



Facultade de Filoloxía

Grao en lingua e literatura inglesas

**A Study on Manx Folklore**

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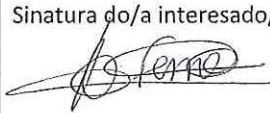
**Resumo** [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the revival, preservation and study of the culture and tradition of the Isle of Man, which are claimed to be of Celtic and, to a lesser extent, Viking origins. The island was a popular tourist destination for the British already in Victorian times and, still today, keeps a peculiar political relationship with Great Britain, that of a self-governing dependency.

The main objective of this dissertation is a thorough analysis of the origin and development of Manx folklore. The study will also include a brief introduction to the historical context of the island and its linguistic and political peculiarities.

The analysis will extensively focus on a diachronic approach to the folklore of the Isle of Man, highlighting and explaining the most significant elements related to traditions, superstitions, legends, tales, myths, ghost stories, proverbs, folk music and dances, traditional food and traditional feasts and festivals, which have played a significant role on Manx society and culture through time. The dissertation will be supported by a close reading and examination of the most important reliable bibliographical sources on the matter.

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## **Summary**

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the revival, preservation and study of the culture and tradition of the Isle of Man, which are claimed to be of Celtic and, to a lesser extent, Viking origins. The island was a popular tourist destination for the British already in Victorian times and, still today, keeps a peculiar political relationship with Great Britain, that of a self-governing dependency.

The main objective of this dissertation is a thorough analysis of the origin and development of Manx folklore. The study will also include a brief introduction to the historical context of the island and its geography and linguistic and political peculiarities.

The analysis will extensively focus on a diachronic approach to the folklore of the Isle of Man, highlighting and explaining the most significant elements related to traditions, superstitions, legends, tales, myths, ghost stories, proverbs, folk music and dances, traditional food and traditional feasts and festivals, which have played a significant role on Manx society and culture through time. The dissertation will be supported by a close reading and examination of the most important reliable sources on the matter.

## **1. Introduction**

The Isle of Man (see map in the appendix) has always been a great unknown for many people, despite forming part of the British Isles. As a dependency of the British Crown, there are many who do not know about its existence and a great percentage of those who do, myself included, have heard about it only because of the motorcycle championship race that is held there every year.

It was precisely that lack of information and my own personal curiosity which arouse my interest in discovering, not only its history, but also its folklore and traditions. I have always found it enthralling to know about the folklore of a certain culture, above all, its mythical creatures and ghost stories.

Despite the fact that the dissertation will extensively focus on the analysis of the folklore and traditions of the island, I find it useful to provide a brief introduction which will include its historical legacy, a mention to its peculiar language, the Manx, and its special political status.

The main part of the study will be divided into two major sections. The first one will deal with the most important myths, legends, ghost stories, tales and superstitions which have played a crucial role in Manx folklore, mentioning the aspects in common and the differences with the other British Isles. I will devote the second part to analyse different traditions as well as the traditional gastronomy, concluding with some of the most important Manx proverbs.

My dissertation will be exclusively based on reliable sources. I have focused my attention on those authors who were the most cited and widely recognised as researchers of the Manx folklore, such as Arthur William Moore or Hannah Ann Bullock, whose works helped me to distribute and organise the contents. Specialised web pages and media contents have also contributed to the essay, always taking into account their scientific rigor and their official status.

I must remark that, at the beginning, it was quite difficult to find physical sources specifically dealing with the Isle of Man. As a result, I had to look up on the Internet, finding several web pages which provided scanned versions of the books I was interested in. The majority of the sources come from the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, something which has helped me to better understand some past traditions and beliefs. After a close reading of several sources, the aim of this dissertation is to analyse the most important aspects of the folklore of the Isle of Man in a coherent and organised way.

## **2. Historical Approach**

### **2.1. Geography**

The territory of the Isle of Man is located in the Irish Sea between the coasts of Ireland, Scotland and England. It is separated from Ireland and England at a distance of twenty-five miles. Galloway, in Scotland, sixteen miles to the north, is the nearest point to where the island lies (Moore, 2005: 93). Stenning (1950: 87) calls the Isle of Man “the centrum” of the British Isles and he adds that there is a local comment showing the pride of the Manx: from Snaefell, the highest mountain of the island, “on a clear day can be seen six kingdoms, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Mann and the Kingdom of Heaven!”.

The distance between the southernmost point of the Island, Spanish Head, and the northernmost one, Point of Ayre, is thirty miles (Stenning, 1950: 89). The outline of Man is irregular, containing bays and creeks. The relief of the island doesn't have high mountains but hills which, at a distance, look higher than they really are because of the impression that they rise directly from the sea. In contrast to the rest of its outline, the coast from Peel to Ramsey, passing Point Ayre, is less rugged, with sandy cliffs. The highest peak of the island is called Snaefell, reaching two thousand thirty-four feet and it is part of the central mountain mass of Man (Moore, 1900: 8-10) (see map in the appendix).

Characterised by its rainy weather, the landscape of Man is full of valleys, meadows and woods with different shades of green (Moore, 2005: 93). The thick mists, which are commonly connected with Manx legends and myths, as we will see later, frequently cover the island (Stenning, 1950: 88).

Stenning (1950: 91) points out that there are many ruined and abandoned cottages scattered around the island. He explains that these spots belonged to Manxmen who suffered from economic crises and had to emigrate towards USA and Canada during the early Victorian times.

### **2.2. Brief History**

It must be emphasised that the special location of Man, in the middle of the Irish Sea, was an advantage for many peoples such as the Celts or the Scandinavian, due to strategic reasons (Moore, 2005: 95-96). Evidence support the existence of human activities in the Isle of Man in 6,000 B.C., that is, Mesolithic times, and remains of

menhirs, monoliths, chambered tombs and megalithic alignments can still be found, such as those at Meayll Hill or Cashtal yn Ard (Moore, 2005: 95).

For a long time, the Isle of Man was inhabited by the Celts who left a big legacy behind. In fact, Celtic culture has been kept over time and plays an important role in the island. There have been several researches and excavations across the island, and many remains belonging to the Celtic period have been discovered, such as metalworking material, inscriptions in stones or evidence of round houses dating back to 400 B.C. on St. Patrick's Isle (Moore, 2005: 96).

This last islet, located on the western coast of Man is the home of Peel Castle, the place where, according to tradition, St. Patrick began his process of Christianisation of the Manx (Moore, 2005: 97). Cells, or *keeills* in Manx, were the first chapels which appeared on the island. They were very little buildings made of stone and timber. There were around two hundred cells spread around the island, of which only thirty-five remain today (Moore, 2005: 98). Stenning (1950: 148) offers a description of these little churches or *keeills*: "Their architectural form, so severely simple, of one chamber, undivided into nave and chancel (...), they have no grandeur, no architectural design (...) but they have a quiet dignity and homeliness".

Little is known about the beginning of Christianity on the Isle of Man, since written records are scarce. But what is certain is that by the time Christianity arrived, Celts had their own beliefs and religion. It seems that they received this new religion in a positive manner as Stenning (1950: 148) asserts: "(...) the upcoming of Christianity was to a great extent happily received by the Celtic mind and temperament".

The Romans visited the Isle of Man during the Celtic period but did not settle there. The only vestiges they left behind were some coins and an inscription on a stone on which it is written in capital letters *AVITI MONUMENTUM*, that is to say, "this is the monument of *Avitus*<sup>1</sup>" (Stenning, 1950: 13).

The conquest of the island by the Norsemen in the ninth century was partly due to the fact that they were drawn by its strategic position and the fertility. Several burial sites have been found dating back to that period, for instance, at Knock y Doonee, Balladoole and Cronk yn Howe, as well as in St. Patrick's Isle. Celtic, Scandinavian and Christian elements became fused together (Moore, 2005: 99). Moore (2005: 99) offers

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<sup>1</sup> *Avitus*, whose full name was *Flavius Maccilius Eparchius Avitus*, was a Western Roman emperor from 455 A.D. to 456 A.D., year of his death (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Avitus>. Last accessed 5.24.2019).

Thorwald's cross<sup>2</sup> as an example of the fusion of pagan Norse designs and Christian elements, in this case, the symbol of a fish. We owe it to them the current Parliament of the Isle of Man, since they are the first ones who held the Tynwald<sup>3</sup>.

The hegemony of the Norwegians over the territory of the Isle of Man ended after the Treaty of Perth<sup>4</sup>, signed in 1266. Scotland took control of the island, although a few years later, in 1290, it came under English rule in the reign of King Edward I. The dispute between Scotland and England for the possession of the island lasted many years. Eventually after having belonged to both territories intermittently, England won the struggle in 1346. There have been several lords who became in possession of the island, among which we must highlight the importance of the family of the Stanleys, who lasted for some generations. It was in 1736 when their direct line ended. Currently, it is the Queen Elizabeth II who possesses the title of Lord of Man (Moore, 2005: 103-111).

### **2.3. Political Status and Law**

It must be kept in mind that the Isle of Man belongs neither to Great Britain nor to the United Kingdom. Hence, its peculiar political status. Notwithstanding, it has remained a dependent territory of the British Crown, resulting in, as said before, Queen Elizabeth II being the current Lord of Man. Inherited from Scandinavian times, the isle has its own Parliament, called *Tynwald*, which allows it to have a self-government, as explained above. There is no representation of the isle in Westminster, but the United Kingdom has the power to intervene in terms of foreign relations and defence. Laws in the island differ from those of the rest of Great Britain, although they are all based on English principles. Man is well-known for being a tax haven, since taxes there are lower than in other British Isles (Moore, 2005: 94-95).

*Tynwald* is a 1,000 years-old Parliament, consisting of two branches: a Legislative Council and the House of Keys, where bills and proposals are discussed

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<sup>2</sup> Thorwald's cross is described by Moore (2005: 99) as follows: "Thorwald's cross, a slate Christian cross slab found in Kirk Andreas, is a good example, its double-sided engraving illustrating transition from old beliefs. On one side is the battle of Ragnarök, a pagan Norse Armageddon-equivalent- while on the other a belted Viking holds a book and a cross; next to him a fish symbol informs that Christ now rules".

<sup>3</sup> *Tynwald*, the current Parliament of the Isle of Man has a Scandinavian origin. Its name comes from the Old Norse *Thingvalla*, which meant 'assembly field' (Moore, 2005: 101).

<sup>4</sup> The Treaty of Perth was signed in 1266 as an agreement that ended the military conflict between Norway and Scotland over the sovereignty of the Hebrides and the Isle of Man (<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryMagazine/DestinationsUK/Isle-of-Man/>. Last accessed 5.14.2019).

before being transmitted to the Legislative Council. This historical Parliament is made up of 35 members who are directly elected every five years and is located in the capital city of the island, Douglas (see map in the appendix) (<http://www.tynwald.org.im/about/hok/Pages/default.aspx>. Last accessed 3.24.2019).

There are several agreements and negotiations between the Parliament of London and the *Tynwald*, always in the interest of the island. Although there is no record of the first *Tynwald*, it is known that they were open assemblies, the aim of which was to make new laws. Moore (2005: 101) states that “things were based on the notion that free men should know the law under which they were ruled”. An annual open *Tynwald* in the village of St. John is still celebrated in Midsummer’s day, as a traditional event (Moore, 2005: 101).

## 2.4. Manx Language

Let’s have a look now at the Manx language and its important role in the island. For centuries, it was spoken by the majority of the population, but its use progressively decreased over the years until it almost disappeared. Fortunately, there have been several attempts to revive it and promote it as a powerful weapon of Manx cultural identity. There are no conclusive evidence of the origin of Manx language, but as stated in Moore’s work, “philologists classify it as a relative of the q-Celtic<sup>5</sup> Gaelic speech of Ireland” (Moore, 2005: 97).

Stenning (1950: 5) emphasises the importance of *The Glossary of Cormac* (9<sup>th</sup> century), in which the earliest record of the Manx language was found. It tells the story of a woman who challenged a group of Irish pupils and their teacher, all of them poets, to complete a couplet in her Manx dialect. This is supposed to have occurred around 650 A.D. (Stenning, 1950: 5).

Manx remained as an oral language until the eighteenth century, when it began to be written. Stenning (1950: 370) points out that “the only printed text before 1700 appears to be the ballad of *Mannanan Beg-y-Leirr, ny Slane Coontey jeh Ellan Vanin*” (seventeenth century) and he adds that “even in the eighteenth century there were only the Bible and Prayer Book in print”. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the first dictionary and grammar of Manx language were published (Stenning, 1950: 370).

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<sup>5</sup> As well as Irish and Scottish Gaelic, Manx is classified as a Goidelic language, a group of Celtic languages originated in Ireland. It is also possible to refer to it as q-Celtic, since unlike the other group, the Brythonic languages, Goidelic kept phoneme /q/ (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Goidelic-languages>. Last accessed 5.12.2019).

According to Stenning (1950: 372), since the beginning of the nineteenth century, there is nobody on the island who only speaks Manx. Everybody is able to speak English fluently. Dialects differ a bit from each other depending on the geographical area of the island (Stenning 1950: 372).

The situation of Manx language has been difficult since the second half of the nineteenth century, partly due to the strong presence of English in daily life. The fear that their language may be forgotten and no longer used increased the awareness of the Manx society and led to the creation of *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, known as The Manx Language Society, in 1899, the aim of which was to promote Manx, trying to revive it and preserve it as the national language. Another institution that we must mention which worked for the promotion of Manx and which supported the Manx Language Society was the Manx Heritage Foundation (Belchem, 2000: 312-314). *Tynwald* supported the creation of the latest edition of the English-Manx dictionary (1979).

It was in the 1970s when the last native speaker of Manx passed away. Recently, efforts to promote and keep Manx language alive continue to be made. As a matter of fact, it is possible to read a weekly language-teaching article in a local newspaper as well as listening to a programme on Manx radio. Urban areas are more interested in the language than rural ones and in 1991 a study asserted that only 643 people were able to speak Manx (Belchem, 2000: 314-316).

### **3. Manx legendary and mythical frame**

#### **3.1. Belief in Fairies**

Manx society has always been very superstitious and the belief in fairies used to be very common. First, we must specify that the Manx name for fairies is *sleih beggey* or *ferryshin*, the latter deriving from the English word *fairy* (Rhys, 1901: 289). It is also possible to refer to them as *Mooijer-Veggey*, as Moore (1891: 34) reflects in his work.

Fairies have always played a prominent role in the folklore of many societies and the belief in these mythical creatures has always been present in the Isle of Man as well as in the rest of the British Isles. Over the course of centuries, fairies have often been depicted as mythical creatures possessing human features, being much smaller and fragile and dressing in different shades of green or blue (Moore, 1891: 33).

They are said to live in nature spots such as hills or woods, where they are heard playing beautiful melodies. Their musical skills are great and the legend says that listening to them while playing melodies is considered quite hazardous, above all, if you

stop to listen carefully. The beauty of their performances is dangerous inasmuch as it is possible to get caught by it and unable to escape. Actually, according to tradition, there was a man, who did not believe in fairies and laughed at the Manx people who did so, who found himself crossing a river with his horse when he listened to the harmonious tune of the fairies and remained still for more than three quarters of an hour (Moore, 1891: 40).

Although their physical aspect looks handsome at a distance, “on closer inspection, they are often found to be decrepit and withered” (Moore, 1891: 33). Therefore, and following this assertion, the common idea of a fairy being very pretty must be rejected. It is up to them to decide if they want to be visible to human beings or to go unnoticed and sometimes they can be seen riding horses (Moore, 1891: 33).

A difference must be made between those fairies having good intentions and those who are malevolent and bring misfortunes to humans. It is believed that bad behaviour towards them is punished by the fairy by throwing an arrow at the human who has annoyed them, although the mark of its impact is not detected on the skin. Only after death, a blue mark appears on the body. It can be inferred from their actions that these spirits adopt a vengeful personality if someone dares to interfere with them (Moore, 1891: 33).

Fortunately, the role of the benevolent fairies is more important and powerful and sometimes they may, in some way, compensate for the misfortunes brought about by the malicious ones. Hence, it is strongly recommended to maintain a good relationship with them. One of the first measures that must be adopted is to avoid calling them fairies. They prefer to be known as “little people” or “good people” (Moore, 1891: 33). There are some other aspects that satisfy the fairies and which are described by Moore as follows (1891: 34):

It was an old custom to keep a fire burning during the night, so that the fairies might come and enjoy it. If anyone was rash enough not to do this, or to abuse them in any way, he would be sure to suffer from it. It was also customary to leave some bread out for the Fairies, and to fill the water crocks with clean water for them before going to bed. (...) The Manx women, formerly, would not spin on Saturday evenings, as this was deemed displeasing to the *Mooinjer-Veggey*, and at every baking and churning a small bit of dough and butter was stuck on the wall for their consumption.

One of the methods of stopping the retaliations of the fairies or *Mooinjer-Veggey* was to attend a Fairy Doctor or a Charmer, who provided the patient with herbs which were supposed to palliate the negative effects caused by their vengeance (Moore, 1891: 34).

In Manx folklore, salt and iron are considered essential elements which serve as a protection against the machinations of the fairies. People had to be extremely cautious with children, especially if the baby was beautiful: a piece of iron should be placed in their cradle. It is also advisable to tie “a red thread round the child’s neck”, for they could be kidnapped by the fairies if they are left alone or unprotected (Moore, 1891: 35). Moore (1891: 35) adds another measure which must be taken both by human beings and animals: “to have a *cuirn*, or mountain ash, in the front of a cross, made without a knife, put over the threshold of their dwellings”.

We must highlight the superstition which implies that on Midsummer’s Eve the power of fairies reaches its highest point and in order to prevent them from entering the houses, yellow flowers and other herbs, such as primroses or gorse, are put on the door of the house (Herbert, 1909: 176).

Fairies are considered by Manx society the first creatures which inhabited the Isle of Man. To avoid being discovered, legend says that they intentionally provoke a constant thick fog which surrounded the island, making it invisible to people aboard the ships. In this way, they seize control of the island by preventing others from being aware of its existence. There are several stories, according to tradition, which explain the discovery of the island by sailors who, after taking notice of it and spreading the news, made other people come to the island to make a further investigation. Little by little fairies were defeated, losing their control over the island (Moore, 1891: 36-37).

There is another similar and interesting story related to this mystical fairy fog which we must mention, which serves as an explanation of the origin of a Manx national symbol, the Three Legs of Man, also known as the Triskelion, present in the coat of arms of the island. It is believed that a group of sailors accidentally came to the island and started to prepare a fire on the shore. It was then when something bizarre happened in the sky. Moore (1891: 37) explains this event as follows:

As they were preparing to kindle a fire on the beach, they were astounded by a fearful noise issuing from the dark cloud which concealed the island from their view. When the first spark of the fire fell into their tinder box, the fog began to move up the side the mountain, closely followed by a revolving object, closely resembling three legs of men joined together at the upper part of the thighs, and spread out so as to resemble the spokes of a wheel. Hence the Arms of the Island.

As mentioned before, Manx fairies loved riding horses around the island, and it is possible to come across many stories about people who have seen them doing so. To give a local example, a sailor who landed on the island was walking to his sister’s house

in Kirk<sup>6</sup> Malew to spend the night there, when he heard the sound of a group of riders galloping towards him. He saw they were thirteen, all of them dressed in green clothes, although what startled him the most, was that it was too late at night for riding horses. When he told his sister, this was her answer: “For those you saw were fairies; and ‘tis well they did not take you away with them” (Moore, 1891: 38).

A different story tells us about a deal between the owner of a horse and a little man who wanted to buy the animal. This little man made him just one offer which was not rejected by the seller, who readily accepted the price. But as soon as the little man mounted the horse, both he and the horse “sunk into the earth immediately” (Moore, 1891: 39).

According to Manx folklore, many horses were stolen by the fairies at night and ridden for hours. When they returned them to the stables, the poor horses were exhausted and usually found sweating by their owners. In the Isle of Man there is a road called “The Saddle Road” which owes its name to one of these stories about fairies riding horses. Legend says that an old Vicar of Braddan often found his horse sweating in the mornings “as if he had been furiously ridden many miles”, until one morning he saw a little man dressed in green and “carrying a riding whip in his hand” (Moore, 1891: 38-39). This is the explanation of the origin of its name:

On this little individual turning round, he saw the Vicar standing by the gate, on which he immediately vanished, and the saddle, which had placed at the side of the fence was turned into stone in the shape of a saddle. It has remained there ever since, and so the road which passes this point is called “The Saddle Road” to this day. It is almost needless to state that the old Vicar’s horse was never molested again.

Many men claimed to have been taken away from their homes by fairies. This belief is reflected in several Manx tales, among which one is especially highlighted and still recalled in our time, that of The Fairy Cup of Kirk Malew. It narrates the story of a man who was once delighted by the music played by the fairies and taken to a sort of room where other little people were gathered. Some of those who were present there were familiar to him. When he was invited to drink something, one of these familiar faces approached him and advised him not to drink anything, arguing the following: “for if you do, you will be as I am, and return no more to your family”. The advice made him cunningly throw away the drink contained in the cup and, just after that, everybody disappeared, and he found himself at home with the cup. According to tradition, today we can find that same cup in Kirk Malew, because on the following day of the man's

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<sup>6</sup> *Kirk* is a Scottish term for church (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/kirk>. Last accessed 5.7.2019).

encounter with the fairies, he explained everything had happened to the minister of the parish, who decided to devote the cup to the service of the *kirk* (Moore, 1891: 41-42).

Rhys (1901: 290-291) includes another story in which a man was kidnapped by the fairies and held as a prisoner for more than four years. After being freed, he was not able to explain where he had been or how he had returned to his home but, apparently, he could see his family and observe every detail of their daily life since the very first moment he was taken away. Needless to say, this story impressed his family, who listened attentively while he told them everything they had done during his absence (Rhys, 1901: 290-291).

Undoubtedly, in comparison with men, children are more likely to be kidnapped by fairies. In Manx and, in general in British folklore, when a child is taken by the fairies, he is replaced by another child. The fairy baby is known as a changeling and tends to be an unhealthy or deformed baby. Care must be taken by the families, especially those with children who are not baptised and, as Moore (1891: 34) remarks, “the prettier the child, the greater the risk of it”. Several testimonies are recorded showing the suffering of mothers who experienced these changelings.

Here is a description offered by Moore (1891: 43) about a child that the fairies left as a changeling:

Nothing under heaven could have a more beautiful face; but, though between five and six years old, and seemingly healthy, he was so far from being able to walk, or stand, that he could not so much as move any one joint - his limbs were vastly long for his age, but smaller than infant's of six months; his complexion was perfectly delicate, and he had the finest hair in the world; he never spoke or cried, eat scarce anything, and very seldom seen to smile, but if anyone called him a 'Fairy Elf' he would frown and fix his eyes so earnestly on those who said it, as if he would look them through (...). The neighbours, out of curiosity, have often looked down at the window to see how he behaved when alone, which, whenever they did, they were sure to find him laughing, and in the utmost delight. This made them judge that he was not without company more pleasing to him than any mortals could be, and what made this conjecture seem the more reasonable was that if he were left ever so dirty, the woman, at her return, saw him with a clean face, his hair combed with the utmost exactness and nicety.

Fortunately, in other occasions the family realises that the baby is a changeling and prevents the child from being kidnapped. For instance, there is a story about a family who suddenly leaves the house because of a cry of fire, although nothing happens in reality, and everybody returns home. When they were arriving at the entry of the house, they saw the baby, who was only four days old, placed on the threshold. The only explanation they could find was that the new-born had been taken by the fairies. The next year, the same mother had a new baby and something similar happened. Once more, the 'little people' had failed to take the infant with them. Nevertheless, in a third

attempt, the family was not so lucky and “the mother, who was broad awake, saw his child lifted out of the bed and carried out of the chamber, though she could not see any person touch it” and, after a while, they all realised that a changeling had taken place, since what they found was “a poor, lean, withered, deformed creature” (Moore, 1891: 43-45).

There is another story which describes the superstitious measure of leaving a pair of open scissors next to a baby to protect him from the fairies. While reaping, the child was left under a tree with a pair of open scissors that, unluckily, must have slipped off and left the baby unprotected. The fairies made the most of the opportunity and took the child with them, although the mother reacted in time and saved her baby (Moore, 1891: 45).

Rhys (1901: 192) asserts that Manx fairies “had also dogs, just as the Welsh ones had” and he recalls a story about a man who was once pursued by ‘fairy dogs’ when he was returning home and how he got rid of them:

A fisherman, taking a fresh fish home, was pursued by a pack of fairy dogs, so that it was only with great trouble he reached his own door. Then he picked up a stone and threw it at the dogs, which at once disappeared; but he did not escape, as he was shot by the fairies, and so hurt that they lay ill for full six months from that day. He would have been left alone by the fairies, I was told, if he had only taken care to put a pinch of salt in the fish’s mouth before setting out, for the Manx fairies cannot stand salt or baptism”.

Before describing other mythical creatures proper to the folklore of the Isle of Man, we cannot fail to mention a superstition that still forms part of the Manx folklore, that of the Legend of the Fairy Bridge. The Fairy Bridge (see illustration 4 in the appendix) is a bridge situated in the southeast of the island, to be precise, on the A5 between Douglas, the capital city, and Castletown (see map in the appendix). According to tradition, it is obligatory to greet the little people or the *Mooinjer Veggey* when somebody crosses the river. Bad luck may accompany those who dare not say *Laa mie* (Good day) to them (<https://www.transceltic.com/isle-of-man/fairy-bridge>. Last accessed 5.5.2019). Many Manx people still respect this tradition and, despite not being superstitious or believing in these creatures, many drivers greet them just in case, considering it a magical and a unique tradition.

### **3.2. The *Phynnodderee***

As a native mythical creature of the Isle of Man, it is usual to come across the name *Phynnodderee* (see illustration 8 in the appendix) spelt in many different ways. These include *fenodyree* or *fenoderee*, *fynoderee*, *phynnodderee* or even *yn foldyr gastey*,

meaning 'the nimble mower' (<https://www.isleofman.com/welcome/history/mythology-and-folklore/the-phynnodderree/>. Last accessed 6.5.2019). With regard to the physical features of this curious inhabitant of the Isle of Man, the general depiction which has been traditionally given was that he has black shaggy hair which covers his face, sharing both human and animal traits, possessing a great strength and capable of moving rocks and heavy materials. The *Phynnodderree* may be compared with the *Glashtyn*, another mythological creature which can be classified, as well as the *Phynnodderree*, under the category of 'Hobgoblins'<sup>7</sup>, which are also present in Manx folklore (Moore, 1891: 52-54). Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish them and can be easily confused.

According to Rhys (1901: 287), it is very probable that there was only one *Phynnodderree* inhabiting the Isle of Man, since he only heard talking about it in singular, never in plural. The creature was said to live in solitary spots. There were, at least, two places, as Rhys asserts, "assigned to him, namely, a farm called *Ballachrink*, in Colby, in the south, and a farm called *Lanjaghan*, in the parish of *Conchan*, near Douglas" (Rhys, 1901: 287). Keightley (1878: 402-403) explains the origin of the *Phynnodderree* in the following way:

He is said to have been a fairy who was expelled from the fairy society, The cause was, he courted a pretty Manks maid who lived in a bower beneath 'the blue tree of Glen Aldyn', and therefore was absent from the fairy court during the 'Re-hollys vooar yn our', or harvest moon, being engaged dancing in the merry glen of Rushen. He is condemned to remain in the Isle of Man till doomsday, in a wild form, covered with long shaggy hair, whence his name.

There is a story preserved in the folklore of the Isle of Man which reflects the sympathy and the good intentions of the *Phynnodderree*. It tells us about a man who was going to build a house "a little above the base of Snafield mountain". Several men had to help him carry big stones from the beach to the place where he intended to build his new dwelling. As an act of kindness, in just one night, the *Phynnodderree* himself took all the stones, "consisting of more than a hundred cart-loads" (Moore, 1891: 55). After beholding the great deal of work carried out, the man decided to offer the creature some pieces of cloth as a reward. Unfortunately, the *Phynnodderree* found the gift harmful for him and became so displeased that he is believed to have left the island after that. This

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<sup>7</sup> A hobgoblin is a type of goblin, a spirit present in the folklore of many societies, possessing an ugly aspect, described as being heavy, plodding and stupid and usually committing mischievous actions towards humans (Moore, 1891: 52).

reminds us of another figure of the British folklore, the brownie<sup>8</sup>, which also disappears once he is given clothes as payment. Moore (1891: 56) shows how the *Phynnodderee* expressed his feelings when he saw the pieces of cloth:

Cap for the head, alas! poor head,  
Coat for the back, alas! poor back,  
Breeches for the breech, alas! poor beech,  
If these be all thine, thine cannot be the merry Glen of Rushen

Rhys (1901: 287) records this last sentence pronounced by the *Phynnodderee* in a different and clearer way: “though this place is thine, the great glen of Rushen is not”. Rhys visited that same valley in 1890 to conduct an investigation on the whereabouts of the *Phynnodderee*. However, no one was able to tell him where he was (Rhys, 1901: 287). It seems that the Manx people were fond of the *Phynnodderee*, for when he left the island and disappeared forever, a general feeling of sadness arose in many of their hearts, as can be reflected in some words told by the old folk of the island to Moore: “There has not been a merry world since he lost his ground” (Moore, 1890: 56).

Another occupation in which the *Phynnodderee* used to be engaged, and that allows us to reaffirm his goodness, was to prevent the meadow grass from being affected by storms and heavy rains. In order to protect it, he cut and gathered it. One story narrates how a man became displeased with the creature “for not having cut his grass close enough to the ground” and the consequent fury of the spirit. It is thought that the following year the *Phynnodderee* allowed the man to cut it himself “but went after him stubbing up the roots so fast that it was with difficulty the farmer escaped having his legs cut off by the angry sprite” (Moore, 1891: 56). Needless to say that nobody dared to cut the meadow again until “one soldier from one of the garrisons undertook the task” (Moore, 1891: 56). Therefore, here it is possible to compare the *Phynnodderee* to the fairies in the sense that both can be malevolent if they are molested or annoyed. Herbert (1909: 177) explains the following about their strong character: “they are sympathetically inclined to man on occasion, and equally vengeful if the whim seizes them”.

It is necessary to point out again the fact that the *Phynnodderee* and the *Glashtyn*, also called *Glashan*, are usually difficult to distinguish, due to their similar

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<sup>8</sup> Physically similar to hobgoblins, in British folklore brownies are believed to inhabit houses and help in the tasks, but they avoid being seen by humans, only working at nights. It is also believed, as well as the Manx *Phynnodderee*, that they disappear when a human gives them a piece of cloth as a payment ([www.mythicalcreaturesguide.com/m/page/Brownie](http://www.mythicalcreaturesguide.com/m/page/Brownie). Last accessed 5.12.2019). Moore (1891: 52) states that the “Brownies are sturdy fairies who, if well fed and kindly treated, will do a great deal of work”.

physical characteristics. The figure of the *Glashtyn*, whose task is to put the sheep in the fold, also unique to the Manx folklore, is described as a mythical creature, possessing similar features to those of the *Phynnoderee*. An old man once went to gather all the sheep when he realised that they were already folded and that “a year-old lamb, *oasth*, was playing the mischief with them and that was the *Glashan*” (Moore, 1891: 58-59).

### **3.3. *Bugganes* and the *Taroo-Ushtey***

Possessing an ugly aspect and having malicious intentions, *Bugganes* are believed to inhabit the old ruins or remote spots in Manx woods, far away from humans. As the *Phynnoderee*, they have black shaggy hair which covers their face and an ogre-like aspect. They cannot cross water or be on hallowed ground and they are required by fairies to punish people who had committed any bad action towards them (<https://www.isleofman.com/welcome/history/mythology-and-folklore/bugganes/>. Last accessed 5. 6. 2019).

According to Moore (1891: 60-61) and Herbert (1909: 183), *Bugganes* were evil creatures in nature, almost like fiends, for their malice was frequently experienced by Manx people. Undoubtedly, the most famous story about *Bugganes* is that of the *Buggane* of St. Trinian’s Church (see in the appendix), situated halfway between Peel and Douglas. According to the legend, the roof of this little church was never finished because of the mischief of a *Buggane* who tossed the roof of the building just for amusement. After doing that, it is said that the *Buggane* celebrated it with “a loud fiendish laugh of satisfaction” (Moore, 1891: 69). A brave tailor, called Timothy, was the only person who dared to face the *Buggane* in one of the several attempts to finish the construction of the roof of the church. Knowing that it was a very risky action, he started to work on a pair of breeches just under the roof, and shortly after, the shaggy *Buganne* appeared. Moore (1891: 60-61) offers us the conversation between the tailor and the *Buggane* and what happened next:

“Do you see my great head, large eyes and long teeth?” “*Hee! Hee!*” that is, “Yes! Yes!” replied the tailor, at the same stitching with all his might, and without raising his eyes from his work. The *Buggane*, still rising slowly out of the ground, cried in a more angry voice than before, “Do you see my great body, large hands and long nails?” “*Hee! Hee!*” rejoined Tim, as before, but continuing to pull out with all his strength. The *Buggane* having now risen wholly from the ground, inquired in a terrified voice, “Do you see my great limbs, large feet, and long...?” but ere he could utter the last word, the taylor put the finishing stitch into the breeches, and jumped out of the church, just as the roof fell in with a crash.

As might be expected, as soon as the roof had fallen, the *Buggane* started to laugh in the most terrifying way and began to chase the tailor who had to run so as to get rid of him. As the tailor had entered in consecrated land, the *Buggane* “lifted its great head from its body, and with great force pitched it to the feet of the tailor, where it exploded like a bomb shell” (Moore, 1891: 61). Today, we can still visit the church, confirming the fact that it has never been finished.

Among the Manx people the figure of the *Taroo-Ushtey* resembles that of a water bull. To be more precise, it has amphibious skills that allow him to be able to swim and being in contact with water. This bizarre creature was usually seen in a field with more cattle. One of the most famous stories which narrates the myth of the *Taroo Ushtey* is told by a man who suspected its presence among his cows. He and some other men tried to kill the animal, running after him for a long time, until the *Taroo Ushtey* reached a river. The legend says that after the creature escaped, the men could still see it diving down into the river, “though every now and then he would show his head above the water, as if to mock their skill” (Moore, 1891: 59).

### **3.4. Mermaids**

Turning to another mythical sea creature, as in many other cultures, the figure of the mermaid plays a prominent role in traditional Manx folklore. It is well known that a mermaid is a creature who lives in the sea and that the upper part of its body is that of a human, the rest resembling a fish tail. Something which perhaps tends to be less clear is that they do not have only a female gender, but also a male one. Many of the stories concerning mermaids which are recorded in the Isle of Man date back to the times of the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell, a period when not too many ships visited the island. This condition made the spot especially attractive for mermaids, who searched for calm waters. Manx people affirmed that “in moonlight nights, they have been seen to sit, combing their heads and playing with each other” (Waldron, 1744: 106). It was possible to see them but not to interact with them, for they generally escaped from humans, avoiding their encounters (Waldron, 1744: 106).

Waldron (1744: 106-108) records how a female mermaid was captured by some curious Manx people, and describes her in this way:

On opening the net and examining their captive, by the largeness of her breasts and the beauty of her complexion, it was found to be a female. Nothing could be more lovely, more exactly formed in all parts above the waist, resembling a complete young woman, but below that all fish with fins and a huge spreading tail. She was carried to a house, and used very tenderly, nothing but liberty being denied.

According to the story, by observing in detail the captured mermaid, the people realised she did not eat or drink and, despite having heard many mermaids talking to each other, the mermaid kept quiet and did not utter a word for the time she was there. As they got increasingly aware of the fact that if they kept the creature there for more days, she would probably die, they decided to let her go. It is stated that after being freed, the mermaid returned to the sea, where many other mermaids were waiting and asked her how the humans were like, to which she answered the following: “Nothing very wonderful, but they are so very ignorant as to throw away the water they have boiled the eggs in” (Waldron, 1744: 106-108).

There is another story about a mermaid who fell in love with a young Manx man who used to take his sheep to the coast. Considering that they were not seen talking to humans, it seems that, in this case, the power of love made an exception. This is how the mermaid behaved towards him (Moore, 1891: 68):

She would frequently sit down by him, bring him pieces of coral, fine pearls, and what were yet greater curiosities, and of infinitely more value, had they fallen into the hands of a person who knew their worth, shells of various forms and figures, and so glorious in their colours and shine, that they even dazzled the eye that looked upon them. Her presents were accompanied with smiles, patings of the cheek, and all the marks of a most sincere and tender passion.

Unfortunately, in one occasion, when the mermaid tried to hug him, he ran from her, thinking she was going to take him with her into the sea. Needless to say, the mermaid did not like this response and became vengeful after it: “she took up a stone, and after throwing it at him, glided into her more proper element, and was never seen on land again” (Moore, 1891: 68). Despite the stone being little and that, apparently, the mermaid had not caused him any serious injury, the poor boy died just seven days later, having suffered from pains: “the cry was never out of his mouth for seven days, at the end of which he died” (Moore, 1891: 68).

### **3.5. Giants**

Concerning giants or *foawr*<sup>9</sup>, whose several legends have been passed down from generation to generation, it is crucial to point out that, according to tradition, they were, for a long period of time, the owners of the Isle of Man. As we have seen before, fairies were believed to be the first inhabitants of the island, surrounding it with a thick mist to prevent any kind of incursion until several sailors penetrated it and discovered the

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<sup>9</sup> Rhys (1901: 286-287) records this Manx word in his work, which he heard so as to refer to giants.

territory. This brought about more people coming to the island and fairies progressively lost their control over it. Nevertheless, over the years, the new inhabitants, at the same time, “were at length beaten out by a race of giants.” (Moore, 1891: 37-38). According to Manx folklore, these giants took over men’s possessions, for instance, Castle Rushen (see illustration 3 in the appendix). Along with Peel’s castle, Castle Rushen is the other famous fortress of the Isle of Man, and as Peel’s, it has always been a place of superstitions, legends and apparitions. Today, Castle Rushen is a tourist attraction situated in the city of Castletown, which was the ancient capital of the Isle of Man, in the south-eastern part of the island (see map in the appendix). According to Moore (1891: 37-38), the giants were finally expelled from the Isle of Man during “the reign of prince Arthur, by Merlin the famous British enchanter”, although, according to tradition and the legends preserved by the most superstitious Manx people, they are said to still inhabit the underground of the fortress of Castle Rushen. It is believed that, among the many expeditions that have been undertaken there, only one man was able to return from the underground of the castle and to tell what he had experienced. Apparently, the underground of the fortress contains apartments which form a kind of parallel world. Entry was prohibited and all the passages that connected to the galleries closed. Still, there was a brave man, who after being given permission, dared to go on an expedition on his own account. So as not to get lost and be able to return, he used “a clue of packthread” (Moore, 1891: 63-64). After descending and passing through dark galleries and narrow corridors, he saw a light coming from “a very large and magnificent house, illuminated with a great many candles”. A servant opened the door of that house who, after being asked by the brave man how to follow his way until the end, he told him he had to cross the house and reach the rear door. Not long after leaving that house, he saw another one, bigger “and more magnificent than the first” (Moore, 1891: 63-64). The following quote details the encounter that took place between the man and a giant at this point in the narration recorded by Moore (1891: 63-64):

Here he designed also to knock, but had the curiosity to step on a little bank which commanded a low parlour; on looking in, beheld a vast table in the middle of the room of black marble, and on it, extended in full length, a man, or rather, monster; for, by his account, he could not be less than fourteen feet long, and ten or eleven round the body. This prodigious fabrick lay as if sleeping, with his head on a book, and a sword by him, of a size answerable to the hand which it is supposed made use of it. This sight was more terrifying to the traveller than all the dark and dreary mansions he had passed through in his arrival to it. He resolved, therefore, not to attempt entrance into a place inhabited by persons of that unequal stature and made the best of his way back to the other house, where the same servant re-conduct him, and informed him that if he had knocked at the second door, he would have seen company enough, but never could have returned, on

which he desired to know what place it was, and by whom possessed; but the other replied that these things were not to be revealed.

Rhys (1901: 286-287) confesses that he did not make “careful inquiry into what is related about the giants” in the Isle of Man but offers us the following remark:

I do not recollect hearing of more than one giant, but that was a giant: I have seen the marks of his huge hands impressed on the top of two massive monoliths. They stand in a field at *Balla Keeill Pherick*, on the way down from the *Sloc* to Colby. I was told there were originally five of these stones standing in a circle, all of them marked in the same way by the same giant as he hurled them down there from he stood, miles away on the top of the mountain called *Cronk yn Irree Laa*.

### **3.6. The *Moddey Doo***

Peel Castle (see illustration 2 in the appendix), one of the most visited attractions of the Isle of Man, is a spot where legends and myths have been collected and are still told and remembered. We must explain first that Peel Castle has the same name as the city where it is situated. Peel is located on the west coast of the island, twelve miles from the capital city, Douglas (see map in the appendix). As many population centres, Peel grew and developed around the castle, built in a little peninsula, being the original point of the city. The fortress, having belonged to different lords over the centuries, is also said to have been inhabited by fairies and giants. Needless to say, it has suffered changes and its original structure is not completely preserved. Actually, there were two churches inside the castle, the ruins of which can still be visited. We are referring to one of the churches dedicated to St. Patrick that were built in the island. We must not forget to say that this was the first spot, according to tradition, St. Patrick reached when he and other monks intended to Christianise the island. The other church was that of St. German, built around 1245 (Bullock, 1816: 225-228).

The story which concerns us now, known as the ‘The Legend of the *Moddey Doo*’ or ‘The Black Dog’, and dated in 1666, occurred between the walls of this fortification. In Manx folklore, it is believed that the apparition of this dog became so familiar to the soldiers who guarded the fortress that they ended up losing the initial dread and terror which took possession of them when they realised its presence. However, a certain distance and respectful manners were kept so as not to get into trouble. One night, one of the soldiers, having drunk too much, dared to follow the animal when it left the chamber, criticizing the cowardice of his mates. It is said that the other guards heard a loud noise after he left the room and no one had the courage to discover what had happened to him (Moore, 1891: 62). When he returned, quoting from Moore (1891: 62) “they demanded the knowledge of him; but as loud and noisy as he

had been at leaving them, he was now become sober and silent enough, for he was never heard to speak more". The legend says that the poor man never said a word and only survived three days after his daring action. The passage where the dog was said to have appeared when the sunset was close was never reopened after that (Moore, 1891: 62).

There is one hound typical of the English folklore which could be compared to the Manx *Moddey Doo*. It is traditionally known as the Church Grim and it is described as a large black dog which acts as guardian spirit in the churchyards at night. It is believed it plays the role of protector against any kind of attack or profane action to the church. Possessing similar characteristic to the Manx *Moddey Doo*, this dog is only seen in churchyards and not in castles (Bane, 2016: 66).

### **3.7. The Apparition of Castle Rushen**

It is interesting to notice that there is a great number of stories belonging to Manx folklore which have a castle as their location. The next ghost story leads us again to Castle Rushen which is also haunted by giants. It would be unfair to leave this spot without covering one famous apparition, that of the spirit of a woman who is said to wander around the castle and through its rooms. It is believed that she was executed in that same place for having killed her own child. Among all the testimonies which have been recorded about her, there is one that is especially notable, that of an old man who saw her one night. Apparently, the spectre of the woman was just in front of the gates of the castle when the man noticed her presence. What drew his attention most was the fact that the woman was alone in a rainy night, looking quite bizarre: "it something surprised him, that anybody, much less of that sex, should not rather run to some little porch, or shed, of which there are several in Castletown, than choose to stand still exposed and alone, in such a dreadful company" (Moore, 1891: 71).

In an attempt to approach the woman, the man saw the woman entering the castle despite the gates being closed. It was not the first time that the spirit had been seen in Castletown because while the man described how the woman looked like, some people confirmed that it was not his invention. She was also witnessed by the guards of the fortress. It is a must to point out that "though so familiar to the eye, no person has yet, however had the courage to speak to it, and as they say, a spirit has no power to reveal its mind without being conjured to do so in a proper manner, the reason of its being permitted to wander in unknown" (Moore, 1891: 71).

### 3.8. The Sound

The Sound is found in the south-western part of the Isle of Man, near *Cregneash* and also very close to the Calf of Man<sup>10</sup> (see map and illustration 7 in the appendix). Today, there is a famous cafe named ‘The Cafe at the Sound’, a leisure area which offers a nice view of the landscape of that part of the island, as well as the Calf of Man. The wildlife there is varied and it is a paradise for those who are interested in nature and sea animals (<https://www.visitisleofman.com/things-to-do/the-sound-p1292101>. Last accessed 5.7.2019).

Like many of the other areas of the isle, The Sound has its own legend. To be more precise, we need to descend to a sea cave, which is possible to reach by boat and then go deeper in it. According to tradition, the place was used by pirates who gathered their belongings and hide their treasure there. Once, one of the members of the crew remained in the cave when the others set out for a new expedition. It is said that they never returned to the cave and that the guardian, who was never seen again, must have died while waiting for them for many years. A man who was familiar with the story narrated the following about what he was told by an acquaintance (Moore, 1891:74):

“An old fisherman told me”, said he, “that once while he was engaged in ‘laying a bolk’, close to the cave, he was surprised to see a boat, manned by six sailors in red caps, come towards land, and rowing to the mouth of the cave disappear therein. Curious to know who they were and from whence they came, he followed them into the cave, which has only one entrance, but found it quite empty”.

Despite being this a peculiar story of the Isle of Man, we cannot forget that the tradition of ghost ships also exists in other parts of Great Britain. Hebert (1909: 123), who also includes this legend in his work, invites those superstitious people to be at that place “at the right moment, just the right day,” so as to witness “the spectre of a boat rowed by a spectre crew”. He adds (1909: 123) that “into the black mouth of the cavern the apparition disappears, and darkness envelops it”.

### 3.9. The Chasms

Not far away from The Sound, also close to *Cregneash*, there is a beautiful spot called The Chasms (see illustration 8 in the appendix) which is one of the most visited attractions of the Isle of Man. Here the landscape is characterised by having impressive cliffs which have gone through different processes of erosion over the years and have

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<sup>10</sup> The Calf of Man is a little island facing the southern coast of the Isle of Man. (<https://www.visitisleofman.com/things-to-do/the-sound-p1292101>. Last accessed 5.7.2019) (see map in the appendix).

adopted the form of deep fissures and cracks that made this area look wonderful. It can be a dangerous place if precautions are not taken, since it is quite easy to fall off the cliffs and through the fissures (<https://manxgeology.com/chasms/>. Last accessed 5.7.2019).

According to the legend, there was one sheep that fell into one of the fissures of The Chasms when it was escaping from a dog. Despite having heard many stories about strange and inexplicable events which had taken place there before, the owner decided to come to the rescue of his sheep, ignoring the dangers of the situation and the previous warnings of his father. He therefore descended the pit helped by ropes and when he reached the bottom, declared the following: “I was mortified to hear the last bleat of my sheep, evidently struggling under the knife of the butcher” (Moore, 1891: 74). Trying to discover where the sounds came from, he could hear, according to his narration, “human voices in quick conversation, which, with the rattling of knives and forks, the drawing of corks, the decanting of liquor, and the uproarious noise which followed, tended to convince me that I was proceeding towards a company of bacchanalians” (Moore, 1891: 74). Fortunately, he could get out of that place by running very fast, since several dogs started to chase after him (Moore, 1891: 74).

### **3.10. The *Gef* or *Dalby Spook***

Also known as the story of ‘*Gef*, the talking Mongoose’, the *Dalby Spook* has recently become part of the history of the folklore of the Isle of Man. To be more precise, the legend of the *Dalby Spook* took place in the 1930s in Cashen’s Gap, near the village of Dalby. There lived a humble family, the Irvings, whose life changed radically when they were visited by an animal which looked like a mongoose. Apparently, the creature didn’t let the family sleep well at nights, since it made too much noise. After spending several days in the house, Jim, who was the father of the family, tried to communicate with the mongoose, whom he named ‘Jack’. He realised that the animal could not only perform other animals’ sounds, but also perfectly reproduce human language, something that amazed the family. This is what is recorded about the man’s perceptions of the animal and its process of learning (Stollznow 2014: 16):

Its first sounds were those of an animal nature, and it used to keep us awake at night for a long time as sleep was not possible. It occurred to me that if it could make these weird noises, why not others, and I proceeded to give imitations of the various calls, domestic and other creatures make in the country, and I named these creatures after every individual call. In a few days’ time, one had only to name the particular animal or bird, and instantly, always without error, it gave the correct call. My daughter then tried it

with nursery rhymes, and no trouble was experienced in having them repeated. The voice is quite two octaves above any human voice, clear and distinct, but lately it can and does come down to the range of the human voice.

It was the daughter of the family, Voirrey, who began to teach the animal some English words and full sentences, which it successfully uttered. They affirmed that the mongoose soon became a fluent English speaker. Having been taught how to communicate, the mongoose presented itself as 'G-E-F', providing the family with more information about its background. The creature affirmed that "he was an extra, extra clever mongoose, born in New Delhi, India, in June 1852" and claimed that "a mongoose can speak if he's taught" (Stollznow 2014: 17). These are the words the animal uttered to show its intelligence to the Irvings: "if you knew what I know, you would know a hell of a lot" (Stollznow 2014: 17).

There was no doubt in their assertions that, the Gef, apart from becoming almost a native English speaker overnight, it also learnt other skills, such as singing. This is what Jim said about the animal's musical skills (Stollznow 2014: 17):

In succession, Gef sang three verses of the *Ellan Vannin*, the Manx National Anthem, 'in a clear and high-pitched voice'; then two verses in Spanish, followed by one verse in Welsh, then a prayer in pure Hebrew (not Yiddish), finishing up with a long peroration in Flemish.

After a while, the strange mongoose became a new member of the family, whom they got used to living with. However, things started to get considerably worse as the mongoose began to behave in a bad manner, being often rude and mischievous towards the Irvings. As a result, Jim became a bit afraid of the animal and even threatened to kill it several times. The mongoose begged him not to do it and he eventually decided to forgive it (Stollznow 2014: 17).

Appearing in local papers, the news of the peculiar mongoose spread around the Isle of Man and soon attracted many people's attention. At the beginning, despite the intention of the Irvings of carrying out an investigation of the animal, no reporters were interested in it. Harry Price, a ghost hunter, was invited to meet the mongoose, but unfortunately, it was not seen that day in the house, the animal having probably escaped to avoid analysis (<https://www.isleofman.com/welcome/history/mythology-and-folklore/the-dalby-spook/>. Last accessed 5.7.2019).

After other attempts to see the mongoose and although the mystery has never been solved, it has been suggested that the story was invented by the family. In spite of the speculation of the fact that the mongoose may be just a figment of the Irvings' imagination, the fabulous bird is remembered as one of the Manx mysteries of the 20th

century (<https://www.isleofman.com/welcome/history/mythology-and-folklore/the-dalby-spook/>. Last accessed 7.5.2019).

One possible explanation was given at that time: a neighbour of the Irvings had introduced some mongooses in his fields to get rid of the rodents that marred the land. Another suspicion was the appearance, a few years later, of “an unusual animal which was neither stoat, weasel or ferret”, which could have been a mongoose, in the same house where the Irvings had lived and later rented by another person who found it (<https://www.isleofman.com/welcome/history/mythology-and-folklore/the-dalby-spook/>. Last accessed 7.5.2019).

More recently, in a TV program in the 1970s, the daughter of the Irvings was asked about this case but she did not want to answer the questions, insisting on the fact that the Gef was not an invention and that it had existed (<https://www.isleofman.com/welcome/history/mythology-and-folklore/the-dalby-spook/>. Last accessed 7.5.2019).

### **3.11. Witchcraft in the Isle of Man**

According to Rhys (1901: 294), there is a specific way of referring to witches in Manx. He asserts that in Surby, in the south of the island he was told stories about witches referred to as *butches*, and he offers a possible explanation for the use of this word:

That term I take to be a variant of the English word ‘witch’, produced under the influence of the verb ‘bewitch’, which was reduced in Manx English to a form *butch*, especially if one bear in mind the Cumbrian and Scottish pronunciation of these words, as *wutch* and *bewutch*.

Everybody knows that the practice of witchcraft has always been present in many different cultures in the world. The Manx have preserved their belief in witches and magic until recently. The presence of witches and their role in society was very important until the seventeenth century in Europe and by the time Moore (1891: 76-85) wrote about them, witchcraft cases were not completely extinct. Hence, it is a relatively recent practice. Although this tradition shared a set of similar characteristics which were common around the world, some specific actions and methods of punishments of the Isle of Man must be commented on. As in many other societies, to be a witch was considered a crime, severely punished by the law. The activities witches performed were pagan, seen as an insult, something the Church tried to eradicate and fight against (Hebert, 1909: 187-188).

Justice did not exist for witches due to several reasons. First, they could be accused by anybody who thought they could have any kind of relationship with witchcraft and were often judged under extremely unfair conditions. We can confirm the cruelty which was exerted over them even at the moment of being judged with no strong evidence by providing the following example: one method of confirming whether they were guilty or not, was a tradition which consisted of making the accused witch bathe in a lake of the island. It was believed, as in other parts of Britain, that if the witch could swim, she was automatically accused of witchcraft. Conversely, if the witch sank and drowned, she was declared innocent, even though the witch was already dead. As a conclusion, one way or the other, they were going to perish. They were not given the least opportunity to defend themselves from the accusations. Traditionally, if the woman was not guilty “her innocence was declared and she was enthusiastically accorded Christian burial” (Herbert, 1909: 188).

Apart from the usual tradition of being burned, there was another macabre punishment typical from the Isle of Man which took place in St. John’s, more specifically on a mountain known as *Slieau Whallian*. Rhys (1901: 296) stated in his work that “witches used at one time to be punished by being set to roll down the steep side of the mountain in spike barrels”.

#### **4. Peculiar Traditions of the Isle of Man**

##### **4.1. Hunting the Wren or Wren Day**

The curious tradition of Hunting the Wren is one of the most preserved festivities of the Isle of Man. Celebrated on 26<sup>th</sup> December, it has survived over the centuries and has become a day which many people enjoy. Apparently, this tradition was appropriated by the Church, adapting it and commemorating the martyrdom of St. Stephen<sup>11</sup>. Hence, the festivity is also known as ‘Stephen’s Feast Day’ (Moore, 1891: 133).

As many festivities, the tradition of Hunting the Wren has its origin in an ancient legend. It is believed that a fairy “of uncommon beauty” that inhabited the Isle of Man used to seduce men whom she carried to sea. It seems that after being enchanted by the beauty of the fairy, they drowned. This made the male population of the island to be afraid of the fairy and nobody dared to face her, until a brave “knight errant” managed

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<sup>11</sup> St. Stephen is the first Christian martyr accused of blasphemy and condemned by the Church. He is believed to have been stoned to death. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/saints/stephen.shtml>. Last accessed 5.13.2019).

to end her life. According to the legend, in one of his several efforts to catch her, the fairy suddenly adopted the form of a wren, which is a little bird, and escaped from him. Despite avoiding death, she was punished with a perpetual curse: “she was condemned on every succeeding New Year’s Day, to reanimate the same form, with the definitive sentence, that she must ultimately perish by a human hand” (Bullock, 1816: 370-371).

Since these events took place, the tradition of Hunting the Wren is celebrated every 26th of December, St. Stephen’s Day. At the beginning, people chased and killed the birds, using stones or just shooting at them. After that, the bird was paraded and showed at the end of a pole, around which people danced and sang traditional songs. It is important to remark that the feathers of the bird were considered lucky and everybody should buy them (Bullock, 1816: 370-371).

The following description is collected in Herbert’s work (1909: 200) concerning the great importance that the Manx gave to wren’s feathers:

At every house visited, a feather would be left for luck, in return, of course, for largesse; and this feather was considered an effective security. Shipwreck, witchcraft, evil-eye and the like had no fears for the carrier of the wren’s feather. In the dim twilight hours, it was the old custom.

Fortunately, in the current celebration of this Manx tradition, no birds are killed and the cruelty of old times has disappeared. The real wren has been replaced by a plastic one, which is put at the end of the pole and becomes the protagonist of the festivity. For Manx people, the bird is an important symbol, considered “the king of all birds” ([https://www.culturevannin.im/manx\\_year\\_event\\_469497.html](https://www.culturevannin.im/manx_year_event_469497.html). Last accessed 5.7.2019).

These are the first four and the last four lines of a traditional song performed on this festivity:

We’ll away to the woods, says Robin to Bobbin.  
We’ll away to the woods, says Richard to Robbin.  
We’ll away to the woods, says jack of the Land.  
We’ll away to the woods, says every one  
(...)  
The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,  
We’ve caught, St. Stephen’s Day, in the furze;  
Although he is little, his family is great,  
I pray you, good dame, do give us a treat. (Moore, 1891: 136-137)

Following the rhythm of the song, a traditional dance (see illustration 12 in the appendix) is performed. Today, people dance forming a large circle surrounding the central pole where the bird is shown. This pole is normally held by a child ([https://www.culturevannin.im/manx\\_year\\_event\\_469497.html](https://www.culturevannin.im/manx_year_event_469497.html). Last accessed 5.7.2019).

## 4.2. *Tynwald* National Day

The *Tynwald* Day is the National Day of the Isle of Man and it is considered a very special date of which Man people are very proud. It is celebrated on 5th July in the village of S. John's, a few kilometres away from Peel. We must remember that, at the beginning, this celebration took place on 24<sup>th</sup> June, coinciding with the festivity of St. John. When the Gregorian Calendar was established, the date changed to the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. It must be emphasised, as we have seen in the historical approach at the beginning of this dissertation, that the *Tynwald* is the oldest parliament in the world. Its activity on the island has never been interrupted for more than one thousand years, with a few exceptions. We cannot forget that the Vikings ruled the island for more than four centuries, leaving a very important legacy in which the *Tynwald* is especially remarkable and still celebrated. As explained before, it consisted of open assemblies that discussed and passed laws, among other concerns. St. John's was the first spot where the *Tynwald* took place, although today the ordinary sessions are celebrated in Douglas (<http://www.tynwald.org.im/about/tynwald/Pages/History.aspx>. Last accessed 5.13.2019).

The National Day of the Manx commemorates this heritage. On this important date, a ceremony in the church of St. John's is celebrated, followed by a parade of all the members of the *Tynwald* who have to ascend *Tynwald Hill* (see illustration 9 in the appendix), a little mound and the place of ancient celebration (Bullock, 1816: 229). The following is a brief description of this important spot provided by Herbert (1909: 37):

The Sacred Hill of *Tynwald* is a manufactured mound, said to be composed of earth brought from every parish in the island. It is completely round, some two hundred and fifty feet in circumference at the base, cut in narrowing circles or steps, like an out-sized wedding cake of four tiers. Each platform is three feet higher than the last, which makes the height of the hillock just twelve feet.

Once the members of the *Tynwald* have ascended the little mound, it is a tradition to promulgate from there all the Acts of the *Tynwald* which have been discussed in Douglas. Besides being a symbolic act where the public is allowed to attend, it is also a crucial moment for the enactment of new laws. Traditionally and tied to their chests, people wear what is known as *Bollan Bane*, a kind of herb which, according to the legend, helps to get rid of evil spirits and to get luck. On Manx National Day there is music, dances and even a fair in the village of St. John's and everybody is invited to enjoy the festivity ([https://www.culturevannin.im/manx\\_year\\_event\\_469497.html](https://www.culturevannin.im/manx_year_event_469497.html). Last accessed 7.5.2019).

### 4.3. *Hop-Tu-Naa*

The Isle of Man has also its own globally known tradition of celebrating Halloween with its peculiar *Hop-Tu-Naa*. The evening of October 31st is a special date for the folklore of many cultures. Children and adults enjoy a tradition which has survived from the times of the Celts and has passed down from generation to generation. It is thought that the Manx term *Hop-Tu-Naa* derives from the Manx Gaelic *Slogh ta'n Oie*, meaning 'this is the night'. This tradition is considered the oldest one in the island and has never been interrupted in the course of history. We must remember that the Celts marked the end of the year with this celebration, also known as November Eve or *Oie Houney* in Manx (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/arts-culture/ceremonies-and-festivals/hop-tu-naa/>. Last accessed 5.24.2019).

Even though everybody knows that pumpkins are one of the most important elements in Halloween, there is a tradition in the Isle of Man of using turnips (see illustration 10 in the appendix) instead, or *moots*, as they are called there. However, we cannot assert that this is only typical of the Manx, since there exists the same tradition in Scotland. Like pumpkins, turnips are carved, representing faces, and some design competitions take place ([https://www.culturevannin.im/manx\\_year\\_event\\_468995.html](https://www.culturevannin.im/manx_year_event_468995.html). Last accessed 5.24.2019).

In the evening of *Hop-Tu-Naa*, as in many other societies, children perform the ritual of going door to door singing traditional songs, dressed up in costumes and asking for small change or sweets and candies. There is a song titled *Hop-Tu-Naa*, the following verses belonging to it (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/arts-culture/ceremonies-and-festivals/hop-tu-naa/>. Last accessed 5.26.2019):

This is old Hollantide<sup>12</sup> night; Hop-tu-naa.  
The moon shines bright; Trol-la-laa  
Cock of the hens; Hop-tu-naa.  
Supper of the heifer; Trol-la-laa  
Which heifer shall we kill? Hop-tu-naa.  
The little speckled heifer. Trol-la-laa  
The fore-quarter, Hop-tu-naa.  
We'll put in the pot for you. Trol-la-laa  
The little hind quarter, Hop-tu-naa.  
Give to us, give to us. Trol-la-laa

Another famous song which is traditionally performed in this evening refers to a witch, Jinny. According to tradition, Jinny the Witch, whose real name was Joney Lowney,

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<sup>12</sup> Hollantide Eve is another term, along with All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Eve or Hallowe'en used to refer to this tradition which marks the Old Celtic New Year (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/arts-culture/ceremonies-and-festivals/manx-customs-calendar/>. Last accessed 5.30.2019).

was a native witch of the Isle of Man, born in Braddan and supposed to live until 1725. Among other crimes related to witchcraft, she is said to have hindered the production of corn as a retaliation. Here is an extract of a song that alludes to her and which is still sung by many children going from home to home (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/arts-culture/ceremonies-and-festivals/hop-tu-naa/>. Last accessed 5.26.2019):

Hop-tu-Naa, Hop-tu-Naa.  
Jinny the Witch she ate the horse,  
She ate the mane and the tail of course.  
Hop-tu-Naa, Hop-tu-Naa.  
Jinny the Witch she ate the cow,  
But how she ate it, I don't know how.  
Hop-tu-Naa, Hop-tu-Naa.  
Jinny the Witch she ate the sheep,  
She left the wool all in a heap.  
Jinny the Witch she ate the sheep,  
She left the wool all in a heap.

One of the traditional dances of the Isle of Man, recorded by Mona Douglas<sup>13</sup> (see illustration 11 in the appendix), a prominent person in the preservation of Manx culture, is performed during this celebration. *Hop-tu-Naa* has its own traditional dance with has acquired the same name as the feast. To perform it, we need at least two pairs of dancers and we have to follow the rhythm of the *Hop-tu-Naa* song (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/arts-culture/ceremonies-and-festivals/hop-tu-naa/>. Last accessed 5.26.2019).

#### **4.4. Manannan International Festival and *Yn Chruinnaght***

There are two major festivals of music and dance celebrated in the Isle of Man which attract the attention of the Manx and the visitors. Borrowing its name from a prominent figure in Scottish, Irish and also Manx folklore, the *Manannan*<sup>14</sup> International Festival is held annually and includes a great variety of cultural activities. Apart from traditional dances and musical performances, which comprise a wide range of genres such as classical, jazz or cabaret, other different types of cultural events are displayed, including

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<sup>13</sup> Mona Douglas was born in Liverpool in 1898 and moved to the Isle of Man of which her parents were native. She is considered a prominent figure in the preservation and promotion of the Manx culture, including songs and dancing, and also a key figure in the revival of *Yn Chruinnaght*, the Manx National Interceltic Festival (<http://manxliterature.com/browse-by-author/mona-douglas/>. Last accessed 5.30.2019).

<sup>14</sup> Manannán mac Lir is a mythical character of the folklore of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. No reliable written records exist although it has been argued that the connection between Ireland and the Isle of Man was very close in ancient legendary times, which makes the probabilities of sharing similar early myths, as that of Manannan, be high. There has always been a tendency to think that the Isle of Man owes its name to this legendary character (Moore, 1891: 33-37).

lectures, talks or magic shows. The Erin Arts Centre, situated in the village of Port Erin (see map in the appendix), has been holding the event since 1975, always on the last two weeks of June, in order to welcome the summer (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/arts-culture/ceremonies-and-festivals/mananan-international-festival/>. Last accessed 5.27.2019).

Another important festival and even of a greater influence than the *Mannanan's* one is the Manx National Interceltic Festival, also known as *Yn Chruinnaght*, meaning 'the gathering'. This celebration enhances Manx culture as well as its relationship with the other five Celtic nations such as Scotland or Wales. The Manx Society and the World Manx Association were the main precursors in organizing the festival for the first time in 1924, which lasted for just one day. Unfortunately, it was interrupted when the Second World War started and it was not resumed until 1978, thanks to the great work of Mona Douglas. It was established that the city of Ramsey (see map in the appendix) was the place where the event should take place. The festival became an important source of income for the city which was the only one which did not have a festival of its own. Although the main scenario of the festival was Ramsey, other cultural events took place in different parts of the island. In 2007, it was decided to move the main focus to Peel. (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/arts-culture/ceremonies-and-festivals/yn-chruinnaght/>. Last accessed 5.27.2019). In order to show and share the common features of the Celtic nations and, above all, to enhance the power of the Manx Celtic past and legacy, several cultural events are performed, not only music and dances, but also crafts and arts.

#### **4.5. The Isle of Man TT (Tourist Trophy)**

Situated in the middle of the Irish Sea, many people know the Isle of Man because it holds an annual motorcycling championship, famous for its dangerous bends and the high speeds which are reached. Only the bravest competitors dare to participate in this event which has caused more than 200 deaths since its first race, more than a hundred years ago. Needless to say, the championship gathers people from all over the world every year and is an important source of income for the island. Motorcycle enthusiasts can enjoy not only the championship itself but also the different events taking place around it.

The main roads of the Isle of Man are improved so that they can hold the competition for a few days. The race normally takes place between the end of May and

the beginning of June. In 1907, the first motorcycle race took place and, like many events celebrated around the world, the championship was interrupted during the First and the Second World Wars.

The race has sparked controversy. It has always been recognised as one of the most dangerous sport competitions around the world but racers still constantly risk their lives in each sharp bend. Many deaths resulting from the excessive speed have marked the history of the competition. One of the recent incidents which was severely criticized occurred in 2006, when two spectators were killed by being run over by a motorcycle. Despite these tragic consequences, the interest and the expectation for the Isle of Man TT keeps on increasing each year (Wright, 2013: n/p).

#### 4.6. National Anthem

As a dependency of the British Crown, the Isle of Man sticks to ‘God Save the Queen’ as the Royal Anthem for those occasions in which a member of the Royal family is present. However, there exists an official local anthem passed by the Tynwald in 2003, the title of which is *Arrane Ashoonagh Dy Vannin*, (‘O Land of Our Birth’). Usually, only the two first verses are sung when it comes to official or social events. The following extract includes the anthem in Manx and in English:

|                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| O Halloo nyn ghoie,             | O land of our birth,             |
| O chliegeen ny s'bwaaie         | O gem of God's earth,            |
| Ry gheddyn er ooir aalin Yee;   | O Island so strong and so fair;  |
| Ta dt' Ardstoyll Reill-Thie     | Built firm as Barrool,           |
| Myr Barrool er ny hoie          | Thy Throne of Home Rule          |
| Dy reayll shin ayns seyrsnys as | Makes us free as thy sweet       |
| shee.                           | mountain air.                    |
| Lhig dooin boggoil bee,         | When Orry, the Dane,             |
| Lesh annym as cree,             | In Mannin did reign,             |
| As croghey er gialdyn yn        | 'Twas said he had come from      |
| Chiarn;                         | above;                           |
| Dy vodmayd dagh oor,            | For wisdom from Heav'n           |
| Treishteil er e phooar,         | To him had been given            |
| Dagh olk ass nyn h'anmeenyn     | To rule us with justice and love |
| 'hayrn.                         |                                  |

(<http://www.nationalanthems.info/im.htm>. Last accessed 5.27.2019)

It was William Henry Gill<sup>15</sup> who in 1907 wrote this anthem which is based on an old traditional Manx song called *Mylecharaine's March*. A few years later, John Kneen<sup>16</sup> translated it into Manx (Jones, 2012: 194).

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<sup>15</sup> Italian, but of Manx parentage, William Henry Gill was a collector of Manx folk songs ([https://www.manxmusic.com/bio\\_page\\_130254.html](https://www.manxmusic.com/bio_page_130254.html). Last accessed 6.11.2019).

<sup>16</sup> John Kneen was a Manx linguist and scholar born in 1873 Douglas. One of his notable works was ‘The Place-Names of the Isle of Man with their Origin and History’ (1925). He died in 1938. (Jones, 2012: 32).

#### 4.7. Traditional Food

Gastronomy is also an essential part of the folklore of any culture and it would be quite unfair not to point out some of the most important elements of Manx traditional food. It is needless to remember that, as in the rest of the British Isles, fish and chips plays a crucial role on the diet of the inhabitants of the Isle of Man. However, if there is a type of fish that must be singled out among others and of a great importance for the Manx, that is the herring. Actually, along with boiled potatoes, it is the main ingredient of what has been considered for centuries, the national dish of the island, Spuds and Herring, or *Priddhas an' Herrin'* in Manx (see illustration 13 in the appendix). Although there exist several recipes, its preparation is simple. Normally the herring and the boiled potatoes are accompanied by some vegetables or other ingredients. (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/cuisine/>. Last accessed: 5.24.2019). Sometimes, the herring is eaten smoked. This recipe is called *Kippers* (see illustration 14 in the appendix) and it is not only typical of the Isle of Man, but also of England and Scotland (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/cuisine/>. Last accessed 5.24.2019).

Traditionally, herring has been regarded as the key element for the subsistence of the Manx farmers and fishermen and considered a support for the economy of the island, which commercialized and exported it to the rest of the British Isles and the north of France. These are Blundell's (1846: 52) remarks on the importance of the maritime trade and the herring for the Manx: “The sea feedeth more of the Mankmen than of the soil. It yieldeth to the islanders presently of divers sorts of fish, but of no one sort of so much as of herrings, in their season”.

Besides herring, there are other types of fish present in Manx gastronomy as cod or mackerel. Seafood as crabs or lobsters are some of the Manx fishermen's catches, as well as the Queen Scallops or *Queenies*<sup>17</sup> (see illustration 15 in the appendix), which have become very popular on the island. We can enjoy Manx cuisine by choosing among a great variety of restaurants along the coast, which offer the freshest local products of the sea. (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/cuisine/>. Last accessed 5.24.2019).

Paying attention now to the consumption of meat, we must say that there used to be a special breed of pigs, native to the Isle of Man, called *Purs*, the meat of which was

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<sup>17</sup> Queenies are a kind of little scallops, very much present in the traditional gastronomy of the Isle of Man. Actually it has been recently added to the list of national dishes of the island. (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/cuisine/>. Last accessed 5.24.2019).

claimed to be really tasty. Despite *Purs* having become extinct in the 19th century, the Manx have kept alive a breed of sheep also unique and quite appreciated in the island. It receives the name of *Loaghtan* sheep. They have a rich and dark meat, and are traditionally believed to have been introduced by the Vikings (<https://www.gov.im/media/1348476/story-to-isle-of-man-food-drink-leaflet.pdf>. Last accessed 5.24.2019).

We cannot forget either to mention that the Isle of Man has its own type of Cheddar cheese. This kind of cheese is also commonly used in a simple recipe considered by many inhabitants of the island to have become the national fast-food dish: chips, cheese and gravy (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/cuisine/>. Last accessed 24.5.2019).

There is also a traditional Manx type of bread, also considered a cake, called the Manx *Bonnag* (see illustration 16 in the appendix), which plays an important role in the gastronomy of the island. It looks like a British scone, but the Manx *Bonnag* is flatter than the British one. It is usually filled with currants or fruit. Several recipes are possible and, optionally, you can accompany it with butter (<https://www.isleofman.com/attractions/cuisine/>. Last accessed 24.5.2019).

#### **4.8. Manx Proverbs**

The folklore of a certain society cannot be understood without taking into account some of its main proverbs, since they are a crucial distinguishing mark of the character of the people. The thoughts of the inhabitants of a land and their way of life can most certainly be inferred through the common sayings. According to Moore (1891: 181), if we read the Manx proverbs we can conclude that they share similarities with the proverbs of other communities, although “this does not necessarily show that they are not of native origin” (Moore, 1891: 181).

We may start with some Manx proverbs alluding to "general truths and morality", as Moore (1891: 181) classifies them in his work. Both forms, the first in Manx, and then a translation into English will be provided along with a brief explanation of its meaning. One Manx proverb included in this classification recommends not to praise too much of oneself by stating the following: *Cha jagh moylley hooiney hene rieau foddey voish e ghorrys*, that is, “A man’s praise of himself never went far from his door” (Moore, 1891: 181). We also have a Manx proverb

reminding us that the family is more important than any other kind of relationship: *Ta fuill ny schee na ushtey*, something similar to the common saying “blood is thicker than water” (Moore, 1891: 182). When a person is in a situation in which she must accept less than she wanted and she has no choice but to do that, it is common to hear the idiom “half a loaf is better than no bread”. In Manx there is another proverb which explains the same idea in a different way: *Ta drogh hammag ny share na magher foshlit*, which means that “a miserable bush is better than an open field”. This is very similar to the Scottish one, “a wee bush is better than *nae bield*”. The following one serves as a recommendation and advises to be forward and daring, but to a certain extent: *S`mi eve daaney, agh s`olk ve ro ghaaney*, meaning “how good to be forward, but how bad to be too forward” (Moore, 1891: 184).

Proverbs about being grateful and good towards other people who do not deserve it are very common. We can provide the following example in Manx: *Ceau craue ayns beeall drogh voddey*, translated as “throw a bone into a bad dog’s mouth”. According to Moore’s (1891: 186) classification, the following one has to do with the inculcation of contentment and serves as an advice against people’s greed: *Cha nee eshyn ta red beg echey ta boght. Agh eshyn ta gearree smoo*, meaning that “tis not the man who has little that’s poor, but he that desires more”.

We could point out one which is especially peculiar to the Isle of Man and which alludes to kindness: *Tra ta un dooinney boght cooney lesh dooinney boght elley, ta Je hene garaghtee*, which in English would be, “when a poor man helps another poor man, God himself laughs” (Moore, 1891: 188). The explanation of this proverb is based on the Manx idea that the poor inhabitants of the island have always been very kind to each other (Moore, 1891: 188).

Let’s see now some peculiar proverbs of the Isle of Man related to the weather. Referring to the wind, which comes normally from the west, there is a common proverb which goes as follows: *Giare sheear, liauyr shiar*, meaning “short west, long east”. It means that despite the west winds being more common, the east winds last longer when they set (Moore, 1891: 188). An unusual calm in the isle is synonym of a storm coming soon, accompanied by a south wind; hence the Manx proverb *Yn chiuney smoo erbee geay yiass sniessey jee*, that is, “the greater the calm, the nearer the south wind” (Moore, 1891: 188). There is also a common saying which predicts rainy weather “if the sun is

red when he rises” and also another claiming that a cloud on South Barrule Mountain (on the south of the island) is an indication of rain coming (Moore, 1891: 189).

## 5. Conclusions

In this dissertation, a brief approach to the history and geography of the Isle of Man has been provided, as well as its location, considered very strategic by all the different peoples which inhabited it. From the Mesolithic times to the present day, the main events of the island’s history have been pointed out, including the relevant legacy left by the Celts and the Scandinavians, who have made the island what it is today. We could not forget to mention the special political status of the island and its peculiar Parliament, the *Tynwald*, with more than a thousand years of history. Extremely important from a cultural perspective is also the Manx language, the origin of which we have explained as well as the efforts made to revive and enhance its heritage and legacy.

Once the historical approach was covered, we were ready to start to analyse the major topic of this dissertation, that is, a description and analysis of the peculiar features of the Manx folklore and traditions. Two main sections were distinguished: the first one focused on the myths, tales, superstitions, ghost stories and legends and the second one on the most relevant traditions of the island, including traditional feasts, festivals, food and proverbs.

The belief in fairies was our first theme of discussion. We established the common features of these supernatural creatures, differentiating between fairies with good and bad intentions and explaining how to get rid of their mischievous actions. At the same time, some examples of tales and superstitions about the island’s fairy world have been shown.

Next, we have identified some mythical creatures which are only found in Manx folklore. The first one was the *Phynmodderree*, whose main features and behaviour were included as well as the comparison with another Manx native type of hobgoblin, the *Glashtyn*.

Secondly, we have made reference to the peculiar *Buganne of St. Trinian* and the mythical Water Bull known as the *Taroo-Ushtey*. Mermaids, which are present in the folklore of many other cultures, also deserved our attention in this dissertation, since the Isle of Man has its own mermaid legends and stories, some of which have been considered. Similarly, giants, who exist in many folk legends around the world, also play a prominent role in the Manx tradition. We have travelled to Castle Rushen in order

to explain the belief, which has survived until today, in their presence in the undergrounds of the fortress. We also dealt with the castle's connection with the appearance of the female ghost known as the Apparition of Castle Rushen, a figure still remembered today by the Manx people. Along with Rushen, Peel's Castle has its own share of mysteries and legends such as the *Moddey Doo*, the Black Dog, which has been compared to the British Church Grim.

Two other haunted places were mentioned in this dissertation: that related to the Legend of the Sound, which revolves around the presence of a ghost boat, also a typical theme in the English folklore, and that of The Chasms in which mysterious disappearances took place.

Despite being a recent legend, *The Gef* or *The Dalby Spook* has been discussed in this dissertation because of its great cultural impact on both Manx society and the press during the 1930s. Finally, a brief overview of the practice of witchcraft on the island has been provided, placing the emphasis on some of its peculiarities.

As previously mentioned, the second main section of this dissertation has been devoted to the reflection and analysis of Manx traditions. We have discussed the feasts of *Hunting the Wren* and *Hop-tu-Naa*, as well as some of their traditional songs and dances connected to these feasts. It was also important to highlight the Manx National Day, that of the Tynwald, on 5<sup>th</sup> July. A description of the ceremony and the place where it is held has also been provided.

Two cultural festivals have been presented: The *Manannan International Festival* and *Yn Chruinnaght*, both promoting not only music and dance, but also other disciplines such as cabaret or magic. We have also focused on the Isle of Man TT (Tourist Trophy), a globally known sport event.

As key elements of the tradition of a society, we have finished the dissertation by pointing out some of the peculiarities of Manx gastronomy, such as the national dishes *Spuds* and *Herring*. We have also analysed some of the most relevant proverbs and sayings which are common to the Isle of Man.

Although I consider that the main objectives of the study established in the introduction have been achieved, I acknowledge that I have come across some difficulties. One of them is that I could not cover all the most important aspects of the Manx folklore for reasons of the length limit of the dissertation. Even so, I selected those features which were more dealt with than others by the scholars whose works

served as the essential bibliography for my dissertation and analysed those elements which are more peculiar and specific of the Isle of Man and I have tried to provide Manx native instances of each topic.

As for typical Manx dances, there seems to be no specific reliable sources covering this topic. Nevertheless, I would like to keep on working on these issues for future research and, if possible, to travel to the Isle of Man in order to undertake first-hand further research on the considerations of the present-day inhabitants of this magical island regarding their superstitions, legends and ghost stories.

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## 7. Appendix



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