

City of Edinburgh Council

Edinburgh
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

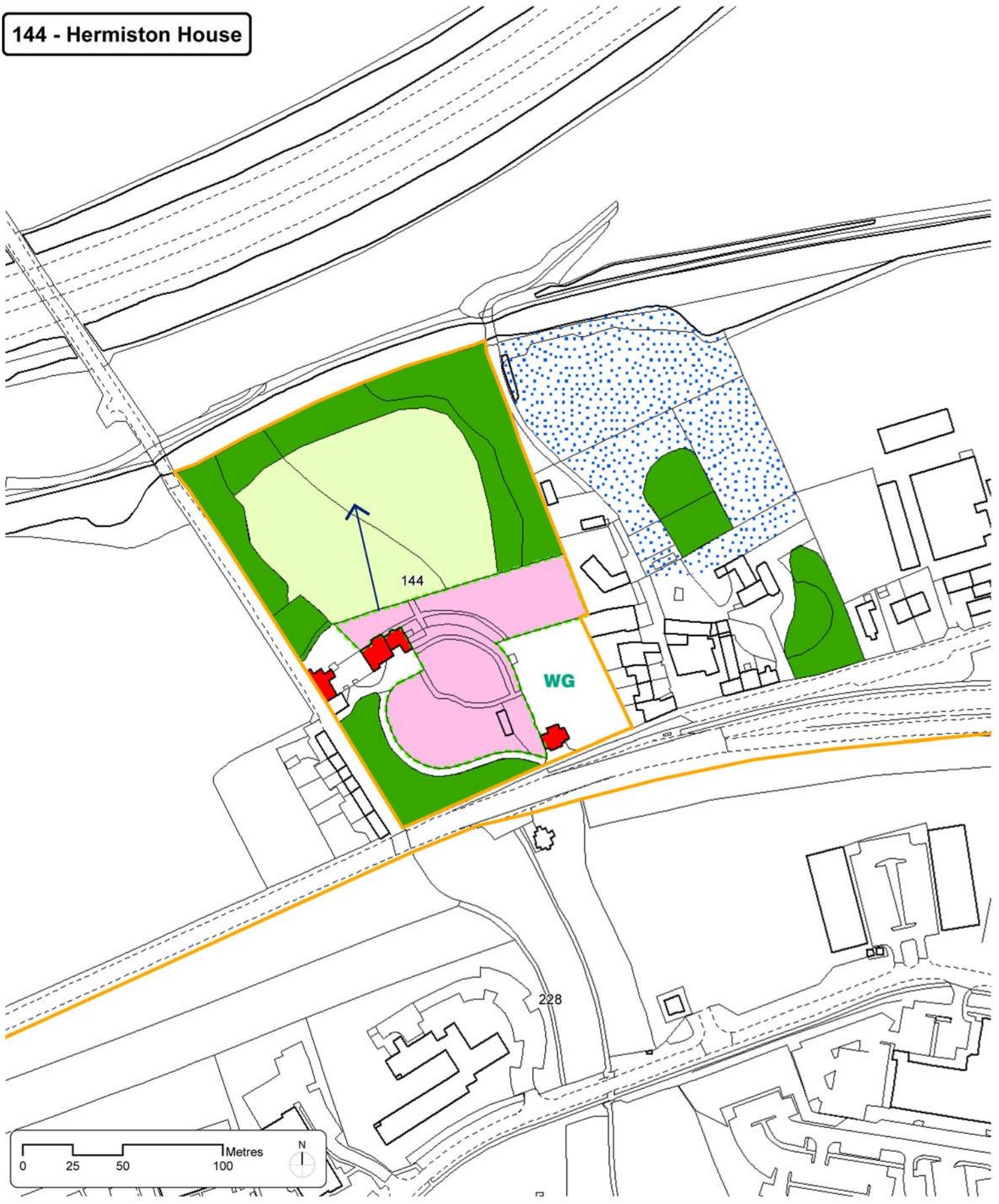
144 Hermiston House

Consultants














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Survey visit: November 2007

144 - Hermiston House



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 | | |

144 Hermiston House

Parish Currie, later Edinburgh

NGR NT 174 702

NMRS No NT17SE 26.00

Owners Institutional (Heriot Watt University)

Designations

Listing Hermiston House, West Lodge, Gate Towers, Gig-House/Stables & Boundary Walls, including Walled Garden B
Former South Lodge B
Hermiston Old Farmhouse B

Scheduled Ancient Monument: Union Canal, Fountain Bridge to River Almond (Index. No. 11097) forms the northern boundary of the site.

Hermiston Conservation Area

Green Belt

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (The Union Canal)

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

Hermiston House and its policies constitute the western third of the Hermiston Conservation Area, which also embraces Hermiston Farm and the neighbouring village of Long Hermiston. The mature policy planting is prominent in views on the western approach to Edinburgh via the A71 Calder Road and from Gogar Bank on the north side of the valley of the Gogar Burn.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

Hermiston House stands on a low ridge to the south of the valley of the Gogar Burn, next to the long-established A71 Calder Road. The surrounding policies are compact and tightly circumscribed – to the south by the Calder Road, to the west by the unclassified Hermiston House Road, to the north by the Union Canal, and to the east by the ground of Hermiston Farm. The mature planting serves as a backdrop to the neighbouring village of Long Hermiston and, together with the surrounding rubble-built boundary walls, is scenically important in views from the surrounding roads. There are closer inward views from the towpath on the north side of the Union Canal and from the canal bridges that mark the north-west and north-east corners of the landscape. The house has long-standing historical and physical links with neighbouring Riccarton House. The M8 passes close by the site in a cutting, which runs parallel with and a short distance to the north of the Union Canal. Site area 3.0ha.

MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Planting recorded from 17th century onwards; landscape developed to its present form in 19th century.

HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

According to Harris (2002) there are records of a settlement or estate of *Hyrdmanestoun* or *Hirdmanstoun* dating back to the 13th century. The present house, with associated planting, appears to have its origins in the 17th century. The house was largely reconstructed in the early 19th century by architect William Burn, at which time the present landscape appears to have been laid out as a setting for the house.

Hermiston House was in the ownership of the Craig family (also of neighbouring Riccarton) from c1683 until 1823, when the estate passed to one James Gibson, who had assumed the title of Sir James Gibson-Craig. The architect William Burn was commissioned to work on both estates in the 1820s and is supposed to have remodelled the house – and even to have lived in it for a period c1830. The house subsequently passed through the female line to the Sudlow family, for whom further alterations to the house c1955 were made by architect Esmé Gordon. The estate was sold to Midlothian Council in 1967 who gifted it to Heriot Watt University in 1969. The house currently serves as the home of the university's Vice-Chancellor.

Maps and Graphic Evidence

While the *Hermistoun* (name only) appears on Blaeu's map (1654) without associated planting, *Hermestoun* is noted on Adair's map (1682) as being surrounded by trees. Roy's map shows a square block of planting on the north side of the public road, a short distance to the west of Long Hermiston, though without a house marked – possibly a drafting error, as the plantation appears to be in the right position with respect to the village and other landscape features. It is only with the Ordnance Survey (1850s) that the character and extent of the landscape can begin to be clearly defined. This shows the policies divided into three sections – an area of densely planted pleasure grounds to the south of the house, embracing a lawn and policy planting; a walled garden immediately to the east of the pleasure grounds; and a larger area of parkland to the north of the house, flanked by boundary planting to the east and west, with a few single standard trees scattered across the more open ground between. The South Lodge and gate-piers, which are said in the Statutory List description to be early 19thC and attributed to Burn, may be later as they do not appear on the early OS maps. Outwith the Hermiston landscape, across the A71 Calder Road, a belt of planting, embracing a lodge house and carriage drive, is seen to link Hermiston House and its landscape with the much larger grounds of Riccarton House to the south.



Ordnance Survey 6" map
1852-53

COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

Mansion House and Pleasure Grounds

The south front of the mansion house overlooks the pleasure grounds, part laid out as a lawn, with adjacent flower borders, and part with mature broadleaved policy planting and shrubberies, through which the house is approached by a short curving drive from a gate at the south-eastern corner.

Walled Garden

The walled garden, still in active use as garden ground, lies just to the east of the pleasure grounds.



Walled garden and house

Gate lodge and drive



House and garden to rear

Park and Policies

The north front of the house overlooks a rectangular grass park or paddock, which slopes down to south bank of the Union Canal that forms the north boundary of the site. Mixed broadleaved planting to both east and west – including mature sycamore, oak, lime, beech and ash – shelters and screens a central area of grass. This is divided by a fence into a mowed area closer to the house and an area of rougher grassland which runs down to the canal. Tree stumps indicate that there were larger trees in this central area, now replaced with new planting, including single standard horse chestnuts and a clump of birch and other broadleaved trees.



*Boundary planting beside A71
road*

Views and Vistas

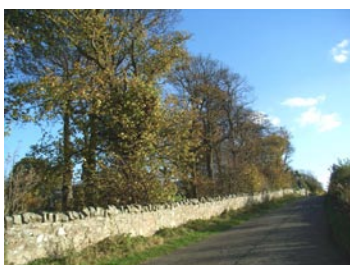
Although views and vistas towards and away from the house are strictly limited by the surrounding policy planting, there is a northerly outlook across falling ground and the Union Canal across the valley of the Gogar Burn. Although the M8 passes close to the landscape, the fact that it runs in a cutting on ground which slopes away from the house means that its visual impact is small, and that the impact of traffic noise is limited.



Tree stumps and new planting

PUBLIC ACCESS

Although there is no public access to the landscape at Hermiston, the site is surrounded on three sides by publicly accessible ground – by the A71 Calder Road to the south, by Hermiston House Road to the west, and by the Union Canal tow-path to the north, the first two of which are open to vehicular traffic, the third to pedestrian and bicycle traffic only. The eastern side of the landscape abuts private ground which is part of Hermiston Farm.



*West boundary wall and
planting*

Union canal beside Hermiston





*View across Gogar valley to
Hermiston from the north*

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

As long as it serves as the residence of the Vice-Chancellor of Heriot Watt University and the grounds are maintained by the University, there seems to be little by way of threats to the character and integrity of the landscape of Hermistoun House. Threats could come from a change of use of the house, or from built development on adjacent farmland to the east, which would diminish the present rural character of its setting. The proximity of mature to over-mature trees to boundary walls, roads and footpaths is likely to be a recurring safety issue.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overall

Despite its small size, the position of Hermiston House and its associated planting on a ridge means that it is visually prominent in the surrounding landscape. Its high visibility from neighbouring public roads and footpaths, and its major contribution to the character of the Hermiston Conservation Area, give it high local significance.

Work of Art

Some

Historical

Some

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

Some

Architectural

High

Scenic

High

Nature Conservation

Little

Archaeological

Little

Recreational

Little

Sources – Primary

Maps

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

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

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

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

Thomson, *Atlas of Scotland*, 1832 NLS

First edition Ordnance Survey (1852) Sheet 5 NLS

Parish map OS (1898-1904) NLS

Ordnance Survey (1915) Sheet IISE NLS – paper copies

NLS National Library of Scotland www.nls.uk

NMRS National Monuments Record of Scotland

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

GB 582 HWUA GC summary www.hw.ac.uk/archive/html/gibsoncraig.html

History of Riccarton www.hw.ac.uk/archive/histric.htm

Hermiston Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2000 [www.http://download.edinburgh.gov.uk/caca/cacaHermiston.pdf](http://download.edinburgh.gov.uk/caca/cacaHermiston.pdf)

Sources – Secondary

Colvin, Howard 3rd edition 1995 *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* Yale University Press

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

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Historic Scotland Listed Building Report Accessed via PASTMAP, on the RCAHMS website www.rcahms.gov.uk 9.1.07, 19.2.07

McWilliam, Colin et al 1978 *The Buildings of Scotland, Lothian* Edinburgh Harmondsworth, Penguin

National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) Accessed via CANMORE, on the RCAHMS website www.rcahms.gov.uk 2.1.07

Tweedie, John & Jones, Cyril 1975 *Our District – the Historical background of Currie & Ratho*, Currie District Council

Additional sources not consulted

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

RHP 547 1793 Plan of the Estate of Hermiston by Thomas Johnston
