

## PARISH OF TOWIE.

PRESBYTERY OF ALFORD, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. ADAM SMITH, MINISTER.

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### I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—THE name of this parish is derived from the Gaelic word *Tuaidh*, signifying north, or north-lying land,—probably in reference to the district by which it is bounded on the south, namely, Cromar. The ancient name was Kilbartha, or Bartha's cell or church. The parish is now known by the name of Towie Kinbattoch,—the latter being from *Khan*, signifying the head, and *Battoch*, grove; and in the cess-books of the county it is denominated *Towie Brux*, having at one period belonged principally to the family of Forbes of Brux, in whom the patronage was long vested.

*Extent and Boundaries.*—The parish is of an irregular figure. The extreme length from north to south is about 10 miles, and from east to west about 5. The medium inhabited length is about 4, and the breadth  $2\frac{1}{2}$  English miles. It is bounded on the south, by Tarland and Migvie; on the west, by Migvie and Strathdon; on the north, by the Cabrach; on the north-east, by Kildrummy; and on the east, by Cushnie.

*Topographical Appearances.*—The parish is almost surrounded by hills; those on the south-east, called the Soccoch, are about 2000 feet high. They were said by Gilderoy and his *Katterin*, who made frequent predatory visits to this quarter, to be the coldest they ever lodged amongst. The surface of the hills is unbroken, undulating, and covered with short heath. There is no level arable land, excepting the haughs on the banks of the river; and on some farms, the land is very steep, and consequently causes an extra expense of time and strength in the tillage. The river Don divides the parish into two nearly equal parts; it makes several beautiful serpentine bends, as it winds its course through Towie; but as the current is rather rapid, and the channel gravelly, it is very apt to cut the banks and shift its course. The aspect of the parish, particularly towards the south, is rather bare and bleak, having little

or no wood to relieve the eye, except in the north-western quarter.

*Soil.*—The soil is a light friable loam with a gravelly subsoil; and in a very few instances the soil is clayey, with a hard retentive subsoil; but in general, there is no great depth of soil.

*Hydrography.*—The Don, as already noticed, flows through the parish, and is the only river in it. The stream or water of Descry bounds the parish for about a mile on the west; it flows almost due north, and then bends away toward the north-west, and empties itself into the Don. In the north-western quarter, the water or burn of Kindie separates Towie from Strathdon, and flows in a south-west direction till it meets the Don. There are three or four smaller streamlets, which rise in the south and south-east quarters of the parish, and flow all in nearly a north-eastern direction to the Don,—one of which, called the burn of Towie, has a course of upwards of two miles, through a beautiful, secluded, and deep ravine.

*Springs.*—The parish is generally well supplied with springs of excellent water. There are also some mineral springs; but as they have never been analyzed, an account of their properties cannot be given.

*Geology and Mineralogy.*—Limestone of a very hard and inferior quality has been occasionally wrought in different localities, for agricultural purposes. Granite rock is known only in one place, where, however, it is surrounded by plantations. There are pretty certain indications of freestone about a quarter of a mile south from the church; but, being in a low wet situation, it is doubtful whether a quarry could be profitably opened. On the farm of Glencui, too, there are indications of serpentine, although it has never been employed for any useful or ornamental purpose.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Eminent Men.*—The most distinguished individual connected by birth with this parish is the Rev. Duncan Mearns, D.D., Professor of Divinity, King's College, Old Aberdeen.

*Land-owners.*—The land-owners are, Harry Leith Lumsden, Esq. of Auchindoir; John David Gordon, Esq. of Wardhouse; Sir Alexander Leith, K.C.B. of Freefield; the Hon. the Master of Forbes; Sir Charles Forbes, Bart. of Newe and Edinglassie; none of whom have any seat or residence in the parish.

*Parochial Registers.*—The register has been always regularly kept: the earliest entry in it is dated 1751.

*Antiquities.*—The most conspicuous object of antiquity is, the ruins of the Castle of Towie, of which a square tower is almost all that now remains. In November 1751, Sir Adam Gordon of Auchindoir sent Captain Ker with a party of foot to the Castle of Towie, to summon it in the Queen's name. Alexander Forbes, its possessor, was then absent, and his lady, whose maiden name was Margaret Campbell, not only refused to surrender, but also poured on Captain Ker a torrent of abuse, and from the battlement took a deliberate aim and fired at him; but the ball only "grazed his knee," whereupon, transported with rage, he ordered his men to set fire to the castle, when the lady, her children, and domestics, in all thirty-seven persons, perished in the flames. The remains of the lady were interred in the church-yard, at what is now called the farm of Nethertowie, where a white stone long marked her grave. This catastrophe gave rise to a ballad, which commemorates the particulars.

There are ruins of chapels at Nethertowie, Kinbattoch, Belnaboth, Ley, and chapel of Sinnahard. At Kinbattoch is a doug or artificial mound of earth, which appears to have been surrounded with about ten feet of water; but no vestige of any fortification that may have been there, now remains. The tumuli on the farm of Kinbattoch were opened in 1750, in which were found several *kistivaen*, containing urns, trinkets, bones, Roman medals with inscriptions, &c.

At Fechley is a mound upwards of 60 feet high, and surrounded by a fosse, partly natural and partly artificial, breadth from 12 to 41 feet, and depth from 8 to 35 feet. The breadth of the mound on the summit is 127 by 200 feet; on which are the vitrified remains of a tower.

On the Glasshill or Grayhill are large tumuli, one of which commemorates the defeat of the Lord of Athol and 200 Englishmen at arms, who came to take the castle of Kildrummy from Robert Bruce's family, when Edward Longshanks had possession of almost all the rest of Scotland. They were repulsed here principally through the valour of the Forbeses, who pursued and almost totally annihilated them in the forest of Kilblean.

In the churchyard is a large stone, six feet in length, sculptured with hieroglyphics.

In a field on the north side of the river, near the present bridge, is a stone of unhewn granite, standing upright, height about seven feet above ground, supposed to be of Druidical origin.

ABERDEEN.

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*Modern Buildings.*—There are no buildings of any note. The church, a plain substantial building, was erected in 1803. The Masonic Society here built a lodge, in which there is a spacious hall, in 1821. It stands almost close to the turnpike road, and is kept as an inn, which is well frequented.

### III.—POPULATION.

According to Dr Webster's returns the number was	656	
The population in 1801,	528	
1811,	585	
1821,	578	
1831,	728	
The present population is	739	
The average of births for the last seven years is	16	
The number under 15 years of age,	247	
upwards of 70 years of age,	53	
Bachelors and widowers upwards of 50 years of age,	19	
Unmarried women upwards of 45,	17	
The number of families,	99	
The average number of children in each family,	4	
The number of inhabited houses,	115	
Number of families chiefly employed in agriculture in 1831,		70
in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,		24

There are 3 persons insane, and 1 deaf, dumb, and blind.

*Character, Manners, &c. of the People.*—The people generally are industrious, and neat and cleanly in their houses and in their personal habits, and enjoy a reasonable portion of the comforts and advantages of society. Vocal and instrumental music, particularly the violin, form the most prominent amusements of the people in the winter evenings, and it is believed that few parishes in Scotland can boast of so many good Strathspey players, who are also temperate in their habits, and industriously employed in their other avocations.

### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture.*—The number of cultivated acres may be computed at upwards of 2400. About 100 acres more might be brought under cultivation; but the doing so would be attended with a heavy expense, and uncertain profit. A rotation of seven years is universally adopted.

*Rent of Land.*—The average rent of land may be stated at 18s. per acre. The duration of leases is usually nineteen years. The farm-buildings are, with few exceptions, substantial and commodious, having for the most part been built by the tenants, with an allowance at the expiry of lease seldom exceeding a year's rent; a sum in most cases not equal to one-third of the cost of erection. The native limestone has never been generally used; and on account of its inferior quality, and the difficulty of obtaining fuel, it is now almost entirely abandoned, and is obtained from Cor-

garf, Glenbucket, and Ardonald lime-works near Keith. Moss is obtained only from the hills adjoining the Cabrach, and the distance proves a serious drawback on agricultural improvement.

*Rate of Wages.*—The wages of ploughmen per the half year, exclusive of board and lodging, are from L. 5 to L. 7; women servants from L. 2 to L. 3; labourers 1s. per day with victuals.

*Mills.*—There are two meal-mills, one barley-mill, one flax-mill, one potato-farina-mill, one saw-mill.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Means of Communication.*—The turnpike road from Aberdeen passes through the parish on the north side, and the old country road from Aberdeen passes from east to west on the south side. There are about two miles of turnpike roads, and about ten of commutation roads.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The church, though not exactly central, is as nearly so as the locality admits of: it is situate on the south or right bank of the river. The manse is situated near the top of an acclivity of about sixty feet, at the bottom of which, and between it and the river, was a small haugh, part of the glebe land, about fourteen yards wide, and six feet higher than low water. This haugh was almost entirely carried away by a late flood. The glebe, previous to this flood, contained about four acres, and was worth L. 8. The manse was built in 1819, and consists of three stories, and is pretty commodious.

The stipend, including allowance for communion elements, is L. 132, 8s. 7d. Sterling, in money, and 26 bolls, 1 stone, 10½ lbs. meal, and 7 quarters 1 peck of bear.

The whole parishioners belong to the Established Church, with the exception of two families of Roman Catholics. The average number of communicants is 462.

*Education.*—There is only one school in the parish, namely, the parochial school. The teacher has the legal extent of garden ground; a house of four rooms, including the kitchen, and a spacious school-room attached; and a salary of L. 28 Sterling. The branches of education usually taught by him are, Latin, English reading and grammar, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, mathematics, and geography. The amount of school-fees is about L. 20. The teacher is entitled to the Dick bequest, and has hitherto ranked above the average allowance from that fund.

*Literature.*—A public library was instituted here by voluntary subscription in 1827, and consists of upwards of 500 volumes in history, religion, science, and general literature.

*Friendly Society.*—There was a masonic society instituted here in 1814, and denominated St Andrew's Lodge of Glenkindie Free Mason Friendly Society, which usually distributes among its members to the amount of L. 50 per annum.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—The average number of paupers receiving regular aid is 15 ; the average sum allotted to each is about L. 2, 16s. per annum ; the annual amount of contributions for their relief is about L. 43 Sterling, of which L. 30 arises from church collections, and about L. 13 from interest of funds, &c.

*Ale-houses.*—There are two licensed ale and spirit-dealers.

*Fairs.*—There are two cattle trysts held annually at the Glenkindie Mason's Arms Inn ; the one lately altered to the first Monday after Trinity Muir in April, and the other on the first Saturday after Keith in September. There are also two feeing markets held at the same place, on the day after the Whitsunday and Martinmas terms, unless the same shall happen on Sunday, when they are held on the Monday following. These are well attended ; but it is generally acknowledged that the feeing markets have a demoralizing effect upon the labouring classes.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

In comparing the former Statistical Account of 1791 with the present, it appears that gravel was then a very prevalent disease, in consequence of some families, in which it was thought to have become hereditary, intermarrying. Very few cases of that malady have occurred for many years past. By the former Account, the number of ploughs was 43, each drawn by eight or ten small oxen ; now the number of ploughs is about 78, each drawn by a pair of horses, many of which are strong and active. Roads have been much improved of late, but are still susceptible of great improvement, especially the bye-roads to many of the farms. There are three wooden bridges across the Don for foot-passengers, which are often rendered useless by the flooded state of the river,—much inconvenience being thereby occasioned to all classes, and danger to the children attending school.

The greatest obstacle to improvement is, that, mostly all the estates being held under entail, the common allowance for building is one year's rent, which may be reckoned two-thirds too little for the ordinary conveniences of a farm-steading ; and seldom is any allowance granted for enclosures, drains, or the reclaiming of waste land.

October 1840.