

# Manx Notes 537 (2021)

“WHO IS MONA DOUGLAS?” (14)

“WOMAN’S REALM: NO. 13. MISS MONA DOUGLAS”  
(1934)

“To unlock the treasures of the Island heart;  
With loving feet to trace each hill and glen,  
And find the ore that is not for the mart of commerce.”

[11c] These words were written by our beloved poet, T.E. Brown, long before Mona Douglas saw the light of day, yet nothing that can be written or said today could more fittingly express the purpose behind all her endeavours in the realms of Manx folk lore, folk music and folk dances.

She has delved deep into the treasure chest of fairy lore and brought out for our inspection many of the wonderful jewels hidden there.

She is a fervent student of all things Manx, and her keen and loving appreciation of her country and her compatriots has induced her to write intimate and authentic descriptions of the manners and customs of the Manx people in ancient days. In the opinion of the best judges, she is one of the finest literary women the Island has ever produced, and is possessed of more genius than any living Manx poet.

As a child Miss Douglas was highly imaginative. She haunted the Douglas Free Library in her early teens, and before she was sixteen years old her first volume of verse was published. Four years before that time she had written poetic fragments which were printed in various forms, and of this early work a well-known critic wrote “this work is noteworthy even as the spontaneous poetic utterances of a child of twelve. It is the unforced product of a young girl’s heart and mind; the reflex of spontaneous thought and inborn feeling for country, for Nature, for art.”

Since that day, Miss Douglas has consistently sustained and developed her impulse to poetry, and has woven many a quaint and charming story in prose of [11d] the *bugganes*, *phynnodderees*, witches and mysterious sprites.

“I write about the Island just because it is the Island, and because I am Manx and proud of it.” That is her justification for her literary activity. And this is what she says about her early life: “I was born in September, 1899, at Liverpool, but both by descent and upbringing I am Manx, and when only a few months old I was brought to the Island to live. Then, being rather delicate, I was allowed to run wild in the hills. I have never been to school, but I practised a mixture of occupations from voluntary odd jobbing about a Manx farm to driving a bread cart.”

She senses the truth of the old Manx proverb, “Dyn glare, dyn cheer,” (‘no language, no country’) and she is doing her utmost to prevent the decay of the Manx tongue. The collection of old Manx folk dances is her principal pursuit at the moment. Her great-grandfather, Philip Quayle, of Glen Trammon, a noted singer

and dancer in his day, gathered together written notes on folk dances and folk songs, and when these notes were left to Miss Douglas by her grandmother she was fired with the idea of making a special study of the subject. In collaboration with Mr Douglas Kennedy, of the English Folk Dancing Society, she is compiling a volume on Manx folk songs and dances.

A full length Manx play, "The Master of Raby," written by Miss Douglas, gained first prize in a competition for play-writing, open to all England, some years ago, and she has also written a number of one-act plays which have been produced in different parts of the Island.

Miss Douglas occupies the post of librarian to the I.o.M. Education Authority, and has no hobbies outside her pursuit of the arts.

"Woman's Realm: No. 13—Miss Mona Douglas." *Isle of Man Examiner* 25  
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Yet another piece of the jigsaw that makes up the biography of Mona Douglas.

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