

# Manx Notes 613 (2023)

“I HAVE NOT FOUND ANY DANCE OVER  
HERETRADITIONALLY CONNECTED  
WITH ANY STONE MONUMENT”

MONA DOUGLAS WRITES TO MAUD KARPELES \*  
(1935)

(1)

COPY/DS.

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER. | School of Geography, | MANCHESTER.I3.  
13.II.35.

Dear Madam,

May I trouble you with an archeological query? The name of Dance (Dance of the Giants, Fairies Dance, and so on) is sometimes used by rural folk in connection with ancient stone monuments, though we do not know whether those names are really old.

I have been investigating a great stone monument in the Isle of Man, and have every reason to think that certain standing stones set around part of a paved forecourt symbolise men and women. Two very large ones flank and entry into a chambered area beyond the forecourt, and I designate them as K.Q respectively (King and Queen). Six others stand 3-a-side.

	K	Q	
(M)			(F)
F			(M)
M			F

This is a hypothetical interpretation with M and F indicating the two sexes. Unfortunately it is only a hypothesis as three of the stones (in circles) were destroyed many years ago.

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\* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “‘I have not found any dance over here traditionally connected with any stone monument.’ Mona Douglas writes to Maud Karpeles (1935),” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* September (2023), [21]–[22].

I wonder whether there is any traditional dance in any way resembling this arrangement of persons. Someone without special knowledge told me he thought there was one in which three pairs danced a sort of obeisance to "A Presence". Probably there is nothing in all this, but I hope you will forgive me for troubling you with a query on the change of some clue to my problems.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) H.J.Fleure

(2)

Thie-ny-Garee, | Laxey, | Isle of Man.

27th November, 1935

Dear Miss Karpeles,

Thank you for your letter of the 18th and the copy of Professor Fleure's very interesting letter to you.

I don't know that I can be of much help, as I have not found any dance over here traditionally connected with any stone monument. There is, however, a fragmentary tradition of a dance formerly performed by fishermen in Dalby and also in Castletown (if this latter tradition is the same, as I think) which does seem to correspond somewhat to the formation that he gives, though it was done by nine men and not by both sexes. I have just been working at the amplification and re-writing of an article on the Manx dances which I have been promising Mr Kennedy for the last five years, and a description of this dance, so far as I have been able to obtain one, is included therein, so I won't quote it in full now as of course you will be able to read the whole thing when I send it along, which will be within a few days as soon as I can finish typing it; but I am abstracting this description and sending it to Professor Fleure in case he may find it of interest. I ought to add that I have not got anything like a complete and workable description of this dance, only an outline, of course it may have nothing whatever to do with the stones or with Professor Fleure's theory, to which, of course, I have no clue beyond his letter.

Yours sincerely,

(1) Copy letter of H.J. Fleure to Maud Karpeles, 13 November 1935, MNHL, MS 09545, Mona Douglas Papers, Box 15, [Folder] International Folk Music Council; (2) Copy letter of Mona Douglas to Maud Karpeles, 27 November, 1935, MNHL, MS 09545, Mona Douglas Papers, Box 15, [Folder] International Folk Music Council.

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H.J. Fleure was a Professor in the Geography Department at the University of Manchester. His letter here from 1935, was forwarded with a covering note by Maud Karpeles to Mona Douglas, who, as can be seen here, answered her that same month.

Fleure does not make clear which “great stone monument” in his words he was referring to, and Douglas makes no attempt to identify it herself. Regardless, she knew of no such dance. The promised article she mentions working on was eventually published as “Manx Folk Dances: their Notation and Revival,” *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, iii.2 (1937), 110–16. The dances alluded to by Douglas are the Salmon Leap and the Mollag Dance.

Stephen Miller, RBV

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