

ral Assembly Committee, since the latter commenced their labours. But of *catechists*, the description of teachers of all others the best calculated to be useful to the grown up inhabitants, many hundreds of whom are so involved in ignorance as to be incapable of deriving benefit from a continued discourse, the minister, after innumerable applications for many years, has been able to obtain only one, of ten that are required; and for that one he could only procure L. 7 of a yearly salary! The gentlemen who have the management of the Royal Bounty, and of the funds of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, may suppose that their money is better employed in paying missionaries and schoolmasters than catechists. But I again aver, and without any fear of successful contradiction, that, in such parishes as Lochbroom, and others in similar circumstances, no teachers, in connection with the parish ministers, are so much calculated to be useful as well chosen catechists.

May 1835.

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## PARISH OF GAIRLOCH.

PRESBYTERY OF LOHCARRON, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. JAMES RUSSELL, MINISTER.\*

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### I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—THE name of the parish is compounded of *gearr*, short, and *loch*. The parish takes its name from a salt water loch of the same name. At the end of this loch, the natives point out a hollow spot of ground, which they choose to denominate "*the Gairloch*" by way of distinction, as they allege that the parish takes its name from it; but it evidently derives its name from the salt water loch, or rather *bay*, for, comparing it with most of the other salt water lochs on the west coast, it scarcely deserves the name of *Loch*.

*Extent, &c.*—This parish is 40 miles long, and 30 miles broad between its extreme points, and contains an area of about 600 square miles. It is bounded on the south by an arm of the sea called *Loch Torridon*, that runs in betwixt it and the parish of

\* Drawn up by the Rev. Donald M'Rae, Minister of Poolewe.

Applecross; on the north, by the river Gruinard, that separates it from the parish of Lochbroom; on the east, by a chain of hills, where the mountain streams running towards the east and west coasts, separate; and on the west, by the Minch, that separates the Long Island, or Lewis, from the main land. To shew the irregularity of the figure of this parish, it may here be stated, that, on the west coast, it has from 80 to 100 miles of sea coast, all of a bold rocky description, except on the shores of the inland lochs.

*Hydrography, &c.*—Few parishes on the west coast can boast of more magnificent mountain scenery,—as the traveller can testify, who has sailed down the picturesque Lochmaree. The principal mountain in the range, is Slioch or Sliabhach; its elevation above the level of the sea cannot be less than 3000 feet. The traveller who, from the west end of Lochmaree, takes a view of the scenery before him, cannot fail to be struck with astonishment at the wild grandeur of the scene presented to his view;—the much-admired and far-famed Lochmaree, with its four-and-twenty wooded islands; the range of mountains commencing on the right and left, and extending four miles beyond the east end of Lochmaree; Lochmaree itself, eighteen miles long, appearing in the distance like an amphitheatre of nature's own workmanship, and presenting to the eye of the stranger an impenetrable barrier.

*Hydrography.*—Lochmaree, as already stated, is 18 miles long, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  mile broad at an average. The greater part of it is 60 fathoms deep, so that it has never been known to freeze, during the most intense frosts. About the centre of the loch, is an island called "Island Maree," on which is a burying-ground supposed to be dedicated to the Virgin Mary;—hence the name of the island and of the loch. This is one conjecture;—another is, that some of the Danish Kings were buried in this island, and that the original name of it was "*Eilean nan Rìgh*," which came to be pronounced "*Eilean Maree*." The number of tombstones in the burying-place, with inscriptions and hieroglyphical figures which few now-a-days can satisfactorily decipher, gives a plausibility to this conjecture which is not easily got over. As it is a doubtful subject, and likely to remain so, a third conjecture may be ventured: There lived, a great many years ago, in this part of the Highlands, a great and good man called "*Maree*," who had his principal residence on this same island; after his death his admirers prefixed *Saint* to his name. Many of his generous and bene-

volent deeds are, to this day, recounted by the people of this and the surrounding parishes.\*

There is only one river worthy of particular notice in this parish, viz. the "*Ewe*," which issues from Lochmaree, and is only one mile long from its source to its confluence with the arm of the sea, called "*Lochewe*." This beautiful stream abounds with salmon of the very best description. It is surpassed by no river on the west coast for angling; and hence it is, during the summer months, frequented by gentlemen from all parts of the kingdom, for this healthy and delightful exercise. An English military gentleman killed one hundred salmon and grilse, in the course of a few weeks, during the summer of 1834; and I am credibly informed that the late proprietor, Sir Hector Mackenzie of Gairloch, Bart. frequently killed twenty salmon in one day.—Besides Gairloch, Lochewe is the only other salt water loch in the parish. This loch, into which the waters of Lochmaree fall, is from 8 to 10 miles long. Near the mouth of it, is a fertile and well cultivated island, called Isle Ewe. Much attention and expense were bestowed upon the improvement of this island, by the present proprietor, Sir Francis Alexander M'Kenzie of Gairloch, Bart., before he came into the full possession of the Gairloch estate. The two principal headlands jutting out on each side of Lochewe, are *Ru Rea* on the south, and Green Stone Point on the north side.

*Climate*.—The climate is mild, although extremely rainy. This may be accounted for, partly by the mountainous character of the country, and partly by other causes. The prevailing winds are the west and south; and at whatever season of the year it blows from these quarters, we are almost certain of torrents of rain. Easterly winds invariably bring us dry weather, and hence they are welcome visitants, although they warn us to wear additional coverings. The easterly winds are more prevalent in the month of March and first half of April, than at any other season of the year. But there has been a marked change in the climate, for some years

\* On the centre of this island is a deep well, consecrated by the said *Saint Marce* to the following purpose. To this same well are dragged, *volens, nolens*, all who are insane in this or any of the surrounding parishes, and after they have been made to drink of it, these poor victims of superstitious cruelty are towed round the island after a boat, by their tender-hearted attendants. It is considered a hopeful sign, if the well is full at the time of dragging the patient to the scene. In justice to the people of this parish, it may be stated, that they have not such an unbounded belief in the healing virtues of the well, and the other parts of the transaction, as their most distant neighbours appear to entertain. The belief in such absurdities is daily losing ground in the Highlands; and there is little doubt that, in course of a few years more, the clouds of superstition that overhang the moral horizon of our Highlands will be dissipated by the better education of the peasantry.

back. Instead of the deep falls of snow, and the long-continued frosts that were wont to starve the black-cattle, smother the sheep, and fertilize the soil in former years, we have now mild weather, and very much rain. Notwithstanding the extreme wetness of the climate, and the people's frequent exposure in the open air, their principal employment being fishing,—they are in general healthy, and of robust constitutions.

*Geology and Mineralogy.*—This, and the neighbouring parish of Lochbroom, afford numerous displays of interesting geological phenomena. Old red sandstone and quartz rock abound, but gneiss and its various subordinate formations may be considered the prevailing formation. Upwards of one hundred and fifty years ago, when the science of mineralogy was comparatively in its infancy in Scotland, and when the spirit of speculation and adventure did not move with such bold strides as in later times, a Sir James Kay sent several people to work at veins of iron ore, on the estate of Letterewe, along the north side of Lochmaree, in this parish. I understood they continued to work successfully for several years; but as wood was their sole fuel for conducting the operations, they were obliged to desist when the wood in the neighbourhood was exhausted. The ruins of one of the furnaces for working the ore are within a few hundred yards of the manse of Poolewe; and those of another are ten miles farther up, along the north side of Lochmaree. A spot is pointed out to the passer by, near the east end of Lochmaree, where they buried their dead. It is, to this day, called "*Cladh nam Sasganach*," the burying-ground of the Englishmen. Highlanders look upon all who do not speak the Gaelic language as *Sasganaich*, or Englishmen. At a later period, some other individual, or perhaps the same, thought he had discovered a vein of silver ore, in another place along the north side of Lochmaree; but after digging to a considerable depth, the undertaking was abandoned, without yielding a remunerating return to the spirited adventurer.

*Botany.*—The rarer plants that are found in the parish are the

*Ajuga pyramidalis*,  
*Arbutus alpina*,  
*Cornus Suecica*,  
*Hieracium alpinum*,  
*Rubus chamaemorus*,  
*Salix herbacea*,

*Saxifraga stellaris*,  
*Saxifraga hypnoides*,  
*Serratula alpina*,  
*Thalictrum alpinum*,  
*Epipactus longifolia*.

All the culinary plants usually cultivated in Scotland, grow freely in this parish, as well as all the common fruits. With regard to plants used for medicinal purposes, I know only six, viz.

<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> ,	For the stomach.
<i>Linum catharticum</i> ,	Aperient.
Ground ivy, -	Deobstruent.
Wild carrot, -	Diuretic.
<i>Ranunculus flammula</i> ,	For blistering instead of cantharides.
Dandelion, - - -	For the jaundice.

Trees indigenous to this parish, are the

White barked ash,	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ,	Poplar, -	<i>Populus tremula</i> ,
Oak, - - -	<i>Quercus robur</i> ,	Bird cherry, -	<i>Prunus padus</i> ,
Birch, - - -	<i>Betula alba</i> ,	Holly, -	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i> .
Alder, - - -	<i>Betula alnus</i> ,	Pine, -	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i> ,
Upland willow,	<i>Salix alba</i> ,	Elm, -	<i>Ulmus montana</i> .
Mountain ash,	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> ,		

Of exotic trees for timber, there are none planted excepting *Larix*, *Pinus larix*—Chestnut, *Fagus castanea*,—which thrive extremely well. A variety of delicate exotic shrubs bear this climate, and produce their flowers, in the grounds of Sir Francis M'Kenzie. Trees in general grow rapidly in this moist climate, whenever the soil and situation are suitable.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Eminent Men.*—This parish has been as fortunate as most of its neighbours, in being the birth-place and residence of eminent characters; but the only person whom I shall at present mention, is William Ross, the celebrated Gaelic bard. This individual was born in the parish of Strath, Isle of Skye, in the year 1762. After receiving as liberal an education as the school of Forres, at that time could afford, he was appointed parochial schoolmaster of Gairloch, when about twenty-four years of age. In that situation, he continued four years. He died in his twenty-eighth year; and his remains are deposited in the churchyard of Gairloch. “As a writer of Gaelic songs,” (to quote from a short memoir prefixed to a Collection of his Songs, published four years ago,) “William Ross is entitled to the highest praise. In the greater number of his lyrics, the bard leads us along with him, and imparts to us so much of his own tenderness, feeling, and enthusiasm, that our thoughts expand and kindle with his sentiments. Without going beyond the bounds of ‘verity and truth,’ it may be affirmed that his poetry, more perhaps than that of most writers, deserves to be styled the poetry of the heart—of a heart overflowing with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions.”

*Land-owners.*—The land-owners of the parish are, Sir Francis Alexander M'Kenzie of Gairloch, Bart.; Sir George Stewart M'Kenzie of Coul, Bart.; Duncan Davison, Esq. of Tulloch; James Alexander Stewart M'Kenzie, Esq. of Seaforth; and Hector M'Kenzie, Esq. of Letterewe.

*Parochial Registers.*—There were no parochial registers kept in the parish previous to the year 1802; since that period, they have been regularly kept.

### III.—POPULATION.

*Character of the People.*—The ancient population of this parish, as far back as the oldest living inhabitants can remember, was comparatively rude and uncultivated. There are now living in the parish, some who remember the time when there was only one, or at most two Bibles in the parish, besides the minister's. What, in such a state of things, could be expected of the manners of the inhabitants? Yet these same individuals will unhesitatingly affirm, that people were more generous and more noble-minded at that period, than they are now.

Population in 1801,	1497
1811,	2755
1821,	4518
1831,	4445

The causes of the increase are various, and too numerous to be mentioned here. Among these, however, may be mentioned the habit of early marriage, and the system of letting the land in lots. The lot of lands this year in the possession of one family may, before twelve months are over, be divided into three equal portions,—in other words, three distinct families live upon the produce of it.

The yearly average of births for the last seven years,	100
of marriages for do.	40
No register of deaths kept in the parish,	
The average number of persons under 15 years of age,	1693
betwixt 15 and 30,	1128
30 and 50,	927
50 and 70,	602
upwards of 70,	95
The number of proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards,	6
of bachelors upwards of 50 years of age,	16
of widowers, do.	18
of unmarried women, upwards of 46 years of age,	76
of families,	795
of inhabited houses,	791
of houses now building,	6

There are only 4 blind individuals within the bounds of this parish: 10 fatuous persons; and 6 deaf and dumb; 4 of the latter belong to one family, and 2 to another.

*Language, &c.*—The language generally spoken is the Gaelic. I am not aware that it has lost ground within the last forty years. Some young men, indeed, who have received a smattering of education, consider they are doing great service to the Gaelic, by interspersing their conversation with English words, and giv-

ing them a Gaelic termination and accent. These corrupters of both languages, with more pride than good taste, now and then, introduce words of bad English or of bad Scotch, which they have learned from the Newhaven or Buckie fishermen, whom they meet with on the coast of Caithness during the fishing season. The Gaelic, however, is still spoken in as great purity by the inhabitants in general, as it was forty years ago.

The houses of the people in general, have but one outer door, and as they and their cattle go in by that one entrance,—the bipeds to take possession of one end of the house, and the quadrupeds of the other,—it cannot be expected that a habitation common to man and beast can be particularly clean. Some of the people, indeed, are now getting into the way of building byres for their cattle, contiguous to their dwelling-houses; and it is acknowledged, even by the most indolent, that a great improvement is thus effected. It is hoped that the practice may soon become more general. When the young people go to kirk or market, few appear more “trig or clean;” and a stranger would hardly be persuaded that some of them lived in such miserable hovels. When a girl dresses in her best attire, her very habiliments, in some instances, would be sufficient to purchase a better dwelling-house than that from which she has just issued.

The people are in general contented with their situation and circumstances. If they have a lot of lands, grass for two or three cows, and fishing materials, they seldom have any further objects of ambition. Owing to the means of education not being commensurate with the increase of population, the intellectual character of the people does not keep pace with their moral and religious character. They are naturally a shrewd, sensible, steady sort of people. With a few exceptions, they are of good moral character. They seldom quarrel among each other; and when they have any differences, these are generally settled by the proprietors or factors. A law-suit is seldom heard of from this parish.

When I advert to their religious character, I am constrained to acknowledge my fear that their knowledge of the truths of our holy religion is more of the head than the heart. The form of godliness is not so much wanting as its power. I do not mean, however, that in this respect the people of this parish are not on a parity with those of the neighbourhood.

Smuggling was carried on to a great extent in this parish, some years ago, but is now very much on the decrease; indeed, while

there is a vestige of such a demoralizing practice remaining, there can be but slender hopes of moral improvement. It may be mentioned to the honour of one of the heritors, that he has erected a licensed distillery, for the sole purpose of giving a death-blow to smuggling on his estate.

#### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture.*—The number of families employed in agriculture, including those who employ servants, is 556; male servants upwards of twenty years of age, 86; female servants of all ages, 141. Number of acres under wood, 5000. I have already mentioned the trees indigenous to this parish, and also the exotic trees planted for timber. The woods are generally kept in good condition, by thinning, pruning, &c.

*Rent of Land.*—Average rent of arable land is from 10s. to L. 1, per acre; rent of grazing a cow or ox for a year, from L. 1 to L. 2; rent of pasturing a ewe or sheep for a year, from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d.

*Wages.*—Farm-servants receive from L. 5 to L. 8 per annum for wages, exclusive of their victuals; masons receive from 2s. 6d. to 3s.; carpenters from 2s. to 2s. 6d.; blacksmiths, 3s.; weavers, from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per day, all including victuals.

*Fisheries.*—The various kinds of fisheries carried on in this parish, are salmon-fishing, cod, and ling-fishing, and herring-fishing. The salmon-fishings are let at L. 150 per annum. Salmon-fishing is carried on by cruives, stell-nets, bag-nets, and stake-nets. Cod and ling are taken by long lines, and the hand-line; and herring, by the common mode of meshed nets.

*Navigation.*—There are four vessels belonging to the several ports in the parish, averaging about thirty-five tons burthen each.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Means of Communication.*—This parish is extremely ill supplied with the means of communication, owing to the want of roads. We have one post-office situated at Poolewe.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The parish church is as conveniently situated as it could well be, considering the extent of the parish; its distance from the eastern extremity of the parish, is twenty-eight miles; from the southern, fifteen miles; from the western, twelve miles; and from the northern extremity, twenty miles. The church was built in the year 1791, and got a thorough repair in 1834. The church affords accommodation for 500 sitters only. The manse was built in the year 1805; but a considerable addition was built to it

in the year 1823. The glebe is worth about L. 30 per annum; the amount of the stipend is L. 240. There is one Government church in the parish; it is situated at Poolewe, six miles to the north of the parish church, and fourteen from the northern extremity of the parish. It is now erected into a new and separate parish *quoad sacra*, called the parish of Poolewe. Exactly one-half of the population of the whole parish is connected with this new parish. We have one catechist employed by the Committee for managing his Majesty's Royal Bounty, and another paid by contributions from the parishioners. There is not a single Dissenter within the bounds of the parish. The average number of communicants at the parish church and Government church, is 360.

*Education.*—The total number of schools in the parish is 9; the parochial school is one of that number; all the rest are supported by different religious societies. The branches of instruction taught at the parochial school are, Greek, Latin, mathematics, arithmetic, writing and English, and Gaelic reading. The branches taught at the Society schools are arithmetic, writing, English and Gaelic reading. The salary in the parochial school is L. 30 Sterling, and L. 4 are obtained from school fees; at the Society schools, the salaries are from L. 5 to L. 25 Sterling. Scarcely any school fees can be calculated upon, owing to the poverty of the people. From six to eight schools are still required in the parish; and some of the schools now in operation ought to be put on a more permanent and efficient footing. Not more than one in every ten of the whole population is able to read and write in English. In 1833, 1773 persons above six years of age could not read either in the Gaelic or English languages.

*Poor.*—The number of poor receiving parochial aid in the parish, is about 100, each receiving from 2s. 6d. to 6s. per annum. The annual amount for their relief is about L. 16, principally arising from church door collections.

*Inns.*—There are five licensed inns in the parish. Their effects are most destructive to the morals of the people. This is evident from the fact, that those who live in the close neighbourhood of these houses are in general given to tippling and idleness,—while those who have not such a temptation at their doors are sober, industrious people.

*Fuel.*—Peat is the only kind of fuel used by the people: it is procured in the mosses contiguous to their dwelling-houses, at an expense of from L. 1 to L. 2 for a family, in the year.

## MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

In concluding this short Account of the parish, I must take leave to say, that either the Parliamentary Commissioners for Highland roads, or those whose duty it was to make application to them, were very remiss in overlooking this parish. When other parishes received large grants for conducting public roads through their whole length and breadth, this parish, though the public mails pass twice through it every week, from Dingwall to Stornoway, was completely neglected. It is almost unnecessary to add that, without public roads, no regular improvement can be carried on in any part of the Highlands. The first great improvement required in this way, is a public road from the east end of Lochmaree, along its banks to the harbour of Poðlewe,—and throwing an arch across the river Ewe, near its confluence with the sea; a spot which seems formed by nature for the purpose. The population is by much too dense for the means of support which they enjoy. A Government grant to convey one-third of the people to Upper Canada would be most desirable; and, in order to promote the moral and religious improvement of the people, two missionaries, and from six to eight schools, on a proper footing, are absolutely necessary and loudly called for.

September 1836.

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**PARISH OF APPLECROSS.**

PRESBYTERY OF LOHCARRON, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. RODERICK M'RAE, MINISTER.

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**L.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.**

THE parish of Applecross, in Gaelic called *Comaraich*, is divided into three large districts; 1. Applecross, strictly so called; 2. Lochs, consisting of Torridon, Shieldag, &c.; 3. Kishorn. This parish formed a part of the parish of Lochcarron, till 1726, when it was erected into a separate charge. The Applecross district was formerly occupied by a body of Roman Catholic priests, whose residence afforded an asylum to such as, from motives of piety, or to escape from punishment for criminal actions, sought such a place of protection. Hence the name *Comaraich*, a place of safety.