

City of Edinburgh Council

Edinburgh
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

134 Ratho Park
(Ratho Park Golf Course)

Consultants

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134 - Ratho Park



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		

134 Ratho Park
(Ratho Park Golf Course)

Parish Ratho, later Edinburgh

NGR NT 1501 7087 Ratho Park
NT 1504 7101 Ice-house
NT 1512 7093 Dovecot
NT 1477 7093 Stables

Owner Ratho Park Golf Club

Designations

Listing Ratho Park with terrace walls and gates A
Ice house C (S)
Dovecot B
Stables and steading B

Area of Outstanding Landscape Quality

REASONS FOR INCLUSION

A moderately-sized estate designed landscape that survives with many of its built and planted features present from the early 19th century, and modified for use as a golf course by the renowned Scottish golf course designer, James Braid.

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

Located west-south-west of the city and east of Ratho village, served by the minor road from Gogarbank along the south boundary and Ratho Park Road to West lodge, and bounded by the Union Canal along the north and east. The M8 motorway extension runs parallel to the canal and about 0.5km distant. Site area 42.3ha.

MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Early-19th century in present form, incorporating earlier components and later additions.

HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

Robert Bruce gifted the estate of Ratho (as well as other estates including Riccarton) to his daughter Marjory and her new husband Walter Steward in 1315. Lord Colinton owned Ratho during the 17th century. Alexander Foulis bought it in 1563 and the family owned it until 1786, with the succession in the hands of Archibald Christie from 1778.

Thomas MacKnight Crawford of Belleville, North Carolina, bought Ratho in 1786. In 1818, Andrew Bonar, who also owned Hatton and Bonnington, purchased Ratho; his son John (d1836) engaged William Burn to build a new Tudor Gothic house in 1824 (Colvin 186). Peddie & Kinnear carried out further alterations in 1868 (DSA). North-west of the house are the steading and stables, also by Burn, built in 1826 and later.

After the Bonar family, there were a number of different residents listed in the County Directory; most were owners. The last Bonar was recorded at Ratho in 1843; a Mrs Caddel was named as the resident 1851 and 1852. In 1862 it was John Orr Ewing (1809-1878), owner of John Orr Ewing & Company, Turkey-red dyers and printers of the Vale of Leven. He had paid £20,000 for Ratho estate. In 1868 John Dougal of Ratho & Glenfirness was named in the County Directory. In 1902 Sir Charles W Cayzer Baronet of Gartmore (1843-1916), head of the Cayzer, Irvine and Company, owned Ratho. The firm was founded in Liverpool and moved



Ordnance Survey 6" map
1852-53

to Glasgow in 1881; its steamships operated from the UK to India. The last entry in the County Directory of 1902, names the house as Ratho Park.

From 1928 the estate was used as a golf course when a club from Corstorphine had to move from their course on Corstorphine Hill at the time that the zoo was extended (Tweedie & Jones 81). This is a parkland course over 18 holes was designed by James Braid and laid out by John R Stutt, who acted in partnership with Braid (Moreton 84). The previous year they had worked together at nearby Dalmahoy (Price 123). It has been said that 'This must be one of the most beautiful courses in Scotland.' (Price 124)

Maps and Graphic Evidence

Shown as a house with a small group of trees and named *Rathorige* on Adair's map of 1682, with *Rathobyres* slightly more prominent to the north-west. On Roy's military survey map of c1750 *Rathaw* is shown as a tall house at the centre of a small rectilinear layout of tree-lined parks set between two burns to the north and south. Laurie 1766 shows something similar, with the Gogar Burn to the east. Knox 1816 and Thomson 1832 show more detail in the landscape with boundary and north-south planting strips, an east-west drive linked to a south boundary road by two other routes. The later map shows the line of the canal cutting through the pattern of the planting strips to the north of the house, indicating that today's landscape covers a reduced area from that of the 18th and early-19th century. The Sharp etc map of 1828 is the first to show an informal natural-style landscape. This comprises: boundary tree belts, including those alongside the canal on the north and east, and internal belts in the north part which appear to incorporate some of the old linear strips; a walled garden west of the house; and a sinuous drive running diagonally from south-east to north-west. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey (1850s) adds further detail including in the walled garden and a stables courtyard in the north-west corner; little parkland planting is shown and that present follows former strip lines.

An aerial photograph from 1941 (RCAHMS E52651) shows few mature trees in the landscape of fairways and open parkland. An oblique aerial postcard on sale at the professional shop shows the core of the landscape in the late-20th century (Alan W Pate, nd).

COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

Architectural Features

Mansion House

Ratho Park has been described as 'severely picturesque Tudor' (McWilliam 403) and, by Groome c1880 (228), as 'a good modern Grecian building with beautiful grounds,' perhaps referring to the interiors that are said to be 'plainest Grecian' by McWilliam (59). Today's description is of an 'asymmetrical Tudor revival

Roy's map c.1750



Sharp's map 1828

Thomson's map 1832



*Ratho House (club house)
with professional shop to right*



house' (HS). The house features spindly corner turrets, stepped battlements and mullioned windows identically disposed on two floors; an intimation of Jacobean in the shaped gables which all surmount projecting bays. Planned as a compact rectangle with the main suite of rooms overlooking a balustraded terrace along the symmetrical south front, a lower lying office court to the north, and an entrance tower on the east side. Now the golf club-house.

Stables courtyard

A quadrangular plan simple Tudor revival steading and stable with two-storey main domestic block at the south facing the drive, single-storey stables and office ranges to the sides, and a two-storey centre block on the north, all in honey-coloured sandstone. By William Burn, built 1826, partly raised to two storeys c1835; mainly fair condition with residential parts inhabited. The cottages there are now known as West and East Cottage.

Lodges and gates

The main entrance at the south-east corner has wide asymmetrical quadrants set on an angle with Tudor-style gate-piers; inner piers and gates removed; former gate lodge on east side also missing; white painted concrete kerbs channel the roadway and deter parking in the stone-chipped quadrants but are intrusive and would be better replaced by a traditional treatment. The lettering of the golf course name along the wall face also is over-large.

A modern single-storey timber house stands beside low-key gate-piers, one with its cap missing, at the west entrance.

Dovecot and ice-house

The lectern dovecot, built during the Foulis tenure and dated 1713, stands east of the house. Roofless but otherwise fairly complete with two chambers and grids of nesting boxes lining the interior.



Dovecot

*Stables courtyard from
south-east*



*South terrace and parkland*

The ice-house was built around the same time and is located in the north tree belt, close to the Union Canal that was built in the period 1818-22. A conical mound with a doorway on the north; recently cleared of sycamore regeneration that had colonised the mound and surrounding area.

Walled Garden

The walled garden to the west of the house is now grassed and used as a golf practice area; no surviving features.

Estate walls

Random rubble wall with semi-circular cope along south road boundary; similar dykes form the other boundaries.

Drives and Paths

Winding south-east drive from south-east gate to the house, surfaced in bitmac. Continues to north and west of the house as a straight drive to the west gate.

Gardens and Policy Planting

Gardens

On the south side of the house is a low terrace, overlooking the parkland, laid out with a grass lawn and perimeter rose beds, with a mixed border of herbaceous plants and ornamental shrubs around the outside; lawn used for putting practice.

Parkland

The parkland at Ratho is the best feature of the landscape and extends over the majority of the area, with planting of various ages complimenting the natural gently undulating landform. Oak is the dominant tree species among the oldest trees. Mature limes line the drive in several sections, notably south of the house and north-west of the house; also along the south side of the walled garden site. A great range of younger trees of various ages occur across the parkland, including trees of some maturity but younger than the oaks and limes. These include mixed broadleaved forest trees, smaller ornamental trees (cherry, hawthorn), and conifers including Scots pine, larch and yew. Much of the newest planting is in banks of trees between the fairways and introduces too much planting and small ornamental trees that interfere with the traditional open parkland character.

The NSA (1840s) refers to 'A few very fine specimens of the Cedar of Lebanon of ordinary dimensions, but healthy and vigorous, are to be seen at Ratho House.'

*South terrace*

*Central parkland looking
towards Pentland Hills with
trees of various ages*



(NSA 80) Some are present west of the house, although they may not be of the same vintage.

One source suggests that the small public park in Ratho village was part of the Ratho policies. Nimmo (108) says that Ratho Park (1.1 ha), which includes a field, football pitch, play area and pavilion, was part of the Ratho House policies and that 'Handsome sycamores a striking feature by the road, but also with a presence of silver birch, ash, and rowan along its walled perimeter.' This is quite separate from the 19th century extent of the designed landscape.

Tree Belts and Woodlands

The boundary trees belts are continuous and comprise mainly mature trees with fair natural regeneration, including ash, beech, hawthorn, lime, oak, sycamore and Scots pine.



*Perimeter tree belt, north
boundary*

Views and Vistas

The Pentland Hills are seen from several parts of the park, although generally the perimeter tree belts limit views out.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Golf courses can be dangerous for public use unless a degree of separation is possible. The golf course uses the whole space of the park and there is little room for paths, although there may be some potential through the tree belts, though these are narrow.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

The layout of the James Braid period had a minimum of new planting and other alterations to the prevailing parkland character, which at Ratho appears to have been lightly planted. There is now too much planting locally within the course,

*Ratho Park Golf Club
entrance*



with a tendency to subdivide the fairways with banks of trees, that interferes with the traditional open parkland character. Continuous planting along fairways is unnecessary since group planting can achieve the same effect in views along their length and the linear planting creates barriers to other views across the course parkland.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overall

An estate landscape of modest extent that has high overall value on account of the range and state of preservation of its surviving built features, including the listed house, stables, doocot and ice-house, and the extensive good quality parkland and the golf course layout by James Braid, that retains some of its character due to its mature forest trees, despite the intrusion of typical inter-fairway recent planting.

Work of Art

High

Historical

Some

Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

Some

Architectural

Outstanding

Scenic

High

Nature Conservation

Some

Archaeological

Little

Recreational

High

Sources – Primary

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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

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RHP 40825 1828 Bound volume of plans (6) of estate of Ratho property of John Bonar restricted

RHP 40825/2 1829, 1837, 1845, 1856 Plan of Ratho Park restricted

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