5. Renfrewshire's 18th Century Planned New Towns and Villages
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During the course of the eighteenth century numerous new urban settlements were established in Renfrewshire. These included deliberately planned villages, expansion of pre-existing parish villages, and unplanned settlements which grew randomly alongside new water powered industry (Table 1). This article looks at six of these settlements which are highlighted in bold in the table.

The two featured towns, Port Glasgow and Johnstone, were entirely new, built on virgin land, and the four villages were built at locations where previously there had been only tiny settlements. Three of them already were kirktons with parish churches - Eaglesham, Houston and Lochwinnoch. Together these new urban settlements played a key part in accommodating the extraordinary growth of the county's population in this century - by 1811 they had become the home for 17% of the urban dwellers (nearly 1 in 6). They were built to accommodate workers and their families employed in newly established industries.

Table 1: Renfrewshire Planned & Unplanned Textile Settlements [1]

Planned	Date	Notes
Port Glasgow	1667	Entirely new deepwater port for Glasgow
Newton Ralston	1750	Initially bleaching settlement, formalised 1781
Eaglesham	1771	New settlement beside existing parish village
Paisley New Town	1778	New planned suburb of town
Johnstone	1781	Entirely new planned town
Thorn	1782	Rival nucleus to Johnstone
Lochwinnoch	1788	New settlement beside existing parish village
Elderslie	1791	Cotton mill settlement
Linwood	1792	Cotton mill settlement
Houston	1793	New settlement beside existing parish village
Crosslee	1793	Cotton mill settlement
Unplanned		
Pollokshaws	1750	Initially bleaching & printing settlement
Barrhead	1765	Initially bleaching settlement
Arthurlie	1760	Initially bleaching settlement
Busby	1780	Cotton mill settlement
Dovecothall	1780	Cotton mill settlement
Gateside	1788	Cotton mill settlement
Crofthead	1790	Cotton mill settlement
Bridge of Weir	1792	Cotton mill settlement

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[1] Based on Table 6.6 in Nisbet, S. *The Rise of the Cotton Factory in 18th C Renfrewshire,* Archaeopress (2008).

The Process

The six featured settlements were typically laid out by landowners or other authorities on regular grid plans with straight, wide streets, lined by buildings, with gardens behind. The landowners sold feus and the buyers built their own properties in accordance with covenants. Their foundation was part of a process which had been going on over the previous century, and which in the eighteenth century saw dozens of new villages established in most parts of Scotland. Other early examples were Inveraray in Argyll and Ormiston in the Lothians in the 1740s.

The layouts, based upon regular rectangular grids, with one or more axis focused on a principal building, were first developed in the planning of country estates. The earliest example in Scotland was Kinross House laid out in the 1680s. With its main axis cutting right through the mansion and extending out through gridded gardens, policies and fields, it is thought to have been informed by Dutch landscape design more than the French. The grid layout of rectangular fields was the preferred pattern for field enclosures. A local example of this type of landscape design was Milliken Estate, laid out for Milliken after he bought and renamed the former estate of George Houston in 1730 [2].

Port Glasgow

The earliest new settlement in Renfrewshire was built on land acquired by Glasgow Town Council in 1667 to be Glasgow's deep water port [3]. The new town was formalised by Francis Stevenson around the start of the 18th century with rectangular blocks parallel with the new harbour dockside, along which was routed the old coastal road (Fore St). The church was set on the axis of Church Street extended up from the dock side. Kirk Street, leading from the shore to the church, together with King Street at right angles, formed the basis for Glasgow Council's grid plan of the town, formalised in the survey by John Watt c.1730 [4]. The town progressed with the building of the Custom House in 1710, the graving dock in 1762, becoming a burgh in 1775 and in due course outgrew the modest extent originally laid out. Nevertheless, it was described in 1845 as presenting *"an aspect of neatness and regularity, not often to be met with"*[5].

The Villages

For improving landowners, the existing old kirktons with irregular narrow streets needed to be largely rebuilt, to take on their new industrial roles to make room for farmers and cotters displaced by agricultural improvements. The enthusiastic promoter of new villages, Sir John Sinclair, decried the old villages as irregular and unpaved, whose inhabitants kept to "*the abominable practice of placing the dunghill*

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[2] Survey of Johnstone by John Watt (1731), redrawn by Stuart Nisbet; also Roy's map of 1754). The estate was purchased on behalf of Milliken (who was still in St Kitts) by Col. Wm, McDowall (Letter from McDowall, Castel Semple to Mr Robert Calhoun, 13th April 1730).

[3] Other new towns promoted by incorporations include Stromness on Orkney from 1670, by the Hudson Bay Company and Tobermory, Argyll, developed by the British Fisheries Society (under the Duke of Argyll) from 1788.

[4] Nisbet, S.M., The Growth of Port Glasgow in the 18th Century, RLHF Journal, Vol.3 (1992), Birmingham City Archives, Plan of Port Glasgow by John Watt (undated, c.1720).

[5] New Statistical Account

before their doors" [6]. In the 'Annals of the Parish', the fictional Rev. Balquidder recounts how in 1767 the coal wagons coming up the village main street stuck in the middens [7]. After the laird was thrown from his horse into the foul heap, he had a new main street laid out, requiring his tenants to rebuild their homes alongside it.

A telling account of the way the old kirktons were improved was given by Semple in 1782 for Lochwinnoch:

> "In the year 1781, the wall of the church-yard was rebuilt with stone and lime, about nine feet high, and two new gates placed thereon; before that period the said yard was in a very fenceless condition, having common foot passage through the same, as also upon fair-days, the principal market was held therein, as the streets were by far too narrow. However, I am happy to inform the reader, that the main street on the east side of the said yard (by the well concerted plan and mediation of William McDowall of Garthland, Esq with some other heritors) is to be made a proper breadth. Some of the houses were taken down, and rebuilt further back off the street, others are to be taken down and rebuilt after the same manner, when it is hoped the proprietors in the other streets will follow the same laudable example: I recommend in particular to them, to take care in future, when they build, not to have the streets too narrow." [8]

Eaglesham
Eaglesham was an irregular group of buildings clustered along an old crossroads and around the parish church. The new village, laid out by the Earl of Eglinton from 1767, widened and straightened the old roads. Only the south east side of the old Kilmarnock road (Montgomery St) was allowed to be redeveloped, giving the houses an open aspect over a village green through which the burn flows. Across the valley was added a new street (Polnoon Street) also with a single line of houses facing and enclosing village green. A water storage system was created on moorland above the new village, and two large cotton mills were sited in the green, providing employment for the new tenants. Only in Montgomery Square, a narrow lane round the back of the church, does a remnant of the original village survive.

Houston
The new Houston was laid out from 1781 by the laird, to the west of the old kirkton to remove population further away from Houston House [9]. The town cross was relocated from Church Street to South Street at the entrance to one of two new village greens. Two streets were laid out parallel with the Houston Burn, in a way that all houses would have access to the burn. Those on the north side of North Street had detached front garden across the street running down to it, those on the north side of South St with back gardens bordering it, and houses on south side of South Street able to access it via the two greens. In both Eaglesham and Houston
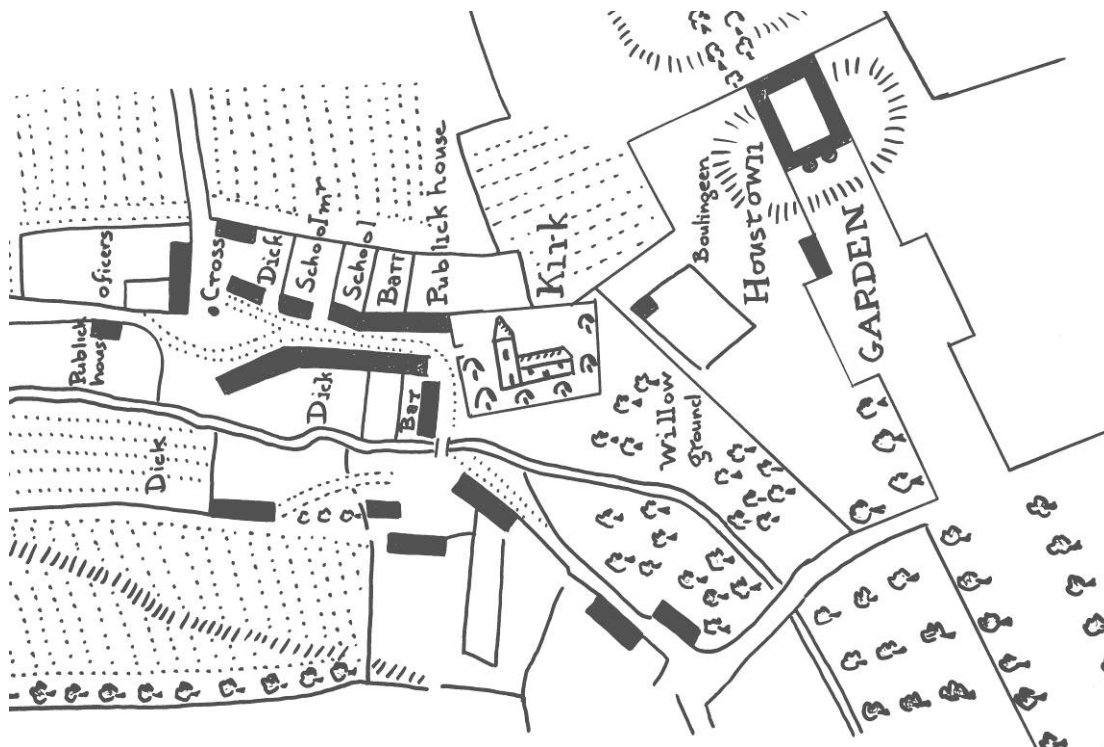
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[6] Analysis of the [First] Analytical Account (1825-60).
[7] 'Annals of the Parish', by John Galt, Chapter 8.
[8] Semple in 'History of the Shire of Renfrew' (1782)
[9] A recently rediscovered estate plan in NLS shows the pre-improvement village: Survey of Houston (Anonymous, undated, but pre-1780).

the old churches were eventually rebuilt on their original sites.

Figure 19: Sketch Plan of Houston Village before Improvement (c.1775) (Based on Survey c.1775)

Lochwinnoch

The reformation of the old kirkton, described above, was actually started in 1729 when Col William McDowall rebuilt the church shortly after buying the Castle Semple estate, adding what later became known as Old Simon, onto the South West aisle of the church to face down the High Street. The tower had a clock and, in 1762, a bell, to aid punctuality not only of churchgoers but also workers in the small flax spinning mill built in 1742 in Factory Street, later renamed St Winnoch St (replaced with a larger mill in 1752 [10].

In 1788 William McDowall III, the original purchaser's grandson, laid out the new town of Lochwinnoch in tandem with his investment in the first of two new large new cotton mills. The plan was on a grand scale with a half mile long High Street, a cross street extending from the new mill down through public square to new Burghers Meeting House closing the vista [11]. It entailed the building (or rebuilding) of the bridge at the main crossing of the Calder at Calderhaugh [12]. The High Street and Church Street were across flat land which had to be drained. The older meandering route from the kirkton to the older bridge at Bridgend was superseded (Craw Place is a remnant of this).

The plan was developed when McDowalls decided to replace the old church on a

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[10] See Castle Semple estate plan by John Ainslie (c.1780)
[11] See John Ainslie's (1796).
[12] Shown on John Watt's survey (c.1730)

new site in Church Street. This was sited to close the vista from the West Gates of his estate down Gates Road and Harvey Street, and the square was actually built to the side of Church Street. So Lochwinnoch could boast having no less than three grand vistas (four if Old Simon is included as closing the view at the north east end of the High St. The Burghers Meeting House (Calder Church) would have been given a more prominent visual role by addition of a spire but its patron McDowall "*desisted from his plan, for he found the sect almost all democrats".*
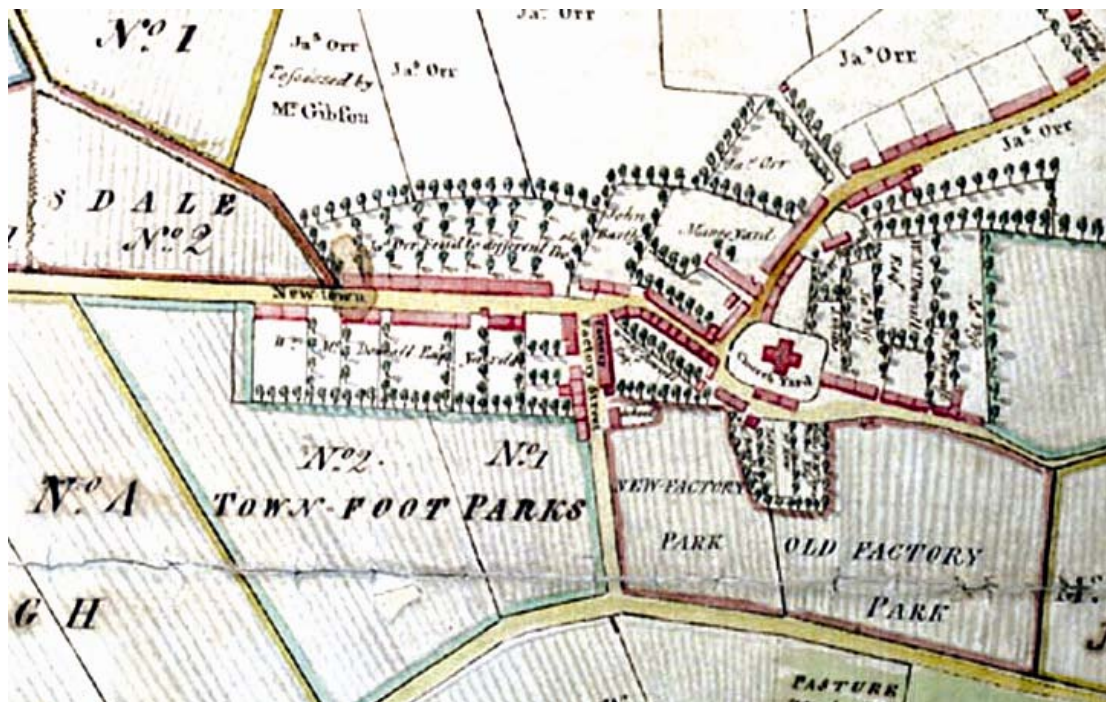
Figure 20: Beginnings of Lochwinnoch New Village (centre) and Old Village (right) c.1780 (Renfrewshire Museums)

In 1836 Lochwinnoch was described as

> "a very thriving village, built on a regular plan of one main street with some streets crossing it at right angles...this description is strictly applicable to the new town; the old,, which is only a small proportion of the village on the north, is mean and more irregular in appearance" [13].

The town grew rapidly but did not extend to occupy Harvey Street till the 20th century. (Population: 1695 1,450, 1755 1,530, 1791 2,613, 1801 2,955, 1811 3,514, 1821 4,130, 1831 4,515.)

Linwood
Linwood was laid out as an adjunct to the huge Linwood Mill built in 1794, replacing a few older houses. By 1811 its population was 552. Its plan was limited by a lack of early population growth, and workers appear to have preferred to walk from further afield.

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[13] New Statistical Account (1836).

Johnstone

Johnstone was laid out from the early 1780s for the new landowner George Houston by Charles Ross of Paisley, the same year as the building of the first of six water powered Johnstone Cotton Mills by Robert Corse at Johnstone Bridge. The layout became the largest of the Renfrewshire planned settlements, facilitating the orderly growth of the town for a century. It comprised two squares (named after the laird and his heir Ludovic), linked by an axial street up to the church (Church St). The meandering old roads from Paisley to Johnstone Bridge were straightened out to become the High Street, intersected at right angles by no less than five cross streets, the blocks large enough to allow generous gardens. In 1837 it was described as *"built on a very regular plan ... to each house is attached an adequate garden"* [14]. Even after a century of continuous development the town was described as having *"a remarkably airy appearance due in part to the spaciousness of the streets and in part to the number of pieces of open garden ground attached to the houses"*.

Within only thirteen years of its foundation it was noted in the Old Statistical Account that,

> "the population, the wealth and the industry of its inhabitants have been increased in a most surprising degree within a very short time...principally occasioned by the erection of two large cotton mills". With the construction of further mills along the White Cart, coal mining at Quarrelton and the opening of the Canal to Paisley in 1810, the large number of feus were quickly developed."

(Population grew from a handful in 1782 to 1,792 in 1792, 3,647 in 1811, c.5,000 in 1818 and 5,617 in 1831).

In the twenty first century Renfrewshire's eighteenth century planned settlements continue to form the heart of the built up area in the region.

(This article is based on a talk by the author to the Forum in March 2011).

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[14] New Statistical Account.