

## Case information

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<b>Case ID</b>	300008812
<b>File Reference</b>	HGPI/P/CE/3
<b>Name of Site</b>	Gordonstoun (Bog O' Plewlands)

<b>Local Authority</b>	Moray Council
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	NJ 18785 68966
<b>Designation No. (if any)</b>	GDL00199
<b>Designation Type</b>	Garden and Designed Landscape
<b>Case Type</b>	Removal

<b>Start Date</b>	2014/2015
<b>Decision Date</b>	02/11/2016

## 1. Decision

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In our current state of knowledge, Gordonstoun (Bog O'Plewlands) no longer meets the criteria for inclusion on the Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes. The site has been removed from the Inventory.

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

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### 2.1 Designation Background

Gordonstoun (Bog O' Plewlands) was added to the Inventory in 1987.

Other designations on the site include:

#### Listed Buildings

LB2239	Gordonstoun House, adjoining garden walls and water tower	Category A
LB2244	Gordonstoun, Round Square	Category A
LB2242	Gordonstoun, Michael Kirk (St Michael's Ogstoun), burial ground and walls, cross	Category A
LB2216	Gordonstoun, Round Square dovecot	Category B

LB2309	Gordonstoun, Cumming House	Category B
LB2241	Gordonstoun, Michael Kirk Lodge	Category B
LB2246	Gordonstoun, Windmill dovecot	Category B
LB2243	Gordonstoun, North Drive Gates and gatepiers	Category B
LB2240	Gordonstoun, East Lodge and gatepiers	Category C
LB2217	Gordonstoun, West Lodge and gatepiers	Category C

## 2.2 Development Proposals

There were no development proposals at Gordonstoun (Bog O' Plewlands) that informed the findings of this assessment.

## 3. Assessment

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Gordonstoun (Bog O' Plewlands) was reviewed as part of the Inventory Refresh Project, 2014-15.

Gordonstoun (Bog O' Plewlands) was visited on 11/06/2015.

All parts of the Inventory site were seen and photographs were taken.

### 3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the criteria for inclusion on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes was carried out, see **Annex A** and the designed landscape was found to no longer meet the criteria.

*The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016, Annex 5, pp. 58-59.*

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

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### Elizabeth McCrone

Head of Designations  
Heritage Management  
Historic Environment Scotland

<b>Contact</b>	Laurence Parkerson, Designations Officer, <a href="mailto:Laurence.Parkerson@hes.scot">Laurence.Parkerson@hes.scot</a> , Tel: 0131 668 8093
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# **ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Criteria for Inclusion on the Inventory\***

## **Gordonstoun (Bog O' Plewlands)**

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### **1. Description**

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#### **1.1 Type of site**

A 20th-century school campus located within an earlier formal designed landscape.

#### **1.2 Main phases of landscape development**

1616–circa 1750s, 1880-1900, 1934 to present

#### **1.3 Location and Setting**

Gordonstoun is located on the mainly flat farmlands of the Moray coastal plain, 2km south of the Moray Firth and 5km west of the town of Lossiemouth. The land slopes gently down from the sea-cliffs towards Elgin, 6km to the south. The area immediately to the south of Gordonstoun consists of former bogland, drained and cultivated as arable land in the 18th century.

Gordonstoun House is the central focal point of a historic, formal designed landscape with a grid alignment of vistas, walks and tree belts, an ornamental canal and historic estate buildings. The grounds also accommodate the modern buildings and infrastructure of a boarding school for 600 pupils.

Belts of trees and plantations around the perimeter of the school grounds enclose the landscape and there are few outward views. There are two important surviving views from Gordonstoun House; the view north, which is channeled along the vista to the northern gates and beyond, towards Covesea, the former sea port for Gordonstoun, and the view south, over the south lawn along the length of the ornamental canal.

External views towards the landscape are most significant from the minor road to the north, the B9040, the track from Covesea, and some minor tracks to the south of Gordonstoun.

#### **1.4 Site History**

The essential structure of the designed landscape at Gordonstoun, (with house, long central canal, vistas and grid-plan of woodland groves and square parks), was created from 1616 to circa 1750 under the ownership of the Gordon family.

Previously, the lands had been part of an estate called Plewlands, or Bog O'Plewlands, owned by the Ogstouns in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and then the Innes family in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There had been a 16<sup>th</sup>-century tower house and planted enclosures, with a dovecot, and possibly an orchard and warren (Ross and Jamieson 2006: 13).

A new house was built by George Gordon, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Huntly between 1616 and 1630. Expansion and consolidation of the estate followed under the prominent landowner and royal courtier Robert Gordon (1580-1656), who created the Barony of Gordonstoun in 1642. The subsequent major works required to drain the boggy grounds, form the ornamental canal and establish the formal garden pattern are traditionally attributed to Gordon's son, Sir Ludovick Gordon (1625-88). His Dutch connections possibly influenced the resulting landscape design, which echoed Franco-Dutch trends (Brereton 1968: 44; Ross and Jamieson 2006: 15).

Succeeding generations of the Gordon family contributed to the emerging design in the later 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries through the completion of drainage operations and the building of the Round Square (the steading and stable court), ongoing planting campaigns and the major remodelling of the house to form a classical mansion.

General Roy's military survey map of around 1750 shows six square planted garden enclosures and 'wildernesses' around the house, with north and south vistas and a grid-plan system of fields or parks on the same orientation, extending down towards the old Spynie Loch. The layout of the grounds around Gordonstoun House is shown in greater detail on Hugh Kinnaird's plan of 'The Loch of Spynie and Adjacent Grounds' of 1783, when the Loch was in the process of being drained.

The period 1755-1854 was a time of 'repose' at Gordonstoun, devoid of major change to the landscape, and marked by the passing of the estate away from the direct line of the Gordons in 1795 and its subsequent occasional use as a summer retreat and shooting estate (Ross and Jamieson 2006: 19-20). The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map suggests a nod towards informal landscape trends during this era, showing changes to the line of the drive, and the creation of informal parkland and shelterbelt planting (Ordnance Survey 1873).

The informal trend was reversed at Gordonstoun during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and around 1900, when some of the straight lines and vistas of the earlier formal landscape were restored and new estate buildings were completed. It proved a short period of investment, however, as family fortunes declined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The development of the school at Gordonstoun took place from 1934, with older buildings restored and converted for a new use. Numerous school buildings and facilities were built between 1950 and 1970 to the north, east and west of Gordonstoun House, including classroom blocks, dormitory blocks, workshops, a chapel, a refectory, medical centre, sports centre, sports pitches and playing fields.

More recent developments include a theatre and three additional dormitory blocks with associated amenities, car parking and hard landscaping.

## 1.5 Landscape Components

### Architectural features

**Gordonstoun House** was first built around 1630. The central section of the house was mainly built around 1730 with eight bays. The adjoining **garden walls** incorporate pediments and a date panel and formed part of the 18th-century garden enclosures. A small, free standing, 18th-century **water tower** is located immediately to the east of the house. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century **Round Square** is a circular-plan, former steading/stable court. It was converted into classrooms and dormitories between 1952 and 1962.

To the east of the campus, **Michael Kirk** is a small, 3-bay Gothic chapel, originally built as a mausoleum in 1705, with later alterations around 1900. The beehive shaped **dovecot** to the northwest of the house is 18th century, with approximately 1000 internal nest holes. A further dovecot known as the **Windmill Dovecot** is thought to have been converted from an earlier windmill on the site.

The perimeter of the designed landscape has various built elements of interest, including partially surviving, coursed rubble **policy walls** of probable 18th-19th century date along the north and west boundaries, and a set of ornamental **gates and gatepiers** at the north gateway installed circa 1900 at the end of the northern vista. The **East Lodge** and **West Lodge**, with accompanying gates and gatepiers, were built in 1899. **Michael Kirk Lodge** is in the 'Cottage Ornee' style and was built around 1900. **Cumming House**, designed by George Kennedy in 1939, is a notable early school building at Gordonstoun, with weather boarded leaning walls and a wooden shingle roof.

### Drives and approaches

The main entrance to the school campus is the **West Drive** from Duffus to the west, via the West Lodge, with the tree-lined entrance road running east to west to the north front of the house. It partly follows the old drive to the estate centre, with the curved section dating to the mid-19th century. The **East Drive**, via the East Lodge, also follows the older route, with a later curved section. Parts of these drives also follow the approximate trajectory of an old highway from Duffus to Lossiemouth (Ross and Jamieson 2006: 9).

### Paths and walks

Most of the historic avenues and walks in the vicinity of Gordonstoun House are aligned with the 18th-century drainage system grid. The most significant exception is the **Silent Walk**, running eastwards between the canal and Michael Kirk. Following a slight diagonal axis which is mirrored by field boundaries on the opposite side of the

central north-south axis, it is a section of the old road from Gordonstoun to Ogstoun Kirk (the predecessor of Michael Kirk) and Drainie Kirk, further to the east.

### **Avenues and vistas**

There are a number of tree lined avenues in the designed landscape, which follow the alignments of the 17th-18th century designed landscape, reinforcing the underlying gridded structure of the campus landscape, and, in some cases, providing longer, channelled views and sight lines.

The principal vista extends north from Gordonstoun House towards the North Drive Gates (no longer in use). It is a surviving element of the 17th-18th century formal design and is flanked with a double line of yews and a small number of elms of a possibly similar age. Through the gates, a track continues northward on the same alignment across rising arable land towards Covesea. An avenue of Crimean limes planted sometime between the later 19th century and earlier 20th century was extended eastwards in 2000 to mark the Millennium.

### **Woodland**

Partially surviving compartments of woodland in the designed landscape include East Riding Wood and Kennels Wood (to the north), and Pheasantry Wood and Oak Wood (to the south). Older lines of yews and elms in the northern areas and some segments of the 18th-century ditch network relate to the 17th-18th century design, which featured a formal series of enclosures, wilderness areas and open woodland groves.

Otherwise, subsequent phases of planting, clear felling and replanting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards has resulted in the current mixed stock of conifers and broadleaves. The character of Kennels Wood, in particular, has changed as it contains a number of modern school buildings and facilities.

Other minor and remnant areas of partial woodland include Home Wood, which retains a limited number of specimen trees, East Lodge Wood, along the East Drive, with a mixture of broadleaves and conifers, and Coronation Wood to the east of Oak Wood. See 'Water Features' below for a description of Lake Wood.

A number of veteran trees stand along the eastern part of the Silent Walk and around Michael Kirk.

### **Water Features**

An important surviving feature of the landscape at Gordonstoun is a long, narrow, clay lined canal which extends 300 metres south of the house along the central north-south axis of the designed landscape. At its northern end, it broadens into a 'hammerhead' shape.

The canal is flanked with trees, known collectively as Lake Wood, which have undergone various phases of planting, felling and replanting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Ross and Jamieson 2006: 48). It contains a Turkey oak (*quercus cerris*), which is recorded on The Tree Register as a county champion for its girth ([www.thetreeregister.org](http://www.thetreeregister.org)). The outer line of a double chestnut avenue (planted 1900) survives. The inner line was removed in the 1980s.

The canal is thought to have been first created in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and is fed from nearby springs and the drainage system. It was left to naturalise during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting a more informal approach to the landscape. It was re-dug around 1900 during a major period of investment and building work at Gordonstoun.

## The Gardens

The South Lawn is located between Gordonstoun House and the head of the canal to the south. It is bordered by a herbaceous border and shrubbery to the west, a small 1930s apple orchard to the east, and garden walls to the north. The garden walls adjoin Gordonstoun House and are likely to relate to earlier small courts or enclosures.

The South Lawn was probably laid out as a formal parterre in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was developed as a more 'naturalistic' garden with beds and borders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before being reworked as an Edwardian formal garden in circa 1900.

## 2. Assessment Against the Criteria for Inclusion on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

*The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016, Annex 5, pp. 58-59.*  
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

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Criteria for determining whether a garden or designed landscape is of 'national importance' for inclusion on the Inventory under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 [<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1979/46/contents>]

### 2.1 Value as individual work of art in its own right

#### Value: Some

The partial survival of the 17<sup>th</sup>- early 18<sup>th</sup> century formal landscape at Gordonstoun is of interest in this category.

The strong, rectilinear pattern is typical of the formal, geometric landscapes created in Scotland during this period and the drainage scheme and canal may have been inspired by Dutch models encountered by Sir Ludovick Gordon (1625-88) (Ross and Jamieson 2006: 10). While many other formal landscapes in Scotland were altered

as fashions changed in the later 18th century, the essential grid-like structure of Gordonstoun endured.

In the present landscape, however, the cumulative development of a school campus has reduced the legibility of the historic design, which diminishes the level of interest in this value category.

Based on our current knowledge of the site, there is no known evidence to suggest that Gordonstoun was especially valued as a work of art in its own right by contemporary society. The house and grounds at Gordonstoun do not receive a mention in the Statistical Account of Scotland (1791-1799) or the New Statistical Account (1834-45) for Drainie Parish or Duffus Parish where Gordonstoun is located.

There is no known evidence to indicate that Gordonstoun performed a major trendsetting role for the development of other landscapes

Inventory sites that score 'outstanding' in this category are those that achieved particular fame due to their scale and/or innovation in terms of design such as Abbotsford in the Scottish Borders, or were particularly notable examples of their type which inspired the designers of later landscapes, such as Penicuik House in Midlothian.

## **2.2 Historic value**

**Value:** Outstanding

The history of the designed landscape at Gordonstoun is well known, detailed by a 1968 publication (Brereton 1968), and a more recent Landscape Management Plan (Ross and Jamieson 2006), and informed by primary sources such as Hugh Kinnaird's map of 1783.

It has merit as an example of a 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century formal landscape that was not substantially changed in response to later landscape trends.

The north-south axis, centred on the house and emphasised by the canal to the south, is characteristic of the type of designed landscape that was fashionable during the earlier 18th century. Other examples of estate landscapes with a central axial avenue aligned with the main house include Sir William Bruce's Kinross House, Perthshire (around 1670), Balcaskie House, Fife (around 1680) and Hopetoun House, West Lothian (around 1700).

The ornamental canal, in particular, is an unusual landscape feature for its date, and sets Gordonstoun apart from other earlier designed landscapes in Scotland.

## **2.3 Horticultural, arboricultural or silvicultural value**

**Value:** Little

The majority of trees within the designed landscape are less than 100 years old. Minor interest in this category derives from a small collection of older trees which contribute to an understanding of the historic planting pattern, and a notable Turkey oak (*quercus cerris*) in Lake Wood, which is recorded as a county champion by the National Tree Register of the British Isles.

Otherwise, there is no known outstanding or scientific collection of plants, shrubs or trees at Gordonstoun and there is no known evidence to suggest that the designed landscape holds a nationally important place in the history of horticultural, arboricultural, or silvicultural practice in Scotland.

## **2.4 Architectural value**

**Value:** Outstanding

Although altered by the development of the campus, the designed landscape still provides the setting for Gordonstoun House, which is recognised for its national historic and architectural interest. Other notable structures within the grounds include the Round Square and Michael Kirk.

A number of other estate buildings and structures including lodges, gates, policy walls and dovecots contribute further interest in this category.

## **2.5 Scenic value**

**Value:** High

The woodland at Gordonstoun is visible as a long, narrow strip from the B9040 road (between Hopeman and Lossiemouth), 0.8 km to the north, and also from the mound of Duffus Castle 1.5 km to the south. From Covesea, the former sea port for Gordonstoun, there is also a significant view along the northern vista and towards the house, flanked by adjacent woodland compartments.

The symmetry of the vista and formal planting pattern adds visual interest to the landscape and has some rarity value in landscape terms, while the woodland canopy provides a more general contrast to the arable flatlands of this part of Morayshire.

The first Inventory record for Gordonstoun (1987) found the scenic value of the site to be 'outstanding'. Using the current criteria, this assessment has found that while the prominence, scale and contrast of Gordonstoun is of interest, it is not sufficiently major to warrant 'outstanding'. The current integrity of the site also bears upon this category of assessment (see condition and integrity below).

Designed landscapes that are of outstanding value in this category tend to be largely intact (with good integrity or 'wholeness') and will make a major contribution to the quality of the surrounding landscape by virtue of their size, location and nature. Scenically outstanding estate landscapes will normally have extensive and mature policy woodlands and/or intact parklands, together with distinctive landscape

features, eye-catching architectural landmarks (follies, lodges, monuments, entrance gates) and large-scale planting patterns. Examples on the Inventory include the large estate landscapes of Forglen House and Haddo House in Aberdeenshire. Culzean Castle in South Ayrshire, and Brodick Castle on the island of Arran are two other examples that also incorporate dramatic landform and especially prominent built elements.

## **2.6 Nature Conservation value**

**Value:** Little

There are no nationally designated habitats at Gordonstoun. Minor value in this category derives from habitats such as the woodland belts, surviving veteran trees, and ground management which encourages wildlife (such as providing nesting boxes).

## **2.7 Archaeological value**

**Value:** Some

At the time of writing, there are no scheduled monuments within the designed landscape (2016).

Undesignated archaeological sites contribute some interest in this category. They range from features that directly relate to the 17th-18th design (including partially surviving drainage ditches) to evidence for older patterns of land use. Aerial photography has yielded evidence for ring ditches and a possible enclosure to the southeast of the house, while the grounds are also known for the find spot of a Class II Pictish symbol stone. The pattern of local, late medieval routes is thought to be partially embedded within the structure of the designed landscape (Ross and Jamieson 2006), while Michael Kirk and burial ground occupies the site of an earlier ecclesiastical centre.

As with all estate or garden landscapes, there is also the potential for future survey or investigation to reveal more information about the nature and development of the site over time.

## **3. Condition and Integrity**

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The condition of the site today and its overall integrity are important elements of the assessment process.

At Gordonstoun, the landscape and buildings are actively maintained to a high standard by Gordonstoun School, with staff employed to maintain the grounds.

Substantial built developments from 1950 onwards have taken place within various parts of the grounds, most notably in some of the woodland compartments, including Kennels Wood. Car-parking, hard landscaping, and the development of access

routes for school traffic have also influenced the character of the designed landscape as a whole.

The integrity of Gordonstoun, as a historic formal landscape, has been substantially lessened by the extent and nature of this development.

#### **4. Summary of Assessment Against the Criteria for Inclusion on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes\*\***

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Gordonstoun is a 20th century school campus developed within the structure of a formal designed landscape that was created mainly in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Sir Ludovick Gordon (1625-88).

This assessment has found that the designed landscape is of historic interest as an example of a 17th-18th century formal landscape that was not substantially changed in response to later landscape trends, and of architectural interest for the many notable structures contained within its boundary, including Gordonstoun House, the Round Square and St Michael's Kirk.

In terms of the other categories of assessment, there are no scheduled monuments or national nature conservation designations and there are no outstanding horticultural collections. While the symmetry of the vista and formal planting pattern adds visual interest to the landscape and has some rarity value in landscape terms, this is not considered to be of sufficient merit to be of 'outstanding' scenic value.

Incremental built development across the northern half of the designated area after 1950 has a bearing on the assessment in terms of the value of Gordonstoun as a work of art in its own right, and in terms of its condition and integrity.

New buildings and infrastructure developed in response to the expanding school have reduced the integrity, or wholeness, of the historic design to the extent that it can no longer be considered nationally important.

On balance, Gordonstoun (Bog O'Plewlands) is not considered to meet the criteria for inclusion on the Inventory of gardens and designed landscapes.

#### **5. Designation Boundary**

N/A

#### **6. Other Information**

N/A

#### **7. References**

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Canmore: <http://canmore.org.uk>/CANMORE ID: [269769](#)

### **Maps, Plans and Archives**

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Ordnance Survey (surveyed 1904, published 1905), Elginshire 002.14 (includes: Drainie; Duffus), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 25 Inches to the Mile. Ordnance Survey: London

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