

PARISH OF ROSEMARKIE.

PRESBYTERY OF CHANONRY, SYNOD OF ROSS.

THE REV. ALEXANDER WOOD, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Situation, Boundaries, &c.—The parish of Rosemarkie lies along the north side of the Moray Frith, bounded by the parishes of Resolis and Cromarty, on the north and north-east, and on the west, by the parish of Avoch. Its length from north-east to south-west is about 6 miles, and its breadth, from the coast inland, is on an average between 2 and 3 miles; comprehending an extent of 15 square miles or thereby.

Name.—The original name of the parish was Rosmarkyn, as appears by the seal of the ancient burgh, and many old chartularies, and is supposed to be of Gaelic etymology—composed of *Ros*, signifying a promontory or headland, and *marachin*, seamen.

Topographical Appearances.—The situation of the parish is very pleasant, as rising gradually from the shore to a considerable elevation, and towards the eastern extremity, the coast presents a particularly bold and high outline, commanding a rich and extensive view over sea and land in all directions. The more inland and elevated grounds, which are for the most part arable, extend in some places to that continued range of hilly ground, which bisects the Black Isle district of Ross-shire, stretching nearly from Cromarty to Beaulie, called the Mulbuie—*Maol-Buidhe*—or yellow promontory, and otherwise, *Ardmeanach*, or middle ridge.

Bays, Springs, Cascades.—There are no lakes nor rivers in the parish. A very beautiful bay is formed by the extensive curvature of the shore, sweeping from Fortrose Point towards the north and

east; near the middle of which curve Rosemarkie is situated. The greater part of the shore is lined with a smooth surface of fine sand, affording delightful ground for sea-bathing; while the bay itself is an admirable place of anchorage and shelter for trading vessels, during high westerly winds. Indeed the shores on this part of the coast are peculiarly favourable for sea-bathing, and are frequently resorted to by strangers for this purpose.

The parish is well supplied with water by means of perennial springs, and some small streams or burns. On the burn discharging itself into the bay of Rosemarkie, about a mile above the town, there is a pretty little fall or cascade. During rainy weather it is considerably increased, and from its position and proximity to the public road, and situation towards the head of a deep ravine, it cannot fail to attract the notice of the traveller, as a pleasing and striking object. Another waterfall, of a similar description, is to be met with on proceeding along the shore to the east; and at the extreme boundary of the parish, in the direction of Cromarty, runs the burn of Ethie, which, with its cascades and high precipitous banks, as it approaches the sea, is truly wild and picturesque.

Soil and Climate.—The nature of the soil is various. In the upper parts of the parish, the lands lie generally on a deep clay bottom, producing abundant crops of excellent quality: of the lower grounds along the coast, where there is an extensive and beautiful flat, well cultivated, the soil is a fine black mould upon light gravel, which, in moderately rainy seasons, never fails to yield a luxuriant crop of all kinds.

The surface being in general dry, and having the benefit of fine sea-breezes, the air is particularly pure and salubrious, so that few contagious distempers make their appearance, and when they do, their progress is quickly checked. The climate being thus favourable, the inhabitants in general are a robust and healthy race; and many of them attain to extreme old age. The most prevailing winds are south-west and north-east; and these at times are sufficiently high and boisterous.

Zoology.—The zoology of the parish is not distinguished by any of the rare species of animals. Under this head, however, the writer may take occasion to notice, that along its bold and rocky coast, crabs, and sometimes lobsters, are dragged from their fastnesses, by the country people, in the proper season; and seals are often seen and killed along the shores, while they are watching their prey. The frith abounds with fish of various kinds, such as

turbot, skate, flounders, cod, haddock, mackerel, whiting, cuddies, and herrings in their season. For the taking of salmon, there are also, here, several stake and bag-nets, in which they are caught sometimes in considerable quantities, and in the highest perfection. These nets are erected on both sides of Fortrose Point, which is immediately opposite to the garrison of Fort-George; between which and the said Point is the Ferry of Ardersier, with a good landing pier on this side for the passage-boat. This Point is also the termination of the links of Fortrose, above a mile in length, and as smooth as a carpet.

Geology.—There have been no minerals or ores of any kind discovered here. The prevailing rock along the north side of the parish is the old sandstone formation of geologists, which extends also to the whole ridge of the Mulbuie, where several quarries have been opened and wrought for many years past; the material being found of excellent quality for buildings of every description. The bold and rocky cliffs, overhanging the sea for more than half the length of the parish, are composed of gneiss, traversed by veins of white quartz. In some parts, these cliffs rise almost perpendicularly to a very considerable height, and they abound in caverns, which add much to the wildness of the scenery; while some of them have frequently been occupied as temporary dwellings by people of the gipsy race.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

The town of Rosemarkie, though not large, is of considerable antiquity. It was erected into a royal burgh by Alexander, King of Scotland,—probably Alexander II. About a mile to the west of it stands the town of Chanonry, so called from its being the Chanonry of Ross, where the bishop formerly had his residence, and which is now the Presbytery seat. It is beautifully situated on an elevated plain, commanding an extensive prospect, particularly of the Moray Frith. It was united to the burgh of Rosemarkie by a charter granted by King James II., anno 1444, under the common name of Fortross, now softened into Fortrose; which charter was ratified by King James VI., anno 1592; and confirmed in a still more ample form by the same monarch in the year 1612. These charters bear that it was to be “entitled to all the privileges, liberties, and immunities granted to the town of Inverness.” Fortrose is then spoken of as a town flourishing in the arts and sciences, being at that time the seat of divinity, law, and physic in this corner of the kingdom. The Bishop of Ross was originally styled Episcopus

Rosmarkiensis, and the Cathedral church stood in the town of Chanonry, in a spacious square, where, together with the bishop, resided a number of his clergy; so that there is scarce a house in the burgh but was formerly a manse belonging to some of the Chapter, as appears by the ancient charters and infeftments.

The Episcopal see was founded by David I., King of Scotland; but there is no certain account at what period the Cathedral was built, though it is said to have been a fine one, with a lofty steeple. Bishop Leslie also takes notice of the palace, which stood at a little distance from the houses of the canons; and he represents it, in his time, as a splendid and magnificent building.

This statement was so far confirmed a few years ago, while trenching the field called the "Precincts," where it was said to have stood, by the foundation walls being discovered considerably under the surface, which walls, including the court or area, were found to cover about an acre of ground.

Only a small part of the ancient cathedral now remains. This seems to have been a wing that ran from east to west, with an arched roof, about 100 feet in length, and 30 in breadth. It had a communication by entries or porches with the main body of the cathedral. It was preserved and repaired by some of the bishops since the Restoration, as a place for public worship; but it has long since fallen into a state of decay, and is only now used for the purpose of interment.

It is highly probable that this cathedral, at the Reformation, had suffered the fate of many others; though it be a current tradition in the place, that the greater part of it, together with the Bishop's Palace, just mentioned, was pulled down in the time of Oliver Cromwell. By his order the stones were carried by sea to Inverness, about the distance of eight miles, for erecting a fort there, called "Cromwell's Fort," whereof the ditch and traces of the ramparts are still discernible. No chartulary belonging to the bishopric has been found in Scotland.

It is probable that Leslie, the last Popish Bishop of Ross, and the zealous advocate for the unfortunate Queen Mary, when he was forced to go abroad, carried all the records of the diocese with him, either to France or to Brussels, where he died, and where these parchments may still be mouldering in dust and solitude.

No inscriptions are to be found about what remains of the cathedral, worthy of notice, excepting on a large old bell, now hung in a small modern spire. It bears the name of Mr Thomas Tal-

loch, as Bishop of Ross, and states that it had been "dedicated to the most holy Mary, and the blessed Boniface, anno Domyny, 1460." In the direction of the main body of the cathedral, at the east, and detached from its remains, stands a building that was probably the vestry. It contains a vault below, with a strong arched roof, now converted into a prison; and the upper part of it is used as the town-house and council-chamber of the burgh.

St Boniface appears to have been, by every ancient monument, the favourite saint and patron of the place, and his history, according to tradition, is simply this. In the year 693, or, according to others, about the year 697, Boniface, an Italian, a grave and venerable person, came to Scotland to make up our acquaintance with the Church of Rome. He built to the memory of St Peter a church where he landed, at the mouth of a little water, betwixt the shires of Angus and Mearns; erected another church at Felin, a third at Restennoth, and a fourth at Rosemarkie; where, being taken with the pleasantness of the place, he thought fit to reside, and was buried there. Bishop Leslie speaks of Rosemarkie as decorated with the relics of the saint, and the very ancient sepulchres and monuments of him and his parents: whence it would seem that he had brought his parents from Italy with him in this pious expedition.

From this traditional account of St Boniface, it would appear that the parish church in the ancient town of Rosemarkie had its foundation laid by him. In repairing it anno 1735, in a vault under a very ancient steeple, there were found some stone coffins of rude workmanship, one of which might probably contain the bones of this venerable apostle. To perpetuate his memory we have here an annual market, called St Boniface Fair; and a spring of excellent water is also distinguished by his name. Nay, what is still more, the seal of the cathedral, or Diocesan Seal, is yet preserved, and used as the public seal of the burgh, with this inscription in Saxon characters: "+ Scapituli scoꝝ Petri et Bonefacii de Rosomarkin." St Peter stands on it with his keys, and Boniface with his crook, in excellent order.

The seal of the ancient burgh of Rosemarkie, which is also in good preservation, has inscribed on it the figure apparently of St Peter, mitred in a shield, with the circumscription *I. +. SIGILLVM IES MVNE BVROI DE ROSMARKYN.*

In the churchyard here, too, lies the body of Andrew Murray, a very brave man, Regent of the kingdom in the reign of David II.,

who, after defeating the English in many battles, and quieting the state of the nation, (according to Buchanan,) having gone to the north to take a view of his possessions there, died in 1338, and was buried at Rosemarkie.

Eminent Men.—Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh, that eminent statesman and able lawgiver, passed a part of his time at Fortrose. Dr George Mackenzie, too, the laborious compiler of the “Lives of the most Eminent Writers of the Scottish Nation,” resided here, in an old castle belonging to the Earl of Seaforth, and lies interred in the tomb of that family in the Cathedral. And Dr James Mackenzie, who writes “the Art of preserving Health,” is said to have been for some time employed in teaching the grammar school of the burgh. In addition to these, it may be mentioned, that Sir James Mackintosh, so well known to the literary world, here received the elements of his education; and even at that early period, his studious habits, and great proficiency, gave strong indications of his possessing high intellectual endowments.

Chief Land-Owners.—The principal proprietors are, Roderick Mackenzie, Esq. of Flowerburn; James Fowler, Esq. of Raddery; Evan Baillie, Esq. of Dochfour and Ethies; Sir James W. Mackenzie of Scatwell, Bart.; the Rev. R. M. Millar of Kincurdie; and Malcolm Maclean, Esq. of Hawkhill. There are several other smaller heritors, who are possessed of burgage lands and tenements. Only one of the principal heritors resides in the parish, namely, James Fowler, Esq. of Raddery. The total valued rent of the parish is L. 3725, 3s. 8d. Scots money.

Parochial Registers.—From the loss of some of the old registers, by accident or carelessness, and the negligence of the people in former times, in registering the births of their children, these records do not extend far back, and are somewhat incomplete, previous to the induction of the present incumbent, in the year 1815. Since then, the session records of births, marriages, deaths, and poor's funds, have been regularly kept.

Antiquities.—An ancient shaft of stone, forming the Cross of Rosemarkie, and bearing as capital a ducal crown, stands at the west end of the street; another of a similar description was erected of old in the market-place of Chanonry or Fortrose, and a third of an inferior description on the Ness, where, according to tradition, the last witch in Scotland was burnt. Immediately above the town of Rosemarkie, there is a mound of nearly a circular form,

Inhabited houses,	-	-	-	-	-	381
Uninhabited houses	-	-	-	-	-	9
Building,	-	-	-	-	-	4
Families chiefly employed in agriculture,	-	-	-	-	-	108
trade, manufactures, &c.	-	-	-	-	-	188
All other families,	-	-	-	-	-	117

Number of illegitimate births in the course of the last three years, 5.

Character of the People.—The people in this parish are, generally speaking, sober, cleanly, and industrious; and appear in every respect contented with their condition, and the circumstances in which Divine Providence has been pleased to place them.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—The parish being divided among a great many small as well as several principal heritors, the number of acres cultivated or occasionally in tillage cannot be satisfactorily obtained without actual admeasurement. Neither can the number of acres of waste and pasture land with any accuracy be ascertained. It is supposed that the greater part of the waste ground might, by the proper application of capital, be kept in occasional tillage, or in permanent pasture. There are under planted wood about 837 acres imperial measure. The application of lime in husbandry, the use of bone manure in the raising of turnips, which are generally ate off the ground by sheep, and which has been found very much to improve the soil, with due attention to a proper rotation of crops, and resting the fields in grass, are becoming daily more prevalent here. The farmers residing near the shore avail themselves of the advantage of using sea-ware as often as they can procure it; which they either spread at once upon the lands, or mix in a compost, the latter process being found to be the best mode of applying it. Some of the tenants keep still a few sheep of the small country kind, which are pastured on heath, and among whins and broom. Leases of nineteen years endurance are general.

Rent of Land.—The rents of land in the country part of the parish vary from L. 1, 10s. to L. 2 per acre; the lands about the united burgh draw per acre from L. 3 to L. 4 and upwards.

The state of farm-buildings would admit of great improvement; and the subdividing and enclosing with proper fences, the different arable fields, hitherto greatly overlooked, would be highly desirable as well as beneficial.

Farming Society.—A society denominated “the Black Isle Farming Society,” consisting of the proprietors and the more re-

spectable farmers in the district, was formed about two years ago at Fortrose, where they regularly hold two meetings in the year, the one for a competition of the best qualities of grain, and the other for an exhibition of live-stock. The members of the society contribute annually for the formation of a fund, out of which premiums are awarded at the said meetings, by competent judges, for the best samples of grain, and for superiority in the breed of cattle. The object farther is, to excite a spirit of emulation among the practical farmers, who have thus an opportunity of communicating to each other their observations and experiments, which may be the means of introducing valuable improvements.

Though large tracts of the parish were of old covered with wood, it has long since become exhausted. But, in later times, considerable plantations of Scotch firs have been raised, which are very thriving; and as the parish is but poorly supplied with moss, these might be a useful fund for fuel. Coals, however, are now so readily obtained, and at such a moderate rate, that they are found to be the cheapest, as well as the most agreeable fire, so as to supersede, in a great degree, the use of any other article of firing. The fir plantations, when cut down, are generally exported to England as coal props. In getting these to the shipping-place there is every facility, with a commodious harbour at Fortrose for trading vessels of moderate size, and where, during any state of the weather, they are completely protected.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Markets.—At Fortrose, which is also the post-town, there are three fairs annually held, in the months of April, June, and November.

Means of Communication.—The public roads to the west, leading to Inverness and Dingwall, being Parliamentary, are kept in excellent repair,—those towards Cromarty and Invergordon are old district roads, badly planned at first, and generally in such a state as to render travelling in these directions extremely difficult and uncomfortable. No mail or stage-coach passes through the parish. The steam-vessels plying in the Frith, and passing weekly, take in and deliver at Chanonry Point goods of every description. These vessels are well fitted up for passengers, and they trade with Aberdeen, Leith, and London. By them the salmon taken here, and brought and collected from various stations around, are, when packed in ice, shipped for the London market,—as also in the season, considerable quantities of pork and live pigs.

Ecclesiastical State.—We have already stated the traditional account of the origin of the parish church in the ancient town of Rosemarkie, as having been founded by St Boniface. On the same site where the church had stood for centuries, was erected eighteen years ago a handsome modern edifice. It is large and commodious, having been built for at least 800 sitters, affording ample church accommodation for the parishioners; in which respect not many parishes are so well provided. With few exceptions the bulk of the more remote parishioners in the country part, may be said to be within three miles of the church.

The present manse was built in 1833, in the same situation as the former, near to the line of road leading from Rosemarkie to Fortrose, and at a convenient distance from the church. It commands a fine extensive prospect of the Moray Frith, and the adjacent country. The office-houses were also rebuilt some years previous; and both these and the manse are finished in a substantial manner, and afford every necessary comfort and convenience.

The glebe consists of about four Scots acres. The stipend is 16 chalders, half meal and half barley, payable according to the highest fiars in the county; with L.8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements. The last augmentation was granted in 1816.

Besides the parish church, the only other place of public worship is an Episcopal chapel, some time since erected in Fortrose, standing a mile distant from Rosemarkie. It is a modern, convenient, and handsome structure of Gothic architecture, and can accommodate, as presently fitted up, about 300 sitters. The congregation now assembling there is very limited, there being but few families or individuals of the Episcopal persuasion in the place or neighbourhood.

The number of families connected with the Established Church is 337; of Dissenting or Seceding families, 21,—in several of which, however, only the heads of the families are Dissenters, while the remaining members attend the Established Church.

It may be proper here to notice, that it is in contemplation to erect, so soon as sufficient funds can be procured by public subscription, a church, *quoad sacra*, in Fortrose. With the concurrence of the presbytery of the bounds, a constitution for the same has been prepared, and submitted to the Church Courts, and has received the sanction of the General Assembly.

The salary or stipend for the support of the minister is intended to be paid out of the annual produce of a fund mortified by a

Mr Thomas Forbes, once a bailie in Fortrose; and under the administration of the ministers of the parishes of Rosemarkie and Avoch; which fund has now amounted to a sum considered sufficient for accomplishing the ulterior object contemplated by the donor.

Education.—There are various schools in the parish, but none of them strictly parochial. This arises from the parish school salary having been at one time conjoined with the grammar or burgh school at Fortrose, and afterwards with the academy there; but since withdrawn from both; and application has been recently made to the presbytery to adopt the proper measures for the establishment of said school. In the meantime, there are at Rosemarkie two schools without salary, where the usual elementary branches are taught, and which are well attended; one of these is an infant school, at which from 30 to 40 children are instructed.

At Fortrose there exists what is denominated the burgh or grammar school, and a female school for young ladies, supported chiefly by subscription.

The academy of Fortrose was the first seminary of the kind established in the north, and is supported out of a fund formed by donations and subscriptions. In it are taught all the branches usually embraced by such institutions, under the superintendence and instructions of the rector and his assistant. Donors of L. 50 and their male representatives become perpetual directors. Those of L. 21 are directors for life. The many young men this establishment has sent into the world, who are now filling various respectable situations in life, bear sufficient testimony to its character and usefulness for nearly half a century past.

There are three Sabbath evening schools in the parish, all of them well attended; and which are found to be productive of much benefit to the rising generation.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is about 86. In this number, however, are included a good many, who, though able to work for themselves, receive small annual supplies, especially when they are known to have young families. Few or none of them travel about to seek charity in other parishes. There is a strong disposition on the part of the poor to refrain from asking parochial relief; but this feeling appears to die away soon after they get on the roll. The fund for their support arises from the weekly church collections, which may amount throughout the year to about L. 17; and the interest of a

small capital of above L. 200, on which capital the kirk-session have always felt a reluctance to encroach, though the pressing circumstances of the poor seemed frequently to call for it. Besides the above, there are two mortifications for the poor of Chanonry; the one by Barbara Mackenzie, Countess of Seaforth, anno 1680, of 17 bolls 2 firlots land rent, under the administration of the ministers of Rosemarkie and Avoch; and the other of 27 bolls, from some lands disposed by Bishop Paterson, and other lands purchased with money mortified by Sir Alexander M'Kenzie of Coul; whereof the magistrates are administrators. John Fowler, Esq. a native of this place, who died in Jamaica, also bequeathed the sum of L. 100 to the poor of Fortrose.

Friendly Society.—There is a society in the united royal burgh, termed “the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Friendly Society,” established in January 1831, which promises fair to be of benefit to the poorer classes of labourers and mechanics therewith connected.

Inns.—At Fortrose there is a good inn, and both there and in Rosemarkie several smaller inns, where inferior accommodation may be had. But it would be highly desirable that the number of low tippling-houses should be more limited.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The appearance of the people, as respects their manners, dress, and habits of industry, shews, that in these, of late years, there has been a great advance. The improvements in agriculture since the time of the former Statistical Account, have been very considerable, and are daily on the increase. The taste for reading in various departments has pervaded all classes of society; so much so, indeed, that among tradesmen and the labouring classes, many valuable works are now to be met with, particularly of a religious character, where in former times such publications were seldom looked for, and but rarely found. There can be no doubt that the bulk of the people in the towns would be inclined to industrious habits. But for want of regular employment, in the absence of manufactories of any sort, they are not so well provided for, as where advantages of this description are enjoyed.

Drawn up May 1839,

Revised February 1840.