

## Time to vote?



### **The Balance of Power in 1831.**

Published by S Gans.

John Bull in the centre, Tories on the left and Whigs on the right.

In 1832 the Scottish Reform Act increased the electorate from 5,000 to 60,000 individuals, which represented about 12% of the adult male population of Scotland – votes for adult women did not come till almost 100 years later.

The increase in the numbers voting was:

- twelve-fold in Scotland
- thirteen-fold in Perthshire, from 238 to 3,134
- and seven-fold in Logiealmond, from 5 to 34

The increase in Logiealmond would have been much higher, but William Drummond, the laird up to 1828, had gone through a legal process to enfranchise four of his nephews. The documents state this was 'with a view to increasing the political influence of the family'. He divided up the estate into parcels, each with a value over the property qualification for the electoral register, and transferred them as 'feus in liferent', so the nephews became freeholders. The absolute ownership remained with the laird. William Drummond was not resident in Logiealmond for most of his adult life. He was based in London but as a diplomat was often

abroad. The estate here was run on his behalf through factors who included his older sister, Catherine. Before he went into the diplomatic service, he was the Tory Member of Parliament for St Mawes from 1796 to 1801, and from 1801-1802 for Loswithell, both in Cornwall. Both were 'rotten boroughs', constituencies that were once significant but by then had a very small population. Each returned two MPs to the House of Commons and they were always Tories.

The long fight for electoral reform aimed to redistribute seats to more fairly represent the population, to improve voting arrangements, and also to extend the franchise to a wider population.

The progress of the Reform Bill through Parliament was hard fought and the Act inevitably a compromise. It sought middle ground between what were seen as bigotry and fanaticism, and balanced popular demand, expressed at times in riots, against long held interests, that remembered the French Revolution. Sydney Smith said in retrospect that 'it was not a good Bill, but it was a great Bill when it passed'. It started the process of reform. Further revision came over many decades.

**'The Reformers' attack on the Old Rotten Tree'** published by E King 1831. The nests in the tree represent the rotten boroughs, which the Whigs are trying to destroy and the Tories are trying to retain.



The Reform Act Scotland, like the parallel Acts for the rest of the UK, extended the franchise to householders with properties valued at £10 in the burghs, and property owners of £10 and tenants with a £50 rental in the country. It also rationalised the constituencies and got rid of the rotten boroughs, introduced voter registration and a system to resolve disputes. Previously there had been very few polling stations and so voters had to be given time to register their vote, but the act established far more – particularly helpful in a large county like Perthshire. Polling time was reduced from 40 to 2 days. But there was a long way to go to a voting system such as we have today.

In the election of December 1832 Perthshire returned a Whig to Parliament after many years of Tory MPs. The Logiealmond tenants almost all voted for him, though in 1834 their votes were more evenly spread between the candidates. The Tory was returned briefly, but he was out again in 1837.

The Perthshire newspapers recorded many heated and lengthy meetings in Logiealmond between 1834 and 1837, and probably before but few of the local papers have been digitised for this period. They were held in the school, which was at that time in Harrietfield in what later became the village hall. Most were in favour of the Liberals and strongly supported Reform. The Secession Church was established here early, and most supported it rather than the parish church. David Forrester says in his local history; ‘When it came to politics the Logiealmond man was unsparing and out-spoken, and could write a paper or a letter, e.g. to the newspapers, with point, as well as speak with an edge to his tongue’.

The printed voters’ rolls for Perthshire in 1832 are available in the Local Studies section of the A K Bell Library, and list individual electors by parish. (Logiealmond was at that time split between several parishes, with most in Monzie.) Initially voting was not secret; and the lists were annotated by hand after the election to record who voted for which candidate. (See poor copy below – the library is not open to get a better one!) The 1832 list of voters has ‘O’ added to the left for the Whig, Earl of Ormelie (the Marquis of Breadalbane), or ‘M’ for the Tory Sir George Murray of Ochertyre

estate. To the right are the votes in 1834 - 'M' for Sir George Murray again, and 'G' for the Whig loser, Mr Robert Graham. The printed list for 1837 has been annotated in a similar way. The 1868 list was even been printed with a column for each political party, so that each individual's vote can be filled in after the election.

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PARISH OF MONZIE.

A

William Allan, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Levrockhaugh  
 John Allan, residenter, joint-tenant, lands, houses, and grazings,  
 Milton and Logiealmond  
 Thomas Allan, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Wester Tully-  
 moran

B

John Bryce, farmer, tenant, lands, houses and farm, Loanhead

C

James Cameron, tenant, lands and houses, Newmill  
 Samuel Cameron, minister, liberenter, manse and glebe, Monzie

D

Andrew Davidson, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Westhill  
 John Dewar, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Hardhill  
 John Davidson, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Millhaugh

F

Alexander Fisher, residenter, tenant, farm, Glouroiren

G

Archibald Gorrie farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Groan

H

Robert Hally, farmer and miller, tenant, lands and mill, Millhole  
 of Cairnies  
 Andrew Hally, senr. joint-tenant, north-west and south-west  
 farms, Cairnies  
 Andrew Hally, junr. joint-tenant, north-west and south-west  
 farms, Cairnies  
 John Hally, tenant, north-east farm, Cairnies,  
 Thomas Hally, farmer, tenant, lands, Wester Cairney  
 David Harley, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Shannock

K

Thomas Keir, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, East Braco  
 Peter Keron, tenant, lands and houses, Smithlands of Imerpaffrey  
 Duncan Kennedy, farmer, tenant, lands and houses, Easter  
 Drumnachar  
 James Kennedy, residenter, joint tenant, lands, houses, and  
 grazings, Milton and Logiealmond

U

This was open to abuse, especially for tenants and tradesmen. On several Perthshire estates, tenants who had not voted for the laird's preferred candidate had problems in getting their leases renewed.

In 1879 a pamphlet was published by 'Glower-ower-im', the name of a small farm near Drummond Park, and the pseudonym for a native of Logiealmond (thought to be Rev. James Macdonald of Abernethy Free Church, brother of A. Macdonald of Chapelhill farm and inn). It was entitled 'Our Land-Laws and Land-Lords versus the Common People. It notes the changing balance of tenants with different beliefs – the reduction of Non-Conformists and increase in established church members, and also the reduction in tenants who had voted for the Liberal candidate in 1868 and the increase in Tory voters. The author of the pamphlet also asserted that where possible, for tenants of the right persuasion, the tenancy agreement was made out to include several names, such as sons or brothers, thus enabling them to vote too.

Our Land-Laws and Land-Lords versus the Common People, page 5, Glower-ower-im, 1879

	<b>1843</b>	<b>1878</b>
Free Church cottages	46	15
United Presbyterian cottages	41	8
Established Church cottages	3	19
Others	3	3
Free Church farmers	32	5
United Presbyterian farmers	33	5
Established Church farmers	8	22
Others	2	0

Although it was a time of falling population numbers in Logiealmond as in most other rural areas because of changes in agriculture, the attraction of towns and emigration, some had less chance of staying than others.

After the Reform Act of 1832 further significant reforms were introduced gradually over the next 50 years. These included secret ballots in 1872, provisions to limit bribery and further increases in the franchise.

**So, consider yourself lucky that you can vote, you don't need to go far to do so, you are not likely to lose your job or your house if you do, and no one knows your choice.**

Rosalind Pearson