96-104 ACADEMY STREET, INVERNESS

Design Statement

MAKAR Ltd
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Dores Road
Torbreck
Inverness, IV2 6DJ

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1.0 Site

1.1 Academy Street is one of the oldest streets in Inverness with its history stretching back over 500 years. It began its development along the line of the defensive ditch or fosse which surrounded the medieval burgh. A range of commercial activities developed along the northern boundary and with the opening of Royal Inverness Academy in 1792, the street officially became known as Academy Street.

1.2 The long development of the street over time is evident in the street's townscape – it is not uniform in height, scale or building design. It is diverse. The southern end of the street is currently more urban in scale with 2 main clusters of Victorian 3/4 storey buildings around the Academy Street / Union Street and Academy Street / Queensgate junctions. The northern end of the street is more domestic in scale with the exception of No. 96-104, Ballantyne House, the Ramada Encore hotel and the recently completed development of flats at 92-94 Academy Street.

2.0 Building Description

2.1 No. 96-104 is a three storey stone building at the north east end of Academy Street with a two storey projection at the rear with cast iron columns and timber floors, originally constructed for the Rose Street Foundry and Engineering Company (re-named Resistance Welders in 1945 and re-named again – to AI Welders in the 1960s). The building formed the company's offices, with the foundry and engineering workshops to the rear, the last remaining of which were demolished in the 1980s when the current two storey car-park was built in Rose Street.

2.2 The external walls of the two storey element to the north east and south east are featureless having previously had buildings against them which have since been demolished. The first floor of the two storey element to the rear is primarily top lit by roof lights.

2.2 The industrial heritage of the building is captured in four mosaics of foundry men at work which are set within the giant round head arches on the front (south west) and north west elevations of the building.

2.3 The company has played an important part in the economic and social history of Inverness. It produced ironwork for a wide range of structures – buildings and bridges; and machines and implements. In the 20th century it developed a specialism in the manufacture of welding machines. During the Second World War it played a central role in the manufacture of PLUTO (Pipeline Under the Ocean), which carried fuel under the English Channel to Normandy after the D-Day landings, by welding together the lengths of pipeline that were wound round a drum for transport and deployment.

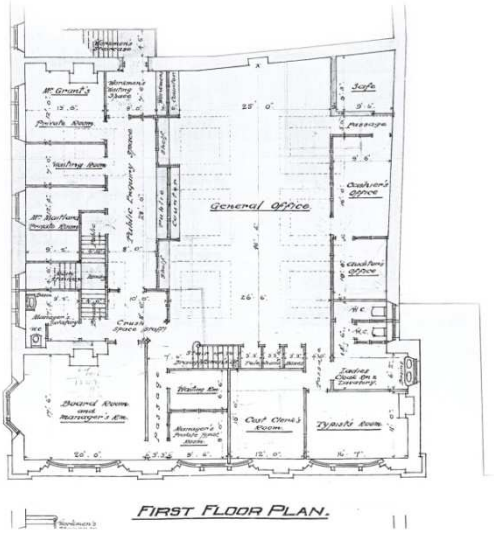
2.4 The company vacated the building in 1988.

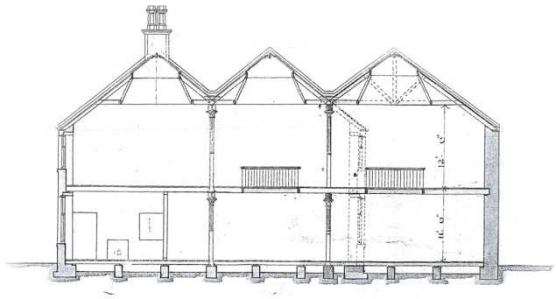
2.5 The building is currently owned by Cairngorm Taverns, a part of the Cairngorm Brewery, Aviemore and is currently vacant.

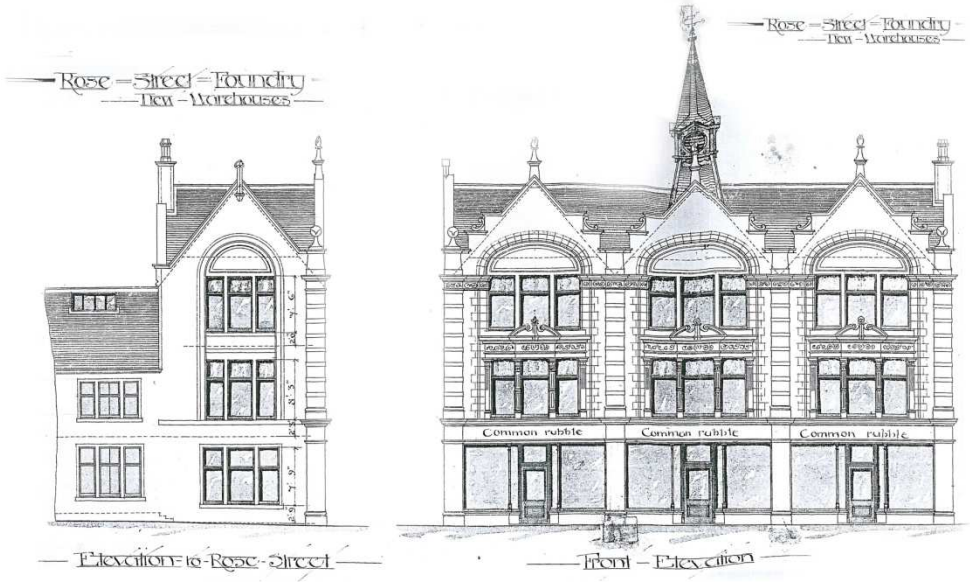
3.0 Significance

3.1 The building has a rich industrial and social history. It formed the offices of the Rose Street Foundry and latterly AI Welders. Key dates in the company's history are listed below:

March 1872	The Company was formed under the name of the Northern Agricultural Implement and Foundry Company for the purpose of purchasing and taking over the business, works, stock and plant of the Inverness Iron Company.
May 1882	Opening of Greig Street Bridge, built by the Company.
Feb 1885	Purchase of properties 18-22 Rose Street.
July 1906	Plans submitted to Harbour Trustees for the erection of a Slipway at Thornbush for the building and repair of steamships and drifters.

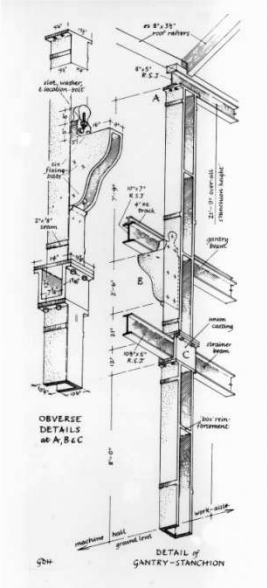






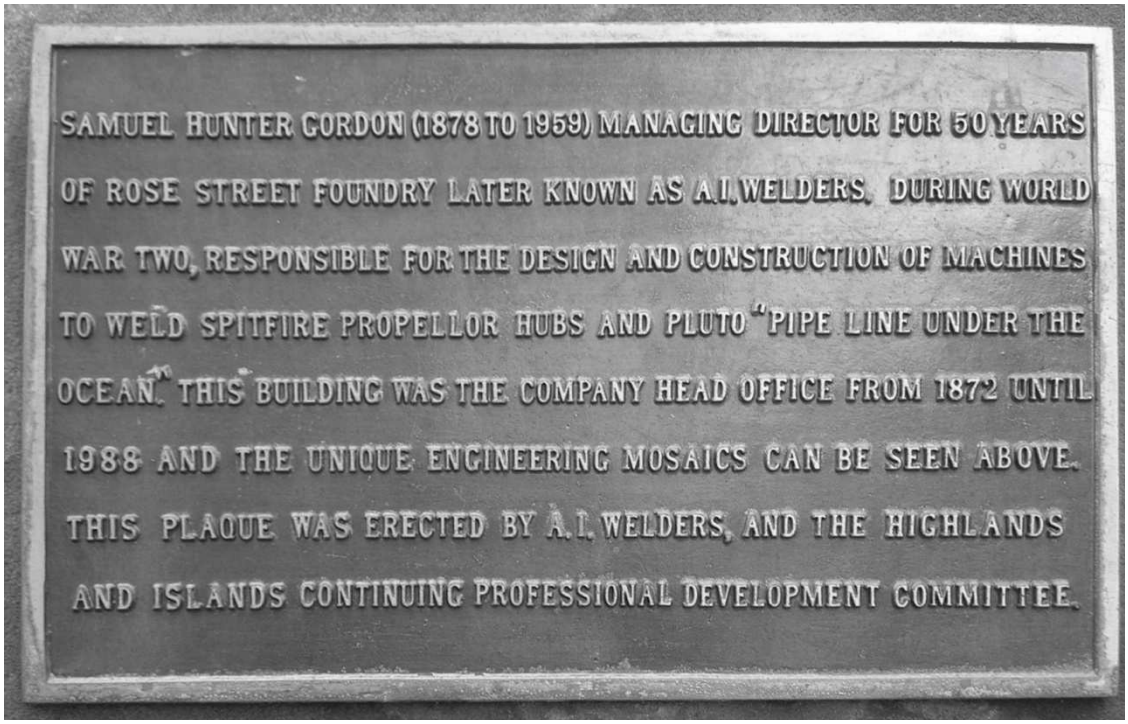
Aug 1912	Company opens motor garage and repair shop in Academy Street.

Mar 1914	Orders received for 1300 rafts for the Admiralty and Battleship Bow Defence Rafts.
May 1920	Company acts as agent for Admiralty in bringing from Canada sixty drifters and fifty three trawlers with authority to sell.
1921	Udney Castle – the largest steel vessel built in the North of Scotland up to that date, built at the Company's Thornbush Slipway.
Dec 1921	Sam Hunter Gordon instructed to purchase A I Manufacturing Company, Bradford.
Oct 1922	First orders received for electric welding equipment: Mitsubishi Company, Japan – for a seam welder for welding bicycle wheel rims.
1934	Provision of welding machines for work on main steam pipes on the Queen Mary.
1935	Supply of electric welding machines to motor industry, the only firm in the United Kingdom who make machines for flash welding the steel body of a motor car.
Dec 1939	First war work – Navy Contract for 1400 tons of chain cable and order for three welding machines to produce the chain at £3,000 each.



Nov 1941	Women trainees introduced to work on manufacturing of resistance welding machines; demand for machines increased.
Nov 1942	Provision of flash butt welders to increase production of airscrew hubs for fighter planes including the Spitfire.
1943-1944	Operation Pluto – Company responsible for welding the cross channel oil pipeline under the ocean.

1947	30% of production of welding machines at Rose Street made for export.
Feb 1949	Work accepted for supply of steel pipe for Hydro Electric project at Cannich.
1957	Orders received for automatic flash butt welding equipment worth £325,000. Company now have 70% of Britain's total production.
June 1962	Company changes name to AI Welders Ltd.
Aug 1969	Extension costing £200,000 to Rose Street works. Record order books declared.
Mar 1971	100 ton automatic flash butt welder built for British Steel Corporation's works at Newport (largest machine manufactured at AI Welders).
1985	Verson International take over AI Welders.
Sep 1988	Sale of Rose Street site and opening of works at the Longman.



4.0 Assessment and Analysis of Heritage Need

4.1 The building is category 'B' Listed, and is described as follows:

Ross and MacBeth, 1893, French Renaissance, snecked rubble with freestone dressings. 3 storeys, 3-bay front divided by giant pilastrade, 3 shopfronts (now altered for offices) at ground floor, bowed tripartites with ornamental frieze and broken scrolled pediments at 1st floor, tripartite windows beneath gablets containing arched tympana filled with tiled depictions of industrial activity at 2nd floor. Rose Street front, gabled 1 bay continuation of Academy Street front.

Date of Listing: 15th June 1981

4.2 The tile mosaics on the building are perhaps its most distinguishing feature. The tiles were manufactured by Craven and Dunnill of Jackfield, Shropshire. The company still exists as a tile distributer. However, it no longer manufactures tiles.

The four mosaics show men working at a range of foundry tasks:
Rose Street: Moulders at work in the foundry pouring molten iron into moulds

Academy Street (left hand mosaic as you look at the front of the building):
This mosaic no longer has any tiles. It depicted pattern makers making moulds.

Academy Street (Middle mosaic):
Fitters working on a variety of foundry tasks.

Academy Street (Right hand mosaic):
Blacksmiths at work

4.3 The building has had a chequered history since AI Welders moved out in 1988. The ground floor has been used as a pub, but the two upper floors have lain empty for over 25 years.

4.4 This is an important building in Academy Street especially given its scale, decorative front elevation and position at the north end of Academy Street. Its run-down appearance has been of increasing concern to many residents of Inverness who view it as one of the key buildings in the city's economic and social history. At the height of its operation over 300 people worked in the office building and associated workshops which lined both sides of Rose Street at the rear of the surviving building.

4.5 Internally the two storey element to the rear is unusual due to the cast iron framed structure supporting the intermediate floor and roof with the upper floor being naturally lit from above by rooflights.

5.0 Building Condition

5.1 The building is listed on Historic Environment Scotland's Building at Risk register.

5.2 The current condition is as summarised in the Condition Report prepared by Alan Marshall, Conservation Architect. The building is generally in a state of disrepair caused by years of neglect and lack of maintenance and is in urgent need of remedial works to the roof, stonework and windows. Internally very little of any historical value remains with the ground floor having been converted to a public bar and the upper floors lying empty, being used primarily for storage.

5.3 A specialist report was commissioned on the condition of the mosaics by the Mosaic Restoration Company which found unless remedial work is carried out soon the mosaics are likely to be lost or it will become un-viable to repair them.

5.4 With the ground floor tenants having recently left, the entire building is now vacant therefore the likelihood of further decay is increased.

6.0 Opportunities and Proposals

The current owner's proposals for the refurbishment and revitalisation of the building are to create a flagship bar for their own trademark range of beers on the ground floor along with a coffee shop/pizza area. A new metal spiral stair will provide access to a restaurant on the first floor. The second floor will be given over to residential use with the creation of a bar/restaurant manager's flat. The re-use of the first floor makes use of the open floor plan, made possible by the cast iron structure, which means that this floor can form a restaurant with a unique atmosphere.

This would meet the following key objectives:

- Return vacant space to use;
- Repair the historic fabric of the building;
- Re-instate key historical features (eg. one of the mosaics which has disappeared)
- Re-invigorate an important built landmark, which will enhance the Inverness townscape.

It is planned to reinstate the Academy and Rose Street elevations to that as shown in the pre World War I photo shown below with slender columns to the ground floor windows on Academy Street and the re-opening of an entrance door on Rose Street previously used to access the first floor offices.

The mosaics will be removed and restored before being placed back on the building all as per the recommendations in the Mosaic Restoration Company's report. The roof, windows and stonework will be repaired as per the recommendations in the Condition Report by Alan Marshall.

Internally the materials will be selected to respect the building's industrial heritage with distressed timber flooring, metal and brickwork finishes. A glazed half height privacy screen behind the ground floor windows on Academy Street will incorporate coloured glass mosaic designs to reflect those externally.

All external walls and roofs will be insulated before being re-plastered to conserve energy and secondary glazing will be fitted to the windows where practical. The rooflights to the rear will be upgraded to incorporate double glazing with opening lights for natural ventilation.

All service extract ductwork for the kitchen and toilets will be routed and terminated on the rear elevation which is currently cement rendered. It is intended that the existing render from this wall is removed and replaced with a more traditional lime render and painted with mineral paint. It is also intended that the two storey element of the north east elevation is rendered due to the poor condition of the stonework.