

# UNITED PARISH OF LIBBERTON AND QUOTHQUAN.

PRESBYTERY OF BIGGAR, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND TWEEDDALE.

THE REV. ALEXANDER CRAIK, MINISTER.

## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Extent.*—THE parish of Quothquan was annexed to that of Libberton in the year 1669. The united parish extends from north to south about seven miles, and from east to west about four and a-half miles. It contains nearly 14 square miles, or 8703 imperial acres.

*Topographical Appearances.*—Along the whole course of the Clyde in this parish, there is a great extent of low level land, consisting of a strong clay soil, a considerable portion of which is covered with water as often as the Clyde overflows its banks, which generally happens ten or twelve times in the year; and the soil being enriched by these inundations, produces luxuriant crops, without any other manure. Where these holm lands are embanked, (which is done when it can be effected without great expense,) the crops are protected against the inroads of the river; but in this, as in other cases, manure is required to renew the soil.

The banks of the Clyde rise gently, but in some places rather suddenly, to the height of 50 or 60 feet above the stream, and extend to the distance of half a mile or more beyond it. The land on the banks of the Clyde is generally early and fertile, and its average rent L. 2, 10s. per acre. As the land recedes from the Clyde, it becomes more elevated, later, and less productive; and though there are some early and fertile spots near the Medwin, the banks of that river are for the most part poor and moorish.

*Meteorology.*—On this head, it may be only remarked, that a greater quantity of rain falls here than on the east coast.

The climate is neither so warm nor so dry as to render the culture of wheat an object; but other kinds of grain succeed very well

in ordinary seasons; and the inhabitants of this parish are subject to as few diseases, and are as healthy, on the whole, as those of any other parish in Scotland. This must be owing, in a great measure, to the pure keen air they breathe, as well as to the general temperance of their habits.

*Hydrography.*—The only rivers in this parish are the Clyde and the Medwin. The Clyde, when swollen by rain, overflows all the low grounds on its banks, doing much damage to the growing crops within its reach. The farmers, however, often carry off the crops as they are cut, beyond the reach of the inundation. The breadth of the Clyde in this parish is from 100 to 120 feet, and its depth from 15 to 1 foot. There are several fords when the stream is low; but in winter they are often impassable.

The South Medwin, which bounds Libberton parish for three miles, rises near Garvaldfoot, in the parish of West Linton, and, after a course of nine miles, is joined by the North Medwin, in this parish, about a mile and a-half before they both fall into the Clyde. A small branch of the South Medwin runs off towards the east, near Garvaldfoot, and, dividing at Dolphington, the counties of Lanark and Peebles, falls into the Tweed. The South Medwin, within its usual channels, is in general about 22 feet broad, and 2 or 3 feet deep, at an average. When united, the Medwins are not much broader, but of greater mean depth.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

It appears from Wodrow's History that, in the year 1663, the parish of Libberton was fined L. 252, 8s. Scots, and Quothquhan L. 182, 16s. Scots, for nonconformity to Prelacy.

*Chief Land-owners.*—The chief land-owner is Sir Norman Macdonald Lockhart, Bart. of Lee and Carnwath.

*Family of Chancellor of Shieldhill.*—The second land-owner is Alexander Chancellor, Esq. of Shieldhill, whose ancestors have been in possession of this estate for the last four centuries, as appears from a charter still extant, \* granted by Thomas Lord Sommerville to William Chancellor of Shieldhill and Quothquhan, A. D. 1432. In July 1474, William Chancellor rode with the rest of the then Lord Sommerville's vassals to meet King James on his way from Edinburgh to Couthally Castle, to partake of the festivity of the "speates and raxes." †

\* This charter is referred to in the Memoirs of the Sommers, Vol. i. p. 175.

† Ibid. pp. 240-246.

After the battle of Bothwell Bridge, James Chancellor was imprisoned on suspicion of having harboured some fugitives; but nothing being proved against him, he was liberated after some days confinement. \* The same gentleman was returned as elder by the presbytery of Biggar to the first General Assembly which met after the revolution of 1688. †

The family residence was originally at Quothquan, and remained there till 1567, when the then proprietor joined Queen Mary's party at Hamilton, and engaged in the battle of Langside. After her defeat, a party of 500 horsemen, sent out by Regent Murray to demolish the houses of her adherents, burned down, among others, the mansion-house at Quothquan. After this calamity, the family residence was removed to Shieldhill, which appears originally to have been a square tower of no great dimensions, but which has at different times been added to and modernized, particularly by the present proprietor.

At a short distance to the southward from Shieldhill is the mansion-house of Huntfield, the property of John Stark, Esq., surrounded by thriving plantations.

*Parochial Register.*—The earliest date of the parochial registers is 1717. They consist of two volumes, and refer to births and baptisms, marriages and burials. The registration by dissenters is somewhat irregular; but otherwise the records are satisfactorily kept.

*Antiquities.*—About half a mile south-west from the church, are to be seen the ruins of a fortification or camp,—improperly called Roman, as its form is circular. It stands on the edge of a high and barren moor, about half a mile from the Clyde, and commands an extensive view of that river to the south and west. It contains about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres, and is surrounded by a double wall of earth, a deep ditch intervening.

### III.—POPULATION.

“From the session records,” according to the Statistical Account of the late Mr Fraser, “it appears that the births in this parish from April 1683 to April 1753, amounted exactly to 2205, the annual average of which is  $31\frac{1}{2}$ . The marriages during the same period amounted to 563, the annual average of which is little more than

\* Wodrow's Church History.

† Records of the Biggar Presbytery.

8." The return to Dr Webster in 1755 gave 708 persons examinable, or above 8 years of age.

In 1811, the population was	749
1821, - - -	785
1831, - - -	773

The decrease of population may be imputed to the consolidation of farms, the non-residence of heritors, the removal of part of the population to towns in quest of employment, and of late to America,—twenty individuals having emigrated to that country from this parish in the year 1831.

There are 8 proprietors in this parish, having yearly rentals of L.100 and upwards. The gross rental of the parish is L.4561.

1. Number of families in the parish,	- - - -	152
of families chiefly employed in agriculture,	- - - -	80
chiefly employed in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	- - - -	36
2. Number of unmarried men, bachelors or widowers, upwards of 50 years of age,	7	
of unmarried women, including widows, upwards of 45,	- - - -	33
3. The average number of births yearly, for the last 7 years,	- - - -	14
of deaths,	- - - -	9
of marriages,	- - - -	7
4. The number of persons at present under 15 years of age,	- - - -	331
upwards of 70,	- - - -	18

*Character of the People.*—They are generally sober, frugal, and industrious, and, as a proof of this, there is not an alehouse in the parish. I regret to add, however, that illicit intercourse betwixt the sexes has become more common than it appears to have been forty or fifty years ago; the number of illegitimate births being not less on an average than three in the year. I should add, too, that poaching is not uncommon, and is hardly considered to be unlawful.

#### IV.—INDUSTRY.

##### *Agriculture and Rural Economy.*—

Arable,	- - - -	5403 imperial acres.
Waste or pasture land,	- - - -	2500
Land worth the cultivating,	- - - -	300
Land under wood,	- - - -	500
		<hr/>
		8703

*Rent of Land.*—Average rent of land per acre is L. 1, 5s.; average cost of grazing an ox or cow per year, L. 3; grazing a quey, L. 1, 10s.; grazing a sheep, 14s.

*Rate of Wages.*—Yearly wages of a ploughman, with victuals, L. 12; of a maid-servant, L. 6, 10s.; of a boy or girl, L. 2; la-

bourers, per day, without victuals, 1s. 9d.; masons, 2s. 6d; wrights, 2s. 6d.; smith's work per lb. of iron, 6d. In the time of harvest, labourers' wages with victuals, L. 2; women's 30s.

*Breeds of Live Stock.*—The common breed of cattle is the Ayrshire, and of sheep a cross between the Cheviot and Leicester. Both are improved by the frequent introduction of new stock.

*Husbandry.*—The general method of farming on dry lands is in six divisions, by the following rotation of crops, viz 1. corn; 2. fallow or green crop; 3. corn; 4. hay; 5. pasture; 6. pasture. On rich lands lying near the Clyde, four divisions are observed, viz. 1. corn; 2. green crop; 3. corn; 4. hay.

Every encouragement has been given by the proprietors to industrious tenants. In the southern and western parts of the parish, where enclosures can be considered advantageous, the whole of the lands are enclosed, either by stone-dikes or hedges and ditches. In other districts of the parish, there are no enclosures of any description. A good deal of improvement has been effected in draining wet lands, but very little of any consequence in reclaiming waste lands. On one estate about fifty acres have been reclaimed within fifteen or twenty years.

The duration of leases in the parish is nineteen years. In the southern division the state of farm-buildings is considered superior to that of those on almost any estate in the neighbourhood of equal extent. In the course of the last seven years the greater part of the farm-steadings has been rebuilt substantially. The others have been repaired, and by enlargements every suitable accommodation has been given to the tenants. In the rest of the parish, the farm-buildings are generally bad, and incommodious.

The face of the country would still be much improved by enclosures and belts of planting, judiciously made. A good deal has been done in this respect of late years: and on the lands of Cormiston, Shieldhill, Huntfield, and Whitecastle, more than 400 acres of larch, Scotch and spruce fir, intermixed with varieties of hard wood, have been planted by their respective proprietors. These plantations are at present in a thriving state, and are already, or will, ere long, be a great ornament to the vicinity. On the property of Huntfield alone, there are 250 imperial acres under wood, the greater portion of which has been planted within the last twenty years. A great part of Libberton moor, which is now a barren waste, if sheltered, drained, and subdivided by belts of planting, and let in small pendicles to industrious cottagers at little

or no rent for some years, would soon be reclaimed; and at no very great expense rendered no less profitable to the proprietor, than ornamental to the neighbourhood.

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

Oats, 6020 bolls, at 18s. per boll,	-	-	-	L. 5418	0	0
As my predecessor, Mr Fraser, in his Statistical Account, states the number of acres sown in oats forty years ago at 2123, which at only five bolls per acre, a very moderate average, would amount to 10,615 bolls, and as a still greater quantity is produced now, the feed and seed oats cannot be included in the above. Feed oats mean the meal used by the family and servants, and the corn consumed by the cattle on a farm; and seed oats those required to sow it. Many farms in the parish afford an average of 8 or 9 bolls per Scotch acre.						
Barley and bear,	-	-	-	700	0	0
Turnips, 3400 tons, at 5s. per ton,	-	-	-	850	0	0
Potatoes, 2400 bolls of 4 cwt. at 5s. per boll,	-	-	-	602	10	0
Rye-grass, 32,240 stones of 22 lbs. at 6d. per stone,	-	-	-	806	0	0
Meadow hay, 8000 stones, at 4d. per stone,	-	-	-	133	6	0
Produce of cattle and sheep grazed,	-	-	-	1100	0	0
Do. of the dairy in butter and cheese, at L. 7 per cow, is	-	-	-	3395	0	0
				Gross amount, - L. 13004 16 0		

A considerable portion of most of the above articles is consumed by the horses and cattle.

Number of milk cows in the parish,	-	485
Do. of queys and stots reared and bred,	-	190
Number of horses,	-	120
of carts,	-	108
of ploughs,	-	49

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Carnwath is the nearest market-town. It is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Libberton church.

*Means of Communication.*—There is no toll-road in the parish, except the one betwixt Glasgow and Peebles, which passes through the north-east corner of it for nearly a mile; and many of the parish roads are bad, as they extend about 30 miles, and would require far more funds to put and keep them in repair than the parish could afford.

*Eccleristical State.*—The parish church was built in 1812, and had the heritors laid out L. 40 or L. 50 more upon it, it would have lasted sixty or seventy years longer than it will do. It is feared that from damp much of the wood, both in the galleries and below,

will soon rot. The church affords accommodation to 450 persons, and is amply sufficient for the whole population.

The manse was built in 1824, and is a good house; but the offices are indifferent.

The glebe extends to about 8 Scotch acres, and is worth L. 16 yearly.

The stipend is 15 chalders, or 240 bolls Linlithgow measure, of grain, half meal and half barley, besides L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements.

There are no chapels of ease, nor dissenting chapels in the parish. The number of dissenters above twelve years of age is about 170, —much the same number as was found by the present writer when he entered to the parish in 1813. The dissenters generally belong either to Seceding or Relief congregations in Biggar, which is nearer to some parts of the parish than the parish church. There are only two Episcopalian families in the parish, who have no chapel within 20 miles. The average number of communicants at the parish church is from 200 to 220.

*Education.*—There are two schools in the parish, viz. the parochial school at the church town of Libberton, and the school of Quothquan; the latter is supported by a mortification of L. 2, 10s. L. 6 for house rent yearly, and the school fees; there are also attached to it a good school and school-house, built last summer.

There is also a Sunday school taught at Quothquan, which is attended by 25 scholars, and is superintended partly by the teacher at Quothquan, and partly by the private tutor at Shieldhill.

The salary of the parochial teacher is L. 30, and the amount of school fees does not exceed L. 20 a-year. In Quothquan school the school fees must be considerably less. The parochial teacher has the legal accommodations. There are no persons born and brought up in the parish, who cannot read and write.

There is a parochial library in the parish; also a Friendly Society, which was instituted in 1811 for the relief of its distressed members.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—At present there are 13 poor persons receiving each about an average of L. 4 yearly. The amount of annual contributions for the poor is about L. 58, of which L. 45 arises from voluntary assessment, one-half of which is paid by the proprietors, and the other half by the tenants. The church collections amount to L. 11; and there is also the interest of L. 40,

—L. 1, 16s. There is less disposition among the poor to refrain from seeking parochial relief than formerly, nor do they now consider it so degrading.

*Fuel.*—The fuel chiefly used is coal, procured either from the parish of Douglas, at the distance of ten miles, or from Cleugh, in the parish of Carnwath, nine miles distant from the church town of Libberton.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

As a proof of the great rise in the value of land in this parish within these last thirty or forty years, the property of Whitecastle, situated in the most elevated district of the parish, was purchased about forty years ago, for about L. 2700; and it has yielded an annual rent, for these nineteen years past, of L. 283, which is not accounted too high. About thirty-two years ago, a property was purchased for the same sum, in the southern district of the parish; the annual rent of which is now L. 345.

It may be added, that the farmers labour under great disadvantages from their high rents, the difficulty of communication with good and ready markets, and their liability to have their crops of corn and potatoes injured by frosts in autumn; in consequence of which they have not only a deficiency of produce, but are obliged to purchase their seed at a dear rate from a distance. In certain districts, chiefly the poorest, and most elevated of the parish, there is a disease incident to cows called the *stiffness*, the cause or cure of which has never yet been well ascertained, but which generally proves fatal to its victims. It is a general wasting, or atrophy, which attacks cattle in the spring or winter months, and reduces them to skeletons. Their only chance of recovery is in their removal to a richer pasture, before the disease has far advanced.

March 1834.