

NUMBER XXVI. .

PARISH OF KIRKMABRECK.

(STEWARTY OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT, PRESBYTERY OF WIG-
TON, AND SYNOD OF GALLOWAY.)

By ALEX. MACLEAN, *Esq;*

Name, Situation, and Extent.

KIRKMABRECK, or more properly the church in the brake, is exceedingly descriptive of the place in which the church formerly stood; for as brake signifies furze, bramble, thorns, heath, fern, &c. so, not only the particular place in which the church stood*, but also many other places in the parish, are incumbered with those substances. This parish, which includes part of the ancient parish of Kirkdale, is 8 miles in length, from North to South, and about 4 miles in breadth from East to West. Bounded by the parish of Minnigaff on
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* The church was removed to the place where it now stands at Creetown, about 150 years ago; the people still continue to bury at the old church.

the North, Girthon on the East, Anwoth on the South, and the rivers Cree and Wigton Bay, on the West.

Surface, Soil, and Produce.—The country in general has rather a mountainous appearance, rising gradually from the shore the whole length of the parish; yet the interior part is, in many places, intersected with rivulets, valleys, and lowland, which, by the industry of the inhabitants, and being in the vicinity of such inexhaustible treasures of sea-shells, have been rendered very fertile, either for producing crops of grain, or for pasturage. The lands on the banks of the river Cree, (which forms Wigton Bay, and is the western boundary the whole length of the parish) is of a superior quality, partly of a clay, and partly of a gravelly soil, and, for either tillage or grassing, is equal to any land in the South of Scotland. The country all along the Bay has a most delightful appearance, the great military road running along the coast between Gatehouse of Fleet, and Newton-Douglas, is one of the most pleasant stages in Scotland, the whole being diversified with woods, gentlemen's seats, and beautiful inclosures, hills gently rising on the one hand, the Bay on the other, with a full view of the town, and great part of the shire of Wigton on the opposite side of the Bay, and the Isle of Man, lying out in St George's Channel; so that, for variety of objects, so well fitted to please and amuse the fancy, or to elevate and expand the mind, such a prospect is seldom to be met with. The mountainous parts are partly green and partly covered with heath, or heather, with a mixture of grass and herbage, that feeds both sheep and black cattle tolerably well. These sheep, which are of the black faced kind, and of the small breed, are generally esteemed excellent mutton, and when come to age, the wedders generally weigh from

from 8 to 10lb. per quarter, their wool generally brings from 8 to 10s. per stone, 26 lib. English. to the stone. They are all bred upon the land, and sold off when they come to age, in regular rotation. There are also a few of the large breed grafs'd upon the low land, worth from 18 to 25s. Ster. The black cattle are all of the true Galloway breed, and a great part of them not inferior to any in the country* ; when they are come to age, they generally go to the English markets. The horses are mostly all of the draught kind, for the purpose of farming, only a few kept for the saddle. There are also a few goats, but that kind of stock are not numerous, the whole stock of the parish stand thus :

Sheep of the small breed,	-	-	7,500
Ditto of the large breed,	-	-	300
Black cattle,	-	-	1,600
Horses,	-	-	200
Goats,	-	-	500

There are also hogs and poultry in abundance, for the use of the inhabitants. This part of the country also yields a plentiful source of amusement to the sportsman, being well stocked with grouse, black game, partridge, hares, and woodcock in the season. The black game, however, have of late years been scarce, and appears to be rather upon the decline.

Agriculture, &c — Thirty years ago there was no kind of grain exported from this parish, but, on the contrary, importations was some times necessary for the support of the inhabitants. Since that period there is an increase of population of about 400 souls, and now there is a considerable quantity of oats, bear, barley, and potatoes, exported annually. There is generally between 900 and 1000 acres in til-

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lage

* It is common to sell two years old beasts at six pounds or six guineas.

lage, two thirds of which may be sown with oats, and the remainder with bear, barley, potatoes, and a few acres in turnsp. The principal manure used for improving land is sea shells, of which there is an almost inexhaustable quantity, not only within the high water mark on this side of Wigton bay, but also in the dry land, several hundred yards from the shore, particularly in the holms of Cassencarie, the property of Alexander Muir M^cKenzie Esq; where they are in beds from four to ten feet deep of the finest shells imaginable, without almost any mixture of sand. As there cannot remain a doubt but that these shells have been thrown together and left there by the tide, so from these and other fossile marine productions, found both on this and the other side of the bay, it is evident, that the tide has flowed 15 or 16 feet higher on this coast, at that period, than it doth at the present. These shells are generally sold by the agents of Mr M^cKenzie at 5d per tun, 25 tuns of which is sufficient for an acre of land, and proves a cheap and excellent manure to this part of the country, and is considered much preferable to either lime or marle. But the advantages of this valuable treasure of shells is not confined to this part of the country alone, but extends round 50 or 60 miles of a coast as far as the mull of Galloway, where they are sold as high as 3s. 6d. per tun. Many thousand tuns of these shells are carried off annually, by a number of vessels, from 20 to 60 tuns burthen, which are constantly employed when the weather will permit, in carrying them all round the coast, and some times even to the Isle of Man. These shells have been used with great advantage for the improvement of barren heathy land, in so much, that many hundreds of acres in this parish, originally not worth more than 2s. per acre, have been made worth from 10s. to 15s. per acre. Yet this, like every other advantage that is easily attained, is not
duly

Scotch kind; and where the land has been cultivated, they are mostly drawn by two horses.

Population.—In Dr Webster's list in 1755, the numbers were rated at 858. In the year 1764, the whole population amounted to 680 souls, of which the Ferry-town of Cree (now Creetown) then contained 104. As the country part of the parish has altered very little in point of population, since that period, it will be necessary to show the increase that has been in Creetown at all the different periods since that time.

	Families.	Under 10 Yrs of age	Above 10 Yrs of age	Total.	Births.	Marrings.	Deaths.
In 1764, Creetown contained	34	20	84	104	4	0	1
In 1774, ditto	120	73	294	367	11	2	3
In 1784 ditto	145	88	354	442	15	3	6
From the 1st November 1793 to ditto 1794	183	142	409	551	19	6	23 ¶
In 1794, the whole parish pa- rish contains	289	249	839	1088	38	9	27

Causes of Population.—The increase of population, not only in this place, but also in many other places in Scotland, is principally owing to these three following causes:

1. To the beneficial effects of inoculation for the small-pox, by which the lives of numbers of children are preserved; and, general as the practice is become, yet, still there are many of these little innocents, that fall victims to the inattention, stupidity, and superstition of their parents, who are so wedded to their ancient prejudices, that rather than part with them, they will consign over half-a-dozen fine children to the ravages of this terrible disorder, or, perhaps, to the gloomy mansions of the tomb.

2. To

¶ Of the 23 children that died in Creetown last year, 12 died of the small-pox.

2. To the improvement of waste lands, by which numbers are employed and maintained.

3. To the recently established branches of manufactures. By the first, life is preserved, and by the two last, emigration is prevented.

Air and Climate.—The best proof of purity of the air and goodness of the climate, is the good state of health generally enjoyed by the inhabitants; they being seldom subject to agues, fevers, consumptions, or such disorders as proceed from a corrupted atmosphere. The rheumatism is the only disorder that seems to gain ground, and most generally complained of. Though there is a great deal of rain that falls here, yet the air is considered dry and healthy, owing to the water being suddenly carried off by the rapidity of the rivulets or burns, which immediately convey it again to the sea, there being no swamps or marshy ground in this part of the country.

General State of the Parish.—The ancient valuation of the parish, as it stands in the cess books of the county, is 3199l. 10s. 8d. Scots. The real rent or present value of the land is 2,750 l. Sterling. The number of heritors is fifteen, of whom three only reside in the parish. John M'Culloch, Esq; of Barholm, (one of the residing heritors,) is joint patron with the King. Dr John Inglis, the present incumbent is a married man, and has two children, a son and a daughter, and has been settled fourteen years. The former stipend was sixty pounds Sterling, and four pounds for communion elements, but by an augmentation of victual stipend, obtained in the year 1792, the present living is worth a hundred guineas per annum, independent of the glebe and manse, which is worth 25 l. more, and is placed in a delightful

lightful situation on the side of the bay, about a mile and a half below Creetown. The church and manse are both in a pretty good state of repair. There are very few dissenters here, only three seceders and two cameronians in the whole parish; and as a proof of the health and good morals of the people, and what probably contributes in some measure to both, is, that there is neither physician, surgeon, lawyer, nor attorney in the whole parish. The poor's funds generally amount to about 35 l. per annum, which, when judiciously applied, so effectually relieves the wants of those depending upon the public charity, (which seldom exceed ten in number,) that there has not been one instance of a native of this parish going out of it as a strolling beggar, for these thirty years past. The schoolmaster's salary is a hundred pound Scots, independent of the school wages; but besides the public school, there are several private schools in the parish.

Price of Labour.—Wages here are generally high. Masons and joiners have from 1 s. 3d. to 2 s. per day, without victuals. Taylors and shoemakers, from 8d. to 10d. with victuals. An experienced man-servant, from 8 l. to 9 l. per annum. The wages of women servants, from 3 l. to 4 l. and the other kinds of work much the same in proportion.

Antiquities—The most memorable place of antiquity is called Cairn-holy or the Holy Cairn, from a tumulus or heap of stones, (as tradition informs us,) raised over the grave of King Galdus. Several years ago, a great many of the stones were carried away for the purpose of building houses and dykes, when there were discovered large stones placed together in form of a chest or coffin; but the roof stone being of such prodigious magnitude, it has never been removed to see what it contains. This memorable tomb stands in the
centre,

centre, between two different places, at about a hundred yards distance from it, where a great number of human bodies have been buried, as appears from the number of stones placed upon one end in form of grave stones. We are told by several of the Scottish writers, that Corbredus Galdus, the twenty first king of the Scots, (a valiant and good king,) was the first of that nation who dared to advance his ensigns against the Romans, who, under Petilius Cerealis, had subdued the Brigantes*, and soon after proceeded to attempt the conquest of this country, under Julius Agricola, who, having landed upon this coast, destroyed all the maritime places, and afterwards reduced the Isle of Man; after which, he returned, and after many a bloody battle with the Scots and Picts, about the year A. D. 82, he subdued the whole of the kingdom South of the Tay. History also informs us, that one of these battles was fought at the river Cree, (which still retains its ancient name,) wherein the Scots were overthrown, but no mention made of the slaughter of their king; on the contrary, we are told by Buchanan, that this same King Galdus died a natural death, after a glorious reign of thirty five years. We are also informed of another battle fought on the river Cree, about the year A. D. 310, wherein the Picts joined the Romans under Maximus their general, against the Scots, under their king Eugenius, but wherein the Scots were again overthrown. But in vain do we develop the history of these times; owing to the ambitious policy of Edward the first of England, a veil is thrown over them which can never be removed. There is also a different account concerning this place, which seems to be founded on history, and which

deserves

* Brigantes, the ancient inhabitants of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Durham, Westmoreland and Cumberland.

deserves attention. About the year of our Lord 1150, it is said there was a battle fought between the English and Scots, on Glenquicken Moor, wherein the Scots were defeated and their General killed, and that the Bishop of Whithorn being along with him in the engagement, immediately assumed the command; but his troops being defeated, immediately fled towards the shore to their boats, but being overtaken by the enemy at Cairnholy, about half a mile from the shore, the bishop, with many other gentlemen, was killed, and was buried here, and that from this circumstance it was called the Holy Cairn, the bishop being a holy man. Certain it is, that on the very place where the battle is said to have been fought, there is a large tumulus which was opened about 15 years ago (the stones being carried away for the purpose of building dykes) when there was discovered a stone coffin, or stones placed together in form of a coffin, wherein was a human skeleton, the scull and the great bones almost entire, and greatly above the ordinary size; also an urn, containing some ashes, and an earthen pitcher: the tumulus is called Cairnywanie.* At a small distance from the above, there is a Druidical temple, or a Danish encampment, but, being left to the uncertainty of conjecture, shall not hazard an opinion; there are also several other tumuli in the parish, that have never been opened. There are also four square towers with battlements, which seem to have been intended for defence: they are all placed on the banks of the Cree.

Mineral

* There is a little rivulet or burn that runs through the place where the battle is said to have been fought, that still retains the name of the Englishman's Burn.

Mineral Springs.—There are several mineral springs, all of which have been beneficial in some cases; one, however, on the lands of Pible, which seems to be of the chalybeate kind, seems particularly adapted for remedying weakneſſes and complaints in the ſtomach, and has been applied to by ſome individuals, with great ſucceſs.

Fuel.—The principal article of fuel is peat, of which there are plenty of the very beſt quality; alſo in many places of the pariſh, there is whins and brushwood, which poor people gather for fuel; and as there are no coal but what is imported from other places, it is not much uſed here.

Price of Proviſions.—Beef, mutton, and lamb, generally ſell for 2½d. or 3d. per lb.; oat meal from 2od to 2s.; butter 6d. per lb.; a fat gooſe 2s.; a hen 8d.; eggs 3d. per dozen.

Miſcellaneous Obſervations.—This pariſh is famous for granite ſtone; as a proof of which, Kirkdalehouſe, built by the late Sir Samuel Hannay, of Mochrum, Bart. is well worthy of the attention of travellers. It is a large modern building, the out-ſide wholly of the moſt beautiful granite, and wrought off to ſuch perfection, as is ſaid not to be equalled in Britain. Admiral Stewart alſo got all the principal ſtones here for Glaſſerton houſe, which he carried acroſs the Bay in boats, at conſiderable expence. And the Biſhop of Derry, on ſeeing the houſe of Sir Samuel Hannay, a few years ago, was ſo much charmed with the ſtone, that he immediately contracted with the ſuperintendent of that work, for building the ſpires of two churches in his dioceſe, which were all to be executed with this ſtone; accordingly the ſtone was all prepared here, and afterwards carried over to Ireland, and the work

executed much to his Lordship's satisfaction, though at great expence. The highest mountain in this parish, or perhaps in the South of Scotland, viz. Cairnsmoor, is one entire mass of granite, the altitude of which has never been ascertained, but which may probably be between 3000 and 4000 feet above the level of the river Cree. This mountain is also famous as a receptacle for foxes, which often spread death and destruction far and wide among the surrounding flocks. There are also appearances of lead mines in several places of the parish, but which have not yet been attempted with success.

A Description of Creetown and Wigton Bay.—Creetown, (formerly called Ferry Town of Cree, from the ferry or passage boat constantly kept at that place) has advanced rapidly within these 30 years, as shown in the table of population, and was lately erected into a burgh of barony, by the interest of the proprietor John M'Culloch, Esq; of Barholm, is beautifully situated on Wigton Bay, and in the vicinity of a plentiful country; of late there has been introduced some branches of cotton spinning, by which about thirty people are daily employed; there is also a pretty extensive tann work, and also a mill for making shot lead; but the greatest part of the men follow a sea-faring life, several of whom, both in the present and former wars, have served in the navy. There are a considerable number of vessels belonging to this port, of from 20 to 60 tons burthen, several of which is employed in carrying shells, and others in the coasting trade; indeed, its advantages as a sea port may one day be the means of making it an opulent place. The inhabitants in general, though charitable and humane, yet are too much addicted to the vices with which such places stand chargeable.

Wigton Bay, as I mentioned before, is formed by the river Cree falling into St George's Channel, and is navigable for
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about 15 miles. It is about 3 miles broad, for about 6 miles from its entrance, and then gradually diminishes as it extends into the country, and divides the shire of Wigton from the Stewarty of Kirkcudbright. There is good anchorage in several places of the Bay, but in particular a little below Cree-toun (the only town in the parish) to which a ship of 500 tons may come and ride in safety: it has a kind of soft blue clay bottom, and makes a very safe harbour. The fisheries, though not very considerable, are yet worth mentioning; in the Spring and Summer months, there are a good many salmon taken, and in the Harvest and Winter, there are a considerable quantity of whiting, cod, and flounders got, by means of what the people call coops, or large creels, so placed in the water that the fish run into them as the tide ebbs, and are taken out at low water; so that with these, and a few shell fish, which is also got in the Bay, this part of the country is generally well supplied. There is also a considerable quantity of sea weed got upon the shore, (which is for the most part flat and sandy) which by some is made into kelp, and by others used for manure. Much more might have been said of the advantages of this as a maritime place, had an abler pen been employed to describe them.

NUMBER