

= Neilston =

Neilston (Scots : Neilstoun , Scottish Gaelic : Baile Nèill , pronounced [palˠn̪ˠ]) is a village and parish in East Renfrewshire in the west central Lowlands of Scotland . It is in the Levern Valley , 2 miles (3 @. @ 2 km) southwest of Barrhead , 3 @. @ 8 miles (6 @. @ 1 km) south of Paisley , and 5 @. @ 7 miles (9 @. @ 2 km) south @-@ southwest of Renfrew , at the southwestern fringe of the Greater Glasgow conurbation . Neilston is a dormitory village with a resident population of just over 5 @, @ 000 people .

Neilston is mentioned in documents from the 12th century , when the feudal lord Robert de Croc , endowed a chapel to Paisley Abbey to the North . Neilston Parish Church ? a Category B listed building ? is said to be on the site of this original chapel and has been at the centre of the community since 1163 . Little remains of the original structure . Before industrialisation , Neilston was a scattered farming settlement composed of a series of single @-@ storey houses , many of them thatched . Some domestic weaving was carried out using local flax . Water power from nearby streams ground corn and provided a suitable environment for bleaching the flax .

The urbanisation and development of Neilston came largely with the Industrial Revolution . Industrial scale textile processing was introduced to Neilston around the middle of the 18th century with the building of several cotton mills . Neilston became a centre for cotton and calico bleaching and printing in the 18th century , which developed into a spinning and dying industry , and continued into the early 20th century . Although Neilston is known as a former milling village , agriculture has played , and continues to play , an economic role . The annual Neilston Agricultural Show is an important trading and cultural event for farmers from southwest Scotland each spring .

Although heavy industry died out in the latter half of the 20th century , as part of Scotland 's densely populated Central Belt , Neilston has continued to grow as a commuter village , supported by its position between Paisley and Glasgow , from roughly 1 @, @ 000 people in 1800 to 5 @, @ 168 in 2001 . Expansion continues due to several new housing developments .

= = History = =

Local historians have proposed various theories for the origin of the name Neilston . Although the first element is likely to derive from either the Gaelic forename " Niall " (genitive " Nèill ") or else from the French Nigel , there is disagreement as to whether the second element represents the English " stone " or " town " . The earliest mention of Neilston is in the Chartulary of Paisley Abbey , which mentions that the Anglo @-@ Norman knight , Robert Croc of Crocstown (Crookston) , assigned the patronage of Neilstoun to the monks of St Mirren 's in 1163 , on condition that masses should be regularly said for the benefit of his soul . G. W. S. Barrow suggested that the settlement may be identified with the follower of Walter fitz Alan , Lord of Kyle and Strathgryfe (and liege lord of Robert Croc) , named Nigel de Cotentin .

Despite this , some writers have given etymological explanations which post @-@ date 1163 . For instance , it has been written that " Neil " was a General of King Haakon IV of Norway , who , fleeing from the Battle of Largs (1263) , was overtaken in this locality and put to death . According to the custom of the age a burial mound was supposedly erected over his grave and the locality ultimately received the name of the General . In a similar semi @-@ legendary popular etymology , Neilston 's origin was said to derive from a stone erected over the grave of a Highland chief named Neil who was allegedly killed at the Battle of Harlaw (1411) , in the reign of King James I of Scotland .

Before its recorded history began , and possibly before its founding , the territory of what became Neilston is known to have formed part of the ancient Kingdom of Strathclyde . Evidence attests that Neilston is much older than its larger neighbour Barrhead , as the first recorded mention of Barrhead was almost 600 years after Neilston 's mention in the Chartulary of Paisley Abbey of 1163 . The chartulary dealt with the foundation of the Clunaic Monastery in Paisley and its relationship to a chapel in Neilston , which were both answerable to Rome via the Clunaic Movement . Because of its chapel , which later became a parish church , Neilston was the most important settlement in the Levern Valley and much of rural Renfrewshire .

In the Middle Ages Neilston 's position in the Barrhead Gap , a pass linking Ayrshire to Glasgow , gave it strategic importance . Robert Croc may have had a fort or watchtower at Coldoun in Neilston in the 12th century . " Doun " is a corruption of " dun " meaning castle or fort , and the prefix perhaps implies the lack of physical warmth within the tower or the greeting received by unwelcome guests . Despite this distinction of local importance , Neilston remained a scattered community of small dwellings and farms , changing only with the arrival of the Industrial Revolution .

In the 17th century Neilston shared in a national hysteria about witchcraft that plagued Scotland . In 1650 a number of people from Inverkip , Linwood and Neilston were accused of witchcraft . However , they passed certain tests which would disprove them to be witches . In 1697 , Christian Shaw of Lambroughton succeeded in convincing a Minister that she was a victim of witchcraft . A Commission of Enquiry , which included the Laird of Glanderston , was appointed to investigate . As a result of the investigation , later known as the Paisley Witch Trials , four women and three men were arrested and eventually condemned to death and executed at Paisley . The Minister of Neilston Church , the Reverend David Brown , officiated at the hanging ; he preached to them before the execution " beseeching them to turn to God , God having exercised a great deal of long @-@ suffering towards them " .

The foundations of a textile industry in Neilston were laid by the monks of Paisley Abbey who mastered the local woollen trade in the Middle Ages . Neilston became a centre for cotton and calico bleaching and printing in the 18th century . This developed into a spinning and dying industry and continued into the early 20th century . Bleachfields and textile processing brought rapid socioeconomic growth to the village . Neilston was one of the earliest centres of textile manufacture during the Industrial Revolution ; the process of bleaching linens was introduced into Neilston in 1765 , and a mill in the parish was the second erected in Scotland . By 1780 , cotton manufacturing and bleaching had become the main industry in Neilston ; the clear busy waters of the River Levern being well suited for power and processing . In the " Old " Statistical Account of Scotland (1792) , compiled under the direction of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster , Neilston was noted to have two cotton mills employing together more than 300 people , over half of them children . The local Minister was concerned for the children 's welfare , remarking on how they missed school to work in the mills where their lungs would be filled with cotton fluff and their skin spoiled by machine oil .

Crofthead Mill (known locally as Neilston Mill) was established in 1792 . It was one of seven large cotton mills on the banks of the River Levern between Neilston and Dovecothall , and although it closed for business in the early 1990s , it is the only industrial structure from this period still standing . Because of the large size of the complex , coupled with its short distance from the main residential core of Neilston , it was described in 1830 , at the peak of the industry 's prosperity , as " a little town of its self " . Other mills and factories have existed but have been demolished , including Broadley Spinning and Weaving Factory , and Gateside village and Spinning Mill .

Following its period of rapid industrialisation , in 1904 about 400 mill houses were constructed forming Lintmill Terrace and its neighbouring streets in what was then the non @-@ contiguous Holehouse area of the Parish of Neilston . Additional housing schemes in the 1920s and 1930s led to Holehouse and old Neilston becoming a single continuously connected urban area , described as that of a " sizable small township " . Since this time , much rebuilding and further expansion has taken place . Gentrification projects since 2000 have included the refurbishment of the parish church in 2004 , an experimental public space renewal initiative in 2005 and the renovation of Nether Kirkton House , a mansion .

= = Governance = =

Neilston is represented by several tiers of elected government . Neilston Community Council forms the lowest tier of governance whose statutory role is to communicate local opinion to local and central government . It is one of ten community councils of the East Renfrewshire council area . East Renfrewshire Council , the unitary local authority for Neilston , is based at Giffnock , close to the border with the City of Glasgow , and is the executive , deliberative and legislative body responsible for local governance . The Scottish Parliament is responsible for devolved matters such as

education , health and justice , while reserved matters are dealt with by the Parliament of the United Kingdom .

The territory of what became Neilston anciently formed part of the Kingdom of Strathclyde . It has lain within the county boundaries of Renfrewshire from a very early time . Neilston emerged as a parish and administrative unit in 1170 , and was for many years under the lordship of the Mures of Caldwell whose tombs are at the parish church . The parish was 8 miles (13 km) in length and by from 2 miles (3 km) to 4 miles (6 km) in breadth , encompassing six sevenths of what is now the town of Barrhead . Neilston Parish Council , a local body with limited power , was established in 1895 , following the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1894 , and abolished in 1930 following the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1929 . In 1890 , Neilston fell under the authority of Renfrewshire County Council , where it remained until 1975 when the county was superseded by the regional council area of Strathclyde . In 1903 , Neilston was within the Paisley Small Debt Court District and Poor Combination . From 1975 to 1996 , Neilston was in the Renfrew District of Strathclyde until the two @-@ tier regions and districts of Scotland were abolished . Since 1996 it has formed part of the unitary East Renfrewshire council area ; East Renfrewshire Council is the local authority . Neilston remains part of Renfrewshire for purposes of registration and Lieutenancy .

Neilston forms part of the multi member ward 1 of East Renfrewshire Council , namely Neilston , Uplawmoor and Newton Mearns North . Four Councillors are elected using the proportional Single Transferable Vote (STV) system . The current elected members are Charlie Gilbert (Conservative) Paul O 'Kane (Labour) Elaine Green (Labour) and Tony Buchanan (SNP) .

Neilston is part of the county constituency of East Renfrewshire , electing one MP to the House of Commons of the United Kingdom Parliament . Kirsten Oswald of the SNP was elected as MP for East Renfrewshire in the 2015 General Election . Before the constituency 's creation in 2005 , Neilston lay in the Eastwood constituency . For purposes of the Scottish Parliament , Neilston forms part of the Renfrewshire South Constituency , represented by Hugh Henry of the Labour Party . In addition to this Neilston is represented by seven regional MSPs from the West of Scotland electoral region .

= = Geography = =

At 55 ° 47 ' 4 " N 4 ° 25 ' 24 " W (55 @.@ 784 ° , -4.423 °) Neilston is in Scotland 's Central Lowlands . The community is 430 feet (131 m) above sea level , 2 miles (3 @.@ 2 km) southwest of Barrhead , 5 @.@ 5 miles (8 @.@ 9 km) south of Paisley , and 10 miles (16 km) southwest of Glasgow . The chief river is the Levern , which has its source at Long Loch . It flows eastwards through Neilston towards Barrhead , before uniting its waters with those of the White Cart Water .

The topography of Neilston is irregular ; to the east nearly flat , and to the south and west , rising to heights of 400 feet (122 m) to 900 feet (274 m) above the level of the River Clyde . The highest points are Neilston Pad and the Corkendale @-@ law , at about 853 feet (260 m) and 900 feet (274 m) above sea level , respectively . Neilston Pad is characterised by a craggy face on its eastern side . Between these hills is the narrow valley of the River Levern , along which passes the turnpike road to Glasgow and Paisley . The soil in the eastern parts of Neilston is a dry loam , occasionally intermixed with gravel . Amongst the hilly areas of the village , the soil is less fertile , whilst in all other rural parts , the land is moss covered moor . The local geology is represented by basalt . The surrounding landscape is dominated by Duncarnock , the resistant core of an ancient and long extinct volcano , known locally as ' the Craigie ' .

Neilston experiences a temperate maritime climate , like much of the British Isles , with relatively cool summers and mild winters . Regular but generally light precipitation occurs throughout the year . Several lakes and small lochs have formed around Neilston : Long Loch , Loch Libo , and Loch Cawpla . Aboon the Brae (Scots language for " above the hill ") is the site of a spring . There are a number of small named @-@ localities in and around Neilston : Arthurlie , Holehouse , Crofthead , Kirkstyle , Coldoun , Gateside , Hollows , Broadley , Nether Kirkton and Neilstonside .

Neilston 's built environment is characterised by its mixture of 19th- and 20th @-@ century detached cottages , single and two @-@ story buildings . Several mansion houses were built for the

owners of former mills and factories . Many of Neilston 's dwellings are painted in whites or ivories . In his book Ordnance Survey of Scotland (1884) , Francis Hindes Groome remarked that Neilston " presents an old @-@ fashioned yet neat and compact appearance " , a view echoed by Hugh McDonald in Rambles Round Glasgow (1910) , who stated that Neilston " is a compact , neat , and withal somewhat old @-@ fashioned little township " , although continued that it has " few features calling for special remark " . It is frequently described as a quiet dormitory village , although some sources from around the turn of the 20th century describe Neilston as a town . There is a mixture of suburbs , semi @-@ rural , rural and former @-@ industrial locations in Neilston , but overwhelmingly the land use in central Neilston is sub @-@ urban . The territory of Neilston is not contiguous with any other settlement , and according to the General Register Office for Scotland , does not form part of Greater Glasgow , the United Kingdom 's fifth largest conurbation .

The Killoch Burn and glen , at the north of Neilston , have become associated with a witch because at low water the numerous pot @-@ holes or rock @-@ cut basins have worn into one another , giving unusual shapes . Locals named some of these the witch 's floor , hearth , cradle , water @-@ stoup and grave .

== Demography ==

According to the United Kingdom Census 2001 , the census locality (village and sub @-@ area) of Neilston had a total resident population of 5 @, @ 168 , or 6 % of the total of East Renfrewshire . This figure , combined with an area of 0 @.@ 45 square miles (1 @.@ 2 km²) , provides Neilston with a population density figure of 11 @, @ 484 inhabitants per square mile (4 @, @ 434 / km²) . This is higher than the average population density of Scotland (at 166 / sq mi or 64 / km²) and nearby Glasgow (at 8 @, @ 526 / sq mi or 3 @, @ 292 / km²) .

The median age of males and females living in Neilston was 37 and 38 years respectively , compared to 37 and 39 years for those in the whole of Scotland . Forty six percent were married , 3 @.@ 2 % were cohabiting couples , 11 @.@ 3 % were lone parent families and 25 @.@ 5 % of households were made up of individuals .

The place of birth of the village 's residents was 98 @.@ 5 % United Kingdom (including 94 % from Scotland) , 0 @.@ 4 % Republic of Ireland , 0 @.@ 4 % from other European Union countries , and 0 @.@ 8 % from elsewhere in the world . The economic activity of residents aged 16 ? 74 was 45 @.@ 4 % in full @-@ time employment , 11 @.@ 4 % in part @-@ time employment , 5 @.@ 2 % self @-@ employed , 3 @.@ 5 % unemployed , 4 % students with jobs , 4 % students without jobs , 11 @.@ 4 % retired , 4 % looking after home or family , 6 @.@ 8 % permanently sick or disabled , and 3 @.@ 5 % economically inactive for other reasons . Compared with the average demography of Scotland , Neilston has low proportions of people born outside the United Kingdom , and people over 75 years of age .

Following the Scottish Reformation in 1560 , there was no Roman Catholic place of worship in Neilston until 1861 ; it has been said that there was no resident Roman Catholic community in the parish in this time , the parishioners instead being Presbyterian . It was not until around the time of the Second Industrial Revolution , when the demand for labour was great , that Irish people began to come to Neilston and other parts of Scotland in increasing numbers , many of them because of The Great Hunger in the mid @-@ 19th century . As a result , Neilston , like neighbouring Glasgow , is home to a significant number of Catholic Irish @-@ Scots . St Thomas 's , part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paisley , was built around 1861 to accommodate the new Catholic community .

== Economy ==

Long existing as a rural settlement , Neilston 's economy was historically driven by farming , although a trade in handloom woven garments from the village 's cottage industry also existed from very early times . Grain mills and watermills were operating in Neilston by 1667 .

Due to its supply of hydropower from the River Levern , Neilston , like neighbouring Barrhead , developed factories and cotton mills after the arrival of the Industrial Revolution . Neilston fostered a

flourishing textile processing industry . At the peak of business , the River Levern was lined with bleachfields , cotton mills and calico printfields . Passing through the ownership of a series of successful companies , Crofthead Mill was once the biggest producer of spun cotton in Renfrewshire . Thread from Crofthead , and thus Neilston , was traded across the world . It is claimed that thread from Crofthead Mill held together the boots of the climbing team led by Chris Bonington on the British Everest Expedition in 1975 .

Neilston Agricultural Show is a cattle show , sheepdog trial and sports and arts festival held near the village on the first Saturday of every May with a tradition beginning in the early 19th century . It began as a result of a dispute between two farmers from the village . Each farmer had a prized bull that he said was better than the other 's . In a bid to settle the argument , the farmers arranged a contest that would be judged by the other farmers in the area . It is not documented who had the better bull , but the contest grew into an annual event that has become a local custom .

Although agriculture continues to a limited extent on the village 's outskirts , Neilston 's textile processing industry has diminished . Since deindustrialisation , Neilston is a commuter village with significant numbers of its inhabitants travelling to the major urban centres of Glasgow , Paisley and Barrhead for work . The village has retained a selection of amenities from local shops for local people , leisure facilities , and schooling however . The Barrhead News , a local newspaper published by Clyde and Forth Press , reports on Neilston , Barrhead , Nitshill and Darnley .

In 2005 the Clydesdale Bank closed its branch at Neilston , leaving it without a bank . In 2006 Neilston Development Trust utilised the Land Reform Act to purchase the bank building for community usage with the aid of a grant of £ 210 @, @ 000 from the Big Lottery Fund . This was the first time this legislation had been successfully used in an urban area . The premises are used as a community café , a service information point , office space and meeting rooms . The trust has been involved in a community energy project , the Neilston Community Wind Farm , which installed four turbines with a capacity of 10MW in 2013 .

= = Landmarks = =

A chapel at Neilston was first recorded in 1163 in a charter of Paisley Abbey . It was commissioned by Sir Robert Croc , as part of a feudal requirement by the High Steward of Scotland , Walter fitz Alan . The original Neilston Kirk was one storey high , and was rebuilt in 1762 to accommodate the growing population of the parish . The only remaining parts of the original building are a Gothic window in a back wall and the burial vault of the Mure family of Caldwell , including the tomb of Laird , scholar and MP for Renfrewshire , William Mure (1799 ? 1860) . Between 1796 and 1798 the roof was taken off the church and an additional storey constructed , making space for a gallery to accommodate the growing population of Neilston . The structure has a spire , a clock , and 940 sittings . The old graveyard is centuries old and has a headstone dating from the 15th century . The church is part of the Church of Scotland , and has a Category B listing from Historic Scotland .

In 1559 , in the Scottish Reformation , an image of Mary mother of Jesus was taken from Neilston Parish Church and thrown into a pool of the River Levern . The pool ever since has been known as the Midge Hole . One of Neilston Parish Church 's most celebrated ministers was Dr Alexander Fleming and his Life (1883) contains much of interest relating to Neilston . In 1826 , despite enlargement of the church , it was too small to accommodate the population and the Heritors demanded payment of seat rents for those attending services . Dr Fleming proceeded to preach from a tent erected in the graveyard for a period of about eight years , insisting that " the people of the Parish are entitled to hear the gospel without money or price . " The case went to the House of Lords and although it was not successful , the parishioners were subsequently able to return to the church and take their places without paying rent and with no further opposition from the Heritors . In 2003 , in a major refurbishment , six skeletons were found beneath the floorboards of the church . Initially sealed off as a crime scene , archeologists from the University of Glasgow confirmed the skeletons were around 400 years old . A local historian suggested they could be the bones of former priests .

Other listed buildings in Neilston include Nether Kirkton House and Crofthead Mill , both Category

B. Nether Kirkton House is a mansion and the former home of whisky heiress Marion Buchanan , and Crofthead Mill is Neilston 's largest and oldest cotton mill , dating in part from 1792 but predominantly 1880 after much of the original building was destroyed by fire . The mill is now used by J & M Murdoch & Son Ltd . , a transport , waste disposal and recycling company .

= = Transport = =

Travellers historically used the Levern Valley as a route to and from the Ayrshire coast . An ancient road from Glasgow to Kilmarnock known as the Flush was the most common path and can still be seen near Neilston . The major A736 road (Lochlibo Road) from Irvine to Braehead runs to the north of Neilston . The nearest motorway is the M77 , of which Junction 4 at Newton Mearns is the interchange for Neilston .

Neilston railway station , opened 1 May 1903 , is the western terminus of the Cathcart Circle Lines from Glasgow Central station . The station is managed by Abellio ScotRail and is 11 @. @ 7 miles (18 @. @ 8 km) southeast of Glasgow Central . It was constructed when the Lanarkshire and Ayrshire Railway built its line through the village to the coast at Ardrossan . Neilston Low was a Glasgow , Barrhead and Kilmarnock Joint Railway station , but closed in 1966 .

The closest airport is Glasgow International , 6 miles (10 km) north of Neilston .

= = Education = =

A school for children of landowners and wealthy farmers was established in Neilston Parish by 1600 , under the supervision of the Kirk Session ; ordinary peasants remained illiterate . Neilston has two primary schools , but no secondary schools . St Thomas 's Primary School is a feeder Roman Catholic primary school for St Luke 's High School in Barrhead . Neilston Primary School is a non @- @ denominational feeder primary school for both Barrhead High School in Barrhead and Eastwood High School in Newton Mearns .

Neilston Primary School was built in the late 1960s with an open @- @ plan extension completed in 1991 . The school roll was 350 in June 2005 . St Thomas 's Primary , linked with the local Catholic chapel of the same name , was built in 1964 in Broadlie Road beside the chapel where the old building was demolished . The school roll was 186 in 2007 .

= = Sports = =

Neilston Juniors F.C. is a football club within the Scottish Junior Football Association . Formed in 1945 , they operate from the Brig O ' Lea Stadium in Neilston and play in red and white kits . Their nickname is ' The Farmer 's Boys ' , and their anthem is the folk song , A Farmer 's Boy .

Neilston Leisure Centre has a 25 @- @ metre (82 ft) swimming pool and a gym . Activities in the leisure centre include casual swimming , swimming lessons , pool fun sessions , fitness classes , sauna , gym sessions , the bi @- @ annual witch hunt staged on pig square and is home to the Neilston webbed feet swimmers association (nwfsa) . It has a mural from the 1960s .

= = Public services = =

Neilston forms part of the Western water and sewerage regions of Scotland . Waste management is provided by the East Renfrewshire local authority . Water is supplied by Scottish Water , a government @- @ owned corporation of the Scottish Government . Neilston 's Distribution Network Operator for electricity is Scottish Power . There are no hospitals in Neilston ? the nearest are in the larger settlements of Paisley , Glasgow and Newton Mearns ? but some local health care is provided by the Doctors Surgery in central Neilston . The NHS board is NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde . Strathclyde Fire and Rescue is the statutory fire and rescue service which operates in Neilston . The nearest fire station is in Barrhead . Policing in Neilston is provided by Police Scotland . The Strathclyde Partnership for Transport , a public body in Scotland , has direct operational

responsibilities , such as supporting (and in some cases running) local bus services , and managing integrated ticketing in Neilston and other areas from the former Strathclyde region . Transport Scotland manages the local rail network .

= = Notable people = =

Gregor Fisher , acclaimed comedian who portrayed Rab C. Nesbitt , was raised by his aunt and uncle in Neilston . Shamus O 'Brien was a Scottish American football striker born in Neilston in 1907 . In his career in the United States , O 'Brien spent eight seasons in the first American Soccer League and another five in the second American Soccer League . John Robertson who built the engine for the steamship PS Comet in 1811 , was born in Neilston in 1782 . A granite obelisk in his honour is erected opposite the parish church . The Stevenson family of lighthouse designers and civil engineers , which included Robert , Alan and Thomas , as well as Treasure Island writer Robert Louis Stevenson , came of a family that farmed land in Neilston parish . People from Neilston are called Nulsoners .