



Oral History

Interviewee: Rob Farrer RBV
Interviewed & recorded by: Paul Quayle
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Topic: A conversation with Rob Farrer RBV about his life at the heart of metal detecting, field walking and archaeology on the Isle of Man over the past forty years.

This is transcription of the interview has been lightly edited for ease of reading.

PQ: Rob, can you tell me your full name?

RF: It's Christopher Robert Farrer. I was born the 25th of the 12th 1953, and I'm coming up to the age of 64 now, and I've been involved in archaeology for probably 40 / 45 years now.

PQ: You're quite well known for your lifetime's involvement in local history and also metal detecting.

RF: Yes, metal detecting was really my first love. It's still my first love, but archaeology, field walking, actually site working and just a general interest in monuments around the Isle of Man. They've always been my interests and I still get excited by finds that have been made, and discoveries made. I've still got that schoolboy feel for finds I've seen, other people have seen, and I've handled some lovely stuff in my time. But my interest there is from my childhood. I was about 5 or 6 and Dad, he was out in Burma, came back from the last war, and to supplement our worldly income at that time, or their worldly incomes, he used to go crabbing, and he used to bring me along with him. So we'd go down crabbing at Port Grenaugh, and one of the, the site that fascinated me most, it still does today, is Cronk ny Merriu, the 'Hill of the Dead'.

PQ: Yes.

RF: Which is a lovely Viking / Iron Age fort site. Peter Gelling did a wonderful dig on that site a few years ago. But one thing we have learned from them sites is there's a number of particular sites of the promontory fort, with a burial, with a church, with a possible Viking age house, and it's sitting on the top of an earlier Iron Age site. And it seems like they, it became popular during the Viking period. I wonder whether it was Magnus Barelegs after the Battle of Santwat, whether he re-fortified all those, those, I call them 'watch and ward' sites. I think they took the stock in, and took the kids, and the women and defended them when they got attacked. But I think they were more watch and ward, probably setting the signals up of enemies coming to our coast in the Viking period.

PQ: So you mentioned the Peter Gelling dig there, in the, was that the early '60s that one?

RF: The early '60s, yes.

PQ: Yes. So were you, do you remember that taking place then?

RF: I remember seeing that. I was very fortunate to work with Peter Gelling in Peel Castle a few years after, metal detecting, Dougie Allen was there. He was a tremendous archaeologist, and he was a very nice chap as well. He knew a lot of stuff, an interesting man to talk to. He was a university professor, Birmingham University, if I remember rightly. But him and his wife used to come here nearly every summer over 30 years, in various digs. One of those digs was, one of the earliest digs that they were doing was Port Grenaugh. They also dug at Peel Castle, and they dug at Block Eary (Lezayre) and Kione Droghad (Andreas). He dug a lot of sites and got a lot of information. He's our Gerald Bersu.

PQ: So when, when he was digging at Cronk ny Merriu then, how old were you at that time?

RF: I was only about 7 or 8 I think, maybe up to 10 years old. But obviously the dig was finished when we got there. My father was working all day, on the high road. We got the hooks out and then, if the water was right, if the tide was right, began searching out of Douglas, Santon Head, or Santon Gorge site. And because the stocks of crabs, left during the 5 years of war, there was hundreds of crabs to get out of the holes around those two areas. A wonderful time. Well I never ate crab until I was 22, because everything was sold. You brought the crab home, stuck it in the boiler, and Mother had the boiler going, and it was all sold. I never tasted crab until I was about, I think I was 22.

PQ: So what was your, when was the first, when was your first involvement in an archaeological dig?

RF: Well, it was when I started metal detecting. Dad had built a Japanese detector, which was absolutely hopeless. And then on the market came, in the '70s, came this new style of metal detectors, and they were absolutely marvellous. And I, Dad said you go to this spot and that spot, and find a few bits and pieces. So I found modern, pre-decimal coins to start off with, and I was getting bits and pieces in to Larch Garrad, Dr Larch Garrad, she was second in command at the Museum at the time. And she encouraged me, she was a great encouragement to me. And during the 1980s I found a hoard, and some gold was found at Eary Lhane, Viking gold, which I happened to be there that day that it was found. But I found a hoard at Ballasleig which is probably a Treasury hoard from the Abbey or the Priory, either of those sites, I think that that particular hoard came from. Going back to the nice bit of gold, I was shown, on a wet day, there was only two of us on the site at Eary Lhane, and

Colin came over with a cup of tea and he sat down and he says, and I says ‘Have you found this farm, this part we’re looking for?’, and he says ‘No, but I’ve found these two objects here’, and he put a nice medieval coin in my hand and this piece of hand. And I said ‘that gold could have been lost yesterday’, it was so shiny and so bright. When he first brought it in they thought it was Australian gold fields, until Larch decided to give it a clean. He came out with a book on metalwork, Viking remains, gold remains, and this, this one is a typical example of them. So it was a, it was gold and it was Viking. And it was a gorgeous object, it’s one of the gorgeous objects in the Manx museum today.

PQ: So that relationship between yourself, and other detectorists, I suppose, with the Museum, that’s always been a good working relationship over the years then?

RF: Yes, I think it was rather hard at the start, with Marshall. Marshall, rightly so, had a few worries about detecting, and I think he got to realise that it was a great benefit to the Manx nation, what we were doing.

PQ: And this is Marshall Cubbon, Director of...

RF: The Director of the Manx Museum at that time.

PQ: Yes.

RF: A very interesting and intelligent man, and always very polite to the Club. Larch took an interest, because she wanted to see the material being brought down, identified, and the sites identified, and she had a wonderful brain.

PQ: Yes, because in, there are instances, many instances, as you know full well, where people don’t declare their finds to museum authorities as they’re supposed to, and yet over here the impression I’ve always got, and from what you’re saying, is that that’s always been one of the, a really good, a really positive aspect of...

RF: You get law breakers in every, every society, where there’s money to be gained. And across they’ve got these amazing Roman sites, and the lads have took, lads, I call them lads, they’re criminals, have gone out at night, digging holes with JCBs. They don’t represent the hobby. They’re just thieves in the hobby, and they are being rooted out. The police are eventually going to get ahold of them. But the Portable Antiques Scheme was set up for metal detecting by a couple of archaeological people in Britain, and that has produced, on paper, photographing the artefacts, and I think photographed 1,300,000 artefacts have been found and registered, photographed and pinpointed where they come from.

PQ: Right.

RF: ... Taking objects out of context. Those objects are slowly disappearing. They’re getting broken with the ploughing, they’re getting corroded away by chemicals in the soil, and even sheep pee has had an awful effect on objects. In another 200 years a lot of the objects, you won’t be able to see them, they’ll be completely gone. So I think we do an interesting job. A coin will not only give you evidence of the, whoever’s sitting on the throne at the time, it will give you evidence of what country it came from, what mint, in what town it was minted in, and it will give you a value, it will give a lot of interesting side lines to an object. An object on its own has got a lot of history, it’s just a matter of getting the history out of it.

PQ: Yes. And with regard to the metal detecting clubs, were you involved at the very beginning of when they were set up?

RF: Yes, I was involved in the Manx Detector Club, back in the 80s, and the, I put an advert that we should form a society, and with good cooperation from the Museum at the time, and we used to hold meetings up at the Manor pub in Willaston. And we had, made a lot of interesting finds, and stuff was brought in. That fell apart though, but we managed to re-establish the youth club, 10 years ago, it was my idea again, re-established it because they were going to change the law of metal detecting, and I wanted to make sure the detectorists got an input in the law. And I think the, I think we've done a good job and we've got a similar act to the England and Wales act, which has been in force many years, and it's worked very effectively.

PQ: Yes, and the impression I get too, from knowing you and also from the Museum, is still you have a really good relationship with the Museum, in terms of the declaration of finds, and the processes, the legal processes involved in that which are, which a lot of people probably wouldn't be aware of. The,

RF: We were lucky to have two such people as Andrew Johnson and Allison Fox. Allison Fox is a museum creator of finds, and she's more closely linked to us, but she is, she is very good with us, and the link there has always been good. Because it benefits her to get finds from us, to fill in missing blanks in the system. And one blank was, I phoned her up one day, and I says to her 'I've got a pommel of a Viking sword, from the Ballaugh area', and she says 'Are you sure it's Viking?' I said 'yes, it's got the inter-lacing on it, and it's got wire, silver wire around it. I brought in that object, and it was one of the most amazing objects I've ever seen. I'm looking at a picture of it on my wall at the moment. The detail on that is Borre style Norwegian. It could have come from the royal family, for all we know, one of the Norwegian royal family. It's got wear on it, it's a 1000 years old, and it's got class and style. So I think it's come from either one of the chieftain tribes or it's come from the royal family itself, from Norway. But a very interesting object. The iron of the sword has disappeared, but we've got the pommel, and bits of bronze associated with it. It's a wonderful sword, it's been to five exhibitions now, it's coming on to the fifth exhibition next year, at Liverpool. It's been to Chester, York, Falmouth, and into Wales. It's come back to Liverpool. Welshpool it went to. But this is, this might be its final, final exhibition, then it's coming back to the Isle of Man where it will be put on a feature. I'm not sure if it's going into the Viking part of the Manx Museum in Douglas, or whether it's going to come to the House of Manannan. I don't really care where it goes, I just, it'll be good to see it back again, back here again.

PQ: Well it's done, like you say, it's done a long tour. I'm sure, it's great that it's been able to be shared with so many people, I suppose. For the listeners' benefit we're looking at a picture of it on Rob's wall now.

RF: Yes, behind you on that wall there's a make-up of what the sword would look like. The make-up is run by the Manx Museum.

PQ: Oh yes.

RF: You can get all the, you can get all the long iron parts of it. There's still bits missing off it. But the actual pommel at the top, it had only just come out of the plough, it was covered in sand, and you see the sand, the situation where it had come from, and after that I think we were lucky, because it had obviously been broken up before, and now, because they've got the two parts of it, you can see how, how it was made. I don't think they've got a pommel which has been so taken apart, it's been taken apart with a plough, but it's still in wonderful nick, and it shows you how, how they worked together. There's part of the blade, and a part of the handle and the pommel itself. You can just see a little piece of line on the, on the underneath of the cross piece on the pommel.

PQ: So if that would have been left in the ground a few more years, and a few more ploughings, then,

RF: There'd have been nothing left of it.

PQ: Right.

RF: This is one thing we try to put forward. I think people are beginning to realise, it's not all about the gold and silver. There are so many objects that are getting found out there, and if they're not found soon enough they'll just disintegrate in the plough.

PQ: Yes.

RF: They become not artefacts, they become part of the original artefact.

PQ: Yes, so you mentioned before about the involvement of the metal detecting club in major archaeological digs in the Island.

RF: And there were quite a number. I started off on Round Battery with Peter Gelling, back in the, I think it was in the '80s, with Peter Gelling. He dug half the Round Battery, had some wonderful stuff, and he said to me one day, he says 'I'm finding a set of pottery on the spoil. Are you able to detect the lead glaze in pottery?' I said 'no, no, cabot's eyes only', I said, [laughter] and he laughed at that. But I would use the metal detector a lot more than what the second dig did. They had a metal detector. They didn't use detectors on Peel Castle, at the very start. It was only when they got to Castle Rushen that David Freke realised the benefits of having detectors there, because I got virtually all the hammered coins out of there, as we had done at the Castletown Stores, and Rushen Abbey. Rushen Abbey we got another 20 coins. Some of the coins are interesting there. The night stairs, which is an internal fixture, I think going from the ground floor to the first floor, and the, I managed to get a, I was asked by Jenny Woodcock to test a hole where the staircase had been originally. I said 'there's a signal on the bottom of that'. She said 'oh they haven't, they haven't scooped it all out.' So we scraped that little bit out, that's by the stairs, and there's yon, yon coin, 1205-1210, came out of that hole, a half cut coin. The coin was in good nick, so I presume when that coin was cut it was cut at the time that the coin was issued. So they were fitting internally the Abbey out at 1205-1210, which is quite interesting. We wouldn't have found that information out any other way.

PQ: Wow, yes.

RF: And I found coins at Castle Rushen, and the very last coin I found there, it got lost in the cleaning process. I heard it might have turned up, so it would be interesting to get it dated,

and with coins you can get a date within 5 or 10 years, depending on the condition of the coin, or when the coin was lost, so it will give us an indication of when something was being built or taken down at that time. So coins are very, very datable, more datable than pottery, so they give a more accurate date on those. And with the use of detectorists, the metal detectors, and the club members on the site, we actually progressed on the dating much better than you had before.

PQ: Yes. And moving on now to, well it's not moving on, it's the same sort of subject, but another aspect of the metal detecting and your work is field walking, and this has also led to some very significant finds for you, hasn't it, over the years?

RF: I was introduced to Alan Skillen, who's sadly passed on since then, but I was introduced to him by Larch Garrad, and we become quite a partnership over the years, and we did a lot of walking. I didn't do as much as him. He had tremendous knowledge of the sites and finds, and an absolutely wonderful man. And he helped me with field walking. And when I was metal detecting I used his same mapping routes and after quite a while I started field walking, and I was finding sites in places which had never been found before. And the, at that time, I think it was in the late 80s, the Forestry Board, at South Barrule, extending the plantation, the Black Mountain, and Creg y Crock and places like that, south and north of the Island. Every time we seemed to be finding sites. And the Black Mountain is an interesting one. We found sites at over 1000 ft, flint work sites, with broken white quartz. They were breaking white quartz up, I presume they were looking for the copper in them. They were having the Bronze Age, and Ronaldsway Neolithic together, and that doesn't only happen once or twice, it happened a number of times. And I presume that the Ronaldsway peoples were turned over to the Bronze Age culture, and had left behind their old culture. It seems to have come from either Spain or Portugal, that where the late-Neolithic people seem to be coming from. And their art work is our art work. So I presume they've actually come out of the Iberian Peninsula, where a lot of that art work is, between Spain and Portugal.

PQ: And the field walking that you were doing at that time, led also to the discovery of what became one of the biggest, is it the biggest archaeological dig that's ever,

RF: I think it's the biggest amount of artefacts there.

PQ: taken place here, yes.

RF: It started off I was walking down the quarries at Billown and Malew, and I picked up a small number of arrow heads, there were 3 or 4, and scrapers. And I bagged them up and I put them into the Museum, with the site location, and a few years later the, they started the quarries, and they looked through their collections, and my finds were dragged out. So they had another field walk around the actual quarries, at Billown, and that produced more arrowheads, so they decided then that there must be test pits around the site. That turned into one of the biggest archaeological digs. There's a Neolithic enclosure, with lovely pots and all kinds. There were 11,000 arrow heads were dug out of that site, and that was only part of the site. A big part of it had disappeared underneath the quarry.

PQ: And that was, the combination of your field walking, and also your metal detecting involvement, and your finds, all culminated in 2009 for you in your crowning moment, I suppose, the year you were awarded the RBV.

RF: Yes, it was a, I was flattered and I was so pleased that my peers, people I'd known for years voted for that award for me personally. It's an award that's put up by the people who are not in government, they're just people who, in various societies, who recognise good works. And their, there are a lot of their names on that particular trophy. And it was awarded, I was embarrassingly amongst all these great people that I'd known, some had passed on, some that were still alive, but all great, great enthusiasts in their, in their quest for knowledge in the Isle of Man.

PQ: Well I don't think anyone would argue that you deserved that award, Rob. And you continue to research various things, I know. So what inspires you these days in terms of research? What are you looking at these days?

RF: We've got great gaps in our archaeological record, and the only way to fill these gaps is by excavating. We do seem to have a gap in the Roman period. Now there are at least 20 coins, and 11 brooches, and about 3 or 4 areas that Roman pottery has been located. And I'm sure they're here, because you have Ravenglass across the way. And they raided Anglesey, the home of the druids. Now I always wondered whether we were the home of the druids. Anglesey is covered in Roman sites, we're not. There's something, something's going on, and those early promontory forts were in the Roman period. And they seem to have gone out of use in the second or the third century. And we've got a gap in our records where there's bits going on, but there's not real movement of people. I wonder whether we've got a mini-ice age going on at that moment. When the Romans withdrew from the Antonine Wall, was it because of the weather rather than attacks by the Picts and the various Roman tribes up there. But I cannot see us sitting here in the middle of the Irish Sea when on a clear day Ravenglass, you can see the Isle of Man from Ravenglass, one of the biggest Roman forts in northern Britain, and there is a site on Maughold, I've forgotten the exact place, but it's above Ramsey, and you can see, you see the English coast, the Scottish coast, the Irish coast, the Irish Sea basin, the Northern plain, and that is a circular ditch cut around the higher internal, with a tower. And Roman experts have seen it, and reckon it's Roman, and the only way to test it is to excavate it. Now whether that happens, I don't know, but I think it's in a chain of single towers running up the coast line, and ours was one of the last. Because the Irish were harassing the Romans in the Irish Sea, and the one place they could hide is off the Manx coast. So I can't see the Romans lot leaving us alone. I'm sure the Roman military were here, probably in cooperation with the local tribes. That's what I thought these promontory forts might be about. But they certainly weren't there at the end. They would not be effective against the Romans, those promontory forts, but they might have been effective against the Celtic tribes. So, that's just a theory. And the only way to prove it is excavation. If they excavate the site at Maughold, we'll see, in the entrance to that, whether there's any Roman pottery, or possibly Roman coins, or anything Roman.

PQ: Well that sounds like an interesting one for the future.

RF: I'm always encouraging younger people like yourself, Paul. Without people like yourself we'll never, we'll never find out. And there's a huge generation of young people who have gone away to university to study archaeology, and are coming back, and they're not always getting jobs, but they are doing the Manx bit in a small way. And without those people we'll never, never gain more knowledge. So I always encourage young people, and give them information on where to look, and what to look for, and I hope it gets passed on,

and they develop the same interests as me. But there's a lot of very intelligent young people come back from university, and I hope to God that we keep them interested in the Manx history and archaeology, what's gone before us.

PQ: Well I'm sure that is the case. I know from my own experience, and other people who've been involved in Manx studies, that you're, having met you has been a, has always been a true inspiration to people, and has really inspired them to go forth and do their own research. And the other side of your, the way your personality is, to inspire people, has also been your community involvement as well, in the Leece Museum in Peel.

RF: Yes.

PQ: I was wondering would you be able to tell us a bit about that.

RF: Yes. Well you're talking about the Leece Museum. I've now, at the present moment I'm going through the condition known as Parkinson's, which is a degenerative condition, which progressively get worse. I used to enjoy two or three days a week at the Leece Museum, talking to visitors, talking to locals, the like, and giving information. And I did get an award from the Peel Commissioners, I had a couple of awards for the help I did in promoting Peel. And I was so chuffed with that award, chuffed as much as getting the Reih Bleeaney Vanannan which I got a while back. But it's nice to talk to people, meeting people, meet people coming back from various parts of the world. The families emigrated in the, in the likes of the potato famine and the times that were, when the Isle of Man was in a poor, poor state, and now they're back here. But it's amazing where Manx people have gone. They've gone all over the world, and there are some amazing stories to listen to.

PQ: So how did you become involved in the Leece Museum?

RF: Well I was down talking to Roy Baker. I'd Roy the year or two, and I said 'do you want any volunteers down here, Roy', and he said 'oh, we're always looking for volunteers, Rob.' And as Roy said I was one of the best, the best volunteers, and I helped him many times. They'll all be volunteers, but I did give more time than most, others had families and what have you.

PQ: And in terms of the Leece Museum as a private museum, how do you think that compares with a public museum, like Manx National Heritage, I suppose?

RF: You're never going to get the building, like the size of the Manx Museum. You don't want a building that size, because it's, it takes a lot to look after. So a lot, there's the social history in the Leece Museum, and we've got a much earlier history in the main museum, and in the House of Manannan as well.

PQ: So do you think a private museum like the Leece Museum can do things that a bigger museum organisation maybe can't do?

RF: Yes, I think there's a lot of bikes like in it. It's not everybody's cup of tea, motor bikes, but meeting the riders who are legends in their time on the TT course, coming in to see you, and seeing these wonderful museums which set the world of TT riding alight. It's marvellous to see them, and that's brought a lot of people into the Leece Museum. But not everybody's interested in, interested in social history. The mixture of social history and TT bikes, and trophies and what have you, is a good combination in my book.

PQ: And you mentioned there your, your Parkinson's, which has affected you, and it's been something, I know, that you and your wife, Fenella, have been prominent in fund-raising, and also creating a greater awareness of Parkinson's disease. Can you tell us a bit about that maybe?

RF: A lot of people today are living with Parkinson's without realising it. It affects people in different ways, but the main thing is the mobility, you lose the mobility through it. A drug called dopamine which runs through various parts of your body, that's cut off the destruction of certain cells in your body, which is part of the Parkinson's symptoms. And there's no cure, all you can do is hold it back. Those are the drugs, and powerful and potent they are. They don't cure it, they slow it down, and we're looking to see a cure. The cure is not for me, it's for the next generation, but we're certainly getting a few bob for the research that is going on.

PQ: And while Parkinson's maybe limits what you are now able to do in terms of field work, I know you still go out detecting and field walking, so how's that affected that?

RF: It's down to a few hours now. The rain, and there's a lot of people who look at Parkinson's expressions and think there's nothing there, nothing in the face, because the smile, the sadness, it's not showing what it used to. And they think that they're away, and not listening to you. Those brains are still finely tuned. I mean you find some very intelligent people belong to the Parkinson's group, with Parkinson's in the Isle of Man.

PQ: And in terms of, going back to Manx studies, and, how do you assess the current state of Manx studies and Manx history, in terms of what's going on, in terms of research these days?

RF: Research is brilliant, but that covers a very, a lot of subjects, a lot of different aspects of our history. Archaeology, there's very little of that going on. We're starting to get geophysics being done in a big way by Mark Noel, and that's wonderful to be able to see what's under the ground without actually digging it. But I go back to metal work, if you don't dig the metal work out of the ground that's in there now, there won't be anything to get in 100 years' time. So I hope archaeology is pushed now. They should have pushed Peel Castle, where it's been 20 years, never mind 5 years.

PQ: And yes, that feeds into my next question, what would you like to see happen and change in the future?

RF: I'd like to see, a lot of sites are under threat. There's coastal erosion. There's a couple of Viking burials up on the Jurby coast, that if they're not rescued in the next 25 years they won't be able to. And we should have a look more closely at the building operations and explorations which are to do with pipes and what have you, to keep a good eye on there's nothing been missed. The law's not strong enough to make builders comply with the laws concerning the finding of archaeological sites. And I think we should do that. Every site should be looked at. And I hope that the law is advanced in that sense. And I've seen so much soil being moved around about, the likes of the metal detecting club just checking the soil, and that's not being allowed. The builders are worried that they might lose 6 weeks off their time. That's the reason that all the, it's not reported.

PQ: Yes, I guess we're into a philosophical debate there about the value of history and archaeology in modern society and in a world where maybe there's not as much money

around for these disciplines as there used to be. But do you feel that our nation's history is still important enough for resources to be put that way?

RF: My view was with the views of other people years ago, but now I've read so much and I've been lacking in responding to that as well, but there's so much that you can gain from previous research, re-researching what people have researched. The interesting bit to me, one particular site is Ballasleig, that I thought that was found in 1836, and I thought there was another site around there, Nunnery Howe, in 1842. But in fact they're both the same, and 1842 was a, was the proper date I find. And there was a big haul of probably 600 - 800 or 1000 coins in it. People thought it was people's savings, but I think that was on a path leading north from south, north to south from Douglas going south, and I think it was part of the Treasury of the Nunnery or the Abbey. And I think as a response to Robert the Bruce's invasion of 1313, they came, the Irish came in 1315, and raided the Abbey, and the Priory to get all the silver they could. And that was in revenge for giving sanctuary to Robert the Bruce when they came here in 1313 and camped at the Nunnery. Reading between the lines, because it was an Irish, Irish army being led by somebody from the English Court, I think. So it's interesting reading between the lines of what objects can tell you.

PQ: Yes, our little island must have been subject to many invasions in the past, some of, only a few of which have been recorded in history. I guess this is what you were saying about the Roman period before, we've got no idea how it really worked politically in the Irish Sea in some ways.

RF: I see Sitric of Dublin was kicked out of Ireland, and surely he came to the northern plain of the Isle of Man, out of Clontarf. He wasn't involved in Clontarf, so his forces were all in one piece. And the, I think the Manx forces that went to Clontarf were absolutely massacred. So I think he came to the northern plain and set up his own state on the northern plain, royal state, because he was minting coins at that time. And the funny thing is in 1079 Crovan comes back, Godred Crovan, wins the battle of Sky Hill in 1079. In 1080 there's no more high value Manx coins being made. I think he closes down the royal mint and the royal palace of the north, in that operation to acquire the Island. I think the north / south divide, as comes down the central valley, that's why they're looking at the central valley, it comes down the hills from the north, I think that north / south divide has been there since Crovan's time. It's always been there, the north and south are two races apart. I think they still are, although they speak the same accent, I think there's more to it than that.

PQ: That's interesting. So do you think the Isle of Man must have had a very important strategic position in the past then?

RF: I think so important, in the Bronze Age, we know that they were digging bronze at Langness and Bradda. You've got the moulds there to prove it. I think the Isle of Man is a very important player in the Bronze Age, until the easy bronze runs out. So I think they're there for years, and the actual pathway, I can see going from Dover to the Isle of Man, to Ireland is going through all the tribes of Britain. And I don't think that that could happen unless there was complete cooperation in the Bronze Age. I think the Roman invasion probably took that away, when they came back in, or when they came in to invade Britain.

PQ: Well, I think that's about everything I wanted to ask you, Rob. Is there anything else you want to talk about for the time being?

RF: I could go on for hours and hours.

PQ: I know.

RF: I don't want to bore people.

PQ: No, you won't bore anyone. Maybe we'll have another go at it in the near future, but we'll have a rest for the time being. For the, for this, to wrap up this one, thank you very much for sharing all those stories with us, and your great insight into Manx studies. It's been a pleasure and an honour, as always, to chat with you.

RF: Thank you, Paul.

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