

DALGETY PARISH

POPULATION. ;-In 1755, the population of the parish was stated to be 761. Since that period it has been nearly doubled. The principal cause of its increase is to be attributed to the extension of the Fordel coal-works, and to several small feus, which have been granted by the proprietor on his lands in the neighbourhood of the colliery. The population in the southern division of the parish has greatly diminished of late. The old village of Dalgety, along with the parish school, and some other houses which were situated near the old church, have all been removed, as the properties in that neighbourhood have gradually come into the possession of the Earl of Moray, and have been thrown into his Lordship's extensive enclosures.

The number of individuals residing in villages is as follows:

At St.David's, a small village on the sea coast	142
Hillend, only a small part of which is in the parish	43
At Crossgates	176
At Fordel Square	141
Rows of Collier Houses	798

Population of the parish in:

1801	890
1811	816
1821	912
1831	1300

There has been no obituary kept in the parish for the last fifty years.

The average number of marriages for the last seven years is 11

persons under 15 years of age, 540

betwixt 15 and 30, 357

30 and 50, 248

50 and 70, 118

upwards of 70, 37

Total 1300

Number of unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers, upwards of 50 years of age, 11

females above 45, 13

The average number of children in each family may be stated at 4

The number of insane, blind, and dumb, 4

Number of families in the parish, 253

chiefly employed in agriculture, 41

in trade, manufactures, or handicraft, 39

CHARACTER, etc. of the PEOPLE.-The people in general are very sober and industrious. Those of them who are not employed in the coal-works consist principally of labourers and farm-servants. The colliers who compose such a large proportion of the parishioners are, with a few exceptions, the most sober and civilized of that class of the community any where to be found. They are quite a distinct class from the agricultural population. Their prejudices, their domestic habits, and even their style of dress are altogether peculiar. So completely have they kept themselves apart, and so much have intermarriages prevailed, that for centuries back the same family names have generally obtained amongst them. The ameliorated condition of the Fordel colliers, when compared with that of many others, is principally to be traced to the effects of education. Before the parish school was removed to their immediate neighbourhood, where it has been for upwards of thirty years, it was their uniform practice to maintain by subscription a teacher amongst themselves. This fact may be of some importance to those proprietors, many of whose colliers are so far behind the other classes of the community, both as regards general education and moral improvement.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.-A very handsome parish church was erected in the year 1830. The style of the building is Gothic. It is seated to accommodate 500 individuals. It does great honour to the liberality and taste of the heritors, being one of the most handsome small country churches in Scotland; and furnishes a proof of the great improvement which has lately taken place in the style of ecclesiastical architecture. It is more conveniently situated for some of the parishioners than the old church, which stood close to the sea side, while the most populous part of the parish is about four miles distant. The site of the new church is about a mile to the north of the former one, close to the public road, which lies betwixt Aberdour and Inverkeithing. It is still, however, about three miles from the great body of the parishioners.

There are a number of individuals really attached to the Establishment, who are thus unwillingly necessitated to become dissenters, on account of the inconvenient distance at which they are placed from the parish church.

The old church is a very ancient building. It was for many years, in a great state of disrepair, and was never well adapted, from its uncentral situation, to be a place of worship for the parish. It stands about two miles from Donibristle House, close to the sea shore. It was formerly a Chapel of Ease to the monastery on the Island of Inch Colme, when the seat of the Earl of Moray belonged to the abbots of that monastery. On one of the small galleries is rudely emblazoned the heraldic arms of the Earl of Dunfermline, a family now extinct. Chancellor Seaton, who was created Earl of Dunfermline in 1605, lies interred in a part of the area of the church, along with some other individuals of distinction.

A substantial and well-finished new manse and offices have also been built within the last five years. They are situated on the glebe, and are a few minutes walk from the new church. The glebe is 12 acres in extent, and lets for about L. 1, 12s. per acre. The teinds of the parish are exhausted; their amount is about 15 chalders.

There are no dissenting chapels in the parish, and those of the parishioners who do not belong to the parish church, attend a Burgher meeting-house either at Inverkeithing or at Crossgates. The latter place is very conveniently situated for the colliers, being only about a mile distant from most of them. The number of individuals attending the Established Church is about 400.

EDUCATION.-There are two schools in the parish. The parochial schoolmaster has the maximum salary and the legal accommodation. The other school is supported entirely by the fees of the scholars, and a free school-room. The expense of education at the parish school is, 8s. for reading; writing, 10s. ,and arithmetic, 12s.,-which are the only branches taught. There are no persons in the parish from six years and upwards who cannot read.

POOR and PAROCHIAL FUNDS.-The average number of persons upon the poor roll is from 25 to 30, and the sum distributed is from Is. to Is. 6d. per week. The annual disbursement is about L. 40. It does not appear that compulsory assessments have ever been introduced into this parish. The three heritors have been in the habit for a considerable period of assessing themselves to make up any deficiencies in the poors' funds. Besides the weekly collections, there is the interest of L. 130 arising from legacies left by individuals to the poor of the parish. Since the new church was opened however, the weekly collections have been more than sufficient to meet all the demands upon the poor funds, though the number of paupers is rather upon the increase. The heritors had formerly to Contribute about L. 10 annually. At present the rare, though much-wished for state of things here obtains, viz. the voluntary Sabbath day offerings of the parishioners supporting all the poor, and the aged, and the infirm amongst them. This is principally to be assigned to the regularity of the attendance of the heritors' families, and of others, since a comfortable place of worship has been provided. The state of complete disrepair in which the old church remained for upwards of thirty years had the effect of alienating many individuals from the Establishment, who could easily obtain comfortable accommodation in the numerous dissenting chapels in the neighbourhood. And thus many who during life had weekly contributed toward the support of a dissenting place of worship, and towards the maintenance of its poor, have themselves ultimately become applicants for parochial relief. This has had the effect of greatly increasing the demand upon the heritors ; and had they not come forward and assessed themselves, and had not many cases of indigence been supplied by the private benevolence of the proprietor of the Fordel coal-works, this parish might long ere now have been

subject to all the numerous evils which never fail to attend that self-increasing evil, a legal assessment, and from which, we trust, it is now in the way of farther and farther receding. And we are persuaded that in many country parishes this evil might have been prevented, had the non-resident heritors voluntarily contributed to the parish funds such a sum as might have been reasonably expected from them, had they been weekly in their places in the parish church. Had this much to be deprecated system ever been introduced into this parish, its principal cause must have been traced to the long period during which no suitable accommodation was provided for the people in their parish church. Much evil results from want of due attention to the comfort of the parishioners in this respect. It not only increases the demand upon heritors to supply their diminished poors' funds, and may thus lead to the introduction of legal assessments, but it goes directly to foster those loose principles, and to induce those habits of idleness and dissipation which give rise to pauperism itself. For an excuse is hereby furnished to the parishioners for withdrawing themselves from the salutary influence of the weekly lessons and ministrations of the gospel, which every enlightened mind will acknowledge are the most efficient of all means for promoting industry, frugality, and prudence amongst our peasantry, and for cherishing that spirit of honest independence which will ever associate degradation with a state of pauperism. We cannot say that any disposition is evinced on the part of the people to refrain from applying for parochial relief. A strict attention, however, is paid to withholding assistance from those who have any private sources of charity from which supplies ought to be afforded them.

June 1836 (Rev. Alexander Watt)