

City of Edinburgh Council

Edinburgh
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

063 Fettes College

Consultants

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Survey visit: October 2007

063 - Fettes College



Key

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

EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

**SURVEY OF GARDENS AND
DESIGNED LANDSCAPES**

Peter McGowan
Associates with
Christopher Dingwall

063 Fettes College

Parish Edinburgh

NGR NT 235 742

NMRS No NT27NW 35.00

Owners Institutional

Designations

Listing Fettes College A
Fettes College Sundial A
Fettes College Carrington House B
Fettes College Glencorse House B
Fettes College Kimmerghame House B
Fettes College Malcolm House B
Fettes College Moredun House B
Fettes College Cricket Pavilion B
Fettes College North Lodge, Gates, Gate-piers and Railings B
Fettes College South Gates and Railings B
Fettes College East Lodge and Gates B
Fettes College West Lodge and Gates B
Fettes College War Memorial B

Inverleith Conservation Area

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

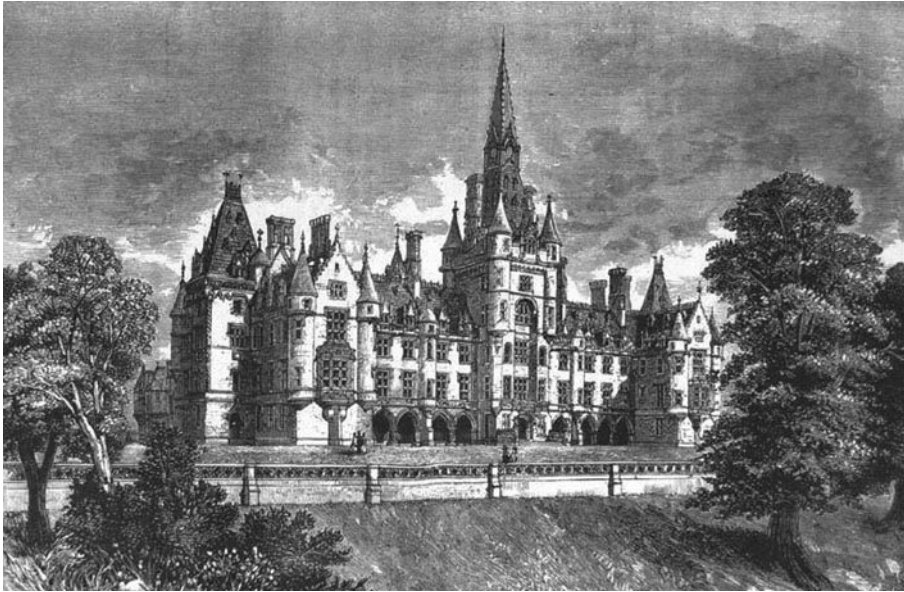
The mature wooded grounds provide the setting for one of Edinburgh's most spectacular 19th century educational institutions, together with its associated boarding houses and other outbuildings, all of which occupy a prominent position on rising ground to the north-east of the city.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

Fettes College stands in a broadly rectangular site on rising ground to the north of the Water of Leith. Its landscaped grounds are defined to the west by Crewe Road South, to the south by Carrington Road and to the east by East Fettes Avenue. Young's Playing Fields to the north are separated from the Belows Playing Fields and main school campus by the 1980s residential developments of Rocheid Park and North Werber, and by neighbouring campus of Telford College. The main vehicle access is from East Fettes Avenue, with subsidiary vehicle entrances adjacent to Rocheid Park, serving the North Lodge, Malcolm House and the Preparatory School, and on Crewe Road South serving staff houses and



Broad Walk from South Gate



*Fettes College, late 19th
century postcard (Edinburgh
City Libraries)*

the Westwoods Sports Centre. There is pedestrian-only access from the south on Carrington Road. Young's Playing Fields to the north are accessed by a track/avenue which runs between the developments of North Werber Park and Rocheid Park. The West Gate and drive is not in regular use. Strong axial lines centred on the main school building continue into the street layout beyond the boundary of the school grounds, eastward into Inverleith Place and southward into Fettes Avenue and Learmonth Avenue. The most spectacular inward views are those from high ground to the south across the Water of Leith. The terrace around the main school building gives outward views over part of the city. Site area 37.4ha.

MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

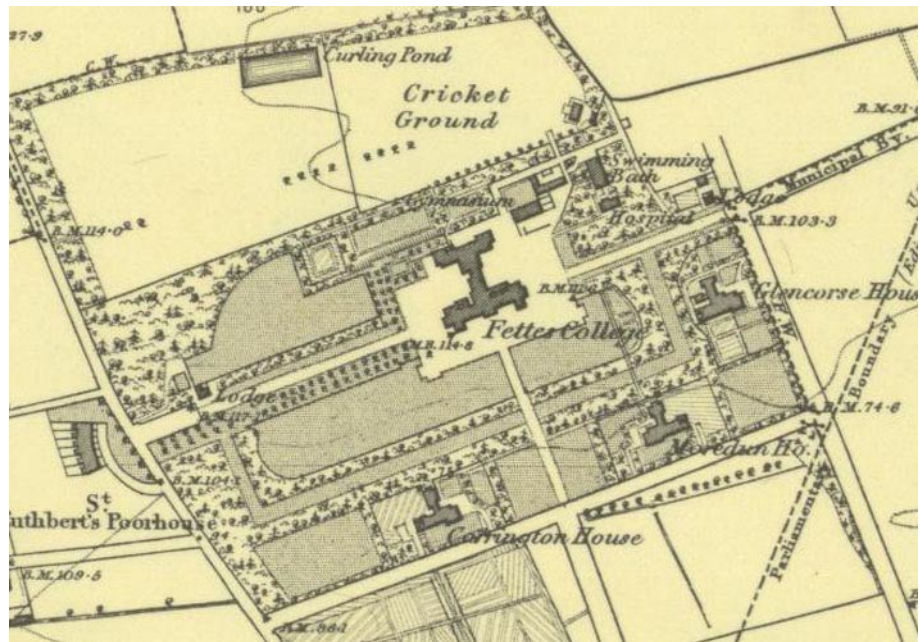
19th century on former agricultural land; significant 20th century additions and modifications.

HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

The main school building and its landscape setting were developed between 1863 and 1870 on what was formerly agricultural land to the east of Werber Farm on part of the Comely Bank Estate. Apart from the addition of land to the north at Young's Playing Fields, the school occupies the original landscape framework created for it, which allowed space along its south and east edges for the addition of boarding houses – Moredun House (1870), Carrington (formerly Dalmeny) House (1872), Glencorse House (1873), Malcolm House (1880) and Kimmerghame House (1928). Other developments in the 20th century included the cricket pavilion (1906) and Dining Hall (1967), joined more recently by new staff housing and the Westwoods sports centre (2002). Built development is continuing in the north-eastern part of the campus.

William Fettes (1750-1836) was a successful tea and wine merchant in Edinburgh. In 1785 he became a member of the Merchant Company and was a founder member of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers. Fettes sat on the Town Council from 1785, and served as Lord Provost in 1799 and again in 1805. He was created a baronet in 1804. Marriage to Maria Malcolm in 1787 produced a son, William, who died in 1815. On Fettes' retirement in 1800 he turned his attention to the care of his many estates, one of which was at Comely Bank in Edinburgh, purchased c1800 from Sir Philip Ainslie of Pilton (Harris). Comely Bank House stood close to the site of Avenue Villas, at the junction of Crewe Road South and Comely Bank.

Maria Fettes died about three weeks before Sir William in 1836. As their only son had predeceased them, there was no direct heir. However, Fettes had left



Ordnance Survey 6" map
1885

£166,000 in his will to '... form an endowment for the maintenance, education, and outfit of young people whose parents have either died without leaving sufficient funds for that purpose, or who from innocent misfortune during their own lives are unable to give suitable education to their children' (Cassells). Between Fettes' death and 1863, the endowment had grown enough to enable his dream to be realised with the foundation of Fettes College on part of his Comely Bank Estate.

David Bryce was engaged to design the main school building in a Franco-Scottish Gothic style (1864-70). Bryce was also responsible for the boarding houses of Moredun (1870), Carrington (1871-72) and Glencorse (1873), together with the West and East Lodges (1870), with their associated gates and railings. Of these, Carrington House was restored by Anderson, Kininmonth & Paul after a fire in 1963. Robert Rowand Anderson designed Malcolm House, North Lodge and the gates there (1880). Built as a sanatorium, this now serves as Fettes College's preparatory school. An earlier cricket pavilion by Rowand Anderson was demolished, to be replaced by another designed by former pupil William Carruthers in 1906. Past pupils who lost their lives during the First World War are commemorated by a war memorial in bronze designed by William Birnie Rhind (1919, recast 1933). The last of the main buildings to be '... built in character with the original buildings' was Kimmerghame House (1928), designed by A F Balfour Paul. All of these buildings were set in a landscape framework designed c1863 by Fettes trustee Archibald Campbell-Swinton, with the assistance of James McNab, curator of the neighbouring Royal Botanic Garden. The Ordnance Survey map of 1877 shows Campbell-Swinton's design in place.

Maps and Graphic Evidence

Roy's map (c1750) shows the area to the north of the Water of Leith as agricultural land. Knox (1816) shows Comely Bank House, with tree-lined fields and the settlement of Werter to the north. By the time of the first Ordnance Survey maps of Edinburgh (1852) the area immediately to the south, surrounding Comely Bank House, had become the Comely Bank Nursery. This remained the case until the end of the 19th century, by which time Fettes Avenue had been created. Subsequent maps and aerial photographs show the development which has taken place since then, some of it on land which was subject to compulsory purchase – on either side of Fettes Avenue, with Broughton High School (1972) to the east, and the Lothian and Borders Police Headquarters (1971) to the west; with Telford College to the north-west from 1963; with the housing developments of North Werber Park and Rocheid Park in the 1980s.

*South Gate and approach*

COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE ETC

Fettes College

The principal school building, an architectural tour-de-force in the French Gothic / Scottish baronial style favoured by David Bryce, stands at the centre of its landscape, on a broad, level gravel terrace, with open lawns to the south, providing car parking and open space from which the building can be appreciated, as well as affording outward views of the city over surrounding woodland.

Lodges and Drives

The East Gate and drive with an avenue of cherry trees now serves as the main vehicular access to the school and its grounds. The West Gate and drive, formerly marked by a triple avenue of elms, is not in regular use and is chained off at the junction with Crewe Road South. While only a few mature elms survive and planting to the north of the approach has been affected by the formation of the Sutcliffe Pitch (all weather playing fields), the western avenue has recently been replanted with limes. The elaborate South Gate and broad gravel walk, with steps up to the main terrace, serves to focus attention on the centre of the south front of the school building, the view of which is framed by a gap the south woodlands.

West Wood, South Wood and the Green Walk

The more westerly and southerly parts of the landscape were planted with a broad belt of mixed woodland, cut through by a broad grass ride known as the Green Walk. The species mix, which owes much to James McNab, is described as follows.

*East Gate and Lodge**West Gate**Glencourse House**Green Walk, South Wood*



*Lawn below Headmaster's
garden*



*Sunken garden by
Headmaster's lodge*



*Belows playfield field and
Malcolm House*



*Boundary woods, Fettes
Avenue*



*Young's playfield field and
Ferry Road woodland strip*



A diverse range of tree species was planted with sycamore, elm, beech, horse chestnut, lime and Norway maple forming the dominant species within the woodland blocks. Evergreens such as Scots and Corsican Pine also formed the original woodland plantings and more ornamental species such as walnut, whitebeam and sweet chestnut tended to be planted as specimen trees. Laurel, holly and yew formed understorey plantings. (Fettes website)

Four boarding houses – Kimmerghame, Carrington, Moredun and Glencorse – occupy pockets cut out of the South Wood. Subsequent development of staff housing and sport facilities has led to a similar reduction in the area of the West Wood.

Belows and Young's Playing Fields

Belows Playing Fields, immediately to the north of the main school building, comprises a cricket ground, rugby pitch and playing fields. Much of the perimeter is shaded by mature trees. Where new development has taken place, as alongside North Werber Park and around the Westwoods Sports Centre and car parks, new screen planting has been put in. A double avenue of young sycamores flanks the track leading from Belows Playing Fields up to Young's Playing Fields, which lie alongside the A902 Ferry Road. Young's Playing Fields are sheltered to the north by the Ferry Road Strip, a narrow belt of mixed broadleaved planting. A line of tall poplars partially screens Telford College immediately to the west. Additional planting and hedging, mostly of beech and hawthorn, encloses and screens this area.

Headmaster's Lodge and Gardens

The area immediately to the north and west of the main school building comprises a sunken formal garden, lawn and shrubberies, together with formal terraced and walks, in which yew and holly are common.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Although there are several entry points to the grounds and are open and unguarded, public access is discouraged for security reasons. Parts of the school campus are covered by CCTV and the grounds are patrolled. *Bona fide* visitors are admitted.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

The landscape framework created for the school in the mid-to-late-19th century is still largely intact, although some parts of the original layout have been eroded by the development of new buildings and facilities. Much of the original planting survives as mature broadleaved woodland. The grounds are generally well cared for by a dedicated team of gardeners and groundsmen. That said, the woodland shows some signs of under-management in places, with localised dumping of materials apparent in a few places. Where new development has taken place,

the tradition of screen planting has been maintained, using varied species mixes similar to the original, except for the planting of poplars along the Telford College boundary. Dead elms are removed and, where necessary, appropriate replacements are put in, such as limes on the west avenue approach. There is a landscape management strategy in place, developed with the assistance of Ian White Associates and Donald Rodger. What threats there are to the character and integrity of the landscape are likely to come from pressure for the development of new facilities for the school. The school reports a constructive dialogue and relationship with the City Council.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overall

The site has high regional significance, as the setting for a building of outstanding character, and for the contribution which the mature woodland makes to views from adjacent roads, and more generally in the north-western part of the city. The site is seen as having a significant group value, along with Inverleith Park, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Warriston Cemetery and several other playing fields, all of which are included in the Inverleith Conservation Area.

Work of Art

Some

Historical

High

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

High

Architectural

Outstanding

Scenic

High

Nature Conservation

Some

Archaeological

Little

Recreational

High (private)

Sources – Primary

Maps

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Alexia Lindsay, archivist, Fettes College
