

Statistical Accounts of Scotland

Extract from First Statistical Account 1790 written by Rev George Home

The parish church appears to be an old edifice, and has lately received several improvements, which its former state rendered extremely necessary.

Extract from Second Statistical Account 1834 written by Rev George Tough

Ecclesiastical State— The church, although nearly half a mile from the village, and a quarter from the manse, is quite central for the parish, and is scarcely three miles distant from the remotest habitation. It stands on a romantic spot on the banks of the Eye, nearly opposite to Ayton House, in a situation of sweet seclusion. As already noticed, it is supposed to have been founded in the 12th century. Besides the present place of worship, consisting in part of the ancient walls, there still remain entire those of the south transept, all beautifully mantled with ivy, and now consecrated a second time, by the place having been converted into the burying-ground of the Ayton family, and adorned with appropriate shrubs and flowers by the pious care of the surviving relatives. In this portion of the ruins there is a stone window, with circular, and not pointed arches, which may be a guide to the antiquarian as to the age of the erection. There is likewise remaining, the gable of the chancel, the sidewalls of which have been assisted in their decay, by the sacrilegious hands of plunderers, for the sake of the sandstone. In the gable of the present church, there is a large circular arch, nearly the whole width of the wall, but now built up, which must have formed the spacious communication with the chancel, and of course wide enough to admit the grand processions to and from the altar in Catholic times. The hewn stone of the walls, appears, from its quality, to have been brought from the sandstone quarry by the sea side at Greystonlees; and this perhaps may account for the church being built on the south side of the river. Its original dimensions comprehending the external ruins, had afterwards been contracted within narrower limits, corresponding with the actual population,—probably at the time when it was converted into a Protestant church. Upwards of twenty years ago, it underwent repairs and an enlargement, by the addition of a northern aisle and steeple. Its capacity was thus better adapted to the increased population, but it would even then, (and still more now,) have been too small, were it not for the accommodation supplied to the redundant population by the two meeting houses in the village. These latter have also afforded similar accommodation to the growing population of the surrounding

parishes. It would have been ultimately a saving to the heritors to have built a new church at the time of the last enlargement. The present although still in pretty good repair, will not last so long as a new one, and when repairs are next called for, it will probably require to be rebuilt and further enlarged. In its present state, it may contain nearly 500 sitters. None of the seats are free, except the communion benches, one or two of which are left for use in the middle passage, but seldom required. The pews are the property of the heritors for themselves, their tenants, and servants. A few seats were given by the heritors to the kirk-session, to be let for the benefit of the poor; but for these little or no rent is received. The feuars and others who have no legal accommodation would, no doubt, obtain liberty to erect a gallery for themselves in the west end of the church, but they have hitherto preferred being indebted to the indulgence of such seat-holders as have spare room, or they occupy the seats of such tenants and farm-servants as attend the meeting-houses.