

EDINBURGHSHIRE

PARISH OF CRICHTON.

PRESBYTERY OF DALKEITH, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND TWEEDDALE

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1. - Topography and Natural History.

Extent, &c. - This parish is situated in the eastern part of the county of Edinburgh; extending in length to about 5½ miles, and 4½ in breadth. It is bounded on the north and west by the parish of Cranston; on the south, by Borthwick; and on the east, by Fala and Humbie.

Topographical Appearances. - The ground in this parish and neighbourhood is remarkable for its undulating nature; hill and dale following each other in almost unbroken succession. It may be remarked, that these inequalities have been becoming more strikingly apparent for some years back; in several instances, indeed, new irregularities of the surface are observable, and spaces of whole acres are visibly sinking from their former level, and forming large hollows, which but a short time ago could scarcely be noticed.

The river Tyne takes its rise in the upper part of the parish, and, holding a northerly direction for two or three miles, at last flows east through the county of Haddington, and, joined by its tributaries, falls into the sea near Dunbar.

In the lower district of the parish, a great part of the land is of a good deep soil, capable of producing excellent crops, while the rest of it is dry and sharp, and well adapted for turnip husbandry, which is carried on to a very considerable extent in this neighbourhood. In the upper part of the parish, the soil is much inferior, consisting chiefly of a thin moss upon a wet soft sand or clay bottom. Towards the east of this tract, however, the land again gradually improves, and, under a judicious system of management, is now producing crops which may almost vie with those of the more inland parts of the parish.

Wood to a great extent has been grown and cut down in the neighbourhood; excellent specimens of which are still standing round the mansion house of Crichton. Belts of fir encircle the high grounds, - which give an agreeably sheltered appearance to that part of the parish, and, in fact, are strikingly ornamental to the aspect of the country.

In the little glen which the Castle of Crichton overhangs, great numbers of glow-worms are to be met with in summer; and if the admirer of these beautiful creatures would visit this spot in the twilight of the evenings, in the months of July and August, he would find himself amply rewarded in the brilliant display of shining lamps which the little illuminati of the glen are ever and anon beaming out around him. The month of July seems to be the period when the lights which they emit are the most striking and beautiful. After that time, they gradually become fainter, and towards the end of August and beginning of September, are extinguished for the season.

II. - CIVIL HISTORY.

The estate of Crichton, possessed by William Burn Callender, Esq. comprehends by far the greatest part of the parish. The mansion house of the property has been long exchanged by the successive proprietors, for the very handsome residence of Prestonhall, in the neighbouring parish of Cranston. It is worthy of remark, that the garden attached to Crichton House was the first in Scotland, into which the present improved system of horticulture was introduced.

Besides that of Crichton, there are several smaller properties in the parish; Costerton, belonging to the late Rev. Francis Nicoll, D.D. Principal of the United College, St Andrews; Blackcastle, to Alexander Mackay, Esq.; a portion of the estate of John Anderson, Esq. of Whitburgh; and Ford, possessed by the late Simon Fraser, Esq.

Antiquities. - On the estate of Crichton, and at a small distance from the church, stands Crichton Castle, famous in Scotch story, and associated with many of its most remarkable events. Sir Walter Scott, in the Notes to his "Marmion," thus writes regarding this old ruin; "A large ruinous castle on the banks of the Tyne, built at different times, and with a very different regard to splendour and accommodation. The oldest part of the building is a narrow keep or tower, such as formed the mansion of a lesser Scottish Baron; but so many additions have been made to it, that there is now a large court-yard, surrounded by buildings of different ages. The eastern front of the court is raised above a portico, and decorated with entablatures bearing anchors. All the stones in this front are cut into diamond facets, the angular projections of which have an uncommonly rich appearance. The inside of this part of the building, appears to have contained a gallery of great length and uncommon elegance. Access was given to it by a magnificent staircase, now quite destroyed. The soffits are ornamented with twining cordage and rosettes, and the whole seems to have been far more splendid than was usual in Scottish castles."

Adverting to the antiquity of the castle, Sir Walter, in his Descriptive Illustrations of the Provincial Antiquities of Scotland, writes, "the size also and style of the building of the tower on the north-western angle show that it has been erected before the rest of the castle. Its antiquity, therefore, will probably draw back to the fourteenth century."

We must not omit to mention the dungeon, a horrible vault, only accessible by a square hole in the roof, through which captives were lowered into this den of darkness and oblivion. This pit is termed the "massie more;" a name of eastern origin, and still applied to the dungeons of the ancient Moorish castles in Spain.

The lofty massive and solid architecture impresses the spectator with a sense rather of awe than of beauty. Near the castle still stand the ruins of what appears to have been a chapel. Upon the property of Longfaugh, and forming now a part of the Crichton estate, there are very perfect remains of a Roman camp. It stands upon a rising ground, commanding one of the finest and most extensive views which the country can produce; is of a circular form, and the entrenchments entirely marked out all around. Neither the Roman camp upon the Marquis of Lothian's ground to the west, nor that farther down the country, retain their distinctive characteristics so well defined as the one in this parish.

Parochial Registers. - The parochial registers have been kept with very commendable

regularity since 1687; in which year, the ordination of the first minister after the Revolution is thus recorded in the register of discipline: "November (1687,) Mr Mathew Selkrig was ordained minister of Crichton by the Presbyterian persuasion at Steils Mains. His call was given by certain heritors and people of the parishes of Crichton, Cranston, Ormiston, and Humble."

III.- POPULATION.

Population in	1801,	923
	1811,	1082
	1821,	1195
	1831,	1325
	Present population,	1163
Of these there reside in the village of Pathhead, as nearly as can be ascertained,		749
In the country parts of the parish,		414
Yearly average of baptisms for the last seven years,		29
marriages,		9
Number of proprietors of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards,		5
unmarried men above 50, bachelors and widowers,		28
unmarried women above 45,		22
widows,		52
Number of families in the parish in 1831,		309
chiefly employed in agriculture,		57
trade, manufactures, or handicraft,		70

The number of illegitimate births during the last three years is 4.

IV.- INDUSTRY.

Agriculture. - There are in the parish about 3900 Scotch acres; of these there are in tillage about 3300; moorland and outfield 450. The remainder may be stated as under wood. Since the date of the last Statistical Account several hundred acres have been brought into constant cultivation, and even now very much indeed is doing by the present skilful and enterprising tenants to render the whole soil more productive and profitable.

Lime Quarries. - Limestone to a very considerable extent has been and still is wrought upon the Crichton estate. It is much valued for its superiority in building, and, for several years, many hundred tons were annually driven, to supply the immense demand which the builders of Edinburgh then required. Great quantities are now carried south for the purposes of manure.

Coal Mines. - Thin strata of coal are found in different parts of the parish, but at present no pits are opened for working.

Amount of Raw Produce. - It is in many instances difficult to come very near the truth, with respect to the gross amount of raw produce in a parish. As nearly as the writer of these observations has been able to ascertain it, it may be stated as under:-

Grain of different kinds	-	-	-L. 5660
Potatoes and turnips about	-	-	1900
Hay about	-	-	1800

V. - PAROCHIAL ECONOMY

Village, &c. - Pathhead is the principal village in the parish, made up for the most part of feus from the property of Crichton. The great road to the south, leading by Lauder, passes through the village, at the foot of which, a most magnificent bridge over the Tyne has lately been erected upon the Ford property, under the direction of Sir John Dalrymple, the present spirited convenor for this district of roads. The bridge consists of five arches 80 feet high, by 50 feet span, and crossing the beautiful valley, between Ford and the finely wooded grounds of Prestonhall and, Oxenford, presents a truly picturesque and commanding appearance.

Means of Communication. - There is a post-office at Pathhead, where are two arrivals and dispatches daily; and four coaches run on this line of road between Edinburgh and the south. The convenient distance from Dalkeith opens up a most ready market for the agricultural produce of the parish, so that altogether the means of communication which it enjoys are of a very superior nature.

Ecclesiastical State. - It is to be regretted that the situation of the church is inconvenient for almost the whole population, standing as it does at the western extremity of the parish, distant from its most populous village two miles, and fully four from its eastern boundary. It is a fine old building in the form of a cross, and was founded in 1449 for a provost, nine prebendaries, and two singing-boys, out of the rents of Crichton and Locherwart. Within the last twenty years, the church has undergone a thorough repair, and is now perhaps one of the most handsome and comfortable in all the country. The church is seated for 600, but its distant situation excludes the hope of any such number attending regularly. The average number of communicants may be stated at 290.

Manse, &c. - The manse was built in 1758, and is in very good repair. There are between 6 and 7 acres of glebe, which is excellent land, and worth L.8 per acre. The stipend is paid in oat-meal and barley; of the former there are nearly 169 cwt., and of the latter 792 bushels Imperial measure; besides L.8, 6s. 8d. in name of communion elements. The number of families connected with the Established Church is 189. The number of Dissenters in the parish is very considerable, resulting chiefly from the remote position of the church, and from the circumstance of a Dissenting meeting-house being placed in the immediate neighbourhood of Pathhead, better situated for many, who, from age and other causes, cannot conveniently attend the parish church. The number of Dissenting families is 79.

Education. - Besides the parochial, there are four other schools in the parish. The salary of the parochial schoolmaster is the maximum, viz. L.34, 4s. 4½d., and the average amount of his school-fees may be about L.30. No salaries are attached to any of the other teachers. Their schools are, in general, pretty well attended, and the branches taught in them, as in the parish school, are those commonly in use in the country. The fees being moderate, the advantages of education are very generally embraced by the people, with the exception of the children of colliers, a good many of whom are resident in Pathhead. These neglected little ones are found useful in assisting their parents in the coal-pits, and the comparatively high wages which the creatures gain, serve too much as a hinderance to their early education, and often, indeed, are the means of nearly excluding them altogether from that blessing. It requires to be here stated, that, within these two years, an Infant School has been opened in Pathhead, under the

patronage and support of Mrs Burn Callender of Prestonhall. This institution is answering many of the expectations of its benevolent projector, and promises, with the blessing of God, to be productive of much and lasting good.

Library. - There is a circulating library in Pathhead. It contains a good many of the standard works of the present time, and is in a thriving way.

Friendly Societies. - A society was formed in 1818, consisting of ploughmen and others in the parish, called the "Whipman Society," the object of which was to raise a fund for the supply of distressed members, and to allow a certain sum at the death of a member or a member's wife, to defray the funeral charges, The Society has at present on its roll 68 members, and its funds amount to L.180. A "Juvenile Friendly Society," having very interesting objects in view, was instituted in 1833. It is in a flourishing condition; its funds amount to L. 150, and the present number of its members is 232.

Poor and Parochial Funds. - Pauperism is very much upon the increase in this parish, and the evils resulting from it are grievously felt. The fine feeling of independence, which so nobly distinguished even the poorest of Scotsmen in past years, and rendered them the honour and the pride of Britain, is now passing fast away, and the demoralising influence, arising from the want of this spirit, is creeping as a pestilence over this neighbourhood. Instead of spurning from them the parish supply, and striving to support themselves and their children, by their own independent exertions, as their fathers would have done before them, they now court the degrading pittance of parochial aid, and clamour as loudly for a place in the poor's roll, as though the highest merit lay in such a distinction. There are at present 35 individuals receiving supply from the parish, the average of whose monthly allowance is 4s. There are others to whom occasional relief is given. The assessment for the last seven years averages L.139.

Alehouses. - The number of alehouses not only in this but neighbouring parishes, calls loudly for an improvement in the present system of licensing such nurseries of licentiousness and debauchery.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The most striking variations betwixt the present state of the parish, and that which existed at the time of the last Statistical Account, are to be found in the improved system of agriculture now pursued, which, in the hands of a skilful and intelligent tenantry, is producing effects highly advantageous to the community, affording a ready supply of labour to the industrious, and enhancing the value of the properties, where their capital and skill are exerted.

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