

LEUCHARS PARISH

POPULATION.; There has been very little variation in the number of inhabitants in this parish from the earliest times till now, as is the case in most agricultural districts. The only change upon the population is that of locality. The Tents moor, which of old used to be studded with turf built cottages, and gardens and crofts attached to them, is now, in a great measure, depopulated, from the extensive farms which have been formed upon it. Many of the former inhabitants of the moors shifted their quarters to the village, and other parts of the parish.

No. of inhabitants residing in the village of Leuchars in 1831, 614

in Balmullo, another village belonging to this parish 250

The yearly average of births for seven years ending with 1831 is, 47

of deaths for 1831 is, 22

of marriages, 16

In 1831, the average number of persons under 15 years of age, 689

betwixt 15 and 30, 475

30 and 50, 432

50 and 70, 214

upwards of 70, 59

Number of bachelors in 1831 upwards of 50 years of age, 6

old maids upwards of 45, 25

In 1831 the number of hearths was, 412

of families, in which there are children, 209

of children, 627

which makes an average of exactly 3 to each.

Number of insane, 3 ; blind, 3; dumb, 1.

CHARACTER AND HABITS OF THE PEOPLE.-The inhabitants are lately much improved in point of cleanliness and dress. Their articles of diet, which formerly consisted chiefly of potatoes and oatmeal, now embrace a greater variety. Instead, of the homely bannock, kneaded at his own hearth, you find the cottager enjoying his loaf from the baker, which he accompanies with beer, milk, or tea. Pork and rabbit during winter, fish and cockles during summer, constitute at once a rich and varied diet. By furnishing manure to the neighbouring farmers, the villagers obtain abundant crops of potatoes at an easy rate. They get a certain portion of land, in which they deposit their own sets, and cultivate and clean the land during the summer months, which tends much to promote their health and enjoyment. Indeed, our villagers are in possession of many privileges and comforts which are denied to the inhabitants of wealthier towns; and, on the whole, they are a contented, industrious, intelligent, religious, and happy people. The demoralizing practice of smuggling, formerly so extensively, prevalent on the shore, has, by the operation of the excise laws, been abolished for many years.

The steadings are now universally in good condition, and on several farms have very excellent accommodation for cattle. There is, however, still a want of cottars' houses for farm-servants, which obliges the farmer to crowd young ploughmen into bothies, which is unfavourable to their improvement in morals. It would perhaps remedy the evil, to distribute the young men among the families of those that are married, and lodge one or two of them with the tenant himself, that all may be under some superintendence, and be profitably employed at leisure hours. Indeed, the bothy system is universally reprobated.

During the last three years, there have been 9 illegitimate births in the parish.

MANUFACTURES. -Besides the employment of about 30 families as masons, carpenters, smiths, tailors, shoemakers in this parish, there are a great many engaged in weaving, Independent of the weavers who are employed in towelling and sheeting for home consumption, there are about two-thirds who work coarse linens, chiefly Dowlas, Osnaburghs, and Silesias for the Cupar and Dundee manufacturers, who export them for America and the West Indies. Many of our young females take to the loom during the winter months, but in summer they prefer outdoor work. Since the introduction of machinery, hand-spinning has almost ceased to be a branch of industry. A spindle of yarn will occupy a woman three days and a-half, for which she will earn 1s.; a spindle of shirting yarn will yield double that sum. The number of looms altogether in this parish may be estimated at about 130. Our weavers are most industrious, working many of them ten hours sometimes even more. Before the salutary change which the weaving interest has lately experienced, the gain per day at the loom, with the deduction of 4d. for expenses, did not exceed 8d. Now, however, provisions being moderate, their labour commands a fair remuneration.

An extensive distillery was erected at Seggie, upon the river Eden, twenty six years ago, and has, with the exception of this year, been all along in successful operation, distilling about 100 quarters of grain per day, during the cool season. Several scores of cattle were annually fed within the premises. It yielded constant employment to about 100 workmen, who received ample wages. The advantages of such an establishment to the farmers in the neighbourhood have been fully appreciated ; as a ready market was afforded them for the disposal of grain. A saw-mill, barley, lint, and two oatmeal-mills are in the parish.

PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

MARKET TOWNS.-The market-towns of Cupar, St Andrews, and Dundee, situated at seven, six, and eight miles distance respectively, with daily communication by post and carriers, afford every advantage to the parish for buying and selling.

VILLAGES.-The two villages,-Leuchars, with 614 inhabitants, and Balmullo, a straggling village on the Dundee public road, with 250 inhabitants, are dry, well-aired, well-watered, and healthy villages, with excellent turnpikes through them.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE; -The parish church, situate in the village of Leuchars, is distant from the east end of the parish about four miles, and from the western extremity nearly six miles. A more central position for the bulk of the population would be about a mile farther to the westward. It is a commodious, well-lighted, and comfortable building, accommodating 850 sitters. There are not more than a dozen free sittings in the church; Is. 3d. only is the average of each seat per annum. A deep gallery, holding 150 persons, erected out of the poor's funds, accommodates the householders at prices graduating from 2s. 6d. to 6d. each. As many more are also supplied with seats, at a small rent, by the principal heritors, after the tenants and their cottars are provided. The manse was built in 1806, and is still considered a respectable and well-finished house, and pleasantly situated.

There is only one church of Original Seceders, stationed at Balmullo, with about 70 joined members, and a respectable minister, whose stipend is of small and variable amount. But to supply the deficiency, his supporters have built him a small manse and a few offices, and granted two acres for a cow's grass.

The attendance at the Established Church throughout the year is steady and full. The number of persons attending church may be estimated at 600 generally. The number of communicants average 700. Some are induced, from convenience, usually to attend the neighbouring parish churches. The number of dissenters throughout the parish is perhaps not more than 100.

A society has been established for twelve years for promoting religious purposes at home and abroad, which has contributed about L. 40 annually. However, it is now fast declining.

The farmers seem to prefer giving their charity to their cottars, with whom they are more immediately connected. The villagers assist their poorer neighbours in a similar way, without troubling the kirk-session, by rendering it the medium of communication. A mistaken idea prevails among many that the session funds are so rich as to require no addition to them.

EDUCATION.-There are four schools; one parochial and three unendowed. Of the latter, one is for teaching sewing chiefly, and English reading is supported by the Balcarres family, and the fees of the scholars. The remaining two are supported by fees alone. The branches taught in the

parish school are, English, Latin, Greek, arithmetic, practical mathematics, writing, grammar, and geography. At present there are no Latin or Greek scholars. The children generally attend only two or three quarters in the year, and pay 6s., 7s. 6d., or at most 9s. per annum each, but often pay weekly. No person is known to be incapable of reading, and very few who cannot write after nine years of age. There is also a flourishing Sabbath school, which has subsisted for twenty years. No additional school is needed.

POOR-The multiplication of paupers is owing to the growing impression, that heritors are bound to support the poor. Dilapidations are annually making on the lying capital, and are in the course of annihilating it. The number now receiving aid regularly from the kirk-session is 30 persons; occasionally, 36. The average number for a few years past is about 25. Average of aliment per week for each is Is. 3d. The annual amount of charitable contributions is L. 75 ; collections, L. 23; land-rent, L. 24; church seat rents, L. 12; interest, mortcloth, hearse, L. 11.

ALEHOUSES.-There are 6 alehouses in the village of Leuchars, and another 6 along the great roads of the parish.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.;-Since last survey, the greatest change is the enlargement of our villages, and the depopulation of the country parts of the parish, which has not been attended with an improvement in the morals of the people in general.

September 1836 (Rev David Watson)