

TYNWALD MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

First Report for the Session 2024-25

**Tynwald Honours:
Sophia Morrison and
Annie Bridson**

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Tynwald Honours: Sophia Morrison and Annie Bridson

There shall be a Standing Committee of the Court on Management of the Clerk of Tynwald's Office.

The Committee shall be chaired by the Speaker of the House of Keys, the Vice-Chairman shall be the President of Tynwald and it shall further be composed of two Members of the House of Keys and a Member of the Legislative Council.

The Committee shall -

- (i) oversee the management of the secretariat of the Office of the Clerk of Tynwald;
- (ii) ensure that necessary services are provided for Members of Tynwald, that appropriate resources are made available to allow for such services and that such resources are properly used;
- (iii) oversee the efficient and effective use of resources by the Clerk of Tynwald, who shall be the Accounting Officer for the Tynwald budget;
- (iv) provide authority for setting staffing levels and overall terms and conditions of service of the staff of the Office of the Clerk of Tynwald;
- (v) for the purposes of the Public Records Act 1999 be the Committee authorized to make decisions in relation to Tynwald papers;
- (vi) be the Tynwald Management Committee referred to in section 3 of the Tynwald Auditor General Act 2011, with the relevant powers and responsibilities in relation to the Tynwald Auditor General; and
- (vii) be the Tynwald Management Committee referred to in section 3 of the Tynwald Commissioner for Administration Act 2011, with the relevant powers and responsibilities in relation to the Tynwald Commissioner for Administration.

The Committee shall consider nominations of deceased persons for inclusion in the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour and may recommend to Tynwald the award of honours by the Court to living persons; and in relation to these duties –

- (i) the Committee shall report to Tynwald at least once during the life of each House of Keys, but not necessarily to make a recommendation;
- (ii) any recommendation made by the Committee shall be subject to the approval of a majority of the whole of Tynwald sitting in public and voting as one body;

- (iii) the Committee shall be responsible for the erection and continuing maintenance of the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour, which shall be maintained in a prominent position in the public part of the Precincts of Tynwald;
- (iv) a plaque shall be placed in a prominent position at a site in the Island appropriate to each person admitted to the Roll and the Committee may consider presenting a suitable memento to the family of the person concerned.

The Committee shall –

- (i) carry out its consultative functions under section 6(3) of the Payment of Members' Expenses Act 1989 as the body designated by the Payment of Members' Expenses (Designation of Consultative Body) Order 2022 (SD 2022/0324);
- (ii) consider and report to Tynwald on the emoluments of the Clerk of Tynwald;
- (iii) own the records of the Emoluments Committee established on 20th April 2010 and its predecessor Joint Committee.

The powers, privileges and immunities relating to the work of a committee of Tynwald include those conferred by the Tynwald Proceedings Act 1876, the Privileges of Tynwald (Publications) Act 1973, the Tynwald Proceedings Act 1984 and by the Standing Orders of Tynwald Court.

Committee Membership

The Hon J P Watterson SHK *ex officio* (Chair) (Rushen)

The Hon L D Skelly MLC *ex officio* (Vice-Chair)

Mr R Callister MHK (Onchan)

Mrs S L Maltby MHK (Douglas South)

Mrs K Sharpe

Copies of this Report may be obtained from the Tynwald Library, Office of the Clerk of Tynwald, Finch Road, Douglas, IM1 3PW (Tel: 01624 685500) or may be consulted at www.tynwald.org.im.

All correspondence with regard to this Report should be addressed to the Clerk of Tynwald, Legislative Buildings, Finch Road, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 3PW.

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To: The Hon Laurence David Skelly MLC, President of Tynwald,
and the Hon Council and Keys in Tynwald assembled

TYNWALD MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
First Report for the Session 2024-25
Tynwald Honours: Sophia Morrison and Annie Bridson

I. Nominations for addition to the Manx Patriots' Roll Of Honour

1. We have decided to make two nominations for addition to the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour. They are:
 - author, folklore enthusiast and pioneer of Manx culture and language, Sophia Morrison (1859-1917); and
 - second woman Member of the House of Keys and first woman president of the Manx Labour Party, Annie Bridson (1893-1985).

Sophia Morrison

2. Sophia Morrison was born on 24th May 1859 as the third child to Charles Morrison, a wealthy grocer, merchant, and owner of a fleet of fishing boats, and his wife Louisa (née Crellin). Sophia lived in Atholl Steet, Peel along with her eight siblings.
3. Educated at Peel Clothworkers' School, Sophia developed a passion for languages, becoming fluent in Manx and French and proficient in several others, including Irish and Scottish Gaelic.

4. Sophia dedicated her life to preserving Manx culture, particularly the Manx language and folklore. She was a founding member of Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh (The Manx Language Society) in 1899 and served as its honorary secretary until her death. She also played a pivotal role in reviving Manx through language classes and the creation of teaching materials.
5. Her influence extended beyond language. Sophia was actively involved in the Pan-Celtic movement, representing the Isle of Man at the 1901 Pan-Celtic Congress in Dublin. She also contributed to various journals and publications, such as 'Manx Proverbs and Sayings' (1905) and her best-known work, 'Manx Fairy Tales' (1911), which preserved stories passed down through generations.
6. In addition to her literary and cultural endeavours, she was central to the development of the Anglo-Manx dialect, contributing to plays and collecting materials for a Manx-English dictionary. She founded and edited 'Mannin', a journal focused on Manx nationalism and culture, which she oversaw until her death in 1917 from intestinal cancer.
7. Sophia was a significant figure in the cultural revival of the Isle of Man and her legacy endures in various memorials, such as the Sophia Morrison Reference Room in the Ward Library in Peel, and her contributions continue to inspire efforts to preserve Manx heritage today.
8. A research paper produced by the Tynwald Research and Scrutiny Support team can be found at Appendix 1. This paper provides information on Sophia Morrison's life and various achievements.

Annie Bridson

9. Annie Dorothy Bridson was born at 17 Drinkwater Street, Douglas on 5th April 1893. Annie was the third daughter of mariner William Watterson and his wife Catherine (née Pearson). The family later lived at 14 Oxford Street, Douglas.
10. Annie was educated at Tynwald Street School and Hanover Street Girls' School, where aged 12 she won a scholarship to the Secondary School at Park Road. She embarked upon a teacher training course at St Margaret's Ripon Teachers' Training College in Yorkshire before becoming a primary school teacher at the Western Road School in Sheffield. She returned to the Island and in 1914 began a ten-year role teaching at Hanover Street School. She later became the headmistress of St Mark's School and used a motorbike to travel between school and her home in Douglas.

11. During this period she became a member of the Isle of Man Teachers' Association (the Manx Branch of the National Union of Teachers) and became actively involved in trade unionism and Labour politics. She attended the founding conference of the Manx Labour Party in September 1918 at the Salisbury Hall, Douglas, and in 1922 became the first woman president of the Manx Labour Party aged 29.
12. On 16th January 1928, Annie married Thomas Gerald Bridson at Malew Church; the couple met through their membership of the Manx Labour Party. They lived in Malew before later moving to Baldrine where they lived together until Gerald's ill health forced them to move to a smaller property in Douglas.
13. During WWII, she served in the Women's Royal Naval Service, becoming a chief petty officer and mentoring new recruits.
14. In 1951, she was elected as the second woman to serve in the House of Keys, representing Garff until 1956. Annie was known for her advocacy for education reform, family planning, social services, and agricultural issues, drawing from her personal experiences as both a teacher and a farmer's wife.
15. She organised the first Family Planning Committee in 1952 and supported several Bills focusing on children's welfare. After retiring in 1956, she cared for her husband until his death in 1967.
16. Annie lived the last years of her life at Glenside retirement home, where she continued to campaign for better conditions for residents. She passed away in 1985 at the age of 92 and was buried next to her husband in Braddan Cemetery.
17. Annie Bridson left behind a legacy as a pioneer for women in Manx politics and a lifelong advocate for the underprivileged.
18. A research paper produced by the Tynwald Research and Scrutiny Support team can be found at Appendix 2. This paper provides information on Annie Bridson's life and various achievements.

Recommendation

That Tynwald approves the inclusion in the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour of Sophia Morrison (1859-1917) and Annie Bridson (1893-1985).

II. Background

The Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour

19. The Roll of Honour is designed to give formal recognition to deceased persons who have made an outstanding contribution to Manx life; the names of those included are listed in Annex A.
20. The recommended criteria for inclusion on the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour are:
 - 1) before the name of any person is recommended for inclusion in the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour that person must be shown to have disinterestedly or self-sacrificially exerted himself or herself to promote the well-being of the Isle of Man;
 - 2) no living person be considered for inclusion in the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour; and
 - 3) inclusion in the Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour be not restricted to persons born in the Island or of Manx parentage.

Method of commemoration

21. The Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour is displayed in the entrance foyer of Legislative Buildings.
22. A more detailed record of each Manx Patriot is included within a dedicated section of the Tynwald website.¹
23. In June 2016 Tynwald approved the creation of a prominently located Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour Board and a Tynwald Honour Board. The Boards were made by the Manx Workshop for the Disabled and are located at St John's Chapel.

Function of the Committee

24. The Tynwald Honours Committee was established in December 1998, following recommendations made by the Select Committee on Manx Patriots, to propose names to Tynwald for inclusion in a Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour for deceased persons.
25. In December 2002 the Committee's remit was extended to recommend to Tynwald the awarding of honours to living Manx persons.

¹ <https://www.tynwald.org.im/Roll-of-Honour/Recipients>

26. At the May 2018 sitting, Tynwald Court considered the 'First Report of the Tynwald Standing Orders Committee for the Session 2017-2018 – Suspension of Members; Organization of Committees; Other Matters' [PP No 2018/0074] and agreed to the recommendation that the functions of the Tynwald Honours Committee be added to the remit of the Tynwald Management Committee.

J P Watterson (Chair)

L D Skelly (Vice-Chair)

R Callister

S L Maltby

K Sharpe

March 2025

References

New Manx Worthies, Dollin Kelly, Manx Heritage Foundation, 2006.

III. Annex A: Manx Patriots' Roll of Honour

Godred Crovan	d. 1095	First King of Mann and the Isles
Edward Christian	1600-1661	Electoral Reformer
William Christian - Illiam Dhone	1608-1663	Manx Patriot
Rt Revd Thomas Wilson DD	1663-1755	Church and Educational Reformer and Historian
Rt Revd Isaac Barrow DD	1613-1680	Church and Educational Reformer
Eleanor (Nellie) Brennan	1792-1859	Nursed Cholera Victims
Thomas Edward Brown	1830-1897	Manx National Poet
Major Robert Henry Cain VC TD	1909-1974	Gallant and Distinguished Soldier
Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine CH KBE MHK	1853-1931	Author and Constitutional Reformer
Sir William Percy Cowley KBE	1886-1958	Constitutional Reformer and Culturalist
John Christian Curwen MP MHK	1756-1828	Agricultural Reformer
Mona Douglas MBE RBV	1898-1987	Poet, Folklorist and Collector
Sir James Gell CVO JP	1823-1905	Constitutional Reformer
Sir William Hillary Bt	1771-1847	Founder of RNLI
Sir Henry Charles Kerruish OBE LLD(hc) SHK CP	1917-2003	Reforming Parliamentarian
Arthur William Moore CVO JP SHK	1853-1909	Constitutional Reformer and Historian
Henry Bloom Noble	1816-1903	Public Benefactor
Sir Joseph Davidson Qualtrough CBE JP SHK	1885-1960	Constitutional Reformer
Captain John Quilliam RN	1771-1829	Distinguished Naval Officer
Marion Shimmin MHK	1879-1942	First Female MHK
Mavis Kelly LRAM	1926-2005	Musician and Teacher
James Brown	1815-1881	Democratic Reformer
Robert Fargher	1803-1863	Democratic Reformer
Samuel Norris MLC	1875-1948	Reforming Parliamentarian
William Kennish	1799-1862	Inventor, Explorer, Polymath
Archibald Knox	1864-1933	Artist, Designer and Teacher
Hector Duff OBE MM BEM TH	1919-2020	WWII Veteran

Appendix 1:
Sophia Morrison - Research Paper by the
Tynwald Research & Scrutiny Support
Team



OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF TYNWALD
Research and Scrutiny Support

Sophia Morrison

Issued 18/07/2024

For: Tynwald Management Committee

From: Erin Duncan

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1. Introduction

Sophia Morrison (1859-1917) was a Manx cultural revivalist, author, and folklore enthusiast best known for authoring 'Manx Fairy Tales' and her work with the Manx Language Society. In the Mannin journal, of which Morrison was a long time editor, it was written in tribute that:¹

It was never enough just to preserve the past - Sophia Morrison wanted to help shape and create a vibrant future for Manx culture

Mona Douglas, fellow cultural revivalist and friend of Sophia Morrison wrote:

*She was one of the earlier Manx nationalists to realize that for the preservation of a country's true individuality its characteristic culture is no less important than its political independence and institutions.*²



Source: [iMuseum](#)

2. Personal Life

2.1 Early Life

Miss Sophia Morrison was born 24th May 1859 in Peel, as the third child to parents Charles and Louisa Morrison (nee Crellin). She was baptised on 27th May 1859 in the Parish of German.³ The Morrison's were well respected in Peel, with Charles Morrison being a wealthy grocer, merchant, and owner of a fleet of fishing boats. The family grew to have 9 children in total.



Sophia was educated at Peel Clothworkers' School and excelled in musical studies, being the first candidate on the Island to pass a music college examination. Based on the 1871 census, it appears likely that Sophia was later educated at a private school in Ballig near Onchan, but little is known about this.

Whilst she was brought-up in an English speaking household, Sophia had a great interest in learning various languages. She became fluent in Manx and French, whilst also possessing a strong knowledge of Italian, Spanish, Irish, and Scottish Gaelic. Her diaries show that Sophia was well read in European literature as a teenager. She became a fluent speaker of the Manx Language as a result of regular contact with native speakers, including fishermen in Peel. In the 9th Volume of Mannin Journal, A. Williams wrote that she was welcomed by Manx speakers because 'she was one of them, and proud of being so'.

Source: [iMuseum](#) (Sophia Morrison around 20 years old)

¹ BBC News, *Sophia Morrison: Fairy tale author and Manx culturist's life celebrated*, 10 December 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-38236424>

² C. Wooley, *The Revival of Manx Traditional Music: From the 1970s to the Present Day*, PhD, University of Edinburgh, 2003, https://www.academia.edu/34547452/The_Revival_of_Manx_Traditional_Music_From_the_1970s_to_the_Present_Day

³ iMuseum, Baptisms, Sophia Morrison, 27 May 1859, https://imuseum.im/search/agent_record/view?id=mnh-agent-572446&type=agent&tab=all&from=&page=&term=sophia+morrison&size=20&sort=&filter=&view=&images=&ttmcp=0&rfname=&rlname=&machine=&race=&raceyear=&linked=0&pos=-20

Mona Douglas, a friend of Sophia, wrote about her first encounter with Morrison:

I first met her when I was only nine years old, and one of the things she did when she discovered that I was 'running wild' among farmers and fishermen instead of going to school, was to present me with a stiff-backed notebook and propelling pencil (great treasures!) and tell me to write down all the Manx stories, games and customs I knew or could find out about.

2.2 Adult Life

The Morrison family lived at a number of properties in Atholl Street through Sophia's life. In 1881, at the age of 21, she resided at 7 Atholl Street in Peel. In the house was her mother Louisa, two servants, and her 8 siblings (Thomas, Minnie, Charles, Louisa, Frederick, Matilda, Stanley, and Eleanor).⁴ Louisa had been widowed the year prior when Sophia's father passed away. Her father's wealth allowed for two of her brothers to attend King William's College and train as doctors and chemists.

Throughout her adult life, Sophia was known to have travelled to many nations around the world including France, Spain, and the USA.⁵

In 1901, Louisa Morrison passed away around the age of 70. In 1911, at the age of 45, Sophia resided at 15 Atholl Street in Peel with her siblings George, Matilda, and Alice. Her occupation was listed as 'private means', and her marital status as single.⁶

3. Career

3.1 Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh (Manx Language Society)

Alongside her friends Miss Joughin and Mr Cashen, Sophia Morrison founded the first Manx classes in Peel, successors of which continue today.

In 1899, she was amongst the founding members of Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh - the Manx Language Society. She was elected a member of the Committee, and then succeeded to honorary Secretary in November 1901, a position which she held until her death in 1917. Through this role, she was involved in the establishment of Manx Classes in the Isle of Man Fine Arts and Industrial Guild (The Guild), and acting as a facilitator of publications and pioneering teaching aids such as Goodwin's 'First Lessons in Manx' (1901).

She was also instrumental in the regeneration of Gaelg on the Isle of Man, introducing the language into schools, and recording phonograph reels of Manx Gaelic and Manx English speech and music.

3.2 Pan-Celtic Movement

Sophia Morrison was a Manx political campaigner for the Manx Gaelic language and its importance in the Island's heritage, acting as a pivotal figure in the development of the Pan-Celtic movement and later the development of the Celtic Congress. During this time, Members pledged to revive their associated language to some degree of legitimacy within their nations. This acted as a form of political expression, pushing back against governments who had/still were in the process of discouraging Celtic languages.

⁴ iMuseum, Sophia Morrison, 1881 Census, https://imuseum.im/search/agent_record/view?id=mnh-agent-1316193&type=agent&tab=all&from=&page=5&term=%22sophia+morrison%22&size=20&sort=&filter=&view=&images=&ttmcp=0&rfname=&rlname=&machine=&race=&raceyear=&linked=0&pos=81

⁵ B. Maddrell, 2002, *Speaking from the Shadows: Sophia Morrison and the Manx Cultural Revival*, *Folklore*, 113 (2): 222, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1260677?seq=1>

⁶ iMuseum, Sophia Morrison, 1911 Census, <https://imuseum.im/search/collections/people/mnh-agent-1233825.html>

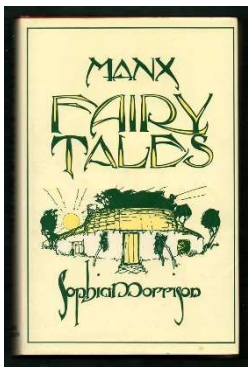
She contributed to the 'Celtic Review' and 'Dictionary of National Biography' in her role as a linguistic researcher. Morrison also represented the Isle of Man at the 1901 Pan-Celtic Congress in Dublin.

3.3 Manx Proverbs and Sayings (1905)

In August 1905, Sophia Morrison co-authored 'Manx Proverbs and Sayings' with Carl Roeder.⁷ This collection was published in the Manx Examiner and listed phrases and proverbs collected from native Gaelg speakers on the Island. Sophia wrote that these phrases were 'obtained directly from the lips of the people, among whom it has been handed down from father to son.' In the preface of this publication, it was written:

Something of the national Character, somewhat of the history of a people, much of its manners and customs, may be gleaned from its folklore.

3.4 Manx Fairy Tales (1911)



Throughout her life, Sophia worked to preserve native folk-song and folk-lore of the Isle of Man. This is said to have been partly influenced by her friend and co-author of 'Manx Proverbs and Sayings' Carl Roeder. In 1911, Sophia Morrison first published her book 'Manx Fairy Tales'. This told stories which she had collected from ordinary Manx people.

After her death, a second edition of the book was released in 1929 following further interest in the publication, this time with its titles illustrated by Archibald Knox in his signature Celtic style. A third edition was published in 1991.

Source: Amazon UK

3.5 Manx Antiquarian Society

Through her role in the Manx Language Society, many notable antiquarians consulted Miss Morrison in relation to Manx Gaelic, folklore, dialect, and music. In 1912, she was elected as Vice-President of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society. Inspired by great Manx figures of the past, such as poet the Reverend Thomas Edward Brown and music collector Dr John Clague, she was determined to promote and collect all aspects of Manx Culture.

Working with her friend Alice Williams, a T.E. Brown calendar was created, alongside a T.E. Brown Day in schools where each school was given a portrait of the Reverend.

3.6 Mannin Journal (1913)

The Mannin was a journal first published in May 1913 by the Manx Society in Douglas. Sophia Morrison used her inherited wealth to fund the publication's cost, and held the role of editor from 1913 to her death in 1917. With a cause of Manx Nationalism, the Mannin was published on yellow paper which Morrison commented was 'supposed to be a Celtic colour', and was illustrated by Archibald Knox. It is said that Morrison was unhappy with Knox's first drawings as he illustrated the front cover of the publication with birds, instead of a Viking ship as she had suggested.

Eight editions of the journal were published during Sophia's lifetime. The ninth edition was edited by her friend Mona Douglas, and released in May 1917 following Sophia's death. Extra material was

⁷ Manx Notebook, *Manx Proverbs and Sayings*, S. Morrison and C. Roeder, 1905, <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/fulltext/mp1905/index.htm>

included to commemorate Sophia's life and work, collected from friends and colleagues. In this edition, Mannin was identified as Morrison's "greatest literary task."⁸

3.7 Anglo-Manx Dialect

Sophia Morrison was a key figure in the development of the 'Anglo-Manx' dialect writing (Manx English). Working with the Peel Players theatre company, she produced plays which were performed both on Island and in England.

Up to her death, Sophia was collecting materials to form an Anglo-Manx dictionary, work which was commenced by the late A.W. Moore. In 1924, Sophia's sister Louisa Morrison published the book 'A Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx Dialect' which was compiled by A.W. Moore, through the help of Sophia Morrison and Edmund Goodwin. This book represented the Manx-English dialect of the late 1800s.⁹

4. Late Life

In her later life, Sophia underwent several operations both on the Isle of Man and in Manchester, after suffering with severe issues of the eye which resulted in Occipital Neuralgia related headaches.



Sophia died on 14th January 1917 at the age of 57 as the result of intestinal cancer, and was buried in the family grave in Peel Cemetery. Her funeral was well attended, with members of the Peel Players carrying her coffin, and the Vicar of German conducting the service.

At the funeral, an old friend and fellow Manx language enthusiast made the remark:

May she become one of those to whom the scriptural phrase may truly be applied: "T'ad ec fee veih nyn seaghyn; as ta nyn obbraghyn geiyrt daue." ("They rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.")

Source: Flickr

In the edition of Mannin that followed her death, P. W. Caine wrote in memoriam:

No heavier blow has ever befallen the cause of Manx nationality than was sustained on January 14th last, when Miss Sophia Morrison, the secretary of the Manx Society and the editor and proprietor of Mannin, passed from mortal ken.

5. Legacy

In the year of her death, the Ward Library in Peel was presented with a portrait of Miss Morrison, and later with a memorial bookcase inscribed with her name by her family. These pieces are now located in the 'Sophia Morrison Reference Room' in the library.

In the Peel Room of the House of Mannanan, an information panel is devoted partly to Sophia, including an audio recording she made in 1910, and some of her needlework.

In 2017, to mark the centenary of Morrison's death, Mec Vannin and the Celtic Congress organised a series of events including a wreath laying at her graveside, talks by academics, concerts, poetry

⁸ Manx Notebook, *In Memoriam of Miss Sophia Morrison*, <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/mannin/v9p499.htm>

⁹ Manx Notebook, *A Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx Dialect*, A.W. Moore, S. Morrison, E. Goodwin, 1924, <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/fulltext/am1924/index.htm>

readings, and Manx dialect play performances. An exhibition titled Sophia Morrison: The First Curator also occurred at the Manx Museum around this time.¹⁰

In a collaborative effort between Culture Vannin and the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, an award was created in Sophia Morrison's name to celebrate the achievement of young Manx language students. The award is given to the highest achieving under 18s in the Teisht Chadjin Ghaelgagh (GCSE equivalent), specifically those who have helped to promote the language. In 2022, the inaugural 'Sophia Morrison Award' was presented to Fiona Pierce and Elena Caley who translated a number of Beatrix Potter children's books into Gaelg.¹¹

5.1 In Tynwald

In Tynwald Court on 13th July 2005, in regards to the Tynwald Honour Committee Second Report of 2004-5, Phil Gawne MHK spoke of how more cultural pioneers and activists should be considered for the Manx Patriots Roll, alongside political names. One such person suggested was Sophia Morrison:¹²

*There do seem to be rather a lot of political names there. I would, certainly, like to see consideration... if we are going to open this up as significantly as we appear to be, I would like to see names such as Dr Clague, Doug Faragher, William Cubbon the founder of the Manx Museum, Samuel Norris, who did such excellent work in terms of bringing a greater democracy in the 19th century, and, indeed, **Sophia Morrison**, who was a great pioneer of study of Manx culture. I would be very grateful if the Committee would give consideration to those names, at some point in the future.*

Additional Information

- iMuseum, Sophia Morrison Biography - <https://imuseum.im/search/collections/people/mnh-agent-11081.html>
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- Creeaght, *Sophia Morrison*, <https://www.islacallister.com/creeaght/sophia>

¹⁰ Isle of Man.com, *Sophia Morrison*, V. Caine, 30 June 2017, <https://www.isleofman.com/article/view/3616/2017/6/sophia-morrison>

¹¹ Learn Manx, *Inaugural Winners of the Sophia Morrison Award*, 24 July 2023, <https://www.learnmanx.com/features/inaugural-winners-of-the-sophia-morrison-award-795205/>

¹² Tynwald Court, 13th July 2005, 1672 T122, <https://www.tynwald.org.im/spfile?file=/business/hansard/20002020/th13072005.pdf#search=%22%22Sophia+Morrison%22%22>

Appendix 2:
Annie Bridson - Research Paper by the
Tynwald Research & Scrutiny Support
Team



OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF TYNWALD

Research and Scrutiny Support

Annie Bridson

Issued 01/11/2022

For: Nina Murray

From: Erin Duncan

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1. Introduction

Annie Bridson was Member of the House of Keys for Garff from 1951 to 1956. As the second female to be elected into the House, Annie's position marked a historic milestone for women in Manx politics.

In [Women's Realm](#), she was described as having traits of 'great moral courage; a fine, forceful oratorical gift; and a keen intelligence and reasoning power'.

In a [statement upon her death](#) in 1985, the Speaker of the Keys (Sir Charles Kerruish O.B.E), who formerly served as MHK for Garff alongside Annie, spoke of fond memories of Mrs Bridson:

"Annie Bridson, hon. members, was a doughty fighter; forthright, down to earth, she understood people and their problems and they responded, recognising her deep care and concern. Above all, she was a true Manx patriot, believing that nothing but the best was the birth right of her people."



Source: [iMuseum](#)

2. Personal Life

2.1 Early Life

Annie Dorothy Bridson (nee. Watterson) was born on the 5th April 1893, the third daughter to her parents William and Catherine. She was [educated](#) at Tynwald Street School (Fairfield Junior School), then the Eastern District Secondary School (Park Road High School), and later at St Margaret's Ripon Training College in Yorkshire (teacher training). She used this education to become a primary school teacher, first in an impoverished inner-city school in Sheffield, before returning to the Island to ultimately become headmistress of St. Mark's school.

The Speaker, Sir Charles Kerruish, spoke of these years as the formative years in which:

"She developed her understanding of ordinary people's problems, and out of that understanding grew a desire to do what she could to improve their lot."

2.2 Adult Life

In the late 1910s, Annie took up the study of Sociology, ultimately 'driving her professional career as a Socialist' according to [Women's Realm](#) in 1934. She aligned herself with the Labour manifesto and held a firm conviction in social reform.

Annie often rode a motorbike between her home in Douglas, and her job at St. Mark's. In [1926](#), she was driving her motorcycle on Albany Road, when she collided with a dog. She was thrown off her bike and sustained head and elbow injuries, which she was treated for at Noble's Hospital.



Source: [Find a Grave](#)

Annie married Corporal Thomas 'Gerald' Bridson in 1928. The marriage was described by the newspapers as '[A Labour Union](#)', as the couple met through their membership of the Manx Labour Party. They lived together in Malew before moving to Lonan in the 1940s, and remained together until his death in September 1967, up until which she looked after Gerald in his ill health.

Gerald was a Member of the House of Keys for Garff between 1919 and 1924, before regaining his seat between 1942 and 1946. He was forced to retire from active politics due to his [ill health](#), and cut his final term as MHK short by a year.

Wine making was a fond hobby of Mrs Bridson, who was interviewed by the [Isle of Man Examiner](#) during her time as MHK regarding her 'unique wine cellar', and spoke of how she believed the drink could replace the everyday cup of tea. She spoke about the 'dying art of wine making in the home' to the Braddan Women's Institute in [1952](#). Once rationing of sugar ended after the war, she was able to create 15 gallons of wine in 1954, using fruit grown on her farm. Her other hobbies included cooking, craftwork, raising chickens, and reading. She was also a lifelong member of the Church of England, known for her [singing talents](#) within services and concerts.

Furthermore, Annie carried out a role of a Justice of the Peace and Magistrate. During their overlapping time as Magistrates in 1956, Mr and Mrs Bridson were [not allowed](#) to sit on a panel at the same time. In [1957](#), she was called to stand in for the Magistrates in a court case regarding a stolen motorcycle, when no Douglas Magistrates were available.

3. Career Outside of Tynwald

3.1 Education and Agriculture

In 1910, Annie Watterson was taken on at Tynwald Street Girl's Department School as a [student teacher](#) for a year. Following her teacher training, she spent her first year in the profession at Western Road School, Sheffield, before returning to the Island in 1914 to work at Hanover Street School for the next decade.

At this point, Annie joined the Isle of Man Teachers Association, which was the Manx Branch of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), and remained involved through World War One. In the post-war period, Annie played an active role in demanding better pay for Manx teachers in line with England. She divided her time between the Manx Labour Party and Teacher's Union, attending the NUT National Conference in Scarborough in 1924.

She became headmistress of St Mark's School in January 1925, and was praised for her progressive thinking and her teaching style. Following her marriage to Gerald in 1928, she retired from her position as a teacher, and became a farmer's wife. This experience in agriculture reflected in Annie's later role as MHK, becoming an issue which she argued for with passion.

She gave evidence before the [Cowley Unemployment Commission](#) in the 1930s on the subject of dealing with adolescents in her capacity as teacher.

In 1935, Mrs Bridson was elected to the Manx Education Authority, which she remained in throughout World War Two. She was however, given a [leave of absence](#) in 1940 due to 'military, naval, or other forms of National Service' which meant she could not carry through in her role due to other commitments (see next section).

She became Governor of the Buchan School in 1954, retaining this role within her time as MHK until 1956.

3.2 Wrens

Annie spent much of her life as a member of the Mannin branch of Wrens, Women of the Royal Naval Services (W.R.N.S). During WWII, she was stationed at HMS St George, a naval depot at Cunningham's Camp on Victoria Road, Douglas. She served as chief petty officer in the Clothing Store Department, as well as becoming a 'Wren foster mother' to mentor new recruits to the service.

In 1949, she was the Chairman of the Wrens Association, remaining in the role during her time as MHK.



Annie Bridson with Mannin Wrens in 1961- Source: [iMuseum](#)

Mr and Mrs Bridson were both supporters of the ex-Servicemen's Associations, campaigning for the improved support of demobilised servicemen after World War One, and to memorialise those who had lost their lives in the war.

In the Keys, Mrs Bridson [voted in favour](#) of the Reserve and Auxiliary Forces (Training)(Isle of Man) Bill 1952, a controversial Bill which only received the minimum of 13 votes in the Keys to pass through its third reading. This Bill gave powers to conscript to the Governor of the Island, and reduced the training period for those selected for military service. Speaking of their attitude towards the Bill, Annie said that the men in the House were adopting the same attitude as they did 'to their wives' spring cleaning'. They 'did not like having to move from one place to another but it would do them good' to approve the Bill.

4. Political Career

4.1 Manx Labour Party

Annie Bridson spent most of her adult life as a member of the Manx Labour Party (MLP), and this was where she ultimately met her husband Gerald, as well as being her entryway into Manx Politics. When speaking about housing after her election as MHK in 1951, Annie said that the 'awful slums' in Douglas before WW1 were the [main cause](#) of her joining the Labour Party, as this was the only group taking action against them. She labelled these living conditions as a 'disgrace'.

In [September 1918](#), a then Miss Watterson, attended the founding conference for the Party as delegate for the shortly lived Douglas Class Teacher's Association. During this, she gave a [speech on education](#), in which she emphasised a need for 'one education authority, a school medical service, and school clinics'. Educational matters were at the forefront of Annie's political agenda, influenced by her position with the teachers' union.

She was also known for her movement to make politics a concern for men and women alike. When the first women's section of the MLP was formed in [1919](#), Annie was the first secretary, before becoming president in later years.

In [1922-23](#), Annie was elected the first woman President of the MLP at age 29. This followed Rushen Parish's branch of the party resolving that education 'should be a national charge, and that the election of the Central Education Authority should be by adult suffrage'. Mrs Bridson represented the IoM Teacher's Association in her position as President.

In [May 1922](#), Mrs Bridson unsuccessfully ran for the Board of Guardians, alongside 11 other Labour candidates who were all unsuccessful in gaining places. She did however, gain the most votes for the Party at 179.

She presided over the [5th annual MLP conference](#) in 1922 as President, making an opening speech in which she described the Party as 'a live and thinking Party, which was not afraid to fight for its ideals', with a purpose of improving social conditions on Island. These improvements were to include housing and medical inspections for school children. She also urged all workers to join their unions for better working conditions. Furthering her prevailing feminist discourse, Annie spoke on how the Manx electorate often chose to vote for a man simply for his gender, rather than his principles.

In the 1940s, Annie and Gerald fell out of favour with the MLP and therefore during her first campaign to become MHK in 1946, she did not stand on the Party's behalf. They were accepted back in to the MLP before 1951, following a poor showing of Labour candidates in the 1946 House of Keys election.

In 1951, Annie stood for the Keys once again, this time as the [official nominee](#) for Garff Labour Party.

4.2 House of Keys

Annie Bridson stood for election for Douglas South in the [1946 House of Keys election](#) as representative for the Ex-Servicemen's Association, alongside her husband Gerald who, in a surprise turn of events, lost his seat for Garff. She lost the second seat in the House to George Higgins by only 13 votes, but had 183 votes more than former MHK Walter Craine who was the next runner-up.

She stood for election once again in [1951](#) at the age of 58, but this time as the Manx Labour Party representative for the Parish of Garff. This time she was successful in her campaign, and became the second ever female MHK to sit in the Keys, taking the second seat behind Charles Kerruish. Annie remained active throughout her five year term, and was the only woman in the Keys during her career as MHK.

Mrs Bridson did not recontest her seat in the [1956 election](#). She was [quoted](#) in saying 'An elderly woman would not be useful to you next year. There is plenty of work for the legislature to do which requires 100 percent attendance by members of the Keys, and I cannot promise that'.

4.2.1 Second Woman in the Keys

In November 1951, during a meeting in Baldrine, Mrs Bridson told her electorate:

"I am sorry there are no other women candidates in the field, because I think women could give much-needed advice in the Keys. There are so many things on which women's opinions should be heard —

education, social services and health services, and, above all, housing. Men build houses, but women have to live and work in them."

She appealed to 'women folk' to think seriously about voting for female candidates, stating that the Labour Party felt strongly that women should have the same vote as those in England. At the time, women in Garff could vote for members of the Keys and Education Authority, but not for Parish Commissioners:

"I think the parish is where they should start to learn the power of their vote because they know the people intimately."

As the only woman in the Legislature at the time, the Speaker often referred to the Members as 'Mrs Bridson and gentlemen'. During Tynwald Day 1952, Mrs Bridson was one of only two women representing the public within the procession to the Hill, alongside Miss Jean Duesbery, Chairman of the Isle of Man Education Authority.

In 1955, Mrs Bridson recorded a talk regarding the House of Keys for the Woman's Hour of the BBC, also explaining the traditions of the Manx Parliament.

4.2.2 Family Planning Committee and Education

One campaign that was at the forefront of Annie Bridson's life, and especially during her political career, was families and children. She was in strong favour of Bills such as the Adoption Bill 1953, the Children Bill 1952, the Guardianship of Infants Bill 1953, which all focused around the protection of children. Annie often focused her questioning or campaigning around education, and through her time in the Keys, she sat on the Board of Education (1951-56). She favoured traditional schooling, and believed that closer relationships between children and their families was a way to solve many social issues.

In 1951, Mrs Bridson spoke about the Manx education system, remarking that although great strides had been made over the past two decades, that too much money was being spent on a system which wasn't working at its finest. She recommended the use of old methods of schooling be returned to produce children 'who will make a valuable contribution to the life of the community', be able to use their common sense, and not be mollycoddled.



Source: iMuseum

The lack of children wishing to enter manual labour jobs troubled Annie, as she described these careers as the life of the community. She said that it 'required as many brains to be a good engineer or plumber as to be an accountant'.

In 1952, Annie Bridson organised the Family Planning Committee. This was a controversial issue, with the use of contraception still a taboo for the Manx public at the time, even within marriage. This was one of Annie's most highly regarded contributions, and one which she counted as her significant achievement to Tynwald.

Within the same year, she also spoke sentimentally in regards to the Children's Bill 1952, arguing that children in the Isle of Man had lived in 'deplorable conditions, conditions in which no sane person should allow to exist'. She spoke of incompetent mothers who were producing 'backwoods' children, with the Local Government board reporting an increase of 18 children in their foster care from the previous year. Without proper mothering, she argued, these children could not grow up to become good citizens, and therefore the Bill was necessary to aid in resolving that.

In [1953](#), Mrs Bridson questioned Tynwald about the modern education system and whether it provided value for money following rising estimates for the Educational Rates increasing for the next financial year. The reasoning she gave for these claims was a lack of discipline given to children by 'modern mothers', who did not take '100 percent interest' in their now wayward children when they were at the 'growing stage'. With the right to discipline children in schools no longer available, the children were unable to 'build on a bad foundation' and did not know the meaning of work. The Chair of the Board of Education argued that the real reason for rising rates was increased teachers wages, and the school building programme which was ongoing at the time.

Annie commended the quality of Education Authority school buildings but contested that 'palatial buildings [do not] necessarily produce well educated children' as the colour and elaboration in classrooms was too distracting to the students.

In [1955](#), a mother charged with not sending her children to school for two months argued that they were 'convulsed with fear' when reaching the school gates. Mrs Bridson argued against this explanation, stating that she could not believe that any child would be afraid of school 'these days'.

4.2.3 Agricultural Issues

Following her time as a farmer's wife, Annie Bridson used her knowledge about agriculture within her time in the Keys, voting in favour of actions which would improve the careers of farmers across the Island such as the [Grading of Cattle](#)—Reduction from Ten to Seven Grades.

Schemes involving bringing waste land into cultivation, and those giving more attention to hard hit poultry farmers, were of priority to Annie.

In [1951](#), she compared the influx of seasonal workers in the tourism industry to that of grain imports, where Manx workers were able to do the job themselves, but just needed some financial assistance to develop and function. Having worked during the 'worst period' for the farming industry, when wheat and corn were imported cheaper than the farmers on Island could grow it, Mrs Bridson saw the rejuvenation of the industry when WW1 occurred, due to Government subsidies and improved working conditions allowing for the development of farms.

4.2.4 Licensing Amendment Bill

The Licensing Amendment Bill 1954 which provided for standard measures for the sale of spirits in licensed premises was strongly opposed by Annie Bridson. Mr Kelly, a Member of the Keys, suggested that cocktails 'mostly drunk by women' should have smaller measures of alcohol within. [Annie strongly argued](#) against this 'adulteration' of a woman's drink, just because men saw them unfit to cope with the same amount measures in their drinks, and that these should be equal in size. She had similarly voted against the Licensing Amendment Bill 1952, which was lost at its [second reading](#). Speaking on the 1954 Bill, she [made her view](#) on equality clear:

"I think if a woman wants a gin and "It" she should have it. Women pay the same price."

In 1955, Annie opposed a Bill which set to allow hotels to open their bars on Sundays to serve alcohol. During a consultation with Garff constituents in [March 1955](#), she challenged the idea of Sunday drinking facilities. Despite a vote of 78 in favour to 23 against at the meeting, Mrs Bridson said she would not change her perspective as those at the meeting did not represent her Sheading, and she had promised to vote against such a move in her successful election campaign.

4.2.5 Committees

Annie Bridson's experience in agriculture was also utilised within many of the [committees](#) in which she had membership, including the Creamery Establishment Committee in 1952 and the Board of Agriculture Marketing Committee.

In [1955](#), she was a member of a committee which investigated the prices of butcher's meat. Annie argued in favour of a scheme in which meat prices would be regulated based on the grade of meat. An [overall conclusion](#) from the Meat Prices Committee stated that prices at the time did not yield unreasonable profit, price control of meat was unnecessary, and that current marketing schemes were sufficient.

Other Tynwald Committees she took part in were the Development of Industry Committee 1952, and the Selection Committee 1954. Furthermore, she was a member of the War Pensions Committee for 26 years between 1954 and 1980 outside of her role as MHK.

4.2.6 Local Government

Mrs Bridson was a member of the [Local Government Board](#) throughout her time in the Keys, elected to the board in 1951 and finishing in 1956.

When speaking about the Local Government (Registration of Voters and Election by Ballot) Bill in [1955](#), Mrs Bridson remarked:

"As a woman member, I am really surprised and amused at the attitude of quite a number of men here. You might think we were back in the 1880's with father the only person who mattered."

She argued against one of the other Member's comments that young women were irresponsible, instead stating that they took responsibility when given it. Despite women working to keep their children, they had no municipal authority vote, which was moving the Island backwards.

The Local Government (Refuse) Bill 1956 was [presented by Mrs Bridson](#) regarding unauthorised dumping. However, she chose [not to proceed](#) with the Bill following changes to clauses, as she did not believe it was an issue to be rushed, and that a bill surrounding the issue should be comprehensive to withstand time.

In regards to [health and social services](#), Mrs Bridson did not agree that the elderly should have to pay for their own prescriptions, especially when they had always contributed to national insurance schemes.

4.2.7 Employment

In [1951](#), Annie criticised the lack of action taken by the House of Keys to provide jobs for men over winter when they were no longer able to carry on with seasonal summer employment. Her argument lay in the fact that unemployment payments were too low, but that sending men to England to work was not viable and would have subsequent effects on society. A knock-on effect of children having no fathers present would lead to increased juvenile delinquency, and therefore increased crime rates as mothers would struggle to cope. Mrs Bridson suggested that increased payments from the £2 in unemployment offered at the time, would stop the £5 per week spend on juvenile detention.



Source: [*iMuseum*](#)

5. Life after Tynwald

Following her retirement from Tynwald, Annie cared for Gerald in his ill health. In 1960, the Bridsons were forced to move into a house in Douglas, as they could no longer tend to the large property they had lived in Baldrine. They lived there for the remainder of Gerald's life, until his death in 1967.

In 1978, Annie moved to Glenside retirement home at the age of 85. During this time, her prowess to incite change remained, as she sought to improve facilities for her fellow residents. This included the installation of clothes washing facilities for residents to do their own washing.

Annie died in 1985 at the age of 92 at Noble's Hospital, and was buried alongside her late husband Gerald in Braddan Cemetery.

Sources

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May 2025