

BUILDINGS AT RISK

Following the recent news that the large-scale development in Ballasalla has been given the go-ahead, it appears another Manx cottage has been condemned to be demolished.

The landmark Balthane Cottage, built in 1785 by the Quaggin family, is to be preemptively demolished ahead of, or to facilitate, an application for a debatable bypass and feeder road for the new estate on what is currently farm land at Ballahick on the outskirts of Ballasalla.

The cottage is the latest in a line of historic Manx buildings that have been, or are to be, demolished in recent years by various government departments; these include:

- A cottage for a road widening scheme at Richmond Hill.
- Bridge House in Foxdale which was subject to two planning applications; the inspector found that demolition was inappropriate and undeserved, and road safety would be better served by works on the opposite side of the road; however Council of Ministers overturned the Inspector's recommendation and allowed the demolition - and the DoI then did what the Inspector recommended on the other side of the road!
- Two more cottages at Balthane again for road widening.
- Ivy Cottages at the White Hoe were compulsorily purchased in 2007 due to engineering mis-calculations for the Iris sewage pumps. The irony about the White Hoe cottages is that the very pumping station which caused their demise was made to look like an old pseudo-Manx cottage to try to blend in with them.
- Glenfaba House was demolished ahead of applying for planning permission (not yet granted) to create a sewage treatment works.

And this list of demolition is not definitive.

The Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society had lodged a submission for a building preservation notice to be placed on Balthane Cottage whilst its significance was assessed – not only as a cottage but also to the Ballasalla environment.

This was rejected by the Minister on several grounds. These were as follows, alterations to the property, it was not on any provisional list for consideration to be registered nor was it put forward as being worthy of consideration as part of the area plan for the south, and although the history of the occupants is known there is no particular special historic interest in the building.

The history of Balthane/Quaggin's cottage has been researched and is included here for interest.



Balthane Cottage, built 1785

Is this the real price of growing the economy?

Buildings at Risk looks at buildings currently at risk, those saved and those lost. Not all buildings can or deserve to be saved. Sometimes a building is so derelict it cannot be re-used or given a new life; and sometimes there can be such an over-riding need that a habitable dwelling must be sacrificed. It is important though that this is done transparently. This week James Maddrell looks at the history of a dateable Ballasalla landmark, and at deficiencies and weaknesses which can allow uncontrolled demolition.

It does not have the exciting history of what are considered our statutorily-designated ancient monument buildings such as Castle Rushen or Peel Castle. None of the occupants were Lords, Ladies, Dukes or Duchesses, just everyday farmers and labourers that worked and lived in the cottage made it their home and passed into history much like the cottage will do soon.

However, the cottage represents the evolution of a very prominent, indeed landmark, Manx cottage.

Of course it has seen changes throughout its history, but crucially, it is a DATEABLE Manx cottage – of which relatively few remain.

It does still have features which should be recognised as a 'Manx cottage' of this age



Demolition in 1961 to widen the junction opposite the Whitestone, Ballasalla (iMuseum)

such as the steep pitched roof albeit raised – a fairly regular occurrence to replace a sleeping loft with upstairs

bedrooms. The arrangement of the windows is slightly off centre around the former front door which is now a win-

dow. The door was moved in the 1970s when the road traffic started to become heavier and a porch was added at the same time to the gable wall to replace the door.

Quite when the roof and chimney work was done and by which owner is not known, but when the cottage had its roof raised the chimneys were rebuilt in brick at the same time and this probably helped to stop the fire from smoking on a breezy day.

The raising of the roof allowed upstairs windows to be inserted and tucked right under the eaves, and the cottage has the classic 'cat slide' roofed extension now housing the kitchen.

Built in 1785, as can be seen from the accompanying timelines the cottage has

only belonged to three family groupings during its 234 year history: Bridsons/Quaggin's/Duff; Karran/Moore and Cubbon/Taylor.

Sadly, when the government becomes the last owner it is going to be the most irresponsible!

If it were given the chance, sympathetic conservation could have been carried out – sadly it appears that is not to be.

It is not the intention of groups like the Alliance for Building Conservation to stop or hold up economic progress – more to try to make it work hand in hand with our built heritage.

Heritage groups on the whole do appreciate that to enjoy a continued life older buildings may have to evolve,

Balthane Cottage's 234-year history

Arthur, son of John & Catherine Bridson, born	1749	1785 Quaggin's Cottage built as home for John Quaggin & Catherine Bridson
Arthur Bridson marries Esther Crane	1799	1801 Arthur & Esther Bridson baptized, twin children of Arthur & Esther Bridson
Catherine Bridson, daughter of Arthur & Esther Bridson, born	1809	1824 Arthur Bridson senior dies intestate; Arthur junior claims probate; his sisters Esther & Catherine are said to have been well provided for during Arthur senior's lifetime
William Duff buys Quaggin's Cottage from John Quaggin & wife Anne (nee Bridson). In 1851 census, John Quaggin (aged 67) is recorded as living in Ballasalla with wife Ann (aged 72), unmarried daughter Elizabeth (aged 25), grandson George Loudon (aged 11) and Robert Shrimmin (aged 18), a servant and farming 25 acres.	1851	1852 William Duff dies - Malew property left to his nephew William Quiggin; other property left to another nephew James Duff
Wood's Atlas: Esther Duff shown as owner of site of Quaggin's (or Quiggin's) cottage	1863	1871 William Duff & wife Caroline sell all property in Malew i.e. Ballahick (comprising parts of quarterland of Ballahick & Ballabridson totalling 110 acres) & Balthane (45 acres) & other properties EXCEPTING cottage & premises & 2 acres of land (equates to description of Quiggin's cottage) to Esther Duff
Esther Duff dies aged 94 (or in 94th year)	1894	1903 Esther Hannin dies
Esther Duff will leaves cottage to niece Ellen Esther Hannin (daughter of Esther's younger sister Catherine); in event of latter's death property goes to other niece Ellen Bridson	1895	1902 Thomas Gerran memorial of will leaves to wife Robina Kerran; property referred to as Balthane Cottage (acquired from Ellen Bridson)
Ellen Bridson in memorial to Esther Duff's will is stated to be owner of property Quaggin's Croft. Ellen Bridson sells to Thomas Kerran; he by this time is farmer of Balthane Property referred to as Quaggin's Cottage	1922	1971 Robina Kerran memorial of will: Balthane Cottage left to daughter, Elizabeth Moore. Balthane Cottage sold by Elizabeth Moore to William Roy & Iris Doreen Cusbon
Balthane Cottage inherited by Cynthia and Steve Taylor (Cynthia daughter of John and Ray Cusbon)	1997	2009 Balthane Cottage to be destroyed to make application easier if proposed bypass comes to fruition at that location
Balthane Cottage inherited by Grant Taylor	2009	

and that in certain circumstances some may need to pay the ultimate price for a building.

In that case, their destruction should be a considered decision not swept under the carpet; applications such as the massive Ballasalla estate which depend on the demolition of Balthane Cottage should make that very clear.

The lack of care for our built heritage by various departments is a worry – the island markets itself to visitors and businesses with quaint images of tholtans and cottages with chiollagh hearths – not once does it show acre upon acre upon acre of clone houses.

This must surely say something about our built heritage.

This erosion of our built heritage and not finding a solution to saving these properties and thoughtlessly demolishing them should be seen as short-sighted in the extreme.

NEW HOUSES?

It is obvious that some new build houses need to be built but on an appropriate scale, and re-using brownfield sites rather than sprawling across hillsides.

Throughout the planning process for this new estate at Ballasalla, questions were raised as to the justification in terms of population.

Recently as well, significant concerns were raised in submissions relating to the draft eastern area plan as to

the numbers of dwellings which are actually needed.

And even whilst the draft eastern area plan enquiry has been sitting, the Manx news has revealed changes and business reductions which could mean fewer houses are needed.

There is a price for progress in individual properties which are demolished to make way for new ones (such as the proposed demolition of West View Cottage at Bradda which was supported by Port Erin Commissioners but successfully contested by local residents), or as collateral damage as Balthane Cottage seems destined to be.

There is also a wider price to pay – the impact on the island, its residents, and its



Glenfaba House as bought by the MUA



Ivy Cottages, White Hoe – demolished by Government

visitors. As has been said before, the island will never be a cheaper place to live, so it has to try and remain an attractive and/or better place to live.

Sometimes, the benefit of a development may outweigh the price – but that has to be properly weighed in the round before a decision is reached.

The price includes the environmental footprint.

It would appear it's not

been considered that we should make this latest estate 'eco houses'.

It is presumed they will have the ubiquitous gas or oil boiler perched in the kitchen area, not a solar panel in sight.

TRANSPARENT AND BALANCED?

Unfortunately, the lack of planning controls in place for demolition – unless they are

registered or in a conservation area or if they are attached to another property – allows uncontrolled and pre-emptive demolition without proper scrutiny.

This affects the whole spectrum of properties – from cottages like that at Balthane to the demolition of the frontage of Ballaughton Manor, which was to have been retained.

In recent cases, pre-emptive demolition or plans for pre-emptive demolition in advance of any planning consent – or even application – mean that when an application is lodged and scrutinised for a new development, the applicant can truthfully (although maybe not with a clear conscience) say 'there's no price to pay in terms of demolition – there was something there but it is gone so cannot be considered as part of this application'.

Use of this pre-emptive demolition by government opens the door for allegations that underhand techniques are used to try obviate any criticism that maybe directed at the department in question until it's too late.

The fundamental issues are that the price for any development needs to be fully visible up-front, and that the largely free-for-all uncontrolled demolition requires a system with at least public notification with a chance to object.

All of these decisions require comparison of the price and the reward.

Finally, as regards the 'Ballasalla bypass' the local Malew MHK has stated: 'This will hopefully ease congestion.'

With probably an extra 500 cars from the estate (two cars per house roughly) this is highly unlikely, and to be honest, with the amount of money and destruction being thrown at this project you would like a little better than 'hopefully'.

Will the reward come? Is the price worth it?



Bridge House, Foxdale - a former bakery, above right, Bakery oven, lost when Bridge House demolished; and below right, carved graffiti possibly carved by a hungry miner?

