

## NUMBER L.

## PARISH OF PITTENWEEM,

## (COUNTY OF FIFE.)

*By the Rev. Mr JAMES NAIRNE.*

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*Name, Situation, Soil, Air, &c.*

**T**HIS parish is situated in the presbytery of St Andrew's, and Synod of Fife. There is no doubt that coal was, in old times, wrought where the town now stands; and in the town there is a large cove, anciently called a *weem*. The pits produced by the working of the coal, and the striking natural object of the cove or weem, may have given birth to the name of the parish. Whether Pittenweem originally was a parish or not, is uncertain. The extent of the parish is about an English mile and a quarter in length, and about half a mile in breadth. It is bounded by the parish of Anstruther-Wester on the E.; by the same and Carnbee on the N.; and by St Monance on the W.; the frith of Forth bounds it on the S. The grounds in the parish are flat; the soil is in general black and loamy, and very fertile; the air is dry and healthy; the water remarkably soft, while that of the neighbouring towns is hard and brackish. The most prevalent distemper

VOL. IV.

3 A

among

among the inhabitants, is the *phthisis pulmonalis*, or consumption.

*Fish, Shipping, &c.*—The fish caught here have of late years been in much smaller number than formerly. Quantities are sometimes sent to the Edinburgh market. Within these few months, a plan was formed for catching turbot with nets, and so getting them alive to send up to London; but the trials have not been as yet very successful. A considerable quantity of lobsters are caught here and in the neighbourhood, and sent to London.—The people here are generally fond of a seafaring life, but few have entered the navy as volunteers. They in general discover an aversion to the army, and I do not think more than 2 or 3 from the parish have enlisted during the last 30 years. At present the number of boats is only 5, and of vessels 4. From a record of the town, it appears that prior to 1639, the shipping here was considerable. From that year to the 1645, the town suffered greatly in that article. It appears from that record, that there belonged at least to the town 13 sail of large vessels; all of which were either taken by the enemy, wrecked, or sold in consequence of the death of the commanders and mariners at the battle of Kilfyth.

*Coal, &c.*—The whole surface of the parish is supposed to cover a continued field of coal, which lies in a very extraordinary way, first taking one direction, then a contrary one, with different dippings. The property of it belongs to Sir John Anstruther. When it began to be wrought is uncertain. It is believed to have been wrought by Oliver Cromwell, who took possession of the Earl of Kelly's estate, of which it then formed a part; and a pit is still to be seen, that goes by the name of Cromwell's pit. In past times, as much coal was taken out as could be procured without

a fire engine. After the working had been long discontinued, Sir John Anstruther, about 20 years ago, erected a fire engine, and has since that period put out an immense quantity of coal, and made salt to a large extent. There are 9 salt-pans. The average expence for the coal and salt working is about L. 50 weekly. The colliers are all free, stand engaged by the year, and are paid in proportion to the work they respectively perform. A good and laborious collier will earn about 18 s. a-week.

*Population* — According to Dr Webster, the number was 939. At present it is 1157, all residing in the town, except 4 families. Males, 541; females, 616; that is, nearly 30 females for 27 males. The disproportion between the number of males and females, may be owing to a number of the young men betaking themselves to a seafaring life; and there being no shipping here, although there is a seaport, many of them fix the residence for their families at the places from whence they sail, and so cease to appear on the parish-roll. Besides, no manufactures being carried on in this place and neighbourhood, induces another class of young men to repair to those towns where manufactures flourish, and to settle there. The females are generally stationary. The average of births is 37, of deaths 25; from which it appears, that multiplying births by 26, and deaths by 36, will produce numbers that would fall short of the actual population.

From 1684 to 1690, the average of births is	-	43
From 1699 to 1709,	-	33 $\frac{1}{2}$
From 1709 to 1719,	-	34
From 1719 to 1729,	-	38 $\frac{1}{2}$
From 1729 to 1739,	-	30 $\frac{1}{2}$
From 1739 to 1746,	-	28
From 1751 to 1761,	-	21
		From

From 1761 to 1771, the average of births is	-	20
From 1771 to 1780,	-	30
From 1780 to 1790,	-	37

From this it appears, that the population at the end of the last century was greater than at present, and was double what it was at the middle of the current century. The failure of the herring-fishing, and of the French and East Country trade, diminished, and the erection of Sir John Anstruther's coal and salt works has increased the population. The average of marriages is 7.

The number of souls under 10 years of age, is	-	260
From 10 to 20,	-	200
From 20 to 50,	-	439
From 50 to 70,	-	224
From 70 to 90,	-	34
The number of handicraftsmen, is	-	78
————— Of apprentices,	-	15
————— Of seamen,	-	72
————— Of fishermen,	-	12
————— Of miners and colliers,	-	36
————— Of household servants,	-	49
————— Of labouring servants,	-	18
————— Of persons born in England, and the British colonies,	-	10
————— Of persons born in other parishes, about		400
————— Of the Established Church,	-	1024
————— Of Seceders,	-	110
————— Of Episcopalians,	-	23

The population has increased very considerably within these 25 years, owing to the colliery and salt-works. The proportion between the annual births and whole population, is as 1 to 31; between the annual marriages and whole population, as 1 to 165; between the annual deaths and whole population, as 1 to 46; between bachelors and married

ried men, (meaning by a bachelor, a man at the age of 25, and a householder), as 1 to 18. Marriages, at an average, produce about 4 children. The number of inhabited houses is 185, and the average of inhabitants for each exceeds 6, and does not reach 7.

*Agriculture.*—Formerly the whole lands in the parish were employed in raising corn. Two-thirds of the ground was sown with rough bear, and the remaining third with wheat, oats, peas and beans. Still a larger proportion of bear and barley is sown than of any other grain. Of late years green crops have been introduced. Fields are laid down with clover and rye-grass; cabbages and kail are raised in the fields, for winter food. The average rent of lands may be L. 1, 15 s. an acre. For the best, L. 2 : 12 : 6 is paid. The land is generally not inclosed, and the rent is such, that the proprietors imagine the increase would not be a sufficient compensation for the expence of inclosing.

*Stipend, Church, Poor, &c.*—The value of the living, including the glebe, and converting the victual at 10 s. the boll (which is rather a low conversion) is L. 82. The patron is Sir John Anstruther. When the church was built is uncertain. It certainly was not originally intended for a church. Concerning it there are two traditions, one of which is, that it was some of the cloisters of an abbey, and the other, that it was the large barn or granary where the corns of the abbey were deposited, which last seems probable. The manse was built about the 1720, and received reparations afterwards. There are 22 proprietors, 7 of these are communities, viz. 3 kirk-sessions, 2 sea and 2 trade societies; 10 of the heritors reside in the burgh.—The number of poor in the parish is proportionally great. At the two last general distributions,

tions, upwards of 60 received charity. The funds for their support, arising from lands and weekly collections, are from L. 50 to L. 60 Sterling yearly. The sailors have a fund, considerably above L. 100 a-year, for the support of their own poor. They are able to make a very decent provision for the widows, both of shipmasters, and of common mariners. This society obtained about 6 years ago a royal charter. The trades have likewise a fund for their poor, which I believe is about L. 20 a-year. There are other two charitable societies, but they are still in infancy; and their annual produce is inconsiderable, but from the nature of them they must grow. One of these societies is formed by the people connected with the colliery. This seems to be a most laudable and humane institution, as accidents often happen at collieries, and it were to be wished that it generally obtained at all public works.

*Prices and Wages.*—The prices of provisions are nearly doubled within these 30 years. Beef, veal, mutton, lamb and pork, are generally sold at 4 d. the lb.; geese, at 2 s. 6 d.; ducks at 8 d.; hens at 11 d.; and rabbits at 3 d.; butter is generally 8 d. the lb.; grain is generally 2 s. the boll below the Mid Lothian fiars. The fuel made use of is coal, and the price of 400 weight is 1 s. 3 d. carriage included. The wages of domestic female servants are generally L. 2, 10 s. a-year.

*Miscellaneous Observations.*—The people in general are economical. Land is often changing proprietors, and the general price is 25 years purchase. The people do enjoy the comforts of society, and are contented with their situation.—The roads in the parish are very indifferent.

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They are kept in repair by the statute-labour, which is generally commuted. Last session of Parliament passed a bill for turnpike roads in Fife, and the great road from E. to W. will pass along by this town.—Kelp is made here, and the average quantity is 8 tons yearly.—The island of Mey, where a light is regularly kept, was a part of the priory, and is in the lordship of Pittenweem.—The principal bay nearest this is Largo Bay, and the safest harbour is Ely, 2 miles farther up the frith than Pittenweem.—One of the fleet of the Spanish Armada came to this coast in great distress, and put in to the harbour of Anstruther Easter, where the people were hospitably treated.—In the year 1779, Paul Jones, with his little squadron, lay for several hours off this harbour, about half a mile from the shore. The pilot and his crew went off, believing they were British ships, and requested some powder, which was given. The crew were permitted immediately to return, but the pilot was detained, treated very uncivilly, and was not set at liberty, until after the engagement Paul Jones had with our fleet.—There is a limestone loch to the westward of the town, which produces a considerable quantity of lime annually.—The cove or weem within the burgh is situated half way between the beach and an old abbey. It is large and capacious, consisting of 2 apartments. At the further end of the inner one, there is a well of excellent water. At the junction of the two apartments, there is a stone-stair, which carried you up a little way to a subterraneous passage, which led to the abbey, where was another stair, which landed in the great dining hall of the abbey. The two stairs still remain; but of late years the subterraneous passage was destroyed, by the impending earth sinking, and cutting off the communication. The subterraneous  
passage,

passage, I think, might be about 50 yards in length.—Dr Douglas, the present Bishop of Salisbury, was born, and received the first principles of his education here. His father was in the mercantile line.—Pittenweem was constituted a royal burgh, by a charter from King James V. in 1547. In the town's charter-chest there are many old writings, which I cannot decipher. The following extract from their records I transmit :

*' Pittenweem, decimo-quarto Feb. 1651.*

*' The bailies and council being convened, and having received information that his Majesty is to be in progress with his court along the coast to-morrow, and to stay at Anstruther house that night, have thought it expedient, according to their bounden duty, with all reverence and due respect, and with all the solemnity they can, to wait upon his Majesty, as he comes through this his Majesty's burgh, and invite his Majesty to eat and drink as he passes; and for that effect, hath ordained, that the morn afternoon, the town's colours be put upon the bertifene of the steeple, and that at three o'clock the bells begin to ring, and ring on still till his Majesty comes hither, and passes to Anstruther: And sikklike, that the minister be spoken to, to be with the bailies and council, who are to be in their best apparel, and with them a guard of twenty-four of the ablest men, with partizans, and other twenty-four with musquets, all in their best apparel, William Sutherland commanding as captain of the guard; and to wait upon his Majesty, and to receive his Highness at the West Port, bringing his Majesty and court through the town, until they come to Robert Smith's yeet, where an table is to be covered with my Lord's best carpet; and that George Hetherwick have in readyness of fine flour, some*

*' great*

' great buns, and other wheat-bread of the best order,  
' baken with sugar, cannell and other spices fitting; and  
' that James Richardson and Walter Airth have care to  
' have ready eight or ten gallons of good strong ale, with  
' Canary, sack, Rhenish wine, tent, white and claret wines,  
' that his Majesty and his court may eat and drink; and that  
' in the mean time, when his Majesty is present, the guard  
' do diligently attend about the court, and so soon as his  
' Majesty is to go away, that a sign be made to Andrew  
' Tod, who is appointed to attend the colours on the steeple  
' head, to the effect he may give sign to those who attend  
' the cannon of his Majesty's departure, and then the hail  
' thirty-six cannons to be all shot at once. It is also thought  
' fitting, that the minister, and James Richardson the oldest  
' bailie, when his Majesty comes to the table, shew the great  
' joy and sense this burgh has of his Majesty's condescend-  
' ence to visit the same, with some other expressions of  
' loyalty. All which was acted.'