

PARISH OF BOWER.

PRESBYTERY OF CAITHNESS, SYNOD OF SUTHERLAND AND
CAITHNESS.

THE REV. WILLIAM SMITH, A. M., MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name, &c.—THE name of the parish is supposed to be derived from a Danish word signifying a *valley*. Its extent is 7 miles in length and 3 in breadth.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

State of Property and Antiquities, &c.—The boundary of the parish was formerly, in the greater part of its extent, the boundary of distinct properties.

The estates of Tister (formerly written Thuspisteer,) and Northfield, in this parish, connected with Durrán, in the parish of Olrick, had belonged to the family of Mr Sinclair Worth of Durrán. Both of these estates are now the property of the Earl of Caithness.

The property of Lyth, in this parish, separated by a burn only from How and Myreland, in the parish of Wick, belongs to Mr Sinclair of Barrack. That of Bowermaddon, and half of Mursay, in this parish, have been added to Tain and Hoy, in the parish of Olrick.

The boundary of Bowermaddon and Mursay was supposed to extend to the burn of Amatan; and the intervening house and farm of Hartfield is partly in this parish, and partly in that of Dunnet. The mills on these two last have been pulled down, and a new one erected in place of them, on the boundary of Bowermaddon.

The estate of Scarmclet, on the south-west side of this parish, has been acquired by Sir R. Anstruther, and added to his property of Dunn, in the parish of Watten, and improved by a new farm at Blackearn, beyond Larel, and a steading of buildings at Bleedy-quoy, and the erection of an excellent new mill. On the premises on which the old mill stood, Sir Ralph Anstruther has caused a school-house to be built.

The improvements formerly begun on the estates of Scarmclet and Clayock, by the late Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin Williamson of Banneskirk, have been considerably advanced by Sir Ralph Anstruther, by the erection of new farms and steadings, and dividing the possessions of the tenants by ditches 6 feet wide by 3 feet deep, which preclude the encroachments of cattle, and lay the land dry. Mr Henderson of Stempster has inclosed many acres by ditches, and improved his property by digging marl pits.

The estate of Brabsterdorran (said once to have belonged to the earldom of Caithness) was lately acquired from that of South Dunn, by Colonel Stewart of Strath, and resold to David Henderson, younger of Stempster: it is now more than four or five times the value of what it was when it belonged to the late Mrs Henrietta Sinclair Wemyss of South Dunn.

The improvements begun on it by General Stewart, by the erection of a dwelling and offices on the site of the old mansion, some hedging, draining, and road-making, have been further advanced, and the mains enlarged, with extended tillage, fallowing, and enclosures with stone and turf dikes, as also drains; on the Mains, there were added a steading of offices, and a thrashing-mill driven by water, besides a new farm at lower Gillock, bounding with Lower Scarmclet and Quoynce.

On the hill-ground to the east, beyond Brabster and Lister, at nearly equal distance from Brabster, Campster, and Belster of Lord Caithness's property, is placed the standing-stone called Stone Ludd, which, by an old tradition, is supposed to be the memorial of a battle fought and gained.

Torfaeus mentions a fight begun in the moss of Skitten, (*paludibus Skidensibus*), now oftener called Kilmster, by two brothers for the Earldom of Caithness,—Liotus, the elder, being supported in his right by the King of Norway,—Scullius, the younger, being aided by the King of Scotland. It is said that the younger was slain in battle, and buried in Hofn, probably Stone Hone, near Watten; and that the elder, victorious brother, was mortally wounded. It is not improbable that the stone was raised as a memorial of Liotus, the Earl of Caithness and Orkney, in the tenth century.

The lands of Bowertower and Auckhorn, Seater, Hastigrow, Kirk, and Stanstill, with Whitegan, belong to David Sinclair Wemyss of South Dunn, and still make up the highest share of the valuation of the parish. The mansion-house of Stanstill is let to a

tenant, with the mains enlarged, and a new square of offices, and thrashing-mill driven by horses.

The estate of Thura was, within the last forty years, purchased by the late William Sinclair, Esq. of Freswick. It is now the property of his son. The Mains have been lately improved by drains and extended enclosures.

Among the improvements in this parish, those carried on by John Sinclair of Barrack, on the property of Lyth and Alterwall, may be reckoned the greatest. He has added several hundred acres to the land in his own possession, laid much ground dry, multiplied enclosures, and on some of the pastures for sheep added wire fences, besides erecting a new mansion-house, and squares of farm-steadings.

III.—POPULATION.

Population by census of 1801,	-	1572	
1811,	-	1478	
1821,	-	1486	
1831,	-	1615	
Number of families in the parish in 1831,			236
chiefly engaged in agriculture,			161
in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,			19

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—All that the writer has to observe on this subject will be found under the head Civil History of this Account.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—Amount of stipend, 14 chalders. Value of the glebe per annum, L.5. There are only six Dissenting or Seceding families in the parish.

Education.—There are four schools in the parish, one of which is parochial, and another a General Assembly's school. The salary of the parochial master, including the amount of an equivalent for garden, is L.35, 16s. 2d., and his school fees may amount to L.14 per annum.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—Average number of poor for the three years 1835–36–37,—53. Average amount of the sum distributed for their support, L.18, 14s. 9d. This consists of church collections, and interest of Dr Oswald's legacy of L.100.

October 1840.