

**A study of language death and revival  
with a particular focus on Manx Gaelic**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores themes of language death and revival, with a particular focus on Manx Gaelic. The first chapter aims to define language death, discusses the scale of the phenomenon, how and why it occurs, and why it is a matter of concern. It also compares a number of methods used to assess the vitality of languages. The second chapter looks at how languages such as Hebrew, Irish and Cornish have been revived or revitalised. It aims to discover common themes in language revivals and revitalisations, and discusses why some have been more successful than others.

Chapter three provides a brief overview of the history of Manx and an account of its decline. Chapter four focuses on the revival of Manx and discusses such topics as Manx in education, families and literature, the official status of Manx and the organisations involved with Manx language and culture. Chapter five contains details of the methodology used to collect information for this dissertation, much of which, particularly details of the revival, current state and possible future of Manx, was collected during a visit to the Isle of Man in June 2009. Chapter six provides an assessment of the current state of Manx and examines use of the language in public, education, families and other domains. Chapter seven explores possible ways in which the Manx language may develop in the future. The final chapter summarises the topics discussed and compares the revival of Manx with other language revivals.

This dissertation shows that the reasons for language decline and death are many and complex, and that it is possible to revitalise declining languages and to revive dead languages. It also shows that the decline of Manx has been reversed, and that Manx is now a living language with a small but ever-increasing number of speakers.

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# Introduction

The fortunes of languages can rise and fall and are intimately linked to the fortunes of their speakers. Relatively few languages are becoming increasingly widely-spoken in the world today and it is becoming more and more difficult for smaller languages to survive. However prospects for smaller languages are not entirely gloomy and a number have been successfully revived or revitalised, and initiatives are underway to do the same for other languages.

Themes of language death and revival are explored in this dissertation, with a particular focus on the Manx language. It contains information from Manx speakers, learners and others involved with the language, as well as information from the literature.

This dissertation aims to answer the following questions:

- How and why do languages die?
- Can languages be revived?
- How and why did Manx decline?
- How was Manx revived?
- What is the current state of Manx?
- How might Manx develop in the future?
- How does the revival of Manx compare to other language revivals?

# 1. Language death

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to define language death, discusses why and how it occurs and why it is a matter of concern, and gives a brief overview of the current scale of this phenomenon.

## 1.2 What is language death?

Without a community of people to speak them and pass them on to the next generation, languages cannot survive. If a community of speakers lacks a viable environment in which to live and means of making a living, their languages are likely to decline and eventually die (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). If a community no longer view their language as a central part of their identity, as has happened for many people in such places as Ireland, Wales and the Isle of Man, the motivation to maintain the language diminishes and language is likely to go into decline (Jones & Singh, 2005).

A language which is no longer transmitted from one generation to another is defined as moribund, while one which is no longer spoken is said to be dead or extinct. Moreover, if languages are considered tools for communication, a language with only one remaining speaker could also be considered effectively dead. Languages that have disappeared without leaving any written records or other documentation can be classified as extinct (Crystal, 2000).

In some cases people stop using languages as their normal means of communication, but continue to use them in specific and limited domains, such as religious ceremonies. In this way languages can maintain a degree of vitality long after their use as community languages has ceased, and may even be revived as vernacular languages. Latin, Ancient Greek, Coptic, Hebrew and Church Slavonic have all been used for religious and/or scholarly purposes, for example, and Hebrew has been revived as an everyday language in Israel (Wurm, 1991).

In other cases languages lose all their speakers and are not used even in limited domains except for perhaps a few words and phrases, but are sufficiently well documented to make their revival a possibility. Such languages could be considered neither fully alive nor completely dead. Instead they might be referred to as sleeping languages which could be awakened. One such language is Miami, an Algonquin language spoken in parts of Oklahoma

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until the 1960s, which fell into complete disuse for thirty years and is currently being revived (Leonard, 2008).

The process of dialect loss is similar to language death, however it is only part of the language that is lost, rather than the whole language. Dialects might die out if the ways of life associated with them disappear or if other dialects or varieties of language replace them. For example, local dialects of Welsh in some areas of Wales are being replaced by the standard Welsh (Jones, 1998), and something similar is happening to Irish dialects in parts of Ireland (Ó hIfearnáin, 2008).

### **1.3 How many languages are currently in use?**

Estimates for the number of languages currently spoken vary widely from 3,000 to 10,000, however most sources give a figure between 5,000 and 7,000. Gordon (2005), for example, lists 6,912 languages and nearly 40,000 alternative names for those languages and their dialects. Ruhlen (1991) gives a figure of 5,000, Grenoble & Whaley (1998) believe that the figure is between 5,000 and 6,000, and the Global Language Register suggests a total in the region of 10,000, which includes many dialects as separate languages. The distinction between language and dialect is largely dependent on sociopolitical factors (Crystal, 2000).

### **1.4 How many languages are endangered?**

Approximately half the world's languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers, and 548 have fewer than 100 speakers (Gordon, 2005). Many such languages are in danger of disappearing, and the rate of language death has increased significantly over the past few centuries (Wurm, 1991). According to the most dire estimates more than 4,000 languages will have died by the end of the 21st century (Krauss, 1992), and an ever increasing proportion of the world's population will be using languages such as Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, English and Spanish (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998). The Foundation for Endangered Languages believes that more than half the languages of the world are moribund, and that most languages are likely to disappear within a few generations (Foundation for Endangered Languages, 2009).

### **1.5 How and why do languages die?**

Languages can disappear very rapidly if all or most of their speakers die as a result of natural disasters, war or genocide (Wurm, 1991). One example is the 1932 massacre of Pipil (Nawat) speakers in El Salvador, after which many surviving Pipils stopped speaking their language as they feared further reprisals (Nettle & Romaine, 2000).

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Infectious diseases to which indigenous peoples have no resistance can also have a devastating impact on those people and their languages. Two centuries after Europeans first arrived in the Americas, for example, an estimated 90% of the indigenous population had died from diseases carried there by European people and animals (Crystal, 2000).

When a country or region is subjected to conquest, colonisation or large-scale immigration, the language of the incoming people is likely to become dominant, and speakers of local languages may be forced to, or feel the need to adopt the new language and to assimilate to the new culture, especially if that culture is one that values monolingualism. Moreover, learning the new language may result in economic benefits, such as access to goods, services and employment. This also happens when people emigrate to a country where a different language is spoken (Wurm, 1991) & (Crystal, 2000).

The process of assimilation or language shift that occurs as a result of colonisation or conquest often consists of a period of bilingualism during which the local people learn the language of the newcomers while retaining their own language(s). The length of this period varies, but in many cases it is not long before younger locals are more comfortable with the new language than with their native tongues, which they may see as irrelevant to their needs. At the same time people may become ashamed of their language, use it less and in a decreasing number of domains. Parents may stop passing their languages on to their children, and as the number of speakers declines, there will be fewer opportunities to use the languages, and the remaining speakers are likely to become isolated and inward-looking. The local languages may become modified and simplified due to extensive borrowing of vocabulary and grammatical patterns from the dominant language, and unless efforts are made to reverse the language shift, the local languages will eventually die (Crystal, 2000) & (Wurm, 1991).

There have been many cases around the world of the deliberate suppression of languages. In Kenya, for example, Gikuyu-speaking children caught speaking Gikuyu in or near school were caned, fined, or forced to carry a sign saying 'I am stupid' or 'I am a donkey'. In Welsh schools any child caught speaking Welsh had to wear a slate with 'WN' (Welsh Not) inscribed on it. They could pass it on to others who spoke Welsh during the day, and the child wearing the slate at the end of the day was punished. A similar system was used in the Isle of Man for Manx and in Brittany for Breton, while speakers of Tlingit and other Native American languages had their mouths washed out with soap and water for speaking their

native language at school. As a result of such treatment many become ashamed of their language; they feel it to be inferior and lacking in importance; they become reluctant and embarrassed to use it, and do not pass their language to their children in order to prevent them suffering in a similar way (Crystal, 2000) & (Jones & Singh, 2005).

### **1.6 Assessing the vitality of languages**

One way to assess the vitality and long term survival prospects of languages is to look at the number of speakers. This method can be misleading however: a language with only a few hundred speakers might be considered highly endangered in a large population numbering in the tens of thousands, however a language in a community of a few hundred who all speak it is in a somewhat stronger position. If a language has tens or hundreds of thousands of speakers but they are scattered among speakers of a larger language, the smaller language may not survive in the long term. Even languages with many millions of speakers can be endangered if another language has replaced them in important domains such as education. Yoruba, a language with 40 million speakers, has been largely replaced by English in higher education in Nigeria (Crystal, 2000).

Fishman (1991) uses the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) to gauge the vitality of languages, and introduces the concept of reversing the language shift (RLS). The focus of RLS efforts and the likelihood of reviving a language depend on the GIDS stage a language has reached. The stages of GIDS are shown below: threatened languages are referred to as Xish, while dominant languages are Yish.

**Stage 1** – Xish is used in the higher levels of education, work, government and media.

**Stage 2** – Xish is used to some extent in local and regional government and the media.

**Stage 3** – Xish is used in the lower levels of work.

**Stage 4** – Xish is used in the lower levels of education as a medium of instruction.

**Stage 5** – There is literacy in Xish within the home, school and community. This facilitates communication between Xish speakers, especially if they are not geographically concentrated.

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**Stage 6** – Xish is still transmitted from one generation to the next within families, is used as an everyday spoken family language, and as a community language, at least in informal situations. Fishman believes this stage is crucial in RLS efforts.

**Stage 7** – Xish is still used as a community language, however intergenerational transmission of the language has largely ceased and the majority of speakers are beyond child-bearing age.

**Stage 8** – Speakers of Xish are mainly elderly and socially isolated. They have few opportunities to use Xish and as a result their command of the language has diminished.

UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) assesses language vitality by looking at nine criteria: the number of speakers; the proportion of speakers within the population; intergenerational transmission; attitudes to the language within the community; domains of use; official attitudes and policies; available documentation; use in new domains and the media; and materials for teaching the language. Using these criteria they classify languages as safe, vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered or extinct. Safe languages are spoken by people of all generations and passed on from one generation to the next. Vulnerable languages are spoken by adults and children, but used only in some domains. Intergenerational transmission of definitely endangered languages has ceased. Severely endangered languages are spoken only by older generations. Critically endangered languages have only elderly speakers who rarely speak them, and extinct languages have lost all their speakers (UNESCO, 2009).

Leonard (2008) uses a continuum of language endangerment which places language widely spoken by powerful groups at the left, and languages that are no longer spoken but are sufficiently well documented to make their revival a possibility at the right. In between are minority languages and languages which are not transmitted from one generation to another. Languages towards the left of the continuum are classified as less endangered, while those towards the right are more endangered. None are classified as 100% safe. Languages with no speakers and little or no documentation are classified as extinct and outside the endangerment continuum.

### **1.7 Why is language death a matter of concern?**

Many people, especially those from predominantly monolingual countries, believe that the world would be a better place full of mutual understanding and peace if everyone spoke the

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same language. However there have been many conflicts and civil wars between people who speak the same language. The economic cost of translating and interpreting between languages is advanced as another argument in favour of a monolingual world. While a lot of money is spent on translating and interpreting, that money should not be considered wasted; instead one could view it as providing a business advantage (Crystal, 2000) and being a “*lubricant of trade*” (Arcand, 1996, p. 119). Languages can also have a positive economic impact on tourism, help to bring and keep communities together and give them self-confidence and a sense of pride in their culture and identity (Crystal, 2000).

Language and culture are closely linked, and cultures are transmitted mainly via languages. When a language dies the knowledge its speakers have accumulated over many generations may be lost, especially if they have left no written records. Language loss can lead to a loss of history, beliefs, traditions, stories, songs and identity, and reduce a community’s cultural distinctiveness (Crystal, 2000), something summed up by the following proverbs:

*Çheer gyn çhengey, çheer gyn ennym* (Manx).

A country without a language, a country without an identity

*Cenedl heb iaith, cenedl heb galon* (Welsh).

A nation without a language, a nation without a heart.

*Am fear a chailleas a chanain caillidh e a shaoghal* (Scottish Gaelic).

He who loses his language loses his world.

(Ager, 2009)

Many endangered languages are spoken in environments rich in biological diversity. When such languages die a great deal of knowledge of the environments in which their speakers live can also be lost. This may include knowledge about agriculture and animal husbandry, botany, medicine, zoology and the ecosystem, some or much of which may not be known to Western science (Crystal, 2000).

Languages are sources of endless fascination in their own right. For linguists the existence of a great diversity of languages offers opportunities to discover the large variation there can be in phonology, syntax, lexicon, pragmatics and discourse patterns, and to search for linguistic universals. The pool of linguistic possibilities shrinks every time a language dies (Crystal, 2000).

## **1.8 Conclusion**

Languages appear to be dying at an ever increasing rate and a significant proportion – perhaps half – of the languages currently spoken are likely to die within the current century. This situation, which has a wide variety of causes, is a matter of concern not just for the people who speak the endangered languages and for linguists, but for humanity as a whole. There are some glimmers of hope however, and some efforts to revive and revitalise languages are succeeding, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 2. Language revival and revitalisation

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses language revival and revitalisation, and considers why some such undertakings have been more successful than others. Efforts to bring back languages which have lost all their speakers can be referred to as language revivals, while efforts to increase the number of people who speak a language and to expand its domains of use are referred to as language revitalisation (Jones & Singh, 2005). However some authors, e.g. Ó Laoire (1996), use both revival and revitalisation when referring to same language. Fishman (1991) refers to the process of language revival / revitalisation as “*reversing the language shift*”, while Leonard (2008) suggests that in some cases language revival can be seen as the awakening of sleeping languages.

### 2.2 The revival of Hebrew

The most successful and widely-known example of language revival is that of Hebrew, the use of which as a community language had largely ceased by 70 AD. After that it continued to be used for literary and religious functions, as well as a common language among Jews from different countries. During the mid-nineteenth century the first efforts were made to revive Hebrew as a everyday language. One man who played a major role in these efforts was Eliezer Ben Yehuda (1858-1922), who was the first to make exclusive use of Hebrew in his home, and encouraged the use of Hebrew among others, as well as its use in schools (Fellman, 1973).

During the early twentieth century the use of Hebrew as a vernacular language increased significantly among Jews in Palestine, and in 1941 the Central Council for the Community of Israel was set up with the aim of imposing the use of Hebrew and to eliminate the use of other languages. Use of Hebrew was closely monitored, and propaganda, threats, insults, humiliation and even violence were used against those not using the language. In spite of this many immigrants continued to speak their native languages at home while using Hebrew in public, but did not pass their languages on to their children, who grew up monolingual in Hebrew (Shohamy, 2008).

Today Hebrew is an official language of Israel, along with Arabic, it is used in public and private, in the media, and in literature, and is the main medium of instruction in schools,

where children are also required to learn Arabic and English. Immigrants to Israel are expected to learn Hebrew as quickly as they can after arrival. Hebrew lessons for adults are provided in intensive schools known as *Ulpanim*, while children acquire the language through immersion at school, and also receive some extra help if necessary (Shohamy, 2008).

While there is no doubt that Hebrew has been successfully revived, Shohamy (2008) suggests that its revival has had negative aspects, including the aggressive elimination of other languages, and the imposition of Hebrew on immigrants, some of whom find it very difficult to become proficient in the language and are unable to secure employment or express themselves fully as a result.

### **2.3 The revival of Irish in Belfast**

Another successful language revival is that of Irish in Belfast, although on a much smaller scale than Hebrew. Irish was spoken natively in parts of Northern Ireland until the 1950s, but had largely disappeared from Belfast before then. By 1965 there were approximately 36 Irish-speaking families in Belfast, and it was during that year that five young couples decided to raise their children through Irish and to use the language as much as possible in the everyday lives. None of them were native speakers of Irish and all had learned it as adults. They built themselves houses on the Shaw's Road and started an Irish-medium primary school in 1971 (Maguire, 1990).

Over the years the school grew steadily and started to attract children from other parts of the city whose parents were learning Irish. As the popularity of Irish medium education grew, a second Irish-medium primary school was established in 1987, and since then two Irish-medium secondary schools and many nurseries have been set up, and numerous Irish language evening classes for adults are run by volunteers all over Northern Ireland (Mac Aindrea, 1997). A vibrant programme of cultural and social events in Irish has also developed, and an Irish language daily newspaper was published between 1984 and 2008 and has continued as an online version since then (Mac Giolla Chóill, 2008). There have been short daily Irish language broadcasts on BBC Radio Ulster since 1986 (Maguire, 1990) and an Irish language community radio station, *Raidió Fáilte*, was started in 2002 (Raidió Fáilte, 2002). In addition, a number of businesses have been set up by Irish speakers, including a garage, a knitting factory and an industrial estate (Andersonstown News, 2009).

From small beginnings an Irish speaking community has been re-established in parts Belfast and Northern Ireland (Maguire, 1990). Irish has not been re-established in all domains however, as was highlighted by a recent court ruling which upheld a 1737 law requiring all court proceedings to be in English (Belfast Telegraph, 2009). Hindley (1990) does not believe that the revival of Irish in Northern Ireland has been as successful as some people claim, nor that it has much relevance or provides much hope for the Irish language as a whole. Others argue that the future of the Irish language is in urban areas where people have much better access to education and employment opportunities than in the rural areas (Ó Dúráin, 2008) & (Independent.ie, 2008). One problem faced by Irish revitalisation efforts in Northern Ireland is that some 40% of the population are strongly opposed to the language (Templeton, 2009).

Meanwhile in the Republic of Ireland Irish is an official language, has been a compulsory subject in Ireland's schools since 1922 and is required for many civil services positions. However few of those who study Irish in schools become fluent, and many have negative impressions of the language (Hindley, 1990). Some 40% of the population claim to speak Irish, according to the 2002 census, but just 10% speak it every day, and another 4% use it on a weekly basis (Murtagh, 2007). On the other hand I have met many people in Ireland who did not enjoy learning Irish at school, and then became interested in it again later in life and became fluent in it. Moreover, since the 1970s there Irish-medium education has grown rapidly and there are now over 200 *Gaelscoileanna* [Irish-medium schools] throughout Ireland. Many such schools were started by parents as small-scale projects and have difficulty securing official recognition and funding (Ó Néill, 2005).

#### **2.4 Other language revivals**

Efforts are being made to revive and revitalise languages all over the world. In North America, for example, most of the indigenous languages are vulnerable, endangered or moribund, and there are revival movements for many of them. There are also revival movements for languages in many other regions (Zepeda & Hill, 1991).

In many cases Native American languages are in the terminal stages of decline when language revival efforts begin, i.e. inter-generational transmission has ceased, most or all of their speakers are over child bearing age, and/or their use is restricted to a small number of domains. Or in other words, they have reached stage 7 or 8 of Fishman's GIDS (Fishman,

1991) or are definitely, severely or critically endangered according to UNESCO's criteria (UNESCO, 2009).

In Kahnawake near Montreal the Mohawk language lost about three quarters of its speakers during the 1960s and inter-generational transmission largely broke down. During the 1970s Mohawk lessons were introduced in schools, and Mohawk-medium education began in 1979. Today about half the community send their children to the Mohawk medium school, and those parents who do so sign an agreement to participate in activities organised by the school, and are encouraged to speak Mohawk at home with their children, and to learn the language themselves if they do not already speak it (Jacobs, 1998). In fact Mohawk medium school is so popular that there is a shortage of places and teachers. (Hover, 1992). Mohawk is now considered a viable language, though with a small population base (Kinkade, 1991).

In other cases languages have lost all their speakers but are sufficiently well documented to make their revival a possibility. One example of this is Miami, an Algonquin language spoken in parts of Oklahoma until the 1960s. Extensive written documentation of the language was made between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, although there is only one short recording of the spoken language from 1949. When revival efforts began in the 1990s only a few fragments of the language remained in people's memories. By the early 21st century several hundred people had acquired some knowledge of the language, some fifteen people had conversation proficiency, and a number of families had decided to use Miami at home and to raise their children with the language (Leonard, 2008).

Another example is Cornish, which disappeared as a community language by the end of the eighteenth century, and lost possibly its last native speaker in 1891. When the Cornish revival began in the early twentieth century the revived language was based on the fragments of Late Cornish that had been documented or which remained in people's memories, as well as Middle Cornish literature, and words borrowed from or modelled on Welsh and Breton. No recordings exist of native Cornish speakers, so the pronunciation of the revived versions of Cornish had to be reconstructed from the surviving Cornish texts (MacKinnon, 2005).

Today there are two or three hundred fluent speakers of Cornish, plus several thousand people with some knowledge of the language; it is taught to a limited extent in schools and in classes for adults; people are writing poetry, songs, short stories and novels in Cornish, and there are regular, short radio broadcasts in Cornish. One weakness of the Cornish revival is

the multiple versions of the language, of which there are currently six. One version, *Kernewek Kemmyn* or Common Cornish, is the most widely-spoken and studied (MacKinnon, 2005), and in 2008 the Cornish Language Partnership agreed on a Standard Written Form of Cornish for use in official publications and signs (Cornish Language Partnership, 2009).

Immersion education for children is used to differing extents in many language revivals and revitalisations. In New Zealand, for example, hundreds of *Kōhanga Reo* [Language Nests] where young children are immersed in the Māori language have been set up since the early 1980s (King, 2001), and a similar programme has been set up for the Hawaiian language in Hawaii. Culture has also played an important part in both these revitalisations: in Hawaiian-medium schools, for example, the pupils learn Hawaiian music, poetry, literature, crafts and other aspects of Hawaiian culture, which is seen as inseparable from the language. Parents who send their children to Hawaiian-medium schools are encouraged to learn Hawaiian and use it as much as possible (No'eau Warner, 2001).

In some language revitalisations focus not just on immersion education for children, but also language acquisition by adults. For example, in the areas of the Basque country where the language is still relatively strong it is possible for civil servants to spend a year or two learning the language while on full pay, and those who achieve proficiency in Basque can have all the fees they have paid for lessons refunded. There are also many small groups of adults with shared interests who meet regularly and speak Basque as much as they can. Such groups usually include one or two native speakers who volunteer to spend time helping learners improve their Basque. Thanks to these and other initiatives, the number of Basque speakers increased from 20% of the population in 1981 to 30% in 2001, and the percentage of schools teaching through the medium of Basque went from 20% in 1982 to 70% in 2005. A major factor in the success of Basque revitalisation efforts appears to be the willingness of people to invest money in the language, not just for education, but also for signs, product labels, youth clubs and so on. The strength of the Basque economy has also been an important factor (Gwanas, 2008).

## **2.5 Why are some language revivals more successful than others?**

The language revival and revitalisation initiatives discussed have enjoyed varying degrees of success. No two language revivals are identical: the state and position of the languages differ when the revivals begin and they have enjoyed different levels of community and official support and funding.

While one man, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, played a significant role in the revival of Hebrew (Fellman, 1973), once the momentum of the revival efforts had built up, the language was imposed and aggressively promoted from on high, while at the same time use of other languages was discouraged, a policy viewed as misguided by Shohamy (2008). The other language revivals discussed here were mainly grassroots initiatives, and many required long campaigns for official support and funding. None have involved the suppression of other languages.

Some language revival efforts, such as that of Cornish, get sidetracked by disputes about orthographies and/or which variety of the language should be used (Jones, 1998). Others enjoy popular support, but few of their supporters go to the trouble of learning the language, or if they know it, do not use it in their everyday lives, as is the case with Irish in Ireland (Murtagh, 2007). Culture appears to play an important role in many language revivals and can help to strengthen people's sense of identity (Jacobs, 1998).

Many language revivals and revitalisations involve teaching of the languages in schools, however teaching languages for an hour or two a week, or less, is unlikely to produce many fluent speakers (Ó Néill, 2005). Immersion education, which uses the language being revived as a medium of instruction, appears to be a much more effective way for people to acquire the languages, both for children and adults.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

It is possible to revive and revitalise languages. Many factors affect the likelihood of success of such initiatives, including the state of the languages when the revivals or revitalisations begin; the levels of community and official support; how much time, effort and money people are prepared to invest in the languages; and the opportunities available to use the languages. The contribution of the languages to the cultural, political and/or religious identity of their speakers also appears to be important.

## 3. The decline of Manx

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the history of the Manx language, and a fairly detailed account of the decline of Manx. It contains information both from the literature, and from individuals involved in the language in various ways.

### 3.2 History of the Manx language

Manx or Manx Gaelic (*Gaelg/Gailck*) is a member of the Goidelic branch of the Insular Celtic languages. It developed from the Old Irish (Gaelic) brought to the Isle of Man during the fourth and fifth centuries AD by missionaries and others from Ireland. The Isle of Man, an island in north of the Irish Sea equidistant between England and Ireland, is a British Crown Dependency and is not part of the United Kingdom or the European Union (Stowell, 2005).

The Vikings began to raid the island in 800AD and eventually settled there and took control. Their influence was most notable on political and legal institutions, and the island's government, the Tynwald is still based on their parliamentary assembly. However there was only minimal Norse influence on the local language and very few words of Norse origin were borrowed into Gaelic. This was most likely because the Vikings became assimilated into the local culture, and were bilingual in Norse and Gaelic. Some of them might have also lived in other Gaelic-speaking regions, such as Scotland, and acquired a knowledge of Gaelic. A number of place names are of Norse origin, including Jurby, Colby, Langness, Port Soderick, Laxey (salmon river) and Snaefell (snow mountain), as well as a few words related to boats and the coast (Price, 1992), (Stowell, 2005) & (Taylor, 1865).

After Magnus, the last King of Mann, died in 1265, the Isle of Man came under the control of Alexander III of Scotland in 1266. Over the following two centuries the island passed through periods of Scottish and English control during which Manx emerged as a distinct language (Broderick, 1999).

### 3.3 The decline of Manx

The influence of the English language on Manx possibly dates back to 1405, when tenure of the island was granted to Sir John Stanley by Henry IV. As a result the Manx people became isolated to some extent from the Gaelic-speaking people of Ireland of Scotland, contacts and

trade with England increased, and the island acquired English-speaking administrators. However this is somewhat speculative as little is known of the interaction between English and Gaelic on the Isle of Man before the Reformation (c.1530) (Stowell, 2005).

James, the Seventh Earl of Derby and Lord of Mann from 1627 to 1643, encouraged young Manx men to study at university in England, and also planned to set up a university in the Isle of Man. However his plans never came to fruition due to the English Civil War (Stowell, 2005). The pursuit of higher education by Manx people in England, or other parts of the UK, continues to this day, as was confirmed by many of the Manx people I interviewed.

In the seventeenth century Isaac Barrow, the bishop and governor of Man from 1663 to 1671, set up English-medium schools in each parish of the island and obliged the church ministers to teach in them. Barrow also believed that the use of Manx in churches was an obstacle to the appreciation and understanding of the scriptures, so encouraged the use of English. The success of these schemes was limited, probably because few of the ministers spoke English. Thomas Wilson (1663-1755), who became Bishop of Mann in 1698, had the power under church law to fine parents whose children did not go to school, however he did not use this power to excess due to his realistic and enlightened attitudes to the Manx language. In fact his translation of *The Principles and Duties of Christianity*, known in Manx as *Coyrle Sodjey* [Further Advice], was the first book to be published in Manx (in 1707), and he expected church ministers to be able to use Manx as at that time over 60% of the population of the island knew no other language (Stowell, 2005).

Wilson's successor, Mark Hildesley (1695-1772) was also sympathetic to Manx and sought to make Manx language teaching materials available for the schools, and to establish the use of Manx as a medium of instruction in schools. This policy, which was supported by the Bishop of York, was successful, and in a relatively short space of time all but one of the schools were teaching through Manx. He also encouraged his clergy to use "their best endeavours to improve the use and practice of the Manx language" (Stowell, 2005: 389). Moreover, during Hildesley's tenure as bishop Manx translations of the bible and other religious works were published (Broderick, 1999).

After Hildesley's death attitudes towards the Manx language became increasingly negative, the Anglican Church withdrew its support for Manx-medium instruction in schools, and by 1782 English had become the main language of instruction in all but five schools. Although

instruction through Manx was reintroduced in Sunday Schools during the 1820s, in 1825 Bishop Murray informed the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), which had been the main source of Manx language religious material, that there no need for Manx versions of such material (Broderick, 1999). In a letter to the SPCK, Murray claimed that, “there is no longer any necessity for impressions of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer in the Manks Tongue; but that in the English Tongue they are much wanted, and sought after with great avidity.” and that, “the teaching of the Manks Language is prohibited by Act of Parliament”, which was not true (Parker, 1831) & (Broderick, 1999).

In 1781 John Wesley visited the Isle of Man at a time when there were some 22 Manx-speaking methodist ministers who were able to preach in both Manx and English, and whose congregations were predominantly Manx-speaking (Thompson, 1998). Initially Wesley encouraged the use of Manx, and in 1783 in a letter to Thomas Tattershall, one of the Methodist preachers on the Isle of Man, he wrote, “If you would learn the Manx language, I should commend you” (Wesley, 1783). However in 1789 in a letter to George Holder, another preacher, Wesley wrote, “I exceedingly disapprove of your publishing anything in the Manx language. On the contrary, we should do everything in our power to abolish it from the earth, and persuade every member of our Society to learn and talk English. This would be much hindered by providing them with hymns in their own language. Therefore gently and quietly let that proposal drop” (Wesley, 1789).

In 1798 John Feltham wrote, “The enlightened Manksman, if he is fond of his native language, must lament the barrenness of its literary field, and the almost daily disuse of his mother tongue. The English language is preferred in general. In the Church and in the Courts of Law, it is indispensably necessary: in general the lower class understand English, and few are wholly ignorant of it; yet they are more ready at, and attached to, their Manks.” (Feltham, 1798).

During the early 18<sup>th</sup> century a trade in wine, tea, tobacco and other commodities grew up between the Isle of Man and England, Scotland and Ireland. The Manx traders obtained these goods in France, Spain, Portugal and a number of other countries, sold them in the UK, and paid duty on them in the Isle of Man, which was lower than the duty in the UK. While the British government viewed such activities as smuggling, the Manx people saw them as legitimate trade. They attracted increasing numbers of merchants to the Isle of Man, which

lead to the growth of the towns, especially Douglas, and greater use of English (Broderick, 1999).

In 1765 The British government attempted to curb the smuggling by means of the Act of Revestment, known as *Yn Chialg Vooar* [The Great Deception] in Manx, which transferred sovereignty of the island from the Duke of Atholl to the British Crown. The loss of earnings as a result of this led to poverty, and boosted the prestige and use of English on the Isle of Man. The position of the Manx language was further undermined by immigration from England and Scotland, especially during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as the emigration of Manx people to England, America and other countries due to economic problems resulting from the Napoleonic Wars, depression in the fishing industry and famine (Broderick, 1999).

Of the Manx people who emigrated to America, a significant number settled in Ohio. Clarke (1872) mentions that a thousand Manx people were resident in Cleveland, Ohio, and that they continued to speak Manx as their everyday language in most domains. Some of them even acquired their Manx in America. Stowell (2005) notes that approximately 30,000 of the current residents of Cleveland are of Manx origin, and that Manx was used as a community language in Cleveland, other parts of Ohio, and parts of Pennsylvania until the early twentieth century – perhaps longer than in the Isle of Man. Other Manx people emigrated to Canada, South Africa, Australia or New Zealand (Coakley, 2001).

English increasingly became the language of the towns, and was spread to other parts of the island after many new roads were built. However the biggest impact on the Manx language came from tourism, which took off from 1833 when a regular ferry service between England and the Isle of Man was established (Stowell, 2005). The number of English-speaking visitors went from around 20,000 in the 1830s (equivalent to half the population of the island) to more than 250,000 in the 1890s. This led to a great demand for English speakers to work in the tourist industry (Broderick, 1999). A Manx proverb from the nineteenth century sums up the situation succinctly, “*Tra haink ny skibbyltee boghtey stiagh hie yn Ghaelg magh.*” [When the tourists came in, the Manx language went out.] (Gawne, 2004).

Manx became associated with poverty, backwardness and ignorance, even by Manx speakers themselves, and parents decided to save their children from such stigma by speaking only

English to them, while using Manx as a secret language amongst themselves to some extent (Thomson, 2000).

In 1821 a large supply of Manx spelling books and other books for children were sent to the Isle of Man by the Sunday School Society in London and the Liverpool Tract Society with the aim of teaching children to read Manx so that they could read the bible to their parents. This material was used in seventeen Sunday Schools with some 600 children. In the same year the strength of negative feelings towards Manx were demonstrated in an anonymous letter to the Manx Advertiser, which said, “What better is the gibberish called Manx than an uncouth mouthful of course (sic) savage expressions... Abolish the Manx; I would say then, as fast as ye can, ye learned of the country. Judges, Lawyers, Clergy, crush it. Allow no one, not even one of your servants or neighbours to speak one word of Manx; and thus, by degrees, annihilate it.” (Stowell, 2005).

Gill (1859) mourns the disappearance of Manx from churches, schools and the the legal system, and said that, “It is rarely now heard in conversation except among the peasantry. It is a doomed language, - an iceberg floating into southern latitudes.” (Gill, 1859, v) He states that object of his works “is not to uphold the Manx as a spoken language, - that were a hopeless attempt, were the end ever so desirable; but to afford some assistance to the student of this interesting branch of the ancient Celtic, and to obtain for it, when its lifetime is gone by, a place among the records of the dead languages of Europe.” (Gill, 1859, iv-v) He is not entirely pessimistic about the language however, and notes that Manx was still widely-spoken among the peasantry, and that they feel more comfortable speaking Manx than English, which they speak “with hesitation and under restraint” (Gill, 1859, v).

A visitor to the Isle of Man noted in letter dated 1883 that “There can be no doubt that the Manx people are throughly ashamed of their language. They say, and, of course, with truth, that it is of no use to them, either for advancement in life or for the acquisition of the most ordinary information.” He mentions that the language is “constantly ridiculed by their English visitors”; that the Manx, “speak nothing but English when there is a chance of strangers overhearing them”; and that those who “habitually use Manx were spoken of with contempt by the other Manx people of their own class who used English only.” Moreover, the one monoglot Manx speaker he knew of was viewed as something of a novelty and people would make a point of visiting her (Miller, 1994).

In a letter published in the *Mona's Herald* in 1872, the Reverend J.T. Clarke, a fluent Manx speaker, wrote that, "[...] in the time of Deemster Lace and Deemster Crellin, no attorney dare appear before them unless they could plead in Manx", and that, "During the reigns of Bishops Wilson and Hildesley, no young man could be ordained without his possessing a good knowledge of Manx". He notes that "although it [Manx] is fast running down hill" he was pleased that "at last Manxmen, though 'the day after the fair', are rousing up out of their deadly indifference in saving their mother tongue from being altogether buried in the grave." He was also keen for Manx speakers to learn to read their native language. The main reason for the decline of Manx he believed was the increasing ease of access to English markets, which necessitated an ability to speak English (Clarke, 1872).

### **3.4 Demographics of the decline of Manx**

Until the early nineteenth century the majority of Manx people were monoglot Manx speakers (Ó Néill, 2005). An 1871 survey by Henry Jenner revealed that outside Douglas there were 12,340 people who habitually spoke Manx (29% of the population), and 190 monoglots (Jenner, 1877). In 1911 just 4.6% of the population (2,382) spoke Manx (Thomson, 2000). Use of Manx as a community language continued into the 1920s (Ó Néill, 2005). After which there remained a small number of people who had learned the language from parents, grandparents or other relatives but who rarely used it and lived isolated from one another and surrounded by English speakers, Stage 8 in Fishman's GIDS. In spite of being very proud of their language, these remaining Manx speakers decided not to pass it to their children as they believed that a knowledge of English was essential. The Manx saying from the 1880s, "*cha jean oo cosney ping lesh y Ghailck*" [you will not earn a penny from Manx] (Broderick, 1999: 13) sums up the attitude of many Manx speakers to their language in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Broderick, 1999).

### **3.5 The breakdown of intergenerational transmission**

During the early nineteenth century Manx parents began to raise their children to speak Manx and English. From 1850 the majority of children were raised speaking English, except in some remote villages and farms, and of the Manx speakers who survived into the twentieth century, none were born after 1877. While this could be seen as the point when the language died, transmission of the language has continued since then, although this has mainly been from adult to adult (Pilgrim, 2005). Since the 1990s, however, a number of families have been raised their children to speak Manx and English (Stowell, 2005).

### **3.6 The last native speaker?**

Ned Maddrell (1877-1974) is usually referred to as last native speaker of Manx, however Ewan Christian, described by Broderick as a semi-speaker of Manx, outlived Ned Maddrell by nine years (Broderick, 1999). Moreover, there were a number of other Manx speakers who were too ashamed to admit that they spoke the language, and there was a degree of competition to acquire the dubious honour of being the last native speaker (Stowell, 2009).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The decline of Manx was a long, complex process that took place over centuries. A variety of socio-economic and political factors were involved, and over time there was a shift from Manx to English in education, the church, administration, and the law courts. There were a number of initiatives to slow the decline, particularly by Bishops Wilson and Hildesley, however these were relatively short-lived and the church turned against Manx after Hildesley's death. English became the main language of the towns, and a knowledge of English was necessary when dealing with visitors to the Isle of Man and when venturing outside the island. Use of Manx became restricted to remote villages and fishing boats, until only a small number of elderly individual speakers with few opportunities to use the language remained. However, at the same time as the language was declining, a number of people were attempting to slow, stop or reverse the decline (Stowell, 2005), as will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 4. The Revival of Manx

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed account of efforts to preserve, study and revive the Manx language since the nineteenth century. It contains information both from the literature, and from individuals involved with the language in various ways.

### 4.2 Beginnings of the revival

During the nineteenth century a number of dictionaries, grammars and other books on the Manx language were published. The Reverend John Kelly (1750-1809) published a grammar of Manx in 1804, and his Manx-English dictionary was published after his death in 1866. He also wrote an English – Manx/Irish/Scottish Gaelic dictionary, however part of this was lost in a fire at the printing office in 1808, and the dictionary was never published .

In the nineteenth century it quite common for those who wrote Manx language material to justify their work and to make it clear that they were trying to preserve the language for academic study rather than to prolong its life (Broderick, 1999). In the introduction to his 1835 English-Manx dictionary, for example, Cregeen notes that, “I am well aware that the utility of the following work will be variously appreciated by my brother Manksmen. Some will be disposed to deride the endeavour to restore vigour to a decaying language. Those who reckon the extirpation of the Manks a necessary step towards that general extension of the English, which they deem essential to the interest of the Isle of Man, will condemn every effort which seems likely to retard its extinction.” (Cregeen, 1835: v)

He goes on to say that, “But those will think otherwise who consider that there are thousands of the natives of the Island that can at present receive no useful knowledge whatever, except through the medium of the Manks language; they will judge from experience, as well as from the nature of the case, that no work of this description will hinder the progress of the English, but in fact have the contrary effect.” (Cregeen, 1835: v)

However Stowell (2005) believes that Cregeen was keen for the Manx language to survive, as is revealed in the Preface where he says of his dictionary, “It is designed to facilitate the attainment of that ancient language, and to furnish the reader not only with a Variety of vocables, idiomatic phrases, and proverbial expressions, but also the outlines of a Manks

Grammar. That a language so venerable for its antiquity and so estimable on many accounts should be so generally neglected, is much to be lamented.” (Cregeen, 1835: v)

### **4.3 Manx language and culture organisations**

Between 1858 and 1907 the Manx Society published a number of works in and about Manx, including John Kelly’s dictionary and Bishop John Phillips’ Manx translation of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Two collections of Manx songs by A.W. Moore and W.H. Gill were also published. Gill adjusted the words and tunes of the songs to appeal to a wider audience, while Moore remained more faithful to the originals. Gill’s book proved much more popular as people at the time preferred to sing the songs in English rather than in Manx, “a language most Manx were desperate to pretend did not exist.” (Stowell, 2005: 399). However Moore’s work did receive greater appreciation and recognition several decades later (Stowell, 2005).

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 1897 a notice was published in the local paper in Peel inviting people with an interest in the Manx language to a meeting in the Primitive Old Chapel. At the meeting, which was very well attended, it was decided to hold Manx language classes in Peel, and to set up the Peel Manx Language Association. As well as learning the language, people learnt Manx songs and history, and similar classes were started in a number of other towns, including Douglas and Lonan. These activities lead to the founding in 1899 of *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* (The Manx Language Society), which aimed to encourage interest in the Manx language, history, music, songs, folklore and place names, to cultivate a national spirit, and especially to preserve and collect Manx literature (Isle of Man Examiner, 1914). Another aim of the Society was to cultivate a modern literature in Manx (Broderick, 2002).

*Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* sought to achieve its aims by running Manx languages classes and lectures, and by trying to persuade Manx speakers to use their native language more often. They ran a regular column in Manx in a local newspaper, the *Isle of Man Examiner*, and collected oral literature. They also attempted to re-introduce Manx in schools, however were hampered by the lack of provision for Manx in the English Elementary Education Act of 1870, a slightly modified form of which was adopted in the Isle of Man in 1872. Three years of trying to persuade the English government to change this bore no fruit, so the Manx Language Society left individual schools to decide the matter. Manx was taught for 30 minutes a week in one school for a brief period, then disappeared from the school curriculum until 1992 (Broderick, 2002) .

At the first annual general meeting of *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* one member was keen on preserving Manx, but advised Manx speakers not to pass the language to their children. This prompted a reporter from *Conradh na Gaeilge* [The Gaelic League] to question the seriousness of the Society. While the *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* did publish a significant amount of material in and about Manx, they have tended to focus on the preservation of Manx rather than its revival (Stowell, 2005). However, William Quayle, one of the founder members, did say at the first meeting, “I am delighted to find that within the past few months considerable efforts have been made in many districts throughout the Island with a view to the revival of the language, and that several classes have been formed.” Which indicates that some members at least were supportive of efforts to revive Manx (Isle of Man Examiner, 1914).

During the 1920s an organisation to encourage the use of Manx in young people, *Aeglagh Vannin* [The Young Manx], was set up by Mona Douglas, and *Caaryn Vannin* [Friends of Mannin] was established to work with *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* (Berresford Ellis, 1993). There was some rivalry among these groups, and between other groups working to revive Manx which slowed the progress of the revival to some extent (Maddrell, 2006).

In 1972 *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, which had been fairly inactive for years, was reinvigorated when Douglas Fargher and a number of other Manx language activists joined and started publishing new material and running Manx Language Nights (*Oieghyn Gaelgagh*) in pubs. In 1976 Mona Douglas revived *Yn Chruinnaght*, which had been a small one-day event in the 1930s and became a much larger, week-long festival of music, dancing and language featuring performers from the Isle of Man and other Celtic countries (Stowell, 2005).

In 1985 the Manx language received limited recognition from the Isle of Man government, which led to the setting up of *Coonceil ny Gaelgey* [The Manx Gaelic Advisory Council]. This group is responsible for Manx translations of summaries of new laws which are read out on Tynwald Day each year, as well as translations of the names of government departments, streets and similar terms. They also provide new Manx words as necessary (Stowell, 2005), however as they only meet four times a year, they are having trouble keeping up with the demand for translations and new words (Derbyshire, 2009).

A group called *Caarjyn ny Gaelgey* [Friends of the Manx Language] was set up in 1991 by Peter Karran, Member of the House of Keys (MHK) for Onchan, with the aim of promoting

and supporting the acquisition and use of Manx. The group run a number of Manx evening classes and residential weekend courses for adults, hold coffee mornings for Manx speakers once a month, and are involved with a number of literary competitions (Caarjyn ny Gaelgey, 2009).

#### **4.5 Use of Manx in publications, literature and the media**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a number of people published materials in and about Manx, including Dr John Clague, who collected traditional Manx songs and tunes, and A.W. Moore, who also collected songs (Broderick, 2002). Most were non-professional scholars, though there was one exception: Sir John Rhÿs (1840-1915), Professor of Celtic at Jesus College Oxford, who produced *Outlines of the Phonology of Manx Gaelic* in 1894, and *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx* in 1901 (Stowell, 2005) & (Williams, 2007) .

One of the most prolific Manx scholars was John J. Kneen (1873-1938), who published Manx lessons in newspapers, and wrote a grammar, a dictionary and a book of conversational phrases. He also studied the history, folklore, place names and personal names of the Isle of Man. In recognition of his work he was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Liverpool and a knighthood by the Norwegian government (Cloakley, 2001).

Between 1913 and 1917 the journal *Mannin* published material on Manx folklore, music and songs. It was edited by Sophia Morrison, the secretary of *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* and a collector of folklore. The revival efforts faltered after its demise, largely due to the upheavals of the First World War, during which 5% of the island's men died (Berresford Ellis, 1993).

In the 1950s Douglas Fargher made a significant contribution to the revival efforts by arranging Manx language classes for adults, publishing Manx courses, and other material, and doing his best to promote the language, in spite of the derision for such activities that was wide-spread at the time. Until 1957 a magazine totally in Manx called *Caraa Ghailckagh* [Manx Language Voice] was published by John Gell for *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*. Between 1965 and 1970 Brian Stowell produced a newsletter in Manx called *Credjue* [Belief], and in the 1970s articles in Manx were published in *The Manxman*, a periodical produced by Ian Faulds and Mona Douglas (Stowell, 2005).

A Manx version of the Irish language course, *Buntús Cainte*, was produced by Brian Stowell with help from Robert Thomson in the 1960s, and has been used in many classes for adults. In 1973 an English version of *The Chronicle of the Kings of Mann and the Isles* was

published by George Broderick, while Brian Stowell and Robert Thomson produced a Manx version. Most of the original Latin manuscript of the *Chronicle* is believed to have been written in about 1257 in Rushen Abbey, with some later additions (24 Hour Museum Staff, 2007). A collection of original stories in Manx, *Skeelaght* [Story telling] was published in 1976 by *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* (Stowell, 2005).

Two collections of traditional Manx folk songs and tunes, *Kiaull yn Theay* and *Kiaull yn Theay 2*, were published by Colin Jerry in 1978 and 1979 and became very popular with musicians and singers. Colin Jerry also set up a traditional Manx dance group, *Bock Yuan Fannee*, and started Manx folk music sessions in Peel, both of which are still going strong (Stowell, 2005).

The first film in Manx, *Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey* [The Sheep under the Snow], was made by George Broderick and Peter Maggs in 1983, and a number of films have been made since then, however a lack of funding has limited the scope of their work (Stowell, 2005).

Short broadcasts in Manx on Manx Radio have been running since the late 1960s. The length of broadcasts was increased from 15 minutes per week to an hour a week in the 1978 (Abalain, 1998). The presence of Manx on the radio was largely thanks to the efforts of the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee (Gawne, 2004).

#### **4.6 Sound recordings**

*Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* made the first recordings of native speakers of Manx with an Edison phonograph in 1905 (McArdle, 2006). Other recordings were made on wax cylinders by Dr Rudolph Trebitsch of the Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna in 1909, and by W.H. Gill not long after (Berresford Ellis, 1993).

Carl Marstrander, Professor of Celtic at the University of Oslo visited the Isle of Man in late 1920s and early 1930s and made extensive recordings of native Manx speakers. On his first visit he could only find 40 people who spoke Manx to some extent. In 1934 he believed that only one native speaker remained, even though the 1931 census had listed 529 Manx speakers. In 1946 Charles W. Loch visited the Isle of Man and was able to locate 20 native speakers (Stowell, 2005)

In 1947 the Irish Taoiseach [Prime Minister], Éamon de Valera, visited the Isle of Man as part of a tour of Gaelic-speaking nations. In Cregneash he met Ned Maddrell, who working

as a caretaker there and who started talking to him in Manx. De Valera replied in Irish and they were able to more or less understand one another. De Valera was very interested to discover that Manx was still spoken, although by fewer and fewer people, and the following year he despatched a team from the Irish Folk Commission to record the last native speakers. The team, lead by Kevin Danaher, made about five hours of recordings of Manx being spoken and sung by 15 people. These were elderly people who rarely had opportunities to speak Manx and who had some difficulty recalling it. Fifty years later the recordings were re-mastered, digitised, transcribed and translated, and 2003 saw the publication of *Skeelyn Vannin / Stories of Mann*, a book containing the transcriptions and translations, as well as information about the collectors and their informants, and CDs with the recordings (Stigant, 2008).

#### **4.6 Manx as a living language**

During the early years of the Manx revival the majority of Manx people were not keen to have the language preserved or revived as an everyday vernacular. As a result, many of those studying it claimed they simply wanted to read the bible in Manx to avoid criticism that they were trying to revive the language. Those who wanted to speak the language fluently were seen as eccentric. However in the late 1930s and early 1940s a small group of enthusiasts sought to change that. This group, which included Leslie Quirk, Charles Craine, William Radcliffe, Mark Braide, Tom Braide, Walter Clarke and Douglas Fargher, spoke Manx as much as possible and spent a lot of time talking with and recording native speakers (Stowell, 2005).

In the 1950s Leslie Quirk, whose grandmother was a native Manx speaker and who acquired a near-native ability in Manx himself, taught Manx at Douglas High School. A number of the pupils had spontaneously asked for Manx lessons, but after great initial enthusiasm, attendance fell, and when Brian Stowell started Manx lessons in 1953, he was the only one in the class. He spent most of his weekends in the early 1950s driving around the island speaking nothing but Manx with Douglas Fargher, Walter Clarke, and sometimes Leslie Quirk. These trips were partly to deliver the fruit the Douglas Fargher imported from Liverpool, and an opportunity to speak Manx and visit native speakers. They also went on a number of trips Dublin where they could hear Irish being spoken, hear it on the radio, and see books in Irish in the bookshops (Stowell, 2009).

The interest in Manx increased during the 1960s and night classes were taught by those who learnt the language from native speakers, including Leslie Quirk, Joan Caine and Dick Radcliffe. Breesha Maddrell recalls Leslie Quirk holding Manx classes in her grandmother's house and learnt some bits of Manx for him (Maddrell, 2009). By 1971 the census showed a 72% increase in Manx speakers from 165 in 1961 to 284 (Ó Néill, 2005).

#### **4.7 Official status of Manx**

Every year on Tynwald Day, 5<sup>th</sup> July, summaries of the laws passed during the year up to that date are read aloud in Manx and English on Tynwald Hill. This practice, which has continued for many centuries, helps remind people that the Manx language exists, provides it with a degree of prestige, and is also a source of new words (Stowell, 2005).

A question about Manx asked in the Tynwald in 1974 by Betty Hanson (1918-2008), MHK for Douglas West and a keen supporter of Manx language and culture, was mocked by the other members, who did not take the matter seriously at all at the time (Karran & Pilgrim, 2009). In 1981 a survey by *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* found that more than half of the candidates standing for election to the Tynwald opposed official support for Manx. This confirmed, according to *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, that there was considerable ignorance and indifference about the Manx language from the government, and that government was unlikely to provide much support for the language. This was not entirely the case however, as the Manx government had been supporting Manx evening classes for adults for quite some time (Stowell, 2005).

In 1984 Charles Cain, MHK for Ramsey, put forward a motion in the Tynwald proposing:

1. That Manx Gaelic should be supported and encouraged by all agencies of Government and Boards of Tynwald so far as they are practically able.
2. That all official oaths and declarations should be able to be made in Manx Gaelic or English at the option of the person making any such oath or declaration.
3. That all documents expressed in Manx Gaelic shall have equal official and legal standing as documents expressed in English.
4. That where places, roads or streets are bilingually named in English and Manx Gaelic, the use of the Manx name should have the same official and legal standing as the use of the English name.

The motion was referred to a select committee, who were generally supportive, however they made it clear that the promotion of Manx should not impede the economic development of the island. They supported the provision of more Manx language classes, and the teaching of Manx history and culture in schools, but did not believe study of the language should be made compulsory as the people would most likely resist any such move. They also proposed that the Isle of Man government should aim to preserve and promote the language ( Select Committee on the Greater Use of Manx Gaelic, 1984).

The select committee made their report in 1985, which marked a turning point in the fortunes of Manx. The Isle of Man government began to take the Manx language more seriously and the overt hostility to it diminished, although there was no real commitment to the language, especially if additional spending was involved (Karran & Pilgrim, 2009).

#### **4.8 Manx in education**

There was limited provision of Manx language classes in schools in the 1950s. Leslie Quirk started teaching Manx at Douglas High School in 1953, for example (Stowell, 2009), and in the 1970s the head teacher of Arbory Primary School in Ballabeg was inspired to learn Manx by the nationalist movement and set up Manx lessons in his school (Gawne, 2009).

In 1990 a quality of life survey commissioned by the Manx government found that 36% of those surveyed supported the teaching of Manx language in schools as an optional subject (Stowell, 2000). This led to the appointment in January 1992 of Brian Stowell as Manx Language Officer, the first person to be employed in a Manx language-related position (Stowell, 2009), and the appointment of Phil Kelly and Peggy Carswell as peripatetic teachers, who were part of the Manx Language Unit, together with Brian Stowell (Kelly, 2003).

The Unit was put in charge of all aspects of Manx language teaching and accreditation in schools; as well as curriculum development; research; teacher training; liaison with other Manx language organisations; translation and a number of other tasks. With only three members the Unit had some difficulty fulfilling all these tasks, however they did their best, and also established useful contacts with education ministers and other people involved in language revival and revitalisation efforts in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland and Jersey (Kelly, 2003).

The initial plan was for Manx to be taught in a similar way to music, which involved taking pupils out of their normal classes and teaching them in small groups. The Manx Language Unit aimed to provide thirty minutes of Manx language lessons per week to pupils from the age of seven, which they thought would be enough to provide a basic introduction to the language without disrupting schools' normal arrangements. They reluctantly decided not to offer Manx lessons to the under sevens as their teachers were worried about the effects of removing children from other classes (Crennell, 1997) & (Stowell, 2000).

A poll of parents and children in May 1992 found that they were not happy with the way Manx was being taught, and that nearly 20% of pupils (1,949) at primary and secondary level were keen to learn Manx, with the percentage of primary pupils wanting to learn the language was closer to 40% (1,482). However there were insufficient resources to teach them all, and when Manx classes began in September of that year, a total of 1,423 pupils were able to learn Manx for thirty minutes a week, with the majority in primary schools. Those who had opposed the reintroduction of Manx in schools had not expected such a response. (Crennell, 1997) & (Stowell, 2000).

At first the teaching of Manx in schools involved large classes or up to forty or fifty pupils and long days for the teachers. Although the position of Manx Language Officer (MLO) was initially intended to be a non-teaching post, the demand for Manx lessons resulting in the MLO teaching as well. After Brian Stowell's retirement as MLO in 1996, Phil Kelly took over the position and a new Manx teacher, Catreaney Craine was appointed. The Manx Language Unit had initially agreed that they would try to teach one thousand pupils per year and had assumed that more teachers would be recruited to help with this task. No new teachers were appointed, and the numbers studying Manx had to be reduced to about eight hundred per year as a result. While there has been little overt opposition to the teaching of Manx in schools, many teachers have been concerned about adding another subject to an already crowded curriculum. Moreover, the introduction of Manx came not long after the establishment of compulsory French in primary schools, and the introduction of the English National Curriculum (Stowell, 2000).

The Manx lessons provide an introduction to the Manx language with an emphasis on the spoken language. They are intended to be enjoyable and engaging, and also seek to encourage positive attitudes to Manx culture and language learning in general. While primary school

pupils tend to be very keen on Manx lessons, the language is often regarded with much less enthusiasm by secondary pupils (Stowell, 2000).

Manx lessons are not compulsory, and the children can opt out of them if they so wish: but only a few do so. Parents who have moved to the Isle of Man tend to see knowledge of Manx language as a way to connect with the local culture, and are, in some cases, more supportive of the language than parents of Manx origin (Derbyshire, 2009).

Manx is available as a subject up to A level in a number of secondary schools. In some schools Manx can be studied instead of another subject, such as German, and this involves two 50-minute lessons per week. In other schools the amount of time available for Manx is more limited as there are problems fitting Manx classes into an already crowded curriculum. The number of pupils studying Manx at secondary school tends to decrease significantly as many of those who studied it at primary school make new friends at secondary school with no knowledge of Manx and perhaps no interest in it. Many such pupils will conclude that they do not need Manx any more, and only those who are very enthusiastic about the language continue to study it (Derbyshire, 2009).

The A level and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Manx courses and exams are both being rewritten at the moment. The new A level, which is loosely based on the Northern Irish Board's Irish Gaelic examination, and the new GCSE, which is based on AQA French examination, will have a greater emphasis on speaking and listening, rather than focusing mainly on written work. The hope is that pupils taking these new courses will become more fluent in Manx (Derbyshire, 2009).

Undergraduate courses in Celtic Studies and Celtic languages are offered at a number of universities in the UK, Ireland and other countries, however there is no provision for study through the medium of Manx at this level. The Manx language can be studied as a minor element of an undergraduate degree at the University of Cambridge, Oslo University, Universität Bonn and Universität Mannheim. The language is also taught occasionally at other universities (CRAMLAP, 2006).

The Centre for Manx Studies (*Laare-Studeyrys Manninagh*) was set up in Douglas in the Isle of Man in 1992. It is part of the University of Liverpool's School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology and offers taught postgraduate and research degrees in Manx Studies. The taught courses include a module on Manx language and literature, as well as modules on

Manx music and art, archaeology, political history, and economy (The University of Liverpool, 2009). The focus of the centre has largely depended on the interests of the directors, both of whom – the first one and the current one – have been archaeologists and medievalists. There are also researchers working on musical traditions, dictionaries and a range of other topics. Few focus on the Manx language (Madrell, 2009).

#### **4.9 Manx medium education**

In the early 1990s a group of families who were raising their children with Manx and English got together and set up *Chied Chesmad* [First Step], a Manx medium playgroup with ten children at first which ran for a few years (Stowell, 2005).

After *Chied Chesmed* came *Mooijer Veggey*, the Manx medium playgroups association, which started in the 1990s as a small group of parents with young children, including Annie Kissack and Phil Gawne, Julie Matthews and Chris Sheard, and Jackie McFerry. At first it was a parents' and toddlers' group that met informally in members' homes and spoke Manx together. They realised that in order to make the group viable they needed to attract more people, and to obtain official recognition they needed someone with childcare qualifications to lead the group. By 1996 they had persuaded the Department of Education to let them rent Braddan School House, and recruited a nursery nurse, Cathy Cook, as group leader. This group, which started with just 6 children, was always run through Manx, until Jackie McFerry went to teach at the *Bunscoill* [Manx medium primary school]. Since then they have taken over a number of other playgroups, where the amount of Manx used depends on how much Manx the leaders speak (Kissack, 2009).

In November 1999 a group called *Sheshaght ny Paarantyn* [Parents for Manx-medium Education] was established by parents with children at *Mooijer Veggey* with the aim of persuading the Manx government to support Manx-medium education at primary level. The Department of Education eventually agreed to do so, and a Manx medium unit was set up in Ballacottier School in September 2001. Initially nine children between the ages of 4 and 5 attended, the unit was very successfully and it enjoyed strong support from parents (Gawne, 2006). When the unit first started those involved did not know how the children would react to being immersed in Manx. However this did not appear to be an issue, and one four year old remarked, "we speak a different language all day, but it doesn't matter". Since then the Manx medium unit has expanded and taken over the old school in St. John's, which is now known as the *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* and currently has 55 pupils. Most of the children there have

no Manx when they start; a few come from Manx-speaking families; and some have acquired a little Manx in *Mooijer Veggey* (Matthews, 2009a).

At secondary level the provision of Manx medium education is more limited. A number of subjects are taught through Manx at Queen Elizabeth High School (QEII) during the first three years. In the 2008/2009 academic year those subjects were geography, history and information technology (Matthews, 2009a). Those who wish to can take GCSE and A level exams in Manx, and pupils who attended the *Bunscoill* usually take their Manx GCSE in Year 7. This demonstrates that they have made a great deal of progress in Manx, something which the Department of Education and the *Bunscoill* are keen to highlight, however some of those involved in education would like there to be a more suitable exam for such pupils who are near-native speakers of Manx (Derbyshire, 2009).

The main problems facing Manx medium education at primary and secondary level are a shortage of teachers able to teach through Manx, and a lack of textbooks and other materials. Some textbooks have been translated by teachers and others, and some material in English is used and the pupils discuss it and write about it in Manx (Derbyshire, 2009) & (Matthews, 2009a).

#### **4.10 Manx in families**

Some families began to raise their children to speak Manx and English in the 1990s for the first time in a century. Even though the number of families involved was small, this was a very significant development given the high level of opposition to the use of Manx as a vernacular language, rather than as a subject of academic study (Stowell, 2005). No official figures of the number of Manx-speaking families are available, however I know of six such families and understand that there are number of others. In some cases both parents speak Manx, in others only one does so, and in at least one family there are three generations of Manx speakers, although they rarely speak Manx at home.

Not all the children raised in such families have become regular Manx speakers, though most have a good knowledge of the language and can use it if necessary. The children who have been educated through Manx are more likely to use the language regularly, while those who attended English medium schools have, in some cases, temporarily turned against Manx. Phil Gawne, for example, told me that his son refused to speak Manx during his first year at

primary school as he did not want to be different from the other children (Clague, 2009), (Gawne, 2009), (Kermode, 2009), (Matthews, 2009b) & (Teare, 2009).

#### **4.11 Manx in businesses**

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a number of Manx companies have started using Manx notices and other material in Manx to underline their Manx identity and to appeal to local customers. Non-Manx businesses with branches in the Isle of Man have started doing the same in order to compete. Recent arrivals on the island tend to understand the benefits of using Manx in these ways, while some Manx people, especially some of the older politicians, still view Manx as a secret too shameful to mention. Limited Manx announcements are made on Manx Airlines flights, and on Steam Packet Company ferries, and banks registered on the island are obliged by law to honour cheques written in Manx (Stowell, 2005).

#### **4.12 Hostility to Manx**

A number of informants mentioned the great hostility there used to be towards the Manx language and to people who spoke it. In the 1930s when Douglas Fargher, Leslie Quirk and others started learning Manx from the remaining native speakers, they were thought of as highly eccentric and many people could not understand why they wanted to use Manx as an everyday spoken language rather than studying it as an academic curiosity. Brian Stowell told me of an incident in the 1950s in St Matthew's Church in Douglas during which Douglas Faragher read from the Bible in Manx and an old man burst into the church shouting, "Stop that! Stop that! That was never a real language! We don't want that nonsense spouted in here! We don't want in here! We don't want in here!" At that time Manx was rarely heard in public, except on Tynwald Day. By the 1970s the mantra of "That was never a real language" had been toned down somewhat to "That was never much of a language." (Stowell, 2009).

The hostility to Manx was still around during the 1970s when speaking Manx in some pubs was not tolerated. For example, Phil Kelly and a number of his friends were asked to leave the White House in Peel and were not allowed to return after some of locals complained about them speaking Manx. Ironically the White House has since become a popular place for Manx music sessions, and there was plenty of Manx being spoken and sung there when I took part in a music session there during a visit to the Isle of Man in June 2009. Brian Stowell believes that many Manx people had developed a profound hostility to the Manx language, while at the same time they were very proud to be Manx. They believed that there was no value in the language and that it was not even a real language, but would have been very

unhappy if it was suggested that they were not Manx because they did not speak the language. Such attitudes are possibly a result of the psychological impact of the shift from Manx to English (Stowell, 2009).

Since the 1980s, and especially since the mid-1990s, the hostility to the Manx language has diminished, or least the overt expression of negative attitudes to the language has become less acceptable. When a question about Manx was put in the Tynwald in 1974, the members did not take it seriously at all and mocked it. However in Charles Cain's motion for the greater use of Manx in 1985 was taken more seriously (Karran & Pilgrim, 2009). Before then an interest in Manx language and culture was viewed by some as highly anti-social and a political stance aligned to the Nationalist movement in Ireland (Karran, 2009).

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

The revival of Manx has involved the individual and collective efforts of numerous people and organisations. It has not always gone smoothly and until recently there was a great deal of hostility towards the language, and those who sought to breathe new life into it have been seen as eccentric or mad. In spite of the obstacles Manx is a living language with an ever increasing number of speakers. There is, however, a long way to go before the position of Manx could be judged secure. Those involved with the language recognise that the Isle of Man is unlikely to become a Manx speaking nation again, and are concentrating on practical and achievable projects, such as Manx-medium education, Manx language classes for children and adults, and encouraging businesses to use Manx in their marketing materials (Stowell, 2005) & (Gawne, 2009).

## 5 – Methodology

This chapter provides details of how contact was established with Manx speakers and learners, and how the data for this study were collected and processed.

Contacts for this study were found via friends and friends of friends. A friend at Bangor University put me in touch with a Manx-speaking friend. He gave me contact details for Adrian Cain, the Manx Language Development Officer at the Manx Heritage Foundation, who put me in touch with other people involved with Manx in various capacities.

Correspondence was conducted by email: with Manx speakers it was mainly or entirely in Manx, and in English with other correspondents.

A message was also posted on the Bangor University bulletin board in Manx and English seeking Manx speakers and learners, and people from the Isle of Man with an interest in the language. One person replied and provided a number of useful contacts, as well as some insights into Manx culture and attitudes to the Manx language.

The data was collected in the Isle of Man between 15<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2009. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with teachers, speakers and learners of Manx, and with others involved with the language. Interviews were arranged via email, telephone and in person using Manx and English, and were conducted mainly in English. The interviews took place in the Manx medium primary school, homes and a number of other places, and were recorded using a Zoom H2 digital recorder. The recordings were later transferred to a laptop computer and transcribed. Informal conversations with Manx speakers and learners, and others with an interest in the language, were also conducted in Manx and English. They were not recorded, although notes were made afterwards in some cases.

In order to gain an impression of the use of Manx in different domains, I attended a number of Manx language classes for adults; and took part in Manx language activities such as a Scrabble evening, a concert by a choir who sing in Manx, and a Manx folk music session. I took note of the use of written Manx on road signs, street names, business names and in other places, and the use of spoken Manx in public places such as museums and other tourist attractions. I also made a note of the Manx language learning materials and other Manx related literature available in bookshops.

## 6 – Current state of Manx

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to use the data collected and observations made to provide an assessment of the current state of Manx Gaelic. It discusses the use of Manx in public, in the education system and in families, and the provision of Manx language classes for adults. It explores people's motivations for learning Manx, and the ways the language is promoted.

### 6.2 Use of Manx in public

The Manx language is very visible in public places in the Isle of Man, although not quite as visible as Welsh in Wales or Irish in Ireland. Many streets and roads throughout the island have signs showing their names in English and Manx. Some are Manx street names that have been translated into English, others are English names to which Manx versions have been added. One informant mentioned that the English versions of some Manx road names are literal translations that sound somewhat strange, and are rarely used to refer to the roads as everyone is familiar with the Manx versions. Another informant told me that while he uses the Manx versions to refer to the roads in question, the English versions help him understand the meanings of the Manx ones, and help him learn some Manx vocabulary (Matthews, 2009a) & (Malpass M. , 2009).

Most towns and villages have names in English and Manx which appear on signs, buses and bus timetables. Most government departments have names in Manx as well as English which appear on signs, stationery, reports and vehicles. The Isle of Man Government website includes bits of Manx, such as the Manx title of the Government, *Reiltys Ellan Vannin*, and of individual departments. The current date is also displayed in Manx and English on the site's homepage (Isle of Man Government, 2009). Some Government Departments, such as the Isle of Man Water Authority, include Manx versions of the Chairman's Statement in their annual reports. The Manx Heritage Foundation is the main body responsible for translations, and they are "[...] constantly being asked on a daily basis for translations. That could be everything from street signs to house names to government departments." (Cain, 2009a).

The visibility of Manx is somewhat misleading as it might lead one to conclude that there are a lot more Manx speakers than there actually are. However it is important as it helps raise awareness of the language and interest in it, both from individuals and businesses. This

visibility also contributes to a positive national identity which helps differentiate the Isle of Man from other mainly English-speaking countries (Cain, 2009a).

Manx greetings are used in the sites run by Manx National Heritage such as the Manx Museum in Douglas, Peel Castle, the House of Manannan in Peel, and the National Folk Museum at Cregneash. When I visited these places I was greeted with *moghrey mie* / good morning, or *fastyr mie* / good afternoon, and as I was leaving the Laxey Wheel I was thanked for my visit in Manx. When asked whether they knew any more Manx, the staff at these sites all said that their knowledge of the language was limited, although I was told that one member of staff at the Folk Museum is a fluent Manx speaker. Manx greetings were also used on the Isle of Man Steam Packet ferries.

There are exhibits on the Manx language at the Manx Museum and at the Folk Museum. Both include recordings of some of the last native speakers, as well as recordings of some of those who acquired their Manx from those native speakers, and of the children at the Manx-medium primary school. These displays present the language both as a relic of the past and a living language. Adrian Cain, the Manx Language Officer would prefer the Manx to be viewed as a modern, living language, rather than something associated with the past that people used to speak in their thatched cottages, in their fishing boats and on their farms (Cain, 2009a).

The Manx National Heritage website includes a page about the Manx language with information in English and Manx, while the information about Manx National Heritage sites is available in English, Manx, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, German and French. There is also an introduction to the Isle of Man in Manx in the tourism section of the site (Isle of Man Government, 2009c).

A number of businesses and other organisations have Manx names, or Manx versions of their English names which appear on signs, stationery and other marketing materials. Some organisations use Manx disclaimers in their emails and it is relatively common for emails to begin and end with Manx greetings and sign offs. Many shops have bilingual open and closed signs provided by Manx National Heritage. Some of the staff at the post office in Douglas are keen to learn Manx and two classes with ten people in each were started by Adrian Cain in July 2009. Adrian also provides taster courses in Manx for other businesses and organisations (Cain, 2009a).

### 6.3 Manx in schools

Manx-medium education is available at the *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh*, which in the current 2008/9 academic year has 55 pupils. From September 2009 it will have 66 pupils. Most of the children there have no Manx when they start; a few come from Manx-speaking families; and some have acquired a little Manx in *Mooijer Veggey*. The teachers at the *Bunscoill* try to use as much Manx and as little English as possible with the children. With the youngest children they use a lot actions, pictures and other props to convey the meanings of Manx words without resorting to English (Matthews, 2009a).

During the reception year the children are initially immersed in Manx during the mornings and allowed to use English or whatever language they like the afternoons. After the first half of the term they understand a fair amount of Manx and ask some questions, by the end of the first term they are speaking more, and by the end of the first year they can understand and speak Manx well. English is used as little as possible, and the teacher of the older children speaks nothing but Manx to them. The children speak Manx to the teachers, and the older ones speak it amongst themselves, to some extent. Outside school the children generally speak English, but sometimes use Manx so that their parents and other people do not know what they are talking about (Matthews, 2009b).

In other schools Manx language lessons are taught for 30 minutes a week by a team of peripatetic teachers from the Department of Education's Manx Language Unit. There are also Manx language specialists in a number of schools who are able to provide more Manx language lessons. The lessons taught by the peripatetic team are available for primary school pupils from the age of seven, and during the first three years of secondary school, however relatively few pupils continue with Manx lessons at secondary level. This is partly due to peer pressure from friends who have no interest in Manx, and partly due to pressure from parents or teachers who have negative feelings towards the language (Derbyshire, 2009), or who worry that Manx lessons might get in the way of what they believe to be more important subjects (Malpass & Malpass, 2009).

As well as the Manx lessons, the Isle of Man's schools also teach Manx history and culture, and lessons in Manx music are provided by the Manx Heritage Foundation (MHF). The MHF employs Breesha Madrell as Manx Music Development Officer with responsibility for promoting Manx music and developing new products and resources, and Chloë Woolley as education specialist with responsibility for organising visiting tutors and music workshops in

primary and secondary schools. In the workshops songs are taught in Manx or English depending on how much Manx the children know. An intensive weekend course is run in October each year at which dancing, song writing and instrumental tuition are offered, and the participants are taught how to present themselves on stage in Manx. At secondary level Manx musical activities are conducted by the *Bree* movement, which involves older participants in Years 12 and 13 tutoring the younger ones, and there is a monthly music session at Green's Restaurant in Douglas at which young musicians from different parts of the island have a chance to get to know one another and learn how to put together sets of tunes and other skills involved in session playing (Madrell, 2009).

#### **6.4 Manx music and dance**

There are five major Manx dance groups and a lively Manx traditional music scene in the Isle of Man involving groups who play Manx tunes and sing in Manx and English. There are regular Manx music sessions in Peel, Port St Mary, Ramsey and other parts of the island, and there are three annual festivals which feature Manx music and dance. Manx musicians and dance groups also take part in festivals in other countries, including the Lorient Interceltic Festival and Liet-Lavlut, a song contest for linguistic minorities in Europe. There are also a number of groups who sing in Manx and play rock, pop and other styles of music, and new songs are being written in Manx about contemporary issues (Madrell, 2009).

Quite a number of those involved in the music and dance groups are not of Manx origin. For some taking part in such activities is a way to become part of the local culture. Prominent among such people was Colin Jerry, who moved to the Isle of Man in 1968 and became fascinated by Manx music, dance and language. At the time there was very little Manx music available in print. He set up the *Bock Yuan Fannee* dance group, the *Bwoie Doal* music group, was a regular at Manx music sessions, and after extensive research, published two popular collections of Manx music and songs, *Kiaull yn Theay* 1 and 2, known to Manx musicians as the Yellow Book and the Red Book (iomtoday.co.im, 2009) (Matthews, 2009b).

#### **6.5 Manx in families**

A number of families have raised or are raising their children to be bilingual in Manx and English. In some cases both parents are fluent Manx speakers, or one is fluent and the other is learning, or one speaks Manx and the other does not. Children from such families who are educated through Manx at *Mooinjjer Veggey* and the *Bunscoill* are most likely to become regular Manx speakers, especially if they have contact with Manx speakers outside their

families and schools. A few of the parents whose children are being educated through Manx at the *Bunscoill* are learning Manx themselves (Gawne, 2009), (Matthews, 2009b) & (Teare, 2009).

### **6.6 Manx in the media**

Manx Radio currently broadcasts three bilingual Manx/English radio programmes for a total of 3.5 hours per week. Two of the programmes, *Moghrey Jedoonee* [Sunday Morning] and *Claare Ny Gael* [The Gaelic Programme], are broadcast on Sundays, while the other, *Shiaght Laa* [Seven Days] is broadcast on Wednesdays. Brief written news items in Manx with recordings by Brian Stowell are also published on the Manx Radio website (Manx Radio, 2009).

Between 1997 and 2003 Phil Gawne wrote a regular newspaper column in Manx called *Fockle ayns dty Chleaysh* [A Word in Your Ear] in the *Isle of Man Examiner*, and which is available online (Gawne, 2003). At least one Manx language column appears in each of the other two local newspapers each week, although there is a shortage of people able to write regularly in Manx to a sufficiently high standard for these columns. Another problem is the suspicion with which the owners of the newspapers regard columns written in Manx only: they prefer bilingual ones (Stowell, 2005).

There are a number of websites containing information in and/or on Manx. The type of information in these sites includes Manx language lessons, stories, articles, reports and so on. The Manx version of Wikipedia, for example, currently contains 2,809 articles in Manx (Wikipedia, Y chicklipaid heyr, 2009) & (Stowell, 2005).

### **6.7 Manx language provision for adults**

There are regular evening and lunchtime classes in Manx for adults in Douglas, St John's and in other parts of the island. Classes are also run for a number of organisations such as the post office. Some are run by the Manx Heritage Foundation's Manx Language Development Officer, Adrian Cain, and others by individuals on a voluntary basis. There are typically one to two hundred adults learning Manx at such classes each year, and many view the social side of them as more important than becoming fluent Manx. As a result only some 5% or so of participants attain fluency (Stowell, 2005). The demand for Manx language classes for adults exceeds the supply of teachers and resources, which indicates a healthy level of interest in the language (Cain, 2009a).

In addition to the Manx classes, there are regular Manx conversation sessions in Douglas and other towns, as well as activities such as Scrabble evenings, language weekends, dances and music sessions. There are three annual festivals at which the Manx language plays a prominent role, and an annual Manx language summer school, which attracts people from the Isle of Man and further afield (Cain, 2009a) & (Stowell, 2005).

Not all Manx learners attend classes: some learn Manx on their own using books, CDs, tapes and online courses. This has become easier in recent years as language learning materials have become more readily available, especially online resources. Manx language courses and other materials were on sale in all the book shops I visited in the Isle of Man, as well as at a number of the sites managed by Manx National Heritage. Some people, especially older learners, learn Manx in order to read the Manx translation of the bible. When the current wave of revival began in the 1970s and 1980s, most Manx learners and speakers knew one another, however this is no longer the case as the number of Manx speakers increases (Matthews, 2009a).

### **6.8 Government policy on Manx**

There is currently no specific government policy on Manx and no specific agency in government with responsibility for the language. Instead a number of government departments are involved with different aspects of the language. For example, the Department of Education deals with education policy, the Department of Tourism & Leisure looks after cultural tourism, and the Manx Heritage Foundation, which is government funded but not part of the government, is involved with promoting the language and teaching it to adults. As a result, there is no overall strategy or policy, and while Manx is generally supported by the government and viewed as positively, few people know what supporting the language actually involves (Gawne, 2009).

While the government would probably be in favour of having all its legislation translated into Manx, this would not be desirable as translators would have to spend all their time on it, and only they would read the translations. A more practical and realistic development would be to make it possible for Manx speakers to correspond with the government in Manx (Gawne, 2009).

In order to promote a positive national identity, which is viewed as very important, the Manx government has invested heavily in museums since the 1980s. As a result the museums have

many awards, including a special award in the European Museum of the Year competition (Isle of Man Government, 2009). Moreover, some of that money has helped the Manx Heritage Foundation and the Manx-medium *Bunscoill* in their work of promoting and teaching Manx. The existence of the Manx language is also used by the Manx government to demonstrate to international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that the Isle of Man has its own culture and identity, as well as its own legal, political and education systems, and that it is not just a haven for wealthy tax exiles (Cain, 2009a).

### **6.9 Motivations for learning Manx**

There appear to be a variety of reasons for learning Manx, and in many cases people were drawn to the language for a combination of reasons. Some informants mentioned that Manx is part of their identity as Manx people and/or that it enhances that identity. A number of informants mentioned that their grandparents or other relatives had a smattering of Manx and that this sparked their interest in the language. Many became interested in the language through Manx music and culture, while others are interested mainly in the linguistic aspects of the language, or are generally interested in languages. One informant told me that he first got interested in Manx after hearing children speaking it and became determined to learn it himself. Another mentioned that, like many Manx people, she became very patriotic while in the last few years of secondary school and this led her to learn more Manx.

### **6.10 Opportunities to use Manx**

There are networks of Manx speakers in different parts of the Isle of Man. Some are connected to Manx classes, others to conversation groups or music sessions. Not all Manx speakers are part of such networks, but those who are have more opportunities to use their Manx. There are no concentrations of Manx speakers in any particular areas or neighbourhoods, although there are significant numbers in Douglas, Port St Mary and Peel (Madrell, 2009).

There is a demand for teachers who can teach Manx as a subject or who can teach other subjects through the medium of Manx. There is also a demand for Manx language tutors for adults, translators, and people who can teach Manx music and dance. Some of the pupils learning Manx at secondary school do their work experience at the *Bunscoill*, which can encourage them with their studies as it demonstrates to them that there might be possibilities of finding work using their Manx after leaving school (Matthews, 2009b).

### **6.11 How many Manx speakers are there?**

In the 2001 census 1,689 people, 2.2% of a population of 76,315, claimed they had knowledge of Manx. 1,527 claimed to be able to speak Manx, 706 could write it, and 910 could read it. The parishes with the highest percentage of Manx speakers were Bride and Jurby in the north of the island, both of which had 6.5% with a knowledge of Manx, and the place with the largest number of Manx speakers was Douglas with 589. At that time 48% of the population were born in the Isle of Man, while 45% were of UK origin, with the majority from England (Isle of Man Government, 2009a).

According to my informants, the majority of those who claimed to be able to speak, read and/or write Manx in the 2001 census have only a limited knowledge of the language. However the fact that they ticked the Manx language boxes on the census indicates that they at least support the language (Gawne, 2009) & (Karran, 2009).

Estimates of the current number of fluent Manx speakers range from 50 to 500. There is a large difference between these estimates because they are based on different definitions of fluency. The lower estimate is the number of people who are “very fluent” in Manx, while the higher estimate is the number who are able to have a conversation in Manx (Stowell, 2009), (Kermode, 2009) & (Gawne, 2009).

### **6.12 Conclusion**

There is no doubt that Manx is a living language used to varying extents in a range of domains including families, schools, offices and elsewhere. The children studying through the medium of Manx are increasing the pool of fluent speakers, and increasing numbers of adults are learning the language. Manx speakers do not believe that the Isle of Man will become a Manx-speaking nation again, however they believe that the role of Manx within the Isle of Man will continue to expand.

## 7 - The future of Manx

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the Manx language could develop in the future, challenges and problems likely to occur, and possible solutions based information from the interviews and conversations I had in the Isle of Man, and from the literature.

### 7.2 Manx medium education

Manx is used to some extent in the playgroups run by the Manx language play group movement, *Mooinjer Veggey*. The amount of Manx used depends on the how well those involved know the language. The fluent Manx speakers who were involved initially now teach at the *Bunscoil*, so if other Manx speakers could be persuaded to train as nursery teachers or nursery nurses, *Mooinjer Veggey* playgroups could become Manx-medium once again (Derbyshire, 2009).

The *Bunscoil* [Manx-medium primary school] will have 66 pupils in the 2009/2010 school year. There is a demand for more places, however the current school building does not have the capacity for more pupils. Possible solutions include expanding the current building, and/or setting up another Manx-medium school. These solutions rely on securing further funding from the Department of Education, which may prove difficult if the Department decides that Manx-medium education has already received sufficient funds, and prefers to support other initiatives (Matthews, 2009b).

At secondary level there is potential to expand the provision of Manx-medium education, if new teachers can be recruited. Another difficulty is the lack of training courses specifically for Manx-medium teachers. One teacher found a not entirely satisfactory solution to this problem by training to teach through the medium of Scottish Gaelic at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic medium college of the Isle of Skye. The Department of Education does run one PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate of Education) course each year in either primary education or secondary education depending on where the teachers are needed. One Manx speaker is currently studying for a secondary PGCE and will be able to teach a variety of subjects (Matthews, 2009b), (Derbyshire, 2009) & (Gawne, 2009).

### **7.3 Manx as subject in schools**

The amount of teaching of Manx as a subject in schools could be increased, if suitably qualified teachers can be found, if funding for those teachers can be secured, and if the schools involved can be persuaded to agree to such an expansion. However, before expansion of the programme can be considered, replacements will need to be found for the members of the current peripatetic Manx language team who are due to retire. There is also a need for training courses for Manx language teachers which is currently not met (Derbyshire, 2009).

### **7.4 Manx language provision for adults**

There is a great demand for Manx language classes for adults which exceeds the supply of tutors. There is a potential future source of Manx language tutors among the pupils of the *Bunscoill*, and among those who are studying Manx as a subject, however they will not be in a position to take on such roles for several years. New courses and materials based on the Welsh *Wlpan* courses are being developed to improve the teaching of Manx to adults. The aim of these courses will be to help adult learners of Manx to become fluent in the language within a relatively short period of time (Cain, 2009a).

The annual Manx language summer school which takes place in August could be extended in length and in terms of the number of activities involved to resemble summer schools held in Ireland, Scotland and Wales. While the focus of the summer school is to teach Manx to people in the Isle of Man, it also attracts some participants from other countries, and this helps to raise the profile of the language (Cain, 2009a) & (Cain, 2009b).

Few of the Irish speakers I talked to at an Irish language and culture summer school in Ireland in July 2009 knew much about the Manx language, and some were not even aware that it is still spoken. However they were interested in finding out more about the language, and may potentially be interested in attending Manx language summer schools. While there are personal and professional connections between speakers of Irish, Manx and Scottish Gaelic, as well as with speakers of Welsh, there is potential to increase awareness and interest in Manx in the other places where Celtic languages are spoken.

There are quite a few Manx language-based activities for adults, however most take place in pubs and younger Manx speakers cannot necessarily take part (Matthews, 2009b). Recently the Manx Youth Service has proposed the setting up of a youth club where young Manx speakers could use their language regularly in an informal setting. If there is sufficient

interest in this idea, the club could start in November 2009 in Peel and could potentially cater for 6 to 18 year-olds (Corlett, 2009). Similar groups for Basque speakers in the Basque country in Spain have been very successful (Gwanas, 2008).

### **7.5. Manx within families**

Manx-speaking adults who would like to raise their children to be bilingual in Manx and English need support and advice on how to go about this. The families who have already raised their children in this way could offer advice, and perhaps a parents' group could be established. This could be along the lines of *Twf* in Wales, which provides information and advice on raising children bilingually, as well as books and CDs (Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg - Welsh Language Board, 2009).

### **7.6 Manx in the work place**

Limited use of Manx is used on signs, stationery, websites, and other materials produced by businesses and other organisations. However there is very little Manx spoken in such places. There is interest in learning Manx in this domain, at least at an individual level, and classes have recently started for employees at the Post Office (Cain, 2009a). Efforts to encourage businesses to use more Manx have been quite successful (Gawne, 2009), and as more Manx is used in this domain, perhaps it will become easier to persuade businesses who are not already doing so to use Manx.

There are increasing numbers of job opportunities for Manx speakers, especially in teaching, and this can provide a good source of motivation and encouragement for those learning Manx. There is also a great demand for translations into Manx from schools, businesses, the government and individuals. There are currently a number of people who are able to undertake such translations on an ad-hoc basis, however it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the demand. Setting up an official translation service is one possible solution to this problem. This would also make it possible for Manx documents to be used as evidence in court (Gawne, 2009).

### **7.7 Conclusion**

There is currently a high degree of interest in Manx which shows no signs of waning. Hostility to the language has diminished significantly in the past 20 years. The number of Manx speakers is increasing and is likely to continue to do so, and there are the increasing opportunities to use the language, and more jobs requiring a knowledge of Manx. These are

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all positive signs for the future of the language. There are problems with the supply of teachers and tutors able to teach Manx and/or teach other subjects through the medium of Manx, however as the number of Manx speakers increases, the pool of potential candidates for such jobs will expand.

If a concentration of Manx-speaking families develops in a particular neighbourhood or area, it is possible that a Manx-speaking community may emerge: perhaps something along similar to the Shaw's Road Gaeltacht in Belfast. Were this to happen, it would be a positive and significant development for the language.

## **8 – Discussion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to summarise the findings of this dissertation by providing answers to the questions posed in the Abstract.

### **8.2 How and why do languages die?**

The fates of languages are intimately connect to the fates of their speakers. Without speakers a language cannot live, although an unspoken but well-documented language has the potential to be revived. Languages might lose all their speakers as a result of natural diasters, wars or disease, something that happened more frequently during the period of European colonial expansion, or because their speakers all shift to other languages (Wurm, 1991).

The reasons for language shift are many and varied. In some cases deliberate efforts are made destroy languages. Franco, for example, banned the public use of Galician, Basque and Catalan in Spain during his regime (Mar-Molinero, 2000), and there are many examples of children being punished in schools for speaking their native languages (Jones & Singh, 2005).

In other cases language shift occur because people perceive that it would be advantageous for them to speak another language, while at the same time deciding or becoming convinced that their native language is not worth preserving and passing on to their offspring (Jones & Singh, 2005).

### **8.3 Can languages be revived?**

It is possible to revive languages. The likely success of such efforts depends on such factors as the state of a language when the revival begins, the level of community and official support, the economic viability of the community, and the dedication and determination of the revivalists. The details of each revival initiative are different, but they have many aspects in common and can learn from one another, as indeed they do: there are contacts between many of the revival efforts in Europe, for example.

### **8.4 Why did Manx decline?**

The people of Mann turned against Manx as they perceived it was no longer a useful language to know. Hostile attitudes towards the language from the Church and the rulers of the islands, punishment of children for speaking Manx in school, and mockery of Manx

speakers by local people and visitors to the island were among the origins of this perception. The perceived economic and social advantages of knowing English also persuaded many to abandon their Manx. As increasing numbers of Manx people turned to English, the remaining Manx speakers had fewer and fewer opportunities to use the language and it retreated to ever more remote places until only a handful of elderly speakers were left.

### **8.5 How was Manx revived?**

Manx was revived through the efforts of many individuals and groups who sought to document the language and culture, to teach it to others, and to use it as much as possible amongst themselves. The introduction of Manx lessons in schools and the establishment of *Moojnjer Veggey* and the *Bunscoill*, the Manx medium playgroups and primary school, have also made significant contributions to the revival efforts, as have the families who use Manx with their children.

### **8.6 What is the current state of Manx?**

Manx is currently spoken by about 500 people, and more than a thousand have some knowledge of it, although according to conservative estimates there are only some 50 people who are really fluent or near-native speakers. Manx is taught as a subject in schools throughout the Isle of Man, and is used as a medium of instruction in the *Bunscoil Ghaelgagh*. There are Manx language classes for adults in many parts of the island, a number of conversation groups and other Manx-based activities. Manx music, dance and culture are quite popular, there are regular programmes in Manx on Manx Radio, occasional Manx columns in local newspapers, and a number of books have been published in Manx.

Manx has yet to be re-established as a community language, as has happened with Irish in on the Shaw's Road in Belfast, however the networks of Manx speakers who meet regularly to speak Manx could be considered a loose-knit community.

When UNESCO classified Manx as extinct in the 2009 edition of the *Atlas of World Languages in Danger* (Moseley, 2009), the Isle of Man's Chief Minister and Manx speakers wrote to protest this classification (Goldberg, 2009). This prompted UNESCO to alter the classification to critically endangered (Isle of Man Government, 2009b), which would indicate that Manx is spoken only by elderly people who rarely use it. While this was true in the early twentieth century, it is no longer the case. A better classification would vulnerable, which indicates that Manx is spoken by adults and children, but it is not used in all domains.

According to Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (Fishman, 1991), one could claim that it is at stage 2, in that it is used to some extent in local and regional government and the media. However this does not indicate that the language shift has been reversed entirely in all the other stages, particularly stage 6: the use of Manx in families and as a community language, and stage 3: the use of Manx in the lower levels of work.

### **8.7 How might Manx develop in the future?**

There are plans to improve existing Manx language classes for adults and to set up more of them. There is sufficient demand for places to justify the extension of the *Bunscoil* and possibly the establishment of another Manx-medium school. The provision of Manx-medium instruction at secondary level could be expanded, and there are plans to set up a youth group for young Manx speakers.

An increase in the provision of Manx-medium education and improved teaching techniques in Manx language classes for adults will increase the number of fluent Manx speakers, which could lead to an increased demand for Manx language-based activities, literature and other materials. There may also be an increase in the number of parents who decide to raise their children with Manx.

### **8.8 How does the revival of Manx compare to other language revivals?**

When the Manx revival began intergenerational transmission of Manx had ceased and Manx was being replaced by English in all but the most isolated areas. In other cases, such as Cornish and Miami, the revivals started after all native speakers of the languages had died and only fragmentary knowledge of the languages remained; or the languages were spoken only by a relatively small number of families, as was the case for Irish in Belfast; or the language had lost all its native speakers but was still used in limited domains, as was the case for Hebrew.

In most cases the revivals were started by grassroots individual and group efforts with little or no official support, at least at first. However the Hebrew revival later secured the full backing of the state, and those involved did not have to campaign hard for recognition, status or funding, as has been the case with the other revivals.

During the course of the Manx revival, the focus shifted from documenting the language and studying it as an academic curiosity to reviving it as an everyday language and using it as a medium of instruction in education. Many other revivals have focused on teaching the

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languages as subjects in schools, and/or using them as media of instruction. The latter method appears to be a more effective way for children to acquire the language (Fishman, 1991). In some cases, such as Irish in the Republic of Ireland, relatively few of the children in immersion education use the language being revived or revitalised outside school and few of their parents speak that language (Hindley, 1990). In Northern Ireland, however, the majority of parents who send their children to Irish medium schools speak or are learning Irish and use it as much as possible at home (Maguire, 1990), and the situation in Hawaii is similar (No'eau Warner, 2001).

Language revival initiatives which have enjoyed the most success, such as Hebrew, Irish in Belfast and Basque, have sought to increase the use of the languages in as many domains as possible and have not relied solely on immersion education in schools. Language acquisition by adults also plays a very important role (Fishman, 1991).

### **8.9 Conclusion**

In a world where a small number of languages are becoming increasingly widely-spoken there is a place to minority languages such as Manx. Reviving, revitalising and maintaining such languages is by no means easy, however it is possible. The success of language revival efforts depends on many factors, including the state of a language when the revival begins, the levels of community and official support, and the dedication and determination of individuals and groups.

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