

# TWO SCOTTISH VILLAGES

## *A Planning Study*

BY STUDENTS IN THE  
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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF  
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### INTRODUCTION

These studies, the first of a series, were carried out in 1956-57 by a group of nine architectural students drawn from all years, the majority being in their First Year. The two villages—Ormiston in East Lothian and Ratho in Midlothian—were chosen partly because of their accessibility, but principally because they were in many ways complementary, both in their historical development and in the problem they present for a planning analysis. The studies are theoretical in the sense that the question posed was what might have been done under intelligent planning control in this century, rather than what has been done, or what might be done now; and as such were an exercise in the understanding and criticism of recent typical development. They are published exactly as presented by the students at the end of the course.

In both cases the fullest co-operation was offered by the Planning Authorities concerned. Mr. F. P. Tindall, Planning Officer for East Lothian, and Mr. J. Baillie, Planning Officer for Midlothian, with members of their staff, gave facilities, information and guidance; their help is here gratefully acknowledged.

### *Ormiston*

#### SITUATION

The village of Ormiston is situated at the west of the County of East Lothian, approximately 12 miles east of Edinburgh, 8 miles west of Haddington, and 3 miles south of the burgh of Tranent. Although not to-day on a main route (the road through it is classified as a B road by the Ministry of Transport) it lies only half a mile to the north of the main route from Haddington to Dalkeith. The Parish of Ormiston surrounds

it, the greater part of its area lying to the south of the village.

The village runs along a well-drained sloping gravel ridge, at a height of 275-85 feet above sea-level. Immediately to its south and below it, the Tyne Water flows eastwards to join the Birns Water, where the two become the River Tyne. The Tyne Water is liable to serious flooding and on numerous occasions has damaged land on both its banks in the vicinity of the village.

The geology of the district is important in the village's development. On the east a band of calciferous limestone runs from the sea inland towards Pathhead; and from it lime was formerly extensively quarried and burnt for agricultural purposes. The village itself, however, stands in the East Lothian coal belt, and there are numerous outcrops of coal in its vicinity, the exploitation of which has dictated the present form of the village.

#### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The history of Ormiston village can be summarised under four phases, which are discernible in its present shape and appearance.

##### *Phase I: Early times to eighteenth century*

The original village owed its existence both to its geographical setting and the social organisation of the time. Conveniently situated at a crossing of the river which gave access from the inland parts to the coast, it began as a mill settlement, the mill lade being fed from a burn that ran slightly to the north of the present stream to join it at the bridge. Such small settlements were common from the twelfth century, when the social organisation of the parish made the meal and corn mill a centre for the surrounding agricultural district. Preston Mill, Beanston and Sandy's Mill were similar settlements of this period; Haddington Mill has been dated back to 1113; and it can be assumed that Ormiston formed one of many similar mill groups in East Lothian.

The settlement itself consisted simply of the mill with its accompanying buildings and land. The recently demolished Ormiston Lodge and Ormiston Cottage dated also from the early Middle Ages. The centre of the parish, however, was the Church, which stood in the grounds of what later became Ormiston Hall, about a mile to the south of the mill.

The milltown remained in this form throughout the Middle Ages and over the period of the Reformation, suffering, in common with most parts of Scotland, from the serious decline in farming and general prosperity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The land was farmed on the runrig or rundale system of joint occupation; long uneven ridges drained by deep ditches stretched away from the village, and the land was manured only in the nearer or "infield" parts of the farm. The remainder of the land lay fallow when the soil was exhausted, or formed permanent rough pasture and moor. It is recorded that at the time the next phase of development of the village began, about two-thirds of its land was "of a moorish sort" and only one-third remained healthy and productive. In the village itself there resided ten tenants and their cottagers (Cockburn 1804:141).

### *Phase II: Late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*

The transformation of Ormiston was the work of one of the great pioneers of agricultural reform in Scotland—John Cockburn of Ormiston (1679-1758). His father, Adam Cockburn, Lord Justice Clerk of Scotland, had already begun the process by building a new church outside the grounds of his house in 1696 and by granting in 1698 an eleven year lease of the farm of Muirhouse (Murrays) to Robert Wight, as an encouragement to the latter to enclose and improve his land. This he did, making boundaries of ditches and hedges at his own expense. His son, Alexander, continued the work, taking over another farm, and receiving leases of 9 and then 38 years until 1734 when 19-year leases were adopted as the most useful term. The Wights prospered and were thought of so highly that their land at Ormiston became a model for other enthusiastic improvers, and Andrew Wight, son of Alexander, was commissioned in 1773 by the Board of Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates to report on the condition of agriculture in Scotland. His survey was published in four volumes from 1778 to 1784 under the title of *The Present State of Husbandry in Scotland*.

John Cockburn extended his father's work on a scale that involved him eventually in bankruptcy. He sat as Member of Parliament for Haddingtonshire from 1707 to 1741 and occupied for many years a post as Lord of the Admiralty. From his long residence in England he learnt much of the

agriculture of the south, becoming an enthusiast for gardening, hedging and cultivation of turnips and potatoes. He set energetically about revolutionising his estate, controlling most of it by letter from London and by periodic visits, and only retiring to the estate itself in 1744. Land was enclosed, innumerable hedges and trees were planted; English systems of rotation and ploughing were introduced; new farm buildings were erected; Ormiston Hall, previously a gaunt two-storey block, was rebuilt and extended; the Ormiston Society or Agricultural Club was founded and met in the village inn from 1736 to 1747, numbering at one time 122 members. In addition, Cockburn entirely rebuilt the village and reorganised its economy.

The exact date of the planning of the village is not clear. It is sometimes, as in *The Farmer's Magazine* (Cockburn 1804: 143) given as 1726; but Cockburn's letters indicate that the village was only being planned in 1735 (Colville 1904:36), and the house which was built for the surveyor who drew the plan was under construction in 1739 (Colville 1904:42). Cockburn seems to have started this scheme in 1734 or 1735. A letter of 1735 indicates that the new houses are about to be built (Colville 1904:36). He employed Lewis Gordon of Gordonhall, said to have been a civil engineer brought up from London to lay out the village; by 1742, however, a "Mr. Yool" seems to have been in charge of its continued growth (Colville 1904:80). Cockburn himself did not build the houses, but feued the land in convenient lots and encouraged the feuars to build by providing them with timber and stones. He had firm ambitions about the character and quality of the village, refusing to allow anyone to build in the main street any houses "but what are two Storeys high". He would not have "paltry little houses" or allow the village to be "confusedly built", arguing reasonably that good handsome houses not only "set off the place" but add to the value of the rest by encouraging business (Colville 1904:79). Numerous references are made to the trees and hedges in and about the town (800 trees had been planted in the hedgerows of the town by the beginning of 1784, and more followed in the succeeding years), and to trees and thorns in the hedgerows; but the double row of trees in the main street which to-day forms such an important feature of the village (Pl. V), does not appear to have been part of the plan (see Plan by Gordon 1742, Fig. 1).

The layout of the new village was not untypical of its time.

One of the first of the planned villages that grew out of the agricultural revolution, Ormiston is neatly and coherently laid out to the east of the old miller's row, while retaining many of the characteristics of the earlier Scottish town and village plan. The houses, informally built on formally organised feu lots, range along both sides of a long almost triangular open space; while behind the houses long "rigs" at right angles to the street reach away into the open fields. In this it bears

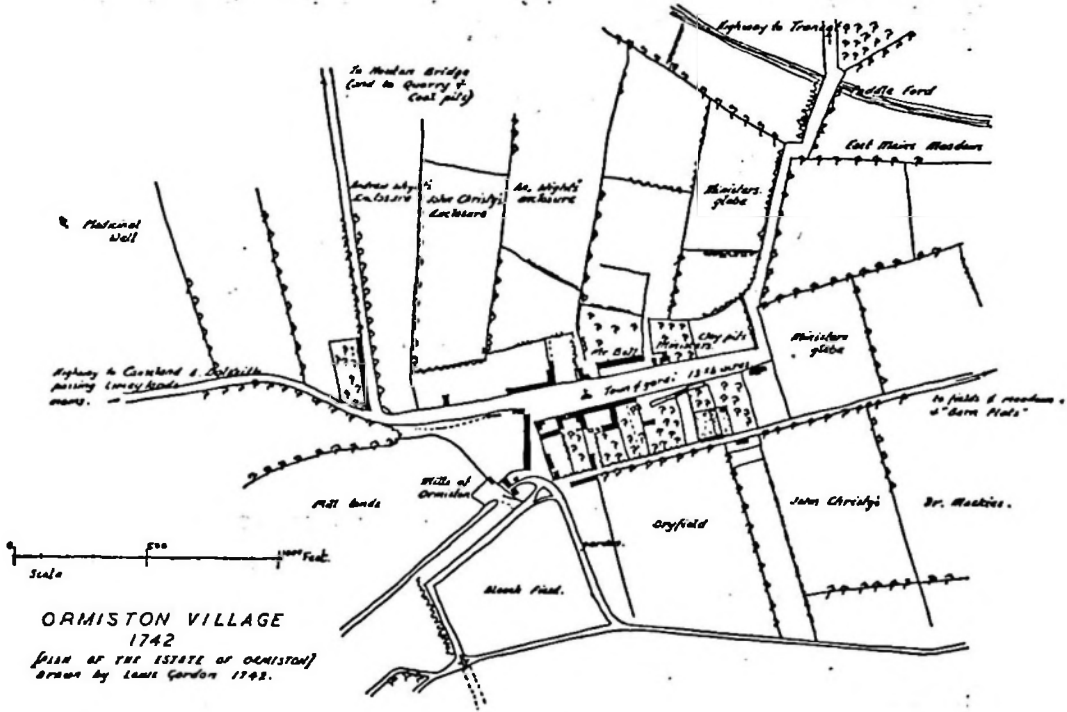


FIG. 1.

similarities to the market-town layout of Haddington. Characteristic too are the closed ends of the village, at both of which the principal road turns off at right angles to the street. The closure of the western, broader end is emphasised by the rebuilt blocks of the older settlement. Building proceeded slowly, and some sites on the north side were never filled.

Long before replanning Ormiston, Cockburn had recognised the need for local industries and manufactures to increase the prosperity of his estate and his tenants. The village was intended to house manufacturers and tradesmen as well as other tenants and cottars, and to become a thriving productive and marketing centre. In 1726 Cockburn founded a brewery

and a distillery. Furthermore, he fostered the growing of flax and founded a bleach field and starch work, obtaining aid from the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Scotland. From Ireland he imported an expert in bleaching, who built himself a house in Ormiston and leased the bleachfield and its accompanying buildings; from Holland he brought in a lint-dresser to instruct his tenants in the technique. A school was founded where girls learned to spin yarn, and quite a large quantity was produced in the village. Within a few years its quality had been widely recognised.

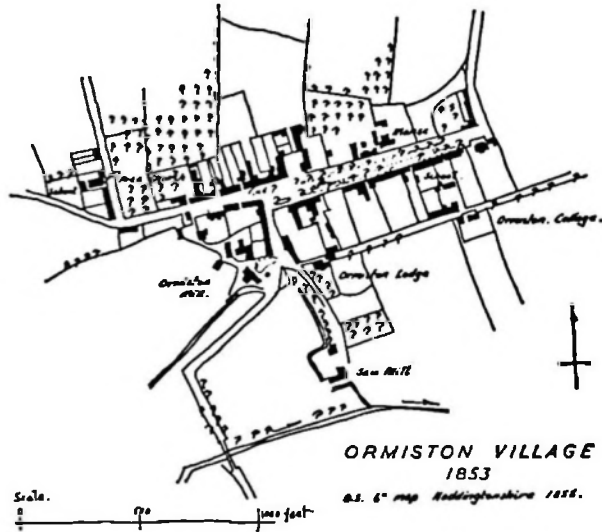


FIG. 2.

Nor was this all. He secured the services of a trained joiner and trained gardeners, and he encouraged the growth of fruits and vegetables. He intended to make Ormiston a marketing centre, and obtained a Charter for this purpose. The market cross still remains as a symbol of this intention. He had an intense interest in the wellbeing of his tenants, founded the village inn and imported an English publican to improve the drinking habits of the Scots. This inn became a centre for the estate and for the meetings of the flourishing Agricultural Club.

The natural growth of Ormiston was interrupted by Cockburn's bankruptcy. In 1747, the estate, which for some years had been in mortgage to the Earl of Hopetoun, was sold to him, and Cockburn's experiments lost their driving force. Although the Earl of Hopetoun continued to maintain the estate carefully (his gardeners regularly looked after the trees

in the village), the market scheme came to nothing, the linen trade declined, and the village ceased to grow. By 1792, the distillery and starch-work were surviving, and the village is described as two rows of two-storey houses sheltered by trees, and containing 500 to 600 persons (Colvill 1792:169). By 1811 the starch works and distillery had gone. Trade had clearly decreased, and farming was the principal occupation; though it was noted that in 1845 there were 7 licensed drinking-houses in the village (Bannerman 1835:152).

Through the nineteenth century it remained practically

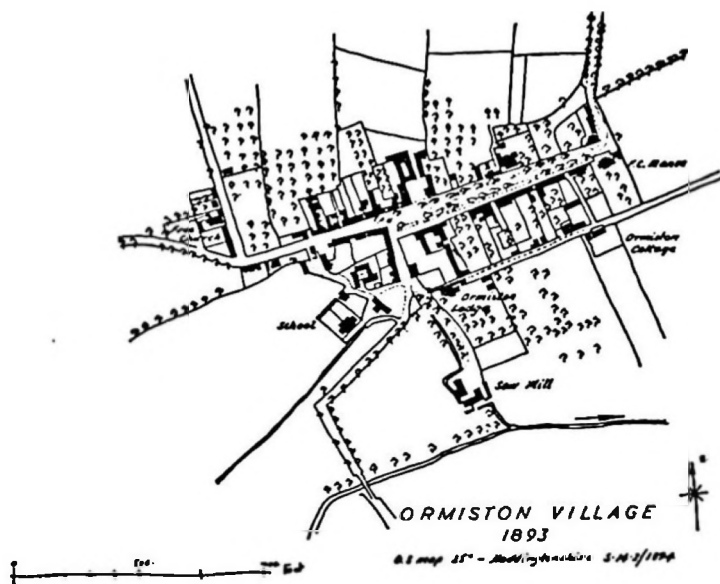


FIG. 3.

unchanged in shape and size. On the 1855 O.S. 6 inch map (surveyed 1853) the village remains much as it was planned (Fig. 2). Ormiston Mill (a flour mill) stands at the southern entry to the village; the School forms part of the south row of the main street (it was later turned into the Public Hall); otherwise the village at that date was the same as that shown in the 25 inch O.S. map 1894 (surveyed 1892) (Fig. 3). In fifty years the School had moved to a new site, the farm had extended its outbuildings. But it remained a simple small village, some distance from the parish church, with manse, public house and hall, school, mills and smithy. Its charm and healthy situation made it a comfortable settling place for old and retired people, who started taking over houses by 1821.

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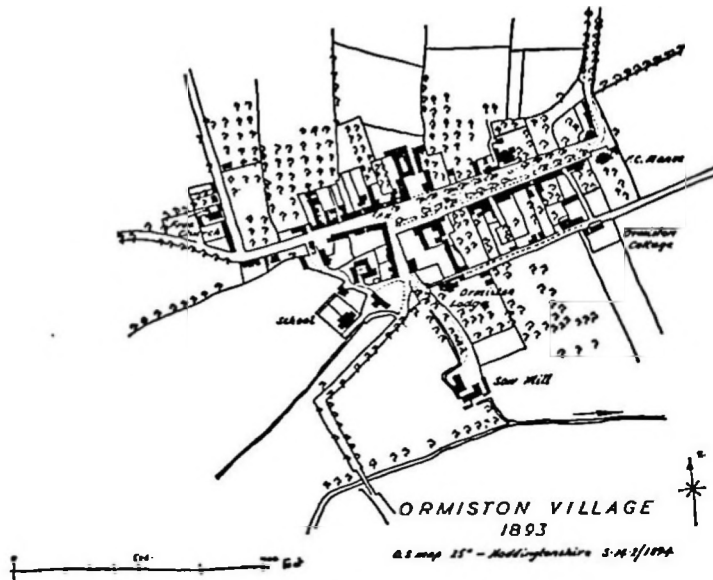


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### *Phase III: Early twentieth century*

The next phase in the growth of Ormiston was due entirely to the opening up of a number of coal mines in its vicinity. Coal had been mined in a small way for many years by families or small companies, several of which survive to this day, and Cockburn refers in his letters to the workmen employed in coal production. But it was not until the late nineteenth century that systematic exploitation and the capitalising of modern collieries began. At Ormiston the first one was the Ormiston Coal Co. at Limeylands, founded by John Clark in 1903. Oxenford I followed in 1912, Tynemount

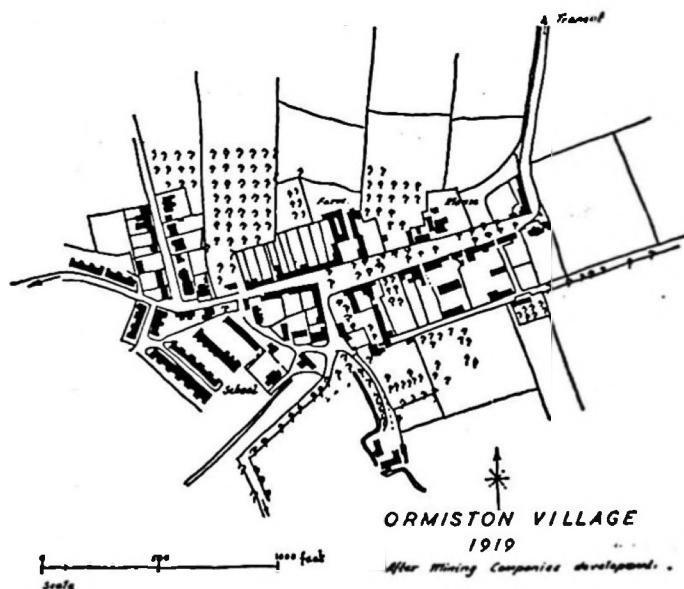


FIG. 4.

in 1922, Oxenford II in 1929. Workers were imported and miners' houses were erected, the first group or row still being known as Clark's Buildings. The old miller's row was rebuilt. These houses were two storey blocks, with a 2-room house on each floor; they were scaled to satisfy the cubic requirements of the bye-laws and therefore contained high rooms with a small floor area. No roads were constructed or separate gardens defined; the blocks were simply placed on the ground at the back of the old milling settlement, and kept close together to avoid possible danger areas from mining subsidence and its attendant compensation payments (Fig. 4).

The Coal Companies' developments continued through the 1920's and 30's. A street of single-storey miners' houses

(Linlithgow Terrace and Hopetoun Crescent) was built behind the earlier blocks; some blocks on the south side of Cockburn's village behind the main street and a group of officials' houses to the north (George Street) were laid out. Under the Miners' Welfare Act of 1920, a fund was established by a levy on the output of coal and the royalties on its sale. From this Welfare Fund, the Miners' Institute (containing billiards' room, reading and meeting rooms), the recreation park (for football, tennis and children's play) and the bowling green, were established, and handed over to the District Council. The local authorities added to them with the public school and the now necessary police station.

#### *Phase IV: County Council Development*

After 1918, although the Coal Companies built some houses here and at Prestonpans, the main responsibility for housing miners in the county fell on the local authority. The County Council, with Lord Polwarth as Convener and George Cruikshank as County Clerk, pursued a vigorous policy in the early 1920's of promoting better health standards, principally aiming at the prevention of disease by the provision of adequate water supplies and better housing. Building started slowly under the Housing Act of 1919, but these early improvements created a demand that led to the rapid expansion of the Council's building activities. Although before the 1939 war none of the council houses were built specifically for miners, the miners nevertheless comprised the majority of the tenants. At Ormiston, development was hindered on the north by the danger of subsidence, and on the south by the flood-plain of the Tyne Water, while the land to the east was reported by the Mineral Valuer as unsuitable for housing. Drainage difficulties also limited the spread to the north west. The village, therefore, was expanded westwards in a series of partly planned but ill-organised streets and terraces. The first group was a street of architect-designed houses on the brae facing south, above the Recreation Park; what is reputed to be the first curved street of council houses to be approved by the Department of Health in Scotland was built north of this. Several rows of builders' houses followed to the west, but still no overall plan was adopted. A further group of architect-designed houses was put up to the north of the expanding scheme (see plan, Fig. 5).

The school was enlarged in 1929 as a Junior Secondary School when the Parish Education Boards were abolished and the County took over their duties. The sewage works was

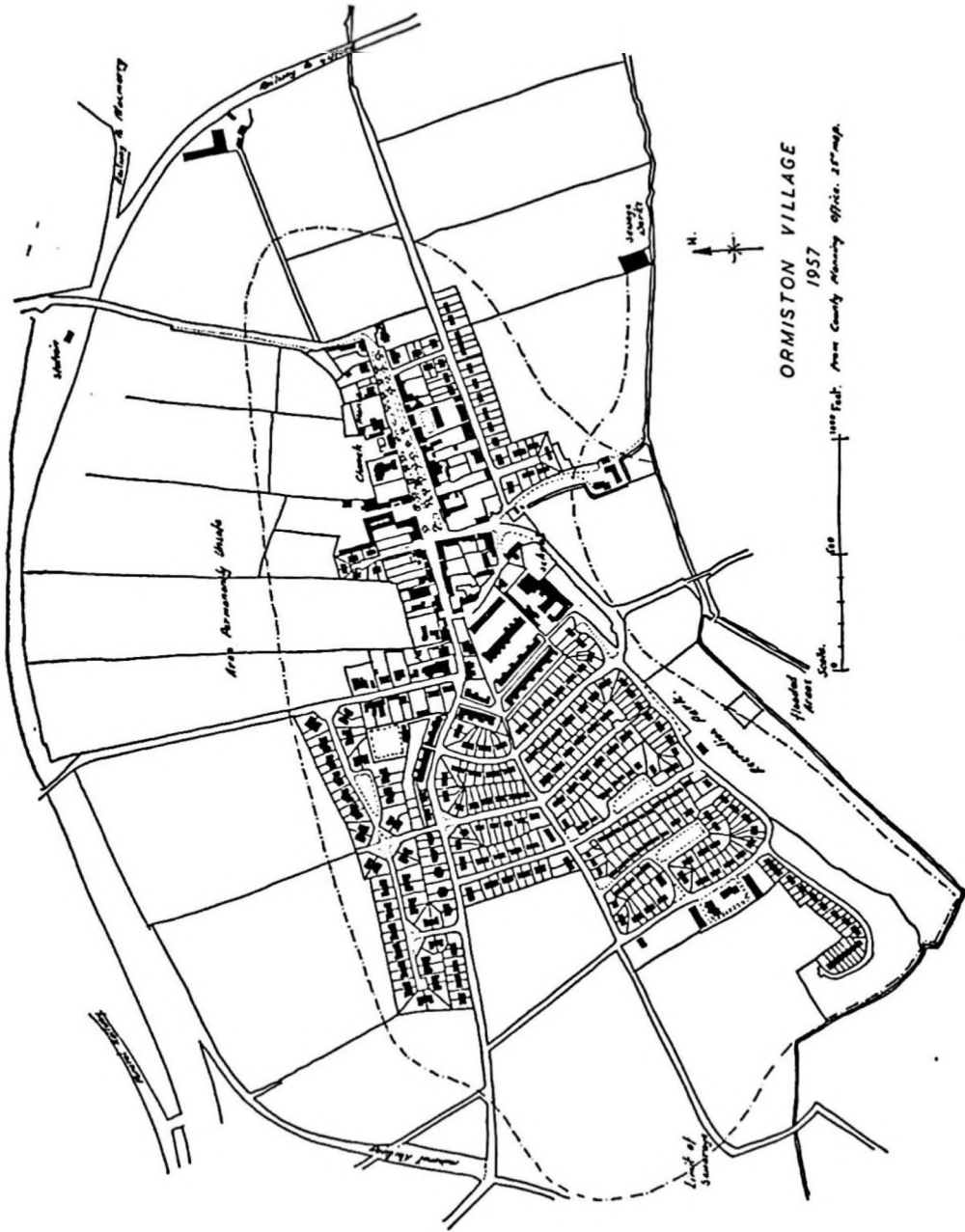


FIG. 5.

constructed in 1933. In 1936, as a result of the union of two churches, a new church for 500 people was built in the main street.

After the 1939-45 war, two streets of prefabricated houses

were erected, some green areas were preserved, and a further scheme of permanent houses at the extreme west of the village was begun.

Several houses in the eighteenth-century village were cleared away; Ormiston Lodge and Ormiston Cottage were recently demolished; and a number of Council houses were erected on the lane south of and parallel to the main street. Altogether 214 houses were built before the war, and 182 afterwards, of which 45 are prefabricated.

But although Sir Frank Mears was appointed Planning Consultant for East Lothian in 1938, little real planning was done until the post-war planning office began to function. Its survey revealed that a number of mines in the vicinity of Ormiston were due to close in the near future, and a decision was taken to develop the small village of Macmerry, which is on the A1 road and nearer to the important mines. Ormiston, therefore, has ceased to grow and is unlikely to expand for some time. The activities of the Planning Authority have recently been directed towards protecting the older buildings and preserving the trees. Beech House, at the north-east corner of Cockburn's village, has been restored and divided into flats; another house on the south of the main street is being adapted under careful contract by a joiner as a workshop; and the Market Cross has been restored by the Ministry of Works. The trees have now been given to the County Council by the estate and will when necessary be replanted. Advice is taken from the Forestry Commission.

#### POPULATION AND OCCUPATION

This history of the village indicates the population trends and occupations of the inhabitants. They can be briefly summarised as follows:

*Population.* In 1792, according to the *Old Statistical Account*, there were 500-600 people in the village (Colvill 1792:169). This presumably remained fairly constant, since in the middle of the nineteenth century the population of the whole parish was 760 (Bannerman 1835:142). The big increase at the turn of the century is shown in the 1911 figure for the parish—1598; and this increased to 1841 in 1931, and 2234 in 1951 (parish figures). Figures for the village itself are only given from 1931 onwards when there were 1221. In 1951 the village population numbered 1914.

*Occupations.* During Phase II of the village's development, it is clear that for a short time occupations were mixed—farming, local industry, trades—with farming becoming the predominant work after the failure of Cockburn's marketing scheme. At the turn of the present century the influx of the miners entirely changed the social structure of the village, and it has tended to become a one-industry settlement. To-day three-quarters of the manual workers are engaged in mining; most of the rest are concerned with farming or market gardening (a good trade is done in strawberries). In addition there are a local joiner and a builder, a slater and plasterer and a number of service trades. The Co-operative Society has two shops, there are three private grocers, a butcher, a hardware merchant, two small general shops, two barbers, one public house and a Post Office, and a bank that opens twice weekly. Two doctors, a District Nurse, and a Health Visitor attend the villagers, a Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic is held fortnightly and an Orthopædic Clinic twice weekly, and the Coal Board, which took over the old officials' houses, has an office in one of them. The School has recently been downgraded, and is now a Primary School.

#### ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS

The first phase of the village having been virtually obliterated, it is convenient to consider the present shape of the village under the three succeeding phases.

##### 1. *The eighteenth-century village* (Pls. V to VII)

In appearance this is the most satisfactory part of the village. The houses, while pleasant in scale and detailing, are not in themselves outstanding architectural examples. The more notable are the Manse, a three-storied stone and slate building, a group of single-storey harled and pantiled agricultural workers' houses, and Beech House, a three-storey stone and slated house at the eastern end of the street—all on the north side; a more continuous group of two-storey houses, including the stone house at present being restored by the joiner, and a group of harled, slated and lime-washed houses, on the south side. The Church, designed by J. Aikman Swan, dates from 1936; the Market Cross, dating from the early eighteenth century, is under the care of the Ministry of Works.

The characteristics may be summarised as follows:

(a) The main street tapers towards the east as it slopes gently downhill. At its upper end the broader part is punctuated in the centre by the Market Cross, raised on a pedestal and dominating the space.

(b) The houses on each side are neither uniform nor regular. They vary in treatment and materials and in height. While the south side is fairly continuously developed, it is composed of houses as dissimilar in style as the simple eighteenth-century harled houses, the nineteenth-century schoolhouse now used as a public hall, the oriel-windowed stone house built by John Clark (the founder of the coal Company), the Co-operative Stores, and a harled semi-detached house built between the wars on a gap site. The north side has noticeable gaps in its development and the houses vary in use and style even more than those on the south. There is the eighteenth-century block with a pend, originally the inn and now the Post Office, the farm house of Market-gate farm, the new church, the three-storey eighteenth-century Manse, the single storey cottages, the widely spaced inter-war bungalows, and the three-storey Beech House at the end.

Nevertheless both sides have a marked street-character and unity. On the north side this may be due in part to two factors: (i) the staggering of the houses so that the larger blocks do not dwarf the smaller ones, except in the case of Beech House which clearly marks the end of the street and the corner, and (ii) the fairly continuous stone walling along this side.

(c) A more important factor which contributes to the unity of the street is the double row of trees. On both sides of the road a well-spaced row of tall mature trees makes the dominant theme of the village design. They shelter the houses but are tall enough not to obscure them, and are set close to the road, leaving a space for grass and good footpaths along the fronts of the houses. This grass ends naturally at the road and the footpaths without curbs of any kind. The footpath access is particularly successful. Occasional naturally formed paths lead across the belts of grass to the road.

(d) The village was not originally developed in depth away from the street, but such pends as there are, in particular the pend at Oak House, give access to pleasant enclosed areas of land, and might be capable of interesting development. Where depth development subsequently occurred (as in

Stanley Place), it happened accidentally as a result of the boundaries of the property associated with the street frontage, and was not well considered.

(e) Both ends of the street are "closed"; i.e. the road alters direction or width and, without ever looking like a cul-de-sac, suggests the end of the settlement. At the east end it turns at right angles downhill to the north, and a memorial to Robert Moffat, the missionary, though subsequent to the planning of the village, is well sited on the corner. At the west end the road forks, one narrower road proceeding due west, the other leading off at right angles to cross the river and join the main Haddington-Dalkeith road. The block of sub-standard empty miners' dwellings on the corner effectively closes the vista at the crest of the shops, while the Market Cross on its little built-up mound breaks the vista down the west road, forces the main road to bifurcate, and forms a visual centre to the village.

In general, it appears that Cockburn's foundation has a marked village character, and it is suggested that some of the factors that contribute to its success as such are the small scale of its houses, the simplicity of its plan form, the topographical unity and completeness, the freedom with which houses have been built (at varying dates) within a general scheme, the landscaping and the planting of trees.

## 2. *The mining village* (Pl. VIII)

The miners' rows are not beautiful, but it is felt that their close-packed simple character given interest by external staircases and access galleries need not have detracted from the æsthetic value of the village as much as has in fact happened. The lack of planning, except in the most rudimentary way, has turned them into stranded blocks in a waste of mud and asphalt; and the problem created by the need for washing lines, back sheds, etc., will require a planned solution such as that at present proposed by the County Planning Officer. They are dismal in colour, but this could be corrected. Their positioning bears little relation to the older part of the village and they are reached only by tracks across the ground.

In view of the considerable amenities added to the village by the mining companies, it is regrettable that a major opportunity to make a coherent extension to the village was lost. There appears to be no logical connection between the siting of the miners' Institute, the bowling green and recreation park other than the purely adventitious availability of sites.



### 3. *The Local Authority Extensions* (Pls. VII and VIII)

Certain parts of these extensions were planned, but there was no comprehensive layout, and four distinct sections are noticeable. One group (the first and last in date of the Council houses) is laid out to face south on the brae above the river; the second (incorporating the post-war prefabricated houses) follows a course dictated by the layout of the miners' row; the third is a planned and slightly more imaginative scheme along and to the north of the road to Limeylands; the fourth is a monotonous development along the original back lane parallel to and south of the main street.

Apart from the prefabricated dwellings and some short terraced blocks, the houses are generally semi-detached. They line service roads with considerable waste of space, and show little evidence of grouping or organisation which might have linked them logically with the older village. The small green spaces have emerged often merely as untidy corners left to satisfy sight-lines. Only in the third group has an attempt been made to form a coherent scheme with green spaces, and to achieve a reasonable scale in the houses by projecting a wing lower at the ridge than the remainder of the house. Here planting in the front gardens seems to have been more careful and successful than in the other groups. In general, however, landscaping and planting have not been considered, and the contrast with the old village in this respect is overwhelming.

A further contrast is afforded by the widespread nature of the Council housing and the low density of the scheme—the density being considerably reduced by the wastage in road widths. Most of the service roads are far wider than they need be. The low density (about 10-11 houses to the acre is common), the random development of the scheme, its size, lack of scale and ill-designed housing, have resulted in a noticeable lack of relationship with the earlier village. At the same time its bulk and population have unbalanced the original concept of the village without contributing to what might have been a unified but socially and æsthetically diverse village settlement.

Nevertheless, it is felt that some well considered laying of paths and planting might improve the scheme and go some way towards establishing a character more allied to the nucleus of the place; and this is reinforced by the impression that much of the attraction of Cockburn's village does in fact depend upon the trees and the road and footpaths, rather

than upon the comparatively undistinguished houses in the main street.

#### GENERAL PROPOSALS

There are two main aspects of this village development which we have thought useful to study. Firstly, the village as it stands to-day is, despite its misfortunes, still capable of improvement by means of planting and landscaping, attention to fences, paths, etc. Some suggestions of this sort will form one group of proposals. Secondly, the unsatisfactory spread of the village with its low density in its later phases, suggests that it might be profitable to consider in what ways the village as it stood at the beginning of this century could be developed at higher densities and in a more compact form. Some suggestions have been drafted, from two points of view. On the one hand, assuming for the sake of the study that the Council development had not taken place, it is interesting to speculate on what *might* have happened if a concentrated plan based on developing the existing village in depth had been adopted. On the basis of such a plan it is possible to show the actual wastage of ground at present and the overall shape which the village might have assumed. On the other hand, it may be that such proposals are still practicable. Although the present trend of employment has halted the building of houses in completion of the Council scheme already begun at the western edge of the settlement, it is always possible that at some future date it may be necessary for more houses to be erected. By selecting as a sample a section of the village lying along the south of the main street, at present characterised by gap sites, a noticeable decay in both buildings and gardens, and unused waste spaces, it is possible to show how such an area could still reasonably be developed should the occasion arise, and could contribute to the rehabilitation of the old village (Figs. 6 and 7). In this plan all the 18 usable dwellings are retained and restored where necessary, and an additional 42 houses are provided, giving an approximate density of 20 houses per acre. This is very reasonable. It may be noted that with the exception of two short blocks of maisonettes over shops, all the houses are given small private gardens. One major area of open space is provided, and three smaller ones, one of which faces a group of four old people's houses. Fifteen garages are also provided—a ratio of one garage to four houses.



FIG. 1.—High Street, Ormiston.



FIG. 2.—High Street, Ormiston.



FIG. 2.—Pend and Close off High Street, Ormiston.



FIG. 1.—Beech House, east end of High Street, Ormiston.



FIG. 1.—The Manse, Ormiston.



FIG. 2.—County Council housing, Ormiston.

PLATE VIII



FIG. 1.—Miners' rows, Ormiston.



FIG. 2.—Recent building. A shop at west end of village, Ormiston.



FIG. 1.—Entry from south, Ratho.



FIG. 2.—Main street looking east, Ratho.

PLATE X



FIG. 1.—Backs of houses on south side of main street, Ratho.



FIG. 2.—Back lane south of main street, Ratho.





FIG. 1.—Ludgate, Ratho.



FIG. 2.—Canal and bridge, Ratho.

PLATE XII



FIG. 1.—Looking north towards Kirktown from the Ludgate path, Ratho.



FIG. 2.—Kirktown of Ratho.

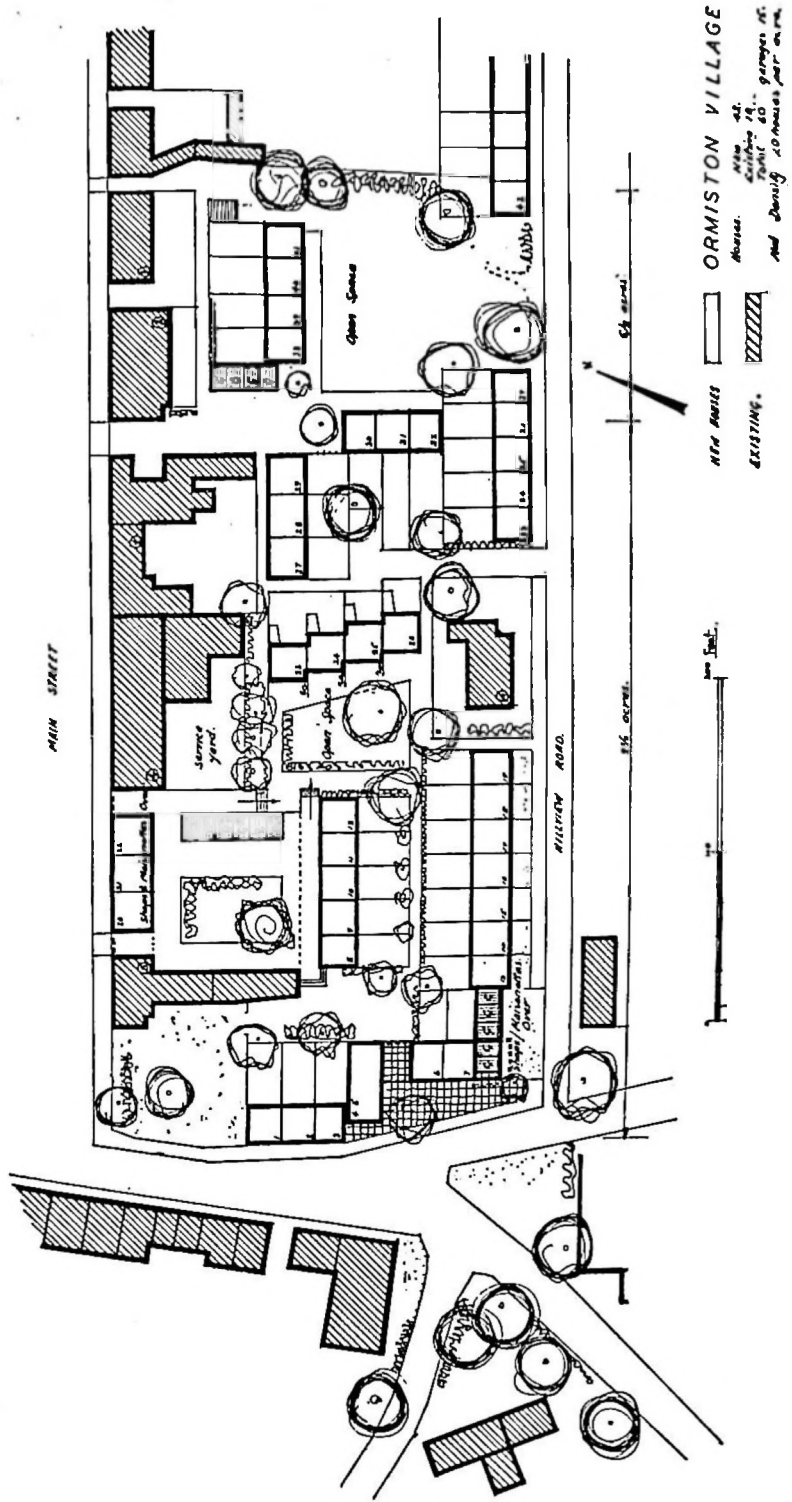
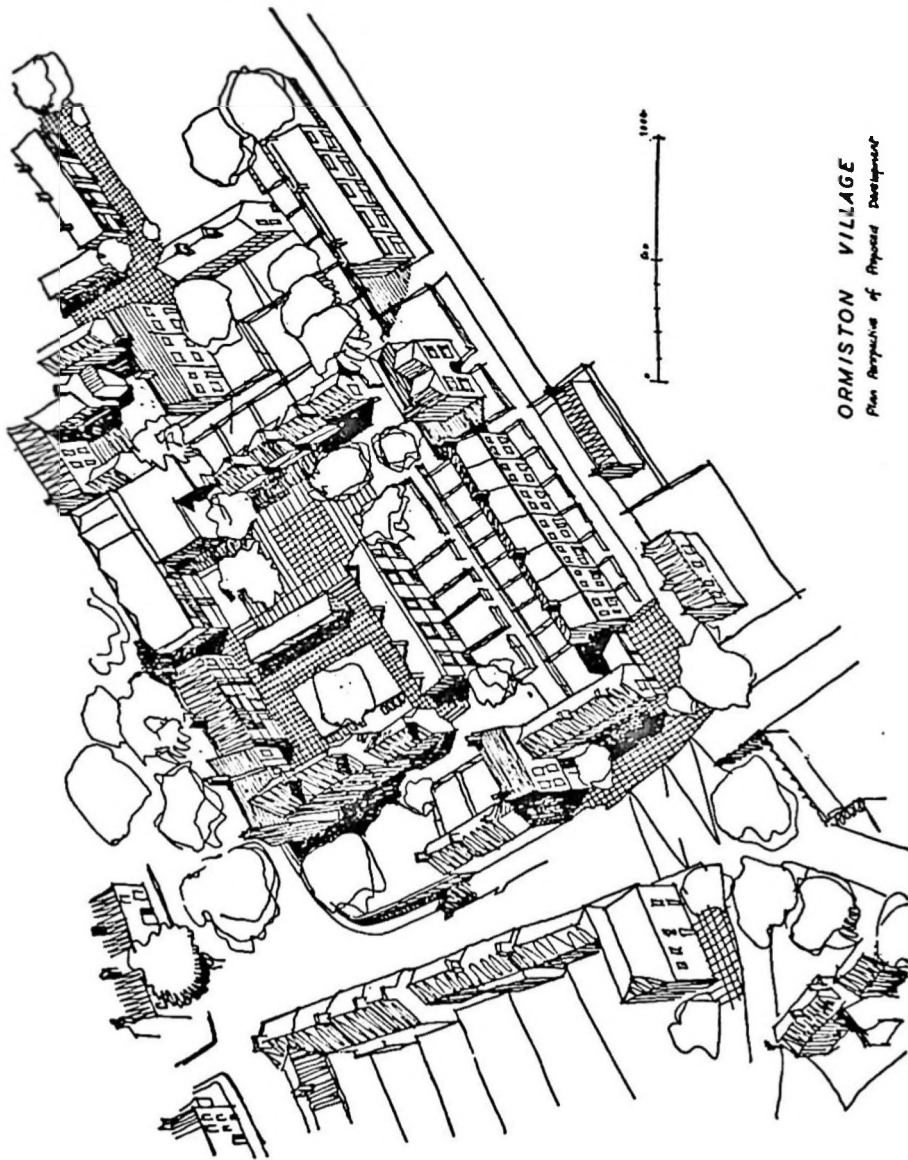


FIG. 6.

On the basis of the density worked out for this area, a further map (Fig. 8) has been drawn, suggesting in broad outline how the village might have grown after 1919. The density is maintained at 20 houses per acre and allowance is



ORMISTON VILLAGE  
Plan Perspective of Proposed Development

FIG. 7.

made for roads, paths, etc. It shows how, within the limiting site factors, a compact but not crowded village might have grown, retaining the centre of the eighteenth-century village as its centre of gravity. Calculation showed that 332 houses had been removed (or assumed not built) and approximately 353 houses gained within the greatly reduced area.

It is at least clear that Ormiston still needs attention in order to unify the present disorganised series of schemes; and it may be that the redevelopment of the original heart of the village—Cockburn's planned precinct—which remains the most satisfying part visually and practically, would go some way towards giving it new life and its true significance as the centre of the place, socially if not geographically. This part has already been modified, though not satisfactorily, by both the mining companies and the local authority. At present

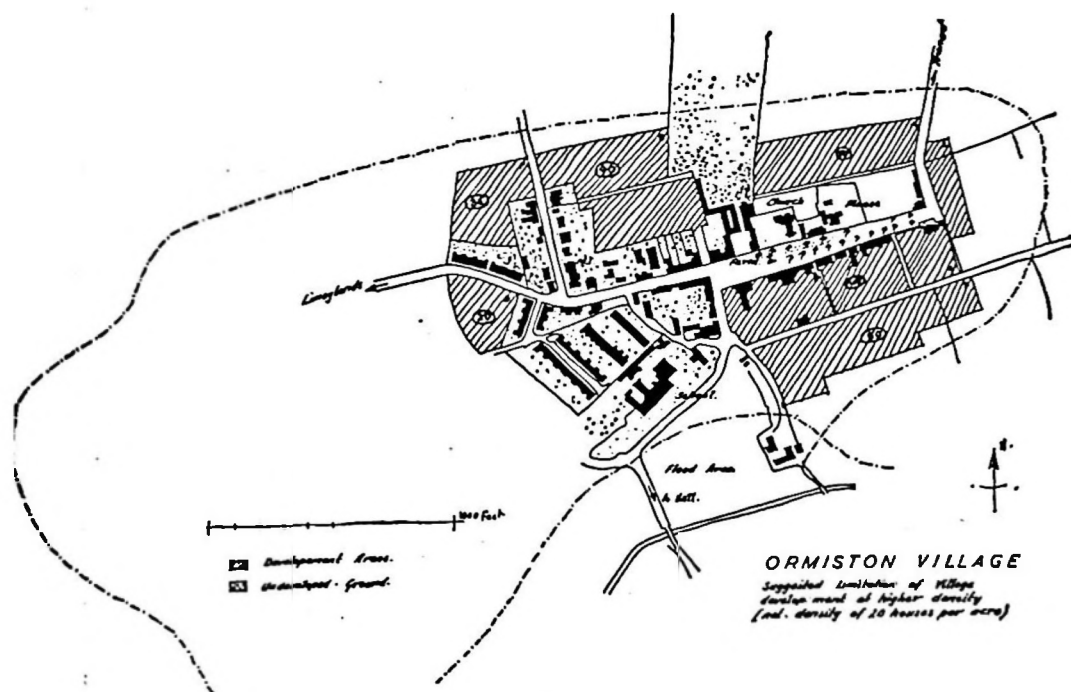


FIG. 8.

an attempt is being made to preserve the older houses; presumably the closed up miners' block in one part of the site and the sub-standard miners' dwellings elsewhere, will at some time have to be demolished. The sample plan aims to keep all the pleasant (and some less pleasant) existing usable dwellings, and to build concentratedly in the available spaces behind and about them.

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## *Ratho*

### SITUATION

The village of Ratho is situated in the County of Midlothian, about 8 miles west of Edinburgh, on a minor road that joins the two main routes to Glasgow, via Bathgate and Midcalder respectively. Immediately to the north of the village proper, and dividing it from the church and a group of buildings beside it (the Kirktown), lies the disused Union Canal, which was constructed between 1818 and 1822 to link Edinburgh to the Forth and Clyde Canal just west of Falkirk. The drainage of the immediate surroundings is affected by the canal. About 1½ miles to the south the Gogar Burn runs eastwards, turning north through Gogar Bank and Gogar (2 miles east of Ratho) to join the river Almond. The Almond passes some 2 miles to the west of Ratho village on its north and north-easterly course to the river Forth.

The main part of the village lies on a ridge sloping downwards from west to east, at about 320 to 250 feet above sea-level. To the south-east the ground falls away to the Gogar Burn; to the south-west and west it rises slightly to separate the village from the valley of the river Almond. Immediately to the north it falls rapidly to the canal at about 225 feet, and this is banked on its north side where the ground falls

slightly further, rising rapidly again to 250 feet at the manse in the Kirktown.

The ridge itself is an outcrop of whinstone (intrusive basalt rock) which is exposed at several places in the vicinity in the general area of carboniferous sandstones. The whinstone has been extracted from numerous quarries near the village, the major quarries being Ratho Quarry (now disused), Hillwood Quarry and Craigbank Quarry, now used for road-stone.

West of the village there remain some groups of trees, many of which were planted for shelter and ornament in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

#### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The name "Ratho" is probably derived from the Celtic word "rath", meaning a fort or mound. The early history of the village is obscure, but it is mentioned in records of the early fourteenth century as the Barony of Ratho. The church of St. Mary retains features that date from Norman times. A charter granted by the King to Alexander Fowlis, who bought the land in 1568, refers to "the 36 oxengate of the town and lands of Ratho . . . with tower, mansion . . . houses, biggings, yards . . . called Ratho Myre".<sup>1</sup> Thirty-six oxengate suggests an acreage of about 468 acres (1 ploughgate—104 acres—containing 8 oxengate); and since an oxgate was theoretically the extent of the individual holdings of the joint tenants under the old Scottish system of farming, each supposed to contribute an ox to the common plough, it might be assumed that the "toun" of Ratho was populated at some time by about 36 families—probably less, in view of the likelihood of one or more families holding several oxengate of land. In any case, the acreage of the town was approximately that of a davoch (416 acres), which was the measure of a typical farm group; so that Ratho was probably a very typical ferm-toun of the Lowlands before the agricultural revolution. It was linked with the Kirk and Kirk-toun by a roadway, once known (according to the Minister who wrote the *Statistical Account* of 1839) as the Lud Gate or Lord's Gate—the "access to the House of God" (Clason 1839:97).

The Kirk-toun was and still is simply a small group of houses near the Kirk—an arrangement commonly found in rural Scotland. Its separation (in this case very slight) from the village proper illustrates the difference between the Scottish

and English villages. In the latter the church normally forms a dominant feature or focus. In Scotland, the villages and kirks were not founded necessarily on the same site; for the kirk served the parish as a whole, which was usually one of scattered farms and farmtowns, and was normally somewhere near the centre of this agricultural parish. The village on the other hand was originally only one of several farmtowns in the parish, any one of which might have been later developed, as Ratho was, to form a village at the time of the agrarian revolution. The interaction of one upon the other is probably to be found in the likelihood that the farmtown at Ratho was developed rather than one of the other "touns", because of its closeness to the Kirk and its consequent position at the convergence of routeways leading to the Kirk.

This general arrangement is confirmed by a Plan of the County of Midlothian made by John Laurie in 1763, which shows the village in roughly its present situation, with however only 10 buildings in the village itself, and one beside the Kirk. These rather scattered buildings straddle a road which does not exactly follow the line of the present road, but passes northwards on the west side of the Kirk. The number of buildings shown may not be accurate on such a small-scale plan.

The ownership of the surrounding land changed frequently, and has been divided among a number of estates, including Dalmahoy, Hatton, Bonnington, Ashley and Ratho Byres. Mansion houses in the parish include Dalmahoy House, Ratho House, Milburn Tower, Bonnington House and Norton House. Ratho Hall faces the village from the slope north of the canal.

The present village owes its form to the radical improvements of the agricultural improvement era, when the farms were enclosed and enlarged, the fields fertilised with lime and the buildings re-erected. In Ratho, according to an Appendix to the *General View of the Agriculture of Midlothian* of 1795 much of the improving took place in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, before which the land was largely "whins and swamps". The planting "with belts and clumps of trees" dates from this time. The village itself must have been rebuilt in connection with the altered road at about the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in accordance with the general redistribution of labour.<sup>2</sup>

The construction of the Union Canal (1818-22) presumably also influenced the layout of the village. It certainly brought



considerable benefits to the people. Where previously it had been one of the most inaccessible places in the three Lothians (Robertson 1793:267), the canal now brought to the village fertilisers and fuel (mainly from Polmont) and passengers.

By 1839, the time of the *New Statistical Account*, the village consisted of one street with two rows of houses, bending northwards across the Canal. The houses were mainly one-storey, built of whinstone from the local quarry, with freestone lintels and roofs of slate or tile. The village had been, says

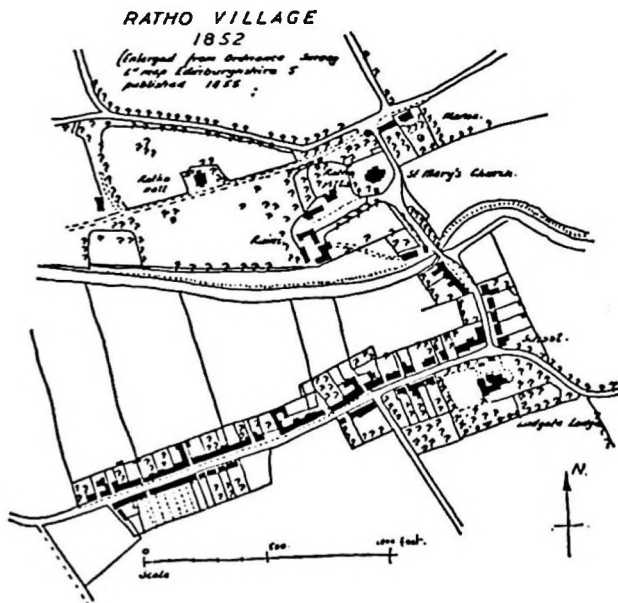


FIG. 9.

the Minister, “much extended and improved recently by the erection of a number of neat cottages . . . and other alterations upon the street”. A few old huts on the south side, then being demolished, still connected the village with olden times. The Minister also notes the increasing taste for flowers, pots, shrubs and “other means of beautifying the exterior of the cottages” (Clason 1839:97).

This village of the early nineteenth century is in fact the core of the village as it can be seen to-day (Pls. IX-XIII). The Ordnance Survey map of 1855 (Fig. 9) shows the same plan and many of the same whinstone houses with freestone dressings. The church had been extended in 1683 and again in the early nineteenth century; the manse “in the Kirkstoun” was built in 1803. There were, says the 1839 *Account*, three schools in the village (the parish school with a master and

85 scholars, and two sewing schools with 22 pupils each), a Post Office, a Freemasons' meeting place and a Distillery. Although there was no proper Inn, there were 8 public houses in the parish, which, the Minister sadly remarks, "is too many". The nearest market was Edinburgh.

The village grew slightly during the remainder of the century. The O.S. map of 1895 (Fig. 10) shows the same arrangement; Ludgate Lodge (now called The Lodge) had arrived at the east end of the village, the school nearby had

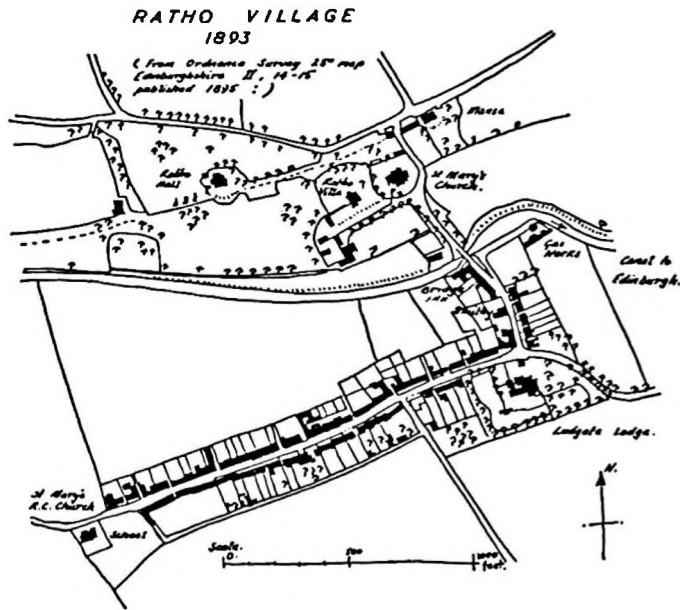


FIG. 10.

grown, and another been built at the western end. The Catholic Chapel had been erected, the houses on the south side of the street were more tightly packed; a smithy stood on the Ludpath; the Bridge Inn beside the bridge (Pl. XI, fig. 2), and a Gas Works east of the bridge by the canal.

The main part of the subsequent development of the village has been the County Council housing to the north west and south of the main street. Thirty-two council houses were erected on a new road (Hillview Cottages) before the second world war. Since the war 12 prefabricated houses and another 152 permanent houses have been built, which can be summarised as follows (Fig. 11).

Post-war permanent houses: 120

(Craigpark Avenue and Crescent; North Street and Hillview Cottages, west end)

Agricultural Workers: 16

(Hillview Cottages, south side; Craigpark Avenue, south end)

Scottish Special Housing—General needs: 16

(Craigpark Avenue, west end)

Apart from the group of 20 at the west end of Hillview Cottages, the post-war County Council development has taken place in a widely spaced scheme to the north of the village, with the backs of the houses to the Canal.

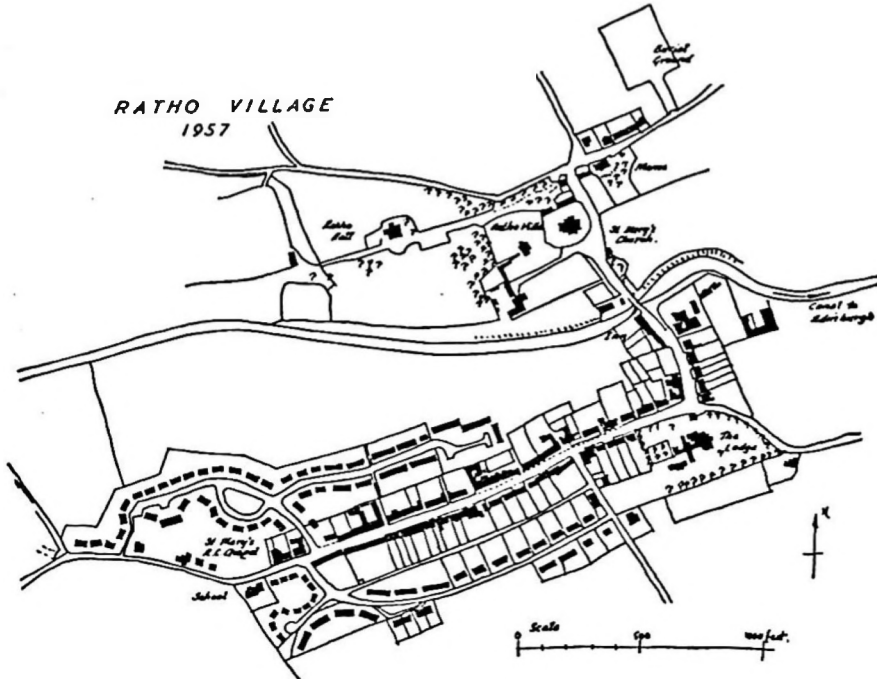


FIG. 11.

In addition, a large number of the old houses on the north side of the main street have been condemned and partly demolished, and a scheme is in hand to rebuild this group as terraced housing, using the old stones and tiles where possible, and incorporating a group of shops and a community hall.

The housing lists for June 1956 show 109 houses in addition to the County Council property.

#### POPULATION AND OCCUPATIONS

Available figures show that the population of the parish of Ratho was about 1145 in 1760 (only some of whom would have been in the village) but decreased to about 825 in 1793

(Robertson 1793:266), as a result of the enlargement of farms and the completion of the work on Dalmahoy House. From then, however, it increased to 1315 in 1831 and by another 149 to form a total of 1454 in 1839 (Clason 1839:93). The reasons given for this are improved agriculture, resulting in the need for more farm workers, the cutting of the canal, the opening of stone quarries and, in the latter decade, the building of new mansions and the greater subdivision of lands in the second stage of the agrarian changes.

In 1839 Ratho was almost entirely an agricultural parish. In addition, the distillery employed 11 people and produced 42,000 gallons a year; one sandstone and four whinstone quarries were in operation, but only one whinstone quarry, employing 10 people, was regularly exploited (Clason 1839:93).

At this time, the population of the village itself was 539 (Clason 1839:96). Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Scotland* gives it as having risen to 689 by 1846. It must have subsequently increased slowly. Available figures for recent years, from the Housing records, show the population as 760 in 1954, 850 in 1955 and 920 in June, 1956, with an additional 18 to 20 people in the Nursing Home at the Lodge.

From such figures as are available for the district, a general view of the occupations in the village can be obtained. Craigpark, Hillwood and Norton Quarries (producing whinstone for roadwork) employ between them 61 workers, some of whom must live in the village. There are 16 agricultural workers' houses with, presumably, 16 agricultural workers in them, four police personnel, a number of teachers, nurses (The Lodge Nursing Home) and various service trades. The Co-operative Society has a large farm in the neighbourhood and a store in the village. There are dog kennels to the east of the village, a mink farm beside the canal, and Ratho Golf Course lies a short distance to the east. Travel to work figures show an estimated 150 men and 150 women travelling daily to Edinburgh from both Ratho village and Ratho Station, about a mile to the north. The latter has been developed on a bigger scale than the village and now has a larger population, many of whom work in Edinburgh.

#### ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS

The Council housing of both pre-war and post-war years is not very successful; and it has been thought useful to suggest a way in which the village might have grown from its shape

and size in the early part of this century. The layout and design of the Council houses is poor, scattered and unsightly; but essentially its fault lies in its lack of sympathy with the original charming if not particularly distinguished village nucleus. The widely spaced groups to the south and the winding streets to the north are so out of character as to give the inevitable impression of a housing scheme tacked on to a decrepit village, rather than an extension of an existing village—as it could easily have been. Indeed the plan of Ratho suggests that the necessary additional houses might have formed not merely an extension of the village, but rather the completion of the village pattern. The advantages of such an attempt are obvious. The village might have been improved rather than disfigured and made visually more attractive and socially more satisfactory, by the integration of the new with the old and the revitalising of the latter in the process.

Several parts of the village show this possibility. The Kirktown could be unified and better grouped by some small rows of houses to close the view up the hill from the village proper (Pl. XII, fig. 2) and make a coherent group at the junction of the roads, thus following the traditional development of the Kirktown nucleus as a place in itself. Since the Kirk is a building of architectural importance, some improvement of the surroundings is in any case necessary to give it the setting it deserves. The derelict gas works area facing the canal is an attractive site, and, properly developed, could form one of the most pleasant terraces in the village; and this could link behind the houses on the Ludgate to a group at the eastern end of the main street, forming a green on both sides of the curving road and finishing the village appropriately. This in turn could be connected to the road to Dalmahoy by a narrow roadway beside the existing trees on the south facing slopes. The old back lane, south of the main street (Pl. X, fig. 2), might be utilised rather than remain as at present an untended track, with houses on its south. In this way considerable lengths of roadmaking could have been avoided. Furthermore, the north side of the main street (Pl. IX, fig. 2) could be developed, following the original pattern, with short blocks stretching northwards at right angles behind the street terraces, and views across the canal to Ratho Hall through pends and lanes and between the blocks. The clearance on this side gives an opportunity to form an open space with hall and shops near the entry road

from the south, thus opening up the central part of the village street. A block of old people's houses could be constructed facing the bowling green, and a garage could be placed near the Inn on the site of the earlier smithy. Westwards along the main street, some derelict property on the south side might be cleared to open out a link between the southern terraces and the northern blocks and the view to the Hall. At the extreme west end it would be possible to open out small green spaces where the lane returns to the main street,

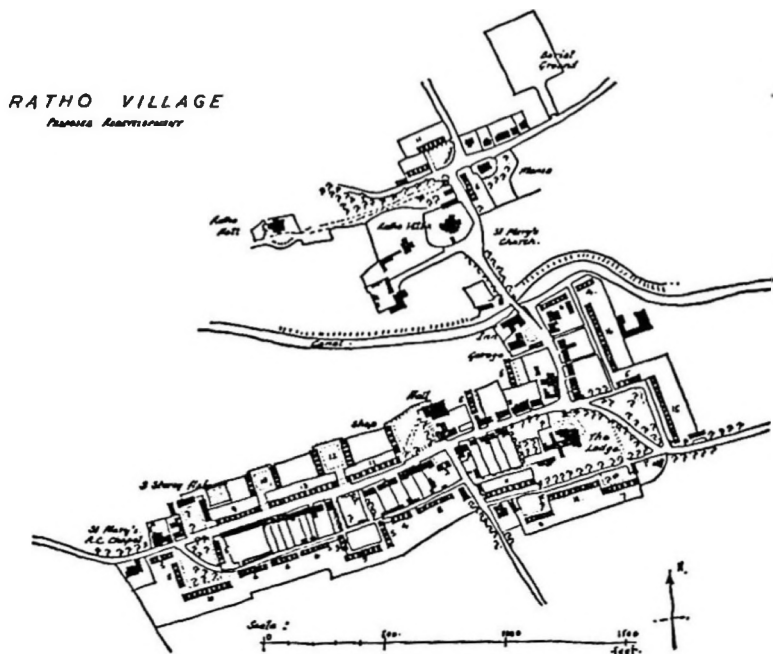


FIG. 12.

and to erect taller blocks as a stop to the village and an improvement of the view on approaching down the hill from the west.

There are still other possibilities. The school, for example, is in an awkward position on the corner at the east end, and has quite inadequate space behind it for recreation and playing fields. If the Lodge, at present a Nursing Home, ceased to function as such, it could probably be adapted as a school building. The advantages of utilising the gardens, tennis courts, etc. surrounding it for children and others are easily seen; and at the same time the grounds, by becoming more part of the village, would add immensely to its amenities.

Alternatively the Lodge might be turned into a Community Centre, and the grounds be open to all in the village.

Using some of these opportunities, a plan has been drawn

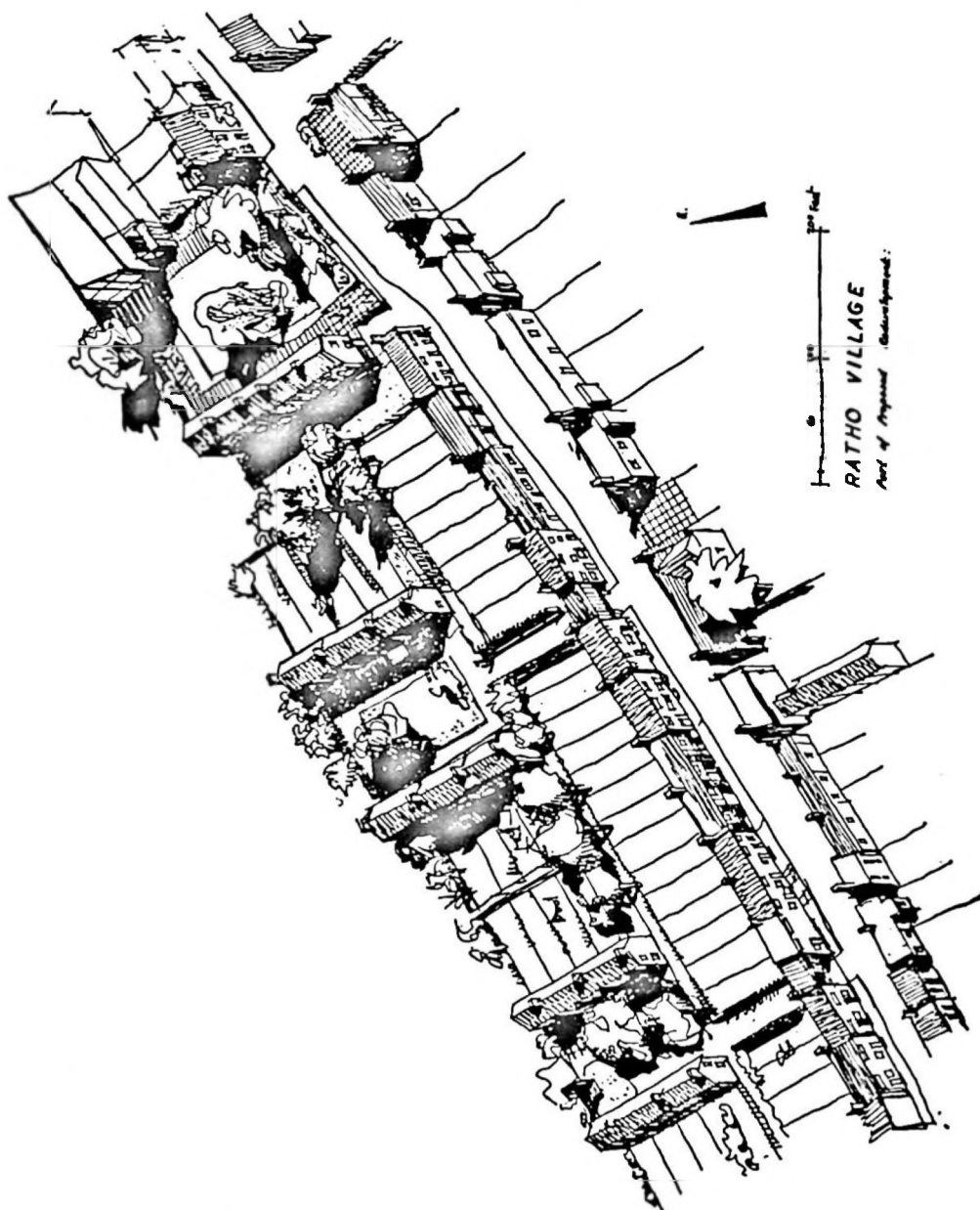


FIG. 13.

which seems to achieve the aim of completing the village pattern without destroying it, and adding a number of amenities which the village did not previously possess (Figs. 12 and 13). The number of houses obtained is slightly more than

the total of houses which have in fact been erected, while using only a fraction of the area of land. Approximately 202 houses replace the existing 196 houses, with 33 new houses in the clearance area on the north side of the main street, 5 shops and 2 blocks of 3-storey flats (giving 25 flats in all). By such a plan, moreover, entirely adequate and frequently generous gardens could be made, with additional open spaces, and yet without the wastage of inevitably derelict land that the normal housing scheme seems to ensure.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Quoted in Clason 1839:82.
- <sup>2</sup> A *Plan of the Parish of Ratho* by Jas. Anderson, was published in Edinburgh in 1819. No copy of it, however, could be discovered. It is listed in *The Early Maps of Scotland*, by a Committee of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. 2nd edition, revised (1936):106. Edinburgh.

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

The illustrations in this article (sketches and plates) were supplied by the Department of Architecture, University of Edinburgh.