



Case information

Case ID	300017920
File Reference	HGH/B/SU/56
Name of Site	Sir James Clark Building, (former Gassing Mill), Old Seedhill Road, Paisley

Local Authority	Renfrewshire Council		
National Grid Reference	NS 48867 63663		
Designation No. (if any)	N/A		
Designation Type	Listed Building	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	Designation		

Received	27/04/2016
Decision Date	14/09/2016

1. Decision

In our current state of knowledge, the Sir James Clark Building, Old Seedhill Road, Paisley is considered to meet the criteria for listing at category C. The building has been designated (listed).

Previous Statutory Address	N/A
New Statutory Address	Sir James Clark Building (former Gassing Mill), Old Seedhill Road, Paisley

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

There is no known listing review of this building.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The Sir James Clark Building was visited on 08/06/2016.

The exterior and interior were seen.

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*

Sir James Clark Building (former Gassing Mill), Old Seedhill Road, Paisley

1. Description

This is a 3-storey, 9-bay former gassing mill, built in 1922 and designed by William James Morley & Son for J & P Coats as part of their Anchor Mill complex. It is currently a business centre (2016). The building is a steel-framed, painted brick building with a projecting cornice and blocking course. The majority of the windows are large, aluminium multi-pane windows which have raised cills and are set in recessed panels. There are some bronze multi-frame windows to the east elevation. The entrance doors to the principal (south) elevation are non-traditional replacements. There is a carved stone depiction of the face of Sir James Clark above an entrance to the northwest. There are rooflights within the flat roof.

The interior was seen in 2016. Each floor has maple timber floorboards and has been divided by partitions to provide modern office accommodation with an open corridor to the north. Some steel structural columns with flat lacing bars are exposed. A shallow stair with maple timber treads at the east end leads to all floors. The ladies cloak room to the east is lined with pink Vitrolite tiles and has two deep recesses with mirrors and has a terrazzo floor.

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 Sir James Clark Building was designed as a gassing mill for the thread company J & P Coats, as part of their Anchor Mills site in Paisley. James Clark (1821-1881) was the founder of the Anchor Mills. J & P Coats was internationally known as a thread producer and was a vital part of the commercial economic success of Paisley in the 19th and 20th centuries. The company stopped production at this site in 1992, but continues to produce thread at other sites around the world.

Photographs from 1929 show the Anchor Mills site with numerous buildings including mills, offices and ancillary buildings (Canmore). The majority of these buildings have since been demolished and parts of the site have been redeveloped for housing and retail use. The remaining mill buildings are 19th century in date and most of those associated with the mill are listed. These include the former Domestic Finishing Mill

(listed at Category A, LB38915), the former Embroidery Mill (listed at category B, LB38916) and the Mile End Mill (listed at category A, LB38917) and its chimney (listed at category B, LB38918).

Together with the shawl industry, thread manufacturing was a major industry in Paisley from the early 19th century and was the basis for much of the town's wealth. Two families are particularly associated with the industry – the Coats and the Clarks. These influential families dominated the world thread market in the mid 19th century and were responsible for many public buildings in the town, including the later 19th century Town Hall (listed at Category A, LB38978) and the Coats Memorial Church (listed at Category A, LB39027).

The centre for the Coats' production was at Ferguslie Mills, to the southwest of Paisley town centre, while the Anchor Mills site was owned by the Clarks. The two companies amalgamated in 1896 to become J & P Coats Ltd and by the mid-20th century, over 10,000 workers were employed at the two factory sites. All the mills at Ferguslie were demolished in the late 20th century and only a few survive at the Anchor Mill site, as described above. These buildings are important remnants of a once prolific and extensive industry in the town.

Gassing was one of the final stages in the production of thread and involved passing thread through a gas jet to give a smooth surface. It was a new process in the 1920s and helped to produce a smooth thread. The former gassing mill in Paisley is the only known gassing mill to survive in Scotland and has been little altered externally from its 1920s form.

Whilst there are no other gassing mills surviving, there are other 20th century factory buildings, which include the later, 1938 extension to Glasgow's Templeton Carpet Factory by George Boswell, (listed at category A, LB33857) and the earlier, 1913, former Arrol Johnstone Motor car factory at Heathhall, near Dumfries (listed at category B, LB3819).

The listing criteria state that the older a building is and the fewer of its type that survive, the more likely it is to present a special interest. The former gassing mill is not rare as an early 20th century industrial building, but it is the only known gassing mill to survive. As such, it adds significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the thread milling process.

2.2 Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

The interior was seen in 2016. The building was designed to have large open spaces to accommodate the specialised machinery used for gassing. Whilst the current interior has been partitioned to provide modern office space, the open plan nature of each floor is still apparent. The maple flooring has been retained on each floor and the stair and contributes to the industrial character of the building. Drawings from the owner show the former specialised machinery within the building; none of this survives.

The Vitrolite tiling within the ladies' cloakroom is rare and indicates some attention to detail of design by the original architects.

Plan form

The rectangular plan form is standard for an industrial building. The original internal plan was of large open floors, with a stair, canteen and cloakrooms at the east end. Whilst partitions have been erected within each floor, this plan form has largely survived.

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

The Sir James Clark building is of standard construction for an earlier 20th century industrial structure and its overall form and materials are testimony to its function as a gassing mill.

It is of standard steel-framed brick composition. The process of gassing required large amounts of light and the rooflights and large windows to the north, south and west elevations were necessary for the building's function. In this regard, it is comparable to some other, earlier factory buildings, including the 1913 former car factory at Heathall, near Dumfries (listed at category B, LB3819). The majority of the windows of the Sir James Clark building have been altered from steel framed Crittal windows to aluminium, but the glazing pattern has been largely retained. The windows to the east are bronze framed. A lift shaft was added to the north elevation of the gassing mill in 1957.

There is little in the way of decorative features in the design, but this is not unusual in a factory building, where the functional aspects were the most important considerations. The carved keystone to the rear of the building was brought from the north elevation of the nearby Pacific Mill which was demolished in 1972-3.

Vitrolite is an opaque, pigmented glass which was popular in the 1920s and 1930s as a decorative material. Its smooth surface made it a popular material for areas where a streamlined and contemporary look was wanted, and it was particularly used in bathrooms, and also on shop fronts. It was manufactured in the UK until the mid 20th century and was usually produced in black, green or pink. As it is a fragile material, it is rare to find it surviving in a large area such as the cloakroom here.

The architect for this building was William James Morley (1847-1930), who was born in Leeds and was the architect for J & P Coates for over 40 years. Based in Bradford, he designed a number of the mill buildings in Paisley including the nearby Mile End Mill, (listed at Category A, LB38917) and the Domestic Finishing Mill, (listed at Category A, LB38915).

Setting

The former gassing mill is set very close to the former Embroidery Mill (listed at category B, LB38916). The former Domestic Finishing Mill (listed at Category A, LB38915) lies to the west and is visible from the building. The former Mile End Mill (listed at category A, LB38917) and its chimney (listed at category B, LB38918) lie to the east, and can clearly be seen from the former gassing mill. Together, these buildings are the core remnants of the once extensive complex of mills which formed the Anchor Mills site. Although the wider setting and historical context of the building has been altered by the addition of modern housing to the east and a large retail

outlet to the south, the listed mill buildings and this former gassing mill have retained a visual relationship which is a reminder of the complex as a whole and the importance of this industry to the town.

Regional variations

There are no known regional variations.

2.3 Close Historical Associations

There are no known associations with a person or event of national importance (2016).

The building was part of Anchor Mills, which was one of the world's largest thread manufacturing sites.

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 Sir James Clark Building has particular interest under a, b, c and d.

- a. The Sir James Clark Building is the only known former gassing mill in Scotland.
- b. The mill is one of only a few surviving mill buildings in Paisley and is the only surviving 20th century mill building in the town.
- c. The building is important as a remnant of a once extensive mill complex which was vital to the economic and social history of Paisley.
- d. the building is relatively little altered in its external or internal form.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

Dating to 1922 and by the architect William James Morley & Son Ltd, the Sir James Clark Building is a rare surviving former gassing mill, which formed part of the renowned and once extensive Anchor Mills thread manufacturing complex in Paisley. The building is situated close to the few surviving buildings from this complex and is important as a surviving element of the thread industry which was the mainstay of Paisley's economy in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries. The building is of brick construction and the rooflights and large windows relate to its previous function where maximum light was necessary. The building is relatively little altered and also retains a rare Vitrolite panelled ladies' cloakroom.

In our current state of knowledge it is considered 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: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>

The Sir James Clark Building is relatively standard in its form as a 1920s industrial building. It is a rare surviving mill building from the once extensive Anchor Mills complex and is considered to be of local importance. Category C is considered to be the most appropriate category.

6. Other Information

N/A

7. References

Canmore: <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 43191.

Maps

Ordnance Survey (Surveyed 1938, Published 1945), Renfrewshire Sheet 012.02. 25 Inches to the Mile map. Southampton: Ordnance Survey.

Printed Sources

Alexander, D. & McCrae, G. (2012) *Renfrewshire*. Edinburgh: Birlinn. P. 241.

Hume, J.R (1976) *The Industrial Archaeology of Scotland. 1. The Lowlands and Borders*. London: B.T.Batsford. pp217.

Internet Sources

History of thread manufacture in Paisley.

http://paisleyonline.co.uk/html/mill_legacy.html [accessed 02/08/2016]

Dictionary of Scottish Architects, *William James Morley*

http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=202685 [accessed 02/08/2016]

Further information courtesy of owner (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/>