

MOONZIE PARISH

Parochial Registers.- The parochial registers are not of ancient date. The first entry in the minute-book is on November 6th 1693. Baptisms were first recorded in 1713, and marriages in 1769. Since 1821, births and baptisms, as well as marriages and deaths, have been regularly recorded.

Antiquities.- When the church was repaired in 1821, there was found in the east end of it a coffin containing some human bones in a mouldering state, and a thigh-bone in good preservation. The side stones of the coffin consisted of two long sandstones, and the bottom of Dutch square bricks. The upper stone, or cover, on which there is often an inscription, had, it is likely, been removed at some early period, but on one of the side-stones there was cut out the figure of a sword, indicating that the person who had been entombed there had been a soldier or warrior. It is probable that he belonged to the Craufurd family, who had large property in the parish, and were generally military men.

Several years ago, when some labourers were casting a ditch on the west side of the farm of Moonzie, they discovered several stone coffins near the surface of the ground. From the rude materials of which they were composed, and the exposed situation in which they were placed, they do not appear to have contained the ashes of the illustrious dead, but to have been the repositories of some ignoble individuals. Some coins have been found in different places of the parish, but none of any importance either from their antiquity or intrinsic value.

POPULATION.

The return to Dr Webster in 1755, was	271
1793	171
1831	188
1841	174

The population of the parish was formerly much greater than it is at present.

Different causes appear to have operated in producing this decrease. About fifty or sixty years ago, the farms in this country were generally of small extent, and much more numerous than at present. Ample employment and maintenance were thus afforded to many families, and the population of the country parishes consequently great. But the farms are now generally of large extent and few in number, and though laboured much more skilfully and perfectly than formerly, the number of cultivators is much diminished. It was also the practice of the farmers in these times to lease out to each of their cottars, and to those who had houses on the farm, two or three

acres of land at a moderate rent, and to give it the requisite cultivation. They also allowed them to keep cows, and provided them with grass in the summer and straw in the winter, for their maintenance. These privileges were highly valued by the people, and contributed much to their comfort and advantage. From the produce of their land and dairy, they had abundance of plain food for the maintenance of themselves and families; and in seasons of sickness, when unable for their daily labour, they could subsist for a time on their own means without being forced to apply for public aid. But this practice has been discontinued, and none even of the farm-servants enjoy the advantage of a cow except the foreman. In consequence of this change, the people of the country who were tradesmen, seeing that they enjoyed none of the comforts of the country, left the habitations of their fathers, and established themselves in the towns from which their employment was principally derived. This desertion has produced in many parishes a paucity of labourers for field work, particularly for the green crop husbandry, which has been rapidly increasing for some time past, and is now carried on to a great extent.

The yearly average of births for the last seven years is, 5, deaths, 3 marriages, 2

Average number of persons under 15 years of age, 79

between 15 and 30, 39 1/2

30 and 50, 39

50 and 70, 16

upwards of 70, 9

There are only three proprietors of land in the parish, and none of them reside in it. The income of each is upwards of L. 50.

Number of unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers upwards of 50, 4 ,

women upwards of 45, 10

Average number of children in each family, 3

INDUSTRY.

The great majority of the people of this parish are engaged in agriculture, either as farmers and ploughmen, or as day labourers. The number of tradesmen is small, four masons, three carpenters, and seven weavers. There are about 1000 Scots or 1261 imperial acres in the parish.

The whole is arable and in a high state of cultivation, except a few acres on the top of Colluthie hill, which is steep and rocky, and incapable of being ploughed, and which has been planted with wood, principally Scots firs.

The soil in general is excellent, being chiefly a black loam, resting up on trap or rotten-rock. In some places it is a strong coarse clay with a wet bottom; and there are about thirty-six acres of moss land belonging to the farm of Lordscairn. Within the recollection of the present incumbent, improvements of the most valuable and substantial nature have been accomplished. Upwards of sixty acres of land, which were formerly covered with whins and broom, have been trenched, and manured and converted into productive soil.

The land has been subdivided and inclosed, drained in the most effectual manner, and cropped so judiciously as both to keep it as clean as a garden, and also to make it most productive.

The average rent of a Scots acre of land may be L.2, 5s. The grazing of an ox of twenty-five stones weight or upwards may cost during the summer from L.1, 15s. to L.2. The keep of one during the winter for six months, on turnips and straw, from L.2, 10s. to L.3. The grazing of a wedder or ewe L.1 per annum.

Live-Stock. Great attention has been paid in the parish to the breeding of domestic animals. Several of the farmers rear a number of young horses every year, and occasionally purchase some brood mares from adjoining counties to improve their own stock. Small active horses are in general preferred to large and heavy ones, as they are better fitted than the others for labouring the hilly ground of the north side of Fife. The Fife breed of oxen, which is generally of a black colour and horned, is the favourite in this quarter. Not long ago, it had rather fallen into disrepute; but the tide is now turned, and from the attention directed to its improvement, it bids fair to rival the best breeds in the kingdom.

The Teeswater or short-horned breed from England was introduced here some years ago, and is still highly esteemed by some agriculturists. The principal advantage of this breed consists in their capability of being made fat when only two years of age. But, notwithstanding this recommendation, it is now beginning to be less esteemed, and to give way either to the Fife or doddled cattle of Angus. There is only one tenant in the parish who keeps a breeding stock of sheep on his farm. They are a mixture of the Leicester and Cheviot. He has lately got some ewes of the Dorsetshire breed, which are of large size and horned, and produce lambs twice a year. A six years' rotation is the mode of cropping generally adopted. 1. Fallow or green crop; 2. wheat; 3. pease or beans; 4. barley with grass seeds; 5. grass cut or pastured; 6. oats. The tenants in this parish enjoy particular advantages in regard to their leases. These extend in general to twenty five years, and include no restrictions of an oppressive nature. The farm steadings of the principal tenants are of a superior kind, built upon the most approved plans, and affording every necessary accommodation. As a proof of the spirit of enterprize and improvement which exists amongst us, it may be mentioned that, though there are only four thrashing-mills in the parish, two of these are driven by steam. The soil is every year changing its appearance and becoming

more productive. A laudable spirit of rivalry prevails amongst the farmers, and leads them to adopt every improvement which may benefit the land as well as promote their own interest.

PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market Town.- Cupar, which is about three miles distant, is the nearest market town. Every article of country produce finds there a ready sale and a good price. There are several small collections of houses in the parish which hardly deserve the names of villages. They are the residences of the agricultural labourers belonging to the different farms, and of a few tradesmen. There has been no inn in the parish for many years.

Means of Communication.- The nearest post office is Cupar. The turnpike road leading from Cupar to Newburgh, and extending to one mile and 1400 yards, lies along the south boundary of the parish. A statute labour road of one mile and 500 yards connects the Newburgh road on the south with the great Dundee road on the north. There is, beside, a private farm road which goes through the middle of the parish.

Ecclesiastical State.- The church of Moonzie is situated on a rising ground in the south-west part of the parish, and is easily accessible to all the population. It is a small plain building, without spire or other ornament. From its elevated position, it forms a conspicuous object from the Newburgh road, and enjoys the name of the Visible Kirk, from being a landmark to mariners entering the Tay, It has all the marks of an old building, but the time of its erection is unknown. It was lately repaired and new seated; and though not possessed of any external beauty, is now a comfortable place of worship. It has accommodation for 171 sitters. All the sittings are free.

List of Ministers since the Reformation.- William Grey, reader, admitted 1576 ; Mr James Wedderburn, admitted 1625, died 1661; Mr J. Wedderburn, Yo., admitted 2d September 1659, deposed 1662; Mr James Forsyth, 1664; Mr David Bayne, 1675 ; Mr James Ross, outed 1689; Mr. Andrew Young, admitted November 21, 1693, died 1699; Mr William Myles, admitted September 12, 1700; Mr Archibald Myles, admitted September 4, 1739 ; Mr David Burn, admitted July 24, 1755 ; Mr Robert Swan, admitted August 9, 1770; Mr Andrew Ireland, admitted March 16, 1777 ; the present incumbent, admitted September 3, 1807.

The manse was built about thirty six years ago, and, though in tolerable repair, is small and inconvenient, and far inferior in point of accommodation to the manses in the neighbourhood.

Forty-one families attend the Established Church; two families are Dissenters. 140 persons at an average attend public worship in the parish church each Lord's day. There are eight Dissenters who go to different churches in Cupar. The average number of communicants for the last seven years, is 110. The average amount of church collections yearly for religious and charitable objects is L.3, 10s.

Education.-There is only one school, the parochial. It is situated in the centre of the parish, and is attended by about 60 scholars. The present teacher has officiated in that capacity for upwards of forty years with great credit to himself, and much to the advantage of the youth in the neighbourhood. His legal salary is only L.30 per annum; but the heritors lately, sensible of his merit, raised it to the maximum during his life. No perquisites of any kind are allowed. The fees in all do not exceed L.14 per annum. The school room is of sufficient size, but the ceiling is low, which makes it uncomfortable for the young people during the heat of summer. The teacher's house is small, and would require both repair and enlargement.

Poor and Parochial Funds.- The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is 4. Some receive 2s., others 1s. 6d. or 1s. per week, according to their circumstances. The annual amount of collections at the church doors for relief of the poor is L.2, 14s. 7 1/2d. ; rent of land, L. 35; seat rent in Cupar church, 16s. ; total, L. 38, 10s. 7 1/2d. It will be seen from this statement, that the principal fund for the support of the poor is derived from land. Six acres of land were purchased by the session of Moonzie in the parish of Cupar, about the middle of last century, at a low price. They were enabled to do this, in consequence of a legacy left them by the last Episcopal curate of the parish, and from the savings of their collections. From the rent stated, there falls to be deducted various burdens, which considerably lessen its amount, such as minister's stipend in Cupar, repairs of church and manse, bridge, and rogue money, bishop's rents, as well as beadle, precentor's, and session clerk's salary. The funds, however, have proved sufficient for the maintenance of the poor, and no application has been made to the heritors for any assistance, The poor evince a laudable spirit of independence, and the funds have generally been employed for the support of the aged and infirm.

January 1843. (Rev. Alexander Kidd)