

## PARISH OF DALTON.

PRESBYTERY OF LOCHMABEN, SYNOD OF DUMFRIES.

THE REV. THOMAS H. THOMSON, MINISTER.

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### I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name and Boundaries.*—THE parish of Dalton, prior to the Reformation, was divided into two parishes, that of Meikle Dalton and Little Dalton; but, since their union in 1633, the church of Meikle Dalton is used by the parishioners of the united parishes as their place of worship,—the ruins of the church of Little Dalton now enclosing the burial ground of the descendants of the Caruthers of Holmains. The name of the parish is evidently Anglo-Saxon; *Dal-ton* or *Dal-dun*, signifying the fort in the dale. There are the remains, accordingly, of a fort on a hill in the immediate neighbourhood of the village of Dalton, at which village, in ancient times, the baronial courts were held. The parish is 6 miles in length from north to south, and 3 miles in breadth; its boundaries are, Lochmaben on the north, which intersects it; Mousewald on the west; Ruthwell on the south; Cummertrees and the river Annan on the east.

*Geology.*—Betwixt the Holmains and Almagill-hills, lies the vale of Little Dalton, in the north end of the parish. These hills are 500 feet above the level of the sea, and run from north to south. They are composed of transition rock of greywacke, which sometimes alternates with greywacke slate. The direction of the strata appears to be from east to west, and their dip to the north. The next class of rocks in the parish, in point of age and extent, is the independent coal formation, which lies in the hollow of the transition rocks, such as the reddish-brown-coloured sandstone on the banks of the Annan. In the south end of the parish, the grayish white sandstone, abounds with limestone of an inferior quality. The next formation is that of floetz trap, considered as the newest of the universal formations, because it rests on all the others. Of this formation, there are only individual links, such as greenstone and porphyritic amygdaloid. The manse of Dalton is founded upon the amygdaloid rock at its western ex-

tremity; from this point, it runs east as far as Langholm. The alluvial formations are very extensive, and consist chiefly of great masses of gravel and sand, which spread over the low lands of the parish, and are formed into ranges and groups of little hills. There is evidently no immediate agent in the neighbourhood which could have collected such immense quantities of matter, apparently the diluvium of the deluge. The sand and gravel cover the solid rocks, principally those of sandstone, and appear upon examination to be composed of the fragments of the various formations found in the vale of the Annan. In the high lands of the parish, the soil is chiefly composed of the waste and debris of the transition rocks, which is fertile; but many of these rocks are covered with common indurated clay and heath, and are barren. The transported soil on the banks of the river, being of a loamy nature, is rich and fertile; but that of an older date, composed of light gravel and sand, which in dry seasons is very unfavourable to vegetation, when moistened with frequent showers, is very fertile in the production of barley.

It has been supposed that the river Annan, at some remote period, instead of its present course, where it discharges itself into the Solway at a short distance from the town of Annan, followed a different course through this parish, running in a southern direction from the mansion-house of Dormont, through a long track of level meadow and peat-moss, and fell into the frith at a short distance from Cummertrees church, three miles west from Annan. It is along this line where the greatest quantity of the alluvial formations are deposited, which are strikingly illustrated in hills and ridges of gravel and sand. These evidently appear to have been carried out of the valley of the Annan by a mighty flood of waters, and deposited at the termination of the transition rocks, which enclose it to a great height. After the deluge, the valley of the Annan must have been a lake; but its waters bursting a passage through a transition rock at Dormont, (the present course of the Annan,) the valley has been drained of its waters, with the exception of a number of lakes in the adjoining parish of Lochmaben. During a flood, the river at Dormont, and for several miles along its course in a northern direction, lays the whole country under water; but were the landed proprietors interested to unite in deepening a very small portion of the bed of the river at Dormont, where it bursts through the transition rock, the beautiful holm lands along its course, with their luxuriant crops, would be preserved in safety.

At one period, it was proposed that a canal should be made through the level track of meadow and peat-moss in this parish, for the purpose of an inland navigation from the upper part of Annandale to the Solway Frith; but it is not likely that the measure will ever be executed. The height of the river at Dormont above the level of the sea is 160 feet.

*Fish, &c.*—The fish caught in the Annan at different periods of the season are the salmon, grilse, sea-trout, whiting, or herling. Thirty years ago, they were caught in great abundance; but since the stake-nets were placed at the mouth of the river in the Solway Frith, they have become very scarce, and unless some law is made for the farther removal of these nets, the fish will soon be extinct,—particularly as the landed proprietors along the course of the river reap no benefit, and therefore take no interest in preserving the breed during the winter, so that nearly all that get up in close time are speared. An act of Parliament was obtained in 1804 for protecting the fish in the Solway Frith from the 25th September to the 10th March, which is the forbidden time.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Parochial Registers.*—The kirk-session of Dalton have in their possession an old book of session records, from the 18th August 1723, to the 1st September 1766, which contains a correct statement of the poors' funds. The registration of baptisms is very incorrect; but from the year 1769 a correct register of marriages, births, and baptisms has been kept.

*Antiquities.*—The only ancient edifice is a tower at Holmains, formerly the seat of the Carruthers of Holmains, but now totally in ruins. It does not appear to have been a place of great strength. At a short distance towards the east, on the Almagill-hills, there is a beautiful old camp of a circular form, now named Range Castle. From the summit of the hill on which it is placed, there is a most commanding view, embracing the beautiful vale of the Annan, with the whole amphitheatre of the surrounding hills, the ancient castle of Robert Bruce, and the burgh of Lochmaben, with its numerous lakes. The camp is formed upon a transition rock of greywacke; its diameter is 102 yards; the ditch or fosse which surrounded the camp is 9 feet deep and 27 feet broad. It must have been a place of considerable strength, from the great inclination of the hill on its north and east sides. The lower part of the camp appears to have been separated from the upper by a rampart or wall made of stones taken from the fosse, many of which are in a vitrified state. This wall has been removed to build fences in the

neighbourhood. The diameter of the upper part of the camp is 54 yards, and the entrance to it is on the western side.

*Land-owners, &c.*—The chief land-owners in the parish are Mr Macrae of Holmains, and Mr Carruthers of Dormont.

*Modern Buildings.*—Of modern buildings the mansion-house of Rammerscales, built by the late Dr Mounsey, is very respectable. It is romantically elevated upon a mountain range, which commands the whole vale of the Annan, and surrounded with hanging wood kept in great perfection and beauty by the present proprietor Mr Bell. The residence of Mr Carruthers of Dormont, built in 1823, is, for elegance, solidity, and convenience, among the best in the county. Its situation is on the banks of the Annan, where it is enriched by a fertile lawn in front, and plantations laid out with great judgment and taste.

### III.—POPULATION.

The amount of the population in 1755, was	451
When the preceding Statistical Account was taken,	615
In 1801,	591
1811,	691
1821,	747
1831, 349 males, 381 females,	730
The yearly average of births for the last 7 years is	23
deaths,	7
marriages,	6
Number of unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers, upwards of 50 years of age,	15
women upwards of 45 years of age,	29
families	127
chiefly employed in agriculture,	56
trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	26
The average number of children in each family,	6
The number of inhabited houses,	123
houses uninhabited and building,	1
Fatuous persons, 1.	

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

### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture and Rural Economy.*—The number of acres standard imperial measure in the parish is about 6753. Of these 600 never have been cultivated, and remain constantly waste or in pasture; and it is only to a small extent that any of this waste land could be added to the cultivated land of the parish;—not more than 200 acres, with a profitable application of capital, could be reclaimed. There is no land in the parish in the state of undivided common. The number of acres under wood is 517, and of these acres 190 are natural wood. The average rent of arable land per acre is about 12s.

*Rate of Wages.*—The wages of a farm-servant with victuals and bed, about L. 9 a-year, and that of a female, L. 5. The average

wages of a farm-labourer per day about 1s. 4d. The small quantity of sheep reared in the parish is of the Cheviot and Leicester breed; and of black-cattle, the Galloway.

*Husbandry.*—The general character of husbandry pursued, with respect to the practice of the farmers, is so various as to be incapable of exact description, but the following may be stated as the most common: 1st year, oats; 2d, potatoes or turnips; 3d, barley with grass seed; 4th, hay; 5th and 6th, pasture. Nearly all the lands occupied by farmers are let on leases for fifteen or nineteen years.

*Farm-Buildings and Fences.*—The state of farm-buildings has been very much improved during the last ten years; but the fences and enclosures are of the worst description; and though there have been many improvements in reclaiming and draining waste lands both by proprietor and tenant on some properties, there is still great scope for farther improvement.

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

Produce of grain of all kinds, whether cultivated for the food of man or the domestic animals,	L. 4500
Of potatoes, and turnips, &c. cultivated in the fields for food,	1500
Of hay, whether meadow or cultivated,	1000
Of crops cultivated for the arts, as flax,	20
Of land in pasture, rating it at L. 2, 10s. per cow or full-grown ox, grazed or that may be grazed for the season; 10s. per ewe or full-grown sheep, pastured or that may be pastured for the year,	3500
Of gardens and orchards,	100
Of the annual thinning and periodical felling of woods, plantations, and copse,	100
Of fisheries in the river,	5

Total yearly value of raw produce raised, L. 10,725

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Markets, &c.*—There being no market-town in the parish, the nearest is that of Annan, at the distance of six miles, and Dumfries at nine miles. Annan is the port to which all the grain is taken, and where the barley in general is shipped to Liverpool. There is but one village in the parish, and its communications with the market-towns are very convenient, not only by the parish roads, but by the great turnpike road from Carlisle to Portpatrick, which runs through the south end of the parish.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The situation of the parish church is at the village of Dalton, and is very convenient, being placed in the centre of the parish. It was built in 1704, and at present it is not in the best state of repair. It accommodates about 300 persons. All the families in the parish, 127, (three excepted who are Seceders,) attend the Established Church; and of these 270 are communicants. The manse was built in 1806. The extent of the glebe is ten acres, and its value L. 10. The amount of the stipend is eight

chalders,—four of oats and four of barley, with L. 58, 6s. of money stipend.

*Education.*—There is only one parochial school, and the branches taught are, Latin, Greek, English, arithmetic, geography, mensuration, and algebra. The salary of the schoolmaster is L. 34, 4s. 3d. and the amount of school wages about L. 20. He has the legal accommodation.

*Poor.*—The number of persons receiving parochial aid is 12, and the average sum allotted to each per week is from 1s. 6d. to 2s.;—besides that many have their house rents paid at L. 1, 10s. per annum. It is to be feared that a disposition among the poor to refrain from seeking parochial relief is fast wearing out. The annual amount of contributions for their relief, arising from church collections, is about L. 25 per year, and what more has been required, the heritors have willingly given it.

*Inns, &c.*—There are two inns in the parish, but the effects of which upon the morals of the people are of the most degrading nature.

*Fuel.*—The fuel chiefly consumed consists of peat, which will soon be exhausted; but coals exported from England to the port of Annan are purchased at a moderate rate.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The more striking variations in the parish since the former Statistical Account was written, consist not only in an increase of population, but in the extent of cultivation, which the late war prices produced. There is also a great increase of black-cattle, horses, and particularly swine, which are reared in great numbers, and are what the farmer chiefly depends upon for his winter's rent. Of late years, they have not been so profitable, and like all other stock, fluctuating in prices. The parish is susceptible of great improvements in respect of husbandry. The soil in general being light and dry, is particularly adapted to the use of turnips, which might be eaten off with sheep to great advantage. Draining and proper attention to the fences, which are in a ruinous state, and the use of lime, which is to be obtained in the immediate neighbourhood, would make a mighty improvement on the face of the parish. The farms in general are over-rented, and for want of capital the farmer is unable to make improvements. The constant change of tenants since the peace in 1815, owing to the fluctuating state of the markets, has been the principal cause in general of the slowness of improvement, which can only be effected by a thriving and industrious people and by a steady state of things.

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