

CULTS PARISH

PAROCHIAL REGISTERS:-These parish records commence in the year 1693, and are continued downwards with little interruption to the present day. Prior to 1748, however, the entries are made in a very confused and slovenly manner, the notices of births, marriages, and deaths being huddled together with the minutes of the kirk-session, and the accounts of the collections and disbursements for the poor. The older minutes of the Session exhibit some curious traits of the characters and manners of the times to which they refer. From the account of the collections, it appears that these were sometimes made in former times, not only for the maintenance of the poor, and for missionary purposes, but for the repairing of roads, bridges, and harbours. And it more than once occurs that the recusant members of the congregation, who fail to give their mite to these occasional contributions, have their names reported to a subsequent meeting of the kirk-session and recorded in the minute.

EMINENT MEN:-This parish has the honour of being the birthplace of Sir David Wilkie, the celebrated painter, who was born in the manse on the 18th of November 1785. His father, the Rev. David Wilkie, for thirty-eight years minister of Cults, was of a respectable family in Mid-Lothian, and was nephew to the famous Dr Wilkie, Professor of Logic in the University of St Andrews, and author of the "Epigoniad." His mother, Miss Isabel Lister, was the daughter of Mr James Lister, a most respectable elder in the parish, and a man of singular sagacity and natural talents. The young painter shewed at an early period of life a strong predilection for that art, in which he has now acquired so high and so well merited celebrity. Even the taunts of his brothers and companions did not deter him from embracing every opportunity, when yet on the very verge of infancy, of exhibiting his natural tastes and prepossessions. And all the aversion, at first shewn by both his father and grandfather, to his following, what they conceived to be an idle and unprofitable pursuit, only served to verify the adage of Horace, "Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret." His father's successor in the ministry has informed me, that when he first came to Cults, he found the walls of the nursery completely covered with eyes, noses, hands, and other parts of the human body, boldly executed, not with crayon, but with the charred end of a stick, but that subsequently, on his return after a temporary absence, while the manse was undergoing repairs, he was shocked to find these interesting memorials obliterated, by the painter's brush no doubt, but by a very different one from that, which the young Artist was destined afterwards to make use of ! Some of Wilkie's earliest performances still exist, in the shape of portraits, which are admirable likenesses, and valued of course very highly by their fortunate possessors. The oldest of his unproductive paintings that I have heard of, is an exquisite representation of a poor family, the father sitting in tattered clothes, smoking a pipe by the fireside, and his daughter, a buxom girl, bringing water from the well in an earthen vessel. It is now in the possession of a widow lady in St Andrews. In one person's possession, there are, among several others of Wilkie's earlier efforts, two very exquisite likenesses of his brother's children, painted long before he reached the acme of his fame, and a domestic scene, his father and mother at family worship, painted in his youth, and not unworthy of being compared with his recent treatment of a

kindred subject, " The Cottar's Saturday Night." A report and belief is very general that the " Saracen's head," a sign board in the village of Pitlessie, was painted by Wilkie. This we have reason to know is a mistake. There is, however, in the possession of Robert Methven, Esq. procurator fiscal for the County of Fife, a sign-board representing a boy watering a horse, which was really painted by Wilkie when a mere boy for a small alehouse in the parish of Kettle. " Pitlessie Fair," which was his first regular effort as an artist, is now in the possession of a proprietor in an adjoining parish, Charles Kinnear, Esq. of Kinloch. It is a fine picture, containing upwards of 150 figures graphically delineated and admirably grouped, including portraits of Wilkie himself, his father, brothers and sisters, and of many other characters well known in the parish and neighbourhood, during the painter's earlier years. This picture is by competent judges considered equal in merit to some of the most admired productions of its distinguished artist, although, having never been engraved, it is less generally known.

To mention or characterize any of his more recent performances, would be quite superfluous. These are well known, and have been justly appreciated. As an artist he may be well accounted the boast not merely of a parish, or of a county, or even of a kingdom, but of the art in general, wherever it is cultivated ; while in private life, as is well known, there is no man more justly esteemed for his simple and unaffected manners, and his amiable and friendly disposition. Sir David Wilkie was appointed by King George IV. Limner to his Majesty for Scotland, and in 1836 he received the honour of knighthood from King William IV.

The Rev. David Wilkie, father of this celebrated artist, merits a special notice in this place, as the author of a valuable " Treatise on the Theory of Interest and Annuities ; with an illustration of the widow's scheme in the Church of Scotland :" as also Dr Thomas Gillespie, the present learned and able Professor of Humanity in the University of St Andrews, who succeeded Mr Wilkie in the ministry of the parish of Cults, and held that office for fifteen years. Dr Gillespie, besides numerous other literary Productions, has published a volume of beautiful sermons on " The Seasons contemplated in the Spirit of the Gospel."

POPULATION.

The following is a statement of the population of Cults at various periods downwards since 1751

Number of inhabitants according to Session records in the year 1751	464
Number as returned to Dr Webster in 1755	449
Number according to last Statistical Account in 1791	534
Number by Government census in 1801	699
1811	766
1821	853

in 1831, males 435, females 468	Total 903
Number in January 1838	914
Increase since 1751	450
since 1791	380

This progressive increase in the population is to be ascribed to the steadily advancing prosperity of trade and manufactures.

Of the 914 present inhabitants of this parish, 516 reside in the village of Pitlessie, and 398 in the country.

The yearly average for the last seven years of births is	20
marriages:	6.57
deaths.	16.14
Of the 914 inhabitants of this parish there are under 15 years of age,	322
betwixt 15 and 30	254
30 and 50	163
50 and 70	136
upwards of 70	39
The number of families is at present	204
By census 1831, the number of families is	211
The number of unmarried men, bachelors, or widowers upwards of 50 years of age	24
unmarried women upwards of 45	36
inhabited houses, by census 1831	174

Since that period, there have been ten additional dwelling-houses built, and nearly as many of the former houses converted into loom-shops. There are seven dwelling-houses at present uninhabited or building.

There are three proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards ; one of them, the Earl of Glasgow, is occasionally resident.

CHARACTER AND HABITS OF THE PEOPLE:-There is nothing remarkable in the character or habits of the people to distinguish them from those of the surrounding district. They are for the

most part healthy and vigorous ; and, on the whole, enjoy, in a reasonable measure, the comforts and advantages of society.

Thirty-five years ago, smuggling prevailed to a great extent in the village of Pitlessie. It has since been entirely abandoned.

INDUSTRY.

Employments of male Adults.- The Government census of 1831 gives the following return of the occupations of the males upwards of twenty years old :

Number employed in agriculture, as farmers, cottars, and farm-servants	48
manufactures	49
retail trade and handicraft	68
Merchants, professional persons, and other educated men	4
Labourers employed in mines, roads, etc.	37

By the same census it appears that in 1831 there were:

Families chiefly employed in agriculture	39
in trade, manufactures, and handicraft	151
Other families not included in these classes	21
Male servants upwards of twenty years old	4
Female servants of all ages	18

LINEN WEAVING:-This branch of manufactures gives employment to a large proportion of the parishioners. The kind of cloth woven is Dowlas. The webs are usually 140 yards long, and 30 inches wide, containing at an average 35 spindles of yarn. The materials are supplied by manufacturers in Newburgh, Leslie, and Kettle, who have agents in the parish. The number of weavers is 85 males and 65 females, in all 150. Of these nearly one-half are boys or young women under twenty years of age; while more than a fifth of the whole number are regularly employed at the loom only during the winter, the remainder being exclusively weavers, and following, except in harvest, no other occupation. The average gross wages per web are 17s., or, deducting 2s. 6d. for winding, dressing, etc. the clear wages per web may be stated at 14s. 6d. The average rent of a loom stance is 9s. per annum. The number of webs usually wrought in the course of a year cannot be precisely ascertained; 1700 may be taken as a fair estimate. Their value when wrought, at an average of L. 5 per web, is L. 8500, the gross sum paid for weaving them at 17s. is L. 1445, of which the weavers receive, as their clear wages at 14s. 6d., L. 1232,

10s. As to wages per week, few even of the best weavers, working steadily twelve or fourteen hours a day, will, after clearing all expenses, realize a greater sum weekly than 7s. The clear average wages earned per week may be stated at not more than 5s. for a man or woman, and 3s. for a boy or girl. The weaving of linens, therefore, cannot be considered as at present affording by any means an adequate remuneration for the labour employed in it.

Some of the webs being warped in the parish, there are twentyfour old women regularly employed in winding the larger bobbins for the warp, at which they may earn at an average 2s.1d. per week. While in winding the smaller bobbins for the woof, the weavers usually employ their wives or children. At this latter employment, if done for hire, from 2s. 6d. to 3s. may be made per week.

TOW SPINNING:- At Hospital Mill, there were formerly a corn and a flax-mill, which, in 1821, were converted into a mill for spinning tow, at a cost of about L. 4000. The wheel when fully supplied with water, (as it always is except for a few weeks in summer,) works with fourteen horse power. The mill has six carding engines, with the other necessary preparing machinery, and ten spinning frames, containing 368 spindles. The size of yarn spun varies from four to fourteen pounds imperial per spindle. The quantity spun annually is from 160 to 180 tons, and its average value is L 7000. The principal market to which it is sent is Dundee.

In this factory, there are employed 50 persons, viz. 7 men at wages from 15s. to L. 1 per week; 31 women, 5s. 6d. to 6s.; 12 children, 3s. 6d. to 3s. 9d.

There is another factory (Russell Mill) in the parish of Cupar, a few hundred yards beyond the boundary which also gives employment to some of the inhabitants of Cults. These two establishments are under the same management. In both of them, a most laudable attention is paid to the comfort, morals, and education of the working people, who are distinguished at once by their intelligence and their morality.

MILLS:- Besides the spinning mill, there are in the parish of Cults 3 mills for flour, barley, malt, and oatmeal ; 1 for cleaning yarn; 1 saw-mill driven by water; 1 saw-mill to be driven by steam in the course of being erected ; 3 thrashing machines driven by water ; and 6 thrashing machines wrought by horses.

TRADESMEN:- The different tradesmen in Cults are as follows, (masters, journeymen, and apprentices being all included) : 7 wrights, 14 masons, 9 shoemakers, 4 tailors, 2 turners, 7 blacksmiths, 2 bakers, 2 brewers, and 5 grocers.

PAROCHIAL ECONOMY

MARKET and POST-TOWN:- The nearest market and post-town is Cupar, about four miles to the eastward, where there is a weekly market held every Thursday.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION:- The high road from Dundee to Edinburgh traverses the parish, and three coaches, one of them the mail-coach, pass along it daily in each direction. There, is a carrier from Pitlessie to Cupar, every Thursday, and the Cupar and Edinburgh carriers pass that village thrice a week going to Edinburgh, and thrice a week returning. Letters are brought from the post-office at Cupar, by a messenger who goes thither with letters and parcels usually every day.

ROADS:-There are two miles of turnpike-road in the parish, and six miles 1615 yards of statute labour roads.

VILLAGES:- The only village that can be properly so called is Pitlessie, containing 516 inhabitants. There are also four small hamlets or groups of houses; Crossgates, Walton, Cults Mill, andHospital Mill, containing from 22 to 70 inhabitants.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE:- The church is situated in the centre of the parish, but is nearly a mile distant from the village of Pitlessie, where the mass of the population are congregated. It was built in 1793, and is in good repair. It was seated originally for 360 persons, but a want of seat-room having been recently felt, the kirk-session, in July 1835, requested the heritors to supply it, by affording additional accommodation. The heritors, with commendable liberality, acceded to our request, so that there is now ample seat-room for 430 persons ; and the church, it may be added, is as well filled, now that it is enlarged, as it was before the addition was made.

The manse, which adjoins the church, was built in 1795, and is in good repair.

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS:- The number of families and individuals of all ages belonging to the different religious denominations, will appear from the following table:

DENOMINATION	FAMILIES	PERSONS
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Established Church	150	678
United Associate Synod	29	136
Relief Synod	13	57
Original Burgher Synod	2	8
Independents	3	8

Besides these, there are two or three families that are not attached to any religious denomination.

There is a Dissenting chapel in Pitlessie, in connection with the United Associate Synod. Twenty-five years ago, there was in the same village an Independent chapel, which has since been converted into a dwelling-house, the congregation attaching themselves, for the most part, either to the Established Church, or to some other Dissenting communion. The number of communicants of the Established Church is 348.

EDUCATION:- The parish school is in the village of Pitlessie. The teacher has a comfortable house, a spacious school-room, the legal extent of garden ground, and the maximum salary of L. 34, 4s. 4d. The branches of education taught by him are, Latin, French, English grammar, writing, bookkeeping, arithmetic, algebra, navigation, and land-surveying. The school-fees for the different branches are, 2s. per quarter for reading; 3s. for reading, and writing; 3s. 6d. when arithmetic is added; and 5s. for Latin. Taking the average of the last seven years, the number of scholars is 60, the amount of school-fees L. 30 per annum, and the emoluments of the teacher derived from other sources, as the session clerkship and registration, are L. 6. There is a private school taught in Pitlessie at present, and attended by 45 scholars. The branches taught in it are, reading, writing and arithmetic; and the school fees are, for reading, 2s. ; for writing and arithmetic, 2s. 6d. There is also, in a remote district of the parish, a third school taught by a female, and attended by 20 young children at an average, who pay some of them 1d. and others 2d. per week. A Sabbath school is taught in the church, attended by from 30 to 40 young people, according to the season of the year.

POOR:- The average number of paupers receiving regular aid is 12. The sums allowed to them vary from 4s. to 10s. per month. exclusive of house-rent, and coals in winter, with which they are also supplied. Besides these, there are some other persons to whom occasional assistance is given. The whole expenses of the kirk-session, for the last seven years, average L. 50 per annum. The annual amount of collections at the church-door (exclusive of those for religious purposes) averages only L. 12 ; and the deficiency has of late years been supplied partly by the voluntary contributions of the heritors, and partly by a gift of L. 100 made to the kirk-session by the Honourable Lord Lindsay, as legatee of the late Lady Mary Lindsay Crawford, of which there are still L. 40 remaining. Little delicacy is shewn in applying for parochial aid, the independent spirit of the Scottish peasantry having in a great measure, died away in this quarter. In the course of one or two years, a legal assessment for the support of the poor will be inevitable.

ALEHOUSES:- There are 8 licensed ale and spirit-dealers, seven in Pitlessie, and one in Crossgates.

FUEL: - The fuel principally used is coal, brought for the most part from Balbirnie, in the parish of Markinch, about six miles on the road to Kirkcaldy. Its cost at the pit is 1s. 3d. per load of 18 stone.

FAIRS: - There were formerly two annual fairs in Pitlessie, for the sale of agricultural stock, chiefly cattle, the one held on the second Tuesday of May, old style, and the other on the third Wednesday of October, old style. The latter has for some years been discontinued; the former is still kept, and is very resorted to. It is one of the best attended fairs in the county.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

In comparing the state of the parish now, with what it appears to have been in 1791, when the last Statistical Account was written, little occurs as worthy of remark. Great improvements have, as might have been expected taken place in agriculture. Instead Of 900 Scots, equal to 1134 imperial acres, the whole extent of arable land in 1791, there are now 1900 imperial acres under regular cultivation. The extent of woodland has greatly diminished, there being now only 115 imperial acres of wood, instead of 400 Scots, equal to 504 imperial acres. The population was then 534; it is now 914. The wages of a day-labourer were then 10d. per day; they are now from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 8d. Houses for labourers were then let at from 4s. to L. 1 a year ; they are let now at from L. 1 to L. 3. There were then only two thrashing-macbins, there are now nine. The old Statistical Account makes no mention of manufactures, from which it may be concluded that they did not then form, by any means, so important a source as they now do, of employment and subsistence to the parishioners. Since 1791, the following buildings have been erected : a spinning-mill, a saw-mill, a yarn-mill, a stone bridge across the Eden at Clushford, the present Church, the manse, and Crawford priory.

June 1838 (Rev Thomas J Crawford)