



Isle of Man
Government
Reillys Eilan Vannin

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1999

THE REGISTERED BUILDINGS REGULATIONS 2005

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at a meeting held on the 3rd March 2009, the Department of Local Government and the Environment, in pursuance of its powers under the above Acts and Regulations REGISTERED

Legion Hall Bromet Road Castletown Isle Of Man IM9 1BX

as represented by the buildings delineated on the plan hereto attached, in the PROTECTEDBUILDINGS 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 3rd March 2009,
By Order of the Department

E J **E J Callow**
Secretary, Planning Committee.

1st Floor, Murray House,
Mount Havelock,
Douglas,
IM1 2SF.

NOTE :

Under The Town and Country Planning Act 1999;

**Schedule 2
The Protected Buildings Register**

Notifications of entries on register etc.

2. (1) As soon as may be after a building has been entered in the register, or the register has been amended by removal of a building from it, the Department shall serve a notice on the owner and the occupier of the building stating that it has been entered in or removed from the register.
- (2) The owner or the occupier of, and any other person having an interest in, a building which has been entered in the register may apply to the Department to remove the building from the register-
- (a) within the prescribed period after service on him of a notice under sub-paragraph (1);
- (b) after the expiration of the prescribed period after the decision of the Department on a previous request under subsection in relation to the building.

Under the Registered Building Regulations 2005

3. Periods for purpose of Schedule 2 paragraph 2(2)

- (1) The period specified for the purposes of paragraph 2(2)(a) of Schedule 2 to the Act (period after notice of registration, within which owner or occupier may request de-registration) is 21 days.
- (2) The period specified for the purposes of paragraph 2(2)(b) of Schedule 2 to the Act (period after initial period, during which owner or occupier may not request a de-registration) is 5 years.

To: **Property Owner – FILE COPY**

Civic Centre, Farrants Way, Castletown, IM9 1NR,
Director, Manx National Heritage
Isle Of Man Natural History & Antiquarian Society

Department of Local Government and the Environment

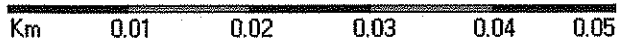
Directorate of Planning and Building Control



Isle of Man
Government



1:625



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Comments	09/00264/REGBLD
Date	03 March 2009



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Dated this 3rd March 2009,
By Order of the Department

REGISTERED BUILDING CONFIRMATION

NAME: Former World War Two Cinema and Gymnasium, latterly The Royal British Legion Hall

ADDRESS: Bromet Road, Castletown

POST CODE: IM9 1BX

LOCAL AUTHORITY: Castletown Commissioners

GRID REF: 271 679

Introduction

The Royal British Legion Hall was constructed by the Admiralty as a cinema and gymnasium during the Second World War. The building was located on the Castletown Camp which was one of the domestic sites providing accommodation for the personnel of H.M.S. Urley, the Naval Station at Ronaldsway.

The building is significant because it is the only surviving structure on any of the station's domestic sites and it has remained largely in its original condition.

History

Suitable areas of flat ground were adopted as landing grounds during the early years of aviation in the Isle of Man. A large field at Ronaldsway became a popular site for landing aircraft and a civil aerodrome developed there during the early decades of the twentieth century.

During the early part of the Second World War, there were huge developments taking place at Andreas and Jurby airfields, but there was little in comparison at Ronaldsway. Around the same time, the Admiralty (responsible for the command of the Royal Navy) was short of air stations and needed further accommodation to train and house its crews. The three sites in the Isle of Man were looked at, but the RAF refused to give up Andreas or Jurby airfields and of the three, Ronaldsway was the best site for the Station because of its position next to the sea (Isle of Man Airport Website).

The decision to use Ronaldsway was made by the end of 1942 and in early 1943 the Manx authorities were told of the Admiralty's intentions to turn the area into a Royal Naval Station. Shortly after, the Admiralty compulsorily purchased the large Ronaldsway estate, plus two smaller adjacent farms, Ballagilley and the Creggans. In addition to this, "*Accommodation off the airfield for 2,000 naval personnel was required and land at Janet's Corner, Castletown, and in Ballasalla was purchased for this purpose.*" (Kniveton G.N., 1985, p.64). The name 'Janet's Corner' had no connection with the Station, but rather it simply came from a woman named

Janet Walkington who lived at the end of the nineteenth century and had a small shop on a corner in the area now bearing her name (Mona's Herald 02/02/1971 and 26/01/1971). Janet Walkington was listed as a resident of Bowling Green Road in Browns Directory of 1894.

In 1943, works began to transform the site and the main contractor who was responsible for the construction of the buildings, along with the airfield itself was John Laing & Sons., a Carlisle firm. Materials were supplied from local sources, with sand and gravel coming from C. Kniveton Ltd. of Braddan and from the Point of Ayre. There was also a plant which produced the concrete blocks used in the construction of hundreds of Admiralty designed buildings (Kniveton G.N., 1985).

The Naval Station at Ronaldsway was commissioned on 21st June 1944 and it was named H.M.S. Urley, after the Manx name for eagle (Manx Electric Railway Society, 1999).

The British Legion Hall was at that time part of the Station's Castletown Camp and a map of "*HMS Urley Castletown Camp 1945*" shows that it was a domestic camp which once covered the site now occupied by the Janet's corner estate. The building now used as the Legion Hall occupied a central position in the camp and the map referred to it as "*Gymnasium & Cinema*" (Francis P., 2006, p.56). The naval workers were housed in the many Nissen huts sited there.

Following the end of the Second World War, the Admiralty no longer had a need for their Station at Ronaldsway, or for the camps at Janet's Corner and Ballasalla. As a result of this, by the end of 1945 the huts within the camps had become empty, on 14th January 1946 H.M.S. Urley was decommissioned and on 28th August 1946 the ownership of Ronaldsway was transferred to the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The Isle of Man Government considered the empty camps at Janet's Corner and Ballasalla to be a possible solution to the post-war housing shortage and in August 1946, Tynwald voted to purchase both of the camps from the Admiralty (IOM Weekly Times, 17/08/46). The two sites were excellent locations for temporary housing as the numerous Nissen huts could be easily converted into homes, electricity and water was already supplied and the main bus route between Douglas and Castletown was close by. In addition to this, the cinema at Janet's Corner was said to be one of the "*definite assets*" of the camps (IOM Weekly Times, 17/08/46, p.5). The Nissen huts on the camps were converted into 2, 3 or 4 bedroom homes, with the Ballasalla site being developed first, followed by Janet's Corner where accommodation was provided for 120 families (Isle of Man Airport website). It was felt that the Janet's Corner site was an ideal location for development and that although the Nissen hut conversions would only provide temporary accommodation, it was highly likely that there would be permanent homes built at Janet's Corner in time (Isle of Man Weekly Times, 19/10/46).

The Isle of Man Government purchased Ronaldsway airport in 1948 and in the same year they approved a plan to replace the temporary Nissen huts at Janet's Corner with 66 newly constructed houses. The development took place in stages until all the huts were removed, leaving the gymnasium/cinema building as the only surviving World War Two structure on the site.

In May 1960, the gymnasium/cinema building was given to the Castletown Branch of the Royal British Legion by Tynwald for no charge and it has remained in their ownership to the present day (November 2007).

Architecture

The building is a standard cinema construction, which was designed by the Admiralty to their drawing number AL13/43 (Francis P., 2006).

The structure comprises three distinct sections. The first is a two-storey brick-built end section, the second is a central Romney Shed which forms the main portion of the building, and the third is a small brick-built building at the far end, which replaced an earlier 16ft span Nissen hut which formerly stood on the site.

Nissen huts were a First World War invention and they continued to be used as the main building type for living accommodation during World War Two. Romney Sheds were larger than Nissen Huts and they were designed mainly for storage purposes by the Directorate of Fortifications and Works at Romney House, London in 1943. Romney Sheds were sometimes modified in order to be used as workshops, boiler houses, canteens or cinemas (Francis P., 2006).

The main entrance is in the two-storey brick-built end section. Here at ground level there is a crush hall, ticket office and toilets. Above this at first floor level there is a projection room centred between a cinema laboratory and a rewind room.

The main section of the building is the Romney Shed, which forms the auditorium. The Romney Shed is a standard sized shed, being 12 bays long and 96ft in length. The external covering to the shed is corrugated asbestos sheeting. The interior of the auditorium is open plan with a stage at the far end and four emergency exits evenly-spaced with two on either side. The emergency exits have each retained their brick-built blackout porches. Behind the stage there is a link to the brick-built extension where there is a dressing room. This extension replaced a 16ft Nissen hut which once stood on the site.

CONCLUSION

The British Legion Hall at Janet's Corner is the only surviving H.M.S. Urley structure on the Janet's Corner site and it has also remained largely unaltered since its construction, still retaining its original entrance foyer, dance floor, stage and projection room.

The building should be given careful consideration for Registration as it is a World War Two survivor which has retained its original equipment and fittings and it is therefore considered to be important in a British Isles context (Francis P., 2006).

RECOMMENDATION

The British Legion Hall is suggested for inclusion on the Protected Buildings Register for the following reasons;

Historic Interest:

This building illustrates an important aspect of the Island's social and military history. It is also of historic interest in the local context of Castletown, the Island, and in a National (British Isles) context (Francis P., 2006).

Close Historical Association:

The building is closely linked with the impact of World War Two on the Island.

Age and Rarity:

Whilst certainly not ancient, it is a World War Two survivor which has retained its original equipment and fittings and it is therefore considered to be important in a British Isles context (Francis P., 2006 – Paul Francis is the recognized expert on World War Two structures in the United Kingdom).

Recommendation accepted

Clm Christian 3/3/09

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Books

Francis P., 2006, *Isle of Man 20th Century Military Archaeology, Part 4: Ronaldsway Airport.*

Kniveton G.N., 1985, *Manx Aviation in War and Peace.*

Newspapers

Isle of Man Weekly Times, 25/05/45, p.6, *H.M.S. Urley as Housing Estate.*

Isle of Man Weekly Times, 17/08/46, p.5, *Huts for the People – Manx Government Purchases Fleet Air Arm Camp.*

Isle of Man Weekly Times, 19/10/46, p.5, *More Nissen Huts as Residences – Janet's Corner Camp to be Converted – Will Probably be Site for Permanent Houses in Time.*

Directories

Browns Directory, 1894.

Maps and Plans

Current digital maps, **DoLGE.**

Internet Sites

Isle of Man Airport Website
www.gov.im/airport/virtual/history

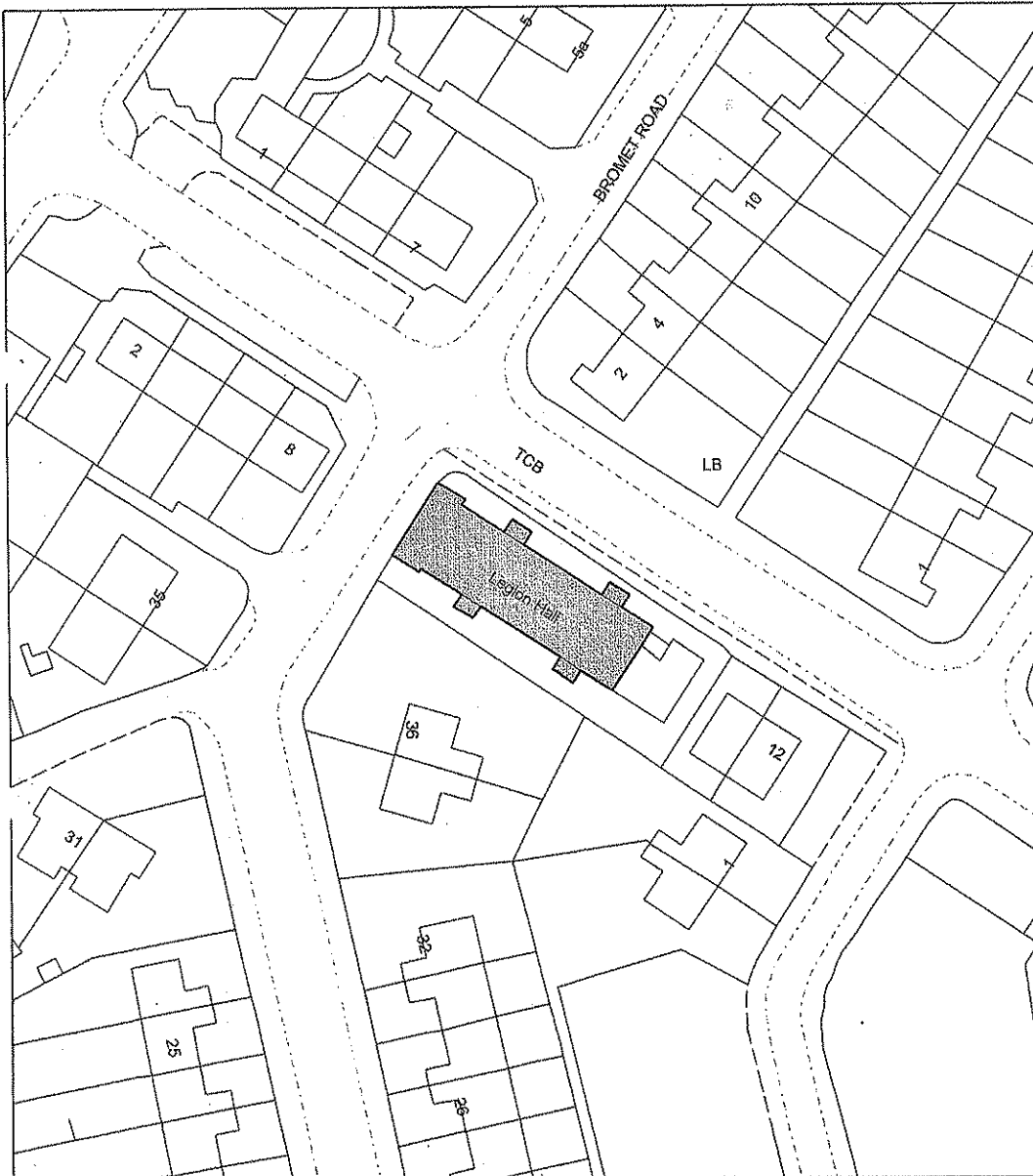
Manx Electric Railway Society (The Industrial Archaeology of the Isle of Man – Air Transport)
www.mers.org.im/keynotes41.htm

Manx Aviation Preservation Society Museum
www.maps.iofm.net/off_the_ground.htm

Nissen Huts
www.nissens.co.uk/default.htm

Department of Local Government and the Environment

Directorate of Planning and Building Control



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