

Manx Notes 538 (2021)

“WHO IS MONA DOUGLAS?” (15)

“REALLY BUSY!”

(1944)

[6e] Most of us think we are really busy these days, and perhaps the majority find the hours all too few for the various jobs which have to be done, but I would ask you to consider the life of Miss Mona Douglas, of Thie-ny-Garrey, Ballarragh, Isle of Man, and when you have read the ensuing story you need not feel sorry for her—she is enjoying her life, and she has “brought it on herself.”

All Manx people know Miss Mona Douglas. From a child she has been interested in her homeland; she is a gifted student of the Manx language, and her interests have always been of a literary bent. For instance, at the age of fourteen she had published a book of her early poems, *Manx Song and Maiden Song*. Since then she has published *Mychurachan* (which is the Manx word for driftwood), and quite recently a combination of verse and plays entitled “The Secret Island.” Then she has written several plays, such as “The Fairy Tune,” “Churning,” and “The Lips of the Sea.” She has produced one play, “The Master of Raby.” In earlier years Miss Douglas was appointed as secretary of the Manx Language Society, and at one time acted as assistant secretary to the Celtic Congress. The Eisteddfod has been pleased to confer upon her the honorary Bardic degree.

Most of these activities belong to the pre-war period. For some years now Miss Douglas has been the librarian of the Rural Library, and there she has the assistance of one young girl only. She starts her work in the library at 10 o'clock, and finishes at 5 p.m. In addition to ordinary work the war has brought further calls on the library. All troops stationed outside Douglas have a branch section of the library; many of them take advantage of the Students' Service, and, generally speaking, the library does its full share in helping the mental outlook and education of the men stationed on the Island.

Then Miss Douglas has a change of work.

She farms The Clarum in Ballarragh, which is only seven or eight minutes' walk from her own home. She has always taken an interest in agriculture. The fact that her mother is not at all strong has precluded her from doing Red Cross work, and so she thought the best way to help on the war effort was to take to the land. so Miss Douglas became the owner of The Clarum at Easter. She got to work immediately, and her help consists of two boys and a girl. Two of these schoolchildren come from Laxey, and the other from Ramsey. The Clarum comprises 80 acres, but there was not time this year to get more than 40 acres under the plough. Miss Douglas has an excellent crop of oats coming on, and she is growing wheat, potatoes, turnips and

carrots. The Government tractor did the ploughing, and she has booked it for the harvest. The farm was bought in something of a hurry, and so this Manxwoman still needs many implements, and she is having a new cowhouse and dairy erected, as she wants to rear livestock. As it is, she is [6f] fully occupied, in her “spare” time, with weeding and generally looking after the 40 acres under crops. She rises at 5-30 a.m. each day, does the housework, gives her mother her breakfast in bed, then goes to the farm and works until it is time to get her bus to the library. She leaves her everyday work at 5 p.m., is home before six, and after having prepared a meal, works on the land until dark. Miss Douglas has not been to a play, cinema or concert more than three times since the war started. Her only change these days is a change of work, but she is enjoying herself very much.

I think I should also tell you that Miss Douglas was “agin publicity” of [6g] any sort, so I shall probably incur her wrath by giving you a picture of her everyday life, but I rather hope she will forgive me in time! I have told you about her because I really do think she is the busiest woman I have ever met. and she is certainly giving direct aid to the war effort.

“[Woman’s Sphere] Really Busy!” *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 26 August 1944: 6e–g.

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A further piece of the jigsaw that makes up the biography of Mona Douglas.

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