**Statistical Account by Rev. Robert Clement Pollock 1950**

**The Physical Basis:** The parish of Stonehouse, a thriving little community, lies in the heart of Lanarkshire, the village being some 18 miles South-East of Glasgow, and midway between the townships of Strathaven and Larkhall, about 3.5 miles from each. Roughly 5.5 miles in length north to south and 2 to 3 miles in breadth, the parish covers an area of 6,249 acres (not counting water). It is bounded to the North-West by Hamilton parish, North-East and east by Dalserf, South-East by Lesmahagow, South-West and west by Avondale, and west by Glassford. The surface rises gently from 200 feet above sea-level in the north to 600 or 700 feet in the south. The Avon Water intersects it at its northern end, after bordering it in the west, and then serves as its eastern boundary.

The **tree plantations** of nearly a hundred years ago have, almost all of them, been cut down, except for that at Spittal, and only a few isolated trees are left. Sycamores in the old churchyard, the copper beech, beech and elm still stand round about the manse. In the main, the parish presents undulating slopes of greenness, on which cows contentedly graze, or crops of wheat or oats or hay, in season, push their green heads through the rich soil.

Stonehouse village lies halfway between Edinburgh and Ayr. The main arterial highway from Glasgow to Carlisle bypasses it about 2.5 miles to the North-East. The road junction is at Canderside Toll. That main road carries all the heavy transport and most of the traffic, which, consequently does not pass through the village. Buses run to Strathaven and to Glasgow, via Larkhall and Hamilton. In appearance the village is like a taut thread, stretched from the Cander Water, on the one side, to the junction of Manse Road and Strathaven road on the other. Its expansion has been more or less in a straight line along either side of the main street. The Cross is no longer its geographical centre, even if it still be the social. Council houses have been added at both ends of the village.

The little village of Sandford, with its 100 or so houses and its very old school, is also in the parish. It lies beside the Kype Burn, which marks the boundary in the South-West. There are no transport services to cover the five miles that lie between Sandford and Stonehouse, whereas some Glasgow-Strathaven buses extend their journey to Sandford, so that Sandford people are more closely connected with Strathaven, going there to church and to shop and to find their entertainment. Strathaven supplies them with ministers and doctors, although the Stonehouse district nurse attends them, and the ministers of Stonehouse act as chaplains to the school.

**Population:** The population of the parish increased steadily and rapidly in the nineteenth century, rising from 1,259 in 1801 to 2,781 in 1851 and to 3,665 by 1901. In the present century the advance was checked, the census totals being: 1911), 3,688; (1921), 4,204, and (1931), 3,703.

The 1951 census showed a complete recovery to 4,306, the maximum ever recorded. Of these, 2,069 were males. Stonehouse village, with 3,483 inhabitants, accounts for fully 80 per cent. of the total parish population.

In the main, the population is composed of people born in the parish. In recent years, however, and especially since the end of the
war, there has been a steady influx of ‘strangers’, still commonly regarded by the villagers as ‘incomers’. If this stream of people continues it will not be very long before most of the population will have been born outside of the parish. As old folk come to die, families that have been resident in the parish for generations are dying out with them. Stonehouse has always been a little isolated, and so hitherto the population has changed but slowly. Now that change is beginning to move much more quickly.

**Public and Social Services:** Stonehouse forms part of the area known as the Fourth District and is administered by the Fourth District Council. The water supply to the Fourth District comes from reservoirs at Camps and Glengavel, after being filtered at the large filter works at Glassford. Electricity is supplied by Clyde Valley Electricity Company, now taken over by the State, and is administered by the South Western Electricity Board. Gas is supplied from the large plant at Uddingston, formerly owned by the county council but also now state-controlled. Sewage is dealt with by works situated at the North-Eastern end of the village. There is, however, a part of Lawrie Street and Green Street from which the sewage is taken in pipes to a field near the viaduct, whence it runs to the river Avon. Maintenance and cleansing of roads and streets is on a very high standard. The streets are gas-lit still; only in the new housing scheme is electricity used to light the streets. The health of the village is attended to by two doctors in separate practices, and one district nurse. There is one chemist. A 500-bed general hospital - known as the County Hospital - is in the parish. Originally it was a small orthopaedic hospital, designed to meet the needs of orthopaedic-tuberculosis in the county. During the war it became an emergency medical service hospital and wards were added. When the war ended the hospital was still used in a small way for general diseases, until in 1949 it was given its full status as a hospital and training school. The health service is, of course, state-owned and state administered.

**Housing:** The total number of houses owned by the county council and occupied to date is 332. Of that number 32 are two-apartment; 110 three-apartment; 130 four-apartment; and 60 are five-apartment. These under construction and drawing near to completion number 104, (56 four-apartment, and 48 five-apartment). Of 214 council houses to be erected on what was Newfield Estate about half have been completed and are occupied. About 80 years ago a number of privately-owned houses were built by various building societies on a 99 years lease. It is almost impossible to discover how many there are. The extent of overcrowding is rapidly diminishing; as new houses are being completed, pressure on families is being eased.

**Farming:** There are 55 farms in the parish. Nearly all the land is arable, and all the farms are dairy farms. More and more farm land has been taken over for house-building purposes and these farms that lie near to the village have suffered accordingly. On the outskirts, however, and up towards Sandford, farms are in extent what they have been for generations. Lockhart Estate, which formerly extended over almost the whole parish, has been broken up. Only two farms, Hamilton farm and the Yards farm, belong to the Lockhart Trustee and are farmed by tenants. All the other farms in the parish are owned by the farmers who farm them. The agricultural statistics for the parish, as supplied by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, are as follows:—tillage, 1,205 acres; rotation grass, 1,466 acres; permanent grass, 2,466 acres; rough grazings, 213 acres.

**Fruit-Growing:** Since the first world war the parish has rapidly become a fruit-growing district, until now one of its major industries is tomato-growing and strawberry-growing. Around the outskirts of the village there are some 30 holdings (so called because they are held by their tenants from the Board of Agriculture). In addition, there are some 15 large and privately-owned fruit-growing holdings—making a total of 45 in all. The proper holdings extend usually to 5 or 6 acres—the biggest privately-owned holding is about 20 acres.

**Industries:** About a third of the people are miners. The main source of work is Canderrigg Colliery, more commonly known as the Broomfield and Canderrigg Mine, which lies nearby, but is now almost completely worked out. Already some of the miners have been sent to the coal-fields in Fife or Ayrshire. When, finally, the pit and the mine are abandoned, those miners who are not old enough to retire will migrate with their families to new areas.

Apart from two small firms, one making firelighters, the second (newly in production) making potato crisps, there is no other source of industry in the parish itself. There is, however, a fairly large firm of builders (George Wilson and Sons), employing about 1,000 men, not all of whom reside in the parish. Their work lies mostly outside the parish itself, on housing schemes at present under construction throughout the country.

A smaller firm of builders (Haston and McGhie), doing similar work, employ about 50 men. A great new industrial estate, still in the process of completion, has sprung up at Strutherhill, between Larkhall and Stonehouse. Some of the factories are in production and employ mostly female labour, part of which is taken, naturally enough, from this parish. Quite a few girls from the parish work in one or the other of the factories in Strathaven; offices in Stonehouse, Larkhall, Hamilton and Glasgow employ a fair percentage of the girls and British Railways about one-sixth of the men.

Churches: There are now three churches in Stonehouse. In September 1946 the Presbytery of Hamilton united the two Church of Scotland congregations - one the former Free church, known as Hamilton Memorial, and the other the former Parish church, known as St. Ninian’s. A very happy and harmonious union has resulted. Worship is held in the parish church building. The old Free church building has been sold. The congregation now numbers 725. The Congregational church, originally a split from the Free church and about 60 years old, is situated in Angle Street and has 240 members. The Paterson United Free church in Lawrie Street was formerly the United Presbyterian church. The congregation (about 400) refused to enter into the Union of 1929 and remained in the United Free Church.

A gospel-hall, at the corner of Hill Road and Wellbrae, is the meeting place for about 20 members of the Plymouth Brethren. They are ‘open’ brethren. The Salvation Army has its meeting-place in Kirk Street and musters 23 soldiers. There is no Roman Catholic church in the parish and the few Catholics resident here attend church in Strathaven, where there is also a small R.C. school. And lastly, there exists a peculiar little group of dissenters known as Jehovah’s Witnesses, numbering 3 in all, who meet weekly in one another’s houses.

**Education:** Camnethan Street Public School, better known locally by its name ‘The Dominie’, was closed in 1947, and all the pupils are now housed in Townhead Street Public School. This building is awaiting reconstruction to meet the many requirements demanded of a modern school. As it is, accommodation is difficult and the school is crowded. The technical subjects, woodwork and domestic science are taught in Greenside School, Green Street, which is being used solely for that purpose until proper accommodation has been built in Townhead School itself. Townhead is a junior secondary school. All the children of the village are educated there up to the qualifying class. If and when they qualify, the children go to Larkhall Academy, a secondary school which educates them up to the sixth year and prepares them, if they so desire, for entrance to the University. It was possible until this year to send children to Hamilton Academy, but that privilege, I believe, must cease when the new Education Act comes into force. The children who fail to qualify, or who qualify and for any reason, e.g., home circumstances, are not allowed to go on to Larkhall Academy, are kept in Townhead School until they are fifteen years of age, at which age they are allowed to leave and seek work. There are 11 teachers in the school (a primary department with three, a junior department with six, and a senior department with two). John McLachlan is the headmaster.

**Social Activities:** In Stonehouse, as in so many villages throughout Scotland, social life and entertainments are arranged almost entirely by voluntary organisations. In the last two years there has been a great increase in their numbers. The adult education schemes of the County Council have been, in large measure, responsible for that.

A Girls’ Club meets in the school, on one night to sew, on another to play badminton, and on yet another for a drama group. The Athletic Club is in four sections, for boys and girls, young men and young women, all sections separate. They meet on different evenings in the school gymnasium for physical training, etc. The local troop of Boy Scouts is known as the 67th Lanarkshire and has 24 Scouts, 24 Cubs, 4 Rovers and 4 Scouters. Recently, another troop has been formed amongst boy-patients in the hospital. It is the 69th Lanarkshire, and has 10 Scouts, 10 Cubs and 3 Scouters. The 1st Stonehouse Company of Girl Guides musters 25 Guides, with 12 Guides in the extension of the Company in Ward 2 of the hospital. There are 3 Guide officers. There are two Packs of Brownies. No. I Stonehouse has 30, and No. 2 Stonehouse has 25 Brownies. There are 12 Brownies in Extension Company in Ward 2 of the hospital. There are 4 Brownie officers. A small company of the Army Cadet Force in the village has 26 boys in it. It is a part of the 4th Lanarkshire Battalion and, of course, the cadets wear the insignia of the Cameronians.

A flourishing dramatic club in the village, with about a dozen members, gives an annual performance in the Public Hall, which it takes for three or four nights. The proceeds are devoted to charity.

The Youth Fellowship of the parish church meets every Sunday night after the evening service for devotions, and every Tuesday night for badminton; and that of the Congregational church meets every second Sunday night and every second Tuesday night.

The parish church Woman’s Guild has a membership of 100; the Congregational church Women’s Meeting has 40; the Paterson United Free church, 60. In addition to the three guilds there is a very active branch of the Scottish Women’s Rural Institute, with 200 members and a very interested and varied programme, including a Highland dancing team, a choir of 32 voices, and a drama group. There are also the usual associations connected with a village. A Cage Bird Association and a Horticultural Society both hold annual shows in the Public Hall. The Agricultural Society, composed mainly of farmers, sponsors an Agricultural Show about the middle of May. A Leaseholders’ Association, formed originally to safeguard lease-holders, has developed into a self-elected Town.

Improvement Committee: There is a very flourishing lodge of Freemasons and a strong branch of the British Legion. A male-voice choir, of no mean ability, was first in its class two years ago at the Lanarkshire Musical Festival. It numbers about 40 voices. A self-elected body of interested persons have formed themselves into a committee which plans and carries through a Children’s Gala Day on the third Saturday of June each year. On that occasion the Flower Queen of the village is crowned. The Queen, her champion and retinue are chosen by ballot by the school children.

**Way of Life:** Perhaps the first thing to note is that the parish is strangely self-contained. It forms a single unit on its own merits. To this, the seemingly innumerable community activities bear witness. Contact is made with Strathaven and Larkhall, but only spasmodically, and mostly youths and girls out walking on a summer’s night. There is no deep or abiding communication. For the most part, the people travel further afield and merely pass through Strathaven or Larkhall. There are no such inter-communications as might well be expected in neighbouring villages, and they have no influence on each other. There is, it is true, in Stonehouse a branch of each of the Larkhall co-operative societies, but that is due to the fact that the indigenous co-operative begun in Stonehouse failed and was assimilated.

There is an understandable and keen rivalry in church life, and on the whole attendance at all the churches and various religious denominations in the village is good. Average morning attendances at the parish church number 200, save on the day of the Sacrament, when the number rises to 450. In the Congregational church, morning attendance remains static, also for Communion, at about 100. In Paterson U.F. church attendances at the moment are falling off, mainly on account of the serious illness of the minister.

There is also, comparatively speaking, a keen interest in all shades of politics, with the Socialists mainly to the fore in the village, keenly contested every inch of the way by a small but well organised Conservative Party. Recently the Scottish Nationalist Party has formed a branch, which, I believe, numbers 22 members.