

Introduction.

Bonhill Parish in olden times, according to early charters, was spelt “Bochlul” “Buthelulle” and “Bohtlul”. The Parish derives its name from the Gaelic word Bog-n’-uill, meaning “foot of the rivulet”. Gradually through the years the word changed until we now have Bonhill.

The villages of Bonhill Parish are better known as the Vale of Leven and are named Bonhill, Jamestown, Balloch and Alexandria. They are all situated in the Leven Valley through which the river Leven flows, the second swiftest river in Scotland.

According to reliable authorities the first reference to Bonhill Parish, that so far has been found, is in a charter of 1270. This charter was granted by Maldowen, the third Earl of Lennox in confirming a grant made to the church at Glasgow of “the land of Hachenkeroch, in the Parish of Buthelulle”.

The Vale of Leven is bounded on the north by Loch Lomond on the south by the Burgh of Dumbarton, the tail end of the Grampians on the west and a lesser range of hills on the east. The Vale of Leven is famous for its romantic beauty and go where you will there is no place to compare with “the beautiful Vale”. There is one snag and that is capitalism. The industrialists in erecting their factories gave no consideration to the beauty of the valley and ugly factories were dumped down with large chimney stalks reaching to the sky, belching foul black smoke.

The Vale of Leven is the gateway to Loch Lomond, the most beautiful Loch in the world. The landlords, who own the estates on each sides of the loch, harry the hikers and campers. In Dumbarton Court practically every week during the summer you find young men and women being fined for trespass. Colquhoun of Luss, Smolletts of Bonhill and the Duke of Montrose all take good care to hound the young working-class men and women of the land.

In 1603 the population was approximately 300; in 1735 it was 901 and in 1790 had risen to 2,310, due to the introduction of the Bleachfields and Printworks.

In 1938 the estimated population of the Parish was 19,952.

It is the purpose of this book to give facts mainly hitherto unpublished. All the books I know written of the Vale have eulogised the Capitalist Class and have not shown, the life of the working-class. Even in the History of the Vale of Leven Cooperative Society we find the evil system of how the poor were treated, praised. The strikes of the workers for better conditions are also glossed over in that book.

This book is a record of the struggle of the working-class in the Vale of Leven their poverty, their struggles, industrially and politically, their march towards the goal of power.

The story of the workers makes the words of Karl Marx live.

“In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond

definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore, mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the task itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.”

(Karl Marx, Selected Works, Eng. ed., Vol. I, pp. 356-57.)

Starving the Poor.

Words cannot convey the picture of poverty and torture that our forefathers endured. Unorganised, the unemployed workers were ground into the gutter by the ruling class of the 19th Century. The cold written pages of the Parochial Board records are written in the blood, tears and hate of the workers. In studying these records you will be filled with a burning hatred of the class who could be so savagely cruel to men, and women and children. That same class exists to-day and would be just as cruel if the workers were unorganised. The Means Test to-day is an example and they would like to go further.

Here is the picture in the words and figures of “the good old days”.

The first meeting of the Parochial Board of the Parish of Bonhill was held on the 13th of September, 1845. At this meeting Mr John Bryson, Ironmonger, Bonhill, was elected to be Inspector of Poor at an annual salary of £15 per annum. At the next meeting Mr Bryson refused to carry out the duties allocated to him for such a salary. No one will blame him for that.

The Board then advertised the job and three applicants were willing to do the job for £15 per year, namely Walter Smith, Andrew Miller and John McFarlane. None of the three

seemed to please so it was decided to again advertise and raise the wage to £50, £30 for Inspector and £20 for Collector of Rates. It was also resolved that it be a full time job and the person so appointed must have no connection with any other business. They finally got a Mr John Batteson, Clerk at Levenford, to do the job and he was accordingly appointed Inspector. Just to show that he must not get reckless on his £50 he was told that a proper set of books will be provided, *but* “that all other expenses of stationary or otherwise be defrayed by the officer.”

The first mention of relief in 1845 is to a man. He was given 2/- per week until “he be able to find work.” Next was a widow and she got 2/- per week. A man was given a pair of boots. A widow was granted 1/6 per week. The case of a widow desiring help to go to America refused. Another woman was allowed 1/- per week. In 1845 the sum spent on relief of the poor amounted to £517:3:0½.

In 1846 we read of a widow with two children, one three years of age and the other 4 months old allowed 1/6 weekly.

A widow in receipt of 4/- per month was advanced to 6/- per month as she was of advanced age and blind.

Widow with four children ages ranging from 9 months to 13 years allowed 3/- per week.

In 1847 we read of a fighter, and the fighter was a woman. She obviously was not prepared to live on 1/- or 1/6 per week. In the records we find that “she obstructed the inspector in the discharge of his duties, collected mobs about him, and in every respect her behaviour was most disgusting. The inspector was authorised to give her no more money. It was decided to report the case to Mr Smollett requesting him (as a Justice of the Peace) to look into the matter and see whither or not the police were doing their duty in keeping down vagrants and protecting the officers of the Parish from annoyance.”

Here we have revolt and the basis of organised effort, for surely for mobs we can read demonstration, all honour to this courageous woman of our class. With her we hate with all our being. the contemptible members of that Parochial Board who refused her keep and incited the police to brutality.

On the 14th October 1848 the Board met to take steps against cholera. In the words of the official minute “for the purpose of modifying the ravages of cholera.” Something like our A.R.P. arrangements took place at a further meeting when it was agreed to, in order to combat cholera, “the appointment of sufficient nurses, establishment of proper places as hospitals to which patients might be removed, or as temporary places for reception of portions of families whom it might be considered necessary to remove from the presence of cholera patients.” (evacuation.)

Due to cholera it would appear that an increased number of people applied for relief and we find the board making economy measures. The economy measures were of course in the cutting down the meagre allowances to the poor. For instance we find a minister of the gospel, one the Rev. Williard Shaw, who made his first proposal in the Board, namely, he moved that a woman, Marion Pollock, be struck off the roll. The woman was receiving 2/- per week from the Board. She was deprived of her 2/- per week.

A case of a girl was reported who had several times attempted to committ suicide. Living on 1/- per week was obviously impossible for her.

A woman, Margaret Munro, made application for relief. She had lost the power of her limbs. Granted 9d per week.

On the 4th May 1849 a resolution was passed by the Board Committee as follows:—

“The Committee of the Parochial Board consider that the practice of begging at present so common throughout the Parish of Bonhill is a great nuisance, and would earnestly recommend the Parochial Board seriously to consider the same and devise the best practicable means for putting a stop to the evil.”

What did the Board do? In 1849 we read of the following:—

A girl, a paralytic made application for relief. It was disclosed that her father was working in Dalmonach and earning 12/- per week, there were three other children. Relief was refused as the father was in regular employment.

Case of an old man and his three daughters. Application for relief on the grounds of advanced years and debility.

Refused on the grounds that:—“the present circumstances of the family being such as to enable *them to live in comparative comfort*, averaging as it would appear nothing under 14/- per week for himself and three daughters.”

In September 1852 we again hear of Cholera and the filthy conditions of the streets in the Vale. On the 12th October 1854 the first Sanitary Committee was appointed. They did not seem to think it necessary that a scavenger should be appointed. The first scavenger was not appointed until 1861 and he had to sweep the streets of Alexandria, Bonhill, Jamestown etc. for the sum of £20:16/- per year.

On the 28th February 1850 the Gorbals Parochial Board making an appeal to all Boards to help defray the expenses of an appeal on a case which, if carried by the Lords, would mean that the able-bodied unemployed would have a right to relief. Consternation among the Parochial Boards of Scotland.

We again find reference to this question on the 6th August 1863 when it was agreed to “contribute £2:2/- to assist in defraying expenses that will be incurred in trying the question regarding the right of Parochial Boards to give relief to able bodied unemployed persons.”

The first mentioned of a poorhouse was in 8th April 1857 when it was agreed “to take over McFarlane’s house in Burn Street, Bonhill and to send to it old and infirm people who were paupers.” The House consisted of four apartments and the Board were to pay rent of £9 per annum. At a later date the old School House in Alexander Street, Alexandria, was taken over as a Poorhouse.

In 1866 there is given a “List of Paupers on the Roll with their weekly Allowances.”

There were 139 on the Roll and received as follows.

2 received $4\frac{3}{4}$ each per week.

1 received $9\frac{1}{4}$ each per week.

1 received $9\frac{1}{2}$ each per week.

14 received 1/- each per week.

2 received 1/1½ each per week.
23 received 1/6 each per week.
1 received 1/8½ each per week.
2 received 1/9½ each per week.
33 received 2/- each per week.
1 received 2/3½ each per week.
19 received 2/6 each per week.
17 received 3/- each per week.
2 received 4¾ each per week.
2 received 4¾ each per week.
6 @ 8/7
2 @ 5/-
8 @ 4/-
5 @ 4/3
1 @ 6/-
1 @ 8/6

139

There you have a picture of the conditions of the poor, not only in the Vale of Leven, but throughout Britain, at the hands of the “unco’ guid,” the lackeys of capitalism, that lasted until the end of the Great War.

Early Days in Bonhill Parish.

It is difficult to ascertain just when the first industry commenced in the Vale of Leven. The most accurate date I could find was that of 1715 when Andrew Johnston opened a small bleachfield at Dalquharn. Dutch bleachers were brought over from Holland to instruct the local workers.

The Croftengea and Levenbank Printworks came next on the list. Levenbank works was built in 1784 and carried on work of printing cotton handkerchiefs and shawls.

In 1768 the Printfields on the Leven were almost entirely confined to producing handkerchiefs and done by Block Printing. The first presses were driven by hand and required great force. Three men were employed on each press and one worked while the other two rested. After a while we have the application of water power and the presses were driven by water wheels.

The employers tended to fill the Print Works with Apprentices. Always the employing class do everything to exploit the young workers. We therefore find at the above period of time the apprentices being bound for seven years and were paid 3/- per week for the

first three years and four shillings per week for the remaining four years.

Journeymen received an average of 18/- per week; labourers were paid 10d per day up to the magnificent sum of 6/- per week. The exploitation of women is also a feature of these "good old days." They were paid 3/- per week. But the most exploited of all were the little children, the boys and girls, who were paid an average of 6/8, per month.

Here is a glimpse of the village in 1790.

The population with the opening of the Bleachfields and Printfields has risen from 901 in 1735 to 2,310 in 1790. There were 993 persons employed in the three printfields of whom 419 were men. 507 were women, and 67 were boys and girls below 10 years of age.

In addition there were the village craftsmen which included:—

7 Smiths

15 Shoemakers

12 Tailors

21 Wrights

6 Millers of different kinds

2 Distillers & 4 Excise Officers.

8 Shopkeepers

14 Alehouse keepers

Prior to the development of the Printfields the staple food was porridge and potatoes but a reverend gentleman, one Gordon Stewart, deplors the fact that the workers are now eating bread and drinking ale.

Land was cheap, the village houses being built on Feus at a rent of £5 per acre and other village houses were built on a lease of 99 years at £6 per acre. Ground for the Printfields was feued at £2:10/- per acre and the value of rent in the whole Parish of Bonhill was £2,500 per annum.

The religious life in the Parish in 1790 was much more varied than to-day. Here is a list of the churches and the number of people associated with each church.

Established Church 592

Old Light Burghers 75

Roman Catholic 12

Cameronians 4

Unitarians 2

Anti-Burghers 1

Relief 254

United Seccession 36

Episcopalians 4

Baptists 3

Methodist 2

Bereans 1

The Anti-Burgher must have been very courageous facing odds of 75 to 1. No doubt that suited him down to the ground and maybe he had many an enjoyable time fighting the 75. I wonder if the Berean ever rallied to his assistance as one minority assisting another?

The number of poor in the village was 30 to 35. The funds supporting them was a capital of £300 which was lent out at interest and was supplemented by the collections at church with the mort cloth dues and fines for fornication which amounted in all to £40 to £50 per year.

It is interesting to study the rise in the population during the period of the industrial revolution. It is as follows:—

1735 901

1790 2310

1801 2460

1811 2791

1821 3003

1831 3874

And by 1839 we have the Industrial Revolution in full swing and the combination of the early factory system with the water wheel now linked with the application of the steam engine in the Printfields in the Vale of Leven.

Here is a little picture of the factories of that time:—

Ferryfield. Total employees 416; 203 men, 121 women and 92 children under 12 years.

1 water wheel 20 feet dia., 7ft., broad, 20” fall.

Wages paid from January 1st to July 1st., 26 weeks amounted to £5,395:8:8. An average of less than 10/- per week.

Dalmonach. Two steam engines of 10 and 16 H.P.

One water wheel 16½ ft. dia, 15 ft. broad, and 26” fall.

Total employees 565; 252 men 169 women and 144 children under 12 years.

At both these works there were eight printing machines which print from one to six colours at one time and 1,200 yards per hour.

(Wages paid same period as above amounted to £5,667:2:0 average less than 10/- per week.)

Bonhill Print Works. This work was known more commonly as “The Wee Field.” It had a steam engine of 18 H.P.

Total employees 190; 100 men, 32 women, and 58 children under 12 years

Wages in six months as above £200 and work done 480,000 yards.

Levenfield Works. Water Wheel 16 ft. dia. 6½ ft broad, fall 3ft.

Total employees 415; 188 men, 97 women, and 30 Boys and girls between 12 and 15 years, and 100 children under 12

Wages paid for the 26 weeks £4,904:2:10.

Levenbank Print Works. Steam Engine of 15 H.P.

Water wheel 22ft. dia. fall 19ft.

Total employees 221; 119 men, 50 women, and 52 children under 12

Wages paid for 26 weeks £3,505.

Alexandria Works. Steam engine of 20 H.P.

Water wheel 18ft. dia. 6ft broad and fall 17"

Total employees 438; 192 men, 142 women, and 104 children under 12

Wages for six months £5,100 and printed 1,310,000 yards.

Dillichip and Milton Works. Steam engine of 14 HP.

Dillichlp water wheel 15' 6" dia. 11' 3" broad.

Millburn water wheel 23ft by 3ft

Total employees 565; 339 men, 103 women, and 63 children under 12 years

Total wages paid in six months £6.820. Goods finished in six months, 2,084,857 yards.

Kirkland Works.

Steam engine 8 H.P.

224 employees, of these 83 were children under 12 years.

You will not fail to note the number of children under 12 years of age employed. Poor little devils, exploited for profits for the Orr Ewing's and Company. What should have been their happiest years, to be spent in the open air, in the sunshine, in play, was spent in wearying toil, in evil smelling calico printing works, the sun shut out by the factory walls.

(Extract to be placed in page 2 Factory)

8/9/1854.

Not more than six per cent were fit for work after 45 years and no one can be astonished at this when we have parliament in 1845 passing a measure for the children in the Calico Print Works to work 16 hours a day and the age from which this became applicable by law was 13 years of age.

In 1862 children under 13 in a Printwork might still be employed from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day in the week despite the fact that under the Act of 1860 Bleachfields and

Dyeworks were brought within Factory Legislation.

The next act in 1874 fixed the hours of women and children in the factories and in most other branches of industry at 56½ hours per week, but once again the print, dye and bleach works were left out. It is not to be wondered at when we have in Parliament the type of representative like Mr Orr Ewing M.P. at that time. This man was obviously in Parliament to see that Legislation, so far as it would benefit the working class, would not apply to the Dye, Bleach or Print-works. This is the employer, the Member of Parliament, who declared that a whole holiday to his employees once a fortnight “would lead to idle habits.” That is what the reactionary Mr Orr Ewing M.P. thought and said.

A striking feature to be noted during the years 1857 to 1862 is the fact that adult male labour decreased by 18 per cent while child male labour increased by 53% and child female labour increased by 78%. My authority for this is the North British Daily Mail of 25/8/69.

Karl Marx in his Capital (Allen and Unwin edition) Chapter X “The Working Day” Page 283 in a footnote states:—

The “open-air bleachers” had evaded the law of 1860, by means of the lie that no women worked at it in the night. The lie was exposed by the Factory Inspectors, and at the same time Parliament was, by petitions from the operatives, bereft of its notions as to the cool meadow-fragrance, in which bleaching in the open-air was reported to take place. In this aerial bleaching, drying rooms were used at temperatures of from 90 degrees to 100 degrees Fahrenheit, in which the work was done for the most part by girls. “Cooling” is the technical expression for their occasional escape from the drying-rooms into the fresh air. “Fifteen girls in stoves. Heat from 80 degrees to 90 degrees for linens, and 100 degrees and upwards for cambrics. Twelve girls ironing and doing-up in a small room about 10 feet square, in the centre of which is a close stove. The girls stand round the stove, which throws out a terrific heat, and dries the cambrics rapidly for the ironers. The hours of work for these hands are unlimited. If busy, they work till 9 or 12 at night for successive nights.” A medical man states:—“No special hours are allowed for cooling, but if the temperature gets too high, or the workers’ hands get soiled from perspiration, they are allowed to go out for a few minutes.....My experience, which is considerable, in treating the diseases of stove workers, compels me to express the opinion that their sanitary condition is by no means so high as that of the operatives in a spinning factory (and Capital, in its memorials to Parliament, had painted them as floridly healthy after the manner of Rubens). The diseases most observable amongst them are phthisis, bronchitis, irregularity of uterine functions, hysteria in most aggravated forms, and rheumatism. All of these, I believe, are either directly or indirectly induced by the impure, overheated air of the apartments in which the hands are employed, and the want of sufficient comfortable clothing to protect them from the cold, damp atmosphere, in winter, when going to their homes.” The Factory Inspectors remarked on the supplementary law of 1860 torn from these open-air bleachers: “The Act has not only failed to afford that protection to the workers which it appears to offer, but contains a clause.....apparently so worded that, unless persons are detected working after 8 o’clock at night they appear to come under no protective provisions at all, and if they do so work, the mode of proof is so doubtful that a conviction can scarcely follow.”

“To all intents and purposes, therefore, as an Act for any benevolent or educational purpose, it can scarcely be called benevolent to permit, which is tantamount to compelling, women and children to work 14 hours a day with or without meals, as the case may be, and perhaps for longer hours than these, without limit as to age, without reference to sex, and without regard to the social habits of families, of the neighbourhood, in which such works (bleaching and dyeing) are situated.”

In the same work “Capital” we find a further quotation from Factory Inspector reports for 31st October, 1862 stating:—

“The Printworks Act is admitted to be a failure, both with reference to its educational and protective provisions.”

Again it needs must be said that the Vale of Leven employers were among the most brutal and ruthless in all Britain. They clung steadfastly to the exploitation of children. We can never forgive them for that. The little child serfs in the Vale Bleachfields worked 11 to 18 hours per day in stores heated from 80 to 110 degrees and this is the description of their lives by Mr Roebuck:—

“They lived the life of the damned, their hands and feet blistered and the skin torn off. Yet they were obliged to work and the persons who overlooked them being sometime forced to keep them awake by beating on the table with large boards.”

No wonder then that when J Orr Ewing died in 1878 he left a fortune of £460,000.

Strikes—Struggles in the Vale.

The earliest recorded strike of the workers in the Vale occurred in 1815. From certain vague references it is clear that other strikes took place before 1815 but no facts can be obtained.

The Workers in Todd’s Field, now the Alexandria Works, in 1815 struck work for an increase in wages and against the introduction of machinery. The workers demonstrated for their demands and no blacklegs were allowed. Mr McNeill records at this time “serious disturbances took place.”

During the early part of 1834 the Master Calico Printers of the West of Scotland after careful and deliberate preparation discharged thousands of their higher paid employees, such as block printers, and supplanted them with starving handloom weavers at a wage of seven and eight shillings per week. This strike lasted for several months and was known as the “big strike”. The workers were extremely militant, so much so that the military were called out, and were billeted in a building beside the River Leven afterwards known as the Barracks and also at a house at Dalvait, Balloch.

Riots ensued and though the mills were guarded by soldiers and police, the enraged operatives invaded the mills and tore them outside.

Again and again the strikers demonstrated to the Mills, through driving rain, with practically no boots to their feet, men and women, boys and girls, soaked to the skin determined to win their fight.

The Government rushed military reinforcements into the Vale and hundreds of workers were arrested and sentenced to anything from 14 days to 12 months hard labour. Many of

the rebel spirits were cleared out of the Calico Printing district.

The young people, the apprentices in the Calico Printing trade played their part in the fight for better wages and conditions. During this period of time we find that apprentices in the Calico Printing trade being imprisoned for three months with hard labour for “acting under the influence of an association of apprentice printers” in adopting a ca’canny policy. Another case was of apprentices who got a month’s hard labour for “Intimidating” their foreman into joining a Union. Another boy got one month imprisonment for assaulting a blackleg. One hundred guineas was offered for information that would lead to the conviction of men who assaulted blacklegs. This was an enormous sum to offer to people who were literally starving. But the solidarity of the workers remained strong and no worker ever attempted to claim such filthy money. You will wonder where justice comes in when you read of such sentences on young people, but you must remember there is no justice, only capitalist law. Please remember that Trade Unionists were sent to Botany Bay for seven years for attempting to organise the workers, while a wealthy man’s gamekeeper received nine months for the murder of a poacher. 1834 was a year of struggle in the Vale. In addition to the foregoing strike there were also strikes at Ferryfield of the Block Printers and also one at Cordale Works. It is valuable to note that in connection with these two strikes a levy to assist the strikers was made on the printers in the other works of the district.

In 1845 the Dyers throughout the West of Scotland were striking against an average wage of 10/- to 12/- per week. Again in 1851 there was a general revolt and widespread strike of Calico printers which was settled by compromise.

The Dalmonach workers went on strike in 1855 against a reduction in wages.

In May 1879 a new factory act came into operation. By this act women were not allowed to work more than 56 hours per week....formerly they worked 60.

The kind owners therefore proposed that they, the women, would require to suffer a reduction in wages while at the same time the workers would be expected to do as much work in the 56, hours as they used to do in 60.

The women decided in the Croftengea Works (Messrs. John Orr Ewing & Co.) that it was time for action and they therefore walked out of the factory. They marched to Dillichip Works (Messrs. Archibald Orr Ewing & Co.) and out came all the women there. Great excitement prevailed and the women then decided to demonstrate to the Milton Works (Messrs Archibald Orr Ewing & Co.) and find out if the women there would come out. Off they then went and soon arrived at Milton Works and sure enough, out came all the women. The strike was now 100% solid. Here was the women, without any prior preparation, but instinctively acting correctly along class lines in their fight against the bosses, building unity of their forces and after a wonderful fight the women won their demands and were ultimately paid the old rates of pay.

In January 1880 a strike of 600 Dalmonach workers took place against a change in working hours and a reduction in wages. Here again a partial victory was recorded.

The largest strike of all since 1880 took place in 1911. For some eight to ten months prior to 1911 the National Federation of Women Workers came into the Vale and organised the women workers. So successful were they that soon 2000 women workers formed the

Vale Branch and some 1000 men and boys joined the Amalgamated Society of Dyers, Bleachers, Finishers and Kindred Trades. Following this organisation there were mass meetings of the workers at which they formulated their demands. Agreement was reached that the demands be as follows:—

- (1) Increase of 2/- weekly for all time workers.
- (2) 10% increase on piecework.
- (3) weekly pays.
- (4) Union Recognition.

The demands were sent to the employers who did not take the slightest notice of them. They simply ignored the communication. The workers then asked for an interview and were informed that the management would be prepared to meet a deputation of the workers to consider any grievances.

The workers held a meeting on the issue “whether they would send deputations to the firm, the Trade Union Officials standing aside.”

Voting by ballot the result was 91% voted in favour of a strike and standing by the officials. Strike notices were lodged with the firm and on the 9th December at 12 o'clock the strike began.

At 3 o'clock on Monday morning the pickets were placed at all gates and entrances of the six works of the company. Mass demonstrations and meetings took place. Seventy extra police were drafted into the Vale. You will always notice that in all strikes the forces of the state are used in the interest of property and against the working class. You never find the police helping the workers to get blacklegs out of a factory, on the contrary, they are used to protect the scum of the earth so that the employers may have a better chance to win.

In this 1911 strike the workers won a Splendid Victory.

The following are the demands they won:—

- 1) Weekly Pays.
- (2) 55½ hours working week.
- (3) 1/- advance per week to all men over eighteen years of age, sixpence advance per week to all youths, and boys under eighteen years of age.
- (4) 1/- per week increase to all firemen, carters and gas plant labourers.
- (5) Time and a quarter after working 55½ hours in any one week to male operatives.
- (6) Sixpence per week increase to all women time workers over or under 18 years of age, also advance of 5% to women pieceworkers at Dillichip and Milton and 2½ % to pieceworkers in Alexandria Works and a further 2½ % on and after 2nd May, 1912.

Factory Conditions & Factory Legislation.

The first act of 1802 fixed a 12 hour day but this was generally evaded and also significantly did not apply to Bleachfields and Printworks.

In the 1819 act employment for children under nine years was prohibited and the 12 hour day extended to include young persons under 16. Night work was also prohibited, but both these regulations were evaded. One striking feature of this act is that for the first time it legalises child labour.

The 1833 Act applied to all textile mills and states that children 8 to 13 years could only work 48 hours per week and 9 hours in a single day. The 12 hour maximum was extended to 18 years and for the first time Factory Inspectors were appointed.

The 12 hour day for women and half time system for children were contained in the 1844 Act but the powers of the factory inspectors were curtailed.

The 10 hour day was passed and included in the 1847 Act.

It is interesting to note that wherever the introduction of the shorter working day was carried out it led to increased production.

The Vale of Leven employers were masters in the art of evading every measure in Factory Legislation that would have been beneficial to the workers. An examination of the Factory Inspectors reports even after 1850 shows how the acts were evaded.

Marx in his "Capital" Page 281/282 Unwin. edition states:—

"Factory legislation for the first time went beyond its original sphere in the "Print works act of 1845." The displeasure with which capital received this new "extravagance" speaks through every line of the act. It limits the working day for children from 8 to 13, and for women to 16 hours, between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. without any legal pause for meal times. It allows males over 13 to be worked at will day and night. It is a Parliamentary abortion."

In 1850 Factory Inspector Tremenheere reported that occasionally young girls of 10 years of age might be found working in a Bleachfield for 20 hours at a time in an atmosphere of 110 degrees.

Mr Roebuck, speaking in the House of Commons on the Bleachfield Bill 1860 and reported in the Scotsman 22/3/1860 stated that the working week in the Vale of Leven Printfields was as follows:—

Monday 17½ hours

Tuesday 16½ hours

Wednesday 15½ hours

Thursday 15½ hours

Friday 15½ hours

Saturday 7 hours

87½ hours per week.

Jamestown Dam.

"The Inspector requested to know, what, if anything, was to be done in regard to sanitary

measures re Jamestown Dam.”

8/2/56.

It cost 9/- per week to board a pauper in the Glasgow Royal Lunatic Asylum.

Fergus O’Conner and Ernest Jones spoke in the Vale during the Chartist Agitation.

In Dumbarton, Vale of Leven and Loch Lomond, McLeod on Page 118

says:—

“We crossed the suspension bridge which connects Alexandria with Bonhill. The Bridge was erected in 1835 by the late Admiral Smollet in whose family or estate the right of ferry was vested. From foot passengers a toll of one halfpenny is exacted, not a very formidable sum to occasional users of the bridge, but an amount which is grudged much even when commuted into small weekly payment by toilers of the Vale, who never meekly bore that yoke. At the County elections of a long by-past period, we have not infrequently seen the Vale printers carrying boards, having painted thereon a representation of the brig, having underneath the motto of “Doon Wi’ the Bawbee Brig.”

J Ewing left £280,000.

He owned property at the head of Queen Street Glasgow which he purchased for £2000 to £3,000. He sold it to the Railway Co., for £35,000 and it is on this ground that the station is erected.

Garibaldi visited Vale of Leven.

Mr John Neill in Records and Reminiscences of Bonhill Parish states:—

“In its early days the Parish was recognised as strongly Radical.”

“Chartism was rampant, and all were in full harmony in their efforts for reform.”

Both locally and personally the district in these days had many outstanding political features, making the people always “to be conspicuous by their efforts, in what they judged to be the cause of popular liberty.”

In Random Street there was a Chartist School.

In Alexandria, as elsewhere there were a number of the inhabitants who took active interest in the Chartist agitation.

One Daniel Campbell, a block printer, descendants of whom still reside in the district, and one Glen, a forester on the Smollett estate, were prominent among the leaders. Glen’s views were rather pronounced, and his employer, Smollett of Bonhill, asked what part of the estate he was going to claim when his views were realised.

“Oh,” said he, “I would fancy a “bittock” o’ the ground near the road at the loch side.” This however was too much for his master and Admiral Smollet dispensed with Glen’s services.”

(See “Glasgow Herald and Advertiser” of 11/2/1803 for formation of the Trade Union of Calico Printers.)

“See Pages 240/241 of McNeills book for Strikes.”

Records and Reminiscences of Bonhill Parish—Neill.

Even in these early days of industrial development friction between masters and men had begun to show. Combinations of Calico printers from different printfields in the West of Scotland sought to regulate prices to be paid by the Masters, and the number of men to be employed. According to a report appearing in the Glasgow Herald and Advertiser of 11th. February 1803, the Calico Printers of Dumbartonshire were not behind in a movement to establish a trade union. The alleged designs and doings of certain printers were considered so malicious that a case was taken into Dumbarton County Court. The prosecutors were Messrs. William Stirling and Sons of Cordale and Dalquhurn. The charge was founded on a statute for "Preventing Unlawful Combinations of Workmen." The newspaper reports of the trial records that "it was clearly established that combinations, consisting of apprentices as well as journeymen, had existed for about a year past, and extended to every printing ground in England, Scotland and Ireland. The combination had for its object to transfer the regulation of prices and management of the hands from the masters to the operatives. To accomplish this purpose, local branches were established, regular meetings held, attended by deputies from each field, and officers appointed for the general management of its affairs, who maintained a regular correspondence with the leaders of the different districts throughout the kingdom. By the regulations of this association, any member who conceived himself in the smallest degree aggrieved by his employers, or who was offered by them any price for his work which he considered inadequate, was directed instantly to leave his employment, and was from that moment entitled to receive from the public fund an allowance of twelve shillings per week until he should find a master elsewhere who would accede to his demands." The charge against the defenders being proved to the satisfaction of the Court, the men were sentenced to three months' imprisonment, while George M'Farlane, district secretary, was also committed to prison for three weeks for gross prevarication upon oath and contempt of Court. The report further stated that from the books and correspondence found in the hands of M'Farlane, the district secretary, it was evident that a very general combination among the operative printers in the three kingdoms had been organised.

The late Mr John Bell, of Dumbarton, who died at Alexandria on 2nd May, 1899, in his 98th year, referring in an interview to his knowledge of strikes, said the first strike which came under his notice occurred about the year 1815 among the calico printers at Todd's Field, Alexandria, now Alexandria Works. The employees demanded an increase in wages, and some rather serious disturbances took place at the time, the introduction of machinery being an additional grievance to the men.

The result of all this was a disorganisation of the trade by men going out on strike. About this time (1834) what was called the "big strike" took place among the block printers in the district. Previous to this women workers called grounders, had been trained to do the lighter class of block work. They were paid at a lesser rate, or a third less than the men, who, therefore, saw that their craft was in danger, and a very bitter feeling was shown against the grounders. As there were nine blocking shops in the parish at the time, the number of men involved, it is estimated, would be over a thousand. The strike lasted for several months, and much distress was experienced. During the time of the strike the military were called upon to enforce law, and to protect life and property. Levenfield, Messrs John Todd & Co.'s, was the centre of the disturbance, and here the soldiers were

lodged in a building at the river side, afterwards known as "The Barracks." Another lodging house for the military was at Dalvait, in a long, low-built house, with small windows. The strike did not benefit the block printers, and the grounders increased in numbers. It was about this time that the cylinder printing machine was coming freely into use, and was affecting the block trade.

There was also a strike at Ferryfield with the block printers, but it did not last long, and later one at Cordale. To assist the men on strike there was a levy made on the other printers in the district. Even in the works where the printing machine was working strikes and reductions were not unknown. In 1855, or thereabouts, there was a general reduction of wages in Dalmonach. It was known as "a penny off the shilling." It caused a lot of heart-burning, and a strike, lasting a few days, followed.

A new Factory Act, which came into operation in May, 1879, was the occasion of a strike of considerable importance among the female workers in three of the principal Turkey-red dye works. It began in Croftengea (Messrs John Orr Ewing & Co.), but extended to Dillichip and Milton Works (Messrs Archibald Orr Ewing & Co.). By the new Act women were not allowed to work more than 56 hours weekly—formerly they worked 60 hours. The masters proposed to make a proportionate reduction in the wages, while, by extra exertion, the women were expected to put through as much work as before. This was objected to, and 400 women came out on strike. The women went back to work on a reduction of about 5 per cent. Nine months later, in February, 1880, Messrs John Orr Ewing intimated that, with a prospect of revival in trade, they had decided to revert to the rates paid previous to the reduction that took place in the month of May previous.

This same year, on 20th January, 1880, a strike took place in Dalmonach, affecting 600 workers. It arose out of a change in the working hours and reduction in wages, caused by a new clause in Factory Act, and lasted for a week, ending without great benefit to the workers.

About the year 1885 Messrs A. Orr-Ewing & Co., Levenbank, proposed to reduce the rate paid for a certain class of block work by $\frac{6}{8}$ in the £, or a third. The reduction did not take effect at first, there being some remonstrance with Mr. A. Orr-Ewing. Not long after it was put into force. It was seen that young, strong men could make big wages, and no organised strike took place.

The strikes, to which reference has been made, were of minor importance to the industrial dispute which burst forth in the closing month of 1911. From published statements it appears that nine or ten months previous the National Federation of Women Workers came into the Vale of Leven to organise the women workers into a trade union, and the attempt was successful. It was at the same time found that there were large numbers of workmen outside any Trade Union, and who were willing to join such an organisation. In due course the claims of the Amalgamated Society of Dyers, Bleachers, Finishers, and Kindred Trades were put before the men. The result was that about one thousand men and boys joined the Union, and two thousand females the Federation. Following this there were mass meetings. Next the workers demands were formulated, and in course forwarded to the directors of the United Turkey Red Co., Ltd. The demands were an advance of 2s. weekly for time workers, 10 per cent. on piecework; weekly pays, and union recognition. No acknowledgment was paid to the communication, and a

repeated request for an interview got much the same treatment, except that the masters were prepared to meet workers to consider any grievances. A direct issue was put before the workers, "whether they would send deputations to the firm—the Trade Union officials standing aside." On being voted upon the result of the ballot was that 91 per cent. of the workers voted in favour of a strike and standing by the officials. Following this the workers' notices were lodged with the firm, and on Saturday, the 9th December, at noon, the strike began. On Monday morning, as early as three o'clock, pickets were placed at the gates and entrances of all the six works of the company. The district was paraded with an improvised band and hundreds of strikers, while during the day open-air meetings were held. Never before had the district been so stirred, and strike scenes were of daily occurrence. The serious nature of the disturbance was not minimised by a force of seventy constables being drafted into the district.

On Wednesday, the 13th December, the directors of the Company decided to close the works. That same evening in the House of Commons Mr Gladstone (Kilmarnock Burghs), on behalf of Mr Acland Allen (Dumbartonshire), asked the President of the Board of Trade whether his attention had been drawn to the dispute between the United Turkey Red Company, Vale of Leven, and their workers; and what action his Department proposed to take in the matter. Mr Buxton, replying, said the Chief Industrial Commissioner is at present in communication with the parties in this dispute.

On the Tuesday of the second week of the strike the Board of Trade met the parties to the dispute, and the following day it was intimated at mass meetings of the women and of the men that a provisional settlement of the strike was arranged on the following terms:—"The United Turkey Red Company will on receipt of an invitation from Sir George Askwith, Chief Industrial Commissioner of the Board of Trade, be represented at a conference to be held not later than January 5, 1912, for the purpose of arriving at a settlement of the dispute existing at their works in the Vale of Leven, it being understood that any point not settled at this conference shall be referred to an arbiter to be mutually agreed upon or appointed by the Board of Trade; work to be resumed immediately and the New Year holidays to be curtailed; wages to be paid on Friday, December 29, up to and including Thursday, December 28; no victimisation." On these conditions the strikers agreed to resume work on the Monday following. During the two weeks the strike lasted, the women were paid 5s each per week, and the men 10s week. The strikers received liberal public sympathy, over £300 being collected outside the district.

On Friday, 5th January, 1912, the conference was held in Glasgow by the Board of Trade with the United Turkey Red directors and the workers. The first day's sitting failed in a settlement, but on the following afternoon it was intimated that a mutual arrangement had been come to, so far as the demands of the men were concerned. The chief features of the agreement were weekly pays, 55½ hours working week, one shilling advance per week to all men over eighteen years of age at present earning less than 25s per week, sixpence advance per week to all youths and boys under eighteen years of age, one shilling per week advance to all firemen, carters, and gas plant labourers, time-and-quarter after working 55½ hours in any one week to male operatives when engaged in men's work. As regards the women workers, no settlement was arrived at until a month later, when after another conference between them and Mr H. J. Wilson, of Sir George Askwith's department, it was agreed to give an advance of sixpence per week to all women time

workers over or under 18 years of age, also advance of 5 per cent to piece workers at Dillichip and Milton, 2½ per cent to piece workers in Alexandria works, and a further 2½ per cent on and after 2nd May, 1912. Other minor details were also agreed to.

Coming to a *resumé* of the wages question, we find that while about the year 1845 wages generally had improved, still labourers were only getting from 11s to 12s weekly. Ten or fifteen years later, the wages of labourers in the printfields came to be revised to about 14s or 15s weekly. Dyers were paid so much per round, and might average from 18s to 20s according to production. Machine printers were classified according to the style of work, and ranged from 34s to 42s. Hand engravers from 23s to 31s, and mechanics and joiners from 21s to 25s. During the next twenty years, very much by the force of organisation and trades unions, there were further advances in wages, machine printers averaging from 38s to 48s, engravers, 32s; and mechanics and joiners, 30s. As shown by statements made during the strike of 1911, printers' wages ranged from 40s to 51s 6d; engravers from 30s to 35s, and joiners and mechanics, 35s to 37s 6d.

In contrasting the methods adopted by the calico block printers of 1803 to secure better wages with the methods followed by the dyers and women workers of 1911, for a similar purpose, it is rather striking to note, although separated by a century of years, the similarity in the procedure of both. It is specially noteworthy that while the methods of the trade unions, or federations, of the two periods appear much the same, the relative position of the unions to the laws of the country in 1803 and in 1911 is entirely different. In the earlier period trade unionism had no legal recognition, and such combinations up till 1843 were met by the Legislature in a hostile spirit. The Trade Union Act of 1871 gave a status and legal recognition to the movement which it did not enjoy previously. A feature of the Vale of Leven Dyers strike of 1911, was the way in which the different classes of workmen, and women workers, combined to attain a common object, and in paralysing a huge local industry.