NEWTON

Imp Gaz, II, 511 [1857/65]

Station, c £8000, elegant, Elizabethan. Council house and Parish Church: "both very unpretending structures."
"The town, so late as about the middle of the last century, consisted entirely of one story houses, thatched and of mean appearance. Towering above them, and situated in Garden Street, amidst gardens and trees, stood Newton castle, the seat of the Baronet Wallaces of Craigie, a castellated edifice of the kind common in the later feudal times. This old castle was taken down about 85 years ago, and the parish church was built near its site."
"The town was, for a long time, dependent chiefly on the collieries, and when they ceased, it remained for some time stationary. But about 56 years ago, it received a new impulse from enterprize in trade and manufacture, and began to undergo extension and improvement. Among its later features are several fine villas and the improvement of the harbour."
4 foundries, employing about 50 men, making all sorts of iron and brass machinery and tools. 400 weavers, and 600 hand sewers, "work for the warehouses of Glasgow.2
"The descendants of a colony of fishermen from Pitsligo and places in its vicinity in Aberdeenshire who long were a peculiar race in dress and habits, and conducted an extensive traffic, are now in a comparatively reduced condition, employ themselves chiefly in white fishing, and have no wider market than Ayr and its immediate neighbourhood."

AP, F 11.9.1936, 10c

Document brought to AP office the other day by Thomas McNidder, Largs. His since 1910. It is a Resignation and Sasine, dated 9th July 1585, in which a tenement in Newton is resigned by Agnes Scot, spouse of Nigel Raith, burgess in Newton, and said Nigel, in favour of Nigel's son, Patrick Raith, reserving to themselves a liferent. Signed by Johannes McKnedar, notary.

Macfarlane [1723]

Descriptions of some Parishes in the Jurisdiction of Kyle in Ayrshire with what is worth notice remarked very exactlie May 1723.
The toun of Newtoun upon Air a hansome village, stands at the mouth of the water of Air where it enters the sea and has a good samond fising with severall other priviledges, has 2 Bailies or toun Counsell and Tolbooth; A loch of a mile long designed by the town loys a litill above it, which furnishes the myln with water. The famelie of Craigie are proprietors of both Newtoun and Prestick and can not elect magistrates with his concurrence and hes the naming of the leit.
…
The Castle of Newtoun belonging to Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie advocat stands west of the kirk 2 short miles near the east end of the Bridge of Air; has hansome orchards with high stone walls and a park closs to the house with a stone dyk about it and a large handsome dovecoat. Alexander of Blackhouse has a house that stands one mile ½ west of the kirk near to the burgh of Air, has a salmond fishing.

Census, 1821, 497

'Extension of the collieries, and of trade in general, has taken place in Newton-upon-Ayr.'
St Quivox: 'has been enlarged, at the expense of the parish of Newton.'

Census, 1831

Newton. 'Several houses have been demolished for a new line of road, and the coal trade is not as flourishing as formerly.'

St Quivox. Coal and quarries, 152.

AO, Tu 5.3.1833, 1d — '... but in the townhead of Ayr, and the greater part of Newton and St Quivox, the streets, and particularly the lanes, are in a very filthy state, water being allowed to stagnate in all directions, and each family having a separate and, in general, openly exposed dungstead. In the old parts ot the town of Ayr the houses are crowded together, high and ill-aired ...' '... on the 10th August a procession in honour of the passing of the Reform bill took place, including nearly the whole pupulation as actors or spectators, anf the evening was spent in rejoicing, which in this part of the world means hard drinking ...'

2SA [Alex Cuthill, "Ayr", 1837] — Not many years ago, the Glasgow road, for upwards of three miles in the vicinity of Ayr, ran on both sides through accumulated wreaths of barren sand, which gave the traveller a very unfavourable impression of the approach to the county town. Now, however, nearly all this has vanished from the sight, and the eye is gratified with small well0cultivated inclosures, neat cottages and gardens, and handsome villas with ornamented avenues and shrubberies.

Census, 1841 — Newton on Ayr. Population increase attributed 'to its being the terminus of a railway.'

St Quivox. Population increase attributed 'to the success of the coal-works and manufactures, and to the demand for labourers consequent upon agricultural improvements.'

AA, Th 9.6.1864, 1b — Intimation of petition, in terms of General Police & Improvement (Scotland) Act, 1862, to have boundaries of Newton and Wallacetown, as a populous place, fixed and defined for the purposes of said Act. Sheriff has ordered intimation in AA, AO, Ayrshire Express and GH, and by handbills. Objections by 23rd June.

AA, Th 5.1.1871, 4e — NEWTON AND WALLACETOWN. It was our purpose to have adverted sooner to the remarkable disclosures regarding the state of Newton and Wallacetown, contained in a report by Capt. Young, Chief-Constable of the County, which was read at the last meeting of Quarter Sesions. It is not yet, however, too late to do so: indeed, the facts stated cannot be too often or too prominently brought under the notice of those who are entrusted with the maintenance of peace and good order in our midst. It has long been acknowledged that the portion of the town of Ayr lying on the north side of the river is in a very unsatisfactory state; and that its condition has been aggravated, rather than ameliorated, by its close proximity to the Royal Burgh, where there is efficient and adequate police supervision. Lawless and troublesome characters, who can find no resting-place on the south side of the water, have only to cross the bridge to be in a sphere where they have comparative liberty, and pretty free scope to follow the bent of their inclination. It is like the case of a man who keeps his own door clean by sweeping the dirt over to the door of his neighbour. Ayr, of course, suffers in its own way from this state of matters, as much of the crime committed within it is done by parties from the other sie of the water; and the Burgh Police, like Tam o' Shanter's witches, dare not cross the running stream after them. The population of Newton and Wallacetown is a good deal larger than that of the Royal Burgh, and the small police force set apart to it is quite inadequate to deal satisfactorily with the lawless elements it contains. While the general character of the district has been long known, probably no one was aware before the publication of Capy. Young's report, how much of the elements of social disorder and demoralisation are to be found in it. According to that report, Newton and

Wallacetown number among their inhabitants 10 returned convicts, 113 convicted thieves, 10 resetters, 71 persons suspected of theft, 162 habitual offenders and bad characters (other than thieves), 60 prostitutes and 8 houses of bad fame. With such a population, uncontrolled by a sufficient police force, we cannot wonder that the peaceably disposed residents of the district - who constitute the great bulk of the inhabitants - should be exposed to annoyances and dangers, and their children to temptations, of a nature and extent that the dwellers in no well-governed realm should have to endure. But it would be a narrow and short-sighted view that regarded the evil only as affecting them. It prejudically affects all the surrounding district in a variety of ways; and therefore it is the duty of all having an interest in the welfare of the community generally to exert themselves to have this moral plague spot removed. It will not do to let it alone, merely because it cannot be definitely settled whose special duty it is to work out the cure. One thing seems pretty clear, and it is that if anything is to be done it must be done from without. There is little hope of the requisite means being taken within the district itself to put matters in the state that they ought to be. An attempt was made a few years ago to get the Police and Improvement Act adopted, but it was unsuccessful; and we do not think there is any greater likelihood of its being voluntarily adopted now. The fact is to be regretted, but it is a fact nevertheless. The great mass of the population of Newton and Wallacetown are respectable people, chiefly of the working class - the dangerous characters above enumerated being for the most part located within a radius of one or two hundred yards from the 'Four Corners', Wallacetown; and the inhabitants generally object to assess themselves in a heavy police rate because a few landlords choose to let their houses to bad characters. Moreover, they think that they have not been well-used by the Burgh of Ayr, in being excluded by it from the benefits of citizenship, merely because the river happens to run between them. It is, indeed, an anomalous state of things that the larger part of the population of the town should be shut out from the advantages of Magisterial and Police supervision; and no plan for the remedying of the evils that admittedly exist can be thoroughly satisfactory that does not embrace the union of the various parts of the burgh under one central authority for police purposes. The different districts of the burgh are all intimately connected with each other. Ayr derives no small advantage from the contiguity of Newton and Wallacetown. Its merchants draw half their customers, and its manufacturers the greater part of their labour, from the northern side of the river; and it is contrary to the whole spirit of our system of local government that portions of the same town so intimately bound together should be under different authorities. In our opinion, a solution of the problem of what is to be done with Newton and Wallacetown must ultimately be found in their closer union to Ayr, and the amalgamation of the Burgh and County Police. Without this there can be no unity of action for the detection and suppression of crime. The great obstacle to this hitherto has been the indisposition of the Magistrates of the Royal Burgh to surrender their ancient dignity of having their own officers, which is surely but a poor and somewhat empty gratification compared with the satisfaction of preserving order and suppressing vice and crime. The amalgamation of county and burgh police, as recently carried out in Stranraer, and for a long time past in the burgh of Irvine, has been found to work most satisfactorily. The disgrace to our civilization involved in the continuance of the present state of things will surely not

much longer be tolerated by those who have the influence to bring out a remedy. Probably if there was such an official as an Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the matter would receive his early attention; but surely our County and Burgh Magistrates will not, without an effort, let it go forth that the problem is one beyond their own ability to solve.

Our remarks have had chiefly to do with the moral and social state of the district. Its physical condition, however, stands also in much need of improvement. The Local Authorities under the Public Health Act, if they faithfully perform their duty, may do much to put matters in this respect on a better footing - though a complete remedy we fear can only be had under the provisions of the Police Act. In some respects the district is more favourably situated than many others for the enforcement of strict sanitary regulations. There are few or none of the densely populated closes and wynds that are to be found in most of our cities and towns. Nearly all the houses front to the streets and have good spaces of garden-ground behind. This is a condition of things that admits of the primary laws of health being enforced, if the local authorities do their duty. The prodigal grant of spirit and public house licenses to houses at and in the neighbourhood of the famous or rather infamous 'Four Corners' is another prolific source of vice, disturbance and crime. Nor should the religious state of the district be lost sight of by the Churches in town. Here surely, if anywhere, is the sphere where a Church should make its living power felt. It is to be feared that in this as in other aspects the unhappy divisions among our Churches prevent unity of action. But we think some co-operative work might be carried on in such a field, even as matters exist, if a friendly understanding were come to by which each Church should take charge of a particular district, and bring the power of religion to bear on those whose lives are so flagrantly opposed to its precepts. It will need all the restraints of law that can be brought to bear, as well as the diligent enforcement of the highest teachings of Christianity, to introduce anything like moral order amongst the depraved classes who have found a 'city of refuge' on the north side of the river.

AA, Th 26.8.1875, 6d — John Wallace, George Street, found guilty in Police Court, Thursday, of conducting a house of ill-fame. Fined £5, or 40 days.

EG, F 4.11.1892, 1214b — Petition of Newton Parochial Board to have Newton held to be a parish within burgh of Ayr in terms of Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act 1855. See Ref.

WALLACETOWN

AP 6.11.1931 — has a good article on early Wallacetown. The first houses in Whitletts Road were built by J & W Drinnan; the first was Hawkhill Cottage, William Drinnan's own house. The 2nd house past the railway was being roofed in June 1876. Hawkhill Bowling Club dates from 1878. Ayr Townhead Station stone went into houses in Burnett Terrace and some houses in Union Avenue, &c.

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