

Building Recording & Analysis at

Empire Cinema, Stanley Street, Holyhead

NGR SH 224685 382777



Report Number: CR46-2013



C.R Archaeology

Compiled by C. Rees & M. Jones

On Behalf of Isle of Anglesey County Council

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Summery

Documentary research has shown that the Empire Cinema was originally built as a private house – Newry House, which was later subdivided into homes and offices which were let to professional men and their families. Part of the structure was converted for use as a theatre in the early Twentieth Century and by the 1920's was in use as a theatre and cinema. At around this time the façade was modified and the distinctive curved frontage added.

No interior features or divisions belonging to the Newry House phase of building have survived. Many of the modifications associated with the early days of the Empire were lost in the late Twentieth Century although there are key elements which survive and allow us to at least in part create an accurate picture of how the interior would have appeared in 1920. The proscenium, ceiling and architraves/ plaster mouldings survive in the auditorium. The gallery survives in a modified form and it is believed that more plaster details are concealed above the suspended ceiling in Room 3. The rigging and galleries above the backstage area are all original and survive in their entirety.

Little modification of the building exterior has taken place since 1920 and with the exception of the removal of the chimneys sometime after the 1970's it is as built. The Empire Cinema is a fine example of an Art-Deco façade and the building is a notable feature given the towns predominately nineteenth century frontages.

The Empire follows the rise and fall of the cinema and provided an affordable escape for the people of Holyhead during the economic depression of the Twentieth Century. The rejuvenation of this iconic building will greatly enhance the townscape and the Empire Cinema when it re-opens will once more be a valuable resource for the town.

Results of Building Recording & Analysis at Empire Cinema, Stanley Street, Holyhead

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1.0 Introduction

C.R Archaeology have been instructed by Isle of Anglesey County Council to conduct archaeological building recording and analysis at the Empire Cinema. The building was originally built as a private house which was later subdivided into homes and offices which were let to professional men and their families. Part of the structure was converted for use as a theatre in the early Twentieth Century and by the 1920's was in use as a cinema. At around this time the façade was modified and the distinctive curved frontage added.

The site is situated in an urban setting and is located at 39 Stanley Street (SH 224685 382777) in the centre of Holyhead, Anglesey (figure 1). Schematic maps show that there are buildings in the vicinity of the Empire Cinema building in the Eighteenth Century although none are the current structure. The first dated map which clearly shows the building is dated 1820 although it may be as early as the late Eighteenth Century.

The buildings is not listed but it is recorded on the RCAHMW database (NPRN 416014) as a Twentieth Century recreational building. It is located within the extension of towns designated Conservation Area (www.holyheadforward). The extent of the Conservation Area is shown in Figure 2.

The archaeological works conducted at the Empire Cinema created a Level 3 building record. This included the collection of archive material which forms the historical background section of this report and the compilation of a photographic record of the site. A drawn survey of the property was produced by Dewis Architecture.

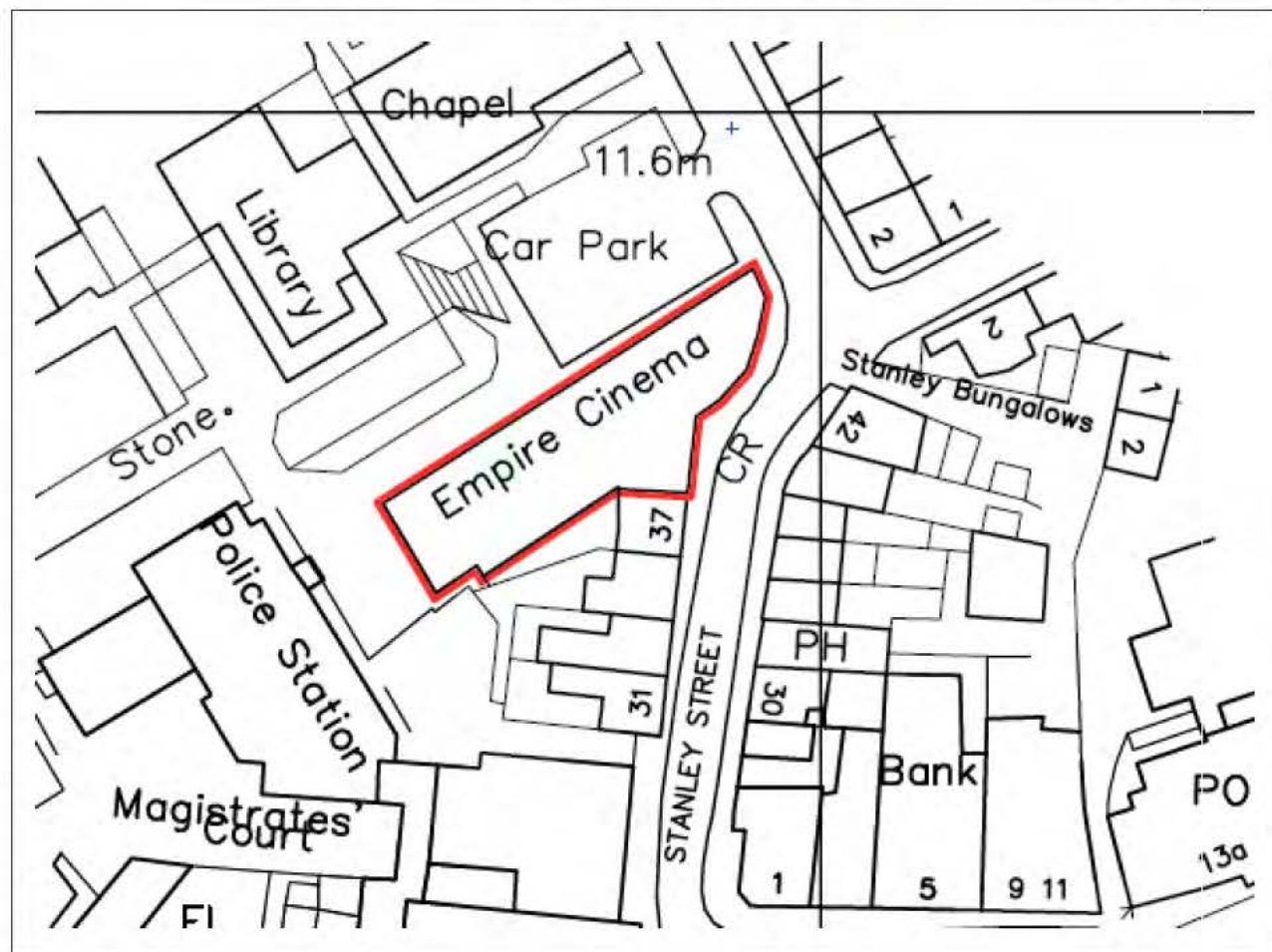
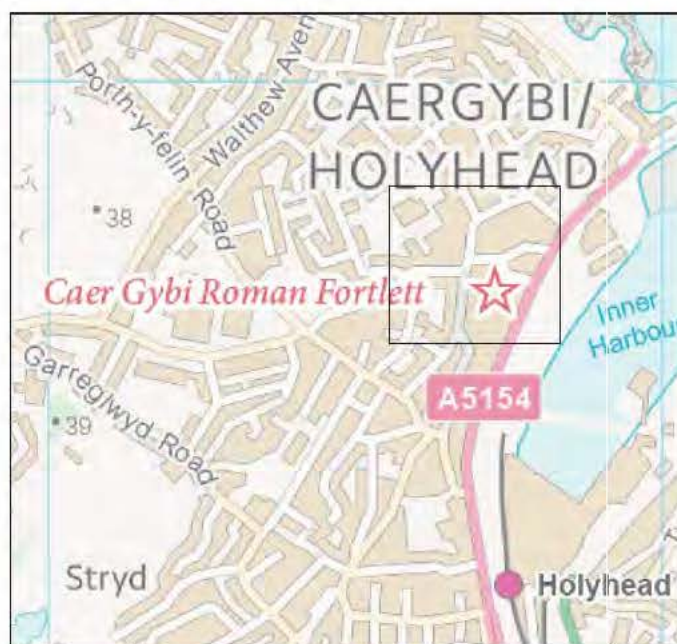
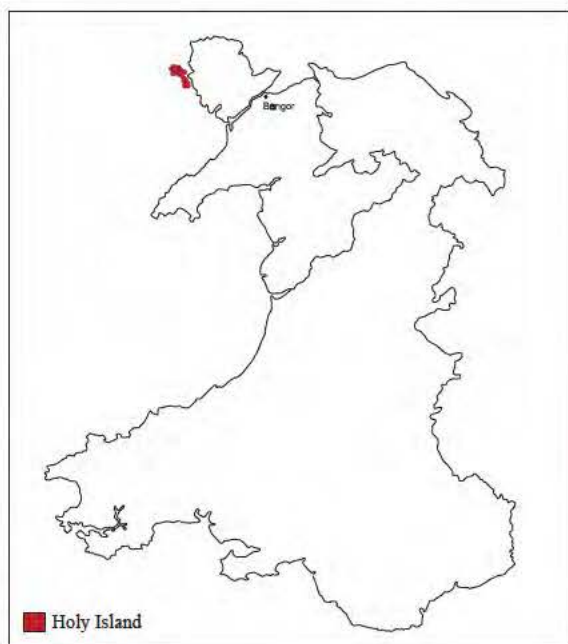


Figure 1. Empire Cinema Location Map
 (Source: OS Open Data Mapping Contains Ordnance Survey data
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Atodiad XIV

Appendix XIV

Cynllun yn dangos terfyn presennol yr
ardal gadwraeth, lleoliad y prif adeiladau
a cyfeiriad golygfeydd

Existing conservation area boundary,
location of principle buildings
and direction of views plan

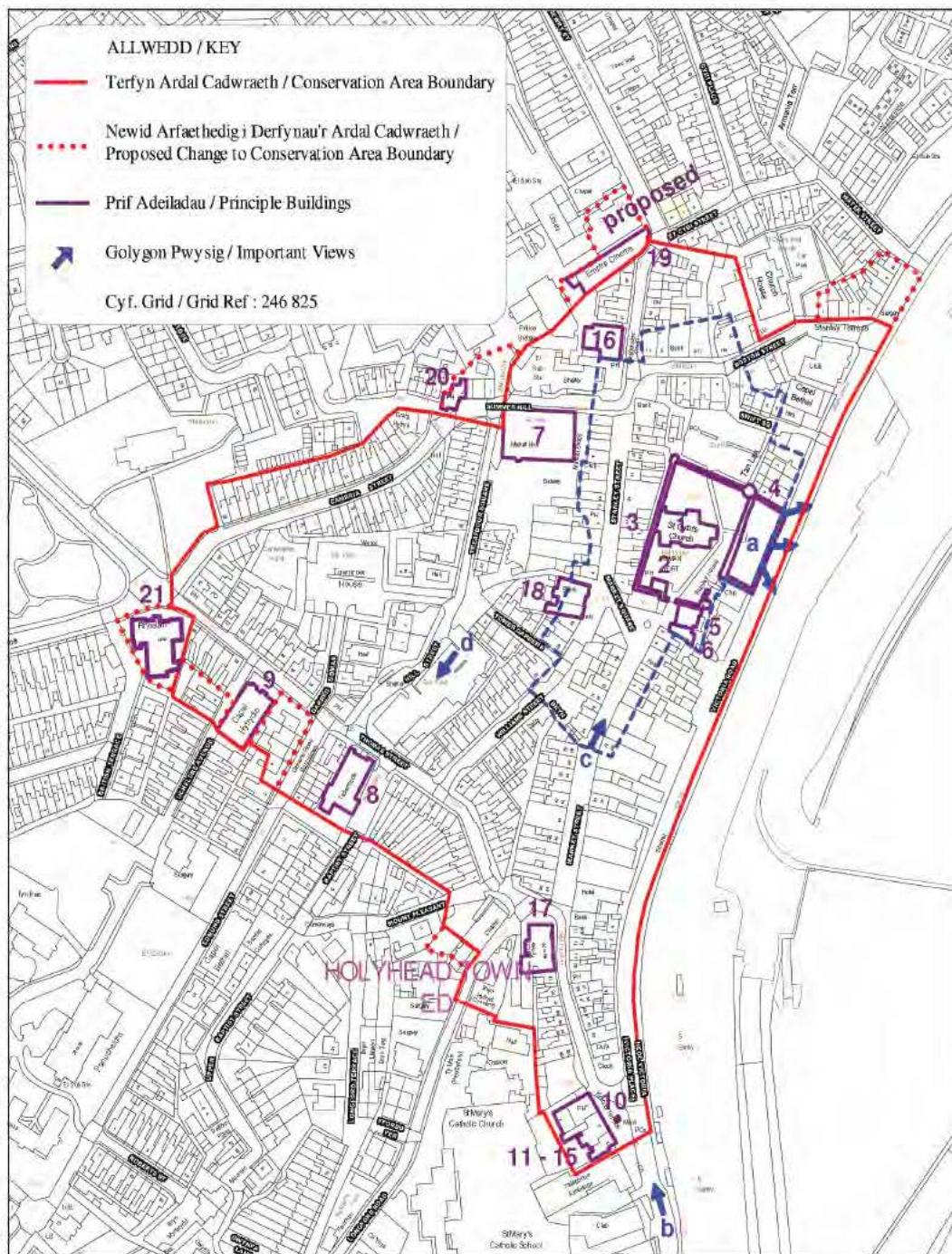


Figure 2. Holyhead Conservation Area Boundary (Source: www.anglesey.gov.uk)

2.0 Project Aims

The programme of works undertaken at the site aimed to create a Level 3 Historic Building Record of the building.

The first aim of the scheme of works was to undertake desk based historical research exploring the history of the property. This information included a map progression, photographic illustrations, archival research, an examination of tithe and census records and a search for entries in historic trade directories which were utilised to compile a coherent narrative history of the site.

The second aim of this archaeological investigation was to create a comprehensive level 3 photographic and drawn record of the site.

3.0 Scheme of Works - Methodology

The archaeological works were conducted in three sections, each of which is detailed separately below. The methodology employed conformed to the requirements of a Level 3 Analytical Building Record as specified in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006) and The Institute for Archaeologists: *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (Revised 2008).

The following points are detailed in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006).

The record created for the Empire Cinema consists of:

Written Account	Points 1-3, 5-13, 22
Drawings	Points 2-9
Photography	Points 1-9

3.1 Desk Based Research

A complete and coherent history of the site was compiled utilising information sourced from Anglesey Archives, Bangor University Archives and local libraries. A full map progression was undertaken along with a search of tithe records, tax records, trade directories and census returns. Web resources were also utilised.

The works were carried in accordance with the IfA Standards and Guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment (IfA 2009) and will include the information required to fulfil points 1-3, 5-9, 11-13 & 22 as specified in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006).

This material forms the historical background for this archaeological report. The report also includes the results of the photographic survey and an additional compact disc containing all site images in Tiff format.

3.2 Drawn Survey

Plans and elevations of the site were produced by Dewis Architecture. Copies of these drawings were taken to site when C.R Archaeology visited to compile a photographic record and were annotated to show the location/direction of photographs taken and to record the position of architectural features.

These drawings fulfil points 2-7 as specified in “*Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice*” (English Heritage 2006). Location plans and historical material have been produced/sourced by C.R Archaeology to fulfil criteria 8-9 in the aforementioned document.

3.3 Photographic Survey

A photographic survey of the properties was undertaken by Matthew Jones of C.R Archaeology in September 2013. This work consisted of:

- 1) A photographic survey of the building exterior
- 2) A photographic survey of the building interior

3.3.1 Equipment

A photographic survey of the building was undertaken using a 14.2 mega-pixel Sony A350 digital camera with a variety of standard and other lenses. Images were captured in RAW format for processing into high resolution JPG and TIFF files.

Where possible all exterior and interior elevations of the building were photographed with scales from ground level. Additional photographs were taken detailing important architectural features.

The methodology employed conforms to the requirements of photographic recording to the equivalent of a level 3 survey, as specified in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006) and will include works specified in points 1-9.

3.3.2 Timetable for Proposed Works

A day was spent on site in September 2013. A further 5 days were utilised for archive research, report compilation and site archiving.

3.4 Staffing

The project was managed by Catherine Rees (BA (Archaeology), MA (Archaeology), PgDip (Historic Environment Conservation)). Site works were conducted by Matthew Jones. All staff have a skill set equivalent to the IfA AIfA level. CVs for all staff employed on the project can be provided on request.

The project was carried out in accordance with IfA *Standard and Guidance* documents.

3.5 Monitoring

The project was not subject to monitoring by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services as this work was conducted outside the planning process. A draft copy of the report will be submitted to Anglesey County Council prior to submission of the final report. Hard copies of the report will be lodged with the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record and at Anglesey Archives, Llangefni. A CD containing the photographic archive and a PDF version of the report will also be submitted to the RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

3.6 Health and Safety

A risk assessment was conducted prior to the commencement of works and site staff were familiarised with its contents. A first aid kit was located in the site vehicle.

All staff were issued with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the site work.

This consisted of:

- Safety Helmets (EN397)
- Hi-visibility vests (EN471)
- Safety footwear – steel toecap and mid-sole boots and Wellingtons (EN345-47)

All staff have passed at least a CITB health and safety test at least operative level and carry a Construction Related Organisation (CRO) White Card for Archaeological Technician (Code 5363).

3.7 The Report

The report clearly and accurately incorporates information gained from the programme of archaeological works. It presents the documentary evidence gathered in such a way as to create a clear and coherent record. The report contains a site plan showing the locations of photographs taken.

The report includes:

- A location plan,
- A plan illustrating the location and direction of any photographs or drawings in the text
- Full dimensional and descriptive detail
- A full bibliography of sources consulted
- An archive compact disc

A digital Adobe PDF version and a bound paper copy of the final report and will be lodged with Anglesey County Council, Gwynedd Historic Environment Record, RCHMW Aberystwyth and Anglesey Archives on completion of the project. The site archive including copies of all photographs in RAW and Tiff format will be deposited at Anglesey Archives.

3.7.1 Copyright

C.R Archaeology and sub-contractors shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides a licence to the client and the local authority for the use of the report by the client and the local authority in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

The copyright for the architects plans and elevations is retained by Dewis Architecture.

4.0 Geographical and Geological Context

4.1 Topography

The properties to be recorded are located on Stanley Street in the commercial centre of Holyhead, a sea port in the north-western part of the Isle of Anglesey.

The site falls within the designated conservation area for the town. The town is characterised as dating predominately from the nineteenth century with “the terraces, chapels and other buildings mostly of the modest sub-classical type found throughout the industrial expansion in NW Wales” (Haslam, Orbach & Voelcker 2009:127).

The town of Holyhead is situated in a key location along the route from London to Dublin and is the shortest crossing point between the two land masses.

4.2 Geology

The superficial geology of the site is described as “Till, Devensian - Diamicton. Superficial Deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. Local environment previously dominated by ice age conditions. These rocks were formed in cold periods with Ice Age glaciers scouring the landscape and depositing moraines of till with outwash sand and gravel deposits from seasonal and post glacial meltwaters” (www.bgs.ac.uk).

The bedrock is detailed as “New Harbour Group - Mica Schist And Psammite. Metamorphic Bedrock formed approximately 545 to 650 million years ago in the Neoproterozoic Period. Originally sedimentary rocks formed in deep seas. Later altered by low-grade metamorphism. These rocks were first deposited as graded clastic sediments or turbidites in the deep sea, and then later metamorphosed, though there is evidence of their sedimentary origin.” (www.bgs.ac.uk).

5.0 Historical Background

The first public film exhibition in Britain was held on the 21st February 1896 in the Great Hall of the Polytechnic Institution, Upper Regent Street, London. A programme of shorts made by the Lumière brothers using their Cinématographe was shown which was so successful that by the 9th March it had been transferred to the Empire music hall in Leicester Square where it ran for a further eighteen months. A British enterprise run by R. W Paul opened the rival Theatrograph in March 1896 and was a public attraction at Olympia before being adopted by other theatres. By the end of 1896 moving pictures were being presented in fairground booths and public halls across Britain (Eyles 2001: 4).

Within two years pioneering cinematographers had brought moving pictures to North Wales with a selection of self-filmed shorts. This area was dominated by the flamboyant showman Arthur Cheetham who was the first film maker in Wales and the first person to shoot events specifically to screen them in his own shows. In 1898 Cheetham visited Holyhead and filmed the Mailboat Munster arriving at the port (Berry 1994: 36-39). Anecdotal evidence has indicated that Cheetham showed his films at the Town Hall during his filming visits to Holyhead (www.cinema-treasures.org).

Numerous buildings were converted for use as cinemas and by the early Twentieth Century purpose built cinemas were erected throughout Britain and by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 even small towns had full-time cinemas (Eyles 2001: 4). The first place to screen cinema films in Holyhead was the Town Hall c.1910 and in all Holyhead was to have at least four, possibly five, picture houses, although not all were exclusively used for showing films.

The Empire is believed to have shown its first film c.1920 but despite being recorded on the RCAHMS database as a Twentieth Century structure the origins of the building are earlier and it first appears on an estate map of 1820 although it is possible that the building may date from the late Eighteenth Century.

The following section will first examine the pre-cinema history of the building, placing it within the context of the development of Holyhead. It will trace the changes in building use exploring the rise in popularity of cinemas, both in Wales and more specifically in Holyhead.

5.1 The Development of the town of Holyhead – Sixteenth to Late Eighteenth Century

The fortunes of the town of Holyhead are closely interwoven with those of the harbour and the route to Ireland. As the shortest sea crossing Holyhead was of key strategic importance in the governance of Ireland and in 1561 John ap Pierce of Holyhead was contracted by the Vice Treasurer of Ireland to supply a vessel for the conveyance of Government Messages (www.anglesey.gov.uk).

Holyhead continued as a centre of trade and transport, albeit on a relatively modest scale and late seventeenth and eighteenth century sources show the church at Holyhead and two rows of houses lining the main street. These sources include a sketch map of the town in 1737 and a Sea Chart of 1748, both drawn by Lewis Morris which enforce this idea of a much reduced centre of the town developing in a strip between the church and the port.

There are a number of interesting descriptions of Holyhead written around this time which emphasise the vernacular nature of the housing. In a discussion of this period the work of Williams (Williams 1950:53) draws on the work of Defoe in which he describes Holyhead as unpretentious and straw thatched but with “*good accommodation in lodgings and diet within*”. Rowlands work of 1989 also describes much of mid eighteenth century Holyhead as undeveloped with many greenfield areas and few houses and cottages. He includes a contemporary description which details the lack of capacity of the town to house its increasing volume of visitors and states “*there were so many Lords and Ladies in the town that the inns were full and they are compelled to put up at houses with thatched roofs*” (Rowland 1989: 11).

A source dated 1770 records Holyhead as “*little more than a fishing town, rendered considerable by being the place of general passage to Ireland*” (Unknown 1783: 18). The volume of this traffic is shown in the letters of William Morris and writing in 1753 he notes that “*we had eight coaches, chariots and post chaises in the compass of 48 hours from Chester*” (Rowland 1989: 11).

In the years leading up to the Act of Union with Ireland in 1801 Holyhead was to undergo rapid development, spurred on by improvements in transport networks notably the turnpike roads of the mid-late nineteenth century. These improvements were begun between Oswestry and Froncysyllte in 1756 and in 1765 the road across Anglesey from Porthaethwy to Holyhead was turnpiked (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 10). The success of these roads was however called into question in an account of the town written in 1770 which states that “*the turnpike road from*

Porthaethwy to Holyhead, 26 miles, is very ill kept for the first five miles, being pitched with great stones, but suffered to lie in great holes. The best part is that between Gwinde and Holyhead, 13 miles. The descent to the ferry-house is execrably rough and dirty; yet here are two toll-gates on this road and one would think traffic sufficient” (Unknown 1783:19).

A number of prominent landowning families in the area had foreseen the rising market for land in the parish and they seized upon the opportunities to add to their wealth through the increased number of visitors the improved road links brought into the town. The Eagle and Child, an imposing English style inn bearing the Stanley crest, was built by Margaret Owen (Penrhos Estate) just before 1770. The Eagle and Child was the principle terminus for coaches and the erection of the nearby Hibernia Inn with a pleasure house on Salt Island and a tidal bathing pool was a direct challenge to the family by the Llanfawr Estate. Both places were run by lessees rather than family members and represent a change in the traditions of the town (Williams 1950: 63).

Penrhos estate lands were leased for periods of three-lifetimes and a row of three-storey houses were built on the on the seaward side of the upper portion of Market Street by the Parrys and Taylors in 1774. (It is noted that these houses were likely built on the footings of earlier structures). The ordered development of the town was however frustrated by the sale of Lligwy, Swift, Llanfawr and Treaddur lands which allowed a more piecemeal development despite attempts by the Stanley family to buy up all land appearing on the market (Williams 1950: 64-5).

An estate map of Holyhead was commissioned by Lord Stanley in 1769 which shows that the plot occupied by the Empire Cinema had yet to be developed as housing and is recorded as belonging to Mr Morris (Figure 3). This document demonstrates the centralised character of Holyhead at this time with the majority of the housing concentrated below the church. The row of houses above the church extends to below the plot on which the Empire building was later erected. It is unclear exactly when this plot was developed but it is believed to have taken place relatively soon after this map was produced as the expansion of Holyhead continues and encroaches on outlying areas.



Figure 3. 1769 Stanley Estate Map of Holyhead. Approximate Position Later Occupied by Newry House is Marked in Red
(Source: Bangor University Archives Penrhos Manuscripts 772-3)



Figure 4. 1820 Stanley Estate Map of Holyhead. Newry House is Marked in Red
(Source: Anglesey Archives WMaps/52/1)



Figure 5. 1841 Tithe Map of Holyhead. Newry House is Marked in Red
(Source: Anglesey Archives WMaps/53)



11	House	1	William Mitchell	House	Man	57	Surgeon & Apothecary	Holyhead	Dr
			Elizabeth Dr	Wife	Man	58		Do	Do
			Mary H. Boyle	Wife	Man	55	Farmers Daughter	Do	Do
			Thomas Gray	Apprentice	Man	25	Ap. Surgeon	Ireland	
			Ann Williams	Servant	Man	27	Barry, Maid	Donagh Anglessey	
			John Hughes	Servant	Man	19	House Maid	Donagh Anglessey	

Figure 6 (Left). 1850 Lligwy Estate Map of Holyhead. Position of Newry House is Marked in Red
(Source: Bangor University Archives Lligwy Papers 214)

Figure 7 (Above). Extract from the 1861 Census for Newry House

In her discussion of the development of Holyhead Lucy Williams mentions Newry House as an Eighteenth Century structure but no references or details are given (Williams 1950: 52). An earlier paper written by Williams in 1944 discusses the house and gardens belonging to William Morris which she locates as having stood near where the Caernarfon Castle public house now stands. She describes Morris, and later his daughter Jane, as owning a strip of land from the Caernarfon Castle as far as the location of the area occupied by the present Empire Cinema. This is reinforced by the 1769 estate Map which also names Mr Morris as owning the strip.

5.2 The Act of Union and Thomas Telford's Holyhead Road – 1801 to 1840

The Act of Union between the Irish and British parliaments was passed on the 1st January 1801 and from this point Irish MPs and peers sat in the parliament of the United Kingdom. It was therefore necessary that there was a fast and reliable communication route between London and Dublin for the transportation of mail, members of parliament, officials and when necessary troops. The current turnpike system, although much improved, was not sufficient to allow this particularly around the dangerous crossings of the Afon Conwy and Menai Straits (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 1-2).

The first elements along this route to be improved were the two ports of Dublin and Holyhead and works were begun on John Rennie's massive Admiralty Pier which protected the ports inner harbour. Works on this ambitious project were completed in 1821 (ibid: 3).

A number of maps from this development survive but they do not detail the town as a whole and show only the seaward side of Holyhead. They show further development in the vicinity of the study area and an increase in housing provision in the town, but we cannot identify the Empire Building.

Between 1810 and 1824 the government spent £150,000 improving harbour facilities. This included the building of a pier at Salt Island and the creation of a “graving dock” which allowed ships to be floated for cleaning and repair. The improvements allowed the Post Office to use paddle steamers rather than the traditional sailing packets to take mail between Holyhead and Dublin. The early nineteenth century was a time of great hardship for the working classes of the United Kingdom with unemployment, social unrest and rising food prices and these works provided employment for local people and the prospect of work attracted a large number of incomers (Rowlands 1989: 15-16).

The employment and trading opportunities offered by the harbour development in Holyhead were very attractive and the town was to benefit from the influx of money and, perhaps of greater importance, an optimism in the assured future of the town. The increase in the status of the town was exemplified in 1821 when George IV visited Holyhead. The new-found confidence in the town is reflected in the population numbers and between 1801 and 1841 the number of inhabitants increased from 2,132 to 3,869 (Rowlands 1989: 15-16). 1801 was a key year for the population of Holyhead as, for the first time, it overtakes that of the Island's previous principle town of Beumaris (www.anglesey.gov.uk).

An estate map produced for the Stanley family in 1820 (Figure 4) shows a continued increase in housing density and is the earliest source which shows the Empire Building. The structure is shown as a detached property set within its own grounds. The land is not in the ownership of Stanley and the owner is not recorded on the document. This date is the latest date for the erection of the building but as this area of Holyhead is not shown on maps dated between 1769 and 1820 it could have been built at any time between these two dates.

Telford's Holyhead road was completed in 1826 with the opening of the Menai Suspension Bridge (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 3) and by 1828 the coach journey from London to Holyhead had shortened to 29 hours and 17 minutes (Rowlands 1989: 24). This road, although intended primarily to take mail coaches and their passengers, generated a considerable volume of stage coach, posting and private travel along with a more limited amount of freight transport (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 5).

Despite being the first major civilian, state-funded infrastructure scheme of modern times the heyday of this route was limited to a relatively short period between the late 1820's and 1830's. Technological advances of the era were to rapidly supersede this great achievement and between 1837 and 1850 the successive opening of railways between London and Holyhead caused a steep decline in the traffic using the road. In 1851 Parliamentary funding for the maintenance of the road was stopped (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 3-4).

5.3 The Arrival of the Railway in Holyhead 1841 - 1900

The next great phase of development in the history of Holyhead was to be heralded by the advent of the railway. Throughout the 1840's there was a programme to construct a railway across Anglesey and in 1848 the first train arrived in Holyhead (Rowlands 1989: 24).

The momentum of the preceding period was continued and further port improvements, in particular the building of the breakwater, attracted national attention due to the sheer magnitude of the operation (Rowlands 1989: 24). The population increase between 1801 and 1841 was eclipsed by that which occurred between 1841 and 1851 when it increased by a further 4,994 to reach 8,863 – a figure which shows a more than doubling of the population in ten years (Rowlands 1989: 16).

These new inhabitants had to be accommodated and the remaining rural characteristics of the town which had survived the earlier part of the century were rapidly lost and by the time of the production of the Tithe Map of the town in 1841 (Figure 5) and the main street outline as surviving today is largely established, although there was continued infilling within the street layout into the early twentieth century (Rowlands 1989: 16).

This map names the property which is later to become the Empire Theatre as Newry House and Gardens and it is owned by Jane Jones and rented to a Mr William Matthew. The name Newry appears again on a number of the neighbouring strips of land. These plots have changed hands since the production of the 1769 estate map. This would infer that Newry House is the centre of a small estate at this time although no further information about it could be sourced from local archives although searches further afield may prove more fruitful. Comparison between the 1820 and 1841 maps show that Newry House is enlarged during this period of time and is shown on the later map as an L-shaped structure.

The 1841 census records for Holyhead do not contain any great detail about property names or addresses other than street names which seem to have altered over time. It has therefore not been possible to identify the property.

An 1850 Lligwy Estate Map of Holyhead (Figure 6) is less detailed than the previous plan and shows the property as unchanged. As it is not owned by Lord Boston the tenant is not listed in the schedule.

The period from the 1840's through to the 1860's was a boom time for Holyhead and this prosperity continued throughout the late nineteenth century. The focus of the towns wealth was still largely reliant on the crossing to Ireland and the associated rail and harbour industries, both of which continued to develop apace during this period (Haslam, Orbach & Voelecker 2009: 132-134).

As mentioned above it was not possible to find the property in the 1841 census, and it was also not possible to identify it on the 1851 census. We can however be almost certain that the family in residence does not change between the tithe and the 1861 census (Figure 7). Mr William Matthew, a surgeon and apothecary, is recorded on both documents along with his wife Elizabeth. Also resident in 1861 was Thomas Leary, an assistant surgeon along with a visitor and two servants. The apprentice surgeon would indicate that the medical practice was operated from the house. The servants were Anne William, a dairy maid and Anne Hughes a domestic servant.

In her work Ramage records that in the preceding late Eighteenth Century there were very few people with any medical skills in Holyhead and no surgeon or physician in the town. Indeed she notes that William Morris himself dabbled in surgery and was an amateur physician. He was a friend of the Surgeon General of Ireland and in addition to visiting him in Ireland would send patients to Dublin Hospital to be cured (Ramage 1987: 247).

The increasing population density during the period of 1841-61, together with poor hygiene and the new diseases brought from far flung travel led to numerous outbreaks and epidemics during the nineteenth century including typhus, smallpox and cholera which killed 42 in Holyhead in 1849 (Davies 2005: 190). Rowlands expands on this detailing the dangers of living in a port town and the fear of disease when a ship flew a yellow flag with a black sphere to show there was sickness on board (Rowlands 1989: 19-20). When accidents, high infant mortality and an increase in an affluent class are added to this then a surgeon would be very much in demand at this time. The ability of Mr Matthew to employ an assistant and two servants is illustrative of a successful business. A dairy maid in particular would set the Matthew family apart as also having land as the family would have had to have owned at least one cow.

An 1868 map of Holyhead is included as Figure 8. This map is once more somewhat schematic and only names important properties. This includes Newry House which is once more shown as a detached house with its own large gardens.



Figure 8. 1868 Map of Holyhead
(Source: Anglesey Archives W/CD/373)

144	Stanley St.	1	William Mathew	Head	man	69	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
159			Elinor do	Wife	do	69	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Margaret Jones	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			James Roberts	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			John Thomas	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do

Figure 9. 1871 Census

92	Stanley St.	1	John Thomas Hughes	Head	man	58	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
	Newby House		Margaret S. Hughes	Wife	man	58	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			John W. Hughes	Son	do	16	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Elizabeth Jones	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Henry Williams	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Henry Henry	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do

Figure 10. 1881 Census (Hughes)

91	St. Do	1	John Thomas Hughes	Head	man	58	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Margaret S. Hughes	Wife	man	58	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			John W. Hughes	Son	do	16	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do

Figure 11. 1881 Census (Roberts)

11	Newby House	1	James Roberts	Head	man	58	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Margaret S. Hughes	Wife	man	58	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			John W. Hughes	Son	do	16	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Elizabeth Jones	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Henry Williams	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Henry Henry	Servant	do	28	Robert James Hughes	Domestic Servant	Do	Do

Figure 12. 1891 Census

By the time of the 1871 census (Figure 9) William Matthew has a new assistant – Evan Thomas Hughes. It is not known when Hughes joined the practice but he is recorded on the Medical Register as being at Newry House in 1870. In 1871 Matthew is 69 years old and Thomas was likely to have been being trained to become his successor – which has happened by the time of the 1881 census (Figure 10).

A description of the town of Holyhead written in 1878 conveys the spirit of the time and reflects on general and population trends during this period. *“Holyhead, on the islet of Holyhead, which is separated from Anglesey by fordable sandy strait, is the most important town in the county. From the large amount of trade carried on with the sister island, Ireland it has become a port of great importance. It places London and Dublin in direct and ready communication; the principle railway, the road, and the telegraph having each their terminus here. Great improvements have been effected during the last twenty years, and a fine harbour made, which affords a safe retreat for distressed ships sailing from Liverpool, Dublin, Whitehaven, and other ports, to all parts of the world. There is a fine breakwater, constructed at the expense of the Government, the pier extending outwards 900 feet, and having a depth of 14 feet at the pier head during low water. Upon its extremity is a monster lighthouse, exhibiting a powerful light 200 feet above the level of the sea; a marble arch commemorating the visit of George IV in 1821, on his visit to Ireland, stands upon the pier. The mail steamers plying between Holyhead and Dublin are some of the finest built boats in the world, and run in all weathers. Passengers may be now conveyed from London to Dublin, a distance of 260 miles, in 11 and a quarter hours. The inhabitants are principally employed in the coasting trade, ship building and repairing, improving of the harbour, fishing, and assisting in the transport of cattle and goods from Ireland (The Wales Register & Guide 1878: 9-10).* The register describes further features of Holyhead in a later passage where it details the building of a new harbour in 1873 at a cost of almost two million sterling, and a town hall in 1875. The population figures given for Holyhead show a slight trend towards a decline in numbers to 8,773 in 1861 and 8,131 in 1871 (*ibid*: 106).

The 1880 edition of Slater's Directory reinforces the optimism and praise for the town's railway and harbour of the previous account and further details the recreational opportunities open to visitors to Holyhead. *“The town also has visitors during the bathing season, during which period many families make it their residence. Bathing machines are established, which contribute materially to the comfort of visitors. There are several objects of interest; among these are, the venerable*



Figure 13. 1888 First Edition
Ordnance Survey Map

Figure 14. 1890 Large Scale
Ordnance Survey Map

Figure 15. Early Twentieth Century
Photograph of the South-eastern
Elevation of Newry House
(Source Randall & Davies 1977)

**Figure 16. 1900 Second Edition
Ordnance Survey Map**

Figure 17. Early Twentieth Century
Photograph of Stanley Street
(Source Randall & Davies 1977)

Figure 18. 1901 Census

[illegible]



Figure 19. 1924 Ordnance Survey Map

1	William Davis	Head	46	Married	24	Insurance Agent	546	Prudential Ass.	Widow	4	Angley, Walsby	Both
2	Ellen Davis	Wife	47	Married	24						Both	Both
3	Nate Davis	Daughter	20	Single							Liverpool City	Both
4	William James Davis	Son	18	Single		Biological Scientist	547	Manchester	Widow	4	Liverpool City	Both
5	Margaret Elizabeth Davis	Daughter	13	Single							Liverpool City	Both
6	Elizabeth Elizabeth Davis	Son	11	Single							Liverpool City	Both
7	John William Davis	Son	7	Single							Liverpool City	Both
8	Myfanwy Davis	Daughter	7	Single							Liverpool City	Both
9	John Martin	Son	2	Single							Liverpool City	Both
10	Elena Davis	Niece	30	Single		Domestic					Liverpool City	Both

Figure 20. 1911 Census (Davies)

1	Joseph Henry Day	Head	36	Married	6	Draper Assistant	460		Widow	4	Birkenhead	Both
2	Emma Day	Wife	52	Married	6						Liverpool	Both
3	Edmund Day	Son	20	Single		Professional	465				Liverpool	Both

Figure 21. 1911 Census (McCormack)

1	William Rees Davies	Head	31	Married	4	Manager	464		Widow	4	Liverpool	Both
2	Elizabeth Rees Davies	Wife	30	Married	6						Liverpool	Both
3	Thomas Rees Davies	Son	4	Single							Liverpool	Both

Figure 22. 1911 Census (Rees Davies)

1	John Jones	Head	38	Married	4	Ironmonger	741		Employed	4	Walsby	Both
2	Mary Jane Jones	Wife	36	Married	11						Walsby	Both
3	Li May Jones	Daughter	10	Single							Walsby	Both
4	Elizabeth Jones	Daughter	9	Single							Walsby	Both
5	Doris Jones	Daughter	6	Single							Walsby	Both
6	Frederick Jones	Son	19	Single		Drummer	24				Walsby	Both
7	Elan Williams	Servant	35	Widow	5	General Domestic			Servant	4	Walsby	Both

Figure 23. 1911 Census (Jones)

remains of a hermitage, two chapels, and the remains of a Roman wall, or as some antiquaries assert, built by the British prince Cassibelaunus; these with the lighthouse, and the suspension bridge, at the South Stack, and the storm guns at the North Stack, attract the attention of the stranger. There are several good inns in the town, the principle of which are the Marine, The Royal (London and North-Western Railway Company's) and the King's Head" (Slater's Directory 1880: 87).

As mentioned above Evan Thomas Hughes has taken over the Newry House doctors practice by 1881 and he lives here along with his wife, son and three servants. One of the servants is employed as a coachman again demonstrating a prosperous business with surplus income generation.

There is a degree of confusion introduced by this census as it records a Mr Evan Griffiths Roberts, solicitor, and family at Number 39 Stanley Street (Figure 11) which is a neighbouring property. The name of this property appears to have changed shortly after this date and Slater's Directory of 1883 records him as operating from Newry House and by the 1891 census (Figure 12) both Evan Hughes and Evan Roberts are recorded as resident in Newry Houses which are clearly separate properties. This would indicate that the property has been subdivided by this time and examination of the later Ordnance Survey Maps would support this hypothesis as a number of separate entrances are shown.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century's provide a wealth of visual sources which greatly enhance the record of Newry House at this time. Ordnance Survey produced their first map of the area in 1888 (Figure 13) and a larger scale edition in 1890 (Figure 14). These maps show the property in detail for the first time and detail the associated grounds and outbuildings. The previous L-shaped structure has been modified and the building appears sub-square in plan with additional buildings to the rear (south-western elevation). Although these buildings are not labelled it would seem likely given the servant roles of dairy maid and coachman that they include a dairy, stable and coach house along with a barn/storage building.

Newry House is shown as smaller than the current building. The north-east facing elevation onto the street has a small front garden with a pathway separating it from the main road and was presumably the main entrance. There are also access points to the north-west (via steps), via the rear garden and in the south-eastern elevation. There is what appears to be a set of steps on the south-eastern elevation and a later photograph dated c. 1900 (Figure 15) shows iron railings in this area.

As previously discussed Holyhead underwent rapid development in the decades preceding the production of this map the area around Newry House has become enclosed by terrace housing. The house does however retain large garden areas to the north and west.

A second edition Ordnance Survey was produced in 1900 (Figure 16) which shows little change from the earlier edition. The only change which is recorded on this document is the subdivision of the rear of the building which shows that the stepped approach to the north-western elevation has been separated from the main building.

As mentioned above a photograph from this period survives which shows the south-eastern elevation of the property prior to the extensive remodelling of the early 1920's (see Figure 15). This photograph shows that at least part of the rear extension to the property was two storeys in height and was presumably added prior to the erection of the terraces which obscure it from view. The façade is of a modest symmetrical Georgian style with what appear to be mid-late Eighteenth Century six-over-six sash windows and above each window and the door are stone hoods.

A second photograph of Newry House (Figure 17) was sourced which shows the building in its wider setting illustrating the prominent position occupied at the end of the street and Newry House is clearly visible along the length of Stanley Street.

5.4 Twentieth Century Holyhead

The 1901 Census (Figure 18) records the same two families at Newry House. Solicitor Evan Roberts is deceased by this time but his sister Annie and a servant retain the property. Evan Hughes along with his wife Mary, an assistant named David Jones and three servants remain in the other portion of the building.

An examination of Trade Directories uncovered a change in occupancy by 1910 and a solicitor named C. Moreton Pritchard was recorded as trading from Newry House. The 1911 census is the most recent census which is publicly accessible but Pritchard could not be found in this document and Newry House was not recorded. It appears that Pritchard was successful and the practice expanded. The Wales Trade Directory of 1917 recorded Moreton Pritchard and Jones at Newry House.

The solicitors were involved in a court case during the First World War when they were hired to act on behalf of a grieving father, Mr Robert Thomas against a Evan G. Owen who was arranging life insurance for soldiers of the town. He would pay them a "few shillings" to have any payouts from the insurance assigned to him. It was believed that Evan Owen benefited by more than £21 on the death of Private Thomas. The firm were keen to stop the practice and press for the prosecution of Evan Owen for "fraud" and to stop him gambling on the lives of local soldiers (www.holyheadwarmemorial19141918/home/army/seth-thomas-royal-welsh-fusiliers).

The firm is trading from Newry House as Moreton Pritchard and Jenkins in 1927 although the building has undergone a major renovation and remodelling by this time. Comparison between the 1900 (Figure 16) and 1924 Ordnance Survey Maps (Figure 19) shows that the building has been massively expanded by this date and the the distinctive curved building façade added. The buildings/extension to the rear of the main house have been removed/remodelled to allow for a large two storey extension which occupies the entire plot and is built over the existing gardens. The 1924 Map does however show two separate units at the front of the building which may have housed the solicitors office.

The records for the advent of cinema in Holyhead are somewhat fragmentary and it is a little confused as to the exact dates that the picture houses opened. What is clear however is that the pioneers of cinematography in the town were a Messrs. McCormack and Davies who have an involvement in all three of the earliest cinema shows.

Although not purpose built as a cinema it is believed that the first place in Holyhead to screen films was the Town Hall and by 1910 the 800 seats in its auditorium were regularly being filled by shows given by McCormack and Davies (Hornsey 1996: 44). An online biography of the pair was sourced which was corroborated by a search of census records. The biography records that William Thomas Davies was born in Liverpool on the 17th January 1893, the eldest son of William (a Liverpool City Police Constable born in Pentraeth) and Ellen Davies (born in Llandudno). In the 1890's William Davies was forced to retire from the police due to an accident and took up employment as a caretaker at a club in Birkenhead. Sometime later the family moved to Holyhead where in partnership with a Mr Clement John McCormack of Liverpool they ran the McCormack and Davies Picture Palace Cinema at Holyhead Town Hall. In September 1913 Mr McCormack married William Davies daughter Catherine. During the First World War William Thomas Davies served in the Royal

Naval Reserve the Royal Engineers Inland Waterway Transport Department and after training served with No 11 Port Construction Company, Royal Engineers (www.archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com).

This account generally corresponds with other sources although the dates may be slightly different. The 1911 census (Figure 20) records the aforementioned Davies family as living in Holyhead but although William Thomas Davies (aged 18) is recorded as working in the film industry as a bioscope operator his father's occupation is listed as an Insurance Agent and he is a worker rather than an employer. The 1911 census for Clement John McCormack (Figure 21) records that he is 20 years old, living in Liverpool and a professional violinist. The work of a local historian notes that during the era of the silent film McCormack used this skill at the Empire and was the violinist for the musical accompaniment.

A document dated 1911 sourced from Conwy Archives (Document Ref: CD4/13/1/20) presents a third William Davies involved in the burgeoning cinema scheme of Holyhead. In the statement of the dissolution of a partnership a Mr William Rees Davies, public entertainer, and Mary Annie Davies are recorded as the retiring partners who are handing over their share of their business to a Mr John Jones (ironmonger). It reads “*the parties have since that last mentioned date (2nd Novemeber 1910) carried on in partnership together the business of Cinematograph shows under the style or firm of “Davies Empire” but since altered to “The Hippodrome” down to the date hereof when it was agreed that the said partnership should be determined on the therms that*” and then lists the monies to be paid and the discharge of liabilities. This is the first document to mention the Empire although it does appear to have originally applied to a different building.

The 1911 census taken on the 2nd April, just before this document was written, confirms all the information above. William Rees Davies and Mary Annie Davies could be found at the addresses given and a search of the 1901 census revealed that they are brother and sister. The entry for William (Figure 22) lists his occupation as a Cinematograph Proprietor and records that he is an employer not a worker. His partner John Jones (Figure 23) is listed as an iron monger and employer and of interest the employer of William Thomas Davies is listed as J.O Jones.

The next historical source which provides information on the development of the cinema in Holyhead is the The Kinematograph Year Book, Program Diary and Directory for 1914. It is believed to be the earliest single source which attempts to correlate information on the film industry at that time. The directory provides an overview of the previous year and contains articles, advertisements for films, film companies, suppliers and service providers. It also contains a directory of all cinemas in the UK at the time.

Two cinemas are recorded in Holyhead at this time – the Town Hall Picture Palace with 800 seats and run by Davies and McCormack, and the Victoria Hall run by Rees Davies – who is presumably the William Rees Davies who is discussed above. It is unknown where the Victoria Hall was but in his publication Hornsey (1996: 44) discusses the possibility that it was located in Victoria Terrace. This ties in with the 1900 and 1924 Ordnance Survey Maps which show a hall at the rear of Victoria Terrace. Despite both the Davies Empire and Hippodrome being mentioned in the 1911 source neither were recorded in this directory.

A local historian has researched the Empire Cinema and recorded that it was opened by local M.P Sir R.J Thomas on behalf of Messrs. McCormack and Davies in 1920 and the entire proceeds of the first evening were donated to the local federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers. He also recorded that it was built by Mr John Hughes of Sunnyside, Holyhead.

An opening date of 1920 would support the conversion of the existing building rather than a complete rebuild as has been suggested elsewhere as following the First World War there was an acute housing shortage which resulted in a ban on new “luxury buildings” until 1921 (Eyles 2005: 8). It is unclear whether when the Empire opened it was with a theatre or cinema show as it was certainly used for both.

In his work Hornsey (1996: 47) documents that by 1922 there were two shows a night at the Empire with a matinee on Saturday. Programmes were changed twice a week, admission prices were between 6d and 1/9d and there were 740 seats. The proscenium was given as 30 feet in width. He also states that the manager at this time was the aforementioned Mr McCormack who also played violin in the musical accompaniment. His partner Mr Davies managed the Town Hall.

This arrangement was however relatively short lived and on 23rd June 1924 The Holyhead Empire Theatre Company Ltd was formed in Llandudno following the purchase of the cinema. The directors were named as Dr. D Farquharson, Mr Arthur Hewitt and John Alexander Farquharson. Also involved in the venture were solicitor Mr R.V Johnson and secretary Mr. R Jones. The resident manager was Mr Hugh Gillies. A 1927 musical programme (Figure 24) and a 1930 concert poster (Figure 25) survives from this era.

The twentieth century was less kind to Holyhead than the nineteenth and following the First World War it must be seen as a time of great decline and hardship for Holyhead and its inhabitants. This decline was to begin in the 1920's when a number of episodes which were to prove disastrous for the town occurred. The first came in 1920 when the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company withdrew from the port ending 70 years of unbroken service and resulting in the loss of 350 jobs. This loss was compounded by the loss of the Royal Mail service contract to the London and North-Western Railway Company which led to the towns reliance on a single company. The dangers of this became evident when the LNWR merged with a number of other rail companies to form the much larger London, Midland and Scottish Railway Company and introduced scathing economies resulting in further job loss.

At this time relations with Ireland were changing and in 1922 Southern Ireland achieved home rule. Following this separation the diplomatic links between Britain and Ireland became strained and in 1932 a six year tariff war began which was to further feed into the precarious position of the town. In his work on the period John Rowlands records that *“The Trade War with Ireland was disastrous for Holyhead, because had it not happened the town's dependence on the LMS and the railway company's monopoly of the trade with Ireland, would have made them both relatively immune to the economic recession of the 1930's. Without those six long years of the Tariff War, Holyhead's limitations as a one company town could have been it's greatest strength. In fact as events turned out the fact that Holyhead was a one company town was it's greatest weakness in the 1930's”* (1989: 29-30).



Figure 24. 1927 Empire Theatre Programme (Source: Anglesey Archives WM/2359/53/1-1)



Figure 25. 1930 Empire Theatre Concert Poster (Source: Anglesey Archives WM/2359/53/1-1)

Figure 26. 1976 Photograph of the Empire (Source: www.facebook.com/pages/Welsh-Cinema-Photo-History/402310479876144)

Figure 27. Ground Floor Screen in the Empire Cinema (Source: Randall & Davies 1977)



The recession of the 1930's was on a global scale and unemployment was high throughout the country but for reasons detailed above Holyhead was particularly harshly hit leading Megan Lloyd George (MP for Anglesey) to claim in 1937 that Holyhead was suffering higher unemployment than all but the very worst areas of South Wales and Durham. Statistics record that unemployment in Holyhead was only to fall below 30% once during the 1930's and in December 1936 it hit the record level of 47.7%. Many families left the town in search of work elsewhere and during the 1930's the population fell by over one thousand. Contemporary observer accounts paint a bleak picture and stated that "*the town is in crisis – the most serious in its history*" (1931), "*there are hundred of men, women and children practically destitute*" (1933), "*anyone walking through the town would at once notice that Holyhead was a dead town; there was nothing there at all*" (1938) and "*we are worse off in Holyhead today than we have been in the whole history of the town. The town is poverty stricken*" (1939). It was only with the advent of the Second World War in 1939 that there was any improvement in the towns fortune – a fact that was bitterly noted at the time by the town clerk who remarked that "apparently you cannot get anything for Holyhead unless you get a war". The war did however bring employment and government contracts to the area although Holyhead was never to return to it's late nineteenth century heyday (Rowlands 1989: 25 – 34).

During the inter-war period the decline in disposable income in the town was reflected in a drop in spending on recreational pursuits and a compilation of licensed premises dated 1938 shows a dramatic reduction in the number dropping from 58 in 1897 to just thirty – less than it had in 1824. Cinema was however not to suffer the same decline and indeed the 1930's are often considered the Golden Age of the film industry with audience numbers reaching their peak in the 1940's (Miskell 2006:36).

In 1931 the Kinematograph Yearbook records three cinemas in Holyhead, The Empire, The Hippodrome and the Town Hall. The entry for the Empire reads "*Empire Theatre (RCA), Stanley Street.—Prop., Holyhead Empire Theatre Co., Ltd. Booked by R. R.Jones, 35, Mostyn Street, Llandudno. Continuous. Mat., Sat. Prices, 4d. to !s. 3d*".

The entries for the other cinemas are also of interest as they allow the relative pricing of the three venues to be studied. They read: "*Hippodrome, .Market Street.—Prop., Holyhead Hippodrome, Ltd. Booked at Hall by" Man. Continuous. Pictures and Variety. Stage, 14 ft. deep ; two dressing-rooms. Prices, 6d. to 9d. Station, Holyhead, L.M.S."* and "*Town Hall Cinema.—Newry Street.—Prop.,*

Mrs. Ellen Davies, " Cae Mawr," Holyhead. Booked at Hall. Continuous. Prices, 4d and 6d". (Mrs Ellen Davies was the wife of Mr William Davies of Davies and McCormack).

Despite earlier innovations the advent of sound in cinema did not occur until 1927 with the film "The Jazz Singer". It was the first feature film with sound and by the early 1930's the "talkies" were a global phenomenon. The RCA in the 1931 listing for the Empire is an abbreviation for the RCA Photophone - the trade name given to one of four major competing technologies that emerged in the American film industry in the late 1920s which was used for synchronizing electrically recorded audio to a motion picture image (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/RCA_Photophone). It shows that the venue was the first in the town to show sound films.

This appears not to have been a universally popular decision at the time and Hornsey (1996:47) records an interesting anecdote from the time. In March 1930 the Hippodrome took a poll of its patrons and audiences as to whether it should fit talkies. The vote was over 80% in favour of silent films although the venue was eventually to succumb to progress as silent films ceased to be made. The advent of sound in cinema was to herald the end of the Town Hall Cinema as the only sound ever fitted here was the public address system and films ceased to be shown when silent films ended (ibid: 44).

By the 1930's film had become such an attraction that many of the Welsh theatres that had previously included cinema as only part of its repertoire began to devote themselves wholly to the screening of films. However in contrast to growing attempts in other parts of the UK to gentrify their clientèle with large ornate and elaborate venues Welsh cinema was to remain almost exclusively a working class pursuit with the vast majority of its buildings seating less than a thousand (Miskell 2006: 33-7).

The difficult economic climate in Holyhead during this period resulted in a similar pattern of use to that seen throughout Wales. Major companies were reluctant to invest in less affluent areas and provision was very much on a local scale. The cinemas of Holyhead were able to provide a cheap, affordable escape from everyday life and habitual weekly attendance, predominately by the working classes was the most common consumption pattern. By charging just a few pence for the cheapest seats, often to watch slightly older films rather than new releases, those on very low incomes or the unemployed could still afford to attend regularly (ibid: 55 & 93).

In addition to its budget 4d seats the Empire was also able to offer more upmarket seat choices than the Hippodrome and the Town Hall as is reflected in the most expensive ticket prices – 1s 3d in the Empire compared to 9d in the Hippodrome and 6d in the Town Hall (Kinematograph Yearbook 1931: 483). This range of prices allowed a visit to the cinema to be transformed from a relatively everyday event to a special excursion for those able to spend the extra money.

During the Second World War the cinema offered a relatively safe retreat from air raids and continued to be a popular form of mass entertainment (Eyles 2005: 27). Local reminiscences of the town during this period remember the Empire finding itself at odds with the local chapels when it began opening on Sunday afternoons for the troops. Also recalled was the full house cinema watching Arthur Askey in *Bandwagon* when Holyhead was bombed in 1941. Immediately following the cessation of hostilities “a nation in celebratory mood pushed British cinema attendance to a record level of 1635 million in one year” (Eyles 2005: 27).

It was following World War Two that the final cinema in Holyhead was to open. Cybi Hall in Treaddur Square was converted for use as a 240 seat cinema by Messers Johnson and Beretta. This cinema was much smaller than the Hippodrome or the Empire and had a twelve foot wide screen (Hornsey 1996: 48). It appears that the term “fleapit” which is often used as a term of endearment when referring to old cinemas could be aptly applied in this instance. In a letter reproduced by Miskell (2006: 93) it is documented that the people of Holyhead used to refer to the Cybi Cinema as the “Sit & Scratch”.

Following this hiatus of attendance cinema numbers were to decline. The advent of television and an increase in living standards/comfort began to erode viewer numbers. In an attempt to compete colour films were made in increasing numbers and CinemaScope with stereophonic sound was introduced in 1953. This new innovation required many cinemas to widen their proscenium openings or erect new screens in front (Eyles 2005: 27).

As in earlier times the Empire was to adopt the new technology and was re-equipped with a 27 foot wide panoramic screen for showing the new CinemaScope films (Hornsey 1996: 47) and the modernisation of the Empire appears to have corresponded with the closing of the Hippodrome which burnt down around this time and was rebuilt as a retail unit.

As the general trend towards a decline in the number of cinema-goers continued the Empire had to evolve to cater for those who did attend. Figure 26 shows the building shortly before the screening area was sub-divided in 1976 in order to create two smaller screens and Hutchinson Leisure of Burnley became involved with the cinema. As the original projection box was at the rear of the stalls, a periscope system had to be installed to project into the circle screen. This proved to be inadequate and a new projection box was built at the rear of the former circle to serve the upper screen (www.cinematreasures.org). This action was taken in the majority of profitable cinemas as films were no longer shown in short runs, often of only a week or so, and there was no longer a need for a large auditorium as people had a longer period in which to see a film (Eyles 2005: 29). Figure 27 shows the interior of the ground floor following the division of the screen and figures 28 & 29 show the exterior advertising the two screens.

Of particular interest is a photograph taken at around this time which shows the rear of the Empire Cinema without the render which is currently concealing many of the earlier door and window apertures (figure 30). Also shown is the adjacent building from Summer Hill Terrace and a storage shed between the Empire and the house, both of which have since been demolished.

In 1985 the American style multiplex was introduced into the UK which provided a much greater choice of films for its visitors. It proved to be an instant success, particularly with young cinema-goers and the ensuing wave of large new cinemas on this model all but killed off the smaller venues (Eyles 2005: 29).

The Empire could not compete with this new development and changed hands to become independently run in 1986 (www.cinematreasures.org). In November 1991 the downstairs screen was closed and the area given over for use as an amusement hall. The Empire was not viable as a single screen attraction and by February 1992 the second, upper screen also closed. It remained closed until 1994 when Focus Films took ownership of the cinema and it re-opened with the “Lion King” and “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” (Hornsey 1996: 48). The owner of Focus Films was the infamous North Wales serial killer Peter Moore and following his arrest for the murder of four men in 1995 the Empire was once more closed (www.cinematreasures.org).



Figures 28 & 29. The Empire Cinema in the Late 1970's Following the Division into Two Screens. Also Shown is the Neighbouring Shop Prior to Remodelling
(Photograph Supplied by Mr Graham Van Weert)

Figure 30. The Rear of the Empire Cinema in the Late 1970's Showing Openings now Obscured by Render
(Photograph Supplied by Mr Graham Van Weert)



Figure 31 (far left). Cinema Screen Prior to Closure in 2008
(Photograph Supplied by Mr Graham Van Weert)

Figure 32.
Foyer Area in 2008 Prior to Closure of Cinema
(Photograph Supplied by Mr Graham Van Weert)

Again the Empire changed hands and it reopened on 22nd August 1999 as part of the independent South Wales Cinemas chain. It had undergone a complete refurbishment and the upper floor was used as a cinema and the ground floor became the Regal Bingo Club (www.cinematreasures.org). The venue closed once more in 2008, this time as a result of a downturn in bingo rather than cinema attendance caused at least in part by the smoking ban of that year. A newspaper article reported the dismay of local residents (www.news.bbc.co.uk). Figures 31 & 32 show the cinema at the time of this closure.

Funding has recently been secured and the building is currently undergoing renovation and will reopen as a multi-faceted entertainment centre with a cinema, laser tag, café and play area (www.dailypost.co.uk).

6.0 Results of Archaeological Works

A site visit to the Empire Cinema, Stanley Street was conducted in September 2013. The building has undergone a major remodelling since it was originally built in the late eighteenth/ early nineteenth century. With the exception of the remaining stone walls all original/ historic features were removed when the building was converted from a private house/business premises to a theatre/cinema. The cinema itself has also undergone a number of refits and the vast majority of the early cinema/theatre fixtures and fittings have not survived.

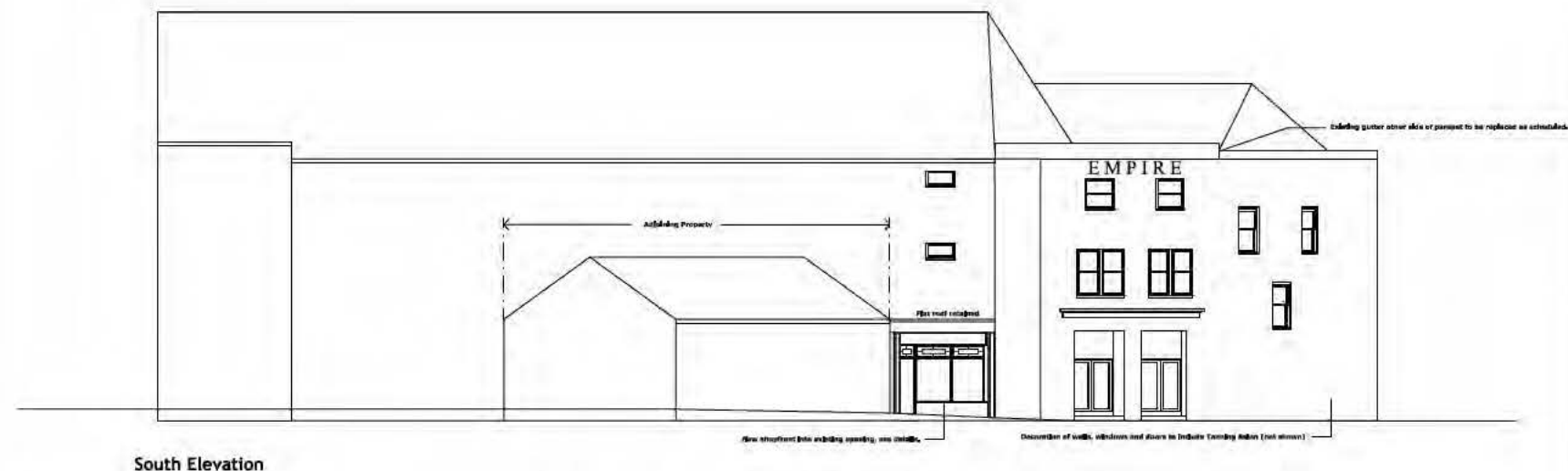
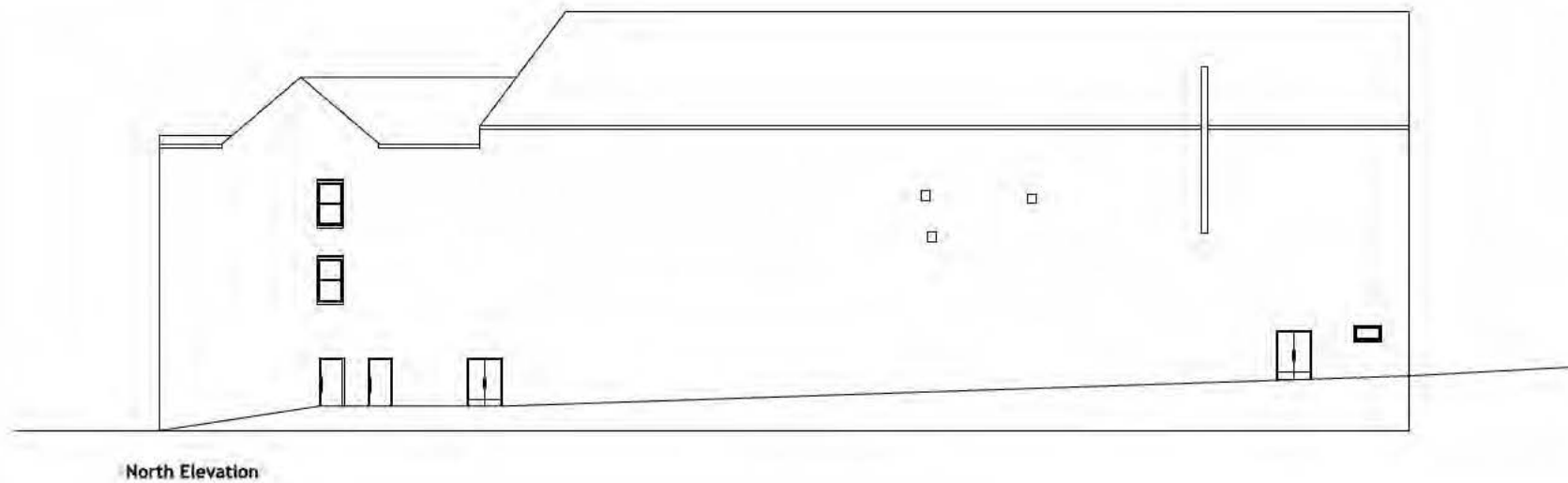
A photographic survey was made of all accessible interior and exterior spaces and surviving interior and exterior features will be discussed by floor level. Given the modernity of the majority of the interior and the current construction works at the premises most photographs are record shots rather than a detailed survey.


The building is currently undergoing renovation and will reopen as a multi-faceted entertainment centre with a cinema, laser tag, café and play area.

6.1 Drawn Record

Building elevations and floor plans of the site were produced by Dewis Architecture. Copies of these drawings were taken to site when C.R Archaeology visited to compile a photographic record and were annotated to show the location/direction of photographs taken and to record the position of architectural features.

These drawings are included as figures 33 – 35.



Rev	Description	Date	By	Check
			<p>To meet British Standard BS 5400 Part 1 1977:200</p> <p>01344 31344 01344 31344 01344 31344</p> <p>01344 31344 01344 31344 01344 31344</p>	
<p>Architectural Services: Planning Engineering Environmental Temporary Works Structural</p>			<p>Contract Building Services: Project Management Architectural Services Structural Services</p>	

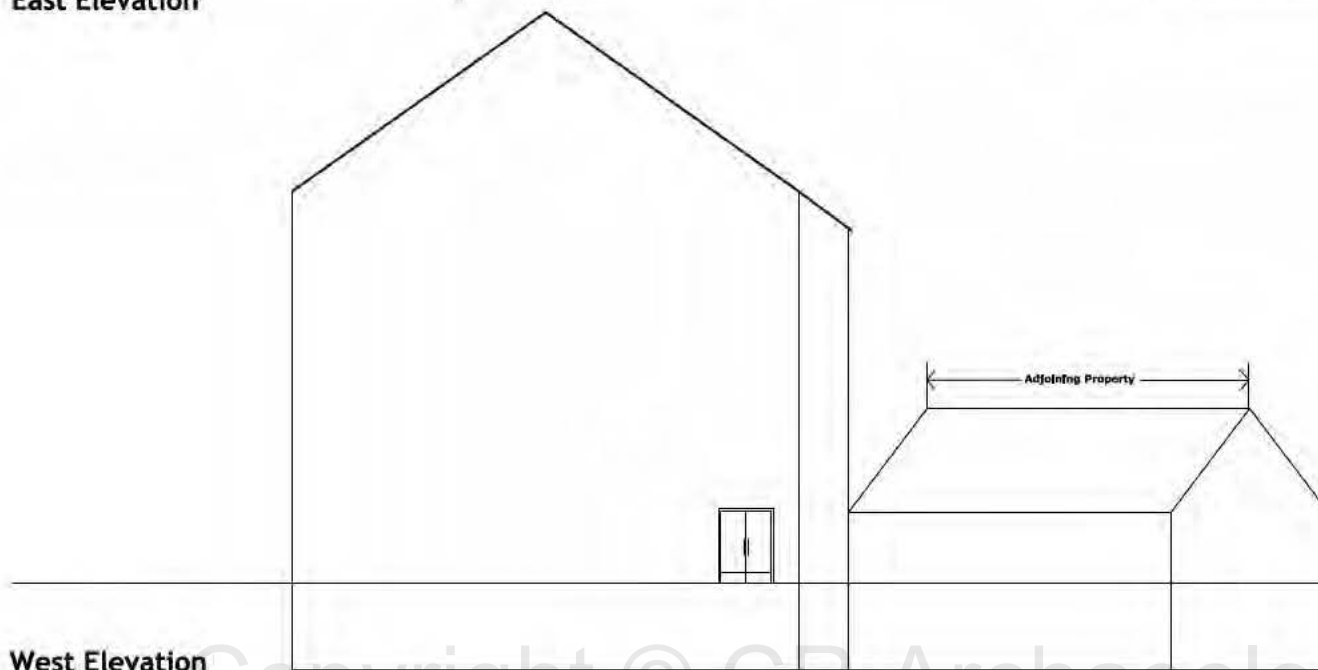
<p>Client</p> <p>Holyhead Town Council</p> <p>Project</p> <p>Empire Cinema, Holyhead</p> <p>Drawings</p> <p>Existing Elevations - North & South</p>			
Drawn By	Rev	Date	Drawn By
D413.03	1	11/10	GON
Rev	Date	Drawn By	Drawn By
12 Dec '12	A1	Tender	DRH

This drawing must be read in conjunction with all relevant drawings.
All dimensions must be checked and verified on site before commencing any work or producing any drawings. The information should be noted in accordance with any discrepancies. Only the information shown on this drawing is to be used.
This drawing is copyright and remains the property of DEWIS.

Figure 33. Existing Elevations (North & South)




East Elevation



West Elevation

Figure 34. Existing Elevations (East & West)

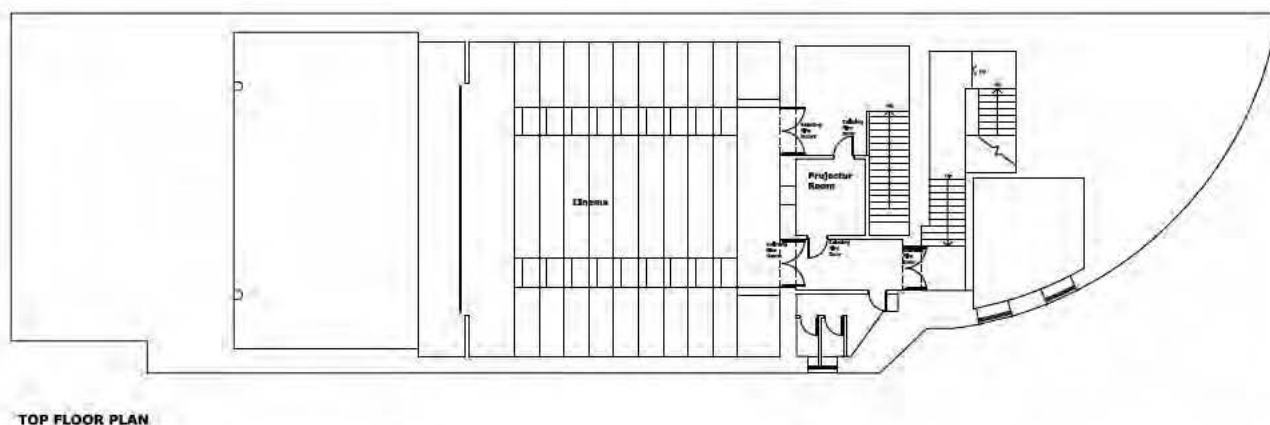
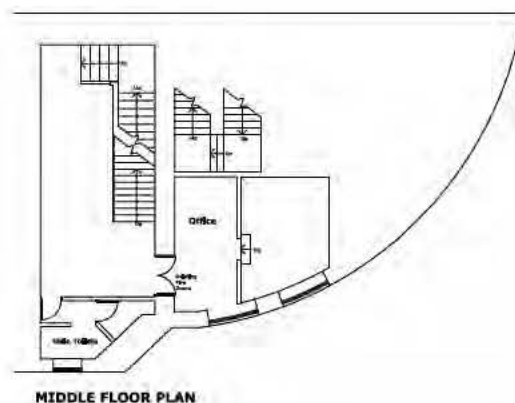
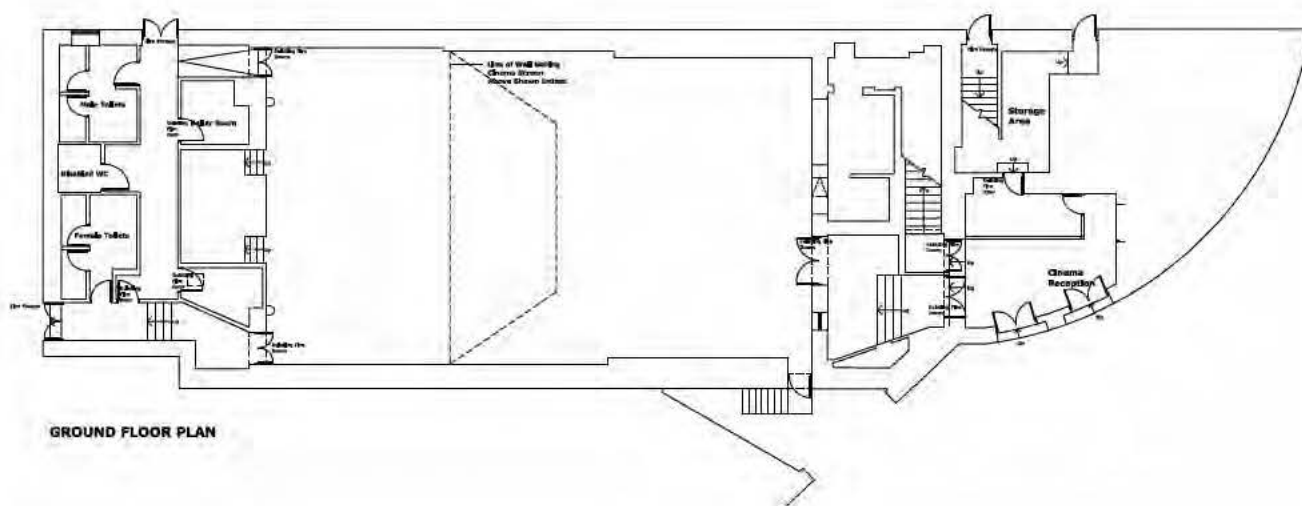
Rev.	Description	Date	By

		To: School 170000 (Design) 170000 (Design) 170000 (Design)
01753401 110000 01753401 110000 01753401 110000		01753401 110000 01753401 110000 01753401 110000

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Client: Holyhead Town Council			
Project: Empire Cinema, Holyhead			
Drawing: Existing Elevations - East & West			
Project No. D383.04	Rev. 1	Scale 1:100	Designer GOH
Date 12 Dec '12	Size A2	Issue Date Tender	Approved by DRH

This drawing must be read in conjunction with all other drawings.
 All dimensions must be checked and verified on site before commencing any work.
 or providing any drawings. The architect shall be notified immediately of any
 discrepancies. All agreed alterations are to be marked on this drawing.
 This drawing is copyright and remains the property of Dewis.




Rev	Amended by	Date	By
 <div> <p>DEWIS architecture</p> <p>01492 511100 01492 511101 info@dewis-arch.co.uk www.dewis-arch.co.uk</p> </div>			
<p>Client: Hollyhead Town Council</p> <p>Project: Empire Cinema, Hollyhead, Anglesey</p> <p>Drawing: Existing Floor Plans</p>			
Project No:	Rev:	Scale:	Drawn by:
D413.02	A1	1:100	DRH
Date:	Scale:	Drawn by:	Check by:
20 Oct '12	A1	Tender	Adopted by:
<p>This drawing must be read in conjunction with all related drawings. All drawings must be checked and signed by the client immediately on receipt of the drawing. The architect must be notified immediately of any discrepancies. Only signed drawings are to be used for construction. This drawing is copyright and remains the property of DEWIS.</p>			

Figure 35. Existing Plans

6.2 Results of Photographic Survey (Plates 1 - 64)

A photographic survey was conducted and the full photographic archive has been included in TIFF format on an accompanying disc at the back of this report. These photographs are subdivided by interior and exterior and internally by floor. Relevant photographs are incorporated into the main text as numbered plates and the positions of these are marked on the accompanying figures. Appendix A records the location and position of the photographic plates at ground and first floor level and Appendix B records the location and position of the photographic plates at second floor level.

6.2.1 Building Exterior (Plates 1 - 10)

The Empire building was photographed with a 2m photographic scales from a variety of positions creating a comprehensive record of the structure and placing the building in its local setting.

Despite the Art Deco style of the structure as seen today the building is a mixture of phases with the earliest believed to date back as far as the late Eighteenth/ early Nineteenth century. The oldest element is the block on Stanley Street. The façade of this building element was rebuilt in brick c. 1920 but the remaining exterior walls were of local schist stone construction. This was observed in the interior roof space as the exterior wall faces are obscured by cement render. This render covers all blocked features within the wall and the original window and doorways could not be identified. Their layout to the rear of the building is shown on figure 30.

The building roofs are pitched and a parapet has been used on the 1920's façade to give the illusion of a more modernist design and to hide the older origins of the structure. The curved shape of the twentieth century façade gives the Empire its distinctive appearance and clean lines. The windows and doors are arranged in groups with the openings in the entrance block positioned symmetrically and those for the shop frontages in the north-eastern façade arranged in an almost chequerboard pattern. As can be seen in figure 29 the shop doorway has been altered and the opening adjacent to the cinema blocked.

A photograph supplied by Mr Van Weert and included as figure 30 shows the rear of the building without the render and records a number of openings which are no longer visible including the doorways and windows. The block immediately behind the original building is shown to have been a house frontage which corresponds with cartographic and census evidence that Newry House was two separate properties.

The plain exterior of the auditorium area is also currently covered with cement render and in this instance the interior render was also intact. When photographic evidence is consulted it is clear that this render conceals a number of openings within this façade. This area of the building is shown to incorporate older Nineteenth Century building elements and the lower portion of the building can be seen to preserve these earlier openings, along with two possible blocked windows at first floor level. It is not possible to determine from this photograph exactly where the two building phases join although it is likely to be around the position of the drainpipe.

This later 1920 area of the building is a simple stepped box shape of local schist and is architecturally unremarkable. It has minimal window openings and doorways to minimise light entry and a simple pitched roof. Of interest in this area of the building is the now partially blocked doorway which is shown in figure 30. This tall opening is positioned near the stage area and would have enabled large set pieces and props to be brought into the building.

The Entertainment Centre building element was not originally part of the cinema and was incorporated into the building range after the late 1970's. This is evident from Figure 26 which clearly shows that it was in use as a shop in 1976. This building was added after the cinema was built and fills in the gap between the Empire and the neighbouring terrace shown on the 1924 Ordnance Survey Map.

6.2.2 Building Interior (Plates 11 - 64)

The building interior will be discussed by floor, beginning at the ground floor level and working upwards. Floor levels will be further subdivided by room although it must be noted that many of the the internal divisions are modern.

6.2.2.1 Ground Floor (Plates 11 - 32)

The current layout of the first floor of the property shows ten individual rooms with associated corridors. These internal divisions are in general not original and reflect the changing nature of the requirements of the businesses. This floor of the building housed the cinema foyer, ground floor screen and a number of toilets and store rooms.

Room 1 (Plates 11 - 16)

Room 1 was the entrance foyer for the Empire Theatre. This function has been retained from the original conversion although the double doors leading through to Room 3 are a modern addition and the area was previously open plan.

No features from the Newry House building phase survive.

Room 2 (Plate 17)

Room 2 was a small store room below the stairs leading to the first floor level. It is believed that this room was utilised as an office or stores in the theatre/cinema era. It is at a lower level (single step down) than the adjacent room and the reason for this is unclear. It is possible that this may be associated with an earlier use but this could not be confirmed.

Room 3 (Plate 18 - 21)

Room 3 was a landing or waiting area between the foyer and the ground floor screen. It was created when the second cinema screen was added in the 1970's. This area was part of the original foyer as is evidenced by the ticket booth to the left of the room and the moulded plaster ceiling decoration which was viewed through a missing ceiling tile (see Plate 21). This decoration could be seen to have extend beyond the existing divisions.

No features from the Newry House building phase survive.

Room 4 (Plates 22 – 28)

Room 4 was the main auditorium which housed the stage and screen area. It was heavily modified during the 1970's when a second screen was added although some original theatre/cinema features do survive. When built the room had 740 seats split between the ground floor and gallery but with the addition of the second screen the galley was boxed off and extended to create a separate second floor (see Plate 28).

When this was done a suspended ceiling was built across the original screen area and two sets of doors to the backstage area were added – possible to comply with fire regulations. The addition of the suspended ceiling created in effect an area of dead space above it which preserved the upper portion of the plaster moulding of the proscenium as seen in Plates 23 & 24. This upper portion was a simple “carpenter's mitre” design and the lower portion (now lost) would have reached the floor level and framed the stage. It is possible that should a “paint scrape” be conducted on this plaster that the original colour scheme for the hall will be revealed.

The boxed area behind the screen would have originally have been open to allow performers to move between the stage and backstage areas.

The original “egg and dart” moulding can be seen running along the top of the walls and leading into the boxed second floor. This area of the room is open to its full height and the 1920 suspended barrel vaulted ceiling survives. It was not possible to inspect this fully but it is believed to have been a lathe and plaster construction. A bay leaf pattern had been added in moulded plaster across the ceiling.

Rooms 5 - 9 (Plates 29 - 32)

The area behind the main stage/screen would have housed the performers dressing rooms when the theatre was originally built. In the modernisation of the cinema all original features were removed and this area is now divided into modern toilets, storage rooms and corridors. It was not possible to photograph the toilets. The corridor and store rooms have been recorded in Plates 29-32.

Room 10

Room 10 was a small open area which had previously been used as a shop and later an entrance to the bingo/amusement centre. It was a modern addition and access was not gained.

6.2.2.2 First Floor (Plates 33 - 40)

The first floor area did not extend over the entirety of the building and only occupied the front Stanley Street portion which had originally been Newry House. The roof structure partially visible in Plate 34 is thought to pre-date the conversion to a theatre. No other evidence of the early building was visible as all walls were plastered. The room divisions are of a later date and it is unclear as to whether they belong to the 1920 remodelling or are modern modifications.

Room 11 (Plates 33 - 35)

Room 11 was an office area. The opening shown in Plate 35 was a modern lift shaft.

Room 12 (Plates 36 - 37)

Room 12 was used as a male toilets. Of interest in this room was the front wall from which the render had been removed. It clearly showed the brick construction of the 1920 façade.

First Floor Corridor & Stairs (Plates 38 – 40)

Modern additions – record shots only.

6.2.2.3 Second Floor Level (Plates 41 – 56)

The second floor level was located in the large rear area which housed the auditorium. It was partially formed from the theatre gallery. Plates 41 – 44 were taken inside the gallery structure below the cinema seats (facing the projector room). The stone walls shown belong at least in part to the original Newry House structure and confirm that this rear element incorporated the outbuildings discussed in the previous section. It also appears that when constructing the gallery material was reused from the earlier structure as is evidenced by Plate 44.

Also housed on this floor was a second projection room, toilets and stairwells. The layout of these rooms was all of 1970's or later date.

Room 13 (Plates 45 - 48)

As mentioned in the previous section the 1920 gallery was converted to a separate room housing a second screen in the 1970's. The original theatre ceiling as described above was preserved in this room.

Room 14 (Plate 49)

Room 14 was the projection room added in the late 1970's when the periscope method of projection onto the newly added second screen was found to be inadequate.

Room 15 (Plates 50 – 51)

Modern corridor area. No features of architectural interest.

Room 16 (Plates 52 - 54)

Modern store room. No features of architectural interest.

Room 17 (Plates 55 - 56)

Modern stairwell. No features of architectural interest.

6.2.2.4 Attic Area (Plates 57 – 64)

This area was located behind the screen and above the backstage area later used for toilets and storage. It was the best preserved part of the 1920 theatre and the original rigging and galleries survived. It attests to the theatre rather than cinema elements of the buildings history.



Plate 1. Empire Cinema Front Elevation



Plate 2. Empire Cinema Front Elevation



Plate 3. Empire Cinema Front Elevation

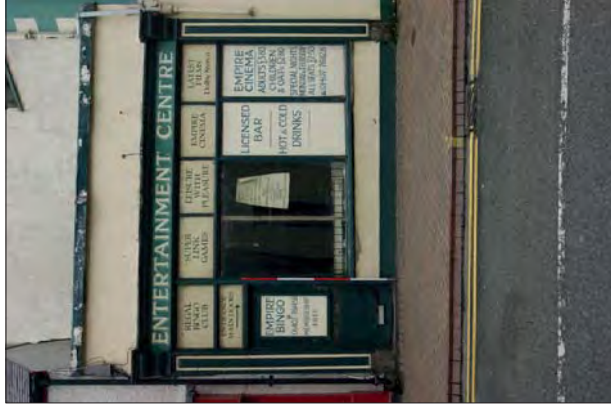


Plate 4. Empire Extension Originally Separate Shop



Plate 5. Empire Extension Originally Separate Shop



Plate 6. Empire Theatre
Curved North Eastern Elevation



Plate 7. Rear Elevation Showing
Front Facade which was
Added 1920

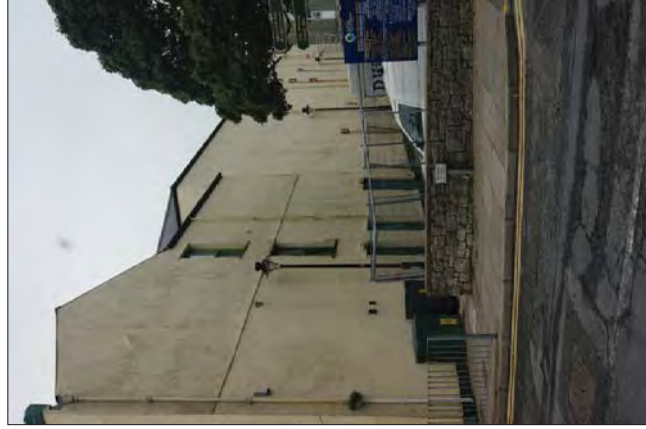


Plate 8. Empire Theatre Rear
(North-west) Elevation



Plate 9. Empire Theatre
South-west Facing Elevation



Plate 10. Empire Theatre South-west and
South-East Facing Elevations



Plate 11. Room 1 Entrance Foyer



Plate 12. Room 1 Entrance Foyer



Plate 13. Room 1 Entrance Foyer



Plate 14. Room 1 Entrance Foyer



Plate 15. Room 1 Entrance Foyer



**Plate 16. Foyer
From Room 3**



Plate 17. Room 2



Plate 18. Room 3



Plate 19. Room 3



Plate 20. Room 3



Plate 21. Surviving Plaster Moulding Room 3



Plate 22. Room 4 Main Auditorium Facing Screen



Plates 23 & 24. Surviving Plaster Moulding Around the Screen in Room 4

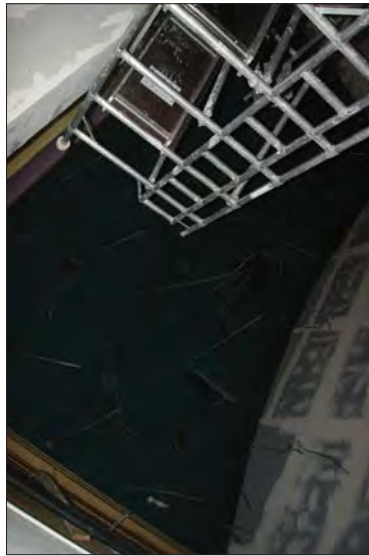


Plate 25. Surviving Original Ceiling Room 4



Plate 26. Surviving Plaster Moulding Room 4



Plate 27. Room 4 Facing Entrance/ Exit



Plate 28. Room 4 Facing Upper Level - Originally the Stalls



Plate 29. Corridor Leading to Room 4

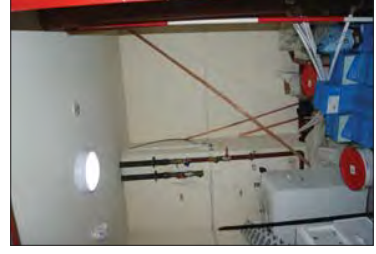


Plate 30. Room 5



Plate 31. Rear Corridor



Plate 32. Rear Corridor



Plate 33. Room 11



**Plate 34. Room 11
Showing Roof Structure**



Plate 35. Room 11



Plate 36. Room 12



**Plate 37. Room 12 Note
Curved Brick Facade**



Plate 38. First Floor Corridor and Stairs



**Plate 39. First Floor
Stairs**



Plate 40. First Floor Corridor



Plate 41. Stone Construction



Plate 42. Detailed Shot of Recess
Possibly Original Location of Floor Joist



Plate 43. Different Construction Materials



Plate 44. Rough Wood Possibly Salvaged From Building Prior to 1920 Remodelling



Plate 45. Room 13 Upper Screen Inserted in the 1970's Occupies Stall Area. Note Original Plaster & Ceiling



Plate 46. Original Cinema Plaster Moulding



Plate 47. Original Cinema Moulding



Plate 48. Area Behind Screen



Plate 49. Room 14 - Upper Projection Room



Plate 50. Room 15



Plate 51. Room 15



Plate 52. Room 16



Plate 53. Room 16

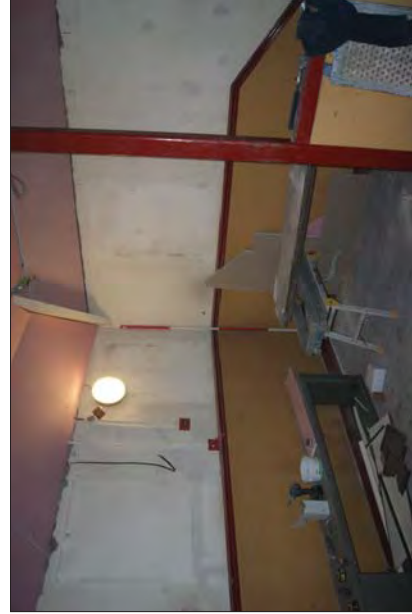


Plate 54. Room 16



Plate 55. Room 17



Plate 56. Room 17



Plate 57. Loading
Gallery & Hoist



Plate 58. Lattice
Track



Plate 59. Loading
Gallery



Plate 60. Loading
Gallery



Plate 61. Loading
Gallery & Hoist



Plate 62. Loading
Gallery

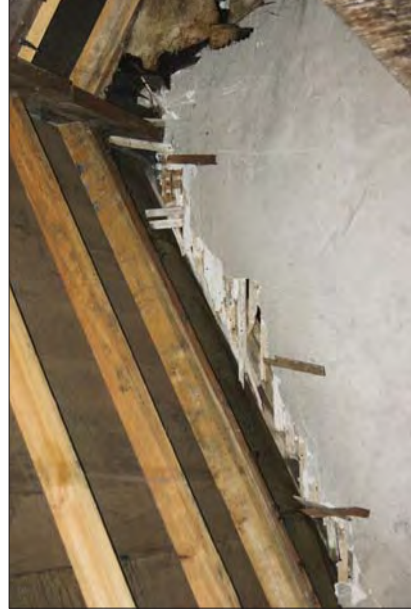


Plate 63. Theatre Era Lathe and Plaster
Dividing Wall



Plate 64. Pulley System for Curtain/
Safety Curtain

7.0 Conclusion

Documentary research has shown that the Empire Cinema was originally built as a private house – Newry House, which was later subdivided into homes and offices which were let to professional men and their families. Part of the structure was converted for use as a theatre in the early Twentieth Century and by the 1920's was in use as a theatre and cinema. At around this time the façade was modified and the distinctive curved frontage added.

No interior features or divisions belonging to the Newry House phase of building have survived. Many of the modifications associated with the early days of the Empire were lost in the late Twentieth Century although there are key elements which survive and allow us to at least in part create an accurate picture of how the interior would have appeared in 1920. The proscenium, ceiling and architraves/ plaster mouldings survive in the auditorium. The gallery survives in a modified form and it is believed that more plaster details are concealed above the suspended ceiling in Room 3. The rigging and galleries above the backstage area are all original and survive in their entirety.

Little modification of the building exterior has taken place since 1920 and with the exception of the removal of the chimneys sometime after the 1970's it is as built. The Empire Cinema is a fine example of an Art-Deco façade and the building is a notable feature given the towns predominately nineteenth century frontages.

The Empire follows the rise and fall of the cinema and provided an affordable escape for the people of Holyhead during the economic depression of the Twentieth Century. The rejuvenation of this iconic building will greatly enhance the townscape and the Empire Cinema when it re-opens will once more be a valuable resource for the town.

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Archive Material (Sourced from Anglesey Archives, Llangefni)

W/CD/373 1868 Map of Holyhead
Wmaps/52/1 1820 Stanley Estate Map
WMaps53 Sketch Map of the Town Drawn by Lewis Morris in 1737
WM/2359/53/1-1 Empire Theatre Programmes
1841 Tithe Map and Returns for Holyhead
1888 First Edition Large Scale Ordnance Survey Map
1890 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map
1900 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map
1924 Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Archive Material (Sourced from Bangor University Archives)

Lligwy Papers 215 Survey of Land and Property in Holyhead 1850
Penrhos Manuscripts 772-3 Estate Maps, Holyhead 1769
Penrhos Manuscripts 774-6 The Book of Reference for Above Maps 1769

Archive Material (Sourced from Conwy Archives, Llandudno)

CD4/13/1/20 Copy Deed of Dissolution of Partnership Between William Rees Davies, Mary Annie
Davies and John Jones

Trade Directories

1883 Slater's Directory
1889 Sutton's Directory
1899 Bennett's Directory
1910 Bennett's Directory
1914 The Kinematograph Year Book, Program Diary and Directory
1917 Wales Trade Directory
1927 Wales Trade Directory
1928 Wales Trade Directory
1929 Wales Trade Directory
1930 Wales Trade Directory
1931 Kinematograph Year Book
1933 Wales Trade Directory

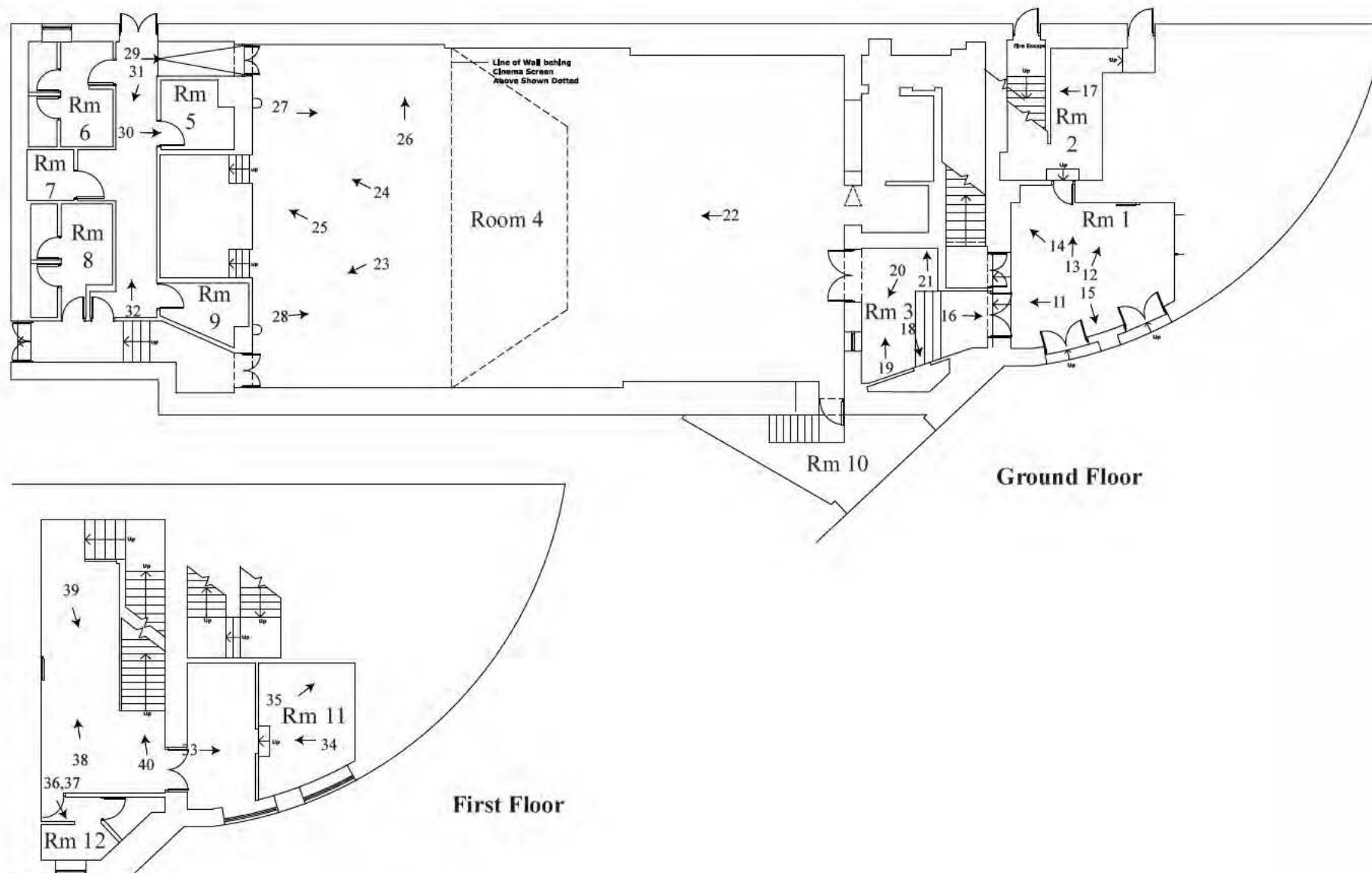
1936 Wales Trade Directory
1937 Wales Trade Directory
1942 Wales Trade Directory

Archive Material (Sourced from Bangor University Archives)

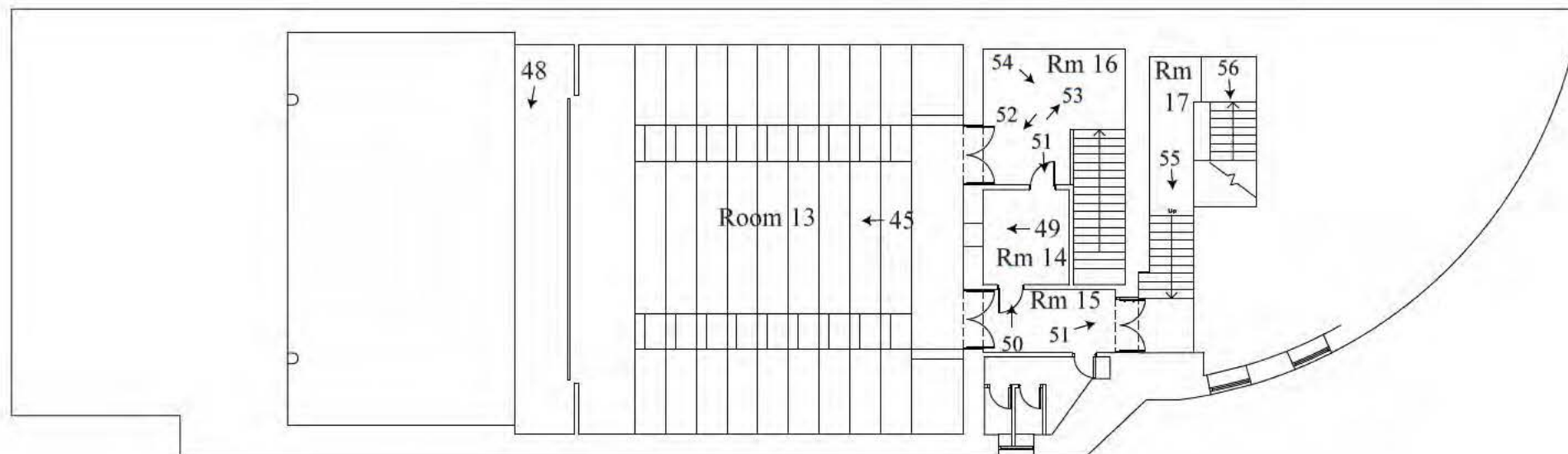
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Appendix A. Location and Direction of Photographs of the Empire Theatre - Ground and First Floor Level



Appendix B. Location and Direction of Photographs of the Empire Theatre - Second Floor Level