

## N U M B E R XXIX.

## P A R I S H O F B O U R T I E,

(COUNTY AND SYNOD OF ABERDEEN, PRESBYTERY OF  
GARIOCH).

*By the Rev. Mr THOMAS SHEPHERD.*

*Extent, Soil, &c.*

**I**TS extent is about 4 English miles in length, and 2 in breadth, and it contains about 4000 acres, most of which have been measured, and above 600 acres inclosed. Some of these inclosures are planted with firs, and generally in a thriving way. One of the greatest extent, of 50 acres, on the estate of Barra, was among the earliest planted in this country, and is now cutting down and selling to good account. On the same estate is lately finished another inclosure, not so extensive as the former, but is stocked with a variety of plants of different kinds of wood besides that of firs. About the middle of the parish, there are two ranges of hills, mostly green. They seem of old to have been laboured within 50 yards of the top, but now  
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the higher parts are neglected. The ground upon the skirts, and at the bottom of these hills, is wet and spongy; later in harvest by 10 days than the earliest parts of the parish, and seems more suited for grafs than grain. The lands lying to the W. and to the E. of these hills are generally of a strong stiff soil, with a clay bottom, pretty fertile, but much pestered with large stones, both above and below the surface. About 20 years ago, our country did not breed cattle of sufficient bulk and strength to labour the ground. They were mostly brought from the south, particularly from Fifeshire. In a few years, by hard labour, they were worn out, and became unfit for service; and as the farmer had not the means of fattening them, he very often sold them for a third part of what they cost him. The case is now much altered to the better. The farmer brings up oxen able for his work, sells them or fattens them when they begin to be upon the decline, and in this way is rather a considerable gainer than a loser upon his work cattle.

*Population.*—According to Dr Webster's report, the population was then 525. The number of inhabitants, by an exact list in 1771, was 560. It is now only 450; the decrease is principally owing to the monopoly of farms, and the scarcity of moss. Of the present inhabitants, 2 are Seceders, 10 Episcopalians, and 6 Quakers, the rest attend the Established Church.

*Rents.*—One farmer possesses nearly what employed 4; each of whom yoked 10 oxen. The proprietor took these lands under his own management for a few years, inclosed and limed a considerable part of the grounds, built an excellent dwelling-house, substantial and commodious office-houses,

houses, and let the whole to one gentleman, at rather more than double the rent the lands formerly gave. The rent is now about L. 185 Sterling. Another farm rents L. 105 Sterling. The rest of the rents of the parish are from L. 40 down to L. 7 Sterling. The whole rent of the parish is about L. 1000 Sterling, the valued rent L. 2501 Scots.

*Mode of Cultivation.*—Several of the tenants yoke 10 oxen in one plough; however, the new husbandry has been practised by some of them for several years, and is daily increasing. There are about 50 acres of turnip, and 250 of sown grass. The grain generally sown is bear and oats, few pease or lint-feed; and there are as many potatoes raised as serve the inhabitants.

*Number of Cattle.*—There are about 600 black cattle; 500 sheep pasture during the summer, but not so many through the winter, and 130 horses. We have now 60 carts. In 1744, when the present incumbent was settled, there were only 2. At that period there were only two houses in the parish which had stone chimnies, the house of Barra and the manse. Since that time, three of the heritors have built mansion-houses; and within these few years, seven neat and commodious houses have been erected, upon different farms within the estate of Barra.

*Manure and Fuel.*—The principle manure is that which the cattle afford. Of late the farmers have begun to bring lime from Aberdeen and Newburgh, English and Scotch shells, and some powdered lime from Udney and the Buchan country. Some years ago it was to be had at Pitmedden.

medden. The principal fuel is peat, and some turf from the moors and surface of the peat-mofs.

*Antiquities.*—On the summit of the hill of Barra, there are the distinct remains of a camp, of a circular form, in extent near to 3 acres, and furrounded with 3 ditches. It goes under the name of the *Cummin's Camp*. The Cummins were a bold and numerous race of people, who are said to have been proprietors of the greatest part of the Buchan country, and disaffected to King Robert Bruce. After the battle near Inverury, where the king's arms were victorious, he marched his troops, stormed this camp, and put the Cummins to flight. It is probable this camp had been originally formed by the Danes, as it seems to have required considerable time and labour to execute it, and that the Cummins had taken possession of it as an advantageous post. In the church yard there is a long rough stone, cut out into a coarse statue of a man. The traditional report is, that it was done for the celebrated Thomas de Longueville, the companion of Wallace, who was killed in storming the above mentioned camp, and is buried here; but all this rests upon uncertain tradition. There are three Druidical temples here, two of them pretty entire.

*Heritors and Stipend.*—There are 5 heritors, none of whom at present reside. The stipend is L. 42 : 4 : 5 in money, 32 bolls of meal, and 16 bolls of bear.

*Character of the People.*—They are sober, industrious, and peaceable. Since 1744 none of them have been tried before a criminal court.

*Advantages*

*Advantages and Disadvantages.*—The advantages are the sobriety of the inhabitants, (not an alehouse being in the parish), and the diligence of the women in knitting stockings. They are far from lime, and it requires a considerable share of their summer labour to provide fuel.\*

\* The rise of farm servants wages is very remarkable. When the present incumbent was settled in 1744, the half year's wage of men servants was from 8s. to 15s. Sterling. The present rate is from L. 2, 10s. to L. 3, 15s. Sterling.

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