

UNITED PARISHES OF COLVEND AND SOUTHWICK.

PRESBYTERY OF DUMFRIES, SYNOD OF DUMFRIES.

THE REV. ANDREW M'COLLOCH, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent.—THIS parish extends in length, from east to west, along the coast of the Solway Frith, about 8 miles, and is, from north to south, 4 miles broad.

Topographical Appearances.—The surface is extremely rough and irregular. Broom, furze, and bramble spread with amazing rapidity. Many of the higher grounds are poor and shallow, owing to the soil being carried down to the valleys. These, however, are fertile and kindly, and produce grain of good quality and excellent pasture. Towards the east or Southwick side, many of the farms are in a high state of cultivation.

Besides a ridge of hills that run through the middle of the parish, there is a mountainous range covered with heath, and running to the large and conspicuous mountain of Criffel.

Coves or Caves.—There are a number of these along the “wild shores of caverned Colvend.” The principal of these is called the Piper’s cove, from a legend that a piper undertook to explore it. He carried his pipes with him, and continued to play under ground till he reached Barnbarrach, about four miles distant from its mouth. The sound then ceased, and nothing was ever heard again of the unfortunate minstrel. It is found, however, to be only 120 yards in length. There is a well in the middle, 22 feet deep. There are a number of fissures in the rocks along the shore. Close by the Piper’s cove, already mentioned, there is a rude natural arch, about 40 feet in height, called the Needle’s Eye. Another arch, bearing the same name, and lying more to the eastward, is more regularly formed though not so high.

Hydrography.—There are a number of small lakes in the parish. A strong chalybeate flows from one of the clefts. It was formerly used as a tonic in intermittent fever.

Mine.—A copper mine was at one time wrought. The ore was said to be rich, and the seam of a tolerable thickness.

Woods.—There is a considerable extent of natural wood in the parish upon the estates of Fairgirth and Barnhourie; and, of late years, great quantities of wood have been planted, principally oak and fir.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Parochial Registers.—The earliest date of the parochial registers is 1716. They have not been regularly kept.

Land-owners.—The chief land-owners are, Mr Oswald of Auchencruive; Mr Crichton of Auchenskeoch; the Rev. Mr Maitland of Fairgirth; and Mr Stewart of Southwick.

Antiquities.—Coins have sometimes been dug up, principally of Edward I. of England, and Alexander III. of Scotland.

On the castle hill of Barclay, there are the remains of a circular encampment. There is also a hill called the vitrified fort, and another encampment, of a circular form, not far from the manse.

There is a well called the Murderers' Well, near the Southwick Needle's Eye. According to tradition, it was named from the following circumstance: A set of border reivers came to levy blackmail on the peaceable inhabitants of Colvend. The parishioners rallied, and seizing the leaders of the foray, threw them down this rock to the well below.

At Achenskeoch, in Southwick, there are the ruins of a large building of the castellated form.

III.—POPULATION.

The population in 1755, was	898
1794,	964
1801,	1106
1811,	1298
1821,	1322
1831,	1358
1841,	1495

Smuggling is now unknown. This coast, at one time, was notorious for this illicit traffic. There were a number of cellars below ground, where smuggled brandy was concealed, till the people were informed of its arrival. It was conveyed away in barrels slung over horses' backs, even as far as Teviotdale, by bands of men, prepared to defend themselves against the revenue officers.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—Arable land lets about 10s. per acre. Of late years, a considerable quantity of waste land has been reclaimed.

The state of farm-buildings and enclosures has undergone a great change in the last forty years. Number of farms, 71; rent from L.10 to L.560.

Live-Stock.—There are fed in the parish between 40 and 50 score of black-faced sheep, and a few score of other kinds. The cattle are almost all of Galloway breed.

Quarries.—There are two mill-stone quarries in the parish; but they have not been wrought of late.

Navigation.—Coasting vessels are employed in shipping grain to Liverpool, Dublin, Glasgow, &c.; in the herring fishery; and in bringing coal and lime from the English side. There are annually exported from the parish, about 4000 bushels of barley, and 5000 stones of meal.

The Barnhourie sand-bank, so fatal to vessels, especially to those which are strangers to the coast, runs from the mouth of the Urr to the Nith. Nearer to the English side is another bank called the Robin Rig.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is extremely ill situated for the united parishes. The nearest part of Southwick is four miles, and some farms are distant seven miles. It was built in 1771, and is too small for the present population.

The manse was built in 1804. There are about twelve acres of glebe, partly at Colvend, and partly at Southwick: value of both glebes about L.20 per annum. The teind was exhausted by last augmentation in 1824, and amounts to L.232.

There is a meeting-house belonging to the Secession, about seven miles from the parish church. It is ill attended, and would be still more so, if the parish church were centrally placed.

Poor.—There are on the poor's roll, at this time, 44 persons. The fund for distribution arises chiefly from the collections in church.

February 1844.