

The New Statistical Account of Scotland

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Parish of Kirkmichael

Presbytery of Dunkeld, Synod of Perth and Stirling

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I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY

Boundaries.—This parish is bounded by those of Logierait and Moulin on the west; Braemar and Crathy on the north; Glenisla and Alyth on the east; and Blairgowrie, Kinloch, Cluny and Caputh on the south. It comprehends the greater part of Strathardle, the whole of Glenshee, and a district lying at the lower extremity of that glen, on the west side of of the river called Black Water. Strathardle is about 10 miles long, and from 1 to 2 miles broad, and includes part of the parishes of Moulin, Kirkmichael, Blairgowrie, Bendochy, and Kinloch. Glenshee is about 7 miles long, and less than a mile broad. At the head of this glen are two smaller ones, narrow, and about 3 miles long. The district bordering on the Black Water is of a form nearly circular, measuring somewhat more than 2 miles in diameter. Though this parish is pretty extensive, there is no part of it detached. Its figure does not vary much from a parallelogram, being from 17 miles long from north to south, and from 6 to 7 miles broad.

According to tradition, Strathardle was anciently called in Gaelic *Strath na muice brice*, *the strath of the spotted wild sow*; which name it is said to have retained till the time of the Danish invasions, when, in a battle fought between the Danes and the Caledonians, at the head of the country, a chief, named Ardfhuil, *high noble blood*, was killed, whose grave is shown at this day. From him the country got the name of *Srath Ard-fhuil*, *Strathardle*.

Hills, Lochs, &c.—A hill at the end of Glenshee, called *Beinn Ghulbhuinn*, is distinguished by having been the scene of a hunting which proved fatal to Diarmid, one of the Fingalian heroes. Here are shown the den of the wild boar that was hunted, a spring called *Tobar nam Fiann*, the *fountain of the Fingalians*; a small lake, called *Loch an Tuirc*, *the boar's loch*; also Diarmid's grave, where he was buried by his comrades. The highest hill in the country is *Mount Blair*, which divides this parish from Glenisla. The only lochs of note are, *Loch Sheshernich* and *Loch nan ean*, situated pretty high among the hills. These abound in excellent trout. There are one or two medicinal springs, which are believed to be of antiscorbutic quality.

Climate, Soil, Crop.—The country being more elevated than Athole on the one hand, and Marr on the other, and being in general open and unsheltered, the climate is colder than in either of these districts, and more exposed to the severity of a cold or stormy season.

The soil on the banks of the Ardle is thin and dry, having a sandy bottom, and yields in general light crops. In the higher grounds it is wet and spongy, unfriendly to vegetation, except in dry warm seasons, when it yields a pretty good crop. The same description applies to the soil of Glenshee, and of the Black-water district.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY

Antiquities and Curiosities.—In the middle of a pretty extensive and elevated heathy moor, stands a large heap of stones or cairn, 90 yards in circumference, and about 25 feet in height, which are described particularly in the old Account. There can be little doubt that all these are relics of Druidism.

About a mile north-east from the above mentioned great cairn, on a flat-topped eminence,

surrounded at some distance with rocky hills of considerable height, and steep ascent, stands one of those rocking-stones which the Druids are said to have employed as a kind of ordeal for detecting guilt in doubtful cases. This stone is placed on the plain surface of a rock level with the ground. Its shape is quadrangular, approaching to the figure of a rhombus, of which the greater diagonal is 7 feet, and the lesser 5 feet. Its mean thickness is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Its solid contents are therefore about 51,075 cubical feet.

On the north side of the stone, at the distance of 60 yards, on a small eminence, are two concentric circles, similar to that already described, and a single circle adjoining to them on the east side. Beyond this, at thirty-seven yards distance, on another small eminence, is another pair of concentric circles, with a single one adjoining to them on the east side. Beyond these, at forty-five yards distance, is a third pair of concentric circles, with their adjacent circle on the east side. Farther on to the north-east, at a distance of 90 yards, is a single circle, and beside it, on the west side, two rectangular enclosures of 37 feet by 12; also a cairn 23 or 24 yards in circumference, and about 12 feet high in the centre. Several small cairns are scattered in the neighbourhood. One hundred and twenty yards west from the rocking-stone is a pair of concentric circles, with a small single circle beside them of 7 feet in diameter. All the pairs of concentric circles are of the same dimensions, the inner one being about 32 feet, and the outer about 45 or 46 feet in diameter; and all of them have a breach or doorway four or five feet wide on the south side. The single circles are, in general, from 32 to 36 feet in diameter, and have no breach. The vestiges of all these structures are perfectly distinct, and many of the stones still retain the erect posture in which all of them had probably been placed at first. Cairns and circles similar to those described are to be seen on other hills of this parish, particularly between Strathardle and Glenderby. There are likewise several tall, erect stones, called here in Gaelic, Crom-leaca, or Clach-shleuch-da, *stones of worship*.—(Old Account).

Parochial Registers.—These begin in the year 1650, and contain records of the marriages and births, and, at times, of deaths. They have not been regularly kept till of late years.

Land-owners.—These are, Mrs Farquharson of Invercauld, valued rent, L.355. 17s. 4d.; Miss Rutherford of Ashintully, L.320. 12s.; Patrick Small Keir, Esq. of Kinmonth, L.336. 14s. 11d.

Mansion Houses.—These are, Ashintully, the residence of Miss Rutherford; and Woodhill, the residence of Adam Ferguson, Esq.

III.—POPULATION

Amount in 1801	...	...	1563
1811	...	...	1460
1821	...	...	1551
1831	...	...	1568
1841	...	...	1411

IV.—INDUSTRY

Agriculture.—

Cultivated or occasionally under cultivation,	...	4419 Imperial acres
Never cultivated	...	44616
That might be cultivated with profit,	...	901
In undivided common,	...	1460
Under wood,	...	683

Rent.—About L.1. 2s. per imperial acre. Real rental of parish L.6450. 12s. 6d.

About 400 acres of waste land have, of late years, been brought into cultivation. Lime, of which there is abundance in the parish, is applied with great success as a stimulant. The

modern system of husbandry in the low country has been introduced in all its departments. most of the farmers have neat and comfortable houses, instead of the mean and unseemly hovels which they formerly occupied. These improvements have been greatly facilitated and accelerated by the formation of good roads, and the erection of bridges. One of the most important of these, a handsome bridge of two arches, was built during last summer across the river Ardle at Kirkmichael, the expense of which, amounting to upwards of L.500, was raised by voluntary subscription among the public-spirited proprietors and inhabitants of the district.

Manufactures.—There is one distillery on the property of Patrick Small Keir, Esq., conducted by Mr Alexander Fraser, Pitcarnuck.

Fishings.—There are none except trout-fishing in the streams and lochs. Several of the proprietors have a grant of the right of salmon-fishing in their charters, thereby clearly demonstrating that valuable fish at one time frequented the rivers of Ardle and Blackwater, which unite a little below the Bridge of Cally and form the Ericht; but in consequence of a natural obstruction in the river last named near Blairgowrie, thirteen miles from Kirkmichael, advantage was taken of the circumstances, perhaps 150 years ago, to raise an artificial barrier, which effectually intercepts the progress of the salmon upwards.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY

Ecclesiastical State.—269 families belong to the established Church; 7 families are dissenters or Seceders; and there is one Roman Catholic family. Stipend, L.150. Glebe, in extent 5 acres arable, and 1½ pasture.

The manse, is at present in tolerably good condition, and was built in the year 1818.

Education.—There are two parochial schools; one in the village of Kirkmichael, and the other in Glenshee. As the valleys of Strathardle and Glenshee, which run nearly parallel, compose the parish, and the parochial schools are situated at the west or upper end, an additional school is required near the eastern extremity in Strathardle. The first has about L.15, the second about L.10 yearly of fees. The first has L.15, the second L.2 a-year from other sources.

Poor.—The number on the roll is about 12, exclusive of the two lunatics, whose maintenance requires about L.30 annually. They receive about 2s. per week. About L.88 annually is the amount contributed for their relief; whereof about L.42 is from church collections, and L.4 for mortcloth and hearse. The heritors have hitherto voluntarily contributed what is required in addition to the ordinary funds. There is a sum of L.8. 8s., being the interest of a capital sum of L.220, bequeathed by Messrs M'Dougall, Bruce, and Lyons; also L.200, bequeathed by the late Patrick Dow to the poor not on the pauper roll, to be under the management of the kirk-session. There are also two mortifications; one yielding L.17 a-year, bequeathed by a Mr Stewart, for the education of boys of the name of Stewart at the schools of Kirkmichael, Glenshee, and Drumfork; and another, yielding about L.20 a-year, mortified by the late Patrick Dow, Esq., for the establishment of bursaries in favour of young men educated at the parish school of Kirkmichael, failing which, at the adjoining parish school of Moulin. The University of St. Andrews is directed to be preferred.

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