

# PARISH OF HOBKIRK OR HOPEKIRK.

PRESBYTERY OF JEDBURGH, SYNOD OF MERSE AND TIVIODALE.

THE REV. JOHN EWEN, MINISTER.

## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—IN the more ancient records, the name of this parish is written Hopkirk, undoubtedly an abbreviation of Hope-kirk or *kirk of the Hope*.\*

*Extent, Figure, Boundaries, &c.*—The parish extends in length from north to south, about 11 miles, and in breadth from east to west, about 3 miles, widening to something more at the top or south end, and contracting to little more than one mile at the northern extremity. Its figure is not unlike the naked impression of the left foot, the heel being turned to the north. The whole superficies may be estimated at 30 square miles.† On the south, it is bounded by Castleton parish; on the west by Cavers and Kirkton; on the north by Cavers and Bedrule; on the east by Southdean, and a small part of Castleton. By the one or other of these two last-mentioned, it is separated about six miles from the English border.

*Topographical Appearances, &c.*—The hills in the southern extremity appear to be a continuation of the Carter or Cheviot range. The principal summits are Fanna and Windbrugh, which attain an elevation of about 1600 feet. At the opposite or northern extremity, Rubberslaw rears, to a height of 1420 feet, its dark rugged and heath-covered form, part of which only is in this parish, the remainder in Cavers and Kirkton. On the other side the Rule, and somewhat south, is the beautiful round-shouldered and grassy hill of Bonchester, rising to a height of about 1260 feet. The flat lands or haughs lie all within the valley through which the Rule flows from south to north, and are scarcely a quarter of a

\* A *hope* means a small valley or glen opening into a larger valley, generally at the confluence of a mountain rill with a larger stream.

† Stobie's map errs in assigning the whole of the suppressed parish of Abbotrule to Hopekirk, whereas it was divided equally between Hopekirk and Southdean.

mile in breadth. On each side, the ground rises with a considerable acclivity, to the eastern and western borders of the parish.

On approaching Hobkirk either from the east, west, or south, the temperature feels obviously augmented as we descend into the valley of the Rule; but it must be confessed, that the borders of the parish in these directions are particularly exposed; and this circumstance, doubtless, renders the change more perceptible, and more grateful to the traveller. Upon the mountain range to the south, clouds condense and precipitate themselves in copious rains. These sometimes fall so heavy as to resemble water-spouts. The inhabitants of this parish, as well as of the neighbouring town of Hawick, preserve the remembrance of a water-spout which broke upon Windbrugh, some seventy years ago, and unexpectedly swelled the streams of Rule and Slitterick to a tremendous height. In the traditions of the good town, this event is still celebrated under the appellation of Hawick flood, and several anecdotes connected with it may be found in Wilson's History of Hawick. An allusion to the same event occurs in Leyden's Scenes of Infancy, where, with poetic license, the poet ascribes the sudden inundation to the vengeance of the affronted nymph of Windbrugh Lake.

The climate is upon the whole damp, the heights swampy, and often overhung with moist fogs, vernacularly termed *drows*, or *Liddesdale drows*.

*Hydrography.*—In the upper part of the parish, there are numerous salubrious springs flowing from the greywacke formation; in the lower parts, where the sandstone prevails, there are comparatively fewer. Several marshes or bogs occur, but nothing which can properly be called a lake; that which is so termed and is celebrated by Leyden, on the top of Windbrugh, is in reality a peat moss. There is but one stream of any consequence in the parish, viz. the Rule,—which, rising from the range of hills on the south, flows nearly due north throughout the whole length of the parish, and, about two miles beyond its northern extremity, falls into the river Teviot. Its whole course, therefore, must be about thirteen miles. Like all mountain torrents, its declivity is considerable, and its velocity proportionally great. From this circumstance, combined with the extensive drainage of the hills, its swellings and subsidings are extremely sudden. About a mile south from the church, the name is first applied to the union of three branches, which gather their waters from the alpine range above-mentioned. Two or three small burns join it farther down,

all originating within the parish. The south-western corner, however, includes a small portion of Langburn, the principal feeder of the Slitterick, which flows northward, and joins the Teviot at Hawick, seven miles above the confluence of the Rule.

*Geology and Mineralogy.*—The parish may geologically be divided into two districts. The rocks, from the northern extremity to a mile and a half above the church, are mostly sandstone; thence, southward and westward, the greywacke predominates. On the south, occur likewise extensive masses of limestone, and red sandstone of a different species from that above noticed. The limestone is found at Limekilnedge, south of Windbrugh, where it has long been burnt for use. Here also are symptoms of a coal formation, which is not likely to prove beneficial. Windbrugh itself shows a gritty sandstone, more akin to the Northumberland formation. That in the north end of the parish has sometimes a red, and sometimes a white colour; and both kinds are employed for building. In fact, the upper strata generally consist of the white, which, accordingly, crops out three miles before the red. Both kinds are extensively wrought for public use in the adjoining parish of Cavers, at Denholm-hill quarry. The dip of the sandstone is to the north or north-east. The greywacke has generally a westerly course, varying somewhat to the south, and stands nearly vertical, with a slight overhanging to the north. The limestone, (supposed to be mountain limestone,) dips to the east like the Northumberland rocks, and probably the sandstone found in this upper district maintains the same position.

Besides the rocks above-mentioned, there appear on the top of Bonchester, Rubberslaw, and Windbrugh, caps of trap, greenstone, or probably a species of basalt, though not, unless in this latter site, assuming the basaltic form. A singular dike, varying from two to six yards wide, crosses the lower part of the parish from east to west, and continues its course through the greywacke as well as through the sandstone. Its material is greenstone, or something analogous, with a considerable proportion of iron, which is oxidized whenever it lies in contact with the air or penetrable soil. This dike is clearly shown at Hallrule mill; thence it extends in a westerly direction to Hawick,—making its appearance at the Glen, at Kirkton, Miller's Knowe, and other places on the line, where it is wrought for metalling the roads. It may also be traced eastwards across the Jed near Edgerston. Other troubles of lesser

note may be observed in the red sandstone, by which the strata are heaved up and otherwise deranged.

At Robertslin, near Limekilnedge, occurs a stratum of agate or coarse jasper, which has frequently been employed for seals and other ornaments. Its prevailing colour is reddish, clouded and streaked with blue, crimson, and yellow, generally presenting but little transparency. Portions of fossil wood are found in the water-course, brought down from the hills; but none have been discovered *in situ*.

The soil over the sandstone is a reddish clay, among which are numerous large rounded stones, commonly blue, more rarely black, rolled from the greywacke and basaltic rocks. These, mixed with red sandstone, form the channel of the river. Moreover, there occur frequently smaller stones, of two or three pounds weight, of an oval shape, sometimes of a flesh colour, sometimes of a white quartz look, such as occur in coarse conglomerate. Of this, in fact, a mass is exposed by the Catlie Burn near Wauchope garden, where the sandstone formation terminates.

*Zoology*.—Judging from the names of places in the neighbourhood, it would appear that the hart, the hind, the wolf, &c. were formerly natives of this district. Thus, we have Hartshaugh, Hindlee, Wolflee, Swanshiel, Ernescleugh, &c. Foxes still commit nightly depredations upon the poultry-yard, and otters have been discovered on the banks of the stream about Wells. There, also, among the lofty trees, herons build their nests; and squirrels latterly have been seen in the woods.

The Rule abounds with excellent trout, and is esteemed an excellent stream for angling; but some dexterity is required, from its being shallow, and in many places fringed with alders. Few salmon or sea-trout visit its waters, and that never but in spawning season, when they are killed without any regard to prohibitory statutes. It is to be regretted that the small streams are so generally swept with nets, which not only diminish the angler's legitimate sport, but destroy much of the salmon fry ere they reach the sea.

The sides of the valley are plentifully and beautifully wooded,—in a manner scarcely equalled in this part of the country. Birch, hazel, alder, and ash, are of natural growth. Oak, beech, elm, and the different kinds of fir, seem most congenial to the soil, and attain to a state of great perfection.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

There is no event in our knowledge that deserves to be noticed under this head. The abbey of Jedburgh possessed lands in the parish; and probably some facts in its history might be learned from monkish records. The remains of numerous fortifications testify that this, like other border districts, had been the scene of frequent conflicts. Queen Mary traversed this parish on her way from Jedburgh to Hermitage Castle, when, a little beyond its extremity, she got entangled in the Queen's Mire.

The Rev. Robert Riccalton, minister of the parish from 1725 to 1769, was a man of considerable talent, an independent thinker, and an author of two volumes of essays and sermons. With him the poet Thomson spent part of his early life, and is said here to have formed the plan of his Seasons, and taken many of his descriptions from scenes in the neighbourhood.

*Land-owners.*—The chief land-owners are, Sir W. F. Elliot, Bart. of Stobs and Wells; Robert K. Elliot, Esq. of Harwood; Walter Scott, Esq. of Wauchope; Hon. J. Sinclair of Green-river; and James Elliot, Esq. of Wolflee. Altogether there are but nine heritors in the parish.

*Antiquities.*—On Bonchester Hill, there are remains of a citadel, with numerous encampments, both round and square; and in some places, modern circumvallations may be observed intersecting the more ancient. The situation is commanding, and seems to have been regarded as a place of great strength and convenience. The estimation in which it was held by the Romans no doubt procured it the appellation Bonchester, *i. e.* *Bona Castra*, or the good camp. Hand mill-stones, arrow-heads, and other implements of former times, have been found in the vicinity. On Rubberslaw, at Wauchope, and in several other places, there are likewise vestiges of encampments or fortifications. In digging, some time ago, at Langraw, a quantity of ashes and partly-consumed bones were exposed within a circular area about eighteen feet diameter. On these being removed, four holes drilled in the *dent* or sandstone shale were discovered, in which posts had been secured by small stones crammed in from above. Whether these posts had supported a canopy or a funeral pile, or what had been the purpose of the erection, we are unable to determine. Several urns have been dug up in different situations. Two cairns have been removed within the memory of the present generation; one on the east side of Rub-

berslaw, the other at Fodderlee, near to a place where tradition says a battle had been fought.

### III.—POPULATION.

Population in 1801,	-	760
1811,	-	709
1821,	-	652
1831,	-	676

The enlargement of farms has been the principal cause of the late decrease of population,—conjoined with emigration to manufacturing towns, and even to foreign countries.

There is no town, and nothing that can properly be called a village, within the parish.

The annual average of births during the last seven years, may be	-	14
deaths,	-	9
marriages,	-	3
The average number of persons under 15 years of age,	-	271
between 15 and 30,	-	128
30 and 50,	-	187
50 and 70,	-	72
above 70,	-	18
The number of unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers, upwards of 50,	-	16
of unmarried females upwards of 45,	-	23
of families in the parish,	-	121
chiefly employed in agriculture,	-	53
in trade, manufacture, or handicraft,	-	27
The average number of children in each family may be	-	4
Number of inhabited houses,	-	122
uninhabited, do.	-	2

During the last three years there have been six illegitimate births in the parish.

Poaching, especially the snaring of game, prevails to a considerable extent. Smuggling and illicit distilling are not now practised.

### IV.—INDUSTRY.

The estimate hazarded above gives about 19,000 acres for the area of the parish; of these, 3400 are in tillage or laid out in grass parks. There may be 860 acres in plantations, mostly in a very thriving condition. Those towards the upper part are sufficiently thinned and regularly tended; those in the lower part are sadly neglected, though in many places excellent timber might be felled with great advantage to the remainder. We have already mentioned that firs, beeches, and oaks, succeed best in this soil. Admirable specimens of these may be seen at Wells, Weens, and Greenriver. More recently, ash, elm, birch, &c. have been mingled; but few of these have as yet attained great value.

*Rent, &c.*—The average rent of land may be 15s., and none is let so high as L. 2 per acre. The average sum paid for grazing a three year-old ox or cow L. 6; a two-year old L. 4; a hill sheep 5s. 6d., infield do. 12s.

*Rate of Wages, &c.*—Labourers earn about 1s. 9d. a day throughout the year; artisans, 2s. or 2s. 3d.; men-servants get about L. 10 a year; women L. 4 or L. 4, 10s. during the summer, and L. 2 in winter. A hind is sometimes paid in the following manner: A free house worth probably L. 2; 10 bolls oats; 2 do. barley; 1 do. of pease; 4 carts of coals; 1000 yards of potatoes, a capful of lint-seed or a bushel of barley sown,—the master preparing and manuring the ground. Bondage work is general in the district, that is to say, every cottage is bound to furnish the farmer with a field worker, paid at the rate of 10d. a-day.

Lime costs 8s. 6d. a single cart load; good stable-dung, 3s. Bone manure may be purchased, ten miles distant, at L. 1, 1s. a quarter. Turnips 3d. a week per sheep. Hay 8d. a stone of 22 lbs.

*Stock, &c.*—The common breed of sheep is the Cheviot, crossed more or less with the Leicester. One gentleman has for some years kept a few merinos. The cattle are mostly of the short-horned breed. There may be 9500 sheep in the parish, 300 cattle, and about 80 horses. The annual quantity of wool sold may be guessed at 2000 stones of 24 lbs. each, which in price might average last year L. 1, 6s., counting the white L. 1, 10s., and the laid wool, L. 1, per stone.

The duration of leases varies from nine to nineteen years; but, of late, from the uncertainty of the times, short periods have generally been adopted.

*Husbandry.*—Considerable attention has been paid to farming, both as regards the improvement of stock, and the melioration of the soil. There is no want of capital for profitable enterprise. Five out of the nine heritors farm all or great part of their estates. The system of husbandry is good, and calculated directly to enrich the country. Draining and liming have been executed with manifest advantage. Much heath, too, has been reclaimed within these forty years. Perhaps more land has been brought under the plough than will yield a profitable return, unless it be afterwards laid down permanently in grass.

The older farm-buildings are very indifferent; the newer ones are good, and afford ample conveniences.

*Enclosures.*—The enclosures are improving. Feal or turf dikes are now seldom employed. Stone walls and hedges are generally in use. The former are the most effectual; but they are like-

wise the most expensive. A good five-foot wall may be erected for 6s. to 11s. per rood of eighteen feet, according to the distance from quarries. The building costs about 2s., the quarrying 2s. or 3s., and the leading makes up the remainder. Two kinds of hedges are employed for enclosures. 1st, That of thorn, which is here apt to moss up and canker, from the dampness of the climate. 2d, That of whin or furze, which has been lately introduced with apparently great advantage. It is at once cheaper than thorn, more easily reared, and sooner available as a fence. As this is a subject of importance to farmers, the following comparative view may be acceptable:—*Thorn*. Making ditch per rood, 10d.; thorns at 10d., 64 to a rood, including transport, 8d.; fencing with stake and rice, 1s. 0½d.; total, 2s. 6½d. This, in order to be a competent hedge, will require six or seven years of incessant care, and at least one renewal of the protecting fence.—*Whin*. Making bed, 3d.; ditch if required, 3d.; seed at 1s. per lb. 1d.; fencing 1s. 0½d.; total, 1s. 7½d. In four, or at most five years, this will be an efficient fence without any renewal of the temporary protection.

The calculation of the stake and rice stands thus: Rice at 1s. per cart, 3d. per rood; stakes, eight to the rood, 6d.; carting, 2d., putting up, 1½d.; total, 1s. 0½d. Three bar pailing will run thus: Wood, say 2s. 5d.; sawing, 4½d.; nails, eleven to the rood, at 10d., 1d.; labour, 1½d.; carting, 2d.; total, 3s. 2d.

Pailing is certainly preferable on the score of cleanliness; for a stake and rice fence harbours weeds. But this latter, besides being cheaper, turns to use an article, which would otherwise be in a great measure lost, viz. the thinnings of plantations. The seed of the whin is sown in April, and the plants, if kept from rotting by too much wetness, shoot away rapidly in the course of the season. The hedge being evergreen, presents a warm and beautiful appearance throughout the year; but regular pruning or switching up is necessary in order to prevent decay in the heart, and seeding. From this latter source, indeed, is anticipated the greatest objection to this kind of fence; for unless carefully watched, the furze will soon usurp the whole field.

*Produce*.—The following may be regarded as an approach to the value of raw produce yearly raised in the parish:

Of the 3400½ acres under tillage, there may be 1500 in grain, ¾ oats,			
¾ wheat, barley, &c. at say L. 3, 10s. per acre,		L. 5250	0 0
280 Turnips, L. 4,		1120	0 0
70 Potatoes, L. 7,		490	0 0
950 Grass and hay, at L. 2,		1900	0 0

14800 Pasture, at 5s. say,	-	-	3700	0	0
12 acres garden, say	-	-	100	0	0
Woods should give,	-	-	240	0	0

L. 12800 0 0

The valued rent of the parish is L. 4152; the actual rent in 1821 was L. 7095.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Hawick and Jedburgh, at the distance of eight miles, are the nearest market-towns. The latter has been usually reckoned the post-town; but a post-office in connection with Hawick has just been established at Bonchester Bridge. This will afford great accommodation to the inhabitants, and gain a day or two upon the transmission of replies to letters from London and Edinburgh.

The turnpike road from Hawick to Newcastle crosses the parish, from east to west, for about three miles and a-half, and that from Jedburgh to Castleton, north and south, for about ten miles. There are, besides, several statute-labour roads kept in tolerable repair. Altogether, their length may be upwards of twenty miles. Across the Rule are three stone-bridges, besides wooden ones, and others across burns or small torrents, in various directions.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The church is very centrally placed, though at a considerable distance from the extremities of the parish. It was built towards the beginning of last century, and since 1777 has undergone no repairs of any consequence. Its present condition is far from comfortable. The earthen floor is two steps below the level of the churchyard. The roof is nevertheless so low, that in the galleries there is not room at the sides to stand upright. The seating is in bad repair. The whole is dark, damp, and dirty. The interior, if properly laid out, might contain 400 sitters.

The manse was built seventy years ago, and has just undergone some inadequate repairs. The extent of the glebe around the manse may be 15 acres; and half of Abbotrule glebe 24 acres: value of the whole about L. 40. The stipend modified in victual is 15 chalders, one-half meal, and one-half barley.

There are 28 families in the parish attending the chapels of dissenters or Seceders.

*Education.*—The parochial school is situated by the churchyard wall, and is well attended, though its distance from the extremities of the parish is too great for young children. The number of scholars may average 60 throughout the year. They are taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. The master's salary is L. 31, 10s. per annum, including an equivalent for a garden: his fees may amount

to L. 22 per annum. A juvenile school is taught by a mistress in the lower part of the parish. The benefits of education are duly appreciated and universally acquired.

*Library.*—A subscription library has just been commenced, and is likely to be of considerable advantage.

*Savings-Bank.*—There is no Savings bank in the parish; but lodgments are made, chiefly by servants, in that of Jedburgh or of Hawick.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—The average number of paupers deriving aid from parochial assessment is 20, at the rate of L. 4 each per annum. A few receive temporary assistance from the session fund. It is gratifying to remark, that the genuine Scottish independence is not quite gone in this district; several individuals in real need, have manifested great reluctance to accept any parish relief. The total amount of assessment is about L. 80 per annum; and of church collections about L. 12. There is a benefaction of L. 100 left by Lady Yester, the interest of which is annually divided between the heritors and the schoolmaster.

*Inns.*—There is but one inn or public-house within the parish, viz. at Bonchester Bridge on the Newcastle road. The effects of such establishments on the morals of the people are never good; yet there is less drunkenness now than once prevailed. The practice of giving licence to the keepers of the toll-gates, stubbornly maintained by road trustees, is much to be deprecated. If refreshment be necessary, the license might at least be restricted to ale, and thus probably one-half of the evil would be removed.

*Fuel.*—Peat, turf, and wood, are burnt in the cottars' houses, but the fuel principally used is coal, which is brought from Northumberland, a distance of about twenty miles. It may be purchased at 9d. or 10d. a cwt. Coals could be procured both nearer and better at Tynehead, if the Duke of Northumberland would allow a road to be made in that quarter. There, a level and easy communication across the border might be obtained at no great expense; and it is much to be lamented that His Grace should deny the neighbourhood so great a benefit, merely through a dislike to break up the privacy of Keildar Castle.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The parish, within these last forty years, has been vastly improved in its general aspect; and here an acknowledgment is due to the late Mr Wilson of Hallrule, and especially to Mr Elliot of Wolflee. Much waste land has been reclaimed and brought into

a proper state of cultivation. The quantity under tillage has been more than doubled. Many plantations have been formed, and present a thriving appearance. The value of the district generally has been immensely increased. There is, however, still room in the western or south-western skirts of the parish for additional plantations to beautify and improve the ground.

The following improvements in husbandry may be submitted as occurring in this parish.

1. *Deep Ploughing.*—This has of late been introduced with very beneficial results. In certain soils, particularly in lands reclaimed from moor, there exists, not much below the surface, a stiff, dense and sterile clay, which denies all passage to moisture, as well as to the roots of plants. This stratum, commonly denominated *muir-band*, in some places only a few inches thick, may be readily pierced and broken, by using a plough without mould-boards, following in the furrow made by a common plough. This, drawn by three horses, or better still by oxen, will penetrate to a depth of sixteen or eighteen inches, and even raise stones of a considerable weight. The advantage of this procedure is, that the disturbed stratum will either deepen the soil generally, or act as a drain for superfluous moisture in wet lands; while in dry lands, it will serve as a reservoir to the plants when the superincumbent moisture is exhausted.

2. *Selection of Grasses for cultivation.*—Very seldom is any other kind than rye-grass with red and white clover sown. Yet it is allowed, that these are not equally adapted to every soil, whether wet or dry, rich or poor, moor or loam. It is to be regretted that farmers who have some knowledge of botany have not directed their attention to this most legitimate and beneficial purpose. The fitting soils for wheat, for barley, and for oats, have been long ascertained, and why might not experience be as successfully employed to discover the most congenial kinds of grasses and clovers? Italian rye-grass has been lately introduced into Galloway with much promise of advantage. It might be tried on the banks of the Rule.

3. *Top-Dressing of Grass Lands.*—The improvement of pasturage is of vital importance; and in general grass thrives well in this district. Its growth might be farther promoted by applying compost or short dung to the surface. Such a practice, with sufficient draining, will be found to yield a profitable return. It is the fault of the damp climate more than the soil, when the grain crops fail;

and as that will not affect lands in grass, the return from them is always certain.

It might be farther noticed, that the disease called *finger-and-toes* is occasionally very hurtful to the turnip crop. Lime has been regarded as the most successful remedy, and bone manure has been thought favourable. Amongst live-stock, the *loup-ing-ill* is a severe scourge, the loss by it ranging from five to ten, and even twenty per cent. This disease, as yet little understood, is attended with curious and very peculiar circumstances. It is attached to particular soils, most commonly to those where the greywacke predominates; and it may be remarked, that stock brought from a distance is more liable to it than what has been reared on the ground. It usually makes its appearance towards the middle of April, with the withering east winds of that period, and leaves the flock, (with the exception of a few irregular cases,) about the middle of June. It attacks sheep, cattle, and swine. It resembles paralysis affecting the limbs, sometimes the head or neck, and occasionally the back. Wherever it occurs, the vermin called *ticks* are found to accompany it. Severe bleeding at an early stage of the disease has been practised with advantage; but no infallible mode of treatment has been discovered for its cure. By plentifully liming the soil, it has been eradicated from certain farms. Burning would probably have the like effect, as it is presumable the disease may be occasioned by the puncture of the insects, with which it is always attended. These, it is well known, are bred in the earth, and get upon the sheep either by their legs or by their muzzle when feeding. Hence the parts usually affected are the limbs or the neck. This interesting subject is well worth the serious attention of farmers.

As a general improvement, perhaps, the opening of a road into Tynehead would be the greatest of which the parish is susceptible. By this means, abundance of coal might be procured at a cheap rate for the poor, and likewise for burning the limestone, which might be more extensively wrought at Limekilnedge and in Castleton. It would likewise furnish an ample and less expensive supply for the manufacturing town of Hawick and the neighbouring districts. The attention of proprietors and tenants has been more than once directed to this object; and it is deeply to be regretted, that neither the prospect of an increased revenue, nor the desire of conferring a great public boon on the west of Roxburghshire, induces the Duke of Northumberland to countenance the scheme.

March 1836.