



**Mona Augusta Mangan**  
**M.A. Radford**  
**Mona Magnet**  
**(1894-1990)**

Mona Augusta Mangan was born in Wales in 1894 to Peter Daly "Clarence" Mangan and Elizabeth Johnson. Clarence was from Galway son of Lancelot Spencer Mangan (miller) and Anna Augusta Kelly of Kilrush, Co. Clare. Mona said that her father was destined for the priesthood and ran away to become an actor (Sunday Times, 1922). He

renamed himself Clarence<sup>1</sup>.

Mona's mother Lilly was from a theatrical family and grew up on the road with "The Prince of Wales portable Theatre company" run by her mother Lily Johnson's family. Clarence her father was a travelling actor. Mona claims to have been always a "harum scarum". She grew up on the stage, in early years touring with her parents and making her stage debut at three weeks old.

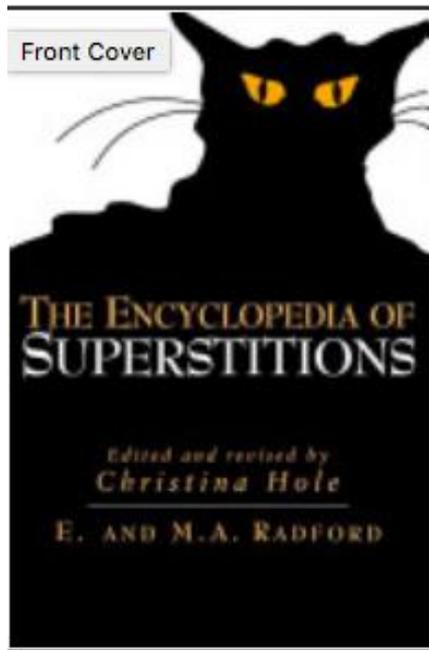
Children of travelling actors travelled with their parents and worked or stayed with family or were boarded out. Mona worked from a young age, from seven on she was advertised as a child actress and vocalist, Petite Mona (The Stage, 1901), Little Mona (The Stage, 1902) (The Stage, 3 July 1902)) and as an adult in musical theatre using the stage name **Mona Magnet** (Sunday Times NSW, 1922). Interviewed Australia in 1922 with her mother, Lilly recalls Mona playing in Aladdin at six and says that "she played nearly everything in drama as a child". Mona recalls being "often severely smacked for not doing them right" (Sporting Globe Melbourne, 1922).

In her teens Mona was sent to a convent boarding school in Southampton. Mona was used to a very different life. She says she ran away and regales interviewers with tales of running off to France to become a dancer at fourteen and being sent home on a steamer by the British Consul. The story includes a shipwreck and sixteen hours on an open boat on the English Channel. Mona was a great one for the dramatic but her stories do usually have some element of truth. She also says all of the Irish uncles and aunts were nuns and priests. One of her three aunts was a nun and a few of her great aunts – no priests and there were married uncles.



At the time it was very popular for women to play male roles – at least partly to show off their legs. Mona had some success playing principal boy in pantomimes. She wrote some of her own material: song lyrics and children's verse. She played in 1920 at the Hippodrome in London and at the Kennington in pantomime. Contemporary reviews remark on her comic character roles.

<sup>1</sup> I know of no relationship to James Clarence Mangan, poet



Under the name Mona Magnet she toured to South Africa, which gave voice to a story about a baboon attack and in 1922 she was touring Australia with a musical and comic act. In 1922 interviews she made much of her famous relation, General Sir Thomas Kelly Kenny<sup>2</sup>, calling herself Mona Kelly Mangan and she also talked of a granduncle a Mangan poet and sculptor (The Herald, 1922)<sup>3</sup> who made a bust of his poetic heroine Rosamunde which was pictured on a Free State stamp,

In her forties, in 1939, she married Edwin Radford a Cambridge educated journalist and writer. In 1944 writing under E and M.A Radford they collaborated on detective books about "Inspector Manson". They went on to write many detective books together, the most popular series is the original Manson books, which are being reissued. They were cowriters on the British

detective movie "The Six Men" in 1951 (Wikipedia) and then wrote the story of the movie into a book.

Edwin Radford also wrote non fiction including "Crowther's Encyclopaedia of Phrases and Origins" 1945. He collaborated with Mona on "An Encyclopaedia of Superstitions"<sup>4</sup>, still in print.

They lived together in Worthing, Norfolk and wrote together well into their 80s. Lilly, her mother, lived with Mona from 1939 until her death in 1953.

<sup>2</sup> She refers to the General as both her uncle and Great uncle in various 1922 interviews, he was her grandmother's first cousin.

<sup>3</sup> The poet was James Clarence Mangan 1803-1849. I am unsure as to the sculptor

<sup>4</sup> Michael Friedmans Publishing House, 2002