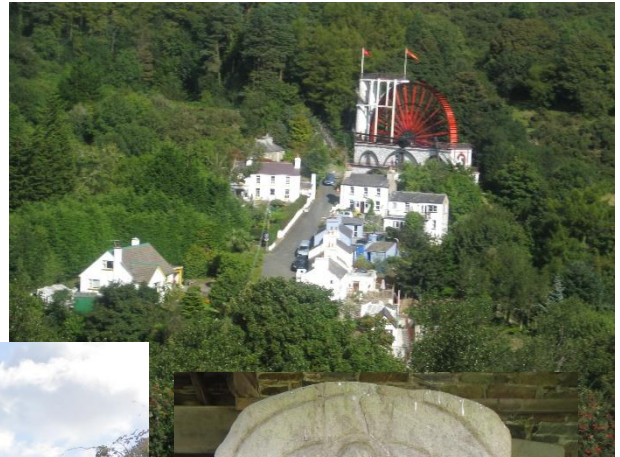


The Isle of Man



Michael Pierre de Villiers

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Title page: At Ayre Point, The Laxey Wheel, the Camera Obscura, Manx Cross at Moughold, Derby Fort and airport in the background and the old Toll Gate (Marine Arch) on Marine Drive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Pierre de Villiers was born in Durban, South Africa. He was trained to World Meteorological Organization class one meteorologist and multi-discipline weather forecaster in the South African Weather Service where he reached the rank of Director. He served on a weather ship in the South Atlantic. He served on World Meteorological Organization expert teams and was World Meteorological Organization rapporteur for the Africa region. He was also a commercial pilot and flying instructor. More recently he was a weather forecaster in the United Arab Emirates, then in England. Now retired.

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2026-07-20

The Isle of Man

Michael Pierre de Villiers

Introduction

Starting in 2012 my wife and I have been to the Isle of Man on numerous occasions to visit close relations who located to the Isle from South Africa. This article is a combination of places visited and activities during these visits. Our first visit in 2012 was a reconnaissance trip on their behalf prior to their relocation due to company expansion from South Africa to the Isle of Man, to learn about the property market by viewing prearranged houses in various locations on the island while discussing buying or leasing with agents as well as amenities such as schools. Subsequent visits were purely social and as tourists when much more was seen of the island.

The Isle of Man, situated in the Irish Sea pretty much midway between England and Ireland, north of Wales and south of Scotland, is a self-governing British Crown dependency. That is, it is under the sovereignty of the British Crown, but does not belong to the United Kingdom (nor the European Union). It has its own parliament called the Tynwald (reputedly the oldest continuous legislature in the world), government, judiciary, administration and raises its own revenue. Oriented north-north-east to south-south-west, the elongated island can easily be circumnavigated by road in one day. It has its own Manx (Mannin) language, although rarely heard spoken, certainly never heard by the author. The Isle of Man in Manx being Ellan Vannin, much less common Ellan Mannin,

Isle of Man reconnaissance

December 11th 2012, we flew early morning Flybe from Birmingham Airport to Ronaldsway Airport, Ballasalla, Isle of Man and returned late on the 12th. We spent the night at the Sefton Express Hotel across the road from the airport and had our one evening meal at the White Stone Inn, Ballasalla. While our primary objective was information gathering, we did albeit fleetingly manage to see a good deal of the island, mostly seen from the motor car.



Leaving the Mersey Estuary and Irish Sea inlet at the River Dee and passing Port Erin of final approach to runway 08 at Ronaldsway Airport.

The flight to the island was supposed to be operated by a de Havilland Dash 8-400 twin turbo-prop aircraft, departing 07:15 arriving 08:10, but it had to be replaced by a twin-jet Embraer 195. This meant a delayed departure. We were concerned that we would be late for our first

house viewing appointment, considering we first had to collect our rented car and find the place on a strange island. That is, strange to us. In the end we made it with some time to spare. The car we hired was an appealing red Nissan Micra. Ideal for the rather flat island and frequently narrow winding roads.

During the two days, viewing houses we covered coast to coast from the south of the island at Port Erin to the northernmost tip at Point of Ayre, including places such as Castletown, Douglas (capital), Onchan Head, Laxey and Sulby. Winter sun and low sun angle was not the best for photography, unless one was aiming for the atmospheric look.



A composite photograph. The bay at Port Erin seen in gloomy winter late afternoon sunlight. The remains of a breakwater can be seen at low tide. It was destroyed in a severe storm in 1884 about 20 years after it was built and never rebuilt.



The Point of Ayre Lighthouse. On the right, the foghorn building with Winkie on the shingle and gravel. Someone has marked the direction to Scotland on the car park area.

The Point of Ayre Lighthouse, apparently still active, was designed and built in 1818 by Robert Stevenson, grandfather of the writer and novelist Robert Louis Stevenson. The point has a shingle and gravel beach deposited by strong currents that expanded with time. A smaller light, known as the Winkie, was built in 1889 on this beach 230 metres (750 feet) seaward of the main lighthouse. Further expansion of the beach caused Winkie to be moved further 76 metres (250 feet) in 1950. Winkie' light was decommissioned in 2010.

A curiosity at Port Erin is a well on the edge of the beach. Not where one would expect to find a well. The plaque reads; St Catherine's Well. This source of fresh water inspired fishermen centuries ago to settle hereabouts. Port Erin began here.



St Catherine's Well at Port Erin showing both sides. Apparently no longer in used. However, water could be seen escaping, seen in the lower left of the photograph on the right. The two photographs date from a visit the following year in September.



On the Douglas promenade looking toward the harbour entrance.



The Tower of Refuge on Conister Rock.

It was gloomy when we passed through the capital Douglas, evident in the photographs above and left. Of particular interest was Conister Rock, or St Mary's Isle on a partially submerged reef in Douglas Bay with the Tower of Refuge built in 1832. The reef is not visible in the photograph. Apparently, the reef is only fully submerged at spring high tide. The reef was often responsible for damage to and sinking of ships. The tower was built to provide refuge for shipwrecked sailors and serve as a visible warning of the location of the reef, particularly at high tide.

Back in the south, before returning to the airport and returning the hired car, there was time to briefly visit nearby Castletown. Castletown, with its narrow winding streets, is the original capital of the Isle of Man and the Tynwald until 1869. It is also the location of Castle Rushen

and the old House of Keys. More about both structures later.



A view of Castletown with Christmas decorations and part of Castle Rushen as well as part of the harbour at low tide.

We arrived back at Birmingham International Airport, more-or-less on time, at 20:15, this time on the expected de Havilland Dash 8-400 aircraft.

Isle of Man four-day visit

Best trip of 2013, was our September visit to now settled relatives on the island from the morning of the Saturday 14th 2013 departing in the evening of Tuesday 17th on Flybe De Havilland Dash 8-400 aircraft. Upon arrival we collected our now blue Nissan Micra 1200cc, 3 door car from the airport Athol car hire. A newer version of the red one hired on our scouting trip in December 2012. A most enjoyable 4 days travelling more of the island than before. This time purely as tourists and relaxed.

The best for me being trips on their steam engine train and trams. Less of an enthusiast, my wife also enjoyed the journeys. Saturday afternoon we travelled on their Manx Electric Railway, which is really a tram, but they do not like you to call it that. It operates from Douglas to Ramsey via Laxey on the northern part of the east coast. I think it is about 30 kilometres (~19 miles) and takes 1 hour and 15 minutes. We travelled from Douglas to Laxey, return. Each way 30 minutes.



A Manx Electric Railway No21 tram with trailer No59 that has Douglas & Laxey Electric Tramway written on the side at the Baldrine stop toward Douglas. Photographed 14th September 2025. On the right Snaefell Mountain Railway tram No4 at Snaefell. Photographed 14th September 2013.

We also travelled on the Snaefell Mountain Railway, which is also really a tram, that takes 30 minutes from Laxey to the top of Snaefell Mountain at 621 metres (2036 feet) above sea level. Unless you walk there is no other way to the top. Although, there is a road to near the base of the last climb. Excellent weather for the tram trip north during Saturday afternoon to Laxey



Douglas Corporation Tramway horse drawn tram.

then to Snaefell Mountain. On a good day from this point, one should be able to see Ireland to the west, Scotland to the north and England to the east and Wales to the south, but the visibility was not that good. However, you can see a good deal of the island to the west and east coasts and the northern tip of the island.

They also have a horse tram that travels along the Douglas promenade during the summer months. It is believed to be the last horse tram in the world. I am told the horses know when their shift for the day is done. They simply refuse to do another trip.

The Isle of Man Steam Railway operates from the capital Douglas to St Erin in the south-west, a distance of 26 kilometres (16 miles) that takes 60 minutes for the trip. Sunday was a very windy and wet day for the trip, but worth it.

Parked next to the Douglas railway station was an Associated Equipment Company (AEC) Regent III that is preserved as part of the Isle of Man Transport heritage fleet. It entered service new in June 1949, withdrawn from service in 1976. It was very similar to, possibly identical to, the busses I remembered riding in as a child in Durban, South Africa. The AEC and Leyland type double decker busses were operated by the then Durban Transport Management Board. I particularly remember when travelling to or from school we used to throw our school cases in the space under the stairwell at the rear platform entrance then go to sit upstairs, collecting the cases when disembarking.



Left, AEC Regent III at the railway station. Right, No.4 Caledonia.

Our steam locomotive for the trip was No.4, Caledonia, a 11cwt (23t) 0-6-0 tank built in 1885. Already mentioned, it was a wet and windy day that did not detract from the scenery on the way and the attractive little stations, such as at Castletown. A notice board informed one to alight here for Castle Rushen, the Old House of Keys and Nautical Museum.



Misty and wet scenery and Castletown station.

To end the day, we drove to the Grand Union Camera Obscura on the higher ground to the south of Douglas along the Marine Drive. It is a building, dark inside, which, using light and mirrors, reflects outside scenic images on to a large screen. Although the sign said it was open Easter to September and we were there before closing time, it was nevertheless closed and locked.

The composite photograph below of Douglas Bay shows the entrance to the harbour and ferry terminal in the foreground. Behind it, compare the reef with its Tower of Refuge and low tide with that of the tower shown previously.



Monday the 16th, we headed to the west coast and Peel, stopping on the way at Tynwald Hill. A plaque at the site says, "Tynwald, a word of Viking origin, is the ancient assembly ground where the Manx Parliament and people meet each year in the open air to hear the proclamation of new laws. This national gathering and the Manx constitution associated with it, originated during the time of the Manx Kings of the Isles, the last of whom died in the year 1265 AD. It is a remarkable political survival which may well be older than the Icelandic Parliament established at Thing-vellir in the year 930 AD. The earliest account of the Tynwald Ceremony (1417 AD) shows that the King of Man sat (as the Lieutenant Governor still does) in royal state on the top of Tynwald Hill, facing east, his sword held point upward before him. His barons (of whom the bishop alone survives) were beside him. Before him sat the Deemsters (judges)

and high officers. On the terraces below were the Twenty-Four Keys, the clergy squires and yeomen (the parish captains). Outside the fenced enclosure were the Commons of Man. The hill is said to have been formed of soil from each of the ancient parishes of the island. Its Manx name, Cronk Keeilleoin (The Hill of St. John's Chapel) emphasizes the long association of the Hill, where law was proclaimed and the Chapel which served both as Court House and Church. The traditional date for the assembly was Midsummer Day 24th June. This was Christianised as the Festival of St. John the Baptist, hence the dedication of the Chapel. Since the alteration of the Calendar in 1752, the ceremony has been and still is, held on Old Midsummer Day, 5th July." Which King Charles III attended this year 2026. Next to the site is the present St John's Church.



Tynwald Hill and the Tynwald Hill St John's Church.

Peel is a pretty seaside town and main fishing port in the Isle of Man. It is the third largest town in the island after Douglas and Ramsey. Peel could be called a city because of its Peel Cathedral, which is the seat of the Bishop of Sodor and Man. Peel was the capital of the island for over 200 years until the King of Man moved from Peel Castle to Castle Rushen at what is now known as Castletown.



The large ruined Peel Castle or Cashtal Purt-ny-Hinshey, seen above on St Patrick's Isle from the road causeway, is still impressive. The fort was built by Vikings, ruled by Magnus Barefoot, in the 11th century to replace the older stone monastic buildings. The original fort was made of wood before the most of the walls and towers were stone built in the 14th century. Ruins of the former Cathedral of St German are still in evidence within the fort on the left of the

photograph. The brick building in front of the castle is the island is the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) Lifeboat station with its slipway.



Replica Viking boats at Peel.

Moored at the uppermost part of the harbour on the River Neb we found moored, three replica Viking boats. In 2005, a new floodgate was installed at the entrance to the river to enable boats to remain afloat at low tide. Next to the harbour and the Viking boats, is the historical Moore's Kipper working factory and shop. Fish were taken straight from the fishing boats to produce traditional, oak fired, chimney smoked, Manx kippers. Apart from fish, they also cure bacon, salmon, queenies and king scallops. It is the last of these traditional curing yards and is now a living museum. We were kindly

shown the kipper making process whereby the fish are cut then soaked in salt and placed on sticks before being hung in large chimneys to be smoked.

The last day, Tuesday the 17th, we packed our luggage in the car and headed north to Ramsey and nearby Port-e-Vullen, simply because we had not seen it before. Frankly not much to see. We did not go further north because we went to the northern tip of the island at Point of Ayre on our December 2012 scouting trip.

From Ramsey we turned west and southward along the west coast past Peel to visit the more rugged and rural part of the island. We had been told Nairbyl Bay was worth a visit. It is approached past a visitor centre then via a narrow, steep and winding road to a deserted and rocky beach with two whitewashed and thatched bungalows. Very picturesque. It was a pleasant day. However, one can imagine how wild it would look on a stormy day with a heavy sea running.



The narrow and steep descent to Nairbyl Bay. Just visible bottom left is the roof of one of cottages seen in the photograph on the right.

Back on higher ground, to the far south one could just make out the highest point of the Calf of Man at the southernmost point of the Isle of Man, our next destination. Well not quite. The Calf of Man is an island, but really close enough to see in detail, especially with binoculars. Even closer to see there were seals on a smaller intervening island.



The Calf of Man with a small intervening island on the shore of which were seals.

Then it was back to Castletown for a final look around before returning the car and our evening trip back to Birmingham International Airport.



Castle Rushen and the Old House of Keys in Castle town.



A segment of the ruin of the Abbey of Rushen seen from the road. We did not bother to venture within.

when parliament moved further north to the new capital, Douglas.

Castle Rushen was built for a Norse king, who died here in 1265 and buried at the nearby Abby of Rushen. The ancient castle walls bear evidence of sieges, including an attack by Robert the Bruce. In the past, the present castle museum, has served as a mint and a prison. Rushen Abby dates from 1134 when it was bestowed on the Monks of the Sauvignac Order by King Olaf I. In the past, the Abbey has had a number of uses, such as for strawberry teas and tea dances. It now has a restaurant next door. Across the street from the castle, is the Old House of Keys. The building was the meeting place of the lower house of Tynwald, the Isle of Man's parliament from 1821 to 1874. Castletown was the capital of the Isle of Man until 1874

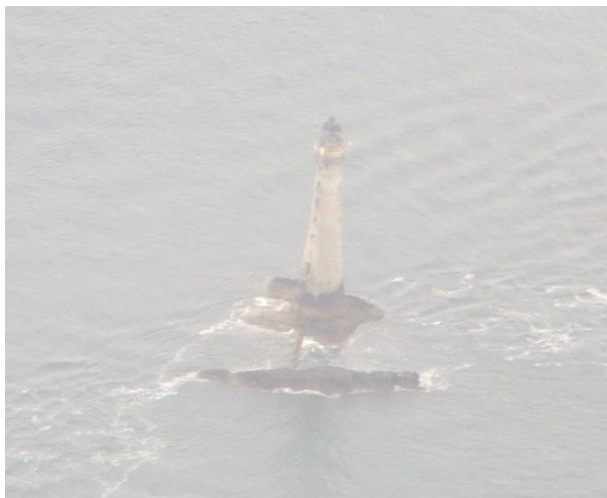
The Isle of Man March 2023

There were two visits to the Isle of Man in 2023, in March and June. The 2nd trip more than somewhat interesting.

We arrived on Saturday the 4th March, back home Wednesday afternoon on the 8th. Had a good time with good walks in dry but cold weather. We were there for the eldest grandson reaching 21 years of age on the 7th, or so called 21st birthday. However, it is really the 22nd birthday. The 1st birthday is when one is born (day 1). Therefore, when one year old this is the 2nd birthday not the 1st, two years old 3rd birthday, etc.



Boarding Loganair ATR72-600 G-LMTD at Birmingham airport.



Hazy view of Chicken Rock Lighthouse. More rock is visible at low tide while none visible at high tide.

Flew Loganair LM0638 from Birmingham International airport to Ronaldsway and return. My first flights in the ATR72. Not a particular fan of this aircraft type, mainly due to its early wing icing history and not as good crosswind limits as the de Havilland Dash 8. However, we had good flights and was impressed by the flight and cabin crews. Since flown numerous times in the type.

Good view from my window seat during lower descent on to a starboard (righthand) turn to finals for runway 03. Took some not so good photographs of the Chicken Rock Lighthouse on the righthand base leg to final approach to runway 03 at Ronaldsway. Very hazy.

It was built between 1870 to 1875 on an isolated rock reef about 2.5 kilometres south of the Calf of Man. Building could only take place during lower tide, about five hours per day. The tower height is 44 metres. The light was first shown 1st January 1875. Granite from Dalbeattie in Scotland were prepared as blocks at nearby Port St Mary then shipped to the rock.

Four keepers manned the lighthouse with accommodation in the tower. The old Calf of

Man cottages were used as the keepers' shore station until 1886 when a family shore station was built in Port St Mary. 23rd December 1960 there was a fire. The keepers were trapped at the top of the burning tower until the Port St Mary Lifeboat crew rescued them in difficult weather. When repairs were completed two years later in 1962 the light was automated. In 1968 a new light was established on the Calf of Man with Chicken Rock Lighthouse downgraded to minor light status and solar powered in 1999. In 2007 the light's range was increased to 34 kilometres. The Calf of Man light was then decommissioned.



Victory restaurant. It is situated near to where the Snaefell Mountain Railway crosses the road on its way to the mountain peak.

Along with relatives we went to Sunday lunch at the Victory restaurant near to the peak of Snaefell, The restaurant theme is the annual Isle of Man TT motorbike race.

Visited Curraghs Wildlife Park. Nothing more than a zoo set in a park like environment. Most animals are in cages, some in an open field setting. That is, those that are not an escape threat. In one enclosure a type of wildcat incessantly padded a fixed path in and around its supposedly natural surroundings. The animal was clearly trapped and unsettled. It was cruel and made me angry to see. I confess, I thought we were going for a walk in natural surroundings

where we may or may not see indigenous wild life. I was not happy. I hate zoos. Then drove to Sulby, Kirk Michael, Cronk-y-Voddy (sounds painful), Ballacrine to Douglas then home at Baldrine. Good walk on Monday 6th to the Ballannette Park conservation area and wetlands and Douglas Head on Tuesday 7th. From Douglas Head one can see the UK Cumbria hills to the north-east.

Had fun departing Ronaldsway airport on the Isle of Man. While the weather was good at the Isle of Man, I was concerned we could get stuck on the island due the weather changing at Birmingham airport where snow and low cloud was forecast. Everyone was on board ready to go and were pushed back on time. Then stood with engines run up on the ATR72 twin turboprop aircraft. Said to my wife there is a problem. After some time, the captain said there was a technical problem with number 2 engine (starboard). They were going to do a restart. Not happy with restart. Said they were returning to the gate for a ground engineer inspection. Engineer came on board. After some time, we were told they believe they had fixed the problem. Did another start, then shut down. Reset fault code in computer. Engineer left the aircraft. Said to Roz maybe he should stay on board. Started engine number 1 during push back then engine 2. Stood for a while, while flight crew did further checks, then taxied for departure.

Arrived at Birmingham 51 minutes late in light snow. Temperatures slightly above freezing, so tending to melt and not settling. We took the bus home from the airport then walk for 15 minutes in light wet snow. My luggage had a broken missing wheel when collected at the carousal. Had to drag it minus a wheel at the airport and on the walk home. It was quite invigorating in +1C.

The Isle of Man June 2023

Our second trip to the Isle of Man was late in June on the 24th to the 28th. A good visit, but some palaver getting there and back on Loganair ATR72-600s flights. Arrived Saturday at the Isle of Man after an interesting flight.

First of all, we departed 50 minutes late from Birmingham International Airport. While we were ready to pushback on time, I understand the airside service provider did not have the necessary ground support equipment available.



Disembarking G-LMTE at Ronaldsway Airport.

Then when we arrived at Ronaldsway airport the pilots had to abort the approach due to below minimum cloud, went into a hold for about 30 minutes, tried again, aborted again, then diverted to Liverpool. From my window seat (disturbingly one row rear of the port propeller and concern if it detached) and the flight crew, I could see the ground vertically. However, as the captain later explained forward vision prevented them from seeing the runway at decision height (Isle of Man has a CAT I ILS and 200 feet decision height) he had to overshoot on both approaches. After two approaches I would have diverted

as well. The aircraft was supposed to go to Liverpool anyway after landing at the Isle of Man and return to the Isle of Man. Passengers and crew remained on board while we took on board the passengers at Liverpool. We departed with a new delayed flight number, then tried landing again. This time successful.

Over four hours on an aircraft for a flight that should have been 45 minutes. Excellent flight crew and professional conduct, especially the captain for keeping the passengers informed at appropriate times, bearing in mind the rule is to aviate, navigate communicate, in that order and the friendly 1st officer while on the ground at Liverpool. Plus, the wise move of taking on board more fuel at Birmingham. The captain did warn us that the weather at Ronaldsway was not as good as at Birmingham.

Returning Wednesday 28th, more fun and games. From the departure lounge, I saw our aircraft arrive. Then watched the passengers disembark, then the cabin crew, then the flight crew. Said to my wife this does not look good. Usually, the new crew stands at the aircraft waiting to board for a quick turnaround. Our Loganair flight at 12:30 BST was cancelled at 12:32 BST due technical. Coincidentally, it was the same aircraft that we flew in on our outbound flight on the 24th. We were asked to collect our luggage and return to your Menzies airport representative to arrange suitable transport.

We were rebooked (along with others on the same flight as us) on a flight departing at 15:35 BST to Manchester then coach trip from Manchester Airport to Birmingham Airport. The flight was delayed to 16:35 BST. This was already known at 13:30 BST when booking in. I asked for meal vouchers. I was told there were no meal vouchers.

We duly left on time at 16:35 BST to Manchester. Then a specially hired a Sky Coaches luxury Volvo bus trip from Manchester Airport to Birmingham Airport. We and other passengers, departed Manchester 18:00 BST. Arrived Birmingham Airport 19:40 BST. We finally arrived home at 20:45 BST. Left for the airport at the Isle of Man at 10:30 BST. All in all, 10 hours 15 minutes in transit.

Postscript. As our original flight from the Isle of Man was scheduled at 12:30 BST and our

alternative flight was already listed as delayed to 16:35 BST, this exceeded the at least 2 hour delay necessary for meals and refreshments, that is, 4 hours and 5 minutes. I referred Loganair to: If your flight was cancelled or you were denied boarding and you are waiting for an alternative flight, or there is a long delay (at least 2 hours) to your flight, the airline must provide you with care and support, such as meals and refreshments, according to Aviation Passenger Charter: summary of passenger rights - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and Aviation Passenger Charter - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). I received immediate confirmation of my claim and that there was a 28 day processing delay. I was pleasantly surprised that my claim for cancellation and meal vouchers was accepted and paid to me within the specified time frame. All told, I was very favourably impressed with Loganair.

Apart from relaxing local walks and lunch at the restaurant overlooking the Calf of Man, the only interesting place visited was Laxey, previously mentioned in this article, mentioned above, is home to the Great Laxey Wheel. Quoted in the Laxey Visitor Guide as a “brilliant piece of Victorian engineering and the largest surviving waterwheel of its kind in the world.” The 22 metres (72 feet) high wheel, Lady Isabella, was built in 1854 to pump water from the Laxey Mine.



The Laxey Wheel.

Water power had to be used, because the Isle of Man has no coal. Opened in 1854. Water from the surrounding area, such as springs and streams, is collected in the cistern. The cistern is higher than the top of the wheel. Water flows up the tower in the form of an inverted syphon. A closed pipe from the cistern to the top of the wheel carries water to falls into the buckets made from wooden slats around the circumference of the wheel causing it to rotate in a reverse direction. At the centre of the wheel is a crank. The crank



The viaduct. Its position can be seen on the left of the Laxey Wheel above. On the right the rod after it leaves the viaduct to the Adit, horizontal mine tunnel, to the mine pumping shaft. converts the circular motion of the wheel to horizontal motion. On the one side it is connected to a counterweight, on the other to a very long rod of 200 metres. Every full rotation of the crank has a stroke of 4.2 metres. This causes the 200 metres rod on the viaduct to move forwards and back again to the pumping shaft where the stroke is attached to a T-rocker that provides the pumping action to pump water up the shaft from the mine. The wheel and rod is made of wood, except for key metal mechanical parts. The rod has wheels at intervals to

minimise friction and easier stroke action.



An excellent view from the platform above the wheel seen in the Laxey Wheel photograph. The tramway line to Snaefell can be seen cutting through the trees on the other side of the valley. On the right the tramway/electric railway station at Laxey.

February 29th to March 3rd 2024

This winter visit from Thursday 29th to Sunday 3rd was the first time that I travelled to and from in a 50 seat Embraer 145. Loganair G-SAJO to Ronaldsway, G-SAJN return to Birmingham.

The time was spend relaxing with invigorating winter walks with Snaefell covered in snow the view from the large front window.



Loganair Embraer 145 at Ronaldsway and Snaefell bedecked in snow.

Friday 7th to Monday 10th March 2025

There was concern before departure about the weather at Ronaldsway. The weather there was borderline CAT I ILS on runway 08/26 earlier morning with the risk of diversions and delays. However, it began to show improvement before we departed. When we landed mid-afternoon, it was much improved.

The best part of this trip was a Saturday walk along Derbyhaven Beach past Castletown Golf Links to Saint Michael's Isle and to the ruin of an 11th century chapel and the 16th/17th century Derby Fort ruin. Four kilometres return from Derbyhaven. To get there one first goes past the southern end of Ronaldsway's runway 08. Situated at the entrance of Derbyhaven Bay is St.

Michael's Isle, a rocky island dating from the Mesolithic period. It is accessed via a bridge from a narrow mainland peninsula.

According to Manx National Heritage, Fort Island or St Michael's Isle is first mentioned in 'The Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles' as the site of a battle in 1250 and the location of St. Michael's Chapel. Built upon the site of a Celtic keeill (early Medieval period chapel), St. Michael's, along with St. Trinian's Church, is one of the best-preserved examples of early Manx Christianity, with the area around the chapel being used for burials well into the eighteenth century."



The chapel seen before crossing to the isle.



Derby Fort.



A protruding cannon and seen inside one of the ruined structures.

"In 1651 the guns of Derby Fort consisted of one demi-culverin, one saker, two demi-saker and one sling-piece. By 1694 the fort had three heavy guns, while the earthwork had one brass minion and one brass saker" (Wikipedia). Apparently, a demi-culverin was a medieval and

Renaissance cannon. A saker was a medium cannon slightly smaller than a culverin. A demi-saker was basically the same as a saker. A sling-piece? Not the foggiest idea. Anyway, cannons remain in evidence either protruding from gun slits or seen inside through openings and the entrance gate, which is locked so no entrance allowed. Ruins of what look like small barracks or armoury storage buildings can be seen inside.

Isle of Man 10th to 17th September 2025

A good trip. Went walking a lot, saw new places and learnt more about the island.

Both flights on time Wednesday 10th and Wednesday 17th. Same aircraft each time, Loganair ATR 72-600 G-LMTG and same seats each way, 12 C and D. Both on time.

On the descent to runway 26 at Ronaldsway saw the Steam Packer Company ferry HSC Manannan on its way from Douglas to Liverpool. Reacted quick enough to get a photograph. HSC stands for High Speed Catamaran. Sighting of the coast in rain on long final to runway 26.



HSC Manannan and approach to runway 26 at Ronaldsway.



On Friday, during a walk along the southern end of the harbour to the Douglas Lighthouse we walked down steep steps to a secluded and came across the interesting rock faulting formation seen on the left.



Got a good photograph of the HSC Manannan in port (above right) The Manannan has operated the Douglas to Liverpool route since 2009. It carries up to 850 passengers and 175 vehicles. Speed 50 knots lightly laden, 40-42 knots fully laden as well as the MV Ben-My-Chree at anchor in Douglas Bay (seen below).



The MV Ben-My-Chree left and MV Manxman right.

Two days later back in the harbour area photographed the third ferry in the Steam Packet Company fleet, namely the MV Manxman. Founded in 1830, the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company is the oldest continually operating passenger shipping company in the world. The Manxman is the largest and newest, since 2023, addition to the fleet of four ships. It is also the largest ship in the Isle of Man with capacity for 1000 passengers and crew, 237 cars and 75 trailers. Speed 19.25 knots. The MV Ben-My-Chree is the old passenger and freight workhorse, servicing the Isle of Man since 1998. It is now a reserve vessel. Passengers 500, cars 200, speed 19.5 knots. A fourth vessel, the roll on roll off container and cargo MV Arrow, is also a back-

up, mainly freight, especially during peak times, such as during the annual Isle of Man TT (motorcycle Tourist Trophy races). Passengers 12, 65 trailers, speed 16 knots (Steam Packet Company and Wikipedia).



A bonus was a photograph (left) of the harbour's small tug the Wendy Ann built in 1934 and the Douglas based RNLI lifeboat 14-37 with, in the background, the MV Ben-My-Chree now berthed in the harbour.

Saturday the 13th, we went by bus northward along the coast to Ramsey last briefly and unfavourably seen in 2013.



While walkabout in the town centre, in Market Place, we came across an interesting symbolic statue, supposedly of Norse Kings of Mann, King Orry and his son King Olaf. A notice board says "Godred Crovan (King Orry) seized the throne in 1079, creating the Kingdom of Mann and the Isles from the Irish Sea to the Outer Hebrides. His son ruled for 40 years before assassination by his nephew in Ramsey." Which king is which depicted in the statue it does not say. There is also no reference to the game they are playing. It

looks like and could be an early form of chess, which was widespread in Europe by 1000 AD, originally from India around the 6th and 7th centuries.

Photographed the old Queen's Pier. Dating from 1886, it was built so that "packet boats of the

Isle of Man Steam Packet Company could call still call at low tide.” There was a tramway to transport passengers and luggage. It is now very much dilapidated, although there is a preservation campaign. Also walked past the swing bridge that carries road and pedestrian traffic over the lower part of the harbour. Opened in 1892 it is still operational.



The deep er sea end of the dilapidated Queen's Pier and the swing bridge.

Tuesday 16th we went north by car with family members to Moughold near to Ramsey to walk in the countryside in the vicinity of the village. Excellent view of the mountain inland and south along the coast toward Baldrine from the high ground above the lighthouse.



The view inland from above the lighthouse (see below) and southward along the coast.



Off to one side of the local the church, in the churchyard, is a collection of stone slabs with incised Manx Crosses dating back to medieval time. Interesting.

According to information notices at the barn like site displaying a large collection of Manx Crosses, “Maughold possess one of the most comprehensive collections of Christian stone crosses on the island, thanks to its fifth century origin as the landing place of St Maughol's, followed by the foundation

of a powerful monastery with links to Whithorn and Armagh, the crosses on display were carved over a long period of time and reveal the influences to which the Isle of Man was exposed.” The notices go on to say they were created during the medieval period, around the 5th to 15th centuries, beginning with conversion to Christianity, continuing through the arrival of Norse settlers in the 10th century, to the “re-organisation of the Church along European lines in the 12th and 13th centuries.” They were created by the “simplest grave-markers carved using



Some of the grave markers in the barn.

basic tools, to the more elaborate memorials produced by professional sculptors for wealthy clients” and “many of the crosses depict figures of people, pagan gods, animals and mythical monsters, telling stories, supporting religious beliefs and expressing the mixed identity of the Manx people.” Most people were illiterate, however, at Maughold with its monastery literacy was more prevalent with nine of the crosses on display inscribed in different languages and different forms of writing.

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