
Bitesize History-Fairs

The Fair o' Hill 1863



There used to be three annual Fairs held in the Parish of Lochwinnoch. The oldest of these is called "The Fair o' Hill" from the place where it was first held in times long gone by. This fair has been held in the parish from time immemorial on the first Tuesday of November, Old Style, but the fair ground, or meeting place, has been shifted three or four times. It originally met at "The Market Hill," a portion of high lying ground about two miles to the north-east of the village, and belonging to the ancient domain of the "potent and powerful" family of Sempill. At another time it was held about St John's Hill, the highest part of the Old Town of Lochwinnoch. In course of time

is was transferred to the grounds about the Church, or what is now known as the "Auld Kirk Yard" of Lochwinnoch.

In these days the burying ground was not so well enclosed as it is at present. In the year 1781, "the wall of the church yard was rebuilt with stone and lime, about nine feet high, and two iron gates placed thereon"

Merchants, pedlers, and packmen with their wares—coopers, with laddles, luggies and other wooden dishes—drapers, with cloths and yarns—shoemakers, with shoes and boots—cattle dealers, with fed beasts, and farrow cows, these, and a great variety of other things, were year by year, regularly brought to the "Fair o' Hill" and exposed for sale at this old market in Lochwinnoch, the people crowding the church yard, and the articles being carefully laid out on the tops of the "thruch stones" lying over the graves.

After the burying ground had been enclosed, and towards the end of the last century, when the New Town was built, the place of meeting was again shifted to the present cross of the village. For many years past, the custom of bringing "all sorts of wares and merchandise" to this fair, has been abandoned, and the "Fair o' Hill" is now held only as a cattle market, and term for farmers, dealers, landlords and others to meet and settle their martinmas, and other accounts. This year, the old fair was held as usual, on Tuesday last. The day itself, for November weather, was favourable enough. The attendance of men and cattle, was large, compared with some previous years.

It is understood that very few beasts remained unsold, and that upon the whole this fair went off briskly enough.

