

## NUMBER LXIII.

## PARISH OF ERROL,

## (COUNTY OF PERTH.)

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*Name, Situation, Soil and Climate.*

**T**HE name of Errol seems to be of great antiquity. The first mention made of it is about the year 980, when the country was freed from an invasion of the Danes. One Hay and his two sons, who were ploughing in the field, stopped their countrymen in their flight, caused them return to the charge, and, by a furious onset, subdued and rout their enemies. For this signal service, the family was ennobled under the title of Earl of Errol, and obtained a portion of land in the Carle of Gowrie, where Errol is situated. It continued in the possession of their descendants till the middle of the last century, and has since belonged to several proprietors. No account is given of the origin of the name. The parish lies within the Synod and presbytery of Perth. It is bounded by the river Tay on the S.; by the parish of Inchtute on the E.; by Kinnaird, Kilspindie, and Kinfauns, on the N.; and by  
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St Madois on the W. It is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length, and nearly 3 in breadth; perfectly regular and compact, and includes a large and a fair portion of the carse of Gowrie. From the one end to the other, it stretches over almost the whole breadth of the carse, from its commencement at the foot of the hills, to its termination by the Tay; and though it is in general level ground, there are several eminences in it, which add much to the beauty of the figure. The soil is of excellent quality. It varies according to the situation. The low land, which may comprehend two-thirds of the parish, is in general a strong clay; the rising ground, and particularly that in the neighbourhood of the village of Errol, is a rich black earth; and towards the W. end of the parish, the soil is of a lighter nature, inclining to a brown sand. The whole country is naturally wet, and it is the draining and improving of it within these last 50 years, which has contributed so much to its value and fertility. The climate, of course, could not be considered as the most desirable. It was damp, and attended with such diseases as are common in a heavy atmosphere. Some time ago, the ague was a very prevalent complaint; it has now in a great measure disappeared; but a disease still more fatal seems to have come in its stead. Consumptions, which formerly were rare, have of late been very frequent, although, from the state of cultivation, it should be thought that the air is much more salubrious. But what is remarkable in the carse of Gowrie, the people who reside in the higher parts of the country are not found to be the most healthy. The inhabitants of the low and marshy grounds, indeed, may be more liable to rheumatic complaints, but they have been often observed to enjoy the longest course of life.

*Agriculture.*—The mode of cultivation has undergone an entire revolution within these 40 years, and, as this parish is an important part of the carse of Gowrie, that article is the more deserving of notice. The land was formerly divided into what was called infield and outfield, there being about two-thirds of the former, and a third of the latter. The infield, which generally lay next the village or tenement, got the dung produced on the farm, and was kept under a constant rotation of peas, wheat, barley and oats; lime, fallow and artificial grasses, were almost unknown. The outfield, after remaining 6 years in its natural state, was for 3 crops turned into oats, having been previously thrown up into dikes as a preparation for them; after which it was allowed to revert to its former condition. The produce of every kind was very indifferent. In those days of sterility, the horses were supported in summer upon thistles, which were to be had in abundance, both in the laboured and uncultivated grounds, and which it was the employment of the servants to collect. The land is at present in a high state of improvement. As almost the whole parish is capable of bearing the same grain, the farmers, like impartial stewards, direct their attention equally to every part of their charge, and divide their possessions into 6 equal portions, which they employ for fallow, wheat, peas, barley, grass and oats. The fallow which succeeds the oats or wheat, is turned over in the end of autumn, again in the beginning of summer, and commonly ploughed and harrowed other 3 times in the course of it. It is always enriched with dung, and frequently with lime, which are laid on it before it gets the last furrow in August.—The wheat upon the fallow is sown from the 8th to the last of September. As this is the principal crop which recompences the toil and expense

pense of the farmer, it is perpetually encroaching on the grounds belonging to the other kinds of grain. Some tenants who are only bringing their lands into order, or who, it is feared, are bound down by their leases, adhere strictly to the sixths into which they have divided them, and convert no more into wheat than they had under fallow; others, whose possessions have been longer in a state of improvement, borrow considerably from the barley and oats, turning fields of peas and of grafs into wheat as they judge best; while some very good farmers plough up the whole of what was grafs, and lay the third of their grounds under wheat. But this extensive cropping is liable to be interrupted, and is sometimes entirely prevented, except on the fallow, by the heavy rains which fall in autumn.

The seed-time is finished in general by the middle of October, and the harvest commences about the 24th of August. According to the soil, strong beans, grey peas and beans, or early peas are raised; the grain is sown as early in March as the season will permit, the oats immediately after; and the harvest takes place in September. The land for barley, that it may be fully pulverized, is thoroughly ploughed at 3 different periods, November, April and May, and the crop is ready for reaping at the same time with the oats. Drilled beans, potatoes and turnip, are sometimes put in place of peas, and found to be an excellent preparation for the barley.—If the quantity reaped from each kind of grain in the parish should not seem remarkable, the quality yields an abundant compensation. The return obtained in general from wheat may be 10 bolls the acre on the fallow, and 8 after grafs. The average produce of peas and beans is 8 bolls, which, at the price they usually bring, is a poor crop; but the benefit derived to the land, and the maintenance they furnish

furnish for the horses, are the reasons for continuing them. Oats may be estimated at 11 bolls, and often several more; but as they do not commonly exceed 14s. in value, wheat is found to be more profitable, and seldom fails to be substituted in their room, when the exchange can safely be admitted. Barley is a precarious crop on strong clay ground, and cannot be reckoned upon for more than 8 bolls, though 10 and upwards are frequently obtained. But the produce of all the above articles is subject to much vicissitude, though the return mentioned is the highest that can in general be expected. No part of the kingdom perhaps excels this for crops of grass. They are raised after barley or oats, and even sometimes after wheat; and though the increase depends a good deal upon the season, 3 luxuriant cuttings are frequently had between the beginning of June and the end of September. A considerable quantity of fruit is likewise produced in this district. Formerly there were large orchards planted at many of the farm tenements, some of them consisting of several acres; and though they are in some measure become barren through age, and the quality is by no means fine, they annually bring money into the parish.

The rearing of live stock, though generally practised, is not carried to great extent. The soil is ill adapted for pasture, and too valuable to be left for that purpose. There are just as many animals maintained, as consume the fodder produced on the farm. The cattle are kept in straw-yards with open shades, where they thrive very well, and are sold when 3 years old, from L. 4 to L. 6 or L. 8 each. The milk-cows, and work horses only, have liberty to feed on a part of the sown grass for a little time in summer, and the other stock are sent to graze in the neighbourhood, or fold, excepting as many as can be supported  
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in the yard upon clover. Till of late, the breeding of horses was rather neglected, and large sums were laid out in purchasing them; but the farmers are now become more attentive to their interest in that respect, and there is a prospect that they will henceforth provide for themselves. But the carse tenants who can go much length in bringing up young beasts of whatever kind, are those who have grais possessions somewhere else, to which they can remove them at the proper season. The parish may contain 7000 acres. The whole of it is arable, and at present under cultivation in the manner already mentioned, excepting some inclosures of firs, which, though the trees are scarcely come to half their size, the proprietors are fast clearing off. From the different methods pursued by the farmers for the productions of grain, it cannot be exactly determined what quantity of land is employed in each species; but it is conjectured that there is a fifth of the whole parish in wheat, nearly a sixth in grais, and as much in peas, something more in fallow, potatoes, flax, and plantations, less than a sixth in oats, and about the same in barley.—Land is rented at very different prices. Fifteen years ago, it was about 15 s. the acre. It rose immediately after to L. 1, 5 s. and was then judged so high, that the tenant obtained his possession for life. It has of late been letting for L. 2, and some of it even for L. 2, 10 s.; but rents of this last kind are given chiefly for lands about the village, where trades people pay rather for the convenience than value of ground. The valued rent of the parish is nearly L. 17,000 Scots, and the real rental is said to be about L. 8000 Sterling. The extent of farms is variable, but in general from 100 to 200 acres. The tillage is performed by a plough, with an iron head and mettle mould board, drawn by 2 horses, which one person manages.

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For every 30 acres in the farm, one such plough is commonly judged necessary. As the labour is severe, strong horses are employed, which, for the most part, cost more than L. 21 a-piece. Four or 5 cows are kept on a possession of 100 acres.

*Wages, Prices, &c.*—An ordinary ploughman gets from L. 7, 7s. to L. 9, 9s. a-year; if married, he pays L. 1 for his house and garden, and L. 1, 10s. for the maintenance of a cow throughout the year. There are many of both descriptions in the parish; and though the cottager is not so likely to change his residence, the unmarried person is as much desired for a servant. The wages of a female servant are from L. 2, 10s. to L. 3, and the whole of her employment is in the house, except in seed-time and harvest. Most of the male servants have their lodging apart from the dwelling of the farmer; and for victuals, which they prepare themselves, receive 2 pecks of oat-meal a-week, and a certain measure of milk for each diet. When labourers are hired by the day, they have 10d. in winter, and 1s. in summer, for meat and wages. Persons from the neighbouring boroughs are engaged for cutting down the crop; the men get from L. 1, 3s. to L. 1, 5s. and the women from 15s. to L. 1, besides provisions, which they generally earn in 3 weeks. A considerable expense, besides, was annually incurred for a number of hands for threshing out the grain, which service is chiefly done now by machines for the purpose. Threshing-mills were introduced into the parish about 3 years ago, are multiplying every season, and considered a capital improvement in husbandry.—The whole costs attending cultivation, exclusive of rent, and also of lime, which is frequently demanded, are said to be L. 2 an acre. The price of provisions is much the same

same as in the neighbouring parishes.—This parish produces much grain, besides what is necessary for its own consumption. A good deal is sent every year to Perth and Dundee, and large quantities are exported by sea. It is carried coastwise to Leith, and several other ports on the Forth, and up the canal to Glasgow. Winter and spring are the seasons of exportation, the farmer being then obliged to dispose of his grain. The prices are regulated by the Edinburgh and Glasgow markets, being commonly somewhat lower, though the grain is of the best quality, and the measures used here exceed those at Leith, by at least 5 *per cent.* which will defray the charge of transportation. There are two places at which all the grain exported from the parish is shipped off; the shore of Errol, a little below the village, and of Powgavie, on the E. point of the parish, where it joins with Inchtute. The chief traffic carried on, is that of grain in winter, and lime and coals in summer. Lime is brought from different parts of Fife, and sold for 17 d. the boll, wheat measure, and also from the north of England, of a superior quality, which is to be had for 2 s. 4 d. barley measure. Coal, which is the fuel used in the parish, costs about 3 s. 9 d. the boll, weighing 52 stones. There may be 140 or 150 chaldrons of coals delivered at the shore of Errol in a season, and 120 of lime. The quantity of grain exported may be nearly the same with that of the lime delivered. A correspondence is likewise kept up with London, and some other places, whence porter, wine, sugar and wood, are frequently received. The proprietor of Errol has a duty upon the articles shipped off, or landed at the harbour on his estate. A passage-boat goes regularly between it and the shore of Newburgh every tide.

*Population.*

*Population.*—At the time of Dr Webster's report, the numbers were 2229. At present (1791) the numbers are 2685; of these 1857 live in the country, and 828 in the village. There are 1301 males, and 1384 females. Computing from 21 years, the time of majority, there may be 472 unmarried, 846 married, and 164 widowers or widows. Of all descriptions, there are

Under 10 years of age,	-	-	633
Between 10 and 20,	-	-	536
Between 20 and 50,	-	-	1117
Between 50 and 70,	-	-	362
Above 70,	-	-	37

The annual average of births for the last 6 years is 77; of marriages 32, and of burials 40. There are 18 heritors belonging to the parish; but the most of it is in the hands of 6 or 7 proprietors, few of whom reside. Almost the whole country is occupied by the farmers. They are expert and industrious in their profession, and prosperous in their circumstances. Little of the servile work on their possessions is performed by them or their families; and beside female, many of them constantly maintain 8 male servants. There are 211 weavers, who for the most part work cloth for sale; but no fine manufacture is carried on. There are 50 wrights, 25 tailors, 21 shoemakers, 14 blacksmiths, 5 masons, 2 brickmakers, 1 bricklayer, 4 bakers, 3 butchers, 2 surgeons, and 1 writer. There are 7 innkeepers in the village, and 10 in other parts of the parish. There are not above 240 Seceders of all denominations. The remaining 2445 belong to the Established Church, who, for numbers and genteel appearance, will not be excelled or equalled by many country congregations in the kingdom.—Their stature is considerably above the ordinary size, and their proportions otherwise well adjusted. In

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temper and manners, they are gay, cheerful and active. The higher ranks are opulent, and the lower have it in their power, from the great wages they can earn, to purchase the conveniencies of life. They are far removed from sordidness, and are not unsusceptible of generosity, of which they have given proof on several occasions. As the people equal their neighbours in useful, and far surpass them in elegant accomplishments, it is expected that they will be exemplary also in that devout and religious demeanour, which gives every embellishment its true lustre and dignity.

*Church, School, Poor.*—The church was built in 1765. The manse above 60 years ago; has had some inconsiderable repairs since that time, and is still in a tolerable condition. John Allen, Esq; of Errol is patron.—There is only one established school, though, from the inconvenience of sending children to a distance, others are maintained in different quarters. The parish schoolmaster has 200 merks Scots of salary, 1 s. 4 d. on every marriage, 8 d. on every baptism, and 3½ d. on every certificate. He has besides a small fee for doing the business of the kirk-session. The office is judged to be worth L. 50 Sterling a-year.—The poor on the roll at present, besides some who get occasional aid, are 36. The distribution for their support amounts to more than L. 70 a-year. The means for furnishing it are the weekly collections at the church, which just now may be reckoned L. 40; the interest of L. 600, which is a fund belonging to the poor, and the duties arising from marriages and burials. No assessment has for some time been levied from the parish.

*Village.*—The village of Errol is the only place in the parish, in which the number of buildings has lately increased. Its situation is remarkably pleasant. Seated on an eminence, rising by a gradual ascent above the level of the country, the prospect from it is extensive and delightful. But the houses in the village are as paltry as the situation is pleasant. As there is no stone in the neighbourhood, they are mostly built of clay, and huddled together, without much order or regularity. Excepting gentlemens seats, all the old buildings in the parish are of that substance, which, when properly cemented, is reckoned the warmest and most durable of any; and there are some fabrics of it still in tolerable repair, the date of which cannot be ascertained. In forming such edifices, every man is his own mason, raising them by times, and putting on one layer as the other is condensed; and to this cause it is certainly owing that there are so few professional masons in the parish. It is thought that the people have now in some measure lost the art of preparing the materials, and compacting them together, so as to give the clay-houses the solidity they had in past times. They are, however, adopting a plan of building much more agreeable to the eye, and certainly no less useful for accommodation, moulding the mortar into bricks, and with these forming their dwellings. The proprietor having adopted the judicious plan of feuing out many of the old houses, with their yards, several good houses have of late been erected, and the village has increased in population.

*River Tay.*—The country is intersected in different places by small tracts of water, called pows, which move slowly from the N. to the S. side of the carse, and which are collected mostly from the trenches opened for draining the ground.

ground. The Tay, into which they issue, is the only river in the parish. It furnishes excellent salmon. Formerly the market here was well stocked with them, and their price always moderate; but the whole fishings having been let to companies of merchants in Perth, for a number of years the produce has been sent in vessels to London, where the demand for them has almost entirely removed them from the reach of the people, for whose use nature seems to have ordained them. They are still caught in great quantities in the river, but not many immediately opposite to Errol. The Tay, by the constant action of the tide and current, making an impression on a soft bank, and washing away every season a valuable portion of land, the late proprietor of Errol built large stone dikes for the defence of his estate. Besides stretching along the coast, piers were run some length into the river. They have had a considerable effect. A strong crop of reeds grows annually in the mud, over which the tide regularly flows, which help to diminish its influence, and, by their roots, to consolidate the earth; and the bank, which formerly was so yielding, is become a firm beach, covered with young planting, which is of use, both for ornament and protection. But what is profitable by land is hurtful by water. The long piers are supposed to have altered the position of the banks on which the salmon were caught, and they seem to have deserted that part of the coast. There is a popular tradition, that the Tay anciently ran along the foot of the hills, by the N. of this parish; but if ever that was the case, it must have been at a much earlier period than is reported. The change from that course to the present, is supposed to have taken place in the 12th century; but there are charters on record of that date, confirming to the Hays of Errol, and other proprietors in the neighbourhood

neighbourhood, or mentioning their disposing to religious houses, their right of fishing on the Tay, to which it cannot well be conceived how they had any title, unless the river always held the channel which it now occupies. That some branch of the Tay may have had its direction by the N. of the carse, or rather that there may have been much water in the hollow ground, before the country was drained, is extremely probable; but there is little reason to imagine that the bed of the river has ever undergone any alteration.

*Disadvantages.*—The parish has always had a bad name for roads. In a wet country, and deep soil, the track either of man or beast, when much used, and never repaired, soon becomes unpleasant, if not impassable. The keeping the public ways in a tolerable condition, must have been attended with uncommon difficulty and expense, from the necessity there was of bringing the materials from a distance; but the task which was so arduous, being almost entirely neglected, the roads were in a state of disrepair, which cannot easily be conceived. There is a prospect that this grievance will now be speedily removed. In consequence of an act of Parliament, lately obtained, a great post-road is carrying on from Perth to Dundee, which runs through this parish, and another turnpike is making from that to the shore of Errol, which will facilitate the communication both by land and water. When this important work is accomplished, it is hoped that the statute-labour, which will not be necessary elsewhere, will be applied to the cross-roads, that they also may be put in a tolerable state. The landlords will certainly find, that the money expended in this way will be a valuable improvement to their estates.—Next to bad roads, the chief inconvenience

venience of which the people can complain, is the want of good water. There are few springs in the low grounds, and the small streams which issue from the hills are polluted before they reach the inhabitants of the carse. The country people use the water of the pows, which, in time of drought, is of a stagnating nature, and in rain, is deeply tinged by the clay. The inhabitants of the village dig pit-wells, which, when left open, afford the most nauseous water; and even when inclosed, and built up with a pump, their produce is not of the most pleasant or salutary quality. But this is a disadvantage which it would be very difficult to remove, and which the people must endeavour to support as part of their natural destination.

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