

4 THE
HISTORY 2
OF
Buckhaven

IN FIFESHIRE.

Containing the Entertaining Exploits of
WISE WILLIE
AND
WITTY EPPIE;

With a Description of their College, Coat of Arms, &c.



EDINBURGH:

Printed for the Booksellers in Town and Country.

THE
HISTORY
OF
BUCKHAVEN.

IN the county of Fife, on the sea-coast, there stands a little town, inhabited by few but fishers, called Bucky-harbour, because sea buckies and shells are found in great plenty on the rocks about that place. There is little mention made of this town by historians, so as to know its original antiquity. Their own Burgess-ticket, which was partly truth, but more of it by way of lampoon, was dated, two and thirtieth day of the month of Julius Cæsar. Their Coat of Arms was, two hands gripping each other over a Scate's rump. The oath was, "I wish that de de'il may tak me an I binna an honest man to you, an ye binna de like to me." An article of good neighbourhood they had, whoever was first up in a good morning,

sed to raise all the rest to go to sea ;
 ut if a very bad morning, piss and go
 o again till break of day ; then raise
 Wise Willy, who could judge of the
 eather by the blawing of the wind——
 heir freedoms were, to take all sorts
 fish contained in their tickets, wiz.
 obsters, partens, podlies, spout-fish,
 ea-cats, sea-dogs, fleuks, pikes, dick-
 uddocks, and p—fish.

Again, these people are said to have
 escended from one Tom and his two
 ons, that were fishers on the coast of
 orway ; who, in a violent storm, were
 own over, and got ashore at Bucky-
 arbour, where they settled ; and the
 hole of his children were called
 hom-sons, and soon became a little
 own by themselves, as few of any other
 ame dwelt among them. This is a
 aditional story, handed down from
 ne generation to another. They
 ept but little communication with the
 ountry people about them ; for a far-
 er, in those days, thought his daugh-
 r cast away if she married one of the

fishers in Bucky-harbour; and, on the other hand, Witty Eppie, the ale-wife wad a sworn, Bego laddie, I wad rather see my boat an' a' my three sons dade against the Bass, or I saw ony ane o' them married to a muck-a-byre's daughter; a wheen useless tappies, that can do naething but rive at a tow rock, an' cut corn; they can neither bait a hook nor redd a line, houk sand-eels, nor gather pirowinkles.

Now Wise Willie, and Wittie Eppie the ale-wife, lived there about a hundred years ago. Eppie's chamber was their College and Court-house, where they decided controversies and explained their wonders; for the house was like a little kirk, with four windows and a gavel door. The wives got leave to fly their fill, but fighting was prohibited, as Eppie said, up-hands was fair play. Their fine was a pint o' ale, and Eppie said it at a plack the pint. They had neither minister nor magistrate, nor yet a burley-bailie, to brag them in his tolbooth. The Lord o' the manor

ided all disputable points, and Wise
 lile and Witty Eppie were the ru-
 of the town.

Now Eppie had a daughter, she ca'd
 ngly-tail'd Nancy, because of her
 less growth; her waist was like a
 tter, wi' nae curpen for a creel; being
 inburgh bred, and brought up wi'
 Loudin aunty, she had learned to
 d and sew, make coarse claiths, and
 ico mancoes; there was nae scholar in
 e town but hersel; she read the bible,
 d the book of kirk-sangs that was new-
 come in fashion. Willie and Eppie
 l'd them ay what it meant, and said
 the letters in it was litted by my
 ord, for they saw him hae a feather
 at he dipped in black water, and
 ade crooked scores, just like them;
 d then he spoke them o'er again, and
 tell'd him what to say.

It happened on a day, that two of
 eir wives, near the town, found a
 orse-shoe, and brought it home, and
 en sent for Willie to see what it was.

Willie comes and looks at it. Indea
 quo' Willie, it's a thing and holes in
 I kent, quo' they, he wad get a name
 till't. A'ho! quo' Willie, whar did
 find it? Aneath my Lord's ain horse
 Willie. Adeed, said Willie, it's the
 auld moon, I ken by the holes in't
 pailing it to the lift; but I winder
 she fell in Fife, for the last time it
 saw her she was hinging on her back
 aboon Edinburgh. A-hech, quo' Willie
 we'll set her upon the highest house
 in the town, and we'll hae moonlight
 our ain a' the days o' the year. The
 whole town ran to see the moon! How
 tout, said Witty Eppie, ye're a' fool
 thegither; it's but ane o' thae things
 in my Lord's mare wears upon her lufe.

At another time, one of the wive
 found a hare, with its legs broken, ly
 ing among her kail in the yard. She
 not knowing what it was, called her neigh
 bours to come and see it: some said it
 was a gentleman's cat, or my lady's
 lap-dog, or a sheep's young kittlen, be
 cause it had saft horns: Na, na, cried

Wise Willie, its ane o' the maukins
that gentlemen's dogs worry. What
will we do wi't? Faith, quo' the wife,
we'll sing the woo aff, and make fish
and sauce o't to my Tammy's parrich.
Na, na, said Wittie Eppie, better gie't
to my Lord, and he'll stap an iron stick
through the guts o't, and gart rin round
fore' the fire till it be roasted.

It happened on a dark winter morn-
ing, that two of the wives were going
to Dysart to sell their fish; and on
the road-side there happened to be
some tinker's ass tethered. The poor
ass, seeing the two wives coming with
their creels, thought it was the tinkers
coming to flit or relieve him, fell a-bray-
ing: The two wives threw their fish a-
way, and ran home like mad persons,
saying they had seen the deil, ay the
very horned deil, and that he spoke to
them, but they didna ken what he said,
for it spoke waur than a highlandman.
The whole town was in an uproar; some
would go with picks and spades, and
hagg him to pieces; others wad go and
catch him in a strong net, and then

they could either hang or drown him. Na, na, quo' Wise Willie, wemauna cast out wi' him at the first, as he's gotten the twa burdens o' fish, he'll e'en gang his wa, and fash us nae mair; he is o'er souple to be catch'd in a net; a' your pith will neither hang him nor drown him, and the kintry he comes frae is a' het coals, sae he'd never burn; we'll gae to him in a civil manner, and see what he wants. Get out Witty Eppie and Lingle-tail'd Nancy, wi' the Bible and Psalm-book; so aff they came in a crowd, either to kill the deil or catch him alive; but, as they came near the place, the ass fell a-braying, which caused many of them to faint and run back. Na, na, quo' Willie, that's no the deil's words at a', it's my Lord's trumpeter routing on his brass whistle. Willie ventured on till he saw the ass's twa lugs. Now, said Willie, come forward an' haud him fast, I see his twa horns; hech, sirs! he has a white beard like an auld man. So they inclosed the poor ass on all sides, thinking it was the deil: but when Wise Willie

saw he hadnae cloven feet, he cried out, Scarna, lads, this is no the deil, it's some living beast; it's neither cow nor horse. An' what is't then, Willie? Indeed, quo' Willie, it's the father o' the anaukins, I ken by his lang lugs.

Now, some say this history is too satirical; but it is according to the knowledge of those times, not to say one place by another. The old wives will tell you yet, of many such stories of the devil appearing to their grandfathers and grandmothers, and dead wives coming back again to visit their families long after being dead. So this Buckhaven was once noted for droll exploits; but it is now become more known, and is a place that produces the hardiest sailors of any town on the Scots coast. Yet many of the old people in it still retain the old tincture of their ancient and uncultivated speech, such as Be-go laddie; they are also of a fiery nature, for if you ask any of the wives where their College stands, they'll tell you, if your nose was in their a—e, your mouth would be at the door of it.

Now, it happened when Wise Willie turned old, that he took a great swelling in his wame, spueing up his kail, collops, and cauld fish, and naething wad stay on his stomach; and a stout stomach he had, for crabs' heads and scate broo, or brose on a'bridal morning; yet it fail'd him, and he fell sick. Nane could cure him, nor tell what ail'd him, till a mountebank stage-doctor came to Kirkcaldy, who judged by people's piss the trouble of their person. Wise Willie hearing of his fame, pissed into the bottle, and sent it to him with his daughter. The bottle being uncorked, his daughter spilt it by the way, and, to conceal her sloth in so doing, pissed in it herself. Then on she goes, till she came to the stage-doctor, where she cried out aloud, Sir Doctor, Sir Doctor, here is a bottle of my father's wash, he has a sair guts, and canna drite ony, but spues a' he eats. It's true I tell you, my dow. The doctor looks at it, and says, it's not your father's surely, it's your mither's. The deil's in the man, said she, divna I ken my father

frae my mither. Then, said he, he is with child. The deil's in the man, quo' she, for my mither bare a' de bairns before; dat's no true, sir; fegs, ye're a great liar. Hame she comes, and tell'd Willie, her father, that the doctor said he was wi' bairn. Owaesme, quo' Willie, for I hae a muckle wame, an' I fear its owre true. O plague on you, Janet, for ye're the father o't, an' I am sure to die in the bearing o't. Witty Eppie was sent for, as she was a houdie, an' she fand a' Willie's wame, to be sure about it. Indeed, quo' Eppie, ye're the first man ere I saw wi' bairn before; an' how ye'll bear it, troth I dinna ken; but I wad drink salt sea water, and drown it in my guts—for if men get ance the gate o' bearing weans themselves, they'll seek nae mair wives.

So Willie drank sea watertill his guts was like to rive, and out he goes to ease himself among the kail. With the terrible noise of his farting, up starts a maukin behind him, who thought it was shot. Willie seeing her jump o'er the dike, thought it was a child brought

forth, cries out, Come back, my dear bairn, and be christened, and dinna rin to the hills to be a Pagan. So Willie grew better and better every day after his being brought to bed in the kail yard; but his daughter was brought to bed some months after, which was the cause of the doctor's mistake.

Now Wise Willie had a daughter called Rolling-coughing Jenny, because she spokethick, six words at three times, half sense and half nonsense, as their own records bear witness. She, being with child, was delivered of a bonny lassie; and all the wives in the town cried out, Be-go laddie, it's just like its ain father, lang Sandy Tamson (or Thomson,) we ken by its lang nose; for Sandy had a great muckle red nose, like a labster's tae, bowed at the point like a hawk's neb; and Sandy himself said, that it was surely his, or someither body's; but he had used a' his birr at the getting o't, to try his abilities, being the first time e'er he was at sic a business before; and when he hae

done a' that man could do at it, he said it was a' nonsense; and shame fa' him but he would rather row his boat round the Bass an' back again, or he'd do the like again. For Wise Willie gade wude at the bairn, and said it had mair ill-nature than the auldest wife about the town; for it pissed the bed, shit the bed, and skirl'd like a wild cat, and kept him frae his night's rest. A' the auld hags about the town ca'd him Sandy the bairn's daddy; and a' the young gillie-gaukies o' lassies held out their fingers, and cried Ti hi hi Sandy, the Kirk will kittle your hips for that. An' after a, the blear-eyed bell-man came bladdering about the buttock meal, summoned him and her before the haly-band, a court that was held in the kirk on Saturday morning. All the herd laddies round about cried, Ay, ay, Sandy, pay the bull-siller, or we'll cut the cow's tail awa. So poor Sandy suffered sadly in the flesh, beside the penalty and kirk penance.

But Wise Willie had pity on them,

and gade wi' them to the Kirk-court, what learned fouk call the Session. Jenny was first called upon, and in she goes where a' the haly band was convened, elders and younger deacons, and dog payers keeping the door, the cankerdest carles that could be gotten between Dysart and Dubyside—white heads and bald heads sitting wantin bonnets, wi' their white-headed staves, and hodden-grey jockey coats about them.

Mess John said, Come away, Janet, we're waiting on you here.

Min—Now, Janet, where was this child gotten? you must tell us plainly.

Jan—Adeed, sir, it was gotten at the black stanes, at the cheek of the crab-holes.

Mess John stares at her, not knowing the place; but some of the elders did. Then, said he, O Janet, but the devil was busy with you at that time.

Jan—A, by my fegs, sir, that's a great lie ye're telling now, for the deil was nae there that I saw, nor ony body else, to bid us do ae thing or anither; we lo'ed ither unco weel for a lang time before that, an' syne we tell'd ither, an' agreed to marry ither, like honest folk; then, might na we learn to do the thing married fouk do without the deil helping us?

Whisht, whisht, said they, ye should be scourged, fause loon quean, it thou is, ye're speaking nonsense.

Jan—De deil's i' the carles, for you and your minister are liars, when ye say it is de deil was helping Sandy and me to get de bairn.

Come, come, said they, pay down the Kirk-dues, and come back to the stool the morn; the price is four pund, and a groat to the bell-man.

Jan—The auld thief speed the darth o't, sir, far less might sair you and

your bell-man baith. O but this be an ill world indeed, when poor honest fouk maun pay for making use o' their ain a—: Ye misca the poor deil a-hint his back, an' gies him de wyte of a de ill in de kintry, bastard bairns and every thing; an' if it be sae as ye say, ye may thank de deil for that four pund an' a groat I hae gien ye; that gars your pot play brown, an' gets you jockey-coats, an' purl-handed sarks, an' white headed-staves, when my father's pat wallops up nought but bear an' blue water.

The woman is mad, said they, for this money is all given to the poor of the parish!!

Jan.—The poor of the parish! fint a haet ye gie to them but wee pickles o' pease meal, didna I see their pocks; an' the minister's wife gies naething ava to unca beggars, but bids them gae to their ain parishes; an' yet ye'll tak the purse frae us, for naething but playing the loon a wee or we be mar-

ried, an' syne ye cock them up to be looked on an' laugh'd at by every body : a deil speed you an' your justice, sir. Hout, tout, ye're a' coming on me like a when colly dogs hunting awa a poor ragget chapman frae the door. So out she goes cursing and greeting. Sandy is next called upon, and in he goes.

Min.—Now, Saunders, you must tell us how this child was gotten ?

San.—A now, Mess John, sir, ye hae bairns o' your ain, how did you get them ? but yours are a' laddies, and mine is but a lassie ; sae if you tell me how you got your laddies, I'll tell you how I got my lassie, and then we'll be baith alike good o' the business.

The minister looked at him and said, Hout, tout, Saunders, lay down four pound and a groat, and come back the morn to the stool, and give satisfaction to the congregation ; you had more need to be seeking repentance.

for that abominable sin of uncleanness than speaking so to me.

San.—Well, here's your siller, sir; I hae gotten but poor a penny-worth for't, an' yet ye tell me to repent for't: what the auld thief needs I repent, when I'm gaun to marry the woman, an' then I'll hae to do'ed o'er again every day, or there'll be nae peace in the house. Figs, its nonsense to pay siller, repent, and do'ed again too; fine advice indeed, Master Minister! and that's the way the like o' you live.

Now, sir, says Wise Willie, ye manna put them on the black creepy till they're married, they've suffered eneugh at ae time.

A-weel a-weel, said he, but they must marry very soon.

I true, says Sandy, ye'll be wanting mair clink; foul haet ye do for naething here.

The next exploit was, an action at law against the goodman of Muiredge, a farmer who lived near by, that kept sheep and swine. His sheep came down and broke their yards, and ate up their kail; and the wild hares they thought belonged to the same man, as they ran to his house when they were hunted. The swine came very often in about their houses, seeking fish-guts and ony thing they could get. So it happened, when one of the children was sitting easing itself, that one of the swine tumbled it over, and bit a piece out of its backside! The whole town rose in an uproar against poor grumphie, as they called her, and takes her before Wise Willie. Willie took an axe and cut two or three inches off her long nose. Now, says Willie, I trow I hae made thee something like another beast; thou had sic a lang mouth before, it wada frightened a very deil to look at ye; but now ye're fac'd like a little horse or cow. The poor sow ran home roaring, all blood, and wanting the nose; which caused

Muiredge to warn them in before my Lord. So the wives that had their kail eaten appeared first in the Court, complaining against Muiredge. Indeed, my Lord, said they, Muiredge is no a guid man, when he is sic an ill neighbour; he keeps black hares an' white hares, little wee brown-backed hares, wi' white arses an' loose wagging horns; they creep in at our gush holes an' does what they like; when we cry, pussie, pussie, they rin hame to Muiredge; but I'll gar my colly haud them by the fit, an' I'll haud them by the horn an' pou the hair aff them, an' send 'em hame wanting the skin, as he did Sowen Tammie's wee Sandy for codin o' his pease; he took aff the poor laddie's coat, an' sae did he e'en. And Willie said, if ye were a sow, my Lord, an' me sitting driting, and you to bite my arse, sudna I hae amends o' you for that? Od, my Lord, ye wadna hae a bit out o' your arse for twenty marks: Ye maun e'en gar Muiredge gie ten marks to buy a plaister to heal the poor bit wean's arse again.

Well said, Willie, says my Lord ;
but who puts on the sow's nose again ?

A fegs, my Lord, said Willie, she's
honester like wantin't, an' she'll bite
nae mair arses wi't. An ye had hane
a nose, my Lord, as lang as the sow,
ye'd been obliged to ony body it wad
cut a piece aft.

A gentleman coming past near their
town, asked one of their wives where
their College stood ? Said she, gie me a
shilling an' I'll let you see baith sides
o't. He gives her the shilling, think-
ing to see something curious. Now,
says she, there's ae side of your
shilling, and there's the ither ; so it is
mine now.

There was a custom in Bucky-har-
bour, when they got a hearty drink,
that they went down to dance among
the boats, and two or three of the oldest
went into a boat to see the rest dance ;
and when they admitted a burgher
there was always a dance. One day

they admitted gly'd Rob, who was a warlock, and made them all stop their dancing; for which he was carried before Wise Willie to answer for that crime, and he was banished to the Isle of May, to carry coals to the Light-house.



A POPULAR SONG.

IC A WIFE AS WILLIE HAD.

WILLIE Wastle dwalt on Tweed,
 he spot they ca'd it Linkumdoddie,
 Willie was a wabster guid,
 you'd stown a clue wi' onie body ;
 he had a wife was dour and din,
 Tinkler Madgie was her mither ;
Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wad na gie a button for her.

He has an e'e, she has but ane,
 he cat has twa the very colour ;
 heve rusty teeth, forbye a stump,
 clapper tongue wad deave a miller ;
 whiskin beard about her mou,
 her nose and chin they threaten ither ;
Sic a wife, &c.

He's bow-hough'd, she's beam-shinn'd,
 he limpin leg a hand breed-shorter ;
 he's twisted right, she's twisted left,
 he balance fair in iika quarter ;

She has a hump upon her back,
 The twin o' that upon her shouther;
Sic a wife, &c.

Auld baudrans by the ingle sits,
 An' wi' her loof her face a washin;
 But Willie's wife is nae sae trig,
 She dights her grunzie wi' a hushion
 Her walie nieves like midden-creels,
 Her face wad fyle the Logan-Water

*Sic a wife as Willie had,
 I wadna gie a button for her.*

FINIS.