

## Archived [www.kennish.com/william](http://www.kennish.com/william)

The following pages detail the contents of [www.kennish.com/william](http://www.kennish.com/william) which ran from 2000 to 2010 under the control of John William Kennish, a direct descendent and keen promoter of William Kennish (1799-1862).

The site was taken down in 2011 due to John's retirement from his consultancy practice where it formed part of his marketing activities, but is reproduced here with his permission and with grateful thanks by Robert Stimpson, author of "***William Kennish Manninagh Dooie – True Manxman***". Some of the contents of these pages have now been updated and amplified by the book, but this web site is recorded with gratitude as it formed one of the early inspirations to delve further into this amazing Manxman's life and inventive pursuits.

Robert W Stimpson,  
Douglas, Isle of Man, February 2012



# **William Kennish**

**February 24, 1799**

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**March 19, 1862**

**Painting as featured on the cover of  
"The Ionian Mission."  
Original art by Geoff Hunt RSMA, Artist Partners, London,  
U.K.**

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**Poet  
Writer  
Seaman  
Inventor  
Explorer  
Engineer  
Scientist  
Naval Officer  
Designer of the Panama Canal**

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William Kennish was born in 1799 in a cottage, in the Parish of Maughold, close by the foot of the Bridge of Corran, on the Isle of Man, which is located in the Irish Sea between Ireland, and Great Britain. The cottage still remains, and is occupied today, standing below the main Douglas-Ramsey Road on the East side of the foot bridge. His Father was Thomas Kennish, 11/21/1762, and his Mother, Margaret Radcliffe, 2/16/1766. William was a true Manxman, and his people for many generations past are to be found in the Kirk Maughold Church Yard there.

*A Manxman true from the cradle I was reared,  
Close by the foot of the bridge of Cornaa,  
Whose keystone was fixed in the year I was born.  
The Manxman's Farewell*

The Isle of Man is known for its financial center, World Class Motorcycle Races, Manx cats with their short tails, and proud Manx ancestry, which in addition to Irish and Scottish roots, also leads back to the time of the Vikings who frequented their Island.



The Norwegian Vikings first settled the Isle in 900 A.D. as they found it to fit their need for a strategic location from which to base their attacks against the Irish, Scottish, and English settlements. The Vikings however considered the Isle of Man to be their home, and heavy Scandinavian settlements prospered there for hundreds of years. The Isle has since enjoyed hundreds of years of parliamentary procedure as their form of government, which is among the longest, and most lasting on earth. Today they remain an independent legacy, and government, and are bound by the rule of no other nation.

William was raised on a farm located in the Upper Cornaa Valley -- the Cornaa Farm, by his humble parents, where he followed a plough and worked the land, and then as he grew older, he turned to, and learned the trade of a ship's carpenter at Ramsey. In 1821, at age 22, he reportedly was crossed in love, and in great distress, left the Island, and joined the Royal Navy as a Seaman. At that time he could scarcely speak any English, his native language having been a variation of Manx Gaelic, nor could he read, or write.

*When thou prov'dst false and I was slighted,  
I from my native Isle did roam,  
And on the world became benighted,  
Without a friend - without a home.*  
The False One

However, with his natural ability and skill, in seven short years he not only learned the language, but also rose from the position of a common Seaman, to that of a Warrant Officer, and Master Carpenter of the whole British Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea. This was accomplished due to his being given the opportunity to mingle with his well-educated shipmates, from which he became self-educated in the various areas of literature, and science -- they reportedly "being ever as willing to impart instruction as he was to receive it." Considering that he would have then only been 29 years old -- and in a time when the British Navy truly ruled the world with ships of oak, and men of iron; this was quite an accomplishment for someone who could scarcely express himself in other than his native language.

*But this was Greek to my poor brain,  
For names of cattle and of mountain sheep,  
Were all that my thick block-head could contain,  
No foreign subject could it learn or keep.*  
Mona's Isle, Canto II

William, while well know as a poet, was a greater scientist, and inventor. In fact, many of his inventions have played an important role up until today. Simply stated, he seems to have been

the kind of man who could not see a gadget in use, but least he try to improve upon it.

For example, and from the long emptiness of the sea and sky, and his small shipboard cabin came a variety of ideas to include;

### **§ Warship Cannon Fire - Surveying Instrument; the Theodolite**

In this period, warships had to manoeuvre the entire ship to bring their guns to bear. This is to say that their guns were fixed, and pointed outward - and to angle the shot, the entire ship had to be moved one way, or another. In warfare, the ship brought its long side to bear toward the enemy ship -- and fired a tremendous salvo. And if the ship rocked upward, or downward, the target was missed. Unfortunately, when in this ineffective position, your ship was also then left broadside to the enemy ship -- which in turn turned loosed their broadside fire on you. Naval warfare of that age therefore amounted to seeing which ship could take the most cannon fire. For very obvious reasons, this logic was counterproductive and deadly in terms of men, and ships.

William, being a practical man, decided that it would be much more logical to rotate the individual guns, than the entire ship. So, while on board the H.M.S. Hussar, and on the North American station in 1830, he developed the method "for the concentration of fire of a ship's broadside" which greatly enhanced the destructive power of the British warship's massed guns, with a much lower rate of death and destruction, to their warships.

His first problem was to estimate the distance to the target; so, he accomplished this by inventing the theodolite. A theodolite is a surveying instrument used to measure horizontal and vertical angles with a small telescope that can move in horizontal and vertical planes. Having found the distance, he then had to devise a method of moving the guns into the required side angles of fire, and the barrels into the correct angle of elevation. This was simple -- he developed, and used standardized wooden wedges. He then made a chart for each gun so that the gunners knew exactly the right angle of fire and trajectory required, the exact wedges to use, and the exact position needed -- all of which positioned the gun, irrespective of the position of the ship, exactly on the target. His method was tested in the West Indies, was successful, and became standard operating procedure for the British Navy.

His principle of naval warship gun laying, although now accomplished mechanically by steel, computers, and hydraulic power systems -- remains the same as he devised it using ships of wood, and men of steel in the early-1800's.

And the surveying profession got the theodolite, which is still used today although it has now been laser enhanced. William would be impressed !!

### **§ Using Warship Cannon on Land**

Logically, and in a natural sequence of things, his attention then fell upon the value of also using these same ship cannons on land in support of ground troops when there was no immediate prospect of a pending sea battle.

Cannons of the period were made of very heavy brass, and therefore could not be moved from ship to shore in a practical way. William simply took the ship's fresh water tanks, which were used and emptied one at a time, and placed them on deck. Then the guns were strapped to the tanks, lowered over the side, and placed into water by using the ship's davits. In turn, the ship's boats were then able to tow the guns to shore, where they were placed onto specifically designed horse drawn gun carriages, to be taken quickly into battle.

Crude, but practical, and a forerunner of the modern military self-propelled, and amphibious gun.

### **§ Grey Paint for Naval Warships**

Modern warships are painted grey to best blend into their ocean environment. Note in early paintings that warships of his day were painted black, and were therefore easily observed. William was the advocate for changing the color of British warships from black, to gray, and it was done.

Note the color of the warship in Geoff Hunt's painting at the beginning of this essay - black. Please take time to visit Geoff's Internet site which is found at <http://theartbook/portfolios/artistpartners/hunt.g/pics1.htm> - If you are in the area, his works are available at the Mystic Seaport Maritime Museum located in Mystic, Connecticut.

### **§ Artificial Horizon**

William discovered that there were deviations of a ship's compass as it moved about the ocean. As a method of checks and balances, he therefore invented the first artificial horizon. This was a trough of mercury in which the stars were reflected, and it is quite understandable that an actual image of the stars before the navigator of a ship was more reliable than a compass, wherein there were likely to be deviations.

This same method of studying the stars is still used by astronomers.

### **§ Steam Engines**

In his time, steam was coming into use as a method of power, in lieu of sails. William submitted designs for future steam engines to the British Naval Admiralty.

### **§ Screw Type Ship Propeller**

In the mid-1800's he submitted designs and a model of the first screw propeller, which today resides in the London Naval Museum. William unknowingly had made another significant discovery, however, his was a world of sail, and steam power and the screw propeller were not brought into use until years after he had died. The early airplane propeller also used the marine screw propeller design in concept.

### **§ Pneumatic Tube for Document Transport**

Recall the pneumatic tube system that we use every day ? William invented it, and then offered the idea to the English Post Office to hasten the delivery of letters in urban areas. The ignored the concept, but it was taken up by the Americans.

### **§ Fuse Intended to Burst the Cannon Shell on Striking the Object, Without Reference to Distance.**

### **§ Method of Drowning the Powder Magazine of a Ship-of-War**

### **§ Automatic Pneumatic Sounding Instrument**

His principles in the area of early pneumatic concepts were to be seen again in the form of the modern pneumatic tire.

### **§ Hydraulic Ventilator**

### **§ Hydrostatic Diving Machine**

### **§ Hydraulic and Hydrostatic Engine**

He was noted for many inventions, subsequently served on the men-of-war H.M.S. Tribune and H.M.S. Donegal in the English Channel and on a long voyage to Australia, and was awarded the Gold Iris Metal from the Society of Arts and Commerce for his service.

However, knowing human nature, we are not surprised to also learn that his rapid progress and revolutionary ideas roused the envy of his shipmates. Many times in his writings he mentions this unpleasantness. He was so soured by the fact that, although he spent time and money on his inventions and models, he received no monetary reward from the Government, so when he was pensioned off by the Navy, he was without any other income source. William appears to be a classic example of the need for coordination of timing, and ideas.

*I've sailed beneath the flag of England's fame,  
These twenty years to many a foreign shore,  
And now my crazy hulk, shattered and lame,  
Lies up in hope to brave the storm no more,  
Trusting that fortune yet may deign to smile,  
And bear me to my long-loved native isle.  
On my return to England's happy ground,  
Fate had decreed to set me once more free,  
For Esculapian skill my timbers found,  
Unfit for future service at sea,  
Granting me forty pounds-and-five a year,  
Down life, close-hauled, upon the wind to steer,  
With my depending family in tow,  
And adverse breakers roaring on my lee,  
While o'er the shoals of life I touch and go,*

*Endeavoring to weather penury.*  
Poem to E.M. Gawne Kentraugh

*My charts and compass and my sextant too,  
Lie moldering upon my cabin shelf,  
Tho' adjustments I can warrant true,  
For they were manufactured by myself,  
On Nature's plan of never-erring truth,  
Carefully studied from my early youth.  
As here I drift before the storm of fate,  
Without an anchor and my rudder gone,  
And all my timbers in a shattered state,  
Unable thus my barque to steer,  
While, on my lee, life's adverse breakers roar,  
O'er the shoals of penury's iron shore.*  
Poem to "An Honored Friend"

However, and on a positive note -- in October of 1826, he had also taken time to marry Mary Edward Shedd Blackmore Byford, in Gillingham, Chatham, Kent, England.

So in about 1844, disheartened, poor, and intending never to roam again, he retired from the Navy and lived from then to 1848, on the banks of the Silair Bourne, now the Silverburn River, in his family cottage named "Balla Salla Lodge" where he and Mary continued their family of what was to be nine children.

*Ha, there is my own native land,  
For whose absence so long I've wept,  
And there is the wave beaten strand,  
On whose bank when a child I've slept,  
Let fate now decree what it may,  
Since again my own Mona I see,  
No more from thy rocks will I stray,  
My Mannin-veg-villish me cree.  
There I with my own better half,  
Will thy ancient customs retain,  
I'll take up my poke and my staff,  
Before I will quit thee again.*  
Unpublished Poem



His cabin home became his refuge were he could wrap himself around his familiar church, family, friends, valley, mountains, and seasons.

*The dame now made her exit with the sire,  
Leaving the youths to love and merriment,*

*And sat them snugly by the kitchen fire,*  
Mona's Isle, Canto II

William worked as a civil engineer and surveyor for the British Government to design seaport harbors, sea walls, and breakwaters, wrote poetry, and continued with his inventions. In 1844 he published in London his "Mona's Isle and Other Poems" which resulted in limited sales, but today is considered, while not great poetry, none-the-less, a scarce book of Manx folklore. In addition, he also opened a school which included in its curriculum mathematics and navigation.

However, and despite his efforts, in 1846 he found himself insolvent, and was imprisoned for a time as a debtor. However, in short order he was relieved of his financial embarrassment for as in 1847 he was once again employed to design better harbors for the Manx fishermen.

In 1848 he was caught up by a restlessness, which we Kennish's all seem to have, and the lure of America. He and Mary made their decision, packed up their children - William, Catherine, Emma, Joseph, Margaret, Mary, Matilda, Thomas and Jane - three others had died in infancy - and as was the tradition of the period, likely sold everything they had, booked passage on a sailing ship out of Liverpool, and struck out for their new life in America. The voyage to America took four weeks and three days, and they landed at Sandy Hook, New Jersey on Christmas Morning, 1849.

They took up residence in the Williamsburg section New York City, which today we know as Brooklyn. With his talents he was soon established. William was engaged by the Hope Association, and the F.W. Kelly of New York, a mining company, to undertake several projects which were related to the quest for gold in New Granada, or what is today, Colombia.

His prospecting assignments took him into 9,000 foot mountain ranges where no white men had been previously. During these travels, William learned of a valley that stretched across the then Isthmus of Darien, or Panama. This discovery led him to conduct a survey for a possible canal route across the Isthmus of Central America, which we know today as the Panama Canal.

One of his first findings was that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were on the same level, when it had always been asserted that the level of the Pacific was higher than the Atlantic.

Then he was successful in discovering a route through the Atrato River Region, which could be constructed **without** the use of locks - but rather required the construction of a significant tunnel, and canal to join the two parts of this River. The plan was substantial and would require that the River be widened to 200 feet, dug to a depth of 30 feet, and connected by a 3-mile long tunnel under the Cordilleras Mountain Range. The project cost was estimated to be in the range of \$130,000,000, mid-1800's, U.S. dollars !! His detailed plans and maps were submitted to Emperor Napoleon III, Queen Victoria, and President Buchanan. His proposal was approved and \$ 25,000 allotted for further study, however, the American Civil War, which occurred soon after, interfered with any further progress at the time. Quite a feat courage and endurance for this raw, self-educated country lad from the farm hills of the Isle of Man !!

William died only a few years later in 1862 from a "tropical fever" he had contracted during his



travels in the terrible Central American climate. This was likely yellow fever which would kill thousands during the actual construction of the Canal.

However, it was noted by his engineering peers many years later, and just prior to the actual construction of the Canal in the early 1900's, that;

Mr. Kennish was the Robert Burns of the Isle of Man. An excellent poet, imbued with the patriotic spirit, he preserved the legends of the Isle in verse. The volume has long been out of print, but there is an enterprise on foot to reprint at an early day, the work, with additional articles.

Mr. Kennish was an Officer of the English Navy, a mechanical inventor, and civil engineer. The Panama Canal project that is being undertaken, is a result of his visits to Central America many years earlier. While engaged there while working for a mining company, and with his naval background, he was impressed with the necessity, and opportunity of a canal from the Atlantic, to Pacific Oceans. When proposed to his employer, Mr. Kelly, funds were provided for William to conduct a complete survey, and design of such a canal project.

During this field work period, Mr. Kennish crossed the Isthmus, on foot, 11 times. On his last journey, he was accompanied by a General Michler of the U.S. Army as the American government had taken notice of his work, and wanted to verify his survey, and plans. The Baron Friedrich von Humboldt, a noted scientist of the period, and for whom the Humboldt Current which runs from the Antarctic up through the Pacific Oceans is named after, also accompanied William and subsequently confirmed his reports in all essential particulars. Such work was very hazardous in the mid-1800's, and his exposure to disease, in the form of fever, was the essence of his eventual death years later.

Some of his journeys among the tribes, who were hostile at that time, were undertaken alone. Fever held him in the wilderness for months at a time, exhausted, and on one occasion, temporarily blinded. It must suffice to say that his repeated journeys were accomplished at terrible risk to his life, and with the greatest gallantry, and skill.

His maps and plans were compiled in New York, and presented to the various American and European governments. In this remarkable scheme he designed the canal without locks. His design was considered a practicable one and would have followed a route without locks, dams, or gates -- it would have resulted in a canal two hundred feet wide, thirty feet deep, and one hundred and thirty miles long, and would have included a tunnel three miles long through a dividing mountain ridge.

Mr. Kennish's recommendation was however set aside, but in the early 1900's were presented to President Roosevelt. His plans of 1854, were in 1905, or 50 years after his effort, described by engineers of the time;

*"To be as complete and perfectly executed as plans of the present time - in an engineering sense, they are a work of art."*

In fact, his schemes of 1854 were largely incorporated in the canal design that was eventually adopted.

Even in 1862 he sent a "hydraulic and hydrostatic engine" that he was working on, to an international exhibition in London. Both of these inventions were, also after his death, patented, and manufactured by a Yorkshire firm in Wakefield, England.

Indications are that he was likely an unhappy man who squandered time, energy, health, and a sure fortune with no reward but a gold medal. His life was a succession of failures, and triumphs -- however, his revolutionary ideas remain with us today, as do his works of verse -- poems which paint an accurate and beautiful series of word pictures of the life, work, play, customs, beliefs, and folk-tales of the people of his period -- and yet, he was impoverished all of his life.

His wife Mary reportedly died 40 years later while in Illinois, at age 92, and as the result of an accident. Apparently she possessed many of William's same qualities of restlessness, and the lure for continued adventure, at the age of 92 as she had many years before when she came with him to America. Mary was as likely of the same exceptional mold. I would have liked very much to have the opportunity to have known both of them.

*Then sleep in peace, my honored ancient race,  
Your earthly cares are now for ever fled,  
Leaving behind no mark for man to trace,  
Your faults or virtues to your lonely bed.  
And tho'no sculpture decorates your tomb,  
Nature shall dress, at each returning spring,  
Your lonely mansion with the heather bloom,  
While mountain larks around your shrine shall sing.  
And when no more the rays of summer smile,  
But winter storms from the bleak north emerge,  
And wrap in gloomy vest your native isle,  
Te osier reeds shall sigh your funeral dirge.*  
A Elegy of An Ancient Burying Ground

Regarding the conclusion of this essay;

- William Senior lived from 1799-1862 (63),
- William his Son, from 1837-1893 (56),
- His Son, and William Senior's Grandson, and also a William, from 1870-1895 (25).
- And his Wife, Mary Edward Shedd Blackmore Byford Kennish, from from 1811-1901 (90).

William, his Son, 1837-1893, who was also an engineer, is documented to have been involved in the construction of the Statue of Liberty, in New York Harbor, in 1885. He also served in the Union Army during the American Civil War, 1861-1865.

Regarding the end of William's life, and based upon years of research .....

March 19, 1862 - William Kennish dies of "pneumonia brought on by typhoid" in Greenwich Hospital New York City.

March 21, 1862 - William's body is delivered to the Green-Wood Cemetery in New York City.

It was placed into receiving tomb 1148 as internment 89154. The charge was \$ 1.00.

Subsequently, but at an unknown date, it was moved to another temporary storage area, and was placed into what was identified as "30 Vaults, Vault 16, Coffin 692."

May of 1862 - His wife Mary applied to the British Admiralty for "financial assistance for passage to England" from New York.

May 19, 1862 - Her request was refused, as William had, as a retired Royal Navy Officer (1821 to 1844), received a government pension, and upon his death, his pension then went to Mary for the remainder of her life as of March 20, 1862.

During his Royal Navy career William had served aboard the H.M.S. Tribune, H.M.S. Donegal, H.M.S. Britannia, H.M.S. Victory, H.M.S. Windsor Castle, H.M.S. Genoa, H.M.S. Lapwing, H.M.S. Ringdove, H.M.S. Hussar, H.M.S. Ordinary, H.M.S. Alfred, H.M.S. Excellent, H.M.S. Tyne, H.M.S. Hupar, H.M.S. Grampus, H.M.S., and the H.M.S. Powerful. Records indicate that he was injured while with the Navy ... possibly during the storm induced wreck and sinking of the H.M.S. Tribune off of Tarrango in 1839.

May of 1862 - In response, and likely due to a lack of funds that had motivated her to approach the Admiralty with her passage request in the first place, Mary sold William's grave site to John H. Baker and his wife Laura S. Baker ... apparently to raise money for commercial passage back to England. John Baker was buried in the plot on June 12, 1862.

June of 1862 - Mary sailed to England on a commercial ship. Matilda ... Mary and William's daughter, at that time lived in Thames Ditton, Surrey, England. She had two daughters, Elizabeth Mary born in 1860, and Margaret Alice who was born in 1863 ... Mary's granddaughters.

This circumstance could have also had something to do with the condition of William's diseased and infected body, which if buried without a vault, could spread the infection via the ground water table. Perhaps the body could not be buried immediately thus presenting her with the positive option of selling the grave site for Mr. Baker who apparently was in need of one.

Also and likely more importantly, Mary had a brother, William Byford Jr. who was her only sibling to survive infancy with her. William Byford, Jr. who had been a Captain in the Royal Navy "died on October 12, 1862 in the Royal Navy Hospital at Plymouth, England after a long lingering illness." This would also fit into the timing of things and have been yet another significant motivator upon which to adjust her priorities, and return as quickly as possible to England to be with her dying brother, just after having lost her husband of 36 years to an extended illness. Mary's father William Byford, Sr. had also been an officer in the Royal Navy.

Mary seems to have had quite an affiliation with both the Royal Navy, and men named William !!!

Therefore, either Mary or the New York City Board of Health appears to have had William's body placed into a pending burial status with the Cemetery. Mary then sold his grave site to John Baker likely to raise funds with which she returned to England within the above motives, both of which fulfilled her need to be with the living, more so than with the dead, which is understandable.

Eventually we know that Mary and numbers of her children and grandchildren ended up in Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, and Nebraska. Mary was with her family when she died in 1901 and was buried in Joliet. Her interesting obituary appears later in this essay.

However and strangely, William's body continued to reside in Green-Wood Cemetery where it had been placed in 1862. It appears that Mary never returned to see to the matter of his proper internment. Documents disclose that she returned to England in 1862, and then disappeared until 1901, or some 39 years later. Her whereabouts is unknown during this extended period.

March 1869 - Seven years after first receiving his body, the Cemetery appears to have taken action to resolve William's continued presence by having it buried in a "common public grave," as one of two bodies residing in a single grave site ... likely stacked one above the other.

According to recently discovered records on the part of Green-Wood Cemetery staff, the remains of both William Kennish and a Charles Nurse in fact rest within Grave 384, Lot 259, which in 1869 was identified as a "Public Lot for Adults."

Charles C. Nurse was born in New York City and died on August 14, 1863 at the age of 19 years of Bilious Fever. His body, as with William's, had been in storage for six years prior to being buried. Note that both had died of a contagious disease, which could account for this unusual process.

It would appear that both were buried as public wards. And I continue to find it strange that while Mary left a splendid obituary, one has not been located for William in New York City, England, or the Isle of Man despite his considerable accomplishments, notoriety, and press while he lived.

William's Son and Grandson were both subsequently buried in the original Kennish plot in the Green-Wood Cemetery, that being Lot 13432, Section 172, in 1893 and 1895 respectfully ... as were Elizabeth Cecelia Kennish (1867-1910) and Paul Revere Kennish (1875-1912). Their graves are marked with stones.

April 2001 - The William Kennish grave site does appear to contain a grave. However, the location is unmarked.

## **Narrative of the Obituary of Mary Kennish**

*Daily Republican Newspaper*

*Joliet, Illinois USA*

*November 20, 1902*

### **Mrs. Kennish Dead**

#### **One of the City's Most Remarkable Women Passes Away**

#### **Mary Edward Shedd Blackamore Byford Kennish**

**January 1, 1810 to November 19, 1902**

Mrs. Mary Kennish, who had suffered with a broken limb, from the effects of a fall on November 2, passed away quietly to her final rest shortly after midday yesterday at the residence of her son-in-law T.C. Shepherd, in Bush Park. On Wednesday last, she called the family, one by one, about her and bid each goodby and talked with them of their plans for the future, with mind and voice as clear and vigorous as before her troubles.

Mrs. Kennish would have been 92 years of age January 1, and except for the accident would have lived probably many years for she was in perfect health and strong in mind. Seldom is seen so much happiness for self and others in extreme old age. She was a woman of much culture and intelligence, active and energetic, taking an interest in all about her and her family who lived for her and made her last days her best.

She had seen much of life, and in contrast to our peaceful life it was one of unimaginable interest, and contained many stirring events. Mrs. Kennish is today an English woman of the noblest type of the Nineteenth Century, those of trust and purest of womanly graces.

Her father, William Byford, was a warrant officer in the Royal Navy and served during the French and English War. While an infant, she was taken by her mother on board her father's warship, the *Cressy*, where sealed orders were then received, ordering the ship at once to sea. Taking advantage of the excitement occasioned by the birth of Napoleon's son, the *Cressy* approached the French coast, captured a French warship then at anchor and carried it as a prize back to England, and this with Mary on board. William Byford also assisted in the capture of many other prizes. William Byford, Jr. son of the above, and Mary's brother, was a captain in the Royal Navy and served in the Russian War. After a long, lingering illness, caused by arduous duties during that war, he died October 12, 1862, in the Royal Navy Hospital at Plymouth, England.

Mrs. Kennish's maternal grandfather, John Edwards Blackamore, was a purser on board his majesty's ships *Glasgow*, *Experiment*, *Ardent*, and *Nonsuch*, and served in the war with America in 1776. He married an American lady and their daughter, Mary Blackamore, married William Byford, whose daughter Mrs. Kennish was.

Mrs. Kennish married William Kennish in 1826 at Gillingham, in Chatham, Kent. Mr. Kennish also in the Royal Navy, retired therefrom in 1843, after faithful service, during which time he was the inventor of many useful inventions applied by the government. Mr. and Mrs. Kennish came to America in 1849, when Mr. Kennish entered into a mining scheme in Central America.

From this he was engaged by F.M. Kelly of New York, to undertake the survey of a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. Mr. Kennish died in 1863 through a disease contracted in his travels in South America. Mrs. Kennish's sons, William and Tom P. Kennish, both were soldiers in the Union Army during the American Civil War, and her grandson's Clifton Shepherd, Paul, and Tom Kennish, Jr. in the Spanish-American War.

Mrs. Kennish had eight children, two whom survive her ... Tom P. Kennish of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Mrs. T.C. Shepherd (Jane) of the City Park, Joliet. The late Mrs. C.S. Dawson was also a daughter.

Then from the obituary of T.C. (Thomas Clifton) Shepherd ... son-in-law ... September 26, 1917:

Born in Beverly, Yorkshire, England on May 19, 184? and came to America in 1865. One year later he was married in Brooklyn, N.Y. to Jane Kennish who survives him. They came to Joliet in 1899. He was the son of the late Thomas Shepherd, governor of Beverly Prison, and Anne Sorby, of Wakefield, England. There were seven children, three of whom, Alfred, Matilda and Ruth, are dead. Two daughters, Mary and Margaret and two sons, Thomas C. and Charles W., both of Battle Creek, Michigan, survive.

As William's religious preference could be relevant, but is unknown, it is noted that T.C. Shepherd's wife, Jane ... who was William's daughter, was an Episcopal ... as has been my family for as far back as I am aware. Logically then, so William may have been. Both T.C. and Jane, who died on September 11, 1928, had their funeral and burial at the same Episcopal Church, and graveyard, those being Christ Church, and the Elmhurst Cemetery in Joliet.

So William has been found ... in an unmarked public grave ... in a Brooklyn, New York cemetery. But somehow, and given the nature of his life ... it would seem that a burial location near the mist and roar of the coast of the Isle of Man would have been more fitting.

None the less, my special thanks to those who have cared and persevered, after all these years to support the solving of the riddle that has been in force for all that time ... or at least since my childhood, when I sat by the fireplace and listened to my Grandmother and Aunt tell stories about this unique man by the name of William Kennish, from the Isle of Man, who obviously inspired many people.

John William Kennish  
April of 2001

Lastly, I would also be interested in obtaining a copy of his 1844 volume of poems titled "Mona's Isle and Other Poems" should one become available.

Mona's Isle and Other Poems" by William Kennish, R.N

Thank you.

John William Kennish

Westbrook, Connecticut USA

860.399.\*\*\*\*<sup>1</sup>

[website link](#)

[Email link](#)

Endnotes -----

1. Mr. Geoff Hunt, Maritime Artist, London, UK.
2. Ms. Francis Coakley, Senior Lecturer, University of Surrey, Guilford, UK - Advisor.
3. Ms. Jane Cuccurullo, Secretary, The Green-Wood Cemetary, Brroklyn, NY - Advisor.
4. Variety of works from the Manx Society, and other Isle-of-Man sources.
5. Variety of miscellaneous documents and stories presented to me over the years.
6. Counsel from my Grandmother Marion Kennish, and Aunt Barbara Goodwin; deceased.

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<sup>1</sup> This archived copy in PDF form has omitted John William Kennish's email and telephone details.