Ta daa cho-haggloo dy ve er nyn gummal ayns Aberystwyth mleeaney dy chowraghey keead blein neayr’s hooar John Rhŷs baase. Va Rhŷs yn chied ard-olloo Celtish ayns Oxford, as v’eh jeant ny reejerey as ny oltey jeh’n Chooneisel Follit. Va ayns voor echey ayns cur er bun yn British Academy neesht, as t’ad cummal loayrtys bleeanoil ayns cooinaghtyn jeh dys y laa t’ayn jiu. V’eh ruggit ayns 1840 da eirinnagh boght ayns Ponterwyd ayns Ceredigion, as she Bretnish va’n chied ghlaire echey. Ren eh scoillaraght shanshoil er folkke-oaylleaghyt y Vretenish, er beel-arrish Cheltiagh, er screeuyn-cloaie Ogham as Gaulish, er lettyraghys mean-eashagh, as er ymmodee cooislyn elley, goaill stiagh yn Ghaelg.

Haink Rhŷs dys Mannin hoshiaght ayns 1886 lurgu da ve cuirrit liorish yn saggyrts as yn shennaghee ynnyoil Ernest Savage. Cur shilley er ny screeuyn-cloaie ogham ayns Mannin va oyr yn turrys, agh haghyr Rhŷs er y Ghaelg vio neesht, as ghow eh toshiaight dy ynsagh ee voish loayreyderyn dooghysagh, va foast palçhey dy liooar ec y traar shen ayns dy chooille sy skeerey. Haink eh reesht queig keayrty eddyr 1888 as 1893, as dagh keayrt v’eh tannaghtyn paart dy hiaghteeyn as eh rouail mygeayr yn ellan, meeteil rish sleih va abyl lhaih yn Vible Ghaelgagh da. V’eh cliaghtey screeu sheese yn folkley-magh oc ayns agh-screeeuee phonetagh as lurgu da goll dy-valley, gobbragh dys anmagh er yn oie lesh folkley Cregeen as folkleyr Kelly dy hoiggal ny va chymsit echey ’sy laa.

Chammah as meeteil rish sleih er-lheh dy lhaih ayns ny thieyn oc, veagh eh bannaghey da sleih er y raad ayns dy chooille sy voayl as prowal loayrt Gaelg roo. T’eh ginh dooin dy row eh gddyyn ansoor ayns Baarle son y chooid smoo, son nagh b’liack lesh ny Manninee loayrt rish joarreeyn ayns chengey yn cihillagh, agh v’eh lhiggey er dy re ass boayl fadane ’sy Thalloo Vretenagh v’eh cheett as nagh row monney Baarle echey, “Cha row fys aym dy row yn Vretenish cha faggys da’n Ghaelg!” dooyrt shenn ven dy row haink ny raad.

Ayns 1895 ren Rhŷs cooney lesh A. W. Moore dy chur magh lioar-phadjer Ghaelgagh yn Aspick Phillips. Ec jerrey yn nah lioor ta mess yn ronsaghey echey er yn Ghaelg vio, The Outlines of the Phonology of Manx Gaelic, cheet risht. Ta’n lioor shoh feer scanshoil son dy vel eh dy mennick jannoo imraa jeh raaghyn er-lheh cheayll eh ayns dagh ayrn jeh’n ellan, as yn aght va’n folkley magh cahllhaa vois skeerey dys skeerey. Ny-yeih ta cooid voor jeh’n ronsaghey echey foast ayns ny lioaryn-noteyn echey ayns Thie-liaoragh Ashoonagh yn Thalloo Vretenagh.
Two conferences are to be held this year in Aberystwyth to mark the hundredth anniversary of the death of John Rhŷs. Rhŷs was the first professor of Celtic in Oxford, and he was knighted and made a member of the Privy Council. He was one of the founders of the British Academy as well, and they still hold an annual lecture in his memory. He was born in 1840 to a poor farmer in Ponterwyd in Ceredigion, and Welsh was his first language. He did important scholarship on Welsh philology, Celtic folklore, Ogham and Gaulish inscriptions, mediaeval literature, and many other subjects, including Manx.

Rhŷs came to the Isle of Man for the first time in 1886 on the invitation of vicar and antiquarian Ernest Savage. The purpose of the trip was to view the ogham stones in the Isle of Man, but Rhŷs encountered the living Gaelic speech of the island as well, and began to learn it from native speakers, who were still fairly numerous and that time in every parish. He returned five times between 1888 and 1893, and each time he stayed a few weeks, travelling round the island, meeting people who were able to read the Manx Bible to him. He would note down their pronunciation in phonetic transcription and after going home, work late into the night deciphering what he had collected with the help of Cregeen and Kelly’s dictionaries.

As well as meeting particular individuals in their homes, he would greet people on the road in each area and try to speak Manx to them. He tells us that he usually got a reply in English, since the Manx did not like to speak to strangers in the language of the hearth, but he pretended that he came from a remote part of Wales and did not have much English. “I never knew Welsh was so close to Manx!” said one old woman.

In 1895 Rhŷs helped A. W. Moore to publish an edition of Bishop Phillips’ Manx prayer book. At the end of the second volume the fruits of his research on living Manx appear, The Outlines of the Phonology of Manx Gaelic. This work is very important as it mentions particular phrases he heard in different areas, and the way pronunciations varied from parish to parish. Much of his research on Manx, however, is still buried in his note-books in the National Library of Wales.