

From The Third Statistical Account
of Scotland 1951

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CHAPTER 8

DALMELLINGTON DISTRICT (1948)

Parishes	<i>Dalmellington</i>	<i>Coylton</i>	<i>Dalrymple</i>
Area (thousand acres)	18	12	8
Farmland percentages			
Crops	2	20	22
Grass	4	47	49
Rough	94	33	29
Population (hundreds)			
1811	8	12	8
1851	29	15	11
1891	50	27	13
1931	62	24	14
1947	68	27	15
Women per 100 men, 1931	85	96	93

THE PARISH OF DALMELLINGTON

THE town of Dalmellington stands at a height of 600 feet above sea level at the upper end of the Doon Valley where it splits into three. One branch with the Cumnock Burn comes from the east. Another with the Muick Water comes through the town from the south-east. The third with the Doon itself comes down from Loch Doon through the Ness Glen, and the river widens temporarily into the Bogton Loch just west of the town. Dalmellington is built partly on the end slopes of the spurs separating these valleys, and partly on the flat ground below.

Concerning its origins nothing is known, and in spite of many guesses the name throws no light on the subject. Romantic people believe that the town took its name from Dame Helen's Castle, reputed even on Ordnance Survey maps to stand below the present Castle Crofts, but who Dame Helen was and when she lived (if ever), nobody knows. It is commonly said that the word is a hybrid—Teutonic *ton* and Celtic ante-

cedents—but whether *dal* is a valley or a meeting, and whether the *melling* means ‘mills’ or ‘hills’ is not very clear. McDowall’s ingenious derivation from the Gaelic *dail meallain tuinn*, ‘the fort of assembly of the moat-surrounded mound’, or more literally ‘the meeting place at the mound with the moat’, has the advantage of not invoking a mongrel word and of connecting the place-name with the remarkable moat hill which is still one of the striking features of Dalmellington. There is the further suggestion in it that there was a military purpose behind the earliest Dalmellington. It is reasonable to think that the first settlement in this rather bleak country was made because here was a centre which commanded the hill passes north to Ayr, east to Edinburgh, south to Galloway and Dumfries, and west to Stranraer and Ireland. So late as 1678 when the Highland Host were sent into the west country to harry the Covenanters, 900 of them were quartered in Dalmellington because of its central position. But who the people were who made the moat hill is quite unknown. There is speculation about the Romans having a station here on the way from the south to Ayr, but the moat hill is not a Roman construction. The mound is just as mysterious as the Pickans (Picts?) Dyke near the village.

Eighteenth century Dalmellington was a small rural village with some 500 inhabitants, and there were perhaps another couple of hundreds in the country parts. But the modern way of life was already taking shape. Good coal was being got from surface workings and sent down the turnpike road to Galloway. There were 8,000 sheep and 800 black cattle on the hills, and plans were on foot for the spinning and weaving of wool which materialised in the two woollen mills which flourished for a time in the following century. The extension of coal-mining after Watt’s engine had made the pumping of the deeper workings feasible, and the completion in 1858 of the railway which still links the town with Ayr, caused new growth in the town. The railway was never extended to Galloway and in the days before long distance road transport Dalmellington was the railhead for all the country to the south, and a place of considerable importance. There are still two hotels that date back to this time and the old posting stables now used as car lock-ups are still in existence. The iron furnaces

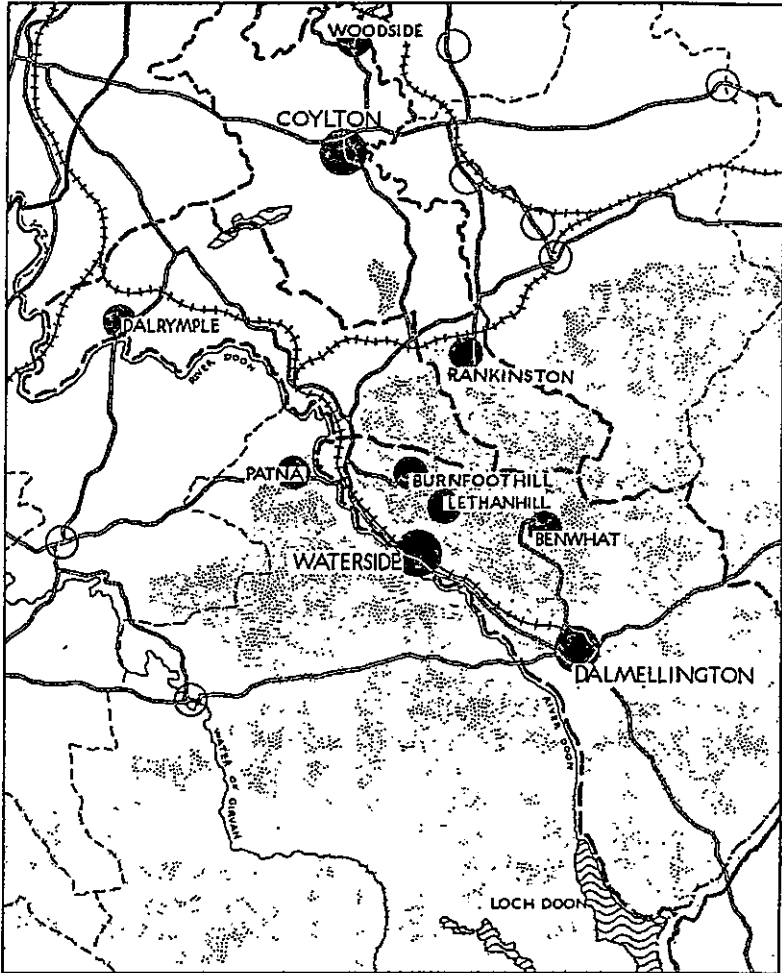


Fig. 46. PARISHES OF DALMELLINGTON, COYLTON, DALRYMPLE

at Waterside, now no longer active, added to the employment available for men in Dalmellington.

The town of to-day with its 3,770 folk has preserved something of its rural character. Seen from the main road from Ayr against the foothills of the Southern Uplands it has a fine situation. To the south are the pleasant woodlands of Craigen-gillan, leading to the wild narrow wooded Ness Glen. To the east are the woods of Camlarg House in the valley of the Cumnock Burn. Much of these woods and some of the Craigen-

gillan ones have been cut down during the War to provide timber. Craigengillan is now the only large house in the district. Camlarg House was purchased during the War years by the local coal company, which devoted the timber in the policies to its own purposes and demolished the House.

The old town, situated in the valley of the Muick just before it joins the Doon, looks rather drab. The main streets follow the roads through the town to Galloway and New Cumnock, and are on the whole adequate for motor traffic. But side streets off these main roads follow no definite pattern. Some are mere lanes, not properly surfaced and very muddy in wet weather. The old houses in the town are on the whole substantially built but most of them have no damp-proof course and are very damp. Some have been modernised but most of them fall short of 1950 requirements. Quite a number are used as stores or lock-ups. Between the Wars a considerable addition was made to the town by three housing schemes: two small ones at Bellsbank Crescent and Castle Crofts, and a larger one at Gateside into which were brought the inhabitants of the Craigmark and Beoch miners' rows, demolished in 1938. Since the War ended 12 permanent new houses have been added at Castle Crofts and the Gateside scheme has been completed by the erection of 14 'pre-fabs', and 18 houses of four and five apartments. In addition there have been two completely new schemes: the first on the Town's Common, consisting of 20 aluminium houses described as permanent 'pre-fabs' and some 36 permanent houses; the second a very big scheme on Bellsbank and Pennyarthur ground in a beautiful situation with charming views of the Bogton Loch, the Craigengillan policies and the Loch Doon Hills. The latter is said to be for about 800 houses with sites for church, school and shops: about a third of the scheme is already completed or on the way. The first of the houses are a quarter of a mile from Dalmellington: whether it will develop as a separate community or as part of Dalmellington is a question for the future. The village of Benwhat is one day to follow Craigmark and Beoch to extinction, and its miners are to be housed among the thousand miners already in residence in Dalmellington. On the outskirts of the town there is a smaller scheme called 'The Glebe' consisting of rather poorly built semi-permanent houses,

adjoining an Industrial and Miners' Hostel for 130 men, built on what was at one time the Church Glebe. These houses were put up during the War years to re-house redundant Lanarkshire miners who came to take up work in the local coal industry. The hostel is used as an industrial hostel for single men, quite a number of whom are from Ireland. Along the three main roads on the outskirts of the town there are good modern houses of the villa or bungalow type, owned for the most part by trades- or professional-people about the town. Several built or acquired by the coal-masters for their mine managers are now the property of the National Coal Board. On the outskirts of Dalmellington are three groups of miners' houses taking what share in Dalmellington life suits them but preserving a character of their own. The first of these is Burnton lying to the north. It consists of quite substantially built houses of the cottage type in blocks of two, originally erected by the Dalmellington Iron Company for its workers. The houses are exceptional of their kind in having bathrooms. Pennyvenie village lies along the road from Dalmellington to New Cumnock, and consists of a number of well built houses in rows. By comparison with most miners' rows the houses are distinctly good. Along a road leading from the New Cumnock Road to the Ayr Road avoiding the town centre are three rows of houses named Broomknowe, with houses much like those of Pennyvenie.

From the valuation roll, it is estimated that there are about 950 houses in Dalmellington: 105 cottages, 12 terrace, 26 villa, 180 tenement, 350 scheme houses, 189 miners' houses (Broomknowe, Pennyvenie and Burton), and 50 miners' houses under N.C.B. 95% of the houses have gardens. There are no wells in use in Dalmellington and its smaller neighbours: the water is all piped. All the houses have electricity, but only 20% have hot water and 30% lack a bathroom; 5% of the closets are outside.

To serve the people and the district around there are two surgeries, a bank, a Post Office, a Labour Exchange, and a District Council Office. In the centre of the town, not very conveniently situated for those living on the outskirts, are shops of different kinds: grocers (4, 1 of them licensed); butchers (4); bakers, drapers, confectioners, coal merchants (3 each); fish-

mongers (vans only), newsagents, electricians (2 each); chemist, ironmonger, shoemaker, fruiterer, general dealer (1 each). Numerically most frequent are public houses (5), fish and chip shops (4), cafés (3). The Co-operative Society, established in 1879, is very strong. It has a membership of 1,455, and an annual turnover of £144,000. In its service are 70 employees; 48 engaged in distribution (shops and vans), 10 in production (bakery, etc.), 7 in miscellaneous work like boot repairing, and 5 in management. Its vans serve a large area around Dalmellington and go as far south as Carsphairn and Dalry.

Mining. So far as the town is concerned, mining is the only industry. But compared with most mining communities Dalmellington does not bear the marks of mining. This is due to the fact that with the exception of the small Bogton mine the mines are well away from the town. The town lies in the valley: the mines are on the hills above, between the road to New Cumnock and the great southern fault. Altogether there are eight of them with a total annual output over 470,000 tons. The oldest of them is Beoch 3 which was working from 1866 to 1890 and was reopened in 1923. Pennyvenie 2/3, the largest of them, with an annual output of about 124,000 tons, dates back to 1872: its bath equipment is very good and serves three other pits as well: the screening plant can deal with 750 tons a day. All but this Pennyvenie pit are surface mines. The writer of the first *Statistical Account* puts on record that the Dalmellington coal was 'the best coal in the West of Scotland'. The quality still remains good. All the mines produce first-rate house coal, and the two Beoch ones also produce industrial coal. Except Pennyvenie 5 they are equipped with coal-cutting machinery and work 'longwall advancing'. The total labour force in the eight mines is about 1,300. Nearly a thousand of these live in or near Dalmellington. The rest come from Benwhat, Waterside, Patna and Lethanhill.

Leisure Interests. Listening-in plays an important part in the leisure time interests of the people. Practically every house has a wireless set and in many cases it goes continuously as a background noise. Reading is still a common home pursuit as it was a hundred years ago when the writer of the *New Statistical Account* described the Dalmellington folk as 'a reading people'. There are over 3,000 borrowers from the local branch of the

County Library, and book changes average 4,000 a month. There are very few books in the homes however, but copies of Burns are common and the knowledge of his works is sometimes extensive. Actually the newspapers are more read than any books. On Saturday evenings during the football season the sale of evening papers is three times that on ordinary week nights. The local newspapers, the *Ayrshire Post* and the *Ayr Advertiser*, have an equal popularity and circulate widely. Among Sunday papers the *Sunday Post* is easily the best seller. The demand for women's weeklies is greater than the supply, and the same is true for children's 'comics' like the *Beano* and the *Dandy*. There is quite a lot of card playing. The games most played are whist, rummy and other old favourites: very few people play bridge. For sports there are two angling clubs, bowling club, curling club, cycling club and a junior football club. Around Dalmellington there are large tracts of common ground, and two fields specially set off for games—the Station Park where the Craigmark Burntonians (the junior football club) play, and the Black Bull Meadow now being laid out as a village playing field by the District Council.

Gatherings for entertainment are hampered by the serious shortage of hall accommodation. The only hall for any kind of social function is the church hall of the Kirk o' the Covenant. The hall connected with the Merrick Café is purely a dance hall, and the Masonic Hall is a very small place. There is no institute and no public reading room. The only open door for most people in Dalmellington outside their own homes, it has been said, is the public house. This is to overlook the picture house, which has seating accommodation for 630 and is attended nightly by an average of 540 people. There are three changes of programme weekly and many people have the thrice-weekly habit. Quite a number of people find their entertainment in Ayr, but big queues in the Ayr bus station and high railway fares are a deterrent to travel. So far as the younger people are concerned dancing is the most popular form of entertainment. In the winter time there are dances twice or three times a week. The Merrick Café has a dance every Saturday night to which come young men and women from as far away as New Cumnock. The dance is even a gateway to education. The best attended of the Further Education

classes in country dancing. Other classes in general favour are those in tap dancing for children and for 'old tyme' dancing run by the Garden Club. Next in popularity are the whist drives held regularly by the 'Eastern Star', by the bowling club in its own pavilion, and in the Glebe Hostel. In contrast with these, lectures, concerts and adult classes make a poor appeal. The local Community Council with the help of the Arts Council for Great Britain has made a valiant endeavour to provide good music but has had to give up for lack of support. The Further Education classes held in the school are the last stronghold of culture. Besides a discussion group there is a good arts and crafts section, and a class in aero-modelling under highly expert tuition. A local concert party known as the Dalton Players which stages a variety revue every year, and a Village Silver Band which has the support of the whole community must also be noted

In the nature of the case, the town is dominated by the coal industry, but the long tradition of mining and the country background have given it a character of its own. As a rule, the Dalmellington miner is less extreme in his views and habits than most miners. Politically he supports the Labour Party and sends Labour men to represent him in District and County Council, but he is not an ardent politician and not an extremist. His newspaper reading is significant. The most popular paper is the *Daily Express*, followed by the *Daily Record*, but not many read the Socialist *Daily Herald* and only half a dozen the Communist *Daily Worker*. Another special feature is dress. The Dalmellington miner off his shift is a collar and tie man.

Social Life. Family life, the Community Council reports, is no worse than elsewhere. Mining being a reserved occupation, there were fewer fathers in the services than in most places and home conditions during the War were consequently more normal. But following the War, there seems to be less sense of family responsibility. Partly because of overcrowding, houses are less homes than they used to be. People have become more dependent on the cinema for their entertainment than on home interests. But over all housekeeping is good. Wives prepare good meals and mothers take good care of their children. The younger women expect to go out more and care more for their personal appearance. The relations of parents and children

are much easier than they were not so long ago. At the best there is greater mutual frankness. At the worst, the children are more impertinent. With many fathers working on back and night shifts and seeing comparatively little of the children during the week, the mothers have a larger share in the upbringing of the children. Corporal punishment in the home is comparatively common: the weakness is that it is not consistent. Improved transport facilities coupled with better wages have broadened the outlook of the people, who now go further afield for holidays. The local bus hirer has three motor buses, which are often chartered for day tours to the Scott Country, The Three Lochs, Edinburgh, or for a night at the pantomime. The custom of going to Ayr every Saturday is an old-established one. With all that, Dalmellington remains a rather close community. Incomers are a long time in being accepted. There are plenty of common interests but little community spirit. There is a Burns Club, a Gardening Society, a Mining Club (open to all in the industry but mainly composed of managers, oversmen, and firemen), a curling club that plays on the Ayr Ice Rink, a strong Masonic Lodge, Rechabites with a large membership, a junior football club with a keen following. But the social activities are sectional, and the members of the clubs are generally more concerned with their own group interests than with the interests of the town. The local Community Council has a struggle for existence. Even in its own province there is division, in the form of a Ratepayers' Association which is mainly concerned with the allocation of houses. Happily there are few social cleavages and little religious animosity. Old houses and new, bungalows, tenements and villas are thoroughly intermixed.

At one time Dalmellington was a sober place, thanks perhaps to a strong Temperance movement which was fanatically teetotal, but the War has brought a change for the worse. 'Dalmellington', says one man, 'has turned almost as bad as Glasgow on a Saturday night!' There is certainly more drinking now, and yet there is less drunkenness. Both hotels have seven-day licences, and people come from New Cumnock on Saturdays and Sundays for drink. Disturbances of the peace, however, are rare. Among women there is very little drinking. A good many people have their weekly 'flutter' on football

pools, and there is a considerable amount of betting on horses and dogs. With so much open country around gambling schools are common. Some run continuously over the whole week-end, and if reports are to be believed stakes are high. There is much destructiveness: street lights are frequently smashed; trees are broken down; fences are destroyed; it is impossible to keep public flower plots. It is the opinion of the Committee reporting that there has been no deterioration in sex morals: pre-marital sex relations are still too common but there is no increase in promiscuous intercourse.

MINING VILLAGES. At the end of the parish towards Ayr a considerable number of workers in the Dalmellington pits have their homes in three or four village collections of miners' rows, which came into being just over a century ago when ironstone was first mined to feed the furnaces at the Dalmellington Iron Works in Waterside. The first is Waterside itself beside the Doon, three miles up from Dalmellington, with a population of some 1,180. North of that are Lethanhill and Burnfoothill with a combined population of 950; and nearer Dalmellington the village of Benwhat with 460 people. The total labour force in the villages is about 400, a quarter of whom are employed in the Houldsworth Pit in Dalrymple parish, the rest in Dalmellington. No new building is going on in any of the villages, the intention being to bring the workers into Dalmellington and other centres at some later time.

The exodus is furthest advanced in the case of Benwhat, which may be taken as typical of these villages in decay. Benwhat stands 500 feet above the Doon Valley, and 1,100 feet high, with Benwhat Hill (1,426 feet) immediately behind. The first 20 houses were built in 1847; 110 more were built between 1870 and 1874, and these 130 houses still stand with half a dozen of the worst of them bricked up. The houses are in rows, four above and one below the road, with derelict gardens between. They are all of the low 'but-and-ben' type. At the back of each row with its jutting out kitchenettes is a narrow ash path, alongside which is a brick gutter with running water from the hill to carry away the dirty water from the houses. The only other buildings are the Store, built and run by the Iron Company with a Beer Store attached, which at one time had a monopoly of trade because no vans were allowed nearer

than the Iron Gates a mile and a quarter from the village; and the fine modern school opened in 1926, built over an ironstone mine and surrounded by bings. The road in front of the houses is made of ashes, and vans carrying goods to the villagers bump slowly along. The whole place wears an air of neglect. Only the most urgent repairs are ever made. Sanitation there is none. Except in the school all the closets are dry. There is electricity in the houses but none of the equipment which would lighten the women's labours. At the moment it is a thriving little village. With the men folks in the mines there is a steady income coming into the homes, for the most part to be put away for the day of removal to Dalmellington when new furniture and carpets will be needed. Cramped as are their quarters most people spend the winter evenings at home. About a hundred houses have wireless and the News and Variety programmes provide the main entertainment. Many of the young men pass their leisure time in a house that has been converted into a reading room, playing billiards, dominoes, etc., or reading the daily papers. There are libraries in the reading room and in the school, but only fiction is ever read. The Beer Store, which under National Coal Board conditions now supplies whisky as well as beer, is well frequented by the older men, without evident detriment; no women attend. The school is the centre of what life there is in the village. For many years there were classes two or three evenings a week but now the evening classes meet only once weekly. The most successful functions are a junior country dancing class attended by school pupils, and a Youth Service Club with an average of 25 members which has badminton, gymnastics and discussions as its main interests. All dances, concerts, and political meetings are held of necessity in the school; there is no other place available. The Benwhat Silver Band has its practices in Dalmellington. Running with the Doon Harriers is the main sport in Benwhat. The club ceased during the War, but it is alive again and has already managed to win the Ayrshire championship. The only other sport is football and here again Benwhat does well as an amateur club. There is no bowling green, tennis court, putting green or golf course. The older inhabitants will be sorry to leave the place of their birth and upbringing, but the younger folks will not share their regret. The long hard three miles

that separate them from the nearest centre keep them too much confined to their hill home in the winter months. There are other difficulties that come from being off the beaten track. The doctor takes a run up three days a week but there are occasions when he is hard to get. The nearest maternity homes are 18 miles away and the best the women can have at ordinary times is a visit from the nurse. But in a few years the old houses will be in ruins, fit company for the bings of other days that surround them, and life will have begun anew elsewhere for the migrants from Benwhat.

Education in the Parish. There are half a dozen schools in the parish. Four of these are in the mining villages in the north: Benwhat with 80 pupils; Waterside's two schools—the Public School (120 pupils) and St. Xavier's Roman Catholic School (120 pupils); and Lethanhill Junior Secondary School (160 primary pupils, 35 junior secondary). In the Dalmellington area are two schools: Dalmellington Junior Secondary School, the central school of the area to which come all the pupils who have completed their primary course in Benwhat and Waterside Public Schools as well as in Kerse in Dalrymple parish; and little Pennyvenie School a mile and a half from the town which has only 20 pupils and finishes with them at the age of nine. Dalmellington School has about 550 on the primary roll and over 200 on the junior secondary. To house these pupils it has three buildings huddled together. Some 190 infants occupy a new brick and roughcast building; 360 primary scholars are taught in the original 1874 stone school; the junior secondary classes meet in the ramshackle erection put up in 1919 as a temporary building. Though all under one head, these units are quite separate. Both aesthetically and practically the arrangement is most unsatisfactory. The only time the school is one school is when the pupils from the different buildings pour into the extensive playground and get mixed up a bit at the intervals. Although in the north-west extremity of the parish, the school is reasonably convenient of access, but the construction of a bridge over the railway would be a great advantage to the children from the Gateside scheme just over the line from the school. About 150 pupils take dinner in school, many of them from the outlying parts. Most parents take good care of their children—dress them well and keep them clean—and are

vaguely interested in their education. There is no parent-teacher association and popular opinion is rather against the idea: as one person has put it it would only be 'a gossip centre'. All classes send their children to the school. The school provides a three-year language course with French and Latin and sends the pupils fit for more advanced studies to Ayr Academy at the end of the third year. Most of the pupils however are enrolled in the practical non-language classes. In connexion with the school are various youth organisations: physical culture (for the girls, strange to say), junior country dancing, a choir, an aero-modelling class, a stamp club. A school football team competes in the Doon Valley League and plays against the Ayr schools. There is no official scheme of vocational guidance but the teachers have made themselves proficient in the art and give considerable help in the choice of careers. Most boys enter the pits either as miners or as tradesmen. A number become joiners, painters, builders, etc., with local firms. A few enter the professions, mostly teaching and accountancy, and occasional boys become shepherds or go to farm work. For girls there are few local openings. Most girls enter offices, usually in Ayr but some serve the National Coal Board or become shop assistants in Ayr or Dalmellington. Virtually none enter domestic service: the few that do are 'the complete duds'! Rumours of the establishment of a shirt factory in Patna keep alive the hope of an industry for females somewhere near at hand.

Churches. Mining places are generally reputed to be difficult parishes for the church, but this does not hold in the case of Dalmellington. There is a tradition of religious loyalty in the village which may go back, it has been suggested, to the days of the Covenanters. 'Among the older people', says one recorder, 'there can still be seen the typical Covenanter, sternly righteous, with rigid views of right and wrong, and not keen on changes.' The sense of Covenanting ancestry found expression in the designation of the Old Parish Church at the time of the 1929 Union as the Kirk o' the Covenant. This church has a membership of nearly 1,000 and as tokens of its vigour has a very large Woman's Guild with 238 members, and a Sunday School with the same number of scholars. Lamloch was a Free Church before it became a United Free and later

a congregation of the Church of Scotland: it has 357 members, and its organisations are no less active. Church attendance on Sunday morning is but moderate (the average in the one case being 190 and in the other 60) but the turn-out at Communion in the course of the year is about two-thirds of the membership. There are 400 men on the one roll and 150 on the other, and the proportion is two men to three women. Besides the Woman's Guild, both have Girls' Associations and an association for men, and at one time they ran an 'Open House' jointly on Sunday evenings. There are Sunday Schools in Burnton and Benwhat. At the north end of the parish there is a third congregation of the Church of Scotland—Waterside and Lethanhill Church—with a membership of 465. There are two buildings, a stone church at Waterside and a wooden church at Lethanhill. On Sundays there is a morning service at Waterside and an afternoon service at Lethanhill. There are separate Sunday Schools, Woman's Guilds and other organisations but one minister and session. The only other church in the parish is the Roman Catholic one at Waterside—the Church of St. Francis Xavier. It seats 300 and serves all the villages from Patna to Dalmellington. The total attendance at the 8.30 and 11 o'clock services on Sunday averages some 500. There are one or two other religious bodies. The Christian Brethren have about 60 members and a large Sunday School. The Church of Christ has a few households and meets in Pennyvenie where they have also a small Sunday School. There is a branch of the Ayrshire Christian Union, an evangelistic group of about a dozen which holds prayer meetings in the village. In addition, a few Jehovah's Witnesses go round the houses selling the sect's literature, and some people interested in spiritualism attend meetings in Ayr.

Few householders are completely without a church connexion, though not every adult member of the family may be a communicant. Sometimes all are members; sometimes it may be the parents, with the young people uninterested; quite often the young people are communicants though their parents are not. On the whole the weak section is the age group 35 to 50. The older people retain their interest, and there are signs of increasing interest among the younger people. Even non-churchgoers, if born and bred in Dalmellington, usually

claim to 'belong' to one or other of the churches, and are quite definite about what minister they want for marriages and other services. As a matter of fact the idea of the Union of 1929 is taking longer to enter the heads of non-churchgoers than of church members. Among church members, the memory of the Disruption which used to produce a sharp cleavage is gradually disappearing. Incoming families, whatever their former church connexion, are slow to join up, but when they do so they are not usually concerned with the old divisions. A good many of the villagers are indifferent but well disposed to ministers and church. Only a small minority are antagonistic and that usually because of political views. The Christian ethic remains the accepted ideal in all quarters, and the people are still proud of their Covenanting tradition. But the old hardness of that tradition is passing. The religion of the younger people is broader, gentler and more gay. They appreciate a richer and more varied form of service. They are interested in meeting young people from other congregations and willingly take part in the wider life of the Church.

Farming. Apart from sheep farming, agriculture is of very little account in the economy of Dalmellington parish. Out of a total acreage of 17,184 only some 900 acres are under cultivation, rather less than a third of which is being cropped. There are in the parish 30 horses, 500 dairy cattle, 1,200 hens (in round numbers)—in each case the smallest number for any parish in the county. The density of the cow population is only three per hundred acres of farmland—a low record which Dalmellington shares with Barr. As against this there are over 15,000 sheep, 109 for every hundred acres of farmland, which is proportionately much the greatest number in Ayrshire.

There are fifteen farms altogether, ranging from 20 acres to over 2,000. About half the farms lie along the banks of the Doon between the Polnessan Burn on the north boundary and the head of Ness Glen. The soil here is a rich clayey loam and makes good arable land. Some of the farms carry from 60 to 80 cows, mostly Ayrshires. The chief crops are oats, hay, turnips and potatoes, all grown for consumption on the farm: the average yield per acre is 15 cwt. of oats, 15 tons of turnips and 6 tons of potatoes. The rest of the farms are in the hill country that rises up behind the river holms to a height varying from

1,000 feet to 1,760 feet. The highest are entirely devoted to sheep, some of the less elevated carry about 20 cows. As a typical Dalmellington farm, may be taken one of 1,240 acres. Twenty acres in this case are arable, the rest consists of rough grazing for cattle and hill ground for sheep. A farm of this size carries approximately 36 score of sheep, 20 dairy cows and about 60 young stock. Twenty acres, of which about five are marginal land, are ploughed each year and provide hay, straw and oats for winter feed. The rent for this particular farm thirty years ago was £400: to-day the rent might be £600. As it happens, it belongs now to the farmer himself, as do about half the farms in the parish.

Several of the farmhouses are very old. Some of them, with walls three feet thick, may be as much as 300 years old. Most farms have been modernised of late years. Bathrooms have been added, telephone installed, and in all but a few electricity has been introduced. As a rule there is a good water supply from springs or ground water or gravitation. Tractors have largely replaced horses, and most dairies have milking machines. The farmers themselves reside in the farms except in the case of large sheep farms where the owner resides in a nearby town and the farm is run by shepherds who live in houses on the farm. Changes in the occupancy of the farms are not very common. Most of the farms have been tenanted by the same family for over fifty years, and some go back at least a hundred and fifty.

THE PARISH OF COYLTON

The parish of Coylton is a long rectangle of land extending from the River Ayr not far from the boundary of the county town into the Southern Upland moors twelve miles away to the south-east. The Water of Coyle, winding and 'brawling' throughout its ten miles of boulder-strewn length, forms about two-thirds of the eastern boundary of the parish, before plunging over a linn near Sundrum and joining the Ayr about a mile further on. The northern corner of the parish, beyond the Coyle, consists of some four or five fine farms, the mining village of Woodside (marked down for demolition) and the adjacent hamlet of Springs. The parish inclines from near sea level in the north-west to the south-east, where the high broken