

# BALMERINO PARISH

## POPULATION.

The population of the parish has been steadily on the increase for many years past, owing to feuing, and to its vicinity to Dundee, where employment can easily be procured in the manufacturing of linen, etc.

The population in 1755 amounted to	565
1791	703
1821	965
1831	1055
1837	1070

The yearly average of births for the last seven years is 27, of marriages 6. There is no register of deaths kept. The average number of persons, their ages, employments, and families is as under:

<b>In 1831 the number under 15 years of age was</b>	<b>430</b>
<b>betwixt 15 and 30</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>30 and 50</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>50 and 70</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>above 70</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Number of families at present</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>houses</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>Average number of children</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Number of communicants</b>	<b>458</b>
<b>male heads of families</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Dissenters, about</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>inhabitants in villages</b>	<b>550</b>
<b>The number of individuals employed in weaving is about</b>	<b>150</b>

The rest are chiefly engaged in agriculture. There are in the parish 5 grocers, 3 wrights, 4 shoemakers, 3 blacksmiths, 3 tailors, 1 medical practitioner, and 5 publicans.

**CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE:** - The inhabitants are justly entitled to be regarded as honest, industrious, sober, and extremely exemplary in their attendance upon the ordinances of religion. They are strongly attached to the Established Church, and less than ordinarily given to the

following of divisive courses. During the last three years, there have been three illegitimate births in the parish; and a long time has elapsed since any suffered, either for theft or disturbance of the public peace.

**MANUFACTURES:** - Since the destruction of the stake-net fishery, many of the individuals employed in that amphibious kind of occupation have betaken themselves entirely to the trade of weavers. None of them, however, have as yet risen to the dignity and professional importance of manufacturers, but derive their webs, at second hand, from those of this class in Dundee. About 150 men and women are engaged at the loom with materials supplied from this quarter. The linens which they weave are called Dowlas and Osnaburgh and, an expert weaver will earn about 2s. per day. Some of the young men thus employed in the winter months, are engaged in the Greenland whalefishery during the season of that now hazardous and precarious employment.

### PAROCHIAL ECONOMY

**MARKETS, MEANS of COMMUNICATION:-** The nearest market-town is Cupar, distant about seven miles. The nearest post-office is Newport, and is distant about four and a half miles from the manse. There are no turnpike roads in the parish ; but the statute labour roads are in good condition, and the means of communication with other places are various, and of easy access. There is a passageboat which sails from Balmerino pier to Dundee once a week, or oftener if required. Considering the population of the parish, this department of our statistics is rather meagre in its details. There is neither baker, brewer, nor butcher within its bounds. The navigation or shipping interest is upon an equally limited scale. Only the passage-boat, which is a joint-stock concern, belongs to the parish. Many vessels with coals, however, discharge their cargoes during the season. About fifty years ago, according to the last Statistical Account, this harbour was the chief place on the south side of Tay for shipping grain ; now not a single boll is shipped here, if we except such parcels of wheat as the farmers in the immediate neighbourhood send by the passage-boat to the Dundee bakers. The Messrs Rintoul, however, carry on a considerable trade in potatoes, which are sent up to the London market. In some seasons, upwards of 6500 bolls have been shipped from this port by these gentlemen, besides what has been exported by them from other places.

**ECCLESIASTICAL STATE:** - The church is situated about the centre of the parish, and is seated for about 400. It was finished in 1811. It is a plain building without any ornament, but considerably deficient in point of accommodation for the parishioners. The heritors, however, have it in contemplation to enlarge its dimensions. The manse was built in 1816, and is one of the most commodious in the presbytery.

The number of families attending the Established Church is 195; of Dissenting or Seceding families, 20.

**POOR and PAROCHIAL FUNDS:** - The poor of the parish are supported by the collections made at the church, and by the liberality of the heritors and inhabitants. Those upon the roll get from 3s. to 6s. a month; others get occasional relief at the new year and sacrament, in money, coals, or meal, according to circumstances; and the resident proprietors of Naughton and Birkhill distribute, during winter, coals and meal to the most necessitous. The proprietor of Balmerino has given, for some years back, L. 10 to, the poor on his own estate. The heritors also assess themselves to the amount of L. 20 per annum, for the maintenance of two idiots. The number of persons receiving parochial aid is 12 or thereby. The average annual amount of church collections for the poor is L. 18.

**EDUCATION:** - There are two schools in the parish the parochial school, and one taught by a female. There are in winter generally from 120 to 130 scholars attending the former, and about 40 at the latter. The salary of the parish school is the maximum, and the fees amount to from L. 25 to L. 30 per annum. The branches taught in it are, English reading, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, geography, etc. :Greek and Latin are not much required. The teacher is eminently qualified for his situation, being possessed not only of all the requisite information in no ordinary degree, but peculiarly fitted for communicating it to his pupils. A decided improvement has taken Place, as well in the amount as in the standard of education, since his appointment to this parish; and it is pleasant to find that his labours are duly appreciated by the inhabitants at large.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The improvements in husbandry and agriculture are abundantly manifest in the district, since the date of last Account. Many wastes have been reclaimed, marshes have been drained, and thriving plantations are everywhere rising up for shelter and protection. The systems of wedge draining and subsoil ploughing are being adopted. Turnips are extensively sown; and the practice of eating them off with sheep, in suitable situations, is general. The roads through the parish have also been much improved, and are, in general, kept in excellent repair. Many of the farmsteadings are newly erected, and some of them may vie with any in the country, either in extent of accommodation, or in neatness and elegance of structure.

February 1838 ( Rev John Thomson )