

"A WEE KEEK BACK"

BY

JIM CAMPBELL



"CENTRAL AND WEST FIFE LOCAL HISTORY PRESERVATION"
 ("The Present Preserving the Past for the Future")

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(Articles that appeared in local newspapers)

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PRESENTATION.

It is gratifying to be able to state, as showing the respect and esteem in which he is held, that Alexander Westwater, letter-carrier between Lochgelly and Shawsmill, was lately presented by residents on the above postal route with a sum of money amounting to close upon £15 for the purpose of purchasing a pony and machine to enable him to discharge his duties more efficiently. The following statement appears on the subscription sheet – *“We, the undersigned residents of the postal route, from Lochgelly to Shawsmill, by way of Ballingry, Auchterderran, Cardenden, and Dundonald, having taken into consideration the amount of travel thereby given to Alexander Westwater, the runner on this route, who has to go over this amount of ground measuring 18 miles or thereby on his going and returning to the head office at Lochgelly within almost an unreasonable space of time; hereby resolve to present the said Alexander Westwater, collectively with an amount large enough to put him in funds, wherewith to purchase a pony by which he will be enabled to distribute the correspondence coming to the above districts with more regularity – which will be a great boon to all, and without unduly pressing upon the faithful runner now on the journey.”* The success with which the matter has been carried out is in a great measure due to Mr Stevenson, banker; Mr Kippen, schoolmaster, Ballingry; and Mr Terris, Manager, Westfield, these gentlemen having exerted themselves in the collection of subscriptions.

February, 1874

WEAVER AND WEAVING IN FIFE.

The handloom weaving at one time found a staple branch of industry in and around the village of Milnathort, and only as far back as 1873 about ninety hands were steadily employed at the shawl and wincey weaving, and good prices at that date were obtained. The trade being exceedingly brisk all hands received constant employment, and the average wage earned by the shawl weavers amounted to about 3s 10d a day. Previous to this time, however, the wages were much lower, but a rise of from 20 to 30 percent. took place when a table of prices was agreed to by the manufacturers and weavers delegates at Alva on the 6th March 1873. For some time this table of prices worked very well, but in November of last year trade became exceedingly dull, and a slashing deduction in the price took place, which brought the earnings back to their old level. The average wage at the present time amounts to 3s a day of 10 hours, but on account of the great dullness, which unfortunately prevails, the women are little more than half of the time employed. At present only sixty-two weavers are engaged in all the whole handloom weaving departments; of these fifty belong to the shawl trade, and the remaining twelve to the wincey and shirting branch.

In the beginning of 1873 a union was formed in connection with the weaving trade in the district, which was styled "The Milnathort Weavers Branch Union." But it is now, so far as membership is concerned, in very low water. The principal employers in the village are the firm of Messrs. Willet, Chapman, and Company, and Mr William Henderson. The handloom weaving trade is annually diminishing, and houses which were more made for shops about ten years ago are now being turned into dwelling-houses, which are principally occupied by the operatives engaged at the spinning mill and factory in the town.

Strathmiglo.

The handloom trade is generally dull at present and twenty-five hands are idle. There are signs, however, of a slight improvement which may cause some activity ere long. In 1873 about 200 weavers were employed, but at present the number is only 125. The average wages made in 1873 were from 15s to 18s a week, now the wages may correctly estimated at 10s to 12s per week. The principal manufacturer in the town is Mr Troup who also owns a large powerloom factory.

Auchtermuchty.

About ten years ago Auchtermuchty may have been styled a great centre for handloom weaving in the central districts of the county of Fife, but since that time many changes have taken place. In 1866-67 no fewer than between 800 and 900 hands would be constantly employed and it seemed as if the old burgh was prosperous forever. But times have changed, and Auchtermuchty has changed with them. At the present time only about 100 weavers ply the shuttle and the prospects for the future are not bright. The average wages made by the men when in full employment amounts to 12s per week, while the women earn about 6s. Unlike the village of Milnathort, where co-operation is unknown, the burgh of Auchtermuchty has many sorts of co-operative companies. Among them is a manufacturing company which was commenced some fifteen years ago, and which has done a fair amount of

business. At present this company employs from twenty to twenty-five hands, and pays a fair average wage. Generally speaking, trade is very dull, wages inclining low, and hands are steadily decreasing. The principal employer of handloom weavers are bailie Lambert (powerloom manufacturer), who carries on an agency for an extensive house in Dunfermline; Messrs. Troup, and the Messrs. Curr Company also employ a number of handloom weavers in addition to the operatives engaged in their powerloom factories.

Falkland.

In 1867 no fewer than 200 hands were employed at the handloom weaving trade, but since that time a steady decrease in numbers of workers has been observed. The principal stuffs manufactured were broad and narrow sheeting and hucks and narrow towellings were produced by steam power in the factories. A number of hands were also engaged at the wincey weaving trade, who are supplied with webs by Messrs. Williamson and Dorret. The principal employer of the handloom weavers in the district are Mr Thos. Lumsden, Eden Valley Works, Freuchie, and Messrs. Wilson & Hill, Ladybank. The average wages earned at the present time amount to for men 14s, and for women 7s per week. At the present time the number of hands thus employed does not exceed 60 or 70, and trade is anything but encouraging. The powerloom factories employ a good number of hands, the proprietors being Capt. Cousin and Provost Jackson.

Freuchie.

Freuchie, like Auchtermuchty, could boast of its splendid weavers, and not a few of them were "cracks" in their way. They were generally well up in politics, followed the times, and one rare peculiarity was the style of their work, which it was their pride to finish without a flaw. Before the introduction of steam power into the village the handloom weaving was the staple of the district. A large amount of apprentices were educated in the craft, and even some parts of the town were named after this particular branch of industry. "Shuttlefield" was a great centre for weavers, but within a short time past this property as well as many others have been converted to dwelling houses. Ten years ago about 100 hands would be engaged at the linen trade, but since that time great changes have been effected, and the numbers have gradually decreased, not more than forty-five being now employed. In the brisk season the average wage amounted to 16s per week for men and 8s per week for females. Gradually, however, slight deductions have been made in the price paid on the various fabrics, and at the present time the wages are set down on the average at something like 13s per week for males and about 7s for females, the number employed in the latter class being very limited. The textures run from 32 porters to 80 porters, the class of goods woven being chiefly sheetings. The local handloom manufacturers are Mr T. Lumsden of Eden Valley Works and Mr W. Cameron. The females in the district are employed in the powerloom factories belonging to Mr Lumsden and Messrs. Adamson & Co., where the average rate at piecework ranges from 5s to 12s weekly. In addition to the manufacturers named there are others who supply the handloom weavers with work for other town.

Kingkettle.

Trade here is very steady, and all hands are employed. There will be about fifty handloom weavers in the village of Kettle and Kettlebridge, which number show a falling off of nearly one hundred hands within the past ten years. No change has been made in the price since a general rise arranged seven years ago. The prices paid for white sheetings are 1s 3d to 1s 4d per spindle of warp. Narrower shorts are paid from 11d to 1s 1d per spindle, according to texture. Wide sheetings form the principal class of goods manufactured. The average for moderately skilled workers may be set down at from 15s to 16s per week. The employers are Mr Robert Blyth and the firm of Messrs. D. Beveridge & Sons. The latter engage a large number of operative in connection with their extensive powerloom factory of Arthurfield Works. Full time is also carried on at the factory at present.

Ladybank.

Little difference has taken place in the number of hands employed within the last five years, and no alteration in prices paid for the past seven years. The employers are Messrs. Wilson & Hill, who supply a number of hands in a few of the small manufacturing villages in the county – webs being supplied to persons in Newburgh, Dunshalt, Falkland and Freuchie, &c. The goods manufactured by this firm are all linen, and some of them are of a fine fabric. The average wage earned by the broad linen weaver will amount to about 3s per day, while the extra good hands may earn a little more where fine “stuff” has been put in. Few if any women are engaged at the handloom – the factories all being busy, all are employed in them. Although there seems no direct dullness, still the prices are low for the seller. Some thirty-eight years ago Ladybank was a place almost unknown. Only a few houses were then built in what was called the Moor. Monksmoss, however, was erected before that time, and this small village, which consisted only of some 24 houses, formed an important centre in the Howe of Fife. A great meeting of those who were favourable to the Chartist movement was held at Ladybank. No fewer than 7000 politicians attended. The main body of the great assemblage consisted of weavers from almost all the villages within half-a-day’s journey. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed on that day, and the speeches were delivered with much spirit and impression, as the whole audience were Chartists to the “backbone.” Exactly on the spot where the “hustings” were erected at that time stands the powerloom factory of Messrs. Wilson and Hill. The weavers arrived from the villages with bands and music playing, and all the banners floating in the breeze. Auchtermuchty itself sent down about 1,000 of the good sort of hands, and Leslie and Markinch also contributed a good representation. About twenty-two years ago Mr Lawson of Kettle, who succeeded his two uncles, Messrs. David and Alex. Adamson, in the handloom linen manufacturing trade, employed from 1000 to 1400 hands, and kept upwards of a dozen of warping mills in constant operation. In addition to his large business in Kettle he had extensive agencies in Kennoway, Lundimill, Pitlessie, Falkland, and Strathmiglo, &c. Ladybank has become now a small town, and many “little lairds” can point to the shuttle as the means of their success. The railways and factories employ a great bulk of the working class. Wages are fair and steady, the average on the railway being about 18s per week. The female population have found employment in the powerloom factories, where the average wages range from 8s to 10s per week, while

some extra good hands can realise with flue fabrics and good machinery 15s at times. The weavers at the present day are like their forefathers in principal and politics; and to use an expression of one of their own number, "There is a strong sprig among us of the Chartist men still." In earlier times the weavers all had their tidy gardens, fed their own pigs, and fed on the home produce; were exceedingly industrious, and for general knowledge could be compared with any equal number of artisans of a different class. "Tick" was a thing which at one time was despised among weavers, who proudly maintained their independence.

June, 1877.

LIGHTING OF THE CROSSGATES STREETS.

In the beginning of last winter a committee, consisting of a number of gentlemen, got up a series of entertainments, which were moderately attended by the inhabitants, a charge of course having been made for admission. It was intimated in the bills announcing the entertainments that the proceedings were to go for procuring lamps with which to light the streets. At the finishing of the concerts for the season, however, the treasurer found it his duty to intimate to a largely attended meeting of the inhabitants that the income had only met the expenditure, the largest amount of the money having been spent on liquor. This year, however, the thing has taken a very different shape. A new committee having been formed, they solicited subscriptions throughout the village, and from different gentlemen not immediately connected therewith, amongst whom we noticed Mr Wallace of Hallbeath, £5; Mr Stenhouse of North Fod, £1; Mr Smith, Dulloch, £1; Mr Carlow, manager, Hallbeath Colliery, 10s. the subscription list must have been well responded to throughout, as the amount realised from this source is something like £25. Three weeks ago the first concert for the season was got up, which was presided over by Mr Henderson of Fordell, the singing being contributed by Mr Sneddon and family from Edinburgh, a gentleman who at one time lived in the village, and the sum realised therefrom amounted to, after defraying expenses, £20. The committee now having £45 on hand, they at once made a contract with Mr A. Rolland, plumber, Dunfermline, for the supply of 20 substantial paraffin lamps, and with Mr Chalmers & Blair, Springhill Foundry, Crossgates, for the supplying of cast-iron standards or posts. The posts were fitted up two weeks ago, being placed on large blocks of stone. On entering the village on Monday evening last, we found the streets presented an animated appearance. The lamps being lighted, the inhabitants were all attracted out of doors. Altogether the arrangements of the lamps throughout the village is good and cannot fail to give general satisfaction, although another two lamps are very necessary on the road leading to the station. We also found the streets placarded, announcing an inauguration concert in McLean's Hall that evening in celebration of the lighting of the streets, and for the purpose of raising funds to keep the lamps in oil, etc, during the winter. A little before the appointed time for the opening of the concert the village instrumental band paraded the streets, and was the means of attracting a large crowd to the hall door. The hall was beautifully decorated with evergreens, berried holly, and ornamental lights, and immediately above the platform was emblazoned the appropriate words in evergreens, "Enlightenment". On the motion of Sheriff Lamond, Mr Wallace of Halbeath took the chair; and was accompanied on the platform by the Sheriff, Rev. G.R. Anderson, Mr James Mathieson, Misses Lamond, Mr Rolland, and members of committee; and amongst those present we also noticed Mr Carlow and family, Mr Heggie, Messrs. Brown, Horne, Robertson, &c.

The Chairman, on rising, said – Ladies and gentlemen – I have great pleasure indeed in taking the chair on this very auspicious occasion – an occasion which, I am sure, will be remembered by the inhabitants of Crossgates as a grand day, or rather I should say, a great evening, for now for the first time you have got your streets illuminated in a very splendid way – in a way, if I may use the expression, very superior to our Dunfermline streets, notwithstanding that they have the advantage of gas. It gives me pleasure to think that I have had the opportunity of assisting in the inauguration of this

very happy evening, which in itself shows that the village is not falling behind in this age of improvement. Another substantial proof that you are improving is that you, some time ago, introduced into the village a supply of excellent water, one of the most essential benefits for a community. You now participate to a greater extent in light of a very different sort from that we have tonight, but of a very important kind, I refer to your two splendid schools for the educating of your children, so that they may be able to fill situations in whatever sphere their tastes are best suited for, I must, however, not detain you with a speech, as you have not assembled here on my account. On the contrary, we have got a splendid programme of music before us, which will be more interesting than speeches. Therefore in conclusion, I hope that the village will continue to prosper, and since the inhabitants have once put their hand on the plough by way of improvement, they ought certainly not to look back. (Loud cheers.)

A programme of excellent music followed, the contributors being Mrs Oswald, Miss Torbet, Mr Moodie, Mr Oswald, Dunfermline; Mr Izatt, Methil, Leven; Mr Blair, Crossgates. The singing throughout was very good, and Mrs Oswald in her rendering of "Jock O' Hazledean" touched the feelings of the audience with such effect that the demands for an encore were not easily quelled. Mrs Moodie ably presided at the harmonium and Councillor Lindsay added to the evening enjoyment by amusing stories from Smith's readings. After the singing was over Mr Rolland submitted a statement, which showed that the lamps and everything connected therewith were to cost £44, and the amount raised from the present concert would be £9 after defrayed expenses, so that they would have as much money on hand as would clear all the expenses connected with the lamps for this year. This statement was received with acclimation, after which Sheriff Lamond proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman, and the Rev. Mt Naismyth to the singers, which was heartily responded to. The meeting then separated.

December 1877

THE SCOTCH MINER.

Perhaps no class of workman has suffered more from the long-continued depression in trade than the miners. Four or five years ago they were in receipt of very high wages; they were practically masters of the situation, and, unfortunately, they used their temporary power in too many cases in a foolish and tyrannical manner. The coal and iron trades then were in a state of prosperity which had never been equalled before. Colliery proprietors were getting such enormous prices that they were glad to pay any wages in order to get coal and iron raised quickly so that they might reap the benefit of the rates ruling at the time, while the miners, in full enjoyment of all the luxury which a rapidly and enormously increased wage brought, felt inclined to play the "gentleman", and instead of making the most of the period of prosperity, frittered away their time in mass meetings and "idle" days, living as luxuriously as their incomes would permit, without making any preparation for a period of dull trade. But circumstances have entirely changed, and the Scotch miner's to-day are probably in as bad a condition as almost any class of workman. Not only have their wages been reduced over and over again until they are now on the average not more than 3s a day, but several pits have been closed, and in the case of others the men are only allowed to work three or four days a week. Some isolated attempts have been made to resist the reductions, but they have never assumed more than local dimension, and even in these cases they have signally failed, for the miners soon discovered that their employers could afford to suspend operations owing to the prices that have been, and still are, ruling in the coal and iron trades; and, in addition to this, several colliery owners have a sufficient quantity of mineral lying at the pit-head to meet any emergency. The most recent case of this kind is the strike in the Motherwell and Slamannan districts, where a state of great destitution exists owing to the refusal of the men to continue working at the employer's terms. Appeals have been made to the workmen in the surrounding districts who continue at work to join those on strike, but they have refused on the ground that resistance at the present time must end in defeat. Delegate meetings have been held with the view of forming some organisation amongst the miners, but the result has never been successful. The fact is, the men are unable to pay into the union funds, for they find it impossible to provide themselves and their families with the common necessities of life. Nor is there much talk now about emigration. In the beginning of last year Mr MacDonald advised 20,000 of the younger men to leave an occupation which could only afford starvation wages, and emigrate to the great coal fields of America, but his advice was not taken; for at that time thousands of miners in the coal districts on the other side of the Atlantic were in a state of utter destitution owing to the long continued period of dull trade. It is no exaggeration to say that the condition of the Scotch miners at the present time is as bad as it was twenty years ago in point of wages. Both the coal and iron trades are almost at a standstill. Coal, which five years ago was fetching 20s to 23s a ton, can now be had for 5s or 6s; while pig-iron, which has been swaying backwards and forwards about 51s for several months, was then selling readily at 130s and 140s. and, in addition to this, the output of coal and the production of pig-iron has been reduced. The fact is, there have not been so few furnaces in blast as at the present time since the year 1845, when the number was 88, with the average price of pig-iron at 80s 3d. It is difficult to reduce the figures with any accuracy, the

difference in price received by the coal and iron proprietors for the past five years as compared with 1872-73; but for iron alone it may safely be stated at over £2,000,000 a year, or £10,000,000; coal, over £4,000,000 a year, or £20,000,000; while if we take the wages of the miners, the difference there will be found not less than £3,000,000 per annum, or £12,000,000 during the four years – in all a depreciation in value to the extent of £42,000,000.

The present condition of things is the best proof which could be afforded the folly of the position taken up by the leaders of the men during the period of prosperity in 1872-73. All over the country speeches were delivered in many cases by those who should have known better, about what the men could do if they only remained united. Some foolish people even hinted that they might never be in receipt of less than 10s a day, for they could regulate the supply to meet the demand. Indeed, it is not so many months ago since Mr MacDonald gave it as his opinion that the only way to prevent the wages from becoming lower was for every man to decrease his out-put, and for a short time the experiment was tried; but unfortunately, instead of the men now showing anxiety to work less, it is the employers themselves who are desirous of reducing the hours of labour. But even with the decreased out-put, prices have not gone up. The Scotch miners have had a painful lesson of the folly of the system which led them to believe that, no matter what the condition of trade, they had the power in their own hands to say to an employer at what figure they were willing to sell their labour. No one would grudge the miners a good wage, for they have not only very dangerous, but very disagreeable work to perform; but if the lesson they have been learning during the past few years profits them, when the period of prosperity comes round, their sufferings will not have been in vain.

April 20, 1878.

DEATH OF MR G.W.M. HENDERSON,
OF FORDELL.

We announce with great regret that Mr G.W.M. Henderson, of Fordell, died on Monday evening shortly before eight o' clock at Fordell House. Although for sometime it had been known that Mr Henderson was not in particularly good health, the news of his death was everywhere received with great surprise.

Mr Mercer Henderson, who was born in 1823, was the eldest son of Mr Douglas Mercer, C.B., a lieutenant-general in the army, and colonel of the 68th Foot, who succeeded to the estates on the death of his brother, and, by Royal licence of date January 1853, was authorised to assume the surname and arms of Henderson. He became professor of Fordell on the death of his father in 1854, and has since devoted much attention to the workings of the extensive coal mines which form an important part of the family property.

Mr Henderson received the most part of his education abroad, and, when comparatively a young man, entered the Scots Fusilier Guards, soon attaining to the rank of Captain. He, however, was obliged to quit the profession of arms about the year 1854, owing to ill health. Never of a robust constitution, Mr Henderson was unable to take part in public affairs for which he was otherwise qualified. He was deservedly popular in the West of Fife, and as an employer of labour he did not fail to emulate the character of his predecessors by many acts of kindness beyond the fulfilment of his duty as an employer, and the consideration thus manifested, was cordially reciprocated by the people of the district. The inhabitants of the village of Crossgates are to him in large measure indebted for the supply of water which, six years ago, was brought to their doors from the Cullalo Hills. The extensive policy and beautiful gardens of Fordell are well known to many who had the privilege generously accorded to them on application for admission, and the wealth of plants and flowers in their seasons was the object of inexhaustible delight. Mr Henderson was married in 1868 to Alice Jane, daughter of the Hon. Bouverie Francis Primrose, the cousin of Lord Rosebery, and has died without issue. According to Walford's *County Families of the United Kingdom*, the present heir to the Fordell estates is the deceased gentleman's sister Lady Clark, of Penicuik.

Mr Henderson, had he been so inclined, and his health permitted, might have entered on a Parliamentary career, which by education and sympathy he was well fitted. On more than one occasion efforts were made to induce him to do battle for the Liberal cause in his native county, but he was never persuaded to do more than work on behalf of others. In several of the election contests he took a prominent part. Sir Robert Anstruther, when his seat was gallantly assailed by Mr Boyd Kinnear, found Mr Henderson by his side rendering signal service, and on subsequent occasions he proved an earnest and useful supporter. At the last general election Mr Henderson sided the Hon. Preston Bruce in his canditure, but the state of his health did not permit many public appearances. For the most part Mr Henderson lived the life of a quiet country gentleman, manifesting great interest in his estate, and a still deeper concern in the welfare of all dependant on it and on his family. His colliery village was made a model village; he identified himself with its life, promoting educational schemes, stimulating a love for the beautiful by giving prizes for the best kept cottages and

gardens, aiding sanitary undertakings, helping to provide a good water supply, receiving the miners at his mansion once a year, until the Fordell Parade was one of the event of the season, and seeking in a variety of ways to maintain the good relations his father established between Fordell House and Fordell village, and to direct wisely a healthy influence in the neighbourhood. Mr Mercer Henderson's death creates a lamentable blank in the West of Fife.

In Consequence of Mr Henderson's death, the ball which was to be given by Lady Rosebery at Dalmeny on Thursday could not take place. The ball of the West of Fife Hunt has also been definitely postponed.

October 1881

TERRIBLE DISASTER AT ABERDOUR.

Navvies' Hut Destroyed by Fire – Three Men Burned to Death

One of the most startling disasters which has taken place in this district for a considerable time occurred at Little Couston, near Aberdour, at an early hour on Monday morning, when a large hut was totally destroyed by fire, three navvies were burned to death, and over 100 left without shelter.

In connection with the new railway which is at present being constructed between Burntisland and Inverkeithing to join the Forth Bridge Railway at the latter place, several ranges of huts are erected at convenient points along the line for the accommodation of the large number of navvies employed at the undertaking. One of these erection was situated at Little Couston, about a mile west from Aberdour, on the main road to Inverkeithing. The majority of the huts are the property of Messrs Waddell, the contractors for the railway, but the range in question was erected during the present year by Mr Robert Jenkins, joiner, Sinclairtown, Kirkcaldy, as a private speculation; and was partly owned and conducted by him.

Description of the Hut.

The hut consisted of one storey, and was eight feet square, covered by a series of paralleled V-shaped roofs. The main door was in the front or south end of the building. A passage ran nearly half way into the hut. On the west side of the passage were the store and the canteen, and on the east side two dining rooms and the cooking apartment, and of the contents of which was a large iron plate for cooking purposes, placed on a structure of bricks about two feet in height, and kept hot by a couple of fire underneath. The passage led into a corridor running east and west, and off this corridor were four sleeping rooms with 106 beds, placed like the berths in a ship, and licensed for accommodating 186 sleepers. Mr Jenkins resided with his wife and three children in the old farm-house adjoining, and the immediate management of the hut was entrusted to a man, James Scott, known as the deputy, who had the assistance of a lad named Robertson; and in addition, two young men, George Seath and David Dickson, respectively looked after a canteen and store belonging to the premises. The charge for accommodation was fourpence per man per night, or, if a bed was occupied seven days successively, two shillings per man per week.

The Alarm of the Fire.

About half-past two o'clock on Monday morning, a wild cry of "Fire" rang through the building. As may easily be imagined, the greatest consternation and alarm immediately prevailed. The indication of fire seemed to have been first observed by the occupants of the eastmost sleeping-room, into which apartment dense volumes of smoke were finding their way. The navvies in this room, 28 in number, attempted to get out, but found that the ordinary means of egress was closed. It is here necessary to explain that there is a practice in lodging huts of the kind to lock all doors of the sleeping rooms until all the occupants are admitted for the night, in order to secure that no one shall enter without payment, and thereafter, before midnight, to unlock the doors. Scott, the deputy, says that all the doors were unlocked except that of the

eastmost room, and he did not carry out the practice with regard to the door in consequence of one or two of the inmates having shown themselves unruly earlier in the night. At the hour already mentioned, Scott, who slept in an apartment between the kitchen and this room, was aroused by a noise in the passage. He at first thought that some of the navvies had quarrelled and were fighting, but this idea was soon dispelled as

Frantic Cries off “Oh! Oh!” and “Fire”

Reached his ears. Taking in the situation at once, he jumped out of bed and without dressing rushed into the passage and unlocked the door of the eastmost bedroom. In the short period of time required to accomplish this he was scorched on the back, and ran a narrow escape of being rendered unconscious. He then retreated to the door at the east end of the passage leading to the outside, and was closely followed by the men. As soon as the door was opened, however, the wind blew such a volume of smoke and flame in their faces that they were unable to penetrate it. By this time almost all the navvies in the hut were out of bed, and

A Scene of Wild Excitement

Prevailed. Finding an exist by the east door impossible, the men rushed to the front door, but only to find it locked. The store-keeper and the canteen keeper, who slept in the front portion of the hut, were aroused by the noise, and with all promptitude had the front door opened. Ere this was done, however, numbers of the men had become desperate, and rushing back to the sleeping apartments, seized various articles of furniture, such as forms, which they used as battering rams, and

Knocked Out The Wooden Walls

of the hut and got into the open air. Others again climbed to the roof, and escaped by the skylights. Only a very few minutes elapsed between the time of the alarm being first given and the door being opened, but so great a start had their fire gained that before the navvies reached the outside, it was apparent that the whole erection was doomed. The hut itself being composed of wood, and the roof of tarpaulin, the flames rushed from one point to another with alarming rapidity until in ten or twelve minutes from the time the outbreak was noticed the structure was one

Roaring Mass Of Flames,

Which, stimulated by a sharp westerly breeze, leapt high in the air, sending up myriads of sparks, and lighting up the district very brilliantly for miles around. Added to this there was the crash of timber, the crackling of the burning material, and above all, the terrified shouts of the men. Altogether, the scene, while it lasted, was terrible in the extreme.

Sleeping Without Shirts.

It is the custom of a large number of the navvies, who are mostly Irish, to sleep without shirts or night-dresses, and in the hurry to escape from the burning, many of them did not take time to get into their clothing or bring it with them, but ran out

naked. The deputy keeper, however, and some others rushed through the flames and smoke, and, at the peril of their lives, secured a quantity of clothing, which was utilised as covering for the naked men.

Three Men Roasted In The Flames.

When the fire was at its height in the western portion of the hut, it was ascertained that three of the navvies had been left inside the eastmost sleeping room of the burning building. As the structure became levelled down by the ravages of the fire, the men's bodies were observed roasting in the flames, and the 108 men who had escaped were utterly powerless to get them out. Two of the victims, McLachlan and Martin, were lying on the floor; the third, Ward, was in bed, his head only being visible above the coverlet. Of course, anything in the nature of help to the unfortunate fellows would have been of no avail, as they were lying motionless, and must have succumbed some time previous to the horrible discovery being made. Probably they had first been suffocated, as no one seems to have heard them shout for help, or utter groans. This is rendered all the more likely by the fact that Ward had apparently never risen from bed. From statement made by other occupants of the room, however, it is believed that McLachlan, if not Martin as well, attempted to escape, but were overpowered by the smoke or overtaken by the flames in endeavouring to secure their clothes. After the fire had died out, the remains of the men presented a shocking spectacle as they lay on the ground amid charred wood and burnt bedding and rugs. Little more than the skeleton was left in each case, and the bones had been bleached by the flames. Later in the day the remains were gathered together, care being taken to keep as far as possible those of each man separate. Rough but decent coffins were prepared, and the bones having been deposited therein, were conveyed to the mortuary at Aberdour. The names of the deceased, together with their ages, are – John Ward, about 40; James McLachlan, 45; and Terrace Martin, about 50. They were all, it is said, unmarried, and were Irishmen. Several of the navvies stated that Ward belonged Armagh, that McLachlan was brought up in Birkenhead, and that Martin was connected with Leith.

Several Men Injured.

In the rush to escape, several of the men were scorched about various parts of their bodies, and their injuries were attended to by Dr Veitch, Aberdour, who arrived upon the scene about four o'clock. Among those most seriously injured was Thomas Dougan, aged about 50 years, who was badly burnt about the shoulders. Another man, Thomas Donnelly, aged 43, had one of his toes severely bruised while engaging in battering down the walls of his sleeping apartment. Both men had sustained such serious injuries that it was deemed necessary to convey them to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary early in the day.

The Spread of the Fire.

It has already been stated that the fire spread with great rapidity, and some idea of the nature of the conflagration may be gathered from the fact that in less than half-an-hour from the outbreak being discovered the entire building was level with the ground. Of course, the embers smouldered until the day was well advanced. Beyond some of the bed-clothing, nothing was recovered from the flames, the clothing of

many of the men and the stock in the store and canteen being destroyed, and nothing left but the cooking stove and an iron weighing apparatus. Some traces of the contents of the stove were noticeable; such as salt herring, hams, and tinned meat, but they had all come under the influence of the flames and smoke.

A House and Stable in Danger.

At an early stage of the fire, the old farm-house occupied by Mr Jenkins and others was in imminent jeopardy. The Jenkins was induced to remove his wife and children from the premises, while the other occupants did not lose much time in following his example. As showing the danger in which the house stood, it may be stated that a rain-water barrel at the north-west corner was ignited by the flames, notwithstanding the fact that it was at the time almost filled with water. The roof of an outhouse also caught fire from sparks having alighted upon it, but the flames were extinguished by a pailful of water being dashed upon them. It was deemed advisable to remove a couple of horses which occupied the stable at the east side of the house, and in consequence of their terror on account of the flames, some difficulty was experienced in getting them to leave their stalls, but they were eventually taken out safely.

Clothing the Naked Men.

As already indicated, many of the navvies were obliged to leave their clothing behind them. Those so unfortunately situated numbered about forty or fifty, and as the only covering they had was a rug, a sheet, or a blanket, it was suggested, after the panic which arose had in a manner subsided, that an attempt should be made to find some articles of wearing apparel for them. A begging party accordingly set out for Aberdour, and the neighbouring mansions, and their requests for assistance were met in a liberal manner. Mr Normand, Whitehill, and Mrs Moubray, Otterstone, were handsome contributors, the former also giving a sum of money. In the course of the day parcels of clothing also arrived from Burntisland and Edinburgh and by nightfall most of the men were comfortably clad. Naturally many of the garments were misfits, and here and there men whose forms were usually associated with moleskins and corduroys were to be observed cutting rather curious figures with cast-off superfines and fashionable tweeds, out of proportion to their bodies; while a few, rigged out in once fashionable but now antiquated habiliments, were the source of a little amusement.

Searching Among the Ruins.

After the fire had thoroughly burnt itself out, numbers of the men who had lost money – sums ranging from a few coppers to 20s – made a search among the ruins, and some coins were recovered, several of them, however, being “run” and otherwise disfigured by the heat. One man who had lost a considerable number of shillings refrained from searching among the ashes for them, as he had left his clothes quite near to where his three fellow-workmen had been burned.

Excitement in the District.

News of the sad affair was soon bruited abroad throughout the district, and a profound sensation was created in Aberdour, Dunfermline, Burntisland, and elsewhere. The scene of the fire was largely visited in the course of the day, but little was to be seen beyond a blackened mass. Those who were upon the ground early in the day were sadly impressed by the pungent smell arising from the calcined human remains, parts of which were picked up as late as one o'clock.

The Origin of the Fire.

It seems clear that the fire broke out at a point near the room occupied by Scott, the deputy keeper, situated about the middle of the east end of the hut, or in the cooking room, but how it originated no one seems to know. Mr Jenkins and the deputy asserted their belief that it was a case of wilful fire-raising, but they remarked that they had no proof for this supposition. Scott stated that on Sunday night he damped down the fire at 25 minutes past nine o'clock, and that every man was in bed at 25 minutes to ten. He did not go to bed until ten minutes past ten, in case any more navvies should come to the huts after ten, the stipulated time for closing. He waited longer than usual because a considerable number of men generally leave on Saturday for their homes, or for towns, and return on the Sunday evening or on Monday. He rose at half-past one o'clock in the morning, he looked through the huts, and found everything right.

The Amount of Damage.

The damage is estimated by Mr Jenkins at between £900 and £1000, this sum including the stock in the store of the canteen. The premises were insured in the office of the Atlas Company, but not to the full amount stated.

Official Inspection and Enquiry.

The news reached the County Police Office, Dunfermline, about nine o'clock, and as soon as some criminal cases had been disposed of in the Sheriff Court, Sheriff Gillespie, accompanied by Mr McFarlane, the procurator fiscal for West Fife, and Inspector Webster, drove to Little Couston. They made an inspection of the ground, and afterwards proceeded to Aberdour, where a number of parties were precognosed. The inquiry was continued in the Fiscal's office at Dunfermline on Tuesday.

Housing of the Navvies.

Mr Jenkins does not intend to re-build the hut, but this will cause very little inconvenience, as there seems to be abundance of accommodation for the navvies in the huts erected by the contractors at other points of the line near by.

A Demand to Be Housed – Recouped For The Loss.

The majority of the navvies found shelter on Monday evening in the huts and houses in the neighbourhood, but at 11 o'clock a considerable number of the class who had been taking no thought of nightfall appeared at the house of Mr Jenkins and demanded shelter, and to be recouped for the loss they had sustained. On being remonstrated with some of the more jingo members of society assumed a somewhat threatening attitude, and it was only after the police arrived on the scene that they quietly withdrew and began to seek a "shakedown". Nearly a score packed themselves like herring in a barrel in a stable which occupies a site near to the ill-fated huts, while a few others were forced to have recourse to the expedient of making a bed among the corn stooks of a field close by. The weather was comparatively mild, and one or two of the hard-bested creatures seemed to spend a fairly comfortable night in the fresh bed of oats.

Incidents on Tuesday.

On Tuesday only a few of the men found their way to work, and in the course of the morning quite a squad congregated in the Main Street of Aberdour. To the fashionable wag a study of the garments which many of the men wore, must have proved amusing if not interesting. A tight fitting mourning coat looked a little from home on a man with a pair of thick cord trousers, while the checked horsy suits and caps which were being aired made one almost feel that "Pat" had suddenly leapt from the trench and "Spuds" to the saddle and a mansion house. All was exceedingly quiet at the scene of the conflagration. Now and again a few needy-like creatures turned up and engaged in the hopeless search among the ruins for coins, but really the "finds" were not numerous, and the game was soon give up as a non-paying concern. The meat provided by the kind people in ther district was found to be ample for wants, and in the forenoon it was computed that all who had lost their clothing had been supplied with a suit of some kind and a pair of new boots. No friends turned up to claim the bodies of the three unfortunate men who perished in the flames, and in the course of the afternoon the charred remains were interred in Aberdour Churchyard. A very large number of the navvies attended the funeral, and a little service was conducted over the graves. In the evening it transpired that the number of men who had not a pillow on which to lay their heads was not so great as the previous night. A few, however, could not do better than seek shelter in the fields.

Sympathy.

At a meeting of Dunfermline Town Council on Monday, Provost Donald referred to the disaster, and expressed great sympathy with the poor men who had suffered in the fire.

Resumption of Labour.

All the men have returned to work, and have found sleeping accommodation in the huts and houses in the neighbourhood.

No Necessity For A Special Fund.

There is no necessity for a special relief fund for the men, but £100 could be spent to advantage by providing a temporary reading and recreation room. Mr A. Rolland, of Aberdour, is doing good work in this line, and we hope he will have the support of all who care for making poor men's lives happy.

October 13 1888

HUT LIFE ON THE ABERDOUR AND BURNTISLAND RAILWAY.

The brief sketch we gave last week, in connection with the disaster at Little Couston, of hut life on the Aberdour and Burntisland Railway must have led our readers to the conclusion that a very large section of men are eking out an existence which cannot be said to be an improvement upon life fought out by the rude inhabitants of early Briton. With a view of bringing the misery more prominently before the people of West Fife, and if possible assure the attention which may bring about reform of some kind or another, we think it met to-day to supplement our statements of last week.

Description of the Huts.

The large huts are built of wood, and consist of a dinning hall, a kitchen, and a number of sleeping apartments. Iron beds, guaranteed to rest two people, are rowed along the sides of each apartment, and in a comparatively small space thirty or forty men are packed together.

Admission Fourpence.

A keeper and perhaps a deputy are in charge of the huts, and each evening the men are admitted without reserve at the rate of 4d per head. If the 4d is not forthcoming admission is of course forbidden.

Cooking Their Own Food – A Struggle For the “Hot Plate”.

The men cook their own food in the Aberdour hut, and the same principal was enforced in connection with the structure which was burned down at Little Couston. The men, as a rule, breakfast between 6 and 7 in the morning, and the rush of upwards of 150 navvies to the “hot plate” or cooking stove is a sight never to be forgotten. The scene may in all fairness be designated the battle of the “hot plate”. As the hour approaches for commencement of work, those who have been forced to wait until numerous dishes have left the “plate”, naturally become anxious, and the frying pans, kettles, goblets, &c. begin to be tossed about in such a manner as to suggest to the stranger that he has suddenly become transported to a castmetal manufactory. Many of the breakfast dishes are indeed not very tempting, and the same holds good of the foods that are being attacked at dinner time. Only half-an-hour is allowed for dinner, and rather than fight for a place on the “plate”, or go to the trouble of cooking, a considerable number of the poor men content themselves with bread and butter, while others fall back upon the “rough and ready”, and, certainly dangerous “push by” of a jug of beer and a scone. Indeed, on the occasion of our visit, we were actually told that it was no uncommon thing for some of the men to place a piece of raw meat between a scone, and make this do duty for a dinner. Having ample time on hand at night, the cooking warfare does not assume the same competitive form as it does in connection with other meals, but the “tea” is over at 6.30 pm and the men have a long night with

Really Little To Do.

Time hangs heavily on the poor wretches hands, and the vast majority of them, who may be said to have known nothing else but an Epicurean life, spend the night in drinking. Saturday night is a wild night at the huts, and Sunday morning is generally pretty well advanced ere the poor men – who have really more need to be pitied than laughed at – have roared themselves hoarse, and become so exhausted that they pay their 4d, and seek in vain ‘Tired Nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep’.

Spending Their Sunday.

A long rest is taken on the Sundays, and during the summer the most of the afternoon has been spent in the open under the shadow of the woods. The various religious bodies in the village of Aberdour tried to conduct religious services in the dining hall of the Aberdour hut for some time, but the babble of tongues was always so great that the inside meeting were abandoned. Out door meetings continue to be held, however, and Mr Brown of the Free Church, and Mr Rodrick of the Established Church are receiving assistance from speakers from Carrubbers Close Mission, Edinburgh.

Is Reform Possible?

Now, in the above we have refrained from painting an alarming picture. We cannot help saying, however, that hut life as conducted in connection with the large huts on the Aberdour and Burntisland Railway is “not worth living”, and before winter sets in, in all its severity, the men and women of the district, who take a serious view of things, must come forward and bring about considerable reform. We willingly admit that much of the material is difficult to work with. Indeed, many of the “tramps” are as bad as it is possible for human nature to be. Every penny goes as it is earned in many instances, but with all the drawbacks here indicated, we think it possible to bring a change for the better. Man is a being of circumstances. If no pressure is made for reform from without, the miserable wretch will “wallow in the mire”, and continue – despite evolution dreams – to return to his vomit until he has gone down

*To the vile dust from whence he sprung
Unwept, unhonoured and unsung.*

It is a great distance from the squalid home to the palatial mansion of the rich, but after all we think it possible to make the distance less, and

Here Are The Reforms We Humbly Suggest.

The system by which from 100 to 200 men are crushed into one hut, without any arrangements for cooking but a “hot plate” is bad, and ought at once to be abolished. What is needed – and we confess we are surprised that any other principle should have been thought of – is a number of huts affording accommodation for say 30 men at most, and let the whole of the cooking be placed in the hands of a woman and say her husband. To the cooking department the men could repair like rational beings, and instead of casting away 3d on a pint of beer, they could have a plate of warm soup for a penny. Many of the men are an unsteady and beer-loving lot, but the big hut system can only drive them from bad to worse. If the employers would only look to

their own interests they would at once make three huts of the big hut, and open up an “eating house” in connection with every hut. This is one course which would assuredly tend to improvement, and

Another Way of Bringing About Reform

Is to raise funds to provide a methodical system of religious work and periodical entertainments. We are glad to say that already the first step has been taken in this direction. A number of gentlemen resident in the neighbourhood of Aberdour have erected a small wooden hall at a cost of £45. This building is seated to hold about 50 people. On weed days it will be set aside as a reading-room, and on Sundays religious services will be conducted during the day and evening. The cost of the building has been raised, but funds will be required to carry on the good work, and to-day

We Make an Appeal

To all who can spare a shilling to come and help us. We have no hesitation in saying that it would be wrong to entrust the navvies with money, but here is a source through which every penny will be put to good use. Me A. Rolland, of Aberdour House, Mr Normand, of Whitehill, Sheriff Gillespie, Rev. Messrs Brown and Roddick may be said to form the committee who will have charge of the institution, and we feel confident that money committed to their trust for such work as we have referred to will be found a good investment.

*Rescue the perishing, rescue the dying,
Jesus will comfort you, Jesus will save.*

Until matters have taken a more definite shape, and a receiving official has been appointed, we feel it our duty to announce that we will be happy to take charge of any money subscription or parcel of periodicals any of our readers may seem fit to send in. Money gifts or periodicals may be addressed to: - The Editor, Dunfermline Journal, ‘For Navvies Rescue Work’.

October 20 1888

THE "KINGDOM" OF FIFE.
ITS ENTERPRISE AND ITS NATURAL
RESOURCES

In the Christian Institute, Bothwell Street, Glasgow last night, Mr Andrew S. Cunningham, Dunfermline, lectured under the auspices of the Glasgow-Dunfermline Association, his subject being – "The Progress of Fife; Its Enterprise and its Natural Resources."

Mr James Clark, the president of the association, occupied the chair, and was accompanied on the platform by Mr Mackay, treasurer; Mr Marshall, vice-president; Mr Spence, and others. The chairman stated that he was delighted that the association was progressing admirably, and that the large attendance at that, their opening lecture, spoke volumes for the future.

Mr Cunningham, who was well received said: - Mr Chairman, and Gentlemen – You will perhaps allow me in the first place tonight to congratulate you upon the formation of a Glasgow-Dunfermline Association, and upon the enthusiasm which has been displayed since the formation in the work of making the members feel that the organisation which is calculated to increase the bond of union which ought to exist between natives of the "City by the crooked stream" resident in the "Second City of the Empire." Carlyle says "Beautiful is young enthusiasm. Keep it to the end." I can only hope that the enthusiasm which has been exhibited by this Association will not be the enthusiasm of new born zeal which is destined to vanish away but that it will be an enthusiasm which will be abiding, and which, through years to come, will be the means of bringing Fifers frequently together in this and in other capacities. The theme upon which I address you tonight is "The Progress of the 'Kingdom' of Fife: its enterprise and its natural resources." I make no apology for asking you to slip the collar for an hour and to take a retrospective glance at the road which natives of the "Kingdom" have travelled during the past century or more.

The Importance of History.

From an early period of the world's history it has been a common thing for thinking people to make an occasional pause and take a retrospective glance at the milestones they have passed in life's journey. I think you will agree with me when I say that if a pause was necessary in days gone by it must be doubly necessary now, when sections of the community may be said to be engaged in a struggle which is aptly described by the words, *the rush of life*. In the Book of Books Job compares life to the movements of the weaver's shuttle. The weaver's shuttle of Job's day had a very different click to the shuttle of our day. Our shuttle is rattled along the framework of the loom at a furious rate by steam power, and this just exactly represents modern life. As the life in Job's day was to the shuttle driven by hand, so the life of our day is to the shuttle driven by steam. Hence it is that I argue that it was necessary to slip the collar in the good old times and sit down and quietly review the past, it is an absolute necessity that we should occasionally, individually and collectively, take a peep at the records of the past and study the success and failures connected with institutions which play an important part in modern life. Rightly read and rightly interpreted history is one of our best school-masters. If we are in connection with any question at the moment we ought, as rational beings, to try and find out the real cause of error, and make the wrecks and ruins consequent upon error, our guiding star for the future. Lord

Beaconsfield once said: - "What wonderful things are events; the least are of greater importance than the most sublime and comprehensive speculation." And Mr John Moreley speaks of the past "As enabling us to see our way more clearly through what is happening to-day." Only the other day Lord Rosebery in speaking before the Scottish History Society said: - "After the Union I think I may say that Scotland determined to take, with the disability of the loss of her separate Government, the full advantage of it. She gave herself up to fitting herself for the great part that she was destined to play in the government of the British Empire. She recovered by a long period of repose the exhaustion of the political part of her history, which was all excitement and which was no repose, and as the affluent forces of nature gather themselves under the uniform and impassive covering of the snow, so under the apparent deadness and modernization of the eighteenth century Scotland was collecting her strength for the efforts which she has put forward in the nineteenth." The task I have set before myself to-night is to try to prove that Fife has during the nineteenth century taken fair advantage of the "collected strength" of the eighteenth, and despite our "queerness", our isolation, and our quaintness, we have made as great progress industrially and otherwise as many of the counties of Scotland. Penants in his "Toon in Scotland", published in 1776 says: - "Fife is a county for populas – that excepting the environs of London, scarce one in South-Britain can vie with it; fertile in soil, abundant in cattle, happy in collieries, in ironstone, lime, and firestone, blest in manufactures, the property remarkably well divided, none insultingly powerful, to distress and often to depopulate a county." Although great changes fall to be recorded in connection with the industries of the county since 1776, I think that Penant's words might well be taken as representing the conditions and the circumstances of the county of the present day.

The Population.

is generally accepted as one of the best tests of progress or decadence which can be applied to a town, a county, or a country, and if we apply this test to the "Kingdom" for a century back, people with a statistical turn of mind and a love for big families, will have little cause for complaint. In 1801, for instance, the population of the county was returned at 93,743, and during the next ten years it rose to 101,272. From 1811 to 1891 the average increase was at the rate of 10,760 every ten years, and the total of 1891 was 187,346 persons. The increase in population between 1881 and 1891 was 15, 415, and should the same rate of increase be maintained during the ten years ending 1901, the population of Fife will have more than doubled during the century. That disposes of the county as so far as population is concerned; but seeing as this is a Glasgow-Dunfermline Association, you will perhaps bear with me when I say that the population of the parish of Dunfermline was returned as 9,980 in 1801; in 1891 the population was 29,958 and the chances are that in 1901 it will be upwards of 31,000 – fully three times the population of 1801. This is a higher rate of increase by a third than the county as a whole; but it must be kept in mind that the average is considerably reduced by Culross and by the many quaint little burghs whose life to this day is very much as it was when the "curfew tolled the knell of the parting day." – burghs which are more attractive to the artist than are to the armies of people who are engaged in the fierce industrial battle of life. Culross parish, for instance, could boast of a population of 1502 in 1801, and in 1891 it had fallen to 1096. Before I proceed to deal with the great industries of the "Kingdom", perhaps you will allow me to touch on the

Parliamentary History

of the county. The first Parliament after the Union met in 1707, and it is this Parliament Mr Miller, in his great work, "Fife, Pictorial and Historical," tell us that Fife had three representative – one for the county, one for a group of burghs consisting of Dysart, Kirkcaldy, Burntisland, and Kinghorn, and another for Anstruther (East and West), Crail, Kilrenny, and Pittenweem. St Andrews and Cupar had to be content with casting in their lot with Perth, Dundee, and Forfar; and Inverkeithing, Dunfermline, South Queensferry, and Culross joined with Stirling, and these made up the Stirling District of Burghs. Cupar and St Andrews were disjoined from Perth and Dundee by the Reform Bill of 1832; the St Andrews and the Kirkcaldy Burghs have been re-arranged, but the burghs comprising the Stirling group remain exactly as they were in 1707. An attempt was made to divorce Dunfermline from the Stirling Burghs in connection with the Redistribution of Seats Act of 1884; but radical as the electors are in politics, they are conservative in some things, and the opposition to the proposed change was so strong that Parliament refused to grant decree of divorce, and the newspapers were compelled to announce that the "marriage of Kirkcaldy with Dunfermline would not now take place." When Sir William Harcourt visited Kirkcaldy a fortnight ago, he said, in referring to the political fight in which he had engaged in the burgh 38 years ago: - "Things are a good deal changed since those days. We went to the poll, and it was a very heavy poll at that time. I have refreshed my memory by looking at the numbers. The victorious candidate polled 304, and I polled 284. Now, I do not think my friend Dalziel would be satisfied with a poll of 304. As far as I know, he has multiplied that number by exactly ten." In 1832 the electorates of the Kirkcaldy Districts of Burghs only reached a total of 700; to-day it is nearly 6000. What is true of Kirkcaldy is also true of other constituencies. In the St Andrews group of Burghs the electorate in 1832 was 600; to-day it is 2800. The electors of the Stirling Burghs numbered 1182 in 1832, and to-day the constituency is upwards of 6000. The county electorate as one constituency in 1832 was 2,186, and to-day the county is divided into two divisions, the Eastern division having a constituency of 9500, and the Western division of 10,500. These changes in the constituencies of the county have been brought about, and yet the county of Fife and other counties of the United Kingdom, which have experienced similar changes, go on progressing. Even at this late hour there is no appearance of the revolution and the anarchy which some people predicted would follow Lord Derby's "lean in the dark" of 1832. When the people who had lived in small houses had been enfranchised, Mr Lowe, who died as Lord Sherbrooke, in a spirit of despair gave vent to the words, "We must now at least educate our new masters." If Mr Lowe could return to the political platform to-day and take a glance backwards as we are doing, I verily believe that he would admit that "the new masters" have behaved tolerably well; indeed, things have gone on just about as well as if the whole Parliamentary machine had been in the hands of the "old masters". Another feature which may be accepted as a very good test of progress, or the reverse is

The Valuation of the County.

The first reliable statistics we have on the valuation of the county appeared in 1815, and in that year the total was returned at £405,770. Forty years hence the valuation was returned at £683,613 9s 0d, and from this date the increase some years were very

marked. I would not like to detain you reading the statistics for each year; but I might give you the totals returned at the close of each decade from 1855. In 1865 the valuation was £783, 109 15s 1d; in 1875 it was £960,430 2s 2d. The valuation in the county first crept up to the million in 1877, and in 1885 it was as much as £1,035,916 3s 6d; while in 1895 the total was £1,118,541 17s 2d. From 1855 to 1869 the progress in the landward parts of the burghs and parishes was continuous, but in 1870 there was a falling off to the extent of upwards of £4000 in the landward parishes. This decrease was more than made up by the increase in the burghs, however. Because of a readjustment of the railway valuations and a decrease in the landward parishes – the decrease in the latter was brought about by a falling off in the valuation of agricultural subjects – a decrease fell to be noted from 1885 to 1889; but in 1890 came away with a rattling increase, and went considerably beyond the total of 1885. The development of the minerals has had a good deal to do with the increases which fall to be noted from 1885 to 1895, and this is one of the reasons Fife shows up so well when compared with counties which are largely dependant on agriculture. I am now going to ask you to take a glance with me at the

Mineral Resources of the County.

Charles I. described the county as “a beggar’s mantle with a fringe of gold.” If Charles could only take a run through the county to-day I think he would be inclined to alter what he doubtless regarded, as Sheriff Principal Mackay in his “History of Fife and Kinross” reminds us, as one of his best sayings. Gentlemen, the collieries which have been established in every part of the county impress one with the idea that the whole “mantle” is one of gold rather than the “fringe”. In the very centre of the fabric hundreds of tons of coal, representing many gold pieces, are being brought to the surface weekly. There has been a market for the coals of the “Kingdom” for many years. As far back as the thirteenth century there exists a grant to the abbot and monks of Dunfermline of the right to dig for coal in Pittencreeff. They were expressly forbidden to sell what they got to anybody, and there was probably no great sale for coal in Scotland until the fifteenth century. In 1407 collieries at Dysart were in full operation. These are the collieries which subsequently caught fire and continued to burn for more than two centuries. By 1425 it is certain that coal was an article in common use, and of great merchandise. About 1450 an Italian priest, afterwards Pope Pius II., visited Scotland, and has left on record his astonishment at seeing what he calls “black stones” given away at the church doors to the poor, who, he says, take them home and use them for fuel. The consumption of coal in Scotland went on increasing so rapidly that our good ancestors grew alarmed about the supply, and the first coal scare was in 1563, when an Act was passed forbidding its export. I need scarcely remind you that Culross has the distinction of having given a new impulse to mining in Scotland as far back as 1615. Coal working previous to this had been entirely confined to the crop or upper seams, and the drainage was carried through by levels which run out to the natural drains – the burns – at a lower level than the actual workings. The crop seams were becoming exhausted, and an old record tells us, says Mr Millar, in his “Fife Pictorial and Historical”, that there was a “*maist exhorbitant dert and scantiness of fewall*”. At Culross the upper seam known as the “Jenny Peat” had been worked as far as it could by day levels as a means of drainage, and Sir George Bruce hit upon the idea of introducing the Egyptian wheel for pumping water. The wheel was driven by three horses, and consisted of an endless chain with 36 buckets attached to it. As eighteen full buckets ascended, eighteen empty buckets

descended. The site of this Egyptian wheel pit can be seen on the edge of the shore near Culross to this day, and when the tide is back, traces are also to be seen of the Neat Pit which belonged to Sir George Bruce. It was this Egyptian wheel pit which James VI. descended, and was brought to the surface at the Moat Pit to find it was surrounded by a flowing tide, and suspecting a plot on his life, he shouted "Treason!". In those feudal times, miners were slaves and were bought and sold with the pits. They were even excluded from the Habeas Corpus Act of 1701, which recurred the liberty of the subject; but Sir John Henderson of Fordell, who was the member of Parliament for Fife in 1780, struck a blow at the slavery among miners by granting the miners of Fordell their freedom, and it is this freedom which the miners of Fordell still celebrate by the "annual parade". This action on the part of Sir John, and the action of Lord Abercorn, led to the passing of the Act of 1799, which emancipated the miner and gave him a free citizenship. The emancipation of the miner and the improvement of machinery led to the further development of the minerals of Fife, as well as other counties. During the present century railways, steamboats, and a further improvement of machinery have led to an extraordinary development of our mineral resources, and to-day more new pits are being sunk in Fife than was the case at any period in the history of the trade. How far the development which has gone on will be apparent when I tell you that in 1874 the output of the county of Fife was 1,390,678 tons. Last year the output was 3,706,407 tons. Trade has been considerably better in 1897 than it was in 1896, and I fully anticipate that the output for the year just about to close will be considerably beyond 4,000,000 tons, and thus a record will be established for the county. There are upwards of 12,000 persons employed in and about the pits of Fife. About 2,000,000 tons of Fife coals were exported in 1896 and the average price at Burntisland was 7s per ton. Roughly speaking the average for the remaining 2,000,000 sold for home consumption would be about 9s per ton. All these represent a total which would make a pretty heavy fringe of gold. As I have already indicated, a great amount of energy is being displayed at every colliery in Fife, and small as our "Kingdom" is, it has the distinction of having within its borders one of the largest, if not the largest, mining concerns in Scotland – the Fife Coal Company. In 1872 when the Fife Coal Company was formed, the daily output was 300 tons; to-day the output is 6000 tons daily – one twentieth of the whole output of Scotland. The Cowdenbeath Collieries, which are embraced in the Fife Coal Company's works, only had an output of 300 tons a day in 1872, and to-day they contribute 1500 tons to the total output of 6000. Before I turn from mining you will perhaps allow me to say that the monks of old and the miners of more recent times have very much reduced the area of the coalfield of the Dunfermline district, and the ancient city can scarcely now claim to be the mineral centre of the "Kingdom". The parishes of Beath, Ballingry, Auchterderran, Wemyss, and Scoonie are destined to become greater centres of activity in mining than Dunfermline ever was. Kelty is growing by leaps and bounds, and Cowdenbeath, which consisted of two inns and the houses for the under-straupers for the Edinburgh-Perth coaches when Her Majesty, the Queen, drove through Fife in 1842, is to-day a thriving burgh of 6000 inhabitants. The complexion of quaint Buckhaven has been completely altered by the opening up of the minerals, and the "Miserable Row of Cottages" Defoe wrote of early last century, have been encircled by modern streets, and the burgh can boast of nearly 5000 inhabitants. Methil keeps pace with Buckhaven, and in recent years Leven has developed into a town of considerable dimensions. The whole aspect of affairs in East and West Wemyss are being changes – these once sleepy hollows are now full of life and activity. Turning now to the

Linen Trade of the City of Dunfermline,

you will perhaps allow me to say that we have the first mention of the fact that weavers were resident in Dunfermline in 1491. The weavers of this far off time were doubtless engaged on very coarse fabrics. James Blake, however, had a mind above the coarse tickings manufactured in his day, and in 1719 he set up a loom in the Pended Tower which Mr Andrew Carnegie has just converted into a museum, and experimented so successfully on the finer fabrics that the trade was soon established which made Dunfermline famous all the world over. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the British Linen Company established an agent in the town, and they employed as many as 400 weavers. Time came when the sound of the shuttle and the pirn wheels were heard in every street and every lane in the city. In 1825 the Jacquard machine rendered an impetus to the trade, in so far as it enabled manufacturers to produce goods of patterns which could not possibly be attempted on the old "draw loom". The Jacquard only staved off the evil day, however. Competition became keen, prices fell, and the forties proved the most trying times which have been experienced in the City of Dunfermline. The beginning of the end of the hand-loom came in 1849, when the power-loom was introduced. A second power-loom factory was opened in 1851, and to-day there are no fewer than eleven power-loom works in operation, turning out linens for the entire world. There are nearly 600 looms at work, giving employment to 6000 persons. It is impossible to produce statistics which can give one more than an approximation of the value of the goods produced annually in the city. I am assured by an expert, however, that, roughly speaking, the turnover of the Dunfermline factories will be a little over one million pounds a year, and the production of the factories will be at least 20,000,000 yards. I must leave the work of figuring out how many of the ordinary dining-room tables the Dunfermline factories clothe with fine linen annually at twenty million yards. It is enough for me to say that the total figures out nearly 11,365 miles at a yard wide. It may interest you to know that for a long series of years America has been a very large consumer of Dunfermline linens. Chalmers, in his "History of Dunfermline", tells us that in 1836 one half of the whole produce of the city went to United States. Two years ago, when trouble arose with America and the United Kingdom over the Venezuela question, Mr William Inglis, of Victoria and Castleblair Linen Works, in speaking of the bond of union which existed between America and Dunfermline, stated that the half of the goods manufactured went to America, and this estimate is quite borne out by the only index of the Dunfermline trade done with America, which is open to the public – namely, the direct value of the goods exported through the Dunfermline Consulate. Last year the value of the goods which were involved through the Dunfermline-American Consul Office was £374,937. It is computed that this only represents half of the goods exported to America, many of the large American houses finding it more convenient to ship their linen with other goods from Glasgow, London, Liverpool, and Manchester. If this computation is near the mark, it means that the value of goods sent annually to the United States is something approaching from £500,000 to £700,000. If we make a run from Dunfermline to

The Lang Toun

We find that enormous changes have taken place in recent years. "Nairn's Folly" was the name applied to Mr Michael Nairn's first efforts in 1847 to construct a useful floor covering out of the fibre of cork and oil paint. All the criticism of the unsympathetic speakers did not prevent Mr Nairn from perfecting his linoleum, however, and to-day Kirkcaldy linoleum is as well known throughout the world as Dunfermline fine linens are. The "Lang Toun" grows apace with its public works, and in every street there is evidence of enterprise and activity. A good harbour would have been of great advantage to the burgh; but the residents can at least congratulate themselves on the fact that Burntisland and Methil docks will ere long compare favourably with any similar works on the Forth. As to

Agriculture

I think we have made some progress since Dr John Thomson, the minister of Markinch, in 1800 appealed to the people in these words "Let the spade and the plough engrave names upon your lands, and let your memory be perpetuated by substantial and permanent improvements of the soil." According to the returns published by the Board of Agriculture for 1896 there are 328,802 acres of land and water in the county. The arable land figures out a total of 182,802 acres. The acreage of land occupied by tenants is 202,553, and by landlords, 53,802 acres – a total acreage of 255,747. There are 2366 holdings in the county, and the average holding is 108 acres. Of ther holdings, 494 are above one acre and not exceeding five; 722 holdings are five acres and not exceeding fifty; and 1149 are above fifty acres. There are no fewer than 471 holding of one acre and under. Fife has, of course, suffered from the agricultural depression, in common with other counties; but landlords and tenant farmers are adapting themselves to the altered circumstances of the industry, and it is evident that even yet farming can be carried on to profit. Much as people delight in speaking of the past as the "good old times" I think that you will agree with me when I say that the present times are preferable to the past. I purpose devoting the time still at my disposal to taking a glance at records which show us

The County In The Light Of Other days,

And which I think will not fail to emphasise the fact that socially the progress has been very great. One cannot read the records of the Town Council and Kirk Session, as given by Dr Henderson, without feeling that one of the darkest pages in the history of West Fife of the seventeenth century is that which gives an account of the crusade against poor women who were taken as witches. The members of the Town Councils and kirk Sessions of the district were exercised for years over the witch scare. In 1642 as many as six poor old women were sacrificed in one day at Witchbrae, and in 1649 the Presbytery of Dunfermline presented a special "supplication" to Parliament praying for increased powers for putting the witches to death. A fair sample of the blending of the spiritual with civil powers appears in the Dunfermline Kirk Session records for 1653. A certain Margaret Markman was brought before the Session for abusing her husband in "cruel and malicious speeches". The Session referred her to the Magistrates to be "imprisoned in the laighest prison house", and thereafter be "set on the Tron on a Mercat day to the example of others". In 1656 the Dunfermline Kirk

Session seems to have devoted a great deal of its time to a theme which still consumes a good deal of the time of church courts – Sunday Desecration. One entry states that the Session found many people on Sabbath after the sermons “sitting at doors and walking on the streets and in the yairds, about the fields at yr worldlie discourses”. Two men, for instance, had to go down upon their knees for having ventured to gather nuts in a plantation near the city. The fear of death was almost put upon a poor joiner because he attempted to make a coffin on a Sunday; and an entry, bearing the date 1677, shows that the masking a stirring a pot three persons were sharply dealt with, although one of them stoutly declared that she “saw no sin in the wark.” In 1705 the Town Council of the city joined the Session in their laudable crusade against “cursers” and “swearers”, and agreed to give the constable who “apprehended” and “ye informant” each 1s off the first end of the fine imposed on “cursing vagabonds”. These old peace preservers and social reformers do not appear to have been particularly consistent, for while the Kirk Session attempted to put down a Sunday walk in the garden, and the Council laid violent hands on all who dared to swear, the barbarous sport of cock-fighting was tolerated. The Yule cock-fights took place in the Abbey Churchyard at first; but the locals were afterwards moved to the “Queen’s House”, where popular prices were announced in the words – “Front seats, 6d; second seats, 3d; and back seats, 1d.” The authority which Dr Henderson quotes for cock-fighting does not say whose patronage the questionable pastime was under. It would be astonishing to know if a front seat were reserved for any of those who were the instigators of poor old women being “tortured and sawn asunder” as witches, or were responsible for old men, who sighed for a breath of the pure air heaven sent on a Sunday, being afflicted and tormented. An entry in the Council minutes of 1713 throws some light on the bondage under which the poor miners toiled. The Earl of Rothes sent a letter to the Town Council of Dunfermline asking for the loan of two colliers, when the Council “warranted the bailies to lend to the Earl, David Murgan and George Brown, upon the Earl’s bond to restore them on demand without expense; and, in case the Lady Pittencrieff wants William Watson, warrants the bailies to lend Watson to her.” An old manuscript states that in 1730 “the Hiegate (or High Street) was overgrown with grass in some places, and that kie and horses were to be seen feeding thereon.” The following entry in the Council minutes shows that our forefathers would have been much better employed in the work of improving the sanitary conditions of the burgh than in hunting witches and aiding and abetting the clergy in their persecution of the people who on a Sunday sought a breath of fresh air in sweeter pastures than the wretched streets: - “James Thomson and Alex. Wilson complain that the great quantity of rubbish on both side of the Rotten Row throws the water into the middle of the street, and it gets frozen and is therefore difficult to walk on.” The Council and Kirk Session records of the ancient burgh of Culross are interesting reading. Mr Beveridge in his book “Culross and Tulliallan”, give a good many extracts. On the 21st September 1642, for instance, John Smith was accused by the Kirk Session of having absented himself from the communion, and having confessed his fault was ordained to stand “the next Lord’s Day at the Kirk door betwix the 2 and 3 bell, barefooted and bareheaded”. Penny weddings with their attendant revelries were frequently before the ecclesiastical authorities at Culross. Sunday searchers were quite as exacting as the Dunfermline watchers, and people were frequently brought before the Session because they had the courage to go to the garden and pull a leek or a “sybie” on the Sabbath day. A poor woman named Elspeth Schioch was compelled to sit in branks because she was honest and courageous enough to tell the “searchers” that “they were too busy in things that concerned them

not.” Ther Church seemed to control the Council in some matters – an entry in the Session Records showing that the bailies and Council were “desired to have the meeting of the Council on Monday before the exercises, or on Wednesday, so it withdraw them not from the publick worship that day.” Another entry tells us that two elders were appointed “to goe through the streets everie Sabbath about fyve hours after sermon, to see that there were no people sitting at doors or children playing on the streets.” One delinquent was ordered to make a pair of branks for “scolds, flyters, cursers, and swearers,” in satisfaction of his “insolence, rytos, and disorders.” Amongst the records of punishments for trivial offences, it is satisfactory to state that now and again one comes across an entry which shows some heart and Christian charity. For instance, a carrier is reported to having lost a horse, which was the means of his livelihood, and in consideration of the fact that he “was a virtuous frugall person, the Session ordained that a collection publicated would be made for him, and intimated next Sabbath day.” In his “Reminiscences of Dunfermline,” Mr Alex Stewart tells many stories of the olden time, but I find I cannot touch them tonight. Now, gentlemen, I have only two minutes left, and these two minutes will be devoted to a name which sounds like sweet music to a Fifer’s ear, namely,

The “Kingdom”.

The genial Sheriff-Principal of Fife – I mean of the “Kingdom” – says, “The physical geography of the district confirms the traditionary history that the wedge sloped peninsula shut off by the sea and the two firths from the rest of Scotland, and from modern Perthshire by the Ochils, the highest mountain-range of southern Scotland, had been one of the many separate kingdoms of the Picts, who never formed a united monarchy. Several of its place names still bear witness to the existence of an independent or it may have been an independent king To no period after the Celtic can the name of the “Kingdom”, still familiar by tradition to its natives, be preserved by Fife alone of the counties of Scotland, be reasonably ascribed.” The Sheriff is no doubt right in his theory as to the origin of the name. From Pictish times it has been handed down to us as a sacred heritage, and despite the fact that every other county in Scotland has ceased to be a “Kingdom” I believe that Fifer all over the world to-day are determined to hold fast by the name. There is a charm in the name and it is because of its charm – its beauty and its poetry – that I beg of the Glasgow-Dunfermline Association in the words of the beloved Apostle of the Gentiles to hold by the name: - Brethren stand fast and hold the traditions which ye were taught whether by word or by epistle.”

December 1897.

THE PROFITS OF HILL OF BEATH PUBLIC-HOUSE.

The Village Lit Up.

The village of Hill of Beath has grown by leaps and bounds during the past few years, and for the first time in its history the village on Thursday lit up – part of the profits of the now famous public-house having to be applied toward the work of introducing the electric light. The engine and dynamo have been fitted up at the old Engine Pit. The engine is twenty-horse power, and the dynamo is capable of supplying current for 200 sixteen candle power lamps. Sixty lamps have been erected throughout the village. When the light was turned on on Thursday one could not help feeling that the distribution had been planned so as to give the best results. The incandescent lamp instead of the arc has been adopted – a system which is admirably adapted for the short streets of a village. The installation has been carried out by Messrs Hunter & Jack, Glasgow, and so admirably had they done their work there was not a single hitch when the hour came for turning on the light. The installation means a capital expenditure of £400, and the total annual expenditure for wages, &c., will be about £60. In connection with the ceremony of turning on the light, a meeting of the villagers was held in the hall of the village. Mr Rowan, manager, occupied the chair, and was supported by Mr John Ross, solicitor, Dunfermline, and others.

The Profits of Drink.

The Chairman said that an important step had that might be reached in connection with the disposal of the profits of the now famous public-house. The people would now be able to walk about the village with greater freedom on the dark winter nights. He wished it to be distinctly understood that there was no desire to increase the sale of drink in the village. Indeed he hoped that the improvements introduced into the village would be the means of showing the people the enormous profits that were made on drink, and help them to come to the conclusion that drink was not an article which they should spend money. He had pleasure in introducing to them Mr Ross, who had taken a great interest in the question of applying the profits from drink to matters of public utility. (Applause)

Mr Ross, who was well received, said that as one who had taken some interest in the work of establishing the Hill of Beath public-house, he supposed he would be entitled to a share of the blame or the praise which critics thought fit to administer. So far as they had gone yet the blame had outweighed the praise. Now that the electric light had been introduced into the village from the profits of the house, perhaps some praise might come. When he was at Kelty some time ago, speaking on the public-house question, there seemed to be a slight suspicion that there was

A Snake In The Grass

down about Hill of Beath. Some people seemed to be under the impression that the electric light had been suggested by the Fife Coal Company, so that they might get rid of some obligations. He could not for the life of him understand what motive the Fife Coal Company could have in suggesting that part of the profit of the public-house

should be devoted to electric light as against other purposes, or how the electric light would free them from of obligation. They could have such a village as Hill of Beath formed into a lighting district, and, as the principal proprietors, the Fife Coal Company would, no doubt, have to bear a considerable share of the expense. But, as one who knows a good deal about County Council work and lighting, they would perhaps allow him to state that the villagers of Hill of Beath would

Wait Until Dooms Day

before they would get an installation of the electric light in Hill of Beath through the County Council. He told them frankly that he rejoiced that the electric light had been introduced into the village. He said this because he hoped that the light would be the precursor of many good things which would come to Hill of Beath. There was nothing that was more uncomfortable than to walk through a village such as that on a dark winter night. He regarded the electric light as one of those things which would make go about preaching

a Healthy Gospel of Discontent.

The light would show them bad roads, broken windows, and many defects of village life. He for one did not think that many of the surrounding of the village life of to-day could exist in a place where the electric light had been turned on. So he would be very surprised if in a short time the villagers of Hill of Beath were not asking better foot-paths, better roads and some of them better houses. He did not minimise the importance of an advance of two shillings per week to the working man with a family – they all liked an increase in wages – but he could not help pointing out that they had something more to press for than wages. They required comfortable surroundings. (Hear, Hear,) Let them, for example, take a woman who had a husband and say three children. She went to a village where the roads in the winter time were wretched. She liked to see the

Children Toddlin' Out and Toddlin' In,

and she rejoiced when her husband got home from work. She fights for a time to keep her house clean against all the mud which would be brought in on the feet of the children and the husband. But ultimately she gets tired of the thing – and allowed things to take their swing. He made no wonder at the fact that the poor woman became disheartened and allowed things to drift. He congratulated them on the introduction of the electric light, because it opened up a

Vista of Improvement

for our mining village. He hoped that it would only be the beginning of many good things for the village of Hill of Beath. In regard to the public-house he might state frankly that he had no desire to see it prosper in one sense. He hoped that it would not result in increased drinking. Indeed, if it resulted in an increase in drinking, he would consider it a failure and the public-houses opened on the system would be better closed. The scheme was an experiment. He had again and again asked those who criticised the scheme if they were pleased with the existing state of things. The answer was “no”. Well, all they could do meantime was to aim at that which was

practicable. He had raised the question at Kelty; and notwithstanding all the opposition which had arisen there he was hopeful that a house would yet be established at Kelty. He hoped that the house at Kelty would be more under popular control than the Hill of Beath house. He had place a scheme before the villagers of Kelty through which they would have complete control.

A Word To The Management.

But all the same Hill of Beath would be looked upon as the precursor of such houses, and he could not help pointing out to them that a great deal depended on the management. The house had been visited by some outsiders who were taking an interest in the drink question. Some had gone away pleased with what they had seen, and others had formed an unfavourable impression. He asked the management to keep a watchful eye on the house, and to manage it well. It was a public-house – a house in which the public had an interest, a house to which say four men could adjourn to have a game of draughts or dominoes, and to which the two who drank water or lemonade would be as welcome as the two men who drank whisky. The name public-house given to the houses of our day was a misnomer. The ordinary licensed house was not a public-house; it was a house which belonged to the man to whom the certificate was granted. Mr Ross concluded by making a second appeal to the managers of the Hill of Beath house to see that it was well conducted, and to spend the profits on works of public utility.

The Chairman said that if people could realise the real value of whisky and what it cost to produce it they would drink less of it.

The Light Was Turned On

in presence of a large assemblage of the villagers, and in every street it was a complete success.

October 1898

THE PARISH OF BEATH

The Villages of Kelty, Oakfield,
And Neighbourhood.

A writer, in the “Old Statistical Account of 1796”, writing of the parish of Beath says: - “The population has decreased considerably within these twenty years; owing not to any epidemical distemper, for the people are very healthy, but principally to the practice of laying so much ground into grass by which means the farmers carry on their labour with fewer hands than formerly.” The population of the parish then was only 600, and it is apparent from this old note that the chief industry was agriculture. Early in the present century the people in the district began to feel that Beath as a parish could not live by agriculture alone; and at various points the upper seams of the minerals were attacked. In the Cowdenbeath district the work of development has gone on with great enterprise, and the population in the burgh of Cowdenbeath alone to-day is more than ten times the population of the whole parish in 1801. Mining enterprise has not been confined to the southern part of the parish, however. For some years things moved very slowly in the Kelty district, but in recent years all has been activity, and the population of the five straggling villages from Maryborough to Cantsdam give a total of 3,600 persons.

Churches and Schools.

Recently a new Free Church, an Established Church, and a U.P Church were opened, and it is but a few months since the new Infant School was taken possession of. The new school provided accommodation for from 500 to 600 children; and the rate on increase during the past year has been so great that it is evident that Beath School Board will be compelled to consider a further extension of buildings at no distant date. The churches and the schools, the Co-operative Society’s buildings, and the public-houses are the most imposing buildings in the village. At the recent Valuation Appeal Court the Assessor hazarded the opinion that one of the public-houses was the most valuable public-house in the “Kingdom” – it would, he alleged, be a “ten thousand pounder” were it to come into the market. If Kelty can boast of the most valuable “pub” in the county it can also claim having within its borders

The Greatest Pit in Scotland.

There are some pits in Scotland whose fittings are quite as heavy as the Aitken Pit fittings, but there is no pit can touch the Aitken output of from 1200 to 1400 tons of coal per day. The Lindsay Pit continues to vomit out a large output; but the old Kelty pits which fell into the hands of the Fife Coal Company upwards of quarter of a century ago, have been abandoned, and a good deal of dismantling work has been carried through. The outlay in connection with the sinking and fittings of the Aitken Pit was enormous – perhaps from £50,000 to £75,000 – and the subject would require to be a good one to justify the expenditure. Operations are going on briskly at

Blairadam Colliery.

The Company made a very good start some years ago; but as fate would have it, they ran into a stretch of calcined coal with their Dunfermline Splint seam. Happily the Company were plucky enough to cut through the burnt coal, and for some time they have had before them a considerable stretch of the very finest Dunfermline Splint coal. There is now not the slightest trace of calcined minerals in the “faces”; and during these prosperous times the Company has been doing splendidly. The blaes which overlie the seams of coal make a capital fireclay; and in the hope that the utilization of the blaes might prove a profitable concern for the Company, a Hoffman Kiln was recently erected in the vicinity of the pits and the work of brick-making commenced. The machinery is all of the most approved type; and the output is already as much as 10,000 bricks per day. Since the work of brick-making actually commenced the demand has quite reached expectations; and the management contemplate the erection of two Newcastle kilns. The Lochore Company, Limited, continues to work the minerals of Benarty, and the Rosewell Company are making the most they can of Lassodie Mill. The mining operation of the district do not end with the four works above referred to. Sometime ago

The Fife and Kinross Company, Limited,

was floated with a capital of £70,000 with the object of working the Blairinbathie mineral field forming the west coalfield of the estate of Blairadam. The Company have been fortunate in securing Mr Allan as manager. Mr Allan has had great experience in mining operation in the West of Scotland, and he has commenced operations on such a scale as to indicate that he intends establishing a first-class colliery. Ther field extends to fully a square mile, and it has been proved by bores being put down on the dip and the rise of the metals. The bores brought up the following results: -

27 fathoms		Rough Coal	5ft 6ins.
45	“	Main Coal	6ft 6ins.
47	“	Cairncable Upper	3ft 6ins.
47	“	Cairncable Lower	2ft 8ins.
49	“	Duddiedavie	5ft
52	“	Swallowdrum	2ft 3ins
111	“	Glassie	3ft 10in.
134	“	Fivefoot	4ft to 5ft
152	“	Dunfermline Splint	2ft 8ins.

All these seams are of good quality. Two pits are in process of sinking and all the machinery has been contracted for. Mr Allan and his directors have chosen what is undoubtedly the best site for the pits. The site chosen is a point about half-a-mile west from the mansion house of Blairadam. It is the basin of the surface, and the bores show that it will also prove the basin of the mineral field. Indeed, the pits are likely to strike into the deepest part of the coal basin, and from every side it is contemplated that the coals will be worked to the rise. Should this expectation be realised it will be an easy matter to run the coals into the pit bottoms without extensive haulage. No. 1 Pit is 16 ½ feet by 10 feet, and No. 2 , 12 feet by 10 feet.

For No. 1 a tandem combined pumping engine has been contracted for. The engine will have a six foot stroke, and will work at the rate of from 6 to 5 strokes a minute. All the gearing will be of the best type, the two plungers being 17 inches in diameter. A pair of coupled winding engines have been ordered for each shaft, and steam will be provided for the whole machines by four Lancashire boilers. The base has been laid for a chimney stalk 125 feet high, and the work of constructing the flues is being pushed on with all vigour. Two well-known Airdrie firms, Messrs Gibb & Hogg, and Mr Martin, are supplying the pumping and the winding engines, and Mr Marshall of Motherwell, secured the contracts for the boilers. The chimney stalk and the flues have been placed in the hands of Mr Street, Cowdenbeath; while Mr Adams, High Blantyre, is to undertake the pithead frame work. The well-known pit-sinkers, Messrs Ford and Macallum, have been entrusted with the sinking of the shafts. The old Blairadam railway runs to a point within a quarter of a mile of the site of the pits, and from here it is intended to extend the line to the works. A thick wood and a glen separate the pits from the railway, and the connection, short as it is, will involve considerable expenditure. The trees are being cleared with all possible speed, and the management of the pits hope that the railway connection will be made within six months. Meantime a light railway has been run to the point where the Blairinbathie line terminates to the pits, and over this line it is intended to convey the material for building operations and the lighter portions of the machinery. Two pretty heavy lairs of whin rock fall to be cut through in both shafts. Whin, of course, adds considerable to the cost of sinking; but with the explosives in use now-a-days, even whinstone is got through in a wonderfully short time. The pits are to be lined with wood from top to bottom. They will be worked on the double cage system – a ton of coal being brought to the surface every run. The Upper seams will be tackled in No. 2 Pit, and in No. 1, the pumping pit, the Dunfermline Splint and the Five foot seam will be developed. Meantime the Company will only have the old row of houses at Blairinbathie' but as time goes on they will proceed with the erection of houses on the estate of Blairadam near Kelty.

Coal Working in the Olden Time.

It may be interesting to state that Lord Chief Commissioner Adam, the present proprietor's great-grand-father wrote "Observation on Blairadam," and in the work a good deal of space is devoted to the coal seams. The lord Chief Commissioner tells us a great deal about coal working from 1700 onwards. For instance he tells us that on Blaircrambeth there was a very rich seam of coal. This seam was nine feet thick. The general sale was for some time given up, but in 1772 he renewed the working of this seam for sale; and he had seen all the lawn, from a beech tree he mentions, up to almost the door of the house covered with coal. In 1778, when it was reported that the upper rooms or lines of working were exhausted, the pits were closed. The only drainage works the old mines had were the levels running into the Kelty burn so the workings were confined to very small patches. The Lord Chief Commissioner also mentioned attempting to work the coal near Craigencaat, and incidentally refers to a survey which he got specially from an engineer. Arguing from the report, the Chief Commissioner says that "there is a great value of coal" in the west of the estate, and continues by saying "that the time may come when, even by the means of a steam-engine it may be very advantageous to work the coal." It looks like the time forecasted by the learned Lord Chief Commissioner – that the time for working the coal advantageously with a steam-engine – had already come.

The New Water Supply.

So far as quality is concerned, the new water supply from Loch Glow is giving every satisfaction to the people of the long straggling villages. The enormous cost, however, has come as a surprise upon the entire community. After the many battles which had to be fought out were finished, it was expected the original estimates of £3674 13s would be exceeded by about £2000, but no one dreamt of the total reaching at least £9390. The Kelty water supply was originally obtained from the Pieris and Lochornie burns. The intake well and filters were situated immediately below the Lochgelly reservoir on the same burn. During the greater part of the year a sufficient supply was obtainable for the requirements of the district, but in the summer months the quantity of water was often reduced to the compensation water given off from the Lochgelly reservoir. This compensation water was given *ex gratia* by Sir Charles Adam, the riparian proprietor, through whose land the burn flows, and could have been withheld by him at any time. In order to meet the growing demands of the district, a provisional order was promoted in Parliament, and sanction obtained in 1896 to raise the level of the existing embankments at Loch Glow, so as to impound the flood waters of the loch which were practically lost to the mill owners and the riparian proprietors for motive power, and to abstract a quantity of water not exceeding 162,500 gallons per day.

Loch Glow,

from which the supply is obtained, is situated about 3 ½ miles west from Kelty. The original top water level of the loch was 888.45 feet above ordinance datum, but this has now been raised to 893.95 feet above ordinance datum. The area of the loch before being raised was 110 acres, but the water surface now submerged extends to 120 acres. The original available capacity of the loch was about 82,000,000 gallons, but this has been increased to 254,000,000 gallons. The drainage area or gathering ground of the loch extends to 650 acres which in ordinary years would yield fully the total available capacity of the loch, or about 255,000,000 gallons. This gathering ground almost entirely consists of hill pasture land which is comparatively free from all sources of contamination, so that the water is of excellent quality in every respect for domestic purposes.

The Filters

and pure water tanks are situated almost midway between loch Glow and Kelty, on the Blairadam estate, and about 300 yards north of the Lochgelly reservoir. The filters, of which there are three, are 45 feet by 30 feet each, and are capable of efficiently passing over 3000,000 gallons per day. The floors are formed of cement; the walls are built of brickwork in cement lined with white enamel brick and finished on the top with red sandstone cope. The filtered water is collected and conveyed from the filters by a 9 inch cast-iron pipe to the pure water tank. This tank is 35 feet in diameter and 17 feet deep, and contains 96,000 gallons. Like the filters the floor is formed of concrete, and the walls are built of brickwork in cement lined with white enamelled brick. The supply of water to the filters is regulated by ball valves, which prevent any waste of water and maintains a uniform head of pressure. The top water

level of the tank is 721 feet above sea level, which is high enough to command any houses likely to be built in the district. From

The Pure Water Tank

A six-inch cast-iron pipe is laid to Kelty. This pipe, after passing alongside the Blairadam branch railway to a point about 100 yards east of where that railway crosses the Drumnageil burn is laid through the fields and joins the private road leading to Keltyhill farm near to Keltyhill Pit; from thence it is laid along the Keltyhill private road to the public highway opposite the Kelty Public School; from this point the size of the pipe is reduced to 4 inches in diameter, and it is continued southwards along the public highway to near Cantsdam. Connections were made at different points between the new and old mains so as to utilise the existing pipes as far as possible. And hydrants were placed at convenient places along the public streets. Messrs Leslie and Reid, the eminent engineers, were the engineers for the works. The water assessment for the villages is 2s per £1, and the drainage tax is 1s per £1. No attempt has yet been made to

Light and Clean

the villages; but something must be done in this direction in the near future. If a scavenging and lighting district were formed, the cost to the ratepayers would be 9d per £1. This means a pretty heavy burden for working men; but the outlay would pay in the end. Under the existing state of things, poor mothers must find it a difficult task to keep their houses half clean. As Mr Ross said at Hill of Beath, the children go “toddlin” out and “toddlin” in, and as often as they drag themselves through the mud in the dark, so often is the house transformed into something approaching the roads. At present the County Council have little or no power to deal with side streets; but if a scavenging and lighting district were formed they could move as much in side streets as they do on public highways. And it must be confessed, they have much need for reform on the highway leading from Cantsdam to Kelty Bridge. Because of its heavy contribution to rates from minerals, Beath parish has a strong claim for special treatment, and next year the County Council might do worse than make a special rate for the Kelty district roads.

The Library.

A good deal of progress has recently been made in connection with the building of a library. The library is a two-storey building. On the basement floor there is a spacious billiard room and a caretaker's house, and on the upper flat a library and reading room are provided. The building will cost about £700. £130 of the Moray bequest is to be spent on books.

The Public-House Question.

The site proposed for the proposed Gothenburg public-house is just opposite Hunter's famous house. Although little is heard of the house meantime, it must not for a moment be thought that the matter has been allowed to drop. As a matter of fact the committee recently appointed are going on with all the preliminary work. Mr Scobbie, architect, Dunfermline, has been asked to prepare plans for the house, and

the committee hope to be in a position to place a prospectus before the people of Kelty at no distant date.

The County Councillor For Kelty District.

Mr Terris, Dullomuir, returns to the County Council, as the representative for the Kelty district. No more painstaking representative could be found, and what he has done for education in the district will be apparent when it is stated that he has held a seat on the Beath School Board since the passing of the Education Act. Now that the new County Council has been elected, the villagers should convene a meeting and confer with Mr Terris on the desirability of having the village lit and cleaned. The present order of things is intolerable. People in those days must have light and cleanliness. If the fathers will not take the matter severely in hand, the mothers should commence an agitation which will be not be solved until a radical reform has been brought about. Here, is work for the newly formed Women's Liberal Association.

December 1898

THE GREAT DUNFERMLINE FIRE
OF 1624.

The City Completely Wrecked.

May 25, 1624, was a terrible day for Dunfermline. It appears that the day had been one set aside for drill – “Wappinshaw Day” – and in the course of the drill some burning tow or wadding “from a field gun” fell upon the roof of a thatched house near the Rotten Row (now Bruce Street), and in a short time the row was in a blaze. The houses in those grand old days, were principally wood, and within an hour the flames had spread to High Street, and from High Street to other streets. There was no organised fire brigade, and the water supply of the city was principally drawn from wells in the gardens. Within an hour of the outbreak it was seen that the extinguishing apparatus at command was worse than useless; and the people were seized with panic and rushed beyond the burgh boundary to save their lives. The wind was blowing a gale when the fire had broken out, and within five hours three-fourths of the houses had been reduced to ashes. Very strange to say, the Burgh Records take no notice of the conflagration, and for details of the fire we are mostly dependent on the records of other Town Councils in Scotland. The Lords of the Privy Council of Scotland visited the city, and reported on the fire to king James VI. Here is the Privy Council’s report *verbatim et literatim*: -

The Lords of the Privy Council to King James VI.

Most Sacred Souerane – Thair hes of lait fallin oute, within the burgh of Dunfermylne vpon the xxv day of Maij last, ane most lamentable and fearfull accident, by ane suddane and terrible fyre, whilk arise with the same and continewed so violent for the space of foure houris, as no foresight nor strength of man wes able to resist it, sua that the poore inahbitantis who, with mutche stryveing and extreame hassaird of thair lyveis, opposed thame selths agains the violence of the fyre, were constrayed in the end to yield to necessitie, and to be spectatowris of this fearfull visitation, wherin the twhole body of the toun, whilk consisted of eleven scoir of tenementis, and foureteen scoir and sevin families, wes whithin the space foirsaid, byrnt and consumed, with the whole plenessings of the houses and the barnis about the toun, wherein there wes fyve hundredth bollis of victuail, saxteen score of bairnis, of whom the eldest is not past sax yeiris of aige, is totalie ruined and undone, and the poore inhabitantis, who wer a companie of industrious and verteous people, and paynefullie and cairfullie laborit for thar leving, ar reducit to that extreame point of miserye, that nothing is left thame bot the cloathis vpon thair back, without a house or holde to repose thair languisheing bodyis in, as some of us, who has seene the desolatioun of this poore toun, can beare record. We have beene veri solist and cairfull for a supplie to this poorw toun, and hes begon oure selffis to gif a good example to otheris, and by our letters we haif remmendit thame to the whole body of this estate; And whereas this gentleman, your Majesties auld seruand, hes, at the earnist desire of the poore toun, undertane to represent unto your Majestie the desolat estate and conditioun thairof, they hev petitioned ws that be himwe wad give notice vnto your Majestie of the treuth of this mater, whilk, in a mater of this kind, we could not weel deny. In the meantime, we sall haif a cair that the moneyis quhilkis sallbe contributed for this earhand salbe providently managed and rightlie distributit, according to the quaitie and necessitie of

the parties interested, and in evr other thing whilk may procure th3 comferte and relief of that poore toun, no thing sallbe inlaiking in ws which to oure charge and plaseis apperteynis; And so, with oure humble prayeris vnto God, recommending your Majestie, and all your royall and princelieadvis to the protectioun of the Almightye. We rest for ever.

A writer of an unpublished MS., which is in the Advocate's Library, gave a very graphic account of the fire. He states that "while a wappinshaw was goin on, William Anderson, son til John Anderson a bailiff of the said town, and Charles Richeson, his servant, being shooting a shot with some of their friends in a certain place of the town, a little piece of lint flieth upon a thak-house which easily kindled; the fire increased with the violence of the wind and did flie from house to house, and sometimes would flie over ane house without doing it any harm, but would burn the next house, till the great admiration of all men. So that this fire did burn Meikle of the town except the Abbey and the Kirk threof, the tenth part were not free of it. This, by the judgement of all beholders, was thought til have been some divinity or some witchcraft, rather nor this foresaid accidental fire".

According to Calderwood, the writer of a history of Scotland, "the fire began at twelve hours, and burnt the whole town, some few sclat houses excepted, before foure afternoure; goods and gear within houses, malt and victuals in malkilns, and hame were consumed with fire." Balfour in his "Annals of Scotland," states that Dunfermline at this time consisted of 220 houses containing 287 families, and the "Aberdeen Record", in an article on the fire, stated that 220 tenements were consumed and that the tenements had been occupied by 187 families. In some towns the appeal for help for poor Dunfermline was heartily responded to. In Aberdeen, for instance, 1600 merks were collected by voluntary contributions. In Edinburgh the Council appointed collectors to "ingather voluntary contribution for re-edificing Dunfermline", and a handsome sum was raised. Dr Henderson says that the ravages of the fire appear to have been confined principally to the area of the town lying on the north side of High Street, viz.: - the Collier Row (Bruce Street); the Rotten Row (West Queen Anne Street); North Chapel Street, the Cross Wynd, all the north part of the south side of High Street, the upper part of the New Row, and the north side of Maygate. The work of rebuilding the town seems to have been taken up with great vigour. The collections which came in from other towns were distributed, and at the latter end of 1624 "the sound of mallet, hammer and saw were heard in every quarter of the town," there "being large flocks" says an old MS., "of tradesmen at work in the town." There is no record of what came out of the appeal for help from King James VI.; but a record informs us that Prince Charles (afterwards Charles I.) gave a donation of £500 Scots, "Dunfermline being his ain toun." In rebuilding their houses a great many of the more pious inhabitants placed stones above their doors and windows having the date of the fire and scripture mottoes. It is only a few years since a good example of the mottoes was interfered with in connection with a building in High Street. The stone bore the following: -

1624

Z5 . MA11.

AL . WM . MM

PRAIS . GOD . FOR.

Tradition tell us that the house in question was the eastmost house overtaken by the flames and was only partially destroyed. Hence the proprietor's joy as expressed in the words "Praise God For All His Gifts". "For All His Gifts" were awaiting in the motto of modern times, but it was apparent that changes in the structure of the doorway had led to the removal of the lower part of the motto. The Grammar School of the city, which stood on a site near the old High School, was destroyed by the fire. A new school was erected in 1625, and that school was the Grammar School of Dunfermline until 1817, when the old High School was erected. In a short time the old school will be razed to the ground by the Post Office authorities, and an extension to be made to the Post Office will cover the site. Dunfermline was very poor when the fire occurred, and the suffering must have been intense for months. Had it not been for the collections which came in from other towns, many families would have died of sheer starvation.

April 1899

KELTY AND HILL OF BEATH
PUBLIC-HOUSE EXPERIMENTS.

Last week's number of the "Alliance News" contained the concluding account of its special Commissioner's inquiry into the Fife "Gothenburg" public-house experiments. The Commissioner writes with a degree of fairness quite unusual in such papers as the organs of anti-liquor societies. He deals chiefly with the Hill of Beath, comparing it with Kelty. A collier whom he met on the road was very much opposed to the scheme; so, too, were Mr Archibald Adam, who is a member of the Beath School Board, and the Rev. W. Stephen.

The Commissioner proceeds: -

It is at Hill of Beath that the Gothenburg has had the longest and fairest trial in Scotland. In 1885 the population of Hill of Beath was 1175, the inhabitants consisting of 356 males, over 16 years of age, and 399 females. At that time there was no public-house in the village, but that year two applications for licences were made, and then began the fight which resulted in the establishment of a Gothenburg house.

I was not favourably impressed with the house. It was commonplace indeed when compared with its neighbour at Kelty, and the contrast in the managers was as marked as in the building. Yet I subsequently heard appreciative things said of the management.

"The Benefits" Of The System.

I made my way into the village, and found the "Reading Room" open. There was a well filled library along one side of the room, on the tables was a good supply of illustrated papers, magazines, and newspapers. In the adjoining room was a fine billiard table, smaller tables at the sides, for chess, draughts, &c. The rooms were lighted by electricity. I discovered that the building was call "The Institute", and was governed by "Rules and Constitution," framed and hung up in the reading-room. From these it appears that "The Institute premises have ben provided by the management of the Hill of Beath Tavern for the purpose of providing facilities of the self-improvement, recreation, and social enjoyment of the inhabitants of the village.

"The Institute shall not be identified with any party or sect, and the premises shall not be let or granted for any purpose outside the objects of the above-mentioned.

"No betting or gambling of any kind shall be permitted on any part of the premises.

"Membership subscription shall be sixpence yearly.

The next object claiming attention was the bowling green. There I found quite a number of men engaged on the green, and an interested group watching the proceedings. The green is surrounded by shrubbery, at the back of which, on both sides, are rows of miners' cottages.

The village is lighted with electric light, but the installation is somewhat primitive. Rough poles, more fitted for telegraph wires, carry the wires which supply the electricity. I had some conversation with the miners at the green, and all of them seemed satisfied with the arrangements which provided them with pleasing recreation. Some were inclined to think it a mistake on the part of the management to close the "Gothenburg" house at nine o' clock. There were a good many who did not relish being turned out at that hour, and preferred going to Crossgates or Cowdenbeath, where they could remain until ten o' clock.

Opinions of Workmen's Wives.

On the following day I again visited the village, and got into conversation with some of the wives of the miners. Two of them, whose cottages adjoined the bowling green, were firmly convinced that the introduction of the Gothenburg house had been a great benefit to the place. They admitted that there was a great deal of drinking, particularly Sunday drinking, but that, they hastened to assure me, was not on the part of the inhabitants of the village. They had a nurse in the village, which was a great blessing to many a house at critical times. There was also a missionary, but he lived at Cowdenbeath. The missionary was supported by the Free Church and not by the Hill of Beath Tavern Company. The mission room was at the other end of the village. Questioned as to whether there had not been an increase of drinking, they admitted that some the new-comers to the village did drink freely, and would do so whether the Gothenburg was there or not.

Interview With The Secretary.

I was yet short of authentic information as to the working of the Gothenburg house at the Hill of Beath, and decided to interview the secretary. I found him at his office at the colliery, and he very kindly left his duties there to accompany me through the village. He offered some apology for the apparent rudeness of the manager in refusing information, explaining that they found it necessary to do so for the reasons stated by the manager.

Although I had previously visited the Institute and the bowling green, I consented to be shown over them again. Close to the bowling green a large building was in the course of erection. This was pointed out to me as their new reading-room which the Tavern Society was putting up at a cost of £1000. It would contain all the facilities of the old Institute, with many additional advantages. They intended to provide refreshments there also. Tea, coffee, mineral waters, &c., but no intoxicating drink. Anyone wanting intoxicants would have to go down to the Gothenburg House. The old Institute would again be reconverted into dwelling-houses and handed over to the Fife Coal Company. Plans had also been passed for the erection of a new mission room, one-third of the cost of the hall being promised by a gentleman connected with the United Free Church.

Asked whether in spite of the apparent material advantages enjoyed by the village there had not been a moral laxity produced thereby, the secretary said that the question reminded him that he had a letter asking whether it was not a fact that as a result of the Gothenburg system a Temperance Society, a Good Templar Lodge, and evening continuation classes had been extinguished. He had not had time to reply to that yet.

“What” I asked, “is your answer to that statement?”

“Well,” he replied, “we have a strong Temperance man here, named Ramsey. When I got this letter I simply went to see him and gave him the letter to read, and asked him if there was any truth in it. He said that the Temperance Society and the lodge had gone down, but it had nothing to do with the Gothenburg. It was laxity on part of the officials. None of their members went near the room or play a game of bowls on the green, so that they had not been led away that way. That was just an instance of the sort of thing they had to meet. In fact, he had letters from the London papers, asking for copies of their balance sheets, &c., but they had refused to supply them.

I explained that the object of my visit was to obtain facts which it was desirable to put forward instead of the vague and conflicting statements, and that I should be glad if he would supply me with accurate information as to the financial dealing of the Society.

The secretary thereupon invited me to his house, where he kindly produced his balance sheets, from which I was permitted to give the following financial statement:

		*Receipts	Profit
Four months ending Sept.	1896	£545	£160
Six months ending March	1897	754	£166
The year ending March 31	1898	1781	£448
The year ending April 3	1899	2210	£562
The year ending March 31	1900	2344	£403
Nine months ending Dec. 31	1900	2156	£426

*Odd shillings omitted

In 1898 the Society spent –

In Jubilee celebrations	£172. 0. 0
Paid part of a loan	£300. 0. 0

In 1899 they made the following payments: -

Rent	£73. 0. 0
Electric lighting	242. 8. 6
Bowling green	124. 0. 0
Football club	25. 0. 0
Singing classes	5. 7. 6

In 1900 the following addition sums were paid: -

Bowling green	£357. 3. 5
Reading room	94. 9. 9
Electric light	238. 19. 0
Singing classes	6. 13. 10

In 1900 to the end of the year the following payments were made: -

Reading room	£77. 5. 8
Bowling green	48. 14. 6
Electric light	99. 0. 11
Football club	12. 16. 0
Singing class	6. 19. 6

The secretary informed me that there was no ground for the implication that the Fife Coal Company were benefited by the establishment of the Gothenburg public-house. Their duties as landlords and proprietors were just the same, and these they were fully discharging, he believed, to the satisfaction of all the inhabitants.

The Committee of Management was now quite distinct from the Coal Company, the house having been made over to the Tavern Company for £1200, and they were determined, having no opposition, to work the business to the best advantage for the welfare of the neighbourhood.

Criticisms and Conclusion.

The foregoing article contain the chief results of my investigation into the working of the "Gothenburg system" in Scotland, and in conclusion I offer a few words of criticism of that system.

The first point that suggests itself is the altogether inadequate basis which it furnishes for the conclusions that are sought to be drawn from it. A small country village, practically held in the hollow of the hand of one firm of employers, where all the inhabitants are of the same stamp and manner of life, furnishes no parallel for what would be necessary for the complex life of a large town or city. This fact is made apparent even in the slightly different conditions of Kelty and in the Hill of Beath. In the latter, where there is only one public-house, the management can dictate their own terms, but with the opposition of other public-houses the Gothenburg at Kelty is, in the words of the manager, "doing no good."

Again, it needs no argument to see that a community like that of Hill of Beath, which has increased its expenditure from £1291 for the ten months ending March 1897 to £2156 for the nine months ending December 1900 must be drinking vastly more than is creditable to them, making due allowance for good trade and increase of population.

The method of management at the Hill of Beath is, however, preferable to that at Kelty. At the former there certainly seems a determination to save the miners from over-indulgence, and the want of inducement to visit the house, apart from the desire for liquor, coupled with the attractions provided in the village, conduce to that end. At Kelty, on the other hand, the house is certainly a great attraction. While friendly societies at their recent annual conference have been condemning the system of meeting at public-house, the provision made at Kelty for such meetings seems to run counter to the general feeling in that particular case.

June 1901

THE "MODEL VILLAGE" OF
WEST FIFE.

About a quarter of a century ago the village of Hill of Beath was little heard of. To-day Hill of Beath is more famous than Townhill. There is scarcely a week passes but men from distant parts of the country make a pilgrimage to Hill of Beath. The pilgrims do not journey to Hill of Beath to fall down upon the haunts of the Covenanters of old on the historic hill. They come to inquire and to admire the Gothenburg Public-House of the village and the institutions which are springing up in the village from the profits of the house. It is little more than six years since Mr Charles Carlow, the managing director of the Fife Coal Company, protested at West of Fife Licensing Court against a licence being given for any house near Hill of Beath; but concluded with the words: - "If the people demand a licence, we will give them one, and allow them to expend the profits on purposes of public utility." The people demanded a licence, and in 1895 a start was made with the new public-house system in Scotland. For some years the people have had the advantage of a reading room and recreation room, the electric light, and a bowling green. The profits from the house have been applied as follows: -

	£	s.	d.
Old reading and recreation room	221	13	4
Upkeep for five years	215	0	0
	436	13	4
 Bowling green ground an pavilion	 485	 6	 9
Upkeep for five years	60	0	0
	545	6	9
 Electric light	 420	 8	 5
Upkeep for five years	140	0	0
	560	8	5
 Jubilee celebrations	 31	 10	 0
Football club	69	8	5
Singing class	25	0	4
Hill of Beath Disaster Fund	25	0	0
Reducing purchase price of Tavern building	300	0	0
	1993	7	3
Total			

The demand for accommodation in the reading room and recreation rooms has recently been such that a handsome new building at a cost of £1000 - £1100 with furnishings – has just been built. The rooms were opened on Saturday, and the enthusiasm amongst the villagers at the opening was such as to impress one with the idea that every department of the institution will be largely taken advantage of. At the opening ceremony on Saturday all the speakers took care to emphasize the fact that the Recreation and Reading Rooms were opened as a counter attraction to the public-house; and, as Mr William Robertson said, it does at first sight look paradoxical for them to be attempting to wring the neck of the goose that laid the golden egg while they were enjoying the benefits that flowed from the consumption of liquor. All we have got to say at this point is that if the Reading and Recreation Rooms are worked as they ought to be; if the bowling green is taken advantage of to the extent it ought to be there will be less drinking in Hill of Beath than there is in a village of like size in the country. Mr Carlow was right on Saturday when he said: - “It was practically inevitable that a house would be established there, and it was then he suggested that, if a house had to be there, they should have some control over it. There were many Workmen’s Institutions throughout the country, and they all new the advantages that were to be derived from them. They all knew that if working men would only cultivate their minds, if they would only in their spare hours devote themselves to innocent healthful recreation, such as these building would provide them with, their minds would be turned against the grosser attractions of the public-house, and they would be materially improved.” If the Hill of Beath people, say some critics, go on increasing the attractions and draw all from the public-house, what next? Mr Carlow answered that question. He said : - The thing he would like to say as representing all friends everywhere who took an interest in the social, moral, and intellectual improvement of the working classes, and that was that they would all be delighted if the direct outcome of these buildings was that the funds of the public-house became so low that they would have no more money to spend on improvements.” Were it possible to suspend all drinking there would be plenty of funds for recreation and reading rooms and other institutions. “We are goin to try to make Hill of Beath a model village.” was a remark Mr Carlow made at the Licensing Court some years ago. Can any mining village in Scotland boast of the institutions which Hill of Beath has? And the Gothenburg has only bee in existence for a few years. If ten men have been made readers who did not hitherto read any would that of itself not be some reward for the experiment?

November 1901

HALBEATH AND KINGSEAT COLLIERIES.

The Stoppage of Work.

Collieries, like men, have their allotted span. Men appear upon the world's stage and then vanish away like the grass that withereth. Collieries may be full of life and activity, with whistling steam puffing about them in all directions, one year – pulse beating high – and the following year all may be a silent as the grave, some rusty pulley-wheels and big gapping, yawning holes being the only reminders of the days that were. For centuries coals was worked at the mining village of Halbeath. Some of the little red roofed houses which are built on the “Cline Brae” ridge with a southern exposure, and which to this day stands at the old “Chant” and “Waterhead”, date back nearly a couple of centuries, and memories of the days when the old mines were drained by the Buckieburn, and when the “Fletcher” and the “Success”, and the “Willie” pits were in operation, seem to linger around them. Other houses are reminiscent of the “Queen” pit and the “Albert” rather than the “in-gaun-ees” of far off days.

Early in the Morning.

Forty years ago the rattle of spear-rods and the “sough” and the weird “scream” of the steam and the high pressure cylinder of the “Queen's” big pumping engine could be heard day and night. And early in the summer mornings when the fleets of little crafts of days gone by had arrived from the Baltic and Norwegian ports at the Ness at Inverkeithing, the villagers were awakened by the rumble of wagons. “Sag” and the other drivers having to face a “four o'clock yoke” to enable them to make a double journey of the old wagon road. And because all was activity at the “Queen,” “Davie Lawson” and his fractious horse, “Black Jock” had to be up with the lark at “Albert”. To-day square walls stand around the “Queen” and the “Albert”, and men and women who can look back, just a little while, are left with only the echoes of the rumbling noises of the two pits. Away down in the depths below, where miners once toiled and sent coal to the surface, and where Tam Veitch worked many a hard night shifting buckets, there is only the noise of gurgling waters, and so far has the sea of water risen up the shaft that it has found its way to Cuttlehill Colliery and the “Eliza” Pit; and “Netherbeath” and “Burnside”, and the “Eliza” stand like the “Queen” and “Albert”, monuments of other days.

The Exhaustion of the Coalfield

of Halbeath was foreseen by the late Mr Andrew Wallace, the late Mr Charles Carlow, and others in the distant past; and 45 years ago they turned their attention to Kingseat, one and a half miles north, and sank No. 1 Pit. The lowest seam worked for many a day was the “Eight Feet”. Then the “Stair Pit” formed the second outlet. Schoolboys liked to descend the shallow stair pit; and one day, when three mites were foolishly led down by an older friend, the wheel brae hammer struck just as they stepped off the bottom stair. The mites could see none. The mysterious hammer struck terror in their little hearts, and the terror was made worse by “Jock”, the wheeler, connecting the signal with “Auld Clotie”. No. 2 Pit was sunk more than 30

years ago, and No. 3 26 years ago. The three pits have operated upon the field for from 20 to 45 years. Three months ago No. 1 Pit was stopped, and is now dismantled, and on Friday a notice was posted intimating that in fifteen days the other two pits, because of the "practical exhaustion of the coalfield, would be stopped".

Coming Events.

Many years ago Campbell put on record what people often felt that "coming events cast their shadows before." The men employed at the Kingseat Pits must have seen "shadows" of the complete suspension for months; but many of them have toiled in the district for from 40 to 45 years, and it is difficult for men who have lived so long in the "Long Row", and within a few yards of "Nanels" corner, to distinguish between "shadows" and the reality. Hence it was that the notice of Friday last, after all, took many by surprise. On the same day as the notice was posted, it was announced that the coalmasters of Scotland had made a demand for a reduction in wages. Groups of men stood by the corners in the villages of Halbeath and Kingseat on Saturday; but they did not discuss the reduction in wages. There was only one theme of conversation, and that was the coming stoppage. "I thocht I would have gotten a' ma time oot o' it," said one man who had trudged the "high dykes" through good and bad weather for well-nigh forty years; while yet another who had vivid recollections of Mr Howieson's burnt tawse, and had enjoyed many a "lilt" to "Jude's" fiddle, gave a sigh and said he "thocht the same." On the Sunday morning the same group of men stood at the corners of Guttersgates, the Long Row, and at Kingseat. The suspension was again the subject of conversation.

A pathetic Group.

A pathetic vein run through the remarks at times because the older men, as old men do, persisted in lingering more in the past than in the present. A young man in one of the groups, who could scarcely be expected to grasp the feelings of men who have been in the district for 50 years, turned laughingly to an old struggler and said, "We will get work elsewhere, John." There was a pause. John was thinking that he is not so able now for the long road as he once was, and he vouchsafed no answer until he was appealed to a second time. "Oh, yes," said John. "Auld Katie, who often spoke in proverbs, used to tell us 'There's a hole for the livin' and a hole for the daid.'" And, happily, the movement to and from other collieries during the week have been such as to indicate that the living are determined to find the "hole" in which they can earn the best possible living. Men are preparing for departure on all hands; the management are preparing for the stoppage.

Forty-Six Years Ago.

In the sunny days of forty-six years ago when the Glasses laboured in the Kingseat fields, the wild duck, the snipe, and the water-hen often remained in undisturbed possession of the southern shores of loch Fitty. When the steam has been withdrawn from the pumping and the winding engines of Kingseat Colliery, the same stillness will come back again. Twenty years ago who would have thought of such a contingency arising in 1902? And yet the exhaustion of the coalfield and the stoppage of the colliery were events to be looked for; for, even on the sites of the collieries, history repeats itself. The peewee and the snipe, which is scared to-day by the puff

of steam and the rattle of the jigger, may migrate only for a brief season, and return to their former haunts on which they first took wing, to feed and build their nests and rear their young without molestation. Such is life. Such is the round of the mill of the age in which we live. Who can change the procession of Nature – that process of change and decay?

August 1902

THE CLOSING OF KINGSEAT COLLIERY..

About 300 Workers Affected.

The fifteen days warning intimating that because of the practical exhaustion of the coalfield all contracts would cease at Kingseat Colliery, near Dunfermline, expired on Saturday. Nearly 300 men, women and boys are affected. Mr R.W. Wallace, the lessee, and the management, find that there is still a small piece of coal to work near the bottom of No. 2 Pit, and for this and for cleaning purposes several hands have been retained on one day's notice. About 50 hands may thus be employed, and on Saturday something like 250 had ceased work, and many men carried home their graith. The villages of Halbeath and Kingseat belong to the lessee of the colliery, and hitherto the tenants of the houses have worked at the colliery. The condition stipulating that tenants of the houses must so work at the colliery has been withdrawn, and the terms of letting so altered that the men may go and find work elsewhere. A good many men have already found work at adjoining collieries, and there is a prospect of some work being carried on at Kingseat for some time. If the water is allowed to rise to a certain height at the colliery it might find its way into Hill of Beath and Dalbeath collieries, and it is thought that the Fife Coal Company may elect to keep the pumping engines of No. 3 pit going. If this experiment were had recourse to a number of men would be employed at the colliery to dig coals for the pumping engine, etc.

Bringing Home The Graith.

“Lifting the graith” is a mining term. The “Graith” is the term the miners apply to their tools. When miners strike work, they generally “lift their graith”. In a pit the tools are apt to deteriorate by damp, or to be destroyed by roof or side falls of stone, and hence the reason the miners carry home their tools on occasions when labour is likely to be suspended for a considerable time. At Kingseat pits on Saturday, the most of the men carried home their “graith”. The “graith” had been brought up from the Dunfermline Splint, the Five Feet, Eight Feet, and other seams, and the tools will never – no, never – be taken back again to the same places. The notice on the pit bank announced a stoppage of the pits because of the “practical exhaustion of the coalfields.” And so far as the seams in question are concerned, the notice is right. There are considerable stretches of the Splint, the Five Feet, and the Eight Feet,

Away Under Loch Fitty,

but it would be dangerous to work the coals further than they have under the loch. It is a long distance from the bottom of the loch to the Dunfermline Splint seam, but it must be kept in mind that when the coal is withdrawn the strata is subject to great movements, and “sits” now and again occur, with the result that depressions show themselves on the surface. For instance, great depressions have taken place on the southern shores of the loch, and for a distance of something like half-a-mile the water has encroached upon the lands of Halbeath and Kingseat to the extent of from 25 to 100 yards. The loch has therefore increased enormously in size, and at points where the surface showed ruptures, the waves make sad havoc at times when the wind is off the north. But we return to the

March home With The Graith On Saturday.

There were many little processions. Some of the young men laughed gaily as they wended their way from the pits to their respective homes with their shovels, picks, boring tools, harps, and even the "pins" or talies through which a register of their hutches had been kept at the pithead. The older men wore a somewhat sadder look, however/ they had never been in any colliery but Halbeath and Kingseat, and one man who had seen more than fifty summers was heard to vouchsafe the information to a companion that the pins which now hung on his belt were the same as those his father run sixty years ago. And as he sat by the wayside taking a rest he turned a heavy hammer which bears the appellation of "a mell", and said that that "mell" was in the "Queen" when the water burst in forty years ago. A wag who sat near said that a friend he knew as "Old John" found after the water was drained in the "Queen" that the shaft of his picks was thereafter known as the "Snail Hole Pick". Turning to the owner of the mell the wag asked if the time-worn holes were snail holes? The owner was not in the mood for joking. He revived some of the reminiscences of the burst of water in the "Queen" pit, lit his cuttie pipe, shouldered his graith, and was soon passing over the high dykes to Halbeath. As he thrust the tools behind the "ooter" door he remarked to the other members of the family that he had had many a weary trudge to Kingseat; but that was the last, so far as work was concerned. "Oh yes, everything comes to an end." Was the remark of one member of the family, and it brought the reply, "even the age in which we live will itself end some day."

At The Village Corners

on Saturday night the chief theme of discussion was the chance of work if the Fife Coal Company elected to pump the water at Kingseat and work the upper seams. "There cannot be much hope of work meantime for a big company of men, although the Fife Coal Company take the field," said one man who stood in one of the groups, and it is evident that he voiced the feelings all round, for on Monday considerable numbers of men secured work at the adjoining collieries. The rumours of the water being pumped from the old Halbeath pits are being revived. The pumping of the water is a big job. The Wholesale Co-operative Society is looking after a coalfield. Would the Co-operators of West Fife sanction the Wholesale Society spending £100,000 at Halbeath? The miners of Halbeath and Kingseat who are Co-operators would likely say that the Wholesale Society would be fools if they would. Why are the Fife Coal Company not pumping the water? Because the management of the company are not fools.

September 1902

THE PARISH OF BEATH.

How Football Was Once Played

Interesting Old Church Document

Mr And. S. Cunningham, Dunfermline, lectured in Cowdenbeath last week, under the auspices of the Literary Society, on “The Parish of Beath: Its Rise and Progress.”

Mr Cunningham said – Peter, the fisherman of 1860 years ago, who, upon the day of Pentecost, publicly impeached the Roman Government and the Jewish Sanhedrim, makes an appeal in his epistle to the people to add to their most holy faith, and he continues to say that he shall always be ready to put them in “remembrance of these things though they know them.” I have come to the burgh of Cowdenbeath to-night for the purpose of calling on your remembrance some things connected with the Parish of Beath, and with the example of Peter before me I shall not think I have committed an unpardonable sin though ye know some of the things I am going to relate. The writers of all ages have at repeated intervals slipped the collar and looked back. Mr Birrell, the late member of West Fife, puts in a strong plea for us keeping the “fields of history for ever unenclosed;” and Edmund Burke tells us that “in history a great volume is enrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind.” The theme I have chosen to speak upon to you to-night is “The Rise and the Progress of the Parish of Beath.”

What Does Beath Mean.

As a preliminary let me say that Beath is a Gaelic word, signifying birch-tree. From this it is argued that the parish was at one time covered with birch trees, and that instead of the perpetual puff of steam and the rattle of the machinery of the pits of our day and the laughter of children, we only had the “sough” of the wind in a dense forest and the singing of the birds. The theory of the birches is strengthened by many of the names which still cling to the parish, and which are as familiar to the residents as the rising sun. Dalbeath, for instance, is the field in the Beath or birch forest; Hill of Beath is the hill of the forest, and Halbeath is the house of the birch forest. Confirmation of this theory is to be had in the fact that from time immemorial a house stands near Halbeath which bears the name of the Hal-House. Away back in far off days

The Barony of Beath

belonged to the Monastery of Inchcolm. The youngest among you may be inclined to ask “Why a Barony?” Davis I., the youngest son of Malcolm Canmore, was the first ruler to draw up laws founded on the usages of towns and villages in England and Scotland. During his reign each burgh secured the legal right of self-government – the election of magistrates being placed in the hands of the burgesses. The powers of the magistrates ranged from whipping to hanging, and the burgh had the complete monopoly of the trade of the district. The burgesses of Dunfermline, for instance, may have been conceded a monopoly of the trade of West Fife, and none but burgesses could buy or sell or manufacture within the prescribed area. The Abbots

and the barons soon began to get envious of the power of Royal Burghs, and the Abbots and great lords combined and had the villages which sprung up near the cathedrals and abbeys erected into burghs they were designated the Burgh of Regality. The barons followed up the action of the abbots, and had the villages near their castles erected into burghs. These burghs were called the Burghs of Barony. Servants were the slaves of their masters in these times. If a stray bondsman happened to be found without a master he was allowed fifteen days to find an engagement. At the Abbey of Dunfermline there was kept a register containing the pedigrees of slaves on the estate, with their marriages, names of the persons whom the daughters had married, and the tax paid by bondsmen when they gave their daughters in marriage, and so deprived the Abbey of their service. Well, as I have already indicated, the Barony of Beath belonged to the Abbey of Inchcolm, but through some cause or other the Monastery of Dunfermline obtained rights over certain lands within the Barony. The extent of the rights is well defined in a document which is dated 16th July 1577. one John Durie, a brother of the Abbot of Dunfermline, was admitted a monk of Dunfermline Monastery. Despite the high position held by the Abbot, John Durie became weary of the rules of the monk and the Dunfermline cloisters, and he joined the reform party, who were destined to drive the sixteenth century ecclesiastics from the cathedrals and the abbeys. The

Curious Document of 1577

shows that Robert Pitcairn, the Commendator of Dunfermline Abbey, had given John Durie and his son Jossua, or the longest liver, for all the days of their “lifetime” a pension of “66 pundis 13 4” in place of the portion that accrued after the dispersion of “brethering”; and the curious thing about the document is that the “few maills” of certain lands in Dunfermline and Beath Parishes were assigned to Durie as surety for the payments of the pension. The right of the ecclesiastics of Inchcolm to tax the Barony of Beath for pensions is clear and indisputable; but the question of how the Commendator of Dunfermline had a right to lay any part of the lands of Beath under contribution for pensions to monks or anybody else is a problem which has been a mystery to every historian who has attempted to write about the parish. By a document, which through the kindness of Messrs Davidson & Syme, W.S., Edinburgh, I have been able to lay my hands upon, I think I have solved the difficulty. This document takes the form of a Charter granted in 1572 by the Commendator of the Monastery of Dunfermline to William Douglas, of Loch Leven, anent

“Keltie-Heuch” Colliery.

The document proves that the “Heuch” was an old one, because we are told that it had been part of the Monastery of Dunfermline for “many years bygone beyond the memory of man,” and had been occupied by Lord William Douglas and his predecessors, “and their tenants, colliers, and servants.” The rent payable by Lord Douglas, who, by the way, was a brother of George Douglas, who in 1568 assisted Queen Mary in her flight from Loch Leven, was £6 13s 8d, and an augmentation of 6s 8d Scots – 11s 8d sterling in all. So by this document which now comes to light we find that the Monastery of Dunfermline had minerals rights in the Parish of Beath, and that in 1572 coal had been worked at a date “beyond the memory of man”. It was in 1291 that the monks of Dunfermline, as Mr Dron in his new book on “The Coalfields of Scotland” reminds us, first began to work coal on the estate of Pittencreeff near the

monastery grounds. In company with their brethren from Inchcolm they doubtlessly visited the Barony of Beath at repeated intervals, and we may assume that in connection with one of the visits the Dunfermline mining experts of the thirteenth century discovered coal. The monks of Inchcolm were not practical men. The work of opening up the Keltie-Heuch would naturally fall into the hands of the Dunfermline monks, and so the Dunfermline Monastery obtained a footing, and a “vested” interest in the Parish of the Birches. Thus in the days of the birches, we have a glimpse of Beath in the olden time – a link which tells us that perhaps 500 or 600 years ago coal was being gotten from an open “heuch” or level run in from the sides of the Kelty or other burns. I have not as yet been able to discover the site of the first colliery of the parish; but with a little care some of the Beath mining experts of to-day might be able to locate where the Dunfermline mining engineers of the monasteries first began work, and where the slaves of the Barony toiled in the hope of earning as much as keep their miserable lives in. James I. was a son of Annabella Drummond, who had a palace at Inverkeithing, and in 1435 James’s Court was visited by Aeneas Sylvius Piccolonimi, a Papal envoy, then of the age of 30 years. Sylvius became Pope Pius II. In 1458. In the narratives of his visit to Scotland, we have a vivid picture of the social life of the people of Scotland in the days when the first “Keltie-Heuch” was in operation. He tells us that a sulphurous stone was dug out of the earth. It was used as fuel and was at the church doors distributed to half-clad beggars.

Hector Boece in Fyfe.

On a date which brings us near the time when the Keltie-heuch was let to Lord Douglas of loch Leven, 1526 – Hector Boece, the historian, says: - “In Fiffe are’ won black stanes quilk has sa intolerable heit quhair they are kendillit that they dissolve and meltis irne, and are thairfore richt profitable for operations of smihtis.” Who knows but Aenes Sylvius Piccolonimi saw “black stanes” being carried away from the church door of the Barony of Beath in the olden time? Seeing Hector Boece visited the mines of Fife of 1526, are we drawing too much upon the imagination in assuming that he inspected the Beath “Heuch”, which, we are told, in 1572, had been in operation before the memory of man? Some of you may be inclined to ask how

The lands and Minerals of Beath

came to be alienated from the Monastery of Dunfermline and Inchcolm? The question is easily answered. Early in the Sixteenth Century, when the church was being shaken by Luther, and a little bit of blue sky foretold the dawn of the Reformation, a good deal of land was fued by the Church. The lands of Muirtown of Beath and Knocksodrum were set in fue to Henry Stewart, and the lands of Cuttlehill and Seaside were let to John Wemyss. The lands and Barony of Beath were in fue to James Stewart of Doune. The Charter whereby Beath was conferred upon Sir James Stewart is dated 27th April, 1543, and relates that the abbot and convent for “a very large sum of money paid for the repair of the monastery burned by our old enemies of England.” has demitted in fue-farm the lands and Barony of Beath and the Mill of Beath. In the following year one of Sir James’ sons was appointed one of the canons of St. Colme, and ultimately he became commendator of the Abbey. At the death of the commendator in 1590 his son Henry was appointed to the post. Henry was the younger brother of James Stewart, the “Bonnie Earl o’ Moray”. In 1611 King James VI. erected the possessions of the dissolved Abbey into a temporal lordship in favour

of Henry Stewart, with the title Lord St. Colme. Henry was succeeded in his title by his son James, and his title and his possessions fell into the hands of the Earl of Moray, his cousin James – the son of the “Bonnie Earl,” and in the hands of his descents the lands continue to this present day both in the parishes of Aberdour, Dalgety, and Beath. Although it has little bearing on the parish of Beath, perhaps I may be pardoned telling the story in a few words of

The Murder Of The “Bonnie Earl Of Moray”.

The Marquis of Huntly was a grand leader of the Roman Catholic Church party. His grandfather was slain by the Regent Moray in 1562, and his father was sentenced to the death of a traitor, although ultimately pardoned by Queen Mary. Sir James Stewart had nothing to do with the persecutions; but Huntly was determined to avenge himself upon a man who he considered had usurped the title. Huntly trumped up a charge against Moray of treasonable conduct, and induced the King to give him a blank cheque for his apprehension. Armed with this commission, he reached Dalgety House, and set fire to the building. In his hurried flight to the rocks in Donibristle Bay Moray’s headgear caught fire, and this betrayed his presence. The Earl was shot down like a dog by Gordon of Buckie. On the sneeringly Huntly appearing on the rocks with a face of brass and a curl on his lip, the dying Earl gave vent to the following words: - “Ye have spoiled a better face than your own.” Thus died the “Bonnie Earl of Moray,” one of the earliest proprietors of the Barony and lands of Beath.

The Church of Beath.

One of the oldest and most interesting documents I have been able to lay my hands upon is that which is entitled “A Short and Fine Narration Concerning the Kirk of Beath,” and which is dated 1640. In these early days a minister of the name of Robert Bruce had charge of the parish of Aberdour, Dalgety, and Beath. Robert was fond of the money, but it appears he did not care much for the work, and the parish was hopelessly neglected. There was no preaching of the Word, and so the document tells us that “this kirke in some sorte myght be compared with Gideon’s fleece which was dry when all the earth was watered. When all the congregations of Fyfe were planted, this poore kirke was neglected and overlooked, and lay desolute then fourteen years, after the Reformation eighty years. The poore parochiners being always lyke wandering sheep without a shepherd, and whairas they should have been conveyened to hear a pastoure preiche, the principal cause of the people’s meetings was to heare a pyper play upon the Lorde’s daye, which was the day of their profaine mirth, not being in workes of their calling. Which was the cause that Sathane had a most faire name amongst them, stirring many of them in to dancing, playing at football, and excessive drinking, falling out and wounding one another, which was the exercise of the younger sort, and the older sort played at gems, and the workes of their calling without any distinction of the weeke daye from the daye of the Lord. And thus they continued, as said is, the space of eighty years; this poore kirke being always neglected, became a sheepe hous in the night.” This document throws some light on

The Social And Religious Customs

of the parish of Beath in 1640. For eighty long years previous to 1640 the church had been in ruins and instead of meeting upon that first day of the week “to provoke one another to good works,” and for the hearing of the Word they met by the wayside, on the slopes between Kelty and Kirkford to hear a piper play and to make the day one of “profane mirth.” Dancing was, it appears, indulged in and it will be news to the Cowdenbeath Football Club, the Hearts of Beath, the Kelty Rangers, and the Lochgelly United that as far back as 1640 the people of the parish of Beath spent much of their time upon the Sundays in witnessing the game of football. Although two blacks never make a white, and I have no desire whatever to whitewash the Beath Sunday Athletes of 1640, who tried

To Brighten Their Dull Lives by Football

It may be of some interest to you to know that your ancestors were not much worse than many of their neighbours. In 1616 James Vi., who spent a great deal of time in Dunfermline and who was an adept at golf issued a manifesto on Sunday games which he specified as lawful to be observed were archery, football, and Morris-dances. Perhaps the worst feature of all was the fact that in many parishes the game was played in the village churchyard, and thus in sacred spots where dust had been once gathered to dust and where all ought to have been as silent as the grave we had stragglers and noise which were a terrible outrage. The football of the olden time was not the Association game of to-day. The coarse, ruff, wrestling connected with the Sunday Churchyard orgies of these days has been depicted by a reverend bard: -

The hurly burly now began –
Was right weel worth the seeing,
Wi’ routs and raps frae man tae man,
Some getting and some geing;
And a’ the tricks of feet and hand
That never was in being;
Sometime the ba’ a yardling ran,
Sometimes in air was fleeing
Fu’ high that day.

But let me return to the kirk document of 1640.

How A Church Was Built.

It appears from the paper that Alexander Colville of Blair had become tired of the Sunday orgies, and at his investigation a meeting was held in the little hamlet of Shiels for the purpose of considering the religious condition of the parish. Mr Colville had beheld the piping, the dancing, the revelling, “deboshing, drinking, and excess” from his windows, and the document tells us that he was stirred up by the Lord to do something for the poor people. He had a fair meeting of the parishioners, but they all said they were too poor to give any of their private money although willing to assist with horses for drawing timber and stones. Mr John Hodge of Leuchatsbeath was appointed overseer of the work, and a new church very soon made

its appearance. Old John Row, the Garnoch Reformer, who had to face a good deal of persecution because of his refusal to comply with Episcopacy, soon came to the help of the people of Beath, and he had the pleasure of preaching the first sermon. The following paragraph, which is culled from the 1640 document, gives us a glimpse of the religious revival which the new church brought about: - "The people, understanding that sermone was to be at the Kirke of Beith so unexpectedlie and so suddenlie builded, did resort from all places and much out of every sitie, being new-fangled with such a suddan change, thronged in so to kirke that there was scarce anie place left to raise up some height for a place for the pastore." Through the intervention of Row, Beath was erected into a parish in 1643, and a minister in the person of Henry Smithe was called from the Second Charge of Culross. After much pressure the indolent, Mr Bruce, who, I am afraid, was, like the Laodicians of old,

"Neither Cold Nor Hot."

was induced to take some little interest in the work, and to admit the necessity for a sermon being preached weekly in the parish. Despite his admission and his intolerable failures of years, he had the impudence to apply, in 1646, to the Estates of Parliament of Scotland to ratify and confirm a document of 1637, placing him in the position of minister of the kirks of Aberdour, Dalgety, and Beath, and to the "constant stipend, teinds, fruits, rents, emoluments, and duties thereof, with manse and glebes." Blind to the manner Bruce had neglected his duties, the Estates of Parliament granted his request, and the new minister of Beath was left with a church standing upon a breezy hill but no stipend. John Row and others felt, however, that the minister of the parish could not live on the wind which swept over the hill which lies between Kirkford and Kelty, and in the county of Fife the sum of £1500 was raised to provide a sufficient stipend for the minister of Beath. So in the parish of Beath at a time when there was much poverty in the land, we have an instance of a church not only being erected by

Voluntary Effort,

but an endowment provide from private funds for the support of the minister. It was in this old building in which the people worshipped before they took to Sunday football, dancing, and making merry with the Evil One that the leaders of the first Protestant movement met in 1550, and inaugurated the agitation which led to the overthrow of the Roman Catholic Church. On the Hill of Beath, which is a prominent feature in the parish, a conventicle was held in June 1670, and a great gathering was addressed by John Blackadder, the ejected minister of Torqueer, and John Dickson, the rejected of Rutherglen. We have evidence of the troublous times which existed in the fact that whilst the service was being conducted, the Government hirelings, in the shape of the military, appeared upon the scene. Happily, the military had more "gumption" than the church dignitaries who had sent them, and the service was allowed to be conducted to the close without molestation. In 1606 the estate of Cocklaw, and the coal pit known as the "Keltie-heuch", were conferred on William, Earl of Morton, by his father.

"A Wee Keek Back"

Coals At Blairadam.

Writing of 1772, Lord High Commissioner Adam, the friend of Sir Walter Scott, tells us that near the borders of Beath and Cleish parishes, he had renewed the working of a seam of coal, and he goes on to say: - "I have seen all the lawn up almost to the doors of Blairadam covered with coal." The Lord High Commissioners here records a custom which I am afraid would scarcely be tolerated now-a-days. The superiors of to-day are anxious enough to have the minerals they own turned into golden sovereigns; but I am afraid few of them would care to have the avenues leading to their mansions, utilised as sites for coal Bings. In the "Old Statistical Account," published in 1792, a minister of the parish gives us a glimpse of Beath as it then existed. He says - "The Parish contains about one hundred families, which allowing somewhat more than four to a family, may amount in all to from 400 to 500 souls. The population has decreased considerably within these twenty years; owing not to any distemper, for the people are very healthy, but principally to the practice of laying so much ground into grass." He further tells us that there is only one colliery in the parish; that the number of pupils at school is about thirty, and the teacher's living is from £15 to £16 a year.

The Minerals of Beath.

Mercer, one of the ministers of the parish of Dunfermline, writing in 1828, says: - "With regard to the minerals of the parish of Beath the Kelty Coalwork has been wrought for a long period; it employs about fifty people - men, women, and children. Besides this there is a small colliery at Lassodie Mill belonging to Mr Mudie of Cocklay, and another on the White-Thrashes, on the property of Mr Thomson of Stevensbeath." Through the kindness of Messrs Landale, Frew, & Gemmell, mining engineers, I have a reading of the report by Dr Landale which throws some light on the colliery operations of the White-Thrashes, whose site is less than 300 yards to the east of where we now stand. The report is dated 1837. It appears from the report that early in the century two pits were sunk to the Blawlowan seam of coal. The pits were sunk upon a ridge and work had to be suspended because of water. The field was ultimately taken by a Mr Gibson, who fitted up a steam engine on the Engine Pit which worked with 14 ½ inch pumps, and he actually had the boldness to put a four-horse winding engine on the Gig pit. The pit only gave employment to 22 miners, and Mr Landale does not advise a continuance of operations unless a good splint coal could be got to compete with the coals gotten at Blairadam, Lochgelly, and Lumphinnans. Mr Landale also speaks of parrot and other seams of coal having been struck in bore at a point near Cowdenbeath Inn. He rightly thought that attention might be directed to this part of the Beath field. And as some of you are aware attention was directed to the discoveries near Cowdenbeath Inn, and while work goes on near the Inn the fields of Beath are being tapped at Lassodie, at Hill of Beath, and Kelty. In 1841, when the Royal Commission was inquiring into child labour in mines, Mr Robert Wilson only employed twenty-six males and nine females at Hill of Beath however, and here is Mr Wilson's evidence before the Commission: - "Colliers in this part work their children at eight and nine years of age, and it would be a prudent step not to allow male or female to enter a pit until the age of twelve years; that by keeping them at school they might learn a little more knowledge of the right and wrong." In the fifties and sixties coal working was carried on, with indifferent

success, in the parish, and the years of progressive development only began with the advent of Mr Adams at Hill of Beath and Mr Brownlie at Lassodie in the closing days of the sixties. Me Mungall at Cowdenbeath in 1870 and the Fife Coal Company at Oakley in 1873. What has been done 1870 I must leave for another lecture. Suffice it meantime for me to say that the parish, which at one time was thought only to be good for birch trees and at another for grazing cattle, although one of the smallest parishes in Scotland, is now one of the most productive mining fields in Scotland. Indeed, I question if the output of minerals in any area of similar size is anything approaching the production of the Parish of Beath. “The Rise and Progress of the Parish of Beath!” You could not get a better

Index of its Rise and Progress

than is to be found in the statistics of the population, and here they are as far back as I am able to trace them: -

1791	500	1851	1253
1801	613	1861	2300
1811	668	1871	3534
1829	729	1881	5442
1831	921	1891	8206
1841	973	1901	15,801

Cowdenbeath was formed into a Burgh in November 1890. The reason of the demand for the change was that the village had grown into a “populous place”, and the population was about 4000. At the census taken in April of 1901 the population of Cowdenbeath was 7466, and to-day now stands about 8000, this means that the population has nearly doubled in eleven years. We have found in the “Old Statistical Account” the number of scholars in attendance at the colliery school in the parish was about thirty. Dr Ferguson in the “New Statistical Account,” published in 1845, says “The Parochial School is the only education in the parish”, and he states that it is attended by 100 scholars. To-day we have five schools, Lassodie, attended by 205 children, Kelty, by 1348, Cowdenbeath, by 1249, Foulford by 1300, and Hill of Beath by 361 – a total of 4523 scholars.

Wonderful Changes.

I think I have been able to show that it has brought many progressive changes to the parish of Beath during the past half century. But I would have you remember that time does not always bring progressive changes. Driving through your Burgh some weeks ago, an old friend, who can speak of the Beath of sixty years ago, what would become of Cowdenbeath in fifty years time, when the minerals are exhausted. The minerals of the district may not be exhausted fifty years hence; but the amount of coal to work will certainly be less than it is to-day, and between this and the day of decline men and women in the burgh who take life seriously must face the problems of establishing another staple industry within your bounds. Great pieces of machinery are put down at the pits of Fife yearly. There is not a wheel turned out at Cowdenbeath. Every engine has to be brought purchased from a district outwith the parish of the birches. Why should a company not be formed in Cowdenbeath for the purpose of establishing a good engineering work. Your reply to this will be that it

needs money. Of course such a project would need money, but it by no means follows that the money should come from one or two individuals. Heaven helps him who helps himself, and if the people of Cowdenbeath keep in mind what can be accomplished by a few determined men can be achieved by 50, by 100, or by 1000 individuals, they may be able to boast an engineering work sooner than they expect. Messrs Erskine, Beveridge & Company may some day extend their linen works.

October 1902

THE PARISH OF AUCHTERDERRAN.

Its Rise And Progress

Glimpses Of The Mineral Development

The name of the parish is of Celtic origin. *Uch* means high; *tire*, land; and *darran*, an oak forest; and keeping these meaning in view one is driven to think of the time when Auchterderran was a high land of the oaks, or perhaps the land of the stream of the oak. The Church of Auchterderran is said to have been given to the Monastery of St. Serf by Fothad, the last Bishop of Alban who laboured in 1059 – 93. No trace of the ancient building remains. The present Parish Church was erected in 1789, but during the incumbency of the Rev. Mr Houston it has been much enlarged. The church possess four very fine communion cups which were presented in 1668 and 1687 by Mr David Scrimgeour of Bowhill. The ruined tower of Carden stands on the banks of the Carden, a little to the south of the village of Cardenden.

The Past And The Present.

As is the case in Ballingry and Beath a good many changes have been witnessed in the parish of Auchterderran during the past few years. In 1791 the population of the parish was 1200; in 1891 the population was 6194; to-day it is 8900. In 1891 the population of the Burgh of Lochgelly was 4133; to-day it is 5600. In 1861-62 the valuation of the parish was £13,394 7s 5d; in 1892 it was £21,924; to-day the valuation is £39,126 12s 9d. The progress indicated is attributable to the fact that the parish is rich in minerals, and recently a period of unprecedented development has been experienced. On the eastern boundaries of the parish the Bowhill Coal Company, and the Dundonald and Carden Companies are operating; in the centre and western boundaries the Lochgelly Iron and Coal Company are at work, and the Wilson & Clyde are developing to an enormous extent. Coal has been worked in Auchterderran from time immemorial. As far back as 1582, James VI. granted the lands of Carden, “with tower, manor, mills, woods, and coal,” to George Martene, who claimed it through his mother, one of the Duries. In those far-off coals were only gotten from “ingoing eyes” run into the sides of the burns, and it apparent up until 1791, when the “Old Statistical Account” was published, comparatively little had been done to tap the minerals of the parish, for the Rev. Andrew Murray reports that there were only 31 families employed at coal getting, Mr Murray says: - “*A collier earns, or can earn, about 10s a week. The coal works now working in this parish draw for coals £1700 a year; £500 of which is for coal exported, the rest for consumption of the neighbourhood.*”

A Spar Between the Pastor and the Malthus.

Mr Murray tell us that a day labourer received about 1 shilling a day in 1791, and he thus comments on the hard lot of the labourer: - “*The greatest evils of the situation arose from the lowness of their diet and the wretchedness of their lodging, which is cold, dark, and dirty, exposing them to a numerous class of disease incident to such a condition. The meagre food of the labouring man, too, is unequal to oppose the effects of incessant hard labour upon his constitution, and by this means his frame is*

worn down before the time of Nature's appointment. That people continue to enter voluntarily upon such a hard situation shows how much the union of the sexes, and the love of independence, are principal of human nature, and from such causes this situation is not thought by the people themselves, to be wretched, nor yet without some share of comfort. Within these last twelve years, the wages of a man have risen from 8d to 1s, without a proportional rise upon his expense."

Malthus, the political economist, attacked Mr Murray on his Auchterderran gospel of "love of independence," and declared that the minister should have written "the love of progeny" instead of independence. In the "New Statistical Account" Dr Murray protested strongly against Malthusian doctrine, and said: - *"In that class (labourers) the laws of progeny does not appear to be either intense or even very general, but the desire of procuring that independence which consists of having their own house, their own fireside, their own little domestic society seems to influence them generally and in a great degree."*

Glimpses of Social Life.

Dr Murray gives us some glimpses of social life which are very interesting. Writing in 1791, he tells us that the people have only one day in the year as a holiday for merry-making – Handsel Monday. Even on this famous day the good people of Auchterderran avoided meeting in large assemblies for diversion. *"Each family" he says, "collects its own kindred from the different parts of the district, provides a feast, and spends the time in eating, drinking, and conversation".*"There are a few persons called 'Tinkers' and 'horners' half resident and half-itinerant, who are feared and suspected by the community. Two of them were banished within six years". *"The inhabitants are improving in the mode of living and dress. Intemperance from spirituous liquors is by no means frequent among them; but unluckily the use of whisky is increasing, and that of been diminishing. The blue bonnet, a national badge, is disappearing rapidly". Dr Murray complains of the "sourness of aspect" on the part of the natives to strangers and unwillingness to show goodwill to strangers. In the village of Lochgelly in 1791 several weavers were at work and there was a thriving bleachwork in the parish. Writing in 1844, Dr Murray says that poaching and snaring are had recourse to and "a little Highland whiskey, I believe, is occasionally smuggled, although we have far too much of our own production." A Savings Bank is reported to be doing well in the parish.*

From 1805 to 1845.

In 1815, the year the Battle of Waterloo was fought, the output of Lochgelly Colliery was about 50 tons per day. Writing in 1844 in the "New Statistical Account", the Rev. Dr. Murray thus glances at 40 years: -

"Drunkenness formerly rare is now lamentably frequent. Forty years ago, emigration was thought of with much reluctance; now the predilection for the native spot has diminished and emigration is more readily embraced. Forty years ago we were accustomed to regard increase in population as increase of national prosperity; now such increase seems regarded as an obstruction. Forty years ago we had no medical gentlemen in the parish; at present two are resident. Since the draining of our soil and marshes obtained, the heron has nearly disappeared, and since our district

became wooded pheasants have reached our latitude. Forty years ago servants for husbandry were few in number, at present they seem redundant. Formerly coal hewers were inferior to other classes of mortals and respectability, here they are now nearly on a level. Forty, nay, twenty years ago we had not one metalled road, now we have several. Forty years ago, irregularity, multiplicity and confusion of weights and measures pervaded all transactions, now we have one philosophical and just standard. Forty years ago the ministers of the Established Church generally delivered all their discourses from the pulpit without a reading; now they are generally read. Forty years ago land was sold in Fife at thirty-five years' purchase of the existing rental now it sells at twenty-six years' purchase of present rental. The valued rent of this parish is upwards of £7000 Scotch. The present real rent is about £7000 Sterling. Forty years ago all the rents here were paid in money, now they begin to be paid in grain, at the rate of the county fiars. Forty years ago resurrectionists, as they are called, were unheard of; now even the poor labourer is under the hardship of providing safes for the graves of his friends. Forty years ago thrashing machines were unknown to us; now they are becoming general and so beneficial that it is difficult to believe how farming could be carried on without them. Forty years ago the different ranks in society were distinguished from each other by their dress; at present there is little distinction in dress. Forty years ago I was the youngest minister of the presbytery, now I am the oldest."

Lochgelly Colliery From
1840 to 1902.

In 1840 Lochgelly Colliery belonged to Mr John Henderson, and here is the evidence which was given before the Royal Commission in 1841 in connection with the employment of women and children: -

Henry Chisolm, manager of Lochgelly: - We have employed at present 94 males and 25 females, who are wrought below ground; 26 are under 18 years of age, and 10 under the age of 13. Our seams of coal being thick, five to eight feet, very young children are not needed – indeed they are never required; and no children ought to be employed under 12 years of age in any mines, as they both lose education and strength by being under ground so early.

At some coal-workings, children commence as early as six years of age, and remain below as long as the adults.

The time in the Lochgelly Colliery is limited to nine hours, and no one is allowed to work at night except the engineman.

No accidents here have ever taken place of a fatal nature. Carbonic acid gas exists, but we drive it out by superior ventilation. In rainy weather we suffer by water in the pits.

Men are employed in our mines at howking only, and the females as putters; each are ranked distinct, and no married women now work in our mines. The mines at Deanpit, and Cuttlehill (also leased by Mr Henderson) are at present stopped from working.

Agnes Cook, 15 years old, putter: - has wrought at Lochgelly 12 months; worked in the fields prior to coal work; father is a collier; mother was a farm servant. Can read – (reads well; intelligent); never was at writing; makes own clothes and stockings.

Eliza Dickson 17 years old, putter: - Began work below 5 years since; works nine hours every day; never been off work; was in the fields before at coals; left as more money is to be got than field labour; could never earn more than 8d a day above now gets 15d when working in wet roads. Never got hurt; was below when a young man (Joseph Harrower) was crushed to death by fall of roof three years ago, and remembers one Andrew Beveridge being killed in the same manner two years since. Reads; was a wee while at the writing, but not since down.

(Reads badly; ignorant, but has a knowledge of the verses of many Psalms, which she learned at Sabbath School.)

Alexander Gillespie, 12 years old, hewer: - Began to work at eight years old; was born at Polmont in Stirlingshire. Father dead eight years – died from dropsys brought on by sitting in damp work; he was 28 years old. Can read a little, and I am learning to write at night-school.

(Dejected and ill-informed.)

In the closing days of the forties Mr Henderson was joined by Messrs Jas. Russell, Falkirk; Thomas Grainger, contractor; and R.W. Kennard of the Caron Iron Company, and the combine took the name of John Henderson & Coy. At this time a good deal of attention was paid to the manufacture of iron in the district, and the blast furnaces, which still stand on a site near Lochgelly Railway Station, bear the date 1847. Mr Henderson began to devote more attention to his Cuttlehill Coalfield in 1850, and at Cuttlehill he was joined by Mr Andrew Wallace who was chief clerk at Lochgelly, and Mr W. Fraser, Inverkeithing, and founded the firm of Henderson, Wallace, & Coy. Mr Henderson's time being a good deal occupied at Cuttlehill, he withdrew from Lochgelly, and in 1854 – just four years after Mr Andrew Landale had come to Lochgelly as manager – the company assumed the name of Lochgelly Iron Company. On the death of the original partners it was fully recognised that Lochgelly was a coal producing field rather than an Iron field, and in 1872 a company was formed under the title of the Lochgelly Iron and Coal Company, Ltd., with a capital of £100,000. Mr Landale was appointed Managing Director of the Company. Under the new Company the furnaces were soon damped down, and from then until now the efforts of the Company have been concentrated on coal getting. In 1885, Mr Landale was succeeded by Mr John Connel as managing director, and in 1896 Sir M. Arthur, Glasgow, took the post of chairman, which Mr James R. Stewart had held from 1872. To-day the Company have three pits in operation – the Dora, the Gordon, and the Lochhead – on the estate of Little Raith, to the west of Lochgelly Burgh; and on the estate of Lord Minto, to the north, south, and east of the Burgh, four pits are at work – the Mary, the Melgund, the Jenny Gray, and the Arthur. In the pits on Little Raith estate the Glasse, the Mynheer, the Five Foot, and the Dunfermline Splint seams are worked at depths from 20 fathoms to 100 fathoms. The same seams are being worked in the pits on Lord Minto's estate. All the pits are well appointed with machinery of the latest type. Recently the capital of the Company was increased to £100,000 of preference and £150,000 ordinary. £75,000 of the preference has been called up, and

£135,000 of the ordinary. The increased capital has enabled the Company to tackle a huge scheme of developments. At Brighills, to the east of Lochgelly, two pits are being sunk to the Dunfermline Splint, the old Nellie pit, which stands cold and abandoned to the north of the Railway Station, is to be re-opened, and the Mary Pit, to the west of the Station, is being sunk from one of the upper seams to the Five Feet and Splint seams, which are supports of the now famous navigation sort. In the pits at Brighills the Eight Feet seam has been struck at a depth of 100 fathoms. The coal is five feet in thickness and is stated to be of the finest quality. No test bores have been put down to prove the minerals below the Eight Feet seam. The pits are in the basin between Glenraig and Bowhill Collieries, however, and we fully anticipate that the navigation coal of these collieries should be struck at depths of from 150 to 180 fathoms. The Nellie Pit is also being re-opened. The Nellie Pit was an expensive concern for the Company in the upper seams, but the lower seams being found to be of splendid thickness and quality to the south and the north, it is expected that the Nellie will some day pay off the adverse bill that stands against it. At present the output of the Company is 2000 tons a day – the directors aim at doubling this output. Splendid coupling engines have been erected on the Minto and Brighills pits, and the temporary pumping engine is giving place to a magnificent direct working pump engine capable of dealing with a flood of water. On the Nellie pit a pumping engine is also to be erected. “A big concern” are the words which will be applied to the Lochgelly works in the near future.

The colliery is under the immediate supervision of Mr Nisbet, the general manager, and Mr John McQuillan and Mr Jas. D. Connel have charge of the financial and general office work.

Glenraig Colliery.

Glenraig Colliery is situated about a mile to the north of Lochgelly Railway Station, on the borders of Auchterderran and Ballingry parishes. The estates of Glenraig was purchased by Mr John Wilson, M.P., in 1894. In that year a series of test bores were put through to the minerals, and in 1895 the Wilson & Clyde Colliery, Ltd., had commenced to sink four pits. In two years afterwards, the Lochgelly Splint seam was struck at a depth of 240 fathoms from the surface, and ultimately No. 1 pit was sunk to the lower seams, the Five Feet, and the Dunfermline Splint. Among the seams passed through are the following: -

Glassee	4 ½ feet to 5 ½ feet thick
Mynheer	4 “ to 4 ½ feet thick
Lochgelly Splint	7 “
Five Feet	3 ½ “ to 5 “
Dunfermline Splint	3 ½ “ to 4 “

The Five Feet seam has received sufficient heat to make it a navigation coal, and Wilson & Clyde are on the admiralty list. The work of development underground has gone on in a most surprising manner since 1897, and away down in the bowls of the earth there are as many as seven pumps and five haulage engines worked by compressed air. In No. 1 Pit the Five Feet seam dooks are 500 and 800 yards from the surface, and the Dunfermline Splint seam is being opened out to the rise of the pit bottom. The No. 2 shaft of the Lochgelly Splint seam is being worked in all

directions, and the Glasse and Mynheer seams are also being laid under contribution. The coal output from the colliery is from 1100 to 1200 tons a day. The machinery is of the best type. The direct working pumping engine delivers 650 gallons a minute at the mouth of No. 1 Pit; but the power is so great that from 1200 to 1500 gallons would be tackled without putting any strain on the gearing. The Company recently acquired East and West Crosshill estates, and taken in conjunction with Glenraig, this gives them a field of 700 acres. The electric light is introduced throughout the works, and the picking and coal cleaning plant are of a kind calculated to turn out coals in the best condition. Mr Telfer, the general manager, is a thoroughly practical man. The Company employ from 680 to 700 hands. When the Company commenced operations the only houses near the site of the pits were those which formed the old row of "Contel." Now a village of 250 houses surround the Colliery, and two years ago a "Gothenburg" public-house was opened. The one-storey building in which liquor first began to be sold has been found to be too small, and in the course of a month or two the "sign" will be effaced from the old building, and a two-storey "Gothenburg", giving double the accommodation of the old, opened.

Bowhill Colliery.

Two miles to the east of Glenraig e have the colliery of Bowhill, which belongs to the Bowhill Colliery Company, Ltd. Bowhill Colliery, like its near neighbour, has not a long history. It was only in 1895 that the first sod of the two pits were cut. The minerals had not been tested by bores, as is usually the case, but Mr Archibald Bowman, Muiredge, and the late Mr David Adams, of Muircambus, who were directors of the Company, declared that they would risk sinking without trial bores; and the Company risked it with the result that their faith has been fully justified. Bowhill Colliery is one of the most successful mining concerns in the country. Here are the seams of coal passed through: -

	Depth	Thickness
Duddy Davy or Jubilee	152 Fathoms	5 Feet
Lochgelly Splint	170 "	4ft. 10ins
Five Feet	207 "	4ft.
Dunfermline Splint	220 "	3ft. 9ins.

The Jubilee and the Lochgelly Splint seam are operated upon in No. 2 Pit, and in No. 1 Pit efforts are concentrated on the Five Foot seam which is largely sold throughout the country for navigation purposes. The Company have an enormous field of coal and the value of the field will be apparent when it is stated that the Lochgelly Splint dook has been 1000 yards through clean coal while the rise workings are run to a distance of 400 yards. The Five Foot dook is being pierced through splendid navigation coal to a point 550 yards from the bottom of the shafts and away to the rise the work of opening out goes on. There are seven water pumps, and four haulage engines perpetually at work underground, and on the pithead there is a ceaseless clatter of machinery and puffing of steam. Coals are brought to the surface all the 24 hours, and the output of the colliery has now reached a total of 2000 tons a day, and with 1000 from each of the two pits the maximum has not been reached. The platforms on the pit mouth, on which strings of hutches are continually in motion, are being extended. Through the extensions and other developments each pit will have its own platform and tramway connection with the screening and the picking plant, and

the army of pithead workers will be able to handle the empty and loaded hutches with greater facility, with the result that the output will be raised from 2000 to from 2500 to 3000 tons a day. "That is a big output, and the disposal of it brings great responsibilities," was the remark of a visitor to the pits the other day, and the reply of an official was, "I wish we saw it 3000; we are not able to supply our demands for navigation coal." The electric light has been introduced into every department of the offices and the pithead, and the glare of the picking tables and screening plant is such that the work is carried on as effectively at night as it is in a noon-day sun. The Company employ as many as 1400 hands. Some of the men are old Cardenden men; some are Fifers, drawn from all parts of the "Kingdom"; but a considerable number have been drawn from England, from the West of Scotland, and from the Green Isle. The whole of the works are under the charge of Mr R.A. Muir, the general manager and secretary of the Company. He has a splendid under manager in Mr Bowman, and in Mr Davis Cairns, the cashier, he has a capital head of the office staff. The villages of Bowhill and the Jamphlars have sprung up around the colliery with all the mushroom growth common to an American city. The Company have put up as much as from 350 to 400 houses of a splendid type, and the private speculator in building is at work in every direction. The result is that the old Church and the little hamlet of Auchterderran are completely surrounded by the "new toon", and instead of the plaintive notes of the peewee and the piercing cry of the whaup, we have the merry laughter of children and the incessant patter of machinery. The villages are supplied with water pumped from a spring in the pits at a point 70 fathoms from the surface. And splendid water it is. The enterprising shopkeeper appears at every corner of the village, and a branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland was recently opened in the main street.

The Carden Colliery.

The Carden Collier Company was launched in February 1900. The Company's pits are situated about three-quarters of a mile to the east of Cardenden Station, and a little to the east of the village of Cardenden. The Company have practically succeeded to the old coalfields of Clunie and Cardenden, which were worked in far-off days when the coal output of the county of Fife was very small. Here is the evidence laid before the Parliamentary Commission of 1841 in connection with the old Clunie Colliery: -

Mr Alexander Goodall: - I have been 19 years connected with the management of this colliery, during which period no fatal accident, nor has any of a serious kind taken place. In this area very little disease exists amongst the men as their habits and mode of living differ from most colliers. In the first place young boys have never been allowed to go below ground, and no females whatever work our pits.

I consider the keeping females out of the mines one of the most important points towards the improvement of the collier population, as it forces them to self-dependence, and as they are obliged to send their daughters into the fields or to service so they are compelled to seek wives from other trades than their own; and it is a singular fact that scarcely any one of our colliers have married upon colliers' daughters, as also a large number of the daughters of colliers are married to nedlers, ploughmen, and other people.

There is a school attached to the colliery, at which the majority of male and female children attend. They enter as early as five or six years, and continue till 12, when the boys go down, as they are of no use before that age. Although our seams are very thin, not exceeding 23 inches high, and our roads 42 inches.

The number of men employed are 40 heads of families; 22 under 18 years of age, and four above 12 years of age.

Few men marry about this quarter till 22 to 24 years of age.

David Blair, 16 years old, putter: - Wrought between three and four years below; employed to put and fill; have not yet been putting at the coal wall. Does not care about the work, though it is gey sair work. Works 10 hours daily, sometimes more, and makes 11 days out of 12. Earns at present fifteen pence per day.

(Reads and writes well; well informed; very musical; plays exceedingly well on the violin)

Mrs Blair, mother of David Blair: - has been married 34 years, and has no recollection of any female or young children being employed to labour below ground. The guid wives have an objection to their children being wrought until they have strength; and when they are working they require good wholesome food sent down. I have five sons working with my man (husband), and they have the porridge and meat sent down and get it as regular as when at home. My father was a miller, and my daughter is married to one. Ten children alive; all read and write.

William Herd, 12 years old, gin driver: - I drive the horse round the gin – have done so 12 months. Could read and write before sent to work. Father is a collier, have seven brothers and sisters; was five years at school. Father is an Episcopalian, and we go to the Episcopalian chapel. Knows the Church Catechism.

Davis Patterson, 15 years old, putter: - Works 10 hours at wheeling the tubs; has done so three years and a half; works on mothers account. Father died some years since at Perth.

(Reads very well; writes badly; not very forward in Scripture knowledge)

Isobel Henderson, wife of J. Henderson, collier: - Lived at Clunie all my life. Have several daughters, who work in the fields; they get 1s 6d a week. Are very healthy; and can get work full 7 out of 12 months.

The Carden Company have had a good deal to do in connection with the clearing of the old pits of water, and coal getting has consequently been retarded to some extent. They have a splendid manager in Mr Joseph Parker, and he has done wonders with the drainage work. The Smithy Coal, the Lochgelly Splint, and the Upper Four Feet are being worked. The Smithy Coal is thin, and two of Jellot & Copley's Coal Cutting Machines have been introduced. Meanwhile the output is 200 tons a day, and the work of development proceeds apace. The Company are taking the safe precaution of proving the field, which is an extensive one, by boring, and if other seams of workable coal are struck under the Lochgelly Splint, sinking operations will be

tackled at the first possible moment. All the fittings of the colliery, pumping, and winding engines and screening plant are well appointed, and giving the visitor the impression that the Company and their manager means business.

Dundonald Colliery.

Coal has been worked at Dundonald Colliery from time immemorial, but the miners of old went no depth. They simply ran a rabbit's hole in the crop seams in the Carden Glen, and when they could not find a level for the water in the Carden and other streams they abandoned operations and began afresh at some other spot. Traces of the old workings can be seen to this day. Under a rock at the Carden Tower ochre water bubbles summer and winter, and the lie of the ground and the whole surrounding point to the conclusion that the water takes its rise at the coal faces where men and women toiled in the days when coal workers were *adscripti glebe* – slaves of the soil, and were bought and sold with the soil. In 1840, when the Royal Commission was sitting in connection with the employment of women and children in mines, there were 47 males and 12 females employed at Dundonald, and here is the evidence which was led before the Commission: -

Mr Andrew Adamson, manager of Dundonald Colliery and Messrs Grieve and Nasmyth – Children and young persons are not directly employed by the proprietors, as a contract is taken by the men to do their own putting, and they generally employ those who can do it quickest. Part of the work is done by winding coals from the working by incline wheels; the winding is generally performed by strong females. As boys are of little use before 12 years of age, none ought to be allowed to descend until arrived at it. We have no school or sick fund belonging to this work.

James Mitchell, coal griever, Dundonald – We have few colliers here who get the length of 50 years; more die off near 40, from the bad breath those who go earliest in life get touched with it soonest. We have had no accidents at this pit, but some people suffer from rheumatism as much water is below at times, and they get it from damp work. Very young children are of little use, but the contractors take down who they like.

Thomas Campbell, 10 years old, hewer – Am learning to hew coal at Dundonald, with father; went down first with him; goes down now with brother who is 18, and been 10 years below, and two sisters. Father is 46 years of age, he has long been gone in the breath; he has been idle three months with it, and not able to work at all. Brothers and sisters all read a little, and so do I; am wrought at the reading by John Ewan, at Shaws Mill, about a mile away.

Mary McKinley, 12 years old, putter – Works for Andrew Nichole, who contracts for our work. I make a shilling a day, and work 11 days in the fortnight. We are sorely worked by contractor, but obliged to do so as work is uncertain hereabouts. Has a rest of half an hour at porridge time.

Operations were for many years carried on by Mr Alexander Nasmyth at Dundonald; but recently a lease was taken of the minerals by a Company which will be known as the Dundonald Colliery Company. The members of the firm are Messrs W.Y Fleming of Fleming and Ferguson, Paisley; J Hamilton Meikle, Newcastle; and J.N. Thomson. Mr Thomson is a Fife man, and was for years the manager at

Lumphinnans. Since he left Lumphinnans he has had an extended experience of colliery work, and studied mineralogy, electricity, &c., at the Heriot Watt College in Edinburgh, at the Andersonian in Glasgow, and came out with first-class honours. He has taken up the general managership of Dundonald, and although it is only four months since the works fell into the hands of the new Company his capacity for practical work is already apparent in every department of the works. As yet only three seams have been worked at the colliery: - the Lochgelly Splint, the Glasse, and the Mynheer. The Five Foot and the Dunfermline Splint seams are under the Mynheer. A pit and a day mine are in operation, and the Mynheer is only 30 fathoms from the surface in the pit. The Mynheer is a strong, hard coal – splint from roof to pavement – and of excellent quality for household purposes. Being so hard and only 33 to 36 inches in thickness, the men could not dig a very big output – from 1 to 1 ½ tons a day. Mr Thomson had an air-pressure engine erected at once, and he introduced one of Jellicott & Copley’s coal cutting machines. He adapted the Methil Engineering Company’s air-compressing plant to the machine, and the result in every department has been a complete success. There are three inches of tough “dalk” below the coal. The machine holes this in from 3 to 3 ½ feet from end to end of the working faces during the back shift. The coal settles down gently onto the pavement along the whole line, and the hewers come in the morning and commence the work of filling, the result has been that within three months the output of the colliery has been raised from 50 tons a day to 250 tons. A second coal cutter is on order for the same seam going in the opposite direction, and within three months the output will be at least 400 tons a day. The seam has a strong, hard roof, is not steep, and is therefore admirably adapted for coal cutting machinery. The electric light is being introduced, and Mr Thomson is arranging and fitting up a screening and picking plant, so that the coals might be turned out in the best of condition. An analysis of the Mynheer seam shows that the coal is high in heating power, and free from the foreign matter which makes dust. The Company have a big field – from 600 to 700 acres – and everything points to the conclusion that ere long Dundonald will be one of the thriving collieries in the district.

Education.

From time immemorial a good deal of attention has been paid to education in the parish. In 1791 there were two private schools in addition to the parish school in the district. The scholars at the parish school numbered from 50 to 60 and at the private schools 80 – total 130 or 140. In 1844 there were four schools in the parish – the parish school, two venture schools, and a boarding school, and here are the returns of pupils on the rolls: - Boarding school, 50; venture schools, 70 each; parish school, 90 – total 280. Mr Peter Herd, the teacher of Clunie, gives us a glimpse of the schools of 60 years ago in his evidence before the Royal Commission in 1841. He says: -

In this part of the country boys are generally removed during the summer to labour about the fields, and they are taken away at the ages of 9 and 10 years; they return in the winter months, and continue in this manner at school until they are 12 years of age, when they are withdrawn. Young persons working in mines and other hard labour make very little progress; they are as dull in spirits as they are fatigued in body, and under such circumstances whatever is done is looked upon as being a task imposed rather than lessons for their benefit. The progress of persons wholly unemployed is decidedly greater than those employed at irregular occupations, even

though you throw in the advantage of superior age. The want of proper attendance and that for a period sufficient to allow children to obtain a sound elementary education, often prevents them filling situations where only a moderate degree of knowledge is required. No Sunday School instruction is sufficient to make up for loss of that of the day school, and although the morals of the colliers of this place be far in advance of most in Fife, yet children have not sufficient instruction for the common purpose of life.

Dr Murray, in his evidence before the same Commission, says: -

There is one Sabbath School in Lochgelly in connection with the United Secession congregation, and the teacher complains that he can make little of those who do come, from their being easily removed from the day school. At Lochgelly, boys leave the day school as early as 10 years old and the girls generally below that age; at the parochial, boys leave at 12 years of age and girls 10. Their education is very imperfect, the continuous labour deprives them of the opportunity of improving themselves afterwards. Children ought to remain at school up to 13 or 14 years of age. Young persons employed in agriculture are in better condition than those employed in coal mines; the former being more cared for by their parents, and the farmers in whose service they are.

Between 1850 and 1870 great progress, thanks to Mr Andrew Landale, was made in matter educational in Lochgelly and district, and since the Education Act of 1872 passed the progress has been fully maintained. Two years ago a school was opened at Cardenden, and the Board have agreed to build a new school at Bowhill at a cost of £10,000. To keep pace with the increasing population a temporary corrugated iron and wooden building has been erected. At Lochgelly the infant and senior schools have been extended and improved; at Glencraig an infant school is to be opened; and at Lumphinnans, which is in the School Board area of Auchterderran, an infant school has been open for years. The Lumphinnans School has been extended, and a senior department opened. The following table shows the pupils on roll at Lochgelly and Lumphinnans Schools: -

Lochgelly Senior	717
Lochgelly Infant	719
Lumphinnans Senior	261
Lumphinnans Infant	<u>230</u>
	1937

The Burgh of Lochgelly.

The burgh takes its name from the loch which lies to the south-east. In 1791 Lochgelly could only boast of a population of 342; in 1844 the population was 612. By 1877 the handloom and the bleaching industries had vanished away; but the minerals had been developed to a considerable extent, and with a population of nearly 3000 Lochgelly was formed into a Police Burgh. In 1891 the population was 4433; in 1901 the population was 5472; and to-day it is nearly 6000. With another turn of good trade the burgh will undoubtedly increase its boundaries in all directions. The Lochgelly and Iron Coal Company have opened a new street in Auchterderran Road, and in the same district the private builder is at work. The Co-operative Society are

doubling their premises at a cost of from £6000 to £7000, and here and there shops are being extended. So as to ensure the community with a plentiful supply of water new filtering tanks have this year been constructed by the Town Council of the Burgh. And at Blairenbathie a new pipe has been laid at a cost from £7000 to £8000, and negotiations are proceeding for the purchase of land for increasing the storage accommodation. The Council are not overlooking the drainage question, and as soon as the water problem has been thoroughly solved a big drainage scheme will be looked into. A glance at the pits of the district shows that the colliery owners are marching with the times. Corporations, like individuals, must be prepared to follow the pathway of progress, and the institutions which are in the hands of the Town Council, the School Board, and other bodies must keep pace with the growth of industries. The collieries in the district, with their perpetual puffing of steam and rattle of machinery, present a striking contrast to the day mines and the small pits of days gone by; and the difference between Lochgelly and the villages of the parish of the future must be as great as that presented by the gin pit of old with its output of 20 tons a day and the throbbing bustling pit of to-day which throws from five hundred to one thousand tons of coal to the surface.

December 1902

THE TYPHOID OUTBREAK
AT LOCHORE.

Official Report By The Medical
Officer.

At a meeting of the Kirkcaldy District Committee of Fife County Council, held at Kirkcaldy on Saturday – Mr Neil Ballingal, Markinch, presiding – Dr Nasmyth, Medical Officer of Health for Fife, submitted a report, in which he said that during the month of May to date there had been reported to him 39 cases of infectious disease, of which 36 cases had been enteric, 21 of the cases being in Mary Pit Row, Lochore. Dr Nasmyth reported that Dr Dickson, Lochgelly, had asked him to inspect the Mary Row, as a number of persons had suspicious symptoms of enteric, and 21 cases had been notified. The cause was undoubtedly due to sewage polluted water, the persons having been using the water coming down from a burn to the west of Lochore House. Alongside the burn was an ashpit, which drained into the burn, and which he considered to have been the cause of the outbreak. The water was led into a pipe and into a pond at the Mary Pit, and the people using the water had either taken it from the pond or the pipe discharging into it. The pipe was at once extended to a spring of water to the west of the burn, and which he believed to be pure water, and the pipe had been continued to the houses at Mary Row. The pipes had been disinfected with chloride of lime. Some of the cases were too ill for removal, and he arranged with the matron of the Thornton Hospital to get a nurse for them and to look after disinfection. The nurse arrived on Monday night, and her services were much appreciated. Mr Carlow, of the Fife Coal Company, had offered to pay all the expenses of the nurse. There had been a separate outbreak at Lochore, where there were eight cases, and it was discovered that the branch pipe which supplied Lochore had been polluted from the cattle watering troughs in the field, which had been misused by some of the inhabitants.

Mr Andrew Leitch, Buckhaven, said this was a most horrid report. He did not think there had been such a thing for the last twenty-five years, and that was the time of the smallpox. How was it that the Sanitary Inspector had allowed this to go on so long? Mr Leitch proceeded to refer to the Fife Coal Company, when the Chairman called him to order.

Mr Leitch – I want to know the reason that epidemic has arisen there.

The Clerk – it has arisen in consequence of the polluted state of the water supply to the houses.

Mr Johnston – the sewage has been allowed to get from the ashpit into the water. How did the sanitary Inspector not see that before?

The Clerk – It is an isolated place.

Mr Johnston asked if this had not practically been a hotbed of fever.

Mr Nasmyth said that ever since he had anything to do with the District Committee, Lochore and its neighbourhood had always been that.

Mr Johnston moved that a Committee be appointed to consider the advisability of forming a special water district for Lochore, and that the committee be Mr Budge, Mr Prentice, Mr Fyshe, Rev. Mr Houston, and Mr McMenemy.

Mr Prentice, Strathore, seconded, remarking that he understood that this water had been suspicious for some time. He asked the doctor whether the outbreak took place first at the farm or at the row of cottages.

Dr Nasmyth said there had been a good many cases at Lochore for some years, but this outbreak at Mary Row broke out all at once. It was a separate and distinct thing.

Mr Leitch said he also objected to all the pollution coming down the Leven. It was abominable, and with reference to the cattle watering troughs Dr. Nasmyth said that the Sanitary Inspector had actually seen boys using the tubs as conveniences.

Mr Johnston's motion was then agreed to, and the Committee appointed.

Forty-Seven Cases.

In spite of the energetic measures of the authorities, cases of typhoid fever are still springing up at Lochore, near Lochgelly, and there are now forty-seven cases notified. So far the mortality has been low considering the extent and severity of the epidemic, and the length of time to which the sufferers have been exposed to the malign influence of the contaminated water supply. There are now two trained fever nurses resident in the district, and their aid is much esteemed by the medical men in charge of the sick.

June 1903

THE TYPHIOD OUTBREAK AT LOCHORE.

The Cause of the Outbreak

At a meeting of the Kirkcaldy District Committee of the Fife County Council held in Kirkcaldy on Saturday – Mr J. Budge presiding – the report of a Sub-Committee appointed at last meeting anent the water supplies at Lochore and neighbouring villages was submitted. It showed that the Committee visited the locality on the 11th inst. and it was then discovered that the water supply at Lochore received pollution from the tanks used for watering cattle. The report went on to state that on 9th March 1901, the Water Inspector reported that there was a considerable waste of water owing to the want of ball-cocks on the field troughs, but he had not observed what turned out to be one of the

Greatest Source Of Pollution,

namely, the way in which the tanks were connected to the pipes. The Committee considered it a pity that the District Committee had not satisfied themselves then as to the real state of matters. The supply to Mary Pit Row was even more marked, and the committee considered that the Fife Coal Company were most seriously to blame for the state of matters. However, it was only fair to say that the place where the pollution occurred was out of the way and not easily observed. The Committee recommended that authority be give the Chairman, Clerk, Mr Houston and Mr McMenemy to get such advice and take such other steps as they might deem necessary to ascertain the population and rental of the areas proposed to be formed into a Special Water Districts.

The Chairman stated that Mr McKenzie, water inspector, had reported to the committee that day that the troughs referred to in the report were not the same ones that caused the pollution. He accepted the statement, and he did not wish to put anything upon a servant except but what was fair.

Mr Prentice, Strathore, held that Mr McKenzie should have pointed out the place to them when there. He wished to ask if the Doctor knew about the place.

Dr Nasmyth – there was another place, but there was no pollution.

Duty Of Officials.

Rev. Mr Houston, Auchterderran, held that no official should be dragged into the matter, as he thought the Fife Coal Company was the party entirely to blame, for they ought to have seen to their houses not being inhabited until the water was pure, good, and clean.

Mr Prentice contended that they had officials to look after careless proprietors. He could not say that the case as put forward by Mr Houston quite freed the official.

Mr Fyshe, Markinch, asked if it was to be understood that their doctors and sanitary inspectors were to know of water being polluted without a complaint being made to them? Were they to saddle them with the responsibility of an outbreak of disease without any hint being given them?

Mr Houston – That is the whole point.

The Chairman said that by looking carefully into all the different eater supplies they were only doing fair duty as their servants.

Medical Officers Report.

The report by Dr Nasmyth was then read showing that the cause of the outbreak at Mary Pit Row was owing to the discharge from an ashpit finding its way into the burn from which water was taken. At Lochore the outbreak might have been caused through the cattle troughs being polluted with typhoid excreta, or typhoid infection getting into the spring.

The Chairman remarked that the trouble had burned itself out, as it were, for the moment. He thought it was a most serious matter for a large Company to build houses without obtaining a proper water supply. How they would deal with the matter would come up further on, and there was no doubt they had a very big question before them, which they would have to face fairly and see what was best in the circumstances.

The Mary Pit Row Case.

Mr Ritchie was not quite satisfied regarding the Mary Pit Row matter. He would like explanations as to how such negligent pollution passed the observation of their sanitary inspector. He must have known that there was water coming from the place, and that it must have been suspicious water.

Mr McKenzie said that this water supply was taken in by the Coal Company for feeding boilers. The tenants had a reasonable supply.

Dr Nasmyth stated that he understood instruction were given to carry a pipe from Mary Pit Row to the spring for the supply of the people living there. Instead of that, the pipe was carried to a ditch, where there was a dam filled by the overflow from a tank and old filter.

The Chairman remarked that it seemed to him that the unfortunate circumstances connected with the outbreak were owing to the apparent carelessness of the Coal Company's not seeing that the supply of water was not better than it was.

Mr Prentice thought the sanitary inspector should have drawn their attention to the matter.

Mr Fyshe said that year in and year out it had been reported by the Medical Officer that the water was either insufficient or not of good quality. He would like to ask Mr Prentice if it was human nature for the Company to still maintain such a supply.

Mr Prentice replied, stating that he did not relieve the Coal Company.

The reports were adopted.

July 1903

THE WAY AND WORK OF REFORM

Cowdenbeath – No.1

For the subjoined admirable and on the whole cheering account of the good work in this active and industrial centre we are indebted to the Rev. James Gilmour: -

The articles in the "Express" and "Journal" on "The Way and Work of Reform" provide deeply interesting reading for all who are alive to the problems presented by the rapid influx of population to our mining centres, and it must be a great encouragement to all who are exercised about the solution of such problems to find an influential paper like the "Journal" which has always given prominence to mining matters, interesting in itself practically in these vital subjects.

A TRANSFORMATION.

In trying to estimate the situation accurately, care is needed to guard against the danger of underestimating the progress that has already been made on the one hand, and of cherishing unwarrantable satisfaction on the other hand. If we may speak for Cowdenbeath for example, the Cowdenbeath of to-day is no more like the Cowdenbeath of eighteen or twenty years ago than is darkness to sunrise. Not merely has the town grown and the population increased, but institutions of all kind have sprung up, so that the town shares in the complex and many sided life intellectual, social, and religious, of any well-ordered and enterprising community. On the other hand there are great social evils still to be deplored. Intemperance prevails with non-church going, indifference, and in many quarters that want of refined taste and regard for the courtesies of life that are easily within reach of the working classes.

HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS.

In thinking of the ameliorating agencies and influences that have been at work, one naturally begins with the mining companies, whose types of houses in recent years has been a great improvement over the earlier specimens. It would be difficult we imagine, nowadays finding houses with no coal house, washing house, or scullery. Even w.c's are being added wherever the water supply is sufficient for their introduction. We have long felt, however, that it is a great pity a bath is not added. The time has surely come when in every miner's house a bath ought to be considered a sine quo non. That is not a luxury at all, but a simple necessity of life, and would conduce alike to morals and to health, as the present plan for performing all the ablutions in the kitchen is neither conducive to that comfort there ought to be in the home, nor that refinement of feeling that ought to be aimed at in the humblest dwelling. A few pounds extra would easily provide this in the building of the house, and the cost could be recouped by a slightly increased charge in the weekly rent. We would consider this one of the most elementary of the "works and ways of reform". In the taste for gardening there is room still for great advance. Neglect of the ground provided is no doubt due to in many cases to the insecurity of tenure felt by the occupant of a Company's house, changes in the sphere of work being frequent and the workman having to leave the house when he leaves the Company's employ. The difference is at once seen where the occupant is the tenant of a private house, where

the gardens, as a rule, are cultivated, and the feus properly fenced in and separated. Everything, therefore, that tends to arrest the migratory habits of men, and to root them in a particular community, tends to be the refinements of their tastes and gradual elevation in the social scale.

A PLEA FOR MUNICIPAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Coming now to speak of the educative effect of municipal institutions and the work of self-government on individual and social life, the opinion may here be confidently expressed that not a little of the progress and enterprise of Cowdenbeath in recent years has been the formation of the town into a Police Burgh, which took place fourteen or fifteen years ago. So self-evident is this to all who have watched the progress of the town, that is simply marvellous to outsiders to understand why there should be any difficulty in readily bestowing these powers upon Kelty. We have no hesitation in predicting that if Kelty is allowed to adopt the Act, and train its citizens in the art of self-government, the town will at once forge ahead, and make rapid progress as Cowdenbeath has done; whereas, if in deference to the County Council these powers are withheld Kelty's progress we do not doubt, will be effectually arrested. Self-government is the condition of physical improvement. Since these powers were vested in our town our streets have been paved and named, water supply improved, lighting modernised, a drainage scheme undertaken, a Sanitary Inspector appointed, the cleansing of the streets taken over by the Commissioners, justice dispensed, and so forth. All may not have been done that needs to be done. One of the difficulties of a new town is that burdens accumulate so rapidly that the most zealous Council cannot move so fast by reason of the taxation as their ambition would dictate. But it is undeniable that since that period was reached a zeal for advance has characterised the town, and amid all the difficulties by which they are surrounded the municipal authorities deserve all credit for the pains they have taken in the town's behalf. And this after all is only one measure of the progress. The years have seen a wonderful growth in capacity for office and in the power of self-government on the part of our citizens. So much is this the case that for the immediate future there seems no lack of men worthy of being entrusted with the most responsible offices.

EDUCATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Similar remarks might be made with respect to the School Board and our education institutions. In a parish almost half the size of Dunfermline for population, the work of the Board for the past few years has been no sinecure. School after school has had to be built or added to, and pace kept with the modern requirements. But so well has this been done that the Board has under its care not only some of the best appointed schools in Fife, with a full staff of thoroughly qualified teachers, but has added on cooking and continuation classes, besides co-operating with the County Council for teaching of mining and other subjects. The Board may have erred in some part of its policy. Until recently it steadily resisted a scale of wages, and a good deal of dissatisfaction was thereby caused. Happily this has now been made right. But even with such drawbacks very good results have been produced, reports in some cases being so excellent that better results could hardly be looked for.

FAITHFUL CHURCH SERVICES

And now, ere closing, a word for the churches. Let it not be forgotten what the churches have done. For them no less than for others the situation has had its difficulties and problems. Take the problem of church accommodation alone. Within the last dozen years or so, no fewer than seven new churches have been built in the parish of Beath alone, besides the extension of others, and a number of manses. When it is remembered how much of the money had to be raised from the outside (they are all free of debt), and how much of the labour necessarily fell on the ministers and office-bearers, it is obvious that something has not merely been attempted, but done. Not only so, but in connection with most of these churches there are now flourishing congregations, with well-equipped Sabbath Schools, Bible Classes, Temperance, and Missionary Societies, Mother's and Cottage meeting, Lodging-house work, and all the complex organisations connected nowadays with our congregational work. If notwithstanding many are still outside the church, let it be remembered that many of them are not the lapsed properly speaking, but persons who have never had a church connection at all. With a little more time many of these may yet be gathered in. Rome was not built in a day. On the other hand, there is room yet in certain directions for additional power and more abundant work. It must surely be patent that a town like Cowdenbeath, with a large non-church going population, would be none the worse of a town missionary. Indeed, each of the churches to be properly manned, would need an addition to the minister a missionary to go from house to house and do the excavation work. The churches hitherto, not being self-supporting, have had some difficulty in pressing this claim. But now that that stage is being approached, it may be time to consider whether a claim like that might not be urged upon our Church Committees.

COUNTER ATTRACTIONS TO THE PUBLIC-HOUSE

There is another direction in which the needs of the community are still unsolved, viz., in a combined effort, on social and gospel lines, to provide counter attractions to the Public-house on the Saturday nights during the winter months. This is done to a small extent already on Gospel lines, but the effort would have to be on a much greater scale. Something was attempted last winter by the Public-house Society in the way of providing entertainment by popular concerts. But we have little faith in mere entertainment doing much lasting good. Man needs more than to be amused. Man needs to be saved, and experience has proved that nothing will do this but the Gospel. It has been impossible hitherto to get this dream for the Saturday night fulfilled. Ministers cannot do everything. If the people on Sabbath are to be fed, the minister must be some nights in his study. And even as it is during the winter months, the calls and demands upon the poor minister are appalling. At the very least it would need some intelligent layman with some means, and good social position to help. Once that is gained we shall feel that another stage in our social development has been reached, and that inroads into the territory of the enemy might be more rapid. Meanwhile, it will do no harm, and perhaps unexpected good, to have the subject properly ventilated.

June 1904

VISIT TO THE AITKEN PIT

The New Pumping Machinery.

Although soon to be outrivalled by its younger sister, the Mary, the Aitken is at present times the largest pit in Scotland, its output of 2000 tons a day far exceeding that of any other. Its appointments, in the way of engineering, joinery, and blacksmith works, haulage, winding and pumping engines, coal sorting and screening plant – all above ground – are nowhere surpassed. Below ground a similar state of things exist. The coal is brought to the pit bottom by the most up to date appliances. A new water-pumping engine is the latest addition to the machinery at the foot of the shaft.

The Pit Bottom.

Through the courtesy of Mr Davis Beveridge, the manager of the pit, a representative of the “Express” and “Echo” was taken down the shaft in order to witness the great new water-raising engine. The first impression which strikes the non-expert visitor is the enormity of the space at the pit bottom. On either side of the shaft stretches a great hall or tunnel, lined with brick, whose limits are lost beyond the area illuminated by the electric light. There is no need of the miner crouching here; the largest man, seated on the highest horse, may pass without fear of contact with the roof.

The Dooks.

All is activity at the pit bottom. By power, by horse traction, or by elevator from the Five Foot seam, the hutches of coal are brought from the various dooks to converge at the mouth of the shaft. There they are handled with marvellous expedition by squads of men, who are required every minute to load and unload the cages. The dooks which strike away into the working faces ramify in all directions. Some of them must be considerably over a mile long. That which cuts in the direction of the Mary Pit dips to a depth from the bottom of at least 150 fathoms or 350 fathoms from the surface. Another proceeds to Benarty Hill, a third penetrates to the heart of Kelty, while others connect the Lindsay and the Pewit Pits with the Aitken.

How The Dooks Are Wrought.

The hutches are brought to the top of the principal dook by the haulage engine at the pithead. On the endless rope attached to the engine as many as 37 full hutches and a similar number of empties may be attached at one time. Out of that dook 700 tons of coal per day on an average are brought. The other dooks are wrought by electric motors, varying in power according to the length and steepness of the brae, and supplied with energy from cables brought down the shaft. About a dozen of hutches are brought up by a motor at each turn. When the hutches have arrived at the top of the dooks onto the horse roads, they are taken charge of by the pony driver, who harnesses them to an animal more generally of the appearance of a common cart horse than a pony, and brings them along the rails to the pit bottom.

Horse Roads and Horses.

These horse roads are generally about 6 feet high, and although it is seldom that accidents arise in them through falls from the roof it is not an uncommon thing, notwithstanding the greatest precautions, to have a collision with disastrous results, from races coming in opposite directions.

The Aitken Pit stables contain no fewer than 52 animals, those in harness during the day being relieved on the night shift, and vice versa. Notwithstanding the fact that they never see daylight, unless when sickness arises, the general health of the horses is good, the work underground evidently agreeing with them. The load for a horse – from nine to twelve laden hutches – is determined by the nature of the road on which the animal is engaged.

The New Pump.

To return to the new water-pumping machine, however, it is known by the name of the Riedler patent pump, and is manufactured by the Airdrie Iron Company. Unless as a standby – for all things human are liable to break down – the new machine is actually not required. The pumping machinery at the pithead, with its power to bring 1400 gallons of water to the surface per minute, easily overtakes the requirements. But repairs are sometime necessary, and when the machinery is silent the growth of water is so rapid that the pit is set idle. To obviate such a contingency, the Riedler pump has been introduced.

The Water Lodgement.

The whole of the water which flows out of the rock, it may be explained, is diverted into channels or “gauts”, each of which finds its way into the lodgement. To keep the water within the confines of that lodgement and prevent it overflowing the workings is the business of the pumping machinery – an operation which although it has only an indirect effect on the output, constitutes one of the heaviest items in the oncost bill which Mineowners have to face.

Starting The Pump.

The new machine was started for the first time on Friday night in presence of the pit manager, a representative of the firm who have built it, and a goodly company of interested spectators. Only one slight hitch took place, due to an oversight. When that had been remedied, the machine glided away smoothly, and for four hours discharged the duties of its neighbour at the top of the shaft without the slightest difficulty. It is not the first machine of the kind which has been introduced in Scotland, or even Fife, but it is the largest in the country.

Its Housing Accommodation.

To find space for it a chamber measuring 72 feet long, 21 feet broad, and 27 feet high had to be excavated from the solid. Of rock and coal 5250 square yards were dislodged. Heavy steel girders are stretched across the roof to support it, these girders and the heavy engine cylinders (weighing 8 ½ tons each) being taken to the bottom of the shaft only after considerable difficulty. The foundations of the engine are of solid concrete, encased in a shell of brick, and they are supported with brick buttresses at intervals for the purpose of solidity and strength.

Its Component Parts.

The machinery is in three distinct parts (1) the engine (fed with steam from the pithead boilers); (2) the double acting pump which raises the water from the lodgement at a depth of sixteen feet into a specially built tank, and condenses the steam; and (3) the double acting pump (whose cylinders are fed by the natural inflow from the tank) which forces the water up the steel tube to the top of the shaft. The tank is 10 feet deep, 21 feet wide, and 9 feet broad.

Engine And Pipes.

The engine is a coupled horizontal, having a 3 ½ feet stroke, 24 inch high pressure and 40 inch low pressure cylinders, and a heavy 16 feet fly wheel constructed in two parts, which are welded together by shrunk hoops. The rams of the pumps which raise the water from the lodgement are 12 inches in diameter, and have a 3 ½ feet stroke, those of the other pump being 6 inches in diameter with the same length of stroke. Without difficulty the machine is able every minute to throw through an 11 inch steel pipe to the surface, a distance of 1230 feet, a column of water measuring 1200 gallons. On the water pipe there is a pressure of 535 lbs to the square inch, the pressure on the steam pipes being 100 lbs to the square inch.

Distinctive Features.

Several ingenious fittings are the property of the new pump. While the valves open themselves they must close by mechanical action. Two air vessels form part of the machinery, these being fed by an air charger. The purpose of these vessels is to cushion the shock of the pump. It was neglected to have these vessels charged with air that caused the slight hitch when the pumps were started on Friday evening.

Statutory Obligations.

It is intended soon to test the new machine along with that at the pithead for the purpose of discovering which gives the best results according to the coal consumption. The construction of the new pump along with the preparation which had to be made for housing it, have taken nearly a year to complete, and as may be imagined the new addition to the mechanical appliances has cost the Company several thousands of pounds. By Act of Parliament an outlet for workmen other than the main one must be provided, because an outburst of steam might take place at a point which would render their escape impossible by the main entrance. Accordingly a stairway had to be constructed leading into a passage which emerged in the Five Foot seam overhead.

The Aitken Field.

As there are still millions of tons of coal lying to be wrought in the Aitken Pit, the new pump is likely to find work for many a year to come. In the vicinity of the Mary Pit the Dunfermline Splint seam is of great thickness and excellent quality. What impresses one very strongly in visiting a pit like the Aitken is the enormous amount of capital which has to be sunk before a tonne of coal is secured. Even after the pithead machinery is ready and the shaft sunk, thousands of pounds must be spent in providing a workable space at the bottom and in opening out the different horse roads and dooks.

June 1905.

SATURDAY NIGHT IN COWDENBEATH.

Few towns of its size in Scotland can present so interesting and animated a spectacle as is to be witnessed in Cowdenbeath's principal street on a Saturday night. To the inhabitants Saturday is the brightest day of the week. Its relaxations and delights are looked forward to with eager anticipation, and are relinquished with reluctance. On this week-end day the miner gives himself up to enjoyment. According to long established custom he is on duty bound as evening approaches to get into "regimentals" and take the "misses" out on parade. The centre of attraction is the well-lighted, spacious and clean High Street, with its attractive and brilliantly lighted shops. From late in the afternoon onwards all roads lead to the High Street, and there is a steady deluge of arrivals, a large proportion of whom are visitors from the district, for Cowdenbeath is now a considerable reputation as a shopping centre, thanks to the car service. Between the hours of 8 and 9 o'clock the zenith is reached. From the Fountain right to the North End the spacious Street is crowded with a seething sea of humanity. Progression is difficult; one must move with the crowd. The stranger, and the person whose unhappy fate it is to be in a hurry makes a dive for the roadway in the expectation of being able to increase his pace. He immediately discovers that he up against something worse. He dodges, pushes, and scrambles among other foot passengers, tramcars, horse vehicles, perambulators, and cycles, and thankfully returns to the pavement as being the lesser of the two evils.

Unlike the stranger, the crowd is in no hurry. It is a slow-moving, but withal a good-natured crowd. The Saturday night shopping is in full swing; the many shops are filled to overflowing, but this makes no appreciable diminution in the street crowd. Patient husbands hang about the shop doors waiting for the belated return of the mistress of the house, who has gone to purchase a new frock for the bairn, or the Saturday morning breakfast. As a promenade for young couples the High Street possess some subtle power of attraction. In the midst of the crowd lads and lasses perambulate quite contentedly and untiringly from end to end of the street with an occasional look at the shop windows by way of variety. Bands of young men (now a fairly prominent feature of town life) extract considerable entertainment from their mixing with the crowd, their journey to and fro being interspersed with visits to their favourite ice-cream saloon rendezvous. Blessed or otherwise with ceaseless activity, and an endowment of animal like spirits, their hilarious progress adds much to the gaiety of the street. Greetings are constantly being exchanged between friends from the district and their intimates resident in the town. Families parties meet, and discuss family matters, remaining an obstacle on the pavement for an indefinite period, pedestrian traffic having to make a detour to get past the group, who are for the time unconscious of anything but their own affairs.

At different parts of the street meeting of various kinds are being held. At the Fountain one religious meeting succeeds another. The vantage-ground at the Colliery office is occupied by a social orator, who is declaiming to a large, but only somewhat attentive audience, the blessings of the great gospel of discontentment. In Union Street two young ladies with the courage of their convictions are endeavouring to stimulate enthusiasm in "Votes For Women", but their audience is an attenuated and constantly moving one. Underneath the railway bridge an evangelical meeting is

being held, but the speaker's discourse is lost through the constant interruptions of a loud voice from the other side of the street proclaiming the fact that tomatoes are very cheap. The street vendors of fruit do a roaring trade, in every sense of the term. The barrows and carts are literally surrounded, and the perspiring proprietor is kept serving out to a stream of customers. Cowdenbeath at all times but particularly on the Saturday night is the "Mecca" of itinerant music-vendors and entertainers. At every available corner are vocalists, melodeon players, blind fiddlers, and many other varieties of the entertaining art. The miner has a decided leaning to entertainment, and the wanderers must extract a considerable sum from their visits to the town.

But it is now fast approaching the tenth hour, and the "guidman" and his wife are either enjoying the fare provided by the picture shows or wending their way homeward. The shops have disgorged their parcel laden patrons, and the street crowd is becoming appreciably thinner. Each of the departing cars carries away its full complement of passengers. At 10 o'clock the streets are temporarily filled with a crowd of a totally different nature, and the policemen are to be seen escorting some obstreperous gentlemen of the "no fixed abode" type to a secure lodging, or trying to quell the pugnacity of several belligerently disposed persons who have a difference of opinion, and are bent on settling it in the most approved fashion. After ten the street begins to clear more rapidly, but it is midnight ere the pavements cease to echo with the tramp of feet. The appearance of the street when empty would bring the tears to the eyes of any respectable scavenger. It is littered with every imaginable kind of rubbish; but an efficient cleaning staff has it restored to its usual cleanly condition long before the church-goers are out of bed.

September 1911