

Appendix 6 – The former Woolwich Covered Market (List Entry Number: 1456184)

Reasons for Designation:

The former Woolwich Market, 1936, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

The roof is a good representation of the Lamella system, built at a scale which clearly demonstrates the structural capability, is unaltered, and is the earliest known surviving example; * based on a simple but visually distinctive geometric structural system which creates a striking, uninterrupted interior.

Historic interest:

A rare survival of a dwindling number of Lamella structures in England, of which over 100 were built during the interwar period and only 16 of which are thought to remain.

History:

A market was opened on the site on Plumstead Road in 1932, necessitated by overcrowding of the earlier marketplace on Beresford Square, c50m to the west. Four years later the new market was enclosed by a lightweight steel structure with a Lamella roof; construction took three months and cost £2,268, and the new, covered market was reopened on 18 September 1936.

The Lamella system was developed in Germany in the 1920s. It uses short structural members in an interlocking lattice grid to create a shallowly arching structure which could achieve wide, uninterrupted spans. The Horseley Bridge Engineering Company of Tipton acquired the license to use the system in England in 1929, and in the following decade designed and built over 100 structures incorporating Lamella roofs. One of the principal applications of the system was in the construction of aircraft hangars, and the first commission, in 1930, was for Henleys Ltd at Heston Airfield. The Air Ministry commissioned their first hangars at Usworth, near Newcastle upon Tyne in 1932, and in 1936 placed an order for 22 hangars to be built at their stations at Ternhill, Shawbury, Brize Norton and Kemble; of these, a number survive, and the group of four at Kemble are listed, as is the Lamella hangar at Liverpool

airport. Lamella roofing was by no means limited to hangars, however, and in his 'short history', Allen notes various industrial buildings, garages, a school, and power plant which incorporate the structural system. Lamella roofs were used much less frequently following a couple of collapses in the 1940s, due to the unforeseen weight of snow, and faults in assembly. One notable example of later use was on the Sea and Ships Pavilion at the Festival of Britain in 1951.

Woolwich Covered Market is the earliest known example of a Lamella roof to survive in England. The building ceased use as a market in 2017, and has been converted to a multi-venue food hall. The structure remains largely intact.

There are purported to be subterranean passages beneath the market, used as air-raid shelters during the Second World War.

Details:

Market hall, 1936, to the designs of the Horseley Bridge Engineering Company, incorporating the walls of the 1932 open-air market.

STRUCTURE and MATERIALS: a steel-framed, segmental-arch roof supported on steel stanchions encased in concrete and brick. The roof is clad in corrugated sheeting and glazing. The walls of the 1932 open-air market are built in London stock brick and have limestone dressings.

PLAN: the market stands on the south side of Plumstead Road. The building is rectangular in plan, with a span of 29, and c35m long.

EXTERIOR: the principal elevation of the building faces north onto Plumstead Road. The dominant feature is its deep projecting fascia of white boarding with 'PUBLIC MARKET' inscribed in applied lettering. The elevation is divided into three sections by wide tiled stanchions; the outer bays have concertina shutters, and the central section is fully glazed, with multiple windows in replacement metal frames. The roof, clad in corrugated sheeting, recedes in a gentle arc, and has strips of glazing and a pitched lantern along the apex.

The building abuts other structures at either end, and its glazed gables rise above to the rear. On the rear elevation are a number of brick ancillary structures related to the 1932 market, with a pitched entrance leading into the main market hall.

INTERIOR: internally the main market hall is a single, open-plan space, and the

principal feature is the roof structure. The steel framework is exposed; it consists of short channel-section members – Lamellae – bolted together in pairs to form a diamond lattice, braced with narrow purlins and tie rods. Mechanical and electrical services are attached to the framework, and there are metal domed light fittings. The segmental-arched gable ends are fully glazed with multiple lights in metal frames.

The roof is supported on steel warren trusses; that on the southern side is glazed, and is supported on brick piers, and on the north side, the truss is supported by four concrete stanchions. The brick wall of the original open-air market of 1932 stands detached from the piers on the south side, forming a narrow aisle beneath a lean-to roof. The walls contain two doorways with limestone architraves with circular mouldings at the corners and inscribed date-stones. They retain sliding timber doors.

The other structures internally relate to the 2018 conversion to a food market.

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 13/02/2019