



WESTMUIR: 200TH BIRTHDAY

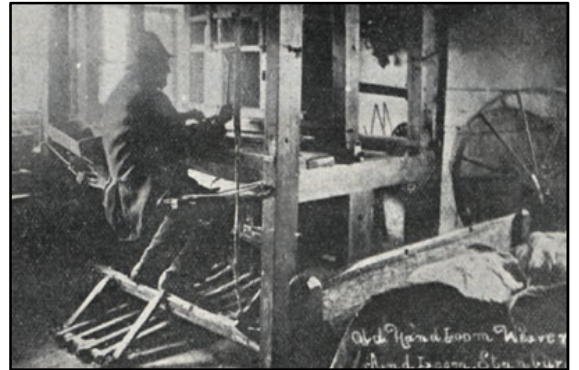


In **1815** the **Kirriemuir Town Authorities** offered a number of plots for sale or rent along the town boundary at the **west mare**. The offer was a response by the town to increasing attempts by neighbouring farms to encroach on town land. That is why presumably these proposed crofts to the west of the town were situated along the **Parish Boundary** from **Egnomoss** round **Broadwood** and along the **Roman Road** and not as one might expect along the main **Kirriemuir/Alyth road**. Already a similar policy had been adopted on the **north mare** three years earlier with some success. Whether this plan would prove effective to the west of the town was uncertain. It was hoped obviously that **new handloom weavers** with their families would be **encouraged to settle** and so **increase Kirriemuir's prosperity** while protecting the town boundaries at the same time;

but would it prove possible to create a new suburb a mile and a half away from the town and its facilities?

Twenty five years later it was obvious that it would and a new village '**Westmuir**' with **214 residents** and some **fifty properties** had appeared. Only half of these buildings were dignified with the title of 'houses' and the rest were described as 'room with one, two, three or four loom shop' which were nevertheless still residences. By the time of the **1841 census**, **46 men** with their **womenfolk** were occupied in a **dozen or more weaving shops** in the **linen trade** in the Westmuir.

The **new village** had also attracted a large number of other **tradespeople**; **32 labourers**, a **ploughman**, a **molecatcher**, a **ratcatcher**, **woodcutter**, **mason**, **teacher**, **2 cattle dealers** and a **male domestic servant**. The only **female worker** specifically mentioned was also described as a **domestic servant** - how **typically chauvinistic!** Possibly this lady and her male colleague were employed in the largest house in the Westmuir which was occupied by a **lawyer** working with the **Sherriff's Office in Dundee**. Clearly, with the exception of this legal commuter, the Westmuir was anything but a dormitory village.



By this time the village so far away from the town centre had also become quite self-sufficient. The adults had a **public house** which in time **acquired stables** and **nine rooms** for let presumably for **passing trade**. Some at least of the village children attended a **schoolroom** with a **teacher Mr James Goss** also a resident in the village. Most important for the village must have been the establishment of a house, coal store and shop by the **enterprising merchant, Mr Robert Fairweather** who also owned a **large store** in **Kirriemuir's High Street**. The profitability of the Westmuir emporium was recognised by the town council which levied a rate on the business five times greater than the average Westmuir local tax.

There was much money to be made in the new village and with so many **self-employed** and **self-reliant workers** it is not surprising that **six weavers** and **four labourers** were **multi-property owners** by the **1850s**. Indeed the **first owner** of the **public house** was a **labourer Mr William Wilson** who in turn sold it to **another labourer Alexander Ross**. At least one other **enterprising resident** also branched out and opened a **market garden**.

The opportunities afforded in the development of early Westmuir were noted **outwith the village** and property was **owned** by **farmers** in **Glenisla** and **Lindertis** and by a **Quarryman** in the **Northmuir**. **Two ladies**, one resident in **Lindertis** the other in **Edinburgh** also **owned property** for **let** in the village as did a **Mr John McDougall** who was living in **America**.

By **1850** the only thing Westmuir lacked to be **fully self-sufficient** was a **Church**. These early years had been **boom time** but what goes up must **come down** as did the **fortunes of Westmuir** but that is **another story**.