

PARISH OF INVERCHAOLAIN.

PRESBYTERY OF DUNOON, SYNOD OF ARGYLE.

THE REV. A M'TAVISH, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—INVERCHAOLAIN is the ancient and modern name of this parish; it is derived from the Gaelic, and signifies *the plain or lands fit for tillage on the small stream*, which is descriptive enough of the situation of the manse and the adjoining farm.

Situation, Boundaries, &c.—This parish is situated in the district of Cowall, the south-eastern division of the county of Argyle. It is bounded on the south-east by the parish of Dunoon; on the north and north-west, by the parishes of Kilmun and Glendaruel; west and south-west, by Loch Riddan and the east Kyles of Bute. Its greatest length is about 15 miles, and greatest breadth 8 miles, including Loch Striven, which intersects it.

Topographical Appearance and Climate.—The general surface of the parish is hilly and rugged—a range of hills running along both sides of Loch Striven, but toward the south-eastern part, it becomes more level.

The climate is, in general, very mild though moist. There is

no disease that may be said to be peculiarly prevalent in the parish. Typhus and other epidemics occur occasionally, brought from the low country, but are of short continuance. The snow rarely ever lies more than two days, on the low grounds near the shore. Westerly winds prevail, which bring frequent showers upon us from the Atlantic, but our heaviest rains are with southerly winds; and when the lofty hills of Arran are enveloped with clouds, we are sure to have a fall. The people are generally healthy, and many live to a great age. The soil nearest the sea is generally light and sandy, with a mixture of moss in some parts, but there is a considerable variety, from its great extent: a large portion of it is of a very red colour.

Hydrography.—The parish is intersected by an arm of the sea called Loch Striven, signifying the *loch of noses or points*. It is upwards of nine miles long, and about two miles broad at the mouth, getting narrower as it enters the country. It varies in depth from 20 to 55 fathoms in the centre, generally shelving gradually from the shore without any rocks or shoals; in one or two parts the depth is so sudden that you might step on the land from a line of battle ship. There are several beautiful sandy beaches for bathing. The water is clear and very salt, except when there are great floods of rain swelling the mountain torrents, which discharge themselves into it. The luminous phosphoric appearance of the water at night is very marked, particularly during the autumnal months, sometimes giving the loch the appearance of being on fire; the waters of the East Kyles of Bute and Loch Riddan are much of the same character. There is in all, a sea shore of between thirty and forty miles.

There is little current in Loch Striven, except what is occasioned by the rise and fall of the tide. The tide is much more rapid in the Kyles of Bute, particularly about the burnt islands near the entrance to Loch Riddan, and the flood tide coming from the firth of Clyde, (between Bogany point in Bute and Toward Point in Cowall,) meets the flood tide coming in the West Kyles at a point about half-a mile west of Southhall, and from this point the ebb tide returns in the same way as it flowed. There is no stream in the parish deserving the name of a river. It abounds in springs of the finest water. The only ones deserving of notice are two that discharge themselves from the opposite sides of a large hill about the same level, with a rushing noise, never seeming to vary in quantity, and not freezing. There are

many beautiful small cascades, but the only one worthy of remark is on a farm belonging to Archibald Campbell, Esq. of Glendaruel, where the water pours over a perpendicular rock with such force (when there is a flood in the stream) that it forms a beautiful arch, and the only way of getting from one side to the other of the stream when so flooded, is by going under the arch.

Geology.—It principally consists of mica-slate and many hard rocks lying in beds. Several whinstone dikes appear in different parts of it, which can be traced in a direct line for a great distance, far beyond the bounds of the parish. Limestone has been wrought, but it is of a hard quality, and the purchasing of Irish lime in shell has been found less expensive.

Zoology.—It is not remarkable for any rare animals. The large greyhound fox has become very numerous of late years, and most destructive to the sheep stock. Ottars are frequently found along the sea-coast; badgers are now seldom seen; roe-deer are plentiful; hares very numerous and of a large size, but the white or alpine hare are now seldom met with; white and brown weasels are common; wild-cats were numerous some years ago, but are not so now. Rats, mice, and moles abound; but there are not many adders or lizards seen. All the common birds natural to this part of the country are found here; crows are so much encouraged, that they are prodigiously destructive, particularly to the newly sown fields and in the harvest time; grouse are to be found on our mountains, and a few partridges in our fields; the blackcock has become most plentiful of late years, and pheasants are to be seen in all quarters since their introduction into the country by the late Kirkman Finlay, Esq. of Castletoward; ptarmigan used to be found on two of our highest mountains, but were said to have been extirpated some years ago by the game-keeper of a neighbouring proprietor; wood-cocks, snipe, land and water-rails, green, golden, and grey plover are common in their season; herons are very numerous. In severe weather we are visited by wild geese, but they do not breed in the parish; swans are seen passing over us going south; land-barnacle sometimes alight in our fields in the harvest season; sea-fowls of every kind are numerous on our waters, and a variety of divers, particularly in the winter; also, widgeon, teal, and other ducks.

Loch Striven and the Kyles of Bute abound in fish of every kind common on the west coast. The most abundant are, the whiting, haddock, cod, ling, flounder, skate, mackerel, seath, or

coal-fish, rock-fish or sea-perch, salmon, and trout. Sometimes there are great takes of herring, which are a blessing to the people. The most of them keep nets to embrace every favourable opportunity of catching them. The conger eel are numerous and of a large size, and though they are very troublesome to the herring-fishers, (from running along their nets and picking out the herrings,) yet they are fished in great quantities for the Liverpool market. Shoals of grey mullet occasionally come into our loch, but few of them are caught; sole are not abundant; turbot and halibut have sometimes been taken; also that much prized fish, the John Doree; the ink or cuttle-fish are to be found; the kethick or ground-shark are often thrown on our shores by the storms; the Portbeagle shark and dog-fish are common; the porpoise or pelloch and whale follow the herrings; seals are frequently seen; lobsters, crabs, and shrimps are also prevalent; there are a variety of shell-fish on our shores; oysters and muscles were at one time very plentiful, but are now scarce; par and salmon-trout were abundant in our streams, but are yearly becoming less numerous.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Heritors.—There are seven in the parish: John Campbell, Esq. of Southhall; Alexander Lamont, Esq. of Knockdow; Alexander Finlay, Esq. of Castletoward; Sir John Fife of Gortan; John Campbell, Esq. of Dunoon; Archibald Campbell, Esq. of Glendaruel; and Mrs Harkness of Garrachoren.

Resident Heritors.—These are, John Campbell, Esq. of Southhall, whose place is beautifully situated near the entrance to the East Kyles of Bute, commanding a prospect of the Firth of Clyde, as described in the former Statistical Account of this parish; Alexander Lamont, Esq. of Knockdow; and Sir John Fife, a gentleman from the north of England, who has purchased property on both sides of Loch Striven within the last twenty years. He has built a most commodious cottage, delightfully situated on the east side of the loch, commanding a view of Rothsay Bay, with Ayrshire and Arran in the distance. He has planted nearly 100 acres about his place, and done much to ornament and improve the low grounds and hill-pasture. Also, Mrs Harkness, heretrix of Garrachoren.

Antiquities.—The only thing particularly worthy of being noticed under this head, is the ruins of the old Castle of Ellandheirrig, on a small island in Loch Riddan, about a hundred yards from the main

land, fortified by Archibald Earl of Argyle, when he made his unfortunate descent upon Scotland in 1685. The castle was taken by his enemies and blown up; but a small portion of it is still standing, and is seen from the steam-boats passing through the Kyles of Bute. This island and adjacent property at that time belonged to the ancient family of Ellandheirrig, who possessed a large estate in this part of the country, and were celebrated as warriors in Gaelic song. They are now extinct. The island now belongs to John Campbell, Esq. of Southhall, whose grand-uncle purchased it, along with what then remained of the property, from Sir Neil Campbell of Ellandheirrig, the last of that house. There are tumuli in different parts of the parish. Several of them have been opened. In some, stone coffins containing human bones were found; in others, earthen urns with black ashes. Stone coffins containing human bones have been turned up in different parts of the parish. In digging the foundation of the present church in 1812, several dozens of human skulls were found, and near them a few bones of a very large size. There is a large stone ten or twelve feet high in the middle of a field at the head of Loch Striven, but nothing is known about it.

III.—POPULATION, &c.

The return made to Dr Webster in 1755 was 944

	Inhabited houses.	Families.	Males.	Females.	Total.
According to census in 1811,	103	105	300	288	- 588
1821,	106	115	318	333	- 651
1831,	105	100	301	295	- 596
Taken by myself in 1835,					592
Census taken in 1841, 583.					
Extra people working at Oakwoods at the time, 116, total,					699

The register of births commences in 1737, but is in an imperfect state; of marriages from 1761, equally imperfect; but accurately kept of both from 1771. There is no register of deaths; average of births, 16; of marriages, 5. Gaelic is the language of the natives, both old and young, but all of them can read and speak English. English is gaining ground, and all are anxious to acquire it.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The parish may be considered as entirely pastoral and agricultural. It contains upwards of 40,000 acres, of which 1300 are arable, 1500 low pasture, 440 of thriving plantation of various ages, consisting principally of larch, Scotch spruce, and

silver fir, oak, ash, and birch. There are 1000 acres of oak coppice woods generally cut every twenty or twenty-one years, yielding a handsome return to the proprietors. All the rest is hill pasture. The only remarkable trees are two hollies of great size, the largest near the mansion house of Southhall, the other near the farmstead of Inverchaolain.

Little advancement in agriculture has been made in the parish on the whole, and few improvements have taken place upon the lands of the old proprietors, except in the immediate neighbourhood of their own residences. There is no regular rotation of cropping; two or three, and even four white crops are taken, till sometimes it hardly returns the seed sown, notwithstanding the forcing it with sea-weed; thus the natural grasses are destroyed, and the land becomes covered with weeds, consequently many of the hill sides, once cultivated and left out in this state, have become overrun with heath. The lands in the immediate neighbourhood of the manse do not yield, by a third or even a half, what they are said to have done fifty years ago. There are no proper ring fences, not even the old ones kept up which separate the hill pasture from the home farm or arable land. The parish principally consists of sheep farms, containing a portion of arable land, and generally let for a period of nine years, (many of them rack-rented,) which is considered too short. However, Mr Finlay has a few arable farms in the parish highly cultivated, drained, and subdivided, though the lands are principally very sandy and light, a great portion of them being reclaimed from barren heath, by the late Archibald Younger, Esq. a former proprietor. The leases on these lands extend to nineteen years, and the farmers have comfortable houses.

Live-Stock.—There are about 10,300 sheep in the parish, all of them of the black-faced breed, with the exception of nearly 100 Leicester, fed on the low grounds by two of the proprietors, and a few pets. About 150 slack ewes are wintered on the low pasture, and sold, with their lambs, to the butchers in summer. There are some very good sheep-stocks, and well attended to in every respect. The hill pasture is generally good, and surface-draining in some instances practised: but, upon the whole, we do not consider the sheep-stocks improving of late years. There are upwards of 250 cows, 7 bulls, and 240 young cattle fed during the summer months, and nearly 200 calves reared annually. They are princi-

pally of the Argyleshire breed. There are about 40 of the Ayrshire short-horned breed kept for their milk. There are 71 horses in the parish, principally a cross between the Highland and Clydesdale. The sheep are readily sold to the Greenock, Glasgow, Rothesay, or Dunoon fleshers at fair prices. Young cattle are purchased by drovers for the different low country markets.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

There is no village in the parish.

Means of Communication.—There are about thirty miles of made road. The scenery is bold and romantic: from the mansion-house of Southhall to the head of Loch Riddan it is truly beautiful. It is considered to surpass the celebrated entrance to the Trossachs at the foot of Loch Caterine. The road from South Hall to Glendaruel is kept in the best order. I cannot say much in commendation of the way in which the other roads in the parish are attended to. They are chiefly made and repaired by statute labour.

Ecclesiastical State.—There are two places of worship, the parish church and a chapel built by subscription, and a contribution from the General Assembly's Church Extension fund. The latter was opened for public worship by the parish minister on the 23d of August 1840. The parish church is situated on a rising ground immediately behind the manse, surrounded by a beautiful burying-ground. It was built in 1812, and might be made very comfortable if it was strapped and lathed and properly attended to, and is the third church on the same site. The first was built by a man who said that he dreamt that he would find a treasure concealed in a certain spot in the parish, (which is still pointed out,) and was commanded to build a church with it on "Crochdan in airy," but his funds became exhausted, and a part of it remained unslated for many years. There was another church built close to this old one in 1745, which was pulled down when the late Mr Campbell of Southhall, the principal heritor, insisted on building the present church, to the great annoyance of some of the other heritors. The old Roman Catholic place of worship and burying-ground were situated on an eminence about 200 yards above the present one, on the side of the hill. The chapel is most comfortable in every way, and situated on the east Kyles of Bute. The manse was built in 1807 by order of the Court of Session; but the then incumbent accepted of one inferior to

the plan given by Mr Gillespie Graham, the architect appointed by the Court of Session, and was built by contract given to the lowest bidder, who absconded before it was finished; the minister was in consequence put to a considerable expense in endeavouring to make it somewhat comfortable. It got a sort of repair in 1832; but the present incumbent has been necessitated to expend a considerable sum of money upon it for the comfort and health of his family since that time. The office houses are pretty good, the principal line of them being roofed, and several of them entirely built at the minister's own expense.

The glebe consists of about four acres of arable, and three roods of pasture and unimprovable ground. Several encroachments are said to have been made upon it during vacancies; besides, there is a servitude of eight cows upon the surrounding church lands of Strondharaig; but, from the overstocked and wretched system of cropping the land, the servitude is of little value. There is no doubt but the minister was entitled to followers to those cows, according to the original universal custom of the country; and the minister was always, even of late years, in the habit of keeping one or two calves, till, about three years ago, they were driven off by the present proprietor of the lands.

The stipend, decreed for in 1775, is 100 bolls 3 firlots of oat-meal, and 158 Scots money of vicarage. What this is short of L.150 Sterling, is made up by Her Majesty's Exchequer. There are lands in the parish rented at upwards of L.200 per annum unvalued. There is little vacant teind.

The valued rent of the parish is L.204, 8s. 5d. Sterling: the real rental is L.3400, 15s. Sterling, exclusive of the lands in possession of the resident heritors, and the returns for woods and plantations.

Education.—There are only two schools in the parish. The schoolmaster's accommodation is miserable, and the schoolmaster, who died a few months ago, was in poverty, although a most meritorious man.

There was a good school-house built a few years ago for the side school, which is inefficiently taught, the teacher being old. I had a small school taught at the head of Loch Striven for some seasons, which did much good. There are two Sunday schools kept in the parish that are superintended by the minister.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of persons

on the roll is from twelve to thirteen, besides others who receive occasional assistance. There still remains a capital of L. 60 Sterling, saved many years ago from the collections at the church door; a legacy of L. 100 Sterling, received two years ago; collections at church door, about L. 20 per annum. The heritors have been prevailed upon, of late years, to assess themselves from L. 12, 17s. to L. 13, 17s. per annum; and from these sources, and receiving occasional small donations and legacies, we have hitherto supplied the necessities of the poor, giving them from L. 2 to L. 8 per year, according to their necessities, so that there is not a beggar in the parish. The people in general are very kind to the poor, and there has not been, for a great many years, any who went beyond the bounds of the parish to seek alms, except two who were weak in the mind, and could not be prevented from wandering. There is generally a great aversion on the part of the poor to seek parochial aid.

Friendly Society.—There is a Friendly Society which has existed for upwards of half a century, and does much good.

Fairs, &c.—There is but one fair held in the parish. There are four public-houses.

Fuel.—Coals are principally used, and cost from 13s. to 15s. per ton, conveyed by water; peats are also used, but it is difficult to procure them.

July 1843,