

PARISH OF KELLS.

PRESBYTERY OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT, SYNOD OF GALLOWAY.

THE REV. JAMES MAITLAND, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name, Boundaries, &c.—THE name of this parish, according to the former Statistical Account, is Gaelic, and descriptive of its elevated situation; but Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, derives it from the British "Cell," a *grove* or *wood*,—which seems the more probable derivation, as formerly a great portion of the parish was covered with wood, many remains of which are still visible in the bogs and mosses.

Kells is one of the most extensive parishes in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright. The extreme length is fully 16 miles, and breadth about 8 miles. It is of a triangular shape, calculated by Ainslie, in his survey of the Stewartry, to contain 37,978 Scotch acres, and about 74 square miles. It is bounded on the north, by Carsfairn; on the west, by Monigaff; on the south, by Girthon and Balma-ghie, from which three last-mentioned parishes it is separated by the river Dee; and on the east, by the river Ken, which divides it from Dalry, Balmaclellan, and Parton. Previous to 1640, the parish was still more extensive; but what now constitutes the western division of Carsfairn was then disjoined from it, and with the northern part of Dalry formed into a separate parish. The royal burgh of New Galloway, situated in Kells, is 24 miles distant from Dumfries, 18 from Newtonstewart, 20 from Kirkcudbright, 14 from Castle Douglas, and 12 from Carsfairn village, through which a coach passes from Ayr to Dumfries and Castle Douglas, opening up an easy and speedy communication between New Galloway and Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Topographical Appearances, &c.—The scenery along the banks of the river and loch of Ken is eminently beautiful. Kenmure Castle, with its avenue of ancient limes and verdant meadows; the little rural burgh of New Galloway, interspersed with trees; the winding river and the splendid loch of Ken, having for its back ground the rocky Lowran, and the lofty and wooded Bennan, form

a landscape rarely surpassed. The scenery around Glenlee Park is also most striking and romantic, every where fringed with natural copsewood, and studded with oak trees, amongst the finest in the south-west of Scotland. There is in the immediate vicinity of the mansion-house a rocky and beautifully wooded glen, containing two waterfalls of considerable extent.

The face of the parish is hilly and unequal. Along the banks of the Ken, there is a considerable extent of arable and meadow land, interspersed with copsewood; but on leaving the river, the surface gradually rises into a range of magnificent mountains, of the height of about 2700 feet.

Climate, &c.—The climate is exceedingly moist, but mild and healthy. From a rain-gauge kept at Kenmure Castle, the annual quantity of rain appears much to exceed the average of the eastern parts of Scotland.

There fell in 1832,	-	56 inches,	6 16ths.
1833,	-	59	2
1834,	-	54	12
1835,	-	59	12
1836,	-	72	12
1837,	-	52	4
1838,	-	58	0

Average of seven years, 59 inches.

The extreme humidity, however, does not appear to be injurious to health or longevity. Epidemic diseases are of rare occurrence, and the inhabitants robust. The prevailing winds are the west and south-west; but, especially in the months of March, April, and May, there are frequently long tracts of east wind. Here, however, as in other parts of Galloway, its severity is much tempered. Considering the inland situation of the parish, the seasons are generally early. Harvest, on an average, may commence the latter end of August. When attention is paid, the common garden vegetables, such as peas, potatoes, &c. are generally fit for use in the second week of June, and in favourable springs even sooner. The gooseberry, strawberry, raspberry, plum and cherry thrive and bear luxuriantly. The pear and apple do not succeed so well: except the coarser kinds, they are apt, unless in favourable situations, to canker. The fuschia and myrtle, with a little protection, stand the winter tolerably well; and the Noisette rose, without any covering, was uninjured by the severe frost of January and February 1838.

Hydrography.—The principal stream connected with the parish is the river Ken, which forms its eastern boundary. It has its rise in the east of Carsfairn, or confines of Dumfries-shire. Upon

entering Kells, on the north-east, it is joined by the Deuch, and at the southern extremity of the parish by the Dee, which name it then assumes, and, after a course of about forty miles, empties itself into the sea at Kirkcudbright. The Dee, which separates Kells from Monigaff, Girthon, and Balmaghie, is also a considerable stream. The parish is everywhere intersected by rivulets. The lochs are numerous: the largest is Loch Ken, in the vicinity of New Galloway. Its length from Kenmure Castle to the Boat of Roan cannot be less than five miles, by about one-half or three-quarters of a mile in breadth. Lochs Dungeon and Harrow in the north of the parish are also of considerable extent.

Mineralogy.—There are no mines of any description wrought in the parish. The hills to the south along the river Dee are masses of granite.

Zoology.—Ptarmigan are extinct. Grouse are considered to be on the decrease, partly from poaching, and probably also from the great increase of black game, which is abundant. Hares and partridges, were they properly preserved, would be plentiful; as it is, they are comparatively scarce. Snipe and woodcock are numerous. Deer were occasionally seen, in the remembrance of some old people. The bittern has disappeared. Foxes and otters are numerous, but the badger has of late years become extinct. Eagles are often seen, and occasionally have their nests in the parish. Salmon, especially towards autumn, are abundant, both in the Ken and Dee; but there is no regular fishery. Trout are plentiful in Lochs Dungeon and Harrow, and in the smaller streams. In Loch Ken there are pike and perch. Perhaps the largest pike known to have been killed in Scotland, was caught with the rod and fly in this loch by John Murray, game-keeper to the grandfather of the present Viscount Kenmure. It weighed 72 lbs. The head is still preserved in Kenmure Castle, and bears witness to its enormous size. In Loch Dungeon there are char, which are occasionally killed with the fly; and in the river Dee the pearl muscle abounds.

Botany.—The parish affords an ample and interesting field for the investigations of the botanist. Amongst the rarer plants are the following:—

Uva ursi
Pinguicula lusitanica
Meum athamanticum
Geum rivale
Nymphaea alba

Anagallis tenella
Cardamine amara
Solanum Dulcamara
Orobus sylvatica
Ornithopus perpusillus

Melampyrum pratense
Botrychium Lunaria
Pteris crispa
Polypodium Dryopteris
Asplenium Ruta-muraria,

and many other rare and beautiful ferns.

There is a considerable extent of natural copse, chiefly oak and birch, both of which are evidently indigenous. The avenue of limes at Kenmure Castle has been long celebrated, and the oaks around Glenlee Park are splendid trees. The only plantation of any extent is on the estate of Airds, the property of Thomas Hughan, Esq. It may consist of about 250 acres. It is chiefly composed of Scotch fir, larch, and oak, and is thriving vigorously. It was planted, we believe, in 1810.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Chalmers in his *Caledonia* gives an account of the parish. There is also a description of it in Symson's *Galloway*, written in 1684, and published in 1823, from a manuscript in the Advocates' Library. It is likewise mentioned by a Dr Archibald in a short account of Galloway, printed along with Symson's work. "There is a well," says the Doctor, "in the parish of Callis called Kernadort. The water is very sweet, to which many people resort who are distempered with sore heads and stomachs, and it proves effectual." This well, which is a strong chalybeate, is still well known to the inhabitants; but not resorted to, as in Archibald's time, by strangers, most probably from its being difficult of access to invalids.

Land-owners, &c.—The land-owners are, Viscount Kenmure; Sir William Miller, Bart., one of the Lords of Session as Lord Glenlee; William Forbes, Esq. of Callendar; Thomas Hughan, Esq. of Airds; John Kennedy, Esq. of Knocknalling; John Hoggan, Esq. of Stranfasket; William Grierson Yorstoun, Esq. of Garroch; and the Honourable F. M'Adam Cathcart of Craigenhillan. The valued rent is L.4548, 13s. 4d. Scots. The present rental is about L.4800 or L.5000 per annum.

Eminent Characters, &c.—Lowe, the author of *Mary's Dream*; Heron, author of a history of Scotland, a most voluminous writer, of whom there is an interesting account in D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*; Gordon, translator of Tacitus, and author of the *Independent Whig*; and the Rev. William Gillespie, author of the *Progress of Refinement, Consolation, &c.*, were natives of this parish.

Parochial Registers.—The parochial registers are imperfect. The first entry is in 1693. The register of baptisms does not appear to have been kept with any regularity previous to 1750.

Antiquities.—Kenmure Castle is an edifice of great antiquity. At what period, however, it was originally built is unknown.

The charter-chest of the Kenmure family is understood to contain many ancient and curious documents. In the former Statistical Account, there is mention of the remains of a wall or stone dike running through the parish from south to north, vestiges of which still remain. The rocking stone* is no longer an object of attraction. About twenty years ago, it was displaced from its pivot; whether from the effects of lightning, or by some mischievous persons, is not known. In the church-yard there is a stone erected to the memory of one Adam M'Qwhan, who was shot during the persecutions in the reign of James II., on Knockdavie, a small eminence in the vicinity of New Galloway, upon which there is the following inscription:

“Here lyes Adam M'Qwhan, who, being sick of a fever, was taken out of his bed and carried to Newtoun of Galloway, and the next day most cruelly and unjustly shot to death by the command of Lieutenant-General James Douglas, brother to the Duke of Queensberry, for his adherence to Scotland's reformation, covenants, national and solemn league, 1685.”

This stone was, in 1832, placed in a handsome granite monument, the expense of which was defrayed by a collection made by the present incumbent.

Modern Buildings.—The church, which is handsome and commodious, was built in 1822. Glenlee Park, the property of Sir William Miller, was about the same time much enlarged. Mr Kennedy of Knocknalling, and Mr Grierson Yorstoun of Garroch, have both, within these few years, built handsome and comfortable residences.

III.—POPULATION.

The population in 1755, was	784
1791,	869
1801,	778
1811,	941
1821,	1104
1831,	1128

By the census of 1841, the population is 1121, of whom 436 are in the burgh of New Galloway.

Parochial Registers.—The yearly average of baptisms for the last seven years is 3, and of marriages, in which one or both parties belonged to the parish, 8. No register of deaths has been

* Since the above was written, we have been informed that there is another rocking stone, on the same range of hills with the one adverted to as destroyed, equally large and interesting.

kept, but they bear a very small proportion to the number of births.

There are eight proprietors in the parish, but only two permanently resident, namely, Viscount Kenmure and W. Grierson Yorstoun, Esq.

Character of the People, &c.—The inhabitants are sober, moral, and religious, and of sound and healthy constitutions. There is only one fatuous person in the parish. There has, undoubtedly, since the commencement of this century, been a great improvement in the dwellings and comforts of the people. Of late years, a considerable stimulus has been given to neatness and cleanliness in the cottages and gardens attached to them, by the prizes given by the Glenkens Society.* The food of the peasantry is the same as in other parts of the south-west of Scotland, chiefly oatmeal and potatoes. There is a considerable consumpt of bacon and mutton ham. Wheaten bread is coming into much more general use, and the retail of butcher-meat has, within these last ten years, greatly increased.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—Kells must be regarded, almost exclusively, as a pastoral parish. The grain produced (chiefly oats) certainly does not exceed the annual consumpt.

Rent of Land.—In the neighbourhood of New Galloway, the rent of land is L.2 per acre; but, as in other parts of the parish, the arable land is attached to extensive stock farms, no fixed sum can be specified as its value per acre. The fences are in most cases exceedingly bad, and there is ample scope for improvement in drainage, collecting manure, and in general farm management. Turnip husbandry might be most advantageously and more extensively adopted. That agricultural improvements have not kept pace here with those in the lower district of the stewartry, must not be attributed to any deficiency in intelligence, activity, and industry on the part of the occupiers of land, but partly to the great expense of lime, and chiefly to their attention being directed almost exclusively to stock. There can be no doubt, however, that an improved system of tillage, by which the land might be

* The Glenkens Society takes its name from the district, and was commenced about 1830, under the auspices of William Grierson, (now W. Grierson Yorstoun,) Esq. of Garroch. It has for its object the general improvement of the people. It gives prizes in the schools, for the neatest kept cottages, to apprentice joiners and blacksmiths, &c.

laid down in a richer state for pasture, would eventually be found much more profitable than the one now generally pursued.

The number of sheep in the parish is calculated at 17,040, and they are considered worth 2s. 9d. per head annually. There are 565 Highland cattle grassed nine months, which may pay on an average L.1, 5s. per head; 315 Galloways, kept a year at an average of L.2 per head, and 421 cows with their followers. There are a great number of pigs kept which uniformly turn out a profitable stock. Almost every cottager is enabled to fatten one either for his own use or the market.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

The royal burgh of New Galloway is situated in the parish. Its population by the recent census is 436. In it the Sheriff and Justice of the Peace courts for the Glenkens are held. There is a daily post. Post-horses and carriages are kept, and a branch of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Bank has been established. The roads are excellent in every direction. The bridges are generally in good repair. The one across the Ken in the vicinity of New Galloway is built of granite. It is a beautiful bridge, highly ornamental to the district, consisting of five arches, the span of the centre one being 90 feet.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church with regard to the population is centrally situated. It is seated for 560, but can accommodate more. It was built in 1822, and is in excellent repair. None of the pews are let. The attendance is good and regular. The number of communicants may vary from 350 to 400. There is no Dissenting place of worship in the parish. The number of Dissenters in the parish may amount perhaps to 50; of these about 9 are Episcopalians, 10 Irish Roman Catholics, and the remaining belong to the United Associate Synod of the Secession church. There is a Sabbath school in New Galloway, which is well attended. The annual collections for religious purposes may amount to L.10 or L.12.

The manse was built in 1806, and an addition to it in 1836. Though the rooms are smaller than in the manses more recently built, it is now a convenient and comfortable dwelling, quite suitable to the benefice. The glebe, including the garden and site of the manse, consists of about 8 acres, and may be worth L.15 per annum. The teinds are exhausted. The money stipend is L.299, 9s. 8½d., of which sum L.9, 19s. 6d. is payable from the

teinds of Carsfairn. In 1755, the stipend was L. 67, 18s. 4d.; when the last Statistical Account was written, L. 80, 11s. 3d.; and previous to the late augmentation in 1834, 12 chalders, half meal, half barley. The rectory of Kells was united by Robert I. to the archdeaconry of Galloway. But in the beginning of the sixteenth century, when James IV. enlarged the establishment of the chapel royal at Stirling, the church of Kells was transferred to it, and constituted one of the prebends of that establishment.

Education.—The only school in the parish is the parochial one, situated in New Galloway. In addition to the elementary branches, Latin, Greek, French, and geography are taught. The salary is the maximum of two chalders, and the whole emoluments of the teacher, including wages and Candlemas offerings, may amount yearly to L. 65 or L. 70. The fees for English are 2s.; with writing, 2s. 6d.; with arithmetic, 3s.; with Latin, French, and Geography, 5s. per quarter. The school is excellently taught, and a great stimulus has been given to the pupils by the prizes awarded by the Glenkens Society. A school is much required in the northern part of the parish.* The people are intelligent and fully alive to the advantages of education. They can all read and almost universally write. There is a good village library attached to the Sabbath school.

Poor.—The number of paupers on the roll has of late years been 18 or 20. Their allowances, except when they require a person to attend to them, vary from 7s. 6d. to 15s. per quarter; but extraordinary cases are constantly occurring, when more must be given. The six years previous to 1842, from the failure in the potato crop, the advance in the price of meal, and the scarcity of peat, owing to the wet summers, pressed very heavily on the poor.

The annual church collections now average from L. 35 to L. 40, —occasional donations, proclamations, and mortcloth fees, L. 16. These sums, with the interest of L. 522, 16s. at present in the hands of the kirk-session, have hitherto met all the ordinary expense of the poor. The feeling of shame at being put upon the poor roll, both on the part of individuals themselves, and their relatives, has rather decreased. There is a growing impression, that the heri-

* This defect, since the above was written, has to a certain extent been removed, through the liberality of John Kennedy, Esq. who has built a school on his property, and pays a small salary to the teacher.

tors can be compelled by the sheriff to grant relief. There is, however, a great repugnancy on the part of the paupers to be removed to anything like a workhouse; that is, to being collected into one dwelling, with a person to attend to them.

Fairs, &c.—Formerly there were four fairs in New Galloway. The April, midsummer, and Hallow fairs are still pretty numerously attended. Little business, except hiring, is transacted at them. Cattle-markets have recently been commenced, with every prospect of success. There are three inns in New Galloway, and one public house in a remote part of the parish. Fuel is expensive. Peats are most generally used by the peasantry and in the farm kitchens. They are becoming scarce, and cannot cost less than 3s. per cart load. Coal are brought from Dalmellington in Ayrshire; they cost at the pit 3s. or 3s. 6d. per ton of twenty cwt.; but there is a land carriage of twenty-four miles to New Galloway, which necessarily renders them very expensive.

* MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The comforts of the people have been undoubtedly much increased since the last Statistical Account was written. At that period, and down even to the last fifteen or twenty years, salted provisions were alone used from Martinmas to July. The houses have undergone a great improvement. Roads, which in 1792 were mere mountain tracks, have been opened up in every direction. The church collections, which then averaged only L.12, 10s. per annum, now average L.35 or L.40, and this without any additional resident heritors to swell the amount,—a circumstance showing both a more general attendance upon ordinances, and greater ability on the part of the people to contribute to the poor, while the number of paupers, when the population is considered, has not proportionally increased. There appears to have been no increase in the number of sheep and cattle kept in the parish, but in the quality of the stock there has been a vast improvement. In agriculture, though a more liberal system of husbandry is certainly gaining ground, much remains to be done. The fences and drainage are both bad, nor in many cases is the value of manure at all appreciated as it ought to be, either as a mean for top-dressing meadow land, or to enable the farmer permanently to improve his pasturage by sowing out his fields in a luxuriant state. The two great impediments in the way of farther improvements are the expense of lime, and several farms susceptible of profitable tillage,

having been thrown together as sheep walks. Upon the whole, however, the social condition of the people is on the advance, and though some may yet talk of the good old times, as if want and misery had then been almost unknown, were their fathers, who kept a few potatoes as a treat for Halloween, bled their cattle in spring to make blood puddings, sent their children to school with "a cauld kail blade" in their pockets for a *piece*, and luxuriated on black oats and braxy, to revisit the parish, they would be astonished to behold comforts and refinements in the dwellings of the farmers, and even in many of the peasantry, which in their day were unknown even in the houses of men of moderate landed property.

October 1839.

Revised, February 1844.