

Short Guide

SCOTTISH TRADITIONAL SHOPFRONTS





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ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

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2nd Edition

Published by Historic Environment Scotland – Scottish Charity No. SC045925

Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh EH9 1SH

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Second Edition March 2017

First published by Historic Scotland April 2010

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Contents

1. Introduction	4	10. Shop interiors	34
2. Historical development of shops	5	10.1 <i>Caring for traditional shops</i>	34
3. Elements of a shopfront	9	10.2 <i>Shop fittings</i>	35
3.1 <i>Cornice</i>	9	10.3 <i>Tiled interiors</i>	36
3.2 <i>Fascia</i>	10	10.4 <i>Floors</i>	36
3.3 <i>Console brackets</i>	10	11. Researching historic shops	38
3.4 <i>Fanlight</i>	11	11.1 <i>Archival sources</i>	38
3.5 <i>Pilaster</i>	11	11.2 <i>Physical evidence</i>	39
3.6 <i>Plinth</i>	12	12. Alterations, maintenance and repairs	40
3.7 <i>Lobby</i>	12	12.1 <i>Recording</i>	40
3.8 <i>Stallriser</i>	13	12.2 <i>Restoring shopfronts</i>	40
4. Identifying key architectural features	14	13. Case studies	42
4.1 <i>Dating of shopfronts</i>	16	13.1 <i>Case Study 1: Conserving a traditional timber shopfront</i>	42
5. Signs and lettering	20	13.2 <i>Case Study 2: Sympathetic approach where limited original fabric survives</i>	44
6. Sun blinds and awnings	22	13.3 <i>Case Study 3: Where works uncover traditional features</i>	45
6.1 <i>Blind mechanisms</i>	23	14. Consents and permissions	46
6.2 <i>Restoring blinds</i>	23	15. Conclusion	48
7. Security	24	16. Contacts	49
7.1 <i>Glazing</i>	24	17. Further reading	50
7.2 <i>Protection of entrances</i>	24	18. HES technical conservation publication series	51
7.3 <i>Modern security measures</i>	25	19. Glossary	52
8. Ventilating shops	26		
9. Exterior finishes	28		
9.1 <i>Painted finishes</i>	28		
9.2 <i>Cladding</i>	30		
9.3 <i>Vitrolite</i>	30		
9.4 <i>Ceramics</i>	31		
9.5 <i>Metals</i>	32		
9.6 <i>Glass</i>	33		

1. Introduction

Shops make a significant contribution to the distinguishing character of town centres. Their architecture creates a timeline of change and innovation over 250 years reflecting fashions, materials and the rise and decline of retail as an economic driver in our towns and cities. They form an important link with the social and cultural history of a place: family businesses, shops and architecture are all integral to the history of a village, town or city.

The primary purpose of a shopfront is to attract the attention of shoppers. Owners developed techniques and adopted fashions to make their business stand out from the crowd. Creative signage, decorative paint finishes, inviting entrances and attractive window displays all influence the potential customer. Conserving the historic features of shops enhances shopping districts and may, in turn, bring economic benefits to an area by encouraging tourism and improving footfall, (Fig. 1). In contrast, shops of poor appearance can detract from an area, may discourage shoppers and ultimately may erode the character of a place.

This Short Guide is intended to give a sound understanding of the main elements of shopfronts and the type of materials used to construct shopfronts of different periods. This knowledge can help to date a shop, understand its pattern of development and, therefore, how to maintain and care for it. Understanding what is there and how to care for it is essential in conserving all traditional buildings.

Shops can be deceptively complex in terms of their history, materials and architecture and the further reading section will help the reader to explore this subject in more detail.



Fig. 1 Traditional shopfronts create interest and variety in towns (St Andrews)

2. Historical development of shops

It was the later 18th century when fixed shops emerged in Scotland as rivals to the long-standing street markets and annual fairs. Although fresh food continued to be sold at street markets, other goods, particularly those which were of a high value, moved into shops. Jewellers and watchmakers, for example, preferred the security of a small luckenbooth rather than an exposed market stall. These early shops were simple adaptations of domestic properties or small locked timber booths but, during the 19th century, shops became more sophisticated in design and much more prevalent.

The design of early shops was heavily influenced by glass technology. During the 18th century, the size of glass was restricted by the available technology and both shops and domestic properties used multiple small panes to create windows (Fig. 2). Seeking to make their shops more visible and the area of glazing larger, some shop owners installed bow windows (Fig. 3). These maximised the amount of display space available within the restrictions of the glazing.



Fig. 2 Early shops typically had a fixed display window created from multiple small panes (Dunkeld)

Fig. 3 Bow shopfront window in Sanquhar

With the invention of plate glass in the 1830s and the lifting of the prohibitive Glass Tax in 1845, larger panes of glass became both readily available and more affordable, giving shop owners the opportunity to have a significantly larger area of glazing. In some areas the use of horizontal panes is evidence of the gradual change towards large plate glass windows. Examples still survive in Edinburgh as well as in smaller Scottish towns (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5).

The change to larger paned windows occurred over a number of years but went hand in hand with the development of other materials, notably cast iron. The rapid expansion of Scottish iron foundries from the mid-19th century offered new design opportunities to create taller, lighter and airier shops. Cast iron was used for utilitarian structural beams and also for decorative columns as well as decorative elements like brattishing. Elaboration increased as confidence grew in the architecture of this building form and by the late 19th century it was widely used and certainly favoured by some architects who promoted its use. In St Andrews, Fife, almost thirty cast iron shops dating to the late 19th century survive and demonstrate the versatility of this material (Fig. 6).

Department stores with fabulous top-lit saloons were found in the larger cities. Wealthy drapers were at the cutting edge of new design, including fire-proof buildings, escalators, cash railways and artificial lighting. They aimed to provide a huge range of goods and services incorporating specialist departments, and also provided customers with additional comforts such as tearooms (Fig. 7).

Fig. 4 Shops in West Nicholson Street, Edinburgh with horizontal window panes

Fig. 5 Shop windows split horizontally to create two smaller panes (Melrose)

Fig. 6 Cast iron was very versatile and could be both decorative and structural (St Andrews)

Fig. 7 Interior of Jenners department store, Edinburgh © RCAHMS



The end of the 19th century and the early 20th century also saw the rise of chain stores, a new breed of retailer. Thomas Lipton, with his grocery chain which originated in Glasgow, was one of the first but others followed including Templeton, Massey, William Low and the Buttercup Dairy. Each developed their own identity and used fashionable materials and designs to promote their particular brand above the growing competition.

At the turn of the 20th century, shops were elegant in design with curved glass, bell-shaped entrances and decorative mosaics bearing the name of the shop owner. Materials were high quality with frequent use of brass, mahogany and stained or etched glass (Fig. 8). Styles were inspired by the Art Nouveau movement and remained decorative, but generally with simpler lines than the later Victorian period which could be excessively elaborate.



Fig. 8 Brass door handle on Edwardian shopfront with Art Nouveau inspired design (Blairgowrie)

Despite the economic fluctuations which prevailed in the inter-war period, the late 1920s and 1930s proved to be one of the most innovative and exciting periods of shop design. The 1925 Paris Exhibition encouraged new approaches which were embraced by many architects. Moderne or Jazz Moderne (later referred to as Art Deco) utilised sleek and simple designs with geometric detailing including zig-zags. The emergence of new materials allowed shops to be dramatically transformed. Shopfitters favoured materials like chrome, etched glass and Vitrolite (a coloured structural glass). Ceramics and polished stone were also fashionable for their sleek looks, including faience (a glazed terracotta) and terrazzo as well as marble cladding. Sunrise motifs, common in 1930s domestic properties, also featured on some shopfronts (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9 Sunrise motif incorporated into the glazing of a 1930s shopfront (Falkirk)

Retailers including drapers, department stores, shoe shops and jewellers adopted 'arcaded' frontages. These elaborate entrances were made possible during the 1920s and 1930s by the increasing availability of electric light. With less reliance on natural light, entrances could be deep and complex with showcase islands. The popularity of this design was short lived, however, due to the high maintenance needed for the large display space. The folly of devoting such a large area of valuable retail selling space to circulation was also recognised and many were either reduced in length or removed altogether. Surviving examples are therefore rare.

Chain stores continued their growth and instead of adapting existing buildings, created their own purpose-built premises. Tailors, including Burton's, Price's Fifty Shilling Tailors and Hepworth's, vied for position in prime sites. Burton's favoured sleek, white faience frequently executed in an Art Deco style. All had distinctive shop designs and trademark tiles and colour schemes to reinforce their brand.

During the post-war period, many towns were redeveloped and core historic areas demolished in favour of modern shopping centres. Increasingly the importance of the car was influential in the design of town centres. Traditional street patterns were lost as streets were widened and the requirement for car parking became paramount. Cheaper materials like concrete, aluminium and plastic prevailed. Combined with the fact that little attention was paid to well established principles of good design, the appearance of town centres gradually deteriorated, the speed of this encouraged by growth in out of town retailing in the late 20th century.

Although good examples of post-war shop design are not numerous, some interesting and high quality examples can be found in Scottish towns (Fig. 10). Good examples of inter-war and post-war shops are increasingly rare, having only recently received better recognition of their historic significance.

It is important that good examples from all periods are valued and conserved; these represent an important part of the architectural history of Scotland. This ties in closely with technological development, the changing economic fortunes of a place, the social history of businesses and retail, and development of technology in architecture. It is this great variety of architecture, materials and history which provides our High Streets with vibrancy and cultural significance.



Fig. 10 Polished stone cladding and metals like bronze were widely used in the design of inter-war and post-war shopfronts, including this former department store in Perth dating from 1960

3. Elements of a shopfront

A shopfront is constructed of a series of architectural elements, each of which has a specific purpose. Small details are important and while apparently individually unimportant, these can make a significant contribution to the look of the shop (Fig. 11). It is therefore important to consider the whole frontage, including the parent building, when examining a retail property.

Fig. 11 Cast iron shopfront, Cromarty, by Saracen Foundry, Glasgow



3.1 Cornice

The cornice marks the division between the shop and the building above, and is aesthetically important in the appearance of the building. It may be moulded, dented or plain and will often have a lead covering to protect it from weathering, and will usually be of stone or timber. The cornice may be absent in flush, inter-war shopfronts (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12 The fascia here is set below a dentilled cornice with cast iron brattishing (Dunkeld)

3.2 Fascia

This is the area below the cornice used to display lettering and is an important element of any shopfront. The size and design will depend on the period of construction; 18th- and early 19th-century shops have narrow fascias, later 19th- and early 20th-century shops often have deeper, more elaborate designs. Later Victorian shops can have curved or S-shaped fascias but these are rarely found. Again, for inter-war shops, there may be no specific fascia if the shopfront is clad in Vitrolite, ceramics or polished stone.

3.3 Console brackets

These are decorative elements which mark the end of one shop and the beginning of another, and are a feature strongly associated with shopfront architecture. Early examples are normally classically inspired in their design with scrolled features (Fig. 13). Console brackets are usually found in pairs but are more numerous on a row of matching shopfronts. They may be absent, particularly on minimalist Art Deco shopfronts, but are frequently used on Victorian and Edwardian frontages. Particularly elaborate examples are on Victorian shopfronts, the most exotic designs being 'bookend' consoles dating to the 1880s and 1890s, which are very deep and elaborately carved (Fig. 14 and Fig. 15). Materials vary but are usually stone or timber.



Fig. 13 Classically inspired console bracket with scrolls and acanthus leaves

Fig. 14 Decorative console bracket (Crieff)

Fig. 15 Bookend consoles are highly decorative and often elaborately carved © L. Lennie



3.4 Fanlight

Traditional shops will usually have a fanlight above the entrance door, typically rectangular or square glazing set into a timber frame (Fig. 16). The glass may be plain or decorative with stained or etched glass, usually as part of a wider scheme for the shopfront. Some fanlights are bottom-hinged to open inwards, allowing ventilation into the shop. The fanlight allows natural light into the shop and also contributes to the aesthetic appearance of the building, so it should not be blocked up or painted over.



Fig. 16 Gothic fanlight above the entrance to a shop dating to the late 18th century (Perth)

3.5 Pilaster

Pilasters are an important feature which frame the shopfront. They are an applied decorative element in the form of a column, shaft and base, which projects slightly from the wall but is generally not structural in nature. Pilasters may be decorated or plain, but vertical fluting or reeding is the most common design. The materials may be timber, stone or cast iron (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17 Pilasters frame the shopfront. Early examples tend to be of a plain design, such as this one in Kelso

3.6 Plinth

The plinth is the base of the pilaster and will usually be of a plain design. The construction material is likely to be the same as the rest of the pilaster. The plinth is in contact with the pavement and so can be subject to deterioration due to impact, road salt and water ingress (Fig. 18). It can be difficult to prevent this damage so use of robust materials which can withstand this location, such as masonry, together with regular maintenance, can help to prevent problems.



Fig. 18 Poor maintenance of the plinth can lead to rot and deterioration

3.7 Lobby

This is the small recessed area at the front of the shop. It may be square, curved or rectangular in plan. The floor can be of plain concrete but is commonly tiled using mosaic or encaustic tiles (Fig. 19). The walls and ceiling may be panelled, tiled or incorporate a glazed showcase for the display of goods. Splayed lobby entrances are often protected by a shop gate of timber or wrought iron. Early to mid-Victorian shopfronts will usually have a square lobby with double storm doors (Fig. 20).

Where alterations have been made to a shopfront, sometimes the lobby has been removed to create a flush frontage. The loss of this element should be resisted as the recessed lobbies create a rhythm in the streetscape and are an important aesthetic aspect of traditional shopfronts.



Fig. 19 A mosaic entrance with a marble step for the Buttercup Dairy Company. The stallriser is also tiled in their trademark green and white tiles (Dunbar)

Fig. 20 Storm doors protect the lobby when the shop is closed but fold back neatly during opening hours (Crieff)

3.8 Stallriser

The stallriser is an important element in the appearance of a shopfront. It is the area between the window sill and the pavement and may be constructed of stone, brick or timber. The finish can be of render, paint or tiles and occasionally decorative ironwork. Late Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts sometimes incorporated prismatic glass blocks to allow natural light into the basement (Fig. 21).

The height of the stallriser will be related to the type of goods on sale. Retailers who sell large goods like furniture will have expansive windows with minimal stallrisers. In contrast, those selling smaller goods or items which people will want to inspect at close range, such as jewellers, fishmongers and butchers, will have a much higher stallriser so that the goods are easier to examine.



Fig. 21 Late Victorian shopfront with prismatic glass stallriser and pavement lights which direct light into the basement area (St Andrews)

4. Identifying key architectural features

The appearance of a shopfront is closely related to its period of construction. This will determine the construction materials used, the style adopted and the key architectural features. In addition to the date of construction, several other factors will have an influence:

Designer

Shops may be designed by an architect, builder or shopfitter. It was the late 19th century before architects took a serious interest in shopfront design, and many good examples designed by local architects working in towns across Scotland date to that period. Shopfitters rose to prominence in the inter-war period and tended to focus primarily on the shop, whereas architects generally gave greater consideration to the parent building. Specialist shopfitters were also chosen by some retailers for their particular expertise: some for example, understood the special requirements of jewellers and could design the shopfront and interior accordingly.

Construction materials

Shopfronts were often built with the latest available materials and even helped in the development and promotion of certain products. While materials like timber and stone transgress all architectural periods, fashionable and short-lived products like Vitrolite (a type of glass cladding) are dictated by the period of construction. Use of materials such as Vitrolite and terrazzo is particularly associated with the innovative inter-war period.

Parent building

The style of the parent building will influence the shop design and may dictate what design can be accommodated within the building. Heavy masonry pillars, for example, may impede the design of a shopfront. In contrast, purpose-built tenements with ground floor shops, and specific retail buildings like department stores, may have a more cohesive design compared to buildings where shops have been fitted in later.

Location

Rural shops may have less adaptation than those in large towns and cities. The lack of competition and the fact that local shoppers are very familiar with the premises may have discouraged investment in elaborate shop construction. Shops in small villages and rural locations may therefore have a more domestic appearance, retaining the original windows and using simple signage to indicate their presence (Fig. 22).

Fig. 22 Shops vary enormously, from the simplest vernacular building to purpose-built premises (Falkland)



4.1 Dating of shopfronts

Dating of shopfronts can be difficult as there may be overlain changes and alterations since the design was first executed. There may therefore be a combination of styles, and completely unaltered, original shopfronts are relatively rare. The following provides a guide to the common features found on shops according to their period of construction.

Georgian shopfronts (late 18th and early 19th century)

These are typified by smaller paned windows, classical detailing and good quality joinery (Fig. 23).

- Fascia is usually very narrow
- Occasionally a bow-fronted arrangement
- Small, domestic sized windows or slightly enlarged windows
- Small panes of glass, sometimes of an early manufacture
- During the 1830s and 1840s glazing size began to increase and wide horizontal panes were used
- Limited display and poor natural light
- Shopfront executed in timber
- Classical detailing including simple pilasters or arched openings



Fig. 23 Georgian shopfronts used multiple paned windows, sometimes set in a bowed frame with a narrow fascia (Edinburgh)

Victorian shops (mid 19th century to c.1900)

Significant change occurred in shop design over this period as new materials became available and shop numbers increased. The growth in premises meant more competition and a need to be noticed. This created the climate for more daring and creative shopfronts (Fig. 24).

- The fascia increased in size and was flat, angled or curved and usually executed in timber
- Cornice, sometimes moulded, may be of timber or stone and may have a lead flashing for protection
- Console brackets were a commonly used feature. Early designs are classically inspired but in the later period tend to be more elaborate
- 'Bookend' console brackets which are deeper and more decorative were found in the 1880s and 1890s
- Plate glass, cheaper and more readily available, began to be used especially in the main town and city centres before being adopted in smaller towns
- Towards the end of the period integral roller blinds were beginning to be incorporated into the design
- Later 19th-century shops adopted splayed entrances which are more open with improved visibility
- Pilasters are a typical feature and may be plain, fluted or with geometric detailing
- Mid 19th-century shops generally have a square entrance with double storm doors
- Increasing use of cast iron for structural and decorative purposes, with its use for decorative pillars particularly favoured in the 1880s and 1890s
- Lobby entrances are often decorated with encaustic and geometric tiles
- Surviving interiors may be tiled or have good quality shelving, counters and purpose-built storage executed in good quality timber



Fig. 24 Late Victorian shopfront with decorative cast iron columns by MacFarlane's Saracen Foundry (Crieff)

Edwardian and early 20th century shops

This period continued with the design principles established in the later 19th century, but with increasing use of decorative materials like stained and curved glass (Fig. 25).

- High quality joinery using exotic hardwoods such as mahogany and teak
- High quality brass fittings
- Windows frequently tall with large expanses of plate glass and may feature a decorative clerestory
- Stained or coloured glass or small square paned windows to the clerestory
- Art Nouveau influences evident with flowing plant forms
- Entrances are deeper and occasionally bell-shaped with curved glazing
- Lobby floor of mosaic, sometimes incorporating the name of the retailer or their business
- Interior fixtures, where they survive, are good quality counters, shelving and specialist shop fittings often executed in mahogany or similar hardwood

Fig. 25 Edwardian shopfront with curved glazing, mosaic entrance and decorative clerestory (Forfar)



Inter-war shops

The 1920s and 1930s was a period of great transformation in shop design, from traditional to sleek and minimalist. This was made possible through the availability of new materials like Vitrolite, steel and chrome.

- Art Deco inspired designs using a variety of new materials and styles
- Console brackets, if used, tend to be simple and stylised
- Smooth polished materials like Vitrolite, polished granite and marble and faience are favoured
- Use of geometric detailing including margin panes, stepped fascias and other detailing (Fig. 26)
- Materials for window sashes include bronze and chrome
- Glazing can be decorative or plain with use of curved glazing for entrances and etched glass to the clerestory

- Interiors may include window screens
- Arcaded entrances were popular with drapers, shoe retailers, jewellers and department stores
- Lobby floors are usually marble or terrazzo, often with geometric designs



Fig. 26 Inter-war shopfront with curved glazing, polished stone and geometric detailing (Forfar)

Post-war shops

The shops in the immediate post-war period tended to follow the styles established in the 1930s and there was little innovation. By the 1960s there were occasionally novel designs with unusual 'fish tank' windows, and although the majority of shopfronts were unremarkable, some good examples survive (Fig. 27).

- Plain and simple designs in 1950s
- Use of materials like terrazzo, faience, marble and Vitrolite
- Windows sometimes angled or of a square 'fish tank' design
- Door often offset rather than central
- Occasionally unconventional shopfront designs found in 1960s
- 1970s onwards there is increasing use of modern materials including plastics and aluminium



Fig. 27 Post-war shopfront with angled window, bronze frames and marble cladding (Aberlour)

5. Signs and lettering

Effective advertising is one of the most important aspects of successful retailing. Shop signs should respect the style of the shopfront, the wider townscape and the retailer. Signage which is creative and attractive can be highly successful. In contrast, signs which are inappropriate in size, style or material can seriously detract from the overall appearance and although perceived to be more visible, may not necessarily enhance the footfall to a business.

The history of retail signage has its origins in large pictorial signboards, and three dimensional signs which prevailed in the 18th century catered for the fact that many people were illiterate. The banning of these signboards in the later 18th century by the burgh authorities resulted in the gradual development of the fascia as a place to promote the retail business. Pictorial hanging signs are now really only found on public houses, and three dimensional signs prevailed with certain retailers such as barbers (red and white pole) and pharmacists (mortar and pestle) (Fig. 28 and Fig. 29).



Fig. 28 Three dimensional signs are occasionally used, such as this mortar and pestle sign favoured by pharmacies

Fig. 29 Padlock sign for an ironmongers shop (Anstruther)

Hand-painted lettering was the method used for the early shopfronts, with local signwriters developing their art in lettering. During the later 19th century, the elaboration of painted lettering increased with the use of gilding, shadow lettering and experimentation with different fonts (Fig. 30). Individual signwriters developed their own styles and characteristics which, within certain localities, would have been recognisable as the hand of that particular tradesman. Earlier signage and lettering may be uncovered during renovation works. These can give clues to the history of the shop and should always be recorded and retained if found.



Fig. 30 Early signage and lettering uncovered during renovation works (Perth) © L. Lennie

While hand-painted lettering was widely used, alternative methods of lettering began to emerge. V-cut lettering was used for high class retail establishments. The letters were deeply cut into a timber board, gilded and then the entire board covered with a protective sheet of glass. Elegant and decorative, such signage is enduring and strongly associated with late Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts.

Applied letters were a stylish alternative to signwriting. Cut from timber or cast in metal, they could be made in a variety of fonts and sizes (Fig. 31). During the inter-war period, simple sans-serif letters were fashionable and looked elegant on the minimalist Art Deco facades. Neon-lit letters were also popular for the reflective surfaces.



Fig. 31 Applied letters look attractive and were available in a variety of materials and fonts to suit different shop fascias

In addition to fascia lettering, shops may use hanging signs. These are particularly useful when a shop has a limited or absent fascia, such as in domestic style shops with little adaptation for retail trade. Traditional hanging signs, when of an appropriate design, can enhance the streetscape (Fig. 32).

It is also essential that all signs are well maintained. This is important so that the shop has a good, well kept appearance, but is also for safety. Loose and poorly maintained letters, fascia boards and hanging signs can pose a danger to pedestrians. Regular checking and maintenance should be undertaken.



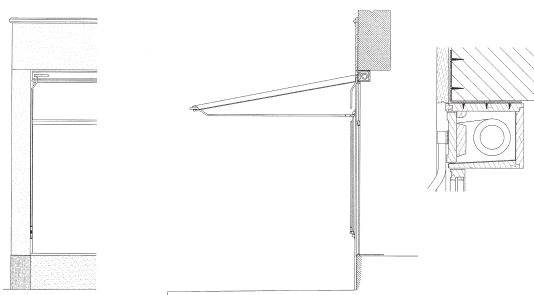
Fig. 32 Hanging signs can add interest to a street

6. Sun blinds and awnings

A sun blind or traditional awning offers protection from the sun for shop goods and also provides shoppers with a degree of protection from inclement weather. They are designed to be pulled out only when needed and then retracted if not required (Fig. 33). They are not essential for all shops but may be required where the shopfront faces the sun as this can quickly fade goods, such as clothing, displayed in the window, and will also heat up the interior of the shop.

Traditional blinds were widely used from the mid 19th century and remained popular into the 1950s (Fig. 34). They are less necessary now with modern glazing products and air-conditioned shops. However, many owners of traditional shopfronts continue to use them and see them as a practical asset to their shop.

Blind boxes may be an integral part of the design of the shopfront or may have been retro-fitted to the frontage. Integral blind boxes allow the blinds to be neatly accommodated, folding away out of sight when not in use. A retro-fitted arrangement, in contrast, can sometimes be clumsy, particularly if located above the cornice. However, if they are well considered, they can sit satisfactorily on shopfronts. In some cases, fitting individual blinds within the window opening may be the best solution (Fig. 35).



33



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35

Fig. 33 Drawings showing the arrangements for blinds

Fig. 34 High Street, Perth in 1935 showing the extensive use of traditional awnings ©St Andrews University Library. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk Reference: 000-000-152-771-R

Fig. 35 Retro-fitted blind box situated below the cornice with a crank arm blind arrangement

6.1 Blind mechanisms

The blind cloth is fixed to a sprung roller set within a timber blind box. When closed, the rolled up blind is hidden from view by the blind rail, usually made of timber but sometimes with a bronze or chrome finish. A small fixed eyelet allows the blind to be pulled in and out using a boat hook, and metal arms permit the blind to extend. These may be of a zig-zag design or, more typically, have crank arms (Fig. 36 and Fig. 37). Storm chains anchored to the shopfront help to prevent excessive movement in strong winds (Fig. 38).



Fig. 36 1930s integral awning with chrome zig-zag arms (Hawick)

6.2 Restoring blinds

Where a blind box exists, it is usually possible to restore the blind to working use by renovating the mechanism and fitting a new blind cloth. Awnings were originally made of canvas or sail cloth, but modern fabrics, if non reflective, have an appearance similar to traditional fabrics. They may also be significantly lighter than traditional materials and therefore easier to use.

Timber boxes fitted above the cornice are vulnerable to the weather and can deteriorate if not covered with a lead capping. It is therefore important to consider this protection when undertaking renovations.

Blinds should be checked regularly and maintained to ensure that they are in good working order. This includes ensuring the awnings are not damaged, that the roller mechanism is working effectively and that any protective lead is preventing water ingress. Specialist blind fitters can undertake repairs if required.



Fig. 37 Zig-zag arm mechanism in retracted position



Fig. 38 Storm chains help to prevent the blinds from moving too much when it is windy

7. Security

7.1 Glazing

Security has always been a concern to shop owners, both in terms of protecting the goods inside and the glazing. It was as important to the shop owners of the past as it is today and, as a result, there are several different methods used to protect a shopfront:

- External removal shutters
- Rising or lifting shutters
- Roller shutters

Early shops had heavy wooden shutters which protected the windows and which were stored out of sight during opening hours. These were heavy and cumbersome, although effective in protecting the glazing. In an effort to provide a simpler approach integral roller shutters were developed. These had timber slats rather than the metal roller shutters used today. Where there was a basement below the shop, it was possible to install rising shutters. These were of a pull-up design operated by a weighted pulley system similar to that used for sash and case windows (Fig. 39). Surviving examples of lifting shutters are of considerable interest but are relatively rare.



Fig. 39 Shops in Cockburn Street, Edinburgh are fitted with rising shutters. The blue shop on the left has the shutters in the closed position © L. Lennie

7.2 Protection of entrances

Entrances were traditionally protected with double storm doors, (Fig. 40). These 'shop-hung' doors have special hinges which allow the doors to fold neatly back to appear like panelling in the lobby during opening hours. In the later Victorian and early Edwardian periods, shop entrances became splayed and open which encouraged the use of shop gates, (Fig. 41). Usually made of timber or wrought iron, they are lifted into the shop during opening hours and are a deterrent to prevent abuse of the lobby when the shop is closed. Alternative types include metal concertina gates which are pulled across the entrance. These were particularly favoured for butchers' shops.



Fig. 40 Double storm doors protect the shop lobby when closed © L. Lennie

Fig. 41 Timber shop gate used to protect recessed entrance

7.3 Modern security measures

Where original shop gates and shutters survive they should be retained and conserved. Many will be able to be brought back into full working order and are a practical asset to a shop. However, modern gates in an appropriate design may be used where the original gates have been lost. Similarly, it is possible to design removable, lightweight shutters which can protect the glazing (Fig. 42). However, care should be taken to install these without damage to historic fabric. If existing fixings survive, these should be utilised where possible. It is important that the shutters can be easily removed, otherwise they tend to be left on the shopfront during opening hours (Fig. 43). This prevents windows from being cleaned and presents a poor image to shoppers if premises appear to be closed.

Modern, externally mounted roller shutters are detrimental to historic fabric and generally incompatible with historic shopfronts and should not be installed (Fig. 44). Consents may be required for shutters and advice should be sought from the local planning authority prior to undertaking any work.



Fig. 42 Bespoke and lightweight modern shutters which protect the shopfront were installed in Bo'ness as part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative © L. Lennie

Fig. 43 Externally mounted mesh shutters detract from shopfronts and make it difficult to carry out regular maintenance © L. Lennie

Fig. 44 Modern externally mounted roller shutters are visually intrusive © L. Lennie



8. Ventilating shops

Ventilation was important, particularly for fresh food shops which required a cool interior to prevent goods from deteriorating. There were a number of methods used:

- Ventilator at the window head
- Ventilation grilles in the stallriser
- Hopper fanlight above the door which opens inwards
- Lifting sash windows (normally reserved for butchers and fishmongers)

Ventilators are narrow features at the window head which allow a flow of air through what is otherwise a fixed window. These may be of a plain design or can be decorative and made of timber or metal. Some ventilators are of a fixed style, but others are 'hit and miss' with a sliding mechanism which allows the flow of air to be controlled (Fig. 45).

Ventilators work in conjunction with vent grilles in the stallriser. Air flows through these vents, and as it rises and warms it is expelled through the ventilators at the window head. This constant circulation draws fresh air into the shop (Fig. 46).



Fig. 45 Decorative window head ventilator

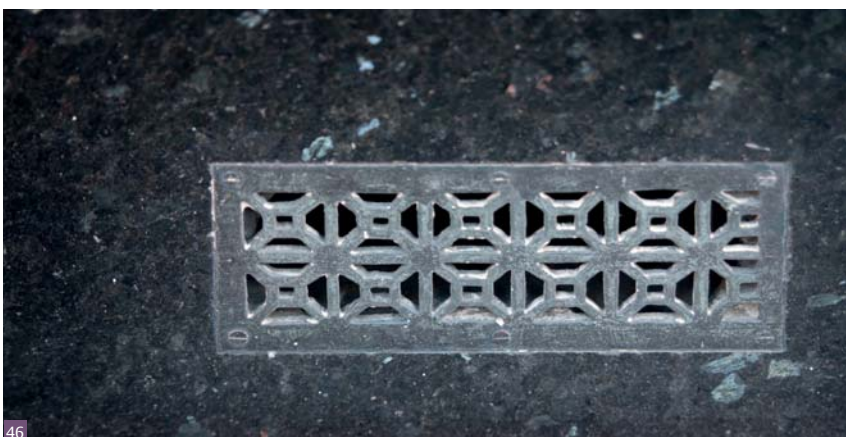


Fig. 46 Vents in stallrisers can be decorative and may therefore contribute to the aesthetic appearance of the shopfront

Greater amounts of air can be introduced using hopper opening fanlights. The hinged fanlight can be opened to different degrees using a ratchet system, thereby controlling the air flow. Some butchers and fishmongers installed a totally open fanlight or stallriser, protected only by a wrought iron grille. Examples occasionally survive in both former and existing butchers' shops (Fig. 47).

Lifting sash windows are now rare. Used from the early 19th century until the 1950s, the lower window opened up behind the fixed sash above. It allowed goods to be sold through the window, similar to a market stall, and also made setting out and cleaning of the display area much easier (Fig. 48).

These features are not only practical, but may also have a decorative element which contributes to the appearance of the shopfront. If they are no longer in working use, they should still be retained and, where possible, considered in conjunction with other methods of heating and ventilation. Such traditional passive features contrast with modern mechanical ventilation and air conditioning systems, and should be considered favourable in terms of energy efficiency.



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48

Fig. 47 Former butcher's shop with cast iron fretwork to the stallriser to allow ventilation (Crieff)

Fig. 48 1930s fishmongers with lifting sash (Ayr)

9. Exterior finishes

Part of the interest of shopfronts is the great variety of finishes used to decorate the frontages. These liven shopping streets, creating texture and colour. The different types of finish include:

- Painted woodwork
- Varnished woodwork
- Painted render or stucco
- Ceramic materials including tiles, faience and terrazzo
- Cladding including marble, granite or Vitrolite
- Metals including cast iron, chrome and bronze

9.1 Painted finishes

Paint protects timber, makes shopfronts more visible and also helps to delineate one shop from another. While Georgian shops were plainly painted with the limited colours available, the fashion for decorative finishes gained popularity during the Victorian period. Graining and marbling techniques were used to create distinctive and decorative frontages which were indicative of a high status. Expensive to produce, these techniques gradually fell out of fashion by the early 20th century.

Woodwork was generally painted, although varnish was occasionally used for high quality hardwoods like teak, walnut and mahogany. Such timbers have a beautiful appearance and were much prized around the turn of the 20th century for high status shopfronts. In contrast, modern softwoods and composite timbers are generally unsuitable for a stained finish and would instead be painted. Where a shopfront has an original varnished scheme, this can be maintained to retain the appearance of the frontage.

The choice of colour is often related to the branding of the retailer. However, this should not be chosen at the expense of the appearance of the shopfront. Bright, modern colours rarely look good on a traditional shopfront and white can also look stark and inappropriate. A carefully chosen combination of colours can be effective in helping to pick out architectural detailing and a well painted shopfront which is clean and regularly maintained helps to attract customers (Fig. 49 and Fig. 50). A 'heritage' palette may guide a retailer towards suitable colours. These are colours which are specifically chosen to be in keeping with historic buildings and which may, in some cases, be inspired by colour schemes used in the past (Fig. 51). Paint finishes protect the underlying timber and require to be inspected at least once a year to check for deterioration.



Fig. 49 A well considered and carefully executed paint scheme is an asset to a retail business



Fig. 50 Use of contrasting colours can help to highlight architectural detail



Fig. 51 Darker colours may look better on traditional shopfronts, although contrasting colours can help to highlight architectural detailing (Edinburgh)

9.2 Cladding

The use of marble, granite and Vitrolite cladding rose to prominence in the inter-war period. Sleek and smooth, these fitted with the styles promoted under the Art Deco Movement and were also easy to maintain. Green marble was particularly favoured in the 1930s and is found on many shopfronts of this period.

9.3 Vitrolite

Vitrolite was described by its manufacturer, Pilkingtons as 'a Rolled Opal Glass' with a 'hard brilliant, fire-finished surface'. It was available in many colours including black, green, white, pink and blue, and its depth of colour and reflective qualities made it an ideal product for re-facing shopfronts (Fig. 52). Applied straight to the masonry or to timber framing, it was usually fixed using mastic.

Vitrolite is easy to maintain and can be kept clean by simply washing down with water but abrasive tools should be avoided as these could scratch the surface. Although strong, Vitrolite is a glass product and is therefore vulnerable to damage. In particular, lower positioned panels may be damaged by impact or where fixings such as signage are placed (Fig. 53). Regular inspection of panels should be undertaken to ensure they remain secure, that the mastic has not deteriorated and that any cracked panels are not compromised.

Vitrolite has not been manufactured since the 1960s and no similar product is available. It should therefore be regarded as a precious material worth conserving. The only option to find a suitable replacement would be from salvage sources, but sourcing a good match may prove difficult as there were many different sizes and thicknesses of this product. Careful repositioning of surviving Vitrolite panels may also help to retain the aesthetic appearance of the shopfront.

There are few tradesmen experienced in working with Vitrolite. If work is to be carried out it would be advisable to speak with a number of different tradesmen, depending on the work required, who have appropriate skills. These may include specialist marble contractors experienced in cladding and glass conservators who may be able to advise on small repairs.

Fig. 52 Black Vitrolite was very popular for 1930s shopfronts but good examples such as this fishmongers in Ayr are now rare

Fig. 53 Damage can occur to Vitrolite if care is not taken with fixings such as signage



9.4 Ceramics

Ceramic materials were chosen for shopfronts because they were easy to keep clean and aesthetically were very pleasing. Small glazed ceramic tiles are often found on stallrisers, sometimes brick-shaped, but it is rare in Scotland to find an entirely tiled historic shopfront (Fig. 54).

Faience and terrazzo were popular in the 1930s due to their clean lines and pale colours. These materials can become damaged and cracked and require to be repaired by a specialist experienced in the repair of ceramics.

Modern ceramic tiles do not have the same appearance as historic tiles and are generally unsuitable for traditional shopfronts. Care should also be taken when using modern tiles to repair historic tile schemes, as these will rarely have the same size, depth and glaze as historic tiles. Specialist ceramics firms can successfully copy historic tiles and ensure that a suitable match is achieved (Fig. 55). Repairs to historic tile schemes should always be carried out by a tiler who has experience of this type of work.

Ceramics have a glazed finish which ensures that they have a long life. They require little maintenance other than gentle washing down with water and a soft, lint-free cloth. Regular inspections should be undertaken to ensure that the grouting is intact and tiles have not become loose. Sharp or abrasive tools should not be used as these can damage the glaze.

If conservation work is required for a historic tile scheme, whether internal or external, the advice of a tile conservator should be sought before undertaking any work.

Fig. 54 Tiled stallrisers are common, particularly with brick-shaped tiles

Fig. 55 Tile samples can be provided by a specialist tile manufacturers to ensure a good match for an existing historic tile scheme



9.5 Metals

A variety of different metals types are found on shopfronts. The most common are cast iron, brass chrome and bronze; the latter two being particularly associated with 1930s shopfronts.

Cast iron is used both structurally and decoratively on shopfronts, from heavy supporting columns to brattishing (Fig. 56). A suitable paint finish is required to slow down corrosion by preventing moisture and air coming into contact with the metal. Repainting will be needed every five years. Further advice on the care of cast iron is available in *Historic Environment Scotland Short Guide 4: Maintenance and Repair Techniques for Traditional Cast Iron*.

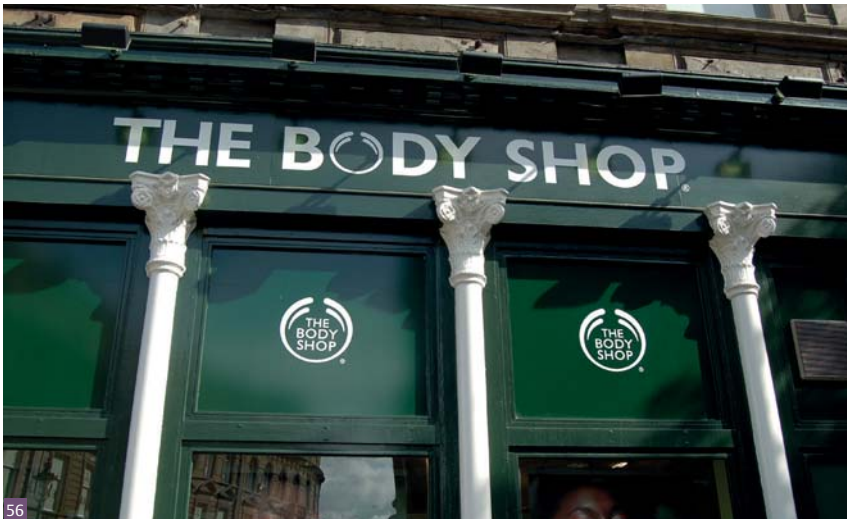


Fig. 56 Cast iron columns require regular painting to ensure that the metal does not corrode

Specialist metals such as chrome and bronze can become damaged and lose their appearance (Fig. 57). Bronze is a copper alloy which is fairly resistant to corrosion if maintained but damage can occur through over-cleaning and application of inappropriate materials. Use of paint can be particularly damaging and should be avoided. Gentle cleaning with a lint-free cloth, distilled water and pH neutral soap is appropriate to keep bronze and chrome in good condition and also gives an opportunity to check for damage. A microcrystalline wax should be applied approximately every two years to protect the bronze. The advice of a conservator experienced in metal conservation should be sought for the care of specialist metals. Without regular maintenance these can become dull and corroded.



Fig. 57 Bronze window frames in an Art Deco style for a 1930s Co-operative building in Stonehaven

9.6 Glass

The glazing of shopfronts is a very important aspect of the look of the shop and the architectural history. As a fragile material it can be easily damaged and, as a result, historic glass may have been replaced.

Early glass is important and should be retained and protected as far as possible. Historic glass is identified by striations and imperfections in the glass. There may also be specialist products such as curved glass and etched glazing (Fig. 58). Stained glass is also found on some shopfronts, particularly those dating to the early 20th century (Fig. 59).

The frames holding the glass are important for the longevity of the glazing and should be maintained to ensure they do not deteriorate. Timber frames can rot if not painted regularly and this can lead to the loss of glazing. The lead of stained glass windows may also deteriorate over time.

Glass is easy to keep clean with water and a soft cloth. The advice of a glass conservator should be sought for specialist glazing such as stained glass.



Fig. 58 Curved glazing is an important aesthetic element of some shopfronts



Fig. 59 Stained glass is often associated with Edwardian shops (St Andrews)

10. Shop interiors

Original shop interiors dating to the 19th and early 20th century are rare. Those that do survive are a significant asset to a retail business as they are generally of a very high standard and have an authenticity which cannot be created. Traditional interiors give a clue to previous occupiers and businesses and represent a strong link with the past. Each one will be unique.

Historic retail interiors may include:

- Counters, shelving and drawer units
- Window screens
- Specialist items associated with particular trades such as jewellers showcases
- Original ironmongery
- Decorative plasterwork
- Tiled or timber lined walls

10.1 Caring for shop interiors

Considerable care should be taken when installing any modern fittings to a traditional shop interior as these can damage tiles and other historic interiors (Fig. 60). Appropriate advice should be sought before undertaking alterations to original features. For listed buildings, the interior as well as the exterior of the building is protected, and the local planning authority should be consulted before making any alterations.



Fig. 60 Modern fittings such as electrics should not be installed where historic fabric can be damaged

Due to the rarity of early shop interiors, every effort should be made to retain and conserve them. While they may require some creative use of space to meet modern retail purposes, they undoubtedly represent an asset to a shop. Even apparently insignificant elements like traditional ironmongery and window screens can make an important contribution and should be retained. Where stained finishes survive, these should be retained and painting or stripping of finishes should not be undertaken. The careful use of cleaning products is advisable to avoid damaging surfaces. As interiors may make use of specialist materials, it is advisable to seek a suitably qualified specialist who has experience of working with that product.

10.2 Shop fittings

Long counters, fitted shelving with drawer units and glass fronted cabinets were installed in grocers, jewellers, tobacconists, confectioners, drapers and pharmacists. Often beautifully crafted in exotic hardwood, these fittings were purpose-built to cater for the needs of the particular business. Names of different products and medicines are sometimes incorporated into the drawers (Fig. 61 and Fig. 62).

Other elements include glazed window screens which are fitted behind the window display area, creating a barrier between the display area and the shop but still allowing natural light through (Fig. 62).

Fig. 61 Traditional pharmacy fittings may include names on drawer units (Edinburgh)

Fig. 62 Late 19th-century interior in Aberfeldy with glazed window screens, decorative plasterwork and barley twist columns



10.3 Tiled interiors

Towards the end of the 19th century, the ready availability of mass produced tiles enabled shop owners to have hygienic and decorative interiors. Popular with butchers, fishmongers and grocers, tiles allowed a fresh look to interiors which impressed shoppers and allowed easy maintenance. Whilst independent retailers sought either specially commissioned murals or 'off the peg' panels and plaques, chain stores usually had their own tile schemes which were used in all of their shops to reinforce their corporate identity (Fig. 63).

Historic tile schemes make for an aesthetically attractive and durable interior which has a strong link with the history and origins of the shop. Often they are specific to that shop, and so every effort should be made to retain original tiled interiors (Fig. 64).

Fig. 63 Chain stores commissioned tiles to promote their brand such as this tile depicting shamrocks and an 'L' for Lipton in Arbroath

Fig. 64 Decorative tiled counters are occasionally found in butchers' shops and are an attractive asset to a shop interior



10.4 Floors

Retailers need practical and hard-wearing surfaces which are easy to clean. A favoured finish for Victorian and Edwardian entrance floors is tiles, typically mosaic or geometric tiles although encaustic tiles are also found (Fig. 65 and Fig. 66). Marble is occasionally used for entrances but it is a relatively soft stone and does wear over time.

Terrazzo became fashionable in the 1930s and is a particularly hard-wearing surface. A composite ceramic material, it can be created in a variety of colours and designs. It is very easy to clean and, when polished and well maintained it has a beautiful finish (Fig. 67).



65

Fig. 65 Geometric and encaustic (inlaid) tiles are associated with late Victorian shopfronts

Fig. 66 Mosaic and tiled floors are practical and hardwearing (Crieff)

Fig. 67 A terrazzo floor has a beautiful finish when well maintained (Stromness)



66



67

11. Researching historic shops

Understanding a shopfront is the key to ensuring its successful conservation. Before undertaking any alterations or repairs, research should be undertaken so that the significance of the building can be fully understood. Understanding the original design, changes over time and the construction materials will then help to inform the most appropriate course of action.

11.1 Archival sources

There are many documentary sources which can assist in piecing together the history of a shop, its previous occupiers and perhaps the original design. These include:

- Historic photographs and postcards: photographs provide a visual record at a single point in time which can provide information about retailers and can indicate how a shop has changed over time.
- Dean of Guild Court drawings: these are early planning drawings dating back to the 19th century, and earlier in some locations. They are an excellent source of information, where they survive, as they can provide detailed information on the original design, the architect and the materials specified (Fig. 68).
- Company archives: the business records of retailers offer important insights into the history of a company including their shop premises.
- Paintings and drawings: street scenes help to provide general background information and can be particularly helpful for early shops. They may be less accurate than other visual media and so care should be taken in their use.
- Trades directories, advertisements and letterheads: these documents are very useful as they may include drawings of the shopfront, confirm addresses and provide information on the retail business (Fig. 69).
- Newspapers: local and national newspaper articles about retail businesses can be useful, particularly in relation to the opening of larger stores.

Local libraries and archives are the ideal starting point for documentary research and staff can guide researchers through the available material. Increasingly there are resources online, including trades directories, photographs and drawings, making these documents very accessible.



Fig. 68 Dean of Guild Court drawing for Woods in Perth by Edinburgh shopfitters Adam Currie in 1902
© Perth & Kinross Council Archives
(DGP 1902-32)

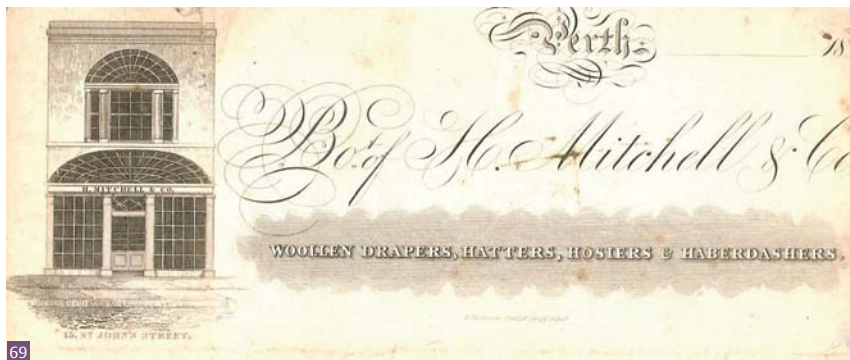


Fig. 69 Business letterheads can give clues about the history of a shop
© Perth Museums & Art Gallery

11.2 Physical evidence

The building itself can provide a significant amount of information. In the first instance it is advisable to undertake a detailed survey of a building, recording the materials, repairs and any alterations made to the original design.

A shop may retain names of a former owner or their business type. For example, a name may be incorporated into a mosaic entrance floor. This can then help with identifying suitable leads in documentary research.

Where there are shops of a similar type, these may give clues about missing architectural elements or the original design intention. This is particularly helpful in pairs or rows of shops where reinstatement of features is being considered.

12. Alterations, maintenance and repairs

Well considered alterations can help to reinstate a shop's architectural features, making it an asset to a business. Even minor improvements such as sensitive signage or reinstatement of original window proportions can transform the appearance of a shopfront.

Shops can change hands frequently and new occupiers will often want to re-brand a shop to suit their own retail requirements and particular image. This will generally involve, as a minimum, new signage and possibly a new colour scheme. It is important that any work is carefully considered to ensure that traditional fabric is not compromised, whilst at the same time meeting the needs of the retailer.

The logo of a retailer should be adapted or applied in such a way that it fits sensitively to the existing architectural design and scale. It is particularly important that chain stores do not impose their brand onto historic buildings in an inappropriate way. A well chosen approach allows a national retailer to retain their image whilst not compromising the historic character of a shopfront or detracting from the local identity of a town.

Paint colours must also be carefully chosen. Some retailers may have bright colours associated with their brand image. These can still be represented in a shopfront but must be appropriate so that they do not dominate the building or wider townscape. Changing of the paint colour may require consent and it is advisable to contact the Local Authority who may have relevant policies or guidelines.

12.1 Recording

Before undertaking any alterations or repairs, a survey of the shopfront should be undertaken. The level of intervention will dictate the type of survey needed. Where significant alterations or repairs are planned, a professional survey should be instructed.

Works to a shopfront may uncover earlier fabric including signs, tiles and fixtures. It is important to allow for the potential discovery of such elements and ensure that these are suitably recorded and, where appropriate, conserved at an early stage in the design of the proposed alterations.

12.2 Restoring shopfronts

It is often possible to restore shopfronts on the basis of sound research and physical evidence. There may be grants available and it is advisable to contact the local authority or City Heritage Trust (where appropriate) to see whether funding is an option. Repairing of good quality existing fabric should be the first option. Restoration of missing features, where supported by good evidence, may be eligible for grant funding.

Where little or no historic fabric survives, installing a new shopfront may be the most appropriate approach. The design of a new shopfront should respect the parent building and the wider townscape. Pastiche designs should generally be avoided, although the principles of traditional designs should be considered. Good, modern design has an important place in the High Street and good quality materials are the key to successful modern shopfronts.

13. Case studies

13.1 Case Study 1: Conserving a traditional timber shopfront

Bow-fronted shops are rare in Scotland, with only a few surviving. Deuchar on South Street, Perth dates to the late 18th century and is one of Scotland's oldest shopfronts (Fig. 70). It was suffering from rot to the timber frame and sill. An experienced joiner removed only the minimal amount of timber required and carefully replaced the rotten areas (Fig. 71 and Fig. 72). The shop was then repainted in black with white hand-painted lettering significantly enhancing its appearance (Fig. 73).

This project is an example of minimal intervention and conservative repair which is a cost-effective approach to the care of shopfronts.

Fig. 70 Shop before conservation and repair





Fig. 71 Part of sill replaced in matching timber



Fig. 72 Small area of fascia replaced



Fig. 73 The shopfront after repairs and repainting

13.2 Case Study 2: Sympathetic approach where limited original fabric survives

This is a shopfront on the ground floor of an 1830s Listed Category B building in Stirling. The original shopfront had been lost, with the exception of the Victorian fascia which has an interesting horseshoe detail (Fig. 74 and Fig. 75). This fascia was retained and a new shopfront in a sympathetic style designed in timber with granite stallriser. The original fascia was then used for the lettering and the shopfront was repainted in an appropriate colour (Fig. 76).

Street entrances, especially in urban districts, were often protected by a storm door, giving access to a small internal draught lobby (Fig. 76). While partially for security, they also provide an effective form of draught control and reduce heat loss during entry and exit. Storm doors were typically double-leaved with flat profiles, giving good protection against the elements, especially driving rain. The storm doors sometimes folded back neatly into the recess to appear as panelling when opened.



Fig. 74 Modernised shopfront in Stirling with aluminium windows, modern tiled stallriser and poorly proportioned signage, but the Victorian fascia above survives © L. Lennie

Fig. 75 Detail of Victorian console bracket with dentilled detail and horseshoe pattern © L. Lennie

Fig. 76 Shopfront following sensitive redesign including retention of Victorian fascia. The work was funded by Stirling City Heritage Trust © L. Lennie



13.3 Case Study 3: Where works uncover traditional features

This shopfront in Perth was due to be renovated by a new occupier. Once work began, late 19th-century lettering was discovered below later modern additions (Fig. 77 and Fig. 78). Dean of Guild Court drawings helped to establish the original layout of the shopfront (Fig 79). The proposed scheme was reconsidered to take into account the original proportions of the shopfront, and the lettering was carefully recorded and preserved beneath a new fascia. The shop was repainted in a strong but appropriate colour (Fig. 80).

This case study demonstrates the need to be flexible when approaching shopfront renovation works as earlier fabric may be uncovered. This should be recorded and conserved as part of the history of the building.

Fig. 77 The shopfront before work began retained original features such as console brackets, but had a number of modern interventions including repositioning of the doorway

Fig. 78 Removal of modern interventions has revealed the original shop signage and proportions of this Victorian shopfront in Perth © L. Lennie

Fig. 79 Dean of Guild Court drawing for the building dated 1902 © Perth & Kinross Council Archives (DGP 1902-62b)

Fig. 80 The shopfront at 27 George Street, Perth once all works completed



14. Consents and permissions

If you are planning to alter, extend or demolish a historic building, you may need to apply for consent. Consent is the mechanism by which planning authorities ensure that any changes to listed buildings and Conservation Areas are appropriate and sympathetic to their character.

A variety of consents may be required. Planning authorities will give advice on the requirement for listed building consent, advertisement consent and other permissions which will be needed. Therefore, we suggest contacting the local authority as early as possible to determine what is required.

If you are unsure whether your building is listed or in a Conservation Area you should contact the local planning authority or Historic Environment Scotland. Below are the types of consent you may need to apply for:

Listed Building Consent

You must get Listed Building Consent (LBC) from your planning authority if you wish to demolish (all or part), alter or extend a listed building. LBC may be required whether the building is listed Category A, B or C, and is also required for internal alterations.

However, as there are certain types of alterations/repairs which might not require LBC (such as if you're replacing old materials for new on a 'like-for-like' basis), we suggest that you speak to your planning authority before making any repairs. They are the determining authority for these applications and they will be able to advise whether the proposed works require LBC. For certain types of LBC applications the planning authority is also required to consult Historic Environment Scotland.

Conservation Area Consent

You must get Conservation Area Consent (CAC) from your planning authority if you wish to demolish an unlisted building in a Conservation Area.

Planning Permission

Alterations and additions to historic shops may require Planning Permission. In a Conservation Area there may be additional protection measures to preserve the character of an area, including the alteration of windows and external doors. The local planning authority will be able to advise what works will require Planning Permission.

Advertising Regulations

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1984 cover many different types of outdoor signs including fascia signs and hanging signs. Signs on shops therefore fall within these regulations and it may be necessary to apply for consent to erect a sign.

Local Authorities may also designate areas of Special Control of Advertising to protect the amenity of historic areas. The control over advertisements in these areas will be stricter. Signs attached to a listed building may also require Listed Building Consent.

The local planning authority will be able to provide advice on the consents needed for signs, including whether illumination is permitted.

Appointing professionals, consultants and contractors

When undertaking alterations, it is advisable to employ the services of a conservation professional such as a conservation accredited architect.

When appointing a contractor, they should have previous knowledge of the materials involved in addition to having a sound knowledge of basic conservation principles. They should be able to demonstrate that they have the knowledge and experience to carry out the repairs and alterations in a sensitive way. Due to the different materials present, it may be necessary to identify more than one expert to deal with the conservation of a traditional shopfront.

15. Conclusion

Traditional shopfronts are an important part of townscapes, whether in city centres, towns or villages. Their variety of materials, styles and designs tells a story of Scottish retailers, shop designers and ever-changing architectural fashions.

Shops can seem very simple but often have many layers of history, resulting in a complexity of materials and styles. Understanding how a shop originated and the changes which have occurred in its lifetime helps to develop a strategy for conserving and caring for it.

This Short Guide has highlighted the different features, materials and elements which may be present in shops of different ages. Care should be taken to ensure that these elements are appropriately repaired and conserved so that the individual character of our retail townscapes is retained and enhanced for all to enjoy.

16. Contacts

Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland (AHSS)

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E: nationaloffice@ahss.org.uk
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Building Conservation

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E: info@buildingconservation.com
W: www.buildingconservation.com

Dictionary of Scottish Architects

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W: www.scottisharchitects.org.uk

Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)

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The Scottish Ironwork Foundation

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W: www.scran.ac.uk

The Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society

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W: tilesoc.org.uk

Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, EH9 1SH
Tel: 0131 668 8600
W: www.historicenvironment.scot

Historic Environment Scotland Conservation

(technical advice)
Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, EH9 1SH
T: 0131 668 8600
E: technicalresearch@hes.scot
W: www.engineshed.org

Historic Environment Scotland Heritage Management

(planning/listed building matters)
Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, EH9 1SH
Tel: 0131 668 8600
E: hmenquiries@hes.scot
W: www.historicenvironment.scot

Historic Environment Scotland Grants

(funding options)
Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, EH9 1SH
Tel: 0131 668 8600
E: grants@hes.scot
W: www.historicenvironment.scot

17. Further reading

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18. Historic Environment Scotland technical conservation publication series

The following publications are all free to download and are available from the publications page on our website: www.historicenvironment.scot

Technical Papers

Our Technical Papers series disseminates the results of research carried out or commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland, mostly related to improving energy efficiency in traditional buildings. This series covers topics such as thermal performance of traditional windows, U-values and traditional buildings, keeping warm in a cool house, and slim-profile double-glazing.

Refurbishment Case Studies

This series details practical applications concerning the repair and upgrade of traditional structures to improve thermal performance. The Refurbishment Case Studies are projects sponsored by Historic Environment Scotland and the results are part of the evidence base that informs our technical guidance. This series covers measures such as upgrades to windows, walls and roof spaces in a range of traditional building types such as tenements, cottages and public buildings.

INFORM Guides

Our INFORM Guides provide short introductions to a range of topics relating to traditional skills and materials, building defects and the conservation and repair of traditional buildings. This series covers topics such as ventilation in traditional houses, maintaining sash and case windows, domestic chimneys and flues, damp causes and solutions improving energy efficiency in traditional buildings, and biological growth on masonry.

Short Guides

Our Short Guides are more in-depth guides, aimed at practitioners and professionals, but may also be of interest to contractors, homeowners and students. The series provides advice on a range of topics relating to traditional buildings and skills.

19. Glossary

- Arcaded entrance:** A deep entrance into a shop popular in the 1920s and particularly 1930s. The entrance may be complex in shape with zig-zags, in-and-out detailing and elaborate plans including a showcase island. Simpler versions may be T-shaped or straight. Popular with drapers and shoe retailers but fell out of favour in the post-war period when the front of a shop was regarded as valuable retail space and now a rarely seen feature.
- Blinds:** See also *Dutch blind*. Originally canvas awnings on metal framing used to protect goods on display in windows from sunlight, possibly as early as the late 18th century. Also offered pedestrians and shoppers some protection from the weather.
- Blind box:** A box, usually of timber, which hosts the blind mechanism. May be integral to the design of the shop (from mid 19th century) or may be an addition, usually above the cornice, which has been retro-fitted.
- Blind rail:** The timber or metal panel which fronts a blind box and hides the awning and mechanisms when the blind is in a closed position. It is fitted with an eyelet to allow the blind to be pulled out into the open position.
- Brattishing:** Cast iron cresting of a decorative nature which is set on top of a parapet or cornice. Fashionable for late 19th-century shopfronts.
- Bronze:** A metal alloy (tin and copper) popular in the early 20th century until the inter-war period. It was widely used for window sashes to complement other materials like mahogany and marble.
- Bungalow shops:** Single storey row of shops which are lock-up shops with no residential accommodation. Typically have a flat roof, sometimes hidden behind a parapet, and the shop units are often quite small.
- Chrome:** Chrome plating involves electroplating a thin layer of chromium onto a metal surface to provide a shiny, silver surface. The trade name 'Staybrite' may be used. Fashionable for 1930s shopfronts.
- Clerestory:** Upper part of a shop window which may be decorated with stained or painted glass or opaque glass. May also be used for display of names or products.
- Column:** Vertical, structural elements which are usually circular in plan and of plain or decorated design. They typically carry an entablature (fascia) or lintel.
- Colonnette:** A slender column often found at the corner of a shop lobby as a supporting column, usually in timber or cast iron but also in brass.
- Console bracket:** Used to mark the termination of one shop and beginning of another. Have their origins as classical brackets or corbels using an ogee curve which terminates in a volute at top and bottom. They are located usually at the end of the fascia situated below the architrave or cornice. May be highly decorative using classical inspiration but many are of a stylised design. Bookend consoles developed at the end of the 19th century are deep, highly decorative and much larger than normal console brackets.
- Cornice:** In classical architectural terms this is the uppermost division of the entablature. For shops it is generally the top section of the fascia and marks a division between the shop and the building above. It may be decorated or plain. Usually of timber or stone, it may have a protective layer of lead for weather-proofing.

Dentil:	A small block which is part of a horizontal series situated below the cornice often in late 19th-century shopfronts. May also be used to decorate other features such as door pediments.
Department store:	A larger shop, sometimes purpose-built, sometimes converted buildings with several different retail departments within one building. Often originated as a drapers but then extended into other lines, notably women's and children's wear.
Double-fronted:	Shop with a central or off-centre doorway with two windows flanking.
Dutch blind:	(Continental blind). Of curved design, these are fixed to the shopfront and tend to obscure architectural detailing. Often of modern plastic materials and may be used to advertise through lettering on the front of the blind.
Encaustic tiles:	Victorian tiles which are inlaid with clay to produce a decorative pattern and found in shop entrance lobbies. Mass produced in the later 19th century by Minton & Co. and became a fashionable flooring for many Victorian buildings.
Faience:	A type of terracotta which comes in a variety of glazes and sizes. It may be structural or used as cladding. Sometimes used in the construction of shopfronts and popular as a facing for buildings in the 1930s.
Fanlight:	A glazed light situated above a door, often square or rectangular in shape. Glass may be plain or decorative and may have glazing bars of varying designs. Late 18th-century shops tend to have narrow rectangular fanlights with classical detailing. Fanlights became larger during the later 19th century as shops became taller. Hopper type fanlights are bottom-hinged and open inwards to allow ventilation to the shop, especially in provision stores.
Fascia:	This originated as the classical 'frieze' but was simplified for shopfront use, originally being narrow but during the 19th century deepened with the increasing use of it for lettering. May also be angled or curved and usually constructed of timber.
Lifting sash:	See also <i>Sash</i> . Found in shops which may have been a butcher's or fishmonger's in the past. The sash window slides upwards behind the fixed upper sash to allow the display to be arranged, for ice to be removed and for sales to be made to the street. Upper window may be decorated with stained glass and the window may be quite wide. Popular until 1930s but now rarely found.
Lobby:	Small recessed area at front of shop leading to shop door, sometimes referred to as a porch, either square, curved or bell-shaped in plan. Sometimes protected by a shop gate. Floor can be plain concrete, tiled, terrazzo or marble. The walls may be panelled, tiled or incorporate a showcase. The ceiling (soffit) may be panelled, plastered or mirrored.
Mosaic:	Decorative ceramic made up of small tiles (tesserae) laid in mortar to form a decorative pattern. Patent or simulated mosaics were created to reduce the high costs of laying mosaic but still achieved a similar appearance. Fashionable in Edwardian period for the lobby floor.
Pilaster:	A column, shaft and base which projects slightly from the wall but is generally not structural in nature. Used for shopfront design particularly from the 1850s onwards. May be decorated or plain, often with fluting or reeding.
Prismatic glass:	Glass blocks with horizontal, triangular ribbed detail which refract light so that it is directed into a room in a predictable way. Developed by the Luxfer Prism Company, it was used in buildings before the wide availability of electricity.

- Sash:** The frame of the shop window which accommodates the glazing. May be timber, bronze or chrome. Metal sashes typically have a timber core.
- Screens (window):** Devices used to create a division between the window display and shop. Often made of timber or glass and found in Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war shops. Changes in fashion mean that these rarely survive.
- Shopfitter:** A specialised type of tradesman, sometimes having originally been a joiner, who fits both shop frontages and shop interiors. Well known firms include Pollards (London), Harris and Sheldon (Birmingham) and Archibald McEwan (Glasgow).
- Shutters:** A security feature for the protection of goods and of valuable glass. Wooden boards were available from the mid-18th century. They were lifted in and out of the shop and placed into special grooves or slots in the windows and fixed with an iron shutter bar. Roller shutters were introduced in the early 19th century but wooden lifting shutters remained popular into the early 20th century. Metal roller shutters are now popular with shopkeepers as these may be perceived as offering a higher degree of security but can be visually intrusive, particularly for traditional shopfronts.
- Single-fronted:** A shop with a single display window and door to one side, either with a plain lobby panel or may incorporate a showcase.
- Stall plate:** (Or sill plate). An area on the sill of the display window which is curved or wide enough to take lettering, usually of the shop owner's name or their products. Often engraved in brass and popular with certain types of retailer such as chemists.
- Stallriser:** The vertical area between the sill and ground level usually in brick, stone or timber. May be plain or decorated with tiles, ironwork or stone cladding.
- Terrazzo:** A cementitious material which incorporates marble chips, ground to achieve a smooth surface. Designed to imitate marble but considerably cheaper and can incorporate designs easily. Very hardwearing and suitable for areas with heavy foot traffic.
- Ventilator:** A horizontal band at the window head which is used to allow ventilation into a shop. May be of cast iron and decorative or plain. 'Hit and miss' ventilators can be slid across to vary the level of ventilation. Popular for fresh food shops which required higher levels of ventilation.
- Vitrolite:** A type of rolled opal structural glass popular in the 1930s as a facing for buildings, and particularly shopfronts, to give a sleek, shiny finish. Found in many different colours including black, cream, yellow and pink. Originally made by Pilkingtons but no longer manufactured and no similar product is available.



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