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LANYON
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LAGAN
COLLEGE

CLONES
CANAL
STORES

NEWRY
RESOURCE
CENTRE

WATERWORLD

The Clones Canal Stores sit on the banks of the Ulster Canal on the edge of Clones in County Monaghan close to the border with Fermanagh. Completed in the 1840's the Ulster Canal linked Upper Lough Erne to the Blackwater River which flowed into Lough Neagh, and formed part of the much larger waterway transport network throughout Ireland at the time that included the Erne, the Shannon and the Lagan Canal. The canal flowed through Clones, as did the railway, making the place quite well connected to the rest of Ireland. The canal closed in 1931 and now lies derelict and the railway has long gone.

In 2007 at the height of the Celtic Tiger boom years the North South Ministerial Council announced plans to restore and reopen the section of the canal between Clones and Lough Erne. Restoration of the canal would link Clones to the Erne Shannon waterways system, and could create potential for tourism and recreational led regeneration along the route as it weaves along the Fermanagh and Monaghan border. One such proposal is a plan to construct a marina adjacent to the Canal Stores. To date, although planning has progressed, construction work has not commenced.

The Canal Stores were built at the same time as the canal to provide storage for goods transported along the network. The complex consists of a group of buildings typical of small industrial buildings of the time built with stone walls and roofs in slate and metal sheeting and now stand as a reminder of the industrial and commercial heritage of the canal. The buildings fell into disrepair until 1995 when the largest building was rejuvenated by Tom Mullarkey and Mary Kerrigan of McCormick Tracey Mullarkey Architects. This brought that building back into use as a community and heritage centre with a cafe, a tourist information point, multifunctional flexible spaces and a permanent lace exhibition.

The community building sits parallel to the canal and is a fine two storey industrial building with entrances to both floors afforded by a change in level between the road and canal. Internally much of the industrial feel of the building has been conserved, especially on the lower ground floor where concrete paving stones help give a sense of history.

The centre is used extensively and a need to enhance the facilities was identified which led to a decision to add a new kitchen and some more multipurpose space. The new accommodation, which officially opened in October 2014, has been provided in a two storey extension appended on to the end of the previously restored block. The extension has a pitched roof form and is entirely clad in zinc. It is both striking and familiar at the



THE TEAM

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Structural & Civil / Taylor and Boyd

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Electrical / McGuigan Electrical

Quantity Surveyor / Sammon Surveyors

Service Engineers / Patrick McCauls

Main Contractor / McGuigan Builders

Photography / Keys and Monaghan





► same time. The zinc clad walls and roof give it a crisp and contemporary feel, and yet the material immediately echoes the corrugated metal buildings found alongside stonework in traditional rural farmsteads and industrial buildings, including fragments of those adjacent on the site.

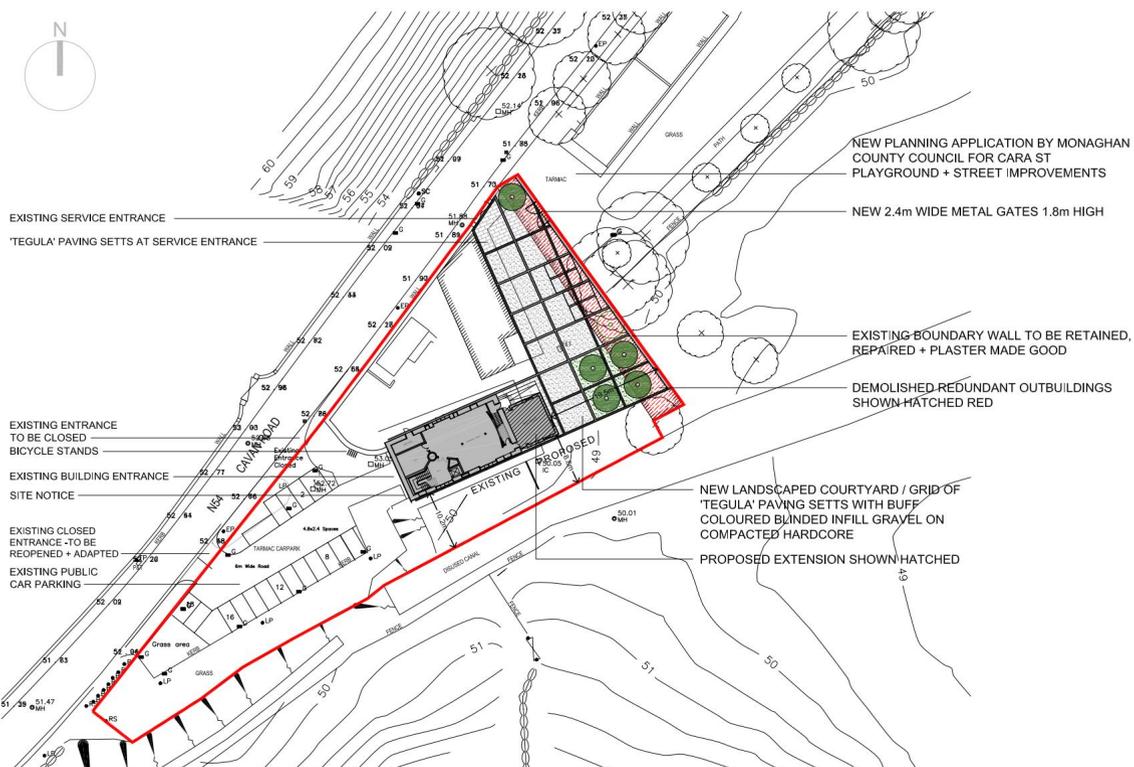
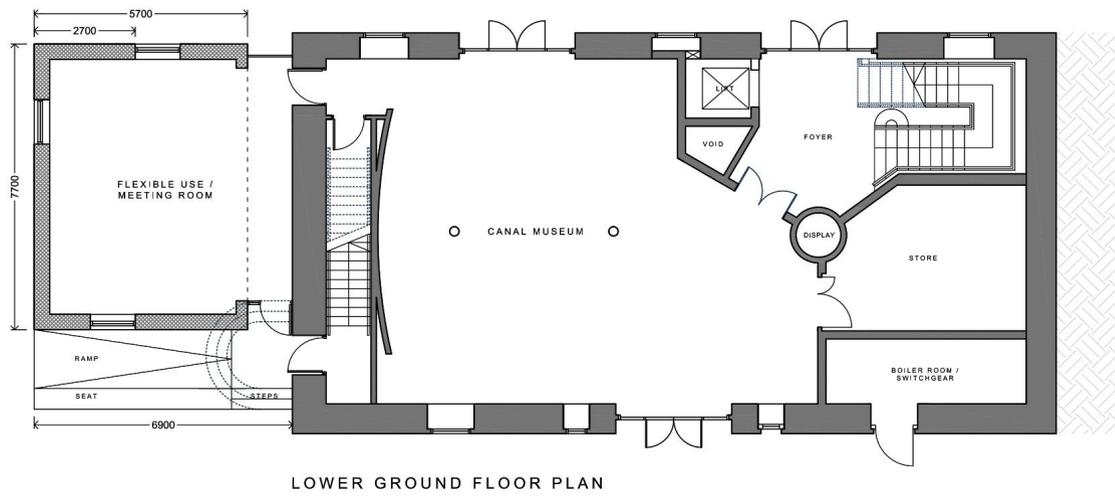
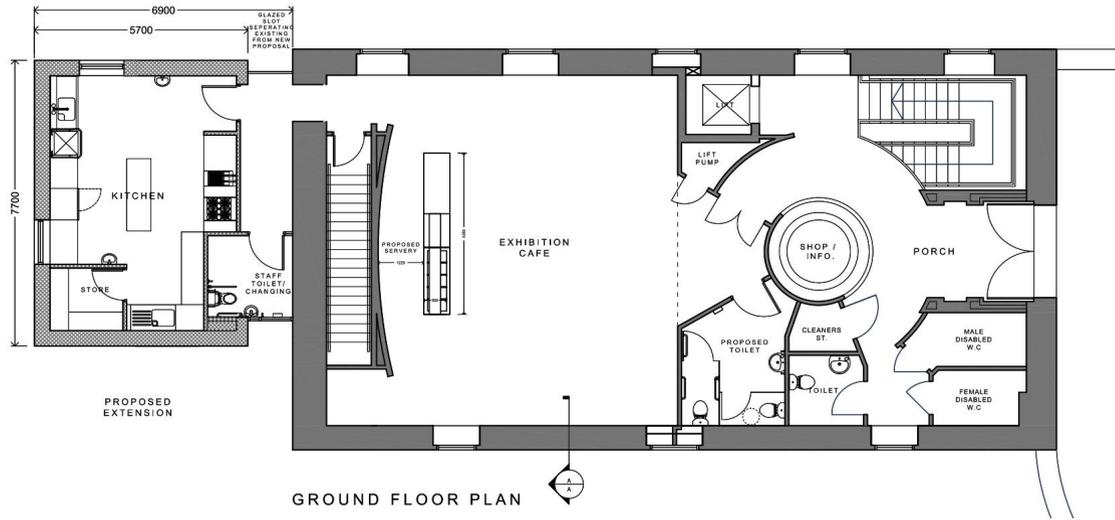
The use of the single material to wrap the walls and roof is a strong move. The form and material are a bold response to the older buildings and are totally appropriate to the setting.

The extension is modest in size. A new multipurpose room has been added on the lower ground floor which is linked directly to the existing function room. Both spaces can be accessed directly from the outside. Internally the new room is white plastered with the exception of the stone gable of the original building which has been left in its natural finish. This helps articulate the space and is a notable departure from the original conservation work where the internal faces of the stone walls are painted white. Upstairs a new large kitchen has been provided and fitted out with commercial stainless steel catering equipment and benches.

The extension has been constructed with concrete block work cavity walls with the zinc cladding placed over the top. This method of construction has produced thick exterior walls which in turn has created rather satisfyingly deep window reveals. The vertical seams on the zinc have been placed to suit the window openings resulting in unequal spacings. This provides a layer of detail and an interesting pattern and texture especially when looking at a tight perspective along the front of the building. There are other gestures including narrow double height windows that help soften the impact of the new where it meets the old.

When the architects first took up the commission there had been a suggestion that the extension could be in stone ►







► though ideas progressed on from that. Later in the process, a value engineering exercise identified the cladding as being overly expensive and the architects had to resist calls for it to be substituted with plain rendered walls. Thankfully the zinc remained and the expenditure on the high quality material that was central to the architectural concept has been justified.

Within the existing building there has been little change. A few repairs were undertaken to softwood window and door frames, signage was updated, and the toilets were reworked. Externally the landscaping has been improved and areas including a disused yard have been cleaned up and resurfaced to make things more presentable. Of course the entire landscape setting will be totally transformed if the canal is reopened.

While the decision was made to extend the building that had already been conserved, the other block along with its appendages, although cosmetically tied up, is still sitting empty and is crying out for reuse. Presumably if the canal is reopened and a marina constructed people will be queuing up to restore them and put them to use.

The scheme could have progressed in many different ways. In the event the architects were ambitious and an opportunity was taken. The project was treated with the care that it deserved and the effort was well worth it. The Canal Stores now has a 21st Century addition to lead it into the future. ●

Wayne Hazlett

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Co. Monaghan, Republic of Ireland**