

Heritage Information

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Manly-Lota RSL Sub-Branch Hall

Key details

Addresses	At 184 Melville Terrace, Manly, Queensland 4179
Type of place	Hall
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Arts and Crafts
Lot plan	L499_RP33018; L498_RP33018
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Information — May 2013

Construction

Walls: Timber

People/associations

the Manly Progress Association (Association)

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (G) Social

The Manly-Lota RSL Hall was originally built in 1936 as the Manly Progress Association (MPA) Rooms. Established in 1911, the MPA comprised residents and ratepayers meeting to promote the interests of the district. The MPA saw the need for a large, community hall and after its construction it was used for a variety of purposes including fundraising during World War II. The Manly-Lota Sub-Branch of the RSL was formed at the MPA Rooms in 1936 and met at the building until 1940. The Sub-Branch obtained the MPA Rooms in 1952, renaming the building the Manly-Lota Memorial Hall.

History

In December 1911, a representative meeting of local citizens was held at Paton's Hall to form the Manly Progress Association. Previously, the needs of the Manly community had been represented by a larger, district organisation, the Wynnum and Manly Progress Association (established 1903). The MPA comprised local residents or ratepayers, who acted in concert with, and sometimes against, the relevant level of government, to promote civic improvements in Manly and Lota. A principle concern was the improvement of public facilities along the Manly foreshore in order to attract day visitors and longer-term holiday makers. Examples of other MPA activities include lobbying the Postmaster-General's Department for the provision of more public telephones; and approaching the Brisbane City Council for the resurfacing of the Manly Beach Reserve.

The MPA continued to meet at various venues such as Paton's Hall, the Tidbury Rooms or the state school, in Manly, until 1928. The MPA saw a definite need for a public hall for the local area. Fundraising for the hall's construction was conducted by the MPA. A variety of activities, such the annual formal ball that began in 1927 at Manly's Strand Picture Theatre, a 1928 community fete along the Manly foreshore and appeals for public donations were conducted. From 1929, the MPA began meeting at the 184 Melville Terrace, in what was temporary accommodation in a small building. This site comprised 36.2 perches of land that had been in the ownership of Mary Hannah Wright, the wife of Thomas Wright, since 1894. She had mortgaged the land through a loan from developer Benjamin F. Cribb in 1905 and then again on 14 April 1927 via a loan from Benjamin S.F. Cribb. The second mortgage may have been used to fund the construction of the first building used by the Manly Progress Association. On 3 April 1928, this property was transferred from Mary H. Wright to a board of trustees comprising Richard Russell (MPA president), Henry Reese and Thomas Goodman. The MPA is first listed as having 'Rooms' at this address in the 1929-30 Edition of the Queensland Post Office Directories. The fundraising for a new purpose-built MPA hall was hampered by the need to pay off monies owing on the existing MPA Rooms at 184 Melville Terrace. Thus the 1928 Manly Fete's profits had to be divided between "the building fund to pay off the present debt on the association's meeting hall, and inaugurate a new fund for the progress hall which it contemplates building shortly".¹

By February 1932, £300 had been raised and the MPA decided that "the outstanding need of Manly was a public

hall worthy of the large community", with a frontage of 147 feet agreed upon.² In 1935, the MPA decided that the proposed dimensions of the new community hall were to be 84 feet by 48 feet; while its public accessibility was ensured by the hall being built in the centre of the Manly business district.³ To complete the funding of the new building, the three trustees secured a mortgage through the Queensland Government's State Advances Corporation on 3 March 1936.

As a result, construction of the second MPA hall began with a stump capping ceremony held on Sunday 29 March 1936. The new hall retained the name of the Manly Progress Association Rooms and was completed prior to August 1936. Furnished with items such as a piano, it was used for a wide variety of functions, including dances. During World War II (1939-45), the MPA Rooms was the centre of local efforts to aid the District Patriotic Fund.

In World War I (1914-18), Australia realised that there would be a need to provide a community-based support organisation for its returning servicemen. A national body, called the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) was founded in New South Wales on 6 June 1916. While this national body included Queensland in its coverage, a separate state association, affiliated to the national organisation, received a separate Charter on 25 April 1917. In 1919, the national returned soldiers and sailors association was reorganised, with the state body renamed the RSSILA Queensland Branch. A Brisbane District association was formed on Anzac Day 1926. It was renamed the South Eastern District Association in 1928.

Across Brisbane's suburbs, groups of Great War veterans formed local Returned Soldiers and Sailors clubs that became known as Sub-Branches of the District and the national Associations. While unofficial commemorations of the landing at Anzac Cove had been occurring since the first anniversary on 25 April 1916, an official Anzac Day, with its attached public holiday, was not declared until 1927. The Sub-Branches were responsible for organising the local Dawn Service, a local Anzac Day March (if required), celebrations after the March and the Remembrance Day commemorations on 11 November, each year. The Wynnum Sub-Branch also looked after the needs of the veterans who had settled around the Manly-Lota District, particularly with repatriation health care access, the Soldiers Settlers Scheme housing and funeral notices for recently deceased members.

The Manly-Lota Sub-Branch of the RSSILA was formed at a local hut on 26 September 1936. The new Sub-Branch was created so that the local ex-servicemen would not need to continually travel to Wynnum to attend meetings and socialise. Soon after, the Sub-Branch moved its meetings and services to the MPA Rooms. However the Sub-Branch wanted a club house that was separate to the MPA Rooms/community hall. Together with the local RSSILA Women's Auxiliary, the Sub-Branch commenced fundraising in 1938. Its members continued to meet at the MPA Rooms until 4 October 1940 when the Manly-Lota Sub-Branch clubhouse was opened at the corner of Nelson Parade and the Esplanade, Manly. That same year, the RSSILA changed its title to the Returned Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA) in recognition of those serving in the Royal Australian Air Force (formed 1921).

In the postwar period Manly, like other outer Brisbane suburbs, rapidly urbanised as it filled with new residents and new housing estates. The Manly Progress Association declined somewhat after World War II, but continued to meet until 1981. A contributing factor to the MPA's decline may have been the death of trustees Thomas Goodman on 1 February 1940 and Richard Russell on 8 April 1949, followed by the retirement of trustee Henry Reese in 1950. On 20 December 1950, Goodman, Russell and Reese were replaced as trustees of the 184 Melville Terrace site by Kevin F.J. Keegan, Oswald M. Addison and John W. H. McMaster.

Because the Nelson Parade RSSAILA clubhouse was cramped and unsatisfactory, the Sub-Branch decided to obtain its old meeting place, the Manly Progress Association Rooms. Negotiations for the full transfer of ownership continued throughout 1951, aided by one of the new trustees, Kevin Keegan, being a Sub-branch

member. The transfer of the property was finalised on 14 May 1952, when Kevin Keegan, William M. Gunn and Patrick V. Ryan, of the Manly-Lota Sub-Branch were appointed as replacement trustees of the property. The Manly Progress Association Rooms became the Manly-Lota Memorial Hall.

The RSSAILA's Manly Sub-Branch sought Brisbane City Council approval to extend the Manly-Lota Memorial Hall on 4 February 1954. The RSSAILA became the Returned Services League (RSL) in 1965. The trustees of the Returned Services League of Australia (Queensland Branch) South-Eastern District finally gained the certificate of title for this property on 28 October 1988. In 1990, the Returned Services League was renamed the Returned and Services League that emphasised the organisation represented both past and current serviceman and women; while at the same time retaining its well-known abbreviation of the RSL. The Manly-Lota Sub-Branch received its current RSL Charter on 30 July 2004.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as a community hall erected by the Manly Progress Association and used by it and local organisations such as the Manly-Lota RSSILA Sub-Branch.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as it was built for and used by the former Manly Progress Association from 1936-51; and then used (1936-40) and later owned from 1951 by the Manly-Lota RSL Sub-Branch.

References

1. "Manly Fete", *The Brisbane Courier*, 3 January 1928
2. "Manly Progress", *The Brisbane Courier*, 18 February 1932, p.3
3. 'Modern Community Hall – Manly Progress Association's Proposal', *The Courier Mail*, 8 October 1935, p.17
4. Brisbane City Council, aerial photographs 1946 & 2009
5. Brisbane City Council, post-1946 Building Cards
6. Brisbane City Council Sewerage Map No. W.40 & W41, c1951
7. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
8. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Picture Queensland
9. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949
10. "Wynnum News", *The Brisbane Courier*, 24 February 1903
11. "Wynnum and Manly", *The Brisbane Courier*, 28 March 1903
12. "Meeting at Manly", *The Brisbane Courier*, 31 March 1903
13. "Manly Progress Association", *The Brisbane Courier*, 19 December 1911
14. "Waterloo Bay from Hemmant to Lota", *The Brisbane Courier*, 8 August 1927
15. "Manly Progress", *The Brisbane Courier*, 18 February 1932
16. 'Modern Community Hall – Manly Progress Association's Proposal', *The Courier Mail*, 8 October 1935
17. "Manly's New Hall – Stump Capping Ceremony", *The Courier Mail*, 30 March 1936
18. RSL South Eastern District Association executive member Peter Kinsella, telephone conversation with Dr Carmel Black (BCC Heritage Team), 16 May 2013
19. "Brevities", *The Courier Mail*, 17 August 1936
20. <http://rslsouthqueensland.com.au/sub-branches/Manly-Lota>

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Note: This information has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this information is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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