

## **Proud to be Manx?**



***Harry Kelly outside his thatched cottage in Cregneash, before he passed away in 1935.***

When I view the seven kingdoms from the summit of Snaefell,

When I stoop through the narrow door of Harry Kelly's thatched cottage at Cregneash,

When I hear the unmistakeable clip-clop of gentle tram horses on Douglas promenade,

When I, at sleepy dawn, sail into Douglas Harbour past the trusted Tower of Refuge,



***Douglas Horse trams first commenced in 1876.***



***The Tower of Refuge, built in 1832.***

When I say a lucky hello to the Lil' Fellas and Phynodderrees at Fairy Bridge whilst driving en route to the Airport,

When I solemnly read the names of my ancestors on our village War Memorial,

When I see purple heather flowering on the sunny slopes of Carn Gerjoil above Windy Corner,

When I taste delicious Queenies caught off the rocky Niarbyl coast,

When my elderly uncle advises *Traa dy Liooar*,

When I spot on TV, a Manx flag being waved in the packed crowd in front of Glastonbury's Pyramid stage,

When I stand next to cascading waterfalls in ancient Ballaglass Glen,

When I enjoy a local crab bap on sandy Fenella Beach,

When I glimpse St Trinians roofless church and remember the angry Buggane,

When I contemplate in peaceful Milly's Picnic Garden,

When I pick wild blaaberries on lonely Slieau Freoaghane,

When I see boys and girls hand in hand enjoying Manx folk dancing,

When I smell the honey scented yellow gorse at the Point of Ayre,

When I listen to learned Deemsters reading out new laws in Manx and English on famous Tynwald Hill,

When I observe my nephew competing in the sack race at Cronk-y-Voddy's summer sports day,

When I hear lively conversations spoken in Manx gaelic at *Yn Chruinnaght*,

When by chance I meet strangers in London and discover they have the names Qualtrough or Shimmin or Kennaugh,

When I gaze over at majestic Calf of Man from the Sound Café,

When I notice a red fuchsia growing out of the tumble downed walls of Killabrega tholtan in Sulby Glen,

When I see young children going from house to house in Laxey on Hop-tu-Naa night, holding turnip lanterns and singing about Jinny the Witch,

When, at solstice sunrise, I touch the sacred stones of the Druid's Circle,

When I attend a candlelit Oiell Voirrey in Ballaugh Old Church, with its two crooked gate pillars,



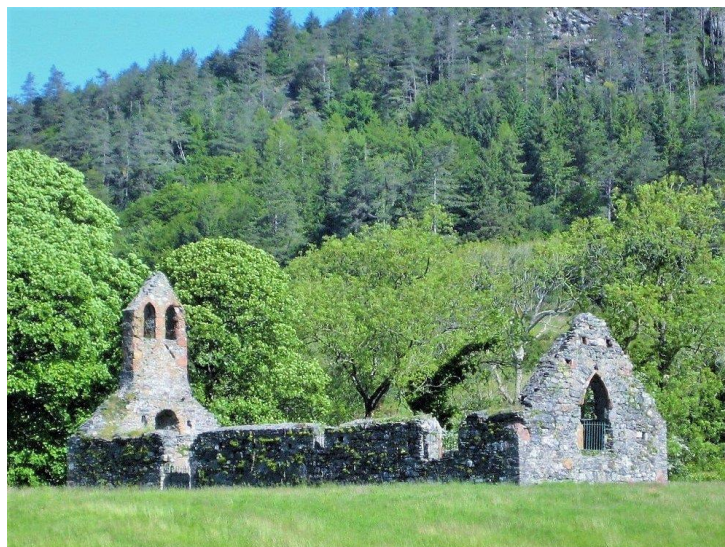
***Ballaugh Old Church. Local tradition has it that the world will end if the leaning entrance pillars touch!***



***Fairy Bridge, Santon. .  
Phynodderrees live under the road here.***



***Tranquil Milly's Picnic Garden, Kirk Michael.***



***St. Trinians Church, Greeba, whose roof was blown off by a furious  
buggane, with Tim the tailor inside.***

When I encounter a motorcyclist in far away Naples who is wearing a TT Races scarf,  
 When I kneel to drink from a chilly mountain stream on Beinn-y-Phott,  
 When I stroke Orry, my neighbour's black Manx cat,  
 When I hear a pair of croaking Ravens high above the white triskelion on North Barrule,  
 When I bid for homemade bonnags at a rowdy Mhellia in the Mitre pub,  
 When I listen to *O Land of Our Birth* being proudly sung by the Lon Dhoo Male Voice Choir,  
 When I breathe *thy sweet mountain air* on Slieau Curn,  
 When I watch brown Loughtan lambs frolicking in Spring fields,  
 When I cast an eye over the *Odin's Raven* Viking ship,  
 When I marvel at a glorious sunset from Cronk ny Arrey Laa,  
 When I walk amongst bluebells growing in the quiet Christian ruins of Keeill Pherick at Spooyt Vane,



***Odin's Raven was rowed  
from Norway to Peel in 1979.***



***Keill Pherick was a little Christian church  
dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century AD.***

And when I come back tired from long foreign travels and catch first sight of the green hills of dearest *Ellan Vannin* from my aeroplane window,  
 my heart leaps and I often shed a little tear.

Because when I witness those things I feel proud to be Manx. Because I love the Isle of Man. Because this is my special home. This is where I belong.

### **However, all is not well in the camp.**

On Tynwald Day this year, I was walking along Orrisdale Road, Kirk Michael when a young man I know drove up to me in his builder's wagon.

I jokingly said that I thought he would be flying a Manx flag from his vehicle, given that it was our National Day.

His spontaneous response was, *"I'm not proud to be Manx"*.

Surprisingly, this was from a man in his early 30's, born in Kirk Michael of Manx parents and grandparents. He proceeded to lambast the current government with expletives before driving off.

Unfortunately, this sort of palpable political disillusionment is not unique.

I know of two other young people currently planning to leave the Island for new lives in Manchester and Liverpool.

A recent survey by Island Global Research revealed that an alarming 87% of 1,000 Isle of Man respondents felt their elective representatives were not representing them very well or at all.

When the IOM Government held a series of roadshows around the Island this year, a paltry 29 people turned up in Ramsey on 30<sup>th</sup> June, out of a population of over 8,000.

The grandstand seating capacity for the Tynwald Day ceremony in St. Johns this year was significantly reduced, due to falling demand and embarrassingly empty seats in previous years.

Moreover, at the last IOM General Election in 2021, only 50.68% of the electorate voted. In other words, *half* of those eligible to vote did not bother.

### **WHAT HAS GONE WRONG?**

Here are a few things to start with:-

#### **i) Housing**

In August 2025, the average cost of a house in the Isle of Man was £384,179.00.

The average salary is currently £39,780.00.

This means that the cost of a house is approximately 10 times the average wage. Regrettably, this makes home owning for most young Manx people completely unobtainable. In addition, rental properties are very expensive and in short supply.

It is this issue of affordable housing which most concerns young adults on the Island. Many hundreds of 20 and 30 year olds remain living at home with their parents because they cannot afford to move out. I personally have three nephews and a niece trapped in this unhappy situation.

## ii) **Health Care**

The budget for health service provider Manx Care has ballooned from £305 million in 2021 to £361 million in 2025, yet the quality of service has manifestly deteriorated. The managerial bureaucracy of the DHSS co-exists alongside the bureaucracy of Manx Care, wasting millions of pounds in duplicated and needless civil service administration.

Face to face patient consultations with GP's are now as rare as hen's teeth.

The suicide rate on the Island remains worryingly high and the addiction service Motiv8 recently stated that around 1,800 children on the IOM are impacted by parental substance issues.

The waiting list for an NHS dentist on the Island had grown to a shocking **6,112** by September 2025. That is over six thousand men, women and children potentially in pain with toothache and gum disease, who were unable to afford a dentist.

Manx Care announced last week that the dental waiting list has suddenly been reduced from 6,112 to only 1,500 now. This is due to the allocation of new financial contracts with dental practices, at a total cost of £700,000.00 per annum.

What is really disturbing about this announcement is how easy and quick it has been to solve the problem. It just shows that there has been a lack of political will and empathy for people.

The fact that the waiting list for a dentist was allowed to grow over four years to more than 6,000 people is utterly disgraceful.

Manx Care's response to these chronic problems is typically for the bungling CEO Mrs Teresa Cope, to issue a stream of glib platitudes reassuring the public that, *"We are supporting colleagues who are working tirelessly across multi-agencies to keep everyone safe"*.

### iii) Transport

Travel links to and from the Island continue to be costly and unreliable. £80 million was spent on a new passenger ferry called the *Manxman*, but it is plagued with mechanical problems such as vibration and periodically has to sail slowly and sometimes is unable to sail at all.

The Manx Government has also paid for a new ferry terminal to be built in Liverpool at an initial estimated cost of £31.3 million. However, the final cost is now projected to be more than double that at £75 million.

Meanwhile, vehicle and passenger fares remain very expensive, despite the Steam Packet Company being publicly owned.

Last year, flights to and from Ronaldsway Airport were significantly delayed due to Air Traffic Controller issues, and the problems remain unresolved.

The high cost and unreliability of sea and air links to and from the Island is deeply frustrating for residents, visitors and businesspersons.

### iv) Business closures

Dozens and dozens of family businesses have tragically closed since 2021. Household names such as G.H Corlett jewellers, Vondy's garage, Looneys fabrics, Moore's kippers, Quayle's convenience store in Kirk Michael, Brown's café in Laxey and L'Experience restaurant in Douglas to name just a few.

Literally, every week brings news of another shop, eatery or venture dejectedly closing down.



***Quayle's was first opened in 1871 but sadly closed this year after 154 years in business.***

Small establishments continue to battle with rising energy costs, rents, business rates, VAT and compliance costs. In addition, the impediment persists for the self-employed who have to make substantial lump sum Income Tax payments on account/in advance each January, months before any income for the forthcoming year has actually been earned.

A recently announced 9.9% rise in the minimum wage on the Isle of Man to £13.46 per hour from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 will only increase the pressure on struggling businesses.

**v) Royal Family**

The Island continues to pay over £700,000.00 per year to keep the King's representative, the Lieutenant Governor, pampered in the lap of luxury at Government House, Onchan. Eight members of staff are employed including a butler and chauffeur, with £97,491.00 spent in 2023 just on the manicured gardens.

This illegitimate colonial hangover is a clear affront to hardworking Manx taxpayers. It is stating the obvious to say that if the Crown wishes to have a representative on the Island, it should jolly well pay for it.

**vi) Wind farm**

Plans continue to be progressed for a towering *on-shore* windfarm called Cair Vie, at Eary Stane plantation, near Colby, which will desecrate beautiful Manx countryside in the south of the Island.

**vii) Energy costs**

In 2019, gas cost 7.27 pence per kwh unit on the Island. In 2025 it now costs 9.79 pence per kwh unit.

In 2019, electricity cost 16.70 pence per unit. It now costs 29.10 pence per unit. That is almost *double* in 6 years.

The Island's crippling electricity bills are partly caused by the Government's misguided pursuit of a net zero orthodoxy. And yet, if every house exchanged its gas or oil boiler for an air source heat pump and if every petrol car was replaced with an electric one, it would have only an infinitesimal impact on so called manmade climate change.

### **viii) Bloated Public Sector**

The number of those working for Government in the public sector has soared to 23.6% of all employees on the Island. This means that nearly a quarter of all employees on the Island work for the Government.

In addition, the public sector occupational pension deficit requires on average £30 million to be withdrawn from general reserves every year, just to plug the gap between contributions by, and payments out to, retired government workers. The current political administration has made little if any effort to tackle this plainly unjust fiscal situation.

### **ix) 20 MPH Zones**

20 mph speed restricted zones were planned to be rolled out across the Island's towns and villages, initially without public consultation. New signs were purchased and poles even installed along some highways, all without public support. Only now is the government undertaking proper consultation with local communities on this unpopular topic, which it sensibly should have done in the first place.

### **x) Heavy handed Policing**

In 2020 & 2021 there were 248 people arrested on the Isle of Man for breach of Covid regulations, including 22 child arrests. 79 custodial sentences were handed down by the Manx Courts, including two juvenile sentences.

In addition, citizens are still being arrested by the police and brought to Court for possessing tiny amounts of cannabis. In one of my legal cases this year, the Prosecution initially insisted on a criminal trial for someone who had pleaded not guilty to possessing a mere *0.2 gms* of cannabis for his own personal use. The charge was later withdrawn.

The IOM Constabulary Road Policing Unit regularly posts on its Facebook page. Regrettably, they give the impression that officers are gloating about the number of vehicles stopped for defects or sneakily caught speeding by unmarked Police vehicles or towed away for having no tax disc. That type of disastrous public relations messaging appears to be rejoicing in the mistakes and misfortunes of local motorists.

This sort of authoritarian policing is simply alienating young people and driving them away.

### **xi) Political Malpractice**

Members of Tynwald awarded themselves a generous 6% pay rise in 2024.

The *Legislative Council* continues to lack democratic legitimacy with the eight MLC's voted in by MHK's, not the public, and with each MLC pocketing a handsome £74,252.00 per year for effectively a part-time job.

In any event, many citizens fail to see the point of this *Members Only Club*, often comprised of complacent retirees, weak sycophants and gravy train apparatchiks (sometimes all 3 in 1).

All of these MHK's and MLC's selfishly still do not pay for car parking, whereas other commuters pay on average £27.00 per week to park in Douglas.

Despite pledges to keep taxes low, a series of stealth taxes such as Court fees, vehicle licence charges, septic tank costs, company registration fees, road vehicle tax, passport prices and waste disposal fees have all risen well above the rate of inflation.

The cost of posting a letter within the Island has risen from 62p in 2020 to 90p now, almost 50% more.

Moreover, Income tax was raised by 2% in 2024. This was subsequently reduced to a 1% rise in 2025. Treasury did have plans for a ring-fenced 2% increase in Income Tax for 2026 (as an NHS levy) but this idea was dropped following widespread criticism. No doubt, this proposal has only been temporarily shelved because of the looming General Election.

Other instances of broken promises include the MHK Tim Johnston explicitly stating in his political manifesto and on the campaign trail in 2021 that, "*I repeat my clear commitment that if I am elected on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, I will not take on a ministerial position in the new administration.*" Shamelessly, Mr Johnston became the Enterprise Minister just 16 months later.

When an elected parliamentarian becomes a minister, he or she can use the prefix/title "The Honourable". Is this appropriate in Mr Johnston's case?

This sort of brazen and unprincipled behaviour has undoubtedly contributed to a devastating loss of confidence in public administration on the Island.

## **xii) Prison**

In 2022, the average IOM Prison population was 93. The figure as at October 2025 was 60% higher at 147 inmates.

Instead of focusing on rehabilitation and education for prisoners in order to reduce reconviction rates, the Department of Home Affairs' regressive response last week was simply to suggest building yet another wing onto Jurby Prison.

### **xiii) Homelessness**

Shamefully, the Island does not have a dedicated shelter for homeless people. Emergency accommodation continues to be provided via local hotels and B&B's.

The cost of those emergency bed spaces just for the three months January to March 2025 was a staggering £187,990.00.

Many individuals released from Prison after serving their sentences, as well as persons remanded in custody seeking a bail address, experience considerable difficulty finding somewhere to live on the Island. Sofa surfing and transient accommodation in motorhomes has become normalised.

### **xiv) Population Growth**

The IOM Government has a plan to increase the population by 1,000 people every year from the year 2022 to the year 2037, that is an overall increase of 15,000 persons.

However, by October 2025, the Island's population had only increased by 454 residents since the 2021 census.

In any event, a material concern is that this government has not put in place the necessary infrastructure such as additional hospital space, GP's, schools etc. to deal with the anticipated population growth. In effect, it is putting the cart before the horse.

Another worry is whether the new arrivals are properly integrating into the Manx way of life. The danger of destroying community spirit and creating ethnic ghettos is troubling.

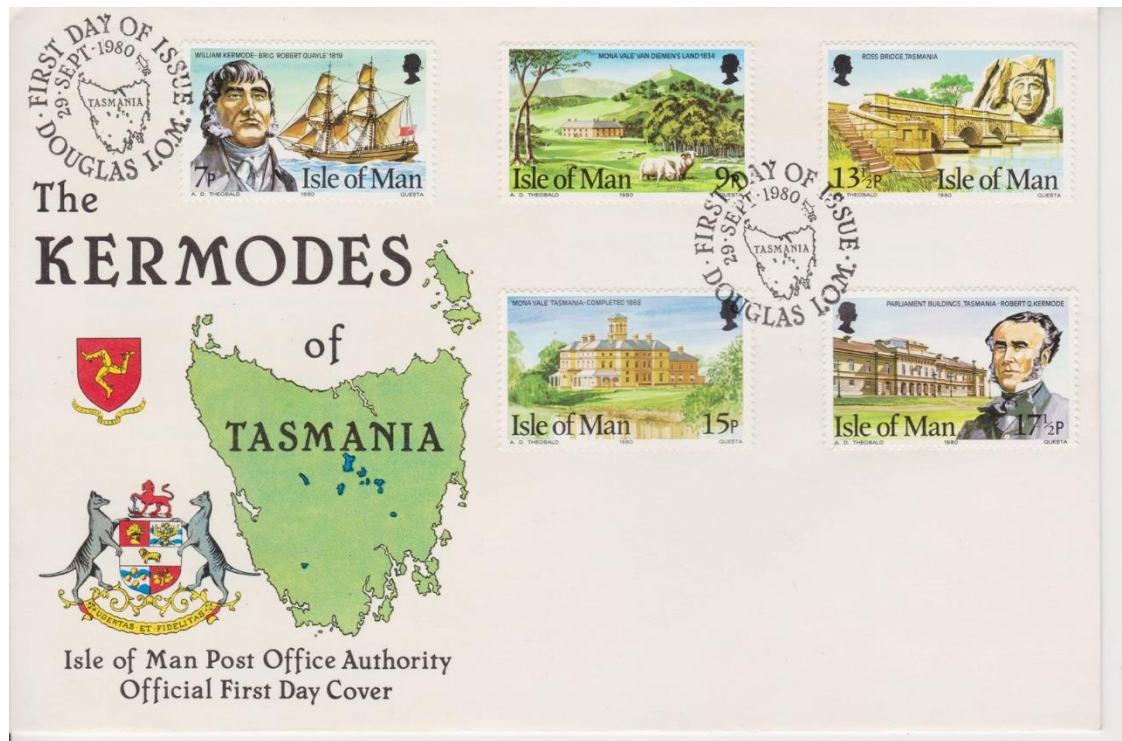
In addition, many locals are apprehensive that the Island is being used as a backdoor for obtaining legal residence and visitor/work visas in the UK or Republic of Ireland. At present, potential illegal immigrants can arrive on the Manx sea ferries without being subject to any entry checks.

### **Emigration**

In the 1800's the Isle of Man, like Ireland and Scotland, experienced periods of mass emigration. There were times of famine and economic hardship and many Manx people left the Island to start new lives such as in South Africa, Canada and America.

For example, in 1821 the Parish population of Kirk Michael was 1,427. By 1911 it had declined to only 843.

I come from generations of Manx folk with my family tree stretching back to 1681 on the Island. There is even a *Kermodes of Tasmania* first day stamp cover issued by the IOM Post office in 1980 to commemorate members of my family who left the Island's shores in the 1800's as pioneers of a new life in Tasmania, Australia.



***A one way trip on a sailing clipper to Australia in the 1830's took around 4 months.***

In those times, people left the Isle of Man because there was no work. Now people are leaving the Island *in spite* of work being available.

The present government has failed to get a grip on the political, social and economic problems listed above due to a lamentable lack of focus.

Quite simply there has been an absence of passion and determination to address the real needs of ordinary people and small businesses.

## **Disenchantment**

The TV presenter Noel Edmonds has recently bought a house on the Island and is full of praise for the Island's beauty and quality of life. Yes, for the rich, the self-serving political class and senior civil servants with jobs for life and gold plated pensions, life is hunky-dory.

But for the majority of the population, those running small businesses, those earning the average wage and those unable to work, life is truly a daily struggle full of worries and sacrifices.

Of all the serious faults, incompetence and wrongs perpetrated by the current government, the worst is this: that there are citizens who actually **no longer feel proud to be Manx.**

This is a catastrophic failure of political leadership. There are too many *Billy Liars* in the present administration, individuals who disingenuously laud the Island's success with housing, healthcare and transport, when the grim reality is completely the opposite.

To make residents feel bad about themselves, to make them feel like they have nothing to look forward to and to make them feel not proud to be Manx; this is scandalous. This is heart breaking. This may take a generation to fix.

**Remember** – we all have an opportunity at next September's General Election to express how this government has made us feel.

"AS FREE AS THY SWEET MOUNTAIN AIR"

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