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Last reviewed: 2012

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

EDINBURGH CASTLE – MILLS MOUNT CART SHED



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EDINBURGH CASTLE – MILLS MOUNT CART SHED

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Mills Mount Cart Shed was built in 1746, beside the late 17th-century Mills Mount Battery, in the immediate aftermath of the battle of Culloden that brought an end to the 1745–46 Jacobite Rising. It was extended and converted into an armoury, ordnance store and ammunition magazine c. 1810, at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, and converted to a barracks by the 1870s, but reduced to its original size in the 1890s as part of the remodelling of the north Ordnance Storehouse into a military hospital. Subsequent uses included as a junior ranks' club, a tea room and a souvenir shop. The present north extension was added in 1992 as part of its conversion into a restaurant, which is its current use.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview

c. 1680: A Storekeeper's House is built beside Mills Mount Battery to house a residence and storage accommodation for one of the garrison's most senior staff officers.

1730s: The Storekeeper's House is demolished as part of a programme to upgrade the Northern Defences.

1746: The Cart Shed, designed by Dugal Campbell (who also designed the nearby Governor's House) is built beside the reconfigured Mills Mount Battery. It is designed to hold 50 carts bringing bread and other supplies from the town to the much enlarged castle garrison following the end of the 1745–46 Jacobite Rising.

c. 1810: With the Napoleonic Wars at their height, the building is extended to the north. The original Cart Shed becomes an armoury and ordnance store, and the extension a fire-proof ammunition magazine. The original open-fronted five-bay shed is given a stone façade.

c. 1850: The original Cart Shed is also made over to an ammunition magazine.

c. 1875: The entire building is converted to soldiers' barracks, housing eight long, narrow barrack rooms. The present fireplaces date from this time.

c. 1897: The northern extension is demolished to create room for the conversion of the north Ordnance Storehouse into a military hospital.

1923: The building is made redundant following the relocation of the garrison to Redford Barracks, in the city's south-west suburbs.

1939–45: The Army returns in strength to the castle for the duration of World War II, and the Cart Shed is used as the Junior Ranks' Club.

1972: The One o' Clock Gun is repositioned on the adjacent Mills Mount Battery from the Half-Moon Battery.

1982: The building is converted into the castle's first souvenir shop.

1989–90: Archaeological excavations beneath the original Cart Shed and its later northern extension discover part of the basement of the later 17th-century Storekeeper's House and the ammunition store of the c. 1810 extension. The excavations precede the creation of the Vehicle Tunnel, which runs beneath the building.

1992: The Cart Shed is once again extended to the north, this time as part of the building's conversion into a café and restaurant for visitors. The architects are the Edinburgh-based practice Robert Matthews, Johnson-Marshall and Partners.

Archaeological Overview

Extensive archaeological excavations were carried out in 1989/90, directed by Peter Yeoman and Stephen Driscoll for Historic Scotland, below and immediately around the Cart Shed, as part of the creation of the Vehicle Tunnel. These succeeded *inter alia* in pushing the history of occupation of the castle rock back into the later Bronze Age (9th century BC).

Most particularly, the excavations found remains of the basement of the late 17th-century Storekeeper's House, including a large fireplace in its east wall. The foundations of the c. 1810 extension were also discovered.

Architectural/Artistic Overview

Mills Mount Cart Shed comprises two very different structures, the original 1746 Cart Shed (modified c. 1810) and the 1992 northern extension, built to help form the castle's new café and restaurant.

Original foundation phase: Dugal Campbell's original Cart Shed was a modest single-storey open-timber roofed structure of five gabled bays, open to the front (ie the south).

Development phase 1: The open-fronted bays were infilled in stone c. 1810 and replaced by two doorways, as part of the building's conversion to an armoury and ordnance store.

Development phase 2: The existing fireplaces were built c. 1875 as part of the building's conversion to soldiers' barracks.

Period of State care: The present rear extension was built to a design by Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners of Edinburgh. It incorporates part of a café/restaurant at the upper level and the western entrance below.

It is remarkable that the Cart Shed, such a basic structure and run up in great haste to meet a temporary need, has survived in recognisable form to the present day.

The 1992 extension did not attempt to replicate the c. 1810 extension (which simply repeated the original building's five-gabled bays). Instead, a gabled structure, orientated east–west, was built, with a large rectangular oriel window facing east and four smaller oriel windows with pedimented dormers facing north (the latter above the simple opening of the Vehicle Tunnel). The playful design, not without its critics when built, succeeds in providing a most remarkable interior

space, whilst at the same time masking the hitherto high blank wall previously visible from Princes Street.

The proximity of the Cart Shed to the Vehicle Tunnel means that the building can readily be serviced from below and behind, without detriment to the enjoyment of visitors to the castle.

Social Overview

Mills Mount Cart Shed serves an important use as the main café and restaurant for visitors, in a prime position overlooking Princes Street and adjacent to the One o'Clock Gun.

The building has also become a major 'after hours' venue, used for all manner of events (eg corporate hospitality, book launches).

Spiritual Overview

Mills Mount Cart Shed has no observable spiritual associations.

Aesthetic Overview

Mills Mount Cart Shed may be a modest single-story structure, but it occupies a prominent position in the castle, beside the main approach road between the Portcullis Gate and Foog's Gate.

The views from within, and beside, the Cart Shed are phenomenal (except when the haar is in), offering splendid panoramas over the north side of the city and out towards the Firth of Forth and Fife.

The view from Princes Street of the north side of the castle includes the 1992 extension. Somewhat controversial at the time, the building has weathered in well and scarcely any mention is made of its intrusive nature today.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

In which year exactly was the first extension built? Investigation of War Office documentation may help to provide a more full picture of the building's use through the 19th century.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

Mills Mount Cart Shed was the only structure built in the castle in the immediate aftermath of the 1745/46 Jacobite Rising, and is a testament to the vital role the castle played in policing Scotland following the battle of Culloden (April 1746).

The building provides castle visitors with a wonderful space within which to eat and drink whilst enjoying magnificent views over Princes Street, the north side of the city and the Firth of Forth.

ADDENDA

Associated Properties

Some other military sheds: **Stirling Castle** (Straw Store, 1810); **Fort George** (1750s)

Keywords

barracks; ammunition store; café/restaurant

Selected Bibliography

Driscoll, S T, and P A Yeoman, *Excavations within Edinburgh Castle in 1988–91* (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph Series No.12, Edinburgh, 1997)