

V.

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE QUESTION, "WHERE WAS JOHN KNOX BORN?" BY JOHN RICHARDSON, ESQ., PROCURATOR-FISCAL, HADDINGTON. WITH SUPPLEMENTARY NOTICES.

It is admitted on all hands that Knox was born either in the village of Giffordgate, a suburb of the town of Haddington, or in the village of Gifford, four miles distant from that town. The late Dr M'Crie sums up in favour of the latter place—*1st*, On the authority of Beza, a contemporary of Knox, who thus designates the Reformer, "Joannes Cnoxus, Scotus, Giffordiensis," which Dr M'Crie thinks "evidently means that he was a native of the town of Gifford." *2dly*, Of Spottiswood, another contemporary, who says he was "born in Gifford within Lothian." The other authorities quoted by Dr M'Crie, on the same side, are, David Buchanan, who wrote in 1644, Matthew Crawford in 1732, and Wodrow; but these three are merely followers of the other two, and quote no other independent authority or cause of knowledge.

On the other side are Archibald Hamilton, Knox's countryman and acquaintance, who states that Knox was born in the town of Haddington and another Scotsman who writes at the same time, and says he was born *near* Haddington.

Now, setting other recently discovered circumstances aside, one would be much inclined to prefer the testimony of the two contemporary Scots-

men, one of them *personally acquainted* with Knox, and who appears, from his description of Knox's parents, *to have known them also*, to that of Beza, a foreigner, who had no such personal knowledge, and who might well misunderstand the accounts which he had received of the place of the Reformer's birth. Beza, besides, does not say Knox was born in the *village* of Gifford, a circumstance of some moment, as will be shown. He merely describes Knox as belonging to Gifford in Scotland, just as Spottiswood says "of Gifford in Lothian," which may as consistently be interpreted to mean the *estate* or territory of Gifford as the *village* of Gifford. If this be so, then the accounts of Beza and Spottiswood are not inconsistent with that of Hamilton, for, in truth, the village of Giffordgate is a part of the *estate* and territory of Gifford, although distant four miles nearly from the rest of that estate. The Giffordgate lands are still held of the Marquis of Tweeddale, the proprietor of that estate, and they are expressly mentioned in the titles of it. If, therefore, *Giffordgate* be assumed as Knox's birthplace, the different accounts above alluded to are reconcilable with one another, inasmuch as he would still be a "Scotsman belonging to Gifford," according to Beza; "born in Gifford within Lothian," according to Spottiswood; "born in the town of Haddington," according to Hamilton, as Giffordgate is one of its suburbs; and "born *near* Haddington," according to Knox's personal friend and countryman, Hamilton, inasmuch as Giffordgate is a village independent of, although near Haddington, from which it is separated only by the River Tyne. It may thus be truly said that these different accounts are not contradictory; some are only more specific than others—the personal friends who had the best knowledge of the locality being most specific.

That Dr M'Crie's preference for the village of Gifford is founded on a want of knowledge of these circumstances can be easily shown. He assumes that the village of *Giffordgate* is a part of the village of *Nungate*, another suburb of Haddington, on the same side of the River Tyne with Giffordgate, and adjoining it. The two villages, in fact, are only separated by a public road passing through Tyne at the ford. In common language, the two villages are generally treated as one, and called Nungate. While Giffordgate, however, is held of the Marquis of Tweeddale as part of the estate of Gifford, Nungate village is all church lands,

formerly belonging to the Abbey of Haddington, and now to the Earl of Wemyss and Lord Blantyre, in right of the Crown, as coming in place of the Abbot. Giffordgate lands were acquired by the Yester family, as far back as 1451, in exchange for a barony in Forfarshire; and the lands of Giffordgate are expressly mentioned in the charter of that date as one of the parcels of lands of which the estate consists.

Following out his assumption that Nungate comprehended Giffordgate, Dr M'Crie directed some inquiries about the Reformer's ancestors, and the property which it was known they had in Giffordgate, or Nungate, according to his apprehension, to an examination of the charter-chest of the Earl of Wemyss and March, instead of that of the Marquis of Tweeddale, where some evidence on the subject may yet be discovered. Among Lord Wemyss' titles Dr M'Crie found a charter to "William Knox in Morham, and his wife," in 1598, of certain lands in "the territory of Nungate." This and the boundaries given in the charter, of which we have seen a copy, clearly distinguish them from Giffordgate lands. The Doctor there takes for granted that this Knox and spouse must be the descendants or relations of the Reformer's father, if there were any; and having found, by inquiring at the descendants of this William Knox and his wife, that the Reformer was no relation of theirs, he rejects the authority of tradition in favour of Giffordgate as the place of his birth, and sums up in favour of the village of Gifford. It is thus evident Dr M'Crie, not knowing that Giffordgate was a separate village, and part of the estate of Gifford, did not direct his searches in the proper quarter. The charter among Lord Wemyss' titles proves that a certain William Knox and spouse had lands in "the territory of the village of Nungate," but it does not establish that there was no proprietor of lands of the name of Knox in the adjoining village of Giffordgate, part of the estate or territory of Gifford. It is certain, however, as we now proceed to show, that a person of the name of Knox did hold lands or houses, or was in some way connected with lands or houses in Giffordgate, as early or earlier than the time of the Reformer, and on the very spot indicated by immemorial tradition as the place of his birth.

Tradition, when not inconsistent with facts and circumstances, and corroborated by documentary evidence, is of great value. Now, it is

well known that for time immemorial a tradition has existed in Haddington that Knox was born in the suburb of Giffordgate, and the particular spot is pointed out. It is directly opposite the east end of the parish church, on the other side of the River Tyne. This tradition has of late received remarkable confirmation by the discovery of two instruments of sasine among the titles of Mr James Watson, writer, Linlithgow, the proprietor of a large part of the village, and comprehending the spot indicated by tradition as the birthplace of Knox. These instruments are dated in 1607 and 1611 respectively. In these, certain "butts" of land are described as bounded on the *north* by the lands called "*Knox Walls*," and other butts are described as bounded by "*Knox Walls*" on the *south*. The description is applicable to the exact spot pointed out by tradition as Knox's birthplace; and as Mr Watson holds the lands on each side of "*Knox Walls*," and *all between*, it is clear that the latter are comprehended in his property, although no distinct title to "*Knox Walls*," by itself, has been discovered. These sasines are the oldest of the series of Mr Watson's titles, as far as Giffordgate lands are concerned; and they prove that near the time of the Reformer, a property, ever since said to be the place of his birth, was known by the family name. This fact gives rise to the unavoidable inference, that the name was of *some standing even then*, and that it either belonged to one of the name of Knox, or that a person of the name was, in some way or other, remarkably connected with it. Long before 1607, therefore, the name of Knox is associated with a property in Giffordgate; and as he was born in 1505, and died in 1572, there is no reasonable doubt that the name was familiar to the place as early as his birth. The sasines proceed on charters from Lord Hay of Yester, as superior and proprietor of the Gifford estate.

Other two circumstances may be added as corroborative of the view of the question now taken. *1st*, It is universally admitted that Knox was educated at the Grammar School of Haddington. Now, if it be true, as his acquaintance Hamilton states, that his parents were of lowly birth, it is natural to infer that he would be educated in the parish where he resided, and would not likely be sent to another parish school four miles distant. *2d*, There is no evidence that a *village* called Gifford existed at the date of Knox's birth; it may be said, indeed, that there is evi-

dence to the contrary. At that time, and for long after *his death even*, the parish of Gifford was called Bothans, and the village of the parish was likewise so called. The sasine in 1607, before alluded to, proves this. It is in favour of "James Hay in Bothans and Marion Cranstoun his spouse." In the index of places in the county of Haddington, which occur in the abstract of old retours to Chancery, published by the Record Commission in 1836 (vol. iii.), we find the parish of Bothans and the village of Giffordgate, but we in vain search for a parish or a village called Gifford. Chalmers, in his "Caledonia," vol. ii. p. 535, states, that "the village of Gifford did not exist when Pont made his Map of the Lothians during the reign of Charles I. It has since arisen on the east bank of Gifford Water." The village, had it existed, would certainly have been laid down in that map. Messrs W. and R. Chambers, in their "Gazetteer of Scotland," concur in this respect, and say, "the village of Gifford has arisen since the reign of Charles First." The present village appears, in short, to have had its origin at the time or soon after the removal of the old church of Bothans from near Yester House (where the remains still exist) to its present site. This was *after* the death of Knox. According to the presbytery records, the name of Bothans Parish was not generally dropped till about the year 1668. See last edition of the "Statistical Account of Scotland," *voce* "Yester Parish," which is the legal name. According to the same authorities, the village near the old church was sometimes called Yestred or Yester, sometimes Bothans; and it is a remarkable fact, that although the old titles of the Yester estate contain various names of lands which still bear these names, Gifford is the name of *no* part of the estate except the lands of *Giffordgate*, and this is so in the most ancient of the charters. On the site of the present village of Gifford there was a mansion called "Gifford-hall," similar, probably, to the mansions of Newton-hall and Newhall, which still exist in the parish as seats or distinct estates; but that of "Gifford-hall," being part of the Yester estate, on which there was a principal mansion near, had been allowed to merge in the village. Gifford village was originally, and still is, frequently called "Gifford-hall," from the name of the mansion around which it began to rise; and this fact shows that the "Hall" was the origin, and not the village. The date of the erection of Gifford-hall House is not known.

But it has been argued that the very name of Giffordgate proves the existence of a Gifford village or town, because the former denotes the way or road to the latter. This is an argument of no value. The old word "gait" no doubt means a road, or way, or street, but the prefix to that word does not necessarily mean the name of a town or village to which the road leads. Such prefixes more frequently denote names of *persons*, or *qualities*, or *objects*. Thus, even in Haddington, we have Nun-gate, to denote the road the nuns took to the Abbey of Haddington, where their residence was; "Hardgate," to denote a quality, the origin of which is lost in obscurity. We have also the name of "Sidegate Street," the origin of which name is also unknown, but may be conjectured from its situation with regard to the rest of the town. The Crossgate and Tolboothgate are examples of the names of places *in* the street or ways themselves, not distant from them. Numerous examples of the same kind occur in most Scottish towns. The name of Giffordgate originated in that of the *old proprietors* of Yester estate, which, as we have already mentioned, included Giffordgate lands. The Giffords were a very ancient family, whose name became extinct by the failure of heirs-male in the time of Robert II., and the estates have ever since continued in the family of Hay (the ancestors of the Marquis of Tweeddale), who married the eldest daughter of Hugh Gifford of Yester, the last heir-male. See "Chalmers's Caledonia," vol. ii. p. 535. The Giffords thus gave the name of Giffordgate to the village, as being the road or way of the Giffords to their estate. The village of Gifford or Gifford-hall derived its name in the same way from a mansion of the Giffords, but Giffordgate village or street existed two centuries before the other, for it is so named in the old retour of 1434; while it is evident from Pont's Map of Lothian, dedicated to King James, and prepared about the year 1620, that no such village as Gifford or Gifford-hall then existed.

I. A SUPPLEMENTARY NOTICE BY MR LAING.

Since Mr Richardson's paper was read to the Society, I find in some extracts from the Registers of Geneva, obligingly communicated by W. H. Laurence, Esq., a circumstance stated that in a great measure sets

the above question at rest. In June 1558, after the birth of his son Nathaniel, Knox was admitted a burghess of the city of Geneva, and in the register he is called, of course upon his own authority, a native of Haddington: "JEHAN CNOXE . . . NATIF DE HADINGTON EN ESCOSSE." This, I presume, means the town or immediate suburb of Haddington, and extinguishes any claim for the village of Gifford, *even if it could be shown that such a village was then in existence*. Mr Richardson has clearly established the fact, that the suburb of Haddington called Giffordgate was so known during the sixteenth century; and that some houses there, till a recent period, retained the name of Knox's Walls. This removes the apparent discrepancy of Beza's styling him *Giffordiensis*, and yet connecting him with Haddington. Knox himself in a foreign land—if Edinburgh, for instance, instead of Haddington, had been the place in question—would never have named a locality such as the Cowgate or Canongate, but the town itself, as the place of his nativity.

When this subject was brought before the Society, I took occasion to mention that Knox's name occurred in some of the old Haddington protocol books. This, therefore, may be a suitable opportunity for inserting copies of such early deeds as are connected with the name of the Scottish Reformer.

At page xiv. of the first volume of Knox's Works, following the note in Dr M'Crie's last revised edition of his Life of Knox, I mentioned that the name of *Schir John Knox* occurs as a witness to a deed concerning Rannelton or Rumbleton Law, in the parish of Gordon, Berwickshire, dated 8th March 1541, in an old volume of Protocols belonging to the burgh of Haddington. (Vol. ii., p. 458.) Being desirous, after an interval of many years, to re-examine these old Protocol books, through the kind exertions of Thomas Thomson, Esq., W.S., this permission was obtained from the Magistrates of Haddington. After a careful search, I found the above date, by some unaccountable mistake, was erroneously quoted, as it ought to have been the 28th of March 1543. But this examination fortunately brought to light two other entries of a similar nature. It seemed, therefore, desirable that further inquiry should be made; and Mr Thomson having applied to the late Earl of Haddington, through his agent, James Hope, Esq., W.S., his Lordship allowed the title-deeds of the Samuelston property to be sent to Edinburgh for

examination. Among these there was discovered the notarial instrument written by Knox on the day previous to the deed just mentioned.

From these deeds a new fact is ascertained in the life of the Reformer—his having, as was not unusual with priests, occasionally acted in the capacity of Notary. Various searches and inquiries have been made in other quarters to find any documents of a similar nature, but hitherto without success. Mr Thomson, however, has appended to this article the substance of his unwearied endeavours to throw some light on Knox's connexion with the Kers of Samuelston, and with William Brownfield, who apparently was one of his pupils during Knox's residence at Samuelston, on the banks of the Tyne, about four miles to the west of his native place at Haddington.

DAVID LAING.

No. 1.

Extract from Protocol Book of Alexr. Symson Elder, fol. 134.

The xiiij day of December anno Im V^{exl} zeris.

The q^{ik} day Heriot messinger proclomit the Kyngis lettres at the mercat croce of Haidinton discharging all man to by ony corne catell or other gudis fra James Kar in Samelston eftir ane Decreit optenit be Laidy Dudhoip on the quhilk SIR JHONNE KNOIX in name and behalf of James Kar askyt the copy of the lettres quhilk ves deniit be the said officer witness Georg Foross Patrik Forross Jhon Zong Robert Dunken.

No. 2.

Extract from Book of Court of Cownsaill of Haddington.

The Burro Court haldyn be the Bailzes the xxi. day of November anno Im V^{xlij} zeris dempster Jo. Lowrie.

The quhilk day Andro Gibson & Richart Dikson ar bundyn sworn and oblist to stand at Decreit of James Ker and SIR Jo. Knox chosin for Richart Dikson and John Hanschaw and James Thyne for Andro Gibson sworn to convene and deliuer this day anent the claime of ane chalder of beir and the four men to cheis ane our-man with consent of party and quhat beis decretit Jo Ayton souertie for payment of the samyn.

No. 3.

A Notarial Instrument of John Knox, containing an Assignment by Elizabeth Home Lady Hamilton, of Samuelston, of Nonentry duties of the Ley-Acres to James Ker in Samuelston, dated 27th of March 1543. From the Original in possession of the Earl of Haddington.

In Dei nomine Amen. Per hoc presens publicum Instrumentum cunctis pateat evidenter quod incarnationis Dominicæ millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo tertio die vero mensis Martii vicesimo septimo indictione prima pontificatus sanctissimi in Christo patris ac domini nostri Domini Pauli diuina prouidentia papæ tertii anno nono in mei notarii publici et testium subscriptorum presentia egregia et nobilis domina Elezabeth Home Domina Hammylton ac domina vitalis terrarum de Sammelstoun cum pertinentiis non metu ducta nec errore lapsa sed sua mera et spontanea voluntate ac pro gratuito et benemerito seruitio constituit fecit necnon irrevocabiliter ordinauit Jacobum Ker in Sammelstoun commorantem assignatum in et ad terras de Le-Acris cum pertinentiis jacentes infra vicecomitatum de Edinburch et constabulariam de Hadyntoun infra terras de Clerkintoun et Lethame ab oriente infra dictas terras de Clerkintoun et Sammelstoun ab australi prædictas terras de Sammelstoun ab occidente et communem moram wlgariter vocatam Glaidmur ab aquilone prout jacent in longitudine et latitudine cum omnibus commoditatibus et libertatibus quas predicta Elezabet de dictis terris consequi potuerat videlicet ad leuandum et recipiendum dictarum terrarum de Le-Acris cum pertinentiis omnes et singulas firmas et commoda quecunque annorum lapsorum ab obitu quondam Nycholaïæ Ker Domine Sammelston seu cuiusuis hæredis aut possessoris legitimi de dictis terris infeodati vltimo et vestiti atque eiusdem assignationis vigore ad lenandum et recipiendum omnes et singulas firmas annorum sequentium donec et quousque legitimus et propinquior heres statum possessionem et sasinam hereditariam realem et corporalem recipiet insuper ad dictas terras per dictum Jacobum vel seruos illius ocupandum et colendum quomodolibet durante toto tempore wardiæ releuationis et nonintroitus dictarum terrarum cum receptione et leuatione firmarum et commodorum quorumcunque de dictis terris vbi et quando continget heredem

legitimum statum possessionem et sasinam vt moris est accipere quarumquidem terrarum nonintroitum vt vocant wlgariter *the ward releif and nonentres* egregius vir Willelmus Gourlaw de Kincrag ac dominus superior terrarum de Le-Acris cum pertinentiis prefatæ Elezabeth Home vendidit pureque et simpliciter alienauit ut plenius testatur carta prefati domini superioris dictarum terrarum de dicta venditione et alienatione præfatæ Elezabeth heredibus et assignatis suis per dictum dominum superiorem confecta quamquidem cartam subscriptione manuali pariter et sigillo prefati domini sigillatam et signatam prescripta Elezabeth manu gestans in fidem et testimonium supradictæ resignationis et assignationis prescripto Jacobo tradidit pariter et deliberauit cuius tenor sequitur. Be it kend to all men be thir present lettres me William Gourlaw of Kincrag baroun of the barony of Alderstoun and superiour of the Acris vnderwritten to haue sald and disponit and be thir presentis sellis and disponis to ane honorabill lady Elezabeth Home Lady Hammyltoun and hir assignais ane or ma all and sindry males fermes profitis and dewiteis of the landis callit the Ley-Acris lyand within the schirefdom of Edinburch and constabulary of Hadingtoun betuix the lands of Clerkintoun and Letham on the est part the sadis landis of Clerkinton and lands of Sammelstoun on the south part the saidis landis of Sammelstoun on the west part and the common mur callit Glaidmur on the norhth part of all zeris and termes bipast that the samyn hes bein in my handis or my predecessouris superioris tharof sen the deceis of vmquhill Nicholace Ker Lady Sammelstoun or ony vther last lauhchfull possessour and immediatt tenent to me or my predecessouris of the samyn be resson of ward nonentres forfaltour or ony vther maner of way and siklik of all zeris and termes to cum ay and quhill the lauchfull entre of the rychtuis air or airis tharto bein of lauchfull aige with the releif tharof quhen it sall happin and that for certan sowmes of mony payit and deliuerit to me tharfor be the said Elezabeth of the quhilkis I hald me weill content and be thir presentis quitelamis and dischargeis hir airis executouris and assignais tharof for euer with power to the said Lady Hammyltoun and hyr assignais for sadis to intromet and tak vp the males fermes profitis and dewiteis of the saidis landis callit the Le-Acris with thar pertinentis bayth of termes bigan and to cum during the tyme of the ward releif and nonentres tharof at thar awin hands and to dispon tharon at thar plesour and to occupy the

saidis landis with thar awin gudis or to sett thame to tenentis as thai sall think maist expedient with court plaint herezeld and merchet vnlawis amerchiamentis and eschetis of the saidis courtis and with all and sindry vther commoditeis fredomes asiamentis and rychtuis pertinentis quhatsumeuer pertenyng or that rychtuisly may pertain tharto during the said space frely quietly weill and in peax but ony reuocatioun or gaincallin quhatsumeuer and I forsuhth and my airis sall warrand acquiet and defend this my present dispositioun to the said Elezabeth and hyr assignais forsaidis during the said space in all and be all thingis as is abon expremyt aganis all deidly as law will but fraud or gyll. In witnes of the quhilk thing to thir my present dispositioun and sellin subscriuit with my hand my seill is affixit at Edinburgh the xx day of Aprile anno i^m v^c xxxv zeri^s befor thir witnes Alexander Ramsay Adam Ker and Thomas Makane notar public with wtheris diuers. Super qua quidem assignatione superque eiusdem omnibus et singulis punctis necnon articulis prefatus Jacobus Ker a me notario publico subscripto sibi fieri petiit hoc presens publicum instrumentum. Acta erant hæc in horto Domini Joannis Ker in Sammelstoun sub anno die mense indictione et pontificatu vt supra hora ferme quarta post meridiem presentibus honorabilibus viris videlicet egregio nobili et potente domino Willelmo Domino Heris Georgio Ker in Chyrnsyd Thoma Ker Joanne Vane et me Domino Joanne Knox notario cum diuersis aliis testibus ad premissa vocatis pariter et rogatis.

JOANNES KNOX
TESTIS PER
CHRISTUM FIDE-
LIS CUI GLORIA
AMEN.

Et Ego vero JOANNES KNOX sacri altaris minister Sanctiandreae dioceseos auctoritate apostolica notarius quia præmissis omnibus et singulis dum sic ut præmittitur agerentur dicerentur et fierent vna cum prænominatis presens personaliter interfui eaque omnia et singula sic fieri et dici vidi sciui et audiui ac in notam cepi ideoque hoc presens publicum instrumentum manu mea propria scriptum exinde confeci et hanc in formam publicam redegis signoque et nomine meis solitis et consuetis [signau] in fidem et testimonium veritatis omnium et singulorum præmissorum rogatus et requisitus.

Non falsum testimonium perhibeto.

J. KNOX *notarius.*

No. 4.

*Extract from Protocol Book of Alexr. Symson, younger, vol. ii.,
foll. 32 and 33.*

Pro Domino Home

Vigesimo octavo die mensis Martij anno domini millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo tertio Indictione prima pontificatus Pauli pape tertii anno nono.

Personaliter accessit honorabilis vir Karolus Home procurator nobilis et potentis Domini Georgii Domini Home &c per suas literas patentes suo sigillo nec non manuali subscriptione munitas literarie constitutus prout mihi notario publico subscripto luculenter constabat ad personalem presentiam elegantis juvenis Willielmi Brounefield filii Stephani Brounefield de Grenelaudene Domini feodi quatuor mercatarum terrarum cum pertinentiis jacentibus in Iye Ramylton law infra Vicecomitem de Berwik per dictum Karolum nunc occupatarum Et ibidem procuratori nomine quo supra suprascriptum Willielmum Brounefield dominum feodi earundem premuniuit comparere infra ecclesiam beati Egidii de Edinburgh duodecimo die mensis maii proxime sequente datam presentium Et ibidem ad numerandum et recipiendum super altare beate Jacobi apostoli inibi situm summam octuaginta mercatarum vsualis monete regni Scotie pro redemptione totarum et integrarum dictarum quatuor mercatarum terrarum cum pertinentiis nec non ad recipiendum litteras assedationis earundem terrarum cum pertinentiis pro spatio et terminis in reversione desuper confecta contentis prefatamque reversionem in omnibus suis punctis et articulis perimpleri videndum et audiendum dictasque quatuor mercatas terrarum cum pertinentiis renunciandum et extradonandum secundum tenorem antedicte reversionis desuper confecte et procuratoris desuper directi Desuper Instrumentum Acta in Samuelston hora sexta antemeridie testibus Srr Jo Knox his maister (?) William Ker Patrik Home et Patrik Wod cum diversis aliis.