

Case information

Case ID	300017040		
File Reference	HGH/B/TC/218		
Name of Site	Main Prison Block		
Local Authority	Perth and Kinross Council		
National Grid Reference	NO 11808 22389 (Crescent Block), NO 11786 22395 (Tower Board Room)		
Designation No. (if any)	LB39331		
Designation Type	Listed Building	Current Category of Listing	A
Case Type	Amendment		
Received/Start Date	2014 [Scottish Prison Service Listing Review 2014-15]		
Decision Date	23/10/2015		

1. Decision

In our current state of knowledge, Crescent Block, A and B Halls and Tower Board Room, HMP Perth, continues to meet the criteria for listing. The statutory listing address and the listed building record will be amended.

Statutory address	Crescent Block, A and B Halls and Tower Board Room, HMP Perth, 3 Edinburgh Road, Perth
--------------------------	--

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The buildings at HMP Perth were listed on 26/08/1977. This part of Perth has not been resurveyed and no known comprehensive listing review of the buildings at HMP Perth has taken place since 1977, however the category of the Main Prison Block (now known as the Crescent Block, A and B Halls and the Tower Board Room) was changed from B to A on 6 July 1994.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals. A part of the boundary wall to the north of the site was being demolished (with listed building consent) at the time of the site visit.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

HMP Perth was visited on 05/12/2014 as part of our partnership project with the Scottish Prison Service where we are carrying out a review of existing listed prisons. The review of HMP Perth is part of this project. Part of the interiors of Crescent Block, A and B Halls and Tower Board Room Some were seen.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Listing criteria was carried out. See **Annex A**.

The designation criteria are found in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), pp. 71-85. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011.pdf>

Elizabeth McCrone

Head of Designations
Heritage Management
Historic Environment Scotland

Contact	Elizabeth McCrone, Head of Designations Elizabeth.mccrone@scotland.gsi.gov.uk, 0131 668 8760
----------------	---

ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Listing Criteria*

Crescent Block, A and B Halls and Tower Board Room, HMP Perth, 3 Edinburgh Road, Perth

1. Description

At the centre of A and B Halls is a crescent shaped Tudor style observation block of 5 and 4 storeys by Thomas Brown and dating to 1839-42. It consists of an advanced two bay 5-storey central tower flanked by slightly lower curved 4-storey crenelated blocks which are in turn flanked by lower curved crenelated single bay 4-storey sections. The crescent block is constructed of squared and coursed whinstone with cream sandstone ashlar margins and quoins. There are chamfered openings and some openings have hoodmoulds. There are replacement steel-framed multi-pane windows to the rear.

A Hall (to the left of the crescent) and B Hall (to the right of the crescent) are imposing 4 storey crenelated cell blocks constructed in cream ashlar. B Hall at 24 bays is slightly longer than A Hall but they are in the main largely similar. Both have advanced taller 2-bay inner corner sections with machicolation. Both have slightly advanced later outer bays added in 1876 (3 bays to A Hall; 4 bays to B Hall) and large near-central crenelated ventilation chimneys. There are some segmental and round-headed openings particularly to the inner and outer bays, but most are regularly-spaced small rectangular openings with chamfered margins. There are replacement timber multi-pane windows.

The interior of A and B Halls, partially seen in 2014, comprise a corridor plan with four floors of regularly spaced cells opening off either side of the corridor. There are few architectural features and the design is simple and functional. The basement of A Hall (now not used for prisoner accommodation) has some surviving early narrow 2-panel timber cell doors with an observation hole and a central rectangular letter-box type opening. There are some surviving sets of vertical metal bars forming barriers (central gate not extant) which are no longer used but which appear to conform to Brown's description of the design of the cell blocks and are likely to date from Matheson's work of around 1852-9.

In front of the Crescent Block is a two storey 5-bay flat-roofed building with a crenelated parapet now known as the Tower Board Room. It was originally built by Robert Reid in 1810-12 (it formerly had a tall observation tower which is thought to have been demolished in the 1960s) and it was extensively altered by Thomas Brown in 1839-42 to form the Governors' Office and a reception centre for new inmates. It is constructed in squared and coursed whinstone with cream ashlar margins and quoins. It has a two-way forestair to provide access to the central first floor entrance.

2. Assessment Against the Listing Criteria (SHEP, 2011) pp74-75

Criteria for determining whether a building is of 'special architectural or historic interest' for listing under the terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/9/contents]

To be listed, a building need not meet all the listing criteria. The criteria provide a framework within which judgement is exercised in reaching individual decisions.

2.1 Age and Rarity

The site of HMP Perth has its origins as *The Dépôt*, Scotland's principal place of internment for French prisoners of war. Designed by Robert Reid as a military prison in 1810-12, it was later chosen as the site for the General Prison for Scotland. Some buildings (of which Aultbea House, the Visitor Centre and Staff Club and the Tower Board Room survive today) were retained for its new use, but the prisoner of war barracks were demolished as they did not comply with new thinking about prison design. The General Prison for Scotland was designed by Thomas Brown and constructed in 1839-42. Later alterations and additions have been made, including the demolition of a number of buildings constructed by both Reid and Brown. The site has been redeveloped since the 1980s and continues in use as a prison, HMP Perth.

There have always been two distinct parts to the prison site and this continues today. Within the boundary wall there is a section fronting Edinburgh Road which has buildings related to the functioning of the prison (such as the Surgeon's House) and this is separated from the prison itself which is to the rear by a further wall with the Old Gatehouse at its centre.

There are two principal periods which are relevant to the interest of the surviving historic buildings at HMP Perth: the Napoleonic Wars and prison reform in Scotland in the 19th century.

The Napoleonic Wars (1803-15) where Britain and France were at war was the reason that the Perth Dépôt for French prisoners of war was built. Large numbers of French prisoners were interned in the south of England but this was considered too great a risk for the security of the English ports and it was decided that a number of prisoners should be transferred to Scotland. Built to hold 7,000 men it was designed by Robert Reid (1774-1856; architect and surveyor to the King in Scotland from 1808-40) in 1810-12 as a military prison. The pair of former guardrooms and the former Surgeon's House (now Aultbea House) are the principal survivors on the site of the former prisoner of war complex.

The Perth Dépôt was unique – it was the sole purpose-built site of this scale and type constructed in Scotland (the only other purpose-built site was at Valleyfield, near Penicuik and it comprised timber huts of which none survive). The buildings surviving from this period are therefore exceptionally rare and they tell us much about military architecture and design of the period.

Prisons as purpose-built structures did not come into being in the United Kingdom until the 1770s. Until this time, imprisonment as a punishment was not the norm. Prisoners were usually incarcerated for short periods of time before corporal or

capital punishment was carried out or they were transported to America or Australia or, in the case of debtors, they paid their debts. In Scotland the local tolbooth often served as the place of temporary detainment and such prisons were run by the burgh. Conditions were usually woeful. All types of inmates would be held together, with no segregation, and usually in a single large room which was frequently overcrowded. Unruly prisoners could be sent to 'the pit', a dark hole in the ground. Where there were prisons, individual cells were rare.

John Howard (1726-90), one of the most well-known of the emerging prison reformers, visited Scotland and Ireland as part of his tours of prisons throughout the United Kingdom in the 1770s and 80s. As Cameron tells us in *Prisons and Punishment in Scotland* he visited Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Inverness, Nairn, Stirling and Jedburgh prisons in 1783 noting that they were, "old buildings, dirty and offensive, without courtyards and also generally without water" (p50). Howard was key in instigating nationwide reform efforts with the publication of his book '*The State of the Prisons in England and Wales*' (1777).

A number of new prisons were constructed in response to the calls of the reformers and also to cope with the huge numbers of French prisoners of war who were in the United Kingdom. Calton Jail in Edinburgh opened in 1791 to designs by Robert Adam and it was later extended by Archibald Elliot in 1817. Perth opened in 1812 to house prisoners of war, Cupar opened in 1814 (listed at category B), Inveraray opened around 1820 and Jedburgh in 1823 (both listed at category A). The buildings were generally designed by leading architects of the day, including Archibald Elliot and James Gillespie Graham. Plans and styles were variable, from castellated as at Calton and Jedburgh to classical as at Inveraray and Cupar.

Generally the prisons of the time followed a congregate system whereby prisoners were kept together unsegregated throughout the day and night. Howard and other reformers vehemently condemned this practice as producing moral contamination and corruption. Howard advised that alongside implementing healthier practices of ventilation and the employment of paid gaolers that prisoners should be divided by classes and housed in separate yards. It was increasingly believed that different kinds of prisoners corrupted each other and hence that prisoners of different age, sex and type of crime should be kept apart. Howard and early investigators played a significant role in instigating reform by bringing to public attention the state of prisons throughout the country. Their recommendations regarding health, classification and inspection formed the basis for the reforms and legislation of the 19th century and encouraged architectural design towards providing cellularly divided spaces to fight against the spread of physical and moral contamination within the prison environment.

On 17 August 1839 an *Act to Improve Prisons and Prison Discipline* was passed in Scotland to enshrine classification and separation as principles of prison discipline.

An earlier 1835 Act had set up Inspectors of Prisons in Great Britain and the 1839 Act transferred the control of prisons to County Boards which were established and took over local supervision and management of all prisons, except Perth, which was

to be rebuilt as the national prison. Prison Acts of 1877 brought prisons under the authority of the Home Secretary which lasted until the Criminal Justice Act in 1948.

The effect of the 1835 and 1839 Acts was a new wave of prison building, with Thomas Brown II (1806-1872) appointed architect to the Prison Board of Scotland in 1837. Brown's prisons took on board the suggestions of the prison reformers and were built to reflect contemporary ideas of observation and control, with solitary rather than mass confinement in a hygienic environment and with an emphasis on rehabilitation.

His design for the General Prison at Perth was one of his first major prison commissions and one of the first prisons in Scotland to be built on the separation principle. Thomas Brown's scheme of 1839-42 for the General Prison for Scotland proposed four large cell blocks of 4 storeys radiating from a semi-circular viewing corridor. Two were built in 1839-42 and they linked with the crescent block described above. The planned further two were built around 1852-9 in response to overcrowding issues to the designs of Robert Matheson (now known as A and B Halls) and these were later extended in 1876. They run parallel to the crescent block. The two cell blocks built in 1839-42 to the east of the crescent block have since been demolished.

Although not designed by Brown, the two surviving cell blocks (A and B Halls) follow Brown's pioneering plan and are significant and rare survivals of their type. Other surviving buildings from Brown's scheme include the Crescent Block which links A and B Halls, his reworking of Reid's observation building to form the Governor's office, and the Old Gatehouse which appears to have been a more simple construction on Brown's plans and has been altered later to form a more substantial building.

The history of punishment and prisons has a fascination for the public and they are important barometers of our changing understanding of humanity. Very few purpose-built 19th century prisons from the period after the reforming Acts in the 1830s survive. While there are earlier examples of prison buildings at Inveraray and Jedburgh, these both date from before the important Reform Acts, and were not specifically planned for the 'separate system' (although they were both later added to by Brown to take account of the new system).

A and B Halls and the Crescent Block are the best surviving examples of a radiating wing plan on this scale and one of the earliest and best surviving examples of the separation system of prison architecture in Scotland. They are also the oldest surviving cell blocks still in use in Scotland. As such, they are a significant part of the history of prison architecture in Scotland and are exceptionally rare.

2.2 Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

The interior of the Tower Board Room was not seen and has not been taken into account in this assessment.

Interiors of this building type would be expected to be altered over time as penal reform developed and intact prison interiors do not survive in any number in the United Kingdom. With the exception of the addition of floors over the original gallery, this makes the relatively unaltered plan form of the interiors of the Crescent Block and A and B Halls exceptionally rare.

Plan form

See ***Technological Excellence or innovation, material or design quality*** below which is also relevant to this section.

While HMP Perth has been subject to change for over 200 years since it was first constructed, sufficient elements remain to give a strong sense of the plan form and consequent understanding of the site. The site occupies largely the same footprint as it did when first constructed in 1810-12.

The plan form of Crescent Block, A and B Halls and Tower Board Room is highly significant in the context of prison reform architecture of the 19th century. Although A and B Halls were not built by Brown they were built shortly after and follow Brown's plan and it is therefore not critical when considering the interest of the plan form that they were not designed by Brown himself.

Brown adapted the model prison plan first introduced at Pentonville by Sir Joshua Jebb for his work at Perth. Each of the two wings were four storeys high and contained about 160 separate cells, with a further set of punishment cells on the lower ground floor. These were joined to the full height semi-circular observation corridor.

Within the wider complex at Perth there was accommodation for the governor's warder and chaplain, chapel, laundry, bake house and cook house, and accommodation for those deemed criminal lunatics or of unsound mind, the 'lunatic wing', amongst other buildings.

The plan and form of the prison was determined entirely by function in order to facilitate most readily the rules of the new disciplinary system that required a strict prevention of communication and regimented routine of work together with religious and moral instruction. The daily routine of the prisoner involved confinement to the cell where productive labour such as weaving and boot making took place. Prisoners received one hour of exercise a day in an airing yard and their only communication came from visits by a warder and instruction by the chaplain. Masks were worn to avoid recognition outside the cell. Food was delivered by means of a small service door so that even the warder was not seen, the belief being that isolation would prevent the mixing and encouraging of criminal behavior and encourage reflection and self-help.

In order to facilitate this strict regime of separation, every aspect of the design was considered in terms of its function for the prevention of communication. The doors of the cells were placed as far apart as possible to prevent prisoners from ever seeing one another. The walls were strongly built at between 14 and 18 inches thick between cells and the cells had heavy floors of Caithness slate. Windows 3 ft. 6 by

15 inches were placed high up in the cell secured with iron bars to prevent prisoners from viewing the outside world. The same level of attention to detail was applied to the disciplinary concerns of noise and prisoner surveillance. To facilitate inspection the cells were designed in an oblong form with a one-way viewing device installed in the door. The entrance doors to the hall were to be capable of opening without any noise and officers were instructed to wear carpet shoes to muffle the sound of their approach.

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

See **Plan form** above where technological innovation and design quality is also discussed.

Thomas Brown was responsible for building around 12 purpose-built prisons and he added to, or reconstructed, around 9 other prisons during his tenure as architect to the Prison Board of Scotland. As a result of this he is the leading prison architect of the 19th century in Scotland. Very few of Brown's purpose-built prisons survive and Perth is amongst the best-preserved examples.

The castellated style was popularised by the Adam brothers in the late 18th century. In the early 19th century prison architecture tended to be either classical (as at Inveraray) or castellated (as at Jedburgh). The castellated style, used at Perth, brought with it connotations of authority and a fortress-like appearance was intended to give comfort to the residents of the city that it was a secure place.

Brown's demolished cell block wings were plainer than the later wings by Matheson. They were constructed in whinstone and had simpler architectural detailing. Matheson used cream sandstone ashlar and crenelated parapets. The crenelation is typical of defensive buildings and also of the then-fashionable Scots Baronial style and contrasts with the earlier Reid buildings where a simple classical style of architecture typical of the period was used.

Setting

The site occupies largely the same boundary as it did when constructed as a prisoner of war camp in 1810-12. While there have been significant alterations to the site since its use as a prisoner of war camp and a prison, the historic buildings which remain are clearly readable as institutional buildings. There is similarly no mistaking the function of the large cell block wings even though two have been demolished and there are a number of other new buildings on the site which enable it to continue to function as a prison in the 21st century. Many of the historic buildings are visible from Edinburgh Road, one of the principal routes into the city of Perth and for over 200 years the site has been an important landmark in the city.

Regional variations

There are no known regional variations.

2.3 Close Historical Associations

None known at present.

3. Working with the Principles of Listing (SHEP 2011, p76)

In choosing buildings within the above broad headings particular attention is paid to:

- a. special value within building types*
- b. contribution to an architecturally or historically interesting group*
- c. the impact of vernacular buildings*
- d. authenticity*

When working with the principles of listing the Crescent Block, A and B Halls and Tower Board Room has particular interest under a, b and d.

a. There is not a comparable early 19th century prisoner of war site in Scotland and the buildings surviving from this period are therefore exceptionally rare. In terms of prison architecture, very few historic prison buildings from the 19th century survive and fewer still exist which were built on the separation system. HMP Perth is also the oldest prison still in use.

b. There is interest here both in the Reid buildings and Brown's buildings and how they were used together. The interest of each building is enhanced by the survival of others and the group value here is therefore very important in understanding the site and its two main 19th century phases of construction.

d. While there have been significant alterations to the site from its origins in the early 19th century through to the present day, the character of the historic buildings largely remains, in particular, the exterior of the cell blocks which unmistakeably evidence their function and purpose through their architectural treatment.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

Designed by the renowned prison architect Thomas Brown and completed by Robert Matheson, this group of buildings is exceptionally important in the history of prison architecture in Scotland. Using the pioneering separation system, these are the only surviving examples of their type and scale in Scotland and are also the oldest cell blocks still in use today. The Tower Board Room contains fabric from Robert Reid's earlier Napoleonic Prisoner of War Camp of 1810-12 which is also of exceptional interest.

In our current state of knowledge it continues to meet the criteria for listing.

5. Category of Listing

Categories of listing are non-statutory and buildings are assigned a category (A, B or C) according to their relative importance following the assessment against the criteria for listing.

Category definitions are found at: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/heritage/historicandlistedbuildings/listing

In terms of the age and rarity of this building type in Scotland, these buildings are of exceptional interest and are therefore considered to meet the criteria for listing at category A in view of their national importance.

6. Other Information

N/A

7. References

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland:
<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/canmore.html> CANMORE ID 244662

Ordnance Survey (surveyed 1860, published 1863) Large scale town plan, Perth XCVIII.9.4. Scale 1:500. London: Ordnance Survey.
<http://maps.nls.uk/townplans/perth.html> [accessed 12/02/2015]

Joy Cameron (1983) *Prisons and Punishment in Scotland* Edinburgh: Canongate

John Gifford (2007) *Perth and Kinross: The Buildings of Scotland* New Haven and London: Yale University Press p.605-608.

Dictionary of Scottish Architects. *Thomas Brown II* at
http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=200146 [accessed 12/02/2015]

National Records of Scotland, Architectural Drawings of Perth Prison, RHP9270.

Date of Assessment	23/07/2015
---------------------------	------------

* This assessment is based on our current state of knowledge and has been prepared for the purpose of consultation or to provide a view on the special interest of a building. This assessment is a consultation document and will form the basis of any new or updated listed building record should the structure be listed. The content of this assessment may change to take into account further information received as a result of the consultation process.

** A building may be found to meet the listing criteria but in some circumstances may not be added to the list. See 'When might Historic Scotland list a building' at www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/historicandlistedbuildings/whatwelist