



# Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society

## Autumn 2019 newsletter

Welcome to our Autumn 2019 newsletter. Enclosed is the programme card for the forthcoming Winter 2019-20 lecture series; this newsletter is intended to give a summary of the activities of the Society during the last six months, and highlight other selected topics of interest to members.

### ***Excursions***

We have enjoyed another rich mix of excursions this summer, across a wide range of subjects - social, archaeological and natural history - and terrain (thanks Pat, and the individual leaders). From visits to the Manx Aviation and Military History Museum, and the Knockaloe Internment Centre, and walking the route of the Upper Douglas Cable Tramway; to a boat trip round the Calf of Man and right around Chicken Rock, returning through by Kitterland and onto Bradda Mines (pictured right); seeing wallabies and orchids at Close Sartfield; and a walk around Ballachurry Nature Reserve and Farm. On the hills, we had a day-walk around Corrody, Creggans and Lhergy Rhennie where we learned of the interaction of man and landscape. In Kirk Michael we saw both the Cronk Guckley Tumulus excavation at Berk; and then to Ballacarnane to see keeill, chapel and a possible murder weapon! and we had a chance to look at the Renshent Landscape, including the excavation.



The MNH-coordinated Heritage Open Days ('HOD') takes place over the weekends 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> October. In recent years, IoMNHAS has contributed one or even two extra excursions for HOD, over and above the normal summer excursion programme, but as no leader available, the Society will not be organising extra walks for HOD this year. However, a number of individual IoMNHAS members are, as in previous years, running walks, talks and visits in locations across the Island - details of the HOD programme can be found via [www.manxnationalheritage.im](http://www.manxnationalheritage.im)

### ***Next summer (2020)***

If any member has an idea for an excursion they would like to lead, either for the regular summer programme or as an IoMNHAS contribution to Heritage Open Days, Pat Newton would be delighted to hear from them (contact details for Pat on the programme card). Consideration is also being given to an off-Island trip in 2020, possibly to Cumbria.

## **Winter events**

Whilst most of the lectures this winter are being held, as usual, in the Museum Lecture Theatre, please note that the astronomical event on 22<sup>nd</sup> February is being held at 'The Dome' at the Nunnery Stables and must be booked; there are only 30 seats so first to book (and pay) get the seats – details of how to book are on the programme card.

## **Tynwald Fair / Southern Agricultural Show / Food and Drink Festival**

Yet again we ran our interactive “How well do you know YOUR Island” challenge at these three events. Luckily, the weather for Tynwald Fair was clement; the Southern Show had some rain (but not the disruptive storms of last year); and the Food and Drink Festival had mostly good weather. Thanks to the members who helped run the stalls, both we, and our visitors, had fun at all of them! It was great meeting old and making new friends; and heartening how interested visitors, including a significant number from off-Island, were to chat about aspects of the Island.



For those haven't (yet) seen or tried the activity, it is a type of quiz with pictures of, or clues to, sites or buildings on the Island, and visitors have to 'pin the tail on the donkey' by popping the magnetic clue picture (which is like a 'fridge magnet') into the right location on the magnetic map. It provides a way to engage visitors and open conversations about sites, buildings and other aspects of the Island, as we try and coach them to work out where each one is. For the Food and Drink Festival, we have special clues which all have a food or drink connection; whereas the clues used at Tynwald and the Southern Show are more general.

We also have on-display an appropriately selected range of the Buildings at Risk articles which we (the Alliance for Building Conservation, which is coordinated by IoMNHAS) have in the *Isle of Man Examiner* every fortnight, the articles on display chosen to be topical or to relate to some of the clues. All the 80+ articles to date can be read online at [www.abc.org.im](http://www.abc.org.im) by clicking on 'Buildings at Risk articles' in the right-hand menu.

## **Marshall Cubbon Bursaries**

Each year, IoMNHAS awards up to two bursaries, each of up to £250, in memory of Marshall Cubbon to students (undergraduate or postgraduate) who are researching a Manx related topic at a recognised institution of Higher Education. Marie Weale received a Marshall Cubbon Bursary earlier this year to continue her research into the osteological material collected at Rushen Abbey, and she reports:

“The funds awarded to me by the Society helped cover some travel expenses to attend the Paleopathology Association Annual meeting, in Cleveland Ohio. I presented a paper on the evidence of disease that has been found at Rushen Abbey to the 200 experts attending. Among this was the Island’s only known case of Paget’s disease from the archaeological record and an example of an osteoid osteoma, a type of bone cancer that is rarely seen in individuals from the past. I received an overwhelmingly positive response towards the work I have done on the collection so far. Many people knew of the amazing archaeological sites the island is famous for, and were excited to see work being done on the human remains.

The data collection of the human remains from Rushen Abbey is almost complete, there are 25 boxes left and to date just over 150 boxes have been assessed. Work continues to try and understand more about the people from this site, their daily life and the diseases prevalent and the time. Thank you to the Society for your continued support with this research and I am excited to update you when all the remains have been assessed.”

Applications for the 2020 bursary round will open 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019, details and the application form can be found on [www.manxantiquarians.com](http://www.manxantiquarians.com)

## ***Excavations***

### Round Mounds

Courtesy of Robert and Anne Cannell, the excavations at Cronk Guckley under Drs Rachel Crellin and Chris Fowler continued this summer, with IoMNHAS volunteers joining the university students on the dig. The mound/cairn continued to yield a rich range of finds, most spectacularly a stone-lined grave contained skeletal remains, along with what is believed to be a complete jet ‘spacer plate’ necklace; shown here is one of the spacer plates. The team hopes to continue with the dig at Cronk Guckley in 2020.



### Renshent

Pauline Stewart reports: “Eight Society members assisted at excavations on Mrs Angela Cain’s property at Renshent. This was the first excavation to investigate a farm associated with Rushen Abbey whose existence is documented from 1540 onwards. Drs Peter Davey and Philippa Tomlinson and Henry Atherden and Shauna Joy (Northern Archaeological Associates of Barnard Castle) led the excavations to examine geophysical features identified by GeoQuest Associates.

Members of the Society were involved in all aspects of the excavation – laying out the trenches, actually excavating, planning features and trenches, cleaning, photographing and recording finds, and photogrammetry.

Of the ten trial trenches nine yielded features - 3 banks, 10 ditches, 14 pits, 10 furrows, and 2 walls – indicating a series of enclosures in different orientations and sizes, which had perhaps been modified during a relatively short period.



Sixty-three finds were collected spanning the Mesolithic to the Modern period. The six worked flints included a small, retouched, parallel-sided blade, typical of the Manx Early Mesolithic (6 – 8,000 BC), with others most likely Neolithic (4 – 2,000 BC). Recovered from wall foundations located in one of the trenches was a mudstone slab whose incised cross is of a type associated with Manx keills and early parish churches. The broken upper part of a granite rotary quern was uncovered in the same location.

Medieval and post-Medieval-Modern pottery was found (two and 36 sherds respectively), mostly 18th and early 19th centuries, along with six pieces of glass. Both pottery and glass are closely paralleled by finds from Castletown demonstrating that the post-Medieval inhabitants of Renshent shared the cultural norms of wider Manx society.

The material revealed at Renshent suggests a dynamic landscape with many different types of field boundary, ploughing systems, and a complex series of built structures. Further area excavation would be merited and the existing farmhouse, in particular its outbuildings, have potential for more detailed vernacular architectural survey.”

### ***Research update***

A ‘Research Update’ will be circulated by email shortly, with further details on the above, collaboration requests (including Manucaptors, Methodist Minister photographs, and Standishes), and also details of recently published books of possible interest to members. If you haven’t already done so, and would like occasional updates by email, please send your email address to [communications@manxantiquarians.com](mailto:communications@manxantiquarians.com) so we can add you to our email list.

### ***Keeping in touch***

- If you haven’t already done so, you can join our e-mail list used to keep members informed – details & privacy policy: [www.manxantiquarians.com/page\\_72633.html](http://www.manxantiquarians.com/page_72633.html)
- Visit our FaceBook page, for information from the Society and selected other items of interest to our members. You don’t have to be a member of FaceBook to read our page; but if you are, please “Like” our page to be automatically notified when updates are posted [www.facebook.com/IsleOfManNaturalHistoryandAntiquarianSociety/](http://www.facebook.com/IsleOfManNaturalHistoryandAntiquarianSociety/)
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