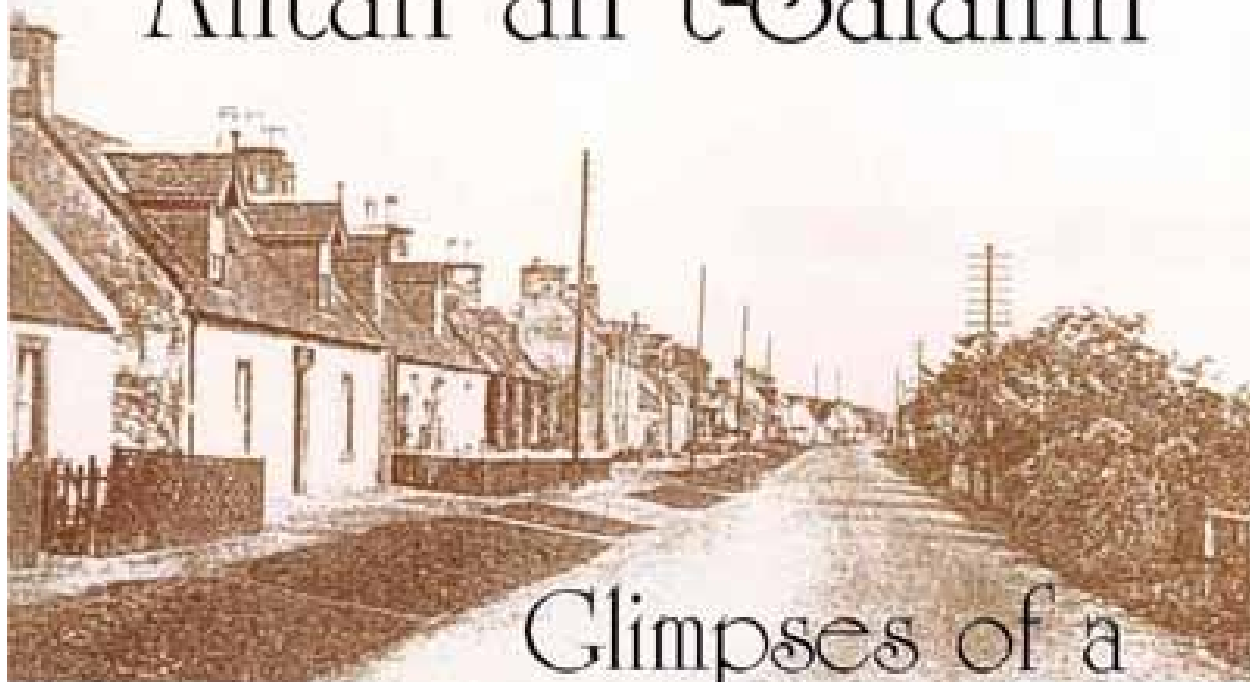
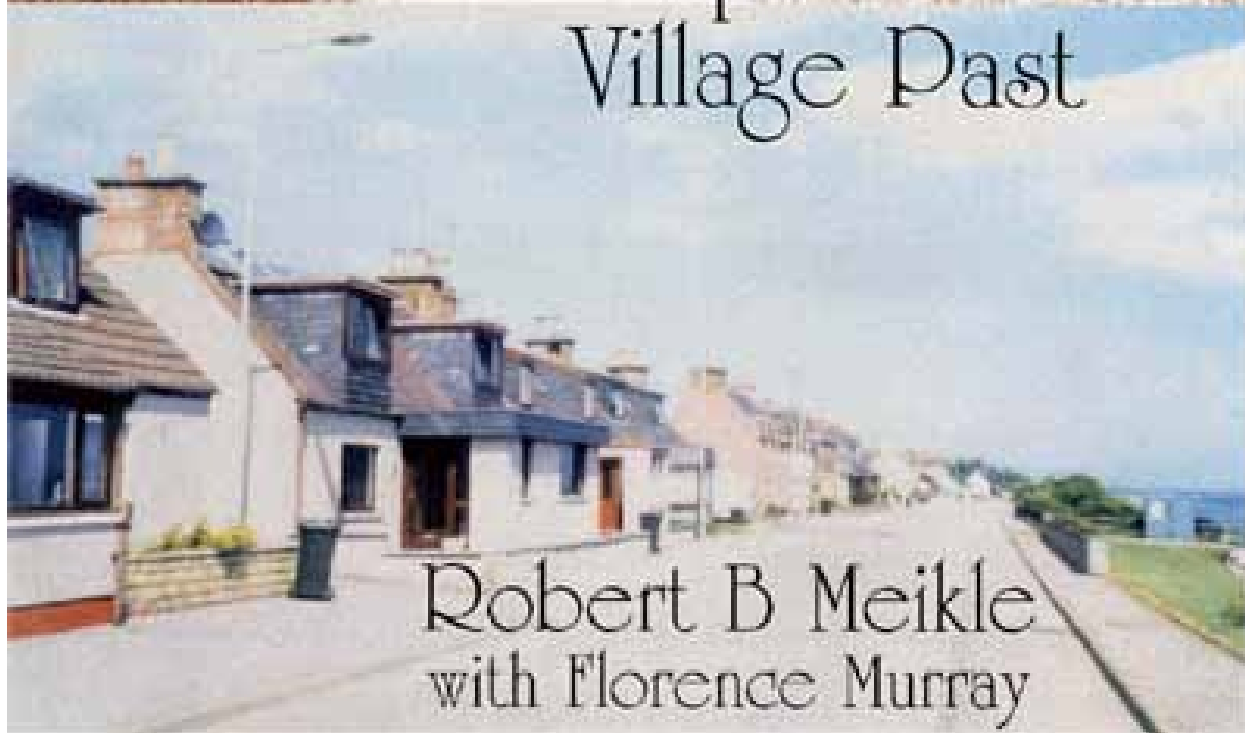


Saltburn

Alltan an t-Salainn



Glimpses of a
Village Past



Robert B Meikle
with Florence Murray

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Saltburn. Alltan an t-Salainn.
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Introduction

In August, 1999, I determined to find out a little more about Saltburn, my home village now for 25 years. Although aware of a considerable body of yet-to-be-recorded oral history of the village, both accurate and anecdotal, I decided to copy and to analyse the information relating to Saltburn in the six National Censuses available to the public.

The copying took place in Inverness Library and the analysis, re-awakening the long-dormant skills of a retired dominie, is intended to create a factual record of the village for others, now and in the future. In effect there follow six snapshots of Saltburn, six days frozen by the census takers over a period of fifty years, from 1841 until 1891.

The pleasure of recording, linking one census to the next and, above all, of peeping respectfully into the lives of the farm labourer and the mason, the tradesman, scholar and pauper has been considerable, exciting the imagination.

As ever, one thing led to another and the results of examining old village plans and a newspaper cutting of 1929, together with a wish to record the village in the Millennium year saw more material added to the census analysis.

However, the jewel of these glimpses of the past, a memoir written some years ago by Florence Murray reveals details and a dimension of village life against which the mere interpretation of statistics and plans pales significantly. Luckily, though, the memoir and analyses complement each other.

This little work is affectionately dedicated to the good folk of Saltburn, past and present, who have striven to make this village an independent, happy place in which to live and work and in particular to a wise, wonderful lady who shares her precious, magical memories with us.

September 2001



Saltburn panorama.

The 1841 Census

This was Scotland's first door to door census, but a relatively crude one. In it were recorded houses, inhabited and not, but not always addresses. The names of the inhabitants were recorded and their ages. The latter, however, were generally rounded down to the nearest five years, with the under-5s accurately aged. Relationships of residents to the head of households - eg wife, daughter, grandson - were not recorded. Nuclear families, that is 2 parents and child/children, are fairly obvious, but the method by which the Census defined 'Distinct Families' is not. Means of livelihood were defined, occupations, pensioners for example, but one suspects that this was done only partially. Finally, places of birth, namely Scotland or not and Ross County or not were recorded.

The People

On June 7th, 1841, 292 people were recorded living in Saltburn. The Saltburn census-enumeration area also included houses to the north of the village near Ord and the Kinraig road where some 37 residents were recorded. 31 folk were absent from the area on Census Day and it seems reasonable to assume that most of them lived in the village and thus to estimate a village population of 319, 136 males and 183 females.

94 'distinct families' were recognised in the census area and in the absence of clear definition, one can only note that of the 75 village 'households', 13 had one resident, 7 were husband and wife-occupied, 33 had nuclear families and 22 comprised other social groupings.

Every one of the 292 recorded residents was born in Scotland and almost 99% of them were Ross-shire born, there being only 4 who were not, a clear indication of the static nature of the community and the surrounding area in 1841. As explained in the preamble, ages recorded were mostly approximations, consequently analysis of age structure can only be an approximation. Clearly Saltburn was a young village with 38% of the population being 14 or under, 24% young adults (14-34), 34% aged 35-64 and only 4% aged 65 or over.

Livelihoods

The census recorded how folk made their living or how they were supported. Apparently, 62 people (56 males, 6 females), that is 19% of the population, were in employment. The land, naturally, was a major employer, with 8 farmers, 12 male agricultural labourers, 4 female farm servants, 3 gardeners, 2 cartwrights, a ditcher and a stoneblaster. Perhaps surprisingly, the sea occupied only a salmon fisher, a harbour inspector and a merchant seaman. Building trades were well represented with 15 masons, 3 thatchers and 2 house carpenters. 3 tailors, a shoemaker, a cooper, 2 hemp spinners (working in the Invergordon works?), 2 spirit dealers and a teacher complete the list of 19 occupations. 3 residents had independent means and 2 were army pensioners, with the quite chilling statistic that 26 folk, all but 2 being female, were recorded as being paupers. Their ages ranged from 20 to 80, (10 were under 40 years old) and they were without visible means of support.

Housing

There were 75 houses in Saltburn, 4 of them listed as uninhabited. However, all 4 were occupied, 2 by paupers, 2 by families. No details of houses are available but 52 of them housed 5 or fewer people and 6 houses sheltered 8 or more villagers with one of them having 11 occupants. Many of them were thatched.

Surnames

There were 26 surnames in the village, virtually all Scottish. Three names dominate all others. There were 54 MacKenzies, 54 Ross's and 88 Munros, the last more than 1 in 4 of the population, clearly showing the inter-related nature of the village.

Summary

The 1813 surveying of the Cadboll Estates led to the consolidation of the estate's tenant farms and the removal and resettlement of these farmers and their families. At Alltan an t-Salainn (Little Burn of the Salt), a new village, with a new name, Saltburn, was created by laying out 30 feus along the shore of the Cromarty Firth, with room for further expansion. These feus were occupied by those displaced from the new farm of Ord1s lands and from other new Mid-Ross farms. ('This Noble Harbour' 1991)

Analysis of the 1841 census seems to show that, with 75 houses in the village, the allowed-for expansion had taken place. Saltburn was already a sizeable community in relation to Invergordon village which had some 700 residents. It was close-knit, housing locally-born folk, and a core of tradesmen, craftsmen and farming folk was tempered by a considerable number of poor people. The population age structure reflected that of the country at that time with a preponderance of young people and young adults. The more detailed 1851 census should show interesting changes and a more sharply defined picture of the community.

The 1851 Census

Held on 31 March, 1851, the census was more refined than its predecessor, recording houses, addresses, inhabitants' accurate ages and their (marital) condition, heads of households and the relationship to them of all others in the house. Occupations were recorded and the county and parish of birth of all residents.

The People

The census reveals 342 folk living in the village, 160 males and 182 females, a 7% increase on 1841. All but one young lad were Scots-born, indeed 94% of the residents were Ross-born and 60% were born in Rosskeen Parish. Virtually everyone was born in the Highlands with small numbers from Moray and Sutherland. Analysis of ages shows a village population with 112 young folk 14 or under, almost 33% of the total, a 25% young adult sector (15-34), 35% of those aged 35-64 and only 24 people or 7% aged 65 or over.

There were 82 household groupings. 11 houses were occupied by one person, 9 by husband and wife couples, 45 by nuclear families and 17 by other groupings eg. 7 single parent families, 4 brother/sister households and 4 houses sheltered paupers. Of the 45 families, 13 had five or more children and the average family size (including parents) was 5.3. 9 of these families had lodgers and interestingly, 4 of these were female paupers of mature years, examples of a mutually-rewarding arrangement! Overall, 14 households had lodgers, a feature of the time, as was the presence of young relatives, grandchildren, nieces and so on.

Livelihoods

By 1851, 105 folk, some 31% of the village populace were in employment, a 12% increase. The occupation profile changed noticeably from 1841, in that 55 men, over half of the working population of Saltburn, laboured for a living. Most were in farming, which had fallen from 50% to 30% of total jobs, the rest in general labouring. Combined with a strong building trade sector (26 masons, 3 house carpenters, 2 thatchers), this suggests a response to an increase in the labour demands of the large progressive farms and the rapid development of new settlements. There were 6 hemp spinners, a seaman and a shellfisher. Tradesmen included 3 tailors, 2 shoemakers, 2 cartwrights, a cooper, a blacksmith, a sawyer, and a riddlemaker. Dealing in spirits clung on, with a part-time mason tending to local needs! Only 1 farmer and 2 crofters are listed, but many residents may have been part-time crofters¹, cultivating their feus. 24 women worked, 18 as agricultural labourers, 6 as hemp spinners.

4 Chelsea pensioners were in residence, apparently thriving and in no need of Viagra, one of 71 having 2 daughters under 13, another 80 years young with a 45 year old wife and 3 youngsters, 15, 13 and 8 years of age! The number of paupers had fallen from 27 to 17, one of them being the 87 years old father of two offspring in their twenties! 3 retired residents were recorded.

Scholars

The identification of scholars gives one a vague sketch of education in 1851. 67 young folk were so recorded ranging in age from 6 to 20. All but one were 7 or over, half were 12 or over and one in

five were middle to late teenagers. This first such census record provides an encouraging picture of the quest for learning, and may have included a number in tertiary education. 27 youngsters between 5 and 13 years of age were not under education.

Surnames

31 surnames, again predominantly Scots, were recorded. It will come as no surprise that there were 38 MacKenzies, 66 Ross's and 99 Munros, these 3 surnames accounting for two thirds of all residents. One wonders if nicknames or bye names were a distinguishing tool!

Summary

By 1851, the village had grown a little in both total population and the number of houses, 74, with a further 6 under construction. A marginal increase in people born outside Ross-shire shows some inward movement of population. However, since only 25 of 1841's 75 'families' were clearly still living in Saltburn, outward movement was even more pronounced. A definite growth in employment, with a shift from self-employment to labouring and many more employed in construction reflected a developing economy in town and country. The village was in a progressive period in 1851 and the 1861 Census may show this continuing.

The 1861 Census

The census of 6 April, 1861 additionally sought information on mental handicaps, those afflicted by blindness, deafness or dumbness and on how many rooms in the house had 1 or more windows.

The People

The village population fell by 15% to 289, the lowest total of the three censuses so far administered. 122 males and 167 females were recorded living in 93 household groupings in 76 houses.

91% of all villagers were born in Ross-shire, 55% of them in Rosskeen Parish and with over 99% born in Scotland, only 8 people were born outwith the Highlands. The age structure changed, with those aged under 35 almost equalling those aged 35 and over. Just over a quarter of the residents were under 14 and just under a quarter were younger adults, aged 14 to 34. Over one third were older adults, 35 to 60 years old, and another considerable rise in the over-65s to 15% saw 42 such seniors living in Saltburn. Uniquely, one, a former thatcher born in the parish, was 100 years old, born not all that long after the '45!

Livelihoods

97 villagers (34%) were in employment and only 13 occupations were recorded. Agricultural labouring and masonry accounted for 3 out of 4 jobs with 55 labourers and 21 masons. There were 5 cartwrights, a crofter, a thatcher and 2 house carpenters. 2 grocers, 2 tailors and 2 shoemakers plied their trades and 2 domestic servants, a sailor, a proprietor of houses and 2 teachers of English complete the list. 72 males and 25 females were employed, the latter virtually all farm labourers or domestic servants. 17 paupers were identified, 15 females and 2 males, two out of three being over 60 years of age. There were 2 pensioners.

Scholars

Consistent with the age structure, a relatively small number of children, 34, were scholars, being educated either at school or at home. 15 youngsters between 5 and 13 years old were not scholars. This is a fairly rough indication of the educational health of the village since compulsory education and the Education Act was still 11 years away. A 'day school' is recorded, with no details of its size or location, but, certainly, it occupied the present community centre building and was built in 1859 just outside the village boundary.

Surnames

31 were recorded, Munro (83), Ross (51) and MacKenzie (34) again dominated all others and accounted for 6 out of 10 folk. Once again Scots names were in huge majority. It was interesting to note 7 Christians and 2 Christys among female Christian names. The feminisation of male names, a popular fashion then, gave a Hughina, a Hectorina and an Alexanderina!

Windowed Rooms

For the first time, the census, perhaps revealing authority's interest in and concern with living conditions, records 43 households having 1 room with 1 or more window(s), 42 with 2 such rooms, 5 with 4 such rooms and 1 household revelling in the luxury of 5 rooms with at least 1 window.

Summary

In this, the first year of the American Civil War, the smallest population to date, a narrow range of occupations and a dearth of scholars in an oldish population seem to indicate a downturn in Saltburn's prosperity. The healthy increase of 'senior citizens' numbers, relatively fewer paupers and a population a little less insular in birthplace compensate for such minor gloom. The difficulty of matching 93 households, namely schedule entries, to 76 houses continues to bedevil the author as do descriptions of occupations. For example, agricultural labourer could mean something slightly different from census to census. What will 1871 reveal?



Three Wise Men



The "Village Black-
smith" at the present
day, - a good specimen
Don't you think so L. J. d

The 1871 Census

This census differed very little from its predecessor. However the nation's consciousness of education led to the more precise recording of all those between the ages of 5 and 13 attending school or being educated at home.

The People

279 residents were recorded living in the village on 3rd April 1871, the lowest total in 30 years and a drop of 3.5% from 10 years before. There were only 114 males and 165 females. 57% of them were parish-born, 85% were born in Ross-shire - a clear decrease - and 97% were born in the Highlands with no one born outside Scotland. Some 34 of 1861's households were still in Saltburn showing a fair degree of stability of population. Overall the balance of younger and older people differed little from 1861, the under-35s and over-35s being in a 51% to 49% ratio. The under-14s increased a little to 31%, the 15-34 and 35-64 age groups dropped to a lowly 20% and to 30% respectively, and the over-65s peaked at 19% of the total population. 88 household entries in the census inhabited 77 houses, with 6 houses uninhabited and 1 being built. There were 30 nuclear families, 19 single parent families, and 13 households were occupied by couples, 16 by sole occupants, 8 by brothers/sisters and 2 others.

Livelihoods

The proportion of villagers in employment rose again, to 37%, and for a third consecutive census. 103 people, 79 males, 24 females, worked for a living. Labouring, generally (17) and agriculture (21) and the masonic trade (19) accounted for over half of the total. Agriculture further employed a farmer, 6 crofters and a dyker. Marine occupations re-appeared with 5 fishermen, 5 seamen and a ships carpenter. Tradesmen included a cooper, a tailor, 3 carpenters and 2 shoemakers. There were also a cartwright, a thatcher, a flesher (butcher) and a blacksmith. A greatly increased range of occupations included a bank accountant, an engineer-fitter, a compositor, a clerk, a dressmaker and a sewing mistress. The extension of the Highland Railway line from Dingwall to Invergordon in 1863 and to Tain in 1864 explains a platelayer and a pointsman living in Saltburn. A merchant, 3 general servants and 4 domestic servants conclude an impressive list. The number of paupers rose by 6 to 23. All were women, 10 spinsters and 13 widows, all were over 60 and 12 were over 70 years of age. One pauper was described as 'fatuous', doubting the authenticity of her status. Female jobs, almost inevitably depended on farm work (11) and service (8) with 5 others.

Surnames

Again, 31 were recorded with the ever-dominant trio of Munro (71), Ross (31) and MacKenzie (28) accounting for almost half of all village surnames. Scottish names again predominated but a Portuguese surname, Sylva, introduced a new dimension. In Christian names Murdoina, Jamesina and Alexina, long lost variations, caught the eye.

Scholars

There were 52 'scholars' aged between 5 and 13 and only 6 young people of this age group were not being educated. The availability of this information on a national scale must surely have informed the Government as it prepared the Education Act for introduction in 1872.

Windowed Rooms

Incomplete details on the microfiche of the census prevent a full analysis and only 55 of the 88 households can be examined. On average, each of them had 2 windowed rooms, 21 having 1 such room, 19 having 2, 6 had 3, 8 had 4 and one had 5 rooms with 1 or more windows. There seems to be a clear improvement from 1861.

Summary

A small drop in population and an increase in the number of young people are the only significant changes in the demography of the village. A considerably greater range of jobs would surely have enlivened the life of Saltburn. Hardship, reflected in the continued, increased presence of paupers, was a constant companion and, as occupations over 30 years show, life was hardly easy for virtually everyone. Education was in good heart, though, and housing almost certainly had improved over the decade. Will 1881 witness this momentum continuing?

The 1881 Census

The census of 1881, taken on April 4th, 1881, was very similar to that of 1871. Scholars were accurately identified but not so specifically. It seems that almost informally, since no official heading/question is printed, Gaelic speakers were identified and tallied in the enumerator's hand.

The People

The village population rose to 299, a 7% rise in a decade and the biggest total for 30 years. This increase was due almost entirely to 21 more male residents, 135 in all, with 164 females. 88 'household' entries inhabited 81 houses and 3 uninhabited houses were recorded. There were 29 nuclear families, couples made up 7 households, sole occupants numbered 17, there were 14 single parent families, 9 households of siblings and 12 other groupings. The average family size was 5, another peak. 35% of villagers were aged under 14, a figure nearly reaching the 1841 peak, and with 21% belonging to the 15-34 age group, Saltburn again showed a youthful age structure. Older adults (35-64) comprised 34% with only 31 folk (10%) 65 years or over, a considerable drop from 1871. However, among them were 10 octogenarians! Rosskeen Parish-born folk totalled 50%, the lowest percentage so far and 88% of villagers were Ross-shire-born. 94% were born in the Highlands and a mere 5 souls outside Scotland. Some 35 of 1871's 88 households can still be recognised as resident in Saltburn, in whole or in part, displaying considerable stability of population.

Livelihoods

Only 11 paupers were recorded in this census, by far the smallest total in the 40 years so far covered. 116 people, 39% of the population, were in employment in a wider range of 30 occupations. The predomination of labouring, with 23 general labourers and 13 farm servants (a description seemingly interchanged with 'agricultural labourer' but none-the-less disappointingly vague!) and masonic work (17) accounted for almost half of the jobs. A shepherd, 2 gardeners and a dyker also earned a living from the land. There were 2 fishermen, a sailor, a seaman and a ships carpenter. Skilled tradesmen included a house carpenter, a cartwright, 3 tailors, 3 dressmakers and a shoemaker. 2 bakers, a grocer, a coachman, 2 teachers, a bank accountant and an engineer extend the variety. The railway employed a clerk, a surfaceman and a platelayer. Finally, almost surprisingly, service gave employment to the biggest group of villagers. Female all, 20 general servants and 8 domestic servants perhaps reflected the needs of the Victorian era. 4, possibly 5 shops were recorded, one a grocer's, one a baker's, it can be deduced, but details are given of none of them. A new group, dealers, emerged and 2 general dealers and 3 horse dealers, all possibly transient, were recorded. 75 males and 41 females worked, the latter in service (see above), in farm service (7), dressmaking (3) and others (3).

Surnames

Munro (45), Ross (38) and MacKenzie (24) were still the top 3, by some margin, in a record total of 36 names and they accounted for just over 1 in 3 surnames. As usual Scots names dominate and, once again, new names showed population influx and movement. Such changes are even shown in 'the top 3', which covered two in three of all villagers in 1841 and halved in 'popularity' 40 years on.

Scholars

72 scholars were evidence of a commitment to compulsory education, with only 3 youngsters aged 5 to 13 not classed as scholars. Only 5 of the 72 were aged over 13 years.

Windowed Rooms

These averaged two for the 88 households. Again most had 1 or 2 such rooms, with only 20 houses having 3 or more.

Gaelic Speakers

33 were identified, only 7 of them being under 35 years of age and 2 out of 3 were over 50 years old. No indication of fluency in the language is given, however.

Summary

In 1881 Saltburn seems to have enjoyed a little upturn in its wellbeing. An increased, rejuvenated population enjoyed very full employment, especially for females, in the widest-yet range of occupations. Education was healthy and the dearth of paupers suggests a slightly more affluent village. Several finer houses date from 1880 and confirm this. Will this continue in the last census of the 19th century?

The 1891 Census

Taken on 5th April, 1891, this, the last census of the 19th century refined details of employment by classifying Employers, Employed and Self-employed. Those who spoke Gaelic and Gaelic and English were also recorded. Otherwise the census was the same as that of 1881.

The People

Only 254 inhabitants were recorded, a large decrease of 45 (18%) over the decade. 120 males and 134 females lived in only 64 houses, 3 houses were uninhabited and 77 social groups can be identified. There were 28 nuclear families, averaging 4.5 persons, 15 single parent families, 6 couples, 19 sole occupants, 5 households of siblings and 4 others. 45 of 1881's 88 households remained in the village. Just over half of the village folk (54%) were born in Rosskeen Parish, 86% were born in Ross-shire and 91% were Highland-born, with nearly 4% born outwith Scotland. Saltburn's age structure changed once more, maturing again, with under-35s and over-35s virtually in balance. Less than one third (30%) were children under 14, one in five were young adults (14-34), older adults (35-64) formed a considerable slice of 36% and one in seven was aged 65 or over, a rise from 1881.

Livelihoods

The apparent rate of employment, 37%, and the number of occupations, 27, were high. 93 folk were in employment, it seems, 64 males and 29 females. The word apparent is necessary since the refinement referred to above records 1 employer, 52 employed and 15 self-employed people. If these 68 people were the only folk in employment, then 25 were not, an unemployment rate of 27%. However the total of 68 could be a partial record of the status of the 93 villagers. Since previous censuses gave no such details, we can but compare occupations totals census to census, never really knowing how many people were in employment on census day. Labouring and service still dominated village employment. There were 11 general and 15 agricultural labourers, and 17 servants, 13 domestic and 4 general. The number of masons dwindled to 8. Other tradesfolk were a cutler, a linen weaver, a block printer, 2 printer's compositors, a plasterer and a shoemaker. There were 3 bakers, 3 tailors and 2 carters. The land supported 2 gardeners, 2 shepherds, a nurseryman and a molecatcher. The sea occupied 2 seamen and a fisherman. Dealers comprised 4 peddlers, a general dealer and 2 hawkers, mostly incomers. Railway staff were 5 surfacemen, a pointsman and a female gate-keeper. Two out of three females were servants or agricultural labourers, supplemented by 3 dressmakers, the village school teacher and the lady gate-keeper. Paupers disappeared, but there were annuitants, 12 in all, all female and 11 of them over 65 years old. 3 women and a man were 'living on private means.'

Scholars

55 of them, ranging in age from 4 to 16, included every village youngster of school age, a clear sign of progress from the early years! 6 scholars were over 14 years of age.

Surnames

45 surnames were recorded. Finally, Munro (34) lost leading position in 'the big three' to Ross (44) and there were 24 MacKenzies. These 3 names still accounted for 4 in 10 villagers. Population movement into the village explains the much greater variety of surnames, with many single bearers of a surname.

Gaelic Speakers

Surprisingly, 113 people were identified as Gaelic and English speakers, 45% of the total populace! Virtually everyone over 65 was included and only 10 of these bi-lingual folk were under 35. Comparison of Gaelic speakers in 1881 and these findings raises the question of how a Gaelic speaker was defined. 46 villagers resident in Saltburn in 1881 were now credited with speaking Gaelic and English, 11 of 1881's Gaelic speakers were still in Saltburn, listed as Gaelic and English-speaking as were 56 newcomers.

Windowed Rooms

A further slight improvement is recorded, with the average for the village being 2.35 such rooms per house! 53 of the households had 1 or 2 windowed rooms and 24 houses, probably including some present-day houses, had 3 or more.

Summary

Sadly, in 1891, 10 years before the end of Victoria's 64 year reign, Saltburn seems to have shrunk. A relatively small population was marginally weighted to the older (35+) half of the scale. A considerable number of incomers, particularly in 2 boarding houses, saw the village open up a little, but a large core of long-settled local folk remained. Families were slightly smaller, some 10 houses had gone in 10 years and yet a number of bigger, better houses indicated some prosperity. Employment seems to have been buoyant but perhaps the shadow of considerable unemployment hung over the village. Education was firmly rooted in a healthy village school and Gaelic was still a strong element in a slowly changing culture. To continue this study we must now await 2002 and the release from the 100 year rule of confidentiality of the 1901 census. As, then, the Victorian era ended, how did the village fare?



Saltburn Scholars and Teacher, 1896/97

Epilogue

The Victorian Period

A conclusion is perhaps unnecessary since the reader will have traced life in the village sequentially and the table of statistics gives development-at-a-glance.

The total population, peaking in 1851, fell sharply then steadily, before recovering then plunging in 1891. Throughout the half century villagers were almost exclusively Scottish and Highlanders. Nine out of 10 were Ross-shire folk and consistently over half were born into Rosskeen Parish. A considerable number were born in neighbouring parishes. An initially young populace aged steadily in structure overall with some rejuvenation in 1881. The increase in numbers of older people may well reflect improving standards of health and living conditions. On average, some 75 houses sheltered some 84 social groupings. Only in 1851 was house building significant and regularly 3 houses or so were unoccupied. However, many changes in tenancy and house construction/reconstruction must have occurred between censuses. Housing improved slowly and steadily, at least in terms of window provision!

Families were larger than they are now and while 7, even 9 children were recorded, most had about 3 children, scotching the myth of many large families. Extended families, where grandparents, single mothers and grandchildren and even paupers were supported show the responsible, caring nature of the 19th century rural community. Poverty was a constant companion alleviated for some with Parish Board relief of, for example, 1 shilling and sixpence (7.5 pence!) per week, and rent was sometimes also paid.

Employment grew steadily throughout the censuses in both numbers employed and the range of jobs. Places of work cannot be identified, but local farms, construction projects and neighbouring Invergordon were likely major employers and, as now, there was little village-based employment. The changing range of occupations reflects the needs and developments of the times but women rarely escaped the hard life of labouring or service. The growth of education is clear and the role of the village school in the community must have been vital.

Study of the censuses fails to identify families in known houses and cannot reveal the independent, strong sense of community. Happily, other source material is available and soon, God willing, will be researched to the further enrichment of the portrait!

Florence Murray's Reminiscences



The Pot of Gold

Alltan an t-Salainn - Burn of the Salt - was once a bonnie burnie running through woods down to a shingly beach. But that was lang syne, barely in living memory. It got its name after the Union of the Parliaments when imported salt, essential to Scotland's export trade, was taxed, and heavily. Coopers, rope and netmakers, fishermen, shipowners, merchants, all engaged in the export of salted fish to the Continent, any folk using salt (and that's everyone) found the new prices exorbitant. So the contraband trade organized. Into creeks and crannies around Scotland cargoes of salt were run, smugglers and excisemen, hunted and hunters, dodged, trapped, eluded one another. The Salt Burn was one of their places. Came the time when the smugglers had to run for it - leaving behind the traditional pot of gold.

There was no village at the Salt Burn then, no vestige of a village. But the pot of gold passed into folk lore and lingered there. Years later, at the beginning of the last century, when the Parliamentary Road was being built along the coast, a crofting ancestor of mine from Sutherland was working on the stretch that passes through Saltburn. There was an inn there and a puckle houses. When the young loon went home one weekend an old man joked, "It's at Alltan an t-salainn you are is it? If I could walk the length of myself, indeed I would take a spade and a barrow and we'd dig for the pot of gold."

At the beginning of this century a Saltburn man had such a vivid dream of the exact spot where the treasure lay that he rose in the middle of the night, took his spade and dug beside the burn. He wasn't any the richer, but he was cross for days when the rest of the village heard about it.

The poor burn now is drained into sewers and debouches through a culvert beside the pier. But at what is now Ellan Donnan, Number 9 Saltburn, and was the Big Feu, Ross Bon Accord built his braw new villa, before the 1914 war, and made the bonnie green with turf taken carefully here and there from the banking of Alltan an t-Salainn.

Alan's Wife

Little more than a generation ago, when the lives and folk memories of peasantry were of no interest beyond their own fireside, Saltburn's story could have been read and listened to. Kenny Davidson was still alive, doing free-lance journalism. His reference books and the records and documents of his researches into local history were still snug and safe in the sheddie ahint the dyke beside the gean tree in his brother William's garden. William's and their cousin Geordie's memories narrative powers were alive and well. They died and the paperwork was all burnt.

A bit further back a woman lived in what is now Number 20 Saltburn, the house she was born in. The feu then was Number 62, according to the census return of 1841, the numbering starting from the east end of the village. Margaret Ross, Mrs Alan Macleod, born in February 1832 was the only daughter of a soldier who came out of the army after Corunna and who had been in the siege of Buenos Aires, where his howff for the duration was a Spanish cobbler's shoppie. The locals made plain to him and his comrades, by word and gesture, that they would get their throats slit if they failed to bow to the Virgin on entering and leaving. Margaret had two brothers, the elder a schoolmaster who died young. The other emigrated to Australia. Her husband was a stonemason. After she was widowed and her three daughters married and away, she lived alone, kept a little shop, sold paraffin from her coalshed across the road, worked her garden beside the sea, and cultivated the feu at the back. When I as a child knew her first she had given up her cow, let the byre be used as a stable and relinquished tenure of her allotment acre.

She was a thesaurus of story, with a retentive memory and a grasp of the aura and climate of the times she spoke of. Her father had been evicted from the family croft and like others found a haven in Macleod of Cadboll's Saltburn. Each feuholder had the land opposite across the road, the feu for which a small annual fee was paid, and also an acre allotment which he cleared, with no rent payable until he got it to be productive. If the feu he landed with had no house, he built for himself.

The present Number 19 (then 63) is on a mutual gable with 20 and was either an inn or a house of refreshment. In 1837, when Margaret was five years old, the stagecoach passed northwards decorated in honour of Queen Victoria's accession. The fear an tighe went to the Rosses' house inviting them to come and drink a health to the young queen. Margaret's mother declined, saying, "I wish the young queen well, but I'll not drink whisky." Her father went.

In the 1890s when Ross, Pollo, who had the distillery at Pollo, was renovating Number 19, heightening the upstairs and slating the roof, Alan's wife told him the story. So he called the house Victoria Cottage. I often wonder about the people who lived here. I know the names of some of them and remember Alan's wife saying, "A Waterloo widow lived upstairs in your East Room. She would be often gathering sticks in the woodie to boil water for her brose."

From a bairn, sitting on her father's knee listening to tales of his childhood and army days, till it came her turn to narrate - a long time it was for she lived till near 99 - her consciousness reached out beyond herself into far lands and distant days. Around the kitchen fire her father's friends - not hearing well, not seeing well - and she reading from the papers "news of the Crimea to Waterloo veterans".

You speak of her (we were told) as Alan's wife and to her as Mrs Macleod. She was sometimes referred to as Cloudy (which was permissible) or Shooga (which was the height of impudence and not allowed). She was known to admonish children "SPEAK CLEAN AND CLEAR OR I DON'T SERVE YOU". Sugar, mispronounced, by a bairn, stuck to herself as a byename.

In the last year of her life, when she was frail and could no longer read her Bibles - Gaelic and English - esconsed to her great annoyance in the big brass bed taken into her kitchen from ben the room (the visitor's bed) in place of her own narrow bed that folded up into a wall-press and had the door shut on it in daytime - attired in a flounced goonie (instead of one of her own decent plain shifts) and a frilly nightcap with tie-ers - she consoled herself by reciting favourite psalms and chapters (now in Gaelic, now in English) and sometimes with such worldly concerns as "What in the mischief came over my Rockingham teaset? The last time I was up the stairs I couldn't lay hands on it." Also "If the Lord is coming for me, I wish He would come. And get me out of this nonsense of a rig."

She was a little dainty woman, slender, with a narrow face : neat and clean in person and house. She wore dark clothing - not black - a long fitted bodice, cut plain, buttoned from waist to throat, with a slight flare over a plain skirt : an apron over the skirt for some tasks : for others the skirt was pinned up in front. I remember her when she was over eighty shovelling coal from a pile by the roadside into the coalshed behind the dyke : her skirt pinned up and also the first petticoat : the grey woollen one a few inches below her knee : neighbours, on tenterhooks in case she would hurt herself, watching and waiting for the right minute when she would not be displeased to accept help : her deft footwork as shovelful after shovelful shot through the gate into the coalshed that Alan built for her, many years before. And a good stone one it was and is. Her usual headgear was a neat cap with a small snoot and a little round button on top - not unlike a schoolcap. The ocean-going rig was an unadorned black bonnet with tie-ers and a cloak (not full-length).

The Saltburn masons were proud of their work. They were at the building of Edinburgh New Town, of Invergordon Free Church (where Spurgeon himself came to preach at its blessing). And they built their own schoolie for their village. The School Board supplied the teacher. Previously a teacher would have to gather his own pupils and collect his fees for himself, unless (as sometimes happened) a church or a group of local people took responsibility. The census return for 1841 lists for feu 63 (now 19) the Spirit Dealer and family and JOHN URQUHART aged 25 TEACHER. Not necessarily all in the same house. There was a "house in the lane that burnt down" last century, of squared masonry, but when it was built I don't know. Its hefty foundations are still there (as Eddie Alexandrowicz will testify with embellishments). In the 1920s or 1930s Rogerson took the stones when he was doing things about the present Numbers 43 and 44. He never paid for them either. My grandfather, being used to the honest ways of old Mr Patterson Ord, thought "He'll give me what's fair when he's paying his accounts." And that was that.

Invergordon Church is now the Church of Scotland. To Alan's wife it was a symbol of victory, of right triumphing over an extremely impudent wrong. When Belle Murray, my grandfather's sister, came as her neighbour I believe they had many an amicable argument with no holds barred. Views were exchanged over the potato shaws that flourished in Belle's little fenced plot in front of her house. Remarks about "Mo-der-als" - Renders of the Seamless Garment - lackeys to an earthly

government, passed between them as Cloudy moved to her own door, bowing graciously over her shoulder as she made each parting remark.

She had a narrow garden before her windows. Pink roses, peppermint, a pretty striped grass (not the rampant kind) and sorts of daisies. She often came into my granny's with a posy and a couple of Spurgeon's sermons (of which she had boxes-full up the stairs) and took home with her in return a weekly newspaper that had a Gaelic page. At New Year she brought a piece of her own make of dumpling, THE FREE CHURCH PUDDING.

When she wanted company in the evening, she would rap with her poker on the chimney-back. That was the signal that she was free of customers and would welcome a visit. My aunt Janet usually went, because they both loved yarning about bye-gones. Sometimes I was detailed to go.

Alan's wife knew where the witches met in the dark of the moon. Is that elm-tree now a ghost in the debauched smelter? She knew who from Saltburn went to the school for Black Art at Dingwall. She knew, but would never tell, whose were the running footsteps you can hear on still nights. But if you hear flying hooves up Kate's Lane (now Seaforth), along the back roadie and round again and round again by Ord Brae and again, that's just Punch the lovely Suffolk remembering how he came to Paradise when he came to Saltburn and found his friend Mary the mare and their master. He had been cruelly treated in training, one eye destroyed, sold and bought and sold again because the gentle beast when put to cart, kicked the cart to bits. In Saltburn his patient master persuaded him to accept his cart. After a day's work, when they came home to their stable and were unyoked, Mary was attended to and settled in her stall, while Punch set loose kicked his heels up, galloped and frisked round and round about till he was ready to come in and be set at his manger.

She knew whose ghost was in the barnyard and what he said to the grieve ; whose great-granny was rebuked for unseemly language by that Master Witch, Fear Ardross ; who was kin to the crofter who won a sleight of trafficking against that wily Fear and taunted him at Dingwall market with "You cheated the Devil but you'll no cheat me."

She didn't always tell all her stories through, observing a certain reticence, a restraint in keeping with her appearance and the way her cottage was - clean, plain yet pleasing. She and Alan lived in her parents' house. So who, she or her mother, set and trained the Marengo ivy in the lobby & put the narrow-framed steel-engravings on the wall? His Most Gracious Majesty King George the Fourth, Canning & Earl Grey. Cadboll used to shake his stick at poor Prinny's likeness. On the kitchen wall were Queen Adelaide (but not Queen Caroline) and a mem and elegant Sweet Eighteen. In the 1920s re a Napoleonic anniversary, she acquired from somewhere a very good colour print of Buonaparte and set it above her fireplace - the cheekit grate, which took girdle and rack for hotbread, broth pot and dumpling pot, and in earlier days her Dutch oven. If anyone remarked on the Emperor and his unsuitability for that honoured place, no change was got out of her beyond "An evil spirit".

She had stories of Napier's fleet sheltering in the Cromarty Roads ; of the unseemly presence of soldiers, during the Disruption troubles, in Rosskeen Church yard ; of the Corn Rioters at Invergordon harbour ; of the Cromarty ex-regular who refused to turn out with the militia against the rioters, for which his pension was stopped. He got the schoolmaster to write to Wellington - 'served my Country alongside you - I refuse to bear arms against my fellow-countrymen'. Wellington replied that he would do his best for him with the War Office. His pension was restored, but at half-rate.

Sometime she would tell of Sir John Moore and recite the poem, clear and articulate, her pronunciation of some words - beerial - Coroonya - of an older style perhaps? Campaigns, marches, the disposition of troops in battle - stranger to the listening child than tales of Ashie-puttel, elves or giants. And once, I believe, she caused palpitations and horror in a very genteel wife when she demonstrated to a group of customers seated around the fire in her kitchen (no counter shop this) just how a Gurka used his kukri. Where she learned that skill?

She was a kind good neighbour but could come a scathing remark on occasion. As "What are they so big and perfect about? None of them would be here if the granny had got her just deserts in the Low Countries." Army orders were proclaimed LOOT AND YOU DIE. The soldier's wife in question, one of the women who followed their menfolk on campaign, was a notable looter and was nearly caught when she was boiling a pig in a washing-pot. The orderly party luckily (perhaps deliberately) omitted to look deep enough into the pot.



Victoria Cottage (Florence's home) and Cloudy's house, 2001.

The Water Supply, The Hall, The Drovers' Field and The Platt

When Saltburn was riven asunder by power politics in the 1920s, she revived old memories of the burns and wells that the villagers had depended on for their water supply: how they set about organizing a piped supply, with street pumps: how people helped them (lawyers, landowners) with advice, plans, permission: how a Charter was drawn up, restricting the use of the water to within the village boundaries and to certain other agreed users, and safeguarding the rights of the owner of the

loch from which the water was drawn. The charter was presented to Parliament and authorized. The school was outwith the authorized boundaries and had no water supply. Dry lavatories outside. Water for the teacher's kettle, or for sprinkling on slates, or whatever use, fetched from Bobby Hogg's pump - later called Geordie's pump - and very likely before that Robbie Lordie's pump: a straight fluted pillar of iron with a lion's head open-mouthed, and atop the head a little flat wheel for turning the water on.) A Committee was voted to collect the annual fee of one shilling per household and to be responsible for the maintenance of the supply, for necessary repairs and for the annual cleaning of the reservoir. (RBM's Note : A recently-found extract of the feu charter, known commonly as "The Chart" reveals that on the 18th of October, 1878, Sir Alexander Matheson of Ardross and Lochalsh, M.P. allowed the Feuars of Saltburn to take water from the old mill dam at Delny. This was by a 2.5 inch pipe through Balintraid farm and along the north side of the road, with provision for 5 street wells, including one for the Schoolhouse. Before this date villagers had a cistern, filter and 3 inch pipe in operation and Sir Alexander's letter of sanction conferred 'a new and perpetual right and tolerance to take water' on the 5 village Trustees and their successors. The cost was a yearly feu duty, if asked, of only one penny sterling !!) Raising money to pay for all this, the villagers had a concert party which performed in the surrounding district. People of all classes in the countryside around helped them. Some wrote scripts for them or took part in their performances. One mentioned was a concert singer who was staying with friends near Dingwall. Alan's wife specially remembered her lovely voice and the beautiful diamond in her ring. The lady dressed in full fig for the do - and that was appreciated with delight.



A village wedding 1927

From the time the school was built until into the twenties it was used for any social or business gathering: for Sunday school and other meetings: the Established, the U.F. and the Free Church ministers held Sabbath evening service or weekday prayer meeting at regular intervals. There were dances there from time to time and children's parties. The dockyard workers presented a piano to

the school. Very advanced from the days of previous generations, when getting a new clay floor laid in someone's house gave occasion for a dance to melodeon and fiddle. Then Modern Times erupted with a vengeance. A local family bought an ex-Army hut (a wooden one - Nissens came with the next war) and an enthusiastic group of young people formed to run dances etc to pay for it - real dances we'll have when THE HALL goes up, with slipperene on the floor. Everyone said VERY NICE. Where will they put it? I expect they'll put it on somebody's allotment. Then they could have water run in. The Charter mightn't allow that, so it will likely be on someone's feu. OH VERY NICE. But they put the dratted thing outside the village, west of the school wall. And the village war was on. The "Highland News" was full of it for ages. At a prayer-meeting an exemplary elder (who held by the Charter) stood to pray and the prayer was for peace. Oh Lord give us peace in our hearts and on our tongues. Of the opposing faction an equally exemplary elder, (sitting), sounded out with Amen..Amen..Amen... One sitting beside me whispered in my ear, "The words mean oh dear that we were...but the sound of his voice says SHUT UP AND SIT DOWN." They didn't get the water. But I don't know how it all eventually settled. The hut ended up as a store at Tommy the Ironmonger's in Invergordon. But they had many functions in the hall before that - parties, dances, concerts, fetes. The bairns' Christmas Party with the lovely candle-lit tree moved, candles and all, from the Schoolie to the Hall; ring-a-rosies in the Schoolie became games in the Hall; but the Sunday School soldiered on for many years in the old location, with its attendant annual soiree- (pronounced very much more aptly as zoo-a-ree). Indeed the Sunday School was the lingering survivor of all, but at long last it died too and the old Schoolie was deserted.

Before the 1914 War the Drovers' Field, beside the sea opposite Balntraird, was still unfenced and used by the local loons as their football field. That 'Drovers' Field' was the general name for it, I don't know, or that it was much or ever used by drovers as an overnight stopping place. Those feuars of Saltburn who cultivated the tiny plots by the sea as vegetable gardens - to grow specially good carrots, parsnips, leeks - made sure that these gardens were secured by dykes or fences. Sheep (or whatever poor beasts were harried in droves to the slaughter or market) could have razed the lot.

The Platt, by the shore opposite the Schoolie now occupied by nos. 3 and 4 Saltburn was the place for the bonfire at Hogmanay and any other bonfire called for by occasion. A letter from Saltburn from one old playmate to another and read on the other side of the world, included among the when-you-come-home-you'll-find items "Balntraird fenced the football field and there's English squatters on the Platt" !!

All must be documented. A whole history department - teachers and pupils sent foraging among backfiles of the "Highland News", copies of the Statistical Accounts, rentrolls of the local Superior, estate papers, census returns et alia, alia, alia - could enjoy a fine and time-consuming project before wee Michael catches up and sends them all back to the barrack square.

That's me finished, but you must hold a seance and ask Willie Paterson to step in from the realms of light. All his life he had the whole village of Saltburn and all it contains strung along his South March. Without a doubt he could give you the real low-down.

A Pot-pourri

Village Feus

The Ordnance Survey 25 inches to the mile plan of 1906 shows the distribution of land in Saltburn, 92 acres in all, in a roughly rectangular settlement. This information does not relate directly to the census study period but it throws some light on land distribution in the 1841-1891 era and is of general interest.

There were 51 strip feus or allotments in 1906, ranging in size from 4.7 acres to 0.95 of an acre. 36 of these were smaller, mostly 1 to 1.5 acres and there were 15 larger holdings, some 2 or more acres in size. Feus were longer and mostly narrower at the SW end of the village. These 51 holdings averaged 1.74 acres and totalled 89 acres. There were also 7 scattered, squarer, garden-like plots totalling 3.25 acres.

Undated, plan-annotated information from Ord Farm reveals that 33 villagers owned/tenanted (no clue is given) the 51 feus. 21 folk had 1 feu, 8 had 2, 2 had 3 feus and 2, including the local nurseryman, had 4.

The 'smaller' feus were some 12 to 15 yards wide, the 'larger' being 25 to 30 yards wide. Length or depth of the strips ranged from 415 yards at the SW end of Saltburn to 385 yards in the middle and to the NE. Feus ended inland at between 100 (SW) and 160 (NE) yards from the railway line.

The 30 original feus of the 1813+ Cadboll Estate disposition clearly became sub-divided and their size and ownership/tenancy must have changed frequently over the years. No details of their use is available but cultivated or stock-bearing they must have helped to support villagers' livelihoods. Further research may reveal these details and may also date the demise of the holdings and the incorporation of the allotments into Ord Farm, probably before World War Two.

Study of the 1874 Ordnance Survey plan of the village shows that few changes in the strip feus occurred in the years to 1906. Two of the 1874 two acre feus were split into acre feus, two acre feus were incorporated into larger feus by 1906 and a new feu of just over an acre was split from a large 1874 feu. Thus in the same overall area there were some 49 strip feus.

Ord Farm

Ord Farm has been closely linked to the village for a long time, probably for the best part of 200 years. From 1841 to 1891 never fewer than 30 souls lived on the farm, deriving their living from it. An unknown number of farmworkers lived off the farm and certainly some of them lived in Saltburn, in No 30 and in Nos 51A + B, 52A and 53A for example.

Donald Munro farmed Ord in the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses with, respectively, 13 adults/17 children on Ord, including 7 resident workers, 16 adults/17 children including 12 workers and 20 adults/11 children, with 15 staff, including in 1861, a farm manager. In 1861 the farm was 550 acres in size. Between 4 and 7 families lived on Ord during these years.

In 1871 and 1881 Alexander Munro was the farmer of 315/320 arable acres and respectively in residence were 27 adults/11 children with 16 workers and 14 adults/20 children with 14 of them workers. Doubtless in these and other decades whole families worked at busy times. In both censuses a coachman is recorded signifying a rise in the farmer's status, an enriched lifestyle.

In 1891 William Patterson, timber merchant, factor for Cadboll Estates and the first of generations of Ord Pattersons, employed a labour force of 16 including a coachman and a governess for his 5 children. 23 adults and 15 children lived on Ord. Changed days now as the 5 sturdy little sandstone cottages, slate-roofed and split-doored, shelter not weary farm folk and their lively bairns but Texel and Suffolk tups and their lively progeny! Change too is reflected in Alan Cameron and John Fraser farming 520 acres with admirable efficiency and modern technology.

A Rough Census for 2000 AD

Since the 2001 national census will not be available to the public until 2102. and to provide a basis for comparing Victorian Saltburn with Elizabethan Saltburn, there follows an analysis of the village in this Millennial year. The 'census' is as accurate as possible, but there are limits to personal observation and guesstimates of ages, for example. Occupations too, are only broadly defined. Temporary residents have been included in the study, as they were in past censuses, but not those in bed and breakfast accommodation.

The People

In late June, 2000, 265 folk live in Saltburn, 132 males and 133 females. There are 105 social groupings, 39 nuclear families, (ie 2 parents and 1 or more children), 37 couples, 26 folk living alone and 3 other groupings. These are an extended family, a unit of 2 siblings and a single parent family. The average nuclear family is almost exactly four, viz 2 children, and only 3 families are 6-strong.

It is not possible to identify birthplaces, suffice it to say that while many are Highland-born, many are not, following the influx of people related to the North Sea's 'black gold'!

Analysis of ages reveals a mature village population which reflects the national picture. One in five (18%) is a child, under 14, young adults (14-34) make up 16%, older adults (35-64) comprise a dominant 53% and one in 8 villagers (12%) is over 65 years of age, perhaps scotching the myth that Saltburn is a place of mainly old folk!

Livelihoods

77 males and 54 females work, meaning, that 49% of the population is economically active. Some 4 folk are unemployed but the current downturn in oil fabrication could result in a considerable increase in this category, hopefully temporarily.

Some 30 females and 14 males are pensioners, a considerable 17% of the populace. There are 62 scholars, 9 of them in or destined for further education and the mature age structure is further shown by there being only 9 youngsters of pre-school age

It is not possible to accurately identify all jobs and professions, consequently a broad description must suffice.

Oil related industries occupy 20 males, 12 of them working off-shore or overseas, 4 in the Nigg fabrication yard, 2 in the oil terminal and 2 in related occupations. In Invergordon the port employs 6 men and the distillery 5.

Construction provides 6 jobs, finance 4 and education 2. Engineering, partly oil-related gives employment to 4 males and shops/services occupy 7 men. 7 male jobs are in small manufacturing industries and tradesmen include 4 joiners and a plumber but, alas, no masons! A range of other occupations comprises a driver, a police sergeant, a call centre employee and a man of the cloth. Computing, with 2 so employed, local government, club management, bed and breakfast

accommodation and general handyman duties each employ one male, closing the list. The reader will note that not a single farmworker remains!

Female occupations fall into 3 main categories. 12 women find employment in the education service, e.g. teachers, secretaries, classroom auxiliaries and school meals staff. 13 work in the shops/services sector and 13 in caring for others, nursing, home help duties, medical secretarial work. Again a range of other occupations concludes the broad listing. There are 2 general secretaries, 4 women working in local government/local economic administration, 2 in providing bed and breakfast, 2 in finance, 2 in manufacturing, and one each in the police force, pharmacy, agricultural servicing and office supply servicing. 2 females are unemployed. Happily, Saltburn women no longer slave in farm field or big house as now, highly trained, they form an enlarged admirably effective workforce.

Housing

There are 115 houses in the village, ranging in age from the early years of the 19th century to the first year of the 21st. A shop and a community centre, formerly the village school, are the only two other buildings.

105 houses are permanently occupied, 9 are empty, currently and 1 house is being built. Of the 115 houses, 5 are for rent, 4 are maintained for occasional occupation and 2 are empty.

Surnames

There are 82 surnames in Saltburn and the days of the 'Big 3's' domination are long gone, the names Munro (11), Ross (11) and Mackenzie (5) accounting for only one in nine of the present day population. Scottish names are many but a wide range shows the width of folks' origins. Five surnames only reach double figures, the two above and Mackay (11), Macleod (11) and McIver (10).

Summary

Comparing the Saltburn of 160 years to 110 years ago with Saltburn 2000 might be a little unreal, there having been so many changes in the intervening years. However, in census terms, these are the only reference points available and the comparison which follows and is abridged in the table on page 38 shows many differences. Our village, Scotland in microcosm perhaps, is now a very different community from the nineteenth century Saltburn, albeit the *esprit de village*, a spirit of enterprise, caring and friendliness binds us to them over the centuries

In total size, the present day population is comparatively small (maybe fewer than we would guess!) compared with the earlier years and it exceeds only 1891's total. However the total number of houses is half as much again as the Victorian average. Clearly then, housing density has risen (with Back Lane development particularly) and housing occupancy has fallen. On average each Victorian house sheltered about 4 folk, whereas today there are just over 2.5 folk per house! In population makeup the virtually equal numbers of males and females is remarkable. Virtually no extended families remain and lodgers are few, if any!

Today 50% of the population is in employment, a large rise since the 1871-91 era and largely the result of many more women working. In fact there are only some 16 Saltburn ladies under 60 years

of age who can be described as housewives, truly la creme de la creme! Local employment is still considerable but the footloose, mobile nature of the oil-related industry with its dependent, ancillary industries is a completely new facet. Or is it?... reportedly Saltburn masons helped build many of Edinburgh's buildings in a 'travelling men' capacity!! Farming the land or the sea, however, no longer plays a part in the village economy.

Surname analysis serves only to accentuate the many origins which we Saltburnians have. Finally, while threatening unemployment, the cost of fuel, the 'PC' and the mobile telephone are crosses which we may have to bear, they are more easily suffered than the heavy burdens of back-breaking toil and sapping poverty borne by those who went before.

Not a lot of changes?



1920's



2001

The 7 Censuses - A Table of Analysis

9*At times uninhabited

0* 12 Annuitants

Year	Population			Birthplace			Age Structure				Family Size(P&C)	Housing			Social Groups	Livelihoods			Scholars	Surnames	
	Male	Female	Total	%Rosskeen Parish	% Ross- shire	% Scotland	%Under 14	%14-34	%35-64	%65and over		Occupied Houses	Uninhabited Houses	Being Built		Employed (%)	Occupations	Paupers		Total	'Big 3' (%)
1841	136	183	319	N/A	99	100	38	24	34	4	N/A	75	4	0	75	19	19	27	N/A	26	60
1851	160	182	342	60	94	99	33	25	35	7	5.3	74	1	6	82	31	17	67	31	59	
1861	122	167	289	55	91	99	26	24	35	15	4.6	76	3	0	93	34	13	17	34	31	58
1871	114	165	279	57	85	100	31	20	30	19	4.7	77	6	1	88	37	28	23	52	31	47
1881	135	164	299	50	88	98	35	21	34	10	5	81	2	0	88	39	30	12	72	36	36
1891	120	134	254	54	86	95	30	20	36	14	4.5	64	3	0	77	37	27	0*	56	45	40
2000	132	133	265	N/A	N/A	N/A	18	17	53	12	4	105	9*	1	105	49	N/A	N/A	62	82	11

And finally.....'The Saltburn Amateurs'

A cutting from a (local?) newspaper of 26th, August, 1929 heralded 'Saltburn's Unique Jubilee', headlining 'Village Water Supply Romance' and 'Inhabitants Turn 'Mummers' To Pay Cost.'

The article went on to reveal that, prior to 1879, 'the crofters and squatters on the lands stretching from Alness to Balnagown (who) were driven from their homes to make way for the big farmers..... of whom many took up feus and small pieces of land by the seaside forming what latterly became known as the village of Saltburn', suffered from a major deprivation.

Living 'for many years on the edge of penury' the 400 or so souls frequently suffered 'fevers and other troubles' due to the lack of water. A privately-owned well whose water was grudgingly shared out by a stern lady known as 'Big Bassie' barely met the community's drinking and cooking needs.

Showing wonderful enterprise and courage, some 70 feuars (virtually every house owner?) 'risked all they possessed' to raise a loan to enable a water supply to be carried 'from a burn issuing a loch several miles distant'. Thus in 1879 the village's own water supply was turned on.

Hard times followed and in 1889, with the repayments of capital and interest falling into arrears and with the lenders pressing for payment, the horror of 'homes put to the hammer and every stick and penny being grabbed by the lenders' loomed large for the villagers.

One admirable soul, (anonymous, sadly) conceived the idea that a village concert party touring the country could raise enough money 'to wipe off the debt'.

So, 'a band of humble, shy but brave villagers 'set out' as crusaders in the entertainment world to which they were such absolute strangers. Old men and women set themselves to learn Gaelic and English songs, young men learned the violin and the bagpipes and young women chanted the love songs which always appeal!'

'The success of the Saltburn Amateurs...was instantaneous, they toured the greater part of Ross-shire and the audiences went wild with delight at the quaint acting, singing and playing of the strange, old-world artists. The money flowed in (like the water!) and at the end of a couple of seasons, the debt...was cleared to the last penny!'

The 'Amateurs' then vanished from public gaze and today we can only marvel at their brave, successful efforts. Amateur, however, they obviously were not, being clearly professional in preparation and in purpose. The clever use of the term 'mummers', namely actors in a folk play, was uncannily appropriate.

Dawns over the Firth

