

Registered Building No. 169

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1991**

**THE REGISTERED BUILDINGS (GENERAL) REGULATIONS 1991**

To: Mayor, Aldermen & Burgesses                      The Town Clerk  
Town Hall    Town Hall  
Ridgeway Street    Ridgeway Street  
Douglas    Douglas

The Senior Librarian  
Douglas Town Library  
Ridgeway Street  
Douglas

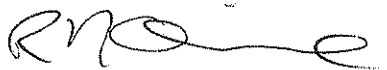
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at a meeting held on the 14th March, 1997, the PLANNING COMMITTEE of the Department of Local Government and the Environment, in pursuance of its powers under the above Acts and Regulations REGISTERED **The Douglas Town Hall and Public Library, Ridgeway Street in the Town of Douglas** as defined in red on the enclosed plan, in the PROTECTED BUILDINGS REGISTER by reason of architectural and historic interest.

THE EFFECT OF THIS REGISTRATION IS IMMEDIATE and prohibits the alteration or demolition of the structures or appearance of any part of the buildings except in compliance with an obligation imposed by or under any statutory provision or with the prior written consent of the Planning Committee.

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Dated this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of May, 1997.

By Order of the Committee



R M Quine  
Secretary, Planning Committee.

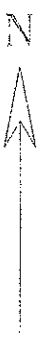
3rd Floor, Murray House,  
Mount Havelock,  
Douglas,  
Isle of Man.

NOTE: Rights to request de-registration of the building are provided under the Regulations and in summary are that:

Application in writing for de-registration may be made by the owner or occupier of, and any other person having an interest in the buildings within a period of 28 days of service of this notice. Such application should be sent to the Secretary, Planning Committee, 3rd Floor, Murray House, Mount Havelock, Douglas.

In the event that de-registration is not requested by any party within the 28 day period described above, then de-registration may not be requested within a period of 3 years.

- c.c.    1) R.B. File 169  
         2) Manx National Heritage, Kingswood Grove, Douglas  
         3) ADCO, Rose Cottage, Mount Rule, Braddan



Scale 1:500

Department of Local Government & The Environment, Isle of Man

## **THE TOWN HALL and PUBLIC LIBRARY, DOUGLAS**

### **HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND ASSESSMENT IN CONNECTION WITH ENTRY ONTO THE PROTECTED BUILDINGS REGISTER**

In 1896 the Municipal Borough of Douglas came into being having received the approval of Tynwald the previous year under the Douglas Municipal Corporation Act.

During the 1600 - 1700's, Douglas had developed as the main centre for trade on the Island, becoming almost a "boom town" and by 1800 had increased in size and was sustained by trade.

The nineteenth century saw the advent of sea bathing and the seaside holiday came into being. Some areas of the old town were at that time quite unsavoury and unhealthy places, not to be shown off with pride to the increasing numbers of visitors.

The old system of Town Captains had already been replaced by Town High Bailiffs, but even this system was becoming increasingly difficult to administer.

A Town Bill was accepted in 1860 and following an election, on Tuesday 24th July, 1860, the first Commissioners were elected: Samuel Harris, who had topped the poll, was elected Chairman.

With the growth of the tourist industry, by 1891, 35% of the Manx population were living in Douglas. The structure of the Town's government required to be reviewed and following debate, the above-mentioned Act was adopted.

By 1900, in recognition of the new status of the town the Town Hall and Public Library, built at a cost of £25,708.00., was in use.

A convenient site was reserved in Ridgeway Street which had been named after the Governor of the day and the design was entrusted to Mr Ardron F.R.I.B.A., of Messrs Ardron and

Dawson, Westminster.

The main building Contractor was Messrs Gradwell and Co. of Barrow in Furness. The style adopted was "Renaissance" with the aim being to combine lasting strength with lightness and elegance. Dressed rubble stone was used with Bath stone dressed openings.

The following description of the interior of the building is based on a feature in the Man's Herald of March, 1900:

The principal entrance is in John Street leading to a spacious corridor, with floors of marble Mosaic, containing the main staircase. On the left of the main corridor are placed the Municipal Offices - The Town Clerk's Office, Enquiry Office, Public and Rates Office and the Accountant's Office. To the right of the main corridor is the Water Office and along the John Street side of the building are the Borough Surveyor's Offices - Enquiry Office, Drawing Office, Building Inspector's Office and the Car and Sanitary Inspector's Office.

Ascend the main staircase and we reach the floor on which the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms are situated. The Chamber itself is a magnificent room, 47 feet by 32 feet, which has an arched roof with panelled ceiling. The floor is laid in Oak which also used for the wainscotting and the Ardron mantelpiece. Overlooking the Chamber at the Church Street end is the public gallery. A desk and chair is provided for each Councillor arranged in a horse shoe style. A handsome bench is provided for the Mayor and Alderman along the Ridgeway Street end. On the bench is also provision for the Town Clerk, Borough Surveyor, Staff and representatives of the press. The furniture and upholstery is in Morocco leather.....Adjoining the building in John Street provision has been made for the town Fire Brigade. A large room houses the (horse drawn) manually operated fire engine and appliances. There is also a tower for drying the hoses plus a large assembly room for use of the men.

When plans for the new Municipal Buildings in Ridgeway Street were being considered it was

decided that this would also provide the ideal location for a new central library adjoining the Town Hall. A date above the Library entrance suggests that its construction was commenced in 1897, two years before the foundation for the Town Hall were laid.

The requirement was for three main areas: Lending, Reference and Newspapers. This aspect of the building has remained substantially the same.

A feature of the Library was the section on Manx publications: this almost served as a "national library" until the Manx Museum was opened in 1922.

With the advent of the Centenary of the Douglas Town Council, the major task of refurbishing the Town Hall and Public Library was undertaken at not inconsiderable expense. The programme of works included re-roofing; reinstatement of certain architectural features which had gradually been altered, or disappeared; repair of original windows; repair and renewal of stonework; the erection of a period Clock obtained from Potts of Leeds; a programme of hard landscaping to enhance the setting of the building plus extensive works undertaken on the interior of the building, including the refurbishment of the Council Chamber.

The main focus of Registration lies in the high quality external envelope in addition to the major public spaces which are among the finest in the Island. During the life of the building, alteration and reorganisation of some of the ancillary accommodation has taken place in response to changing needs of the town's governing body: such ancillary spaces are not seen to fall within the main focus of Registration, save from the aspect of maintaining the structural integrity of the building as a whole.

The ultimate result is a building which still retains its most vital functional role whilst making, what is acknowledged to be a major, and now enhanced, contribution to the Civic Architecture of the Island's Capital.

**The Douglas Town Hall and Public Library accordingly merits entry onto the Register of Protected Buildings on the following grounds:-**

- 1) The aesthetic quality of the buildings and**
- 2) The unique role which the building has played in the Sociological and Historical development of the Island's Capital.**

Source : Douglas Centenary 1896 - 1996 Ed. G.N. Kniveton.