

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

LISTED BUILDING	Library (Original Block), University College of Wales, Mumbles Road, Swansea
Grade:-	II
Date of Notification:-	13.03.2004
National Grid Reference:-	SS 6315592000
O.S. 1:10000 Sheet No:-	SS 69 SW
CADW Reference No:-	82444
C & C of S Reference No:-	LB:516

Notes:-

Location:-

On the SE side of the mall which runs between Fulton House and Singleton Abbey, immediately SW of, and below the Abbey. Joined at the SW to the later 1960s library tower.

History:-

The University College of Swansea originate as the town's technical college, which acquired university status in 1920, an outcome of the Royal Commission on University Education, which reported in 1918. The college had originally been sited at Mount Pleasant, but following the purchase of the Singleton estate by Swansea Corporation in 1919 it was agreed that part of the site (including the Abbey itself) could be given over to housing the college. Originally using the Abbey and a series of temporary pavilions, the first permanent building scheme was planned in 1930. Provision of a library was deemed a priority, and in the event, the only part of the scheme to be completed. A competition was held for its design, which was won by Verner Owen Rees of London (1886-1966). The proposed building was illustrated in the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1935, and the library opened in October 1937.

Exterior:-

Library building, in the stripped down classical style characteristic of the 1930s. Buff brick with ashlar dressings including plinth, and cornice and string courses to main block; flat roof. The building occupies a stepped site, and comprises a main block with continuous glazing at first floor level, wrapped by advanced ground floor block forming a podium to NW and NE, and similar advanced block at basement level to SE. Original main entrance in NE elevation, facing Singleton Abbey. Strictly symmetrical, with slightly recessed entrance bay, stepped up from advanced flanking blocks of the podium. Doorway in moulded ashlar surround, with college arms above (signed 'Verner Rees'). Paired windows in flanking bays. The NW podium is articulated by a band of closely spaced windows (the glazing divided horizontally and with margin lights in metal glazing bars). There is a further entrance recessed at the far right of this block. The main block rises from this podium; it is dominated by a continuous band of fenestration, separated by narrow ashlar pilasters, and contained by continuous ashlar bands at head and sill level; a further advancing string course below balancing the plain cornice. The tall windows are

divided horizontally and by margin lights in metal glazing bars. This arrangement is repeated on the rear (SE facing) elevation. Similar triple windows in each return elevation. Rear has basement storey which repeats the arrangement of the ground-floor podium block to the NW, but with corner entrance blocks, slightly advanced and stepping back twice. Widely spaced simple windows at ground floor level.

Interior:-

Not inspected in 2003.

Listed:-

As a fine example of a purpose-built library from the 1930s. The building has retained its integrity (notwithstanding its linkage to a later building), and combines a restrained classical stylistic language with clear articulation of function. The building is also of historical interest as the first purpose built university building at Swansea, part of an uncompleted early scheme for the development of the campus.

Reference:-

Architects Journal, Vol. 81, May 1935, p 727.

Architects Journal, Vol. 82, October 1935, p 577.

Architects Journal, Vol. 87, January 1938.

David Dykes, The University of Swansea: An Illustrated History, 1992.