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QUARTERMILE

**JAMES NORIE PAINTING, OLD CRAIG
CRAIG HOUSE
EDINBURGH**

Painting Survey report

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QUARTERMILE

James Norie Painting, Old Craig, Craig House, Edinburgh

Painting Survey

PREPARED BY:	EDITED BY:	APPROVED BY:
Ariane Buschmann	Frank Giecco	Frank Giecco
		
Buildings Archaeologist	Technical Director	Technical Director

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WASTE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong LLP (WA) was commissioned by Quartermile to undertake a programme of archaeological painting recording of the James Norie painting in Old Craig, Craig House, Edinburgh. The work was required as a condition of planning consent. The painting most likely dates from the mid-18th century and has been associated with the redevelopment of Old Craig by John Elphinstone. It is the last remaining panel of a set of four wooden panels by the artist James Norie (1684 – 1757).

The painting is in good condition with some discolouration of the glossy varnish. It is fastened within the upper level of the timber panelling in a representative room at the first floor of Old Craig. Additionally, three nails within the painting have been used to further secure the painting to the wall.

The painting conservation specialist Sylvia Krauss assessed the painting in-situ and produced a list of recommendations for the further treatment of the painting.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION AND POLICIES	5
1.1	Project circumstances and planning background	5
1.2	Planning Context	5
2	METHODOLOGY	7
2.1	Standards and Guidance	7
2.2	Painting Recording	7
2.3	Reporting and Project Archive	7
3	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	9
3.1	Introduction.....	9
3.2	Historic Background	9
4	THE PAINTING	11
5	CONCLUSION.....	13
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	16
	Secondary Sources	16

PLATES

Plate 1: General view of the semi-monochrome painting	11
Plate 2: Detail of the greenery to the left and the fisherman	12
Plate 3: Detail of lower, square headed nail	12

1 INTRODUCTION AND POLICIES

1.1 Project circumstances and planning background

- 1.1.1 Wardell Armstrong LLP was commissioned by Quartermile, to undertake a programme of archaeological painting recording of an oil on timber painting by James Norie in Old Craig, Craig House, Edinburgh (NT 23457 70663), in advance of the redevelopment of the property for residential purposes.

1.2 Planning Context

- 1.2.1 Scottish Planning Policy (The Scottish Government 2014) states that “the historic environment is a key cultural and economic asset and a source of inspiration that should be seen as integral to creating successful places”. Consequently, the planning system should:

“promote the care and protection of the designated and non-designated historic environment (including individual assets, related settings and the wider cultural landscape) and its contribution to sense of place, cultural identity, social well-being, economic growth, civic participation and lifelong learning”; and “enable positive change in the historic environment which is informed by a clear understanding of the importance of the heritage assets affected and ensure their future use. Change should be sensitively managed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the fabric and setting of the asset, and ensure that its special characteristics are protected, conserved or enhanced”.

- 1.2.2 The mechanisms for the conservation of the historic environment are set out in the *Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement* (HESPS), which was published by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in June 2016.
- 1.2.3 Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. This establishes that any work which affects the character of a listed building will require listed building consent. In assessing an application for listed building consent, the planning authority is required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 1.2.4 Section 2.24 of the *HESPS* states that *“any building or man-made structure may be considered for listing. In order to be listed under Section 1 of the 1997 Act any such building or structure must be of special architectural or historic interest”.*

- 1.2.5 Section 2.36 of the *HESPS* explains that *“many buildings are of interest, architecturally or historically, but for the purposes of listing this interest must be special”*.
- 1.2.6 Section 3.38 of the *HESPS* explains that *“once lost listed buildings cannot be replaced. They can be robbed of their special interest either by inappropriate alteration or by demolition. There is, therefore, a presumption against demolition or other works that adversely affect the special interest of a listed building or its setting”*.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards and Guidance

2.1.1 The survey was undertaken following the appropriate standards and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014).

2.2 Painting Recording

2.2.1 The recording of the painting comprised an observation of the oil on panel painting to produce a photographic and written record. Digital photographs were taken and a painting conservation specialist assessed the condition of the painting. In summary, the photographic survey included:

- General view or views of the painting;
- Photographs of all relevant design details, damages and alterations.

2.2.2 The written record comprised:

- The precise location of all structures subjected to the building and topographic survey, as a National Grid reference and in address form;
- The location of the project archive;
- A historical background to set the structure into its historical context, with information derived as a result of the desk-based research;
- Photographs of the painting to illustrate the report.

2.2.3 The purpose of the painting recording was to produce a photographic and written record of the painting in situ. Its aim is to create a detailed record of the current state of the painting and record any damage or alterations.

2.3 Reporting and Project Archive

2.3.1 Three paper copies of the report will be submitted to the client's agent for submission to Edinburgh City Council within two months of the commencement of on-site works.

2.3.2 A digital copy of the report will be deposited with Historic Scotland at Edinburgh.

2.3.3 An archive will be prepared in accordance with the recommendations in '*Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation*' (Brown 2011). The project archive will be deposited with the relevant Archive Centre.

2.3.4 Wardell Armstrong LLP supports the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project (<http://www.oasis.ac.uk>). The aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of developer-funded fieldwork. Details of this project have been included on the OASIS database under the identifier **wardella2-318090**.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 A previous historical background research has been undertaken (WAA 2015), derived from various resources available from archives, libraries and online. This following section only presents a short summary in the development of the Old Craig building.

3.2 Historic Background

- 3.2.1 Old Craig had been built as a comparatively small tower house, close to Edinburgh city. The earliest, still extant fabric is part of the three storey tower house, with the datestone of 1565 giving an approximate date of its construction. The initials LS CP point to the owners at this time, Laurence Symson and Catherine Pringle. The house may have been built on an L or T plan, with small first and second floor windows and a crow-stepped gable. The whole ground floor contained a vaulted ceiling. The Dicks family owned the house from at least 1685. Craig House was extended on the north-west in 1745, possibly for Sir James Elphinstone. In the 19th century it was the residence of John Hill Burton, a Scottish historian (Historic Scotland, accessed 12/08/15).
- 3.2.2 During the late 18th to the early 19th century the building remained empty and began to fall into a derelict state. Its renovation in the early 19th century might have brought further enlargements of the windows, as well as the removal of the crow-steps of the east-gable of the earlier building. Cartographic documents by John Adair from ca. 1682 display a tower house named Craighouse, and on the 1st Edition OS map of 1857 Craighouse is depicted as a T shaped building with a variety of outbuildings to its north and west sides.
- 3.2.3 The estate of Craig House was purchased by the Board of Managers of the Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, under the influence of the then Physician Superintendent, Dr Thomas Clouston in 1878. While being put to immediate use, Old Craig underwent a few changes over the course of the next decades. A wooden veranda and porch had been added to the east elevation by 1896, as well as a porch with flanking stairs on the south elevation. A shallow bay was added to the north. Six new dormer windows were added to the attic floor on the south elevation of the original building. On either side of the chimneys on the north side a pair of dormer windows was added. The old casement windows were replaced by single panel windows. Additionally, the harling of the building was lined, simulating a more high status ashlar stone finish, a common

internal and external finish of that time (Simpson Brown 2012).

- 3.2.4 Some parts of the interior of Old Craig were changed to suit the new purpose of the building. Walls between smaller rooms of the old building were removed, creating one large room per floor. Several new interior finishes were added in a characteristic Sydney Mitchell Free Renaissance style.
- 3.2.5 In *The British Medical Journal* from Nov. 3 1894 (pp. 994), it is mentioned that by this time, Old Craig already accommodated twelve patients.
- 3.2.6 By 1908, the western half of the west wing had been removed. The walls of the eastern walled garden had also disappeared. A further significant alteration was the removal of the formal entrance from Craighouse Road. The decorative gate posts to the south of the Lodge mirror the original ones from the 18th century situated at the former entrance to Old Craig, as seen on a photograph from 1900. The entrance ceased to be used as such after 1900 with the construction of the Lodge (Simpson Brown 2012, 21). By the early 20th century, the majority of the old out buildings had been removed.
- 3.2.7 Old Craig House itself was adapted for hospital use. The site was renamed the Thomas Clouston Clinic in 1972 (Lothian Health Services Archive/ Historic Scotland Ref website).
- 3.2.8 After Napier University obtained the Craighouse Complex from the Lothian Health Services in 1994, the before mentioned main entrance to Old Craig was reopened and enlarged to allow access for public buses. Old Craig was repainted in a pink colour.
- 3.2.9 Within Old Craig once were a series of four painted wooden panels by James Norie (1684-1757), probably commissioned for the house by Sir John Elphinstone. The Norie family ran a successful Edinburgh interior decoration business specialising in painting decorative panels and frames, focusing on landscape motives. Some of their works were commissioned as topographical records of specific locations but most of their paintings are idyllic views. Many were designed as elements in interior decorative arrangements, sometimes painted in monochrome rather than full colour, such as is the case in Old Craig (City of Edinburgh Council 2007, 5).
- 3.2.10 In 1729, Norie senior became a founding member of the Edinburgh Academy of St Luke, one of the earliest art academy in Edinburgh (National Galleries Scotland, accessed 22/05/2018).

4 THE PAINTING

- 4.1.1 The recording of the painting in situ was undertaken on the 1st of May 2018. The old lounge or reception room of Old Craig is located at first floor level, off the southern hallway, once accessible via a staircase at the south elevation.
- 4.1.2 The painting by the painter James Norie (1684 - 1757) displays a mostly monochrome landscape with a bridge and castle in the background (Plate 1). There are hints of green paint in the left section of the painting. A fisherman is at the front central position (Plate 2), with four further people at the right section of the painting.
- 4.1.3 The painting is situated at the upper level of panelling on the east elevation of the room, between two doorways. It is an oil on wooden panel painting and appears interlocked with the surrounding panelling.
- 4.1.4 The oil painting is in good condition, with only little surface dirt. It appears structurally sound, although three nails with square heads have at some point been driven through the panel, with two left and right at the top edge and one centrally at the lower edge of the painting (Plate 3). They have been painted to blend in with the painting, but are assumed not to be original.
- 4.1.5 There are some discolouration of the glossy varnish, which darkens the painting.



Plate 1: General view of the semi-monochrome painting



Plate 2: Detail of the greenery to the left and the fisherman



Plate 3: Detail of lower, square headed nail

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The oil on panel painting most likely originates from the early to mid-18th century. It was painted by James Norie, whose family were influential painters of this time in Scotland. The painting is the only remaining part of a set of four panel paintings by this artist in Old Craig.
- 5.1.2 The nails within the picture may have been a later measure to secure the painting further onto the wall.
- 5.1.3 In the course of an initial inspection of the painting by the conservation specialist Sylvia Krauss, she assessed that the painting is structurally stable and in a good condition. The slightly darkened varnish might be considered aesthetically unsatisfying and removal might therefore be considered. The painting does however not necessarily require any treatment, unless a varnish removal is desired. (Krauss 2018).
- 5.1.4 Sylvia Krauss recommends three variations of preservation and supplied an estimate of cost for each treatment (without VAT):

- A) Preferred recommendation: The painting should be kept visible in situ as part of the historical interior and integrated with the refurbishment design. If a varnish removal is desired to brighten the overall appearance and get rid of the somewhat patchy appearance, this should be carried out in situ. The three nails driven through the panel from the front are currently fairly well integrated. To treat the painting off the wall in the conservation studio would necessitate removal of those nails as well as the frame ledges. Whilst the frame is likely to come off fairly easily, the nails through the panel are likely to cause damage to panel and paint layer during any attempt to remove them. This option will not risk any inadvertent damage to the painting and ensure its continued appreciation as historic part of the interior in future being aesthetically refreshed after varnish removal.

Varnish removal – £700.00

Re-varnish – £35.00

Travel costs for 4 days (96 miles round trip x fuel charges 11p) + reduced hourly rate for travel time – £42.24 + £160.00

Total costs: **£935.24**

- B) Alternative recommendation: The painting should be removed from the wall

and kept as historical part of the interior either or display elsewhere in the building or in storage, but accessible on request. Removal of the varnish would be optional and could be carried out in the conservation studio. The holes left by the nails and any other damage possibly caused during removal from the wall, should at least be structurally repaired and possibly restored. This option accepts any slight damage caused during removal from the wall, whilst keeping the painting accessible in future and allowing the refurbishment to go ahead independently.

Removal from wall – £140.00

Repair of holes – £140.00

Varnish removal – £700.00 (optional)

Re-varnish – £35.00 (optional)

Travel costs for 1 day (96 miles round trip x fuel charges 11p) + reduced hourly rate for travel time – £10.56 + £40.00

Total costs: **£330.56 – £1065.56**

- C) Least recommended option: The painting could be left in situ as historical part of the interior, but covered up to allow for any desired decoration scheme. A protective layer on the front must be applied (likely facing tissue and/or some kind of protective panel) prior to any further decorating. As the painting would then lose much of its free air circulation to the front, there is a danger of a microclimate building up inside this pocket. Depending on the conditions of the wall, this might be too moist, risking the formation of mould or causing deformation and possible splits to the panel. It might therefore be advised to attach a barrier sheet underneath the painting prior to covering it up. This would however require removing the three nails as well as the frame first, which as described above, risks causing damage to the panel and paint layer. This option would mean the painting could stay in situ as historical part of the interior whilst refurbishment can go ahead independently, but accept possible damage during temporary removal from the wall or by being kept in a micro climate and strongly limit access in future.

Temporary removal from wall – £140.00

Attaching of barrier layer – £70.00

Facing and protective layer – £210.00

Travel costs for 3 days (96 miles round trip x fuel charges 11p) + reduced hourly

rate for travel time – £31.68 + £120.00

Total costs: **£571.68**

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STOKE-ON-TRENT
Sir Henry Doulton House
Forge Lane
Etruria
Stoke-on-Trent
ST1 5BD
Tel: +44 (0)845 111 7777

CARDIFF
22 Windsor Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BY
Tel: +44 (0)29 2072 9191

EDINBURGH
Suite 2/3, Great Michael House
14 Links Place
Edinburgh
EH6 7EZ
Tel: +44 (0)131 555 3311

GREATER MANCHESTER
2 The Avenue
Leigh
Greater Manchester
WN7 1ES
Tel: +44 (0)1942 260101

LONDON
Third Floor
46 Chancery Lane
London
WC2A 1JE
Tel: +44 (0)20 7242 3243

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
City Quadrant
11 Waterloo Square
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4DP
Tel: +44 (0)191 232 0943

PENRYN
Tremough Innovation Centre
Tremough Campus
Penryn
Cornwall
TR10 9TA
Tel: +44 (0)1872 560738

SHEFFIELD
Unit 5
Newton Business Centre
Newton Chambers Road
Thorncliffe Park
Chapelton
Sheffield
S35 2PH
Tel: +44 (0)114 245 6244

TRURO
Wheal Jane
Baldhu
Truro
Cornwall
TR3 6EH
Tel: +44 (0)1872 560738

WEST BROMWICH
Thynne Court
Thynne Street
West Bromwich
West Midlands
B70 6PH
Tel: +44 (0)121 580 0909

International offices:

ALMATY
29/6 Satpaev Avenue
Rakhat Palace Hotel
Office Tower, 7th Floor
Almaty
050040
Kazakhstan
Tel : +7-727-3341310

MOSCOW
Suite 2, Block 10,
Letnikovskaya St.
Moscow, Russia
115114
Tel: +7(495) 980 07 67

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology:

CUMBRIA
Marconi Road
Burgh Road Industrial Estate
Carlisle
CA2 7NA
Tel: +44(0)1228 550 575