



Case information

Case ID	300008837		
File Reference	HGH/B/HF/53		
Name of Site	Cromarty Court House Museum, Church Street, Cromarty		
Local Authority	Highland Council		
National Grid Reference	NH 78977 67390		
Designation No. (if any)	LB23585		
Designation Type	Listed Building	Current Category of Listing	A
Case Type	Amendment		
Received/Start Date	2014 (Former Scottish Court Houses Listing Review 2014-16)		
Decision Date	13/01/2017		

1. Decision

In our current state of knowledge, the Court House Museum at Cromarty continues to meet the criteria for listing. The statutory listing address and the listed building record have been amended. The category of listing remains at A.

Previous Statutory Address	Church Street, Court House, Prison and Gatepiers
Amended Statutory Address	Cromarty Court House Museum including prison, gatepiers, boundary wall and railings, Church Street, Cromarty

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

This building was listed at category A on 25/03/1971 and the listed building record was revised in 1994. The building is located within the Cromarty Conservation Area.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

Cromarty Court House Museum was considered for amendment as part of the Former Scottish Courts Listing Review 2014-2016. The exterior and interior was seen at a site visit on 05/03/2015.

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 0320
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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Listing Criteria*

Cromarty Court House Museum including prison, gatepiers, boundary wall and railings, Church Street, Cromarty

1. Description

The court house was constructed from 1772-82 and in 1845-47 Thomas Brown II carried out repairs and improvements to the building, including a cell block to the rear. It is a 2-storey, 5-bay, T-plan former courthouse (now a museum) with a central projecting 3 stage clock tower and octagonal cupola. The building is predominantly constructed of coursed rubble and has been rendered, with rusticated quoins at the ground floor, ashlar margins, gable string courses on the gables and a cupola in coursed red sandstone. There are square windows at the ground floor and round-arched windows at the first floor with multi-pane sashes. The roof is slated.

The clock tower has round arched recesses at the ground floor. That to the east side has an entrance door. The third stage has a blind lunette and there is a simple stone parapet and a pinnacle on each corner. The octagonal cupola has a clock face on its north elevation and louvred bull's eyes on three sides. The cupola has a domed copper roof and is topped by a metal weathervane. To the rear is a later mid-19th century L-plan and gabled cell block with a slate roof containing 3 prison cells with small high level windows. There is a small arcaded exercise gallery with a flat stone roof and iron bars in the arcades. The cell block and exercise yard are constructed of coursed red rubble with ashlar dressings.

The interior was seen in 2015. The first floor courtroom retains many mid-19th century fittings. There is a raised bench (with no seating) flanked by cast iron stoves, a narrow timber dock, a jury and witnesses' boxes, and benches. There are plastered walls with some timber panelling up to dado level and a simple moulded plaster ceiling. The adjoining former clerk's room to the rear has a mid-19th century inserted chimney. There is a vaulted documents store in the roof space of the prison block, which is accessed from the corridor adjacent to the clerk's room.

At the ground floor is a kitchen, 3 cells and an exercise gallery. Two of the cells were fitted with single low wooden beds, now replicated. The third and largest cell has a fireplace and was used both for debtors, and as a dayroom for prisoners. All 3 cells have a studded, metal-plated door.

A pair of square ashlar gatepiers to Church Street are supported by a curved wrought iron lap bracket. There are iron railings mounted on a coped stone wall.

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 at Cromarty was commissioned by George Ross of Pitkerrie and Cromarty in 1772 (see other information section). Construction began in that year and the interior scheme was the work of joiner Thomas Keith and was complete by 1783. The court house clock is by John Ross of Tain and is dated 1782 and installed 1784. The bell itself is said to have been from the Spanish carrack ship, *San Dimas*, and is dated 1771 and inscribed 'S.DIMAS.CARRACA.ANNO D.1771'.

In 1845-47 the ground floor was adapted and extended by Thomas Brown II to provide 3 prison cells and an enclosed exercise gallery, as well as living accommodation for a jailer and his family. It was also at this time that a heating and ventilation system was installed (see Technical excellence or innovation, material or design quality heading below) including two cast iron stoves in the courtroom to either side of the bench.

The prison was closed in 1872 however it continued to be used as a lock up for local police after this time. Furthermore the building was used by the naval shore patrol (military police, responsible for the discipline of sailors) during the First World War when the natural harbour of the Cromarty Firth was a naval base. Unusually, the Burgh judicial functions of a sheriff court and prison continued in the same building until its closure in the 1950s. The building laid empty and fell into disrepair until repair work was undertaken by Ross and Cromarty District Council in 1988 to prepare for its eventual conversion to a museum in 1991. At the time of review in 2016 the building continues to be in use as a museum.

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, however, prior to this time burgh judicial functions were commonly housed in a single building, such as the tolbooth or town hall. The Court House at Cromarty is representative of this time. Town houses were the centre of local administration and they served as meeting places for councils and courts, a place to keep records and to collect taxes and customs, and for the imprisonment of suspected criminals. A building such as Cromarty Court House would have shared the principal chamber for civic and judicial functions.

By the 19th century 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. A number of Scottish towns and cities had already begun to construct or adapt buildings to

separate judicial functions from other civic and administration activities and about one third of the surviving town houses were built or rebuilt in the first third of the 19th century. Court houses with extensive pre-19th century fabric are unusual. Other examples include Tain Sheriff Court (Listed Building number 41867, listed at category A) and Jedburgh Sheriff Court (Listed Building number 35503, listed at category A) which are both attached to 18th century Tolbooths.

The Burgh Police (Scotland) Act of 1833 significantly altered local government in Scotland and marked the beginnings of democratically-elected councils. The period following this Act brought forward stricter financial control of Scottish burghs and few new or major alterations to court houses were carried out until the Sheriff Court Houses (Scotland) Act of 1860. The main exception in this period was the remodelling of prisons or cell accommodation, which following The Prisons Act of 1835 were subject to annual inspection. An 1839 Act transferred the supervision, management and cost of prisons to County Boards. The few court houses that were constructed between 1835 and 1860 typically had a small cell block range, such as Dingwall and Peebles. Cell blocks were also added to the court houses of Nairn, Inverness, Cromarty and Stonehaven (cell block has been demolished). Following the 1860 Act court houses generally had a solely legal purpose and did not incorporate a prison, other than temporary holding cells.

The Court House at Cromarty is an impressive late 18th century civic building that straddles a significant period of change in the Scottish legal system. Its judicial functions and form have remained in use in this tolbooth style building which was not significantly extended or rebuilt after the Sheriff Court Houses (Scotland) Act of 1860. The survival of the 1845-47 prison additions and alterations by Thomas Brown are also representative of the prison reform movement 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 at Cromarty Court House most of the 1845-47 internal scheme remains intact, particularly in the principal court room and prison block.

Plan form

The symmetrical plan with the principal court room on the first floor is typical for a classical town house and court house. The survival of the cell range and arcaded exercise gallery at the rear is also of interest as cell blocks were added to a relatively small number of court houses. The building largely retains its mid-19th century plan form at the ground floor, and most significantly its late 18th century plan form at the first floor.

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

Late 18th and early 19th century town houses and court houses are typically classical in design as an appropriate indication of the important civic status of this building type. Cromarty Court House is no exception to this with a classically proportioned principal elevation, including round headed windows and a distinctive octagonal clock tower. By the early 17th century it was an obligation of every burgh to have a

clock to call meetings and public events and to mark rising time and curfews. Typically tolbooths and town houses would have a landmark tower or steeple to house the clock, as well as a stylistic reference to the earlier tollbooth.

In the interior, some innovation is credited to Thomas Brown II who installed gas fittings, and a Dutch style heating and ventilation system were also installed at the time of the 1845-47 improvements to the building. A stove in the corridor of the new cell block powered the system and a brazier was installed on the first floor to circulate the warm air around the building through the flues inserted into the walls.

Thomas Brown II (1806-circa 1872) began his architectural career in his father's firm. He 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. As architect to the Prison Board of Scotland, Brown II had extensive experience in designing county court houses and prisons (the design work of which his partner Thomas Wardrop gradually took over) including Dingwall, Wigtown (1862), Alloa (1863), Forfar (1869) and Stirling (designed 1866, built 1874) (see separate listings). The practice were also highly successful at remodelling and designing country houses. The Tudor Gothic style adopted at Dingwall was undoubtedly influenced from both Brown and Wardrop previously working in the offices of William Burn and David Bryce respectively.

Setting

The building is set back from the street and on a small mound with a distinctive clock tower and cupola. Its position and design is indicative of a building of status and it has significant presence in the town centre of Cromarty, rising above the surrounding one and two storey fishertown type buildings.

Regional variations

There are no known regional variations.

2.3 Close Historical Associations

This former Court House played a role in the First World War when the town was used as a naval base and the prison cells were used by the military police. When considering close historical association, the fabric of a building should reflect the person or event and not merely be a witness to them. In this case the association with the First World War is not considered to be reflected in the design of the building as the cells were not built for this military purpose.

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 Former Court House at Cromarty has particular interest under a and d;

a. It is a well-detailed late 18th century civic building which has good classical details to its principal elevation and main interior spaces. The later prison additions by Thomas Brown II are also representative of the prison reform movement in Scotland.

d. The principal elevation and plan form of the building has been largely unaltered since the prison was added in 1847.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

This former court house at Cromarty is an impressive late 18th century civic building that straddles a significant period of change in the Scottish legal system. It was remodelled in the mid-19th century by Thomas Brown II to include prison cells and an exercise gallery and these changes are representative of the prison reform movement in Scotland. Set back from the street and situated on a small mound with a distinctive clock tower and octagonal cupola rising above the surrounding one and two storey fishertown type building, it has significant streetscape presence in Cromarty town centre. The classically proportioned principal elevation, remains largely unaltered since construction was completed in 1783. Internally the building retains a number of late 18th century and mid-19th century decorative details, particularly the heating system and prison cells.

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: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>

Category A is for buildings of national or international importance, either architectural or historic; or fine, little-altered examples of some particular period, style or building type. When compared with court houses of similar date and size, the architectural and historic interest of the former Court House at Cromarty is considered to continue to be most appropriately recognised at category A.

6. Other Information

The former mercat cross (LB23586, listed at category B), is situated within the grounds of the former court house on a stone plinth directly to the central bay of the principal elevation. It is inscribed 1378, 1770 and G.R..

The Cromarty estate was sold to George Ross (1708/9-1786), a lawyer, of Pitkerrie in 1767. Ross, formerly confidential clerk to Duncan Forbes of Culloden and subsequently patronised by Argyll, was a successful London-based army agent. Ross invested in both the Cromarty estate and the wider town. In collaboration with William Forsyth (1722-1800) a local merchant, Ross built a hemp factory (later used as a rope works), commissioned the courthouse (1772), the harbour (designed by John Smeaton and built 1781–84), the brewery (1770s) and the Gaelic Chapel (1783).

7. References

Canmore: <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 14464

Maps

Great Reform Act Plan (1832). Cromarty. Vol. 11. London: House of Commons.

Ordnance Survey (surveyed 1871, published 1880) Ross and Cromarty Sheet LXVII.9 (Cromarty). 25 inches to the mile. 1st Edition. Southampton: Ordnance Survey.

Archives

Inverness Courier (19 April 1843 and 19 June 1844) Advertisement for tenders.

Printed Sources

Gifford, J. (1992) *Buildings of Scotland: Highland and Islands*. London: Penguin Books. p.399.

Groome, F. H. (Ed) (1885) *The Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland; a survey of Scottish topography, statistical, biographical, and historical*. 1st Edition, Volume II. London: William Mackenzie. p. 309.

New Statistical Account (1845) *Statistical Account of the Parish of Cromarty*. Volume XIV. p.14.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (1996) *Tolbooths and Town-Houses: civic architecture in Scotland to 1833*. Edinburgh: The Stationary Office. pp.59-61.

Online Sources

Dictionary of Scottish Architects, *Thomas Brown II* at http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=200146 [accessed 24/08/2016].

Historic Scotland (2014) *Scottish Courts Preliminary Report* at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/media/3337/scottish-courts-preliminary-report.pdf> [accessed 24/08/2016].

Other Information

Further information provided by the Cromarty Courthouse Museum (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 Environment Scotland list a building' at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>