



Roland Paul Drower

12-10-53 to 12-05-08

Roly Drower died suddenly from a heart attack in May.

He first contacted Mec Vannin in 1996, offering space on his newly created "Manx Megalinks" internet site. His idea was simple and sound; to create both a "portal" and hosting facility for Manx organisations of all persuasions and for Manx poets, artists and musicians.

This was when the internet was just coming to general public attention and a lot of people just didn't grasp the potential usefulness of the internet as a means of international communication and information exchange. Hence, many people let this excellent opportunity slide past them and the concept of a central portal to "all things Manx" and a central hosting resource was almost lost.

Mec Vannin, however, instantly recognised the worth of the facility and continued to host its pages on the Manxman domain up until its closure in August 2007. By this time, Mec Vannin had seamlessly transferred to a stand-alone domain. Whereas other organisations have stumbled from domain to domain and are frequently beset by fragmented, out of date pages, dead-ends and well-intentioned but misguided piecemeal sites, Mec Vannin's web presence has been consistent since Roly's first involvement. His advice and tutoring were invaluable in maintaining our internet integrity.

But who was Roly? What was his intent? It didn't take long to establish that his objectives with the Megalinks / Manxman pages were altruistic, or Mec Vannin would likely have kept away. He was outwardly non-partisan although he had his own political standpoint that could not be pigeon-holed into simplistic left / right, communist / socialist / capitalist terms. That he was a founding member of the Isle of Man Freethinkers is a reflection of this. He was not overtly radical but was definitely non conformist and had



Roly and Partner, Anne, December 2007

a healthy disdain for the corrupt establishment in all countries. That corrupt establishment seemed, in Roly's eyes, to have been fermented and distilled into a particularly rotten brew in the Isle of Man.

Nonetheless, he was not a cynic by default and, at times, displayed a refreshing (some might say naive) belief in the ultimate triumph of truth and honesty over lies and deceit. He was certainly no fool, and his deep intelligence was easy to perceive without him ever talking down to people in any way. Few, without being told, would have suspected him of formerly having worked for NASA until quitting for ethical reasons.

The thing is, it is impossible to pin down Roly's character. Nearly everyone who knew him, knew him in a slightly different light: Poet, musician, humourist, computer expert, political thinker, motorcyclist, socialiser, organiser, friend, partner This is where his non-partisan nature allowed him to deal with individuals and groupings who may have had little time for each other but

were not necessarily discomfited by Roly's dealings with all.

But what brought Roly, born, raised and educated in southern England, worked in the USA, to the Isle of Man, to a place which seemed to epitomise the clostrophobic, incestuous machinery of state that he so opposed?

Roly's mother, Angela, is Manx and when his father Denys retired in the early 1980s, they decided to come to Angela's country of birth. Roly came to visit in 1984, having given up the day job as a rocket scientist, and stayed. The Island was very different back then. We were rising out of the recession made so acute by our over-dependence upon what was already a fast shrinking industry; English mass tourism. It was actually a nice place to be. Though the government of the day was hardly one to hold in high esteem, it had not yet collapsed into the culture of unbridled arrogance bolstered with an impenetrable denial response that is the ministerial system of government we have today. Nor was it the undisguised hand-maiden of the international finance sector. Like the rest of us, he watched it

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In memory of Roly Drower

From page one

all go so horribly wrong.

One of Roly's main lines of attack was an incredibly incisive humour reinforced with a great command of language. His humour was not the bitter sarcasm of many anti-establishment humourists, but a gentle, almost polite, smack across the face of the subject. In simple parlance, Roly took the piss but he took it so very well.

Recognising that the newspaper monopoly created by Isle of Man Newspapers' acquisition of the "Manx Independent" was a gift for a government that was openly incapable of dealing with any objective scrutiny or criticism, Roly decided that a humorous exposé publication was the best means of creating a counterbalance. In talks with the committee of Mec Vannin, he realised that a hard-copy publication like "Yn Pabyr Seyr" would not be practicable. It would be too costly, distribution would be difficult and slow, and so the impact and penetration would be limited. Reliable contributions to a physical address would be too open to interception and, as was proven by the Manx police force's totally unfounded raid on Roger Watterson's printing works in the 1970s, daring to advertise yourself as an anti-establishment publisher would be like advertising a democracy rally in Zimbabwe.

The internet was identified as the best vehicle; Roly had the skills and resources to maintain a set of "live" pages. He had the talent to write eloquently and humorously without losing the impact of the true message within. He could drop bombs wrapped in cotton-wool. The Manxman Black pages, as they became known, were the delivery vehicle. Hosted outside the Island, they were less susceptible to the interference that would be certain to accompany a site hosted in the Island and / or using an "im" domain. He established a network of contributors and, as was so totally necessary given the justified fear of repercussions for those who supplied information, provided means for anonymous contributions. That did not mean Roly published recklessly. He always tried to verify information supplied and never hesitated to correct items if subsequently shown to be inaccurate.

It may sound like anyone with internet skills could go out and set up such a

site but that is very far from the case. There have been several abortive attempts to create on-line competition to the Isle of Man Newspapers' monopoly. The "Isle of Man Eye", the "Ballagh Jester" and the "Black Dog" sites come to mind. There may have been others, we don't know, which proves the point. Only Roly's Manxman pages were able to grip the public imagination sufficiently to generate widespread interest in an internet based publication. Both government and Isle of Man Newspapers were seething at the thought that their stranglehold on public information was slipping. Questions were asked in Tynwald, Richard Corkill had his own list of suspects and Isle of Man Newspapers spouted self-indignant aspersions against a publication that laid bare the monopoly's short-comings.

While those who had most to fear from the Black Pages barked and snarled up the wrong trees, Roly kept chipping away at loose rendering that lay over the corruption in the Island. Only the Black Pages carried any actual reports from the Mount Murray corruption inquiry.

The greatest triumph, perhaps, was the exposure of the fraudulent grant application by Richard Corkill's wife, Julie. The familiar tactics of blunt denial, secrecy and political pressure on the police all failed to stop a rolling stone. Like King Cnut trying to command the tide to halt, Richard Corkill clung to power in Mugabe-esque fashion until he could cling no more. Even when he eventually let go, his fingernails issued a teeth-jarring squeal all the way down to the next election.

Even given the same raw information sources as Roly, it is unlikely that anyone else could have presented it in such an imaginative and digestible form. That is an important fact to remember. Roly didn't write the news on Manxman, he presented it in his own unique fashion.

It was inevitable that there would be repercussions. Roly's pages had upset too many people with power and with too much to lose. The story of Roly's legal battle with Albert Gubay, a central figure in the Mount Murray debacle, quite literally requires a book and, hopefully, that book will one day be written. Roly was subject to an internationally record breaking (9 month) legal gag via what is known as an Anton Piller Order (correct spelling), only finally dropped when Roly's refusal to disclose his sources resulted in an open trial for contempt of

court. Only then did a further two years' of legal background arguments take place with Roly's defence finally being torpedoed on a technicality. He never had a chance to demonstrate the veracity of statements alleged by Gubay to be libellous in open Court. The most amazing thing is that throughout the entire ordeal, Roly never expressed any feelings of malice towards Albert Gubay or his cohorts. Pity perhaps, but not malice.

In the wake of the legal case, the wounded establishment and its lackies gloated and sighed relief. Understandably, after three years of extreme stress, Roly was under obligation to his family to curtail his activities. That doesn't mean he was finished with exposing corruption, but a new direction was necessary. For one thing, Roly had no assets and very little income which can make life beyond simple survival pretty tough. That, in itself, did not unduly worry Roly as he was completely non-materialistic. He was looking forward to spending quality time with his family and friends.

As is ever the case, most people in the Isle of Man simply don't have the first idea of how much Roly did for them. There are even some individuals who, in total ignorance of the full story, believe that he *must* have done something wrong to have been subject to the treatment he was. It's so typical and comparisons to Iliam Dhone are inescapable.

Roly had no belief in any life beyond this one. He understood that a person's worth is the sum of their actions between birth and death. There was no afterlife waiting for him, good or bad, and the non-religious funeral service for him, packed with family, friends and supporters, was touching and personal. Contrast this with spectacle of an embittered old man, dying with a fortune but without friends, just hangers-on hoping for a slice of a cake somewhat diminished by understandable but, nonetheless, unpersuasive attempts at buying favourable obituaries and a Gold Member pass to some perceived afterlife. Roly got it right.

To say, "Thanks Roly," would be a paradox because Roly, the man, has gone, but we must be grateful for Roly's work and his memory will live on.

END

As a tribute to Roly, it has been decided to reproduce some of his material previously published as original material in Yn Pabyr Seyr. First, there is his highly acclaimed "Illiam Dhone Day" oration, since described by President, Bernard Moffatt as, "one of the finest commentaries made there on current Manx political life." Then, one of his fine satires called "The Consultants", first published in YPS January 2001 followed by a piece under the pseudonym "Manx Rabbit" published in YPS January 2003

Illiam Dhone Day Commemoration 2nd January 2005 English Oration by Roly Drower

In 2005, Jersey will begin the process of introducing a ministerial system of government to its people. Their current system will be replaced by a chief minister and up to ten ministers. In this respect they will be following the Isle of Man, which has had ministerial government since 1986.

Don't do it Jersey! At least - don't follow our model. The Manx ministerial system has been, in my view, very damaging to democracy.

Why? Because the Council of Ministers has become more powerful than the parliament that should control it.

Firstly, there is the problem of the ministerial block vote. Ten ministers are simply too much for a small elected assembly. We have nine, plus the Chief Minister, which, until Mr Corkill resigned, amounted to 40% of any vote in the House of Keys.

We also have a large number of members of departments, who can be seen as deputy ministers. Precisely why we need so many members of Tynwald tied up doing work that ministers and their civil servants should be doing defeats me.

But all of them, as members of the Government, are expected to respect the ministerial consensus, and to observe collective responsibility. The footprint in an electoral assembly of this mass of nodding dogs almost guarantees that the "ayes" have it in any vote.

Next, there is the manner in which ministers are appointed. The Chief Minister is not elected with a national manifesto by the people, but by the very parliament in which the consensus mentality lives and breathes. When the Chief is elected, it is he or she that selects the Council of Ministers, who then go on to choose their members. This is a recipe for cronyism.

Then there is the manner in which members of the Government are rewarded. Parliamentarians receive more on their salary if they are members

of departments, and a substantial amount more if they are ministers. Although collective responsibility is not itself enforced, the financial rewards for keeping to the ministerial line are very large - as are the penalties for speaking out of turn. As was demonstrated in the last Gelling Government, breaking ranks can get you sacked.

Take these three problems alone and you have an amorphous organism at the heart of government that has practically ensured that it does not have an opposition. Is that the sort of government the people of Jersey are looking for?

In the November issue of a Jersey newsletter entitled "We want our Island Back", I found the following:

"The Island [Jersey] is ready for party politics. Let's go ahead now! Having one party is downright dangerous, don't you think? . . . We believe Jersey needs the safeguard of a political system that encourages real democracy. Having a party in power and an opposition party is the tried and tested method favoured by many democracies around the world."

We do not have an opposition on the Isle of Man because any attempt at forming a coherent party system usually fizzles out. This is because, if any members of a potential opposition are elected, they are soon sweetened with government jobs. What little outspoken, and out-of-pocket, opposition then remains, is shouted down as narrow-minded, counter-productive, or even subversive.

These are not my only complaints about ministerial government.

How, for example, do we find out what decisions are actually being made by our Council of Ministers? It holds its meetings in closed session without publishing an agenda, even to MHKs, and without making a copy of their minutes available to the public.

Given that all the real decision making

is done in the Council of Ministers, not in the parliament, and given that many subjects worthy of a full debate in the House are hurriedly chaperoned through the Keys with the block vote, the hansard has effectively been taken out of the public domain and made inaccessible to the electorate.

All this from a government that claims to be committed to transparency.

Secrecy has isolated government so far from the people that very few of us actually know what the policies of our government actually are. They publish a Government Plan. But this is not a manifesto so much as a list of lame mantras about the aims and purpose of government.

For instance:

"To pursue manageable and sustainable growth based on a diversified economy."

Or

"To progress the social well-being of the people of the Island."

It is difficult to extract information from a set of policies that have been distilled from rain-water. They tell you nothing about what is going to happen next.

But, fluffed up with this vapour of good intention, the Government becomes assured, arrogant and so disconnected from its electorate that ministers appear to run amok, spending millions of pounds of taxpayers money on glamorous projects for which they have no mandate whatsoever from the electorate. Half of the glamorous projects turn out to be white elephants, and all of them turn out to have cost twice if not three times the norm.

In a recent issue of the South Douglas Community Newsletter, David Cretney said of recent events:

"Arrogance, egos and lack of

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William Dhone Commemoration 2005 English Oration (continued)

transparency have no place in a modern democracy."

So it is official, is it David? We can tell Jersey to add arrogance to the list of problems that ministerial government will bring with it?

The Tourism Minister is referring, perhaps, to a Chief Minister who, in the midst of a blast of serious allegations, arrogantly refused to step down again and again until, finally, his arrest was so internationally conspicuous that it brings with it the Irish and UK press.

Or perhaps he is referring to a Treasury Minister who, having been found to have knowingly misled his own parliament and his own people by both a Commission of Inquiry and a Standards Committee, refuses point blank to resign. Well, the Manx people are all sick of your protests, Mr Bell. Just go!

Let me remind you of one of those core aims of government again.

"To pursue manageable and sustainable growth based on a diversified economy."

Our politicians - shopkeepers for the most part - have been using the word 'growth' for years without once demonstrating that they know what the word means. Now they have magically added the word 'sustainable' to it.

Sustainable growth? In what? In the wealth of the existing population? In the population itself?

Well, sorry to break up the meeting guys, but 'growth' is not 'sustainable'.

I spent hours at university sweating over the equations of growth. They occur in problems ranging from the exponential increase of populations to the runaway fission in a nuclear bomb. They do not, in my mind, characterise stability. They do, however, characterise our management of resources on the planet as a whole - a massive burn out, then nothing left.

The only growth that is sustainable is zero growth. Period.

I mention growth because it leads us quite nicely to another ailment in our system of government. Spin.

Let's take the Isle of Man Strategic Plan. When this document was presented to the

public for comment in 2001, I wrote to DoLGE protesting about the way it gaily used the word 'development'.

Why are words important? Because 'development' is like the word 'growth'. Our politicians have allowed it to become central to the very language of planning. The word means (according to my dictionary) the process of making something fuller, or larger. It is about increase. It is not about constancy, or stasis, or even remotely restraint.

When you read the Strategic Plan on one hand, and see the vast spending on infrastructure on the other; when you see ministers overturning the decisions of planning committees and independent inspectors to give planning permission to companies that blatantly profiteer; then it is very hard to believe that there is not some hidden intention within government to smooth the way for a substantial increase in population.

The mindset of those behind planning in this regard was revealed with brutal clarity in 2002 when the former Director of Planning, Barry Vannan defended his support for residential development at Mount Murray on the radio. He explained, and I quote:

"..Malta, that's half the size of the Isle of Man and has a population somewhere about 400,000 .. the Channel Islands, there's a population of something like 150,000, 160,000 people in something like a quarter of the land mass .."

By extension then, according to a once respected senior planning official, the Isle of Man can comfortably accommodate over half a million people. Well, yes! - if you want it to end up looking like part of Middlesex.

Anyway. I was not even graced with an acknowledgement for my letter in 2001. And, sure enough, in the 2004 version of the Strategic Plan the word 'development' is everywhere. It falls off the pages.

According to DoLGE it is required by statute to maintain a 'Development Plan', and the Strategic Plan forms part of this Development Plan. A strange hierarchy because this means that planning strategy - if we can call something that only plans for the next

12 years a 'strategy' at all - is subservient to the principal motive of 'development', rather than the reverse. Would a 'Conservation Plan' not have been more appropriate.

Two differences between the 2001 version and the 2004 versions of the Strategic Plan give the game away.

In the new version, the word 'sustainable' has been sprinkled in like fairy-dust to give us the nice buzz phrase 'Sustainable development'. They even use it in the title, 'Towards a Sustainable Island'.

I would argue again that 'development' is no more sustainable than 'growth'.

But listen to this: In the 2001 Strategic Plan the number of new dwellings proposed was 3500 in ten years, or 350 per year. In the new Draft Strategic Plan, it is 5400 in 12 years, or 450 per year.

I'll run it past you again, in case you missed it. One: They add the word 'sustainable?'. Two: They increase the rate increase by almost 30%.

Now that is what I call spin.

It is a source of endless despair to me that politicians charged with planning for the future seem to be unable to see beyond their own brief lifetimes. They handle the future the same way a dysfunctional parent handles a credit card. They live for the moment, cashing in the pension, heaping hire-purchase agreements on their grand-children, content to extend the patio onto the vegetable garden, and then describe that as 'sustainable growth'.

So that is my take on Ministerial Government: Spin, arrogance, secrecy, a system of block vote, cronyism and consensus by reward. The very opposite of democracy. What message will this give our friends in Jersey?

But I will end on this one positive thought. If democracy is easy to break, it is probably quite easy to fix as well.

RP DROWER

The Consultants

by Roly Drower, first published in *Yn Pabyr Seyr* January 2001

And God opened his window, and reached out and pointed down with a single, wrinkled finger.

And a thunderbolt fell to the earth and hit the Chief Minister on the forehead just as he was about to say something.

And suddenly the Chief Minister was a changed man.

And the Speaker of Tynwald looked up from his lingerie catalogue and said: 'Yes, Mr Gelling.'

And the Chief Minister said: 'I would like to say, Mr Speaker, that, by the end of this decade we shall put a Manxman on the Moon.'

And everyone was amazed.

And the Isle of Man Examiner had the headline:

Manxman to be put on moon.

And the Manx Independent had the headline:

Man found pissing in sink.

And the Courier had the headline

Shoprite prices lower than ever.

And God fiddled with the catch on another window.

And Gabriel said: 'Who let him out of bed?' But nobody knew.

And the civil servants got together and said: 'Ah-ha. The Moon. What we need are the very best consultants for this job.'

There's my nephew Jim in Walsall.

And I have a sister in law in Baltimore whose brother knows something about space.'

And the consultants arrived on the Island, and then more consultants, and everyone said

'Where are we going to put them.'

And the President of Tynwald said:

'I know of some holiday cottages in Maughold.'

And the inspector for counting livestock more than once and other hill-farming subsidies said:

'Who let him out of bed?'

But nobody knew.

And the consultants asked

'What do you want us to do?'

And they were given several reams of paper and told:

'We want you to write a report.'
'What do you want in the report?'
'Well, start with your credentials and then itemize your expenses so far.'

'Do you not want us to suggest a site for the launching pad?'

And the MLC's looked hurriedly at the civil service.

And the senior civil servants said 'Don't worry about that bit.' and then quietly drew straws.

And after much deliberation, they said 'We have chosen Braddan for the project, which will be code-named "Up Yours Buster"'

Obviously, in order to accommodate the vast workforce necessary to complete this prestigious project, we will also need to build 5000 first time buyer homes and to widen a few roads.'

And the road widening began immediately without consultation for some reason, in Abbeylands.

And the consultants said 'What shall we do now? Shall we help with the rocket?'

And the Treasury Minister shook his head and said:

'We have negotiated the purchase of a retired SS20 missile from a businessmen in Minsk - a well respected dealer who let us have it for a snip in exchange for some Offshore financial services.'

'What shall we do then?'

'Why don't you write that report!'

'What do you want in the report?'

'Well, use your imagination.'

So the Consultants used their

imagination, then phoned up the Chief Minister's Office.

'We have finished our report.'

'I'm sorry but there's no one here at the moment. Can I take a message?'

They phoned up The Department of Local Government.

'We have finished our report.'

'I'm sorry but the Minister is in a meeting.'

They phoned up Port St Mary Harbour Master's office.

'I'm sorry but Mr Madrell's laying pots.'

And so the Consultants submitted their four inch thick report as directed by the bylaw enforcement officer to the recycling bins outside B and Q, and then posted their bill to the treasury.

And the treasury passed the bill to the Chief Minister.

And the Chief Minister passed it back to the treasury and said:

'Because of gross overspending in the consultancy stage the mission will now be a hot air balloon carrying a small dog.'

And the next day Manx radio received a record fourteen phone calls, including one fifteen minute call from the wife of an MLC protesting at the cruelty of using a battery dog in an airborne no-escape balloon situation.

And so the balloon was shelved, and the dog was sent back to Ard Jerkyl and the civil servants sighed with relief because thousands of houses had now been scheduled, and nobody had even noticed.

Gabriel gave God a large sedative Then waved his finger and said:

'Have we been going walk-about again?'

And he walked over to the window and quietly closed it. **RP Drower**

The Rabbit's still on the loose...

by Roly Drower, first published in *Yn Pabyr Seyr* January 2003

As he comes to the end of his first calendar year in office, Richard Corkill might like to reflect on the real meaning of democracy on the Isle of Man. But then perhaps he wouldn't. Because, from where some of us are standing, democracy on the Island doesn't look too healthy.

Let's take one example that the Corkill administration afforded us within its first few precious weeks in office: The purchase of the Nunnery. And let's ask a very simple question. How many people knew in advance? In those few frantic weeks before the 2001 election, how many people actually knew that the Government intended to secure the purchase of the property the moment that it was safely back in power?

I didn't know. I didn't see it in anyone's manifesto. I would never have suspected that the Government had already undertaken to guarantee a loan for 5 million to purchase a property worth 3 million, using a paper company that had been set up years before for the purpose, which it had conveniently turned into a charity. And I would never have thought that DLGE would then purchase the fields back again through the land bank, regardless of the fact that they already appeared in the balance book as an asset against the original loan.

My suspicion is that nobody knew. Nobody except the Council of Ministers, the HSBC, and the Truly Reverend Graham Ferguson Lacey. The most obvious conclusion is that the electorate were not meant to know. Had it been public knowledge, then the players would have had to do it properly, going cap in hand to Tynwald for the money, instead of laundering the purchase piecemeal through the Department of Education budget (which is what is currently happening).

In the United Kingdom, they complain of Stealth Taxes. On the Isle of Man, we could complain about something more wholesale: Stealth Government. The number of Government

adventures that have actually had a popular mandate is, I suspect, vanishingly small. Many have gone almost unannounced until the contracts were irreversibly signed.

Very few people who watched the expensive new diesels fire up at Pulrose in the early 90s could have foreseen that, within less than a decade we would be taking out a mortgage/bond for stg50 million on an undersea cable link, stg20 million plus on a meandering gas pipeline, and stg80 million on a new CCGT power station that, according to one UK expert, should have cost half of that.

Very few of the people I know wanted the stg250 million Iris scheme, the stg42 million Incinerator, or the Douglas ring road to service them. But then perhaps I mix in the wrong company. everybody I know wanted the money invested on organic composting, recycling and public transport.

So why is the Isle of Man Government so reluctant to confide in the electorate, or to take into account of the wishes of the Manx people. Why does it choose instead to concuss them into submission with the Council of Ministers block vote.

Is it just plain arrogance? It could be in some examples. In the case of the Incinerator, the contract with United Waste appears to have been signed 6 months before the Public Inquiry approved the stack; either an extraordinary ability to foresee the outcome, or a yawning disregard for it either way.

Or is it fear of public opinion? The Government has known for years about the Douglas Ring Road. But, apart from some noises about the widening of Vicarage Road, there has been very little public consultation. I have always half expected them to resurrect their drawings for the flyover across Braddan Hills. If they did, I think that we would be the last to know.

Just as business fails when retailers lie about the goods they market, so democracy fails when elected

representatives fail to come clean about their intentions. Democracy is about mandates. If you go into government supporting one point of view, then do an about-turn in government just to become a minister, then you have ceased either to honour your own views or to represent those of your constituents. (Before he got into power, you may remember, Mr Corkill opposed incineration.) When the collective view of the Council of Ministers becomes more important than the views of the electorate, then mandates are worthless.

Democracy is also about public access to public information. Mr Corkill himself can partly take credit for the latest culture in his administration, that of hiding behind commercial confidentiality. In a recent example, Mr Corkill was asked by Mr Karran to name the beneficial owners of certain offshore companies that receive an income from the Government. But he refused to disclose the information, maintaining that it was commercially confidential.

Can the Directors of a Company refuse to disclose the beneficiaries in their accounts to their shareholders? We, as taxpayers, are shareholders in Isle of Man PLC. So surely we should be given the same rights. For all we know, the Chief Minister could be happily dishing out half the government contracts to his brother in law and we would be none the wiser. An absurd notion, perhaps, but quite possible in the current climate of confidentiality.

As long as the Isle of Man Government continues to conceal its intentions with regard to such projects as the Nunnery, as long as it continues to treat public opinion as an afterthought to be shrugged off, as long as it continues to hide its dealings behind such devices as commercial confidentiality of the Official Secrets Act, and as long as it continues bludgeon the parliamentary process with its block vote, then democracy on the Isle of Man will be dead.

Manx Rabbit (*Roly Drower*)

How many gallons to the mile?

Celtic League takes up anti fly-past campaign.

We nearly got rid of the obnoxious RAF Tynwald fly past back in the 1990s after Mec Vannin made an extensive submission to the Tynwald Arrangements Committee - they actually concurred but, when going before the House of Keys, Alex Downie claimed that it gave the ceremony some sort of credibility and, if lost, would be difficult to get back (well, good). For some reason, the recommendations of the TAC were subsequently ignored.

The Celtic League (Mannin Branch) have recently taken up the cudgel and have put an interesting new slant on it - carbon footprint. The fuel burnt in sending the RAF Hawk fighters over the Island would, optimistically, run a double decker bus on normal service for a month.

Forget the carbon footprint - it's just wrong.

Runway extension could wreck Derbyhaven Bay

Irrespective of the pros and cons of an airport runway extension in itself, the chosen method of piling thousands of tons of imported stone into Derbyhaven bay is likely to result in an environment catastrophe for the bay.

The tide flow runs from Santan Head to Fort Island and vice versa but there is a circular counter flow on the ebb which flushes the bay. The runway extension will project directly into this tide with untold implications for the bay. Perhaps we should be thankful that the environmental destruction that would have resulted from sea-bed gravel extraction from the north of the Island has been averted, for the time being at least.

The trouble with "public consultation" is that, irrespective of what the public says, the government will do whatever suits it at the time. This engenders apathy and thus allows the government to claim endorsement for its projects by default.

Mmmmm.. Accumulative

poison, mmmmm....

Mec Vannin welcomes the decision to abandon flouridation plans for the public water supply. We are opposed to mass medication which is exactly what artificial flouride dosing represents. If there is a problem with the health of children's teeth in the Island, perhaps provision of adequate dental care and education is the intelligent solution.

One "argument" used by the DHSS in its propoganda campaign was derived from a 1962 ruling in an Irish court claiming that flouride dosing was not mass medication since flouride occurs naturally in water. So do lead salts, cadmium salts, aluminium salts, typhoid, cholera

IoM Benefits Group

A Santan man now living in Peel is fronting a campaign to reform state benefits for the chronically ill.

Rob, 54, has worked all his life since leaving school without claiming any benefits. At Christmas 2007, he had to stop working and signed on sick, receiving £62.25 per week. As his condition deteriorated, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, an incurable and chronic condition i.e. it will only get worse with time. His benefit has now been raised to £63.75 and that is it. As a result, his home is under threat and the situation shows no sign of improvement. He has since discovered that there are many people in the Island in the same position and whose financial situation is worse than his.

As a result, he and some others have formed a group to lobby for a change for those who must give up full time work due to chronic illness. He has a petition in circulation to collect signatures and has a website at islofmanbenefitsgroup.org where an on-line petition may be signed.

Mec Vannin endorses this campaign.

Let go, Leg Co!

The Legislative Council has a new member. Does anybody care? Can anybody remember how many rounds of voting were required before yet another pensioner got their comfy chair? How many of you could actually name the MLCs (some of the MHKs have a struggle)? Well, we do need to care because this undemocratic body, all too often a retirement home or bolt-hole for the incompetent and unpopular, can and does block all attempts to reform it. Its existence is an anachronistic throw-back to English colonialism and, whereas Mec Vannin does not oppose the existence of a second house per se, there is no room for indirectly elected houses in a democracy. Especially ones that cannot be reformed.

The only way that the impass can be broken, and we've said this before, is to pack the chamber with reformists. These must be people who are legally sworn to endorse the reform of the Legislative Council. Until that happens, the situation will only get worse. If The House of Keys is serious about implementing the reforms it has voted for five times in the past twenty seven years, its members will find the candidates to do that even if they serve no other purpose in the governmental process.

Oh S***t !

The government is now considering sewage treatment in the Island with the use of small, modular sewage facilities. This is because the IRIS scheme doesn't work and never will, despite the hundreds of millions spent to date.

In 1991, Mec Vannin made submission to the DLGE recommending the use of small scale modular sewage treatment plants. It took the Party a couple of hours and a couple of quid to arrive at this conclusion. It has taken the government a further 17 years and millions of pounds to reach the same.

For more information about membership of Mec Vannin and our policies, please fill in the coupon overleaf and send to:

**The Secretary
Mec Vannin
c/o 23 Kerroo Coar
Peel
Isle of Man**

You can also visit our website at

www.mecvannin.im

Farming and Fishing - Heritage Industries or an alternative to starvation?

Mec Vannin has repeatedly warned against losing the ability to produce enough food to sustain our population. That doesn't mean we should only eat our own produce but we must have the capacity to be self sufficient. We are now in serious food debt and, as we predicted, the world food supply is starting to get squeezed. Our farming industry continues to shrink and the contraction of farming into a few farms running as a "heritage industry" is now government policy. We must reverse this slide and our relationship with Europe is now a profound inhibition to our secure future.

Our politicians refuse to acknowledge this, however, and continue to rely on the calming mantra drilled into them over decades that Protocol Three is the "best of both worlds". Just what these worlds are is unclear, but they must be pretty awful places.

Our fishing industry has reduced to fishing for shellfish only, almost entirely for export. The European shellfish market is now completely flooded out by extremely cheap imports from South America where boats fishing under European flags can operate for a fraction of the cost of fishing European waters. If the situation is not addressed very quickly, we will have no fishing industry at all. Diversification of the fishing industry is a matter of utmost urgency if there are to be any commercial fishing vessels left in Manx waters in another two year's time.

From our point of view, Protocol Three never had its day but anybody who believes that our continued reliance upon this 36 year old document is beneficial to us is simply not in touch with reality.

One potentially beneficial result to the increasing food prices is that, as imports become more expensive, home grown produce may once again become economically viable but not as long as we grow houses instead of food.

I am interested in joining Mec Vannin. Please send me a policy summary and membership form to:

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Time to end Brit military recruitment in our schools

Mec Vannin's stated policy is to oppose the use of our schools to recruit our children into the UK's armed forces. Let's be quite blunt about this. The UK hasn't fought a justifiable conflict in decades. As such, the UK forces continue to be a tool of unjustifiable imperialism and we can offer no support to them on any level.

The IoM Department of Education have continued to fail to act on this issue. Now, certain UK local authorities have finally put an end to this practice after pressure brought by the National Union of Teachers. Yet again, where we should have led, the Isle of Man, the last bastion of a corrupt empire, will probably end up as the last place where children can be indoctrinated into signing up to fight the UK's oil wars.

The Good Old Ways can be better

New technology has usually proved beneficial to society. Occasionally the reverse is true. A case in point is the "Clare Plan", an aerial mapping technique bought-in from Ireland (at who knows what cost) and adopted by the Government Planning Department two or three years ago.

Property changes now usually require a "Clare" derived plan, as opposed to the more traditional method of making reference to existing surveyors' plans and established physical reference points.

Planning applications should have accurate site and location plans, to scale, with the location clearly identified. These must be lodged with the Land Registry and are legal documents.

There are however, fundamental problems with the Clare Plan. The aerial survey was carried out at a time of year when trees and shrubs were in full leaf, obscuring natural and archaeological boundaries such as water courses, hedges and so on. Anomalous features such as telegraph wires appear on the Clare version, and confuse the plan with features that have no relevance. Naturally, boundaries of land must dovetail exactly with adjoining land or this cause problems, to wit, boundary disputes.

Worryingly, surveyors have found that, when working with the plans derived from this method, the calculations do not coincide with what is on the ground. Edges of buildings may appear to be on a roadway for example. On the other hand when their same calculations are compared with OS plans from the eighteen hundreds, there is congruence!

It seems that the "Clare Plan" is not fit for purpose. This has caused frustration in the surveying profession and much unnecessary extra expense for clients.

The problem is down to simple physics and mathematics understood by any schoolchild but, apparently, beyond the comprehension of whoever foisted this upon us.

Aerial photography is routinely used by the United Kingdom's Ordnance Survey to update maps. These aerial photographs are intrinsically distorted and are "fitted" to existing maps derived from tried and trusted surveying techniques. The overall effect is a homogenous picture that fits within existing surveyed reference points but between those points, substantial variations can exist.

That is perfectly acceptable for smaller scale maps that are not used for establishing legal boundaries. It is singularly inappropriate for accurate plans where inches may be important.

Let's get back to basics. Theodolites and base lines work; aerial snapshots don't.