

NUMBER XL.

PARISH OF FETTERESSO.

(COUNTY OF KINCARDINE, SYNOD OF ANGUS AND MEARN,
PRESBYTERY OF FORDOUN.)

By the Rev. Mr. JOHN HUTCHEON.

Name, Rivers, Extent, Soil, &c.

THE name of the parish is Gaelic, and means a place between the banks of two rivers, which is highly descriptive, not only of the place where the church stands, but likewise of a tract of ground about a mile square, extending towards the coast, on the N. of which runs the Cowie, and on the S., the Carron, two small rivers with high banks. The parish is about 10 statute miles in length, between 5 and 6 in breadth, and contains 19,606 Scotch acres, or 24,914 English, according to a survey of the county by Mr. W. Garden. Of the above, one-third may be arable ;

ble; the rest is barren ground, consisting of mosses and moors covered with heath and stones, chiefly granite.

Face of the Country.—The parish may be divided into three districts. The tract of country lying between the Cowie and Carron from the coast, about 3 miles to the W., has a rich and fertile appearance. Close to this district, stands the mansion-house of Mr. Barclay of Urie, on a rising ground near the river Cowie, the sloping banks of which are planted with trees towering one above another. This plantation, which extends an English mile to the W., and as far to the E. of the house, on both sides of the river, presents a most delightful appearance, and the vast extent of highly cultivated ground divided into large fields, and enclosed with thorn hedges, greatly heighten the beauty of the prospect. The tract of ground in this district, between the church and the coast, about 20 years ago, was chiefly moor covered with short heath, furze, and broom; now it is almost all enclosed, and in a state of high cultivation. What part is not so, is planted with Scotch firs, larix, ash, &c. which are in a very thriving state, and will add considerable beauty to the appearance of the country in a few years. At regular distances, neat commodious dwelling-houses of stone and lime, and covered with slates, are built by the proprietor, Mr. Barclay, for his tenants. This circumstance is mentioned to show the rapid progress of improvement in this place. About two miles S. W. from Urie, is the mansion-house of Fetteresso, formerly the residence of the ancient and noble family of Marischal, and now of Mr. Duff, son of the late Admiral Duff, who purchased the estate from the York-building Company in 1782. The site of the house is snug and warm, and surrounded with fine old trees, which, together with the adjoining improved fields, exhibit a beautiful appearance.

pearance. The second district stretches along the coast, and comprehends the estates of Cowie, Muchals, and Ellick. Here the face of the country has but a bare appearance, as there are no trees, excepting a few at the mansion-houses of Muchals and Ellick. There are, however, rich corn fields enclosed with stone or earthen fences on both sides of the post-road that runs through this part of the parish, which gives the country a fertile appearance. The lands of Mounquich, lying 5 miles W. from the coast, form the third district. The face of the country here, in general, is not favourable. In one particular spot, however, great improvements have been made of late, which, amidst the gloomy waste which every where surrounds it, presents an agreeable prospect. Mr. Silver, a native of this district, made a purchase of the estate of Netherby, on his return from the West Indies, where he built a genteel modern dwelling-house, with a complete set of offices, which, since his death, have been greatly improved by his son. He likewise planted several pieces of moorish ground with Scotch firs, ash, and oak, &c. which are in a very thriving state; and highly improved and cultivated about 100 Scotch acres, which he enclosed in small fields, with stone fences and hedge rows of ash; by which means, and the very great improvements he made on the state of the roads, the inhabitants here are happily put on a footing with those on the coast.

Climate and Diseases.—The air is in general dry and healthy; and the people little subject to contagious distempers. The most prevalent are rheumatisms and nervous fevers. It deserves to be remarked, that the people who reside near the moor and marshy places, enjoy as good health; and live to as great age, as those near the coast. Many of them live to 70, and some of them to 80 years of age, and upwards.

Coast, Fish, Harbours, &c.—The coast from Stonehaven to the N. boundary of the parish, extends nearly 7 English miles. It is bold and rocky. There is one bay, called the Bay of Stonehaven, which stretches from Downy to Garron Point, that is, about two miles. In this bay, there is a salmon fishing, the property of Mr. Barelav; and a white fishing, the property of Mr. Innes of Cowie. Three boats are employed in this fishing, with six hands to each boat. The fish caught here, are ling, cod, turbot, skate, haddocks, &c. which are consumed by the people in the neighbourhood. There are likewise two creeks or small harbours, one at Muchals, another at Sketraw. At the former, there were two fishing-boats, which were lost in a storm about 30 years ago, and the crews perished, since which time they have not been replaced. At the latter, there are 7 boats of much the same size, and having the same number of hands with those at Cowie. The fish caught here are likewise consumed by the people in the adjacent country. Here, by the way, it deserves to be remarked, that a Mr Mackie, lately from the West Indies, made a purchase of the lands of Sketraw, in 1788, where he has built a very good dwelling-house, and made very great improvements, having, in the space of 3 years, enclosed with stone fences, and highly cultivated, about 60 Scotch acres, part of which was formerly barren, covered with heath and furze. He continues to carry on his improvements with great spirit and industry.

Population.—The population of Fetteresso is not so great as it was formerly, though it is still somewhat higher than it was 40 years ago. By an exact survey taken in 1764, the number was 3500. The return to Dr. Webster in 1755, was only 3082. Increase in 9 years 418. The number of souls, in 1790, was 3370. Decrease in 26 years 130. Increase,

crease, upon the whole, in 35 years, from 1755 to 1790, is 288. The above mentioned decrease, is owing chiefly to two or more farms being turned into one; a practice not uncommon here. The births, at an average, are 70; the marriages 25; the deaths cannot be ascertained, no register of them having been kept. There is a Chapel of Ease, and an Episcopal meeting-house in the N. part of the parish. The number of Episcopalians is about 400: they are an obliging, peaceable, decent set of people, and live in good habits with those of the Establishment. There are no other sectaries in the parish.

Church, School, and Poor.—Formerly Earl Marischal was patron of the parish; but upon the forfeiture of the titles and estate of that family in 1715, the right of patronage devolved to the King. The church is old, inconvenient, and unfit to contain the congregation, when fully assembled together. It is 94 feet in length, within walls, and 19 in breadth. Opposite to the pulpit, there is an aisle, which is of service to the preacher, by enabling him to speak with greater ease. The aisle was built in 1720; but when the church was built, is not known, there being no date upon it. Neither walls nor roof are plastered; and as the floor is from 3 to 4 feet lower than the surface of the ground on the outside of the walls, pools of water stand in the area several days after a heavy rain. The burying-ground is much larger than any in this part of the country. There are about 250 tomb or grave stones in it, some of which are of an ancient date; and a few have very fine engravings upon them, done by a Mr. Cresswell, a farmer in the parish, who could not form a single letter with the pen. The manse was built in 1726, and has undergone few repairs, excepting new windows in 1784. The stipend is 71 l. 2s. 6d. Sterling, 2 chalders of meal, and 1½ chalders of bear; the glebe, including the garden and
 4 ½ 2 pasture

pasture ground, is 6½ acres.—The schoolmaster's salary is 8 l., 6 s. 8 d. Sterling, which, together with the emoluments of the office, make his living about 20 l. Sterling a-year. Twelve years ago, the heritors built an excellent school, and a house for the master, under one roof, which last they neatly finished to encourage him to keep boarders.—The number of poor who receive occasional supply is, at an average, 36. There are 5 or 6 besides, who receive weekly from 1 s. to 2 s. each. The money belonging to the poor, is 70 l. Sterling, the interest of which, with the weekly collections, seat-rents, mortcloth dues, &c. amounts to about 40 l. Sterling yearly.

Antiquities.—The vestige of an old camp, on a hill called *Ree-Dikes*, or the *King's Dikes*, appears very distinct. It is an oblong square of 21 acres, has four outlets and redoubts before them, and many of the trenches are still pretty deep *. In almost every part of the parish, remains of *Druidical temples* are to be met with †. On the coast about a mile and a half N. from *Stonehaven*, appear the remains of a castle, the residence of the *Thanes of Cowie* or *Mearns* ‡. On a rising

* It is supposed by some to have been a Roman encampment, and to be the very spot occupied by *Agricola's* troops before his engagement with *Galgacus* the Scotch king. On a moor 2 miles E. of the camp, there are a great many tumuli, or small cairns, and some very large ones, which are supposed to be sepulchral monuments raised on the field of battle to the memory of the dead. The moor is called the *Kemp-stane Hill*, on each side of which, there is a morass, which would cover the flanks of the army that first reached the ground, and it is not improbable the battle was fought between the morasses.

† Since the incumbent was settled, there was one that seemed to be pretty entire, the three circles formed by stones of different sizes being very distinct. But the farmer on whose possession it stood, demolished it a few years ago, by carrying off the stones for building.

‡ *Buchanan* calls the *Thane of Cowie* *Macpendirus*. *Donald Bane* the brother of *Malcolm Canmore* (he says) bribed *Macpendirus* *, *Comes Meruise*, to assassinate

* *Buchan. Hist. Scot. Lib. vii.*

rising ground near to the Thanes castle, there had formerly been a place of worship; the gables and part of the walls are still standing. Adjoining to this, there is a burying-ground enclosed with stone walls, where many of the people in the N. part of the parish, on account of its vicinity to them, bury their dead.

Rent and Proprietors.—The valued rent of the parish is 6534 l. 4 s. 2 d. Scotch, and the real rent is about 4200 l. Sterling. The number of heritors is 6, and of feuars 8. Two of the former, and 4 of the latter, are resident. Thirty years ago, about one half of the rent of the parish was paid in grain, but now the grain is almost all converted, and the rent is chiefly paid in money. Improved land is let from 1 l. to 1 l. 10 s. Sterling the acre. Some pieces on the coast near Stonehaven are let much higher. Unimproved land from 10 s. to 15 s. the acre*.

Agriculture.—Before 1763, farming was little studied here as a science, and for that reason was not carried on according to any regular plan. The spirit of inquiry into the methods practised in the S. parts of the country had not gone forth. Hence the mode of farming that had been in use for ages past, was still continued. Every farmer followed the course which his father taught him, and was satisfied. In this state, the
country

assassinate Duncan the bastard. Sir David Dalrymple calls him Malpedir, which he translates from the Gaelic, "the servant of Peter." After him, one of the name of Fraser was raised to the rank of Thane of Cowie. Sir David Dalrymple in his Annals, to which the reader is referred, mentions some remarkable facts relating to this family. The ancient and noble families of Lovat and Salton, are descended from them, and perhaps most of the families of that name in Scotland.

* The daily wages for labourers in husbandry, are from 10 d. to 1 s., whereas 10 years since, they were not above 8 d. The usual wages of a male-servant are
7 l. a-year

country might have remained till now, had not Mr. Barclay, who is possessed of an enterprising spirit, and extensive knowledge in agriculture, which he acquired by reading the best publications on that subject, and by his own observations in the different tours which he made on foot in his younger years through Scotland, and a great part of England, introduced a new system. Before the above period, lime, as a means of improvement, was little known, and had never been used; clearing the land of stones, straightening and leveling, summer fallow and green crops, dividing and enclosing ground in separate fields, had never been attempted. All this was left to be done by Mr. Barclay, who embarked in the arduous undertaking with animation and fortitude; and notwithstanding the many obstacles that necessarily occurred to obstruct his progress, he persevered in the prosecution of his designs with ardour and resolution: But as he was so obliging as give the writer of this an account of his operations and improvements, he shall publish it in the terms he received it.

“ Land improved by Mr. Barclay of Ury, in the space of 25 years, about 800 acres; 500 of which were arable, and

300

7 l. a-year; and that of a female-servant 3 l. Twenty years ago, their wages were little more than a half of what they are now. When the incumbent was settled, the wages of the first male-servant he had was 2 l. 6 s. 8 d. Sterling a-year, and of his first female-servant 1 l. 6 s. 8 d. Sterling. Every article of living is increased in proportion. Beef cost then 1½ d., or at most 2 d. the pound. Mutton was not sold by weight; on an average it was 9 d. the quarter. Veal and lamb were seldom brought to market; few people thinking it worth while to fatten them. Now beef costs 3 d. the pound in autumn and winter, and 4 d. in spring and summer. Veal, mutton, and lamb, are from 3 d. to 3½ d. the pound. Butcher meat is to be had in Stonehaven, the nearest market town, every lawful day of the week, which is very convenient for the inhabitants, and the people in the neighbourhood. Poultry and eggs are almost double the price they were some years since.

goe barren, covered with short heath, furze, and broom: The land was improved in this manner, by clearing it of stones, many of which were split by gunpowder, draining, levelling, and enclosing, chiefly with thorn hedges.

“ *Mode of Cropping.*—First year, fallowed and improved by lime; 50 bolls of Scotch shells, water measure, to each acre; 4 firlots to each boll, and 34 Scotch pints to each firlot. The lime ploughed into the land before winter, and sometimes the land was ploughed a second time before it. The first crop oats or barley. Second year, dunged, and sown with turnips, in broad cast, and hoed while any weeds appeared. The turnips sometimes fed off by sheep, but most commonly one half drawn, and the other half fed off in alternate ridges, the whole ground being included in the fold. Third year, barley and grafs-seeds. If intended to be broken up for wheat, 12 pound of broad clover, and 2 pecks of rye-grafs to each acre. If intended to remain for pasture, a greater quantity of rye-grafs, with the addition of 6 pound of white, and 6 pound of yellow clover, and 4 pound of rib grafs to each acre. That part of the land proposed for grain, was folded the first or second year of the grafs, and ploughed up for wheat or oats, which were succeeded by turnips; and the above course continued.

“ Mr. Barclay has planted about 800 acres with Scotch firs, great part of which are since filled up with oak, ash, beech, and larix. His tenants* in the parish have also improved nearly the same quantity of land which he himself has done, and follow, in general, almost the same mode of cropping. Twenty-two wheel-ploughs are at this time at work upon and those farms. The farm houses and offices are built of stone
lime.

* See Statistical Account of Kinross, vol. VI.

lime, and roofed with slates or tiles. He has laid down by a regular plan, above 12 acres of ground, with streets 48 feet wide, and a square of 2 acres in the middle, part of which is fenced and built: All the houses are roofed with slates or tiles. This village adjoins to the town of Stonehaven, where there is a safe and convenient harbour."

To the above account, it may be added, that Mr. Barclay's extensive improvements are chiefly round the mansion-house; that the fields are all smooth and level like a bowling-green; and that they are let to a butcher for grazing, who has from 50 to 60 black cattle, and between 800 and 1000 sheep feeding in them; by which means the value of the ground must be increased in a few years.

It is to be regretted, that the farmers on the lands of the other proprietors, made no attempts towards improving their farms for a long while after Mr. Barclay's tenants commenced their operations, because they had no encouragement given them by their landlords. At length, however, some of the most judicious, who were in good circumstances, began to dress and lime a few acres by way of trial, for they wished to proceed with slow and cautious steps. Finding by the crops which they produced, that their labour and expense were fully repaid; they made a second and a third trial. All which, answering beyond expectation; they annually dressed and improved pretty large fields, laying down the first grain crop with grass-seeds, till their whole farm was cultivated. Animated by their example, more than by Mr. Barclay's, because more on a level with their capacity and circumstances, others were induced to improve their ground. Thus, by degrees, the spirit of improvement is become universal here, insomuch that people who possess but a few acres, sow some turnips, plant some potatoes, and lay down a ridge or

two

two with grafs-seeds. Upon the whole, by the agricultural improvements in this parish, the state of it is rendered essentially better than it was 20 years ago; and by the advantages which Mr. Barclay's operations and example have produced, not in this parish only, but through the greater part of this county, he has justly merited the thanks and esteem of all around him.