

The Citadel (Common) Hospital 1877

By the mid-19th century, the Burgh owned a range of storehouses at the Citadel. One was occupied by a hemp (rope) factory which, along with others, was destroyed by fire in 1865.ⁱ However, the nearby Artillery Volunteers drill hallⁱ escaped and this building became vacant when, in 1873, the Volunteers opened a larger hall in Margaret Street (now part of the Spectrum Centre). In 1874, the Infirmary signalled its intention to stop taking smallpox cases given the risk of infection spreading in the hospitalⁱⁱ and a meeting between the Burgh and the Parish occurred soon after when the Citadel was apparently first suggested as a site.

In 1877, the old drill hall was converted into the Citadel Isolation Hospital for cholera and smallpox patients. It was virtually rebuilt. Its



three original storeys were reduced to two, the walls being reduced in height from 20 to 12 feet, and it received a new slated roof. Its interior walls were re-lined and there were new windows, new doors and two new fireplaces. A separate block containing wash house, coal cellar and 'dead house' (mortuary) were added. The architects were Matthews and Lawrie and it cost over £800.²

The harbour location allowed the local authority to meet the ever

ⁱ Possibly part of the original barracks of Cromwell's Fort.

ⁱⁱ The 1867 Public Health Act had encouraged local authorities to make provision.

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present danger of infectious disease brought by visiting ships. The hospital is clearly shown on the 1902 OS map (page 1) with what appears to be the wash house block.



The hospital is also shown on the photograph above³ which dates from around 1890. Cromwell's Towerⁱ is on the extreme left, the large building on the right is the harbour master's office and, behind it, protruding to the left of the central sycamore tree, is the Citadel Hospital. It had two 6 bed wards, a nurses' sitting room and a kitchen. The loft above was unused. There are few records of the hospital's use in the 19th century. In 1881, two nurses were employed when a smallpox case was removed from a ship. In 1892, during a cholera scare the Burgh agreed that any cases of cholera in soldiers from the Cameron Barracks could be admitted if required and a decade later agreed that they could erect tents nearby if the hospital could not accommodate all the patients. This was never required.⁴

ⁱ Mid-18th century and not part of the original Cromwell's fort.

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It was always difficult to staff small emergency fever hospitals since both the need for and supply of nurses were unpredictable. Like some other isolation hospitals, it had a resident caretaker.ⁱ In 1891, it was Annie Gould, who appears to have been 75 years old at the time and who died there around 1902. She was later described as having been a ‘very pawky’ lady who was there for a long time. The post continued until the facility was more intensively used.⁵

In 1893, local solicitor James Mitchell returned from London and died of smallpox the following week. Although his household was isolated in the Citadel, an outbreak was feared and the Burgh ordered the erection of a second building to be used as a reception for smallpox contacts. It was a 70 x 18 feet (21 x 5.5m) wooden and corrugated iron building with two wards, each with 5 or 6 beds,ⁱⁱ and a small kitchen. It appears to be the building shown to the left of the original hospital on the map on page 1. After 1900, smallpox and cholera declined although the danger was still present. In 1904, a seaman with smallpox from a visiting ship infected a local groom who, with his family, was treated at the Citadel.⁶

Improving national standards required local authorities to provide suitable disinfection and, in 1902, a pressure steam disinfecter was constructed near the hospital and a van provided to transport clothes and bedding - all at a cost of nearly £600.ⁱⁱⁱ The disinfecter was in constant use not only by the Burgh but by others such as nearby Districts and the Military Hospital at Cameron Barracks. It was still in use in 1940 and, until then, had bedding transported by a horse ambulance which was housed at Falconer’s Garage on Tomnahurich Street.⁷

ⁱ As part of their contract, caretakers could be expected to immediately vacate the premises in the event of a fever case and to assist with caring for the patient.

ⁱⁱ In 1918, it had 3 beds in each ward.

ⁱⁱⁱ The MOH noted that this did not obviate the Infirmary from having a suitable one. Its poor disinfection was an ongoing issue for its fever wards.

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The Infirmary fever wards were often under pressure and, from 1904, the Citadel was available for overspill of scarlet fever and diphtheria cases. It is not clear how often it was used for this but, in 1911, a scarlet fever case certainly went there when the Infirmary refused her, not apparently because of her illness, but because she was heavily pregnant.

In 1908, the MOH reported that both the cholera and smallpox hospitalsⁱ were in good orderⁱⁱ and could be opened at short notice. From then, the Citadel appears to have been used more often. The government had been exhorting local authorities to have emergency isolation facilities and, from 1908, the Aird District of the County was allowed the use of 3 beds. In 1911, a request from Nairn to access the facilities was refused.

The 1911 census lists a nurse, caretaker and one patient but patient numbers expanded when, in 1912, the original building was fitted out for advanced cases of phthisisⁱⁱⁱ and Nurse Roy from the Infirmary was appointed matron.^{iv} A second nurse was appointed soon after and there was a porter and maid. The wooden building became nurses' accommodation. From 1913, tenders were put out for supplying the hospital with food and fuel which suggests regular use. By 1914, it had a telephone and, in early 1915, it upgraded its bedding and screens.

In the first 6 months of this new TB facility, it treated 14 patients of whom six died and it continued with normally around five beds occupied although numbers varied from 0 - 9. By 1915, it was receiving cases from as far away as Skye. In 1916, it was approved for national insurance purposes^v for 14 beds although the MOH noted it had only six beds in

ⁱ By then, the wooden building was for cholera and the original one for smallpox.

ⁱⁱ Although it seems that the wooden building did not have piped water until 1912.

ⁱⁱⁱ Possibly in response to the National Insurance Act of 1911.

^{iv} The matron post also incorporated Culduthel when it opened.

^v This indicates it had reached a certain national standard.

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each of its two wards. Using one of the buildings for nurses' accommodation reduced flexibility but one ward was used at times for cerebro-spinal meningitis and, in March 1916, it was given over to cases of measles, and later mumps and chickenpox, from the naval base at Invergordon. By then, and until 1920, a ward at the Poorhouse was also used for TB.⁸

The opening of Culduthel Hospital in 1917 reduced the need for the Citadel and, by then, the building required refurbishment to the extent that the Navy, in need of fever facilities, decided not to use it. The need to ensure immediately available isolation facilities for cholera and smallpox was reaffirmed nationally and, from early 1919, the hospital reverted to its original purpose and TB cases ceased.¹ Nursing staff were no longer required although the wooden building continued to be set aside (but unused) as staff accommodation until at least 1930. A caretaker was appointed although attempts to secure a residential one failed. In the 1920s, it seems to have been little used. In the mid-1920s, a 'tinkers camp' sprang up nearby and was allowed to remain provided it moved if the hospital was occupied. Given the logistics of this, it was probably thought unlikely that the hospital would be required.⁹

In early 1929, an inspection by local and national officials considered it unsuitable for scarlet fever and diphtheria and it was not used in the fever outbreaks of 1928-29 when Culduthel Hospital was severely pressurised. It was thought to be suitable if the building was reconditioned but its redundancy at this point is confirmed by the fact that it did not come under the new Inverness Joint Hospitals Board but was retained by the Burgh which continued essential maintenance. In 1934, the MOH wrote, enigmatically, that 'The Smallpox Hospital at the Citadel, consisting of 12 beds, is quite suitable for the area for which it has to cater'. However, in July 1937, it closed and the caretaker was given notice. The Joint

¹ By then, Culduthel was open.

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Hospital Board purchased bedsteads and other materials from the Burgh for £2 for use in Muirfield. In February 1938, the Scottish Youth Hostel Association tried, but failed, to purchase it and the Burgh continued to maintain the building. From late 1937, it was used for air raid training in preparation for war and, in October 1940, it was agreed to use it to store petrol. By requisition, it was let for £21 p.a. to the Air Ministry in April 1941 and, after the War, it was used to kipper (cure) herring. It was demolished sometime in the late 1940s and evidence suggests that the second buildingⁱ was also demolished at the same time.¹⁰

ⁱ A contributor to Inverness Our Story remembers acquiring corrugated iron from the building close to the old fever hospital.

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References

- ¹ Inverness Advertiser 24 March 1865
- ² Inverness Advertiser 1 December 1871; 26 January 1877; Inverness Burgh Papers Highland Archives
- ³ The photo was taken by George Gray and we are most grateful to Mr JFM Macleod for the copy which is used here and for information on its origins. The photo appeared in Inverness Field Club's *Old Inverness in Pictures* in 1978.
- ⁴ Inverness Town Council minutes 7 April 1902
- ⁵ Aberdeen Journal 25 June 1881; Inverness Courier 30 September 1892: Decennial census; Inverness Town Council minutes 13 March 1902; MacDonald Dr J MOH *Medical and Sanitary History of Inverness* in Transactions of the Inverness Scientific Society Volume IX 1919:
- ⁶ Scottish Highlander 14 September 1893; MacDonald 1919 *op. cit.*: Medical Officer of Health Annual Report
- ⁷ Inverness Town Council minutes
- ⁸ Macdonald 1919 *op.cit.*: Skye District Committee Minutes
- ⁹ Inverness Courier 5 January 1926, 12 December 1930
- ¹⁰ Inverness Courier 1 January 1929; British Medical Journal December 7 1929 p1080; Medical Officer of Health Annual Report 1934; Inverness Town Council July 1935 p544; Inverness Town Council Public Health Committee 13 September 1937, 14 February 1938, 14 April 1941; Aberdeen Journal 10 May 1938, 24 March 1938; Air Raid Precautions Sub Committee 26 July 1939, 2 October 1940; Mackay, Sheila S OBE (Ed) *Inverness Our Story* Inverness Bk1 2004. Information on herring kippering from Mr Frank Syme who ran a nearby factory (courtesy of Mr Geoff Macleod).