

UNITED PARISH OF LARBERT AND DUNIPACE (County of Stirling)

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Situation, extent, &c – The united parishes of Larbert and Dunipace are situated in the county of Stirling, about seven miles distant from the town, lying towards the south-east, and are within the presbytery of Stirling, and synod of Perth and Stirling. Each parish hath its own church and kirk-session. These churches were originally two chapels, belonging to the abbot of Cambuskenneth, near Stirling; But, at the Reformation, they were erected into different charges; and, since that time, have been under one minister. The extent of both parishes, from east to west, is about eight, and from south to north, about two miles. They are generally level ground; and the soil is partly of a light dry nature, and partly clayey.

Minerals – There is plenty of free-stone and coal in both parishes; but no coal is wrought at present, except at Kinnaird and Quorrole, which lie in the parish of Larbert.

Population – In former times, the parish of Dunipace was the most populous; but now the population there is greatly diminished, owing to the heritors taking the land into their own hands, and appropriating it to pasturage for large cattle, sheep, & c. The population of the parish of Larbert has increased in a very large proportion. There are about 3000 people in it above 12 years of age, consequently about 4000 in all. In Dr Webster's report, the number is 1864. There are several villages in said parish, but no market town. The number of handicraftsmen in Larbert parish is about 1500. In the parish of Dunipace, there are only about 80. The annual average of marriages in the parish of Larbert is about 31, which is taken from the records. The births in it are about 60; but, on account of the different sectaries, there are a great many who are not recorded. Of deaths, there are about 38; but there are several inhabitants in the parish of Larbert who have their burying places in other parishes, and the deaths of such are not inserted in our records. At an average of three years, there are, in the parish of Larbert, 17 baptisms, 5 marriages, and 10 burials.

Manufactories – The manufactories in both parishes are very considerable. In the parish of Dunipace, there are a printfield, and a cotton-spinning manufactory. In the parish of Larbert the famous Carron works are situated, which is one of the greatest founderies in Europe. There are about 1000 workmen employed, and about 150 carts for driving coals, iron-stone, & c. The works consist of five blast furnaces; 16 air furnaces; a clay mill for grinding clay and making fire bricks for the use of the said furnace; an engine that raises 4 tons and a half of water at one stroke, and, on an average, draws 7 strokes in a minute. This engine goes in the time of drought, and consumes 16 tons of coal in 24 hours. Besides the coals consumed by this engine, there are 120 burnt every day in the works, and by the inhabitants belonging to them. Besides the air furnaces, there are 3 copula furnaces, that go by virtue of the blast furnaces, by pipes conveyed from the machinery of the blasts. Their business is much the same with the air furnaces. There are also 4 boring mills, for boring guns, pipes, cylinders, & c. One of the boring mills is adapted for turning the guns on the outside. They have likewise smiths forges for making the largest anchors and anvils, as well as small work of various kinds; besides a forge for making malleable iron, and a plating forge: Also a forge for stamping iron, the hammer of which, with the helve, are both of cast metal, and weigh a tone and a half. A nail manufactory is likewise carried on in Larbert parish to a considerable extent.

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Church – There are no places of public worship, except the established church of Larbert and Dunipace.

Produce, & c – Neither parish can supply itself with meal, owing to so much ground being laid out in pasture. In both parishes, there are about 50 acres sown with flax, and as much with grass. There is no ground in common in either, except where the great cattle tryst is held three times in the year. It is a dry muir, belonging to Sir Michael Bruce, where, it is computed, there are between 20,000 and 30,000 cattle collected at the October tryst. The advantages enjoyed by both, are plenty of coal, and, from their vicinity to the great Canal, water carriage to and from the East and West seas at an easy rate. Of course, they have plenty of provisions brought to them from many distant places.

Antiquities - Near the Carron works once stood the famous *Arthur's Oven*, called by Buchanan *Templum Termini*. Several Danish forts, or observatories, are in these parishes; one at Larbert, another at Braes, in the parish of Dunipace, and a third in Upper Torwood. There are two artificial mounts in the parish of Dunipace, near the church. Each of them cover, at the base, about an acre of land. They are upwards of 60 feet high, and raised in a conical form. The reason of raising them is said to be for a memorial of peace which had been concluded there between the Romans and Scots (the name of the parish is supposed to originate from these two hills – they are the *Dunes pacis* or *hills of peace*). A part of one of the mounts, towards the west, was carried away (as Buchanan says) by a flood in the river Carron. At what time this happened is uncertain; but the course which the river had then taken, when it made this encroachment on the mount, is still visible. The great Roman Causeway from Carmuir, (where the Roman camp was, in the parish of Falkirk), which crossed the river Carron by a bridge, west of the village of Larbert, and went almost in a straight line to the castle of Stirling, is still entire in many parts, both in the parish of Larbert and Dunipace. In Dunipace parish is the famous Torwood; in the middle of which there are the remains of Wallace's tree, an oak which, according to measurement, when entire, was said to be about 12 feet diameter. To this wood Wallace is said to have fled, and secreted himself in the body of that tree, then hollow, after his defeat in the north. Adjoining to this is a square field, inclosed by a ditch, where Mr Donald Cargill excommunicated King Charles II.

Schools – In the parish of Larbert there are five schools, the principal of which is the parish school in Stenhousemuir. The number of scholars, in general, is between 60 and 70. The annual salary is 100 L Scotch, and 1 L Sterling as session clerk. The perquisites arising from the baptisms, marriages, and certificates, & c, amount in general to 8 L. 10s. Sterling. In the school at the village of Carron-shore, there are about 40 scholars, and the same number in the school at the village of Larbert. In another school at the colliery of Kinnaird, about 24 scholars are taught. In the parish school of Dunipace there are about 40 scholars. The fees per quarter are the same with the parish school of Larbert. The annual salary is 100 merks Scotch; the master has 1 L, Sterling per annum for being session clerk. The perquisites arising from baptisms, marriages, & c, amount to 1 L. 4s. 8d.

Miscellaneous observations – The great road that leads from Stirling to Edinburgh, goes through both parishes, upon which there is a toll bar at Torwood. This road is maintained by the toll; and other cross roads are repaired by an assessment laid upon householders, and the statute work of the farmers. The land rent is generally between 20s. and 30s. Sterling per acre. There are several funds in the parish of Larbert, besides the poor's rates, and collections at the church door. The first was erected by the Carron Company soon after they began their works, for the benefit of their workmen. The members belonging to this fund are about three hundred and twenty. There are three public houses in the parish of Larbert; one at Carron, and two in the village. There is one in the parish of Dunipace, on the road from Stirling to Glasgow. But alchouses, or rather what may be called whisky houses, are very numerous in both these parishes. In these houses a drink of good ale cannot be got; but aquavita is to be had in abundance. It has even got the better of some of the fair sex, who instead of being admired, then become the abhorrence of sober men. In general it is observed to be hurtful to the health, morals, and usefulness

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of mankind, especially when taken too often, or to excess. There are six heritors in the parish of Larbert, viz. Sir Michael Bruce, Bart. Colonel Dundas, Mr Bruce of Kinnaird, Mr Strachan of Woodside, Mr Caddel of Banton, and Mr Miles Riddell of Larbert; and three in Dunipace, viz. Mr Morehead of Herbertshire, Mr Johnston of Denovan, and Mr Spottiswood of Dunipace; each of whom keeps a four wheeled carriage. It is worthy of being recorded. to the honour of these gentlemen, that during the great scarcity in 1782 and 1783, they voluntarily raised the assessment upon their property from 20 s. to 30 s. Sterling on the 100 L. Scotch of valued rent, for the support of the poor; besides importing grain, which they sold below the market price to all who applied for it. Mr Bruce of Kinnaird, the famous Abyssinian traveller, has lately erected an elegant monument of cast metal over the vault wherein his lady and eldest son are interred, which is much admired by strangers. There have been 40 houses built within these 10 years, besides one gentleman's seat in the parish of Larbert, and only four taken down within that period. Servants wages are very high in comparison of what they were formerly, being about 10 L. per annum , besides their board; so that between the increase of rents, and the high rate of wages, the husbandman is often put to great difficulties. Such as employ cottagers seem to be easier, and better served.