

PARISH OF ROBERTON.

PRESBYTERY OF SELKIRK, SYNOD OF MERSE AND TIVIODALE.

THE REV. ALEXANDER NIVISON, MINISTER. *

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent, Boundaries.—THE extent of Robertson parish in length is about 13 miles, and in breadth about 5. It contains about 48 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the parishes of Ettrick, Yarrow, Ashkirk, and Selkirk; on the east, by Ashkirk and Wilton; on the south, by Hawick, and Cavers; and on the west by Eskdalemoor, and Ettrick.

Topographical Appearances.—The parish is hilly; but no single hill rises nearly to the height of the Ettrick ones on the north, or those of Liddesdale on the south. The most elevated is the range to the west of the parish, upon the boundaries of Dumfries-shire, containing the hills of Craickmoor, the Culm or Coom, (evidently from the Latin *culmen*), and one of a rather conical figure, called the Criblaw of Craick. None of these, it is thought, much exceeds 1300 feet above the level of the sea. This range of hills lies north and south. The acclivities are in some places precipitous, but generally moderate, and the summits are flat. Two other ranges of hills, of less elevation, fall from the above, in an eastern direction; and between these is the water and vale of Borthwick. The one range rises on the south of Borthwick water, and declines again towards Tiviot river; the other rises on the north side and declines a little towards Ale-water. The vale of Borthwick is generally narrow.

Meteorology.—The situation of the parish, at nearly equal distances from the east and west seas, determines in a great degree the temperature and climate. It has been ascertained that nearly one-third more rain falls in this neighbourhood than in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. July and August are the warmest and driest months in the year, though in these we have sometimes

* Drawn up by Mr Andrew Hogg, formerly schoolmaster of Robertson, now schoolmaster of Wilton.

terrible thunder storms, accompanied with heavy falls of rain. Rheumatism among the labouring classes, especially in the decline of life, is still a general complaint here; but considerably less so since the introduction of surface draining. The weather in September and October is very variable. The following tables, the one taken from the Transactions of the Royal Society, Edinburgh, and the other from Dr Douglas's "View of the Agriculture of Roxburgh and Selkirkshire," will furnish the best information connected with the temperature and climate.

Comparative table of the rain that fell at Branzholm and Wool or Wall.*

		Branzholm.	Wool.
1773,	-	32.652	34.022
1774,	-	29.250	30.688
1775,	-	38.573	39.177
1766,	-	26.295	27.579

Abstract of the medium state of the barometer, thermometer, and rain, for the year 1780.

	Branzholm.			Wool or Wall.		
	Bar.	Ther.	Rain. Frost.	Bar.	Ther.	Rain.
January, -	29.160	25.605	1.250	29.380	29.020	1.120
February -	29.000	32.290	2.950	28.050	32.370	1.210
March, -	29.000	42.613	2.500	28.820	43.000	2.780
April, -	28.900	40.700	4.025	28.720	40.880	4.085
May, -	29.090	50.226	2.100	28.920	51.020	3.530
June, -	29.213	55.000	2.050	29.090	52.500	1.860
July, -	29.280	58.355	0.250	29.995	60.050	1.630
August, -	29.430	59.000	3.350	29.310	63.000	0.500
September, -	29.000	54.900	4.700	28.630	56.140	4.415
October, -	29.230	44.260	1.975	28.710	45.050	4.080
November,	28.180	34.600	0.350	28.250	36.850	1.440
December, -	29.530	35.700		29.440	35.025	0.540
			25.500			27.170

Hydrography—There are several lakes in the parish.—That of Ale Moor is a pretty circular sheet of water, about two miles in circumference, of considerable depth; in some places it has been ascertained to be thirty fathoms. From it, flows Ale-water. Hell-moor lake, partly in the parish, and treble the extent of Ale Moor, is more shallow. The scenery around both is in the summer season pleasant, but rather tame. The lake of Moodlaw, to the west of the parish, is said to be equally divided among the three parishes of Roberton, Eskdale Moor, and Ettrick; and each parish in its respective county, Roxburgh, Dumfries and Selkirk. Thus three parishes and three counties meet in the centre of this lake.

* Branzholm is situated about three miles nearly south of Roberton, but considerably lower in elevation; and Wool is about five miles nearly north, and nearly as high in situation.

The water of Borthwick flows from the range of hills on the west of the parish. Its direction is eastward, its course rapid, and length about thirteen miles. It falls into the river Teviot about two miles west of Hawick.

Geology and Mineralogy—The prevalent rocks are of the greywacke series. A seam of very excellent ironstone crosses the parish. The alluvial deposits covering these rocks are generally gravel, sand, clay, marl, and peat. There are many mosses in the parish, in some of which are found excellent shell-marl and peat. Decayed trees are often found imbedded in these mosses, as also horns of the deer species and of other animals, which, from the size of the bones, seem to have been of a species distinct from any of those of the present day.

The soil in the vale of Borthwick is of good quality. Upon the ascents on each side of the water it becomes thinner, gravelly, and dry. Towards the summits of the hills, it is wet and boggy,—especially in the western part of the parish.

Zoology—In most of the lakes are found abundance of perch, pike, and eel, and where the pike is not found, there is abundance of excellent trout. During the spawning season, great quantities of sea trout, grilse, or young salmon come up the Borthwick and Ale. The spawning season in the Tweed is perhaps more early than that of its tributary streams; but this may be owing to the shallowness of the latter. It is during the autumnal floods that the greatest quantities of fish come up. They commence their run upwards about the end of October, and continue coming and going with the floods during the winter season; and some lingering ones are caught so late as April; but these are in a very exhausted state, and not good for food.

A certain grub has of late years done considerable damage both to crops and pasture in this neighbourhood. As an instance, it may be noticed that about ten acres of pasture were destroyed by it upon the farm of Todshawhaugh. This pasture first lost its verdure, and then became quite brown. On pulling up a handful of the withered grass or moss, a number of these insects were seen. They were of a dirty whitish-colour, of the shape of the common caterpillar, but rather thicker and shorter. The crows at last discovered them, and made great havoc amongst them,—literally pulling up every stem of grass, in order to reach them. Latterly the appearance of the ground was almost that of ploughed land covered with withered grass.

Botany.—Medicinal Plants.—Acorus calamus; carminative and stomachic. *Adiantum capillus veneris*; used for preparing the syrup called Capillaire. *Agrimonia Eupatoria*; slightly styptic and astringent. *Artemisia vulgaris*; anthelmintic, stimulant, detergent, and sudorific. *Cynoglossum officinale*; astringent, inspissant. *Digitalis purpurea*; sedative and diuretic. *Rubus chamæmorus*; refrigerant, antiscorbutic. *Vaccinium Myrtillus*; refrigerant, astringent. *Vaccinium Oxycoccus*; refrigerant. *Vaccinium Vitis Idea*; refrigerant, antiseptic.

There are a number of thriving plantations in the parish. The kinds of timber which predominate at present are the larch, spruce, and Scotch fir; but considerable quantities of these are, by the annual thinnings sold off, and the hard-wood, such as oak, ash, elm, plane, and beech, are gaining the ascendancy. In many places, the firs are nearly thinned out, and the hard-wood trees are shooting up beautiful trunks. There is also a considerable quantity of old timber in the parish, especially at Borthwickbrae. Most of the plantations are upon the estates of Borthwickbrae, Chisholme, Borthwickshiels, Hoscoat, and Harden. Upon the Duke of Buccleuch's estate, which forms half the parish, there are scarcely any plantations.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owners.—The land-owners are, the Duke of Buccleuch; R. Chisholme, Esq. of Chisholme; Allan Elliott Lockhart, Esq. of Borthwickbrae; Hugh Scott, Esq. of Harden; George Pott, Esq. of Borthwickshiels; Thomas Stavert, Esq. of Hoscoat; Archibald Scott, Esq. of Howcleuch; James Johnstone, Esq. of Alva; Robert Pringle, Esq. of Clifton, M. P.; and Charles Riddell, Esq. of Muselee.

Parochial Registers.—There are some registers which go back as far as the year 1680, but they are neither voluminous nor regularly kept. They have also suffered much from decay and from damp. One small record of the births and marriages of Hassen-dean parish is still preserved.

Antiquities.—There are a number of ancient camps in the parish,—some of these of a square,—others of an oval shape. One of them is situated upon the farm of Highchesters. This camp, as the name indicates, is on an elevated piece of ground, and commands an extensive view. The largest and most complete camp is upon the farm of Broadlee, to the west of the parish. There are two others upon the farm of Todshawhill, one upon the farm of

Todshawhaugh; and another upon the lands of Borthwickshiels called *Camp Castle*. The name generally given to these camps by the common people is that of the *Pict's* or *Peoch's* works. A ball of about one and a-half pound weight was lately found near one of these, and in another some daggers in a very decayed state.

The old mansion-house of Harden, the ancient abode of the Scotts of Harden, is a place which still excites considerable curiosity. The carved stucco work upon the ceiling of the old hall is well worth attention. The lobby is paved with marble, and the mantel-piece of one of the rooms is surmounted with an Earl's coronet, and the letters W. E. T. wreathed together, signifying "Walter Earl of Tarras,"—a title borne in former times by the house of Harden. This mansion-house was formerly fortified by art, and is still so, in some parts, by nature. In front of the house, there is a deep glen, very precipitous on both sides, but both sides are covered with beautiful trees. Into this glen, it is said, that Wat of Harden, a well-known border chieftain, used to drive the cattle which he had carried off in his nightly raids. From one of these excursions, an infant was brought home. He was fostered by Mary Scott, at that time Lady of Harden, and a descendant of the lady of that name commonly called the Flower of Yarrow. This unknown child is supposed to have been the author of many of the border songs.*—See Leyden's "Scenes of Infancy," and "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border."

* Dr Leyden alludes to this tradition in the following beautiful lines, from "The Scenes of Infancy."

"What fair half-vail'd leans from her lattic'd hall,
Where red the waving gleams of torch light fall?
'Tis Yarrow's flower, who thro' the gloom,
Looks wishful for her lover's dancing plume.
Amid the piles of spoil that strew'd the ground,
Her ear all anxious caught a wailing sound;
With trembling haste the lovely nymph then flew,
And from the plunder'd heaps an infant drew!
Scar'd at the light, his feeble hands he flung
Around her neck, and to her bosom clung;
While beauteous *Mary* sooth'd in accents mild
His fluttering soul, and kissed her foster child.
Of milder mood the gentle captive grew,
Nor lov'd the scenes that scar'd his infant view;
In vales remote from camps and castles far,
He shunn'd the cruel scenes of strife and war.
Content the loves of simple swains to sing,
Or wake to fame the harp's heroic string;
He liv'd o'er Yarrow's fairest flower to shed a tear,
And strew the holly leaves o'er Harden's bier;
But none was found above the minstrel's tomb,
Emblem of peace, to bid the daisy bloom;
He, nameless as the race from whence he sprung,
Sung other names, and left his own unsung."

Modern Buildings.—The mansion-houses of Borthwickbrae, Chisholme, Borthwickshiels, and Hoscoat, are excellent modern buildings: and some of the farm-houses are little inferior. Indeed, none of the late improvements is more striking than the excellent farm-houses that have been erected. Almost all of them are new, or have undergone a thorough repair since the former Statistical Account was written. The manse underwent a thorough repair four years ago. The church is old, but in good repair, and well accommodated to its purposes. It bears the inscription of 1659. Robertson was erected into a parish about that date. Hassendean, the old parish, about nine miles lower down the country, was annexed to Minto and Wilton. Robertson was erected from parts of the parishes of Hawick, Selkirk, Wilton, and Hassendean.*

The remains of two chapels can still be traced,—one of these upon the farm of Chapelhill, where curates from Hassendean used to officiate; the other, said to have belonged to the diocese of Galloway, is at Borthwickbrae, where the chief burial-place of the parish still is. The families of the Potts and Grieves are buried here.

III.—POPULATION.

The population by the return to Dr Webster was, in 1755,	651
In 1791 and 1792,	629
1811,	558
1821,	674
1831, males 360, females, 370	730

There is one village which has sprung up within these few years, called Deanburnhaugh, in which there are 100 inhabitants.

The average number of births for the last 7 years,	13
deaths,	7
marriages,	7
The average number of persons, in 1831, under 15 years of age, was	275
betwixt 15 and 30,	232
30 and 50,	124
50 and 70,	81
upwards of 70,	18

* From the inscription on the church bell, it appears to have belonged to Melrose tolbooth. Tradition says, that when the church was removed from Hassendean, the people in that quarter were highly incensed, and made great opposition to the measure. The first of the workmen who mounted the ladder to unroof the old church was struck with a stone, which killed him. The ladies also showed much zeal in defending the kirk; and there is an old ditty, which arose out of the transaction, still sung in the neighbourhood.

There are three wives in Hassendean,
And three in Briery-yards,
They are a' away to Hassendeanburn,
And left both wheel and cards, &c.

Whilst the parishioners of Robertson were moving off with all that was portable of the old church, the Hassendean people followed, and a scuffle ensued at a place called Hornshole, about two miles below Hawick. Here the enraged Hassendean folk seized upon the church bell, and cast it into the pool, where it still remains.

The number of families of independent fortune residing in the parish,	-	4
proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards,	-	9
unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers, upwards of 50 years of age,	-	9
unmarried women upwards of 45 years of age,	-	21
families,	-	131
The average number of members in each family,	-	5½
The number of inhabited houses,	-	121
uninhabited houses,	-	2

Curling has become a very prevalent amusement here ; as also coursing the hare, both with the greyhound and harriers.

Character, &c. of the People.—The character of the inhabitants is generally moral and religious, and their habits cleanly. The general appearance of the cottages does not correspond to that of the farm-houses ; but a better style in erecting these is yearly gaining ground, and there is a considerable ambition amongst the peasantry to have neat houses. Their ordinary food is barley, and a small portion of wheaten bread, oat-meal porridge, broth and butcher-meat occasionally, fish, butter, cheese, potatoes, milk, and tea.

Poaching was lately carried on to a great excess in this parish and neighbourhood, not, indeed, by the people resident in the parish, but very generally by the operatives of the manufacturing towns, especially when trade was slack. Formerly, the poachers used singly to seek the game, and generally fled when they saw any person approaching them, or at least walked off the ground when desired. But of late years they banded together, and daringly set the keepers at defiance. The farmer and his shepherd were often insulted, and sometimes the gun was cocked in their faces ; but it fared much worse with the gamekeepers, as they seldom returned home without personal injury. Bands of these modern freebooters, for they were generally the very scum of society, would sometimes take up their residence in some outhouse or fold in the moors, and continue there for weeks at a time,—living on such provisions as could be had. Instances are known of their taking and roasting sheep. About two years ago, when matters were at the worst, the landed proprietors, along with some farmers, their servants, and a few energetic constables, attacked them. Upon one occasion, in particular, about twenty of these poachers were congregated round a corn field, then recently cut, where they killed the game in great abundance. In this situation, the constables and farm-servants set upon them, and took them all prisoners. A few of the more notorious of these poachers, against whom warrants had been obtained, were pinioned and carried off to jail. Since that time there has not been much poaching.

Of late years there has not been much killing of fish. The gentlemen certainly do not countenance it; neither do they punish it, unless when the trespassers are brought before them in a Justice of Peace court. Indeed, their too scrupulously protecting the fish in our highland streams would only be conferring a bounty on the good citizens of Berwick, at the expense of depriving their own peasantry of a very savoury morsel to their often scanty potato supper on winter evenings.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—The number of acres, imperial measure, in the parish, either cultivated or occasionally in tillage, is about 2000; but a much greater quantity than that has been formerly cultivated. The number of acres uncultivated, and which form the sheep-walks, is very great,—perhaps about 28,000. All the land that can with a profitable application of capital be cultivated has been so already. Indeed, it may be questioned whether a quantity of that at present in tillage might not be more profitably untilled. The number of acres under plantation is about 550; and great care is taken in the management of the plantations.

Rent of Land.—The average rent of arable land is about 15s. per acre; and the average rate of grazing, at the rate of L. 4, or L. 4, 10s. per ox or cow, and 7s. per ewe.

Rate of Wages.—The daily rate of labour in summer is about 2s. and 2s. 6d., and in winter 1s. 8d. or 1s. 10d. Women in summer receive 10d., except in harvest, when their wages are nearly equal to those of men. The wages of a ploughman, who receives his victuals in his master's house, are from L. 8 to L. 10, 10s., and those of a servant girl from L. 6 to L. 7, 10s.

Stock.—The common breed of cattle is the short-horned; and the number of cattle, including Highland kyloes, not bred in the parish, is about 700; of horses, old and young, 130.

There are about 19,000 sheep in the parish, which produce about 2800 stones of wool, Troy weight. The common breeds of sheep are the Cheviot, more or less crossed with the Leicester ram, and a few hirsels of the black-faced kind. Great attention is paid to their improvement. It is a very prevalent and profitable custom to cross the Cheviot ewe with the bred ram. The mixed offspring is a very heavy lamb,—much heavier for the English butcher markets than the pure Cheviot one. The wool is also much improved both in weight and quality. Some farmers have of late years allowed their flocks to go partially unsalved; but the unsalved wool,

though higher in price, is considerably reduced in quantity and weight. These circumstances, and the risk of the sheep catching a prevalent disorder, perhaps nearly overbalance the profit. The farmers who follow this practice engage in it with misgivings and a suspicion in their own minds as to its propriety; and certainly their neighbours, who do not follow the custom, have a great jealousy against it.

Of late years, a considerable number of kyloes, bought at the Falkirk trysts, have been wintered in the parish. It is considered by some, that the putting of a certain number of cattle upon the sheep pastures is not only profitable, but also advantageous to the sheep. The experiment seems at least a reasonable one, as one species of stock may feed, in a great measure, upon the herbage and grasses which another passes over. However, there are different opinions on the subject, and the real sheep-breeders do not seem much to relish the custom.

Husbandry.—The general character of the husbandry pursued is the five-shift rotation. The duration of leases is generally 7, 9, and 11 years. The farm-buildings are good. The enclosures are generally hedges near the water side, and dry-stone dikes in the higher grounds; but several of the sheep-farms have, as yet, no ring fences.

Among the principal improvements, that have been recently made, are the introduction of lime and bone dust; but the greatest is certainly the sheep drains. These are mostly surface drains. They have the effect of drying the meadows and marshy land,—by which means the grass becomes much finer and thicker. They have likewise been the means of curing several disorders among the sheep, such as rot.

The disorder which commits the greatest depredations in this neighbourhood, is the *louping ill*. This disorder has as yet baffled all skill: and it often commits great havoc among the sheep in the spring season. What renders it still more formidable is, that it does not carry off the weaker sheep, but very generally seizes the best. The shepherd often passes, on his morning round, a fine healthy ewe, and in the evening finds her a victim to this mischievous disorder. Upon a farm of between forty and fifty score, sometimes there will be deaths to the amount of seven or eight score. The disorder has all the appearance of a palsy, only, that that disorder amongst the human species is generally incident to age, whereas among sheep the disorder in question seems to carry

off old and young indiscriminately. There are a number of other disorders incident to the sheep and stock in this part of the country, but none of these are of a very deadly nature.

The Pastoral Society of Selkirkshire has had considerable influence in improving the breeds of both cattle and sheep. Many of the farmers of this parish are members of it.

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

Produce of grain of all kinds, whether cultivated for food of man or domestic animals,	L. 2000	0	0
Of potatoes, turnips, &c.	700	0	0
Of hay, meadow and cultivated,	1200	0	0
Of land in pasture, rating it at L. 4 per cow, or full-grown ox, grazed, and 7s. per ewe pastured for year,	9000	0	0
Of gardens,	70	0	0
Thinnings of plantations, annual,	60	0	0
Wool, 2800 stones at L. 1,	2800	0	0
Miscellaneous, not enumerated in the above heads,	300	0	0
Total yearly value of raw produce,*	L. 16,130	0	0

The old valued rent of the parish is L. 10,654, 10s. 10d. The real rental at present is about L. 6500.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Means of Communication.—Hawick, at a distance of three miles from the lower, and fifteen, from the higher parts of the parish, is the nearest market-town; and there is a daily communication by carriers. The length of turnpike roads in the parish is nearly twenty miles.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church, situated in the lower part of the parish, which is most populous, is perhaps scarcely so convenient to the population as another spot, that might have been chosen; but no person who is willing to go to the house of God has much reason to complain. It is three miles from the lower, and ten from the higher extremities of the parish, and nearly in the centre of the bulk of the population. It was probably built, as the inscription upon it imports, in 1659. It affords accommodation to about 250 persons. The manse was repaired in 1827. The extent of the glebe is 16 acres, and its value about L. 20 per annum. The boundary betwixt Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire divides the glebe in such a manner, as to entitle the minister to a vote in each county. The amount of stipend is 14 chalders, a considerable part of which is paid from lands lying in the parishes of Wilton and Minto. It is twenty years since any augmentation was obtained.

* The above estimate is given with much doubt; and it is thought that, if there be any error, it will be in making the amount too great.

The number of families which attend the Established church is about 112; and of individuals, old and young, about 626. The number of Dissenting families is about 19; and of individuals, old and young, about 104. Divine service is well attended. The average number of communicants is about 200. There is a Missionary society in the parish; but it is rather in a languishing state. Its yearly contributions may be about L. 3.

Education.—There is one parochial school. The branches taught are, reading, at 8s. per annum; reading and writing, 10s.; arithmetic, 12s.; mensuration, &c.; Latin. The salary is the maximum, and the yearly amount of fees received may be L. 24. The teacher has the legal accommodations; but the school has been for ten years by far too small. A splendid new school-house and schoolmaster's house are nearly finished. About one-third of the parish is so situated that children cannot attend the parish school. These are at a distance of five and eight miles.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is 15, and their annual average pay L. 5, 4s. The amount raised by assessment—one-half upon the heritors, and the other half upon the tenants—is about L. 100; and that collected in church is about L. 10. There are individual cases where considerable reluctance is shown in the asking of aid; but this laudable spirit, it is feared, is on the decline.

Alehouse.—There is one alehouse in the parish. Formerly there were two; but one of them was suppressed, as it gave encouragement to tippling, and harboured poachers.

Fuel.—The common fuel is peat, which can be obtained in abundance at about 5s. 6d. a cart load, and coals at about 15s. per cart load of 11 and 12 cwt.

November 1834.