Design Statement:

The Stables
Cromlethill
South Road Oldmeldrum
Inverurie Aberdeenshire
AB51 0AB

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1. Introduction:

This Design Statement has been prepared by Ian Duncan Architects to accompany planning and listed building applications for the alterations of a former stables within the curtilage of Cromlethill, Oldmeldrum.

The Stables are not listed, but are located adjacent to the Category "B" listed house.

2. Appraisal:

Site Description:

Cromlethill is located on the south-west fringe of Oldmeldrum, within the designated conservation area. The site is bounded by South Road to the south-west and by residential property to all remaining aspects. The site consists of the main house, a cluster of three outbuildings to the north-east and a Victorian greenhouse to the east corner. A linear driveway, accessed from South Road, follows the north-west boundary to a parking area at the rear of the house. Historically, this would have been the service access. A formal driveway servicing the front of the house is accessed further along South Road to the south-east, although this access is no longer used by the current owners.

A varied mix of mature, deciduous trees define the boundaries, and setting of Cromlethill to the east, south and west, largely concealing the house from the public realm.

Plan view showing location of Cromlethill.

Aerial view of site.

Category "B" listed house.

Undesignated Stable building.

2. Appraisal:

Cromlethill:

Cromlethill is a two storey house with attics, dating to the early 19th century and constructed of rendered stone with exposed granite margins and string course. The building is characterised by it's beautifully proportioned and typically Georgian main facade.

The double fronted central block sits beneath a piended roof of Scottish slate and is flanked by single storey wings, each with single windows and piended roofs set behind parapets.

The main door is defined by an entrance porch supported on timber Doric columns and the windows are 12 pane timber sash.

The rear elevation is less formal and dominated by later additions; two lean-to passages which run along the rear of the original elevation and a substantial 2 storey extension. The latter is of Italianate style with deep eaves projections and large 4 pane timber sash windows.

Overview of Cromlethill within it's original curtilage c.1972. The kitchen garden to the right was later sub-divided to accommodate two houses.

Principle elevation.

Rear view looking south-west (later addition to left).

Rear elevation looking south with west lean-to addition.

Rear view looking south-west (corner of later addition).

2. Appraisal:

Outbuildings:

Located to the north of the site, are a cluster of stone built and rendered outbuildings which would have originally accommodated a cow byre, coach house, outhouse and stables. While their date of construction is not precisely known, it is likely that a house of Cromlethill's stature would have required these service buildings from its outset.

The outbuildings are modest and typically vernacular in style. The original coach house and cow byre are accommodated within a single story "L"- shaped building fronting the service drive while the original stables are located to the south-east with the small outhouse closing the gap between the two buildings to form a small sheltered courtyard.

Stables:

The stables are on two stories located close to the north of the house, although separation between the two buildings would have been more exaggerated prior to the construction of the rear extension. The building is of rendered stone construction with piended roof to the south-west and gabled with chimney to the north-east.

Four door openings are present at ground level, two of which provide access to the stable at the south-west end of the building and a further two serving the rear quarters, and what was likely to have been the coachman's accommodation. The upper floor is sub-divided into two rooms, each with (now blanked) low level openings. A cantilevered bay dormer to the north-east room is clearly a later addition, possibly intended to bring additional daylight into the room.

The building has been redundant since 1982 and while periodic maintenance has been carried out to keep the structure watertight, the building is generally in disrepair and its upkeep, without function, is considered unsustainable.

Stables with former coach house in foreground and house to right.

South-east doorway.

South-east elevation looking north.

Later dormer addition.

North-west elevation, outhouse centre and rear of coach house right.

South-east elevation looking west.

South-west elevation (stable doors).

Stables interior looking north.

North-west door opening.

2. Appraisal:

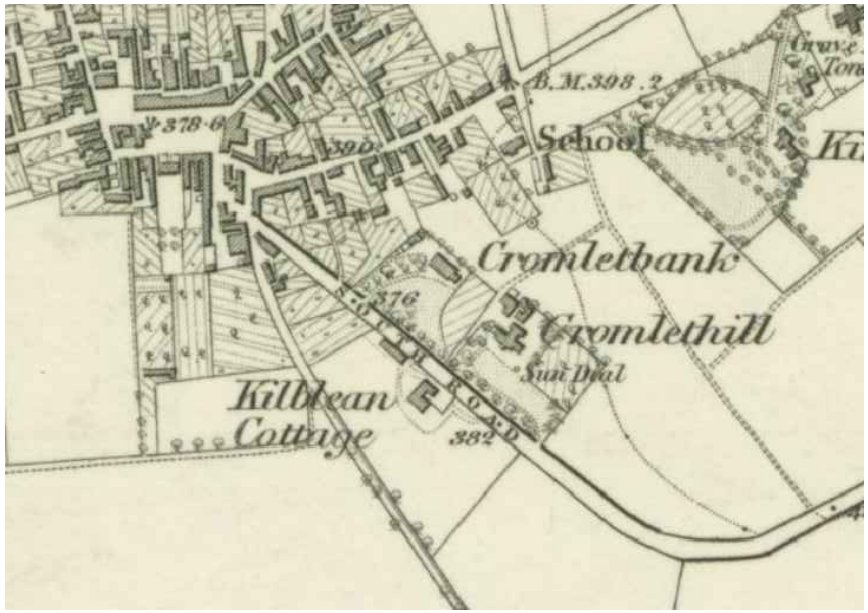
Historic Context:

The first mention of Cromlethill is on the deeds for the sale of the land to the Manson family dated christmas 1803. Manson is named in the deed as "Merchant in Oldmeldrum" at a time when Oldmeldrum was the dominant settlement in the Garioch, with sixteen merchants based in the burgh at the end of the 17th century. The plot, prominently positioned on the newly opened Aberdeen to Oldmeldrum turnpike (now South Road), was generously proportioned and in stark contrast to the tightly packed houses fronting the roads and lanes converging on nearby Market Square. The architectural response was to construct a fashionable Georgian villa, set on an elevated position back from the road and overlooking the open countryside toward Barra Hill.

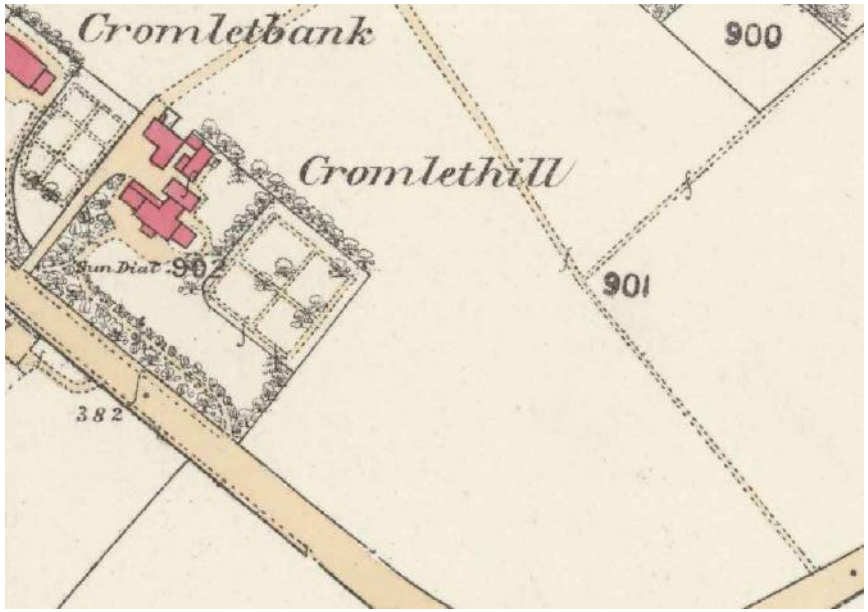
The house was substantially extended to the rear sometime prior to the 1st edition OS map of 1867. This shows the building substantially as it is now with the three service buildings arranged to the rear and with a formal, or kitchen garden to the east.

Cromlethill remained in the Manson family for several generations and is notably the birthplace of Sir Patrick Manson (1844-1922) parasitologist who founded the field of tropical medicine. In 1954 a commemorative plaque was erected on the street boundary wall, inscribed "*Birthplace of Sir Patrick Manson, GC, MG, MD, FRCP, DCS, LLD, FRS, 1844-1922, "The father of tropical medicine" This memorial plaque has been erected by the London School of Tropical Medicine, founded by him in 1899*".

Following a previous change in ownership, the building was again put up for sale in 1952. the particulars from this sale state that "... *there are the usual outhouses, including a 3 room cottage which is meantime let*". This reference to the original coachman's quarters of the stables indicate its continued domestic use well into the 20th century.



OS map of 1867.



OS map of 1867.

From the 1950's the house was occupied by Dr Annie Anderson MBE who ran her GP surgery from the three rooms of the stables. The surgery was closed upon Dr Anderson's retirement in 1982 and it was shortly afterward that the grounds were sub-divided to accommodate two new dwellings, Cromlet Grove and Cromlet Lodge to the west.

Statement of Significance:

Cromlethill has evidential value in its ability to provide information about the past development of the house. It has historic value, both as an example of a 19th century house which has been altered and extended over its lifespan, and also from the value derived from its association with Sir Patrick Mason. There is also aesthetic value in the formal symmetrical design of the principal facade.

There is no communal value attached to the house, it is a private residence and as it is set back from the public realm and obscured by mature trees, it contributes little to the streetscape.

The significance of the stable building is rooted in its association with the heritage asset and its supporting function as a service building, reinforcing the status of the main house.

4. Impact Assesment:

Proposals and Impact:

The proposals seek to bring the disused former stables back into use as a pool house for the enjoyment of the occupiers of Cromlethill. To enable this, it is proposed to remove the internal fabric of the building which is in poor condition and offers little thermal value. The ground floor is also without a damp proof membrane and its complete renewal is therefore considered necessary to bring the building to a habitable standard.

The removal of the first floor to accommodate the floor standing pool will create a single double volume space which is brightly lit through the use of new patent glazed rooflights. The rooflights are intended as an obvious modern intervention with the function of bringing additional daylight into the building. This will be achieved through the removal of the dormer window which itself was a later addition likely designed to improve daylight. While the dormer is an incongruous feature within the curtilage, interrupting the roofline of this simple building, the rooflights reflect those on the house and the Victorian greenhouse to the south-east. The discrete low profile frames will, in addition, reinstate the simple profile of the roof and strengthen the visual hierarchy of these collection of buildings.

The removal of the dormer may offer some evidential value of the existence of an upper floor, but this is also true of the high level wall openings which are to be retained. in this regard the loss of the dormer is considered to have negligible impact to the building.

The lean-to structure to the gable end will be removed. This structure has no architectural or historic value and will improve the form of the building. Its loss is considered to have a beneficial impact to the building.

In all the proposals are contended to enhance, to a minor extent, the setting of the listed house.

Summary of Proposals:

Works to the building comprise:

- The removal of the existing concrete ground floor and installation of an insulated ground floor slab complete with damp proof layer.
- The removal of the internal fabric, including the first floor structure, to create a single, double volume space.
- The removal of the dilapidated lean-to at the rear of the building.
- The removal of the later bay dormer addition on the north-west elevation.
- The installation of internal insulated timber linings, set back from the existing masonry walls.
- The removal and relaying of the existing slates on bitumen felt.
- The installation of low profile patent glazed rooflights to the north-west and south-east elevations.
- The installation of a conservation style rooflight on the south-west elevation.
- The installation of black painted, joiner made, timber frame windows to the high level openings on the north-west and south-east elevations.
- The installation of replacement black painted, joiner made, timber doors on the north-west and south-east elevations.
- The infill of the stable doors on the south-west elevation with black painted timber panels.
- The repair of pointing to the stone gable wall with traditional lime mortar as required.
- The installation of an outdoor boiler in the adjacent outhouse with flue exiting the roof to the rear north-east elevation. Below ground conduit to stables building.
- The installation of a pump and filtration system in the adjacent outhouse to serve the pool. Below ground conduit to stables building.
- The installation of a heat revovery ventilation unit with grille taken through the north-east gable.

Conclusion:

It is considered that the proposals will provide a sustainable use for the building, avoiding further deterioration and securing its long term future. The proposed works will maintain and improve the building's form through the removal of the dormer and lean-to structure, while continuing the evolution of the building and returning it to its intended function as a service building.

5. Pre-Application Enquiry:

A Pre-Application enquiry was submitted to Aberdeenshire Council in April 2021 (ENQ/2021/0677). The following comments were received in September 2021 and our response to each are noted in blue.

- *Comment: "In terms of the design, the principle of what you are trying to do is acceptable. We can accept the removal of the upper floor, there are good reasons for this and it will give a future purpose to the building".*

- *Comment: "The retention of the dormer/garret window would be preferable as it will demonstrate the building's previous use which is important".*

  Response: In an effort to retain the dormer in an safe and accessible position for cleaning and maintenance, consideration was given to retaining part of the existing upper floor as a mezzanine level. However the staircase requirement to access the mezzanine hugely compromises the useable floor area on both levels and is not considered practical in this instance. Given the inaccessibility, exacerbated by the deep cantilevered cill and the justification described in section 4, we would respectively request that further consideration is given to supporting the removal of this element.

- *Comment: "While it is understandable that light into the pool is maximised, the rooflights should be reduced in scale/reduced in number".*

  Response: Details of the patent glazed rooflights are included within this application and illustrate the low profile frames finishing flush with the slate line to reduce the visual impact on the building. Notwithstanding this, each rooflight pane has been reduced in height and width and has been consolidated into a single simple array along each long elevation.

- *Comment: "In terms of the Listed Building Consent, we would require the usual information, profiles of the windows etc".*

  Response: Profiles/elevations are included within this application.

- *Comment: "We would also need to know the extraction system as we wouldn't want any future damage to the building due to the pool".*

  Response: Moisture and ventilation will be controlled by means of a Vaporex 33 - DH33AX dehumidifier combined with an Indux E300 Heat recovery ventilation unit (information provided with this application). The ventilation unit requires an external grille and is thus positioned inconspicuously on the north gable wall.