

West Lothian District Council

This booklet is the result of a survey of farm steadings carried out by West Lothian District Council's Planning Department in the summer of 1990. The farms all lie in the Bathgate Hills in the heart of West Lothian. The typical buildings are described and the life and work that went on around them is evoked using text, photographs and diagrams. The question of what to do with the many redundant steadings is also dealt with. This booklet is aimed at local people, visitors and the general public alike.



Produced by
West Lothian District Council
Planning Department

The Farmsteadings of the Bathgate Hills

**THE
FARM STEADINGS
OF THE
BATHGATE HILLS**

**Nils White
WEST LOTHIAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
1991**

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Most of all, though, the owners and tenants of all the farms visited, from whom an enthusiastic welcome was received, are to be thanked warmly.

FOREWORD

In this study of farm steadings in the Bathgate Hills, Nils White gives the key to the need for such studies everywhere by referring to the tremendous speed of change at the present day. Of the 50 steadings tucked into the area demarcated by Linlithgow to the north, and Bathgate and Uphall to the south, 12 have been converted to other uses and 8 more are no longer used for farming. There has already been a 40% change in farming intentions as expressed in the use of steadings alone.

Though surrounded by urban complexes, this area of West Lothian is remarkably attractive and full of interest, though relatively unknown to visitors. Attraction need not lie in the spectacular. In this case, it flows from the pleasure of observing how a strongly man-made landscape has developed, and of spotting traces of the past in the present. In any such landscape, the buildings are the most prominent features. Through them can be seen the way in which the most prominent industry - farming - has worked to produce food for man and beast, and through them too appears evidence of ongoing social changes as living standards rise and different perceptions of day-to-day needs come into play. Thatched roofs gave way to roofs of imported slate for the houses, and of tiles for the outhouses, especially the byres where good ventilation was important. Linear or L-shaped layouts changed to more enclosed units with centrally-sited cattle courts. Some buildings were heightened to give more living and working space, and such alteration leaves a clear mark on the characteristic rubble walling. The attractive round or polygonal horse-mills have nearly vanished as gas, oil and tractor power have replaced horses. Bothies are no longer needed. The separation of up-to-date dwelling houses from the steadings, and from the workers' housing, added just a touch of prestige. In these and numerous other ways, social change can be seen on the outside of the buildings.

Inside, the story is the same. Easily cleaned concrete floors and trevises replace trevises of stone and wood with cobbled floors. Milkhouse fittings and shelves are hardly needed. Doocots are filled up. Henhouses, built as part of the steading, lie empty. No straw skeps sit in the occasional sets of beeholes, though where riding horses are used, the low loupin' on stane may yet stay in service. The boilers for water to scald the dairying utensils or for boiling the feed for the stock lie rusting, and the great, chunky, cast iron cake-breakers are encrusted with cobwebs, where they survive at all.

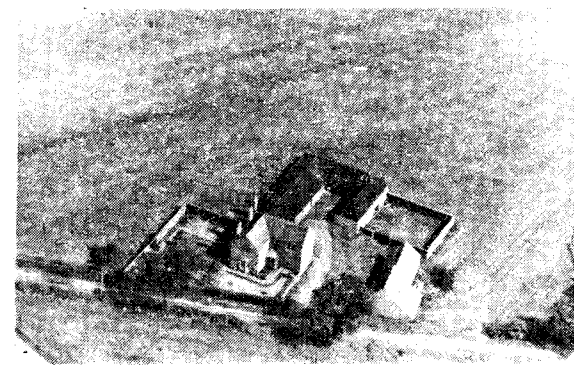
All these points seem negative, but they are not, for they are no more than markers of changing times. What remains is the quality of the building of many of the steadings and dwellings on the group of estates that covered the area. Essentially the 50 steadings provide a record of mainly Victorian features, some of which are specific to the estate, and some to the locality (e.g. in line with the intractable nature of whinstone as a building material). It would be interesting to establish which architects planned farm buildings like Cauldham with its 64 acres and one bay cart-shed, and Brunton with its 208 acres and its six bay cart-shed, both of which farms are described in detail here. This is for future research, however, as part of wider studies in Scottish farm buildings. In the meantime, Nils White has produced a fine local study, well timed to catch his set of farm buildings at a point in time when much still remains. For West Lothian District Council to publish the results is an excellent initiative, which should set a good example in other areas as an incentive to similar work elsewhere, and as a reminder of the need to give "measured consideration" to the preservation, not only of finer architectural features, but also, and even more so, to the more everyday building features that in reality characterise best the districts where the buildings are situated.

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INTRODUCTION

All around us, there are tangible links with history. The countryside itself is man-made and can tell us much about human activity in the past, while the buildings standing in it perhaps represent the strongest connection of all. Along with farming itself, the design of farm buildings has been changing almost continuously with the passing of time. The buildings have been altered, added to or rebuilt, so that many farms date from several different periods, and thus display what has been called an 'historical narrative'. Since the last war, however, the rate of change has been faster than ever before and often, rather than keeping old steadings in use, it is easier to demolish them completely. They are then replaced with large, open plan, pre-fabricated sheds, so much more versatile for modern farming.

In this climate of breathtaking change, the importance of recording and, in some cases, preserving what remains has become clearer than ever. With this objective, a survey of the farm steadings in the Bathgate Hills was carried out in the summer of 1990. All the steadings in the area were visited, 50 in total, and a detailed written and photographic record was made of each. Also, the possibilities for adaptation and conservation were considered and an assessment made of the buildings' condition.



1. Nethermuir: from the south-west c1963.

The Bathgate Hills, lying between Bathgate, Linlithgow and Uphall in the heart of West Lothian, are interesting in that they display features of both upland and lowland farming within their bounds. Most of the higher ground is not covered in heather moorland as is the case in much of Scotland and therefore pastureland is not confined to the lower reaches.

Much of what has been written about Lothian farms has concentrated on the large, planned, lowland steadings of East Lothian; indeed many of the fashions and styles which developed there were not slow to reach West Lothian. However, anyone expecting the rather palatial steadings seen in that part of the country would be disappointed, the farms of the Bathgate Hills are usually small and the steadings humble by comparison. The Ordnance Survey Gazetteer of 1885, describing the whole of Linlithgowshire, tells us that *"The average extent of the farms is a little over 100 acres, while 40 per cent are over 50 acres, and only 6 per cent over 300 acres"*. However, despite their small size, the quality of construction of many of these buildings was high and recognised as being so in the Statistical Accounts of 1843 for Torphichen: *"The farms are not large; and the style of farm building corresponds; some of them, however, are of a rather superior order"* and Linlithgow: *"Farm buildings are commodious, and suited to either rearing or feeding. Dwelling houses are comfortable, and in general large enough to accommodate a large family. Several steadings are excellent"*.



2. Knock Farm: from the south-west.

Today, most of these small farms are still worked as individual units, though few are still owned by the estates for which they were originally built. Most of the buildings found on farm steadings in the Bathgate Hills date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - another time of rapid change in agriculture. The fashion for building the stading around a central court, enabling cattle to be contained during the winter, slowly spread to the area from the more progressive parts of the lowlands and buildings were often added to the linear or L-shaped stading to complete the new shape. In particular, there was a spate of building in the 1830s and 1840s when there was an upturn in the fortunes of agriculture after several years of recession.

The majority of these farm steadings were owned by one of the estates in the area when they were built, among them Wallhouse, Ochiltree, Lochcote, Craig Binning, and Hopetoun. Sometimes it is possible to see recurring features peculiar to one estate, such as the fine cornice work seen on the farmhouses belonging to the Lochcote Estate.

These differences aside, each farm stading, through necessity, would usually comprise the following: 1. Barn, for storing straw, and thrashing the grain. 2. Granary, often with a cart shed below. 3. Milking byre. 4. Dairy. 5. Stable. 6. Bothy, to house farm labourers. 7. Cattle wintering courts. 8. Farmhouse.

In the following pages, each of these buildings is examined with reference to examples found in the survey. However, before looking at them, a brief look at construction methods is useful, both as a guide to dating the buildings and also simply the better to appreciate them.

CONSTRUCTION

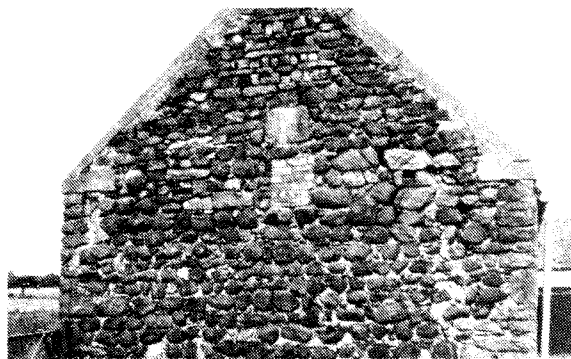
As in most of Scotland, the builders of these farms were fortunate in having an abundance of stone with which to build, usually found within a very short distance of the site. However, there are several variations in the kind of stone used, and also in the construction techniques. These variations are useful as they can often be the key to dating a structure.

THE WALLS

"There is a considerable quantity of freestone, very durable for building, and plenty of what is commonly called whin-stane, both made use of for building houses and fences". Torphichen 1890.

There are two principal types of stone used as building materials in the Bathgate Hills - sandstone and whinstone. Sandstone, perhaps the building material most associated with Scotland, has long been valued for the ease with which it can be worked and its soft, warm colours.

The whinstone found in this area is most commonly bluey grey in colour and by contrast, is very difficult to work being a hard, almost shiny material. Surprisingly, its lack of porosity also presented difficulties as water would move inward faster through the jointing in the wall leading to dampness. However, a highly skilled mason could solve this problem by laying outward sloping courses.

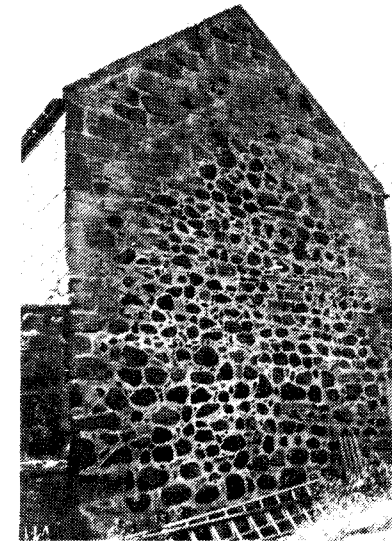


3. Quarter Farm: wall of weathered stone rubble

Whichever of the two stones was used, the main part of the wall was nearly always constructed of rubble, which is rough stone shaped either very crudely or not at all.

The stone was pointed with lime mortar, which was a mixture of sand, aggregate and lime, produced at one of the limekilns in the area. The texture and light colour of this mortar was also a major contributor to the character of a wall.

In pre-Improvement times, rubble usually consisted of loose, weathered stones cleared from the fields. These are easily recognisable by their rounded shape (3). After Improvement, it was more usual to extract building stone from quarries, although common sense demanded that old stone was re-used where the building replaced an earlier structure. In cases where extra height was needed, rather than rebuilding completely, an extra lift of stonework would be added to a wall (4), often illustrating a change of favoured building material.



4. Hiltly: change of building material in upper courses.

A wall built of quarried rubble is usually uniform in stone type and has a more jagged appearance, the rock having been broken up at the quarry. This was usually a small pit as near to the building site as possible and was often opened up especially for the construction of one farm. It is often no difficult task to locate the source of building stone, which is now usually overgrown or flooded.

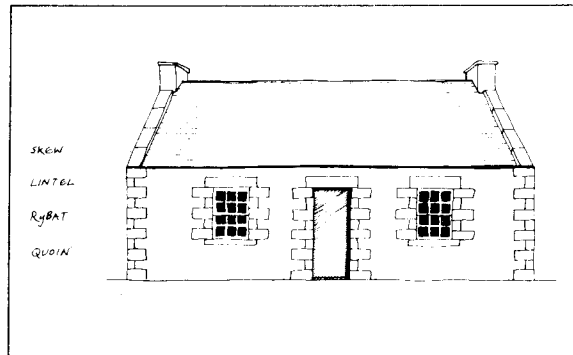
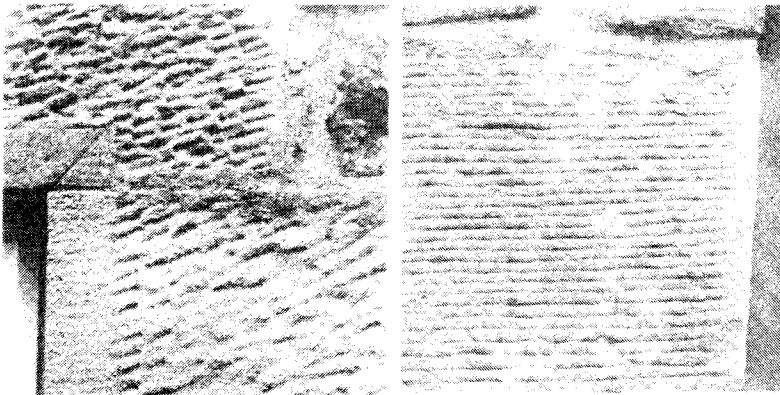


Figure 1: Dressed stonework.

There were parts of the building where straight edges were needed and for which crude rubble was inadequate: chimneys, skewes, quoins, rybats and lintels (fig 1). These are nearly always finished in dressed sandstone, regardless of the construction of the rest of the building.



5. Stugging.

6. Droved sandstone.

This stone was either roughly tooled, a technique known as "stugging" (5), or given finer, smooth and "droved" finishes (6). Droving is often a sign of an eighteenth or early nineteenth century building, while stugging became more popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Both these techniques are illustrated in the boal hole of the barn at South Mains (7) dated 1848.

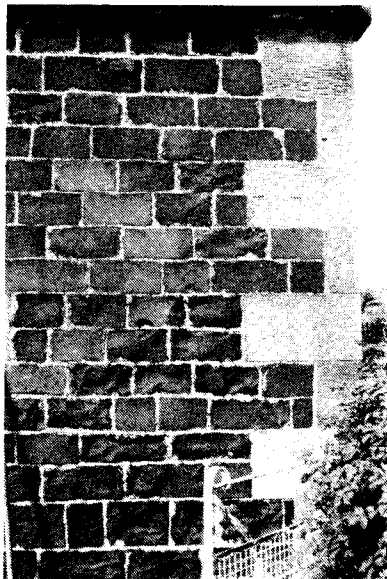


7. South Mains: upper storey boal hole in barn.

Ashlar stonework was not found on any of the agricultural buildings in the area, but there are examples of coarse, squared rubble (8). Nearly always this would be sandstone, but there are some cases where builders have gone to the trouble of dressing whin to a similar quality, providing a handsome contrast to dressed sandstone (9). Harled or whitewashed walls are unusual in the Bathgate Hills area.



8. Cathlawhill: stable wall constructed of squared sandstone rubble.



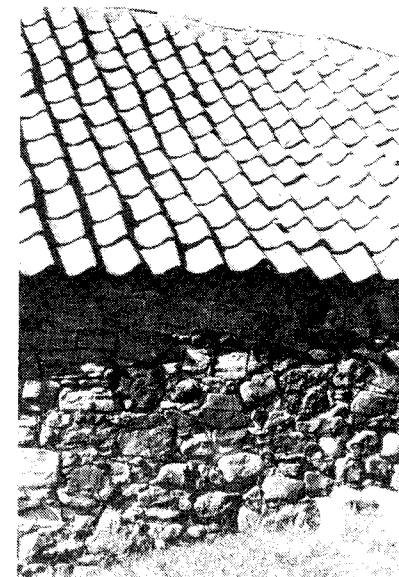
9. Ochiltree Mill: squared whinstone rubble with sandstone dressings.

THE ROOF

The roofs found in this part of Scotland are also very distinctive. It can be deduced from the gable pitch of some of the older buildings in the area that they were originally covered in thatch; indeed, a surprising number

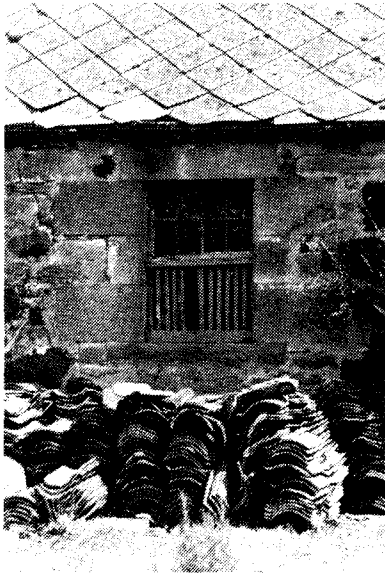
of buildings mentioned in the O.S. Name Books of 1854 were thatched, including the houses of Bishopbrae, Cauldhame and North Mains. During the 19th century, however, thatch was gradually superseded by slate and pantile. Of the two, slate was the more versatile, the more effective at keeping out the weather and the more expensive. Slate did not occur naturally in the area, having to be imported from one of the main producing areas of Scotland, usually Argyll.

Red pantiles have an interesting history in central and eastern Scotland. Reputedly, they were first brought over on ships from the Low Countries in the 18th century. Later, they were made locally. In West Lothian, there were several brick and tile works and, by the mid 19th century, many of the humbler buildings in the area were covered with this attractive material (10). Variations, such as glass pantiles for skylights and ventilation tiles were developed, but there are few instances of deviation from the basic design. Another advantage of the pantile roof was that it 'breathed'. This made it much healthier for cows which, in a byre covered in slate, tended to sweat too much, sometimes leading to pneumonia. When slate was used, one answer to this problem was to lay the slate at half the usual overlap.

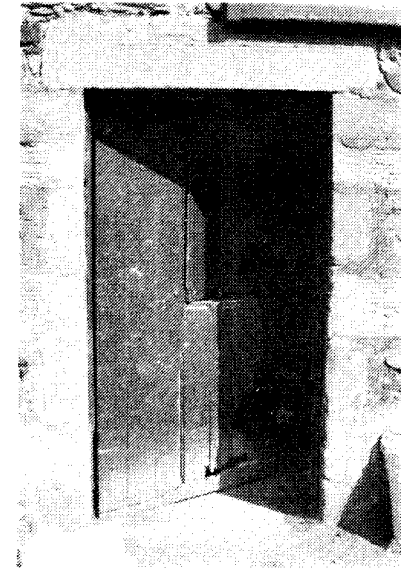


10. South Mains: pantile roof.

The construction of the roof never varies, with simple "A" frame trusses. Corrugated iron has a long history of use in Scotland, but where it is encountered in the Bathgate Hills it is usually recent, replacing a more traditional material.



11. Drumcrosshall: asbestos slates laid in a diagonal pattern. At the base of the wall are stacked pantiles salvaged from the cattle court, now demolished.



12. Bankhead : double leaf door.

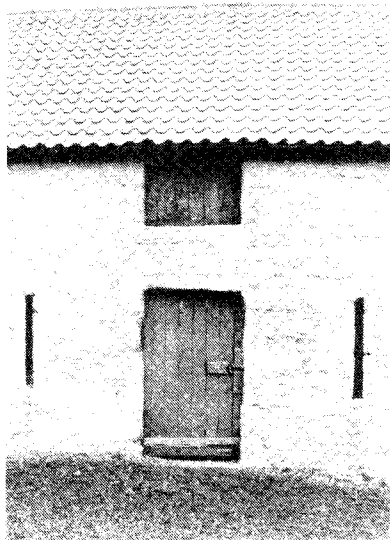
At Drumcrosshall, asbestos slates, laid in an attractive diagonal pattern, are used (11).

Usually, the original joinery survives intact and the quality and ingenuity of the work involved is often impressive: doors were often designed to allow varying amounts of draught into the building (12), and were sometimes split both vertically and horizontally permitting almost infinite adjustment.

THE BARN AND GRANARY

Perhaps the building most associated with farms, the barn is usually instantly recognisable and often was conceived as the showpiece of the group.

To understand the use of the barn fully, it must not be forgotten that each farm, despite its small size and often inhospitable terrain, had to be self-sufficient. The oats and barley, needed for animal fodder and as food for the farmers, were grown and thrashed on the farm. Until the beginning of the 19th century, the thrashing of the corn was done by hand, using flails to beat the grain from the ears of corn and then letting the through-draught in the building take care of the winnowing (separation of the grain from the chaff). These techniques required that the building have a hard earth floor, a high ceiling that allowed the flails to be swung at full force, opposite doors and arrowslit vents (13). These had to be situated to take the full broadside of the prevailing westerly wind, and as a consequence the barns of this area are nearly always north-south oriented.

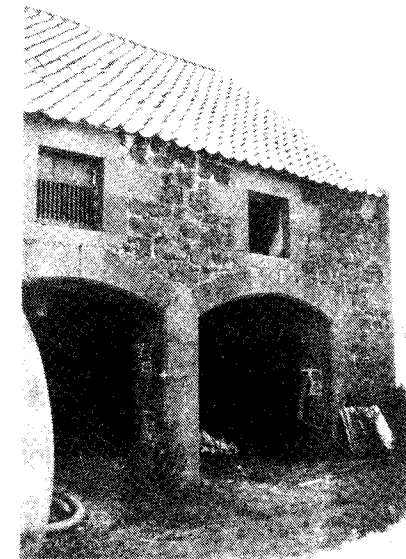


13. Easter Carribber: 18th century barn with arrowslit vents.

In the early 19th century, however, mechanical thrashing techniques were introduced using horse, water or wind power and, later on in the century, steam power. This enabled the operation to be carried out in a more confined space. Winnowing could be done using one of the patent fanners. The new machinery was either housed in the existing barn, with associated structures added on, or a new one was built.

Hay was usually stored in a stack outside although a certain amount was often kept in lofts above the stable and byre. Purpose-built hay barns only became prevalent with the introduction of pre-fabricated, corrugated iron Dutch barns during this century.

The grain that was produced by the thrashing operation was put into sacks and stored in an upstairs granary. Very often the granary was in the same building as the barn and commonly there would be a cart shed underneath. The exterior of cart and implement sheds on farm steadings can be very fine with a series of arches over the individual ports (14). Usually they are built of stone but, in the late 19th century, cast iron piers were sometimes used.



14. North Mains: twin port cart shed with granary above.

THE HORSE MILL

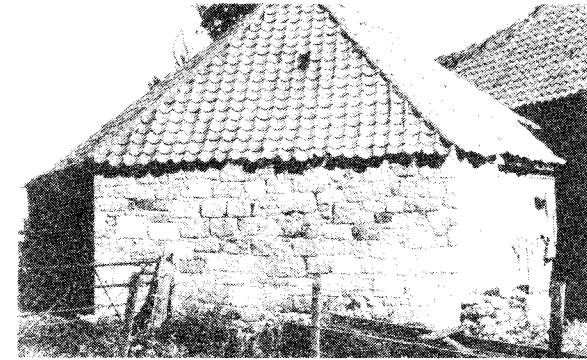
The most characteristic building associated with the new thrashing techniques was the 'horse mill' or 'horse gang'. This was a round or polygonal building (15,16) in which up to six horses (no more than two in the Bathgate Hills) would toil, harnessed to a rotating overhead beam, which by a series of gears would work the thrashing machinery.

The ricks of unthreshed corn would be hoisted up to the first floor using a rick lifter, an old example of which was found at Quarter Farm, then the sheaves would be fed into the thrashing machine from above. Meanwhile, in the horse mill, a young lad was employed to shoo the horses to keep them moving.

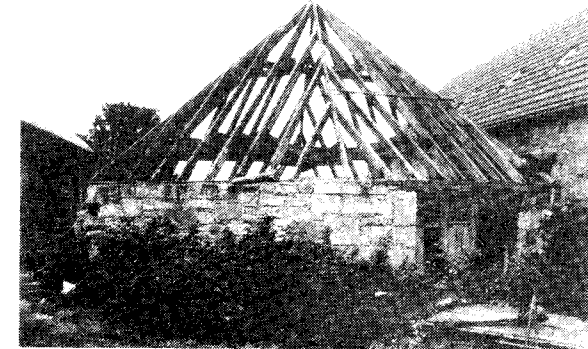
Sometimes the horses would have been assisted by oxen, harnessed closer to the axle-beam, to allow for their greater strength and slower speed. Investment in one of these machines could be seen as rather extravagant considering the small quantities of grain produced. However, it was normally used throughout the winter months, rather than completing the thrashing operation immediately after the harvest.



15. West Broadlaw: horse mill c.1963. The roof has since collapsed.



16. Cauldhame: horse mill.



17. The Byres: horse mill with pantiles removed.

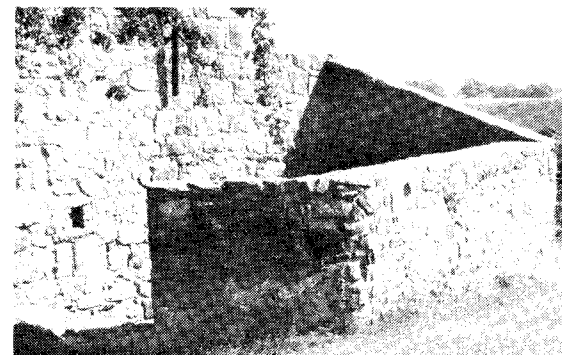
These horse mills were slowly replaced by gas and oil engines at the beginning of this century and latterly the operation has been taken over by combine harvesters. As well as being the most distinctive, the horse mill is probably the most useless building for the modern farmer. Partly for that reason, only two have survived with roofs intact in this area: one at Cauldhame and the other at Williamcraigs. Yet there are twelve sites in the area where there is conclusive evidence of such a mill.

There is still evidence of horse mills on the following farms in the area: Byres, Cauldhame, Craigmailing, Galabraes, Law, North Mains, Wairdlaw, West Broadlaw, Wester Druncross, Wester Gormyre, Wester Tartraven and Williamcraigs. Of these, all but four are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1854. The Ordnance Survey Name books from the same year confirm that nearly every farm had a thrashing mill.

Despite their principally functional nature, where they do survive, the quality both of stonework and the intricate joinery employed in the roof is often impressive. Indeed, their aesthetic qualities may well have been appreciated by those who built and used them. This is suggested by the use of black glazed pantiles on the horse mills at Wester Druncross and at Williamcraigs, which contrast with whitewashed walls in the case of the latter. Although the removal of tiles from the roof of the horsemill at The Byres farm (17,41) represents a loss, hastening the decay of the building, it does serve to reveal the elaborate joinery used.

In the Bathgate Hills, there are no remains of windmills, but water was a common source of power in the valleys where it was readily available. Several examples of wheel houses (18), remains of machinery, lades and millponds exist; at Wallhouse the wheel house and pit for an undershot wheel (meaning that the water flow that provided the motive power passed under the wheel) are still in place and the flagstones which lined the long, sunken lade are still sometimes uncovered when the field it passed through is ploughed.

Most water wheels were controlled by a sluice which could be closed, diverting the water to an overflow. However, at Wallhouse, there was a trapdoor under the wheel which, when opened, lowered the water level stopping the wheel. This was usually perfectly adequate, but during heavy rain, wheel and thrashing machinery could career out of control until the water abated. At Hilderston, the sites of two water wheels can be seen, the newer of the two being incorporated upstream in the new barn of 1855. There is one instance, at Ochiltree Mill, of a water-powered thrashing mill being installed on the site of a much older corn mill, records of which go back to the 13th century.



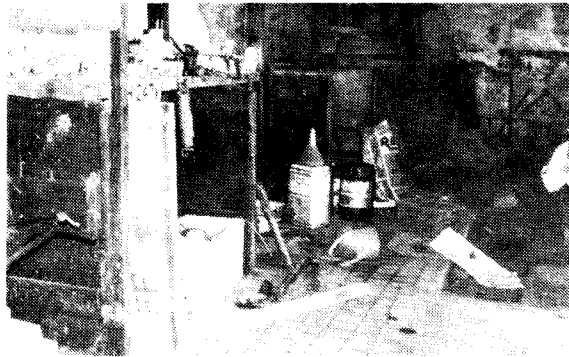
18. East Broadlaw; wheelhouse dated 1864.

Remains of water mills were also found at Bishopbrac, East Broadlaw, Nethermuir and South Mains.

Steam-powered thrashing mills were commonly installed in larger low-land farms at the end of the 19th century. In the Bathgate Hills, Oatridge and Wester Ochiltree had them, though nothing now remains of either. Not far away, however, is the magnificent chimney at Waterstone.

THE MILKING BYRE

As the Bathgate Hills was a dairying area, milk was the end product in many of the farms. It followed, therefore, that some prominence was given to the byre. Like the other buildings in the steading, the byre went through several developments and those which remained in the same use until recently are the least unaltered. The most original byres found in this study have flagstone floors, trevices (used to separate the pairs of animals) of stone (39) (found at Law, Hiltly, Craigmaling and Cauldhame) or wood (19) (found at South Mains, Wairdlaw and Hiltly). Usually, there are stone feeding troughs in the stalls at floor level.



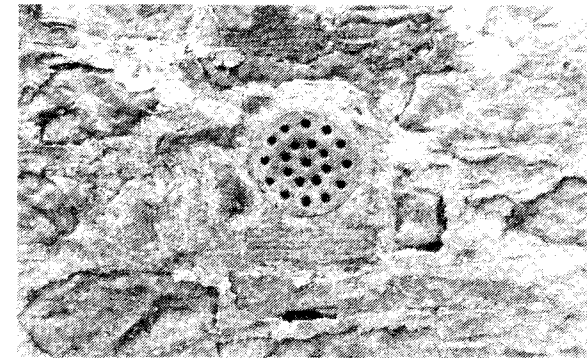
19. Hiltly: byre with wooden trevices.

With the acceptance, in the first half of this century, of the supreme importance of hygiene when dealing with milk, new laws were introduced setting out minimum standards regarding cleanliness. The old trevices and bare stone walls were no longer acceptable and were replaced by rendered brick trevices, with rendered walls and surrounds, and a concrete floor.

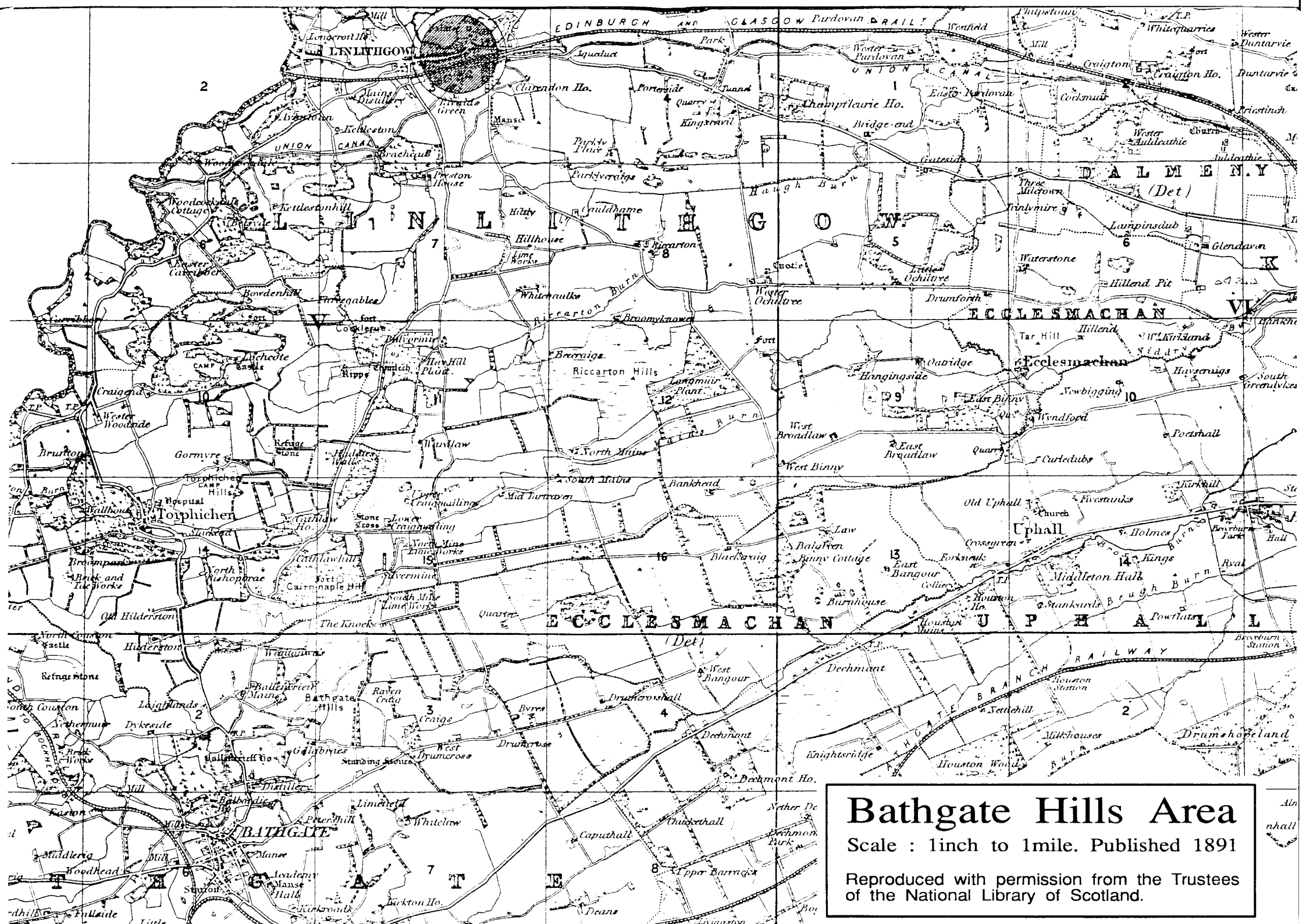
Although it might be expected that this would have spelt the end for the traditional byre fittings, many do still survive; this may be thanks to the abandonment of the old byre, either coinciding with a change in the type of farming, or with the fitting out of a new building. Alternatively, on many farms, we know that when the inspector appeared he would be

presented with a spanking new byre, meeting all the necessary health requirements, though rather small considering the size of the herd. Across the yard however, milking continued surreptitiously in the old byre, in spite of the new regulations.

Ventilation was another necessary requirement for the cows and there were several different designs for the individual wall vents found in many byres. (20)



20. South Mains: ceramic vent in wall of the byre.



Bathgate Hills Area
 Scale : 1inch to 1mile. Published 1891
 Reproduced with permission from the Trustees
 of the National Library of Scotland.

THE DAIRY

Close to the milking byre were the dairy buildings. There were two main requirements.

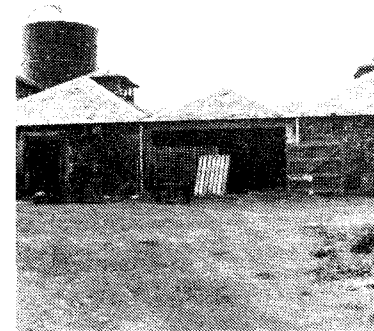
First, the building had to remain relatively cool during the summer months and, for this reason, there was a minimum of fenestration in the south wall; it would also often be situated close to a stream.

Secondly, it had to be easy to keep clean. A supply of boiling water was necessary for cleaning the utensils and there was often a boiler near the dairy where the wooden utensils were scrubbed daily with hot water and Bath brick, an early form of scouring powder.

The benches round the walls were used as stands for milk bines or bowies - shallow dishes in which the cooling milk would separate - and were usually made of flagstone slabs, or slate in finer examples such as those found at Wester Gormyre and Wairdlaw. Until the 1930s, there was no Milk Marketing Board and each farmer had to sell his own in the nearest town, in competition with his neighbours. As recently as the 1940s, there are stories of Mr. Briggs of Wairdlaw undercutting the standard rate of thruppence a pint, to try to sell all his milk.

THE CATTLE COURTS

During the harsher weather of the winter months, it was normal to keep both dairy and beef cattle permanently on the farm, in byres and wintering courts respectively. Often they were let out for just half an hour a day to let them stretch their legs. This was for the benefit both of the cattle and the workers, obviating the need to fetch them in for milking in inclement weather. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was some debate over whether it was better to keep the beef cattle inside during the winter or if, as was thought by some, it was healthier for the cows to be left in the open, with simple shelter provided. The covered court faction eventually won and a classic style of cattle wintering court evolved (21, fig 2) which enabled the cattle to be fed from a central feeding passage through hatches in the walls.



21. West Bangour Farm:
cattle courts.

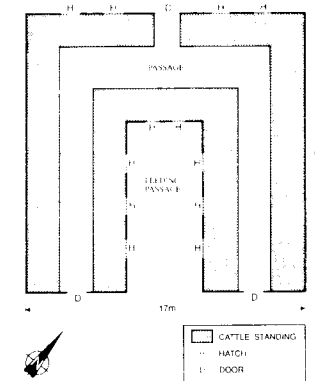


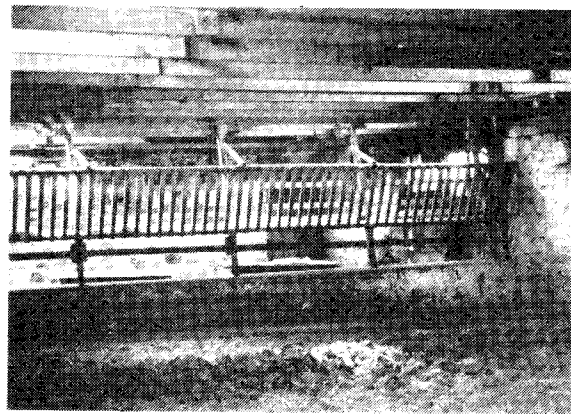
Fig.2 West Bangour Farm:
plan of cattle court.

The cattle fodder varied between farms, depending in part on what was grown. Turnips were commonly used on some farms. Sometimes these were boiled up in a large cast iron urn in purpose-built boiling houses, such as the one at Quarter Farm (22). On other farms, a mash was specially prepared. At Cauldhame, one mile from Linlithgow, the mash typically consisted of draff mixed with beanmeal, peasmeal, and treacle. Draff (used brewer's grains) was a by-product of the nearby distillery.

Later, commercially made cattle cake was bought in, usually coming in blocks which had to be broken up before being fed to the animals. Hay was fed to the cattle from overhead hecks (23).



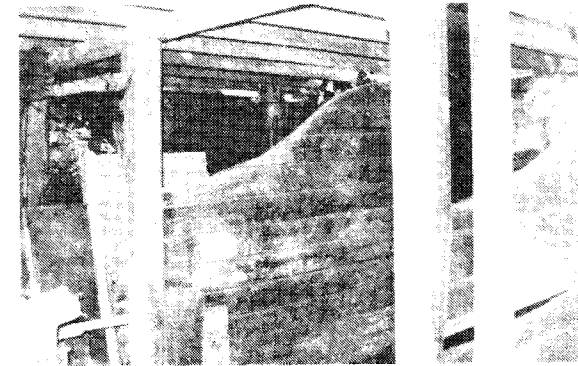
22. Quarter Farm: boiler.



23. North Couston Farm: heck.

THE STABLES

Horses were the principal power source on the farm before the mechanisation of agriculture, and it was therefore imperative that they should be looked after well. By the middle of the last century, most stables had stalls for individual horses. The trevises were usually swept up at the wall end to prevent the animals from biting each other (24).



24. Wairdlaw: wooden trevises in stable.

Although horses usually worked in pairs, there would normally be an extra horse to do the work requiring only one animal, or to replace sick animals and mares heavily in foal. This extra horse was known as the 'orra beast' and most farms therefore had an odd number of horses.

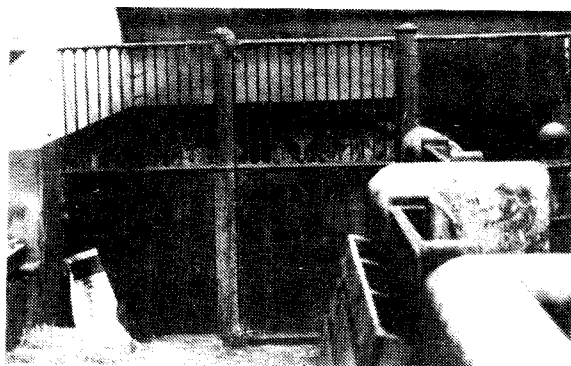
The floor of the stalls was cobbled, providing a dry, hard wearing surface. The rest of the floor was often covered in flagstones and might include a 'gruip' (25), which was the gutter running down the centre. There are still good examples of cobbled stable floors at Wester Gormyre (26) and Brunton.



25. Wester Gormyre: griip

26. Wester Gormyre: cobbled floor of stable.

The stable tended to be better appointed than the other buildings of the farm; there are often pegs for hanging the harnesses and even cupboards for storing the tack. Typically, there was a loose box for foaling as at Oatridge, where there is a rather grand example (27). Brunton, Drumcrosshall, Dykeside, Hilderston, Hiltly, Oatridge, Wairdlaw and West Bangour all have well-preserved examples of stables.



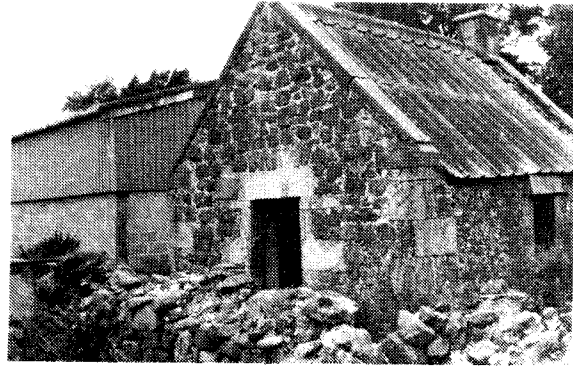
27. Oatridge: loosebox.

THE BOTHY

Farming was a far more labour-intensive activity when these steadings were built and even on the smallest farms it was normal to have a number of permanent employees. The cot house near the farm was where married couples usually lived, but other workers would be accommodated on the steading.

Before the advent of the new steadings it was quite usual for farm workers to sleep in the hayloft, but with improvements in agriculture it became normal to have a bothy house. The men who lived in these buildings were often temporary labourers and unlike the cot house, the bothy was not usually a permanent home. Several traditions of bothying exist in Scotland. In some parts the bothy was set away from the farm, but more usually it would form a part of the main group of buildings. Frequently, the bothy would be little more than a room and, in addition to the cramped dimensions of the building, it was sometimes situated in such a way that the tenant farmer could keep a close guard over his charges; the eighteenth century bothy at Cauldham Farm had bars across the window which faced out of the steading. Whether this was a measure introduced by the farmer to discourage illegitimate excursions is left to our imagination, but what we can be sure of, is that life as a farm worker had little relation to the romantic way in which it is sometimes now portrayed.

There is quite wide variation between bothies in the area. The small building at Craigmaling (28) was variously used as a dairy and bothy. The west-facing window was no more than a slit, which would have been stuffed with rags to exclude draughts. Although a bothy such as this one scored low on creature comforts, the building was hardly ramshackle, with its careful detailing and handsome proportions. Bigger farms would have larger, more comfortable bothies.



28. Craigmailing: bothy

At Drumcrosshall there were two bothies, both with separate living and sleeping quarters, and each with its own fire-place. Also, perhaps significantly, they could be entered from either within or without the central court of the steading. The interior of these, like most bothies, was clad in pine.

The bothy at Wairdlaw (29) could have been quite comfortable, with its range and even a sash and case window. This contrasted with the rather ascetic conditions imposed on the workers at Craigmailing(28), only a quarter of a mile away.



29. Wairdlaw: bothy.

THE FARMHOUSE

Before the 19th century, the long, low farmhouse was often joined to the other buildings of the steading with a door leading directly to the byre. Typically, there would be just two rooms and conditions were spartan; the ruined farmhouse at Craigmailing was still standing earlier this century and had no more than a hole in the roof to serve as a chimney. As agriculture prospered, however, it became common to build a more substantial house set slightly away from the other buildings (30). In the wealthier farms these were of two storeys. With the completion of the new house, the old one either fell into disuse and collapsed, or was converted to a new use as a bothy or byre, as was the case at Wairdlaw.

Sometimes it was not felt necessary to build afresh. Instead, an extra storey was added to the existing house. Where this has been the case, there is usually a distinct change in building material visible at first floor level (40). Often the dairy was attached, or close to the farmhouse, and sometimes the remains of a privy can still be seen, as at Cauldhame.

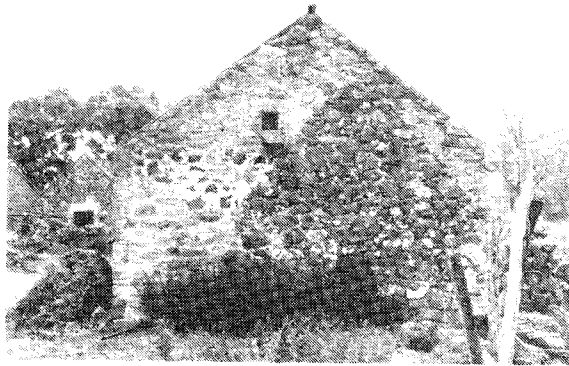


30. Ochiltree Mill: farmhouse.

OTHER INTERESTING STRUCTURES

In addition to the buildings mentioned above, there are several other features which have strong associations with farming and were found on the survey.

Often, high up in the gable of one of the farm buildings, there is a small hole, or group of holes; this usually indicates that there was a doocot in the roof, the purpose of which was to provide pigeons as a source of fresh meat during the winter.

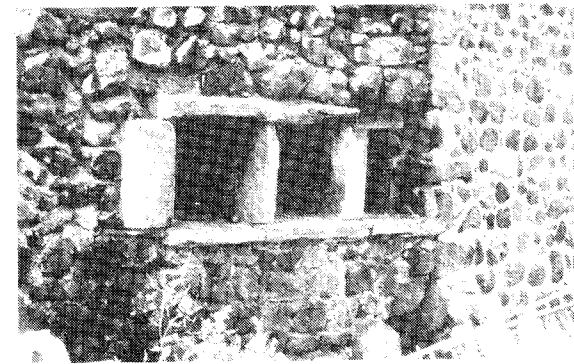


31. Craigmaling: owl hole.

Note how the change in stonework shows the way the building was raised and widened.

Sometimes there is a single larger hole with a perch. If this is in the barn, there is a good chance it is an owl hole (31). Unfortunately, barn owls have not been seen for several years in the Bathgate Hills, mainly due to clearance of woods and the increased use of pesticides. However, in the last century, they were not uncommon. As they played an important part in the control of vermin, it was in the farmers interest to encourage these birds to nest in the barn.

At Hiltly, there are some square, sandstone recesses in a wall (32). These are beeholes where the beehives were placed. They may have been secured in position by an iron bar which was padlocked into place, protecting the precious honey.



32. Hiltly: beeholes.

Also at Hiltly, there is a loupin-on stane, or mounting block (fig 3), to help riders into the saddle.

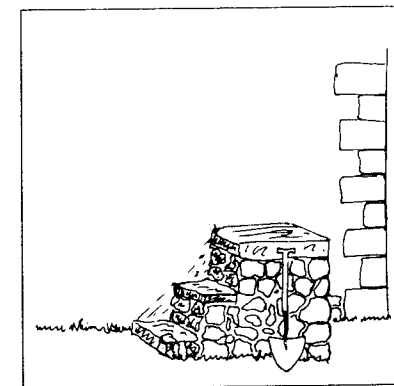
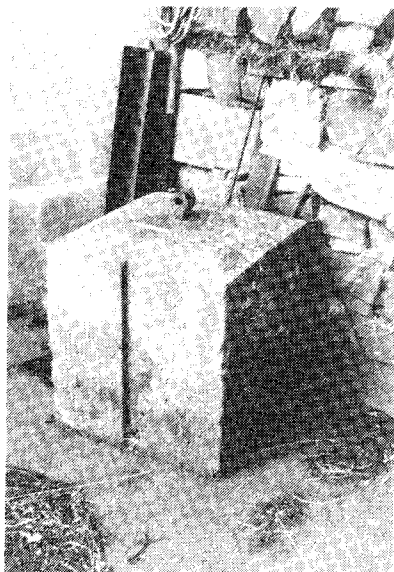


Figure 4, Hiltly: Loupin-on stane.

Often, lying outside the buildings, is the weight from a cheese press. This is a large lump of sandstone with grooves down the sides and an iron eye at the top. It shows how common cheese making once was on farms. Cheese presses were found at Bowdenhill, Wester Drumcross, Wester Gormyre, and at Ochiltree Mill, where the exceptionally well preserved weight illustrated stands in a corner of the farmyard. (33).



33. Ochiltree Mill: cheese press.

Determining the age of a building is a lot easier when there is a stone in the wall bearing a date and this is one of the first things to look for. Unfortunately, it may not be so conclusive as it seems. There is a good chance that the other buildings on the steading are not contemporary with the dated one. The rather odd practice of re-using date stones from earlier structures in newer buildings is also not unheard of. At Blackcraig, a stone dated 1776 was found on the inside wall of the barn. The building does appear to be that age; however, we can't be certain that it is accurate owing to its unusual location. Usually however, date stones are useful to give an anchor date around which to base other similar buildings. A good example is Ochiltree Mill (30), which bears the date 1834 on a skewputt. Other houses can be compared with this and their age estimated, especially those that also belong to the Dalmeny Estate to which Ochiltree Mill belonged.

It was normal to keep hens on the farm and occasionally, as shown here at Hillhouse (fig 4), there is a purpose-built henhouse with steps for the birds to gain entry to the high level door.

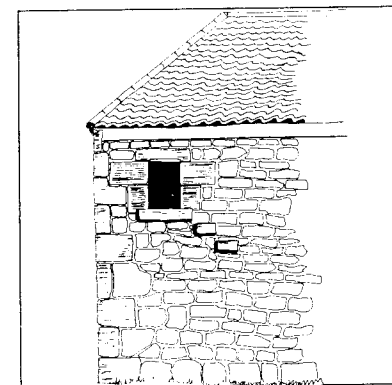


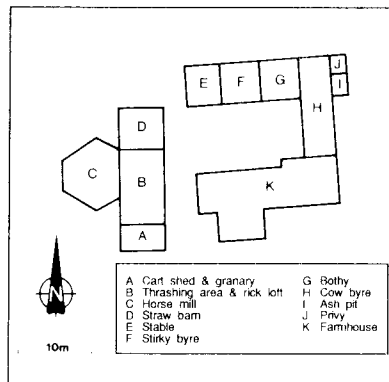
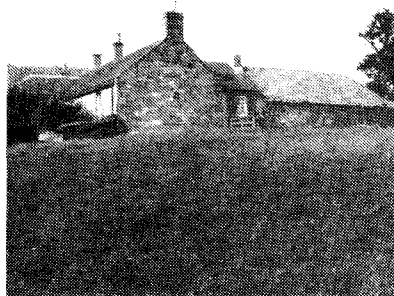
Figure 5. Hillhouse: henhouse steps.

In the following pages, there are descriptions, with plans and photographs, of two farms in the Bathgate Hills: Brunton and Cauldhame. Both are relatively unaltered and therefore give us quite a good idea of what farming was like in the last century. The steadings were designed for tenanted farms of different acreages both belonging to estates. The buildings of each are under-used, and there will be increasing pressure to find a new use for them.

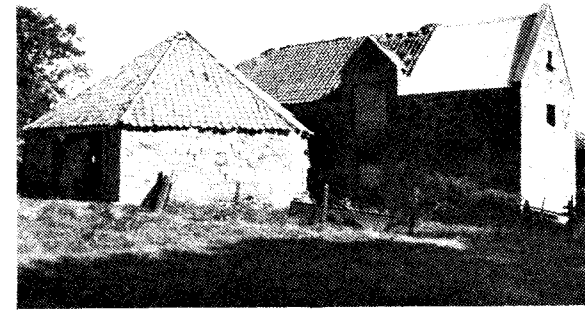
CAULDHAME

Although it is in a dilapidated condition, this small steading is of great interest, as the buildings survive largely unaltered. The farm was originally 64 acres and in 1854, according to the Ordnance Survey name book, was the property of the Champfleurie estate.

The most impressive building of the group is the combined barn and granary (35). It is constructed of squared rubble with a stugged finish, droved rybats and skews, and a pantile roof. The granary is at the south west end and has a single bay cart shed below it. Access was through the sheaf loft and there is an owl hole in the gable. The barn has an earth floor and originally had a sheaf loft with a hopper feeding the thrashing mill below, which was powered by a horse mill. There are two doors above each other, one at ground floor level, the other, known locally as the 'boal hole', leading to the sheaf loft. These were essential lines of communication between the operators of the thrashing machinery and the boy driving the horses, when the machinery needed to be slowed down or stopped.

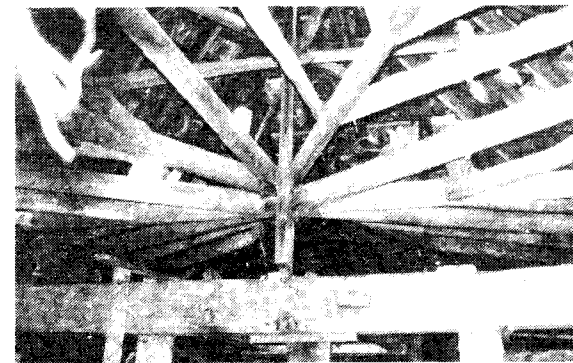


34. Cauldhame Farm: east elevation and figure 6 plan.

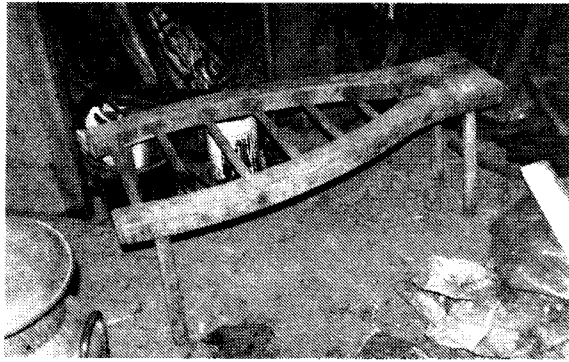


35. Cauldhame: barn and horse mill showing barn door and boal hole.

The horse mill, hexagonal on the outside, is circular within. The type of construction is similar to that of the barn. The last use of the building was for keeping pigs, for which makeshift sties were erected. Inside, the roof is constructed radially (36). Below this there is a stout cross beam, still with the bearing which supported the vertical axle.



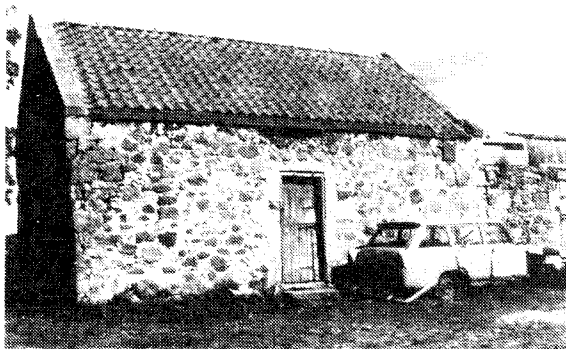
36. Cauldhame: interior detail of horse mill roof.



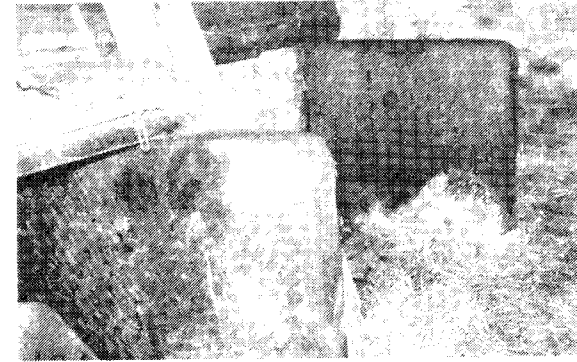
37. Cauldhame: clipping stool. The sheep was placed on its back on the bars while the shearer sat astride the stool on the right.

At the north east end of the building is the straw barn, which has no loft. The floor is of flagstone. The roof over this part of the building is in a poor state of repair, many of the tiles having been removed.

Inside the barn are several interesting artefacts. The meat cooler was a galvanised cart for wheeling the mash into the cow byre at feeding time. The mash on this farm consisted of draff (brewers grains from the distillery nearby), mixed with peasemeal, beanmeal, and treacle. There is also a clipping stool (37), used to support the sheep while they were being shorn, various harvesting tools and a meal girdel, which contained oatmeal, the staple food in the area, and stood near the kitchen.



38. Cauldhame: stable from the south.



39. Cauldhame: byre with stone trevises.

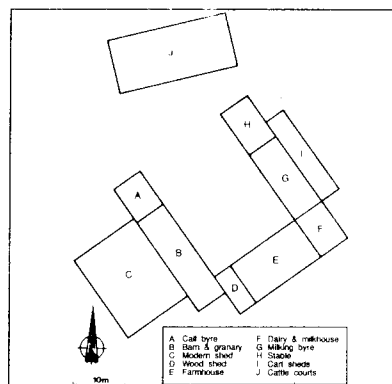
The stable (38) dates from a much earlier period than the barn, being a mainly 18th century structure. It is constructed principally of field boulders, though the gable is of more recent, squared rubble similar to that used on the barn. Only the uprights of the stalls remain, but it is clear that there was space for two pairs of horses (plus one). The floor has been covered in concrete, but was originally cobbled. The roof is interesting in being mainly of pantile, but with a slate drip course over the eaves minimising water penetration above the walls and preventing snow build-up in winter.

The 'stirky byre' was used to accommodate stirks (yearling bullocks); it is in very poor condition with a temporary felt roof. The bothy is in ruinous condition, but there is still evidence of the old fireplace. Originally there were bars across the window. The byre, with space for 13 cows, is also partly in ruins and still retains the original stone trevises (39), a flagstone floor, and the remains of stone troughs. The farmhouse appears to have been extended in the latter half of the last century. The O. S. Name books of 1854 tell us that the farmhouse of the time was thatched, but now, like the stable, the roof is pantiled with slates over the eaves. The boulders which formed the old footings from the original house are still visible at the base of the walls.

BRUNTON

Situated one mile west of Torphichen, Brunton (40) was originally part of the Wallhouse estate, and has a good wide steading which served an area of 208 acres in the mid 19th century when most of the buildings were put up.

At the head of the steading is a large, very elegant, two storey farmhouse. The lower storey is of sandstone and whinstone field rubble, while the upper storey is of good quality squared sandstone rubble. The building has a slate roof and extending at right angles to the house on either side are two ranges, incorporating the major ancillary buildings. Next to the house are the old dairy and boiling house, both of which are also roofed in slate. Conveniently adjoining these is the milking byre of random rubble which now has a corrugated iron roof. The interior was modernised in the 1930s with later additions.



40. Brunton steading: northwest elevation and figure 7: plan.

At the end of the north east range is the stable (41) with a cobbled floor and loose box. A hayloft above made feeding easier. There is also part of a stall for two pairs of horses (plus one).



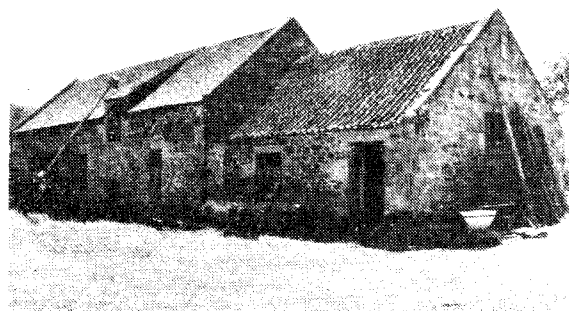
41. Brunton: stable. Note the cobbled floor.

The main building in the south west range is the barn (42). It is built of field rubble, with upper courses of quarried whinstone indicating an addition to the building some time in the 19th century. There is a sheaf loft over only half of the barn area, suggesting that the earlier part of the building predates the use of thrashing machinery. While there are no remains of any thrashing machinery, the Ordnance Survey Name book of 1854 tells us that there was a machine at that time.

In the sheaf loft there is a contraption marked 'H. Bamford and Sons, Uttoxeter. Improved Cake Breaker' (43). This was used to break up the slabs of cattle cake bought in for the animals.

The roof is slated and attached to the main barn is a straw barn. At the end of this row of buildings is the calf byre of quarried whinstone and dressed sandstone. The roof is of pantiles. Inside there is an old stirrup pump and a fanner. Set slightly apart from the main steading is the cattle wintering court, of which only the walls now remain and which is enclosed in a modern shed. Abutting the milking byre is a six bay sandstone cart shed with slated roof and fine stone arches. This is the most unusual

feature of the steading, most in the area having no more than two cart bays. Six seems a disproportionate number of carts for the number of horses. The answer may be that several of them were implement sheds; however, most of them are now bricked up.



42. Brunton: barn and calf barn from north.



43. Brunton: cake breaker.

THE FUTURE

It is only relatively recently that the historical and architectural value of many of the old farm buildings has been recognised. When they were built, the landlords had an almost unlimited supply of cheap labour at their disposal which, combined with locally occurring, high quality building materials, enabled them to put up buildings that were both solid and in many cases attractive. These buildings were themselves erected as a response to changes in agriculture and often they were built on the sites of older buildings which had to be razed in order to accommodate them. So, does this mean that now they in turn have become obsolete, they should be demolished and replaced by modern sheds, better suited to the needs of the agriculture of the day, but universally recognised as being inferior both in appearance and durability?

If we recognise the importance of the old buildings, the answer is no, but the question of what use they should be put to is complicated. The exceptionally high demand for housing in the countryside at the moment can present an opportunity for a new use, as occasional good conversions into dwellings demonstrate. However, recent experience has shown that residential conversions, when poorly carried out, can themselves be very destructive and as the fashion sweeps through the country, few buildings are left untouched. Although a barn or byre may seem bursting with "potential for imaginative conversion", it should be remembered that certain features such as windows, rainwater goods and internal partition walls played no part at all in the original design of the building and if they have to be added, careful thought should be given over their location. Otherwise, the original character of the building may be lost irrevocably.

With the upheaval that is being experienced in farming, it is not inconceivable that some of these buildings could again be used for agricultural purposes some time in the future; old farm buildings have several advantages over the new; both for keeping animals and storing crops, traditional buildings are both better insulated and better ventilated, creating a much healthier environment for these purposes. This is especially relevant with new incentives for farm diversification. With very few alterations many old farm buildings are also well suited for use as much-needed workshops for small businesses. Inevitably, a large number of buildings have already been converted: out of a total of 50 steadings visited in the Bathgate Hills,

twelve have already been changed to new uses, while another eight are not used for farming or residential conversion was being considered.

The argument here is not that there should be an overall presumption against residential conversions, but rather that measured consideration should be given to all possibilities. Ultimately, the greatest concern is that good buildings should not be lost. Just as in any other period, there is a need for new buildings, but it is hoped that with adaptation, and a spoonful of imagination, the older buildings may survive as well. One of the greatest causes for optimism is the keen interest that most owners showed in their buildings and they are to be thanked for their co-operation in the survey.

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FARMS IN THE BATHGATE HILLS

Ballencrieff Mains, West Bangour, Bankhead, Bishopbrae, Blackcraig, Bowdenhill, Broompark, Broomyknowes, Brunton, Burnhouse, Byres, Cathlawhill, Cauldhame, Craigmailing, Drumcross, Drumcrosshall, Dykeside, East Bangour, East Broadlaw, Easter Carribber, Easter Gormyre, Easter Woodside, Galabraes, Hilderston, Hillhouse, Hiltly, Kipps, Knock, Law, Mid Tartraven, Nethermuir, North Couston, North Mains, Oatridge, Ochiltree Mill, Parkley Craigs, Parkley Place, Quarter, Riccarton, South Mains, Wairdlaw, Wallhouse, West Binny, West Broadlaw, Wester Drumcross, Wester Gormyre, Wester Ochiltree, Wester Tartraven, Wester Woodside, Williamcraigs.



The Byres: Roof of horse mill.