



LOAGHTAN BOOKS NEWS



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At last!

After months of revision, rewriting, new photographs and putting the whole thing together, the second edition of *A Brief History of the Isle of Man* is now available. Its working title was 'BH2'



Above is one of the pictures we didn't use in 'BH2'. Taken from Castle Rushen, it's the memorial in Castletown to Cornelius Smelt, a popular governor. It was to have been topped by an urn but the money ran out. Locals call it 'the candlestick'.

But what's changed?

It's impossible to be comprehensive in 160 pages, so any author has to be selective. Important historical events must go in, of course, but, for example, when talking about neolithic sites, Ballafayle Cairn in the first edition, was replaced by King Orry's grave in the second. The first edition made no mention of Manx involvement with the slave trade, the second does. Manx cats were left out of the first edition, but put into the second. Get the idea?

We've also learned more about the history of the island in the six years since the first edition was published. Many people have commented, 'history doesn't change, does it?', but it depends on how you look at it. Facts don't change of course, but often we don't know the exact facts - and our interpretation of them changes all the time. For example, when the Channel 4 programme *Time Team* discovered a rare Ogham stone while digging on the Mount Murray golf course, near Douglas, they dated it as from the 10th or 11th centuries and tentatively translated it as referring to a group of fifty warriors. Other experts taking a more leisurely look have decided that it's more probably a grave marker from four centuries earlier.

While not quite agreeing with George Santayana ('history is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren't there'), the revised book does give us the chance to show different aspects of the history of the Isle of Man.

Horse power... and power to the horse

For centuries the only way to get about on land was either by walking or by horse. Even as recently as the Second World War many people reverted to horse-drawn transport, when petrol was scarce. As it says on page 108 of *Dear Ray*, horses even had their own gas masks.

However it's only in Douglas that the last remaining horse-drawn trams can be seen. They trundle the length of the promenade, as they have for 140 years, despite recent politicians attempts to close the tramway (yes, really). As it says on page 30 of *Sites & Stories*: 'Some visitors worry about whether the tram horses are overworked or ill treated. They are not. Not only would it be cruel, it also makes no economic sense to abuse animals on which your income or revenue depends. (Employers could take note here!) For a horse, well fed, fussed over, with enough work to do to be interesting but not so much that they become jaded, the rest of their herd for company in the stables, and most of the winter at grass, it's a lovely life.'

Best wishes
Sara

STOP PRESS

We were hoping to be able to tell you that *Two Fish for the Summit*, another in our Hoofprint series, is also now available. It's about life and work on Snaefell, but unfortunately arrived from the printer in too bad a condition to publish immediately.

While we sort it out we'll leave you to wonder about the title!

Quote of the day

'As the tramway conductors were sworn in as auxiliary postmen they collected the mail from the wayside boxes for onward transmission to the main sorting office in Douglas.'

Page 98, *Manx Electric Railway; Past & Present*