CASE STUDY: 15 -17 CROSSGATE CUPAR

BRIEF: Shop front reinstatement and repairs of category C-listed tenement building for 5 owners making use of the Cupar Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme/ Town Heritage Interest (CARS/ THI) grant funding.
DATE: 2015-20 **VALUE:** £85,000

1.INTRODUCTION

This project was prompted by an initial enquiry from the owner of a mid-floor flat at the neighbouring 11 Crossgate, previously George Inn and Western Bank before that, who was keen to make some repairs. I informed them about the Cupar CARS/THI project which was focused on this central part of the Conservation Area and at one stage all owners on both sides of George Inn Pend were interested in making use of the funds available until one of the flat owners at No 11 pulled out and hence I was left supporting the 15-17 Crossgate side of the George Inn Pend.

2. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The property is an early 19th Century Georgian tenement building with shop on ground floor over three storeys with a flat in the attic and three window bays with painted droved ashlar walls and slate roof and as such has ARCHITECTURAL significance. It can also be considered to have OVERALL significance due to the contribution it makes to the Cupar Conservation Area.

The Ground Floor shop has been occupied by Couper Carpets most recently and has been used by multiple retailers over its lifetime including Fruiterer/ Confectioner, Family Grocers and a Butchers. From historical photographs it appears that the shop retained its domestic appearance (Fig 52) until c1970's when Alex Munro Butcher integrated the right-hand shop window and door into one large opening with retained stallriser and removed the over fascia stone cornice to provide a flat area of wall for an integral aluminium box sign and canopy (Fig 53). This resolved the lack of height for both separate canopy and sign and would have prevented the produce from overheating in the widened shop window. The box sign remained albeit the canopy is not being used and Couper Carpets have integrated their own plastic sign (Fig 54) and text to the front and a separate projecting sign.

The shopfront stone had been painted to match the Couper Carpets business brand green and a surface film of white paint to the pend side had started to peel away. Above the shop to the front a light grey masonry

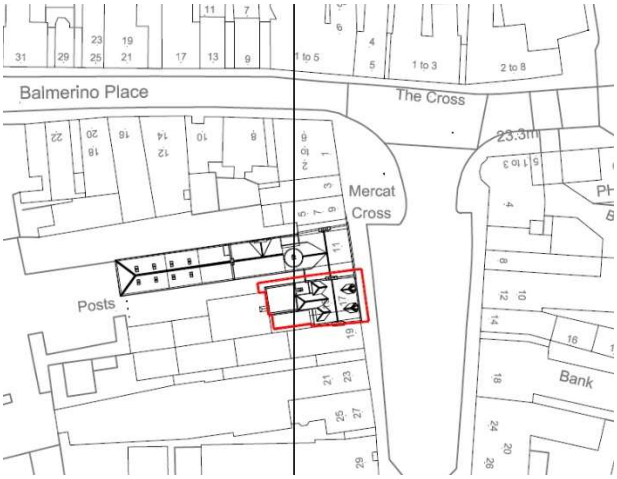

Figure 1. Location Plan

Fig 2. Shop front pre alterations, note gate

Fig 3. Shop front post c1960 alterations

Fig 4 Shop front before works

Fig 5. Shop front after works

paint appeared to have been applied as part of the recent works in which the first floor flat had been sub divided into two separate units.

3. STATE OF REPAIR

I recommended that the rainwater goods needed an overhaul, and I came to understand that the below ground drainage required clearing out as this was periodically backing up. I also recommended that the masonry to the rear required vegetation growth removed, some cracked lintols rinned and one over the pend replaced (Fig 73), extensive re-pointing was required replacing localised cement mortar (Fig 67) which had accelerated the decay of the sandstone and a limited number of stone indents (Fig 75,77) were recommended.

The dry rot evident in the tenement stair (Fig 63, 63) and a
second-floor flat window surround (Fig 65) required removal. I brought in a timber treatment specialist who quoted for removal based on visual survey, they offered an intrusive investigation, but the owners opted to wait until funding was in place before progressing this. The specialist's intrusive investigation progressed as part of the construction phase and found that the dry rot had spread from roof level to first floor level (Fig 66, 68, 69) and the cost increased by c600%. To keep control of the costs I proposed, and the owners' agreed, for the main contractor to carry out the dry rot removal on the basis that there would be no guarantee, water ingress was stopped, we removed 'as much as necessary and as little as possible' of the affected timber, we treated the adjacent remaining timber with same treatment proposed by specialist and the new timbers were isolated from the masonry thus saving the client cost and minimizing the loss of historic fabric. As part of this investigation, the contractor found that the first-floor bathroom window WC recess which had been carved out of the corner of the masonry stair tower and had no adequate support (Fig 70) and so this had to be made good, with advice from a Structural Engineer I brought in, as a matter of urgency (Fig 71) and the bathroom redesigned accordingly.

4. DESIGN APPROACH

The design was led by the aspiration to reinstate the original shop front back to something like the original using historical photographs as a reference (Fig 52). The Shop owners were keen for the design to also incorporate a canopy to protect the window display

Fig 6. Existing cornice during works

Fig 7. Reconstructed cornice during

Fig 8 and 9. Gutter detail before and after

Fig 10 and 11. RW goods before during and after works

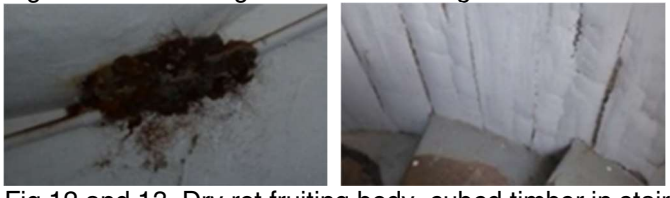

Fig 12 and 13. Dry rot fruiting body, cubed timber in stair

from the sun. I investigated this but was not able to design a satisfactory solution because of the restricted height, which was the reason that the stone cornice was removed in the first place. The shop front intervention that I proposed involved the removal of the existing canopy box and sign, removal of green paint to frontage, reinstatement of the stone cornice (Fig 57), replacement of metal framed windows with timber double glazed units, an overhaul and coordination of the projecting sign, the reinstatement of a fascia sign (Fig 86) and reconstruction of the gate to the pend (Fig 72, 73).

I managed the shop front negotiation between the planner and shop owners as the shop owners wanted to incorporate a lot of text on the fascia sign as per the existing sign and the planner was keen to minimise the amount of text to be in keeping with original. We settled on a fascia sign with the shop name 'Couper Carpets of Cupar' with the Trades coats of arms either side centrally and a telephone number on the left side and an email address on the right side and a coordinating projecting sign on the basis that additional text could be integrated onto the shop windows (Fig 55). The shop's brand colours of green and gold were maintained for signs, windows, and door and with natural stone to the shop frontage.

The SLCT 'A Building Stone Survey for Cupar Conservation Area, Cupar, Fife' was used as a reference tool for the selection of stone and mortar. I specified that new stone for repairs should 'match original for colour, texture, porosity, crushing strength and weathering properties.' and mortar as a 'lime mortar mix for indenting or pointing should match the original mortar and be informed by careful analysis of original build mortar samples.' The rear external walls had the most severely eroded stones, and these were repaired with stone indents (Fig 75). The contractor selected Blaxter stone from Northumberland as this is one of the comparable options
referenced in the SLC report. Extensive repointing was carried out using a moderately hydraulic lime mortar with a 5(aggregate): 2(lime) mix consisting of to achieve the desired sandy colour and Otterbein NHL 3.5. The sand used was 40% builders' sand for workability and 60% sharp sand for strength. From my training I understand that the mortar specification ensured that it was more porous than the stone so that moisture build up in the wall will be emitted the sacrificial mortar rather than the stone.



Fig 14 and 15. Dry rot staining, timber decay



Fig 16 and 17 Existing cement pointing, dry rot works


Fig 18. Dry rot cubing to flat entrance lintol



Fig 19 and 20. WC unsupported recess and brick infill


Fig 21 and 22. Pend before and after, reconstructed gate

The ashlar frontage had the brittle paint removed with a scraper before polishing to match the existing stone, with carborundum polishing disc and paper. This revealed concrete repairs (Fig 78) to the shop window surrounds which were repaired with ashlar stone indents (Fig 79). The stone used was Blaxter stone for reasons given above. The mortar used was a non-hydraulic lime putty mix consisting of 2(aggregate):1(lime) mix NHL 2 Otterbein and silica sand. The mortar specification ensured that it could be used in thin ashlar beds whilst also being more porous than the stone for the reasons given over.

5. OTHER INFORMATION

HES Listing: 15-17 CROSSGATE FRONT BUILDING ONLY REF LB24177

Fife Council Planning Reference 16/03576/FULL 17/00429/FULL

Fife Council Planning Reference 16/03573LBC, 17/00428/LBC

Fig 23 and 24. West stair wall before and after

Fig 25 and 26. South stair wall before and after

Fig 27 and 28. Concrete infill and ashlar reconstruction

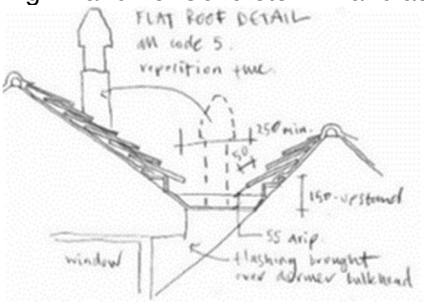

Fig 29. Gutter sketch detail