

**THE 'OLD' STATISTICAL ACCOUNT.**

The volumes are headed 'The Old Statistical Account of Scotland drawn up from the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes by Sir John Sinclair, Bart.'

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**Introduction**

It is now about twelve months since I first had the honour of circulating among the Clergy of the Church of Scotland a variety of queries, for the purpose of elucidating the natural history and political state of that country. My original idea was, to have drawn up from their returns a general statistical view of North Britain, without any particular reference to parochial districts. But I found such merit and ability, and so many useful facts and important observations in the answers which were sent to me, that I could not think of depriving the Clergy of the credit they were entitled to derive from such laborious exertions; and I was thence induced to give the work to the public in its present state.

It would have been more desirable to have had the accounts of the different parishes arranged by presbyteries or Counties, for the purpose of the connection, and to prevent repetition, where the circumstances of the different districts were nearly similar. But it was not to be expected that complete information respecting any one of the larger divisions of the Kingdom, could be at once obtained. It was therefore thought most advisable to throw as much variety as possible into the first volume, that the reader might be enabled to form some general idea of the state of the Kingdom even from this part of the Work. Whether the same plan is to be preserved in, or whether more regularity and connection are to be attended to in the future, will depend on the unanimity and dispatch with which the clergy transmit the necessary information to the author.

The variety of business, both of a public and of a private nature, in which I have of late been engaged, has prevented me from arranging or abridging, so completely or otherwise I should have done, the answers included in this volume; and, indeed that part of the work must be attended with considerable difficulty, unless the clergy in general will do, what many of them have very successfully executed, namely transmit their accounts prepared for immediate publication. Answers to the queries, however, which have been circulated, are still requested; but, where it is equally convenient, it is certainly more desirable that the clergy should consider the queries merely as a key to inquiry; and the models which are now set

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before them, together with the annexed analysis, will be of service in pointing out the best mode of drawing up the statistical account of the different districts.

It would be improper to conclude without returning my best acknowledgements to the clergy in general, for the attention they have paid to the different requisitions with which I have troubled them, and for the very polite and flattering manner with which they have personally addressed themselves to me on the occasion. The spirit and alacrity with which they have engaged in so laborious an undertaking must feel the utmost satisfaction from the reflection, that they have contributed to the foundation of a work, of which it may be truly said, in the words of a respectable citizen of the country, George Dempster, Esq. 'That no publication of equal information and curiosity has appeared in Great Britain since the Domesday Book; and that, from the ample and authentic facts which it records, it must be resorted to by every statesman, philosopher, and divine, as the best basis that has ever yet appeared for political speculation.'

Edinburgh. May 25, 1791.

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### **Analysis of the Statistical Account of the Parochial District**

As many of the clergy may be desirous of having a particular form laid down for drawing up the Statistical Account of their respective parishes, the following plan for that purpose is submitted to their consideration.

The name and its origin  
Situation and extent of the Parish  
Number of acres  
Description of the soil and surface  
Nature and extent of the sea coast  
Lakes, rivers, islands, hills, rocks, caves, woods, orchards etc.  
Climate and diseases  
Instances of longevity  
State of property  
Number of proprietors  
Number of residing proprietors  
Mode of cultivation  
Implements of husbandry  
Manures  
Seed-time and harvest  
Remarkable instances of good and bad seasons  
Quantity and value of each species of crop  
Total value of the whole produce of the district  
Total real and valued rent  
Price of grain and provisions  
Total quantity of grain and other articles consumed in the parish  
Wages and price of labour  
Services, whether exacted or abolished  
Commerce  
Manufactures  
Manufacture of kelp, its amount, and the number of people employed in it  
Fisheries  
Towns and villages  
Police  
Inns and ale-houses  
Roads and bridges  
Harbours  
Ferries and their state  
Number of ships and vessels  
Number of seamen

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State of the Church

Stipend, manse, glebe, patron

Number of poor

Parochial funds and the management of them

State of the schools and the number of schools

Ancient state of population

Causes of its increase or decrease

Number of families

Exact amount of the number of fowls

Division of the inhabitants

[1] by the place of their birth

[2] by their ages

[3] by their religious persuasions

[4] by their occupations and situation in life

[5] by their residence, whether in town or in the country.

1791- 1799 version – THE ‘OLD’ STATISTICAL ACCOUNT

[Author’s note – Markinch is Volume 12; pages 525 – 555. Rev. Thomson’s letter was returned during 1792]

**Parish of Markinch** [County and Synod of Fife; Presbytery of Kirkcaldy]  
by Rev. Mr John Thomson

**Name, Extent and Surface**

The parish church and village of Markinch stand upon the southern declivity of an eminence, or little hill, surrounded on all sides by a marsh; and from this insular situation, the left part of the name is obviously derived. Mark or merk, according to the most ancient spelling, has probably been prefixed, from the valuation put upon this inch, or spot of ground.

The greatest extent of the parish from north to south is five miles and a half; and, from east to west, about five miles, which may contain about 7000 acres. The form of the parish is very irregular, being deeply indented in several places by the adjacent parishes. The village of Dubbieside, which contains near 200 inhabitants and lies upon the Firth of Forth, on the west side of the mouth of the Leven, forms a part of this parish, though totally detached by the intervention of the parish of Wemyss.

Markinch consists of four straths or valleys, running from west to east, all of them approaching, and some of them joining one another on the east. These straths are separated by gently swelling hills, which rise to no great height, and which are usually called laws. These hills, or laws, corresponding to the general rise of the country from south to north, gradually rise above one another; the more northerly always overlooking those that lie towards the south. The hill on the northern boundary is in a line with the Lomond Hills, and forms a part of that track of high ground, which, extending from west to east, divides the northern from the southern part of the county.

**Soil, Climate and Diseases**

The soil of this parish is various. A small part consists of strong clay, and deep loam. A larger proportion, of light loam is rich and fertile. There is also a good deal of dry, gravelly, sharp land which, in moist seasons, yields plentiful crops. But the largest proportion is rather wet, and lies on a cold, tilly, or clayey bottom. Of this kind some is sufficiently deep, and, in warm springs and summers, abundantly productive. But other parts of it are thin, and, when allowed to lie untilled, apt to run into heath, or course bent grass.

The whole parish almost is arable, except a moss on the north side, and some swampy ground, which has been planted with fir, and other kinds of barren timber. This parish has little shelter from the storm in any direction, but suffers most from the easterly winds, which, in the spring months especially, are exceedingly cold and

penetrating. The climate, however, is tolerably mild and temperate, and the inhabitants generally healthy.

Rheumatism, consumptions and hystericks are the most prevailing diseases. Nervous fevers are not uncommon, though seldom epidemical. During the incumbency of the present minister, several instances of scrofula [author's note – tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands] and cancer have occurred. The smallpox is frequently very fatal. Though a few individuals have been reconciled to the practice of inoculation, yet the prejudices of the bulk of the common people against it continue so strong, that it has not yet been generally introduced. Children from 4 – 10, or 12 years of age, seem particularly liable to worms, particularly that species, called the teres, or long round worm. Some young people in this place have been known to void, in the space of 24 hours, upwards of a score of these worms, some of them 10, and 12 inches long.

### **Rivers**

The River Leven, which issues from a large lake of the same name, lying about five or six miles to the westward, runs through this parish, and empties itself into the Firth of Forth, at the town of Leven. The Orr is another considerable river, rising from a loch or lake, of the same name, also to the westward, and runs through the southern part of the parish, joining the Leven about three miles below the parish church. In both these rivers there is a plenty of different kinds of fish. Salmon, pikes, and burn trouts are the principle kinds. There is also to be found in them a species of trout, of a tolerable size, the flesh of which is red, resembling that of salmon, of a fine flavour, and very delicate. Those who are fond of the amusement of angling can never miss excellent sport in these rivers at the proper seasons.

### **Roads and Bridges**

The great north road from Kinghorn to Cupar and Dundee runs through the west part of the parish; and, since the late Turnpike Act for this county was obtained, has been mostly put into excellent repair. On this road, there are several bridges within the bounds of this parish; but three only of such consequence as to deserve notice; one over the Orr; another over Lochty, a small water about a mile north of the Orr; and another over the Leven, near Balbirnie. The first of these is very old and narrow. It was built about 260 years ago, by James Bethune, Archbishop of St. Andrews, son to the Laird of Balfour in this Parish. The other two have been lately re-built. There is another line of road, which leads from Kirkcaldy to Cupar and passes through the eastern part of the parish. On this road there is an excellent bridge over the Leven at Cameron. There is also a public road, which leads from Kinross to Leven, Largo and the east coast, and nearly divides the parish in the middle. It is in tolerable order, though not yet in the same state of repair with the two just now mentioned. On the west road, there is a toll bar near the northern extremity of the

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parish; and another on the east road at Windygates, near Cameron Bridge. Besides the bridges already taken notice of, there is one over the Orr, about a mile and a half above its influx into the Leven, one at Balgonie, and the other at Balfour. The by-roads are in a very bad condition. In winter and in wet weather, even during the summer months, they are, in many places, almost impassable. This evil the parish of Markinch feels in common with the rest of the county; to remove which, some effectual remedy ought surely to be, as soon as possible, applied. Good toll roads are doubtless highly advantageous to a country; but the advantage will be almost entirely confined to passengers, and those who live in the immediate neighbourhood, unless a ready communication with these be opened up for the remoter parts of the county, by putting the by-roads into a proper state of repair.

### Population

Markinch is, perhaps, one of the most populous country parishes in Fife; the number of souls amounting to nearly 2800. The return to Dr Webster in 1755 was only 2188. Hence there is an increase of about 612. This extraordinary population may be accounted for from the following circumstances: There are seven villages in the parish, which contain about 400 families; and two large collieries, which employ a great number of hands. The feuars are very numerous, being about 120. There are a great many mills, of different kinds, upon the Leven. Every farm of any considerable extent has a cottage town upon it; and there is a great proportion of the heritors resident, who, besides the extraordinary number of servants they keep, employ a much greater number of labouring people, than tenants could be supposed to do.

Since the year 1785, when the present incumbent was admitted, the population of the Parish has increased about 200, owing to the re-erection of Balgonie Colliery, which had not been wrought for 40 years, and a great many new feus, granted lately by the Earl of Leven. Within the last six or seven years, about 80 new houses have been built, and eight rebuilt, besides a great many more, which are building. The expense of these buildings may amount to £4000 sterling. The division of the inhabitants and any other circumstance relative to the population of the parish, necessary to be remarked, will be seen in the statistical table hereto annexed.

### Heritors and Rent

The principal heritors are the Earl of Leven, Mr Balfour of Balbirnie, Colonel Wemyss of Wemyss, Mr Bethune of Balfour, and the Countess of Rothes. Besides these, there are several other respectable gentlemen who possess considerable property in the parish, and a number of small proprietors. The number of the whole is 21, of whom 11 are resident. The valued rent amounts to £10,456 5/- scotch money. The real rent cannot be exactly ascertained as many of the proprietors are resident, and have a considerable quantity of their land in their own possession. As nearly as it can be calculated, it may amount upwards of £5000 a year. Within the last 20 years,

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the rents have risen above £2000 a year; and they are daily advancing. The rent of land, let in large farms, is from 10/- to 22/- the acre. Small pieces of ground, if of superior quality, or in the immediate neighbourhood of the villages, will bring from 30/- to 40/- the acre.

### Agriculture

Some years ago, the method of farming, in this parish, was extremely rude, slovenly and unproductive. Excepting the pleasure ground around gentlemen's seats, and some enclosures, which the residing proprietors kept in their own hands, the whole parish almost lay open and unenclosed. Few turnips were sown; and very little ground laid out in clover and rye grass. The land was ill-tilled; no pains taken to make, or to keep it clean, and the scanty allowance of manure injudiciously applied. In consequence of this, the grain was of an inferior quality, and brought a lower price at the market. But of late, by the example of the gentlemen, who begin to pay more attention to the improvement of their estates, by the regulations fixed in the new leases, and by the exertions of some intelligent, substantial and enterprising farmers, agriculture begins to assume a more prominent aspect. Though much of the parish still lies open, enclosing is going on very rapidly. The turnip husbandry becomes more and more extensive every year. A great deal of land is sown with clover and rye grass. More attention is paid to fallowing, and cleaning; and more judgement shown in cropping the lands. The judicious farmer keeps more of his land for hay and pasture, and less tillage than formerly; by these means, as well as by the quantity of turnips raised, and consumed upon his farm, the quantity of manure is increased, and he enabled to do more justice to his grounds. The use of lime too, as a manure is becoming very general. One tenant lately laid upon his farm, upwards of 1500 bolls of shells or unslacked lime, in one season. The Scots plough is still used by many, but its construction has been much improved, by which means it is rendered easier for the horses, and makes better work, than formerly. However, the English plough, with the curved mould board, of cast metal, is coming fast into use. Where the land is dry and clean, a couple of horses are only yoked into the plough, and the man who holds the plough, drives the horses: but in wet, deep, and strong land, cattle are still used along with the horses. This method is certainly very proper, for such a soil; as the steady, deliberate step of the cattle gives a due check to the hurry and impatient ardour, natural to horses, in wet deep ground. Though improvements in agriculture are making considerable advances, yet there is one bar, which, unless removed, must greatly retard their progress and prevent their ever coming to perfection. I mean the disinclination of the proprietors to give leases of a sufficient length of time. To enclose, and subdivide and clean, and manure to purpose, a farm of any considerable extent would require from £500 to £1000 but there are few farmers who would risk such an expense upon a lease of 19 years. To accelerate the improvement of land, and to bring it to its highest state of cultivation, the proprietors must either encourage the



exertions of the farmer, by granting longer leases, or take the trouble and expenses upon themselves.

### Produce

Oats, and barley, or blanded bear, are the prevailing crops. Blanded bear, or rammel, as the country people here call it, is the produce of barley and common bear sown in a mixed state. These are distinguished by the form or structure of the ear, the barley having only two rows of grain, and the common bear six. Barley is a stronger and larger grain than the bear. It lies longer in the ground before it springs, and is later in ripening. And the same difference is observable, when they are made into malt. It is remarkable, however, that when barley and common bear have been cultivated, for some time, in a mixed state, they spring, and ripen, and malten equally, and little difference in point of strength or size is discernable. This is probably owing to the pollen of the two species mixing and falling indiscriminately upon both, when the plant is impregnated, and thereby producing a sameness in the quality of the grain, whilst the external form of the ear of each is preserved distinct.

Corresponding to this idea, the blanded bear holds a middle place, in point of quality, between barley and common bear. Though inferior to the former, it is of better quality than the latter. This mixed kind of grain is wearing out, and the culture of clean barley becoming more general. Till lately, little wheat was sown in this parish: at present between 80 and 100 acres may be raised annually. It is doubtful, however, when the nature of the soil, in general, is considered, whether it would be advantageous to the farmers here, to push the cultivation of wheat to any considerable extent, at least, till the improvement of the ground is brought to a higher degree of perfection than it is at present. Nearly as much land may be employed in raising pease and beans; and upwards of 100 acres for flax. It may be proper to observe here, that whilst improvements of other kinds have been attended to, the culture of flax still continues to be conducted in a very injudicious and unprofitable manner. The farmers, besides sowing a quantity for themselves, their servants, and harvest reapers, let so much of their land to others, who either are adventurous in that article, and raise considerable quantities, or who raise it solely for the use of their own families. Little attention is paid either to the choice of the soil, or the preparation of the ground; and of course, whilst the product is small, generally not above two, and sometimes not above one tron stone, from the peck of feed, the land is scourged, and a great deal of extraordinary labour and manure necessary to fit it for a succeeding crop. Potatoes too are raised in large quantities. Besides what every farmer plants for his own use, all the cottagers upon the farm, and many of the inhabitants of the adjacent villages, take as much land for potatoes as they can plant with their ashes, and what dung they can procure; and for this, they either pay money, or labour in harvest. The rent at which land is let, for flax or potatoes, is generally from £3-£4 the acre; and when let in small quantities, it is from 15d to 18d the 100 square yards.

### **Cattle**

The breeding of horses, and particularly of black cattle, has of late become an object of general attention. Most of the principal farmers, besides rearing young cattle, graze in summer, and feed upon turnips in winter, a considerable number for the butcher. Formerly, every farmer, almost, kept a quantity of sheep: but now they are totally banished, except a few, which some of the residing proprietors breed for their own use, and these are mostly of the large white faced kind. The farmsteads, with a few exceptions, are ample and commodious, and every farm of any considerable extent, has a cottage town upon it. This is of great advantage to the farmer; as it enables him to furnish a house and garden, or kailyard, to such of his men servants as are married; and the other houses he can let on such terms, as to secure the labour of the cottagers in harvest, or at any other season, when extraordinary assistance may be necessary.

### **Mills and Miltures**

There are a great many corn mills in the parish; every heritor of any considerable property, or who has the command of water, having a mill upon his estate to which his tenants are usually thirled. The miltures are very high, amounting to one 13th part of the value of the grain carried to the mill. For this, it is true; the mill master does a great deal of duty. He carries the grain from the farmer's barn, dries, and grinds it, and brings it home.

### **Manufactures**

On the Leven, near Balbirnie Bridge, a manufacture of linseed oil hath been established for a good many years, which hath been carried on to a considerable extent. This manufacture is not only profitable to the manufacturers themselves, but advantageous to the country around, as it furnishes a ready market, and ready money, for all the linseed produced in the neighbourhood, which, being unfit for sowing, could not turn to account any other way – there is also in this parish, a bleachfield, where a large quantity of cloth is whitened every year. It is under the best management, and gives general satisfaction. In the village of Markinch, a stocking manufacture has been set on foot lately, and promises to do well. Some time ago, a considerable quantity of brown linen was manufactured for sale. But of late, that kind of work has been mostly relinquished, and the weavers, not engaged in country work, have been employed by the great manufacturers on the coast, in making checks and ticks, and from the flourishing state of these manufactures, and the extraordinary rise of wages, the number of weavers hath greatly increased. There are a few who carry on business for themselves, on a small scale, and employ from 6 – 12 hands. Manufactures of different kinds, particularly of spinning and weaving, might be carried on in this parish with much advantage. The water of Leven affords many excellent situations for machinery. Coal is at hand, and abundant. There is great

plenty of good freestone for building; and, therefore, should any man of ability and enterprise set a business of this kind on foot, it might be highly beneficial to himself, and to the country around; and would be well worthy the countenance and encouragement of the gentlemen in the immediate neighbourhood; as; by employing a number of hands, it would furnish a ready market for the produce of their estates, and of course, heighten their value.

### Ecclesiastical State

The church of Markinch is a very ancient place of religious worship. It was given by Maldvinus, Bishop of St. Andrew's, to the Culdees in the 10th century. Towards the end of the 12th century, it was mortified to the Priory of St. Andrews, by Eugenius the son of Hugo, a second son of Gillimichel Cuff, the 4th Earl of Fife, which deed was confirmed by a charter of King William. From this Eugenius, the family of the Earl of Wemyss is supposed to have sprung. About the beginning of the 17th century, the small parsonage of Kirkforthar, belonging to Lindsay of Kirkforthar, a cadet of the family of Crawford, was suppressed and annexed to Markinch. The ruins of the church of Kirkforthar are still to be seen: they stand in the middle of the old churchyard or burying ground, which is enclosed by a wall; and there many of the people belonging to that district still bury their dead.

The King is patron. The living consists of 128 bolls of victual, Linlithgow measure, half meal and half barley, and £500 scotch in money; including £100 scotch for communion elements, besides a manse and eight acres of glebe. In the year 1636, the stipend received a small augmentation on account of the annexation of Kirkforthar. Since that period, it has been but once augmented, and the augmentation got was only £20 of money, and the conversion of some oats into meal. Among the predecessors of the present incumbent was Mr Tullidelph, afterward Principal of the College of St. Andrew's.

There is no seceding meeting houses in this Parish. The great body of the people continue steadfastly attached to the established church, about one sixteenth part only having joined the different sectaries.

### Schools

There is one established schoolmaster in this Parish. He has a good house and garden, with a salary of £10 a-year. The school fees are, 3/- for teaching Latin, 2/6d for arithmetic, 2/- for writing, and 1/6d for English. And, as the village of Markinch, and the country in the immediate neighbourhood, are very populous, the emoluments are considerable. Including precentor's fees and, other perquisites, they may amount to £50 a year.

Besides the established school, there are six private schools in different parts of the Parish, the most considerable of which, is fixed at the Coaltown of Balgonie. This is under the immediate patronage of Lady Balgonie, who has built, at her own

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expense, a school house, and a house for the schoolmaster, and by the encouragement she has afforded, and the personal attention she has paid to it, has greatly contributed to its prosperity and success. Her Ladyship has also established, at the same place, a school for teaching young girls to sew, and has provided a house for the mistress, with an apartment for teaching, and has given such encouragement, as to induce a woman of character and abilities to undertake the management of it. At these different schools, upwards of 200 children are constantly taught, almost all of whom belong to the parish.

### State of the Poor

There are at present twenty poor people on the roll, who get regular supply every week; besides several others, who are assisted occasionally as their necessities require. The sum extended annually for this purpose, is about £60 sterling, arising from a fund of £320, the weekly collection at the church door, and the dues of the mortcloths. There are no begging poor belonging to the parish.

### Prices of Grain and Provisions

For some years past, the average price of wheat has been 20/-, of barley 15/-, of bled bear 14/-, of common bear 13/4d, of oats 12/- and of oatmeal 15/- the boll. The wheat boll is nearly four Winchester bushels, the barley and oat boll six Winchester bushels, and the meat boll eight Dutch stone.

Beef, mutton, pork, lamb and veal sell commonly at 4.5d the pound, of twenty two ounces. At particular seasons, however, when these articles are plentiful, they fall to 3.5d, and at other times, when they are scarce, rise to 5d or even 6d the pound.

The price of all kinds of poultry has advanced greatly of late. A fed goose will sell at 3/6d, a turkey at 4/-, a hen at 1/- and chickens at 6d or 8d the pair.

Butter sells at 9d, common cheese at 3d and sweet milk cheese at 4.5d the pound. Butter and cheese are sold by the same weight with the butcher meat.

Some years ago, fish of all kinds were abundant and cheap. But now the price is more than doubled. This extraordinary rise is owing partly to the scarcity, and partly to the increased consumption of the Edinburgh market.

### Prices of Labour

The wages of day labourers, from March to October, are from 1/- to 1/2d, and for the rest of the year, from 8d to 10d, varying according to the nature of the work in which they are employed. In harvest, men get 10d, and women 8d a day, with their meat. When hired for the whole harvest, men have a guinea, and women 15/- or 16/- and their maintenance; and generally the privilege of some lint sown. Men's servants, who eat in the house, get wages from £5 to £7 a year, and maid servants from £2 - £3.

Farm servants, who furnish their own provisions, get 6.5 bolls of meal, and an allowance for milk, besides their wages. Sometimes they have a house and kailyard

and a cow fed through the year, and, in that case, their wages are not so high.

Tailors get 8d a day, with their meat; masons have 1/8d; and carpenters 1/6d. Within these last few years, the price of labour, in general, has advanced in the proportion of 3 to 2.

### **Inns and Alehouses**

Upon the west road, there are two excellent inns, the New Inn at Pittillockford and the Plasterers, near Balbirnie Bridge. These are superior to most, and equal to any in the county. There are ten alehouses in the parish which sell porter, whisky, and small beer. Some of these brew, and the rest purchase small beer from brewers, partly for sale in the house, and partly to supply private families with that article. Though alehouses are generally hurtful to the industry and morals of the people, these bad effects have not been sensibly felt in this parish.

### **Minerals and Fossils**

In the estate of Balbirnie, there is an extensive bed of shell marl. The shells are mostly wicks [periwinkles] and muscles. When exposed to the air, they fall in a short time to powder. The medium thickness of the bed is 3.5 feet under a cover of 7 or 8 feet. This marl was discovered a great many years ago; and it is surprising, that such a fund of manure should have been neglected for so long a time, especially as there is level enough to drain it, at no great expense.

There is abundance of freestone in the parish and some of it in excellent quality. On the north side of the parish, there is a large moss, from which a considerable quantity of peat is dug every year. These are partly used by the poorer people in the immediate neighbourhood, and partly carried to more distant places, and sold for the purpose of kindling fires.

But what chiefly deserves to be mentioned under this article is the plentiful supply of excellent coal which this parish enjoys. Balgonie coal, the property of the Earl of Leven, was discovered and wrought upwards of 300, some say 500 years ago.

As far back as the year 1517, the Coaltown of Balgonie is mentioned in a scheme of division and valuation of the county of Fife, of that date. The name of the village evidently indicates, that it had originally built for the accommodation of the collier, or, because built on the ground where coal had been found and wrought. But since it had grown to such a consideration at the above mentioned period, as to be taken notice of in the general description and valuation of the county, it must have existed, and, of course, the coal must have been wrought at an early period, to a considerable extent, appears from the coal waste, which can yet be traced for upwards of three miles along the line of bearing, and which had been dried by a free level to the depth, at an average, of 14 fathoms.

It would appear, however, that when the free level coal was wrought out, the workings ceased. How long ago this happened, it is impossible to say. The grandfather

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of the oldest man living on the spot 60 years ago, had neither seen it wrought, nor had he seen any person who could tell at what period it stopped. In the year 1731, it was again set a-going by Alexander, Earl of Leven, who erected a water engine, which wrought two sets of pumps, with nine inch working barrels, and which dried the coal to the depth of 30 fathoms. In the year 1732 this coal was let to tacksmen, who carried it on for some years, but meeting with large hitches yielding much water, their engine was overpowered; which obliged the tacksman to abandon this spot, and erect a windmill at a little distance on the crop, leaving a sufficient barrier to keep off the water, which drained a small breast of the coal.

This mill wrought an eight inch bore 14 fathoms deep, which enabled them to carry on a more extensive winning, [whatever extent of coal is dried, either a free level, or an engine, it is called, in the language of the colliers, a winning i.e. gaining of the coal.] farther on the dip, than the old free wastes.

During this operation, George Balfour Esq. of Balbirnie, wrought up a level to the coal in his estate, anno 1740, which enabled him to undersell the tacksman of this coal; by which means, in 1743, they were obliged to give it up, there not being demand for both. Nothing more was done till the year 1785, when Lord Balgonie erected it again, by fitting the present engine.

Balgonie coal is within a mile and a half south east of the village, and Balbirnie coal within half that distance to the west. Both these collieries are too distant from a sea port for exportation; but the whole inland part of Fife, for many miles round, and even north to the River Tay, is supplied from them. The former has a water engine, with a wheel 26 feet diameter, which works two pumps to the depth of 30 fathoms, with 12.25 inch working barrels. What the late tacksman intended is now carried into effect by the present winning, which commands a very fine breast of coal in both seams. The lowermost seam is yet untouched with this winning. The main seam, now working consists of:

|  | Feet     | Inch     |
|--|----------|----------|
| A mixture of splint cherry coal and rough coal     | 3        | 0        |
| Stone  | 0        | 4        |
| Rough coal, which includes 9 inches of fine cherry | 3        | 0        |
| Stone  | 0        | 4        |
| Rough coal   | 1        | 2        |
| Stone  | 0        | 3        |
| Fine strong splint                                 | 1        | 6        |
| Fine cherry  | <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> |
| Total between roof and pavement                    | 9        | 11       |

The roof consists of hard blue till, about ten feet thick, above which are strong posts of freestone, some of which are very hard. The other seam lies ten fathoms deeper; it is said to be a very fine coal, seven feet thick, but has some small ribs of stone in it. The average output for the past four years is about 30 tons a day, and so

much is the case altered since 1743 that there is a great demand, and the consumption is daily increasing. This coal dips to the east at the engine, but to the south east after passing a large hitch about 500 yards from the engine pit, on the line of bearing at the crop, the dip, or declivity, is exactly a fathom in three; but, in the dip workings, only one fathom on four and a half; which gives ground to believe that it will last flatten altogether, and even crop out at the opposite point of the compass, which, if the case, will make it a very productive colliery.

Balgonie coal lies both in the Balbirnie estate, the property of John Balfour Esq. and in Leslie estate, the property of the Countess of Rothes, being one and the same seam: and is called Leslie or Balbirnie coal, according to the estate, in which the works are for the time.

But as almost the whole of it, level free, and more than half the under level are in Balbirnie Estate, it is generally known by the name of Balbirnie coal when this coal was first discovered, cannot now be known, but it appears to have been wrought at an early period near Balbirnie Burns, first by a free level, and afterward by some sort of pumps, at a place called pump stink, to the northward of Balbirnie House. Old pits can be here traced along the crop, but the period these were wrought, is unknown. About the year 1730, George Balfour Esq. of Balbirnie, a gentleman who had paid considerable attention to the study of mineralogy, began first to trace the strata by bores and otherwise, from these old wastes, through great part of his estate to the River Leven, nearly one mile distant; - then began at the river, and, by a stone mine across the metals, wrought into the coal, and thus made it level free to a great extent, about the year 1740. By this level, it was wrought from that date, till the year 1780. In sinking the first pit on the level, a seam was found 18 inches thick of the little coal, and through the whole held it is exactly 21 feet above the main coal everywhere – the same gentleman bored 12 fathoms through the main coal in search of other seams, but found none above three inches thick.

Balbirnie coal consists of two species, called the little coal and the great coal. The quality of the little coal is extremely good. It is a cherry coal, has something of the caking quality, as it works iron very well, and is the only coal in this part of Fife that will do so; for which purpose the very smallest particles of it are sold to the smiths on the coast of Fife, from Dysart to St. Andrews, and the whole inland part of the country, extending to 1000 tons annually, besides the quantity of great coal, in the state after mentioned. It varies in thickness from six feet to four feet. The distance between roof and pavement is generally the same. When a stone is found in the middle of the seam, the coal diminishes in thickness, as the stone increases, till at last, if the stone be very thick, the coal is so much thinned as to be hardly worth working.

This field of coal is not a regular one: it lies very nearly in the form of a horse-shoe; supporting it five or six times broader than ordinary, and the open space of the common size. At the place where first discovered, a little to the north of the River Leven, the dip was directly south. In working forward, the field divided in two; one

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level run toward the north west, another to the north east, and the crop was wrought till within twelve feet of the surface. The two branches of the level separated further and further, and the two crops did the same, leaving a space of many hundred of fathoms between, in which was neither coal, nor appearance of it: this space resembled the open part of the horse-shoe. The encreasing [sic] consumption of coal will appeal from the following state.

- From 1740 to 1763, the quantity of coal sold at Balbirnie appears to have been 42,135 loads, or 8,427 tons annually, which in 23 years is 192,811
- From 1763 to 1777, both inclusive, the average sales were 46,719 loads, or 9,343 tons annually, 140,157
- From 1778 to 1792, both inclusive, the average quantity was 54,660 loads or 10,932 tons annually, 163,980

[The loads in the above computation contain 27 stone Dutch weight each, which is one third more than the sale load, or load sold to the county. The former is known by the name of collier's load]

- In 1784, owing to a scheme of lowering the price of the coal to all who were more than ten miles distant from the coal works, there was an additional quantity sold, not included in the foregoing average, of 4,047
- Total number of tons sold on 52 years, 500,995

On the supposition, that the demand for coal should not increase above the average of the last 15 years, being 10,932 tons annually, but continue the same; and although one half of the whole field of coal were yet entire [which certainly is not the case], an equal quantity would be entirely exhausted in less than 46 years . But the increasing consumption must be immense, when it is considered, that during the first 40 years, there was no other coal work, except this, to supply this part of Fife, and that during the last seven years the coal of Balgonie has also been wrought, and has supplied the County with 9000 tons annually, notwithstanding of which, the consumption of this coal is continually on the increase.

Since 1780, three water engines have been erected upon this coal. The first works two pumps, 14 inch working barrels; the second, two pumps of 11 inches diameter; the third two pumps of 15 inches diameter, of the working barrel; and about 20 fathoms left from the coal to a mine in which the water is delivered five fathoms below the surface of the ground. Above rock is gravel, which admits the winter rains to pass through the numerous cutters in the strata, conveys it down to the coal, and is the great cause of such powerful engines being necessary to drain the coal. It is a pretty general opinion, that all coals are as good in quality, or better, in the dip than towards the crop. Also, that any coal once discovered, may be wrought to any depth from which it is possible to draw the water. But what has recently happened is this very coal, gives reason to believe that opinion, however general, to be erroneous; for, when the engines were first erected, from the favourable appearance of the surface of the ground, composed of flat and gently rising fields of



last extent, and from the extreme flatness of the coal, which did not dip above one in 12, often not above one foot in 20. It had the appearance of being almost inexhaustible, or, at least, that the under level coal would be much more extensive than the crop already wrought; but the very reverse of this was found to be the case. An engine erected at the trifling depth of 20 fathoms, in the short space of ten years from its erection, was found not only deep enough, but actually deeper than any coal in that field. In working up to the engine level, it was found entirely cut off in the dip by a gravel dike, composed of gravel and large bullet whin stones, all of them rounded as if they had been long tossed about in water. The level was pushed on through this gravel, till it was found impracticable to proceed with safety to the workmen: the coal was, therefore, wrought along the side of this dike, as deep as there was any coal, and in the progress of the work, the coal to the dip on the west side of the field, which this engine was erected to drain, not only turned out to be of bad quality, but its thickness was diminished by a hard stone which divided the seam in two, extending from one to four feet in thickness, so hard as only to be wrought with gunpowder; which added so much to the expense, that the coal could not be wrought with profit, and was therefore abandoned altogether, and the third engine erected on the east part of the same coal where the seam was found six feet thick, without any stone at all. The proprietor wrought up a level along the side of the River Leven, about half a mile in length, which lessened the lift of the engine five fathoms. In working up this mine, about 150 fathoms from the place where he intended to erect his engine, he found the metals on edge perfectly perpendicular; a little further, he found them dip one fathom in three, and that to the west, directly contrary to the dip of the coal, and there he found two seams of coal, with seven fathoms of stone between them; the first, 2.5 feet, and the other, three feet thick, dip one in three. About 50 fathoms farther, he found flat metal rising to the west, the proper rise of the coal in that part of the field.

These appearances gave him reason to believe the main coal did not extend far to the dip, but was either cut off by these edge metals, or would be found on the dip separated by a stone into two seams, and suddenly thrown out to the surface in the form of the two seams he had discovered in his mine, by a rise of one fathom in three, directly contrary to the ordinary crop of coal. In order to discover this, as soon as the engine was erected, a level mine was pushed on to the eastward: the coal was found to be perfectly good till he approached within 50 fathoms of the edge metals, where a stone made its appearance in the middle of the coal, one inch thick, six fathoms farther, it increased to 18 inches thick, and continued to increase till it was found impracticable to be wrought, and appeared fairly to divide the seam of coal in two, corresponding in thickness to the two edge seams he had discovered in the said mine. The coal continues flat, but it can hardly be doubted, that if the level is driven 20 fathoms further, it will rise the opposite way, one fathom in three. [since writing the above, an upset has been pushed forward, and the coal actually found to rise, as supposed above one fathom in five; and it will, no doubt, a little further on, rise one

fathom in three, and crop out at the surface; and the stone will increase in thickness, till it is found seven fathoms at the surface, and the main coal is thrown out there, in the form of the two seams, above mentioned.]

Since this is the case upon the east part of the field, it is not easy to account, why the same thing has not happened on the west part of the same field, where the gravel dike intervenes, and cuts off the coal in place of the edge metals; the probability is, that the edge metals are also there, and that the coal will terminate and be thrown out to the surface by them in the same way, though in this part the gravel dike seemed to be thrust in, between the first and the edge metals; and is of great thickness, as a trial was made at right angles, a hundred fathoms distant, and 17 fathoms deep, where, in place of the rock and ordinary metals above the coal, nothing but gravel was found; from which it may be concluded, that the dike exceeds 100 fathoms in thickness. How much more, it is hard to say; at the distance of another 100 fathoms, the edge metals are seen in this part of the field also, which destroys every hope of the main coal being again found beyond the dike. From what has appeared in the east part of the field, it seems pretty certain, that if the coal is found at all, it will be in the form of the two seams on edge, thrust suddenly up to the surface by these edge metals, and consequently of small extent and little value.

From what is above recited; it may be inferred, that it is not always safe to trust to the dip side of a seam of coal being of value, though the crop has been found good, which was the case here, the crop having been wrought for 40 years, and everywhere in the natural level found good, and yet the dip on the west half of the field has been exhausted in less than 12 years, at least, all that was found valuable in it; how long the dip in the east part of the field now working may last, it is hard to say, though it is scarce possible, allowing the quality to be good through the whole extent of the known field, that any coal will remain to work 50 years hence.

From the foregoing history of the two valuable fields of coal, and facts above recited, some very important conclusions may be drawn, viz.

1. The limited and small extent of the coal fields.
2. The increasing consumption of the coal and its limited extent, gives reason to apprehend its being totally exhausted.

The limited extent of all coal may be inferred from its being impossible to trace any, very far in the line of bearing. Balgonie coal may be ranked among the regular ones, as the line of bearings is the same with the general bearing of the strata in the greatest part of Britain, where they are not thrown out of their course by adventitious causes, such as dikes, mountain rocks of a different species from the strata that accompany coal, and sometimes by the walling and twisting of the coal metals themselves, which frequently alter the line of bearing, as well as the dip of the coal, to all the points of the compass. Such regular seams as this, with so considerable a dip, may be thrown out of their course by dikes and slips but generally keep the same line of bearing. The very flat seams, such as Balbirnie Coal, being much more

liable to wave and twist, till the dip and crop are in the opposite direction from the regular course of bearing. It may be worth inquiry, why the most regular of seams of coal can be seldom pursued in the line of bearing above a few miles, for the fact is, few or no seams in this part of Fife, reach above two or three miles in length at most, and many not half that distance; for instance, Dysart coal which has the same line of bearing with Balgonie, has been wrought from the seaside about two miles, where, nearer the water of Orr, it is entirely cut off and no more seen. About half a mile east, and one mile north, the south extremity of Balgonie coal appears, and keeps the same line of bearing, as well as resembles Dysart coal somewhat in quality, but not in thickness; Dysart coal being 22 feet, and Balgonie coal only nine feet thick; the declivity pretty much the same. At the distance of three miles, this coal, and all the strata accompanying it, is also cut off; and not the least vestige or appearance of that coal, or any other, has been discovered within some miles of it. Wemyss Coal, Methel, [sic] and Durrie coal, are as regular seams as either Dysart or Balgonie, but none of them can be traced farther in the line of bearing; they are all cut off in the same manner before they are two miles from the sea. The more inland coals distant eight or ten miles from the Firth of Forth, such as Burnturk, Pitscottie, Divan and Clatty, are situated on the sides of hills of small extent, the metals of which have no continued line either of bearing or declivity; and the coal in these situations consequently subject to all the irregularities ever found in coal works. Some of the seams are even seen to crop out quite round a small eminence. And even small as the extent of these fields is, the coal is found full of dikes, hitches, and all imaginable troubles; which render them scarce worth working. Beyond this, in the flat country, along the banks of the Eden, no coal has ever been discovered. And from this to the Tay, there are no strata ever discovered that indicate coal being there: nor are there sufficient symptoms even to encourage trials for coal, with any rational hope of success.

The Fife coals, even the most regular, being thus continued in the line of bearing, are comparatively of very small extent, compared with the idea a stranger has of them, on a slight view of the number of pits he sees at work on the various seams. Such a person, if unacquainted with the natural history of coal and its strata, is apt to suppose the whole country full of coal; the very dikes and interruptions in the bearing of the strata, increases the deception, showing, as he supposes, a still greater number of seams and extent of coal. For instance, a person unacquainted with the interruptions met within coal fields, sees Dysart coal, and Balgonie both at work, he imagines the one may be wrought north on the line of bearing, as far as the Lomonds, six miles distant, and the other south to the sea, and north to the Eden, whenever the proprietors choose to do so; and hence he concludes, both coals almost inexhaustible: but investigate the subject thoroughly by proper judges, and they will declare the attempt vain, to pursue the one further north, or the other either south or north, than it has already been done and what he imagined inexhaustible seams, may possibly entirely wrought out in less than 100 years.

I shall not attempt to account for the frequent interruptions in the line of bearing of the coal, and all other strata. I have only pointed out the fact, that neither coal nor any other strata whatever can be traced to any considerable distance, without such interruptions being met with.

What actually happened in working the dip of Balbirnie coal, may happen in a hundred others, where the probability of the dip being both good and extensive, cannot possibly be greater, than it was in that very coal, till it was actually tried. One fact seems to be established by it, that some coals do not extend to any very great depth from the surface. But after continuing to dip for some time, they rise the contrary way, and crop out to the surface on a point of the compass diametrically opposite to the former crop. Many could be pointed out which actually do so, though the greater part of the seams may reach to so great a depth, and may at that depth be so altered by dikes and slips, as to throw the opposite crop, or rise to such a distance, as often prevents its being perceived to be the same seam, though it actually be so. This example proves coal to be limited in extent in a different way. And that it is by no means certain that coal can be had in the dip, though good in the crop, and wrought there above 40 years. The increasing consumption of coal, and its limited extent, gives reason to apprehend its being totally exhausted. It seems to be the opinion of the publick, [sic] that coal is inexhaustible. Government appears to have adopted the same opinion, in allowing such immense quantities of coal to be exported to all the nations in Europe. It is greatly to be wished, that this opinion were well founded; but it is contradicted by incontrovertible facts. It is not above 200 years since coal came into common use, and it is highly probable the first 150 years of that period did not exhaust so much of it as the last 50 years. Examine all the coalfields, not in Fife only, but through all Britain, and it will be found that every part of them near to a seaport, and many of the inland seams of coal, are not only exhausted to the depth of the natural level, but almost all of them already wrought, and exhausting fast by fire and water engines, many of which are very deep. It will also be found; that the quantity already wrought is probably at least equal to the quantities yet to work of all the known seams of coal within the island. It might perhaps be an object worthy of being investigated by Government; for if the issue of their research should be, as there is a high probability it would, that there was not a sufficient fund of coal unexhausted in the island of Britain to supply the present demand for 200 years to come, it is probable they would think it proper to interfere and prevent the too rapid consumption of an article indispensably necessary to the very existence, not only of the capital and other great cities, but to almost every species of manufacture, and to the many thousand artifices employed in them, Such could not even exist without a plentiful supply of coal, in a country so destitute of wood as Great Britain is. The superiority which the possession of coal gives to her manufactures, on the failure of that supply, would be instantly transferred to those nations in Europe, possessed of a sufficient quantity of wood for their consumption.

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It is not difficult to account how Government, and the nation at large, are lulled into security on this point. The properties of coal have an interest in a great and immediate consumption. No matter from what it arises; immediate profit is the objective, whether from home or foreign market. The rest of mankind have little opportunity, and still less inclination to investigate a subject of which the greater part have a very superficial knowledge. It is not the less necessary that the alarm be given; the danger, upon candid inquiry, will not be found ideal. Great dependence is sometimes placed upon the discovery of new seams of coal, never before known; but if it be considered, that there is scarcely a seam of coal of any consequence in Great Britain, which has not been known to exist for half a century, and that scarce a new discovery of coal has been heard of during that period, to which is this to be imputed? Not to the want of trials, for of these numbers have been made without success; but as it is an established fact, that every seam of coal as well as all other strata, rise and crop out, at or very near the surface of the ground, there is a high probability that few valuable seams of coal could remain so long undiscovered. As in every extensive field, the chance is, that some part of the crop will approach so near the surface, as to be laid open by rivers, canals, rivulets in little glens, and not seldom the rise or outburst of the coal, will be seen in the form of a black dust, mixed with small particles of coal, in common ditches, where nothing is meant but the enclosure of the ground. Such appearances should, and, I suppose, generally are examined. By such means the greater number of coals already known, have been discovered. And though others may exist not yet discovered, there is little reason to suppose the number or extent of such undiscovered seams to be very considerable.

The extent of coal fields in Britain is very inconsiderable, when compared with the immense tracks that have no coal metals [or strata that usually accompanies coal], nor any appearance to indicate coal being contained in them. But the coal fields themselves are very far from containing coal everywhere. The county of Fife, for instance, is a coal field, and has been held out in a late publication, on the causes of the scarcity of coal, as containing an almost inexhaustible fund of that useful mineral, and as every where containing coal. No assertion could be more slenderly founded; it is probably much nearer the truth, that for every acre in Fife containing unwrought coal, there is not less than 50 that have no coal in them, nor any rational probability of any being found. That there is still much coal in Fife, is a certain fact; but if no other part of Britain is better stored with it, it is equally certain, that more than one half of the whole quantity of the kingdom is already exhausted. Add to this, that the remaining half must be wrought with engines at a vast expense; and it is not absolutely certain whether, in quantity and quality, it may equal that part of the coals already exhausted. To prove what is above alleged, would not, perhaps, be very difficult. Take all the coals, in Fife, wrought out, or now working, one after another, examine consumption, and the quantity of ground wrought out within the last ten years, and compare this with the quantity of ground which the proprietor supposed to

contain coal as deep as there is a possibility of working, it would immediately be known, supposing the consumption of the same, what number of years the remaining coal would supply the demand, at the same rate of consumption. Such an inquiry, I am afraid, would amount to a full proof that another century will consume the whole.

**Antiquities, etc**

Balgonie Castle, one of the seats of the Earl of Leven, is a fabric of great antiquity and considerable strength. The time when it was built cannot be exactly ascertained; but from the best information that can be got, it appears to be of the same age with the cathedral of St. Andrews, which was built in the twelfth century.

This castle is pleasantly situated on the south bank of the Leven, elevated about 36 feet above the bed of the river. It is of a quadrangular form, and stands upon an area of 135 feet by 105 feet. The open court within, is 108 feet by 65. Connected with the tower is a house of three storeys, built by General Sir Alexander Leslie, extending to the north east corner; and on the east side of the court is another house of the same height, built by the present Earl of Leven's grandfather. From the vaults under these new buildings, and the thickness of the walls of the lower storey, it appears probable that the old buildings had been greatly extensive, and that the new houses had been raised on the foundations of the old. On the south and west sides of the court, there is a high strong wall, which appears to be coeval with the tower: and without the wall there has been a large motte, the remains of which are still to be seen. The gateway is on the west side, beside which, and under the wall, there is a pit. There is also a dungeon, or a dark cell in the bottom of the tower. This castle stands in the middle of an oblong square, inclusive of 300 acres, fenced by a stone and lime wall. Near it there is a garden of about seven acres, enclosed by a wall of twelve feet high, and a great deal of fine old trees around. Balgonie, which anciently belonged to a family of the name of Sibbald, was purchased in the reign of Charles the First, by General Leslie, who was created Earl of Leven by that monarch in 1641. Towards the end of the last century, David, second son of George Earl of Melvill [sic], married the Countess and heiress of Leven, in consequence of which, the estates and titles of the two Earldoms came to be united in the same family, as Lord Raith, the oldest son of the said Earl of Melvill died without issue.

The tower, which stands on the north side and near the north west angle, is 45 feet by 36 over the walls, and 80 feet high. The top is surrounded with battlements, projecting about a foot beyond the walls. The roof, which appears to have been repeatedly repaired since it was first built, is raised in the middle, and between that and the battlements, it is flat, and covered with stones. The walls of the two lower stories, both of which are vaulted, are 8.5 feet thick: but above that, they are only seven feet thick. There is an apartment in it called the chapel, and, in the wall on the opposite side of the court, the ruins of a room are still to be seen, which was called the chaplain's room.

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The architecture of this tower is still very perfect and entire, and the third storey hath been lately repaired by the present Lord Balgonie. About half a mile to the east of Balgonie, and on the same side of the Leven, is Balfour or Balor, an old building, standing in the middle of some fine enclosures, and surrounded with a good deal of old plantations. This place gave the name of Balfour to a very ancient family, from which the Balfours in Fife, of whom there is a considerable number, it is thought, mostly sprung.

In the fifth of the reign of Robert the Second, John, Laird of Balgonie, dying without male issue, Robert Bethune, also of an ancient family in Fife, married his daughter, the heiress of Balfour, still, however, retaining the name of Bethune. From this house, several respectable families of the name of Bethune have descended. James Bethune, Archbishop of St. Andrew's and Chancellor of Scotland, his nephew David Bethune, Cardinal and Chancellor of Scotland, and the Cardinal's nephew, James Bethune, Archbishop of Glasgow, were all three of this house of Balfour.

On the west side, and about half a mile from the parish church, stands Balbirnie, which anciently belonged to Balbirnie of that ilk, but which, for some generations back, hath been in the possession of a family of the name of Balfour. A considerable part of the old house still remains, and is kept in good repair; on the south side of which, and connected with it, the present proprietor hath built a neat commodious modern house. The situation is rather low and concealed; but delightfully romantick [sic]. In front, there is a pretty extensive lawn, thinly and irregularly planted with different kinds of trees. The surrounding eminences, as well as all the low marshy ground near it, are covered with fine thriving plantations of barren wood. Besides the attention paid to the pleasure ground around the house, the present proprietor has of late greatly beautified, as well as meliorated his estate in the neighbourhood, by enclosing regular fields with belts of plantation; and by placing clumps of trees on the higher grounds, arranged and disposed in such a manner, as at once to please the eye, and to afford shelter to the adjacent fields.

The steeple of Markinch is another ancient building, and from the similarity of the workmanship, is probably of the same age with Balgonie Castle. It is about 15 feet square, and preserves its thickness till it rises to 80 feet high. From that to the top, it is about 24 feet, drawing to a point, in a pyramidal form. From its elevated situation, it is seen at a considerable distance in several directions; and forms the termination of a beautiful view from the house of Leslie, the seat of the Countess of Rothes, which stands about three miles to the westward of Markinch.

Markinch Hill is a beautiful object. It lies on the north side of the village, and is of an oblong oval form, and 200 yards in length. On the northern declivity there are six terraces of about 20 feet broad, and which extend the whole length of the hill, winding round the east end of it. They are evidently artificial; but nothing certain can be learned as to their original use and design. Two reports prevail; the one is, that the terraces were originally ditches, intended to strengthen an encampment, or military

post on the top of the hill; but that they have been levelled since for the purpose of tillage. The other report is that they were made to accommodate spectators, assembled to behold certain public games, performed in the plain below; which plain is called the play-fields to this day.

The publick [sic] road from Markinch to the north, passes the west end of this hill, and, on a rising ground, on the opposite side of the road, stands a broad stone about seven feet high, called the Stobb [sic] Cross. It is a very coarse piece of work, without any sculpture or characters on it that can lead to the knowledge of the design of its erection. Vulgar tradition says that it was erected to the memory of a gentleman, who fell on this spot, in a mortal rencounter with one of his neighbours. As this cross stands upon the very edge of the road, and about eight or ten feet above its level, it has been in danger of tumbling down, by the earth's falling away from it. The present Earl of Leven, therefore, caused it to be secured, by facing up the earth with a wall of stone and lime.

On the eastern extremity of the parish, in the farm of Duniface, mortified to the United College of St. Andrew's, by a gentlemen of the name of Ramsay, for the education of four bursaries at that College, there is a hill or eminence not unlike the one just now mentioned. On the north end of this hill, there is a spot of ground which rises higher than the rest, and is called the Maiden Castle, fenced on the south side by ditches, the vestiges of which remain to this day. Boethius calls it *'arx septinalis totidem soffis munita, olim possessio fisi dussi, cujus posreritas, per multa secula, earn tenuere.'* Some pretend it was a feat of McDuff, Earl of Fife, and that there was anciently a subterraneous passage from it to Brunton, which lies about a quarter of a mile to the east of Markinch church, and where Malcolm, Earl of Fife, had a castle. It is said that the entrance to this passage at Brunton was shut up lately as in the time of the late John Simpson of Brunton. Near the Maiden Castle a battle has been fought, probably between the Scots and Danes, as a great many stone coffins, with human bones in them, have been lately discovered in the immediate neighbourhood. In several other parts of the parish, coffins of the same kind have, at different times, been discovered. One, in particular, was found about seven years ago on the headlaw, between Markinch and Balgonie. It was a square form, made of four unhewn slabs of freestone, set edgeways, and covered with a broad stone of the same kind, which upon was laid a large unformed mass of stone, and above all, a heap or cairn of small stones. The bones enclosed in it were calcined.

### **Character of the Poor**

It would be sacrificing truth to complaisance, to say that there are no worthless or exceptionable characters in this parish. The number of such, however, is comparatively small. The great body of the people are sober, peaceable and industrious. Their attendance on the public ordinances of religion is punctual and exemplary, and their moral conduct correspondent to their notice, that the colliers of



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Markinch possess a respectability in point of character, to which few other colliers in the Kingdom can pretend. In them you see nothing of that gross ignorance, that roughness and barbarity of manners, that extravagance and disorderly behaviour, but too generally characteristic of this description of men. On the contrary, with a few exceptions, they are remarkably intelligent, attentive to the duties of religion, civil and obliging in their manners, sober, frugal and diligent; in consequence of which, they and their families live comfortably, and make a decent appearance. It deserves also to be mentioned, to the honour of this parish, that during the late ferment, when designing, factious, and turbulent men were endeavouring to disturb the public tranquillity, and to alienate the affections of the people from the mild and equal government under which they live, their loyalty to their king, and attachment to the constitution remained uncorrupted. They joined no discontented associations; they imbibed no seditious principles; but every man attended to the duties of his station, and left the modelling and mending of the constitutions to others, as a business beyond their sphere, and above their abilities.

### Statistical Table of the Parish of Markinch

|                               |      |  |     |
|-------------------------------|------|--|-----|
| Number of                     |      | Number of                              |     |
| Fowls                         | 2790 | Wrights                                | 16  |
| Males                         | 1364 | Smiths                                 | 11  |
| Females                       | 1426 | Shoemakers                             | 20  |
| Families                      | 653  | Tailors                                | 9   |
| Married couples               | 475  | Brewers                                | 4   |
| Widowers                      | 36   | Gardeners                              | 5   |
| Widows                        | 65   | Midwives                               | 2   |
| Average of marriages annually | 20   | Colliers, including overseers, drawers | 100 |
| Average of births             | 63   | There is no register of burials        | -   |
| Under two years of age        | 200  | Coopers                                | 2   |
| Between 2 and 10              | 538  | Bakers                                 | 3   |
| Between 10 and 20             | 524  | Wheelwrights                           | 2   |
| Between 20 and 30             | 469  | Flax dressers                          | 8   |
| Between 30 and 40             | 393  | Stocking-makers                        | 2   |
| Between 40 and 50             | 272  | Dyers                                  | 2   |
| Between 50 and 60             | 176  | Turner                                 | 1   |
| Between 60 and 70             | 147  | Shopkeepers                            | 4   |
| Between 70 and 80             | 58   | Male servants                          | 136 |
| Between 80 and 90             | 13   | Female servants                        | 120 |

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|                          |          |   |           |
|--------------------------|----------|---|-----------|
| Heritors                 | 21       | Labourers                                   | 65        |
| Residing heritors        | 11       | Horses above one year old                   | 383       |
| Feuars                   | 120      | Black cattle above one year old             | 1540      |
| Farmers                  | 60       | Sheep                                       | 300       |
| Teachers                 | 7        | Bleachfield                                 | 1         |
| Notary publicks [sic]    | 2        | Corn Mills                                  | 10        |
| Plasterer                | 1        | Lint Mills                                  | 7         |
| Weavers                  | 160      | Barley Mills                                | 4         |
| Masons                   | 24       | Waukmills                                   | 2         |
| Inns                     | 2        | Flour Mill                                  | 1         |
| Post-chaises             | 5        | Oil Mill                                    | 1         |
| Carts                    | 100      | Collieries                                  | 2         |
| Alehouses                | 11       | Coal engines                                | 4         |
| Rents of feuars property | £480 stg | Valued rent                                 | £871 7/1d |
|                          |          | Real rent of land belonging to the heritors | £5000     |

**SECOND STATISTICAL ACCOUNT of MARKINCH PARISH**

PARISH OF MARKINCH

PRESBYTERY OF KIRKCALDY

SYNOD OF FIFE

Writer: The REV J SIEVERIGHT, MINISTER.

**PART ONE - TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY**

**Boundaries**

Markinch is bound on the north, by the parishes of Falkland and Kettle; on the south by Dysart and Wemyss and on the east by Kennoway and Leven. The general form of the parish is quadrilateral, the lines of boundary being pretty regular, except on the eastern side, which is deeply indented by the parish of Kennoway. There has lately been published a well executed map of the parish by Mr James Frazer, land surveyor in Markinch.

**Name**

The church and village of Markinch are situated on the summit and declivity of a gentle eminence, which, at a remote period, has, doubtless been surrounded by water, but in more recent times, by a deep morass, which, though now drained, and in many parts covered with buildings, may still be distinctly traced throughout its original extent. If it is considered, then, that, at the commencement of the present era, the whole county was covered with a dense and impenetrable forest, - the appropriateness of the name will be sufficiently apparent, mark or maerk, in the language of Scandanavia, signifying a forest, and ynys or insch, in ancient Celtic, an island – hence the Celto-Pictish name Markinch or ‘island of the forest’.

The more ancient orthography is Merkinch. In west Goth maerke signifies a limit or boundary – the Anglo-Saxon, meark, the same, - thus, meark – land. Conftnium, fines terrae – but both, we apprehend, are derived from merk. Sylva, as the radical word – forest in ancient times often forming the principal boundaries between different countries and states, and their minor territorial subdivisions. This is one of the few words, which, with little variation in sound or orthography, are found in most languages, ancient and modern.

Within the insular limits we have thus described, are included a knoll or eminence on which the church stands, towards the south; and Markinch Hill, towards the north; - the two being connected by a sloping ridge, along the summit and sides of which, the primitive habitations were necessarily constructed; but since the drainage of the marshy ground, the village has extended itself on all sides, and now contains a population of 1300 in habitants. Being neither a Royal burgh

however, nor Burgh of Barony, [author's note – this is an incorrect statement as James Law was given a charter of Barony in 1673 by King Charles the Second] its annually chosen magistracy is but a nominal thing; while want of funds, and much more of the authority necessary to level an assessment, has hitherto prevented the adoption of those measures of internal police and embellishment, which are really indispensable to the health and comfort of a crowded and increasing population.

### **Extent**

The extent of the parish is about six miles in length by five in breadth. Its superficial area may be estimated at 10,200 imperial acres.

### **Topographical Appearances**

The general aspect of the country is varied and picturesque. From the Lomond Hills, as a background to the north, it slopes gently toward the south and east. The parish is intersected by four fertile valleys, watered towards the eastern extremity. The valleys are separated by corresponding ridges of low hills; each chain rising gradually above the other in the direction of the summit level. Nor are thriving and extensive plantations wanting to heighten the natural beauties of the landscape, - and the varied succession of hill and dale.

The proportion of wood is considerable, and being principally of the ornamental kind, and in the vicinity of gentlemen's seats and villas, it is so disposed as to produce the most favourable effect.

### **Geology**

In this department we shall be confining ourselves to a plain statement of facts, abstaining as much as possible from speculative conclusions, and avoiding all references to conflicting theories.

We first notice the remarkable range of low hills, composed of fine sand and water – worn stones, skirting the northern side of the valley of the Leven. These hills vary in height, generally according to their distance from the course of the stream, or lowest level. Those of them that are isolated and detached, form an acute angle with the axis of the valley, that is, supposing the valley of the Leven to run in a south-easterly direction, the eminences in question extend lengthways, almost due east and west. The southern slope will be found to be in almost all instances very gradual, while the declivity towards the north is as invariably bold and abrupt. Hence, if our observations are correct, we think the conclusion obvious, that these elevations have been generated by the action of a tidal wave, ascending in the direction of Loch Leven, and having a lateral action diverging from the firth of Forth, as the central line of direction of the great tidal stream. Hazarding the opinion, that these hills were formed by the action of an ebbing and flowing current, we find undeniable proofs of marine agency in the marl beds which lie within a few feet of the surface, at the

distance of less than a mile from the parish church. These beds vary in thickness from three to four feet, and consist entirely of marine shells, among which the mytilus, buccinum and cardium acuzeatum predominate. In connection with this fact, we have to notice the incredible numbers of water worn boulders, of all sizes and dimensions, found upon and near the surface or imbedded in the diluvial clay of which the topsoil is composed.

These rolled masses comprehend most varieties of the primitive rocks, among which, basalt, greenstone, and porphyry predominate. Granite, gneiss, and micaceous schist are next in abundance. None of these rocks are found in situ for many miles, and then only in a western direction. The clay, in which these boulders are imbedded, is nearly, if not altogether, devoid of organic remains, while their appearance clearly betrays long exposure to the action of a powerful current. Whence, and in what manner, these boulders were brought into their present position, and in such incredible numbers, it is difficult to conjecture; unless we may suppose that they have been transformed thither by a powerful current flowing from the westward, continuous in duration, rather than of the nature of a sudden and transient eruption. This conjecture derives countenance from the fact, that the boulders are imbedded in the clay at various depths, and that those of them that belong to the trap family, differ very materially in their character, from the great trap vein or dike by which the Parish is intersected from east to west, and which is of the porphyritic kind, spotted with nodules of sulphured iron, and with micaceous laminate. This remarkable dike is traceable from the Leven. About a mile south of the village, intersecting the Balgonie coalfield, in a straight line to Kingsdale, near Kennoway, where it is protruded. At the point where it crosses the Balbirnie coal basin, near Plasterers Inn, it is said to form a solid compact mass, thirty feet in thickness in approaching the trap. The coal is thrown up in a remarkable manner, till at last it is cut off altogether. A bore carried down to the depth of 100 yards on the south side of the dike, transversed successive beds of clay, sand and gravel, but no indications of coal or of rock of any kind were discovered. The trap is projected through the great bed of sandstone, on which the whole of this part of the country reposes.

### **Sandstone**

The consistency of this rock varies from a minute breccia to the utmost degree of fineness and hardness; the colour from a deep yellow to the purest white. The colouring matter is derived from the iron in a state of chromate, with which the superincumbent soil is strongly impregnated. The dip of the sandstone beds seems to depend almost entirely on accidental circumstances. The strata are found in all positions from the horizontal to the vertical. In many instances, it is found in what the quarrymen term lunearts, that is, in solid cone-shaped masses of immense dimensions, unstratified, and without cleavage in any direction. In this state, on being

broken up, the surfaces often present a blistered or sintry appearance. But this is peculiar to the fine-grained and harder qualities of the sandstone. The coarser sort is regularly stratified in layers of uniform thickness, easily separated by means of the wedge and lever. It is in this kind that organic remains are almost exclusively found. These remains consist of cacti, and trunks of trees protruded perpendicularly; the roots reposing sometimes on the coal beds below, but for the most part without trace of branches or leaves. Impressions, however, of the bark, branches, and leaves of trees are not infrequent on the surface of the strata

### Organic Remains

With regard to fossils, we may state that vegetable remains are found in the greatest abundance and variety in the softer bituminous and harder shales, and the slate clays. They comprehend principally impressions of the leaves and stems of plants, and are common, we believe, to the whole coalfield on the eastern shores of Fife.

### Mineralogy

Besides the concrete and stratified rocks already briefly enumerated, the department of mineralogy supplies specimens of rock crystal containing various extraneous substances. Crystals of quartz of great beauty are occasionally found in the sandstone and trap rolls; to these may be added, though more rarely, nodules of agate, carnelian, chalcedony and jasper. For more minute details on the geology and mineralogy of this part of the country, the reader is referred to Mr Landall's excellent prize essay on the geology on the east coast of Fife, 'Transcriptions of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland' volume 11, 1837.

### Ironstone

Ironstone is found in the parish in great abundance. Soon after the publication of the last statistical report, a company from Newcastle projected an ironwork on the Balgonie Estate. Much expense was incurred, and the scheme has a sufficient trial, but ultimately proved unsuccessful, and the enterprising individuals engaged in it suffered considerable loss. It has long since been abandoned. The stone, however, containing some portions as much as 80 per cent ore, has frequently been exported to the Tyne for smelting. At present the working of it interfered with a seam of coal, and is entirely suspended.

### Balbirnie Coal

The coal so denominated lies on both banks of the Leven, particularly on the estate of Balbirnie, but partly in the lands of Rothes and Coull, in one continuous seam. A portion of the field belonging to the Earl of Rothes has at different times been leased to the proprietor of Balbirnie, who possesses peculiar advantage for

## Statistical Accounts of Markinch Parish

working it, as the greater portion of the coal that is level free, and also more than half under level, are in the Balbirnie Estate. This coal was wrought at a very remote period, but not extensively previous to the year 1730, - when the nature of the field was more accurately ascertained by means of bores, - proceeding from the old wastes in the direction of the river, from whence a mine carried across the metals, rendered the field level free to a very considerable extent. In fact, no other means of drainage seems to have been resorted to for a period of forty years during which time upwards of 365,000 tons of coal are computed to have been raised and sold. The Balbirnie coal is now drained by means of water engines on the Leven; that on Coull by a steam engine.

The field is somewhat irregular in shape, but approaches most nearly the figure of an ellipse or horseshoe. It is what is called a trough coal. The dip of the Balbirnie seams is very irregular, on the east side it is sometimes 45 degrees, on the west 12 degrees, the seams are three in number, and the thickness is as follows:-

|                                      |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| First, upper coal, a soft cherry     | 1 foot 6 inches |
| Second, main seam, cherry and splint | 4 feet 6 inches |
| Third, under coal, cherry            | 2 feet.         |

The following is a section of the strata passed through in sinking a bore on the south crop, near Newton Bridge, about half a mile from the village of Markinch.

|                                      | Fathom | Feet | Inches |
|--------------------------------------|--------|------|--------|
| 1. Surface                           | 0      | 1    | 6      |
| 2. Sand, mixed with gravel           | 1      | 0    | 4      |
| 3. Brown clay, mixed with whinstone  | 7      | 3    | 8      |
| 4. Gravel bed                        | 0      | 4    | 6      |
| 5. Dark blue bleas                   | 0      | 1    | 0      |
| 6. Whitish fire clay                 | 0      | 2    | 6      |
| 7. White freestone with partings     | 2      | 3    | 8      |
| 8. White soft till                   | 0      | 2    | 7      |
| 9. Bleas, with gray freestone bands  | 2      | 1    | 1      |
| 10. Grayish freestone with partings  | 1      | 4    | 8      |
| 11. Dark-coloured parting            | 0      | 0    | 3      |
| 12. Gray freestone, with parting     | 0      | 3    | 10     |
| 13. Coal                             | 0      | 1    | 10     |
| 14. Black coloured till              | 0      | 0    | 5.5    |
| 15. Bleas, with gray freestone bands | 1      | 0    | 0      |
| 16. Blue coloured bleas              | 0      | 3    | 6.5    |
| 17. Coal                             | 0      | 1    | 0      |
| 18. Brownish freestone               | 0      | 1    | 2      |
| 19. Coal splint                      | 0      | 1    | 11     |
| 20. Soft blea parting                | 0      | 0    | 4      |
| 21. Coal                             | 0      | 0    | 3.5    |

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FATHOMS 21 1 1.5

But the strata vary in thickness, as well as the coal seams, at different points in the field. In general the depths from the surface to the different seams may be set down as follows: - From surface to upper seam, 17.5 fathoms;

To main coal, 23 fathoms;

To under coal, 30 fathoms.

At Balbirnie the engine is erected on the main seam, with a draft of 25 fathoms, two fathoms being cut below the coal for what is called a sump or well, so that there are no shafts 30 fathoms deep. Cuts are capped right and left from the bottom of the shaft to the upper and under seams, the depth being 25 fathoms, or 50 yards as noted above. This engine stands on the lowest part of the seam, the coal rising on either side of it. The whole field is thus rendered accessible to the miner, if we except about 20 acres of the lower seam which can only be drained by an addition of power to the water-engine, and by sinking the shaft seven fathoms deeper. Various bores have been made with a view to the discovery of new seams of coal, but without success. One in particular, from the pavement of the main coal, near the centre of the coal-field, was carried down to a depth of 67 feet 4 inches, till intercepted by a bed of stone, so hard, that in a whole week only six inches were bored through, and the attempt was, therefore, relinquished.

The average price of Balbirnie coal may be stated at 8/- per ton; but the price varies according to the quality.

The colliers, in addition to their daily earnings, are allowed a free house and garden. Coals for their own use are charged to them at the hewing rate. The following table will give a comparative view of the rates of wages for the years specified. We premise that a single collier is reckoned to hew an average of ten loads per day.

| Years   | Price per load | Wages per day |
|---------|----------------|---------------|
| 1770-79 | 2d             | 1s 8d         |
| 1780-89 | 2.5d           | 2s 1d         |
| 1790-99 | 2.75d          | 2s 3.5d       |
| 1800-09 | 3.5d           | 2s 11d        |
| 1810-19 | 3.75d          | 3s 1.5d       |
| 1820-29 | 3.75d          | 3s 1.5d       |
| 1830-39 | 3.75d          | 3s 1.5d       |

### Dislocations and Obstructions

The trap dike, by which the Balbirnie coalfield is intersected, has already been noticed under the section of geology, as well as its effects in throwing up the cutting of the coal seams. A similar vein of trap cuts off the coal to the north of Coull engine. Occasional hitches are met with in all parts of the field, raising or depressing the strata, but without offering any serious obstacles to the operations of the miner. The upper coal being only eighteen inches in thickness, and the difficulty of sufficiently



enlarging the galleries, from the nature of the strata in immediate contact with it, being very considerable, the men suffer severely from a confined and hampered position, and from bad air, so that their general health and appearance are thereby, in process of time, sensibly affected. Asthma and consumption are the complaints to which they are most liable, and at the age of thirty many of them look old men. Formerly, when engaged on the main seam, many reached the ages of sixty, seventy and eighty. Now, what with the thin seams, bad air, and an unguarded use of ardent spirits, it is rare to find an old man among them.

**Balgonie Coal**

The property of James Balfour Esq. of Whittingham has been worked for centuries. In the old valuation of the county in the year 1517, Coaltown is mentioned as one of ‘the pertinents’ of Balgonie. The waste may be traced for several miles along the line of bearing, and the coals have been exhausted in the same direction to a depth of fourteen fathoms, as far as the free level admitted. In 1731, a water engine was erected, which drained the coal to a depth of thirty fathoms, but in succeeding years, this engine was overpowered by the increased accumulation of water from hitches, and the tacksman to whom the field had been leased substituted a windmill farther on the crop. Operations were carried on in this way till the year 1743, when it was found impossible any longer to compete in the market with the Balbirnie coals, and the working was consequently relinquished. This suspension continued for more than forty years, till at last, in 1785, more powerful engines were erected, and the coal throughout the whole field rendered accessible to the former depth of thirty fathoms, but still only reaching to the nine feet or upper seam. This coal is presently worked at Thornton, near the bridge of Orr, by steam power. The Balgonie is known to be a continuation of the Dysart coal. The strata dip towards the south east, and consequently crop out in north westerly direction, at an angle of from 25 degrees to 21 degrees, or a rise of one in 2.5 or three; but the angle varies at different points; in the field at Thornton, for instance, the rise is only 7.5 degrees or about one in eight.

There are two seams of coal along the whole line of bearing; the depth on the level is from 25 to 35 fathoms to the first, or what is commonly called the nine feet seam, which consists of

|                     | Feet | Inches   |
|---------------------|------|--|
| 1. Splint coal      | 2    | 0  |
| 2. White Daulkstone | 0    | 6 hard at first, but falls when exposed to weather |
| 3. Spar coal        | 1    | 3  |
| 4. Same as second   | 0    | 4  |
| 5. Head coal        | 3    | 4  |
| 6. Stone as second  | 0    | 8 not wrought                                      |
| 7. Bottom coal      | 4    | 4 not wrought                                      |
|                     | 12   | 5  |

## Statistical Accounts of Markinch Parish

|                      |    |    |
|----------------------|----|----|
| Deduct 2, 4, 6 stone | 1  | 6  |
| Thickness of coal    | 10 | 11 |

But a material alteration takes place in the thickness of the Balgonie upper seam after crossing the hitch at Thornton. On the south or Dysart side of that point the total thickness increases to thirteen feet ten inches as follows

|                         | Feet | inches     |
|-------------------------|------|------------|
| 1. Splint coal          | 2    | 0          |
| 2. Daulk stone          | 0    | 6 roof     |
| 3. Spar coal            | 1    | 3 roof     |
| 4. Stone                | 0    | 4          |
| 5. Head coal            | 3    | 10         |
| 6. Mid stone            | 0    | 8          |
| 7. Bottom coal          | 5    | 2          |
| 8. Ground stone         | 0    | 8 pavement |
| 9. Ground coal          | 1    | 7 pavement |
|                         | 16   | 0          |
| Deduct stone, 2,4,6,8,2 |      | 2          |
| Thickness of coal       | 13   | 10         |

The second seam, commonly called the seven feet coal, lies ten fathoms below the nine feet coal above-mentioned, or to a depth of 35 to 45 fathoms on the level. It consists of: -

|                      | Feet | inches |
|----------------------|------|--------|
| 1. Head coal         | 1    | 2      |
| 2. Head stone        | 0    | 6      |
| 3. Bottom coal       | 1    | 10     |
| 4. Stone             | 0    | 10     |
| 5. Road coal         | 1    | 0      |
| 6. Stone             | 0    | 6      |
| 7. Rough coal        | 1    | 2      |
|                      | 7    | 0      |
| Deduct stone 2, 4, 6 | 1    | 10     |
| Thickness of coal    | 5    | 2      |

The common mode of working the coal at Thornton is what is technically termed 'stoop and througher.' The working rooms are thirteen feet wide, and the pillars 15 feet; the width of the rooms contracting on nearing the crop, or where the roof is insecure.

The average number of colliers employed may be stated at 30. They are paid at the rate of 2.5d per load of twenty stones Dutch, for large coal, which sells at 1/- per load. The small coal costs 1.75d per load for hewing and sells at 6d. The sale was originally confined to the country demand, but latterly the manufactories on the Leven and Orr waters, and in Kirkcaldy, have drawn their supplies from hence. With more powerful engines for drawing off the water, the coal seams on Balgonie may be

regarded as inexhaustible, as they dip to the east, and are never found to rise to the surface in a direction opposite to a line of bearing.

## **PART TWO – CIVIL HISTORY**

### **Antiquities.**

MARKINCH HILL. This remarkable hill, on the southern slopes of which the village is partly built, is an object alike interesting to the geologist and the antiquary. It is composed of a fine sand, intermixed with water worn stones, and rises to the height of about 100 feet above the ground level in the vicinity, extending in a continuous ridge from east to west about 300 yards. At either extremity it sinks abruptly, and is flanked by two smaller eminences, that to the west terminating in the marshy ground along the line of Balbirnie Park wall, while that on the east is separated from Dalginch Law by a deep and narrow ravine, through which Balbirnie burn flows. The southern slope of the hill is sufficiently gradual, but on the northern side it is naturally precipitous, and has been rendered more so by the labours of art. The whole of this side of the hill from the base upwards is cut into terraces, which seem to have been continued round its extremities. On that, towards the east, indeed, they may be still distinctly traced, but towards the west they are obliterated, the hill having been cut down, partly to allow a passage for the road, and partly for the purpose of obtaining sand and gravel. These terraces, six in number, are of an average breadth of twenty feet, and rise each above the other in regular gradation from ten to twelve feet. They overlook a level field of about twelve acres, which, before being drained, must have formed an impressive morass. There is no very definite tradition why or when these terraces were formed. The most probable conclusion is that they are the work of the Roman invaders, who, under Agricola, overran this part of the country, covering it with entrenchments and fortifications, as a basis for more distant operations. For advancing this opinion in preference to any other, our reasons are briefly these:

First, in a military point of view, and according to the modes of warfare then in use, the position is one of the strongest which the whole country affords. The natural advantage of its situation, indeed, must have rendered it nearly impregnable with but a handful of defenders, while, as a fortified camp, it was capable of receiving several legions.

Secondly, it forms one of a chain of similar fortresses, most advantageously situated for commanding the surrounding country, for mutual support and for keeping up a direct communication with the coast and with the interior.

Third. The extent of the works above described, the great amount of labour and industry required for their completion, and, above all, their form and regularity, so little in unison with the rude and derisory habits of the aboriginal inhabitants, and so unsuited to their savage modes of warfare; while in all these respects they very exactly characterise the enterprise and skill of their invaders, and the superior

advancement in the art of defensive warfare.

#### MAIDEN CASTLE

At the eastern extremity of the parish, and in the immediate vicinity of the village of Kennoway, are to be seen the vestiges of ancient fortifications, running along a narrow but somewhat elevated ridge of sand-hills, commanding the surrounding plain. In the case of an invasion from seaward this would naturally have been regarded as the first defensible position, being scarcely two miles from the mouth of the Leven, and forming the key to the interior of the country towards the north and west. Whether the Scots, Romans, or Danes were its first occupants it is now impossible to determine. That it has been the scene of some bloody conflict is evident from the number of stone coffins containing human bones that have been dug up in the immediate neighbourhood. Farther westward, in the direction of Markinch, weapons of war, peculiar to the Romans, have from time to time been found. The highest point of the ridge in question rises to the height of perhaps eighty feet above the small stream which runs at the foot of it. On this knoll, the Pretorium or citadel, known by the name of Maiden Castle, has stood. Its form has been that of a square, and it measures about thirty paces across. According to Boethius, this was the castle of Macduff, Thane of Fife. His description of it is sufficiently precise, and is valuable as the only plausible record concerning a spot, that has once evidently been of some importance. 'Supersunt inter Divi kenethi templum et Levenam amnem, eadem in regione, areis septemvallis olim septaetotidemque fossis uti nunc est videre, vestigia; ubi hujus clarissimi viri post eum vita functum posteritas longa secula habitavit.'

DALGINCH, which lies to the east of the village of Markinch, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, is the reputed site of another of Macduff's castles. Its more modern name is Brunton, now called Barnslee, the seat of Mrs Colonel Paxton, and a subterraneous opening from the present house, but which has long been closed, is said, in popular tradition, to communicate with the Maiden Castle above mentioned, which is distant in a straight line between two and three miles. The supposition is too absurd to admit of being reasoned upon. However, that, at a comparatively recent period, Dalginch was a place of considerable note, will appear by the following extract from the Ancient Digest of Scottish Laws, known by the name of Regiam Majestatem, ascribed, as we believe, to the usurper Macbeth, 'Ad quae loca tenentur Warranti venire.' CXX 'Haec sunt loca ad quae warranti debent venire ut res calumniates legitime wattantereat. In Gowrie apud Sconam. In Starmonth apud Cluny. In Fife, apud Dalginche. Haec sunt loca capitalia Scotia comitatatum per totum regnum.' In the edition of the Regium Majestatem anno 1606, the following note is inscribed in the margin – 'n.b. Terrae de Dalginche pertinebant olim Jacobo Cockburn, tempore Jacobi II Regis, nunc dicuntur terrae de Brunton, et per Wardlaw dominum de Torrie possidentur at sunt contiguae terries de Markinche' –

how long Dalginche continued a principal seat of justice we have no means of ascertaining; probably as long as the Thanes of Fife maintained an independent jurisdiction. Markinch must have been a place of some note as late as 1296 in which year it was visited by Edward the First in his progress from St Andrews to Stirling, as we learn from the diary of his expedition his first stage being Markinch and his next Dunfermline.

#### FAMILY SEATS

The most ancient residence of note in the parish is the Castle of Balfour or Bal-orr, so designated from its situation near the confluence of the Orr and the Leven. It was originally the seat of the family of Balfour, who thence derive their name – one of the most ancient and respectable in Fife. About the year 1360, John de Bethune, described as ‘familiaris Regis Roberti’, married the daughter and heiress of Sir Michael de Balfour of that ilk, and with her obtained the estate of Balfour. The Bethunes are undoubtedly of French extraction, and are reputed to derive their name from Bethune, a considerable town in French Flanders. They came to England with William the Conqueror. One of them was the companion of Richard Coeur de Lion during his return from the Holy Land, and was made prisoner along with him by the Duke of Austria. Duchesne in his ‘Histoire de la Maison de Bethune’, derives the Scotch branch from a certain Jacobin de Bethune, who, he says, came to Scotland about 1448; but there are authentic documents to prove that the family were settled in this county as far back as 1165. Those of them whose names are most distinguished in history are James Beaton, Archbishop, first of Glasgow, and afterwards of St Andrews and Chancellor of the kingdom. St Mary’s or New College, founded in 1537, remains a monument of this prelate’s munificence and zeal for learning. He died in 1538 and was succeeded by his nephew, David Beaton, Cardinal, Legatus a latere, and Chancellor, assassinated by Norman Leslie and his associates, 3 May 1546. A nephew of the Cardinal, James Beaton, was elevated to the See of Glasgow. Our limits do not permit us to enter at greater length into the annals of this ancient and honourable house. It may not, however, be deemed superfluous to remark, that the estate of Balfour has been transmitted, in the direct line of hereditary succession, for the space of 480 years, and in the direct male line for upwards of four centuries.

Westward from Balfour, and on a steep bank overhanging the Leven, stands the ancient baronial Castle of Balgonie. The most ancient part of this venerable structure consists of a donjon or keep, eighty feet in height, and 45 feet by 36 feet over the walls. The basement storey, dimly lighted by a single narrow slit in the massive thickness of the walls, seems to have served as a prison. It is vaulted, as well as the storey above. The summit is surrounded by slightly projecting battlements, with circular tourelles at the angles. The roof is flat, and paved with square slabs of freestone. On the terrace thus formed, and several feet within the external battlements, on three of the sides is erected a lodge of an oblong form, with chimneys

and sloping roof, served probably in former times as a corps de garde for the garrison. Along the bank, looking northward, the first Earl of Leven erected a house of three storeys, communicating with the tower, and a wing fronting east was added by one of his successors, but, from the unusual solidity of the substructions, and from the range of cellars which they comprehend, in structure evidently far from modern, it is to be conjectured, that buildings equal in extent originally occupied the site of the present edifice, constituting, as now, two sides of a quadrangle; the other two sides being formed by a strong wall of masonry. The space thus enclosed forms an oblong area of 108 feet by 65. The main entrance into the court is by an arched gateway, flanked on each side by towers, which bear marks of having been at one time provided with battlements and machieoulis. Over the arch are the remains of a chamber, communicating with the tower by a narrow passage conducted in the thickness of the wall. The castle has once been surrounded on three sides by a deep fosse, and a strong rampart of earth. On the side of the river no defence was needed other than the inaccessible nature of its position. With all these stern appliances and means to provoke assault and to resist aggression, history records no tale of siege sustained, not doughty feats of arms performed under its walls, or within the fair and ample domain by which it is surrounded, - nor are its precincts stained by any of those deeds of blood or torture which throw an interesting gloom over so many monuments of feudal times. The earliest proprietors of Balgony, of whom there is any record, are the Sibbalds. It afterwards passed by intermarriage to a cadet of the family of Lundin. In the reign of Charles the First the lands of Balgonie were purchased by General Alexander Leslie, who was created Earl of Leven by that hapless monarch, with succession to heirs - general of his body, lawfully begotten. Owing to the failure of male heirs in the person of Alexander, third Earl of Leven, the title and estates devolved to his sister, Lady Catherine Leslie, who was married to the second son of the then Earl of Melville, and became Countess of Leven in her own right. By the death of his eldest brother, the Lord Raith, her husband succeeded to his paternal title and inheritance, thus uniting the two earldoms into one family. In 1823, the beautiful and extensive estate of Balgonie was purchased for the sum of £104,000 by James Balfour, Esq. of Whittingham, brother of the late General Balfour of Balbirnie, who, it is understood, designs to rebuild the castle, at present fast hastening to decay, on a scale answerable to his ample fortune, and the ancient grandeur of the pile.

The principal seat of the Balfours was the castle of that name, as already mentioned. They reckon their descent from the time of King Duncan, and their names appear as sheriffs of Fife, and as present at successive Parliaments, down to the reign of Robert the Second. The ancestor of the Balbirnie branch was a cadet of Balfour of that ilk; who, having married a daughter of Thomas Sibbald of Balgonie, obtained with her a grant of the lands of Dovon, in the reign of Robert the Third. One of the descendants having obtained a charter of the lands of Lalethan of Lundin of that ilk in 1576, was designed of Lalethan, and afterwards of Balbirnie, acquired by

purchase from a family of the same name.

Balbirnie House, now the property of John Balfour Esq., is situated about a mile to the west of the parish church. The house is an elegant modern structure, erected by the late General Balfour. The principal entrance, which is on the south front, is by a handsome portico, formed by columns of the Ionic order, with corresponding pilasters. The whole materials were drawn from freestone quarries on the estate. The house is pleasantly situated in a romantic hollow, sheltered from every wind that blows by those detached and gently undulating eminences, which form so remarkable a feature in the scenery of the vale of Leven. These heights, clothed with some of the finest trees in the country, are rendered accessible on all sides by means of walks and alleys, so contrived, as to command at every turn varied and picturesque views of the surrounding country, from the Lomonds to the shores of the Firth of Forth, and the coast beyond. The shrubberies around the house, and along a small brook which meanders through the grounds on the east, are laid out with exquisite taste and effect, and contain, in great variety and profusion, such plants and shrubs, native and exotic, as are hardy enough to withstand the rigors of the winter. The park, including garden and shrubberies, extend over a surface of 200 acres. As a complete and elegant residence, Balbirnie is surpassed by few north of the Tweed.

The only other residence in the parish which deserves particular mention on account of its antiquity is Kirkforthar, the seat of George Johnstone Lindsay Esq. a cadet of the noble and ancient family of Crawford. Kirkforthar formed part of the Lord Lindsay's ancient estate of Struthers, and became a separate branch in the following manner:

David, Lord Lindsay of Byres, espoused the cause of King James the Third in opposition to the views of his son, James the Fourth, who was stirred up by the confederated nobles to become their leader in a foul and unnatural rebellion. Lord Lindsay commanded his father's adherents. The two hostile armies having met at Sauchieburn, a battle took place, which issued the defeat and death of the unfortunate James the Third. Immediately after, Lord Lindsay was arraigned of high treason. Although he was an excellent soldier, and had great experience in the service of foreign states, yet he was but little gifted with court phraseology, or versed in judicial procedures, and in his defence made a cutting and sarcastic speech, which drew down upon him the displeasure of the king and his judges. But Patrick Lindsay, his brother-german who was bred a lawyer, on hearing his brother's speech, and witnessing its effects, craved permission to plead his cause, which he did with so much address, that Lord Lindsay was acquitted. The old Baron, touched with a piece of service so seasonable and important, immediately exclaimed, 'well spoke Pat; for your pyot tongue tak' ye the mains of Kirkforthar.' Lindsay or Lindessay was originally an Anglo-Saxon earldom in the county of Lincoln; and one of the great divisions of that county bears the name of Lindsay to this day. The son of the Earl of Lindsay, after the fatal field of Hastings, accompanied Edward Atheling into Scotland to the court of

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Malcolm Canmore. The two principal branches or stems of this once potent family were represented – the one by the Earls of Crawford, the other by Lord Lindsay of the Byres, until the reign of Charles the First when the whole honours of the family were vested in the person of John, tenth Lord Lindsay of the Byres, fourteenth Earl of Crawford, and first Earl of Lindsay. The family of Kirkforthar bear the arms of Lord Lindsay of the Byres, Earl of Lindsay, and of the Mure, Lord of Abercorn.

Besides the above, several families of note once made part of the parish aristocracy, but are now extinct, and scarce a vestige of their dwellings remains.

### PART THREE - POPULATION

The population of the parish has increased at a rapid rate during the last century. Within the last seventy years it has considerably more than doubled. As population and means of subsistence are intimately connected, this great local increase may be attributed, in a great measure, to the introduction of new branches of productive industry, which, by supplying regular employment, both retained the native population, and attracted influx from less favoured districts-emigration even of individuals being, very rare.

| Years      | 1755 | 1790 | 1801 | 1821 | 1838 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Population | 2188 | 2790 | 3130 | 4661 | 5396 |

### Agriculture

The number of acres under cultivation amounts to about 8500, 350 of which are let in small lots varying from one to ten acres, and on leases varying from one to seven years. The remainder are let in about forty three farms of various sizes. There are about 400 acres in feus or smallholdings in perpetuity, for an annual payment, varying from a merely nominal acknowledgement to £16 per imperial acre. These feus are chiefly in the villages, and extend from a few poles to several acres each. There are about 800 acres under plantations, and a moss, the only one in the parish from which peats are dug for fuel, may contain 100 more. The quality of land held by proprietors of bleachfields and of other public works may extend to 100 acres; the remainder say 300 acres, may be regarded as taken up by roads and water courses. In order to insure greater accuracy in this important branch of statistical enquiry, we have divided the parish into three sections, each of which will be found to differ from the other in various respects:-

First. That part which lies on the north bank of the Leven, embracing the highest cultivated land in the parish. In this quarter the soil consists of loam, gravel, or clay, resting upon a porous subsoil of sand and gravel: here drainage is for the most part easy, so that the land is in general dry and fertile.



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Second. District lying between the Leven and Orr. Soil, wet loam, sand and clay, upon a retentive subsoil, consisting of blue till, patches of sand, silt and stones.

Third. District between the Orr and the boundary of the parish to the south and east. Soil, a thin wet loam, clay and sand, part Moorish. Subsoil retentive stiff clay or till.

In some parts of the second and third districts the subsoil is partially impregnated with iron immediately below the soil, forming a pan or crust nearly impervious to water. Where this is the case, the soil must be considered decidedly bad; indeed, where it exists in any considerable degree, heath is the natural production. These soils also contain boulders in extraordinary quantities, principally trap, some of which are several tons in weight. In many fields of the same districts, and within fourteen inches of the surface, a sufficient quantity of these boulders can be obtained for filling drains at so small an interval as nine feet asunder.

**DRAINAGE.** The prevailing mode of draining is that of furrow-drains from two and a half to three feet deep, filled with stones turned out in working the soil. When the materials are found in this way properly broken, built and packed in the drain, this method will be found both economical and efficient, when the drains are on a hard bottom. Tiles are preferable when the bottom is soft or where stones are not plentiful, and where the water contains ochre or deposits sediment.

**PRODUCTS OF THE SOIL.** The system generally adopted is that of raising grain and rearing and feeding cattle of the Fifeshire breed. Rotation of crops from four to seven years:

| One                | Two             | Three                       | Four   | Five   | Six    |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Fallow or potatoes | Wheat or barley | Grass                       | Oats   | Fallow | Fallow |
| Fallow or potatoes | Wheat           | Peas, beans, tares, turnips | Barley | Grass  | Oats   |
| Fallow or potatoes | Wheat           | Barley                      | Grass  | Oats   | Fallow |
| Fallow or potatoes | Oats            | Grass                       | Grass  | Oats   | Oats   |

The first year's grass is often cut for hay. It is then sometimes pastured for one or more years, according to the promise of grass or the wants of the farmer. Supposing the lands in the parish divided into ten equal parts, the proportions of the various kinds of crop may be estimated as under:

Fallow or green crop 20%; wheat 10%; barley 10%; grass 30%; oats 30%.

Peas, beans or flax are but little cultivated. The above estimate is exclusive of the space allocated to roads, fences, watercourses and pleasure grounds.

**MANURES.** Bone manure is used in dry land; rape cake has been tried successfully in clay and wet lands. The principal extraneous stimulant applied is lime

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from Forthar, Chapel, Pitlessie or Inverteil lime works. Besides the farmyard manure, a considerable quantity is obtained from the neighboring villages.

**AMOUNT OF PRODUCE.** Adhering to the sectional divisions already referred to, the following estimate is offered as the average produce per Scotch acre:

First district, wheat 3.5 quarters; barley 4.5 quarters; oats 5.5 quarters.

Second district, wheat 4 quarters; barley 3.5 quarters; oats 5.5 quarters.

Third district. In the western part of this district, little wheat is sown; the same is the case with regard to barley. Oats may be estimated at 5.5 quarters per acre.

**LEASES.** The usual endurance of leases is for nineteen years. Farms are let by private offers – a mode which, while it obviates the injurious tendency of public competition, enables the landlord to exercise his judgment in the selection of the tenant, with a just regard to the interests of both. A fixed sum of money is now almost universally substituted for the antiquated, though perhaps more equitable, mode of rent in kind.

**RENT AND VALUE OF LAND.** In consequence of the increased demand for all sorts of agricultural produce on the breaking out of the French Revolution, the rentals of many estates were doubled. At the close of the war, however, the value of farms fell from 15 to 20 per cent. Since the practice of furrow-draining was introduced, wet-bottomed lands, such as we have described above, have risen considerably in value.

**WAGES.** Men servants are hired by the year from Martinmas to Martinmas. Married men receive of wages £11 sterling. In money; 6.5 bolls oatmeal; coals, carriage free; and from one Scotch pint of milk to two imperial quarts daily. They are also allowed a free house, with eight falls of garden ground, besides twenty four falls for planting potatoes. Unmarried men receive £12 sterling per annum, lodgings, potatoes for six or seven months, with meal and milk as above. Female servants get from £5 to £6 10/- with board and washing.

**MANUFACTURES.** Local facilities for the establishment of all those branches of productive industry which require the aid of machinery, are peculiar and numerous. The most remote part of the parish is but an inconsiderable distance from the coast. It is traversed by excellent roads in all directions, rendering communication with the great manufacturing town of Dundee, through the shipping ports of Newburgh and Newport, on the one hand, and with Edinburgh, by Kirkcaldy and Pettycur on the other, neither difficult nor expensive. The water power supplied by two considerable streams, the Leven and the Orr, is unlimited and inexhaustible. Coals are abundant and cheap, and excellent stone for building is found in all directions and at a trifling depth below the surface; while seven populous villages furnish an abundance of hands for all those operations where manual labour is required. At the period of Dr Thomson's statistical return, there existed in the parish no machinery save what was used in corn and flax mills, of which there are at present

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in use of the former one, and of the latter four. Since that time a class of public works has sprung up, which have been greatly beneficial to the industrious classes. The following statement is made up from the proprietors' returns, which have been obligingly furnished.

### PAPER-MILLS.

**Roths Papermill** was erected in 1806, by Mr. William Keith, and worked as a two vat mill. Some years after, it became the property of Mr. David Lindsay, who enlarged it considerably, and latterly erected a paper machine. In 1836, it was purchased by Messrs R. Tullis and Co. Brown and grey wrapping-papers are the sorts now manufactured here, for which about 25 cwt. of flax waste, coarse bagging, or ropes, are used daily. Employment is here afforded to about 20 men and 10 women.

**Auchmuty Papermill** was erected by Robert Tullis and Co. as a four vat mill, and began working in May 1810. The vats are now all thrown aside; the paper being made by a Fourdrinier machine, such as is generally used. Above a ton of fine rags is consumed here daily in making cartridge, coloured, printing, and writing papers. There are upwards of 50 women employed in sorting and cutting the rags, who are paid at the rate of 10d per day of ten hours. About the same number of men are required to attend the machinery, and manage the different processes, or engaged as wrights, carters, labourers etc. The wages of these latter vary from 1s 6d to 2s 6d per day. The hands at the Roth's Mill are remunerated at the same rate. The annual amount of excise duty paid by the two mills is about £6500 sterling, and, as the duty is 1 1/2d on each pound of paper, this gives a total of 1,040,000 pounds, or 465 tons of paper manufactured annually.

**Balbirnie Papermill** was erected in the year 1816, by the late Mr. Alexander Grieve, and was continued with two vats and one engine, until 1834, when J. Grieve and Co. introduced a machine and four engines. The papers made here are principally for the London market, and consist chiefly of two kinds, the one very strong, such as is principally used by grocers; and the other very thin and transparent, for the use of drapers and silk-mercens. The raw materials employed are, damaged yarn, flax waste, bagging and ropes, of which, when making light papers, 24 cwt., and when making heavy papers, 37 cwt. are consumed daily. The quantity of paper manufactured yearly averages 44,000 reams, weighing about 560,000 pounds, or 250 tons, and contributing to the public revenue the sum of £3500 per annum. The number of hands employed on the works are 30, of whom 16 are men, and 14 women; the former earn from 1s 6d to 2s 8d and the latter from 10d to 1s 1d per day.

### WOOLLEN MANUFACTORY.

**Balbirnie Bridge Factory**, established by Mr. Drysdale, 1835. The stuffs manufactured here are plaidings, blankets, and shawls. The wool employed is chiefly of British growth. The carding and spinning processes are carried on, on the premises,

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by means of two roving-machines and two double sets of jennies of 144 and 168 spindles respectively. There are ten power looms and four hand looms employed, producing 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 quarters widths. The average daily consumption of raw material is eight stones of 24 pounds each. The hands employed are 27, of whom 10 are men, 11 boys, and the remainder women and girls. The men earn from 10s to 16s per week, and the others from 3s 6d to 6s. The power-loom weavers, 6 boys and 4 girls, earn as much as 1s each per day of twelve hours. The articles manufactured are principally for the Glasgow market. The wholesale prices are, of blankets, from 7s to 17s each, and of plaidings, from 10d to 1s 3d per yard.

### LINEN MANUFACTORY.

Previous to the year 1810, the brown linen manufactory of this parish was limited to some 50 or 60 operatives, who sold their Silesias and window-blind Hollands to the merchants at Auchtermuchty and Kettle, from whom the yarns were generally purchased. The yarns chiefly used were handspun, the produce of Scotland and Ireland, with some German yarns imported from Hamburg; but in a few years this branch of the linen trade very much declined, and was at last almost entirely relinquished. About the year 1804, the manufacture of dowlas, sheetings, and various kinds of towellings, was introduced from bleached, mill, and spun flax, and tow yarns, and this branch of the trade has continued to increase, till it now employs from 800 to 900 individuals, including winders, warpers, weavers, and lappers. The hands thus employed do not all belong to Markinch. The work is given out to be performed at their own homes, and many of them reside in the adjoining parishes. During the summer months, nearly a third part of the weavers go to out-door work, and return to the loom when winter sets in. Steady workmen, at the present rates will earn at dowlas weaving about 7s; at sheetings 8s and at towellings, 9s per week. The winders are chiefly old and infirm persons, or married females who have time to spare from their domestic duties; they earn from 1s to 4s; warpers and lappers, 10s per week. The whole of this branch is in the hands of Mr. Robert Inglis.

### FLAX SPINNING MILL.

**Balgonie mills**, the property of Messrs Baxter and Stewart, for spinning flax and tow. The works command the entire use of the Leven, and the machinery is driven by two water-wheels of fifty-five horse-power.

1. For flax spinning, dry or long staple, there are twenty frames, containing 1000 spindles, with a full system of screw-gill preparation to correspond. The size of the yarn spun is from one and a half to three pounds per spindle, or, in other words, from 30 to 16 lea yarn.

2. For flax spinning, wet or broken staple, there are eighteen frames, containing 1170 spindles, with full system of circular gill preparation for the same. The size of the yarn spun is from 12 ounces to half a pound per spindle, or from 30 to

60 lea yarn.

3. For tow spinning, there are three systems of spinning, each with suitable preparation, including, twelve six feet carding engines, viz. five frames, 296 spindles, for spinning yarn from two to three pounds per spindle, or 24 to 16 lea; ten frames, 400 spindles, for spinning yarn from three and a half to six pounds per spindle, 14 to eight lea; four frames, 160 spindles, for spinning yarn from 10 pounds to 24 pounds per spindle, five to two lea.

The principal buildings of which the mills are composed form three sides of a rectangle, 160 feet by 140. Two of the sides are occupied by machinery, and the third is occupied by three spacious warehouses, with heckling rooms above. There is a large store warehouse detached, capable of holding 200 tons of flax, as well as large conveniences in the way of stabling, smithy, and gas work. There are about 265 individuals employed at the mills, of whom about 95 are full grown men, 120 women, and 46 of both sexes under seventeen years of age. The wages paid each fortnight are about £200, averaging say 12s per week for each man, and 5s per week for each woman and for the younger hands. The quantity of flax manufactured in the year 1838 was 475 tons, of which 340 tons was Baltic flax, 65 tons Aarchangel and the remaining 70 tons Dutch, French, and Irish. Besides the tows from these flaxes, about 100 tons of imported tow were used. The total cost of the whole material was above £25,000.

The yarns spun are, with the exception of the heavier tow yarns, either sold in the district adjoining, or exported to France. The heavier tow yarns are manufactured by the proprietors into canvas, sacking etc. chiefly for the London market. This branch of the business is carried on in Dundee, and at present employs from 60 to 100 looms; but arrangements are at present making for transferring it to Balgonie; and when this is effected, it will cause an addition to the number of persons already employed of about 100 men, and 50 women and children.

The village of Milton, adjoining the mills, has, since the enlargement and extension of the works in 1836-37, nearly doubled its population. The present population is 580. The houses are, in general, neat, substantial, and fully beyond the average of the country as to comfort. The rent of a house of two rooms, with a few falls of garden ground and a pigsty, is from £2 to £2, 10s per annum.

**Haugh Spinning Mill** was erected in the year 1794, for the purpose of spinning chiefly canvas yarns from flax and tow, which was carried on by various companies up to 1832, when the present proprietor sold all the old machinery, and introduced a complete set of new, for spinning fine yarns adapted for home made linens. Half the machinery works upon the long staple, and half upon the short staple principle. An addition was made to the work in 1835, and the mill now contains upwards of 2000 spindles, capable of turning off about 600 spindles of yarns per day. The machinery is propelled by two waterwheels of about 40 horsepower. The mill consumes from 25 to 30 tons of flax per month, consisting chiefly of the finer qualities imported from

Holland, Belgium, and France, and also from Archangel, Riga, and St Petersburg. The yarns are for the most part woven in the county of Fife, into almost all descriptions of family linens.

**Haugh Bleachfield.** In 1836, there was added to the mills a bleachfield, capable of bleaching about two tons of linen yarn daily. The work people employed at the mill and bleachfield are in number 183, of whom two thirds are females from fourteen years of age and upwards, earning from 4s 6d to 7s 6d per week. The men earn from 9s to £1 weekly. Most of the hands are accommodated with dwelling-houses on the premises. Upwards of twenty families are thus accommodated, besides a good many boarders; the whole may be estimated at an average of 280 to 320 souls. Their moral and religious character is generally good, and their attendance at church very respectable, both in point of numbers and of outward deportment.

**Lochty Bleachfield,** on the water of Lochty, in the vicinity of the new and thriving village of Thornton, is the property of David Landale Esq. Kirkcaldy. About two tons and a half of linen yarn are bleached at this field per day, the greater part of which is manufactured into cloth in the county; but part is exported to France, and some sent to Ireland. At this field the residuum of the chlorine stills is converted by the usual process into carbonate of soda, and mixed with potash, as a detergent for the yarns. From 80 to 100 hands, mostly women, are employed at this bleachfield. The women are paid 5s 6d, and the men 10s to 12s per week.

**Balgonie Bleachfield,** the property of Messrs William Russell and Co. was established in 1824, for bleaching linen yarns. About 480 tons of flax and tow yarns are bleached here annually. The number of hands employed is 70, who are paid at the same rate as at the other bleachfields. The machinery is worked by water power supplied by the Leven, on the banks of which the works are situated.

**Roths Bleachfield,** the property of Mr. D. Donaldson, was erected in 1800. The quantity of yarn bleached on an average is as follows: From December to March, inclusive, 292 tons; from April to November, inclusive, 390 tons. The number of hands employed is of men, 30, women and girls, 80. The men earn from 10s to 11s per week; women and girls, 3s 6d, 4s 6d, 5s 6d, according to age and capability.

Besides the above public works, there is a very extensive grain distillery at Cameron Bridge; and there has lately been established at Thornton a vitriol manufactory, for supplying with that article the surrounding districts, which, previous to this erection, were subjected to the expense of carriage from Glasgow. The works at Thornton are a branch of a Glasgow firm extensively engaged in the vitriol manufacture.

## PAROCHIAL ECONOMY

**Ecclesiastical State.** According to an entry in the "Great Register Book" of the Priory of St Andrews, the church of Markinch was given to the Culdees by Malduinus, the son of Gillander, seventh Bishop of that See, who flourished in the

early part of the tenth century. "Malduinus Episcopus St Andreae dedit eis ecclesiam de Markinch cum tota terra." It seems to be a fact sufficiently well authenticated, both by records and histories of the period, that the first Bishops were themselves Culdees, and elected from among the general body of pastors by a majority of votes. But as the influence of these holy men became gradually undermined by the emissaries of Rome, and the insidious abettors of Papal domination, they were stripped, one by one, of their privileges and possessions, and finally ceased to exist as a distinct and influential body in the church. At what time they ceased to hold possession of the cure and lands of Markinch, we have no means of ascertaining very precisely; but, by a deed of Eugenius, son, of Hugo, a second son of Gillemichael McDuff, fourth Earl of Fife, we find it was mortified to the Priory of St Andrews, towards the close of the twelfth century. This deed was confirmed by a charter of King William. From this period the patronage of the parish continued vested in the Priory of St Andrews, till, on the suppression of religious houses at the Reformation, it was resumed by the Crown. The names of the earliest incumbents after the downfall of Popery are not preserved, the session records reaching no farther back than the month of July 1626, at which period they began to be kept with an exactness and detail long since discontinued, exhibiting an interesting picture of the manners and opinions of the time, and showing with what vigilance and vigour the discipline of the church as carried into effect, and its government maintained throughout the most trying and stormy periods of its history.

From these records it appears that collections for the poor were regularly made on Sundays, and on occasions of baptisms and marriages. The sums thus collected were stately distributed to the regular poor on the roll, while incidental cases of want or of more urgent distress were liberally relieved on the application of the necessitous. The names of the principal proprietors in the parish appear as the collectors and the distributors of the poor funds, as patrolling in turn the streets of the village during the hours of Divine service, debating offences against social order and good morals, and enforcing, the salutary discipline of the church against graver delinquencies. Among other respectable members of the Kirk Session up to the Reformation, we find the names of Sir David Auchmuttie of that Ilk, and of the Lairds of Balbirnie, Bandon, Bruntoun, Coul, Carristoun, and Kirkforthar, names related to the first families in the kingdom, and who disdained not to exert the influence which their rank and wealth conferred in promoting the interests of religion and morality. In addition to the usual immoralities cognisable by the Session, and which were then punished by fine and by rebuke in the face of the congregation, we find not a few deleted for pursuing their ordinary avocations on the Sabbath, for absenting themselves from church and from the administration of ordinances, for slandering neighbours, for profane swearing, for drunkenness, and frequenting houses of public entertainment during the hours of Divine service. In 1643, Mr. Frederick Carmichael is admitted minister of the parish, the "ministrie of the Presbyterie" having met at the

Kirk of Markinch for that effect. His predecessor would seem to have been deposed as "ane enemie to ye Covenant," notwithstanding the testimony borne in face of the Kirk Session by the Laird of Bruntoun in his behalf, that "he was as honest a minister, as faithful a minister, and as conscientious a minister as any minister in Fyffe." It appears, however, that the great majority of the elders and people were heartily engaged on the side of the common cause. Numbers of the parishioners flocked to the national standard, with arms in their hands, while contributions in money were not wanting to attest the general zeal for the cause of the Kirk and the Covenant. Several instances occur in which "the sessioun thought it meit yet the voluntarie contribution should be carried to ye armie by ye minister, and to be delyvered ther." That the incumbent during these years was a zealous promoter of the popular cause is manifest from the above extract, if, indeed, he was not one of the council of ministers appointed to attend the General in the field; for not only do the weekly entries show that his pulpit was at frequent intervals supplied by one of his brethren of the Presbytery, but we also find such intimations as the following - "That day our ain minister taught Psalm 34 verse 19, being returned for ane space from the armie," and again, "13th July 1645, Our ain minister returned from England." We refer to one other entry to show that the victims of war were not forgotten by such of their brethren as tarried at home; for under the date of August 24th, 1645, we find it noted, that a messenger was dispatched by the Session "to Montrose, his ligure, to try if any prisoneris of this parochie be thaire." Nor were demonstrations of piety, of which the times furnished such signal examples, wanting to second the efforts of a generous patriotism. The adverse vicissitudes of those troublous times are duly marked by days of public humiliation and fasting, for which the reasons are recorded at length, while the successes of the national leaders are as duly celebrated by public acts of thanksgiving. Days of thanksgiving were ordained "for ye victorie obtained be our armie at York against Prince Rupert his armie," for "the victorie our armie obtained at Newcastle," for "the happie victorie obtained be Lieutenant General David Leslie, against James Graham, sometime Earle of Montrose, and his rebels, at Philiphaugh, near Jedburgh, upon ye 13th of September 1645." In this manner the principal events in this most eventful period of Scottish history are noticed up to the Restoration. Such was the political education of our fathers. Their guides and instructors were their ministers and elders, the former, for the most part, men of large minds, as well as of an ardent piety; deeply versed in the principles of civil not less than of ecclesiastical polity; while the latter, were, by their birth, education, and moral worth, entitled to the respect and esteem of those over whom they were called to rule, of whom moreover, they were the local and legitimate protectors. The principles and the proceedings of those days have been sometimes wittily ridiculed, and sometimes gravely denounced as hostile to monarchy and subversive of liberty of conscience; nor have they wanted able vindicators. But discussion were here out of place. Suffice it to remark, that so fixed and firm was the attachment of our forefathers to the revered



institution of monarchy in the State, and presbyterial order in the Church, that neither the example, nor the caresses, nor the menaces of the "English sectaries" availed to repress, much less to vanquish them.

A system grounded on principles so holy, and aiming at results so salutary, a system so deeply rooted in the habits and affections of a whole people, none but the most licentious monarch, and the most unprincipled administration that ever swayed the destinies of the British Empire, would have wished, or ventured to assail. After the re-establishment of Episcopacy the altered state of matters is lamentably manifest. The meetings of session are no longer stated and regular; no fasts are ordained but those which precede the communion, no days of thanksgiving set apart, but the 29th of May "for his Majestie's happie returne." Yet the Sabbath day ministrations never seem to have suffered any serious interruption during the long and troubled night of Episcopal domination; nor is the most distant allusion made in the Minutes of Session to any change of form, under the new order of things, unless the following may be so interpreted: "30th November 1662, reading before and after sermons did begin again."

In the course of the succeeding year, the names of those elders who were landed proprietors are no longer found, as present at, or concurring in, the deliberations of the session; they devolved on meaner men those duties which the arbitrary temper of the times rendered it dangerous for them any longer to discharge. The acts of their successors are no longer bowed to with deference and submission; threats are held out of making "applications to my Lord St Andrews for purchasing of a warrand" in "mitigatione" of the required "satisfactione." "My Lord St Andrews, through his commissary, enjoins the "mitigatione" prayed. But our limits do not permit to enter more minutely into details. If similar instances of arbitrary interference served to weaken the bonds of discipline, and to lessen the respect due to the immediate pastors and rulers of the church, they served to prepare the minds of all good men and true patriots for welcoming the glorious dawn of civil and religious liberty ushered in by the Revolution of 1688.

After the Revolution settlement, when civil and religious liberty were placed on a secure basis, the church, if not a faultless, at least exhibited a fair and well-proportioned institution, as efficient an instrument for publishing the Gospel, and instructing the people, divested of religious pageantry and superfluous appendages as latter ages have witnessed. From that happier period, the parish seems to have enjoyed a succession of not only sound, but able ministers all of them faithfully and some of them eminently successful in their day. The patronage, which is vested in the Crown, was exercised judiciously, chiefly by means of the Earls of Leven, who till lately held the rank of principal heritor, and long diffused a salutary influence over the parish. No unpopular settlement, I believe, ever took place, and those who advocate the advantage of such management, will no, doubt be anxious to ascertain the result.

Now, though every minister in his day has had sufficient reason to deplore the

limited success of his ministry, it is due to truth to make the statement I now do, that, after twenty years connection with the parish, I have found among its ancient families, as compared with newcomers, transplanted from fields placed under a different system of spiritual husbandry, an order, decency, and moral bearing, obviously superior, even where much might be lacking as to the full standard of wished-for piety. This general statement admits many exceptions on the one side and on the other; but enough remains to warrant the assertion that a sound Christian agency is the best calculated to induce moral order, and did, in fact, in this place, largely prove its adequacy to that effect.

As to literary distinction, few of the pastors referred to had leisure, or inclination, it is presumed, to enter the lists with competitors for fame. One or two of them were deemed fit to be transferred to St Andrews, to occupy in that University the place of principal. Another, who furnished the former Statistical report, published an agricultural survey of the county, about the time of his translation to a city charge; of the rest, nothing remains beyond a few sermons, mostly of an occasional and ephemeral sort. Their works, however, we doubt not, will bear a last-day review without shame, as they are without pretension.

Owing to the rapid increase of population, the parish field soon became unmanageable for a single labourer, especially as secular business increases on the hands of the Established clergy in proportion to the census. Household ministrations necessarily became rare, and the effects of one visit had vanished before another could be given to confirm the impression. Church accommodation, too, was unrighteously straitened; for a place of worship built for a population of 2000 or 3000, left many among 5000 or 6000 unprovided for. Neither had there been any Dissenting place of worship erected here previous to 1834, owing, no doubt to the popular settlements that had so long prevailed. In that year, a chapel in connection with the United Secession body, and seated for 380 was opened, though so placed as to afford little aid for unaccommodated parishioners in the remote village; for it was put down in close neighbourhood to the parish church, while several considerable villages, at from two to four miles distance, were overlooked.

It was then, however, the Church Extension scheme came into action, and here it was speedily and efficiently applied, first at Thornton, a village four miles off, with more than 500 inhabitants; and next at Milton of Balgonie, having nearly 600 indwellers, besides a populous district lying beyond it. The church at Thornton is seated for upwards of 400, and that, at Milton for 650; while a new erection at Methil, on the border of Wemyss parish, has supplied accommodation for a large village of 400 inhabitants, situated on the coast, and more than six miles distant from the church at Markinch. In the latter village, Inverleven, a small Dissenting chapel had long existed, and nearly one half the inhabitants, who adhered to the Established Church, were obliged to cross the Leven to attend public worship at the church of Scoonie, the minister of which, indeed, had taken the virtual charge of them for many

## Statistical Accounts of Markinch Parish

years.

The church at Thornton was built by general subscription, that of Milton solely by the heritors and people of the district to be benefited by the erection; and it is due to the respectable heritors of the parish to record their liberality on that occasion, in grateful terms. Both churches have now ordained pastors; and seats being furnished at a low rate, Sabbath privileges are accessible, to all. But after these erections have so greatly relieved the pressure on the parish minister, a body of about 3500 remain, among which to exert his still inadequate pastoral superintendence, though he has done what he could to remedy the deficiency, by calling a qualified assistant to aid him in the work. It were much to be desired that his unendowed fellow labourers in the new parishes were on an equal footing as to stipendiary compensation. The Rev. Mr. Murray, the first minister of Milton, was after six months translated to the parish of Dunbog, and was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. McEwan, the present incumbent. The first minister of Thornton, the Rev. Mr. Adamson, is still there. In both churches the seats are well let and occupied.

The present stipend, augmented in 1822 is 18 chalders, half barley, half meal, paid at the rates of the county fiars, the fluctuation of which is very considerable, ranging betwixt the highest and the lowest proportion of one to five-eighths, within the period of the writer's incumbency. The glebe contains nearly nine acres, which must be valued at £32 per annum. The manse is of very ancient construction, by much the oldest in the presbytery. It has undergone repairs and alterations so numerous, as greatly to affect its apparent identity. The site has been long regarded by incumbents as very insalubrious, and more has been expended to obviate dilapidation, than would have built a wholesome and commodious dwelling. The church is in excellent repair.

According to a census taken in 1836, the whole population of Markinch amounted to 5328, or 1189 families. Of these, 159 families are Dissenters from the Established Church; 51 families are of a mixed composition; 30 of them having one Dissenting member; and 14 having two in each; the rest three or more; 25 of the first class (159) reside in the far off village of Inverleven. Making these deductions, there remain within the bounds of the civil parish about 1079 families, exclusive of those of a mixed profession, in connection with the Established Church, or owning no other connection. Since last census, the population has increased, but without materially affecting, the above proportions. No marvel that the class of non-attenders at any place of worship should have increased, when church accommodation, till recently, was so disproportionate, and more especially, that, to supply the public works, strangers, not always of settled principles, or church going habits, are often attracted to the parish.

### EDUCATION

This has always been a prominent object in our parochial system. No other

country has ever exhibited so close an alliance betwixt religion and education, or shown a parish church and parish school in such harmonious and undivided neighbourhood. Of this conjunction, the beneficial effects have been incalculably great, both as to intellectual improvement and intelligent piety. The earliest records of the Kirk Session evince the attention paid to means of education ; for, besides the parochial school, we find order taken to have the remoter localities supplied. Thus, in 1702, the following entry was made "The minister having acquainted the session, that he had found, on his going thro' that part of the parish, that the people of Coaltown stand in great need of an English school for teaching their children, the session, taking the case to their consideration, not only what is represented, but further, that there is a dangerous water betwixt this and Coaltown; and that many poor things of that town must be lost entirely as to instruction, if there be not a school there, and that parents who have substance of the world, and are obliged to send their children abroad out of the parish, will be hereby encouraged to keep them at home, and that the doing of this is one necessary and Christian duty, and for the special benefit of that corner of the parish, and not in the least liable to any reasonable exception, did unanimously agree that there be a school in Coaltown, and offered to the minister their ready concurrence with his project to that effect."(This school has continued to the present time).

Equal interest, however, was not shown by the people at all times in availing themselves of school-training, for on the 20 March 1643, this minute occurs "The said day, George Robertson did give over his office of ye school and ye Kirk, and ye session, and yet because his detitie was small and ewil payed". Probably, George Robertson might have set down the people's indifference to his own remissness or want of skill. In the present day, at least, the desire for good education pervades all classes in the parish, nor are the means for accomplishing it sparingly enjoyed, nine schools, besides the parish one, being in active operation. Of these nine, two only, on the Balgonie estate, have any shadow of endowment; the one at Balgonie Square, enjoying an annual allowance of £10, with dwellinghouse annexed, the other, at Thornton, having £5 simply. These sums had been allowed by the former proprietor, and are continued by the present, with a becoming liberality. Another school, at Balbirnie coal-hill, merely provides the teacher with a house. Of the rest, none have any other means of support for the teacher, save school-fees, a very precarious and inadequate source of remuneration for a class of men whose meritorious labours are of so much importance to the community. A female school in the village derives pecuniary aid from the private subscription of a few ladies connected with the place, chiefly of the Balgonie, Balbirnie, and Barnslee families.

The parish school may be held up as a model, so admirably is it conducted by Mr. Duncan Stewart., Previous to his appointment six years ago, little could have been said in favour of its management; but it is now efficient in the highest degree, and, in point of system, will bear a comparison with seminaries of the first class. After

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this, it need not be said that it is well attended. Indeed, want of room is the chief impediment it labours under, and though the heritors have already done much in the way of affording accommodation more is needed for the due working of the important institution. When Dr Thomson gave his Statistical Report, the salary of the schoolmaster was £10, the dwellinghouse also being old and incommodious. Mr Stewart's salary is £34 4s 4½d; school fees, £70; other emoluments, £17 10s; total income per annum £121 14s 4½d. The dwelling house is late erection, and affords accommodation considerably beyond the statutory amount, though by no means beyond the station of the occupants.

Besides weekday means of instruction, the Sabbath school system is diligently worked under the efficient direction of the assistant minister, aided by a number of gratuitous teachers, who devote a portion of the Sabbath to this excellent purpose. Oral instruction is aided by the gratuitous use of a small, but gradually increasing collection of appropriate books, which convey to many houses, ill-provided with such furniture means of information and material, for thought, on subjects of momentous importance. The Dissenting chapel has also its collection of books in useful circulation.

### **BENEFIT SOCIETIES.**

There are several Associations that belong to this department, the strength and resources of which are shewn in the subjoined table:

| Name              | Number of Members | State of Funds | Entry | Payment          |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------|------------------|
| Friendly Society  | 224               | £1000          | 2/6d  | 1/6d [quarterly] |
| Brotherly Society | 107               | £300           | ...   | ...              |
| Apron Society     | 160               | £400           | ...   | ...              |
| Equitable Society | 180               | £30            | ...   | 1/- [weekly]     |

The last is of recent origin, and for the time, the most popular, as requiring a moderate payment of 1/- weekly, till the collective sum amounts to £30; each in his turn, which is determined by lot, is put in possession of that sum, continuing the weekly contribution, nevertheless, till his payments shall have replaced the amount drawn, with interest. Thus, each has his contributions realised to him, and a mutual accommodation results to the whole.

The object of the other three Societies is to make provision for widows and superannuated members, and to help when disabled by sickness or incidental casualty. The widow's allowance from the Friendly Society is £1 4/- per annum; sick members receive for a time 4/-, and, if permanent aid is required, 2/- per week. Some of the others allow less.

There is, however, less alacrity now than in time past among young men to enrol themselves in these Societies, and as their success and stability depend on new

accessions to supply the vacancies made by death, there is reason to apprehend a less permanent existence to some of them than their benevolent projectors contemplated. There has not been shewn any strong disposition to make use of savings banks, nor has any branch of those institutions been here established, though, doubtless, an investment in them would possess many advantages in the way of encouraging economy and counteracting improvidence. A branch of the Commercial Bank, Edinburgh, has recently been introduced, which will afford new facilities to the business part of the community.

Poor and Parochial Funds.

Though this class must have increased with an increasing population, yet it has done so by no means in the same ratio. In 1621, the ordinary poor were 21; in 1645, 93; the intermediate years exhibiting little fluctuation. At present, and for the last twenty years, the ordinary poor average 50 on the roll for stated supply. In few cases, is full maintenance afforded, the weekly pension being chiefly given to persons disabled by sickness or age from industrial employments, and wanting relations in a condition to relieve them fully though, with a little assistance, well disposed to contribute to the utmost of their power. The rate of allowance varies with the circumstances of the individual's case, there being as many under 1s 6d per week, as there are above that moderate sum. A heavy charge, however, occasionally occurs by having whole families devolved on parish support, either by the death of parents, or by their desertion. Cases in the latter predicament have, of late, become more frequent, and will necessarily multiply in proportion as moral principle is undermined, by the insidious fallacies of opinion, which of late have been industriously propagated on the questions of property and the marriage contract.

Besides the ordinary poor, occasional relief is administered, to a considerable extent, to persons not claiming regular supply, though incidentally requiring assistance. It is always an object to keep this class distinct from the others, as far as the principle of public charity will allow. In general, there is no indisposition to receive aid, though far less among recent settlers, than the ancient residents. When cases of lunacy occur among the working classes, the parish, for the most part, is called on to defray the expense of their admission into a public asylum. At present, there is one individual so maintained at Perth. In general, recovery is by no means hopeless, when the case is not too long neglected.

To meet these charges, the permanent funds of the parish are very inadequate. These funds comprise church door-collections, dues on marriages and mortcloths, and interest on money in bank deposit.

The first named class of revenue is variable, and it is to be regretted that the younger portion of churchgoers are less exemplary in the Sabbath offering than their fathers. Injurious opinions, indeed, are by some inculcated, to the effect that such contributions, going only to exonerate the proprietors of the soil, who are legally

bound to support the poor, form an act of gratuitous generosity on the part of the unlanded community, as if charity were the business of a class, and not the general concern of a virtuous community.

Other causes operating unfavourably on church door collections might be mentioned, did the nature of this report allow more than general views. It must, moreover, be taken into the account in stating an average, that the quoad sacra parishes, having their own collections, must cause a diminution at the parish church. By the terms of their constitution, they are allowed to apply their collections for their own objects, provided they collect twice annually for the parish funds. It is a remarkable fact, that, in one of those new erections, that at Thornton, not a single pauper has claimed to be relieved. Since these disjunctions took place, the average collection at the parish church is under £1. Thrice annually, (at two sacramental occasions, and first Sabbath of the year) extraordinary collections are made, the proceeds of which are distributed in addition to the ordinary supplies, and chiefly to persons not on the stated roll. Collections for objects not eleemosynary are also occasionally made, averaging from £30 to £40 per annum. These include the General Assembly's Schemes, books for Sabbath school library etc.

The return for mortcloths has of late years greatly declined, the right of the Kirk Session to exact a fee being occasionally disputed, and not by Dissenters alone, though it was first challenged on that side. The payment is undoubtedly legal, but can rarely be enforced without violating the decencies due to interment of the dead. There is a deposit fund of £400 belonging to the parish, the interest of which only is at the disposal of the Kirk Session. A Female Society for aged women in destitute circumstances lays out about £50 annually, and is so conducted as to prove an excellent auxiliary to the Kirk Session. The principal ladies connected with the parish patronize it.

It must not be omitted, that a great deal of private charity is unobtrusively distributed by the families of the principal heritors, whether resident or otherwise. It is pleasant also to state, that among the humbler classes, many instances occur of an habitual, though little noticed readiness to communicate of their little to a neighbour having less. The finest charities of life are thus produced.

The two great coal proprietors, Mr. Balfour of Whittingham and Balgonie, and Mr. Balfour of Balbirnie, make liberal donations of coals each winter. The former not being resident, places his coal bounty at the disposal of the Kirk Session, and never reduces the list of expectants made up by the elders. The Barnslee family also do much in the way of private distribution to the deserving poor. In the eastern part of the parish, the family of Balfour has been long distinguished in this respect. With all these accessories, the parish funds present a large deficit, which the heritors have hitherto met by voluntary assessment. This is gradually becoming more onerous, and the Kirk Session experience augmenting difficulties in their management. Indeed, in so far as relieving the poor ceases to be regarded as a branch of charity, and passes

into the predicament of an absolute legal claim, it becomes the more difficult for a Kirk Session to administer beneficially. Their position is pressed on the one side by applicants, on the other by heritors, who have to provide for deficiencies. In this conflict, their moral influence is exposed to damage, and as it perishes, their usefulness suffers ill proportion. Yet the substitution of a machinery divested of all church associations, and worked by legal power only, destroys one of the healthiest agencies ever introduced into the parochial economy.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

On minor branches of parish statistics, it is not necessary to dilate. It may be mentioned that the public health is under the care of three active and well-qualified medical practitioners; whereas, long after Dr Thomson wrote his Report, not one was resident in the parish. These three reside in the village of Markinch. There is nothing that requires special notice in the department of disease; here, as in other parts of the island, cases of pulmonary consumption forming the largest class. The mortality of the last forty years shows an average of 69, the greatest amount (in 1834) being 130; the lowest (in 1802) 53.

Several instances of a longevity exceeding ninety years have occurred during the last twenty years; and one, a few months ago, who had gone beyond ninety six. The ardour of politics had carried him, two years before, to a polling place six miles from his habitation.

As to the general morals of the community, it were indelicate to go into specialities of detail. Crime, as the term is usually understood, is exceedingly infrequent. Petty breaches of the peace occasionally occur, but will become rare, as the cause of temperance gains ground, and happily it does gain on the opposite vice, solicited as that vice is by a too promiscuous system of licensing public-houses, the number of which is still excessive, and ought to be reduced. The class of immorality that most falls under the cognisance of the Kirk Session has sensibly diminished; and, upon the whole, the community has an improved moral aspect. This is much aided by the excellent regulations maintained at the leading public works, whose proprietors insist on moral conduct as an indispensable condition of being retained in their employment. Several of them, too, have provided libraries for the use of their work people, which operates in many ways in producing a beneficial result. And, in proportion as the popular mind is well informed, it will cease to lend a facile ear to the propagators of opinions subversive of virtuous order and religious obligation. The parochial system, not less than other institutions of the land, has of late years been exposed to unsparing aggression and nothing less than its ruin will satisfy assailants. We wish its downfall averted, in the persuasion that it is a righteous instrument for promoting an host of objects, each of which, we cannot help thinking, is worth more than the most exaggerated cost of the whole!



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### ADDENDUM

List of Heritors:

James Balfour of Balgonie [non-resident]

John Balfour of Balbirnie

Drinkwater Bethune of Balfour

J E Wemyss of Wemyss Castle [non-resident]

Earl of Rothes [non-resident]

Mrs. Colonel Paxton of Barnslee

United College of St Andrews [non-resident]

G J Lindsay of Kirkforthar

John Landale of Man

J Johnston of Little Lun [non-resident]

John Lawson of Carieston [sic]

George Greig of Little Balcurvie

Wardlaw Ramsay of Balcurvie [non-resident]

C M Christie of Durie [non-resident]

J Simpson of Durie Vale

D Millie of Cameron Bridge [non-resident]

A Mitchel [sic] of Coul

J Balfour of Ashgrove

G Ballingall of Carieston Easter [non-resident]

[Rev J. Sieveright (June 1840)]

## THE THIRD STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF SCOTLAND

By Alexander Smith M.A., Survey Officer

Published by Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London 1952.

### The County of Fife

#### Introduction

Sir John Sinclair's concern is a description of the population, production and trade of every parish in Scotland, with some record of the food, diseases and longevity of its inhabitants.

On New Year's Day 1798, after seven years and seven months and seven days of labour and anxiety, Sir John Sinclair had the happiness to complete his work in 21 volumes. His membership of the General Assembly had suggested to him the possibility of prevailing in the clergy to furnish such information regarding their respective parishes as would enable him to publish what he had formerly designed for the concluding part of his Financial History. Mr J G Kyd, the ex-Registrar General for Scotland and the prime mover of The Third Statistical Account has continued to favour the approach of Sir John Sinclair. To the maximum possible extent Mr Smith, a native of Anstruther, a graduate of St Andrews University and its appointed survey Officer, has applied the technique to the sixty parishes of Fife.

The information contained in the study was collected over a period of three years between 1946 and 1949. There was a slight modification made to these figures by inclusion of the 1951 census returns.

#### The Historical Setting

Very little is known about the early days and culture embraced in Fife. In time, Christianity supplanted the old, probably Druid, religion, and many of the modern towns were thought to have originated as ecclesiastical cells.

When the New statistical Account was written, the authority of the Established Church was still very considerable, despite the secessions of the previous century. Two events have characterised its history since then:

One – the breaks and re-unions within the Church.

Second, the steady weakening of ecclesiastical influence with religion relegated to a fairly minor place in the thoughts and lives of a great many people.

Disruption – [Thomas] Chalmers was born in Anstruther, he had been a Professor at the University of St Andrews and minister of Kilmany Parish. No fewer than 25 ministers, approximately one third of the total, went over, taking their congregations with them in whole or part.

Evangelical movements, the Baptist Church, the Salvation Army and Plymouth Brethren found local support. Very marked has been the growth of Roman

## Statistical Accounts of Markinch Parish

Catholicism, chiefly on account of the large influx of miners belonging to that faith, around the turn of the century, at first confined to a very few communities in the industrial part of the county.

The Church of Scotland has nearly 150 congregations and approximately 82000 members.

Of the other churches, there are 28 Roman Catholic places of worship; 25 Scottish Episcopal and 19 Baptist.

### **The Parish of Markinch**

Markinch, a very irregularly shaped parish of nearly 10,000 acres, consists mainly of four valleys, all converging towards the east. Through these valleys run the Rivers Leven, Lochty and Ore and the Bichty Burn, with the ground between them rising successively higher towards the north. The land on the northern boundary is in a line with the Lomond Hills, and forms part of that tract of high ground, running from west to east, which divides the northern from the southern part of the county. Good fishing can be had in the Rivers Ore and Lochty – mainly trout and an occasional pike; but, so far as the parish is concerned, fishing in the River Leven is of little or no account as a result of river pollution, from Leslie downstream to the Forth. The date when fishing was last possible on this stretch of the Leven is not known, but it is generally supposed that there has been no salmon fishing for 100 years or so, and the same period probably applies to trout.

The main north road runs through the west part of the parish. Entering at the village of Thornton, it passes through or near Woodside, Cadham and Balfarg, and leaves the parish beyond the New Inn, having crossed the Rivers Ore, Lochty and Leven. Another road passes through the eastern part of the parish, joining Kirkcaldy with the county town of Cupar and crossing the River Leven near the village of Windygates at Cameron Bridge. Three roads from the west join the main north road – in the village of Thornton, at Bankhead, and at Cadham village. The last of these is at present an arterial road from west and central Scotland and is greatly used. Taking into consideration the effects of the war and the amount of traffic which they carry, the roads in the parish are standing up very well. There has, moreover, been a great improvement in the by-roads since the last Statistical Account, and while some are not nearly as good as they might be, all are quite passable, no matter what the weather may be. Many fine bridges have been built since the coming of the railway, and the parish is fortunate in that there are few level crossings within its boundaries.

In addition to the burgh of Markinch, there are five large or growing villages in the parish – Thornton, Milton of Balgonie, Coaltown of Balgonie, Windygates and Woodside. The village of Dubbieside at the mouth of the Leven, formerly part of Markinch, was incorporated in Wemyss parish in 1891. At the time of the New Account, Markinch was the fifth most parish in the county, and, though it has been outstripped by a number of others in the interval, its population and economic

importance alike have greatly increased. The population has risen steadily since 1755, when it was 2188, to its present figure of nearly 9000 (to which the burgh contributes 2306, or rather more than a quarter).

**General Housing Conditions.** Since the population of the parish increased very gradually for many years, housing conditions remained much the same from one generation to another. After 1919, however, a great forward movement in house building took place, and, in the next twenty years nearly all the insanitary dwellings and slum buildings were swept away, as Local Authorities operated a large housing programme. New schemes were built, and the population was transferred from inferior or overcrowded dwellings into modern houses, but, by 1949, the problem was again formidable for a number of reasons. Housing became a matter of urgent importance for all Local Authorities, and such has been the extent of their building that there are now more houses belonging to the councils than to private owners. In all, 730 houses were erected in the parish between 1919 and 1949. Outside the burgh, however, many of them are still without sanitation or water, and it is the aim of the County Council to have water laid into every house in their area at an early date. Except for some older, privately owned dwellings, all houses in the parish now have bathrooms.

Many years must pass before the whole population is properly and adequately accommodated, for there is a long waiting list of applicants. Young people are handicapped at the time of marriage since houses are not available for them and they have to resort to the expedient of renting a room from some more fortunate householder, or, as often happens, staying with parents – not a good arrangement, as bickering and strife may arise and much unhappiness is caused. County and Burgh Councils have worked harmoniously together in the past to try and find a solution. A large extension of 50 acres of land was conceded by the county to the burgh in 1946, for the building of approximately 500 houses to help meet the needs and demands of the burgh alone. Woodside, Milton, Coaltown and Thornton all are in the same plight, and the County Council is urgently striving to cope with the problem. Largely because of the building that has taken place, the valuation of the parish has risen steadily, and in 1949, was just under £68,000 (rateable).

As each scheme is completed, it means a further call for water, and soon the supply for the whole parish will be in the hands of the County Council. For long, the burgh has had its own supply of water of hard quality – good for the brain but bad for the feet! Soap in the local water does not lather very readily, and many complaints are made of the wastage of soap, especially during rationing. There is no reservoir, the water being merely drained or sucked out of the marshy ground at Lochmuir into three wells. There is never a shortage, but the water needs careful filtering and there has always been the danger of typhoid from animal manure, as cattle graze on the lands from which the water is drained. The Council, therefore decided to join the

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County Scheme, but up to the present still uses its own water. New houses also placed a greater strain on the drainage system, and the works became inadequate. Again the county council stepped in, and the whole parish is to be included in the Leven Scheme. The streets throughout the parish are well kept and are lit at night by electricity, of a different type for county and burgh, but satisfactory in each case.

For the conduct of these local affairs, a very happy understanding exists between burgh and county. The parish has always been favoured with councillors of high character – men who were prepared to devote their time and energy to the interest of their fellow-men. The town of Markinch became a Police Burgh in 1892, with the power to elect a provost, two baillies and six councillors. From 1892 to 1950 there have been eight provosts, the longest term of office being that of Provost John Dixon, who occupied the civic chair from 1896 to 1922, and who was equally well known for his good judgement and for his generosity. The public park of Markinch known as John Dixon Park was gifted by him, as was the gold chain of office now worn by the provost. The interest shown in council affairs by the electors is fairly good, and about 60% of those eligible generally register their vote at the poll. The results show that men in all walks of life – the ordinary workman, the man in an executive position and the highly paid, salaried official – share the favours of the voters. The council is a mixture but a good one, and Markinch is, or should be, proud of its representatives.

**The Economy.** The nineteenth century saw great developments in industry in the parish, as elsewhere. In the early nineteenth century, there were some 40 ‘mills’ that is water wheels, on the River Leven, 21 of them in the parish of Markinch; but the development of the steam engine made water wheels obsolete and uneconomic. Nevertheless, the presence of a good supply attracted industries dependent on water for process purposes. The largest single industry in the parish today is papermaking, one of the largest water consuming industries.

There are now seven mills in the parish and only five of them use the water of the River Leven, but the employment they give and the value and quantity of their produce greatly exceed that of the 21 that operated over a hundred years ago. The Old Statistical Account makes reference to flour mills, all of which are now extinct, though the remains of old buildings can still be seen as part of the farm buildings at Middle Mill and West Mill; it is also known that the present paper mill at Auchmuty was a meal mill up to 1809, as were, in all probability, several of the other mills.

There are now three paper mills, two owned by Tullis Russell and Company Limited and one by Fife Paper Mills Limited, one whisky blending and bottling warehouse owned by John Haig and Company Limited, one coal mine, the Balgonie Colliery Company Limited, now the property of the National Coal Board, one wool mill, one saw mill and one bleachfield. The operations of the paper mills and the warehouse are of the greatest significance in the county’s economy, and have been

described in earlier pages.

The **Balgonie Colliery**, in spite of the gloomy forebodings of the writer of the Old Account, is still operating, and the reserves are estimated at 15 million tons, which should keep the pit working for a further 50 years. It is the largest single user of the water of the River Leven, owning large falls from which considerable power is derived for working coal-cutters, conveyors, haulages and the pumping machinery in the pits. This plant, which consists of three turbines and is capable of producing 684kw, augments the main steam-driven turbine generators. Now in process of sinking is a shaft for a new pit at Thornton, which will work some 80 million tons in the Limestone Coal Group. The pit will be the most modern in Scotland, and should last for more than 100 years.

The **Balbirnie Wool Mill** is now the only firm in the county making wool blankets. It is an old firm, having been established in 1835, and has a very high reputation for its quality blankets. Fifty men and women are employed. Williamson Brothers operate one of the few saw mills left in the parish, and carry on a good business in timber. The river water no longer drives the saws, electricity being used for the modern high-speed machinery. Robert Tullis junior Limited, is one of the few firms left in Scotland still carrying on the bleaching of flax yarn. In bygone days, this bleaching was done by exposure on the grass, but today it is entirely a chemical process, and the water of the River Leven is largely used in the operation. The grey yarn is spun in surrounding districts, brought into the bleachfield for the bleaching process and afterwards dispatched to weavers all over the country for manufacture into cloth. The firm is also engaged in cotton yarn and jute yarn bleaching, and employs 60 men and women in the various processes.

In view of the variety of industries in the parish, unemployment is almost unknown. Most workers have a minimum fixed wage, free medical care, contributory health insurance and old-age pensions, and free education for their children. In short, every man, woman and child is so well cared for that many see a danger in all incentive to thrift and good housekeeping being almost completely removed, and wonder how long the country can afford such a state of affairs.

The parish is a fertile one and is farmed very intensively; all types of arable crops are grown and heavy yields are obtained. During the past half-century, however, there has been a considerable loss of very good arable land to housing and industry; mining subsidences have rendered drains inoperative and the cultivation difficult; and the introduction of open-cast working has completely sterilised some 350 acres of good land for a long period.

In the last fifty years, chemical fertilisers have been used in increased and increasing quantities, but not to the exclusion of farmyard manure, which is still considered an essential part of the intensive farming programme. In recent years, more attention has been given to grassland than previously, while the demand for milk has resulted in some farms specialising in dairying. One farm on Balbirnie Estate

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has been converted to dairying on the cattle court system on a large scale, with a T. T. herd of Ayrshire cows. There, too, the experiment has been made successfully of providing a hostel for the farm workers. More mashlum is now grown to enable producers to give their stock a higher protein feed. In the parish, the change from horse to machine has been widespread, and only two horses are now kept where formerly eight or ten would form the work-team.

There has been no marked change in the system of land ownership since 1920, when many sitting farmers purchased the holding occupied by them. The farmers of the parish form a class apart from the industrialists, and employ their leisure time in the company of other farmers rather than with urban dwellers. Nevertheless, they have learned to appreciate the point of view of the townsman, and it may fairly be said that the countryman is more conversant with the problems of industry and town life than the urban dweller is with those of the country. Farm workers too, mix little with the urban population. They frequent the towns to shop and participate in entertainments, but are not absorbed into the urban activities in their neighbourhood. They note the short hours of the urban workers and their all too frequent lack of individual conscientiousness in their employment with a certain amount of envy, which is tending to stir up both discontent and apathy. It is often held that the farm workers near the urban districts in the parish take less pride and interest in their work than do those who are more remote from an industrial centre.

With the exception of the Co-operative Society, which is the largest trader and has branches in Coaltown, Woodside, Kennoway, Windygates, Thornton, Freuchie and Falkland, Markinch is a parish of small shopkeepers, with most of them in the town of Markinch itself. The main street there, unfortunately, is the shortest of any burgh in Fife, with the result that shops are comparatively few, though they are of good quality and stock a fine class of goods. Notwithstanding the fact that virtually every need can be got locally, the tendency is to shop outside the parish altogether, largely because of the expansion of bus services. This is a practice which does not offer inducements to new traders to enter the locality. The fish and chip shop and the ice cream parlour or café have had an amazing growth in the present century. Originally in the hands of Italians, they are now run everywhere by Scottish and Italian folk alike, and have become a part of the life of the people. They might well be called the poor man's restaurant and evening rendezvous.

The two inns mentioned in the last Statistical Account do not now function as such. The Plasterers Inn is no longer on the main road and is a dwellinghouse owned by Messrs Tullis Russell and Company. The New Inn near Kirkforthar, almost at the extreme northern boundary of the parish, is now roofless and in the process of being demolished. It is still situated near the main north road and would make a good Road House, as a resting place for long-distance transport. Each village and town is well supplied with hotels and public-houses, and while the New Account states that there were ten ale-houses in the parish, it is safe to say that this number has at least been

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increased by 50%, apart altogether from licensed grocers. Indeed, there are more licensed premises than any other class of shopkeeper.

In the hive of industry that this parish is, transport plays an important part. Situated on the main line of the British Railways, businessmen were quick to see the advantages of railway service into their factories, and private lines were laid in. Employees in past years would walk many miles each day to and from work, but now the firms arrange special motor buses for the workers' benefit. These buses pick up employees near their homes – in many cases as far away as Leven, Buckhaven, Kirkcaldy and Leslie – bring them to the place of employment in Markinch and return them home when the day's work is over.

**Schools.** There is no senior secondary school in the parish; the pupils who wish and are able to take advantage of a senior secondary course travel to Cupar, Kirkcaldy or Buckhaven at twelve years of age.

There are three schools with primary divisions only – Coaltown of Balgonie (111 pupils), Milton of Balgonie (47 pupils) and Preston (51 pupils). Two schools have both primary and junior secondary divisions – Thornton (with 263 primary and 85 secondary pupils – a total of 348) and Markinch (280, 210 – 490). There are schoolhouses for the headmasters at Coaltown, Milton and Thornton. Markinch is the junior secondary centre for pupils over twelve from Coaltown of Balgonie, Milton of Balgonie and Preston. The old part of Markinch School, built in 1879, was destroyed by fire in June 1948. It is in process of rebuilding, a dining room and assembly hall being included in the plan.

After leaving school, many pupils attend evening continuation classes, commercial and technical courses being available as well as numerous other classes of utility and cultural value. Throughout the parish there are numerous libraries, the most notable being that of the Tullis Russell Institute at Markinch, erected as a memorial after the First World War. The County Library at Kirkcaldy also supplies books to all schools.

**The Churches.** The primary effects of the Union of 1929 in the parish of Markinch were that the two former United Free churches, Balbirnie and Brunton, entered the Union and became Church of Scotland charges, each with a definite territorial area within the parish. The present Balbirnie Church was built in 1898, at a cost of approximately £3300, all of which was raised by the congregation within four years. Brunton Church dates back to 1844. These changes made it necessary to re-name the old church which for centuries had been known as Markinch Parish Church. Most appropriately, the Kirk Session decided on the name St. Drostan's Parish Church, for it was to St. Drostan, a disciple of St. Columba, that the old church was originally dedicated.

A small minority in Markinch dissented from the Union of 1929 and has



maintained itself apart as the United Free Church. Worship was at first conducted in the YMCA Hall, but, on the 24 October 1931 the present church in George Street was erected by the efforts of the congregation. The church is meantime a dependant charge under the Home Area Committee, but with increasing numbers and income it is hoped that 'full status' will ultimately be attained. Today as in the past the main body of the people are attached to the Church of Scotland; other sectaries exist, but with only a comparatively small number of adherents.

Two items of particular significance in connection with St. Drostan's Parish Church fall to be recorded. First, the installation of an illuminated clock, the gift of R P Wilson of Beechcroft, in the church tower. This tower is all that remains of the original church and is one of the five specimens of pure Norman towers in Scotland. It was built about 1200. The church was consecrated in 1243 and dedicated to St. John the Baptist and Modrust. The spire on the top of the tower was erected at a later date. The heritors put on record in 1806 that the 'steeple' required substantial repair, and that the clock and dial plates should be put in proper order. It was stated that the stones were 'all loose and in great danger of falling'. They agreed on 7 April 1807, to accept a plan by James Barclay, that 'the top of the spire be finished with hewen stone and octagon figure'. Whether this was the date of the erection of the present octagonal steeple upon the top of the tower, it is hard to say. In 1929, the upper part of the tower was strengthened by the insertion, below the level of the parapet, of a ferro-concrete collar support, and the whole tower was pointed and strengthened under the supervision of the Ancient Monuments Committee of H M Office of Works. The lancet and other small openings, which had been built up, were re-opened and the openings filled with glass to prevent birds and rain from entering the tower. The tower was found to have been built upon the earth, without any adequate foundations, and these were strengthened by under-pinning the walls with concrete. The dedication of the renovated church tower and clock was performed by the then Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Rev. Dr Bogle.

Another achievement that calls for mention is the building of the new church hall, when the ever-growing membership had made the old building quite inadequate. The new hall is one of the finest in Fife, with seating accommodation for over 400, equipment on the most modern lines, and ample facilities for all congregational activities. It cost £3500, a sum which, apart from generous donations from the Baird Trust and the Home Mission Committee, was raised by the devoted and untiring efforts of the congregation. At the outbreak of the recent war, the hall passed into the hands of the military. Its use by various army units considerably impaired its condition, but, at the end of the war, a grant from the War Department and the expenditure of an additional sum by the congregation made it possible to restore the hall to its former beauty and serviceability.

Through various organisations, the Church contacts the community and seeks to further its highest interests. Each of the four churches in Markinch has a Women's

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Guild, which meets fortnightly throughout the winter. The syllabus includes such activities as group discussions, brains trusts, quiz nights, dramatic productions, lantern lectures, music – efforts all planned to increase within the community interest in and knowledge of the Church's work, and to help members to meet the many challenges of the hour. Again, all the churches in Markinch have Youth Fellowships drawn from their congregations. The week-night activities of these Fellowships are chiefly recreational, and on Sunday evenings they meet for biblical discussions and a devotional service. Both Markinch and Coaltown Schools have chaplains. From time to time classes are visited, the Scripture Lesson perhaps taken or a school service conducted, and guidance given, when asked for by teachers, in the difficulties that arise in presenting Christian truth to young people.

There are other points of contact that the church in Markinch makes with the community (and with interests outside its bounds), as does the Church in every parish, but enough has been said to show that these activities touch life in its many phases and situations and seek to impregnate them with Christian significance.

**Recreation and Amenities.** In this busy and industrial parish, much is done for the mind and body of the inhabitants. The British Legion is zealous in the welfare of its members who gave service to their country in the forces; the WRIs at Rothes, Milton and Kirkforthar cater for the interest of the women folk there; and Milton of Balgonie and Coaltown of Balgonie each has a Miners' Welfare Institute.

Youth has its uplift and its training in the many clubs organised for its benefit. Dramatic, choral and intellectual studies are encouraged. There are very healthy groups of Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies, all under voluntary leaders; for those past school age there are Girls Clubs, Boys Clubs, YMCA and the Army Cadet Corps. In the town of Markinch, a Central Youth Club has been formed, which includes representatives from all the different Youth Organisations in the parish, who meet together for discussion of their main activities and the varied problems that arise.

While football is the chief sport of the parish, bowling greens and tennis courts are available and popular. The golf course fell into disuse during the war, but a new course is expected to be ready in the next few years. Milton and District Homing Society has a fine reputation for the quality of racing pigeons, which take part in flights from the Continent as well as England.

Unfortunately, there is not an actual playing field, in the true sense of the term, in the whole parish. The burgh and Coaltown each has a public parks, and these serve the purpose of sport and play for all classes and sexes, but very much more could be done for children and young people. The burgh's fine football team is badly handicapped for want of a suitable pitch, and, though the club is willing to purchase or rent a field, it just cannot be got.

One notable open space is Markinch Hill, presented to the town in 1919 by Mr Edward Balfour of Balbirnie, and interesting alike to the geologist and the

antiquarian. It rises to a height of 100 feet above the ground level in the immediate vicinity, and extends in a continuous ridge from east to west for 300 yards. The whole of the north side is cut into terraces which wind round its eastern end. Nothing can be learned of their original use, but they overlook a field known as the 'playfield', and it is probable that they were used for watching games and plays in medieval times. On the summit, a handsome memorial was erected in 1920 to those who gave their lives in the Great War. The memorial is under the care of the Town Council, and a pilgrimage of remembrance is made to it once a year. The hill is thickly wooded and is a noted local beauty spot.

At the foot of the hill, on the opposite side of the public road, stands a broad stone known as Stob Cross. It is a coarse piece of work without any sculpture or characters on it, but bears the marks of great antiquity. It is thought to be one of the few sanctuary crosses of Scotland. The Town Council is anxious to preserve it and may acquire the ground in its vicinity, laying out in a manner worthy of its name – 'holy ground'.

The centre for a great many activities is the Markinch Institute. This fine building is the property of Messrs Tullis Russell and Company Limited, and has been in use for the good of the community since 1920. Membership of the Institute is open both to the firm's employees and to the inhabitants of the town, the annual subscription being very small and the privileges of membership very great. The Institute is equipped with a splendid lending and reference library, a reading room, a billiard room, a games room and a fine hall for badminton, table tennis and lectures, all made possible through the generosity of a notable benefactor of the parish in the person of Sir David Russell, LL.D. He it was, too, who brought the Tullis Russell Prize Silver Band, the excellence of which is now known to a very wide public, through the medium of broadcasting. The band is always ready to give its services willingly to any deserving cause in the parish. The Tullis Russell Music Club, the Girls Club, plays by the Repertory Company in Rothes Canteen Hall, music and singing by talented artistes are all made available to the inhabitants through the goodwill of Sir David Russell and his son.

**General.** In the ordinary course of events, there is no intermingling of the social life of any of the communities making up the parish, as each keeps itself to itself and follows its own line of welfare. These are practically similar in each community, one of the principal features being treats for the old folk. Coaltown of Balgonie specialises in theatricals, and the Balgonie Players are welcomed everywhere, not only for the efforts they make to raise funds for the benefit of the needy, but also for the high quality of entertainment provided. Dancing is popular and whist drives are unending.

Gone are the days of the old Scottish Sabbath, when 'a Sabbath well spent brought a week of content'. Sunday is now looked forward to as a day when the worker may spend the evening at a non-stop variety concert or a go as you please

competition. This is confined meantime to the villages and has not yet penetrated to the burgh. Social life in past centuries seemed to revolve around the church; in the 1940-50 days of austerity, the housewife finds much of it as she queues up for food, or drinks, a cup of coffee after her morning shopping. The fried-fish shop and the ice-cream parlour have already been noticed as a social phenomenon, entirely unknown to previous ages.

While social isolation may now be the usual order, a great change took place in 1939 at the outbreak of the war. Then every social service became the business of men, women and children all over the parish. Under the leadership of Markinch Town Council, all communities vied with one another to give service – nobly, unselfishly and unrestrainedly. Committees for war efforts, ARP, War Savings and indeed every conceivable good cause, came from all districts and tackled every job with wonderful spirit and enthusiasm. Sad to relate that, when war ended in 1945, the various bodies shrank back again to the old way of life. A new spirit, however, had certainly been awakened.

At a time when lawlessness is rampant, crime is infrequent in Markinch. In the main, they are a law-abiding and peaceable folk who show a deep respect for life's sanctities. At a time when there is a decline in self-discipline, when unrest is seething among masses of workers and strikes are frequent in spite of high wages and full employment, there is little or no discontent among the workers in Markinch. The great majority are imbued with a high sense of personal responsibility, and reveal a fine capacity for and a steady fidelity in work.

In common with other communities, indeed in common with the whole country, Markinch has not escaped the decline in allegiance to organised religion which has become in recent years so startlingly apparent. But there is still a large and solid core which attendance at worship and loyalty to the church are exemplary. And, even for those whose attendance on the public ordinances of religion is irregular and intermittent, the church is still deeply present in their conscience.