

PARISH OF YESTER.

PRESBYTERY OF HADDINGTON, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND
TWEEDDALE. -

THE REV. JOHN THOMSON, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE ancient name of the parish was *St Bothans* or *St Bathans*,—the name of a saint who, if we may judge by the vestiges of him which still remain in various parts of the country,* was once held in high and general estimation. The change of the name from *St Bathans* to *Yester*, seems to have been made soon after the Reformation, which, among many other good results, has

* Abbey *St Bathans*, and several villages in Ireland.

destroyed the popular reverence for *pseudo-saints*. This change, however, as appears from the Presbytery records, was not generally adopted till about the year 1668. *Yester* is the ancient name of the Marquis of Tweeddale's estate, which lies chiefly within the parish. The name appears to be of Cambro-British origin. In that language, the word *Ystrad* or *Yestred* signifies a *strath* or *vale*. This name, afterwards corrupted to *Yester*, is very expressive of the local aspect of the parish, which forms a strath on the banks of a rivulet called Gifford-water, a tributary of the Tyne. The antiquity of the present name is shewn by the following circumstance, that Hugh de Gifford (to whom William the Lion granted the baronial domains of Yestred or Yester in the twelfth century) "gave to the monks of Melros a toft in his village of *Yestred*."* The parish is popularly called Gifford, from a village in it of that name.

Extent and Boundaries.—The parish is about 6 miles long from east to west, and about 5 in breadth, including an extent of 2 miles in the Lammermoors. It contains 7080 Scots acres, or nearly 14 square miles. Its form is nearly that of an oblong square, bounded by the parishes of Garvald, Haddington, Bolton, Humbie, and Lauder.

Topographical Appearances.—The Lammermoor hills run along the south side of the parish. They are covered with heath, and afford good pasture for sheep. The highest of these is *Lammerlaw*, which is situated in Yester parish. Its height above the level of the sea is about 1700 feet. Near the summit of *Lammerlaw*, is an excellent spring of water; temperature in August 1834 42°, and scarcely at all different in winter. Various small streams descending from these hills, and uniting about a mile from their base, form the Gifford Water † which flows through the strath or *Ystrad* already mentioned. This strath is one of peculiar beauty. Although it is 400 feet above the level of the sea, it is highly cultivated and richly wooded. In the centre or lower part of it, stands the village of *Gifford*, around which extends a circular elevated ridge of fertile land at the distance of about a mile and a-half, which slopes gently toward the lower part, and affords a good shelter from the cold east winds.

* Chalmers' Caledonia, Vol. ii. p. 534.

† It is mentioned in the former Statistical Account, that "this stream was remarkable for a flood on the 4th of October 1775, which carried down most of the bridges in the parish, and a number of trees from Yester; a most unaccountable circumstance, as no extraordinary quantity of rain had previously fallen." The supposition of a *water-spout* will perhaps explain the difficulty.

Soil, &c.—The greater portion of the county abounds in limestone and marl. At Kidlaw, in the south-western corner of this parish, there is a lime quarry; but, owing to its distance from coal, the working of it is rather expensive. There is no stone for building in the parish, no coal, nor gravel, except what is taken from the bed of the river. Formerly there were quarries of hard red freestone of excellent quality at Barra, which is two miles east from Gifford; but they have not been wrought for many years. The soil of this parish, in common with that of East Lothian generally, furnishes a striking instance of the great benefit which results from well directed industry. It is by no means so highly favoured by nature as many other districts which have been less improved. It presents the aspect of an inclined plain, descending northward from Lammermoor towards the sea, and may therefore be considered as in some measure averted from the sun's rays, and exposed to the chilling northern blasts. The soil, too, is generally of that kind in which clay greatly predominates, although in several parishes on the sea coast, and in some of the higher parts of this parish (at Long Yester and Long Newton) a light loam is sometimes met with. A clay bottom, however, forms the principal characteristic of the soil, which is about four-fifths clay, and one-fifth light and gravelly; but a skilful agriculture has in a great measure overcome these disadvantages, and rendered the soil very productive. It ought to be remarked, however, that, notwithstanding the northerly exposure of this parish, the climate is on the whole favourable to the growth of corn; and it has been very much improved of late by draining.

Climate.—As might be expected from our proximity to the Lammermoors, a greater quantity of rain probably falls in this parish than in almost any other in the county. But the heavy falls of rain brought from the Atlantic Ocean by the westerly winds, and which so frequently deluge the West of Scotland, are little known here. The greater part of the clouds brought from the west are attracted and broken by the high grounds between Clydesdale and West Lothian. The few that escape this attraction are broken and divided by the Pentland hills. One part of these proceeds northward by Arthur's Seat, and is wasted in the Frith of Forth; and another is attracted by the Moorfoot hills, and proceeds along that range by Soutra hill and Lammermoor. Some of these clouds, however, from their height, occasionally escape both attractions, and travel eastward by Dalkeith towards the vale of Tyne and the higher

districts of this parish. But from this course they are generally diverted by the Garleton-hills and Traprene Law; and then they take either a southerly direction towards the hills of Lammermoor, or a northerly direction by North Berwick Law to the Frith of Forth. Such is the general course of the western clouds about the beginning of spring; and as the season advances, the quantity of rain from the west is gradually lessened; so that, during the summer and autumn, a west wind is a tolerable security for dry weather. An instance of this occurs at the moment of writing this account. In the forenoon and afternoon of this day, an unusually large quantity of rain fell, the wind blowing with great violence from the south and south-east; but towards evening, the wind has veered round to the west; and at present, the sky, which but lately was darkened with clouds and mist, is clear and serene.

During winter, the wind in every point from the west round by the north to the east occasionally brings snow or rain; but snow seldom remains long on the ground. For some years back, little snow has fallen in this district; and it very seldom happens that we have more than a week of what is called *close weather*.

The spring in this part of the country is generally dry and cold, especially when the wind blows from the east. The cold, however, is by no means so intense as in many parishes in the immediate neighbourhood of this,—which is owing in a great measure to the circular elevated ridge that surrounds the strath of Yester. Occasionally in spring, there are heavy showers of hail or rain from the north-east. During the whole of May, the winds generally blow from some point to the north, with a bright sun, and a dry keen penetrating air, which renders it a trying period to invalids. Notwithstanding this, however, the situation of the parish is remarkably healthy, the air pure and invigorating, the climate generally mild, and “no particular distemper is prevalent.” At this period, the husbandman endeavours to have his fallow, especially on strong land, lying under a cross furrow and in large clods, which are dried so thoroughly by the east winds, that most of the rooted weeds enclosed in them are withered and destroyed.

The weather seldom sets in steadily mild before the end of June. It is a proverbial expression, that the crops upon the clay and the strong land do not often begin to “mend until the nights are turned,” that is, till the summer heats commence.

In summer and the beginning of autumn, the only rainy points are the south and east. Generally the wind sets in from these

points at the change and full moon; and (as in the case above-mentioned) brings from ten to eighteen hours of continued rain. The latitude being so high as 56° renders the climate, as might be expected, very changeable.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Historical Notices.—The names of places, rivers, and habitations in this parish and the neighbourhood, show that it was inhabited in ancient times by the great tribe of British Ottadini. Thus *Garvald* or *Garw-ald* signifies, in the Cambro-British language, the rough rivulet; *Barra* from *Bar*, a height, *Ra'* a fortlet;—*Yester* or *Ystrad*, a strath. No traces of the Romans now exist in this parish, although it is well known that they subdued the Celtic inhabitants of the district. This appears from the remains of Roman encampments discovered in the neighbourhood. Many vestiges of the Anglo-Saxons remain in the names of places, such as *Lea*, *Law*, *Hope*, *Lammermoor*, &c. This district was for a considerable period under the dominion of the English; and in 1020 it was ceded by them to the Scottish king.*

In the reign of David I., Hugh de Gifford, an English gentleman, settled in East Lothian, and obtained extensive estates there. He was succeeded by a son of the same name, who rose to eminence under William the Lion, and obtained from that monarch the additional territory of *Yester*. The celebrated castle of *Yester*,—celebrated on account of the *Hobgoblin Hall*,†—was at that time, and long afterwards, the family residence. Hugh de Gifford was of sufficient importance to have his own sheriff, according to the practice of feudal times. One of his descendants, John de Gifford, who lived in the time of Robert Bruce, obtained by marriage the lands of Morham. In 1418, the male heirs of this ancient family having failed, the extensive domains of the Giffords were inherited by four daughters,—the eldest of whom, Johanna, having obtained the estate of *Yester*, transferred it to her husband, Sir William Hay of Locherwart. Thus arose the family of *Yester* and *Locherwart*, who obtained the title of Lord Hay of *Yester* in 1488, that of Earl of Tweeddale in 1646, and that of Marquis of Tweeddale in 1694. In allusion to the circumstance above-mentioned, that a great part of the fortune of this family

* Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, p. 404, observes, "that the Celtic-British are the earliest names on the map of Lothian; that the Saxon are the second; that the Gaelic are the third; and the English are the fourth,—corresponding to the several successions of the colonizing people."

† Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion*, Note 3 on Canto iii.

was acquired by marriage, a son of the first Marquis, Lord Charles, made the following verses:—

Aulam affi jactans, felix Domus Yestria nube,
Nam quæ sors aliis, det Venus alia tibi.

Various accounts have been given of the origin of this ancient family. Buchanan * says that the Hays are descended from the hero of the battle of Loncarty, whose story is well known. The Scots, having been put to flight by the Danes, were met by Hay and his sons, who were ploughing in an adjoining field. Armed with ploughshares, they forced their panic-stricken countrymen to turn back on their invaders. The consequence was that the Danes experienced a signal defeat; and soon afterwards, Hay, for his bravery and patriotism, was raised to the rank of nobility, and obtained a large estate in the Carse of Gowry, "quem (Buchanan adds) adhuc eorum posterit tenent." This Hay, it is universally acknowledged, was the ancestor of the families of Errol and Kinnoul; and many hold also that he was the ancestor of the family of Tweeddale. Others again affirm that the ancestry of this family was of Norman descent, and settled in Scotland about the year 1200, having previously come from Normandy with William the Conqueror. Let antiquarians decide the question as they best can.

Eminent Men.—John Knox, the Father of the Scottish Reformation, was born in the village of Gifford, in the year 1505. The place of his nativity, indeed, has been questioned; some maintaining that he was born at Gifford-gate, one of the suburbs of Haddington. But it is easy to show that this opinion is not well founded. †

* *Rerum Scotticarum Historia, in vita Kennethi Tertii, anno 980.*

† We shall shortly state the evidence in favour of both opinions, that the reader may decide for himself: That Knox was born at the village of Gifford, in this parish, is proved not only by the circumstance that this has long been the prevailing opinion, but also by the testimony of Beza, his contemporary and friend. He calls him "Joannes Knoxus, Scotus, Giffordiensis," (*Imagines illustrium virorum, Ee. iij. an. 1580,*) evidently meaning that he was a native of Gifford. If he had been a native of one of the suburbs of Haddington, would not Beza have called him *Haddingtoniensis*? Spotswood (*History, p. 285, edit. 1677,*) says, that "he was born in Gifford, within Lothian," which statement is confirmed by David Buchanan, Crawford, and Wodrow, (*Buchanan's Memoir of Knox, prefixed to the edition of his history, published 1644; Crawford's Life of Knox; Wodrow's MS. Collections respecting the Scottish Reformers, in Bibl. Coll. Glas.*) On the other hand, Archibald Hamilton (*De Confusione Calvinianæ Sectæ apud Scotos Dialogus, fol. 64, a. Par. 1577.*) says that he was born in Haddington,—and another writer, that he was born "*prope Haddingtonam.*" (*Laingæus De vita, et moribus, &c. fol. 113, b. Par. 1581.*) Hamilton's testimony possesses little weight. M'Crie observes of him, that "he has retailed a number of gross falsehoods in his work," and though it may be said, that he was under no temptation to tell a lie in a matter of fact, yet it is not likely that a man of his character would either give himself much trouble to ascertain the truth in his case, or be very scrupulous in adhering to it. The other writer, who says that

The Rev. **John Witherspoon**, D. D., LL. D., President of the College of New Jersey, in America, was born in the manse of Yester on the 5th of February 1723.* The following notice, though rather lengthened, of this distinguished man, it is hoped, may not be unacceptable. He was lineally descended from John Knox, and was connected with a family of property in the east of Scotland. His father, who was ordained minister of Yester in March 1720, was eminent for his piety, learning, and fidelity as a minister of the gospel. Young Witherspoon was sent at a very early age to the public school at Haddington, where he distinguished himself by his assiduity and proficiency. He was sent, at the age of fourteen, to the University of Edinburgh, where he attracted the particular notice of the professors by his talents and acquirements. At the age of twenty-one he was licensed to preach the gospel; and soon after he was invited to become assistant and successor to his father in the parish of Yester;—but he chose rather to accept a call from the parish of Beith, where he was ordained with the universal consent of the people. A short time afterwards, he was called to Paisley, where he laboured in the work of the Lord with universal acceptance and great success. During his residence in Paisley he was invited to remove to Dublin, to Rotterdam, and Dundee; but he refused. He was also requested by the Trustees of the College of New Jersey to accept the office of President. He at first declined the offer; but on a second application he complied with it. The finances of the college (which was founded and chiefly supported by private liberality,) were in a low and declining condition when Dr Witherspoon arrived in America; but by his talents, reputation, and exertions, the college was soon raised to a state of great prosperity. Formerly the academical course had been too superficial, and too much tinctured with the dry and unedifying forms of the schoolmen; but Dr Witherspoon introduced all the modern improvements of Europe, and incorporated with the course of instruction a sound and rational metaphysics, equally removed from the doctrines of fatality and con-

Knox was born near Haddington, is called by M'Crie in the first edition of his work, "another of the same kidney" with Hamilton, and therefore entitled to no credit. Few persons, therefore, will be disposed to differ from the late distinguished biographer of Knox, when he says, "I am inclined to prefer the opinion of the oldest and most credible writers, that he was born in the village of Gifford."—M'Crie's *Life of John Knox*, 5th edition, Vol. i. pp. 1, 2. For a more full examination of this point see the Appendix to the volume, Note A.

* It is stated in the accounts of his life that he was born February 5, 1722; but on examining the parish register, I find that he was baptized on the 10th of February 1723. It is not likely that a year would elapse between his birth and baptism.

tingency. Under his auspices, most of the American clergy were educated; and the United States owe to him many of their most distinguished patriots and legislators,—above thirty of his pupils having become members of Congress. In this situation Dr Witherspoon continued with increasing success till the beginning of the American war,—an event which suspended his functions, and dispersed the college. He then appeared in a new character. The citizens of New Jersey elected him as one of the most suitable delegates whom they could send to that convention which formed their republican constitution; where he distinguished himself as much in the capacity of a *civilian* as he had already done in those of a *divine* and *philosopher*. In 1776, he was sent as representative of New Jersey to the Congress of the United States. He continued a member of that body seven years, and distinguished himself by his firmness, enlarged views, and profound wisdom. Nor did he forget, amid the bustle of political life, his ministerial character. After peace was restored, the college was reassembled, and continued to flourish under the immediate care of a vice-president; but Dr Witherspoon did not neglect to use every means for its improvement. Dr Witherspoon was well prepared for the part he performed in the civil and ecclesiastical assemblies of America, by the experience he had acquired before leaving Scotland, as leader of the Orthodox party in the church, chiefly upon the great question of patronage, which was then the subject of discussion. For more than two years previous to his death, he was deprived of sight; but he bore this and all his sufferings with exemplary resignation and cheerfulness. During his blindness, he was frequently in the pulpit, and spoke with his usual accuracy and power. He died on the 15th of November 1794, after a life of great activity, of true piety, and of eminent usefulness. His writings are well known. They display extensive learning, a profound knowledge of Scripture, and an intimate acquaintance with the human heart.*

This parish gave birth also to Dr Charles Nisbet, President of the College of Carlisle in America. He was born in March 1728 at Long Yester, where his father held the office of schoolmaster. After receiving license, he was ordained minister of Montrose; from which place he was induced to remove by the offer of a Presidency in America. Though a man of distinguished attainments, he seems to have enjoyed little comfort, and less worldly prosperity in "*the land of liberty*." Although the names "College" and "Pre-

* See the *Life of the Rev. John Witherspoon, D. D. LL. D.* prefixed to his works.

sident" sounded well, yet he found that his situation was neither more profitable nor more respectable than that which his worthy father had held before him. On one occasion, he wrote to his friends, that "America was certainly a 'land of promise;' for it was all promise and no performance."

We cannot refrain from mentioning another eminent man who was long minister of this parish—the Rev. James Innes, whose memory is still respectfully and affectionately cherished. He was ordained in the year 1760, and died in 1821; having been minister of Yester during the long period of sixty-one years. As he left no writings behind him, we cannot now form a sufficiently correct estimate of his powers. Although his talents were not of the highest order, yet he was remarkably distinguished by his powerful appeals to the conscience, his unbending integrity, and his unwearyed diligence, in his Master's work.

This parish claims a remote connection with Sir Isaac Newton, who is said to have been a branch of the family of Newton of Newtonhall in this parish.*

Parochial Registers.—These consist of nine volumes, and have been kept with considerable regularity. The date of the earliest entry is 18th March 1613.

III.—POPULATION.

In the last Statistical Account of the parish, we are informed that the population was much greater about a hundred years before than at that time. The decrease is attributed "to the demolition of cottages, and the union of several small farms into one."

In 1755, the population was	1091
1791,	983
1801,	929
1811,	1006
1821,	1100
1831,	1019 viz. 494 males, and 525 females.

The population at present (1835) is about 1050. The number of the population may perhaps have been considerably affected by the improvements in manufactures. Formerly, there were about twenty weavers in the village of Gifford; but owing to the improvements in machinery, there are at present not more than two or three; and even these have not constant employment in this branch of

* Information on this point may be obtained in Sir David Brewster's *Life of Sir Isaac Newton*, Appendix, No. I.

two-year old, L. 4, 10s. ditto; ditto one-year old, L. 3, ditto. For a full-grown sheep in field pasture, L. 1, including turnips; ditto on hill pasture, 6s. per annum. These of course vary considerably with the price of stock and wool.

This parish is rated in the county cess-books as follows: The estate of Yester, L. 2911, 11s. 8d.; Newtonhall, L. 1141, 2s. 4d.; Newhall, L. 468; Skedsbush, L. 111, 9s. 4d.; total L. 4632, 3s. 4d. The real rental of the parish at the time of drawing up the last Statistical Account was L. 2000 Sterling. At present it is L. 8000 per annum, having increased about L. 2000 within the last twenty years. This increase, however, is in a great measure to be attributed to the death of many of the old liferenters during that period, who held their farms at a very low rent.

Live stock.—The common breeds of sheep in this parish are the Leicester and Cheviot; and also a hardy thriving breed between a Leicester tup and a Cheviot ewe. The total number of sheep is 4000; and 900 lambs are bred annually. Great attention has been paid to their improvement, especially by the Marquis of Tweeddale. The cattle are of various sorts, from the fine short-horned English breed down to the native of the Highlands and the Shetland islands. The total number of cattle in the parish is 360; and 80 calves are bred annually.

Husbandry.—The state of husbandry has been much improved in this parish within the last ten years. At present, it is perhaps as perfect here as in any part of the country. Little wheat is grown in this parish, although it is of good quality. Barley, oats, and turnips are the principal crops. John Marquis of Tweeddale and Sir George Suttie, were the earliest and most successful in practising the turnip husbandry. This was about a hundred years ago. Bone dust has of late been very generally used instead of manure, for raising turnips, and its effects have been astonishing. Draining also has been carried on generally and successfully throughout the parish. Lately, the Marquis of Tweeddale has erected a mill for working the clay, and has invented a very ingenious machine for forming the tiles, which will greatly facilitate the operation of tile-draining. A considerable quantity of waste land has lately been reclaimed at the foot of the Lammermoors, on the farms especially of Long Yester and Long Newton; and the crops raised will soon repay the expense of cultivation. The general duration of leases in this parish is nineteen years. The state of farm-buildings and en-

closures is good. Many of the farm-houses are new, and as commodious as the mansion-houses of many Highland lairds. As far as I am aware, every encouragement is given to improvement by the proprietors.

Produce.—The gross amount of raw produce raised in the parish, as nearly as can be ascertained, is as follows :

Grain of all kinds, 8,644 bolls of six imperial bushels,	L. 8,457 18 0
Potatoes, . . . 1,800 bolls at 6s. per boll of 40 stones,	540 0 0
Turnips, . . . 10,000 tons at 4s. per ton,	2,000 0 0
Clover-hay, . . . 40,000 stones at 7d. per stone,	1,166 13 4
Meadow-hay, . . . 3,000 stones at 4d.	50 0 0
Pasture for . . . 360 cows at L. 5,	1,800 0 0
Pasture for . . . 3,000 sheep at 6s. for 1000 at 18s.	1,800 0 0
Young cattle, horses, and lambs bred, wool, &c. say	3,000 0 0
Total amount of raw produce,	L. 18,814 11 4

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Markets.—There are no weekly markets held in the parish ; but there are three trysts or fairs held annually, which will be afterwards mentioned. The distance from Gifford to Haddington, where a market is held every Friday, is four miles. This town, it is well known, affords to the surrounding country a good market for all kinds of agricultural produce. The Haddington corn-market is the greatest in Scotland, owing probably in some measure to its being entirely a ready money market.

Means of Communication.—The road to Haddington, though not very level, is kept, as all the other roads are, in good repair. It might, however, be much improved at little expense by cutting and raising. In this parish there are about three miles of turnpike roads and thirteen of parish roads. The road from Gifford to Edinburgh, which is distant about nineteen miles, is in a good state of repair. Since the year 1750, when an act of Parliament empowered commissioners to repair the post-road from Dun-
glas Bridge to Ravenshaugh Bridge, the cross roads of this parish and county have been greatly improved. Before that time the roads were nearly impassable. At present, a one-horse coach travels three times a-week between Edinburgh and Gifford ; leaving Gifford on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at 7 A. M., and returning on the other days. It passes through Saltoun and Tranent. It leaves No. 2, Princes Street, Edinburgh, at a quarter to four afternoon, and performs the journey in about two hours and a-half. There is a penny post-office in the village of Gifford. Till

of late, the post-man travelled between Gifford and Haddington (which is the post-town) twice a-day;—bringing letters from the north mail in the morning, and from the south mail in the afternoon. But, this summer, he has travelled only once a-day; the reason of which probably is, that this is an “age of economy and retrenchment.” Possibly, however, if the sixpence a-day which was lately taken off his small wages were restored, he might be able once more to afford the Gifford people the benefit of a double journey *per diem*. There are two carriers, each of whom travels between Gifford and Edinburgh every week; leaving Gifford on Tuesdays and Fridays, and Edinburgh on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The bridges and fences throughout this parish are kept generally in the best condition.

Villages.—There are three villages in the parish, viz. Gifford, Long Yester, and Long Newton. The last two, which are situated at the foot of the Lammermoors, are inconsiderable. The village of Gifford is generally admired for the beauty of its situation, and the regularity of its buildings. It is situated on the east bank of Gifford-water. Nearly all the houses in the two principal streets are of two stories, and possess an air of great comfort. One of these streets runs along part of the avenue leading to Yester House: and at the northern extremity stands the school and dwelling-house, surmounted by a small spire. The church is situated at the extremity of the other street. About a third part of the houses in Gifford is the Marquis of Tweeddale’s property,—the rest are held of him in feu or fief. The amount of feu-duty paid annually to the Marquis by the feuars (of whom there are about forty) is L. 13, 17s. 11d. It may be interesting to mention the tenure by which these feus are held. The conditions are, that each feuar should “attend the Marquis of Tweeddale the space of two days yearly, sufficiently *mounted with horse and arms*, upon his own proper charges and expenses, when he shall be desired to do the same:”—also that he should “attend other two days at the Marquis’ expense;”—should “ride at two fairs yearly in Gifford,” and “perform a *darg* or day’s work yearly for winning of hay in the parks of Yester.” The feuars were exempted by the Marquis “from all cess, taxations, ministers’ stipends, and other public burthens.” They obtained from the superior, long ago, a grant of a piece of land near Gifford, called the Common, consisting of 60 acres, and worth at least L. 100 per annum; 14 acres are at pre-

sent in cultivation, and yield a rent of L. 46. This sum has of late been judiciously applied to the purpose of making local improvements,—especially to form a pavement along the streets of the village, which will be a great benefit to the place. The rest of the Common is in pasture. Each feuar who pays 10s. a year of feu-duty has a right to a cow's grass, and all the feuars are allowed to "cast *faill* and *divot* on the common, for upholding and repairing their houses, in quantities proportionable to their respective feu-duties." The feuars meet every two years to choose two bailies and a committee of five, by whom the affairs of the village are managed. In ancient times, the Marquis of Tweeddale's factor, (who held the office of baron bailie) and the two bailies chosen by the feuars, met three times a-year at the Cross to settle disputes and try delinquents. The existence of this court (which was called the *Birla* or *Boorlaw* Court, and which was discontinued only within the last forty years,) accounts for the following characteristic passage in the former Statistical Account: "There is not one lawyer or attorney in the whole parish; and the people make it their study to keep their affairs as much out of the hands of such men as possible." The Boorlaw Court had a constable to enforce their orders, and this functionary still remains in office. The punishment usually inflicted by the court for misdemeanours was a night's confinement in the Black Hole or the *Jougs* at the Tron.*

Ecclesiastical State.—It has been mentioned that the parish church is situated in the village of Gifford, on the north side of the parish. This situation, though distant from some families, is perhaps the most convenient that could have been chosen. About one-half of the parishioners (those in Gifford) are thus in the immediate neighbourhood of the church; and of the other half the great majority are within two miles, although a few families are three miles distant. The church was built in the year 1708. It was re-seated and thoroughly repaired about five years ago, which has rendered it very comfortable. It affords sufficient accommodation for the parishioners, having been seated for 560; although it may accommodate without inconvenience about 600. The sittings (as they ought to be in an Established Church) are all free.

* The *jougs* (*jugum*, a yoke?) were pieces of wood fastened round the neck of the culprit, and attached to an upright post, which still stands in the centre of the village, and is used for weighing goods at the fairs. Here the culprit stood in a sort of pillory, exposed to the taunts and missiles of the villagers.

They are allocated by the sheriff to the various heritors according to their valued rents, by whom they are allotted to their tenants and dependents; whilst the session of course possess the right of allotting the communion table seats.

The present manse was built in 1824. It is commodious and well finished; and is one of the best in the country. The glebe contains about 10 acres; and is let for L. 25 a year. The stipend amounts on an average to about L. 200, besides the allowance for communion elements.

There are no Dissenting or Seceding chapels in the parish. The great body of the people have long been firmly attached to the Established Church; and their love has not waxed cold. There are about six Seceders and two or three Episcopalians in the parish; but many of the former, being advanced in years, and therefore unable to travel to Haddington, generally attend the parish church. The younger branches of their families, having been trained under the faithful ministrations of former ministers, have in most cases joined the church. The Episcopalians attend the Established Church regularly. The average attendance is nearly 600, which is more than half of the population; but this is explained by the fact, that several families in neighbouring parishes are nearer, by several miles, the church of Yester than their own parish churches. The number of communicants at the summer sacrament is on an average about 430; at the winter sacrament, 400. The number of male heads of families in communion with the church is 135.

An Auxiliary Bible Society existed and flourished in the parish for many years. It consisted exclusively of members of the church, although Dissenters were not prohibited from giving their contributions. The Society sent about L. 25 annually to the East Lothian Bible Society; but this was discontinued, and the money directed to other religious purposes, four years ago;—about the time when our Seceding brethren made the discovery that the Church of Scotland is the “Mother of abominations,” and raised the war-cry of extermination against the “paid servants of the devil.”!! This questionable discovery has certainly had no good influence on the operations of religious societies. A collection, amounting to L. 62, was made last spring, for the church extension fund. On the first Sabbath of the year, a collection is made to supply the poor with coals. On an average it amounts to L. 7; and the

tenantry and others kindly undertake to drive the coals, free of expense.

In former times, the parish of Yester was not so extensive as it now is. It was increased in 1702, by the annexation of part of the parishes of Barra and Bolton; the other part of the parish of Barra was annexed to Garvald. The old church of St Bathans stands near Yester House, about a mile from the present church. It is now used as a burying-place for the family of Yester and their connections. It is a small but very handsome building, of red sandstone, and has evidently been renewed at different periods. The nave bears the date of 1635; but the transept is more ancient, probably by 200 years. The pulpit, which is made of beautifully carved oak, and said to be 400 years old, was removed from the former to the present church, where it still is.

From the ancient *Taxatio*, it appears that the church of St Bothans was not of great value: being rated only at thirty merks. In 1421, Sir William Hay of Yester, converted this church into a collegiate form—consisting of a provost, six prebendaries, and two singing boys, who enjoyed the lands, tithes, and other ecclesiastical revenues of the parish, down to the period of the Reformation. Alicia Hay, daughter of Sir Thomas Hay of Errol, and second wife of Sir William Hay of Yester, granted for the support of a chaplain in the collegiate church of Bothans, the lands of Blanes within the constabulary of Haddington,—also various rents of houses in the town of Haddington, amounting to L. 4, 2s. 6d. Sir David Hay, son of Sir William, gave also some additional lands for the support of the chaplain; and in 1539, Robert Watherstone (provost of Bothans) gave for the same purpose, two houses in Haddington, the rents of which amounted to L. 3, 10s. 8d.; also two acres of land on the north side of the town. In Bagimont's Roll, the church of St Bothans is rated at L. 40.* After the Reformation, the revenue was given in at L. 100 Scots. It has been doubted whether the collegiate church of Bothans and Yester be the same; but their identity appears certain.† At Duncanlaw, on the east side of Yester parish, there was formerly

* In the Roll of St Andrew's, 1547, the *Praepositura de Bothans* is mentioned as being situated in the deanery of Dunbar. *Reliq. Divi Andreae*. Dempster informs us that the 18th of January was the festival of Bothan.

† The village near the old church was sometimes called *Bothans*. In 1320, Sir John Gifford of Yester granted to the monks of Dryburgh an annual rent from his village of Bothan.

a chapel dedicated to St Nicholas; but no vestiges of it now remain.*

Education.—The means of instruction in this parish are furnished in sufficient abundance. There are five schools; three of which are parochial and endowed. Of these, one is in the village of Gifford; another in that of Long Yester, and the third in that of Long Newton. The two unendowed schools are in the village of Gifford: one of these is under the care of a female, who teaches sewing. In the schools at Long Yester and Long Newton, as

* Robert III. gave to the chapel of St Nicholas at Duncanlaw, some lands which had belonged to John Straton. Roberts. Index, 145.

I have not been able to discover the names of the ministers who had the spiritual oversight of this parish from the Reformation till the year 1653. On the subject of their deeds and virtues, history is silent. A short account of those ministers whose names are known may not be uninteresting, as it tends to throw some light on the state of the church at different periods. In October 1653, Laurence Charteris was chosen minister of Bothans *by the session*. He seems to have been a man of some eminence in his day. It appears from the Presbytery Records, that he was Moderator of the Presbytery of Haddington from 1671 till 1676; a circumstance which shews, not only that he was held in respect by his brethren, but also that the presbytery were beginning at that time to adopt Episcopalian views and practices. Accordingly, Mr Charteris was appointed by the *Bishop of Edinburgh*, in January 1676, to be Professor of Theology in the University, in which situation, however, he does not seem to have continued many years. After the Revolution, he was removed to be minister of Dirleton, where he died. In August 1681, *George Stephen* was ordained minister of Yester, in consequence of an edict from the Bishop of Edinburgh. He appears, however, to have been a staunch Presbyterian. The following reason, highly honourable to his principles and character, is assigned for his removal, in the session records:—"January 7, 1682. No sermon, Mr George Stephen, our minister having left his charge, because he would not take the test imposed by authority, as he was required on Thursday last past." In December 1682, Robert Meldrum, minister of Garvald, was appointed by the *Bishop of Edinburgh* to be minister of Yester. In this situation he remained till December 1699, notwithstanding the political and ecclesiastical changes which during his incumbency had taken place in the nation. The change from Prelacy to Presbytery at the Revolution does not seem to have changed his determination to continue minister of Yester; and though this circumstance might make some regard him as a second "*Vicar of Bray*," yet he appears to have been a faithful minister. The following entry in reference to him is made in the session records:—"December 17, 1699. No sermon, our minister being dead, having faithfullie in the office of the ministry, served at this church exactly seventeen years, from the serving of his edict here to the next day after his burial." On the 9th of January 1700, the heritors and householders met at the church "for the election of new elders;"—and the heritors, elders, and householders were ordered by the Presbytery to be present on the 31st, "for signing a call to a minister to this parish." The call was given to a Mr Alexander Anderson: but he does not appear to have been ordained, having probably accepted a call to another parish. In January 1701, another call was signed to Mr James Craig, who was ordained in April, and remained till October 1713; when he was translated to Dunbar. In November 1719, "the heritors, elders, and others concerned met to elect one to be their minister, and unanimously made choice of Mr James Witherspoon." He was ordained in March 1720, and fulfilled his office with exemplary fidelity. He died in August 1759. Mr James Innes was ordained minister of this parish in March 1760, and died in February 1821. He was succeeded in December the same year by Daniel Wilkie, now in the New Grayfriars' Edinburgh. Robert Smith (now at Old Machar's Aberdeen) was inducted minister of this parish in October 1829. David Horne (now at Corstorphine) was ordained in May 1831; John Thomson in April 1834.

well as in the unendowed schools, the common branches of reading, writing, arithmetic, and English grammar are taught. In addition to these, Latin, Greek, French, geography, and mathematics are taught in the parish school at Gifford. Two or three boarders usually reside in the Gifford schoolmaster's house; and he is well qualified to instruct them in the various branches of classical education. The fees of one of the unendowed schools may amount to L. 24 per annum, and of the other to about L. 14.

The following is a statement of the income of the parochial schoolmasters: at Gifford, salary, L. 34, 4s. 4d., school-fees, L. 40, other emoluments, L. 1. 7s. 10d.,* total income, L. 75, 12s. 2d.; —Long Yester, salary, L. 8, 11s. 1d., school-fees, L. 18, total income, L. 26, 11s. 1d.; †—and Long Newton, salary, L. 8, 11s. 1d., school-fees, L. 14, total income, L. 22, 11s. 1d. The schools and dwelling-houses are in good repair, and the teachers have the legal accommodations. The general expense of education is as follows: For teaching to read, 3s. per quarter; to read and write, 3s. 6d., and in the parish school, 4s.; for reading, writing, and arithmetic, 4s. 6d., and in the parish school, 5s.; for teaching these branches, together with geography or grammar, 6s.; and for teaching the classics, 7s. 6d.

The schools are conveniently situated for the accommodation of the children. None are so distant from school as to be deprived of the means of instruction. The schools are in general well attended. The average attendance of children in this parish at all the schools is about 220, which is more than one-fifth of the population. All the children in the parish above six years of age are able to read, and most of them can write. It is to be regretted, however, that in many cases the children are taken from school too soon, in order to assist their parents in their work. Yet the people in general seem to be alive to the benefits of education; and it would be reckoned a great reproach to any parent if he neglected to send his children to school at the proper age. About twenty years ago, the sum of L. 100 was mortified by William

* The sum of L. 1, 7s. 10d., given to the parochial schoolmaster in Gifford, arises from mortified money on some estates in the parish, and part of it from an estate not in the parish.

† It ought to be mentioned that, in addition to the sum of L. 8, 11s. 1d., which the schoolmaster of Long Yester receives from this parish, he obtains also from the parish of Garvald the sum of L. 17, 2s. 2d., so that his emoluments amount to L. 43, 13s. 3d.

Begbie, Esq. of Gifford Vale, to educate poor children. The interest, amounting to L. 4, 10s., is appropriated to this purpose by the kirk-session. The session also, when necessary, pay for the education of poor children; and several members of the family of Yester bear the expense of educating between ten and twenty children. There are two Sabbath schools in the parish.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—There are at present eighteen regular paupers, each of whom receives on an average L. 3 per annum. Besides these, about eight or ten receive occasional assistance. The whole yearly expenditure of the kirk-session is about L. 120. In 1722, the average of the Sabbath collections was L. 2 Scots money each day. In 1751, it amounted to 4s. Sterling; in 1792, to 8s.; at present the average collection on Sabbath is L. 1, 3s.; and the annual amount is about L. 60. In 1710, the session received from the Laird of Newtonhall the sum of L. 1519, 3s. Scots, which was expended in purchasing from the Marquis of Tweeddale thirteen acres of land, subject to a feu-duty of 1s. per acre. The rent of this tract, which is called the "*precious land*," amounts at present to L. 29; which sum is also appropriated to the maintenance of the poor. In 1798, the Rev. Mr Innes, and his brother, Dr Robert Innes, mortified to the kirk-session the sum of L. 200, the interest of which is applied to assist the poor in paying their house rents. This sum is placed in the hands of Lord Tweeddale, who still allows L. 10 of interest. It has been mentioned, that on the first Sabbath of the year, a collection is made to supply the poor with coals, amounting usually to L. 7. All these sums, together with what is derived from the use of the mortcloths, &c. may amount to about L. 110, which is nearly adequate to the supply of the poor, and happily renders assessments unnecessary. About twenty years ago, during a period of great scarcity, an assessment was made to supply the labouring poor. Although necessary at the time, it had by no means a good effect on that feeling of honest pride which is characteristic of Scotchmen. At present, however, there is no undue anxiety to obtain parochial relief. Many would rather submit to the severest hardships than live on the parish. The poor are all supported in their own houses, and are supplied with medicines from a dispensary *gratis*. Many of the poor are supplied with soup three times a-week from the Marquis of Tweeddale's kitchen, and with wood for fuel in winter from the grounds of Yester.

Fairs.—There are three fairs or trysts held annually in the village of Gifford; viz. on the last Tuesday of March, the third Tuesday of June, and the first Tuesday of October. At these fairs, about 500 cattle, as many horses, and between 3000 and 4000 sheep are usually offered for sale. Many purchasers come from a considerable distance; and generally a good deal of business is done. At the last-mentioned fair, the Agricultural Society of East Lothian meet at Gifford to award premiums for the best *pens* of sheep of different kinds. About twenty years ago, leave was obtained to hold a tryst on the Monday mornings during harvest for hiring shearers. This has of late been a great nuisance to the parish; as the shearers, to the number often of 500, flock to Gifford *on Sabbath*; and not only wait to be hired, but profane the Lord's day by drunken and disorderly conduct. A bill, like that of Sir Andrew Agnew, would be no small blessing.

Inns, Alehouses, &c.—Of these there are seven in the parish.

Fuel.—All our coal is brought from the parishes of Salton and Pencaitland,—a distance of six miles. The price of a cart-load is 7s. 6d., viz. 4s. for 12 cwt. of coal, and 3s. 6d. for carriage.

October 1835.