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# Bitesize History-Fairs

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## *The Fair o' Hill 1863*



**T**here 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

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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.



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# Bitesize History - People

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## Population 1902



**T**he present state of the population is as follows:  
Village of Lochwinnoch, 2645: Howwood, 209: Glenhead: 53 in  
the country, 1008—total, 4513. There are from fifty to sixty proprietors  
of land of the yearly value of £50 and upwards.

The Renfrewshire dialect, contains far more words derived from the Gaelic than that of many other counties. The inhabitants of this parish spoke this kind of Scotch dialect exclusively till the public works introduced people from all parts of Scotland, and even from Ireland, which has modified it somewhat.



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No game or amusement by which the inhabitants of this parish are so much distinguished as curling—which they have the best opportunities of enjoying on the fine sheet of ice on the loch of Castle Semple.

The young men and women employed in the cotton-mills can afford both to live and dress well, and their example tells upon the rest of the inhabitants. The numerous small proprietors too, are generally in better circumstances than ordinary farmers, and therefore the appearance of the congregation is much gayer than might be expected in a country parish.

Those who endure the heat, fatigue, and long confinement of the mills require a generous diet, and use it. They have generally butcher-meat at dinner, and sometimes at breakfast. This occasions an excellent market in the village. Many of the other inhabitants live in a plainer style, both in the town and country. The peasantry, I believe, generally eat porridge, and bread and cheese or milk to breakfast: broth and butcher-meat to dinner; and porridge again, or potatoes, or some other lighter food, to supper. Tea is not used in the country on ordinary occasions, except by some heads of families; but, with solitary exceptions, they live well.

In a manufacturing place like this, a great deal of ignorance and immorality may be expected. But the managers of the public works have always, much to their credit, been very careful about the character of the persons whom they employ; and the inhabitants enjoy all private as well as public means of instruction and improvement.



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# Bitesize History - Events

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## *The Paisley Glee Club 1875*



**T**he Paisley Glee Club have had an excursion to this far-famed glen, leaving County Square about two o'clock afternoon, and reaching Lochwinnoch before three. Above the hotel occupied by Mr MacMillan there is large comfortable well furnished apartment, pretty well adapted for musical meetings, which was freely placed at the disposal of the members. Mr MacMillan, we believe, is a native of Paisley, although has long resided in Lochwinnoch, and appeared very glad to see many Paisley bodies. These periodical visits of the club to this place and that are much appreciated by the members. It is a very pleasant way spending Saturday afternoon, combining the feast of reason and flow of soul with healthful recreation in the open air.



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The weather last Saturday was unusually favourable, and the enjoyment for all was correspondingly enhanced.

The books of the club have been unpacked and the conductor is ready to start we must not hinder the members from the glees selected for this meeting, which were sung in the following order:

*"In the pleasant Summer Day" .... Beale. "Health my Dear" ...Spofforth. "Abelard," ....Calcott. "Where shall we make her Grave,"....Sir H. R. Bishop. "Crabbed Age and Youth," ... Stevens.*

After the foregoing pieces were sung we were invited by Mr MacMillan to inspect his garden, and help ourselves to any quantity of his splendid crop. Having made a pretty good impression on the grozets, it was decided that every man should pocket his book and set out for the glen.

Here the following glees were tried, although not so satisfactorily as could be wished on account of the noise of water dashing among the rocks:

*"Green of the Valley," ... Calcott. "The Mighty Conqueror,"....Webb "Come, Bounteous May," ....Spofforth.*

Whilst the singing was going on a numerous party of Good Templars from Paisley made their appearance on the edge of the cliff, where they did us the honour of listening to our efforts, and applauding them far beyond their merits. It was decided, however, that the remainder of the programme should be sung within doors. Accordingly tracks were made for the village, and the glees still the list were sung in our former quarters:

*"Are White Hours for ever fled?" "Come live with me and be my Love," "If love and all the world were young," "Adien, ye Streams," "Wanton Gales," "Sweet Poet of the Woods," "How often have I seen the generous Bowl,"*

