

The First Statistical Account

(County of Stirling)

**By the Rev. Mr James
Robertson – A.D. 1795**

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“The carfe farmers are careful to procure horfes of fuperior fize and ftrength. For the moft part the ploughing, fummer fallow excepting, is conducted with two horfes, without a driver. Four muft at times be employed in fummer fallowing. Lefs progrefs perhaps may be made with two horfes than with four, but the work is better done, as two properly trained, and acquainted with the ploughman’s voice, will proceed with more fteadinefs, and in a fraighter direction than four, drawing unequally, and injudicioufly driven by an ignorant boy.”

Thus wrote the Rev. James Robertson in 1794 in the first ever Statistical Account for the parish of Gargunnoch. The old practice of using the letter “f” in place of some of the letter “s” occurs throughout his hand written account and while it looks delightfully quaint it makes reading a bit of an effort nowadays. His spelling and punctuation are also suspect to the modern eye but I have left that largely uncorrected.

Also, the modern eye, more used to a different (lighter) style of language and shorter sentences can quickly tire of long paragraphs so I have sub-divided many of them.

John McLaren – Dec 1999

Situation

Gargunnoch, or Gargownno (as it is called in some old records), is situated about six miles west of the town of Stirling, on the south side of the Forth, by which it is separated from the parishes of Kilmadock, and Kinkardine. It is bounded on the east and south, by the parish of St. Ninians, and on the west, by Kippen, Balfron, and Fintry.

Name – It seems of no great importance, to ascertain the precise meaning of the word Gargownno. Different etymologists will give different explanations of the meanings of names of places, in which there is often more imagination than knowledge.

Gargownno is probably of Celtic origin; descriptive of the particular spot, on the banks of the Forth, where a small fort stood, of which there is some account in the History of Sir William Wallace. There we read of the Peel (small fort) of Gargownno, in which an English party was stationed, to watch the passage of the Frew, in its neighbourhood. Wallace with a few followers, took the fort by stratagem in the night, while the English were off their guard. The curious stranger may be conducted to the ground which it once occupied; and may perhaps regret, that scarcely a stone is now left to tell its story. There is something so venerable in the abodes of our ancestors (though in ruins), that it is much to be wished, the frequent practice of carrying them away, for the purpose of making dykes, fences, was forever abolished.

The remains of the Bridge of Offers, about a quarter of a mile westward of the Peel, by which Wallace crossed the Forth, on his way to the Moss of Kinkardine, are still in existence; and for several years, it has been in agitation to rebuild it, which would greatly facilitate the communication betwixt the parishes on both sides of the river, and encourage tenants to give additional rent for their farms.

Extent – The parish extends about three miles and a half, from east to west, and from north to south it measures six

Division of Land – All the estates consist of muir, dry field and carse farms. On the south is the muir, which is part of a hilly tract of ground, stretching out from Stirling to Dumbarton. That portion of the muir which belongs to this parish, consists of about 3000 acres, of which each heritor has a division, lying in a direct line with his other lands.

The muir has of late become an object of greater consideration, than in former periods. The demand for such pasture has much increased; and this has naturally led the proprietors to place a higher value on it, than they were accustomed to do a few years ago. Every one has his own proportion accurately measured; and its worth is now so well understood, that that sometimes it is no easy matter to settle a dispute about a few acres; which perhaps in other times would have gone for nothing.

That part of the muir, which is connected with the estate of Gargunnoch, was let, last year, at almost double the former rent; but the proprietor has this year taken it into his own hands; and having perused Sir John Sinclair's pamphlet on the subject, hath been induced to flock it with the Cheviot breed of sheep. The shepherd who has been brought from that country, is hopeful that the experiment will succeed to a wish, although all the sheep farmers here are strongly prejudiced to the scheme; and predict its total failure during the winter months. The superior quality, and price of the wool, is a sufficient justification of the attempt; and if the plan is successful, it will certainly turn out one of the most beneficial of our improvements.

Men of property alone are qualified to engage in designs of this nature. If they are successful, they will soon be followed by others; and society at large will reap the good fruits of their labours. Or, supposing the undertaking should prove abortive, they are sufficiently able to sustain the loss. That man is deserving of praise, who employs his substance in such laudable pursuits, as according to his best judgement may be useful to the community as well as to himself.

It would be of great advantage, both to the landlord and tenant, if care was always taken to annexe to the muirland farm some low lying fields, of better pasture; as, where this is not the case, the farmer is often obliged to send his flock during the winter a great distance, which must be attended with great inconvenience. Col. Eidingtoun of Gargunnoch is well provided in this respect; a circumstance favourable to his purpose of rearing the Cheviot breed. The tenants of the muir of Boquhan, in this parish, are also well accommodated. They possess some good pasture ground, immediately below the hill, which adds much to the value of their farms, both with respect to convenience and profit. They are at pains never to overstock those fields, in summer; and the sheep find abundant provision in them, in winter. By this means, the muir is covered by the sheep which it has bred; and the farmer says, that such as have been thus reared at home, turn out much better than those which he hath bought, at any time, from other parts of the country.

It is seldom that any part of the muir is cultivated for raising grain. Attempts have been made this way, but most frequently with little or no success. A few acres near the house of the farmer have been sown with oats or barley, but a good crop was never expected. The soil and climate forbid the use of the plough. There are extensive meadows; which, after having been covered with water in the winter, and had a little manure thrown upon the surface, produce abundance of excellent hay; and hay making, which is generally in the month of August, is the principal harvest.

The whole of the muir is without inhabitants, two families excepted, which possess that part of it belonging to General Campbell of Boquhan. Gargunnoch muir, as it has been stated above, is in the hands of its own proprietor; but the other divisions are rented by sheep farmers in neighbouring parishes. To reside at a distance from the farm must always be attended with disadvantage. It is impossible the necessary attention can be given to the flock. Or, if the trust is committed to a shepherd, whose visits are only occasional, and who cannot be constantly at hand, especially amid the storms of winter, when much exertions is often requisite to save the animals; is it easy to see the risk must be greater, than when the master himself, or some such interested person, resides on the spot.

The two muirland houses have nothing in appearance to recommend them; and yet the low roof, the sort of door which obliges a person for the sake of his head to make a profound bow as he walks in, and the pitiful window, which scarcely affords him sufficient light to show him where he is, are inconveniences soon forgotten, when he is placed by the fireside. The inhabitants though dwelling in a desert, have a civility of manners which does them honour. An old soldier who came to their door, was kindly received, and continued for years to make their house his home. All the return they could expect, was a little amusement in the winter evenings, while he rehearsed the story of sieges and battles.

If houses for the entertainment of the public cannot be expected in a country that is thinly inhabited, this disadvantage is so much the less felt, that the people are remarkable for hospitality. There is a kindness to the stranger, which is seldom to be met with in larger and more polished societies. If there is little ceremony, there is much good will.

In many places of the muir, there are roots of trees discovered, of a large size, from which it appears to have once been a forest; but now a tree cannot be discerned. While ascending the hill, a little copse wood may be perceived upon the edge of the rock, which the sheep cannot reach.

The access to the muir is by narrow paths called ballochs (roads). General Campbell of Boquhan has, lately, at no small expense, made an excellent road from the ford at Frew, to his muirland. This road, six miles long, has opened up an easy communication with the low country. Carts can now approach the heights to carry down peats, the fuel in common use, or to receive the dung which would otherwise be thrown into the water. In forming this road he met with opposition from the tenants of the muir. The many advantages derived from it have now corrected their mistakes and prejudices, in opposing what was so evidently intended for their benefit.

It is delightful to look down from the hills to the cultivated plain below. The prospect is extensive and beautifully diversified. The winding of the Forth, the fertile valley, adorned on both sides by the seats of the proprietors, and stretching from west to east further than the eye can reach; and the range of mountainous country on the north and south, serving as a wall to shelter it from the storms, form altogether one of the most picturesque scenes in Scotland. The beauty of the landscape is greatly increased of late, by the very extraordinary improvements in the moss of Kincardine, belonging to Mr Drummond; where many families, encouraged by the liberal terms held out to them by that gentleman, have settled and live comfortably. As their number is daily increasing, and as each family is bound to remove a certain portion of the moss yearly; it is understood, that the period is at no great distance, when upwards of a thousand acres of carseland will be added to his estate, while in the mean time those who clear the ground of the moss have an ample reward. The plan has succeeded beyond every expectation. There is no object of curiosity, in this part of the country, equal to the improvements in the moss of Kincardine.

The inhabitants of this parish look to the hills for signs of the weather, and are seldom disappointed. The setting sun, shining on the face of the mountain, indicates fair weather; while the sudden falling of mist on the top of it, soon after he has arisen bright, is considered as the sure mark of a rainy day.

Several rivulets flowing from different quarters of the muir, and at length uniting, form a succession of cascades, over craggy precipices, which after heavy rains, are seen and heard at a great distance. The best view of them is from the rising ground at the west end of the village of Gargunnoch.

Dryfields – The dryfields occupy the intermediate space, between the muir and the carse grounds. Their name supposes that they are not subject to those floods, which frequently cover the carse, a flat low lying country. Besides their being considerably raised above the level of the carse, and their gradual ascent to the bottom of the hills, which makes it impossible for water to remain upon their surface; they are also for the most part of such a light and sandy soil, as quickly absorbs the rain, and shows the propriety of the name they bear.

The greatest part of the dryfields, until of late, lay waste and wild, overrun with furze and broom. Few of them were subdivided or enclosed or cultivated in any considerable degree. Plantations were not in use, and excepting on the sides of the glens, scarcely anything like a tree was to be seen. But now it is quite a new scene. All the heritors have united in a regular plan of inclosing with dykes and hedges. Many of the uncultivated spots are covered with thriving plantations. The country is adorned and the farms sheltered.

In giving some account of the present state of the dryfields, Boquhan, the property of Lieut. John F. Campbell claims particular attention, as his unwearied exertions, in executing an intensive plan of improvements for thirteen years past, have beautified and enriched his lands, in a high degree.

The plan has been carried out at an expense, exceeding at times the rental of the estate; and yet such expenditure is not lost, if by this means the value of the ground is proportionably increased, and bread is given to the industrious poor. Fifty or sixty day labourers, and occasionally a greater number, are employed in planting, hedging, draining, ditching, rooting out whatever might obstruct the plough, making good roads from farm to farm, and fencing the young hedges and plantations from injury by cattle. Twenty five pound sterling per week, laid out in this manner, have not only fertilized many waste and barren fields, but have also afforded the means of subsistence to not a few families in the neighbourhood. Every one must have some amusement, and there are amusements which please not on reflexion; but, when agricultural improvements are viewed merely in the light of an amusement,

(though they were attended with no other advantage), it is certainly one of the most rational that can be conceived, and to a generous mind it must give real pleasure, as every step taken to cultivate the country, contributes to the general advantage of the community.

A pamphlet lately published by the General himself, entitled "Notes respecting the Situation and Improvements of the Lands of Boquhan", describes in a lively, entertaining, instructive manner, the change produced on the dryfields, since they came into his possession.

These improvements may not appear so striking to those who saw their commencement, and have been accustomed to observe their progress from day to day, as they must to everyone, who may now return to Boquhan, after an absence of several years. Strangers as they pass along, are charmed with the scene, and survey at leisure that rich variety of natural and artificial beauty that surrounds them.

There is only one thing regretted, by some of the inhabitants. It was necessary, to pull down a considerable number of cottages. Three or four small farms are thrown into one, by which means, the population of the dryfields is diminished: but when it is considered that the lands are now cultivated to much better purpose than formerly, that they are doubly fruitful, and that wherever a family is possessed of a few acres only, even the necessaries of life must be procured with difficulty; when to this it is added, that such persons find no worse subsistence as day-labourers, than as tenants of what do not merit the name of farms, it must be owned, that the method which is now almost universally adopted, of having fewer tenants, but larger farms, is of advantage to the country, while it is attended with no permanent loss to any individual.

Better houses are also obtained, than could be expected were the farm to consist of little more than twelve or twenty acres. And this must uniformly be the case, wherever farms are extensive, and let to substantial tenants; as when one farmhouse only is required, where three or four were formerly necessary, the farmer will be better accommodated, in every respect, in a style of elegance unknown in former times, and with less expense to the landlord.

Dr Moir of Leckie, whose lands are situated eastwards of Boquhan, has also commenced a plan of improvement, in the dryfields, by inclosing and planting such spots of ground, as are but little adapted to cultivation. When the gentleman, whom he lately succeeded, came to the estate, it was encumbered with heavy debts. He instantly resolved, that his income whatever it might be, should exceed his expenditure, until he gave every one his own. He lived long enough to see his laudable purpose fulfilled. The plan he had laid down, however, made him unwilling to engage in any expensive scheme of improvement; and when the period at length arrived, which brought him the accomplishment of his wishes, he was then so far advanced in life, as to find no enjoyment in pursuits which require all the vigour and activity of youth. On this account it must be acknowledged, that the Lands of Leckie are far behind some other estates in the parish, with respect to those elegant improvements, which usually distinguish the residence of men of fortune and taste.

The present proprietor has already done much to remedy this defect, and last year, more than double the usual number of labourers was employed. The place is beginning to assume a new aspect. A garden is to be immediately formed, in a field very favourable for soil and exposure; and when the family make the house of Leckie their stated abode, which it is expected will soon happen, there is every reason to believe that rapid progress will be made in many other useful and ornamental improvements.

About a mile to the eastward of Leckie, the road from Stirling to Dumbarton passes over a rising ground, and there the dryfield of the Barony of Gargunnoch are viewed to advantage. The spectator is charmed by the prospect. The cascades from the hills, the glens covered on each side, some with natural wood, some with regular plantations, the village, the church and manse, the chimney tops of Gargunnoch house just discerned above the wood, the well dressed fields, some for pasture, and others for crops of various kinds, and all inclosed with dykes and hedges in excellent repair, form altogether a very fine landscape. The inclosures however, that are immediately under the hill, and have been long in pasture, are overrun in furze and broom, which are almost their only produce, when not cultivated several years. Fields of this nature, it has been said by sheep farmers, are exceedingly useful in the winter, as the sheep feed on furze. But as fields in grass are superior in every respect, the proprietor has begun to clear away this kind of shrubbery. Burning or rooting out furze and broom, does not answer so well, as cutting them a little above the surface of the ground. The root soon withers and dies. Nothing however can do the business so effectually, as the plough; and when the grounds are again

thrown into pasture, the cattle will prevent them relapsing into their former wild state, for a long course of years.

Gargunock House, now the seat of Col. Eidingtoun, stands on an elevated situation, near where the dry fields are united with the carse; and commands an extensive prospect. Though of an irregular figure it contains good accommodation for a genteel family. Some parts of it are evidently of ancient date. On the east wing there is a sort of tower, which gives it a dignified aspect on that quarter; and until a few years ago there was a high wall and a strong gate in front of it, which indicated that it was designed as a place of strength. It is probable that the Peel, which was at a little distance, having been abandoned, or fallen into decay, it became necessary that the mansion of Gargunock should be so constructed, as to become a place of safety for the inhabitants.

The barony of Gargunock, for a century past, belonged to the family of Ardkinlas; and the late Sir James Campbell, whose memory will long be dear to the parish, having resided chiefly here, was at great expense, in making improvements both on the house, and the adjoining fields. The removal of the wall and gate, marked the manners of the times. The garden and orchard, which were immediately under the windows, were also removed; high grounds were levelled; an addition was made to the house, in a modern style: A sloping bank was formed on the east and south, where the garden formerly was, and where sheep now feed; and from the high road, to which he gave a new direction, an approach was made to the house, far superior to any in this part of the country.

The house of Gargunock has acquired an additional grandeur, from the fine front built by Col. Eidingtoun in summer last.

There is one general remark to be made, respecting the dryfields. No portion of them is now allowed to lie neglected. They are almost entirely inclosed throughout their whole extent, to the bottom of the mountain; and the heritors vie with each other, in decorating and fertilizing this part of their property.

Carse -

Etymologists explain this word, as signifying rich or fertile. This account is justified by fact, for such lands, when properly cultivated, produce luxuriant crops. About forty years ago, the carse grounds lay in almost a state of nature, unprofitable to the landlord, for it was difficult to find men who would venture to possess them. Bad roads, fields uninclosed, the stiffness of the soil, ignorance of that kind of farming which is suited to the carse, presented great difficulties when any attempt was made towards improvement. But now it is astonishing to observe the effects of better husbandry. The rivulets flowing from the hills, through the carse, have been confined within their proper channel, so as to prevent overflowing of the fields. excepting upon very rare occasions, after excessive rains; many of the farms are fenced with hedges, in a thriving condition; the old division of the lands into outfield and infield has been abolished. The practice of liming is followed, with great success; a regular rotation of crops has been almost universally adopted; and from 4 shillings sterling per acre, there has been of late a rise to upwards of a guinea, and in some instances, to 30 shillings sterling.

The whole carse it is believed was originally under water. Beds of shells similar to these, which are now in the Firth of Forth, have been discovered in several places. This seems to justify the opinion, that the carse has, at some distant period, been gained from the sea. In later times, it was covered by what has been called the Caledonian forest, at least it is certain, that when the Romans were in this neighbourhood, the carse was filled with trees of a large size, which they cut down, to dislodge the Scottish army that took refuge there.

The carse property of Mr Graham, an heritor of this parish, still goes by the name Micklewood, which evidently refers to a former period of its history: For although there are some uncommonly fine trees, chiefly oaks near his house, which must have been there for some centuries, Micklewood undoubtedly signifies a wood much more extensive, than can now be discerned in this country. The probability is, that not only the whole carse of this and the neighbouring parishes, but the dryfields also were a forest; as large roots of trees, which are manifestly of very ancient date, are everywhere found, especially on the sides of the glens.

It appears that after the forest was cut down, what is now called carse, became moss. Not long ago, about two acres still remained in this situation, in the carse of Boquhan, to show what the whole once was; and at the present day, there are upwards of 1000 acres of moss, in the carse of Blairdrummond, in the parish of Kinkardine, directly north of the lands of Micklewood. This moss, as has been mentioned above, is daily diminishing. Trees of extraordinary bulk are found in it. The trunk separated from the

root, and lying at a little distance, with the marks of the ax upon it, proves not only the existence, but the cutting down of the forest. Upon this the moss gradually grew; scarcely any part of it is deeper than another. The cleared grounds are on a level with the fields in culture around them, and so fertile is the land thus won from the moss, that after burning the surface, it bears plentiful crops of oats, for several years, without any sort of manure.



Meiklewood House

The proprietors of Boquhan and Micklewood are the only heritors of distinction who reside in the carse; and their houses and plantation appear beautiful from the heights. The venerable oaks of Micklewood, attract the attention of every visitor. Nor can we omit to mention the row of firs, where herons, time immemorial, have built their nests, and brought forth their young. These firs of Meiklewood are the only trees of the kind in the parish to which they resort, and Mr Graham allows those trees to remain chiefly on their account.

All the roads in the carse (excepting that of Boquhan and Micklewood), are so extremely bad, that during the rainy seasons they are almost impassable. At such times, carts cannot be used. Everything must be carried on horseback, and even in this way it is with difficulty that the business is accomplished. When the farmers are spoken to individually on the subject, they are constantly complaining of their roads, and seem anxious to assist in repairing them. But no one chooses to set about the work alone. When the time is convenient for one, it is inconvenient for another. Fair weather comes, the road is dry and firm, and the matter drops. In short the proverb hold true;” What is everybody’s business is nobody’s”.

The best way would be, that the landlord should make good roads to all the farms, and assess the tenants for the interest of what money may be expended. this mode would be acceptable to them all, and of great advantage to the proprietor; as when leases expire, easy access to the farm will be always one of its most powerful recommendations.

The houses on the carse farms are not good. There are two circumstances, which must always prevent them from becoming so. The first is, the farms are small, some twenty, and few more than forty acres. Can good houses be expected in such cases? The second is, the house is built by the tenant who is only allowed some timber by the landlord. It is of consequence fitted up as superficially as possible. If it serves the purpose of a dwelling during the currency of the lease, nothing more is expected. For these reasons, it seems probable, that farm houses will be mean and uncomfortable, wherever they are built at the expense of tenants of a few acres. Upon the farm of Redhall, in this parish, consisting of 100 acres of carse and as much of dryfield, the property of Mr Seton of Touch, there has been lately built an exceedingly good house of two floors and with a slate roof and handsome offices, at the expense of the proprietor. Such houses, though for the present expensive, last for ages, without the necessity for those repairs, which are incessantly required for those thatched cottages of half stone and half clay, which begin to decay almost as soon as they are reared. It is to be acknowledged, however, that poor as the carse houses still are, they are much better than they were twenty years ago. They consist of at least two apartments, each having a chimney and a tolerable window: Nor are the cattle permitted as formerly, to enter at the same door with the family. If the dunghill, which in many instances is still in front of the house, were removed to a proper distance behind it, this would be another step to cleanliness and health.

Soil – There are few fields, either dryfield or carse, uniformly of the same soil. In the dryfields the soil is chiefly light and sandy, not unfrequently with a red tilly bottom; but in some places it is a rich loam, resembling the low or flat grounds on the banks of the Forth. In the carse there is clay of all colours, but blue is the most prevalent, which is also the best in quality. In a dry spring season, after an open winter, the clod is so hard, that there is great labour and fatigue before the harrows can make any impression. a good deal of frost in the winter, and occasional showers in the spring, are favourable to the carse; but, if there has been little frost, or, if there is great drought after it is ploughed, the clay becomes impenetrable as the rock, and it is not without much toil that the seed is covered. The nearer

the banks of the Forth, the land becomes so much the more pliable. The clay mixt with gravel and sand, form those rich flat fields on the sides of the river, which are in high repute both for corn and pasture.

Farming – The method of farming now generally observed, proves its superiority by its effects, while new attempts are made from year to year, by those of spirit and enterprize in the way of farther improvement. The use of lime to the amount of 8 chalders per acre in the carse, and 5 in the dryfields, and the system of having a regular rotation of crops in every field, are the chief circumstances which have produced the very material difference betwixt the present and the former quantity of grain in the parish. It is no unusual thing now to find 10 bolls of wheat or barley upon an acre, which once produced almost nothing but thistles. The carse is sown with wheat, beans, barley and grass seeds, and after hay has been cut for two years, the field is next sown in oats, but in some places pasturing is preferred, as it contributes much to enrich the ground.

The late Mr Graham of Micklewood, who had a thorough knowledge of farming, and who pointed out the way to the improvement of the carse, scrupulously observed the following rotation of crops, as what he judged the best, and expressly appointed a particular farm to be so cultivated in all time coming; persuaded that experience would prove the excellence of his plan. A farm, said he, ought to consist of twelve inclosures, and be managed as follows;

Summer fallow, wheat, beans, barley, hay, pasture for three years, oats, beans , barley, oats, summer fallow &c.

This order is found to answer so well, that the farm of Woodyet, which exactly observes it, has always a better crop than any other in the parish. The three years pasture is the chief thing, which distinguishes his plan, and probably contributes most to give it full effect.

The wheat and barley land for the following year is begun to be ploughed about the end of the harvest; and, if the weather is at all favourable, the whole of this business is concluded before the winter sets in. Wheat is sown about the middle of September, thereafter, when the field has been ploughed about five or six times. The lee intended for oats, is ploughed during the winter months, if the weather permits. Beans are sown about the end of February, and beginning of March, although in a climate so inconstant as ours, the seed time is uncertain. Beans sown and ploughed down on the 9th January produced one of the best crops perhaps we ever saw, and so wet was the ground a few years ago, that it was not until the 6th day of April that any seed was sown in this country. The usual time for sowing oats is from the 20th March to the end of April. The barley is sown after this, and the last in order, though not the least profitable, is the turnip, a species of husbandry introduced of late by some of the heritors, in which the tenants do not seem disposed to follow their example.

Beans are not sown in the dryfields, as the soil is not sufficiently strong to bear a crop of this nature. Peas are sometimes tried to advantage, but for the most part they run to straw, without grain. The rotation of crops in the dryfields is commonly this;

oats for two years in succession, and barley the third year with grass seed, hay for two years, and pasture for three or four. Potatoes are also raised in considerable quantities, and there is not a crop to which the soil is better suited. The return is very encouraging. A boll and a half, and often two bolls are digged where one peck was planted. Some lay the sets in drills, which undoubtedly is the best way, as by this means the rows are distant from each other near 2 feet, the plough can be used among them, throughout the summer, and while this answers every purpose of summer fallow, the earth is raised about their roots, which makes them dry and mealy, and promotes vegetation. A field in potatoes is a fine preparation for wheat or barley. None of the red kind are here used, excepting the yam, which grows to a very large size, and affords good food for cattle.

The carse farmers are careful to procure horses of superior size and strength. For the most part the ploughing, summer fallow excepting, is conducted with two horses, without a driver. Four must at times be employed in summer fallowing. Less progress perhaps may be made with two horses than with four, but the work is better done, as two properly trained, and acquainted with the ploughman's voice, will proceed with more steadiness, and in a straighter direction than four, drawing unequally, and injudiciously driven by an ignorant boy.

In each farm there is a field in wheat, well dressed and limed. It has been found that dung is more advantageous to the wheat than lime, and several farmers now give lime to the barley fields, and dung to the wheat. One of them this year gave the wheat field a part of both, and the return is luxuriant.

Last year, not quite an acre and a half of the minister's glebe, which had been in pasture for three preceding seasons, was ploughed only once at the end of October, and sown with wheat without lime or manure of any kind, and the crop produced £20:11:6. One boll was sown and fifteen were reaped.

The husbandman is at pains to find good feed for his lands. If the same grain is incessantly used it soon degenerates. This defect is remedied sometimes by exchanging that of the carse, for what grew in the dryfield. But the chief improvement this way is the introduction lately of the early red oats from the south, which produces more meal, and ripens almost a month sooner, than any other known in this country. This promises to be a great acquisition to those whose crops are frequently in danger from a late and a wet harvest.

The drill husbandry is not practised here. Attempts were made to introduce it at Boquhan, and premiums were offered by the proprietor to the tenants who should use it successfully. Some had not the spirit to engage in it, and those who began had not patience to persevere.

Great improvement is made in the art of ploughing. Prizes are annually given by the gentlemen in the neighbourhood to those who excel, and the young men eagerly contend for this honour. The old Scottish plough is most generally in use, but Small's is beginning to be of great repute. The old plough is frequently made by the farmers themselves, and at little expense, which is almost an irresistible argument in its favour.

The threshing machine which abridges the labour, and enables the farmer to prepare his grain with great speed for the market, is now set up, not only by some of the heritors, but also by such of the tenants as have large farms. This is acknowledged to be one of the most useful instruments of husbandry, that has ever been invented. It has no other inconvenience, than when a great quantity is threshed out at once, the straw is less relished by the cattle, than when it is fresh from the flail.

Kilns, with heads made from cast iron, in which twelve bolls of oats can be dried in the course of six hours, have been built last year by, by the chief heritors. Care must be taken not to overheat them, and to turn the grain often, as in some instances where these precautions were neglected, the whole has been lost.

The farmer justly complains of the heavy tax, which bears the name of multure. It is indeed a real oppression, when many of the farms are bound to pay the miller the eleventh peck of meal, and in some cases, a similar quantity of beans, and barley. The tenants of Leckie are now free from this bondage. The mill is in the hands of the proprietor, and arable land is assessed at the rate of one shilling sterling per acre for defraying every necessary expense, to which the tenants have cheerfully submitted.

It would be of great benefit to the country, if all that variety of service usually demanded by the heritors, besides the proper rent, were relinquished. Great inconvenience arises from the obligation to which the tenants are subjected; to pay fowls, to drive coals, peats and dung; and in harvest to cut down the proprietors grain. By being thus in a state of requisition, the tenant is often incapable of attending to his own affairs. On some very important occasions, the opportunity on his own farm is lost, and never returns.

There is an established market in Stirling, for all sorts of grain, to which the neighbouring farmers resort; and they find a ready sale. The price is usually regulated by the Edinburgh and Haddington markets.

The whole secret of farming, seems to lie in preserving the land dry and clean, in observing a regular rotation of crops, taking care not to impoverish the soil, and to be seldom from home, especially in feed time and harvest, ready to seize the favourable opportunity when it occurs. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich".

Population – It appears that there has been little variation in the population of the parish for many years. The cotton mills at Balfron and Down, and the great demand at Glasgow a few years ago, for weavers, masons, and day labourers, considerably diminished the number of souls in the parish. The hope of regular employment, and better wages, enticed several families to settle in those places; where the young and old were constantly occupied. By the late stagnation of trade, however, many have been obliged to return to their former occupations.

Additions made to some farms, and the spirit of improvement prevailing among the heritors, which has led them to keep a great part of their land in their own possession, have banished many inhabitants from the dryfields, where the ruins of cottages are frequently to be met with; but in the meantime, the village of Gargunnoch, which in the memory of some still alive, consisted in only 3 or 4 houses, now contains about 400 souls.

Number of souls	830	Persons above 80 years of age	2
Males	403	Do. betwixt 70 and 80	9
Females	427	Do. betwixt 60 and 70	58
Families	178	Do. betwixt 50 and 60	83
Belonging to the Established Church	808	Do. betwixt 40 and 50	78
Episcopalians	3	Do. betwixt 30 and 40	104
Seceders	14	Do. betwixt 20 and 30	147
Relief society	2	Do. betwixt 10 and 20	182
Cameronians	167	Under 10	167
		Total	<u>830</u>

The population of this parish in 1755 was	956
In 1793 it is	<u>830</u>

The number of souls diminished 126

Heritors 8, clergymen 1, schoolmaster 1, students 2, farmers 55, weavers 10, shoemakers 2, tailors 7, masons 3, wrights 4, baker 1, innkeepers 3, smiths 4, cooper 1, day labourers 28, carriers to Edinburgh and Glasgow 2, widowers 11, widows 38, batchelors above forty 8, unmarried women above forty 9, men-servants 94, and maid-servants 62.

Register of Marriages

1744	10	1784	8
1745	6	1785	7
1746	8	1786	9
1747	6	1787	5
1748	8	1788	5
1749	13	1789	10
1750	7	1790	9
1751	14	1791	10
1752	12	1792	12
1753	4	1793	11
Yearly average	<u>8</u>		<u>8</u>

Register of Baptisms

1639	25	1744	36	1784	24
1640	35	1745	28	1785	23
1641	33	1746	19	1786	20
1642	28	1747	32	1787	22
1643	35	1748	48	1788	19
1644	27	1749	31	1789	20
1645	39	1750	36	1790	26
1646	26	1751	30	1791	14
1647	22	1752	32	1792	15
1648	26	1753	36	1793	20
Yearly Average	29	-----	34	-----	

Register of Deaths – No correct account can be given of the number of deaths, in this parish; as not a few of the inhabitants have their burying ground in other parishes, and it is only when the mort cloth is required, which only happens when the funeral is in the parish burying ground, that the death is

inserted into the register. The tax on baptisms and deaths was paid reluctantly. The one on marriages did not occasion so much alarm, although it was thought some kind of reward ought rather to have been offered by the legislature, to those who entered regularly into that connection. All have agreed that there is wisdom in the repeal of those taxes.

Poor – The number of poor who receive a stated monthly allowance from the Parochial funds, is sixteen, all of whom, one excepted, reside in the village. It is usual also, in the winter season, to give occasional supplies of meal and coals, to families who may be in difficult circumstances, but whose names are not on the poor's role.

There is now no assessment for their maintenance. This has been unnecessary for some years past, as supplies abundantly sufficient have been obtained another way.

George Moir, Esq. of Leckie, now deceased, generously added to the poor's stock in 1788. Being of the Scotch Episcopal communion, he seldom attended the Established church. He saw however, and he had the humanity to acknowledge, that the poor of the parish suffered a loss, by his absence; and when he gave the sum above mentioned, he said "he was only paying what he owed them". It is to be wished, that wealthy heritors who either do not reside upon their estates, or who are too much in the habit of being absent from the church, would imitate him, in this instance, and consider the case of the poor, who must sustain a loss, when those in affluent circumstances withhold their weekly collections at the church. The chief resource for supplying the poor in this parish, and in almost every parish in Scotland, arises from the collections made at the church on the Lord's day.

At the same time there are perhaps few country parishes in Scotland, where there is more ample provision for the necessities of the poor, than in Gargunnoch. The capital stock belonging to the Kirk Session, amounts to £365 Sterling, the interest of which, together with the collections, mort-cloth money, the fees paid at marriages, baptisms, &c. afford the widow, and the fatherless, the aged and infirm, a considerable portion of the necessities of life.

An addition was made to the funds of the poor in 1784, by a very singular circumstance. Two old women, sisters, who lived in the village of Gargunnoch, had for many years, every appearance of extreme indigence; though without making any application for assistance from the parish. One of them at last, applied to be received on the poor's list; and as no doubt was entertained of her poverty, she received four shillings per month. She died about six months after the commencement of her pension.

On examining her bed cloathes, one purse (of gold and silver), was found after another, till the sum amounted to upwards of forty pounds sterling. Some old chests and barrels were found stored with beef, meal, cheese, and various other kinds of provision; and it was evident that the poor woman had lived in great affluence. The relations of the deceased, on hearing of the discovery, came from a distance, to lay claim to her effects. But according to the settled rule of the parish, she had bequeathed all her effects to the poor, at the time she was received on to the poor's list. One half was allowed to be the property of the sister, who had received no pension from the parish. The other half became the property of the Kirk Session, to the great mortification of the relations; who certainly deserved this disappointment, as they had taken no notice of the deceased, while she lived.

The care of the poor is laid on the Kirk Session. A committee is appointed to enquire into the circumstances of those who petition for supply; and more or less is granted, according as the case seems to require. Few have less than half a crown per month; while four, five, six, and in some cases, even ten shillings are distributed to those, who are absolutely helpless. A person must reside in the parish, at least three years, before he can be entitled to the public charity.

No public begging is allowed. We are often harassed by vagrants from other places; but they are not permitted to acquire a residence in the parish. One seldom gives them anything, without having cause to repent it. They spend everything they receive at the first alehouse; and for the rest of the day they become a public nuisance. The constables are called, who see them out of the parish; but this does not operate as a punishment, while they are still at liberty. It would be of great advantage, if in every parish, there was some place of confinement for people of this description, to keep them in awe, when they might be inclined to disturb the peace of the town, or of the neighbourhood.

Church – The church was rebuilt in 1774, is very neatly fitted up, and in excellent repair. On the top of the east gable, there is the figure of a cross, and on the west, that of a crescent. These were upon the gables of the old church, and have been replaced upon the new. This might have given offence a century ago; but the people are now wiser than to quarrel with a stone of any shape or appearance.



The manse, which was built for a bachelor, is too small for the accommodation of a family. Few houses of the kind, however, are more pleasantly situated. There is a good garden. The soil and the exposure are so favourable, that crops and fruits, of various kinds, are reaped from it earlier than from any other in the parish. The stipend is about £80 sterling, with a glebe of 6 acres. Col. Eidington, the proprietor of Gargunnoch estate, is the patron.

Parish School – The schoolhouse is situated on a rising ground, at the West End of the village. It has two floors, the first for the school, the second for the habitation of the schoolmaster. During the winter season, there may be 50 or 60 scholars; and yet the whole income, including salary, perquisites as Session clerk, and school fees, scarcely amounts annually to £16. The reading of English is taught for a merk Scots per quarter, writing and arithmetic for 2 shillings; fees, which are by no means adequate to the troublesome task of the matter. When a man decently qualified submits to the drudgery of training up children in several important branches of education, common sense must revolt at the idea of his being in a worse situation than the day-labourer. It is hoped something will be done for a better provision to the masters of parish schools.

Village – The village, consisting of some 90 houses, chiefly of one floor, and thatched, is situated on the side of a hill, part of the barony of Gargunnoch. The military road from Stirling to Dumbarton, passes through it. The best inn upon the road is here, few houses of that kind are kept in such good order. It is kept remarkably clean and neat, a circumstance not very common in houses of the same description.

Each inhabitant has a small garden. The one half of the property belonging to the village was feued out about 50 years ago, at the rate of 20 shillings sterling per acre, the other half at a later period was feued at 40s. There is no kind of trade or manufacture in the village; not even a grocery shop that deserves the name. Supplies of all the necessary articles are got from Stirling weekly or by carriers from Edinburgh or Glasgow. There are some weavers, taylor, and shoemakers, and the other inhabitants are chiefly day labourers.

Much inconvenience arose from the want of a surgeon, but this is now removed. Dr Moir of Leckie the first heritor, and a gentleman of great eminence in his profession, is ever ready to give his advice and assistance to the villagers without a fee. There is no writer or attorney among them. When any dispute arises, which is very seldom, it is either settled by the Minister, or by Mr Graham of Micklewood, a justice of the peace, in whose judgement parties acquiesce.

Antiquities – A little southwards of the village, there is a conical height called the Keir-hill, which is evidently artificial, and seems to have been a military work. There are remains of a ditch or rampart of a circular form, which proves that it is not of Roman origin. It is probably of later date, and appears to have been the place from which Sir William Wallace sallied forth on the night when he took by surprise the Peel of Gargunnoch.

In one of the dryfields of Boquhan, some pieces of brass armour and points of spears were found a few years ago by a tenant, when digging for limestone. A great quantity of human bones was also discovered in the same spot, the remains probably of the slain at the battle of Ballochleam, which was fought in the adjoining fields.

There is no object of natural curiosity in this parish equal to the glen of Boquhan. The road made on the east side by the present proprietor, leads to a most romantic view. But, if a person has leisure and perseverance to descend and walk along the bottom of the glen, at the field of Oldhall, he will be surprised at every step, with a scene perfectly wild, as though nature were in ruins.

Local Disadvantages – The parish is situated on the north side of the hill. In the higher part of the dryfields, the sun is not seen during the winter months. Coal must be brought from Bannockburn, 10 miles distant; for although marks of coal can be observed in several places within the parish, no attempts have been made to discover it. The tenants on the banks of the Forth have boats, but these in their present state are found inconvenient and dangerous for horses and loaded carts. A bridge is much wanted near the lands of Micklewood. The one at the ford of Frew does not sufficiently accommodate the inhabitants of a tract of fertile country, for many miles on both sides of the river.

Roads – The military road from Stirling to Dumbarton, made betwixt 30 and 40 years ago, and which passes through the centre of this parish, is now by Act of Parliament to have a new line of direction, and to be made a turnpike road. It is hoped the trustees will confine the exercise of their power to what is immediately useful and necessary.

Any alterations in order to avoid heights, or to lessen the distance, where that can be conveniently done, would be readily submitted to by all, from the evident advantage resulting from them. But, if new lines of considerable length are proposed, where the grounds must be purchased and reinclosed; or, if the road shall be so formed as to render plantations and improvements useless, which have been carrying on for years in the faith that the present line of road was to be permanent; if it shall be so directed, as to abandon a number of thriving villages, or so unnecessarily widened as to break in upon many beautiful strips of planting, by which means a debt must be incurred that can only be repaid by a heavy toll on the coal and the lime, it is doubtful, whether the good or the evil of such alterations would preponderate.

The trustees have no interest but to act for the general advantage of the country, and there is no reason to doubt that this will be the object of their chief attention.

Game &c. – In this parish there are heath fowl, hares, and partridges.

The commencement of partridge shooting, as early as the beginning of September, is very often a cause of their scarcity, as the tenants are tempted to destroy the eggs for the sake of the crops, which are sometimes much injured by the sportsmen and dogs.

The cleft of Ballochleam is still remarkable for the hawks, for which it was in great request in former times, when falconry was in fashion.

A crow, perfectly white, was found last spring on a tree at Boquhan.

The farmer suffers a real loss by flocks of pigeons which cover his fields in feed time, and make frequent visits to his wheat before it is cut down; and thinks a tax on pigeon houses would be a wise measure.

Diseases – Rheumatism, fevers, consumptions, are the chief disorders of the more aged inhabitants, and the small-pox, the measles, and whooping cough, of the young. Not a few are afflicted with the scrophula, but the people have little conception of its effects on their posterity. There is still an unlucky prejudice against inoculating against the small-pox, while the people have a strong inclination to frequent the house where the disease exists, not perceiving, that by doing so they communicate their infection to their children as effectually, and a thousand times more fatally than by lancet. Dr Moir inoculates gratis, and has had considerable influence in reconciling the common people to a practice, which god in his providence hath remarkably blessed for the preservation of the human race.

It is difficult to determine whether the carse or the dryfield, be most favourable to health. Some have live to a great age in both; but it is certain, that as the tenants of the carse have the greatest share of labour, so they seem most capable of enduring it; and if a greater degree of labour supported with vigour indicates health, or promotes it, it may be conjectured, that the carse is fully as healthful as the dryfield. It would perhaps be of advantage, if those who are most exposed to fatigue, to cold, or to moisture, would use a cotton, instead of a linen shirt. It might contribute to prevent those rheumatic complaints, to which they are so often subject.

Price of labour, wages, &c. – A few years ago, a man servant for the farm, who lived with the farmer, could have been found for 5 or 6 pounds sterling per year, but now 10 or 12 are given. Women servants who lately were engaged at £2-10s are now scarcely satisfied with £4. Their purse is just as empty as before, but there is a material change in their article of dress. The day labourer who once wrought at six-pence or eight-pence per day, now receives a shilling, and in seedtime and harvest, his victuals besides. Last harvest, 1794, the wages rose to sixteen and eighteen pence per day, besides victuals, which is by far the highest rate of wages remembered in this country.

The day-wage men for the whole parish reside in the village. They are called forth to their labour in the morning, by the sound of pipe or drum, and have the same signal when they retire in the evening. They are a sober industrious contented set of men, and though their food be simple, and their dress and dwellings mean, it is believed that they have more real enjoyment, than those who are in the more elevated situations.

Food and dress – The aged inhabitants are surprised at the change in the article of living, and what is evidently a proof of the wealth of the country, is unreasonably the subject of their lamentation. It is seldom that any of them live beyond their income. The other extreme ought also to be avoided. More is expected than the poorest fare, and the meanest dress from men of opulence. When the farmer is only careful how he may lend his money, and add to his stock, and lives at home as penuriously as when he had nothing, he denies himself the proper use of the bounty of Providence, and is really poor in the midst of his prosperity. There are few such in this parish. They all assemble at church, clean, and in decent attire; many of the women in black cloaks and bonnets and the younger sort adorned with ribbons. It gives general disgust, however, when the dress is unsuitable to the station. There is sometimes a contention for pre-eminence in gaudy shew, which is severely censured, especially when the maidservant cannot be distinguished from the mistress.

All the men, with very few exceptions, wear hats, and what may be thought remarkable, there is only one wig in the whole parish. Tea is universally used. Even the poorest families have it occasionally, and the last cup is qualified with a little whisky, which is supposed to correct all the bad effects of the tea. There are few families without some butcher meat laid up for the winter. All agree, that they are better clothed and fed than their forefathers; and seem contented with the lot assigned them.

Price of Provisions – Oatmeal is from 15s to 17s Sterling per boll. Peas and barley meal about 10s per boll; potatoes, corn measure, 5s per boll; butter 12s per stone; common cheese 4s, and a better kind made on Saturday's evening 5s 6d. per stone; poultry at a reasonable price. A good fowl may be got for 1s sterling; eggs at 4d per dozen. The price of necessaries in this parish varies according to the demand at Stirling on market days.

Great scarcity was apprehended in 1783, through the failure of the preceding crop; but upon the return of peace, a large quantity of white peas being commissioned from England by a man of public spirit, and grinded into meal, assisted the other expedients which were then adopted to prevent a famine in this part of the kingdom.

Character, Manners, and Customs – The character of the inhabitants of this parish is sobriety. They profess to fear God, and honour the king. In their deportment they are grave, and in their speech considerate. They are remarkably attached to the institutions of religion, and all of them, (22 persons excepted) worship together at the parish church. During the late attempt of designing men to throw the country into confusion, not an individual in the parish joined the clubs of pretended reformers, or showed the least disaffection to our happy constitution. The only reform they wish, is in their own persons and families, where they acknowledge there are many things that need to be corrected; but they leave affairs of state to those who are lawfully appointed to govern. There has been no one here charged with any capital crime for a long course of years. The minister's garden is situated near the high road and might easily be plundered, and yet he cannot say that he has been robbed of a single apple, since he came to the parish, upwards of 7 years ago. There is very seldom any occasion for church discipline; no cause has been carried from the session to the presbytery for many years.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper is dispensed twice in every year. And as there is no stated allowance to defray the expense of the communion in winter, the parishioners cheerfully contribute for this purpose.

Young and old are distinguished for polite attention to strangers. Men of superior rank have a respectful bow from every one they meet; for people here have not been taught the new doctrine of liberty and equality.

It is seldom there are social meetings. Marriages, baptisms, funerals, and the conclusion of the harvest, are almost the only occasions for feasting. At these times there is much unnecessary expense. Marriages usually happen in April and November. The month of May is cautiously avoided. A principal tenant's son or daughter has a crowd of attendants at marriage, and the entertainments lasts for two days at the expense of the parties. The company at large pay for the music.

The manner of conducting funerals in the country needs much amendment. From the death to the internment, the house is thronged by night and day, and the conversation is often very unsuitable to the occasion. The whole parish is invited from 10 o'clock in the forenoon of the day of the funeral, but it is soon enough to attend at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Everyone is entertained with a variety of meats and drinks. Not a few return to the dirge, and sometimes forget what they have been doing, and where they are. Attempts have been lately made to provide a remedy for this evil; but old customs are not easily abolished.

The dregs of superstition are still to be found. The less informed suspect something like witchcraft about poor old women; and are afraid of their evil eye among the cattle. If a cow is suddenly taken ill, it is ascribed to some extraordinary cause. If a person, when called to see one, does not say, "I wish her luck," there would be a suspicion he had some bad design. It is but just to say, that the generality of the people are superior to these vulgar prejudices, though the traces of them are still to be found.

There is one prevailing custom among our country people; which is sometimes productive of much evil. Every thing is bought and sold over a bottle. The people, who go to the fair, in the full possession of their faculties, do not always transact their business, or return to their homes, in the same state.

It is but justice, however, to say, that a disposition to virtue, industry, loyalty and peace, characterises the inhabitants of the parish of Gargunnoch.

Valuation – The valuation of the whole parish is £4127:15:2d Scottish money; but the real rental is above £3000 Sterling. About 30 years ago, it was only half of that sum. There is now an increase at every term. No farm is now let without an additional rent. Applications are made for the farm, long before the lease expires. The separate estates, which comprehend the whole parish, are Leckie and Kepdarroch, Boquhan, Gargunnoch, Micklewood, Redhall, and Culmore.