

## Using historical records to investigate Scotland's rural past

### Statistical Accounts of Scotland

The Statistical Accounts of Scotland are vital sources for researching settlement and landscape change. They contain detailed descriptions of every parish in Scotland during critical periods of change in the Scottish countryside:

The First or 'Old', Statistical Account (1791-1799) was established to investigate what effect the agricultural improving movement was having upon the Scottish countryside. It contains many descriptions of traditional, farming practices, as well as descriptions of improved and experimental methods of agriculture.

The Second or 'New', Statistical Account (1834-1845) was compiled when the improving movement was in full swing and the country was experiencing a period of great economic change – the industrial revolution. As well as information about the progress of agricultural improvements, this account contains descriptions of emigration and famine across many parts of the Highlands.

Looking at the Statistical accounts will give an overview of life in the Parish of Kenmore, Perthshire, where Margdow is located. Comparisons of each of the accounts will enable you to see how rural life changed for the people in Margdow between 1791 and 1845. Complete versions of the First and Second Statistical Accounts are available to view online at <http://edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot/>

### Examples of how to use these resources

- After reading both Statistical Accounts say how the people's livelihoods improved and deteriorated in the intervening time.
- What were the major changes which took place in the parish?
- What kind of hardships did people face?
- Look at the population sections of the Statistical Accounts and describe what each of the trades does. Why would these jobs be important in a farming community?
- Were the writers sympathetic or biased in what they wrote? If so, why?

### Further ideas

- Use the Statistical Accounts of Scotland website to investigate the past in the parish where your school is located.
- Try to find a copy of the Third Statistical Account to see the records for daily life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Find other written sources which document life in your area in the past. Contact your local library, archive or museum for information
- Use an oral history archive to find out more about life in the countryside in the past. Sound recordings can be found at
  - <http://www.tiriodh.ed.ac.uk>
  - <http://www.nefa.net>
  - <http://www.ambaile.org.uk>
  - <http://www.scran.ac.uk>

- Write an account of life in your neighbourhood today, using the same structure as the Statistical Accounts.
- The Statistical Accounts mention Gaelic being spoken in Kenmore parish, and township names are often in Gaelic. Use this name evidence as a starting point for analysing place names around Scotland. The Ordnance Survey website has several sections with resources for deciphering Gaelic, Scandinavian and Scots place names. <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/freefun/didyouknow/placenames/scan.html>
- Try to find out the meaning and origin of your home town's name.

Here is a transcription of a summary of the Statistical Account. The complete version contains even more useful detail about life and society in Kenmore parish.

## **Statistical Account of Scotland (1791-1799)**

Parish of Kenmore

By The Rev. Mr Colin MacVean, Minister

See <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Perth/Kenmore/>

**Population** - This parish seems to have undergone no considerable change, with respect to population, for some considerable time past. The districts along the sides of loch Tay have, from time immemorial, been remarkably populous. In these places, the tenants, in general, have but very small possessions, several of them being crowded together in the same farm. And although it is certain that the noble proprietor might increase his rent-roll considerably, by enlarging the possessions and lessening the number of tenants, yet, knowing their attachments to their country, he allows them to remain in the abodes of their forefathers. The only villages in the parish are Kenmore and Stronfernan, the latter of which was built a few years ago, and consists of about 24 families.

It appears, by the return made by Dr Webster in the year 1755, that the population of the parish was then 3067. By a survey taken in 1794-5, the population amounts to 3463. Of these 1520 are males, and 1943 are females. The average number of marriages yearly is 24, and of births 60. The number of burials is uncertain, as there are no less than 6 burying places in the parish; and no register of burials is kept.

In the parish are 63 weavers, 38 tailors, 36 wrights, 26 shoemakers, 20 flaxdressers, 10 smiths, 9 masons, 8 coopers, 3 hosiers and 1 dyer. In the above list apprentices and journeymen are included.

**Agriculture and husbandry** - The richest and best cultivated land in this country extends nearly a mile in width on both sides of Loch Tay. The soil, which is of a loamy texture, has, in the course of time, been carried down by the rains from the higher grounds; and is enriched with the spoils of decayed animals and vegetables. Heath, bent, and coarse grasses, are the general product of the hills and muirs; but the valleys and water carried soils in the glens, etc. produce good crops of excellent grasses. The grains chiefly cultivated are oats, bear or big (four rowed barley), beans, peas, potatoes and lint. The average return of lint is commonly a stone of flax from the lippie. Potatoes in general make a good return. The old system of rotation, namely, the infield land with oats and bear alternately, and the outfield with oats and ley, is in general continued. Each farm is commonly subdivided among several tenants, a practice which does not merit the highest approbation. These tenants have each a separate lease or verbal bargain, the duration of which is commonly from year to year, at the will of the proprietor. Under such a system, agriculture cannot be expected to make great progress.

**Horses, Cows, and Sheep** – The horses, with which this and the neighbourhood parishes are stocked, are of the Highland breed, and of about 12 or 13 hands high. They are very hardy, and easily supported. Their number, in this parish, is 926. The cattle are also of the Highland kind; are kept principally for breeding, and amount to 3028. The number of sheep in the parish amounts to about 11,480. They are of the black-faced breed, which, for about half a century past, have gradually succeeded the ancient Highland, or native kind, a few of which yet remaining some places in the neighbourhood. The above numbers of the livestock are exclusive of followers. Some trials have lately been made to introduce the Cheviot breed of sheep. Lord Breadalbane, a few years ago, complimented some of his principal tenants with a few of the Cheviot sheep, by way of trial. But none of the sheep graziers have discovered any inclination to stock their farms with them, in preference to the black-faced kind.

**Rental** – The real rent of the parish may be about 2800 l. Sterling. The value of land has risen considerably these last 12 years, in consequence of the rise in price of sheep and black

cattle. The produce of the parish is supposed to be rather more than what is sufficient for the consumpt(ion) of the inhabitants.

Here is a transcription of a summary of the New Statistical account. The complete version contains even more useful detail about life and society in Kenmore parish.

## New Statistical Account of Scotland (1834-1845)

The Rev. David Duff, Minister

See <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Perth/Kenmore/>

### Population

There are no sufficiently accurate data by which we can with precision determine the ancient state of the population. The materials within our reach indicate a fluctuation, for the last hundred years, between nearly 3000 and about 400 above that number. Thus by

The return of Dr Webster in 1755, it was		3067	
Mr MacVean's census in 1794, it was		3463	
Government census in 1821, it was		3347	
Government census in 1831, it was		3126	
Parochial census in 1836, it was		3158	
In 1794	1520 Males	In 1836	1471 males
	1943 females		1687 females

It thus appears, as indeed is generally the case in rural situations, that there is a considerable excess on the side of the female population.

**Villages** – There are no towns, and even but a few such assemblages of houses as are called villages. The only places worthy of this name are Kenmore, with about 80 inhabitants, Sronfernan with about 150, and Acharn with about 90. The population is thus entirely rural.

Average yearly number of births for last seven years, 65

Average yearly number of deaths for the last seven years, 55

Average yearly number of marriages for last seven years, 24

Average number of persons under 15 years, 1067

Average number of persons between 15 and 30, 835

Average number of persons between 30 and 50, 691

Average number of persons between 70 and 70, 411

Average number of persons upwards of 70, 122

Total, according to census 1831, 3126

Number of unmarried men, bachelors, upwards of 50, 18

Number of unmarried men, widowers, upwards of 50, 39

Number of unmarried women, upwards of 45 years, 90

Number of unmarried women, widows, upwards of 45, 95

The number of families is 646; so that the average number of individuals in each family is 4.88.

Number of insane, 7; blind, 5; fatuous, 10; deaf and dumb, 2.

**Language.** – The language almost universally spoken is the Gaelic. It is likewise the language in which the greater part of the ministrations of religion is discharged. While I would say that, within the last forty years, the language has neither lost nor gained ground, I would likewise say that the English language is becoming every day more generally familiar; for there is now hardly an individual who is not capable, more or less, of making use of it. How this invasion of the speech of our southern neighbours is ultimately to operate, seems not a very difficult thing to conjecture. At no distant period, it will, in all likelihood, so far prevail over its less potent associate, as almost entirely, if not altogether, to take its place. Nor does the substitution appear to be an event greatly to be deprecated.

**Habits, etc.** – Our people are no longer the “Reidshankes” of Pitscottie, “cloathed with ane mantle, with ane schirt, fashioned after the Irisch manner, going bair-legged to the knie;” for a single instance of the kilt is scarcely to be seen from one end of the parish to the other. Irish-like, indeed, we use a vast deal of potatoes, but then we manage to season these roots with a due mixture of beef, mutton, and pork; not to speak of the milk, cheese and butter with which we are supplied from our dairies; or the higher dainties of tea and sugar with which not a few contrive to regale themselves. I believe little or no poaching of any kind takes place in the parish; and it is the same as to smuggling’ though it is spoken of as a practice which was at one time very common. Independently of what many families import themselves, there are, within the parish, for the convenience of the public, ten small retail shops, where such articles as tea, sugar, tobacco, snuff, oil, cutlery, woollen, linen, cotton, and even silk stuffs, may at any time be procured. And, as if all this were not enough, two rival bakers from Aberfeldie penetrate, twice a-week upon an average, a considerable way into the parish with well-stored carts, to supplant our oaten cakes by the substitution of wheaten bread.

**Agriculture** – The soil, the primary source of wealth all the world over, may be described as being, in general, a light brownish loam with a slight mixture of clay; such a loam as appears when hazel, birch, and the sort of underwood usually associated with these, have been grubbed out, and which has never been either richly or skilfully medicated with manure.

The distribution of the cultivated land, as to cropping, may stand nearly thus:

3100 acres in oats; chiefly the late white

1048 acres in bear; Chester

640 acres in potatoes; large Perthshire red

306 acres in turnips, peas, rye, lint

306 acres in sown grass

The livestock is nearly as follows

521 horses; 3109 black cattle; 12, 050 sheep; 500 swine.

Breeds of cattle – The common breed of cattle is the West highland; and of sheep, the black-faced. But the Ayrshire cow may sometimes be seen; as may likewise the Leicester and Southdown breeds of sheep, particularly in the parks and pastures of Taymouth.....

...Till of late years, no great attention has been paid either to the management of land, or to the breeding of stock. But the recent efforts of the Highland Society... bid fair to lead rapidly to improvements in all the departments of husbandry. The ploughing matches which annual take place in sections here and there in the country, together with the premiums given for green crops etc are already accomplishing very perceptible effects, as well in the extent and quality of these crops, as in the better aspect of the ploughs, and horses, and their harnessing.

... The farm buildings, in general, are in an indifferent state; nor, so long as the land continues so much subdivided as it has heretofore been, can they well be otherwise. As lots and crofts, however, begin to be thrown together, so as to make something like farms, an improvement now in progress, neater, more substantial, and more commodious farmsteadings as well as dwellings arise, and, as a matter of course, will more and more arise. The iron plough is becoming not uncommon; and on a farm here and there you will see the drill harrow, as you will also see larger and stouter-built carts than were formerly used. Exclusive of roads...one of the most obvious improvements recently carried on has been the clearing of land from large stones and rocks by blasting. Another is that of draining such parts of the hill pasture as are too retentive of moisture, an operation which seems to promise results highly beneficial.

**Miscellaneous observations** - In briefly noticing the more striking variations betwixt the present state of the parish, and that which existed at the time of the drawing up of the former Statistical Account, I have observed particularly, that, from the patriotic and praiseworthy exertions of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, as well as from those of a more local nature, considerable improvement has taken place in the management both of land and of live-stock. A greater extent of green crop in general, and of turnips in particular is annually cultivated; - greater attention is paid to the kind and quality of seed-corn; - the breed of horses, cattle, and sheep is in progress to be better;- and the facilities are mightily increased, whether for sending away or receiving produce. Moreover, there are afforded ampler means for the acquisition both of secular and religious instruction, insomuch that it is to be hoped that, simultaneously with the improvement of the productive powers of the soil, and of the domesticated animals, we shall have to contemplate the still higher and nobler result of man's personal advancement in knowledge, power and righteousness.