

City of Edinburgh Council

**Edinburgh**  
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

**237 Baberton House**














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Survey visit: September 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		

**SURVEY OF GARDENS AND  
DESIGNED LANDSCAPES**

Peter McGowan  
Associates with  
Christopher Dingwall

**237 Baberton House**  
(Baberton Golf Course)

Parish Currie, later Edinburgh  
NGR NT 191 691  
NMRS No NT16NE 1.00  
Owners Multiple private (Cruden Investments Ltd. / Baberton Golf Club)  
Designations  
Listing Babertoun House A  
Babertoun House Sundial B  
Babertoun House Walled Garden C(S)  
Babertoun House Bothy C(S)  
Group Category A  
Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 6190 Baberton Mains Enclosure  
Green Belt  
Heritage Trees

**REASONS FOR INCLUSION**

A long established country house estate on the south-west fringes of Edinburgh that, due to its comparatively high elevation, gives it extensive views over its environs, as well as ensuring that its woodland contributes to views from the surrounding area and to the wider setting of the neighbouring settlements of Currie, Juniper Green and Baberton.

**LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT**

Baberton House and its designed landscape lie a short distance to the west of the A720 City of Edinburgh Bypass, between the A70 Lanark Road and the line of the Edinburgh suburban railway between Wester Hailes and Curriehill. Access to the golf club and golf course is from the south, from the A70 Lanark Road via Baberton Avenue, following the first part of what was formerly the southern approach to the mansion house (now disused and blocked off). Present day access to the mansion house is from the north, off the B701 Wester Hailes Road, across the A 720 City of Edinburgh Bypass, via Westburn Road and Baberton Road. The landscape lies on the north side of a low ridge, and enjoys panoramic views to the north and west embracing Arthur's Seat, the Lomond Hills, Ochils and southern Grampians. The estate, which is now in divided ownership, is effectively surrounded on three sides by suburban housing. Site area 49.1 hectares.

Although the south-eastern corner of the designed landscape directly abuts the north-western corner of the Juniper Green Conservation Area, the topography and screen planting along the boundary means that there is comparatively little visual connection between the two areas.

**MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT**

Record of planting from the 17th century, with successive changes during the late-18th and early-19th centuries; conversion to a golf course end 19th century.

**HISTORY OF THE LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT**

The origins of the house and estate of Baberton lie in the medieval period, with some of the earliest records being found under the name *Kilbaberton* (Harris).

The present mansion house incorporates a U-plan tower house of 1622, built by Sir James Murray, sometime Master of the King's Works, on land granted to him by King James VI. The estate appears to have passed through a number of hands during the century or so following James Murray's death in 1634, during which time further enclosure took place. Among the heritors was Alexander Brand of Baberton (NSA). Significant changes to the landscape occurred during the late 18th century and early 19th century, apparently at the hands of the Christie family (GD51 & GD 150). There were further changes of ownership during the later 19th century and 20th century. In 1893 the owner Sir James Gibson Craig leased around 90 acres of parkland to the newly-formed Baberton Golf Club, who subsequently purchased the land (Cant). The mansion house and its immediate environs were sold most recently to Cruden Investments Ltd, who converted the house to offices c1980.

### Maps and Graphic Evidence

*Balbertoun* appears as a named house on Blaeu's map of the Lothians (1654), based on the earlier surveys by Pont (c.1595), though without an indication of associated planting and/or enclosure. In line with other comparatively high status houses of the period, the building of the U-plan tower house of 1622 by Sir James Murray is likely to have been accompanied by tree planting and the creation of walled gardens. Adair's map (1682) records the house of *Balbertoun* with associated planting, though without any indication of the character or extent of the landscape.

The Roy's *Military Survey of Scotland* (c1750) shows *Baberton* as a substantial house, set within a series of about a dozen walled and tree-lined parks. The house stands at the north of a central garden enclosure, with an indication of formal gardens to the south, and a walled and tree-lined avenue approach from the north. Ornamental planting, which occurred during the late 18th century and early 19th century, at the hands of the Christie family, was seemingly intended to create a parkland landscape more in line with the fashion of the times. This planting and remodelling included the creation of a new scenic approach from the south, and the formation of a new walled garden to the south-west of the house, possibly on the footprint of earlier gardens.

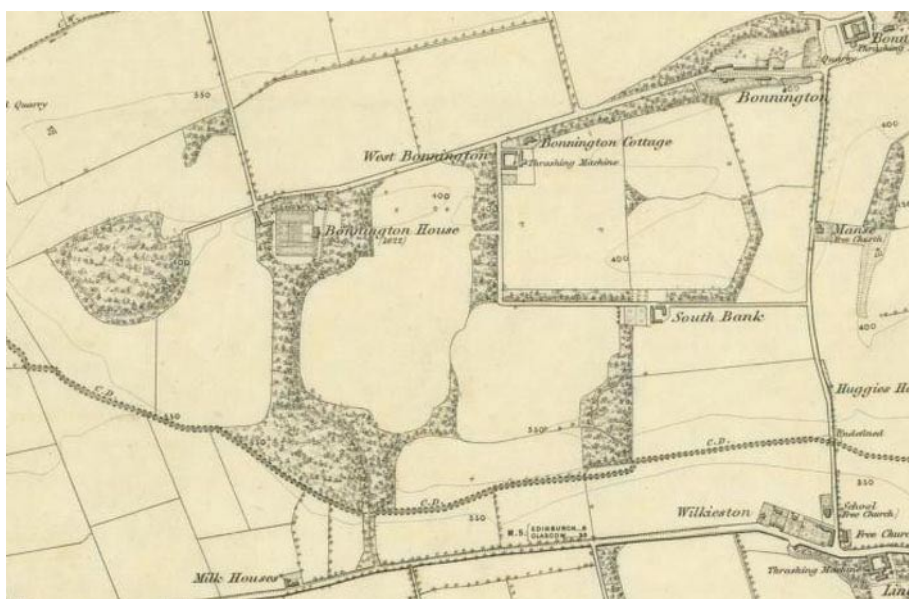
Incidentally, Roy's Map (c.1750) shows *Little Baberton* to the north, more or less equivalent to today's *Baberton Mains*, with its own small landscape of hedged or tree-lined enclosures. This was effectively cut off from the rest of the estate by the construction of a new railway line by the Caledonian Railway Company c.1850, together with a north-eastern extremity of the Baberton House landscape.



Roy's map c1750



Knox 1816



Ordnance Survey 6" map 1850s

In 1893 the owner Sir James Gibson Craig leased about 90 acres of parkland to the newly formed Baberton Golf Club. A 9-hole course designed by Willie Park Jun. (Moreton), was soon extended to an 18-hole course and continues in use to this day, the land having been purchased by the club. There is a substantial but long-disused quarry marked on the Ordnance Survey map (1853) as 'gravel pits', hidden within one of the central blocks of woodland.

The outline of the landscape depicted on Roy's Map is still clearly seen in the boundary of the golf course today, within which can be detected the vestiges of pre-existing rectilinear sub-divisions, represented by stone walls, embankments and hawthorn trees. The character of the landscape today owes much to 19th century parkland planting in the form of blocks and clumps, though this has been augmented by more recent planting by the golf club, intended to separate and define the golf fairways. At the south-eastern extremity of the landscape is the village of Currie, where neighbouring housing on Muir Wood Road and Nether Currie Crescent was built in the 1960s on what was formerly Currie Muir. The rather weakly-defined north-eastern corner of the designed landscape was developed during the 1970s, with Baberton Mains Way bringing housing right up to the east side of the old north avenue approach and to within 50m of the mansion house.

## COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

### Mansion House

The Category A listed mansion house comprises the original 1622 tower house and substantial 18th century additions. It is currently used as offices. The three-storey mansion house cannot be seen from the 1902 golf club-house that overlooks the landscape from its south-eastern corner.



*House from the south*

### Gate Piers

The two sets of gate-piers included in Historic Scotland's list description are those immediately to the north-west of the house. Another unlisted pair of gate-piers lies hidden in the woodland a short distance to the south of the house, marking the line of the old south drive. There is a single surviving gate-pier at the north end of Baberton Avenue in Currie, marking the start of what used to be the long south approach. A gate-lodge that used to guard this approach has been demolished. There are new gate-piers and railings at the north entrance to the estate on Baberton Road.



*Listed gate-piers*

*Walled garden*

### Other Structures

The unlisted golf club house, built in 1902 to designs by J N Scott and A Lorne Campbell, replaces an earlier structure, and stands near the south end of the long south approach to the house, now blocked off. A stone-built viewpoint indicator, erected in 1998, stands on high ground near the centre of the golf course. There is a small amount of landforming, stonework and ornamental planting in the immediate vicinity of the Golf Club House.



### Formal Gardens

There is little in the way of formal gardens near the house, although the south side of the mansion overlooks an irregularly-shaped mowed lawn, fringed with rhododendron, and showing some traces of more formal planting. An early 18th century Category C(S) listed garden bothy stands to the north-west of the house. A Category B listed sundial of early 17th century date stands in the lawn to the south of the house.

### Walled Garden

A substantial Category C(S) listed rubble-built walled garden, said to be of 18th century date, lies to the south-west of the mansion house, largely hidden within the policy woodland. The garden, part of which was converted into a tennis court in the late 20th century, is now abandoned and the wall and gates are



partly ruinous. The garden contains some traces of earlier planting, including box hedges and fruit trees, but is now heavily overgrown with brambles etc.

### Drives and Paths

The present bitmac drive to Baberton House, following the line of the original north avenue, is flanked by mown grass verges and 20th century ornamental planting of mixed conifers and broadleaves, amongst which are the decayed stumps of earlier avenue trees. The start of the southern drive is of bitmac as far as the Golf Club House, but soon reverts to a drybound surface, before becoming overgrown and completely lost as the line is followed towards the mansion house, separated from the neighbouring parkland in some places by a low embankment. Within the landscape, there are traces of the old access road to the gravel quarry, also heavily overgrown. Existing paths and bridges mostly relate to the operation and servicing of the golf course.

### Trees and Woodland

Although much of the policy woodland appears to date from the late-18th century or early-19th century, there are some notable older trees, especially in the vicinity of the house, including a double-stemmed beech with a girth of c5m and a huge pollarded sycamore with a girth of c6m. The original policy woodland appears to have been almost entirely broadleaved – oak, ash, sycamore, beech, lime, horse chestnut, with some holly and hawthorn – though with some more recent planting of larch and Scots pine in the vicinity of the gravel quarry. Rhododendron and snowberry are locally invasive. Where occurring, regeneration appears to favour sycamore and ash. The recent golf course planting is mostly of Scots pine and native broadleaves, though this shows signs of damage by deer in some places.



*Baberton House gardens and landscape, 1955 (The Scotsman)*

*Neglected policy woodland*



*New north entrance*



*South entrance and gate*



*Golf course parkland*

*View north from clubhouse*

*View to north from viewpoint*



*Veteran sycamore*

A *Woodland Management Plan* is in place, prepared by Mark Hamilton on behalf of the Edinburgh Greenbelt Trust in 2003. Many of the larger trees are tagged.

#### **Parkland**

The undulating parkland is managed as a golf course, with areas of closely mown grass, flanked by areas of semi-rough and rough, separated by strips and blocks of woodland. Traces of former field boundaries, and of cultivation ridges are to be seen in a few places. Artificial landforms and bunkers associated with the golf course detract to a degree from the parkland character.

#### **Water Features**

The landscape contains no significant water features, although some standing water and swampy ground in the former gravel quarries, well protected by fences, is largely hidden from view by dense planting and undergrowth.

#### **Views**

The elevation and aspect of the site mean that it enjoys panoramic outward views to the north and west. Southerly views are effectively blocked by the topography and by neighbouring built development. The visual link between the mansion house and its wider landscape setting, never particularly strong, has been effectively broken by recent planting.

#### **PUBLIC ACCESS**

There is no formalised public access to the landscape at Baberton beyond that of the golfers and the occupants of Baberton House, who can access the lawns and shrubberies in the immediate vicinity of the mansion. That said, there is some evidence of informal access from the neighbouring residential areas along the eastern edge of the landscape.

#### **FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL**

The woodland shows signs of having been neglected for a significant period, especially in the latter half of the 20th century, with the result that there are over-aged trees which may represent a safety hazard in places. Rhododendron and snowberry are locally invasive. There are signs of localised dumping of materials within the woodland and of limited vandalism. The open character of the parkland has been adversely affected by recent linear planting between some of the golf fairways.

Restocking of the policy woodland can be achieved through a combination of natural regeneration and replanting. The implementation of a woodland management plan, drawn up for the Baberton Golf Club by the Edinburgh Greenbelt Trust in 2003, should ensure the future of the woodland.

**ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE****Overall**

The landscape has some local value as the setting for an important house, and for the significant contribution, which its woodland makes to views in the south-western part of the city.

**Work of Art**

Little

**Historical**

Some

**Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural**

Some

**Architectural**

High

**Scenic**

High

**Nature Conservation**

Some

**Archaeology**

Little

**Recreational**

Some



*Old field boundary hedges  
within golf course*



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NLS National Library of Scotland [www.nls.uk](http://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](http://www.scran.ac.uk)

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NAS GD509/9 Genealogical notes on Christie of Baberton, Johnston of Warriston, Scott of Malleny, Wardlaw of Riccarton nd

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