

# PARISH OF KIRKMICHAEL.

PRESBYTERY OF LOCHMABEN, SYNOD OF DUMFRIES.

THE REV. JAMES SMAIL, MINISTER.

THE REV. H. DOBIE, ASSISTANT. \*

## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name and Boundaries.*—THE parish, known by the above title, consists of the original cure of Kirkmichael, and the greater part of the old parish of Garrel,† which were united about 1674. The derivation of the name Kirkmichael is evidently from St Michael, to whom the church was dedicated. Garrel is a vulgar abbreviation of Garvald or Garwald, signifying in the Scoto-Irish, the *rough rivulet*; an appellation which is very frequent in the North British topography, and which here applies to the rivulet that runs in a very stony channel past the old church.

The united parish is elliptical in form, and extends 9 miles in length, and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in extreme breadth. It is bounded on the north by Kirkpatrick-Juxta; on the north-east and east by Johnstone; on the south by Lochmaben and Tinwald; and on the west by Kirkmahoe and Closeburn.

*Topographical Appearances.*—There are two ranges of mountains in this parish, stretching nearly north and south, the one situate between the small river Ae and Glenkiln-burn, and the other between Glenkiln-burn and the lower grounds. The hill of Holehouse, on the northern part of the first range, is about 1500 feet above the level of the sea; Woodhill, on the south, about 1250; Knock-craig, at the head of the second range, about 1400; and

\* This account has been drawn up by Mr Dobie, Assistant Minister.

† The lands of Raehills, the elegant seat of J. J. Hope Johnstone, Esq. M. P., the two Minnygaps, Mollins, Crunzie-town, and Hartfield, now annexed to the parish of Johnstone, formerly belonged to Garrel.—See Act. Parl. vii. 644, A. D. 1669, entitled, "Ratification in favour of Sir John Dalziel of Glensae, and Robert, his son, of all and hail the lands of Raehills, and others therein mentioned, lying within the parochia of Garrel."

Kirkmichael-fell, at the other extremity, about 1100 feet. The southern part of the parish is, in general, level; though there are several rising grounds interspersed, which descend, by a gradual declivity, towards the farm of Cumrue, at the southern extremity, about 190 feet above the level of the sea.

*Climate.*—The quality of the soil of this parish,—the contiguity of the mountains before-mentioned,—and the rivers and burns by which it is bounded and intersected,—render the air in general rather moist. But from the rapidity of the waters, in consequence of the very considerable declivity of the ground, the air is frequently changed, and not permitted to stagnate. The inhabitants are in general remarkably healthy. When a severe epidemic disease prevailed last season to a fearful extent in Dumfries, which is only eight miles distant, there was not a single instance of infection in the whole of this parish.

*Hydrography.*—There are several veins of ironstone and ochre in the parish, and consequently many springs of chalybeate water; but none of a strength so remarkable as to deserve particular notice. There are two lochs or lakes, the one on the summit of the first mountain range, called Crane Loch,—one acre in extent, and very deep; the other, called Cumrue Loch, on the farm of that name,—four acres in extent, and fourteen feet in depth. This loch formerly comprehended ten or twelve acres, but has been reduced by draining to its present size. There are two or three small cascades in Garrel Water, the largest of which is eighteen feet in height.

*Geology and Mineralogy.*—The general direction of the strata of the transition rocks, which compose the high ranges of this parish, is from north-east to south-west; and their angle of north-westerly dip with the horizon may be stated at from 45 to 60 degrees. About half a mile from the manse is a rock of alum-slate, having interspersed through it iron pyrites. The lower part of this parish is of sandstone formation, incumbent on the cropping of the basaltic rocks, and ranging, near their junction, almost parallel. Its strata there dip towards the south-east, having a very considerable inclination. Two miles south of this, at Ross, where it is wrought, this rock dips about one in three south-westward, the beds stretching from south-east towards north-west. The colour is red. The several holms on the banks of the different streams appear to have been formed by deposits washed down, in the course of ages, from the higher grounds.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Land-owners.*—The land-owners are his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch; John S. Lyon, Esq. of Kirkmichael; James S. Wightman, Esq. of Courance; Robert Kennedy, Esq. of Craigshiels; John Swan, Esq. of Glenkiln; William Robson, Esq. of Hazlebrae; Patrick Campbell, Esq. of Lawers; and Henry Constable Maxwell, Esq. of Milnhead. The Duke of Buccleuch draws L. 150 per annum above the half of the present rental. Mr Lyon's estate is next in extent and value. The others are stated above in the order which corresponds to the valued rent of their properties.

*Parochial Registers.*—No parochial registers appear to have been kept prior to the year 1727; and those from 1727 to 1759 are very imperfect. Since the latter period they have been better attended to, but are confined entirely to births.

*Antiquities.*—On a bank, which is washed by the rivulet of Garrel, may be seen the ruins of the church bearing that name, with its accompanying cemetery. Garvald was rebuilt in 1617; but, from the time of its annexation to Kirkmichael, has been allowed to fall into decay. The church-yard, however, is surrounded by a stone and lime wall, with a plantation of weeping-birches, and other trees suited to the place.

The only Roman work in the parish is a branch of the great road, that led from Netherby, in Cumberland, to the chain of forts, built by Lollius Urbicus, between the Forth and the Clyde. This can still be traced through a moss, and seems to have terminated at a castellum, of which two sides still remain very distinct, and which now forms the minister's garden.

On the farm of Wood is the ruin of the old tower of Glenae, which, in 1666, gave the title of Baronet to a branch of the family of Dalzell, before its succession to the earldom of Carnwath.

There are several indistinct remains of ancient fortifications; but no traditions about any of them, except a small fort, commonly called Wallace's Tower, adjoining Tor-liinn, a glen filled with natural oak, and stretching westward from Knockwood. This fort commands an extensive view to the south, occupying the summit of an angle formed by the junction of two branches of that steep ravine; and being protected on its third side by a large fosse, it must have been in former times, before the general use of fire-arms, a strong place of defence. Sir William Wallace, while meditating the capture of the castle of Lochmaben in 1297, is said to have kept sixteen men there, with whom he sallied forth to annoy the English

garrison under Greystock and Sir Hugh of Moreland. Having taken some of their horses, the Scottish hero was pursued to Tor-head, (a name descriptive of the situation, the Celtic *Tor* signifying mount,) by Moreland, who, in the encounter which ensued, was slain, with several of his followers. A large stone, named "sax corses," *i. e.* six corpses, a short way distant, marks the burial place of the vanquished. Greystock, enraged at this defeat, and strengthened by fresh supplies from England, immediately proceeded to attack Wallace with 900 men. Thus overpowered by numbers, he fell back among the hills; and being joined by Sir John Graham of Dundaff with thirty men, and Kirkpatrick, his kinsman, with twenty of his retainers, was overtaken on the north border of the lands of Holehouse, near the bottom of Queensberry, where a general engagement took place. Greystock fell; the victory was complete; and the survivors seeking shelter in the wood from which they had pursued the Scots, Wallace reached Lochmaben before them, and took possession of the castle. A cairn, as was then usual, has been raised on the field of battle, where may be seen the long flat stones, set on edge in the form of graves, believed to surround the remains of the dead. A stream runs from the place, called "Discomfit Gutter." A moss brow, bearing the name of "Graham's hag," is at a short distance; as is likewise "Bledy-gill," evidently a corruption of Bloody-gill.

About the year 1785, there was found, in a small piece of peat-moss near the line of the old Roman road, a pretty large pot, of a sort of base copper, and a decanter of the same metal, of the shape and size of our white stone quart decanters, with 3 feet about 1½ inch long. They were both sent by Dr Burgess, then minister of the parish, to the Society of Antiquarians at Edinburgh, and are in their museum. They were thought to be Roman. They might have been thrown into the place where they were found when the Romans left the castellum, perhaps pursued by the natives, and obliged to abandon their heavy luggage to expedite their flight.

Last summer, another antique of similar metal, capable of containing 13 imperial gills, with 3 feet 2½ inches in length, and altogether 10 inches in height, having a handle and spout, and somewhat resembling in shape a modern coffee-pot, was dug up in a place called Car's moss, near the mains of Ross. In that moss are the vestiges of a small British station, from which it probably takes the ancient British or Celtic etymon of Car or Caer,

meaning *fort*. Not far from the same spot was found, several years ago, a large round leaden dish, which contained two pieces of iron, much corroded, resembling a mason's trowel and tool. This led to the supposition that it had been used for holding mortar. A hole was pierced on each side, to which a handle might have been fastened.

A number of small silver coins of Alexander III. of Scotland, and Edward I. of England, were discovered upon the 10th November 1821, in a piece of soft ground, about half way between Nether-Garrel and Courance. A year or two afterwards, nearly a quarter of a mile from the same place, was found a small silver coin of James I. of Scotland. Several of these coins, and the brazen decanter found lately, as described above, are in possession of one of the heritors.

Many of the ancient circular British encampments appear in the parish. Upon some of these being opened, ashes have been found; likewise several broken querns, or hand-mills, formerly used for grinding corn; and in one of them, upon the farm of Gilrig, with a partition crossing it, and which seems to have been occupied during later times, there was dug out a sword having a basket-hilt, but so much covered with rust, that it was impossible to form any accurate opinion respecting its antiquity. There was also seen a number of pipes of burnt clay, with heads somewhat smaller than that of the tobacco-pipe now in use, swelled at the middle, and straiter at the top.

*Modern Buildings.*—A very handsome and elegant mansion-house has been erected by Mr Lyon, on his estate of Kirkmichael, and is just finished. It is built in the old manorial style, after a plan made by Mr Burn of Edinburgh. It is surrounded by a very considerable extent of fine old timber, and the pleasure-grounds are embellished by beautiful flower-gardens, and two fine artificial pieces of water. Mr Lyon has also made a very excellent walled garden and hot-house.

There are two mills in the parish; one, upon the barony of Ross, for oats, wheat, and barley; and another, upon the estate of Kirkmichael, adapted merely for oats and barley.

### III.—POPULATION.

The amount of the population of the parish cannot be traced any farther back than 1759. At that time, the number of inhabitants was 780: in 1791, it was 950. The increase was supposed

to be owing to the division and cultivation of a very large common, and the improvement of other lands. In 1801, the population was reduced to 904. The decrease was probably occasioned by a practice, then becoming prevalent, of *leading* farms, as it was called; that is, a farmer having one farm, possessed, at the same time, another, which was said to be *led* along with it. By this means, several farms, formerly having numerous families residing on them, were, when thus *led* along with others, left almost uninhabited. At each census, since that period, there has been a gradual increase, which would perhaps have been much greater, had it not been for the change which has taken place by the enlargement of many of the farms. In 1831 the population was 1226.

1. Number of families in the parish,	- - - - -	218
of families chiefly employed in agriculture,	- - - - -	128
chiefly employed in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	- - - - -	44
2. Number of unmarried men, bachelors or widowers, upwards of 50 years of age,	- - - - -	12
of unmarried women, including widows, upwards of 45,	- - - - -	31
3. The average number of births yearly, for the last 7 years,	- - - - -	36
of deaths,	- - - - -	21
of marriages,	- - - - -	8
4. The number of persons at present under 15 years of age,	- - - - -	478
upwards of 70,	- - - - -	40

Three of the proprietors already named are resident, as also two smaller ones, who possess L. 10 tenements, without being liable for parochial burdens.

#### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture and Rural Economy*—The whole of the parish has been surveyed, and plans made of the several farms, at different times, and by different land-measurers. The number of acres standard and imperial measure is as follows.

Meadow and arable land,	- - - - -	6700 Acres.
Sheep pasture,	- - - - -	9190
Mossy pasture interspersed through the arable lands, partly convertible into meadow, and including the mosses from which the inhabitants are supplied with peat,	- - - - -	550
Sand-bed pasture, comprehending roads, lakes, and water-courses,	- - - - -	280
Under wood, natural or planted,	- - - - -	350
		17070

Probably 300 or 400 acres of this hill land might be advantageously broken up, fallowed, and thereafter sown down with grass seeds, to improve the pasture.

The natural woods consist principally of oak, ash, birch, and alder. The young plantations are composed of Scotch, larch, and spruce firs, with a sufficiency of oak, ash, and elm, for standards.

*Rent of Land.*—The average rent per acre of meadow and arable land is 14s. 6d.; of sheep pasture, 3s.; of mossy pasture interspersed through the arable lands, partly convertible into meadow, and including the mosses from which the inhabitants are supplied with peat, \* 4s.; of sand-bed pasture which, after deducting 130 acres for roads, lakes, and water-courses, will be reduced to 150 acres, L. 1.

The average rent of grazing cattle is at the rate of 25s. for a one year old; 35s. for a two years old; and L. 4 for a cow or full-grown ox; and at the rate of 4s. 9d. for a ewe, or full-grown sheep, pastured for the year.

*Breeds of Live Stock.*—The cattle are all of the Galloway breed. Turnips are cultivated to such an extent, that 2200 Cheviot and Highland widders, inclusive of several score of half-bred hogs, are annually fattened upon them.

*Husbandry.*—The system of husbandry pursued is, in some cases, a six, and in others a four years' rotation. Since 1822, when the old leases terminated, very great, judicious, and expensive improvements have been made by the Duke of Buccleuch, on his beautiful and valuable barony of Ross, in this parish, by building very excellent and even elegant farm-steadings, containing every accommodation of the most convenient and substantial kind that a farmer can desire; planting both for shelter and ornament; enclosing, partly with stone dikes, but principally with hedges; making roads, and giving every encouragement to promote and extend the cultivation of the land. There is no part of the country, through which a traveller can pass, where he will be more delighted with a view of the rapid progress of very spirited and substantial improvements. Such are the invaluable advantages which a district derives from being blessed with a liberal and patriotic landlord.

The duration of leases is, in some cases, 15, in others 19 years. The greater part of the farm-buildings on the other properties in the parish is new and of a superior description. The hedges that have lately been planted are very extensive; and are all in a thriving state, being well attended to.

\* Much mossy land has already been reclaimed, and now yields good crops of hay.

*Produce.*—The average gross annual amount of raw produce, raised in the parish, may be thus estimated.

Wheat,	-	300	imp. acres at L. 6, 8s. per acre, exclusive of seed,	L. 1920	0	0
Barley,	-	350	do. 4 10 do. do.	1575	0	0
Oats,	-	1250	do. 3 4 do. do.	4320	0	0
Potatoes,	-	400	do. 6 8 do. do.	2560	0	0
Turnips,	-	600	do. 2 10 do. do.	1500	0	0
Rye-grass hay,	1000	do,	2 6 do. do.	2300	0	0
Meadow hay,	700	do.	1 14 do. do.	1190	0	0

*Cattle Grazed.*—

Cows, (including the product by calves until weaned,) 460		
at L. 4,	-	L. 1840 0 0
One year old cattle or stirks, 460 at L. 1, 5s.	-	575 0 0
Two year old cattle, 580 at L. 1, 15s.	-	1015 0 0
		L. 3490 0 0

About 150 three years' old cattle are kept for wintering, but do not require to be taken into account in the consumption of grass, as they are sent south in spring, part of them in a lean state, and part fattened for the market.

Sheep, 5720 at 7s.,	-	-	-	-	2002	0	0
Gardens and orchards,	-	-	-	-	100	0	0
The greater proportion of woodland consists of plantations under ten years' growth; but the periodical felling of the natural and full-grown wood taken yearly, is	-	-	-	-	100	0	0
					L. 20997	0	0

*Rate of Wages.*—Men employed in husbandry labour receive 1s. 6d. per day in summer and 1s. 3d. in winter, and women 9d. per day, without victuals. Men-servants, who are fit for every kind of husbandry work, and are boarded in the house, receive, on an average L. 5 in the half year, and women-servants from L. 2, 10s. to L. 3. Masons and joiners generally charge 2s. 6d. per day.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Market-Towns, &c.*—There are no towns or villages in the parish. Lockerby is distant from Cumrue five miles to the south-east; but Dumfries, which is fully seven miles from the bridge of Ae southward, is the market-town most frequented. The length of turnpike road, crossing the parish, is nearly five miles. The mail-coach from Edinburgh to Dumfries travels along it twice daily.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The patronage of the old parish of Kirk-michael has belonged to the noble house of Queensberry since the Reformation, and is now held by the Duke of Buccleuch. There belonged to this church, during the reign of Catholicism,

three merk lands of the old extent, now the property of Mr Lyon. Garvald was of old a mensal church of the bishops of Glasgow; and Robert Blackadder, the first archbishop of that see, in 1506, assigned this rectory to the collegé of Glasgow. The patronage thereof at the Reformation belonged to the convent of Red Friars at Failfurd, in the county of Ayr; was thereafter vested in the Crown; and, so far as is known, remains so, although it has not for a long period been exercised by the king. The church lands of Garrel, extending to five pound lands of the ancient valuation, in 1565, exclusive of the glebe united by excambion to that of Kirkmichael, passed from that convent into lay lands, and are now mostly comprehended within the barony of Ross.

The present parish church is near the south-western boundary; a situation not at all convenient for the greater part of the population, being fully five miles from the opposite side and southern extremity. It was built in 1815, and is in good repair. It contains sittings for upwards of 500. The manse was built in 1798, and has since that time undergone several repairs. The glebe is about 18 imperial acres in extent, and may be valued at L. 18 a year. The stipend is 15 chalders, half meal, and half barley, and L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements, amounting, at the county fiars' price of the seven years preceding the augmentation 5th December 1821, to L. 232, 0s.  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. There being no place of worship in the parish but the Established church, it is attended by all the inhabitants, except about 30, who are dissenters. Divine service is generally well attended. The average number of communicants is 330.

*Education.*—There are two schools in the parish, the principal one being placed near the centre of the greatest population. The branches of instruction generally taught are English, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, and geometry. The salary of this school is the maximum, viz. L. 34, 4s.  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d., and the fees amount to about L. 16 per annum. The teacher has considerably more than the legal accommodations with respect to a dwelling-house and garden. No salary is attached to the side-school. The master of it is paid entirely by fees received from the scholars, which are the same as those of the parochial school.

The people are in general alive to the benefits of education. There are none above fifteen years of age (idiots excepted) who cannot read. Two sheep-farms on the north-western side of the parish are about six miles distant from these schools. But the po-

pulation in that quarter is small, and there is access to a side-school in the neighbouring parish of Closeburn.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is 20, and the average sum allotted to each per year is L. 1, 4s. There are no legacies or mortifications. The annual amount of church collections, with small fines exacted from delinquents, and other dues, is about L. 35, 3s. 10½d. Several persons, not on the poors' roll, obtain occasional relief. It is still with reluctance that the necessitous are induced to apply for parochial assistance. But it is easy to perceive that the spirit of independence by which the lower classes in this country have been so long distinguished, is here, as in other places, exhibiting symptoms of decay.

It may be remarked, in concluding, that the rental of the parish, when the former Statistical Account was drawn up, was L. 2500, and that at present it amounts to L. 6475 per annum.

*January 1834.*