

# PARISHES OF KILBRANDON AND KILCHATTAN.\*

PRESBYTERY OF LORN, SYNOD OF ARGYLE.

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## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—THIS parish has received its name from some one of those Scottish saints who, no doubt, were celebrated in their own times, but of whom very little is now known, except that they were companions or followers of the famous St Columba. It appears that, before the Reformation, there were four churches or chapels within the bounds of the present parish, which were dedicated respectively to Brenan or Brandon, Cattan, Bride or Bridget, and Coan. The places where these churches once stood, and where the ruins of some of them are still to be seen, are called Kilbrandon, Kilchattan, Kilbride, and Kilchoan. When these four churches or parishes were united, the last two names were dropped, whilst the other two are still retained. The parish is generally called Cuan by the country people, from the circumstance that the present church stands near the narrow sound of Cuan, (derived from the Gaelic *cumhan*, narrow,) which separates Seil from Luing.

*Extent, Boundaries, &c.*—The parish is situated in that district of Argyle called Nether Lorn. It consists of a portion of the mainland and a group of islands, five of which are inhabited, viz. Seil, Luing, Easdale, Torsay, and Shuna. Its greatest length from north to south is 10 miles, and its greatest breadth is about 6 miles from east to west. The district on the mainland belonging to the parish is about 4 miles long, and two miles broad; Seil 4 by 2; Luing 6 by 2; Shuna  $2\frac{1}{2}$  by  $1\frac{1}{2}$ . Each of the other islands is less than a square mile. On the east side, the parish is bounded by Kilniaver and Kilmelfort, from which it is separated on the north-east by the Sound of Clachan, and on the south-east

\* Drawn up by the late incumbent, the Rev. Finlay M'Pherson.

by Lochmelfort; one of the outlets of which lies between Shuna and the parish of Craignish. On the south it is bounded by the north end of the Sound of Jura, a branch of which, from 1 to 2 miles in breadth, separates Luing on the south-west from Scarba and other small islands belonging to the parish of Jura. On the north-west, it is bounded by the Sound of Mull, which is here about 8 miles in breadth, thus leaving a part of the parish due west, of some miles in extent, open to the Atlantic Ocean.

The islands of Seil and Luing, which constitute the principal part of the parish, form one contiguous range, with the exception of the narrow sound of Cuan for 10 miles in length. Along the east side of these islands, the land is low and indented with bays. On the west, the coast is generally high and rocky, particularly about Easdale, thus presenting a bold front to the waves of the Atlantic, which in stormy weather beat with great violence against these shores.

There are no high mountains in the parish, but there are several ridges of hills rising in some parts to the height of 600 or 800 feet above the level of the sea. The island of Seil consists very much of undulating low hills, with fertile slopes and valleys. Luing is generally more level. The soil in both these islands is well adapted for every species of crop, but the climate is so variable and moist, that the expectations of the husbandman are often disappointed. The district on the mainland consists chiefly of hill pasture.

There are no rivers in this neighbourhood, but their place is supplied to a certain extent, by the number of narrow sounds by which the parish is so much intersected. The Sounds of Insh and Easdale are on the west coast, lying between the islands of the same names and Seil. The Sound of Clachan, which separates Seil from the mainland, is only a few yards in breadth. It runs nearly in a straight line for about two miles, and might be taken for an alpine river. A bridge was built across this sound fifty years ago, being perhaps the first instance of the kind in Great Britain where an island was thus joined to the mainland. This bridge is 70 feet wide, and 26 feet above high water mark, so that small vessels of twenty tons burden may pass under it. The skiffs from the north find a safe passage through Clachan in bad weather, when they could not venture with safety round the west coast. This sound is very shallow, being dry in some parts at low water. The Sound of Cuan is much broader and deeper than that of Clachan, and the current here is very strong, running at the

rate of seven or eight miles an hour. The tide here takes a very circuitous course round the north end of Torsay, which juts out from the north-east end of Luing, and from which it is separated by a sound a few feet in breadth, and might easily be shut up altogether. The Sound of Shuna lies between the island of that name and Luing.

*Bays.*—There are several bays and harbours in the parish where vessels of any size may safely ride at anchor, and where many of those which sail along the west coast run for shelter in stormy weather. The principal bays are, that of Ardmaddy on the mainland, Bulvicar in Seil, and Blackmillbay in Luing. There is also a good harbour at Easdale, and another at Toberonochy, on the east side of Luing.

*Climate.*—It is well known that the weather in winter is much milder on the west coast than in the interior of the country,—the frost is not so intense, and the snow does not continue long on the ground. There being no rain-gauge in the neighbourhood, the quantity of rain that falls cannot be given, but there is seldom any complaint of the lack of moisture. From a note taken, some time ago, of the prevailing winds, it appears that the wind generally ranges from south to north-west for two-thirds of the year. The north wind generally brings dry weather along with it. Although the climate is moist, it is rather salubrious, owing to the sea air, which is here very strong and pure. There are very few diseases peculiar to the district. Those arising from exposure to cold and damp, and from a defective and unwholesome diet, are the most prevalent, such as rheumatism, consumption, dropsy, &c. As there is always a medical man employed to attend the quarries, the people have an opportunity of getting their children vaccinated, which, however, is too much neglected till small-pox breaks out amongst them. Typhus fever and small-pox are often conveyed from the south country by those young people who go thither in quest of employment. Their friends, from motives of mistaken kindness, insist on taking them home before they have fully recovered, which brings disease amongst the people. For some years past, owing chiefly to this cause, cases of fever have been very prevalent in the parish.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Heritors.*—About three-fourths of the parish belong to the Marquis of Breadalbane. The other heritors are, the heirs of the late John McDougall, Esq. of Ardincaple; Major Campbell of

Melfort; and the Town-Council of Glasgow, to whom the Island of Shuna was left by the late — Yeates, Esq. for the behoof of some charitable and literary institutions in that city.

*Mansion Houses, &c.*—Armdaddy Castle is one of the seats of the Marquis of Breadalbane, where the family have been in the habit of residing for some weeks, during the summer season, for the last few years. It is situated on the mainland at the head of a fine bay, and commands an extensive prospect of sea and land. The castle, which is a very old building, stands on an eminence of a conical shape, which has the appearance of an artificial mound. It was the residence of a family of the M'Dougalls, when that clan was in possession of the greatest part of Lorn. It was occupied in the time of persecution, during the reign of Charles II. and of his brother James, by Lord Niel Campbell, a brother of the Earl of Argyle, who was put to death in 1685. He made some additions to the former building. His own initials and those of his Lady (Catherine Kerr,) are cut in a stone in one of the gables, N. C., C. K., 1676. Lord Niel himself was also a sufferer in those times of tyranny and blood. There is a small cave in the face of a rock, at a short distance from Armdaddy, where it is said he used to conceal himself from his pursuers. In this castle, the late Marquis of Breadalbane was born in 1762. It was then occupied by his father Colin Campbell, Esq. of Carwhin, the presumptive heir to the title and estates of the Breadalbane family, and whose memory is still held in the greatest veneration throughout the whole district of Nether Lorn. The only other mansion house in the parish, is that built at Ardincaple, by the grandfather of the present proprietor about fifty years ago. It is now occupied by Dr Archibald Smith, who resided many years in Lima, and is the author of the able and interesting work entitled "Peru as it is."

*Registers.*—There is a volume of session records beginning with the year 1753, and continued, though not very regularly kept, till 1793. Owing to some cause not well explained, the following volume was lost or destroyed twenty years ago. The parish register has been regularly kept since the induction of Mr Beith in 1826.

*Antiquities.*—The only remains of antiquity in the parish are the ruins of some old forts, so common in the Highlands. There is one of these on the top of a hill in the Island of Luing. It is of a circular form, built of dry stones, and was apparently a place

of great strength, as the wall is about ten feet thick. There is another in Torsay, called the Castle of Dogs, and supposed to have been a hunting seat of the M'Donalds.

### III.—POPULATION.

Nothing is known of the ancient state of the population of this parish ; but from the number of churches in the times of Popery, it must have been very considerable.

The population in 1755 was	1492
1772,	1750
1793,	2060
1801,	2278
1811,	2327
1821,	2644
1831,	2833

The increase in the population has been chiefly owing to the great number of people who are employed in the slate quarries.

*Character, &c. of the People.*—The people of this parish, who, with the exception of a few families, consist entirely of the labouring classes, are very intelligent and industrious. They are decidedly superior, in point of knowledge, to the population of most of our Highland parishes, and their moral character is in general very correct and regular. Those employed in the quarries cannot perhaps save much money ; but as they are supplied with a provision for themselves and their families, though in debt to the Company, they are, upon the whole, in somewhat comfortable circumstances.

The Gaelic language is universally spoken by all the natives of this district. The people in general can understand and speak English tolerably well ; but they have a great predilection for their mother tongue. There are scarcely a dozen people in the whole parish, who do not understand Gaelic, and these are strangers from the south.

Mr John Whyte, the engineer of the slate works, who is an elder in the Established Church, and teaches one of the Sabbath schools, has, during the last three winters, delivered a course of lectures on mechanics in the Gaelic language. The people in general, and especially the young men at Easdale, seem to appreciate his laudable and gratuitous efforts for imparting to them useful and interesting knowledge. It is believed that this is the first attempt that has been made to communicate such knowledge to the Highlanders in their own language. Lord Breadalbane, to whose liberality this parish is so much indebted in many respects, has lately presented this infant institution with an air-pump, to

enable Mr Whyte to illustrate some of his subjects to greater advantage.

#### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture.*—The state of husbandry in this part of the country has been greatly improved of late years. A considerable extent of waste land has been brought into a state of cultivation, and much has been done in rendering what was formerly arable more productive. The Marquis of Breadalbane gives great encouragement to his tenants and crofters in improving their lands by draining, ditching, and the work is done at the mutual expense of landlord and tenants, under the superintendence of an overseer, who lines out the drains and sees them properly executed, and then values the work done. From one-half to two-thirds is credited to the tenants in their rents. The drains are made of various dimensions, according to the nature of the ground. In some places, they are built and covered with flags, and in others they are filled entirely with small stones. In tilly and mossy land, they are cut according to the thorough draining system, but where spring water is found rising at the foot of banks, drains of from four to six feet deep are often made, and found to be very effective.

The general stock consists of black-cattle of the west Highland breed, of which there are excellent folds in the parish selected and attended to with great care. There are only two or three sheep stocks, which are mostly of the black-faced kind, and of medium quality.

There was an Agricultural Society established on the lands of the Marquis, five years ago, and annual competitions are held for black-cattle and sheep, at which premiums are awarded to the best. Premiums are also given to the best ploughmen, and for the best kept horses and harness, and for the best plots of turnips, a crop hitherto much neglected, but which, it is expected, will soon be grown more extensively. His Lordship gives prizes also to those cottars and small tenants who have the best managed gardens. The good effects of these encouragements are already very evident.

The arable land rents, according to quality, from L.1 to L.2, 5s. per acre, Scots. The average rent of the mere grazing of a cow is from L.2 to L.3; of a sheep, from 3s. to 4s. The rate of wages is from 1s. 4d. to 2s. to day labourers; and from 2s. to 2s.

6d. to artisans. Hired farm-servants receive from L. 8 to L. 12 in the year; women from L. 4 to L. 6.

The leases are of various duration upon the larger farms, and most of the smaller possessions are held at will from year to year. The whole tenantry on Lord Breadalbane's property hold their lands under regular heads of lease, whether from year to year or for a longer period,—and even those who have their tenants at will, have no hesitation in signing these, knowing that so long as they conduct themselves properly and pay their rents, no other person will get their possessions. A five course rotation is prescribed for farms, and a four course for crofts,—in large possessions a six course rotation is reckoned preferable.

A rule established by Lord Breadalbane on his property, with regard to cottars, has had an excellent effect in protecting them from oppression on the part of the tenants, and might be adopted with great advantage on other large Highland estates. No tenant is allowed either to take in or to remove cottars without his Lordship's permission, and those who are poor hold their houses and gardens rent free. As to those cottars who are in circumstances to pay rent, a certain sum is fixed by direction of the factor on the estate, as the value of the house and garden, beyond which the tenant cannot make any demand. And the cottar is not bound to work for the tenant a single day, if he prefers to pay cash, which leaves him free to find labour, wherever it is most to his advantage. The rent of a house and garden is from 15s. to 30s., according to the value and the ability of the cottar to pay. This is a complete check to that thralldom to which cottars are subjected, when left to the uncontrolled will of a merciless tenant, who would exact from them their labour during the greater part of the year, giving them nothing more than a small piece of potato ground in addition to the house and garden.

*Quarries and Mines.*—The Easdale slate quarries are the only works in the parish of this description. The quality of the rock is known to be very superior, and of great durability. The formation is very similar to that of the Welsh slate works, as described by Professor Sedgwick, so far as regards the distortions of the sedimentary bed; and it is surprising with what accuracy the quarriers can trace the different stones, or layers, through thin distorted beds, after sinking and again reappearing.

These quarries have been wrought for nearly two centuries, and they are still carried on very extensively. Upwards of 200

men are employed in them, producing from four to five millions of slate annually. Under the superintendence of the present manager, James Robertson, Esq. the improvements made in machinery have been taken advantage of in these works. The labour, formerly done by horses and carts, and wheel-barrows, is now performed by steam-engines and railroads.

There are, altogether, four quarries wrought at present, viz. the principal one at Easdale, one at Balvicar in Seil, and two in Luing. One quarry at Easdale is 120 feet below the level of the sea.

The quarriers are paid for the slates at certain rates per thousand. They generally earn from L.30 to L.35 each in the year. The men employed in cleaning out the slate rubbish are paid at the rate of 1s. 3d. to 1s. 8d. per day.

In Luing and Seil, there are appearances of lead ore and zinc, but these have not yet been discovered in such quantity as to encourage the working. There is also a marble quarry near Ardmaddy, which was wrought for some time, but has been discontinued, being found unprofitable.

*Fisheries.*—The herring fishing was at one time very productive on this coast; but of late years, those who follow this occupation have not been very successful. At the south end of Luing, however, considerable quantities are taken with the fly in May and June, and sell at a high price. Last year, Lord Breadalbane gave lines to about forty of the Luing people, for the purpose of encouraging them to fish for cod and ling. It is hoped their endeavours will be successful, as this sort of fishing has been too much neglected in this quarter.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Market-Town.*—The nearest market-town is Oban, which is sixteen miles to the north.

*Villages.*—There are five villages in the parish, the largest of which is Easdale. This village is built on both sides of the Sound of Easdale, and contains a population of about 800 individuals. The houses of the quarriers are only one story high, and slated, and they all have a neat and comfortable appearance. All the steamers which ply between Glasgow and the northern ports pass through the Sound of Easdale. There is thus a frequent and speedy conveyance both to the north and south. The following note was taken in 1825, of all the vessels that entered the Harbour of Easdale in the course of a twelvemonth: 7 brigs, 15

schooners, 5 galliots, 254 sloops, and 245 steamers, including their repeated trips. Here might be seen, some years ago, (1828), the engineer of the work plying his little bark across the sound, propelled by the Archimedes screw.\* This ingenious piece of mechanism was his own invention. In this village there is an inn, several shops, and a post-office. There is a daily post between Easdale and Oban.

The other villages are, Balvicar in Seil, Toberonochy, Millbay, and Colipol in Luing. All these have been built in the vicinity of slate quarries; and, as some of these quarries are not wrought to any extent, being found unproductive, many of the inhabitants of these villages are often ill supplied with employment.

*Roads.*—The parish is well supplied with roads and ferries. The public road from Oban enters the parish from the north-east, at Clachan Bridge. It passes through the centre of Seil and Luing. There are several cross roads, which are kept in good repair.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The church is situated in the centre of the parish, at the south end of the Island of Seil, close to the Ferry of Cuan. It was built about one hundred years ago, and accommodates 600 sitters. No seat rents are exacted. All the people, except the inhabitants of Seil, have to cross a ferry, and some of them more than one in coming to church, which circumstance, in bad weather, prevents their attending regularly. In good weather, the church is always crowded. Taking into account the large population and the obstructions by ferries, there is scarcely a parish in the Highlands or Islands of Scotland, where an additional church is more required. The great body of the people belong to the Established Church. The number of communicants is about 400.

The number of Dissenters in the parish, as reported to the Church Commissioners in 1836, was 200. They belong chiefly to the Covenanters and Independents. There are two persons belonging to the Baptists, and one Roman Catholic family. Dissent in this district has been owing entirely to the abuse of patronage in former times.

The manse is sufficiently large and commodious. It was built in 1827. Before that time, there was no manse in the parish.

\* Mr John Whyte's claims to this invention are stated in a letter addressed by him to the Editor of the Scottish Guardian Newspaper, and inserted in that Journal of date the 26th June 1840.

The former ministers used to occupy a large farm at a low rent, the farm-house serving for a manse, and, by this means, the old glebe, which was of some value, has been lost to the church. The present glebe contains very little arable land, except a piece of reclaimed moss. Its value may be about L.15 a-year. The stipend is the minimum. The sum of L.14, 0s. 8d. is annually received out of the Exchequer.

*Education.*—There are generally eight schools in operation in this parish during the winter months. These were attended in 1840 by 625 scholars. There are also five Sabbath schools, which are all well attended. There are two parochial schoolmasters. The schoolmaster of Kilbrandon, who resides in Seil, has the maximum salary of L.34 a year, with a dwelling-house and garden. The other, who resides in Luing, receives L.25 a year, with a school-house and garden, but without a dwelling-house; but he rents a croft on which a comfortable house was lately built, partly at his own expense. There are two remote localities where the respective proprietors give L.5 a year to enable the people to employ a teacher. In the populous island of Easdale, there is a school supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. The salary is L.15, with L.3 for an assistant during winter. There are three other schools on the teachers' own adventure. The branches taught in these schools are English and Gaelic reading, writing, arithmetic, and book-keeping. The parochial schoolmasters teach Latin, navigation, and mathematics when required. The school fees are, for reading, 2s. per quarter; with writing, 3s.; arithmetic, 4s.; Latin, 5s. The people in general make great efforts to give some education to their children; but many of them, from their poverty, are obliged to withdraw their children from school before they have made any great progress, and send them to earn something for themselves. Owing to the same cause, the school fees are not well paid; so that those teachers who are without an endowment cannot be expected to be very efficient. Lord Breadalbane gives an annual sum for prizes, which are awarded at a public competition of all the schools in the parish, and which tends very much to stimulate and encourage both teachers and scholars; but, without some adequate endowment, there can be no great improvement in many of the schools in this district.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—The number of poor upon the roll

is 108. A few more receive occasional aid. Those on the roll have received, for some years past, from 10s. to L.1, 5s. each in the year, according to their necessities. The church collections, with other dues, amount to about L.20 a year. The Marquis of Breadalbane gives very liberal donations, which enable the kirk-session to give the sums above-mentioned to the poor. His Lordship also allows small pensions to some aged and reduced tenants. The superannuated quarriers are chiefly supported by a fund of their own, arising from a nominal rent of 5s. annually paid for their houses and gardens. The Easdale Slate Company give a monthly allowance of meal to disabled quarriers and their families.

*Savings Bank.*—Under the patronage of Lord Breadalbane, a Savings bank was established at Easdale, two years ago; but it is now merged in the National Security Savings' Bank at Oban. It is hoped, when its advantages are better understood, that the class of people for whose benefit it has been established, will avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded them of making some provision for the time of sickness and old age.

*Fuel.*—The quarriers at Easdale are all supplied with coals from Glasgow at the rate of 19s. per ton. The farmers generally use peats, which were, at one time, very plentiful in these islands, and easily secured; but are now becoming rather scarce, particularly in the island of Seil.

July 1843.