

BUILDINGS AT RISK

Demolition threat for Baillie Scott's first commercial build

This series of fortnightly articles comes to the pages of The Examiner by way of the Alliance for Building Conservation, a body made up from representatives of various conservation and heritage groups in the island.

Although under the banner of 'Buildings at Risk', not every building featured is immediately at risk of demolition, sometimes their continued existence becomes doubtful for one reason or another. In the UK, certain bodies publish lists of 'Ten buildings most at risk'.

These are often those designed by famous architects of the past and now lie empty or derelict with no certain future, or there is a planning application to demolish them and erect replacement buildings of far lesser quality.

Today's article relates to such a building here in the island. It was designed by that internationally known architect Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott.

It has, like so many buildings, been the subject of alteration over the years, but the corpus of Scott's building is still evident despite the subsequent work.

During the period 1891-93 Baillie Scott worked on the design of four houses; View Park for Mr J S McAndrew (this later became The Majestic Hotel); Oakleigh on Glencrutchery Road for Mr William McAdam; The Red House, Victoria Road, for himself and Ivydene for Richard Maltby Broadbent.

At that time, all of these were in fact in the Parish of Onchan.

R M Broadbent came from a Yorkshire family who settled on the island. His father, Samuel, owned Bibaloe Beg Farm in Onchan.

After an education at the Douglas Grammar School, Richard went to work in his maternal uncle's ironmongery business, George Sherwood and Co., in Douglas, something he was later to inherit.

This gave him capital to speculate and he became a member of The Manx Syndicate who purchased the Castle Mona Hotel and its extensive grounds for development.

The Syndicate also built the Castle Mona Pavilion which became 'The Palace' and he was a director of the Palace Company (later The



An extremely rare picture taken on September 7 1893 when the first electric trams ran between Derby Castle and Groudle on a single track with a passing loop on the right of the picture. Baillie Scott's Groudle Glen Hotel looks strange without the intended veranda which was constructed before the 1894 season. The flat roofed dormer windows and the small bay windows suspended from the overhang above were used for the first time on this building. They later became iconic of Scott's work. Also visible are the carved wooden corbels set diagonally on each corner. Note the complete lack of trees in the glen on either side of the valley



Tram number three prepares to return to Douglas. On the left contractor's materials and plant lie at the side of the line. On the roof of the hotel a cat ladder lies alongside the nearest dormer window. Beyond the hotel is a stable for three or four horses. When Richard Maltby Broadbent advertised for a manager he received 100 applications. He selected Mr Driver who had been the manager of the Injebreck Hotel and Pleasure Gardens at Baldwin

Palace and Derby Castle Ltd). When plans were announced for the development of the Howstrake Farm in Onchan for the erection of houses and the creation of an electric rail-

way running to Groudle, he saw a great business opportunity.

The river at Groudle divided the lands of Bibaloe Beg from those of the 600 acre



A rear view of the hotel taken from within the glen. Note the wooden balcony on the right which gave patrons the opportunity to look down into the glen. It was supported by wooden legs which were replaced in 1939 by a steel frame. In 1953 the lounge was extended out onto the balcony area. The basement walls are in exposed stonework whilst the walls between the different levels in the bay windows were hung with decorative shaped red clay tiles

Howstrake Farm. He made arrangements with the Douglas Bay Estate Company to lease part of their land and added it to his own to create Groudle Glen. This was to provide

recreational facilities for the thousands of mill town visitors from Lancashire who came to the island each summer.

His scheme came to total

fruitation over a few years with the creation of a sea lion pool, polar bear pit, small zoo, miniature steam railway, stalls and side-shows.

His glen lacked one thing – trees. It had been farmland on both sides of the river and so he let it grow wild and advertised it as 'The Fern Glen of the Isle of Man'.

He then planted the trees we see today.

Where the electric railway was to terminate, for the first year at least, he erected an hotel which was to provide bar and dining facilities as well as guest accommodation on the upper floors.

He utilised the architect of his own house which was reaching completion at that time, Baillie Scott.

The basement and ground floor were built in stone, whilst the upper floor jettied out in timberwork.

The basement walls had



A picture taken post 1894 when not only has the veranda been built but there are creepers growing up the legs. A garden has been created at the entrance to the glen and off to the left a large waiting area and booking office have been built. These stand to this day having been renovated in 1993 under the directions of Maurice Faragher from the MER. Note the electrical connectors on the tram being the same as to be used on the Snaefell Mountain Railway.



A view taken prior to the Great War as another load of passengers alight for a day at Grouldie. Baillie Scott's wooden veranda has been renewed in concrete but following the same design. The length has been extended to the full width of the frontage but the wooden balustrading has been reused. A canvas awning has been erected to shade those taking tea on the new balcony area opened up to the public. On the left of the hotel is a new two storey stable building which was timber framed then sheeted with expanded mesh and roughcast to match the hotel. On the right is a café erected in 1894 on stilts at the rear to provide a level floor. This building was erected as a temperance refreshment room utilising the landward pavilion from the Iron Pier at Broadway on Douglas Promenade which was being dismantled at that time. The first manager was Mr George Bowling

strap pointing, whilst the upper floors were finished in roughcast and painted.

Baillie Scott used carved oak corbels at the corners where the first floor projected as he had used on Oakleigh.

He incorporated tile-hanging on the bay windows.

The hipped roof was covered in red 'Rosemary' clay tiles as he had used on three other houses, but here we have the earliest example in the whole world of the iconic Baillie Scott flat-roofed dormer window and small bay window suspended from the eaves above.

These were both features he was to use again on subsequent buildings.

Inside, the ceilings were coffered to the ground floor rooms as in Broadbent's own house, Ivydene, at Little Switzerland.

The glen and hotel opened to the public at the beginning of August 1893.

A month earlier, an application for a public house li-

cence was heard.

The property was not finished but the licensing bench made the unprecedented decision to grant the licence which was not to come into force until the property was finished.

Three days before the court hearing an advertisement appeared in the local press for six plasterers, such was the unfinished state.

The electric railway opened on September 7, 1893 and soon it was realised that the hotel was not big enough to deal with the crowds.

It was not complete externally at that time, but before the next season the verandah was added to the front and so, in addition to providing an additional seating area, it completed Scott's design.

At a licensing court in March 1894, approval was granted to alter the bar arrangement so the car drivers

didn't mix with the public.

The wooden supports to the verandah were, many years later, replaced with solid pillars and the wooden balcony at the rear was replaced by a larger one on steel legs in 1939.

Further alterations took place in 1953 when the space under the verandah was incorporated into the lounge bar and the rear balcony was enclosed to provide more covered accommodation.

Now Baillie Scott's first ever commercial building in the world is threatened with demolition and replacement by four flat-roofed town houses, four storeys high and terraced at basement level, together with one further detached flat-roofed house three storeys high.

At this stage it is an application for approval in principle (18/01300/A), but the island's reputation for looking after its architectural heritage is in the balance.

The eyes of the world are upon us.



Probably taken in the years after the Second World War. Note the staircase created to provide direct access to the tea terrace. Four sections of the veranda have been filled in to provide additional room inside the building. To the right of the picture is Glenholme, erected to the designs of Lomas and Barrett in the 1930's as an example of 'Moderne' architecture. It provided living accommodation for the company manager but also contained a sweet and cigarette shop come ice-cream and pop café at ground floor and first floor level with its own balcony. Beneath the dwelling were spacious public toilets for the patrons of the glen

Architect Baillie Scott

Baillie Scott, as an architect, ranks alongside Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Charles Francis Annesley Voysey, all of whom were to influence architectural style in Britain, and indeed beyond, in the latter years of the 19th century and early years of the 20th.

It was in the Isle of Man that Scott nurtured the 'cradle of his career'. It was here that he found his feet and gained his reputation which saw him being commissioned by royalty on the Continent and requests for his services in Russia, Switzerland, Poland and even America.

His work in the Isle of Man is extremely important for it serves as a visual portrayal of how his work matured from copying old forms of architecture such as Elizabethan in View Park, the building that became The Majestic Hotel, and Tudor half-timbering as in Ivydene, to the free-flowing Arts and Crafts style of Onchan Village Hall.

All this within a very short period of time.

Scott was born on October 23, 1865 at Beard's Hill, St Peter's, near Ramsgate, Kent.

He was the second eldest of 10 children born to Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott and his wife Martha, nee Waters.

His grandfather was a merchant in Edinburgh, but his father followed a different line. He spent a year staying with an aunt in Canada then worked his passage home before sailing to Australia as a crewman.

He sailed in coastal waters of Australia for several years before entering into a partnership renting 26,000 acres running 2,800 head of cattle.

In 1853 he sold out for



Baillie Scott in his early days in the Isle of Man, photographed by J E Bruton of Harris Promenade, Douglas

£12,350, but used £4,500 of this to set up a second partnership in a slightly smaller cattle ranch. He returned to Britain in the early 1860s, leaving a manager in Australia.

He decided to educate his three sons for 'Colonial life' and Baillie Scott was sent to the College of Agriculture in Cirencester with the express intention of managing the cattle ranch in Australia.

Scott graduated in Agriculture with honours in drawing in science in December 1885, but he didn't head to Australia.

Early in 1884, his father's lease of the land in Australia was due for renewal and he decided to give up the ranch and sell all the stock.

There was nothing for Baillie Scott in Australia and so he became articled to Major Charles Davis, the City Architect for Bath.

He served his articles

from 1886 to 1889 when three changes took place in his life: he married Florence Kate Nash; he came to the Isle of Man and stayed; and in November their daughter was born.

The tale that he was so seasick on the voyage here put him off returning was just part of Scott's sense of humour. Arriving here, he saw great opportunities for an architect in a land where the ever-increasing tourist trade resulted in the need for new houses, shops, places of entertainment and the like, all needing an architect.

He went to work for Frederick Sanderson, a civil engineer, who was involved in the layout of several new estates in Douglas, Ramsey and Port St Mary and subsequently at Howstrake in Onchan.

He also enrolled in part-time classes at the Douglas School of Art.

In May 1891, he sat a series of examinations in drawing, shading, perspective drawing and architecture.

His good results resulted in him automatically gaining the Art Teacher's Certificate.

For four years after the time of their arrival in the island, Mr and Mrs Baillie Scott resided at 35 Alexander Terrace, Douglas (now 61 Woodbourne Road).

The landlord was R F Douglas, the builder who was subsequently to help Baillie Scott get established in his own practice.

Baillie Scott left the island during 1901, not for the sake of the children's education as he claimed, but for the simple reason that the crash of Dumbell's Bank in 1900 seriously affected the building trade on the island.