

BUILDINGS AT RISK

The history of Ramsey's very own bypass, Waterloo Road

In the latest Buildings at Risk article, Patricia Newton of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society (IOMNHAS) looks at the development of Waterloo Road in Ramsey and how some of its 19th century buildings have, from proud beginnings, been through checkered histories or, in recent decades, have disappeared altogether under demolition schemes to become car parks.

A sandstone milestone near Ballure Glen, facing uphill, states 'Douglas XV miles'; to the north, downhill, another milestone of a different age reads 'Ramsey ½ ml'.

In 1835, a memorial to the Committee of Highways stated that Maughold Street, the main route to Ramsey, was not fit for purpose, with two carts or carriages unable to pass one another; it suggested building a new entrance to the town.

The decision was made to construct a direct line through the Loughs, at the back of the town – in effect a bypass – rather than a route along the shore.

Locally called Cardle Road after Cardle's (near Corran), owner Robert Kerruish was the first to drive a carriage along the new route.

Kerruish may have had little inkling of the future role the road would have in the development of the town's public life, and of the later play that its official name 'Waterloo Road', together with its continuation as Albert Row, Street, Road and Square, might have on the fate of its associated buildings.

Whether you were Protestant, Presbyterian, Wesleyan or Roman Catholic, or attending church or chapel, grammar, board or day School, and favouring temperance or alcohol or simple amusement, all needs were catered for along the road, accompanied by rows of mainly terraced housing, businesses, a bank and finally the electric tramway bringing in visitors in their hundreds and encouraging



Dumbell's Bank and Plaza

them to stay.

So what has happened to this vibrant scene?

With the northern tip of the island being only 16 miles from Scotland (closer than it is to Douglas), perhaps it's not surprising that probably the earliest building in Waterloo Road was that of the local Claughbane stone and steeply pitched slated roofed church that the Wigtown Presbytery of the United Secession Church were asked to build to accommodate 230 people.

It opened in April 1837 but was superseded in 1885 by the Scotch Kirk, or Trinity Presbyterian Church, designed by Mr Barry and built by Boyde Brothers.

The older building became a temperance hall in 1886 and was subsequently bought by the Quayle Trust, which also administers adjoining houses.

As one of Ramsey's oldest



Sandstone milestone near Ballure Bridge

surviving buildings, today's Quayle's Hall has been appropriately renovated by The Rotary Club of Ramsey into the

Ramsey Heritage centre.

But what of its successor? With a dwindling congregation, Trinity United Reform Church is now being offered for sale, its future in doubt.

The Scots were followed by Wesleyan Methodists. Two earlier chapels in south Ramsey had successively become too small (and have been demolished).

In 1845, Rev Samuel Taylor, superintendent minister, gained permission from the Secretary of the Methodist Conference to build a chapel 58ft long by 50ft broad to seat 750 on land given by Mr W Callister, of Thornhill.

It was stated that the opening debt should not be more than £400.

Starting an association with four generations of the family, James Callow helped build the chapel, which opened on June 5, 1846.

In 1862, vestries were add-

ed, and in 1882, an additional 24ft extension was made for 300 new sittings. In 1906, the building was entirely re-seated, the rostrum altered and the organ put back, a vestibule was built and new windows put in. In 1938, it was reroofed – but by 2018 it, too, was up for sale.

In past times education and religion went hand in hand.

Various private schools already existed but, prior to the implementation of the 1872 Education Act, education was not free.

Ramsey already had its grammar school built in 1762, but until funds were raised in the 1860s, a new school could not be built. However, in 1864 the Manx stone new school, now referred to as the Old Grammar School, had its foundation stone laid in

part of Joe's Lough, appropriately by Lieutenant Governor Henry Loch.

It was constructed in a non-Manx style with stone mullion windows – a feature that is reflected in the adjacent former almshouses, Mysore Cottages.

Competition with later Wesleyan schools meant the Grammar School did not achieve sufficient funds or endowments for maintenance, repairs or improvements.

With his Latin motto of 'Nil amantē difficile' – in effect 'Where there's a will there's a way' – Rev A S Newton remedied the situation, moving the school to larger premises in north Ramsey.

However, the impact of the 1900 Dumbell's Bank Crash eventually saw a move back after both parents and Newton lost out financially.

Later, as an entity the Grammar School was ex-



Ramsey Palace Station & Plaza

tended into the Wesleyan Day School but, fortuitously, the old Grammar School remained, being turned into Ramsey Youth Centre in 1952.

Albert Street and Road schools had a different fate.

George Kay designed, and James Callow built, both the yellow-brick Wesleyan Day and Sunday School for 550 scholars in 1888, and then the 1902 St Maughold's Roman Catholic School opposite for which Father Barron had strenuously raised funds and which, curiously, had a dedication stone of Russian granite.

While the former school served as an overflow for the 1905 Albert Road School when it was extended, that did not save it from meeting its own 'Waterloo' in the early 1990s.

A similar fate was met by the younger building opposite, with only a gatepost now remaining.

The biggest car park of all was left by the 2011 demolition of the Albert Road School, which in its time had

been described as one of 'the most up-to-date schools in the island'.

The purpose-built Dumbell's Bank, in reality entitled Douglas and the Isle of Man Bank (Dumbell, Son & Howard), on the corner of Peel Street, was erected by another Callow in 1889, its ornamentation reflecting the quality and success the bank was then associated with.

After the 1900 crash, it became Parr's Bank and then the National Westminster until November 1988, with only the word 'BANK' disappearing from its frontage.

However, its existence clearly had an impact for business in the vicinity, particularly after the opening of the electric tramway into Ramsey in 1899 when numerous adverts appear for local businesses, which were almost next door to it and opposite the tramway's Palace Station.

Just opposite, on December 2, 1899, Messrs Chrys-

tals Brothers advertised the sale of the late Dr Clucas's 1847-vintage 'well-built genteel residence (with surgery), coach house, stables, harness room and yard'.

With the complex of buildings comprising over 300 sq yds, the potential for business purpose was recognised.

By 1909, Nelson's Waterloo Hotel and Dining Rooms was advertised as 'The Home of the Cyclist'.

Perhaps this was not considered propitious, and by the 1920s its name was changed to Hotel Britannia.

But its sprawling and expansive past caught up with it and, as at present, dogged it, as then proprietress, Miss Bond, became bankrupt.

Meanwhile, the road's most southerly building, the Albion Hotel, later Ascog Hall, at the junction with Stanley Mount West, was by the late 19th century waiting to accommodate visitors, but was in time used by volunteer army units and Scouts. It is now converted into apartments.



Waterloo Road Methodist Chapel 1946

Described as being in the 'very heart of Ramsey and in a most popular and largely frequented thoroughfare', and also completing the crossroads of the big four streets, in February 1892 McAdam & Moore were appointed contractors to build the Ramsey Palace.

Measuring 90ft long, 74ft wide and 50ft high, and located in the garden of Elm Villa 'endowed with a luxuriant growth of trees and ornamental shrubs', it was an entertainment venue aimed at providing a similar place of amusement to Douglas's.

Fifty workmen were employed on its construction.

Opening concerts in July 1892 were highly praised, but the sacred concert staged in August was condemned by, among others, the Trinity Presbyterian Church.

However, Friendly Societies such as the Foresters also held their meetings here.

At the outset the local press considered that 'the people of Ramsey had been so long without any source of amusement that it has become almost impossible to get the inhabitants to turn out'.

They were perhaps not encouraged by the fact that 'the establishment would be run on strict temperance principles'. With the venue boasting a splendid oak floor, and being lit with electric light and capable of holding 1,200 people, by the end of 1892 the Palace was in financial difficulties and was put up for sale in January 1893.

Ramsey Amusements Ltd redesigned the building in 1895 more along the lines of a modern cinema, and re-

naming it The Plaza. But the name Palace stuck and, four years later, when the Manx Electric Tramway arrived in the town of Ramsey itself, its terminus was named Palace Station.

Its proximity, where 'many thousands of visitors arrive and depart weekly', was an important selling point for businesses.

For example, No 12 Albert Row - 'The Deemster's House' - was advertised as being of special attention to those intending to set up first-class refreshment premises.

The Isle of Man Times's northern branch also had premises opposite the tramway station, as did promoters of Vannin Sliver Lead Mining Co of Glen Auldryn, whose secretary, William Rowe, was younger brother of Capt Richard Rowe of Laxey Mines.

In 1935 the Palace Cinema, as the venue was being described then, was given a pure geometric makeover to become the Plaza. That year the film reels for the first 'Mutiny on the Bounty' movie arrived in Ramsey in a snowstorm after having first travelled to Laxey by tram, then back to Douglas by boat, and then had eventually arrived via Glen Helen by car.

But the Plaza still had its operating restrictions which, in writing his revue 'Let's make Whoopee' for The Northern Players, the Rev E C Paton poked fun at as follows:

'I flew from Blackpool the other day.



The last indication of Dumbell's Bank

'To spend a Sunday here; I ordered lunch at your best hotel, And asked for a glass of beer.

'The waitress looked at me aghast; She said "You must be mad!

'We can give you cocoa, pop or tea,

'But beer, it can't be had.'

But for the Palace or Plaza, its own 'Waterloo' arrived in 1991, when a car park took its place.

As for Palace Station, both the initial station building and its tram shed were originals relocated from Ballure, where the line had initially halted on the edge of Ramsey in 1898 before being extended into the town itself a year later.

Between them in recent times these buildings accommodated the Royal Carriage (used to transport King Edward VII in 1902) and the Planet loco from the Queen's Pier, as well as a youth centre and a small museum.

However, following refusal of planning consent for a combined bus and tram station on the space - there simply was not enough room on the station site for both to safely operate and pedestrians to circulate - the government carried on its destruction of buildings in this part of Ramsey and demolished both structures.

Now the tram terminus has been ignominiously moved to behind the Ramsey Methodist Centre and the station site proper mostly lies empty - how this is meant to attract passengers to the scenic northern stretch of the line and help reinvigorate Ramsey as a whole has not been explained.

Car parks, albeit free, are winning over quality brown-field redevelopment on these government-owned sites.

Yet, as illustrated, during its 1946 centenary the Waterloo Methodist Chapel congregation left a time capsule message for those residents and visitors still around in 2046.



St Maughold's RC School on January 1937

COMMENT

Secretive ACU risks damage to the TT

The Auto Cycle Union has announced some details of changes to be introduced after the crash that badly injured Steve Mercer during last year's TT races.

Once again, the ACU has hardly been transparent about it.

The 'press release' was not released to the press, just uploaded on to its site (although not on its front page).

Those reforms are welcome, although 'a more comprehensive safety plan' is bland to the point of parody.

Anyway, the ACU says that's the end of the matter, so don't you dare ask any more questions about it.

Most baffling – and horrifying – is the suggestion that some content is 'very business sensitive'.

We'd like to know what on earth that means. Business considerations outweigh the public's right to know what went seriously wrong in the Isle of Man's premier sporting event?

We would still like to know why the report cannot be released with parts of it redacted if they really are sensitive rather than simply embarrassing for the ACU officials.

For the TT to continue and thrive, we need to have confidence in its organisers.

While they're so secretive and hide behind 'legal privilege' and commercial confidentiality, our confidence in them drains away.

How to contact us

Letters, Isle of Man Newspapers, Publishing House, Peel Road, Douglas IM1 5ED
 opinions@iomtoday.co.im
 Tel: 01696697
 Editor: Richard Butt
 Newsdesk: 01624 695697
 newsdesk@iomtoday.co.im
 Sports Editor: John Wattersson
 Reception/Photo sales:
 695623 (9am - 5pm)
 ads@iomtoday.co.im
 Advertising: General inquiries
 670000 ads@iomtoday.co.im
 Newspaper subscription details:
 01624 695657
 sarah.radcliffe@iomtoday.co.im

FINANCE

Changes to bank are not welcome

For the first time in my life I am moved to write a letter to the press following the latest revelations from Isle of Man Bank. Interestingly, Mr Shimmis MHK regularly stresses the importance of seeking the views of the public before making any fundamental changes in the way our lives are ruled.

I, and I know many others, am not aware that he sought the views of any of the bank's customers, in his former life as managing director, before making the changes to the bank's branches in Athol Street and Regent Street, which, I think it is fair to say, are not regarded by anybody as positive, to say the least.

I have personally heard the former chief executive of Nat West Bank describe Isle of Man Bank as the jewel in the crown of the group.

So very sad now to see how it has declined in stature and in its level of service.

On a perhaps similar tack I was amused to note the visit to the Scottish Parliament of a number of our MHKS. Bearing in mind the appalling record of cash management by the Scottish Parliament over many years I do wonder who was supposed to learn from whom?

Name and address supplied

HEALTH

We wait so much longer to be seen

Several weeks ago you printed waiting times for doctor's appointments. I realise you got these figures from Freedom of Information sources.

Who are they trying to kid! They had Peel waiting times as four days...noooo!

We wait at least three weeks and sometimes four weeks (no disrespect to the doctors who, I am sure, work very hard).

Speaking to friends from all areas of the island, we all disagree with the government figures!

Name and address supplied

ENVIRONMENT

Did protesters walk to London?

An article on the Manx Radio website tells of two inter-

TO THE CHURCH OF 2046

We send you greetings on the occasion of the Bicentenary of the Waterloo Road Church. We do not know if the building is still standing, or if you still use it. We do not know whether there have been far-reaching church-union schemes since we wrote. We do not know what sort of a world you live in. Are you wandering among the planets in your space ships or are you painfully dragging yourselves out from the wreck of a civilisation—all our present splendid skills and powers lost? Whatever changes there may have been we know the church of Jesus Christ continues. Have you been looking back through our records and wondering what sort of people we were?—wishing perhaps that we wrote as well as the men of 1846 did. Has our routine and drudgery a sort of glamour in retrospect, and can you see the purpose of it as we perhaps cannot? In many ways you are wiser than we are. It may be in some ways you are not. You do not think as we do and some of our methods seem crude to you. Our clothes are as ridiculous to you as yours would be to us if we could see them. But we are linked in common worship of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. We are, as the same Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

We that are dead salute you!

Last week you published my article on Ramsey's Very Own Bypass, Waterloo Road. The final paragraph referred to the illustration of the message sent by those celebrating the centenary of the Waterloo Road Methodist Church in 1946 to those living in 2046. Unfortunately the illustration itself was omitted.

Patricia Newton
 South Cape, Laxey

id island residents who have travelled to London to join the futile, and dangerous, anti-global-warming protest – dangerous because not only has it caused considerable disruption to the lives of tens of thousands of London residents, it has caused a considerable increase in the amount of carbon dioxide being created there, due to the amount of traffic held up in surrounding areas, not to mention the considerable damage caused to infrastructure and buildings in the area – as usual in these types of demonstration. It is simply an excuse for bully-boy-boys to exercise their 'rights' to impose their beliefs on the general public.

But what about the best part of the story – the article doesn't tell us how this intrepid couple walked/cycled to the east coast of the island, climbed into a canoe/kayak/dinghy and rowed themselves across to the UK coast, then walked/cycled all the way to London!

Oh! Could that be because in reality they jumped on to gas-guzzling, carbon dioxide-creating boat and train, or even worse took their car on the boat and drove down?

Perhaps someone can enlighten us?

And, if these people really believe they can influence governments, why are they not protesting in countries which are doing nothing to slow their production of carbon-dioxide, such as India and China?

Why should I believe them?

Name and address supplied

HEALTH

I'd like to thank doctors in A&E

At a time when Noble's Hospital seems to be getting some adverse publicity, I am writing through your newspaper to thank the A&E doctors who were very caring, helpful and supportive to me over the last week. In addition to this, under supervision of the sister the nursing staff were also excellent.

On Sunday it necessitated the staff calling the ENT consultant Mr Hogg to deal with me and he explained everything he was going to do. Monday I had to return again and saw Mr Hogg's assistant very quickly and given medication.

Today, Wednesday, I was fitted into Mr Hogg's clinic and further treatment given, hopefully this will be the end of it.

In addition to the staff of A&E I had to call the paramedics, as I had collapsed at home and again the service was superb. Fortunately I had a friend with me who got me into the recovery position.

All in all I cannot fault any of the treatment and the way I was attended too. I think we all

could count ourselves lucky that we have such good doctors and nurses in our A&E facility and through out the hospital, as well as the dedicated staff of the paramedic team

Rita Kingston
 Ramsey

ENVIRONMENT

The odd logic of gas exploration

I read in the Examiner [March] that 'Search for gas could fund renewable energy'.

This seems to me a non-sense in the environmental debate, and not conducive to the island's UN Biosphere description. I have a somewhat convoluted argument but bear with me.

The search for gas could cause serious damage to the marine environment habitats and wildlife.

If the search finds potentially exploitative deposits does anyone believe the government would refuse an attempt to recover those deposits?

Of course not, otherwise why as it allowed the search in the first place? What would be the point in searching if no extraction was allowed? Not going to happen. Allow search and extraction (if viable) is a foregone conclusion.

This brings into question whether burning that gas, albeit abroad, is a Manx contribution to global CO2 increase and therefore hardly compatible with the Biosphere protection. Just because we export it does not make the island less liable, even if the income is used for renewables. Renewables should be supported regardless of gas supplies. One might also ask why export those reserves which could be consumed in the island and reduce our horrendous gas bills. None of this makes any sense environmentally nor economically.

Personally I say do not search (because that will lead to extraction and environment damage) OR make use locally to the benefit of residents.

Not that I expect any of our politicians/systers to care.

Geoffrey Clark
 Douglas

DEVELOPMENT

Marina would be out of keeping

I have been visiting family on the Isle of Man for over 40 years. The Isle of Man's natural beauty is spectacular.

When the island received the prestigious Unesco biosphere and World Heritage designation I was so excited.

Having an island nation at the forefront of protecting the planet is so progressive. Over the years I have admired how the island is able to maintain its character while balancing progress and development.

On our recent visit we were so impressed with the Queen's Pier restoration and the warm welcome we felt from the Ramsey community.

My wife and I were floored to learn about the proposed housing, hotel and marina development in Ramsey.

It is so out of character for the Isle of Man and more in keeping with out of control development one sees elsewhere. Destroying a large part of the public beach to make it available for the few is a travesty. Is the seashore not for everyone?

As a business person, I am not against development and job creation. Indeed I support it. However, destroying part of a scenic bay and threatening its habitat is not the way to go. Surely there is a better way! The question to ask ourselves is: 'What would David Attenborough do?'

Leslie Murdock
 Mountain View, California

iomtoday.co.im

MOST READ ONLINE

1. Don't mention Manx Radio during radio coverage of the TT
2. Roads open again after 'incident'
3. Man is fined £500 after leaving knife in his pocket
4. Directors of failed firm are banned by the court
5. Tapas back on menu at The Garrison
6. Stats show population remains vulnerable
7. Farmer must remove track's barriers
8. Ben-my-Chree sailing cancelled
9. In this week's Isle of Man Examiner: Details of the Manx Radio TT deal
10. 'We're devastated it's closing'