

# ANSTRUTHER EASTER PARISH

## CIVIL HISTORY

Anstruther Easter was erected into a royal burgh, by a charter of James VI. dated 18th December 1583. It does not hold burghage of the Crown, but feu of the family of Anstruther. Anstruther Easter was at one time possessed of lands lying near to Kingsbarns. The magistrates having engaged in a Lawsuit with Sir J. Anstruther, sold their lands about the year 1770, for L. 500, to pay the cost of the action. The same lands have since been sold for L. 5000. The revenue of the burgh arises chiefly from customs, and shore or harbour dues, etc. It has fallen off considerably since 1827. In the year ending Michaelmas 1832, it was L. 78, 3s., and at the same period, the debts due by the burgh amounted to about L. 485. The magistrates levy no taxes, except the cess due to government, and the customs and shore dues. They have the usual jurisdiction of magistrates within the royalty. There have been no civil causes tried in the Bailie Court since 1820. The town clerk acts as assessor to the magistrates, and his appointment is during pleasure of the magistrates and council. They appoint the burgh schoolmaster, procurator-fiscal, and town-officer. The council consists of nineteen members, including three bailies and a treasurer. Like many other small towns, Anstruther Easter has of late years decreased much in wealth and importance. Though it is still the best market-town in the district, its decayed condition may be judged of by the single fact, that the tonnage belonging to the port, at the date of the former Statistical Account, was 1400, and is now only 964. Capital seems to be flowing steadily to the larger towns, and with it of course that part of the population which cannot find employment here. Accordingly, the value of property is considerably lowered, and, while old tenements are suffered to fall into ruins, the number of new erections is comparatively small.

In the year 1710 Anstruther Easter was made a port, and a custom-house established. In 1827 it was made a sub-port, comprehending St Andrews, Crail, Pittenweem, St Monance, and Elie, with the establishment of a collector, comptroller, and tidewaiter; having also three coast-waiters, one at each of the following places, St Andrews, Crail, and Elie. This custom-house can correspond directly with the Board of Customs; but the accounts are usually transmitted to the custom-house at Kirkaldy.

**PAROCHIAL REGISTERS:**-The records of the kirk-session are preserved from the year 1641, down to the present time. They have been carefully kept, and are very legible. The register of baptisms during the same period is also preserved. Of marriages the record is less regular and entire.

**ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.**-Previous to the year 1636, the town of Anstruther Easter formed part of the parish of Kilrenny. At that period, it was erected into a separate parish, and a

church built. In the year 1641, the first minister was settled. The succession of ministers down to the present time seems to have been regular. Their names and the dates of their ordination or induction are as follows: Colin Adams 1641, Edward Thomson 1677, William Monerieff 1686, William Woodrop 1691, James Nairne 1710, John Nairne, his son, 1764, who had been previously assistant and successor for twenty-one years, and Robert Wilson, the present incumbent, 1796.

#### POPULATION.

For a great length of time the population of the parish of Anstruther Easter has varied very little.

In 1744 it was 1000

1764 900

At the date of former Statistical Account, above 1000

In 1831, 1007

At present it is believed that the number is considerably below 1000

The average number of baptisms during last 7 years is, 16

of marriages, do. 10

No accurate record of the number of deaths has been kept.

Number of families in the parish, 255

In the former Statistical Account some instances of great age are mentioned. At present there is one individual in the parish in her ninety-third year, having all her mental faculties in full vigour, and able to attend divine ordinances every Sabbath.

Of the inhabitants of this parish generally it may be said, they are intelligent, but the vice of intemperance is by no means rare. The privilege of the town as a royal burgh, in electing a representative to Parliament-, jointly with four other towns of nearly similar size, has been against the morality of the place, and it may also be added against its industry. The late change in the system of election, and the classing of this with the large and populous towns of Cupar and St Andrews in the exercise of the above mentioned privilege, have already sensibly diminished the evils alluded to; and it is hoped that the interruptions to regular industry will be less frequent, and the temptations to immoral conduct less abundant. Infidelity has prevailed to some extent, chiefly through the influence and example of one or two individuals. The natural consequence of

this has followed; disrespect to religious ordinances, and neglect of the moral and spiritual interests of the Young. It is believed that worship is performed in comparatively few families. It must, however, be added, that there is a large body of the inhabitants of this parish, whose general conduct and habits entitle them to respect ; and that there are a few who afford good evidence of being actuated by the spirit and the principles of vital Christianity.

#### PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION:- There is a post-office in the town, (not a sorting office.) The means of public conveyance are, a stagecoach, three times a-week, to Edinburgh, byway of Pettycur; a daily coach to the same city, during the greater part of the year, by way of Largo; and one daily to and from St Andrews. A branch of the National Bank of Scotland was established in Anstruther Easter in May 1832. The number of tradesmen is very considerable: bakers, 5; tailors, 5 ; master-masons, 4; blacksmiths, 3 ; saddlers, 2 , tinsmith and plumber, 1 ; shoemakers, 9; wrights, 5; weavers, 6; butchers, 3; watchmaker, 1 ; bookbinder and stationer, 1. There are two excellent inns in the town ; houses in which ale and spirituous liquors are sold, 13-a number far too great for the wants of the inhabitants; and there is no doubt that they have exercised a very prejudicial influence on their morals, by affording undue facilities to intemperance. In general, it may be observed, that the necessaries and the comforts of life are abundantly furnished, and at a reasonable rate ; and that the expense of maintaining a family is materially lessened, by the constant and large supply of fish. brought into the town directly, or from the adjoining fishing station of Cellardyke.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE:-The church is most conveniently situated in a large burying-ground, which is surrounded by an excellent wall. It was built in 1634; the spire was ten years later in being completed; and within it is the bell bearing to have been a gift from Andrew Strang, shipmaster. The roof of the church was repaired many years ago ; and in 1834 it underwent a thorough repair internally, being entirely re-seated in the most commodious form, and having the pulpit placed in one end and a gallery in the other:-altogether, it is now probably one of the most elegant country churches anywhere to be seen. It was originally built by subscriptions, donations, and the personal labour of some of the parishioners ; and has been upheld out of the seat rent fund, carefully husbanded by the kirk-session. The late repair was executed by means of that fund, and a sum borrowed on the security of the seat rents ; and it must be observed, that, there being no heritors in the parish, and the town poor, had the fund alluded to not existed, it does not appear how that repair could have been effected. And it must also be stated, to the credit of the kirk-session, that they resisted, some years ago, an attempt to wrest from them the management of the seat-rents, and established their right, and have ever exercised it in a manner satisfactory to the whole community. The church is now seated for 630; the highest price of sittings is two shillings, and the lowest ninepence each ; the free sittings are intentionally very few, that the indigent may not feel themselves degraded to the level of absolute pauperism. Within the church, and placed in the south wall, is a monument, supposed to be to the memory of one of the former ministers of the parish, Mr William Moncrieff. The manse

was built in the year 1590, by James Melville, the nephew of the celebrated Andrew Melville, whose life has been so ably written by the late lamented Dr M'Crie. At that period the worthy and pious James Melville had the pastoral charge of what have long since been five parishes, viz. Kilrenny, Anstruther Easter and Wester, Pittenweem, and Abercromby. Having succeeded in obtaining ministers to the others, he devoted himself to Kilrenny, which then included Anstruther Easter. In his Diary he says, " that the parishioners of Kilrenny bound themselves to build him a house, upon a piece of ground which the Laird of Anstruther gave freely for that purpose; but he adds, it would never have been perfected, unless the bountiful hand of his God had made him take the work in hand himself." The town and landward parish scarcely afforded half of the building materials; the remainder of the expense he bore himself,-the whole cost of the erection being upwards of 3500 marks, or about L. 190 Sterling, It remains to this day, with very few alterations, and these only in the interior, if we except a paltry addition made to it by a former minister, not at all in the substantial style of the original building. The situation is remarkably well chosen; the walls are of great thickness; the lower story consists of three vaulted cellars; the ceiling of the apartments in the second storey is as lofty as in most modern buildings ; that of the third much less so. A staircase, in the form of a round tower, is carried up the whole height of the building, at the top of which there is a small apartment, commanding a very fine prospect, and having on the outside, chiselled in stone, these words-" The Watch Tower." This manse, at present far inferior to modern manses, might, with a judicious repair, be made a most commodious dwelling, and might remain for generations :a monument of the judgment and liberality of one who, during his harassed life, was scarcely permitted to occupy it for any length of time together. It is ascertained that the burden of upholding the manse lies upon the town.

The average yearly number of communicants for the first time is about 9. The communicants, in all, are about 330; of whom 85 are on the roll as male heads of families', according to the General Assembly's act on Calls.

There are three Dissenting meeting-houses in this parish Burgher, Independent, and Baptist. The families connected with them-, belonging to the parish, are, in all, about thirty-three. There is also a Bible and Missionary Society, composed of members belonging to the different denominations of Dissenters, whose funds are believed to be considerable.

EDUCATION.-There is only one school in the parish, the parochial or burgh school. The branches taught are, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and occasionally Latin. The average number of scholars attending the school is about 80. The schoolhouse is upheld by the town, as also the teacher's dwelling-house, which has a good garden attached, and was lately rebuilt. The teacher is appointed by the Town-Council, and he has no other salary than L. 5, 6s. 8d. per annum derived from the town.

January 1837 ( Rev Robert Wilson )