

# PARISH OF TROQUEER.

PRESBYTERY OF DUMFRIES, SYNOD OF DUMFRIES.

THE REV. WILLIAM THORBURN, MINISTER.

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## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—THE name of this parish was written Troquire in the records of the kirk-session of the parish about the year 1745, and Troqueir in the records of the Presbytery of Dumfries, in the year 1647. Perhaps it was so called from the two French words sig-

nifying the third quire, it being one of the three Catholic quires in the district, betwixt that of Lincluden on the one hand, and that of Sweetheart Abbey on the other.

*Extent, &c.*—It comprises a space of nearly 8 miles in length, and 5 miles in breadth; and has for its boundaries, Terregles on the north; Newabbey on the south; Lochrutton on the west; and the river Nith on the east. This river is wonderfully pure and transparent, considering that it has tides twice a day the whole length of its connection with Troqueer.

*Topographical Appearances.*—This parish may be said to be divided into three distinct parts by three ranges of elevations, which run almost at equal distances from each other, like waves of the sea. The first range, which rises with a gradual acclivity from the river, has been long in cultivation, and is remarkable for its beauty and fertility. As it lies within the burgh-roods of Maxwelltown, and contains a large portion of Maxwelltown, with some public nurseries and gardens of considerable extent, and several houses and villas of modern architecture, its enclosures bring a high rent, varying from L.3 to L.6 per acre. The intervening space between the first and second elevation is also highly cultivated and productive. The Cargen, which falls into the Nith towards the south-east, runs along the whole of this valley, much to its utility, but little to its beauty, as it is a dull, heavy stream. On the banks of this small river, otters are sometimes seen, which find shelter among the bulrushes and alder bushes which cover several parts of its margin.

The second elevation, which rises to a greater height than the first, and extends considerably farther to the south, is likewise under the plough, and yields crops of turnips and potatoes, hay and oats, wheat and barley of the best quality. It may be mentioned here, that some of the farmers on the higher grounds of this range have lately tried bone-manure with great success, and much to the ease of the horses which they employ in husbandry. A large portion of the space between the second and third ranges of hills is moss and meadow, both of which might be brought into a much more productive state by skilful cultivation. Indeed, were the whole of this moss, which at present yields only peats of an inferior quality, and whose surface is mostly covered with coarse heath, and frequently disfigured with bogs and quagmires, properly drained and levelled with the spade, it would, at no great distance of time, repay the expense, and, in the meanwhile, con-

tribute highly to the beauty of that part of the parish, and to the value of the conterminous parishes. On this moss the botanist will find no plants of the rarer kinds to gratify his curiosity. It is evident that the whole range of this moss, stretching several miles in length, was, at a remote period, a part of the firth, and covered twice a-day with the tides that flow up the Nith.

The third range of elevation, which is much higher than the second, and extends along the whole space of the parish, is under tillage on the sides and along parts of the summit; and the crops which it produces, though neither so early nor so rich as those that grow on the other two, are sufficient to repay the skill and industry of the cultivator. On several parts of this range are extensive and thriving plantations of fir, larch, ash, elm, oak, and other forest trees. None of these hills contain freestone, limestone, coal, or any other fossil entitled to the notice of the mineralogist. The rock of the whole of them is composed chiefly of mica slate, running into syenite, with occasional masses of granite shooting up through the strata beds.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Mansion-Houses.*—The properties in the parish entitled to notice, are those of Kirkconnel, Cargen, Mabie, Dalscairth, Gollidielea, Terraughty, Carruchan, Cargenholm, and Mavis Grove. The mansion-house of Kirkconnel, the most extensive and valuable of these properties, stands remote from the public road and in sight of the river, is surrounded with a considerable extent of cropping and pasture land, and several thriving plantations, and has many accompaniments that invest it with an imposing aspect and an air of antiquity. A Catholic chapel is attached to it, appropriately seated and furnished. The mansion-house of Cargen is a large building; and though placed too near the corner of the field and the parish road, yet, as it commands a view of some of the beautiful windings of the river, it might, by a skilful extension of the lawn, and a tasteful grouping of the trees around it, be made a charming residence. On this estate is St Querdon's Well, which is the subject of a poem of considerable length, written by Mr White, late teacher of mathematics in the Academy of Dumfries. The mansion-house of Mabie is a modern, substantial, and well-arranged building, stands on an elevated situation, and commands an extensive and sublime land and water prospect. A saw-mill, lately erected on this estate, proves of great advantage, by bringing to market the surplus of fir trees, with which some of its woods

abound. The present proprietor, by draining a considerable portion of moss which lay directly in view of the mansion-house, and levelling it with the spade, and top-dressing it with compost, has greatly improved the spot by giving a green sward to what was formerly a disfiguring swamp. The mansion-house of Dalscairth is an elegant, spacious residence, standing on an extensive field, skirted with plantations of trees, with a waterfall in view of it, descending from a considerable height through a range of hanging wood, which renders it truly picturesque and romantic. The present proprietor has added greatly to the beauty of the place by converting, at a considerable expense, an extensive marsh in front of the house into a lake, the margin of which is laid out and varied in a very tasteful manner. The mansion-house of Goldielea is a delightful residence, embosomed in wood, has a lawn in front studded with clumps of venerable oaks, and is refreshed and enlivened with a perennial stream of water running over a transparent and pebbly bed. The mansion-house of Terraughty stands on a very delightful eminence, has a great extent of land-prospect, and a field in front that might, at a trifling expense, be converted into a lawn of singular beauty. The late proprietor made a garden, hot-house, green-house, and vinery, at a considerable expense, all of which are tastefully arranged, and highly productive. The mansion-house of Carruchan is surrounded with fields of rich soil highly cultivated; and is particularly interesting from the seclusion of its situation. The mansion-house of Cargenholt stands close to the river Cargen; has a warm southern exposure, with a full view of Criffell; and is a sheltered comfortable residence. On this property, there is a brick-kiln, the bricks of which are in great request, owing to their superior quality. The mansion-house of Mavis Grove is situated on a delightful rising ground near the river Nith, has a variety of large trees of different sorts ranged tastefully around it in a kind of amphitheatre, and is much admired for the amenity of its situation and the softness of its scenery. The villas of Summerville, Arundel, Bromland, Troqueerholm, Ryedale, Rosefield, Nithside, may be mentioned as all of them commodious, and some of them spacious and elegant.

*Eminent Men.*—This parish cannot boast of having been the birth-place or residence of any person entitled to notice, except, perhaps, the Rev. Mr Blackadder, who, about the period of the Reformation, was officiating minister; the particulars of whose life and banishment to the Black Rocks, where he died, are rescued

from oblivion by the published narrative of the Rev. Mr Crichton. It is said that Lagg, who was the terror of the Covenanters of his time over the whole south of Scotland, resided occasionally in this parish at a place which is called Hag-hall to this day.

*Antiquities.*—Close by the manse, and directly opposite to the spot, on the other side of the river, where Cummin's castle formerly stood, is a moat of a circular form and considerable height, where, according to oral tradition, the kings of Scotland, or their vassal chiefs who were entrusted with the keeping of it, used to hang offenders, and the most daring of their captives taken in battle, or in acts of pillage and robbery. The more probable conjecture is, that it was one of the circular mounds where the baron or judge of the district held courts of Justice in the open air.

*Parochial Registers.*—The register of proclamations begins April 1713; that of baptisms, 14th June 1734. The parish records begin about the same time. All of them are, for a long period, extremely meager and scanty. It may be mentioned here, that the records of the Presbytery of Dumfries commence 5th August 1647.

### III.—POPULATION.

Amount of population in 1801,	.	2774			
in 1811,	.	3409			
in 1821,	.	4901	—whereof in Maxwelltown,	3048	
in 1831,	.	4665	Do.	Do.	3601
in 1841,	.	4351	Do.	Do.	3230

### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Rental of the Parish.*—In the year 1752, the rental was ascertained before the Court of Session to be L.950; in the year 1791, it was nearly L.5000; and in the year 1819, L.12,000. And though landed property has fallen considerably in value of late, yet the rental of the parish may still be regarded as L.11,000.

*Fishery.*—There is a fishery in the Nith, drawn on the Troqueer side of the river opposite to Dumfries, which furnishes salmon, grilse, and herlings, more than sufficient for the supply of the two burghs and the adjoining country.

### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Maxwelltown.*—Maxwelltown, formerly Bridgend, has a claim to a particular account. About twenty-one years ago, it was erected into a burgh of barony, with a provost, two bailies, and four councillors elected annually; and it was named in honour of Mr Maxwell of Nithsdale, its superior. It stands opposite to the burgh of Dumfries, with which it is connected by two bridges. It stands

on a bank or ridge circling along the edge of the river; and with its burrow-roods comprises a space of nearly a mile in length, and half a mile in breadth.

The houses in the old part of Maxwelltown are built without any regard whatever to elegance, and run in streets awkwardly crooked and narrow. A more correct style of building has been adopted in the new part of the town. Many of the houses are neat and convenient, and the streets run in straight lines, and are of a sufficient breadth. The public road from London to Portpatrick, and from London to Glasgow and Edinburgh, by Thornhill and Elvanfoot, runs through Maxwelltown. By the former, the mail-coach to Portpatrick passes daily; by the latter, a private coach runs every day to Glasgow, and a private coach runs to Edinburgh three times a-week.

Maxwelltown has a court-house of sufficient dimensions for accommodating the meetings of the Magistrates and Justices of the Peace of the district, and the courts of the Sheriff when he officiates in this quarter. Below the court-house is a jail, wherein delinquents apprehended within the burgh can be lodged till arrangements are made for removing them to Kirkcudbright, a distance of twenty-seven miles, whence they are to be sent back to stand their trial at Dumfries;—an inconvenience that might easily be remedied, by incorporating Maxwelltown with Dumfries in all matters of police. As Maxwelltown has no police act, its streets are ill lighted at night, there being as yet only a few lamps in it, which have been erected and are still supported solely by the voluntary contributions of some of its wealthier inhabitants.

Two founderies have lately been established at Maxwelltown, both of which have a great run of employment. It has long had a waulk-mill; a die-house; two roperies; a brew-house; two tanneries; four nurseries, two of which have hot-houses, in which grapes and some of the other rarer fruits are reared in great perfection; and a damask manufactory, celebrated for the beauty and elegance of the fabrics. The water-mills belonging to Dumfries stand on the Maxwelltown side of the river; which, by the superior style in which they are fitted up and worked, gave great satisfaction to the community. An observatory, which was formerly a windmill, stands on the top of the Corbelly hill, forming a striking object over an extensive range of district. The butcher-market of Maxwelltown has, for some time past, taken the lead of that of Dumfries, and affords a daily supply of excellent beef and

veal, mutton and lamb, in their respective seasons. A Dispensary has lately been opened in Maxwelltown, for the benefit of the poorer classes of its inhabitants, under the superintendance of a young medical practitioner.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The church and the manse are situated within the burrow-roods of Maxwelltown, at a distance of a mile from the most crowded part of the population. The church is capable of accommodating 840 sitters. A chapel of ease was lately built in the centre of the burgh, through the influence of the principal landed proprietor, and others. The Crown is the patron of the parish.

The manse was built thirty years ago. Its situation is on the banks of the Nith, and it commands not only an extensive view of the Nith, but of Criffell in the adjoining parish, and of Skiddaw and some of the other lofty hills in the north of Cumberland. The stipend is L.322, 12s. money, the teinds having been surrendered by the whole of the heritors, the titular excepted, whose estate pays nearly two chalders of victual, the one-half meal and the other barley. The glebe contains nearly eleven acres, all of good quality.

A chapel of ease was some years ago erected in Maxwelltown, capable of accommodating 1600 sitters; the stipend of the minister is L.150 without a manse.

*Education.*—There are three schools in the landward part of the parish, the principal of which is the parish school, which has L.30, 16s. of salary attached to it, with L.2, 10s. of interest, arising from a mortified sum for teaching the children of the cottagers who reside on the estate of Dalscairth, and a comfortable dwelling-house and an excellent garden. The second school has a salary of L.15 from the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, with L.9, 12s. from the heritors in compensation for the keep of a cow summer and winter; and a large garden, a suitable dwelling-house, and a sufficient quantity of peats for fuel, are furnished by the surrounding tenants gratis. The third school is supported by the tenants on the estate of Cargen, who pay the teacher wages, and give him bed and board in their houses alternately. In these three schools, about 180 scholars are taught annually.

There is only one endowed school in Maxwelltown, with a salary of L.9, 12s. paid by the landward heritors, and L.4, the interest of L.100 of mortified funds. It has also the benefit of the

interest of some smaller sums bequeathed by a few individuals. The teacher has the usual wages, but no dwelling-house. Two others schools are taught in Maxwelltown, the masters in which have no emoluments but the wages. The number of scholars in these three schools may be 250.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—The poor on the roll may be 100. The funds for their support, arising from proclamations, interest of mortified funds, mortcloth fees, collections at the parish church, donations, and one-third of the chapel collections, amount to about L.140 annually, which affords but a miserable pittance for the support of so many, and is one proof among a thousand others, that a provision for the aged and infirm should, in no country, be left to the unsteady and capricious impulse of compassion, but be enforced by positive statute. Indeed, in a parish such as Troqueer, where many of the heritors do not reside, and several of those who are resident attend other places of worship, and contribute nothing to the poor on the roll, a poor's rate, with all its predicted evils, would, if properly managed, be the cheapest, the fairest, and the most effectual mode of maintaining the native poor.

*Fuel.*—Coal is the fuel chiefly used by the inhabitants, which is partly conveyed by land from Sanquhar, a distance of twenty-seven miles; but chiefly by sea from the coal-pits on the opposite coast of England. The first is sold by weight, the last by measure, and almost always at a moderate price.