

College and Ronaldsway Airport

Ronaldsway was first used as an airfield in 1929 with passenger services to the UK starting in 1933. In 1936 the College 1st XV flew to Belfast using West Coast Air Services. In 1939, when the Second World War began, the airfield was controlled by the Royal Air Force and was renamed RAF Ronaldsway. Civilian flights, however, continued throughout the wartime period. In 1943 the airfield was handed over to the Admiralty and developed as a Fleet Air Arm training station, RNAS Ronaldsway. Land was requisitioned from King William's College and extensive development followed. By 1944 the airport had four runways and was the training base for Fairey Barracuda squadrons. Renamed HMS Urley in 1944 the airport's role was that of a torpedo bombing training station until the end of the war. After the war civilian operations continued and the airport was sold to the Isle of Man Government in 1948.



College from the south-east. This photograph was taken in the early 1930s and shows the land on which Ronaldsway Airport now stands, still part of the College grounds. In 1943 the Admiralty requisitioned Ballagilley Farm, the Sanatorium, Croit-E-Gilley and 6 acres of Gell's Fields. The farm and adjacent farmland was converted into an airport, and Croit_E-Gilley and the Sanatorium demolished. Stone from Croit-E-Gilley was used to build the Boys' Woodshop.

The building, on the seaward side of the Derbyhaven road, formerly Ballagilley Farmhouse, was demolished in 1933. In the immediate foreground is 'Mother' Schofield's Cottage.

College from the south-west in the early 1930s. The area now known as Janet's Corner (Gell's Fields) can be seen on the left of the picture. It is here that the Fleet Air Arm provided living accommodation in Nissen huts for aircrew and service staff on the requisitioned land in 1943. Notice the stream running through Gell's Fields.

College purchased 4 houses on the Promenade in 1919 but sold them in 1933.

