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NEW LIGHT ON THE FIRST NEW TOWN

STUART HARRIS

AT THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST 1766 John Laurie, land surveyor, geographer and teacher of mathematics, published a map entitled 'A Plan of Edinburgh and Places Adjacent' (fig. 1), upon which appears the earliest known representation of the New Town of Edinburgh.¹ This was something of a publishing scoop, for it came out all of 17 months before the city's final scheme was made public. But quite fortuitously it gains new and much greater significance when it is set alongside the written record of the New Town project in the City Archives, for when taken together they throw an entirely new light on the process of its design, and in particular upon what happened and who did what in its crucial stage in the summer and autumn of 1766. Yet the wider background cannot be ignored, for by 1766 the New Town project was itself by no means new. Already it had been on the go, albeit in starts and stops, for the best part of a century. Inevitably there had been a certain evolution of ideas about its design and about how it might be set forward, and some preliminary steps had been taken; and since much of this will have a bearing on how the evidence is to be interpreted, it will be helpful to preface the discussion with a brief review of the previous history.

As Lord Provost George Drummond remarked when he laid the foundation stone of the North Bridge in 1763, the need for extension of the burgh had been recognised by James, Duke of Albany, as far back as 1680 or thereby.² And there was a certain grandeur in the concept behind the charter that, as King James VII, he granted in 1688, authorising the purchase of land and its annexation to the 'royalty' or area endowed with burgh privileges, as well as the 'building of bridges or arches for this noble design of enlarging the

cittie'.³ But progress was blocked by the king's downfall only weeks later, and by the troubles in the decades that followed; and the next recorded proposal was of a much narrower sort. It came in 1720, after the town had acquired the farm of Lochbank, on the slope from the Nor Loch up to the Lang Dykes or Lang Gate, a road roughly on the line of the present-day Rose Street. The suggestion was that the loch should be drained, or (as proposed in a later amendment) made into an ornamental canal with a service road on the north side of it, so that access between the town and Lochbank might be improved and the well-to-do encouraged to build their houses there.⁴ George Drummond, then Lord Dean of Guild, acted as the town's agent in obtaining the necessary Act of Parliament in 1723, but the times were hard and nothing came of it.⁵

In 1728 much bolder proposals were put forward by John Erskine, Earl of Mar, then in exile for life in France after leading the Jacobite rising of 1715. He suggested that the valley should be spanned by a high-level bridge, more or less on the line of the future North Bridge, to give scope for the construction of 'many fine streets' on the high ground opposite the Old Town.⁶ In particular he conceived of a single straight street running approximately east-west along the crest of the ridge, with a veritable garden suburb laid out on either side and so enjoying the superb views to north and south; and although it was to be over a quarter-century before any dreams began to come true, it is difficult not to believe that Mar's grand design inspired (unless perchance it reflected) the vision that gripped the imagination of George Drummond and the Council.⁷ For when the town began in the 1750s to prepare the ground for a New Town – partly by purchase of land north of Lochbank, but also (with the help of the Heriot



Fig. 1. A portion of John Laurie's 'Plan of Edinburgh and Places Adjacent', engraved by Alexander Baillie and published in August 1766. This is reproduced at 70% of the scale of the original; a detail is shown in fig. 3a. (Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.)

Trust as superiors) by arranging that other owners and tenants would fall in with the town's scheme if and when it went ahead – the intention was clearly to enlarge the site in such a way as to permit the development to be symmetrical about the crest of the ridge. The same intention was still obvious in 1766, only weeks before the design competition was launched, when the town feued 75 acres from the Trust, as shown in the deed plan here reproduced as fig. 2.⁸

The final campaign began in 1752, when enlargement of the town, extension of the royalty and the construction of a north bridge were chief among the published *Proposals* put forward by the Convention of Royal Burghs for public works to be carried out in Edinburgh by a national trust appointed for that purpose.⁹ Set up four months later, this trust got so far as to purchase the site for the bridge; but the scheme as a whole was held up by debate about extension of the royalty, and in 1761 the trustees passed the problem to the Town Council.¹⁰ But although extension of the royalty was considered to be vital to the New Town, it had little relevance to the bridge as such; nor did the case for the bridge wholly depend upon the creation of the New Town, for there were powerful independent arguments for it as a much-needed means of 'free communication to the north and west'.¹¹ It was therefore feasible to press on with the bridge on its own. A scheme was set on foot and a foundation stone laid in October 1763, but shortly afterwards the work was abandoned.¹² There was a pause before the Town Council, in November 1764, set up a special 'Committee on Communication with the Fields on the North' (also less ponderously known as the 'Bridge Committee') to progress a fresh design.¹³ John Laurie, 'reputed an exact surveyor', was commissioned to produce site plans, and the design of the bridge was put out to competition in January 1765.¹⁴ The prizewinner was the architect and mason David Henderson, with William Mylne (Deacon of the Masons, and a member of the Town Council and of the Bridge Committee) as

runner-up. But after a debate about styles and costs, Mylne's design, as structurally amended by the architect John Adam, was preferred, and the contract was let on this basis in August 1765.

This progress with the bridge seems to have eased the way for the New Town project; and on 26 January 1766 the Town Council expressly directed the Committee 'to confer on the intended Improvements in the Fields to the North, and to advertise a competition for a new town', to be assessed by 'persons of honour' nominated by the town. Once more, John Laurie was commissioned to produce a site plan.¹⁵ The Committee launched the competition in April and adjudicated it on 26 August 1766. Thereafter in due course the Town Council laid the necessary Bill before Parliament on 24 January 1767, obtained powers in June, approved the final design of the New Town in private on 29 July 1767, and published it for feuing on 1 January 1768.

These various stages of the 21-month process of designing the New Town are examined more fully below; but the bald summary is enough to show that the publication of the layout of the New Town in Laurie's plan of 1766 was probably based upon leaked information. This in itself would be but mildly interesting and scarcely surprising, for although the Council was certainly secretive,¹⁶ Laurie was not without contacts. As a practising land surveyor he had a regular stream of commissions from the town from 1764 onwards, and he had also worked with at least two and very likely all of the technical professionals or amateurs of architecture who, as we shall see, were involved in the New Town project.¹⁷ All that he would have needed for the purpose of his small-scale map was a mere thumbnail sketch or the briefest of descriptions. What is surprising and of the highest interest is that Laurie issued not just one but two versions of his 1766 map, and that they show very different versions of the New Town plan (fig. 3).

The prints have to be read with caution, for the map scale is only 1½ inches to the mile and the part we are

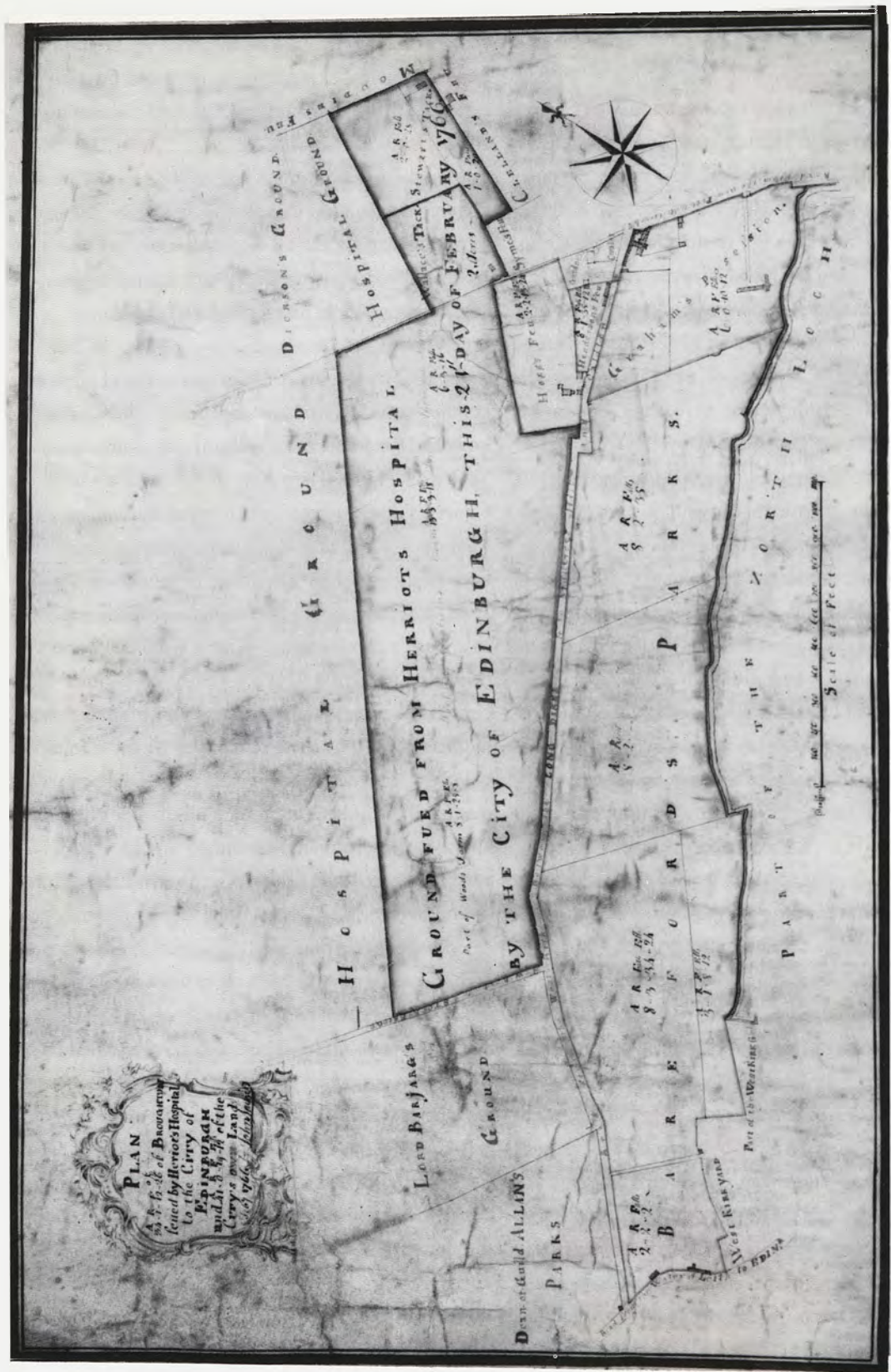


Fig. 2. Deed plan by John Laurie of ground acquired by the City in February 1766, forming part of the site of the New Town. (Reproduced by permission of the Director of Technical Services, Edinburgh District Council: photograph, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.)

concerned with is barely an inch long. Besides this, in both cases the engraving of the New Town is clumsy and somewhat coarser than that of the rest of the map; and in particular, the fronting of streets, whether by buildings or gardens, is not always properly distinguished. Yet the main differences are quite clear, and so is the relative dating of the two issues, for one or two extra place names such as 'Caldton [*sic*] Hill' appear on the later one, and yet more decisively it retains vestiges of discarded parts of the other engraving.¹⁸

This later print (fig. 3b) presents a 'New Town' that closely resembles the final design and the place as built. There is the familiar pair of squares at the ends of the central avenue, major buildings close the vistas here and at the end of the North Bridge, and the Bridge makes a firm junction with the southern avenue and a link to Leith Walk. Indeed the only thing that differs is that the print shows only six cross streets instead of seven – and this is as likely as anything else to have been an engraver's error. By contrast, the 'New Edinburgh' figured on the earlier print (fig. 3a) shows little that is familiar. Admittedly it shows three avenues, but instead of two squares there is only one, set in the middle of the plan so that it cuts the central avenue in two, each half running out indefinitely beyond the cross streets. There are also diagonal avenues running saltirewise from the extremities of the cross streets; and besides this there are no terminal buildings to close vistas, and the road from the North Bridge to Leith Walk makes only an uncertain junction with the southern avenue.

Yet notwithstanding these differences, there is an underlying likeness: for in both cases there are longitudinal avenues combining with cross streets to form a great rectangle lying symmetrically along the ridge, and in both cases the function of the various features within it, however different their form and their success in so doing, is to articulate this basic structure. This last is the decisive point, for although it is not

unknown for competing architects to hit on similar treatments of a site, and although it might be held that the Earl of Mar had already pointed out the site's architectural possibilities forty years earlier, the significant thing is not only that the two plans share a basic structure, but that in articulating it the later plan is strong precisely where the earlier one is weak. Clearly they are related, and as clearly the second is a more masterly re-working of the first.¹⁹

In order to see how this might have come about, the record of events in 1766-67 must be examined rather more closely than has been done heretofore in published accounts, for these will be found to have missed some important points and confused others, simply because they have not recognised how the work was delegated – and therefore minuted.²⁰ The first phase of the work, signalled by the remit of 26 January 1766 quoted above, and comprising the architectural competition and its adjudication and follow-up in the autumn of 1766, was wholly delegated to the Bridge Committee and is recorded solely in their minutes; while the second phase, which began on 17 January with the adjustment of the terms of the Bill for extension of royalty and included the presentation to Craig, the completion of the design, and the issue of the plan and conditions for feuing, was handled directly by the Town Council, with some assistance from a special committee set up in June 1767, and is recorded in the Town Council minutes. The record is not perfect, for as was not unusual, some matters were dealt with behind the scenes and without formal minutes.²¹ But the gaps are not as formidable as they seem at first, and in the upshot a reasonably coherent account emerges.

The Bridge Committee effectively started the design of the New Town on 9 April 1766, when they approved and advertised the conditions of the architectural competition and instructed the issue of the site plan.²² By 21 May they had received six entries, and a seventh came in June.²³ As prescribed by the advertised conditions, the schemes were anonymous, each

numbered to refer to a sealed note of the author's name – and the conditions were explicit that the notes relating to the unsuccessful entries would be returned with the seals intact. On 2 July the Committee resolved to take opinions on all seven schemes from four skilled assessors or 'men of honour': Sir James Clerk, Lord Kaimes, Commissioner George Clerk, and John Adam, the eldest of the Adam brothers and senior partner in their Edinburgh office. There was a preliminary meeting with them on 7 July; and then on 26 August the Committee received their report and proceeded to adjudicate the competition.²⁴ After hearing George Clerk and John Adam, they found unanimously that the plan labelled No. 4 had the most merit of those submitted, and that its author was therefore entitled to the prize; but most significantly the minute immediately continues, 'though they do not find that the said Plan has so much merit as to be adopted as the Plan to be carried into execution, yet [they find] that it may be of use in giving others hints to improve on'. Having thus chosen the winning scheme, they then broke the seal of the 'private paper' relating to Plan No. 4 and found that its author was James Craig; and thereafter they directed that the unsuccessful entries, their anonymity still intact, should be returned to their authors.²⁵

Thus although Craig won the prize, the Committee firmly rejected his scheme as not good enough to be built, and there is nothing to suggest that this judgement was ever modified or departed from. On the contrary, everything that followed was consistent with it. When Craig was given his awards in 1767, the Town Council's minute echoed the very phrases of the Bridge Committee as quoted above, for he got them not as architect of the New Town but as winner of the competition, author of 'the best Plan of a New Town in terms of the Advertisement in the newspapers for that purpose'.²⁶ More importantly, the Bridge Committee were prompt to follow up their judgement that his plan might be 'of use in giving others hints to improve on',

for by 26 October 1766 they had asked for and received 'a rectified Plan of the Improvements made out by William Mylne', which they then passed for an opinion to the same assessors as before.²⁷

Was this a new proposal by Mylne himself? It could have been, for although as Old Convener of Trades he was a member of the Bridge Committee (as were George Clerk and John Adam by this time, having been appointed to it on 8 October) the minute reads that he produced the plan as 'William Mylne, Mason'. But the description 'rectified plan' surely implies that it was not so much an independent scheme as an amendment of Craig's – albeit an extensive and radical one, since the minute of 26 August implies that the required development of 'hints' was such as would have to be entrusted to 'others', rather than the original author; and the same phrase suggests that it was remitted to a group (perhaps John Adam and George Clerk as well as Mylne) rather than an individual.

Nevertheless Craig was not dropped from the project, for on 10 December the Committee received and likewise passed on to the assessors 'two plans in different views made out by Mr James Craig of the proposed Improvements, with a plan of the Common Shores [main sewers]'.²⁸ Again, this is a minute that requires careful interpretation. It would be altogether too hasty to assume that these were counter-proposals to Mylne's 'rectified plan' of six weeks earlier. A sewers plan could not be drawn up in isolation, but would pre-suppose the existence of a master plan of streets and building plots, and such a thing could scarcely be described as 'two plans in different views'. Indeed this phrase hardly makes sense if the term 'plans' is taken to mean *ground plans*; but if we read it in the broader sense of *drawings*, interpretation becomes straightforward, and we may infer that along with a sewers plan Craig submitted drawings – perhaps elevations, or even perspective views, but more likely sections relating to the sewers – which developed from

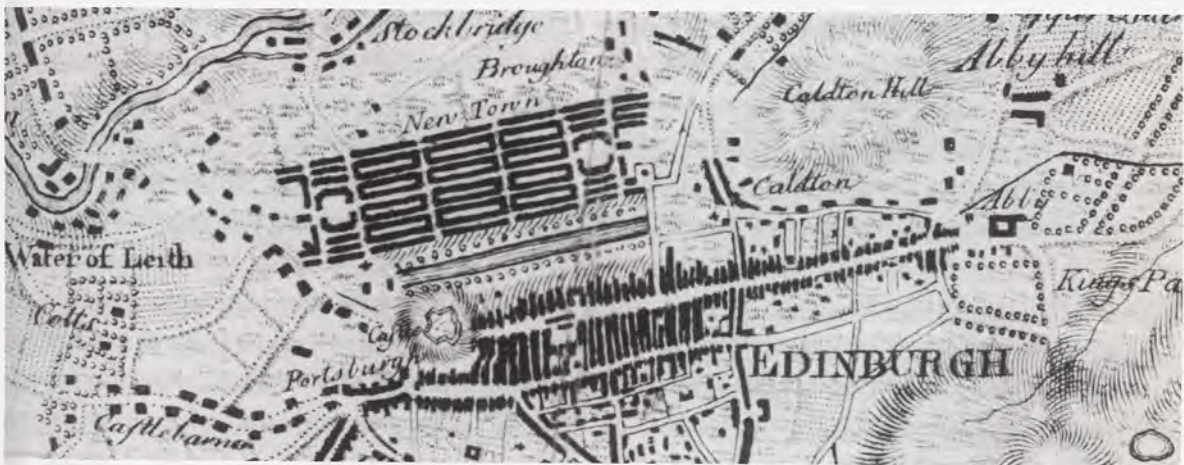


Fig. 3. Enlarged details from John Laurie's 'Plan of Edinburgh' showing the New Town design in relation to the Old Town: (a) the first version of 1766, (b) the second version of 1766, (c) a subsequent edition of 1786, amended to show the street pattern as built, with four blocks between the squares, although this alteration has been added at too small a scale. (a. Trustees of the National Library of Scotland; b and c, Professor D. C. Simpson.)

Mylne's master plan or were in the nature of adjustments of detail or checks of feasibility.

This view is strengthened by the fact that the Committee passed these drawings to the assessors *simpliciter*, and that there is no further mention of physical plans in their minutes, although they continued to be busy with other aspects of the project.²⁹ The impression is that by now there was broad agreement on the plan – as indeed there had to be, for things were moving fast in preparation for the necessary extension of the royalty. Only three days later, on 13 December, the Lord Provost wrote to the Lord President of the Court of Session, asking him to call a meeting of interested parties to consider the draft of the Bill, which included a list of the agreements securing the site for the whole scheme.³⁰ On 17 January 1767, after receiving a report from that meeting, the Town Council finally adjusted the terms of the Bill and sent it off to Westminster, where it was laid before Parliament two weeks later.³¹

This impression of consensus continues. On 24 June 1767, the day on which the Act came into force, the Town Council approved a recommendation by the Lord Provost 'from his Committee' (a phrase previously used when minuting reports by the Bridge Committee) that they should set up 'a small Committee to settle the Plans of the new Buildings and to feu out the grounds'.³² Within the remarkably short space of five weeks this special committee was able to give in a comprehensive report, dealing with planning regulations and the methods of feuing as well as the master plan, about which they reported that 'after many meetings and consulting with Lord Kaimes, Lord Alemoor, Commissioner Clerk and other persons with skill in these matters, they had reviewed all the former plans with the greatest care and attention, and considered several amendments proposed by Mr Craig; and that Mr Craig, by their direction, had made out a new Plan'.³³ This new drawing, approved on 29 July 1767 and dated

and signed by the Lord Provost, is still preserved in the City Museum, Huntly House.³⁴

Obviously this has to be read in the light of all that had gone on before. Although the report was by the special committee, it need not be supposed that there had been any radical break with earlier discussions, for its members were also members of the Bridge Committee. Again, the 'former plans' reviewed could scarcely have included the original competition entries dealt with eleven months previously, for Craig's had been rejected as a practical scheme and the other six had been dispersed without record of their authorship; but it is reasonable to assume that the review covered the drawings produced by Mylne and Craig in the autumn of 1766, together with any further but unrecorded drawings done in the interim. Nevertheless, considering the wide scope of the report and how quickly the committee were able to get out their 'new plan' and proposals of such evident maturity, it is unlikely that they had had to consider any radically new departure, and everything suggests that it was a matter of making adjustments to something already worked out and largely agreed. Its acceptance proved to be final, and the plan of 29 July 1767 became the standard reference in charters for the various feus in the New Town. Nevertheless there was some delay,³⁵ for it was 23 December before the Town Council were able to announce that the plan was finally adjusted and ready for feuing, and although an advertisement in the *Caledonian Mercury* on 15 August had promised speedy publication of an engraving 'from the original plan designed by James Craig' – namely, from the new drawing approved on 29 July – the finished plate did not come out until 1 January 1768.³⁶

This completes our review of the entire process from the beginning of 1766 to the end of 1767; and clearly the broad conclusion must be that while it suggests that something of Craig's original competition entry was carried through into the final plan, there is nothing in the written record to show what that

'something' might have been. Contrary to what has been widely assumed and asserted, the Town Council minute of 29 July 1767 does not necessarily imply that Craig's original idea had become the bones of the final scheme; and *a fortiori* this is true of the Bridge Committee's minutes of August and October 1766: indeed, we might be forgiven if we concluded from them that precious little of Craig's original survived.

In these circumstances, the witness of Laurie's pair of plans is important and enlightening. In respect of date they are relevant, for the first print was published on 4 August 1766,³⁷ and although it is not known when Laurie revised the plate to show his second version of the New Town plan, it is evident that his map work was going on at the same time as the competition entries were being assessed and judged and followed up by Mylne's 'rectified plan'. Given that Laurie had ways and means of finding out (however imperfectly) what was going on, and bearing in mind that his revised plate showed a representation of Mylne's plan or a development of it, there would seem to be no problem about this second version, since the information was there for worming out at any time after the end of October – or, if the leak was from Mylne's office, perhaps some weeks earlier. But as regards Laurie's earlier version, it is time to draw together conclusions already arrived at. For if the minutes show that Mylne's plan was to some extent a reworking of Craig's Plan No. 4, and if the evidence of form is that Laurie's second plan, derived (as above) from Mylne's, was manifestly a re-working of the plan shown on his first print, then it must follow that this early plan was a representation of Plan No. 4, and we are confronted with the interesting fact that Laurie published it three weeks before the Bridge Committee received the assessors' report on 26 August and proceeded simultaneously to choose that plan as winner but to reject it as a practical scheme.

The meeting of 26 August 1766 was in fact the Committee's next formal meeting after their 2 July

decision to consult assessors, and there is nothing to suggest that it had been delayed because the assessors' report was slow in coming to hand. Considering that the assessors had started their work on 7 July, it is not surprising that Laurie's publication shows that it had taken them less than four weeks to agree a recommendation. At the same time, there are clear signs that this had come to Laurie's ears only hours before his map went to press. Indeed, it is evident that he had not banked on being able to show the New Town plan, for although he proudly advertised his map as 'including all the roads, coasts, rivers, rivulets, hills, plantations, towns, villages, gentlemen's seats and farmhouses', and even 'distinguishing the arable and pasture grounds', there is not one word about the major scoop, the inclusion of 'New Edinburgh'. Its clumsy engraving, already remarked on, would suggest that it was a hurried stop-press addition; and close examination shows beyond doubt that it was added only after part of the map of the existing countryside, already engraved, had been obliterated, because some details of the Lang Dykes road evaded the scraper and still show on the print. Evidently Laurie got some note of Plan No. 4 as the front runner in the competition. He may or may not have heard that (as we may fairly presume) the assessors had reservations that damned it as a practical scheme; but in any case he could not be sure how the Committee would act.

If further proofs of the identity of the plans were needed, it might be asked how Laurie's plans relate to what was said about Craig's plan in the minute of the 26 August meeting, quoted above – namely that the Bridge Committee 'did not find that the plan had so much merit as to be adopted' for execution, but that 'it might be of use in giving others hints to improve on'. As regards lack of merit, the plan shown on Laurie's first print was clearly unhappy as well as uneconomic. The central square came where the crown of the ridge was sharpest and least suited to it. The central avenue was weakened by division and indeterminate ends.

The diagonal ones were a clumsy over-elaboration, uneasily related to the square and other streets and creating awkward shapes of plots throughout the scheme as well as corners so acutely angled as to be virtually unbuildable. But as regards hints for others to improve on, the basic idea was clearly superb; and, as has already been said, virtually every change made in the second version was calculated to clarify and enhance it. The final plan has been described as poor in its simplicity, redeemed only by its superb site;³⁸ but the architectural truth is that the simplicity was precisely what was required to exploit the magnificence of the site.

Thus Laurie's maps not only flesh out the story that emerges from the minutes but illuminate it with a new certainty. If something was worth salvaging from Craig's rejected scheme, it was this basic idea; and if his scheme was 'rectified' it was by purging it of its weak points and silly over-elaboration and replacing them with this firm simplicity and the immensely stronger scheme of two squares.³⁹ There was no great technical difficulty in doing this – it was more a question of seeing the need for it; and

it is not surprising that it had to be done by 'others', for in the very nature of things the author of such a muddled scheme as the original would be the last to be able to perceive its weakness and devise its remedy. Nor is it at all surprising that, as has happened to many a youthful winner of an architectural competition since his day, the 26-year-old Craig should continue to be employed on the detailed development of the scheme as rectified, under the direction of senior consultant architects.⁴⁰

Although the basic idea of the New Town can be seen as a development of what the Earl of Mar had suggested in 1728, Mar's was a vision of a splendid suburb of private mansions and gardens, and Craig must be credited with opening up the possibility of transforming that notion into an even grander and essentially civic design of public streets and spaces. But Craig was no architectural genius:⁴¹ it was the Bridge Committee and their assessors who rescued the idea from his cluttered plan; and thanks to Laurie we can see how much we are indebted to the assessors and William Mylne for pulling the design together and devising the first New Town as we have it today.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

This article draws on two manuscript sources in Edinburgh City Archives (ECA) – the Town Council Minutes (TCM) and Bridge Committee Minutes (BCM) – and I am grateful to the City Archivist for permission to quote from these. BCM is the single volume entitled 'Sederunt book of the Committee appointed by the Town Council of Edinburgh for forwarding the scheme of a communication with the fields on the north of the City by a bridge over the North Loch', 7 November 1764 to 31 January 1770: ECA, Bay D, Shelf 30. I am also grateful to the present Editor and in particular to Dr Allen Simpson for criticism and suggestions that have greatly assisted the final development of this paper.

- 1 A remark to this effect by David Simpson in the course of a conversation in 1984 is gratefully acknowledged as the trigger of the present study. In 1932, when cataloguing Laurie's map of 1766 (evidently in its second version), Charles Boog Watson noted that it showed a plan of the New Town, but made no

further comment: William Cowan, *The Maps of Edinburgh, 1544-1929*, 2nd edn, revised (Edinburgh 1932), p. 116. In 1967 Simpson drew attention to the map (again in its second version) as showing the plan in the very year of the design competition, long before the scheme was approved and officially published. Reproducing the plan in enlarged detail, he suggested that it might be related to Craig's competition entry: D. C. Simpson, 'City Plans and the New Town', *University of Edinburgh Journal*, 23 (1967), pp. 52-57. Neither Boog Watson nor Simpson noted the existence of an earlier version of the 1766 plan. In 1971, in an article not known to me until after the present paper was drafted, Martin Meade described and reproduced both versions of the plan, and suggested that the first was possibly Craig's original scheme: M. K. Meade, 'Plans of the New Town of Edinburgh', *Architectural History*, 14 (1971), pp. 40-52. see pp. 41 and

45. The present study, being more extended and relying on primary sources not used by Meade, provides a firmer base for interpretation of the maps.
- 2 Alexander Kincaid, *History of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1787), p. 93. James was resident in Holyrood between 1679 and 1682 as Charles II's Commissioner in Scotland, and seems to have become personally interested in the question of the city's improvement: James Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh* (London 1880-83), I, p. 335.
- 3 TCM, 12 October 1688. This was quoted extensively by F. C. Mears and John Russell, 'The New Town of Edinburgh - 1', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club (BOEC)*, 22 (1938), pp. 167-200, see pp. 170-172.
- 4 Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 174-175.
- 5 A. J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1966), p. 13.
- 6 Quoted by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 173-174. Thomas McCrae in 'Lord Kames and the North Bridge', *BOEC*, 23 (1940), pp. 147-154, suggested (p. 147) that Mar must have made a slip in naming the site for his north bridge as Liberton's Wynd (which was on the south side of the Lawnmarket) in mistake for Halkerston's Wynd, which ran on a line just east of the present bridge, and was in fact the only wynd on the north side of the High Street.
- 7 In conversation with the Rev. Thomas Somerville in about 1763, Drummond remarked that he had worked for the realisation of a new town on the ridge of Bearford's Parks ever since 1725: T. Somerville, *My Own Life and Times, 1741-1814* (Edinburgh 1861), pp. 47-48, quoted by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 175-176. He did not mention his part in the earlier Lochbank scheme of 1723.
- 8 The site plan (see note 15) shows all lands acquired by the town by February 21 1766, while the 1767 private Parliamentary 'Act for Extending the Royalty of the City of Edinburgh over certain adjoining Lands' lists other lands which had been feued out by Heriot's Hospital 'under an express condition and covenant that in case the Royalty of Edinburgh at any time thereafter be extended they [the feuurs] should be subjected to build such houses agreeable to the Plan to be created by the Town Council'. The only part of the site not so secured was at the north-west corner, where a problem (caused not so much by the march with the Moray estate, shown as 'Provost Stuart's ground' on the site plan, as by a prohibition on building within 30 ells or 92½ feet of the boundary) was not resolved until 1791: Youngson, *Classical Edinburgh*, p. 93. The point is well illustrated by the overlaying of Maps 2 and 3 for the continuation article by Mears and Russell, 'The New Town of Edinburgh', *BOEC*, 23 (1940), pp. 1-37.
- 9 Youngson, *Classical Edinburgh*, pp. 3-12, quotes extensively from the *Proposals for carrying out Certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1752, reprint 1982), while a summary by Drummond published in the *Scots Magazine* of August 1752 is quoted by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 176-181.
- 10 For an account of the work of the trustees see W. Forbes Gray, 'The Royal Exchange and Other City Improvements', *BOEC*, 22 (1938), pp. 1-27.
- 11 *Scots Magazine*, July 1759, quoted by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 184-185. The claim for the bridge was that it would enable traffic, not only from Leith but from all directions, to bypass the town's difficult approaches and congested High Street. A map expressly drawn to illustrate this appears on a print in the collection of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, reproduced (but incorrectly dated c. 1767) in *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 35 (1919), after p. 330, as Map 3, and also by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 8), after p. 4, as Map 1. It shows roads branching from a Y-shaped junction at the north end of a proposed North Bridge and leading to the north, west and (by a bypass from Haymarket) south. Its author and provenance are unknown, and its date can only be inferred as being after the surveys of James Scott and Fergus & Robinson in 1759 (see Boog Watson in Cowan, *Maps of Edinburgh* (note 1), pp. 37-38), and before the construction of the road built through Lady Nicolson's parks in 1763. The same plate, with some updating and amendment (including a connection to the east by a bypass of the Canongate) was re-used by Phinn & Mitchelson in August 1763, in combination with an entirely new plate showing the design of the North Bridge which was just then being put out to contract. The resultant print is described by Boog Watson, *ibid.*, pp. 38-41, and Meade, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 46 and fig. 32b. But the important point, noted by Simpson, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 53, is that it is a composite of two impressions, the second plate (of the bridge) having been so arranged that the final print could be produced by overprinting one plate with the other. The second plate is inscribed 'Jas Craig Delin.', i.e. 'from drawing(s) by James Craig', and this was only right and proper since it was engraved from his drawings of the bridge (see note 12 below). But simply on an assumption that the inscription referred to the first plate as well, the design of the bypass roads shown on that plate has been persistently attributed to Craig and cited as evidence of an early interest on his part in the planning of the city. The truth is that the evidence all points the other way. The method of composing the print shows that the roads scheme existed before the bridge plate was made - indeed, it may have existed before the bridge was designed, for the bridge design (which no one has suggested was Craig's) appears to respond at its northern end to the Y-shaped road junction shown on the map. There is nothing whatsoever to link Craig with the design of the map; but in any case the expression 'delineavit' is surely decisive, for it means that if

- he contributed anything to any part of the print it was as draughtsman, not 'inventor', and it only confirms that he claimed no part in its design.
- 12 The scheme advertised for tender on 2 July 1763 was abandoned, for reasons unknown, after one pier had been partly built. Who designed it is not known; but it is perhaps significant that David Henderson's price for his prize-winning scheme in 1765 included a credit of £300 for 'the pier already built': BCM, 2 April 1765. The contract drawings exhibited to tenderers were evidently drawn out for the designer by James Craig, for they are now represented by two engravings, each inscribed as based upon his drawings: one, the more elegant of the two, was engraved by Hector Gavin for the *Scots Magazine* of July 1763; while the other, closely similar but to a slightly larger scale, and advertised in the same magazine as being engraved from the contract drawings, is part of the composite print by Phinn & Mitchelson (in association with Gavin) mentioned in note 11 above. These prints, the only surviving drawings of this ill-fated design, show that it had six slender arches where Mylne's sturdier scheme of 1765 had three arches flanked by two small ones.
 - 13 TCM, 16 January 1765. Although the Bridge was argued for as a means of communication with Leith and elsewhere (see note 11) any suggestion that the intention to develop the New Town was ever played down or concealed is simply not true.
 - 14 BCM, 12 and 26 December 1764, 2 and 9 January 1765. No fewer than 22 schemes were received by 2 February.
 - 15 The MS survey shows the lands acquired by the town, and the plan of the North Bridge: National Library of Scotland (NLS), Map Room, City Architect's Map Collection No. 5. In lieu of title it bears the note 'All the GROUNDS within the Red Shade belong to the CITY of EDINBURGH - J L 1766', in the same characteristic lettering used elsewhere on the plan. Boog Watson recorded the plan and ascribed it to Laurie (but incorrectly numbered it as No. 4 in the series): Cowan, *Maps of Edinburgh* (note 1), p. 116. The same survey is the basis of another MS plan reproduced here as fig. 2 (NLS, City Architect's Map Collection No. 2/c.2) inscribed as by John Laurie and dated February 1766; it omits the Bridge and some lands in the extreme east and west, and lays emphasis on ground 'feued from Herriots Hospital this 21 day of February 1766'. Both maps were subsequently engraved; and it appears that the engraving of No. 5 was issued to competition entrants in April 1766: a copy at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is reproduced as Map 2 to accompany the second article on the New Town by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 8).
 - 16 Lord Cockburn's strictures on the cabbalism of the Town Council, although referring to the 1780s, would no doubt have applied with equal force in 1766: Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time* (Edinburgh 1858), pp. 94-96.
 - 17 BCM, 12 December 1764, confirm that John Laurie had been brought in to make accurate surveys for the Bridge. These are listed in BCM, 9 January 1765; and since two of them (plans of the Bridge site and of the fields to the north) were drawn on the same large scale 'so as to join occasionally', it is likely that together they became the basis for the New Town site plan in 1766 (see note 15). TCM, 3 June 1767, also credit Laurie with 'several surveys' in the extended royalty (which of course included most of the site of the Northern New Town of 1802) but give no details. Sir James Clerk of Penicuik had employed Laurie to survey his estate in 1757; and in 1765 Clerk enlisted both Laurie and William Mylne ('Mr Mills') to help to argue his objections to David Henderson's design for the North Bridge: see, for example, BCM, 6 March 1765.
 - 18 Some lines on the earlier engraving, showing a curved road linking the Bridge to Leith Walk, were missed when the plate was scraped and burnished for re-engraving, and still show on the later print.
 - 19 Meade described and illustrated the two plans as Nos III.3 and 3a: Meade, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 44-45 and figs. 31a and 31b. He suggested that the two plans 'very possibly illustrate Craig's initial project or the subsequent amendments proposed to the committee prior to the manuscript plan of July 1767': *ibid.*, p. 41. But this would be to telescope events, for the amendments referred to by Meade are not to Craig's original scheme but to Mylne's 'rectified plan' of October 1766.
 - 20 Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (notes 3 and 8), Youngson, *Classical Edinburgh*, and Meade, *op. cit.* (note 1), all fail to note this, and consequently overlook relevant minutes and misinterpret cross-references.
 - 21 There is a hiatus in BCM between 23 March 1767 and 12 October 1768, and it is not known whether the Committee met within that period. If the special committee of June 1767 kept minutes, none have been found; nor is it known whether they continued to meet after reporting on 29 July 1767, although the presumption is that one or other of these committees must have been directing the process in the autumn and winter of 1767-68.
 - 22 The advertisement was carried in the newspapers regularly between 12 April and 14 May 1766. For the site plan supplied to applicants, see note 15.
 - 23 BCM, 21 May and 2 July 1766. Since the late entrant was referred to as 'No. 9', there must have been at least nine original applicants.
 - 24 Youngson, and subsequently others, aver that the Town Council met on (Saturday) 2 July and received a report of an adjudication by the Lord Provost and John Adam in favour of Plan No. 4 by James Craig: Youngson, *Classical Edinburgh*, p. 71. However, there is no record of any meeting of Council on that day, and the story conflicts absolutely with the minutes of the Bridge Committee meeting of 26 August at which the formal

- adjudication was made by the Committee, based on a report by Adam and the other assessors, and at which Craig's name was first revealed: BCM, 26 August 1766.
- 25 Hence the lack of any list or information about unsuccessful schemes or their authors.
- 26 TCM, 17 April and 6 June 1767.
- 27 BCM, 22 and 29 October 1766.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 10 December 1766.
- 29 For example, with extension of services and application of rates to the New Town.
- 30 See note 8. The letter by Gilbert Laurie, the new Lord Provost, is quoted by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 8), pp. 1-2.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 32 TCM, 24 June 1767.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 29 July 1767.
- 34 Inv. 418A. The manuscript plan was described by Meade as No. III.3: Meade, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 46-47.
- 35 The reasons for the delay in general feuing are not clearly recorded. Since a foundation stone was laid in Thistle Court on 26 October 1767, at least some streets must have been pegged out by then, and it is possible that this showed up some discrepancies that took time to sort out. A report in TCM, 24 February 1768, mentions water supply and the correct setting out of feus as questions that had still to be resolved. There was also difficulty with sewer design: although Craig had produced a plan of sewers to the Bridge Committee on 10 December 1766, and was sent to London a year later to consult about their design (see TCM, 14 October 1767) it was a year later still, 25 October 1768, before the Bridge Committee approved a design by David Henderson. On 6 December they let the contract to William Jamieson, the builder and industrialist who had already opened a brickworks at Figgate and was to play a leading part in the development of Portobello.
- 36 A pull from the unfinished plate exists and was reproduced by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 8), as Map 3. This probably represents the plan as shown to George III by his physician Sir John Pringle, seeking his general approval of the scheme and in particular of the terms of dedication which Craig had drafted without the knowledge or permission of the Town Council. Sir John's detailed account of his meetings with the King and Queen Charlotte is engrossed in TCM, 23 December 1767, and this is quoted by Mears and Russell, *op. cit.* (note 8), pp. 12-14. The change of street names (resulting in the names of Prince's Street, Queen Street and Frederick Street) was sparked off when the name 'St Giles Street' caught the royal Londoner's eye. A single copy survives in the British Museum of the amended version produced for the Council in December 1767 before publication of the plan, and this was described by Meade as No. III.3b: Meade, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 48.
- 37 *Caledonian Mercury*, Saturday 2 August 1766. This advised that the map, price 5 shillings, would be published 'on Monday', that is on 4 August. The text was kept set up in type, and the further advertisements of 6 and 13 August are headed with the formula 'This day was published . . .'
- 38 See, for example, Youngson, *Classical Edinburgh*, pp. 71 and 79.
- 39 James Craig nevertheless clung to his idea of a central feature, for in a revised scheme (presented to the Town Council in 1774) he proposed a circus in the centre of George Street, in addition to the squares at either end. The manuscript plan is in the City Museum, Huntly House (Inv. 418B), and has been described and illustrated by Meade (together with the version engraved from it) as No. III.3c: Meade, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 49 and fig. 34a. Craig was so proud of this plan that he had it included, along with an elevation of the Physicians' Hall, in his portrait by David Allan, now in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (Inv. PG 729); this is reproduced as the frontispiece to Youngson's *Classical Edinburgh*.
- 40 It is true that Craig signed his drawing of 29 July 1767 with the conventional note '*inven[tit] et delin[eavit]*', implying that he had designed the scheme and not merely drawn it out; but in view of the evidence for the rejection of his original scheme and the adoption of Mylne's 'rectified' plan, he seems either to have suppressed the memory of these events (as indeed others have done in like circumstances) or else conveniently elided them. Together with the affair of the dedication of the New Town plan to George III a few months later (see note 36), this gives the impression that self-promotion played a considerable part in the life of this young man.
- 41 None of Craig's other works, such as St James Square (1775), the Physicians' Hall (1776) and the Old Observatory (1776) could be considered as brilliant or outstanding.