CASE STUDY: 8 BONNYGATE CUPAR

BRIEF: Shop front restoration and repairs of category C-listed tenement building for three owners making use of the Cupar (CARS/THI) grant funding.
DATE: 2016-19 **VALUE:** £70,000

1.INTRODUCTION

This project was prompted by the Cupar CARS/THI project managed by The Fife Historic Building Trust (FHBT) which was targeted to a central part of the Cupar Conservation Area and provided support for repairs and shop front reinstatements. On the basis that I could see that this property was in obvious need of repair I notified the various owners of the funding available and was appointed project architect with a view to with assisting to progress the works

2. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The property is a Georgian early 19th Century 3 window with droved margin and broached faced ashlar and a slated 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 original ground floor central shop was subdivided into two units c1970s and the upper living accommodation, accessed via a pend and external stairs to first floor level, was presumably subdivide into two flats at the same time. The building has HISTORICAL significance as it was the original office and home of Robert Tullis the founder of R Tullis & Company which today is known as Tullis Russell. In 1801 he bought the property and started a bookshop and bindery (Fig.2), in 1803 he started a printing press and publishers, in 1809 he bought Auchmuty Paper Mill (near Markinch) and in 1822 he started the Fife Herald (Fig.3). Originally the shop had a central entrance with fluted pilasters, and large windows both sides with panelled stallrisers below. The shop was sub divided into two units (c1960) with separate entrances thus losing the original central pilastered entrance and stallrisers, but the original fascia sign and console brackets survived albeit covered with oversized fascia board and plastic signs, with an unsympathetic projecting sign (Fig.10) fixed back through the fascia.

3. STATE OF REPAIR

Maintenance of this property is a challenge due to being located on a narrow stretch of busy road and with restricted rear access via a narrow pend and restricted courtyard to the rear.

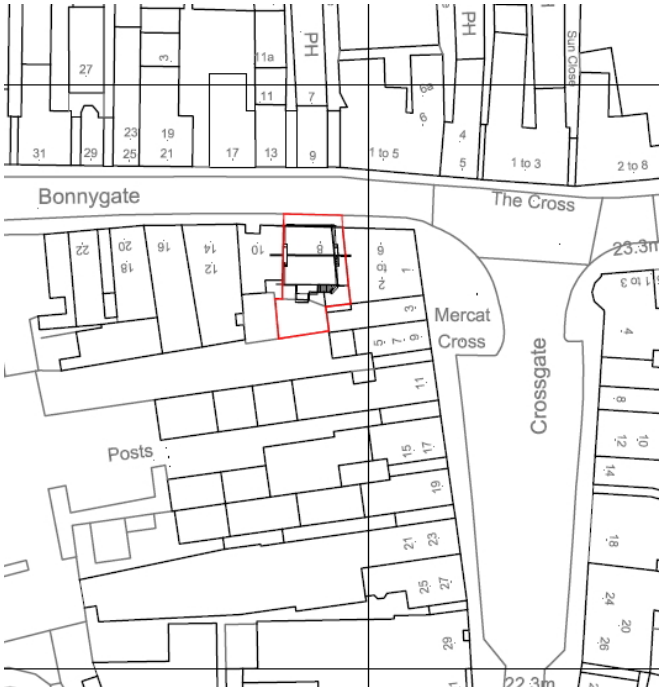

Figure 1. Location Plan



Fig 2 and 3. R Tullis & Co publishers and Fife Herald



Fig 3 and 5. Bonnygate elevation before and after

Soon after my initial enquiry to one of the owner's letting agent, I was called to assist with a courtyard wall which was leaning due to a significant buddleia growing out of the wall head for which I arranged emergency repair by as experienced stonemason. Soon after this I had a call from Fife Coucil building safety team who had been called to cordon off the street because sections of the thin cement coat had started to fall away onto the pavement below. As is common in the Bonnygate the poor quality of stone to the street elevation had multiple layers of paint and a thin coat of cement (Fig.16) in an attempt to protect it but in fact this had only served to trap water and accelerate decay. Initially I allowed for removal of the paint and thin coat cement to frontage, stone indent repairs, repointing and application of a lime-based render as recommended by the CARS/THI funded SLCT's report 'A Building Stone Survey for Cupar Conservation Area' but had to omit this as part of a cost saving exercise to make the project economically feasible.

There were two leaks in the slate roof that required local repairs. The rainwater goods required clearing and an overhaul generally using the HES specification for repainting cast iron rainwater goods. The rubble masonry to the rear required significant repointing, vegetation removal (Fig.23) and several stone indents repairs and lintol replacements. Interestingly there was evidence of Mason bees (Fig.26) having used the stone at the rear south facing elevation. The rear shop window steel security grate fixings had expanded and caused stone damage which had the stone repaired and grate repainted and refixed with stainless steel fixings (Fig.27) to prevent this happening again.

The (mostly) sash and case timber windows had a repair schedule drawn up, which was a combined effort between me and the joiner and included typical repairs such as cill replacement, putty renewal, sanding, and re-painting along with ingos repointing and new sand mastic. One of the windows in the upper flat had a missing pane of glass and required sash repairs (Fig.20 and 21). The upper flat's owner received enhanced assistance due to having limited funds and this along with other thermal improvements were part of a research project.

Although the fascia sign had survived the left-hand console bracket had decayed due to exposure to rainwater from blocked downpipe (Fig.12 and 13). The initial joiner sub-contractor was not able to reproduce a replacement console bracket but after a joint effort by me and the main contractor we found a joiner who was able to reproduce the console bracket (Fig 14 and 15) and replaced the lead flashing.

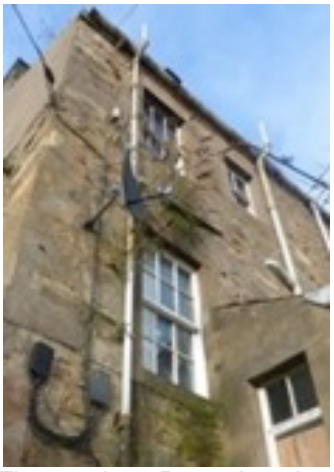

Fig 6 and 7. Rear elevation before and after



Fig 8 and 9. Failed downpipe before and after

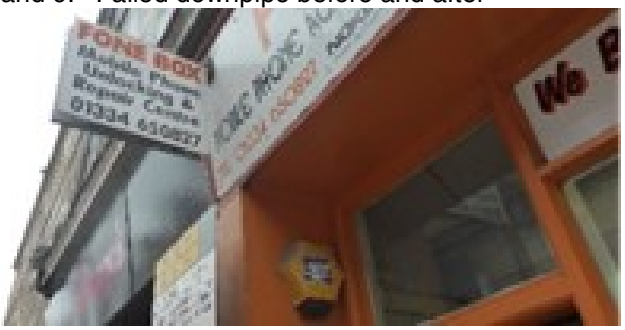
Fig 10. Shop front before works

Fig 11. Shop front after works

4. DESIGN APPROACH

My initial thoughts were to reinstate a central shop entrance arrangement and columns, but soon settled on concentrating available resources on reinstating the fascia sign and console brackets, the extensive masonry repairs, rainwater goods overhaul, roof leaks repairs and overhaul of windows.

On initial inspection I had thought that the shop fascia sign and console was cast iron due to the integrate detailing. I checked this with Lindsay Lennie (Scotland's Shops and Traditional Shops and Shopping in Cupar) and Ballantine's Iron Foundry and I allowed a sum in the contract for a reproduction to be made. Once on site and on closer inspection the contractor found that it was in fact timber which made the repair simpler and less costly.

The shop works therefore included removing the oversize plastic and inappropriate projecting sign, restoring a console bracket renewing the lead flashing over, provision of new fascia sign in proportion with the original, new timber cladding boards to entrance recesses and under fascia sign, to match boards revealed during works with all woodwork painted in an anthracite grey generally and off white to the facia sign for shops own sign to be hand painted all to provide a unified appearance of the original shop frontage (Fig.11).

FHBT allowed the saving that was made on the shop sign to be used on the stone repairs to the frontage. When the thin cement coat and loose paint was removed, we found that additional stone indent repairs were justified as there had been considerable decay. The bonded multiple layers of paint were removed by specialist paint removers Blastclean Scotland using Tavec 201 Tensid (Fig.18) to loosen the paint and a DOFF water system for removal. I considered acceptable as it was one of the less intrusive options provided in the SLCT's Cupar Stone report referenced earlier.

The SLCT's Cupar Stone report was also used as a reference 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 contractor selected Blaxter stone from Northumberland as this is one of the comparable


Fig 12 and 13. LH console bracket before and during works

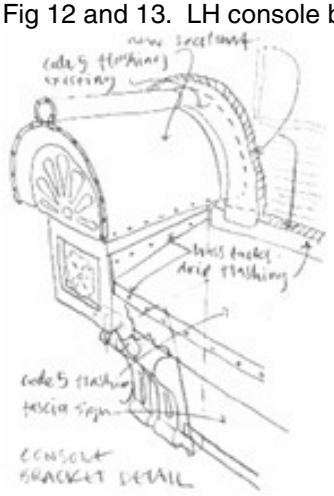


Fig 14 and 15. LH console sketch and after works

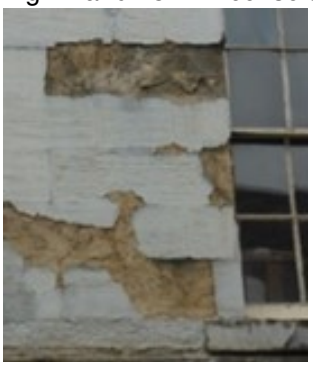


Fig 16 and 17. Cement/paint before and during works


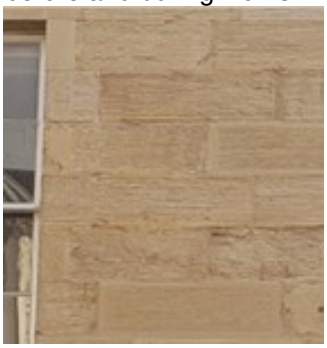

Fig 18 and 19. Paint removal, masonry tooling

options referenced in the report. The agreed mortar mix for indent repairs and repointing to rear elevation was a moderately hydraulic lime mortar with a 5(aggregate):2(lime) mix consisting of sand from Angel Park, Ladybank and Otterbein NHL 3.5 to achieve the desired strength and colour. I understand from my training that the mortar specification ensured that it was more porous than the stone so that moisture build up in the wall will be emitted through the sacrificial mortar rather than the stone. Chimney repointing and haunching to chimney pots used a more durable hydraulic lime with similar mix except using Otterbein NHL 5 due to the exposed chimney location. The mortar for the ashlar frontage was 2 (silica sand) : 1 (lime putty gauged with NHL 2). The finish to the mortar was left to semi cure before scraping with a small pointing tool to give a courser textured finish as this increases the surface area, sheds water better than a smooth surface and therefore increases longevity as well as being more in keeping with the original is also more aesthetically pleasing (Fig.27).

For the upper flat owner to access the additional financial support FHBT suggested a research project that could run alongside the repairs to monitor the effect of a programme of heritage appropriate thermal improvements. The thermal improvements carried out included levelling and topping up attic insulation, repair and draught proofing windows, repairs to a surviving timber shutter, draught proofing and insulating attic hatch and draught proofing the flat entrance door. As I find this type of work interesting, I was tasked with running this side project and monitored the before and after heating costs, writing a report, and presenting the findings. I used data log tags, thermal imaging, energy usage data and weather monitoring over two twelve-week periods. The report's findings were that there was almost a 30% reduction on energy usage because of the improvements. The report is available via the FHBT website.

5. OTHER INFORMATION

HES LISTING REF 6, 8 BONNYGATE LB24244
Fife Planning Reference 17/02077/FULL, 18/02676/FULL
Fife Planning Reference 17/02075/LBC, 18/02603 /LBC
FHBT Cupar CARS/ THI page Link:
https://fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk/project/cupar/#downloads



Fig 20 and 21. Window before and after repair



Fig 22 and 23. Stone indent and vegetation removal



Fig 24 and 25. Front window after works



Fig 26 and 27. Evidence of mason bees, grate repair