

DYSART PARISH

POPULATION.- From want of proper documents, little information can be given of the ancient state of the population of this parish. With the exception of Dunfermline, it has long been reckoned the most populous in the county. So far back, indeed, as the year 1619 or 1620, the inhabitants were so numerous, that one minister was not sufficient to do the work of the parish, and in consequence of this a second charge was established, and another minister introduced. According to Dr Webster's report, as quoted in the former Statistical Account, the number of souls in 1755 was 2367, and, as will be seen from the census of 1831, it is now upwards of 7000, exclusive of sailors, which amount to a few hundreds more. This great increase may be fairly traced to the different public works which have been established in the parish; to the facilities afforded to feuars ; to the low rate of house-rents, and to the cheapness of fuel.

A more particular account of the different villages in the parish will afterwards be given; but in the meantime the following state of the population may be depended upon:

Town of Dysart	1801
Pathhead including Sinclair Town	3330
Hawkley Muir and Upper part of Sinclair Town	434
Gallaton	1053
Boreland	184
Country part of Parish	302
Total	7104
Of Which Males	3291
Of Which Female	3813

The only family of nobility residing occasionally in the parish is that of the Earl of Rosslyn : but there are many families of independent fortune, and five or six proprietors of land whose income from that source varies from L. 200 to L. 300 or L. 400 a year.

Dysart can boast of at least as many instances of longevity as any parish in Fife. There are a good many instances of people above eighty years of age, attending church regularly twice a day not only in summer but during winter; and not many months ago, a respectable old man in his ninety-fourth year, not only attended church but sat in session with his brethren, and his recollections were as distinct as at any period of his life.

The number of lunatics known to belong to the parish is only two, and they are supported in an asylum by the heritors. The number of fatuous persons does not exceed three or four at most.

The great body of the people are of industrious habits; and although from the pressure of the times, they have not had it in their power to enjoy those comforts which they did a few years ago, it would be great injustice to conceal that they have borne their privations with more than ordinary patience and that, upon the whole, they are contented and happy with their situation and circumstances. There are a great number of very intelligent individuals amongst them, and not a few who are distinguished both for religious principle and good moral practice.

At one time, smuggling prevailed to a very great extent, and the common impression was, that there was no harm in it. In many of the old houses, indeed, the smuggling holes where sea-faring people concealed tea, gin, and other articles, are still to be seen; but this degrading and sinful practice is not now known to exist.

MANUFACTURES: About forty years' ago, there were about 100 smiths employed in the manufacture of nails. It is said, that about 12,000,000 of nails were made by this number of men, and that their value was not less than L 2000. These were generally sold in Edinburgh and Glasgow, as Well as in all the principal towns of the north of Scotland ; and a large proportion of them were used for ship-building. This branch of nail manufacture flourished exceedingly for upwards of a century; but nail factories having been established in other parts of the country, greatly diminished the profits of the merchants here, and now the trade itself is almost totally discontinued.

The same thing may be said of the manufacture of linen, cloth. Formerly, great quantities of it were made in the. parish; but very few now.

The principal branch which flourishes at present is the manufacture of cheeks and ticks. This branch of trade was introduced into the parish between 1710 and 1720; it continued to increase till 1776; but about that time scarcely brought L. 9000 of yearly value. It is very different at present. The number of looms employed in the manufacture of this kind of cloth is about 2088; the quantity of cloth made is supposed to be 31,006,720 Yards; and the annual value of this quantity not under L. 150,236. A large proportion of this is sold in Glasgow, London, Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham and Leeds. A large proportion of it is also sent to other parts of Europe, to the Cape of Good Hope, and to the East and West Indies. The number of hands employed in this department of trade, including weavers, winders, and warpers, may be fairly estimated from 5000 to 6000. Several of the manufacturers have agencies in different parts of the country, in Ceres, Strathmiglo, and Perth; and it appears from their testimony that the number of looms employed by them out of the parish is above 1000.

The weavers are engaged all the six days of the week, when they can find employment. Some of them, indeed, are obliged to work from four or five in the morning till ten or eleven at night; and after all their industry, will not earn more than 5s. or 6s. per week. It is almost needless to add, that this is but a poor remuneration for their labour; that the effects of such long hours on their health. are anything but good, and are very adverse to mental improvement.

At the mill where flax is spun, the work people are employed, from half-past five in the morning till eight at night, half an hour being allowed for breakfast and the same for dinner. The earnings of the female mill-spinners are from 6s. to 7s. weekly. It deserves to be mentioned that the

proprietors of this mill are men of great respectability; that they take an interest in the morals of the young people; and that they will not allow the most distant approaches to anything like vice.

VILLAGES.- There are three villages in the parish, Pathhead, Gallaton, and Boreland. Pathhead is in the western extremity of the parish, at the head of a steep descent leading to Kirkaldy called the Path, and, from thence it derives its name. It is divided into Pathhead Proper or Dunnikier, and Sinclairton. The former or old town, which is of very ancient date, is built on the estate of Dunnikier.- It consists of three principal streets, the Back, the Middle, and the Nether Street, at the end of which last street, is the house long inhabited by the family of Dunnikier. The latter, or New Town, is built on the estate of the Earl of Rossly, and is separated from the former by the great road leading to Dundee. The building of it commenced about seventy years ago, and extends about a mile north, where it joins the village of Gallaton. The population in this part of the parish, as will be seen from the last census, is 3764.

Gallaton is a village of considerable extent. It is divided into Easter and Wester Gallaton. The population of both is 1053. There are two traditions respecting the origin of the name. The one is, that under the feudal system, the field on which the first house was built was the place where criminals were executed. The other and more probable of the two is, that about two or three hundred years ago, a noted robber or house-breaker suffered the extreme penalty of the law here, and that, from this circumstance, it got the name of Gallowstown, afterwards of Gallaton. It was long a place celebrated for the making of nails: and when Dr Adam Smith resided in Kirkaldy, he frequently came to converse with the more intelligent nailers in this village respecting their mode of barter.

The village of Boreland is the most inconsiderable of the three. It is about half a-mile to the south-east of Gallaton; it was founded about a century ago, and is inhabited by those who are employed in the coal works. About twenty years ago, there were fully 300 individuals residing here; but by the last census the population does not exceed 184. This arises from the coal works being carried on on a less scale than formerly.

Inns:- There are by far too many public-houses in the parish-not fewer than 150,- and it is almost needless to say, that their effects upon the morals of the people are most pernicious.

April 1836 (Rev. David Murray, Minister)