

## BUILDINGS AT RISK

# John Taggart: Was he the first Manx-born 'architect'?

In this week's Building at Risk, Frank Cowin looks at the last of the three Bishop Ward era church architects, John Taggart, who designed churches, chapels, public and commercial buildings, and also drew one of the earliest street plans encompassing the whole of Douglas.

**T**his week's article concludes the consideration of churches and chapels built during (or just before) the tenure of Bishop Ward, through the architects responsible for them.

John Taggart is the first Manx-born 'architect' of whom we are aware, but like most at that time he was also a builder.

He was involved in the building, or re-building, of Kirby for Colonel Sir Mark Wilks, around 1810.

This is in keeping with Taggart's other projects, most of which are large buildings.

Soon after this he is involved under Thomas Brine in the work being carried out at Castle Rushen.

At this time he was asked to undertake work at St Mary's Anglican Church, Castletown.

This was probably the addition on the town side of the 'old' Bishop Wilson church of 1698 to create an extra aisle.

This was suggested by Bishop Murray in 1817 and it was completed and consecrated – but the people were annoyed with the way it had been done without any vestry meeting.

As a result in 1824, when the roof and walls of the old building were reported to be ruinous and dangerous, it was demolished and the commission for the new building went to Thomas Brine.

John Taggart had laid out Athol Street, Douglas, as building plots in 1810 and also designed the first building to be erected there, the National School, which much later became Karran's Knitwear factory, and later still offices, before being demolished and replaced by the unfortunately-named 'Heritage House'.

Some of what are now offices in Athol Street were also his handiwork, being built as houses for professional men who later began to use room(s) as their offices.

He designed and built one of the first of the Bishop Ward churches, All Saints' Lonan, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1830 but it was not consecrated until 1835 due to 'disputes with the builder'. Despite this one of the pinnacles bears the date 1834.

This building replaces a previous one on this site, which it-



All Saints, Lonan



self was in place of the original church, St Adamnan's, which is sited in one corner of the parish and therefore created problems

of access for many of the parishioners.

Visiting English ecclesiastical architecture critic John

Mason Neale, writing in of Taggart's All Saints in 1848, simply says: 'This is also a modern building with an ugly tower..'

This building has ceased to be used as the Parish Church. Christ Church Laxey is now being used and All Saints' is currently being transferred to the care of a trust to be used for community purposes.

Taggart was also responsible for a number of Methodist and other denominational chapels of which the largest was Thomas Street Wesleyan Methodist Chapel which as its name suggests was sited on Thomas Street.

After Victoria Street was

'punched through' the old streets of Douglas in the 1870s, the Thomas Street Chapel had a complete internal refit and 'dressed up' the facades facing the public roads although the face away from the roads was left in its undressed stone finish.

The chapel name was changed to that of the Victoria Street but Thomas Street itself still exists and is the approach road to the Marks and Spencer car park (and the new Premier Inn).

The chapel and its Sunday

School building however were demolished to make way for Barclays Bank and its car park (see Buildings at Risk of October 9, 2018).

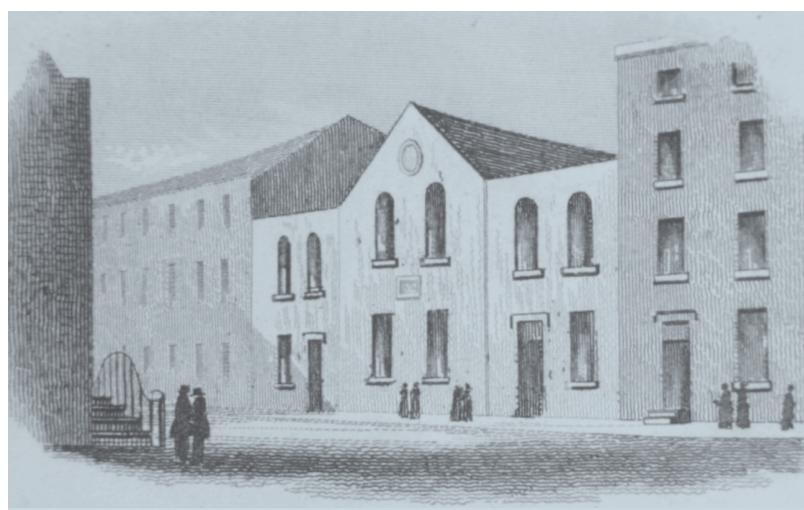
When Primitive Methodism arrived in the early 1830s Taggart was responsible for their first chapel in Douglas close to Thomas Street in what is now Wellington Street – but previously known as Factory Lane and/or Preaching House Lane.

The building itself being one of those demolished to make way for the Marks and Spencer building.

Not far away, and also now demolished, was Wellington Hall, the building also by Tag-



Corlett Sons and Cowley warehouse, South Quay, Douglas (demolished)



Independent Chapel, Athol Street, Douglas (demolished)



John Taggart's plan of Douglas 1833-4

gart erected to be the Douglas Covered Market – only for its owners to find that the stall holders preferred to stay out in the rain rather than pay them to be indoors.

This building externally was

very similar to Thomas Street Chapel, and was latterly better known to many as 'MGM'.

As Douglas expanded another chapel was built this time on Well Road Hill again by Taggart, and again demolished, this

time to make way for Markwell House.

The Independent Chapel on Athol Street was yet another designed by Taggart and all his chapels could be said to have a 'family likeness'.

## The not-so-enduring fate of the three Bishop Ward-era architects

	Status
<b>John Welch</b>	
<b>Churches - C of E</b>	
St Peter's, Douglas	Registered
St Mary's new church, Ballaugh	Registered
Kirk Christ, Laxey	Registered
St Stephen's, Sulby	Registered
St Luke's, Baldwin	Registered
St James, Dalby	Registered
Parish Church, Kirk Michael	Registered
St Bernabeus, Douglas	Demolished
In original use, some alterations	
In original use, some alterations	
Closed, probably transferring to community	
In original use, additions and alterations *	
In original use, additions and alterations *	
In original use, additions and alterations *	
In original use, some minor alterations	
* School use of part of building discontinued	
<b>Churches &amp; Chapels - other</b>	
Scotch Kirk (St Andrews), Douglas	Demolished
<b>Public Buildings etc.</b>	
King William's College	Registered
Peel Castle Hotel	Registered
Castle Mona conversion to Hotel	Registered
George Hotel, Castletown	Registered
Tower of Refuge	Registered
Saints Memorial	Registered
<b>Houses etc.</b>	
Harold Tower, Douglas	Registered
Thimbleton, Douglas	Demolished but replaced with replica x 3 + 1
Hermitage, Douglas	Demolished
Fort Anne, Douglas	Demolished
Some doubtful additions!	
In original use, altered	
Demolished but replaced with replica x 3 + 1	
Alterations and possible extensions, now	
<b>Thomas Brine</b>	
<b>Churches - C of E</b>	
St Mary's C of E, Castletown	Registered
St Paul's, Ramsey	Registered
<b>Churches &amp; Chapels - other</b>	
St Mary's RC, Castletown	
<b>Public Buildings etc.</b>	
Old House of Keys, Castletown	
Kirk Michael Courthouse	
Peel Old Courthouse	
Police Office / Town Hall / Sessions House	
Castletown Market & Assembly Hall	
Prison etc works to Castle Rushen	
Original Lifeguard House, Castletown	
Douglas Gun Battery	
Lengness daymark (Herring) tower	
Douglas daymark (Herring) tower	
Hausen, Sheep etc.	
Alterations to Lorne House, Castletown	
Beech House, Castletown	
Hausen on The Parade, Castletown	
Lloyd's Chemist, Castletown	
Farmer George Hotel/Illavado, Castletown	
Hornies at Southern end of The Croft,	
Woodbourne House, Douglas	
Additions/alterations to Milltown	
Some further alterations	
In original use	
Generally in original use	
<b>Detrimental</b>	
Peel Museum	
Barclays Bank (MWH property)	
Altered for display purposes (MWH property)	
Demolished	
Registered	
Registered	
Demolished	
Surrounded by new apartments	
Some further alterations	
In original use	
Generally in original use	
Moving into Community use	
<b>Demolished</b>	
<b>John Taggart</b>	
<b>Churches - C of E</b>	
Additions to St Mary's C of E, Castletown	
All Saints, Lonan	
<b>Churches &amp; Chapels - other</b>	
Theresa Street Methodist, Douglas	
Well Road Hill Methodist, Douglas	
Wellington Street Methodist, Douglas	
Independent Chapel, Athol St, Douglas	
<b>Public Buildings etc.</b>	
National School, Athol St, Douglas	
Wellington Hall, Duke St, Douglas	
<b>Houses</b>	
Kirby, Braehead	
Hornies in Athol St, Douglas	
<b>Warehouses etc.</b>	
Corlett Sons & Cowley, 3 Quay, Douglas	
Bonded Warehouses, Douglas	
Altered, but now	
Altered & use changed, then	
In original use	
Change of use to offices and then	
but now J3-S1 survive and are	
<b>Demolished</b>	
Registered	
<b>Demolished</b>	

Again, the Independent Chapel was demolished to be replaced with offices.

In its original form, the chapel was upstairs with three shops or workshops below – these at various times including an organ builder and Bregazzi's Gilders and Framers.

Taggart also designed many of the quayside warehouses which were once so common but have now almost completely disappeared (see for example the former Customs Bonded

Warehouse and Corlett Sons & Cowley warehouse in Douglas in Buildings at Risk of October 9, 2018).

In 1834 Taggart produced a street plan of Douglas.

The street plan was one of the earliest to show the whole town which continues to be an

ern age is proving to be a liability and threat to survival.

John Taggart died in February 1836, less than two months before the date of John Welch's 'Six Days Tour' and four years before the death of Thomas Brine.

These three men provided, or were involved with, all the best buildings of early years of the 1800s.

The list above shows how far from true is it that 'their legacy lives for ever'?