Case information

Case ID	300017968
File Reference	HGH/B/SG/98
Name of Site	Kelburn Sundial To West Of House

Local Authority	North Ayrshire Council		
National Grid Reference	NS 21695, 56706		
Designation No. (if any)	LB7298		
Designation Type	Listed Building	**Current Category of Listing**	A
Case Type	Amendment		

Received/Start Date	11/02/2016 [Kelburn Castle Estate Listing Review]
Decision Date	17/11/2016

1. Decision

In our current state of knowledge, the Kelburn Sundial continues to meet the criteria for listing at category A. The statutory listing address and the listed building record have been amended.

Previous Statutory Address	Kelburn Sundial To West Of House
Amended Statutory Address	Sundial to west of Kelburn Castle, Kelburn Castle Estate, Fairlie

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

This building was listed at category A on 14/04/1971.

The structure is located within Kelburn Castle Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL00233).

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals that would affect the outcome of this assessment.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The sundial was considered for amendment as part of Kelburn Castle Policies – Listing Review 2016.

Kelburn Castle and associated ancillary buildings and structures were visited on 06/04/2016.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

The building was found to meet the criteria for listing.

A full 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*
Sundial to west of Kelburn Castle, Kelburn Castle Estate, Fairlie

1. Description

Dated 1707. An early 18th century, Scottish 'obelisk' type sundial of polished ashlar sandstone elaborately carved with incised cup and heart-shaped hollows, intricate geometric symbols and dials on every face, some with metal gnomons. The sundial is 2.6 metres tall including the base and is located at the centre of a square parterre garden area to the immediate west of Kelburn Castle (Grid Ref: NS 21695, 56706). It consists of a stepped plinth, a 5-stage shaft surmounted by a tetrahedral sphere, and a tapering finial capped by a wrought-iron vane with a banner, bearing the monogram of the Earl of Glasgow and his wife, and thistle. The shaft is inscribed with the initials 'EDG' and 'CIC'.

2. Assessment Against the Listing Criteria (HES Policy Statement, 2016) Annex 2, pp. 51-52

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

The first Edition Ordnance Survey map, published in 1856 shows the position of two sundials at Kelburn Castle. Dated 1707, this sundial is of the distinctive 'obelisk' type and is contemporary with the additions made to the tower house during the early 18th century.

Kelburn is among the oldest ancestral country seats in Scotland to have been continuously inhabited by successive generations of one family, having been in possession of the Boyle family (formerly 'de Boyville') since the 12th century. Kelburn has a prominent coastal setting to the south of the town of Largs, with views from the castle across the Firth of Clyde to the Isles of Cumbrae and Bute and southwest to the Isle of Arran. The Kel Burn runs through the estate, passing through a wooded ravine and over a 15 metre high waterfall into a naturally carved pool to the southwest of the castle.

Kelburn Castle, like Stair House in Ayrshire (LB14372) and Blair Castle in Perthshire (LB6074) is a multi-period building which demonstrates the transition from the medieval tower house tradition towards the new fashion during the Renaissance period for domestic, non-fortified buildings. The designs for these new buildings were classically inspired and often included a formal suite of rooms or apartments.

The medieval tower house section of the building, with stair towers at opposing corners forming the classic ‘Z-plan’ was remodelled circa 1580 by the then Laird of Kelburn, John Boyle incorporating fabric from earlier structures on the site. The later 17th century/early 18th century additions reflect the significant changes at large estates where remodelling along classical architectural lines followed the contemporary taste for formality and rationality, and catered to the owners’ desire to improve their status by accommodating important guests and providing them opportunity for the conspicuous display of wealth and knowledge.

In 1869, the 6th Earl of Glasgow inherited Kelburn along with a number of other estates in Scotland and this coincided with a major phase of development and building improvement across the estate around this time including the building of new gate lodges and gatepiers, a new gardener’s cottage, ghillie’s house and kennels. Another significant extension to the castle was also added around this period.

The castle is the focal point within the Kelburn estate policies. The principal phases of addition are distinctly identifiable and the successive additions dating from the early Scottish Renaissance to the present day represent changing political and cultural values as well demonstrating a significant transition in Scottish domestic architecture at this time. Associated ancillary estate buildings and structures, including sundials, monuments, stable offices, lodges, bridges and worker’s cottages (some of which are listed separately) contribute to our understanding of this historically significant ancestral seat.

Sundials became fashionable in country house gardens in Scotland during the 17th and 18th centuries, both as decorative structures and as time keeping devices, as the science of gnomics (or art of dialling as it was commonly known) became increasingly popular. Horizontal dials with a single gnomon, an engraved dial and perhaps the sun’s movement in the zodiac, were common and structures with multiple dials are found throughout Britain, but the tall, narrow ‘obelisk’ sundial type is unique to Scotland. The emergence of a type of particularly elaborate sundial in Scotland during the Age of Enlightenment, is illustrative of a changing world of increasing prosperity and the spread of rational, scientific and mathematical thought (Daniel, 2008).

The tapering obelisk is a long-established architectural form, likely to have been used as a method of time keeping in ancient Egypt. The 17th century Scottish obelisk sundial traditionally has 3 parts: the square shaft with an octagonal-shaped capital and then a tapering finial above. The shaft is commonly divided into 5 horizontal sections, with a face on each side, and many of the compartments are hollowed out with various geometric shapes, some of which have metal gnomons inserted into them to cast a shadow, or etched lines which mark out the hours as the edge of the shape casts a shadow over the lines. The bulging octagonal capital at the centre usually has square and triangular faces, and the tapering finial also had sun motifs and other shapes inscribed or carved into it and further gnomons. The similarity of form and detail shared by many of the surviving Scottish examples, which are widely spread geographically, is significant.

There are 25 obelisk sundials known to still be in existence in Scotland, many of which are also affiliated with important ancestral seats, including examples at Craigiehall in Edinburgh (LB5559), Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute (LB12054) and Tongue House in Sutherland (LB18459). The earliest one is thought to be at Drummond Castle in Perthshire, dated 1630 (LB19883). The other smaller example of an obelisk sundial at Kelburn (LB7299) stands at the centre of a circular stone basin at Grid Ref: NS 21666, 56823. Though undated, this dial bears the same initials as the former, and is probably of about the same age.

The early 18th century obelisk sundial to the west of Kelburn Castle is one of the best preserved examples of its type in the country. It is among a small number of known sundials of the obelisk type, a design unique to Scotland, and is a relatively rare survival in what appears to be its early 18th century form, retaining many of its metal gnomons. The sundials at Kelburn are an important component of the estate landscape that was redesigned in the early 18th century, adding to our understanding of the 17th and 18th century Scottish interest in mathematics and timekeeping.

2.2 Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

n/a

Plan form

n/a

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

This sundial at Kelburn has well-defined hollowed out faces to the shaft and capital, many surviving metal gnomons and a fine metal cap. It is among the finest examples of the important ‘obelisk’ type sundial in Scotland, adding to our understanding of the 17th and 18th century Scottish interest in mathematics and timekeeping.

Setting

This sundial, located in its early 18th century position to the west of the circa 1700 additions to Kelburn House, is part of a group of associated contemporary estate buildings which reflect 17th and 18th century design and theory in the Scottish garden landscape.

Regional variations

There are no known regional variations.

2.3 Close Historical Associations

None known at present.

Kelburn is among the oldest country seats in Scotland to have been continuously inhabited by successive generations of one family, the Boyles. The family crest and initials of various family members are represented in the stonework at Kelburn Castle. People of significant social standing commissioned houses and the developed their estates and the association with these people is not a significant factor in this assessment for listing.

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 the monument has particular interest under a, b and d.

a. The sundial is an exceptionally well-preserved example of an early 18th century multiple-dial sundial of the obelisk type unique to Scotland. It is one of only 25 surviving 17th and early 18th century sundials of this particularly unusual and distinctive type.

b. The sundial contributes to the group of ancillary buildings and structures associated with Kelburn Castle which add collectively to the architectural and historic interest of the estate.

d. The little altered design of this sundial particularly adds to the interest in terms of its authenticity.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

This early 18th century 'obelisk' type sundial, which is a design unique to Scotland, is an important surviving element of the Kelburn estate and one of the best preserved examples of its type in the country. The obelisk sundial is one of only 25 such known remaining sundials, all of which are listed. Situated to the west of Kelburn Castle its elaborately patterned and carved facetted form makes an important contribution to our understanding of decorative garden structures as part of historic garden design, and also of the study of mathematics and timekeeping to 17th and 18th century landowners.

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/

This large sundial is among the finest examples of the obelisk form of sundial, unique to Scotland. It survives in what appears to be its early 18th century form, retaining many of its metal gnomons. Category A, denoting national significance, is

considered to continue to most appropriately reflect its architectural and historic interest.

6. Other Information

N/A

7. References

Canmore: http://canmore.org.uk/ CANMORE ID: https://canmore.org.uk/site/41170

Maps

Ordnance Survey (surveyed 1855; published 1857) Ayrshire, Sheet VI (includes: Cumbrae; West Kilbride) 6 inch to 1 mile, 1st Edition. Southampton: Ordnance Survey

Printed Sources

Old Statistical Account of Scotland (1791-1799) Vol.2: Largs Parish, Ayrshire, p.361

Close R. (1992) *Ayrshire and Arran - An Illustrated Architectural Guide.* Edinburgh: Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, p.82

Close R. and Riches A. (2012) *Buildings of Scotland – Ayrshire and Arran*. London: Yale University Press. pp.392-399

Daniel, C. St J. H. (2004) *Sundials*. Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd.

MacGibbon, and Ross (1902) *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, Vol V. Edinburgh: David Douglas. pp.407-412

Somerville, A.R. (1987) *The Ancient Sundials of Scotland*. Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Volume 117, pp233-264.

Weaver, L. (*12 August 1916) Kelburne Castle, Ayrshire', Country Life Magazine* p. 182-6

Archives

Scottish National Monuments Record, Ref: AYD/52/2.

* 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 Environment Scotland list a building' at https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/