

**Fife Herald & Advertiser 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1850**  
**RIOTING AT DUNFERMLINE. (From the Scotsman)**

On Monday last Dunfermline was the scene of a riot of such formidable description as to render it necessary for the authorities to call in the aid of the military. The riot originated on Saturday evening in a fight between some Irish Railway navies and some inhabitants of Dunfermline, and finished on Monday, by an attempt, on the part of the latter, to expel all the Irish resident in that that town and neighbourhood.

It appears that Saturday last was the closing pay day of the labourers employed in the construction of the Stirling and Dunfermline railway. The afternoon was spent by a large number of the labourers in drinking and dissipation; but up to eleven o'clock, when the public-houses were closed, there did not appear to be any symptom whatever of a breach of the peace being intended. About three quarters of an hour afterwards, however, a fight, said to be a mock one, took place among some of the navies at the top Bruce Street. A number of the inhabitants assembled to witness the row. Whether these parties interfered or not we cannot learn, but in a short time the fight began to change in character, and it became at once apparent that, prior to leaving that district of the country, there had been a predetermined scheme on the part of the Irish to revenge some old grudge upon the people of Dunfermline. The Irishmen, instead of beating each other, commenced to assail the onlookers, and being reinforced by others, who had been lying in ambush, and some of whom were armed with bludgeons, the affray wore for some minutes a very alarming aspect. A man named David Anderson, a weaver from Dysart, who had recently come to Dunfermline, was along with others, knocked down in the struggle; and as a cry was raised that he was murdered, the Irishmen, afraid of the consequences, immediately began to disappear, and the row ceased. Anderson was conveyed to a place of safety, and medical assistance obtained, when it was found that he had received a severe kick on the side of the neck from the iron shod boots of one of the navies, occasioning a deep wound, from which the blood flowed in great abundance. It was also discovered that his spine was fractured, which is supposed to have been caused either by a kick or a blow from a bludgeon. He was still in life yesterday afternoon, but it is not thought that he will long survive the injuries he received. Mr. Lambert, the Superintendent of the Dunfermline Burgh Police, and a party of constables, succeeded in apprehending twelve of the leading actors in the affray, who are still in custody. It is said that the person who kicked Anderson is among the number.

This finished the disturbance on Saturday evening. During Sunday the town exhibited its accustomed quiet appearance, although it is pretty evident, from what subsequently took place, that there must have been some secret organisation going on among, at least, a portion of the working classes, who consist chiefly of weavers.

About half-past ten o'clock on Monday morning, the first results of this secret organisation appeared in a large meeting of weavers and others at a place called Dam-back, in the close vicinity of the spot where the fighting occurred on Saturday night. What took place at this meeting we could not ascertain; but there can be no doubt, from what afterwards happened, that a determination was entered into to expel forthwith either all the Irish resident in Dunfermline or the obnoxious portion of them. Some time after they had assembled, Mr. Shirreff, the sheriff-substitute of the western district of Fife, and

Provost Kinnis, went up to them, and admonished them to keep the peace, and disperse without delay. This warning was unheeded by them; and as their numbers continued every moment to increase until, it was calculated, there could not be fewer than fifteen hundred or two thousand persons present, they ultimately resolved, in defiance of the law, to proceed forthwith with the expulsion of the Irish, furth not only of the boundaries of the royalty of Dunfermline, but of the Kingdom of Fife itself.

Having this object in view, they formed themselves into a compact body against which it was in vain for the authorities, with the small police force at their disposal to contend, and went along by Golfdrum and Baldridgeburn, in the outskirts of Dunfermline, turning all Irishmen they knew out of their houses, and this in spite of every resistance. If it was the original intention of this lawless mob only to oust such of the Irish as were concerned with the row on Saturday night, or in affrays of similar kind, they did not long adhere to it; for, in their triumphant progress, they visited the houses of some natives of the sister isle who have been, it is said, for years resident in Dunfermline, without having ever been known to misconduct themselves in any respect. They did not interfere with the wives or families of these persons; and, where they met with no opposition they abstained from everything approaching to violence. In all cases, however, where their harsh and illegal demands were not complied with, they were not over scrupulous as to the means which they used to accomplish their purpose. This naturally led to some serious encounters; for in several instances, the Irishmen, acting on the principle that every man's house in this country is his castle, were prepared to contest the intrusion of the mob, even at the sacrifice of their lives. One man barricaded his door, and refused to allow any one to enter his dwelling. All his efforts, however, to keep the crowd out were unavailing; as, by means of some large paling stakes, the crowd even managed to burst open the door, and to demolish the temporary barricade which had been erected behind it. Irritated beyond measure at this conduct he seized an axe, and, with an oath, declared that he would not allow any one to enter his house. Two or three of the ringleaders in the crowd pressed forward, and just as he was aiming his blow with the back of his axe, one of the besieging party struck his arm backwards with a stick, which caused the sharp part of the axe to enter the unfortunate man's own forehead, and thereby to inflict a severe wound. In another case a man was valorously defended for some time against the mob by his dog; and this obstacle was not overcome until some one ruthlessly and cowardly cut the throat of the poor animal.

The Irishmen, as they were unhoused, were made to take up a position in the centre of the crowd. The number captured in this way amounted to about forty-five. The larger portion of these were navies, but some were weavers, shoemakers, and mason's labourers. The crowd did not extend their lawless acts to the principle streets of the burgh, although they might easily have done so, when it is considered that, by this time they were two or three thousand strong. Retracting their steps, to some extent by the route whence they set out, they proceeded down the street called New Row, in the direction of Queensferry, intending to see the Irishmen shipped across to the other side of the Forth before leaving them.

Provost Kinnis, and Bailies Johnston and Ireland, were meanwhile engaged in swearing in special constables. The more respectable portion of the inhabitants came forward and enrolled themselves with alacrity; so that ere long a force sufficient to have

struck awe among the rioters was collected, but not in sufficient time to overtake them before they were beyond the limited boundaries of the burgh, and where all jurisdiction on the part of the magistrate ceased.

The Sheriff-Substitute, and Mr. Macdonald, the Procurator Fiscal, on learning the design of the mob, hired a drosky, and proceeded without a moment's delay, by another road to North Queensferry. They arrived at that place some time before the mob, and succeeded in organising a body, composed chiefly of the workmen employed in the Carlin Knowes Quarries, to oppose the forcible banishment of the Irishmen across the Forth. The mob, by the time they reached the Carlin Knowes Quarries, in the neighbourhood of North Queensferry, where the Sheriff-Substitute and his party had taken up position, had dwindled down from two or three thousand to about four hundred. The Irishmen were ordered by the Sheriff-Substitute to march into the quarry, which they did. The mob were then cautioned, at their peril to proceed any further; and with this caution after a few minutes' consultation, they ultimately deemed it advisable to comply—returning quietly to Dunfermline. We learn that, on the way from Dunfermline to North Queensferry, there was only one attempt at violence by this mob. This occurred near the Spittal toll-bar, where three of the Irishmen left the public road, and endeavoured to cross the fields, with a view of going to Burntisland. They were pursued, however, and brought back—one of them, on being overtaken, being knocked down and otherwise abused.

While the above was going on, a scene of a somewhat similar kind was enacting at the Townhill Collieries, distant about a mile from Dunfermline. At these collieries, we are informed, several hundred men are employed, about sixty of whom are Irishmen. Incited by what had taken place at Dunfermline, the Scotch colliers resolved to expel all the Irish colliers from the works. In addition to the feelings which actuated the people of Dunfermline in their hostility, the Scotch colliers were prompted by another and perhaps stronger motive to the expulsion of the Irish. There has been a strike for some weeks past among the miners in Lanarkshire for a rise in wages. A similar course was intended in Townhill and the adjoining collieries in Halbeath and Wellwood; but, as they were afraid that they could never succeed in their object so long as they had to compete with the Irish, who are not so scrupulous about the rate of wages for which they work, they entered into a proposition that was made by one or two of their leaders to banish all the Irish from the pits at Townhill. In the course of Monday forenoon, they expelled about thirty of the most obnoxious of the Irish, and, with the assistance of about three hundred weavers from Dunfermline, were proceeding to expel still more. In this they were frustrated, to some extent, by the boldness and determination of the manager, Mr. Mungall, who, armed with a pair of pistols, went up to the leader of the riotous mob, and threatened to blow out his brains if he would not desist. At this juncture, too, Bailie Johnstone and Mr. Kilgour, the town-clerk of Dunfermline, arrived at the spot; and, by the combined agency thus brought to bear for the preservation of the peace, the riotous proceedings were quelled.

Fearing that matters would assume a still more serious character than they actually did, the authorities of Dunfermline about mid-day despatched a special messenger to Sheriff Monteith in Edinburgh, with a request that he would come to Dunfermline, and bring with him a detachment of military. The Sheriff at once acceded to this request, and with the consent of the military authorities, obtained the assistance of a detachment of the 13<sup>th</sup> Light

Dragoons from Piershill Barracks. The Dragoons left Edinburgh about seven o'clock, by way of Queensferry, and on arriving at which Sheriff Monteith asked the unfortunate Irish, who had been driven thither by the mob, in the afternoon, if they wished to return; and as they all, with the exception of some six or seven, expressed a desire to go back, the Sheriff, accompanied by the military, returned with them to Dunfermline, which they reached about nine o'clock. All was quiet by this time in Dunfermline; but, as the Irish expressed some doubts about the safety of going to their respective homes, they were kindly sheltered for the night in the Town House, and at an early hour on Tuesday morning, proceeded without molestation or annoyance to their various residences.

The services of the military not being required on Monday evening in Dunfermline, the Sheriff and authorities, from information that they had received, deemed it advisable to send them out to the Townhill Colliery; and they arrived there no more than in time, as the work of intimidation resorted to in the forenoon to cause the Irish to leave, had been renewed with the aid of a body of Scotch colliers from the pits at Halbeath and Wellwood. Immediately on hearing the approach of the military the mob dispersed. As the leaders were all known, some time was spent endeavouring to apprehend them, but notwithstanding every exertion, the authorities only managed to capture one of them, who was brought into Dunfermline under the escort of the military, and lodged in prison.

Yesterday, there was no attempt to renew the disturbances at Dunfermline or Townhill, and we are disposed to think that there will be no farther recurrence to such lawless proceedings as took place on Monday. Warrants have been issued against all the chief participators in the riots, and it is expected that these would be put into effect yesterday evening, and the parties quietly lodged in prison, without the assistance of the military, who still remain in Dunfermline.

In crossing at Queensferry yesterday forenoon, we observed about eight or nine Irishmen and their families on the pier; and as they had all the little articles of furniture which they possessed beside them, we take for granted that that it is not their intention to return to the county of Fife.



