

STONEHOUSE

Stonehouse is located on the River Avon in the heart of rural Lanarkshire in an area of natural beauty and historical interest. Nestling in the Avon Valley the village of Stonehouse thrives in the peaceful surroundings of the countryside with its clear blue waters and rolling hills.

As is the case for many rural villages in Scotland, a community is built on its people's spirit, resourcefulness and character. This Stonehouse possesses in abundance, ensuring an active, thriving community, working together in the furtherance of recreational, charitable and traditional events, such as the Gala Day and the Agricultural Show.

Stonehouse has a great deal to offer both visitors and residents alike, providing a range of local services, through its shops, inns, picnic settings and accommodation to suit your every need. This guide will assist in providing you with a short history of the village, as well as informing you of the many activities and events throughout the year. Visitors and tourists will be assured of a warm welcome from the people of Stonehouse and fond memories of their stay.



HISTORY

In prehistoric times, the natural place to settle would have been by the river Avon with its fertile holms and abundance of natural resources. Evidence of early man can be found throughout the parish, enabling us to build a picture of how the community of Stonehouse developed over the centuries.

The earliest records of a landowner in Stonehouse appear to be about the year 1220, when Sir William (the Fleming) de Douglas of Stanhus, appears as a witness to a charter along with Sir Archibald Douglas. The Douglases were the chief landowners of the parish until the reign of James II who endeavoured to destroy the Douglases and install the Hamiltons to the Barony of Stonehouse.

Principally known as a weaving community, Stonehouse has developed and adapted to social and industrial change. Having always retained its strong agricultural identity and beautiful natural environment, Stonehouse's character and future have been shaped and enriched by its inhabitants throughout the years.

Some believe that before the dawn of recorded history, on a small mound half a mile to the west of the village, "standing stones" possibly stood within the old kirk graveyard. A stone cist was found in the old kirk cemetery in 1937, confirms this site as a place of pagan significance.

The oldest record of the village appears to be a notice stating that the parish of Stonehouse and the churchyard were to be dedicated in the ninth century to St.Ninian.

ON THE BANKS OF THE AVON

The Avon is one of the most endearing and beautiful of all Scotland's rivers; an inspiration to many a painter's palette and poet's imagination. The river flows through the parish from its source in Ayrshire through the parishes of Strathaven, Glassford, Stonehouse, Dalsfer and eventually into the Clyde a mile east of Hamilton and is reckoned to be one of the best trout streams in Scotland. The Avon and Cander gorge are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest; an outstanding example of semi-natural deciduous gorge woodland.



The Avon has many tributaries which in themselves have a natural beauty and interest. The largest of these is the Kype Water which flows through the hamlet of Sandford. Following the course of the Kype to the Avon, the Spectacle E'e falls can be found projecting a cascade of water some 50 feet to the pool below. Equally enthralling is the Cander Water, a stream rising from the parish of Lesmahagow, some six miles to the meeting of the waters at the Fairies Rock, where it is said fairies would dance after dark.

The Linthaugh Bridge which spans the Avon was built in the late 18th century to replace the bridge swept away in the floods of 1771. Further down stream you can still view the columns of Scotland's longest viaduct, constructed by the famous Arrol Brothers in 1904 and later dismantled in 1984. Spanning the Cander Water you can also find Woodland Bridge designed in 1821 by the famous Thomas Telford.

The Avon in its natural setting is a haven for many birds and wildlife including, deer, mink, badgers and more recently the otter which has returned to the seclusion of these waters. Often tropical in appearance, the Avon gorge also supports many rare plant species.

THE STANIS WEAVERS

Stonehouse prospered and developed as a weaving community during the 18th and 19th centuries, latterly in the manufacturing of silk garments. Working closely with Strathaven, the Stonehouse weavers produced silk scarves, handkerchiefs and assorted garments for export to the Indian, as well as the home market.

When weaving was at its peak in the early 19th century, the weavers were prosperous enough to own their own property. Streets of privately owned cottages were built, such as those of Hill Road, Cam'nethan Street and Queen Street. These streets form part of the Conservation Area and still retain the character and beauty of their former existence as working homes.

In 1841 there was talk of decline, despite the fact that there were 400 weavers working in Stonehouse rising to 500 in 1891. With the introduction of the power loom, hand loom weavers were unable to compete. However, the Stonehouse weavers were able to adapt better than most, specialising in fine silks woven on the intricate patterns of the Jacquard loom. As work became scarce towards the end of the 19th century the weavers sought employment in agriculture, or the mines to supplement their income.



The last two weavers in Lanarkshire were the Hamilton brothers, Robert and James, of Cam'nethan Street. James Hamilton died at the age of 84 in 1959 and completed his last 'wab' in 1939. The silk loom belonging to the Hamilton brothers now rests in the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

THE COVENANTERS

During the reign of James VI the church gradually became more under the influence of the sovereign. When he ascended the English throne he tried to introduce a system of governing the church by bishops. This caused mistrust of the government which continued under the reign of Charles I, who condemned private prayer meetings and conventicles in Scotland. A deep discontent festered in the hearts of Scotsmen, true to the religious beliefs of the Scottish church and in the spring of 1638, at Greyfriars, they subscribed in supporting the National Covenant.

During the protectorate of Cromwell the country enjoyed a great deal of spiritual freedom when he legitimised Protestantism. This freedom was short lived when Charles II came to the throne and religious discontent returned to Scotland. He strove to bring the Church under his control and was more oppressive than his predecessors, sending hundreds of followers of the Covenant to the gallows. Ministers who refused to submit to the will of Charles II were either imprisoned, or evicted from their parishes. However, nearly four hundred ministers did not adhere to the will of Charles II and so began the bloody inquisition of Scotland.

'Bloody' Graham of Claverhouse led the onslaught, but suffered defeat at the Battle of Drumclog in 1679. It is thought that he may have used Patrickholm House as his headquarters during the persecution of the Covenanters locally, for its occupants, the Hamilton's of Raploch, were at that time fiercely opposed to the Covenanters. John Morton was the only Covenanter lost on the field of battle at Drumclog but five others died later from their wounds, including James Thomson of Tanhill whose grave stone rests in the old kirk cemetery.

On an old parochial map of the parish, crossed swords are found at Sodom Hill indicating a battle site. The battle may have been a skirmish between the Covenanters and 'Clavers'. The only record found of this battle taking place is from Robert K. Chalmers song 'In praise of the Avon', in the lines:

*Sodom Hill and Drumclog Field
Where weavers fought and wadna yield;
Where Scotland's richts were firmly seal'd
Beside the winding Avon*

It was the Battle of Bothwell Bridge only three weeks later, that sealed the fate of the Covenanters. Persecuted and hunted for their faith, their monuments stand as a silent reminder of their oppression.



DOUBLE DYKES

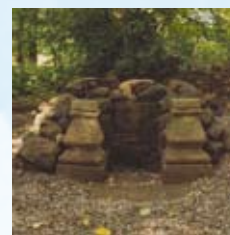
At the eastern side of the parish, south of Ringsdale Castle, the river Avon and Cander Water converge on the steep banks of the Avon Gorge. The tapering area of land between these streams is known as Double Dykes. About a quarter of a mile from the apex, the ramparts and earthen walls are viewed from north to south, in a semicircular fashion, forming defences for the base of the triangle. The origins of these defences are uncertain, though 19th century local historian Robert Naismith suggests Double Dykes may have been a Roman fort. The fort may even be older, dating to the Iron Age.

ROMAN ROAD

In 80^{AD} Governor Gnaeus Julius Agricola led a Roman army of 20,000 men into Scotland establishing forts between the Clyde and the Forth. To control this new frontier the Romans set about building a network of roads. Stonehouse can lay claim to a length of the Roman road system running through the parish. This can be seen at Dykehead by taking the road up Sidehead Road to Avondyke Training Centre. Two field boundaries south of Dykehead Farm lie just beyond the training centre. To the left, through a metal field gate, follow the fence downhill to another gate. From there onwards, the raised surface of the road can be viewed from the left edge of the field. A slightly raised surface can be followed on foot for two kilometres to Gill farmhouse. The road was formerly known as the 'Deil's causey' as those of superstitious belief believed the Devil had a hand in its making.

MOUNDS AND CAIRNS

There exist at least four sites of interest within the parish which are indicated on ordnance survey maps either as a mound, or cairn. The first mound lies on the line of the Roman road, along the Udston Road, a quarter of a mile on the right from Chapel Farm heading west. Another can be found to the right of Fairy Burn Bridge towards Sandford at Tweediehall. Although there is little evidence of these cairns today, they can still be clearly identified in shape, particularly that of Cairncockle on the Blackwood Road, of where a half circle ditch can still be seen. Further mounds can be found at Westmains farm (Mount Pigsaw) and Law farm near the village of Sandford.



HOLY WELLS

Four holy wells are found within the parish. Of pagan origin, from a time when there were many superstitions surrounding water, pilgrims from all over the surrounding countryside would flock to experience their healing properties, or administer Christian baptisms, as was probably the case at St.Ninian's well. This well like the old kirk church and churchyard, was dedicated to Ninian. Other holy wells still in evidence include, a sulphurous spring known at St.Patrick's well near Glenavon, St.Laurence's well near Chapel farm and the recently restored St.Antony's well, within the grounds of Spital House.

GLESART STANES

Although these stones lie outside Stonehouse parish boundary, they cannot go without a mention. It is possible that other stones may have stood throughout the surrounding area, but through land improvements, these have long disappeared. The 'Glesart Stanes' lie near Avonholm by the Avon, on a hill surrounded by a cluster of trees including oak and holly. Oak was the most sacred of trees to the pagan religion, said to have many powers from fending off lightning to curing toothache. A single standing stone can also be found at Crookedstane farm.



THE OLD KIRKYARD

A prehistoric site of great historical interest, the old kirk ruins are probably Stonehouse's most recognisable feature. Classified as a 'B' listed monument, along with the graveyard in 1971, the belfry is typical of other 17th century churches. Last restored in 1734, it probably fell into disrepair during the latter half of that century, as the new church in New Street was opened in 1772.

In 1937 an account of Stonehouse stated a cist was found some years previous within St.Ninian's old kirk walls. Its presence would suggest that the old kirk yard may have been a prehistoric site of religious significance, long before the present church was established here. The oldest gravestone to be seen in the kirk yard is that of James Hamilton who died in 1650.



The old kirk cemetery possesses a great variety of monuments, some of historical significance, some of great sorrow and others of amusement and intrigue.



STONEHOUSE



LOCAL INFORMATION LEAFLET



FACILITIES AND ENTERTAINMENT

ANGLING

Fishing permits are available from Avon Angling Club by contacting 01698 793065 or Kype Angling Club on 01357 520738.

SPORTING FACILITIES

Alexander Hamilton Memorial Park possesses a floodlit athletics track available throughout the year. Rugby and 7 a-side football is available by bookings the pitch on 01698 452360. The public park also has a multi-surface play area for roller blading, basketball and other ball games. The Tilework Park has a floodlit all weather playing surface providing the opportunity to play either football or tennis. The facility also has indoor changing facilities and a full size grass pitch. Contact 01698 424101 for information. Adjacent to the park there is also a BMX track.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Stonehouse Agricultural Show is held annually on the third Saturday in May adjacent to the Tilework Park facility. Stonehouse Gala Day is held annually on the first Saturday of June in the Alexander Hamilton Memorial Park. Stonehouse Christmas Festival is held during the month of December.

MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT

Stonehouse Folk Club usually meets every second and fourth Friday of the month between September and June in St.Ninian's Church hall. A' the Airs Burns Club meet every first Friday of the month between September and May in the Public Institute, New Street.

HERITAGE RESOURCE ROOM

For visitors trying to trace family ancestry, or seeking historical information on the area, the local Heritage Group run a small heritage facility above the local library.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Available in the local library at 4/5 The Cross. Tel. 01698 793984



REX PICTURE HOUSE

Directly across from the old parish church in New Street, stands the village's first picture house, built in 1914, and now the premises of 'Top Grade Windows'. Known as 'The Palace', the cinema was designed by Victor Wilson, seating 600 and was later sold at auction in 1918. In 1937 the 'Rex' Cinema was opened in Argyle Street by the owner, John Edward Sheeran. The picture house was furnished with a chandelier and mahogany panel fittings, including a staircase, from the German ship 'Homeric'. Launched as 'Columbus' in 1913, in Danzig, the 'Homeric' was said to have been built for the Kaiser, in expectation of him winning the first world war. Ceded to Britain in 1919 she was sold to the White Star Line and renamed the 'Homeric'. Having sailed the ocean seas for many years, she was broken up at Inverkeithing in 1936, where her interior furnishings were dismantled and transported by 14 wagons to Stonehouse railway station.

In May 1925, Alexander Hamilton fulfilled his dream and presented the park, bandstand and fountain to his native village. The bandstand now commands a magnificent panoramic view of the Avon Valley from the Alexander Hamilton Memorial Park. Purchased by Forth District Council from Glasgow District Council in 1924, the bandstand originated from the Great Glasgow Exhibition of 1911, regularly entertaining audiences across the county with Stonehouse's very own Pipe Band (world champions 1909) and Silver Band (British Champions 1919).

The park itself was probably better known for the longest chure in Scotland, opened in 1933 by Councillor Thomas Wilson and later dismantled around 1967. When Sir Harry Lauder visited the park in August 1942, he said, "It's a bonnie park; yin o' the nicest I've ever been in, an' something Stonehouse folk should be rale proud o'".

Before the establishment of the Agricultural Society in 1858, the parishes of Stonehouse and Dalswinton held combined shows, generally at the Crossyre Knowe. These fairs could often last for days and were very popular with the children of the village. In the latter end of the 19th century, 'Pinder Ord's Circus' came to the village with performing dogs, hens, claphans, horses and trapeze artists.

The Stonehouse fairs go back several centuries, principally for the buying and selling of cattle and settling of half yearly accounts. With improvements in transport, fair days in rural Lanarkshire became very popular, bringing in day visitors from the surrounding towns and Glasgow. Growers and craftsmen brought their produce to be sold and traded, while parents and children dressed in their best clothes and painted their houses and doorsteps in honour of the fair day.

The parish of Stonehouse possesses more rights of way than any other ward in the former Hamilton District. As in other parishes throughout the country, the network of routes reflect the economic and social history of the area. For instance, over half the rights of way have access to some industrial usages, primarily to coal pits (Dovesdale-Broomfield Pit), quarries (Watstone-Overwood sandstone quarry), limekilns, oil works and mills (Sandford-Spectacle E'e Mill). Some routes provided general access, while some routes follow the lines of ancient roads (Tanhill - Roman Road) and village lanes.

In order to preserve these ancient routes, it is up to the residents, and those walkers seeking the escapism of the city, to ensure these rights of ways are used regularly, to preserve what have been handed down, and sometimes fought for by our forefathers. In doing so, the utmost respect and care must be given to those who make a living from the land.

WALKING

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In Stonehouse, we are fortunate to have the best of both worlds on our doorstep; the close comforts of the city, and the freedom of the countryside.

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In 1815 James and William Murdoch of Hill Road enlisted in the 26th Cameronians to fight Napoleon. At the Battle of Waterloo, they were mortally wounded and whilst dying on the battle field they wore their names on the fly leaf of a bible with the only medium available to them - their own blood.

The infamous Burke and Hare are said to have frequented the Black Bull Inn in the early 1830's, stopping for refreshments on a coach journey. As late as the 1850's, inhabitants of Stonehouse were still planting Rowan trees to protect them from the infamous witches of Stonehouse.

Sandstone from Overwood quarry was used to construct the St.Andrew's hall (Witchell Library), the Glasgow Stock Exchange and the Glasgow Herald building designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

Scottish colourist painter Leslie Hunter stayed with his uncles at Millburn farm during the first world war painting a collection of still lifes here.

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Stonehouse Violet football team's greatest moment came in the season 1977-78, when they reached the Scottish Junior Cup Final, losing out to Bonnyrigg Rose in the "Battle of the Flowers".

In 1973 Stonehouse was designated to be a 'New Town', to receive a population of 35,000 from Glasgow, with the likelihood of an increase up to 70,000.

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FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS

- Tandoori Nights, 3/5 King Street, Tel.01698 793311
- The Crosskeys Inn, Queen Street, Tel. 01698 791221 (Bar Lunches)
- The Shawlands Hotel; as above (Evening Meals and Bar Lunches)

ACCOMMODATION

The Shawlands Hotel and Travel Lodge, Ayr Road, Larkhall ML9 2TZ Tel. 01698 791111 Fax. 01698 792001

BY BUS

A regular bus service is available to and from Hamilton every 20 minutes until 6.00pm by Whitelaw buses (254 service). After 6.00pm the service is hourly. For further details phone Whitelaw Buses on 01698 792800.

BY ROAD

Stonehouse is only 30 minutes away from Glasgow and 1 hour from Edinburgh. The A71, between Edinburgh and Ayr passes through Stonehouse. Whilst this route can be busy, it does takes you through the scenic Clyde Valley and the historic town of Strathaven. From the north or south, visitors can access the A71 by exiting the M74 at junction 8. Car parking and toilet facilities are available opposite the local Cooperative on King Street only 100m past the village centre.

HOW TO GET THERE



AWAY YE GO!

