

THE HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES
OF THE
COUNTY PALATINE OF DURHAM;

COMPRISING A CONDENSED ACCOUNT OF ITS
NATURAL, CIVIL, AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY,

FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE PRESENT TIME;
ITS BOUNDARIES, ANCIENT PARISHES, AND RECENTLY FORMED PAROCHIAL DISTRICTS
AND CHAPELRIES, AND PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL DIVISIONS; ITS
AGRICULTURE, MINERAL PRODUCTS. MANUFACTURES, SHIPPING, DOCKS,
RAILWAYS, AND GENERAL COMMERCE; ITS PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
CHURCHES, CHAPELS, PAROCHIAL REGISTERS,

LANDED GENTRY, HERALDIC VISITATIONS,

LOCAL BIOGRAPHY, SCHOOLS, CHARITIES, SANITARY REPORTS,
POPULATION, &c., COMPILED FROM PARLIAMENTARY AND OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS, PRIVATE
INFORMATION. AND OTHER AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

EMBELLISHED BY NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

“RETINENS VESTIGIA FAMÆ.”—*Virgil.*

VOL II.

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1857.

SOUTH BIDDICK.

THIS township adjoins that of Penshaw on the southwest, and borders upon the Wear. It contains 343 acres. Its population, in 1801, was 490; in 1811, it had fallen to 141; in 1821, it had rallied to 167, and, in 1831, to 199; but in 1841, it had dropped to 74; and in 1851, it was only 38, of whom 17 were males and 21 females. In 1841, there were 15 inhabited houses, and 5 uninhabited; but in 1851, there were only 8 houses, all of which were inhabited. The annual value of property assessed to the county-rate in 1853 was 833*l.*

The North-eastern Railway has an extent of 5*F.* 154*Y.*, and an area of 5*A.* 2*P.* in this township. In 1851, it contributed 27*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.* to the local rates, and 28*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.* in 1852; the gross amounts collected in the respective years being 69*l.* 8*s.* 4*d.* and 73*l.* 17*s.* 9*d.*

The name of Biddick, anciently *Bedyke*, was probably from the Saxon, being surrounded by a *dyke* or *fosse*. Supposing the present mansion to stand on the site of the ancient *Bedyke*, the whole spot could have been easily insulated by a trench communicating with the Wear, and from which circumstance it may have received the name of *Biddic-Waterville*, which it bears in some old records. The village lay in a low sequestered situation, and has been graphically described as “formerly inhabited by banditti, who set all authority at defiance; nay, the officers of excise were afraid of surveying the two public-houses, unless protected by some of the most daring of the colliers, who were rewarded for their trouble. There were in the village about ten shops or houses where contraband spirits were publicly sold without any license. The press-gang were at one time beat out of the place with the loss of two men, and never more were known to enter into it; for if they were known to be in the neighbourhood, the ‘Biddickers,’ used to sound a horn, the signal for them to fly to arms; fires were lighted in various places; the keels in the river were seized, with which they formed a bridge of communication with Fatfield (another place on the opposite side of the river, equally as lawless as their own), and kept watch and ward till the danger was past; in consequence of which it became a receptacle for such as had violated the laws of their country.”¹

¹ DRUMMOND, EARL OF PERTH.—The sequestered village of South Biddick was the asylum of the attainted Earl of Perth; and here, in the humblest circumstances, since the disastrous and memorable rebellion of 1745, the descendants of that unfortunate nobleman have remained. Under the influence of his mother, Lady Jean Gordon, only daughter of the Duke of Gordon, a woman of great spirit and activity, and warmly attached to the house of Stewart, he joined the chieftains. On leaving his castle on that occasion, tradition states that he turned round, and, as if anticipating the result, exclaimed, “Oh! my bonny Drummond Castle, and my bonny lands!” He was first lieutenant general at the battle of Preston Panns, and commanded at the sieges of Carlisle and Stirling. He commanded the left wing of the army at the decisive battle of Culloden, where he was severely wounded, and fled on horseback from the field. The romantic perils and hair-breadth escapes of the earl are too numerous to be mentioned here. He happily effected his escape from Scotland, the more immediate scene of danger, although he could not at the time meet with any ship bound for France. He had previously, with a view to lull suspicion, and to facilitate his projected attempt to escape, caused a report to be circulated that he had embarked for that country about three weeks after the battle of Culloden, and died on the passage, from the combined effects of his wounds and the excessive fatigues he had undergone; and this story, being currently believed at the time, answered the purpose for which it was intended. In pursuance of a preconcerted plan, he

made his way to the sea-coast, and fortunately succeeded in getting on board a vessel, which landed him safely at South Shields. Passing on to Sunderland, he proceeded up the river Wear to South Biddick, which place he selected as a temporary sojourn. Being a wild, sequestered spot, inhabited exclusively by colliers and keelmen, who were at that period a very lawless set, and had an especial sympathy for all who were pursued by justice for any crime morally short of murder, Lord Perth thought that he probably might remain here for a considerable time, if necessary, safe from all danger and pursuit. The vicinity of the coal mines added much to the security of any fugitive; as, in the case of sudden alarm, he could be plunged by the friendly colliers into the recesses of a mine several hundred feet deep, where it would be next to impossible to discover him. The particular locality thus selected by Drummond presented to his mind other advantages: it was at a convenient distance from Sunderland, where vessels were generally to be met with, bound for the ports of France and Holland; and in case any event should unexpectedly happen, prior to his final embarkation, at all favourable to the cause of the exiled family, he was in a situation from whence he could speedily co-operate in any renewed effort which might be made. On his arrival at Biddick, the noble fugitive took up his abode under the humble roof of John Armstrong, a pitman, who, without at all suspecting the rank and condition of his guest, received and entertained him with the greatest hospitality and kindness. And here it was that all the plans and prospects of the unfortunate Perth were destined to undergo a total and permanent change; no further attempt was ever made on behalf of the expatriated Stuarts, and a circumstance arose within the little fireside circle at Biddick which fixed the destiny and the abode of Drummond for life. Armstrong had a daughter, Elizabeth, who was a girl of exquisite beauty, and of artless and most engaging manners. She was only about twelve years of age when Drummond first came under her father's roof, and he had taken great delight in instructing her, and aiding the growth and expansion of the superior intellect with which he soon perceived she was naturally endowed. Time rolled on; the stranger still lingered at Biddick, where he had found what proved to be a peaceful and secure retreat; and when Elizabeth Armstrong had entered on her sixteenth year, he conceived a violent attachment for her, and felt that she was necessary to his future happiness. The hopes of the Jacobites had become finally extinguished; he quite despaired of ever recovering his estates, or resuming his former station; and even if he should, the voice of love unhesitatingly assured him that his Elizabeth would adorn it. He obtained the assent of both her parents to their union; and, in the month of November, 1749, she being then in her seventeenth year, he led her to the altar at the parish church of Houghton-le-Spring. Some time after their marriage, they removed to a cottage called the Boat House, the occupation of which was kindly granted to Drummond by Nicholas Lambton, Esq., of Biddick Hall. Even at this time, it appears that Mr. Lambton knew a part, at least, of the history and misfortunes of the stranger who had thus mysteriously appeared and settled in his vicinity; as it was remembered by Mrs Peters, one of the earl's daughters, recently surviving, that Mr. Lambton, on that occasion, addressed her father in the following words:—"I know you well enough; you are one of the Drummonds, the rebels; but I will give you the house and garden for all that." Attached to the cottage, which was close to the river, was a ferry-boat; and from the profits of this boat the exiled Perth contrived to procure a scanty subsistence for himself and his rising family. While he was employed in the humble occupation of rowing passengers across the river Wear, his wife had the management of a small shop, which added a little to their very limited means of existence. In the course of a few years, the family consisted of six or seven children; and it was the parent's great delight and employment, in the intervals of his occupation on the river, to give them that instruction himself which he could not afford to procure for them at suitable schools. As, however, the boys grew up, he was much perplexed how to dispose of them. He could have wished to put

them in some way of life not altogether unbefitting their origin and descent; but he was entirely destitute of the means to accomplish this. William, the youngest, who frequently went down to Sunderland in the keels, conceived a liking for a seafaring life, and was in due time placed under the care of the master of a trading vessel belonging to that port. His elder and only brother, James, was of a more quiet and studious turn, and lingered at home, sometimes taking his father's place in the little ferry-boat, and sometimes accompanying John Armstrong, his grandfather, down the coal-mine where he worked, to gratify his youthful curiosity, by witnessing the operations there. He was extremely partial to his grandfather; and in this way he gradually conceived a liking for the rude occupation which the old man followed. The boy was too young, as yet, to be trusted with the secret of his father's real rank. He longed to be able to carry something home to his beloved mother on a Saturday night, to add to the common stock and common comforts of the family; for, as his sisters grew up, he perceived that the difficulty which his parents had in maintaining their humble household increased. Without his father's knowledge, he got himself placed, through the intervention of Armstrong, on the colliery establishment; and at the end of a week, during which his parents had observed that he was more than usually absent with his grandfather, he brought his little earnings, and with all the pride of independence, and all the warmth of filial and fraternal love, he poured them into his mother's lap, as she sat conversing with his father at the door of their little cottage. This was probably the most severe and painful trial which the unfortunate Perth had ever experienced. It is true that, for some time past, his fate and fortunes appeared to have been quietly merged in those of the unknown Drummond, the humble ferryman. All search and enquiry after him had long ceased; for the story of his death on the passage to France had obtained general credit, and had contributed much to his subsequent security. He had been attainted of high treason by act of parliament, along with others of the Jacobite chiefs. He was not only dead in law, but dead to the world at large; none but a few of his friends in France, and one or two of those in his native Scotland, being at all aware that he was still in existence. He had long despaired of any change in his affairs, or in those of his exiled master, and had, as he fancied, resigned himself to his apparent destiny. But though he might have been resigned to it himself, the voice of nature was strong within him, and he now felt acutely that he had not resigned his children. He became extremely desirous that his son, rather than follow the unsuitable occupation in which he had commenced, should adopt the example of his younger brother, and try his fortunes in the merchant service. But the boy himself had no predilection for it; and his mother was strongly opposed to having both her sons entirely removed from her, and engaged in so hazardous a pursuit. Drummond communicated to his devoted wife, and for the first time, the full secret of his former rank and fortune, which, up to this period, she had only partially understood. The gentle Elizabeth felt most deeply for her idolized husband's altered state; and she pondered on the blighted prospects of her children with all a mother's fondness. Still there was no present remedy, and the youthful James continued to accompany Armstrong to the coalmine. In the latter end of the year 1771, a memorable flood occurred in the waters of the Tyne and Wear, which swept away the bridge between Newcastle and Gateshead, and destroyed many houses and buildings on the banks of both rivers, and, amongst others, the Boat House in which resided Drummond and his family. The cottage was reduced to a complete ruin; the greater part of the furniture was floated down the stream and broken; and but for the opportune aid of the ferry-boat, the lives of some of the inmates would probably have fallen a sacrifice. The ill-fated Perth was reduced, by this wide-spreading calamity, to the greatest distress. This was, however, generously alleviated by his great friend and patron, Mr. Nicholas Lambton, the gentleman already alluded to, who not only rebuilt for him the Boat House, but kindly assisted in replacing his little stock of furniture. Some things,

however, it was unfortunately beyond the power of generosity or friendship to replace. Amongst the articles carried away by the flood was a wooden box or chest, in which were contained a favourite diamond ring, with various family papers, letters, and documents, and amongst them the original royal patent granted by James II., at St. Germain's, to Drummond's grandfather, the fourth Earl of Perth, and purporting to advance him to the dignity of Duke. Drummond's daughter, Mrs. Peters, remembered that after the inundation had subsided, her father frequently wandered along the banks of the river, in the vain hope of finding the box or some of its contents, and more particularly the ducal patent, which he considered might possibly be of essential service, at some future period, in assisting his family to regain their honours and estates. But, notwithstanding all the search and all the inquiries he could make, it was never afterwards recovered; and it is therefore probable that the box had floated down the river into the open sea. Towards the close of the earl's life, and nearly thirty years after he had sought an asylum at Biddick, he conceived a longing desire to revisit his native Scotland, for the purpose of taking what he now felt would probably be a last farewell of his long-lost castle and domains. The many objections made by his affectionate wife having been overcome, he set forth, in suitable disguise, on his melancholy journey towards Scotland. A few weeks brought the wanderer safely back to his anxious family at Biddick, in the same uncouth habiliments in which they saw him depart. Great was the joy on both sides at meeting: he related all the incidents of his journey, and of his reception in Scotland by the few friends to whom he ventured to make himself known. He had sojourned for some time under the hospitable roof of a Mr. Grame, a gentleman in whom he could place implicit confidence; and having been accommodated with suitable apparel, a lady, who had known him well in happier days, immediately exclaimed, on seeing him in his altered dress, "The duke looks like himself now!" He was also seen and recognised by some of his former tenantry; and the memory of this visit still lingers round his castle of Drummond, and his wide domains of Strathern. The earl survived this adventure a few years, and died in the lowly home of his adoption, at Biddick, in the year 1782, in the seventieth year of his age. He lies interred at the little chapel of Penshaw, and his dust mingles not with the long line of his renowned ancestry. Thus ended the disastrous life of James, sixth Earl of Perth. His younger son, William, had been extremely successful in his maritime pursuits. Very shortly after his father's death, he heard a rumour in London that the forfeited Scotch estates were about to be restored by the crown to the heirs of the former owners. This induced him to institute some inquiry on the subject. But, on a subsequent occasion, his ship was unfortunately run down at sea, on her passage to London, and William Drummond and all hands on board perished; and to complete the disaster, most of the documents and papers which had escaped the inundation of 1771 were supposed to have been with him on board his ship, at the time it was unhappily lost. James Drummond, the eldest son, still continued to follow the humble and ungenial occupation into which his destiny had originally thrown him. Much was occasionally talked of with reference to the recovery of his family estates; but, from the insurmountable barrier which poverty presented, little was attempted, and nothing actually done; and, after a laborious life, he died February 7, 1823, at the age of seventy-one, and now sleeps peacefully in the rural cemetery of Penshaw, beside his once illustrious father. James left a large family, and Thomas, his eldest son, born April 3, 1792, and brought up a pitman, became the heir and representative of the ancient house of Perth. He claimed the earldom; and his petition was, on April 28, 1830, presented to the House of Lords, by virtue of his majesty's order of reference, and was referred by their lordships to a committee of privileges. On the 20th of June, 1831, at the Canongate Court-room, Edinburgh, Thomas Drummond, of Biddick, in the county of Durham, grandson and last heir male of the body of James, sixth Earl of Perth, commonly called the "Duke of Perth," was, by a respectable jury, unanimously served nearest and lawful

Boldon Book states that the villains of South Bedic held their vill to farm, paid 5s., and provided 160 men to mow in harvest, and 36 carts to lead the lord's corn at Hocton. Alianor de Colley died seised of the manor of South Bedyk nigh Newbotell in 1335; and in the following year, her son Gilbert styled himself *Dominus de Bedyk Waterville*. From the Daldens and Burnyng-hills the estate passed to the Bowes family, and, after the death of the Knight Marshall, became the seat of his second son, George Bowes, Esq.² His son, Sir George Bowes, sold Biddick to the Lambtons;³ and it descended, in 1723, from Freville Lambton the younger, Esq., of Hardwick and Biddick, to his half-brother, Nicholas Lambton, Esq. Mrs. Mary Lambton, only daughter and heiress of Nicholas, devised the estate and other property to Mr. John Dawson, who assumed the name of Lambton. Biddick was afterwards purchased by the Marquis of Londonderry, who sold the hall, with a part of the lands, to the Lambtons of Lambton; and they were for some time occupied by William Henry Lambton, Esq., a younger branch of the family, who died at Geneva, November 23, 1825.

heir of his deceased great grand-uncle, Lord Edward Drummond, who took upon him the title of Earl of Perth, and who was the youngest and last surviving son, and last heir male of the body of James, the fourth Earl of Perth Thomas Drummond now resides at New Penshaw. Additional documents, tending to prove his identity, have lately come into his possession, which his legal adviser appears to think will more fully establish his right to the peerage, so long in abeyance.

In 1841, the Duc de Melfort claimed the earldom of Perth, as heir male general of the family, he being the great-great-grandson, by his second marriage, of John Drummond, Earl and Duke of Melfort, second son of James Drummond, third Earl of Perth.

Under the act 24 Geo. III, cap. 57, 1784, the Perth estates were granted by that monarch to the father of Lady Gwydyr, who had been found, by a decree of the Court of Session, to be the nearest heir male of the attainted John Drummond, under the supposition that James Drummond had died without issue.

²Some idea of the colliery operations of that day may be gleaned from the following passage in the papers of Mr. Bowes, who died in 1606:—"There is coles gotten in five severall places (of the Biddick estates), the furthest place thereof is not 3 miles from the house; and I have sonke a shafte within the domaine, having onely bestowed 4*l.* charges, and have already gotten some coles, which if the seams of coles prove to be 3 quarters of a yard thick, the same with 200*l.* stocke will yeald 200*l.* per ann. clear profit."

³ Joseph Lampton, or Lambton, a member of the South Biddick family, was educated for the Catholic priesthood at Rheims and Rome, from whence he was sent to England. Being apprehended, tried, and condemned, he "suffered at Newcastle in the flower of his age, and in sight of his friends and relatives, on July 27, 1593. Being cut down alive, a felon attempted to rip him up; but his heart failed him, and he chooses rather to die than go on with the operation. A butcher from a neighbouring village (Whickham) was then prevailed upon by the sheriff to execute the cruel sentence."