



Case information

Case ID	300016471
File Reference	HGH/B/TC/216
Name of Site	Village Hall, Main Road, Blair Atholl

Local Authority	Perth & Kinross Council		
National Grid Reference	NN 87255 65349		
Designation No. (if any)	LB6104		
Designation Type	Listed Building	Current Category of Listing	B
Case Type	Amendment		

Received/Start Date	2015 [Drill Halls Listing Review]
Decision Date	04/08/2016

1. Decision

In our current state of knowledge, the Village Hall, Blair Atholl continues to meet the criteria for listing. The statutory listing address and the listed building record has been amended. The category of listing remains at B.

Previous Statutory Address	Village Hall, Blair Atholl (Scottish Horse Drill Hall)
Amended Statutory Address	Village Hall (former Scottish Horse Drill Hall) including boundary walls to north and excluding two rendered extensions and rifle range to rear, Main Road, Blair Atholl

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The Village Hall, Blair Atholl was listed at category B on 05/10/1971. It is located within the Blair Castle Designed Landscape (GDL59)

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The Village Hall, Blair Atholl was considered for amendment as part of the Drill Halls Listing Review 2015-16 and was visited on 26/11/2015. The exterior and interior of the building was seen at this time.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

The building was found to meet the criteria for listing.

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

The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 2, pp. 51-53.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Listing Criteria*

Village Hall (former Scottish Horse Drill Hall) including boundary walls to north and excluding two rendered extensions and rifle range to rear, Main Road, Blair Atholl

1. Description

This hall was designed by James Macintyre Henry and built in 1907; additions at the rear were made at various points during the 20th century, including the rifle range which was added in the 1950s. The building is a 2-storey, 10-bay irregularly planned Scots Jacobean domestic style building, formerly the Scottish Horse Drill Hall and now used as the village hall. In accordance with Section 1 (4A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 the following are excluded from the listing: the two rendered rear wings and the rifle range.

It is built of squared blue limestone rubble with light brown polished ashlar dressings. The principal (north) elevation has an advanced wide crowstepped gable central bay with a bowed tower with a bellcast roof to the right. The central doorway has a large projecting hood, above which is a stone panel with the arms of the regiment; the triple window above is surmounted by panel with the Scottish Crown and Thistle and the date 1907. The first floor has catslide dormers on the east side of the front elevation, while the west side has tall dormers with triangular gableheads.

There is a mixture of 12- and 18-pane glazing in timber sash and case windows and the roof is grey slate. There are corniced chimney stacks with some red clay cans. The low boundary walls at the front of the site have moulded copes.

The interior which was seen in 2015 has a good surviving early 20th century decorative scheme. There are several large public areas within the building which includes the armoury (located in the east part of the building), offices and the drill hall itself. The main hall is located at the centre of the building at right angles to the main elevation. The bowed tower has a circular stair with iron balusters and timber hand rail. This staircase gives access to a raised viewing balcony overlooking the hall lit by a triple window while at the opposite end of the hall is a raised dais. The hall is lined with timber boarding to dado height and the roof is supported on timber trusses. A first floor room has a compartmented ceiling with small cornice.

2. Assessment Against the Listing Criteria (HES Policy Statement, 2016) Annex 2, pp. 51-52

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 hall was built in 1907 and opened on 14 September of that year. At the time it was built it was intended primarily for Squadron A of the Scottish Horse but also for use by the local people as a village hall. The cost was estimated to be £4000 but by the time it was opened only £2300 has been raised and there was a debt of £500. The drill hall, armoury and sergeant major's house had been built but some areas, namely the proposed library and clubhouse in the west wing were not completed as intended at that time. Whether this part of the building was not built by 1907 or remained as a shell and then completed later is currently unknown.

The hall is of historical significance because Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War, personally attended the opening ceremony in 1907 and gave an important speech describing his plans for the reorganisation of the forces. The choice of this hall for this speech was presumably partly because of the timing of its completion but also because of the significant figures who had been involved with the conception and construction of the building. The foremost of these was George Stewart-Murray, Marquis of Tullibardine and son of the Duke of Atholl. Lord Tullibardine had served under Lord Kitchener in the Sudan, and during the Second Boer War, he raised two regiments in South Africa, the 1st and the 2nd Scottish Horse. The 1st Scottish Horse saw active service in Western Transvaal. It was very successful and Lord Tullibardine received the local rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in South Africa. Following the war, the regiments were disbanded for a period in 1902 before being reconstituted and in 1907 Blair Atholl became the headquarters of Squadron A. The Duke of Atholl, father of the Marquis and who had also seen active service in South Africa, gave the site for the building.

Lord Lovat, another committed supporter of the volunteers, also spoke at the opening ceremony. In 1899 he raised the Lovat Scouts and served as their second-in-command in the South African War, where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 1900. He had established his Yeomanry headquarters at what had been the public hall in Fort Augustus in 1900. The list of those who were present also includes commanding officers from a large number of volunteer battalions across the country as well as many other distinguished individuals. The opening of this hall is a key moment in the history of the volunteers.

A number of additions have been made to the hall at the rear. In the 1950s, and after the Scottish Horse ceased to use the hall, a separate rifle range was built at the back parallel to the main front of the building. This is now joined to the hall by a later rendered addition. The rifle range the two rendered additions to the rear of the hall are not considered to be of special interest in listing terms and are proposed to be excluded from the listing.

In the late 1850s there was concern in the British Government about the Army's ability to defend both the home nation as well as the Empire. Britain's military defences were stretched and resources to defend Britain needed to be found. One solution was to create 'Volunteer Forces', a reserve of men who volunteered for part-

time military training similar to that of the regular army and who could therefore help to defend Britain if the need arose.

In 1859 the Rifle Volunteer Corps (and Artillery Corps in defended coastal areas) were formed and the Volunteer Act of 1863 provided more regulation on how the volunteer forces were run and it set out the standards for drills and a requirement for annual inspections. Most purpose-built drill halls constructed at this time were paid for by a major local landowner, the subscriptions of volunteers, local fundraising efforts or a combination of all three. The Regulation of the Forces Act 1871 (known as the Cardwell Reforms after the Secretary of State for War, Edward Cardwell) gave forces the legal right to acquire land to build a drill hall and more purpose-built drill halls began to be constructed after this date. The largest period of drill hall construction, aided by government grants, took place between 1880 and 1910. The Territorial and Reserve Forces Act 1907 (known as the Haldane Reforms after the Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane) came into force in 1908 and the various Volunteer Units were consolidated to form the Territorial Force. The construction of drill halls largely ceased during the First World War and in 1920 the Territorial Force became the Territorial Army.

In the 20th century changes in warfare and weaponry made many of the earlier drill halls redundant and subject to demolition or change to a new use. Around 344 drill halls are believed to have been built in Scotland of which 182 are thought to survive today, although few remain in their original use. Drill halls are an important part of our social and military history. They tell us much about the development of warfare and the history of defending our country. They also, unusually for a nationwide building programme, were not standardised and were often designed by local architects in a variety of styles and they also have a part to play in the history of our communities.

As an example of the building type the Drill Hall at Blair Atholl is not early. However what distinguishes it from its contemporaries are the quality of the materials from which it is built and good detailing of the exterior. The exterior and the main spaces are largely unchanged since the early 20th century, making this a very good and largely intact example of the building type.

2.2 Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

The interiors of drill halls were designed to be practical and largely unembellished. The main requirement was the provision of a large open space unimpeded by columns. In some cases a viewing balcony would be included. A wide entrance was also a typical feature to allow large groups of drill marching volunteers to enter and exit the building.

The armoury was located on the ground floor of the east side of the building with the quarters for the Sergeant Major above. Besides the hall itself there are several large public areas within the west part of the building, including offices and a recreation room. The interiors are typical with no exceptional detailing.

Plan form

The requirements for drill halls were basic – a large covered open space to train and drill as well as a place for the secure storage of weapons. The vast majority of drill halls were modest utilitarian structures. Most drill halls conformed to the pattern of an administrative block containing offices and the armoury to store weapons along with a caretaker or drill instructors accommodation, usually facing the street. To the rear would be the drill hall itself. Occasionally more extensive accommodation was required, such as for battalion headquarters where interior rifle ranges, libraries, billiards rooms, lecture theatres and bars could all be included.

The plan of the drill hall at Blair Atholl does not follow the usual pattern of halls of this date with offices at the front of the building and drill hall behind. The hall itself occupies a central position in the building, the central gable of the façade, which is the dominant feature, is the gable end of the hall. This immediately conveys the main function of the building. The hall was designed to accommodate 480 people. A 2-storey, 3-bay wing with central doorway was at the east side and this had accommodation for the Sergeant Major on the first floor with the armoury below. The west side of the building was to accommodate the offices, mess and library.

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

Drill halls were built in a variety of architectural styles and no individual type dominates. They were usually designed by local architects and constrained by tight budgets. They often had a strong link to their local communities and could be used for other community activities. Architectural style could reflect the streetscape of the local community and be small and modest, similar to surrounding domestic properties, or they could be more eye-catching and overtly military in appearance, particularly for larger forces or headquarter buildings.

As stated above the primary function of this building was a drill hall for Squadron A of the Scottish Horse volunteer corps, though it was also intended for use as a village hall. The opening of the building was widely reported in newspapers. These reports covered both the actual building and the substance of Richard Haldane's speech. The description of the building in the 'Aberdeen Journal' was particularly detailed and included the information on the heating and ventilation systems in the main hall. It also stated that 'the principle of the design of the building is typical of the Scottish domestic architecture of the end of the 17th century'. What might be loosely termed the 'Scottish Baronial' style was used relatively frequently in the design of drill halls because of its military connotations.

As noted in the Aberdeen Journal, the architect of the building was James McIntyre Henry. James McIntyre Henry (1852-1929) was a local man who worked as an assistant in the office of David Bryce in the early 1870s. Perhaps through local connections or through his spell with Bryce who was working in the late 1860s and 1870s at Blair Castle, he formed a relationship with the Atholl estates and worked at the Castle at various times in the early 20th century. This connection was presumably the reason he was selected to design the hall. Over and above this his partner from 1905, Thomas Forbes MacLennan, was a keen volunteer. However it would seem from newspaper reports that it was Henry who was mainly responsible.

Although Henry's work largely consisted of additions and alterations to existing buildings, he designed a number of new buildings and worked in a variety of styles. The modest Gibson Craig Hall at Currie and the large commission of the Midlothian County Buildings in George IV Bridge, Edinburgh are designed in a neo-Palladian style. As far as can be ascertained the hall at Blair Atholl was his most significant commission for a new building designed in the Scots Jacobean style. However he was well acquainted with the style from the work he undertook over a period of time at Blair Castle.

At £4000, the cost of the hall was higher than most halls outwith the large urban areas – in comparison the slightly later East Claremont Street hall in Edinburgh cost £7,000 while small town drill halls such as that at Bathgate would cost about £1500, the allowance for building halls after the 1907 Act. Within this budget Henry has succeeded in producing a good well-detailed design, adapting the requirements of a drill hall to the Scots Jacobean style, with a distinctive central crowstepped gable and tower with bellcast roof which indicate the position of the hall itself. The choice of the Scots Jacobean style may also have been influenced by the adjacent picturesque crow-stepped Blair Cottages designed by R and R Dickson in the 1840s.

Setting

The building is located on a large prominent site in the centre of the village close to the entrance to the Blair Castle estate and with open ground to the south leading down to the River Tilt. Like the adjacent bank and cottages it is set back from the line of the road. It makes an important contribution to the streetscape of the village.

Regional variations

There are no known regional variations.

2.3 Close Historical Associations

As noted above Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War, attended the opening ceremony of the hall and in his speech outlined the plans for his reforms of the Armed Forces. However, when considering close historical association, the fabric should reflect the person or event and not merely be a witness to them. In this case the association with Haldane is not considered to be reflected in the design of the building.

3. Working with the Principles of Listing (HES Policy Statement, 2016) Annex 2, pp. 53

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 a grouping of buildings*
- d. *authenticity*

When working with the principles of listing the Village Hall, Blair Atholl has particular interest under a and d

- a. The former drill hall is a very good example of this building type using good quality materials and good details.
- d. The façade and side elevations of this building retain their early 20th century appearance. The interior of the hall itself is also largely unchanged.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

The former Scottish Horse Drill hall complex, designed by the prominent Edinburgh architect James Macintyre Henry in 1907, is a large and important example of a drill hall built just before the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act 1907 was implemented. The hall has particular historical interest because, at the opening ceremony in September 1907, Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War, outlined his plans for restructuring of the army. Designed in a late 17th century Scots domestic style with a distinctive central crowstepped gable and tower with bellcast roof which indicate the position of the hall itself, the building is important element of the streetscape in the village of Blair Atholl. The principal and side elevations and the interior of the main spaces in the building are largely unaltered.

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

The later rendered rear extensions and the rifle range are not considered to be of special interest in listing terms at the time of this review and are proposed to be excluded from this 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: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>

Category B denotes buildings of regional or more than local importance; or major examples of some particular period, style or building type, which may have been altered. In listing terms the interest of this former drill hall at Blair Atholl is considered to be of regional importance as the building is a good well-detailed relatively unaltered example of the building type. Therefore category B continues to be the most appropriate category of listing.

6. Other Information

N/A

7. References

Canmore: <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 162126

Printed Sources

Aberdeen Journal (16 September 1907) p.6.

Dundee Courier (11 September 1907) p.1.

Dundee Courier (16 September 1907) p.4.

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Gifford, J. (2007) *Buildings of Scotland: Perth and Kinross*. London: Penguin Books. pp. 209-210.

Historic Environment Scotland (2016) *Scotland's Drill Halls Preliminary Report*. Unpublished.

London Daily News (16 September 1907) p.7.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser (16 September 1907) p.7.

Scotsman (25 August 1905) p.5.

Online Sources

Dictionary of Scottish Architects. James Macintyre Henry at http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=200309 [accessed 23/02/2016].

* 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 Environment Scotland list a building' at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>