

EXCURSION, N<sup>o</sup> XXVI.

To DISHLEY, and HATHERN.

## DISHLEY-GRANGE

belongs to Sir William Gordon, and is inhabited by Mr. Bakewell. It was a granary to the Abbey of Gerondon; the great barn is still remaining, and is the largest I have ever seen; it is in length 48 yards, and in breadth 15, by stepping; and the roof is supported by large timber, like the roof of Leicester castle.

The little church, which stands near Mr. Bakewell's, has a low tower, and one aisle, in which service is performed only once a month. The little hamlet of Thorp near, is a member of it, and Sir William, I believe, is the impropiator; but the living of Hatherne being in Sir William's gift, it is conditioned to be served by the incumbent of that place. Near the altar, if it may be so called, Robert Bakewell is remembered, who died in 1773, aged 88. Another Robert Bakewell died in 1716, aged 73; and a Benjamin Clarke, gent. died in 1707.

Mr. Bakewell does the county honour, and deserves particular notice in these pages. It is not in my power, however, to do his character that justice his great exertions and abilities require. I will therefore just notice the things which passed before me on my visit to this place; and suffer those who are judges, and have written on the subjects of the management of live stock, farming and grazing, to speak more scientifically.

The first thing that struck me here was the polite reception a stranger meets with from Mr. Bakewell's dependents (he unluckily was not at home). We were shewn the different apartments in the farm, the grounds, and the stock; and every thing explained to meet our wishes with ease and address. Even the menial servants, who are busied in the farm, perform their services in something like a mechanical method; they are put in action by superior powers, and move with regularity and order.

We were first shewn the fine sheep, in number about 20, under a clean shed in the grounds; it was in June. A servant, who is within the barn where they are placed to be shewn separately, hands them from the barn door, one at a time, to another servant within, who seems exceedingly expert at shewing to advantage: he has the adroitness of a good horse-dealer, but much less of his vanity. I sat contentedly upon a bench making a few remarks, while my friends, some very respectable graziers, were engaged in handling the sheep where quality was or should have been. Although I had no concern in the examination, I could discover alertness and skill in the servant; and before all was shewn, I began to fancy I knew something of the matter; but I had prudence enough not to expose myself by an attempt at handling. I could but admire, with some degree of astonishment, the amazing breadth of some of their backs, the smallness of their heads, and lightness of their bones. They are kept as clean as a race-horse, and I smiled when I was told that they, like those fleet animals, wore at times body cloaths. The three last shewn, I was told (not by Mr. Bakewell's people), were likely to make, this season, by their gets, 3000 guineas.

Mr. Bakewell, I find, respects the company of men of judgement, and is himself happy in shewing his great improvements on his farm. He is frequently visited by the first characters in the kingdom, and assuredly his management and improvements here are deserving the notice of even common observers. I was pleased, on leaving the shed, to be shewn the long-famed old cow,

which stood like a venerable ruin on props of magnificent architecture, bulging fine limbs, enfeebled with old age. I will not attempt to describe what she has been; only in general terms observe, that she is now 25 years old, and has been esteemed, by judges, one of the finest animals of that species ever bred. She now lives in an asylum; a meadow full of keep, set apart to soothe her passage to the earth, for in the slaughter-house she is not to make her exit. She eats but little, and yet retains upon her back, which is now a yard over, broad cushions of fat. She seldom moves: she stood like a statue while I went round her, upon legs bowed at the joint like those of a decrepit old man in the last stage of his existence.

On our return towards Mr. Bakewell's house we were shewn the meadows, one of which had been watered by the little navigable cuts made in his grounds. (I call them navigable, for his turnips, in winter, are carried along these little streams from one ground to another.) It was a dry time, and the difference in the appearance of two pieces which adjoined each other, one watered and the other not, was astonishing; that which had been watered had produced two crops of hay that season, and the other was in a state of barrenness.

In the slaughter-house we were shewn one of the finest sheep that was ever bred from Mr. Bakewell's flock. It is preserved in salt, and hangs up by another esteemed valuable sheep, of a different county bred. We were told that they were fed together on food of the same quality, and quantity if they chose it; but the difference is amazing; one had a capacious stomach, &c. which might contain the entrails of a large *Lincolnshire sheep*, the other scarcely those of a common lamb. One had a neck as long as a horned sheep; and the other's head, seemed without neck, stuck in its shoulders. In short the difference struck me greatly; and so did the conduct of the person please me who attended us: upon his being asked by one of the company what county bred the other sheep was of, he modestly requested to be excused from replying.

We were shewn also Mr. Bakewell's famous bull; but it was an animal that I rather chose to see at a distance than at hand. I consequently did not touch his fine carcase, nor thought those safe who did.

I feel a strong impulse to give something here from Mr. Marshall's Rural Economy of the Midland Counties; he having honoured Leicestershire with some peculiar marks of distinction. And as I consider Dishley the seat of that empire and source which has given vigour to improvement in the management of live stock and agriculture in various parts of the kingdom, but more especially in this county, it may not be improper.

Mr. Marshall calls the midland district, of which Leicestershire is the most considerable part, a fertile tract of country. He says, set "The rocky points of the forest hills apart, the county contains no barren surface; it has not, perhaps, one acre worth less than 5s. and but few less than 10s. an acre. The entire county is not at the present rental value of lands worth much less, on a par, than 15s. to 20s. an acre: an estimate which I believe no other county will bear, Rutlandshire excepted."

In page 192, on *Sod-draining*, he speaks thus handsomely on a gentleman at Ibstock. "Mr. Paget, a superior manager of the highest class of yeomanry, made himself master of the art, taught it to his labourers, practised it on an extensive scale upon his own estate, and has sent young men of his instructing into various districts as sod-drainers. How fortunate (says he) for rural affairs, when genius becomes assisted by science and self-practice! What may not be expected from professional men of this description!"

In page 284 he says, Mr. Bakewell of Dishley stands first in this quarter of the kingdom, as an improver of *grass land by watering*. The great stroke of management, in this department of Mr. Bakewell's practice, which marks his genius in strong characters, is that of diverting to his purpose a rivulet or small brook, whose natural channel skirts the farthest boundary of his farm; falling, with a

considerable descent, down a narrow valley; in which its utility, as a source of improvement to land, was confined.

“ This rivulet is therefore turned at the highest place that could be commanded, and carried in the canal manner round the point of a swell, which lies between its natural bed and the farmery; by the execution of this admirable thought, not only commanding the skirts of the hill as a site of improvement by watering; but supplying, by this *artificial brook*, the house and farm offices with water; filling from it a drinking-pool for horses and cattle, and other purposes.” Mr. Marshall tells us, that Mr. Bakewell once had it in contemplation to make a flat-bottomed boat to navigate his turnips from the field to the cattle-sheds; “ but, finding it not easily practicable, his great mind struck out, or rather caught the beautifully simple idea of launching the turnips themselves into the water, and letting them float with the current! Mr. Bakewell is, in truth, a master in the arts, and Dishley, at present, a school in which it might be studied with singular advantage.

“ Mr. Paget, of Ibstock, is also a proficient in the science and art of watering grass lands on the the modern principle. He cuts a considerable quantity of hay, annually, from lands which have received no other *manure* than *water* during the last forty years. A striking instance this, that water is not merely a stimulus or force, as some men conceive it to be; but communicates some actual nutriment to the herbage.” He mentions also Mr. Moore of Appleby, and Mr. Wilks of Meeham, as having made successful trials of this method of watering grass-lands.

Speaking of live stock (page 294), he says, “ The breed of horses in the midland district is allowed to be on the decline. Its breed of cattle is probably at its height; and its sheep at present are so near perfection, that it is not probable they should receive *much* improvement. Beside, the grand luminary of the art has passed the meridian, and, though at present in full splendor, is verging toward the horizon.”

Speaking of horses in the midland district, Mr. Marshall remarks that, "The handsomest horse I have seen of this breed (the Leicestershire black cart horse), and, perhaps, the most picturable horse of this kind ever bred in the island, was a stallion of Mr. Bakewell, named K. He was, in reality, the fancied war-horse of the German painters; who, in the luxuriance of imagination, never perhaps excelled the natural grandeur of this horse. A man of moderate size seemed to shrink under his fore-end, which rose so perfectly upright, that his ears stood (as Mr. Bakewell says every horse's ears ought to stand!) perpendicularly over his fore feet. It may be said, with little latitude, that in grandeur and symmetry of form, viewed as a picturable object, he exceeded as far the horse which this superior breeder had the honour of shewing to his Majesty, and which was afterwards shewn publickly some months in London, as that horse does the meanest of the breed. Nor was his form deficient in utility. He died, I think, in 1785, at the age of 19 years."

Mr. Marshall pays Mr. Bakewell some high compliments as a breeder of horned cattle and sheep; and enumerates the following respectable ram-breeders as leading men in the midland district, favourers of the new *Leicestershire* or *Dishley* breed.

Mr. *Stubbins* of Holm; Mr. *Paget* of Ibstock; Mr. *Breedon* of Ruddington; Mr. *Stone* of Quarndon; Mr. *Walker* of Woolsthorp; Mr. *Bettison* of Holme; Mr. *White* of Hoton; Mr. *Knowles* of Naileston; Mr. *Deverel* of Clapton; Mr. *Princess* of Croxall; Mr. *Burgefs* of Hugglefcott; Mr. *Green* of Normanton; Mr. *Robinson* near Welford; Mr. *Moor* of Thorp; Mr. *Ajley* of Oddeston; Mr. *Henton* of Hoby. "Had the Dishley sheep," says Mr. Marshall, "twenty years ago, been judiciously distributed over the district, and had been on all occasions *permitted to speak for themselves*, it appears to me probable, that there would scarcely have been a sheep of any other breed left in the midland district."

Mr. Bakewell, I apprehend, is not in the habits of being pleased with trifling compliments; but this is an opinion which a great man may receive with some degree of pride.

“Mr. Bakewell, we are informed, has actually let a Ram to three farmers for the purpose of covering 800 ewes for 1800 guineas, a fact almost incredible.”  
*Leicester Journal, 1790.*

“This village did anciently belong to the monastery of Gerendon adjoining to it; and after the dissolution of the monastery it was granted by King Henry VIII. to Thomas earl of Rutland, whose heir now enjoys the same.

“Ecclesiæ de Dixley patronus abbas Leic’; persona Ricardus institutus per Hugonem nunc episcopum Lincoln; solvens dicto abbati dimid. mercam ab antiquo. Et percipit ecclesiæ de Dixley duas marcas de domo de Gerendon, pro quibusdam decimis ab antiquo.  
BURTON.

## H A T H E R N

lordship is divided property. Sir William Gordon is a principal proprietor, and lord of the manor.

The village stands partly on the turnpike road to Derby. It contains 180 dwellings. Here remains an old cross in an open place near the church. On the wall of a house in this place, occupied, I think, by a Mr. H. Allenbrow, is a vine, which extends itself from the trunk one way 14 yards; and the other way it would have extended equally as far if it had not been cut. It struck me as a curiosity.

The church has a tower steeple, with five bells, a nave, and two side aisles, with a spacious chancel. An alabaster stone near the pulpit has figures of a man and woman on it; the inscription is partly covered with a seat. Matthew Trigge, rector, died in 1691. Nathaniel Palmer, Gent. died in 1691, aged 27. Helmesly Morrison died in 1780, aged 24. Andrew Glen, rector, died in 1732, aged 67

The Reverend Mr. Middleton died in 1765. Here are, besides that mentioned by Burton of Ralph Marshall and Elizabeth his wife, many old broken stones. In the church-yard Nicholas Low has a tomb to his memory; he died in 1761, aged 70. It says, "In him was lost by a sudden stroke a peaceable neighbour, and a tender, indulgent husband."

This register I did not see. I can assure the reader that I have been, some time since, tired of the task of seeking for registers. Some of them, I can also assure him, when found, are not worth the trouble and pains they required. Some of them are kept by the respective clergy, some by the parish clerks, some by churchwardens, some by the principal man in the village, some at a village a distance off, and some no one knows where. Some are kept according to the late act of parliament; some by an old method, and some few by no method at all.

"In the sixth of Edward I. Robert Fitz Allan, and William Nauncell held lands here of the honour of Winchester, whose heirs, in the 24th of Henry VI. enjoyed the same. In the 20th of Edward III. John de Segrave, John Nauncell, Robert Delhay, John Hotoft, Thomas de Thorpe, Thomas de Shulton, and the Abbot of Gerendon, held lands here of the honour of Winchester. In the 20th of Richard II. John lord Beaumont was seised of lands belonging to this manor.

"*Ecclesiæ de Hatherne patronus Abbas Leicestr. persona Ricus institutus per Hug. nunc episcopum Linc. solvens dicto Abbati 3 marcas & unam petram cereæ ab antiquo.*"