

A Heritage of Shops: an Investigation into the Evolution of Historic Shopfronts in Perth and Perthshire

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INTRODUCTION

Historic town centres are in danger of losing their individual identity and special character through the replacement of traditional shopfronts with modern, unsympathetic frontages. Extensive town centre redevelopment schemes and the desire for corporate imagery by large multi-national retailers means that traditional shopfronts are being gradually eroded. Retail design forms part of the cultural and social history of our urban areas and the presence of traditional designs makes a significant contribution to the architectural merit of townscapes, a factor so important for encouraging tourism.

This paper examines the historical development of shopfronts in Scotland, with particular reference to Perthshire. It considers the influence of local and national designers from the latter 19th century until the end of World War II, together with an examination of the styles and materials which they adopted. It proposes a categorisation of shopfronts in terms of their vulnerability to change and finally assesses the current situation in Perthshire.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF SHOPS

The earliest shopping would of course, have been done at local markets and fairs. Trade was a vital element of Scotland's historic burghs and the burgesses jealously guarded their valuable right to exact fees from traders entering the burgh to sell their goods in the town's markets. This monopoly on trade was to diminish and eventually end in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century as improvements in economic circumstances gradually made the old burgh institutions redundant (McWilliam, 1975; Devine, 1983).

Gradually the importance of market trading must have been superseded by permanent shops. This transition was encouraged partly by the increased demand for luxury goods like tea, coffee, spices and watches which eventually became sufficient to warrant them being sold in permanent shops rather than just market stalls (Moody, 1992). Unlike the market traders, these goods were not made by the seller, but instead were imported or made elsewhere and then sold on by the retailer who, as Moody (1992, p79) states, "did not fashion or grow his own product".

Although the introduction of a Shop Tax in 1785 does suggest that there must have been sufficient shops in existence to make the tax justifiable, old habits remained. In Edinburgh, for example,

wealthy residents in the New Town, where the formal landscape did not feature retail premises, still used markets in the Old Town. However, McWilliam (1975, p120) states that by 1830, some types of retailing such as books, clothes and stationary became 'socially acceptable' and even groceries from Italian Warehousemen were finding their way from the market to the permanent shop.

The Victorian period was one of great change in shopping as new types of retailing were introduced which challenged established practices. The modern Co-operative Movement began with the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844, and spread across the country, mainly in response to the considerable poverty of the working classes. From the 1870's companies like Lipton's, Maseys, Templetons and Home and Colonial Stores founded their highly successful businesses on a few key products like butter, tea and ham. Whilst some of these early chain stores catered for the middle classes, most supplied the rapidly expanding urban working classes and tapped into the emerging popular markets for tea, sugar, margarine and processed foods.

These chain stores were the first retailers to recognise the importance of adopting a characteristic 'fascia' where the design was to be the same in each shop and they quickly adopted this advertising advantage (Mathias, 1967, p53). Each shop was standardised in layout and design with the same products being sold and the same selling policies in operation (Davis, 1966). This allowed the customer to feel comfortable in the familiar surroundings no matter which of their stores they were visiting. These early ideas were to become established practice during the 20th century.

From this flurry of activity at the end of the 19th century, the economic fortunes of retail premises in the early 20th century varied as two World Wars hindered economic development. Despite this, the Inter-War period of the 1920's and 1930's saw considerable energy in retailing with new materials and designs. This mirrored the wider situation where the United Kingdom was experiencing a period of vigorous growth in the construction industry which eventually peaked in 1937 (Powell, 1996). The demand for goods was unprecedented compared to previous periods and future retailing giants like Marks and Spencer and Woolworth had already gained a strong position in Britain's High Streets.

During the post-war years, these large companies consolidated their positions. Since the 1960's, car ownership has had a significant impact on consumer behaviour. The resulting superstores, covered shopping centres and multi-storey car parks have replaced traditional shopping street patterns and the legacy of these large-scale redevelopment schemes is evident in many towns today.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE OF SHOPFRONTS

Shopfront design is strongly influenced by the practical aspects of retailing. These include the need to display goods effectively, the desire to attract customers and the need to accommodate the goods being sold. Elements such as lighting, venting and the requirement for hygienic surfaces all impact

on shop design. Transparency is essential to allow the goods within the shop to be visible and the shopfront should 'seduce' the customer into entering the shop and spending their money (McKean, 1987, p91). Fashion is also a major dictator in shop design although, as will be demonstrated, some features and styles may be quite short-lived in their appeal.

Medieval Shops

The earliest shops would probably have had two wooden shutters rather than glass which was prohibitively expensive. The lower shutter would have dropped onto a leg to form a table and the upper one would have been fixed above to create a canopy (MacKeith, 1986). Very little evidence for early, particularly medieval, shops survives in Scotland today since fire risks forced the replacement of these timber buildings with stone and slate. It is therefore difficult to determine the extent of these early buildings. Clark (2000) confirms that both fire and constant remodelling have left little evidence of medieval shops. He suggests that any which have survived are generally as a result of the owner's poverty and therefore inability to implement any change. Certainly in Perth, no medieval shops survive although archaeological investigations have uncovered evidence of early shop premises within the city. Excavations in 1982 by the Scottish Urban Archaeology Trust (SUAT) in central Perth, uncovered shops and workshops with animal pens and working areas situated behind the buildings. These buildings were of timber with wattle and clay and probably roofed with heather or straw thatch (SUAT, 1984).

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Shops

Although medieval fabric has been lost, a number of shopfronts from the eighteenth century still exist. The architecture of the Georgian period has strong classical influences but in terms of shop style it is probably most strongly associated with the bow-fronted shop. Having started as small oriel bays, these became larger with a more permanent base making them a nuisance to pedestrians and traffic in the narrow streets (Dan and Wilmott, 1907). Despite their encroachment on the public highway, they were immensely popular in the second half of the eighteenth century because they allowed greater light into the dark shop interior and also expanded the display space (Powers, 1989).

The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed the introduction of new materials such as plate glass, cast iron and steel which allowed shopfronts to be tall and elegant for the first time. The development of plate glass by the Chance Brothers in the 1830's meant that retailers were no longer restricted to shop windows with numerous small panes of glass. However, there was not an immediate adoption of the material as it was 1845 before the very heavy duty imposed by the Glass Tax was removed. The slow but significant transformation is examined in Eldridge "The Plate Glass Shopfront" (1958).

The increased availability of large sheets of glass was a successful partner for cast iron, and this proved to be a particularly popular combination with retailers. Scottish iron manufacturers such as

Walter MacFarlane and The Lion Foundry exploited this market by including shopfront designs in their foundry catalogues. Often highly decorative, these were to prove an enduring architectural feature of both Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts.

Victorian shops are also recognised by the use of console brackets at the end of the fascia, a practice which Eldridge (1958, p194) describes as “almost universal” in the latter nineteenth century. These could be highly decorative, sometimes featuring flowers, animals or other intricate carvings whilst some are simple scrolls. Usually made from timber and painted, they survive on many Victorian shops. Some have ‘Bookend’ consoles which are frequently larger and more elaborate, often with carving on the outer face. Their introduction coincided with a fashion for deeper fascias at the end of the century.

Twentieth Century

The Edwardian period continued the progress of the latter nineteenth century and was marked by shopfronts of high quality materials. The fashion for very tall shopfronts, which started in the nineteenth century, continued with some vigour into the early twentieth century. Shops could literally be doubled in height, including removing the windows and floor of the first floor to create a vast cavern of a shop with natural light and deep, curved lobbies. The clerestory of the shop window was often ornamental featuring coloured or opaque glass. The shoppers and shopkeepers must have welcomed the transformation from the low-ceilinged and dark shops of earlier periods. However, criticism was levelled at the design of early twentieth century shopfronts, with the extensive use of plate glass being a particular source of disapproval (Ellis, 1904).

From the limited activity of the period of World War I, the 1920’s are described by Grundy (1982, p41) as a period of “striking innovation in shop design”. New styles such as Art Nouveau and particularly Art Deco prevailed in the Inter-War period. Materials like Vitrolite, a rolled opal glass, and chrome were utilised with bronze and Roman Stone to great effect and neon lettering and lit fascias made the shops highly visible at night. Arcaded shopfronts were particularly favoured, especially by drapers and high-class clothiers. These wealthy retailers occupied substantial premises and could afford to lose part of their retail area to create arcades of considerable depth and complexity. The advent of electric lighting also meant that shops were no longer reliant on natural light permitting the lobbies to be very deep (Grundy, 1982). Terrazzo floors and bronze sashes to the windows attracted the shoppers into a sheltered display area where goods could be admired in relative comfort. However, the popularity for these waned by the end of World War II and now very few arcaded fronts survive.

SHOPFRONT DESIGNERS IN PERTH

This section will consider the use of Dean of Guild plans and the outcome from research into shopfront design in Perth.

City of Perth

Perth is a large county town situated on the River Tay with a population of 43 200 (www.gro-scotland.gov.uk). Founded around 1125, it is famous for its associations with whisky manufacturers Bell's and Dewar's and the dry cleaning business of Pullars. While considerable historic fabric has been lost through redevelopment, the centre retains some impressive Victorian and Edwardian buildings and a number of interesting traditional shopfronts.

Dean of Guild Records

The Dean of Guild records represent the earliest evidence of town planning and environmental control in Scotland. Their history is both complex and varied, being inextricably linked with burgh status and the craft guilds. The Dean was the head of the merchants and, acting as magistrate, could wield his legal power over the burgh. From their medieval origins, the Dean of Guild Courts, a sub-committee of the General Court of the Guild, performed a number of duties including safety of buildings, access issues and neighbourhood disputes (Rodger, 1983, p77).

However, during the eighteenth and particularly the nineteenth centuries, the power of the Courts receded as Town Councils emerged as the dominant force in town life (Rodger, 1983). Gray (1992) notes that by 1850 they no longer performed their original medieval functions and the Courts became increasingly inactive. A series of Burgh Police Acts followed, subsequently rationalised with the 1892 Burgh Police (Scotland) Act which re-established the Dean of Guild Courts. Their existence finally ended in 1975 with the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and all building control is now operated by the local council Department of Building Control (Gray, 1992).

Although many Dean of Guild records were destroyed, Perth is fortunate that plans exist from 1877 onwards. These take the form of Minute Books, Plan Registers and associated drawings held in Perth and Kinross Council Archives. Although the earlier plans may have limited information or may even be anonymous, most drawings include a location plan, full elevations and floor plans and an address or name for the architect or designer. These drawings provide a unique and often beautiful pictorial record of the evolution of different designs and the designers who created them.

Methodology

The plans for retail premises were sourced using a card index system compiled by archive staff. All Dean of Guild plans for Perth held in the archive are listed by address and potentially suitable plans were identified and examined. The data extracted included:

- Designer and their location
- Date submitted to Dean of Guild
- Client (and client business, if known)
- Materials

- Location of property
- Shopfront design (by photocopy or sketch depending on copyright)

This data was then included in a database to permit analysis.

The Dean of Guild Plan Books indicate that of the 3353 plans submitted between the years 1877 and 1946, 123 have no plans. The majority of these are from the earliest years of the Courts operation and particularly before 1887. Of these 123, a total of 28 applications for retail premises were identified as lacking plans and all but one date from before 1887. The earliest years can therefore be considered to be less reliable, but from 1887 onwards the plans are generally available.

Shopfront Designers

The Dean of Guild plans indicate that there were five principal types of designer who were commissioned to design retail premises:

- Perth Architects: firms who were based in the city.
- Other Architects: firms based outside of Perth, mainly Dundee, Edinburgh or Glasgow. Often larger firms whose clients were perhaps based in that location but who occupied shop premises in Perth.
- In-house Architects: employed by large firms like Lipton's, Boots or Burtons.
- Builders and Joiners: usually local tradesmen but were also from Edinburgh, Dundee or Glasgow.
- Shopfitters: specialised firms who fitted both shopfronts and shop interiors.

Although the earliest creators of shopfronts would have been local joiners, during the nineteenth century architects began to become involved in shop design. The rise in the number of architects operating in Perth is evident in the local Trade Directories. In the Post Office Directory of 1860-61 (Marshall, 1861), there are only three architects listed, but this gradually increased to nine by 1882. By 1907, there were 16 firms of architects and /or surveyors operating in the city (Leslie, 1907). This increase is reflected in the Census figures for 1851 which had 10 architects listed for Perthshire and 273 in Scotland as a whole. By 1901, Perthshire had risen to 67 with a total of 1 881 architects throughout Scotland (HMSO, 1854; 1902).

The demand for architects services in Perth must have been limited due to the small size of the city and so they accepted a variety of commissions, rarely specialising in any particular field. They produced both commercial and domestic designs and villas and bungalows seem to have been a particular mainstay for several firms. This situation was typically found in other similar sized centres (Bailey, 1996) as architects no longer were confined to superior type projects and instead became involved in more routine work like housing (Powell, 1996).

In Perth, local architects were the dominant force until the end of World War I, as indicated in Table 1. However, the introduction of many new retailers heralded change within the types of designers involved. By the 1930's, shopfitters submitted 24% whereas the number of applications by Perth architects had dropped to only 49% from a peak of 92% in the first 10 years of the twentieth century. This is despite the fact that the total amount of submissions for both decades was similar. The pace of change was halted by the advent of World War II when applications dwindled to minimal numbers.

Overall, the retailers of the Perth remained loyal to their own architects and some retained the same firm for many years. Not surprisingly, retailers based outside of Perth frequently employed architects from their own location. For example, J.S. Birrell, confectioners, originated in Glasgow and by 1938 had over 180 branches (Slaven and Checkland, 1986). They sought the services of a Glasgow architect, James Carruthers, to design their Perth shop in 1930. Carruthers also worked for Saxone Shoe Company of Kilmarnock.

Table 1: Dean of Guild Plans by Designer

| Year | Perth Architects | Other Architects | In-House Architects | Shopfitters | Builders | Others | Total |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| 1877-1889 | 14 (88%) | - | - | - | - | 2 (12%) | 16 |
| 1890-1899 | 53 (84%) | 2 (3%) | - | - | 1 (2%) | 7 (11%) | 63 |
| 1900-1909 | 59 (92%) | 2 (3%) | - | - | 2 (3%) | 1 (2%) | 64 |
| 1909-1919 | 15 (88%) | - | - | 1 (6%) | 1 (6%) | - | 17 |
| 1920-1929 | 42 (78%) | 3 (5.5%) | 6 (11%) | 3 (5.5%) | - | - | 54 |
| 1930-1939 | 33 (49%) | 4 (6%) | 8 (12%) | 16 (24%) | 5 (7%) | 1 (2%) | 67 |
| 1940-1946 | 5 (71%) | - | - | 2 (29%) | - | - | 7 |
| Total | 221 (76%) | 11 (4%) | 14 (5%) | 22 (8%) | 9 (3%) | 11 (4%) | 288 |

Some large retailers preferred to employ their own architects and therefore had a department dedicated to the design of their shops. Companies like Boots the Chemist, Lipton's and Burton's all had their own architects who created styles that would be recognised across the country. In Perth, several of these 'type' shopfronts were found in the Dean of Guild applications. J.W.C. Gregory, the company architect for Boots Pure Drug Co. Ltd imposed the company brand image on premises in High Street in 1922, and three years later, introduced one of their famous lending libraries to the first floor. Whilst small reminders of these remain, such as a mosaic lobby floor, these shopfronts rarely survive intact. As these businesses grew or, in the case of Liptons and Home and Colonial Stores, were taken over by other firms, so the shopfronts were altered. New occupiers are always keen to impose their own style on the shop and, as a result, the distinctive shopfronts of this period are hardly ever seen.

Shopfitting firms also introduced very characteristic shopfront styles. These specialist firms were frequently employed by drapers to design grand shopfronts but other retailers such as jewellers, also sought their services. The first Perth Dean of Guild application by a shopfitting firm was by E. Pollard and Co. of London. They were employed by Cairncross jewellers in 1911 to design an elegant frontage for their new premises. Pollards had the expertise to meet the very specific needs of jewellers to display goods effectively and elegantly and to meet any security requirements.

The first arcaded shopfront application was for Wallace's Department Store, designed by Perth architect AK Beaton in 1929. Arcaded fronts were particularly popular in Perth during the 1930's. Of the 64 Dean of Guild shopfront plans from 1930-1939, 13 were for arcaded fronts of which 11 were between 1931 and 1935. This represents 20% of the plans for this period indicating the popularity of this type of design. They are almost exclusively reserved for drapers, clothiers and major shoe retailers like Saxone and Norvells. Only one of the 13 is for a non-clothes retailer and this was for a hairdresser.

The popularity of these complex arrangements was short-lived and in the post-1945 period they were considered to be wasteful of retailing space and replaced with less elaborate frontages (Morrison, 2004).

THE PRESENT POSITION IN PERTH

In addition to an examination of the historic development of shopfront styles through the Dean of Guild records, a survey of over 170 shops in three locations, Perth, Crieff and Comrie was undertaken. The aim of this research was to establish the current position in terms of shopfront survival.

The three locations are very different. Perth is a county town with a population of 43 200 and Crieff, Perthshire's second largest settlement located 17 miles west of Perth, has a population 6 740. Comrie is a small but wealthy village 7 miles west of Crieff, population 1 950 ([1908](http://www.gro-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

scotland.gov.uk). The three settlements were chosen to allow insight into how traditional shopfronts in different types of retailing location have survived.

The survey involved an external visual examination of each shopfront to establish style, materials, general condition and degree of alteration. The Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest prepared by Historic Scotland was consulted to determine whether the shops were listed and in what category. Note was also taken of conservation area status.

Table 2 indicates that of the 168 shops surveyed, a total of 98 are Listed but only 10% of those surveyed in Crieff have Listed status. In contrast, Comrie has 33 shops, almost all of which have listed status. The implications of this will be considered later.

Categorisation and Assessment

By considering the current survey and the Dean of Guild data together, it is possible to assess the significance and the vulnerability of the shopfronts which survive. This helps to establish the extent of the problem and to determine whether existing policies are effective in achieving conservation objectives.

Categorisation is a recognised method of classifying buildings according to their importance or vulnerability. For example, the Scottish Civic Trust maintains a ‘Buildings at Risk’ register of buildings which are often vacant and neglected and liable to be demolished or to become totally ruinous (www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk 22/3/05). These are assigned a category on a scale of ‘ruinous’ to ‘good’ to allow their condition and future to be monitored. Similarly, Historic Scotland and English Heritage assign a category for listing purposes according to the importance of a certain historic building.

Table 2: Numbers of Shops with Listed Status

| Location | Total No Shops Surveyed | No of Streets | Listed Cat A | Listed Cat B | Listed Cat C(S) | Total Number Listed |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Perth | 96 | 5 | 0 | 31 | 32 | 63 |
| Crieff | 39 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Comrie | 33 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 27 | 31 |
| Total | 168 | 12 | 1 | 37 | 60 | 98 |

For the purposes of this research, six categories have been adopted (see Figures 1 and 2 and Appendix 1). Categories 1 to 3 refer to modern shopfronts and these are respectively,

unsympathetic, sympathetic or of a modern design. The ‘Shelter’ shop indicates typical unsympathetic treatment using deep signs which are out of proportion to the building. The Category 2 building has been re-designed in a traditional fashion through the Perth Façade Improvement Scheme. The Category 3 shop has a modern, polished granite tile finish.

The final three categories concern traditional shopfronts. Category 4 is a mixture of traditional and modern, often the case where the surround is of a permanent construction such as stone but a modern shopfront has been inserted. Category 5 is traditional, low risk where the shopfront is in a stable retail area, in good repair and typically has listed status. The final category is that of traditional and vulnerable. Here the building may be located in a retail area subject to redevelopment pressures, the shop may have been vacant for a long period or the significance of the shopfront design may not be recognised. The latter situation is particularly the case with shops dating from the twentieth century and the example shows the last surviving arcaded shopfront in Perth. It does not have listed status.

Category 1: Modernised, Unsympathetic



Category 2: Modernised, Sympathetic



Category 3: Modernised, Modern



Figure 1: Photographs of Categories 1, 2, 3

Category 4: Mixed Traditional/ Modern



Category 5: Traditional, Low Risk



Category 6: Traditional, Vulnerable

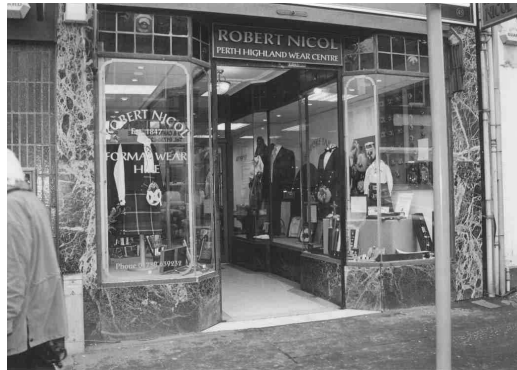


Figure 2: Photographs of Categories 4, 5, 6

Categories 1, 2 and 3 represent shops where essentially the historic fabric has been lost, although they can still make a valuable contribution to the local townscape. The modernised, unsympathetic category clearly is the one which offers the least in terms of aesthetic appeal. In contrast, categories 4, 5 and 6 have a high level of historic material but this may be at risk through lack of recognition of the importance or significance of the shopfront.

In addition to assigning a category, some shops can be identified as being of considerable historic significance and accordingly, every effort should be made to protect them. In this case, a star (*) is included to indicate that the shopfront warrants special attention. This is a method adopted in the listing of buildings in England by English Heritage where there are two categories of Grade II building, Grade II and Grade II*, the latter being of greater historical importance.

Results

In compiling the Buildings at Risk register, the Scottish Civic Trust acknowledges that there may be difficulties in assigning a category to some buildings because the boundaries are indistinct (www.buildingsatrisk.org). With this type of exercise, there will inevitably be grey areas and some may fall into more than one category. However, the most obvious or dominant aspect is used to assign a category.

The results are outlined in Table 3. Comrie is a special location with almost all of the shops listed. The village retains many interesting and varied shopfronts exhibiting a variety of features such as cast iron, bookend consoles and original interiors. Despite many having listed status, over 20% remain vulnerable, primarily because of the limited opportunities for retailers in this type of location. As a result, some shops inevitably lie vacant for long periods and there is then pressure to convert to other uses, particularly residential.

In contrast, Crieff has only four listed retail premises and it displays a mixture within the six categories. The modernised, unsympathetic category is particularly high for Crieff at 26%. Although most shops are occupied, many are considered to be vulnerable because they do not have listed status. The town also faces economic challenges with a frequent turnover of retailers for some properties, a large number of charity-occupied shops and a reliance on tourist trade. Local retailers are currently voicing concern over the prospect of Tesco's opening a supermarket on the edge of the town. This will certainly be a consideration in the future sustainability of many of these shops and consequently on the survival of historic fabric.

Perth displays a mixture across the categories and there is variation across the five streets investigated. In George Street, the majority of buildings are listed and the street retains many original features. In contrast, North Methven Street is a fringe retailing area where many of the buildings are not listed and are therefore vulnerable. The large number of mixed traditional and modern frontages in Perth may be attributed to the fact that many have an original stone surround, often quite decorative, but the shop front itself has been replaced, frequently in aluminium.

Table 3: Initial Conclusions

| CATEGORY | Perth | <i>Perth</i> | Crieff | <i>Crieff</i> | Comrie | <i>Comrie</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Total | With Star (*) | Total | With Star (*) | Total | With Star (*) |
| 1- Modernised, unsympathetic | 15 (16%) | 0 | 10 (26%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2- Modernised, sympathetic | 11 (12%) | 0 | 1 (2.5%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3- Modernised, modern | 1 (1%) | 0 | 1 (2.5%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4- Mixed traditional/modern | 28 (29%) | 1 | 9 (23%) | 0 | 2 (6%) | 0 |
| 5- Traditional, low risk | 32 (33%) | 10 | 7 (18%) | 0 | 24 (73%) | 12 |
| 6- Traditional, vulnerable | 9 (9%) | 5 | 11 (28%) | 6 | 7 (21%) | 0 |
| Total | 96 | 16 | 39 | 6 | 33 | 12 |

This categorisation places emphasis on the protecting legislation for listed buildings. However, listing status does not guarantee protection and these properties may still be vulnerable, especially if they are vacant for long periods. Retailers may choose to ignore the legislation and carry out alterations without permission or permission may be sought and granted because the significance of the features is not recognised. The threats to shopfronts are therefore many and complex.

This categorisation is a useful tool to measure the situation in a retailing location where the underlying styles and shopfront evolution is understood. It is then possible to identify shopfronts of historic significance which may also fall into the category of being vulnerable. However, retailing is a transient operation and what may be applicable at one point in time may be rapidly changed by factors like the opening of a new shopping development. Retailing can be a fragile industry and it is important to understand the issues facing retailers if traditional shopfronts are to be conserved.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of shop design in Scotland has received little attention to date. The result is that there is limited understanding of the evolution of designs and the significance of this part of our urban heritage. Retailers have little incentive to retain traditional features and planning authorities do not always have the information available on this type of structure to give them the justification for protection. Early twentieth century shopfronts are particularly vulnerable as these are rarely listed.

This research has highlighted the significance of traditional shopfronts in Perthshire through an examination of historical records combined with a current survey to determine the vulnerability of shopfronts to change. The examination of three different locations indicates that both small and larger retailing centres face challenges which can impact on attempts to preserve shopfront heritage.

Although this research relates to one particular Scottish county, it is likely that this situation is typical for similar sized settlements elsewhere. Further research is needed to assess the extent of traditional shopfront survival in Scotland and to determine the threats which they face. Deeper understanding of these shopfronts is essential if they are to be conserved as part of our townscape heritage.

APPENDIX 1 CATEGORISATION OF CRITERIA

Category 1: Modernised, unsympathetic

Criteria:

- Building is pre-1945
- Removal of most or all original features

- Replacement with modern style and materials such as aluminium frames, plastic fascias and flush shopfronts
- Signs are often large and out of proportion to the rest of the shop
- State of repair may be poor, especially in fringe retail areas

Recommended Action

- Replacement with more sympathetic style in keeping with the surrounding building. The historic fabric has been lost but there should still be an attempt to have designs which are in keeping with the locality

Category 2: Modernised, sympathetic

Criteria

- Buildings is pre-1945
- Original shopfront largely or totally removed
- New shopfront design is sympathetic in scale and design to the building
- Traditional materials such as timber used
- May be part of a Façade Improvement Scheme

Recommended Action

- No further action required as the shopfront is sympathetic to the building it is part of and to the surrounding urban area

Category 3: Modernised, modern

Criteria

- Building is pre-1945
- Shops are of an interesting and modern design but not in a traditional style.
- Shopfront is generally post 1945

Recommended Action

- No further action is required as the shopfront may not be traditional but there is a place for good modern design

Category 4: Mixed Traditional/ Modern

Criteria

- Building is pre-1945
- Exhibits both modern and traditional features
- Frequently has a stone surround with a modern aluminium shopfront inserted where the original shopfront would have been of timber
- The alterations may date back for several years but the original features, if in stone, will generally be intact

Recommended action

- These shopfronts may benefit from sympathetic reinstatement of the traditional front but the requirement for this will depend on the degree and nature of the modern alterations

Category 5: Traditional, low risk

Criteria

- Building is pre-1945
- A shopfront with all or many traditional features
- Shopfront may not be original to the building but will still represent historic fabric, e.g. the building may be 1850 and the shopfront 1910
- Generally in good state of repair
- Located in a stable retail area where there is little pressure to convert to other uses, such as residential
- The building is Listed and may also be in a Conservation Area

Recommended Action

- Provided the shop is Listed there should be no immediate threat so no further action is required

Category 6: Traditional, vulnerable

Criteria

- Building is pre-1945
- Shopfront is of historic importance and retains many original features

- Possibly in a fringe retail location or has been vacant for a long period of time with limited chance of it being commercially viable. It may be under threat from conversion to residential use.
- Alternatively, it may be in a successful retail area where redevelopment and replacement with modern shopfronts is commonplace
- The shopfront may be of a unique type, such as an arcaded front of which few examples survive.
- It is unlikely to be Listed but may be in a Conservation Area

Suggested Action

- Determine the significance of the shopfront through research and investigation
- Identify possible risks to the shopfront such as vacancy, conversion to residential.
- Consider Listing as a method of protection

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