

# PARISH OF KIRKPATRICK-DURHAM.\*

PRESBYTERY OF DUMFRIES, SYNOD OF DUMFRIES.

THE REV. GEORGE GREIG, MINISTER.

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## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—In Wodrow's History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, we find this parish to have been formerly distinguished as Kirkpatrick on the Muir, but this name has long been laid aside. Kirkpatrick is an appellation which it bears in common with several parishes in the south of Scotland. "Durham is most probably derived," says Dr Lamont, the author of the former Account of this parish, "from the Saxon words *durr*, which signifies dry or barren, and *ham*, which denotes a village or division of a manor. If this derivation be just, Durham becomes descriptive of a country that is dry and barren, an appellation that is peculiarly applicable to the situation, and soil, and surface of this particular district."

*Extent, &c.*—The parish stretches from north to south in a pretty regular form to the extent of about 10 miles: its breadth seldom exceeding 4, and nearly averaging  $3\frac{1}{2}$ . If we take nine miles as the length, exclusive of extreme points, we shall have about  $31\frac{1}{2}$  square miles as its extent of surface. It is bounded by the parishes of Urr and Crossmichael, on the south; by Parton and Balmaclellan, on the west; by Glencairn and Dunscore, on the north; and by Holywood and Kirkpatrick-Irongray, on the east.

*Topographical Appearances.*—Though the general elevation of the parish is considerable, it contains no lofty mountains, and the heights which diversify its surface consist chiefly of craggy hills, which partake of the geological character of the surrounding district. In many places these ranges have not as yet been cultivated to their summits, and are now crowned with thriving plantations. Towards the north lies the Muir of Kirkpatrick, a high bleak district, consisting chiefly of pasture for black-cattle and

\* Drawn up by the Rev. Geo. John Duncan, Kirkpatrick-Durham.

sheep, and in many places producing nothing more profitable than benty grass or heather.

*Hydrography.*—The Urr, which is the only river connected with the parish, rises in its north-west corner from a lake of the same name, and flows rapidly through a romantic valley, forming the western boundary of Kirkpatrick-Durham from one end to the other, and reaching the sea about ten miles beyond the southern extremity of the parish. There are a few inconsiderable lakes, which afford amusement to those who delight in angling, but contribute little either to the general beauty or advantage of the country.

*Geology and Mineralogy.*—There have been as yet no discoveries of useful minerals. Nodules of lead were at one time met with in a field on the estate of Chipperkyle; but it has been conjectured, with some probability, that these were not the production of the spot.

*Soil.*—In the lower district of the parish, the soil is in general tolerably fertile; and, though in many places thin and sandy, where judiciously managed, yields rich and luxuriant crops of grain. A large proportion of the surface consists of fine old pasture, which furnishes a kindly and often highly profitable nourishment to the herds of black-cattle for which the district is famous.

The salmon-fishing of the Urr, it is to be regretted, has of late years become extremely unproductive. It is not many years since the proprietors on its banks used to procure very considerable quantities of this valuable fish at trifling expense or trouble; but now it is comparatively very seldom to be had. The cause of this has been variously stated. There can be no doubt that poaching is carried on during the whole winter by torch-light, destroying the mother-fish, and thus almost annihilating the breed; and, what is infinitely more to be regretted, promoting, it is to be feared, a spirit of lawlessness and dishonesty quite inconsistent with the good order of society. Part of the evil probably arises from the extensive stake-net fisheries at the river's mouth, which intercept the fish in their way from the sea; and from the erection of the wiers and dams which the different mills on its banks require. The period when the salmon ascend this river for spawning cannot be very accurately stated. The shallowness of the stream frequently prevents their appearance till after the ordinary time, and, in dry seasons, they do not reach its higher parts till so late as November. The other fishes most frequently

met with in the Urr are trout and pike, and the lakes furnish perch and eels.

*Woods.*—There are no woods of any extent within the parish. Along the banks of the river are the remains of a natural forest, which the successive encroachments of modern agriculture have reduced to very scanty dimensions, but which still add greatly to the picturesque beauties of this romantic stream.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

The secluded character of this parish has prevented it from ever becoming the scene of important historical events. During that dark period of Scottish history, however, which elapsed while the second Charles and his successor were endeavouring to bind the yoke of despotism around the necks of their northern subjects, we find its inhabitants inspired by the same ardent zeal which distinguished their countrymen in the noble cause of religious and civil liberty, and more than one martyr's tomb in the neighbourhood still recalls to the patriot the time, when, upon these fields, the cause of Scotland's freedom was contested. Mr Gabriel Semple, of the family of Cathcart in Renfrewshire, the outed minister of this parish, was one of the distinguished witnesses for the truth which that remarkable age produced. Some interesting particulars of his life are detailed in Wodrow's Church History, and Murray's Literary History of Galloway. He lived to see the completion of his most ardent wishes at the glorious Revolution of 1688, when he was recalled to Scotland, and chosen to the pastoral care of the parish of Jedburgh, where he continued in the zealous discharge of the duties of his office till the year 1706, when he died at a very venerable age.

*Antiquities.*—This parish presents but a barren field for antiquarian research. In various quarters there are the remains of circular walls and mounds, which in this district, and throughout the Stewartry where they abound, have received the name of *moats*. What these have been, or for what purposes erected, cannot at this remote period be distinctly ascertained. Certain it is, that, as places of strength, none of them, even when in their most perfect state, could have long resisted the effects of a cannonade, whence it may be argued, that their origin ought to be referred to a period prior to the general use of fire-arms. That they are to be traced to the Roman invaders seems highly improbable, both from their number and peculiar form, while the idea that they are Druidical remains, is, for similar reasons, equally unte-

nable. It seems most likely that these curious structures have been meant as places of security for cattle during those lawless periods when the Border clans extended their ravages far and wide, making open plunder their sole profession. This idea seems to be supported by the fact that, in many retired corners of the Muir of Kirkpatrick, there are to be met with the remains of stone dikes which have once formed circular enclosures, universally understood to have been used as places of safety and concealment for cattle during the predatory incursions of "the thieves of Annandale." On one of the moats just alluded to, which is situate on the estate of Doonpark, there were found a few years since some remains of ancient armour. Owing to the ignorance of the discoverer, however, these were speedily converted into implements more useful, if not more curious than the "auld nick-nackets" which adorn the shelves of the antiquary, and any information they were calculated to afford was thus lost. The only remnant of early architecture to be met with in the parish, is the foundation of an old church on the estate of Areeming, which, though no records remain to tell its history, in all probability gave its name to the neighbouring farm of Kirklebride.

### III.—POPULATION.

The amount of population, by the returns made to Dr Webster, was 699. Towards the close of last century, it was reckoned at 1000. The Government census since that period affords the following numbers :

In 1801,	-	1007
1811,	-	1156
1821,	-	1473
1831,	-	1486
1841,	-	1487

The rapid increase which took place about the end of last century, has been traced by Dr Lamont to the formation of a new and most beneficial road which leads to a harbour at the mouth of the Urr, the introduction of manufactures, and the change of plan adopted by proprietors in letting their estates, by which, what had been formerly occupied by one tenant was divided into several farms, each let to a separate individual.

There can be no doubt that these were the true causes, and they are quite sufficient to account for the effect. The gradual increase which has since taken place, in common with that which is observable in the country at large, may be traced to its general improvement and extended resources.

The amount of population residing in the different villages may be thus estimated :

In Kirkpatrick-Durham,	500
In Bridge of Orr,	47
In Crocketford, (so far as connected with this parish,)	88
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Total amount of population in villages,	635
Total in country,	852
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Total amount of population,	1487

In every 100 of the inhabitants, the average number of persons

Under 15 is	36
Between 15 and 30,	23½
30 and 50,	23½
50 and 70,	12
Upwards of 70,	5

*Mansion-Houses.*—There are no fewer than six mansion-houses in the parish, occupied by their respective proprietors, or tenants in an equally respectable station, who in most cases reside here during the whole year; while the adjoining parishes are every where dotted with the comfortable homes of families of independent fortune. The neighbourhood is thus rendered in the highest degree agreeable; and the well-known hospitality of the gentry has given it the not inappropriate title of the Court of Galloway. Within the bounds of this parish there are twenty-one proprietors of land of the yearly value of L.50 and upwards, of whom ten are resident.

The number of unmarried men above fifty may be stated with tolerable accuracy at 49; that of unmarried women above forty-five, at 66.

There are resident in the parish, one individual who has not the use of his reasoning faculties, and three who are blind or nearly so.

*Character of the People.*—The people, in general, are orderly, quiet, industrious, and contented. In the principal village the unnecessary multiplication of public-houses at one time contributed to demoralize a certain class of the inhabitants, and to introduce wretchedness, disease, and beggary; but at present the abuse of ardent spirits is comparatively but little witnessed, while the regularity of attendance upon public ordinances, and the anxiety evinced by parents to afford their children the blessings of education, give us reason to believe, that the character of the inhabitants comes fully up to the average of their countrymen, in respect to intelligence, morality, and religion. It is, however, much to be regretted, that offences against the game-laws are frequent, and tend

here, as elsewhere, to introduce among the young men habits of idleness, and a disregard of the laws, which not only destroy their own respectability, but threaten to entail distressing effects upon the succeeding generation.

#### IV.—INDUSTRY.

The number of acres may be stated in round numbers at 20,000, of which about 8000 are either cultivated or occasionally in tillage. A great portion of the remainder is used as pasture for black-cattle or sheep, while a considerable tract is included under the names of bogs, mosses, and muirs. The wood covers perhaps 400 or 500 acres. Of the uncultivated land a large proportion lies in the northern district of the parish; and there are many hundred acres in that quarter capable of yielding a very profitable return to an enterprising capitalist. With the exception of the natural wood, which is to be found chiefly on the estates of Kilquhanity and Kirklebride, the trees in this parish are for the most part but recently planted, and consist of the common hard-wooded kinds, which are largely intermixed with larch in order to afford them the necessary protection from severe winds. The average rent of land over the whole parish may be stated at 7s. per imperial acre; but in the southern and western districts it may fairly be estimated at L.1 or L.1, 5s.

The rate of labour varies in winter from 1s. to 1s. 4d. a day, and in summer from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 8d. The mode of husbandry will be found to differ very little, if at all, from that pursued in the neighbouring district. The attention of the farmers is chiefly directed to the breeding and rearing of black-cattle for the southern markets. Their leases generally last for fifteen years, and their houses and onsteads are convenient and comfortable.

It would be impossible to give any accurate account of the value of the annual produce of different sorts yielded by the soil. The annual rental of the parish is about L.6600. A great proportion of the farmers engage in the cattle trade, either speculating on their own account, or acting as commission agents for the great dealers. The trade is proverbially insecure, its success or failure in each enterprise depending on a rise or fall of prices, which very generally can neither be foreseen nor controlled.

*Manufactures.*—There is no branch of manufactures carried on to any extent in the parish. The different societies for the encouragement of trade, manufactures, and commerce, mentioned in Dr Lamont's account, have long since died a natural death, and

now there are neither artisans nor manufacturers within our boundaries, whose services are required beyond the immediate neighbourhood.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Market-Town, &c.*—The nearest market is afforded by the thriving little town of Castle Douglas, which lies about six miles south-west of the village of Kirkpatrick. There is a post-office at the village, and a daily delivery and dispatch. A post-cart, which, along with the mail, carries light goods, travels between Kirkpatrick and Castle Douglas, by which the household wants of the community are chiefly supplied. The great road from Portpatrick to Dumfries skirts the southern boundary of the parish for five miles, offering a means of ready communication with every quarter of the kingdom. Besides the mail, a heavy coach passes from Dumfries to Kirkcudbright and back on six days of the week. At Crocketford, a road branches off towards New Galloway and the Glenkens; but there is at present no public conveyance in that direction.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The church is situate in the southern extremity of the parish. It was built A. D. 1748, and bears all the marks of its early date. About thirty-five years ago, in consequence of the increased demand for church accommodation, a number of the inhabitants were at the expense of erecting an aisle, which increased the sittings to three hundred and seventy-five, a number greatly below the proportion legally requisite for the amount of population. The manse was built in the year 1838. The glebe contains upwards of six acres, and consists of tolerably good land. The teinds are exhausted, and the stipend amounts to L.271.

Before the late secession from the Establishment, the numbers connected with the different religious societies might have been stated as follows: Established Church, 1284; Dissenters and Seceders, 158; Episcopalians, 12; Roman Catholics, 32. Among the Dissenters and Seceders in the preceding table, are included two aged individuals, a man and a woman, resident at Crocketford, the last venerable remnant of a fanatical sect, the followers of a woman named Buchan, who arose in Ayrshire about forty years ago,—and who, to the amount of forty men and women, including a minister of the Relief Church and a member of the legal profession, after having been persecuted from one district to another for several years, at length took up their abode in this parish, where

they have resided with little intermission ever since. This innocent but enthusiastic society have always possessed a community of goods, and now that their numbers are so small, their worldly circumstances are more than comfortable. Among other singularities, they refuse to acknowledge the band of marriage; but the most striking peculiarity by which their opinions were at first distinguished, consisted in the belief that the members of their sect should never die, and that, under the guidance of their female seer, they were to be translated in a body to the New Jerusalem. This expectation having been disappointed, notwithstanding the severe and lengthened fasts which they underwent in order to facilitate their flight,—and death having interposed his unquestionable negative to their doctrine by summoning their leader to her last account, they found it necessary to relinquish the most fanatical of their opinions, and, though with several exceptions, among whom is to be reckoned the clerical member already noticed, they continued to preserve their seclusion from the world,—their manners, which had always been inoffensive and peaceable, became gradually assimilated to those of their neighbourhood,—and they are now to be distinguished only by the simplicity of their demeanour, and a few religious peculiarities of the most unobtrusive description. The old man, who still survives, possesses a large fund of intelligence, and amuses himself by writing many a dissertation on points connected with his peculiar creed, which, though not theologically orthodox, evince a mind much above the ordinary standard.

A "Free Church" has been lately erected in the village, which is attended by a large proportion of the people.

*Education.*—Of the three public schools in the parish, two are on the Establishment. The expense of education is the same here as in the neighbouring parishes. The principal schoolmaster, whose place of instruction is situated at the village, is entitled to the largest rate of salary, (subject to a small deduction for the support of a school at Crocketford,) besides a considerable annual sum derived from money mortgaged many years ago for his benefit. The inhabitants seem, in general, fully alive to the blessings of education, and the whole population, with hardly a single exception, are taught to read and write. There are a few poor families resident in the upper end of the parish, whose places of abode are situated at so great a distance from any of the schools as to preclude their deriving from them any benefit. A teacher is therefore generally

hired for the winter, who resides alternately in each house in the district, instructing such children as are sent to him by the neighbouring families.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—The number of persons at present on the poor roll, several of whom have families chiefly dependant on what they receive from the parochial fund, is much increased of late, and the average sum afforded to each is miserably small. The session funds arise from collections in church and a voluntary assessment annually imposed by the heritors. The sum of L. 5 besides, arising from money mortified for this charitable purpose, is yearly distributed to five such poor persons as the Kirk-session judge to be the fittest objects.

*Fairs.*—There is still an annual fair held in the village of Kirkpatrick in March, but the assemblage of attendants has vastly diminished, and the horse races and balls have dwindled into a very paltry representation of what they seem formerly to have been.

*Inns.*—There are four public-houses in the parish, which, in general, are conducted in a respectable manner.

*Fuel.*—The parish was long amply supplied with fuel from the mosses with which it abounds, but of late years this valuable article has become scarce. Peats are still obtained in small quantities both in this and the neighbouring district; but the chief article of consumption under this head is coal, which is procured from the English skippers, who import it from the opposite coast, and sell it to their customers at the harbour of Dalbeattie, at the average rate of 7s. 6d. a cart load.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Since the last Statistical Account was written, the general aspect of the parish has been most materially changed. Then, there were but one or two houses that could claim any superiority over those of the farmers, and these last again were but a very small step removed above the humble thatched cottages of their servants and labourers. Now, almost every considerable estate has its mansion, and its neat garden and tasteful shrubbery. Heath and furze then occupied large tracts of ground, which are now covered by thriving wood, or cleared for the pasture of cattle and the growing of corn. Then, only a few tracks existed to point out the direction which the traveller should pursue, without aiding him materially in his journey. Now, smooth and well engineered roads intersect the parish in all directions.

Other changes too have taken place. The manufactures which

at that time were prosperously commencing, and promised to bring wealth and comfort to the abodes of many of the inhabitants, have taken their flight to other regions, and the people again possess all the characteristics of a rural race, though in many cases suffering from the dire effects of extreme poverty. To this fact may, perhaps, in some measure be traced the difference which is observed in the attendance at the fair of Kirkpatrick now, when compared with what it once was.

*Revised March 1844.*