

ous even for horses. This road is now become a sort of thoroughfare between the Carse of Gowrie and Strathmore, and is of public advantage, as well as private benefit.

*May 1837.*

## PARISH OF MEIGLE.

PRESBYTERY OF MEIGLE, SYNOD OF ANGUS AND MEARNS.

THE REV. JAMES MITCHELL, MINISTER.

### L.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Situation, Extent, &c.*—THIS parish is in the centre of Strathmore, bounded on the north-west and north, by the rivers Isla and Dean; on the east and south, by the parishes of Essie and Nevy, and Newtyle; on the south-west and west by those of Kettins and Cupar-Angus. It lies in  $56^{\circ} 36'$  north Lat. and  $5''$  east Long. from Edinburgh, being in length  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from west to north-east, and from 1 to 2 miles broad. It probably derived its name from its local situation,—the church and manse being built on a plain between two marshes or “gills,” which might thus have given rise to the word Midgile or Meigle.

*Strathmore.*—Strathmore, “the great strath or vale,” reaches from near Perth to Brechin, about 40 miles long, 4—6 broad, bounded on the south and south-east by the Sidla Hills, and on the north and north-west by the Grampians. There are no caves in the parish, and no part of it is hilly. The gentle eminence on which Belmont Castle stands (says Dr Playfair) is 204 feet above the level of half-flood mark at Panbride, near Arbroath. The village of Meigle lies quite contiguous to the church, and is watered by the burn of the same name.

*Geology, &c.*—Two quarries of red sandstone have been wrought, and used for building. The dip inclines to the west. Marl was dug in great abundance in the Gill, on the south. It was covered with peat-earth. The remains of the marl are now mixed with the moss by cultivation. But where a bed of marl is found (as under the road to Dundee) it is very soft and white, retaining scarcely any remains of shells.

Alongst the side of the marl-moss (called Myres,) and occa-

sionally running into it, there is a stratum of sand, apparently sea-sand, which seems to be the deposit of an arm of the sea, that had flowed through the strath, from near Perth to Douglaston, and thence towards Arbroath. It may, however, be the deposit of an interior lake long ago emptied. On the Sidla hills, distant only one mile and a-half, geologists have observed some marine or aqueous remains.

The soil in general is a fine black mould, inclining to brown, on a bottom of mortar, and yields good crops of wheat, barley, oats, and green-crop. There are also some sandy and clayey soils. Each of them is generally well improved and cultivated.

In the river Dean, good perch, pike, and trout are caught. The trout are often taken in February and March. Their flesh is red, and the flavour excellent. A few salmon ascend the Isla, but very few are taken. The common white trout and also pike are caught in that river.

There are no forests. The plantations are of oak, ash, beech, elms, and of the plane and service-trees, of the larix and different sorts of pines. On moist soils, the birch, alder, and willow are planted, and occasionally elsewhere. There are some fine aged elms, beeches, and ash, chiefly in Belmont park, formerly Kirkhill, where the Bishop of Dunkeld occasionally resided. One of the beeches, standing in a back-court at Belmont, is somewhat remarkable. The height of it to the top is 74 feet, the girth is 13 feet 9 inches at 3 feet from the ground. The solid wood below the offset of the branches, which are large and extended, is 276 feet.

There are some springs of excellent water in the parish; some of them flowing from sandstone rock, others from clay and gravel.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

No ancient history of this parish is known. Boece mentions it, speaking of Vanora's tomb erected here. And there is no modern account of it, previous to the late Statistical Account, by Dr Playfair, then minister of Meigle, afterwards Principal of the United College of St Andrew's, and known to the world by his chronological and geographical works.

*Land-owners.*—The chief land-owners are, Lord Wharncliffe; Lord Strathmore, by late purchase; Mr Murray of Simprim; Mr Nairne of Drumkilbo; and Mr Kinloch of Kinloch, whose property is "temporaliter" in Cupar Angus.

*Parochial Registers.*—The earliest date of the register of baptisms is the 31st of July 1727. It is pretty regularly kept; but

no register will be ever quite complete, till it be made imperative on Dissenters and all persons to record the baptism of their children.

*Antiquities.*—In the park of Belmont, there is a tumulus called “Belliduff,” which tradition gives as the spot where M'Duff slew Macbeth; and about a mile distant, stands a large whinstone nodule, or block of twenty tons weight, called Macbeth's stone. In all probability there has been fighting near these apparently sepulchral monuments; but it is more probable that Macbeth was slain at Lumphanan in the Mearns.

A font or trough for holy water was dug out of the rubbish, when the body of the old church was taken down. Its form is octagonal, each compartment having some emblem of the crucifixion upon it, as the “mock robe,” the “spear and sponge,” &c. It is a very hard stone, and placed on a pedestal in the minister's garden.

In the church-yard are the remains of the famous sepulchral monument of Vanora, or Guinevar, wife of the fabulous King Arthur, according to tradition. It relates that Arthur lived in the sixth century—that he lost a battle with the Picts and Scots—and that Vanora was made a prisoner, and detained in captivity on Barryhill, distant about two miles and a half from Meigle. Barryhill, in the parish of Alyth, was fortified of old. Vanora, says tradition, held an unlawful intercourse with Mordred, a Pictish King; and Arthur, when he received her again, enraged at her infidelity, caused her to be torn to pieces by wild beasts. She was buried at Meigle, and a monument erected to perpetuate her infamy. Such is the traditional story. But even Arthur's existence is now doubted, while of the Arthur of romance every one has heard.

The monumental stones called Vanora's have been described so often, and so minutely, that it seems unnecessary to dilate upon them in a work intended to be as concise as possible. Pennant, Dr Playfair, Pinkerton, Forsyth, and Knox, have given ample details, and to them the curious inquirer will at any rate have recourse. Let it suffice to say, that on each of these stones, now quite separated, there is a variety of sculptured figures, chiefly of the monstrous kind. One is a huge serpent fastened to a bull's mouth; another like a centaur—and there are two representations of wild beasts tearing a human body,—and one where the body seems tied or close to chariot wheels,—which may relate to Vanora, or may have given rise to the tradition.

*Buildings.*—The body of the church was built about fifty-four years ago; but two aisles of the old one remain. It is a plain building of stone. Belmont House, the seat of Lord Wharnclyffe, (called Kirkhill till about seventy years ago, when it was rebuilt,) is a handsome quadrangular building, retaining part of the ancient tower, in the back court. The lawn is extensive and finely wooded, and well kept, as is the garden.

Meigle House, Drumkilbo, and Kinloch, are good mansions, and pleasantly situated. Potento, a moderate sized house, occupied by a tenant, is delightfully situated on the south bank of the Dean; surrounded with wood, and near the rocky banks of the river. On the opposite side of the Dean, is Caerdean, where there are still the vestiges of a camp.

### III.—POPULATION.

There is no authentic record of the population till Dr Playfair (Statistical Account) gave the amount at 1148. Since then it has decreased.

Population in 1811,	-	928
1821,	-	847
1831,	-	878

The causes of the decrease are the enlargement of farms, and the removal of a linen manufactory. About 301 persons reside in the village of Meigle; 45 in Longlees; and in the country 530.

The average number of baptisms is	18
of proclamations,	9
But marriages less by 4-5, one of the parties residing elsewhere.	
The average number of persons under 15 years of age is	316
betwixt 15 and 30	245
30 and 50	191
50 and 70	110
above 70	90
Number of families;	191
chiefly employed in agriculture,	81
in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	88
The number of bachelors and widowers upwards of 50 years of age	18
unmarried women under 45 years of age,	35
children in each family,	3½ nearly.

One insane (a man) is in the asylum. There are two (males) fatuous; and six of both sexes idiots, or quite silly.

One peer occasionally, and three families of independent fortune, reside in the parish. There are seven proprietors of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards.

### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture.*—The arable acres in the parish, exclusive of Kinloch, are 2726; about 178 acres are under wood, and 100 acres in pasture, a small part of which is in the natural state. In parks

and lawns, trees have been for a long time planted, and pasture and wood-land are thus intermixed. There is no undivided common, but a small part of what was such may be profitably improved by tillage, or planted with trees. The woods and beltings are regularly thinned and pruned.

*Rent.*—Land rent is very various. The average rent (partly in grain and money) of land fit for wheat is reported to me, by factors and tenants, at L. 2 to L. 2, 15s.; that of land fit for barley and green crop, L. 1, 10s.; and of land of an inferior quality, L. 1. But of this last description of soil there is little in the parish. There is little permanent pasture, except in lawns and parks, of much value, and it is either pastured by the proprietor, or let together with arable land. The rent may average about L. 3 to L. 4. The rental of the parish is about L. 5000.

*Wages.*—Wages, including the value of victuals, (oatmeal and milk,) and lodgings of a farm-servant for one year, are stated at L. 20 to L. 24, 11s.; and for a woman, living in the house, at L. 5 to L. 7.

Day-labourers get 2s. a day from March to September. Women for field work, 8d.; masons and carpenters have from 2s. to 3s. in the long day—less in winter in proportion.

*Live-Stock.*—Few sheep are bred. In this parish and the neighbourhood the Leicestershire is generally most esteemed. Angus-shire cattle are the principal stock; but some are bred from a cross with the short-horned (Teeswater) bull, and accounted good feeders, and early fattened. The general duration of leases is nineteen years. The farm-buildings and enclosures are well-preserved. Proprietors give encouragement to improvements, and in most instances have given deductions of rent since the late war—or when times required abatement. And their kind consideration is generally admitted by the tenants.

There is no regular manufactory now in the parish. About fifteen men and women are chiefly employed in weaving coarse linen. Machinery has nearly put an end to hand-spinning, and old women, especially, get little or nothing to do, and are (many of them) reduced to poverty.

A Perth manufacturer who resides here has a work-mill, &c. for dyeing and dressing cotton cloth, for umbrellas. The people employed (from six to eight) live comfortably, and work only twelve hours every lawful day. About 72,000 yards are finished and sent to London annually.

## V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Markets.*—Meigle is a market-town, but has now no regular weekly market. Lately it has had a fortnight tryst for the sale of cattle, which is well attended. It has also two fairs in the year, for cattle and horses, and ordinary traffic, when a considerable multitude assemble. The nearest market-town is Cupar Angus, five miles distant, but Dundee (13 miles) is the principal market-town, and port for shipping of grain. The quantity of grain and of potatoes sold is not ascertained, but is very considerable.

*Means of Communication.*—Meigle has a post-office, and three post-runners daily. There are about six miles of turnpike-road in the parish. Every lawful day a coach runs to and from Edinburgh and Aberdeen, by Perth and Queensferry, and one from Blairgowrie,—and one from Cupar Angus, to meet the rail-road coach, to and from Dundee, at Newtyle, (two miles from Meigle) three times a week.

A very old bridge over the Dean connects Meigle with Airly, in the county of Forfar. A well-built bridge has lately been erected by subscription over the Isla, connecting this parish with Alyth. Bridges over the burn of Meigle, and over-drains, are kept in good repair, as are the fences.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The situation of the church is convenient for the people. Its distance from the extremities of the parish is from two to three miles. The church is in pretty good repair. Two bishops of Dunkeld, and two Presbyterian ministers of the seventeenth century, are buried in the north aisle. The church affords accommodation for about 700 persons. Tenants, and householders have seats free, but, owing to the great inequality of the population on different properties, some seats are let.

The manse was built in 1809–10. The glebe, exclusive of garden, house stances and roads, is about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  acres of good soil, and worth L. 17 or L. 18 yearly. The stipend is 14 chalders meal and barley, vicarage worth about L. 3, and L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements.

There are no chapels of ease, or other places of worship in the parish, except an Episcopalian chapel, whose minister is paid by his people. He has two other chapels. There are 23 Episcopalian, and 38 Presbyterian Dissenters in the parish.

Divine service in the parish church is generally well attended. The average number of communicants is from 390 to 400. There is no society for religious and charitable purposes, but charity in va-

rious ways is liberally exercised towards the indigent, and the wants of the poorer inhabitants are readily relieved.

*Education.*—There is one parochial school and one unendowed. The parochial schoolmaster's salary, including L. 2, 2s. 9½d., in lieu of a garden, amounts to L. 36, 7s. 1d.; as session-clerk he has also a salary of L. 2, 10s.; register of baptisms and marriages, L. 5; school fees, L. 25; total L. 68, 17s. 1d. He has good accommodation. The unendowed school produces yearly about L. 15 to the teacher; but he is paid for other things, as collecting the road-money, &c.

In the parochial school, the usual branches of education are taught, also Latin, Greek, French, geography and practical mathematics. In the other, the teacher is qualified in much the same manner, but has no advanced scholars. School fees for reading and writing are very moderate. The poor pay none.

Every person above childhood, or eight years of age, can read, and there are few who cannot write. The people in general are alive to the benefits of education, and endeavour to send their children to school, part of the year. The distance from school is nowhere great.

*Poor.*—The church collections average yearly about L. 36, 10s., which sum, together with interest of money saved by the session, (L. 16, 17s. yearly) and mortcloth-money, has hitherto supported, in part or wholly, from nine to fourteen paupers in ordinary times. According to circumstances, we give from 4s. to 10s. a month.

There is no alms-house or workhouse in the parish, or in any of the towns near it. A house of this kind is much wanted, to which we could send silly or weakly paupers, paying board, &c. for them. Few are averse to receive parochial relief. Some, however, consider it degrading.

*Friendly Society.*—The ploughmen have a friendly society here of about eight years standing, and it is found advantageous. We had a saving bank, but, from the low rate of interest for money, are giving it up.

*Inns.*—There are five inns or taverns in the parish. Not more than two are necessary for travellers, &c.

*Fuel.*—The fuel used is chiefly coal from Dundee, the cost, including carriage, about 1s. 5d. per cwt. Wood is also used as fuel.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Since last Statistical Account was written, great progress has been made in the theory and practice of husbandry; and in

Strathmore, landlords and tenants have concurred in advancing the art by all the known and approved methods. The latest improvement is the application of bones for manure, which was introduced by a farmer here, and generally adopted. It is pretty well known in Scotland, that the farmers in Strathmore are amongst the most intelligent and enterprising of their profession.

Great improvements have also been made in building gentlemen's seats, and tenants' houses, and the parish now presents a highly cultivated and pleasing aspect.

*Drawn up 1833—Revised May 1837.*

## PARISH OF RATTRAY.

PRESBYTERY OF DUNKELD, SYNOD OF PERTH AND STIRLING.

THE REV. WILLIAM HERDMAN, MINISTER.

### I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—THE name of Rattray seems to have belonged alike to the parish, and to the principal family that dwelt in it, and probably was transferred from the one to the other. It is said that there are records which bear the name of Rattray of Craighall and Rattray, as early as 1066. No account is given of the etymology of the name.

*Boundaries, &c.*—Rattray is the westmost parish in Strathmore, the district adjoining in that quarter being the Stormont. It is bounded by the river Ericht, which runs along the west and south side, the whole extent of the parish, and separates it from Blairgowrie. On the east, it is bounded by the parish of Bendochy, and farther north by the parish of Alyth. The breadth of the parish, from west to east, is about 2 miles; the length from north to south is 5; besides the detached portion of Easter Bleaton.

*Topographical Appearances.*—The whole surface of the parish inclines by a very considerable declivity from north to south. The southern part, washed by Ericht, is flat; but the ground soon begins to rise towards the village, a short way behind which, perhaps not more than a quarter of a mile, these hills commence, which continue to increase in elevation and ruggedness, till they terminate in the Grampian mountains; though at the distance of many