

The community of Neilston is proud of its history and heritage. Here are contributions from some of the current projects and pursuits.

Bobbins and Threads

Bobbins and Threads is the name of a group of former Neilston millworkers who have been meeting since 2002 to record their memories.

In recent years they have been joined by a computer expert, a publisher and an editor and together they are near to completion of a book entitled Bobbins and Threads. Memories of a former Bobbins and Threads volunteer in local areas to enable their participation in the research, and recording of gardens and designed landscapes in their locality.

Among the sites currently being researched by the Society is the designed landscape which surrounds the site of Cowden Hall in Neilston. Sir Anthony Eden, the then King of Norway, and members of the community and workshops in the camp and the visits to Neilston village to us - Torbjørn as a small boy with his parents and a former refugee who now lives in Spain, who generously sent a small selection of photographs of gardens and designed landscapes. The society is training volunteers in local areas together they are near to completion of a book entitled Bobbins and Threads. Memories of a former Bobbins and Threads volunteer in local areas to enable their participation in the research, and recording of gardens and designed landscapes in their locality.

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For more information on Bobbins and Threads visit: www.bobbinsandthreads.co.uk

For more information on Bobbins and Threads visit: www.gardenhistorysociety.org

Potentially this site could contribute significantly to the understanding and interpretation of Neilston's history and provide an educational and leisure resource for the community and others.

For more on the Garden History Society visit www.gardenhistorysociety.org



Making the Bobbins



The Mill



Snypes Dam



Clydesdale Bank



Sir Anthony Eden at Refugee Camp



Galbraiths Stores

The Garden History Society Scotland

The Garden History Society was founded in 1965 as a voluntary organisation with the main aim of promoting the study, appreciation, protection and conservation of historic gardens, parks and designed landscapes. The Garden History Society Scotland (GHS) was formed in 2000.

GHS seeks to raise awareness of Scotland's heritage of gardens and designed landscapes, and to foster public understanding and enjoyment of these elements of our history.

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Norway Project

A simple query from a borrower coming into Neilston library led to a long and interesting interactive 'real' drama that is inclusive, innovative and accessible, specialising in bringing community stories to life. Their work uses the Second World War. Built on the ground that now is the Kingsgate Estate, including Havelaw Avenue, were Nisaman huts, originally for the use of evacuees from Glasgow. However, in 1946 this camp became a safe haven for 500 Norwegian Refugees.

The story of their rescue from the island of Sørøya, to Murmansk and finally to Scotland is amazing. We made contact with Torbjørn Eide, a former refugee who now lives in Spain, who created that takes the audience on a journey through time

The project has developed to include all members of the community and workshops in the camp and the visits to Neilston village to us - Torbjørn as a small boy with his parents and a former refugee who now lives in Spain, who generously sent a small selection of photographs of gardens and designed landscapes. The society is training volunteers in local areas together they are near to completion of a book entitled Bobbins and Threads. Memories of a former Bobbins and Threads volunteer in local areas to enable their participation in the research, and recording of gardens and designed landscapes in their locality.

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For more information on this story contact: Joyce Wallace at Neilston Library, Main Street, Neilston, East Renfrewshire G78 3NN

Tel: 0141 577 4981
email: neilston.library@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Walking Theatre Company

The Walking Theatre Company create dynamic interactive 'real' drama that is inclusive, innovative and accessible, specialising in bringing community stories to life. Their work uses the Second World War. Built on the ground that now is the Kingsgate Estate, including Havelaw Avenue, were Nisaman huts, originally for the use of evacuees from Glasgow. However, in 1946 this camp became a safe haven for 500 Norwegian Refugees.

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Neilston's thriving community is well served by a considerable number and diversity of clubs, some of our groups go back a long time, reflecting local association with Neilston's landscape, culture and pastimes...

Crofthead Bowling Club

There are over 60 trophies to be won. All exhibitors however aim to win the ultimate prize, the Champion of Champions Medal. The "Cattle Show" has always been well supported by the local people and schools of Neilston, Uplawmoor and where it was originally based in the grounds of Crofthead Bowling Club dates back to 1921

The Club then relocated to its present site at Molendinar Terrace. The cost of the new green and has meant the show has gone from strength to strength.

and Co Ltd, the Mill owners at that time. Currently some members are undertaking a bit of research to find out more about their club and its history

Neilston Curling Club

The first Neilston curling club was formed at a meeting in 1824, and known by the name of Neilston Curlers Society. The club curled at Craighall Dam, Neilston. The current Neilston Curling Club was formed in 1875 at a meeting in The Masons Arms Inn, High Street Neilston, and added to the RCCC in 1876. Matches were played when ice was available at Walton Dam. Curling matches were transferred to Lochlilbo where a Curling-stone house was built in 1885. Concessions were granted by the Glasgow Removers who had the best bull, but the contest grew into an annual event that has continued for nearly 200 years.

Since 2000, the 'Dome' houses an educational space where sheep shearing and bee keeping arrangements were put in hand to relocate the In 1919 the club moved to Kirkton Dam and return for the cost of the single journey.

For members and their curling stones to travel for members and their curling stones to travel to an annual event that has continued for nearly 200 years.

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Neilston Agricultural Show

Being so early in the show calendar means that the weather can be a bit unpredictable, and over the years, roasting sunshine, rain, sleet and even snow have been part of show day but whether it is wiles or sun tan cream, the show brings the whole community together for tugs o' war, dancing competitions – up to 150 children take part – races, dog competitions, sideshow, horse riding show jumping and of course the sheep and cattle events.

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Neilston Juniors

The Band have travelled extensively representing East Renfrewshire and Scotland at festivals and events in Europe, China, Japan, Thailand, North Africa and beyond.

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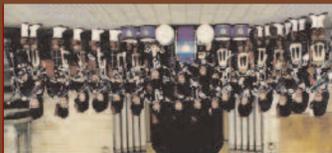
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Unveiling of Robertson Memorial 1912



Former home of Dr. Pride



Parish Church Halls

Neilston people and place

Looking back, looking forward, in the company of today's community



Unveiling of Robertson Memorial 1912



Former home of Dr. Pride



Parish Church Halls

Acknowledgements and Links

Neilston Development Trust, The Old Bank, 84 Main Street, Neilston G78 3EB
Tel: 0141 561 1201/0141 881 1337
email: neilstondevttrust@hotmail.co.uk
web: www.neilstontrust.co.uk

For more information on local history:
Neilston Library
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East Renfrewshire Council Local History Heritage website www.portaltothepast.co.uk

and Renfrewshire Local History Forum www.rlhf.info

local walks and rambles:
contact Neilston Library – see above walks in the surrounding countryside:
www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/community-life-and-leisure

The Trust thanks the following for their valued contributions and assistance:

Barrhead and Neilston Historical Association (affiliated to Renfrewshire Local History Forum) particularly Irene Hughson, Chairman (Neilston Past) and Robert Humphrey (photographs)
East Renfrewshire Council Library and Information Services particularly Amanda J Robb and Jenny McGhie (building information and photographs)
Professor Arthur McIvor and Dr. Angela Bartie, Scottish Oral History Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow



Neilston Curling Club has enjoyed success throughout its history in external matches, winning the Greenacres Interclub Championship many times in succession. In recent years Neilston have maintained two teams in the Interclub League Division 1, with Neilston teams being winners and runners up in the 2005/06 season. Neilston have also had success in the Barratt Cup having won the Cup in successive seasons 2005/06 and 2006/07.

Neilston Juniors Football Club, team colours red and white and nicknamed 'The Farmer's Boys' were formed on Monday 4 June 1945 when a public meeting was held in the old wooden clubhouse Saturday 11th August of that year, it was an away match against Riccarton Bluebell and resulted in a 4-4 draw. In the late forties we had several good players and participated annually at the Rothbury Folk Festival and the Airlinton Show.

The Band have had twinings with Rothbury Highland Pipe Band in Northumberland for more than 30 years and participate annually at the Royal Band de Gaites in Ournes, Galicia and the Tokyo Pipe Band where it is a visiting Judge at the annual Tokyo Highland Games held in Japan.

1995 was our 50th Anniversary year. The Club has 1995 was our 50th Anniversary year. The Club has survived due to the hard work and determined efforts of everyone at the Club.

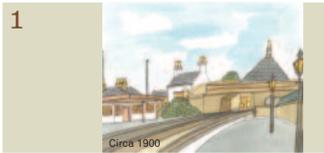
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The Buildings



Neilston Railway Station

Neilston Station, originally named Neilston High as there was a Neilston Low on the Barrhead-Kilmarnock line, is the terminus of the electric train line from Glasgow. It was opened in 1903 when the Lanarkshire and Ayrshire Railway built its line through the village to the coast at Ardrossan. In its heyday the line carried boat expresses to Ardrossan and coal trains from Lanarkshire but through services were cut back to Neilston. The remaining line to Glasgow Central was electrified in 1962 with Glasgow's famous "Blue Trains" taking over the services.



Neilston Parish Church Halls

Opened 1873, the former Neilston South Church (formerly a Free Church) united with the Parish Church in the 1920's. Worship in the South Church discontinued in 1964. The South Church buildings have since been converted for use as Neilston Church Halls.



3. John Robertson Memorial

Born in Neilston on December 10, 1782 John Robertson started an apprenticeship with a spinning wheelwright before setting up his own engineering business. He developed a steam engine which was subsequently bought by Henry Bell and installed in Bells "Comet", a wooden vessel hailed as the first successful steamship to sail commercially in Europe and credited with being responsible for the emergence of hordes of steam-powered vessels travelling up and down the Clyde. Robertson died in 1868 and is buried in the Necropolis, Glasgow.



Dr. Pride's Former Home

Both Dr. David Prides, father and son, were medical practitioners and two of Neilstons' best known characters. "The History of the Parish of Neilston" was written by Dr. David Pride Jr. in 1910. His own son, Wallace Ainsworth Pride, was also a doctor. The Pride house had previously been a Union Bank and is now a Masonic Lodge.



Glen Halls

The Glen Halls opened on 7th December 1899 funded by a donation from Lady Glen. Margaret Glen inherited a vast fortune from her uncle Robert Craig, "Rhoosan" or Russian Rab, who owned large thread mills on the River Neva near Leningrad. Lady Glen used the money for many charities including the Glen Halls in Neilston, the gold chain for the Provost of Barrhead and many other causes.



Neilston Parish Church

The parish church of Neilston was first recorded in 1163 in a charter of Paisley Abbey. It was built by a Norman knight Sir Robert de Croc as part of a feudal requirement by the High Steward of Renfrew, Walter Fitzalan. The ancient part of the building is a Gothic window and the burial vault of the notable family, the Mures of Caldwell. The window lists the names of members of the congregation who gave their lives during the Great War of 1914-18. The graveyard is centuries old and has a stone dating back to the 15th century. During the Reformation an image of the Virgin was taken from the Church and thrown into a pool of the River Levern. The pool ever since has been known as the Midge Hole.



St. Thomas Church

St. Thomas Church and the original school was built in 1861 following an influx of Irish workers seeking to escape the potato famine in Ireland and in response to a demand from the expanding mill industry of the Levern. This was the first Roman Catholic church in Neilston since the Reformation of 1560. The tower was added in 1891. A memorial stained glass window depicting the 'Pietà' dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrow lists the names of those who gave their lives during the Great War of 1914-18.



Neilston Development Trust Office and Bank Café

In 2006 the Trust bought the former Clydesdale Bank through the Community Right to Buy Provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 with funding from the Big Lottery Fund. A landmark step for the Trust and the first commercial property bought in an urban area in this way. **Come in for a cuppa after your stroll around the village. See website for opening hours**



Crofthead Mill

James Orr & Company built the original mill in 1792. It was one of seven big cotton spinning mills on the banks of the Levern between Neilston and Dovecothall. The current mill was built in 1891. The spinning of cotton ceased and the mill went on to produce sewing thread using cotton and other fibres. At one time there was an imposing mill school where half-timers, children between the ages of 9 and 12, had their lessons after working a morning shift in the mill from 6 in the morning till 2 in the afternoon. In 1992 the mill closed.



Mill Cottages

In 1904 mill houses were built to house workers from the expanding Crofthead Mill forming Lintmill Terrace and its neighbouring streets. This made Holehouse almost a separate community from the older part of the village. The houses were built in the English style which contrasted with the rest of the village.



Neilston

The first community to be part of the Scottish Renaissance Towns Movement

1. Neilston Railway Station
2. Neilston Parish Church Halls
3. John Robertson Memorial
4. Dr. Pride's Former Home
5. Glen Halls
6. Neilston Parish Church
7. St. Thomas Church
8. Neilston Development Trust Office and Bank Café
9. Crofthead Mill
10. Mill Cottages

Additional buildings

- A. St. Thomas Primary School
- B. Neilston Primary School
- C. Library
- D. Kingston Playing Fields
- E. Leisure Centre
- F. Football Ground
- G. Post Office

www.neilstontrust.co.uk

I Remember when...

"We used to play wi' the peeries... made from the bobbin...the men in the turning shop would shape them like an upside down ice cream cone, broad on the top and going to a peak at the bottom... at the bottom there was a metal stud, like a stud from a pair of shoes or a pair o' boots, we coloured it wi' all different chalks and ye had a piece o' string wi' a stick and ye put the string round the peerie, and then ye whipped it and ye had all the different colours and different shapes, just like a spinning top..."

"The football teams played... the big thing about life to the boys was Hollywood, the top scheme, Kingston Estate, they were called the Hollywood Stars, and the Neilston, down in Hillside Road and Lea Avenue, Braehead Quadrant, we were called Coney Island... and we called them Hollywood Stars that never shone because Coney Island wis always beatin them!"

Mr. Alex McDade

"When my children were all young we used to love walking up to Uplawmoor and then coming down the Straight Mile, and when you are on the Straight Mile and look about you think there are no houses up there... It's just as if you are away up in the Highlands of Scotland looking at it... it's beautiful up there..."

"I got married when I was twenty so that would have been 1958, that's 50 years I'm married now, that's when I moved to Neilston, but I always came to Neilston young... I had aunts and uncles that lived there... my aunt was canteen manageress at the Neilston Mill for years and she had as many friends in Neilston so at the weekends I'd be with

her visiting all these people and they were all Neilston folk and going a walk here 'n there with them on the 'Cuddy Brae' on the road up to Uplawmoor... there's a tree, it was called the 'Cuddy Brae' because the tree was the shape of a horses head..."

Mrs. Anne Perrett

"My father used to fish at the Glanderston dam and the Walton dam... I was in the go-chair and my brother Simpson running behind... the dam is really the most beautiful spot in this area, in the springtime you've got wild flowers and if you're looking towards the Craigue, with the Dam in the foreground, when the sun actually shone on the water it was like stars jumping from the water... it was a beautiful view... one of the nicest walks was the Midge Hole Glen with the wild flowers, the primroses and all the ragged robin and the trees covered in brambles and the beautiful waterfalls coming down the Glen..."

"The Cattle show was one of the great highlights of the year... all the children were looking for the Codona shows... the shows were first to come... it was like wildfire... it went round all the children because it was an entirely different way of life than what they were used to... many a child received a whipping from the teacher cause he would plunk school to see what was happening!... there was a special race... the Trap Racing!... beautiful carriages with the driver all dressed up and the carriages and the horses all dressed up with bows... beautiful... there was a ring cut out in the ground and they would prance along racing each other... there was also men taking bets and they would stand and throw their arms and call people to take bets... it was really magnificent..."

Mrs. Georgina Henderson

"Mafeking came from the Relief of Mafeking built in 1901 or whenever it was... Millview just faced the Mill, Alexander Terrace... Alexander was a mill owner... Molendinar because the folk were coming from the Duke Street end of Glasgow... they had shut the mill there and brought folk out here... Orr Terrace after the original mill owners and Lintmill because of the Lint Mill down the road... Station Road's proper name is Dundonald Road... the ground belonged to Lord Dundonald at one time and my father never called it anything else but Dundonald Road."

"You went in the door and into the left was the bank... it had one o' thon big mahogany counters... when you went in the main door there was a door opposite ye and that it was into the house. I never went in there but you would see it open occasionally... there was a big grand staircase inside it and the rest of the building was the bank managers house. He was living above the bank..."

"Cowdenhall was also used as a social centre for the mill workers... my grandfather played in an orchestra that they had..."

Mr. John Anderson

"There was a sewing group... if someone had an interest there was a wee group. There was a lot of stitching, a lot of embroidery and there was great enthusiasm to see who could turn out the nicest tablecloths, they were all proudly starched for the basket teas... there was usually some sort of concert had been organised... you took all your food with you in a basket and your fancy table covers and after the concert everyone had their tea and then there was usually a dance after that..."

"I remember the dances in the Glen Hall... and there was one year our Church Sunday School Superintendent John Nicol organised this Grand Panto... we rehearsed and rehearsed for this and ye know it was good fun. People didn't mind being a bit daft for a laugh, you know for a concert night. And that ran for a whole week, every night for a whole week... and I'll tell ye you were exhausted at school that week... late nights!"

"There were trains that took people right up to the coast... right into Saltcoats... the Breezers!... for wee short trips up to the coast at night after your work... people loved that..."

Mrs. Isabel Knox

"Mrs Chisholm had a wee shop past the butchers and then it was Miller's paper shop and then it was up to the corner and it was Rosie Crilley's on the corner and I wis feart fae Rosie Crilley... there were these steps in all the shops, ye went up the steps tae Rosie, she had jet black hair and she'd say "Wit ye wantin'?"... and of course the chemist was just a wee shop and the post office was next to it and ye just went up two steps fae the street and ye went in that way to the post office... they must have had the sorting place or whatever at the back... Mrs Mullen had a wee shop and she had hot peas... they were great... and then there was Hay's paper shop... that was Hay's for generations..."

"I got a new blazer on Cattle Show Day... it was in Double Hedges Road then... it was a big event and they had the horses, and the bookies were there... aye... and they had a big dog show... and this farmer was standing beside us... he had big dogs and this woman was parading wi' one o these wee toy dogs... like a wee Pekinese, it was just a wee thing and he says "See if a took that hame to ma wife, she'd be putting it on a stick and cleaning the windae wi' it!"..."

"The Sunday School... I can remember the Sunday School... when ye got anything new you had to keep it first for Sunday for the church... and ye wore hats... I remember I had this wee navy blue coat wi' a wee bit red trimming and a wee red hat... I wasn't allowed out to play on a Sunday... ma father took me a walk in the afternoon well away up the countryside... and he and my Uncle Willie Brown had oan their hard hats, the bowler hats to go their walk on a Sunday afternoon..."

"The refugee camp... I remember King Hakkon being there and Anthony Eden..."

Mrs. Annie Leitch

"There was a butcher on the Main Street and then there was a close to go up the stairs... well I was just about sixteen, I worked with Andrew the milkman and this Bowfield Steamer come chugging up the road and the horse went right up the close... I wis the wee'ist and I got o'er the top of the milk cart, on tae the horses back and loosened all the straps sat on its back and drove it through the close... they pulled the cart back out and I came through wi' the horse, hooked it up again and away we went..."

"The Lintmill, that's where everybody in the mill houses learnt tae swim... the water used to come in off the top and it brought a lot of silt out to about four yard and it was great... all the kids could walk about on that... and then as they got bolder they went further out and then they would swim back in, and then when you got really bold ye swam right across, aye... in the winter ye went skating on it..."

Mr. Willie Wilson

"I was fifteen when I started in the mill... we used to all congregate after work at night and play skipping ropes at the top of Glen Mill and ye know... 'I spy sheep! They were like two teams and one went away and hid and the one o' them came back and it was oranges for far o wa' and apples for near. And they would shout "Oranges! Oranges, Apples! Apples!" Lie low sheep, lie low sheep... and that's what ye played at..."

"Aye, the shilling Breezers... it was a train journey to Saltcoats... it was a Saturday night, I always went to the dancing there ye see, and the train was late, the hale o' Neilston was all out because it was late... the line was built to meet the boat trains for Ireland at Ardrossan... it closed in 1932 that line but they kept it open for these evening breezers and they were crowded... the Sunday School Trip used to go on the train, I remember going on the train with my tin across my knee and you got a bag and a pie and everything down at the church hall..."

Mrs. Annie Robertson

"I love every stone in Neilston... The Lintmill, we jumped over the burn... that's my Neilston. We played in Hamiltons park... that was at the top end... we all ken't one anither... we played at wee hooses, we used to go to the coup and gather all the inoleum and we scrubbed it snow-white... we scrubbed it till the pattern came aff! It! There were two horses in the field... Carl and Jean... Jean was a bad horse. If it ran, you ran and kept running!"

Mrs. Christina Morrison

was skating on it..."

