

MANXLAND — A swift historical account +

The British Post Office,, relenquished its postal responsibility of the Isle of Man on July 4th, 1973, after taking care of the Island's mail for more than 300 years. To mark the occasion, the British Post Office issued a "last day" cover, complete with the then current 4 Isle of Man regional values — 2½p, 3p, 5p, and 7½p.

On 5th July, we saw the birth of a new stamp issuing authority within the U.K. Thus four independent postal issues now form part of the British Isles area.

The first definitive set, issued on 5th July, consisted of 16 stamps, ranging in value between ½p and £1, and totalling a face value of £2.25½. The set features island scenes, historical sites and indigenous animals.

A seventeenth stamp was also issued along the definitive range, to mark the inauguration of Postal Independence; this had a face value of 15p and illustrated Viking settlers coming ashore in 938 A.D.

Even today, many are only vaguely acquainted with the Isle of Man. Set in the Northern half of the Irish Sea, Isle of Man holds a very unique political position within the British Isles. Although a part of the British Isles, it forms no part of Great Britain, the United Kingdom. In fact, Manxland, is a separate kingdom, whose 'Lord of Mann' happens to be also the Monarch of Great Britain.

It is thought that most probably, the island's earliest inhabitants were the Palaeolithic or Stone Age people. However, evidence in support of this hypothesis, must have been lost for ever during the Glacial Age, 20,000 years ago. Then it was no mere island, but part of the great plateau of Western Europe.

After the Ice-age, probably, 5,000 years ago, a new race of people took over the island; their ancestors must have crossed over from France and Spain. A bold, seafaring people, they left burial mounds and forts as witness along the greater part of the Western coast of Europe.

Irish monks, followers of St. Patrick and St. Columba, may have converted the isle to Christianity. By the time the Vikings made their first raid, the whole of Manxland was Christian. The Vikings settled in the Isle in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

In 880, the King of Norway included the Isle of Man in his Third Kingdom; the last Scandinavian King of 'Mann' was Magnus, 1252-1266, who accepted the overlordship of Alexander III of Scotland.

Ruled for centuries by noblemen, kings and governors in succession the Isle of Mann's ruler became known to this day as 'Lord of Mann', when in 1504, Thomas III took that title. In 1765, the British Parliament passed the

the Revesting Act, buying the lordship of Mann, on behalf of the British Crown.

Perhaps one of the best known facts about the Isle of Mann, is that it has its own Home Government modelled on the Scandinavian Legislature, established as early as the 9th Century.

The Manx language, likened to Scottish Highland/Gaelic and Irish was only a spoken language up until the 18th Century. The first Manx grammar was only a spoken language up until the 18th Century. The first Manx grammar was published in 1804 and the first dictionary in 1835.

"The Three Legs of Man", is the national emblem of the Isle of Mann. Its appearance dates back to circa 1250 on the Manx Sword of State.

Among its famous personalities, are found participants in the Mutiny of the "Bounty": Fletcher Christian, a member of the island's famous Christian family of Milntown; Peter Heywood who was Manx by birth; and Captain Bligh, who married a Manx woman, Miss Elizabeth Betham on the island and whose daughter was baptized on the island at Douglas in 1784. Another famous personality of the Island, is Sir William Hillary, founder of the Royal National Institute. Hillary was a member of the Isle of Man, (Douglas) Lifeboat crew in the early mid 1800's.

1974 will see the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and it has already been announced that the Isle of Mann will be marking this occasion with a commemorative set.

*with acknowledgement to Mr. M. Clarke.

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