

ST CATHERINE'S CHURCH and CHURCH HALL - Port Erin

The Church Hall

St Catherine's Church Hall is a significant place in the life of Port Erin. It is the venue for a wide range of Church activities as well as being hired out for other social events.

In 1940, it played an extremely important role in the creation of the Women's Internment Camp in Rushen. On 29th and 30th May 1940, the internees were brought to Port Erin by train and taken to St Catherine's Church Hall in Church Road to be registered.

The women's registration cards were filled in with details of their date and place of birth; nationality; passport and occupation details; date of arrival in the UK and where they had lived; arrival in the Island and address of their billet; date of release and destination. Most of these registration cards are now safely in the library at the Manx Museum, as they are a valuable artefact from the Internment Camp.

It was from this Hall that they were taken to the hotels and boarding houses where they were to spend their internment. Throughout the life of the camp the Hall was used as a first aid post and for other activities.



St Catherine's Church

The church in 1940 was, as it is today, the hub of the Port Erin community.

Many of the internees were under considerable pressure and in distress because of their arrest and detention and, in particular, because of their separation from family members – husbands, children and parents.

The vicar of St Catherine's Church, along with the clergy from the other churches, welcomed those internees who chose to attend their churches for Sunday services.



On 28th July 1940, Bishop George Bell, who was the Bishop of Chichester, came to the Island at the request of the wives of the Lutheran Pastors, who were interned in Rushen Camp, and gave a sermon in St Catherine's Church. This sermon was well received by the internees. However, the Bishop's visit caused considerable controversy in the House of Commons in London, because he had been involved with a report about the Camp which had given incorrect information about how the internees were being treated.