

FALKLAND PARISH

CIVIL HISTORY.

Falkland has obtained great celebrity, from having been in former times one of the favourite residences of the Scottish monarchs. The first mention made of it in history, is in the book of the Priory of St Andrews. Sibbald, quoting from this book, states, that in the fifth year of the reign of David I., Constantine, Earl of Fife, and Macbeth, Thane of Falkland, gathered together an army to prevent Robert de Burgoner from forcing the Culdees of St Andrews and Lochleven to give him the half of the lands of Kirkness, in which they succeeded.

Falkland afterwards became the property of the Crown; but, in the time of Malcolm IV., it fell into the possession of Duncan, the sixth Earl of Fife. Duncan married Ada, Malcolm's niece, and Falkland formed a part of her marriage dowry. It remained in the possession of this powerful family until the year 1371, when it passed into the hands of Robert Stewart, Earl of Monteith, afterwards Duke of Albany and Regent of Scotland. The Castle or Tower of Falkland is mentioned in an indenture between Isobel, Countess of Fife, and this celebrated statesman, whom she acknowledges as her heir. The said Earl, it is said, " shall have in his keeping the Castle of Falkland, with the forest of it, and a constable shall be placed there by him as he pleaseth, and the said Countess may stay within the tower when she pleaseth, and the whole village of Falkland, over against the said tower, shall be set in tack."

" Falkland," says Dr Jamieson, " had formerly a designation which, as far as I have observed, occurs in no other instance. Speaking of the forfeiture of the Earl of Fife, Sibbald says, , It was before that called the Castle or Mar of Falkland, and was one of the seats of the Macduffs.' I have met with no word that seems to have any probable affinity, unless we should view it as softened in pronounciation from Welsh, magwyr, what is raised up, a structure, a wall, a building, a house.' "

Falkland first became the residence of the Court during the regency of Albany. Robert III., a feeble monarch, entrusted him with the entire administration of the kingdom., and hence manerium nostrum de Fawkland, as he termed it, became virtually the seat of Government. But when the estates of Murdoch, the second Duke, were forfeited in 1424, Falkland reverted to the Crown.

While the old Castle or Mar of Falkland belonged to Albany, it became the scene of one of the most painful tragedies in the history of Scotland. David, Duke of Rothesay, eldest son of Robert III., and heir apparent to the Throne, was thrown into one of its dungeons by his uncle, the Duke of Albany, where he was starved to death in 1402. The circumstances connected with this event, so characteristic of the cruel and barbarous manners of the times, are differently related by the Scottish historians; and have led to much discussion; but the result of recent investigations has confirmed the popular account. The Regent was jealous of the talents of the young Prince. He beheld in him a dangerous rival, whose capacity for affairs and energetic character might prove fatal to his own power. These fears appear to have been well founded, for Rothesay, while yet a very young man, supplanted his uncle in the regency. The ambitious mind of Albany could not

submit patiently to this humiliation, and the dissolute conduct of the unfortunate Prince soon allowed him an opportunity of gratifying his revenge. Rothesay was of a voluptuous disposition; he seems also to have been inconstant in his attachments, so that he gave just cause of offence to several families of rank, and created formidable enemies to himself. among the nobility. These individuals supported Albany in his machinations against the Prince. The weak monarch, Robert III., was made to believe that the vicious excesses of his son were exciting popular discontent, and that it was expedient that he should be placed under temporary restraint. Rothesay was indignant at this insulting proposal, and attempted to make himself master of the Castle of St Andrews, and in that citadel defy his enemies. But in passing through Fife he was arrested by Lindsay of Rossy and a traitor of the name of Ramorgny, friends of Albany, by whom he was carried first to St Andrews and afterwards to Falkland. Here he was exposed to the most barbarous treatment. He was thrown into a miserable dungeon, under the charge of two ruffians, by whom he was starved to death. His life, however, was preserved for a few days by means so affecting and romantic, as to remind us of some of the incidents of Roman story. According to Boece, Buchanan, and others, his life was for some days feebly sustained by means of thin cakes pushed through a small crevice in the wall of his dungeon by a young woman, the daughter of the governor, whose heart was moved by the situation of the unhappy Prince. But being at last found out, she was put to death by her father, who regarded her noble conduct as an act of treason towards himself. Her cruel fate did not prevent another woman, employed in the family as a wet nurse, from supplying him with milk conveyed through a long reed from her own breasts. She also fell a victim to her generous compassion, and the Prince perished miserably. Albany gave out that he died of a dysentery, but the people were convinced that he had been foully murdered. A public inquiry was made into the matter, but a jury, composed of the creatures of Albany, were sure to return a verdict of acquittal. Their report is a partial and constrained testimony to Albany's innocence, and after it was returned, any further rumours unfavourable to him or to his friends were forbidden by a public proclamation, a circumstance which fully accounts for the silence of Winton and others upon the subject. The Prince was buried at the Abbey of Lindores, where the curious may still see the stone coffin in which, it is said, his remains were enclosed.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly the site of the Castle of Falkland. We are disposed to believe that it stood on the mound a little to the north of the present edifice. The palace was begun probably by James II., and completed by James V. " The part now remaining consists of two distinct portions of building in different styles of architecture. The eastmost portion is two stories in height, and in the monastic style. On each floor there are six windows, square topped, and divided by mullions into two lights. Between the windows the front is supported by buttresses enriched with niches, in which statues (representing the Stewart family) were placed, the mutilated remains of which are still to be seen, and terminating in ornamental pinnacles, which rise considerably above the top of the wall. The western part of this front of the palace is in the castellated style, and of greater height than the other. It is ornamented with two round towers, between which is a lofty archway, which forms the entrance to the court-yard behind, and which in former times was secured by strong doors, and could be defended by the towers which flank it. James V. made great additions to the palace, and appears to have erected two ranges of buildings equal in size to that described on the east and north sides of the court-yard. As completed, therefore, by him, the palace occupied three sides of a square court, the fourth or western side being enclosed by a lofty wall. The range of building on the north side of the court has now

entirely disappeared, and of that on the east the bare walls alone remain, these two portions of the palace having been accidentally destroyed by fire in the reign of Charles II." On the east wing the " facade between the windows is ornamented with finely proportioned Corinthian pillars, having rich capitals, and above the windows are medallions presenting a series of heads carved in high relief, some of which are beautifully executed, and would lead us to believe that more than native talent had been employed upon the work. On the top of the basement which supports the pillars, the initials of the King and of his Queen, Mary of Guise, are carved alternately."

Little is said of Falkland as a royal residence before the time of James V. That gay but unfortunate prince was kept in restraint at Falkland when a minor, by the Earl of Angus and the Douglasses. Angus left him there to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, and proceeded himself to the Lothians ; while Sir Archibald Douglas went to Dundee, and Sir George to St Andrews, entrusting the young monarch to the charge of Douglas of Parkhead. James embraced the opportunity to escape out of their hands and assert his independence. That his purpose might not be suspected, he ordered preparations for a splendid hunt on the following day. The chase was to commence at seven in the morning, which James made the excuse for retiring early to bed, and Douglas, after setting the watch, followed his example. As soon as all was quiet in the palace, the prince, disguised as a groom, contrived to elude the vigilance of his guards; went to the stables and saddled a fleet horse, and then, accompanied by two trusty followers, galloped at full speed to Stirling Castle, which he reached by dawn of day. James, who was fond of hunting and hawking, often returned to Falkland afterwards, that he might enjoy his favourite amusements. In the following passage, taken from an old humorous ballad which the learned ascribe to the pen of this joyous prince, he celebrates the mirthful recreations of this royal retreat.

Was never in Scotland hard nor sene

Sic dansin nor deray,

Nowthir at Falkland on the grene,

Nor pebillis at the Play,

As was of wowaris, as I wene,

At Chryst-kirk on ane day.

James V. died at Falkland, in December 1542, shortly after the disastrous affair of Solway Moss. It is alleged that he died of a broken heart. After this battle, says Drummond of Hawthornden, he passed in a retired manner to Fife, and from Hallyards to Falkland, " where he gave himself over to sorrow. No man had access unto him, no, not his own domestics. Now are his thoughts busy with revenge, now with rage against his scornful nobility; long watchings, continual cares and

passions, abstinence from food and recreation, had so extenuated his body, that, pierced with grief, anguish, impatience, and despair, he remained fixed to his bed, where he breathed his last, in the 33d year of his age and 32d of his reign." .

Mary of Guise, the widow of James, resided occasionally at Falkland during her regency, surrounded by her French soldiers. It was here, in the year 1559, that she cited the Earl of Argyle, and James, prior of St Andrews, (afterwards the celebrated Regent,) to appear before her. Her daughter, the unhappy Mary, seems also to have been attached to this residence. She retired to it., on several occasions, to escape from the anxiety and turmoil of her distracted court, and enjoy, like her royal father, the pleasures of hunting and hawking. She was at Falkland in the month of September 1561, when Bothwell and the Hamiltons laid a plot to take away the life of her natural brother, the Earl of Murray, that the Queen might be completely in their power. Bothwell urged that the thing could easily be accomplished and the Queen surprised, because she was in the habit of resorting daily to a wood in the vicinity of Falkland, where stags were kept, and where she could be seized without any difficulty.

Falkland was also honoured frequently with a visit from that sage monarch James VI., who took great pleasure- in buck hunting a taste which could be amply indulged in the noble park that lay around the palace. While he was enjoying this pastime, in the month of June 1592, a desperate attempt was made by the unprincipled Francis Earl of Bothwell and his associates to obtain possession of his person. " Bothwell understanding the King to be at quietness in Falkland, be the secret advertisement of certayne courtiers, rade from the water of Esk to Falkland, accompanied by the Master of Gray and a goodly number of horsemen. But when they came to the palice, they found not sik reddeness as was supposit, bot be the contrare certayne people provydit to resist, sa that Bothwell was repulsit, and he, to his perpetual ignominie, fled away with shaymeful dreador; and before thay departit, thay spulyeit the King's stable, and reft many horses bayth out of the town of Falkland as also furth of the park."

A few years later (1600), James was exposed to another assault in the same place, for at Falkland the first scene was laid of that dark tragedy, known in Scottish history as the Gowrie conspiracy. An account of this painful affair was published at the time by royal authority. " His Majesty, having his residence at Falkland, and being daily at the buck hunting, (as his use is in that season), upon the 5th day of August 1600, raide out to the parke, between six and seven of the clocke in the morning, the weather being wonderfull pleasant and seasonable. But before his Majestie could leape on horseback, Maister Alexander Ruthven, second brother to the late Earle of Gowrie, being then lighted in the town of F'alkland, hasted him faste down to overtake his Majestie before his onleaping, as he did," &c. He enticed James to Perth, and the result is well known.

After James succeeded to the crown of England, Falkland ceased to be a royal residence. Charles I slept in the palace once or twice, and Charles II. also visited it; but after the departure of James, it ceased to become the scene of important events, and hastened to decay. Fairney of Fairney acquired the heritable offices of Forester of the Woods and Muirs of Falkland, the lands of Nuthill, &c. In 1604 Fairney sold these offices to Sir David Murray of Gospetrie, Lord Scone, for 4000 merks, and about the same time James VI. gave a grant to his Lordship of the offices of Constable of the Castle, Foreiter of the Forest, and Ranger of the Lomonds of Falkland, on

account of his services at Perth, 5th August 1600. The estate then passed into the family of Murray of Lochmaben, afterwards Earl of Annandale, and was sold in 1658 by James Lord Annandale to John Earl of Athole. His successor, the Duke of Athole, sold it to Skene of Hallyards, from whose family it passed to the late Mr Bruce. Mr Bruce, immediately after he acquired the property, began to repair the palace. He converted part of it into an elegant and commodious dwelling-house for the factor, and laid out the adjoining grounds as an ornamental garden, greatly to the embellishment of the ancient edifice. The same taste and liberality are exhibited in the preservation of this interesting ruin by the present proprietors, O. Tyndall Bruce, Esq. and his lady.

The only other building in the parish that deserves particular mention is the new House of Falkland. It is built after a design by Mr Burn of Edinburgh in the Elizabethan style of architecture. It was begun in 1839 and completed in 1844, and is justly regarded as one of the most beautiful and princely edifices in Scotland.

Population

Amount of Population in 1801	2211
1811	2317
1821	2459
1831	2658
1841	2885

Manufactures.

A great part of the population of the parish are engaged in hand-Loom weaving. There are no manufacturers carrying on business, on their own account, in the town of Falkland; but one individual manufactures dowlas and sheeting in Newton of Falkland, and six manufacture window-blinds in the village of Freuchie. The weavers are principally employed by manufacturers in the neighbouring towns of Newburgh, Kettle, and Kirkcaldy.

PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Seven markets for horses and cattle are held in Falkland during the year, four of which are mentioned in the charter of the burgh. The Lammas market was formerly one of the most extensive in Scotland, but it has greatly declined. The other markets have also fallen away, except the one held in November, immediately before Hallow Fair, which is steadily improving. These markets were held at one time upon the Lomond Hills, but of late years they have been held alternately in the streets of Falkland, and in a small commony adjoining the town. We cannot but consider these markets as injurious to the morals of the people. They lead to much intemperance. There is no market for grain in the town; it is sold either to the dealers in the surrounding villages, or at the market in Kirkcaldy, twelve miles distant.

Villages.

Besides the ancient royal burgh of Falkland, there are two villages in the parish, Newton of Falkland and Freuchie. None of these villages are built upon any regular plan. Narrow dirty streets cross each other in every direction, and the primitive, but most odious custom of making dunghills in front of the houses, is still maintained. Freuchie and Newton of Falkland are inhabited principally by feuars engaged in hand-loom weaving. Falkland was erected into a royal burgh by James II. in 1458.

The preamble to the charter of creation states, as reasons for granting it, the frequent residence of the royal family at the manor of Falkland, and the damage and inconvenience sustained by the many prelates, peers, barons, nobles, and others of their subjects who came to their country-seat, for want of victuallers and innkeepers. This charter was renewed by James VI. in 1595. The corporation consists of three bailies, fifteen councillors, and a clerk. a number greatly disproportioned to the present size and importance of the burgh. The corporation possessed at one time a very considerable extent of property, but by mismanagement and law-suits, it has dwindled down to very narrow dimensions. The revenue in 1844 amounted to L.56, 2s. 5 1/2d., the expenditure to L.79, 15s. 3d., the debt to L.323, 5s. 7d. Falkland still bears some faint traces of its former greatness, among other things, in the names of its streets, one of which is called "Parliament Square," another "College Close," and a third, the "West Port." Some of the houses which belonged to officers of the household in the time of James VI. still remain. The town is exceedingly healthy. Its site at the foot of the East Lomonds is airy, and the people enjoy an inexhaustible supply of the purest spring water, brought into the town in pipes from the neighbouring hill. This was effected by the town council in 1766, at an expense of L.400. The town, however, does not appear to have been healthy in former times, for it is mentioned in an old record, that the followers of the Court, when residing in Falkland, sent their children to be educated in Cupar, on account of the greater salubrity of the place. The fertile plain to the east of Falkland was then marshy, so much so, that when James VI., in 1611, issued a mandate, enjoining the presbytery to hold their meetings at Falkland instead of Cupar, they refused to comply, on the ground that Falkland could not be approached in winter, nor after heavy rains in summer. But the marshes have been drained long ago, and the air, ever fresh from the Lomond Hills, is so healthy, that the inhabitants are somewhat remarkable for longevity.

Ecclesiastical State.

The church stood originally at Kilgour, in the western confines of the parish, and before the Reformation belonged to the Priory of St Andrews. The Earl of Fife made a grant of it to the priory in 1318. The deed of mortification, as well as another curious old charter, bearing date 1224, which throws light upon the ecclesiastical state of the parish at that early period, may be seen in the book of the Priory of St Andrews, lately published at the expense of Mr Bruce. It is

difficult to ascertain when the church was removed to Falkland. There is a stone in the present structure, bearing the date 1620, but there is reason to believe that there was a more ancient edifice upon the same site. The present church can boast of no architectural beauty. It was repaired about the year 1772, but internally it is again in a state of great dilapidation. It has a damp earthen floor, and many of the seats are decayed: altogether it reflects little credit upon the parish. It is seated for about 700 or 800 people. The front of the gallery in the north aisle, belonging to Mr Bruce, is beautifully carved in oak. It bears the arms of Viscount Stormont, (captain of the guards in the time of James VI.) by whom the church was erected.

Manse:- There never was a manse at Falkland until 1807; for when the original manse at Kilgour fell into decay, the minister, by a private bargain between him and the titular of the teinds, obtained in lieu of a manse and glebe, one chalders of bear, amounting in value to L.80 Scotch, L.6, 13s. 4d. Sterling, and more recently he was accommodated with a few apartments in the ruins of the palace. This state of matters continued till 1806, when the above compact was declared illegal by the Court of Session. The heritors then bought half an acre of ground about a quarter of a mile to the east of the town, on the northern slope of the East Lomond Hill, for the site of a manse and a garden. The manse was erected here in 1807, in a neat substantial manner, though its interior plan might have been more conveniently arranged. The ground on which the manse is erected was anciently part of the property of the Order of the Knights Templars; and a copious spring of excellent water at the manse is still named St John's Well, and the adjoining property to the west is styled St Mary's Chapel Yard ; and beside it is another strong spring of excellent water, called the 'Lady Well,' (in honour of the Virgin Mary,) which was conveyed in pipes to the town of Falkland, in the year 1766.

Cemetery:-The ancient burial ground was at Kilgour. The church, which seems to have been a small building, 40 feet by 16, stood in the centre, having a quire at its east end. Not a single vestige of it is now visible, the foundations having been dug up about twenty years ago, and removed to fill up drains on the neighbouring farm. The farmer transported one of the ancient stone coffins into his stable-yard to form a water trough for his cattle, where it still remains, and then crowned this sacrilegious act by ploughing the churchyard. The present burial ground was probably first used for the purpose of interment about the year 1670, as the earliest date upon the tombstones is 1674. But the old cemetery of Kilgour was also used, up to the beginning of the present century, if not later.

There are three dissenting places of worship in the parish; two in Falkland and one in Freuchie. The number of Dissenters, however, is not large, the two congregations in Falkland being very small. The great body of the people adhere to the Established Church.

Education:- The number of schools in the parish is five; of scholars attending them 350. The parochial teacher's salary is the maximum, and his fees may be about L. 50 per annum. He has an

allowance of L. 10 a year for house and garden. There is an excellent subscription school in Freuchie, which confers an immense benefit upon the village. The means of education are put within the reach of every inhabitant of the parish, but still it is doubtful if the people are in general better educated than they were forty years ago. The children of both sexes are taken away from school at such an early age, to engage in hand-loom weaving, that sufficient time is not allowed to complete their education. They forget much of what they have learned in early youth, before they arrive at years of maturity. Unfortunately there is no public library in the parish, but steps are now taking to supply this grievous defect, and place a sound literature in the hands of the people. A Sunday school library, which is extensively used both by old and young, has been established during the last year, and it already contains many standard works upon practical divinity.

Poor.- The average number of people receiving parochial aid is 34. Besides the regular paupers, 30 or 40 persons in straitened circumstances sometimes receive a little aid from the kirk-session. The whole expenditure for the poor of the parish, which contains nearly 3000 people, is, for the last year, L. 143. The weekly allowances run from 6d. to 2s. 9d. : 1s. is about the average. The bulk of the paupers are above sixty years of age. There cannot be a doubt that a reluctance to apply for parochial aid is disappearing, but, at the same time, it is feared that an excessive desire to foster a spirit of self-dependence among the poor, has, in this as in other parishes, led to a stinted allowance in many cases of real distress. The first voluntary assessment for the aid of the poor was made in 1800, and the system has been continued up to the present time; but as some of the heritors have refused to pay their proportion for the last year, the system, of legal assessment will, in all probability, be immediately introduced. A yearly sum of L.40 or L. 50 is derived from mortifications, sessional dues, mortcloth, .&c., while the collections at the church doors may upon an average amount to L. 20 a year. It is proper to mention that liberal donations are made to the poor by Mr and Mrs Bruce of Falkland.

Inns.-.In the parish there are fourteen licensed houses for the sale of ardent spirits. We are afraid that stringent police regulations are necessary to keep some of them in proper order. The practice of granting such licenses to so many houses in a parish of this size is highly censurable.

Fuel.-There is a great abundance of coal in the neighbourhood. It is brought in carts from the adjoining parish of Markinch, and also in considerable quantities from Lochgelly. The Balbirnie and Lochgelly coals are of excellent quality, and if we include the carriage, cost 9s. or 10s. a ton.

February 1845 (Rev. A. Wilson)