

The Drysdales of Dollar.

BY THE REV. ROBERT PAUL, F.S.A. Scot.

WE are all, I suppose, familiar with the fact that certain surnames abound in various parts of our country, and have continued to do so for a very long period. Notable illustrations are to be found in the case of the Highland clans, such as the Campbells in Argyll, the Grants in Strathspey, the Camerons in Lochaber and Lochiel, and the Mackays in Sutherland. And the same applies to the Border septes, like the Johnstones of Annandale, the Armstrongs and Elliots of Liddesdale, and the Homes of the Merse. In all these localities the patronymics borne by the families originally possessing, or at all events inhabiting, the lands and acknowledging a common ancestry, still largely prevail. It may be said, indeed, that almost every part of Scotland has surnames peculiar to itself, and still prevailing there more largely than elsewhere, notwithstanding the migratory and shifting habits of modern days. Along the "Hillfoots," for example, such names as Kirk, Alexander, Burn, Dawson, Glass, Harley, and others that might be mentioned are of frequent occurrence to-day, and they can all be traced back as existing in the locality for a very long time—in the case of some of them even hundreds of years.

Amongst these one of the most notable is that of Drysdale. This cognomen is frequently met with at the present day in the west of Fife, and more or less throughout what was known in ancient times as the territory of Fothrik, Forthriffe, or Forthreve, the part of the country which may be described generally as that between Loch Leven and Stirling from east to west, and between the Ochils and the Forth from north to south. And the popular belief in the district is that the name first came into use in our own parish of Dollar, and under circumstances detailed in the following interesting and curious document, which is said to have been preserved among the various representatives of the family in this district for many generations:—

"On the twentieth day of May, one thousand five hundred and three years, we, Thomas, William, and James Douglas, sons of the departed Thomas Douglas of Brushwood Haugh in the parish of Drysdale and shire of Dumfries, left our native place for the reason here assigned, viz., defending our just and lawful rights against our unjust neighbour, Johnston of Greenstonehill, who, being determined to bring water to his mill through our property, and having obtained leave of his friend, the King, began his operations on Monday, the 16th May. We prevented him by force. The next day he brought twenty of his vassals to carry on the work. We, with two friends and three servants (eight in all), attacked Johnston with his twenty, and in the contest fourteen of his men were killed along with their base leader. A report of these proceedings was carried to the King, and we were obliged to fly (the tocsin* being sounded). We took shelter under the shadow of the Ochil Hills, in a lonely valley on the river Devon. After having lived there full two years, we returned home in disguise, but found all our property in possession of Johnston's friends, and a great reward offered for our lives. We, having purchased a small spot, called the Haugh of Dollar, and changed our names to the name of our native parish, were clearly in mind to spend the residue of our days under the ope of the Ochils, and wish the name of Drysdale to flourish in the lonely valley. The King passed through this with his court on the 12th of June 1506, going from Stirling to Falkland; dined on Haliday's green (an eastern neighbour); but we were not recognised."

* The alarm bell.

There seems no reason to doubt the credibility of the story thus recorded, whatever may be said of the authenticity of the document itself. For at the period mentioned the Borderland was in a most disordered state, and conflicts between the turbulent Border clans—of whom the Douglasses and the Johnstons were amongst the most prominent—were of constant occurrence. Nor were these members of the former tribe who are said to have fled from their native Dryfesdale to the northern shire of Clackmannan by any means singular or alone in so doing, or in their change of name with a view to secure immunity for their violence. For it is on record that some forty years before this time—in 1460—two younger sons of Sir Adam Johnstone of Westerraw in the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, scions of the very family with whom the Douglasses of Brushwood Haugh were at deadly variance, fled from their native district in consequence of “some discontent,” and settled in Perthshire, assuming “to themselves the surname of Souter, that thereby they should not be noticed for the tyme.”* “One of the breithers dyeing without issue, the other surviveing, for his good deportment was married to a gentlewoman, from which marriage proceedit diverse honest men.” These “honest men,” with their families, who, it is mentioned, were “considerable,” bore the name of Souter for upwards of a century, when, by Act of the Scottish Parliament, 21st August 1663, in the reign of Charles II., they were permitted to resume their true and ancient surname of Johnstone, the Act declaring that “this change shall nowayes prejudice them nor their airs and successors.”

It is further evidence of the credibility of this story that as a tradition it has been long known in the locality where the incidents referred to in it are said to have occurred, and that many attempts have been made in the past to identify the exact location of Brushwood Haugh and Greenstonehill, but unfortunately without success. I have recently made extensive researches in every available source of documentary authority, and also in the district, without being able definitely to locate them. The names have utterly disappeared, and are quite unknown even to natives quite familiar with its topography and history.

The parish of Dryfesdale, popularly pronounced Drysdale, is situated in the centre of Annandale in the south of Dumfriesshire, and takes its name from the Water of Dryfe which flows through it in a south-westerly direction to join the river Annan. Along the banks of the stream are wide tracts of rich holm land, the depositions of the water from time immemorial, consisting of deep loam, easy of culture, and luxuriantly fertile.† Before joining the Annan, and after traversing the parish for some two and a half miles, the deposits which it makes, and the stretch of level land which it occasionally desolates with its floods, is called Dryfe Sands. This place is memorable as the scene of a sanguinary conflict in 1593 between the Maxwells and the Johnstones, in which the former, though much superior in numbers, were vanquished and pursued, and lost on the field and in the retreat seven hundred men, including Lord Maxwell, their commander, many of the wounded, it is said, being cut down in the streets of the neighbouring town of Lockerbie.

* “Genealogy and Surnames,” by William Anderson, Edinburgh, 1865, p. 114.

† The Dryfe’s impetuosity and its property of “driving” all before it at times is supposed to be the origin of its name.

From a courteous correspondent in that town,* I have received information which makes it tolerably certain that the sites of Brushwood Haugh and Greenstonehill were somewhere on the banks of the Dryfe in the holm-land in the northern part of the parish. This information was communicated by a Mr Kerr, a native of the locality and an official of the Caledonian Railway Company, now resident at Carstairs, whose opinion is that they were at or near a spot called Old Walls in the Dryfe Valley. This place is still a farm about two and a quarter miles north of Lockerbie, and a mile above Lockerbie House, which before 1881 had long been the home of a family of Johnstones, and later of the Johnstone-Douglasses of Lockerbie. Old Walls lies on the east side of the river Dryfe, and about a mile farther up on the other side is Lammonbie Mill. Mr Kerr's great-great-great-grandfather was tenant of Lammonbie Farm, and his great-grandfather was tenant of the Farm of Lockerbie Hill. His grandfather, who was born in 1777, was for fifty years baron officer here to Mr Johnstone-Douglas of Lockerbie, and Mr Kerr says that he had frequently heard the story of the Drysdale from his grandfather, who always affirmed that the scene of the dispute was in the vicinity of what is now Lammonbie Mill, and that the places named, or at least one of them, were situated near Old Walls. This is the more probable as the lower end of Dryfe Water has long been the home of the Johnstones, and the locus is one of the few places in the parish suitable for a mill, or indeed possible for one to be.

The wish expressed by the Douglas refugees that the name they had assumed might flourish "in the lonely valley on the River Devon," was abundantly fulfilled. For in the course of the century following their settlement there, their descendants are found located as portioners, feuars, and tenants in different parts of the parish and surrounding districts. In 1536 a William Draisdale was bailiff at Alva to Sir William Monteith of West Kerse, who was then the proprietor of that estate, and another member of the family, and of the same Christian name, was chief officer of the garrison of Lochleven Castle under Sir William Douglas in 1567, and was one of the most wary and relentless jailers of the unfortunate Queen Mary, during her confinement there.† A "Sir Andro Drisdell" occurs in a minute of the Regality Court of the Barony of Alloa, dated 20th June 1554. From the Register of Dunfermline Abbey it appears that about 1557 a tack of "three bovates of the Mains of Dollar" was granted by the monastery there to an Agnes Drysdaill and her husband Andrew Vannand. Four of the name, a Thomas, a William, and two Johns—one of the latter being designated "alias Gregoursone"—were among the original feuars of the Dollar lands belonging to the Regality of Campbell, when these were first feued by the Earl of Argyll in 1605. In 1620 Simon Drysdale, one of their immediate descendants, was still in possession of the Haugh of Dollar, the original settlement of the fugitives from Dumfriesshire. And in the Commissariat Record of Stirling, the wills of twenty-seven

* Mr Thomas Henderson, solicitor, to whom my best thanks are due for the amount of trouble he has taken on my behalf.

† Burns-Begg's "History of Lochleven Castle," 1887, where a full account is given of the stratagem by means of which the captive queen endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to provide for Drysdale's absence from the castle on the day of her escape.

persons of the name in the parish of Dollar, evidently persons of substance more or less, are registered between 1615 and 1685.

The reference at the end of the above document to the passing of the king (James IV.) and his court on their way from Stirling to Falkland in June 1506 is interesting, because in connection with it there is still current in Kinross-shire a curious tradition as to an incident in the royal progress which is said to have occurred on this occasion at Tullibole Castle near the Crook of Devon, and the memory of which is still preserved by a local designation. The king and his retinue were hospitably entertained in passing by the laird of Tullibole, and the tables were erected in a field in the neighbourhood of the Castle—the "Haliday's green" of the document. Among the king's attendants was a trooper celebrated for his bacchanalian prowess, and among the vassals of the laird there was one named Keltie equally renowned for the same questionable pre-eminence. The two challenged each other to a drinking bout, but having no opportunity of pitting their powers against one another while the king was present, they agreed to meet on the following morning on the same spot where his majesty had dined. It is not said what kind of liquor they drank, but they drank it out of a "quaff" as it was called—a small wooden vessel holding about half an English pint. They continued to drink for three days, when the trooper fell from his seat apparently asleep. Keltie thereupon took another draught to show that he was conqueror, and this gave rise to a proverb in the district, "Keltie's Mends." It was customary thereafter when any person refused to drink off his glass that he was threatened with "Keltie's Mends." Keltie, it is said, afterwards dropped also from his seat and fell asleep, but when he awoke he found his companion dead. He was buried where he lay, and as the place was near a small pool of water, it still retains the name of "the Trooper's Dub." The ghost of the unfortunate trooper was believed to haunt the spot, and the Rev. Mr Graham, the writer of the Old Statistical Account of the parish, says that in his day (1796) few of the country people cared to pass the Trooper's Dub at night.

The "Haliday's Green" of the above document, however, militates strongly against its authenticity as an account contemporary with the incidents it purports to relate; for, as may be learned from the article on Tullibole Castle in the present number of the *Dollar Magazine*, the proprietor in 1506 was Andrew Hering of Glasclune, and the Hallidays did not come into possession of it until a century later. This indeed seems to me to be conclusive proof that the old Drysdale manuscript printed above is not really a production of the sixteenth century, as it professes to be, but must be relegated to a much later date. It is possible that the story was perpetuated orally among the Drysdals till the following century, when it was committed to writing, and was composed in the first person to give it greater verisimilitude. In several copies of it which I have seen, a note is appended to the effect that it was copied first by Simon Drysdale of the Haugh of Dollar in the year 1620, as well as by subsequent representatives of the family. Probably "first copied" should be "first committed to writing." The story itself, however, as I have already said, is not at all improbable. It may be added that though it professes to give the origin of

the branch of the Drysdales in our part of the country, the name was already known elsewhere, and is found occurring even in this same district some twenty-seven years before. For in one of the burgh records of Stirling it is recorded that on the 16th May 1478, a Thomas Drusdale—who was evidently an ecclesiastic, from the “Dominus” (the Latin equivalent of our “Sir,” usually at this period applied to certain priests) prefixed to his name—appeared before the Abbot and Convent of Cambuskenneth about his lease of Alveh (Alva) Church. And the same Thomas Drysdale appears as a witness to a sasine of James Shaw of Salchy (Sauchie), of the five merk land of Tullibody, dated 11th March 1478. But in those times these ecclesiastics were a wandering folk, and his presence in the Hillfoots was probably a mere sporadic or solitary occurrence.
