

City of Edinburgh Council

**Edinburgh**  
Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

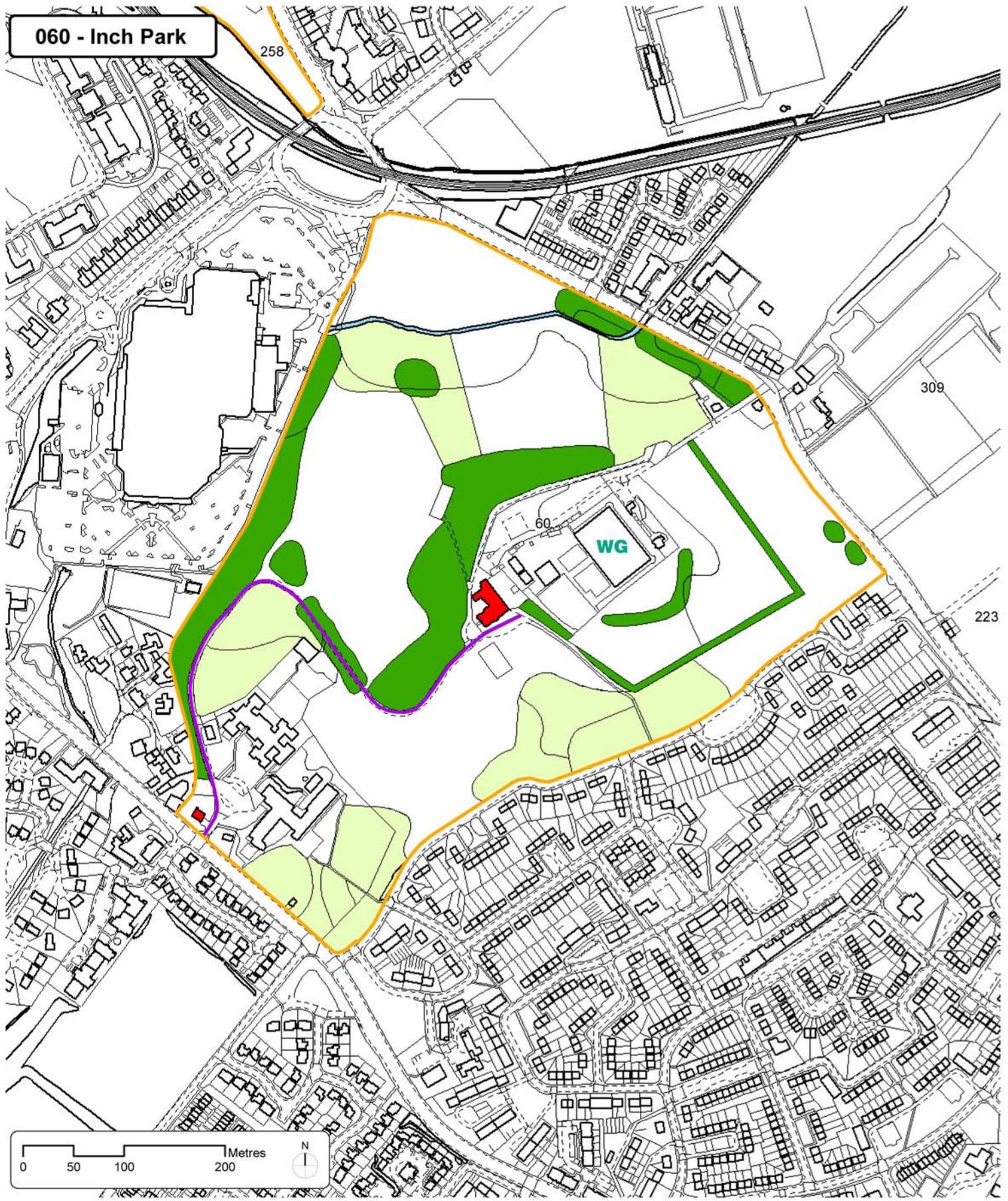
**060 Inch Park**  
(King's Inch, King's Meadow)

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Survey visit: September 2007

060 - Inch 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            |   |                          |

## 060 Inch Park (King's Inch, King's Meadow)

Parish Liberton, then Edinburgh

NGR NT2767 7082

Owner City of Edinburgh Council

### Designations

Listing Inch House A  
Garden  
Sundial B  
Gate in north garden wall C  
Gate in south garden wall C

### REASONS FOR INCLUSION

A former country estate, the major part of which survives as a public park and sports pitches, with other parts used as a primary school, Council plant nursery and training unit, housing and incidental open space, with the category A listed house as a community centre.

### LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

Located between Old Dalkeith Road (A7) and Gilmerton Road (A772) to the south of Cameron Toll and the shopping centre, on a fairly flat site with the Braid Burn within the north boundary and Liberton housing to the south. Craigmillar Castle and its designed landscape (aka Craigmillar Castle Park) lie to the east. Site area 28.7ha.

### MAIN PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Early 17th century; late 18th century; early 19th century; 1890s; second half of 20th century (housing, schools and nursery development).

### HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

The Inch lies on land that belonged to the Abbey of Holyrood from 1450 (Harris 349). In 1617, James Winram – who in 1623 was the Keeper of the Great Seal – built the earliest part of the existing house. This was an L-shaped, three storey, crowstepped tower house, often assumed to be accessed across a drawbridge, being perhaps on an island or *inch* in an area flooded by water. Harris considers the name to be from Gaelic 'innis', a riverside or meadow (349).

The Braid burn runs through the north of the site and flooded in 1760 (Good 62), again in 1870 and four times in the last sixteen years.



*The Inch parkland from King's Hill looking south-east to Craigmillar Castle policies*

In 1660, Sir John Gilmour of Craigmillar (c1605-71), Edinburgh lawyer, MP and Lord President of the Court of Session, acquired the Inch, but the family remained based at Craigmillar Castle, which perhaps was better suited to accommodating his family – there were twenty children (McGowan 12). Ownership of the Inch and Craigmillar passed from father to son: MP Alexander 1656-1731; MP Charles 1701-50; Alexander 1737-92. Hanoverian troops were garrisoned at the Inch in 1745 (Nimmo 77, 78) and a west wing was added late in the 18th century.

It is unclear exactly who was the first Gilmour to move from Craigmillar – most references merely state that the Gilmours ‘moved to the Inch at end of the 18th century’. One dates this move to 1775 ([www.craigmillarcastle.com](http://www.craigmillarcastle.com)). Alexander Gilmour died childless in 1792, bringing the male line and the Baronetcy to an end. The estates passed to Walter Little Gilmour of Liberton (1764-1806). In 1806, the Inch was described as ‘habitable although doors and panes of glass are missing, a stair is in bad repair, the North Wing is in poor condition and the wall of the laundry rotten’ (quote from GD 122/3/857 in CANMORE RCAHMS report). In 1809, and again in 1812, Robert Little Gilmour, who managed both Craigmillar and The Inch on behalf of the under-age Walter James Little Gilmour 1806-87, spent monies on repairs at the Inch. From 1844, The Inch was let out to tenants. These included a Dr Begbie, William Ritchie editor of *The Scotsman* 1817-1831, and Sir John Douglas GCB of Glenfinart (who resided there when Commander of Forces in Scotland). The last tenant was Sir James Gardiner Baird Bt. who lived at The Inch for nineteen years (Good 63).

In 1891 MacGibbon & Ross added turrets and oriels as part of the restoration work carried out for the new owners, the Gordon-Gilmours (Nimmo 77, 78). It seems that the last occupant of Inch House was Sir Robert Gordon Gilmour (1857-1939); his son Sir John Little Gilmour (1899-1977) sold the estate to Edinburgh Corporation in 1946. Public housing was to be built on the hill to the south of the house, and the house and its policies were to be used for community purposes. The land acquired extended either side of Gilmerton Road – 52 acres to the west and 163 to the east. In 1946 a design competition for the site was held and the winner was Mr D Stratton Davis, Gloucester. 1800 houses were planned together with a range of shops, a library and churches. In the event the scheme was developed with 1773 houses between 1950 and 1956 (Kirkland 389) without a central focal point, and with the public buildings dispersed over the site. An unattributed article commented:

‘the use of the Inch House as the main element in the community structure seems suspect ‘it is too far away from most of the housing on the site and it is noticeable how most people’s interest and enthusiasm seems to be in inverse proportion to the distance that has to be walked’ (*Edinburgh Today* 29, 30).

Inch House was initially used as a primary school for the new housing scheme. From 1986 to date it has been the Inch Community Centre. After damage by fire in 1973, the house was restored and a wide range of community activities is run from there. Currently there are plans for the development of a £2 million multi sports facility there (*Edinburgh Evening News* 9 May 2007).

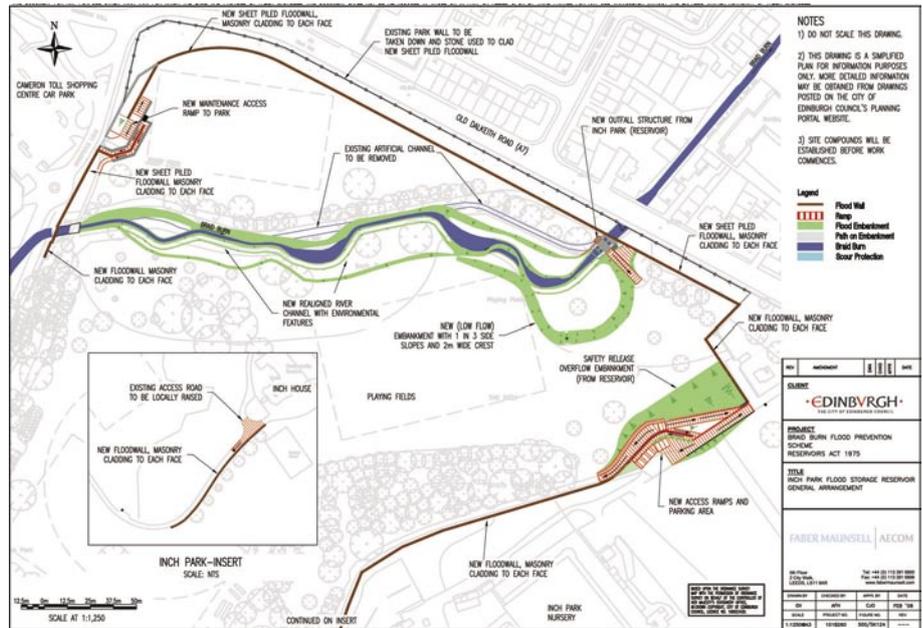
Since 1982 all plants required by the city council for its planting displays are grown under 0.75 acres under glass on the south-east side of the house. Alongside is the ENABLE training centre and support unit for students with learning difficulties (Nimmo 136).

At the time of survey a flood prevention scheme for the Braid Burn was under construction in the park, funded by The City of Edinburgh Council and The Scottish Government. This is one part of a major scheme comprises fourteen projects valued at £28 that, when complete, will protect around 900 homes and businesses from flooding. In addition to dealing with events up to a 1-in-200 year storm, the scheme includes additional capacity for environmental change.



*Inch House in use as a school, 1958 (The Scotsman)*

*Inch Park Flood Storage Reservoir General Arrangement, Faber Maunsell / Aecom Feb 2008*



The flood prevention works in the park include the larger of the two flood storage reservoirs to be completed by early 2009, followed by reinstatement of the park, scheduled for completion by 2010.

Constructing a flood reservoir in Inch Park is central to the overall design, giving capability to retain floodwater in the park to reduce the flows downstream. Floodwalls between Inch House and Old Dalkeith Road, and parallel to Old Dalkeith Road have been completed and will be cladding with natural stone. Stone from the existing estate wall on Old Dalkeith Road will be reused to face the new reservoir wall.

The existing artificial channel will be removed under the scheme and a more natural river channel created with 'environmental features' including planting of native vegetation to re-naturalise the riverbed. A substantial planting programme will include hundreds of trees, thousands of shrubs, wetland perennials, and a reed bed aimed at re-creating natural habitats for local wildlife.

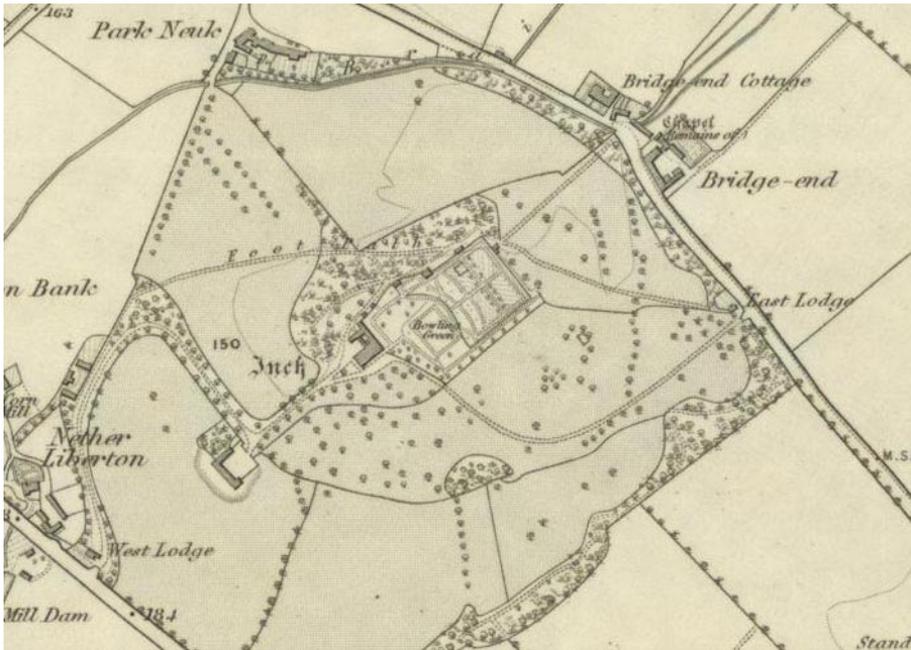
**Maps and Graphic Evidence**



*John Laurie 1766*

*Inch* within a small enclosure is first shown on Adair's manuscript map of 1682 and again on the published version of 1735; in more detail on Roy's Military Survey c1750, indicating an unstructured layout of tree-lined enclosures. On John Laurie's *Plan of Edinburgh* of 1766 the house is at the centre of broad crossing avenues. On Knox's 1816 map, the layout appears more informal although without much detail. Lancefield's *Plan of Edinburgh and Leith* (1851) shows Inch House policies cut by the bottom edge of the sheet with a walled garden on the east of the house, a major tree belt on the north, part of a north avenue beyond and a boundary tree belt parallel with Dalkeith Road.

The 1st edition 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey, published in 1855, shows the layout of the gardens and policies in detail including the components on Lancefield, including a bowling green between the house and walled garden, with parkland to the south of the house, a winding approach from a west lodge on Gilmerton Road with accompanying tree belt and naturalistic tree belts on the south and east boundaries. Lodges on the east include East Lodge and a lodge at Bridgend. The 1905-6 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey, published 1908, shows the addition of *Lady Susan's Walk* along the south-east boundary of the Inch parkland leading to *Laird's Walk* beside Old Dalkeith Road opposite the Craigmillar policies. Current maps show the extent of housing within the policies of the Inch to the south of the house (as noted above), schools in the west part of the site,



Ordnance Survey 6" map 1855

nursery (glasshouses) east of the house on the site of the old walled garden, and a pavilion and playing fields north-west of the house. Further north-east is Cameron Toll shopping centre. East of Old Dalkeith Road the land remains open as far as Craigmillar Castle and Craigmillar Castle Road.

An etching in *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh* (Grant III, 340) shows the south face of the house before the 1892 remodelling with plain iron gates into the park.

*The Scotman* photographs during the 20th century show a garden area in front of the house in 1933, the Corporation nursery in the walled garden and a sundial near the house in 1955 and the house in use as a school in 1958.

**COMPONENTS OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE**

**Inch House**

The original house forms the east angle of the present mansion and was a L-plan structure of three storeys and an attic; built of rubble and roughcast in 1617. Lower outbuildings to the north were added in 1634, with sculptured



*Inch House entrance front*



*Inch House north-west end*



*Inch House from Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh c1880*

*Inch House with intrusive play  
facilities, from the south-west*



dormer-heads. Some 18th and early 19th century additions. A large south-west addition of two stories and attic with angle turret was completed in 1892 (dated over dormers), designed by MacGibbon and Ross remodelling and the Georgian wing. An elaborate pilastered and pedimented doorway with faceted rustication, with a bay window above, continues in use as the main entrance to the building in its current use as the Inch community centre. A modern stairwell has been added at the west end.

#### Other Buildings

Sundial dated 1660 was moved to Inch from Craigmillar Castle in 1894; present location not found.

#### Walled Garden

Site of Council nursery with modern glasshouses and polytunnels covering the whole area. *The Scotsman* photographs from 1955 show the area as an attractive and well-tended open-ground nursery including a rose section.



*Nursery in the walled garden,  
1955 (The Scotsman)*

#### Lodges

West lodge remains at the gated west entrance, with flat-roofed extensions to the front and west side. Bridgend lodge also remains on access drive to nursery.

#### West Gate

The west gate now forms the vehicular entry to the two schools and Inch community centre: squat gate-piers with moulded copes with convex quadrant walls terminated by similar piers and with round-cornered pedestrian gateways either side (now blanked off with stone).

A contract in the Craigmillar Papers refers to the building of the Great Gate at the Inch, between Sir Alexander Gilmour and William Miln, mason (GD 122/3/830), possibly this gate. Later papers in 1836 (GD 122/3/1374) give the specification for a new west approach.

*West gate and lodge,  
Gilmerton Road*





*Liberton Primary School and King's Hill from parkland with Inch housing to left*

### Liberton Primary School and Kingsinch School

Located together in the west of the policies ground beside Gilmerton Road. The primary school to the south is two-storied below shallow pitches roofs, located at the high point of the overall site and benefiting from surviving large parkland trees in the south of its grounds and further south. Younger small trees are out of character and emphasise the boundary fence line.

### Pavilion

The changing pavilion is a high-walled windowless box with painted-over graffiti at the lower level overlooking the north playing fields.

### Play Features

A multi-purpose games area with turquoise fencing and floodlights is located in front of the house, with a children's' play area to its east with low iron fences, a large castle play feature and other equipment, within a good group of mature trees. Both features are very prominent in views to the house.

### Estate walls

Estate wall remaining along large sections of Gilmerton Road and Old Dalkeith Road are an important surviving component of the former estate. Sections have been removed or lowered for an open outlook in front of housing and for sightlines at road entrances.

### Drives and Paths

**West Drive:** a long winding drive from the west gate past the schools and north playing fields to Inch House, skirting the hill on which the primary school now sits (King's Hill).

**Glenallan Drive:** main access to Inch housing from Gilmerton Road and forming the south boundary of the park, with some incidental open space to its south beside the main road.

### Gardens and Policy Planting

Whyte described the garden and landscape at the Inch in 1792:

The garden at the Inch lies on the east side of the house. It consists of two acres, and is finely fenced on all hands by a high wall. The principal avenue is of limes, and looks well. There are a good many stately trees, consisting mostly of ashes, elms and sycamores. There are only a few oaks.

West from the principal avenue, is a rising ground called the King's hill. It was formerly planted with firs, which were demolished on the windy Saturday 1739. On this account it goes frequently under the name of the Fir-hill. The grass here is rich, as is always the case where firs have grown. There was a design to have the main avenue cut through this hill. The work was begun but never executed.

*Fragmented remnants of parkland tree planting south of house (note stumps), all in poor condition*



The New Statistical Account in 1839 mentions ‘there are admirable and most productive gardens with forcing houses ... there are many fine trees’ (NSA 18). Later, Good states that ‘the garden is on the east side of the house and contains about 2 acres of ground. The park contains, many stately old trees the present laird has quite recently planted largely and extensive’ (Good 1893, 63).

The 1850s OS maps show a footpath from Craigmillar Castle to The Inch and strip planting round the Inch policies. By 1906 a picturesque walk ran along the south boundary of the policies and the Laird’s Walk linked The Inch to Craigmillar’s policies. The parkland north and south of the house remains prolifically stocked at this time.

At around the turn of the 20th century, the Inch House “received its most extensive alterations in history” (curator’s notes). The 1906 OS maps show Lady Susan’s Walk, linking the Inch policies to the woodland path up to the castle. This walk was regularly used in the early-20thC by Lady Susan Gilmour. Just before the second world war, the Inch and surrounding effects were sold by Sir John Gilmour, who moved to Earlston in the Borders.



*North boundary wall adjoining  
Cameron Toll*

The main tree belts are the long-established thick belt to the north of the house and a good belt beside the north boundary wall adjoining Cameron Toll. The latter comprises lime (dominant), yew, horse chestnut, Norway maple and Scots pine, with a large sweet chestnut at the west end. Other more open belts lie beside Old Dalkeith Road, along the shorter Gilmerton Road boundary and alongside the west drive. A young belt south of the nursery area includes gear, lime, sycamore, purple sycamore and horse chestnut. A belt or short avenue of limes runs west from the house.

#### **Parkland**

Parkland is now limited to broad strips along the south perimeter of the park and other ‘left-over’ space. Trees species include sycamore (dominant), ash and Scots pine, lime, hawthorn, oak and Norway maple, with one walnut (one west of house) and monkey puzzle (near house on south). These are a variety of ages and many are in poor health with little or no recent planting or restocking.

Large parts of the parkland are now playing fields: one pitch south of the house and a football pitch, cricket ground and rugby pitch to the north.

#### **Gardens**

No gardens remain.

#### **Water Features**

See description of Braid Burn works under History of Landscape Development above.



*Garden planting south of the  
house, 1933 (The Scotsman)*



*North sports pitches with view  
to Arthur's Seat*

### Views and Vistas

Good views from open areas to Arthur's Seat to the north and Pentland Hills to the west. From King's Hill Craigmillar Castle policy woodlands can be seen, although not the castle itself.

### Visual Intrusions

The multi-purpose games area with turquoise fencing and floodlights and children's play area are both positioned in front of the house entrance and seriously intrude into its setting. The changing pavilion is a windowless box and does nothing to enhance the park. The Council nursery and training facility is not highly visible from the park but the secure area limits free access around the park and detracts from appreciation of its layout.

### Area of Influence

The relationship of The Inch to Craigmillar Castle designed landscape is highly significant both historically and in terms of linking walks and planting. Opportunities exist to re-establish these links in the development of Craigmillar Castle Park.

### PUBLIC ACCESS

The site is a public park and there is free access to most of it, apart from restricted access at the two school and nursery compound.

### FUTURE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL

Very little attention has been paid to the historic layout of the estate in the management and planning of facilities over several decades and there is no external interpretation. While sites for schools and the flood prevention scheme are essential, much could have been done to restore the planting structure and avoid spoiling the setting of the house with play facilities. The location and fencing around the nursery is also an impediment to the functioning of The Inch as a park. Overall the place has great attraction and could be improved in



*North boundary and west  
drive tree belts*

many ways, including by the better integration of various uses and adaptation to new pressures in the future, that should be considered in the context of a Conservation Management Plan.

## ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Overall

A estate landscape that now accommodates many modern functions although surviving in large part as a public park with many attractive features, but where a coordinated plan is needed to conserve its values and to plan and enhance it for the future.

### Work of Art

Little in present form

### Historical

High

### Horticultural / Arboricultural / Sylvicultural

Little, apart from commercial horticulture in nursery

### Architectural

Outstanding

### Scenic

Some on account of views from roads etc.

### Nature Conservation

Little

### Archaeological

Some potential value due to long use of site

### Recreational

High

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