

# Manx Notes 370 (2019)

T.E. BROWN

“SEVEN DAYS IN THE ISLE OF MAN”

(1874)

[3c] SIR,—I enclose some suggestions for pedestrians. What I want is, with your kind permission, to show my fellow-pedestrians how to spend 7 days in the Isle of Man. I believe I can guarantee the accuracy of this little sketch. I hope no one will be frightened by the term “pedestrian.” The longest of these seven walks is the last, and that is not more than 20 miles; though, certainly, much of it is rather stiff. The fact is people surrender the delights of pedestrianism far too tamely, and far too early in life. I hope I may induce some of your visitors to reconsider the question as regards themselves.

If you think the outline likely to be of any use, I should be glad also to place at your service a few “Hints How to Use the Manx Railway.”—Truly yours,

T.E. Brown.

Clifton College, July 22, 1874.

1st Day.—Get leave for the Nunnery land behind Douglas Head. This is important: the bit is very fine. I feel sure that application to Mr Taubman, at the Nunnery, or to his agent in Douglas, would procure permission. The first inlet is Ballacregga harbour, the east corner of Soderick bay. Strike inland until you hit the path to the Port Soderick Hotel. Follow this path. At the west corner of the bay, get on the cliffs again. St Anne’s Head; Greenock; some delicious walking over fine turf, a nice margin between the fields and the rocks. The temptation to lie down here and dream for a couple of years or so must be resisted. Jackdaw harbour; Cass-na-howin, the foot of the Santon river. If the tide is out, wade across; if it is in, make a bundle of your clothes, fasten them to a good big stone, throw them across, and then swim across yourself. If nervous about this, keep up your own side of the stream to a farmhouse, when you can cross on a plank. Down the other side, to sea again—undoubtedly, one of the very best things in the Island. Keep west to Derbyhaven; walk round, and out to Fort Island; then, along the “back of Langness”—commonly called the “back o’ Langlish”—to Langness point. The gullies are good. Off the point, notice the Skerranes and the strong tide. Creep out on the point as far as ever you can; in again, and follow coast of Castletown bay—exquisite bathing-creeks; water gloriously clear. At the N.E. corner you come on to the Racecourse, a sweat bit of turfy sand bank—smells like a rose. Near the College you hit the road, and so on into Castletown. On this walk there is no place of refreshment except Port Soderick Hotel, and this is close to Douglas. Sandwich and flask will be best. The whole walk will take about six hours. Smokers could hold out till dinner in Castletown. This walk is a very solitary one. After leaving Port Soderick, you will most likely not see a soul before you come to Derbyhaven.

2nd Day.—A look at the Castle outride is enough; inside, it is a jail. Make for Scarlet, and bathe there. This is a prime beatitude. Keep coast to Poolvash. Here you get road. Follow it to Mount Gawne. Just beyond Mount Gawne there is a mill. Here take a foot path to the left; it will lead you to Port St Mary. Here you might lunch. Ask for the Chasms. However, it is not hard to find them. Take the turn to the right off Port St Mary street, and keep up the road past the only big house. You will soon see a stile on the left. Here is a path to the creek of Perwick. Keep rather up the little glen (Glen Chass); climb up its left side to a mine, which is unmistakable. A very little beyond this you come on to the open moor. Its sea edge contains the Chasms. Keep the coast. The next head is the Black Head; then Spanish Head. Here you see the Calf and the Sound. Strike inland; cross some seedy-looking, little, half-drained fields, and you will hit a road running up N.E.: leads to Craig-naish. At this hamlet, be sure to take the seaward road. It leads by a Druidical circle to a mountain gate. Below the gate is a little glen called Stroon-snail. There is a road down it into Port Erin. This walk might take some five hours. Sleep here; but in the evening take a stroll by Bradda village to Fairy-hill. The first part of this day's walk will be lonely enough; but there will be people at the Chasms, probably.

3rd Day.—Bradda Head; behind it, a very deep bay—Fleshwick. North of this bay, or rather creek, keep close to the cliffs; but rise gradually. You will come to a singular depression in the coast line called “The Slock.” Here are some walls converging. Steer north, and keep up. You will get to the top of Cronk-ny-Airey Lhaa, a splendid lookout-post westward. If decently clear, ought to see Ireland. The little town on the coast is Peel. You can see the Castle. The deep dell on the north is Dalby; the reef of rocks running out just north of it is the Niarbal. Descend eastward. The mountain before you is South Barrule. When you come to the level between the two hills, you will find a road. This place is called “The Round Table.” Turn down the road to the left. It will lead you just above Dalby and the Niarbal, and then it will follow the coast north. Keep this road to Glen Meay. See the waterfall, which, by the-by, is only a ruin of its old self, and then follow the stream to the shore. Climb up on the right, and you will get on to Peel hill. A fine walk along the top, and then you drop down in to Peel, just as the Castle begins to show itself in front. Five hours ample for this walk. Refreshments, of a sort, might be had at Glen Meay; but I should “lay in” at Port Erin. Sleep at Peel. A fine lonely walk, except just at Glen Meay.

4th Day.—The Castle. Take train to St John's. Walk to Rhenass, the name ludicrously transmogrified now into “Glen Helen!” See waterfall, and return to gate, where you can get a teetotal lunch. Up Craig Willie's hill to Cronk-y-Voddy chapel. Here take a road, to the left, which will enable you to strike the road between Peel and Kirk Michael, just N.E. of Glen Broigh. Walk N.E. on this road to Kirk Michael. You will cross the mouths of three glens—Glen Cam, Glen Ballagawne, and Glen Willan. Glen Cam (crooked) is decidedly one of the finest things in the

Island. At Glen Ballagawne, turn up the stream for about half a mile, and you will come to the Spoot-vane waterfall. It is not worth much. You can leave it by a different road, which will fall into the highroad nearer Kirk Michael. It is a part of what is called “Bishop Wilson’s road.” As you walk along, Scotland hovers nearly parallel to you, a fine old geographic ghost. Sleep at Kirk [3d] Michael. If there is no room at the hotel, you will find a very decent “public” a little down the street, where you can get a good clean bed, and a dish of ham and eggs for breakfast of the most bountiful kind. This day’s walk will have been magnificently solitary, except from Peel to Rhenass.

5th Day.—Don’t waste time on Bishop’s Court. The glen is really nothing; a few clumps of rhododendra and some gravel walks—a part, in fact, of the Bishop’s private grounds. Go straight on to Ballaugh. Immediately after crossing the bridge, turn to the right, and go up the glen. Keep on some two miles to Ravensdale, where the glen forks. Take the E. stream, and go right up. When you get well up on to the first plateau, and are on the open mountain land, steer S.E. by S.; or, what is as good a guide, walk straight on from the top of the glen to the first cultivated laud. Then skirt this, going about E., and you will come down into Sulby Glen at a capital spot. I want you to come down just where the Sulby river turns northwards. Here there is a little chapel, and 500 yards below there is Bishop Murray’s bridge. Cross this, and go up a narrow lateral glen, where they have been trying for slate, and, I am sorry to say, have destroyed one of the sweetest little waterfalls and rock-basins in the British Isles. However, this bothers me more than you. Keep to the stream as close as you can, up to its source. You are walking S.E. by E. along the back of Snaefell. You can, if you choose, go up to the right and climb the mountain. I do not recommend that. It is an unsatisfactory view, and the mountain itself a very ugly stupid affair. Come to the watershed. Bear a little to the N. of E. You will see, but avoid, the new road running towards Ramsey, N.E. by E. You will cross the old road from Ramsey to Snaefell, and strike the head of Glen Aldhyn. Follow this glen right down to Milntown, where you get on to the main road, which you saw last at Ballaugh. This takes you into Ramsey (2 miles). An absolutely solitary walk from Ballaugh to Milntown. You can have a grand bathe in the Sulby river. For refreshments, I should try a cottage in Sulby Glen where you first come down. You will get buttermilk and oatcake, at any rate. Give the people a trifle. (The old free hospitality can’t be relied on in these days: it is better to bear this in mind up Manx glens.) The walk will take six hours. Sleep at Ramsey.

6th Day.—Go up North Barrule. The best way is to follow the “old Douglas road,” which turns up to the right, a few yards above Ballure bridge. Descend straight to a little inn just E. of the mountain and on the regular Douglas road. Walk back towards Ramsey on this road. You go down a long hill (Slieu Lewaigue). Where it turns rather sharp to bear down upon Ramsey, leave it, and turn to the right. At Lewaigue House (Mr Christian’s), turn to the left. The lane will lead you to Port-e-

Viullen (pronounced “Port-a-Vullion”). Turn up the road which leads to Kirk Maughold Church; but leave it almost immediately. Pass through a gate on the left, where there is a runic cross set up in the hedge. Now keep close to the sea. There is only a track. It leads round Ago Point (pronounce as an Irishman would, “ego”), just above an iron mine. Follow on. You can’t go down to the water’s edge. Just keep above the rocks. Less than a mile of this will bring you to St Maughold’s Well. It is in the seaward face of the steep hill. It is not so very easy to find. The danger is that you may pass above it; so you really must keep as close to the very cliff as you well can. You are not likely to pass below it without noticing the rushy damp look of the ground, which indicates that you are not far from it. Then climb to the top of Maughold Head, which they call “The Cairn” (pronounced “kern”). Now, which ever way you look, there is no view like this in the Irish Sea (I have heard George Borrow say this). Go down inland to the churchyard, which you can see from the top, due W. From the little hamlet near the churchyard gate, follow a road which leads S. by the back of Baldromma Farm, to Port Moore. Thence keep the coast to Cornaa harbour. Here turn up the stream inland till you reach Ballaglass Waterfall This I very much recommend. A little below the waterfall is a mill and bridge. Cross the bridge, and proceed southwards. The road is a little intricate, running from farm to farm; but say you want to go over the Barony. This is a good bit of moorland near the sea. It will lead you to the Dhoon. This is a fine deep ravine, running down to the water’s edge. Just above it, on the south side, you will find the Douglas road. Follow it to Laxey. There is a choice of roads at the top of this hill (Dreem-y-Keskeig). Take that which keeps closest to the cliffs. A little after Laxey Glen Gardens, I would strike a very old rough road down to the left, and descend to Lower Laxey, of Laxey on the sea. The two views of Laxey are those from the opposite headlands at the mouth of the glen. One you will have just had; the other you will have as you go up on the other (Douglas) side. Don’t trouble yourself about the big wheel, washing apparatus, and what not. [But, if you must, go up the glen to the hotel near the little church, and sleep there. Next morning, go up Glen Roy, N.W. of Laxey, and spend an hour there before starting for Douglas. Return to hotel for start.] Follow Douglas-road till you pass a smithy. A few yards beyond this, turn down to the left. A lane leads to the shore—Garwick. By no means miss this. Now, keep to the cliffs all the way to the Crescent, on Douglas Bay. Rather a long walk—say eight hours from Ramsey to Douglas. Quite solitary, except just about Laxey and from the Crescent in to Douglas.

7th Day.—If you slept in Laxey, walk to Douglas as above. Have a car out to Braddan Church, and let it take you on to Injebreck, in Baldwin Glen. Return to sleep in Douglas.

*One Caution.*—Don’t chaff the country people. Remember, the race is mainly Celtic; and you will readily, but (I think) only to your disgust, elicit a coarse echo of

your own fun. Talk to them quite simply and kindly, and you will like them very much. It makes all the difference.

T.E. Brown, “Seven Days in the Isle of Man.” *Isle of Man Times* 25 July 1874: 3c–d.

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“I hope no one will be frightened by the term ‘pedestrian.’ The longest of these seven walks is the last, and that is not more than 20 miles; though, certainly, much of it is rather stiff.” T.E. Brown enjoyed walking and walking alone, as some of his comments show, “[t]his walk is a very solitary one,” “[a] fine lonely walk, except just at Glen Meay,” “[a]n absolutely solitary walk from Ballaugh to Milntown.” He also enjoying bathing and recommended the Sulby river and the sea at Scarlet as spots. “Sandwich and flask will be best.” This was Brown’s advice when walking from Douglas to Castletown. The refreshments on offer at Glen Meay were not to his taste, “I should ‘lay in’ at Port Erin” being his comment.

Brown warns the traveller, “Don’t chaff the country people,” and the result of that was being seen in the change in hospitality in the countryside:

For refreshments, I should try a cottage in Sulby Glen where you first come down. You will get buttermilk and oatcake, at any rate. Give the people a trifle. (The old free hospitality can’t be relied on in these days: it is better to bear this in mind up Manx glens).

Here in 1874, Brown writes that “the race is mainly Celtic,” one of the earliest identifications of the Manx being so.

Stephen Miller, 2019

