

The growth of

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According to the census of 2001, Oban and the immediate surrounding area has a population of around 9,000 people.

The census statistics would also suggest that there is a steady flow of people moving away from the centre of town to set up home in outlying areas, with the old Ardchonell and Kilmore council ward showing an increase in population of more than 15 per cent in the 10 year period between 1991 and 2001.

The number of people living in and around Oban may not be huge by modern day standards, but compare to the past 200 years, that number is massive.

In a little over 100 years, the number of full time residents in Oban has doubled, and although a commonly used phrase is that 'Oban never changes', nothing could be further from the truth.

In 1841 the number of people living in Oban had dropped to under 1,400. However, within another 40 years, that figure had more than doubled and by 1886, 120 years ago, Oban's population had cleared the 4,000 mark.

In line with demand for housing and commercial premises, the wealth of the Burgh of Oban also grew and in the mid 1880s it was reported that 'the increase of the assessable rental of Oban has been unprecedented in the history of British towns. From 1864 until the present time (1886), Oban, has increased at the rate of 260 per cent.'

The town had been declared a burgh of barony by Royal charter, granted in favour of George



William, Duke of Argyll. However, in 1820 it was discovered that that the charter of 1811 was invalid, and the Crown had to grant a new charter dated 1820.

Then, as today, Oban depended largely on the tourist trade for the majority of its annual income. Its only real industry, other than the traditional low-key fishing and farming, was its distillery. Attempts had been made to start a brewery and a farina (grain) mill but both ventures had failed. Any heavier industry was unlikely ever to have been