

NUMBER XV.

PARISH OF KELTON.

(County and Presbytery of Kirkcudbright.—Synod of Gallo-
way.)

By the Rev. Mr. THOMAS HALLIDAY.

Names, Situation, River, Extent and Soil, &c.

KELTON consists of three united parishes, *Kelton, Gelston,* and *Kirkcormock*. Near the S. E. boundary of the parish, there is the vestige of an old chapel, called *Kirkmirren*, supposed to have been designed for a Chapel of Ease. The etymology of these names is uncertain: probably they are either of Celtic or Saxon original.

The great military road from Dumfries to Port Patrick, runs through the parish for the space of four miles, in a direction nearly from N. E. to S. W. It is separated from the parishes of Tongland and Balmaghie by the Dee, a river abounding with salmon of the richest quality and flavour.

Kelton is about 6 miles in length. In breadth, it is very unequal. At a medium, it is nearly three miles, and contains an area of above 9500 square acres. The soil of the

parish is exceedingly various, generally thin. In some places, it is a fine loam; in others, it is a deep watery till, especially on the small hills of a conical figure, with which the parish abounds. These little hills are all arable; but they render the surface very uneven. The most luxuriant crops are produced, in general, when the ground is well manured with dung, lime, or marl. Lime is imported from England at 1 s. Sterling per Carlisle bushel. In the north end of the parish, there is abundance of the finest shell marl. On the S. and S. W. borders of the parish, there are some hills, mostly covered with heath. The highest of these is steep and rocky, and rises 1100 feet above the level of the sea.

Climate and Diseases, &c.—Kelton is seldom visited with those fogs, or noxious damp, which are unfriendly to health. The air is, in general, dry and salubrious. No diseases are known to prevail in the parish, but such as appear in other places of the country, that are deemed healthful. Rheumatic complaints seem to prevail most. Fevers of different kinds now and then appear, and sometimes consumptions, &c. The ravages of the small pox are greatly prevented by the humane and successful plan of inoculation. Instances of longevity have not been wanting in Kelton. Seventy is not reckoned old age. Numbers arrive at 80 years, and several at 90, and upwards. There is a woman now living in the parish, aged between 97 and 100 years; and a woman died lately at the town of Castle-Douglas, having reached the long period of 107 or 108 years. She remembered King William the III's cavalry passing through this country to Ireland in 1689. The heaviest rains here are from the S. E., South, and S. W.; and the strongest winds are from the W. and S. W.

Produce

Produce and Exportation.—The chief produce of Kelton is oats, which are of a very good quality. A considerable quantity of barley, and *bigg*, or bear, is raised in the parish; and some wheat. Rye, pease, and beans, are not much cultivated; but there is plenty of potatoes for home consumption, and a good deal for exportation. The lands are generally laid down, or sown out, with rye-grass and clover. Few have yet paid attention to Turnips. The average exportation of grain is, of late years, about 2000 bolls, each boll containing 11 Winchester bushels, or 22,000 Winchester bushels in whole. The markets are, the north of England, and the west of Scotland. The oats, when well cleaned, yield rather more than a stone of meal per bushel. One great hindrance to improvements, in this place, is the high multures. Hemp and flax are not much attended to in this parish.

Black Cattle, Sheep, &c.—The staple commodity of Galloway, which comprehends the shire of Wigton, and stewartry of Kirkcudbright, is black cattle and sheep. Besides what are used in home consumption, many thousands of black cattle are annually driven to the English markets. The black cattle in Kelton amount to above 2000, are strong made, and of a middle size. The sheep do not exceed 1000. Those fed upon the hills are of the small old breed of the country; those fed on the lower and improved grounds, are much larger; generally of a mixed English breed, and have finer wool; but are stronger, and not so pleasant to the taste, as the small kind. There are above 300 horses in the parish.—There are 50 ploughs, and 89 carts employed in husbandry.

Population.—The present state of population in Kelton is 1600 souls. The return to Dr. Webster, in 1755, was 811;

P p 2

increase

increase 789. The proportion the sexes bear to each other is about 90, or 91 males to 100 females. No distinct register of births, marriages and deaths, has been kept in Kelton, since the year 1727; and therefore, the different ages of the inhabitants cannot, with any sort of precision, be ascertained. The increase of population has been very considerable in the parish since the year 1765, and is still advancing, with rapid progress. Marriages and births are become very frequent, because of the continual increase of the inhabitants.

The different professions are as follows :

Merchants, - - -	14	Hair-dresser, - - -	1
Square-men or wrights, -	9	Bakers, - - -	2
Smiths, - - -	7	Masons, - - -	14
Tailors, - - -	10	Slater, - - -	1
Weavers, - - -	14	Stocking weaver, -	1
Butchers, - - -	3	Sadler, - - -	1
Surgeon, - - -	1	Tobacco spinners, -	2
Shoemakers, - - -	5	Carriers, - - -	2
Clockmaker, - - -	1		
In all, - - -			88

Church, Schools, and Poor.—The King is sole patron of the united parishes. The stipend of Kelton, as settled in the year 1788, is 80 l. Sterling neat, exclusive of a glebe of about 15 acres. The manse and offices were rebuilt in the year 1777.—There are three schools in the parish, but they are very poorly endowed. One of these has only 2 l. 8 s. 9 d. another 2 l. 10 s. and the principal school about 8 l. 4 s. Sterling of annual salary, exclusive of school wages, which are very low in this place. Above 50 scholars usually attend each of these schools.—The poor are, for the most part, supplied by the collections made in the church. There are not above 12 at present upon the list. The collections for the poor amount to about 24 l. Sterling per annum, at an average.

There

There are no mortifications in Kelton for the use of the poor. The church was rebuilt in the year 1743. In 1783, a large aisle was added to it; and still, it is by far too small for the accommodation of the people.

Fuel.—Peats are the fuel that has been commonly used in Kelton; but they are now become very scarce, as the mofs in most places, is nearly exhausted. No coal has yet been found in this country, and the expence of that article from England is exceedingly high. Coals, at present, in the port of Kirkcudbright, are sold at 1 l. 8 s. Sterling per ton, exclusive of cartage, which, to the consumer in Kelton, raises the price to about two guineas per ton*.

Rent, Heritors, &c.—The rental of Kelton, as it stands upon the Cefs Roll, is 3598 l. Scotch. The real rent is above 4500 l. Sterling. There are 18 Heritors in the parish, 7 of whom reside.

Villages and Markets.—There are two villages in the parish, both upon the military road, about a mile and a half distant from each other. At the south west village, called *Rhonbouse* or *Kelton Hill*, there is held on the first Tuesday after the 17th day of June, O. S. an annual horse fair, the largest, perhaps, of any in Scotland, where there is, generally, a very fine shew of all sorts of horses. To this fair, vast numbers of horse-dealers resort from England, Ireland, and the east, south, and west of Scotland. Many chapmen and hawkers frequent Kelton Hill fair. Upon the hill adjoining to the village, where the fair is held, many large and well covered tents are erected by people from Dumfries, Kirkcudbright,

* The ton of coal at Kirkcudbright, is 38 cwt. at 7 stone English each cwt.

Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse of Fleet, &c. stored with provisions and all sorts of liquors, for the accommodation and refreshment of those whose business calls them to the fair; and, considering the vast concourse of people upon that occasion, they generally dispose of their articles to advantage. The fair lasts only one day. At this place too, a weekly market for black cattle is held upon Monday, beginning in October, and ending in December, every year.

Trade and Manufactures.—The other village, formerly called *Carlinwark*, now erected into a free and independent burgh of barony, and denominated *Castle-Douglas*, after the superior, is situated at the north corner of the Carlinwark Loch. Within the limits of this burgh, there are, at present, between 600 and 700 inhabitants, where, 26 years ago, there were not 20. At this town a banking branch is now established; and, two companies are engaged in the manufacture of cotton: one of these companies, (in which the superior, William Douglas Esq. of Castle-Douglas, a gentleman of great property, and principal heritor of the parish, is concerned,) proceeds upon a pretty large scale. Here, likewise, a soap-work, brewery, tannery, and woollen manufactory, are in contemplation. One great hindrance, however, to the establishment and carrying on of extensive manufactures in this place, with success, and to advantage, is the scarcity of fuel. Should a plan be adopted whereby to remedy that inconvenience, it would tend much to the benefit of Kelton, and this country in general. Were the tax taken off the importation of coals from England, that salutary end would, perhaps, in a great measure, be attained. In regard to population, the town of Castle-Douglas, is increasing with rapidity, and needs only manufactures to render it considerable*.

Wages,

* There is a post office at Castle-Douglas, where mails are dispatched and received every day, to and from all the principal post-offices in Great Britain and Ireland.

Wages, Servants, &c.—The common rate of wages given to a man's servant, fit for every branch of husbandry, is from 8 to 9 guineas per annum. And the wages given to the best women servants, are from 3 l. 10 s. to 4 l. 10 s. per annum. Forty years ago, the very best men servants received no more than 2 l. per annum, and the best female servants 15 s. Sterling. The common rate of wages, then, was considerably lower than is stated above. Cotter's wages are now about 15 l. Sterling per annum. Tradesmen have 1 s. 8 d. per day, and some receive more, exclusive of victuals. The number of men servants in Kelton, including cotters, of whom there are 30, amounts to about 100. The female servants are nearly double that number.

Mills.—There are three corn mills in the parish, one barley mill, and one flax mill. Though flax is not much attended to in Kelton, the mill is supplied from the neighbourhood around*.

Lake and Marl.—Near the north corner of the parish, there is a lake, commonly called *The Carlinwark Loch*, along the west side of which runs the military road. The extent of this loch, before it was partly drained in the year 1765, was 116 square acres. Ten feet of water were then taken off from it by a cut, or canal, to the water of Dee. Now it is only 80 square acres in extent. This loch is one great source of improvement to Kelton and the neighbourhood. It contains
in

land. About six years ago, the postages received at this office, amounted only to about 48 or 50 l. Sterling, and did not defray the expence of the establishment. Now it yields a revenue of 140 l. Sterling per annum, and is still upon the increase.

* The rate of living bears a full proportion to the increase of wages. It is a well known fact, that 50 years ago, 50 l. was more than equal to 150 l. now; so great has been the advance of every article of living. Provisions, &c. of all kinds, still continue to rise in their price.

in itself, and the mosses adjoining, an inexhaustible fund of the very best shell marl. The marl is taken out of the loch by means of boats and ballast bags, wrought with a wheel; a mode that is pretty expeditious; and it is taken out of the mosses, in the way of throwing, usually practised in other parts of the country.

Improvements.—Since the loch was drained, the face of the country, all around, has undergone a very wonderful change in point of improvement. Not only Kelton, but the parishes of Buittle, Crossmichael, Balmaghie, Parton, Balmaclellan and Kells, reap the benefit of the marl, from the Carlingwark Loch and its vicinity. Marl is carried from the Loch in flat bottomed boats, along the canal to the Dee, in large quantities, for the improvement of the lands on each side. It is conveyed up the river, by means of these flats, as far as New Galloway, to the distance of 15 or 16 miles*. Before the late improvements in husbandry, the crops in this place were, in general, very light; and the grain, in quantity and quality, inferior, by far, to what it is now.

Antiquities.—At the N. E. boundary of the parish, there is the vestige of an old Druidical temple, near to which there is an abundant spring of excellent water. It was, probably held sacred to the worship of the pagan God, *Thor*. From this temple, the farm in which it is situated, seems to have derived its name, *Thors* or *Tors*, plural, being now divided into *upper*, and *nether*.

When the water was let out of the Carlingwark loch, in the year 1765, at the mouth of the drain next to the Loch, there

* In the Carlingwark Loch, there are pikes, perches and eels, which are consumed in the neighbourhood.

there was found a *dam*, or building of stone, moss. and clay *, which appears to have been designed for deepening the Loch. Before it was drained, there were two isles in the Loch, the

VOL. VIII.

Q q

one

* Besides the stone dam mentioned above, there was one of oak wood and earth, at the end of the town of Castle Douglas, now covered by the military road. About this place, many horse-shoes were found, sunk deep in the mud, of quite a different make from those now in use. Several very large stag heads were got in the Loch; a large brass pan was also found in it. Near the S. W. corner of the Loch, a brass *pugio*, or dagger, 22 inches long, and plated with gold, was raised from the bottom in a bag of marl. The *pugio* is in the possession of Mr. Gordon of Greenlaw. On the west side, near the south corner of the Loch, between it and the military road, there is a small piece of rising ground, in view of the castle of Thrieve §, and distant from it, a full mile, called *The Gallows Lot*. On the top of this, stood a gibbet or gallows, upon which were executed those whom Douglas, Lord of Thrieve Castle, thought proper to criminate. Here, it is said, M'Clelland of Raeberry, Lord Kirkcudbright, was put to death by the command of Douglas, notwithstanding the king's letters demanding his release. This circumstance proved fatal to Douglas, his family and interest, in this part of the country. The remains of Raeberry lie buried in the church of Kirkcormock, as appears from the inscription upon a grave-stone there. In the centre of a cairn, near Gelston, was found a stone coffin, above 7 feet long, and 3 feet wide, in which were human bones, in length and thickness, larger by far than the now common size; also a brass or copper helmet, with some other implements of war, greatly corroded. Not far from this place, a nicely carved urn was dug out of the earth, filled with a reddish dust. On the hills, near the S. E. boundary of the parish, there are the vestiges of two large Danish or Saxon encampments, of a circular form, and not far from one another; the one 117, and the other 68 paces in diameter, strongly fortified with triple walls of stone, of a great thickness. In the S. E. border of the parish, likewise, there has anciently been a pottery. The place, where the clay had been dug up for the work, is still very discernible, and the fragments of earthen ware are frequently to be seen in the fields adjoining. From this work, the farm, in which it was situated, has derived its name, *Pottersland*. There are several beautiful moats in the parish, and the ruins of a castle that belonged to the Lords of Kirkcudbright, which had been surrounded with a wide and deep ditch, filled with water.

§ *The Castle of THRIEVE stands upon an island surrounded by the Dee, and belongs to the parish of Balmaghie. An accurate account of this ancient and famous Castle may be seen in Mr. GROSS'S Antiquities.*

one near the north end, and the other near the south end of it. These isles were places of rest, for large quantities of water fowls, of various kinds, which annually came and bred there; even wild geese, it is said, have been sometimes known to breed on these isles. There was always a tradition in the parish, that there had been a town in the Loch, which sunk, or was drowned; and that there were two churches or chapels, one on each of the large isles: There is also a tradition, that the cannon, with which James the IVth. battered the castle of *Thrieve*, was made, (that is, the staves were put together and hooped,) at Buchan's Croft on the west side of the Loch. One of the balls, weighing 48 pounds, picked out of the wall of *Thrieve*, is now at Greenlaw. The vestige, or foundation of an iron forge, was discovered on the south isle. Around it, likewise, there had been a stone building, or rampart; and, from this isle, to the opposite side, on the N. E. there is a road of stone secured by piles of oak wood, with an opening, supposed to have been for a draw-bridge. In several places of the Loch, canoes were found, which appear to have been hollowed, after the manner of the American Savages, with fire. On a small isle, near the north end of the Loch, there was found a large iron mallet or hammer, stained on one end with blood. It is now in the hands of the Antiquarian Society at Edinburgh, and is supposed to have been an instrument used by the ancient Druids, in killing their sacrifices. On several of the little isles in the Loch, were large frames of black Oak, neatly joined. There are two small isles, that have been evidently formed by strong piles of wood driven into the moss and marl, on which were placed large frames of black oak. The tops of these were fully six feet under water before the Loch was drained. The design of these works is not at present known.

Character.

Character, &c.—The inhabitants of Kelton are, in general, an intelligent, polite, social, and hospitable people. In regard to elegance in houses, neatness of dress and genteel living, they are equal, if not superior to their neighbours around them. The sentiments of the people of Kelton, with respect to religion and morality, are, for the most part, rational, just, and free from bigotry.—None belonging to the parish, in the memory of the oldest now living, have suffered the pains of law for any capital crime.—There are four noted inns in the parish, and many small tippling houses. These little gin shops have a ruinous effect, upon the health and morals of the lower classes of the people; the adopting, therefore, some effectual measure for their suppression, would be a business not unworthy the attention of those, to whom the police of the country is intrusted.