

## NUMBER XXXII.

## PARISH OF CRIMOND.

*(County and Synod of Aberdeen—Presbytery of Deer.)**By Mr. WILLIAM GALL, Assistant to the Rev. Mr. JAMES JOHNSTON Minister of the Parish.**Situation, Extent, Surface, and Rivulets, &c.*

THE parish of Crimond is situated in that district of Aberdeenshire, called Buchan, and lies nearly in a line between the sea port towns of Peterhead and Fraserburgh; being about  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant from the former, and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  from the latter; and bounded on the N. E. by the German Ocean. The figure of the parish, including the Loch of Strathbeg, (part of which is in the parish of Loanmay), is triangular. The base of the triangle, adjacent to the German Ocean, is nearly 3 miles, and its height is about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles. It contains about 4600 acres, of which nearly 3000 are arable. The remainder is occupied by mosses, links, fands, a common, and the lake of Strathbeg. About a quarter of a mile from high water mark, there is a steep hill along the shore, almost perpendicular, and nearly 200 feet in height. From the summit of this hill there is a gradual descent for about a mile, till the

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ground

ground be but a little higher than the level of the sea; after which there is a gradual ascent, with a few variations, to the upper part of the parish. As the parish lies very flat, there are few springs of soft water; and, in dry summers, many have considerable difficulty, and must go to a great distance to procure water for themselves and their cattle. There are a few streams of soft water in the parish, arising from mosses; but they contain very little water in summer. The most considerable of these streams, or burns, divides the parish of Crimond from Loanmay, and falls into the Loch of Strathbeg; but its whole course, with all its turnings, will not exceed 4 miles. Yet, though there is rather a scarcity of soft water, there are many mineral springs; most of them are supposed to be much impregnated with iron. None of them, however, have been much used for any medicinal purpose.

*Heritors and Rent.*—The parish is divided among 4 heritors: Mr. Irvine of Drum, proprietor of the lands of Crimond and Millhill; Mr. Harvey of Broadland, proprietor of the lands of Rattray and Broadland; Mr. Duff of Feteresso, proprietor of Logie; and Mr. Annand of Haddo, proprietor of Haddo; besides 2, who possess only a few acres each. Of these, Mr. Harvey of Broadland generally resides. The valued rent of the parish is 2172l. 13s. 4d. Scotch; the real rent is above 1300l. Sterling. The value of the land here has risen very considerably during the last 50 or 60 years.

*Manufactures and Commerce.*—From the scarcity of water in the parish, there can be no manufactures established here. The women, however, are employed partly in spinning flax, for the manufacturers of Aberdeen and Peterhead; partly in spinning tow, which is manufactured into a coarse kind of narrow cloth, called *barn*, which labouring people use for shirts,

Shirts, and which sells, unbleached, at about 6d. or 7d. per yard; or into a still coarser kind, which is made into bags for carrying grain, and which, being much closer woven, sells at about 8d. or 10d. per yard. A considerable quantity of this cloth is sold yearly at different fairs in this neighbourhood; and a still greater proportion of linen yarn is spun, and sent by land carriage, chiefly to Aberdeen, a distance of 35 miles. The women will gain, by spinning, from 4d. to 6d. a day.

*Fish, Kelp, &c.*—The coast abounds in fish, particularly cod, which are of an excellent kind (Ratray cod being very famous); but for want of a proper landing place, they are not caught in very great quantities here. There is no fishing town in the parish; but some of the crofters and artificers, on the estates of Broadland and Haddo, fish in good weather, when they are not otherwise employed. Mr. Harvey of Broadland proposes to make a proper landing place, but has not yet begun to put his plan in execution. Sea weed, or ware, is used as a manure; and a small quantity of kelp is manufactured here. *Ratray Head*, in this parish, is a very dangerous rock. It is very low, and stretches a good way into the sea. A great number of vessels have been shipwrecked there. In these cases, the conduct of so many of the lower ranks, in this and the neighbouring parishes, especially of those who are most adjacent to Ratray Head, can by no means be justified; for they pilfer and carry off from the wreck whatever they can lay hold on, sometimes in a very barefaced manner. The erection of a light-house at Kinnaird's Head, about 7 miles W. from Ratray Head, will probably render these wrecks less frequent at the latter. The last ship wrecked there was the *Delight of Burlington*, a large vessel, laden with iron, wood and tallow, in November or December 1790.

*Climate and Soil.*—The climate is healthy, and seems not so liable to infectious disorders, as other parishes in the neighbourhood. The putrid sore throat raged with great violence 2 or 3 years ago, in most parishes in the neighbourhood, and carried off great numbers; but though a few were seized with it in Crimond, none died of that disorder. Consumptive disorders are most frequent here. At present an infectious fever prevails, which has proved fatal to several. In spring 1792, 20 people, from 1 to 16 years of age, were inoculated for the small pox. One of them did not catch the infection; the other 19 had them in the most favourable manner. But notwithstanding this success, the example is not likely to be followed.

The land next the shore is a very light sandy soil, which produces, in general, weighty crops of bear, pease and beans. It is easily cultivated, and would produce excellent crops of early grafs; but this husbandry has been seldom attempted in that part of the parish. In the N. W. part of the parish, for 2 or 3 miles from the sea, is a light loam, earlier than most other parts; and some of it produces weighty crops. Part is on a clay bottom; much of it is a cold damp late soil, particularly near the mosses; and as a great part of the parish appears once to have been covered with moss, this soil is to be found in many places. The only grain produced here is oats, bear, pease and beans; the two last in not very great quantities.

*Agriculture and Produce.*—It is but lately that any considerable improvements in agriculture were made here. It is indeed nearly 60 years since Mr. Irvine of Crimond began to use lime. But so little was the nature of that manure known at that time, that he took 7, 8, and even 11 successive crops after  
after

after liming. Some fields have not yet recovered the bad effects of this over-cropping. When the tenants, about 30 or 40 years ago, began to use lime, the landlords, in order to prevent over cropping, caused insert a clause in the leases they granted, prohibiting tenants from taking more than 4 crops after folding with sheep or cattle, and 5 after liming, without the intervention of a green crop; but if the 5th crop after liming was pease, they could, by their lease, make the 6th bear, and then a 7th and 8th oats. It is easy to see, that such a mode of using ground, must have greatly retarded improvement. Liming is not much used at present here, as most of the ground, for which it is proper, has already been limed, and got such a large dose, that a second liming is rather hurtful than beneficial. What lime is now used, is commonly harrowed in with bear, and clover and rye-grass seeds, after turnips and potatoes, in old infield ground. Shell marl is beginning to be used as a manure, and seems to answer well.

It is not much above 20 years since potatoes, turnips, or artificial grasses, were to be seen in the fields in any quantity. But people now begin to perceive the advantages of those improvements. Potatoes are planted in quantities sufficient to supply the consumption of the parish, which is considerable. A few were sold last year for exportation; but the expence of land carriage will probably prevent any attempts to raise them for exportation. Many have large fields of turnips. Summer fallow is sometimes used; and the potatoe, turnip, and fallow fields are generally sown down with rye-grass, and red and white clover seeds; and sometimes grass seeds are sown in ground not so well prepared. But a great deal remains to be done; and it will be a long time before the district can arrive at the degree of cultivation it is capable of. There is no regular rotation of crops carried on here, unless by one or two tenants. A very good rotation, which has been used,

used, is, 1st, turnips, potatoes, pease, or fallow; 2d, in a light soil, oats; and, in a strong, barley, each with artificial grasses; 3d, hay; 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th, pasture; 8th, oats: 9th, sometimes oats, which finishes the rotation; sometimes bear; and, in that case, 10th oats.

Nearly the half of the arable ground in the parish is in natural or artificial grasses. About a 5th part of the remainder is in potatoes, turnips, pease, or other green crop. Every tenant, for the most part, has a greater or lesser quantity of flax, chiefly for family use. What remains, is in oats and barley. The turnips are used, partly in feeding cattle for the butcher, but chiefly in rearing young cattle. The parish will produce nearly, on an average, 6000 bolls of grain annually; of which from 1000 to 2000 are exported; the remainder is needed for feed, and the supply of the inhabitants. The value of cattle sold yearly, including a few sheep, amounts to more than the grain exported. Very fine cattle are reared and fed here. The number of black cattle is rather above 800. There are but few sheep. About 20 years ago, horses used to be brought from other places, to supply the farmers in this and the neighbouring parishes; but now good horses are reared and exported. The number of horses in the district is exactly 205. Some farmers also dispose of a little hay.

Some time ago, in this district, the plough was drawn by 6 horses, or 10 or 12 oxen; now 4 horses, or 4 oxen, and sometimes 2 horses, are used. The Scotch plough is generally employed. There is scarcely any of the parish inclosed, which is partly compensated by the practice of winter herding. About 16 or 20 years ago, many of the tenants began to inclose with earthen fences; and perhaps a third part of the parish was inclosed in that manner. But as these fences soon mouldered away, and became insufficient, a stop was put to that manner of inclosing, and the earthen fences were generally

tally thrown down. In some parts of the district, stones are not to be got in sufficient quantities for inclosing; and, even where they can be got, a tenant can hardly be expected to inclose on a lease of 19 years, the longest generally granted here.

The shortness of leases usually given, seems to present an insuperable bar to perfection in agriculture. From the decreasing value of money, the landlord imagines he must be a loser by granting a long lease. But might not a lease be granted for 3, 4, or 5 nineteen years, without any material injury to the landlord, arising from the progressive decrease of the value of money? For instance, might not the rent of a farm be regulated by the price of oatmeal, or of any kind of grain? Suppose a farm to be let for 20l., and the price of oatmeal, at the beginning of the lease, to be 10s. per boll, then the rent, or 20l., would be equivalent to 40 bolls of oatmeal. Suppose, at the end of the first 19 years, the price of oatmeal, on an average of 7 years, to be 12s. per boll, then let the rent for the second 19 years be the price of 40 bolls of meal, at 12s. per boll, or 24l. Suppose, at the end of the second 19 years, oatmeal to be 14s per boll, then let the rent, for the third 19 years, be the price of 40 bolls of meal, at 14s. per boll, or 28l. The rising rent might in the same manner be regulated by the price of cattle or sheep of a certain weight, or of beef or wool, or other productions of the farm. A moderate advance might likewise be made for the capability of improvement. A long lease might surely be granted, upon this or a similar plan, without materially injuring the landlord; while the tenant would be encouraged to attempt substantial improvements, as he would have a certain prospect of reaping the fruits of his industry.

*Population.*

*Population.*—According to Dr. Webster's report, the number of souls, in 1755, was 765\*.

POPULATION in February 1792.

Males above 10,	-	313	Members of the Established Church,	
— below 10,	-	117	children included,	- 662
Females above 10,	-	390	Scotch Episcopalians,	- 244
— below 10,	-	97	Amburgher Seceders,	- 3
			Roman Catholics,	- - 3
Total †,	-	917	Number of families,	- - 221

\* About the time that the return was made to Dr. Webster, and for some time after, the population was said to be on the increase, owing chiefly to the dividing of large farms into smaller ones. But since the year 1770, the population seems to have been upon the decrease. In 1772, it appears, from the list kept by the overseer of the roads, that there were 232 men in the parish, from 16 to 60, liable to work on the highways. These have gradually decreased since. In 1781, there were but 200; and last year only 171.

† In February 1793, there was a decrease of 15, owing to the removal of 2 families and 5 or 6 artizans out of the parish.—It is impossible to give any account of the births, deaths, and marriages. Scarcely any of the dissenters insert their childrens births in the register; and even some of the Established Church are equally negligent. Before 1783, no register of burials and marriages was kept, and scarcely the half have been registered since that period. The decrease of the population may, among other causes, contribute to the high price of labour, and to what is of worse consequence, the difficulty of procuring labourers. At the time that the large farms were divided into smaller ones, the subtenants and cottagers rented partly the smaller farms, and partly crofts, from the heritor, which were generally too large. When the possessors of these small farms and crofts were found not to be the best improvers of the ground, the landlords began to put two or more of the small farms into one, so that now there are scarcely any subtenants, and few crofts let by the heritors. As there are no villages in the parish, and no cottages to be let, but such as have a piece of ground annexed to them, young people, for want of a settlement, remove to the manufacturing towns of Peterhead and Aberdeen; so that day-labourers and handicraft people are procured with the greatest difficulty. It would probably be of great advantage both to themselves and the public, if the heritors would allot  
a small

*Church*\*, *School*, *Poor*, &c.—The stipend is a chalder of bear, a chalder of meal, 700 merks Scotch in money, with 50 merks for communion elements, and a glebe of about 5 acres of very good ground. The Earl of Errol is the present patron. The church was built in 1576; at least this date is above one of the doors. It is probable, however, that it had only been repaired that year, as there is still a font stone in the E. end. The manse was built in 1763, and new offices about 4 or 5 years ago.—A new school-house, with rooms for the master, was built in 1791. The schoolmaster's salary is 100 merks Scotch, and, including all perquisites and school fees, will not amount to above 11l. or 12l. a year.—The poor are supported by the weekly collections, and the interest of 130l. Sterling. Of this, 100 merks Scotch were mortgaged by a proprietor of Logie, about the beginning of the century, and 50 merks by Mr. Leslie, late minister of Crimond, about the year 1740. These two sums, by being lent out at interest, amounted, in 1748, to 700 merks Scotch; and, in 1782, with some small savings, to 170l. Sterling: A practical proof of the accumulation of money by compound interest †.

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Roads.

a small part of their estate (near a moss if possible) to be let in small crofts of 2 or 3 acres to day-labourers and artificers, and to grant them leases. By these means many would settle in the country, the best nursery of the human species, and it would always be easy to procure labourers and artificers, which is frequently not the case at present. This difficulty of procuring day-labourers, labouring servants, &c. prevents many improvements from being attempted. It would also be of consequence, that such crofts were very small, because if they were large, they would either take up too much of the possessor's time, or the necessary attention would not be paid to them.

\* Mr. WILLIAM LAW, probably the first Presbyterian minister at Crimond after the Revolution, was deposed, soon after the beginning of the century, by the Synod of Aberdeen, for what they were pleased to call *heresy*, he having asserted in a Synod sermon, "That *virtue* was *more natural* to the human mind than *vice*."

† Since that period the capital has decreased. The poor are literally supported.

*Roads.*—The roads in this district are repaired by the statute labour, which, if properly performed, would have kept them in repair: But the work was always too superficially performed, because too much was attempted in one year. And, as the roads stood as much in need of repair as ever, in a few years they became very bad. This rendered people averse and awkward in performing the statute labour. Besides, about 10, 12, or 20 years ago, the then residing heritors frequently repaired their private roads by means of the statute labour; and overseers were often partial or negligent. More attention, however, has been paid to the public roads for some years past, and they are now considerably improved.

*Lake, Hill, &c.*—The Loch of Strathbeg is partly in the parish of Crimond, partly in that of Loanmay. It contains about 550 acres, and is above a mile in length from E. to W.; the breadth is unequal. The E. end, which is in Crimond, is nearly half a mile from the sea, the W. end somewhat farther\*. At the E. end of the Loch of Strathbeg, in a very pleasant

ed by the poor. The heritors either do not reside, or do not attend public worship. A great many are dissenters, who contribute little or nothing to the support of the poor. For 10 or 12 years past, Mr. Irvine of Drum has caused 5 or 6 bolls of oat-meal, and sometimes more, yearly, and, at different times money, to be distributed among the poor of his estate. An example which deserves to be followed by all non-residing heritors, and those who do not attend public worship.

\* At the beginning of the present century, this lake was of much smaller extent than it is now. It was confined to a small part of the E. end, and had a communication with the sea, so that vessels of small burthen could enter it. People born about the beginning of the century well remembered the first overflowing of the W. part of the Loch, though the particular year is not now known, but it must have been about 1720. Previous to that time there was a hill

pleasant situation, there is a small hill, of a circular form, whose top is exactly half a Scotch acre in extent, called *the Castle-Hill*. It rises 38 feet above a small plain on the N. E. but is only 12 or 14 feet above the higher ground on the opposite side. The famous Cummine Earl of Buchan, had a feat here, but after his defeat at the battle of Inverury, by King Robert Bruce, this castle fell into ruins. By the blowing of the light sandy ground in the neighbourhood, which very frequently happens, it is now covered with a deep soil, and produces crops of grain and grafs. Such is the instability of human affairs \*. About a quarter of a mile S. of the Castle-hill, the walls of a chapel, furrounded by a burial place, are mostly entire †. Around this chapel formerly stood the burgh of Rattray. It is said to have had the same privileges as a royal burgh, except sending members to parliament. The burgage lands are of considerable extent ‡. This district

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is

hill of sand, between the hill above mentioned and the sea, and still higher than it. A furious E. wind blew away this hill of sand in one night, which stopped the communication between the loch and the sea by forming a sand bar. The low lying ground to the W. was soon overflowed, and the extent of the loch much increased. An attempt has been made to drain this loch - the operations for draining it were begun in 1787, and are still continued, though hitherto unsuccessful. The proper method of draining it does not appear to be yet discovered.

\* About 60 years ago, Mr. Arbutnot, then of Broadland, caused dig up an eminence at the S. E. side of the Castle-hill, where he found a great number of stones, supposed to belong to the kitchen of the castle, as the workmen found very large hearth-stones covered with ashes.

† It is supposed to have been a private chapel for the use of the Earl's family. The length is 45 feet within the walls, the breadth 18 feet, the thickness of the walls 3 feet, and the height of the end walls, still above ground, 32 feet. In the E. end of the chapel are 3 arched windows; the largest, which is in the middle, is 12 feet high and 2 feet wide. The other 2 are each 7 feet high, and 2 wide. The walls are built of very small stones firmly cemented with lime.

‡ There are now only 2 feus, or rather 3 feu divided into 2: The oldest charter

is called, in an old charter, *the Great Park of Crimond*. There are, however, very few trees in it at present; but it appears, from the mosses, that there have been large plantations formerly. Many oaks, still fresh, have been found in the mosses; but scarcely any other kind of wood. In these places, when the moss is exhausted, or nearly so, roots of very large oaks are to be seen, as close together as trees of their size could well be supposed to grow in a plantation. In the uppermost part of Crimond, the adjacent parts of Loanmay, and a part of Longside, which was disjoined from Crimond in the last century, there are several very extensive mosses contiguous to each other, which, if we may judge from those already exhausted, have been once covered with wood\*.

*Ale Houses.*—There is only one licenced public house in the parish; but there are several persons, who, by getting  
*market*

ter upon this feu, extant, was granted in 1627. In that year, in a burgh-court holden at Rattray, by the Honourable John Hay of Crimondmogate, William Dalgarno of Blackwater, and David Ravis of Strathstedlie, bailies of the burgh of Rattray, a jury of 13 honest men, citizens of the said burgh, find, that Magnus Smith, the father of William Smith, died possessed of 4 roods of land in the said burgh. Upon this, David Ravis, one of the said bailies, superior of the lands of Rattray, grants a charter on the said 4 roods in favour of William Smith.—The next charter is granted in 1675 by William Watson of Haddo, bailie of the burgh of Rattray, superior of the said lands, in favour of Isobel Watson, spouse of Alexander Bisset in Bilboe.—The latest charter is granted in 1711, by Charles Earl of Errol, superior of the lands of Rattray, in favour of the daughters of the said Alexander Bisset and Isobel Watson.

\* In Fordoun's Chronicle, after mentioning the defeat of Cummine at Inverary, it is narrated, "That Bruce pursued him to Turriff, and afterwards destroyed by fire his whole earldom of Buchan." The large plantations of trees were no doubt destroyed with the rest of the earldom; and this is the more probable, as marks of fire have been perceived on trees deep buried in the moss.

*market sets* from the excise officers, contrive to retail ale and spiritous liquors during a great part of the year; and as they pay no licence, and hardly any duty on ale, and have little convenience, they can afford to sell below the ordinary price in a decent house. Hence these private ale houses are too much frequented, and their effects may soon become pernicious. Drunkenness, however, is not a prevailing vice here. The severe season of 1782 was attended with many bad consequences; but it had one beneficial effect in this neighbourhood, that of almost putting a stop to this vice.

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