

THE  
STORY of BUCHAVEN  
IN FIFESHIRE,

Containing the Witty and Entertaining  
*Exploits of Wise Willie*

AND

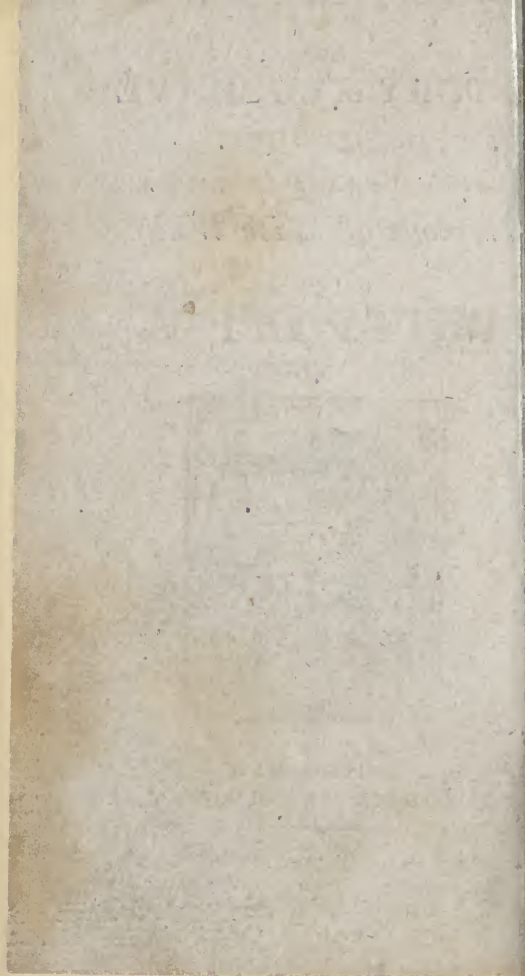
WITTY EPPIE.



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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
BUCHAVEN

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IN the county of Fyfe, on the sea-coast, there stands a little town inhabited by few but fishers, called Buckey-harbour, be-



cause of sea buckies and shells to be found so plenty on the rocks about that place. There is little mention made of this town by historians, to know its original extraction and antiquities, but in their own Burgess-Ticket, which was partly truth, but

more of it by way of lampoon. This Ticket was dated the two and thirtieth day of the month of Julius Cæsar. Their Coat of Arms was two hands gripping each other over a Scate's rumple. This 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, was to rise all the rest to go to sea; but if a very bad morning, piss and go to bed again till break of day, then raise wise Willie, who could judge of the weather by the blawing of the wind—Their freedoms were, to take all sorts of fish contained in their ticket, viz. Lobsters, partens, podles, spout fish, sea-cats, sea-dogs, fluks, piks, dick puddocks, and p—fish.



Again, these people are said to have descended from one Tom and his two sons, who were fishers on the coast of Norway, who, in a violent storm, were blown over, and got a shore at Buck-harbour, where they settled; and the whole of his children were called Tom sons, and soon became a little town by themselves, as few of any other name dwelt among them, This is a traditional story handed down from one generation to another—They kept but little communication with country people about them, for a farmer, in those days, thought his daughter cast away, if she married one of the other band, witty Eppie the ale-wife wad a sworn Bugo laddie, I wad rather see my boat an a' my three sons daded against the Bass or I saw ony ane o' them married to a muck-a-byre's daughter; a wheen useless tappies, it can do naething but rive at a towrock and cut corn, they can neither bait a hook nor redd a line, houk sand-eels, nor gather pir-riwinkles.

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 con-

troversies, and explained their wonders ; for the house was like a little kirk, had four windows and gable door, the wives



got leave to flyte their fill, but fighting was prohibited, as Eppie said, up hands was fair play. The fines was a pint o' ale, and Eppie sold it at a plack the pint. They had neither minister nor magistrate, nor yet a burlie bailie, to brag them wi' his tolbooth. The Lord o' the manor decided all disputable points, and Wise Willie and Witty Eppie were the rulers of the town.

Now Eppie had a daughter, she ca'd Lingle-tail'd Nancy, because of her feck-



ss growth; her waist was like a twitter,  
 and nae curpen for a cieel, being Edin-  
 burgh bred, and brought up wi' her Lou-  
 en aunty, was learned to read and sew,  
 made coarse claith, and calicoe mancoes;  
 there was nae scholar in the town but her-  
 el, she read the bible, and the book of  
 psalm sangs that was newly come in fa-  
 shion. Willie and Eppie tell'd them ay  
 what he meant, and said a the letters in  
 it was litted by my Lord, for they saw him  
 use a feather that he dipped in black wa-  
 ter, and made crooked scores, just like the  
 same; and then he spake o'er again, and  
 it tell'd him what to say.

In happened on a day that two of their  
 wives near the town, found a horse shoe,  
 and brought it home and sent for Willie  
 to see what it was; Willie comes and  
 looks at it; Indeed, co' Willie, its a thing  
 and holes in't. I kent, co' they, he wad  
 get a name till't. A' ho'? co' Willie,  
 whar did ye find it? Aneath my Lord's  
 ain house, Willie. Adeed, said Willie, its  
 the auld moon, I ken by the holes in't, for  
 nailing it to the lift: but I winder it she  
 fell in Fyfe, for the last time it I saw her  
 she was hinging on her back aboon Edin-

burgh. A hech, co' Willie, we'll set he  
upon the highest house in the town, and  
we'll hae moonlight o' our ain a' the day  
o' the year. The whole town ran to see  
the moon! Honest tout, said witty Eppie,  
ye're but a' fools thegither; its out ane  
o' the thing it my Lords mare wears upon  
his lufe,

At another time one of the wives found  
a hare with its legs broken, lying among  
her kail in the yard. She not knowing  
what it was, called out to her neighbours  
to see it; some said it was a gentleman's  
cat, or a lady's lap-dog, or a sheep's  
young kittlen, because it had east horns:  
Na, na, cried wise Willie, its ane o' the  
maukins that gentlemen's dogs worie,



What will we do witt? Faith, co' they all,  
we'll singe the woo aff, and make fish and  
sauce o't to my Tammy's parich, Na na,  
said Witty Eppie, better gie't to my Lord,  
and he'll stap an iron stick through the



guts o't, and gart rin round afore the fire till it be roasted.

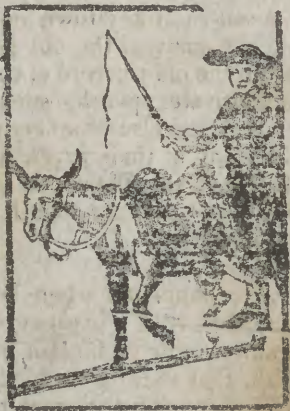
It happened on a dark winter morning, that two of their wives were going to Dy-sart to sell their fish; and on the road side



there happened to be some tinker'sasstethered. The poor ass seeing the two wives coming with the creels, thought it was the tinkers coming to flit or relieve him, fell a crying, the two wives threw their fish a' awa', and ran hame like mad persons, crying 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 was waur than a highlandman's; the whole town was in an uproar; some would go with picks and spades, and hagg him to pieces; others would go and catch him in a strong net, and then they would either hang or drown him. Na, na, co' Wise Willie, we manna cast out wi' him at the first, as he's gotten the twa burdens o' fish, he'll e'en gang his wa, and no fash us nae mair; he is o'er souple to be catch'd in a net; a' your pith will neither hang nor drown him, and the kintry he comes frae is a' het coals, 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; and as they came near the place, the ass fell a-crying, which caused many of them to faint and run back. No, na, co' Willie, that's no the deil's words at a', its my Lord's trumpeter, routing on his brass whistle. Willie ventured till he saw the ass' twa lugs, Now, said Willie, come forwards an' haud him fast, I see his twa horns; heh sir, 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 had nae clo-  
ven feet, he cried out, Scarna lads, this is  
not the diel, it's some living beast; it's



neither cow nor horse, An' what is't then,  
Willie? Indeed, co' Willie, its the father  
o' the maukins, I ken by its lang lugs.

Now some say this history is too satiri-  
cal; but it is according to the knowledge  
of those times, not to say one place by a-  
nother. The old wives will tell you yet  
of many such stories of the devil appear-  
ing to their grandfathers & grandmothers,

and dead wives coming back again to visit their families long after being dead; So this Buchaven was once noted for droll exploits; but it is now become more known, and a place now 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 uncultivate speech, such as Be go laddie; they are also of a fiery nature, for if you ask any of their 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, he took a great swelling in his wame, and casting up his kail, collops and cauld fish, that nothing could stand on his stomach; and a stout stomach he had, for crabs heads, and scate-broo, or brose in a bridal morning; yet it fail'd him, and he fell sick. None could cure him, nor tell whatail'd him till a mountebank stage doctor came to Kircaldy, that could judge by people's piss the trouble of their person. Wise Willie hearing of the same pissed into the bottle, and sent it away 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, and on she goes, till she came to the stage-doctor, when she cried out aloud, Sir Doctor, Sir Doctor, here is a bottle of my father's wash, he has a sair guts, and needs na drite ony, but spues a' he eats. Its true I tell you my dow. The doctor looks at it, then says, its not your father's surely, its 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, co' 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. O waes me, co' Willie, for I hae a muckle wame, and 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, co' Eppie, ye're the first man ere I saw wi' bairn before, and how ye'll bear it troth I dinna ken, but I would drink salt sea water, and drown it in my guts—for if men get ance the gate o' bearing weans

themselves, they'll need nae mair wives. So Willie drank sea water till his guts was like to rive, and out he got to ease himself among the kail ; and 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 dyke, thought it was a child brought forth, and cried out, Come Back my Dear, and be christened, and dinna rin to the hills to be a Pegan. So Willie grew better every day thereafter, 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 spak thick sax words at three times, half sense and half nonsense, as her own records will bear witness. She being with child, and delivered of a bonny lassie ; and all the wives in the town cried out, Be go lad-die, it's just like its ain father, lang San-Tason, (or Thomson,) we ken by his lang nose ; for Sandy had a great mucke 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 some otherbody's :  
but he had us'd a' his birr at the getting  
o't to try is abilities, being the first time,  
e'er he was at sic a business before ; and  
when he had done a' that man could do at  
it, he said it was nonsense ; and shame fa'  
him, but he would rather row his boat  
round his 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 ; and 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 : And after a' the blear-eyed bell-man  
came bladering about the buttock meal,  
summoned him and her before the haly  
band ; a court that was held in the Kirk on  
Saturday morning ; and all the herd lad-  
dies 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, besides the penalty and kirk pen-  
ance.

But Wise Willie had pity on them, and  
gade wi' them to the Kirk-court, wha



learned fouk call the Session. Jenny was  
first called upon, and in she goes where  
a' the ha'p band was convened, elders and

younger deacons, and dog payers, keeping the door, the cankerdest carles that could be gotten between Dysart & Duby side—white heads and bald heads sitting wantin' bonnets, wi' their white headed staffs, and hodden grey jockey coats about them.

Mess John says, 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 crabb holes.

Mess John stares at her, not knowing the place, but some of the elders did. Then, sail he, O Jannet 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 long time before that, an



syne we tell'd ither, and agreed to marry  
ither, like honest fouk ; then might na we  
learn to do the thing married fouk do,  
without the deil helping us.

Whisht, whisht, cried they, ye should  
be scourged, sause loon quien it thus is,  
ye're speaking nonsense.

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

come, come, said they, pay down the k-  
dues, and come back to the stool the  
n; the price is four pound and a groat  
he bell man.

an—The auld thief speed the dark o't  
far less might sair you and your bell-  
a baitn, O but this be a warld indeed,  
en poor honest fouk maun pay for mak-  
use o' their a—: Ye misca the poor  
l a-hint his back, an' gies him the wyte  
a de ill in de kintry, bastard bairns and  
ery think; and if it be sae as ye sae ye  
y thank the deil, for that four pound  
d a groat I gien you; that gars  
ur pat play brown, and gets you jockey-  
ats and purl handed sarks, an white-  
aded staves, when my father's pot wal-  
os up nought but bear and blae water.

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

Jan—The poor of the parish! fint a  
ate ye gie to them but we pickles o'  
ease meal, didna I see their pocks; an'  
he minister's wife gies naething ava to  
nco beggars, but bids them gae to their

ain parishes ; and yet ye'll tak the pu  
 frae us for naething but playing the lo  
 a wee or we be married, and syne co  
 them up to be looked on and laughed  
 by every body : a deil speed you and yo  
 justice, sir. Hute, tute, ye're a' coming  
 me like a wheen colly dogs, hunting a  
 a poor raggit chapman frae the door.  
 out she goes cursing and greeting. San  
 is called upon, and in he goes.

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

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

The minister looks at him, and says  
 Hute, tute, Saunders, lay down four pun  
 and a groat, and come back the morn to  
 the stool, and give satisfaction to the con  
 gregation ; you had more need to be seek  
 ing repentance for that abominable sin o  
 uncleanness than speaking so to me.



San... Well, here's your siller sir, I hae  
ten but poor penny worths for't, an' yet  
tell me to repent for't; what the auld  
ef needs I repent, when I'm gaun to  
try the woman, an then I'll hae to do't  
again every day, or there'll be nae  
ce in the house; figs it nonsense to  
siller, repent, and do't again too, a fine  
ice indeed, maister minister! and that's  
way the like o' you live.

Now sir, says Wise Willie, ye manna  
them on the black creepy till they be  
ried; they've suffered enough at ae  
e.

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

true, says Sandy, ye'll be wanting  
r clink; foul haet ye do for naething  
e.

The next exploit was an action at law  
inst the goodman of Muiredge, a far-  
r who lived near by, that kept sheep &  
ne. His sheep came down and broke  
r yards, and ate up their kail; the  
hares they thought belonged to the

man, as they ran to his house when they were hunted. The swine came very often in about their house, seeking fish and any 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 the poor grunkie, 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 tell you I hae made thee something like another beast; thou had sic a lang mouth before it wad a frightened a very deil to look at, y but now your fac'd like a little horse or cow. The poor sow ran home roaring all blood and wanting the rose; 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 good man, when he is sic an ill neighbour he keeps black hares and white hares, little wee brown backed hares wi' white ars and loose wagging horns; they creep at our gush-holes an' does the like; when we cry, pussie, pussie, they rin hame

Muir-edge; but I'll gar my colly had them



by the foot, an' I'll had them by the horn,  
n' pull the hair aff them, and send 'em  
home wanting the skin, as he did Sower  
'anmie's wee Sandy, for codin o' his  
ease, he took aff the poor laddie's coat,  
and sae did he e'en. And Willie said, if  
we were a sow my Lord, an' me sitting  
criting, and you to bite my arse, sudna I  
ae a mend o' you for that? odd, my Lord,  
we wadna hae a bit out o' your arse for  
winty marks: Ye maun e'en gar Muir-  
edge gie ten marks to buy a plaster to  
heal the poor bit wean's arse again.

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

A fegs, my Lord, said Willie, she's ho-  
mester like wantin't an' she'll bite nae mair  
urses 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 aff.

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

There was a custom in Bucky-harbour, when they got a hearty drink, that they went down to dance among the boats, two or three of the oldest went into a boat to see the residence, and when they admitted a burgher, there was also a dance. One day they admitted glyed Rob, who was a warlock, and made them all stop their dancing, for which he was carried before Wise Willie to answer for that, for which, he was banished to the isle of May, to carry coals to the Light House.

FINIS.