

N U M B E R XXV.

PARISH OF JURA AND COLONSAY.

(COUNTY AND SYNOD OF ARGYLL, PRESEYTERY OF KINTYRE.)

By the Rev. Mr. FRANCIS STEWART.

THIS parish has the island of Ilay on the S., and that of Mull on the N.; it is bounded on the W. by the Atlantic, and on the E. by the Sea, which washes the coast of Cregnish, of north and south Knapdale, and part of Kintyre. Including sea, it is 50 miles long, and 30 broad. It consists of 9 islands, of which 6 are inhabited. Colonsay and Oronsay are separated by a narrow sound, which ebbs dry at low water, and they form the western division of the parish. About a league and a half to the E. lies the island of Jura. At the north end of Jura, are the islands of Scarba, Lunga, Balnahaigh, the Garveileachan, and Eileachan-naomh. As the island of Jura forms by far the most considerable part of the parish, we shall give it the first place in this account.

Name,

Name, Situation, Extent, and Surface.—There are various etymologies given of Jura. Some think that it was so denominated from the great quantity of yew trees which grew in the island. The name of the yew, in Gaelic, is Juar; hence, they say, Juarey; and, in a contracted form, Jurey, the island of Yew Trees. Buchanan says, that the ancient name of the island was Dera, which, in the Gothic language, signifies a stag. This account of the name seems the most probable, as there is still a considerable number of deer in the island, and, as the Gäel pronounce it Diura, very near the Gothic Dera. The tutelary saint of the island was Fernadal; from him the burying-ground is denominated Kil-fhearnadail, or the Cell of Fernadal; also a large oblong stone on the shore, 3 miles S. W. from the Cell, Leac-fhearnadail, or the stone of Fernadal; and a farm, 2 miles N. E. of the Cell, Ard-fhearnadail, or the hill of Fernadal. The island of Jura, with its appendage of little islands at the N. end, stretches along opposite the coast of Cregnish, of Knapdale, and nearly as far S. as the N. end of Gigha. Towards the S. end it may be about 6 leagues from the continent, towards the middle about 3, and at the N. end not above 1. The length of the island is about 30 miles, the breadth various, but no where, it is believed, above 7 miles. As there has been no actual survey, the length and breadth are not exactly ascertained. The appearance of the island is very romantick, and calculated to raise sublime emotions in the spectator's soul. There is a ridge of towering mountains, which run from S. to N. along the W. side, terminating the prospect from the continent, and very often covered with clouds and darkness. These mountains are 4 in number. That to the S. is called Bein-achaolais, or the Peak of the Sound, as it stands over the Sound of Ilay; the next Bein-an-oer, or the Gold Peak; the third a Bhein-sheunta, the Consecrated Peak; and that to the

N. Corra-

N. Corra-Bhein, the Steep Peak. These peaks are seen from the continent of Argyllshire, and from part of Perthshire, from Buteshire, Ayrshire, Dumbartonshire, and, it is said, from part of Lanarkshire. They are seen at a great distance to the W., and are the first land which the sailors make, coming in their direction from the Atlantic Ocean. There is very little vegetation on these peaks, their summits and sides are covered over with fragments of stone, and exhibit a stupendous monument of the resistless force of time. The W. side of the island is not fit for cultivation; it is wild and rugged, intersected with many torrents, which come rushing down from the mountains; and has been deemed so inhospitable, that no person chooses to fix his habitation in it. All the inhabitants live on the E. side of the island. Along the margin of the sea, on this side, the grounds are pretty level; but at a little distance from the shore, there is a gradual ascent. The whole of this side forms no unpleasing scene. The coast is, in several places, variegated with bays and harbours, and points of land; the arable and pasture grounds spread on a declivity before the eye, and terminate at the base of those towering mountains, which form a romantick and awful background.

Air, Climate, and Diseases.—The air is pure and salubrious, as it is generally in the sea-coast, and in hilly countries. The clouds are, indeed, often intercepted by the high hills, and descend in torrents; but we have constant breezes, sometimes brisk gales of wind, to dry up the rain. The tops of the mountains are covered with snow a considerable part of winter, but it seldom lies long on the low grounds. The inhabitants are very healthy, and many of them live to old age. A few weeks ago, died, a lady at the age of 96. She retained the use of her faculties to the last. Till within a
few

few months of her death, she could walk about with considerable vigour, could read the smallest print, or thread the finest needle without the help of glasses. The diseases are few in number, owing, perhaps in a good measure, to the simple mode of living of the inhabitants. They are sometimes seized with inflammatory disorders; this seems to be occasioned by the lightness of their clothing, particularly of their bed-clothing, which is not sufficient to keep up the perspiration while they are at rest. They are liable to those disorders, which are occasioned by living much upon milk and fish. Of late, rheumatic complaints have become more general among the lower classes. We have had one dropical case, last summer, that proved fatal; several have died within the last twelvemonth of stomach complaints. There is no surgeon in the island, and they never send for one, except in cases which are deemed extremely dangerous. A great proportion of children die in infancy, and many of the mothers, though of a strong constitution, recover slowly in child-bed. Both these circumstances seem to be owing to unskilful treatment, for there is not a single bred midwife in the island. The small-pox, in the natural way, carried off many children in autumn 1791. The people entertain no prejudice against inoculation, but grudge the expense of it.

Soil and Produce.—The soil along the shore is thin and very stony; towards the moor it is clayey, and, in some places, there is improveable moss. As the arable ground lies on a declivity in the neighbourhood of high hills, the water is constantly oozing down through it, and, in many places, bursting out in little springs; so that it is what the low country farmers call spouty ground. The crops are oats, barley, potatoes, and flax. There has been no trial made of artificial grasses, though there are some spots proper for them. Common

iron field pease, likewise, are not raised here, though, from the nature of the soil along the shore, they might prove a beneficial crop. Oats are, in general, a very unproductive crop, the greatest average returns are not above two and a-half. Potatoes and barley are more productive, and, were the ground properly managed, might prove very valuable crops. The system of farming here, has made very slow advances towards improvement, and is, at least, half a century behind that, in many parts of the low country. The farmer does nothing to his grounds all the summer. Although there is plenty of lime-stone on the opposite shore of Knapdale, and in the adjoining island of Ilay, and plenty of peat in Jura, for burning lime, yet no person remembers a single trial made of that manure. The only manure used is the sea-weed, which is to be had in great abundance, and gives one tolerable crop. This answers the contracted views of the farmer, who keeps the best patches of his ground constantly in tillage, and labours like one who is not certain of his possession beyond the present year. The farmers of this country are utter strangers to the mode of abridging labour. It is no uncommon thing to see 12 men and 20 horses at work in a farm, which 3 men and four horses would, on an improved plan, labour to much better purpose.

Quadrupeds, Birds, &c.—The tame animals are cows, horses, sheep, and goats. The small tenants, in general, overstock their grounds, so that the black cattle are rather small, and inferior to those of Ilay. The horses also, though hardy, are a very diminutive breed. The sheep of Jura are remarkable for the fineness of their wool, and the delicacy of their flesh. Were proper care taken to keep this breed from degenerating, by mixing with the Galloway sheep now introduced into the island; were it allowed to increase, and cover the greatest part

of the island, Jura, in the course of a few years, might have very considerable returns from its wool, and transport annually the increase of its flocks to richer pastures on the continent, where the mutton would greatly excel that of the English, or Low Country sheep. There are several flocks of goats in Jura, but they are much on the decrease. They are not so profitable as sheep; they carry no fleece, and their flesh is inferior. The inhabitants of this island would find it their interest to banish two-thirds of the horses which they keep, to rear fewer black cattle, and to extend their stock of sheep and goats. As there is very little meadow ground in the island, and the arable ground makes such poor returns in oats, it ought certainly to be the grazier's object to keep such a stock principally as would shift for itself in winter.

There are one or two herds of red deer traversing the mountains. We have plenty of grouse, some termagan, and black game; but no partridge, no hare, and very few rabbits. Among our birds of prey are the eagles, which build their nests in the inaccessible precipices on the W. side of Jura, and prove very destructive to the kids and lambs. The fish commonly caught here are cuddies, and sayths. In autumn there are some lythe, and small cod. There is a very delicate fish that may be had through the whole year, called by the country people *murloch*. It is very long in proportion to its thickness, and, in shape, resembles the dog-fish; it is covered with a very rough skin, like shagreen, of which it must be stripped. In an arm of the sea that runs in on the W. side, and almost divides Jura in the middle, there are great quantities of lobster, oysters, and craw-fish. The marine plant, of which kelp is made, grows in great abundance on the shores. Before the general use of Barilla, the kelp of Jura was a considerable addition to its rental.

Harbours.

Harbours.—There are two very fine harbours on the E. side of the island; that to the S. is called the Small Isles; and that to the N. the Lowland-Man's Bay. They are within a few miles of each other. The harbour at the Small Isles is a capacious bay, about 4 miles in extent. Into the mouth of this bay are thrown longitudinally 3 or 4 islands, which leave but narrow openings into the harbour, and form a strong barrier against the violence of the sea. It is from these islands that the harbour takes its name. Lowland-Man's Bay opens towards the S., is contracted at the entrance by 2 points of land, which run out, like two arms, but is pretty capacious within. The harbour of Small Isles is rather shallow for vessels of great draught of water, but this is deep enough for any vessel. Notwithstanding the excellence of these harbours, and that Jura is only a few hours sailing from the lochs where herrings are fished, there is no vessel above 5 or 6 tons burthen belonging to the island, and of these there is none employed in the fisheries. The course of the tides along the coast of Jura, particularly in the sound of Scarba, and in that of Ilay, is very rapid. The navigation of the sound of Ilay is dangerous, not only from the rapidity of the tides, running 6 miles an hour, and from the sudden squalls which come from the neighbouring hills, but also from foul ground. Many vessels have been lost in this dangerous sound. As a considerable number of those trading to the north seas have occasion to pass through it, one should think that it ought to be carefully examined and surveyed, to see what improvements are practicable.

Population.—According to Dr. Webster's report, the number of souls in 1755 was 1097. To ascertain the present population of this parish, a survey was made in June 1792.

ISLAND OF JURA.

Farms	{	In tillage, -	15	} Total, =	27
		In pasturage,	12		
Families in the island,		204	Females,	-	471
Souls,	-	929	Widowers,	-	6
Males,	-	458	Widows,	-	42

As the present incumbent has not been long in the parish of Jura, and as he has not been able to procure former examination rolls, it is out of his power to give a statement of the population prior to the date of his own survey. Emigrations to America have proved, once and again, a drain to this island; but, in the present mode of management, it may be said to be still overstocked with inhabitants. Near half the farms in the island are in pasture, and require very few hands to manage them. Of course, the great body of the people live in the farms, which are in tillage. In some of these there are between 50 and 60 souls. Such a swarm of inhabitants, where manufactures, and many other branches of industry are unknown, are a very great load upon the proprietors, and in a great measure useless to the state. The slightest survey of the situation of the people shows how much improvements in farming, and the introduction of industry, are wanted. The spirit of emigration is still powerful in the island, and requires considerable alterations to extinguish it*.

Metals,

* As there was no register of births and marriages kept in the parish till within these few years, the author found it impracticable to trace back the matter so far as might be wished; but has gone as far back as the commencement of the parish records.

	MARRIAGES.	BIRTHS.
Years.	No.	No.
1787	6	23
1788	8	18

1789

Metals, Minerals, &c.—There is iron-ore, and manganese in Jura: about the middle of the island, there is a considerable body of slate; small quantities have been quarried, and the colour and quality seem to be very good. There is to be found also, on the W. side of the island, in great abundance, a very fine kind of sand used in the manufacture of glass.

Antiquities and Curiosities.—There are several barrows through the island; there are also pillars, and castellums, or duns. There is one relic of antiquity of a singular kind. In more places than one, we can trace along the declivity of a hill, the ruins of a wall, that was about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, terminating, perhaps, at a lake, or some very abrupt steep place. At the lower extremity of the wall, there is a deep pit, above 12 feet diameter at the mouth, and very much contracted at the bottom. This, the tradition of the country says, was a contrivance used in former times for taking the wild boar. The huntsmen drove him along the wall, till he took refuge at last in the pit, and there was made captive. At the N. end of the harbour called the Small Isles, there are the remains

	MARRIAGES.	BIRTHS.
<i>Years.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
1789	7	24
1790	7	26
1791	7	18
1792	31	25
	46	134

The tax upon marriages and baptisms is matter of complaint, especially in such a parish as this, where there is very little circulation of money. It is such a trifle, that it seems beneath the dignity of taxation, and goes contrary to the famous *jus trium liberorum*, to strike at the very roots of national strength and glory. Instead of exacting such an odious tax, a small encouragement for keeping parish records with greater attention, might turn out of much greater advantage to the state.

mains of a considerable encampment. On the side toward the shore, there is a triple line of defence, with deep ditches: from the centre of the work, the earth was scooped out, to a considerable depth, in the form of 3 ellipses placed longitudinally, and thrown up in large mounds on the right and left. On the side toward the hills, there were regular bastions formed all along; and at the E. end, on a line with the centre, is to be seen a pretty large mount, which seems to have been a place of arms. The famous Gulf of Breacan lies between Jura and Scarba. The sound between these two islands is narrow, and forming a communication between the Atlantic and the internal sea on the coast of Argyll; the rapidity and violence of the tides are tremendous. The gulf is most awful with the flowing tide; in stormy weather, with that tide, it exhibits an aspect, in which a great deal of the terrible is blended. Vast openings are formed, in which one would think the bottom might be seen; immense bodies of water tumble headlong, as over a precipice, then rebounding from the abyss, meet the torrents from above; they dash together with inconceivable impetuosity, rise foaming to a prodigious height above the surface: the noise of their conflict is heard through the surrounding islands. This gulf is an object of as great terror to the modern, as Sylla and Charybdis were to the ancient mariners. It is industriously avoided by all who navigate these sounds: there are instances, however, of vessels being drawn into it. Large stout vessels make their way through it in its greatest rage, but to small craft it proves immediate destruction.

It will be proper, in this place, to give a short account of the islands at the N. end of Jura. Scarba is very rugged, and mountainous; it is about 3 miles long, and nearly as many broad. Lunga is not so mountainous, and is about 2 miles long, and half a mile broad. Balnahaigh is about a mile in
circum-

circumference, and is all a slate quarry. This quarry has been worked for many years back, and found to yield very good slate. There are generally about 30 men employed in it, who work by the piece, or at so much the thousand of slate.

ISLAND OF SCARBA.				ISLAND OF LUNGA.			
<i>Population.</i>							
Farms,	-	-	2	Farm,	-	-	1
Families,	-	-	14	Families,	-	-	6
Souls,	-	-	50	Souls,	-	-	29
Males,	-	-	27	Males,	-	-	13
Females,	-	-	23	Females,	-	-	16
Widowers,	-	-	0	Widowers,	-	-	0
Widows,	-	-	3	Widows,	-	-	0

ISLAND OF BALNAHUAIGH.

<i>Population.</i>							
Families,	-	-	28	Females,	-	-	68
Souls,	-	-	132	Widowers,	-	-	0
Males,	-	-	64	Widows,	-	-	4

Having finished our account of Jura, and its appendage of islands at the N. end, forming the eastern division of this immense parish, we proceed to give a short account of the western division. The islands of Colonsay and Oronsay form this division, and from their contiguity, the sound between them being dry at low water, may be considered as one island.

Name.—Colonsay and Oronsay, derive their names from two saints, Colon and Oron. Oron had his cell in Colonsay, on the farm in which the present proprietor's house stands, but

but though his cell was in Colonsay, he seems to have been revered in Oronsay, which is so called after his name. Colonsay, who seems to have had no cell in either of the islands, was lucky enough to have his memory preserved, by giving his name to Colonsay.

Situation, Extent, and Surface.—This western division of the parish, being considered as one island, has Mull on the N., is washed by the Atlantic on the W., and stretches across the sound of Ilay on the E.; from which circumstance, it is called descriptively, Eilean Tarfuing, or the Cross-lying Island. Ireland is the next land to it on the S. It is a flat island, when compared with the towering peaks of Mull and Jura in its neighbourhood. The surface, however, is very unequal; there is a considerable number of rugged hills, covered over with heath. This division of the parish has been surveyed, and found to measure about 8000 acres, of which about 3000 are said to be arable.

Air, Climate, Soil, &c.—The temperature of the air, and the climate, are nearly the same as in Jura. The inhabitants are robust and healthy; they live in the same simple manner with their brethren in Jura, and have neither lawyer nor surgeon in the island. The soil is generally light; along the shores it is sandy, but more fertile, and not so stony as that of Jura. Barley and potatoes are more productive crops here than oats. Artificial grasses have been tried, and are found to answer. The sea-weed, of which there is great abundance for kelp and manure, has been tried with success upon meadow ground. When the surface is quite covered with it in winter, a dissolution and incorporation with the soil takes place, the natural clover and finer grasses are encouraged to shoot up, and a most luxuriant crop follows. The pasture
on

On the low grounds, especially in the S. end of the island, is uncommonly rich.

Quadrupeds, Birds, &c.—The system of converting arable into pasture, is making rapid progress in Colonsay. The best part of the island is under black cattle; these are in great request among the graziers, and thought to be a very fine breed. The breed of horses is small, and hardy, like that in Jura. The art of abridging labour, and keeping a few good cattle, has not as yet established itself in this distant corner. Those innocent animals, the sheep, are totally banished, although there are no quickset hedges; and nature seems to have destined the heath-covered hills for their use. There are great numbers of rabbits in the island; but no hare, no partridge, and very few grouse.

Population.

Farms	{	In tillage, - 7	}	Total, - 15
		In pasture, - 8		
Families, -	-	134	Females, -	- 366
Souls, -	-	718	Widowers, -	- 6
Males, -	-	352	Widows, -	- 12

There are above 40 souls, at an average, in each of the farms; but some of these being very small, not having above 3 or 4 families, the number of souls in the best inhabited farms is very great. The average number of souls to a farm in Jura is 38. A few emigrated from Colonsay to America, summer 1792; but in summer 1791, a considerable proportion of the inhabitants crossed the Atlantic. Those who remain, give out that they are waiting only good accounts from their relations, and a proper opportunity of being transported to

the other hemisphere. Pity it is that such numbers should bid farewell to their native country, when there is so great a demand for useful citizens; and their situation might be rendered more comfortable at home*.

Antiquities, &c.—The remains of several Romish chapels are to be seen in Colonsay. There was a monastery of Cistercians in this island. Their abbey stood in Colonsay, and its priory in Oronsay. The remains of the abbey were, with Gothic barbarity, torn asunder not many years ago, and the stones put into a new building. The walls of the priory are still standing, and next to Icolmkill, is one of the finest religious monuments of antiquity in the Hebrides. No metals of any kind, so far as I could learn, have been discovered in Colonsay. There are great quantities of sea-coral on the shores, and it proves a very good manure.

PARISH OF JURA AND COLONSAY.

This parish belongs to 6 heritors, of whom only 2 reside. The Duke of Argyll is patron.

Rentals.

Valued rent, -	L. 286	18	5	} Sterling.
Real rent, -	7	1656	2	

Church, Manse, Poor, Schools, &c.—The church and manse are in Jura. The church has stood for 12 years at least, has
no

* The registers of marriages and baptisms have been kept so negligently in Colonsay, that, however defective this account may be without extracts from them, they cannot be admitted. The assistant preacher resides in Colonsay, but there is no proper house built for his accommodation; and there is no church to shelter the people from the inclemency of the weather.

no place for a bell, and was never seated. The manse was built about 18 years ago; till then there was no manse in the parish. New office-houses were built, and the manse was repaired about 4 years ago, but so insufficiently, that it needs new repairs. The stipend is 2000 merks, out of which the minister pays, in terms of the decret of augmentation, 800 merks to his assistant in Colonsay. The manse and glebe may be worth about 10l. The allowance for communion elements is 2l. 10s. This sum is exceedingly small, and not at all adequate to the purpose. It is a peculiar hardship to the minister of Jura to be tied down to pay such a large proportion out of his benefice to an assistant-preacher, while he must, at the same time, incur the expense and danger of crossing broad perilous ferries to marry and baptize in the other islands. It is believed that there can be very few instances produced in Scotland, where the minister is not allowed to stipulate with his assistant, but obliged to take his chance of payments himself, and regularly pay his assistant a sum equal to 2-5ths of his stipend.—There are no funds for the poor except the weekly collections, and the casualties from fines and marriage-money. These different items may amount to 10l. a-year. The poor in this parish are not much in the habits of going about and begging; they are generally assisted by their relations, and very few of them have their sole dependence on the parish box.—There are 3 schools; a parish school, and 2 charity schools. The parish school is in Jura; the salary is 7l. One of the charity schools is in Colonsay, and the other in Jura. The salary of each of these is 15l. These schools are of prodigious service towards enlightening the understanding, and improving the heart of a generation, that otherwise would be neglected. So many instances can be produced from the history of mankind, and from the noble exertions of the Society for Propagating Christian Know-

ledge, to prove that industry, probity, and every virtue, grow and flourish, not in a state of savage ignorance, but of civilization, of light, and of religion, that every encouragement ought to be given to this excellent institution. It can be shown in the clearest manner, that the landlords in the Highlands and islands, ought not only to be punctual in fulfilling the easy requisitions of the Society; but that it is their interest, should the charity schools be withdrawn, to educate the youth at their own expense*.

Miscellaneous Observations.—The language universally spoken in the parish is Gaelic. Very few of the old people understand English. But from the laudable endeavours of the schoolmasters to teach their scholars the vocabulary, and use of that language, and from a general opinion gaining ground, that it will be of great service in life, it is hoped that the rising generation will make considerable progress in acquiring the English language. The inhabitants do not feel that strong desire of bettering their circumstances, that would stimulate them to exertion and enterprize. Instead of trying the effects of industry at home, they foster the notion of getting at once into a state of ease and opulence, with their relations beyond the Atlantic.

Advantages and Disadvantages.—Among the disadvantages of this parish, are its remote situation, the breadth and difficulty

* *Price of labour.*—A male servant employed in the business of farming, gets for the half year 2 l.; a female servant employed in the same business, gets for the half year 1 l.; a day labourer is paid 6 d. and his victuals; a tailor 6 d.; a shoemaker 6 d.; a boat-carpenter 1 s. a day and victuals. The price of labour, though considerably higher than it was some years ago, is still apparently low; but the labour is in proportion. Industry and the arts, have made such slow progress, that the expense of labour is full higher than in the low country.

culty of its ferries to the main shore. Had the inhabitants easier access to see the industry, and mode of living in the interior parts of the country, they would probably follow the example of their more enlightened neighbours. Under this disadvantage, the landed gentlemen ought to bestow double diligence in opening the minds of the people; turning their attention to the common branches of education; introducing among them a spirit of industry and improvements. The island of Jura labours under a peculiar disadvantage from the great number of rapid rivers with which it is intersected. These come tumbling down from the mountains; and as they are not bridged, render the roads often impassable. There are no less than 6 of them in the space of 4 miles. The fuel used in this parish is peat, which, from the frequent rains in this watery climate, becomes very precarious. Last summer not above half the fuel was got home, and even that in very bad condition. But it is hoped that the legislature will adopt proper measures to take the duty off an article so universally and absolutely necessary as coal.

The advantages of this parish are its nearness to the lochs, where herring are caught; the great quantities of sea-weed every where on the shores, both for the purposes of kelp and of manure. The sea-coral of Colonsay is a valuable article. The slate of Balnahuaigh brings considerable returns to the proprietor. The sand for glass manufacture, and the slate in Jura, surely deserve attention. What in this island might be turned to great advantage, is its excellent wool. Were a few spinning machines introduced, and blanketing, and stockings manufactured, the hands that could be spared from agriculture and pasture would be usefully employed, and, instead of being a dead weight on the proprietors, furnish an example of useful industry to their neighbours. The white herring-fishery is an object which might be prosecuted with advantage
from

from every corner of the parish. The harbours of Jura, indeed, give it great advantage for large vessels, but through all the islands there are creeks for small fishing boats. Perhaps the best mode of encouraging the young men to embark in this undertaking, would be for the gentlemen to join with them in fitting out a few boats of moderate size for that purpose. Should these boats be successful, they would be the means of circulating money, an article which, from the absence of trade and manufactures, is very scarce among the lower classes. The little sums introduced in this way, would rouse a spirit of adventure, and give new springs to every kind of industry. From such small beginnings the extensive fishery carried on by our buffes took its rise.

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