



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

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**Property in Care (PIC) ID:** PIC224

**Designations:** Scheduled Monument (SM13032),  
Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL00308),  
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within PIC boundary

**Taken into State care:** 1859 (Ownership)

**Last reviewed:** 2018

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# HOLYROOD PARK



We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties

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# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## HOLYROOD PARK

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# 1 Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

Holyrood Park is a large-scale, dramatic and rugged open space within the heart of the city of Edinburgh. It is some 8 km in circumference and covers 259 ha. Its highest summit is Arthur's Seat at 251 m above sea level. The park is covered by a number of national designations for both natural and cultural heritage and is also a key feature within the informal buffer zone/visual envelope of Edinburgh World Heritage Site.<sup>1</sup> The Scheduled area includes at least 111 archaeological sites.<sup>2</sup> The area includes 8 listed buildings. There are also two separate SSSI designations, one for Duddingston Loch, the other Arthur's Seat SSSI covering the rest of the park.

Set in middle of Edinburgh, the park is an important recreational resource and site of major events for the city's 487,500 population and the 3,692,000 tourists the city accommodates every year.<sup>3</sup> There is no estimate of users based on surveys. Anecdotal estimates range from ½–5 million visits per year. Historic Scotland (HS) maintains a ranger service that operates out of the Education Centre (that has the only public toilets in the park), which is near Croft-an-righ at the north of the park. In 2017 Holyrood Lodge opened as a visitor centre with an exhibition describing the key features of the park.

The Queen's Drive encircles the interior of the park. There are five road entrances to the park: St Leonard's; Meadow Bank; Horse Wynd; Holyrood Gait; Duddingston Low Road. The Duddingston Low Road runs from the St Leonard's entrance to Duddingston Village. The section of Queen's Drive from Holyrood Gait to Horse Wynd is known as the Loop Road. The short section of road from St Margaret's Loch to the Meadowbank entrance is the Duke's Walk, and Dukes Walk to Kaims Head is known as the High Road.

## 1.2 Statement of significance

Of all the properties under HES care, Holyrood Park perhaps exhibits the broadest range of heritage values assessed at a consistently high level of significance and with exceptionally high levels of public visitation and use. Consequently many of the more locally important aspects of the site are not mentioned in this summarised statement but are discussed in later paragraphs of this document and in the Appendices.

The following bullet points summarise the most significant heritage values of Holyrood Park:

- The key geological features of the park, Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, are a nationally important resource for the study of geology. The association

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<sup>1</sup> There is no formal buffer zone for the WHS, however, Holyrood Park is considered a 'natural buffer' and Arthur's Seat is a key part of the Skyline Study. See (The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site, 2011) and (The Skyline Study).

<sup>2</sup> (Cultural Heritage Survey, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh Report No.262, 1997, p. 11).

<sup>3</sup> (Mid-2013 Population Estimates Scotland, 2014, p. 31), (Tourism in Edinburgh 2011, 2013, p. 7).

with James Hutton and the foundation of the science of geology is famous and internationally recognised.

- Holyrood Park is a nationally significant archaeological resource. The long history of occupation attested by well-preserved archaeological features such as the cultivation terraces offer a unique opportunity to experience and interpret landscape-scale archaeology within a city setting.
- The primary historical values of the park come from its close association with the Palace of Holyroodhouse and Holyrood Abbey and *their* key role in national history. It is a unique survival of a royal park established in the Stewart period which retains its original boundaries and is relatively undisturbed by later development.
- While it lies outwith the Edinburgh Old and New Towns World Heritage Site boundary, the importance of the park (particularly Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags) in defining the Edinburgh cityscape cannot be overstated. These values feed in to the inspirational qualities of the landscape and have demonstrably affected many artists and writers, and continue to do so today.
- As a public park in the middle of a city, Holyrood is unique for the quality of outdoor experience and the feeling of "wildness" that its hinterland offers; this is amplified by the high nature conservation value of the site. A walk up Arthur's Seat and the panoramic views from the top is one of Edinburgh's defining experiences.
- In addition to the park's contribution to the city's "brand value", its role, along with the parliament, Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Mile, as a stage for key national events is considerable and it holds a strong (and historically rooted) place in the nation's consciousness.

## 2 Assessment of values

### 2.1 Background



#### Chronological summary

A more detailed chronological overview is given at Appendix 1 which includes many of the important historical events linked to the park. Below is a summary of the key phases of development focussing on the land-use and management aspects which have shaped the park.

Date	Event
350 million years ago	Arthur's Seat volcano erupts and over subsequent millennia the top of this mountain is eroded away to leave the pattern of rocks we see today
11,000 years ago	End of last ice age and retreating glaciers scour out the valleys of the park
8500 years ago	The landscape of the park is mostly wooded above ill-drained boggy valleys.



<b>6000 years ago</b>	The park is visited by Mesolithic communities and used as a resource for hunting; a flint tool found on Whinny Hill dates from this time. Later, farmers arrive and begin to clear and work the land.
<b>3000 years ago</b>	Bronze age people work the land; the terraces above Dunsapie Loch may date to this time; a bronze Age burial cist was found on Windy Gowl.
<b>2000 years ago</b>	The four iron age hillforts date to this time and there is evidence of Roman presence in the area.
<b>1128</b>	Holyrood Abbey founded by David I. The area of the park was used as a royal hunting ground linked to Edinburgh castle and the growing city of Edinburgh.
<b>1530s – 1540s</b>	Quarries opened under James V at Salisbury Crag and Camstane, the stone was probably used to build the first boundary wall around the park and also in the construction of Holyrood Palace. The quarries were used over centuries and at Camstane the sunken hollow way leading to the quarry pits testifies to many years of cart traffic.
<b>Early 19th century</b>	The park was still used for a variety of agricultural and industrial purposes but was increasingly recognised as an area of landscape quality - though pollution from industry detracted from this. In 1826 unemployed weavers built the Radical Road, under Walter Scott's direction. Quarrying in the park reached a peak but was finally stopped in 1831, following a public outcry as excessive quarrying of stone using explosives was changing the face of Salisbury Crag.
<b>1850s</b>	Following resumption of management by the Crown, the park becomes a public park primarily managed for recreation, though it retained military functions as rifle range and parade ground. Queen's Drive was constructed, the marshes drained and St Margaret's Loch and Dunsapie Loch created, the lodges and gates constructed and St Ann's Yards cleared.
<b>1980s onwards</b>	Management aims integrate more nature conservation objectives; trees are planted around the boundary; improved wetland habitat at Hunter's Bog; footpath and erosion mitigation works. 2002 Holyrood Education Centre built.

Table 1: Brief chronology

## 2.2 Evidential values

Holyrood Park is an outstanding evidential resource particularly for its geological and archaeological value; these aspects have been subject to study and research over many years.

## **Geology**

### **Evidence of volcanic activity**

The key geological features of the park, Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, are a nationally important resource for the study of geology and for the history of the development of this branch of science. Their origins lie in volcanic activity around 350 million years ago which caused volcanoes to push through the earlier sedimentary rocks. Arthur's Seat is an example of a strato-volcano where layers of ash and viscous lava are laid down in strata; this leads to the typical conical profile (famously at Mount Fuji).

Long extinct, Arthur's Seat is now approximately half its original height, its jagged edges smoothed down by millennia of erosion. Part of the cone survives at Whinny Hill. Salisbury Crags are made up of dolerites formed deep inside the volcano from molten rock which was not expelled during eruptions. Samson's Ribs were also formed inside the volcano, from molten basalt which cooled into six-sided columns. The SSSI citation notes: *The small composite volcano of Arthur's Seat, of lower carboniferous period, is one of the most studied volcanoes in the world. All the component parts of a typical strato-volcano are well displayed and the sequence of eruptions can be traced with a continuity unique in Britain.*<sup>4</sup>

Geological and erosion processes have left a rich legacy of rock types and formations near the surface which provide highly visible evidence of environmental change over geological time. The SSSI citation particularly notes *the sequence of rocks, especially sediments, in places fossiliferous, intercalated in the lava pile enable the palaeo-environments which existed during the vulcanicity to be determined in unusual detail.*

### **Importance for history of geology**

Holyrood's role in the history of science, particularly geology, is also of great importance. It is most associated with James Hutton (1726 – 1797) a leading figure in the Scottish Enlightenment who is internationally famous as the founder of modern geology. Hutton lived most of his life in or around Edinburgh and spent much time studying the rocks of Salisbury Crags as they were revealed during quarrying. There he found evidence to support his theory that igneous rocks were formed from hot molten rock pushed up between older material and subsequently cooled and solidified.<sup>5</sup>

The quarry face which Hutton studied was quarried away in the 1820s, but the same evidence is visible in the face behind it. The area known as Hutton's Section is visited and celebrated by geologists from all over the world. Though there are other areas of Scotland equally associated with Hutton's theories, Holyrood is especially important as it helps place Hutton within the wider social and intellectual orbit of Enlightenment Edinburgh and also because the rock faces are so easily accessible to so many visitors.

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<sup>4</sup> (Citation: Arthur's Seat Volcano Site of Special Scientific Interest).

<sup>5</sup> Poss J. Playfair, 'Biographical account of the late James Hutton, FRS Edinburgh', Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 5/3 (1805), 39–99.



## **Archaeology**

Holyrood Park is a nationally significant archaeological resource. In 1997 an archaeological survey identified 111 features.<sup>6</sup> It is likely that more detailed investigation would yield more information and potentially identify additional sites. The park is unusual (and possibly unique) in effectively presenting a fairly extensive and open cultural landscape within the bounds of a city.

The extensive nature of the park, its time-depth in terms of human presence and the numerous finds to date, indicate that significant ground disturbance anywhere in the park could unearth important prehistoric artefacts.

The earliest evidence for a human presence in the park comes from the discovery of numerous Mesolithic and Neolithic flint and stone tools, indicating that the area was exploited from at least the 5th millennium BC. In 1778, during dredging works on Duddingston Loch, a hoard of Bronze Age artefacts was discovered including spearheads, swords, rapier, and a bucket-staple. While significant in its own right, the Duddingston Hoard is also important as it is the first entry in the accession register for the newly founded Society of Antiquaries of Scotland – this collection became the foundation for the National Museum of Scotland. In 1846 during the construction of Queen's Drive, a rich haul of Bronze Age objects was found; more recently in 1996 three bronze axes were found on Dunsapie hillfort.<sup>7</sup>

## **Hill forts**

The four prehistoric or Dark Age forts (on Salisbury Crags, Samson's Ribs, Arthur's Seat and Dunsapie Crag) together demonstrate that the area was a major centre in the final centuries of the first millennium BC and the early centuries AD. The best preserved of the forts are the two largest, on Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, at 8.4ha and 9.4ha respectively. None of these forts has been closely dated, but a Roman intaglio of the 1st century BC has been found in the fort above Samson's Ribs.

The two smaller enclosed settlements (on the eastern flank of Dunsapie Crag, and a short distance to the south-west of Windy Gowl) are characterised by scooped yards containing platforms for timber round-houses. These farmsteads are likely to preserve very personal evidence from the Iron Age farmers who lived and farmed in the area. Examination of the associated buried deposits can give us detailed information about the form and construction of the houses and can contribute to our understanding of how structures were used and how this changed over time. Buried artefacts and ecofacts and buried soils can contribute to our understanding of how people lived and worked, the extent and nature of trade and exchange, and the nature of the agricultural economy.

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<sup>6</sup> (Cultural Heritage Survey, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh Report No.262, 1997, p. 11).

<sup>7</sup> Found by illegal use of metal detector, (Cultural Heritage Survey, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh Report No.262, 1997, p. 12).

### **Landscape features associated with cultivation**

By far the most extensive remains in the park are cultivation terraces and furlongs of rig-and-furrow, some overlain by the 16th-century park wall. These are among the best preserved cultivation remains in the Lothians. It is difficult to date the rig and furrow precisely; they were certainly in use in Medieval times. The stratigraphy suggests that terraces were part of the same systems as the rig and furrow.

The most striking terraces lie on the east flank of Arthur's Seat where a flight of fifteen terraces resembles a staircase climbing the hillside. They are accompanied by a furlong of rig-and-furrow that encroaches on the lower terraces, while the banks of two later enclosures overlies the terraces on the north-west.

These landscape features can contribute to our knowledge of agricultural practices and show evidence of a complex development sequence. Organic remains associated with them may allow their dating to be better understood and may provide information on the crops that were grown at different times.



Figure 1 Cultivation terraces on Crow Hill Piction (008-001-075-854-C)

### **Other landscape features**

By the 12th century the area of the modern park was divided between the Abbey of Kelso, the royal family and the Augustinian abbey of Holyrood.<sup>8</sup> While agricultural activity continued in the park right up until the 19th century,<sup>9</sup> many of the important features of the park are connected with monastic or ecclesiastical activity or with Holyrood Palace.

<sup>8</sup> (The Charters of David I, 1999, p. 86 no.70).

<sup>9</sup> (The Scotsman, 1843).

Buried archaeological deposits can reveal much about monastic activity in the park during the medieval period. The timber building remains and probable outer precinct boundary to the east of Holyrood Abbey can increase our understanding of the ancillary structures that serviced the main abbey buildings and can contribute especially to knowledge of the monastic economy. Elsewhere, buried remains of a dam, sluices and corn mill near Hunter's Bog can show how the wider landscape was exploited.<sup>10</sup>

The park is associated with hunting in early medieval period, and there is potential to discover buried features such as banks, ditches and fences that were used in the management and corralling of deer. The founding story of the Abbey describes David I and his nobles waiting for deer at the foot of Salisbury Crags, so the Hawse may be a likely place for such remains, though it has suffered from modern quarrying.<sup>11</sup>

## **2.3 Historical values**

The park possesses a range of historic values both in its association with significant historic figures and events, and in its ability to demonstrate past ways of life. The archaeological resource associated with the park is dealt with at 2.2 above, as is the association with James Hutton. The following paragraphs pick out some of the key associations of the medieval and later history of the park.

### **Royal associations**

#### **David I and the foundation myth of Holyrood Abbey**

The medieval and later history of the park is inextricably bound with that of David I. The foundation myth of the Abbey, known from an early 15th century manuscript,<sup>12</sup> contains many symbolic messages about kingship, wilderness, divine revelation and religiosity. As it has come down to us, it seems to link two themes: the legend of the True Cross and the religious symbolism of stag hunting.

David I is seen as a very important medieval king, he is often credited with modernising Scotland along European lines, and noted for his piety seemingly demonstrated in the huge number of Abbeys he founded.

The legend states that in 1128 David I and his court set out on a hunt.<sup>13</sup> It was the feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, and David had been advised not to go by his confessor. While waiting alone by a spring at Salisbury Crags, a stag charged the king, goring him in the thigh. As the king attempted to hold-off the stag by the antlers, his crucifix miraculously flew into his hands. On touching the antlers with it, the stag disappeared, leaving David holding the crucifix. The wounded king was carried back to the Castle, preceded by the crucifix, and that night was commanded in a dream to found a "house of

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<sup>10</sup> (Stonarch, 2000), (Cultural Heritage Survey, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh Report No.262, 1997, pp. 54-55).

<sup>11</sup> (Gilbert, 1979, p. 54).

<sup>12</sup> (The Holyrood Ordinale, 1914, p. 63).

<sup>13</sup> This version of the legend is a précis of that given in (An Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of The City of Edinburgh, 1951, p. 143).

cannons devoted to the cross". The Abbey was then founded by the spring (which became known as the Spring of the Cross) and called Holyrood.

The crucifix was reported as that given to David by his mother, St Margaret, and was believed to contain a relic of the True Cross; it became known as the Black Rood of Scotland. This relic was regarded as the most important in Scotland and was captured by Edward III in 1346; it was held in Durham cathedral until it was lost during the reformation. The themes of the deer hunt and the appearance of a cross between antlers has been noted in the context of the miraculous conversion of early Christian saints such as St Eustace and St Hubert,<sup>14</sup> whose cults became popular in the 12th and 15th centuries respectively. The earliest known seal of Holyrood Abbey (c. 1148) does not refer to the hunting episode, but a 14th-century seal includes a depiction of the stag and crucifix as a marginal design. St Anthony's Chapel is also associated with holy days venerating the True Cross (see below).

### **Later royal associations**

The area of the park was largely held by the Abbeys of Holyrood and Kelso and was a productive agricultural resource. During the 16th century it came under more direct royal control with James IV's construction of the Palace, and James V's building of the boundary wall in 1541. The enclosure was probably not primarily viewed as a hunting reserve/park with the area remaining primarily in agricultural use. 16th century records indicate sheep grazing and hay production as key activities; deer are occasionally recorded as being brought from for example Falkland, possibly to be hunted but this seems a rare occurrence.<sup>15</sup>

Mary Queen of Scots is also associated with the park. Her connection to Holyroodhouse is well known and celebrated. In 1562 one recorded episode serves to illustrate the potential to use the park as a grand stage for crown display. Mary had the land of Hunter's Bog flooded to provide a watery stage on which floated replica boats in a miniature naval pageant held to celebrate the wedding of one of her ladies in waiting.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the most easily identifiable physical evidence of royal association with the park is with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Their influence consolidated the boundaries as we see them today and also brought about the change in management direction to that of public recreation. This aspect is dealt with in 2.4.1.

The royal association with the park continues to this day. The Palace of Holyroodhouse is the Queen's official residence in Scotland and the garden, which borders the park, is the location for the annual Queen's Garden Party.

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<sup>14</sup> (Gilbert, 1979, p. 75).

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed account of Holyrood Park in the context of other Royal parks see John G Harrison [Scotland's Sixteenth Century Royal Landscapes \(Word document, 1.50MB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> Marriage of Lord Fleming to the Lord Ross's eldest daughter. (Chambers, 1859, p. 29).



## **Religious Associations and Sanctuary**

The park has several strong religious associations primarily of course with Holyrood Abbey (see separate Statement) and also with St Anthony's Chapel. Seven Holy Wells are recorded within the park, though their locations are not always certain today. The most important historically was the Rood Well, associated with the foundation myth of the abbey, the re-sited St Margaret's well (see 2.4.1) is believed to mark this location; and St Anthony's well near St Anthony's Chapel is also well preserved.

### **St Anthony's Chapel<sup>17</sup>**

Probably the most striking architectural feature within the park is the remains of St Anthony's Chapel, from 1128 under the control of the Tironensian Monks of Kelso Abbey.<sup>18</sup> With it came a goodly area of land from Duddingston to Portobello; Duddingston Church was also under Kelso's control. The chapel was dedicated to St Anthony the Great, also known as St Anthony Abbot, St Anthony the Eremite, or St Anthony of Egypt. The building date for the Chapel is not known: it first appears in a document issued by Pope Martin V in 1426, which indicates that the chapel was well-established by this date. It also remarks that the chapel attracted substantial numbers of visitors on St Anthony's Day, Good Friday, and the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

The Chapel was known in medieval times as "the chapel of St Anthony of/on/in the Crag". Both "the Chapel of/on/in the Crag" and "St Anthony's Chapel" are used as short-forms in the pre-Reformation sources, but from the 18th century its usual name settles as "St Anthony's Chapel".

The Chapel was an important part of the religious life of the city and there is evidence that the Chapel was a focal point for pilgrimage and procession, including attendance by James III and IV. While there is a tradition (stated in the 17th century) that there was a hermitage at the Chapel (associated with a structure to the west of the Chapel and a cave in the cliff face below), there is no other evidence to prove the case either way.

The Chapel also seems to have had associations with May Morning. Accounts record regular increase in offerings and payments around May 3rd, this date rather than May 1st traditionally marking the start of Summer and being associated with Beltane in Scotland. May 3rd is also the Feast of the Invention of the True Cross, a celebration of its rediscovery in Jerusalem, which of course links neatly with the David I and the stag legend, see above. The association between St Anthony's well and May Morning celebrations, first recorded in the 1680s, gathered traction in the 19th century.

Control of the Chapel was retained by Kelso Abbey even after James V took control of much of the park area to form his hunting preserve in 1541. After

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<sup>17</sup> A project to research the history of the Chapel is ongoing (August 2018) and fuller information and references will be added in due course.

<sup>18</sup> there is a persistent tradition to the Chapel was connected to the Preceptory of St Anthony, a medieval monastery in Leith, where the community ran a hospice or hospital which specialised in caring for people with skin ailments but this has been shown to be false, see GWS Barrow 'Treverlen, Duddingston and Arthur's Seat' 1959.

the Reformation, the chapel's history becomes unclear; it seems to have become regarded as part of the Holyrood Palace grounds and gradually fell into deeper decay. Certainly by the mid-18th century antiquarian descriptions record increasing dereliction, but also indicate the Chapel as an object of curiosity and interest, particularly linked to the Well and the May Day traditions.

Thus, during the late medieval period the Chapel seems to have held a fairly high profile in Edinburgh's religious life, with various feast days and processions which seem to consciously reflect and enhance its geographic and cultural context.

### **Debtors Sanctuary**

Another key association was the role of the park as a place of sanctuary from at least the 16th century. Holyrood was one of the largest known sanctuaries in Scotland and it retained this role up to the later 19th century, long after other areas of sanctuary were outlawed. The boundary took in Arthur's Seat and stretched to the edge of Duddingston Loch. By 1686 there were 75 people living in the sanctuary, and by 1816, 116 people. A township of tenements sprang up in the area around the present palace, then known as St Anne's Yards, where many debtors lived. The sanctuary was administered by a baillie and there were a complex series of regulations and customs which debtors had to abide by in order to benefit from its protection.

While no above ground trace of the structures associated with the sanctuary survives, archaeological evaluation demonstrates that boundary walls and demolition deposits survive below ground. These and related deposits can increase understanding of this aspect of the park's history, revealing how people lived after they had claimed sanctuary. In addition, there are many documentary sources which shed light on life within the sanctuary, from the earliest recorded debtor, one John Scott in 1531, to more famous inhabitants including Thomas de Quincy and the future Charles X of France, who resided here for two years from 1796. The last recorded debtor was an Edinburgh solicitor, David Bain, who lived here up to 1880.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Innocent railway**

The Innocent Railway was one of Scotland's first freight railways and was opened in 1831 to carry coal from the mines in Dalkeith into the city, but soon carried passengers too. It earned its name as the carriages were originally drawn by horses rather than a steam engine. The line incorporates one of the earliest surviving railway tunnels (NT27SE 589) at its north-west end, extending from the Wells o' Wearie to the station at St Leonards. Disused from the 1960s, the route now provides a cycle and walking track and is popular for both leisure and commuting.

### **A place for gatherings and commemoration**

Other aspects of the park's significance relate to its role as a stage for official or unofficial gatherings, and the stories associated with them. This role

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<sup>19</sup> (Cadell, 1985, p. 10), (Wickham-Jones, 1996, p. 31).



continues today and the contemporary values are discussed at section 2.7 below.

By the 1850s the flat ground between the palace and Meadowbank was formalised and became known as “the Parade Ground”. Some troop reviews became major national events; in 1860 a Grand Review was held with grandstands erected to seat 3,000 VIPs, and an estimated 100,000 people attending the ceremonies. The park has a strong association with the military, the area providing training and camping grounds and rifle ranges during the 19th century. A recent (2017/8) survey<sup>20</sup> revealed a series of training trenches and further documentary work collated an archive of reports and images relating to the park during the First and Second World Wars. Further information on this aspect is available from Cultural Resources Team [crt enquiries@hes.scot](mailto:crt enquiries@hes.scot).

Other gatherings were unofficial protests against authority and have more local resonance. These are woven into the stories of the park and have given names to features such as Murder Acre (after a 1767 apprentices’ riot during which there were fatalities) or Piper’s Walk (1778 mutiny of part of the Seaforth Highlanders protesting against deployment to the East Indies).

Muschat’s Cairn commemorates an event in 1720: Margaret Hall was brutally murdered by her husband, Nichol Muschat, an Edinburgh surgeon. The townspeople built a cairn to demonstrate their abhorrence of the act: the present cairn was erected in 1832 some way from the original cairn site, and features as a meeting place in Scott’s *Heart of Midlothian*.

### **A place for leisure**

From at least the late 17th century the park had, in addition to its industrial and agricultural elements, become a place for leisure activities. In particular curling and skating on Duddingston Loch has, through Sir Henry Raeburn’s 1790s *Skating Minister*, become particularly iconic. The octagonal 2-storey, grade B listed, Thomson Tower, built in 1823–24 by W H Playfair, is on the edge of Duddingston Loch and just outside the park. It was the Duddingston Curling Society’s meeting and storeroom. The society was responsible for codifying the modern rules of curling.<sup>21</sup>

## **2.4 Architectural and artistic values**

### **Architecture**

The architectural tone of the park is set by the Victorian lodges and cottages which date from the 19th century development of the formal park. While there is much archaeology which indicates past history, there are few buildings of early date, principally St Anthony’s Chapel and the boundary walls which delineated James V’s park.

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<sup>20</sup> Barclay, G.J., *The Military Uses of Holyrood Park 1850-1939*, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Listing description (The Thomson Tower, Duddingston Loch, Edinburgh, 2012).

## **St Anthony's Chapel**

St Anthony's Chapel is the most important structure within the park boundaries surviving from the medieval past. It was clearly a structure of some importance, imposingly set on a craggy outcrop. There are few surviving details about its construction: as noted above, the original building date is unknown. The first reference to it dates from 1426 which refers to "repairs", making an earlier construction date likely; it has been a ruin since at least the 18th century, celebrated for its Picturesque appearance and melancholy atmosphere.<sup>22</sup>

The monument comprises fragmentary remains of a rectangular plan chapel, of which the north wall survives best. It consisted of a three bay vaulted nave with a tower above its west end; fragments of the vaulting survive along with features such as window and door margins, drawbar slot and an aumbry. To the west are the remains of a small rectangular structure variously interpreted as a hermitage or store, with the footings of a curved wall linking the two structures, now barely visible.

The chapel is depicted in the form of thumbnail sketches on two English views of Edinburgh commemorating sixteenth-century attacks by Tudor armies - a sketch of 1544 showing Protector Somerset's raid, and the more sophisticated "Petworth Map" recording the Siege of Leith campaign in 1560. Both images relate closely to the extant remains, showing the chapel with its tower, the surrounding wall and the structure to the west.

Taken together, the evidence indicates that the chapel was once a building of impressive architectural quality. If it was harled or limewashed originally then it would have stood out in its landscape like a beacon. In addition to the chapel, the complex included the adjacent hermitage/store and cave, all contained within an encircling wall which gave the site an impressive entrance passage, and a paved approach route leading up from below the crag, with the font-like well alongside the roadway. The impressive scale of the chapel's settlement context is further emphasised by traces of medieval field-systems on Arthur's Seat, and by sixteenth-century evidence for a garden-like property associated with the chapel on the flat ground to the north. The medieval setting was one of farmed and productive land rather than the wild, remote and naturalistic setting which is perceived today; and an established route to the Chapel for pilgrims on several key feast days.

Following its abandonment and decline, the Chapel becomes one more romantic ruin in the landscape, an inspiration for artists and the focus for tales and interpretations of its history.

## **Boundary Wall**

Approximately 8km of boundary walls enclose the grounds of Holyrood Park, the nature, date and composition of the wall varies considerably along its course and it has undergone numerous repairs. The present park boundary

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<sup>22</sup> A fuller discussion of St Anthony's Chapel is given in an unpublished report *The Chapel on the Crag*, by Arkady Hodge from [CRTenquiries@hes.scot](mailto:CRTenquiries@hes.scot)

was first formalised and enclosed in the 1540s under James V when the land became a royal park. Quarries were opened at Salisbury Crags and Camstane to provide some of the stone for the first wall.

The course of James V's wall is likely to reflect the line of earlier boundaries associated with the lands of Holyrood and Kelso Abbeys, and in this sense it provides a link to the medieval past. There is a local tradition that the current wall was rebuilt by the last hereditary keeper in the early 19th century, but large sections of the wall are evidently over 200 years old, with some sections dating to the early 18th century and earlier. During the 16th and 17th centuries various boundary disputes led to some destruction of the wall, theft of stock and illegal grazing especially around the Duddingston area: there is therefore a history of early repair projects.<sup>23</sup>

In 1646 Charles I transferred the park into the keepership of Sir James Hamilton of Priestfield (brother of the Earl of Haddington) and in 1691, the state paid for the rebuilding of the wall of the Park of Holyroodhouse. In 1836, the park was transferred to the control of the Board of Woods, Forests (etc.) and the park boundaries were altered. Keepership of the park continued to remain with the Earls of Haddington until 1846, although with continued Crown interest. The end of the keepership raised questions of ownership of and responsibility for the wall, with some considering it to be in joint ownership; in 1847 a surveyor for the Board of Works concluded that the Crown retained sole ownership of the boundary walls.

The walls also delineate the boundaries of the Sanctuary (see 2.3 above). Whilst the course of the wall and its foundations have a historic origin, some of the present wall fabric has been rebuilt, perhaps using historic material, much of it during the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>24</sup>

### **19th century park structures**

There are eight listed structures within the park which date from its later 19th century development as a public park, largely under Prince Albert's auspices.

The listed structures in the park comprise: Holyrood, Meadowbank, Duddingston, St Leonard's and Dumbiedykes Lodges with their associated gateways; Wells o Wearie cottage, St Leonard's Fountain and St Margaret's Well. In architectural terms, none of these individual structures (apart from St Margaret's Well) are of national importance: their significance comes from their group value, their historic links to the development of the park and the visual statement they make at the various park entrance points. Collectively they are also a material symbol of the unequivocal change in the identity of the park to a public recreational resource and of the management regime, by way of regulation and provision of services, which this required.

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<sup>23</sup> For more detail see John G Harrison [Scotland's Sixteenth Century Royal Landscapes \(Word document, 1.50MB\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> A fuller Report on the Boundary Wall, compiled July 2018 by Stefan Sagrott is available from Cultural Resources Team [CRTenquiries@hes.scot](mailto:CRTenquiries@hes.scot)

Three of the lodges (Holyrood, Duddingston, and Meadowbank) represent the first phase of development, largely under Prince Albert's auspices c 1857. They served the newly formalised roads and access points and set the tone for the park. They were all designed by Robert Matheson, who as Clerk of Works for Scotland from 1848 onwards, supervised all work to government and crown property in the country. In 2017 Holyrood Lodge opened as a visitor centre for the park.

These lodges are very similar in style, conforming to the stock motifs found in many loosely Gothic cottages of the time. For instance the steeply pitched gables emphasised by either kneeler skewputts or overhanging eaves and decorative bargeboards; tall chimney stacks set diamond-wise and basket arched doorways, all lending a mildly Tudor air. Also part of this phase of development was Wells o' Wearie cottage; this simple single storey cottage was built to house the shepherd who looked after the sheep which grazed the park.

St Leonard's Lodge was also designed by Matheson, but is different in character to his other lodges. Dated 1863/5 it is not quite as grand as the others, being only single storey and without the gable ornamentation. It has a surviving timber veranda to the east side (a similar arrangement to the south side is lost) and is thought to have functioned as a tea room. In 1886 a fountain was erected near to St Leonard's lodge; it was designed by Robert Morham, Edinburgh City Architect and is of modest proportions; originally its centre-piece was a bronze unicorn statue. The loss of the statue and the fact that the fountain does not function reduces its visual impact and interest to visitors today. Dumbiedykes Lodge is the latest of the lodges, built in Scots renaissance style and dated 1906; its designer is unknown.

St Margaret's Well is an interesting historic feature with considerable archaeological and architectural value. It was originally the well-house over a spring associated with St Margaret in Restalrig. In its structural elements, a hexagonal chamber with rib-vaulting supported on a central pillar, it is an accurate miniature representation of St Triduana's Aisle. It was removed stone by stone and rebuilt in the park by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1859/60, as it was threatened by development at the time. The choice of new site is important as it was located near the site of another holy well within the park – St David's Well.

**Artistic values: association and inspiration**

*If I were to choose a spot from which the rising or the setting sun could be seen to the greatest possible advantage, it would be that wild path winding around the foot of that high belt of semi-circular rocks, called Salisbury Crags, ... the prospect commands a close-built, high piled city stretching itself out beneath ... When a piece of scenery so beautiful yet so varied - so exciting in its intricacy yet so sublime- is lighted up by the tints of morning or of evening and displays all that variety of shadowy depths, exchanged with partial brilliancy, which gives character to even the tamest of landscapes, the effect approaches near to enchantment.*

Sir Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818).

As might be expected the juxtaposition of Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags as foil and backdrop to the city has proven inspirational for many artists and writers. A fuller listing (though by no means exhaustive) of literary references is given at Appendix 6, and this section lists a few key examples. Literary walking tours most usually include some aspect of the park.

The rugged semi-wild nature of the park, which can hint at danger and the supernatural, has been used as a backdrop for many fictional works: the Brokenspectre episode from James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) is an historic example; Ian Rankin's Rebus novels *Dead Souls* and *The Falls* are contemporary examples. Two recent publications take aspects of the park as their theme: *Arthur's Seat, Journeys and Evocations* by Stuart Mchardy and Donald Smith (2013) and *Made in Edinburgh, Poems and Evocations of Holyrood Park* by Tessa Ransford (2014).

The park offers space for solitude, observation, reflection and ever changing visual effects. It has inspired many past and present authors and artists, whether they have used the park directly as a setting or not.

## 2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

While they lie outwith the WHS boundary, the importance of the park (particularly Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags) in defining the Edinburgh cityscape cannot be overstated. The contribution of the "lion" silhouette of Arthur's Seat is particularly strong on distant approach to the city from many directions, while the Crags are particularly important from closer at hand.

As well as their striking form, colour plays an important part offering the contrast of the dark red crags, green grass and yellow whin from the grey of the city. Light and weather conditions obviously affect perceptions of the park and provide changes of "mood". The play of light emphasising the colour, geometric forms and facets of the crags is a particular delight. See for instance [William Crozier's 1927 canvas \*Edinburgh \(from Salisbury Crags\)\*](#) or [William Bell Scott's \*Salisbury Crags\*](#).<sup>25</sup>

Arthur's Seat is an unparalleled viewing platform offering extensive views in all directions: to the coast, the Bridges, the industrial development on the Forth and the distant hills to the north. An extremely important characteristic is the way views from Arthur's seat can link to both the hills within the city (for example Castle Rock, Calton Hill, Blackford Hill) and to more distant hills (for example Traprain Law, Berwick Law); this can help to make the wider Lothians landscape more understandable. These strong visual linkages can also be related to a shared geology and/or archaeology; for instance Arthur's Seat is covered by the same SSSI designation as Calton Hill and Castle Rock.

The interior landscape of the park falls into several distinct areas. The flat land around the fringe and near the Palace has an overtly managed character

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<sup>25</sup> Both artworks can be accessed online at the National Galleries Scotland website: [www.nationalgalleries.org](http://www.nationalgalleries.org)



(mown grass and playing fields) and is the setting for many events. The hillier ground of the interior has a much more “natural” feel, though non-the-less managed. The interior of the park is encircled by roughly four areas of higher ground: Whinny Hill to the north-east; Dunsapie Crag to the east; Arthur’s Seat, Crow and Nether Hill forming a larger formation to the south; and Salisbury Crags to the west. It thus feels somewhat enclosed and it is easy to forget the city on the other sides of the hill. The interior is penetrated by the Volunteers’ Walk, which encircles the back of Salisbury Crags, above Hunter’s Bog. Alongside, and below this, is The Dasses and the Dry Dam, running down from the back of Arthur’s seat, north to Anthony’s Well.

The three lochs in the park are: St Margaret’s Loch to the north, Dunsapie Loch to the east and Duddingston Loch to the south-east. St Margaret’s has a relatively tame air, is filled with swans and other water-fowl. Often they are fed inappropriate food by the public, despite signs requesting them not to for the bird’s wellbeing. Duddingston Loch is currently managed under lease by SWT as part of their reserve and is the largest of the three. It has a wilder air, but is most often observed at a distance from the High Road. Dunsapie Loch is perhaps the most attractive, most often viewed from the west with Dunsapie Crag in the background.

## **2.6 Natural heritage values**

The park is nationally recognised for the importance of its natural heritage value. It has not been subject to modern agricultural methods hence it has high biodiversity value and acts as a biodiversity reservoir and corridor for the surrounding areas. As with the other cultural heritage values noted above, the extensive nature of the park and its location within city boundaries make it a unique resource for education and learning centred on the natural environment.

### **Geology (see 2.2 above)**

#### **Habitats**

The complex geology of the park has led to rich and diverse plant communities and to the park being classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.<sup>26</sup> Although the park was farmed in the past, it has never been subject to modern agricultural practices and associated soil improvement that favour a few species to the detriment of many others. As a result the wildlife habitats have retained a rich biodiversity of plants invertebrates and birds. Much of Holyrood Park is covered with unimproved grassland and, depending on the underlying rock type, acid and calcareous grassland habitats have developed, each attracting different plant communities. The complexities of habitat present lead to an exceptional diversity of plant species, with over 350 species of higher plant being recorded.

The park was grazed by sheep up until 1979, this prevented the development of scrub and woodland. With the removal of grazing these plant communities have developed and spread, leading to a reduction of the grassland and a

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<sup>26</sup> (Citation: Arthur’s Seat Volcano Site of Special Scientific Interest).



resulting decrease in the biodiversity of the grassland. Where possible this has been addressed by meadow management practices – cutting and removal of more competitive grasses to allow smaller herb species to flower and thrive. This is, however, not as effective as grazing and is limited by access and has issues with sustainability through use of fuel and disposal of the cuttings. The current Local Biodiversity Management Plan (LBAP) 2010–2015 includes a trial of five possible management regimes for the grassland, with the intention of identifying the most effective.<sup>27</sup> Grazing was introduced for a short period, in 2002–4, in a small area to the west of Duddingston Loch there are plans for this to be re-introduced by the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Duddingston Loch is a separate Site of Special Scientific Interest, located at the southern edge of Holyrood Park.<sup>28</sup> The loch is the only remaining example of a natural freshwater loch in the City of Edinburgh area. The plant communities found here are representative of eutrophic (nutrient rich) loch and loch shore habitats, the reed bed is the largest in the area. A clear transition of habitats from freshwater, reed bed, scrub, to woodland is present. These diverse habitats harbour a rich assemblage of birds.

### **Species**

Over 60 species of plants that are rare in Scotland or the Lothian area have been recorded in the park, including the nationally rare sticky catchfly and the maiden pink which is rare in Scotland. Eight of these rare species are included in the LBAP, including the adder's tongue fern, sticky catchfly and a rare plume moth. The LBAP includes management actions to monitor and increase not only habitats, but also the range and numbers of the noted species and as a result biodiversity in general. Holyrood Park is the most important area identified in the plan. Mainly through the efforts of the park ranger service and its use of volunteers, it is the largest single contributor to the improvement and monitoring of biodiversity within the plan area.

Duddingston Loch supports a number of breeding waterfowl, such as heron, great crested grebe, mute swan, tufted duck, mallard and coot, while birds such as the sedge warbler breed in the reed bed and associated scrub. In winter, populations of mallard, pochard, tufted duck, teal and shoveler are present. A number of uncommon plants occur around the loch, including several that are rare, including nodding bur marigold *Bidens cernua*, greater spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*, fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*, lesser water plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*, and fool's water-cress *Apium nodiflorum*. Several of the other aquatic and marsh plants are uncommon in the Lothians due to the shortage of suitable habitat.

## **2.7 Contemporary/use values**

As well as its contribution to the Edinburgh cityscape, outlined in above, the park makes an important contribution to the life and image of the city. Very high numbers of people access the park for a variety of reasons. The roadway

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<sup>27</sup> (Edinburgh Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2010–2015, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> (Citation: Duddingston Loch Site of Special Scientific Interest).

running around the park is used by approximately 8.5m cars per year<sup>29</sup> and is a major thoroughfare. The number of people who access the park on foot or bicycle is unknown. While it is regrettable that we have no firmer estimates, it is undisputed that numbers are exceptionally high. Many people, residents and tourists alike, value the park for the leisure and recreation opportunities it offers and for its general contribution to their wellbeing. Residents are likely to be repeat visitors and also often use the park well into the evenings and at night. For these reasons Holyrood Park is of great importance to the city and people of Edinburgh. By virtue of its outstanding scenic contribution to Scotland's capital city and its role as a stage for major events it is also legitimate to assess these values as "high" in a national context.

A fuller description of the various use values associated with the park, together with some of the management issues which they raise, is given at Appendix 5. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the most significant of these use values with some examples.

### **A place apart – timeout, tranquillity and refreshment**

While many people use the park for physical activity including greater and lesser degrees of adrenaline-inducing sports, see below, an aspect of the park which is equally valued, though less easy to describe or evaluate is its capacity to provide spiritual refreshment. This aspect has been noted in attitude surveys by park users<sup>30</sup> and relates to the aesthetic and inspirational qualities discussed at 2.4.2. These values are intangible, personal and often deeply felt. For many, especially regular users, they add immeasurably to quality of life and well-being.

### **Sports and activities**

The park, by reason of its ease of access, extent and topography provides many opportunities for sports of all kinds: cycling, walking, and running are common. Many people use it as a "commuter route" either by car, or by more environmentally friendly modes of transport, climbing and fishing require a permit and are restricted to certain areas (respectively, South Quarry and Duddingston Loch).

More organised team sports take place in the parade ground area with 6 or 7 regular football groups, mainly junior league clubs and a similar number of fitness groups. A summer's day brings out crowds for picnics, frisbee and kite flying and the park is a regular dog-walking haunt.<sup>31</sup>

All of these activities contribute to health and wellbeing of large numbers of people on a regular basis, though the specific contribution to the city has not been calculated.

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<sup>29</sup> Extrapolated from (Holyrood Park Traffic Study, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> (Brady, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> (Gray, 2014).

## **Organised Events**

### **Major/national events**

As a park in the capital city, and one so close to and intrinsically linked to the parliament and Holyrood Palace, Holyrood Park often plays host to events that are of great importance in national life. The most recent example is the World War I Drumhead memorial service, which took place on 10th August 2014. The ceremony started on the esplanade at Edinburgh Castle and progressed down the Royal Mile to the park, where wreaths were laid at a memorial. It is believed 5,000 attended the service and more gathered to watch the procession.<sup>32</sup> Other events of note that took place recently are: 2013 NVA Speed of Light; 2011 Armed Forces Day; 2009 The Gathering; 2009, 2010 Edinburgh Festivals' Cavalcade.

The park is also often the venue for major sporting or charity runs e.g. January: Great Winter Run; Great Edinburgh Run. June: Race for Life, Cancer Research; Moonwalk Scotland.<sup>33</sup>

### **Local events**

There are many traditional, casual and organised events that take place in the park. Traditional events include witnessing the solstice, Easter Sunday and May Morning, these tend to be relatively small-scale and do not involve the Ranger Service in any great degree. There are about 40–50 community events (defined as events that do not pay a fee because they have little or no infrastructure impact) a year.

The park is also the focus for many family “traditions”, e.g. many local families take to the park for a walk on Christmas afternoon or Boxing Day; or gather in the park to watch fireworks at the end of the International Festival or other occasions. There is one particular fringe performer who, every festival, starts each day with some mediation on Arthur’s Seat, and has done for several years.<sup>34</sup>

### **Ranger Service**

In terms of practical management the Ranger Service spends a lot of time out on site patrolling. On these patrols rangers look for any issues that need to be notified to the works team or police; they manage visitor behaviour; look after site safety and provide advice, assistance and directions to the public. They are often first on scene for any emergency in the park, including major incidents such as accidents, rock falls, fires or even suicides, and in alerting and assisting the emergency services.

### **Learning and community engagement**

The Ranger Service also carry out many formal and informal educational learning and engagement activities, talks, guided walks and events. The audiences for these are varied including, from nursery groups to, the University of the Third Age, John Muir Award groups, City Guilds, Junior

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<sup>32</sup> (BBC, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> (Urquhart, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> (Gray, 2014).

Rangers and the general public. The activities tend to cover a variety of topics from nature conservation (for example species information survey work), historical aspects, geology, archaeology and general stewardship.

### **Conservation activity, volunteering and participation**

The Ranger Service also runs a series of volunteer programmes. These cover a wide range of capabilities and interests. A key element are the Volunteer Rangers: this is a long-term commitment that involves prolonged formal learning in different skills. There are also survey volunteers, where the object is a specific conservation survey over, usually, a short time period. Finally there are conservation volunteers. Again this is usually volunteers brought in for a short time period for a specific task: such as clearing invasive species.

## **3 Major gaps in understanding**

The history and development of the park over time has been relatively well studied both by physical survey and documentary research. However, there are many aspects which would benefit from further study. Some key aspects which are comparatively under-researched are:

- Information on park users, their numbers and economic and social impact
- Local community values for the park
- Holistic understanding of some of the key elements and inter-relationships of the park in its wider context, e.g. with the Palace, Abbey, Edinburgh Castle and surrounding Burghs.
- The dates, layout and functions of the major prehistoric sites: the four hillforts and the scooped settlements; their inter-relationship with each other; and their inter-relationship with comparable sites on nearby crags and hills (for example Edinburgh Castle Rock; Blackford Hill) and settlements on the Lothian plain.
- The significance and interpretation of features and anomalies recorded (both in the past and more recently) around and within Duddingston Loch.
- Detailed characterisation of the palaeoenvironmental potential of deposits in the park, especially the ancient loch west and south of the Palace, and wetland areas around Duddingston Loch and in Bawsinch Nature Reserve.
- Three-dimensional landscape modelling over millennia, based on palaeoenvironmental and archaeological research.
- The dates and changing land uses represented by the cultivation terraces and furlongs of rig-and-furrow cultivation, together with enclosures and other relict field systems.
- The layout and extent of the Abbey precinct where it falls into the park and monastic impact on and uses of the wider park landscape.
- Documentary and field investigation of the various industrial uses of the park.

#### **4 Associated properties**

Palace of Holyroodhouse, Holyrood Abbey, the palace gardens, Queen Mary's Bath, Croft-an-Righ, Abbey Strand, Edinburgh Castle, Linlithgow Palace and Peel

#### **5 Keywords**

Royal, Park, Chapel, Well, Hillfort, David I, Abbey, Craggs, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, cultivation terrace,

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