

PARISH OF LESWALT.

PRESBYTERY OF STRANRAER, SYNOD OF GALLOWAY.

THE REV. ANDREW M'CUBBIN, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—LESWALT signifies the meadow along the burn. The rivulet, on the bank of which stands the old church, takes its rise out of a large moss of nearly 1000 acres, and forms a beautiful cascade where it enters the romantic glen of Altdowran, which signifies the Otter's Burn.

Extent and Boundaries.—The parish is bounded on the east, by the Irish Channel; on the west, by Lochryan; on the north, by Kirkcolm parish; and on the south, by Portpatrick. It is nearly 8 square miles.

Topographical Appearances.—This parish is very hilly, and there are large tracts of moss in the upper district. They abound in grouse and black game. There are many fine meadows and rich pasture grounds. The meadow which gives name to the parish is now cultivated, and produces very fine wheat crops. That part of the parish next Lochryan is partly flat; but the greater part is hilly, and for four miles the soil is very fine, and produces crops of all kinds, which return very fair profits to the farmers. The part lying along Lochryan has many advantages: vessels lie in great safety in Soleburn Bay. They import lime from Ireland, and sometimes shells; and along the coast, the shell sand has been of real advantage to those who have used it, particularly upon damp soils. Towards the south the ground is more adapted for pasture than cultivation. It is wet, hilly, and interspersed with tracts of moss. Yet of late years, this side of the parish has undergone a great change. The coarse kind has been limed, and rewarded the farmers for their hard labour. The push-plough has been successfully used upon the unequal soils; and when the sod is burnt, and the ashes spread upon the soil with lime, there are

many instances of seven or eight seeds in return. Towards the west, upon the Irish Channel, some parts are fertile, but generally the ground is of a barren nature, and abounds very much in a sandy soil amongst the coast. Large tracts are kept solely for sheep and young cattle. The coast presents awful chasms of broken rocks, as if some convulsion of nature had torn them asunder. Alongst this coast, there is not one safe harbour; although, at no considerable expense, one might be formed at the bay called Saltpan, which would be of mighty advantage for this part of the parish. Since the present incumbent came to the parish, the saltpan was in operation, and produced very excellent salt from sea water.

Along the coast, which extends about eight miles, there are excellent fish, particularly cod; but no fishing station. The fishermen from Portpatrick scruple not to come along the coast and take the fine red cod.

The middle of the parish has of late been mightily improved, being at no great distance from Loehryan, and lime easily obtained at Soleburn about 1s. 4d. per barrel. A fine road passes through the parish about the centre, and sweeps round Lochnaw, and passes on to Portpatrick, and another branch turns to the north, and passes alongst the north of Kirkcolm parish, and terminates at Stranraer. Sir Andrew Agnew, who succeeded his grandfather, Sir Stair Agnew, in 1809, has improved the face of the lands around his castle in a very tasteful manner. Every stranger considers himself highly gratified with the prospect about Lochnaw.

Climate.—This parish being situated along the Irish Channel, the weather is very changeable, and dreadful storms visit it, particularly from the west. At certain periods, a creeping mist, assuming various forms, approaches from the Atlantic. Sometimes this presages a long tract of dry weather, and at other times, rain in abundance.

There is a high wooded hill above Lochnaw Castle;
Take care when Lady Craigh hill puts on her mantle.
The Lady looks high and knows what is coming;
Delay not one moment to get under covering.

Although the climate is moist, few parishes can produce instances of longevity similar to what occur here. The beadle died a few years ago, aged one hundred and two years, and his wife eighty-two. Some are living at the advanced ages of ninety-six, eighty-six, and eighty-seven years. The people are generally of a very healthy

and sound constitution, and the labouring classes can perform a very fair day's work at seventy years of age.

Hydrography.—The only loch worthy of notice is Lochnaw, which signifies "the loch with the ford." One of the knights, a Sir James, drained this fine loch in order to have a meadow. The late Sir Stair often said, that some of his successors would again throw it into a lake, which prophecy has been fulfilled by Sir Andrew Agnew, the present proprietor. The water covers above thirty acres of land, and, at the end next Lochnaw Castle, is of considerable depth. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the scenery around this loch, and many strangers come to behold it. There are no rivers in this parish, but two considerable burns, viz. Soleburn and Pooltanton. The former empties itself into Lochryan, having an eastern course; the latter runs south, and empties itself into the Bay of Luce, after a course of ten miles.

Geology and Mineralogy.—There are no mines in the parish. The greywacke, called erroneously whinstone, is the common stone found, and some quarries thereof are of a beautiful texture and appearance. The new addition to Lochnaw, lately finished, has been built of this stone. There are also quarries of red sandstone.

Zoology.—This parish was famed, in former times, for goat-whey; but it is now very rare to meet with one of these animals. Salmon come up the two burns before-mentioned, during the first flood in the month of August, or early in September, for spawning, and they return when the frost commences. The Bay of Lochryan is famed for oysters, which, at low water, are gathered in abundance along the shore.

Plantations.—The only plantations are about Lochnaw Castle; some of the trees are very old, but none remarkable for size. The fir, the ash, the sycamore, and beech, are all in a very thriving state. The greater part have been planted, within these thirty years, by Sir Andrew Agnew.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Leswalt belonged to the monks of Tongland in the reign of James V. The vicarage was taxed L. 12, 13s. 4d., being a tenth of the estimated value. At the Reformation, the tax was L. 26, 13s. 4d. In 1587, the church was vested in the King, and returned to the Bishops of Galloway, by a grant from the King in 1689. On the abolition of Episcopacy, it was vested in the Crown.

Land-owners.—There are four principal heritors in this parish: The Right Honourable the Earl of Stair; Sir Andrew Agnew, Bart. of Lochnaw; Colonel Vans Agnew, Esq. of Sheuchan; and the Rev. David Wilson, Stranraer. There are four other proprietors who pay a small part of the stipend. Sir Andrew Agnew is the principal heritor, and the only residing heritor.

Modern Buildings.—Lochnaw Castle is the only considerable building in the parish. It is built on an elevated hill, and appears to have been intended for a place of defence. Towards the south, traces of a deep fosse may still be seen, and on the north it is defended by a lake. A fine new church was built in 1828, which contains about 800 people.

III.—POPULATION.

Population in 1801,	-	1329
1811,	-	1705
1821,	-	2392
1831,	-	2636

The number of persons of both sexes in Hillhead is 328, and in Clayhole, 462; both of which places form a part of the town of Stranraer, but are situated in this parish, and are included in its census.

The yearly average number of baptisms is about	60
deaths, between	30 and 40
marriages, about	15
The number of inhabited houses,	448
houses uninhabited or building,	32
The number of families, is	539
chiefly employed in agriculture,	239
trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	153

There are three fatuous males, and one fatuous female in the parish; and two persons dumb.

The number of illegitimate births during last three years, 5.

Character of the People.—The people in general live in a very comfortable manner, and have of late improved much both in language and manners. They have a strong sense of religion, and their conduct becomes their profession.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—It is impossible to say what number of acres are under tillage, as the land has not been measured. It may, however, be stated, that a very considerable quantity of land has of late years been under tillage, which before was never cultivated. When that coarse land is limed and laid under summer fallow, eight or ten seeds are generally produced. There

are very considerable tracts of land wholly in pasture, and very little probability that these will ever reward the farmer by tillage.

Rent of Land.—There are no grounds in undivided common in the parish, but the whole is laid out in farms. Some of these rent at L. 200 Sterling per annum, and upwards. The rent of some parts of the parish per acre is as high as L. 3 per annum; and L. 2 per acre is common. Farms let on a lease of nineteen years may average about L. 1 per acre. The common rate for grazing a cow or ox for the year is about L. 3, 10s.; a ewe, 5s.

Wages.—The common rate for a farm-servant is L. 10 per annum with victuals; a maid-servant L. 4, 4s.; meal per stone may be said to average 2s. 6d. per stone, potatoes 10d. per bushel; a mason or carpenter 2s. per day with victuals.

Live-Stock.—The breed of cattle being Galloways, they are well known and much sought after. Large droves are annually sent to England, which bring fair prices. The sheep are various; the Cheviot, the black-faced and various mixed breeds,—all of which reward the farmer, perhaps, better than black-cattle.

The general duration of leases is nineteen years, but there are some life tacks. The farm-houses are all good, and well adapted for their respective purposes; and the fences have, of late years, been greatly improved, and add very much to the beauty of the country.

Produce.—There are raised in the parish about 4000 Galloway bolls of oats, average value about L. 6000. Wheat has been of late cultivated; but what the real amount is cannot be ascertained; average price per bushel, 6s. There are raised about 2000 bolls of potatoes annually; average price about 13s. 4d.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Town.—No market-town in the parish, but one in Stranraer, which is in the neighbourhood. The post-office is in Stranraer.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church, built in 1828, stands in a very convenient situation for the parishioners, and is about eight miles from the farthest extremities of the parish, and affords accommodation for 800 sitters. No free sittings.

The manse was built in 1811. The glebe contains nearly 20 acres; value about L. 30 annually. The stipend is the minimum. The only other place of worship in the parish is a parochial

preaching station in the suburb adjoining to Stranraer, where a district church is about to be erected. The church is well attended, and the number of communicants about 400. The church collections and other donations average about L. 40 annually.

The number of families attending the Established Church is 411; of families attending chapels of Dissenters or Seceders, 111; of Roman Catholic families, 17.

Education.—There are, at present, four schools in the parish, the parochial and three private. The parochial schoolmaster has the minimum salary, a house and garden, and the school fees,—the amount of which I cannot ascertain. There are no children in the parish so distant but they may attend some of the schools; and there are none belonging to the parish who cannot both read and write, as the parents, in general, seem anxious to have their children educated. About 200 children attend the Sabbath evening schools.

Library.—There is a parochial library, which contains nearly 400 volumes, and the people have a taste for reading.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of poor receiving aid is about 60, eleven of whom receive on an average per annum, L. 6. The rest of the paupers receive parochial aid from the church collections, which amount to betwixt L. 50 and L. 60. There are no legal assessments: but contributions are voluntarily made by the heritors. The poor have also the interest of L. 200 left by the late Earl of Stair. The greater part of the poor, being Irish, are very frequent and importunate in their demands.

Inns.—There are six inns or ale-houses in the parish.

Fuel.—Both coal and turf are used as fuel in the parish. A cart load of turf costs 2s.; coals, 15s. per ton.

February 1839.