

PARISH OF SPOTT.

PRESBYTERY OF DUNBAR, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND TWEEDDALE.

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I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of this parish seems always to have been the same, with a slight difference in the orthography, being sometimes written *Spott*, and sometimes *Spot*. It is a name which appears not inappropriately to have been given to it, on account of its retired sheltered situation.

Extent and Boundaries.—The parish is ten miles long, and five broad. It is intersected by an extensive tract of land, which till lately was in a state of common, and known by the name of Dunbar common, and considered to belong to the parish of Dunbar. It is now divided; and whether the portions of it contiguous to other parishes are now to be regarded as forming part of these parishes, has not been determined. Were it not for the interposition of this common, the parish of Spott would be of an irregular oblong figure. It is bounded on the north by Dunbar; on the east by Dunbar and Innerwick; on the south by Cranshaws; and on the west by Stenton and Dunbar.

Topographical Appearances.—The whole parish is an alternation of hill and dale, the hills gradually increasing in height till we reach the highest ridge of this part of Lammermuir, 700 feet above the level of the sea. Doon hill, which is situated

* This includes the occasional poor, and also four lunatics.

† This Account was furnished, while the parish was vacant, at the request of the Superintending Committee, by the Rev. John Thomson, Prestonkirk.

about a quarter of a mile south west of the village, is upwards of 550 feet above the level of the sea.

Hydrography.—There is nothing deserving the name of a river in the parish. The largest rivulet is Spott water, which runs through the valley in which the church and village are situated. It is joined, a little farther down, by a smaller brook, which runs close by the mansion-house of Spott, and it falls into the sea at Broxmouth, where it takes the name of Broxburn. There is another on the south side of the parish called Bothwell water, which falls into the Whitadder near Cranshaws. Springs are numerous on the banks of the rivulets. The town of Dunbar is supplied with water from St John's well, in the neighbourhood of the village. Kisthill well, near Bothwell, was once held in repute for the cure of scorbutic complaints.

Geology.—The geology of the Lammermuir hills is too well known to require any lengthened description. They are composed almost entirely of grauwacke, distinctly stratified, through which trap rocks are to be seen protruded in various places. There is also a considerable extent of old red sandstone, filling up to a certain level most of the valleys, especially along the courses of the different rivulets. There occurs also a considerable portion of conglomerate, which is composed of fragments of all the rocks which are to be found in the district. The irregular range of hills which are to be seen along the northern base of Lammermuir, in this parish, and the neighbouring parish of Innerwick, where we first meet with cultivated ground, is chiefly composed of this conglomerate, at least so far as the writer of this has been able to discover. Doon hill seems also to be formed of this. On the south, it is cultivated to the summit, and on the north side, which is very precipitous, much resembling some of the trap rock hills which frequently occur farther to the north and west in the county, it is covered entirely with wood. The ridge of rising ground, which is lower down on the opposite side of Spott water, is composed of a red-coloured sandstone, which occurs throughout the whole of the ridge, stretching eastward to the sea coast at Broxmouth, and westward as far as the parish of Yester. It is quarried in the parishes of Dunbar, Spott, Stenton, Whittingham, and Bara. It varies a little in colour at different places. Whether it be the same formation, which occurs at these several places, the writer is not prepared to say: so far as he has seen, it is nowhere interrupted by trap rocks.

Soil.—The soil is in general light and sandy, well adapted for the cultivation of turnips. But there is a considerable extent also of clay-soil, about a fourth perhaps of the parish.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Historical Events.—The principal historical event connected with this parish, is the battle of Dunbar or Doonhill, fought between Cromwell and General Leslie, on the 3d of September, in the year 1650. The latter had pitched his camp on the summit of Doonhill, where he might have held at defiance the army of the Commonwealth, had he not, contrary to his own better judgment, been forced by the indiscretion of the clergy, who accompanied his army, “to descend into the plain, with a view of attacking the English in their retreat. Cromwell, looking through a glass, saw the enemy’s camp in motion, upon which he exclaimed, ‘The Lord hath delivered them into my hand,’ and gave orders immediately for an attack. The Scots, though double in number to the English, were soon put to flight, and pursued with great slaughter.”* The remains of the encampment are still distinctly to be traced on the top of the hill. †

Land-Owners.—The chief land-owners in the parish are : James Spott, Esq. of Spott, patron of the parish ; Colonel Carfrae of Bowerhouses, (both of whom have residences in the parish.) ; the Duchess Dowager of Roxburghe ; the Earl of Haddington ; Sir George Grant Suttie of Balgone ; and Mrs Hamilton Nisbet Ferguson of Biel.

* Hume’s History.

† A minister of Spott, named John Kello, was executed in 1570, for the murder of his wife, Margaret Thomson. As the case is altogether a singular one, the circumstances connected with it may be here briefly detailed. The murder was committed on a Sabbath. Having before divine worship suspended his wife behind a door in the manse, he repaired to the church where, in the course of the service, he was remarked to have delivered a more than usually *eloquent sermon*. The services being over, and the congregation dismissed, he went to the residence of a neighbour, stating to the lady of the house, that his wife (Mrs Kello) had for some time been rather in a depressed state of mind, and that he had called to request that she would kindly come over and join them in their family dinner, and endeavour to cheer her up. The request was at once complied with. On arriving at the manse, to the seeming amazement of both, the doors and windows of the manse were found barricaded. After some little time, Mr Kello contrived to effect an entrance : A few moments after, he came running to a window, exclaiming to the lady who accompanied him, “My wife, my wife, my beloved wife, is gone.” Kello being a man who had credit for real piety, was never for a moment suspected of having perpetrated the murder. Such crimes, however, seldom escape the Divine vengeance, even in *this world*. Some time after, being confined by indisposition, he was visited by Mr Simpson, then minister of Dunbar, to whom he related that on the preceding night he had dreamt a distressing dream regarding his wife. This Mr S., probably from some suspicions in his own mind, at once applied to the dreamer, saying in the words of the Prophet Nathan to David, “Thou art the man.” Conscience stricken, he made a full confession of his crime, and was executed at Edinburgh shortly afterwards.

Parochial Registers.—The earliest date of the parochial registers is, of births 1748, of marriages 1789. There is no register of deaths. The above appear to have been regularly kept.

Antiquities.—Besides the remains of General Leslie's camp on Doonhill, there are still visible the remains of another camp on a hill to the south-west of the village, supposed to be of Roman, or perhaps Danish origin. Part of an ancient spear was lately found near this camp, and is now in possession of the proprietor of Spott.

The parish and village of Spott was of old renowned as the habitation of witches. In the kirk-session records, dated 1698, we find the following statement: "The session, after a long examination of witnesses, refer the case of Marion Lillie, for imprecations and witchcraft, to the presbytery, who refer her for trial to the civil magistrate; the said Marion generally called the *Rigwoody witch*:" and in October 1705, "many witches burnt on the top of Spot Loan." It is generally believed, that the last witch who was executed in Scotland was burnt at Spott; a stone commemorative of the event, and marking the place of execution, is to be seen a little way to the east of the manse.

Modern Buildings.—Of these, the principal are the mansion-houses of Spott and Bowerhouses. The former is delightfully situated at the foot of Doon hill, on the side of a ravine formed by the rivulet mentioned above, and commanding a beautiful and extensive view of the flat country about Dunbar—the Bass Rock, Isle of May, and south-east coast of Fife. The latter, though situated considerably lower down, near the northern boundary of the parish, commands the same extensive view. Spott House has undergone considerable repairs since it came into the possession of the present proprietor. The mansion house of Bowerhouses is entirely new, and not yet fit, indeed, for habitation. The parish church is very old, and cannot boast of any beauty, either in point of architecture or situation. Part of it is said to be Saxon. The parish school-room, and schoolmaster's house, have been lately rebuilt, and are both elegant and convenient. There are two oat-meal mills in the parish.

III.—POPULATION.

In 1755, the amount of population was	727
1791,	619
1801,	592
1811,	561
1821,	562
1831,	612
In 1831. there were of males,	308, of females, 304.

The population seems to have decreased materially between 1755 and 1801, probably owing to the farms having been reduced in number, and increased in size; the number of farmers in 1730 having been 21; in 1791, 7; now in 1836, there are 6 resident and 2 non-resident.

The yearly average for the last seven years, according to the session registers, is

of births,	13 $\frac{3}{4}$
of marriages,	4
of deaths,	11*

The average number of persons under 15 years of age is	223
betwixt 15 and 30	165
30 and 50,	127
50 and 70,	77
upwards of 70,	20
Number of insane persons	1
deaf and dumb,	1
blind,	1

The only heritor at present residing in the parish is the patron, James Sprot, Esq. of Spott.

The whole number of proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards, is 6.

Popular Customs.—These are the same here as in other parts of East Lothian. The custom of going about as guyzards, on the evening before new-year's-day, once universal and not confined to the lower orders, is now gradually falling into disuse. Old Handsel Monday is strictly observed as a holiday, in every part of this county; on that day, all the younger branches of a family assemble together, and spend the day in the house of their parents, and all work is most scrupulously abstained from.

Character of the People.—The farm-servants in East Lothian enjoy the comforts of society, according to their rank in life, to a greater degree than the working-classes in most other parts of the country; and though the gains of the hinds or married ploughmen have, from the low price of grain, in which their wages are paid, been for some years past considerably diminished, they are in general well contented with their condition, industrious, and devoted to the interest of their masters. Their ordinary food consists of wheat or barley bread, mostly baked by themselves, pork and salt herrings, potatoes and oatmeal porridge. Tea is very generally used by the females; and in the Lammermuirs oatmeal cakes

* There is no register of deaths, but the above is the number given in the former Statistical Account, which cannot be far from the truth as to the present period, the number of births and marriages, and the amount of the whole population having been almost the same then as now. Births were 11 $\frac{3}{4}$, marriages 4 $\frac{3}{4}$, whole population 619.

are used, but they are wholly unknown among the peasantry in the low part of the county. The people, as is generally observed in all agricultural districts, are remarkable for honest industry: and in so far as their external moral conduct is concerned, they are undoubtedly superior to those of the manufacturing districts. Smuggling has long been unknown on this coast. Poaching in game is perhaps more or less practised.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The number of imperial acres which have been cultivated is, as nearly as could be ascertained, 2800; the number which have never been cultivated, in the part of the parish to the north of Dunbar common, is 980. The extent of the farm of Bothwell, which lies to the south of Dunbar common, detached from the rest of the parish, and of which very little is fit for cultivation, the writer of this Account has been unable to ascertain. There may be about 100 acres of wood in the parish, mostly natural, on the steep sides of conglomerate hills; except what is found surrounding the mansion-houses of Spott and Bowerhouses.

Rent.—The valued rent of the parish, as stated in Sir J. Sinclair's Statistical Account, is L. 4355, 3s. 3d. Scotch. The modern rent is exceedingly variable. The land in the low part of the parish lets as high as the average of good turnip land in other parts of East Lothian. The rent is paid according to the middle fiars prices of wheat, and varies every year. Some of the muir farms are rated so low as 3s. 4d per acre.

Rate of Labour.—The rate of farm-work, when paid by the week, is from 9s. to 10s. in summer, and 8s. in winter. Married farm-servants, hired by the year, receive in grain, potatoes, cow's grass, and other perquisites, what has been computed, according to the low price of grain for the last two years, not to exceed 8s. per week, which is lower than the wages of an ordinary day-labourer—only it must be taken into consideration, that the pay of the latter ceases when he is unable to work from sickness, which is not the case with the former. Young unmarried men, when hired as ploughmen, receive from L. 4 to L. 7, per half-year, with bed and board. Masons' and carpenters' wages are generally 3s. per day in summer, and 2s. 3d. in winter. These rates of labour are not given as what are peculiar to this parish, but what are common in the district.

Live-Stock.—Grazing being practised to a considerable extent by the principal farmers, a corresponding attention is paid to the breeds of cattle and sheep. All the improved breeds introduced

into the county by John Rennie, Esq. of Phantassie and others, are grazed on the various farms; and great numbers of sheep of the Leicester, Cheviot, and black-faced breeds, and of black and short-horned cattle are annually fattened on turnips.

Husbandry.—It is needless to say, that the general character of husbandry pursued is of the most improved kind. This parish can boast of some farmers as much distinguished for zeal, and enterprise, and success, in their profession, as any in East Lothian. Turnips are cultivated to a great extent, and on some farms the land is grazed always for two, and occasionally for four or five years. There are various rotations followed, according to the various soils. On what is considered a heavier soil, the ordinary rotation is, 1. turnips; 2. barley or wheat; 3. two years grass; 4. oats. On the lightest soils, the following is the rotation: 1. turnips; 2. barley, or wheat; 3. grass for three years, and occasionally for four or five years; 4. oats. On a strong clay soil the rotation is either, 1. fallow; 2. wheat; 3. one year grass; 4. oats; or, 1. fallow; 2. wheat; 3. grass; 4. oats; 5. beans and pease; 6. wheat. A considerable extent of waste meadow or muirland has been reclaimed, and brought under the plough, on the north base of the Lammermuirs. Bones, rape-dust, and other manures, not the produce of the farm-yard, are more or less used by every farmer. The general duration of leases, and that which is found to be most advantageous, for both landlord and tenant, is nineteen years. The state of farm-buildings and enclosures, is in general good. It would be an improvement, were slates used instead of tiles. The roads, in this parish, with the exception of that between Spott village and Dunbar, are not in very good repair.

Produce.—The annual average gross amount of raw produce, raised in the parish, is, as nearly as can be ascertained, as follows:

Produce of grain of all kinds,	L. 10836	0	0
turnips and potatoes,	4045	0	0
Yearly value of land in grass,	2544	0	0

Total, L. 17425 0 0

Manufactures.—The only thing of this sort carried on in the parish, is a manufactory of potato-starch, or flour, on the farm of Easter Broomhouse. It employs six women for six months in the year. The flour is principally used by manufacturers of cloth; and sometimes by bakers and confectioners in large towns.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-towns.—The nearest market-town is Dunbar; but the

greater part of the grain raised in the parish is sold at Haddington. Dunbar is the market from which the common necessities of life are procured by the inhabitants of the north part of the parish. Those in the west part of it may sometimes resort to the village of East Linton, in the parish of Prestonkirk, or to the village of Stenton; while those in the extreme south most frequently resort to Dunse. The only village within the parish, is the village of Spott.

Means of Communication.—Dunbar is the post-town. The village, being situated about two miles from Dunbar, and several parts of the parish being still nearer it, the inhabitants enjoy abundant and easy means of communication with other parts of the country, by the stage coaches which pass and repass through that town, every lawful day. And travelling will be still more facilitated in this county, if the railway, which is now in contemplation between Dunbar and Edinburgh, be proceeded with.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is situated close by the village, and in so far as the population may be supposed to be denser there than in any other part of the parish, (though it does not contain above a fourth of the inhabitants of the whole parish,) it may be said to be in as convenient a situation as could well have been chosen. It is at a great distance from the Lammermuir part of the parish, the farm of Bothwell being fully eight miles from it. But, with this exception, there is no place much farther off than four miles. The inhabitants of Bothwell are not numerous, and generally attend Divine ordinances in the church at Cranshaws, which is much nearer to them. The church at Spott is very old. The precise date of the building of it is not known. It was repaired in 1790, and though in a quite sufficient state, cannot be said to be very comfortable. It is seated for 350. The whole of the sittings are free. The manse was built in 1806; and, though comparatively new, has already undergone repeated repairs. The extent of the glebe is 6 Scotch acres, worth about L. 3 per acre. The stipend is 16 chalders, and L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements.* The number of male heads of families on the roll of communicants is 71. The number of dissenting families is 16. Public worship is regularly and respectably attended.

Education.—Besides the parochial, there has been for a long time a subscription school, which, however, is at present without a

* The stipend in 1765 was L. 68, 17s. 2d.; in 1759, it was augmented to L. 1000 Scots; in 1798 it was L. 165, 0s. 8d.—*Chalmers' Caledonia and former Statistical Account.*

teacher. In both schools, all the ordinary branches are taught. The parochial schoolmaster has the maximum salary or what is equivalent, and all the legal accommodations. The expense of education is in the parochial school, 2s. 6d. per quarter for English reading; 4s. for writing; and 5s. for arithmetic. It is not supposed that there is any one in the parish of a proper age who cannot read. All the young people learn to write; nor, is it supposed that there are many, if there be any at all, of the older inhabitants, who cannot write. Of this a pleasing proof was afforded a few days ago, at the moderation in a Call to the gentleman who has been recently presented to the vacant charge of this parish, on which occasion upwards of 50 persons, male heads of families, in the rank of ordinary ploughmen, signed the call, in presence of the Presbytery, in a legible and respectable hand.

Libraries.—The only library in the parish is a branch of the East Lothian Itinerating Libraries.

Friendly Societies.—The only society of this nature is one to which there are several similar in the county,—the object of which is to assist a hind in replacing his cow, when she unfortunately dies. The members pay 8s. or 10s. annually. No member is permitted to kill his cow, even when rendered useless by accidental injury.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of persons who receive parochial aid, is from 12 to 16. The average allowance to each in ordinary circumstances, such as widows, and aged infirm persons, is 6s. per month. The poors' funds are from weekly collections at the church door, which amount to the average sum of L. 6, 6s. per annum; from an assessment which averages L. 50 per annum; and from the interest of L. 200 Sterling, and 400 merks Scotch, or L. 222 Sterling, originally mortified by Lord Alexander Hay of Spott, for behoof of the poor of the parish, which at present amounts only to L. 5 per annum.

Ale-houses.—There is but one ale-house now, and there was but one at the period of the last Statistical Account; nor does it appear that they have ever been more numerous.

Fuel.—The fuel used in the lower district of the parish is coal, procured at Dunbar, to which place it is brought by sea from England and Fife, or at the coal-pits in the western part of the county. The former costs in general, from 7d. to 1s. per cwt., but it varies in price; the latter costs just now at the pit 5d. per cwt.

Peat and dried turf constitute the principal fuel of the inhabitants of Lammermuir.

December 1836.