

Historic Building Record  
Firrhill Stables  
257 Colinton Road  
EDINBURGH  
EB13



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257 COLINTON ROAD  
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*Illustration 1: Site location plan*

*Illustration 2: Plan of 257 Colinton Road, former stables*

*Illustration 3: Exterior elevations of 257 Colinton Road*

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## ***ABSTRACT***

*Alder Archaeology were commissioned to conduct an Historic Building Survey of a former stables at 257 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, in advance of conversion to a domestic dwelling. The proposed development, which includes an area of car parking and garden, was centred on NGR NT 22592 69814. The work (site code EB13) was undertaken on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018 in fine weather conditions. The requirement was to create a photographic and illustrated narrative record of the building in its present state. The general fabric and form of the building suggested construction prior to 1868 (when the mansion to which the stables was attached was built); however, the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (1855) shows no buildings on the site. The rubble wall fabric bore some evidence of re-construction and the stone upper wallhead had been built up with bricks; a chimney had also been blocked, with no trace of a fireplace. It is therefore possible that an earlier outbuilding had been re-purposed. Iron horse stall fittings and drainage were still in place at the time of the survey.*

# **1 Background**

## **1.1 Introduction**

City Architecture Office Ltd commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an historic building survey of a former stables at 257 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, in advance of conversion to a domestic dwelling. The proposed development, which includes an area of car parking and garden, is centred on NGR NT 22592 69814. The work (site code EB13) was undertaken on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018 in fine weather conditions. The requirement was to create a photographic and illustrated narrative record of the building in its present state.

The work was designed to satisfy the archaeological condition on development application reference 17/05683/FUL.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of this survey was to create a narrative record of the building's form, function and fabric, noting any significant details and evidence of phases of construction and/or use, together with a photographic record of all major elevations, internal and external, current setting and features of historic or architectural interest. Measured and annotated plan and elevation drawings were also produced.

## **1.3 Reporting**

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this survey. Copies will be sent to the client, The National Record of the Historic Environment at Historic Environment Scotland, and City of Edinburgh Historic Environment Record.

## **1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues**

This Historic Building Record constitutes archaeological work designed to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development.

## **1.5 Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank Peter Rorke of Cornerstone Property Development Ltd and Moray Royles of City Architecture Office for their assistance and guidance throughout this project. City Architecture Office funded this survey.

# **2 Details of Work**

## **2.1 The Site (Illus 1)**

The former stables is a single, one-and-a-half storey building, inside the entrance drive to the Firrhill House day centre, just off the E side of Colinton Road. The building is number 257 Colinton Road.

## **2.2 Archaeological Potential**

The stable is believed to be of later 19<sup>th</sup> Century origin and is attached to Firrhill House, a day centre on the site of a mansion built in 1868 at the junction of Colinton

Road and Oxbgangs Road. Although not a listed building, the stable is regarded as being of local archaeological and historical significance.

### **2.3 Archaeological Method**

All external and internal elevations were photographed, along with the general setting of the building and any features of interest. A narrative account was created, discussing the building fabric, dimensions, developmental sequence and likely function. Measured elevation and plan illustrations were produced, with annotations and cross-referencing to the accompanying text.

### **2.4 Results of Investigations**

The S of the site comprised a small car park, flanked to the W by the neighbouring house at 257a Colinton Road and to the N by the stables. The E was fringed by bushes and sloped upwards via an embankment to the car park of the day centre. N of the stables, the ground sloped up steeply, becoming the wooded S shoulder of Firr Hill and retained by another embankment and a low wall in front of the stables.

The stable, rectangular in plan, aligned E-W and measuring 10.70m x 5.10m (internal), was constructed as a unicameral building, but had been internally subdivided by a wooden partition screen 4.40m from the W end. The partition featured a doorway 0.80m wide 0.90m from the S end, and had originally been covered in pine boards, still present at the S end but stripped from the remainder. The smaller W end room formed by the screen featured pine floorboards raised 0.08m above the concrete floor present in the main room, the latter grooved in herringbone pattern for grip and including an E-W drainage channel 1.70m from the S wall.

Horse stall dividers were still present, comprising cast iron end posts with decorative ball knobs, supporting iron tethering rings and curved mild steel (?) screen top rails. Two N-S stalls against the N wall each measured 2.70m long x 1.80m wide; the third stall in the NE corner of the building was larger, being 2.70m N-S x 2.50m E-W, with an extension into the SE corner formed by an iron stall pillar on the W (inside), the E and S walls forming the other sides and an opening to the N, the extension being 1.20m N-S x 2.30m E-W. The large NE stall featured an iron grille in place on its stall divider, with wooden backing (the other stalls bore traces of this backing, which had been stripped out).

The S elevation of the building featured two windows either side of the sole entrance, both sash, with six panes in upper and lower half, within a wooden lattice. Each window measured 1.30m wide, 1.80m high, 1.00m above the concrete floor, set within an embrasure 1.48m wide and 0.24m deep. A similar window, of the same dimensions, was located centrally to the W elevation. The windows, while probably not original, may well have been fitted early in the use of the building as a stables; however, if so, they had certainly been re-glazed, as two of the three featured circular fan vents in the upper half. The W window in the S elevation was situated close to the door, 0.30m away on the other side of the internal partition; the E door was 1.40m from the door, central to the main room. The door was double-hinged, of heavy wood (possibly oak) planks, with a five-pane transom above. The doorway measured 1.40m wide, 2.40m high, with a moulded wood frame set onto ashlar stone side casing. Doorway and

windows were framed by reinforcing internal columns of regular blockwork construction, built against the rubble wall fabric (see below).

An upper loft space was accessed via a fixed iron ladder within the smaller end room. This featured two central columns of massive wooden beams supporting the steeply-pitched roof and a wooden slat loading door in the W end - probably a replacement. The floor had been re-covered in plywood, with fairly fresh sawdust indicating recent work. Significantly, the uppermost 0.50m of the wallhead had been built up with machined red bricks, indicating that the roof had been reconstructed. The uneven nature of the stone wallhead suggested that this had perhaps extended above its current level. The NW corner of the room featured a chimney that was visible externally above the N wall but was otherwise invisible inside the building, with no fireplace on the ground floor. The loft was not fully entered for safety reasons.

The building was constructed of yellow sandstone rubble, with stugged ashlar exterior casings on all apertures and stugged ashlar quoins on all corners. Door and window lintels were stugged single blocks, the door lintel being 1.70m long and the windows 1.50m. The fabric was lime mortar-bonded, with patches of more recent brown render. The roof was of grey slate and featured a central cupola double vent, also roofed in grey slate.

A slight difference in construction was noticeable between the lower and upper parts of the wall, with the lowest 1.50m being quite closely spaced with regular coursing of elongated or slab-like blocks. Above this point, spacing became wider and rather more erratic, suggesting a possible re-build. While the interior of the main room was plastered throughout, sections of the smaller room had been stripped to reveal bare stone and here cracking was evident in the NW corner in the vicinity of the presumed base of the chimney noted externally but otherwise unseen. The general fabric, construction and appearance of the building suggested an origin prior to 1868, although the OS 1<sup>st</sup> Edition map (1855) showed no buildings on the site. Possible evidence of rebuilding perhaps suggested the conversion of an older outbuilding (requiring a chimney) to use as a stables; however, the spacing of the windows to align perfectly with the internal subdivision of the stables strongly suggested that these features were contemporary and that, therefore, the present windows had been inserted as part of the conversion. A clearly late iron ventilation grille in the S wall set within stugged blocks had also been inserted.

### **3 Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 3.1 The building at 257 Colinton Road is a good example of a late nineteenth century stables of modest size, with more recent refitting of some features. It is locally significant and conversion work should preserve its present fabric as far as possible.

#### **3.2 Recommendations for Further Work**

Alder Archaeology consider the historic building record to have been compiled according to the archaeological condition on this development and do not recommend further work. However, the final decision ultimately rests with the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service.

## **4 Bibliography**

Map: Edinburghshire, Sheet 6 (includes: Edinburgh; Lasswade), survey date 1852, publication date 1855, Ordnance Survey six-inch first edition

## Appendix 1 Photographic Register

<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
001-2	S elevation (external)	N
003-7	Location shots, S elevation (external)	NE, N, NW
008	Location shot, Colinton Road entrance/number 257a from stable	SW
009-11	W elevation (external)	E
012	N elevation (external), oblique	SE
013	W end of N elevation (external)	S
014	N elevation (external), oblique	SW
015-16	Location shot, N elevation (external), oblique	SW
017	E elevation (external), oblique	SW
018-19	SE corner and E elevation (external), oblique	NW
020	Main room/horse stalls (internal), oblique	NE
021	Main room/horse stalls/partition screen (internal), oblique	NW
022	W elevation (internal)	W
023	End room (internal), oblique	NW
024	N elevation of end room (internal)	N
025	N elevation of main room, W end (internal)	N
026	N elevation of main room, E end (internal)	N
027	E elevation, S end (internal)	E
028	E elevation, N end (internal), oblique	NE
030	Detail, iron stall post	W
031	Detail, stall divider, NE stall (internal), oblique	NW
032	Detail, tethering ring on stall divider, NW stall (internal)	N
033	Detail, stall divider, NW stall (internal), oblique	NW
034	S elevation of end room, W end (internal)	S
035	S elevation of main room, W end, with door (internal)	S



036	S elevation of main room, E end (internal)	S
037	Loft, loading door in W end (internal), oblique	NW
038	Loft, detail of brick upper wall, N elevation	N
039	Loft, wooden roof supports, oblique	NE
040	Loft, E elevation	E

## Appendix 2 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

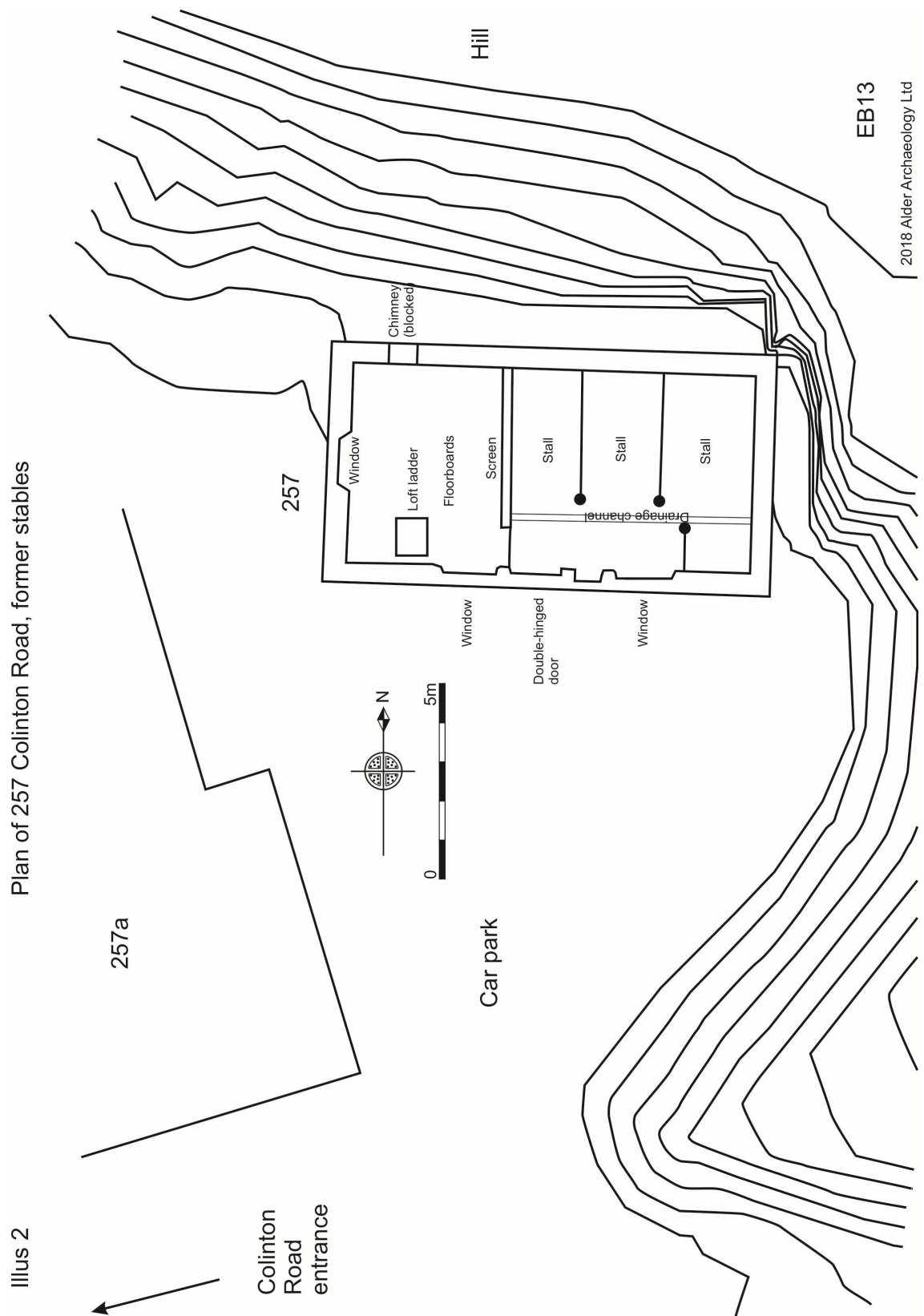
<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Edinburgh
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Firrhill Stables, 257 Colinton Road
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	EB13
<b>PARISH:</b>	Edinburgh
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	C Fyles
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Alder Archaeology Ltd
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Historic Building Record
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	-
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Stables (disused)
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NT 22592 69814
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	23/03/18
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	23/03/18
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	None
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	Alder Archaeology were commissioned to conduct an Historic Building Survey of a former stables at 257 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, in advance of conversion to a domestic dwelling. The proposed development includes an area of car parking and garden. The work was undertaken on 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2018 in fine weather conditions. The requirement was to create a photographic and illustrated narrative record of the building in its present state. The general fabric and form of the building suggested construction prior to 1868 (when the mansion to which the stables was attached was built); however, the 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (1855) shows no buildings on the site. The rubble wall fabric bore some evidence of re-construction and the stone upper wallhead had been built up with bricks; a chimney had also been blocked, with no trace of a fireplace. It is therefore possible that an earlier outbuilding had been re-purposed. Iron horse stall fittings and drainage were still in place at the time of the survey.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	-
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	City Architect Office Ltd
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Alder Archaeology Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX
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<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended/deposited)	HES (intended)

Illus 1



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# Exterior elevations, 257 Colinton Road

Illus 3

