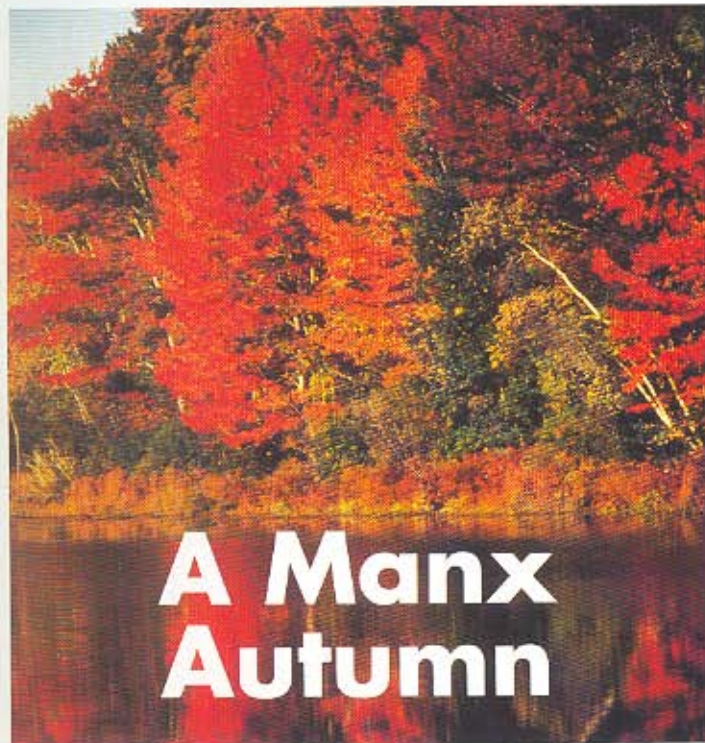


In the Summer 1995 edition of Flying Colours, readers were asked to write a short story on the subject of 'Autumn'. This is the winning entry written by *Bransom Bean* from the Isle of Man.



A Manx Autumn

I love the weather of my adopted homeland, the Isle of Man. That tends to confuse some people. I suppose it's really the season. I love Autumn.

I grew up in New England. Summer temperatures in New Hampshire soar to over 90 degrees with humidity to match. When Spring finally begins its work on the Winter after December, January, February, March and April there's six to ten feet of snow to be melted in the woods and at least a metre of ice to clear from Lake Winnepesaukee.

As a boy I remember feeling Fall's first hint of its coming. In August the air cleared, just for a day. The wind, though not cold, was crisp and blew from the North with a refreshing clean smell as if it had been pumped from the Polar Ice Cap.

Soon we began gathering in everything from the garden except of course the parsnips. A Winter in

the frozen ground makes them sweeter.

Before long, chimneys that had lay cold and dank through the Summer began to perfume the air with the special smell of well cured hardwood logs, softly burning.

Wood smoke smells so much better in the Autumn. Winter wood smoke is too serious. In Fall a fire is cosy. In Winter it's life or death.

The foliage began high in the Maples, most spectacularly in the same Sugar Maples I would tap next Spring with a half inch drill, collecting their sap to make Maple syrup and Maple sugar candy. The deep Maple reds would soon be followed by the brilliant yellows and orange of Elms and Oaks. Whole mountainsides burst into a spectacular fiery blaze of colour.

Tourists would come to see it. They had to time it just right, though. Fall foliage is fickle in New Hampshire. It could disappear overnight, victim to a chilling rain or

the first snow flurries swirling down from Mount Washington leaving only branches and tree trunks, grey like the coming Winter, and mountains of fallen leaves.

I remember raking leaves into great crackling piles for burning. They had to be raked again and again after being pressed into various uses by raker and non raker alike. As aromatic hiding places in a game of hide and seek I often lay covered by them inhaling that special blend of earth and wood. My mother is sure that's when that terrified little mouse hid in the pocket of my coat.

But I'm 43 now, too old for the draft. The prospect of snow, ice and frostbite is daunting. Central heating is no luxury. But I still love a real fire, and the need for one.

I've opened every disused fireplace I can in Rock Cottage. I cut the turf myself. Mixed with bits of drift wood I pick up from the beach and sometimes a dash of coal it gives a lovely heat.

SPECIAL ENTRY

Jersey European Airways was pleased to receive a special entry for the Summer 1995 'Autumn' Short Story competition from an Isle of Wight-based group called 'Write with Julie'.

The group is made up of people with mental or physical disabilities, all of whom have reading or writing difficulties. Jersey European Airways and BMI Publications, publishers of Flying Colours, have been pleased to give special prizes in recognition of the group's superb efforts to Peter Kew, Julie Anne Holton, David Boniface, Heidi Prince, Chery Wynne, Brian Davis, Heather Holbrook, Tony Piggott, Paul Letbe, Charlotta, Anne Adams, Abigail Mottram and John Flux.

A Manx Winter never gets much below zero, even in February. Some of our best fires are in June.

I really love the season in the Isle of Man. I love the Autumn.

Somehow it's always Summer in Apalachicola and everywhere else in Florida for that matter. I'd never live there.

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The winning entry was written by Bransom Bean who lives near Castletown in the Isle of Man. His prize is a pair of tickets anywhere on the Jersey European network plus a two-night stay. He also wins a superb Colibri LE GRAND fountain pen and ballpoint pen set in a marble finish.

The five runners-up, each of whom receive a Colibri BALI ballpoint pen in a black lacquer/gold plated finish are Ian Kerr of Seaford in East Sussex; Chris Blackstone of Belfast; Arthur Dearnley-Wood of Glossop in Derbyshire; Rowland J Balmer of Helston in Cornwall and Heather Richardson, also of Belfast.