

# PARISH OF MOCHRUM.

PRESBYTERY OF WIGTON, SYNOD OF GALLOWAY.

THE REV. ALEXANDER YOUNG, MINISTER.\*

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## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Extent, Boundaries.*—THE greatest length of the parish from east to west is about 10 miles, and the greatest breadth between 4 and 5 miles. It is bounded on the south, by the Bay of Luce; on the west, by the parish of Old Luce; on the north, by Kirkowan and Kirkinner; and on the east, by Glasserton.

*Surface, Soil, and Climate.*—“ The general appearance of the surface cannot be denominated either level or mountainous; it is partly both. The flats, however, are not extensive, nor are the hills of

\* From Notes furnished by the parochial Schoolmaster of Mochrum.

great elevation; but, being intermixed with each other, at moderate distances, they exhibit a variety of prospect not unpleasing to the traveller, nor unprofitable to the owner. From the eastern boundary, along the Bay of Luce, for several miles, the soil, with a few exceptions, is excellent, being mostly of a fine light, and in some places, a strong deep loam. Approaching towards the centre of the parish, it becomes gradually more thin and stony, while a large extent, on the east and west sides, mostly consisting of rocky eminences, or mossy swamps and lakes, exhibits a bleak and barren prospect, and is chiefly used for pasture. There are, however, scattered up and down in this bleak region, some small pieces of good dry arable land. Owing, perhaps, to the general dryness of the soil, the openness of the country, and its fine exposure to the sea air, the climate is remarkably healthful.

“*Sea Coast.*—A flat smooth gravel beach, mostly about 50 yards wide, runs along from the eastern, till within a mile of the western extremity of the parish, where it is intercepted by a steep rocky hill projecting into the sea, and forming a bold inaccessible shore.

“Parallel to the beach, the land, rising suddenly, forms a steep bank or precipice, which renders the access from the shore into the country, in many places, rather difficult.”\*

*Geology.*—Here, as in the county generally, the rocks belong to the Neptunian series of the transition class.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Land-owners.*—The chief land-owners in the parish are, Sir William Maxwell, Bart. and the Marquis of Bute.

The real rental of the parish is about L. 8000 per annum.

*Parochial Registers.*—In these, births, marriages, and all matters of church discipline are recorded; but until the settlement of the present incumbent in 1822, there were no parochial registers regularly kept.

“*Antiquities.*—Near by the church, which is situated about a mile right into the parish from Port-William, there is a pretty large earthen mound, quite entire, with a deep ditch or *fosse* round it.

“On the eastern extremity of the sea coast, at the summit of a steep bank, there are very distinct remains of an Anglo-Saxon camp. And, within two miles of the western extremity, also hard by the shore, stand the ruins of a small manse and church, called *St Finian's Chapel*, probably from the famous Saint of that name.

\* Vide Old Stat. Account.

“ In the middle of the moor-land appears an old tower or castle, whose walls are very strong, and almost entire ; and being nearly surrounded by lakes, when viewed at a distance it has a most curious and picturesque appearance, resembling much a large ship at sea.

“ It is called *the old Place of Mochrum* ; and formerly belonged, together with a considerable estate contiguous to it, to an ancient family, of the name of *Dunbar*, who resided in it, were created Knights of Mochrum about a century ago, and still enjoy that title. But the castle and the property have now, for about one hundred years, been in possession of the Earl of Dumfries, now Marquis of Bute.”\*

*Mansion-Houses.*—The principal mansion-house in the parish is that of Monreith, belonging to Sir William Maxwell. There are five or six smaller mansions.

*Eminent Characters.*—The Dunbars settled in Mochrum so early as the year 1368, Thomas Dunbar, the first of Mochrum, who was second son of Patrick, Earl of March, having got a grant of the lands in question and others in that year. The Mochrum branch of the Dunbars were long eminent, and cadets of this house founded the families of Dunbar of Baldoon, (now represented by the Earl of Selkirk,) and Dunbar of Clugston. But the most eminent person of this name was Gavin Dunbar, son of Sir John Dunbar of Mochrum, and ultimately Archbishop of Glasgow, and Lord Chancellor of Scotland. Gavin having studied at Glasgow, was appointed Prior of Whithorn about the year 1504, as successor to James Beaton, whom he afterwards succeeded in the see of Glasgow. Dunbar, being, says Keith, “ a man of polite letters,” was appointed preceptor to the young King James V. ; a trust which he discharged so satisfactorily, that on the see of Glasgow becoming vacant in 1522, he was nominated to that dignity. In 1526, he was appointed Lord Chancellor ; and in 1536, when the King went to France, on his marriage to Magdalene, daughter of Francis I. his Lordship was chosen one of the Lords of the Regency. When Lord Maxwell, in the year 1542, made a motion in Parliament to the effect that the Bible be allowed to be read in our vernacular tongue, Archbishop Dunbar opposed it. The motion was, however, carried, but he entered the dissent against the decision in his own name, and in that of “ all the prelates of the realm.” He died in 1547. The family of Moch-

\* Vide Old Statistical Account. ●

rum was raised to the baronetage in 1694, and is now represented by Sir William Rowe Dunbar, Bart. (Murray's *Literary Hist. of Galloway*, 2d edit. 1832, p. 14-17.) The Maxwells, Baronets of Monreith, have been settled in the parish for about two centuries. John Maxwell, younger of Monreith, having joined the Covenanters, and having been present at the battle of Pentland, in 1666, was exposed to much suffering and persecution. Though not in custody, he with many others were tried for treason and rebellion, and were condemned "to be executed to death, and demeaned as traitors, when they shall be apprehended." (Wodrow's *Church Hist.* Vol. ii. p. 73-5.) But Maxwell, though he made several narrow escapes, never fell into the hands of his enemies. He was pronounced by the famous Colonel Wallace "the greatest Christian that he knew in his station;" and his name is honourably connected with the ecclesiastical history of his times. (*Memoirs of Veitch and Brysson*, p. 381.) The Maxwells of Monreith can also boast of having given birth to a family, several of whom have distinguished themselves. We refer to the family of Captain James Maxwell, youngest son of Sir William Maxwell of Monreith. Captain Maxwell had eight sons, of whom the following attained to distinction; Major Stewart Maxwell, author of an excellent poem, entitled "The Battle of the Bridge, or Pisa Defended, in ten cantos," who died in 1824; Captains Keith and John Maxwells, who both distinguished themselves in the naval service, (James's *Naval Hist.* Vol. iii. p. 214); and Sir Murray Maxwell, the commander of the *Alceste* which conveyed Lord Amherst as Ambassador to China. The Chinese having insulted the officers and crew of the *Alceste*, Captain Maxwell resolved to chastise them for their temerity. He chastised them accordingly, having himself fired the first gun, thus rendering himself personally responsible for the consequences of the attack. The *Alceste* was wrecked by striking on a sunken rock on her return home; a misfortune from which Captain Maxwell's character received even an additional brilliancy. The narratives of Captain Basil Hall and Mr M'Leod, surgeon of the *Alceste*, descriptive of this calamity, as well as illustrative of the expedition generally, form about the most interesting works of the kind known to us. On the accession of his late Majesty William IV. Sir Murray was nominated one of his naval aide-de-camps; and in 1831 he was appointed Governor of Prince Edward's Island. On receiving notice of this appointment, he left Scotland in a vessel for London;

but being seized with fever, and there being no medical man on board, he died soon after his arrival in London, leaving behind him a name for professional merit, general honour, and integrity of character inferior to none. (*Murray's Literary History of Galloway*, 2d ed. 1832, pp. 283-92, 343-4.)

### III.—POPULATION.

In the former Statistical Account, it is observed, "there is, perhaps, no country parish in the county that has increased so much in population as Mochrum for these last twenty years. The inhabitants, who now amount to 1400, it is certain, did not exceed half the number previous to that period. This increase has been almost entirely effected on Sir William Maxwell's estate, who, carrying on extensive plans of improvement upon the lands which he held in his own natural possession, had occasion to employ a number of additional labourers, and these happening to consist mostly of young, stout, newly married Irishmen, this prolific race soon contributed largely to the human stock."

Amount of population, as per Government census in 1801,	-	1118
1811,	-	1945
1821,	-	1871
1831,	-	2105
Population in villages,	-	1000
in the country,	-	1100
Number of families in the parish in 1831,	-	641
chiefly employed in agriculture,	-	394
in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	-	65

Number of illegitimate births in the parish during last three years, 12.

### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture.*—The number of imperial acres in the parish, either cultivated or occasionally in tillage, is 26,880; the number of acres under wood is about 200; the number of acres that might, with a profitable application of capital, be added to the cultivated land, probably 1000. In matters of agriculture there has been a great increase of practical knowledge in this parish within the last forty years: and the effect has been a corresponding increase in the amount of agricultural produce.

*Navigation.*—The number of vessels of all burthens belonging to the parish is 12; and the number of tons burthen of all such vessels 746.

### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Means of Communication.*—A mail-coach passes and repasses through the parish each lawful day: and letters, newspapers, &c.

are received and delivered at Port-William, the principal village and only sea-port of the parish.

The market-towns of Whithorn and Wigton are equidistant from the parish.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The number of families in the parish attending the Established Church is about 300 : of Dissenting or Seceding families, 40 : of Roman Catholic families, 35.

The stipend of the parochial minister amounts to L. 157, 14s. 1d. The value of the glebe may be about L. 25 per annum.

There is a small chapel in the parish belonging to the Relief persuasion, but abundantly large for those of that denomination belonging to the parishes of Mochrum, Glasserton, and Kirkinner.

A large addition was built to the manse of the parochial minister, by the heritors, when the present incumbent succeeded in 1822 ; and it is at present in excellent repair.

*Education.*—Number of schools in the parish, 5, and no more are required. All the native inhabitants of the parish above six years of age can read ; but about thirty natives of Ireland residing in the parish cannot read. The amount of the parochial schoolmaster's salary is L. 26 per annum ; and L. 5 are allowed him for house and garden. His fees may amount to L. 12 per annum, and his other emoluments to L. 2.

*Poor.*—The number of persons receiving parochial aid is 40, and the average sum allotted to each is about L. 2 per annum. The sum collected for the poor in the church amounts on an average to L. 69, 15s. There is no legal assessment. The amount received from alms or legacies may be about L. 15 per annum.

January 1839.