Beealeraght

Bilingual Manx column - January 2013

Christopher Lewin

Christmas Day is no sooner over than too many people these days are saying how relieved they are that it is finished for another year: the ‘hype’ has been going for a month or two and now at long last they can return to normal. But in truth Christmas begins on 25th December and before that it’s Advent when we should be contemplating the four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell.

Not so long ago Christmas decoration weren’t put up until Christmas Eve, and some keep up this traditional today. If you don’t start Christmas until Christmas Day, you won’t get tired of it so fast.

Especially in the Isle of Man we have reason to value the days of Christmas after the big day. Many of our national customs, both old and new, happen in the ‘Foolish Fortnight’—as the old Manx used to call it—between Christmas and Epiphany. Though it was raining, no doubt many people were out on St Stephen’s Day doing Hunt the Wren and playing cammag in St John’s. On the 27th there was a chance to enjoy ‘Mollag Yennal’ in Douglas.
To make clear to us as it were that Christmas is not over, the old Manx called New Year’s Day ‘little Christmas’, as indeed for a long time they kept up 5th January as Old Christmas Day, and to mark this a Manx service is being held this year in Peel Methodist Church at 3pm on Sunday 6th.

In this fortnight too we remember the death of Illiam Dhone on the 2nd January, and this year is the 350th anniversary. Also in the Christmas fortnight the 27th December is the anniversary of the death of Ned Maddrell, and the death of traditional Manx as a mother tongue.

So there is a lot for us to do and think about at Christmas and it isn’t over yet. Merry Christmas and a happy new year to you all!