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2208 - THE GROVE, EWANFIELD, CRIEFF PH7 3DA CONSERVATION AND DESIGN STATEMENT

<https://www.cgstudio.uk/2208/>

THE SITE



The Grove (formerly Rosegrove) is situated centrally in the Crieff Conservation Area as defined in 2008.

It is thought that The Grove and its close neighbour Morven (formerly Ferngrove) were built at the same time. A photograph of the house, taken around 1902, indicates the two houses were originally joined at the roof of their single storey ancillary or kitchen part of the buildings at the boundary wall. Morven has subsequently been re-roofed, omitting the section which reached the boundary. These two buildings mark the beginning of a series of house developments which flanked the entrance approach to the Hydropathic Hotel, shortly before the hotel extension was built in 1894.

Fig.2 Extract from Geo. McCulloch map ca. 1888-1905
A. K. Bell Library, Perth

From the title documents, the original house is thought to have been built in 1877. It does not appear in the 1863 Ordnance Survey but is clearly shown on the 1899 update. The Geo. McCulloch map of 1888-1905 (CPK / A. K. Bell Library) shows Ewanfield in its early state of development and shows Rosegrove on this map, without north, south and west extensions.



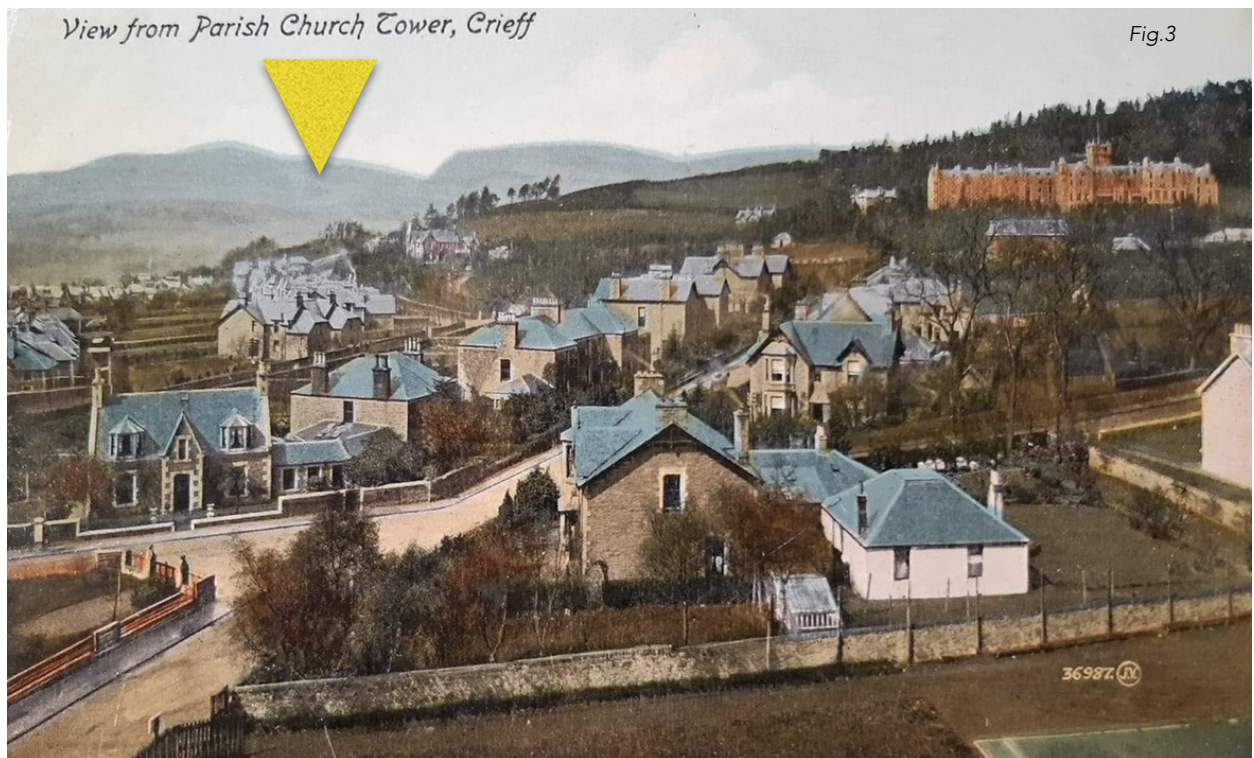


Fig.3

Locus - The Grove is one of many villas developed in the upper part of Crieff after the middle of the 19th century. Although the houses follow an heterogeneous typology, they tend also to be varied individual designs, built using locally quarried sandstone and slate. Generally speaking, the area of the upper town which lies above the Comrie Road and the Perth Road is a product of a period of prosperity and of the attractiveness and accessibility of the town following the railway developments of the period. The essential qualities of the development still exist and are refined by maturity, even though there have been modern incursions which are not so disruptive as to seriously devalue the area's integrity. More damaging has been the more pernicious though not at all subtle infractions like artificial slates and - most notably - pvc windows within the conservation area. The Grove is one of those properties into which a previous owner had pvc windows installed, to the house's great detriment.

Orientation - The Grove's site extends, between neighbouring properties on either side and from Ewanfield at the front, to Knock Road at the rear. It is enclosed by rubble stone walling on all four sides. There are two vehicle access points on the Ewanfield frontage, one of which is currently closed with concrete blockwork. The house sits at the top of the sloping site, near the east end with the front facing east and the back facing west.

Grounds - To the front, the ground is finished almost entirely with concrete pavers, which have moved substantially with ground heave; probably affected by the tree roots of the (now removed) Lawson's Cypress [*chamaecyparis lawsoniana*] in the south east corner of the front garden. As well as an invasive root system, this tree had disease on its east side. When obtaining consent to remove the tree, it was agreed that it would be replaced by a new specimen tree of a type more suitable for the location, on conclusion of the works.

The front boundary is marked with a stone-built wall with a reduced section where, historically, iron railings were present. To infill for the missing railings there is a hedge [*onicera nitida*] ~1.6m high. The hedge is in poor condition and over-run with ivy and is to be removed and replaced as part of new works.



Fig. 4 Front / East view, from Ewanfield



Fig. 5 Rear/West view, from Knock Road

There is sandstone paving and there are stone steps on the north side. Immediately to the rear of the house is fairly level ground also finished with concrete pavers. Beyond this the rear garden is laid out to a rockery on the west facing slope, below which is lawn and surrounding borders. There are mature trees and shrubs in the back garden which are shown on the block plan. These include a Magnolia [*magnolia soulangiana*] and a large Acer, probably [*acer palmatum atropurpureum*] There are also smaller holly trees, an acer japonicum, a eucalyptus and a large Pieris [forest flame] among others.

The rockery is very rustic and appears rather alien to the context but is known to have been in place since at least 1931; an aerial photograph, though blurry, reveals the layout of paths and rocks quite clearly.

A stone retaining wall forms the rear / west boundary, along the edge of Knock Road. The change in ground level is a little over 1m and there are steps down to a gate in the wall in the south west corner of the garden. Where the gate is located, the stone retaining wall is leaning into Knock road by a substantial degree and needs to be repaired.

THE HOUSE AS EXISTING

The existing house is a detached stone-built four bedroom villa. In its form it is quite typical of late 19th century houses in this part of Crieff though its remaining front-facing bipartite vertical sliding sash windows with stone mullions are less typical. There may have been more of these stone mullions before the house was altered in the early 20th century. The additions and alterations reflect contemporary influences from the, assumed, 1910-1930 period. Aside from the more recently added PVC windows, the double hung sash windows were altered in the same period, allegedly by the then house owner. These alterations included the installation of many decorative leaded lights on the public-facing sides, as well as some internally.

Originally, the two storey house had an L shape plan with peend-end slate roofing and lead roll ridges. The first floor has a combed ceiling, breaking above window head level. The main volumes have high ceilings with decorative plasterwork and decorative timber window and door surrounds. The floors are timber with a suspended timber ground floor structure, apart from a tiled floor in the entrance porch.

There are stone-built chimneys with stone terminals and decorative, buff clayware chimney cans. The walls are generally coursed rubble red sandstone with predominantly buff sandstone dressed quoins, rybatts, sills and lintels.

The Grove appears to be largely "as built" but there are distinct later additions which consist:

North - On the north side of the house, there are two adjoining extensions. The rear/west part is a lean-to glass house and the front part is a two storey extension, built using an imperial one-brick wall. The latter has a faceted slate roof with zinc flats which is not reconciled to the main roof. It has an odd gable formed by the raising of the north wall head in brickwork. The bottom part of the brick-built extension is thought to have originally been the location of a coal-fired heating boiler. The lean-to glass house presumably benefited from the boiler room heat losses, as it gets very little sunlight. This brick extension has been inexpertly covered with a dense cement render, ruled out to give a token impression of stone divisions. The render is boss and, in part fallen, due, we believe, to the long term effects of interstitial condensation forming on the outside face of the brickwork. Joints have been pointed with cement.

South - On the south side there is a single storey extension which appears to be an adaptation of an earlier if not completely original extension, probably for ancillary and cooking spaces. The original form, suggested in the Fig.3 above, was a double pitch slate roof from the south wall to the boundary wall (originally connected to a similar roof on the adjacent property) with a plain pitch to the fore and an improbably shallow valley to the rear, connecting the roof to a lean-to roof, parallel to the south wall. Currently this is reconfigured to a shallow pitch, almost flat roof, behind the ridge of the extension. It is not known whether the enclosure of the south yard was original but it seems that the stone boundary wall was a common internal wall for a shorter span than is currently enclosed and a brick adaptation/raising of the stone boundary further back indicates the enclosure was augmented afterwards. The main rear roof has been extended with fully supported zinc or lead sheets and which are now overlaid with felt. Let into the south wall of the house, within this extension, is a recess for a cooking range. The south elevation stone walling of the main house is in poor condition with much cement pointing and cement based render on stone, applied as repairs.

East - On the east elevation is a brick-built two storey window bay to the front and a flat roofed entrance porch with a brick built base and timber frame over, with leaded windows on the two glazed sides. There is no known photographic evidence of how the front elevation was configured before these additions. It could reasonably be assumed that there were windows which conformed to the design of the other front facing bipartite windows. The single brick bay window extension evidently used to have a lead flat roof behind a concrete parapet, cast in situ to copy the profile of the moulded cast iron gutters on the main house. The lack of insulation and the failure of the bay roof to contain the rain probably meant that the timber windows made for the new bay had failed and had been replaced with upvc windows, made to the reveal sizes. The brickwork construction of the bay and the porch base were also rendered with a dense cement cover which was coloured and ruled out. The porch has a "flat" lean-to roof which is collapsing and leaking. It was originally finished in lead or zinc which is now overlaid with felt. The waste and soil pipes from the bathroom above had been redirected around the roof of the porch. There is some cement pointing evident and stone damage.

West - On the west face of the house is a semicircular solarium or sun room. This was probably added at the same time as the other extensions and is visible on the 1931 aerial photograph. It has a felt roof covering over zinc but there is a question about whether this is the original shape of the roof, as opposed to a more decorative shape of glazed or lead covered roof. The roof is collapsing and the structurally optimistic glazed frame which forms the surrounds of the solarium is in urgent need of restoration to prevent further collapse.

Garden buildings - Constructions in the position of the north and south extensions appear on the 1899 O.S. map, though it is not sufficiently clear to tell if these buildings were made as they are now. This map also shows a small building about half way down the rear garden's south boundary, which is no longer evident. There was a ruinous gazebo or summer house against the garden north boundary which was removed quite recently.

House walls generally - As above, there is widespread cement pointing of the soft red sandstone which has caused blown surfaces and excess moisture has also caused some disaggregation of stones. The most severely affected elevation is the south facing wall and chimney stacks but varying degrees of damage are to be found throughout.

Windows generally - Fourteen of the original timber vertical sliding sash windows, most of which probably had decorative glass and leadwork, have historically been removed and replaced with PVC double hung sash windows, which have been sized to the openings, rather than the rebates. Nine timber double hung windows remain, though they are in need of repair. There is evidence that suggests the original sash windows had astragals in their upper sashes but this cannot be conclusive.

Main roof gutters - The main house has an unusually large 7 x 5 cast iron moulded gutter. There is evidence of the back or base of the guttering having failed on each face of the house. Only one pattern has been found to match (JJWL N°99 [S&D pattern 48]) made to order by the Longbottom Foundry. There are sections of pipework and guttering which are rusted and require repair or replacement.

Fireplaces - Some fireplaces have been altered, perhaps contemporary with the house extensions work, which are stylistically later than the period when the house was first built.

Significance

Although not a listed property, The Grove is in the centre of the Crieff Conservation Area and is subject to planning controls [S.61 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)(Scotland) Act 1997]. The general condition of the building appears to be good, though in need of maintenance or improvement.

The area of the Crieff hill town, in which these terraced developments took place in the mid to late 19th century is unusual because of the influence of city-based affluence and the development of railways. In the 18th century, the core town of Crieff was centred around the then parish church and the cross in the High Street. It is here where the oldest buildings and the old street patterns exist; where the town's development was more organic, in what were traditional Murray lands. The next wave of development was in the Drummond lands west of the toll booth, which developed from the bridge over the Earn up to the James Sq. and along Burrell Street, to the north west. These developments are evident in the John Wood map of 1822.

In the quadrants of Comrie Road to Ferntower Road and from Ferntower Road to the Perth Road contain the bulk of the mid 19th century development of houses and it is in their largely unspoiled group that their collective significance lies and it is this planned development which is part of the focus of the conservation area where strict controls need to be exercised to maintain the value of these areas to Crieff's story.

THE PROPOSAL

Repairs - Some repairs are already under way at The Grove, which include the replacement of the slate roof, the guttering and of lead or zinc roofs. New but traditional timber double hung sash windows are being installed by James Normand & Son of Perth to replace plastic windows. At the same time, the remaining timber windows are currently being overhauled by James Normand & Son.

There are long established roof leaks which demand urgent attention but which need to be organised in a logical order and these repair works are scheduled to begin in March 2024:

The bay window roof has at some point been adapted to change the fall and, over a plywood cover, there has been fitted a single membrane finish with welds. This roof has been leaking for a number of years, possibly since it was installed, as some welds do not appear to be complete. This has resulted in frequent leaks into the wall which have probably compounded earlier leaks (which may have prompted the roof adaptation and the addition of pvc windows). These leaks have caused deterioration in the wall finishes and a complete strip of the interior of the bay walls is warranted.

Repairing the bay does not necessarily require planning consent but, in order to reconcile the revisions to the head of the bay walls, it may be necessary to adapt the wall head which currently is formed as a concrete faux gutter. This projecting casting is part of the bay roof, also concrete, but is not essential to the stability of the bay wall structure and it may be necessary to adapt the moulding. I cannot say exactly how it may change until we start to disassemble the roof and wall head area but no radical changes are anticipated. The plan is to try to reinstate a lead roof and to properly adapt the guttering either side of the bay, which is currently inadequate.

There is a zinc box gutter on the north main roof wall head, which lies adjacent to the raised wall head for the north extension roof. This gutter is leaking and requires to be replaced. However, it is a poor design and these works intend to eliminate a problem (practical and aesthetic) by blending the north extension roof to the main roof. It is a poorly designed extension and the roof is ugly and not well resolved. These works will simplify the arrangement and, by mitring the sections of slating on the facets of the roof, the overabundance of metal ridges will be mitigated. The zinc flats on top of this roof will be replaced as lead with wood filled rolls.

The porch roof is collapsing and the leaded glazing is bowed. This is considered to be the result of poor design and a significant lack of maintenance, exacerbated by additional loads on the roof by earlier works, including the overlaying of felt on the fully supported metal finish.

The repair works will not have any significant impact on the appearance of the porch, except that after the rotten support frame and roof structure have been chopped out and replaced, the roof will be refinished with lead. The boss cement render on the base of the porch will be removed, the cement picked out of the wall and refinished with a floated lime render. Part of the works to the front will include the removal of all soil and waste pipes from the front elevation and repairs to the stonework. When the porch was added to the house, the soil and waste pipes were diverted around the porch into an ugly, poorly planned arrangement.

The solarium at the rear of the property, like the porch, has not received adequate maintenance over a long period of time. Furthermore, it was not properly designed and the roof loading, including the very heavy lead gutter, cannot be reconciled through the minimal uprights in the glazing where the steel is rusted and many elements of timber are rotten. It is felt that restoring the framework of the solarium on its own will not result in a sustainable solution and further measures will be needed to support the weight of the replaced roof. The lead gutter has been pushed out of shape by repeatedly leaning ladders on it. Consultations with lead conservation specialists (Edinburgh Leadcraft) did not give much hope for its preservation but this will be evaluated properly when the time to dismantle the gutter comes. The plan would be to restore the gutter's shape and to remove the paint and to get it to flow into the original downpipes, as it did before it slumped at the apex.

The glasshouse roof is requiring a complete overhaul and it is planned that it will be stripped back to good timber and rebuilt in the same location using appropriate sections.

GENERAL SCOPE OF WORK AS PROPOSED

The works are designed to include the following:

- Repairs to main slate roof and cast iron guttering, including for replacement of slates.
- Repairs to existing timber windows and replacement of existing pvc windows.
- Removal of boss cement render and replacement with lime render with wash.
- Reduction of south extension roof, replacing with fully supported metal roof finish (lead)
- Removal of semi derelict lean-to timber porch at south east corner and replacement of metal sliding shutter with new timber door.
- Downtaking of small section of wall with door and window on the west side of the south extension and the construction of a new timber west elevation further east.
- Removal of concrete block paving and replacement with gravel hard standing areas.
- Construction of a new timber garden building.
- Repair of the solarium frame and roof and the replacement of the roof finish with a fully supported lead sheet and roll.
- Repair of the north end lean-to glass house.

There will be no plastic or pvc material used on the outside of the building and the unsightly burglar alarm boxes will be removed. Exterior cables will be either removed or tidied. Stains on stonework will be cleaned.

A longer term programme of repairs to the boundary wall will follow this project and a new beech and blackthorn hedge will be planted between the gateways at the front. To be trimmed to the height of the adjacent walling.

ROOF

At first floor level the roof forms a comb on all four sides of the main part of the building. Such that when the roof covering is stripped, an opportunity is provided to insulate the sprocket sections of the roof which form the comb and run over the stone wall head. This will be carried out according to the available space, utilising a breathing fibre insulation, to help resist cold bridging at the wall head. Also helping with integration of the uprated insulation of the whole loft. It allows the owner to preserve the decorative cornices at first floor level while making worthwhile improvements, mitigating heat losses.

The roof appears to have had little alteration apart from patching since it was first made. It has the traditional laid-to-reducing-courses texture of characterful local Craiglea or Aberuchill slates, which have a silver-green-grey colouring and a coarse texture. Despite considerable efforts, no sources of sufficient, appropriately sized local slates has been found. The slater has been asked to use Westmorland green slates or, if these are not available, or too dear, the option is SSQ Riverstone Gruesa which is more silver than green but it should fit well in the locality. The Riverstone Gruesa slates are no longer available but we have established that SSQ has sufficient stocks in the UK for this project. The roof slating will be remade to reducing courses and the ridge and peentrees will be closed with lead over a timber roll. The valleys and abutments will have lead flashings.

CAST IRON

There is evidence of extensive failure of the large 7 x 5" moulded cast iron gutters on all elevations. It is an unusual and large profile, the pattern for which is kept by J & J W Longbottom, so it should be possible to piece in sections without changing the appearance. If it is found that none of the existing guttering is salvageable, the replacement will probably still be the same profile as there are very few if any 7 x 5 options available. The extensions have simple half round or half round and bead and these will be overhauled or replaced using the same plain cast iron profiles.

The erection of the front porch may have contributed to the extensive waste and soil pipework on the front elevation. The proposed works include for making bathroom waste/soil drains internal, allowing us to remove these unsightly external drainage elements. All rainwater pipes will be overhauled.

WALLS

The brickwork alterations to The Grove have been poorly built but they are judged by the engineer to be sustainable, with their enclosures brought to a better standard of ventilation and insulation.

Repairs to the single brick walls will entail knocking off the almost wholly boss cement render and re-surfacing externally with new lime render. Internal surfaces will be insulated using a breathable fibre insulation product.

The house has generally been repointed with a strong cement mortar which, in areas, has caused damage to the stonework. Also, poor control of vapour in chimneys with gas fired appliances and a lack of rainwater system maintenance has given rise to quite extensive stone damage on the south elevation, plus a little elsewhere, which may occasion the piecing in of severely disaggregated sections of stone, to match. The whole house's stonework will be raked and repaired and then repointed with an appropriate lime mortar. Work to be carried out by a specialist in stone conservation, Lawrence Schofield of Alva.

The stone conservation work will include repairs to chimney heads, which will include the introduction of buff clay vent inserts to some flues.

The new garden shed and the rear/west elevation of the south extension will be timber boarded, the boarding stained black or charcoal grey.

WINDOWS

Repair double hung timber sash windows with leaded lights and upgrade with new seals, pulleys, sash cords and hardware.

Replace unrepairable window with traditional double hung timber sash window.

Remove plastic windows and replace with newly made traditional timber double hung sash windows.

The window repairs are being carried out and the new windows are being made by James Normand & Son, joiners of Perth, using best practice for traditionally made dhs windows, including seals and IGUs.

The design of windows omitted any astragals. There is evidence that at least one of the windows which were converted to leaded lights originally had timber astragals in the upper sash only. I took the view that introducing astragals on the basis of limited evidence would make for a very confused and fussy outward appearance, especially at the front where most windows had been converted to leaded glass. Fitting IGUs with astragals would have produced a rather clumsy effect as well, so the decision to keep the sashes uncluttered was not a difficult one.

Although there are no plans to make significant internal alterations to the stone walls, the opening of the reveals for the window work provides an opportunity to insulate the jambs with vapour permeable fibre batts, to assist with reducing cold bridging.

The solarium's three large bifold curved windows are suspended from steel uprights which are very deteriorated by the ingress of water. The frame metalwork was probably not sufficient at the outset and it seems likely that we will have to augment the metal supports as well as repair what is there. The collapse was undoubtedly exacerbated by the very heavy lead gutter and the heavy roof. The aim is to repair the solarium without changing its appearance, apart from removing the improvised PVC pipework.

ENERGY

Where areas of the building are affected by the proposed works, the opportunity will be taken to improve insulation and energy use and to eliminate draughts without making any deleterious impact on the appearance of the building. Key insulation areas are the roof sprockets and ceilings ties, the inside of brick built sections, stone window jambs and the suspended ground floor. The existing gas fired heating system is to be retained and optimised but also mindful of the prospective Heat In Buildings legislation and the likely need to have a strategy for a transition to alternative non-polluting fuel over the next nine years.

GROUNDS

The garden building is a proprietary structure primarily aimed at providing storage and shed functions. despite its utilitarian purpose, we intend to finesse the design a little, by staining the timber very dark grey or black and fitting a sinusoidal zinc covered roof with a cantilever with supporting cornice timbers.

The erection of the garden building will shape changes in the layout of the garden. Over a longer period of time than these works the garden will be reworked around the new shed building and additional planting will be carried out, including the new hedge mentioned above.

The change of the hard standing areas to a river gravel will be established at the immediate front and back of the house whilst retaining stone flags to the north side of the house, on the slope.

There will be a long term programme of repairs to the stone boundary wall using an appropriate lime mortar for pointing.

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