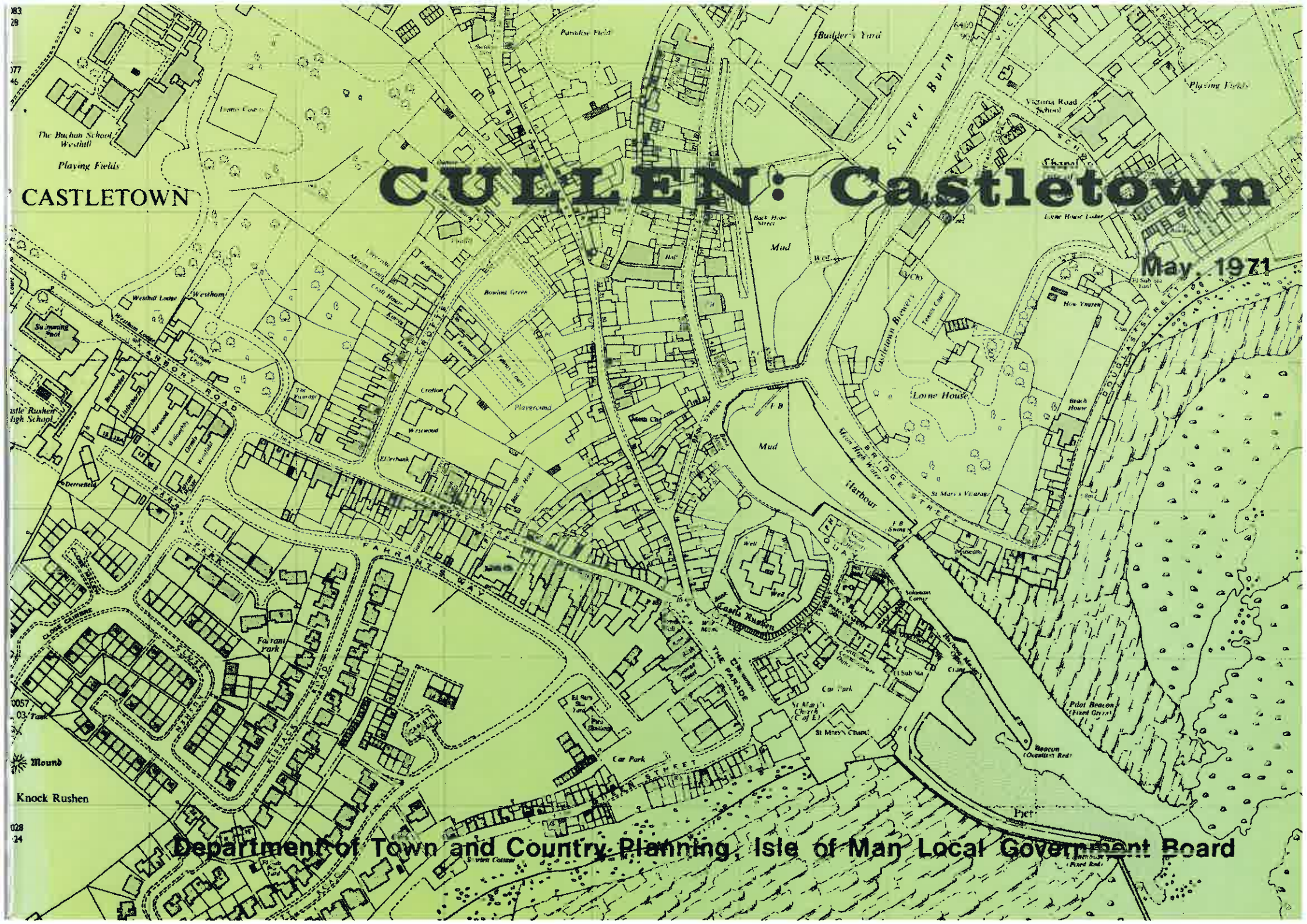


CASTLETOWN

CULLEN: Castletown

May, 1971



Department of Town and Country Planning, Isle of Man Local Government Board

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Knock Rushen

A preliminary outline of proposals intended for consultation only.

The reader of this report should not expect proposals for wholesale clearance and fashionable town centre renewal. The report is based on an understanding of the character or personality of the town and it seeks to coax this individuality into the new world of tourism, cars and coaches without essential damage. We believe that Castletown has a unique character which is a great asset. Do not destroy it.

Preliminary note on the Isle of Man

Resident population about 50,000, size somewhat less than half the G.L.C. area. It has been a free port for centuries and has a metropolitan, even suburban, feel about it out of all proportion to its size in spite of the 2,000 ft. mountains. In character a mixture of Liverpool, Ireland and Cumberland with Liverpool predominating, the same undemonstrative accent, subtle humour and ability to leave you alone.

It is in fact a town park on a very large scale, combining every kind of scenery with a remarkable road network and very little traffic. The Isle of Man can do for half the country what Regents Park does for London, provide an illusion of space which contains a whole range of sophisticated pleasures. The towns and landscapes are as it were exhibition pavilions in this park, providing for completely different tastes compared say, to the market towns of East Anglia which all have a basically similar rhythm. As well as the natural differences in shape and size the Manx towns need to differ in mood and temperament as well.

As indeed they do. Douglas the extrovert like a crescent setting for the Blackpool Tower that has moved fifty miles

out to sea, Ramsey a triste stray from Torbay, Port Erin and Port St. Mary a pair of middle of the road resorts, something for everyone like Hastings or Ramsgate. Castletown a toy capital, the sort of place that has achieved naturally what Port Meirion had to do with Italian trimmings. And Peel is just Peel, an introverted blend of Celtic and Norse for which I can't think of an equivalent. None of these towns will be well served by trying to make them look like any of the others. The fragility of Castletown and the introversion of Peel are their guarantee of a share in the tourist trade apart from seeming to suit the very different inhabitants of the two places, which feel a hundred miles apart and in fact are barely ten.

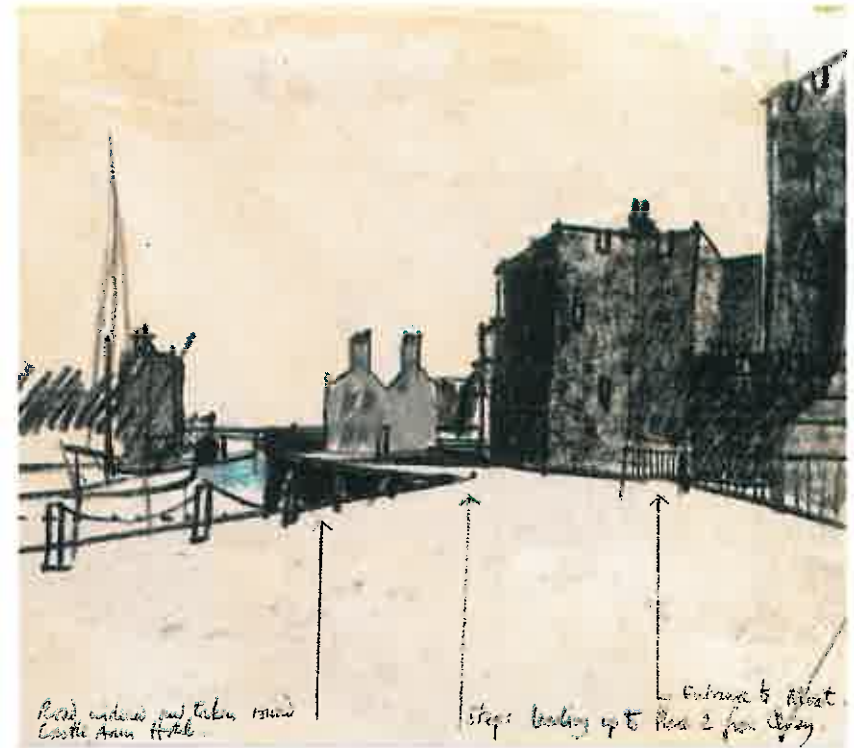
Report on Castletown

CASTLETOWN IS REALLY A TINY COUNTRY TOWN, an Appleby or Oakham, transplanted to Man and then balanced on a razor's edge between the fury of the sea and the alien bulk of the Castle, far bigger than anything else in the town, gathering its glacies and palms around it like something dropped in from the Riviera.

THIS TENSION IS EXTREMELY EXCITING, and could now be upset by the smallest action, the demolition of one more building, even. Because although sea and castle have stayed the same, the urban energy of the country town is slowly leaking inland from the harbour. And the town itself, quite apart from the site, is one of the best of its kind in Britain. The beautifully controlled views seawards on either side of the Church and indeed through the clear aisle windows of the Church, the formal square itself, the Doric column



Hotel terrace contained by Barbican. Fine anticipatory seaward view. Paint turret white?



The quay showing road widened and taken round Castle Arms Hotel. Steps lead to hotel terrace whilst most leading up to Parade peels off to the right.

