

NUMBER LXVII.

PARISH OF ARBIRLOT.

(County of Forfar.)

By the Rev. Mr RICHARD WATSON.

Name, Situation, Extent, &c.

ARBIRLOT is termed, in old writings, *Aberelliot*. The name seems to be of Gaelic original, in which language *aber* signifies *above*, and *Elliot* is the name of the water. *Aberelliot*, therefore, is expressive of the local situation of the village. The parish of Arbirlot lies in the county of Forfar, in the presbytery of Aberbrothock, and synod of Angus and Mearns. It is about 4 miles in length, and 3 in breadth. The extent of sea coast is about 3 miles, and, for the most part, flat and sandy.

Soil and Climate.—The greater part of this parish is hilly; yet the hills are neither very high nor rocky. They are in general green, and capable of cultivation. The air is considered as healthy, and there are no peculiar diseases. The soil is various. Along the coast there is a thin dry soil, which, in a wet season, yields a tolerable crop; but in a dry season, a very scanty one. The soil, contiguous to this, consists of a light rich loam, on a gravelly bottom, which becomes fertile in proportion to the season, and the care bestowed on its cultivation. In fields adjoining to each other,

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we have soils very different; some shallow, others deep. The deep soils have generally an under stratum of clay, which renders them hard to plough; but when proper care is taken of their culture, and the season favourable, they produce weighty crops. In the hilly parts of the parish, there are various qualities of soil, some cold and wet, some moorish and spongy, some dry and gravelly. In a word, the variety of soil is so great, that often, in the same field, different soils are to be found. This inequality of soils, which, at first sight, seems a defect, is in reality a remarkable proof of the wisdom of providence; for there is no soil so ungrateful, as not to reward the labourer's toil, if he will only bestow proper care on its culture, and each soil has a season, in which it is peculiarly productive. The ground, in this parish, has, for the most part, a good exposure, and grows fruitful, in proportion to its state of cultivation. This has encouraged the farmers of late years to improve tracts of it, which formerly lay waste and uncultivated.

Agriculture and Produce.—Such of the tenants as border on the shore, use sea ware for manure. But the principal manure here used is lime, which is brought partly from the Frith of Forth, and partly from Sunderland in England, at a very considerable expence; yet the farmers value it so much, that they look upon it as an essential requisite in carrying forward their improvements. The times of plowing, sowing, and reaping, are determined by the seasons, and the general rules laid down by the most experienced farmers. The principal crops raised in this parish are oats and barley. Of the former there is only a small quantity, but of the latter a great deal is annually exported. Of late years, a considerable quantity of wheat and turnips has been sown, and, in general, succeeded well. For some years past, the farmers have paid due attention to the raising of flax; and, from the
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premiums they have received, it appears that their labour has not been in vain. In the year 1790, there were 97 acres of ground, within the bounds of this parish, sown with lint-feed, which in general succeeded well, and procured the premiums given by the Society for raising of flax in this county. There are from 40 to 50 ploughs in this parish, of different constructions. Some of them are drawn by 4 horses, and others by 2. When 4 horses are yoked, 2 servants are requisite; but when two do the work, one man is sufficient, as he both holds the plough, and drives the horses. This last mode of plowing has been introduced, partly from the improved state of the farm, and partly from the increase of servants wages. It will be admitted by the candid, that improvements in husbandry, as in the fine arts, arrive at maturity by degrees. Encouraged by success, the farmers in this parish have, within these 20 years, made rapid progress in the cultivation of their lands. And as their farms are not over-rented, they are enabled to go on with their improvements.

Cattle.—It may not be improper to observe, that great attention is paid to the breeding of cattle; but little to the feeding of them. They are, for the most part, brought to the market about 3 years of age. There is only one grazier in the parish. It is remarkable, that there is not within the bounds of this parish one flock of sheep, especially when we consider, that the greater part of it is hilly. Perhaps the period is not far distant, when the farmers may see their interest in this particular, and take the benefit which their local situation evidently points out.

Wages.—The yearly wages of men servants, in the different branches of husbandry, are from 7*l.* to 8*l.* Sterling; and

and of women servants, from 3 l. to 4 l. Sterling, including the perquisites. The wages of a day labourer are 6 d. when the employer furnishes him with provisions. But when the labourer victuals himself, his wages are from 1 s. to 15 d. per day.

Population.—The return to the inquiry made by Dr Webster, in 1755, respecting the population of this parish, was 865. No particular enumeration has been made since that period, until about 12 months ago, (September 1790), when an exact list of the inhabitants was made up; and their number amounted to 1055, of whom there were 550 males, and 505 females. By a register, well attested, it appears, that the marriages, births, and deaths in this parish, from the beginning of the year 1780, to the end of the year 1790, were as follows:

A. D.	Marriages.	Births.			Deaths.
		mal.	fem.	in all.	
1780	5	14	7	21	17
1781	3	17	13	30	4
1782	1	11	5	16	12
1783	5	11	11	22	11
1784	4	16	9	25	3
1785	11	8	7	15	12
1786	6	16	9	25	9
1787	3	18	9	27	10
1788	6	17	15	32	3
1789	5	11	10	21	6
1790	4	28	10	38	7
	53	167	105	272	94

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The above account of births, corresponds with an observation made by the Baron de Montesquieu, in his *Spirit of Laws*, that there are born, in several parts of Europe, more boys than girls.

Manufactures.—The inhabitants of this parish enjoy the advantages of raising, watering, dressing, and spinning of flax, in a high degree, which might surely be an object of great importance, both to flax dealers and manufacturers; though, as yet, there is no established linen manufactory in the parish. For some years past, there has been a small brick-work carried on; but it does not appear, that this branch of manufacture has either enriched its proprietors, or much benefited the parishioners. Several houses have been built within these last 10 years for tradesmen, especially weavers, who have met with due encouragement from the farmers. They are allowed a piece of ground nigh to their houses, on reasonable terms; and are bound to perform no services, except a few day's labour, at different seasons of the year, during which time they receive, from their respective masters, 6 d. *per* day, and their victuals. It is probable that these persons, from their industry, economy, and attention to business, will increase the produce, the wealth, and the population of the parish. There is one brewer in this parish, and 4 persons who sell ale and spirituous liquors, and are known by the name of *tappers*. These alchouses are rather for the accommodation of strangers, than for the use of the parishioners, who look upon idleness, debauchery, and intemperance, as the principal sources of human misery.

Fuel.—The fuel, commonly used by the inhabitants in the lower part of the parish, is coal, and by those in the higher part, peats and turf.

Roads.

Roads and Bridges.—The bridges in the parish are good. The roads were exceeding bad, but have been altered for the better within the last two years; and at present there are several favourable circumstances, which induce us to hope, that they will soon be repaired to our wishes. By a late act of Parliament, the statute labour has been commuted; and the conversion money raised in this parish has been laid out by the gentlemen of the district to great advantage. Being furnished with every qualification requisite for the improvement of the roads, we may justly be confident, that they will take the most effectual measures in order to complete a scheme, so consonant to friendly intercourse, sympathetic aid, and sound policy. A turnpike road is now making between Dundee and Arbroath, which runs through this parish; and though the tolls charged are considerable, yet the advantages are so visible, both in speculation and in fact, that very much good is expected from it.

River and Fish.—The water Elliot, which runs through this parish, from north to south, hath its source in the parish of Carmylie, about the distance of 3 miles from the town of Arbirlot. It was noted, some time past, for trouts of a peculiar relish. At present there are very few in the water. It may be observed, that our young men, instead of using the well dissembled fly to catch the firmy rate, have of late tried the gun to kill the springing game. This new fashion will, probably, soon be over. For some years past, there has been, at the mouth of the Elliot, a salmon fishery; but, either through the negligence of the person who has the management, or from the different run which that species of fish have taken, very few are caught. By the variety of trees and shrubs on the banks of Elliot, which invite the several kinds of singing birds, and the Castle of Kelly, built upon a rock, by the
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water edge, though in a half ruined state, a very beautiful and delightful romantic scene is formed, which is to be seen to great advantage on the road betwixt Arbroath and Arbirlot. The Elliot is not only an object of beauty, but of utility. There are 5 mills upon it; one for cleaning flax, another for dressing yarn, and 3 for grinding corn. A few years ago, the greatest part of this parish was under thirlage to some of the corn mills in the neighbourhood, and payed a very high multure. But the present tenants, desirous of obtaining freedom from this thralldom, agreed among themselves to pay the rents of the several mills to which they were thirled; and the late factor or steward on the estate of Panmure accepted of their proposal; in consequence whereof, they can carry their corn to any mill they please.

Heritor and Rent.—The whole parish of Arbirlot, at present, is the property of the Hon. William Maule, brother of the Earl of Dalhousie, by a deed of the late William Maule, Earl Panmure. The valued rent is 4266 l. 13 s. 4 d. Scotch. The real rent is 22 bolls 2 pecks wheat, 454 bolls bear, 519 bolls 8 pecks meal, and 935 l. 11 s. 5 d. Sterling. The rent paid by the tenants varies from 5 s. to 30 s. *per acre*. But ground, in proper culture for flax, is frequently let for one crop, by the farmer, at 5 guineas the acre. There are instances of individuals renting lands, formerly possessed by several tenants, and of removing those people known by the name of cottagers; but whether this has turned out to the advantage or disadvantage of the farmer, is doubtful.

Church —The living consists of 57 bolls 4 pecks meal, Lunthgow measure, 44 bolls bear, 10 bolls 12 pecks wheat, and 16 l. 6 s. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in money, with the addition of a manse, a garden, and a glebe of 4 acres. The value of the living,

therefore, cannot be estimated above 85 l. Sterling a year. The King is patron. The kirk was repaired in the year 1785, and the manse in the year 1790. There are only a few Seceders in the parish, and no Roman Catholics.

School.—The parochial schoolmaster has no legal salary paid him by the heritor. His income consists of 8 bolls of meal, which was mortified in the year 1628, by Alexander Irvine of Drum, then proprietor of Kelly, in favour of the schoolmaster of Arbirlot; and confirmed by his son, Sir Alexander Irvine, Knight, in the year 1637; and 5 bolls 8 pecks of oats, collected from the several tenants in the parish, at the rate of 2 pecks for each plough; which, together with a house, garden, session-clerk's dues, and school fees, may be estimated about 20 l. Sterling *per annum*. The number of children, educated at this school, varies according to the different seasons of the year. In winter, they may be reckoned from 40 to 50; in summer, from 30 to 40; in spring and autumn, from 20 to 30. The presbytery have appointed every parochial school, within their bounds, to be examined once a year, by a committee of their number.

Poor.—The poor, being few in number, are tolerably well provided for. In the year 1629, Alexander Irvine of Drum, a gentleman of fortune, then proprietor of Kelly, mortified 12 bolls of meal to the poor in the lands of Kelly, which have been of very great advantage to indigent persons in that part of the parish, especially in the years 1782 and 1783. There are, besides, of certain annual income, 10 l. Sterling, belonging to the poor's fund, being the interest of 4000 merks lent at 4½ *per cent.* which, together with the collections in the church on Sundays, and at the celebration of the Lord's supper, produce about 35 l. Sterling a year.—The distribu-
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tion of this money is considered as a branch of duty belonging to the minister and kirk elders, who meet at various times in the year for that purpose. Part of it is employed in buying coals, coats, and shoes, for indigent persons in the winter season; part in supplying those who need a certain weekly, monthly, or quarterly allowance, according to their necessities; part in teaching poor children of the parish; and part, in relieving such other occasional objects of compassion as make application to them. Of all these disbursements an exact account is kept, for the satisfaction of every fair inquirer who is entitled to ask it. As the kirk session has advantages, both for knowing and supplying the wants of the poor, so its members are extremely attentive to distribute to every one according to his exigencies, insomuch that there is not at present one beggar belonging to this parish. Vagrants, however, to whom begging is sweet, infest it from week to week, and from day to day, through the revolving year. It were to be wished, that work houses, in every county, were erected for the dissolute and idle.

Longevity.—We have several instances of great longevity. There was a man in this parish, who died a few months ago, at the advanced age of 99. About eight days previous to his death, he seemed to have lost all his senses; he neither saw, heard, spoke, felt, nor moved; but received food, when it was put into his mouth.

Mineral Waters.—Propitious nature has kindly provided several mineral springs near Arbirlot, one of which had a high character some years ago; and it is to be regretted, that for want of proper accommodation, persons of high rank have declined coming to it. The well is about half a mile distant from Arbirlot, and not exceeding 100 yards from the
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high road betwixt Arbroath and Dundee. It is called *Wormy-hills Well*, probably from the formation of the hills about it, which very much resemble worms, especially when they twist themselves. The water of this well has been used with success, both in scorbutic, and in rheumatic disorders. It is deservedly esteemed on account of its medicinal virtue; and being within 200 yards of the sea, persons attending it have the benefit of sea bathing, which, of late years, has been much recommended by our best physicians.

Antiquities.—A few years ago, the remains of a religious house in the parish, whose ruins had been revered for ages, were taken down. And though we cannot say at what time, or by what person, it was built, yet from the accounts given of it, we have reason to believe, that it had been a Druidical temple. The province of the Druids, properly so called, was religion; yet they managed matters so dextrously, that they engrossed all power, civil as well as religious; and under the character of either priests, magistrates, philosophers, or physicians, took every thing under their cognizance. In this parish, there are many heaps of stones, which the people call *cairns*. But whether they were at first designed as monuments, raised over the dead, or signs of memorable events, or altars of the druids, is uncertain.

Among the Greeks, there were many heaps of stones, consecrated to Mercury; and among the Latins, there were numberless rude pillars, consecrated to the same divinity, under the denomination of Faunus. It is also certain, that in Gaul and Britain, there were many heaps and pillars exactly similar to these. But we cannot affirm, that the natives of this country performed any religious ceremonies on these cairns, or considered them in any other point of view, than as objects of grateful

grateful remembrance, of mutual confidence, and of future fame.

It is reported, with much confidence, that a crown of one of the kings of the Picts, was found in the Black-den of this parish, by a quarryman, about the beginning of the present century, who sold part of it in the neighbourhood, for 20 l. Scotch; and sent the remainder to London, with a view to procure its real value. But by some unforeseen occurrence, he and his family were prevented from reaping that advantage, which might have been expected from so valuable a curiosity.—It is confidentially reported, that a road was made through part of this parish, by Hector Boethius, the Scotch historian, which still bears his name, though somewhat corrupted. It is called *Heckenbois-path*.

Castle of Kelly.—Neither the period when the Castle of Kelly was built, nor the proprietors, through a long series of ages, can now be traced. Tradition, however, has handed down a circumstance, which deserves notice, viz. that one Ouchterlony, laird of Kelly, was violently active in demolishing the Abbey at Aberbrothock. Nor is it unlikely that he considered every religious fabric as a relic of idolatry. And being remarkable for the activity of his zeal, he was appointed by the Convention to carry this barbarous deed into execution.—To describe, at large, the beauties of Kelly, and do justice to Nature's varied charms, would require uncommon descriptive powers. The soil does not refuse nourishment to trees of foreign birth. At present there is in the garden, a tree called the *Dall-hound-bolly*, remarkable for its beauty. Then exposed to the sun, and sheltered from the chilly blast, it has grown up to full maturity.

General

Migratory Birds.—The migratory birds are the swallow, the cuckoo, the lapwing, the dotterel, and corn-craick or rail. The sea-gulls are considered as ominous. When they appear in the fields, a storm from the south-east generally follows; and when the storm begins to abate, they fly back to the shore.

General Character.—The inhabitants of this parish are sober, industrious, and regular in their attendance on the ordinances of religion. Sensible of the advantages which they enjoy, both of a civil and religious nature, they wish to relieve the miseries, and promote the happiness of their fellow creatures. They are just in their dealings, true to their promises, liberal to the poor, and mutually helpful to one another.

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