

Lotted lands and planned villages in north-east Scotland*

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Abstract

Between 1720 and the 1850s some 490 planned villages, characterized by a regular layout of streets, building plots and adjacent fields (or Lotted Lands) were founded on estates throughout Scotland including 100 or so in north-east Scotland. Lotted lands were fields, typically subdivided into one- or two-acre lots, which were leased to villagers to grow crops such as oats and turnips and for grazing cattle and horses. Agricultural activities were particularly important where labouring and domestic industries provided insufficient employment. Working lotted lands gradually became less popular during the first half of the twentieth century though they continued to exist in a few places until the 1970s.

Planned villages founded by landowners on their estates during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are one of the most distinctive settlement types in Scotland and Ireland. Their founding in such large numbers in this period is a feature which distinguishes the Scottish and Irish rural landscape from that of England. Typically, the ground plan and provision of the basic infrastructure of streets, drainage and water supply, and the construction of a few public buildings was undertaken by the landowner. Incoming families normally built their own homes or contracted with tradesmen to build for them. In all, some 490 villages were founded on landed estates throughout the Scottish mainland and in the Hebrides and Orkney Islands, while it has been estimated that about 500 villages were planned or re-planned in Ireland.¹ A system of small and medium-sized villages was created in Scotland where previously only hamlets such as kirktowns at parish churches and burghs had existed. Beyond the built area

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¹ L. M. Cullen, *The Emergence of Modern Ireland, 1600–1900* (1981), p. 61.

were field lots (lotted lands), commonities and peat diggings which, taken together, represented a considerable commitment to agricultural activities.²

This paper examines lotted lands in the planned villages of north-east Scotland. The study region, which comprises the former counties of Morayshire, Banffshire, Aberdeenshire, Kincardineshire, Angus and Perthshire east of the River Tay, was one of the most important areas of planned village development in Scotland. Within this region some 100 villages were founded between 1750 and 1850 (Fig. 1): it also has the highest proportion of settlements with lotted lands.

By the late 1760s, the advantages of planned villages were well appreciated. Archiestown (Morayshire) was founded in 1760 (see Fig. 2). A few years later it was described as 'no project ... [the] only mean to improve land without expense and with certain profit ...'.³ By this time the process of establishing a planned village had become familiar. When a village was first projected, a land surveyor was employed to divide out the village building plots and lotted lands while the estate factor and his lawyer drew up a list of regulations to be observed by householders and tenants of the lotted lands. While some householders negotiated directly with the landowner or his factor, others were attracted to villages by newspaper advertisements. In some places, (New Aberdour and New Leeds, Aberdeenshire for instance) the newspaper notice invited interested persons to a roup (auction) on the site of the new village.⁴ The first year was given over to removing to the village and house building, which was the responsibility of the householder. Although gardens were large, typically extending to one-eighth of an acre, some land that had previously been cultivated was lotted to each household to enable them to grow crops in the first few seasons. Thereafter the improvable ground would be expected to begin to yield crops of potatoes and eventually grass or oats could be sown. Similarly the lands of planned villages became standardized. They consisted of some previously cultivated land, new land that was capable of being improved, and peat moss. Rights to quarry stone for house building purposes were often granted and some communities were also given a commonity where turf could be dug and stones gathered. The spatial structure of the lotted lands also took shape in this period. The better lands lay adjacent to the village while previously uncultivated land lay at a greater distance. An inner series of lots was followed by one or more series of lots of improvable ground in the moor, each serviced by lanes that led out from the village. Small byres and tool sheds were built in the large gardens, known as yards, at the rear of the main dwellings.

In the north-east, lotted lands were a particularly common feature in villages in the counties north of Angus (Table 1). The remoteness of areas such as upper Speyside and Buchan from large manufacturing centres, the fluctuating fortunes of local textile industries and uncertain employment opportunities were offset by the security of home ownership and access to land and peat fuel that were offered in planned villages. The lotted lands were a very important aspect of life in planned villages and were farmed by people from a wide range of occupations. Dairy men and carters rented several lots to feed their animals, tradesmen always had some land

² Sir J. Sinclair (ed.), *The statistical account of Scotland* (21 vols, 1791-9), (hereafter OSA) VI, pp. 128-30.

³ National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS), Grant of Monymusk Papers, GD 345, uniform box H,

bundle 15, letter, Sir Archibald Grant to Archibald Grant, Edinburgh 29 Dec. 1762.

⁴ *Aberdeen J.*, 26 Sept. 1797; 20 Mar. 1798.



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|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Cummingstown | 10 Mill of Links | 19 Burnhaven |
| 2 Hopeman | 11 Strichen | 20 Maryton |
| 3 (New) Duffus | 12 Fetterangus | 21 Padanaram |
| 4 Covesea | 13 St Fergus | 22 Kirkton |
| 5 Porttannachy | 14 Old Deer | 23 Hunter's Town |
| 6 Portgordon | 15 Mintlaw | 24 Burrelton |
| 7 Longmanhill | 16 Stuartfield | 25 Strelitz |
| 8 Gardenstown | 17 Longside | 26 Baledgarno |
| 9 Sandhaven | 18 Buchanhaven | 27 Caroline Place |

FIGURE 1. Distribution of planned villages in north-east Scotland

TABLE 1. Lotted lands in planned villages

County and period of founding	Moray, Banff, Aberdeen and Kincardineshire		Angus and East Perthshire	
	1750-99	1800-50	1750-99	1800-50
<i>With lotted lands</i>				
inland	24	15	5	5
fishing/small ports	4	3	-	-
<i>Without lotted lands</i>				
inland	2	6	2	20
fishing/small ports	4	8	1	1

and labourers, widowed women and the poor relied heavily on their lots. Moreover, rent concessions on cultivated land and new land free of rent for periods up to seven years were available in many villages when these were founded. It was not surprising that living in villages was preferred to renting a cottage and some land from a farm tenant.⁵

Lotted lands were also present in a number of fishing villages. Fishermen in maritime communities that were established before 1700 had a tradition of cultivating small plots of ground, a practice that continued into the nineteenth century when potatoes were grown on hillside plots in communities such as Pennan (Aberdeenshire).⁶ However, the occupational structure of planned fishing villages was more diverse than these earlier settlements. As a consequence, tradesmen, labourers and merchants had an active interest in the lotted lands, though these covered smaller acreages than inland villages with comparable populations. Two kinds of village in the northern part of the region lack lotted lands. Small specialized fishing communities such as Covesea (Morayshire), ports (Kingston, Morayshire) and villages developed in the nineteenth century in suburban locations (New Elgin, Morayshire) were not involved in part-time farming.

There are striking differences between the distribution of lotted lands in the northern counties and in Angus and east Perthshire. They were never numerous in the latter area, a reflection of village functions and the later period of founding. The mill and single-row settlements that were developed along the roads that linked the main towns in the 1810s and 1820s housed weavers who were employed in the textile industries of Arbroath, Forfar and Kirriemuir. Other villages were also developed in conjunction with the earliest railways in the region. Better employment opportunities and access to urban markets appears to have reduced the need to produce food for family consumption and so the demand for lotted lands.

The sources available to study lotted lands are detailed and extensive. A large number of collections of estate papers have survived in public archives and private ownership and of particular value in the present context are memoranda, rentals and plans. These provide information on the evolution of lotted field systems as well as individual holdings. In addition, important documents were often registered to preserve them for future reference in the Register

⁵ NAS, Seafeld Papers, GD 248/25/2/16, notes on the scheme propos'd for erecting the village of Grantstown [1765].

⁶ NAS, British Fisheries Society Papers, GD 9/366/2, hints

and observations regarding fishers and fishing villages ... Mar. 1808; for a photograph of potato plots at Pennan, Aberdeenshire see *Buchan Illustrated* (The Aberdeen Daily Journal and Evening Express, Aberdeen, c. 1905), p. 30.

of Deeds kept by the Sheriff Clerk of each administrative county.⁷ Newspaper advertisements which announce the founding of planned villages, frequently describe the advantages of the site and give details of the availability of land, pasture and fuel from the moss.⁸ Advertisements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intimated the sale of growing crops on lotted lands and local news sections of the press reported on the acreage sold and the price obtained. The progress of individual villages can be monitored in a number of printed sources. The *Old* and the *New Statistical Accounts*, prepared in the 1790s and the 1830s–40s, contain descriptions of each parish and comment on significant economic and social developments while several Board of Agriculture county surveys also highlight agricultural activities in villages.⁹

Changing conditions on the lotted lands of particular communities in the second half of the nineteenth century were described in evidence given to a number of Parliamentary Commissions. Individual tenants gave statements to the Napier Commission (1884), the Deer Commission (1892) and the Select Committee on Feus and Leases (Scotland) (1894).¹⁰ In the context of the present study, these are largely of comparative interest as they deal with conditions in villages in the Highlands and the Borders. Of greater significance were several cases involving disputes between landowners and tenants concerning lotted lands heard before the Court of Session in Edinburgh.¹¹ Parliamentary Papers and Session Papers also print historical estate records such as rentals and correspondence as well as contemporary evidence. The early decades of the twentieth century are richly documented. The enactment of The Small Landholders (Scotland) Act in 1911 led to the creation in the following year of the Scottish Land Court. The Land Court met, usually in the county town, to hear evidence from individual tenants seeking statutory small tenant status and from landowners. The records of the Land Court which have been deposited in the National Archives of Scotland and the evidence put before it, which was reported in local newspapers, provide information on cropping, animal husbandry, agricultural practices and rents. Finally, Valuation Rolls are available between 1855 and 1960; these list individual holdings and the names and occupations of tenants. They are particularly useful in pinpointing the sale of landed estates which can then be followed up in the Particular Register of Sasines held in the National Archives, which records all changes in the ownership of property, and in local newspaper reports. Valuation Rolls are also invaluable in tracing changes in the structure of lotted lands within particular villages. However, from 1961–2, a different format was introduced in which individual lots were not separately recorded. The resultant gap in information is unfortunate coming at a time when the practice of renting lotted lands was about to end on a number of estates.

I

Lotted lands have attracted surprisingly little research. In fact their existence has been overlooked in books written about Scottish agriculture such as that by Symon, in Leneman's study

⁷ For a discussion of this and other sources see D. G. Lockhart, 'Planned villages – a review of sources', *Scottish Local History* 39 (1997), pp. 34–9.

⁸ *Aberdeen J.*, 31 May 1796 (New Pitsligo); 26 Sept. 1797 (New Aberdour).

⁹ Lockhart, 'Planned villages – a review of sources', p. 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹¹ Signet Library, Edinburgh, Session Papers, vol. 597, no 117, *Campbell v Mackinnon and others* 1862 (Tobermory); vol. 651, no. 177, *Clinton v Brown* (New Pitsligo).

of smallholdings and land settlement and, most crucially, in Carter's wide ranging survey of agriculture in north-east Scotland between 1840 and 1914.¹² Research on field systems in Scotland has focussed largely on three topics: the characteristics of the infield-outfield system that predates enclosure and which was common throughout Lowland Scotland; processes of enclosure, and the evolution of crofting landscapes in the nineteenth century.¹³ In comparison, research on the field systems of towns and villages has been limited and mostly relates to regions of Scotland other than the north-east.

The earliest sustained discussion of agriculture in towns and villages was an account of the land system of the royal burgh of Lauder (Berwickshire). The land system of the burgh was described in a parliamentary report on borough common lands in 1870, in Sir Henry Maine's *Village Communities in the East and West* and in a monograph of 1903 based on the notes of the town clerk, Robert Romanes.¹⁴ These publications showed that the burgh lands consisted of arable acres, hill areas that were occasionally cultivated, and common grazing.¹⁵

With the exception of Murray, writing on burghal organisation in 1924 and who devoted several chapters to the structure of landholdings in Glasgow and burghs in Ayrshire, references to fields in other Scottish burghs are generally less detailed.¹⁶ Many local histories only summarize the charter of erection of burghs of barony that were established between the fifteenth and seventeenth century.¹⁷ Unfortunately, more recent interpretations of Scottish urban development also contain limited coverage of agricultural pursuits. In Michael Lynch's collection of essays on *The Early Modern Town in Scotland*, an essay on the merchants of Dumfries usefully distinguishes between small-scale activities in the town's yards and more extensive agriculture on the outskirts of the burgh but this is very much the exception.¹⁸

Research on Scottish planned villages dates from the 1940s. Again the agricultural land lying around the village has not been given a great deal of priority by researchers. In a pioneering study, Houston identified villages associated with agricultural and estate interests as one of the major types of planned village and noted that the cultivation of lots was an important employment activity.¹⁹ However, later surveys of planned village development, such as those by Smout and Turnock, make only fleeting reference to lotted lands, while the latter tantalizes the reader by emphasising the importance of smallholdings without actually providing examples of village

¹² J. A. Symon, *Scottish farming past and present* (1959); L. Leneman, *Fit for heroes? Land settlement in Scotland after World War I* (1989); I. Carter, *Farm life in northeast Scotland, 1840-1914* (1979).

¹³ See, for example, R. A. Dodgshon, *The origin of British field systems: an interpretation* (1979); and the publications of J. B. Caird listed in A. H. Dawson *et al.* (eds), *Scottish geographical studies* (1993), pp. 12-14.

¹⁴ BPP, 1870, LV, 'Return of all boroughs and cities in the United Kingdom possessing common or other lands ...', pp. 40-8; Sir H. Maine, *Village communities in the East and West* (sec. edn, 1870), pp. 94-7; R. Romanes, *A series of papers written by the late Robert Romanes* (priv. printed, 1903).

¹⁵ J. H. Romanes, 'The village economy of Lauder', *English Historical Rev.* 29 (1914), pp. 532-7; *Ibid.*, 'The land

system of the Scottish burgh', *Juridical Rev.* 47 (2), (1935), pp. 101-19.

¹⁶ D. Murray, *Early burgh organization in Scotland* (2 vols, 1924).

¹⁷ For example, D. McNaught, *Kilmaurs Parish and Burgh* (1912), pp. 223-2.

¹⁸ W. Coutts, 'Provincial merchants and society: a study of Dumfries based on the registers of testaments, 1600-1665', in M. Lynch (ed.), *The early modern town in Scotland* (1987), pp. 147-66.

¹⁹ J. M. Houston, 'Village planning in Scotland, 1745-1845', *Advancement of Science*, 5 (1948), pp. 129-32; *Idem*, 'An historical background of village development in Scotland', *J. Town Planning Institute* 35 (1949), pp. 87-95.

field systems.²⁰ Case studies of lotted lands are also comparatively rare with most attention paid to Highland areas. Gaffney's account of the founding of Tomintoul (Banffshire), describes in detail the pattern of lotted lands when the village was established in 1775 and after the lots were reorganized in the mid-1820s.²¹ Research by Storrie on Islay (Argyllshire) and by Dunlop on the coastal settlements founded by the British Fisheries Society have also demonstrated the importance of lotting.²² Finally, the present author has reviewed planned village development in Scotland drawing attention to the significance of lotted lands in the life of village communities and to their role in land improvement. In addition, an introductory analysis of the lotted lands of the north-east has outlined their distribution and broad characteristics.²³ However, many issues have not been studied in detail and deserve greater attention, particularly the origins and structure of lotted lands, the role of part-time farming in village communities, livestock and cropping patterns, and the processes of expansion and eventual contraction of field areas that occurred between the founding of planned villages in the late eighteenth century and the demise of lotting in the mid-twentieth century.

As we will see in the next section, lotted lands were an integral part of the layout and economy of the new planned villages created from the 1750s onwards. Their subsequent history is shown in Table 2 and is explored in the remainder of this paper. The demand for lotted lands may have increased in the early nineteenth century and was met by the reclamation of new land or the incorporation of additional land taken from farms or crofts. Whilst the middle years of the nineteenth century may be seen as the heyday of the lotted lands, progressive depopulation after 1870 resulted in a process of concentration, and, in the twentieth century, lots progressively disappeared, sometimes to be built over, sometimes to be made into sporting facilities but often to be incorporated into farms. Virtually none remained at the beginning of the new century. A handful of photographs, such as that of Dufftown seen from the west c.1880, serve as a reminder of how this landscape once appeared (Plate 1).

II

Tracing the origins of lotted lands poses a number of problems for researchers largely because plans and detailed rentals only survive for most estates from the early 1760s. Consequently it is not easy to determine whether the burghs of barony founded in the region in the seventeenth century had field systems that provided a model for the lotted lands of planned villages when

²⁰ T. C. Smout, 'The landowner and the planned village in Scotland, 1730-1830', in N. T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the age of improvement* (1970), pp. 73-106; D. Turnock, *The historical geography of Scotland since 1707* (1982), pp. 82-96.

²¹ V. Gaffney, *The Lordship of Stathavon* (Third Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1960), pp. 34-61.

²² M. C. Storrie, 'Landholdings and settlement evolution in west highland Scotland', *Geografiska Annaler* 47B (1965), pp. 138-61; *Idem*, *Islay: Biography of an island*, (sec. edn, 1997), pp. 128-35; J. Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society, 1786-1893* (1978).

²³ D. G. Lockhart, 'The planned villages', in M. L. Parry and T. R. Slater (eds), *The making of the Scottish countryside* (1980), pp. 249-70; 'Planned village development in Scotland and Ireland, 1700-1850', in T. M. Devine and D. Dickson (eds), *Ireland and Scotland, 1600-1850* (1983), pp. 132-45; 'The construction and planning of new urban settlements in Scotland in the eighteenth century', in A. Maczak and C. Smout (eds), *Grundung und bedeutung kleinerer städte im nördlichen Europa der frühen neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1991), pp. 31-66; 'Lotted lands in the planned villages of North-East Scotland', in Dawson *et al.* (eds), *Scottish geographical studies*, pp. 164-75.

TABLE 2. The changing nature of lotted lands

Stage	Period	Characteristics
I Village founding	1750–1825	Plan prepared by land surveyor – village advertised in newspaper – building plots and field lots auctioned on village site – field lots sometimes drawn by lottery method
II Expansion and reclamation	Late eighteenth century–1830	Reclamation of previously uncultivated land – growth of village may result in additional land being acquired from neighbouring crofts or farms and lotted out to villagers
III Maturity	1830–1870	Most village households rent land – variations in landholdings present but not substantial
IV Consolidation	1870–1920	Depopulation – smaller number of households – greater variation in size of holdings – some lots tenanted by neighbouring farmers and non-residents
V Erosion	1920–1950	Estate sales result in lotted lands being separated from parent estate – sale of individual lots to sitting tenants – changes in land use become evident eg. Council housing, public utilities, sports such as tennis, bowling and golf. Village dairy proprietors acquire larger holdings
VI Decline and extinction	1950–present	Decisions by estate management to end lotting and further estate sales – much land acquired by neighbouring farmers; after 1970, only a small number of tenants remain in a few villages

these were founded from 1750 onwards. The charter founding Rosehearty (Aberdeenshire) in 1684 for example granted grazing rights on the Links of Pitsligo which were bounded by the 'laboured Corn ground of the riggs of the Links'. Access was also granted to commonties for casting fail and divots for the building of their houses and tenants, and to various peat mosses.²⁴ Similar privileges were granted in neighbouring burghs of barony; however, the crofts and arable lands which are mentioned in the charters that define burgh territories are not described in detail.

While some of the elements of burghal land use that existed in the pre-improver period, such as commonties and peat mosses, were adopted in planned villages, the lotted land system appears to have been created as part of the wider transformation of agrarian landscapes that occurred after 1750. Certainly, this view of the origins of lotted lands was widely held among estate factors when they gave evidence to Parliamentary Commissions and the Land Court between 1890 and 1914.²⁵ Lotted lands were, however, not confined to new planned villages because at older burghs of barony (Portsoy and Fordyce, Banffshire), they replaced the riggs into which the former open fields were subdivided.

The earliest evidence for lotted lands can be seen in newspaper advertisements placed to

²⁴ W. and J. Cook, W. S., Edinburgh, Brucklay Char-
tulary, Charter, The lord and master of Pitsligo to the
feuars and burgesses of Rosehearty, 28 Sept. 1684 (copied
1835).

²⁵ BPP, 1894 (238), XI, *Report from the select committee*

on feus and leases (Scotland), pp. 11–13; Banff Sheriff
Court, Scottish Land Court, Landholders Holdings Book
part 1 (1913), p. 18; 'Countess of Seafield's Trustees v
McCurrah', *The Scottish Law Reporter* LVI (1913–14),
pp. 141–4.



PLATE 1. Dufftown, Banffshire from the west, c.1880

Source: George Washington Wilson Collection, University of Aberdeen, C3418.

attract settlers. The first notice in the north-east is for a proposed village at Slioch, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of Huntly (Aberdeenshire) in 1755. This offered 'every feuar ... a nineteen years lease of some acres of Ground adjacent to their feu, which they are to inclose by hedge and ditch as shall be directed ... They are to receive quicksetts or French whins with forest trees, to plant round their possessions, all which they are carefully to preserve and winter-herd, and to clean the ditches and to prune the trees ...'.²⁶ The lotted lands at Slioch had a number of characteristics that would become typical in planned villages, notably land situated at the rear of the building plots and nineteen-year leases of ground that could be improved. In the 1760s, land became a widely publicized inducement to settle in planned villages. During this decade, the *Aberdeen Journal* carried notices for thirteen villages, of which nine specifically mentioned lotted land and eleven indicated that access to peat moss and other land resources would be granted.

At both New Byth (Aberdeenshire) and Aberchirder (Banffshire) grass and corn ground was offered 'hard by the village', while the site of Rothes (Morayshire) was said to adjoin 'a fruitful

²⁶ *Aberdeen J.*, 3 June 1755.

field'. More details were given for Grantown-on-Spey (Morayshire) where some fifty acres of good land and 200 acres of grass to accommodate cattle, horses and sheep were reserved for the villagers.²⁷ Rentals which survive for this period indicate that village populations began to use their allocation of lands within one or two seasons of agreeing to build their houses.²⁸ Since the overwhelming majority of the population lived only short distances from new villages, it is likely that many tradesmen and labourers would have spent a final year at their previous address while their houses were being built. Thereafter progress in land reclamation and farming seems to have been rapid. In Archiestown, tenants were required immediately to drain the barren ground around the village and Sir Archibald Grant when on a visit in the summer 1764, four years after its founding, noted that 'some crops of everything from heather' had been harvested in the previous season.²⁹ Equally rapid progress was being made at Macduff (Banffshire) where 25 tenants had taken possession of lotted lands in 1764, a year after moving into the new town.³⁰ Changes to the landscape around New Keith were even more dramatic and within fifteen years of its founding, 490 acres had been lotted out to its inhabitants.³¹ The characteristic rectangular shape of individual lots within the lotted lands (as at New Pitsligo, Fig. 2) also seems to have become the norm at an early stage. A plan of Macduff in 1764, shows 45 lots of 1½ acres each, laid out in regular sequence and served by access lanes.³² In comparison to those highly regular plans, the lotted lands in some villages appear to have developed in a more *ad hoc* fashion reflecting the limitations of surveying techniques and perhaps the experimental nature of early village planning. This can be seen in the different alignments of lots at Archiestown which were laid out by the estate's gardener (Fig. 3), while the inhabitants of Strichen (Aberdeenshire), cultivated outfields on the adjacent Burnshangie farm before these were enclosed.³³

It became widely recognized by estate managements that planned villages and especially lotted lands could add significantly to the rentals of landed estates. The role of the village in agricultural improvement can be seen at Monquhitter parish (Aberdeenshire) where the *Old Statistical Account* explains how the founding of Cuminstown raised the rent of part of a moorland area from £11 to between £120 and £150.³⁴ The impact on rentals often occurred over a short period of time, for example at Hopeman (Morayshire) where:

Mr. Young in four years has settled nearly 300 souls on a spot at Inverugie; which, when he began, was perfectly barren; and a considerable tract of ground near the village, is, in consequence of their industry (in a great measure) risen in rent from something like 2s. 6d. to nearly £3 per acre.³⁵

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1763 (New Byth); 26 Mar. 1764 (Aberchirder); 12 Dec. 1763 (Rothes); 15 Apr. 1765 (Grantown-on-Spey).

²⁸ See, for example, University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers, Ms 3175, vol. 234, Ledger Feuars of Fife Keith beginning with land rents crop 1817; Blairmore Estate, Glass (NRA(S) 1326), vol. V, Ledger commencing crop 1806 (Dufftown).

²⁹ NAS, Grant of Monymusk Papers, GD 345, uniform box A, bundle 18, letter, Sir Archibald Grant to Archibald Grant, Archiestown, 24 July 1764.

³⁰ University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer)

Papers, Ms 3175, M series, bundle XVI C41, abstract rental of the lands set to the feuars of Down, 1764.

³¹ NAS, Seafeld Papers, GD 48/2663, rental of the Keith collection, crop, 1761.

³² *Ibid.*, Sketch of the lotted land of Down ... and to whom sett, 1764.

³³ Aberdeenshire Library Service, Strichen Estate Papers, A plan of the farm Burnshangie and Mormond village, 1768.

³⁴ OSA VI, p. 129.

³⁵ R. J. Adam, 'Papers on Sutherland estate management, 1802-1816', *Scottish Hist. Soc.*, fourth ser., 9 (1972), p. 98.



FIGURE 2. Lotted lands at New Pitsligo, Aberdeenshire, 1803.

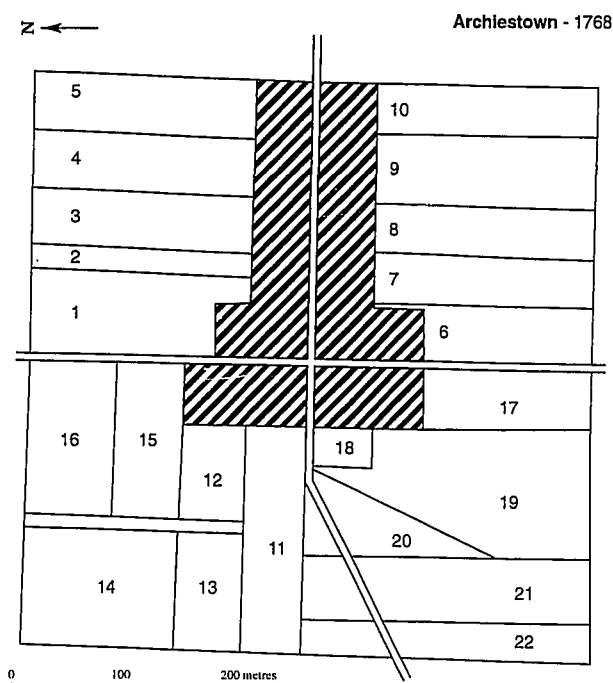


FIGURE 3. Lotted lands at Archiestown, Morayshire, 1768.

In addition to higher rentals being achieved after improvement, tenants of lotted lands were asked to pay a greater rent per acre than crofters and farmers. The lotted lands always attracted higher rents because of their proximity to villages and due to competition for land among householders.

As a consequence, a progressive and substantial increase in rent could be expected after the founding of planned villages. The lotted lands of New Keith (founded 1750) yielded £212 in 1761, £332 in 1800 and £1278 in 1856.³⁶ In 1886, some 2000 acres of lotted land rented to 350 tenants in villages on the Banff section of the Earl of Fife's estates brought £2600 in rent. Farm rents (per acre) on the same estates were typically 50–60 per cent of lotted land rents.³⁷

In comparison, the costs of founding planned villages varied considerably ranging from £130 for Cummingtown (Morayshire), a small roadside village, to £3000–4000 for larger developments such as Grantown-on-Spey and New Pitsligo.³⁸ Larger villages had a more elaborate infrastructure, and public buildings such as the inn and school were built by landowners who may also have invested in textile industries.³⁹

When comparing income and expenditure for planned villages, estate accounts demonstrate that the planning costs could be recovered fairly quickly. Moreover, there were other financial

³⁶ NAS, Seafeld Papers, GD 248/2663, rental of the Keith collection, crop 1761; GD 248/2700, rental of the Keith and Mulben collection, crop 1800; GD 248/2729, rental of the Keith collection, crop 1855 and lotted lands crop 1856.

³⁷ *Aberdeen Herald and Weekly Free Press*, 15 May 1886.

³⁸ D. G. Lockhart, 'The evolution of the planned villages of north-east Scotland', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2 vols, University of Dundee, 1974), I, p. 258.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 266–8.

TABLE 3. The extent of lotted lands in selected villages

Village	Type	Year	Lotted Lands		Acres
			arable	pasture	
Aberchirder	tradesman-agricultural	1771	99.9	16.7	116.6
Archiestown	tradesman-agricultural	1768	—	—	68.9
Caroline Place	tradesman-agricultural	1835	49.6	49.7	99.3
Cummingstown	fishing	1829	—	—	103.8
Fife Keith	tradesman-agricultural	1817	—	—	119.5 ^a
Guildtown	tradesman-agricultural	1835	35.3	2.3	37.6
Hopeman	fishing-tradesmen	1833	207.2	81.5 ^b	288.7
Macduff	fishing-tradesman	1764	—	—	67.6
New Leeds	tradesman-agricultural	1854	93.3	8.8	102.1
Newmill	tradesman-agricultural	1812	—	—	331.9
Portgordon	fishing	1823	—	—	34.9
Roths	tradesman-agricultural	1790	—	—	103.4 ^c
Stuartfield	tradesman-agricultural	1780	—	—	182.3
Tomintoul	tradesman-agricultural	1825	138.2	190.2	328.4
Urquhart	tradesman-agricultural	1792	—	—	78.2 ^d

Notes:

^a Moor ground was available.

^b Includes roads in measurement.

^c The lotted lands at Roths increased to 233.6 acres in 1798 after a new street had been completed.

^d The lotted lands at Urquhart increased to 105.3 acres in 1794 when the Mill Land was lotted.

benefits. The village acted as a market for farm produce which in turn raised the rent level of farms in the vicinity while the lotted land system helped to support a pool of labourers who could work on neighbouring farms but without requiring accommodation to be provided by farmers.⁴⁰

III

The acreage of lotted lands attached to individual villages varied greatly (Table 3). During the early nineteenth century, acreages in lotted lands in Banffshire ranged from 35 acres (Portgordon) to 631.5 acres (New Keith).⁴¹ Size of population was the most important factor explaining such variations; however, village functions, occupational structure and the type and quality of the land itself also appear to have been influences.

The most extensive areas of village fields were found in plateau areas such as Buchan and the upland margins of Speyside where large acreages were reclaimed from moorland. In these

⁴⁰ *Aberdeen Herald and Weekly Free Press*, 15 May 1886.

⁴¹ NAS, Records of the Crown Estates Commissioners. CR8/180, Contents of that part of the Parish of Rathven

belonging to His Grace the Duke of Gordon from a survey in 1810 by John J. Roy; NAS, Seafeld Papers, GD 248/2700, Rental of the Keith and Mulben collection crop 1800.

TABLE 4. Lotted lands of New Pitsligo, 1794–1996

	Tenements (number)	Lotted lands				Annual rent (£)
		arable	moor	pasture	total	
1794	20	25	–	–	25	6.0
1802	94	69	110	–	179	–
1807	166	215	234	–	449	295.0
1870	250	1139	–	–	1139	942.1
1892	250	1125	–	–	1125	1130.0
1913	250	1100	–	–	1100	1079.0
1950	234	1028	–	29	1057	650.0
1975	–	140	–	–	140	403.7 ^a
1996 ^b						

Notes:

^a One tenant received a rebate of £80 for taking down fences and levelling old lot boundaries.

^b The last village tenant relinquished his land in 1996.

Sources: NLS, Fettercairn Papers, Acc. 4796, rentals; Middelmuir Farm Office, Strichen, rentals; *Aberdeen Daily J.*, 20 Mar. 1913, p. 3.

districts, villages were allocated some previously cultivated arable land and allotments of ill-drained moorland which they were expected to improve. For example, in 1807, 234 out of 449 acres at New Pitsligo were classed as improvable. By 1871, 265 acres of arable and almost 900 acres of moor, most of which had been improved, helped to support a population of almost 2100 (Table 4 and Fig. 2).⁴² The scale of farming activity in smaller villages was no less impressive; for example at Cuminestown (Aberdeenshire – population 477 in 1841) 160 acres were under cultivation in 1827, and about the same time the inhabitants of Tomintoul in the uplands of Banffshire (population – 819 in 1841) rented almost 330 acres.⁴³ There is also evidence to suggest that occupational structure was important in determining the area under cultivation in individual villages. Strichen and New Leeds (Aberdeenshire) are a case in point. Although the former had a population three and a half times greater than New Leeds in 1841, the difference in the extent of their lotted lands was less pronounced. These amounted to 200 and 102 acres respectively in 1854. While Strichen had a diverse occupational structure with almost 90 per cent of its household heads employed in crafts or retailing, in New Leeds only 25 per cent can be assigned to these categories. Instead 41 per cent of its household heads were crofters or agricultural labourers and a further 22 per cent stated they were retired or paupers at the 1851 Census. These disparities were almost certainly reinforced by the poorly

⁴² NLS, Fettercairn Papers, Acc. 4796, box 31, Draft Notes for a memorial regarding the land rights of the feuars of New Pitsligo, 30 Nov. 1870.

⁴³ University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers, Ms 3175, F series, 31/2 Plan of the Lands of

Auchry ... 1827 by G Campbell Smith; NAS, RHP 1819, Plan of the village and lands of Tomintoul belonging to His Grace the Duke of Gordon 1825 by George McWilliam.

drained and boggy character of the lands at New Leeds compared with those at Strichen which had been farmed prior to the creation of the village in the mid-1760s.⁴⁴

The clearest indication of the influence of occupational structure upon part-time farming activities can be found in maritime villages. Lotted lands are usually associated with the larger communities such as Macduff (Banffshire) and Hopeman (Morayshire) which had diversified occupational structures and where fishing provided employment for only a minority of the inhabitants. Among the specialized fishing villages, small acreages were farmed, for example at Porttannachy (Banffshire) where 40 acres were lotted out in 1815.⁴⁵ Cummingstown (Morayshire), where two-acre lots were rented by each household, was exceptional and it is interesting to note that this village lacked harbour facilities and consequently failed to attract a significant fishing population. Moreover, contemporary writers emphasized that it was unwise to provide lotted lands for fishermen. They stressed that these could become a distraction from the business of fishing.⁴⁶

Individual holdings within the lotted lands also show considerable variation. The evidence from rentals points to three principal differences. Firstly, where villages were situated on estates held under strict entail, the landowner was restricted to leasing lots no greater than half an acre per house built and as a consequence holdings in such villages are characterized by a higher degree of uniformity.⁴⁷ Secondly, holdings on land that had previously been farmed also are fairly uniform. In these, a land surveyor was employed to divide up each field. Almost all lots were made virtually equal in size, the exceptions being those at the extremity of each field. Early rentals for Newmill and Aberchirder (Banffshire) and the prospectus for Fife Keith (Banffshire) show that almost all households enjoyed access to lotted lands and that the variation in individual holdings was relatively small. At Aberchirder in 1771, seven years after the village was founded, only one household did not rent lotted lands. In Fife Keith, every building plot was auctioned together with a lot of land and the purchasers of only eleven out of 113 plots declined to rent land.⁴⁸ Thirdly, in a few places inequality in holdings was a feature from a very early date. Additional land could be acquired by purchasing two building plots and although regulations required houses to be built on both plots, the second dwelling was either occupied by another member of the family or was sub-let. On the moorland fringe, variations in the quality of the land seems to have been fundamental in contributing to significant differences in the size of holdings. At Stuartfield (Aberdeenshire), while the mean

⁴⁴ D. G. Lockhart, 'The founding of villages on Strichen estate, Aberdeenshire' *Scottish Local History* 41 (1997), pp. 12–13.

⁴⁵ *Aberdeen J.*, 1 Feb. 1815; NLS, Gordon Cumming Papers deposit 175, box 123. Sir Wm G. Cumming Gordon Bt to the Fishermen inclined to settle at the village of Cummingstown, 1 Oct. 1808; box 61, folder 3. Sketch plans of Cummingstown [c. 1808].

⁴⁶ Sir G. S. Mackenzie, *A general view of the agriculture of the counties of Ross and Cromarty* (1810), p. 243; NAS, British Fisheries Society Papers, GD 9/132/5, Report Charles Robertson ... Lochbay, 31 Dec. 1797; 196/5, letter, Donald Grant to Gilbert Salton, Ulinish, 14 Nov. 1808.

Occasionally allotments for tradesmen were regarded in a negative light where there were prospects for full-time employment, for instance in R. Rennie, 'Plan of an inland village', *Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland Society* 2 (1803), pp. 261–3.

⁴⁷ Act 10 Geo. 3 c. 51 The Entail Improvement Act, 1770.

⁴⁸ Scottish Catholic Archives, Gordon of Auchintoul Papers, FA 2/21, abstract rental of the feu duty and land rent of the town of Aberchirder ... 1771; University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers, Ms 3175, M series, bundle LXVI, K43 New Village ... to be ... named Fife Keith; *Ibid.*, vol. 234, Ledger feuars of Fife Keith beginning with land rents crop 1817.

size of holding about 1780 was 7.1 acres, individual tenancies ranged from 0.37 to 21.5 acres.⁴⁹ The incentive of financial rewards for the greatest amount of land brought in from the waste and for the best crops of grain, sown grass, potatoes and turnips grown on the lotted lands of New Pitsligo led to dramatic changes. Premiums were widely advertised in the *Aberdeen Journal* and in handbills which led to a rapid increase in population. A number of households took advantage of large plots of moorland which were rent free until improved.⁵⁰

Over time, fundamental changes occurred in the tenancy of lotted lands. While reclamation of moorland and moss could meet demand for more land from growing village populations, such as around New Pitsligo (Table 4) and at the Moss of Keith east of New Keith, it was more common to subdivide the fields of an adjacent croft or farm into lots. Macduff (Banffshire) is a good illustration of this process. Until 1761 it was a small seatown. It then underwent significant expansion in the 1760s and 1780s (when it became a burgh). This growth was accompanied by lotted lands being laid out at Tarlair, Myrehouse and Newburn of Morehouse.⁵¹ Similarly, the construction of a new street in the 1790s in Rothes (Morayshire) was also accompanied by the creation of additional lotted lands.⁵²

Demand for land was not only linked to rapid population growth. The failure of small-scale textile industries, limited employment opportunities and the tendency for villages to attract labourers and the rural poor meant that land was a valuable asset to the poorer households in such communities. This was certainly true of the smaller planned villages that lacked markets and diversified employment structures such as Urquhart (Morayshire). This village had been founded in 1783–4 to replace the old kirktown and to provide land to landless labourers at a time of widespread famine.⁵³ Nine years later 27 acres were added to the village lotted lands following a petition by the inhabitants to the landowner, the Earl of Fife.⁵⁴

Conversely, it was progressive depopulation which undermined the system of lotted lands. Depopulation was first recorded throughout the region in the 1860s. In the Buchan District of Aberdeenshire, losses of between 6 per cent (Fetterangus) and 42 per cent (New Byth) occurred between 1871 and 1901.⁵⁵ Of New Leeds it was noted in 1912 that 'many of the houses are unoccupied and in a ruinous condition. The village is in a very isolated position and there appears to be little demand for the houses and it would not pay to spend money to maintain the old buildings'.⁵⁶ The impact of outward migration on landholdings was less noticeable in

⁴⁹ Burnett-Stuart Papers (Crichton House), deed box 'Village of Stuartfield', Notes – Measures and rents c. 1770–c. 1820.

⁵⁰ *Aberdeen J.*, 4 Aug. 1795; 31 May 1796; NLS, Fettercairn Papers, Acc. 4796, second deposit, box 75, handbill, village of New Pitsligo, May 1796.

⁵¹ University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers, Ms 3175, M series, bundle LXVI, K55, Plan of the quarries crofts of Newburn of Morehouse 1786 and 1787; A plan of the Farm of Myrehouse ... 1785; A plan of the farm of Tarlair surveyed Oct. 1783.

⁵² *Aberdeen J.*, 22 Feb. 1790; NAS, Seafield Papers, GD 248/2238, rental of the Moray collection, croft 1780; GD 248/2250, rental of the Moray collection, croft 1790; GD 248/2258, rental of the Moray collection croft 1798.

⁵³ *Northern Scot.*, 23 June 1984; NAS, RHP 31339, Plan of the lands of Urquhart lying in the shire of Moray, 1783, by William Urquhart.

⁵⁴ University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers, Ms 3175, B series, B2(13)3 2, sketch ... the Lands of Urquhart formerly possessed by John Mantach ... 1793, by James Chapman; *Ibid.*, Articles and conditions to be observed by and binding on those who shall obtain lots of the land ... Urquhart 1794.

⁵⁵ BCP 1871 (380) LIX, *Census of Population, Scotland, 1871*, Section III, pp. 127–8; BCP 1901 Cd 1257, *Census of Population, Scotland, 1901*, Section XI, pp. 267–8.

⁵⁶ University of Aberdeen, Macdonald Collection, Ms 2626, box 87, letter, Edward Millard & Co. to Messrs Lumley & Lumley: London, 17 Dec. 1912.

the larger communities. In these villages, there were still significant numbers of households able to rent lots that had been given up; however in small villages this was not always so. Writing in 1913 about Mintlaw, the estate factor noted that 'the tendency for some time past has been for the smaller holders to give up their lots which are generally acquired by some of the larger holders'. In this village, six of the twenty-seven landholders farmed 112 out of 199 acres.⁵⁷ The pattern was similar in neighbouring villages such as Old Deer and Longside.⁵⁸ It is also likely that the consolidation of holdings was linked to the needs of particular occupations such as carriers, innkeepers and dairy owners who wished to expand their businesses. In this period too, neighbouring farmers began to rent lots. When demand from village households for land was buoyant, farmers would have been unwilling to pay the higher rent of individual lots. However, by the turn of the century landowners were prepared to rent unoccupied lots to farmers seeking additional land at agricultural rents. For example William Fyfe of Markethill rented 35 acres at Longside at an average rent of £0.83 per acre, less than half the rent paid by village tenants.⁵⁹

After the First World War, a wider range of pressures on lotted lands became evident, such as competition for land on the village fringe and the sale of landed estates. Two new uses of land emerged in this period that contributed to the erosion of the lotted lands, namely council housing and sports clubs. A number of planned villages had acquired municipal administrations following acts of 1850 and 1862 that permitted places with a population of over 700 to become police burghs. The councils in these burghs enthusiastically embraced their legislative powers to build council housing adjacent the existing built-up area and often on lotted lands purchased from the estate. Such negotiations usually involved the landowner making alternative land available though at a greater distance as at Callander, Perthshire.⁶⁰ The creation of sports facilities was also concentrated in the larger settlements. Some sports facilities such as cricket (New Pitsligo), tennis and bowls (Strichen) required only part of a lot. However the creation of golf courses such as the Royal Tarlair Golf Club at Macduff in the mid-1920s and Keith Golf Club at Fife Keith in the early 1960s utilized larger acreages.⁶¹

While changes in land use affected only parts of the village lands, changes to estate ownership and the sale of individual lots had a profound effect upon the future pattern of holdings and contributed immensely to the demise of lotted lands in many villages. Three variants of this process can be identified. Firstly, landowners might choose to sell some holdings on an estate and offer sitting tenants the opportunity to purchase the land held by them. An example was the sale of lots at New Deer (Brucklay estate) in 1921 by the proprietor, Alexander Dingwall-Fordyce, which resulted in the majority of tenants purchasing their land. Lots which were not taken up in this way were auctioned. Subsequently, individuals could purchase and sell their

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, box 78, letter, Geo. Snowie to Messrs Walker & Duncan: Pitfour Estates Office, 6 Mar. 1913.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, letter, Robert B. Fyffe to Messrs Walker & Duncan: Aden Estates Office, 6 Mar. 1913; box 74, Statement for Vincent Connell Bruce of Inverquhomery and Longside ... Mar. 1913.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Stirling Council Archives, Callander Town Council

Minutes, CA1/1/6, 20 Mar. 1919–20 Sept. 1920, *passim*.

⁶¹ University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers, Ms 3175, vol. 815, rental of the estates of the trustees ... in the Duff House District, 1924–25–1928–29; Keith Town Council Minutes, vols 28–29, 4 May 1962–9 Mar. 1964, *passim*; *Banffshire Herald*, 24 Feb., 12 May, 26 May 1962; *Banffshire J.*, 27 Feb. 1962.

lots and after 1960 these were gradually consolidated into larger holdings.⁶² Secondly, entire estates were sold, often to a speculator who subsequently broke-up the property into individual holdings which tenants could purchase. This occurred on the Strichen and Pitfour estates in Aberdeenshire in the 1920s after they were secured by Edgar Fairweather, a London-based speculator, who was active in purchasing estates managed by trustees throughout Scotland.⁶³ While many tenants of lotted lands purchased their holdings, others continued to rent, and the residual estates were managed by the Property Realisation Company based in Inverness which attempted further sales when leases expired. By contrast, the transition from tenancy to owner-occupation of lots was spread over a period of fifteen years at New Aberdour. The sale of the lands of Aberdour and Rosehearty (Brucklay estate) in 1934 by Alexander Dingwall-Fordyce to Thomas Place of Northallerton had only a limited impact on tenancy arrangements on the lotted lands. However in 1947, Lord Brocket purchased the unsold part of the estate and in the course of the next three years the village lots were sold to the sitting tenants.⁶⁴

Thirdly, the sale of an estate also could lead to the end of lotting within a very short period. The years immediately after the Second World War witnessed further changes in estate ownership and management of the remaining lotted lands. At Charlestown of Aberlour (1950) the Aberlour Orphanage purchased Allochy estate and did not renew tenancies.⁶⁵ At New Pitsligo, the lotted lands changed little during the ownership of the 21st Lord Clinton (1904–57). The sale of the Pitsligo estate two years after Clinton's death to George Watson, a local farmer, led to the rationalization of holdings in favour of a simpler management strategy of larger fields with the lotted lands being amalgamated into adjacent farms. By 1975, only 142 acres remained, of which about 60 per cent was let to three local farmers, while only ten villagers still had holdings.⁶⁶ Recalling these changes in 1997, the laird noted that: 'The last feuar ... to have any village land, relinquished his tenancy last year. My family, separately, farm most of the land. All the "rigs" are into big fields now'.⁶⁷

The most extensive changes impacted on Macduff, Fife Keith and Dufftown in the early 1960s when the estates of the late Duke of Fife were sold by his trustee to pay the death duties of Princess Arthur of Connaught.⁶⁸ Most of the lotted lands were purchased by dairy farmers and calf breeders, though some land at Fife Keith and Dufftown was acquired by the town councils for house building and amenity purposes. These changes were not always popular among holders of lotted land. The population of Fife Keith had maintained a tradition of part-time cultivation and on the portion of lotted lands that had been purchased by Keith Town Council, several

⁶² Brucklay Estates Office, Shevado, Maud, Brucklay Letter Book no. 18 *passim*; *Buchan Observer*, 18 Jan. 1921.

⁶³ *Buchan Observer*, 15 Sept. – 3 Nov. 1925 *passim* (Strichen); 30 Mar. 1926–30 Nov. 1926, *passim* (Pitfour); 29 Nov. 1932 (obituary of E. C. Fairweather); J. M. Bulloch, *The last Baird laird of Auchmeddan and Strichen: The case of Mr Abington* (1934), pp. 13–14; NAS, Inverness Sasines, 7 July 1925; Renfrew Sasines 25 June 1927; Kirkcudbright Sasines 19 Aug. 1927.

⁶⁴ Brucklay Estates Office, Brucklay Letter Book no. 21, p. 578, 4 June 1934; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 30 May 1934; NAS, Aberdeen Sasines, 18 Oct. 1935–11 Mar. 1953

passim; Valuation Roll, County of Aberdeen, 1935–6 and 1948–9.

⁶⁵ *Northern Scot*, 2 Sept. 1950; Valuation Roll, County of Banff, 1951–2 and 1955–6.

⁶⁶ *Banffshire J.*, 1 Dec. 1959; *Buchan Observer*, 1 Dec. 1959; Valuation Roll, County of Aberdeen, 1960–1; Middlesmuir Farm Office, Pitsligo Estate, Village land rents payable to Martinmas 1975.

⁶⁷ Personal communication from Mr. George Watson, Fraserburgh, 19 Dec. 1997.

⁶⁸ *Banffshire J.*, 18 July, 29 Sept., 7 Nov. 1961; 27 Feb., 22 May 1962; *Banffshire Herald*, 4 Nov. 1961.

tenants objected to their lots being incorporated in the proposed golf course. They contended that they had held their lots over a long period, they enjoyed farming activities and that satisfactory alternative land was not offered to them, though eventually they succumbed to pressure from the community to give-up their tenancies.⁶⁹ At Macduff, most of the lands were purchased by four dairies, from which cows continued to graze on pasture, thus maintaining a tenuous link with the past. By the early 1980s, only one of these remained.⁷⁰

On those estates that did not change hands, the lotted land system slowly waned. Neighbouring farmers have acquired most of the pendicles at Guildtown (Perthshire) and when the decision not to renew leases on the Drummond Estate was taken in 1950 it brought to a close a long period of gradual decline in village farming. In Burrelton and Wolfhill, there had been more than fifty landholders in the early 1870s; by 1920 this had declined to twenty-seven and in 1950, just twelve holdings remained.⁷¹

By 1965, lotted lands managed by estates survived in only a few places such as Tomintoul (Banffshire). This upland village was still surrounded by a large acreage of lots where some individual boundaries had not changed since they were re-organized in 1825. The village lands were part of the Glenlivet estate owned by the Crown Estate which provided continuity of ownership. Nevertheless, amalgamation of tenancies proceeded steadily. About sixty tenants remained in 1960, but their numbers had been halved by 1973 and in 1999 only eight remained. Here too it has been management policy to allow neighbouring farmers to acquire lots that had been given up by the smaller tenants in order to make their farms more commercially viable with the result that four of the eight rented 91 per cent of the lots.⁷²

IV

The evidence for animal husbandry and cropping patterns on lotted lands is more fragmented and is largely confined to the period after 1860. The chief purpose of lotted lands was to provide households with sufficient land to keep one or possibly two cows to produce milk for domestic use and for general sale. Animal fodder requirements strongly influenced land use and holdings were worked in small shifts with about half in grass and the remainder cropped. The crop rotation that evolved to support them was usually a five or six course rotation, the six-year rotation comprising three years of grass, then oats, turnips and oats. Animals were housed in byres that were situated in the yards (gardens) of villages and were accessible to the lanes that linked the streets and the lotted lands, the animals being driven out each day to pasture. A few people kept small herds of cows, the forerunners of village dairies that flourished until about 1970, while horses were essential for tradesmen such as masons and carters. Additional grazing

⁶⁹ *Banffshire Herald*, 26 May 1962.

⁷⁰ Macduff Town Council, *Macduff and its harbour* (1966), p. 13; *ibid.*, (sec. edn, 1983), p. 14.

⁷¹ Guildry Incorporation of Perth, Minutes of meeting of Committee of Management 1913–84; Tenant's Accounts, vols 4 and 5; Drummond Estates Office, Muthill rentals of the Estates, nos 2–9; *ibid.*, Abstract of rentals,

year to 31 Mar. 1951.

⁷² NAS, Records of the Crown Estates Commissioners, CR6/31, Glenlivet Estate rental, 1960–1; CR6/35, Glenlivet Estate rental, 1973–4; Crown Estate Office, Edinburgh, The Crown Estate Valuation 31 Mar. 1999; Lotted Lands Tomintoul spreadsheet [1999].

for these animals could be obtained from households who sub-let their lots, while in larger villages fields known as grass parks were let by the landowner on annual leases.⁷³

Part-time farming was therefore an essential component in the life of planned village communities. Moreover, working land continued a tradition present in the pre-improver period when tradesmen in fermtouns, kirktowns and burghs of barony had an interest in agriculture. The importance of the lotted lands in planned villages can be seen in the parish descriptions in the *Old Statistical Account* (1790s) and the *New Statistical Account* (1830s).⁷⁴ Collectively these point to achievements in reclaiming wasteland, a strong commitment to the land and the important contribution made by lotted lands to the rent rolls of estates. The typical pattern of landholdings in a medium-size village such as Newmill (population – 499 in 1841) was 176 lots divided among eighty households.⁷⁵ Each household tenanted two or three lots which were widely scattered in several former farmlands. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, there was a heavy dependency upon these lots. The 1851 Census recorded that 24 per cent of household heads were in agricultural employment while a further 37 per cent were not employed. Most of the latter group would have relied on the produce of their lots.⁷⁶ Support for this view can be found in a detailed letter written by George Laing to Sir John Stuart Forbes, owner of the Pitsligo estate in Aberdeenshire in 1830. Laing emphasizes the attachment of the villagers to their land because 'there is little or no manufacturing or trade and the people all depending entirely on the produce of their lots of land'.⁷⁷

Writers have generally agreed that the lotted lands contributed significantly to the prosperity of communities in the nineteenth century and for some time afterwards. These enabled tenants to eke out their income and occupy their spare time. Estimating the proportion of family income that was derived from working lotted lands is quite complex. While rent payments and income from crops that were auctioned are well documented, information on the cost of tools and equipment, outbuildings and inputs such as manure, and investment in drainage and fencing is very patchy. Moreover income would have varied from one year to the next depending on crop productivity and prices obtained at auction while many transactions, such as sales to other villagers, are not recorded. Taking as an example, a typical holding of 5 acres (two acres in oats, one acre in turnips and two acres in grass), in the early 1880s, rent averaged £1.60 per acre and the crop would have fetched about £35 at auction.⁷⁸ However, it is likely that only some of these crops would have been sold. The price of fertilizers was between 5 and 10 per cent of rent paid while the cost of drainage and fencing was usually shared, with the estate contributing materials such as tile drains and the tenant providing the labour. The costs of ploughing and sowing are difficult to assess. Many villagers took great pride in their ploughing skills and competed regularly in local ploughing matches, others employed carters and occasionally farmers provided

⁷³ *Buchan Observer*, 12 Mar. 1929, p. 2.

⁷⁴ For example OSA V, p. 421; Rev. J. Gordon (ed.), *The statistical account of Scotland by the ministers of the respective parishes* (15 vols, 1845), hereafter NSA, XII, p. 281; XIII, pp. 390, 230.

⁷⁵ University of Aberdeen, Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers, Ms 3175, A219(1)1, Rental of the lands possessed by feuars of Newmill crop 1812.

⁷⁶ Census Enumerators' Books 1851, Keith Parish,

Banffshire (seen on microfilm at the Local Heritage Centre, Grant Lodge, Elgin).

⁷⁷ NLS, Fettercairn Papers, acc. 4796, box 37, letter, Philanthropus (George Laing) to Sir John S. Forbes: New Pitsligo, 8 Feb. 1830.

⁷⁸ These calculations are based on reports on the sale of growing crops and wages paid at feeing markets in the *Banffshire J.* and the *Buchan Observer*; *Aberdeen Herald and Weekly Free Press*, 15 May 1886.

this service, sometimes as a favour, more often for payment in the form of a few day's labour at turnip hoeing or at harvest time. In addition, holdings of this size would have supported a cow, making the household independent for dairy produce and providing surplus milk that could be sold. In short, working five acres of lotted land could contribute the equivalent of an additional 50 per cent of income for a tradesman. Earnings of this magnitude from part-time farming also had a wider appeal that ranged from a subsistence income for the unskilled and the elderly to a rewarding hobby for those in professional employment. Moreover, the large village gardens were used to produce potatoes and other vegetables and fruit and some of this produce was displayed at the annual village shows organized by its horticultural society which had become an established feature of village social life by mid-Victorian times.

By the late-nineteenth century, depopulation had enabled a number of tenants to increase their holdings from two or three acres to 15–20 acres. Larger holdings typically comprized lots that had been acquired from tenants who had chosen to give up farming. As a consequence, specialization in livestock enterprizes, particularly cattle and pigs, became the norm among the larger land holders while the smaller tenants, like their predecessors, usually only possessed a cow. In addition, some villagers owned two or three houses in order to acquire the land that was attached to them to support more animals. The extra houses were sub-let to people in full-time employment such as railwaymen or servicemen.⁷⁹

The records of the Scottish Land Court provide information on the acreage of land rented and ownership of animals of those applying for the legal status of statutory small tenant which enabled the Court to fix rent levels. Taking New Pitsligo as an example, records during 1913–14 show that 24 per cent of tenants owned horses and 47 per cent had cattle.⁸⁰ In 1959, a questionnaire was conducted among tenants in this village that provides particularly detailed information on the ownership of livestock. A sixty-three per cent response rate from the 109 tenants showed that about 37 per cent owned cattle and almost as many owned sheep. Poultry (26 per cent) were also common, while three respondents specialized in pig farming.⁸¹ Although the survey is the only one of its kind known to exist, it is likely that the pattern of livestock farming was fairly typical of other villages that still retained lotted lands at this time, and apart from the demise of horses for transport and ploughing, of livestock ownership in the early part of the century as well.

Evidence given at the hearings of the Scottish Land Court suggests that oats, turnips, barley and grass were the most common crops on lotted lands, though potatoes were also cultivated, especially on lots improved from moorland. With the exception of Strichen in 1912, where oats accounted for 40 per cent of the acreage and turnips and hay accounted for a further 45 per cent, there is little evidence in these reports of the acreage given over to each crop in a particular season.⁸² In large and comparatively prosperous villages such as Keith, Macduff and Aberchirder (Banffshire) and Turriff and New Deer (Aberdeenshire) much of the crop was auctioned on the ground a few weeks before harvesting. Crop sale advertisements were therefore searched in an effort to provide more information on cropping patterns. A number of local newspapers were examined. Some, such as *The Banffshire Herald* and *The Moray and Nairn Express* [The

⁷⁹ *Aberdeen Herald and Weekly Free Press*, 15 May 1886.

⁸⁰ Aberdeen Sheriff Court, Landholder's Holdings Book, part one, applications to the Scottish Land Court.

⁸¹ Middlemuir Farm Office, New Pitsligo village lands,

particulars of applicants, Nov. 1959.

⁸² Aberdeen Sheriff Court, Scottish Land Court, Lotted lands Strichen, notes on behalf of proprietors, Strichen Estates Office, 31 Mar. 1913.

TABLE 5. Village crop sale advertisements in the *Banffshire Journal* and the *Buchan Observer*, 1847–1930

	Annual Sales		Individual Sales	
	<i>Banffshire J.</i>	<i>Buchan Observer</i>	<i>Banffshire J.</i>	<i>Buchan Observer</i>
Oats	58	14	37	14
Barley (including bear)	19	3	4	1
Corn (unspecified)	23	18	15	1
Turnips	41	22	18	6
Potatoes	18	16	10	—
Grass (and temporary grazing)	4	2	1	—
Hay	16	23	13	8
Straw	5	2	—	1

Note: Most corn sales would have been oats.

Sources: *Banffshire J.* 1847–1930; *Buchan Observer* 1863–1930 (known as *East Aberdeenshire Observer* between 1875 and 1893).

Northern Scot] which were published at Keith and Elgin only contained advertisements for sales in a few villages close to these towns. However, it was found that two in particular, *The Banffshire Journal* and *The Buchan Observer*, which had wider circulations, carried a large number of sale notices for crops grown on lotted lands between the mid-nineteenth century and about 1930. Such notices fall into two broad categories, first, the sale of crops belonging to one person, and second, auctions of the crops from a number of holdings. In addition, local correspondents reported on a large number of these sales and sometimes gave details of the crops sold from particular holdings, the price per acre or drill and the names and addresses of purchasers. The pattern of crop sales is summarized in Table 5. This highlights the dominance of oats throughout Aberdeenshire, Banffshire and Morayshire. Turnips, although grown on smaller acreages, were almost as common, reflecting their importance as winter fodder for cattle. Barley sales were less frequent, due to purchases by whisky distilleries in lowland areas of Moray and Banffshire, while the altitude of individual villages such as Dufftown and Archiestown prevented barley reaching an adequate standard.⁸³ Finally, sales of hay and potatoes were generally sporadic and small-scale, suggesting that much production was for family use.

V

In addition to lotted lands, households in planned villages had access to two further land resources: commonities and moss. Commonities were areas of uncultivated land whose use was shared among the population of the village. These were most frequently areas of rough pasture where cattle and horses from the village were turned out to graze. A secondary function was the opportunity to gather building materials such as stone, clay and divot. Exceptions to this pattern were fairly rare, however the commonity of the Haugh of Letham (Angus) was used for

⁸³ H. Hamilton (ed.), *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: The County of Banff* (1960), p. 367.

bleaching cloth and washing linen, and not surprisingly pasturing was discouraged, though the feuars of Letham were compensated with rights to dig clay in a second commonity.⁸⁴

Village commonities covered relatively small areas; Stuartfield, for example, had two commonities, one of five acres at the northern edge of the village and another more extensive area south of the settlement. Commonities were often criticized for their untidy appearance. In 1841, the north commonity of Stuartfield was described by the estate factor as an unimproved waste 'and a most complete eye sore'. About twenty years later, James Beattie of Aberdeen was employed to survey the village lands, and his report was equally unfavourable: 'the ground is very wet and broken up by the digging out of clay and such like; is both unseemly and injurious from its wetness to the health of the villagers'.⁸⁵ The number of villages with formally established commonities is not known, but virtually every settlement had specific areas where the feuars could acquire building materials and periodically graze their cattle. In Angus and east Perthshire, where it has already been noted lotted lands were less common, landed proprietors made available quarries to furnish building materials and these may be regarded as a substitute for the privileges that commonities offered.⁸⁶

The importance of village commonities began to diminish in the late nineteenth century. Houses built with finished stone and slate roofs replaced those with rough stone or clay walls and thatched roofs whilst grazing needs could be accommodated on the lotted lands. As a result, rights in commonities lapsed into disuse and the lands returned, by agreement with the feuars, into the proprietor's possession.

Peat mosses were a further resource that were highly valued and helped attract population to villages.⁸⁷ When a village was founded, part of the unimproved lands were selected as a source of peat fuel for the village. Moss lands were carefully regulated by agreements, known as moss tolerances, that were drawn up to define the quantity of peat each household was allowed to dig each year for which a payment, known as moss mail, was made. Feuars were not permitted to sell peats or graze their cattle and horses on the moss and a moss grieve was appointed to enforce these regulations and settle disputes.

When a moss was nearly exhausted, the proprietor would open another area for exploitation. In Strichen, the first tolerance was issued for the Little Moss of Mormond, but within three years, part of the larger Borrowhill Moss was opened for digging and a further 11½ acres was allocated in 1792.⁸⁸ As a consequence of digging peat and reclamation for lotted lands the areas of moss were greatly reduced. Between 1845 and 1875, 230 acres were reclaimed at New Pitligo, while the mosses near New Leeds contracted from 120 to 40 acres.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ NAS, Forfar Sheriff Court, Register of Deeds, Deed of privileges to the inhabitants of Letham of Dunnichen, 17 Dec. 1789, registered 22 Dec. 1789

⁸⁵ Burnett-Stuart Papers (Crichie House), deed box 'Village of Stuartfield', memo for Mr. Burnett Stuart of Dens, 1841; report and valuation of farms and crofts etc on the lands of Crichie and Dens ... by James Forbes Beattie, Aberdeen, 21 Jan. 1865.

⁸⁶ Sheffield City Libraries, Wharnccliffe muniments, Wh.M. 277, General conditions under which the lots of ground in the new village of Newtyle are to be disposed

of, 30 Sept. 1833.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Auchenblae, Kincardineshire in G. Robertson, *General view of the agriculture of the County of Kincardine or The Mearns* (1813), p. 204.

⁸⁸ NAS, Aberdeen Sheriff Court, Register of Deeds, Contract and agreement betwixt Alexander Fraser Esq. and the feuars of Mormond village, 17 Apr. 1792, registered 17 May 1792; Innes and Mackay, Solicitors, Inverness, Fraser of Strichen Papers, agreement, the villagers for firing from the Moss of Borrowhill, 1769.

⁸⁹ J. Peter, *The peat mosses of Buchan* (Aberdeen, 1875).

VI

Lotted lands played an important role in the economic life of planned villages between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. This is reflected in the drainage and improvement of moorland where part-time farmers pushed cultivation into previously neglected areas. Village lands at various times provided subsistence for the poor, a supplementary source of income for tradesmen, a significant opportunity for village entrepreneurs, a recreational interest and additional land for farmers.

Although lotted lands had such an important role in the life of village communities, they have tended to be overshadowed by other land-related issues such as the Highland Clearances, the land question in the late-nineteenth century and land resettlement during the inter-war period. Lotted lands were rarely discussed in local newspapers or in the weekly farming newspaper, *The North British Agriculturist*. They were also overlooked by writers in periodicals such as the *Farmer's Magazine*, the *Journal of Scottish Agriculture* and *Transactions of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland*. Although writers in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* frequently commented on allotments they (unfortunately) ignored parallel practices on lotted lands in Scotland. Finally, when Victorian and early twentieth-century photographers visited planned villages, they appear to have been more interested in street scenes and public buildings. Only two photographs that clearly show cropping on lotted lands, one of harvesting operations at Dufftown (plate 1) and the other of livestock on lotted lands at Aberchirder, have been located.⁹⁰ In addition, a small number of general views of places such as Keith and Rothes were published in the Christmas supplements of local newspapers in the post-1950 period and some of these picture part of the adjoining lotted lands.⁹¹

Fortunately, sources such as estate plans and estate papers, Ordnance Survey large-scale maps and Valuation Rolls contain detailed evidence of the structure, tenancies and, to a lesser extent, the farming activities which characterized this field system. Present-day landscapes occasionally provide clues to past farming activities on the lotted lands. A few rectangular lots survive east of Gordon Lane in New Aberdour, out buildings that once served as byres can be found in rear gardens in many places and access lanes still link villages with distant fields. Today only Tomintoul has retained its lotted lands: the lots between the village and the A693 to Corgarff remain excellent examples of this field system.

The lotted lands of New Pitsligo, New Keith, Tomintoul and Strichen have figured prominently in the discussion. Although these are among the best documented, it is clear that from the area under cultivation, and their widespread occurrence, that lotted lands deserve recognition as a significant element in the changing Scottish rural landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the economy of its inhabitants.

⁹⁰ University of Aberdeen, George Washington Wilson Collection, C3418, Dufftown from west c.1880; *Aul'Turra* (Turriff, 1997), p. 36 (New Byth from the foot of Bridge Street); *Buchan Observer*, 14 Oct. 1924, p. 2

[Fetterangus]; University of St Andrews, Valentine Collection A8357, Aberchirder.

⁹¹ *Banffshire Herald*, 17 Dec. 1955, p. 6; *Northern Scot* [Christmas Number], 25 Dec. 1961, p. 53.