

The Rev Mr Hugh Gordon, Parish of Anwoth.

...The parish is about 6½ miles long, from N.E. to S.W. and 3½ broad. The sea-shore is generally flat and rocky, though in one place it is bold and elevated. It contains no harbours. The land which lies upon the sea-shore, and near the mouth of the river is in general flat; the soil is dry and fertile, lying for the most part on a bed of sand or gravel. This part produces excellent crops of grain and grass; but the soil being thin, it is much injured by dry seasons. Farther up the river, towards the north, the surface becomes more uneven, broken, and barren, and hills, which are not very elevated, every where appear. The lesser part here is arable, excepting a small strip on the banks of the river. For about 6 miles along the banks of the river, and at some distance from it, there is a considerable quantity of natural and planted wood, which being intermixed with gentlemen's seats and cultivated fields, having the river on one side, and the hills on the other, rising at proper distances, forms one of the most beautiful prospects that is to be found in this part of Galloway. These woods grow on the estates of Messrs Maxwell of Cardoness, Macculloch of Ardwell, Murray of Broughton, Hannay of Rusco. They consist mostly of oak, ash, birch, and fir, and it is believed that if sold at 20 years growth, they would give £7000 Sterling.

Climate. the air is for the most part as dry, pure, and salubrious, as anywhere in the neighbourhood. No epidemical diseases are known to prevail here, the measles and small pox excepted; to prevent the baleful effects of the latter, inoculation is now generally used.

Rivers. The river Fleet.... is navigable for small vessels of about 50 tons as far as the village of Gatehouse.... Fish are not plenty in this river; a few salmon, sea trout, yellow trout, and flounders, are caught in it. The salmon and sea trout are taken with draught nets, but the quantity is so small, that it will scarce defray the expense of labour, and is not a tenth part of what it was 50 years ago. They are caught from May to the middle of August, and sold in Gatehouse and the neighbourhood at about 3d the pound....

Population. According to Dr Webster's report, the population in 1755 was 53. The number of inhabitants in this parish has within these 50 years considerably diminished.

At that time, the number amounted to 500 examinable persons. Last year (1792) an exact enumeration of the inhabitants, of all ages, was made, when they amounted to 495; 270 of whom were males, and 225 females. About 450 of the inhabitants live in the country part of the parish, and the rest in a village, which is in its instant state. It is built on the river Fleet, opposite to Gatehouse and being connected with it by a bridge it is considered as part of the same village. The inhabitants in the village are mostly employed in manufacturing cotton, which a few months ago was carried on with spirit and success, but like many other branches of trade, it is now almost given up.

The decrease of the inhabitants is caused partly by some of the proprietors taking farms into their natural possession to improve them, and conjoining several in one when again let, and partly to the vicinity of the parish to the village of Gatehouse, to which many of them have removed, where those who formerly were common labourers, commence spinning cotton, and tradesmen follow their former occupations....

There are 9 proprietors belonging to the parish, 2 of whom constantly reside in it, and 1 occasionally. By far the Greater number of the inhabitants are tenants or cottagers. There are 6 weavers, 4 tailors, 2 shoemakers, 5 wrights, 6 masons, 3 smiths, and 2 millers. All the inhabitants are of the Established Church.

Quantity of Acres, Rent, etc.The quantity of acres amounts to about 8600, nearly 2900 of which is arable.... the real rent is about £2200 Sterling. Some farms are rented so low as £10 a-year; others so high as £200; it is believed the average is about £60. Best arable land is in general let at 15s. the acre; but some contiguous to the village is taken in small quantities at double that price.

The improvement of land in this parish and neighbourhood has been very rapid within these few years. Formerly there were but few enclosures, and the ground was in its natural state; consequently, when tilled, it yielded but small returns to the farmer, sometimes two, sometimes threefold. Now the land is generally enclosed and before it is broken up, it is improved with shells, marl or lime. There is some marl in the parish, and the shells on the sea-shore seem to be inexhaustible. Lime is brought from Cumberland and sold at 1s. the Carlisle bushel, 50 of which are commonly laid on acre. For the most part 3, sometimes 4 crops of grain are taken from the land thus improved, with the last of which clover and rye-grass seeds are sown. The following year the grass is sometimes cut for hay, and sometimes pastured. The land lies 6 or more years before it is again broken up, and affords excellent pasture for cattle.

Animal and Vegetable Productions. A much greater quantity both of grain and cattle is produced in the parish than is necessary for the sustenance of its inhabitants. About 650 acres are employed in raising oats, 70 in barley, and a few acres in potatoes, about 1 at an average to each farm. The soil is not considered to be well adapted to the production of wheat, though in some spots good crops of it have been raised. Little attention is paid to the cultivation of hemp and lint. Oats is the principal crop. The grain not consumed in the parish is partly sold in the neighbourhood, and partly shipped for Whitehaven, Liverpool, and the Clyde. There are about 1260 black cattle, 140 horses, and 4000 sheep in the parish. A few cattle are fatted for home consumption, or sold to butchers, who slaughter them in the neighbouring towns and villages; but the greater part are sold when three years old to drovers, who take them to the English market. They are of a middle size, fatten well and weigh far beyond their apparent bulk. The sheep which pasture on the moorish part of the parish are of a middle size; their face and legs are black, the body white. They sell at about £7 a score, of 21 to the score, before they are fatted; their wool is rather coarse and is sold about 9s. the stone of 28 pounds. There is another kind commonly called muggs; they are much larger; their wool is far superior, both in quantity and quality, but their flesh is not reckoned near so delicious as that of the moor sheep.. The kind most esteemed in the cultivated part of the country is a cross breed; that is, between the moor ram and the mugg ewe, or vice versa. The ordinary price of beef and mutton is 3d. of pork 4d. of butter 6d. and of cheese 3d. the pound of 16 ounces. The Winchester bushel of oats is commonly 1s.8d. and of barley 2s.6d. The stone of meal is 1s.8d. but at present all of these articles, particularly grain, are much higher. The common wages for labourers are 1s. the day, but when employed in certain kinds of work they have more. Masons and wrights receive 1s.8d. or 2s. the day; tailors 10d and victuals. The ordinary wages for a male-servant, when he hires for the half-year, are £4; for a maid-servant, £1-15s.

Living, School, Poor. The manse was built about 40 years ago and is now receiving a considerable repair. The patron is David Maxwell of Cardoness Esq. The stipend of the parish in ordinary years is about £80; a part of this, however, being payable in grain, it is sometimes a little above, and sometimes below that sum. The glebe contains about 6 or 7 acres. The public school is at the church. About 30 or 40 scholars attend in winter, but fewer in summer.... The emoluments of the school are £11 of yearly salary 1s.6d. the quarter for teaching English, 2s. for writing, 2s.6d for arithmetic, 3s. for Latin and French, and 10s.6d. for teaching a set of bookkeeping. The schoolmaster also receives £2-2s. a-year together with 2s. 6d. for each proclamation, for being session-clerk and precentor if he holds these offices.

There are 10 persons on the poor's list, some of whom are entirely supported; some can earn part of their sustenance receive a quarterly aid, and others an occasional one, as their necessities require.

The fund for this purpose arises from the weekly collections, amounting to about £14 a-year from dues received for the use of the mortcloth, fines imposed on delinquents and from the interest of £200 lent money. This last sum has accumulated partly from donations and partly from the surplus of the poor's funds, after their necessities had been supplied.

...Cardoness...Castle. The sea still flows to within a few paces of it; and from the banks of shells that are deposited on each side of the point of land on which it is built, it appears that the sea, at no very distant period, washed the rock on which it now stands.

Advantages and Disadvantages. The advantages of this parish are, its vicinity to the sea, on account of which, lime and other articles are got with very little carriage by land, and great quantities of shells lie on the shore, in the lower end of the parish, which experience has proved to be well adapted to the improvement of land. The great road from Carlisle to Portpatrick passes through the parish. The other roads in it are judiciously directed, and generally in good repair.

The scarcity of fuel is one disadvantage; peats are not plenty; in some places of the parish they must be carried 4 miles. The coals used must be brought from Cumberland or Ayrshire; the high duty hitherto imposed on which, rendered them extremely dear, and amounted almost to a prohibition against their being used by the middle and lower ranks.