

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1991
THE REGISTERED BUILDINGS (GENERAL) REGULATIONS 1991

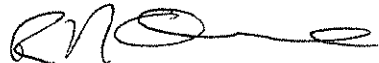
To:
The Vicar & Wardens
All Saints and St Thomas
The Vicarage
Marathon Avenue
Douglas

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at a meeting held on the 30th April, 1999, the PLANNING COMMITTEE of the Department of Local Government and the Environment, in pursuance of its powers under the above Acts and Regulations REGISTERED **St Thomas Church, 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 structure or appearance of any part of the building except in compliance with an obligation imposed by or under any statutory provision or with the prior written consent of the Planning Committee.

Dated this 14 day of June, 1999

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.

- cc -
- 1) Douglas Corporation, Town Hall, Ridgeway Street, Douglas
 - 2) Manx National Heritage, Kingswood Grove, Douglas
 - 3) Advisory Council, 52 Alberta Drive, Onchan
 - 4) R.B. File 178
 - 5) File 2920

jurisdiction

Douglas Corporation

code

DU/A/R/A

location

38177601

ownership

origin

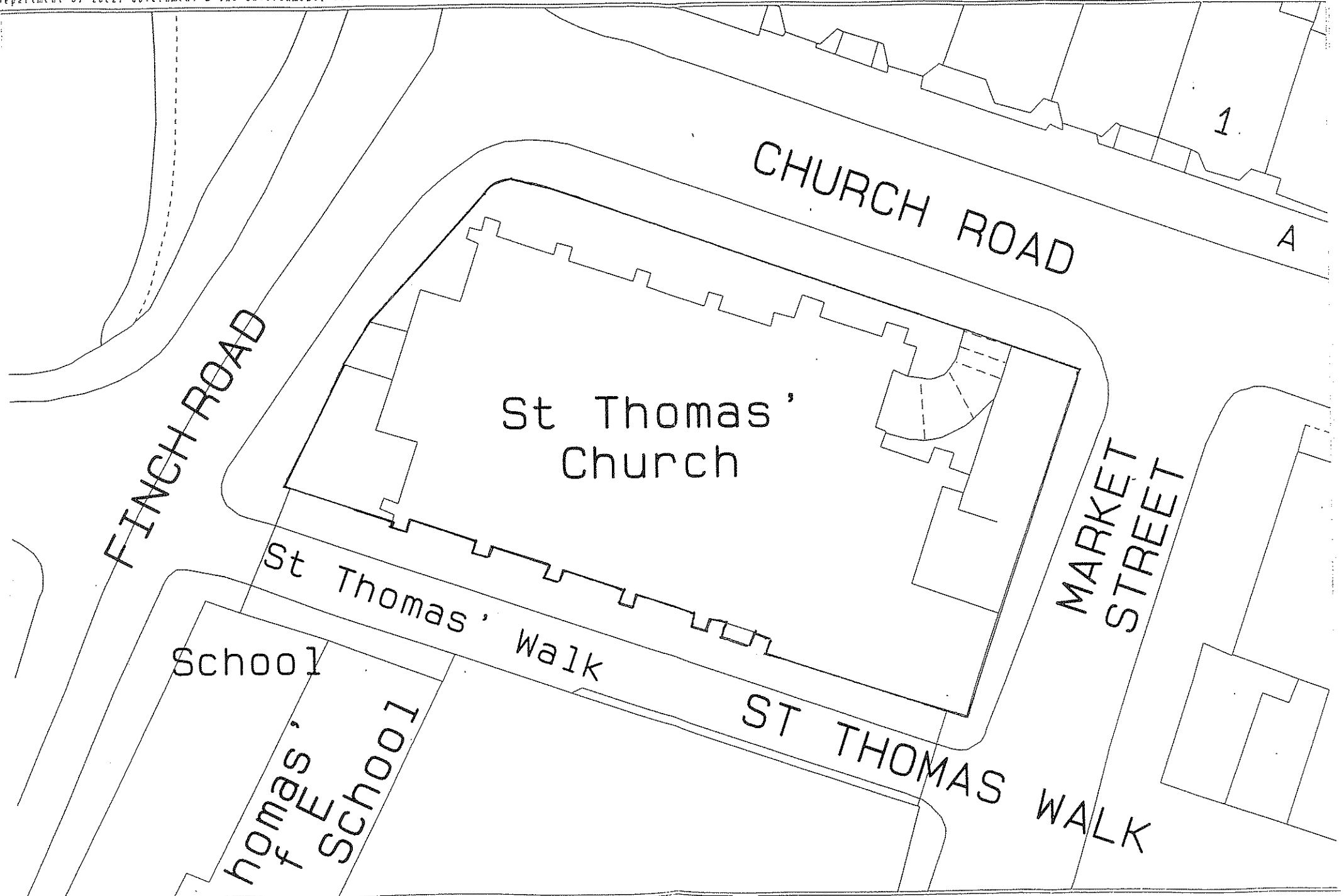


description

St. Thomas' Church, Finch Road, Douglas.

recommendation

Scale 1:200



FINCH ROAD

CHURCH ROAD

St Thomas' Church

MARKET STREET

St Thomas' Walk

School

Thomas' f School

ST THOMAS WALK

1

A

**THE PARISH CHURCH OF
ST THOMAS
DOUGLAS**

HISTORICAL NOTES

The designer of St Thomas' church was the renowned Victorian Architect **EWAN CHRISTIAN**, who was President of the RIBA from 1884 - 86 and for some considerable time, Architect to the Church Commissioners of England. Related to the Christians of Milntown, Ewan Christian in 1887 achieved the status of Royal gold Medallist, designing numerous Ecclesiastical buildings the length and breadth of the country.

In a recent historical assessment of the former Isle of Man Lunatic Asylum at Ballamona, (now demolished), designed by Joseph Henry Christian who was Ewan's younger cousin, Mr Michael Eaton (Assessor for English Heritage) commented:

It is clear that Ewan Christian was highly regarded by his contemporaries including Pearson, Teulon and Waterhouse, and was given an extensive, though delayed, obituary by the RIBA

Ewan Christian rose through the ranks of the architectural profession to become very highly regarded in his time and undoubtedly was one of the most successful and widely recognised Victorian Architects to which the Isle of Man can lay claim.

Although the foundation stone for the Parish Church of St Thomas was laid in the 9th July, 1846, and the Church was licensed for worship on the 1st August, 1849, by Lord Auckland the then Bishop of Sodor and Man, disputes arose as to the patronage of the Church and it was not until the 29th June, 1872 that this was finally resolved and the Church was consecrated and re-opened for Divine Service.

The Victorian Gothic style of the Church owes much to the Early English period of architecture and has three tall Lancet windows in both East and West fronts, surmounted by a Rose window. Most of the other window openings are of the same form and are grouped in pairs between the buttresses of the long North and South walls. The Clerestory windows are of a trefoil design and allow natural daylight to penetrate the structure of the lofty timber roof, which is characteristic of early Gothic style. The original design was to have incorporated a tower surmounted by a spire, however this idea was abandoned due to difficulty in securing a good foundation for the structure.

Much of the Church's interior is of special quality with many items having been donated by parishioners in memory of loved ones, or by subscription.

It is known that several of the stained glass **windows** in the Church are the work of Messrs Heaton, Butler & Bayne who were a firm of considerable repute and who were involved in a phase which produced a more inventive recreation of the medieval canon than had been usual, much of their best work, marked by simple linear designs and strong colours, being produced during the 1860's. The firm's work became distinctive by its use of specially commissioned coloured glass and other examples of their work can be found in:

- a) *Te Deum window, All Saints, Clapham Park, London;*
- b) *East Window - Crucifixion, Prickwillow, Cambridgeshire, and*
- c) *Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (1866) formerly in St Andrew, Bridport, Dorset but now in Ely Cathedral: Stained Glass museum.*

The **Chancel floor** originally had a tiled finish, but was re-floored with Italian Marble as were the Aisles and a step of Belgian black marble placed in the Sanctuary. The chancel floor shows the figure of St Thomas holding a model of the Church.

The Nicholson Murals

Following the re-opening of St Thomas' in 1872, several improvements were made to the fabric and decoration of the Church.

In 1882 Canon Ernest Savage MA, FSA, was appointed Vicar and being a keen Church historian he became the driving force behind the move to have St Thomas' decorated internally which ultimately led to the result which we see today.

At an Easter vestry meeting held in 1896, it was proposed by Deemster Gill that an estimate and plans be obtained for cleaning and beautifying the walls of the Chancel. A further meeting was held on the 6th May, 1896 when it was agreed that Messrs Nicholson Brothers be asked to undertake this work. Plans were approved by the Lord Bishop for a Chancel Screen and the wall decoration.

The large and impressive scheme of wall paintings in St Thomas' church was carried out by the renowned local artist **John Millar Nicholson R A**. By April 1897, the work on painting the Chancel was almost completed, but the funds began to run out and it was not until 1910 that the scheme was finally completed. The completion of the murals was marked by a special Service held on the 10th April, 1910. The original concept was to include painting the walls both above and beneath the galleries, but this was not to be.

The following description of the murals is taken from '*The Parish Church of St Thomas, Douglas - A Short History*' published in 1998 and which is based on the 1970 - 71 Presidential Address given to the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society by Mrs. A. G. Flanagan.

'Description of the Murals

In Mediaeval times, when decoration was at its best, the colour was always introduced on the background, and the scenes, figures or emblems to be shown were drawn in outline. In St Thomas' Church the reddish brown background that is used on the walls is the same tone that is used in the celebrated ancient wall decorations of Friskney Church, Lincolnshire. The blue background is the same shade found in similar old work in Canterbury Cathedral. Our forefathers would not just decorate the walls of Churches for the sake of it; wall decoration was meant to be instructive. The same doctrine was applied to the decoration of St Thomas' when Canon Savage asked John Nicholson to give expression to his thoughts.

In the uppermost compartment at the west end in the walls of the nave, the ground is painted sky-blue and the white ornament is the heraldic representation of clouds; below that, the base of the clerestory windows and the apex of the nave arches, is an "Arcading", which runs the whole length of the Church on both sides and across the west end. The thought running through the main scheme - on the west wall, the foliage of the Tree of Life - Cherubim placed at the east end of the Garden of Eden, with flaming sword to keep the way of the Tree of Life - seen on either side of the west gallery. In the spandrels of the arches in the Nave nearest to the west end, are representations of the Worship in the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple -

The Altar of Incense

The Ark of the Covenant

The Golden Candlestick

The Table of Shewbread

In the next pair of Arches are the four representations of the Evangelists -

<i>Man(Angel)</i>	-	<i>St Matthew</i>
<i>Lion</i>	-	<i>St Mark</i>
<i>Ox</i>	-	<i>St Luke</i>
<i>Eagle</i>	-	<i>St John</i>

In the next pair of Arches are the Christian Emblems -

The Lamb - Pelican - Phoenix and Dove

In the next pair of Arches are the emblems of Christian Life and Character -

The Vine Branch, the Lily and the Olive and Palm Tree

The Chancel

On the highest part of the walls and over the east window are flying angels supporting a scroll on which the Hymn appears :-

'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts - (North Wall)

Heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory - (East Wall)

Glory be to Thee O Lord Most High' - (South Wall)

In the lower compartments are Angels on the other side of the Organ; Archangels on either side of the Reredos, and 'All the company of Heaven' in the two other compartments on the south wall.

The next compartment on the northern wall shows Michael fighting with the many headed dragon. In the opposite compartment of the south wall is the figure of the Archangel Gabriel coming with the message of the Incarnation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The actual scene here shown is taken from the account that is given in a very ancient Christian narrative of our Lord's birth, called "The Protevangelion".

The double compartment on the south wall shows the "great multitude which no man could number", described in Revelation VII, "clothed in white robes" the emblem of Purity, and "with palms in their hands", the emblem of Victory.

The walls between the texts and the oak panelling are decorated with wheat and grapes and diaper work of Vine leaves, emblematic of the Holy Communion.

On the east wall running up between the three lights of the window, is the "Tree of Life", on either side of the "River of Life" which bear twelve manner of fruits, and leaves of the tree were for the healing of the Nations. (Rev XXII,2).'

In recent years interest in the Murals has grown and their true merit is only just beginning to be recognised.

In 1997, with guidance from The Council for the care of Churches, it was decided to seek specialist advice on the condition and possible repair and restoration of the Murals, which by that time had deteriorated in places, as a result of rainwater penetration in certain sections of the fabric of the building. **Tobit Curteis Associates** - Wall Painting Conservators, (Principal Tobit Curteis BA (Hons) Dip Conservation (Courtauld Institute)), were asked to survey the murals and to make proposals for their conservation. In due course a very detailed Report was submitted to the Parochial Church Council who then embarked upon a massive fund-raising exercise and at the time of writing, a comprehensive programme of repair and restoration of the Murals is underway and is approximately half completed.

On page 2 of his report Mr. Curteis says:

'Although the original decoration of the interior was somewhat plain, between 1896 and 1910 the walls of the nave and chancel were elaborately painted by the local artist John Miller Nicholson(d. 1913). While the style of the decoration is relatively simple in some areas, the impact of the overall scheme is extremely dramatic. The very size of the scheme, over 520 square metres of decorative painting, as well as its unique position on the Isle of Man, makes this an unusual and significant scheme of paintings'.

The Parish Church of St Thomas, Douglas is considered to be of special architectural and historic interest and is accordingly entered into the Protected Buildings Register on the following grounds:

- 1. The building is a unique example of decorative art and craftsmanship and this is particularly represented in the highly decorative Wall Paintings which were carried out by the renowned local artist JOHN MILLAR NICHOLSON, RA (d. 1913), between the years 1896 and 1910.**

- 2. The building was designed by the eminent Victorian Architect EWAN CHRISTIAN, President of the RIBA from 1884 to 1886 and for much of his career, Architect to the Church Commissioners of England.**

- 3. The building makes a very important contribution to the streetscape of the Town of Douglas, occupying a very prominent corner site in the heart of the Island's Capital.**

May 1999.