



Case information

Case ID	300018185
File Reference	HGH/B/DB/40
Name of Site	Wigtown Town Hall (Former Wigtown Sheriff Court), The Square, Wigtown

Local Authority	Dumfries and Galloway Council		
National Grid Reference	NX 43431 55371		
Designation No. (if any)	LB42439		
Designation Type	Listed Building	Current Category of Listing	B
Case Type	Amendment		

Received/Start Date	2014 (Former Scottish Court Houses Listing Review 2014-16)
Decision Date	10/01/2017

1. Decision

In our current state of knowledge, Wigtown Town Hall 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	The Square Town Hall
Amended Statutory Address	Wigtown Town Hall (former Wigtown Sheriff Court) including railings, The Square, Wigtown

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

Wigtown Town Hall was listed at category B on 20/07/1972. The building is located within the Wigtown Conservation Area. The listed building record was revised in 1991.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

Wigtown Town Hall was considered for amendment as part of the Former Scottish Courts Listing Review 2014-2016.

The interior was partially seen and exterior was seen at a site visit on 12/08/2014.

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/>

Elizabeth McCrone

Head of Designations
Heritage Management
Historic Environment Scotland

Contact	Devon DeCelles, Designations Officer Devon.decelles@hes.scot, 0131 668 0230
----------------	--

ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Listing Criteria*

Wigtown Town Hall (former Wigtown Sheriff Court) including railings, The Square, Wigtown

1. Description

Wigtown Town Hall was designed by Thomas Brown II in 1862-3 and incorporates some elements of an earlier 1756 building on the same site. It is a 2-storey, 8-bay, rectangular-plan French Gothic former court house and county hall, with a tower in the north elevation and a large mansard attic. It is built in polished, squared and snecked red sandstone with contrasting cream sandstone dressings. There is a string course between the ground and first floor, a string course at the first floor that links the hoodmoulds over the windows and a moulded eaves course. All the ground floor windows are bi or tripartite with stone mullions and have carved shields over each window. The first floor windows are all 2-light pointed-arches with cusped rose lights in the arch-heads. The building has tall mansard slate roofs, lead finials at the corners and wallhead chimney stacks with tall octagonal cans at the north and south elevations. There are a pair of small, louvered gabled ventilators on the front roof pitch.

The principal (west) elevation is symmetrical and has a central tripartite porch, with paired buttresses flanking the door and supporting consoles of the balustraded first floor balcony surmounted by 2 heraldic stone lions. The entrance has a moulded pointed-arch surround with the Wigtown burgh arms carved in the tympanum over the shouldered doorway that has double-leaf panelled doors. The windows are all sash and case frames with a multi-pane glazing pattern; 3 to each ground floor light, 4 to the first floor lights.

The north elevation has 3 bays with a central projecting 3-stage tower. The door to the left has the arms of the burgh reset from the earlier 1756 building. There are string courses between the tower stages and single lights at the ground and first stage. The second stage has clock faces set in louvered 3-light openings and a corbelled ashlar balcony on the north elevation. The eaves course has a deep carved corbelled cornice and decorative dragon gargoyles at the corners. The tower has a tall mansard roof with lucarnes and brattishing. There is a pair of small, louvered gabled ventilators dormers.

The interior was partially seen in 2014. The upper county hall (former courtroom) has timber boarding to dado height on each wall and a stage. The ceiling is coombed with rib and pendant plasterwork. The ribbed plasterwork design of the hall is repeated in the other rooms, corridors and stairwell. The doorways and window openings have pointed arches. The central cantilevered stone stair has a barley twist balustrade with a glazed skylight above. There is a barrel-vaulted cell at the ground floor, to the right of north entrance, which is a remnant from the earlier 1756 building.

The front and side elevations have painted metal railings on low stone walls with chamfered angles. There is a pair of lamp standards with decorative twisted barley poles on octagonal bases flanking the entrance of the building.

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 former court house and county buildings at Wigtown (presently in use as the Town Hall) was designed by Thomas Brown II of the prominent architectural practice Brown and Wardrop and dates to 1862-1863. It replaced a 1756 court house and prison on the same site, and the north elevation incorporates the two lower stages of the tower associated with the earlier court house. The court house at Wigtown is understood to be the third court house constructed on this site (Wigtown Town Hall Information Boards). The 1862 court house is first shown on the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1896 and, when compared to later maps, the footprint of the building does not appear to have changed since this date.

After the closure of the sheriff court in 1975 the building was increasingly used for community purposes. The courtroom became a hall and a new smaller courtroom for the district court was created downstairs in the former sheriff clerk's office. The district court closed in 1998. The building was closed in 2000 for major repairs and refurbishment and was reopened in September 2003. The building is used as a local meeting place and there is a public library on the ground floor (2016).

The development of the court house as a building type in Scotland follows the history of the Scottish legal system and wider government reforms. The majority of purpose-built court houses were constructed in the 19th century as by this time there was an increase in the separation of civic, administrative and penal functions into separate civic and institutional buildings, and the resultant surge of public building was promoted by new institutional bodies. The introduction of the Sheriff Court Houses (Scotland) Act of 1860 gave a major impetus to the increase and improvement of court accommodation and this provision of central funding was followed by the most active period of sheriff court house construction in the history of the Scottish legal system and many new court houses were built or reworked after this date.

Court houses constructed post 1860 generally had a solely legal purpose and did not incorporate a prison, other than temporary holding cells. The courts were designed in a variety of architectural styles many relying heavily on Scots Baronial features to reference the fortified Scottish building tradition. Newly constructed court buildings in the second half of the 19th century dispensed with large public spaces such as

county halls and instead provided bespoke office accommodation for the sheriff, judge and clerks, and accommodating the numerous types of court and holding cells.

Wigtown Town Hall is a distinctive example of a mid 19th century court house because it is designed in the French Gothic style and has good stonework to the exterior and high quality plasterwork to the interior. As the design dates from 1862 it is one of the first sheriff court houses to be designed after the 1860 Act, a significant period of court house building in Scotland.

2.2 Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

Courts were often highly decorated buildings in keeping with them being high status civic buildings and much of the mid-19th century decorative scheme remains at Wigtown Town Hall. In particular, the ribbed plasterwork in the former main courtroom is well-detailed. The detailing to the ancillary rooms, such as the former Sheriff Clerk's office, Sheriff's chambers and circulation spaces is typical for its date.

Plan form

The original layout has been modified but much of the mid-19th century plan remains, particularly at the first floor. The symmetrical design around a central first floor courtroom is standard for a court house of this date.

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

As prime civic buildings courts usually have a significant amount of decorative work to the exterior and the former Sheriff Court at Wigtown is no exception to this. This detailing includes an imposing central entrance porch with moulded pointed arch surround, arched first floor windows with cusped rose lights and a prominent clock tower. Externally the building is largely unaltered and remains a distinctive example of a court house from this period because of its French Gothic style, with some Flemish influences in the design of clock tower. The tower steeple contains 3 bells, the oldest dated 1633 and inscribed on the 1633 bell in its tower are the words "O God let Wigtoune flourish by thy word in Christ who is onlie our head. Anno 1633". (Maxwell, 1912, p.185)

Thomas Brown II (1806-1872) began his architectural career in his father's firm, and probably worked in the office of William Burn prior to being appointed as architect to the Prison Board of Scotland in 1837 and setting up his own independent office in Edinburgh. James Maitland Wardrop was born in 1824 and was articled to Thomas Brown II, becoming a partner in 1849. As architect to the Prison Board of Scotland, Brown had extensive experience in designing county court houses and prisons, the design work of which Wardrop gradually took over. This included the court houses of Linlithgow (1861), Alloa (1863), Forfar (1869) and Stirling (designed 1866, built 1874). The practice were also highly successful at remodelling and designing country houses. The French Gothic style adopted at Wigtown was undoubtedly influenced from both Brown and Wardrop previously working in the offices of William Burn and David Bryce respectively.

Setting

Wigtown Town Hall overlooks a large square and is at the centre of the town. It is one of the most prominent public buildings in the town because of this setting and the scale of the building.

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 at present (2016).

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 Wigtown Town Hall has particular interest under a and d.

- a. It is an unusual example of a court house in the French Gothic style, with fine stone detailing and a distinctive tower.
- d. The building has been little altered externally and internally since the time of construction although it has changed use. The plan form and room layout is largely unchanged and the interior decoration such as fittings and fixtures are predominantly retained.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

Wigtown Town Hall was designed as a burgh court house and was among the first wave of court houses to be constructed following the Sheriff Court Houses (Scotland) Act of 1860. It was designed by the prolific court architect Thomas Brown II and is an unusual example of a court house from this period because of its French Gothic style, with some Flemish influences. It has a wealth of good stonework on the exterior of the building, such as an imposing central entrance porch, arched first floor windows with cusped rose lights and a prominent clock tower. The interior retains much of its 1862 decoration and plan form, including good plasterwork.

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

Category B is for buildings of regional or more than local importance; or major examples of some particular period, style or building type, which may have been altered. When compared with other examples of court houses, the interest of Wigtown Town Hall is considered to be of regional significance, therefore category B remains the most appropriate category of listing.

6. Other Information

The previous listed building record written in 1989 references a survey report (GD 138/2/172) held at the Scottish Record Office (now National Records of Scotland). This source has not been consulted as part of this review (2016).

7. References

Canmore <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 215461

Maps

Ordnance Survey (surveyed 1894, published 1896) Wigtownshire, Sheet XXI.SE. 25 inches to the mile. 2nd Edition. Southampton: Ordnance Survey.

Archives

National Records of Scotland, GD138/2/172, Planning surveys, royal burgh of Wigtown survey report [from previous listed building record]

Printed sources

Gifford, J. (1996) *The Buildings of Scotland: Dumfries and Galloway*. London: Penguin Books Ltd. p.570-571.

Online sources

Dictionary of Scottish Architects, *Thomas Brown II* at http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=200146 [accessed 24/10/2014].

Herbert, Sir Maxwell (1912). *Fourth and Fifth report and inventory of monuments and constructions in Galloway*. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions. p.185 at <https://archive.org/details/fourthandfifthre00scot> [accessed 24/10/2014].

Historic Scotland (2014) *Scottish Courts Preliminary Report* at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/media/3337/scottish-courts-preliminary-report.pdf> [accessed 24/10/2014].

Other sources

Wigtown Town Hall Information Boards (2014).

* 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/>