

PARISH OF MORDINGTON.

PRESBYTERY OF CHIRNSIDE, SYNOD OF MERSE AND TIVIODALE.

THE REV. GEORGE FULTON KNIGHT, A. M. MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Boundaries, Extent, &c.—THIS parish is situated in the south-east corner of the county of Berwick. It is bounded on the north by the parish of Ayton; on the east, by the German Ocean, and the liberties of the town of Berwick on Tweed; on the south, by the river Whitadder; and on the west, by the parishes of Hutton and Foulden. Its form is irregular, somewhat resembling a sand-glass, or the letter g,—on the narrow part of which stand the church and manse; the parish is there only the breadth of the glebe. Its length from north to south is between 3 and 4 miles; its greatest breadth, which is towards the northern extremity, is above 2 miles. Its original extent was very small, consisting only of the barony of Mordington and the estate of Edrington, till the year 1650, when the lands of Lamberton (of much greater extent than the whole of what, before that period, constituted the parish) were disjoined from the parish of Ayton, and annexed to Mordington. In the year 1666, Mordington was disjoined from part of what is now the parish of Longformacus,—when the latter, together with other lands from surrounding parishes, was erected into a new parish.

Topographical Appearances.—The north part of the parish consists of high ground, containing many commanding eminences,—from which is obtained an extensive and splendid prospect of the Merse of Berwickshire, and the wooded and picturesque banks of the Tweed, Whitadder, and Blackadder, together with a considerable part of the county of Northumberland,—while the view is terminated on the south by the bold and lofty range of Cheviot; and on the west, by Ruberslaw, the Eildons, and the Lammermuirs. Toward the east, this highest part of the parish commands a view of the German Ocean, Holy Island, Bamborough Castle, &c. At the extreme north-west of this high ground, there are the remains of a camp

most distinctly and broadly marked, which, from its circular form, seems to be Danish. The hill on which it stands is called Hab or Habchester. The remains of this camp consist of two trenches, 18 or 20 feet high, which seem to have been faced with stones. Half of the circle remains entire, which half is in Mordington parish, and in which it would seem no change has taken place since its construction. The form of the other half, lying in the parish of Ayton, is scarcely discernible, having been ploughed down. No station could have been better selected for observing the movements of an enemy, and for keeping up a communication with the German Ocean, which is not more than a mile distant from it.* Another eminence, about a mile south-east of Habchester, is the spot where the last person burned for witchcraft is alleged to have undergone that fate,—so late as the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is still called the *Witch's Knowe*.

The ground falls by a gentle and gradual descent from this place towards the south, for more than half the length of the parish, till it reaches the river Whitadder, its southern boundary. On the east, it descends towards the sea. The coast of the parish exhibits a continued unbroken line of abrupt rocks, which contain some caverns that were much used by smugglers in foreign spirits, before the erection of a Preventive station at Burnmouth. Detached masses of rock of considerable size stand out into the sea in one or two places, and some of them present an aspect of grandeur and sublimity. The romantic and sequestered fishing village of Ross, at the northern extremity of the parish, is too much an object of interest to the admirers of picturesque scenery not to be noticed. It stands at the foot of a ledge of almost perpendicular rocks divided by a rivulet, which, in rainy seasons, forms many beautiful cascades,—while the sea foam beneath, and the cottages standing almost close upon high water mark, give the scene a very striking appearance.

Climate.—The climate of this parish is generally salubrious. The prevailing winds are west and south, which are frequently violent. The east winds on the coast are cold; but the inhabitants are generally healthy and robust. Among the labouring classes, rheumatism is the most common complaint: there are no distempers, however, peculiar to the district.

Hydrography.—The Whitadder is the only river in the parish, and forms its southern boundary; its many windings and precipi-

* Of this camp, further notice is taken in the Account of the parish of Ayton.

tous banks, clad with wood and moss-covered rocks, possess great beauty.

Geology and Mineralogy.—There are two divisions of rocks in the parish, the upper and the under. The upper consists of a large mass of unstratified rocks, the principal of which are porphyry and trap. The lower consists of stratified rocks, which appear along the sea coast on the north-east, and also on the banks of the Whitadder on the south. Although there has been considerable dispute of late years among geologists about what these last are, it is now generally agreed that they are the *lower members* of the coal formation, or the carboniferous series. The strata, as seen in the ravines and river sides of the lower parts of the parish, consist of numerous alternating beds or strata of shale, sandstone, and indurated marl. The general direction of these strata seems to be from west to east, the dip generally at a considerable angle, but so various, that it is impossible to state the general angle. Beyond the boundaries of the parish to the south, these rocks are succeeded by the coal field of Northumberland.

As a circumstance tending to confirm the conclusion, that the lower division of the parish belongs to the old coal formation, and not to the new red sandstone, as has been supposed by several geologists, we may mention the fact, that *coal does make its appearance* at several places near the sea coast of the parish,—that various attempts have been made to work it,—and that, from its importance, the present proprietor has lately made several investigations with the view of working it.

Some old pits and mines have been cleared, which are believed to have been wrought half a century ago, and by which two workable seams of coal have been discovered, an upper and an under; the former 13 inches thick, and of good quality; the latter 26. It is stated by fishermen, that a third much lower and thicker is to be seen at very low tides. The proprietor has not yet completed his investigations, but, from the great depth of the coal, except when approached below the coast rocks, and near high water-mark, the working of it would seem likely to be attended with some difficulty. Lime in considerable quantity has been found in the vicinity of the coal, but it is of an inferior quality.

On this coast, a mile or two south-east of the village of Ross, the sandstone strata are *nearly vertical*,—which, indeed, we may naturally expect from their vicinity to the trap rocks. In other

parts of the parish, it is impossible to perceive the junction of the trap and the sandstone, on account of the thick covering of soil.

It may be mentioned, that in the strata of shale and indurated marl below Edrington House, a few *vegetable fossils* have been found.

Zoology.—There are no animals, wild or tame, peculiar to the parish. The rarer wild animals are, otters on the banks of the Whitadder, wild ducks on the high grounds, and herons. Foxes abound in the lower parts of the parish on the Edrington estate, and badgers are met with among the sea rocks. The common kinds of game, as hare, partridge, black-cock, dotterel, and woodcock, are plentiful. These last are sometimes found in the early part of the season, weak and exhausted, probably by their long flight across the German Ocean. Brown and silver pheasants are occasionally found in the woods of Edrington.

This coast has long been famed for white fish, every variety of which is to be found on it, and is sent chiefly to the Edinburgh market by sea. Cod, ling, and haddock are the most common kinds. Salmon are also found on the coast, and have been fished with bag-nets. There are no oysters nor muscles; but lobsters and crabs are plentiful; the former are sold chiefly for the London market to smacks which pass the coast at stated intervals. The Whitadder contains trout and salmon, which ascend the river in spawning time.

Botany.—For the more common plants in this as in the adjoining parishes, the reader is referred to the “Flora of Berwick-on-Tweed,” by Dr Johnston. The following habitats of some rarer plants additional to those given in the Flora may be mentioned; *Pedia olitoria*, found by Mr Carr, surgeon, Ayton, in the ravine above Ross: *Parietaria officinalis*, on the side of the old aisle of the former church, in front of Mordington House, by the same: *Rosa rubiginosa*, on the sea banks half way between Ross and Lamberton Sheills, a single shrub, but perfectly wild, by Dr Johnston: *Senecio tenuifolius*, in the lane between Edrington and Cocklaw.*

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Antiquities.—The church or chapel of Lamberton, which was either at one time a parish church, or, as seems more probable, a chapel of ease to Ayton, and an adjunct of the Abbey of Coldingham, is celebrated as having been the place where King

* Dr Johnston, although very extensively employed as a medical practitioner, finds leisure to cultivate, and with eminent success, several departments of natural history.

James IV. of Scotland, and Margaret, daughter of Henry VII. of England, were contracted in marriage in the year 1503,—which paved the way for the happy union, first of the two crowns, and afterwards of the two kingdoms. This chapel has now nothing remaining but part of the outer walls, and is used as the burying-place of the family of Mr Renton of Lamberton.

The old castle of Edrington, of which but a small part also has escaped the mutilating hand of time, is situated at the south of the parish, on the top of an almost perpendicular rock, which is clad with wood, and washed by the winding Whitadder below. Like many of the old forts in this neighbourhood, it was the scene of frequent contests in the border wars. Its possession was often included in treaties between the kings of England and Scotland. In the year 1534, it was restored by Henry VIII. to James V., from the latter of whom it had been taken in a former war,—Henry declaring that he made this restitution as a proof of his gratitude, benevolence, and friendship for the Scottish king. The possession of this castle, and the lands connected with it, was thus confirmed to the King of Scotland and his subjects, its former owners, free from molestation or injury on the part of the King of England, his vassals, or subjects, or the inhabitants of the town and castle of Berwick-on-Tweed; and it probably continued in this situation till the union of the two kingdoms. From its commanding situation, it seems to have been singularly well fitted for defence, especially from the south, and was likely to have been regarded by the English as an important out-post when they were in possession of the town of Berwick.*

Eminent Men.—Under this head there is nothing to be mentioned,—except that the Rev. Alexander Lauder, who wrote a work against Episcopacy, and lived in the beginning of last century, was minister of this parish.

III.—POPULATION.

In 1755, the population was only	-	181
In 1792, it had increased to	-	335
By the census of 1821, it was	-	302
of 1831,	-	301

* It is worthy of notice, that below this castle, and close by the bank of the river, there is a flour-mill belonging to the proprietor of this part of the estate, the water-wheel of which not only drives the mill, but also a thrashing-machine, situated upwards of 500 feet above it, by means of a shaft 600 feet long, which runs through a tunnel in the rock above. This is an instance of the distance to which the powers of machinery may be transferred by the application of very simple means.

On the estate of Upper Edrington there is a sequestered glen, which is said to have given rise to the old Scottish song of "Tibby Fowler o' the Glen."

This decrease in the population since 1792 is chiefly to be ascribed to the union of small farms, and the consequent diminution in the number of farm-servants.

1. Yearly average of births,	-	-	-	-	6
marriages,	-	-	-	-	1
deaths,	-	-	-	-	4
2. Average number of persons under 15 years of age	-	-	-	-	120
between 15 and 30,	-	-	-	-	54
30 and 50,	-	-	-	-	85
50 and 70,	-	-	-	-	32
above 70,	-	-	-	-	10
3. Number of unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers, upwards of 50 years of age,	-	-	-	-	7
of unmarried women, and widows, upwards of 45,	-	-	-	-	10
4. Average number of children in each family,	-	-	-	-	6
5. Number of families in the parish,	-	-	-	-	59
of inhabited houses,	-	-	-	-	59
of uninhabited,	-	-	-	-	5

It may be noticed, as an instance of the longevity of fishermen, that there is at present a boat's crew of four men belonging to the villages of Ross and Burnmouth, whose united ages amount to 301 years. Though no longer able for the rougher toils of their mode of life, they employ themselves in lobster-catching.

Character of the People.—The inhabitants of this parish are in general frugal and industrious, orderly in their habits, and contented with their condition. They present an illustration of the high superiority of the purely agricultural districts over the manufacturing, in regard to the general character of the population. No inhabitant of the parish has been convicted of a crime before a court of justice in the memory of man.

As this parish lies on the border between Scotland and England, the illicit traffic of smuggling Scotch whisky into England is carried on to a considerable extent at two public-houses on the turnpike-roads to Berwick-on-Tweed. Those who engage, however, in this unlawful employment, are persons of low character from Berwick, who buy the spirits at these two public-houses, and convey them secretly into England. A guard of excise officers, which is maintained by Government at considerable expense, traverses the roads,—by which means the traffic has lately somewhat decreased, but it is still carried on to a considerable extent; and its demoralizing influence on those engaged in it, is lamentably apparent. No remedy, however, seems likely to avail, but an equalizing of the duties on spirits in the two countries.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

This parish may be regarded as exclusively agricultural; for, with the exception of the small fishing village of Ross, it is entire-

ly devoted to the occupation of husbandry. There are 40 males employed in agriculture, 6 in handicrafts, 14 are engaged in fisheries, and there are at present 4 superannuated labourers.

Agriculture.—The parish contains 2597 acres of cultivated land, 26 acres in plantations, and 900 acres uncultivated; these last are part of the lands of Lamberton, which, though generally spoken of as “muir land,” consist to a very great extent of most profitable pasture ground; and a considerable part of it was forty years ago under the plough. Since that period, this land has been in permanent pasture, consisting of dry uplands. This forms about three-fourths of the whole of the land on the farm of Lamberton not at present cultivated. The remainder consists of boggy or marshy grounds, and about 100 acres of heath land; which, from its rocky barren nature, seems to be the only soil in the parish which it would be impossible to cultivate to advantage. At present, owing to the extremely low price of grain, and from the uncultivated ground rearing such good and healthy stock, the price of which is unusually high, it is deemed unadvisable to plough any part of it; but, should a period arrive, when, from a change in the state of markets, it might be considered advantageous to improve this land, the whole might be again made arable at very little expense.

It is supposed that 800 acres might, with a profitable application of capital, be added to the cultivated land of the parish.

Rent of Land.—The average rent of arable land in the parish is L. 1, 5s. per acre. Cows are grazed at L. 5 for the season.

Wages of Labour.—Labourer’s wages are the same as in all the neighbouring parishes, viz. 10s. in summer per week, and 9s. in winter; artisans 2s. 6d. per day. The practice prevails here, as in neighbouring parishes, of having farm work performed by what is called *bondage service*. Farm-servants, called *hinds*, are paid, as in other parishes, partly in grain, and partly in money. Their general allowance is, of oats, 9 bolls, of six imperial bushels; of barley 3 ditto of ditto; pease 1, ditto of ditto; an allowance of L. 4 Sterling, which among them is called *sheep-money*, in lieu of a small number of sheep they formerly were permitted to keep; and a cow’s grass, with aliment for the cow in winter. There is thus secured to themselves and their families a fixed supply of the necessary articles of subsistence, whatever may be the state of the market. This mode of paying farm-servants keeps them from ever being in want, while they are able to work; and deprives them, in a great measure, of

the power of spending money imprudently. The very favourable effect of it, therefore, on the morals of the people is too important not to deserve special notice.

Husbandry.—The situation of this parish is peculiarly favourable to the purposes of agriculture, the lands in general consisting of a dry and manageable soil, which the skilful farmer can turn to great advantage; and the climate being so favourable, that grain, even in the latest seasons, is commonly brought to maturity. There is a ready market for every kind of farm produce at the town of Berwick-on-Tweed, which is only four miles distant. There corn is sold by sample, and the utmost punctuality observed by the corn-merchants, as to payment. To the recently established market at Eyemouth corn is also sent. Some part of this is disposed of to the millers in the neighbourhood, whose mills on the banks of the Whitadder (one of which lies in this parish) manufacture a considerable quantity of meal, flour, barley, &c. The wool-staplers from Yorkshire come here at particular seasons to purchase the wool; while fat stock is sold to dealers from Morpeth,—to fleshers in Berwick,—and at a monthly market at Ayton.

Berwick supplies the agriculturist with manure, which is much used in turnip husbandry, though within these five or six years bone-dust has been greatly in request. Bones in considerable quantity are imported at Berwick from Prussia and other continental countries,—are ground at mills in the neighbourhood,—and sold at from 18s. to 20s. per imperial quarter. This kind of manure has greatly superseded the former, being suitable for the light soil of the parish; and it is more easily, and at less expense, conveyed to the higher grounds. Very considerable improvements in the cultivation of the soil have taken place during the last ten or twenty years. Draining has been and is carried on to a very considerable extent, so that the land has become greatly more productive. Every species of white and green crops is raised, particularly barley, oats, turnips, and artificial grasses. Wheat and beans are raised in smaller quantities than the other kinds of grain, because not so suitable to the light soil of the parish. The usual rotation of crops is, first oats, then turnips; after these, barley with grass-seeds, which makes hay the succeeding crop; and the ground upon which it is raised is commonly allowed to remain for some years in grass for pasture,—after which it is again taken up and managed according to the above rotation. There is always, however, a great proportion of the land in grass, and to this the tenants

are commonly bound down in their leases, which extend to the term of nineteen years; and they are seldom permitted to have more than the half of their land in tillage.

But the crop which ought especially to be noticed, on account of the improvements recently made in the mode of its cultivation, is the *turnip crop*. Turnip husbandry is conducted in this parish on an extensive scale. Turnips are highly valuable for feeding cattle during winter, either on neighbouring grass-fields into which they are carried, or by being used in houses or sheds. On the light and dry soil, of which the greatest part of the parish consists, the feeding of sheep on the ground where turnips grow is considered highly advantageous, and is the method universally adopted. The *ruta baga*, or Swedish turnip, whose hardy and durable quality renders it so advantageous to the farmer after the early turnip has been used, is cultivated in the proportion of one-third to the white globe-turnip. The land on an average may yield 5 bolls of 6 bushels of wheat per acre; $6\frac{1}{2}$ of barley; and $7\frac{1}{8}$ of oats. Pease is a crop scarcely at all raised, except in the lower parts of the parish, where the land will yield from 6 to 8 bolls per acre; and of hay no more is raised than is necessary to supply the horses, cattle, &c. in the parish; but on an average of seasons, the crop amounts to from 180 to 220 stones per acre. Potatoes are raised in small quantities for home consumption, and generally amount to from 25 to 30 bolls of 40 imperial stones, per acre. An acre of turnip will pasture ten sheep for six months. The ground is farmed under the four-shift husbandry.

Produce.—The gross amount of the raw produce yearly raised in the parish may be as follows:

Produce of grain of all kinds, 3617 bolls at 24s.	-	-	-	L. 4340	0	0
Of turnips and potatoes, 283 acres.	-	-	-	1153	0	0
Of hay, meadow and cultivated, 12000 stones at 7d.	-	-	-	350	0	0
Of land in pasture, rating it at from L. 3, 10s. to L. 4, 15s. per cow or full-grown ox, grazed, or that may be grazed, for the season; and at 11s. per ewe or full-grown sheep, pastured, or that may be pastured, for the year,	-	-	-	1000	0	0
Total yearly value of raw produce raised,	-	-	-	L. 6843	0	0

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is situated, on the whole, conveniently for the population, being not farther than three miles from the most distant part of the parish. It was built in 1757, when it was removed from its former situation on the south of Mordington House. The field on which it stood is still known

by the name of the "Kirk Park." The church is seated for 173. The average number of communicants is 98. Divine service is, on the whole, well attended by the parishioners, and by a considerable number of members of the Church of Scotland from the liberties of Berwick. The number of families belonging to the Established church is 45; of Dissenting or Seceding families, 14. The average amount of church collections may be stated at L. 8 a-year. The manse was built about twenty years ago, and is in good repair. The glebe consists of fifteen acres and a-half of good arable land, and yields a rent of L. 37, 10s. The stipend is the minimum.

Education.—There is one parochial school, at which fifty children on an average are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, &c. The schoolmaster's salary is the maximum: and his school fees may amount to L. 30 per annum. The people are in general alive to the benefits of education; but their anxiety to put their children soon to work for themselves, frequently induces them to take them from school before their education has been at all properly advanced. There are not more than 2 or 3 persons upwards of fifteen years of age in the parish who cannot read. The total number of scholars attending school in the course of a year is 56.

Library.—There is one small library in the parish, which has been in existence for two years. It was established, and is kept up, by private subscription, and the books are given out gratis.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—This parish, like many on the Scottish border, is very heavily assessed for the poor. The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is 18. The average sum allotted to each per week is 1s. 9d. The only fund from which the maintenance of the poor is derived, is an annual assessment on the proprietors and tenants; its average amount is L. 99, 18s. That so large a sum should be required for a population of only 301, is to be ascribed chiefly to the proximity of the parish to England. After a claim on this parish has been established by a residence of three years, persons remove into England, where, after the lapse of many years, they become paupers; and, not establishing a claim for aid from any English parish, they become burdens on this, the last Scotch parish in which they have established a claim for parochial relief. In proof of this, it may be stated, that, at present, of 19 on the roll, 12 reside in England. It is a remarkable fact, that, in the year 1792, when the former Statistical Account was writ-

ten, there were only *two* paupers on the roll; at present there are 19. Then, the assessment did not exceed L. 7; it is now L. 100. This enormous increase may be ascribed in part to laxity in the administration of the poor-laws; but chiefly to the loss of that feeling of independence which was formerly so noble a characteristic of the Scottish peasantry,—a circumstance to be ascribed almost entirely to the withering influence of the English poor-law system.

Inns, &c.—There are no fewer than four public-houses where spirits are sold. Two of these are at toll-bars; but it is to be hoped that this number will soon be diminished.

Fuel.—Coal is easily obtained by the inhabitants of this parish from the Berwick collieries: it is sold at the rate of from 3s. 4d. to 4s. 8d. per cart load.

February 1835.