



Case information

Case ID	300016436		
File Reference	HGH/B/LA/427-431		
Name of Site	George Square 55 (LB28823), George Square 56 (LB28824), George Square 57 and 58 (LB28825), George Square 59 (LB28826), George Square 60 (LB28827)		
Local Authority	City of Edinburgh Council		
National Grid Reference	325944, 672984		
Designation No. (if any)	LB28824 (including former separate listings: LB28823, LB28825, LB28826, LB28827)		
Designation Type	Listed Building	Current Category of Listing	A
Case Type	Amendment		

Received/Start Date	2015 [University of Edinburgh Estates Listing Review]
Decision Date	23/06/2016

1. Decision

Propose merging 5 listed building records into a single listing under LB28824 and update listed building record and change statutory listing address to include all house numbers between 55 and 60 George Square. No change to listing category is proposed. (See also proposed merging of 14 listed building records, numbers 16-29 George Square under LB28810)

Amended Statutory address	56, 57, 58, 59, 60 George Square, including boundary walls and railings, Edinburgh
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2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

Numbers 56-60 (inclusive) George Square were listed at Category A on 14/12/1970. George Square is located within the Soutside Conservation Area.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

Numbers 55-60 George Square were considered for review as part of the University of Edinburgh Estates Review (2015-16).

Numbers 55-60 George Square were visited on 01/07/2015. The exteriors were visited on 11/09/2015. Most of the main areas of the interiors were seen.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the listing criteria was carried out, see **Annex A**.

The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 2, pp. 51-53.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Listing Criteria*

**56, 57, 58, 59 60 George Square, including boundary walls and railings,
Edinburgh**

1. Description

James Brown 1774-1779. Numerous alterations and additions including: 1824 subdivision of 57 into 57 and 58; Frank W Simon and Tweedie 1893 (internal linking of numbers 56 and 57 for the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society); J M Johnston 1928 (internal alterations at number 56, also for the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society); University of Edinburgh Department of Works 1947 alterations and additions to number 60 for Midwifery Department) and many later alterations also by the University Department of Works. 5-storey, 3- and 5-bay, mainly rectangular plan classical style houses which form a terrace, now a series of university departments. Numbers 55-59 Craigleith droved ashlar; number 60 squared sneaked pink and cream Craigmillar rubble sandstone with blue whin pinnings. Set on ground sloping north to south and forming the north east portion of George Square. Roman Doric doorcases (some with coupled columns) with elided friezes; number 60 with later Greek Ionic doorcase. Cast iron balconies to some windows at numbers 57 and 58.

4-pane glazing in timber sash and case windows. Tall corniced gable stacks with yellow clay cans.

The interiors were seen in 2015. Many have been altered and connected internally but still retain elements of outstanding Georgian interior schemes, including late 18th century staircases with decorative iron balusters and timber handrails, marble and timber chimneypieces, panelled timber doors, fine cornices and some timber dadoes. The largest house on the east side was number 57 (now divided into numbers 57 and 58) and the interior is particularly fine. The decorative inner screen in the vestibule with fanlight is of note. There is a good 18th century staircase rising at the rear of the building which has fine iron balusters and timber handrail. The former public rooms have particularly good plasterwork, the two rooms at the front of the building having three windows and two windows respectively. The vestiges of archway between the two front rooms may suggest that this was one large entertainment space. There is a variety of other features in the other houses, but generally the surviving detailing is simple but of good quality.

2. Assessment Against the Listing Criteria (SHEP, 2011) pp74-75

Criteria for determining whether a building is of 'special architectural or historic interest' for listing under the terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/9/contents]

To be listed, a building need not meet all the listing criteria. The criteria provide a framework within which judgement is exercised in reaching individual decisions.

2.1 Age and Rarity

George Square (originally George's Square) was laid out in 1766. Only a small proportion of the original plan remains. The feuing plan which was engraved in 1779 but which must have been drawn up by 1766 shows houses on four sides, each side divided into two stretches of terrace by central narrow lanes, except on the north where the gap was wider and off-centre to allow Ross House an uninterrupted view to the south. On the east side numbers 55-60 were a discreet unit, the southernmost house originally bounded on the south by Windmill Street. The houses on the west side of the square had gardens but the outbuildings were at right angles to the terrace at the south east corner of the square. Some are still extant. The houses on the east had coach houses and stables at the rear of the terrace with access from Windmill Lane. These are no longer extant. Ainslie's map of central Edinburgh (1780) confirms that this layout was executed (with the exception of the building filling the lane in the west terrace) and an incomplete stretch of buildings at the south east corner (completed a few years later).

The concept of building houses in squares was not a new one. In England it was developed in London in the years after the Great Fire. However the first square to have a properly laid out garden at its centre was probably Soho Square, built in 1681 by the Earl of Macclesfield. Squares quickly increased in popularity as pleasant, airy places to live and houses sold quickly. Many squares at this time were set among fields and had views of the open countryside. However by 1725 many squares had become choked with rubbish and the focus of crime and anti-social behaviour. The St James's Square Act of 1726 created a board of trustees with the power to make a regular charge on residents for the maintenance of the square. This was a turning point, and many other squares followed suit with their own Acts. The Portman Estate was developed in the 1760s with Portman and Manchester Squares among the first to be built (1764 and 1770 respectively). In Dublin squares, for example Merrion Square, were also being developed in the 1760s. The development of grand squares was a feature of Georgian town planning which was prevalent from the mid-18th century to the early 19th century across Britain but had a particular impact on the development of Edinburgh.

The tradition of tenement building, which dominated the Old Town, had already been challenged in Edinburgh by the 1760s. Argyle Square (on site of the Museum of Scotland and now demolished) built in 1742 consisted of houses intended for single occupation by one family. James Brown planned Brown Square (originally Browns Square) in the 1750s. It was almost complete in March 1764. This was on a small scale but was well received in the 'Edinburgh Advertiser' at the time: 'That very elegant square called Brown Square, which in my opinion is a very great beauty to the town is now almost finished'. John Adam designed a row of houses speculatively in Adam Square which were approved by Dean of Guild in 1761. Although called 'Adam Square' in fact it was simply a block of houses on one side. The originality of the scheme lay in the concept of a terrace of full houses and in the details of the design. It appears to have been the first terrace in Scotland to be built with a unified frontage, a precursor to the frontages in Charlotte Square thirty years later.

The individual houses in George Square followed the standard Georgian pattern developed in London in the early 18th century, three bays wide with the entrance door to one side and therefore seen as individual buildings the houses are not a rare

type. However seen as a whole the square was the earliest and most ambitious scheme of unified town planning attempted in Edinburgh to date. Like the squares in other parts of England and Ireland at this time, George Square had a set of rules and regulations which were strictly enforced. The residents were restricted in what they could do both in terms of activities and alterations to their buildings (such as the height of their chimney stacks) but the design of the house was the choice of the client. Residents were allowed privileges such as access to the Meadows via a gate on the west side of the park belonging to Mrs Lockhart of Carnwath. Commissioners were appointed to attend to lighting the square and cleaning it. In 1772 they advertised the 'let' of the removal of dung from the square.

George Square was also a pioneer in the concept of a central semi-private garden area as opposed to many earlier British and Continental examples which had communal areas suitable for public gatherings and entertainments. James Brown clearly intended the gardens to be ornamental pleasure grounds, which they were to be kept 'in good order and in an ornate manner' as indicated in his rules, it was not until 1813 that animals were removed from the railed off central area and gardens established. That year the proprietors organised for the Commissioners of George Square District to employ a person to prepare a plan and estimate the expense of laying out the ground after which John Hay, gardener, was employed to carry out the improvements. Robert Kirkwood's map of 1817 shows planting around the edges and around a central circular feature with paths leading to the four sides of the square.

James Brown purchased the lands of Ross House in 1761 from the architect John Adam. Feuing began in 1766 and the first houses were occupied (numbers 4 and 6) later that year on the north side, followed by several others in 1767 on that same side. The formal feuing plan which shows the streets which Brown developed over the whole area he purchased included the area from Buccleuch Place on the south to Teviot Row on the north and as far east as Chapel Place (now Buccleuch Street). Therefore George Square lies at the centre of a larger urban scheme fitted within the grounds of Ross House. The George Square scheme dates from the same year as James Craig's original New Town plan (he won the competition in August 1766). George Square was outwith the city boundary and, being privately developed by James Brown, was not subject to the jurisdiction of the city fathers. Craig's New Town was much longer in gestation and Craig himself, unlike Brown, was not responsible for the design of the houses. The construction and therefore occupation of George Square was much faster than the formal squares in the New Town of Edinburgh.

The east side of George Square was built from 1774 to 1779, beginning at the north end and moving southwards chronologically. From early advertisements in newspapers, it would seem that all the houses always had attic rooms. Early views of the square suggest that these attic rooms were lit in many cases by small roof lights rather than dormer windows on at least three sides of the square – for example in the view of George Square by Alexander Carse (1799) which shows the south side and parts of the west and east sides. However other than number 60 at the north east corner, which remains without dormers, the attic rooms of numbers 56-59 may have always had dormers. It is certain that by the 1880s there were dormers on

numbers 57 and 59 (Omond's 'Arniston Memoirs'). In many if not most cases the dormers have been enlarged during the 19th century.

George Square is the earliest surviving square in Edinburgh and an important example of mid-18th century town planning, predating the New Town by several years. The northern part of east side, begun slightly later than the west side and completed within a five year period, is more uniform in appearance than the west side and an important component of the square.

2.2 Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

Numbers 55-60 George Square have been altered at various different times and several have been connected internally to enable horizontal circulation, but a number of 18th century features are still in place. The interior details of numbers 57 and 58 (originally one large house but subdivided in the 1820s) are particularly noteworthy and include a fine 18th century staircase with iron balusters and timber rail, some good surviving 18th timberwork including dadoes in the public rooms and door and window architraves.

Plan form

The variety of plan form found in this terrace add to the interest of each component part. The main difference in the plans is the varying position of the stairwell. In some such as numbers 55 and 56 these run at right angles to the façade of the building and are top lit by a cupola. In others including number 57, the largest house, the stair is located at the rear of the building and is lit by a window in the rear wall. This arrangement meant a larger hall at both ground and first floors. The vestiges of an archway between two front rooms at first floor level in number 57 suggests that these two rooms were originally a large entertainment suite, perhaps unique in the square and significant for its early date. This arrangement became a common feature of later houses in the New Town of Edinburgh (for example in Charlotte Square).

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

The mason Michael Nasmyth was responsible for the construction of the square and to him is probably owed the variety of stone used and the variety of tooling on it.

It is generally been assumed that during the course of development of the square the use of rubble walls with whin pinnings gave way to more regular coursing and dressed ashlar but, in fact, this is not borne out by studying the dates at which the buildings were occupied. In this terrace, at number 60 the walls are of rubble with pinnings. It was first occupied in 1774. On the west side of the square, number 29, James Brown's own house which is of dressed ashlar was built and occupied by 1770, so the earlier house uses dressed ashlar. Therefore there must have been an element of choice by the client not simply the early buildings rubble and later ones dressed ashlar. It has been suggested that it may have been intended that the rubble walls were to be stucco rendered as was the case in St Andrew Square. However, Arnot, writing in 1779, described the walls 'built partly of blue whin and

partly of free stone, put alternately in a chequered figure, resembling the stuff that sailors' shirts are made of' which suggests they were left exposed.

The houses at the east side were larger than those on the north and west side with an additional storey. This terrace contained the largest house in the square, number 57, which was originally five bays wide. The first occupant was Vice Admiral Sir John Lockhart Ross of Balnagowan. This house was divided in 1824 with a new entrance formed and the numbering altered.

Although George Square was conceived as a unified scheme there was considerable variation in the houses in design and material (as discussed above). On the north side the houses were described in 1816 as 'mean and unequal height, mostly consisting of a sunk floor, principal floor and attic storey'. Surviving images suggest some houses were similar to those on the west side of the square. Certainly the houses on the east, numbers 55-60 had an additional storey compared to those in the upper half of the terrace on the west. Therefore although Brown laid down clear rules for all inhabitants regarding, for example height of chimneys, he did not insist on consistency in the overall scheme. The buildings on the south side and on the southern stretch of the east side of the square were a mixture of flats and houses. However generally the houses were two or three storeys with sunk basement and attic with the doorway to one side of a three-bay arrangement. A measure of homogeneity was guaranteed by the simple classicism of the porticos and the regulated style of windows (including the dormers as originally built) and doors. Externally this terrace is the least altered remaining part of the original buildings in the square.

James Brown (1729-1807) was the second son of a William Brown of Lindsaylands, a Commissioner of Supply. James Brown's older brother was George Brown, an army officer, who became the laird of Elliston and Lindsaylands on his father's death in 1757 and was Receiver-General of Excise in Scotland. The square was named after him. Nothing is yet known of James Brown's training but as the son of a landed gentleman, he may have had a scholarly rather than a practical training. He may have relied on pattern books in his early designs. The purchase of the lands of Ross House in 1761 and the development of George Square and surrounding area was Brown's next work after Brown Square. The scale of George Square is completely different from Brown Square which seems to have had no more than five houses on the north side and less on the east and west sides. Brown developed the areas around George Square in the 1780s and was involved in various projects such as the Riding School and the development of South Bridge. He was one of the trustees engaged to ensure that the Act of Parliament for building South Bridge and the wide range of improvements connected with this were carried out. Other trustees included the Lord Provost, the Rt Hon James Hunter Blair, the Rt Hon Henry Dundas of Melvill, the Rt Hon Islay Campbell Lord Advocate.

As noted above Brown was responsible for the feuing plan and for the design of the houses in George Square, unlike James Craig whose input into the New Town was restricted to drawing up the plan. Although Brown was one of the promoters of the Riding School in Edinburgh and purchased the site (which is now occupied by Surgeon's Hall), he did not design it himself but chose Robert Adam to do so in 1763-4. In the 1780s Brown planned Buccleuch Place but in March 1783 he advertised for plans and estimates for George's Square Assembly Rooms. It was to

occupy an almost central position in Buccleuch Place with a view north down the east side of George Square. From this and from the absence of any major works (with a couple of exceptions such as Bellevue House) he seems to have perceived himself more as a businessman and designer and promoter of town planning developments than as an architect but his achievements as the former are significant.

Setting

Numbers 55-60 George Square form part of the east side of George Square. The ground level slopes gently toward the south and although the roof and window levels remain constant, evidence of the slope is found in the lower height of each successive doorcase (if measured against the window and doors) as the terrace drops.

This terrace is visible immediately on entry to George Square from Crichton Street, the main vehicle entrance to the square. The changes the square has undergone and fact that the trees in the gardens are now of considerable height and maturity somewhat obscures the original context of the buildings and the sense that it was a coherent unit. Also its scale is now dwarfed by 20th century buildings in its immediate vicinity. Nevertheless it continues to make an important contribution to the streetscape.

George Square was part of a larger scheme of house development devised by Brown which stretched from Teviot Place in the north to the lanes behind Buccleuch Place at the south. The open aspect to the south provided by the Meadows is much as it was when the square was complete.

Regional variations

There are no known regional variations.

2.3 Close Historical Associations

There were many notable residents in George Square. From the time it was built it was popular with the aristocracy and leading citizens of Edinburgh. The first resident of number 55 was Lt-Gen the Hon Alex Mackay, Commander-in- Chief in Scotland, followed by the 5th Earl of Kintore in 1779 who played an important role in the founding of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. John Ritchie, proprietor of the 'Scotsman', later lived at this address. Vice-Admiral Sir John Lockhart of Balnagowan was the first inhabitant of number 57 in 1778 and was the client for whom the larger house was designed, followed in 1790 by Sir Robert Dundas of Arniston, Chief Baron of Exchequer.

3. Working with the Principles of Listing (HES Policy Statement, 2016) Annex 2, pp. 53

In choosing buildings within the above broad headings particular attention is paid to:

- a. special value within building types*
- b. contribution to an architecturally or historically interesting group*

- c. the impact of a grouping of buildings
- d. authenticity

When working with the principles of listing 55-60 George Square has particular interest under a, b and d

- a. George Square was the earliest and most ambitious scheme of unified town planning attempted in Edinburgh to date.
- b. This terrace is an important component of the original square.
- d. This terrace is externally the least altered remaining part of George Square. The houses were larger than those elsewhere in the square and therefore subject to fewer additions. Many interior features also remain intact including fine staircases, chimneypieces, timberwork and cornicing.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

Numbers 55-60 George Square designed by the architect James Brown in 1766 and built from 1774-1779 is an important surviving component of the square. George Square was the earliest and most ambitious scheme of unified town planning attempted in Edinburgh to date. The classical details of the doorpieces and regulated style of windows give the terrace coherence although there is considerable variation in the materials used in construction and in the height of the terraces. The concept of terraces with individual houses designed for occupation by one family was relatively new in Edinburgh where tenement living had been the norm and proved an immediate success with the aristocracy and leading citizens. This part of the square is little altered externally and has many surviving interior features. It is an important element in the streetscape.

In our current state of knowledge it continues to meet the criteria for listing.

5. Category of Listing

Categories of listing are non-statutory and buildings are assigned a category (A, B or C) according to their relative importance following the assessment against the criteria for listing.

Category definitions are found at: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>

55-60 George Square is a very important example of coherent town planning and the first of its type in Edinburgh. It is of national importance and category A is the appropriate category of listing.

6. Other Information

From information in contemporary newspapers and from what is still visible in the buildings, the typical original distribution of rooms can be gleaned: number 60 which was offered for sale in 1771 was a typical example. The accommodation comprised:

the dining room and breakfast parlour on the ground floor, the drawing room on the first floor, four bedchambers, presumably on the first and second floors, a housekeepers room, kitchen, and chambers for men and maid servants, a large back area, coach house and stable for four horses.

7. References

<http://canmore.org.uk>

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http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=404322 [accessed 1 September 2015]

<http://www.londongardenstrust.org/history> [accessed 1 September 2015]

8. Images

Images proposed for inclusion in online Listed Building Record if building becomes listed or if an existing listed building record is amended or removed.



* This assessment is based on our current state of knowledge and has been prepared for the purpose of consultation or to provide a view on the special interest of a building. This assessment is a consultation document and will form the basis of any new or updated listed building record should the structure be listed. The content of this assessment may change to take into account further information received as a result of the consultation process.

** A building may be found to meet the listing criteria but in some circumstances may not be added to the list. See 'When might Historic Scotland list a building' at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>