

KILCONQUHAR PARISH

PAROCHIAL REGISTERS.-There are no printed nor manuscript historical accounts of this parish, so far as known to the writer, except the parochial registers, which commence in 1631, and have been regularly kept ever since.

This parish originally comprehended the whole of the parish of Elie, and the barony of St Monance. Sir William Scott of Ardross, who was proprietor of all the lands now constituting the parish of Elie, got them erected into a separate parish in 1639, he becoming bound to furnish a church for the new parish, with a manse and glebe for the minister; and expressly stipulating, that the stipend then allocated on his lands, and payable to the minister of Kilconquhar, should continue to be so paid in all time coming.

The late incumbent of the parish of Elie made an attempt to get the whole of the teinds, and raised a process before the Court of Session to get this agreement set aside. The heritors of Kilconquhar appeared as defenders, and after some litigation the process was dropped.

The present parish church of St Monance was a chapel in this parish previously to the annexation of that barony to the parish of Abercrombie in 1646.

POPULATION.

Date	Population
1753	2131
1794	2013
1814	2312
1821	2317
1831	2540 exclusive of 70 seamen
1834	2749
1836	2732

Three villages contain nearly two-thirds of the population.

	Males	Females	Total
Earlsferry	309	340	649
Kilconquhar and Barnyards	256	302	558
Colinsburgh	239	322	561
Country Population	456	508	964
Total	1260	1472	2732

Excess of Females	-	212	
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The females exceed the males nearly 8 per cent., but the males bear a much nearer proportion to the females in the rural districts of the parish than in the villages. In the former, the females exceed the males only 6 per cent., in the latter 11 per cent. This may be accounted for, by single women finding cheaper houses and more employment in the villages than in the country.

The following is the state of births and marriages for last seven years

Years	Births	Males	Females	Marriages
1829	68	36	32	17
1830	58	27	31	15
1831	53	29	24	16
1832	66	31	35	28
1833	68	32	36	22
1834	79	39	40	16
1835	54	29	25	22
Totals	446	223	223	136

It is rather remarkable that the births of males and females, though different in different years, are precisely the same in seven years. There is nearly one birth to 43 persons, and one marriage to 140, or more properly 70, and $3\frac{1}{4}$ births to each marriage.

The following table will shew the numbers and ages of the persons who have died during the last seven years :

Years	Males	Females	Total	Average Age
1829	18	22	40	32
1830	21	19	40	50
1831	19	24	43	48
1832	14	25	39	47
1833	23	13	36	38
1834	28	35	63	34
1835	20	27	47	38
Total	143	165	308	41

One person to 62 has died yearly. The average age has been 41. The births have exceeded the deaths 138 in the seven years.

The following table will show more particularly the ages of the persons who have died last seven years.

	under 10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100	over 100
1829	14	4	1	5	2	3	3	2	4	1	1
1830	7	5	4	2	-	2	6	5	6	3	-
1831	7	3	3	1	5	3	4	10	7	-	-
1832	7	1	2	2	4	1	4	8	8	2	-
1833	7	5	5	2	3	4	1	2	7	-	-
1834	25	4	1	4	2	2	3	7	15	-	-
1835	6	5	1	4	2	7	11	3	8	-	-

The person who died in 1829 above 100 was a female who was born in this parish, and whose name and birth are recorded in our session books. She was one hundred years and four months when she died. She kept an inn or public-house in Colinsburgh for More than seventy years. She was of a placid cheerful disposition, was temperate, but said that she had never been particular as to what she ate or drank.

persons under 15 years	981
above 15 and below 50	1265
above 50 and below 70	357
above 70	129
Bachelors above 50	27
Widowers above 50	31
Unmarried females above 45	68
Widows	99
Insane persons	4
Fatuous	4
Deaf and dumb	2
Blind	1

There are 655 families, counting each separate lodging a family, which make 4 1/8 for each family. Many single persons, however, occupy separate lodgings, so that families, properly so styled, must be considerably larger.

The language spoken here, especially by the young, is better than in most parts of Scotland. This is owing chiefly to our having good schools, and the youth being in general better educated. There is nothing particular in the appearance, the manners or customs of the people. They enjoy in a reasonable degree the comforts and advantages of society, and are generally contented with their condition and circumstances. It may be mentioned as a proof of the regularity of their conduct, that during the last twenty-three years, which is the period that the present incumbent has resided amongst them, there has not been an instance of a person belonging to this parish having been brought to a justiciary trial.

The comfort in which the inhabitants live may appear from the circumstance of our bakers using annually about 1000 quarters of wheat in bread; and our butchers killing and selling weekly upon an average 12 animals, including bullocks, sheep, lambs, veal, etc. Besides which, about 600 pigs are yearly fed and used by cottagers and others. Several families, too, in the higher ranks, use their own mutton, lambs, etc.

MANUFACTURES.-There are no spinning mills nor public manufactures in this parish ; 235 persons are employed in weaving, 120 males, and 115 females. The webs are generally got from Kirkaldy, Kirkland, or Dundee, ready for the loom. Manufacturers in each of these places have agents here, for giving out, and taking in the work. The kinds of cloth worked here are doulasses, checks, and sheetings. About fifteen young men in Earlsferry are employed in weaving sheetings from 3 to 4 yards broad, at which they can earn from 3s. to 4s. a day.

The average earnings of all the weavers, male and female, in the parish may be about 8s. per week, or L. 4888 per annum. A great proportion of the men employed in weaving have also been bred to the sea. From thirty to forty used annually to go to the whale-fishing in summer, and return to the loom in winter. From that fishery having been so unsuccessful of late years, few now go to it. About twenty or thirty now go in the months of July and August to the herring fishing on the north-east coast of Scotland.

All the manufacturing part of the population reside in the villages. There is not a weaver in the whole of the landward part of the parish.

TAN & CURRYING WORKS.-There is a tan-work in Kilconquhar and a currying-work in Colinsburgh, carried on by the same company, in which leather is manufactured to the value of L. 14,000 or L. 15,000 per annum. From twenty to twenty-four men are employed in these works, to whom about L. 15 are paid weekly in wages.

The following list will give a view of the professions and occupations of part of the inhabitants who have not been mentioned : 1 surgeon ; 1 writer .3 cloth-merchants ; 13 grocers ; 12 gardeners ; 9 bakers ; 3 butchers ; 16 tailors ; 29 shoemakers; 20 wrights; 18 masons 13 blacksmiths ; 1 tinsmith; 2 saddlers; 3 coopers ; 2 slaters; 1 stationer; 1 house painter; 22 sailors; 12 public-houses; 90 persons employed at coal works.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.-Two stage coaches pass daily through the parish, one from Anstruther to Edinburgh by Pettycur, another from Anstruther to join the Largo steamer, which carries passengers to Edinburgh twice a-day in summer, and once a-day in winter.

Excellent turnpike roads run in all directions through the parish. The great road from the east to the west of Fife along the south coast, passes through it. Colinsburgh is a regular stage on this road. Here there is a good inn, with post-chaises and horses. There is also another line of turnpike road that runs from south to north, and which, in the northern parts of the parish, branches off in various directions leading to St Andrews, Cupar, Dundee, etc. Carriers from this go weekly to Edinburgh, Kirkaldy, St Andrews, Cupar, and all the towns on the coast.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.-The parish church, which stands in the village of Kilconquhar, was built in 1820 and 1821. The plan was furnished and the building erected by Messrs Dickson, architects, Edinburgh. It is a handsome building in the Gothic style of architecture, with a tower 80 feet in height. The church is conveniently situated for four-fifths of the population, but extremely inconveniently for the inhabitants of the northern part of the parish, the extremity of which is at least seven miles distant. The church contains sittings for 1035 ; 50 sittings are allotted to the poor.

The inconvenient situation of the church for the inhabitants of the northern parts of the parish has led to the erection of a chapel at Largoward, which was opened for public worship in September 1835, and which, since that time, has been regularly supplied, by the presbytery furnishing supply the one Sabbath, and the minister of the parish providing it the other. A subscription has been made for supporting a preacher, who may reside in the district, and officiate regularly in the chapel. This chapel is on the confines of two other parishes, Carnbee, and Cameron ; and within two miles of it is a population of upwards of 800, who are, some of them, seven, and all of them more than two miles, from their own Parish churches. This is a locality where a new parish ought to be erected, and to which the attention of the Royal Commissioners is now solicited.

The manse and offices were built in 1815, and are in good condition.

The number of persons belonging to the Established Church is 2300. Divine service, both in the church and chapel, is well attended. The number of communicants belonging to the Established Church is 1110; the number generally present at the time of the communion about 1000.

Dissenters.-There are four dissenting meeting-houses in the parish, besides a small Baptist meeting. There is also a meeting house in Cameron parish, just on the borders of this, which has as great an attendance of the inhabitants of this parish, and is as conveniently situated for them, as any of the others. These meeting houses contain as many sittings as would accommodate every man, woman, and child in the parish, allowing 18 inches to each. They contain upwards of 2700 sittings. Not 200 of these are let to, or occupied by, persons belonging to the parish. The number of dissenters in the parish, young and old, of all denominations, is 361. The meeting-houses in the parish belong, two to the Relief, one to the United Associate Synod, and one to the Independents. The one in Cameron belongs to the United Associate Synod. One of the Relief

meeting-houses in Colinsburgh, and the United Associate meeting-house in Kilconquhar, were some years ago sold for debt ; but by some arrangement they are still kept up as places of worship, and have ministers. The other relief meeting-house in Colinsburgh is now falling into ruins, and is almost deserted. The Independent meeting-house, although actually situated in this parish, which runs close to the village of Elie, was built, and is Supported, so far as it has support, chiefly by persons in Elie. A very small number attend it. What stipends these ministers receive is not known, They must be very small. There are 3 families of Episcopalians in the parish, and 51 persons belonging to no religious communion, although some of them occasionally attend the Established Church.

We have a society for church purposes, composed of members of the Established Church, which distributes annually about L. 30 for the support and extension of the gospel.

EDUCATION.-There are six schools in the parish. The parochial schoolmaster in Kilconquhar has a salary of L. 34, 2s. 4d. being the maximum. The heritors also allow a salary of 100 merks for a school at Largoward, where the chapel is built. The other four schools have no salary. There is also a female school at Kilconquhar. The number of scholars attending all the schools is about 450, or a sixth part of the population.

The branches taught in the parish school are English, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, French, bookkeeping, geography, algebra, Euclid's Elements, trigonometry, mensuration, navigation. The number of scholars studying Latin in this school for the last two years has been 28, in 1834 the number was 33. This school is remarkably well taught, and the teacher Mr M'Laurin, having a commodious house, has 16 boarders from different parts of the

country. An usher is kept to assist in teaching this school. In the other schools the more ordinary branches only are taught. The people in general are alive to the benefits of education. All the children are within easy reach of some of the schools, and are taught to read and write.

POOR.-The average number on the regular poor's list for the last ten years has been 36 About two-thirds of these either are Dissenters, or have been Dissenters. These proportions have been nearly the same for the last twenty years. The Dissenters here do not provide for their poor, nor do they contribute any thing to the poor's funds of the parish. If they give any thing to the poor, it is unknown to the kirk-session, and must be confined to those of their own communion. They give nothing to any of the poor of the Establishment.

January 1837 (Rev William Ferrie)