

STRATHMIGLO PARISH

CIVIL HISTORY

At a remote period, the lands of Strathmiglo appear to have belonged to the Crown, whence they passed into the hands of the Scotts of Balwearie, an ancient and powerful family. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, a royal charter was granted, constituting these lands into a barony, with power to form the feuars into a burgh of barony, and vesting the nomination of its magistrates in the superior. The superiority afterwards was obtained by the family of Balfour of Burleigh, noted in Scottish history, whose arms are carved on the front of the town-house. After the Rebellion in 1745 was quelled, hereditary jurisdictions, the barbaric remnant of feudalism, were annulled; and Strathmiglo was, in consequence, deprived of the usual baronial privileges. The feuars, however, still retain the management of some property pertaining to the original burgh, and use it in a very creditable and beneficial manner.

The ecclesiastical history of this parish is not destitute of interest. The church was originally collegiate, and connected with the bishopric of Dunkeld. When the Papal hierarchy was assailed and overturned, this, in common with many other districts in Fife, took a lively interest in the Reformed religion, and steadily adhered to the Presbyterian worship and government through its chequered and eventful history. A sequestered spot called Glenvale, is still pointed out as a place of resort in troubled times. In point of romantic scenery, it may bear comparison with the wild recess in Cartland Crags, where the Covenanters of the west met for the same purpose. When the secession took place early in last century, we find a notarial protest taken by the kirk-session of this parish against the Seceders ordaining elders here, charging them with " intrusion," and threatening prosecution. This singular paper may be found (p. 194) in Swan's Views and History of Fife. The following is a list of the ministers of this parish from an early period :-

1. Mr George Leslie, 1560; admitted vicar of Auchtermuchty, 1575.
2. Mr William Braidfut, 1560.
3. Mr John Balfour, reader, with L.20 Scots of stipend.
4. Mr Alexander Muir, minister, 1574, with L.106, 13s. 4d. Scots of stipend.
5. Robert Scott, reader.
6. Mr James Balcanquel, 1589.
7. John Moncrieff, 1633.
8. John Murray, conformed to Presbytery in 1638.

9. John Rigg, admitted 1655, and afterwards conformed to Episcopacy.
10. David Barclay, outed in 1689.
11. Alexander Auchmoutie, 1690.
12. Thomas Black, 1695.
13. Mr George Gillespie, 1699, grandson of the famous George Gillespie, member of the Westminster Assembly.
14. George Lyon, 1754, grandson of the above Mr Gillespie.
15. Mr John Martin.
16. George Bennet.
17. George Middleton, 1836.

Antiquities.- Within a recent period, the west portion of this parish is said to have contained numerous cairns, imagined to be relics of Druidical superstition. On and around the West Lomond, may be found abundance of rocky fragments of fantastic shape and position; but whether so moulded and piled by nature or by the " Druid hoary," we pretend not to determine. Within the memory of the present generation, there also existed several barrows and tumuli, with human bones, ashes, and warlike instruments. The consequence has been, that Strathmiglo has now lodged its claim among the parishes which compete for the honour of containing the site of the celebrated battle of Mons Grampius, described by Tacitus, in which the warlike but undisciplined Caledonians under Galgacus were defeated by the legions of Agricola.

POPULATION.

The following is a table of the population, as taken at different intervals :

In 1755, it amounted to	1095
1690	980
1801	1629
1811	1697
1821	1842

1831	1940
1841	2187

Analysis of census 1841. Total population, --2187

Males, --1009, Females, --1178, Families, total number of, --517 Number of persons under 15 years,--776

betwixt 15 and 30 years, 604

Number of persons betwixt 30 and 50, -483 , 50 and 70, -263 , upwards of 70, -61

The lands of this parish are divided among twenty-three proprietors, of whom eighteen possess property of the yearly value of L.50 and upwards. Eight of the heritors are non-resident. Six individuals in the parish are fatuous; one is blind from the effects of an accident; and one is deaf and dumb. There is no peculiarity in the general customs or character of the people deserving special notice.

Manufactures.- The staple employment of the great body of parishioners of both sexes in the village is the manufacture of linens. These are wrought up in great variety, such as diapers, damask, dowlas, linen checks, and table-linens. In this department of industry, from 500 to 600 persons are engaged. Formerly, the hand-loom weavers were employed by the extensive manufacturers of Dunfermline, Dundee. and Kirkcaldy, by means or intermediate agents; but of late, almost the whole trade has been carried on by resident manufacturers, transacting business on their own account. There are also in the parish a bleach field and a spinning-mill, both of which are upon a small scale. Those employed in weaving are of course paid by the piece, and work from ten to fourteen hours per day. From the fluctuations in trade, the rate of remuneration is necessarily very variable. A few years ago, it was double and even treble its present amount. But although this, in common with other manufacturing districts, has severely felt the late depression of trade, very few have here been destitute of employment for any great length of time; and, small as the wages have been, and still are, it has not been found necessary, as in many other localities under similar circumstances, to have recourse to extraordinary measures, to meet the pressing wants of the population.

PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market Town.- There is no market in this parish; but in the adjacent towns of Auchtermuchty, Milnathort, Newburgh, and Cupar, at distances varying from two to eleven miles, regular weekly markets are held. Auchtermuchty is the nearest. In Newburgh, at the distance of eight miles, a ready market is afforded for potatoes, cattle, swine, &c., which are shipped thence for the London market. .The population in the village of Strath- miglo and its outskirts amounts to nearly 1400. The only other village is Edenshead or Gateside.

Means of Communication.- These are in general good. The parish may contain eight miles of turnpike, and five of statute labour roads, all kept in excellent order. Here, as throughout the country at large, improvement is in nothing so evident as in the highways. The post-office here is an appendage to that of Kinross. No public carriages pass at present through Strathmiglo.

Ecclesiastical State.- The parish church is situated near the east extremity of the parish; but, being in the centre of the village, containing the mass of the population, no fault can be found with its site. It was built about fifty-eight years ago, and is in tolerable repair; but it is a paltry structure, and ill seated within. It is also rather small, containing accommodation for 750 persons. There are no free sittings, the whole area being divided among the heritors. The price charged for a sitting, however, is small, being from 1s. to 2s. 6d. annually. The manse is sixty years old, and from its situation was rather damp and confined. About five years ago, It underwent a thorough repair, and was much enlarged, and made altogether commodious and comfortable. There is another place of worship in Strathmiglo, connected with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, stated to have a congregation of about 200 from this and other parishes. The number of communicants may be 140, of whom 90 belong to Strathmiglo. At Edenshead, there is another place of worship, belonging to the United Associate Synod, the congregation of which has been computed at 300, of whom 200 may be communicants. Divine service is well attended at all these places of worship. Of the entire parishioners, upwards of 1400 may be in connection with the Established Church, and the average number of communicants is 430. A Tract Society is in operation, which distributes monthly a religious tract gratuitously to every family in the parish. It is supported by occasional collections and contributions.

Education.- There are five seminaries, viz. the parochial school, a female school, built by Mr Skene of Pitlour, who allows a small salary to the teacher, and three subscription schools. These are all conveniently situated. The parochial school was greatly enlarged by the heritors a few years ago, and may comfortably contain 150 pupils. A convenient play-ground was recently purchased by subscription. The teacher's dwelling is also commodious. He has the maximum salary.

Poor and Parochial Funds.- The number of poor on the regular roll is 18 at present, who receive altogether L.1, 12s. per week, the lowest allowance being 1s. and the highest 4s. There are also two lunatics maintained in Perth Asylum, and one blind person partly supported in the Asylum for the Blind. The expense of the three amounts to about L.50 per annum. For the relief of the poor, upwards of L.20 is annually obtained from the stated weekly offerings at the church doors. There is land of the yearly value of L.19 devoted to the same object, and a sum of money yielding L.10 of interest. The parochial minister has also the management of a small property worth L.9 annually, for behoof of indigent persons in the parish. The balance is made up by

occasional voluntary assessments among the heritors. It may be proper to state that a Friendly Society exists here. It was formed in 1806, and at present numbers 213 members. The annual payment is 5s. During illness, a member of it becomes entitled to 3s. 6d. per week for the first nine months, after which the allowance is reduced to 2s. When any member is superannuated, he has a permanent weekly allowance of 1s. It is proper to state, that, while in this as in every district containing a considerable population, there are some individuals hackneyed in mendicity, there is in this parish a prevailing disposition among the poor to refrain from seeking parochial relief. An honourable, though laborious independence, is in general preferred to the resources of charity.

February 1843 (Rev. George Middleton)