

NUMBER XXX.

UNITED PARISHES OF MOY AND
DALAROSSIE.

(County and Presbytery of Inverness—Synod of Moray.)

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Parish, and now Minister of ALVES.*

Origin of the Name.

THE Gaelic is almost the only language used in these parishes, and has been so, as far back as tradition goes. The names of all the places in them are evidently of Gaelic derivation, and descriptive of their situation, or some other property. Accordingly, Moy, in Gaelic, *Magb*, signifies a meadow or plain, which is the nature of the place; Dalarossie, or Dalfergussie, is Fergus's valley. The ancient name is *Starfach-na-gal*, i. e. *the Threshold of the Gaels, or Highlanders*, being the pass, by which the Highlanders entered to the Low Country, so narrow between high mountains, that a few men could defend it against numbers. It was of great consequence to the proprietor in those times, as he could make inroads into the Low Country, and easily prevent any pursuit beyond

that pass. He could likewise hinder any of the neighbouring clans from passing this place without his consent. So sensible were they of their dependence on him, upon this account, that they agreed to pay him a certain tax, as often as he gave them permission to take this road with their booty; which tax is still known by the name of *Stuic-cbriach*, i. e. the steak or collop of the booty, expressive of the quality of this plunder, which was cattle. After the place was cleared of wood and cultivated, it obtained the present name of *Moy*. It came into the possession of William, the 7th Laird of Mackintosh, in the year 1336, and was conveyed to him by David Bishop of Murray. The Laird of Mackintosh, who is undoubted chief of that clan, is likewise captain of Clan Chattan. The Clan Chattan consisted of 16 tribes, each having their own chieftain, but all voluntarily united under the government of one leader, of whom the present Laird of Mackintosh is the representative.

Extent and Surface.—The greatest length of the parish, from S. W. to N. E., is about 30 miles, and the mean breadth about 5 miles. This country is bleak and barren, rugged and mountainous, except small stripes and spots on each side of the river Findhorn, to be afterwards described.

Climate and Diseases.—The climate is much colder here than in the neighbouring parishes, which is supposed to be occasioned by the great height of the mountains. Vegetation is accordingly later, than in the places that lie nearer the Murray Frith; and the crops, in cold seasons, are liable to suffer by the lateness of the harvest. The snow generally begins to fall about the middle of November, and frequently continues until March or April. In the year 1782, the frost and snow overtook the crops of grain almost before any of them were
ripe;

ripe; and they lay buried under the snow till February 1783. Though every possible exertion was made to recover them, yet very little was obtained. The people were in the most miserable condition for provisions; obliged to purchase them at a great distance, and at such a high price, that many families were put on very short allowance. Many were reduced to extreme indigence, from which they have not yet recovered.—But notwithstanding the coldness of the climate, the inhabitants are as healthy, if not more so, than their neighbours. They are not liable to any peculiar local diseases, and many of them live to a very great age. Two persons died last spring at the age of 93; and there are several at present in the parish near 90 years of age, who enjoy their strength and faculties, very little impaired for that advanced age.

Soil and Produce.—The cultivated ground in the parish bears but a very small proportion to that which is lying waste, perhaps not above a 15th part. But the soil, of what is cultivated, is, for the most part, of a very good quality, and, in favourable seasons, produces plentiful crops. The grain raised here is chiefly black oats. Some Scotch barley and rye are likewise raised. All the tenants and their cottagers plant potatoes, which ordinarily thrive remarkably well, and make a considerable part of their maintenance. In favourable years, the produce is nearly equal to the consumption of the parish; but, in unfavourable seasons, when the crops fail, they are under a necessity of procuring considerable quantities of grain from other places. The quantity of grain, necessary for the support of the inhabitants, would require to be much greater, were it not that the numbers of cattle and sheep, kept in the parish, furnish them with flesh and milk in aid of other provisions.

Mode

Mode of Cultivation.—Farming is carried on almost in the same method at present, that was in use for ages past ; very few improvements have been introduced, nor do the people seem disposed to adopt any. Instead of laying the whole dung of the farm on the barley land, according to the general custom in other places, it is all laid here on the ley land, which they break up for oats ; excepting a small part of it, which is reserved for the little barley that is sown, and the potatoes.

Ploughs, Cattle, &c.—On account of the shortness of the labouring season, the number of ploughs in the parish, is much greater than the quantity of land would otherwise require. They are not fewer than 246, and chiefly drawn by 4 horses each, and sometimes there are two oxen along with the horses. The number of horses in this parish is about 900 ; the number of black cattle 1,800 ; and of sheep 12,000. There is a considerable number of each of these kinds of cattle sold annually, with the price of which the tenants pay their rents, and provide for themselves all the articles that their farms do not furnish.—The sheep, upon the large sheep farms, are of the black faced kind ; but those, kept by the tenants, are a cross breed, between the large black faced, and the small sheep, formerly kept in the country. The wool of the large sheep is of a coarser quality, than that of the small ; the wool of the latter sells from 16s to 18s. per stone, Dutch weight.

Wild Animals, Birds, &c.—Foxes are very numerous over all this country, and very destructive to the sheep and poultry. Of late years, a fox-hunter has been hired by the neighbourhood to destroy them. The parish abounds in polecats, otters, and badgers. The red deer are very numerous about the source of the Findhorn. The woods in Moy abound with roes. Black game and grouse are so plentiful in this parish, that
many

many gentlemen resort to it in the shooting season. Cranes and wild ducks nestle in the island in the lake of Moy. On a high rock, above the river Findhorn, an eagle has for many years built her nest.

Woods.—There is a good deal of natural wood on the banks of the river Findhorn, chiefly birch and alders. There is a tradition, that before this country came into the possession of Mackintosh, it was in a great measure over-run with wood, and called the Forest of Strathdearn; that it was set on fire through carelessness, and destroyed by the inhabitants, when they began to clear the ground for cultivation.—The Laird of Mackintosh has very considerable plantations of Scotch firs mixed with forest trees; to which he is making additions annually. These plantations are in a thriving way, and in a short space of time, will decorate the country, and be of very great service to the inhabitants.

Rivers.—The river Findhorn takes its rise, in the hills of this parish, from a few inconsiderable springs, the principal one of which issues, in a copious stream, from what is called the *Gloven Stone*, a large rock with a fissure in it. The direction of this river is nearly from S. W. to N. E. After running for the course of 24 miles through this parish, it passes through those of Calder, Ardclach, Edenkeillie, Dyke and Forres, and falls into the Murray Frith at Findhorn, in the parish of Kinlofs. The whole course of it, from its source to the sea, is about 50 miles. It is called, in English, *Findhorn*, from the place at which it enters the sea; but the Gaelic name of it is *Uisg-earn*. From thence this parish, through which it runs for the space of 24 miles, is called Strathdearn. As this river runs, for all this course, between high mountains, and receives many streams or rivulets in its progress, it

it rises very rapidly, and falls at times very suddenly. There is but 1 bridge over it, through the whole of this course; and the people at a distance from the bridge, having frequent occasion to cross the river, often attempt to ford it in an improper state, by which many lives are lost. This river abounds with a great variety of trouts; some salmon are also found in it within the bounds of this parish, especially in seasons that have frequent *speats* or floods, that enable the salmon to get over the rocks, which obstruct their passage when the river is low. There are a number of lesser streams and rivulets in the parish, but none of them of such importance as to deserve particular notice.

Lake, Island, &c.—The Lake of Moy is the only considerable one in this parish. By an actual measurement of it, taken on the ice, its greatest length is $1\frac{3}{4}$, and the greatest breadth $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. This lake abounds with *charr* (commonly called *red wames*), and a great variety of other trouts, of different sizes and colours. About the middle of the lake there is an island, consisting of about 2 acres of ground. It lies N. and S., and is nearly the shape of a violin. At the south end of the island, there are the remains of a house, containing 4 fire rooms, where the Lairds of Mackintosh resided in times of trouble. By an inscription above the gate, it is said to have been built in the year 1665, by Lauchlan the 20th Laird of Mackintosh. Adjoining to the house, there is a garden, planted with fruit trees and currant bushes. It appears, by the ruins still remaining, that there have formerly been very extensive buildings in this island. The remains of a street, the whole length of the island, with the foundations of houses, on each side, are still very visible; and in the year 1760, two ovens were discovered, each capable to contain 4 bushels of
meal

meal made into bread. In the year 1422, it contained a garrison of 400 men. In those troublesome times, when it was necessary to live either in fortified or inaccessible places, the Lords of Mackintosh resided here constantly, except in the winter seasons. At the distance of some hundred yards from this, there is an artificial island formed, by heaping a parcel of large round stones upon each other. This place was used for the confinement of malefactors, before the abolition of the jurisdiction power, which was vested in the hands of the chiefs. When the lake was low, the criminal could scarce stand with dry feet; but after rains, the water rose to his middle. Luckily, however, for the prisoner, in 24 hours he was either acquitted or condemned. This place is called *Ellan-na-glach*, i. e. *the Stoney Island*.

Mineral Well.—At the north end of the lake, there is a well of mineral water, which is accounted serviceable for headachs, and disorders of the stomach. There is no account of its being analysed, so as to have its qualities ascertained; but it appears to be of the chalybeate kind.

Population.—The parish register having been destroyed a few years ago, by an accidental fire, a list of baptisms and marriages cannot now be made out; nor can the population be ascertained in that way. The following is the result of a late enumeration, taken for the purpose of this statement: The deaths are not recorded in this, or the neighbouring parishes, and therefore cannot be ascertained.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of examinable persons, -	757	843	1600
----- children under 7 years of age, - - - - -	-	-	213
Total number of souls, - - - - -	-	-	1813
The return to Dr. Webster, in 1755, was	-	-	1693
Increase, - - - - -	-	-	120

LIST of BIRTHS and MARRIAGES for the last four years.

	1788	1789	1790	1791	Total.	Ann. Aver.
Baptisms, - -	34	45	32	49	160	40
Marriages, - -	18	10	12	45	55	13½

There have not been many new houses built for these several years; but of late some parts of the parish, which contained a great number of inhabitants, have been laid out in sheep farms, which has diminished the population very considerably; and if this sheep farming plan shall be extended here, as is proposed, it is thought it will occasion a still farther diminution of the population.

Occupations.—In these united parishes, there are no towns, villages, nor manufactories of any kind. All the inhabitants are employed in cultivating the ground, and in tending their cattle, excepting a few artificers; such as, square wrights, blacksmiths, weavers, tailors and shoemakers, who work for the other inhabitants. The generality of the tenants occupy small farms, for which they pay from 5*l.* to 10*l.* Sterling of yearly rent. All these tenants have cottagers, who are employed as servants and labourers by them, or follow the occupations already mentioned*. The number, either of tenants

* The wages of labourers are increased considerably of late years. About 30 or 40 years ago, that of an ordinary farm servant, including some perquisites,

ants or cottagers, cannot be ascertained with precision; but it is supposed, that the number of the formes is about 200, and that of the latter not less than 340; which, with the proprietors residing in the parish, makes the number of houses a few more than 540.

Proprietors, Rent, &c.—These parishes are the property of 13 heritors, all holding of subject superiors, except the Laird of Mackintosh. Five of these heritors reside in the parish. The valued rent of the parish is 2,234l. Scotch. The real rent is about 1000l. Sterling, and is increasing considerably, by sheep farms. As pasturage is an important object here, in letting of farms, pasture ground is considered as well as the arable land; and land is let not *by the acre*, but *by the piece*, or *lump*; and therefore the rent per acre cannot be specified. Besides the rent in money, customs are paid *in kind* by most of the tenants, such as wedders, eggs, fowls, and other articles. Personal services are likewise exacted by the proprietors from their tenants; as casting and carrying home a certain quantity of fuel; shearing a certain number of days in harvest; carrying loads from distant parts of the country; and performing numbers of other things, that are scarce worth mentioning, but which are very troublesome to the poor people liable to this treatment.

3 S 2

Ecclesiastical

was from 10s. to 12s. in the half year; and a day labourer had 4d. per day, with his maintenance, and 7d. without it. Now, the wages of a farm servant is from 2l. to 2l. 15s. in the half year; that of a labourer 6d. with, and 1s. without victuals, per day. The wages of a female servant, about 50 years ago, was between 6s. and 7s.; now, from 15s. to 20s. Sterling in the half year. Female servants always receive their maintenance in the family, in which they live; the greater part of the men servants have their victuals in the family, and some receive meal in lieu of their victuals, at the rate of 6 bolls per annum to a full grown man, and 4 bolls, of 9 stone Dutch weight each, to boys.

Ecclesiastical State.—This is an united parish, as already observed, made up of the original parishes of Moy and Dalarossie. There is no account, written or traditional, when the annexation took place; yet, in many respects, the parishes are distinct and separate, though under the charge of one minister. There is still a church kept up in each, in which divine service is performed alternately. These churches are 9 miles distant from each other: the road is at all times rough, and in the stormy season, frequently impassable. The church of Moy was built in the year 1765, and is still in good repair. The church of Dalarossie was rebuilt in the year 1790. Mr. Rose of Kilravock is accounted patron, and has hitherto always presented to it.—The stipend is 69l. 14s. 2d., with a small glebe in each parish. The manse was built in the year 1765, and has lately received some reparation, which has made it tolerably comfortable.—All the inhabitants of this parish are of the Established Church, except a few individuals, who are of the Episcopal Communion, but commonly attend divine service in the parish church.

Schools.—There is a parochial school established in this parish. The school-house was rebuilt in 1784, in a pretty sufficient manner. The salary is 100l. Scotch. The schoolmaster is ordinarily session-clerk, by which he makes about 2l. 10s. Sterling annually. The school fees are, 1s. for reading and writing, 1s. 6d. for arithmetic, and 2s. for Latin. All these emoluments put together, will make about 20l. Sterling in the year. The poor are much inclined to give a little education to their children; but so extensive is the parish, that a very inconsiderable part of them only can be accommodated by the parochial school.

Poor.

Poor.—There are a number of poor people in this parish; but most of them do something in the way of providing for their own maintenance, and receive what aid can be given them from the parish funds. These funds are very inconsiderable, being only the weekly collections, which do not exceed 4l. or 5l. Sterling in the year. Such as are altogether incapable of labouring are relieved by the neighbourhood: But as the practice of common begging is not restrained, many of them betake themselves to that method of obtaining support.

Roads and Bridges.—The road from Inverness to Perth passes through this parish. It was made, and is still kept in repair, by Government. Besides a large and useful bridge on the river Findhorn, there is a number of smaller ones on this road, within the parish, which were built and kept in repair at the public expence. There are roads of communication betwixt the different parts of the parish, now forming by the statute labour; but there is so much to be done in that way, that it will take a considerable time before these roads can be completed.

Inns and Alehouses.—There are in this parish 2 inns, on the public road, and about 12 small public houses that sell whisky. The whisky houses are exceedingly detrimental to the morals of the people, as they are so many temptations, in every different part of the parish, to idleness, quarrelling, and many other vices.—It is supposed, that the coldness of the climate renders the use of spirits more necessary than in milder situations; but whatever may be in that, it is much to be regretted, that, instead of making that moderate use of spirits, most of the people, that resort to these small public houses, seldom depart without going to excess.

Character

Character and Manners.—The inhabitants of these parishes, however, are, in general, sober, peaceable, and industrious. Crimes of an atrocious nature are rare among them. The climate is rather unfavourable to the constant exercise of industry, as during the stormy season in winter, and a great part of spring, they can do little, except taking care of their cattle; but as soon as the season permits them to labour without doors, their exertions are very great, until the seed time is over. In summer, they are employed in providing fuel, which consists of peats; and as the climate is unfavourable, on the one hand, this inconvenience is in a great measure remedied, by the great plenty of fuel in every part of the parish. In harvest they are equally diligent in cutting down and securing their corn, before the bad weather sets in.—In their manners, they are remarkably attached to old customs and practices. The language, dress, and most of the peculiarities of the old Highlanders, continue in this place, with very little alteration. Excepting the gentry, few of the inhabitants of this place speak English; nor do they discover much inclination to acquire that language. The tartan plaid and kilt, and the other parts of dress peculiar to the Highlanders, are still in general use among the men; the women, in like manner, retain the Highland dress of that sex. Their houses are of the same construction with those of their predecessors for ages past; and they still place the fire in the middle of the house, and the family sits in the form of a circle around it.

NUMBER