ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOURTH ADDITION TO THE LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL

ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

IN THE BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Department for Communities
Causeway Exchange
1 – 7 Bedford Street
Town Parks
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Dated: 10th June 2024

HISTORIC BUILDINGS LIST NUMBER: 4125

NOTE: Further additions to the list relating to this Council area may be issued at a future date.

SCHEDULE

184th ADDITION TO THE LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST IN THE BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

HB Ref. Number	OS Map Numbers 1:2,500 or1:10,000	Irish Grid Ref.	Building	Date Listed	Grade	Description and Evaluation	Date of Erection
HB26/27/077	147/1	J3357 7257	International Research Centre for Experimental Physics, including railings and retaining walls, Queen's University Belfast University Road Belfast BT7 1NN		B2	A large brick building in a modern style with neo-Georgian elements consisting of flat-roofed interlocking three-dimensional blocks of varying heights with a tall, canted entrance tower, constructed to the designs of John MacGeagh. The building was designed in 1955 and constructed between 1958 and 1962, during a period of rapid growth for the university and of increasing commitment to research and study in the discipline of physics. The involvement of physicists had been extremely significant in the Second World War as physics was seen to play a huge part in winning the war with British academic physicists making a significant contribution to the development of the atom bomb. Radar and radio, vital to wartime communications, also required physics trained personnel. A shortage of scientists, particularly physicists, was a concern in the mid-1950s, when it was proposed that Ulster could start training scientists and technicians to accelerate the nuclear power programme for the UK. The building was officially opened by The Queen Mother in April 1962. The building is of similar style and detailing to The Sir William Whitla Hall (HB26/27/067), also by John MacGeagh which opened in 1949 and is located on its West side. MacGeagh is remembered for 'thoroughness of design and attention to detail' and the neo-Georgian	1940 - 1959

						The building features a distinctive entrance tower with towers being a traditional feature of academic physics laboratories in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the height facilitating experiments on pendula and freefalling bodies. The new building had several unique features specific to its function: delivery points equipped with cranes and hoists were to enable heavy equipment to be brought into the building. The building was designed to be easily decontaminated from radioactive dust, with three distinct systems of mechanical ventilation. Electricity was supplied through a dual system from different city mains in order to preserve a supply in the event of mains failure or repairs and because of the nature of the research work at the university, the floors were designed for heavy loads. Professor Emeléus commented that the building had been designed to be as versatile as possible and to have 'good mechanical stability and floor strength and good mechanical services'. The semi-circular cantilevered concrete staircase in the entrance tower is the main feature of interest internally and while there have been changes to the exterior such as the large infill courtyard extension to the rear and the loss of the majority of the original windows, the building retains the noted sculptural quality and original fabric and detailing, and importantly, massing. The Irish Builder refers to the successful marriage of new and old with the reference to the context of 'The new building sits comfortably and has been made to recede quietly, leaving the parent building still the dominant and central feature'. The building continues in use as the physics department of Queen's University with the remodelling in 2004-5 of a new International Research Centre for Experimental Physics (IRCEP) a testament to both the versatility that Professor Emeléus identified when it was built in 1962, and the harmonious quality of its architecture within the university setting. A prominent yet respectful mid-	

						idiom in which he often designed. The Whitla Hall, designed with Edward Maufe is perhaps his most significant work, but he was also responsible for several other buildings at Queen's University including the School of Geology, and the main library tower (now remodelled), as well as more minor structures such as the tower and archway on the N side of the quadrangle. MacGeagh is also well-known as the designer of the north and south transepts of St Anne's cathedral and several noted churches and church halls. The building was part of a wider post-war regeneration of Belfast and the construction of the physics building, Transport House, the Electricity Board offices in Danesfort and several other substantial steel and concrete structures led the Belfast Telegraph to note that Belfast's 'war scars' were healing. The 75,000 square foot (original size) building was steel-framed and floors, roofs, foundations and retaining walls were of reinforced concrete. Wall infilling was of brick with a cavity construction, giving walls that are almost two feet in thickness with facing bricks all hand-made and sand-faced with Clipsham stone around door and window surrounds - similar to the palette of materials used for the Whitla Hall adjacent. The work was conducted under the supervision of the head of the physics department, Professor K G Emeléus and the Reader, Dr R H Sloane. Sloane's amendments are noted on drawings for the building and Sloane in particular is said to have exerted 'an enormous amount of effort persuading the architects of the needs of physicists and checking every detail of the work as it was performed'. The guidance of Emeléus and Sloane was acknowledged by John MacGeagh when the building was completed. The physics department's most illustrious student, John Stewart Bell (1928-1990) who graduated in Experimental Physics in 1948 is memorialised by the naming, after him, of a lecture theatre in the new physics building.	

						twentieth century building located within the grounds of the main campus of Queen's University, and a building of social and local interest.	

Further information on these records can be accessed on the historic buildings database at www.communities-ni.gov.uk

PLANNING ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2011

STATUTORY LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

WHEREAS

1. by section 80 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 the Department for Communities(hereinafter called "the Department") is required to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest;

2. it appears to the Department that the buildings described in the attached Schedule are buildings of special architectural or historic interest;

3. the Department has consulted with the Historic Buildings Council and Belfast City Council.

NOW THEREFORE the Department in exercise of the powers conferred on it by section 80 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and of every other power enabling it in that behalf hereby includes on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest the building/s set out in the attached schedule.

Dated: 10th June 2024

Senior Officer for the Department for Communities

NOTE: Subsection (7) of the said section 80 provides that the following shall be treated as part of the listed building:-

a. any object or structure within the curtilage of the building and fixed to the building;
b. any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 October 1973.