

City of Edinburgh Council

Edinburgh

Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

256 Pollock Halls

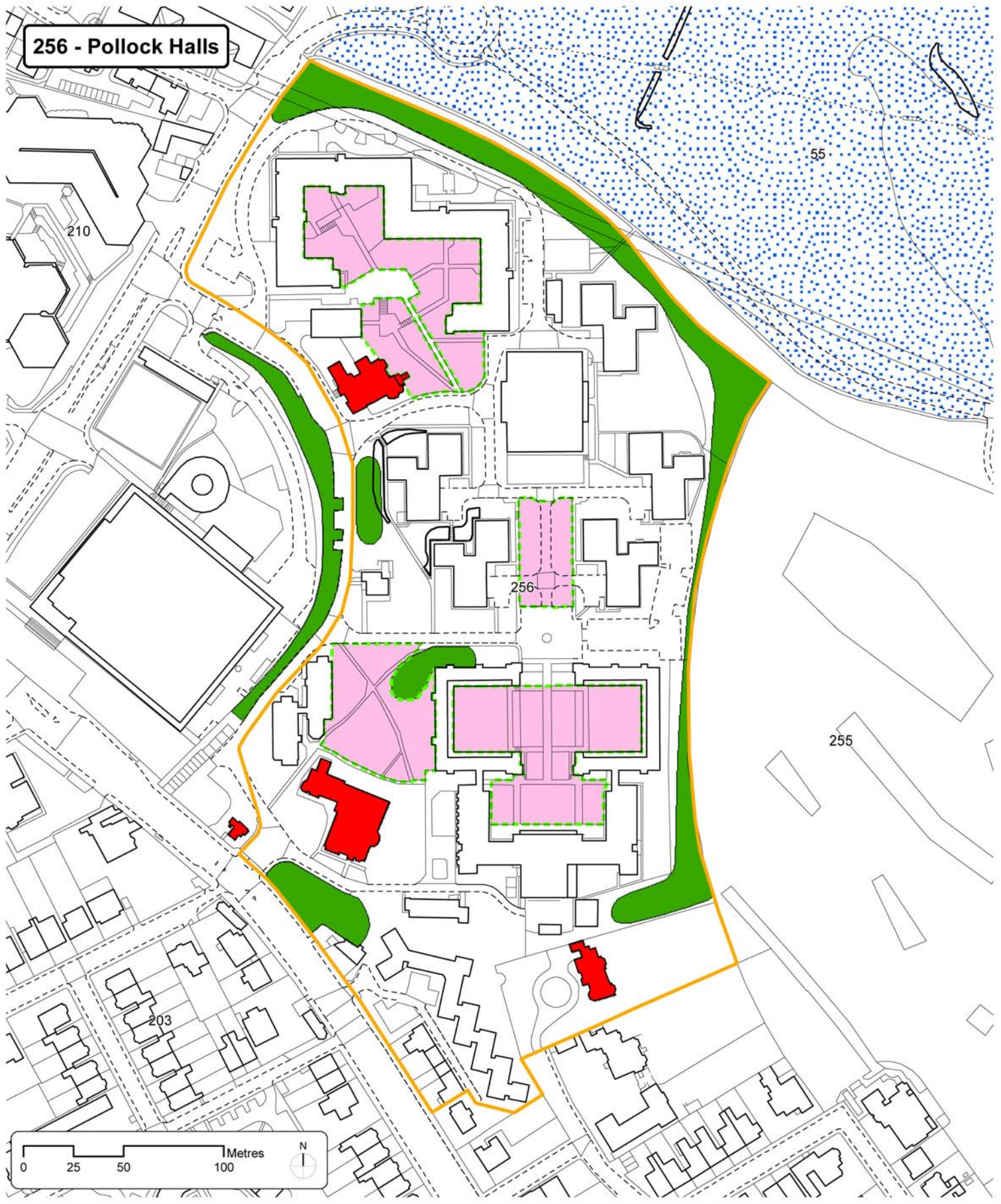
(Abden House, Salisbury Green, St Leonard's Hall)

Consultants














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Survey visit: September 2007

256 - Pollock Halls



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

256 Pollock Halls
(Abden House, Salisbury Green, St Leonard's Hall)

Parish Newington, later Edinburgh

Owners University of Edinburgh

Designations

Listing Abden House B
St Leonard's Hall A
Salisbury Green A
Salisbury Green Gate Lodge B
Salisbury Green former coach house & stables (now 75-77 Dalkeith Road) C (S)

Blacket Conservation Area – Salisbury Green, Abden House and the estate buildings fronting Dalkeith Road lie within the Blacket Conservation Area

Heritage Trees

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

A landscape from two main periods developed around three 19th century Scots baronial villas and their gardens to which have been added halls of residence and related buildings of various dates in the post-war period with high quality landscape design and planting, maintained to the highest standard, to create an outstanding residential environment that is further enhanced by its location at the foot of Arthur's Seat.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

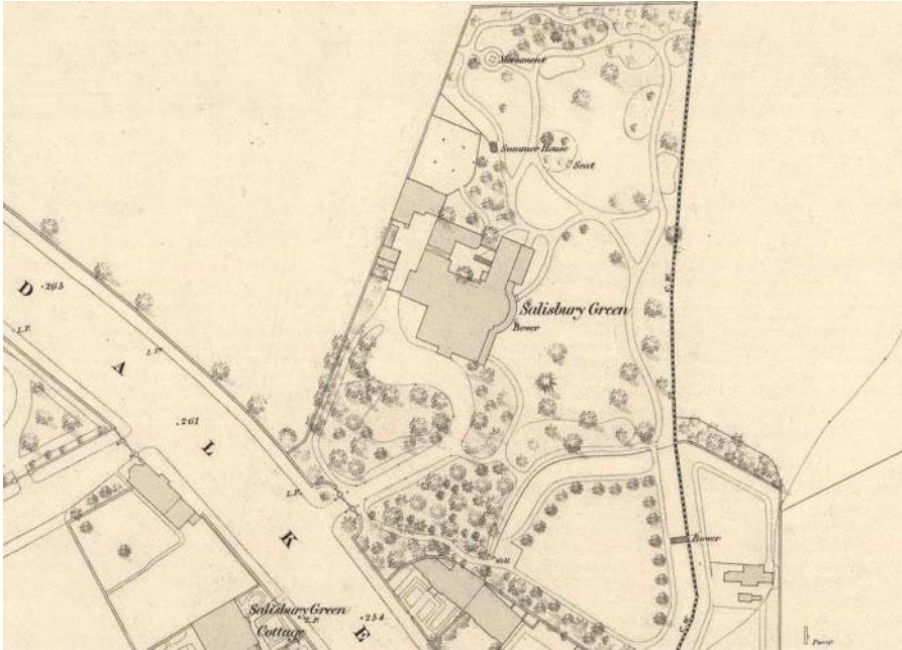
Located on the south-east side of the city on the north side of Dalkeith Road (A68) with vehicular access from Holyrood Park Road. The Royal Commonwealth Swimming Pool on the west is part of the same urban block occupying the corner between the two roads. Topographically and visually the site is dominated by Arthur's Seat (251m) and Salisbury Crags that rise in Holyrood Park along the north-east boundary. Site area 9.3ha.

MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Periodically during the 19th century; 1950s to the present.

*View in centre of Pollock Halls
with three phases of built
development and backdrop of
Arthur's Seat*





Ordnance Survey map 1849-53 showing Salisbury Green

HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

University of Edinburgh Halls of Residence developed on land that was formerly the garden areas of three adjacent mansions: Salisbury Green, Abden House and St Leonard's Hall. Sir Donald Pollock, rector of the university 1939-45, purchased the land and the mansions between the wars and gave them to the university during his time as rector. All three mansions were built for members of the same family – the Nelsons. They owned Parkside Publishing Works, which was located on the site of the present Scottish Widows building (HS).

Salisbury Green was the first house on the site, built by Alexander Scott built c1780, close to Dalkeith Road in the south part of the modern campus. The next owners were the Dick Cunninghams of Prestonfield; the widowed Lady Dick lived at Salisbury Green until 1860 when it was sold to William Nelson (1816-87) (HS). John Lessels remodelled it for him in 1860-7 (Gifford 637). This L-plan baronial building is all '... pious texts and cherub corbels, beautifully carved' (Gifford 637). The main block is the earlier house, which had a wing added c1820 (HS) to the south.

Around 1866, Lessels added a gate lodge on Dalkeith Road (DSA). A coach house and stables (now 75-77 Dalkeith Road) were built on the site of Rose Hall c1880, again in the Scots baronial style (HS). David John Chisholm and others converted Salisbury Green into a hall of residence for male students from 1933 (DSA). A further extension was added to the south-east in 1979 by Gordon Duncan & Somerville (HS), possibly on the site of a conservatory. In 2006 it was refurbished and is now run as a hotel and conference centre.

Abden House was built in 1855 and lies to the south and somewhat separate from the rest of the modern campus with access from Marchhall Crescent to a court on its west side. Thomas Davies designed it for publisher Thomas Nelson (1780-1861); has been described as 'spiritless Jacobean' (Gifford 637). Sir Donald Pollock gave Abden House to the university with the intention that it was used for as the Principal's residence and for official entertaining (Stewart 37). It was used as the headquarters of the Scottish Cultural Resource Access Network (SCRAN) 1997-2004. From 2007 it has been the Confucius Institute for Scotland in the University of Edinburgh.

St Leonard's Hall was originally called Arthursley but had become St Leonard's Hall by 1894. John Lessels designed the house in 1869-70 for Thomas Nelson junior (1822-92); described approvingly as '... fiercest hammer-dressed baronial ... an awesome four-storey tower' (Gifford 637). In 1888 Groome described it as

Ordnance Survey map 1876-77 showing Salisbury Green and Abden House

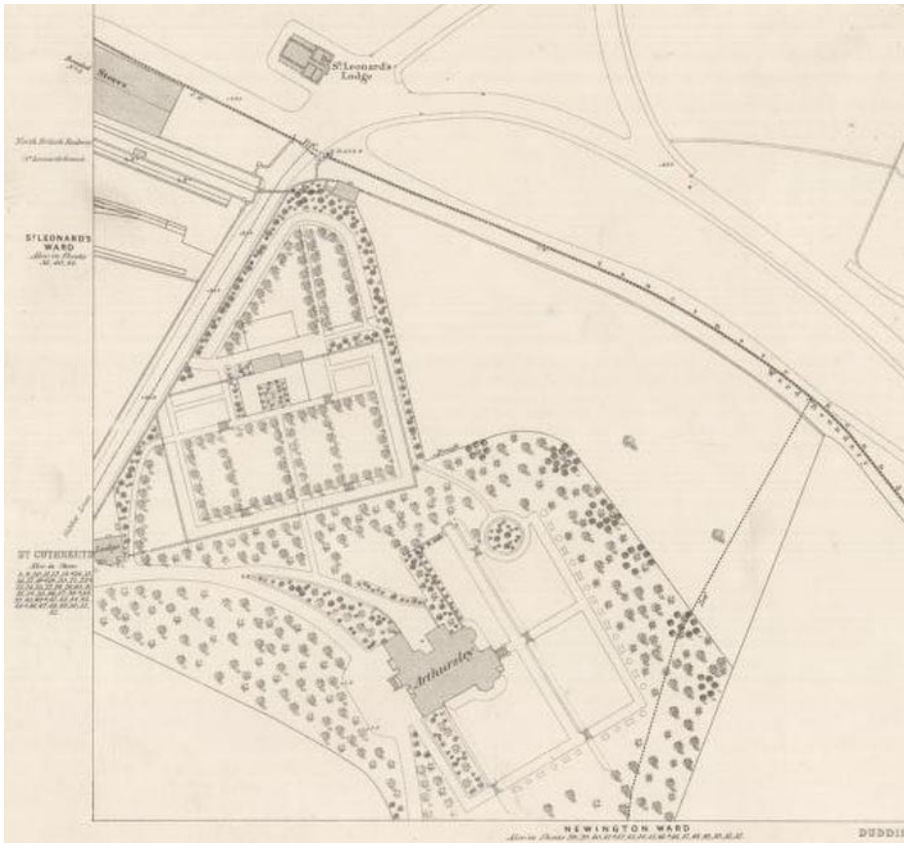


'surrounded by grounds of 12 acres' (Groome V3 312) saying '... now that the wood has begun to grow up around it, the bare aspect of the grounds that at first ... somewhat injured the general effect, has been removed' (Groome 480). St Leonard's Hall was used as a Red Cross Hospital during the First World War and thereafter was St Trinnean's School for Girls (sic) until World War II. It is reputed to be the inspiration for St Trinian's School in the novels of Ronald Seale. St Leonard's Hall was used as a hall of residence for women students from c1939 and now contains university accommodation offices and function rooms.

From 1956-64, the modern building phase of development of Pollock Halls commenced with the erection of Scandinavian-influenced collegiate courtyard residences of Holland House (1959), designed by Sir William Kinimonth (1904-88), followed soon after by its slightly less spacious mirror, Fraser House (the two are now together known as Holland House). Pollock opposed the development scheme but was over ruled by principal Sir Edward Appleton (HS).

In the 1960s six system-built tower blocks were added, named in honour of former Principals of the University; Baird, Ewing, Lee, Turner, Brewster and Grant, clustered round a Refectory block, later named the John McIntyre Centre; all constructed to serve Edinburgh's staging of the Commonwealth Games and coinciding with construction of the adjacent Commonwealth Pool swimming venue. To these was added the largest, Cowan House, which opened in 1973, replacing a hall of the same name demolished in George Square. A further hall, Masson House, was added in the early 1990s. The two northern-most of the 1960s blocks, Cowan and Brewster, were demolished to make way for the Chancellor's Court provide 526 en-suite bedrooms, designed by Oberlanders Architects, which opened in 2003 and is now the largest building on the site. Oberlanders design sought to define the northern edge of Pollock Halls with a courtyard type enclosure, in a similar manner to Holland House etc at the south, and to create an appropriately scaled urban edge to the landscape of Pollock Halls distinct from that of Holyrood Park. It introduced a perimeter access road in an attempt to improve the flow of the landscape through the grounds with less hinderance from vehicular traffic. The whole complex now houses 1,940 students.

The combination of the three 19th century baronial houses, a range of building forms and styles from the post-war period, mature trees from the old gardens



Ordnance Survey map 1876-77 showing Arthursley, later renamed St Leonard's

and a high standard of amenity landscape planting using a rich palette of plants, set against the backdrop of Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crag, has created a campus of outstanding quality and visual diversity. Under the management of the University of Edinburgh Landscape Section, the grounds of Pollock Halls have become a renowned and much admired landscape both as an amenity and as an educational resource.

Maps and Graphic Evidence

Salisbury Green is first shown on Knox's map of 1816 as a house owned by Lady Dick; shown in more detail within a modest garden plot on Kirkwood 1817 and similarly on Lancefield 1851. The OS Town Plan of 1845-53 shows the house plan and garden layout in great detail (at 1:500 scale) with a short drive from Dalkeith Road and sinuous paths on the east and north of the house leading to a seat, a bower, a summer house and a monument, with dense trees and shrubbery near the road and more open planting elsewhere. The OS Town Plan of 1876-77 shows Abden House (and its neighbour March Hall) added on a smaller site to the south, served from what is now Marchhall Crescent, with a walled garden between the two, apparently belonging to Salisbury Green, and



Arthur's Seat from Dalkeith Road, with St Leonard's and immature planting, late 19th century Valentine's postcard view

several small houses facing on to Dalkeith Road. The east boundary of Salisbury Green has been extended to include a long *Fish Pond*. The same map shows a drive close to the west boundary of Salisbury Green, with a lodge at the roadside, running through a tree-planted belt to *Arthursley* to the north. This property has a complex boundary set back from the Holyrood Park wall with another drive leading from a lodge on *Gibbet Loan* (later renamed Holyrood Park Road). A walled garden lies next to the west boundary and a formal terraced garden on the north of the house, with the rest of the site well planted with trees and shrubbery. The corner site (present Commonwealth Pool and Parkside bowling club) is open undeveloped land on both these maps. The 1893 OS maps show little change in the landscape of the three houses, apart from the name change of Arthursley to *St Leonard's Hall*.

COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

Architectural Features

Salisbury Green



Salisbury Green

This L-plan baronial building, mainly three storeys with higher tower with conical-roofed corner bartizans, corbelled castellations and cap-house with crow-stepped gables. The earlier house is largely hidden behind on the north, with a single storey service block to the north-west in the same style. Now runs as a conference centre and hotel.

Abden Lodge



St Leonard's Hall

Three storey house in yellow sandstone in Jacobean style, mainly displayed in gables, dormer gables and chimneys. Faces on to a carriage circle with gates at the end of Marchhall Crescent; enclosing walls approx. 3.0m high remain with an arched gateway leading north to the main campus. Now houses the Confucius Institute for Scotland in the University of Edinburgh.

St Leonard's Hall

Originally called Arthursley; rugged baronial in a rambling plan, generally three storeys with four-storey tower on south-east that echoes that of Salisbury Green; otherwise a much greater area of fenestration, particularly on the south elevation. Now used for function rooms and university accommodation offices.

Lodges

Salisbury Green gate lodge on Dalkeith Road (1886) survives at the modern formal vehicular gateway to Pollock Halls, though unused as such. St Leonard's



*Salisbury Green gate lodge
beside Dalkeith Road*

Abden Lodge



*Holland House*

gate lodge that lay just to the north has gone. The Scots baronial coach house and stables are now 75-77 Dalkeith Road.

Other Buildings

From south to north:

Fraser Court 1960s

Holland House: block A and C, South Hall 1959

Holland House: block B and D 1964

Holland House Annex

Masson House 1990s

Baird House 1960s

Ewing House 1960s

Lee House 1960s

Turner House 1960s

John McIntyre Centre or Refectory Block 1960s

Grant House 1967

Reception Centre 1999

Chancellor's Court 2003-04

Brewster House 1960s; demolished 2002)

(Cowan House 1973; demolished 2001)

Estate walls

Each mansion still has high rubble walls surviving along the main road boundaries, plus all the garden walls of Abden House.

*St Leonard's and Chancellor Court*

Drives and Paths

The main drive between the security checkpoint on Holyrood Park Road and the Dalkeith Road gates follows the old line of the St Leonard's drives, with a re-routing near at the south to exit at the Salisbury Green lodge and join with the drive of the second mansion. Four new roads off this line provide access to various parking courts and service areas. The most recent route runs around the north perimeter serving Chancellor's Court and the older John McIntyre Centre. All are paved with asphalt.

A main pedestrian spine runs from Holland House in the south to the John McIntyre Centre, although unfortunately conflicts with the vehicular circulation running west-east. Many other paths provide links between other buildings through the well-planted landscape. A turnstile in the north estate wall that formerly allowed access to Holyrood Park is now sealed. A pedestrian access gate at Salisbury Green lodge allows residents, visitors and local people access from Dalkeith Road to the grounds (closed 1.00am to 6.00am).

Pedestrian surfaces relate to an extent to the period of development of each area and include red concrete blocks, small unit slabs, standard paving slabs and granite chippings.



Perimeter drive and tree belt

Gardens and Amenity Landscape Planting

The majority of the planting is from the University of Edinburgh phase of development and is of a very high quality. Locally in the vicinity of the three mansions, remnants of the 19th century planting survive, particularly yews and hollies with a weeping ash at Abden House. Along the west boundary and estate drive, along the north-east boundary with Holyrood Park and, to a lesser extent, the east boundary with Prestonfield golf course there are lime, horse chestnut and sycamore in excess of 100 years of age.

Generally the landscape planting is of such a wide variety that it is difficult to summarise and is of consistently high quality and visual interest, planned for displays throughout the seasons. Low herbaceous and shrubby groundcovers are used particularly effectively, together with larger herbaceous plants, spring bulbs, ornamental grasses, architectural foliage plants, mass shrub planting and specimen shrubs and trees.

As well as providing rich environment for the residents of Pollock Halls the planting provides a learning resource – in terms of its planting design and the botanical or horticultural interest of the range of species present – for several educational establishments including the University, the School of Landscape at Edinburgh College of Art, and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. In addition, pages of the Estates and Buildings website provide a Plant Photo Gallery to identify some of the plants for those who are interested.



*High quality amenity planting
of mixed herbaceous and
shrub groundcover and
feature planting*

*Planting associated with
1960s blocks*





Pollock Halls seen from the side of Arthur's Seat

The landscape planting is being augmented and renewed on a continual basis, associated with building development projects, building refurbishment and as areas become tired or otherwise need replacement. Recent projects have included the new landscape planting related to Chancellor's Court and replanting at Lee House and Abden House. The planting is planned and managed by the Landscape Section of the Estates and Buildings Department of the University led by the Landscape Maintenance Officer, John Turpin, who is responsible for the design of new planting schemes. He is the third of person in the post to have managed the creation of the fine landscape since its first creation in its modern form the 1960s.



New service road and associated planting on west of Chancellor Court

Views and Vistas

The central axis terminated at the south by Holland House South Hall is the main formal vista; cross views are also obtained in the lower part of the site eastward to the Lammermuir Hills. Otherwise there are a wealth of intriguing views of buildings of different periods offset by planting of different scales and ages, often with glimpses to or the backdrop of Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. From many elevated viewpoints in Holyrood Park including the main hill, the crags, Radical Road and Queens Drive the Halls are a prominent part of the view, as well as from the Duddingston Drive. The views from Blacket Place and Blacket Avenue are also notable.

Visual Intrusions

There are few intrusions apart from the large signs in duplicate at the entrances and the telecoms tower adjacent to the bowling club which stand out; the gabion



Salisbury Green entrance on Dalkeith Road seen from Blacket Place

*Holyrood Park Road entrance
with Chancellor Court and St
Leonard's*



wall retaining the ground beside the new north perimeter road is also stark but may blend in as it weathers and planting matures.

The range of architectural styles can sometimes jar one against the other, although this is saved by the landscape planting and the overall visual diversity created.

PUBLIC ACCESS

No formal provision for access but the paths through the area are regularly used by local residents. Visitors to Edinburgh who stay in the Halls during University vacations and hotel guests and conference delegates also benefit from access to the landscape.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

No change appears necessary. In such an apparently well-resourced landscape it may be questioned whether adaptation to climate change, changing fashions in planting to reflect more natural or native planting, and the increasing expense of this standard of landscape planting will have a more significant effect than other sites. The conflict between vehicular and pedestrian routes and the lack of priority for pedestrians in mixed areas is one issue that could be tackled.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A site of outstanding architectural significance on account of its three A or B listed mansion houses, as well as some significant modern buildings from c1960 onwards, but whose 19th century landscape has been superseded with modern planting of outstanding quality, which is an exemplar of its type, to create an exceeding rich residential environment.

Work of Art

High

Historical

Some

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

Outstanding

Architectural

Outstanding

Scenic

High

Nature Conservation

Little

Archaeological

None

Recreational

Some

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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**Anderson, RD, Lynch, M, & Phillipson, N 2003 *The University of Edinburgh* Edinburgh University Press*Dictionary of Scottish Architects* Accessed at www.codexgeo.co.uk/dsa, 30.11.06Gifford, John et al 1984 *The Buildings of Scotland, Edinburgh*: Harmondsworth, PenguinGroome, Francis (Ed) 1884 (Vols 1 & 2) 1885 (Vol 3) *The Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* Thomas C Jack, EdinburghHarris, Stuart 1996 *The Place Names of Edinburgh*, Gordon Wright Publishing, Edinburgh*Historic Scotland Listed Building Report* Accessed via PASTMAP, on the RCAHMS website www.rcahms.gov.uk 9.1.07, 21.2.07*National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS)* Accessed via CANMORE, on the RCAHMS website www.rcahms.gov.uk 2.1.07, 20.2.07Stewart, Charles H 1973 *The Past Hundred Years – the Buildings of the University of Edinburgh* University Press

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