

AUCHTERMUCHTY PARISH

CIVIL HISTORY. Parochial Registers.- The oldest record of this parish is a register containing the minutes of kirk-session, commencing in the year 1650, and also a separate register of births and marriages from the same period. How far the latter contains a complete record of all the births and marriages which took place within the parish at this period, it is impossible to say; but it is probable that these were much more accurately recorded at this early period, than they are now, when the parish was less a prey to religious divisions and animosities. No particular register appears to have been kept of the deaths at the time, and the number is only to be ascertained from the notices given of the funds arising from the use of the mortcloth. There is, however, a blank in the records of this parish not easily accounted for, from 1658 and 1667, till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when they appear again to have been kept with considerable regularity. At present the records of this parish, and, perhaps, of most parishes in Scotland, are far from being complete. The register of marriages, amount of collections at the church doors, and minutes of the kirk-session, are kept with great accuracy ; but the record of births and deaths is most deficient. Of the former 25, and of the latter only 8 were recorded for the year 1840, while 50 deaths, and from 70 to 80 births are known to have taken place in the parish within that period. This strange anomaly may be accounted for thus : Over the registration of the former, the kirk-session have, a complete control, over the latter, as the law now stands, they have little or none; and, consequently, by far the most important records are incomplete. Few or none of the Dissenters in the parish register their children's names, and in a parish where, at least, between thirty and forty children must be born of Dissenting parents yearly, there are not as many of them recorded in the parochial registers for the last twenty years. With regard to the register of deaths, it may be observed that, for many years, a very faithful record was kept, while the kirk-session's mortcloth was used, but since it has become fashionable to use those of private societies, or, what is now much more common, none at all, no authentic record of the mortality which takes place within the parish is kept.

POPULATION.

in 1811	2403
in 1821	2754
in 1831	3225
in 1841	3352

In 1841, the town and burgh of Auchtermuchty contained a population of 2550 ; the village of Dunshelt, which lies about a mile to the South-east on the road to Falkland and the New Inn, 601 ; and the landward part of the parish, 293.

MANUFACTURES.-In the year 1817 a blight came over the manufacturing interest in this parish, which it has never recovered. Since that time, trade, instead of being carried on by resident manufacturers, has been transacted chiefly through the medium of agents who give out yarns to the weavers to work from manufacturers at Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen etc. The

manufactures consist of cotton, and linen goods, or cheeks, and drills, as they are called, and green linens. It is generally supposed that there are about 700 weavers in the parish, of which one-third are females, whose earnings average about 5s. 6d. per week.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.-The number of families in the parish is nearly 750, of which Dissenters form, as near as can be ascertained, the one-half. The manse was built in 1793, and is a substantial fabric. An addition was made to it about seven years ago, and it is now one of the best and most comfortable manses in the presbytery. The church was built in 1780, but in 1808 the patron made an addition at his own individual expense (upwards of L.500) by which nearly 400 additional sittings were added. The church now accommodates 900 sitters. It is well attended ; the number of communicants is nearly 600. There are three meeting-houses in the parish besides, viz. two in connection with the United Secession Church, and one belonging to the Relief. They may accommodate 1200 sitters, and are all well attended.

EDUCATION-There are six schools in the parish, of which five are in the town of Auchtermuchty and one at Dunshelt. Three of them, besides the parochial school, are partially endowed by public subscription or private munificence. The parochial schoolmaster's salary is the maximum; the school fees on an average do not exceed L.20 per annum, and his other emoluments as session-clerk and kirk treasurer are about L.12.

POOR AND PAROCHIAL FUNDS.-The number of persons at present upon the poor's roll is 62, exclusive of occasional poor as also those on the list of the female society. The expenditure for the year ending at the 1st of April 1841 was L. 293, 15s. 6d. The average aid given to each is about 6s. per month, but in some cases much more aid few or none have below 4s. per month. In most cases, a house rent of L. 1, 5s. is also allowed, and in few parishes are the wants of the poor better attended to than here. The contributions for the support of the poor in this parish have hitherto been made up of a voluntary assessment upon the landward heritors, and the collections at the church doors, which amount to about L. 30 yearly ; but since the burden of supporting the poor has become so heavy of late years upon the landed heritors, several of whom have refused to pay their share of the assessment, a legal assessment was imposed in September last upon all heritable property in the parish.

January 1843 (Rev Robert John Johnstone)