

BUILDINGS AT RISK

School of thought II

In this, the second in an occasional series on former school buildings in the island, Peter Kelly of the Isle of Man Victorian Society takes a look at what has happened to some of the former school buildings in Ramsey

Ramsey has always been very much the capital of the north. It had a good harbour and the opening of the shipyard in Victorian times brought much employment with some artisans coming to the island to work in it.

This brought an increase in population and subsequently a need for more schools, especially after the Education Act of 1872 which made education compulsory for all children.

In Ramsey, as in Douglas, there were church-run schools, national schools, board schools and several private schools which offered a large and varied list of subjects to entice parents to send their children.

Most of the private schools were located in houses and when the schools closed they reverted to their domestic use.

RAMSEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The Ramsey Grammar School was established under the auspices of the Chaplain of Ramsey when the only church was the original one at Ballure on the outskirts of the town.

As early as 1762 a plot was purchased and a school erected, but by 1857 it was falling into disrepair so the pupils were moved to another building in Ramsey.

By 1860 there were 80 boy pupils attending. There were some boarders and they lived in the house of the Vicar of St Paul's, who was the headmaster.

Efforts were made to build a new school and a bazaar held in Ballure Glen raised the incredible sum of £500.

Other fundraising events were held and plans and specifications were drawn up by James William Wild, an architect of Ballure Road.

He had Manx connections and had come to the island for his health. He had already designed some almshouses on an adjoining site for the Misses Cubbon in memory of their brother, Sir Mark Cubbon.

The foundation stone for these was laid on September, 29 1863 and they were called Mysore Cottages after the place where Sir Mark had been British Commissioner.

Tenders for the school



In his design for the Grammar School James Wild used the same gothic style that he used for the almshouses next door. They were built out of local stone with an imported stone (possibly York stone) for the window surrounds. Unfortunately somebody has decided in more recent times to paint over the natural stone of the window surrounds alongside the front door. Wild's most famous design was the Italianate hydraulic tower at Grimsby Docks based on Torre del Mangia in Siena

were invited in November 1863 and the foundation stone was laid on May 10, 1864 by Lieutenant Governor Loch.

The builders were John Looney, Edward Roberts and Robert Wattleworth. The number of pupils declined following the opening of the Wesleyan School a little further down the road, but there was a resurgence after the appointment of A. S. Newton BA as headmaster.

This resulted in the school moving in 1892 to a new boarding house on the Mooragh Promenade and the Grammar School building was let as the infants' section of the national school.

Dumbell's Bank crash in 1900 and the opening of the free board school in Albert Road in 1905 saw a decline in pupils and the school returned to their Waterloo Road premises. In 1922, the board 'Grammar School' was opened on Lezayre Road.

The pupils transferred and this building was used as laboratories for the new school.

In 1946, the Ramsey Youth Centre was opened in the former Methodist Hall in Bowring Road, but in September 1949 £3,140 was spent on converting the old grammar school into a youth centre.

The contractor was W. Orry Kneale and the building remains in that role today.

RAMSEY INDUSTRIAL RAGGED SCHOOL

This now forgotten school was an entirely charitable institution which also served as a children's home.

In 1862, some of the benevolent-minded women of Ramsey came up with the idea of a school to 'promote the well-being of the destitute children of the lower orders'.

Mr Thomas Gibson, owner of Ramsey Shipyard, organised the purchase of a plot on North Shore Road and the erection of a building by Messrs Callow and Looney for £250.

His daughter, Susanna Gibson, became involved and took charge of the charity with the school opening in

July 1863.

In December 1863, Miss Spranger, the mistress at St Jude's School, left that position to teach at this establishment. It was called 'Industrial' because the children

had to work to provide an income towards the running costs in addition to donations of money and goods from the public.

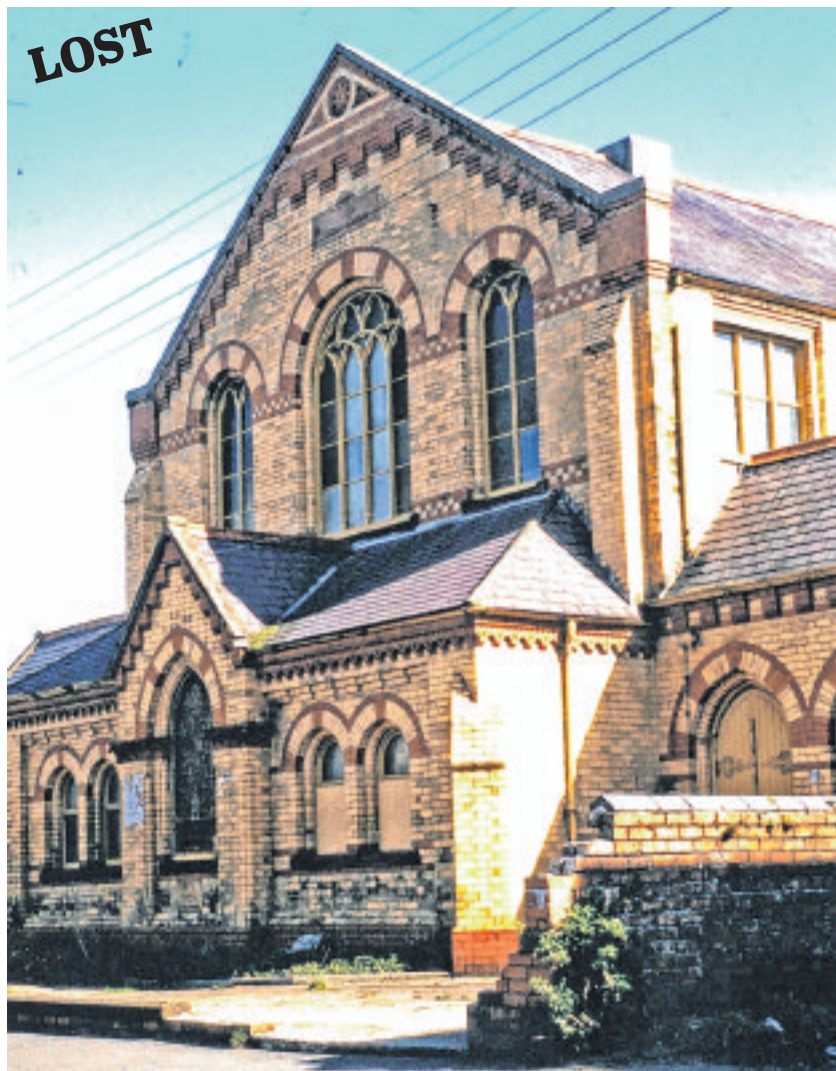
At the rear of the premises, a laundry was built in

which the children worked and there were also baths which locals paid to use as few houses had bathrooms at that time.

The front of the building had a niche set high up in



The Ragged School at the junction of North Shore Road and Shipyard Road in North Ramsey was both a school and children's home for the less fortunate and was the forerunner of the Ramsey Children's Home at Ballacloan almost opposite on North Shore Road. Note the niche set into the gable which is where there once was a statue of a ragged child. Most of the girls who passed through this 'industrial' school entered into service in the houses of the more fortunate



The impressive decorative brick Wesleyan School designed by George W. Kay put more emphasis on the large central hall than the classrooms which were only 13 feet by 9 feet each. The classrooms ran down the two sides of the building which had separate boys and girls entrances yet the classes were mixed. Many years after it closed as a day school (although it continued as a Sunday school and church hall) the large hall was used by the adjoining Albert Road School

which there was a statue of a ragged child. The school ran until 1878 when the establishment was merged into a new home at 'Ballacloan' called the Ramsey Children's Home.

The original building was let out and produced an income until sold in 1926. The building is now used as two

private houses.

RAMSEY WESLEYAN SCHOOL

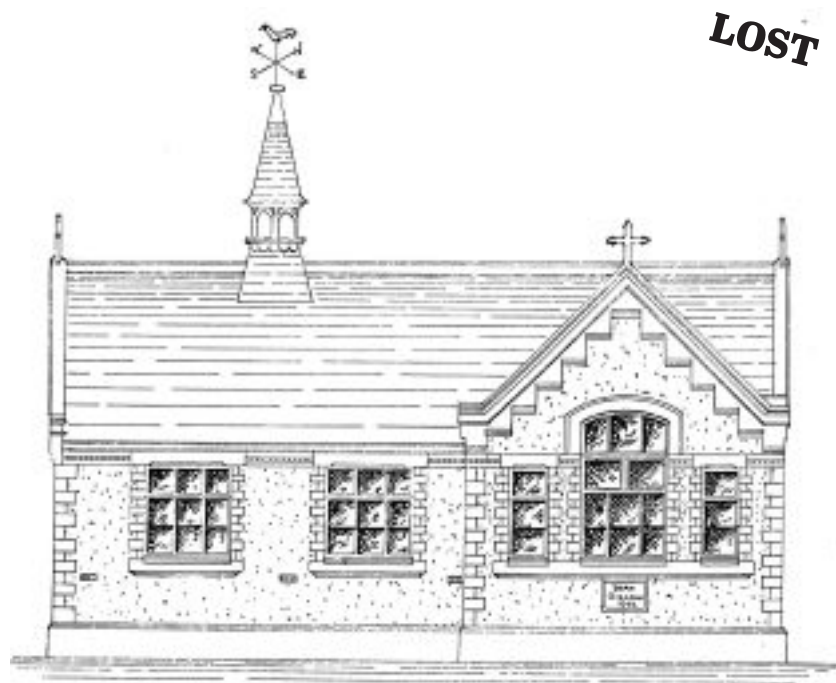
When the large Methodist Church opened in Waterloo Road in 1846, its predecessor in Queen Street became both a Sunday school and day school for the Wesleyan Methodists of Ramsey.

It closed in 1853 through

lack of support, but had reopened by 1857.

In 1871 there were only 14 pupils, but, following the Education Act of 1872, numbers increased, to the extent that by 1881 there were 100 pupils.

The decision was taken, therefore, to build a new school and a plot was pur-



George Kay's elevational drawing for the two-classroom St Maughold's Catholic School in Albert Road. It was built in 1902 in memory of Dean Gillow who served the catholics of Ramsey for many years. It was designed to accommodate 70 pupils and at the time of its closure in 1991 there were 65 children attending

chased on Albert Road.

The local architect George Kay designed a building having a large hall, with classrooms running down the side, rather like schools were subsequently planned in the 1970s.

It was built in pale yellow brick from Flintshire, with decorative arches and string courses in red Ruabon brick.

A memorial stone was laid on May 25, 1888 and the school opened on November 22 the same year.

The builder was J Callow and Sons.

By 1896, the number of pupils had risen to 367, but not every parent was able to pay the weekly 'school pence' for their children so the school was partially sponsored by the church.

An official inspection of the school in 1892 revealed the classrooms were too small and too much emphasis had been put on building the large hall which was used for public meetings and as a mission for the church.

The number of pupils dropped when the free Albert Road Board School opened next door. That incorporated a separate technical school in the grounds, and the girls from the Wesleyan School were permitted to have cooking lessons in it. This school closed on April 30, 1922, but was still used as a Sunday school and church hall.

In 1972 came a change of use when the Ramsey furnishers, T. H. Corkhill, used it as a store for their Parliament Street shop, then it was used for a short time as a branch of the Onchan Discount Warehouse for the sale of paint, wallpaper and other

household items. Eventually, it was demolished and replaced by the Ramsey Commissioners' Close-y-Chibbyr Ghlass housing complex.

ALBERT ROAD SCHOOL

The Ramsey School Board was criticised for dragging its feet in not erecting a board school in the town when they were being erected in the adjoining parishes.

In 1897, they did, however, purchase a site, but it was not until November 1901 that they instructed Ramsey architect J T Boyde to design a school for 850 pupils.

In January 1902 it was announced that it was to be built in red Ruabon brick and the local press commented it was likely to be expensive.

Ratepayers of Ramsey petitioned to meet the board to discuss costs and size of the proposed school which they thought was too large.

In October, interested contractors were sought and Mr Boyde was paid £50 for the plans and specification. There was to be a twist in the tale, for in June 1903 the board met with Mr J. M. Bottomley, architect with offices in Middlesbrough and Leeds. He had already designed one school in Douglas and was shortly to design another.

His plan was for a school for 750 pupils to be built out of local stone and to include a separate building for the teaching of cooking and laundry.

The contractor was James Callow and Sons and the building was formally opened on March 2, 1905.

The school reached its centenary in 2005 and then closed, having been replaced by Scoill Ree Gorree in 2008.

It lay empty and was finally demolished in 2011.

It had been earmarked as a site for social housing and then a more ambitious scheme came along, but nothing has happened, other than a temporary car park on the site.

ST MAUGHOLD'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

This little school was to be found immediately opposite the Albert Road School.

It was designed by George Kay and built by James Callow and Sons using local stone, with Ruabon brick quoins and a roughcast finish.

It comprised two rooms and was designed to accommodate 70 pupils.

The foundation stone was laid by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Liverpool on April 24, 1902 and the school opened in October of that year.

In the early part of 1990, the number of pupils was 65, the headmistress had retired and there were fears that the school would close. There had been an offer of a site or a new school at The Garey, but the school managers commented that they needed a Dr MacDonald and a million pound offer, as had happened at Sulby School.

Despite protests from parents, the school closed in July 1991.

For a while it was used as an overflow for Albert Road School and then it was demolished, apparently to make way for an extension to the adjoining supermarket, but that never happened.

All that is left now is a cast-iron gate pillar standing on the front of the site.



Albert Road School as designed by J. Mitchell Bottomley for 750 children and opened in 1905. The single storey building on the left of the picture was the technical school where girls were taught cookery and laundry work. It was also used by girls from the Ramsey Wesleyan School in the yellow brick building next door which just shows in this picture on the extreme left