

*Topographical Description of the Parish of Aberlady.**By the Reverend Dr Neil Roy, Minister of that Parish.*

THIS parish is not so extensive as formerly, the lands of *Cotts*, and greatest part of the estate of *Redhouse*, having been disjoined from it, and annexed to Gladsmuir at the erection of that church and parish, 1695.

Aberlady church, in the county and presbytery of Haddington, and commissariat of Dunkeld, stands near the shore, about fifteen miles east of Edinburgh. The parish is bounded on the north and west by the sea, on the south by Gladsmuir and Haddington, on the east by part of Haddington and Dirleton, from the last of which it is separated by the water of Peffer, which rising on the lands height near Congalton, runs almost due west, till it falls into Aberlady Bay at Luffness-point. From this point, or a little above it, where the tide ceases to flow, the whole Bay, between Aberlady and Gulan shores, is left dry at low water for near two miles. At spring tides, vessels of sixty or seventy tons may come up the Peffer to within a few hundred yards of Aberlady, and lie perfectly safe, on a soft clay bottom, if properly secured by anchors against the north-east wind.

The town of Haddington claims a right, by royal grant, of a road forty feet wide, from the west gate of the borough to Peffer-shore, and the shore-dues, in virtue of the same grant. Along the shore, from Aberlady to the westernmost point of the parish, runs a track or border of links or sandy ground of considerable breadth, and abounding with rabbits.

Within

Within this border, for a considerable way, the soil is, for the most part, light, with a mixture of loam; but the middle part of the parish, almost from the east to the west extremity of it, is generally poor, flat, sandy, and partly liable to be flooded during heavy rains. From this flat, the ground rises gradually towards the south, being part of that fertile bank of land which extends from Fawside to Whitekirk.

The landed property of the parish, exclusive of a small part of Redhouse, is divided into four baronies, Aberlady, Gosford, Balncrieff, and Luffness.

Barony of Aberlady.

The barony of Aberlady comprehends the village of Aberlady, and the lands of Craigiellaw. It is of a peninsular form, having the sea on the north and west. The castle or fortalice of *Kilspindy*, the principal messuage, stands low on the shore; but the farm-house of Craigiellaw, the only one in the barony, stands on the highest part of the peninsula; and the ground, rising with a gentle swell on every side, commands a noble, beautiful, and extensive prospect. By merely turning round, a spectator has under his eye not only the whole parish, but the south coast of Fife, with its rising hills, royal boroughs, villages, and gentlemen's seats; the Forth, with its islands, as far up as Hopetoun-house, Leith, the shipping in the Roads, Edinburgh Castle, with all the south coast as far east as Garleton-hills, Waughton-house, the seat of the Honourable Charles Hope, Fenton-tower, North Berwick Law, the Bass, Dirleton heights, and Gulan-hill, on the opposite side of the Bay.

Aberlady probably derived its name from a religious house dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, frequently distinguished by the appellation of *Our Lady*.

When

When or by whom that house was founded, or where it stood, is not certainly known. There are, still visible, the vestiges of a small chapel on the north-west corner of the church-yard*, the patronage of which belongs to Luffness; but most probably the chapel of Our Lady stood where the fortalice of Kilspindy was afterwards built. The word *Aber* shews it to have stood by the water side; and *Kilspindy* (cell of black hoods) shews it to have been a religious house. It had, at first, probably been a cell of the Culdees.

These religionists, supposed by some to have been the first Christian clergy in Scotland, had many settlements in different parts of the kingdom, particularly at St Andrews and Dunkeld. At the latter place, they had a considerable monastery†, from which they were expelled by David I. who founded that bishopric, and converted the monastery into a cathedral church; with other places, that Royal Saint may have bestowed Aberlady on that newly erected see. Aberlady had been, from time immemorial, a patrimonial church of Dunkeld, and continued so till the Reformation‡. The Bishop's patrimony was ample, amounting to L. 1704:5:2, Scots money, and near four hundred chalders of victual, of which forty chalders were paid out of the kirk and Mains of Aberlady.

In the minority of James V. Sir Archibald Douglas, uncle to the Earl of Angus, and brother of Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, celebrated for his translation of Virgil's *Æneis*, and other poetical works, was proprietor of Aberlady, which he seems to have held of the Bishop. He was a man of rank and abilities, and much confided in by his nephew, who put him about the person of the young King. He was High Treasurer and Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

T t t.

1526;

* Charta penes Carol. Hope.

† Mylne's Lives of the Bishops of Dunkeld.

‡ Manuscript in the Advocates Library.

1526; but the Hamiltons pretending they could not safely attend the meeting of Parliament if Sir Archibald retained the command of the city, he resigned, and was succeeded by Robert Logan, a citizen. A few days after his resignation, happened the memorable encounter between the Douglasses and Hamiltons on the High-street of Edinburgh, called 'Clear the Casway*,' when the latter, though near ten to one, were chased out of the city. When his Majesty escaped from the Douglasses, Sir Archibald was deprived of the treasurer's office, and was succeeded by Cairncross, provost of Corstorphin, whom Buchanan calls a man 'pecunia quam virtute potior.'

Sir Archibald having been concerned in the attempt to occupy the city of Edinburgh, and prevent the meeting of Parliament, was forfeited for high treason 1528. He retired into England; but, after some time, presuming on former favour, he ventured to return, and threw himself in the King's way at Stirling. His Majesty, being of too princely a mind to proceed against him capitally, after he had thus put himself into his power, commanded him to leave the kingdom, and wait his further pleasure. He withdrew to France, where he died. The year after the King's death, the forfeiture was reversed, and the estate of Kilspindy, or Aberlady, restored to his son Patrick Douglas.

This Patrick, or rather his son of the same name, built the castle of Kilspindy 1585, as appears by the initials of his name, and his arms over the principal door.

Anno 1589, he obtained from the Bishop of Dunkeld, with consent of the Dean and Chapter, 'a procuratory of resignation of the parish-kirk of Aberlady, with the teind-sheaves thereof in the hands of the King, that his Majesty might erect a rectory or parsonage at
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* Buchanan.

' the said parish-kirk, and give full right and disposition of the advocacy, donation, and right of patronage thereof, to Patrick Douglas, and his lawful heirs-male, bearing the name and arms of Douglas, and that the same might be dissolved from the bishopric for ever.'

The resignation was accepted, 'and a charter granted under the great seal, in terms thereof, erecting, uniting, and incorporating the whole lands, village, right of patronage, teinds, and others, into a free barony, to be called the Barony of Aberlady, in all time coming.'

From the Douglasses, the barony, with the right of patronage, came by progress to the Fletchers; and, some time between 1664 and 1667, when the Fletchers were making up their titles it was thought expedient to obtain from the then Bishop of Dunkeld, with consent of the Dean and Chapter, a ratification of the former procuratory, and also a new procuratory of resignation, that the subsequent charter might rest on the firmest foundation.

Accordingly, Sir Andrew Fletcher obtained from the Crown a charter, under the great seal, of the barony, with the advocacy, &c. * of the parish-kirk of Aberlady, and the teind-sheaves thereof, as well parsonage as vicarage. This charter passed the King's hand, contains a *novodamus*, and was ratified in Parliament.

From the Fletchers, the barony and patronage, as described in former charters, came by purchase to the Earl of Portmore 1733. His Lordship's right of patronage, though so firmly founded, was absurdly contested 1768 and 1769, but finally established by decision of the House of Peers 1770.

* Penes the Earl of Portmore.

Barony of Gosford.

Sir Andrew Murray, Lord of Bothwell in Clydesdale, slain in the battle of Stirling-bridge, had married a sister of King Robert I. and had by her a son, Sir Andrew Murray, governour of Scotland in the minority of David II. Maurice Murray his son, and successor in the lordship of Bothwell, obtained from King David a charter of the lands of Gosford in the 20th year of his reign. By the marriage of his daughter to the Earl of Douglas, Gosford became the property of that great family. There is a charter of Gosford by the Earl of Douglas to Christian Ramsay, 1421, '*reddendo unum denarium*, for 'ward, relief, marriage, and suits of court.' This charter was confirmed by Mordac Duke of Albany, during the absence of James I. in England. King James II. gave to Thomas Sinclair a charter of Gosford*, to be held of his Majesty in feu and heritage, for 16 l. 16 s. Scots, 24 capons, and 48 poultry, *nominae feudae firmae*, 1458 †.

From the Sinclairs, Gosford was acquired by Alexander Achison, burghers of Edinburgh, ancestor to the present Lord Viscount Gosford of the kingdom of Ireland, by charter, to be held of Queen Mary, 1561 ‡.

By the Achisons, Gosford was disposed to Sir John Achmutie of Scougal 1622, when it was erected into a barony. This gentleman was fined L. 1000 Sterling by Oliver Cromwell. From Achmutie, Gosford was acquired by Sir Peter Wedderburn 1659, and lately purchased from the Wedderburns by the Right Honourable Francis Charteris, Earl of Wemyss §.

Sir Peter Wedderburn presented to the church of Aberlady four handsome silver cups for the communion service, and granted an obligation,

* Penes Lord Wemyss.

† Penes eundem.

‡ Penes eundem.

§ Penes eundem.

obligation, binding himself, his heirs, and assignees, in the principal sum of 1600 merks Scots, the yearly interest thereof to be paid to backgone tenants and others in the lands of Gosford. This is the only charity fund in the parish.

Spital, now part of Gosford, including Red Spital, or part of Redhouse, was formerly a prebend of the collegiate church of Douglas. Francis Wilson, prebendary of Spital, granted to Douglas of Borg a charter of Spital, to be held of him and his successors in that prebend for L. 22 Scots yearly. There is a confirmation of this charter by Pope Paul IV. dated at St Peter's at Rome, 5to Id. Martii, *anno pontificatus sui primo*. It is observed by Bishop Keith, that the Dominicans or Black Friars had paid them out of the lands of Gosford 24 merks yearly, as appears by a charter of March 28. 1474.

All along the shore, from Aberlady towards Longniddery, are a great many stone graves, all of them that have been opened containing human bones; particularly in Gosford Links, they are laid almost as thick as in a church-yard, and fill a very considerable space of ground. It is remarkable, that many of them lie nearly south and north. In searching lately for a stone-quarry, there were found in a hole, inclosed with stones, about 30 inches by 18, the bones of a human body, and a small well formed tessellated urn, of a very light blue colour; but the workmen had not been curious enough to observe whether there was any thing in the urn, or if it had a cover. It is in the custody of the Earl of Wemyss. At a small distance from these graves are two pretty large tumuli.

In this estate there are promising appearances of coals, and it is hoped they will soon be found.

King James V. is said to have been fond of Gosford, and that it was suspected by his contemporaries, that, in his frequent excursions

to that part of the country, he had other purposes in view besides golfing and archery. Three favourite ladies, Sandilands, Weir, and Oliphant, one of whom resided at Gosford, and the others in the neighbourhood, were occasionally visited by their Royal and gallant admirer, which occasioned the following satirical advice to his Majesty from Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, Lord Lyon.

Sow not your seed on Sandylands,
Spend not your strength in Weir,
And ride not on an Elephant
For spoiling o' your gear.

Balncrieff,

The most extensive of the four baronies, comprehends Balncrieff-house, the seat of the Right Honourable Lord Elibank, with the parks around it, the village, Balncrieff Mains, Lochill, Stantalane, and Myrton. On the south-west it hath part of Gosford; on the south and south-east it is confined by the Cotts, Caldra, and Byres, formerly the seat of the intrepid Lord Lindsay, now the property of the Earl of Hopetoun; and on the north by Luffness.

With other lands and lordships, Balncrieff and Gosford were annexed to the Crown 1455, not to be alienated without advice, deliverance, and decret of the haill Parliament. Lochill, part of Balncrieff, was granted by Queen Mary to David Borthwick, her Majesty's Advocate. From him it was purchased by Bernard Lindsay, groom of the King's chamber, 1608, who sold it to Sir Patrick Murray 1632. From Sir Patrick it came to Sir Peter Wederburn 1679. Lochill, with Stantalane, Balncrieff Mains, and Myrton, formerly parts of the barony of Balncrieff, were repurchased and re-annexed to the said barony by the late Patrick Lord Elibank 1755.

The

The Barony of Luffness

Lies east of Aberlady, and north of Balncrieff. On the east it is bounded by Mungo's Wells, and on the north by Pepper Water. A little to the west of Luffness-house, within an inclosure of six or seven acres, called the *Friarward*, are the vestiges of a chapel and other buildings, said to have been a monastery of Red or Maturine Friars. In an arched nich, in the north corner of the chapel, lies a stone effigy of a man, as large as life, with a shield or coat of arms on his breast, and his right hand grasping his sword. It goes by the name of Friar Bickerton. If this gentleman was a friar, he must have been a military one.

The Bickertons were proprietors of Luffness about the end of the 14th century. One of them, who attended the Earl of Douglas*, is said to have treacherously stabbed him in the back, in the heat of the battle of Otterburn, in revenge for the Earl's having reproved him the preceding evening for neglect of duty. There is a tradition, that this Bickerton was outlawed, and afterwards slain at his own gate by Ramsay of Waughton. The form of a large fish pond belonging to the monastery is still discernible, and might be easily restored.

The French general Des Thermes raised a fort at Aberlady 1549, for straitening the English garrison at Haddington. The house of Luffness, built by the Hepburns 1584, stands within a fortification, an irregular four sided figure, the longest side of which is about 140 yards. The ditches still remain full of water, unless where they have been filled up for more commodious access to the house. About a mile westward, on the shore, are the vestiges of a small entrenched

* Hume's History of the Douglasses.

trenched camp, much defaced by the plough. Both these two places were probably the work of Des Thermes: They commanded the whole Bay, and prevented the landing of provisions or supplies of any kind; in consequence of which, the English garrison was withdrawn.

In the Talbot papers lately published, there is a letter from Sir Ralph Sadler, dated at Berwick, August 23. 1547, to the Earl of Shrewsbury, lieutenant-general of the English army in Scotland, ordering and recommending to fortify some place about the Paths, and particularly White Castle or Aberlady, to enable the English to keep Haddington; with which order, it would seem, Shrewsbury did not comply. The following passage of Sadler's letter shews the great importance of having the command of Aberlady Bay:

' I have much ado to get the victuallers out of the haven; but I have made some of them believe they shall be hanged if they do not go out this tide. Have already made them draw to the haven's mouth, and I trust they shall be at Aberlady some time to-morrow. Those that were at Holy Island have already past this morning towards Aberlady.'

Redhouse.

The Laings were proprietors of Redhouse: One of them was Treasurer of Scotland 1465, Bishop of Glasgow 1473, and Lord High Chancellor 1483. John Laing of Redhouse was one of the Senators of the College of Justice in the reign of James VI.* He left an only child, a daughter, married to Sir Andrew Hamilton, brother to the first Earl of Haddington. With that gentleman's heirs the estate continued, till the last of them lost both lands and life for having

* Not mentioned in Lord Hailes's Catalogue. Sir Andrew Hamilton of Redhouse was admitted a Lord of Session 30th of June 1608.

ving engaged in the rebellion 1745. The estate was purchased by the late Patrick Lord Elibank.

The whole landed property in the parish, exclusive of some inclosures about the houses of Balncriff and Gosford, and a few acres belonging to the feuers in Aberlady, is possessed by eight farmers. The farms are large, which is unfriendly to population. The imperfect manner of keeping the parish records till within about five and twenty years ago, renders it difficult to compare the present population with that of former times. The village of Gosford is entirely destroyed; that of Balncriff falling to decay. Probably the parish is less populous at present than it was 50 or 60 years ago. By an accurate inquiry very lately made from house to house, the number of souls was found to be precisely 800, of which number 386 were in the village of Aberlady. At an average of births and marriages for the last 25 years, there have been precisely four births to each marriage.

There are no charity funds or mortified money in the parish but the above mentioned 1600 merks by Sir Peter Wedderburn. The poor, who are not very numerous, are supported by the weekly collections at the church-doors, aided occasionally by a voluntary parochial assessment, of which the tenants pay one half. These assessments have been so rare and so moderate, that, for one and twenty years past, the heritors have contributed, at an average, no more than one pound seven shillings Sterling annually. The valued rent of the parish amounts to L. 7445 : 6 : 8 Scots.

The old church of Aberlady was a disgrace to the parish: It was 100 feet long, 16½ feet wide, and between 10 and 11 feet high.

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The walls partly built of mud ; and the floor some feet lower than the surface of the ground without. In the year 1773, the heritors built a very commodious church, 50 feet by 37 within walls, and 20 feet high. They agreed on an uniform plan of seats and galleries ; and the whole, when finished, was divided among them in the most amicable manner, in proportion to each heritor's valued rent.

Adjoining to the north side of the church are two ailes, or burial-places, one of which belongs to Balncrieff, and the other to Gosford. In Balncrieff aile, the late Patrick Lord Elibank erected an elegant marble monument to the memory of his amiable Lady. The principal figure is an Angel leaning over an urn, and extinguishing an inverted torch. The inscription on the pedestal is said to have been composed by his Lordship himself.

En tibi lector tumulus Mariae Margaretæ
Cornelii de Young, domini de Elmeet clarâ Marçonorum domo oriundi
Belgiique foederati quaestoris filiae
Primis nuptiis Domino North et Grey, secundis junctæ Patricio Domino de Elibank ;
Cui se per annos XXVIII dulcissimam vitæ sociam comitemque præbuit,
Et formæ et ingenii felicissima natalium decus animi magnitudine
Opum splendorem liberalitate illustravit
Omnibus quascunque mortalium fors ferre potest virtutibus cumulata
Amicis alloquio jucunda exemplo utilis pauperum ita miserata est
Ut inopes ille nullo discrimine sublevandos
Ægestas sola fatis commendaret.

Morte abreptam VI Id. Junii MDCCLXII
Maritus nimis heu superstes inanique desiderio prosequutus
Hoc monumento tandem donavit
Cum illa quacum omnia semper habuerat communia
Ubi Dei jussu e vivis exierit
Commune sepulchrum olim habiturus.

Letter