

City of Edinburgh Council

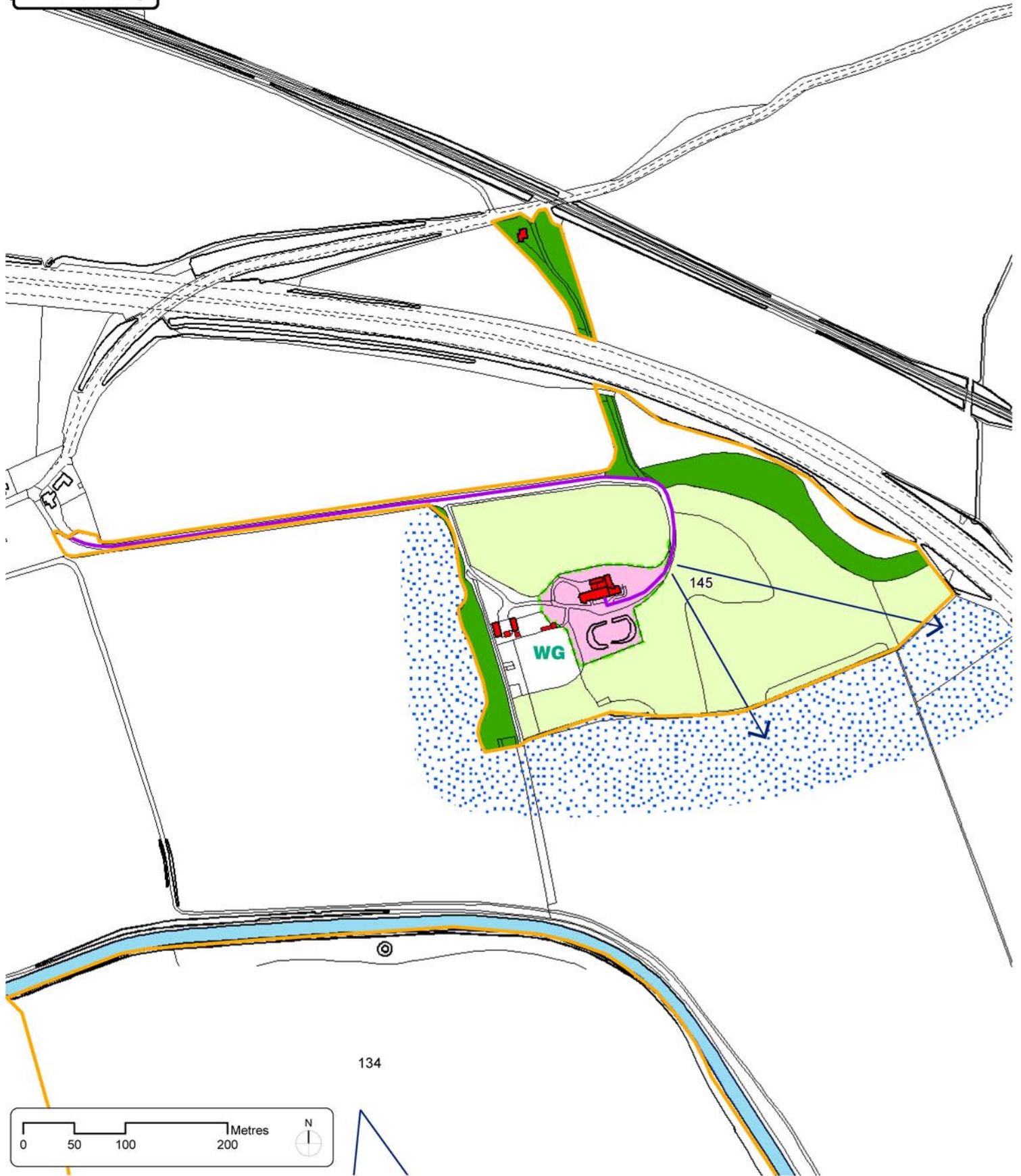
Edinburgh
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

145 Ashley














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Survey visit: November 2007



Key

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Site boundary |  Essential setting |
|  Ruined buildings |  Site of former house |
|  Principal buildings |  Main drive |
|  Gardens |  Principal views or vista |
|  Water |  Panoramic View |
|  Woodlands |  Walled Garden |
|  Parkland | |

145 **Ashley**
(Ratho Bank)

Parish Ratho, later Edinburgh

NGR NT 152 713

Owners Private

Designations

Listing Ashley House with Orangery B
Ashley House Stables and Kennels B
Ashley House North Lodge with boundary walls and gate-piers
C(S)

Scheduled Ancient Monument: Union Canal - Fountain Bridge to River Almond
(Index. No. 11097) c.250m to the south of the site

Green Belt

Heritage Trees (in north belt)

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

Ashley House and its designed landscape occupy a prominent position to the south of the Gogar Burn on the western approaches to Edinburgh. Although affected by recent road development the mature policy woodland remains largely intact and contributes very significantly to the quality and character of the rural landscape between the neighbouring settlements of Gogar and Ratho.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

Ashley House stands on rising ground to the south and west of the Gogar Burn, with a southerly aspect. The house sits within compact policies surrounded on the north, east and south by a small area of tree-studded parkland, with a stable block and walled garden to the west. The house was formerly served by two avenue approaches – a carriage drive from the North Lodge, next to the railway bridge on the unclassified Freeland Road between Gogar and Ratho, and a more functional service drive from nearby Ratho Byres, a little further to the west on the same road. The North Lodge has now been completely cut off from the rest of the designed landscape by the M8, leaving the western drive as the only usable approach. Although comparatively small in scale, the landscape has a strong presence in the landscape, owing to the local topography, and is prominent in the views from the M8. Site area approx. 11.1 hectares.

MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Early 19th century, on site of earlier settlement; late 19th century; severance 20th century.

HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

Although there appears to have been settlement and some associated planting on or near the site of the present house from an early date, the landscape framework as seen today would appear to have been formed in the early decades of the 19th century, so as to provide a setting for the newly-built mansion. Alterations and additions are known to have been made to the house in the latter part of the 19th century, to which period the North Lodge and gates are attributed. The landscape has remained virtually unchanged in character and extent since c.1900, save for the severing of the north avenue approach by the M8 dual carriageway towards the end of the 20th century.

The landscape, which may be equivalent to the earlier farmtown settlements of Rathorigg and Newbigging, appears as Ratho Bank at the end of the 18th century and as Ashley from the from the early 19th century. The estate seems to have emerged at the start of the 19th century from the combination of land brought together from neighbouring estates – that of Ratho Bank, formerly in the ownership of Sir W A Cunningham of Livingston, which was sold to George Reid of Balerno in 1779; and that of Marylands, formerly part of nearby Ratho [Park] estate which was added by c1830. The land passed from George Reid's grandson to lawyer George Veitch in 1819, who has been suggested as the most likely builder of the present house in the 1820s, most probably to designs by architect William Burn. After George Veitch's death, the estate was acquired from his trustees in 1829 by William H Brown, who appears to have been responsible for the change of name to Ashley, and whose family are recorded as having lived there for much of the remainder of the 19th century. Subsequent changes of ownership are less clear, although additional building work is known to have been carried out before the end of the 19th century, and again c1920 by Dunn & Findlay. The estate had suffered from a period of neglect before its acquisition by the present owners, who have been working to restore the landscape with advice given by the Garden History Society in 2000.

Maps and Graphic Evidence

Rathorigg appears as a settlement or house of some stature, in approximately the right location, with associated planting, on Adair's map (1682), and on an engraved version of this same map published in 1735. By the time of Roy's map (c.1750) a house or farmtown by the name of New Begging appears at approximately the same location, surrounded by cultivation, but without planting. This is seen on Armstrong's map (1773) as Newbigging, again without associated planting. The house appears as Ratho Bank on Knox's map (1816), prior to the building of the Union Canal between 1818 and 1822, a move that severed a direct road linking Ratho Bank to Ratho House/Park. This, with subsequent maps such as Sharp, Greenwood & Fowler (1828) and Thomson (1832) shows that significant planting had taken place around the house, prior to its name being changed to Ashley. The Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway, built between 1838 and 1842, passed just to the north of the designed landscape. It is as Ashley that the house appears on the Ordnance Survey (1852), and all subsequent maps. Architectural plans for the house dating from the 1920s, together with photographs of the house and outbuildings dating from the 1970s and 1980s, add little to our knowledge of the wider landscape.



*Ordnance Survey 6" map
1852-53*



*Entrance front and
conservatory*

*Ashley House south front and
tennis court*



COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

Mansion House, Orangery and Terraced Garden

The mansion house stands on a low terrace, overlooking a sunken lawn, from which it is separated by a terraced earth embankment and a flight of stone steps decorated with ball-finials and urns. The sunken lawn is surrounded and sheltered by mature, mostly broadleaved trees, which make up the policy planting. There are shrubberies around the lawn and close to the house, as well as several noteworthy specimen trees including a large cedar of Lebanon, monkey puzzle and weeping birch.

Walled Garden and Offices

A substantial walled garden with castellated garden buildings, with an elaborate crow-stepped stable block and offices adjacent, lies south-west of the mansion house, though largely hidden from it by surrounding mature policy planting.

North and West Approaches

The approach from the North Lodge, largely hidden within a narrow belt of mixed broadleaved planting, mostly of lime and beech, has been severed by the M8 motorway, but is clearly traceable within the surviving plantations. The avenue from the West Lodge, which now serves as the main approach to the house and offices, is mostly of lime trees, with intermediate beech hedge planting, affording views to north and south over adjacent arable fields. A short section of the service drive allows vehicles to reach the stable block, offices and gardens without the need to pass in front of the mansion house. After entering the core landscape the carriage drive sweeps right round to the east to the house, allowing fine views over the adjacent parkland to the east and south-east towards the distant Pentland Hills, before passing through shrubberies to arrive at the front of the house.



Stables block



North lodge and gates

Garden pavilion



*Parkland*

Parkland

The house is surrounded to the north, east and south by tree-studded parkland, maintained as grazing, and divided by the carriage drive that runs between traditional iron park railings. The parkland trees are mostly mature to over-mature, with many showing signs of past damage, mostly through the stripping of their bark, apparently by horses.

Policy Woodland

Apart from the two tree-lined approaches (the northern one now severed), the remaining landscape structure is provided by mature, mixed, mostly broadleaved tree planting, comprising oak, beech, horse chestnut, ash, lime and sycamore, with some Scots pine. Holly, rhododendron, box and yew make up the shrub layer in places, and show signs of having been recently cut back. Areas of woodland to the north-east of the house, and to the west of the walled garden, show signs of prolonged under-management. There are a fallen trees and branches in places, though tree-stumps and a stack of cut timber to the south of the walled garden point to the progressive clearance of these by the present owners.

View and Vistas

The landscape has strong local presence in the landscape and is prominent in the views from the M8. The most extensive outward views from the landscape are over agricultural land to the south and east, those to the north being restricted by the subdued topography and by road and railway embankments. Largely shielded from the house and parkland by a belt of policy woodland and a slight cutting to the north, the nearby motorway is most evident in the southerly views from the core landscape.

*North lodge tree belt**North lodge planting and M8 motorway*

View south to Pentland Hills



Archaeology

Scheduled Ancient Monument: Union Canal - Fountain Bridge to River Almond (Index. No. 11097) lies a short distance (c.250m) to the south of the site, and is directly accessible via a track which passes through the western edge of the designed landscape.

PUBLIC ACCESS

There is no formal public access to the landscape at Ashley, in part due to its awkward location between the Union Canal, the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway and the M8 motorway. Nor is there a wider landscape beyond the small 'core' of parkland and policies immediately around the house.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

The landscape has been well cared for in recent years, following a period of neglect. The main southerly approach having been severed by the M8, the North Lodge is isolated from the rest of the site and in separate ownership. Given that the opportunity was not taken at the time of construction of the M8 to reduce the visual and noise impact of the road with the help of bunding and/or screen planting, the road is intrusive. Putting such measures in place would help to reduce this intrusion. There also exists the possibility of built development on land to the south of Ashley, with the westward expansion of the city. This would impact on the southerly views from the house and landscape.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overall

Although isolated between the M8 and the Union Canal, the comparatively elevated position of the house and landscape, and the lack of neighbouring estate planting, means that the mature policy woodland is fairly prominent in views of the countryside to the west of Edinburgh, not least from the M8 motorway. This gives the site some scenic value. The presence of the B-listed mansion house gives it high architectural value. The design of the landscape has some value, though its integrity has been adversely affected by the cutting-off of the north approach. Taken overall, the landscape is seen as having high regional value.

Work of Art

Some

Historical

Some

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

Some

Architectural

High

Scenic

High

Nature Conservation

Some

Archaeological

Little

Recreational

Little

Sources – Primary**Maps**

Adair *A map of Midlothian* - Counties of Scotland MSS version c. 1682 NLS

Adair/Cooper *A map of Midlothian* – Counties of Scotland printed version -1735 NLS

Roy *Military Survey of Scotland* 1747-1755 Ref 07/5b British Library via SCRAN

Armstrong, *Map of the Three Lothians*, 1773 NLS

Knox, *Map of the Shire of Edinburgh*, 1816 NLS

Sharp, Greenwood and Fowler *Map of the County of Edinburgh* 1828 NLS

Thomson, John *Atlas of Scotland*, 1832 NLS

First edition Ordnance Survey (1852) Sheet 5 NLS

Parish map OS (1898-1904) NLS

Ordnance Survey (1915) Sheet II SE NLS – paper copies

NLS	National Library of Scotland www.nls.uk
RMS Reg Mag Sig	Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, Edinburgh
NMRS	National Monuments Record of Scotland
SCRAN	Scottish Cultural Resource Access Network www.scran.ac.uk

Plans at National Archives of Scotland (NAS), Register House Plans (RHP)

RHP 1404 1821 Plan of the lands of Ratho Bank

Unpublished Sources

Letter from Scott Cooper GHS, to Colin Paton, Ashley House 1 May 2000

Sources – Secondary

The County Directory *The Directory of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats, Villages etc. in Scotland* – annual publications listing properties and residents – various dates 1843, 1851, 1857, 1862, 1868, 1872, 1875, 1894, 1902. RCAHMS library, Edinburgh

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Groome, Francis (Ed) 1884 (Vols 1 & 2) 1885 (Vol 3) *The Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* Thomas C Jack, Edinburgh

Historic Scotland Listed Building Report Accessed via PASTMAP, on the RCAHMS website www.rcahms.gov.uk 9.1.07

National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) Accessed via CANMORE, on the RCAHMS website www.rcahms.gov.uk 20.1.07

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NAS GD1/17 Titles to lands at Ratho, Midlothian and in East Lothian c1358-1360

RHP 1407 1821 *Plan of the lands of Ratho Bank* by Thomas Grainger

NMRS Dunn and Findlay Collection MLD/219/1-9 [via DSA]

NMRS Lorimer Collection LOR R/1 [via DSA & RCAHMS] alterations and additions for Mrs Dodds

Strutt & Parker 1999 *Ashley House, Newbridge, Edinburgh* sale particulars
