

Women in Manx Politics

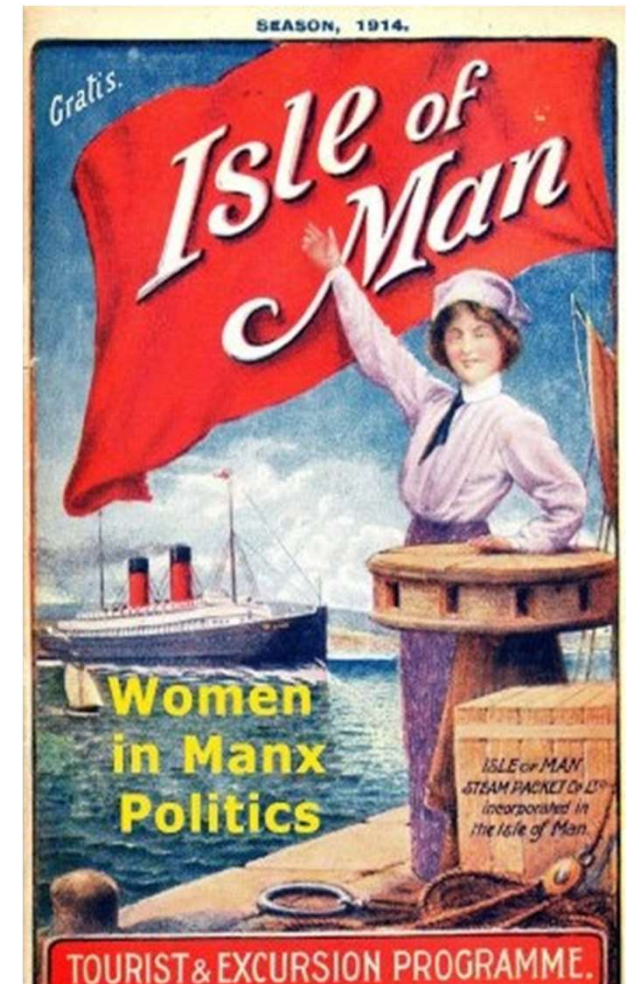
In the Chamber

- Dr Catriona Mackie, UCM
- Prof Peter W Edge, Oxford Brookes University
- Dr Alex Powell, Oxford Brookes University

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a College of Further & Higher Education

Culture
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A Bit of Context ...

- From 1919 to 2023, **23** women have served as Members of the House of Keys
- At the time of the Lisvane Review in 2016: **2** women in the House of Keys (8.3%); **1** woman in the Legislative Council
- At 2016 General Election: **5** women elected to the Keys (20.8%)
- After 2018 LegCo election: **5** women elected to LegCo
- After 2021 General Election: **10** women elected to the Keys (41.6%)

Project Aims

- Highlight the lack of gender diversity in Manx politics – historically and today
- Explore the experiences of women in Manx politics from the late 20th century onwards
- Identify barriers to women becoming involved in Manx politics
- Find ways of encouraging more women to stand for election on the Isle of Man

Project website:

- Search for “Women in Manx Politics”
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Methodology

- Electoral data
 - Numbers standing and elected
 - Influence of political parties
- Documentary research
 - Hansard
 - Isle of Man newspapers
 - Candidates' manifestos
 - Online material
- Qualitative interviews
 - Interviews semi-structured
 - Focus on 'lived experiences'
 - Same interviewer throughout
- Focus Groups
 - Family members
 - Those who decided not to stand

In the Chamber

- Architecture
- Language
- Culture



The Architecture of the Chamber

“our buildings shape us”

The House of Commons



“We shape our buildings,
and afterwards
our buildings shape us.”

The House of Commons



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The Lady Members' Room

- “a separate room for lady members”
- “provide for the Legislature accommodation which ... will prove to be of benefit not only to the members who sit in this House but to the people they represent because we are creating conditions in which members can work .. and in which our lady members can relax or carry out their responsibilities and so on” (Tynwald Court, 7 July 1976)

The Lady Members' Room



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

“To have the lady members’ room and to be able to withdraw there is a tremendous help and I would like to say how greatly, as Chairman of a Board, I appreciate it” (Tynwald Court, 7 July 1976)

Removing the Lady Members' Room

Tynwald Court, 12 July 1989:

Mr Brown: “we have a Members' Reading Room and we should all share it; we are all members together. To have one room set aside, with respect, for two lady members ... is absolutely a waste”

Mrs Hannan: “in this day and age it is totally outdated and outmoded and should be done away with post haste”

Seating in the Chamber: 1880

House of Keys, November 1880:

Mr Sherwood: “they would require some larger seats to be made. If the representation was to be acted upon a proper basis the seats would have to be made to suit (Laughter)”

Mr E. C. Farrant: “To admit ladies as members of the House of Keys would at all events be putting the representation on a broader basis (Roars of laughter)”

Seating in the Chamber: 2023

- "for a woman to be able to use the desk, you've got to be right on the very edge of the seat."
- "the men they've got their jackets on, you know, ... they're bigger, they seem to stay warmer for longer"



The chamber as a gendered space

“Where are all the girl pictures?”



The Language of the Chamber

The Sexual Offences Bill (1987-1992)


Women in Tynwald, 1987-1992

- **Betty Hanson** was in the Legislative Council until 1988
- **Julia Delaney** was MHK for Douglas North from 1986 to 1991
- **Hazel Hannan** was MHK for Peel from 1986 to 2006; Minister of Education, 1991-1995



Hazel Hannan MHK

The Sexual Offences Bill

- Update to the 1967 Sexual Offences Act
 - Isle of Man's homosexuality legislation in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights
 - Significant opposition to decriminalisation of homosexuality in Tynwald
 - It took five years and two Select Committees before the Act was passed in 1992
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The Sexual Offences Bill, 1988-90

- Select Committee Report in 1988 recommended numerous updates but no changes to the current law on homosexuality – two MHKs voted against the report on these grounds (Hannan and Bell)
- Revised Bill brought to the House in 1990. Clauses 9 and 10 decriminalised homosexual acts in private between consenting males, in line with the ECHR – a majority in the Keys and the Council voted against these clauses

The Sexual Offences Bill, 1991-92

- Select Committee Report in 1991 recommended removal of Clauses 9 and 10 – a majority in the Keys and the Council agreed
- After the 1991 General Election, the Bill is brought before the new House of Keys with Clauses 9 and 10 reinstated
- In May 1992, the revised Bill is approved 13 votes to 11 in the Keys

Hazel Hannan

Hazel Hannan was instrumental in

- Supporting the inclusion of the offence of rape within marriage
- Pushing for the decriminalisation of homosexuality on the Isle of Man
- Opposing the inclusion of Clause 38 which prevented the 'promotion' of homosexuality (the equivalent of the UK's Section 28)

Key Questions

- To what extent were women MHKs subject to misogynistic remarks in the House of Keys or Tynwald Court?
- What form did these remarks take?
- Can they be grouped thematically?

Mrs. Hannan: I have told you why.

HK 01.05.1991, K1618-19

Mrs. Delaney: Ah ha, how nice!

The Speaker: Right, ladies. *(Laughter)*

Mrs. Delaney: I was replying to the member in her facetiousness. I do not wish to be associated with her attitudes.

Mr. Kermode: Oh, scratch her eyes out! *(Laughter)*

Mrs. Delaney: No, I do not scratch eyes out. I stand on my own two feet, as any other member here.

The Speaker: Hon. member, just concentrate on what we are doing -

Mrs. Delaney: Yes, indeed, sir.

The Speaker: - and try and avoid starting these little battles.

Mrs. Delaney: I was doing very nicely, Mr. Speaker, until the member intervened.

HK 30.05.1989, K1039

Mrs. Hannan: You want to stop it.

Mr. Gilbey: It is no good the hon. member for Peel saying I want to stop it. —
I do not want to stop it at all.

Mrs. Hannan: Yes, you do. *(Laughter)*

Mr. Gilbey: I do not know how you can know what I want to do.

Mrs. Hannan: It is the second time.

Mr. Gilbey: I do not know what you want to do.

Mr. Kermode: She will scratch your eyes out, Walter!

Mr. Gilbey: She seems to be trying.

Mrs. Hannan: I have not even started yet, Walter.

Attitudes Towards Women

- **Mr Gilbey:** “I also agree with the Chief Minister that none of us likes debating a matter such as this. I think it is profoundly embarrassing to do so in public and with ladies present” (HK 05.05.1987, K439).
- **Mr Maddrell:** “As for a woman always being raped by a man, it makes me wonder sometimes just how enticing women are to men when they wish to be. Her opinion of men always trying to rape women if women do not consent, even in marriage, quite appals me” (HK 01.12.1987, K280).

Attitudes Towards Women

Brig. Butler: “The nature of the male sexual drive is different to the nature of the female sexual drive. I have to say that in many ways the female sexual drive - and I am sorry to be speaking about these things and if I offend anyone, excuse me - but it is of a much more noble character, frankly, than the male sexual drive” (HK 27.03.1991 K1333-34).

Appropriate Attitudes for Women

Mr Corrin: “There are many things that have disturbed me in this debate. The going overboard by the hon. member for Peel - she really is the limit. How a mother, a wife and mother, can embrace these acts is really beyond me” (HK 27.03.1991 K1368).

Lack of Ability

- **Mr Corrin:** “perhaps the hon. member for Peel might learn something if she actually listened when other people are speaking” (HK 23.04.1991, K1448).
- **Dr Orme:** “I hope I managed to follow the explanation that the member for Peel gave. [...] Mrs. Hannan, I am afraid, the member for Peel, passed very quickly over all sorts of complicated financial arrangements ... and it seems to me there were some quite important points there” (HK 23.04.1991, K1472-73).

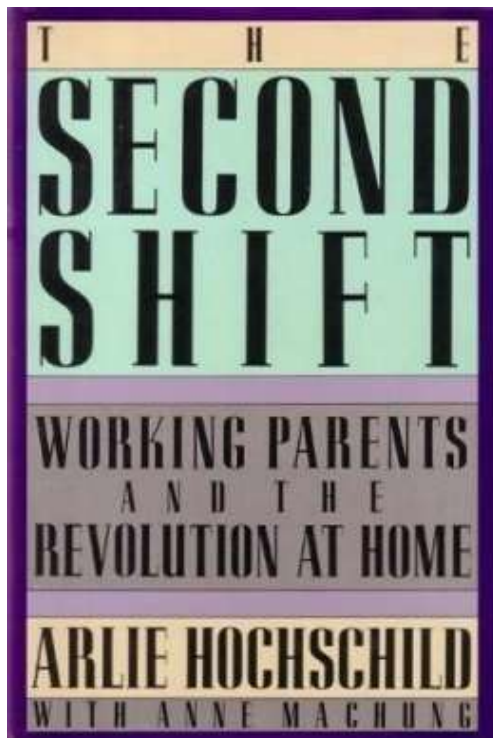
Patronising Remarks

- **Dr Mann:** “I know the member putting this forward is very sincere in how she feels, but my personal position on this, in common with, I think, the majority of members of this House, is that ...” (HK 01.05.1991, K1603).
- **Mr Leventhorpe:** “Just because you do not get your way in something you do not go off like a spoilt child and vote against it. (Messrs. Delaney and Kermode: Hear, hear.)” (HK 07.05.1991, K1670).

The Culture of the Chamber

Culture Change?

The 'Second Shift'



“a few men in there who have family but they’re not the main organiser, childcare provider, they’re not the one who works out how to get children from school to activity, to bath and bed”

The Tone of Debate: “it’s not like it used to be”



“they said that with 5 women in it ... that the mood and the tone of the debates and everything improved massively at that point ... is it politics or is it the person? Is it the gender? I don’t know”

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