

STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF BLACKFORD PARISH ( May. 1837 ).

Presbytery of Auchterarder, Synod of Perth and Stirling. .

By the Rev. John Clark, Minister.

1. Topography and Natural History.

Name. If the name be not altogether English, it may perhaps be traced to the Gothic word fort, signifying not only a strait or firth, but also a road or passage. Some probability is given to this derivation by the circumstances of the parish being situated between the great vales of Strathearn and Strathallan and consequently forming the line of communication between them.

Situation, extent etc. It lies midway between Perth and Stirling and is intersected by the great road between them. Its length from North to South is about 10 miles. It is bounded on the South by the water of Devon, and the river of Earn on the North. Its breadth is about 5 miles: it is bounded by the parishes of Auchterarder and Trinity Gask on the East and by those of Muthil and Dunblane on the West.

SOIL. In such extent of surface the soil is necessarily varied. The south part of the parish is traversed by the Ochil Hills and affords good pasture for sheep. The middle is formed by the extensive Moor of Tullibardine, which is covered with young plantations. The northern part consists of rich and wellcultivated lands.

CLIMATE. The climate corresponds with the elevation of the land above the level of the sea. The Prevailing winds are those from the west. Rains in summer and snow showers in winter, are more frequent than in the lower surrounding districts. The difference, however, is not so great as to cause any peculiarity in the productions of the earth: or in the kinds of animals to be found: or in the constitution and health of the inhabitants.

RIVERS. Beside the rivers Devon and Earn, at the south and North extremities of the parish, there are three others of inferior size: the Madrany (? Machany) which rises in the hilly part of the parish of Muthill, and falls into the Earn at Kinkell, the Ruthven and Allan which both take their rise in Gleneagles. The first is but a small stream, and runs eastward through the parish of Auchterarder till it falls into the Earn: for three miles of its course it runs through Kinwardine Glen, a place of great natural beauty: its high banks being broken with small cascades and all covered with fine copsewood of oak, hazel and birch. The Allan too is here but a small stream. It runs to the west, through the adjoining parish of Dunblane and falls into the Forth below Stirling Bridge.

## 2. CIVIL HISTORY.

Landowners. The landed property in the parish principally belongs to James Moray Esq. of Abercairny; and to Lords Strathallan and Camperdown. What does not belong to them is the property of three other individuals.

Parochial Registers. The parish records extend back to 1738, and have been regularly kept since that period.

Antiquities. There are not many vestiges of antiquity to be found here. From the immediate vicinity, however, of the celebrated Roman Camp at Ardoch, there are several traces of military works and adventures. There are three places where entrenchments are still so evident as to leave no doubt of their having been used as outposts to the Ardoch Station; and the situation of all the three is well chosen for local defence, for mutual communication, and for extensive survey. In different places, there are also many tumuli or cairns, showing the frequency of conflict between the natives and their Roman invaders. In some places the strife must have been evidently great: as the cairns stand close to one another, and are ranged in a semicircular form, showing how orderly the combatants stood, how closely they fought, and how closely they fell. Beside these there are two other remains of ancient warfare. These are the ruins of Kincardine and Ogilvy Castles. Their situation indicates that these castles had been reared for defence, and great strength of masonry was employed in their structure.

There are also a few vestiges of antiquity of another description. These are the ruins of two chapels, the one at Gleneagles, and the other at Tullibardine. The date of the one is not ascertained, the other was built in the 15th century. At Tullibardine also may be seen a few thorn trees that may be viewed with a kind of antiquarian interest. They are referred to in Pittscottie's History: "James the Fourth was fond of shipbuilding, and built the Michael, the largest ship ever seen before. she was 240 feet long, 36 feet within the sides, which were 10 feet thick: she was a year in building and took up all the oak wood of Fife, except Falkland: she had 300 mariners and carried altogether 1000 men. Her length and breadth is planted in hawthorn at Tullibardine by a wright that helped to make her." Only three of these trees now survive the ravages of time and the encroachments of the plough, so that, like every other human memorial, they have long ceased to answer the purpose the planter intended.

## 3. POPULATION.

In the year 1811 the population amounted to 1666. IN 1821 it amounted to 1892 and in 1831 to about the same number. The number of females exceeds that of males by two. 674 of the inhabitants reside in the village, where they are employed as weavers, day-labourers, and mechanics. The number of families in parish is 394; chiefly employed in agriculture, 91, in trade, manufacture or handicraft 140.



#### 4. INDUSTRY.

Wages. According to times and circumstances the wages vary from 1/- to 2/- a day: 1/6 may be taken as a fair average. Those inhabitants not resident in the village are scattered over a wide extent of country and employed chiefly in agricultural pursuits. Within the last 15 years the industry and skill of the people, especially in agriculture, have rapidly improved. Much waste land has been cultivated, and what was formerly under cultivation is now managed in a more skillful manner. Manufactures have improved correspondingly in the same period, especially a manufactory of coarse ~~with~~ woollen cloths, which contains a good deal of machinery, and gives employment to 70 or 80 individuals.

#### 5. PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Roads, etc. There are two markets held here yearly but those held at the neighbouring town of Auchterarder render them of little importance. The roads, both public and private, are good and intercourse between different places is easily maintained. The different turnpike roads extend about 20 miles.

Ecclesiastical State. The parish is within the Auchterarder Presbytery. The church is so situated as to accommodate the more populous part of the parish, but inconveniently for the more distant quarters. It was built in the year 1738 and was lately repaired. It contains seating for 500 persons, who pay no seat rent whatever. There is no other place of worship of any description in the parish. The manse was built about 80 years ago and was repaired within the last 15 years. The glebe consists of 24 acres of very light gravelly soil: and the stipend, as lately modified, consists of 12 chalders of meal, 2 chalders of barley and £30 in money.

School. The schoolmaster has the highest legal salary, and good accommodation both in dwellinghouse and schoolhouse. The usual branches of education are taught, and taught so cheap as to render education attainable by all. The school fees vary from 2/- to 4/- a quarter, according to the branches taught. There are 3 other schools in different parts of the parish, supported by those who attend.

Poor and Poor's Fund. The number of poor on the public funds seldom exceeds 10 or 12. To support these and other indigent & industrious persons who require occasional assistance, a sum varying from £80 to £100 is annually distributed. This money is collected at the Church door, and by contributions from non-resident heritors. There is certainly less reluctance to become pensioners on this charitable fund, than there was shewn in former times, and there is increasing indisposition on the part of natural relations to assist one another.

## 6. Miscellaneous Observations.

There have been many and great improvements in the parish within the last twenty years. The chief of these the formation of roads, which opened new channels for intercourse, and supplied new means for improvement. With improvement of the soil the circumstances of the people have improved. They are more industrious more temperate, more alive to the comforts and conveniences of life, and more anxious to employ means by which these may be procured.

Blackford. May 1837

The soil is varied in a parish of this extent. The Southern part is occupied by a ridge of the Ochil Hills, on which are some good sheep farms. Apart from this hill ground, the rest of the parish is, on the whole, quite good arable land, which grows most crops common to Scotland. Potatoes grow well here. The ground to the north of the River Allan (which rises about a mile E. of the village) known as the Panholes district, is composed largely of light sandy or gravelly soil, and crops suffer there in a dry season. The northern part, mostly in the Strathallan Estate, consists of rich well-cultivated land, with the exception of the portion known as Tullibardine Muir.

The beautiful Glen to the E.-S. leading through the Ochils to Glendevon is Gleneagles, from which the well-known Hotel and Golf Courses take their name.

There are quite a number of small streams in the parish. The Danny and Ogilvy rise in the Ochils and join the Allan a little to the west of the village. The Ruthven rises in Gleneagles and flows eastward at the foot of the Glen towards the Burn. The Machany rises in