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W. Douglas Simpson

Excerpt

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## 1. County and Shire. The Origin of Stirling.

The division of Scotland, for administrative purposes, into parishes and counties, or shires, was the work of the Anglo-Norman barons and churchmen who thronged into the country during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and reorganised her institutions upon a feudal basis. The word “shire” is derived from the Old English “scir,” office, administration. “County” is from the corresponding Norman-French word, “comté,” Latin “comitatus,” strictly the territorial appanage of a feudal earl or count. In Old English times the administrative officer of the shire was known as the “shire-reeve” or sheriff; and both the office and the name were preserved by the Norman conquerors. As the latter to a large extent availed themselves of existing political divisions and institutions, the Old English shire was in many cases conferred as a county upon a Norman earl, in whom the sheriffdom was vested. Thus in course of time the terms shire and county came to be interchangeable.

Very little is known as to the origin of the Scottish shires, but it seems certain that some of them embody territorial units dating back to early Celtic times. Still less is known as to the principles which determined their boundaries. In many cases political considerations now forgotten, and manorial boundaries of the early proprietors, may have played their part. In other cases the county has

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obviously come in existence as an administrative area in dependence upon some centre, such as a royal castle. This is the case with Stirlingshire, which has grown up round the fortified rock that from the earliest ages sentinelled the passage of the Forth. Situated at the most inland point where a bridge could be thrown across the estuary, Stirling was always a place of vital strategic importance. Everyone travelling from Lowlands to Highlands, or *vice versa*, had to pass by this route. In modern times its importance has been much diminished by the construction of alternative railway routes by the Forth Bridge and at Alloa: but until last century the predominance of Stirling Bridge remained unchallenged. With the growth of motor traffic the road across the bridge at Stirling is again one of the busiest in the country. For this reason it has been well said that "Stirling, like a huge brooch, clasps Highlands and Lowlands together." But the position of Stirling has a significance wider than that of its relation to the passage of the Forth. It is not merely a "bridge-town," it is a "gap-town." In the long range of hills which forms the southern boundary of Strathmore, comprising the Sidlaws, the Ochils, and the Lennox Hills, two important gaps occur, both of which have been used as routes from early times. One gap marks the passage of the Tay between the Sidlaws and the Ochils, and was guarded by the walled town of Perth. The second gap is formed by the valley of the Forth passing between the Ochils and the Lennox Hills. This gap was sentinelled by the castled rock of Stirling.

Owing to the fact that they grew up under political conditions long obsolete, the marches of the Scottish counties

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were often strangely anomalous until rectified by a Commission in 1891. Previous to that date the boundary of Stirlingshire showed some remarkable peculiarities. The parish of Logie, north of the Forth, was intersected by a strip of Perthshire, while the parish of Alva, now in Clackmannan, was formerly an outlying part of Stirling. A portion of the Perthshire parish of Lecropt was also in Stirling. In the parish of Kippen, Perth overstepped the Forth and included two strips on the Stirling side. A portion of the Dumbarton parish of New Kilpatrick, containing Milngavie, was included in Stirling.

The origin of the name Stirling is doubtful. Old forms are Estrevelyn, Striviling, and Struelin. The term Snaw-doun, or Snowdon, often given to Stirling by medieval chroniclers, is perhaps a corruption of Gaelic words meaning the fortress with a well.

## 2. General Characteristics.

Geologically and geographically, Scotland may be divided into three districts, bounded by two great “faults,” or lines of fracture in the earth’s crust, which traverse the country from north-east to south-west, one running from St Abb’s Head to Girvan, the other from Stonehaven to Helensburgh. The three districts thus formed are known as the Highlands, the Central Lowlands, and the Southern Uplands; and each has its characteristic physical, biological, and industrial conditions. Stirlingshire lies mainly in the Central Lowlands, but its north-west portion, along the east shore of Loch Lomond, is included in the Highland area. Moreover the

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main mass of the county, though belonging geologically to the Central Lowlands, is anything but uniformly Lowland in character. The plain country is in fact confined to the valleys of the Forth with its tributaries the Allan, Bannock, Carron, and Avon, the Kelvin and a small strip in the valleys of the Endrick and the Blane near Drymen and Killearn, at the lower end of Loch Lomond. In the centre of the county rises the great volcanic area of the Lennox Hills, and intrusive masses such as the Castle Rock of Stirling and the Abbey Craig diversify the scenery of the Lowland strips. Thus Stirlingshire contains within its limits almost every variety of Scottish scenery, from the fertile haughs of the Carseland to the treeless slopes of the Lennox Hills and the wild mountain ridges of Ben Lomond.

These physical differences between the various parts of Stirlingshire have exercised important effects upon its flora, its fauna, and its human life. The Highland area is a district of bare mountains and open moor, scantily wooded and supporting a thin population. Somewhat similar conditions prevail in the central volcanic hills, the grassy slopes of which are mainly devoted to pasture. But the plain country is an area of dense population, owing partly to its fertility, but mainly to its mineral resources. Stirlingshire is thus partly an agricultural and partly an industrial county. Even its agriculture is largely industrialised, for the farmer in Stirlingshire no longer grows his produce to meet his own needs, as his forebears did, but to sell in the open market. There is also much pastoral ground, and a considerable area is waste or given over to sport. There are extensive grouse moors on the Lennox and Kilpatrick Hills.

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The industrial district of Stirlingshire coincides with the great eastern coal-field. This is one of the most densely populated areas in Scotland. Its prosperity depends on a series of coincidences: (1) the presence of iron and coal in close association; (2) the neighbourhood of limestone and gannister, used in smelting; (3) the proximity, in both directions, of the sea, with good ports. The ease of communications east and west with these seaports, owing to the narrowness of Scotland between the two estuaries, Forth and Clyde, has greatly aided the industrial progress of Stirlingshire. In other directions also the physical features and natural conditions of the county have closely affected its industrial development. For example, the woollen industry, still plied at Stirling and Bannockburn, originated through the presence locally of good pasture land in the Ochil and Lennox Hills, and abundant water-power in the streams which hurry down from the heights; while, at a later stage, the exploitation of the coal-fields replaced the older water-power by other sources of energy dependent on cheap fuel.

Although the eastern corner of Stirlingshire skirts the estuary of the Forth, the county is in no sense a maritime one, and its fisheries are of small importance. Yet it contains one port of consequence, Grangemouth, which is the eastern end of the Forth and Clyde canal, and also serves as a seaward outlet for the great iron and coal area which adjoins. From this port a large coastwise and foreign trade is carried on; quantities of coal being exported, while pig-iron is imported from Middlesbrough, most of which is forwarded to Glasgow. There is also a considerable ship-building industry at this port.

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### 3. Shape, Size, Boundaries.

Stirlingshire lies between  $55^{\circ} 53'$  and  $56^{\circ} 19'$  north latitude, and between  $3^{\circ} 37'$  and  $4^{\circ} 42'$  west longitude. The longest straight line that can be drawn in the shire extends from the boundary west of Linlithgow to the shore of Loch Lomond opposite Tarbert Pier. This line measures 43 miles. The greatest breadth of the shire occurs on a line running north and south between the point where Clackmannan, Perth, and Stirling meet and the south-east corner of the shire near the Black Loch. This line is 21 miles in length. The total area of the shire (exclusive of inland water, tidal water, and foreshore) is 288,842 acres, or 451.3 square miles. It is thus the 20th county for size in Scotland. In 1920-1 the county valuation was £1,192,161.

The shape of Stirlingshire is very irregular. Its main portion may be described as a roughly quadrangular figure with its greatest length lying east and west, the four angles being approximately defined by Stirling, Castlecary, Bardowie Loch, and Buchlyvie. To this central portion are appended a long triangular extension skirting the east side of Loch Lomond to Glengyle; a south-eastern portion about Denny, Falkirk, Slamannan, and Grangemouth, which contains the great industrial district of the county; and a northern salient, roughly triangular, across the Forth at Bridge of Allan.

The extreme north-west corner of the shire lies at the summit of Beinn Ducteach (1750 ft.), near the sources of the Water of Gyle, which flows into Loch Katrine. Descending Glengyle, the boundary between Stirling and

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Perth lies in Loch Katrine to a point east of Stronachlachar Hotel, where it turns inward to the south bank, crosses to Loch Arklet, and, after skirting the east end of that loch, strikes southward to the summit of Ben Uamhe (1962 ft.). From this hill the boundary line holds south-east across Ben Dubh (1675 ft.) and Mulan-ant-Sagairt (1398 ft.) to the Duchray Burn, which it follows down to a point just below Duchray Castle. Here the line cuts across irregularly in a south-eastern direction, round the east side of Drumore Wood and just west of Gartmore, and strikes the Kelty Water, which it follows, along the north edge of Flanders Moss, until its confluence with the Forth at Barbadoes. Henceforth the winding river forms the march eastward until just above Stirling. Here the Allan Water flows into the Forth from the north; and the boundary, crossing the Forth, runs up the Allan until within a mile from Dunblane, when it diverges to the north-east up the Wharry Burn. Passing through Glentye, the boundary then turns southward round the east flank of Loss Hill (1771 ft.), where Clackmannan succeeds Perth as the adjoining county. West of Colsnaur Hill (1832 ft.) the march descends the valley of the Menstrie Burn until opposite the village of that name. It then swerves westward towards Blairlogie, and, swinging south-east once more, follows the River Devon down to Bridge End. Striking thence west and then south, it joins the Forth opposite Lower Taylorton. From here to the mouth of the Avon on the south bank the estuary of the Forth is the boundary, Clackmannan and then Fife lying across the tidal water.

From Inveravon the march between Stirling and Linlith-

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gow ascends the River Avon and the Drumtassie Burn to a point a little north of Westfield, where Lanark is touched. This shire continues to march with Stirling along the boundary which, making a sharp re-entrant round Hillhead, crosses the Black Loch and holds north-west until it descends again into the upper valley of the Avon, a little east of Fannyside Loch. Here an outlying portion of Dumbarton is touched. Beyond this another re-entrant occurs, the march line swinging north-east to Jawcraig and then to the west again by Arns and Glenhead to Castlecary. From this point westward the River Kelvin generally defines the boundary, but the line is sometimes north and sometimes south of the river in a curiously erratic fashion. A little west of Kirkintilloch (in Dumbarton) the north-west corner of Lanark touches our county, and forms its boundary along the Kelvin until a point south of Bardowie Loch. Henceforth the main portion of Dumbartonshire is skirted by the boundary, which runs irregularly in a north-western direction by Mugdock and the Allander Water and Auldmurroch Burn, and so down Burn Crooks (the headstream of the Finnich). A little below the junction of the Carlingburn the boundary strikes westward, and, passing over Gallangad Muir, descends by Wester Cameron into the Catter Burn, which it follows to the Water of Endrick, south-east of Drymen. The Endrick then forms the boundary to its mouth in Loch Lomond.

In the southern end of the Loch the boundary between Stirling and Dumbarton forms a sinuous line. Striking westward from Endrickmouth, and passing between Torrinch and Inchcailloch, it swings round the west side of



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Inchfad, and so between Inchmoan and Inchcruin and round the east side of Inchlonaig. Thus the islands of Clairinch, Inchcailloch, Inchfad, Inchcruin, Ceardach, and Bucinch are in Stirlingshire. After rounding Ross Point, the march pursues a central course up the Loch until opposite Ardvorlich Point on the Dumbarton side. Here the boundary holds to the east, and strikes the shore opposite Island-i-Vow. Climbing the steep slope eastward to the summit of Beinn-a'-Choin (2524 ft.), it swings to the north over Maol-an-Fhithich (2000 ft.) and Stob-nan-Eighrach (2011 ft.), and so completes the circuit at Beinn Ducteach.

#### 4. Surface and General Features.

The surface of Stirlingshire may be divided into five well-marked areas, corresponding to the geological structure of the rocks beneath. The extreme north-western portion, beyond a line drawn from Duchray to Inchcailloch on Loch Lomond, belongs, geologically and topographically, to the Highlands of Scotland. It is rough moorland, partly wooded with natural birch and plantations of larch and fir, and rising into magnificent mountain scenery. The general contour of these hills is determined by the manner in which their constituents have yielded to decay. Though there is a great cliff at the summit of Ben Lomond, their shape is generally rounded, owing to the fine detritus into which the slaty rock breaks down, and to the very uniform rate of disintegration. In this respect the Stirling Highlands contrast sharply with the granitic and gneissose mountains further north, which weather along joint-planes into large quadrangular blocks, causing a skyline of "tors" or rugged

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bosses. The highest summit is Ben Lomond (3192 ft.), and within this area are the following other peaks over 2000 ft.: Beinn-a'-Choin (2524 ft.); Ptarmigan (2398 ft.); Maol Mor (2249 ft.); Stoban Fhainne (2144 ft.); Cruinn-a'-Bheinn (2077 ft.); and Stob-nan-Eighrach (2011 ft.). This line of heights east of Loch Lomond is part of the central watershed of Scotland, the streams flowing off it on the east towards the Forth, and on the west towards the Clyde. The Highland district also includes the eastern half of Loch Lomond, gemmed with wooded islands, the picturesque Loch Arklet, and part of Loch Katrine, at its northern end.

In sharp contrast to the Highland Area is the Lowland country which stretches eastward along the basin of the Forth, skirting the uplands of Kippen and the Fintry and Gargunnock Hills, and expanding at the lower end into the broad low-lying country at Stirling, St Ninian's, Airth, Dunipace, Denny, Larbert, Falkirk, Bothkennar and Polmont. Apart from the flat carselands, this region is undulating in surface and is rich arable country, finely wooded. It is continued on the south side of the Campsie Fells and Kilsyth Hills along the valleys of the Bonny and the Kelvin. From the western end of the carseland the low country sweeps west and south by Buchlyvie and Balfron into the valley of the Endrick, descending on Loch Lomond. That portion of the Lowland which lies in the Forth valley above Stirling is purely agricultural in character; but the eastern portion, around Bannockburn, Denny, Camelon, Larbert, and Falkirk, contains the great mineral fields which give the shire its economic importance. Two products of its