



SNEAK PREVIEW

Out in May, our new book *Manx Electric Railway; Past & Present*, combines previously unpublished archive photographs with their modern equivalent



But it hasn't changed much ... has it?

The Manx Electric Railway (MER) is popular. Lots of people photograph it, and lots more are interested in it. For locals, the Victorian and Edwardian rolling stock is their public transport. But old, unpublished views of it are rare.

We were lucky enough to be loaned some unpublished archive photographs of the MER, and had the idea of publishing them with modern photographs taken from the same place. We thought the comparison would be interesting.

It was! Memory plays tricks on you. We had no idea just how much had changed in the half century or so which the photographs cover. Old vehicles dwarfed by a 'modern' building which has since been demolished; trams trundling through countryside which is now a housing estate...

Ironically, the antique rolling stock seems to be the only constant.

The sun in splendour

Isn't it nice that spring is coming at last? Enjoying the sun must be one of the few pleasures which people have shared ever since there were human beings to share them. Thousands of years ago people drew spiral patterns to celebrate the power of the sun, and it's from these early designs that the Three Legs of Mann arises.

As page 12 of *Three Legs Good* says: 'Although the triskelion has come to be associated with all sorts of mystical meanings it may not have begun that way. We've all doodled in the margin of papers, and the three legs makes an interesting shape. Perhaps seven thousand years ago some stone-age graphic designer sketched out the first triskelion and just liked the pattern it made.'

'A still point of the turning world'

That's how T.S. Eliot described books. And he's right. I was taken aback a few weeks ago by a young lad telling me that he thought books irrelevant as he's 'fully digital and can do everything on line now'. I had to think about that.

I do understand what he means. I've heard people say that they want to know *everything*, and, with the internet, they almost can. But books are something more than merely tools for knowledge.

Books require concentration and stillness – like yoga. They need a certain mental effort – like sudoku. They can teach and stimulate inventiveness to help you learn. They require the reader to take an active part – oh yes they do! Films show you the story; fiction requires you to imagine it for yourself.

Before mass media, books were often a window onto a world no-one had really seen. But you can look both ways through a window. Now books provide a haven away from the tweets, surfs, faces and pressure of the global internet intrusion. Through their window we can rediscover patient pleasures.

Page 107 of *Dear Ray* quotes a statement made by Winston Churchill in October 1942: 'If you had seen, as I have seen on my many visits to the forces, and particularly in the Middle East, the need for something to read during the long hours off duty and the pleasure and relief when that need is met, you would gladly look, and look again, through your bookshelves and give what you can. If you hesitate to part with a book which has become an old friend, you can be sure that it will be a new friend to men on active service.'

Best wishes Sara

Quote of the day

'The Manx liked naming their new homes after the places they'd left behind. There's a Laxey in Wisconsin, USA (appropriately it's a mining area), Tinwald in New Zealand, Mona Vale in Tasmania, and even a Corlett Gardens in Johannesburg, South Africa.'

Page 47, *A Young Manx History*