

COUNTRY ACCOMODATION CONVERTED TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS

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Introduction:

Pitcairnie House, 2 miles from Auchtermuchty in Fife dates from the early 16th Century. It may have been the original home of the Leslies of Pitcairnie. The tower was probably built around 1550 by George Leslie, 3rd Earl of Rothes. The strength of the ground floor vaulting and the thickness of the walls, together with the position of the house on an elevated ridge protected on two sides by the loch and on the other two sides by the burn and a glen to form a moat, suggest it was created on a defensive role.

The present owners, Bill and Muriel McLay, acquired Pitcairnie in 1983. They decided to develop the semi-derelict Victorian Wing to provide four guest apartments, with the Lodge House providing a fifth apartment. The development also includes a heated swimming pool and sauna.

Benefits arising from the conversion were as follows: Firstly, it would assure the long-term preservation of the Victorian Wing of the building. Secondly, it would bring in additional revenue to the existing business. This would also mean additional tourist business for the local community and the district in general. The project would provide both short term employment for the local building industry, and also long term employment for existing estate employees and suppliers.

The Conversion Approach:

SAC Building Design Services were employed by the owner Bill McLay to provide drawings and obtain permissions for the upgrade.

Throughout the design process, it was of paramount importance that any alterations proposed did not detract in any way from the traditional character and appearance of the Class A, Listed Building. This resulted in a design incorporating as few new window openings as possible. Furthermore, the stone balustrading to the verandah had to be an exact copy of the balustrading found elsewhere on the building and the pitch of the swimming pool roof was designed so that it remained below parapet level. The Local Authority Planning Department also insisted that all materials used were an exact match to that of the existing building.

Strict parameters were set as follows:

- The main front elevation was to remain largely unaltered.
- As few new window openings as possible were to be created.
- The drawing room was to remain unaltered.
- The vaulted ceilings in certain rooms were to be preserved.
- The roof over the pantry area was to be sensitively replaced.

Due to the nature of the project, the conversion of an

existing building into four independent units, one of the biggest considerations during the design process was the provision of means of escape to a place of safety from any point of the building in the event of fire. This requirement alone tied the location of the access stair to the front verandah, and necessitated the alterations to three window openings which provide a means of escape. Fire safety also dictated the enclosure of stairwells to act as 'protected zones' giving occupants one-hour fire protection.

These requirements of Building Control taxed the creative powers of the design team.

The Design Process and Outcome:

A project of this quality deserves a sensitive approach, with the owners and SAC working together to attain the highest design standards. For example, to accommodate the pool, the design proposed to partially reinstate a previous building, demolished circa 1971. Access to the swimming pool is gained from either the internal lobby area, the gable door, or from an existing opening on the main elevation. The roof line was purposely designed to remain below the parapet level of the front elevation, thereby retaining the main elevation as existing.

The redevelopment of the Victorian Wing has been a fascinating challenging design project which provided great satisfaction. Careful and thoughtful design work resulted in the preparation of a scheme which met the requirements of all parties concerned.

Pitcairnie presents a rare opportunity to stay in an elegant mansion house beautifully set in its own rural parklands. The Victorian Wing of the house has been tastefully restored to provide four impressive guest apartments. These can be booked separately, but can also be taken as a whole unit, offering a total of three double and eight twin bedrooms accommodating 14 persons. The Lodge House provided a fifth apartment.

The current number of self-catering beds available is 21 which includes the 'Lodge'. Pitcairnie is expanding to add two more units by converting other detached buildings. The largest being the stables, also a listed building, which will sleep 8 from 4 bedrooms. The second is the Coach House which will sleep 6 in 3 bedrooms, both will have ensuite facilities, and available from July 2001.

The accommodation is available for booking throughout the year. Owners, Bill and Muriel McLay are always ready to provide a warm welcome for guests. Tel. 01337 827418. Visit the web site on www.pitcairnie.co.uk.

Aknowledgements:

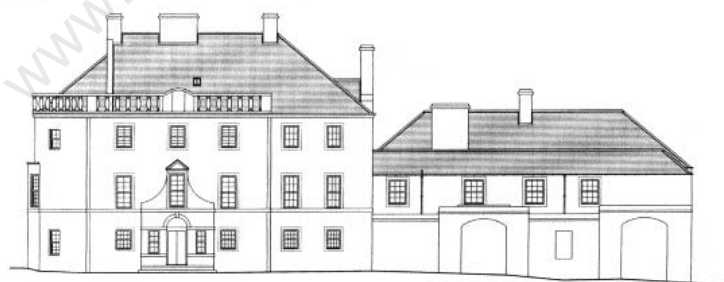
Bill and Muriel McLay for their assistance and also Kevin Murray, formerly CRB, for a previous article published on Pitcairnie.



Gable end view prior to conversion, Victorian Wing on right.

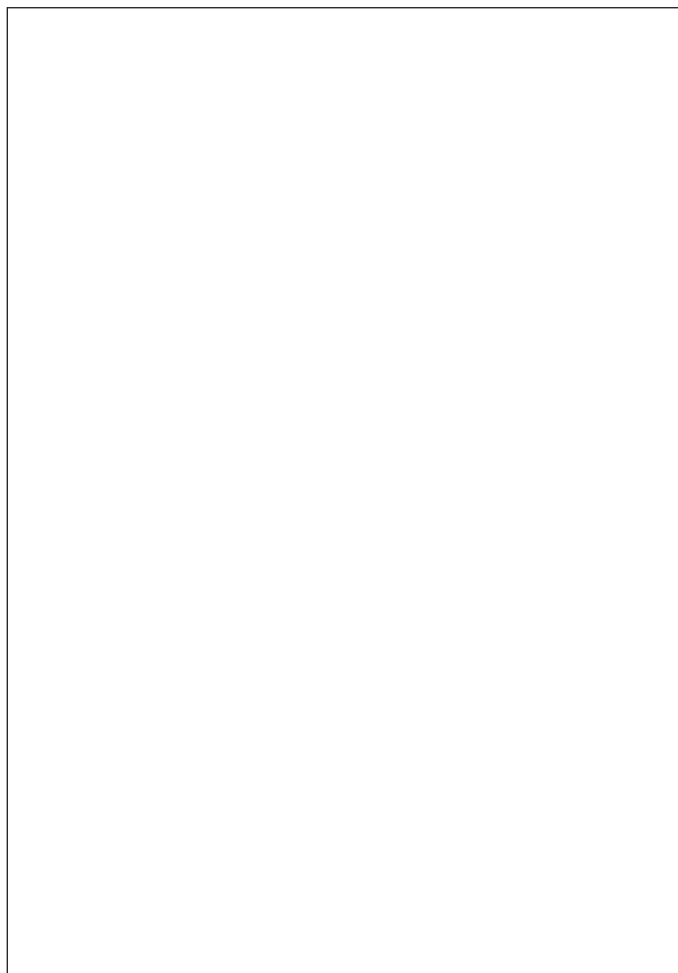


Gable end elevation of converted Victorian Wing (right) and new swimming pool (left) with main house behind.



Pitcalie House prior to conversion. Victorian Wing on right of drawing, 'set back' from main house.

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