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Alex. McCallum

Excerpt

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1. County and Shire. Midlothian.

For purposes of administration Scotland is divided into portions known as Shires or Counties. "Shire" is usually said to be cognate with "share" and to mean division, but this derivation is now disputed: a "county" is the district which was at one time under the jurisdiction of a Count. The division goes back as far as we have written record, although the number of shires has varied in course of time and the boundaries have not always remained the same. The official who represented the King's authority in the shire was known as the Shire-reeve or Sheriff; and sheriffdoms were modified in number and in area from time to time as was found convenient. Thus in 1305 there were at least twenty-five, while at present there are thirty-three.

Probably, the sheriffdom of Edinburgh originally extended over the whole of the Lothians; later it was defined as "a district extending from Colbrandspath (now Cockburnspath) or Edgebucklin Brae on the east to the water of Avon on the west"; by limitations made at various times it was reduced till it coincided with the county as now defined; and again, since 1870 the Sheriff of Edinburgh exercises jurisdiction over Midlothian, Linlithgow, Haddington, and Peebles.

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The district of Lothian varied in extent from time to time, the name being vaguely applied to the low country south of the Forth as far as the Tweed. The significance of the name is uncertain. It may be derived from the Gaelic word for marsh or mire or alluvial land; or it may be connected with the Saxon word for the people, *lêoda*, or that for a chief, *lêod*, in which case the term may have been applied to distinguish the Saxon inhabitants of the region from the Celtic tribes among whom they had settled. Whatever its origin the name has had several forms; the Gaels called it Lethead; the Saxons, Lothene; while its Latin form was usually Lodoneia. Colloquially it was pronounced Lowden, as in R. L. Stevenson's poem, "A Lowden Sabbath Morn."

The name is now restricted to the counties of Linlithgow, Edinburgh, and Haddington, which are known respectively as West, Mid, and East Lothian. Ecclesiastically, the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale corresponds roughly to the three civil districts named with the addition of Peeblesshire and part of Lanarkshire.

2. General Characteristics. Position and Natural Conditions.

Forming part of the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, containing tracts of the most fertile land in the kingdom and extensive areas of hill country well adapted for grazing, and having within its borders a rich coal-field, Midlothian is at once a maritime, an agricultural,

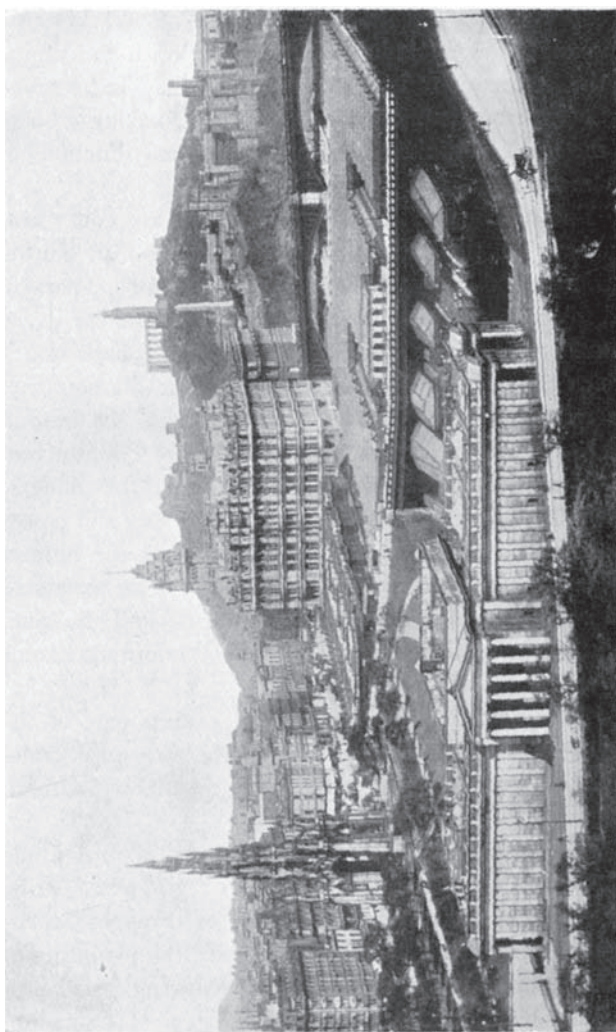
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Edinburgh from the Castle

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a pastoral, and an industrial region. With the capital of the country for its chief town, it may be regarded as the metropolitan county of Scotland, having a share in the legal, administrative, and educational functions of the metropolis.

The harbours of Leith and Granton are convenient gateways to the busy agricultural and manufacturing district round about them; fleets of steamers pass to and fro carrying to continental ports coal and the varied manufactures of the hinterland and bringing back multifarious cargoes for distribution throughout the country; the waters of the Firth and of the North Sea beyond yield an abundant harvest to the trawlers of Granton and the fishermen of Newhaven and Fisherrow; the collieries provide fuel for the household fires of the city and power for many factories and engineering works; the farmers of the Lothians are famous the world over for their skill and success in all the arts of husbandry; and the quiet walks of the Pentlands and the Moorfoots afford sustenance to numerous flocks of sheep.

Midlothian occupies the central eastern part of the belt of lowland which lies between the two great tablelands of Scotland—the Highlands and the Southern Uplands.

Edinburgh, the Heart of Midlothian, is in latitude $55^{\circ} 57' 23''$ north and longitude $3^{\circ} 10' 30''$ west. The same parallel of latitude passes near or through Copenhagen in Denmark, Moscow in Russia, the peninsula of Kamchatka in the east of Asia, Prince Rupert, the new port in Vancouver, and the inhospitable region of Labrador;

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and a striking contrast may accordingly be instituted between the equable conditions prevailing in our district and those of the more or less favoured regions named. It is interesting also to notice that Edinburgh is really a little further west than Liverpool or Bristol, though these are situated on the opposite coast of the country.

The position of Midlothian on the sheltered waters of the Forth, with the safe anchorage of Leith Roads just off its shores, would in any case have given it a certain importance. Conveniently placed for trade with the Continent and having within its bounds the historic capital of the country, the county has had its importance greatly enhanced; while the advantages of a fertile soil, skilfully and carefully farmed, as well as a rich coalfield, have added still further to its wealth and greatness.

3. Size. Shape. Boundaries.

Measured from west to east, the greatest length of the county is 36 miles; its breadth from north-west to south-east is 24 miles; and its area is 370 square miles or 236,595 acres. As compared with other counties of Scotland, it comes twenty-second in magnitude of land area. Out of Inverness, the largest county, eleven and a quarter Midlothians might be carved; whereas it is about seven and a half times bigger than Clackmannan, smallest of Scottish shires.

In shape it resembles an Australian boomerang, with its convex side to the north and the ends turned to the south-east and south-west respectively.

It is bounded on the north by the Firth of Forth ; on the west by Linlithgowshire ; on the south by the counties of Lanark, Peebles, and Selkirk ; and on the east by Roxburghshire, Berwickshire and East Lothian.

The boundary with West Lothian is marked out by the course of the Almond and its tributary the Breich Water ; the southern limit is determined by the ranges of the Southern Pentlands and the Moorfoots ; while the eastern follows the line of the Moorfoots in its southern portion, Brothershiels and Dean Burns in the middle, and a variously named ridge of high ground in the northern.

4. Surface and General Features.

From the coast of the Firth of Forth in the north there is a gradual rise inland and southward towards the Pentlands and the Moorfoot Hills. The long slope between the hills and the sea may be described as a tilted plain dipping to the north. To the east this plain is terminated by the long ridge already mentioned—Roman Camp Hill—that separates Mid and East Lothian ; to the west it is continued into Linlithgowshire and the Carse of Stirling and Falkirk. Through the midst of the plain in Midlothian runs, from south-west to north-east, the ridge of the Pentland and the Braid Hills, which thus divides it into two basins. Apart from Arthur's Seat and the Calton Hill the eastern slope is broken only by gentle undulations ; but the western portion is more

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irregular. For seven miles west of Edinburgh the plain is fairly broad and continuous, but otherwise there are few level spaces of any considerable area. Rather has the surface the appearance of long waves, rising in successive ridges which run nearly east and west; and even this regular alternation of ridge and valley is broken by the presence here and there of eminences which rise sharply out of the plain.

Thus it will be seen that, though there is nothing of the majestic or grand in the scenery of the county, there is yet abundance of pleasing variety. The peculiarly characteristic feature of the district—the occurrence of steep crags with gentle slopes tailing off from them—adds a strikingly picturesque element to the landscape. Finely wooded parks, deep and narrow glens, diversify the surface, and alternate with the fertile, highly cultivated farmlands of the northern plains; the steep slopes of the Pentlands and the rounded rolling heights of the Moorfoots shut in the prospect to the south; while the waters of the Forth, with the hills of Fife, the Ochils, and the Grampians rising in succession beyond, complete a scene of rare variety and beauty.

Three miles south of Edinburgh the Pentland Hills rise abruptly out of the plain and extend in a south-west direction through the middle of the county, continuing into the neighbouring shires of Peebles and Lanark. Their length is about sixteen miles, their breadth from four to six. They do not form a continuous chain, being cut into by many cross valleys, some of which afford passage from the one side of the hills to the

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other. Thus, about the middle of the range, through the Cauldstane Slap between the East and the West Cairn Hill, an old drove road leads from Lothian into Tweeddale and connects two main routes that pass along either flank of the hills—the one on the north being the Edinburgh and Lanark, and that to the south the Edinburgh and Dumfries road. Another of these old drove roads led from Currie by the Kirk Loan and the Maiden Cleuch to House o' Muir on the south-east side—once the scene of famous cattle trysts.

The chief heights in order from north-east to south-west are Allermuir (1617), Black Hill (1628), Carnethy (1890), Scald Law (1898), West Kip (1806), East Cairn (1839), West Cairn (1844), Mount Maw (1753), Craigengar (1700), Byrehope Mount (1752). As they pass to the south the hills decrease in altitude, and they are connected by an irregular group of heights with Broughton Hills in Peeblesshire, which may be regarded as the commencement of the Southern Uplands.

Glencorse Burn or Logan Water, the Water of Leith and its tributaries, and Lyne Water flowing to Tweed are the main channels of Pentland drainage. The streams and springs in many cases have been impounded to supply water for the needs of the metropolis and thus various reservoirs have been formed.

The rounded hillslopes are in some parts bleak and covered with heather : in others they are clad with grasses which afford splendid pasture for sheep.

Several of the gullies which the hill streams have carved in the range are remarkable for their romantic beauty.

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On Threipmuir, says tradition, Sir William St Clair of Roslin staked his head on the fleetness of his hounds and, having *threeped* the dogs effectively to a kill, he won a grant of the Forest of Pentland from King Robert the Bruce, a success which led St Clair to found, near by, the Chapel of St Katherine, the ruins of which are now covered by the waters of Glencorse Reservoir.



Threipmuir Reservoir

The Moorfoot Hills occupy a large part of the south-east corner of the county and stretch into the adjacent parts of Peeblesshire. The valley of the Gala separates them from the Lammermoors, the western slopes of which run along the south-east border of the county. Both topographically and geologically the Moorfoots mark the boundary between the Central Valley of Scotland and the Southern Uplands. Resulting from

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the denudation of a triangular tableland, they form two broken lines of isolated hills and groups of summits, usually rounded and rolling in outline, and of bleak moorland character suited only to the pasturing of sheep. They reach their highest point in Blackhope (or Blakeup) Scar (2136 ft.), the loftiest ground in the county. Gala Water and its affluents, Heriot Water, and Luggate Water, drain their eastern flank into Tweed, while the South Esk and the South and the North Middleton Burn, which unite to form the Gore, itself a tributary of the South Esk, are the main streams on their north-western slope, carrying their waters to the Firth of Forth.

The axis of the Pentland ridge is continued through the Braid Hills and Blackford Hill towards the Forth. "The furzy hills of Braid" reach a height of 698 feet, and from them there is a noble prospect of the rich champaign country stretching away to east and west, and of the southern districts of the city guarded by the couchant lion of Arthur's Seat and rising to the Rock,

"Where the huge castle holds its state,
And all the steep slope down,
Whose ridgy back heaves to the sky,
Piled deep and massy, close and high,
Mine own romantic town!"

On the hills of Braid, where Johnnie of Braidislee once hunted the dun deer, the city golfers in their hundreds now enjoy a milder sport.

The Braid Burn has cut a deep and picturesque glen between the Braids and Blackford,