

PARISH OF SYMINGTON.

PRESBYTERY OF AYR, SYNOD OF GLASGOW AND AYR.

THE REV. THOMAS SMITH WHARRIE, A. M. MINISTER.*

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of this parish is derived from a person who formerly resided here, called Simon Lockhart; Simon's town or Symington.

Situation.—The village is situated on a gentle eminence near the centre of the parish. It commands a fine view of the Frith of Clyde, where vessels are seen sailing to and fro. Ailsa Rock is seen in the distance, also the fertile plains of Cunningham, with numerous enclosures, belts, clumps of planting, and gentlemen's seats. These rich and delightful views are bounded on the north, by the cloud-capped Benlomond, and adjacent mountains; on the west, by the romantic Island of Arran; and on the south, by the high hills near Galloway.

Boundaries.—This parish is bounded on the north, by Dundonald parish; on the east, by Riccarton parish; on the south, by Craigie parish; and on the west, by the parish of Monkton, and is nearly of a parallelogram figure, being about 4 miles in length, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ broad. It contains nearly 5 square miles.

Geology and Mineralogy.—Greyish and blue whinstone abound in this parish, running in beds across the country, at no great distance from the surface; and it is, in some places, above the surface to the height of 12 feet. Around the village, plenty of rotten rock is to be had; but as it is soft, it is not used except for drains.

Soil.—The soil throughout the parish is, in general, clayey, on a hard subsoil. Around the village, it is of a light dry nature, lying on a rotten rock. Part of the parish is of a soft loam or mossy nature, generally lying on a fine clay bottom.

Mines.—Formerly, there was a coal-pit in the parish, but now it is given up. There are numerous whinstone quarries in the parish, used generally for road metal. Limestone is to be had, but it does not repay the expense of mining it. Freestone is abundant,

* Drawn up by Mr John Dunlop.

there being a freestone quarry at the east end of the parish, which supplies all the neighbourhood with stones for the erection of houses. As it lies on the margin of the Glasgow and Portpatrick road, and near to Kilmarnock, a great number of stones are used for buildings in that town. It is rather a coarse stone; finer kinds being procured elsewhere for corners, windows, &c.

Springs.—Plenty of good spring water is to be found in this parish, where the inhabitants have dug wells that afford a supply even in the severest drought.

Plantations.—There are no natural forests in this parish; and the plantations consist mostly of clumps or belts. The proprietor of Dankeith, about the year 1740, planted several belts and clumps of planting on his property, dressed a few of his fields with compost, and was among the first who introduced rye-grass into Ayrshire. About the year 1770, Dr Fullerton of Rosemount, on his return from India, rebuilt the mansion-house at Rosemount in a modern style, cultivated his land, and tastefully ornamented the grounds with belts of planting, giving employment to a great number of poor families.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-Owners.—These are, Lieutenant-Colonel William Kelso of Dankeith; Lady Mary Montgomerie, who is patroness; George Bogle, Esq. of Rosemount; William Hay Boyd, Esq. of Townend; James Ogilvy Fairlie, Esq. of Whitehill; Mrs Fairlie of Williamfield; the Honourable David Boyle, Lord Justice-Clerk; Robert Rankin, Esq. of Muirhouse; James Campbell, Esq. of Craigie; Thomas Davidson, Esq. of Knockendale; and John Wilson, Esq. of Whitelees.

Parochial Registers.—These have been kept so far back as the year 1642, but very irregularly till about 1780.

Antiquities.—This parish can scarcely boast of any antiquities. Formerly, there was a round mound called the Law-hill, at the foot of the village, partly natural and partly artificial, when the proprietor, Mr Boyd, in improving his land, caused the Law-hill to be levelled with the adjacent field. Those employed in doing so, found at no great depth from the surface, several arrow-heads, made of iron, most of them barbed and very rudely constructed. They also found combs made of horn, in a pretty good state of preservation. These are in the possession of William H. Boyd of Townend, and the Rev. Mr Wharrie. There is also an eminence near Helenton,

called the Mote-hill, upon which a ruin stands; but of which tradition takes no notice.

Modern Buildings.—These are Williamfield House, which was erected about eight years ago by Mrs Fairlie of Williamfield; its erection and the surrounding improvements cost upwards of L. 20,000. A large conservatory is at one end of the house, in which is a large collection of rare and valuable plants; and in front of the house, there is an artificial lake, more than a quarter of a mile in length, in which there is an island planted with trees and shrubs. Water-fowls are seen swimming in abundance, both wild and domesticated. Townend House is beautifully situated on an eminence. It is built of dressed whin rock, with hewn freestone corners, &c. which has a beautiful effect. Dankeith and Rosemount houses are of an older date, very commodious, finely situated, and surrounded with thriving plantations, &c.

III.—POPULATION.

Taken in 1755,	-	359
1792,	-	610
1801,	-	668
1811,	-	656
1821,	-	744
1831,	-	684
Population in 1831,—Males, 419, females, 465		
1838, Males, 374, females, 451		
Total, 825. Decrease since 1831, 59		

The supposed cause of the decrease of population since 1831 is the great number of tradesmen, who were employed in erecting Williamfield House, leaving the parish after the erection was finished.

Persons residing in the village,	-	-	-	-	276
in the country,	-	-	-	-	549
Average number of births for the last seven years, about	-	-	-	-	15
of deaths,	-	-	-	-	9
of marriages,	-	-	-	-	12
Males under 15 years of age,	-	-	-	-	183
Males above 15 years of age,	-	-	-	-	241
Females under 15 years of age,	-	-	-	-	160
Females above 15 years of age,	-	-	-	-	291
Persons upwards of 70 years of age,	-	-	-	-	10
Individuals and families of independent fortune residing in the parish,	-	-	-	-	5
Proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards,	-	-	-	-	10
Unmarried men, bachelors and widowers, upwards of 50 years of age,	-	-	-	-	12
Unmarried women upwards of 45 years of age,	-	-	-	-	7
Families in the parish,	-	-	-	-	176
chiefly employed in agriculture,	-	-	-	-	97
in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,	-	-	-	-	55
Average number of children in each family,	-	-	-	-	4
Inhabited houses,	-	-	-	-	146
Uninhabited houses,	-	-	-	-	7
Blind persons in the parish,	-	-	-	-	2

During the last three years, there have been 8 illegitimate births in the parish.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—

Number of acres in the parish, - 3660
 in plantations, about 300

The remainder is nearly all arable land, and under cultivation.

Woods.—The forest trees in this parish are mostly ash, alder, beech, birch, elm, larch, silver, spruce, and Scotch firs, besides oak, some of which are of a large size. All of them have been planted, and are in general kept in pretty good order.

Rent.—The average rent of land in this parish is about L. 1, 15s. for the imperial acre; but some of the land around the village lets as high as L. 3, 12s. per imperial acre. Cows are grazed during summer for about L. 3 each; sheep at about L. 1 each, during both summer and winter.

Live-Stock.—The common breed of cattle for the dairy is of the Ayrshire kind. There are 400 dairy cows kept in the parish, besides 121 young cattle. The draught horses are mostly of the Clydesdale breed. There are about 90 employed for agricultural purposes, besides 14 young horses. There are about 41 horses used for harness and the saddle. The breed of swine is various. About 92 swine are at present in the parish. Many of the cottars do not think themselves comfortable without having pork of their own feeding. There are 550 sheep in the parish, of the Cheviot, Leicester, and black-faced breed.

Improvements, &c.—Within these few years, the land in this parish has been greatly improved by furrow-draining, which has greatly increased the bulk of crops.

The general duration of leases is from sixteen to nineteen years.

The farm-steadings, in general, are very good, being built of stones and lime. The roofs are covered with oat straw, and a number of them are slated.

Quarries.—There is a freestone quarry in the east end of the parish, called Spittlehill, the materials of which are used for erecting houses. The stones are raised by iron levers, wedges, and mells. There are several whinstone quarries in the parish, the materials of which are raised for road metal, &c.

Produce.—The average gross amount of raw produce raised in the parish, as nearly as can be ascertained, is as follows:

Oats, -	933 imperial acres at L. 5,	-	L. 4665	0	0
Green crop,	154	10,	1540	0	0
Hay, -	354	2, 10s.	885	0	0
Pasture, -	1916	1, 5s.	2396	15	0
Plantations,	300	-	100	0	0
Gardens, orchards, &c.	-	-	300	0	0

Miscellaneous produce not enumerated under any of the foregoing heads,	100	0	0
Rearing of 92 swine,	-	92	0

Total return from land,	-	-	L. 10,080	15	0
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V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Markets.—Kilmarnock, at the distance of five miles from the village, is the nearest market-town.

Means of Communication.—A penny post-office is established in the village, where letters are received daily from Kilmarnock and Ayr. The Glasgow and Portpatrick road runs through the whole length of the parish, nearly four miles, on which run daily five stage-coaches, the Glasgow and Portpatrick mail-coaches, besides a great number of carriers' waggons, &c.

Thorn is chiefly used for fences: but there is sometimes a mixture of thorn, beech, and privets.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is situated near the centre of the parish, being about two miles distant from its farthest extremity. At what time it was built, is uncertain. It received an addition in 1797, when the whole underwent a sufficient repair. It can accommodate with ease 400 people. There are thirty or forty free sittings in the church.

The manse was built about the year 1786, and re-slated in 1838. The stipend consists of 120 bolls of oatmeal, and 120 bolls of barley, Linlithgow measure, payable by the fair prices of the county, besides L. 22, 1s. in money, and L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements. The glebe contains about five imperial acres, and may be worth about L. 15 per annum.

There is a Dissenting meeting held once a fortnight in a garret room; but there are not above five or six Dissenting families in the parish. Divine service is generally well attended by all ranks of people. The number of communicants are about 240, not including strangers who join in that ordinance.

The church collections for the poor average about L. 26 a year.

Education.—The parochial school is the only one in the parish, where from seventy to eighty children are taught English grammar, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, French, &c. The salary of the schoolmaster is L. 34, 5s. 10d. The school fees may average about L. 40 a year. The schoolmaster has a dwelling-house, school-room, and garden.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—About eight poor people receive monthly 5s. each, besides having their house rents paid out of the poor's fund. A considerable number also receive assistance, who

are not on the monthly roll of paupers. The annual amount of collections made at the church for behoof of the poor, is about L. 26 : the poor have also the interest of L. 100, left by the late Mrs Fullerton of Rosemount.

When the funds for the support of the poor have been expended, the heritors voluntarily subscribe, according to their respective valuations, for what may be required for that purpose.

Inns, &c.—There are six houses in the parish where spirits and ales are sold ; three of these are in the village, the other three are on the Glasgow and Portpatrick road, where the stage-coaches and mails change horses.

Fuel.—Coal is the only kind of fuel used in this parish : it is procured from Fairlie, Gatehead, and Caprington coal-pits, in the adjoining parishes of Dundonald and Riccarton.

March 1839.

PARISH OF BEITH.

PRESBYTERY OF IRVINE, SYNOD OF GLASGOW AND AYR.

THE REV. GEORGE COLVILLE, MINISTER.*

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of the parish, according to Chalmers, is Celtic, signifying *birch*. There is reason to believe that the whole of the district was once covered with wood. Many names of places indicate their derivation from this circumstance, as *Woodside, Threepwood, Fulwoodhead, Roughwood, &c. &c.*

Extent, Boundaries, &c.—The town lies in latitude $55^{\circ} 47'$ north, and in longitude $4^{\circ} 39'$ west. It consisted, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, of a few houses set down at the kirk, but now contains upwards of 300. The parish lies in the form of a triangle. Its greatest length is from south-east to south-west, which is 4 miles. A small part of it, in the south-east, lies in Renfrewshire, having been disjoined from Neilston and annexed to Beith. This was done about 1649, at which time the bounds of the different presbyteries in the synod of Glasgow were carefully perambulated, with the view of forming new parishes where required, and of annexing or disjoining lands, to suit the conve-

* This Account has been furnished by James Dobie, Esq. of Crummock.