

PARISH OF BOTHKENNAR. PRESBYTERY OF STIRLING, SYNOD OF PERTH AND STIRLING. THE REV. JOHN CAW, MINISTER.

I - TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY

Name - The word Bothkennar is of Celtic origin, and signifies the small arable fen or marsh, - a name highly descriptive of the situation of the parish, which is very small, all arable, and appears at first to have been marshy, from having been made up from the alluvial deposits of the Frith of Forth.

Extent, &c - It is bounded on the north, by the parish of Airth; on the east, by the Frith of Forth; on the south, by the river Carron; and on the west, by the parish of Larbert. It consists of 1248 acres, and forms nearly a square with the church in the centre. It is situated in the Carse of Falkirk, and forms by far the richest patch in that district, and is, perhaps, not equalled by any Carse land in Scotland.

Topographical Appearances - The surface of the parish is a dead flat, no one part of it being six feet higher than another; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that there is not a stone to be found in the whole parish of the size of a pepper-corn, unless brought from other places by manure, &c

Geology - There are no useful minerals in the parish, with the exception of coal of the best quality, which is wrought to a great extent by the Carron Company, and for which they pay the landed proprietors L. 1000 a-year.

Soil - It consists of the richest loam, and, as a proof that the parish has been, at one time, all under water, beds of shells and other marine productions are found in almost every part of it, from two to twelve feet under the surface.

II - CIVIL HISTORY

Land-owners - There are eighteen landed proprietors, all of them non-resident, except three. The Earl of Zetland holds considerably more than one-third of the parish; and the family has been always distinguished as liberal and indulgent to their tenantry. During the French revolutionary war, they let their lands at L.5, 5s per acre, but never exacted more than L.4, and every year gave the tenants a full discharge. The other principal proprietors are, Henry Stanton, Esq. of Gairdoch; Colonel Dundas of Carron Hall; and John Walker Ogilvie, Esq. of Orchardhead. The remainder of the parish is held by others, to the extent of from two to sixty acres each.

III – POPULATION

About twenty years ago, the population of the parish did not amount to quite 500; but since the establishment of the colliery by the Carron Company, it has increased as follows:-

In 1811	821
1821	895
1831	905

IV – INDUSTRY

Agriculture - In no part of Scotland is agriculture better understood, or pursued with more eagerness and success than in this small parish. The soil is so favourable for the production of grain, that there

is not in it one acre of natural grass. Tile-draining has, for several years past, been carried on to such an extent, that almost every acre of it has been subjected to this most important improvement, so important that the farmers assert, that they are paid all their outlay by the additional produce of the two first years. The mode of cropping is that of a six years rotation; 1. naked fallow; 2. wheat; 3. beans; 4. barley; 5. grass; 6. oats. Perhaps the ingenuity of man cannot discover a more important rotation for carse land than this, as a green crop intervenes between every two white ones.

Rent of Land - For several years past, the lands have paid principally a grain rent of from eleven to twelve bushels of wheat per Scotch acre, with, in very few instances, a maximum and minimum of from L.1, 5s. to L.1, 15s. per boll of four bushels, regulated by the fiars of the county.

Rate of Wages - Farm servants are engaged by the half-year, at from L.9 to L.11. There are no day-labourers in the parish.

Stock - There is much attention paid to the rearing of horses for farm purposes, which are of a superior description. No greater number of cows are kept, than is necessary for supplying the family with dairy produce.

Produce - Wheat and beans are the most productive crops. The average of wheat may be stated at six quarters per acre, and in some favourable seasons has amounted even to nine. The time of sowing is always about the month of September. The average of beans is from four to six quarters an acre. Barley and oats much the same as in the neighbouring districts. The hay raised in the parish is of a very superior quality, and brings readily 3d. per stone, in the Edinburgh market, more than dryfield hay. The average produce may be stated at 300 stone of 22 pounds per stone an acre. There are fourteen orchards in the parish; and the first of them appear to have been planted by the monks of Cambuskenneth, who understood gardening better than any other part of the community at the period in which they lived. The soil is particularly adapted to pear trees, which bear more abundant crops than in any part of Great Britain. The golden-nap, which appears to be indigenous, grows with all the luxuriance of a forest tree, and never cankers. Its value is so great, that single trees have, in some particular years, brought from L. 10, 10s. to L.12, 12s.; and a single acre has in some years given L.100.

V - PAROCHIAL ECONOMY

Villages - There is no village in the parish, except a small portion of Carron Shore, the greater part of which is in the parish of Larbert.

Means Communication - The roads are, in general, kept in good repair by the Statute Labour; and there is easy access to every part of the country.

Ecclesiastical State - There have been only five Presbyterian ministers in this parish since Episcopacy was abolished, viz. Mr Lindsay, settled here in 1721; Mr Penman, in 1744; Mr Nimmo, in 1765; Mr Dickson, in 1783; and the present incumbent, in 1796. There is a circumstance worthy of notice, that, while in every other parish in Scotland there was a great aversion to Episcopacy, this parish was so much attached to it, that they kept their minister, Mr Skinner, a most worthy man, from 1688 till 1721; and had he not then resigned his situation, it is probable he would have died among them in the full exercise of his ministerial functions. While the law of patronage was established in every other part of Scotland, the inhabitants of Bothkennar have enjoyed the invaluable privilege, from the days of the Revolution to the present time, of choosing their own ministers, through the indulgence, in the first instance, of the Crown, and, latterly, the Grahams of Airth, into whose hands it came. The consequence of this indulgence is, that the people are much attached to the Established Church, and there are not above six or seven families of Dissenters in the parish, all of whom, except one, have come from other parishes. It is to be regretted that the family of Airth, a very few years ago, sold the patronage for L. 2420. It is at present again in the market, but not yet sold. A new church was built in

1789, and, though not distinguished for external ornaments, it is one of the most comfortable in the neighbourhood, and more than sufficient for the accommodation of the parish. A new manse was built in 1816, at an expense of L.1575, and is, to the honour of the heritors, the best in the county. The stipend is 17 chalders of victual; and the teinds are exhausted. The glebe consists of four Scotch acres of the best land. The Earl of Zetland has reclaimed from the Frith of Forth, by embankments, about 200 acres, which have not as yet been subjected to the payment of any part of the minister's stipend. There are still 800 acres which are left dry by the tides twice every twenty-four hours, and which will certainly, at no distant period, be recovered from the sea.

Education - There is no other school than the parochial, the salary of which is the maximum. The heritors, with their accustomed liberality, built a school and schoolmaster's house in 1830, at an expense of L. 600, and they have allotted to the schoolmaster the fourth of a Scotch acre for garden ground. The number of scholars is, at an average, about 60. The branches taught are, English grammar, arithmetic, writing, geography, mathematics, Latin, and Greek.

Poor - From the parish being almost altogether rural, the poor roll seldom contains more than six, who receive a weekly allowance of from 6d. to 1s., with an occasional supply of coals and clothing during the winter season. The collections at the church door amount to about L. 15 annually. The late John Ogilvie, Esq. of Gairdoch, bequeathed, about twenty years ago, to the native poor of the parish, L. 500, which is lodged in the public funds, and the interest of which is to be laid out in the purchase of meal, when the price exceeds the average of the last seven years by one-fourth part, according to the fiars of the county. James Watt, Esq. a native of the parish, and a merchant in London, bequeathed also L. 100 to the native poor, which is under the management of the heritors and kirk-session.

Fairs - There are no fairs in the parish. The market-town is Falkirk, to which the produce is principally carried.

Inns - There are six public-houses, five of which are in the village of Carron Shore.

Fuel -The inhabitants enjoy an abundant supply of the best coal, at the rate of 7s. per ton.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

The inhabitants of Bothkennar are distinguished for their sober and industrious habits, and live in the most friendly terms with each other. They are most attentive to the public ordinances of the Gospel; and their moral conduct has been such, that there is not an instance upon record of any individual having been arraigned or punished for any offence against the laws of his country. Since the opening of the colliery in this district, a large proportion of the parish, as already stated, are employed in that establishment, whose habits and manners, it is much to be regretted, are not such as become the Gospel. Their wages are high, and the greater part is spent on the Saturday and Sabbath in public-houses, which contributes exceedingly to make them inattentive to the ordinances of religion. Very few of them at any time enter the house of God.

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