

rable to the inhabitants of the western district of the parish, who are at a distance from the mosses; in consequence of which, many of them also use coals, which are procured at Banff or Macduff.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Since the publication of the former Statistical Account in 1793, a great improvement has taken place in the system of husbandry. Agriculture is well understood, and the tenants are in general ready to adopt every improvement. Bone-manure is now extensively used in the raising of turnips; and lime is also judiciously applied. The land here is likewise much benefited by manure and herring refuse, which are brought from Banff and Macduff. The houses of the tenants have also undergone a great improvement within the last forty years. Many of them are now slated, and in other respects are both convenient and comfortable.

The Turriff and Banff, and the Banff and Buchan, turnpike-roads have been productive of much benefit to this parish. The roads in the interior have also been made much better of late years; and the great improvements which have been carried on have been the means of giving steady employment to the labouring classes, whose comfort has thereby been much promoted.

January 1840.

PARISH OF AUCHTERLESS.

PRESBYTERY OF TURRIFF, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. GEORGE DINGWALL, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of the parish is derived from a Gaelic word, signifying a cultivated field on the side of a hill. The locality of the parish and the nature of the soil seem to favour this interpretation.

Extent, &c.—The parish extends about 8 miles in length, and nearly 4 in breadth, and is of an irregular oblong figure. It is bounded on the north by Inverkeithny; on the east, by Turriff; on the south, by Fyvie and Rayne; and on the west, by Culsamond and Forgue.

The temperature is generally mild, particularly in the interior of the parish.

Hydrography.—The Ythan is the only stream of consequence in the parish. It takes its rise from two springs in the upper district of Forgue, about a mile from the boundary of Auchterless. It flows through the vale in a north-easterly direction, and discharges its waters into the German Ocean below Ellon.

Geology.—A formation of clay-stone slate runs through the whole of this parish, nearly from north-east to south-west, and through the neighbouring parish of Turriff, till it reaches the sea at Melrose, in Gamrie. The rock lies too deep to be worked for slate quarries, but it is available for this purpose in the neighbouring parish of Culsamond. It was formerly worked both in Turriff and Inverkeithny, but is now abandoned for the superior quality of slates in the hills of Foudland.

The soil is of a gravelly description, based on a clay-slate. It is almost uniformly dry, and varies in depth from three to twenty-four inches, averaging about seven inches.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owners.—Mr Duff of Hatton and Mr Leslie of Badenscoth are the chief land-owners.

Parochial Registers.—The registers of marriages and baptisms commence in 1680, and have been regularly kept ever since, with some trifling exceptions.

Antiquities.—The most remarkable remnant of antiquity connected with this parish is a camp on the farms of Buss and Logie-Newton, commonly supposed to have been of Roman origin. A great part of what was formerly included within the walls is now improved. The south and west dikes only are entire. Near the remains of this camp, and upon the causeway leading westerly through Forgue, an urn was ploughed up, containing black ashes, and decayed animal matter. This relic of antiquity is now in the possession of Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, Bart. On a farm in the neighbourhood were found a great many heads of darts, commonly called elf-shots, that had been used in war before the introduction of metal in the forging of fire-arms.

In the immediate vicinity of the church, there is a small artificial eminence, of an oval shape, surrounded by a ditch, which is now in many places very much filled up. It still retains the name of the Moat-head, and was formerly the seat of the baronial court. The gallow-hill, where the criminals were executed and buried, is in its neighbourhood, and confirms the general opinion of the original purpose to which the moat-head was applied.

There is a well at the distance of fully a mile east from the church, supposed to have been dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Within the recollection of some of the oldest inhabitants, money, and other articles, were deposited on Pash Sunday by those whose superstitious feelings led them to frequent the well, in expectation of some benefit to be derived from drinking the water dedicated to the Holy Virgin. Close by this fountain are the remains of a place of worship, to which had been attached a burying-ground, where several families of distinction were interred. The old chapel had been used, as is thought, for a bead-house during the times of Popery.

The remains of Druidical circles are pretty numerous in different parts of the parish. By far the most remarkable of these is situated on a considerable eminence on the farm of Logie-Newton, overhanging the Roman camp, and called the Kirk-hill, probably from this cause. Three concentric circles may be distinctly traced; the stones are very large, and of a white colour. A trench of several hundred yards length, terminating about half a mile from the camp in a north-west direction, called Cumine's trench, is still distinctly to be marked, the ditch being in many places four feet deep. This was probably one of the stations of the Cumines before their defeat at Strathbogie, where Adam o' Gordon, who led Robert the Bruce's troops, obtained a decisive victory, and laid the foundation of the future greatness of the Noble family of Gordon.

On the front of the old castle of Towie Barclay, the property attached to which is chiefly in this parish, we find this inscription neatly cut in stone: "Sir Valter Barclay foundit the Tollie Mills 1210." This corroborates the common opinion, that corn-mills turned by water were introduced into Scotland by the Saxon followers of Malcolm towards the end of the eleventh century. For, had corn-mills previously existed in the country, this would not have been thought an achievement worthy of recording. And as the ancestor of the family (John Berkely, son of Lord Berkely of Gloucestershire,) was one of the followers of Queen Margaret, and obtained a grant of this estate for his son Alexander about 1100, this goes far to establish the fact, that they had been introduced by the Saxons. About the thirteenth part of the grain over Scotland and England was considered a fair multure or remuneration for grinding the corn with machinery. This shows that the labour of doing it with the quern or hand-mill formerly

used must have been very great. Immediately above the door of the old castle of Towie Barclay is the following inscription: "Sir Alexander Barclay, founder, decessit, 1136." The estate remained in his family till it was sold by the Honourable Charles Maitland, brother to the Earl of Lauderdale, who married the last heiress in 1752. From this family was descended William Barclay, an eminent civilian at the court of Lorrain, and the still more celebrated John Barclay, from whom the late gallant Russian General, Field Marshal Prince Barclay de Tolly, was lineally descended.

Modern Buildings.—There are few modern buildings of any consequence in the parish. The church was built in 1780—is in good repair, and contains 650 sittings. A handsome school-room was erected by the heritors in 1829. One of the proprietors built an elegant mansion a few years ago. The two principal heritors are non-resident, and have excellent modern houses on their other properties in Turiff and Fyvie. Many of the farmers have substantial houses of two storeys high, with neat and commodious steadings.

III.—POPULATION.

The population of the parish in 1755, the earliest period at which we have any correct information on this subject, was 1264. In 1801, it was only 1120. In 1811, 1257; and in 1821, 1538. According to the census of 1831, the population had increased to 1701. One principal reason for the increase was the number of subtenants or crofters, attached to the large farms, into which a great proportion of the parish has been, for many years, divided. This system of subletting has prevailed very much of late. These subtenants are useful to the farmers as labourers, and when they have their possession on moderate terms, are generally able to support themselves and their families respectably. Unhappily, from the great increase of population, the competition for these small possessions has raised the rents so high, in many instances, that several of the subtenants threaten to be a serious burden on the parish funds.

There are no towns nor villages of any extent in the parish. What is commonly called the Kirktown consists of ten dwelling-houses, with a population of 38. At fully two miles distance south of the church, is the small straggling village of Gordonstown, consisting of about thirty-five houses, with a population of 100. Both of these villages are inhabited partly by families occupying

crofts varying from 5 to 30 acres, and partly by tradesmen of various descriptions. None of them have any permanent feus.

The average of births for the last seven years was 45; and that of marriages, 11. No register of deaths is kept. This parish has been famed for the longevity of several of its inhabitants. A few instances of longevity may be noticed. Peter Garden, a farmer in this parish, died about sixty years ago, at the very advanced age of 132. He retained his faculties to the last. He lived under ten sovereigns; Charles I.; Oliver Cromwell; Richard Cromwell; Charles II.; James II.; William and Mary; Anne; George I., II., and III. He was a page to Ogilvie of Banff, before that gentleman was raised to the peerage, and was one of the garrison in the old castle of Towie Barclay, when Montrose defended it against Argyle. He recollected having been sent, when a boy, to the wood to cut boughs for spears in the time of the civil wars. In his latter days he used to describe Montrose, "as a little black man, who wore a ruff as the ladies do now-a-days." He was married to his second wife when 120 years old, she being eighty, and danced with great glee on that occasion. Margaret Leslie, who resided in the Kirktown, died about the beginning of the present century, aged 112. George Paterson, also in the Kirktown, died in the year 1808, aged 107, and William Andrew, in Little Cushnie, died in 1817, at the same age.

There is only 1 blind person in the parish, and 3 insane.

Number of illegitimate births in the course of the last three years, 11.

Within the last forty years, the language usually spoken has been gradually improving. The habits of the people are in general cleanly. The higher classes live well, using animal food. The common fare of the peasantry is meal, milk, and vegetables. The people are generally respectable as to intelligence, morality, and their observance of religious duties. Smuggling never prevailed to any extent, and since the commencement of legal distilleries is altogether unknown.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The parish contains about 16,000 acres, nearly one-third of which remains uncultivated. There are about 500 acres under wood, all planted, almost entirely with larches and Scotch firs. A great deal more might be profitably employed in planting. The greater part of the woods is young, partly well cared for, and partly neglected. It is difficult to ascertain the average

rent of arable land per acre in this parish, as many of the best farms are on old leases; and much inferior land has been lately brought into cultivation. Perhaps it might average about L. 1 per acre, if it were to be let at present. Few grass parks are let; but the average rate of grazing an ox is from L. 2 to L. 2, 10s.

Live-Stock.—Since 1792, the number of cattle in the parish has greatly increased. Cattle may now be estimated at upwards of 2000, and horses from 300 to 400. There are only about 600 or 700 sheep, generally of the Cheviot or black-faced kind. The cattle of this district were crossed with the old Fife breed about sixty years ago, and these produced the far-famed Aberdeenshire stock. There have been various unsuccessful attempts to improve this species, first by the Lancashire, and afterwards the Galloway. Efforts are now making to improve it by means of the short-horned. Whether these will be more successful, time only can show. The quality of horses has been much improved of late years. The general character of the husbandry in this parish is excellent. The old system of ploughing with a number of oxen has been long disused. Four of them are still sometimes employed for the purpose of tearing in rough ground covered with heath and whins.

In 1791, the first thrashing-mill was erected in the parish. At present, almost every farm of 50 or 60 acres in extent has one. As the ground gently rises from both sides of the hollow, and as many tributary rills fall into the Ythan, an opportunity has been afforded in almost every case of turning these by water, so that although there are now about thirty machines in the parish, not more than four or five of these are driven by horses. Along with the system of fallowing and cleaning the land, was introduced that of liming. The whole parish has been substantially limed oftener than once, and has generally got as much calcareous earth as it requires, so that at present less lime can be used. Placed at a distance from large towns, or even considerable villages, the great desideratum has been to get manure. For this purpose alluvial earth from the banks of the Ythan and smaller streams has been taken in great quantities for forming compost dunghills. Lately, bone manure has been much used. Given at the rate of 25 to 30 bushels per acre, it has produced splendid crops of turnips, and thus, by increasing the means of keeping cattle, has in some degree increased the manure, and promises to contribute materially to the progressive improvement of the country. A mill for bruising bones has been lately erected by an intelligent farmer in this parish for his own accommodation,

and that of the neighbourhood: Upon the whole, few parishes in the country are at the present moment in a higher state of cultivation.

Rate of Wages.—The rate of labour has lately fallen much. Labourers generally get 1s. a-day in summer, and 8d. in winter, with victuals. The wages of masons and carpenters from 2s. to 2s. 6d. in summer, and about 1s. 6d. in winter. Labour, on account of the pressure of the times, is sometimes below the rates mentioned above, and few labourers can get at all times full employment.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

There is no market-town in the parish. Turriff, which is six miles distant from the church, and is also the post-town, is the nearest. The turnpike-road leading from Aberdeen to Banff runs along the eastern extremity of the parish for nearly three miles. Two stage-coaches pass every lawful day.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is nearly three miles from the north-east extremity, and about five from the south-west, and is conveniently situated for a large proportion of the inhabitants. It was built in 1780, and repaired in 1832. The church contains legal accommodation for 650. An aisle was added in 1835, capable of containing 180. There are no free sittings. The manse was built in 1769, and was put in complete repair in 1814. The glebe measures about six acres, and at an average may be valued at L. 2 per acre. The present stipend is 14 chalders, half meal, half barley. There is an allowance of L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements, and of L. 1, 13s. 4d. for grass money. There is no chapel of ease, or other place of worship of any description in the parish. Most of the families are regular in their attendance at the parish church. About twelve families frequent the Scotch Episcopalian chapels in the neighbouring parishes; and one family attends an Independent meeting in Culsalmond. The number of communicants is generally about 830. The average amount of collections for charitable purposes is nearly L. 45.

Education.—There is one parish school, with five unendowed schools. In the parish school the usual branches are taught, such as Greek, Latin, mathematics, arithmetic, English reading, grammar, geography, and writing, &c. In the other schools English reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught. In one of the unendowed schools Latin is taught, and in two others sewing. The parish schoolmaster has the maximum salary, and the legal

accommodation. He has the benefit of the Dick bequest. The fees in the different schools vary from L.10 to L.25 per annum. The average expense per quarter is from 1s. 6d. to 5s. All upwards of fifteen years of age can read. A few cannot write. The people are, in general, alive to the benefits of education, and even the poorer classes show a laudable anxiety to have their families instructed in the common branches. There is only one corner so remote from the parish school as to be inaccessible to their children. Their distance, however, from the school of Culsamond is only about two miles.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of persons presently receiving parochial aid is 38, and each at an average is allowed about 10d. per week.

The sums arising from church collections amount to about L.40 per annum; and from other sources about L.8. There is still a general reluctance among the people to seek parochial aid; but this disposition is neither so common nor so strong as formerly.

Market.—One market, called Donan Fair, is held in the Kirk-town in the month of April, for the sale of sheep, cattle, &c. The market derives its name from Donan, formerly the tutelary saint of the parish.

Alehouses.—There are 7 alehouses, but these have little bad effect on the morals of the people, as the individuals licensed are decent and respectable characters.

Fuel.—Peat and turf are the only kinds of fuel to be got in the parish. English coals are a good deal used by many of the inhabitants. They are driven from Banff and Macduff, about eighteen miles distant.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The most striking variations betwixt the present state of the parish, and that which existed at the time of the last Statistical Account, are to be found in the improved mode of laying out and enclosing the fields; in the great increase of turnip husbandry, and the consequent fattening of a number of cattle for the home and London markets; in a stricter attention to the rotation of crops; and in the general superiority of the various cross-roads, thereby affording increased facilities for agricultural improvement.

January 1840.