

## THE ANATOMY OF THE VILLAGE

Thomas Sharp was a key figure in mid-C20 British planning whose renown stems from two periods in his career. First, he came to attention as a polemical writer in the 1930s on planning issues, including as a virulent opponent of garden cities. His prose tempered over time and this phase perhaps culminated in *Town Planning*, first published in 1940 and reputed to have sold over 250,000 copies. Subsequently the plans he produced for historic towns in the 1940s, such as Oxford, were very well known and were influential in developing ideas of townscape.

*The Anatomy of the Village* originated from a brief phase between these two periods when Sharp was seconded during the early war years to work for the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. Started as an official manual on village planning, it followed on from the *Scott Report*, for which Sharp had been one of the Secretaries. When the Ministry decided not to proceed with the publication, Sharp himself published it 1946. *The Anatomy of*

*the Village* became one of Sharp's best known works, with lucid prose and generous illustration by photograph and beautiful line-drawings of village plans. The aim of *The Anatomy of the Village* was to set out the main principles of village planning, especially in relation to physical design.

*Anatomy* became a key text in thinking about villages in the post-war period; a period when there was great concern that settlements should develop in more sensitive ways than inter-war ribbon and suburban development patterns. The problems of poor quality development, unrelated to settlement form, was to continue to stimulate books such as Lionel Brett's *Landscape in Distress* and campaigns from the *Architectural Review*. Reading the text today it still has much to offer: while some of its assumptions about the level of services a village might support clearly belong to another era, its beautiful and simple typological analyses of village form continue to be of relevance.

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# THE ANATOMY OF THE VILLAGE

*Thomas Sharp*

Introduction by John Pendlebury

First published 2014  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Sharp, Thomas, 1901–1978.

Anatomy of a village / Thomas Sharp ; introduction by John Pendlebury.

pages cm. – (Studies in international planning history)

Includes bibliographical references.

1. City planning—Great Britain. 2. Villages—Great Britain. I. Pendlebury, John R., 1963– writer of added commentary. II. Title.

NA9185.S48 2013

711'.43—dc23

2013007894

ISBN: 978-0-415-64499-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-79486-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo  
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear

# INTRODUCTION TO *THE ANATOMY OF THE VILLAGE*

## **Introduction**

*The Anatomy of the Village*, first published in 1946, is an unusual planning book. An affordable Penguin publication, but extremely attractively produced, it was very popular, selling in the region of 50,000 copies over the twenty-five years or so it was in print. And whilst the book celebrates the qualities of the traditional British village, it was no chocolate-box nostalgic paean to the past, but a firm assertion of the importance of modern, comprehensive town planning in the post-war period. Even more remarkably, the book, which is written in the lucid but highly individual style of its author, began its life as a civil service manual, prepared to be published as a government document but subsequently abandoned as such. The author was Thomas Sharp, an influential and at times brilliant voice in planning in the middle of the century, who rose from a modest working-class background to the heights of the profession, before disappearing for much of the later period of his working life into semi-obscurity.

## **Introducing Thomas Sharp**

Thomas Sharp (1901–1978) was a prominent figure in British planning in the middle part of the twentieth century, both as an

opinionated writer on planning issues and as a producer of plans. From a working-class family on the south-west Durham coalfield, Sharp was one of the first planners trained as such, rather than entering planning via another profession. His reputation was first established through a series of polemical books before, as a planning consultant, in the 1940s he authored some of the most significant and best known war-time and post-war reconstruction plans with something of a specialization in historic towns such as Durham, Exeter and Oxford (Sharp, 1945, 1946a, 1948a), which in turn were influential in developing ideas of townscape.

He rather drifted into planning. With his mother insisting that he would not work in the pits, he secured an apprenticeship locally to a surveyor in Spennymoor. In 1920 he moved to Margate, Kent, and in 1924 he became a Planning Assistant to the City Surveyor of Canterbury. A little over a year later he moved to London to work for the planning consultants Thomas Adams and Longstreth Thompson and here became one of the first to join the Town Planning Institute by examination. In 1927 he became the Regional Planning Assistant to The South West Lancashire Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee. This occupied him for some four years, culminating in the large plan, *The Future Development of South-West Lancashire* (The South West Lancashire

## INTRODUCTION

Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee, 1930). This was the first significant professional work by Sharp. As was the tradition, authorship was assigned to the Joint Committee's Honorary Surveyor who had had little hand in its preparation. This enraged Sharp and the bitter dispute which resulted led to his resignation, which was followed by two and a half years of unemployment. But Sharp's period of notice from the Liverpool post had allowed him to start work on what was to become his first book, *Town and Countryside* (Sharp, 1932), which was both well reviewed and controversial, with its assault on prevailing garden city principles.

Sharp eventually found work shortly after the publication of *Town and Countryside* as Regional Planning Assistant to the North East Durham Joint Planning Committee. He hated the job, but he found time to write. This included a treatise against the appalling conditions found in his native part of the county, *A Derelict Area* (Sharp, 1935a), a series of articles for the *Architectural Review* on the historical development of the English Town (Sharp, 1935b, 1936a, 1936b, 1936c), which became the book *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1936d), the *Shell Guide to Northumberland and Durham* (Sharp, 1937a) and a chapter in Clough Williams-Ellis' book *Britain and the Beast* (Sharp, 1937b). Sharp tolerated the Durham job for four years before resigning in 1937. After three months' unemployment he was invited to do some short-term teaching in town planning at the School of Architecture, King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne (then part of the University of Durham) and this led to a permanent position; one subject we know he taught was village design (Thomson, 1939). This can be seen as something of a turning point in his career. It was the end of Sharp's often unhappy days working for local government and the beginning of a period when new opportunities began to open up thick and fast, many as a result of war-time activity on planning.

Whilst the ten years before had contained many lows it had also seen Sharp established as an important commentator on planning matters. The next ten years would see him rise to the summit of the profession and established as an important writer of plans.

Sharp's most notable contribution during his first period working as an academic was another book, *Town Planning*, a Pelican paperback (Sharp, 1940), frequently cited as the best ever selling text on the subject. In 1941 he was seconded for two and a half years to the Ministry of Works and Buildings, as part of a small team with William Holford and John Dower. His work during this time included acting as joint-Secretary to the Scott Report on *Land Utilisation in Rural Areas* (Great Britain, 1942), undertaking work for a publication on villages, suppressed by the Ministry but later to emerge as *The Anatomy of the Village*, and as Chairman of a technical group that produced an appendix to the Dudley Report on the *Design of Dwellings* entitled *Site Planning and Layout in Relation to Housing* (Central Housing Advisory Committee, 1944). Once again finding working in a bureaucracy frustrating, Sharp returned to academia in 1943. On his return to Newcastle he devised a degree in town planning, but his proposals became mired in University politics and in 1945 he once again tendered his resignation, this time to strike out as a planning consultant.

He was already working on his first commission as a consultant for the City of Durham. This was to emerge in 1945 as *Cathedral City* and is the first of a series of 'reconstruction plans' on which much of Sharp's reputation subsequently rested, a number of which emerged as beautifully produced books from the Architectural Press. The triumvirate of his most significant plans is formed by Durham, Exeter and Oxford (Sharp, 1945, 1946a, 1948a). But these were frantically busy years; the

period between 1944 and 1950 also saw commissions for plans for Todmorden, Salisbury, Chichester, St Andrews, King's Lynn, Taunton, Stockport, Minehead and neighbourhood layouts for parts of Kensington and the new town of Hemel Hempstead.<sup>1</sup> Another significant commission in this period included the making of the first master-plan for the new town of Crawley. This opportunity for Sharp to realise his planning ideas in the form of a brand new settlement was again lost by resignation, following differences with the Chairman of the Development Corporation. A similar fate also met his commission by the Forestry Commission for a series of new forestry villages in remote Northumberland. Originally the intention was for eight complete villages. Ultimately only three were partially built, robbed of the social facilities and completed form so important to Sharp. This was a particularly precious commission for Sharp, making the disappointment felt at the end result all the keener.

Perhaps the principal cause for Sharp's subsequent drought of professional work was, somewhat ironically, the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. This adoption of a greater role in planning by the state saw a decisive shift in the undertaking of such work away from consultants towards in-house work by local authorities. Sharp was unwilling or unable to follow other consultants in seeking work overseas and he described his career from 1950 as 'a period of such intermittent and few small engagements as can be accurately described as a period of near-unemployment'.<sup>2</sup> He was only 49 in 1950. Initially his writings continued and *Oxford Observed* (Sharp, 1952a), widely acknowledged as a classic, was followed by a contribution to the government publication *Design in Town and Village* (Sharp, 1953), which effectively reprised material from *The Anatomy of the Village*, and a revised Shell Guide (Sharp,

1952b), now confined to the more obviously picturesque Northumberland. Thereafter, Sharp's professional writing more or less dried up, with the notable exception of his last major book, *Town and Townscape* (Sharp, 1968).

His work as a consultant was also sporadic. Specific commissions included advising on traffic issues in Vienna, a plan for Rugby, advice on proposals for tall buildings in Cambridge (in opposition to plans by the University, see Sharp, 1963), a holiday village design at Port Enyon on the Gower Peninsula and a report on a possible new town in north-east Berkshire (Sharp, 1967). No work was forthcoming from central government which he felt to be the result of an unofficial black-listing for being 'difficult'. Sharp used some of his under-employment in an attempt to further another of his ambitions, as a creative writer. He had written some poetry since his youth but turned more seriously to this about the age of 60. Some of the poetry made its way into print, and some was broadcast by the BBC, but most did not. He wrote two novels and some novellas, all of which remain unpublished. Thus much of Sharp's professional genius and creative abilities were ultimately to remain unfulfilled.

### **Sharp's early writings about villages and the countryside**

The seeds of many of Sharp's planning principles can be found in his first book, *Town and Countryside*. Whilst he subsequently refined and developed his views and perhaps expressed them better in subsequent texts, the book set out core values which would be sustained throughout his career. In very brief summary, Sharp celebrated the planning achievements of the

## INTRODUCTION

Enlightenment period as a source of inspiration (but not for imitation), for creating harmonious towns and beautiful countryside. In part his book fitted with the widely held concern of the period over the perceived desecration of the countryside, as motor traffic allowed the ugliness hitherto largely associated and confined to the industrial town to spill out into rural areas. In this respect, he was following a path beginning to be well developed by others, such as Clough Williams-Ellis in *England and the Octopus* (Williams-Ellis, 1928) and as represented, for example, by the formation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in 1926 (see Sheail, 1981 for an account of inter-war countryside conservation). However, rather more controversially, *Town and Countryside* was an assault on the then prevailing planning ideology of garden cities, which Sharp felt created low density suburbia:

“The crying need of the moment is the re-establishment of the ancient antithesis. The town is town: the country is country: black and white: male and female.” (p11)

The book laid a platform from which Sharp was to develop a particular brand of urbanism (see Pendlebury, 2009) and approach to planning the countryside. Indeed, the book starts by focusing on the countryside.

A significant part of the chapter “Buildings in the Landscape” is an analysis of the form and visual qualities of a series of existing villages. This section sets out a very significant foundation to the analysis reprised and developed in *The Anatomy of the Village*. Sharp identifies five historic village-form types: roadside villages, villages around squares, around triangles, villages creating places around T-junctions and villages morphologically

related to a castle or country house. For each type he sought to give two examples, although in the case of villages set around a triangle of land one example is hypothetical. Each village has a hand-drawn plan in the text and nearly all have a photograph. All of this closely prefigures the approach undertaken in *Anatomy*. The later work also has a typology of village-form, although it is evolved and modified. Furthermore, nearly all the villages featured in *Town and Countryside* appear again, alongside many new examples. Indeed, the beautiful hand-drawn plans, such a feature in *The Anatomy of the Village*, are very similar between the two publications and some cases look to have been directly re-used. It is noticeable that the photographs used are Sharp’s own for the villages in the north-east and Kent, whereas others of villages elsewhere are reproduced with permission, often from articles in *Town Planning Review*, suggesting he had not personally visited these.

Sharp’s analysis of existing village form was a prelude to arguing for the creation of new villages as the best way of building in the countryside, rather than the ribbon development then prevalent. However, whilst he enjoyed and valued the picturesque effects of traditional villages he regarded these qualities as generally being accidental, arising from long, slow processes of natural growth. In his view they could not be re-created in a new wave of village building. Rather, Sharp argued for a humble formality as

“The rural feeling of the village does not depend on any of those things that are popularly associated with it, flowering gardens, irregular, informal, and quaint buildings, and so on. It seems to depend on much smaller and more subtle things, upon a certain modesty, a certain lack of the

smooth, mechanical finish of the town, and above all upon the harmony of the *material* of its buildings with the countryside. There is nothing to fear, then, from the *planning* of villages in more or less formal patterns like the square and the triangle. And there is everything to gain, since only in this way can we stay the wholesale destruction of rural character by the ribbon.” (p67)

Sharp’s subsequent general planning books, *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1936d) and *Town Planning* (Sharp, 1940), add relatively little about the form and need for the new development of villages. The first reiterates Sharp’s modernist leanings for new villages, anticipated to be numbered in thousands, and to be “frankly contemporary creations expressing their modern purpose with all the modern means that are available. There will be no romantic imitation in them of the unplanned villages of the past” (p113). *Town Planning* says very little specifically on villages but has a sharp critique against the insistence on using traditional materials for new countryside constructions – perhaps somewhat surprisingly so, given the quote from *Town and Countryside* above. A publication from a conference held in Spring 1942, when Sharp was seconded to the Ministry, but before work on the village design manual, is more revealing. Whilst Sharp’s subject was ostensibly New Towns he diverted his talk into discussing villages, stating, for example, “The new villages ... should be clean straightforward streets of honest modern buildings, grouped in a square or a series of squares or similar formations, round a simple green or gravelled space where maybe the telephone box may take the place of the village pump” (Sharp, 1942: 116).

### **The writing and publication of *The Anatomy of the Village***

It is worth reproducing at length Sharp’s own account of how he came to write *Anatomy*:

“The Planning section of the Ministry was growing ... and was anxious to publicise its own work. For this purpose it decided to have written and publish a series of handbooks, or manuals, covering the various aspects of town and country planning, the first of which, thought of as continuing an aspect of the work of the Scott Committee, was to deal with village planning.<sup>3</sup> I was assigned to write this, in the intervals of dealing with the files that all the time circulated about the department. So in the autumn of 1942 I wrote a 40,000 word essay on this, taking as examples the plans of some 25 villages scattered about the country (and mostly chosen from an examination of ordnance maps, rather than from actual knowledge of them), with about 40 striking photographs of these and other villages as illustrations. When the manuscript was finished, the usual Civil Service custom was followed, and it was circulated among the permanent civil servants of the department (the administrative people) for their comments. This took months: far longer than the actual writing had taken. Everyone wrote an exhaustive minute on the thing, often remarking in no very flattering terms on the style of writing (I remember one comment by an assistant secretary as being ‘not the kind of thing the department should be associated with’). Not one of these civil servants had the civility to walk along the corridor to my office to have a word with me

## INTRODUCTION

about the essay; and I was kept in complete ignorance for months about what was happening to it. At last I was told that the decision not to publish had been taken. After some time I requested to be myself allowed to find a commercial publisher for it, undertaking that the department would not be associated with it in any way. This was refused: I had, after all, written the thing in civil service time: and the work to which I had devoted some months and a good deal of both technical and general thought was to be consigned to a forgotten shelf in some basement to gather dust until it was finally committed to destruction in some furnace or other among a lot of other paper that could be regarded as waste. The thought of this did not delight me, and I continued the struggle to have my manuscript released even after I had left the civil service...”<sup>4</sup>

Sharp clearly underestimated civil service filing and retention systems, as the draft manual together with the memoranda written about it survive in the National Archive.<sup>5</sup> In a memorandum of 31 August 1942, H. L. G. Vincent, a distinguished career civil servant and head of the Reconstruction Group (Cherry and Penny, 1986), asked Sharp about the feasibility of such a manual, as a follow-on to the Scott Report. The Scott Committee and Report, to which Sharp had been one of the secretaries and, by his own account, principal drafter of the report,<sup>6</sup> was the government’s attempt to get to grips with a series of rural issues. It focused, on the one hand, on rural economic depression and poverty and, on the other, on the incursions of the town and city into the countryside and the preservation demands this had generated. There were a number of recommendations on villages including “New villages and extensions of

villages should be planned, and should as far as possible be of a compact and closely knit character: no attempt should be made to recreate in new villages the irregularity and ‘quaintness’ of old ones ...” (cited in Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, 1943: 105). Sharp replied to Vincent the next day with enthusiasm, sketching out roughly what the contents might be. Later in September he put the contents down more fully and estimated a word length of 10-15,000 words. The draft manual was circulated in January 1943 – although it had grown to well in excess of 30,000 words.

The contents page of the draft manual, *Village Design*, is remarkably close to the eventual book, *The Anatomy of the Village*. Indeed the text of many of the chapters is close to the eventual publication. The main exception is chapter 3 which is much longer than the subsequent book and has much detail on the technical requirements of a whole series of different building types. This chapter has a hesitancy of tone unusual for Sharp and much rewriting had clearly gone on – so much depended on yet to be determined government policy – and this section was subject to adverse comment when the draft manual was circulated. This chapter was radically shortened in the subsequent book. Perhaps more surprisingly, the intended illustrations changed significantly between the manual and the eventual book. The manual was to have been even more lavishly illustrated, with many more examples of villages. Much effort went into identifying suitable examples with assistance sought from Ministry Regional Offices.<sup>7</sup>

Sharp’s assessment of subsequent events is partial and downbeat but not wholly inaccurate. The memos written about the manual by the professional civil servants or the technical staff, such as Holford, often contain much praise for Sharp’s efforts. In

particular the quality of the prose and analysis in the early chapters was well regarded, although there was seen to be something of a disjunction between these and the more technical material and Sharp's very particular views about the desirability of the terraced house form and about gardens (see below) were not always shared. The bigger problem was more presentational; was this to be considered a technical manual or a personal essay? If the latter should it appear as a Ministry publication or something under Sharp's name with some sort of Ministry endorsement? How would it relate to subsequent publications? Who, ultimately, was the audience? And so on; with the resultant inertia leading to the manual being put into "cold storage".

Finally released by the Civil Service to seek private publication, Sharp was in correspondence with publishers in late 1943 and early 1944.<sup>8</sup> Initially it looked very much like Architectural Press might produce the book; Sharp wrote to Hubert de Cronin Hastings (owner and editor of Architectural Press and Review) in December 1943 and there is subsequent correspondence between Sharp and Nikolaus Pevsner (as commissioning editor). In May 1944 Pevsner confirmed that Architectural Press wished to publish the book, following an extended preview through a special issue of the *Architectural Review*. But relatively late in the day Sharp was in touch with other publishers in parallel. Faber and Faber rejected the text, but Penguin, publishers of Sharp's earlier *Town Planning*, expressed a wish to publish and an agreement was signed on 29 June for a book, "Village Planning". It is unclear why after extended but positive discussions with Architectural Press Sharp sought alternative publishers and ultimately preferred Penguin, but he was careful to write apologetically to Pevsner, attributing his choice to the wider circulation Penguin would receive and presenting *Anatomy* as a sister text to *Town*

*Planning*. Sharp's subsequent planning documents for Durham, Exeter, Oxford and Salisbury were published by Architectural Press as, rather later, was the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1950c).

The relationship with Penguin over the publication of *The Anatomy of the Village*, a title which seems to have become settled soon after the publication agreement was signed, was not entirely happy as the book took an age to see the light of day. After much nagging by Sharp, it was finally published nearly two years later, in May 1946.

### ***The Anatomy of the Village***

*The Anatomy of the Village* is an attractive and accessible book. Well illustrated with photographs and plans, Sharp's prose is concise and lucid. Whilst a significant part of the text was given over to an analysis of the qualities of the English village, that this was no guidebook or academic treatise is evident from the Prefatory Note. This quotes the Scott Report, which anticipated considerable post-war development in the countryside and that such development should be attached to existing villages. The aim of *The Anatomy of the Village* was to set out the main principles of village planning, especially in relation to physical design. The subsequent text is divided into two chapters dealing with 'past and present' and three with 'future'.

Chapter 1, the English Tradition, sets out first to analyse the English tradition of village building. The early part of this chapter conveys much of the essence of Sharp's values towards place and planning more widely. He saw the English tradition as both informal and orderly, as combining the utilitarian with beauty or at least charm and pleasantness and he saw a precious tradition

## INTRODUCTION

but in need of evolution; new village building should not simulate the old. The chapter then sets out a broad typology of village plan forms, revising and developing his work in *Town and Countryside*. His five categories from that work were here reduced to two. First, and most common, Sharp identifies the road-side village, sited at a crossing or on a single road. Critical to village character was that the road was rarely dead straight; thus the road became visually contained and formed a place. The second major plan form suggested is the squared village, though in practice the shape of the enclosure may take many different patterns – this effectively amalgamated four of the village types from *Town and Countryside*. Sharp considered that this type often had a more immediate visual appeal as the plan form was more readily appreciated. However, the principle of visual containment was shared with the road-side village, with roads generally staggered and not allowing any direct vista through. Two other less common forms of villages are added to the typology: seaside and planned villages. Seaside villages are characterised as often having a tortuous and huddling form for shelter against the elements. Planned villages are usually associated with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, whilst having a degree of formality, to be usually relatively simple in plan and comfortably fitting within the English village tradition. For Sharp, simplicity is a key factor in the distillation of village character and a distinguishing feature from small towns where a greater degree of complexity of plan form is held to exist. Finally, in the English Tradition, village community is again held to be characterised by simplicity of form, of an integrated, perhaps semi-feudal, social system.

Chapter 2 considers the Village Today. Sharp set out a position that the ability of the village to naturally evolve and absorb changes had been lost in (then) recent times. Social structures based around

the rural economy had been disrupted by second-home owners and retirees. Physical form had been weakened by ribbon development and so on. New building in responding to the motor car and a demand for privacy had lost compactness. Understanding of village form and character had died, evident also in crude ‘environmental improvements’ by, for example, kerbing village greens. The key decision, for Sharp, was whether to create a whole new form for village planning (for example, suburban or truly urban) or whether to take something of the traditional essence of village form and develop from it in a contemporary manner.

The next part of the book sets out to consider the future, starting in chapter 3 with social requirements. Though villages might vary in plan form Sharp made no such distinction in terms of social form. Villages should have a diversity of occupations and social classes – he was critical of (then) recent land settlement developments on this as well as design grounds. The one future exception to this he anticipated was ‘holiday villages’. Sharp considered that the minimum size of a village should be related to its ability to support some basic social facilities and in particular a nursery and junior school (up to age 11). From this he extrapolated a minimum village size of about 570 catchment (including outlying farms) or about 400–450 village inhabitants, whilst acknowledging that declining fertility rates would cause this figure to rise. Towards the end of the chapter Sharp drifts into discussing design issues. Perhaps the most notable argument he advanced was that houses should have good-sized back gardens, for privacy, but at the front gardens were unnecessary – he considered a traditional narrow unfenced garden strip, or ‘flower strip’, better in functional and aesthetic terms.

Chapter 4 goes on to more directly discuss plan forms for the future village or extensions to existing villages. First, Sharp

considered whether detached, semi-detached or street houses (terraces) generally comprised the most desirable form of development and unsurprisingly, given his previous writings where he strongly advocated this form, concluded street houses to be optimum. Generally these should be straight but might sometimes be gently curved, perhaps following a topographical feature. In terms of plan forms for new villages he expressed a clear preference for the 'squared' type, with all its potential for diversity, such that 'in the future, as in the past, every village can be different from every other village, and that every village may be an individual place' (p63). To this argument Sharp identified potential dangers; the danger of producing an over-elaborate and over-sophisticated pattern, the danger of producing a completely rounded finite design, inhibiting organic change and the danger of designing over-large public amenity spaces. Spaces, he argued, should be closed for climatic, pictorial and psychological reasons (as a contrast to open country views).

The final chapter considers issues of building and planting character in the new or extended village. The chapter starts with a lengthy (and probably self-) quote from the Scott Report which argues against over-prescription in the use of materials in countryside building; quality and appropriate colour were considered important, use of traditional and local materials not, for 'the future of architecture does not lie in the easy direction of mere preservation and narrow conservatism' (p66). Though new buildings should not imitate those existing, Sharp argued for good neighbourliness, through such factors as height, street line, character and colour of materials. Good neighbourliness did not mean timid conservatism. One specific technique in achieving liveliness, Sharp suggested, was colourwash. Planting should generally be informal and simple with, for example, a few substantial trees –

for the 'simple robust utility' (p72) of the English village. The final sentence states 'And the essential basis of all village character is true simplicity' (p72).

### After Publication

*Anatomy* was extensively reviewed. Sharp's own cuttings book<sup>9</sup> contains 29 reviews from 1946 and early 1947, ranging from brief notes to lengthy descriptions in publications as diverse as the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Lady*, *The Architects' Journal* and *New Statesman and Nation*. There were occasional mixed or critical reviews, such as in *Official Architect* (October 1946) or by Geoffrey Clarke in *Town and Country Planning*, who was critical of Sharp for over-analysing and dissecting village character. However, most reviews were positive; some glowing. Clough Williams-Ellis, writing in the *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (September–October 1946), stated,

"I doubt whether the 72 pages could possibly have been used to better or more vivid purpose by anyone concerned to present an analysis of the essentials of our infinitely various villages and to show how so socially admirable a structure can be acceptably adapted to modern conditions that have certainly yet to find their apt expression."

In 1951 Sharp received a very appreciative letter from Arthur Holden. Holden had discussed *Anatomy* with Frank Lloyd Wright and Wright had apparently requested a copy. Sharp sent a copy to Wright and, also on the suggestion of Holden, a copy to Arthur Morgan, formerly of the Tennessee Valley Authority. After an initial burst of sales of 20,000 in 1946 *Anatomy* continued

## INTRODUCTION

to sell respectably until it went out of publication around 1971, selling nearly 50,000 copies in total. In 1973 a company called the EP Group were interested in a limited edition reprint or possibly a revised second edition. Sharp thought a second edition unrealistic as he considered *Anatomy* quite dated by this time and favoured a reprint as a classic text, although in the end these plans came to naught.<sup>10</sup>

Sharp was subsequently to write further about village design in various publications, such as an article for the *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (Sharp, 1949c) and as a contributing author to a Ministry of Housing and Local Government manual on *Design in Town and Village* which belatedly emerged (Sharp, 1953). *Design in Town and Village* contains three chapters; Sharp on village design, Frederick Gibberd on residential areas and William Holford on design in city centres. For his contribution Sharp specifically states that his chapter was based upon *The Anatomy of the Village* and the *TPI Journal* article. However, in actuality it was an almost entirely new text, written in a surprisingly personal tone – Sharp makes more use of the personal pronoun and is more openly opinionated than in his earlier village writings – somewhat ironically as this was, finally, the official publication. The essay also contains many new illustrations and more worked examples of how villages should, and should not, be extended. Alongside these new plans one new interesting photographic illustration was of new rural housing by Tayler and Green. These modernist terraces are commended and work by Tayler and Green has subsequently been subject to critical appreciation and some listed (Harwood and Powers, 1998; Harwood, 2003). Sharp also included reference to his own designs for new villages for the Forestry Commission, although the construction of new villages was by then regarded as being uncommon.

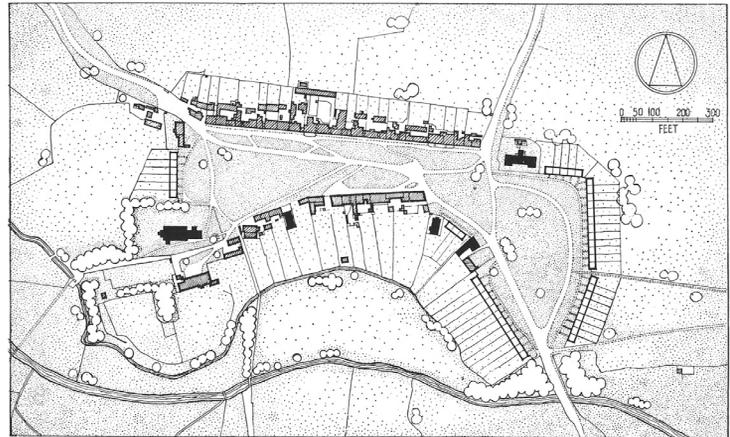
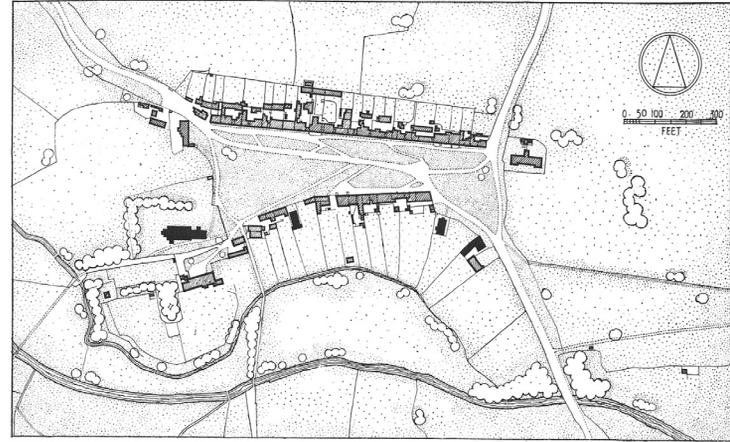


Figure 1 One of Sharp's demonstration plans for extending a village (from *Design in Town and Village*).

## Creating Villages

Sharp's best chance to design the new villages he often wrote about came in 1946 with a commission from the Forestry Commission. He was engaged to masterplan eight villages (ten had initially been suggested) for its forestry workers in the remote and wild country of north-west Northumberland, each of which would house between 350 and 500 people. The forests of Kielder, Wark and Redesdale were undergoing massive expansion and it was anticipated a large workforce would be needed close by. Sharp and others argued that rather than scattered small groups of houses, which had been the policy of the Forestry Commission up until that time, houses should be grouped into villages of sufficient size to sustain community facilities. This was to be a phased work; the Commission decided they immediately needed 150 houses which Sharp recommended be divided between three sites: Kielder (60 houses), Byrness (50 houses) and Stonehaugh (45 houses); though these settlements would be incomplete he considered that they would be of sufficient size to give some community and village character.

There were already a number of buildings at Kielder. Most significant was Kielder Castle, historically a hunting lodge of the Duke of Northumberland, and various houses, some built in the inter-war period for the Forestry Commission. Though Kielder was an obvious place to develop a village, at the outset it was seen to be challenging because of the scattered and disparate existing buildings. There was a debate over whether village extension should take place around Kielder station on the Border and Counties Railway, but Sharp was firmly of the view that it should be on the virgin site of Butterhaugh. Byrness and Stonehaugh were new sites. Comb was to have been the fourth village, again a virgin site, with a linear plan running along an isolated ridge in the Tasset Valley.

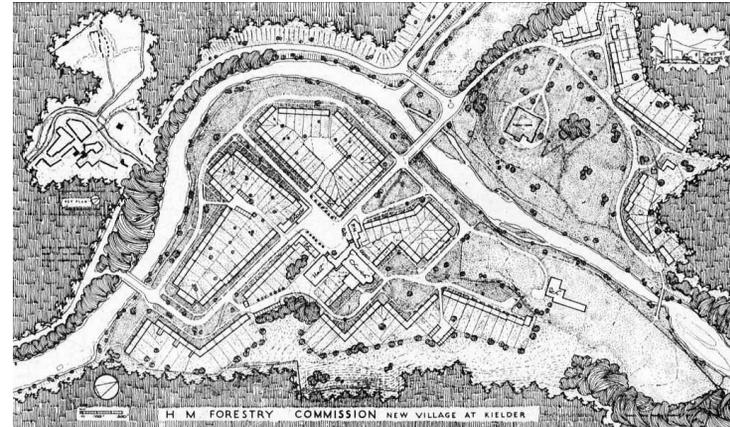


Figure 2a Sharp's plan for a village for the Forestry Commission at Kielder, Northumberland (Sharp Papers, Special Collections, Newcastle University Library).

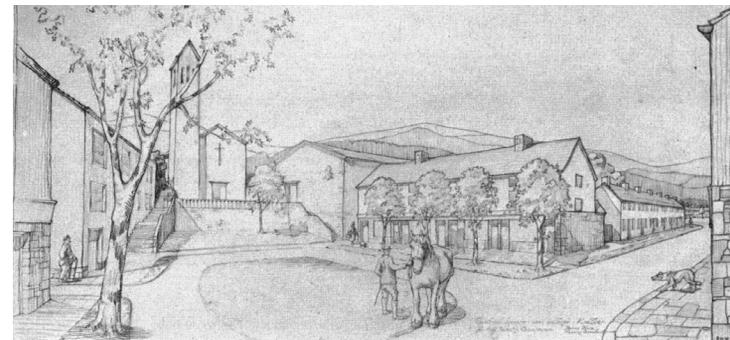


Figure 2b Sketch of village at Kielder (Sharp Papers, Special Collections, Newcastle University Library).

## INTRODUCTION

In undertaking his designs Sharp was mindful of his own writings in *Anatomy* and his conclusion that most English villages, especially in the north, have a strongly nucleated form. At the same time he strove for a reasonably organic and non-formal plan, without axial treatments and so on; a kind of ordered informality. Sharp planned terraces with occasional semi-formal spaces and focus on community buildings. Building in stone was not possible so he proposed white or near-white colourwash as a finish. In Sharp's view the frontage of properties was essentially part of the public domain. The modest front gardens in front of houses were to be left open and grassed as part of the wider composition. Private space was to be found in the long rear gardens.



Figure 3 Photograph of the part of Kielder village today (author).

Like so many of Sharp's commissions things were not to work out as he wished; indeed in *Chronicles of Failure*, he goes as far as saying that the Forestry Commission was the worst client he had. Though he was not architect for the houses built he was not unhappy with these. Rather, the problem was that the works were not continued, as the mechanisation of forestry work and improving communications meant that the scale of workforce estimated to be needed on site dropped rapidly. Kielder and Stonehaugh were only a quarter to a third completed – Byrness rather more so and Sharp felt it rather more successful as the part that was constructed was more self-contained – the remainder of the village would have been the other side of a stream. Furthermore, the Forestry Commission refused to provide the necessary community buildings including basic needs such as a shop or pub. Only after much pressure did they provide £5 or so per village for amenity tree planting!<sup>11</sup>

Sharp was subsequently given one more chance at village design, late in his professional career. Glamorgan County Council commissioned Sharp to produce a plan for a new seaside village resort linking the existing settlements of Port Eynon and Horton on the Gower Peninsula in South Wales. The Council were concerned about the impact of the proliferation of caravan parks. As Sharp describes it “the site ... was a charming bay, bordered in front by a curve of golden sands and inshore by a belt of sandhills under a ring of cliffs”.

“I designed what I believed would make an attractive village, a little Regency perhaps in concept; a cluster of small streets and a square with a little promenade at one end of a large crescent of houses echoing the line of the bay and set back beyond the sand dunes at an elevation above them to give a view of the sea.”

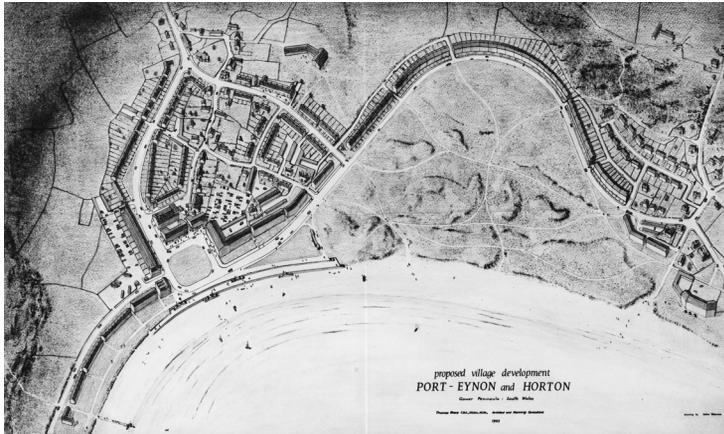


Figure 4 Plan of proposed village at Port Eynon, Gower peninsula (Sharp Papers, Special Collections, Newcastle University Library).

The plan was delivered in March 1964 and Sharp stated “if it had been successfully carried out I would probably have regarded it as the crown of my professional career”, but it was not to be, the proposals blocked by local interests. That Sharp still had some authority on matters of village design is evident by his use as the judge for a village design competition as part of the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales at about the same time.<sup>12</sup>

### Reading *Anatomy* Today

Sharp’s *Town Planning*, which captured the spirit of the wish to create a better post-war world and was available as a cheap Penguin, sold in the order of 250,000, which must make it one of

the best selling books about planning of all time. Whilst the sales for *Anatomy* were not as vast, it sold extremely well, with about 50,000 copies sold in total. And unlike *Town Planning*, *Anatomy* continued to sell well for many years, selling up to 1,000 copies a year until finally going out of print in the early 1970s. This suggests something of enduring relevance in *Anatomy* that attracted sales long after the conditions in which it had been written had receded into history.

*Anatomy* was written at a time of intense interest in the past, present and future of the countryside. In the inter-war period a small publishing industry had developed celebrating and romanticising the qualities of the English countryside, through publishers such as Batsford and the Shell Guides, and a strong rural conservation movement developed; all this was linked to concerns about the future and the urbanisation and suburbanisation of rural areas. It is not surprising, therefore, that *Anatomy* sits alongside many other books about the village and countryside at this time. Amongst many these include *The Changing Village* by F. G. Thomas (1939), *Your Village and Mine* by C. H. Gardiner (1944) and *The Untutored Townsman’s Invasion of the Countryside* by C. E. M. Joad (1945). But these are all very different books from *Anatomy*. Generally rather more nostalgic about the countryside and the loss of tradition, they tend to be essays on social change in villages with little about physical form. And whilst they might look to the future they lack Sharp’s clear prescriptions. They also lack all but minimal illustration, such a strong feature of *Anatomy*.

*Anatomy* remained influential and its themes reoccurred and were elaborated in subsequent texts of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, sometimes with, sometimes without direct acknowledgement to Sharp (see e.g. Bonham-Carter, 1952, Mauger, 1959, Brett, 1965, Green, 1971, Thorburn, 1971, Cloke, 1983). Gordon

## INTRODUCTION

Cherry and Alan Rogers, writing in the 1990s, based much of their discussion of village design on Scott and Sharp before concluding “In large part, village and small town extensions have failed to live up to earlier aspirations. Scott and Sharp have been confounded and there has been no successor prophet” (Cherry and Rogers, 1996: 189). There is clearly much that has dated in *The Anatomy of the Village*. For example, some of Sharp’s descriptions of village facilities seem somewhat fantastical today (as many villages lack any such facilities). On the one hand, it was apparently then common for a village of 300 residents or so to have eight or nine shops and three or four inns. He considered two general stores, a baker’s, a butcher’s, a cobbler’s and perhaps a saddler’s as minimum provision. On the other hand, he considered future facilities might include communal refrigeration for local produce or a communal heating station and laundry. But in other respects the book seems to have a continuing resonance. The analysis of village design remains fresh and lucid and we can see ideas of enduring relevance about, for example, the nucleated village or concepts such as character that he cogently argued for. We can also see developing ideas of townscape – Sharp himself traced his ideas of townscape to the writing of *Anatomy*.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, looked at another way we can see this all as a particular ideological formulation. The nucleated village became the expression of a particular set of values, justified with recourse to historical arguments, technical arguments (efficient service delivery) and a particular aesthetic reading of the English countryside and village. This was allied with a particular idea of a better future, involving an ordered, planned approach. For above all, Sharp believed in planning; Sharp’s vision is not one of nostalgic retreat but of a rather austere modernity. Old villages are beautiful and instructive but it was considered neither desirable

nor possible to imitate them. Tradition was important but was only meaningful if it could develop and change, rather than being fossilised by a romantic view of the past.

In *Landscape and Englishness* David Matless places Sharp firmly in the professional movement of “planner-preservationists” he identifies. This was a movement that sought to

“ally preservation and progress, tradition and modernity, city and country in order to define Englishness as orderly and modern ... This movement posited the view that modern expertise should command cultural and political authority ...” (Matless, 1998: 14).

So this was an approach that sought to manage the environment through modern planning, but not an unfettered modernism. The aesthetic and human values of traditional landscapes were to be understood and have a place in this new, ordered world.

In his essay ‘Doing the English Village’, Matless (1994) more directly considers *Anatomy* alongside other post-war writings about the village and countryside. He discusses Sharp’s visual psychology concerned with “grouping, climax, harmony and order; nucleated places of modern simplicity, minimally decorated, clearly defined and never ‘fussy’” (p16). But Matless’s main use of Sharp is in contrast to other writings. For example, *In the Making of the English Landscape* W. G. Hoskins (1955) shared many of Sharp’s complaints about rural and village change but for Hoskins, in contrast to Sharp, according to Matless, this was part of an anti-modern lament, whereby the traditional village becomes a psychological refuge from the modern world.

Thomas Sharp does seem to fall into the planner-preservationist category Matless identifies, though he might well have argued the

point himself, especially the preservationist label. He certainly believed in planning and like perhaps no other writer of his generation he brought an incisive analysis to the character of the traditional British village with fine illustration and prose that was often lyrical. As Kathy Stansfield effectively identified in the title of her dissertation, the first and for a long time the only serious analysis of Sharp and his work, “poet-planner” would perhaps be a better label than “planner-preservationist” (Stansfield, 1974, see also Stansfield, 1981). And there can be no doubt that *The Anatomy of the Village* and his work on villages more broadly was of enormous importance to Sharp. As he said in his autobiography,

*I felt that what would most satisfy me in life, what would most justify my ever having lived, what would crown a whole life's work, would be to build a good new village and to write a good, even if very short, lyrical poem.*<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Those for Todmorden, Taunton, Salisbury, Chichester, Stockport and Minehead were published (Sharp, 1946b, 1948b, 1949a, 1949b, 1950a, 1950b). Sharp wrote King's Lynn up in the *Architects' Journal* (Sharp, 1948c). A layout plan for Kensington survives in the Local Studies Department, Kensington Central Library (Ref. Local 711-509 Nor).
- 2 This quote is from Sharp's unpublished autobiography, *Chronicles of Failure* (p254). GB186 THS60. See note on Sharp archive.
- 3 Whilst *Village Design* is generally talked about as the first of a series of manuals, Sharp had already done some work earlier in 1942 on a manual for the civic design of central areas which survives in the National Archive HLG 71/779.
- 4 *Chronicles of Failure* pp219-220.

- 5 National Archive HLG 71/779.
- 6 See *Chronicles of Failure*.
- 7 See HLG 71/779.
- 8 Sharp archive THS17.1.
- 9 Sharp archive THS39.
- 10 All correspondence etc. referred to in this paragraph can be found in Sharp archive THS17.
- 11 See Sharp archive THS15 for material on the commission from the Forestry Commission.
- 12 Quotes about Port Eynon are from *Chronicles of Failure* pp264-265. See also Sharp archive THS13.
- 13 See *Chronicles of Failure*.
- 14 *Chronicles of Failure*, p247.

## Note on Thomas Sharp Archive and Town and Townscape project.

The principal repository of Sharp's papers is Special Collections, Robinson Library, Newcastle University. A wealth of material on Sharp including a fully searchable catalogue can be found at <http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/sharp/#>. The collection was catalogued and conserved with the benefit of a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, as part of the project “Town and Townscape: The Work and Life of Thomas Sharp”. The project also led to a series of publications related to Sharp. See especially a series of contributions to *Planning Perspectives in 2008 and 2009* (Vol 23, issue 3 and 4, Vol 24, issue 1).

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*THE ANATOMY OF THE  
VILLAGE*

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*by Thomas Sharp*



PENGUIN BOOKS, HARMONDSWORTH, MIDDLESEX, 1946

# PAST AND PRESENT

## CHAPTER I. *The English Tradition*

1. The place of precedent
2. Village siting and plan-form
3. Village character
4. The Village community

*First published May, 1946*

## CHAPTER II. *The Village To-day*

# FUTURE

## CHAPTER III. *Social Requirements in Villages*

1. Types of village
2. Factors in location and siting
3. Factors governing size
4. Types of village buildings
5. Open spaces

## CHAPTER IV. *Village Plan Forms*

1. Arrangement of buildings
2. Psychology of plan shapes

## CHAPTER V. *Building and Planting*

1. Architectural character
2. Planting and furnishing

*Made and printed in Great Britain  
for Penguin Books Limited  
by C. Nicholls & Co. Ltd., Manchester*

## PREFATORY NOTE

*The Report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas,\* published in August 1942, contains the following passages.*

“Whether or not there is to be any considerable influx of industry and industrial population into country areas, there must inevitably be a good deal of new building to replace the old outworn cottages, farm houses and farm buildings which are now such common features in most districts, as well as much completely new housing. It is inevitable, too, that there will be new week-end cottages for townsmen, new hostels, holiday camp schools and so on: new petrol-filling stations, garages, restaurants and hotels for the traveller and especially new bungalows for the pensioner and the retired. . . .

We have suggested that the farmworker and his family have far more chance of a happy social life and better opportunities of developing as self-reliant and responsible members of society if they live in a village. This is true of all dwellers in the countryside. It applies to the week-ending townsman, and to those people who now go to live in ribbon developments, as well as to genuine countrymen. Though not all country dwellers can live in groups, we consider that planning schemes should be so designed as to direct all new settlers into country towns and villages except where they can advance some decisive reason why they should be housed in the open countryside.

Every new village and every extension to an old village, as well as every new town, should be considered and planned as a unit and not as a collection of separate buildings. We consider that there is great need for the clear application of planning principles to village building. Village planning is by no means an easy art: it is full of subtleties concerning scale and character.”

\* Cmd. 6378: published by His Majesty's Stationery Office. Price 2s.—Also known as the Scott Report.

This essay is an attempt to set out in a brief and direct form some of the main principles of village planning. It makes no pretence at covering all the problems that are involved. Those are many and varied. They range from a whole host of economic-social problems, such as those concerned with the revival of agriculture and rural industries, down to problems of detail, such as occur in the design of the internal arrangements of the houses which constitute the villages. All that is attempted in these pages is a consideration of some of the principles which should govern *physical* design in the building of new villages and in extending or rebuilding old ones.

What exactly is meant by a village? It is not easy to say. At one extreme the village shades almost imperceptibly into the small town and at the other into the hamlet, and it is very difficult to define the points, whether they be of size or character, at which this happens. Size in itself is an unsatisfactory guide. But the matter of character is too complex and subtle to analyse here and now. So, unsatisfactory though it may be, size alone will have to serve for a rough definition for the time being.

The Scott Committee defined “any compact grouping of over 1,500 people” as being a town. That seems to be about right. At the other end of the scale it is probably reasonable to say that any grouping of less than about twenty houses makes a hamlet rather than a village. A village, then, in the sense in which it will be spoken of in the pages, is a compact grouping of anywhere between 100 and 1,500 people.

Any selection of historical village plans by way of example is, of course, bound to be largely personal. It is no easy matter to select, from the eight or ten thousand villages that are said to exist in England alone, the two or three dozen examples which are all that it is possible to illustrate and briefly examine in a short study like this. Readers will no doubt have examples of their own in mind, and they may very well be better than some of those that are used here.

To  
MARY MAY

*ACKNOWLEDGMENTS*

For permission to reproduce the photographs appearing in the text, acknowledgment is made to the following sources—*London Passenger Transport Board*, page 48; *Country Life*, page 49; *J. Dixon-Scott*, page 8; *Herbert Felton*, pages 35 and 41; *Architectural Review*, pages 46 and 51; *Maurice Beck*,

*F.R.P.S.*, page 57; *The British Council*, pages 16, 27, 29, 31 (bottom), 32, 55, 56, 62, 64 and 70; *Will F. Taylor*, pages 13, 24, 28, 30, 31 (top), 43, 44, 59, 60, 67, 68 and 71. The sketches on the cover and title-page were drawn by Hugh Casson and the layout is by Jasmine Gordon-Forbes.

# PAST AND PRESENT

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## CHAPTER I: *The English Tradition*

### *I: THE PLACE OF PRECEDENT*

THE English village has long occupied a central place in the affections and pride of our own people, countrymen and townsmen alike. It has been accepted too, by visitors from abroad as a characteristic and attractive product of the English way of life. Informal, it is nevertheless orderly. Utilitarian, it often possesses a remarkable beauty; or, if it does not have that, it generally has at least a charm and a pleasantness and a *whole* character. A centre of contemporary life, it is also a record of long history. The work of man, it is also the creation of time.

This affection for our old villages, and our pride in them, is natural and praiseworthy. We shall be dull and improvident, unworthy of our heritage, if we do not take every care to conserve their traditional harmonies. But affection pride and memory are only good when they are kept in a healthy balance. Over-indulged they become morbid. We English are often accused of being over-interested in the things of the past, over-indulgent to tradition. If this is true anywhere, it is true of our attitude to our countryside, and especially to the villages that are scattered about it.

Respect for tradition is an excellent thing, provided

that the tradition respected is a genuine living tradition. A true tradition is subject to growth and development. It is not a pool which has welled-up at some particular moment of time, and has remained stagnant ever since. It is a flowing eddying widening stream that is continually refreshed by new tributaries, a stream whose direction is subject to change by new currents created by new conditions.

The tradition that is invoked to restrict activity in the countryside to the kind of activity which was common in the past is a false tradition. Any suggestion that new villages and extensions to existing villages should exactly follow the forms which often gave our old villages such beauty and pleasantness could only arise from a misconception of true tradition. Any suggestion that new village building should *imitate* that old kind of building; any attempt to copy, in a new place which will be built in six months, the irregularities that occurred because of slow growth over a similar number of centuries; any hope to achieve, by planning, the exact effects which have resulted solely from a lack of planning; these would not only illustrate a sense of tradition gone morbid, they would also be doomed to failure from the beginning.

We are at a time of great new social requirements

in the countryside, and of great technical developments. New requirements cannot be met by rigid adherence to traditions that arose out of conditions in which they were unknown. We must work out new forms to meet new needs and to use new possibilities. But this does not mean that we should ignore the achievements of the past. We should be foolish to do so. A study of the principles of design, whether they were conscious or unconscious, which have given our English villages their beauty, their charm and their character, may well elucidate principles that will be useful in our new building. So, before attempting to make suggestions for guidance in future village building, it may be profitable to attempt a brief analysis of some of the features which make our present villages so attractive.

## 2: SITING AND PLAN-FORM

### (a) Generally

We need not bother over-much about questions of village siting in the past. Many of the conditions which determined that siting either do not exist or are of no great importance to-day. Thus the necessity for defence, which in the past was frequently a determining factor in the siting of a settlement, is no longer a consideration of importance, though the plan-forms that resulted from that necessity were often of a kind which gave the village added possibilities of beauty and convenience. Nor should the old determining factor of being near a spring or a stream be of decisive importance in the future, if the improvement of the rural water supply goes

forward, as the Scott Committee, along with all progressive opinion, has recently advocated. Other siting factors, like being by or near a ford or a bridge, will continue to have importance where a natural barrier to communication exists. So will that which, in lowland areas, led to the building of villages on small knolls away from the danger of floods. On the other hand the determining factors which led to the springing up of villages at the crossing of roads have now been changed, and convenience quietness and safety demand a situation somewhat aside from, rather than actually *at*, those places.

The situation of a village (as well, of course, as its function) was an important determining influence on plan-form in the past—as it must be in the future. A situation on a knoll might mean that, on the limited amount of high ground which was available, the buildings had to crowd together. At a crossing of roads, the plan of the village would be determined by the angles at which the roads met; and the existence of a small common or green, of a pond or a pound or other feature, at or near the crossing, would again modify the plan. And so on, and so on. And since there is an infinite variety in sites and a wide variety of functions, since original siting factors have often become unimportant in subsequent additions and original functions have changed, and since nearly all villages have grown naturally and for the most part slowly, there is to-day no set pattern to which village plans conform. In the ten thousand villages and hamlets of England there are ten thousand variations. Shape size and character vary greatly. No village is quite like any other. And this, of course, is the glory of it, that every village is an individual place.

Nevertheless, in all this wide variety two main types of village can be identified. There is the 'roadside' type, and there is what may be called (for want of a better name) the 'squared' type, though the 'square' may be entirely irregular, and, indeed, triangular or of almost any other shape. And while there are many villages which are pure examples of one type or the other, there are also, of course, thousands which are a bit of each.

### (b) *The Roadside Village*

The roadside village is much more common than the squared village. It consists merely of a string of buildings—houses, shops, inns and others—standing side by side more or less indiscriminately. Generally it is situated at a junction of roads, and stretches a little way down each of them; or it may be a simple string along a single road. The road may, perhaps, widen a little within the village to include a narrow strip of green or an additional paved area where a market stall or two, or a few carts, may stand. When the central space extends to a substantial width it may be hard to say whether the village belongs to the roadside or to the squared type.

The roadside village is in some respects the prototype of that ribbon form of building which has been so much deplored, and at the same time so extensively developed, during the last two or three decades. But it is so with a marked difference. The old roadside village begins definitely and ends definitely: and it is comparatively short in length. It was bound



WEST WYCOMBE, Buckinghamshire (pop. 500). A roadside village of the simplest form. Buildings of irregular heights and irregular frontages facing straight on to the road with no gardens intervening. Slight bend about the middle of the street contains the views inwards; while the forking of the roads to the west, and the curving of the road to the east, contain the views outwards. Brick, half-timber, weather-boarding, plaster, colour wash; tiled roofs.

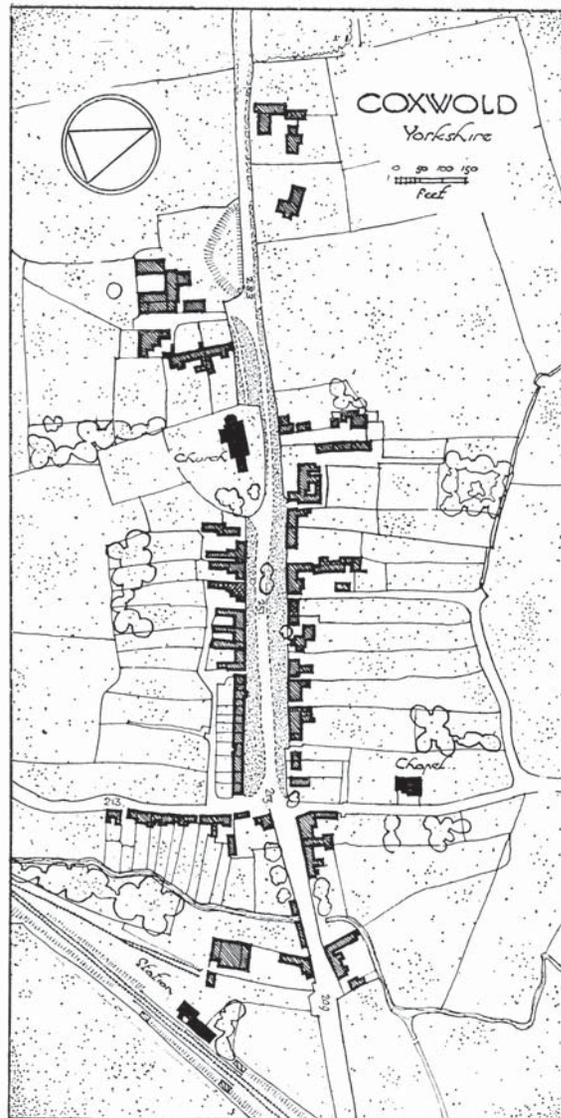


to be, because the country about it could support only a fixed number of people; and its inhabitants were essentially people of the countryside. So not only was the length of each village more or less fixed, there was necessarily a considerable interval between one village and the next.

The old roadside villages get most of their character from their buildings. But they may get a good deal, too, from subtleties which occur in their apparently elementary form. The village which merely borders a straight road so that, approaching the village, one can see through it and out beyond it before one actually gets into it, starts with a handicap which not even the most beautiful buildings can overcome. Fortunately, this does not often happen in English villages. Whether the buildings were built to line an already crooked road, or whether the road was made crooked by having to avoid curiously situated buildings, it is difficult to say; but, whichever way it was, most English roadside villages seem somehow to *contain* their road rather than to be merely a string of buildings pushed aside by it. The road may curve gently away from the straight or it may take a sharp and sudden turn; in either case the village is thereby transformed into a *place*; a place with a way in and a way out and not merely an incident on the roadside.

*WEST WYCOMBE (opposite). The slight curve in the street blocks the outward view.*

*COXWOLD, Yorkshire (200). At the junction of five roads. The main street, climbing up from a small stream with wide sloping green verges, is dominated by the church at the top of the rise. Views in and out are all closed. A few narrow fenced front gardens, but houses mostly on the street line. Stone; roofs of stone-slabs and pantiles.*

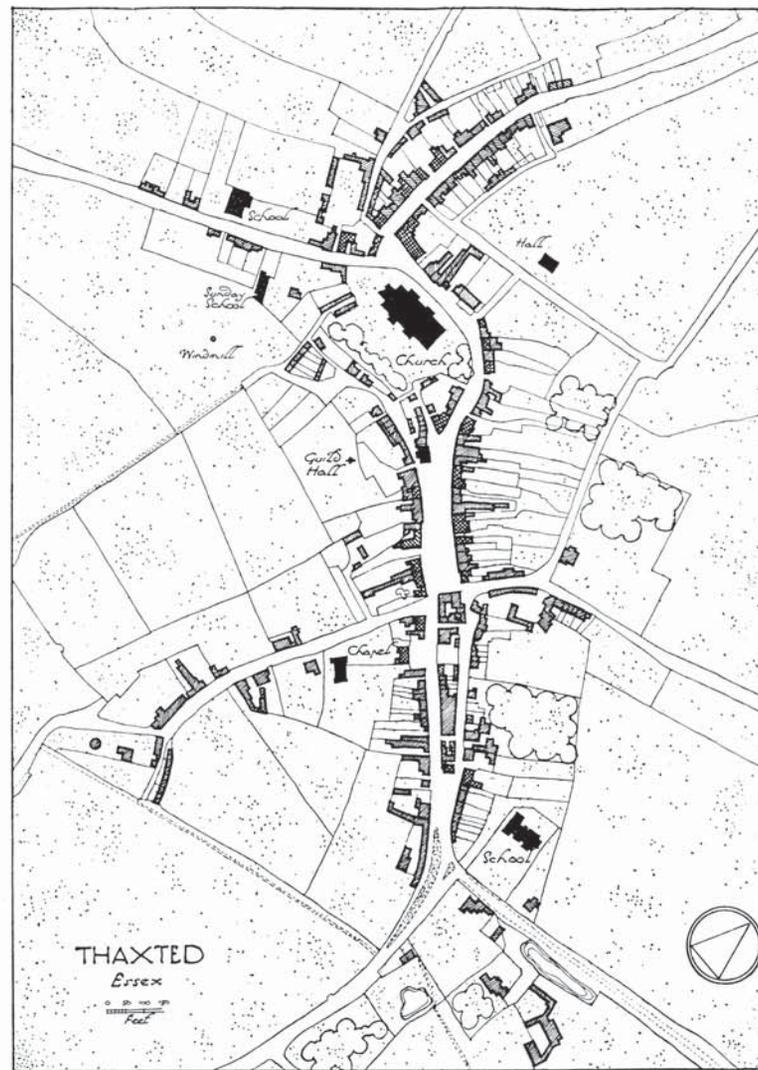


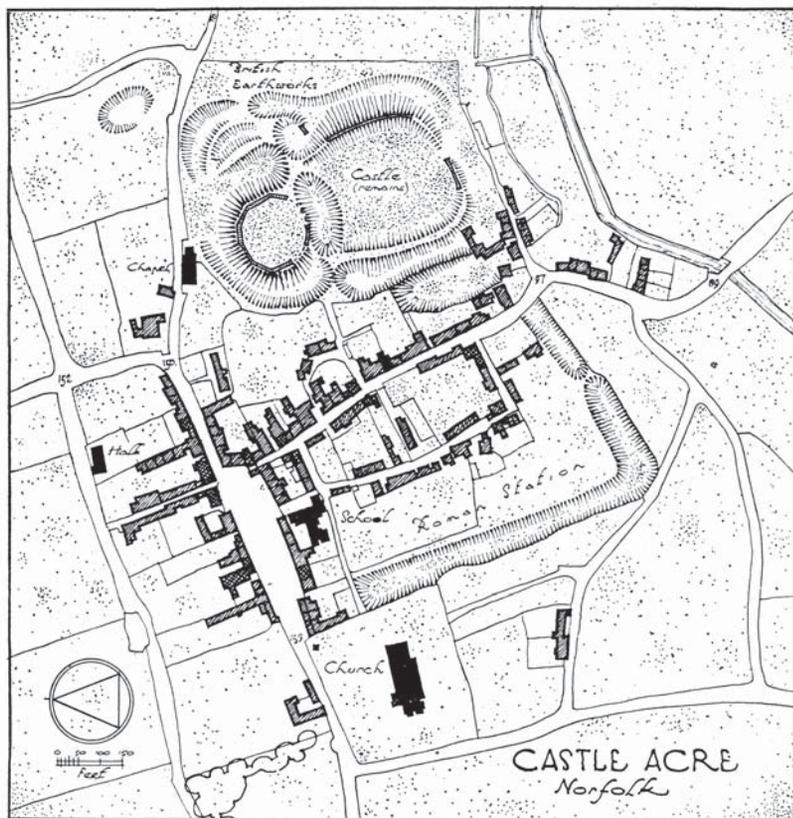
Character and form are also got from other conditions. Almost always the situation of the chief buildings, and especially of the church, creates some individual effect. The church may stand at the turn of the road; or may be right at the head of the village street, dominating it. A manor house, a group of almshouses, a tithe barn, a mill, an inn, a couple of shops, may by accident or design be so situated as to give an emphasis, a 'punctuation', to one or more points in the plan. A pond in the middle of the village—a bridged stream at one of the entrances—a fine group of trees well placed—these and other features like them may also serve to create centres of interest. But nearly always the chief factor which contributes to whatever attractiveness a roadside village may have is less its form or plan *as a whole* than the character of its buildings, and the varied incidental forms created by individual buildings or small groups of buildings in the irregularity of their relationships with each other. In short, informality is the essential quality in the character of most natural-growing roadside villages.

### (c) *The Squared Village*

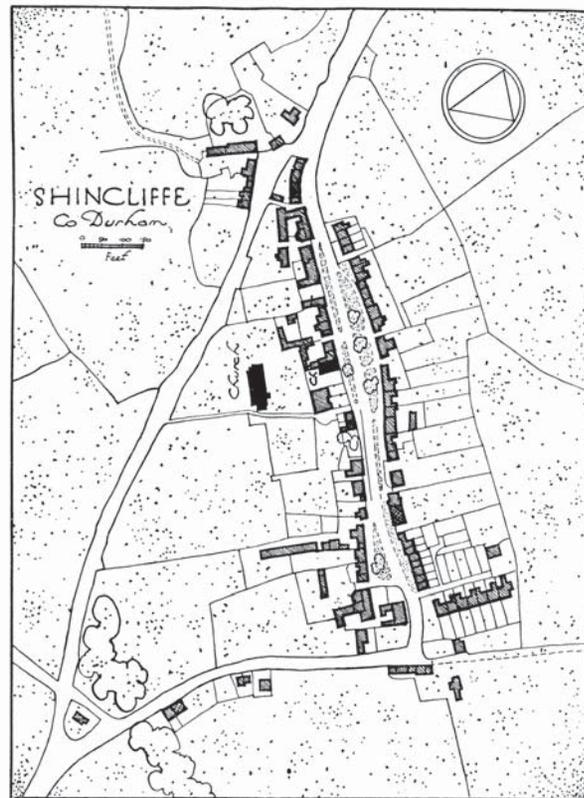
Though the general character of the natural-grown squared village may be as informal as that of the roadside village, since its buildings generally have as little studied relationship to each other, its simpler

*THAXTED, Essex (1,200). Nearly a small town; and, with the widening of the road before the Guildhall, approximating to the squared roadside plan-form. The tall spire of the great church dominates the place. All views are stopped. No front gardens. Brick, stone, colour wash; roofs tiled or slated.*





Above : CASTLE ACRE, Norfolk (600). On a site crammed with history, a considerable part of the village being within the site of a Roman station and on Roman street-lines ; immediately adjoining this there are extensive British earthworks, and remains of mediaeval castle upon them ; on the other side there are the ruins of a priory. The rectangular square at the north end contrasts with the narrowness of the streets generally. One street enters the square through a small mediaeval gateway. All buildings crowd together ; no front gardens, in fact few gardens of any kind within village, though considerable allotments outside. All views stopped. Flint, stone, brick, stucco ; roofs of pantiles and slates.

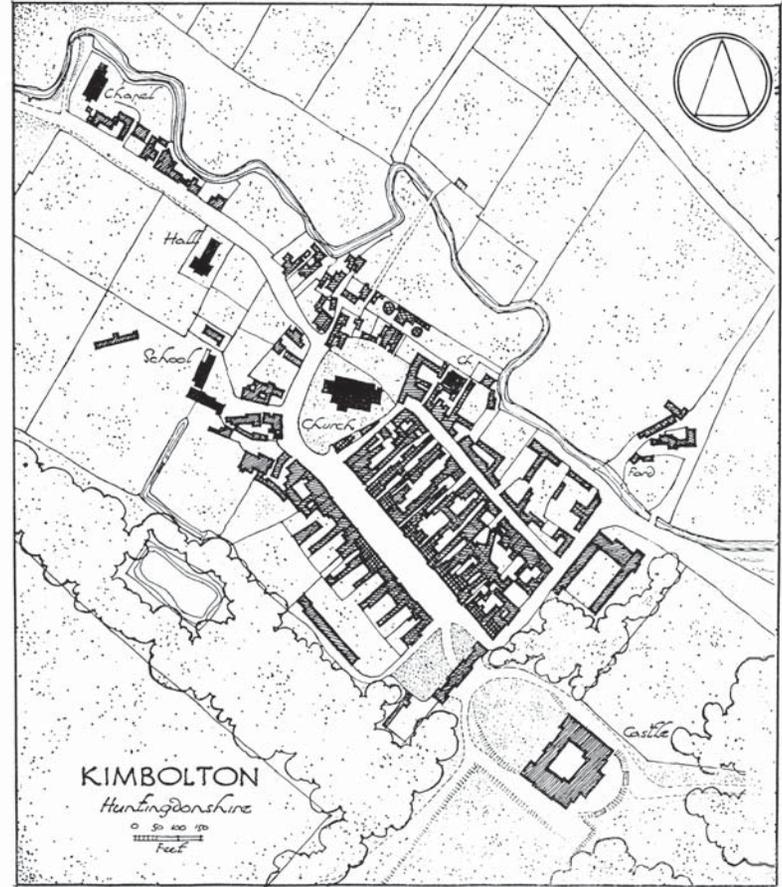


Above : SHINCLIFFE, Co. Durham (450). A roadside village with narrow sloping greens, approximating to a squared village. Note how well the views in and out are stopped. Note also the natural bypass. A few fine trees on the greens. No front gardens. Stone, brick, stucco ; pantiles, slates.

and more readily appreciated plan-form gives this kind of village a more immediate appeal to the imagination. Informal in detail, it nevertheless has an easily recognisable and apprehensible form as a whole. And that form may not only be satisfying to the eye, it may also convey more clearly a sense that the village is the home of a community.

The 'square' village may be of almost any shape. And it will certainly be irregular if it is the result of natural growth. As in the roadside village, the situation of the chief buildings generally gives emphasis to one or more points in the plan ; and often some building or structure on the central green or gravelled space, the village pump, a covered well, a little market hall, the village lock-up, or occasionally a bigger building, will give something of the same kind of punctuation to the whole as a monument does in a city square.

Again, as in the roadside village, the position and alignment of the roads are important influences in the general effect. In most squared villages the entering roads are staggered, that is to say there is no road, and no vista, running right through. The view down an approaching road is stopped by buildings on the other side of the square and so is 'contained' within the village, and the village thereby attains the stature of being something of a local climax. And besides the view *into* the square being 'contained,' the view *out* of it is almost always subtly limited by the manner in which the roads curve away from the entrance space, the view outwards being framed by roadside trees beyond which glimpses of country are seen, instead of trailing out down the long vanishing perspective of

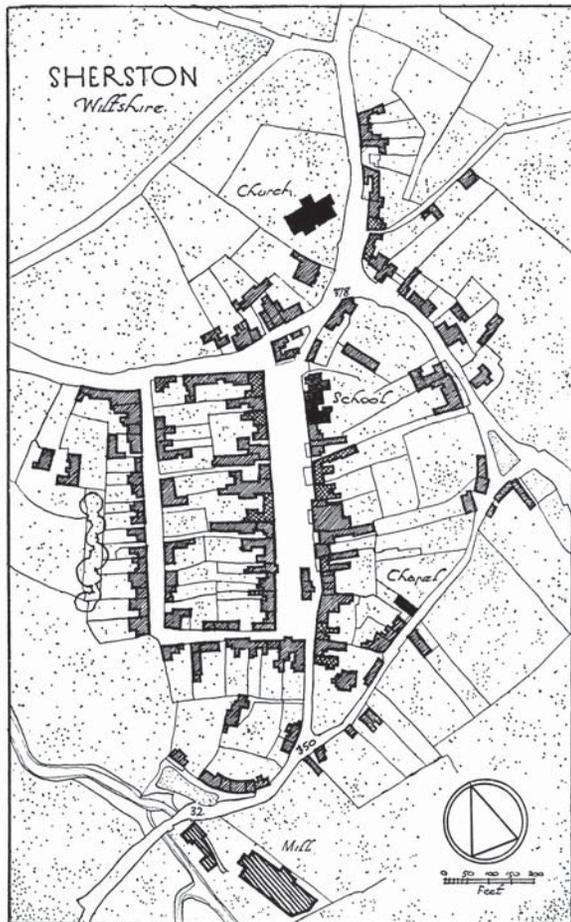


*KIMBOLTON, Huntingdonshire (700). Castle-gate village which has grown and thickened on one side to a near-small-town. Castle gate-house at one end, and sharp built-up turn at the other end of the wide street, produce something of character of elongated square. No front gardens. Various-tinted colour-wash, stone ; tiled roofs.*

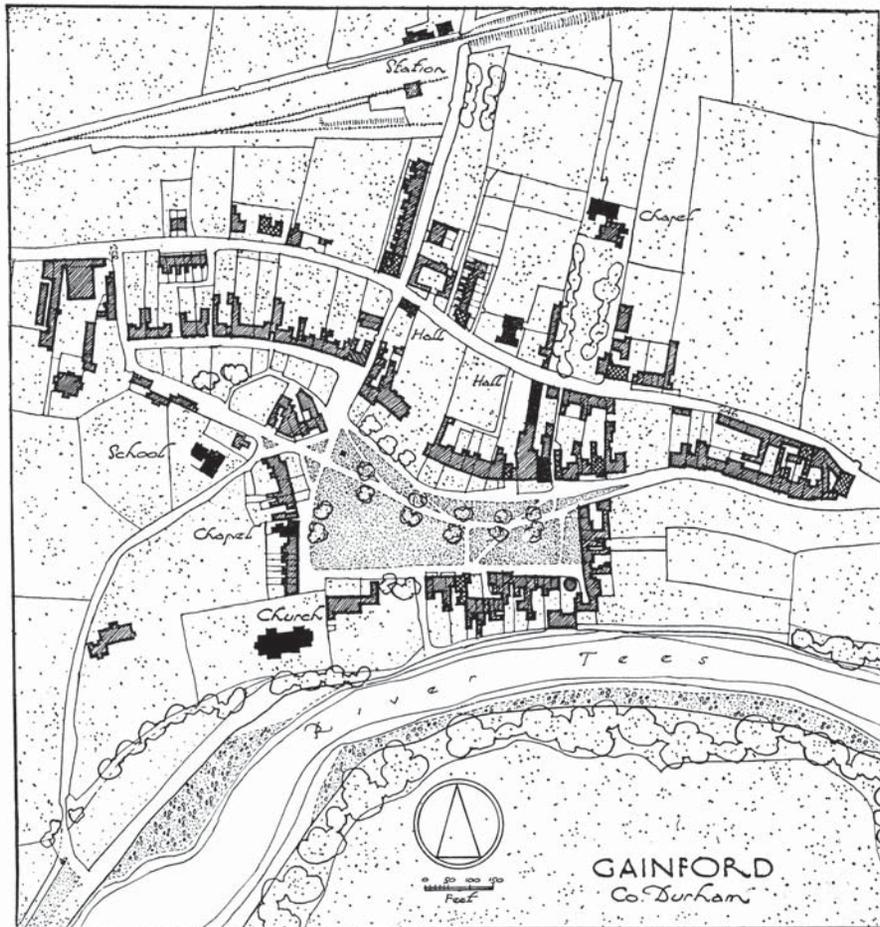
*The view opposite is that from the Castle gates, looking up the main street.*







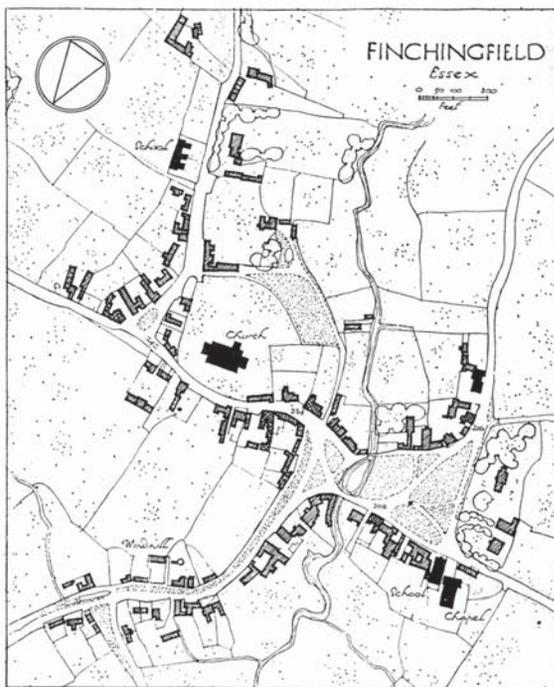
Above : *SHERSTON* (or *Sherston Magna*), *Wiltshire* (800). Situated partly within fortified earthworks on a rise above a small river. The main street is a paved and gravelled rectangle closed at both ends. No front gardens. All views closed. Stone, colour-wash ; roofs of stone slates.



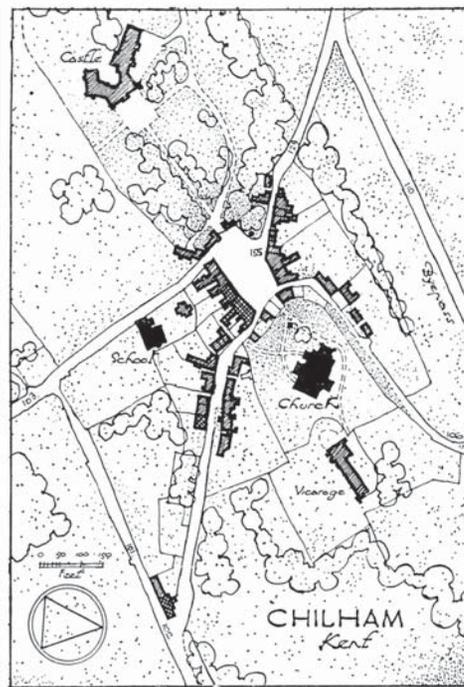
Above : *GAINFORD*, *Co. Durham* (750). The main part of the village is admirable situated between a natural bypass (now somewhat cluttered up with 19th-century buildings) and the river. There are fine trees on the green. All views are closed ; perhaps too closed on the south side, where the existence of the river is not recognised in plan and its natural features are shut off from most of the village. The older smaller houses are without front gardens, but have little unfenced grass or flower strips. Stone, colour-wash, brick ; pantiled and slated roofs.



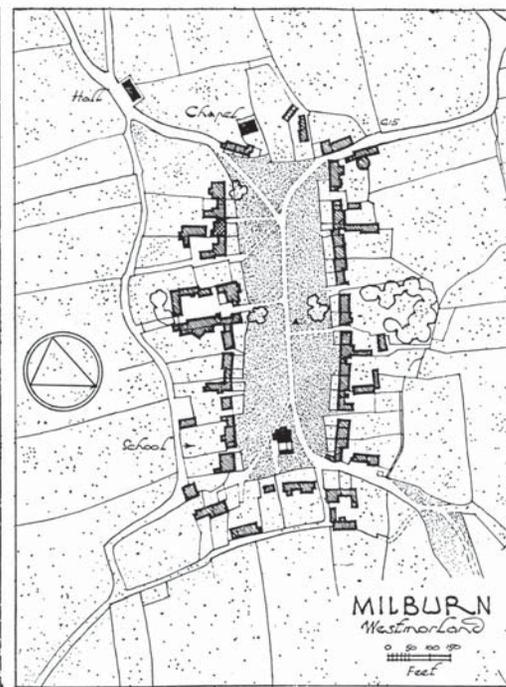
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*FINCHINGSFIELD, Essex (400). A village lying for the most part in a little valley about an open roughly triangular green divided by a large pond beyond which the church crowns the rising ground. The stream feeding the pond is crossed by a narrow brick bridge. All views closed, except one inwards. Houses mostly on the footpath edge. Brick, colour wash; thatch and tiled roofs.*

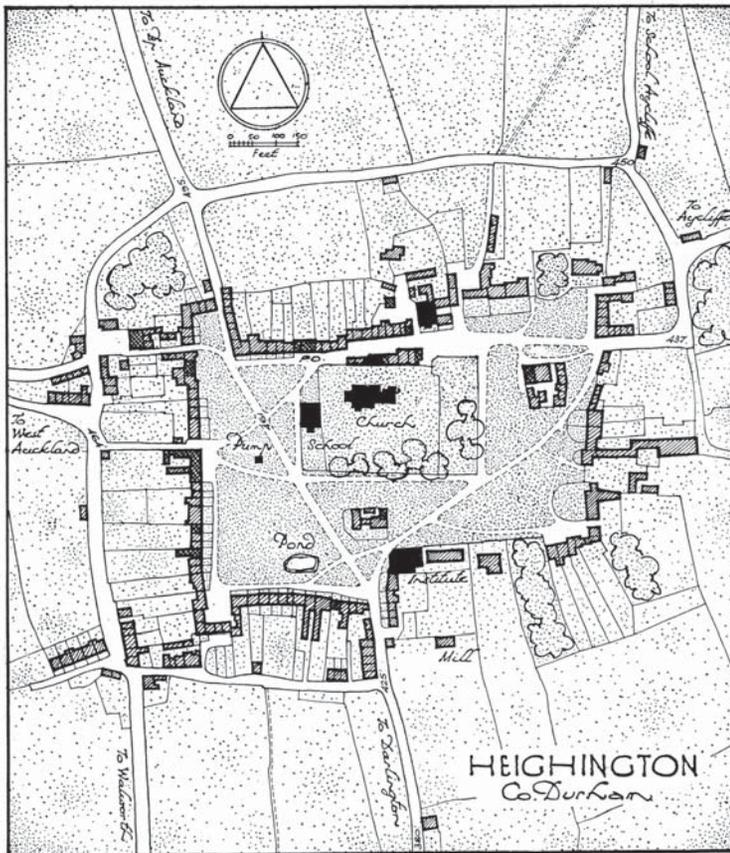


*CHILHAM, Kent (250). A hilltop orchard-surrounded village associated with a local great house. Note the surprising axial arrangement of castle and church, both seen among trees through gaps at the ends of the diminutive gravelled square. All the views are closed. The houses are mostly without front gardens, but some have unfenced flower strips. Half-timber and plaster, brick, stone; tiled roofs.*

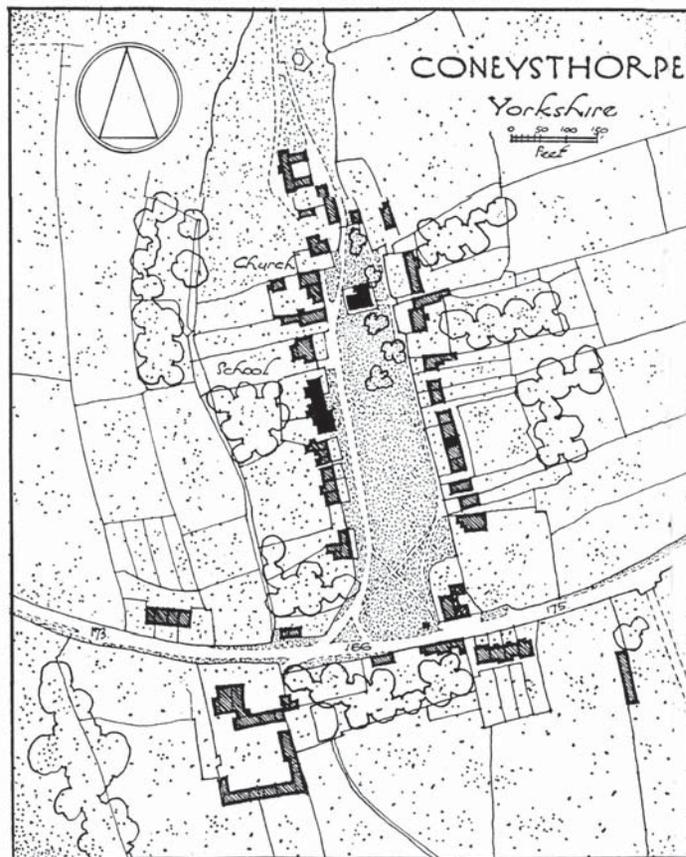


*MILBURN, Westmorland (150). Houses round an open green. There is a natural bypass on the west of the village (i.e., beyond the top of the diagram). There is also a partial ring of Pack roads. Front gardens. All views closed. Stone; roofs of stone slabs and slates.*

Opposite: *A view of FINCHINGSFIELD.*



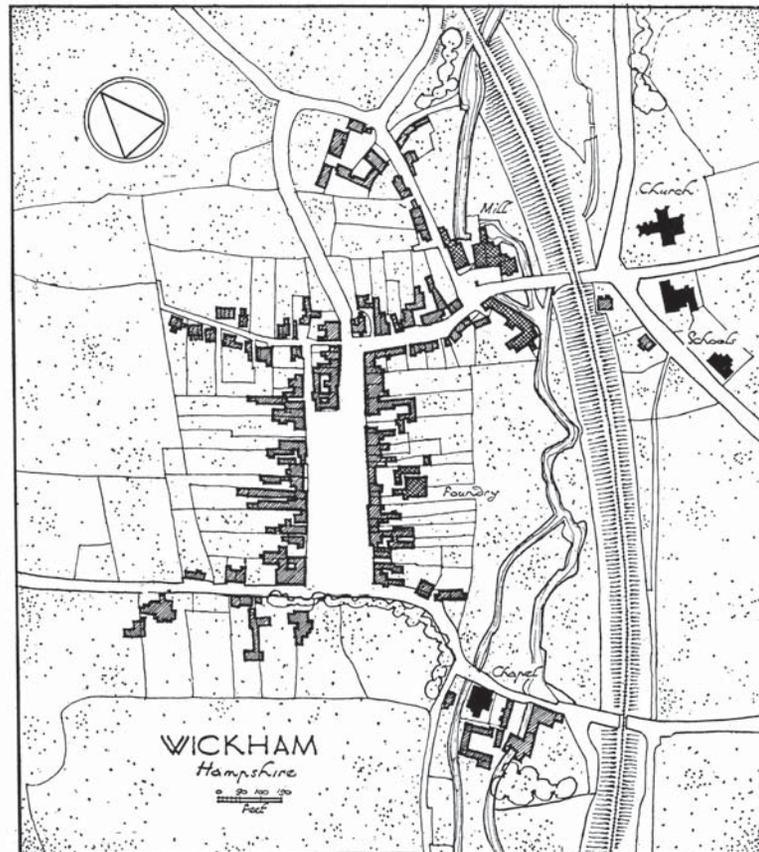
HEIGHINGTON, Co. Durham (800). The square is not so apparent on the site as on plan, because of the central position of the church and other buildings which have "squatted". Note the almost complete natural outer ring-road. Defence requirements probably settled the plan-form. Most entering roads have a tortuous approach, and all entrances are very narrow. Consequently the views in and out are completely stopped. The majority of houses have small front gardens. Stone, colour-wash, brick; roofs of pantiles and slates.



CONEYSTHORPE, Yorkshire (150). An 'estate' village (outside the park of Castle Howard) made up of a wide rectangular cul-de-sac sited in a shallow valley at right angles to its approach road. Note the position of the church (which suggests that the village may have been 'planned', though nothing is known of its history); also the inward-stepping of the buildings beyond, stopping the upward view. Nearly all houses have front gardens. Stone; roofs of pantiles and slates.



*WRITTLE, Essex (600). Village about a large triangular green at the junction of four roads. Note the natural bypass on east and north sides; also the elongated 'square' beyond the eastern angle of the green. Fine trees and a large pond on the green. All views closed. Brick, plaster, stucco; slates and thatch.*

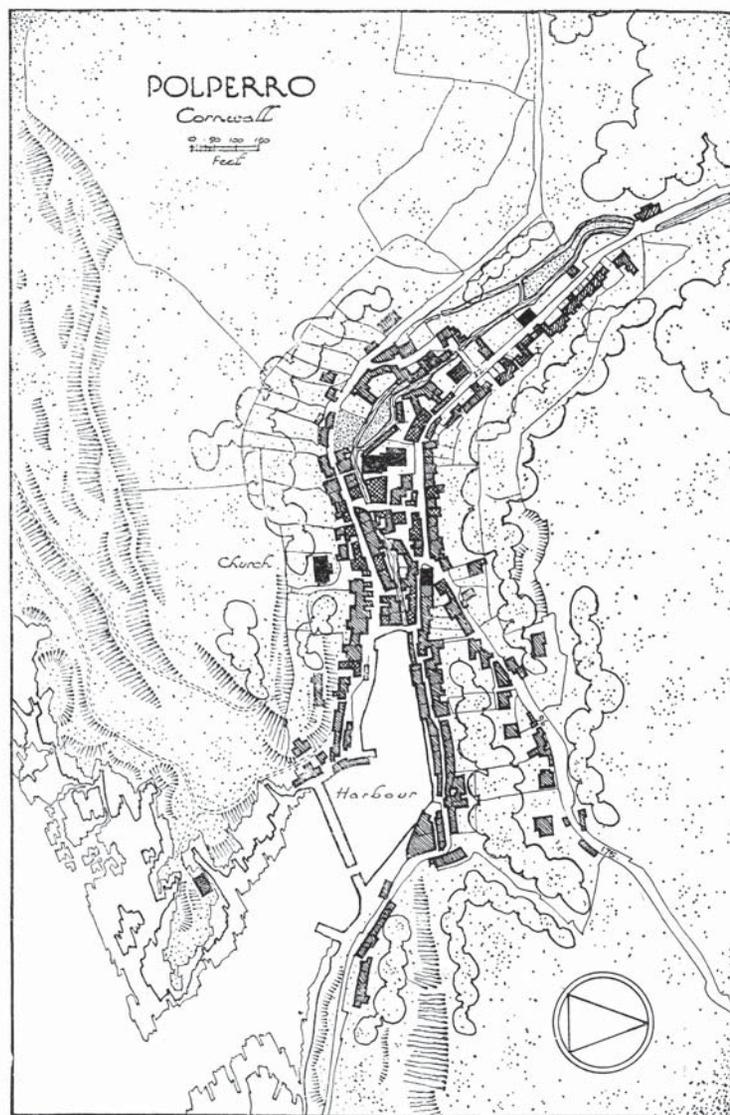


*WICKHAM, Hampshire (750). A wide gravelled elongated square at right angles to the main road which passes by at one end, though two local roads go through; another main road (not shown on the diagram) passes nearby to the east. The buildings are of uneven height, and some rise to three or four stories, producing a near-small-town effect. Views are stopped. No front gardens. Brick, colour-wash; tiled roofs.*

(d) *The Seaside Village*

While it is easy to understand how most inland villages have no very clear and obvious architectural plan-form, lacking as they generally do any striking natural or functional feature which would dictate that form, it would seem at first thought that a seaside village, and particularly a fishing village with a harbour, offered the best opportunity that could be wished for the conscious creation of a clear pattern, or that it at least contained the conditions which would most easily dictate the unconscious creation of such a pattern. A harbour with its piers and jetties, however small and however romantic-looking it may be, is almost bound to have something of a rough formality which, we might well expect, would find a roughly formal echoing shape in the buildings about the harbour. Moreover, to our twentieth-century notions (and particularly urban notions) it would seem the natural thing when building at the seaside to build in such a way as to make the best possible use of the seaward views. But in fact neither of these things happens in the old seaside villages. It would almost seem, from the plan-forms of these villages, that their builders deliberately refused to recognise the existence of the great natural element so close to their doors. The houses generally turn their backs to the sea, or actually hide out of sight of it under the shelter of a cliff.

But this apparent lack of recognition is really recognition of a very respectful kind: a recognition that a situation in full face of an element which may seem to be benign in the few calm months of summer can be very far from satisfactory in the roaring days





*POLPERRO, Cornwall (950). A fishing and holiday village in a narrow valley at the head of a small cove on a rocky coast. Snug against wind and sea, between the steep hills that rise on either side, the other part of the village is cramped and huddled on a pattern of narrow passages and tortuous terraced streets with blind corners. The buildings are long and low, of granite or whitewashed cob, with grey slate roofs. There are very few gardens.*

that are apt to occupy a large part of the rest of the year. The buildings of a fishing village huddle tightly together on narrow tortuous streets for mutual warmth and shelter. Further, shelter was the main purpose of the harbour to which they are attached: and that shelter was best obtained in some cove between protecting headlands. The steepness of the sides of the cove thus made the naturally huddling streets even more tortuous and narrow. In short, the apparently perverse formlessness of our seaside villages has arisen out of functional necessity more than out of the blind accidents of natural unplanned growth.

In spite of its formlessness, however, the seaside village, like the roadside village, gets a good deal of its character and true picturesqueness (i.e., in the sense of being well composed as a picture rather than being merely quaint) from subtleties in the siting of its chief buildings, and, of course, from the narrow tortuous nature of its streets—for this not only affords shelter but also produces that closure of views which, as we have already suggested, is both psychologically and visually satisfying.

### *(e) The Planned Village*

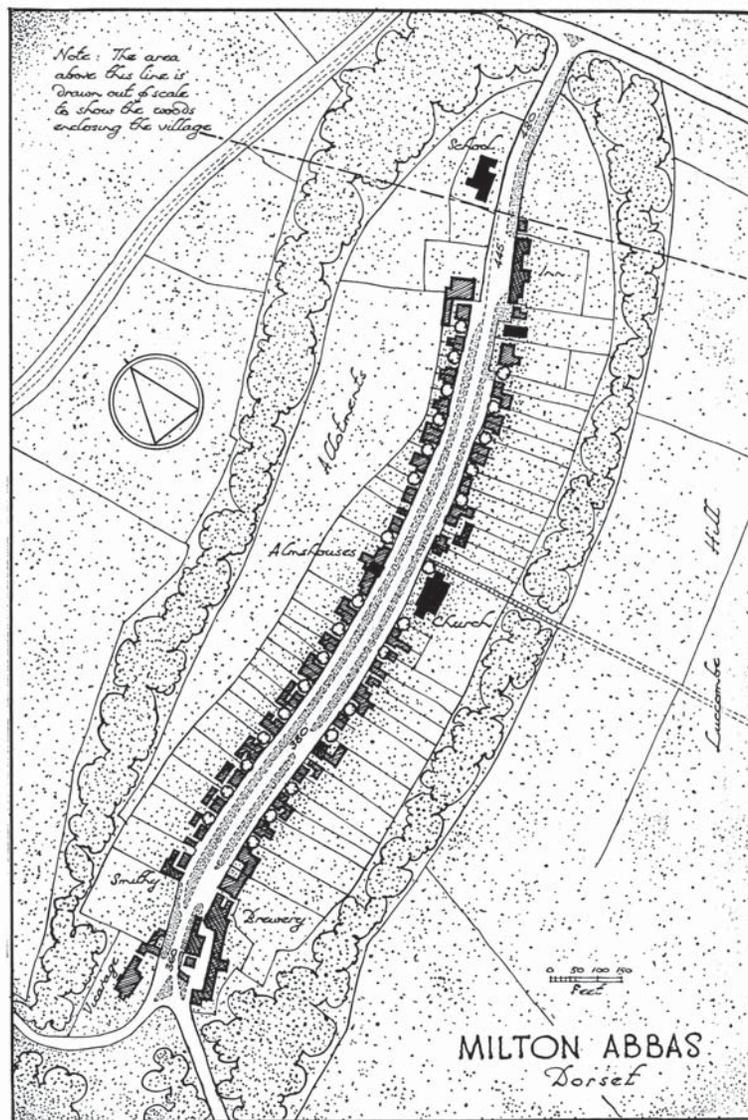
In the natural growing village the irregularity of the individual buildings produces an air of informality, whether the plan-form is loose and ill-defined, as in the roadside type, or more direct and definite, as in the squared type. Whether it is ever possible satisfactorily to capture in a planned village the essence of this informality is more than doubtful. Certainly in most, if not all, of the few planned

villages that have been built in Great Britain no attempt at this has been made.

This is partly to be explained, no doubt, in the fact that most of our planned villages were built in the 18th and early 19th centuries, that is, at a time when most building was of a formal or near-formal kind. Some of them were built in association with a great house, and were arranged about the park gates which formed the central dominating motive of the plan. Others had their origin in land reclamation or land settlement schemes, or in the development of a small harbour or some other work of that kind. All of them were built under the directing force of one man or one body of men; a great landowner housing his dependants, an early industrialist, or small group of industrialists, providing accommodation for workmen.

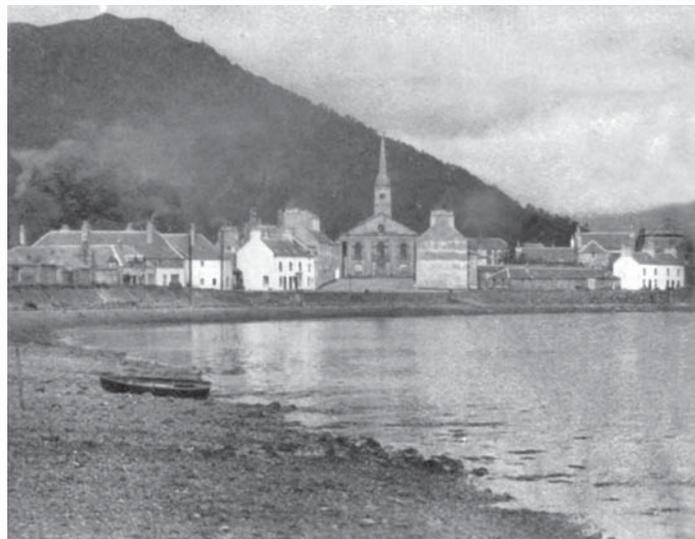
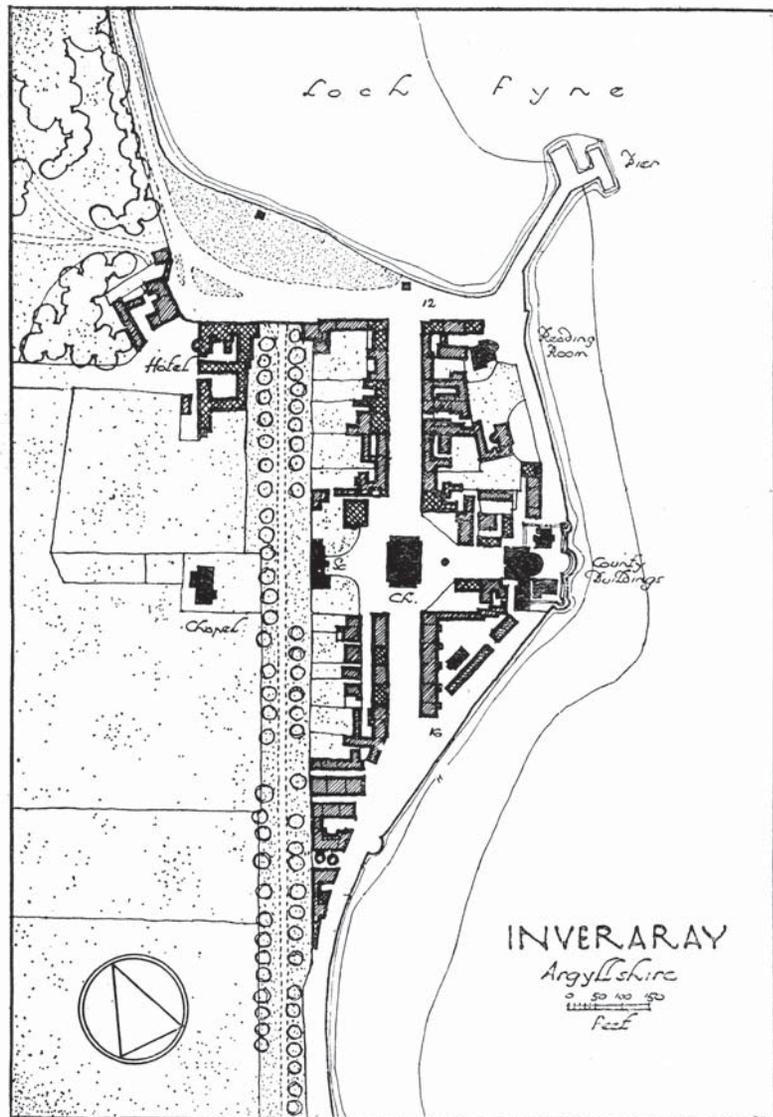
Their plan-forms are nearly always direct and simple, and they are mostly of the squared type. But though they are more regular than the natural-growing villages, these planned villages, in general effect, are well within the main stream of the English village tradition. They are not something apart,

*MILTON ABBAS, Dorset (350). Built about 1786 to replace an older village which had clustered too closely about the windows of the local great house. A planned roadside village. Semi-detached cottages, with no front gardens, only a narrow unfenced strip of grass or flowers between house and public footpath, are spaced regularly on both sides of a wide grass-edged road which curves gently up a little valley girdled by woods. Note how the chief buildings punctuate the design; the church facing the almshouses at the centre; the vicarage facing the brewery at one end; the school, the inn and the hospital terminating the other end.*



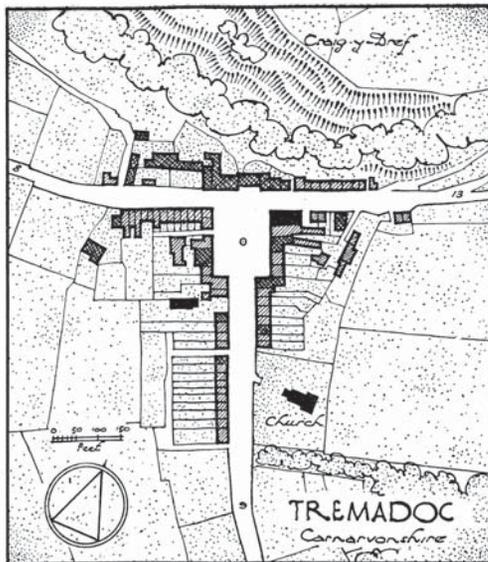
*The immense chestnut trees between each pair of cottages help to weld the village into a whole (it must have appeared rather raw in its first decades before these trees had much growth). Whether or not the general effect is regarded as formal—it is formal, but its formality is of a romantic kind, whereas formality nowadays is generally conceived to be something ponderous and cold—it is achieved by a deliberate and precise ordering of the various elements within the plan-form. Stone, colour-wash ; thatched and slated roofs.*



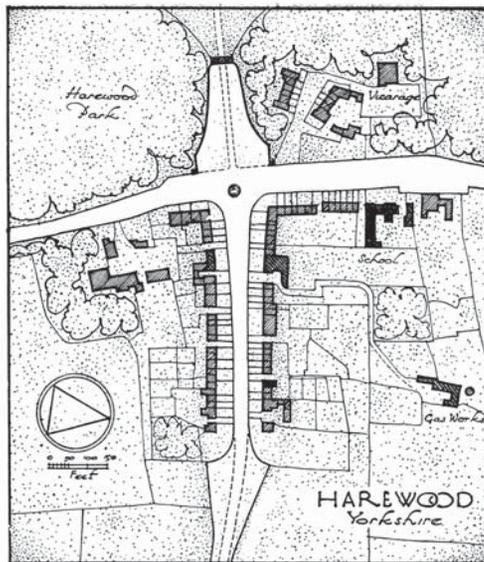


INVERARAY, Argyllshire (350). Though the number of the public buildings and their arrangement about the central square and the scale (three stories) of many of the houses gives parts of the place the character of a small town it is difficult to describe the whole as other than a village. Another example of a rebuilding associated with a local great house. In 1742 the old village (which had the dignity of status of 'an ancient Burgh' and was situated beside the castle) was pulled down, and a new place founded on a little headland at the entrance to the Castle park. Something of French influence is noticeable. Note how the existence of great natural features (sea-loch and mountain view) is only partially recognised, many buildings being shut off from, or turning their backs to, the loch. The inward views are stopped by the church; the outward views are open across the loch. Stone, stucco, colour-wash; slate roofs.

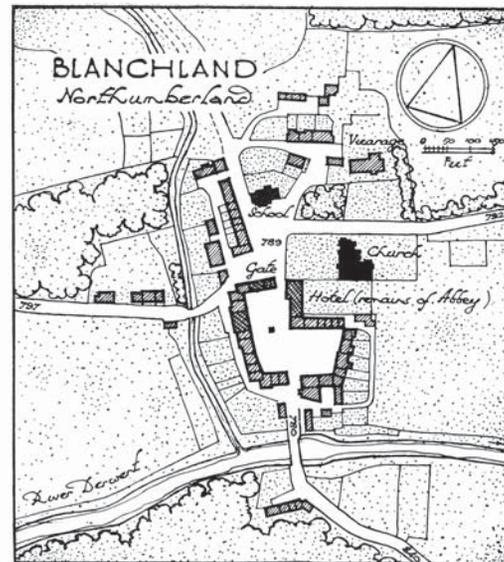
something outstanding and peculiar. They are a little different from the normal village, but their difference is one of degree rather than of kind. There is nothing foreign, outlandish or discordant about them. They *belong*. And they do so because, whatever their other differences may be, they embody the essential qualities of true village character.



**TREMADOC, Caernarvonshire (500).** Founded in 1798 to be the centre and market of a district of some 2,000 acres to be reclaimed from the sea. Some time after its establishment, its founders developed further plans, reclaimed another 4,700 acres, and concentrated on the development of another new town (Portmadoc) some little distance away, leaving Tremadoc uncompleted. Modest formal buildings are centred about a gravelled market square dominated by the market building (slightly off axis) and the hotel, with a flag-staff as the central feature of the square. No front gardens. The simple formality of the whole contrasts with the rugged informality of the sheltering cliff which rises sheer behind the market hall. The unfortunate siting of the church mars the feeling of completeness. Stone ; slate roofs.



**HAREWOOD, Yorkshire (350).** Another example of a planned village built to replace an older one which was too close to manorial windows. Designed by John Carr of York ; built in 1760. Formal blocks of cottages of varying length line the formalised approach to the great gateway of the park to Harewood House. Note the subtle effect of the curving approach road which suddenly narrows where the village begins, thus creating the suggestion of a preliminary gateway ; and, at the other end of the village, where the street has widened out a little, the curved narrowing towards the climax of the vista, the lodges and gates to the park of the great house. Stone-walled front gardens. Stone ; stone-slabs.



**BLANCHLAND, Northumberland (150).** This village was almost certainly built sometime in the second half of the eighteenth century to accommodate workers in the lead mines on the neighbouring moors. It is not improbable that the plan-form follows that of the cloisters of the considerable monastery which flourished here until the Dissolution, and of which remains exist in the church, and in the hotel and gateway on the north side of the square. Note the way the entrances are staggered so that there is no through view. Note, too, the situation of the pant-house, or covered pump, at a position which gives punctuation to, and unifies, the two parts of the plan. The floor of the square is gravelled. No front gardens ; only narrow strips for low-growing flowers between houses and pavement. Stone ; stone-slab roofs.

### 3: THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE

It has been suggested earlier that, while mere size may be a preliminary rough measure as to whether a place is a village or a town, this is by no means enough. It may indeed, be entirely misleading. More fundamentally the distinction lies in character. But wherein does the difference of physical character between town and village lie? What are the essential qualities of true village character?

It is difficult to put into words. To some extent, no doubt, there are differences in architectural character between the buildings of a town and those of a village. But if the existence of these differences were used to develop a suggestion that there are two distinct architectural styles, the town style and the village style, we should fall into a serious error. It is true that old village buildings often show a cruder and rougher finish than town buildings of the same period. This, however, is not because the country builder wished them to be so, and intentionally set about achieving crudeness, roughness, irregularity. It is because the country workman was slower in adopting new methods, was generally a less skilful craftsman than his counterpart in the town; and further because he had to use makeshift materials, since difficulties of transport did not allow materials to be moved about as they can be now. But in each place the builder worked in the best way he knew. And the hundreds of fine country mansions that were built in the 18th century, and the farm-houses and farm-buildings of that time,

and all the extensions and refurbishings of old villages, as well as the newly planned villages—all these show clearly that there was no difference at all between the style of building in the country and the style of building in the town.

Nor was there any essential difference between the materials of which buildings might be constructed in the town and in the country. In each case the choice of material was chiefly governed, and limited, by its degree of availability. It is true that in most country districts there was a natural tendency to use the local building material, whatever it might be (as, indeed, there was in the towns too): but this resulted less from a deliberate preference on grounds of tradition than from difficulties of transport. Certainly when brick became fashionable as a building material in towns in the 17th and 18th centuries there was also a good deal of building in brick in villages which had hitherto had a tradition of building in stone. Here again there was no question of the rough-hewn, the rustic, being reserved for the country, while the elegant, the polished, was reserved for the town.

Village character, then, does not depend on any deliberate use of a particular style of building. Nor does it derive from an acceptance of standards that are lower than town standards. Nor can it lie in the effects of natural undirected growth; for, whether the slow additions of buildings over a long

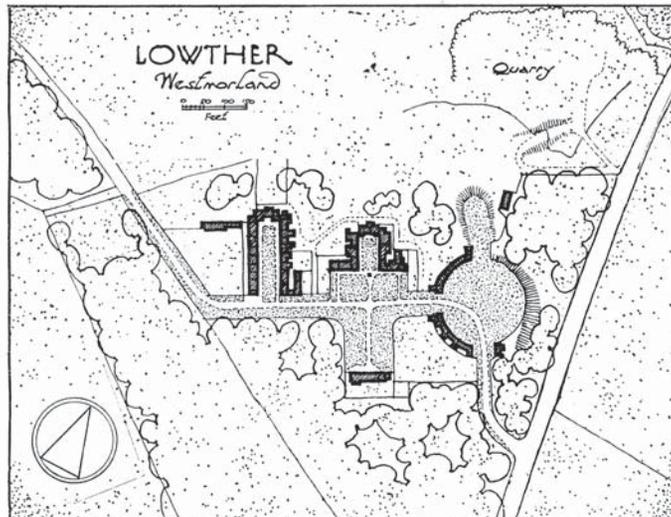
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*YALDING, Kent. An example of informal grouping: also of village gregariousness, large house and cottages in neighbourly juxtaposition.*





*LOWTHER, Westmorland (150). Planned and built about 1682, but left uncompleted. Still another example of a village removed from too close proximity of the great house. The main axis is wide, trim and grass-bordered. The north part of the first cross-axis is a square green-centred quadrangle with two-storied houses at its head, and one-storied cottages on the sides (the village pump is on the axis); the southern part is the bailiff's house, well set back. The second cross-axis (north side only: see above) is a bigger more rectangular quadrangle with a large two-storied house at the head, and formally mixed one- and two-storied houses on the sides (the string course for the taller houses and the eaves line for the lower being unified for architectural effect). No front gardens, but narrow unfenced flower-strips between footpaths and the houses. Stone: roofs of stone-slabs (both quarried only a few yards from the village).*



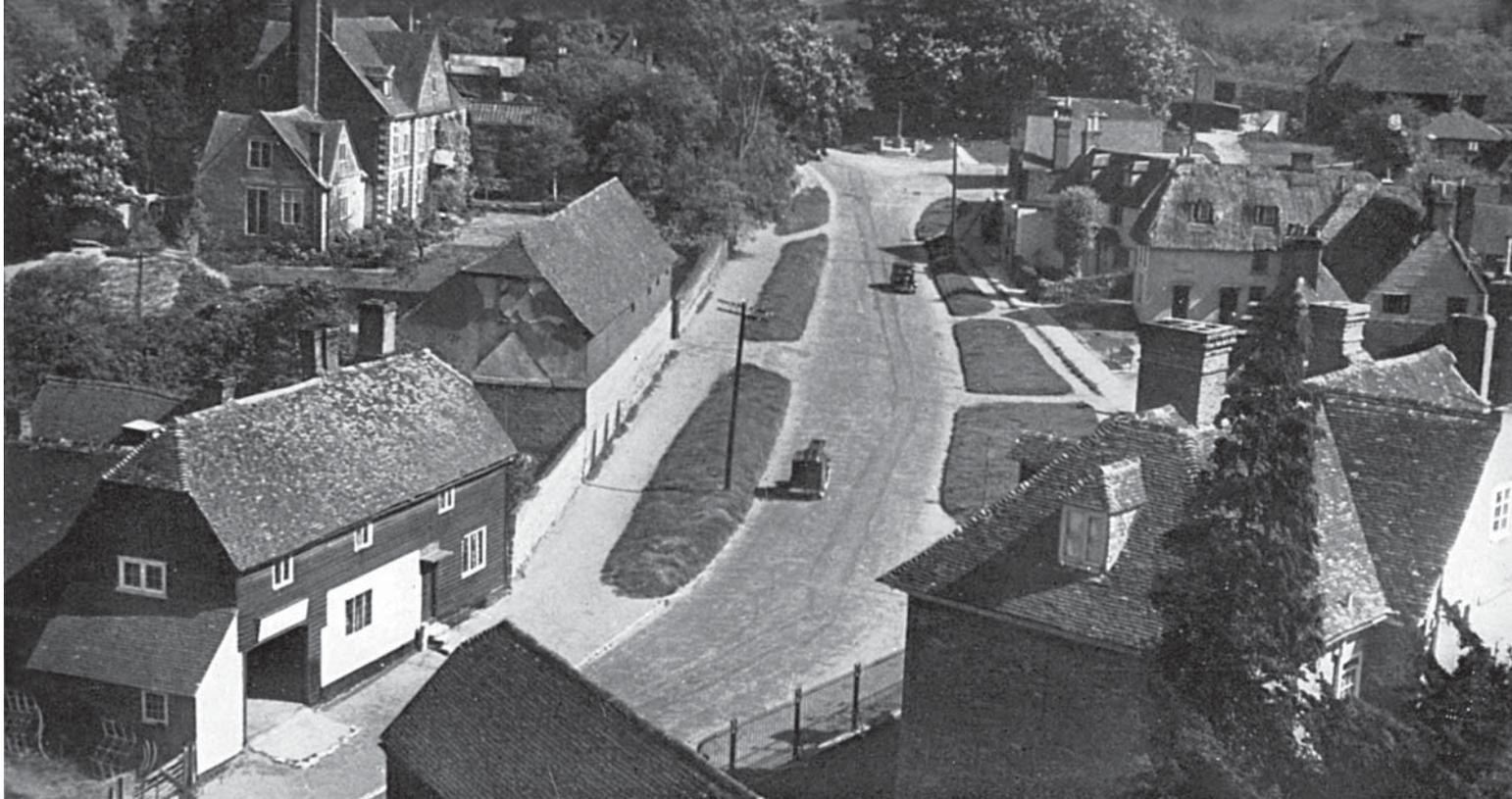
period of time were or were not directed towards the creation of particular scenic or architectural effects, the position in the natural-growing village was in this respect precisely the same as that in the natural-growing town; and, in any case, the planned villages of the 18th century have, as we have seen, all the essentials of true village character. The difference between town character and village character in the past has not lain in matters like these. After all the possible explanations have been examined, it is likely that in the end the true explanation lies merely in the difference between simplicity and complexity.

Simplicity means\* “consisting of one element, being all of a kind, not being complicated or elaborate or adorned or involved, or highly developed, plain in appearance or manner, unaffected, unsophisticated.” The villages of the past have all these qualities in their best sense.

They have simplicity of form. Whatever may be the subtleties which occur in the villages of the roadside or the squared type, the village plan-forms themselves are transparently simple and immediately apprehensible.\*\* They are not fussy, not elaborate, not complex and certainly not pretentious or monumental. A town plan is almost bound to have some or all of these attributes. Towns, or parts of towns, that have been deliberately planned are generally elaborate and are frequently monumental and sophisticated; towns that have grown naturally are generally complicated and involved (though here we come back again to the matter of size, for it is partly

\* See *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

\*\* Their smallness of scale also helps in this, of course.



*YALDING, Kent.*

their size that makes them so). But a village, in the English tradition, is essentially simple; it is clear, direct and unelaborate. A place the size of a village with an elaborate architectural pattern, with a complication of deliberately set axes and cross-axes, and the other paraphernalia of monumental design, might be too small to be called a town but it still would not be an English village.

Few, if any, over-elaborate near-villages of this kind exist in England. Perhaps the nearest approach

is the estate village of Lowther, in Westmorland; and the plan of Lowther is worth looking at by way of elucidating this point. As it was originally designed (in 1682) the village seems to have been intended to consist mainly of a number of quadrangles set at right angles to a main axis running from a circular entrance place. That original design was dangerously near over-elaboration. If it had been completed, Lowther would still have been very attractive, but it would not have been an English village. As a village



BISHOP WILTON, Yorks. An example of a brook running its natural course through the village green : an example, too, of a non-architectural dominant outside the village, namely the tree-crowned hill which closes the upward view.

it was saved by the failure to complete the original elaborate over-architectural plan.

The natural features in our villages, as well as the buildings, are used with a quiet simplicity. Trees mature to their full growth. They are not pleached into formal shapes. Nor are they dragooned into geometric patterns. They may be well ordered in that they occupy some vantage point or serve some subtle purpose of directing a view, or screening a defect; they may create a centre of interest here, or act as a foil against buildings there; but for all these purposes (whether conscious or not) they are used simply and naturally. The gardens and greens and the open spaces are also simple and unelaborate. The cottage garden, that lovely colourful artless creation, is often thought of as containing the quintessence of village character. And so it generally does; but in a *private* rather than in a public way.

The cottage gardens are mostly *behind* the cottages, away from the general view. More often than not there are no enclosed front gardens at all, only narrow 12-inch or 18-inch strips of earth between the house walls and the footpaths of the public road—little unfenced strips neatly packed with characteristic low-growing flowers; with marigolds and nasturtiums, and perhaps with a hollyhock here and there. And the villages that have these open simple little flower-strips in front of the houses, rather than fenced gardens, are generally the pleasantest and somehow the most characteristic of all.

It is, or was, the same with the other natural features. The village green came straight on to the road edge, trimmed, may be, to a neat line once or twice a year, but, save for that, natural free and unkerbed. If a stream ran through the village it was generally left to take its natural course, or if, as was sometimes necessary, it was canalised, that was done quite simply and unaffectedly and no attempt was made to elaborate it into a monumental water-feature. In the same way a village pond was simply and unpretentiously a place for watering cattle; it was that and no more; and no architectural elaboration of its form was necessary or desirable. Simplicity has been a characteristic of all the material forms that have gone to make up the villages of the English tradition.

#### 4: THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

We have so far spoken of the village almost exclusively in its physical and material sense. But more fundamentally it is, of course, a social organism.



Above : *DUNSTER, Somerset. An example of interplay between local punctuation (the butter market at the head of the long street) and an external dominant (the castle among its trees on the hill top).*

Below : *CERNE ABBAS, Dorset. A closed view at the end of a village street : cobbles between houses and footpath.*

It was the simplicity of its social structure which in the past gave to its physical character the qualities that we have just briefly analysed. A simple social structure produced a simple material form.

The English village has been semi-feudal in structure until comparatively recent times; and even to-day substantial remnants of that semi-feudalism remain in many parts of the country. The influence of the local great house has been very powerful for both good and ill. Certainly almost the whole of the deliberate planning of the past was undertaken by large landowners, and even where, as in the great majority of villages, no large scale re-building was undertaken as a deliberate policy, the landowners were able in diverse ways to promote the outward physical amenities of the villages on their estates. They may have done this, and without doubt they often did do it, with the narrowest of motives, sometimes regarding their villages more as mere scenery than as living communities. But whatever may be said about their motives, or about the narrowness of their social interests, the landowners' contribution in this respect was a very real one.

The simplicity of the structure of the village community itself arose, of course, out of common interests and shared work. All the inhabitants were engaged in winning the products of the earth (or the sea) and in 'processing' them more or less on the spot, or in directly serving in some way those who were thus engaged. Class divisions might be sharp. Sect divisions, as between 'church' and 'chapel,' might exist. But these found little expression in the physical form of the village (except





that the chapel was not unlikely to be pushed away in some odd corner out of sight—which from a purely architectural consideration was sometimes not altogether a bad thing). In spite of such superficial cleavages which might exist, the average village, because of the very simplicity of its social structure, was far more fully integrated as a community than were most towns. Social centres existed in the church and the inns; communal games could be played on the village green (where there was one); there were generally sufficient (and sufficiently well-stocked) shops to supply practically all domestic needs; and there were sufficient workshops too, in the saddler's, the wheelwright's, the carpenter's, the smithy and the rest, to supply most trade and craft requirements. Unsatisfactory conditions there certainly were. Much of the housing, for example, was hygienically deplorable, however attractive it might seem externally. But until the end of the 19th century, considering the standards of the times, most villages in England provided, on balance, at least as good conditions for living as did most towns.\* And in the matter of physical pleasantness they were almost always far superior.

*\* The chief disadvantage of the country as against the town was in certain matters in the sphere of personal relationships, as in connection with the tied cottage system and similar arrangements which involved an undue dependence on the good will of others.*

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*WHITTINGTON, Gloucestershire. A beautiful example of village character in building and the treatment of natural features.*

## CHAPTER II: *The Village To-day*

In the last two or three decades the English village has been subjected to various strong changing influences. Had the spirit of the times been more settled, more firm and more confident, these changes would have modified the old-established village tradition; but they would have absorbed that tradition or have been absorbed into it, rather than have swamped and submerged it entirely. Since we have been full of hesitations; since to some extent, lacking a clear philosophy, we seem to have lost the directive control of circumstances which we ourselves have created; and especially since the countryside, because of the decline of agriculture, has been unable to withstand the various powerful assaults made upon it,\* it is the latter condition which has occurred. The tradition, temporarily at least, has been submerged. In the metaphor that has already been used, the stream of tradition, instead of being refreshed and perhaps redirected by new tributaries, has been turned into a wide swamp by the multitude of confused currents that have poured in on it.

The social structure of the village has changed; so much so indeed, that it is hardly any longer possible to speak of it as having a 'structure,' if that is taken to imply any quality of stability. The old sociological simplicity has gone. The advent of residents unconnected with the village's economic

life (such as retired or week-ending townspeople and people who work in a town and use the village as a mere dormitory), has introduced a complexity of elements which are sometimes in mutual conflict or at best are generally separate and unco-ordinated.

And while the advent of the townsman into the village has had this disturbing effect, the attraction of the amenities of the town has to some degree lessened the communal life of the village. It is easy to exaggerate this. There have been some vigorous social developments in the countryside (like those connected with Women's Institutes and Young Farmers' Clubs, for example). But they have mostly been in the field of group activity rather than of full *community life*. There is little doubt that, on balance, there has been a considerable decline of village institutions in many parts of the country. And even where there has not been an actual decline there has been no progressive development of social amenities on the scale of the development that has taken place in the towns. This has largely been due to the lack of adequate facilities in buildings and recreational spaces.

The decline of the village tradition has been clearly reflected in the change in the physical character of many of the older villages and in the form and character of the additions which have been made to them. Much of these additions has taken the form either of ribbon development or of very loosely scattered sporadic development. As a result partly of the new methods of transporta-

\* For an analysis of these, and for a full consideration of the occupational and social aspects of village life, see the report of the Scott Committee, Cmd. 6378, already mentioned.



*CASTLE COMBE, Wiltshire.*

tion by car and bus, and partly of the modern romantic notion of living to oneself and keeping one's neighbours at a proper distance, the tradition of maintaining compactness in settlement (in so far as that was functionally possible) has to a considerable extent disappeared.

The confused state of contemporary ideals is well illustrated in the contrast between the preferences that lead to sporadic development and those that

lead to ribbon development. While most of the people who live in scattered houses (excluding, of course, those who are attached to some form of agriculture) do so because they prefer to be somewhat away from their fellows, most of those who live in a ribbon do so because they like to see the life and movement along the roads—as well as because it is cheaper to build beside an existing road. This second preference is especially illustrated in the way

that the very roads which in the last decade have been constructed to bypass villages have subsequently been lined by ribbons of new houses, the intention behind their construction thereby being very largely stultified.

Perhaps the most glaring departure from the traditional grouping of buildings has been in the accretions that have occurred around seaside villages. Here, instead of the snug compact pattern which had evolved on a functional basis in the past, a wide-open almost patternless scattering has been the commonest form of recent growth; and most seaside villages to-day present a completely unresolved conflict between the old and the new, an unhappy juxtaposition of opposing forms that cannot be given that *whole* character which, as we have said, has constituted the chief charm of the English traditional village.

Additions made to villages by speculating builders and by private persons have all too frequently been disorderly or alien both in form and in character. Even where statutory planning schemes have 'controlled' building operations, the results have often still been unhappy; some of the worst offences against the more obvious standards may have been avoided, but still the essential spirit of village design has been missed. It has been missed, too, in most of the building which has been undertaken by local authorities.

It is, indeed, true to say that little or no attempt has been made to catch the real spirit of the village in any of the thousands of additions to villages that have been made during the last two decades. This *might*, of course, have been done justifiably in a deliberate attempt to discard the old traditional

forms and develop new ones in their place. But it has not been done with that intention. What has occurred has happened unconsciously through lack of proper consideration and understanding. And that is the regrettable part of it. Judging by nearly all the recent additions to villages, it would seem that any true appreciation and understanding of village form and character has died.

It would seem to be so, too, in the new villages that have been built. These have chiefly been for land settlement schemes of various kinds. In some instances, since it has been thought desirable that every smallholder must live on his own plot of ground, no attempt at all has been made to group the houses; they have merely been scattered along roads at wide intervals. In some other instances they have been strung out as semi-detached units in the worst form of suburban ribbon development. In only a few cases has a definite attempt been made at a nucleated grouping about a green or a series of greens, and even there the form and character of the place have generally gone wrong, and more often than not the result has had the appearance of a fragment snatched out of some town suburb rather than that of a true village.

We have said that simplicity has been the characteristic quality of the traditional English village. It is just this quality that our recent village building has lacked. Everything has been fussy and over-elaborate, though often with a mean rather than a rich elaboration. Instead of "consisting of one element, being all of a kind, not being complicated or involved, being plain and unaffected in appearance and manner," our village building has too often been scrappily complex and anything but plain and

unaffected. It is in any case extremely difficult to get unity and coherence, to get a feeling of being all of a piece, a feeling of simple restfulness and repose, into a series of detached or semi-detached units such as generally make up a modern housing 'scheme' or building 'estate' ; and the common current practice of building with hipped rather than end-gabled roofs has not lessened that difficulty. When there are added to that the difficulties involved in an over-elaborate use of a confusion of building materials, in a fussiness of separate fenced front gardens, in an over-rigidity of kerbed street lines and other matters of that kind which are so uncommon in the villages of the past, then there is no wonder that our recent village building has seemed, even to many who have been unable fully to analyse its faults, to be alien unsympathetic and unsatisfactory.

This lack of appreciation of what lies at the heart of village character has also been manifest in the treatment of many of the existing village features. In some parts of the country there have been regrettable attempts at improvements such as 'tidying up' the village green by surrounding it with a harshly displayed kerb, or 'laying it out' with flower-beds and even rockeries and shrubberies.

All these kinds of activity spring from a general loss of the quality of unsophisticated and unconscious simplicity. The social structure of the village has lost its simplicity. The country builders have lost theirs. The ordinary countryman to some extent has lost his. All this is natural and inevitable in the changing conditions of the modern world, particularly in the changed conditions of physical and social communication. It is obvious that our

new villages and our rebuilt old villages cannot in the future have the artless and unsophisticated simplicity of the natural growing villages of the past.

We have, then, to decide whether village building shall take an entirely new form (whether we shall consciously and quite contentedly give it, for example, an urban or suburban form and character), or whether we should continue something of the long-developed tradition of the past, and try to give our future villages something of the essential character of the old. To do this latter does not, of course, mean that we should imitate past forms. Such imitation must be stultifying in the end; it would result not so much in true simplicity as in an affectation of it. We should do everything possible to avoid this affectation. The simplicity we can achieve will be bound to be a conscious simplicity. It will be bound to be so not only because of our own loss of natural simplicity but because the very act of planning is itself a conscious act. But, providing that our conscious attempt to achieve simplicity is honest and sincere, providing that our motives are true and direct, and providing that the simplicity is functional and not merely aesthetic, then we should be able to avoid the errors of affectation preciousness and falseness which a sophisticated simplicity would be bound to display. So, if we wish, we should in the future be able to build new villages and rebuild old villages in such a way that they will have the grace and distinction of the villages of the English tradition, and, along with those qualities, the greatly improved standards of living conditions and the new social and cultural facilities which the countryman now very properly demands.

# FUTURE

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## CHAPTER III: *Social Requirements in Villages*

WE have already said that a village, in the full sense, is compounded of people rather than of the buildings which serve them. Before we can discuss possible principles that might guide us in planning the physical utilities of a village (that is to say its houses, shops and buildings of all kinds, as well as its roads, open spaces and other matters like them) we must consider the human requirements which call these utilities into being or make them desirable.

### *I: TYPES OF VILLAGE*

In an earlier chapter, in an attempt to analyse the physical characteristics of existing places, villages were described as belonging to certain broad types. Two types were mentioned according to their physical pattern—the roadside and the squared types. Other types were mentioned according to their functions—the seaside village as distinct from the inland village, and the land-settlement village as distinct from the normal agricultural village. But while sub-divisions of this kind are useful, especially when making an analysis of physical form, it would be wrong to continue the sub-division when considering social requirements in a village. For if the village, in its

fullest sense, is people rather than buildings, then (subject to comparatively small variations to meet the comparatively small climatic and functional differences which occur in so small a country as Britain), all permanently inhabited villages require much the same broad kind of social pattern and the same kind of social utilities.

And this applies conversely. A reasonably balanced and satisfactory social life can only be obtained in a normal type of village; that is, in a village whose population is made up of well-mixed occupational groups. The present normal type of village in Britain may be lacking in a number of social provisions of various kinds, and it is a long way from being perfect, but at least its population has still a good deal of diversity of occupation, even though this has declined of late because of the diminishing demands on the traditional rural trades and crafts and the lack of an organised rural development of the new trades which should serve the new mechanised husbandry. In the so-called agricultural village the population may, almost to a man, be *indirectly* connected with agriculture; but even so the diversity of occupation is still considerable.

In an examination of the occupational structure of certain rural districts in forty English counties (eight

counties being omitted as unrepresentative), the following median averages have been found\* :—

OCCUPATIONS PER 1,000 EMPLOYED—1931 CENSUS

|                                   |    |    |    |     |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|
| Agriculture                       | .. | .. | .. | 415 |
| <i>Manufacturing industries :</i> |    |    |    |     |
| Quarrying and Brickmaking         | .. | .. | .. | 6   |
| Metal Trades                      | .. | .. | .. | 21  |
| Food and Drink                    | .. | .. | .. | 15  |
| Other manufactures                | .. | .. | .. | 44  |
| <i>Service occupations :</i>      |    |    |    |     |
| Building                          | .. | .. | .. | 36  |
| Water and Electricity             | .. | .. | .. | 1   |
| Railways                          | .. | .. | .. | 14  |
| Road and Water Transport          | .. | .. | .. | 14  |
| Distributive Trades               | .. | .. | .. | 73  |
| Administration                    | .. | .. | .. | 67  |
| Professions                       | .. | .. | .. | 21  |
| Personal service                  | .. | .. | .. | 204 |

These figures cannot be regarded as an absolutely accurate reflection of the occupational structure of 'agricultural' villages in general. They are the average of only 40 out of 476 administrative rural districts in England and Wales, and they cover *all* the area of each district, i.e., open country and small country towns as well as villages. But they are at least a rough indication of the diversity of occupation which even to-day is to be found in the normal type of village.

Though the evils which arise out of a too-limited

\* Information from the Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction. In each of the 40 counties the smallest rural district which had over 30 per cent. of its population directly engaged on agriculture was examined.

variety of occupation are known best in the way they occur in the typical mining village, they are equally well illustrated in most of the land-settlement villages which have been established during the last two decades. The comparative failure of most land-settlement schemes is to quite a considerable degree due to this evil of occupational unbalance. People have been set down in concentrated agricultural colonies where every worker was either a small-holder or a co-operator in some scheme of intensive cultivation, where not even a shop-keeper or an inn-keeper varied the occupationally standardised character of the colony. Such methods of land-settlement can never result in satisfactory *community* settlement. They should be avoided in future. If a new village is required for land-settlement purposes (or for any other purpose) it should be based on a plan which will permit, and indeed require, a varied occupational structure among its population. Or better still, any new population that is introduced into the countryside (whether for land settlement or for industry) should in most cases be attached to existing villages, though in such carefully calculated numbers as not to lead to the social unbalancing of these villages. There is no place for any type of village that is special in the social sense. Every new village and every expanded or reconstructed existing village should be normal at least in the sense that it houses a mixed community.

In suggesting this it is, of course, the village in its traditional sense of a permanent home that is in mind. But we are likely in the near future to see a new kind of village which will indeed constitute a special type—the 'holiday village.' It is probable that if the war had not occurred we should

have had some examples already. The holiday village will differ from the holiday camp (of which numerous examples had sprung up before the war) in that it will provide country and seaside holidays, with the amenities of small community life, for urban family groups, each family having a house to itself. In the building of these villages the problem will arise whether they should be attached to existing villages, or be entirely new and separate places. While it may be that the holiday-maker may get greater pleasure in a holiday village which is attached to an existing village, the existence of migrant crowds in summer and of rows of tenantless houses in winter would be unpleasant to permanent villagers. Though a small group of holiday homes unobtrusively situated on the edge of a village among trees might be entirely satisfactory, there is little doubt that any large grouping would be better constituted as a separate special village, preferably in reasonable proximity to some small country or seaside town.

What it comes to, then, is that, socially, there should be only one type of village for everyday living, the normal village compounded of inhabitants of various occupations and interests. Besides these normal living villages, there may be a number of special places for holidays, which, for convenience, may be called holiday villages though they can never be true villages in anything like the full sense.

## *2: FACTORS GOVERNING LOCATION AND SITING*

In the past the location of a village was determined by the necessities of economic geography; that is

to say, a village was located in a certain area because the winning of the products of that area by agriculture, mining, quarrying, fishing, and other activities of that kind, required its situation there. The village was a place providing housing and other basic requirements for people working in the immediate neighbourhood. The distance between villages in normal agricultural districts was determined partly by the necessity of the home being within reasonable walking distance of the work, and partly by the volume of labour required in the different kinds of work. This volume, or 'density,' of labour also determined the economic size of the village.

Modern conditions have modified these old factors to some extent. The development of transport has done so in that it has made both certain types of workers and certain types of industry more mobile than they have been hitherto. The mechanisation of agriculture has done so through its reduction in the density of labour over certain types of land.

It is impossible to forecast accurately what will be the ultimate result of these changes. That will largely depend on how they are directed. It is not unlikely that our rural economy is at the beginning of a state of change similar in degree to that which, following the change in agricultural methods in the 18th century, gave us our present countryside—or, rather, the countryside before the war of 1914-1918, for it has already changed quite markedly since then. Whether this change will be effected with the minimum of difficulty depends on how far it is planned rather than merely allowed to happen—as well, of course, as on the quality of such planning as there may be.

It is arguable whether or not the recent developments in transport and mechanisation can, and, if they can, whether for the general good they should, affect the village as they have already affected the town, and as they seem likely to affect it still more in the future. On a superficial view it can be maintained, for example, that farm workers and foresters and other workers on the land could now live in small towns and travel out by car bus or 'jeep' to their fields and forests five or ten miles away. On this argument the village could disappear over great parts of the country, and, instead of the existing countryside pattern of villages set at intervals of two or three miles, the future pattern would be one of small towns ten or twelve miles apart. But there must be few agriculturists who can regard such a development as likely to be satisfactory for farm working, especially in districts which carry stock, as most districts must surely continue to do. And, besides, the village way of life is different from the small-town way of life ; and there are many people who prefer it to any other.

The new mobility of certain types of industry, and of most industrial workers, means that it is now possible to establish in country areas certain industries which are in no way connected with the winning of natural resources or with 'processing' them. There are at least five possible results from this, if the development is permitted to take its 'natural' unplanned course. They are—

1. A single factory and the houses of its workers may be built in some countryside away from an existing village or town. This will most certainly be unsatisfactory both for the working of the factory and for the social life of the workers in it.



*SHERSTON, Wilts. The long rectangular village centre is paved and gravelled : the boxed shrubs create a decorative effect.*

2. A single factory or a group of factories may be set up in a rural area, workpeople being transported daily from one or more towns in the surrounding district. This arrangement has been advocated by some people on the grounds that it would keep the towns clear of industrial grime (though, in fact, few industries, except those of the 'heavier' kind, create much nuisance by smoke nowadays). But this would be very unfair on the countryside. And, in any case,

the arrangement will be unsatisfactory in that it will involve workers in excessive daily travel.

3. A *group* of factories and the houses of the workers in them may be established in a new place. The effect of this will depend on the size of the group, and of the units in it. If the group is considerable, as it should be to achieve the occupational diversification which is one of the chief objects of grouping, and if the units in the group, i.e., the individual factories, are of substantial size (employing say something like 50 workers or over), as they are likely to be in this age of mass-production, then they and their associated houses and service buildings will constitute a small town rather than a village.

4. A group of factories and associated houses of this kind may be attached to an existing village. If it is, the result will be to convert the village into a small town. This may or not be desirable; whether it is or is not will depend on many matters with which we are not concerned here, for what was a village will no longer be one.

5. A single factory, or perhaps two, may be attached to an existing village. This may be of great social benefit. For one thing, well adjusted development of this kind may absorb labour which may be displaced through the mechanisation of agriculture. For another, it will help in the occupational diversification which is so desirable. Its success or otherwise will again depend on the size of the factory, or factories, and the number of factory workers in relation to the total number of workers in the village. It has been suggested that the addition to a normal country village of a factory which employs more than a third of the total

available workers in the village is likely to have an unbalancing effect and is undesirable. Certainly the effect on the village community caused by the introduction of a large factory is likely to be serious, and the question of balance is so important that each case will need to have most careful consideration.\*

The sum of all this is that, in spite of the new mobility afforded by the new transport, the actual pattern of village settlement over the country is unlikely to be subject to great change in the near future. In some parts of the country where villages are sometimes unnecessarily close together for modern conditions there may very well be a slight broadening of the pattern of distribution; and a considerable reduction in the number of hamlets, either through the grouping of neighbouring hamlets into a new village or by attaching them to existing villages, is very desirable on social grounds. But, while changes of this kind may take place, the altered modern conditions that we have spoken of (i.e., the development of transport and so on), have not in fact fundamentally changed the balance of the factors controlling the total pattern of village location. Over most of the country there will still need to be a broad pattern of villages situated at intervals of two or three miles.

But while the broad pattern may not be subject to much change, the actual siting within that pattern may sometimes need to be reconsidered.

As there were certain factors which in the past influenced the choice of a site for a village, so there are to-day certain factors which make some sites preferable to others. Some of these factors are old ones

\* For a further consideration of these matters see *Scott Report (Chap. IX)*; also *minority report*.

much modified ; others are new. But the standards which would now influence or determine the choice of a new site clearly cannot be applied in their full force to the thousands of villages which already exist. There are great advantages in the occupation of a long-settled site, even if all the buildings on that site now need renewing on a new plan; and unless an existing site is obviously unsuitable for modern living it should not lightly be abandoned. Existing villages, will, of course, need to be provided with the services and conveniences which modern standards of life demand. The quality of their housing will need to be greatly improved. They will need to be given proper community facilities. They must have electricity and (perhaps) gas supplies, and adequate sewage and refuse disposal systems. If their streets are highways carrying any substantial volume of through traffic they should be bye-passed. And so on. It will be their capacity or incapacity for being given these improvements and for being brought up to a standard consistent with modern ideals of living that will, in the end, determine whether or not they are places which should be encouraged to grow, or even continue to exist, or whether in any long-term rural policy they should be abandoned and rebuilt on some more suitable site nearby, as Lowther, Milton Abbas, Harewood, Inveraray, and other villages, were removed and rebuilt in the 18th century.

The main factors that will influence the choice of site for a new village can be stated quite shortly. A site on a southward facing slope is obviously preferable to one facing north; and a near-level or gently and evenly sloping site is generally preferable to one which has steep slopes or local irregularities.



*ALDERMASTON, Berks. A mill, a rural factory.*

A satisfactory sub-soil with a low water table is necessary. The site should be such that the provision of services will be reasonably economical. A position near a railway line will have advantages, and good road access is essential, though the site



should be a little back from a through-traffic road rather than alongside it. And a site which has well grown trees (as well as, perhaps, a stream or a river) will be pleasant from the beginning, instead of having to wait for forty or fifty years until new trees have grown sufficiently big to settle the village into its landscape.

### 3: FACTORS GOVERNING SIZE

The extent to which communal services can be provided in a village depends to a very large extent on its size. A village, then, should be big enough to provide its inhabitants with at least the minimum communal services which are necessary according to modern standards of living.

It is difficult to establish criteria as to these minimum services. Whatever is done, certain social facilities can never be provided in the village at the level to which they develop in the town; the scale of the group activity that is involved prevents this. The solution of the problem lies in determining which of the social services that are indispensable to our civilisation must essentially be provided on a local basis.

There can be little doubt that the basic indispensable local service is the education of the young child. Older children, those over the age of, say, eleven, may reasonably be expected to travel some little distance to school, though this distance should

not be greater than is necessary, and facilities for travelling (and for midday meals) must be provided at the public expense. The provision for these post-primary schools may be on a *district* basis when a local one cannot be arranged, such a school being situated in the central village of a small group of villages. But it is essential that for very young children schools should be available at the place where they live, if that is reasonably possible; and every village should therefore contain a junior school and a nursery school.

While it is the duty of the State to give every child a proper means of education, it is obviously desirable that this should be done with as much economy as is consistent with a proper standard of service. A wide scattering of very small schools fully staffed with a teacher to every age-group (which might sometimes mean as many teachers as children) would be extremely wasteful. What is even more important, it would be inefficient in an educational sense, for every child benefits by the company of its contemporaries and by sharpening its wits against theirs; and while there is an approximate maximum size for a class for the purpose of good education there is also an approximate minimum.

While it is by no means entirely satisfactory, the coupling of two year-groups under one teacher in a small school is a reasonable working arrangement. There are six year-groups in the range of ages between five and eleven, which is the range generally provided for by a primary school. Three classes of, say, 17 children apiece (each comprising two year-groups) makes a school of about 50 scholars. This is about the minimum working unit for a school even on this compromise arrangement. Calculating

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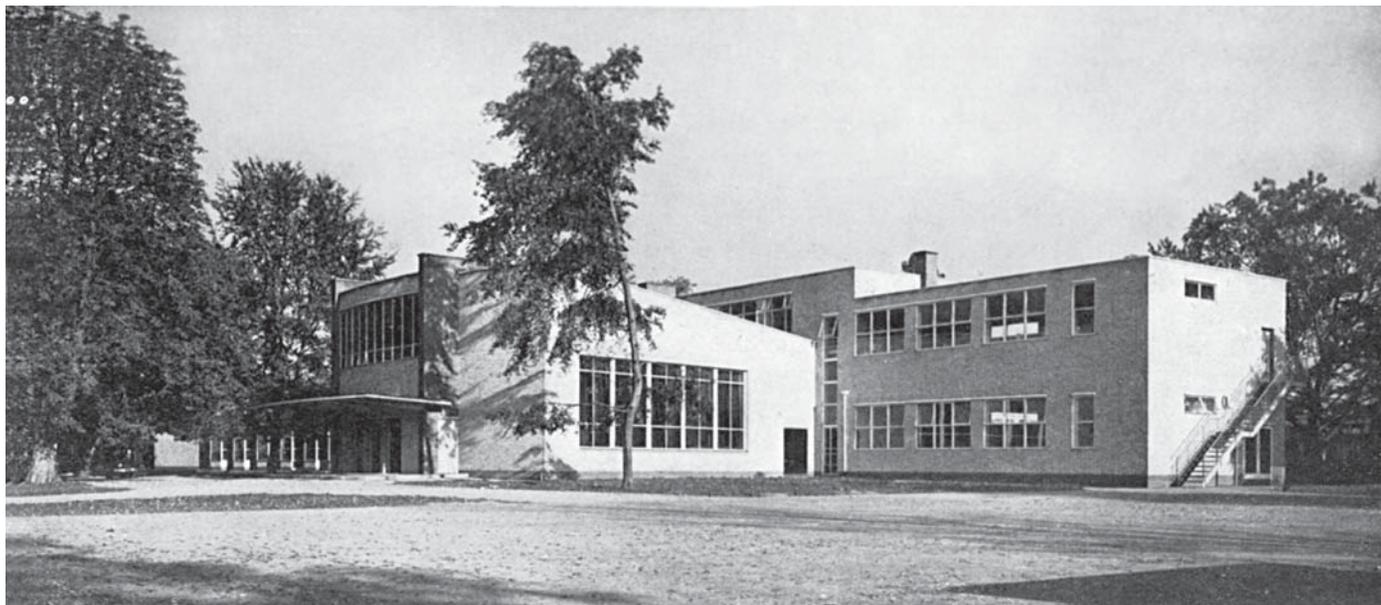
ASKHAM, Cumberland. A village on a sloping site backed by woods.

on the fact that in 1937 there were roughly 14.7 children of each of these year-groups in every thousand of the population, this means that *on the present age-grouping of the population* something like 570 is the desirable minimum population for a village and its surrounding countryside. If, as is not unlikely, something like a third or a quarter of that total population lives in farmhouses and cottages outside the village, then the desirable minimum size for the village itself will be a population of between 400 and 450. This size is a satisfactory one for the provision of a nursery school also. But, as is now well-known, a shift in the age-grouping of the population is inevitable during the next few decades. It has been calculated, for example, that in 1971, there will only be about 11.1 children in each year-group (between the ages of five and eleven) per

1,000 population, if the pre-war birthrate recurs after the war. Thus, in 1971, on this basis, a population of something like 750, with 500-550 inhabitants in the village itself, will be required to maintain a primary school of 50 children. If, however, the present birth-rate could be maintained, there would be about 12.9 children in each age group; and a total population of about 650 in the parish, and some 450 or 500 in the village, would suffice.

There are other basic services which determine what is the smallest desirable size for a village, since it may not be possible to provide them economically for a village much below that size. An adequate 'bus service to the neighbouring town is one example. A population of four or five hundred is said to be necessary for this. But on these matters it is difficult to arrive at any reasonably exact figure as one can

*IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE, Cambridge*



for education, and on the whole the primary education of the population is probably the most important of all these size-determining services.

#### 4: TYPES OF VILLAGE BUILDINGS

The buildings in a village will generally be of five main types. There will be (i) community buildings, (ii) service buildings, (iii) workshops, (iv) (possibly) factories, and (v) houses.

The number and type of *community buildings* will depend to some extent on the position of the village in the group of which it is a part. One village of a group may contain a building or buildings which serve the whole group. It need not follow that the few group buildings will be concentrated in the same village. Different villages may be suitable district centres for different purposes. On the whole, however, it is likely to prove most satisfactory if one particular village does in fact become the district centre for these group purposes, though it is important that this should not denude the remaining villages of the communal facilities which can be successfully provided there. If that were to happen, and the remaining villages were to become mere social suburbs of the central village, then the majority of villages might be even worse off, socially, than they are to-day.

The only social facilities which require to be centralised are those connected with post-primary education and large-scale communal activity. The Village Colleges of Cambridgeshire are admirable examples of what can be done in the way of providing for both activities in one set of buildings.

The future policy of rural education may perhaps result in institutions rather different from these, but, in the main, district social and educational facilities are likely to be provided in something of this kind of way.

The main local community buildings will be the village primary school and the village hall—for whatever district facilities are provided, every village should have its public hall for those activities that are peculiarly its own. The churches, too, will no doubt continue to be important village institutions (though here, because of the union of various denominational bodies, there is likely to be a numerical contraction of separate institutions rather than much new building). And besides these major local community buildings there is room for various minor buildings of a new kind. Many villages could do with a small open-sided covered market building, where fruit, vegetables, eggs and other local produce could be sold. And a communal refrigeration building for the storage of local produce; and a communal heating station and laundry, where, by one of the several methods now available, the communal provision of heat and hot water for all village buildings could be undertaken—these and other facilities like them should be usual features of our new and improved villages.

As to the *service buildings*, the chief of these are the shops and the inns.

The number of shops in existing villages is apt to be large. Every one who is at all familiar with a number of villages will be able to call to mind comparatively small villages of about 300 inhabitants that have as many as eight or nine shops (and three or four inns into the bargain). The number of

shops in relation to population cannot be put on a proportional basis as it can be, with approximate accuracy, in a town. Personal relationships are important in a small grouping, and if you are not on good terms with one shop-keeper you want to be able to buy from another. Obviously, it will not be possible to have two of every kind of shop; but it is generally necessary to have two general stores at least. There will usually need to be a baker's, a butcher's and a cobbler's as well; and perhaps a saddler's—at least five, and perhaps six shops. And something like this number will probably be necessary in the comparatively small village of about 250 inhabitants as well as in the village of 400-500 inhabitants which has been postulated as being the desirable minimum size where conditions permit.

The inn might almost be classed as a community building. As an informal meeting place it is not likely to be superseded by whatever perfect social facilities there may be in community centres and the like. Here again the importance of personal relations in the small group makes it desirable that the village population has a choice of place—which means that there should be at least two inns in every sizeable village. One of these should have the amenities of a genuine inn, that is, it should be a place where the traveller can eat and stay the night. The other may be a quite simple tavern or pub. Neither should be anything like a road house, for that kind of establishment is for townsmen and has nothing to do with village life.

In a village which is on a regular tourist track one of the inns may perhaps have something of the type of the American 'auto-camp' attached to it—

a group of 'over-night' cabins with garage accommodation alongside, ranged round a little private courtyard. But this kind of provision should be kept small, and in scale with the village to which it is attached; otherwise it may be a seriously disruptive element.

Among other service buildings there are such small but nevertheless important things as the bus shelter and the telephone kiosk. The well-considered siting of these can have a most telling and lively effect, for they are to the modern village much the same kind of feature as the village pump was to the old.

Then as to *workshops*. There will always need to be some few of these to serve the day-to-day needs of the village and its surrounding countryside. The traditional village crafts are bound to be much modified by technological change; and so are the workshops. Thus the smithy will become the smithy-garage, attending to the needs of both the literal and the metaphorical horsepower of the



*BUS SHELTER. A building of good modern design sits happily beside the village green with older buildings alongside.*



*HOXNE, Norfolk. Fine well-placed trees at the head of the village green : the telephone kiosk makes a very satisfactory punctuation in the composition.*

district. And of more than the district; for where the village is situated near a road of more than local importance the garage will then need to serve passing traffic (and will be better situated on the roadside, rather than in the village).

While a building for what is generally called a 'rural trade' may very well be situated among the service buildings of a village, if that trade is likely to remain small, the building of a *factory* proper will be better outside a village. Not because a factory must be ugly; it can be extremely pleasant; indeed it *should* be pleasant. But however pleasant it may be it is almost certain to be out of scale with, and consequently to over-dominate, the small elements of which a village is composed. And besides this, and perhaps more important, it will be better for the functioning of both the factory and the village if the factory's traffic does not have to pass through the village streets. So the ideal position is somewhere just outside the village, at a key point in the local communications: and if an attractive setting among trees is possible, so much the better.

Lastly, there are the most important of all village buildings, *the houses*. Here there are two main considerations which affect the planning of the village as a whole.

There is the matter of aspect. It is an excellent general principle that rooms in a house should face in the direction which will give them sunshine at the time most required by their inhabitants. If, as is sometimes vaguely thought, there were some one perfect orientation, that would dictate all our village forms in the future. Fortunately for the pleasures of diversity there is not. Because of the conflicting claims of different uses and because of

the change in the position and height of the sun at different times of the year, planning for sunlight, is in fact by no means the simple matter it would superficially seem to be. Good and bad are apt to cancel each other out—as for example on a southern aspect, where good winter sunshine can be got in rooms but summer sunshine cannot (because of the height of the sun at noon). Though there are people who maintain that winter sunshine is the most worth planning for, it would seem on the whole that the south is one of the least satisfactory aspects (because among other things it almost inevitably involves, as a corollary, that some rooms in the house must have the worst aspect of all, namely, north). On balance, some aspect between NE-SE and SW-NW is the best for general purposes.

Then there is the matter of private outdoor space adjoining the house. In the past this often took the form of a yard; but it is now more or less generally acknowledged that space for a garden is a prime essential to practically every house. The difficult question is what size this garden should be.

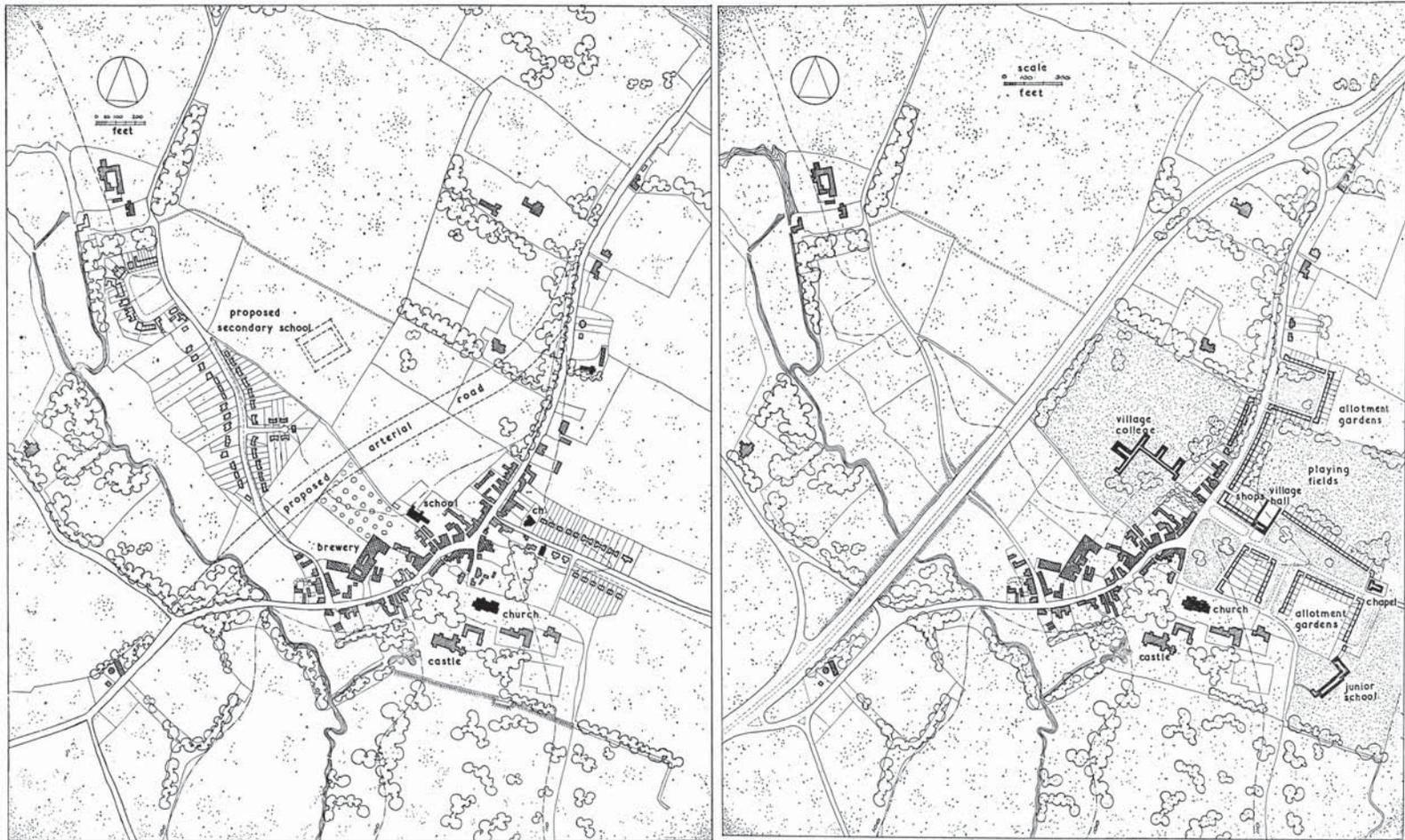
The garden may be used for one, or both, of two basic purposes. It may be an outdoor room or it may be a miniature small-holding for the production of vegetables and fruit and even poultry and pigs. As an outdoor room it is an integral part of the ground floor of the house—an outward projection of it into the open air, a place where occasional household jobs can be done, where small children can play within call and under their mother's eye, where members of the household can sit or potter about on warm days. Part of this outdoor room needs to be paved, part may be a little lawn, and round it all may be a flower border for decoration.

It seems reasonable that outdoor working and sitting space should be about the same size as the indoor working and sitting space, which means that the garden, for this purpose, should be about the same area as the ground floor of the ordinary two-storey house. The fruit and vegetable garden, will of course, be much bigger. The recent common rural standard of one-eighth of an acre for house plus garden seems to give about the right size for this.

If the outdoor-room type of garden is to serve its purpose properly, it needs to have privacy. This means that generally it should be *behind* the house, away from the public roads and approaches. The front garden which is nowadays provided for all new houses has little real use. It is too public to sit in, too small to cultivate. So it becomes a kind of dead area between the house and the road. And that, really, is its intention—to secure the internal privacy of the house by preventing passing people from peering in at the windows. But for this purpose nothing like the present standardised minimum depth of 20-25 ft. of front garden is necessary. Unless a window stretches the whole length of a wall, or there are windows on opposite walls, it is difficult to see clearly into a room unless one flattens one's nose against the glass. So all that is really necessary is to prevent people flattening their noses in this way (if, in fact they ever want to), and this can be done as well by some barrier three or four feet wide as by the suburban front garden. The little traditional unfenced garden strip, which, as we have seen, is so common a feature of the old villages serves equally well: and it is more pleasant in effect.



*A MODERN STREET of small houses such as would fit well in character in a new or an old village.*



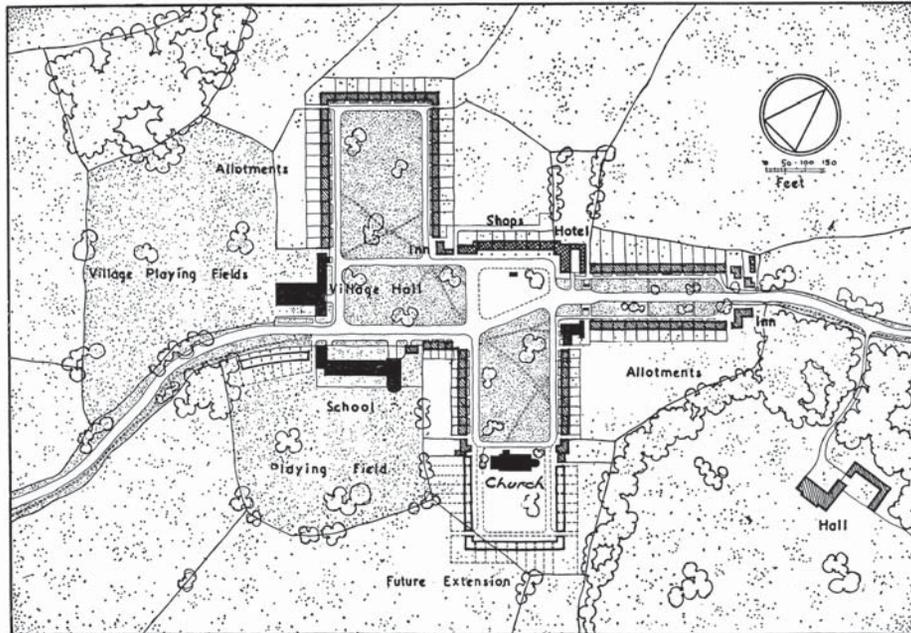
**NON-PLANNING AND PLANNING.** The plan on the left shows what has happened to a village in Kent during the course of this century: the old buildings are hatched: the modern buildings are in outline. Every possible mistake has been or is about to be made. The new houses are badly grouped, so that the village has lost character and coherence: an arterial is to cut the village off from its new school. The plan on the right shows what might have been done if the same new work had been planned: the village is kept compact: the new building shapes are in character: the by-pass is right away from the village.

## 5: OPEN SPACES

Over and above the playing fields that are attached to the village schools, there should be a public playing field in every village. The National Playing Fields Association's general standard for the provision of playing fields is that there should be 6 acres per 1,000 inhabitants: but a provision in exact proportion within that standard is not satisfactory for populations below 1,000. The minimum size for a playing field which will allow for football,

cricket, tennis, bowls and a children's corner is something like 4 acres. A field of this size will be necessary for every village with 250 inhabitants as well as a village with 500.

The playing field should be as close as possible to the village, and it should not be necessary to cross traffic roads to get to it. And it is, of course, an advantage if it immediately adjoins the village hall; for the changing and storage rooms can then be situated in that building.



*A PLAN FOR A NEW VILLAGE, showing an inter-play of shapes, and the considered siting of the main buildings.*

## CHAPTER IV: *Plan-Forms*

### *I: ARRANGEMENT OF BUILDINGS*

Now that we have glanced at the various types of buildings and other utilities required in a village we can proceed to consider their collective relationships and the patterns of grouping, the plan-forms, that are necessary or desirable for the collective functioning of the village and for its orderly appearance.

One of the first things to consider is the arrangement of the houses in relationship to each other.

There are three, and only three, basic methods of arrangement. The houses may be separate; they may be joined to one other; they may be joined to two or more others. Each of these arrangements has its advantages and disadvantages.

*Detached houses.* The separate or detached house can be given a freer plan than joined houses can be given. Open on four sides it can have access on all those sides, and its rooms can have a greater variety of aspect and prospect than those of a half-joined semi-detached house or a fully-joined house in a row. The detached house also has a superiority over the others, in the matter of both visual and aural privacy. These various advantages it can enjoy fully only when it stands quite apart. The nearer it approaches to neighbours the less it enjoys them. Moreover, they are *private* advantages only, i.e., they are enjoyed solely by the persons living in

the house. Against them must be set certain disadvantages both private and public. The cost of all public services to this kind of house is necessarily greater than the cost of similar services to joined houses; for all service roads, and all pipe and cable lines in connection with sewerage, water, gas, electricity, telephone and so on, must be longer. When the houses are very widespread, distributive costs, as in the delivery of goods and in postal deliveries, are also greater; and supervision, as in policing, is more difficult. All these disadvantages are in proportion to the degree of separateness, that is to say, the distance of each house from its neighbours. The greater the private advantage, the greater is the public disadvantage. Further, there is one disadvantage which is not proportionate to the degree of separateness, but is shared by all separate houses; namely that the separate house is more costly to build than a half-joined house, which can share one of its gables with a neighbour, or than a fully-joined house, which can share both.

There are other counts on which the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods of house-building must be considered. They must be considered in their social significance and their possibilities of architectural effect. On neither of these counts is the method of building in detached units very satisfactory. While the possession of a detached house may perhaps satisfy, in an obvious way, the sense of individuality on the part of each family, the collective effect of an assemblage of separate



*GROOMSBRIDGE, Kent. The shops along the village green. The simple railings are excellently in character with the village.*

houses conveys little or no sense of community. Further, the collective architectural result is necessarily scrappy and restless. The separateness of the various units is bound to lessen very seriously the possibility of collective success.

*Semi-detached houses.* In the half-joined or semi-detached house the variety of means of access and the variety of aspect and prospect are reduced by the sharing of a common gable. The possibility of absolute privacy is automatically destroyed by



MILVERTON, Somerset. 'Urbanity' in village buildings.

association with another house—and it is important to note that it is not merely halved, but entirely destroyed. The *relative* privacy which remains cannot be anything like so much compromised by a junction with a third house as the *absolute* privacy has been by that junction with a second.

The semi-detached house has a superiority over

the detached house as regards economy in public services: but the existence of a gap between each semi-detached block necessarily involves waste in comparison with the fully-joined house; and here again the extra cost is proportionate to the distance between the separate semi-detached blocks. Similarly there is economy in construction as compared with

the detached block in that one gable is shared, but the economy is still only half that which is effected in the full joining of houses.

As regards social significance and architectural effect, there is again some superiority when the buildings come sufficiently close together to comprise a single picture, (as they must, in a village). But this superiority is not very marked. Even where an improvement on current practice is effected by having gabled rather than hipped roofs, the appearance is still one of restlessness and disunity, and the real possibilities of collective architectural success are still seriously impaired.

*Street houses.* When houses are full joined so as to form a continuous row, the maximum economy in the provision of public services is achieved. Indeed, some public services, such as district heating, can only satisfactorily be provided when this form of building is adopted. There is also the maximum economy in construction, since both of what would be individual gable walls in the detached house are shared with adjoining houses. And, further, this sharing of gables means considerable economy in the heat loss that inevitably takes place through external walls, which are here reduced to the minimum.

The loss of relative privacy, as compared with that in detached or semi-detached houses which come close together (as they are bound to in any compact grouping such as a village should be), is very slight, if there is any at all; for overlooking from neighbouring windows occurs equally in all cases, as does the passage of sound through windows that are open; and the prevention of the passage of sound through party walls (which occurs in semi-

detached houses as well as in street houses) is merely a matter of building with proper attention to sound insulation.

The variety of aspects in a fully-joined house is less than that enjoyed by a free-standing detached house or a semi-detached block; but, again, this reduction is unimportant when those houses and blocks stand close together; for the space between them is then too small to provide either a desirable view or sufficient lighting for habitable rooms, and there is little or no difference between those houses and the street house which cannot be met by an



*BELSAY, Northumberland. Village shops behind arcades.*



*MONTACUTE, Somerset. A square at the entrance gates to a great house.*

adjustment of internal planning arrangements.

The available alternative means of access is also reduced in the street house. This may be overcome either by the construction of a back lane or by the provision of ground-floor passages between the houses; or it may be provided through a garage incorporated in the house block.

As for social significance and architectural effect, building in street formation is undoubtedly the best arrangement of houses in immediate juxtaposition. The street or the block contains the essence of the sense of neighbourliness and community. And it is only by the large-scale grouping of small buildings into a single composition (which is what a street should be) that architectural unity and repose can be achieved.

These, then, are the chief points for and against the three basic types of arrangement. There is no further basic arrangement. And it is important to note that, in respect of all matters of convenience and economy, the middle house of a block of three is in precisely the same case as the middle house in a block of twenty, or the seventh or the seventeenth house, come to that. Arguments as to whether it is better to build in blocks of four or blocks of ten, eleven, twelve, or any other number, can only be based on aesthetic or social grounds.

Generally speaking, the pattern made by related streets or blocks should be rectangular. Since right-angled rooms are generally preferable to rooms that have odd angles and walls that are not straight or parallel, and since such rooms (and the



*HATFIELD BROAD OAK, Essex. A roadside village : with little unfenced flower strips between houses and footpath.*

buildings that contain them) are the most economical to construct, the normal and natural building line is a straight one. The rectangle is therefore the most convenient plan-form. It is also the most direct and simple; and because of its simplicity (if our earlier analysis of the essentials of village character is correct), it is the most suitable for village building.

This is not to say that there is no place for the curving street. On the contrary, a subtle curve echoing some natural line, like that of a stream or a hillside, may provide a very telling foil against the common rectangular forms. For convenience of building, such a curve should be slow, and to be in character it should be 'natural' rather than geometric. A complicated pattern of elaborate and artificial circular shapes would be completely destructive of the directness and simplicity which should characterise the plan-arrangements in a village.

## 2: *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PLAN-SHAPES*

In using the word 'street' to indicate the desirable architectural arrangement of buildings, one does not necessarily mean a street in the limited sense of two lines of buildings facing each other across a roadway. In the wider sense, any continuous block of buildings is a street.

The street in the more limited and literally more

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*UPWELL, Cambridgeshire. A village following the curve of its river.*







narrow sense was a characteristic form in many of our old villages: in fact, it was *the* characteristic form of the numerous body of villages which we have classified as belonging to the 'roadside' type. That was a natural form for unplanned growth to take in days of infrequent road traffic. But it is not a suitable pattern for planned villages under present conditions of transport. If any of the old village types is of special interest to us to-day, it is the 'squared' type.

The square, the quadrangle and the close are among the most useful plan-shapes for modern conditions of living; and the plans for our new or rebuilt villages, and for village extensions, may very well be based on them, where the topographical conditions are suitable. These shapes, either singly or in combination, are capable of a great deal of diversity. There is a wide range of variation, for example, in the proportions of the simple rectangle and in the way the different kinds of building which go to make up a village may be disposed about it. Some villages may be planned as just a single rectangle or square. But no one would wish them all, or the majority of them, to be like that; for the use of a single basic shape, however varied it might be, would suggest something in the nature of regimentation. Differently proportioned rectangular shapes used in juxtaposition, with the occasional introduction, perhaps, of a triangular or other regular shape, would overcome this. It is obvious that many permutations of these shapes are possible.

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*KIRKLINGTON, Oxon. The view closed at a turn of the road: great trees on the green.*

Further, the modifications demanded of them to suit the topographical conditions of particular sites; the difference in appearance of identical shapes which may be brought about by the situation of existing features such as trees, and by new planting; the differences of appearance, again, that will arise out of differences in architectural design and differences in the materials used in building—all this should mean not only that standardisation can be avoided, but that in the future, as in the past, every village can be different from every other village, and that every village may be an individual place.

There is, of course, a special danger to be avoided in all this; the danger of producing an over-elaborate and over-sophisticated pattern. This juxtaposition of related shapes should not bring into being any form of monumental planning. There should be an orderly relationship of the parts; but the parts themselves should be simple, their relationship should be simple, and then the total result will have the simplicity of character that belongs to the genuine village.

There is another danger; one that arises in taking too limited thought for the total result. It has to be remembered that a village is a living organism, not a static thing. Any living village is continuously subject to change. It is essential, therefore, that the possibility of further growth must be provided for in any plans that are made (the possibility of contraction is another matter, a social-economic one). In planning, there is a natural temptation to produce some completely rounded finite design. But such a design is bound to be unsatisfactory in the long run. Since every village should be capable of extension, one of the important measures of the

success of a plan will be the degree to which the village when built will have the appearance of completeness and yet will still be capable of further harmonious growth.

The question of 'scale' is important. It is important everywhere, but it is especially so in the design of squares, closes and their like. The thing most necessary to remember is that there is no virtue in mere space as such. The only virtue in space in the public parts of a village is in its proper relation to the buildings surrounding it. Private

out-door space will be provided in private gardens; space for recreation will be provided in playing fields on the edge of the village. Any space in squares and closes, over and above the small space required for circulation in service roads and foot-paths, and that required to secure a proper measure of daylight and sunlight in the surrounding buildings, will therefore be purely 'amenity' space. Besides involving difficulties of maintenance, too much space will reduce the surrounding buildings to insignificance; it will reduce their apparent scale. Since



*MONKS ELEIGH, Suffolk. The village green (very ill-kept) narrows and slopes gently up towards the church, which dominates the village: the village pump also punctuates the scene with a subtle emphasis.*

modern buildings are generally low-pitched, this reduction of scale may very easily occur in a design where on paper the open area of a square does not seem to be very large—which adds particular point to the general principle (so often, unfortunately, forgotten) that true planning is a matter of three dimensions and not merely of two; that what is put upon the ground-plan is at least as important as the ground-plan itself; and that no ground-plan which has been prepared without a clear conception of the form of the buildings that are to be put upon it has much chance of success. And in this matter of squares and closes, there is another immutable principle and one this time which seems to have been almost entirely forgotten for a century and more—the principle that a true square is not a space surrounded by buildings, but buildings enclosing a space.

The principle of enclosure is as important as the question of scale. In the old villages the views outwards and inwards are almost always closed. How this came about, whether it was done deliberately or whether it just happened naturally (which is the more likely), no one can say: and anyhow it is not a point for us to bother about here. The point is that there is good reason to maintain this sense of enclosure to-day. For one thing it gives protection against weather. For another thing it is pictorially satisfying. And thirdly it is psychologically satisfying.

For people in towns, where views are close-focussed restricted and canalised, an open view in a park or along a river can afford great pleasure. In the country the position is reversed. There, where views are wide-ranging and rarely closely

directed, a limitation of the view may offer a kind of psychological refuge and a visual satisfaction by way of contrast. That is the pleasure of the walled garden. The enclosure should not, of course, be such as to produce a sensation of being shut in, of being imprisoned. That would be going to the other extreme. And almost always some of the windows of a house in a village should face out into the open country—which in any case is one of the chief characteristics of a squared village. But from inside the enclosed village the surrounding framework of buildings, confining the view and subtly conveying a sense of refuge, can give a great (though not perhaps very easily definable) visual pleasure and psychological satisfaction.

That refers to the view outwards. The closure of the view inwards is also important. As can be seen in almost any old village, the termination of the view *inwards*, so that it is contained there rather than allowed to squander out beyond, gives to the village the character of a local climax. And if that inward view is terminated on one of the public buildings, then the sense of climax will be heightened, and the traveller cannot but be aware that he is entering a well established community.

Of course matters like topography may modify these suggested principles right and left. Sometimes the squared form may be unsuitable, as on a steep hillside, where a simple form of terracing may be more satisfactory. And sometimes a natural view may be so forceful, so dramatic, that *it*, rather than buildings, may provide the sense of enclosure. And so on, and so on. Nevertheless, in spite of special cases, broad principles like these will still have their value for the general run of villages in the future.

## CHAPTER V: *Building and Planting*

### *I: ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER*

In speaking of the villages of the past it was pointed out that there has never hitherto been a distinctive rural style of architecture. It was also suggested that there has never been any segregation of building materials; no labelling of materials as 'this' for the country and 'that' for the town. But in recent years there has been a tendency to run counter to this old practice. Something of a romantic fallacy has grown up round the idea of building in the country.

The report of the Scott Committee has some apposite paragraphs on this matter—

On the question of colour, quality and character of building materials in the countryside (the Committee says) we have received much contradictory evidence. Many people who have the maintenance of the beauty of the countryside at heart sincerely believe that only buildings of 'traditional' and 'local' materials should be permitted to be erected in country places. While we have every sympathy with the desires which prompt such belief, tradition is not a fixed and final thing. If it is alive—and it is only worth anything when it is alive—it must be subject to growth and development. Any attempt to prevent the use of new materials and new types of design arising out of new building techniques based on those new materials, or arising merely out of changes and developments in human needs, is bound in the end to be

futile: and if it were not it would mean the end of all architectural development whatsoever.

We are convinced that the proper and realistic way of directing building operations in the countryside, so as to maintain and even increase rather than destroy amenity, is to require that buildings shall be in good material which is sympathetic in colour with the traditional colourings of the landscape in which it is situated. Thus wood, if it is properly handled, may be very successful in almost any landscape: brick that is carefully selected for colour and texture can be inoffensively used even in a stone country: and concrete, well handled and carefully considered in the matter of colour (which unfortunately it rarely is), may also be successful in almost any district. To say this is not in the least to suggest that there has been nothing wrong in the kind of building which has been going on in the last few decades—the use of glaring red brick in stone country and so on. It has in truth been disastrous. But we feel certain that the future of architecture does not lie in the easy direction of mere preservation and narrow conservatism. It lies in the imaginative use of new opportunities—and it is precisely these that we are now afforded, in building, by the new materials and methods of construction available to us.

In writing this the Scott Committee did not intend to suggest that every building or group of buildings is sufficient to itself and need not be concerned with its surroundings. On the contrary, a building cannot be a good building unless it takes due recognition of those surroundings. It is not enough to say that a building's success lies in the satisfaction of its own purposes. That is very



*BIDDESTONE, Wilts. Village neighbourliness : houses of all shapes and sizes closely and pleasantly associated.*



largely true; but it is not the whole truth. Especially is it not the whole truth when the building is situated among other buildings which, by some means or other, are unified in a harmonious whole, as are the buildings of many of our villages. There a new building, if it is to be successful, must subscribe to existing harmonies. This does not mean that it must imitate the architectural *style* of the existing buildings; what it means is that its height, its position in relation to existing street lines, the character and colour of its materials, and other matters like these, must be carefully considered in relation to the rest of the village. This, again, need not necessarily mean that the new materials, for example, should be the same as the materials of which the older buildings are constructed, though if those are readily available and are suitable for the purpose it would be sensible to use them. What it means is that, since out of a very wide range of available materials there are bound to be some which would be more suitable in this situation than others would be, the choice of the particular material should be determined by a sense of responsibility in good neighbourliness.

Considerations of the same kind should apply, though to a less degree, in the case of a substantial extension to an existing village. Here, where it will be a matter of adding a new building group, or a series of groups, rather than of interpolating new buildings into an existing group, the requirements of harmony and good neighbourliness will be met

by an attention to the materials of which the buildings are to be constructed. To a less degree again this same consideration will apply to the building of a new village. There, the harmony to be considered will not be that of adjacent buildings but of the surrounding countryside.

These considerations should not be allowed to result in a timidly conservative attitude towards design and materials. There is a world of difference between the exercise of free discrimination over the whole range of possibilities and the deliberate limitation of the range to possibilities that are felt to be safe because they are familiar. The latter can only result in an architecture that is safely dead. We want a village architecture that is robust and colourful—as the village architecture of the past generally was. And in attempting that we should remember the possibilities of colourwash. Colourwash is not merely a most useful surfacing where only indifferent or bad materials are readily available; it can look delightful and fresh and appropriate almost anywhere.

There is only one other matter relating to architectural character that need be mentioned here. It is this. A smooth continuous roofline is one of the most graceful and restful characteristics of building in 'street' formation. But too long a repetition of the same *level* of roof over too great an area will in the end become dull and monotonous. That is a very obvious fault in most of our modern suburbs; there is a monotonous level (though not a continuity) of roofs, above which neither church spires nor taller buildings of any kind rise up to diversify the sky-line. Such monotony is unlikely to occur in a village since the houses are com-

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*DUNSFORD, Devon. An example of a church tower dominating a village over its roof-tops, though the approaches to the building are hidden.*



*A RURAL FACTORY. Mill at Aylsham, Norfolk.*

paratively few in number; but even there the punctuation of the sky-line is desirable. The church with its tower or spire gives this punctuation in existing villages. It provides a dominant within the village itself. And outside, too, in the surrounding landscape, it provides a point of human as against natural interest; and it indicates to travellers through that landscape the presence of a human settlement, the position of the countryside's social

and economic centre. In our new or rebuilt villages the church, or the village hall, or both, should act in a like manner.

## 2: *PLANTING*

Village character is almost as dependent on the character of the spaces within the village as on the character of the architectural forms which surround

them; and the character of the spaces is determined by the character of the natural forms which embellish them, as well as by the way in which those forms are disposed and used.

Natural forms may be used either to strengthen and support architectural forms or to act as foils against them. In both cases their character and their disposition in the village plan need to be considered carefully, for though they may be beautiful things in themselves their ill-considered use as elements in a larger composition will not necessarily produce beauty in that composition; and though it is unlikely to produce positive ugliness it may result in dullness, vexation at lost opportunity and, perhaps, monotony.

The covering of the 'floor' of a square or a close is an example. Nothing could be lovelier than our well-kept village greens (though they are not all well kept). But lovely though it may be, grass is not the only covering; and we might with advantage consider whether sometimes in the smaller squares a paved or gravelled floor would not be equally pleasant. Such gravelled squares do occasionally exist in England and Wales; but they are rare. They might well be more frequent. Their use may, of course, be functional as well as decorative. Any small space which is likely to be subject to heavy wear will probably both look better and serve its purpose better if it is paved or gravelled. And, besides being functional in this narrow sense, and being pleasant by way of contrast, the different treatments of different parts of the space within a plan may be employed to bring out the character of the parts themselves. Thus the paving of the space about the centre of the village, where the

public buildings and the shops are, will not only be functionally sound in that the space may be subject to so much use that any grass that grew would be poor and patchy; it will also be sound in that, by way of contrast with the grass-covered spaces in the domestic quarters, the paved space would reflect and emphasise the special public character of that part of the village.

The elements in the plan may also be emphasised by imaginative tree-planting. Thus, again, the village centre may be given importance by a few well-placed trees. Here they may be used with some degree of formality. And so they may be on the straight stretches of the approach roads to the village, where formal avenues (which elsewhere in



EGGLESCLIFF, Co. Durham. A closed corner in a squared village.

the English countryside should generally be avoided) may very delightfully serve a double purpose—the introduction of the approaching traveller to the village and the unifying outward projection of the village into the countryside.

In the rest of the village, however, the general planting should probably be mainly by way of informal grouping. Except in the instances where they are used to emphasise some point of the plan, trees in a village will almost always act as foils against the buildings rather than as supports for them; and they will do that best if they are grouped informally. If the trees are genuinely to act as foils, and not as dominants, it is important that they should not be too numerous. If one or the other were unavoidable it would be better for a village to be slightly bare of trees rather than over-thick with them: but it is the business of the planner to see that neither of these conditions occur, and that a happy balance is achieved.

Village planting should be open in character. Anything (such as the planting of hedges) that will tend to produce sharply-defined subsidiary enclosures within the main enclosures of the village should be avoided. So should anything that will shut off the view, at ordinary eye-level, across the various spaces. For this reason, as well as because they are out of character, shrubberies and such features have no place in the public parts of an English village.

The best constituents for village planting will be the common substantial trees that are characteristic of the everyday countryside. The planting of small flowering trees is sometimes advocated; but it is not really very sensible. The place for these is in

the garden. They are too unsubstantial, too precious, for the simple robust utility that an English village should be. We should be thankful that our forefathers, who planted our village greens with chestnuts and elms, had no access to the pretty diminutive trees of Japan and the exotic shrubs of the Himalayas—though, even if they had, their native good sense would without doubt have rejected such finicking growths from use in village planting. In the public spaces of the village the more generous and noble trees can readily be accommodated; and it is these that should be used.

In the planting and furnishing of the village, as in the use and design of all other material forms there, success lies in simplicity. It is necessary to avoid over-elaboration in the apparently little things as well as the bigger things. All these hundred and one smaller matters cannot be specified here. Some of them have been mentioned by implication in the description of the villages of the past and in the brief analysis of the village to-day. They include such matters as the construction of paths (and the avoidance of their construction to a deliberate garden-like pattern on the village greens), the avoidance of an over-definition of spaces by means of kerbs, and so on, and so on. The sympathetic design and construction of all works, big and little; the determination to create villages which will satisfy the needs of 20th century men (and among those the need for beauty as well as for comfort)—this sympathetic and imaginative planning and design can only arise from sympathetic and informed understanding of the deep subtleties that lie at the heart of village character. And the essential basis of all village character is true simplicity.