

A survey of life in a rural community in the early twenty-first century



Tynron Doon

Photograph by Eunice Laidlaw

Tynron 2007

The Statistical Account of Scotland

At the end of the eighteenth century Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster provided the Scots with an unique analysis of their own times. He wrote to all the ministers of the established church and persuaded them to respond to a formidable list of queries about their parishes. From their replies, during the 1790s he published *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791–1799*.

The ‘statistical’ had none of the mathematical connotations of today. Sinclair’s ‘account’ was ... ‘an enquiry into the state of a country for the purpose of ascertaining the quantum of happiness enjoyed by its inhabitants and means of its future improvement.’ This interpretation was made by many of the ministers themselves and the contributions frequently include information beyond that originally requested.

A New Statistical Account was published in 1845 and a *Third Statistical Account* in 1955. The present account for Tynron differs from previous ones in that it was compiled from questionnaires sent to the households in the parish and collated and edited by a committee of residents in time to celebrate the anniversary of the parish hall.

George Freeborn
Chair Tynron Community Council

Introduction

Our reflections and statistics are based on a survey sent to each household listed on the regularly updated electoral register. Sixty-eight surveys were posted or delivered and 41 returned completed. These incomplete statistics may not always reflect the true picture of the parish today.

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Community Council members
and Mimi Craig and Helen White*

Acknowledgements

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Tynron Parish Hall

Tynron Parish Hall, known locally as ‘the hall’, was formerly a carpenter’s workshop. In 1926 an agreement was made between the MacRaes, owners of the Stenhouse estate, and Francis Gourlay, chair of the Parish Council, to donate the hall to the community of Tynron under the guidance of trustees. In 1927 the hall officially became a place for the community to ‘meet and greet’ and remains central to Tynron’s activities 80 years on. The current seven-member hall committee continues to ensure that the hall remains in a reasonable state of repair and is used for the maximum benefit of the community.

The hall is central for a variety of regular events including Community Council and hall committee meetings, the ‘rural’, and indoor bowls, as well as coffee mornings, silent auctions, car boot sales and much more.

Philip Armstrong
Chair Parish Hall Committee

Location

The parish of Tynron, situated in the west of Dumfriesshire, is about ten miles long and four miles wide. The boundary includes the Shinnel Glen, the lower part of the Scaur Glen, and the village of Tynron Kirk. Tynron Doon dominates the area. This dramatic landmark is of considerable geological interest and is steeped in history.

Population

(based on 60 percent response to survey)

| Age | Number | Age | Number |
|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| 0–5 | 2 | 18–25 | 5 |
| 5–11 | 2 | 25–60 | 40 |
| 11–18 | 14 | Over 60 | 34 |

The 2007 electoral register lists 130 people while the 1988 register listed 114 people, with many names appearing on both lists.

Employment

Tynron has a varied community with 39 different occupations – current and retired – listed on the survey. Agriculture continues to dominate. Other occupations

include health care, social care, education, administration, retail, artists, musicians of international fame, equestrian, gardening, groundsman, tree surgery, a clergyman, patent attorney and a BAFTA award film director. The following numbers include people working or who have worked: there are 23 people who work from home, five work within the parish, 24 work within Dumfries and Galloway and 11 work away from the area.

Education

There is no longer a school in the parish. Most of the younger children attend Penpont Primary School and the older children go to Wallace Hall Academy in Thornhill. Local students also attend colleges and universities in Dumfries and further afield.

Agriculture

Agriculture has greatly changed since the previous records. Many smaller farms have amalgamated to make larger units and many fields have been joined to make larger fields. Although some fields remain surrounded by stone dykes, dykes fallen into disrepair are being replaced by fences. Cropping is mainly silage for winter fodder and some hay is grown. More machinery is used and less manpower, resulting in the sale of farm cottages

which are no longer required for farm workers. Machinery is becoming larger and more powerful, so many jobs, such as silage and sheep shearing, are done faster, with less effort and labour. Shepherds tend their sheep from quad bikes as they have larger areas to cover and more sheep to look after.

Sheep are the main product of farming, along with beef cattle. There is no dairying and no households left which milk their own cow. Since all the surveys were not returned, it is impossible to give actual numbers of livestock. Sheep breeds range from Scottish Blackface, to Texel, Suffolk and even a few Shetland sheep. Cattle breeds are mainly Charolais, Aberdeen Angus and Limousin. Several households still keep a few hens, geese, and ducks. The majority of working dogs are farm collies, with a small number of gun dogs. There are no working horses.

Machinery

Machinery, both agricultural and domestic, has changed the lifestyle of Tynron residents. All households except one own at least one car, and a few several. Based on a 60 percent response, there are 52 cars, nine 4x4s and two vans. Other forms of transport recorded are 12 quad bikes, five bicycles, four motorcycles, two lorries, a 'disabled buggy' and 'historic' vehicles, including a vintage car. At least 11 tractors with a wide range of agricultural attachments and other related machinery are

in use. Garden machinery, such as powered lawnmowers, lawn tractors, strimmers and wood crushers are also a recent development.

Housing

Most of the houses in the parish are traditional style, built of the local whinstone and sandstone and many of the older houses have been improved and altered over the years to meet present-day standards. Information gathered from the questionnaires indicates the age and number of houses built.

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Pre-twentieth century | 31 |
| Twentieth century | |
| <i>pre-war</i> | 4 |
| <i>post-war</i> | 5 |
| Twenty-first century | 1 |
| <i>under construction</i> | 3 |

Planning permission has been granted for four new houses.

In recognition of its architectural heritage, the village of Tynron Kirk has been designated a Conservation Area for planning purposes.

Shopping

We included household shopping in the questionnaire as both the village shop and the mobile shops have closed. All people use the local shops at Thornhill, Penpont and Moniaive, and some people shop in all three villages.

The major change in shopping habits is the introduction of supermarkets. All but four people shop at the supermarket, with several shopping online. Farmers' markets, farm-online and Loch Arthur were also specified.

Leisure

Another great change in Tynron life is the increase in the time for leisure and the private transport to pursue a wide range of activities. The 'Rural' (Scottish Women's Rural Institute) has been meeting in Tynron for 84 years, between October and May with an outing in June, and continues to flourish with a strong membership of 15. Speakers are mainly from outwith the parish. Topics range from birdwatching to dog-sled racing, as well as cookery and crafts.

Carpet bowling remains popular during the winter months, with two tournaments with fellow bowlers from other clubs. More recent regular activities include Tai Chi, yoga, 'dancercise' and country dancing; this has led to the popularity of ceilidhs for all ages. Two parish members recently won the hotly contested D&G Dance

Fever. The 'Right-to-Roam' has encouraged more hillwalking – a weekly walk starts from the parish hall each Thursday evening. Football is the most popular sport despite there being no facilities in the parish. Many people also travel for golf, swimming, scuba diving, skiing, snowboarding, climbing, kayaking and curling. Painting, photography, sewing and music feature throughout the community; natural history, ornithology, geology, vintage cars/tractors and clock restoration are enjoyed by the few.

Many people are members of clubs outwith the parish, including the Dalgarno Singers (Thornhill), the Embroiders' Guild, book groups, Burn's clubs and Rotary.

Domestic pets

Cats and dogs are as popular as in previous accounts. Pet dogs almost outnumber working dogs. Most cats are domestic pets and there are fewer farm cats. There are also a dozen horses, two Tamworth pigs, two peacocks and doves and bees.

Religion

The nineteenth-century William Burn-designed church ceased to be used as a parish church in 1997 and was subsequently sold. It is now owned by persons outwith

the parish who remain unknown. To date, they have done nothing to the building apart from minimal repairs. The memorial plaque from the 1914–18 war has been moved from the church and installed in the parish hall.

Upon closure of the church, the congregation combined with Penpont and Thornhill parishes where services are held regularly.

Attendance at places of worship has continued to decline. Our survey of attendance indicates:

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Regular attendance | 10 |
| Special occasions | 21 |
| Not applicable | 21 |

The churchyard is maintained by the council and continues to be used as a burial ground.

The stone war memorial cross commemorating parishioners who died in the 1914–18 and 1939–45 wars is the setting for a short service on Armistice Sunday. The area behind the memorial has been tidied up to create a peaceful garden area.

Public services

Electricity is mostly available throughout the parish. Public transport has reduced over the years, although the local bus between Moniaive and Thornhill continues to pass through the village twice daily. The school buses take the children to Penpont and Thornhill during term

time and the morning bus delivers the newspapers to the 'ammunition box' beside the parish hall. The nearest rail stations are at Sanquhar and Dumfries, Thornhill station having been closed years ago.

The public telephone box, prominently situated by the village hall, was under threat by BT but given a reprieve thanks to intervention by the Community Council. The Post Office is closed but there is a daily collection from the box in the village. Most houses are supplied with mains water, the pipes being renewed in 2006, but sewerage is managed by septic tanks.

The D&G travelling library visits the village every three weeks.

The services of a community policeman are shared with Thornhill and Moniaive. The nearest GP surgeries are in Thornhill and Moniaive. The small hospital at Thornhill is under threat of closure.

Energy

Although electricity is generally available, several people did not refer to it although they did use electrical goods. Two households are generating their own hydropower and another investigating this method. Oil is by far the most used secondary fuel, followed by wood, then coal. Several people use LPG.

Technology

Modern technology is the greatest change to parish life today. All people own at least one telephone and many have several mobile phones. The majority of people own at least one computer and several added internet, broadband, scanners, printers, photocopiers, ipods, playstations, computer games, palm plot, satellite navigation, and much more. All respondents except seven own at least one television set (one TV owner specified 'never watch it') and many added DVDs, videos and Sky TV.

Wildlife

Based on the survey results:

Animals

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Badger | Otters |
| Bats | Rabbits |
| Dormouse (rare) | Rats are increasing |
| Feral cats | Red squirrel |
| Fox | Roe deer |
| Hares | Short-tailed voles |
| Hedgehog | Stoat |
| House mice | Weasel |

Fish

Trout in the Shinnel
Salmon in the Shinnel

Insects

The clothes moth is on the increase
Wild bees
Humming bird hawk moth
Vine weevil

Birds

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Barn owls | Nuthatch |
| Carrion crow | Peregrine falcon |
| Dipper | Pied flycatcher |
| Flycatcher | Raven |
| Great spotted woodpecker | Redstart |
| Green finch | Siskin |
| Green woodpecker | Sparrow hawk |
| Heron (there is a heronry) | Tree creeper |
| Kingfisher | Yellow hammer |
| Long-tailed tit | Yellow wagtail |
| Magpie | |

Flora

Tynron is rich in flowers and plant life, some dating to Roman times.

LESS COMMON FLOWERS

Arum italicum (lords and ladies)
Caltha palustris (marsh marigold)
Campanula rotundiflora (harebell)
Cichorium intybus (chicory)
Chrysosplenium oppositifolium (opposite leaved golden saxifrage)
Convallaria majalis (lily of the valley)
Fritallaria meleagris (fritillary)
Geranium pratense (meadow cranesbill)
Geum rivale (water avens)
Helleborus viridis (green hellebore)
Hypericum perforatum (tutsan)
Impatiens glandulifera (Indian balsam)
Iris foetidissima (stinking iris)
Lychnis flos-cuculi (ragged robin)
Malva moschata (musk mallow)
Narcissus pseudonarcissus (wild daffodil)
Orchis mascula (early purple orchid)
Oxalis acetosella (wood sorrel)
Oxalis corniculata (yellow oxalis)
Petasites hybridus (butterbur)
Primula veris (cowslip)
Primula vulgaris (primrose)
Rhinanthus minor (yellow rattle)
Salvia pratensis (meadow clary)
Symphytum officianale (common comfrey)
Tussilago farfara (coltsfoot)
Viola riviriana (dog violet)

Woodland

Tynron is fortunate to retain several areas of designated ancient woodland, such as Kirkland, Craigturra, Hulston and Aird, with their beech, oak and other protected species. The juniper wood at Ford is a nature conservation site of international importance, and Stenhouse Wood is under the care of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The matured forest at the head of Shinnel Glen is being felled and removed by contractors outwith the parish. Other trees include sitka, Norway spruce, Japanese and hybrid larch, noble fir and Scots pine. All the elm trees have been dead for some years.

Notes

