

PARISH OF UPHALL.

PRESBYTERY OF LINLITHGOW, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN & TWEEDDALE.

THE REV. GEORGE BOAG, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent, &c.—THE extreme length of the parish, from east to west, is 4 miles, and breadth from north to south about 3 miles. It contains 3120 Scots acres. It is bounded on the north, by Ecclesmachan and Linlithgow; on the east, by Kirkliston; on the south, by Mid-Calder; and on the west, by Livingston and Ecclesmachan.

The highest part of the parish is probably not 380 feet above the level of the sea. Toward the north-west, however, where the church and manse stand, it is so elevated as to have a commanding view of the country to the east and south-east as far as Edinburgh Arthur's Seat, and the Pentland hills, and even North Berwick Law, as well as the Lammermoor hills, are seen in the distance.

The parish anciently was named Strathbrock, which signifies "the valley of brocks or badgers."

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Parochial Registers.—These are chiefly records of marriages, baptisms, and proceedings of session. Registers of marriages and baptisms seem to have been regularly kept, and are for the most part extant, for upwards of two hundred and forty years. Records of the deeds of session have been regularly kept since the establishment of Presbyterianism, after the Revolution. During the time of Episcopacy, before the Revolution, a register of burials seems to have been kept, which is still extant; but since that time, this was for the most part neglected, till the beginning of the year 1840, when the regular registration of burials was commenced.

Land-owners.—The Earl of Buchan is the principal land-owner and patron of the parish. The valuation of his Lordship's property situate in this parish, being the estate of Strathbrock, and part of that of Amondell, is L.3320. Strathbrock, according to

the account given by the late Earl of Buchan, was very anciently in the possession of the family of Sutherland. From that family it passed to the Douglasses about the beginning of the fifteenth century; then to Keiths, Earls Marischal; next to the Earls of Winton and the Oliphants, and sometimes called, on that account, Strathbroke Oliphant. From them it came by purchase to Sir Lewis Stewart, whose grand-daughter, Katherine Stewart, marrying Henry Lord Cardross, it came by descent to the present Earl, Henry David Erskine. The present Earl succeeded his uncle, David Stewart Erskine, the eleventh Earl of Buchan, in 1829.* His own father, the late Honourable Henry Erskine, that most distinguished member of the Scottish Bar, was twice Lord Advocate of Scotland in 1782 and 1806. After a long, laborious, and brilliant professional career, extending over a period of forty-four years, Mr Erskine retired from public life, and spent the remainder of his days in domestic retirement at his beautiful villa of Amondell, in this parish, where he died on the 8th of October 1817, in the seventy-first year of his age. The remains of this most celebrated barrister, as also of the late Lord Chancellor Erskine, his brother, are deposited in the family vault adjoining Uphall Church.

Next to his Lordship, in respect of extent of property, is Norman Shairp, Esq. of Houstoun. The valuation of his estate is L.720.

The Shairps of Houstoun have held property (varying in extent at different periods), in the parish of Uphall, for nearly four hundred years. It is said that their ancestor, whom Nisbet calls William E'sharp, came from Normandy with David II. The first of the family of whom history makes particular mention, is Sir John Shairp, Knight, Advocate for Queen Mary, who acquired most of the property, and in whose time it is said the oldest part of Houstoun House was built. Since his time, many of his descendants have distinguished themselves in battle; and the graves of some are on famous fields.

Thomas Shairp, Esq. of Houstoun, held a pre-eminent place in the opposition party in the Union Parliament, in which, along with his brother-in-law, Murray of Livingston, he represented the county of Linlithgow. In the time of his successor, the property of Houstoun was the largest in the county of West Lothian.

* See Account of the parish of Uphall, 1st vol. of Transactions of the Society of Antiquaries.

Since that time, it has shrunk within comparatively narrow limits. All these facts and many more are fully authenticated by papers in possession of the family, some of which bear as far back a date as 1462.

R. W. Maxwell, Esq. of Middleton, is another land-owner. He has lately purchased and taken possession of that small but beautiful estate, the valuation of which is L.113.

The whole of the parish, with the exception of a very few acres, is the property of the Earl of Buchan and these two gentlemen.

Mansion-Houses.—These are, Kirkhill House, formerly the residence of the Earl of Buchan; Amondell, at present occupied by his Lordship; Houston House, the residence of Norman Shairp, Esq.; and Middleton, the residence of R. W. Maxwell, Esq.

III.—POPULATION.

It appears from Old Accounts, that the population, sixty years ago, was only 600. Since that time, there has been a great increase.

Population in 1801,	786
1811,	800
1821	1016
1831,	1254
1841,	1467

The principal village is Broxburn, of which the population is 500; the only other village is Uphall, containing 220; the population of the country part of the parish, 504. The remaining part of the population at last census consisted of people employed on the railway, who have now left the parish.

Of the regular population, the number of families are, 245; belonging to the Established Church, 216; Dissenters, 24; Episcopalian, 1; Roman Catholics, 4.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

The parish contains 3922 imperial acres, 3532 of which are in a state of cultivation. There are 178 acres of plantations; 212 have never been cultivated, but are, for the most part, capable of cultivation. What is called Drumshorlan moor contains about 200 acres of uncultivated land, of which the half is natural wood.

The real rental of the parish is nearly L.6000; and the average rent per imperial acre about L.1, 15s.

Agriculture.—The greater part of the parish is in a high state of cultivation, and in the hands of active farmers, who have introduced many of the recent improvements in agriculture. Among these, furrow draining has been introduced within the last ten

years, and is progressing. The general character of the husbandry practised is skilful and in accordance with the modern improvements of the day. The soil has been greatly improved by the application of an extra supply of manure, brought from Edinburgh by the Union Canal.

The soil consists generally of clay, and, to a certain extent, its character is a loamy clay, incumbent on a close subsoil, impervious to moisture. The whole cultivated lands are divided into fields, enclosed with ditches and thorn hedges.

The general rotation of crops is, after hay or pasture, one crop of oats; next, fallow or fallow crop; then wheat succeeded by barley or grass seed for a hay crop. In the higher parts of the parish, little wheat is sown, but the fallow crop is succeeded by barley or oats, and then hay or pasture.

The dairy produce is excellent. Considerable attention has been paid of late years to the breed of cows. The Teeswater or short-horned and Ayrshire are preferred, and crosses from these. Butter and milk, also poultry and eggs, are sent to the Edinburgh market. The breed of horses for agricultural purposes has been of late much attended to, and a rapid improvement has taken place from the cultivation of the Clydesdale breed. There are not many sheep in the parish, but recently a few of the Leicester breed have been introduced; and so far as trial has been made, they have proved profitable.

This parish cannot yet boast of any manufactures. Coals have been wrought in it for a long period. The colliery at present in operation is on the estate of Houstoun. It employs about twenty individuals. The parish abounds with other minerals, ironstone and freestone. The ironstone has never been wrought. But the freestone has been wrought to a great extent. It is of an excellent quality, much celebrated; and of late years, by means of the canal, a great quantity of freestone has been conveyed from this parish to Edinburgh, and used in erecting some of the principal buildings in that city.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church bears all the marks of one erected before the Reformation. It is far from being commodious, and is too small for the population. The bell still in use is that brought from the steeple of the old church, and bears date 1441. The inscription on the bell is “*Campanum Sancti Nicholai de Strathbroke.*” The church was a rectory in early times. The

succession of ministers since the Reformation stands thus: 1. The Rev. James Smith; 2. Patrick Shairp; 3. Andrew Keith; 4. Alexander Keith; 5. W. Mowbray; 6. George Barclay, admitted 1691; 7. John Wilkie, admitted August 22, 1706; 8. William Gibb, admitted October 27, 1763; 9. David Ure, admitted July 14, 1796; 10. John Ferguson, admitted September 28, 1798; 11. John Ferguson, Junior, appointed assistant and successor, April 29, 1824; 12. George Boag, admitted August 22, 1839.

In a list of ecclesiastical persons who held lands in Scotland, anno 1296, and preserved in the Tower of London, we find the name of "Ferquardus parsona ecclesie de Strathbroke vicecomitatu de Linlidgo."

The present stipend is sixteen chalders of victual, amounting in value, according to the fiars of crop 1840, to L.265. But there are unexhausted teinds to the value of nearly L.400. The glebe contains ten Scotch acres, which may be valued at L.25. There is, properly speaking, no manse at present. But in place thereof, the minister possesses an excellent mansion-house, belonging to the Earl of Buchan, delightfully and conveniently situated, for which the other heritors pay their proportion of rent.

Schools.—There are two schools. The parochial school is at the village of Broxburn. About 100 scholars attend it. The other school is at the village of Uphall. It is attended by 80 scholars. No additional school seems necessary. The parochial schoolmaster's salary is L.34, 4s. 4½d.; school fees amount to L.36 or thereabouts; and other emoluments to about L.15; the sum of L.1, 12s. is allowed him by the heritors for a deficiency of garden.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—Particular attention is paid to the support and comfort of the poor. The average number regularly receiving parochial aid is about 20; several get occasional relief besides. The weekly collections in the church average about L.16 a-year; property for behoof of the poor, invested in the kirk-session, yields L.40 a-year; and to make up the deficiency of what is requisite, the heritors voluntarily assess themselves. The assessment is L.30 or upwards, varying as circumstances require.

April 1843.