



News & Events

The Newsletter of the Greater Washington, D.C. Area Manx Society

Website: northamericanmanx.org/dc/

Spring 2010

Kelly McCarthy, Editor

2010 Spring Dinner – Save the date

We are returning to the Pier 7 Restaurant in Washington, DC for our annual Dinner and Business Meeting on Saturday May 1st. See the form at the end of the newsletter for more details.

Mee Boaldyn

The Manx word for May is *Boaldyn*, and *laa Boaldyn* denotes Mayday. It is the first month of summer and the night of April 30/May 1 is the Beltane or in Manx, Boaldyn. It is thought that the name originates from the Celtic god, Bel - the 'bright one', and the Gaelic word 'teine' meaning fire, giving the name 'bealhtainn', meaning 'bright fire'.

This is the beginning of the 'lighted half' of the year when the sun begins to set later in the evening (as late as 11pm) and the hawthorn (or rowan as it's called on the island) blossoms. To our ancestors Beltane was a celebration of summer and her fertility. Nature is in bloom and the earth is full of new life. Flowering twigs of rowan are hung above doorways as protection - the start of summer was regarded as a time when the little people and spirits were especially active.

According to the Manx Quarterly #25, April 1921, one of the chief ritual acts of Beltane, not only in Mann, but in all Celtic countries, was the kindling of bonfires, usually on hills. The fires kept off disease and evil, and sometimes cattle were driven through them in order to keep them in health during the year. Sometimes the fire was lit beneath a sacred tree, or a pole covered with greenery, or a tree was burned in the fire. These trees survive in the maypole tradition and they represented the "vegetation" spirit, whom the worshippers address by dressing in leaves and dancing sunwise round the fire, or by running through the fields with blazing branches or wisps of straw.

The bonfire was a sun-charm, representing the sun. Rain-charms were also used at Beltane. Sacred wells were visited and ceremonies were performed with their waters such as being sprinkled over the trees or the fields to promote a good rainfall (*I wouldn't have this was a problem on the Island!*). The use of such rites at Beltane and at other festivals may have given rise to the belief that wells were places of healing. There is a Chibbyrt Balthane or "May Well" on Bradda, in the parish of Rushen, where "certain customs" are hinted at but not recorded. Balthane is also the name of a farm in the Abbey Lands of Malew, and we may be sure that it had some connection with the festival of Belthane.

The custom of rolling in the grass to benefit from the properties of May dew was probably connected with magical rites in which moisture played an important part.

In an allegorical battle between growth and blight the Manx would stage fake fights between Summer and Winter. Referring to this custom a Dr. Kelly observes: *"On this day (May-day), likewise, the young people of different districts form themselves into two parties, called the Summer and the Winter (Sourey as Geurey), and having appointed a place of meeting, a mock engagement takes place, when the winter party gradually recedes before the*

summer, and at last quits the field."



Later on in the article there is a reference to orgies on a hill that fits the description of one found in Baldwin, or Boayldin. In the

interest of discretion I will omit it from these pages but it is easy to find online. It should be noted that not everyone agrees with Dr. Kelly. (*Ed.*)

NAMA Convention in Denver

On August 5th through 8th, 2010, the 50th NAMA Convention will convene in the Denver suburb of Englewood, Colorado. In 1927 the first NAMA Convention was held in Cleveland, Ohio. Seventy-nine years later, the Rocky Mountain Manx Society will be hosting the 50th NAMA Convention. The convention will be held in a Sheraton Hotel, which has a view of the Rocky Mountains from each room. Pike's Peak and the Southern Front Range are visible from the rooms that face south. The north-facing rooms have a view of the Rockies from Mount Evans to Long's Peak.

Jim Corlett, NAMA's President-Elect who is hosting the event tells us that the Hon. Tony Brown, Chief Minister of the Isle of Man has kindly agreed to attend the Convention.

If you are not already a member of NAMA you should consider joining. Go to the website www.northamericanmanx.org for details of membership, the Convention, Manx genealogy, and much more.

Upcoming Celtic Festivals

Two regional Celtic festivals are coming up soon. There will be music and dance stages, a food & pub, crafts vendors, and a gathering of Clans and societies.

The **Potomac Celtic Festival** is scheduled for June 12-13 at historic Morven Park Equestrian Center in Leesburg Virginia. It runs from 10-7 Saturday and 10-5 on Sunday. More information is at www.potomaccelticfest.org

The **Southern Maryland Celtic Festival** is scheduled for April 24th at Jefferson Patterson Park in Calvert County from 10-6. More information is at 443-404-7319 or www.cssm.org.

Manx classes in Alexandria

Kiarkyl ny Gaelgey is the Manx Gaelic Circle, a study group learning the Manx language in the Washington, D.C., area. The group meets on Sunday afternoons, twice a month for a two-hour session at the McCarthy's office on Cameron Street in the Old Town district of Alexandria, not far from the King Street Metro station. The leader of the group is Bill Cassidy, a governor of GWAMS.

Our goal is to learn Manx — and to have fun in the process! *Kiarkyl ny Gaelgey* focuses on conversational Manx, using *Bun-choorse Gaelgagh*, a textbook with four CDs by Brian Stowell, the online resources of learnmanx.com and Radio Vannin programs.

So far we have had classes that covered, on St. Valentine's Day, *Manx-The Language of Love* and for St. Patrick's we

learned all about ordering drinks in the pub. We were also able to welcome a visiting MHK, Mr. Alex Downie who was visiting a space conference held locally and took the time to sit with us during our class.

The cost of the course is \$50 per student per semester (10 sessions over 5 months), and an additional \$25 for the textbook and CDs. Come and join us!

CHECK OUT OUR BLOG:
<http://kiarkyl.wordpress.com>

Reih Bleeaney Vanannan Award 2010

The Reih Bleeaney Vanannan is an annual award made by the Manx Heritage Foundation to a person, or group, who has made the most outstanding contribution to Manx culture. This year Joan Caine of Peel was awarded the trophy in recognition of the many years she has spent teaching and encouraging others to learn the Manx language. A large part of this time has been spent as a member of Caarjyn ny Gaelgey (Friends of the Manx Language) and organizing a variety of Manx classes from beginners to fluent speakers.

The trophy, designed by the late Eric Austwick, displays the figure of the sea god Manannan standing on a sample of Pooil Vaaish marble resting on a plinth. It also contains traces of quartz from South Barrule, one of Manannan's fortresses, and a brooch of Laxey silver presented by cultural field worker Mona Douglas. Joan will now be able to put the letters, R.B.V after her name. This is the only uniquely Manx award that carries this honor.

Website Password

The members only section of our website contains an archive of newsletters, additional email addresses for some of our members, and selected Manx sheet music and recordings. The username is **nama**, and the password is **tynwald**.

Davy Watch



Davy Knowles and Back Door Slam will be playing at Herndon Town Green, VA, on June 4th, 7.30-9.30pm, on the Depot Main Stage as part of the 30th Annual Herndon Festival.

Time to plant your Manx Marvel Seeds

Jim Kneale's gardening tip for those Manx Marvel seeds: In the Washington DC area, the seeds should be started indoors so that they will be big enough to plant outside by Mother's Day. Use fresh potting soil in a section of foam egg carton with drains punched in the bottom. Placed this in a partially latched take-out salad container to keep them damp and warm until they sprout. Transplant deeper as they get larger.

First Manxman to become President of the Oxford Union

An Oxford undergraduate from the Isle of Man has been elected to one of the most prestigious student positions in Britain's universities. Twenty-one-year-old James Kingston from Port Soderick believes he is the first

Manxman to become President of the Oxford Union. The union is well known for hosting lively and controversial debates, attracting heavyweight speakers from every aspect of public life. Previous presidents include the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, Benazir Bhutto, Edward Heath and Tony Benn. James says it's an institution with a proud history. James is reading history and politics.

The 2010 Annual World Bonnag Championships

Report from Valerie Caine

An appreciative audience sat down in St James' church hall to hear farmer John Kennaugh compère one of the most important events in the Dalby calendar.

The Annual World Bonnag Championships attracts people from far and wide to this small church situated on a remote stretch of western coastline, where former baker Bert Winckle of Foxdale has the unenviable task of choosing the winners of this unique competition.

Bonnag, a non-yeasted simple bread, shared by the rural community for generations is a cousin of the Irish soda bread. Recognized as an essential part of the Manx kitchen it is made quickly and efficiently by hand using few ingredients, but never without the vital buttermilk, once available on every Manx farm.

Here are some recipes:

Wheat Bonnag

Ingredients

2 & 1/3 cup white flour
2-4 Tbsp. butter or lard
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. cream of tartar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup buttermilk (available in powder at the grocery)

Method

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix the dry ingredients well together in a bowl and cut in the fat with a pastry blender until it is the size of oatmeal. Add sufficient buttermilk to make into a moderately soft dough. Form into 2 or 3 flat round shaped loaves about 8 inches diameter. Bake about 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out dry.

Fruit Bonnag

A round three-legged pot was used in the cottages for roasting, baking and stewing. It hung from a chain (slouree) over a turf fire in the big open hearth (chiollagh). The lid was flat and could hold a fire on top to ensure an even heat when needed.

Before the advent of cast-iron ovens, some cottages had ovens built into the wall beside the fireplace. They were heated by burning fuel inside until the desired temperature was reached. Then the fire would be brushed out with a goose wing.

As it was a lengthy task to prepare the wall ovens, most baking was done on the griddle over the fire or in the pot-oven.

Baking day would bring forth a batch of plain and fruit bunnings (large scones) and soda cakes, which were traditionally made with buttermilk - but sour milk is a reasonable substitute.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups of plain flour (brown or white)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup currants
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
- 1 large teaspoon mixed spice
- Few drops of vanilla essence
- 1 cup buttermilk

Method

Put dry ingredients in a bowl. Rub in the butter. Gradually add the buttermilk and a few drops of vanilla essence and mix to a soft dough. Ad a little more buttermilk if necessary.

Shape into a round and bake for about an hour in a moderate oven. It should be three to four inches thick and slightly loaf-shaped.

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GWAMS Board and Governors

<p>Jim Kneale Jr. (President) 6408 Silent Moon Run</p>	<p>Harold Quayle (Governor) 4 Sedgwick Lane</p>
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GWAMS
2010 Annual Dinner

Saturday, May 1, 2010
6:00 pm Social Hour ~ 7:00 pm Dinner
Pier 7 Restaurant at the Channel Inn
650 Water Street SW, Washington DC

Pier 7 is in the Channel Inn, at 650 Water Street. Pier 7 is located within walking distance of the Waterfront Metro (Green line). Three hours of free parking under the Channel Inn is available with validation from the restaurant. Social Hour begins at 6:00pm and dinner is at 7:00pm. We will be operating a cash bar, the Manx gift stall and a small raffle.

**Menu: Your choice of : Beef Bourguignon (beef in burgundy wine sauce) or
Cordon Bleu Chicken (chicken stuffed with ham and cheese)**

Dinner includes Melon with Parma ham, thyme-roasted potatoes, fresh mixed vegetables, mixed green salad, apple pie, wine, and coffee or tea.

The price is \$40.00 per person. We need to receive your reservation and menu choice as soon as possible in order to ensure the restaurant has your food choice available on the night. Any questions, please call Jim Kneale at (410)-531-6685.

Directions:

From I-395 and the southeast:

1. Take I-395 North towards Washington.
2. Take the 9th St exit to Maine Ave 0.1 mi
3. Slight right at 9th St 0.1 mi
4. Cross Maine Ave then turn left at Water St 0.3 mi
5. Proceed past 7th Street.
6. Channel Inn is located on the right hand side.

From 295 and the northwest

1. Take the Howard Rd exit 3B to Downtown 0.4 mi
2. Take the S Capitol St SE ramp 1 mi
3. Turn left at M St SE 0.6 mi (ramp to overpass)
4. Turn left at 6th St SW 0.1 mi
5. Turn right at Water St SW 0.1 mi
6. Channel Inn is located on the left hand side.

Agenda

A brief business meeting will be held. There are no elections this year. The Treasurer will make her report.

This will be followed by **Manx Pub Quiz**. Each table will compete as a team in this multi-round – very easy! – competition that will cover well-known facts about the Isle of Man. This is a great opportunity for everyone to have a chat while they discuss the answers. Make sure you sit with your knowledgeable friends! And why not visit the NAMA Scrapbook for some up to date stories about the Island at <http://namanx.blogspot.com> to get an edge on the competition?



2010 Annual Dinner

Family Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ Phone: _____

State / Zip _____ Email: _____

_____ # Beef Bourguignon	\$ _____	Persons \$40 each
_____ # Chicken Cordon Bleu	\$ _____	\$10 per family for 2010 dues
		(if not already paid as part of 12th night)
Total	\$ _____	

Make check payable to
 Washington Manx Association
 Cris Doria Warner, Treasurer
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 Laurel, MD 20707-2641