

PARISH OF NESTING.

PRESBYTERY OF BURRAVOE, SYNOD OF SHETLAND.

THE REV. JOHN M'GOWAN, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE parish consists of the three parishes of Nesting, Lunasting, and Whalsay; and to these are annexed the detached islands of Skerries.

Extent.—If the whole land of the parish were thrown together, its average length would be from 18 to 20 miles, and average breadth 4.

Boundaries.—Nesting is bounded on the east by the Island of Whalsay, with the Skerrie Islands adjacent; by Catfirth Voe on the south; and by Delting on the west.

Geology.—The predominating rock in this parish is gneiss. Primitive limestone, mica-slate, syenite, and granite veins occur in subordinate quantity. In the out Skerries there are beds of primitive limestone associated with gneiss.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Parochial Registers.—There are registers of births and marriages, but not of deaths. These registers were very irregularly kept till 1827; and the Dissenters do not register, except those who have been married and baptised by the parochial minister.

Land-owners.—The principal land-owners are, Robert Bruce, Esq. Simbister, and Miss Robina Hunter of Lunna. These possess nearly the whole parish.

Mansion-House.—A splendid house and offices have been built in Whalsay by Mr Bruce of Simbister. The building is of granite, and cost L. 20,000. The stone was imported across the Sound of Whalsay.

III.—POPULATION.

Amount of population in 1801,	-	1941
1811,	-	1866
1821,	-	2005
1831,	-	2108

The population of the three parishes is supposed to be at present 2250.

During the last three years, only one case of illegitimate birth occurred.

This parish contains a greater number of inhabitants, in proportion to the rental land, than any other in Shetland, owing to the exertions of the two principal heritors in making outsets, or new settlements, on grounds formerly uncultivated.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

The extent of arable land in the parish is supposed to be about 1000 acres. All the rest is waste or in pasture. The whole land is undivided, and common to the tenants of the two principal proprietors. No wood.

Rent.—The average rent of land per merk is L. 1. No progress in the wretched agriculture of the parish, has been made during the last fifty years. The people direct their sole attention to fishing, and consider the cultivation of the lands as only a secondary object.

Fisheries.—The inhabitants adventure in what we call the great fisheries of ling, cod, and tusk; but the principal part of their subsistence arises from the small fishing of piltock and sillock, which, except in very extraordinary years, they can pursue at no expense, and with great advantage, all the year round.

There are fourteen or sixteen herring boats belonging to Mr Bruce, and about seven to Mr Hunter. Mr Bruce's average

fishing amounts to 2000 barrels per annum, and Mr Hunter's is in proportion. Ling and cod, and tusk-fishing, called the Haaf Fishery, commences in the beginning of June, and continues till July and August. The produce is sent to Leith. The greater part of the male population is concerned in fishing;—and many men go to the Greenland whale fishery. *

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—There are three churches, viz. at Nesting, Whalsay, and Lunnasting. The church at Nesting is made for the accommodation of the whole population at sacrament. Skerries Church is sixteen miles distant from the mainland, and the minister preaches there only once a-year. Whalsay is visited by him eleven times in the year, and Lunnasting eleven times also. It was intended that the Whalsay church should have been endowed as a Parliamentary church; but, unfortunately, this advantage was not obtained. Lunnasting Church has been newly repaired, and the seating is good. Whalsay Church has been newly roofed; but the seating is not good or comfortable.

The parish church of Nesting was built in 1794, and is in a tolerable state of repair.

The whole population belongs to the Established Church, except thirty individuals, who are Methodists, Baptists, or Independents.

Stipend L. 150; of which sum L. 69 are received from Exchequer. The extent of the glebe is twelve merks and a-half.

The manse was built in 1770. It was lately repaired, but again needs repair.

Education.—There is one parochial, and two adventure schools. Three more are required. Education is, in this parish, at the lowest ebb. The parish schoolmaster's salary is L. 25 per annum, and his fees do not exceed L. 2 or L. 3.

Poor.—Average number of paupers yearly on the permanent roll for the three years 1835–36–37, 25. Average yearly amount of church collections for these years, L. 14, 2s. 1d. Mortcloth dues, &c. L. 1, 8s.

* Seventeen boats perished in 1832; seven of which belonged to Nesting. About L. 3000 were raised in Scotland and in London for relief of the widows; each widow receiving L. 3: each child under fourteen, 10s; and parents depending on sons, L. 2. This allowance they have got annually since 1832, and will get till 1848.

June 1841.