

CASE STUDY: Records at Risk

Cairncross of Perth

Jewellers, Perth

305.00

1. The fruits of this wild blueberry are set in 9ct gold. Matching earrings (1).
£305.00

2. Blaeberrys again - a natural display in 9ct gold. Matching earrings (1).
£185.00

3. Crowberries to the life-Scots pearls gracing a finely wrought gold spray.
£175.00

4. Between them Scots pearls and 9ct gold re-create the Immortal Asphodels Matching earrings (5).
£160.00

5. The bramble fruits are Scots pearls, set in leafy gold.
£175.00

6. Earrings to match.
£175.00

7. Heather, fern and grasses in Scots pearls and gold, picked from a Scottish Moor.
£180.00

8. The lovely bluebell of Scotland, celebrated in Scots pearls and delicately fashioned from Scots pearls and gold.
£175.00

9. Flowering eternally for a change - the demure sundrop elegantly fashioned from Scots pearls and gold.
£190.00

215.00

Cairncross of Perth was originally founded in 1896 by Alexander and George Cairncross, where it was established as A & G Cairncross. It was situated in a category B shopfront that remained unchanged to the design by E. Pollard & Co in 1911 on St John Street in Perth. A new chapter began for the business in 1988, when James and Alistair, sons of George, retired and subsequently sold the business to Fiona Rennie. As well as selling internationally across Europe, America, and Canada, it had remained the only jeweller that was licensed to sell Scottish freshwater pearls. It sadly closed in 2023 after 154 years of trading.

The Surveying Officer became aware of the business' situation when it was advertised for sale in early 2023. Unfortunately with no forthcoming buyer, its imminent closure was announced and the Surveying Officer contacted the business to offer support and archive guidance for any historical records in their care. It was also found that a previous survey had been undertaken many decades previously in the 1960s, with seven items of note listed.

As a result of the business operating from its original site, which included the unaltered shop front, the Industrial Heritage team at Historic Environment Scotland were keen to visually record the jewellers' premise for the CANMORE database by undertaking a building survey. Therefore, a survey visit was arranged that would accommodate both a records survey by the Surveying Officer, and a building survey carried out by Historic Environment Scotland, and took place just days before the shop closed for the final time. Although several of the previously surveyed records were not located, a small number of items were found that were historically significant including an album of newspaper cuttings, and a variety of promotional material including leaflets and price lists.

The Industrial Heritage Team also found original machinery had not been kept, but they were able to photograph the shop's interior and exterior in its final form before its closure. Following the visit, the Surveying Officer safely transferred the small number of records found to Perth & Kinross Council Archives where they will be catalogued and permanently preserved.

Cairncross Jewellers is one of Perth's oldest and best known businesses. When its closure was announced earlier this year the Business Archives Surveying Officer got in touch and offered to help with the salvage of any business records - which I accepted without hesitation. She alerted me to an early records survey of the business, negotiated access with the owners, salvaged the records from the premises and deposited them in the archive. This saved me an enormous amount of time and ensured that the records were preserved in a safe and timely manner.

The Surveying Officer also put me in touch with the HES survey officer who was conducting a photographic survey of the business that will be shared with my archive service, giving extra context to the business records.

*Ishbel MacKinnon
Archivist, Culture Perth & Kinross*



BUSINESS ARCHIVES
SURVEYING OFFICER

since 1977