

HMS CABBALA / SCOTIA NORTH / LOWTON CIVIC HALLS / THE ROSE CENTRE

The story of Lowton Civic Hall starts in 1939 when the farmland in Hesketh Meadow Lane was requisitioned and compulsory purchased by the War Department. It was to be used as an accommodation village for the munitions factory at Risley Moss and was to be known as Risley Hostels.

Building started in 1941 and the self contained "village" was constructed with its own chapel, cinema and sick bay. It was to accommodate 600 workers and within twelve months it was ready to take its first residents.

However in 1942 before the first Risley worker could be housed, the plans were changed and it was decided that it would become a land-based ship to be known as "HMS Cabbala." This would be a Royal Navy signals training centre. The trainees came from all across the country to be trained in top secret methods of sending and receiving codes, especially the use of Morse Code. There were about 600 sailors and 60 WRENS on board the ship until 1946. There is a memorial plaque to HMS Cabbala in the entrance hall erected in 1983.

After it was vacated by the Navy it was renovated and got ready for the next chapter in its life, as a hostel for displaced people from Eastern Europe, most of whom found work in the local coal mines. By 1948 most of these people had bought their own homes or moved into council houses and the site once again needed a new use.

It was taken over by the Ministry of Works, who converted it into a housing village for American service personnel and their families from the base at Burtonwood The village Scotia North with its ideal facilities had an American forces shop (PX) and a bank added. The Americans remained here until 1960 and the then Golborne Urban District Council took the site over.

They used the land for sports fields and put the accommodation into their council house stock now for local families. When the Golborne Council was taken over by Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council in 1974, it was decided to demolish the housing units and replace them with new council houses nearby, but to retain the playing fields and large halls for leisure use. These halls are what we now know as the Civic Halls.

As an economy measure Wigan intended to close most of its public halls in 2011. Lowton Civic Hall is now being run by a commercial organisation who have re-named it "The Rose Centre."