

# Sheila Margaret Cregeen 1924–1993

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Sheila, like her brother Eric, with whose career her own ran in part on parallel lines, was brought up away from the Isle of Man, their father (Fig. 1) being in the Methodist ministry. She had her higher education at Manchester University, where she took a BA (Hons II.i in English and French) in 1944. From there she went into teaching, including a year at King's school, Macclesfield, during the period 1944–48, and again in 1950–54. Meanwhile she was engaged on work for a Manchester MA (1952) in the Department of Archaeology, the subject of her thesis being 'Aspects of Celtic Culture in the Isle of Man', for, although deprived of the opportunity of spending their childhood on the Island, Sheila and Eric regularly spent their holidays with relatives and came to love the place and store their minds with information, memories and impressions of the Island and its history.



Fig. 1 Allan, Eric and Sheila Cregeen, with their parents James Pentland Cregeen and Gissie Radcliffe. Sheila was to share many of Eric's interests and collaborate with him on archaeological excavations. Allan, who became a scientist, was also a keen supporter of Eric's activities.

For a time Sheila moved from teaching into museum work, as assistant at the Doncaster Art Gallery and Museum, and subsequently as Deputy Director of the Verulamium Museum at St Albans (1954–58). But the urge to communicate was strong and from 1958 onwards she held a part-time lectureship in Archaeology in the Department of Extra-Mural Education at Sheffield, and similar positions with the corresponding departments of Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, giving evening courses in the winter months to adult education classes in Argyll, Galloway, Lothian and the Borders in Archaeology and Scottish History, and subsequently acting in a similar capacity in the Island for the University of Liverpool.

In 1966 she was at last enabled to return permanently to the Island, to teach English at the Buchan School for a year, and Archaeology and Manx History at the College of Further Education. As a teacher of English in southern Italy and Sicily earlier in her career she had acquired a knowledge of Italian, and this subject too she offered at the College. Again in her earlier years she had studied Russian with *émigrés* in Macclesfield, another interest shared with Eric.

Sheila also possessed in a marked degree the gift of story-telling, both orally and in writing. During her years in Scotland she wrote radio plays and scripts for Scottish schools broadcasts, generally on historical subjects, and she also published a little poetry. Her gifts were always at the disposal of public and learned causes, whether judging literature at the Cruinnaght, engaging in secretarial work for the Archaeological Society in Hertfordshire or the Society of Antiquaries, serving on the committee of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society (of which she was President in 1978–79), acting as tutor for the Open University, or in journalism, or in leading history rambles and engaging in archaeological field work (she had a special interest in horizontal water-mills and in building conservation), or playing an active role in Mec Vannin in the early days of that organisation in defence of the land she loved, or making the excellent fudge which her friends remember with so much pleasure.

But a list of her activities gives little idea of the witty and warm-hearted personality behind them. Even the driest discussion was lightened by a jest, and her kindness, to humans and to animals, was legendary. Death took her suddenly and her last anxiety was that her animals should be cared for. At her funeral at Patrick on 6 April 1993, the church was full to overflowing with her friends and neighbours, assembled to honour and take leave of a notably gifted, generous and well-beloved personality who in her life attracted affection rather than this world's goods. There she was buried in the same churchyard where a few years earlier her brother Eric's ashes were interred.