

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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MANX GAELIC AND PHYSICS, A PERSONAL JOURNEY

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At the age of sixteen at the beginning of 1953, I became very much aware of the Manx language, Manx Gaelic, and the desperate situation it was in then. I was born of Manx parents and brought up in Douglas in the Isle of Man, but, like most other Manx people then, I was only dimly aware that we had our own language. All that changed when, on New Year's Day 1953, I picked up a Manx newspaper that was in the house and read an article about Douglas Fargher. He was expressing a passionate view that the Manx language had to be saved – he couldn't understand how Manx people were so dismissive of their own language and ignorant about it. This article had a dramatic effect on me – I can say it changed my life. I knew straight off somehow that I had to learn Manx.

In 1953, I was a pupil at Douglas High School for Boys, with just over two years to go before I possibly left school and went to England to go to university. There was no university in the Isle of Man - there still isn't, although things are progressing in that direction now. Amazingly, up until 1992, there

was no formal, official teaching of Manx in schools in the Isle of Man. In the 1950s and for much later, you might be made aware of the existence of the language because of a personal interest of a primary school teacher. For instance, occasionally, primary school pupils might be asked to copy out the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father) in Manx, generally without understanding it or being able to pronounce the words correctly. So, without much expectation, I asked around at my own school about Manx lessons, and was surprised to find that several months previously, in the autumn of 1952, twenty or more boys had asked of their own accord if they could have tuition in Manx. An evening class (two hours a week) had been arranged, taught by someone called Leslie Quirk. This was terrific, I thought, and went along to my first class, which was held in an annex of the Manx Museum in Douglas. I was the only pupil to turn up.

The teacher, Leslie Quirk, explained that, as so often with voluntary evening classes, the attendance of pupils had fallen off and off to practically zero. With hindsight, I can see that it would have been a miracle if anything else had happened. There were virtually no teaching facilities, Leslie was not a trained teacher, and the boys who wanted to learn Manx had other commitments and distractions. A deterrent at that time (and for a very long time after that) would have been the aggressive attitude of most other people: 'What do you want to waste your time with that old nonsense for? That was never a real language!' This was like some sort of fixed mantra. But meeting Leslie Quirk was crucial for me – he was a fluent speaker of Manx who'd learned his Manx from native speakers. In fact, he was very nearly a native speaker as well as being a kindly, saintly man. He introduced me to Doug Fargher, the charismatic man of the language revival who was passionate about using Manx as an everyday language once again. Doug revelled in his nickname Yn Breaghagh (The Liar), taken from one of his grandfathers. Telling tall stories was a great Manx art-form.

Leslie Quirk worked for Doug Fargher, who was a partner in a fruit import business. Doug's office in Douglas became a Manx Gaelic meeting place for me and Bernard Caine, who was about my age and learning Manx at the same time. I soon met Walter Clarke and Bill Radcliffe, both men who had learned to speak Manx fluently from native speakers, as had Doug Fargher. Doug was tape-recording the Manx of surviving native speakers, including Ned Maddrell and John Kneen, Yn Gaau (The Smith). For weekend after weekend I was immersed in hours of spoken Manx, meeting Doug Fargher, Walter Clarke, Leslie Quirk and Bill Radcliffe, and occasionally going out with them when they were recording native speakers. For a long time, I could understand only a few words, then a few sentences, and then more and more. I had 'First Lessons in Manx' by Goodwin, and two dictionaries – those of Cregeen and J J Kneen – as well as a Bible in Manx. I never attended formal Manx lessons – this was immersion with a vengeance. I can remember that when I attended a Celtic convention in Wales with Bernard Caine at Easter in 1953, we spoke English. At the same convention at Easter in 1954, we spoke together in Manx only. I got to know Ned Maddrell to some extent and met John Kneen – an incredible character. I met other old native speakers, but am ashamed to say I can't remember who they were.

Not long after I started learning Manx in 1953, I read William Cubbon's history of the Isle of Man 'Island Heritage', which made a very deep impression on me. William Cubbon had been the director of the Manx museum. This gave a political dimension to my attachment to the language, and that dimension has never left me. I joined the Manx Branch of the Celtic Congress, which tries to be a purely cultural association. As a representative of the Manx Branch, I attended the Oireachtas in Dublin in the autumn of 1954, the Oireachtas being the annual festival of Irish culture. There I met Eamon de Valera and he commented on the close connections between Irish and Manx Gaelic. It was de Valera who some years previously had arranged

for Caoimhín Ó Danachair to come to the Isle of Man on behalf of the Irish Folklore Commission to tape-record native speakers of Manx, following de Valera's meeting with Ned Maddrell just after World War II. Many years later, these tape-recordings were cleaned up and issued as a collection of CDs complete with transcripts in a joint project between University College Dublin and Manx National Heritage.

In 1955 I went to Liverpool University and gained a degree in physics in 1958. I taught physics in a school in Liverpool for two years, and then took up a post with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at the uranium separation plant at Capenhurst near Chester. Originally, this gas diffusion plant had been built to produce highly enriched uranium, solely for nuclear weapons. However, when I was there the plant was being converted to produce fuel for nuclear power plants – no more bomb material was needed! Incidentally, Capenhurst was the first place where the first successful ultra-centrifuges for separating uranium isotopes were developed. This type of centrifuge became notorious as one of the things which Saddam Hussein never had. Working in an ultra-secret environment did not suit me, so in 1964 I took up a lecturing job at Liverpool College of Technology, which, over the years, morphed into Liverpool Polytechnic and then into Liverpool John Moores University. While working there, I gained a PhD in applied physics.

Right the way through my career in physics, I was active in promoting Manx Gaelic, going backwards and forwards between Liverpool and the Isle of Man two or three times a year. I wrote courses in Manx, along with articles in Manx and English about the Isle of Man and the language. I recorded an LP of traditional songs in Manx – this has recently been re-issued as a CD. In 1958, I had married Pat, and we had two children, a daughter Kerry and a son Seán. When it was convenient, I spoke only in Manx to the children, who gained a very good understanding of the language – their understanding is still surprisingly good. But they rarely spoke in Manx: I spoke Manx,

they spoke English, something which people found strange when we visited the Isle of Man. They were completely unused to the idea that young children could understand Manx. On one rare occasion in the Isle of Man when Kerry was about four years old, she spoke in Manx. This completely astounded a Manx speaker who was nearby, and he proceeded to spread the inaccurate story that both my children spoke Manx all the time.

From the 1960's, there was growing interest in Manx in the Isle of Man. Manx advanced through night classes taught by people who had learnt their Manx from the last of the native speakers. This growth of interest was best shown by the census figure for 1971 of 284 speakers, giving a 72% increase from ten years previously. Despite the language classes, the language organisation, *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, remained somewhat moribund until 1972, when Douglas Fargher and others got elected to the committee and started organising *Oieghyn Gaelgagh (Manx Language Nights)* in various pubs, and publishing new material. Following a suggestion by an Irishman in New York in the 1960's, I translated the Irish language course *Buntús Cainte* into Manx, with the assistance of Robert Thomson. This course was used by various adult classes over a period of years, having been revised by Adrian Pilgrim.

The 1970's saw much increased activity to promote Manx. In 1973, George Broderick published a new English translation from the original Latin of *The Chronicle of the Kings of Mann and the Isles*. This was accompanied by a parallel translation into Manx by myself and Robert Thomson. Also in 1973, George Broderick produced the first significant recording of songs entirely in Manx, sung by me. The vinyl record has recently been transferred to compact disc format. In 1976, *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* published *Skealaght (Story Telling)*, a collection of stories by four new authors. 1976 also saw the revival by Mona Douglas of *Yn Chruinnaght*. In the 1930's, *Yn Chruinnaght* had been a one-day event similar to a country fair. The new event developed into a successful week long inter-Celtic festival held each July in Ramsey.

In the 1950's, the Celtic Congress had been particularly active in Mann under the leadership of Joseph Woods. Later decades saw the emergence in the island of a highly effective branch of the Celtic League (the political breakaway from the Celtic Congress), led by the trade union secretary Bernard Moffatt. The Celtic League's journal *Carn* regularly carries articles in Manx as well as the other Celtic languages. Representatives of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (*The Welsh Language Society*) visited the Island in January 1977 to share their experiences. That same year, other aspects of Manx culture began to come to the fore when the all-male dance group *Bock Yuan Fannee* was formed. The Manx Folk Dance Society had an appreciably longer history and had carried out invaluable work in restoring and developing Manx dancing. *Bock Yuan Fannee* demonstrated a new, robust spirit. By 1978, Manx language radio broadcasts on Manx Radio had been increased to one hour per week where previously there was fifteen minutes of Manx per week, or less, on the radio.

The late Colin Jerry published the first of his booklets *Kiaull yn Theay* (*Music of the People*) in 1978. These booklets, which give the music for folk instruments and the words in Manx for traditional dance tunes and songs, have played a large part in the revival of Manx folk music and song which has taken place in step with the partial revival of the language. Colin and his wife Cristl established a regular folk session on Saturday night in Peel which lasted many years and greatly strengthened Manx music.

A really major development was the publication of Doug Fargher's English-Manx dictionary in 1979, after much work and many tribulations. The dictionary was modelled on De Bhaldraithe's English-Irish dictionary, and its publication was financed by the Manx Government on what was seen as the thousandth anniversary of the foundation of Tynwald, the Manx parliament.

Through the 1970's, *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* began to exert more

pressure, and in 1981 canvassed all candidates for election to Tynwald on their stance regarding the language. The response showed a degree of disdain for Manx among the candidates, with 56% of respondents advocating no official support for the language. *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* commented: 'The survey confirms that while the language is not subject to overt oppression, it remains the victim of ignorance and indifference emanating from the highest levels of society. It is self evident that the language societies in Mann need not look to their own government for support. The outlook remains bleak.'

In fact, the government had given some support to the language, in the form of provision of evening classes for adults for many years. In some schools, ad hoc teaching of limited amounts of Manx was undertaken by interested teachers. In 1982, Manx was offered as a General Certificate of Education subject at Ordinary Level, under the guidance of Robert Thomson, the foremost academic authority on the language. This qualification was taken by adult students until GCE O-Levels were replaced by the General Certificate of Secondary Education (the Isle of Man follows the English education system). For various reasons, a GCSE in Manx was not developed, leaving Manx for some years as the only Celtic language for which formal qualifications could not be taken.

In 1983, the first film to be made entirely in Manx, *Ny Kirree fo Niaghthey* (*The Sheep under the Snow*), was produced by George Broderick and Peter Maggs of Foillan Films. They produced several other films in Manx, but were very severely limited by lack of funding. Also in 1983, an important conference took place. This was entitled 'Manx Gaelic Today' and generated useful debate concerning the state of the language. In 1984, *Fritlag* (*Rag*) was published by Bob Carswell, coming out monthly. This publication carried illustrations and new terminology in Manx. Although it eventually folded in 1987, due to pressure of other commitments on the editor, it marked a further step forward in the rebirth of the language. Another step was taken in 1984

when the Isle of Man Bank agreed to accept cheques written in Manx. The bank changed its mind after protests following an initial refusal to accept such cheques. Some years later, following an initiative by Peter Karran, Member of the House of Keys, an act of Tynwald was passed which made it compulsory for banks registered in the Isle of Man to accept cheques made out in Manx.

For the first time ever, the Manx language was given limited official recognition in 1985 through a resolution of Tynwald. This established *Coonceil ny Gaelgey* (*The Manx Gaelic Advisory Council*) under the auspices of the Manx Heritage Foundation. The original council members were the late Rev. Robert Thomson, Adrian Pilgrim and the late Douglas Fargher. *Coonceil ny Gaelgey*, which was greatly enlarged in recent years on the initiative of Phil Gawne, has carried out invaluable work in translating the summaries of new laws into Manx each year and providing the Manx titles of government departments for stationery, Manx translations of street names, and so on. The summaries of new laws act as a source of new terminology in Manx. Owing to the initiative of John Crellin, *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* opened its first ever headquarters in 1986 in a former school building at St. Jude's in the north of the Island. Since that time, the headquarters has acted as a book store and meeting place for Manx Gaelic activities, overseen by John Crellin and Fiona McArdle.

The year 1986 also saw other developments which raised the profile of Manx. *Mactullagh Vannin* (*Echo of Mannin*) brought out a very successful cassette of new arrangements of traditional Manx tunes. Another major conference on Manx was held under the auspices of the Ned Maddrell annual lecture. And Manx Radio broadcast a language course for beginners. The language movement had found new vigour, while not touching the heights of assertiveness reached by some Welsh activists. More street and road names in Manx were put up, often paid for by *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*. Bilingual signs began to appear on government buildings. The issue of taking marriage vows

in Manx was successfully resolved. In 1987, building on developments from the previous year, another forum was held, this time focusing on Manx in education. The key address was given by Alun Davies, the Director of Education in the island and a native Welsh speaker. He suggested that he was open to bringing Manx into the schools, which had historically only been taught sporadically during lunch breaks or after school at pupils' requests.

In 1990, the Manx government commissioned a Gallup quality of life survey. Thirty-six percent of the respondents said that they wanted Manx to be taught in the schools on an optional basis, a result which surprised those who habitually ignored or belittled the language. The 1991 census returns gave a figure of 643 Manx speakers in the Island, indicating a significant growth in support for the language since 1971 (data on the language had not been sought in the 1981 census).

Following a decision by the Council of Ministers (the Manx cabinet), a Manx Language Officer and two full-time peripatetic teachers of Manx were appointed. The Manx Language Officer (myself) and the two teachers (Phil Kelly and Peggy Carswell) took up these newly-created posts in January 1992. A decision was taken to offer a 'taster' Manx course to all pupils aged seven and over (including secondary school pupils) from September 1992. The response was overwhelming, revealing a large previously hidden desire to learn Manx. About forty percent of primary school pupils (with parental approval) indicated their wish to attend Manx classes. In the secondary sector (aged eleven and over) the numbers were understandably less, but at an average of seven percent were still higher than had been guessed at. A total of 1,949 were registered as wanting to study Manx. This number could not be coped with and Manx classes had to be delayed arbitrarily for several hundred pupils. In September 1992, about 1,400 primary and secondary pupils started taking classes. At the end of the school year in July 1993, about 1,200 pupils were still attending the Manx classes. Virtually all the dropout occurred in

the secondary sector, there being significant resistance to the teaching of Manx in two of the five secondary schools. Not all of this resistance stemmed from hostility to the language per se, but from real problems caused by a very full compulsory curriculum.

As for myself, I could not believe my luck. I was back home in the Isle of Man, in a full-time job teaching and promoting Manx, and being paid for it. My first marriage had failed in the mid-1970s, I was divorced and married Julia in 1982. We have two daughters Caroline and Brigid. On getting the job of Manx Language Officer in 1991, I was apprehensive about uprooting from Merseyside and moving to Isle of Man, with all the possible upsets for Julia and Caroline and Brigid. Was this a totally selfish act? But I knew I couldn't resist taking the job. The move was not painless, and things have not been perfect, but in general it proved to be a good move. It wasn't the case that I was very keen to leave Merseyside and Liverpool, a great city which leaves me with many memories, not least being the experience of taking a beginners' Irish class for quite a few years – the next best thing to Manx. But it was frightening when the city offices received threats for having an Irish class in their adult education programme. For the next teaching year the name of the class was changed to 'Celtic Studies' – with the result that the city received threats from fanatical enemies of Celtic Football Club.

Offering Manx in the schools proved to be successful, with almost all pupils showing great enthusiasm for the language. This enthusiasm was shared by native Manx and recent incomer alike. When a proposal was put to Tynwald in January 1996 that the number of Manx teachers operating in the schools should be greatly increased, this proposal was lost by just one vote. In the accompanying debate no anti-language sentiments were voiced, even by known opponents of Manx. This marked a major step forward for Manx. Teaching material for the schools' programme was created from scratch, producing the course *Bun Noa* (*New Base* or *New Meaning*) along with an audio

cassette and computer software for teaching. Manx as an option still proves popular in the schools, with roughly 1,000 pupils taking it any one time. But there are still timetabling problems, and some schools are lax at informing new pupils they can study Manx. Phil Kelly took over from me as the Manx Language Officer in the Department of Education when I retired in 1996. In turn, Rosemary Derbyshire took over this post on Phil Kelly's retirement. It has been possible for some years now for pupils to take the General Certificate in Manx (equivalent to a British GCSE) and the Advanced Certificate in Manx (equivalent to a British A-Level).

Other aspects of Manx culture developed further in the 1990's, with 1992 seeing the publication of the music collection *Kiaull Manninagh* (*Manx Music*). As the Manx language marched towards the twenty-first century, so too did Manx music. One important group has been the Mollag Band, led by Greg Joughin, which brings together traditional Manx music and modern influences. Another major step to advance the language was taken in 1993 with the issue of Phil Kelly's Manx-English Dictionary, this being the companion to Fargher's English-Manx dictionary of 1979. A support group called *Caarjyn ny Gaelgey* (*Friends of the Manx language*) was set up by Peter Karran, a member of Tynwald and a great supporter of Manx. This led to the setting up of Manx evening classes for adults in a building at St John's rented from the Department of Education, the classes being directed by Joan Caine with enormous commitment.

Of very great significance was the founding in the early 1990's of a Manx-speaking pre-school playgroup called *Chied Chesmad* (*First Step*) which organised initially with ten children. Bob Carswell and Peggy Carswell were prominent here, and families bringing their children up as bilingual in Manx and English were the driving force. For the first time in a hundred years new native speakers of Manx are emerging. In 1996, Chris Sheard and Phil Gawne visited Scotland under the auspices of *Yn Chesbaght Ghailckagh* to

see at first hand the operation of Gaelic playgroups and the progression of children through Gaelic units in Scottish schools. This was taken as a model for action in the Isle of Man. Preliminary discussions took place over the foundation inside a primary school of a Manx Gaelic unit in which Manx-speaking children would be educated through Manx. The foundation of such a unit was one of the proposals in a major report on Manx submitted to Tynwald by the Manx Department of Education in January 1996.

Chied Chesmad led to the foundation of *Mooijer Veggey* (Little Folk) with Phil Gawne as a major driving force. This is a pre-school, playgroup organisation using Manx as the medium. Parents pay for their children to join the groups, and with some government support (from the Manx Heritage Foundation), *Mooijer Veggey* has proved very successful. In turn, the formation of *Mooijer Veggey*, led to the establishment of *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh*, the Manx-medium primary school at St John's – the most significant event in the move to revive Manx, for which we have to thank Phil Gawne and others a great deal. In 1999, *Sheshaght ny Paarantyn* (The Parents' Society) was formed with an interest in establishing a Manx-medium primary school. This started out as one class (or unit) at Ballacottier Primary School in Douglas in 2001. Then the Manx Gaelic 'unit' shared premises at the old St John's School. Finally in 2003 *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* took over all the premises of the old St John's School. Virtually all teaching is carried out through Manx. At present, *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* has 64 pupils – this should rise to 70 in the autumn of 2011. It's safe to say that *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* is an inspiration to all people who love Manx Gaelic.

The body of modern literature in Manx is somewhat scanty. In an effort to redress this somewhat, the Allied Irish Bank in the island initiated a prize of £500 in 1994 for literature in Manx. The first recipient of this prize was Bob Carswell for his collection of poems *Shelg yn Drane* (*Hunt the Wren*). The second recipient was Joan Caine for her translation of a crime novel. For

various reasons, the Allied Irish Bank prize was discontinued, but since then there has been more activity in this field. I produced the first original full-length novel in Manx, *Dunveryssyn yn Tooder-folley* (The Vampire Murders), a satire on modern political life in the Isle of Man, and Chris Lewin has proved to be hugely gifted young writer of Manx. His latest book is a major novel, *Droghad ny Seihill* (The Bridge of the Worlds). At present, Chris is starting a degree in Celtic Studies at Edinburgh University. Others prominent in writing in Manx are Bob Carswell and Robert Teare.

Another important development in the 1990's was the foundation of the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee, a quasi-government body. Following initiatives from Peter Karran, radio broadcasters operating from the Isle of Man can be legally obliged to include a certain proportion of Manx Gaelic programmes in their output. The Gaelic Broadcasting Committee, which has a small annual budget from the Manx Treasury, promotes radio programmes in and about the language.

The development of the internet has given a great boost to Manx, as it has to all minority languages. In this, the Manx language community is very grateful to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig for its support, and in particular to Caoimhín Ó Donnaiile for all his work there on behalf of Manx Gaelic.

It was clear from the start that the work which the first Manx Language Officer (myself) was to do could not all be done – or attempted – by one person. The demand for Manx in general was much greater than had been thought. Therefore, it was proposed, using *Yn Chesaght Ghailckagh* as a vehicle originally, to create another post for someone to work for Manx outside the schools. My job description as the Education Department's Manx Language Officer had assumed that I would be doing no teaching or very little teaching, but a lot of public relations work. The big demand for Manx in the schools made nonsense of this. There was clearly a need for a fully-paid person or persons to work for Manx outside the schools. After some time, the post of

Yn Greinneyder (The Encourager) was created, paid for by The Manx Heritage Foundation – without this government-funded body, many of the advances made by the language would never have happened. For the first two years of my post as the Education Department’s Manx Language Officer, my salary was paid for by The Manx Heritage Foundation.

Initially, the post of *Yn Greinneyder* (The Manx Heritage Foundation’s Manx Language Officer) was taken by Phil Gawne, who previously had been working for Manx National Heritage, the government organisation which runs the Manx Museum, other museums and castles, and a significant number of other heritage sites. Phil Gawne, meanwhile, continued his work with *Moojnjer Veggey*, which went hand in hand with his new post. Among several other projects, he instituted the highly successful annual *Feailley Ghaelgagh* (Manx Language Festival), an event involving lectures in Manx and in English and concerts. Later on, the name of this festival was changed to *Yn Chooish* (The Affair, or The Event). Phil Gawne was then elected to be a Member of the House of Keys, the lower house in the Manx parliament, and left the post of *Yn Greinneyder*, to be replaced by Adrian Cain.

Adrian Cain has continued many of the projects instituted by Phil Gawne, but has for the last year or so concentrated on increasing the number of competent adult speakers of Manx – escaping from the night-school-class-as-social-club-stuck-at-a-certain-level-of-competence, to be cruel about it (not Adrian’s definition). With the support of The Manx Heritage Foundation, Adrian has focused on using a version of the Ulpan methodology of teaching a new language – the methodology used to teach Hebrew quickly and effectively to new immigrants to Israel. This methodology is being used with great success to teach Welsh to adults, and Adrian Cain is tapping in to this, consulting with Welsh experts and inviting them to the Isle of Man to impart their expertise. Adrian is a highly gifted teacher, particularly using unorthodox venues for teaching, like pubs. His pupils are highly enthusiastic

about their excellent progress in speaking Manx. Other teachers of adults will be trained in the methodology Adrian is using.

Data from the 2001 official census of the Isle of Man concerning Manx Gaelic were as follows:

Speaks, reads or writes Manx Gaelic	1,689
Speaks Manx Gaelic	1,527
Writes Manx Gaelic	706
Reads Manx Gaelic	910

The figure of 1,689 is more than ten times the figure given in the 1961 census, which was the lowest ever recorded. At the very least, these figures show the very significant increase in support for the language. Many of those recorded as speaking, reading or writing Manx were aged 16 or under – a virtual sea-change. The total resident population of the Isle of Man in April 2001 was recorded in the census as 76,315. Figures for Manx in the 2011 census will be interesting.

The revitalisation of Manx has been helped greatly by the scholarly work of the late Robert Thomson and of George Broderick. Robert Thomson produced rigorous analyses of the Manx of the Bible and associated religious writing in Manx (Classical Manx), while George Broderick did a similar thing for the Manx of the last old native speakers (late 19th century Manx). In addition, George Broderick has completed and published a monumental work on the placenames of the Isle of Man, building on the work of J J Kneen in the 1920s.

Manx Gaelic has come a long way in the last twenty years, particularly with the establishment of the Manx-medium primary school, *Bunscoil Ghaelgagh*. Financial support from government has been a key element here, combined with increasing public support for the language. The last few years

have seen increasing interest in using Classical Manx. The Manx of the last old native speakers has some distinctive features, including very extensive use of the verb 'to do' as an auxiliary verb to express different tenses in general, limited use of inflected forms of verbs, 'y thie aym' ('the house at-me', 'my house') instead of 'my hie', etc., and virtual elimination of mutations. The Manx spoken now tends to be a mixture of the classical language and the language of the old native speakers, while writing in Manx is showing a pronounced move to the classical language. This is a welcome move, but it's very important not to downgrade those features which emerged in the 19th century which make Manx easier to learn, while not endangering its original nature.

UNESCO recently removed Manx Gaelic from its 'extinct' languages category and pronounced it as being something like 'seriously endangered'. That's progress for you and we are encouraged. But an infinite amount of work remains to be done.