



# Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society

## Spring 2023 newsletter

Welcome to our Spring 2023 newsletter which is intended to give a summary of some of the recent activities and future plans of the Society, and other selected topics of interest to members.

We are delighted that we managed a full programme of winter lectures; enclosed is the summer programme card detailing a rich variety of summer excursions that Pat Newton has once again assembled for us. However, with effect from the March 2023 AGM, Pat retired from the Committee and stood down from the role of Excursions Secretary; and in the absence of a replacement this may be the last such summer programme unless volunteer(s) come forward.

We would therefore repeat the plea for volunteer(s) to help as Excursions Secretary.

### ***Excursion Secretary***

Pat says it's a job (unpaid, of course!) with many rewards – the great outdoors, discovering corners of our island that you didn't know existed, learning about and often meeting the Manx characters that make this 'fair jewel' so fascinating.

The role could be split between two people: one who knows sites of interest from a natural history / geography / flora and fauna perspective, and could organise – or even lead - walks around them; the other is an equivalent role for historical and archaeological sites. There is no requirement to be a specialist in both, what is needed is curiosity and time to explore. Pat usually has more than enough suggestions from members for next year's visits and enjoys checking them out for herself beforehand.

Please note, there is no requirement to attend every Committee meeting, though of course you would be most welcome. You need stout boots, an ability to herd cats, and a computer connection that works. If you want to share your spirit of adventure and discovery with like-minded folk, please get in touch. You can join us following in some pretty remarkable footsteps.

Any member who feels they can contribute in this area is asked to contact the Hon. Secretary [secretary@manxantiquarians.com](mailto:secretary@manxantiquarians.com)

## **Fiona McArdle RBV**

The Society was delighted that the Reih Bleeaney Vanannan 2023 was been awarded to Fiona McArdle for her lifelong commitment to and continued involvement in so many facets of Manx culture.

In the words of Culture Vannin's citation for Fiona's RBV:

“There is hardly a sphere of cultural life that hasn't been touched by Fiona's passion, time and expertise – from Manx language, music and dance, to history and heritage, festival and society committees, community activities, and radio presenting. She has represented the Isle of Man internationally at festivals and conferences, and is a wonderful and knowledgeable ambassador for everything Manx.



“Nominations talked of how much Fiona has both contributed to and achieved for Manx culture, history and heritage over a sustained period, and on a voluntary basis. They highlighted in particular her commitment to the culture and language, which meant that countless people of all ages have benefitted from her teaching and willingness to share her knowledge and talents. Fiona is someone who makes things

happen, often behind the scenes, and without seeking anything other than the reward of the activities themselves.

“Through Fiona's professional life as a teacher, and later Education Officer at Manx National Heritage, she worked to raise the profile of the Manx language and Manx history in particular. At a time when Manx was not taught officially in secondary schools in the 1980s, she led a voluntary Manx language club at lunchtimes, then a singing and dance club as well, entering pupils for competitions in the Guild and Yn Chruinnaght, producing Manx concerts, and in 1989 taking a group 'Crosh Vollan' from St. Ninian's High School to Lorient in Brittany to represent the Isle of Man at the Festival Interceltique there where they did the Isle of Man proud. During that time, she was the driving force behind the production of Skeealyn Vannin, archive recordings and transcriptions of native speakers of Manx, as well as the Manx Language Bibliography. She helped with the development of a curriculum for Manx history, and taught thousands of children through workshops and events. She is a multilingual Blue Badge Guide who has devoted time to train others, whilst welcoming thousands of visitors to Manx shores.”

## ***Fairs and Festivals***

This year the Society will attend three events – Tynwald Fair (5 July), the Southern Show (29 - 30 July), and the Food and Drink Festival (16 – 17 September).

**We need your help** as we can only do this with volunteers to help run the Society's stall – please contact Dave Martin ([Dave.Martin@manx.net](mailto:Dave.Martin@manx.net)) if you think you would like to join in and have fun on our stall.

## ***IoMNHAS Committee***

We are delighted there are three Committee members to introduce to the members in this newsletter: Joanna Shimmin, Sarah Kerruish and Marie Weale. For the last few years, the Hon. Secretary has coordinated the winter lecture programme, Jo has volunteered to take over that role as well as joining the Committee. Sarah, who completed the History and Heritage degree this year – and was awarded graduate student of the year by UCM – joins the Committee. Marie will be known to many from her talks to the Society on Osteoarchaeology; she (along with other IoMNHAS members) is a contributor to MNH's forthcoming Rushen Abbey monograph, and has joined the Committee as a Research coordinator.

Here in their own words Jo and Sarah introduce themselves:

Jo was born and raised in the Island and has always been interested in its heritage and culture. After gaining a degree in the medieval history and languages of the British Isles and Scandinavia from the University of Cambridge, she returned to the Island and currently works for the Attorney General's Chambers. Her other interests include hiking, exploring the Island's maritime history and connections, and planning her next holiday.

Sarah: I was delighted to be invited to join the committee of the IOMNHAS. I am interested in many aspects of heritage, history and archaeology, particularly that of the Isle of Man. I was a volunteer on the final year of the dig at Berk, run by Dr Rachel Crellin, and recently completed my BA dissertation exploring how access to archaeological sites can be improved for autistic visitors. I have two sport mad teenage children and am currently a sessional lecturer on the History and Heritage degree at UCM. Having enjoyed and benefitted from the lectures and excursions offered by the IOMNHAS, I look forward to being involved with the Society.

## ***Research co-ordinators***

We currently have two Research co-ordinators on IoMNHAS Committee; our Society Rules allows up to four. Natural History is still under-represented, any member who feels they can contribute in this area is asked to contact the Hon. Secretary [secretary@manxantiquarians.com](mailto:secretary@manxantiquarians.com)

## **MM100**

As members will know, and also heard about in Katie King's talk after the March 2023 AGM, our Society played a pivotal role in establishing a Museum on the Island, firstly in our own collections and at Castle Rushen, then in its own premises in the former Nobles Hospital one hundred years ago. As Katie said, it was "a story which involves a 'tenacious band of patriots' determined to protect, collect and share the unique cultural heritage of the Isle of Man against all the odds. Thanks to their vision, the Manx Museum is now home to an extraordinary collection of artefacts and archives that help tell the story of the Isle of Man and its people."

MNH curators have assembled a splendid exhibition "MM100" celebrating not only the artefacts but the people behind them; the exhibition, which runs until the end of October 2023, is worthy of (multiple) visits.

### ***Isle of Man Studies (Proceedings of IoMNHAS)***

I greatly regret that *IOM Studies* vol XVIII was not available at the AGM. Vol XVIII should have gone to press at the end of January, and all the material I have received is set and ready, but a number of authors have had personal (or family) health issues so have been unable to complete their submissions yet.

Rather than publish an over-slim volume, the Trustees agreed a short delay to ensure a 'decent' volume was published. I have given all the authors in question an opportunity to finish their papers; but I am also working with several other authors to bring forward contributions which would otherwise have gone in vol XIX. I will keep members updated on progress; we may yet get it away to the printers by the beginning of May.

*Dave Martin, Hon. Editor IOM Studies*

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

- **About 80% of our members have kindly provided their email address. If you haven't done so and would like to receive appropriate bulletins please drop an email to [membership@manxantiquarians.com](mailto:membership@manxantiquarians.com) and ask for your email to be added).** Our privacy and data protection policy can be found at: [www.manxantiquarians.com/page\\_72633.html](http://www.manxantiquarians.com/page_72633.html)
- Visit our FaceBook page (you don't have to be a member of FaceBook to read our page; but if you are member of FaceBook, please "Like" our page and you can be automatically notified when any updates are posted) [www.facebook.com/IsleOfManNaturalHistoryandAntiquarianSociety/](http://www.facebook.com/IsleOfManNaturalHistoryandAntiquarianSociety/)
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