

PARISH OF ANSTRUTHER EASTER.

PRESBYTERY OF ST ANDREWS, SYNOD OF PIPE.

THE REV. ROBERT WILSON, MINISTER.*

L—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent, Boundaries, &c.—THE parish of Anstruther Easter extends no farther than the limits of the Royal Burgh of the same name, and has no landward district attached. It is bounded on the west, by the parish of Anstruther Wester, from which it is divided by a rivulet; on the north, by the landward district of the parish of Kilrenny; on the east, by the large fishing town of Cellardyke; and on the south, by the Frith of Forth. The town is situated at the bottom of a small bay, from the west headland of which, called the Billyness, the best view of it is obtained. It has the appearance of a place well suited to the purposes of trade. The shore, though rugged and rocky, affords a sufficiently wide entrance to the harbour, which is commodious and safe, being protected by a natural break-water, as well as an excellent quay, from the heavy swell occasioned by the prevalence of south-east winds.

Climate.—Along the east coast of Fifeshire, the climate, particularly during the spring months, is generally cold, and is reckoned very prejudicial, where there is any tendency to pulmonary disease, cases of which description are rather numerous in this place. Apart from this peculiarity, the climate is, generally speaking, not unfavourable to health. Epidemics have not usually been very fatal, and during the prevalence of cholera in 1832–33, there were only a very few instances of it in the town. From its nearness to the German Ocean, the severity of the winter is moderated, the snow seldom lying long on the ground; and in like manner, the keenness of the sea-breeze produces, during summer, a refreshing coolness even in the hottest weather. To the same cause is usually ascrib-

* Drawn up by the Rev. David Swan, Assistant to the minister of the parish.

ed the scantiness of wood in the district, which gives it a bare and uninteresting appearance.

Geology.—The rocks along the shore are chiefly sandstone, and are used in building, though not well adapted for that purpose, as they always retain a certain dampness, which indicates itself even in some houses that are known to have been built two centuries ago. The dip of the strata is towards the south-east. There is a bank covered with large boulders, apparently of granites, immediately to the east of the mouth of the harbour. The town itself seems, from recent excavations made in building, to rest on stratified rocks of the description first mentioned, but apparently softer, and overlaid with a thick bed of clay, and retentive subsoil; and hence the water derived from springs is what is called hard, and unfit for culinary and household purposes, until filtered and corrected by carbonate of soda.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Anstruther Easter was erected into a royal burgh, by a charter of James VI. dated 18th December 1583. It does not hold burghage of the Crown, but feu of the family of Anstruther. Anstruther Easter was at one time possessed of lands lying near to Kingsbarns. The magistrates having engaged in a law-suit with Sir J. Anstruther, sold their lands about the year 1770, for L. 500, to pay the cost of the action. The same lands have since been sold for L. 5000. The revenue of the burgh arises chiefly from customs, and shore or harbour dues, &c. It has fallen off considerably since 1827. In the year ending Michaelmas 1832, it was L. 78, 3s., and at the same period, the debts due by the burgh amounted to about L. 485. The magistrates levy no taxes, except the cess due to government, and the customs and shore dues. They have the usual jurisdiction of magistrates within the royalty. There have been no civil causes tried in the Bailie Court since 1820. The town clerk acts as assessor to the magistrates, and his appointment is during pleasure of the magistrates and council. They appoint the burgh schoolmaster, procurator-fiscal, and town-officer. The council consists of nineteen members, including three bailies and a treasurer. The councillors are now elected according to the provisions of the 3 and 4 William IV. Like many other small towns, Anstruther Easter has of late years decreased much in wealth and importance. Though it is still the best market-town in the district, its decayed condition may be

judged of by the single fact, that the tonnage belonging to the port, at the date of the former Statistical Account, was 1400, and is now only 964. Capital seems to be flowing steadily to the larger towns, and with it of course that part of the population which cannot find employment here. Accordingly, the value of property is considerably lowered, and, while old tenements are suffered to fall into ruins, the number of new erections is comparatively small.

In the year 1710 Anstruther Easter was made a port, and a custom-house established. In 1827 it was made a sub-port, comprehending St Andrews, Crail, Pittenweem, St Monance, and Elie, with the establishment of a collector, comptroller, and tide-waiter; having also three coast-waiters, one at each of the following places, St Andrews, Crail, and Elie. This custom-house can correspond directly with the Board of Customs; but the accounts are usually transmitted to the custom-house at Kirkaldy.

Eminent Men.—Anstruther Easter is the birth place of the Rev. Dr Chalmers, Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, and of that eminent oriental scholar Professor Tennant of St Andrews.

Parochial Registers.—The records of the kirk-session are preserved from the year 1641, down to the present time. They have been carefully kept, and are very legible. The register of baptisms during the same period is also preserved. Of marriages the record is less regular and entire.

Ecclesiastical History.—Previous to the year 1636, the town of Anstruther Easter formed part of the parish of Kilrenny. At that period, it was erected into a separate parish, and a church built. In the year 1641, the first minister was settled. The succession of ministers down to the present time seems to have been regular. Their names and the dates of their ordination or induction are as follows: Colin Adams 1641, Edward Thomson 1677, William Moncrieff 1686, William Woodrop 1691, James Nairne 1710, John Nairne, his son, 1764, who had been previously assistant and successor for twenty-one years, and Robert Wilson, the present incumbent, 1796.

The session records bear that presbyterial visitations had been occasionally held in the parish in former times, and that collections were sometimes made in the church for public works in the neighbourhood,—in one instance towards the erection of a bridge at St Andrews. They are chiefly filled, however, with accounts of the disbursement of money to the poor, to church officers, &c. and

with the administration of church discipline (to those guilty of immoral conduct) which far exceeded in minuteness and severity the discipline of modern times.

III.—POPULATION.

For a great length of time the population of the parish of Anstruther Easter has varied very little.

In 1744 it was	1000
1764	900
At the date of former Statistical Account, above	1000
In 1881,	1007
At present it is believed that the number is considerably below	1000
The average number of baptisms during last 7 years is,	16
of marriages, do.	10
No accurate record of the number of deaths has been kept.	
Number of families in the parish,	255

In the former Statistical Account some instances of great age are mentioned. At present there is one individual in the parish in her ninety-third year, having all her mental faculties in full vigour, and able to attend divine ordinances every Sabbath.

Of the inhabitants of this parish generally it may be said, they are intelligent, but the vice of intemperance is by no means rare. The privilege of the town as a royal burgh, in electing a representative to Parliament, jointly with four other towns of nearly similar size, has been against the morality of the place, and it may also be added against its industry. The late change in the system of election, and the classing of this with the large and populous towns of Cupar and St Andrews in the exercise of the above-mentioned privilege, have already sensibly diminished the evils alluded to; and it is hoped that the interruptions to regular industry will be less frequent, and the temptations to immoral conduct less abundant. Infidelity has prevailed to some extent, chiefly through the influence and example of one or two individuals. The natural consequence of this has followed; disrespect to religious ordinances, and neglect of the moral and spiritual interests of the young. It is believed that worship is performed in comparatively few families. It must, however, be added, that there is a large body of the inhabitants of this parish, whose general conduct and habits entitle them to respect; and that there are a few who afford good evidence of being actuated by the spirit and the principles of vital Christianity.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Formerly ship-building was carried on here to a considerable extent; but for the last ten years it has entirely ceased. There is a tan-work in the town, at which a considerable quantity of leather

is prepared, also a brewery, and a rope and sail-work. The proximity of the large fishing town of Cellardyke affords facilities for the business of fish-curing. About 600 barrels of cod are cured annually, besides great quantities of herrings in the month of February, when a shoal usually appears at the mouth of the Frith of Forth, and every person fit for labour finds employment. These are exported chiefly to the West India market. Considerable quantities of haddocks are smoked for the home-market. There are at present six fish-curiers in the town. The vessels belonging to the port are eleven in number, including two packets which sail weekly to and from Leith; the import being chiefly goods for the merchants, and the export, grain from the surrounding district of country. A weekly corn-market is held in the town on Saturday. The number of shops is considerable, greater than is necessary for the accommodation of the inhabitants of the parish; but they are frequented by the population of the neighbourhood, and afford at reasonable prices the articles required for household use. There is a mill in Anstruther Easter for the preparation of all kinds of meal.

Wages.—Wages are according to the rate usually given in the country, and vary of course with its commercial prosperity. Those of seamen, from L. 2 to L. 2, 10s. per month; of wrights about 3s. per day; of masons 2s. in winter, and 2s. 6d. in summer; of day-labourers from 1s. 6d. to 2s.; of women employed in fish-curing 1½d. per hour, in field labour 1d. per hour.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Means of Communication.—There is a post-office in the town, (not a sorting office.) The means of public conveyance are, a stage-coach, three times a-week, to Edinburgh, by way of Pettycur; a daily coach to the same city, during the greater part of the year, by way of Largo; and one daily to and from St Andrews. A branch of the National Bank of Scotland was established in Anstruther Easter in May 1832. The number of tradesmen is very considerable: bakers, 5; tailors, 5; master-masons, 4; blacksmiths, 3; saddlers, 2; tinsmith and plumber, 1; shoemakers, 9; wrights, 5; weavers, 6; butchers, 3; watchmaker, 1; bookbinder and stationer, 1. There are two excellent inns in the town; houses in which ale and spirituous liquors are sold, 13—a number far too great for the wants of the inhabitants; and there is no doubt that they have exercised a very prejudicial influence on their morals, by affording undue facilities to intemperance. In general, it may be observed, that

the necessaries and the comforts of life are abundantly furnished, and at a reasonable rate; and that the expense of maintaining a family is materially lessened, by the constant and large supply of fish, brought into the town directly, or from the adjoining fishing station of Cellardyke.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church is most conveniently situated in a large burying-ground, which is surrounded by an excellent wall. It was built in 1634; the spire was ten years later in being completed; and within it is the bell bearing to have been a gift from Andrew Strang, shipmaster. The roof of the church was repaired many years ago; and in 1834 it underwent a thorough repair internally, being entirely re-seated in the most commodious form, and having the pulpit placed in one end and a gallery in the other:—altogether, it is now probably one of the most elegant country churches anywhere to be seen. It was originally built by subscriptions, donations, and the personal labour of some of the parishioners; and has been upheld out of the seat rent fund, carefully husbanded by the kirk-session. The late repair was executed by means of that fund, and a sum borrowed on the security of the seat rents; and it must be observed, that, there being no heritors in the parish, and the town poor, had the fund alluded to not existed, it does not appear how that repair could have been effected. And it must also be stated, to the credit of the kirk-session, that they resisted, some years ago, an attempt to wrest from them the management of the seat-rents, and established their right, and have ever exercised it in a manner satisfactory to the whole community. The church is now seated for 630; the highest price of sittings is two shillings, and the lowest ninepence each; the free sittings are intentionally very few, that the indigent may not feel themselves degraded to the level of absolute pauperism. Within the church, and placed in the south wall, is a monument, supposed to be to the memory of one of the former ministers of the parish, Mr William Moncrieff. The manse was built in the year 1590, by James Melville, the nephew of the celebrated Andrew Melville, whose life has been so ably written by the late lamented Dr M'Crie. At that period the worthy and pious James Melville had the pastoral charge of what have long since been five parishes, viz. Kilrenny, Anstruther Easter and Wester, Pittenweem, and Abercromby. Having succeeded in obtaining ministers to the others, he devoted himself to Kilrenny, which then

included Anstruther Easter. In his Diary* he says, "that the parishioners of Kilrenny bound themselves to build him a house, upon a piece of ground which the Laird of Anstruther gave freely for that purpose; but he adds, it would never have been perfected, unless the bountiful hand of his God had made him take the work in hand himself." The town and landward parish scarcely afforded half of the building materials; the remainder of the expense he bore himself,—the whole cost of the erection being upwards of 3500 marks, or about L. 190 Sterling. It remains to this day, with very few alterations, and these only in the interior, if we except a paltry addition made to it by a former minister, not at all in the substantial style of the original building. The situation is remarkably well chosen; the walls are of great thickness; the lower story consists of three vaulted cellars; the ceiling of the apartments in the second storey is as lofty as in most modern buildings; that of the third much less so. A staircase, in the form of a round tower, is carried up the whole height of the building, at the top of which there is a small apartment, commanding a very fine prospect, and having on the outside, chiselled in stone, these words—"The Watch Tower." This manse, at present far inferior to modern manses, might, with a judicious repair, be made a most commodious dwelling, and might remain for generations a monument of the judgment and liberality of one who, during his harassed life, was scarcely permitted to occupy it for any length of time together. It is ascertained that the burden of upholding the manse lies upon the town.

There is no glebe, properly so called, belonging to the minister of the parish of Anstruther Easter. The land which goes under that name, about nine acres, is a mortification as part of stipend, which is made up of several smaller mortifications; the tithes † of fish brought into port; a grant of part of the bishop's rents out of the lands of Kilrenny; and a sum from the Exchequer,—the amount of the whole may be estimated at nearly L. 200 per annum.

The outward means of spiritual improvement afforded to the parishioners are, public worship on the Sabbath, forenoon and

* The Diary of James Melville was published in 1829, by the Bannatyne Club, from a manuscript in the Advocates' Library.

† The right to the tithes of fish was purchased by James Melville; and such was their value in his time, that he deemed them sufficient to afford a permanent stipend to the minister of the parish. Now, however, the tithes are with difficulty collected, and, though great quantities of fish are brought into the port, they have for many years yielded little.

afternoon, and occasionally also in the evening; the yearly celebration of the Lord's Supper in the month of May; a Sabbath evening school; prayer meetings held once in two months; and the usual visitations of the sick by the minister. The average yearly number of communicants for the first time is about 9. The communicants, in all, are about 330; of whom 85 are on the roll as male heads of families, according to the General Assembly's act on Calls. The probable average amount of extraordinary collections made in the church, for charitable and missionary purposes, is L. 8 annually. A Bible and Missionary Society, composed of members belonging to the Established Church in the parishes of Anstruther and Kilrenny, has, since its formation three years ago, distributed yearly to various missionary objects about L. 18.

There are three Dissenting meeting-houses in this parish—Burgher, Independent, and Baptist. The families connected with them, belonging to the parish, are, in all, about thirty-three. There is also a Bible and Missionary Society, composed of members belonging to the different denominations of Dissenters, whose funds are believed to be considerable.

Education.—There is only one school in the parish, the parochial or burgh school. The branches taught are, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and occasionally Latin. The average number of scholars attending the school is about 80. The school-house is upheld by the town, as also the teacher's dwelling-house, which has a good garden attached, and was lately rebuilt. The teacher is appointed by the Town-Council, and he has no other salary than L. 5, 6s. 8d. per annum derived from the town. There are two mortifications, Henderson's and Walker's, of L. 4 and L. 2 respectively, on the former of which a number of poor children are educated.

Friendly Societies.—1. The Sea Box Society was formed in 1618, and incorporated by royal charter in 1784. The funds were originally raised by a subscription of 8d. in the pound of shipmasters and seamen's wages; latterly by one guinea from masters, and six shillings from seamen; annually. The rent of lands in the possession of the society amounts to about L. 390 per annum, out of which, provision is made for decayed shipmasters and seamen belonging to, or trading from the port, their widows, and children, and grandchildren if orphans. The management is vested in the shipmasters, who choose a box-master and clerk and

factor. The accounts are audited by the representative of the Anstruther family or by the minister of the parish, or both. This society is of great benefit to the parish.

2. The Trades Box, or Burgess and Trades Poor-Box Society possesses land, originally purchased with money accumulated from donations, mortcloth dues, &c. There is no annual subscription. It affords aid chiefly to aged and infirm freemen, whether residing in the town or not, and occasionally to those disabled by sickness. Its affairs are managed by a committee.

Besides these two, there are four other societies, that administer relief to their members in sickness and in old age, and also to their widows, and sometimes to their children. They are, 1. the Merchant Mechanic Box; 2. St Aile's Lodge of Free Masons; 3. the Friendly Society; 4. the Caledonian Gardeners' Lodge. They are all, so far as we can learn, under good management, and are of great service to many under the casualties of life.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—An assessment for the poor has never been resorted to in this parish. The number of the poor regularly receiving aid from the kirk-session funds is 18, and the average sum allotted to each per week is one shilling. The funds for this purpose arise from the contributions at the church door, which amount weekly to 8s. 6d.; from the rent of lands in the parishes of Pittenweem and Anstruther Wester, mortified for the behoof of the poor, and amounting to L. 34, 10s. An annual collection is made in the church, in the month of December, for the purpose of providing clothing to the poor, and usually amounts to L. 3. Besides this, about the same period of the year, a subscription is made by the inhabitants of the town, to procure a supply of coals for the poor, averaging L. 11. A female society was established this year, for aiding the destitute, and at present, 6d. per week to each of sixteen poor people is distributed from its funds. On the whole, the provision for the poor in this place appears ample, (subject of course to the usual burdens that fall on the funds under the management of kirk-sessions, such as salaries to church officers, aliment to illegitimate or deserted children, and relief to the occasional poor,) and the idea of levying an assessment on householders never having been entertained, there is not that haste in applying for relief amongst the poor, which is said to exist in many parishes in Scotland.

January 1837.