



# Woodbank House, Balloch Inspection Report

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	Scope of Inspection and Report .....	2
1.2	Architectural and Historical Significance.....	2
1.3	Buildings at Risk Register.....	4
1.4	Further Observations .....	6
<b>2</b>	<b>Woodbank House .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1	Introduction .....	8
2.2	Inspection .....	8
2.3	East (Main) Elevation.....	8
2.4	South East Elevation .....	12
2.5	Rear East Elevation .....	13
2.6	South Elevation.....	14
2.7	West Elevation.....	17
2.8	North (Rear) Elevation .....	18
2.9	North East Elevation .....	19
2.10	Internals .....	20
<b>3</b>	<b>Woodbank House Stables.....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	21
3.2	North & South Single Storey Blocks .....	21
3.3	Rear Section .....	21
<b>4</b>	<b>Woodbank House Agricultural Building.....</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1	Inspection .....	27
4.2	Observations and Recommendations.....	27

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Scope of Inspection and Report

Woodbank House and Stables were inspected on Monday 8th May 2017 by RIAS Conservation Accredited Architect, Paul Barham, of Barham Glen Architects, along with Structural Engineers from Peter Brett Associates.

No access was possible to the interior of the building shell of the main house, owing to its dangerous condition, however, detailed inspection of the structure was made by means of an access platform and inspection from ground level around the perimeter of the structure.

The photographs which accompany this report were taken in the course of this inspection.

The purpose of this report is to provide guidance on conservation issues in the light of the property's present condition, and especially with regard to its Grade A listing. The report also provides advice as the suitability of the remaining structure for development, and the implications of the recommendations in the Structural Inspection Report on the conservation of the built heritage at Woodbank House.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Structural Inspection Report dated May 2017 prepared by Peter Brett Associates on behalf of TSL Contractors Ltd. For ease of reference the same numbering system as that used by the Structural Engineers has been adopted in this report.

The Conservation Architect's inspection did not include the Agricultural Building referred to in Section 4 of both the Structural Inspection Report and this report, therefore recommendations for this building have been made entirely on the basis of the photographs and text in the Engineer's report.

## 1.2 Architectural and Historical Significance

Woodbank House and all other structures which form part of the curtilage are Grade A listed. The Historic Environment Scotland listing details and description of significance are as follows:

***Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997***

***Statutory Designation: WOODBANK HOUSE WITH GARDEN BUILDING***

***Designation Reference: LB1125***

### ***Summary***

*Category: A*

*Date Added: 17/07/1989*

*Local Authority: West Dunbartonshire*

*Planning Authority: West Dunbartonshire*

*Parish: Bonhill*

*National Grid Reference: NS 38188 81758*

*Coordinates: 238188, 681758*

### ***Description***

*Circa 1775 with later 19th century additions. 2-storey over basement, 5-bay, rectangular-plan main block; with large 3-storey, 5-bay later 19th century addition at right angles to S. Stucco over rubble; raised ashlar margins; rusticated quoins; eaves cornice.*

*E ELEVATION: 5 bays symmetrically disposed. pedimented bays at centre; broad stair to door at centre; wrought-iron handrails. 2-leaf, 4-panelled door with Gibbsian surround; pediment; modern light attached to keystone; flanking symmetrical bays; window at centre 1st floor above door with lugged surround and fluted keystone. Pediment supported on shallow console brackets; blind bulls-eye window at centre; urn finials. Barred windows at basement.*

*N ELEVATION: broad gable, windows at ground, 1st floor to outer left; barred window at centre basement; window slightly off-centre to right at 1st floor; small window off-centre to left at attic; broad apex stack. Later wing recessed to outer right, pedimented dormerheads breaking eaves at attic; 2-bay block recessed to outer right, chamfered corner; tripartite mini-gabled dormer.*

*S ELEVATION: later 19th century 2-storey, 5-bay block. Pedimented centre bay slightly advanced; full-height (ground to 2nd floor) canted window; 2nd floor window with segmental pediment; stone balustrade balcony. Flanking bays, eaves band cornice dividing ground, 1st floor from attic; pedimented dormerheads breaking eaves at attic storey.*

*W ELEVATION: eaves cornice string course at attic; armorial plaque at centre; coped wallhead stack at centre.*

*12-pane timber sash and case windows; 4-pane timber sash and case windows. Grey slate gabled roof to main house; lead flashings; grey slate piend and platform roof for later house; broad, coped wallhead stacks; 2-pane rooflights.*

*INTERIOR: not seen 1995. Original shutters.*

*GAZEBO: small octagonal timber gazebo. Chevron joinery; pagoda style roof; gablets breaking eaves to alternate facets. Door on S elevation, gablet over with trefoil louvred ventilation; broad window to left. Terracotta fishscale tiles; broad terracotta ridge tiles; terracotta finialled cap; gablets with finials.*

*INTERIOR: boarded seating along each side; chevron timber floor.*

### **Statement of Special Interest**

*The land was settled on James Lindsay and his wife Sarah Brisbane Lindsay in 1670, and a house stood on the site at this time. The property was called Stuckrodger at this time. In 1774 Stuckrodger was acquired by Charles Scott of Dalquhurn, a Glasgow merchant and it appears that the house as it now appears dates from this time. The house name was changed to Woodbank. In 1885 William Ewing-Gilmour of Croftenga was the occupant of the house and it is likely that the later additions date from his occupancy, the coat of arms on the W wall is the same as that on the Masonic Hall in Alexandria. The house became a hotel in the 1930s, and became the Hamilton House Hotel in the 1980s. The house was featured in Scottish Civic Trust BUILDINGS AT RISK (1994). The former stables and garage buildings are in poor condition to the E.*

### **References / Bibliography**

*F A Walker and F Sinclair NORTH CLYDE ESTUARY (1992) 51. Typescript notes from present owner. THE LENNOX HERALD. THE SCOTTISH FIELD, September 1964.*

### 1.3 Buildings at Risk Register

The Buildings at Risk Register describes the building as follows:

#### **Woodbank House, Luss Road, Balloch**

##### **General Details and Location**

**Category** AT RISK

**Name of Building** Woodbank House

**Other Name(s)** Hamilton House Hotel (Former)

**Address** Luss Road, Balloch **Locality**

**Postcode** G83 0SW

**Planning Authority** Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP

**Divisional Area** Dunbartonshire (West)

**Reference No** 1482

**Listing Category** A

**OS Grid Ref** NS 38188 81758

**Location Type** Rural

**HS Reference No** 1125

##### **Description**

2-storey over basement, 5-bay, rectangular-plan main block; with large 3-storey, 5-bay later 19th century addition at right angles to S. Stucco over rubble; raised ashlar margins; rusticated quoins; eaves cornice.

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In 1885 William Ewing-Gilmour of Croftenga was the occupant of the house and it is likely that the later additions date from his occupancy, the coat of arms on the W wall is the same as that on the Masonic Hall in Alexandria. The house became a hotel in the 1930s, and became the Hamilton House Hotel in the 1980s. (Historic Scotland)

**Building Dates** Circa 1775; later 19th century additions

**Architects** Unknown

##### **Category of Risk and Development History**

**Condition** Ruinous

**Category of Risk** Critical

##### **Exemptions to State of Risk**

**Field Visits** 01/03/1996, 01/03/2003, 01/01/1991, 01/05/1997, 01/01/2006, 25/02/2011, 13/10/2008, 27/3/2012

##### **Development History**

December 1979: Press reports note that the former Woodbank Hotel is to reopen as the Hamilton House Hotel. The entire house has been refurbished in an attempt to

return it to its Georgian splendour. The present 18 bedrooms are to be converted into 8 luxury suites, and a new lounge bar will be created upstairs. 1981: The hotel closes. 10 November 1989: The Lennox Herald reports that plans to turn the house into a nursing home have been refused. February 1990: SCT understands the house is now deteriorating, although a caretaker remains on site. There have been reports of interest from potential restorers, although Dumbarton District Council has indicated that the owner has refused to enter into negotiations and is known to be unwilling to sell. November 1992: SCT receives information that the District Council is exploring obtaining a court order to gain access to the property and assess its repair needs. December 1993: Conversations between SCT and the resident caretaker reveal that the owner continues to remain anti-selling. October 1994: SCT understands that an application for a court order has been submitted by the Council. It is requesting access to allow it to assess the level of repairs required to render the building wind and watertight. A planning application has been recently submitted for the conversion of the existing building into commercial and residential use, with the surrounding 22 acres given over to residential use. 18 August 1995: The Lennox Herald reports that Outline Planning Permission has been refused. September 1995: SCT understands that limited progress has been made in obtaining the court order. 21 January 1996: The Lennox Herald reports that the house has been severely damaged by fire. March 1996: External inspection reveals that windows to the front of the house have been blocked up and the house has been left roofless. Some gables have collapsed, as has a large area of the rear wall. 5 September 1996: A Dangerous Building Notice is served, and partial demolition subsequently allowed for public safety reasons. 1997: SCT understands that structural engineers are currently compiling a feasibility study on the house. February 1998: SCT receives correspondence from Gavin Walker and Associates, who have been trying to mobilise action over Woodbank. Responses to their approaches to the Council requesting a site meeting to discuss ways forward are reported to have been negative. 21 May 1999: The Clyde Weekly News reports on the building's inclusion in the Buildings at Risk Bulletin. It is reported that the house has suffered a second fire. May 2000: The Clan Heritage Trust has been involved in lengthy discussions with planners and local MSPs regarding the acquisition of the property and its conversion into a Clan Heritage Museum and Headquarters. January 2001: A meeting is held between the Clan Heritage Trust, local planners, Historic Scotland and SCT to discuss the proposals. There is support in principle, though a feasibility study is required. April 2002: CHT reports that it is not continuing to pursue the plans. 12 May 2004: The Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Reporter notes the building's inclusion in the Buildings at Risk Bulletin 2004-2005. January 2006: site visit by SCT and LPA.

October 2008: External inspection reveals that the house is a ruinous shell. A large section of the rear elevation has collapsed and the interior is filled with fire damaged timbers and rubble. Overall the building appears to be in an unstable and unsafe condition.

December 2008: Local planners report that the building has been included in the draft Local Plan as a development opportunity in the hope that investment can be secured for it.

June 2009: Local planners report they have recently re-established contact with a representative of the building owners. The owners would be willing to sell the building, new contact details added to the record.

February 2011: External inspection finds the building remains a largely roofless ruinous shell - only part of the south elevation is still roofed - in much the same condition as on our previous visit.

27 February 2012: External inspection finds no significant change from the previous site visit.

### **Guides to Development**

#### **Conservation Area**

**Planning Authority Contact** Susan McGowan

**PAC Telephone Number** 01389 722600

### **Availability**

**Current Availability** For Sale

**Appointed Agents** Representative of owners: Colin Wilson, Go Diesel Ltd, 161 Whitefield Rd, Glasgow, G51 2SD. 0141 445 5991

**Price** Unknown

**Occupancy** Vacant

**Occupancy Type** N/A

**Present/Formal Uses** Building Uses Information:

Present Use 1: N/A Former Use 1: Hotel/Hostel

Present Use 2: N/A Former Use 2: Residential, BARR original text : Hotel/Hostel to Residential

**Name of Owners** Sawyer Properties

**Type of Ownership** Company

### **Information Services**

**Additional Contacts/Information Source** The Clan Heritage Trust, The Gowk, Gartocharn, Nr Alexandria, West Dunbartonshire G83 8ND

**Bibliography** Dean and Miers (1990), p109; Walker and Sinclair (1992), p51.

### **Online Resources**

**Classification** Country Houses, Mansions and Large Villas

**Original Entry Date** 20-FEB-90

**Date of Last Edit** 03/10/2014

## **1.4 Further Observations**

The garden building referred to in the Statutory Designation (1.2 above) must be the octagonal timber gazebo in the Description. Canmore lists a photograph of the gazebo, however this is not available to view online:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/316756/balloch-old-luss-road-woodbank-house-gazebo>

Canmore locates the gazebo in the wooded area to the south of Woodbank House. Since the gazebo did not form part of the inspection remit, it would be advisable to carry out a further inspection of this part of the grounds in case anything remains of the structure.

The following advice from Historic Environment Scotland should also be borne in mind in the preparation of development proposals for this site:



*"Listing covers both the exterior and the interior. Listing can cover structures not mentioned which are part of the curtilage of the building, such as boundary walls, gates, gatepiers, ancillary buildings etc. The planning authority is responsible for advising on what is covered by the listing including the curtilage of a listed building."*

For information about curtilage see:

[www.historicenvironment.scot](http://www.historicenvironment.scot)

Historic Environment Scotland also advise that since 1 October 2015 they have been able to exclude items from a listing. However, if part of a building is not listed, it will say that it is excluded in the statutory address and in the statement of special interest in the listed building record. The statement will use the word 'excluding' and quote the relevant section of the Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014. Some earlier listed building records may use the word 'excluding', but if the Act is not quoted, the record has not been revised to reflect current legislation. However, there appear to be no such exclusions in the listing for Woodbank House.

## 2 Woodbank House

### 2.1 Introduction

Refer to Structural Engineer's report.

### 2.2 Inspection

No access was possible to the interior of the building shell, owing to its dangerous condition, however, detailed inspection of the structure was made by means of an access platform and inspection from ground level around the perimeter of the house.

### 2.3 East (Main) Elevation

The quality of the original stonework would indicate that the older part of the house was originally faced with a lime render between the dressed stone quoins and margins etc.

The surviving areas of finished store and render appear to have been coated with masonry paint. This is flaking off in many places and should be carefully removed to retrieve the fine detail of the stonework. Any surviving render should be stripped off anyway.



*Lichen and flaking masonry paint on stone pediment.*

The Structural Inspection Report identifies the entire front wallhead as requiring replaced. The problem and the solution will be different along the eaves and along the base of the pediment. The eaves should be cleared of (extensive) vegetable growth, old slates and loose infill material to re-establish a horizontal wallhead. The detailing of this will depend on the shape of any new structure behind, however the wallhead should be rebuilt to the its original profile.



While all of the internal lintels have failed, the external stone lintels are sound and should be retained and protected while temporary works and inner lintel replacement are carried out.

The weakness of the structure in the areas between ground and first floor windows is exacerbated by the failure of a number of internal ingo quoin stones below cill level. These would appear to have been dislodged when the first floor collapsed.



*Above and below - vegetation, loose slates and damaged wallhead stonework - the timber boarding is the old sarking - any wallplate would have been set further back.*







*Above and below - pediment stonework is relatively sound.*



The base of the pediment presents a different case and should be revisited when works progress - if possible, if the stones in this area are in salvageable condition every effort should be made to retain them in-situ as they provide the base to the pediment above.





*Above - sound stone outer lintel and failed concrete inner lintels; open joints in tympanum should be repointed (these show only minor signs of movement)*

*Below - failed stonework to internal ingo at cill level of first floor window.*



## 2.4 South East Elevation

Old photographs show a steep roof to the original house, with high gables. What remains of this wall contains little of architectural value, including patch repairs in a variety of materials, including brick, block and cement mortar.

Nevertheless, there will be many strong reasons for rebuilding this wall in its original position, if not for its full height. These include:

- (a) providing lateral stability to a retained and repaired main elevation;
- (b) maintaining the architectonic link between the two main elements of the the structure, the east and south façades.



*South-east corner and remains of south gable.*



## 2.5 Rear East Elevation

The 1880s extension is described as having slated piends and platform room (presumably leaded). This wall remains substantially intact and provides an architecturally satisfactory transition from the scale and proportions of the older part of the building to the newer, grander south elevation.

For this reason this wall should be retained and repaired to match as closely as possible its original form, including the re-bedding of cope stones (if sound) or their replacement (if not).



*Rear east gable and parapet.*

## 2.6 South Elevation

While this elevation forms the later extension, it remains largely intact and contains examples of imaginative design and detailing, both in relation to the earlier building and in its own right. The co-existence of these two main façades of different ages and styles tells something about the history of the house enhances the character of the building as a whole. The ensemble could form the basis of an imaginative restoration project, with new interventions creating an internal unity behind the two distinctive elevations.

The south elevation contains references to many of the earlier details - such as the raised quoin stones and the simple rectangular window surrounds, while juxtaposing them with an eclectic mix of Jacobean half-dormers, a Palladian pediment and a plainly Victorian 3-storey bay window.



*South elevation.*

While the two central chimneys formed an intentional part of the original design of this elevation, their reinstatement could severely restrict options for the replanning of the building. It should follow that if the lost gable chimneys of the old house are not being replaced, then there should be no insistence on the replacement of the internal chimneys of the later extension. This should free up considerably the possibilities for the interior redesign.

Missing cope and dormer skew stones should be replaced in stone to match existing. Care should be taken detailing external finishes which may be visible above the parapets.

It appears from the detailing and the squared and coursed stonework that wall areas between the projecting dressed stone margins and string courses etc, may have been given a render finish. This should be investigated in greater detail as the detailing render to stone will be a key factor in restoring this elevation to its original appearance.





*Above - structurally unstable central chimneys and vegetation growing off concrete second floor.*

*Below - Eclectic detailing to 1880s façade.*





Particular care should be taken during the removal of defective steel and concrete second floor, on account of its large spans and unusual construction, and the lack of knowledge of how this floor is supported on or gives support to the wall.

There is also a partially concealed steel or iron girder supporting the pediment over the central bay. This appears to be corroded and is likely to need replaced.



*Above - rusted iron beam supporting pediment.*

*Below - Cracks and open joints to be repointed and plain wall areas lime rendered.*





## 2.7 West Elevation

While this wall is less visible there are two reasons why it should be retained and the defective upper section rebuilt:

- (a) providing lateral stability to a retained and repaired main elevation;
- (b) the armorial plaque at second floor level is referenced in the building's listing.

The present positioning of the plaque would also point to the reconstruction of the gable chimney, which would also help give definition to the end of the building. Alternatively there may be scope for relocating the plaque elsewhere on the building, if this were acceptable to the planning authorities.

The gable wall is built of squared and coursed sandstone however it is difficult to tell whether it was originally pointed or rendered.



*Above - vegetation growing off concrete second floor behind west gable.  
Left - open mortar joints to west gable.*

## 2.8 North (Rear) Elevation

This short length of elevation is all that remains of the rear elevations of the building. There is a continuity of detailing from the west elevation which it would be good to retain, both for the structural integrity of the west gable and because of the surviving detail at wallhead level the surviving corner margin detail.

It would appear that there would be little benefit in rebuilding the section of defective masonry identified by the Structural Engineer, unless this formed part of the proposals for the new structure. The interior and the rear of the building is a rubble strewn mess with little left that is salvageable. The return at this gable and at the rear of the north gable of the original house could therefore mark the boundary between restoration and new intervention.



*Surviving rear projection - section on left structurally unstable.*



## 2.9 North East Elevation

Old photographs show a steep roof to the original house, with high gables. This wall should be rebuilt, at least to eaves level:

(a) to provide lateral stability to the main east elevation;

(b) to preserve the character of the east façades.

How the gable is terminated will be a sensitive matter in terms of maintaining the character of the original house but will also depend on the nature of any proposed intervention within the shell of the building.

The gable has projecting quoin stones to front and rear and appears to have been lime rendered as the front elevation.

The first bay of the wall returning along the back of the original house also remains intact and is similarly detailed. This short length of rear elevation should be retained - this return along with that at the west gable of the extension could then be conceived as bookends marking the boundary between the restored shell and new intervention.



*North gable and surviving rear wall of original house.*



## 2.10 Internals

Refer to Structural Inspection Report.



*Views of ruined interior (from north).*



### 3 Woodbank House Stables

#### 3.1 Introduction

Inspection of the structure was made from ground level both inside and outside of the building group.

#### 3.2 North & South Single Storey Blocks

The south block retains more original features which could be retained, or rebuilt following removal of debris and vegetation. The north block contains more in the way of subsequent intervention, including a sandstone-faced brick infill facing the courtyard and a concrete slab ceiling. Neither block retains its roof.

Both north and south blocks could be refurbished to restore the original symmetry of the courtyard, enhanced by its curved entrance walls flanked by matching stone gables.

Structures to the north of the north block are in a ruinous condition and appear to have been utilitarian in nature. Nevertheless it should be remembered that the alteration or demolition of any building on the site will require Listed Building Consent.

#### 3.3 Rear Section

The two storey chimneyed structure is structurally unstable and should be taken down to first floor level. The rear wall appears to be repairable, although one of the internal cast iron columns has sheared.

The design strategy for the courtyard should involve consideration of the retention of the existing building elements at ground level, or at least maintaining the original building line.



*Central entrance with curved wall to courtyard and collapsed gable to north block.*



*2-storey rear section: above - note mature trees growing out of first floor structure;  
below - note shear crack in left-hand column (supporting brick spine wall).*







*South block - overgrown with vegetation.*







*Above - south block from courtyard.*

*Below - within south block - ceiling still intact despite collapsed roof.*







*Above - interior of north block.*

*Below - failed end wall of north block.*







*Rear of rear section - overwhelmed by tree growth - now causing structural damage.*



## **4 Woodbank House Agricultural Building**

### **4.1 Inspection**

The Agricultural Building did not form part of the Conservation Architect's inspection. This report therefore relies entirely on the text and photographs in the Structural Inspection Report as the basis for any observations and recommendations made below.

### **4.2 Observations and Recommendations**

While demolition is recommended in the Structural Inspection Report it should be remembered that the demolition of any building on the site will require Listed Building Consent.

The agricultural building itself appears to have suffered extensive damage but consideration may still be given to its repair. Its relation to the retaining wall may also introduce the possibility of creating a small courtyard which could be exploited as an amenity area.

The retaining wall itself may be of greater interest, as at least one of the holes referred to in the Structural Inspection Report appears to have the proportions of a doorway. If this is an historic structure, such as an ice house, then it should be retained if possible. This should be investigated.