

# Women in Manx Politics

## 1946-1997

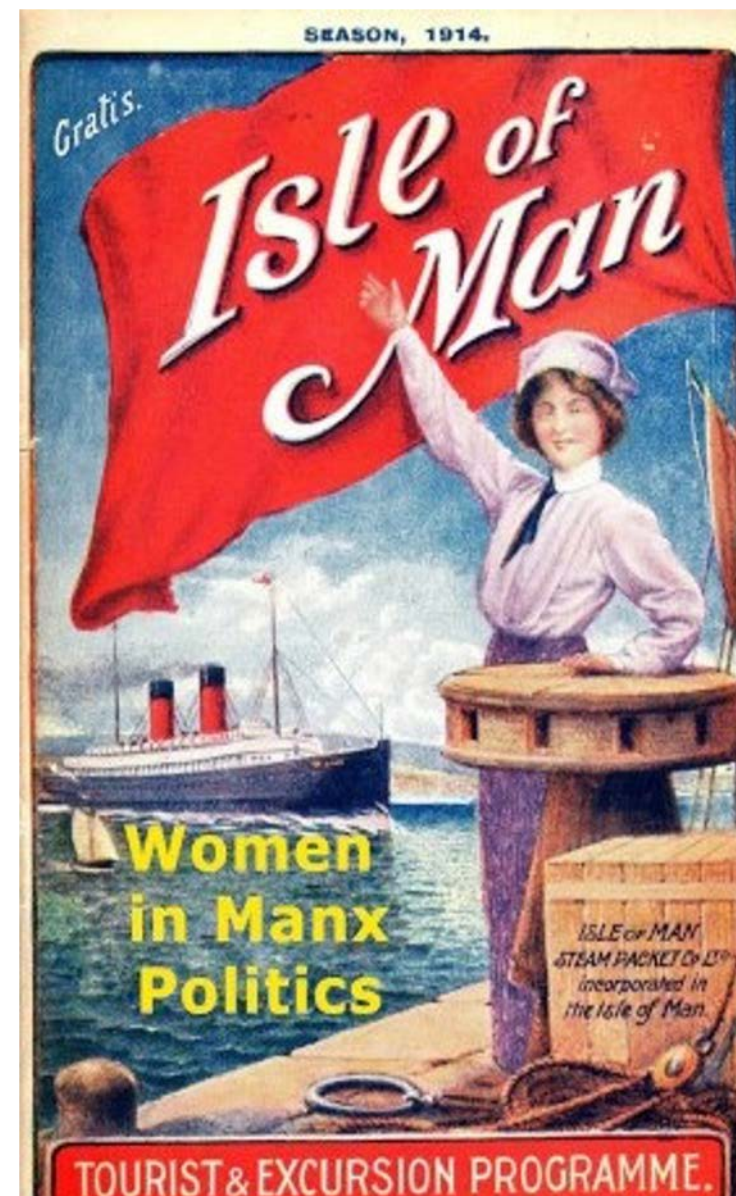
- Dr Catriona Mackie, University College Isle of Man
- Prof Peter W Edge, Oxford Brookes University
- Dr Alex Powell, Oxford Brookes University
- Dr Mari Hughes-Edwards, Edge Hill University

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**UCM**  
University College Isle of Man  
*Colleish-Dilooocoll, Eilan Vannin*  
a College of Further & Higher Education



**Culture**  
VANNIN



# Project Aims

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- Highlight the lack of gender diversity in Manx politics – historically and today
- Explore the experiences of women in Manx politics (with thanks to Culture Vannin!)
- Find ways of removing barriers and encouraging more women to stand for election on the Isle of Man

## **Project website:**

- Search for “Women in Manx Politics”

# Context

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- Some women eligible to vote from 1881
- All men and women over 21 eligible to vote from 1919
- Women eligible to stand for the Keys from 1919
- Women eligible to be elected to Legislative Council in 1961
- Women eligible to sit on juries from 1980

# Women in the House of Keys, 1919-1946

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- **Louisa Nelson** becomes first woman candidate to stand for Keys in 1929 for Ramsey.
- **Marion Shimmin** becomes first woman MHK on 14 February 1933 for Peel.



*Marion Shimmin, 14 February 1933*

# Case Studies

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## PARTIES



**Annie Bridson  
(Garff 1951-56)**

## PROFILE



**Jean Thornton-Duesbery  
(Garff 1966-76)**

## PROGRESSION



**Betty Hanson  
(West Douglas 1974-1982)**

# Political Parties: Annie Bridson

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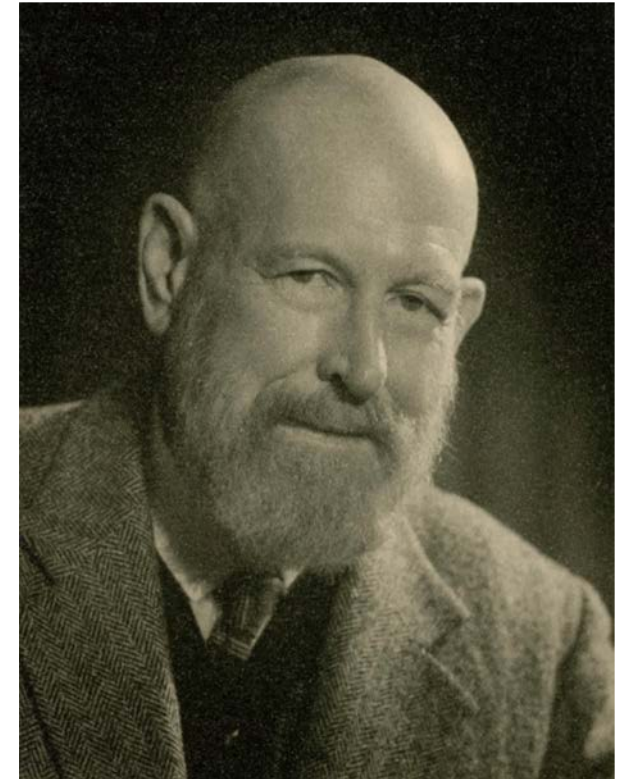


**Annie Bridson  
(Garff 1951-56)**

**FORMATION OF MANX  
LABOUR PARTY.**

On Saturday week a large gathering of delegates of the various trade unions and societies of the Island was held in Rosebery House, Douglas, when further progress was made with the formation of a Manx Labour Party, whose intention it is to take active part in Manx politics and run candidates for Legislative and Local Government bodies. The constitution of the Party, as drafted by a sub-committee appointed at a previous conference for that purpose, was amended in one or two details, and will now be submitted to the various unions for approval. A provisional committee was appointed, with Mr H. M. Emery as secretary. The objects of the Party are set out as follows:—

**Manx Labour Party Formed  
February 1918**



**Gerald Bridson  
(Middle 1919-24)  
(Garff 1942-46)**

# **ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF SOUTH DOUGLAS.**

## **Notice of Candidates Elected (Contested Election)**

I hereby give notice that the Total Number of Votes given for each Candidate at the above Election is as follows:—

Annie Dorothy Bridson	1786
Walter Clucas Craine ...	1603
George Higgins .....	1799
Alfred James Teare .....	2097

Also that the Names of the Candidates Elected are:—

**ALFRED JAMES TEARE.  
GEORGE HIGGINS.**

Dated this 26th day of  
September 1946.

## Annie Bridson: 1946 Election

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- Annie Bridson stood for South Douglas
- Gerald Bridson stood for Garff
- Both stood for the Ex-Servicemen's Association
- Neither were elected

# Annie Bridson: 1951 Election

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- Stood in Garff for the Manx Labour Party
- Elected behind Charles Kerruish
- Displaced sitting candidate, John Quine
- Becomes second woman MHK

**House of Keys Election**  
9th **NOVEMBER, 1951.**

**Constituency of Garff**

**Notice of Candidates Elected.**

I hereby give Notice that the Total Number of Votes given for each Candidate at the above Election is as follows:—

<b>BRIDSON, Annie Dorothy</b>	<b>853</b>
<b>KERRUISH, Henry Charles</b>	<b>1,366</b>
<b>QUINE, John Lindsay</b>	<b>749</b>

Also that the Names of the Candidates elected are:—

**HENRY CHARLES KERRUISH**  
**ANNIE DOROTHY BRIDSON**



# Annie Bridson: Background

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- Teacher and Headmistress
- Involved with National Union of Teachers
- Retired from teaching in 1928 when she married
- Elected to the Manx Education Authority in 1935

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**HENRY CHARLES KERRUISH**  
**ANNIE DOROTHY BRIDSON**

# Annie Bridson: 1951 Campaign

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“I am sorry there are no other women candidates in the field, because I think women could give much-needed advice in the Keys. There are so many things on which women’s opinions should be heard - education, social services and health services, and, above all, housing. Men build houses, but women have to live and work in them. I appeal to all the women folk to think seriously about a woman candidate ...”

# Annie Bridson: 1951 Campaign

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“They are not considered to have wit enough to vote for Commissioners. ... I think the parish is where they should start to learn the power of their vote because they know the people intimately. That is one of the things the Labour Party feel strongly about.”

# Annie Bridson in the House of Keys

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On the Local Government Bill, 1955:

“As a woman member, I am really surprised and amused at the attitude of quite a number of men here. You might think we were back in the 1880s with father the only person who mattered. ... Are we going to be compared with Japan where the women are just household utensils?”

“I ask you as men to give the fully-grown woman the right to vote in these elections. They have every right to expect it.”

# Annie Bridson in the House of Keys

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## Women Don't Want Smaller Drinks Than Men Standard Measures Date is November 12th

A SUGGESTION that a smaller spirit measure should be used in the preparation of cocktails mostly drunk by women was made by Mr. A. S. Kelly in the House of Keys on Tuesday when the second reading of the Licensing Bill adopting a standard spirit measure for the Island was completed.

*"If you give them the standard measure you will have them under the table" he added.*

But Mrs. Annie Bridson would have none of that. "Because a woman is not supposed to be able to 'take it' is no reason why her drink should be adulterated" she said.

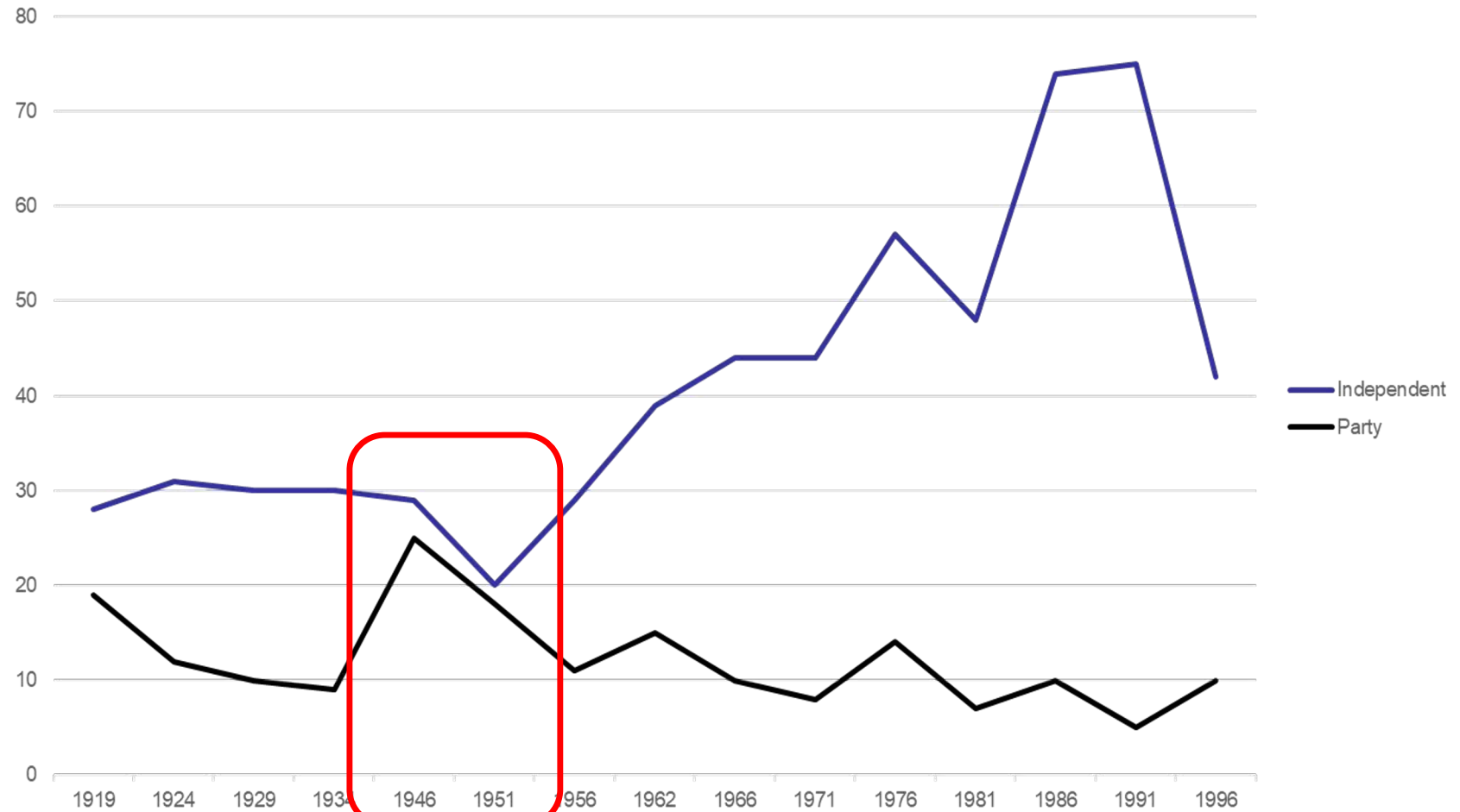
"I am quite surprised at the hon. Member for Ramsey, on his objection for giving a standard measure, and saying that a woman is not capable of holding the full value for her money, so therefore you can adulterate the drink ad lib. ... I think if a woman wants a gin and "It" she should have it. Women pay the same price."

# Labour's Feminine Representatives



MRS. A. BRIDSON, J.P., M.H.K.  
(Garff)

# Party Politics in the Isle of Man



# Labour's Feminine Representatives



MRS. A. BRIDSON, J.P., M.H.K.  
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# Party Politics in the Isle of Man

## General Elections: 1946-1996

	Party Candidatures		
	All	MLP	Other
<b>Number</b>	228	127	101
<b>Percent</b>	100%	56%	44%

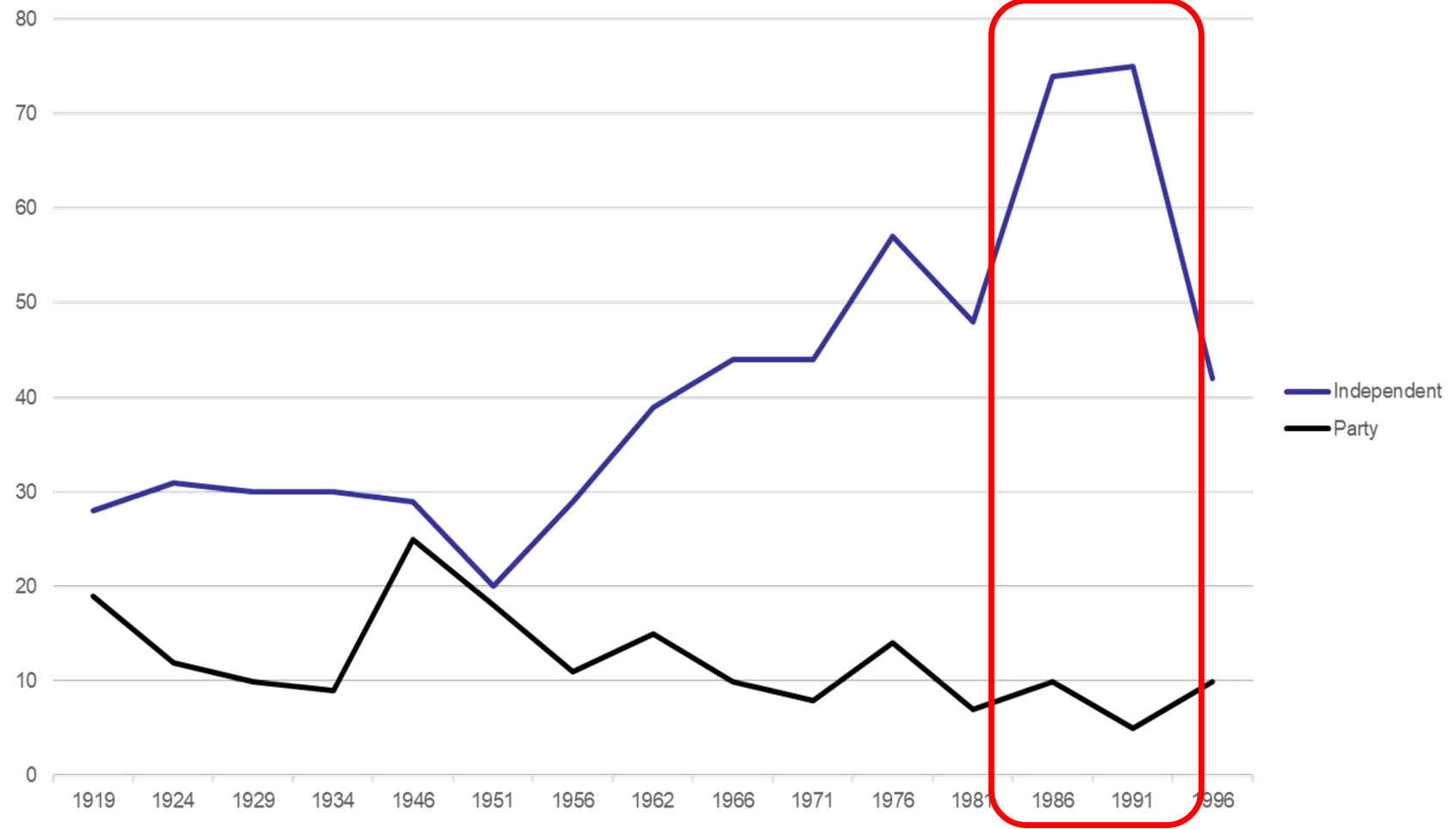
	Success Rate	
	Party Candidatures	All Candidatures
<b>Women</b>	45%	32%
<b>Men</b>	42%	57%

# Labour's Feminine Representatives



MRS. A. BRIDSON, J.P., M.H.K.  
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# Party Politics in the Isle of Man





# Political Profile: Jean Thornton-Duesbery

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- Born in London
- Father was Bishop of Sodor and Man (1925-28)
- Moved to Island permanently in 1939
- Registered nurse and midwife
- Manx Education Authority (from 1946)
- Justice of the Peace (from 1956)

# Jean Thornton-Duesbery: 1966 Campaign

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“Having been approached to stand as a Candidate in Garff Sheading I have agreed although I realise I have not a great deal of experience in the Political field.”

“As you know, I was a member of the Education Authority for 10 years ...”

# Jean Thornton-Duesbery: 1966 Campaign

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If you want a definition of my views in a nutshell perhaps I might be described as an “Independent Progressive” candidate who generally supports present-day policy in the government especially in its provision for housing, social services and employment.

But there are of course aspects of these services where I imagine a woman’s viewpoint and knowledge would be helpful and I feel that improvements in conditions, perhaps new ideas for dealing with the many social problems which arise, and a sympathetic understanding of those problems might constitute a sphere where I could be of assistance.

Name	Constituency	Years	Political Experience	Occupation
<b>Annie Bridson</b>	Garff	1951-56	Manx Education Authority (1935)	Teacher
<b>Jean Thornton-Duesbery</b>	Garff	1966-76	Manx Education Authority (1946) Justice of the Peace (1956)	Nurse
<b>Katharine Cowin</b>	East Douglas	1971-76	Manx Education Authority (1967)	Teacher
<b>Elsbeth Quayle</b>	Castletown	1971-81	Justice of the Peace (1958) Castletown Commissioner	Horticulturist
<b>Betty Hanson</b>	West Douglas	1974-82	Board of Education (1971)	Teacher
<b>Clare Christian</b>	Ayre	1980-86	Father was an MHK	Research scientist
<b>Hazel Hannan</b>	Peel	1986-06	Peel Commissioner (1978)	Nurse
<b>Julia Delaney</b>	North Douglas	1986-91	Douglas Town Council (1983)	Nurse
<b>Brenda Cannell</b>	Douglas East	1996-15	Douglas Town Council (1992)	Business
<b>Pam Crowe</b>	Rushen	1996-03		Business

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# Jean Thornton-Duesbery: 1971 Election

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- Elspeth Quayle (Castletown) and Katharine Cowin (East Douglas) also elected.
- “I am glad to say that we are now accepted as a matter of course and lady members are no longer regarded as a noteworthy phenomenon.”

# Jean Thornton-Duesbery in the House of Keys

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Jury Bill, 1974:

“In doing this I am voicing the conviction of very large groups of thoughtful and informed women in this Island and I believe hon. Members will join me in feeling that it is right that their voice should be heard on this matter in this hon. House.”

# Political Progression: Betty Hanson

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- Schoolteacher
- Board of Education (1971-74)
- Regularly attended Tynwald debates
- Very involved with church and community
- “the 'phone started ringing. Then I was stopped in the street and letters began to arrive. It was apparent people wanted me to stand so I decided to have a go”



# Betty Hanson: 1974 Campaign

## A woman candidate for the Keys

IF a majority of 4,442 voters in West Douglas decide to put Betty Hanson into the House of Keys, she will not enter the Chamber as a stranger. Hers has been a familiar face in the public galleries of Tynwald and the House of Keys for a long time.

Since her Douglas High School days, the former Betty Lucas of Peel has been interested in politics, particularly in the social security and educational aspects, but even more importantly interested in people, which after all is what life and government is all about.

Mrs Hanson, wife of the headmaster of Albert Road School, Ramsey, is a woman of sound commonsense. Talking to her it becomes obvious that she is capable of seeing the other side's view—she's more logical than the average woman.

Fighting an election — "it's a straight fight, so more clear



she was on the staff for nine years, continuing for a while after her marriage.

She didn't return to teaching until her younger son was about 10 years — and then it was to be only for a month, which in actual fact went on for eight years.

"I left five years ago to develop all my other interests."

Mrs Hanson has been a member of Onchan W.I. for 17 years and she shares an interest with her husband in the R.A. Association and in the Legion Players, sometimes doing their decor and taking a "bit" part last year.

When she has the time she likes to paint in oils, to sew, and she says she is a member "of a gardening family" which exhibits in all the flower shows, gladioli being their speciality. Reading is her main hobby and she is very attached to St. Thomas's Church and their Mothers' Union branch. "We are St.

Thomas's people — Eric was headmaster of their school for 20 years. He's a Lay Reader and we think the people of St. Thomas's are community spirited people."

And that is what Betty Hanson is. Community spirited in every way, which is what she says she likes about her own Island. "I would hate to live across — they haven't the community spirit we have here."

As she works on her election campaign which will culminate on December 17th, Betty Hanson is heartened by the support and the help she is receiving.

But she has been touched, almost to the point of tears, and feels very humble when one lady, awaiting an eye operation and badly sighted, insisted on addressing envelopes for her "and doing them beautifully," whilst yet another incapacitated lady brushed all argument aside and will cook the family lunches on election day!

"Mrs Hanson, wife of the headmaster of Albert Road School, Ramsey, is a woman of sound common sense. Talking to her it becomes obvious that she is capable of seeing the other side's view - she's more logical than the average woman."

# Betty Hanson: 1974 Campaign

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“Last week when I interviewed Deemster George Moore, he told me he was in favour of women members of the Legislature, that he considered they could contribute usefully, especially in matters of health, social security and in education which was manifestly suited to women.”



# Betty Hanson: 1974 Campaign

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“Betty Hanson thinks she can contribute ‘consumer wise.’ She says ‘Women are the housekeepers, they are managing the money all the time - men are not.’”



# Women in the House of Keys by January 1975

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Speaker of the House of Keys:

“With your election to the important constituency of West Douglas there are now in our House four lady members, one sixth of its total assembly, a unique proportion for any parliamentary assembly within the Commonwealth.”





# Betty Hanson in the House of Keys

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- Re-elected in 1976 and 1981
- Campaigned on the promise “To represent both the women’s and the men’s points of view”
- Jury Act (1980)



# Political Progression

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- Chair of the Board of Education (1976-81)
- Chair of the Board of Consumer Affairs (1981-88)
- Nominated for Executive Council in 1981
- Appointed to Legislative Council in 1982



# Some Tentative Conclusions ...

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- Party politics
- Public profile and political experience
- Political progression
- Attitudes to women

# Women in Manx Politics

## 1946-1997

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- Prof Peter W Edge, Oxford Brookes University
- Dr Alex Powell, Oxford Brookes University
- Dr Mari Hughes-Edwards, Edge Hill University

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