

**ACCOUNT OF THE PARISH
OF MID-CALDER, WITH
MISCELLANEOUS
REMARKS**

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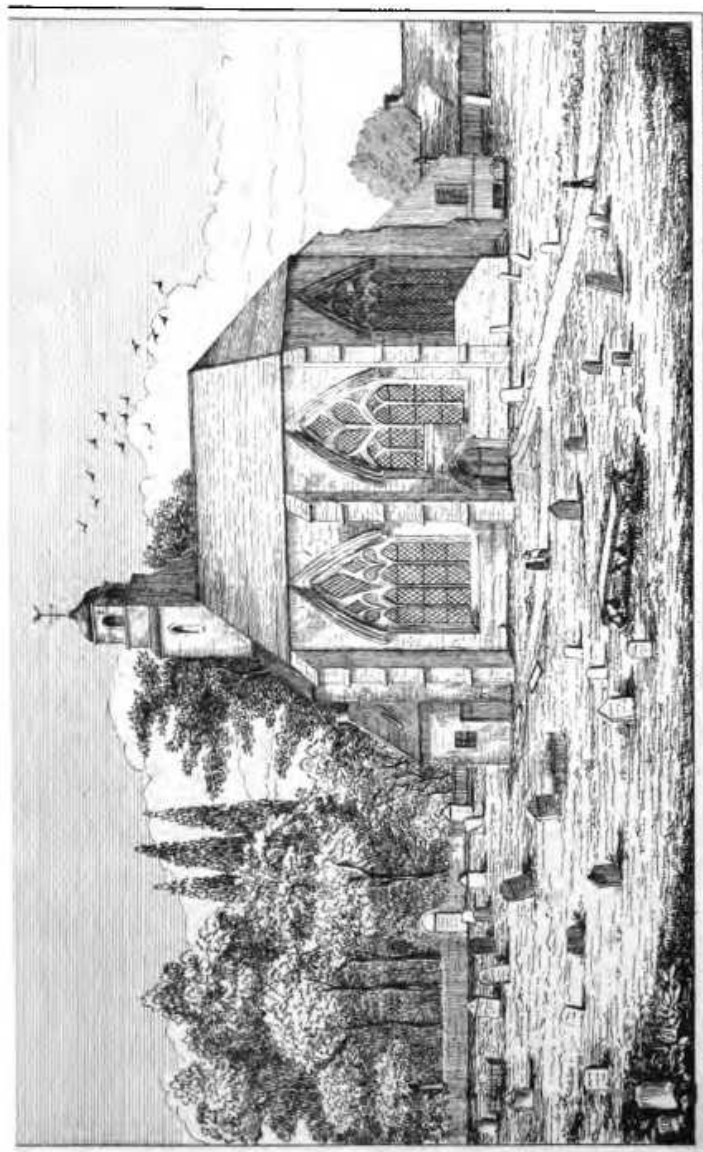
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MID-CALDER CHURCH.

Engraved for the Rev. Dr. Scamman, 1858.

ACCOUNT
OF THE
PARISH OF MID-CALDER,
WITH
MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS,

BY
JOHN SOMMERS, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THAT PARISH.

EDINBURGH:
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MDCCCXXXVIII.

THE following account of the Pariah of Mid-Caldar was originally intended to form a portion of the New Statistical Account of Scotland, in the course of publication. But, having offered it, two years ago, to the Editor of that valuable work, the writer was informed that it could not be put to press till after the publication of that of the county town. Since that time, this Account has received so many additions, that the Author cannot expect it can now be admitted to form a part of that publication. He has resolved, therefore, to print only a few copies of it, for the use of his friends and parishioners, leaving it to the Editor of the Statistical Account of Scotland to select from it whatever he may think necessary for his purpose. In the following pages, it will be observed that the Author has generally adhered to the heads of the plan prescribed for the New Statistical Account of Scotland, although he has availed himself of the opportunity of introducing a considerable number of miscellaneous remarks.

MANES, Mid-Caldar,
July 1838.



PARISH OF MID-CALDER.

PRESBYTERY OF LUNLITHGOW, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND TWEEDDALE.

JOHN SOMMERS, D.D., MINISTER.

I. GEOGRAPHY.

Name and Boundaries, &c.—Calder is a common territorial appellation in Scotland, and always denotes some spot adjacent to water, or rather to a rivulet. This name is of Celtic origin—Cal, Cel, or Coil, being descriptive of wooded or wild regions; and Dur, or Dour, signifying water. These terms are the compounds of the name of several small streams both in Great Britain and Ireland, the banks of which are still covered with natural wood. Chalmers, in his “Caledonia,” mentions four waters or rivulets of this nature in South Britain, and six in Scotland, all of which flow into more copious streams. Some etymologists, however, derive the name from the Celtic word *Cadair*, which signifies a meeting or assembly; and, as there is a mound of earth a little to the north of the village, it has been conjectured that this mound was erected for the use of the Bards and Druids, who always held their provincial meetings, civil and religious, in the open air, generally on mounds of earth either natural or artificial. These assemblies, according to the custom of all barbarous nations, were held in some open field capable of containing the vast numbers of persons who had a right to be present. The person who officiated as reciter or orier at these provincial meetings, was called the *Dadgerinid*; and Dadridge, or Dadridgerig, which is about a mile west of this mound, has therefore been supposed to have been the residence of this officer. This, however, is merely a conjecture.

The parish of Mid-Calder lies in the direction of north and south; and, by the straightest footpath or bridle-road, from the north-east to the south-west extremity of the parish, extends from eleven to twelve miles in length. Its average breadth is from two and a half to three miles; and, in one place, does not extend above three or four hundred yards. It is bounded on the north by the parish of Uphall; on the south, by Liston; on the east, by the united parishes of Kirknewton and East-Calder, together with those of Currie and a small portion of Kirkliston; and, on the west, by the parishes of West-Calder and Livingstone. By a singular coincidence, Liston-Shields, the property of the late Sir Robert Liston, which is situated on the south-east extremity of this parish, belongs to Kirkliston, although it lies at the distance of seven or eight miles from any other part of that parish. The ridge of the Cairn Hills forms the southern boundary of the parish, and may be considered as a continuation of the Pentlands westward till they reach the parish of West-Calder. There are no

elevations in this parish which can properly be called mountains. The easter Cairn Hill is the highest point; and, if Knox's map can be relied upon, its summit is about 1800 feet above the medium level of the sea. This spot commands a most extensive view of the Frith and basin of the Forth, with the adjacent scenery towards Stirling, the coast of Fife, and the Ochils. The eastern extremity of the ridge, or hill, is about fourteen or fifteen miles south-west of the Castle of Edinburgh. Running westward for nearly three miles, it separates the parish of Linton from that of Mid-Calder; and, from the bottom of this ridge the ground slopes, in a gently waving direction northward about nine miles, till it reaches the Almond Water, which may be about 300 feet above the level of the sea. At the eastern extremity of the Cairn Hill which forms the south-east boundary of the parish, south of Harper-*rig*, there is a hollow slope or declivity, known by the name of the *Caldatane Slap*, through which pass, lies the drove road most commonly frequented by dealers in sheep and cattle between the Scotch and English markets. This road is passable also for travellers on horseback during the summer months. But, in order to obtain a more easy and direct communication, it is gratifying to learn that our southern neighbours have already formed and nearly completed this road to within a very short distance of the boundary of this parish; and it is to be hoped that the proprietors of the Calder district will find it their interest to imitate their good example, by finishing this line of road as far as this parish extends. In proceeding northward from the Almond, the ground rises for nearly a mile, when it again slopes gently towards Harry's Muir and Pumpherston Meins, which two farms form the north boundary of the parish. Upon the banks of the various streams that intersect the parish from west to east, there are several fertile spots of land, or haughs; but none of these are of such an extent as to deserve the name of a valley.

The village of Mid-Calder is delightfully situated on the south bank of the Almond, near its junction with Linhouse and Murieston Waters. On the east, is the extensive and romantic wood of Calder; and, on the west, is Calder House, which stands on an elevated lawn, surrounded by ornamental walks, and sheltered by lofty trees and numerous plantations. The town is twelve miles west of Edinburgh, twenty from Lanark, and thirty-two from Glasgow. Calder was formerly the name of a district in the western part of the county of Edinburgh, or Mid-Lothian, comprehending the three parishes of Calder Comitatus or Mid-Calder, Calder Clere or East-Calder, and that portion which now constitutes the parish of West-Calder. The first of these obtained its name from having been in possession of the Earls of Fife, so early as the twelfth century; and the second, Calder Clere or East-Calder, from one Randolph de Clere, who held a grant of the manor from Malcolm IV. The parish of Calder Clere was united to that of Kirknewton in 1750, and was, at same time, detached from the Presbytery of Linlithgow, and united to the Presbytery of Edinburgh. This extensive parish of Calder Comitatus, in 1645, was again divided into those of Mid and West Calder, as appears from our Presbytery records, in which it is stated that, on the 12th of June of that year, Patrick Shields was translated from the parish of Livingstone to West-Calder. This three-fold division of the original parish sufficiently accounts for the scanti-

ness of the teind, and, consequently, for the limited portion of stipend allotted to each of these benefices.

II. NATURAL HISTORY.

Meteorology.—The temperature of the atmosphere varies considerably between the banks of the streams clothed with wood in the lower districts of the parish, and the higher ground upon the cold, boggy land and barren heath. In low, sheltered situations, the thermometer generally ranges between 35 and 60; and the barometer, from 28½ to 30½. In spring and harvest, the frost is often severe in the upper districts when it is scarcely perceptible in places less elevated, especially if the land be drained and wooded, which never fails to raise the temperature two or three degrees. But, although this district, lying nearly as far north as latitude 56, may be supposed naturally cold, it is by no means unfavourable to vegetation, excessive cold and extreme heat being alike unknown. It is more necessary, therefore, to guard against the inconstancy than the severity of the seasons. In low situations, the snow seldom covers the ground to any depth before Christmas, and its continuance is very uncertain. The duration of the storm in winter does not, in general, exceed three or four weeks, although this year it has lasted upwards of seven. In January and February the weather is exceedingly variable; in some seasons it is calm, clear, and open; in others, it is either accompanied with violent wind and rain, or with frost and snow. The mornings and evenings in March and April are generally chill and frosty, and even in May the cold piercing east winds frequently prevail, and are often attended with heavy rain. In June, the mornings are not altogether exempted from the chill cold, which, being speedily succeeded by the noontide heat, often nips the tender shoots of the corn and other crops. The warmest months are July and August; but the otherwise fine weather is frequently interrupted by heavy thunder storms, which are so prevalent at that season. September often runs into extremes. In some years, there is hardly a shower, and, in others, it rains almost daily; but, if September be wet, the weather in October is commonly serene and delightful. November and December have, at intervals, heavy rains and moderate weather; and at all seasons the more elevated districts are most exposed to the severity of the atmospheric changes. Our climate, upon the whole, is moist; and, exclusive of fog and mist, the average number of rainy days for eight years has been ascertained to be about 136. Of rainy days the greatest number is generally in February, July, and December, and the smallest number in March, June, and November; but, during April, May, August, and September, the number is nearly equal. The quantity of rain that falls is generally, but not always, greatest in September, when the showers are very heavy. The highest degree of heat at noon is in the months of June, July, August, and September, and the lowest degree of heat is in December and January. The extreme point of heat to which the thermometer attains is 89 in June; and the lowest, 10 in January, on an average of eight years. These facts are sufficient to enable us to form a pretty correct opinion of the state of the climate in this district; and it may

be still farther judged of, from the operations of the farmer in sowing and reaping his crops. Oats, beans, and pease, are generally sown from the beginning or middle of March, to the end of April; and barley during the months of April and May. Hay harvest commences in July, and other crops from the 25th August to near the end of October. Wheat is commonly sown on summer fallow from the beginning of September to the middle of October; but, after green crop, most generally from the middle of October to the middle of November, on the finest lands.

In spring, and sometimes also at other seasons of the year, the atmosphere is occasionally overloaded by a cold aqueous vapour, or creeping mist, which arises out of the German Ocean, and, spreading westward, first along the valleys, and then gradually ascending to the higher ground, it usually envelopes the whole district in a moist cloud, known here by the name of an *eastern kaar*, which commonly lasts for three days, but never passes the summit of the ridge between the Forth and the Clyde. This vapour is sometimes accompanied by a drizzling rain, which is generally succeeded by several days, and sometimes several weeks, of fair weather. It is everywhere known, that the rain is more gentle, and less frequent, in the lower than in the higher districts, and this is particularly the case here during the continuance of the westerly winds; because the clouds are generally attracted by the hills, and shape their course towards the south, by which means there are many showers in the higher districts, when there is not a drop of rain below. Luminous meteors, in a particular state of the atmosphere, are not unusual phenomena. The lunar rainbow is but of rare occurrence, but the solar is very common. Haloes, fire-balls, and luminous arches, are seldom to be seen; but shooting stars, in a clear night about the middle of November, are very frequent. All these, when they do appear, indicate the existence of inflammable air, formed by the great laboratory of nature. When ignited, they consequently produce a change of temperature, by which the floating vapour is thus condensed, and descends in rain. These fire-balls and shooting stars are regarded simply as atmospheric meteors, originating in the inflammation of a quantity of hydrogen gas, and, in consequence of recent observations, they have become greater objects of attention among men of science. The height of some of these shooting stars has been calculated at 500 English miles, and the rate at which they move is supposed to be double that of the earth's motion round the sun. It is very singular that their general direction should be always contrary to that in which the earth moves in its annual orbit. In 1833, those shooting stars, in America, succeeded each other at such short intervals that it was impossible to count them; and the most moderate calculation fixed them at hundreds of thousands. This phenomenon was visible along the whole of the eastern coast of North America, from the Gulf of Mexico to Halifax, from nine in the evening to sunrise. All these meteors came from the same point in the heavens—namely, that of Leo. Those shooting stars observed in the United States appeared on the nights of the 12th and 13th of November. In 1799, similar phenomena appeared in America, Greenland, Germany, and in many other parts of Europe; and also in Asia, they were seen on the nights of the 12th and 13th of November, in 1832. On the 22d April