

PARISH OF COLDINGHAM,

PRESBYTERY OF CHIRNSIDE, SYNOD OF MERSE AND TIVIOTDALE.

THE REV. JAMES HOME ROBERTSON, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE origin of the name Coldingham cannot be distinctly traced. It is most probably Saxon; in which language *Ham* signifies a village, *Col-den* a cold vale,—these terms correctly describing the situation of the present village, which is much exposed to cold winds from the east and north-east.

Extent and Boundaries.—The parish is of great extent, and of a very irregular figure;—its extreme length from east to west being 12 miles; its breadth 9. It comprehends about 57,600 imperial acres, upwards of 5000 of which, termed Coldingham common, are moorland, scarcely capable of cultivation. It is bounded on the north-east and north by the German Ocean, and the opening into the Firth of Forth at St Abb's Head; on the north-west and west by Cockburnspath parish; on the south-west by the parishes of Abbey St Bathans and Bunkle; on the south by Chirnside; and on south-east and east by the parishes of Ayton and Eyemouth.

It is still one of the largest parishes in the county of Berwick, and previous to the Reformation it comprehended most of the parishes just mentioned as at present constituting its boundaries. It was then termed in its charters *Coldinghamshire*. It is very uneven in its surface. A range of hills forming part of the Lammermoor range runs in parallel lines from east to west, intersected by valleys of considerable extent, and by numerous small streams. None of these hills are of great elevation; the highest, Wardlaw Bank, is 640 feet above the level of the sea; and the largest of these streams is the Eye, which, after traversing the whole length of the parish, falls into the sea at Eyemouth.

Caves, &c.—Numerous caves and fissures, formerly the haunts of smugglers, exist in the neighbourhood of St Abb's Head, some of these of considerable dimensions, excavated out of the solid rock,

are inaccessible by land, and can only be approached at low water, and in the calmest weather. Their narrow entrances are completely blocked up by the rising tide, and a gentle breeze from the east speedily creates a dangerous surf.

About a mile west from St Abb's Head lies Coldingham loch, which covers thirty acres of ground, is 300 feet above the level of the sea, and about 300 yards distant from it. The late Mr Blair, Professor of Astronomy in the Edinburgh University, attempted to ornament a small portion of its sloping banks with trees, but its high situation and contiguity to the sea rendered his efforts unavailing. The only fish in this lake are perch, with which it abounds.

Geology.—The parish of Coldingham is rich in various departments of natural history, particularly in that of geology. In no part of the kingdom are there more striking displays of stratification, or more singular and perplexing appearances, than along the magnificent sea-coast. The rocks throughout the whole extent of the parish belong to the transition class. Greywacke and greywacke slate are the prevailing minerals. Generally the strata are either vertical or inclined at a very great angle with the horizon, their general direction being from east to west. The stratification of this rock is seen to great advantage in the neighbourhood of Redheugh, but it is interrupted by rocks of trap at St Abb's Head, which, however, extend a very short way inland. St Abb's itself may be described as a huge insulated mass of trap rocks, of which the principal are trap-tuffa, amygdaloid, and felspar porphyry. These continue for some miles along the coast towards the east, interrupted by occasional displays of the older strata, till we reach the mouth of the river Eye, when the greywacke again presents itself.

Botany.—A very lengthened catalogue of plants might be given as indigenous to this parish. Cryptogamous plants are particularly abundant. A great variety of mosses, and many individuals of the order Felices, are also to be met with. Among the phenogamous plants we may mention the following as the most rare: *Arenaria verna*, growing in great abundance on the trap rocks on St Abb's Head; *Rhodiola rosea*, to be found in great beauty in Lumsden dean; also *Epilobium angustifolium*, decidedly wild; *Poterium sanguisorba* near, and *Nuphar lutea* in Coldingham Loch; *Glau-cium maritimum* on Coldingham sands, growing in company with the *Cynoglossum officinale*; *Alisma ranunculoïdes* in the moss at the foot of St Abb's Head; *Arundo phragmites*, *Betonica offic-*

nalis, Menyanthes trifoliata, Tormentilla reptans, Pyrola rotundifolia, Pyrola media, Dianthus deltoides, Genista Anglica, Fedia olitoria, Gentiana campestris, Trollius Europæus, Lythrum salicaria, Parnassia palustris, Solanum dulcamara, &c.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

St Abb.—About the beginning of the seventh century, Ebba, daughter of Ethelfrith, and sister to the celebrated Osway, both Kings of Northumberland, fled from Penda, King of Mercia, who was desirous to marry her, and seize her father's kingdom. Having embraced Christianity, she abhorred an alliance with a pagan, and resolved to escape from his entreaties and his violence. The vessel in which she embarked was driven ashore in a storm on that promontory which from her derives its name, St Abb. There she built a nunnery. A few of the foundation stones still stand on the verge of a rock overhanging the sea. Nowhere could she have found a more suitable situation for such a purpose. Remote from the world, the surrounding scenery is in harmony with every devout feeling. The neck of land, five acres in extent, on which it was built, stretches into the sea, having for its three sides perpendicular rocks of great elevation. The fourth side, by which alone an enemy could have approached, was cut off from the mainland, and rendered impregnable by a high wall and deep trench, while the immense height and ruggedness of the stupendous rocks by which it was surrounded, the overhanging precipices on which it stood, the dark caverns yawning beneath, the boundless expanse of ocean stretching in front, elevate the soul, and excite a religious tone of feeling. In a storm the situation is sublime in the extreme. The walls are drenched, and the atmosphere darkened by the spray. The building trembles to its foundation at the beating of the surge upon the precipice where it stands. A wild waste of broken waters rolls over the mighty masses of rock that lie scattered around, or, dashing with a stunning sound against the headland of St Abb's, shoot into the air. Here, amidst the greatest and grandest of nature's works, was the nunnery of St Abba founded. It is recorded in history, that the abbess and her nuns, about the year 837, to escape the licentiousness of the Danes, disfigured their faces by cutting off their upper lips and noses; but that the cruel invaders, unmoved by this act of devoted heroism, burnt the nunnery to the ground with all its inhabitants. The chapel of this nunnery and the cemetery which surrounded it, stood a mile to the east, on another mount. Little of them now remains; but the old inhabitants remember when

a considerable part of the wall and a semicircular arch was pulled down, and when the surrounding ground was used as a place of burial.*

Coldingham Priory was founded about the year 1098 by Edgar, King of Scotland, who, having been driven from his throne, fled into England, and obtained from William Rufus 30,000 men, and from the Abbot of Durham the banner of St Cuthbert, to assist him in subduing his rebellious subjects. He afterwards considered he was as much indebted for his success to the banner and the priests, as to the King and his soldiers; and as a proof of his gratitude, he founded the church of St Mary Coldingham, had it constituted a cell of Durham, and bestowed on it the lands of Paxton, Fishwick, and the village of Swinton.

The several kings, from Edgar, its founder, to James I. regarded this priory with peculiar favour, and enriched it with valuable gifts and important privileges; but in the feeble reign of Robert III., and under the regency of the Duke of Albany, the kingdom being torn by faction, the monks found it necessary to put themselves under the protection of the powerful family of Douglas, who appointed Alexander, the Laird of Home, under-keeper; and thus commenced a connection between the family of Home and the priory of Coldingham, which terminated in that family obtaining all the temporalities of the priory. James III. endeavoured to suppress the monastery, and obtained the consent of his Parliament to apply its revenues to the support of the chapel-royal, which he founded at Stirling. The Homes, in consequence, rebelled, and a battle was fought near Stirling, in which the king was slain, 11th June 1488. In 1509 Coldingham was disjoined from Durham, and placed under the jurisdiction of Dunfermline by the Pope. Alexander Stewart, natural son of James IV. Abbot of Dunfermline, and Archbishop of St Andrews, was chosen prior. He was afterwards slain, fighting by the side of his father, on the fatal field of Flodden. In 1514, this high office was conferred on David Home, brother of Lord Home, who was succeeded by William Douglas, brother of the Earl of Angus. Adam, the next prior, was removed in 1541 to Dundrennan, to make room for John Stewart, the infant and natural son of James V., who was appointed commendator, while his father enjoyed the revenue. In

* The history of Coldingham Priory occupies a prominent place in the history of the south of Scotland; and we must refer the reader who feels interested in the fortunes of this still celebrated, once rich and powerful, priory, to Chalmers' *Caledonia*, Redpath's *Border History*, and to Raine's *History of North Durham*.

November 1544, the English seized the abbey, and fortified it so strongly, that all the efforts of the Earl of Arran, Regent of Scotland, failed to reduce it. In 1545 it was burnt by the Earl of Hertford, and never afterwards regained its former wealth and consequence. John Stewart, commendator, who married Lady Jane Hepburn, sister of the well-known Earl of Bothwell, died in 1563, leaving two sons, Francis and John, on the eldest of whom James VI. again bestowed the commendatorship of Coldingham. Francis, like his father, having rebelled against his kinsman and benefactor, the whole of the temporalities were taken from him and bestowed upon the Earl of Home. On the earl's death in 1619, John, the second son of Francis, who had been created Earl of Bothwell, was appointed commendator. This worthless and profligate individual, in order to procure the means of supporting himself in his career of dissipation and extravagance, alienated in small lots, all the lands which had hitherto remained attached to the priory, and from him the numerous small proprietors in the immediate neighbourhood of the church and village received the charters by which they continue to hold their property. Of this most ancient and richly endowed monastery nothing now remained but its magnificent church, and the extensive buildings by which it was surrounded. It was left to Oliver Cromwell to complete its final overthrow, as he passed through Berwickshire to attack the army of the Scots. A strong body of the inhabitants of the district, who were generally Episcopalians and royalists, established and fortified themselves in the church and tower, in which their forefathers had successfully defended themselves against the Earls of Arran and Angus. The first detachment of troops which Cromwell sent, was repulsed with loss, and he was forced to bring up several pieces of cannon, which in two days shook the tower, and compelled its defenders to capitulate. He afterwards, that he might leave no means of annoyance in his rear, blew up the church, leaving only the north wall and east gable. The tower was ninety feet in height, and formed the north-west corner of the northern transept of the church. It continued in a very precarious state, till it fell about sixty years ago, and not a stone of it now remains. The north wall and east gable of the present church form the whole that remains of this ancient monastery, founded upwards of 700 years ago. They afford beautiful specimens of the transition from the Norman to the early English style of architecture. A number of circular arches, each two divided with an intercolumn-

niation, ornamented the whole of the north wall, resting on corbals, and having richly adorned canopies; but about sixty years ago, with most barbarous taste, the shafts of the arches were cut away, which greatly disfigured the interior aspect of the church. Above these still remain entire five windows of beautiful workmanship, nearly approaching to the lancet figure, and twenty-six plain and clustered shafts, with capitals of different forms, and ornamented with various kinds of foliage. Behind these runs a narrow corridor extending the whole length of the church. The exterior of what remains of the old monastery is remarkable for its beautiful simplicity. The design of the exterior corresponds with the interior. Below is a series of coupled Norman arches embellished with the Chiffon moulding. Above are lancet-shaped Gothic windows, with columns at the sides. The remains of several arches surround the building, and only a few years have elapsed since others were torn down for the sake of the stones. The Prior holding rank as a baron had the right of pit and gallows. The pit was situated a little to the east of the present church, and was filled up so late as 1800; the gallows stood upon a little hill about a mile distant, and is still called Gallowside. A quantity of bones, forming an artificial mound, were dug up here twenty-five years ago. Previous to the Reformation, the priors and monks of Coldingham had acquired the churches of Coldingham, Aldecamus, Ayton, Fishwick, Knapden, Corvendean, Edenham, Swinton, Nisbet, Berwick, Mordington, Lambertton, Ederham, Ercildoun, Smallhom, Stichel, with the chapels of Newton, Nenthorn, and others. The revenues of the priory were variously stated; but the following account from Lauchlan Shaw's Manuscript may be considered as nearest the truth: money, L. 818, 10s. 9d.; wheat, 6 chalders, 7 bolls, 3 firlots, 2 pecks; bear, 19 chalders, 12 bolls, 1 firlot, 2 pecks; oats, 56 chalders, 8 bolls, 2 firlots; peas, 3 chalders, 13 bolls, 2 firlots; and a right to a number of kain fowls, services and carriages from their vassals. By the charters of Alexander II., they had a right of warren and forestry over the extensive waste now called Coldingham Moor, with all the woods and forests adjoining, which charters may be seen at length in Mr Raine's History of Northumberland.

Antiquities.—There are some vestiges of a Roman camp on a hill west of St Abb's Head, and of a British camp on the summit of Ernsheuch, surrounded on three of its sides by lofty precipices. On the top of Wardlae Bank hill is another British camp, with

four rows of circular trenches. There is also a large Roman camp on its north-west side, two sides of which have been levelled; but two still remain undisturbed by the plough. The stations of the centinels on the brow of the hill may be distinctly seen.

Two miles to the west of St Abb's Head is Fast-Castle, built upon a peninsular rock jutting into the sea. The narrow neck which joins it to the land had been cut down almost to the level of the sea, and a draw-bridge was thrown over it, rendering it almost impregnable. The building, which is in ruins, forms one of the most striking and picturesque objects in the county, and is much resorted to by strangers, both on its own account and for the splendid view from the hill immediately above it, which presents the boundless extent of the German Ocean, rolling farther than the eye can reach, the fertile shores of Fife and the Lothians, the distant hills of Stirling and Perthshire, the numerous vessels passing and repassing, the rugged shores and massy rocks of St Abb's Head,—all forming a scene so vast and diversified—so near and so remote—that the imagination can add nothing to its splendour. As might have been expected, from the contiguity to the English border, there were in former days numerous strongholds in this parish, few vestiges of which now remain. Such was Langton Tower, Heughhead, Renton and Houndwood, the last of which was the hunting seat of the prior.

Land-owners.—The parish is divided among 59 heritors, 11 of whom have about L. 400 Scots valuation, among whom are Forman Home, Esq. of Billy; Henry Home Drummond of Blair Drummond; Sir John Hall, Bart. of Dunglass; Sir Samuel Stirling, Bart. of Renton; Mrs Coulson of Houndwood; William Hume, Esq., of Fairlaw; William Hood, Esq. of Sunnyside; William Macintyre, Esq. of Templehall; Thomas Weir, Esq. of Bogan Green; William Dickson, Esq. of Whitecross; John Fuller, Esq. of Hallydown; the Rev. Edward Sandys Lumsden of Lumsden; Thomas Henderson, Esq. of Press. 13 heritors have from L. 400 to L. 100, and 35 have from L. 100 to L. 1, 0s. 10d., all Scots money: 36 proprietors of land have upwards of the yearly value of L. 50 Sterling. It is much to be regretted that there is no magistrate in the parish, and few residing heritors, to whom the poor might apply for temporary relief, the oppressed for assistance, the ignorant for advice.

Parochial Registers.—The first entry in the parochial register of the parish was in 1694, when John Dysart was the first

Presbyterian minister after the Reformation: the register has since been regularly kept.

III.—POPULATION.

In 1801,	2391
1811,	2424
1821,	2675
1831,	2668

The number of families in the parish,	621
chiefly employed in agriculture,	270
chiefly employed in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	131

The number of illegitimate births in the parish during last three years was 13.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—The number of acres in this parish, at once so large and so irregular, cannot be correctly ascertained; but these may be about 57,000, of which 5000 or 6000 are moorland. It is supposed that there are 100 acres of natural wood, and 400 of plantations. The indigenous wood consists principally of oak, elm, and birch. No additional land could be profitably brought under cultivation.

Rent of Land.—The average rent of arable land per acre may be estimated at L. 1, 11s.: the rent varying from 2s. 6d. to L. 5 per acre. Few or no cattle are taken in for grazing.

Rate of Wages.—Farm-labourers receive 1s. 6d. to 2s. in summer, and from 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. in winter; masons and carpenters one-third more. There are 55 hand-loom weavers in the village of Coldingham, who are employed by Glasgow manufacturers to weave cotton, who for several years past have received only 6s. per week for working thirteen hours a-day.

Husbandry.—The general mode of husbandry practised in the parish is that of the four-shift system. Leases are generally for a period of twenty-one years. Farm dwelling-houses and offices are large and commodious, suited to the size of the farm and to the wealth and respectability of the farmer. There are neither quarries nor mines worked in the parish.

Produce.—The average gross amount and value of produce yearly raised in the parish cannot be exactly ascertained: but the following is an approximation:

Grain,	L. 26,000
Potatoes, turnips, &c.	6,000
Hay,	1,200
Land in pasture,	18,000
Gardens and orchards,	30
Annual thinning of woods, &c.	20
Fisheries,	1,300
Total yearly value of raw produce raised,	L. 52,550

A small harbour for the security of fishing boats was erected at Northfield shore, about a mile distant from Coldingham, in 1833, at the expense of about L. 1200, one-fourth of which was raised by private subscription; Government supplied the remainder. Sixteen families reside close by at the picturesque fishing village of Northfield, who, with about 20 others living in Coldingham, obtain their livelihood by fishing. In addition to these, 30 persons proceed annually to the north for the herring fishing, which gives employment for fourteen boats from this place. The fish caught upon this coast are cod, which, when pickled, are sent to the London market; also, haddock, turbot, lobsters, which are transported in carts to the Edinburgh market.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-town—Villages.—The nearest market-town is Eyemouth, two miles and a-half distant. The villages are Coldingham, having a population of 850; Reston, 222; Auchincraw, 161.

Means of Communication.—A daily post goes between Coldingham and Ayton. Nine miles of the great London road traverse the parish, along which three public coaches daily travel; there are 53 miles of parish roads, upon which L. 160 a-year, in the conversion of statute-labour, are expended. All the bridges and most of the fences are in good repair.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is situated nearly at the south-east corner of the parish, in the village of Coldingham. The situation is inconvenient for the parishioners generally, as it has the sea on the east, and the neighbouring parish of Eyemouth, within a mile of it, on the south, and is above eight miles distant from the other extremities of the parish. The church was repaired, and one of the walls rebuilt, in 1662; the remaining part of the building is a part of the old monastery. The church can accommodate 1000 persons, and the greater part of the aisle is appropriated for free sittings, but has never yet been fitted up for that purpose. The manse, which is situated within a short distance of the church, was built in 1801, and repaired and enlarged in 1828. Two glebes are attached to the living; one, consisting of five acres of excellent land, valued at L. 4 per acre; the other, which was allotted to the minister at the division of the common, in lieu of his right of pasturage, also five acres in extent, but of very inferior quality, and worth L. 1, 10s. per acre. The stipend, by an augmentation obtained in 1833, was raised from 15 chalders 15 bolls, and L. 8, 8s. for communion elements, to 18 chalders, and L. 10 for communion elements.

A chapel was erected at the distance of seven miles from the parish church, on the estate of Renton, in 1794, by Sir John Stirling, the proprietor of Renton; and the Rev. Mr Beaton was ordained to the charge by the Presbytery of Chirnside, Sir John Stirling granting him a bond for L. 80 a-year. He was succeeded by Mr Marshall, who afterwards was appointed to a parish in Shetland in the year 1810; from that time, till 1831, with the exception of an occasional sermon during the first few years after Mr Marshall's departure, public worship ceased to be performed, and the chapel became much dilapidated,—no successor to him was appointed, as it was found impossible to procure a sufficient provision for the support of a clergyman.

In the spring of 1831, the present incumbent raised a sufficient sum among the inhabitants of the district in which the chapel is situated, for its complete repair; and in the month of November following, Mr Duncan, with the full approbation of all concerned, was appointed to officiate, and the religious charge of the people entrusted to him by the parish minister, and he has since continued to reside and labour amongst them. His income is derived from the seat rents, and a subscription received from Lord Douglas, Mr Balfour of Whittingham, and the parish minister,—which have hitherto averaged a little more than L. 60 per annum. There is one Dissenting chapel in the village of Coldingham in connection with the United Associate Synod.

Divine service, both at the church and chapel, is generally well attended, and there are few parishes where the Sabbath-day is more devoutly observed. The average number of communicants at the parish church is 560. The number of families in connection with the chapel at Renton is upwards of 70, and the average number of individuals who attend public worship there is 250, and of communicants 140.

Education.—There are eight schools in the parish, having 260 pupils; two of which schools are parochial, where the common branches of education are taught, together with the Latin classics, mathematics, and French; the other six are supported entirely by school-fees, in two of which the classics are taught, and in the other the ordinary branches of education. Both of the parochial schoolmasters have the minimum salary; one of whom draws L. 60 a-year from other sources, and the school-fees are as under; reading, 2s.; writing, 3s.; arithmetic, 4s.; Latin, 5s. per quarter. The opportunity of education is so generally embraced by the people, that there are few who cannot read, and the number of

persons who are not able to sign their name is very inconsiderable ; and there is no part of the parish so distant from a school as to prevent attendance. In addition to these sources of instruction there are four Sunday schools, which are numerous attended.

Literature.—The village of Coldingham is furnished with a subscription library containing 400 volumes, consisting of the best English authors.

Fairs.—There is a fair held twice a-year in the village, which has now dwindled almost to nothing.

Inns.—There are two inns and ten public houses in the parish ; four are situated on the great London road, and all of them are well conducted, and do not appear to be productive of any serious injury to the morals of the people.

Fuel.—The principal fuel used in the parish is coal, brought from the sea-port of Eyemouth and Berwick ; but the persons who live in the moorland parts of the parish chiefly burn peat.

Charitable Institutions.—A friendly society was established in 1791 ; it is in a very flourishing state, consisting at present of 125 members. The present amount of its capital stock is lent in small sums on floating security, and amounts to L. 700. The quarterly payment of each member is 3s. ; and the allowance per week to the sick and those unfit for work, 2s. ; and in the case of a funeral, L. 5 for expenses.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of individuals on the poor roll is 140, a few others receiving temporary aid ; and the average sum allotted to each is 1s. 3d. a-week. The poor are supported by a legal assessment, amounting to nearly L. 600 per annum, and there is no other source of relief except that afforded by the collections at church, which may amount to L. 10 per annum.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Nothing is wanting to promote the progress of industry and the happiness and comfort of the labouring classes, but the residence of the landed proprietors, scarcely any of whom reside in the parish. The consequence of this is, that the poor have none to whom they can look for assistance in adversity, or counsel in difficulty ; and the relative duties between rich and poor have no existence in this parish.

November 1834.

BERWICK,

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