

PARISH OF LANGTON.

PRESBYTERY OF DUNSE, SYNOD OF MERSE AND TIVIOTDALE.

THE REV. JOHN BROWN, D. D. MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name, Boundaries, &c.—THE name of this parish is derived from the village of Langton or Lang-tun, which was probably so called from its long straggling figure. It extended at one time from the immediate neighbourhood of Langton House almost to the eastern limits of the parish. But, as it interfered with some improvements which Mr Gavin, a former proprietor, wished to introduce, he offered to the inhabitants, on advantageous terms, another situation about half a mile distant. They accepted his offer,—removed in 1760,—and, in honour of its founder, named the new village Gavinton.

The figure of the parish is irregularly triangular, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles in mean length, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ in breadth. It contains $11\frac{1}{4}$ square miles, lying partly in the Merse and partly among the Lammermoors, which, under the name of Langton-Edge, run from east to west. Their height may be about 900 feet above the level of the sea. Langton-Burn, almost the only stream in the parish, is so small as scarcely to deserve notice. It runs eastward, and joins the Blackadder. The air, like that of the surrounding district, has always been reckoned pure, and the situation healthy.

Botany.—That part of the parish which lies among the Lammermoors is almost completely covered with heath and some of the coarser grasses. By the sides of its streams, and in marshy situations, may be found *Myosotis repens* of Don, *Veronica scutellata* with its flowers sometimes white, and the beautiful *Sedum villosum*. *Viola lutea* grows sparingly on the hills; *Saxifraga hirculus* has been lately discovered; and, for the last two summers, *Hypnum stramineum* has been noticed in fruit in a boggy situation, which does not seem to have been elsewhere observed. Its fruit is perfect in June. Near Langton-Lees there is a small stream, the steep banks of which are covered with natural wood. Its most interesting plants

are *Rubus saxatilis*, *Cnicus heterophyllus*, *Gymnostomum tenue*, and *Hookeria lucens*. A little farther down, the same stream enters and passes through Langton-Wood, a scene of much natural beauty. Among its banks are found, more or less plentifully, *Veronica montana*, *Rumex sanguineus*, (variety with red veins,) *Chryso-splenium alternifolium*, *Hieracium molle*, *Hypnum alopecurum*, (in fruit,) and *Orthotrichum diaphanum*. In the lower, and cultivated parts of the parish, *Cerastium arvense*, *Tragopogon major*, (lately added to the British Flora,) *Anthoceros punctatus*, and *Peziza Macropus*, are the most remarkable plants.

The following species are not rare, but may deserve notice, as not having been observed elsewhere in Berwickshire:—*Bidens cernua*, *Myosotis sylvatica*, *Gymnostomum fasciculare*, *Bryum marginatum*, *Hypnum piliferum*, *H. murale*, *Jungermannia reptans*, *J. tomentilla*, *Sticta fuliginosa*.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Historical Notices.—From its situation, the village of Langton was exposed to all the misfortunes of Border warfare. It was burned in 1558 by Sir Henry Percy and Sir George Bowes, and at other times pillaged by marauding parties from England.

During the reign of David I. the manor of Langton, with the advowson of the church, belonged to Roger de Ow, a Northumbrian follower of Prince Henry. Roger de Ow granted to the monks of Kelso the church of Langton, which was accordingly held by Henry the Parson. From him the estate passed to William de Vetereponte, or Vipont, who continued to these monks the church with its tithes and lands, adding also those of Coleman's Flat.

In 1296, John Vicar of Langton swore fealty to Edward I. at Berwick, and, in return, obtained a writ for the restitution of his vicarage.

The first Vipont was succeeded by his eldest son by his first wife, Emma de St Hilary, and this family continued Lords of Langton till Sir William Vipont was killed at Bannockburn in 1314. Immediately after this, the estate passed into the family of Cockburn by marriage with the heiress of Vipont. Alexander Cockburn of Langton was keeper of the great seal to Roberts II. and III. He was made hereditary *Ostiarius Parliamenti*, and this office was annexed to the barony of Langton by charter of James IV. February 20, 1504.

William Cockburn of Langton was created a baronet by Charles I. in 1627. Sir Alexander Cockburn was killed in the

battle of Fontenoy. The estate continued in their family till 1758, when it was sold to David Gavin, Esq.

Antiquities.—On the hill near Raecleugh-head, the traces of two military stations still remain. The ditches are very entire, and belonged, it is thought, to a Danish encampment. The traces of another encampment are also to be seen on the moor near Choice-Lee, where a regiment was stationed after the rebellion of 1715 to keep the Jacobites in awe. The place is still called Camp-Muir.

In 1792, when removing a large cairn from the top of the Crumstane-hill, close to the site of the present church, several earthen urns of various sizes were discovered. They contained human bones, but bore no inscription. Stone coffins were also found on the farms of Middlefield and Crease, one of which was $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, 2 deep, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ broad. In 1813, a bracelet of gold was found in a small stream at the Battle-Muir. It measured nine inches in circumference, and was sold for L. 36.

III.—POPULATION.

The following is a state of the population at different periods when a census was taken :

	Males.	Females.	Total.
1755,	-	-	290
1793,	211	224	435
1801,	189	239	428
1811,	199	219	418
1821,	219	258	477
1831,	215	228	443
1833,	-	-	508

Some extensive improvements on the grounds at Langton House, begun since the census of 1831, by affording occupation for more workmen, may in part account for the increased population of 1833.

The average number of births for the last seven years, as entered in the parish register, is $9\frac{3}{7}$. Dissenters do not commonly register the births of their children.

The village of Gavinton contains 243 inhabitants. The rest of the population live on the various farms.

Number of individuals above 70,	-	-	24
unmarried men above 50,	-	-	10
unmarried women above 45,	-	-	19
families in the parish,	-	-	96
chiefly employed in agriculture,	-	-	48
in trade, manufactures, and handicraft,	-	-	22

The parish, with one or two trifling exceptions, belongs to the Marchioness of Breadalbane, who usually resides here during part of the year, and has of late made great improvements on the grounds around Langton House.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—The northern part of the pa-

rish, containing about 4000 imperial acres, lies among the Lammermoors, and is fit only for sheep-pasture. The rest is arable, consisting of about 3000 acres, 900 of which are annually let as grass parks. About 200 acres are covered by wood. Oak, ash, elm, beech, birch, plane, Scotch fir, spruce, and larch, are the kinds grown, and they are all in a thriving condition. The recent plantations, which amount to about 100 acres, will soon afford important shelter to the various farms.

Rent of Land.—The rent of arable land varies from 17s. to about L. 3 per English acre. It may average L. 1, 7s. The average rent of grass lately has been L. 3, 17s. 6d. per cow, L. 2, 10s. per ox, and 12s. per sheep. The cattle are chiefly of the Tees-water breed, the sheep Leicester and Cheviot, with a few black-faced.

Rate of Wages.—The yearly wages of a farm-servant are 10 bolls of oats, 3 of barley, 1 of pease, L. 3 in cash, and he has a cow kept, which is equal to L. 6 more. While he is cutting and carrying in the crop, his food is provided by the farmer. He has, besides, a house, a small garden, and half a rood of land for potatoes, for all which he furnishes a labourer in time of harvest. He also provides a labourer for hoeing turnips, &c. and for this he is allowed 10d. per day.

The wages of an unmarried servant, besides board, are L. 8 per annum; those of a female-servant from L. 6 to L. 7, 7s. The wages of shepherds are the same with those of farm-servants, except that, instead of L. 3 in cash, they have a few sheep grazed, varying in number according to the nature of the pasture.

Day-labourers on farms receive from 8s. to 9s. per week. They work ten hours in summer, and in winter as long as day-light lasts. While the corn is carrying in, farm-servants are ready to work at all times, labouring sometimes the greater part of the night. Scarcely any class of men is more respectable than the farm-servants of Berwickshire. They are intelligent, industrious, and sober.

Masons, in summer, work ten hours, in winter about seven and a-half or eight. During the summer of 1833, they had 14s. per week, and for the three preceding seasons 13s. For a short time last winter they had 11s., but afterwards 10s., which had been the rate of their wages for three preceding years. Wrights work the same number of hours with masons, and their wages are nearly the same.

Smiths are allowed L. 2, 10s., with the driving of a cart of coals (valued at 8s.) for keeping up the iron work required for a pair of farm-horses. This includes shoes, the iron work of a

plough, harrows, and cart, exclusively of wheels and axletree. Other work, as that connected with gates or machinery, is charged at 5d. per lb. The shoe of a riding-horse costs 8d.

Husbandry.—The arable farms are managed in five divisions, (or *breaks*, as they are called,) viz. 1. oats; 2. turnips or fallow, according to the nature of the soil; 3. barley or wheat; 4 and 5. grass for two years. This system is prescribed by all the leases on the Langton estate. The turnips are generally eaten on the ground by sheep confined by nets or hurdles. In sowing grain some of the farmers use machines,—a practice which seems rapidly extending.

The kinds of grain commonly sown are wheat, barley, oats, beans, and pease, of which the average produce is towards six bolls per English acre; potatoes yield from 30 to 40 bolls; hay, from 150 to 250 stones, or a little more; turnips, when led off the land, sell at from L. 6 to L. 9; when eaten on the ground, from L. 3, 10s. to L. 5 per acre.

The quantity of grain of all kinds amounts to about 3500 bolls. Two hundred and fifty acres of turnips, and about 150 of hay, are usually grown.

The rental of the parish is a little above L. 4000.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Village.—Gavinton is the only village in the parish, and Dunse, which is two miles distant, is both our market and post-town.

Ecclesiastical State, &c.—The present church was erected in 1798 at the west end of the village of Gavinton. Till that time the old church, which stood near Langton-House, had continued to be used. It is impossible to ascertain when the latter was built. It must, however, have been at a very remote period, for no notice of its erection occurs in the books of the presbytery, and there are tombstones in the churchyard bearing the date of 1620. It seems to have required no repairs at the parochial visitation called in 1684 by order of the Bishop of Edinburgh, while Mr Patrick Walker was minister. At the next visitation in 1700, the presbytery are said to have found “several things necessary to compleat y^e same;” and the moderator, by their appointment, “recommended y^e persons concerned to see to y^e repair y^rof.” At a third visitation in 1721, they discovered that “the roof was in ill condition,” and in 1727 it fell to the ground. It then underwent a thorough repair, and stood till the present church was erected.

At the visitation in 1684, the manse and offices were condemn-

ed by the presbytery, after hearing the evidence (on oath) of Messrs William Moscript and James Walkinshaw, wrights, and John, Daniel, and Alexander Gilkie,* masons. A new manse and offices were then built on a different site; and an excambion of the glebe took place, with the consent of Sir Alexander Cockburn of Langton, and Alexander Cockburn of Blacksmiln, who were present at the meeting. The manse then built was occupied till 1766, when the present was erected by Mr Gavin. Another excambion of the glebe was then also agreed to, but subsequently amended, as being less advantageous to the living. In the year 1819, an important addition to the manse was made by the late Marquis of Breadalbane.

The minister of Langton before the Restoration was Mr John Burn, who retained his charge till the time of his death in 1677. He seems to have been an exceedingly pious and amiable man. More zealously attached to Presbyterian principles than many of his brethren, he attended the presbytery only twice after the establishment of Episcopacy, and yet he remained unmolested till the year 1670, when he allowed some of the ejected ministers to assist him at a communion. He experienced much kindness and countenance from the Cockburns of Langton. Like the Humes of Polwarth and Redbraes, and the Kerrs of Nisbet, this distinguished family was eminent for piety, and suffered in the cause of civil and religious liberty. In 1679 they established a meeting in one of the houses attached to Langton Castle, where they had regularly preaching from Mr Luke Ogle, † (the friend of Mr Gilbert Rule, afterwards Principal of the University of Edinburgh,) Mr John Veitch of Westruther, and Mr Daniel Douglas. This meeting must have been connived at by the bishop and the Duke of Lauderdale, for none of the parishioners were molested for attending it, except John Galloway, the beadle, whom the presbytery appointed to be "put out of his office." There is reason to believe that practical religion flourished greatly in the parish, and that the preaching of Mr Ogle was eagerly resorted to by serious

* The last three were ancestors of some of the present inhabitants of Gavinton.

† Sir Alexander Cockburn resided at that time in Langton Castle, which stood in what is now called the Little Byres Park. A chapel was soon afterwards erected in Langton-wood, opposite Haining-Rigg, which was occupied by Mr Ogle, and where John Veitch is reported to have preached occasionally, and baptized the children of some of the parishioners. The Duke of Lauderdale, though applied to by some of the Episcopalians, refused to institute proceedings against Mr Veitch for preaching in the chapel. After the Revolution, when the parish church was again filled by a Presbyterian minister, it is probable that the chapel was granted to the handful of Episcopalians who resided in the neighbourhood; and from this circumstance it was erroneously supposed to have been an Episcopal chapel.

individuals from the neighbouring districts. Two Episcopalian ministers held the living before the Revolution,—Mr Robert Hooper from 1677 to 1683, and Mr Patrick Walker from 1683 to 1688. The first seems to have been a peaceable man; the second was a bigotted prelatist. Mr Dysart, who was afterwards translated to Coldingham, was the first minister after the Revolution. The next was Mr Dawson, a highly respectable clergyman. He was succeeded in 1727 by his son, Mr James Dawson, who in 1733 was translated to the parish of St Cuthberts. Since that time the living has been held by Mr James Lawrie, who was removed to Hawick in 1757; Dr David Johnston promoted to North Leith in 1765; Mr Andrew Smith, who died in 1789; Mr Alexander Girvan, (formerly minister of Lunan,) who died in 1809; and the present incumbent.

The records of session reach no farther back than 10th September 1727: but there was a more ancient book, which was regularly presented to the presbytery both before the re-establishment of Episcopacy and after the Revolution. It seems to have been the only session-book within their bounds which, except in a single instance, was never transmitted while they were under the government of bishops. The minutes of presbytery for December 6, 1659, state, that “the session-book of Lantoune had been delivered;” and it is mentioned in the account of the visitation of the parish in 1700, that “the presbytery having caled for y^e church Bible, Confession of Faith,”—of which every session was required to have a copy, as well as of the formula to be subscribed by the elders before they entered on the exercise of their office,—“the acts of y^e General Assembly, session-register, and poor’s-box, they were produced and laid before y^e presbytery.” At the visitation of 1721, though the presbytery found that the session had no church Bible, nor Confession of Faith, nor the later acts of Assembly, and ordered them to be bought, yet, when the session-register was called for, it was presented. When laid before them at Dunse the following year, they approved of it in all respects, except an allowance of half-a-crown given by the session to the elder who represented them in the synod, and which the presbytery declared that “they would not suffer to be done by any session within their bounds.”

The first part of the records which remains extends to February 1733, and is deeply interesting. It exhibits a view of the session and of their management of the parish, so admirably fitted to promote the interests of religion, that, if realized at present throughout the parishes of Scotland, it would demonstrate the superior efficiency of an ecclesiastical establishment more irresistibly than

any speculative argument. The session was not only composed of elders who had the spiritual superintendence of particular districts which were marked out and assigned to each, but in accordance with the Acts of Assembly, (which are still binding,) of a corresponding number of deacons who attended to the poor in their several bounds, and assisted at the communion. The minutes always run thus, "Sederunt minister, elders and deacons." It does not appear whether they observed the directions of the General Assembly of 1723, and required the elders when they were ordained to sign the formula contained in the 10th act of the Assembly 1694, but the attention which they paid to their other duties renders this highly probable. They not only assembled from time to time for the exercise of discipline, in which they appear to have been mild and prudent, for electing commissioners to the presbytery and synod, and for examining the communion-roll before the sacrament, but they had frequent meetings for prayer and conference respecting the state of the parish. At these meetings other members besides the moderator engaged in devotion, and he was accustomed to give such exhortations as these,—that they should be "faithful in the exercise of their offices, and give information to the session what irregularities were committed in their several quarters, that so a check might timeously be put to any appearances of vice, and that they themselves should behave in an exemplary manner in their respective bounds."

And along with these attentions on the part of the elders to the conduct of the members, and on the part of the deacons to the necessities of the poor, a kind and steady superintendence was maintained by the presbytery over the ministers and sessions in the different parishes, which must have been followed by the most beneficial results. It was common to call for their records once in two years, and appoint them to be examined. The following is an example of the vigilance which they exercised respecting the deportment of ministers, and a striking proof of their solicitude for their usefulness. "*March 1, 1709.*—The presbytery this day taking again into consideration the affair anent the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and finding that there has offence been given by the sumptuousness of dinners after sacraments, and the great number of persons resorting thereto, do therefore discharge all the members within their bounds from having any persons whatsoever on the Munday or other days at their dinners, except the ministers who have been assisting, and appoint that their discourse at that time be spiritual." At the parochial visitations questions were

put by the presbytery, first to the elders respecting the walk, conversation, and doctrine of the minister; then to the congregation respecting the elders and deacons; then respecting the schoolmaster, session-clerk, precentor, and beadle; and, last of all, to the session respecting the congregation. It is impossible to conceive a system more fitted to promote the diligence and faithfulness of ministers, or the spiritual and moral improvement of parishes. Its effects, accordingly, were visible in a diminution of crime, and an increase of personal and family religion among the surrounding districts.

The next part of the records, from 11th February 1733 to 7th July 1747, has been lost,—through a mistake, it is said, on the part of an ignorant individual who destroyed both these and the more ancient minutes. The rest have been preserved.

The session has at present a copy of the acts of Assembly, and of the formula contained in the 10th act of Assembly 1694, which has been subscribed by the elders. The late Mr Gavin presented them with a pair of silver communion cups; his daughter, Miss Elizabeth Gavin, with a silver baptismal basin; and Lady Elizabeth Pringle, daughter of the late Marquis of Breadalbane, presented them in 1827 with a handsome pulpit Bible and psalm-book. The church, which is at present in excellent repair, contains 250 sittings, all of which are free.

The glebe consists of 10 acres. The stipend consists of L.122, 5s. 4½d., and of 67 bolls, 2 bushels, 2 pecks, 3 quarts, 0.103 of oats, and 38 bolls, 3 bushels, 1 peck, 2 quarts, 1 pint, 972 of barley paid by the Marchioness of Breadalbane; and of 3 bushels, 2 pecks, 1 gallon, 2 quarts, 1 pint, 179 of oats, and 2 bushels, 3 quarts, 1.6.255 of barley paid by Mr Hay of Duns Castle. The teinds are supposed to be nearly exhausted.

The Dissenters attend the different chapels in Duns. Their number throughout the parish is about a third of the population. In the village of Gavinton, containing (September 1833) a population of 243, there were of Churchmen, 182; of the Relief, 33; Burgher and Antiburgher, 28.

It must be observed, however, that among the farm-servants,—a population much less stationary than the inhabitants of villages,—the proportion of Dissenters is greater. The number of communicants in the Established Church averages from 210 to 232.

Education.—The parochial schoolmaster has, for the last seven years, been unfit for duty, and has resigned the management of the school, retaining the salary, which amounts to L. 25, 4s. 4d., with his dwelling-house and garden. An assistant and successor has

been appointed, who, besides a house and garden, and a salary of L. 20 paid by the Marchioness of Breadalbane, receives the school fees and other emoluments. His income may amount to L. 60. The average number of scholars is between 60 and 70. The school is taught on the most approved principles, and the fees charged are,—English reading, 2s. 6d. per quarter; writing, 3s.; arithmetic, 3s. 6d.; geography, 5s.; practical mathematics, 5s.; Latin, 6s.; Greek, 7s. 6d.; French, 7s. 6d.; theoretical mathematics, 8s. 6d. The gross amount of the fees received is about L. 32. There is no other school in the parish.

A Sabbath school is taught by the assistant-schoolmaster, with the aid of some respectable individuals, and under the superintendence of the minister. It has existed, with two short intervals, for nearly twenty years, and has been attended with the most important advantages. There is a library for adults, containing some valuable books in history, biography, and divinity.

Charitable Institutions.—The only institution of this nature is a Friendly Society, instituted in 1803. Its object is to provide support for those members who are suffering from sickness, or who are permanently disabled by the infirmities of age, and to defray, in part, their funeral expenses, with those of their wives. Every applicant must be of a good moral character,—of a healthy constitution,—not exceeding forty years of age,—and must produce a certificate signed by respectable individuals, stating that he is a peaceable member of society. Members are received from any part of the county; but, from the existence of similar societies in Allanton, Chirnside, Swinton, and Dunse, applications are rarely made by persons living at a distance. The terms are, a sum of 7s. 6d. as entry-money, and a permanent quarterly subscription of 1s. 6d. No one is entitled to assistance till after being three years connected with the society. If he should by irregular conduct bring on illness, he receives no aid, but, on the contrary, is liable to a fine not exceeding 5s. Before aid can in any case be granted, the member, if residing in the village of Gavinton, must, within a week, apprise the deputy-director of his illness; or, if living elsewhere, he must apprise the preses or treasurer. Every application must be accompanied by a certificate from the minister and an elder. If a dispute arise between the society and any of its members, it is referred to the decision of two individuals,—one chosen by each party. Should these umpires not agree, they are empowered to choose a third, by whose decision the parties are bound.

The number of members at present on the roll is 146. Those receiving aid are 32, of whom 9 are superannuated and 23 sick.

At an average, the society relieves 21 sick persons and 7 superannuated. The largest sum given to a member when sick is 4s. per week, and this is continued, if required, for three months, after which it is reduced. The least sum is 1s. per week. L. 3 are allowed to defray the expenses of a member's funeral, and L. 1, 10s. for that of his wife.

This society was for a long time exceedingly prosperous; but latterly, like those in the neighbourhood, it has received only a small addition to the number of its members. Its allowance was at first more liberal than the funds would admit, and was consequently reduced,—a circumstance which probably deterred many from joining it. Still it is exceedingly useful; and, as the rate has for some time been stationary, strong hopes are entertained that it will revive.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The annual assessments have been greatly reduced, chiefly by the temporary aid which is furnished from the weekly collections in church to those individuals or families who may require it. They are thus enabled to extricate themselves from difficulties, and prevented from coming permanently on the roll. To enable the session to afford this assistance, the whole of the collections since the commencement of the present incumbent's ministry have been placed at their disposal. The allowance to paupers on the roll averages 1s. 9d. per week; but the session also gives occasional donations of meal and coal during winter, and 8s. or 10s. to each after the communion. In some instances a weekly allowance of 4s. has been given to individuals who had formerly been in more prosperous circumstances; but these instances have been rare. Widows with three or four young children have received 4s. and have had their children educated, sometimes at the expense of the session, sometimes at that of the heritors. It is due to the benevolence of the Marchioness of Brealdbane to say, that there is not a parish in Berwickshire where more liberal provision has been made for the poor.

In 1832 the assessment amounted to L. 29, exclusive of L. 2, 10s. paid to the collector. The number of paupers on the roll was 5, one of whom was so old as to require the attendance of another individual. The collections at the church doors amounted to L. 29, 3s. 0½d. Of this, L. 6, 17s. was paid to the precentor, session-clerk, beadle, presbytery and synod clerks. The remaining L. 22, 6s. 0½d. was distributed, partly among the poor on the roll, and partly among ten individuals not receiving stated assistance.

August 1834.