

INTRODUCTION

In a city such as Edinburgh, it is easy to be dazzled by the brilliance of the Georgian heritage, with its classical grandeur. Set against this background, the Victorian residential achievement has tended to be ignored, or at best belittled, since each generation tends to reject the principles and way of life of the previous one.

We are now at a sufficient distance from the nineteenth century to look back and realise that the Victorian contribution to the city's architecture and planning is, in fact, quite significant. This has been increasingly recognised in the past 10–15 years, especially in the case of outstanding individual monuments which punctuate the Georgian development in the Scottish townscape.

But this report is not concerned with any building in particular: it examines a Victorian residential area of special character and distinction, the group value of which greatly enhances the charm of the Scottish Capital.

The Grange of St. Giles — or The Grange as it is known at present — is an area on the southern side of Edinburgh which possesses its own identity, rooted in the early years of the history of the city. In any less well endowed city, The Grange would have been designated as a Conservation Area long ago. So far, it has been largely ignored by the authorities. In this situation, then, it is up to its residents, conscious of the value of their environment and realising the danger now posed to its integrity by 'pressures' for development and other forces, to bring to the attention of the Planning and Development Committee of the City of Edinburgh, their concern for the survival of this historic area.

This report, compiled by The Grange Association, presents the case for conservation of The Grange in the following sequence:

First, the rich historic past of The Grange is examined in some detail, most existing bibliographic sources having been consulted. Original maps and other documents were also obtained from Register House, West Register House, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments Record, public libraries, private sources such as old photograph collections, and title deeds of properties in different sections of The Grange. The plans for extension of Grange House by William H. Playfair were obtained from the Manuscript and Rare Books Department of the University of Edinburgh Library. It was difficult to obtain copies of the feuing plans of The Grange, which, with one exception unfortunately have not been preserved: the 1864 feuing plan by Robert Reid Raeburn is preserved in the Map Room of the National Library of Scotland, Causewayside.

The historical analysis stretches over a period of several centuries from the reign of David I, when the lands of St. Geillies Grange* were first conferred on a monastic community, to the end of the nineteenth century. It also gives an account of the Dick Lauder family, the lairds of Grange for many centuries, who had a decisive influence in its development as a residential area, the rise of the present residential development in early Victorian times, and the consecutive feuing plans by distinguished architects such as David Cousin (1851), a disciple of Playfair, and by Robert Reid Raeburn (1858, 1864 and 1877).

It seemed appropriate to examine the Abercrombie Plan of 1949 for its significance in present policy-making, although its provisions were not implemented in The Grange area.

The plan for the City of Edinburgh of 1964, updated in 1975, is still the official document used for development control. The latest planning document for this area is, in fact, in preparation as a Local Plan, and it is hoped that the recommendations contained in this report will have an effect on the Local Plan and be considered before the final document is published.

The historical section, which is a substantial part of this report, is important: "History can give the answer to forgotten but nonetheless important questions such as why or by whom a town was founded just where it is, and for what purpose." (C. McWilliam 1975, p. 18).

Second, the report examines The Grange of today, with its particular mixture of population, age groups and family sizes. The information, obtained by means of a Household Survey conducted in the study area, is the basis of this section. The insight gained from the analysis is very important in assessing correctly present and future policies for the area.

Third, the report studies the special character of The Grange. On the one hand, this character is derived from its historic past, combined with the architectural contribution of the 'villa' and villa development on a planned layout; on the other hand, a great part of this character is derived from its trees, gardens, garden walls, and its natural environment. The visual impact of the special character is assessed in the report by adopting the approach of the American architect, Kevin Lynch.

*The name given to the lands varied in its spelling throughout the centuries: for interest we have retained several old renderings.

Fourth, the main threats to the character, as exposed in the report, emphasise that action is needed now if The Grange is to be handed on to the next generation without further damage.

Finally, the last section describes the way in which the threatened deterioration and loss of character can be halted, and how the effective protection and enhancement of The Grange can be achieved.

The support and active participation of the residents is needed because "The chief agent in conservation is the property owner" (C. McWilliam 1975, p. 193). But residents need to be supported by the planning authorities and legislation. The means of protection are specified by the Civic Amenities Act, 1967, which provides for official designation of areas such as The Grange as Conservation Areas.

Conservation is sometimes mistakenly interpreted by the public as 'preservation'. For the general public, preservation often means no more than the arrest of further decay and the prevention of further deterioration of a building. This concept, extended to an area, has caused some people to think that preservation of buildings and areas would prevent every change and make them lifeless. This fate would be quite undesirable and is certainly not what is wanted for The Grange. Conservation, originally a fine art term, today has two connotations specified in present legislation: 1. *the protection* of an area from deterioration and 2, *the enhancement* of its full potential for present and future users. The word *conservation* has this meaning in the report now submitted to the planning authorities and to the public.

There is a complete bibliography at the end of the report. At the end of the Appendices is a list of books for further reading, which may be of interest to the general reader. In some cases these lists overlap. In the bibliography will be found the titles, authors, publishers and dates of the books used for reference. In the text of the report only the names of the authors, dates of publication and sometimes page numbers are given.



The Grange from the air, c.1974