

PARISH OF KEITHHALL AND KINKELL

PRESBYTERY OF GARIOCH, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. JOHN KEITH, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—KEITHHALL became the name of the parish after the greater part of it was possessed by Keith, the Earl Marischal of Scotland. It was anciently called Montkeggie. Kinkell was a parsonage of seven parishes, and retains the ancient name, which signifies the *head or principal church*. The annexation was in 1754.

Extent.—The length of the parish is about 5 miles, and the breadth is rather less, but very unequal. It contains $11\frac{1}{2}$ square miles.

Boundaries.—The rivers Don and Ury form the boundary with Kintore and Inverury. The parish adjoins Chapel of Garioch, Bourty, Udny, New Machar, and Fintry. The figure is irregular.

The best land is either loam or alluvial. Very little of it exceeds two feet in depth. The inferior consists of almost every variety, with the exception of marl. There is no less diversity in the subsoil. The worst is a hardened mixture of gravel and clay.

The plantations are of beech, elm, ash, oak, plane, Scotch fir, and pine. The larch and oak do not grow freely. The others are of considerable size in the policies of Keithhall, the seat of the Earl of Kintore. At Balbithan, there is a very large beech, remarkable for its straight and branchless trunk, which is 24 feet high, with only two branches at 30 feet. Its average circumference at that height exceeds 12 feet. Seven boughs rise from it, each $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter, to an altitude of 50 feet; and the lateral extent of some is not much less.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Eminent Men.—Caskieben, the ancient name of the estate of Keithhall, was the birth-place of the distinguished scholar, Arthur Johnston. He was born in 1587, and died at the age of fifty-four.

Kinkell is the burial-place of a distinguished warrior who fell at Harlaw, as appears from a monumental stone, with the figure of a knight in armour, and an inscription on the outer part in old English characters:—"Hic jacet nobilis armiger Gualterus de Gro— 1411." The other part of it has been destroyed.

Land-owners.—The Earl of Kintore is proprietor of about three-fourths of the united parishes. Balbithan, the property of Benjamin Abernethy Gordon, Esq. forms an eighth part. Kinmuck, which is rather less, belongs to Alexander Irvine, Esq. of Drum. The Synod of Aberdeen hold in trust the small estate of Newplace, which rents about L. 80; and the Society of Friends or Quakers are proprietors of three acres, on which they have a meeting-house and cemetery.

Parochial Registers.—The register of births, or rather baptisms in Keithhall, has been kept pretty regularly since 1678; but the oldest of them are a little frail. It is doubtful whether there were ever any similar registers for Kinkell.

Antiquities.—The antiquities in this quarter have suffered much from the ploughshare and the erection of stone fences. The cairns or mounds raised to commemorate ancient heroes and events have been broken down; and the place of the Druidic temples that stood in the end of last century is now unmasked, with one exception, where a single stone remains, nearly two and a-half feet square and seven feet high. It is remarkable that the corn grows very luxuriant around this solitary pillar to a distance of fifteen yards, and has always been eighteen inches higher than the crop immediately beside it.

Part of an encampment still remains in the moor of Kinmuck, where tradition records that a great battle took place between the Danes and the Scotch. The latter are said to have slain a bear in their advance, and hence the name Kinmuck, or bear's head. The place of combat bears the name of Blair Hussey, or field of blood.

In a large barrow or tumulus, about eighty yards from a Druidic stone, a chance visitor observed an urn partially uncovered. It was found to contain calcined bones. Two larger urns were subsequently found in a reversed position to the other, and were taken out in fragments. The bones in all the three were put into a box, and buried in the original spot.

The residence of the Earl of Kintore, generally denominated the house of Keithhall, of which the castle of the Johnstons forms a small part, is a very magnificent building.

III.—POPULATION.

Population in 1801,	858
1811,	883
1821,	899
1831,	877
1841,	918

The number of unmarried men 50 years of age and upwards, is 16
 women upwards of 45, 46

The resident heritors are the Earl of Kintore, and Balbithan.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The land under tillage is nearly 5000 acres. The waste land is about 2000. Of this a third part might be advantageously improved. About 400 acres are planted.

Average rent of land in cultivation is 14s. per acre.

The sheep are of the South Down, Leicester, and Scotch breeds. Several farmers have superior cattle, chiefly of the old Aberdeenshire breed. Lord Kintore has long had a very select stock of Ayrshire and short-horn or Teeswater cows and bulls, and is very indulgent to his tenantry in this matter. The Keithhall ox, as one of his Lordship's bullocks was called, was for some time one of the greatest wonders in the north of Scotland. This animal carried the first premium at the Highland Society's show in 1834, was sold at seven years of age for one hundred sovereigns, and certainly was one of the hugest animals ever seen in the shambles. The gross weight of the bullock alive was 1 ton 8 cwt. or 8186lbs.

There has been a considerable extent of waste land reclaimed within a short time. The duration of leases is nineteen years.

All the turf-covered houses have disappeared. A few of the farmers have their houses slated, and the others are neatly thatched. The enclosures are mostly of stone. Lord Kintore brought a hedger from Berwickshire, a few years ago, and has planted hedges of hawthorn on several farms.

None of the proprietors give any encouragement for improving waste ground. Only two or three individuals have accepted the terms of one who advances money at seven and a-half per cent. on that security.

Produce.—

The average produce of grain may be	£. 2000	0	0
of potatoes, turnips &c.	2500	0	0
of hay,	500	0	0
of land in pasture, at £. 5 per acre, or 15s. per acre,	1750	0	0
Total yearly value of raw produce	£. 6750	0	0

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Inverury is the nearest market-town, and only a quarter of a mile from the west boundary. The post-office is in that burgh.

There are two bridges on the Ury; one of stone, which has been built upwards of thirty years; the other has stone piers and a wooden arch, and was built lately.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is in the most central situation, as ascertained by measurement. It was built in 1771, repaired last in 1823, and holds 600 persons. The seats are all free. The manse was built in 1772; the last addition was made only two years ago. The glebe is 25 English acres, and would rent for L.30, if let to a farmer; but when the greater part is in grass, as at present, it is of more value. The stipend is L. 110, 10s. 1½d.; meal, 112 bolls, 8 stones, 9½ lbs.; bear, 20 quarters, 3 bushels, 1 peck, 1¼ quart; barley, 5 quarters, 6 bushels, 2 pecks, and 3 quarts.

The Society of Friends have a meeting-house at Kinmuck. Their number in 1831 was 16 persons.

The number of families who attend the Established Church is 168; and persons of all ages, 650. There are 13 Dissenters, and 8 Episcopalians. Due attendance is given in the church, and the number of communicants is 430. The yearly amount of church collections is L. 45.

Education.—At the parochial school, Latin, geography, grammar, arithmetic, writing, and reading are taught. The lower branches are taught at the unendowed school, with the addition of needle-work. The salary of the schoolmaster is L. 30; fees in 1833, L. 15; other emoluments, L. 25; and his whole income L. 65, besides the legal accommodations.

All between six and fifteen years of age either can read or are under tuition; none above the higher age are known to be unable to read.

The only library is one for the Sabbath scholars.

Poor.—Paupers, at an average, are 17 in number; and the supply for each, L. 4. Church collections during the year for the funds, L. 35; and for charitable purposes, L. 10; legacies, donations, &c., L. 40.

There is only one market, Michael Fair, at Kinkell, for cattle and horses, on the Wednesday after the last Tuesday of September, old style.

Alehouses.—There is no public-house in the parish; but there is a spirit shop on the lands of the synod of Aberdeen.

Fuel.—The fuel is of peat and turf, the expense of preparing which is 1s. the cart-load.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

The greatest variations observable, within the last forty years, are in the value of houses and enclosures, which has risen from L. 150 to above L. 3000; and in the ordinary provision for the poor, which has been tripled within that time. The Earl of Kintore gives, unsolicited, an annual donation, which is more than the former yearly supply, then only L. 18. The other heritors are absentees, and draw their rents without remitting any return to the poor; but it has not been necessary to solicit a contribution from them.

July 1842.

PARISH OF INSCH.

PRESBYTERY OF GARIOCH, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. PATRICK DAVIDSON, MINISTER.

THE REV. ROBERT CUSHNY, Assistant and Successor.*

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name Insch is generally considered to be of Celtic origin, and to signify *an island*. It is not improbable, that the Insch had originally been confined to the small town or village in which the church stands, or, at all events, to the spot of ground which forms the site of the village, and which bears some marks of having been at one time surrounded with water.

Extent, &c.—The parish is of an irregular figure. Were one part of it, however, taken away, namely, the Daugh of Moreal, which there is reason to think had not originally belonged to it, but had formed part of another parish now extinct, called Rathmoreal or Christ-kirk, the remains of whose church, surrounded by a burial-ground, are quite adjacent, in the parish of Kennethmont, the remainder would be pretty nearly an oblong, the greater sides,

* Drawn up by the Rev. Robert Cushny.