

How the Manx Heritage Foundation Act came into being

Forty years ago, Manx culture was full of excitement and energy, but was perhaps somewhat disparate – people were speaking and teaching Manx, musicians were discovering old tunes and songs in the archives, dance groups were representing the Island internationally at festivals, books were being published, and artists, writers and historians were hard at work. In many ways, though, Manx culture didn't have a home or a central focus, and, it certainly didn't have the support it deserved and now demanded.

Former art teacher and crafts expert, Sheila Tarr, recognised all this and more. She was well-known for her work in organising the arts and crafts displays and competition alongside Janet Craine as part of Yn Chruinnaght, doing so much to encourage young people and their families to become part of the festival. She knew first-hand what talent and dedication volunteer-driven organisations and groups displayed, and had seen the benefit of cultural centres in other countries. She felt that those involved in Manx culture deserved more support and recognition as they told the story of the Isle of Man nationally and internationally.

In July 1980, she presented a petition for redress to Tynwald, calling for a permanent centre for the Island's art, culture, craft, language, literature, festivals, and so much more. She had a vision for a space which could be used by different cultural groups for conferences, meetings, performances, archives, and even to be used as a youth hostel. The petition received support in principle from Tynwald, a Select Committee was appointed with Clare Christian MHK as Chair, and their report recommended that the Manx Heritage Foundation be established, with the Manx Heritage Foundation Act 1982 agreed by Tynwald.

Under the name of the Manx Heritage Foundation for many decades, or the more recent trading name of Culture Vannin, the organisation has worked to support and promote Manx culture by partnering with the community, Government agencies and business in order to fulfil the objects of the founding legislation. Communication, education and accessibility are key to this remit, and development work for Manx language, Manx music and dance, and online and educational resources makes sure that is possible. The charity also supports grassroots projects through an annual grants scheme, knowing that the time, knowledge, skill and enthusiasm of those involved with Manx culture applies a multiplier effect to what are often modest awards.

More information about our 40th anniversary celebrations are available on the Culture Vannin website: <https://culturevannin.im/resources/culture-vannin-40-704193/>