

PARISH OF DUNSYRE.

PRESBYTERY OF BIGGAR, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND TWEEDDALE.

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I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name and Boundaries.—VARIOUS etymologies have been given of the name. The most probable is, that it is compounded of *Dun* and *Seer*, the hill of the prophet. The place seems to have been originally the site of a Druidical temple.

The summit of the water-level, at the upper end of the parish, where the stream, by a single turf, might be sent either to the Clyde or the Tweed, to the Atlantic or the German Ocean, is 735 feet above high water at the Broomielaw at Glasgow. The parish is bounded by Dolphinton and Walston on the south-east and south; Linton on the east and north; West Calder on the north; and Carnwath on the west. The extent of surface is 17.25 square miles, or 11071 imperial acres. Its form is nearly a parallelogram, having its longest sides lying south and north.

Topographical Appearances.—The range of the Pentlands, which commences in the vicinity of Edinburgh, may be said to terminate with Dunsyre hill, after extending to the length of twenty miles. This hill is precipitous and rugged, composed of the same stone as Arthur Seat and Salisbury Craigs. It rises about 500 feet above the water level already stated; 1235 feet above high water at Glasgow. From it a range of hills verges towards the west, which gradually slopes into a flat towards Carnwath parish. In the valley betwixt Dunsyre and Walston ranges, runs the water Medwin, through a tract of flat ground about a mile in breadth and three in length, which in that distance falls only about nine feet.

There is a very large cave on the hill Craigengar, on the north-eastern boundary of this parish, which is said to have been a chief rendezvous of the gipsies or tinkers in this part of the country.

* This Account was drawn up by the Rev. Mr Meek.

Meteorology.—In summer, Fahrenheit's thermometer averages from 60° to 70°, and in winter from 40° to 44°; but in frost the range is from 22° to 34°. It has sometimes been as low as 16°, but very seldom. The general range of the barometer is betwixt 29 and 30, so that the average may be stated at 29.5. It has been as high as 30.6, and as low as 28.5; but these are extremes which it rarely approaches.

The valley of Dunsyre lies almost due east and west, having on each side a range of hills. The rainbow often exhibits a most beautiful and imposing appearance in this valley. This generally happens where the sun is in the west. Three irises are usually seen: I have beheld three entire, and the fourth imperfectly formed. The most prevailing winds in the parish are those from the west. They often sweep the valley with great violence, being confined by the ranges of the mountains. The soft freestone with which the houses are generally built becomes damp several hours and even days previous to a storm of wind and rain; a certain indication of a change of weather. As a symptom of the dampness of the climate, the doors in the interior of the houses frequently stand covered with drops of damp, which run in streams to the floor. This must arise in a great measure from the extent of flat marshy ground on the banks of the river, where the water is almost in a stagnant state, and renders the river in many places impassable. Rheumatism consequently prevails, and there are very few who escape its excruciating ravages. Nervous disorders, probably originating in the same cause, are also common.

Hydrography.—There is abundance of fine springs in this parish. One which is in great esteem issues from a rock of whinstone, on the face of Dunsyre-hill, and seems to be affected neither by summer drought nor winter rains. There is another very abundant spring on the glebe, called the Curate's well. It consists of two circular holes filled with soft sand, from which the water issues; and all around, the ground is composed of the hardest clay and gravel. At intervals of five or ten minutes, it bubbles up at three apertures, as if it emitted air. There is another remarkable stream at Easton. It flows in great abundance, and if wood be left for any length of time in its waters, it becomes encrusted over with a white substance. It appears to issue from a red freestone rock,—as this seems to lie in a thick bed all around, three or four feet from the surface; or perhaps from limestone which may be below the freestone. There is another fine spring

LANARK.

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on the farm of Auston Park, consecrated to St Bride, and remarkable for the abundant flow and purity of its waters. It appears to rise from a bed of sand, upon approaching a lower seam of clay and gravel. On the verge of the marsh, there are many springs deeply charged with iron-ore, and seeming to rise either from that mixture or from coal.

The only loch in the parish, the Craneloch, lies in an elevated situation in the moors,—upwards of 300 feet above the water level. It is about a mile in circumference, surrounded with marshy grounds and skirted with heath. All around, nothing is presented to the eye but a bleak inhospitable desert. The water is of a dark mossy colour, of a pretty high temperature, and very deep. It abounds with pike and perch, which are allowed to enjoy their solitary waters unmolested.

Medwin is the chief stream in the parish, and rises in the north-east corner of it, near the foot of the hill Craigengar. It pursues a southerly direction for about six miles, when it suddenly turns to the west. It is here joined by a stream, called West Water, fully as large as itself, which rises amongst the range of hills in the northern side of the parish. It continues to run at a very slow rate along the vale of Dunsyre, forming the boundary betwixt it and Dolphinton, and then that of Walston. Its greatest width is about thirty feet, its greatest depth about ten. It runs shallow and rapid in some places, but in general, from the flatness of the ground, its motion is slow and inert.

Geology and Mineralogy.—Dunsyre-hill is composed partly of blue whinstone; partly of strata of freestone, dipping about an angle from 7° to 10° towards the north. The range which diverges from Dunsyre-hill contains deep beds of pure limestone, resembling gray marble; some of them eight and even sixteen feet deep. These beds are frequently cut across by dikes of clay, gravel, and loose blocks of the same material. In the channels of some of the streams which run down from the high ground are beds of what is denominated Coston limestone. This is apparently a mixture of sand and lime, which has been subjected to heat, and is extremely hard.

Some traces of iron-ore are to be found in these last-mentioned rocks in close union with the stone; and copper-ore in some places has been discernible. Coal has also been considered as lying under these strata, and attempts have been made to dig it, but without success. A fair trial has never been made. The line of

the seams which run across the island passes through Dunsyre to the east. It has also been wrought about a mile to the west, and runs on to Douglas, and passes through Ayrshire to the Mull of Cantyre. Calc-spar is discernible in many parts in the parish.

There are various alluvial deposits in this parish. At the foot of those streamlets which descend from the high grounds are several acres of fine soil carried upon the flat marshy land below. This soil is generally a mixture of clay and sand, of a reddish colour, and bears most excellent crops. The river has also, by being often flooded, deposited on its banks sand to the height, in some places, of two or three feet above the surrounding bog. This large flat is mostly composed of moss,—in some places eleven and even sixteen feet in depth. In digging down the one-half of that depth, it is found to become soft, and the water and sludge rise to the mouth of the pit. It lies in a kind of basin, whose bottom is adhesive clay. Branches and trunks of trees are everywhere deposited in it, and these are generally composed of hazel, alder, and willow.

Soil.—The soil in this parish, especially in the eastern part, may be said to be generally sandy, and the grounds appear to have been, at one time, traversed by currents of water. Towards the west, the subsoil seems to consist of the debris of various hills; among which are found stones of all kinds mixed with sand and clay, and occasionally transparent pebbles. These stones appear to have been rounded by attrition. The light sandy grounds in a few years are covered with heath, if not kept clear by the plough; and the other soils become foul with rushes, paddock-pipes, and the coarse bog grasses. In many places the Yorkshire fog, as it is called, covers all the surface, particularly if inclined to moss.

Zoology.—On this head, it may be only mentioned, that the gannet, or sea-gull, frequents this parish, especially when a storm of wind and rain is threatened. This appears rather singular in a parish situate nearly thirty miles from the sea coast. The lapwing also migrates in flocks to this point during the summer season, and has been known to continue during winter. The eagle is sometimes seen on the hills to the north of Dunsyre, particularly on Craigenkar. There is plenty of grouse in these moors, and a few black game. The gray plover is everywhere to be seen. Wild ducks are numerous in the marshes; and during a storm the parish is often visited with flocks of wild geese, to the amount of fifty or sixty in a covey.

Medwin is a fine trouting stream. The trout are for the most

part red, of a considerable size, and reckoned superior in quality to those of either Clyde or Tweed. Pike of a very large size is often found in the deep parts of the river.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Historical Notices.—Many distinguished characters have been proprietors in this parish. So early as the year 1147, William de Sommerville, the third of that noble family, afterwards Lord Sommerville, married Margaret, daughter of Gualter, who is designed of Newbigging, and Lord of Dunsyre. Sir Patrick Hepburn of Hales was, during his father's life, designed of Dunsyre, in the year 1450, who, on account of his great merit and fortune, was by King James III. created a Baron or Lord of Parliament, *ante annum* 1456. Adam Second Lord Hales succeeded his father, during whose life he had been designed Adam Hepburn of Dunsyre. His successors were created Earls of Bothwell on the 5th of October 1488, and the last of the family was created Duke of Orkney by Queen Mary, whom he had afterwards the honour to marry.

Archibald the Sixth Earl of Angus exchanged his castle and lands of hermitage in Liddesdale, with Hepburn Earl of Bothwell, for the castle of Bothwell in Clydesdale; and hence this property fell into the hands of the Douglasses. It has since belonged to various individuals.

Sir Norman Macdonald Lockhart of Lee and Carnwath, Baronet, is now proprietor of almost the whole parish. The valuation of the parish, as fixed in 1793, amounted to L. 1450 Scots money; of which Sir Norman Lockhart has L. 1383, 13s. 4d., and the remainder L. 66, 6s. 8d. belongs to the Rev. Mr Aiton, which was bequeathed by the late Rev. Mr Bowie, minister of Dolphinton, to the minister *serviſing the cure* of that parish.

Parochial Registers.—The earliest registers of the parish are dated June 7, 1690. By minute of that date, Mr Robert Skene, curate of the parish, is required to give up the kirk-box and key. They have been regularly kept till the year 1712. An interval then occurs till 1760; after which they are regularly kept to the present day.

Antiquities.—The castles generally denominated fortalices, which were stationed in the valley of Dunsyre, establish the fact that the parish was well inhabited in early times. At Easter Saxon there were no fewer of these than five. At Todholes, in the west

end of the parish, stood one of considerable strength, with a fosse around it. There were castles of the same construction at Westhall Hills, Auston; and about 300 yards from the church stood the castle of Dunsyre. It had a vault on the ground story, with two apartments above, which were approached by a circular staircase at one of the corners. About eighty or a hundred years ago, the Baron baillie held his courts in this tower, and in the vault were kept the thumbkins and the boots for torture. On the death of the last baron, who is represented to have exercised a tyrannical sway, the people of the village met, and destroyed these odious engines.

Many Roman reliques have been found here. The line by which the army of Agricola reached the camp at Cleghorn lies through the parish of Dunsyre, and the route can be traced up the county of Tweeddale. The entrance to the glen or valley where Dunsyre is situate is called the Garvald or Garrel; it forms the most natural and easy communication betwixt the east and west of the plain. Through this rugged pass lies the Roman line, marked out by a dike of earth. Several cairns occur here and in the neighbourhood; in some of which urns have been found. One of these is about 6 inches in diameter. It is composed of burnt clay, and rudely carved over. Its under part is narrow, of the shape of the human heart, and projects from the depth of 7 inches about $2\frac{1}{2}$ towards the mouth.*

Among the many places to which the champions of the Reformation fled for safety, Dunsyre was one of the chief. On the confines of this parish, where it borders with Lothian and Tweeddale, is a deep ravine, in the centre of which there is a large collection of stones. This deep rugged spot bears the name of Roger's Kirke, which, in all probability, it received from one of the covenanting ministers.

Covenanters.—One of the most celebrated preachers, Mr William Veitch, was tenant in Westhills, which he was forced to abandon after the battle of Pentlands in 1667. He was the person deputed by the council of the covenanting army, while they were lying at Colinton, to go to Edinburgh to learn some intelligence of importance. He accomplished this mission with great difficulty, but without securing the slightest advantage. On returning, he was accidentally surrounded by a troop of the enemy's cavalry, from which he escaped with difficulty, and fled to Dunsyre. Mr Veitch after-

* Several other cairns and urns are noticed in the original MS.

wards escaped to England; and after the Revolution became minister of Peebles, and thereafter of Dumfries. *

In 1669, Mr Donald Cargill, one of the most distinguished friends of freedom, whose persecutions were as remarkable as his conduct was courageous, preached his last sermon on Dunsyre common. He went, though contrary to the advice of his friends, to Andrew Fisher's, at Covington Mill, where next day he was seized by Irvine of Bonshaw. He was treated in the most ignominious manner; his back was turned to the horse's head, his feet tied below its belly; and in this manner he was led through the streets of Lanark. He was afterwards hanged in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh, his head struck off and fixed on the Netherbow port.

There are several places in the moor which still go by the name of *preaching holes*, and which formed the retreat of the persecuted preachers. Into these they generally retired, while the congregations dispersed at the approach of the persecutors.

III.—POPULATION.

By the return made to Dr Webster about 1750, the population was	359
In 1783,	400
1791,	360
1815, according to census taken by minister,	312
1821,	290
1831,	335

The decrease has been owing to the union of small farms, and the dislike which the farmers entertain towards what are generally denominated cottars.

1. Number of families in the parish,	57
of families chiefly employed in agriculture,	26
chiefly employed in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	19
2. Number of unmarried men, bachelors or widowers, upwards of 50 years of age,	13
of unmarried women, including widows, upwards of 45,	13
3. The average number of births yearly, for the last 7 years,	6
of deaths,	3
of marriages,	2½
4. The number of persons at present under 15 years of age.	105
upwards of 70,	7

No nobility, nor families of independent fortune reside in the parish. There are only two proprietors, and both their properties are worth upwards of L. 50 annually.

* See notice of Major Learmonth in Account of Dophinton.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.

There are in the parish, cultivated and occasionally in tillage, upwards of 3000 acres.	
Constantly in pasture, many of which are waste and of very little value,	8000
Capable of being improved by a judicious application of capital,	2000
Under wood,	30
Undivided common,	0

All the wood has been planted; and, from being constantly cut without any new plantation, will very soon cease to exist altogether. The trees are Scotch fir and larch.

Rate of Wages.—Farm men-servants receive for summer and winter, being generally hired by the year, from L. 8 to L. 12, besides bed and board: females during the summer, L. 3, and during the winter from L. 2 to L. 2, 10s., bed and board. If the men are married, they generally receive about L. 10 wages, and a free house, with a certain quantity of fuel driven. Masons' wages are about 2s. 6d. a-day, and a carpenter's nearly the same.

Breeds of Live Stock.—Considerable attention has been paid to the breeds of sheep and cattle. The Cheviot are bought in some instances when hogs, and afterwards fattened on the turnips. The black-faced are the staple breed, of which there are no fewer than 150 scores in the parish. They are also reared for fattening on turnips. The Ayrshire breed of cattle is generally cultivated, and a cross-breed of heavier stock is annually reared for draughting and feeding on turnips.

Particular attention has been paid to the dairy. The number of milch cows kept by the farmer is generally betwixt 20 and 30. The milk-houses are fitted up in the neatest manner, so as to preserve the milk fresh and clean. The usual method is to make butter, which is salted and sold about Martinmas. Of the skimmed milk, cheeses are made, which are sold about the same time. Dunlop cheeses are also made, and rival any from Ayrshire.

Husbandry.—The fourth rotation is that which is generally practised, as the soil will scarcely admit of a heavier cropping. Turnips are reared in great abundance, and few parishes can boast of so fine crops.

The Medwin has lately been straightened, and will thus afford a facility for draining the surrounding bog. Draining has been carried on to a considerable extent; and irrigation was first practised in this parish in the upper ward of Clydesdale, and has been improving constantly for the last twenty years. The late William

Brown, tenant at Mains, was the first to introduce the improved system of husbandry into this parish.

Leases are granted for nineteen years. The farm-buildings are in general commodious, and in good repair. But the enclosures are few, and in a very indifferent condition.

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 the domestic animals,	L. 3664	0	0
Of potatoes,	270	0	0
Of turnips,	1940	0	0
Of hay, whether meadow or cultivated,	750	0	0
Of land in pasture, rating at L. 3 per cow or full-grown ox grazed, or that may be grazed for the season,	978	0	0
Of land in pasture, rating at 5s. per ewe or full-grown sheep pastured, or that may be pastured for the year,	1250	0	0
Total yearly value of raw produce,	L. 9052	0	0

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Towns, &c.—The nearest market-towns are Carnwath and Biggar: the former, about 6 miles from the village of Dunsyre, where there is a weekly market held on Friday, which may be said to be the chief resort for farm produce from this parish. Biggar is about 8 miles distant, and is attended from this parish principally for seed-corn in spring on Thursday, every week, and its fairs are frequented for horses, cattle, and lambs. Linton, however, in Tweeddale, which is about 6 miles distant, constitutes the principal sheep and wool market.

Village.—Dunsyre village consists of a population of about 50 souls, chiefly composed of tradesmen, for the accommodation of the parish,—smiths, masons, wrights, tailors, shoemakers, &c. There was once a considerable village at Weston. But now the remaining cottages are chiefly inhabited by the servants and families belonging to the farms of that name.

Means of Communication.—Dunsyre keeps up a weekly communication with Edinburgh by means of carriers; and the parish is traversed three or four times a-week by carriers from the vicinity of the metropolis. They purchase butter, eggs, and fowls, which are generally sold at the Saturday market.

There is no post-office in the parish. Carnwath is the chief post-town for Dunsyre. A runner from the post-office at Linton to Robertson, in Dolphinton, might be had twice a-week for L. 2

yearly. This arrangement would serve three parishes, and pay back more than the outlay.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church stands on a tumulus or mound, on the northern banks of the Medwin, and is quite conveniently situate for the inhabitants. At what time the church was built is uncertain. About 1750 it was thatched with heath; as it then appears to have received for the first time a slate roof. At the Reformation, it had been built of the barn construction with the materials of an old Gothic building. In 1820 it underwent a complete repair; and a Gothic tower was erected at the east end, and on each side is a lofty Gothic window. It is seated to accommodate betwixt 240 and 250 sitters. The seats are all free. The heritors divided them amongst their tenants in proportion to their rentals; and allotted a certain proportion to the village.

The manse was built in 1756, and was pretty well repaired in 1815. It has now, however, become ruinous, and requires either to be rebuilt, or very thoroughly repaired. There is also a deficiency in the accommodation of office-houses.

The glebe consists of fifteen English acres, exclusive of the site of the manse, and offices, and garden. It was subdivided and enclosed with stone dikes, and hedges, and rows of trees, by the present incumbent, and, being well drained, may be worth L. 30 or L. 40 annually.

The church or living was gifted to the Abbot and Convent of Kelso, betwixt the years 1180 and 1199, by Helias brother to Jocelyne, bishop of Glasgow, and held by that Convent from the twelfth century till the Reformation. This parish was a rectory of the monks of Kelso; but the revenue they drew from thence till the year 1316, was not above L. 5, 6s. 8d. annually. At the Reformation the revenue increased to L. 20. In 1791–2 the stipend was L. 100, exclusive of manse and glebe, which last was estimated at L. 10 a-year. In 1811, when the Legislature augmented the livings below L. 150 to that sum, the living of Dunsyre on an average of the seven previous years was worth L. 114, 17s. 11⁰/₂d. inclusive of L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements. As the seven years average was taken when grain was very high, the deficiency in succeeding years became great; and another act of Parliament was passed in 1824 to remedy the evil. Still, however, although a small addition was then made, it seldom happens, from the reduced price of grain, that the stipend rises to L. 150. It may be worth while to mention, that the minister was titular of the teinds, and still

continues to receive annually 15s. 2½d. as feu-duty from the lands called Kirklands.

There are no chapels or dissenting-houses in the parish; and hence the parish church is generally well attended. The average number of communicants is about 170.

The yearly average of collections for the last seven years, including fines, mortcloth, interest, &c., is L. 19, 2s. 6¼d.

Education.—There is only one parochial school in the parish. Latin is taught. The salary is about L. 28. The schoolmaster has the legal accommodation, though it is supposed there is deficiency of garden or glebe. There are no individuals in this parish who have not been taught from their infancy to read and write.

Friendly Society.—A friendly society was instituted about the year 1799: it continues, and has for its object to support the sick or disabled members, and to assist in the funeral expenses of husband or wife.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of persons receiving parochial assistance for the last seven years is 57, and the sum annually allotted to each is about L. 6. The funds arising from collections, fines, mortcloths, proclamations, and interest of money lent out to the road trustees at five per cent., in general cover the expenditure; but when found insufficient, recourse has been had to voluntary contributions. There was at one time an extreme aversion to receive parochial aid, and there are still many in necessitous circumstances who would feel degraded by accepting it. But the spirit of independence is gradually wearing away, and many consider it not only as not degrading, but talk of it as a right given to them by the law of the land.

Alehouses.—There are no houses of this description in the parish.

Fuel.—The fuel generally used is coal, which is driven from a distance of twelve miles, and costs about 12s. a ton. A great deal of peat is dug. In the moors or in the marsh on the banks of the Medwin, it is to be had in great abundance, but coal is considered more profitable.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

When the former Statistical Account was published, the modern system of husbandry was little known, and as little practised. Nay, those who had the genius or the hardihood to deviate from the old beaten path were branded as visionaries. This, however, is not

the case in the present day: the farmers are active, industrious, and prosperous.

The great want in this parish is shelter,—the farms, for the most part, being quite exposed to the sweep of the east and west winds. There is also a great deficiency in draining. About two years ago the Medwin, which ran in innumerable windings, was straightened for the distance of three miles. This work, however, has not been sufficiently done, as the water at the under part of the cut overflows its banks, in consequence of a mill-dam, which keeps back the water. This should be entirely removed to render the straightening effectual. Were the flat through which the cut runs sufficiently drained by ditches into the river, there would be recovered not less than 400 acres of the best land in the parish,—all of a deep rich water-borne soil, composed of decayed vegetables, and likely to be worth more than one-half of all the land under cultivation.

At present the principal road runs from the one end of the parish to the other nearly parallel with the river, at the distance of half a mile, and at the east end joins the public road from Edinburgh to Biggar by a very circuitous route. Whereas, were it to be continued straight east through the Garvald, to join the same road near Linton, it would open up a most advantageous communication.

Revised April 1834.