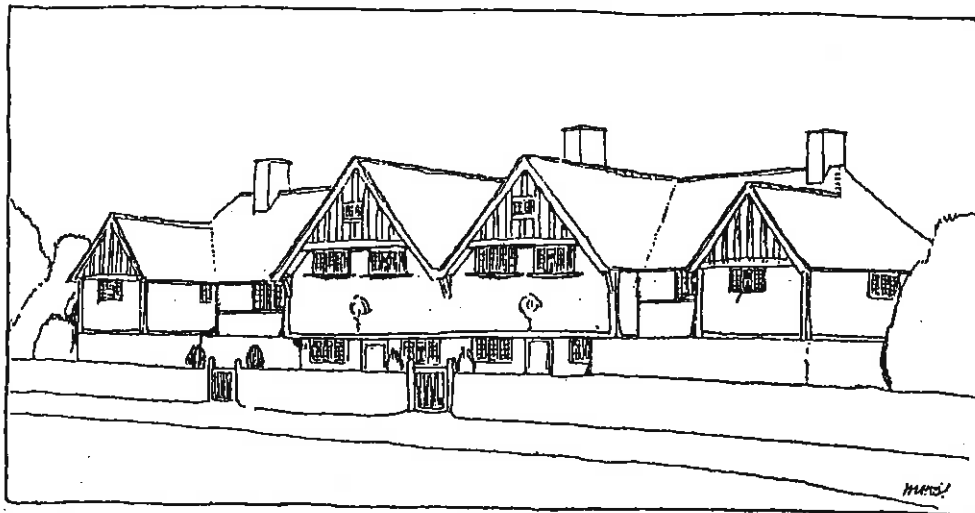


UPPER DOUGLAS

LITTLE SWITZERLAND CONSERVATION AREA

Character Appraisal

*To be read in conjunction with the
Little Switzerland Conservation Area Order
1st September 2003*



Department of Local Government and the Environment
Rheynn Reiltys Ynnydagh as y Chymmyltaght

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In order to justify the selection of an area for Conservation Area status, it is necessary to undertake an appraisal of such an area's character and appearance. The intention of this procedure is to clearly set out the justification for Conservation Area designation, with the added aim of summarising a practical, distinct and factual assessment of the area in a working document. The character appraisal has been the subject of consultation with The Advisory Council on Planning and the Environment, The Douglas Corporation and many other interested parties. The Town and Country Planning Acts place a duty upon the Department of Local Government and the Environment to determine which parts of the Island are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate such areas as Conservation Areas.
- 1.2 The unique and cohesive character which Douglas possesses as a fine seaside town has long been recognized, not only by the Island's local community, but possibly to an even greater extent, by visitors to our shores, who readily compare the variety and quality of the Capital's architecture, to some of the finest townscapes throughout the British Isles.
- 1.3 The Island has always tended to 'wait and see' before adopting patterns of living and approaches to legislation and commerce. The same may be said of the historical development of architectural fashions in the Island. We find architectural styles or 'periods' identified by reigns of various English Monarchs, taken up at a leisurely pace and still remaining in use for years after such styles were abandoned for new approaches, outside of the Island. This tendency can be a little confusing when trying

to date a property, but it has also been instrumental in achieving the unique blend of buildings remaining today.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Douglas occupies a choice location on a wide, east-facing bay, marked by headlands to the north and south, and backed by steeply sloping broughs to the west.

2.2 The town had confirmed its position as the principal trading harbour of the Isle of Man during the eighteenth century. The majority of buildings were sited in a triangle around the harbour which, during the late 1700s and early 1800s, was the fashionable area. However, during the nineteenth century, a number of developments were to occur which encouraged the rapid growth of the town and Douglas was to prove attractive to residents from other parts of the Island, as well as “second home” owners and tourists alike.

2.3 Along with the development of major sections of the town’s infrastructure, the relocation from Castletown to Douglas in 1869, of the House of Keys, was probably one of the most important influences on the subsequent growth of the settlement.

2.4 In response, people increasingly chose Douglas as their main place of dwelling and the town gradually spread along the shore front and uphill onto the broughs behind. Initially, access was very difficult, but major works afforded access to areas behind the promenades and the opening of the former Ballabrooie, Ballakermeen and Ballaquayle estates for development saw further increases in the number of residences constructed during the Victorian period.

3.0 LOCATION AND TOWNSCAPE

3.1 Upper Douglas is characterised by a number of small areas and distinctive neighbourhoods, which possess fine examples of terraced properties. It is a common feature that within such areas, a wide variety of house designs can be found and the influence of Georgian, Regency, Victorian, Edwardian, and Arts and Crafts Periods are all recognisable and this unique mix gives vibrance and vitality to the built fabric of the Island's Capital.

3.2 The townscape of upper Douglas is distinguished by a number of fine, and often very elegant, civic spaces in the form of squares and gardens, which provide a focus for surrounding terraced properties. Additionally, the avenues and other approach roads to these spaces are lined with carefully designed terraces, whose architectural language, detailing and rhythms provide a foretaste of the overall approach adopted in the enclosing architecture of the squares themselves. These early examples of town planning, although rigorous in their approach to detail, form and layout, succeed in creating a sense of spaciousness, charm and gentility which are now synonymous with the identity of substantial, predominantly residential, areas of Upper Douglas.

3.3 From the mid nineteenth century onwards, impressive Victorian terraces gradually developed north of the main town centre and away from the busy, and heavily populated, harbour area. Many were arranged to both create and enhance frontal views, being laid out around green spaces and gardens. The approach to 'period' architectural styles adopted in the Island does not always adopt a text book format in terms of design detail or expected dating: this again adds a Manx flavour to the resulting architecture such as is not found elsewhere.

LITTLE SWITZERLAND

3.4 It is known that in 1874 local and well respected builder Alex Gill had an address in Switzerland Terrace: one theory has it that the wooded area above the terrace came to be known as Little Switzerland but Stuart Slack tells us that the area was at one time known as Switzerland Square.

3.5 The area was part of Glencrutchery Estate owned by Thomas Kneen (later Deemster). A plan was produced by James Cowle the architect builder for Kneen to lay out the area for building purposes. The layout was a far cry from what was to eventually appear. The Manx Sun Newspaper of 21 October 1893 advertised for sale 20 building plots above Little Switzerland and adjoining the house now being erected for Mr R M Broadbent. Applicants had to apply to Messers Dickinson & Kneen, advocates, Athol Street.

3.6 A further large plot was purchased by John Allen Mylrea beside Broadbent's plot and the balance of the land was then purchased by William McAdam the builder and Mark Carine the builder, who between them built the houses in what is sometimes loosely called "The Square". The boundaries between the plots were far from running parallel or at right

angles to each other which was strange given that this was a new development on virgin land.

Ivydene

- 3.7 Richard Maltby Broadbent purchased his plot by deed dated 12 April 1892. Conditions of the conveyance included that a house had to be erected within 12 months and when complete it was to be worth at least £1,000.00. The 9155 sq yd plot extended down the track and into a “glen”. It cost £1575 and was subject to a further condition that not more than six houses or six semi-detached houses, be built on the land.
- 3.8 Broadbent engaged the services of the young architect Makay Hugh Baillie Scott, who on 5 May 1893 purchased his own plot from Kneen a little higher up the Falcon Cliff Road (now known as Victoria Road).
- 3.9 Broadbent’s house was built by R F Douglas and was built as a half timbered house (ie the timber frame supports the upper structure). Scott used sandstone as well as half timbering and rosemary tiles on the roof. Broadbent did not build six houses on the plot but there were stables, (possible the staff accommodation) in the top corner of the plot (northeast).
- 3.10 Many years later a subsequent owner (probably Mr Hargreaves) built a house for his daughter in the northwest corner of the plot. She also later built a bungalow alongside for her daughter. Even more recently, the present owner of Ivydene built a further house in the grounds which is occupied by his son. Thus, the Ivydene plot now supports 4 dwellings out of the six maximum. Ivydene is a Registered Building. The three other properties in the former grounds serve as good examples of “high class” dwellings of their periods 1930’s 1950’s 1990’s.

Highcliffe

- 3.11 John Allen Mylrea purchased his plot for £1120 by deed recorded in January 1898. The plot was described as being “as now enclosed”. The conditions of sale restricted the number of dwellings to be erected to 3 together with the necessary lodges and stables. The second and third houses however were not to be built until 10 years had passed. James Kornwolf in his tome on Baillie Scott attributes Scott’s plan for a stone house at Douglas to a scheme for Highcliffe. He then suggests that Mylrea did his own thing to the design being an amateur architect. True, Mylrea had given a lecture on architecture but it was Armitage Rigby who designed his house, which according to the Onchan Commissioners rate book was known as Cliff Side in 1903 and The Cliff in 1904. Mylrea was one of the defendants of the Dumbells’s Bank trial and so was not to enjoy his new home for long.

Kent Lodge

- 3.12 This is the one property which is at odds with the remainder of the houses in the area of Victorian and Edwardian Construction. The plot was purchased by Misses Mary Jull, Agnes Blanche Jull, and Kathleen Maud Jull of Brighton Terrace for £75. The deed plan was drawn by Armitage Rigby in December 1896 and the deed was recorded the following month. The description of the plot is interesting, for this corner plot is described as “at the junction of Victoria Road and a new road leading to Little Switzerland.
- 3.13 It is quite probably that Rigby designed the house, which despite the use of quoins also has roughcast as a principle wall finish. When complete it was known as Goldstone.

Remainder of Land

- 3.14 By deed dated March 1899 Mark Carine, a joiner/builder who started his career in Glen Vine and then moved to Douglas, purchased the remainder of the land which was now in seven unequal plots, from Thomas Kneen. The price was £1194 and the total area was 9637 sq yds. A condition of sale was that not more than 14 houses were to be erected on the site and indeed 14 were erected. The recording of deeds in Victorian times was often very much behind time and in some cases, houses had been erected before the land was officially conveyed.
- 3.15 Within this plot were two houses under construction not by Carine, but by William McAdam. In July 1899, Carine conveyed the plot to McAdam and the deed plan showed the pair of houses as being in existence.

Holly Bank and Myrtle Bank

(Plot One)

- 3.16 The two houses in question had been designed by Baillie Scott for McAdam. The two had worked together on the rebuilding of a farm at Bishopscourt and Scott also designed Oakleigh on Glencrutchery Road for McAdam. The firm of McAdam and Moore were contractors for the Pier Arcade, The Sefton Hotel, Park Road School, The Palace at Ramsey, houses in Albany Street but they over stretched themselves. McAdam took over the assets to free Moore from any consequences of their “embarrassed” situation and McAdam was subsequently declared a bankrupt. His wife had died in 1892 and in 1893 he remarried a widow of comfortable means. Her trustees, for the marriage settlement purchased Oakleigh from his trustees in bankruptcy. It is probably because of his situation that Kneen did not finalise the sale of the plot for these semi-detached houses. Either he

had shaken off his bankruptcy by 1899 or the conveyance from Carine was to McAdam's son who was also called William.

- 3.17 Holly Bank was occupied in 1899 by William Priestly and the following year Mr Bryan moved into Myrtle Bank. McAdam retained ownership of these houses for some years. Baillie Scott featured them in his 1906 Houses and Gardens Book. Both houses are Registered.

Engadine and Coardailys (formerly Grindlewald)

(Plot Two)

- 3.18 Following his purchase of the seven plots, Carine was working on two pairs of houses, Plots 2 and 6. All four houses were designed by Armitage Rigby and incorporated an open porch, which has been attributed to his study visit to the USA some years before. In December 1899 Carine mortgaged all four houses with the Isle of Man Banking Company for £1,600 which would certainly suggest they were well advanced. Engadine (now Dunollie) was occupied from 1899 by Digby Chamberlain, whilst next door was tenanted during the same year by Rev G F Packer. Mark Carine himself was to occupy this house from 1905, moving from 2 Strathallan Crescent which he had occupied at an advantageous rent from the electric railway company in thanks for much of the work he had done for them.
- 3.19 This pair has carved barge boards and a date is incorporated into their design. Both sit comfortably with Scott's pair on plot one but lack the rosemary tiled roof.

Inglewood and Rosebank

(Plots 3 and 4)

- 3.20 Another pair of houses built by McAdam, but, it would appear to be without the aid of Baillie Scott or possibly any other architect either.
- 3.21 When McAdam purchased plot 4 from Carine in February 1902 he paid £132, which was undoubtedly the plot price and he was hardly going to pay for the house he has erected. What is interesting however, he never purchased plot 3 (Inglewood) from Carine, who retained ownership of the property. No doubt there was some deal behind it all, money may not have changed hands on the other plots and Carine then took the semi-detached house in lieu.
- 3.22 This pair certainly lacks the feel of the other houses in the area, yet they represent the ongoing development and the work of a builder “turned loose” to do his own thing. They were occupier from 1901 and 1902.

Arosa and Briarfield (formerly Santa Rosa and Thurlby Cottage)

(Plot 5)

- 3.23 A most interesting couple which are anything but a pair. Rigby was again the architect for Carine and here on Santa Rosa he embarked on something completely different with iron balcony, sandstone surround to an eye hole window and of course a Westmorland slate roof (recently replaced). Santa Rosa also had a chimney piece inside which greatly resembled Baillie Scotts design for the fireplace in Glencrutchery House which now rests in Miami Beach. R F Douglas made the fireplace for Glencrutchery and he made a copy for at least one of his houses in Cronkbourne Road. Both Douglas and Rigby were accused by Scott of copying his work and were far from friends. The distinctive garden wall to

Santa Rosa is built up from the lining of the retorts of the Douglas Gas Light Company as one time owner Alex Bisset was Manager of the gas company for many years.

3.24 The first tenant of Santa Rosa was Henry Hough in 1902 and for Thurlby Cottage it was Reginald Hurst Milner. This latter property was designed with a flat roof extending from the bay window over the front door where it was supported by wooden uprights.

3.25 This was a most interesting feature, as it could be compared with Scott's treatment of the houses in Falcon Cliff Terrace of a few years earlier. During 1996, this flat roof was replaced with a lean-to slate roof, thus destroying Rigby's design concept which may well have been based on Scott's feature.

The Haven and Red Paths (formerly Fernbank Villa and The Haven)

(Plot 6)

3.26 This pair of houses were commenced about the same time as the pair on plot 2. Again Rigby was the architect and open porches were incorporated although subsequently altered. The left hand property Fernbank Villa (now The Haven) was occupied in 1900 by Lois Hartley and its twin by Mr Mackley. The following year the second house had Julia Reindardt as occupier, but Carine sold it in December 1900 to William Tynedale Reindardt. It is interesting to note that the name The Haven, moved from one house to the other. The late Alec Davidson, architect occupied The Haven for many years. It is uncertain whether the fine trellis work on the porch of this property is original or a subsequent alteration.

Clovelly Cottage and Ruskinville

(Plot 7)

- 3.27 Undoubtedly the best work of Rigby, the format of these cottages was one which he also proposed for an estate in Ramsey but they were not built, making this pair all the more important. These were the last two houses that Carine built on the site and by this time the area was now in Douglas as a result of a boundary extension. Copies of the plans are therefore deposited in the records of Douglas Corporation. The properties appear to have been completed in 1905 and the date is carved in the barge boards as is a 3 legs of Man and other features. Carine mortgaged both properties in 1905 for £420 and £400 but retained ownership for some time.

Kantara and Glencairn (formerly Claire)

(Plot 8)

- 3.28 Another pair of semi-detached houses of Rigby's that are not a pair but an interwoven couple of residences as built by Carine. During construction, he took out mortgages on both, £500 in the case of Kantara and £400 for Glencairns. Both mortgages were taken out in 1903 and when the properties were complete, not only were they in Douglas, but Mr Cunningham had opened his International Young Men's Holiday Camp immediately opposite them.
- 3.29 There was a subsequent court case with Carine trying to safeguard the value of his properties. Cunningham carried out the requirements of the Court and took a lease of Claire on 12 February 1907 at a rental of £70.00 per annum and an option to purchase at £1250. In the interior of Glencairn, Carine incorporated polished granite pillars and other

unusual features. Equally the mixture of iron and timber on the balcony and the strange turret like feature leaves one questioning their originality.

ARCHITECTURE

3.30 Little Switzerland was developed first in the late nineteenth century in the manner as previously described and produced a Victorian “village” housing estate. In it’s time it would have been on the edge of the town although bounded on the north side by the Sunnyside Mansion estate. The grounds of Sunnyside still exist but are presently being developed for large scale residential use.

3.31 The area is occupied by residential dwellings as stated, some were designed by M H Baillie Scott, an internationally known Architect who was at the forefront of Architectural Design, the others followed his lead. The houses typify the Arts and Crafts movement from plan design through to the smallest domestic detail and as a group probably represent the highest concentration of true Arts and Crafts architecture in the Island. The combination of materials and individual approaches to the interpretation of the style which reverts back to the use of traditional materials, give a sense of well established, high quality properties such that there is a definite feeling of arriving in a special environment.

3.31 Three houses in this area have gained Registered Building Status: all designed by Baillie Scott; they are Ivydene, Myrtle Bank and Holly Bank. All have been well documented, illustrated and referenced in books and publications, the most well documented of the three being Ivydene.

- 3.32 This area is the heart of Arts and Crafts Architecture in the Isle of Man, with The Red House, only a little way from this site to the north along Victoria Road.
- 3.33 In Scott's works "plans and elevations became the expression of utility; a building's materials were taken from its locality, being cheaper and in harmony with its surrounding. Details were taken from vernacular original and the architects were interested in craft and in employing plasterers, painters and carvers to enrich their buildings. Ornament was based on nature".
- 3.34 The other houses in the group were contemporaneously designed and should be conserved from the historical and architectural standpoint. It is a duty required, not only for the Isle of Man, but internationally to encourage and preserve the character of this area. There is a sameness and yet a difference to all the properties in this area which is provided by the materials and architectural detailing.
- 3.35 The site is established and well sought after. It is a self-contained area that should be acknowledged in public terms. The maturity of the tree screening and vistas from the site should be carefully preserved and improved. It is hoped that any improvements to the road bounding "The Square" would be minimised, so as not to detract from the qualities of the surrounding properties. A limited palette of materials has been employed and this serves to add a cohesive quality to the visual impact of the area, whilst providing an interesting composition of in townscape term.

3.36 The roof coverings are again limited, being mostly red clay (Rosemary) tiles with some blue slate: at the time of reporting, only one roof was completed in concrete tiles. The chimneys are original and finished either in brick or render with traditional detailing. The area is remarkable because of the lack of unsympathetic alterations. Some properties have had conservatory extensions, however, the majority of these are tucked away from public view, behind the buildings. Roofs and dormers are generally intact and as the designers intended.

3.37 The walling materials are varied but traditional and provide a consistency throughout the area.

The materials used are:

- a. Render and paint;
- b. Tile hanging;
- c. Half timber and render;
- d. Facing brick with timber and render;
- e. Stone facing with timber and render;
- f. Render with stone dressings; and
- g. Pebble dash (limited to one newer dwelling only)

Porches and canopies appear to be generally original, with their metal or timber framed supports.

- 3.38 There is a variety of window styles and proportions but are almost all timber Edwardian, “Arts and Crafts” forms. The low level of PVCu windows in the area is noticeable and any replacements should respond to the ethos of the “Arts and Crafts” movement.
- 3.39 External boundary walls consist mainly of stone, brick or a mixture of stone with decorative brick elements. Vegetation plays an important role in softening the walls and in some cases takes the place of hard masonry, which gives a soft semi-rural appeal to the locality. Gates are either metal or timber and in many cases the latter appear to be delightfully designed originals. Garages and outbuildings are not always original but are generally not incongruous to the properties.
- 3.40 The contribution made by the proliferation of trees, particularly to the southern end of the area should be retained and improved to provide as natural a setting as possible to this quiet residential area. The adjoining office business part, supermarket and petrol station impinge somewhat on the area and so any existing screening must be maintained and encouraged.
- 3.41 Baillie Scott commented that the solution, in his view was to become aware of the nature of materials and realise their full possibilities. The Art of building was an art ... concerned with the arrangements of single things in simple and direct ways. We have to depolarise our minds and look at things as they really are. *“A kind of rude natural mosaic”*.

3.42 The Registered Buildings in this area, designed, by an Internationally renowned Architect, have influenced the design of the remainder, and have the qualities of age, style and universal appeal of the Arts and Crafts movement and as such are well worthy of Conservation Area status.