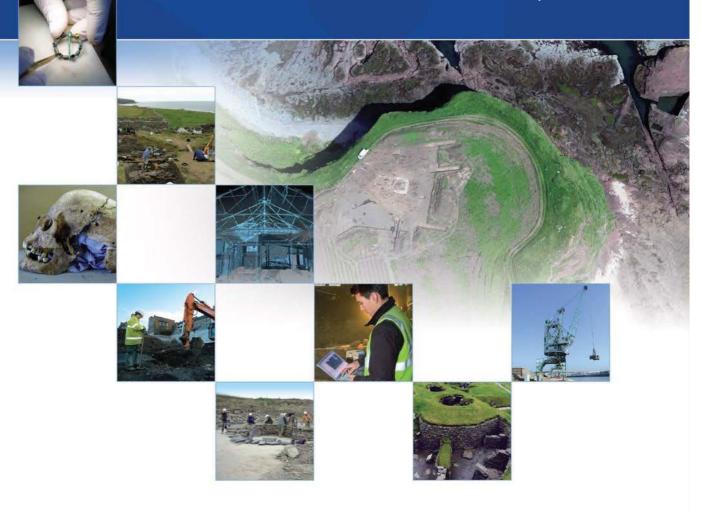
Woodcroft Telephone Exchange, 2 Pitsligo Road, Edinburgh: Historic Building Recording Report

AOC 22550 13th January 2014





Woodcroft Telephone Exchange, 2 Pitsligo Road, Edinburgh:

Historic Building Recording Report

On Behalf of: Queensbury Properties Ltd

Baberton House Juniper Green Edinburgh EH14 3HN

National Grid Reference (NGR): NT 24919 71588

AOC Project No: 22550

Planning Application No: 11/01386/FUL

OASIS No: 168442

Prepared by: Diana Sproat

Date: 10th January 2014

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Contents

			Page
List	of Figur	ires	4
List	of Plate	es	4
List	of Appe	endices	4
Sum	mary		5
1	INTRODUCTION		
	1.1	Site background	6
	1.2	Site location	
	1.3	Site condition	6
	1.4	Site history	6
2	OBJE	CTIVE	
3	METH	HODOLOGY	8
5	RESU	JLTS	9
6	DISCL	USSION	10
7	CONC	CLUSIONS	10
8	REFERENCES		10
	8.1	Bibliographical references	10
	8.2	Cartographic references	
APP	ENDIX 1	1:	11
BLA	CK AND	D WHITE PRINT AND COLOUR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD	11
		2:	
DISC	OVERY	Y AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND (DES) ENTRY	14

List of Figures

- Figure 1: Site location plan
- Figure 2: Extract from Ordnance Survey, 1855
- Figure 3: Extract from Ordnance Survey, 1885
- Figure 4: Extract from Ordnance Survey, 1944
- Figure 5: Woodcroft Telephone Exchange, east and west elevations
- Figure 6: Woodcroft Telephone Exchange, north and south elevations
- Figure 7: Woodcroft Telephone Exchange, floor plans

List of Plates

- Plate 1: East Wing, general view of the south elevation from the south-west
- Plate 2: West Wing, general view of the south elevation from the south-east
- Plate 3: West Wing, detail of the central part of the south elevation from the south
- Plate 4: West Wing, general view of the north elevation from the north
- Plate 5: North Wing, general view of the west elevation from the west
- Plate 6: North Wing, general view of the west elevation from the south-west (taken from roof over West Wing)
- Plate 7: North Wing, detail of central section at the top floor, from the west
- Plate 8: South Wing, general view of the east elevation from the east
- Plate 9: South Wing, general view of the west elevation from the west
- Plate 10: East Wing, general view of east elevation from the north-east
- Plate 11: East Wing, general view of east elevation of the single-story block to the north side, from the east
- Plate 12: North Wing, general view of east elevation from the east
- Plate 13: East Wing, general view of the north elevation from the north-east
- Plate 14: East Wing, detail of the ground floor windows of the north elevation, from the north
- Plate 15: North-East Wing, general view from the south-east
- Plate 16: North Wing, general view of the north elevation from the north-west
- Plate 17: West Wing, general view of the west elevation from the north-west
- Plate 18: Basement, detail of concrete superstructure
- Plate 19: West Wing, ground floor, general view of the interior from the north-east
- Plate 20: West Wing, ground floor, detail of the concrete column and beams
- Plate 21: North Wing, ground floor, general view from the south-west
- Plate 22: East Wing, ground floor, general view from the south-west
- Plate 23: North Wing, third floor, general view from the south
- Plate 24: South Wing, ground floor, general view from the north-east
- Plate 25: South Wing, first floor, general view from the north-west
- Plate 26: Detail of the central stair looking down from the south-east
- Plate 27: Detail of the central stair looking up from the south-east

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Black And White Print and Colour Digital Photographic Register

Appendix 2: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland (DES) Entry

Summary

AOC Archaeology Group was commissioned by Queensbury Properties Ltd to undertake an historic building survey of the former Woodcroft Telephone Exchange at 2 Pitsligo Road, Edinburgh as part of the planning condition on its demolition.

The building was constructed in 1958 - 60 as a prime example of post-war public architecture, a multi-bay two to four storey cross-shaped building with a concrete superstructure set in the grounds of a former 19^{th} estate and country house, which was demolished to make way for it.

This report has successfully recorded the building for the National Archives of Scotland and therefore no further historic building recording is recommended.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site background

1.1.1 AOC Archaeology Group was commissioned by Queensbury Properties Ltd to undertake a programme of historic building recording prior to the demolition of the former Woodcroft Telephone Exchange at 2 Pitsligo Road Edinburgh, prior to its demolition. The work was completed as part of a condition of planning consent on the demolition (Ref: 11/01386/FUL), the mitigation of which was set out and agreed with the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service, who advise the City of Edinburgh Council on archaeology matters. The building is C Listed.

1.2 Site location

1.2.1 The former telephone exchange now lies empty and is located along the east side of the length of Pitsligo Road (to the west) with Clinton Road to the north and Newbattle Terrace to the south. It is located at NGR: NT 24919 71588 (Figure 1). To the east of the development is an electric sub-station (to the south side) and a large 19th century villa (to the north side). The development site is approximately 2.2 hectares in size and is cut off to the south-east side at Woodcroft Lodge.

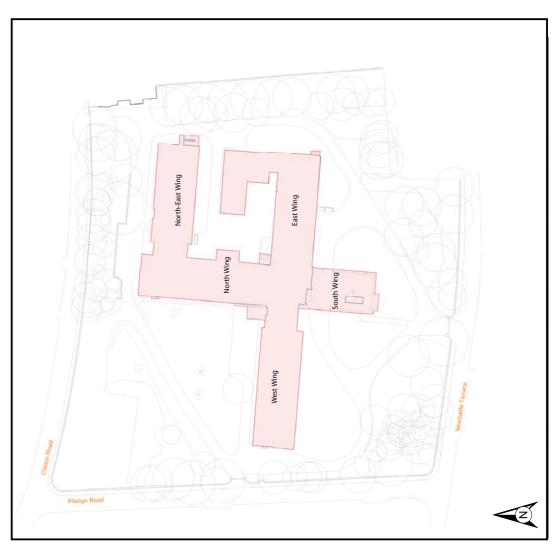
1.3 Site condition

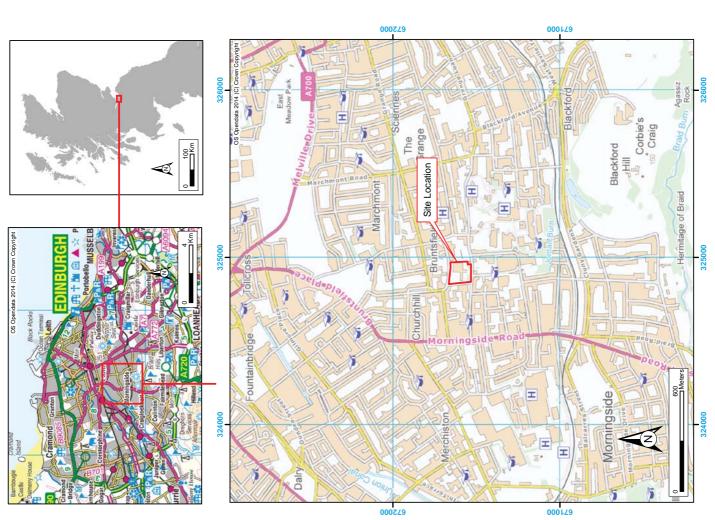
1.3.1 The building has been abandoned since 2006 and, since then, has been left derelict. It was stripped of asbestos and nearly all of its internal divisions in 2007, and has been left like this ever since. The site has undergone little structural vandalism, although has been subject to a lot of graffiti vandalism, both inside and out.

1.4 Site history

- 1.3.1 Prior to the Telephone Exchange building being built in the mid-20th century, the site was occupied by Woodcroft House (which gave the Exchange its name). It does not appear in the 1855 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2) and first appears on the 1885 map (which was surveyed in 1877) (Figure 3), giving it a 1855 1877 construction date. The house slowly expanded into the 20th century as can be seen in the 1944 map (Figure 4). The house and gardens were then demolished in the late 1950s to make way for the Exchange building.
- 1.3.2 The Woodcraft Telephone Exchange was dedicated a B-Listed building by Historic Scotland in 2004, downgraded to a C-Listed building in 2010 (Ref: 50035) and was constructed between 1958 60 by architects Alison Hutchison & Partners. The listed building description describes and comments on the building in detail:

'The Woodcroft Telephone Exchange is a good example of state-sponsored architecture of the post-war period and is a significant example of an industrial building type for the purpose of modern telecommunications. The building, although modified in the late 1980s, demonstrates Scotland's approach to post-war modern architecture combining traditional materials with an overtly functional plan and form. This method of design exemplifies the newly invoked sensitivity to historic environment, while applying forthright ideals of planning and post-war modern architecture. The building's interest includes its grid patterning of exposed concrete framing, a glazed office wing on pilotis, the random rubble detailing, and its adaptable and expandable plan which saw the addition of the north-east wing in 1970. This building was controversial at the time it was built, as it replaced a mid-19th century villa known as Woodcroft House. However, the location was crucial as it lay near the trunk telephone cables. Woodcroft Telephone Exchange, which serviced the south east of Scotland, was built during the great expansion of the Scottish communications network in the late 1950s and early 1960s when national and international telecommunications were being further developed. Commissions for such buildings were usually reserved for the Ministry of Works architects, such as Stewart Sim's Fountainbridge Telephone Exchange (listed category B in 1998). However, private architects were nominated to execute and define the Ministry of Works plans for the exchange in Pitsligo





Road, possibly to satisfy the need to guarantee a quality scheme, as this modern intervention in a mature residential part of Edinburgh needed to be palatable to its neighbours and suitable to its immediate setting. Alison and Hutchison are recognised for their public architecture and have contributed to the some of the most recognised post-war buildings in Leith (Kirkgate, Cables Wynd and Couper Street). They have also specialised in schools and large campus designs such as the buildings for Napier University at Merchiston, Edinburgh.' (HS 2013).

1.3.3 The building was officially opened in 1961 and Sir Ronald German phoned the French Postmaster General (M Jaques Marette) from the site (Edwards 2012). Woodcroft was later joined by another exchange at East London Street in the city in 1964 and another in Canning Street and Torpichen Street in 1967 (*ibid*).



Figure 2: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map, 1855, showing the development area as undeveloped



Figure 3: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map, 1885, showing Woodcroft House and gardens

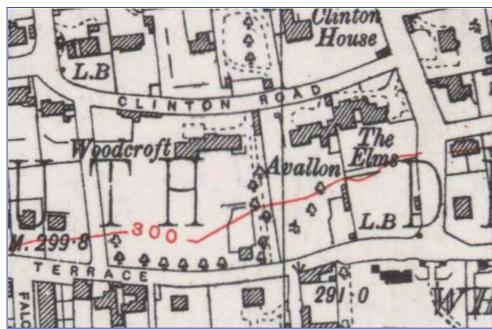


Figure 4: Extract from Ordnance Survey, 1944, showing general expansion of Woodcroft House to the west

2 OBJECTIVE

2.1 The objective of this programme of works was to record the building (through drawn, written and photographic record) as a preservation by record prior to its demolition.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The building had been completely stripped out several years before, leaving nothing but a shell of the building inside, exposing the concrete floors and pillars. A Level 2 record was undertaken, which included a written and photographic record together with a representation of the architects as existing plan and elevations of the building.
- 3.2 A general and detailed photographic record was undertaken in black and white print and colour digital using a 35mm SLR and digital SLR respectively. A running register of photographs was taken on site and can be found in Appendix 1. Some of the digital images have also been used as plates for this report. A written record was also made using AOC *pro forma* recording sheets, commenting on condition, construction, phasing/function and anything else pertinent to the historical record. Annotated architects' drawings were used on site and have been reproduced here in Figures 5 7.
- 3.3 The project has been recorded in the Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS) site (Ref: 168442). An entry has also been submitted to Discovery and Excavation in Scotland (DES) publication for inclusion in the forthcoming 2014 volume (Appendix 2). The original black and white photographs, together with a hard copy and a pdf digital version on CD of the report, has also been submitted to the National Archives of Scotland held at the RCAHMS building at John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX (tel. 0131 662 1456).

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 Woodcroft Telephone Exchange forms a large multi-bay four storey building in a cross shape (slightly off a north/south axis) with long north, east and west wings and a slightly shorter south wing, a later addition (see Figure 1, 5 & 6). There is also an additional north-east wing (added in 1970) to the north side and a small single storey ancillary block between this and the north wing.
- Essentially a building with a concrete superstructure, the façade of the buildings were plain smooth concrete mock ashlar with each bay to each floor framed by projecting concrete lines (Plates 1 5). The east wing has the generously sized windows centrally placed (see Plate 1) although to the west and north wings, the windows are alternatively off-set (see Plates 2, 4 & 5). The ground rises to the west side, making the west wing only two storeys in height, the rest four storeys. The upper glazing of the north wing is much larger to the third floor, the glazing takes the full width of each bay and to the upper fourth floor, the whole bay itself (Plate 6). Rising above the west wing, it has a small façade to the flat concrete roof over the west wing with an abstract arrangement of windows (Plate 7). Here, it adjoins the heavily glazed south wing (Plates 8 & 9).
- 5.3 Moving around to the east side of the building, the east elevation of the east wing has a tall plain stone-effect build adjacent with a heavily glazed stairwell to the north side (Plate 10). This is abutted by a small single-storey building forming the main generator room (Plate 11). To the north of this leads in to a small courtyard (formed from the later north-east wing from 1970), identifying an identical arrangement of the east and north wings on this side (Plates 12 14).
- 5.4 Moving around to the north side, the north-east wing is a wide two storey building with small windows and felt cladding (Plate 15). The north elevation of the north wing, as with east, has the stone effect build with generous fenestration to a rear stairwell and simple rectangular wide windows to the west side on each floor level (Plate 16). The west elevation of the west elevation is different rising to four storeys with the stone effect to the south side, a central glazed section with entrance below and a brick clad section with small windows to the north (Plate 17).
- 5.5 Internally, the building has been completely stripped out (this occurred several years ago and included the complete removal of large amounts of asbestos). Therefore, all the office and other sub-divisions of the building had been removed, leaving nothing but the wide shells of each wing and their concrete superstructures. Figure 7 identifies the floor plans prior to this, showing the divisions. As stated, the west wing only extended for two storeys (it only features as a basement, ground and first floor plan) with a flat concrete roof. The basement (as with everywhere) shows the thick concrete pillars used to support the huge building (Plate 18). Plates 19 & 20 show the general layout of the superstructure of this wing with concrete columns supporting concrete beams, the windows boarded at this level. The north wing has the same arrangement (Plate 21) as does the east wing, although the windows are centralised to each bay in the latter, which has four storeys (Plate 22). The north wing also has smaller thin glazing to the upper floors, as can be seen in the third floor with three-part windows (Plate 23). The south wing is substantially different from the rest of the building, it being a smaller wing and heavily fenestrated. However, the concrete superstructure is identical (Plates 24 – 25). The central part of the building is linked by a large open and airy stairwell with thick circular columns forming the newels (Plates 26 & 27). There are also a number of plainer outer stairwells to the end of the wings.
- 5.8 The outer stone boundary wall which perimeters much of the site is currently heavily covered in vegetation, and is thought to belong to the original enclosure of Woodcroft House. Some of the original openings are also still intact (albeit probably repaired and/or re-mortared when the telephone exchange was built), including the circular gate jambs at Pitsligo Road.





East Elevation







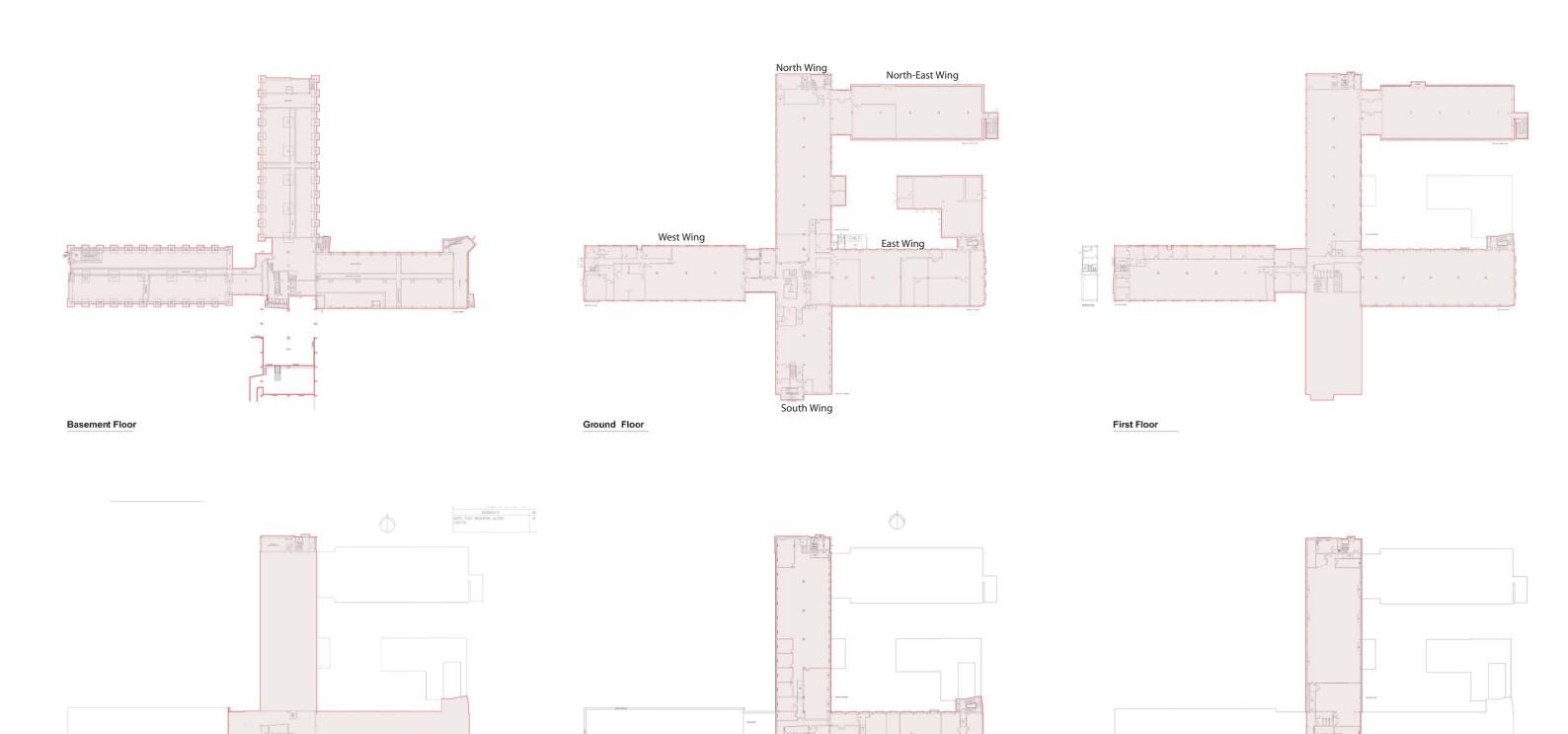


North Elevation



South Elevation





Third Floor

Second Floor



Figure 7: Woodcroft Telephone Exchange, Floor Plans (drawings created by Michael Laird Architects, supplied by client)

Fourth Floor



Plate 1: East Wing, general view of the south elevation from the south-west



Plate 2: West Wing, general view of the south elevation from the south-east



Plate 3: West Wing, detail of the central part of the south elevation from the south



Plate 4: West Wing, general view of the north elevation from the north



Plate 5: North Wing, general view of the west elevation from the west



Plate 6: North Wing, general view of the west elevation from the south-west (taken from roof over West Wing)

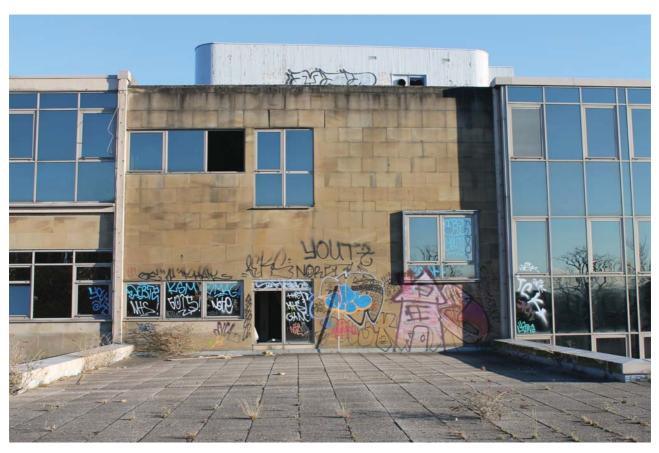


Plate 7: North Wing, detail of central section at the top floor, from the west



Plate 8: South Wing, general view of the east elevation from the east



Plate 9: South Wing, general view of the west elevation from the west



Plate 10: East Wing, general view of east elevation from the north-east



Plate 11: East Wing, general view of east elevation of the single-story block to the north side, from the east



Plate 12: North Wing, general view of east elevation from the east



Plate 13: East Wing, general view of the north elevation from the north-east



Plate 14: East Wing, detail of the ground floor windows of the north elevation, from the north



Plate 15: North-East Wing, general view from the south-east



Plate 16: North Wing, general view of the north elevation from the north-west



Plate 17: West Wing, general view of the west elevation from the north-west



Plate 18: Basement, detail of concrete superstructure



Plate 19: West Wing, ground floor, general view of the interior from the north-east



Plate 20: West Wing, ground floor, detail of the concrete column and beams

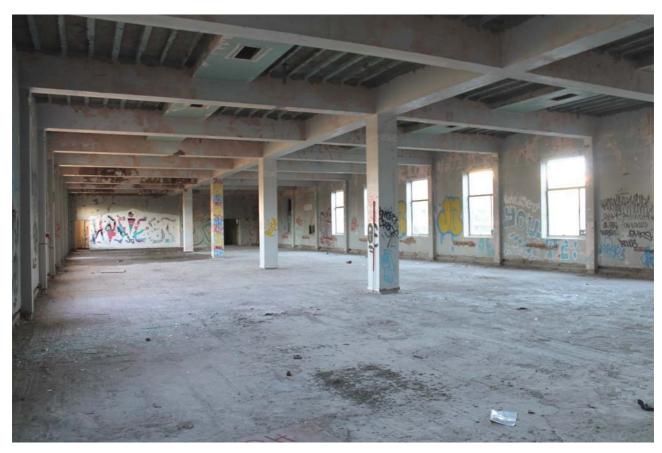


Plate 21: North Wing, ground floor, general view from the south-west



Plate 22: East Wing, ground floor, general view from the south-west



Plate 23: North Wing, third floor, general view from the south



Plate 24: South Wing, ground floor, general view from the north-east



Plate 25: South Wing, first floor, general view from the north-west

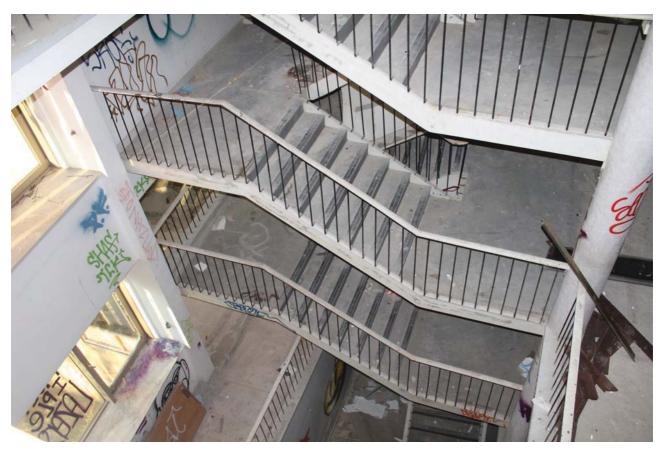


Plate 26: Detail of the central stair looking down from the south-east

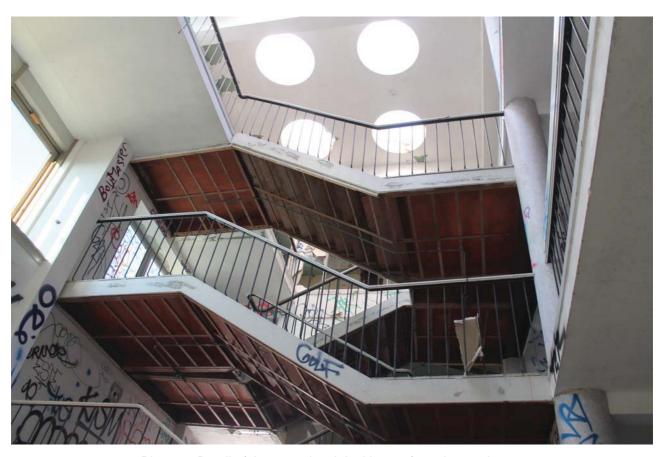


Plate 27: Detail of the central stair looking up from the south-east

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The Woodcroft Telephone Exchange is important for both the communications industry for Edinburgh and as an example of public architecture of the late 1950s, in a period of great growth and architectural advancement in Britain as a whole. In its 'Edinburgh Post-War Historic Buildings' volume, Historic Scotland emphasise its relatively new approach to sensitivity to the environment. Whilst this is hard to fathom given its grandness of scale and concrete construction, the boundaries of the site remained and the vegetation fitted in well to conceal the edifice within.
- 6.2 Without seeing the building 'in use' or with its various departments, equipment and divided functions, it is difficult to make any remarks on the working aspects of the building without referring to only the architecture and its impact and significance at the time. However, council records should provide adequate details of the arrangements and equipment within the building, together with first-hand accounts in living memory, should any further studies of this type be undertaken.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 This report has successfully recorded the building prior to its demolition, created a photographic record to complement that completed by the 2007 by the RCAHMS. Therefore, no further historic building recording is recommended prior to demolition.

8 REFERENCES

8.1 Bibliographical references

Edwards, G 2012 'Nostalgia: Hanging Up On Years of Telephone Connections', in *The Scotsman*, March 17th 2012, http://www.scotsman.com/news/nostalgia-hanging-up-on-years-of-telephone-connections-1-2179962, Accessed 10th January 2014

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8.2 Cartographic references

Ordnance Survey 1855 Edinburghshire Sheet 6.

Ordnance Survey 1885 Edinburghshire Sheet 6.

Ordnance Survey 1909 Edinburghshire Sheet III.SE.

Ordnance Survey 1944 Edinburghshire Sheet III.SE.

APPENDIX 1:

BLACK AND WHITE PRINT AND COLOUR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

Black & White Print & Colour Digital Film # 1

Frame	Description	Taken	Date
		From	
1	Ground floor, single-storey wing to E wing, general view	NWW	09/01/2014
2	Ground floor, single-storey wing to E wing, general view	SW	09/01/2014
3	Ground floor, E wing, detail of top of concrete columns	SE	09/01/2014
4	Ground floor, E wing, general view	SE	09/01/2014
5	Ground floor, E wing, general view	NW	09/01/2014
6 – 7	Ground floor, S wing, general view	NW	09/01/2014
8	Ground floor, S wing, detail of SW corner showing concrete structure	NE	09/01/2014
9	Ground floor, S wing, general view	SE	09/01/2014
10	Ground floor, central corridor, detail of columns	SW	09/01/2014
11	Ground floor, W wing, detail of concrete pillars	NW	09/01/2014
12	Ground floor, W wing, detail of windows	S	09/01/2014
13	Ground floor, S wing, general view	NE	09/01/2014
14	Ground floor, S wing, general view	SW	09/01/2014
15	General view of the N wing	NW	09/01/2014
16	General view of the NE wing	NEE	09/01/2014
17	Detail of small porch to the E elevation of the N wing	SE	09/01/2014
18	General view of S side of the E elevation of the N wing	E	09/01/2014
19 – 20	General view of small single-storey of the annexe to the E wing	W	09/01/2014
21	Detail of the windows to the ground floor of the N elevation of the E elevation	N	09/01/2014
22	General view of the N elevation of the E wing	NW	09/01/2014
23	General view of the E elevation of the N wing	E	09/01/2014
24	Detail of small porch to the E elevation of the N wing	NE	09/01/2014
25	General view of small porch to the E elevation of the N wing	NW	09/01/2014
26	General view of NE wing	NE	09/01/2014
27	General view of NE wing	NE	09/01/2014
28	General view of east elevation of small single-storey wing attached to east wing	E	09/01/2014
29	General view of E elevation of E wing	NE	09/01/2014
30	General view of E elevation of the S wing	Е	09/01/2014
31	Detail of ground floor of E elevation of E wing	SE	09/01/2014
32	General view of E elevation of E wing	SE	09/01/2014
33	Detail, of ground floor windows on the S elevation of the E wing	S	09/01/2014
34	General view of S elevation of S wing	SSW	09/01/2014
35	General view of S elevation of S wing	SW	09/01/2014
36	Registration	-	09/01/2014

Black & White Print & Colour Digital Film # 2

Frame	Description	Taken	Date
		From	
1	Detail from roof, general view of small porch to the E side of the N Wing		09/01/2014
2 - 3	Detail from roof, general view of the NE Wing		09/01/2014
4	Detail from roof, general view of the E elevation of the N Wing		09/01/2014
5	Detail from roof, detail of the small slot in the roof wall to the N side of the E wing roof		09/01/2014
6	Detail from roof, general view of the E elevation of the N Wing, top level	E	09/01/2014
7 – 8	Fourth floor, S wing, general view	SW	09/01/2014
9	Fourth floor, N wing, detail to the N side	SE	09/01/2014
10 – 11	Fourth floor, N wing, detail of windows to W wall	E	09/01/2014
12	Fourth floor, N wing, general view	S	09/01/2014
13	Fourth floor, N wing, general view	N	09/01/2014
14	Upper level, detail of concrete superstructure	SW	09/01/2014
15 – 17	S Wing, top level, general view	NW	09/01/2014
18	N Wing, general view of the W elevation	SW	09/01/2014
19	N Wing, general view of the central W elevation from the roof of the West Wing	W	09/01/2014
20	S Wing, general exterior shot of the W elevation from the roof of the West Wing	SW	09/01/2014
21	Third floor, central corridor, detail looking up main stairwell	SE	09/01/2014
22	Third floor, central corridor, detail looking down main stairwell	SE	09/01/2014
23	Second floor, S wing, general view	SSE	09/01/2014
24	First floor, NE wing, general view	SE	09/01/2014
25	First floor, NE wing, general view	NW	09/01/2014
26	First floor, N wing, general view	NE	09/01/2014
27	First floor, N wing, general view	SW	09/01/2014
28	First floor, W wing, column in office	SW	09/01/2014
29	First floor, W wing, general view	NE	09/01/2014
30	First floor, E wing, general view	NW	09/01/2014
31	Ground floor, detail of the column and roof detail in central corridor	E	09/01/2014
32	Ground floor, N wing, general view	SE	09/01/2014
33	Ground floor, E wing, small room to the E side	N	09/01/2014
34	Ground floor, general view looking up stairwell to the N side of the E wing	Up	09/01/2014
35	Ground floor, single-storey wing to E wing, general view	NWW	09/01/2014
36	Registration	-	09/01/2014

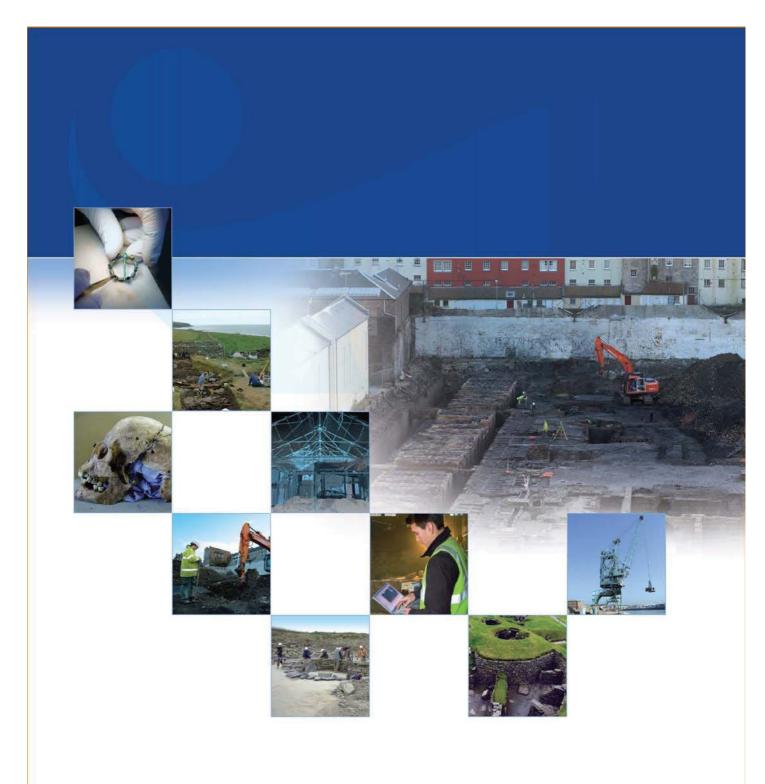
Black & White Print & Colour Digital Film # 3

Frame	Description	Taken	Date
		From	
1 – 17	Unassigned	-	-
18 – 19	Detail of central part of the E and W wings	S	09/01/2014
20 - 21	General view of the S elevation of the W wing	SE	09/01/2014
22 - 23	Detail of the gate jambs to the W boundary wall	E	09/01/2014
24	General view of the S elevation of the W wing	SW	09/01/2014
25	General view of the W elevation of the S wing	W	09/01/2014
26	General view of the W elevation of the W wing	NW	09/01/2014
27	General view of the N elevation of the W wing	N	09/01/2014
28	Detail of ground floor of the W elevation of the N wing	W	09/01/2014
29	General view of the W elevation of the N wing	W	09/01/2014
30	Basement, detail of concrete superstructure	SW	09/01/2014
31	Basement, detail looking up at the stairwell	S	09/01/2014
32	Ground floor, detail of concrete superstructure	SW	09/01/2014
33 – 34	Fourth floor, stairwell detail	SW	09/01/2014
35	Fourth floor, stairwell detail	SW	09/01/2014
36	Registration	-	09/01/2014

APPENDIX 2:

DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND (DES) ENTRY

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Edinburgh Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME	Woodcroft Telephone Exchange
PROJECT CODE:	AOC 22550
PARISH:	Edinburgh
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Diana Sproat
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	AOC Archaeology Group
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Historic Building Recording
NMRS NO(S):	NT27SW 4603
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Telephone Exchange
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NT 24919 71588
START DATE (this season)	09/01/2014
END DATE (this season)	09/01/2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None.
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	AOC Archaeology Group was commissioned by Queensbury Properties Ltd to undertake an historic building survey of the former Woodcroft Telephone Exchange at 2 Pitsligo Road, Edinburgh as part of the planning condition on its demolition.
	The building was constructed in 1958 – 60 as a prime example of post-war public architecture, a multi-bay two to four storey cross-shaped building with a concrete superstructure set in the grounds of a former 19 th estate and country house, which was demolished to make way for it.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None.
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None.
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Queensbury Properties Ltd
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	AOC Archaeology Group, Edgefield Road Industrial Estate, Edgefield Road, Loanhead, Midlothian, EH20 9SY
EMAIL ADDRESS:	edinburgh@aocarchaeology.com
ARCHIVE LOCATION: (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS





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