

PARISH OF PARTON.

PRESBYTERY OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT, SYNOD OF GALLOWAY.

THE REV. W. G. CROSBIE, MINISTER.

L.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name, Extent, &c.—THE name "Parton," which this parish is said to have received before the end of the thirteenth century, is supposed to signify, in the Gaelic language, "the hill top," which is perfectly descriptive of the situation. Its greatest length from north to south is about 5 miles; its greatest breadth from east to west, about 7; and its whole area is about 28 square miles. It is bounded on the north by Balmaclellan; on the east by Kirkpatrick-Durham, from which it is separated by the small river Urr; on the south by Crossmichael; on the south-west by Balmaghie, from which it is separated by the Dee; on the north-west by Kells, from which it is separated by the Ken, a river that is in some places about half a mile broad. The general character of the parish, in point of surface, is very uneven, though there is no hill of considerable height, with the exception of Mochrum Fell, towards the northern part of the parish. There is a hill farther west, called "Cruckie Height," which affords an extensive and interesting view of the vale of Ken and Dee. The rich and varied scenery commanded from this point has been done great justice to, in a descriptive poem by the late Mr Gillespie of Kells.

Hydrography.—On the farm of North Dullarg, a chalybeate spring was discovered many years ago, and considerable attention was then directed to it; but, the property soon falling into other hands, it was neglected, and no effort has since been made to rescue it from oblivion. It is supposed to possess, in some degree, the qualities of the old well at Moffat. The Dee joins the Ken about half a mile above the church, and, though much smaller, it gives the name to the united river, which it retains till it enters the Solway Frith at Kirkcudbright. There is a variety of lochs in the parish, the principal being Corsock, Lurky Patiethorn, and

Falbey. They extend to a considerable depth, and are well stored with trout.

Botany.—There is an oak of remarkable size on the farm of Boreland. Its circumference round its trunk is 8 feet, and round the top of its branches is 300 feet. There is in Parton Wood, along the high road, a number of weeping birches, which are not surpassed by any thing of the kind in this part of the country.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Parochial Registers.—A register of births and baptisms, commencing in the year 1714, has been kept in this parish, but not with much regularity, until the year 1744, when a complete register of marriages, births, and deaths commences, and extends to the year 1783; and from that to the present time, a register of births and baptisms only appears to have been regularly kept.

Land-owners.—These, with the valuations of their respective properties, are,—

	Scots money.
Miss Glendonwyn of Parton,	L.512 11 2
Lady Gordon of Letterfourie,	406 8 10
C. Maxwell, Esq. of Middlabie,	458 0 0
Edward Fletcher, Esq. of Corsock,	355 0 0

The total valuation of the parish amounts to L.2545 Scots.

Antiquities.—Near the church there is an artificial mount 120 yards in circumference at its base, and surrounded with a ditch from six to nine feet deep. About half a mile north there is another nearly twice the circumference of the former, and enclosed with two ditches. At a short distance from this, are the remains of a small Druidical circle. There are also two cairns in the parish.

On the estate of Corsock, in the eastern part of the parish, are the remains of an old castle, the residence of Robert Nelson of Corsock, who is made honourable mention of in the "Scots Worthies," as one who suffered severely in the cause of the covenant. It is now in a very dilapidated state, little indeed remaining but an old tower.

The old church, which was superseded by the erection of a new one in 1834, was built in 1592. It was 72 feet long, by 14 wide. The half of it still remains, and the interior of it has been converted into a burial-place by two of the heritors of the parish.

On the farm of Arvie, there is a flat stone about three feet in diameter, on which are the marks of what might be supposed a cow's foot, a horse shoe, the four nails on each side being very

distinct, and the impression which might be made by a man's foot and knee while he was in the act of kneeling, the knot of the garter being quite evident. The tradition connected with this remarkable stone, commonly called the "Cow Clout," is, that the proprietor, in order to get up arrears of rent, "drave the pun," or, in other words, carried off the hypothecated stock, while a fierce resistance was made by the people, and that over this stone, on which a man had just been praying for relief against his enemies, the cattle passed followed by an officer on horseback, and that it remains as a memorial to posterity of the cruel deed.

Across the river Dee, just below its junction with the Ken, there is a causey, which is evidently a work of art.

Land-owners.—There are twelve land-owners in all, five of whom are resident. The total valuation of the parish amounts to L.2545. The patroness of the parish is Miss Glendonwyn of Parton. Her ancestor, Sir Simon Glendonwyn, in 1458, obtained a confirmation of the barony, baronial rights, and patronage of Parton.

III.—POPULATION.

Amount in 1801,	-	426
1811,	-	569
1821,	-	845
1831,	-	827
1841,	-	808

The great increase of the population from 1811 to 1821, appears chiefly to have arisen from the subdivision of the farms and the increased cultivation of the lands on the estate of Corsock. The people are almost all engaged in agriculture, and are in general of sober and industrious habits.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—About 9290 acres, including meadow and interspersed with waste land, are under cultivation. 5800 acres consist principally of heath and morasses. Perhaps from 500 to 600 acres are capable of cultivation, the greater part of which lies in the interior of the parish, and the great obstacle to the improvement of which is the want of roads.

The average rent of land per acre does not exceed 7s.

The real rental of the parish in the year 1821 was L.6000, but it is now reduced, perhaps, to little more than L.5000.

Quarry.—There is a slate-quarry in the neighbourhood of the church, which has been in operation upwards of thirty years, and has given employment to eight or ten workmen. The slates are of good quality, and extensively used. The rent of the quarry at

one time exceeded L.100; but it has been reduced, on account of the reduction of the duty on the English slates.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Town.—Castle-Douglas is the nearest market-town, and is six or seven miles distant. It affords an excellent market, both for grain and cattle. The high road from Castle-Douglas to New Galloway passes through the western part of the parish; and the high road from Dumfries to New Galloway passes through the eastern part. There is a daily post along the western line. There is a coach on this road communicating with one from Dumfries to Ayr.

Dalbeattie and Palnackie are the nearest ports, and are at a distance of about twelve miles. Almost the whole of the lime, and a portion of the coals used in the parish, are brought from these ports.

Fuel.—The fuel principally used is peat, which the parish supplies in great abundance.

Ecclesiastical State.—The stipend is eight chalders of barley and eight chalders of meal.

The glebe is sixteen acres in extent, and valued at L.25 Sterling. The manse was built in 1777, and has had two additions made to it since. It is now commodious and in good repair.

The church is situated, like most in the neighbourhood, on the banks of the Dee, and is therefore put at the extremity of the parish. A considerable effort was made by a portion of the heritors to have it removed to the interior, at the period of its being rebuilt in 1834, but, as heritors holding more than one-fourth of the valuation opposed it, the proposal was abandoned. A chapel on the banks of the Urr was subsequently built, and a preacher has been supplying regular service, supported partly by seat rents, and partly by the liberality of Major Fletcher, Esq. of Corsock. There are localities connected with it in Balmaclellan and Kirkpatrick-Durham, as well as in Parton, upwards of four miles from the parish churches; so that, if a new parish *quoad sacra* is disjoined, it will embrace a part of all these parishes, and be of considerable extent.

Education.—There are two parochial schools in the parish. One of the masters has L.31, 6s. 8d., and the other L.20 of salary; both subject, however, to a deduction of L.4, 8s. 4d. each as an annuity payable to a retired teacher. The fees actually paid to the schoolmasters do not exceed L.25, and they have no other emoluments.

Poor.—The average number of poor for the last three years, 17; average amount allotted to each, about L.3, 15s. per annum. Average annual amount of contributions for their relief, L.64, 14s., viz. L.24, 8s. of church collections, and L.40, 6s. from voluntary assessment by the heritors on an average for the last three years.

March 1844.