

NUMBER XXVII.

PARISH OF CHANNELKIRK,

(COUNTY OF BERWICK, SYNOD OF MERSE AND TIVIODALE, PRESBYTERY OF LAUDER.)

By the Rev. Mr THOMAS MURRAY.

Name, Extent, Surface, Climate, &c.

THIS parish does not furnish much room for statistical investigation, and the observations which occur respecting it, may be comprehended within narrow bounds. The present name of the parish is evidently modern, and is happily descriptive of the nature of the soil, which is in general a light thin earth, on a deep bed of sandy gravel. In our records, which are preserved as far back as 1650, the name of the parish is spelled *Chingelkirk*. *Chingle*, I presume, is the old Scotch word, synonymous to the modern term Channel*. The extent of this parish is considerable,

* Dr FORD, in his account of the parish of Lauder, has given an etymology different from this. He says, that the ancient name of the parish was *Children's kirk*, because dedicated to the children of Bethlehem, or the Holy Innocents. As the Doctor, however, has given us no authority in support

derable, being full 6 miles in length, and nearly $5\frac{1}{4}$ in breadth. Its figure is nearly circular. The surface of the country is in general hilly, particularly to the W. and N. where the parish is bounded by a high ridge of hills, which divides the counties of East and Mid Lothian from Berwickshire. The hills are covered with heath, and all pastured with the old Scotch breed of black-faced sheep. The parish is well watered by a variety of streamlets, which fall from our mountains, the union of which forms the river *Leader*, or *Lauder*. From the height of the situation, and the light dry nature of the soil, the climate is remarkably healthy. Epidemic and chronic diseases are unknown. As a proof of the salubrity of the climate, the last incumbent held the benefice 42 years, and his predecessor for no less a period than 52. The climate, for 6 months of the year, is however extremely cold, subject to severe frosts, and great falls of snow.

Soil, Cultivation, Produce, &c.—There are in the parish from 1500 to 2000 acres of land in tillage. The soil, as I have already said, is in general a light dry earth, on a deep bed of sandy gravel. It is well adapted to the culture of turnip, potatoes and clover. The following is the usual rotation of crops on the best land: 1. oats; 2. turnips; 3. barley or oats; 4. clover, &c. Agriculture has made a wonderful progress within these last 20 years in this parish. This, like most other improvements in society, has been chiefly owing to the skill and attention of an individual. The gentleman to whom I allude, is Mr Robert Hogarth,

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support of this opinion, and as I find no such thing is mentioned in Spottiswood's appendix to Hope's *Minor Practicks*, I am disposed to consider it as a mere conjecture, and am of opinion that the obvious etymology first mentioned is the best.

tenant in Carfrae*. It is about 25 years since he came to this part of the country, from the eastern boundary of Berwickshire. At that period, our farmers were total strangers to the culture of turnip, and very little acquainted with the modern and new approved method of meliorating land by lime and sown grasses, &c. He introduced the culture of turnip and clover; and by the success which attended his exertions, the neighbouring farmers were soon convinced of the superiority of this new method of managing land, to the old fashioned practice of exhausting and ruining the soil, by a multiplicity of white crops in succession. The culture of turnip and clover is now accordingly become very general, and in no place of Berwickshire is that useful plant produced in greater quantity, or of better quality, on the same extent of land. Mr Hogarth has also lately introduced the white-faced long woolled sheep, from Northumberland; and notwithstanding the coldness of the climate, they promise, from the trials already made, to answer extremely well. It must, however, be observed, that they are not pastured on the heath-covered hills, where, from experiments in similar latitudes, they are not found to thrive. In summer, they are fed within enclosures, where the soil has been highly improved; and in winter, are prepared by turnip, for the market. The introduction of the potatoes was still later than that of turnips. I am assured, it is not above 14 years since they were planted in the fields. They are found to suit the nature of our soil remarkably well; no where are they produced of better quality, and in seasons, when the corn is high priced, constitute fully the half of the food of our cottagers. There are about 30 farmers in the parish. The farms are in general small, excepting those

* This belongs to the Marquis of Tweeddale.

those belonging to the Marquis of Tweeddale, which are pretty extensive. This Nobleman is by much the greatest proprietor in the parish; his property being equal to one fourth of the whole. The number of ploughs in the parish is about 50. They are all of the English construction, or what are known by the name of *Small's* ploughs*.

Number of Black Cattle, Sheep, &c.—The number of young cattle annually reared, I have not been able to ascertain, but I am well informed, that not fewer than 100 bullocks and cows are yearly fed on turnip for the butcher. Of the black-faced sheep, which pasture on heath, there may be from 6000 to 7000. The number of black cattle is from 400 to 500.

Population.

* With respect to the agriculture of the parish, it may be in general observed, that the quantity of grain produced, in good years, is considerably more than sufficient to support the inhabitants; but in cold and wet seasons, our oats and barley do not ripen properly, and are often very ill got. In harvests 1782 and 1783, the situation of the farmers, and inhabitants in general, was truly deplorable. It was the end of December before the harvest was finished, after the greatest part of the crop had been destroyed by frost and snow. Without a supply from other quarters, a real famine would have taken place; our farmers were obliged to buy the whole of their seed-corn for crop 1783, from the east parts of the county, and from the Lothians. Some Dutch oats were also brought from Leith, at an exorbitant price. The *red oats*, so called, I presume, from their colour, prevail very much in the parish at present. They are found to suit the soil and climate, better than any early species that has hitherto been tried. They ripen as soon as the Dutch and Polish; are more luxuriant on the ground; and not so apt to fall by the wind. The principal crops in this parish are oats and rough bear; pease grow very readily on our light soil, but from the coldness of the climate, very seldom attain complete maturity; oats are sown as early in March as the frost will allow; bear from the middle of April to the end of May. The time of harvest is very uncertain; it is very seldom general, however, before the end of September.

Population.—According to Dr Webster's report, the number of souls, in 1755, was 531. The population, as appears from the records of the parish, is much the same that it has been for 100 years past, and amounts to about 600 souls. The annual number of births, for 50 years past, is 18; of deaths, 13; of marriages, 6. We have no instances on record of remarkable longevity. Many, however, have reached their 90th year, and there are some persons now living, of that age.

The tradesmen and mechanicks are,

Weaver,	-	1	Wright,	-	-	1
Tailors,	-	6	Masons,	-	-	3
Shoemakers,	-	2	Millers,	-	-	3
Smiths,	-	2	Gardener,	-	-	1

Rent, Heritors, &c.—The land-rent of the parish is at present about L. 2000 a-year; but as the most extensive farms are at present low rented, it might easily rise to L. 3000 a-year. There are 12 heritors, 3 of whom only are resident; George Somerville, Esq; of Airhouse, Henry Torrans of Kirktonhill, James Justice of Justicehall.

Miscellaneous Observations.—Peat and turf, of which there is plenty in the parish, was formerly the only fuel used by the inhabitants. But since the public roads were made, and kept in good repair, coal, although brought from a distance of 12 miles, is found by our proprietors and farmers, to be on the whole the cheapest fuel. This change is to be attributed to the advanced price of labour, which makes the expense of procuring peat and turf, when every thing is considered, greater than that of coal*.

Stipend,

* The wages of household servants, employed in husbandry, are from L. 7 to L. 8 Sterling annually, besides victuals; female servants receive
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Stipend, Poor, &c.—The Earl of Marchmont is patron of the parish. The living consists of L. 600 Scots, and 3 chalders of victual, half oats, half barley. The glebe consists of nearly 9 English acres of land, but the one half lying detached almost a mile from the other, and the whole being unenclosed, it is of very inconsiderable value to the minister. The living, glebe included, is not worth more than L. 84 Sterling a-year; as the incumbent intends to raise a process for an augmentation of stipend, he wishes these facts to be generally known. The church is built in the old Popish form of a cross. When it was erected is uncertain. It underwent a thorough repair in the year 1702. The manse and offices were rebuilt 7 years ago, and are at present in good repair.—The number of poor on the parish roll is at present 12. The annual expense of supporting them amounts to L. 30 a-year, which sum is raised by collections in the church, and by assessments on the heritors.

Manners

from L. 3, 10s. to L. 4 yearly. Day-labourers get from 9d. to 10d. a-day, with victuals; carpenters, 1 s.; masons, 1 s. 2 d.; tailors, 8 d. Dalkeith is the market-town to which our farmers carry their grain; it is distant about 14 miles. Their carts return loaded with coal or lime. We have butcher meat of all kinds from Dalkeith; and in some seasons of the year, are tolerably well served from Lauder, which is not above 6 miles distant from us. The prices vary at different seasons, according as the markets are supplied. Beef, was last Christmas as high as 6 d. the lb Mutton, 4½ d. Lamb has not been below 4 d. the lb. all this season. The want of sea and river fish is much felt in this part of the country. The streamlets which fall from our mountains, indeed, abound with very fine trout; but the infamous practices of taking them with nets, and destroying them with lime, which have for some years past been very prevalent, have greatly diminished the different species of this excellent fish.

Manners and Morals of the People.—The present incumbent having been but a few months resident in the parish, has not yet had time to be individually acquainted with all his hearers; but from the general acquaintance he has obtained of them, he has no hesitation to pronounce them a frugal, industrious, and happy set of people. They live harmoniously with each other, and support their families decently on the fruits of honest industry. One feature in their character, which, in an age of levity and irreligion like the present, deserves to be particularly remarked, is the regular attendance of all ranks on public worship, and their decent behaviour when thus employed. Will the writer of this paper be suspected of enthusiasm, when he assigns this as one cause of the industry and comfort which prevail among the people at large?

Antiquities.—It is probable that Channelkirk, when Popery was the Established Religion of the country, was a place of considerable note. The memorials, however, are few; a perennial spring of excellent soft water, about a quarter of a mile W. from the kirk, is called the well of the Holy Water Cleugh, a name which ancient superstition had conferred. The Girthgate, that is, the road which the monks kept in their way from Melrose Abbey to Edinburgh, passes through the western boundary of the parish. It is a broad green path, on which the surrounding heath never grows. On this road, a few miles due W. of the church, are to be seen the ruins of an old building, commonly known by the name of the Resh Law, or Restlaw Haw. Tradition tells us, that this was the place where the monks and pilgrims stopped, or rested for refreshment, it being about halfway between Melrose and Edinburgh. A great many Pictish and Scottish encampments are to be seen in this parish and the neighbourhood; they are all of

a round or oval figure, and are called rings by the common people. The Roman encampments were square or rectangular, but there is none of them in this part of the country.

Advantages and Disadvantages.—The chief advantage of this situation is a contiguity to the public road, which leads from Edinburgh to London. It is kept in excellent repair by the money collected at the toll bars, and by the statute-labour commuted into money, according to the number of servants and horses kept by the farmers; without this, improvement of every kind would have been impracticable. The disadvantages of our situation are, the coldness of our climate, and consequently our frequent cold and wet harvests. Were the practice of enclosing land and planting more general, the climate would be considerably improved. Clumps of fir and white wood, judiciously disposed on the heights, would shelter our flocks from the storms of winter, and defend our habitations from the N. and N. W. winds, to which they are at present much exposed. Our landed gentlemen are beginning to see the advantages of enclosing and planting; about 500 acres are already enclosed, and I doubt not but this improvement will advance with considerable rapidity. This part of the county of Berwick, from the number of sheep which it supports, and its vicinity to the public road, seems well calculated for the establishment of an woollen manufacture; and from the present flourishing state of that which was established many years ago at Galashiels, the Noblemen and gentlemen of Lauderdale might promise themselves the highest advantages from a similar erection in the neighbourhood of Lauder.

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