

BUILDINGS AT RISK

Era of chapels, open-air services and stained glass

Buildings at Risk covers buildings and structures - dwellings, commercial and civic - lost, at risk and saved.

In this instalment, Frank Cowin of the Isle of Man Natural History & Antiquarian Society continues his look at the evolution of the Manx Church and its buildings in the 19th century, when huge numbers of islanders and summer visitors attended church, chapel and open-air services and prized religious relics from the past.

St Olave's, North Ramsey started in 1849 with services held in a converted barn, a chapel upstairs with a schoolroom below.

The foundation stone for the present St Olave's was laid in 1861 and was of such interest to the public that the steamer *Mona's Isle* brought passengers to Ramsey from Douglas especially for the occasion.

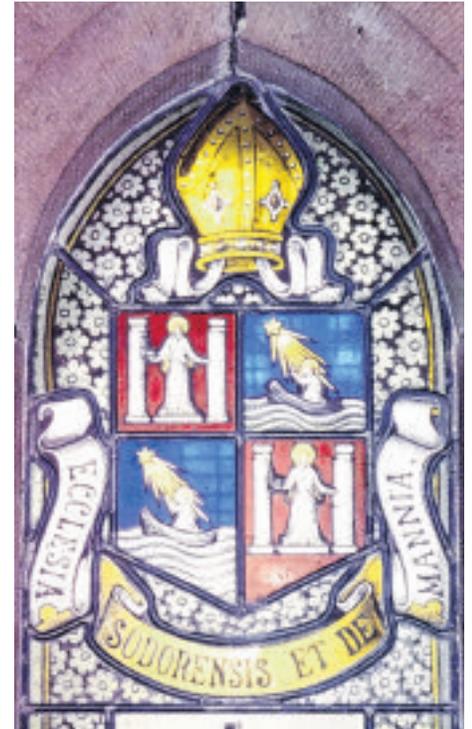
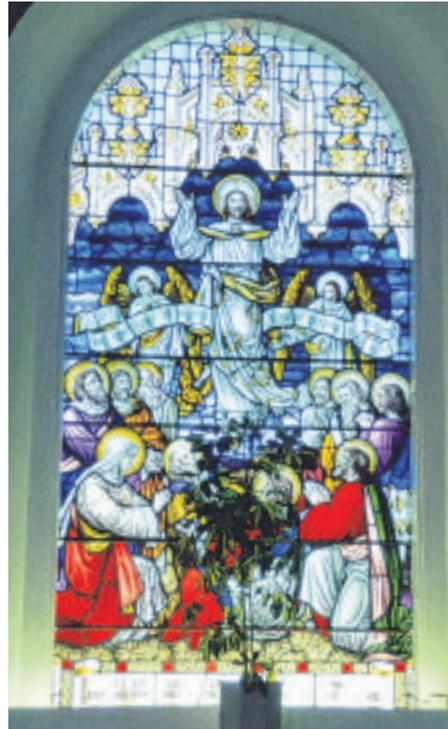
The building was designed by architect M.P. Manning of London and licensed for worship in 1862. The new parish of St Olave was formed out of Lezayre parish in 1881 and it was only then that the church was consecrated.

Manning also designed the Methodist chapel at Andreas, always known as Ballakaneen, which opened in 1863 and was demolished in 1982 when the former Sunday school building was used for worship until the society disbanded in 1990. This building has been converted, like so many former Methodist chapels, into a house but the external finishes now hide the very distinctive, but porous, Ballacorey brick of which it was built.

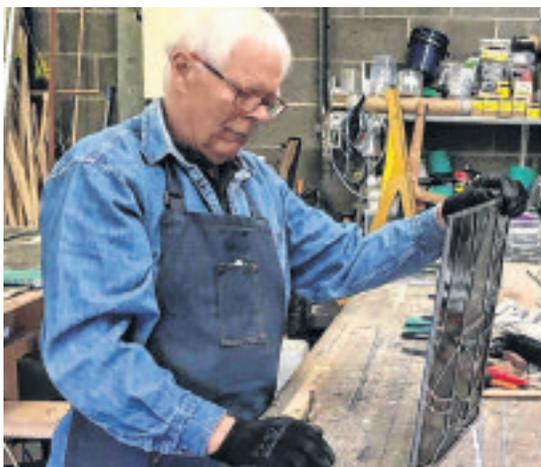
Peel Wesleyan Methodists had built bigger premises on a new site in Atholl Street, now one of only two surviving large chapels in the island with the horseshoe balcony. Atholl Street, Peel has the only Methodist burial ground in the island.



Stained glass conservation and re-use: Three-light window from Ballaugh Methodist Chapel before removal (left) then moved to and skilfully given a new life at Ramsey Waterloo Road Chapel (centre). (Below left) master craftsman Robert Bullock at work restoring a stained glass window from St Patrick's Church Jurby which depicts St Patrick baptising St Maughold (MNH)



A Diocesan crest in Old Lonan



The other remaining large galleried chapel was built as Rosemount Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and is now Trinity Methodist Church in Upper Douglas. It was the last big chapel of this type to be built in the island - the chapel in 1886, its spire added in 1909, while the schoolrooms were added in 1893.

The young men of Wellington Street saw the opportunity of building a new church on

Douglas Promenade on a site reclaimed from the sea by the creation of the Loch Promenade during the 1870s.

Some doubts about it proceeding were quelled by the information that John Butcher, one of the founders of Primitive Methodism, had preached on Douglas shore on that very site.

The church was designed and built under the supervision of local photographer

Thomas Keig, who was to become the first Mayor of Douglas in 1896. He was involved with the building of a number of the other Primitive Methodist chapels across the island.

Loch Parade Primitive Methodist Chapel, to give it its full name, was a typical 'Prim' larger town chapel.

While it was the same horseshoe balconied chapel, this was set half a storey up with a somewhat dismal semi-basement hall below unlike its Wesleyan counterparts which had the chapel at ground level.

A big flight of external steps led up to an internal porch which was itself still below chapel level with a flight of steps up from each end of it.

The equivalent Wesleyan chapels were at ground level with an adjoining hall and schoolroom block.

The same 'Prim' design was followed with Buck's Road which replaced Wellington Street in 1900; Malew Street, Castletown; and Parliament Street in Ramsey now demolished with the site occupied by

Millichap's Furniture Shop.

The Parliament Street Chapel in Ramsey had been built in 1892 as a replacement for their original chapel in Chapel Lane, South Ramsey.

But when it was time to move, part of the society refused to move to the new building. They remained in the Chapel Lane building, built in 1835, which they altered slightly and redated above the main entrance.

They declared themselves as independent of the Primitive Methodist Conference and later joined the Union of Independent Methodists.

The same major scheme in Douglas that created the Loch Promenade also involved the construction of the Victoria Pier and Victoria Street.

The latter bulldozed its way through the old town, including cutting across Thomas Street immediately alongside Thomas Street Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The membership there took the opportunity to strip and refit the chapel and to render the now exposed side wall of the building and add decorative mouldings.

As a final step, the now much-improved building was renamed Victoria Street Wesleyan Methodist Church.

But the attached Sunday school refused to change their name and remained as Thomas Street until it closed following the merger of the Victoria Street and Loch Parade chapels into what was temporarily Lower Douglas Methodist



Recycled glass in Bishopscourt Chapel

Church.

After the Loch Parade premises were demolished and rebuilt, opening in 1976, the merged society moved there and became the Promenade Methodist Church.

The Roman Catholics in Douglas outgrew St Xavier's and bought a plot on Prospect Hill and a new church and presbytery was designed by Henry Clutton of London, dedicated as St Mary of the Isle, opened in August 1859.

The building of this imposing large complex caused unrest in the community, creating the need for the Riot Act to be read.

Large as it is, the church could not accommodate all those wishing to attend mass in the visiting season during the high days of tourism and the sight of a queue, several deep, stretching round the block to meet itself at the gate was not uncommon.

A large summer morning congregation at Braddan (Old) Church for a visit from the Bishop in 1856 led to the service being repeated in the churchyard. This marked the start of what became regular morning services attended by large numbers of people thronging the whole burial ground to the east of the church.

By 1892, some 5,000 people were regularly being recorded at services, but they had to be asked not to smoke or climb on the top of graves.

In 1913, the peak visitor season in the Isle of Man, the services were moved from the churchyard to the camp field above the new church and, for the visit of Archbishop Temple in 1933, an attendance of more than 15,000 is recorded.

Another 15,000 people at open air Sunday afternoon services held on Douglas Head by the Bishop were being reported in the middle of the 1890s. These services continued until the outbreak of the Second World War and afterwards were taken up by the Methodists.

The Salvation Army held services on Douglas shore during the summer but were a regular feature of Douglas life by starting their evening



The window at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Castletown designed by the Irish artist, Harry Clarke

services with the band in the roadway (no traffic problems in those days) at the bottom of Prospect Hill and marching around the block to their citadel in Lord Street which had opened in 1932. Some of their early services were held (1883) in the Bethel, Circular Road, but for many years they worshipped in what had been the Theatre Royal, Wellington Street.

By the late 20th Century, regular open air events had virtually died out. The opening years of the new century have seen a rediscovery of both the old places and practices with the 'Praying the Keeills' initiative and events like 'Jubilate', 'The Nativity on the Hill' and 'Baptism on the Beach'.

The second half of the 19th Century had seen the 'reclaiming' of many of the fonts thrown out into the churchyards at the time of the Reformation.

The founding of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society in 1879 and the Manx Museum in 1886 saw a growing awareness of the importance of the early Christian carved stones and, as a consequence, the gathering

together of them to the parish church of the parish in which they were found.

Until the middle years of Victoria's reign, Manx church windows were either plain glass or patterned colours. Amongst the earliest stained glass picture windows is the east window at Malew.

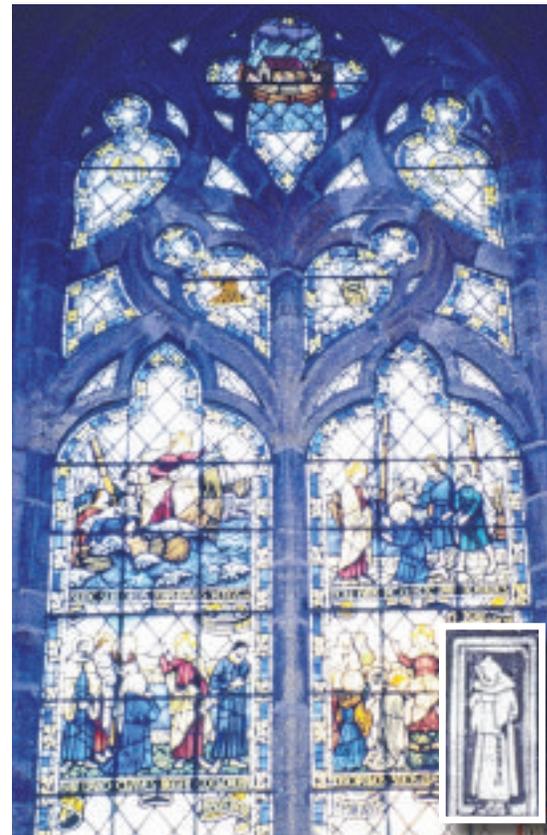
This was fairly quickly followed by others, giving the island a wealth of interesting windows, some by a variety of well-known stained glass workers including Hardman, Morris, Powells and by the Manx-connected maker Kayll, sometimes signed as Kayll and Co, Leeds, and on others Kayll and Reed, Leeds.

The Victorian Stained glass artist, the Manxman Daniel Cottier, had a studio in Glasgow but then moved to London and also opened studios in New York and Sydney.

Despite being highly thought of, especially in Scotland and the United States, he is virtually unknown in the Isle of Man.

There is only one example of his work in the form of a memorial window in memory of his father and grandfather in Lezayre Parish Church, given by Daniel himself in 1884 and which is now unfortunately in poor condition. The artist, John Miller Nicholson who created the murals in St Thomas' Church, Douglas, is only known to have designed one stained glass window and this was in the former Loch Parade Methodist Church.

It is hoped that this can be restored so that it can again be displayed. Its five panels depict Christ and the Evangelists with their symbols and the figures closely resemble the Old Testament figures, by the same artist, on the panels around the sanctuary at the cathedral.



The window by Powell & Co of Whitefriars in London at Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Maughold, Ramsey, with their trademark rebus Whitefriars badge highlighted (inset)

While the architect Baillie Scott used ornamental glass in his many superb domestic commissions, his only window for a chapel is the painted glass east window in the cemetery chapel at Braddan Cemetery.

Baillie Scott did, however, design a pulpit and altar rails for St Peter's, Onchan and the mosaic flooring in the sanctu-

ary of Kirk Braddan (New) Parish Church.

There is at present a stained glass artist, Robert Bullock, working in the island and whose work is increasingly to be seen in its churches.

At the other end of the timescale, two early uses of stained glass are a few fragments surviving from the old cathedral on St Patrick's Isle and a magnificent heraldic window at Bishopscourt formed out of glass found in a



Hall Caine's memorial at Maughold designed by Archibald Knox

recess during the rebuilding there in 1893 after the fire.

The work of Powell & Co of Whitefriars is shown to good effect in Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Maughold, Ramsey.

Two windows of exceptional quality are those in St Mary's Roman Catholic Church on Bowling Green Road, Castletown and designed by the Irish artist, Harry Clarke of Dublin.

No story of Manx churches and chapels would be complete without mention of the woodwork, joinery and carving carried out by Kelly Brothers of Kirk Michael - recently celebrated in Mike Clague's book 'Reapers, Clogs and Pulpits'.

Nor indeed would it be complete without the inclusion of war memorials and graveyard headstones designed by Archibald Knox, most of which were cut by the Thomas Quayle family of Douglas-based Stonemasons.

Outside of the island, Knox has world-wide recognition for his metalwork, especially the Cymric and Tudric ranges designed for Liberty's of London.

An excellent example of his metalwork is the set of silverware designed by him for the guild of St German and now displayed in the cathedral.

All his designs, whatever the final medium, draw heavily on the patterns of the early Christian monuments he studied and drew in his youth.



A mosaic by MH Baillie Scott at Kirk Braddan