

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

To: Canon Alger for the Liverpool Archdiocesan Trustees, Presbytery, St. Mary's Church, Hill Street, Douglas

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at a meeting held on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2002, 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. Mary's of the Isle Catholic Church, Hill Street, Douglas**

as represented by the buildings shown outlined in red on the plan hereto attached, in the PROTECTED BUILDINGS REGISTER by reason of its special 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 20<sup>th</sup> day of September 2002

By Order of the Committee



J Callow

Secretary, Planning Committee.

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Murray House,  
Mount Havelock,  
Douglas,  
IM1 2SF.

**NOTE:**

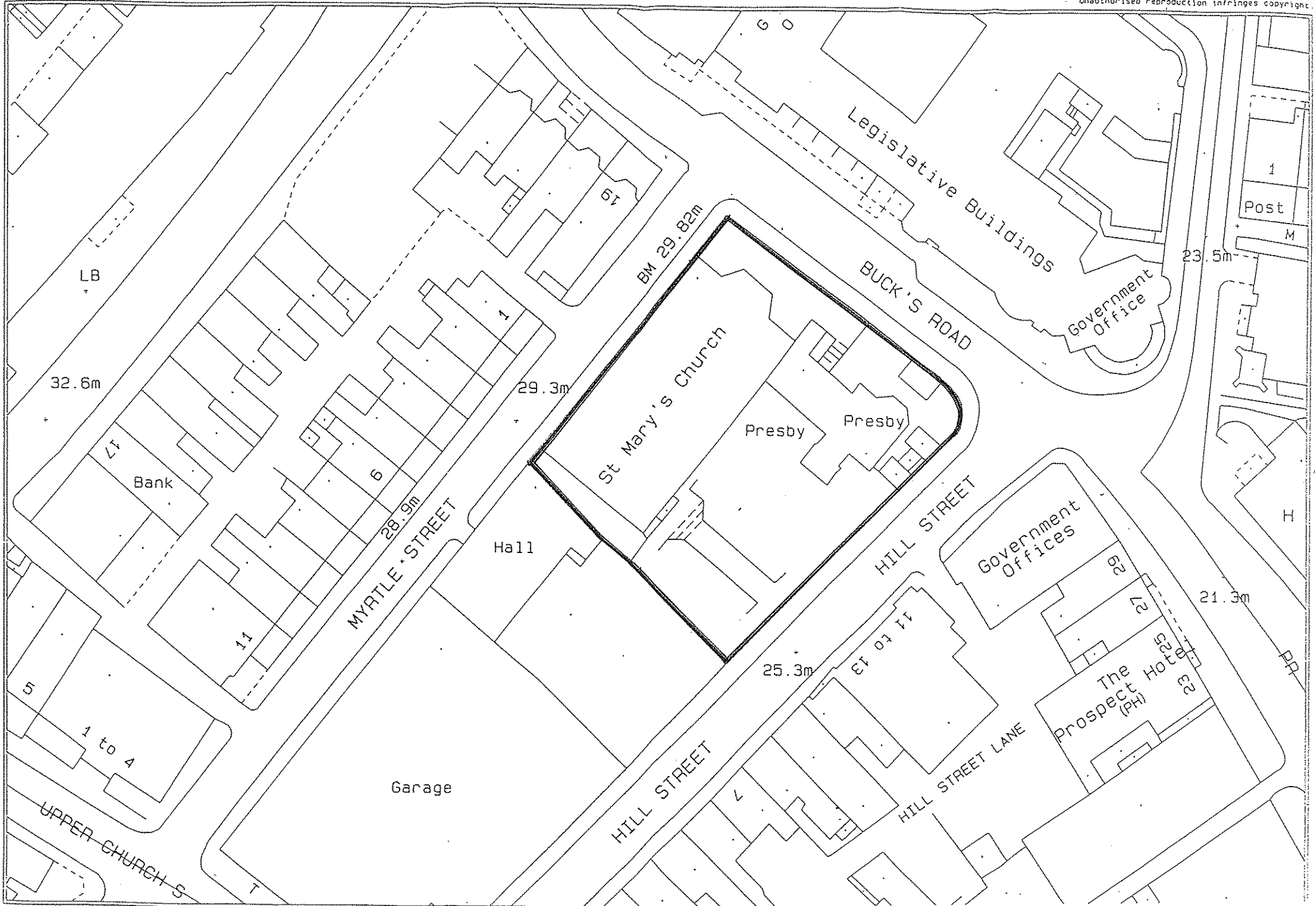
Rights to request de-registration of the building are provided under the Registered Building Regulations and in summary are that:

Applications in writing for the de-registration of the building may be made by the owners or occupier of, any other person having an interest in the building, within a period of 28 days of service of this notice. Such application should be sent to the Secretary, Planning Committee, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Murray House, Mount Havelock, Douglas, IM1 2SF.

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.:- Town Clerk, Douglas Corporation, Town Hall, Ridgeway Street, Douglas  
Director, Manx Museum and National Trust, Kingswood Grove, Douglas  
Advisory Council on Planning & the Environment, 52 Alberta Drive, Onchan

Scale 1:500



## ST. MARY'S CHURCH HILL STREET DOUGLAS

The foundation stone for St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was laid on October 28th 1857, and the Church designed by Henry Clutton of London was opened on 4th August 1859, the cost of construction being £7,000. The Church was given the name St. Mary of the Isle taking this name from the rocky islet in Douglas Bay which later became known as the Conister Rock when the Tower of Refuge had been built upon it.

St. Mary's was built to replace St. Bridget's Chapel near the Nunnery and St. Francis Xavier's on Athol Street, which were of inadequate size to accommodate their growing congregations. Clutton designed St. Mary's to be large enough for congregations swelled by thousands of visitors during the summer months.

St. Mary's reflects Clutton's favoured continental Gothic style of the 13th century. Construction was carried out by Messrs. G P White of Pimlico, London. There was considerable local opposition to the new Church as its construction was seen to be exhibiting growth of the Catholic Church on the Island, which was judged to be influential on "weak minded people." This opposition included mobs of several hundreds roaming the streets of Douglas, breaking windows in the Athol Street Chapel and at the business premises of leading Catholics. St. Mary's is surrounded by a high stone wall with a sandstone coping, this was provided to offer a sense of security to those worshipping inside. There was originally a heavy solid timber folding door, but this was replaced by iron gates designed by (Sir) Giles Gilbert Scott in 1915. This anti-Catholic sentiment continued and in 1862 wire guards were fitted to prevent further breakage of the window glass.

St. Mary's is built in local stone, with string courses and carved decoration in red sandstone imported from Whitehaven. The parapet wall at roof level around the apse of the Church dates from the post war period, it being a replacement for its delicately carved predecessor which had suffered from serious erosion.

The sides of the Church are very plain without buttress or projection. At 17 feet above floor level, a band of sandstone passes around the building, sitting upon this are the tall lancet windows, 5 to each side of the Church and 4 in the west gable. Surmounting the windows in the gable is a large St. Catherine's Wheel or Rose window. The roof to the Church is clad in Welsh blue slate, which has recently been replaced together with the gutters and fallpipes which are now in extruded aluminium.

The Church has twin towers, one being finished in a flat roof, the other with a saddleback coping. It is presumed they were not built to Clutton's original design of twin "Rhenish Helm" spires due purely to cost. The taller tower houses the Church bell which bears the inscription "Sheridan Dublin Maker 1852: Laus. Deo Virginiq. Matri Maria." The external dimensions of the church were given in 1862 as: Length 130 feet; Width 60 feet; Height to eaves 40 feet, to gable point 60 feet. The towers are 17 feet square and 80 feet high. The article stated that they would stand nearly as high again, but this was not to be.

The Presbytery was also designed by Clutton, and was constructed primarily in 1860 by Mr James Lambert of Eastfield, Douglas. He was also responsible for putting the finishing touches to the Church once White's had returned to the mainland.

The Presbytery was built in the same material as the Church, it also has been re-roofed recently. Unfortunately, the Presbytery has been fitted with uPVC windows in recent years.

A single story building, probably of 1970's origin, serves as the Church Office and rear entrance to the Presbytery. Whilst this building is in stone, it does have a flat roof which is out of keeping. Adjacent to Hill Street, the boundary wall has been pierced to allow for the construction of two single-storey, flat-roofed garages. Again these appear out of context with the Church and Presbytery.

In 1973, the entrance steps to the Church were widened into a fan-shape to provide a circulation area, also at the same time a wheelchair ramp was provided and handrails were added in 1984. The Entrance Porch is of red sandstone and houses a statue which post dates its plinth, which stood empty from construction to the 1890s.

In 1893, Messrs. Sinnott, Sinnott and Powell of Liverpool designed a single-storey Repository extension. This lean-to building extends the full width of the Church and includes the Confessionals which are accessed through the gable wall. The builder for this extension was Mr R F Douglas. The gable wall above this extension now has a smooth render finish. Adjacent to this extension is the Parish Hall which is presently being demolished to be re-developed together with the adjacent site.

It is thought that the timber porch interior, with a single side door for winter use and double doors for summer use, was built between 1861 and 1867.

The arcading which separates the nave from the aisles is spaced at 16 feet 6 inch centres, with the point of the arches some 33 feet 3 inches above the floor. The octagonal sandstone pillars measure 20 feet in height and are surmounted by Caen stone capitals which have unfortunately been painted.

Internally, ever since construction, the Church has been subject to alteration, both by necessity and also due to changing requirements to comply with new thinking within the Catholic Church. In 1888, a fund was started for what was described as the 'interior roof'. The ceiling we see today was not part of Clutton's plan which provided for heavy roof trusses exposed under a white plaster ceiling which followed the line of the roof pitch. However, impressive as it was, the open roof did nothing to keep the Church warm during the winter. Plans were prepared by Peter Paul Pugin, but his scheme was superseded by an almost identical one prepared by the Bishop's architect, Mr James Sinnott of Sinnott, Sinnott and Powell. The red Swedish timber ceiling was unveiled on 11th of August 1889.

In 1982, rot was found beneath the surface of the timber floor which was subsequently removed and replaced by a concrete floor with a carpet finish.

At the rear of the Church, beneath the organ gallery, are a series of doors pierced in the gable wall in 1893 to provide access to the new Confessionals. In 1972, the first Confessional was altered by the demolition of the wall between it and the Mission Library. The Confessional nearest to Myrtle Street was completely removed in 1974 to create the Memorial Entrance. The middle Confessional was altered in 1893 to provide the Island's first 'Open Confessional'.

The Organ Gallery, which has a herringbone-patterned front, was extended in 1874 to accommodate a new organ, this replacing the first organ which was the 1839 organ from St. Francis Xavier's. The current organ was purchased second hand and installed in the early 1920s, it was manufactured by the firm of Gray and Davison. In 1975, the Font of Caen stone was removed from the rear of the Church to its present position at the side of the choir stalls.

Much of the interior of St. Mary's we see today is the work of (Sir) Giles Gilbert Scott, his first commission was the new altar in 1909. This replaced the original wooden altar. The altar steps were covered in birds eye fossil, the frontal and gradus of the altar were constructed out of Verde di prato marble. His Triptych depicting several Manx saints. Scott's High Altar was rebuilt in 1970 so as to comply with the new requirement of the priest offering Mass facing the people. Scott then went on to design a new altar and reredos for the Lady Chapel, which was carved by Stuflesser in Italy and erected by Farmer and Brindley of London. His work extended to the niches that house the statues of St Anthony and St. Joseph, candlesticks, and in 1922 the bronze altar rails (excluding the gates which were added in 1950 by Fenning and Company).

In 1862, the first of the present Stations Of The Cross were erected, two more were added that year and the remainder in the 1870s. The Mission Cross was made in 1859 and is a life-size figure of Christ carved in wood by Theodore Phylffers.

The Presbytery has accommodation at lower ground, upper ground, first and second floors. The upper ground floor is at the same level as the Church. On this floor is an original screen with leaded glazing, with the exception of this only items of joinery including doors appear original.

It is recommended that St. Mary's of the Isle be placed on the Register of Protected Buildings for the following reasons:

- 1 Aesthetic quality
- 2 Uniqueness of architectural/design
- 3 Landmark qualities
- 4 Exceptional interior work by an international acclaimed architect/designer (Sir) Giles Gilbert Scott

## REFERENCES

- The History of St. Mary's of the Isle. Peter Kelly. 1984  
Thwaites History of the Isle of Man 1863. P 147 -149  
Isle of Man Victorian Society Newsletter. Dec 1991/Jan 1992. P 13/14









