Much of what we know about Manx music starts with early 19th century manuscripts and the earliest published source, the Mona Melodies, 1820 (J.48/2xf). However, many of the carvals (vernacular religious songs) and church music date from the 18th century, although very little was published.

In the late 19th century, the Gill brothers, composer William Henry and Deemster John Frederick, joined forces with Dr. John Clague on a rescue mission to collect Manx folk music before it was forgotten. At the same time Arthur William Moore was conducting a similar project. In 1896 they published select pieces from their collections, edited for a late Victorian audience as Manx National Songs (J.48) and Manx Ballads and Music. (J.48/14)

The 19th century also offers a variety of church music sources. The singing of carvals at oie’ll verrees (gatherings in the local church on the eve of Old Christmas Day) predominantly died out in the mid 19th century, but many of the texts were preserved.

There is a strong tradition of brass and silver bands on the Island, many of which were formed in the late 19th century, some from earlier village bands.

In the early 20th century Mona Douglas collected folk songs and tunes not noted previously. They were published with arrangements by Arnold Foster in three volumes of Twelve Manx Folk Songs (J.48/30). Douglas also collected many dances and, with the help of Philip Leighton Stowell, restored them for performances around the British Isles, during the 1930s.

This led to two publications of Manx dances by the English Folk Dance Society and the eventual formation of the Manx Folk Dance Society in 1951.

Throughout this time the Isle of Man was flourishing as a tourist destination with large numbers of visitors from the UK every year. To entertain them, large dance halls in Douglas had daily performances for anything up to 6,000 people at a time. Brothers Harry and Haydn Wood filled the demand for music for these visitors and many of the music hall songs of the period are closely associated with the Isle of Man.

The 1960s saw a revival of Manx traditional music and dance. In 1978 Colin Jerry transcribed much of the original collections of Clague and Gill and Douglas as Kiaull yn Theay (J.48/78), and pub sessions similar to those in Ireland started to appear. Dance groups in traditional costume grew out of this revival and in 1978 Yn Chruinnaght Inter-Celtic Festival was born. Today Manx traditional music is vibrant and strong, with three main festivals a year - Yn Chruinnaght, Shennaghys Jiu and the Cooish. There are a growing number of bands and dance groups as well as music taught in schools and through the Culture Vannin youth movement, Bree.
The Manx Music Festival or ‘Guild’, founded in 1892 as a competitive platform for Manx performers, features some classes for Manx music and dancing alongside a more established classical repertoire.

New Manx music is continually being created by traditional music groups, composers, arrangers and rock bands alike. There is an active Manx bands scene which is constantly evolving and which can be accessed through social media sites like Facebook through Isle of Man Gigs and Isle of Man Musicians. The IOM Department of Children and Education have produced a useful information sheet on music education on the Island and the current music scene at:


A comprehensive list of books and published recordings can be obtained from the Reading Room at the Manx Museum, Douglas and up-to-date information on all aspects of the Manx Music and Dance scene can also be obtained from the Culture Vannin Manx Music website:

www.manxmusic.com

The following list identifies some of the key research sources within Manx National Heritage Library & Archive collections:

Bazin, Fenella - *Music in the Isle of Man up to 1896, MS 09530*

Bazin, Fenella - *The Everlasting Hills, J.60/76*

Curtis, Cinzia - *...While the others did some capers’: the Manx Traditional Dance Revival 1929 to 1960, MS 11526*

Faragher, Martin - *With heart, soul and Voice; 100 years of the Manx Music Festival*. L.14/1

Jerry, Colin (Ed) - *Kiaull yn Theay 1 & 2. J.48*

Maddrell, Breesha (ed) – *Kiaull yn Theay 3 & 4. J.48*

*Rinkaghyn Vannin-Manx Dances*. E.244/84q

Roads, Francis - *The Colby Manuscripts. MS 10992*

Roads, Francis - *Ye Boundless Realms of Joy: 40 West Gallery Psalms, Hymns and Anthems from the Isle of Man*. J.48/103

Speers, David - *Manx Traditional Music and Dance: a chronology of source material*. J.48/61q

Spooner, Dennis - *The “Mets” ‘100 years of the Castletown Metropolitan Silver Band, Part 1 The Early Years’ and ‘Part 2 a Champion band’. C.252/13q/C.252/15q*

*The Leighton Stowell Book of Manx Dances*. J.48/19q

Woolley, Chloë - *The Revival of Manx Traditional Music: from the 1970s to the Modern Day. MS 11264*