

Edinburgh

Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

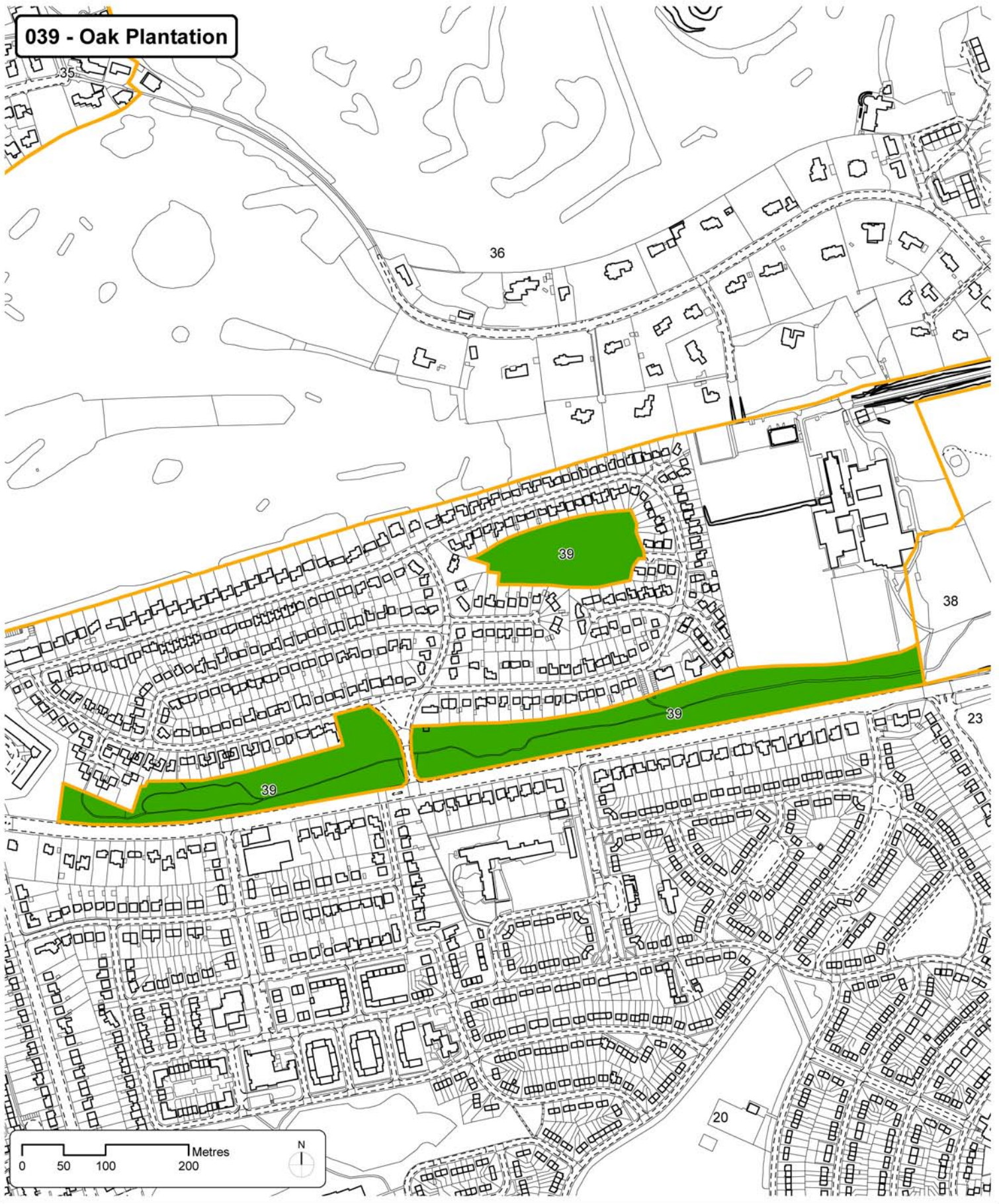
038, 039 Davidson's Mains Park (038) and **Oak
Plantation / Bonnyfield Strip** (039)
formerly part of Barnton (036) and Upper
Cramond (035)

Consultants














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Survey visit: September 2007

039 - Oak Plantation



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		

EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

**SURVEY OF GARDENS AND
DESIGNED LANDSCAPES**

Peter McGowan
Associates with
Christopher Dingwall

**038, 039 Davidson's Mains Park (038) and Oak Plantation /
Bonnyfield Strip (039)**
formerly part of Barnton (036) & Upper Cramond (035)

Parish Cramond, later Edinburgh

NGR NT 196 753

NMRS No NT17NE

Owners Fragmented with areas in Council and multiple private ownership

Designations

Listing Barnton House Walls to Policies on Queensferry Road & Quality
Street B
Barnton House East Gate Piers and Well B

City of Edinburgh Green Belt: Davidson's Mains Park only

Area of Great Landscape Value: Davidson's Mains Park only

Local Nature Conservation Site

Tree Preservation Orders

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

Although the Barnton estate was sold and broken up more than a century ago, surviving elements of the once-extensive designed landscape, which incorporated the former lands of [Old] Barnton House and Upper Cramond, still play a major role in the character of the landscape on the north-west fringe of the city. The surviving estate wall and policy trees that form the Bonnyfield Strip and the southern part of Davidson's Mains Park make a major contribution to views on the west approach to Edinburgh along Queensferry Road. The woodland, together with Davidson's Mains Park and the Oak Plantation are important assets both aesthetically and recreationally for neighbouring communities.

The area prior to 1895 is described in the report on 035, 036 Barnton (036) and Upper Cramond (035). This report covers the period following the opening of the Barnton Branch Railway in 1895. Site areas 14.3ha and 6.7ha.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

This report is concerned with the southern-most section of the extensive landscape associated with Barnton House, being the part of the parkland and policies that was cut off by the building of the Barnton Branch Railway in 1894. The area is bounded to the south by the Queensferry Road, to the west by that section of Whitehouse Road which lies to the south of the Royal Burgess Golf Club House, to the east by Quality Street and a short stretch of Cramond Road South, and to the north by the line of the former Barnton Branch Railway. The area incorporates the housing developments of Barnton Park and Barnton Grove, together with The Royal High School and Davidson's Mains Park. Much of the south and east edges of the area are marked by the estate wall which used to define the boundary of the Barnton policies. The wall has been breached for vehicular access to the Barnton Park housing and pedestrian access to The Royal High School.

Davidson's Mains Park abuts the Barnton Avenue Conservation Area to the north, and an Area of Interest at Davidson's Mains to the east, the latter being a defined in the Edinburgh North West Local Plan (1992) as an area in which '*... local amenity or character [should] be safeguarded in any development*'. The area includes part of the listed boundary walls to the former policies of Barnton House together with the East Gate piers.



Ordnance Survey map 1923

MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

The earlier history of the area prior to 1895 is described in the report on 035, 036 Barnton (036) and Upper Cramond (035). This report covers the period after the opening of the Barnton Branch Railway in 1895.

HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

With the opening of the Barnton Branch Railway in 1895, the southern section of the park and policies of Barnton House became physically isolated from the remainder of the landscape. The first significant built development within this area took place in the south-west corner at Barnton Grove, close to new railway terminus, not long after the opening of the new branch line. The land on which Davidson's Mains Park was formed was acquired by the City Council from Dame Mary Ramsay-Steel-Maitland in 1922 (Nimmo). Subsequent alterations and additions to the park have included a circular bitmac footpath, a pavilion and a centrally-placed play area with railings. New planting has taken place from time to time within the park, augmenting the existing policy woodland. A linking path gives direct access to the neighbouring Bonnyfield Strip. The greater part of the strip of former parkland between the Bonnyfield Strip and the Barnton Branch Railway (closed 1951) has been taken up by the Barnton Park housing development of approximately 600 houses, comprising Barnton Park/Avenue/Crescent/Drive/Place/View/Wood, begun in 1959, in the centre of which one of the larger parkland clumps has survived as Oak Plantation. The small addition of Barnton Park Dell was added to this housing development in 1973. Ground between Davidson's Mains Park and eastern end of the Barnton Park housing development was chosen as the new site for Edinburgh's Royal High School, which opened in 1968. At the north-eastern extremity of the area residential development of East Barnton Gardens took place on the site of the former Barntongate Nurseries in 1978 (Harris). More recently, a small part of Davidson's Mains Park, next to a rocky outcrop in the north-west corner of the park, was designated as a Community Woodland and new trees were planted.

Following the sale of land by the Ramsay-Steel-Maitland family, the ground is now in divided ownership, the eastern part of the area largely in the owned and managed by the City of Edinburgh Council, the western part mostly in multiple private ownership, with the Bonnyfield Strip and Oak Plantation managed by a local residents' co-operative known as the Barnton Park Policies Association.

Maps and Graphic Evidence

Throughout its earlier history the area formed part of the larger designed landscape described under Site 035, 036 Barnton (036) and Upper Cramond (035). This is seen in successive maps including Roy (c1750), Laurie (1766) and



Bonnyfield Strip west and path

Armstrong (1773) with the southern edge of the rectilinear parkland landscape marked by what appears to be a single line of field boundary trees. Contrasting with this, both Knox (1816) and Sharp, Greenwood & Fowler (1828) show a landscape of undivided parkland, dotted with numerous clumps and bounded by a much broader peripheral belt of planting. The line of the Queensferry Road was moved a little to the south at about this time, with Knox (1816) showing an oval clump on slightly rising ground in approximately the same position as the Oak Plantation, and Sharp, Greenwood & Fowler (1828) showing what appears to be a narrow line of trees marking the line of the old road within the park, together with a broader belt of planting a short distance to the south by the realigned Queensferry Road, as well as a large oval clump in the approximate position of the Oak Plantation. The line of the old road is still evident on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (1853) with the Oak Plantation a short distance to the north. This would seem to date the planting of the Bonnyfield Strip and the Oak Plantation, including the trees around what is now Davidson's Mains Park, to the first two decades of the 19th century. Maps from the 1890s onwards show the surviving traces of the old road effectively obliterated by the construction of the Barnton Branch Railway that cut the Bonnyfield Strip and Oak Plantation from the rest of the park.

Although plans exist for housing development within the detached southern parkland from the early years of the 20th century, it seems that, with the exception of the housing closest to Barnton Station, building did not begin until 1959 (Harris). Aerial photographs published by The Scotsman in 1961 and 1966 (SCRAN) show the partially completed Barnton Park housing scheme, with the ground to the west of the Oak Plantation already built over, and that to the east of the Oak Plantation, including the site of the Edinburgh Royal High School, still vacant.

COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

Bonnyfield Strip woodland

A narrow strip of mature woodland bounded to the south by a high stone wall alongside the Queensferry Road and to the north by the back gardens of the Barnton Park Housing development. The strip is effectively divided in two by Barnton Park Drive, created c1959 as the access to the Barnton Park housing scheme. Under the terms of an agreement (apparently) drawn up at the time of the housing development, the householders have a shared responsibility for the ongoing management of the woodland under the name Barnton Park Policies Association. Close to Barnton Park Drive, at the entrance to the housing development, the ground is maintained as mown grass with underplanting of



Bonnyfield Strip west and path



*Davidson's Mains Park, view
from large rocky knoll*



*Davidson's Mains Park, small
rocky knoll*



*Davidson's Mains, Barnton
East Gate*



*Davidson's Mains, old
sycamore*



*Davidson's Mains, community
woodland (above) and central
field with new planting (left)*

ornamental shrubs, and a low brick wall. An informal path leads east and west along the strip. The planting is of mixed broadleaved trees including mature oak, ash, and sycamore, with some elm and lime, and occasional horse chestnut, sweet chestnut and Scots pine aged up to and around 150 years. Laurel, holly, elder and yew form an understorey, with invasive ivy in places, especially towards the east. There is some fallen timber, much of which is left to lie. There is some evidence of limited, though largely unsuccessful, recent underplanting using Tuley Tubes. The woodland strip continues unbroken into the neighbouring woodland belt that surrounds much of Davidson's Mains Park to the east, where the responsibility for management passes to City of Edinburgh Council. Some dumping of garden waste from properties backing onto the woodland occurs.

Davidson's Mains Park boundary woodland

The belt surrounding Davidson's Mains Park is contiguous with that of the adjacent Bonnyfield Strip. The woodland surrounding the park is of mixed broadleaves, including mature to over-mature oak, ash, sycamore and elm, with some holly. A good deal of fallen and cut timber occurs, much of it hidden within the woodland, especially in the south-east corner of the park, where there is also dumped rubble. A small rocky outcrop within the woodland lies close to the boundary wall in the south-east corner of the park.

Davidson's Mains Park community woodland

A more substantial rocky outcrop forms rising ground in the north-west corner of the park, overlooking the Royal High School from the east, characterised by largely self-seeded ash trees and a substantial pollarded sycamore. Most of the surrounding ground appears to have been planted about 8-10 years ago as a Community Woodland with native broadleaves – including oak, ash, birch, maple, cherry, rowan and alder, with a little Scots pine and some hawthorn, blackthorn and holly. The area was very weedy at the time of the site visit.





Davidson's Mains, play area



Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservation Orders cover the area of the former Barnton House policies including Oak Plantation and Bonnyfield Strip, together with a small detached block of woodland at the back of the Royal High School.

Davidson's Mains Park playing fields

Some minor landforming has been undertaken to create a level playing surface in the central grassy area of the park. Just to the south of the playing field is rising ground marked by a small stand of trees and a playground with modern play equipment and railings. Existing mature trees in the central area have been supplemented with some more recent planting of ornamental broadleaves. A white-washed pavilion lies towards the north side of the park. A bitmac path runs around the perimeter of the park from the main entrance in the north-east corner of the park, with bench seating at intervals along its length.



Davidson's Mains, pavilion

Oak Plantation

Originally an oval clump within open parkland, the Oak Plantation has become entirely surrounded by houses towards the east end of the Barnton Park housing development. Though comprised primarily of mature oak trees aged c150 years, as the name implies, there are other broadleaved to be found, including a large ash, with mature cherry and birch in places. An understorey of elder and holly is present, with dense ground flora in places, including invasive brambles, nettles and rosebay willowherb together with a few garden escapes. Some natural regeneration occurs, mostly of sycamore, especially towards the east end of the plantation.

Estate Wall

Much of the south and east edges of the area are marked by the estate wall which used to define the boundary of the Barnton policies. The wall has been breached for vehicular access from the Queensferry Road via Barnton Park Drive to the Barnton Park housing development; opposite Clermiston Road to allow pedestrian access to The Royal High School; and in two other places to create recessed bus shelters.



Oak Plantation and internal path

Views and Vistas

The mature planting of the Bonnyfield Strip, bounded by the old estate wall, forms a striking and more or less continuous feature for approximately one mile on the north side of the Queensferry Road, where it is seen from passing traffic and by houses on the north edge of Clermiston. Houses on the south side of the Barnton Park housing and towards its eastern end, back directly onto the mature woodland of the Bonnyfield Strip and the Oak Plantation, with a few old parkland standard trees surviving on roadsides and in gardens amongst the housing. Outward views from the Bonnyfield Strip and Oak Plantation are limited by the subdued topography, the estate wall and surrounding housing. There are



Oak Plantation view near entrance

inward views from the footpath surrounding Davidson's Mains Park and from the central play area, over the centre of the park, which occupies a slight hollow. The only outward view of any note from within Davidson's Mains Park is from the rocky outcrop in the north-west corner of the park, most notably over the park and eastwards across the city to features as far afield as North Berwick Law.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Although there are signs which mark parts of it, such as the Oak Plantation, as *Private Property*, there is effectively open access to almost all the woodland and open ground within the area. Access to Bonnyfield Strip is by an ungated and informal gravel path which runs from west to east within the plantation, crossing Barnton Park Road and linking directly to a path leading through woodland to Davidson's Mains Park, near where it is crossed by a well-used bitmac path giving pedestrian access from Clermiston and the Queensferry Road to the Royal High School. The only public access to the Oak Plantation is from the east via a short side-road off Barnton Park Avenue, although some back gardens have gates, which allow access. There are informal paths within the Oak Plantation.

The principal access point to Davidson's Main Park is in its north-east corner via the old east gate to Barnton House park and policies, located next to the junction of High Street, Quality Street and Cramond Road South. Limited informal roadside parking is available within the gate. Apart from the circular bitmac path around the perimeter of the central open area of the park, all other paths within the woodland are informal, and of bare earth or gravel. The paths and park are well-used by dog-walkers, joggers, mothers with young children and others.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

There is some evidence of low intensity woodland management within the Bonnyfield Strip and Oak Plantation. Although some littering and vandalism was noted, with broken glass and damaged trees, most notably close to the main access to the Royal High School, there is low incidence of these problems within the greater part of the woodland. Dumping of garden waste from neighbouring properties appears to be a localised problem.

Within Davidson's Mains Park tree stumps and substantial piles of cut timber point to more active management of the woodland, though this appears to be reactive (ie. resulting from the deliberate removal of diseased and/or hazardous trees). In spite of this, the general impression of the woodland within the park is one of neglect, with significant dumped cut timber, fallen branches and other materials in the less visible, and less visited parts of the park. Even the recently established Community Woodland appeared weedy and neglected at the time



Oak Plantation pedestrian access

of the visit. Signage around and within the park is both limited and neglected. The highest level of maintenance appears to be reserved for the more visible and accessible areas of the public park.

Future management issues likely to affect much of the area will arise from the ageing of the woodland, with the consequent increasing hazard posed by overhanging branches and over-mature trees. Some recently-fallen branches were noted beneath oaks in close proximity to the footpath surrounding the park, while one beech tree close to a bench showed signs of recent and major tree surgery, presumably to reduce the hazard to path users. Tags on some of the larger trees suggest that the Council holds some record of the condition of trees within the park, though it is not known if this forms part of a more comprehensive woodland management plan.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overall

The important contribution made to local amenity by the Bonnyfield Strip, the Oak Plantation and Davidson's Mains Park is recognised in their various designations within the *North West Edinburgh Local Plan*, whether as Green Belt, as part of an Area of Great Landscape Value, or Tree Preservation Orders. As well as the contribution of the woodland and old estate wall to landscape character on the west approach to Edinburgh, the woodland provides an attractive backdrop to neighbouring residential areas and is a valuable recreational resource for the surrounding communities. Taken together, this gives the area high value in a local context.

Work of Art

Some

Historical

Some

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

Some

Architectural

Little

Scenic

High

Nature Conservation

High

Archaeology

Little

Recreational

High

Sources – Primary

Maps

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

First edition Ordnance Survey (1852) Sheet 2a NLS

Parish map OS (1898-1904) NLS

Ordnance Survey (1915) Sheet III NW NLS – paper copies

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

Thomson, *Atlas of Scotland*, 1832 NLS

First edition Ordnance Survey (1852) Sheets 1 and 2a NLS

Parish map OS (1898-1904) NLS

Ordnance Survey (1915) Sheet III NW 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

Sources – Secondary

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Gifford, John et al 1984 *The Buildings of Scotland, Edinburgh*: Harmondsworth, Penguin

Grant, James 1880s *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh* www.oldandnewedinburgh.co.uk

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Additional sources not consulted

NAS BR/PYB/5/1/147 1896 Corstorphine, Gogar and Barnton Railway petitions maps etc
