

ACCOMODATION CONSTRUCTION AT PORT LOCKROY

1944

By Capt. A. Taylor.

BRITISH ANTARCTIC

ADG/1A/1944/c

SURVEY ARCHIVES

When the decision had eventually been made to establish the base at Goudier Islet in Port Lockroy, two sites became available for the construction of the buildings. The most obvious one was upon a small gravel beach near the north west corner of the island, and adjacent to what ultimately became the dinghy harbour. It was flat, near the best unloading point the island possessed and its gravel would be useful for the concrete necessary for the foundations of the buildings. However, it was only a few feet above sea level, and no one seemed to know exactly what ice conditions might be encountered in the spring, so the choice was finally made of the alternative site higher up the island.

This second site was located near the summit of the island, a few hundred feet from the unloading ~~point~~ and about thirty feet above sea level. It ~~was~~ lay upon a deposit of small boulders and fragments of rock between outcrops of solid rock running in an east and west direction. While its location necessitated the extra labour of transporting all the materials and supplies up from the beach, it being so far above the sea precluded any possible danger from ice.

Roughly speaking, the materials which we had with us consisted of an ample supply to construct erect a pre-fitted wooden hut 16 feet by 28½, as supplied by the firm of Boulton and Paul; a skimpy supply of parts purported to be sufficient for the erection of two Nissen huts, much of which was second hand; and an assortment of lumber, nails and corrugated iron, among other things, which had been picked up at Deception Island on our journey south.

These materials had various sources in the first instance. Much of the lumber used in the construction

of the original part of the hut, as that section designed by Boulton and Paul has come to be known, was from Canada, while its hardware and manufactured pieces were, of course, British. The Nissen huts had once stood in the Falkland Islands, before being dismantled to come down with us, but the wood of which their floors had been built had grown among trees in West Africa. The supplies procured from Deception Island had all been doubtless of Norwegian origin, for some were so marked, and the timber had once inhabited Norway's forests. Part of the timbers used for the floor joists of one of the extensions we erected were the long derelict remains of an old whaling plan on nearby Wiencke Island. The house was a cosmopolitan one.

The assembly of the original part of the house proceeded at a good speed, for there was plenty of assistance, and the parts of the frame all having been once erected in England, fitted easily together in accordance with the plans which accompanied them. Concrete piers were poured under the 6 x 6 inch stringers which ran the length of the hut concurrently with the erection of the frame of 2 x 4's. Two built up bolted trusses supported the centre spans of the flat ~~too~~ pitched roof. The entire roof and walls of the building were lined with aluminum foiled tar paper, over which was laid boards of one inch tongue and groove material, an air space being left in the walls by means of battens. The roof was covered with heavy rubberoid, well battened down, and tarred at the joints. The inner part of the building was completely lined with  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch tongue and groove material, <sup>in addition to</sup> a small interior partition cutting off a 5 x 8 foot area intended in the original plan to be a porch. The floor was made of a layer of sisalcraft, one of heavy canvas, one inch flooring, and finally was covered with



heavy  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch linoleum.

As this portion of the building neared completion, an extension 18 feet wide and of the same length as the original portion was commenced. The concrete for footings for the posts which would support the floor was poured first in this instance, directly on top of the loose scree (of which there has since been no apparent subsidence). The supporting posts allowed the extension of the floor at the same level as that of the original building, for the ground dropped rather sharply over part of the area covered. Stringers from Deception Island were covered with what had been the flooring of the Nissen huts to make the 500 ~~feet~~ square feet look almost like a dance floor before the walls were up. Heavy 2 inch tongue and groove material from Deception was used for the framing to the walls, together with some of the surplus 2 x 4's supplied by Boulton and Paul. The walls were low (about 6 feet), and the roof was flat, allowing only a 6 inch drop towards the north. Two windows from the original hut were augmented by three others from a Nissen hut to provide the extension with good natural illumination. The roof was covered with sisalcraft, canvas and  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch flooring of varying widths (from Deception I.) and was covered with rubberoid and well battened down as before. The interior walls were lined with surplus  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch tongue and groove material left over after the completion of the original hut, while the <sup>Ceiling</sup> ~~roof~~ and interior partitions were lined with beaver board pilfered from the supply of lining sheets for the Nissen huts. They were largely light proof, but though neither wind-proof nor sound proof, they did save a good deal of timber which at this stage of the work was becoming noticeably scarce.

Although the remaining amount of lumber available

had become most variegated as regards both condition and dimensions, there was still a fair quantity of it left, so it was decided to construct a second extension, 8 feet by 30 in dimensions, which became loosely referred to as the porch, although in point of fact the porch ultimately occupied but a small proportion of it. Part of this would suit the purpose of a storeroom, in addition to provide Berry with extended facilities. To provide the floor joists, it became necessary to rip saw 102 lineal feet of the 3 x 9 timbers which had been brought from Deception, a back breaking labour for so small a result. The roof was treated in exactly the same manner as that on the first extension, excepting for the fact that as we had run out of rubberoid, it was given a second cover of the canvas which was then heavily tarred. The wall framing was largely comprised of dilapidated ends from one of the Nissen huts, lined on the outside with heavy Norwegian siding, and on the inside with the very thin tongue and groove materials from the Nissen.

The discovery of some heavy 3 inch timbers on the nearby Wiencke Island led to the resumption of a life of useful service of the components of an oil soaked derelict whale plan in yet another addition to our hut. This was usually referred to as the annex and was  $6\frac{1}{2}$  x 30 feet in extent together with a  $15\frac{1}{2}$  x 9 foot addition along part of its length. The new found heavy timbers made very strong ~~stringers~~ <sup>stringers</sup> upon which to support the floor, much of which was laid with packing case wood. The walls and roof were of corrugated iron, the ~~roof~~ being doubled to avoid the discomfitures caused by condensed moisture along its inner surface. Spare purlins from the Nissen huts were used to make the wall frames and roof supports. Two small windows and a door completed the annex except for the sanitary arrangements provided by a urinal and

a "two holler" at the farthest end of the building. It also housed a bathroom (with an enamelled bathtub procured from Deception), an oil room containing the paraffin, petrol and a small motor generator set, and some long shelves used for the stowage of gear and supplies of a more perishable nature.

As the decision had early been made that only one Nissen hut would be erected, the parts of one of them became available for incorporation in the hut and provided many useful <sup>components.</sup> ~~parts~~. It was used almost in its entirety, except for the curved lining sheets, and not the least useful item among the pieces so provided was the box of small hardware.

To provide a <sup>t</sup>storeroom, a Nissen hut was erected on a rather rough piece of rocky ground about 100 feet east of the house. Walls were built up from the supply of boulders scattered about the island to provide a more or less level face upon which to support the base plate, a small concrete pier being built up under the location of each rib end. Later the floor was partially levelled off with these same boulders, as there was by this time no timber remaining with which to construct a proper floor. We had only one window left from the eight originally supplied, so the other apertures were boarded up. All the lining sheets were double nailed in order to add to the structure's strength and resistance against the high winds expected, and it has now stood up to a winter's gales apparently undamaged. There was insufficient material left after the completion of the house to finish the inner lining, but it was extended up the walls about seven feet.

Concerning the time taken to ~~the~~ erect the buildings, some dates may be informative. The first load of lumber went ashore on Feb. 12th, and building operations

commenced that same day. By Feb. 17th, the original part of the building comprising the present workroom was habitable, and it was effectively completed on Feb. 22nd, on which date the first extension or Mess Room part of the building was begun. About March 2nd the porch extension was started, and these latter two portions were completed by the time the William Scoresby paid her second visit here that year on March 19th. The last part of the building, the annex, was finished about the end of April, while the Nissen hut, which was erected concurrently with the annex, was completed on April 12th.

These dates, however, are no criterion upon which to base an estimate of the actual time spent on erection work. When we first arrived, all hands\* including the cook lent a hand, and we had additional occasional labour from both the Fitzroy and the Scoresby. Following the departure of the ships, the working crew was considerably whittled down. Marr and Davies were busy almost continuously in moving stores and in getting them under cover. Berry and Blair (and subsequently Blyth) were kept busy in producing food for the enormous appetites the other seven of us developed. Farrington had his infected finger, which kept him from doing any but his radio work. And Back was kept employed during the early part of our sojourn in establishing his meteorological station and attending to cuts bruises and other ailments. Later on, when his practice lessened somewhat, he was able to provide Ashton with longer spells of his services. But that left only three of us to devote our full time to the construction work ---- Ashton, Lamb and myself. The work was entirely under Ashton's supervision.

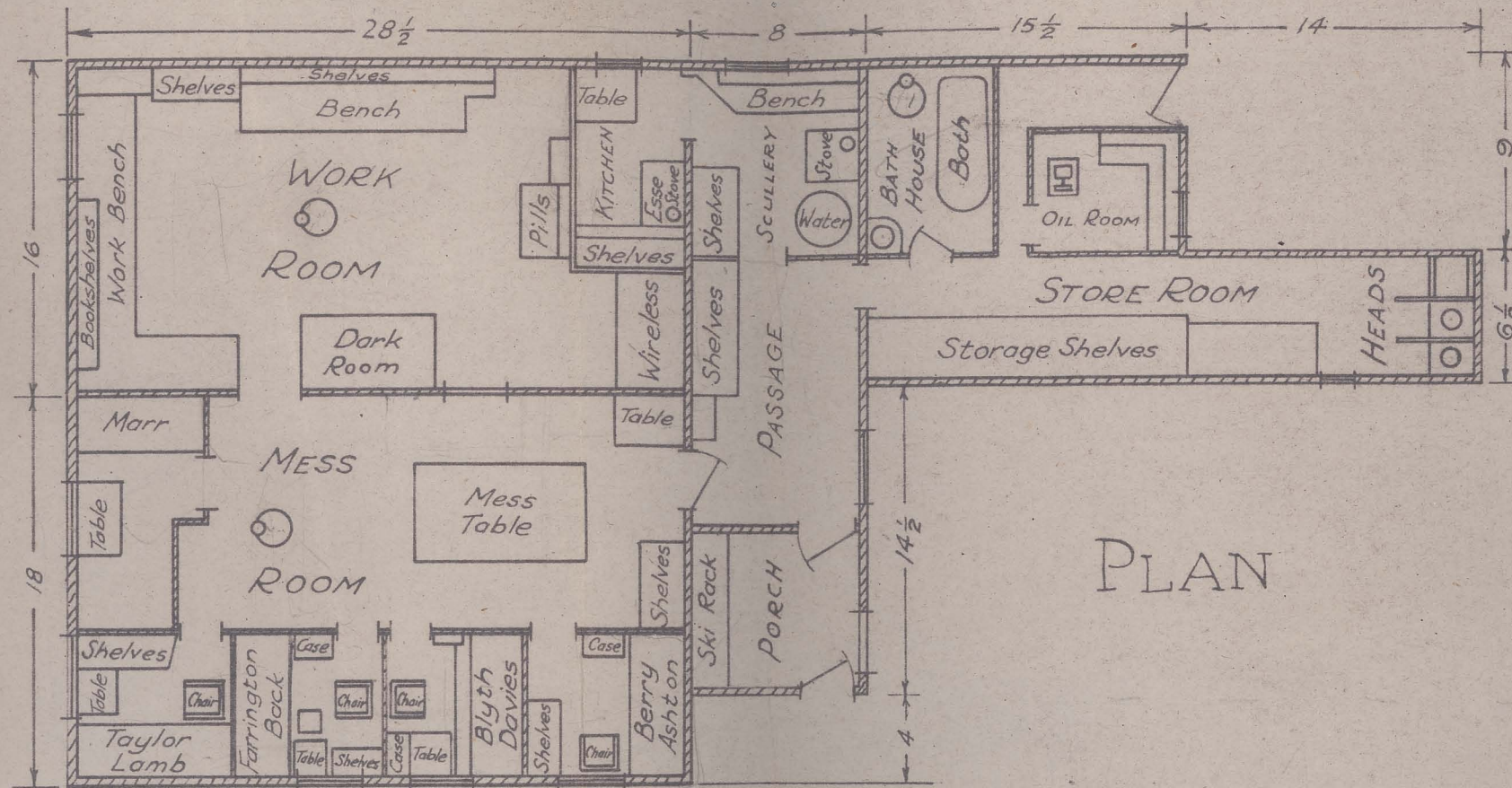
It is mid-July as I write, and the house, with all its appointments, is finished. We find it both commodious and comfortable. Bookshelves, cupboards and tables with other items of furniture and convenience have made



their appearances in the rooms and cabins, most of the latter being designed and constructed by the occupants concerned. Linoleum covers the floors, and rugs serve to soften and brighten them as we sit round the coal fires of our heaters on a wintry night. The comfort we now enjoy has been well worth the effort.

Port Lockroy,  
Graham Land,  
December 6th, 1944.  
A. Taylor.



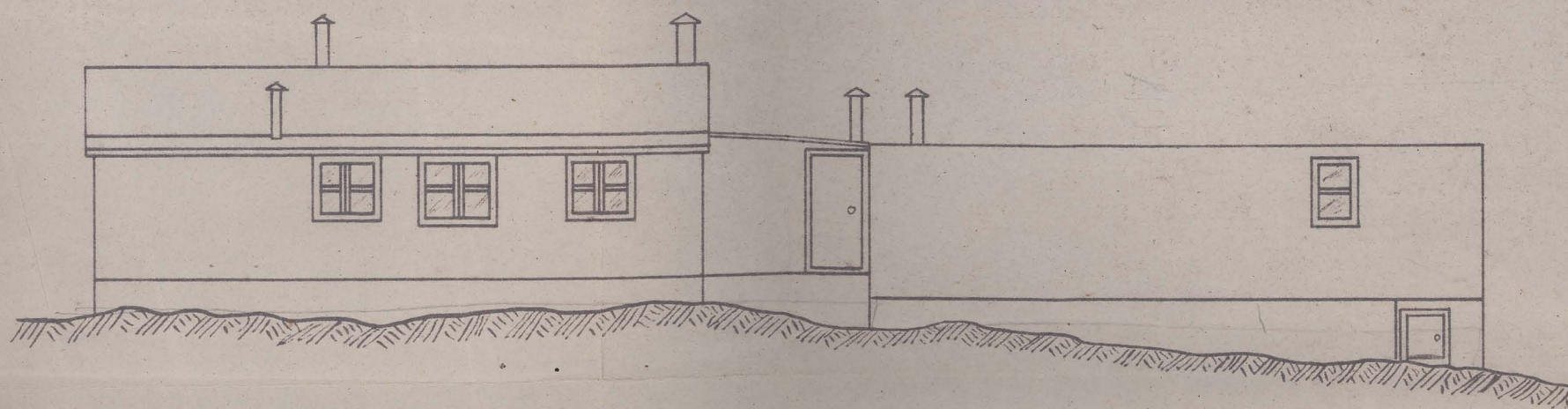


PLAN

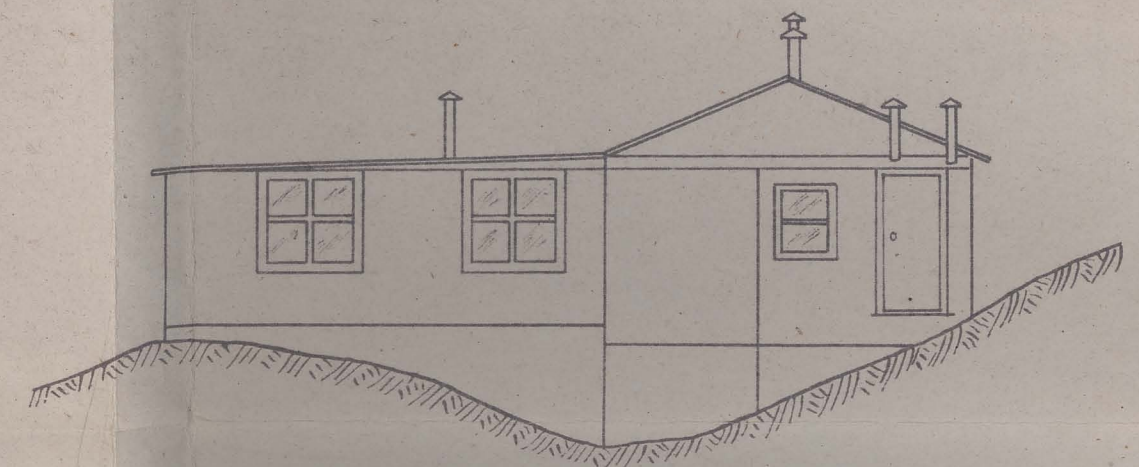
PLAN OF  
BUILDING AS CONSTRUCTED  
AT  
**GOUDIER ISLET, PORT LOCKROY.**

GRAHAM LAND  
UNDER SUPERVISION OF  
L. ASHTON  
SCALE ⅛ INCH TO 1 FOOT  
FEB.-MAY 1944

BRANSFIELD HOUSE



NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION