

## NUMBER LXX.

## PARISH OF KINNELLAR,

*(County of Aberdeen.)**By the Rev. Mr GAVIN MITCHELL.**Situation and Extent.*

**T**HE parish of Kinnellar is situated in the presbytery, synod, and shire of Aberdeen. It forms an area of 4000 acres, and is of narrow extent; consisting chiefly of an irregular assemblage of hills, none of which, however, rise to any considerable elevation, or display any thing very wild or dreary in their aspect.

*Soil and Cultivation.*—The whole parish is either actually cultivated, or at least susceptible of cultivation. Even the hills are partly cultivated, both upon the sides and the summit. Their tops are partly covered with thriving plantations of firs. In other places, where they produce heath, or a strong coarse species of grass, they are still reserved for pasture. The low ground dividing the hills, is, for the most part, swampy. The soil of the hills, wherever they discover any appearance of heath, is warm, kindly, and, in some degree, sandy.

*Cattle, &c.*—Great numbers of sheep were formerly fed here; but these have decreased, and do not now exceed 447,  
more

more advantageous modes of farming having been introduced. Black cattle are more numerous, being at present no fewer than 534; and even these are only the winter stock, kept for labour, and for breeding. In summer, many fields are rented by strangers for grazing cattle, which they introduce from different places; and even the farmers of the parish purchase additional stock, when the grass springs up. These are again sold off, as the year advances. Until January, however, a number continue to be fed in the stalls upon turnips, which are then also driven to Aberdeen, and there sold. Horses are less numerous than they would be, if the practice of plowing with oxen did not prevail. Of these, however, there are in the parish 87. A few swine are fed here; but the greater part are annually fattened, and killed in December or January. In the beginning of spring 1791, there were 39 bee-hives in the parish, which would, no doubt, produce many additional swarms in the course of the summer.

*Agriculture.*—Agriculture has been gradually improved to a state of considerable perfection. Grass seeds had not been sown in this parish, in any considerable quantity, before the year 1750; till about that time they were not kept for sale by the merchants in Aberdeen, and consequently could not be much known among our farmers. The culture of turnips was equally unknown at the settlement of the present incumbent. A few only were raised by some gentlemen in their gardens, for kitchen use. In the year 1758, the minister, unwilling to be at great pains in weeding a bed which he had sown in his garden, and which he did not expect to succeed well, tore out the greater part with a hoe, leaving only a few scattered here and there upon the bed; but was much surprised, to find his crop of turnips turn out much

superior to any of the same plant, that he had ever before seen. After this, he continued to hoe and thin all his subsequent growths of turnips in the same manner. In the next year, a neighbouring gentleman sowed some turnips in a field, and although he did not use a hoe in weeding them, yet thinned them so as to leave about a hand-breadth of ground open around each plant. His crops answered equally well. In 1760 or 1761, the practice of hoeing was generally adopted, by all who sowed turnips through the parish. The culture of this plant has, since that time, become gradually more common; and it has contributed greatly to clear the ground of wild oats, and other weeds, which used before to choke the corn; and the turnips have been very profitably made use of, in feeding and fattening cattle. The introduction of grass seeds has been no less favourable in its influence upon agriculture. Before the use of these was known, those parts of our lands which were cultivated, were, (however much exhausted), kept almost continually in crop, the farmers being unwilling to suffer them to rest; because, for the first two years, scarcely any other vegetable but the stinking May weed appeared upon them. The constant succession of crops then was, one crop of barley immediately after the land had been manured; then two crops of oats; after which the manure was again laid on. This succession is still in some measure continued, notwithstanding the improvements which have taken place; but the land is always very much exhausted by successive crops of oats. August and September are commonly the months of harvest labour. On the lands adjoining to the river Don, which passes through the parish, the crops ripen early. They are somewhat later towards the south. March is the seed time for oats; barley is sown in the end of April and beginning of May.

*Prices*

*Prices of Labour.*—Day labourers receive, for their labour, 8 d. a day; but are now beginning to ask more. Carpenters are paid from 10 d. to 1 s.; masons, 1 s. 5½ d.; taylor, 4 d. or 5 d. with victuals. Labourers, who have families, commonly rent a small piece of ground, the work upon which is performed chiefly by their children. The wages of servants, hired by the year or half year, have increased greatly within these 30 years. In 1758, a man servant might have been hired for 1 l. 16 s. 8 d. a year; at present, 5 l. a year are the common wages for men servants who can hold a plough, and perform all such farm work as requires the greatest strength and skill. Others, whose years and dexterity fit them only for work of a less robust nature, receive indeed smaller wages; but even the weakest and most unskilful man servant, cannot be hired for less than 2 l. a year. For the harvest labour alone, they get from 30 s. to 40 s. Women servants are paid at the rate of 2 l. or 2 l. 10 s. a year.

*Ploughs and Carts.*—For some time past, cows and oxen have been used, as well as horses, in drawing the ploughs. The whole number of ploughs, now used in the parish, are 25. Seven of these are drawn by oxen, and from 4 to 10 oxen are yoked in each plough; the other 18 are drawn by horses. Thirty-eight carts are employed in this parish; 6 drawn by a single horse; 28 by 2 horses; and 4, belonging to Mr Leys, a residing heritor, by a horse and an ox each. Cows are sometimes yoked in the plough, as well as oxen.

*Inclosures and Roads.*—The lands are, for the most part, well inclosed. A small part of the public road, which passes through this parish, with the other parish roads, are kept up, either by the statute labour, or by the money received from

from such as choose to pay the commutation, at the rate of 4 s. 6 d. for 6 days.

*Trade and Fuel.*—Besides cattle, considerable quantities of meal and barley are sold at Aberdeen. Peats are the common and principal article of fuel. Coals are also brought from Aberdeen, which is 9 miles distant.

*Rents and Heritors.*—The whole rents of the lands in this parish amount to between 800 l. and 900 l. The heritors are, Sir William Forbes of Craigievar, the Dyer Company of Aberdeen, the managers of the funds of King's College in Aberdeen, Mr Wilson of Glasgow, Mr Leys of Glasgow, Mr Robertson of Strachry, and Mr Hog of Auchronic. Two chaises are kept by gentlemen residing in the parish.

*Church and Poor.*—The stipend is 70 bolls of meal, 10 of bear, and 340 merks Scotch in money. The glebe consists of about 5 acres of land, not the worst in the parish. The east end of the church was antiently a Popish chapel. Near the door still remains what seems to have been a font for holy water, inscribed with the date A. C. 1534. The west end of the church was built before the erection of the bell-fry, in 1615.—Four poor families are at present assisted from the funds of the parish, under the management of the kirk session. The weekly collections, making about 5 l. Sterling a year, and the interest of a mortified fund of 60 l. are the only sums which the session has to apply to their relief.

*School.*—The parochial school is far from being liberally endowed. The schoolmaster's yearly salary is 100 merks Scotch, paid by the heritors. He also receives, as session clerk,

clerk, 20 l. Scotch a year ; with 6 s. 8 d. Scotch for each baptism, and 16 d. Sterling for each marriage. The wages paid by the scholars are, 1 s. 6 d. Sterling a quarter for English and writing ; 1 s. for English alone ; and 2 s. for Latin and arithmetic. The medium number of scholars is 30 in winter, and 16 in summer. The parish has at present an excellent schoolmaster.

*Population and Diseases.*—The great body of the inhabitants consists of farmers, with their families and servants. As no manufactures are carried on, there are few mechanics, and no villages. Too many cattle, indeed, are kept in this parish, to admit of its being a thriving nursery of the human species. Not that it is much afflicted with dangerous distempers ; although inflammatory and putrid fevers appear occasionally. In autumn 1790, a complication of fever and rheumatism, which, on the third day, brought on a delirium, prevailed in the parish ; but scarcely any died of it. The circumstance chiefly inimical to the increase of its population is, that, as a few hands are sufficient for the management of black cattle, the rest go elsewhere for employment, as they grow up. Even the inclosures, in many respects so beneficial, are, in one instance, unfriendly to population. Boys and girls were employed to tend cattle, while feeding in the open fields ; but in grass parks, a cow-herd is hardly necessary. This is one cause of the great decrease of inhabitants within these 30 years, which amounts to nearly one fourth since 1755. The decrease since 1755, however, is not so great, being only 56, or about one seventh on the whole ; as the return to Dr Webster, on that occasion, was 398. The table here subjoined, exhibits an accurate state of the population of Kinnellar, for these last 34 years.

P O P U L A T I O N

# POPULATION TABLE.

*Containing a List of Dwelling Houses, Souls, Births, and Deaths, for the following Years, which the Minister knows to be exact,*

Years.	Dwelling houses.	Souls.	Births.			Deaths.	EPIDEMICAL DISEASES.
			Mal.	Fem.	Tot.		
1758	96	411	7	5	12		
1759	98	430	7	4	11		
1760		436	2	8	10		
1761	}	*	6	5	11	** (Lists only taken of examinable persons, and therefore not here stated.)	
1762		*	8	3	11		
1763	93	412	4	6	10	8	
1764	102	442	5	9	14	12	{ A fever, chiefly about Auchronic, where the ground is wet, and the habitations poor, was very prevalent, and a stranger.
1765	100	443	6	3	9	7	
1766	102	443	6	5	11	3	
1767	100	419	6	4	10	3	
1768	102	427	5	8	13	8	
1769	100	430	2	6	8	8	
1770	97	411	4	7	11	7	{ A putrid fever cut off many in this parish, and in Skene: 33 burials within 3 weeks, in these two parishes. A stop was put to it, when it came near the manse, by the minister's sister, who gave a bottle of strong beer warmed, in the beginning. This produced a great perspiration, and carried off the fever from all that took it, after severals had died who used the bark, and other medicines.
1771	96	409	4	2	6	13	
1772	93	424	2	11	13	4	
1773	95	419	4	7	11	11	
			78	93	171	84	Small-pox and a fever.

POPULATION TABLE *Continued.*

Years.	Dwelling houses.	Souls.	Births.		
			Mal.	Fem.	Tot
1774	92	402	78	93	171
1775	96	406	3	3	6
1776	91	412	11	5	16
1777	84	383	5	5	10
1778	85	392	9	6	15
1779	82	365	7	4	11
1780	85	387	2	6	8
1781	84	391	5	7	12
1782	82	364	7	1	8
1783	84	368			
1784	91	388	12	130	257
1785	78	353			
1786	75	332			
1787	79	352			
1788					
1789					
1790	67	317			
1791	74	342			

There are two births in this list, which are not in the parish register, two boys having been baptized by a Nonjurant clergyman.

In the 11 years, in which there is a list of deaths, the baptisms were, - - - - - 116  
Deaths, - - - - - 84

Increase of population by this parish in 11 years, - - - 32

The burials in the church yard of Kinnellar, are generally more than the deaths in the parish; there being several families, whose connections are buried here from other parishes, particularly those of the name of Keith, Bisset, Abel, Wood, Moir, Leith, and Fowler; but the above list contains the number of deaths only.

The minister was indisposed and not able to go through the parish.

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*Antiquities.*—Three cairns, with broad bases, still remain in this parish, monuments of a state of arts and manners long since forgotten. One of those cairns, called *Cairn-o-veil*, is placed upon the farm of Kinnellar; another, on the farm of Nether Auguhorsk; and the third, called the *Cairn of Semblings*, or the *Assembly Cairn*, on the top of the hill of Auchronie. Upon the farm of Blackhill were formerly several small cairns, which have been opened and dug to the bottom. In one of them were 3 concentric circles of stones, and within the innermost of these circles, some bones still perfect, but white, as if calcined, upon the surface, and black within. Upon the farm of Upper Auguhorsk there is a large stone, called *Drum Stone*, within sight both of Drum and Harlaw, upon which, tradition says, the Laird of Drum made his testament, immediately before he went to the battle of Harlaw. In the wall of the church-yard, there are some great stones, 10 feet in length, and 4 in thickness, and resting upon the side, which appear to be the remains of a circle of large stones, that once stood in this situation. Another smaller circle, of the same sort, appears to have been placed on the summit of the adjacent hill of Benachard.

*Miscellaneous Observations.*—A storm of thunder and hail, which happened on the 30th of July 1790, did considerable damage to the turnips. A meteor was observed, on the evening of the 5th of October, passing, at a small distance, eastward from this place, in a direction between south and north. It seemed, when observed, to be low and falling.

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