

WEMYSS PARISH

POPULATION.

1755	3041
1801	3264
1811	3691
1821	4157
1831	5001

The increase may be attributed to various causes. The people, in general, marry at an earlier period than formerly ; and this holds true in a very marked manner among the fishermen in Buckhaven. Besides, there is the large manufacturing establishment at Kirkland, under the firm of Neilson and Company, and which has been long in a very thriving and flourishing condition, and which employs a great many hands. And in the coal department, which has also been extended, a good many houses have been lately built for the accommodation of the colliers, some of whom have come from other parts of the country.

The average number of births and baptisms for the last seven years	125 3/7
marriages	36 3/7
Number of inhabited houses in the parish	653
uninhabited houses	6
houses now building	8
families	1089
chiefly employed in agriculture	84
in trade, manufactures, and handicraft	762
families not comprised in the two preceding classes	243

There is one family of independent fortune,-the family of Wemyss.

Ages of all persons in this parish in June 1831 under 15	2022
betwixt 15 and 30	1302
30 and 50	1059
50 and 70	488
upwards of 70	130

There were in (1831) 11 persons between 80 and 90, and since that time 2 have died upwards of 90.

Unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers, above 50 years of age, 63

women, including widows above 45 years of age, 212

Average number of persons to each family, 4 $\frac{2}{3}$

Number of illegitimate births in the course of the last three years, 10.

There are 1 fatuous, 1 deaf, and 5 deaf and dumb persons, in the parish. 3 of the deaf and dumb persons belong to one family, and are all females. They are grown up, and, considering their imperfections they are quick and intelligent. The other two are also females, and belong to one family. They are both young, the one being about two, the other four years of age.

HABITS AND CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE;- Of late years, a new activity and a new stimulus pervade all classes of the people. And I have great pleasure in being enabled to remark, that over the length and breadth of this large and populous parish, education and knowledge have spread themselves among all ranks and classes. The people as a body have long been distinguished for their quietness and general good conduct ; and may justly be said to be an industrious, contented, decent, and church-going population.

MINES.-There are four coal-pits in this parish, one ironstone pit, and one ochre pit. The Wemyss coal-pit employs 140 men, 24 boys, and 42 girls. The yearly produce is about 40,000 tons. The selling price of the splint is 8s. 6d. per ton. This pit is sunk upon the main seam, which is 9 feet thick, and has been wrought to the depth of 100 yards below sea level, through the whole length of the parish, and has been working constantly for the last two centuries. The next working is the parrot or gas coal, which is wrought level free, no machinery being necessary. It employs about 20 men, and is sold for 10s. per ton. The other two pits are wrought exclusively for land sale ; they employ about 50 men, 20 boys, and 7 girls. The ironstone working employs about 35 men and 3 girls. The ochre pit is but newly commenced. The whole number of people employed in mining and mining operations may amount to 300 men, (170 of whom are colliers,) 44 boys, and 52 girls. Their operations, however, require the employment of many other hands, such as smiths, wrights, masons, etc. They all receive their wages every two weeks, the payment of which is upwards of L. 400.

There are several very powerful engines employed in this very extensive coal establishment, And it is but justice to add, that all the recent improvements in mining machinery have been here very successfully and advantageously introduced and applied, and are all under the very active and efficient management and direction of Mr David Landale, mining engineer.

FISHERIES.-This branch of industry deserves notice. The fishing station at Buckhaven is well known, and of late year, has greatly increased. There are 170 men employed in this trade, and all belong to, and reside in Buckhaven. They have no fewer than 144 fishing boats of various dimensions. Generally about the beginning of July, they set out to the north, to Helmsdale, Fraserburgh, and Wick, the great herring-fishing stations, where they stay for about two months. It may well be said, that they are a most industrious and hard-working class of men, and are truly entitled, not only to protection, but to every countenance and encouragement.

MANUFACTURES;- The principal manufacture is that of hand-loom weaving, in which both men and women are employed. In the large manufacturing establishment at Kirkland, under the firm of Neilson and Company, there are 109 persons engaged in flaxdressing; 283 employed at the spinning-mill; 48 in the bleaching department; and 241 in the cloth manufactory; in all, 681, including men and women -boys and girls. This large and extensive work is lighted with gas, and is, for plan, and order and regularity, a model for any similar erection. As far as the health and morals of the people are concerned, it is conducted in the best possible manner. It is not only the wish of the proprietors that the work people's children should be properly educated, but they are really and truly so, in all the common branches; and particular attention is also paid to their instruction in the great principles of Christianity, by a well-qualified and efficient teacher. And fewer applications for parochial relief have come from the people employed at this work, than from any other quarter of the parish.

The extensive works now noticed consume annually 1000 tons flax and hemp, from which is spun 280,000 spindles of flax, tow, and hemp yarns, two-thirds of which are made into canvas, sheeting, dowlas, ducks, sacking, and other fabrics; and about onethird of the yarn is sold. The yearly amount of wages may be about L. 17,000.

There are four considerable manufacturers in East Wemyss, and one in Buckhaven, who, it is computed, consume annually 242,320 spindles, which are made into ducks, dowlas, and sheeting, amounting to 1,202,625 yards of cloth for the home and foreign market. Weavers' wages, including winding may amount to L. 10,000 annually.

East Wemyss was long distinguished for the manufacture of linen, which has, for some time past, been superseded by those above-mentioned.

SALT; -Since the tax on salt was taken off, the number of saltpans has been greatly reduced. At Methil, where there were formerly nine, there are now none ; and at West Wemyss, where there were formerly seven, there are only two, and at present one of then is not working. 6200 bushels may be about the annual average of salt made for the last three years, the average annual value of which may be about L. 470. This forms at once a very striking contras to the quantity of salt made in this parish, previous to the abolition of the salt duties ;-for in 1818, 1819, and 1820, the

annual average sales of salt made at West Wemyss and Methil, was 50,400 bushels. The salt made here is excellent, and obtains a ready market.

PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

MARKET TOWNS;-There are no market-towns, properly so called, in the parish. The nearest is Kirkcaldy, which is about six miles from the parish church.

VILLAGES;-There are seven villages, which are named as under:

1. East Wemyss, in which is the parish church;
2. West Wemyss;
3. Buckhaven;
4. Methil;
5. Kirkland;
6. West Coaltown;
7. East Coaltown.

The four first are built on the sea-shore, and are rather more than a mile from each other. West Wemyss is a burgh of barony, having for its management two bailies, one treasurer, and a number of councillors. Buckhaven is a large and extensive fishing station. Kirkland is an extensive manufacturing establishment, under the firm of Neilson and Company; and East and West Coaltowns are inhabited by colliers, and who are all in the employ of Captain Wemyss.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION;-The turnpike road from Kirkcaldy to Cupar by Kennoway runs through the north part of the parish and is very good. The other roads, which are kept in repair by means of the statute labour money, have been much improved of late, although they are not by any means so good as they should be.

Although there is no post-office *(see N.B.), yet we have every facility for communication, as there is a runner or post-boy from Kirkcaldy to Leven every morning, and again from Leven to Kirkcaldy in the afternoon. There are two carriers in Buckbaven, who go to Kirkcaldy every

week, the one on Tuesday and the other on Friday. There is also a carrier in East Wemyss, who goes to Kirkcaldy twice every week, Tuesday and Friday. And there is a woman, who goes every lawful day, carries parcels, and transacts any business with which she may be intrusted.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE;-The parish church is in East Wemyss, and is as conveniently situated for the great body of the people as it could well be. It is an old building in the form of a cross.

The date of its erection cannot be ascertained. It has undergone several repairs; and, although the construction is bad, yet, upon the whole, it is a decent and comfortable place of worship. It has sittings for about 1000 persons. It is by far too small for the parish. From 900 to 1000 communicate annually. The people are very attentive to the ordinances of religion.

The manse was built in 1791, and is a good and commodious house. The offices are also good, and there is a large garden.

There is a Dissenting meeting-house in connection with the United Associate Synod, situated on the links of Buckhaven, about two miles from the parish church. The clergyman's stipend is L, 110 per annum, with manse and garden. The present minister is the Rev. Robert Pollock. The congregation is respectable, and divine service is well attended.

The following persons have been ministers of this parish since the Revolution : Archibald Riddell, 1691 to 1697 ; Thomas Black, 1697 to 1698; James Grierson, 1698 to 1710 ; John Cleghorn, 1711 to 1744; Harry Spens, 1744 to 1780 ; William Greenfield, 1781 to 1784; George Gib, 1785 to 1818.

The present incumbent was ordained minister of Alva, presbytery of Stirling, 22d April 1813, and translated to Wemyss, 4th February 1819.

The following table contains the census of this parish taken in January and February 1836.

	Total	Under 12	Under 7
East Wemyss	837	227	146
Buckhaven	1475	487	368
Methil	508	166	114
Kirkland	543	146	96
West Wemyss	939	352	233
West Coaltown	299	102	61
East Coaltown	162	64	41
Country P.	452	152	112
	5215	1696	1171

EDUCATION;--The parochial school is in East Wemyss. The teacher, who is a licentiate of the church, has the maximum salary viz.L. 34, 4s. 41/2d and L. 1, 15s. 71/2d., for the want of the legal quantity of garden ground. He is also session-clerk, the perquisites of which may average L. 20 a Year. The school fees may amount to L. 25 per annum. All the common branches are taught here, as also Latin, French, and mathematics. There are six other schools in the parish, all unendowed, except the school at Kirkland, which is partially endowed, as the company, besides the school fees, give L. 30 a year by way of salary. Nearly 800 young persons are receiving instruction in various branches of education at the different schools. And if there are any in the parish above fifteen years of age, or even above ten, who cannot read, the fault lies with the parents. There is an educational machinery ill motion that is not surpassed in any parish; and all the teachers, seven in number, are distinguished for their zeal, and efficiency, and diligence and success, and all, except one, belong, to the Established Church.

Under this head, we have to remark that the late Mr. Archibald Cook, Kirkcaldy, who died in the beginning of 1832, and who was a native of this parish, left property to a very considerable amount. His widow is liferented in the whole of it, after her decease, comes to this parish, and is to be applied solely to educational purposes. During the lifetime of Mrs. Cook, the ministers of Dysart, Kirkcaldy, Abbotshall, Leslie, and Wemyss, act as trustees, and have already entered on their office. After her death, the trust devolves on the presbytery of Kirkcaldy.

INNS- There is no want of inns or alehouses in the parish. Their increase has kept pace with the increase of the population. Men cannot be compelled to be religious; but such a tax can and ought to be put on strong liquor, as would necessarily oblige them to be sober and temperate.

-N.B..-Since the above report was written, and given in upwards of a year ago, I have to notice that a post-office has been established in the village of East Wemyss.

I have also to record, that on the 6th of June last, the foundation stone of a church, in connexion with the Establishment, was laid in the village of Methil, the expense of which is to be L. 1030. It is now far advanced; so much so, that it will be open for public worship about the beginning of March. This new erection is to contain upwards of 800 sittings, and will accommodate the inhabitants Of Methil, Kirkland, Methil-hill, Links of Buckhaven, and those of Inverleven, a remote and detached portion of the parish of Markinch, the whole including a population of upwards of 1700.

January 1838 (Rev John McLachlan)