

# BEATH PARISH

POPULATION.:- In 1821, the amount of population was 729. By the census 1831, very accurately taken, it was 921,-males, 459 ; females, 462. Of this amount there were 23 above 70 years of age About 400 of the population live in the villages of Kelty and Oakfield.

The number of families is 180, containing each, of individuals, on an average, somewhat more than 5 ; a fact, perhaps, rather uncommon; and to be accounted for by early marriages, chiefly among the colliers, who earn higher wages than any other class of labourers. There are 4 houses at present in progress of building; all the rest, amounting to 161, are inhabited. The increase of population is owing to the additional number of hands employed at the collieries, and to a system of feuing lately introduced.

The annual average of births for the last seven years, appearing from the parish records, was 15; of marriages, 5 ; and of deaths, 13. But, as the deaths of all who are interred in the churchyard are recorded, although some of them are from other parishes, and as some parents neglect to have the births of their children registered, the exact number of births and deaths cannot be ascertained.

In general the people enjoy the advantages and comforts suited to their stations in life. In dress and the decoration of their persons, they keep pace with the times. They are, upon the whole, moral and religious. There have been, as there still are, several instances of longevity among them.

During the last three years there have been 4 illegitimate births in the parish.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.-The parish church is the only place of public worship. Its situation is convenient for the population, but not so its size, affording accommodation to only 250 sitters. It is an old, cold, damp, fabric. In 1808, it underwent a repair, and stands greatly in need of another. If the heritors consulted their own interest, and the accommodation and comfort of the people, they would cause its foundation to be dug up.\*

In good weather the church is remarkably well attended. The average number of communicants is above 200, and the number is annually increasing. Of the population nearly 200, old and young, are Burgher Seceders, the only description of Dissenters in the parish. Their number has greatly diminished within the last twenty years.

The manse was built in 1801, and a small addition was made to it four years ago. The glebe consists of 8 acres, and may be worth from L. 16 to L. 20 yearly. The teinds are exhausted, and the stipend is the minimum.

\* Since the above account was given in, a handsome and excellent church has been erected, calculated to afford ample accommodation to the parishioners, and which reflects great credit upon the liberality of the heritors.

EDUCATION-The parochial school is the only one in the parish. Its situation is central. The usual branches of education are taught in it. For the last fourteen years, owing greatly to the superior merits of the teachers, Mr William Beatton, lately called to the parish of Kennoway, and his brother, who has succeeded him, it has been attended by an average of 100 scholars. The fees are, per quarter, for English reading, 2s. 6d.; reading and writing, 3s., do. do. and arithmetic, 4s.; Latin and Greek, 5s. The schoolmaster's house and school-room were lately erected, and are good and commodious. The salary is the maximum: the fees may amount to L. 30 per annum. There are very few persons in the parish above six years of age who cannot read. In general, the people are alive to the benefits of education. There are, however, some exceptions, chiefly among the colliers. Some years ago, Francis Berry, a native of the parish, and who spent the greater part of his life in it, in the capacity of a small farmer, (in consequence of the death of his only child, a student in divinity,) bequeathed a feu in land and houses, the fruit of honest industry, for educating poor children, natives of the parish. The property is subject to the liferent of his widow, an elderly woman. It is let in lease for L. 28, 10s. per annum. The kirk-session are appointed sole trustees.

POOR-The maintenance of the poor has long been a light burden. At present there are only 5 on the roll, three of whom receive each 1s. a-week, and the other two, in more indigent circumstances, 1s. 9d. each. Their wants are supplied out of the ordinary collections, which amount to about L. 11 annually; the interest of L. 100 due by promissory note to the session, and the dues upon marriages and burials. The poor evince no unnecessary disposition to solicit parochial aid.

INNS.-There are one inn and four public-houses in the parish, and their effects are notoriously injurious to the morals of the people.

April 1836 ( Rev. James Fergusson )