

City of Edinburgh Council

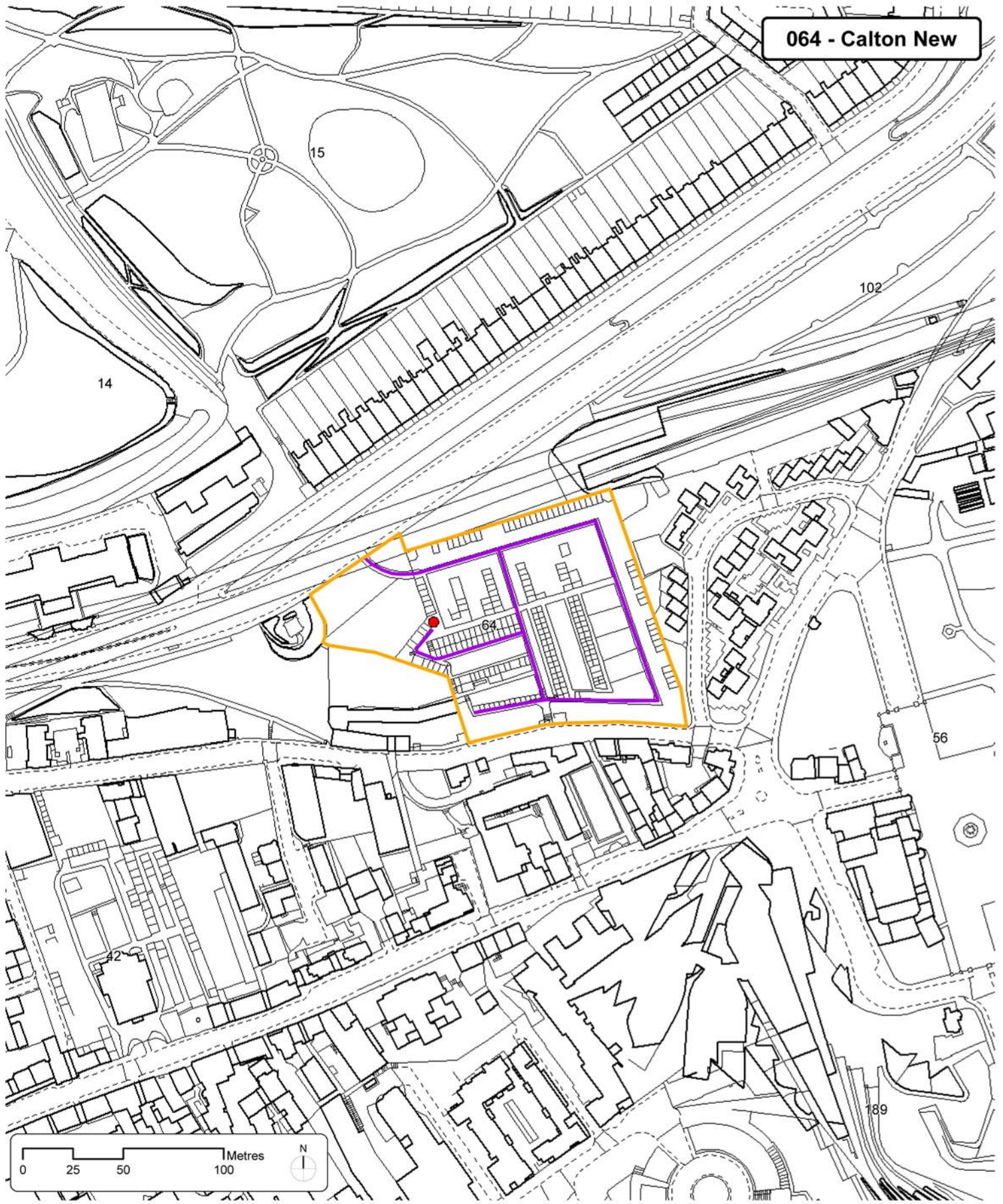
Edinburgh
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

064 New Calton Burying Ground














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Survey visit: July 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 | | |

064 New Calton Burying Ground

Parish St Cuthbert's Edinburgh
NGR NT 267 740
Owner City of Edinburgh Council

Designations

Listing Burying ground B
Watchtower B

New Town Conservation Area / Old Town Conservation Area

Edinburgh World Heritage Site

Open space of outstanding landscape quality and townscape significance

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

One of the four historic graveyards within the city, and although newer and less architectural endowed than the rest, is still of considerable social and architectural interest and is part of the picturesque development of the south side of the greater Calton Hill above Calton Road, with impressive views out to the south.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

New Calton Burying Ground is located on the steep slope between Regent Road and Calton Road. It is set back from Regent Road, enclosed by a high stone rubble wall and partly obscured by the trees along Regent Road, making it secluded and largely unobserved from the outside with little of the drama of Old Calton Burying Ground to the west. Site area 1.4ha.

MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Circa 1817, with main period of use during the 19th century, although occasional later burials.

HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

Prior to the completion of Waterloo Place and Regent Bridge, which cut through Old Calton burial ground, New Calton Burying Ground was opened on the land to the east. On 3 February 1814 *The Society of the Incorporated Trades of Calton*, owners of the Old Calton Burying Ground, was informed of the plan to make a bridge over Low Calton from Shakespeare Square and a new road eastwards across the face of Calton Hill (OEC XIX 133-5). One of the problems



*Entrance drive on Regent
Road*

*General view from near
entrance looking south-east
with Holyrood Palace and
Arthur's Seat*



was the proposed route through Old Calton Burying Ground. As part of the compensation for the loss of their land, it was agreed that the Society would receive an equal area of enclosed land adjoining or close to Old Calton. The City agreed to contact the owners of the disturbed lairs and to provide them with compensation in the form of payment or land and also to undertake the removal of the bodies and re-interment of the remains in the new grounds (*ibid*). The site that was granted by the City, for which the Society paid £1500, was an area of three acres of undeveloped land to the south of the new Regent Terrace (Anderson 616). New Calton Burial Ground was opened in March 1817 (*ibid*).

The grounds were probably laid out by Thomas Brown, City Superintendent of Public Works in Edinburgh from 1819-1847 (DSA). One of the conditions made by the City in the negotiations for the new burial ground was that it should not be visible from the windows of Regent Terrace (Anderson 616). The impact of the burial ground from above is kept to a minimum by it being set back some twenty to thirty metres below Regent Road and behind a stone wall, helped by the natural gradient of the land and terracing of the slope, and by a screen of trees and a modest entrance. The extent of the grounds with the exception of the extension of the southern boundary, which originally stopped short of the north side of Calton Road, remains unaltered today.

From the early 18th century to the early 19th century, grave robbing was at its peak, enhanced by the reputation of Edinburgh's medical school. On the west side of the grounds a three-storey circular tower was built to serve both as accommodation for a caretaker and as a watchtower.

The early 19th century maps of Edinburgh indicate that the development of the burial ground was gradual. Starting from the main entrance in the north-west corner a series of lairs, linked by a perimeter path that followed the line of the enclosure, were erected along the north, west and east enclosure walls. Slowly a series of stepped terraces on a regular grid of minor paths were developed southwards within the main perimeter path. With the growth of the grounds to the south a second entrance was formed between the buildings on Calton Road. Latterly, this was usually locked and is now welded shut. In the mid 19th century, the only major extension to the grounds was made when, in two stages, the southern boundary was extended down to Calton Road. The existing railway tunnels, driven through the south-west flank of Calton Hill just to the north boundary wall of the burying ground, were completed for the North British Railway in 1845 (Birrell 34).

There are a number of interesting monuments and the '... terraces give the cemetery an arcadian air, by the abundance of shrubs and trees which, combined with the many fine neo-classical monuments bring to mind the terraces of Delphi or Pergamum.' (Dickson 66). The formal layout and standardised lairs of New Calton were seen as an indication that 'Edinburgh [was] at the forefront of cemetery reform' in keeping with the new ideas of graveyards as pleasure gardens (MacLean 89). At a time when in most graveyards 'animals grazed ... and bones and bits of coffins littered the ground' the idea that people should be able to 'peruse the lettered monuments with some degree of comfort' was quite novel (MacLean 89). The most striking architectural feature of New Calton is its crenellated watchtower, an essential building in a graveyard at a time when earnings were good for body snatchers. This sideline ended when legislation closed the market for bodies in 1832 (RCAHMS), although it remained in use as accommodation for the site caretaker until at least 1931 (Pitcairn 616).

New Calton supposedly closed c1874 (Keir 439), but evidently a few burials post-dated this. Significant developments in New Calton include the removal of the railings to the majority of the plots in the later part of the Second World War (Patterson 149) and work undertaken by the Council to lower and stabilise the south boundary wall in the 1980s. During excavations a number of bodies and a series of mass collections of bones of the same type were discovered in the area to the west of the south entrance (*pers comm*. George Bell). Although there is no record in the Registers of Burials of the interments, the OS Name

Ordnance Survey 25" map
1848-53



Wood's map 1823



book provides the best clue to their origin recording simply that in New Calton Burying Ground:

all unclaimed persons who die in Royal Infirmary or Calton Jail, and not claimed by their relatives are buried here... (McQueen 26).

As there was no evidence of their identity, a warrant was applied for and granted for their exhumation, the remains were cremated and the ashes were re-interred close to the place where they were found (pers comm. George Bell). During excavations walls of enclosures with no inscriptions were also found indicating that at some time the area immediately behind the wall had been lower and subsequently up-filled. Two toilets, to the side of the south entrance, were also removed (ibid).

Maps and Graphic Evidence

From the mid 18th century until the early 19th century an area of enclosed land with trees, roughly in the area of the lower half of New Calton burial ground, is shown on the maps of Edinburgh. Within the enclosure a series of smaller plots were developed into a single small enclosed garden with trees laid out on a simple grid of paths.

Kirkwood's 1817 map is one of the first to show the new burial ground, with a line of trees along its north wall and the southern boundary extending only as far as the back of the buildings on Calton Road. Wood's map of 1823 shows lairs along the west, north and east walls and the position of the watchtower. On Kay's 1851 map a new entrance between the buildings on Calton Road that links a new central north-south path is shown.

Lancefield's 1851 map shows the first of two extensions to the grounds. On the east of the central north-south path the boundary has been extended to Calton Road. The map also indicates the layout on a regular grid of paths and lairs with an avenue of trees on the northern-most east-west path. The railway and tunnels completed in 1854 are shown to the north of the burial ground. The 1854 as Map of Edinburgh records the layout of the burial ground, including the individual lairs, in detail. Trees line all the paths. The map also shows that the second of the two extensions to the grounds, to the west of the central north-south down to the Calton Road, has been completed.

Thomas Begbie's 1887 photograph of New Calton Burying Ground (Capital Collections item no.11380) is a view of the burial ground from the south showing its terraces, the watchtower and Burns monument, with a single tree in the foreground. It records the burial ground prior to the removal of the railings to the lairs.

Lancefield's map 1851





Lair enclosures along the east boundary

The 1887 OS maps show two new lair enclosures on the south boundary wall and a small building to east of the south entrance steps. Trees line the paths but are less in number than on the 1854 map. The trees are shown further reduced on the 1895 OS map, although such planting is indicated more stylistically by that date. Recent OS mapping shows only minor changes to the layout of the burial ground.

Inhabitants of the Burying Ground

Whilst New Calton cannot rival Old Calton in the importance of its inhabitants it still includes many of Edinburgh's most eminent academics, authors, churchmen, engineers and Lord Provosts along with those from titled families.

The first inhabitants of New Calton were those removed from Old Calton burying ground prior to the construction of Waterloo Place. In the north-west corner, close to the main entrance, a number of 18th century tombstones and wall tablets that predate the New Burying Ground can be found. Apart from these, the earliest interment in New Calton was John Fife. Reference to the fact can be found on the north wall of the tomb of Andrew Fyfe, Surgeon that, amongst others, has the following inscription:

His son, JOHN FIFE, Surgeon, Died 22nd February 1817, Aged 26 years,
and was the First Interred in this new Calton Burial Ground. (Anderson
652)

In 1818 the Society sold to the Society of Jews a portion close to the south boundary wall (OEC XIX 134). There appears to be no known evidence of any interments and continued ownership is unlikely, although unconfirmed without investigation into land titles.

At least six Admirals are buried within the grounds including Rear-Admiral James Bissett (d.1824), Vice-Admiral Alexander Frazer (d.1829), Rear-Admiral, Andrew Smith (d.1831), Admiral Graham (d.1854), Vice-Admiral Alexander Frazer, (d.1870) and Admiral Peat, (d.1879) (Anderson 645). For this reason New Calton, with its distant views to Leith and the Firth of Forth, has been referred to in the past as The Cemetery of the Admirals.

Two of the inhabitants have a close connection with the development of Calton Hill and the graveyards. Archibald Elliot (1761-1823) and Robert Stevenson (1772-1850) were, respectively, the architect and civil engineer for the Waterloo Place, Regent Bridge and Regent Road project. Archibald Elliot was also responsible for the design of the City Jail (demolished prior to the construction of St. Andrew's House) and the Governor's House on Regent Road.

The ability to purchase new titles to plots in New Calton ceased prior to the Second World War (pers comm. George Bell). However, as with Old Calton,

*Lairs, watchtower and Burns
monument (outside site) from
central west-east path*



providing there is still sufficient room within the lair, those families with existing title deeds can apply for individuals to be buried there (ibid). Rare exceptions have been made for the interment of cremated remains and monuments to them can be found in the southern area of the burial ground. One of the most recent monuments, a simple grey granite stone with polished face, has the inscription: 'In Loving Memory of Rob Hunter Architect 1953-1994'

COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

Architectural Features

Watchtower

A large three-storey circular tower built to serve both as accommodation for a caretaker and as a watchtower, with crenellated wallhead and a pair of tall octagonal chimneys. Access to the three floors is by a single external cantilevered stone stair with a light iron baluster. Small windows on three sides at ground level, large square -topped windows above these at first level and eight windows or door openings at second floor level, all with segmental arches and with four of the windows blind. There is no internal toilet. Prior to the war a family of ten is said to have lived in the three rooms, whilst the parents occupied the middle floor, their daughters and sons occupied the top and bottom floors respectively (pers comm. George Bell). Unused lairs to the south of the watchtower were cultivated by the family for growing vegetables (ibid). Now unoccupied, the windows and doors of the watchtower have been boarded up.

Burns Monument

Although outside the burying ground the Burns Monument (built 1830, designed by Thomas Hamilton) beside Regent Road stands close behind the watchtower and is prominent in views across the graveyard looking north and west.

Monuments

Burials include the oldest high walled lairs along the west, north and east walls, almost all embellished with classical details, and less ornate lower walled enclosures terraced into the slope in the lower half of the site, some of which retain their cast-iron railings. Intervening areas have freestanding smaller gravestones of fairly simple designs of various dates. The boundary to Calton Road now comprises empty lairs between an inner retaining wall and the high boundary wall which together act as a retaining structure for the hill slope, following works in the 1980s.



Watchtower

The majority of the monuments, for their age and exposure, are in reasonable condition. However, several of the free-standing monuments have been damaged and broken-off pieces of monuments can be found throughout the ground. The interiors of many of the lairs show signs of neglect and the stonework generally to the monuments vary in their signs of deterioration. A degree of deliberate damage is evident in the lower part of the site where copes have been pushed off and railings bent. Stonework generally is blackened by 19th and 20th century soot.

Among the most architecturally significant monuments and prominent burials are the following.

David Bryce (1803-1876)

An impressive wall monument to the eminent architect David Bryce – among his most notable buildings in Edinburgh are Fettes College, The Royal Infirmary and The Bank of Scotland on the Mound (Turnbull 99). His lair is a fine neo-classical monument composed of a red granite tablet framed by sandstone Roman Doric pillars with pediment and frieze all raised upon an elevated base; probably designed by Bryce himself (Edinburgh 438). Located on the east-west terrace just below the monument to Andrew Skene, adjacent to the central path.

John Call (d. 1833)

An impressive Greek Doric enclosure of John Call, an Edinburgh Coachbuilder. A coursed ashlar enclosure with paired Doric columns that frame the entrance to the lair, retaining its wrought-iron gate; to the east of the watchtower, on the main east-west path.

William Elliot (d. 1834)

An elegant urn supported on a fine tall single free-standing column erected to the accomplished Edinburgh architect Archibald Elliot. As architect of Waterloo Place – Regent Road project, the City Jail (since demolished) and the Government House, Archibald was closely involved in the development of Calton Hill. Perhaps his finest design is the gothic St Paul's Episcopal Church erected in York Place in 1818. Located to the west of the John Call enclosure.

Andreas Gregorowicz (d. 1838)

A broken white pillar commemorating Andreas Gregorowicz, a Polish lawyer, surgeon, soldier and freedom fighter, who was exiled during the insurrection of Russia in 1830 (Turnbull 99). He died from an attack of the plague whilst attending the poor in Edinburgh (ibid). Located at the south, just above the main east-west path.

George Rankin (d.1819)

A fine Egyptian enclosure, half-way along the east-west path on the north boundary wall.

Andrew Skene (1784-1835)

A splendid sculpture in white marble, designed by Patrie Park, RSA (Edinburgh 438), and one of the finest monuments of its type in Edinburgh. The main wall tablet is a bas-relief of *Misfortune* consoling *Wisdom* flanked by naked youths (ibid). On the panel above is a delicately carved bas-relief head of Skene. Located on one of the east-west terraces below the watchtower. Andrew Skene, succeeded Henry Cockburn as Solicitor General in 1834 (Anderson 621).

James Strachan (d.1783)

A simple square stone pillar dedicated to James Strachan, a tanner. Its date identifies it as one of the monuments moved from Old Calton. At eye level on its east face above a relief carving of a skull and bones, is the inscription: *Memento Mori*. Located close to the main entrance.



Grierson lair, north wall

*Axial view looking south to
Scottish Parliament and
Salisbury Crags*



Robert Stevenson FRSE (1772-1850)

A portrait bust and inscribed panel within a high walled lair enclosure in memory of Stevenson who was for 50 years Engineer to the Board of Northern Lighthouses and designed and executed the Bell Rock Lighthouse (among many others) and other works in the United Kingdom including the Waterloo Place – Regent Road project; one of a family of engineers.



*Robert Stevenson FRSE
(1772-1850) memorial*

Boundary and internal walls

Boundary walls are generally uncoursed rubble with a rubble cope on the north boundary and slab copes elsewhere. Internal walls are mostly side walls or retaining wall to the terracing, where this is not achieved by the walls of lairs. A variety of copes are employed. A majority of the walls are in reasonable condition although all require some degree of repair and the top of the north wall has missing stones and there is a considerable growth of ivy on the west wall.

Drives and paths

Paths though the burying ground are surfaced in bitmac and edged with granite or whin setts, where the edge is not formed by walls. The condition of the surface is variable depending on how recently sections have been resurfaced. A few lengths have so edging and are breaking up with grass invading.

General surfaces

Open spaces between path and lairs is laid to grass and kept close mown to a fair standard. The ground within many lairs has been laid with red whinstone chippings and is kept weed-free by spraying. Together these maintenance operations give the burying ground a fairly well-maintained appearance.

Planting

Trees in the burying ground are limited to very few mature specimens of lime, elm and ash (one of each). It is evident that there has been a continuous decline in tree numbers from the optimum shown along all paths on maps in the mid-19th century, eg. 1849-53 (1st edition) OS. A more treed impression is created by the mature trees outside the north and north-west boundary walls in Regent Road Park and on either side of the entrance drive. There has been no restocking.

Views and Vistas

New Calton has exceptionally good views out to the south and south-east, to Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, with the Scottish Parliament buildings and Holyrood Palace prominent in the middle distance. To the east the outlook is over the Easter Road area and along the East Lothian coastline to North Berwick Law and Bass Rock.

PUBLIC ACCESS

The burying ground is open to the public during daylight hours. There appears to be a moderate level of use, but this is limited by its relative seclusion and the sealed gate on the Calton Road boundary.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

There is a natural sensitivity regarding the extent of conservation work that should be undertaken on graveyard monuments. The loss of all, or part, of the railings to the lairs is unfortunate but it would be difficult to argue for their re-instatement. A detailed survey of the monuments is needed to enable decisions to be made on their relative importance and condition and the extent of stabilisation, essential repairs and restoration that should be carried out.

No inspection of the interior or roof of the watchtower has been done but, from the outside there are clear signs for concern. The external rain water pipes are broken and incomplete, the stonework requires immediate attention and the external stair, including its railings and supports, is in a serious and dangerous condition. Unless remedial work to the watchtower is carried out soon it will deteriorate rapidly.

There is a real concern regarding the safety of visitors to the burial ground not only from the undesirable activities, which are known to occur there, but also from the present physical condition of the walls and monuments.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overall

New Calton Burying Ground is of considerable significance and an integral part of the history and the overall development of the Calton Hill, particularly on account of its relationships with Old Calton Burying Ground.

Its importance in the development of graveyards is also notable, being an example of a transitional graveyard, midway between the 18th century grandeur of Old Calton, Greyfriars and Canongate and the new planned cemeteries of Dean and Warriston. Whilst Le Cimetiere de l'Est on Mount Louis in Paris is the true prototype, New Calton can still be seen as an important precursor for the garden cemetery movement in Britain.

Among the notable inhabitants within the grounds are some of considerable local and national importance, and a few closely associated with the development of the Hill. There are good examples of 18th and 19th century monuments. The fine circular gothic watchtower belongs to the age of *The Resurrectionists* in the early 18th and 19th centuries when watchtowers became features of graveyards in Edinburgh and the castellated circular tower for a short time was the prototype for such structures.

Work of Art

High

Historical

Outstanding

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

None



One of many groups of broken stonework

Architectural

High

Scenic

Outstanding

Nature Conservation

Little

Archaeological

High

Recreational

Some

Sources – Primary

Maps

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Ordnance Survey 1895 www.british-history.ac.uk

NLS National Library of Scotland www.nls.uk

NMRS National Monuments Record of Scotland

SCRAN Scottish Cultural Resource Access Network www.scran.ac.uk

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