

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT



The experiment of industry
in
Gatehouse-of-Fleet
Philip Mann

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT

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The Bobbin Mill c.1850

1) THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT

To the passing tourist, Gatehouse-of-Fleet is just another pleasant small Galloway town. It reveals little of its dynamic industrial past. There are few obvious indications that Gatehouse was once a thriving centre of industrial enterprise. Yet for more than a century, vigorous attempts were made to establish here 'a new Glasgow'.

To some extent, and perhaps for two generations, there seemed good reason to believe that this unlikely venture might succeed. Yet ultimately it was doomed to failure. This was 'The Gatehouse Experiment'. This is our theme. It is the story of a community. It is also the story of a few extraordinary social pioneers.

Gatehouse of Fleet, midway between Dumfries and Stranraer, is a tourist attraction, 'a rare and beautiful example of an arrested industrial village'. Its development began in the late eighteenth century and its industries were largely based on the products of the region. There were four cotton mills, two tanneries, a soapworks, two breweries, a brass foundry, a brick field and a ship building yard. During James Murray's lifetime Gatehouse flourished. The industries in Gatehouse remained prosperous until the 1840s, but by the mid-nineteenth century the town was in decline.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT

Fierce competition from the main centres of industry - from Lancashire, and Glasgow - contributed to the failure of the industries in Gatehouse. With the severe problem of communication, and the great distances from major centres of population, the industries failed and enterprise was channelled into agriculture, forestry and tourism.



Ann Street

A TIME FOR ENTERPRISE

Our story begins in the eighteenth century. The local Laird, James Murray of Broughton and Cally, brought the industrial revolution to Gatehouse. For nearly one hundred years, from about 1760 to 1850, Gatehouse was a thriving centre of industry.

Before Gatehouse was established as a centre of industry, the economy of the region was largely agricultural. The prosperity of the local cattle trade provided enterprising Galloway landlords with the capital to practise the new theories of farm management.

Land enclosures meant that large areas of land could be drained and allowed scientific rotation schemes to be adopted. Consequently crop yields greatly improved, and the surplus was exported to Galloway 's traditional markets in north-west England and central Scotland. The increased trade meant that large sea-going vessels had to be accommodated. Long-established harbours along the Solway were greatly improved.

The landed gentry also invested capital, from the improved Galloway farms, into a wide range of agriculturally-based ancilliary industries. During the classic period of industrial revolution (1780-1820) local landed entrepreneurs tried to run these industries on a factory scale.

James Murray planned Gatehouse for the local population displaced by both land enclosure and agricultural improvements. To provide employment for the people, he encouraged industry to develop in Gatehouse.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: A Time For Enterprise

The Murrays

The Murrays of Broughton and Cally were foremost amongst the entrepreneurial families of Galloway. Their importance was derived from the marriage in 1865 of Richard Murray of Broughton to Anna Lennox, heiress to the estates of Cally and Plunton (in south-west Scotland) and Killibegs (in western Ireland). Their marriage resulted in the unification of 100,000 acres of landed wealth.

This enabled James Murray, their grandson, to commission the building of an elaborate Palladian mansion at Cally Estate. The mansion, Cally House, was completed in 1763 to the plans of Robert Mylne - architect of Blackfriars Bridge, London - and was constructed of native granite.

To offset some of the construction costs (by increasing the value of his estate rental) and to provide homes for tenants displaced by enclosure, Murray leased numerous building plots - at 1/- a year - on either side of the main highway near Cally, on the flood-plain of the River Fleet. The village of Gatehouse was to be built on the flood-plain of the River Fleet a mile from Cally House, near the existing gate house and market on the main road from Dumfries and Stranraer. The name Gatehouse derives from the 'Gait House', a coaching inn on the 'gait' (or road). Here lived a Keeper of the road to the ford across the River Fleet. Later the Inn became known as 'the gait house of Fleet' from which the spelling Gatehouse-of-Fleet was formed.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: A Time For Enterprise

Gatehouse-of-Fleet

The new community would subsequently provide the labour force for the industry which Murray wanted to attract to Gatehouse. He had considerable influence in the parish and planned the layout of the town according to a pre-determined pattern. This was the beginning of the planned development of the pioneering industrial community of Gatehouse.

Murray co-ordinated both industrial and residential development. He leased ground for building and stipulated that tenants 'were required to build their houses in a certain order and of certain dimensions'.

Murray directed that the streets should form a grid, with three main thoroughfares 'which rise parallel from the river' - in conscious imitation of the Georgian New Town of Edinburgh. Fore or front street was built along the main road and all the houses were two storeys high. By 1793 there were 160 houses, in three streets, and 1150 inhabitants. The River Fleet ran below the village and flowed out to the Solway. On the right bank of the river, Fleet Street extended the village farther along the main carriageway.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: A Time For Enterprise

Robert Heron (1764-1807) toured Scotland in 1792 and produced a volume of reminiscences in 1799. On visiting Gatehouse, Heron recorded that James Murray had soon the pleasure of seeing a fine village rise near his principal seat; more orderly in arrangement, more uniformly handsome in its buildings, happier in its situation than perhaps any other village in Galloway'. In 1794-5 Murray petitioned George III for a charter. On 21 February 1795, in recognition of the village's establishment, the King granted Murray a charter for the foundation of Gatehouse as 'The Burgh of Barony of Fleet'.



Birtwhistle Street

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: The New Prosperity

3) THE NEW PROSPERITY

In the late eighteenth century, industry depended on water to provide motive power. Organised industry could begin in Gatehouse only when an efficient system of water power was devised.

The River Fleet ran too low to provide sufficiently strong motive power. To solve the problem Murray financed the construction, circa 1790, of a system of lades (or aqueducts) from Loch Whinyeon - an upland water-head four miles from Gatehouse. A lochside embankment and an extensive system of conducting lades including a tunnel cut through a hill, conveyed the water to Gatehouse. The total cost to Murray was £1,400. The water collected behind two dams on the north-east side of the village on opposite sides of the main carriageway. The stored water then flowed into two lades, one supplying each side of Gatehouse.

The system of lades made Gatehouse-of -Fleet ideal for the textile industry. In many ways, Galloway was similar to Lancashire or Central Scotland and Murray was convinced that cotton spinning could flourish in Gatehouse.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: The New Prosperity

Cotton Mills

Gatehouse-of-Fleet was to become the most important (the earliest and the largest) centre of the eighteenth century Galloway cotton industry. Indeed, Gatehouse was one of the first places at which cotton mills were established in Scotland. Yet, the establishment of industrialised cotton textiles in Gatehouse was greatly assisted by an historical accident.

Cotton spinning was to become the prime industry of Gatehouse largely through trade connections developed in the local cattle trade. Messers Birtwhistle & Sons were a respected firm of Yorkshire cattle-dealers and merchants who bought livestock extensively in Galloway. They purchased an estate near Kirkcudbright, by the River Dee, and became acquainted with James Murray. The Birtwhistles had originally intended to build a new cotton mill on their Kirkcudbright estate. The local Laird, the Earl of Selkirk refused permission, fearing that his 'mansion might be disgraced by the vicinity of an establishment of manufacturing industry'. In contrast, James Murray openly encouraged the siting of the mill at Gatehouse. Eventually two mills were built beside the river, at the western end of the village, both making use of the lade water supply. In March 1785 Murray granted John, Thomas and William Birtwhistle the lease of a substantial site on the western bank of the River Fleet.



Scott's Mill

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: The New Prosperity

To finance the mill construction, Murray formed a joint-stock company with the Birtwhistles. The mill - built directly on the river bank - was three storeys high and twelve bays long. In 1788, the Sun Fire Insurance Office valued the mill and its contents at £3,600. (Mill and office at £1,200. Stock and machinery at £2,400). This provided the capital for the construction of a second, smaller mill on the site. A Mr McWilliam established a third mill in the same complex.

Messers Thomas Scott and Co., of Belfast and Bangor, built a fourth cotton mill, circa 1790, at the top of Ann Street on the north-east side of the village - adjacent to Cally Park. Soott's mill was three storeys high and six bays long. The motive power for the mill was provided by the water lade which ran on the east side of the village. Scott's mill is the best preserved cotton mill in Galloway.

In 1792, Robert Heron observed the Gatehouse cotton industry at its height of prosperity. 'Three hundred pounds of cotton-wool are spun into yarn in the week in the large cotton-work of Messers Birtwhistle.' When Heron visited Gatehouse, 200 of the labour force of 300 were children. The total weekly wage bill was £50. The handloan weaving of cotton was a popular occupation. 50 mules and jennies were operated by outworkers in their own attics. As Heron recorded: 'On the Ginnies, a hundred pounds of cotton-wool are spun in the week.' In Gatehouse, the cotton ginnies were particularly concentrated in Birtwhistle Street, where the houses had spacious garrets. Birtwhistle

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: The New Prosperity

Street, built by the mill owners for their employees, is an excellent example of eighteenth-century industrial workers - housing. The outworkers were organised by an agent who paid for the lengths of finished cloth. Whole families were employed as outworkers - either by the manufacturers of Glasgow or those in Gatehouse - weaving muslins on handlooms. Handloom weaving was very common place in the district and remained highly profitable for some years. A ready market for the cotton existed in both Glasgow and Carlisle.

A machine tool-maker settled in Gatehouse specifically to make and repair mill machinery. A brass foundry was established in Victoria Street to supply metal parts for the spinning and weaving machines, which were still mainly made of wood.

The cotton mills enjoyed a brief period of prosperity. Scott and Co., were particularly successful. In 1793 they issued the 'Gatehouse halfpenny', an attractive copper trading token which was brought out to alleviate the restricting shortage of small change in the region. The token was unique in south-west Scotland and about 500 were issued.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: The New Prosperity

The success of the Gatehouse cotton industry, however, was relatively short lived. Initially Gatehouse prospered considerably and was christened the Glasgow of the South - in the serious hope that in time it would indeed rival Glasgow. But in the long term, the Gatehouse mills were unable to follow Murray's capital injection with sustained expansion, when faced with the rigours of the competitive market. Despite the early optimism, the mills were doomed to fail by the aggressive competition of the traditional textile areas. Their strength came from an abundance of expansion capital, doorstep markets, Empire trading links and reciprocal agreements with America for the cheap import of raw cotton.

Scott's mill was an early casualty of competition and failed after James Murray's death. Later Alexander Murray, James's son, encouraged Messers Halliday and Spiers to convert the mill into an estate sawmill - to exploit the mature oak plantation of Cally and extensive forestry in the area. A rotary saw was driven by lade water power, enabling Gatehouse to become a major centre in the developing Galloway timber trade. Scott's mill remains the best preserved former cotton mill in Galloway.

The Birtwhistle mills ceased production in 1810 under competition from steam-powered mills in the north of England. The Birtwhistle mills remained idle until 1832 when they were leased to James Davidson & Co. Entrepreneur James Davidson repaired the buildings and installed 74 power looms, in a valiant attempt to compete with the quality

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production of the rival textile industries. The two Fleet mills had two large waterwheels - an overshot wheel and an undershot wheel, both driven by the powerful lades. According to the 'Factory Return of 1839, the western lade alone - which supplied the two waterwheels - generated the equivalent 55 h.p.

In 1840 a factory inspector found everything in order and reported that 174 workers (including 64 under 8 years of age) were still employed in cotton spinning. Davidson's hopes of early success were dashed on the morning of 14 October 1840, when a fire gutted one of the mills destroying all the equipment and damaging the structure of the building. The equipment was replaced under an insurance policy, but valuable capital was expended on the repair of the building which was only partially covered by insurance.

Despite this setback, Davidson was able to bring renewed prosperity to the mill. In 1844, 200 workers produced a record 1,500,000 yards of cloth. The yarn produced in the Gatehouse mills was sold in Glasgow and locally. On 14 September 1847 a testimonial presentation of a silver snuff box was made to a Henry Haywood, the mill manager. It is recorded that 84 employees made contributions, of whom 48 were women. The Gatehouse mills were in decline and, in the long term, were ultimately to fail. Despite brief interludes of success, when faced with the powerful competition of the big cotton mills of north-west England and central Scotland, the four small of Gatehouse ceased cotton spinning and were adapted to different work more in

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keeping with the region's agricultural base. The Gatehouse mills finally closed about mid-century but were to acquire an important new role, ironically in support of the textile industry in the competing areas.

In 1850 the Fleet cotton mills were acquired by timber merchants, Thomas and William Helme. They had moved from Cumberland in the 1840s to the Galloway town of Dalbeattie where they ran a large timber business. The Helmes converted one of the mills into a bobbin mill and founded the largest regional centre of bobbin manufacture in Gatehouse. The Helmes used one of the other mills as a bark mill and as a store.

Bobbins gather cotton fibre during the spinning process and were vital to the textile industry. The Helmes gave Gatehouse unprecedented significance in the national textile industry as a major centre of bobbin manufacture. Gatehouse bobbins, fashioned from local wood, by water-driven lathes, were exported in great numbers to the very regions that had earlier strangled the town's embryonic textile trade. By the 1920s, the Bobbin Mill only employed around 20 people. A local bobbin mill syndicate helped defer closure and the Bobbin Mill (a name still in use locally) stayed in production until the 1930s. After closure the building fell derelict and today survives only as a roofless ruin with ivy-clad walls.

4) GROWTH, CHANGE AND DECLINE

The Tannery

James Murray believed that local agriculture and manufacturing industry could be successfully combined. Later the Bobbin Mill was to prove his belief. In the late eighteenth century, the Galloway cattle trade was greatly expanded. Tanning became a principal agriculturally-based processing industry.

The Gatehouse tannery was a successful example of the close link between the local cattle farming and the development of tanning as an organised industry. Tanning was an old-established country craft in Galloway and the success of the tanning industry was entirely dependent on the fortunes of the local cattle trade. In Galloway, cattle farming had long prospered in the fertile river valleys and the narrow coastal fringe between the barren moorland and the sea. On these rich pastures, cattle had traditionally been bred. The region also temporarily accommodated vast herds of imported Ulster cattle (sometimes 30,000 a year) as they were driven south to England and the markets in London. Gatehouse was situated on one of the cattle trade's ancient droving routes.

The granting of the Burgh Charter in 1795 had recognised the right to hold a Saturday market - as well as four fairs during the year. In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century the markets and fairs did well and benefited from

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the strategic position of Gatehouse along the Stranraer to Dumfries highway. Livestock and farm produce were bought and sold. In addition cattle, horses, sheep and pigs which were imported from Ulster via Portpatrick - had to pass through Gatehouse enroute for the south.

The well-established cattle market at Gatehouse led directly to the development of a tannery in Gatehouse. In 1768 Murray helped establish one of the region's first industrially organised tanneries. Murray granted John Borrowdale of Wigtown and George Atkinson of Temple Sowerby, a 15-year lease of a plot of land at the foot of Front Street near Fleet Bridge (just below the present-day Angel Hotel) 'to enable them to sink tanpits and erect buildings'. Murray joined the partnership and invested over £4,000 in the building of a two-storey rubble tannery and laying out of tan pits on the sloping ground nearby. Water-power for the tannery was supplied by the eastern lade. A single storey house was built at one end of the tannery facing the street.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, largely as a result of James Murray's investment, Gatehouse was established as one of the major tanning centres in Galloway. Despite his crucial role, Murray derived little personal profit from the tannery. He did, however, claim the minor statutory right to take 'such part of the spent bark belonging to the tannery as they shall have occasion for and incline to use in their hothouses and gardens at Cally'.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Growth, Change & Decline

A new phase of prosperity was established by the arrival of James Davitts. At the end of the lease, Murray bought the entire business and appointed Davitts tannery manager. In 1797 Davitts leased the tannery from Murray and ultimately became the sole proprietor, realising in time a considerable fortune and retiring on the proceeds.

The viability of Gatehouse tanning was wholly dependent on the continuing passage through the town of large herds of imported Ulster cattle. In 1812, for example, over 200,000 horses and cattle were bought over f rom Northern Ireland to the Solway ports. However with the advent of steamships the Galloway droving trade collapsed. Irish cattle were no longer landed at Portpatrick, but taken directly to the newly-accessible English ports. The collapse of this trade had a drastic regional effect, and locally led to the decline of the Gatehouse cattle market. The tannery was deprived of its supply of cheap Irish cattle-hides and was in the end forced to close. Tanning in Galloway remained profitable only in Dumfries, where the cattle market survived through the trading of locally bred cattle. The long, low range of tannery buildings still survive, and serve as a garage and store.

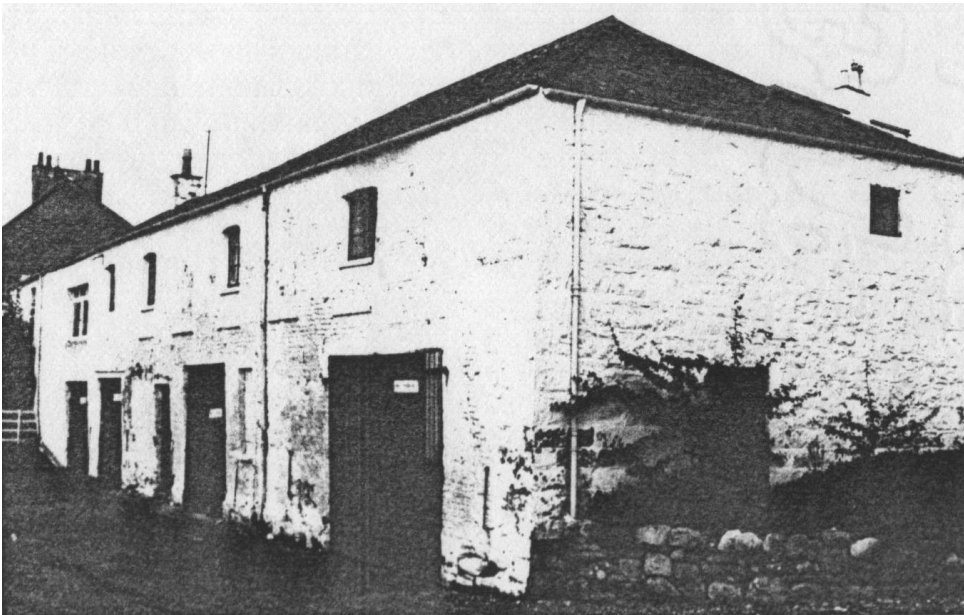
A small tannery of a **Samuel Menzies**, behind Boat Green, was in use as a tannery until 1838. It was then used as a grain store and is now converted to a house.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Growth, Change & Decline

Soapworks and Brickworks

A small **soapworks** was built in 1793 in Bridge Street (next to the Fleet Bridge) and was probably supplied with animal fats. Its effluent caused concern, since with lime imports, which occasionally contaminated the Fleet, it was thought to have adversely affected the salmon fishing.

To the west of Gatehouse, the remains of a small early nineteenth century **brickworks** can be seen in a field known locally as 'Brick Field'.



The Tannery

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Growth, Change & Decline

The Brewery

The importance of Irish cattle meant that local cattle breeding did not develop to the same extent and eighteenth century improvements in farm management were mainly concerned with the development of arable crop farming. Galloway became a significant food exporter. Grain yields (particularly barley) had greatly increased and the surplus was either exported, or used in a re-organised local brewing industry.

Barley had traditionally been grown in the area and had supported a number of small breweries in Galloway. Murray was keen to see a brewery established in Gatehouse and, in 1784, actively encouraged the opening of a brewery near the Birtwhistle mills. He was correct in his conviction that with plentiful supplies of local barley, Gatehouse would become one of the principal centres of the industry in south-west Scotland. The brewery, situated opposite the Angel Hotel, was a large two-storey brick and rubble building built in an L-shape and complete with extensive arched vaulting on the ground floor. A single-storey house was built at one end, nearest the street.

With a monopoly of local supply, the brewery was very successful and the extent of drinking was a frequent cause of moral concern. As Heron observed in 1790: Tippling houses are wonderfully numerous. I was informed by the excellent Excise

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man of the place, that not fewer than 150 gallons -of whisky alone - had been consumed here for the last six months.'

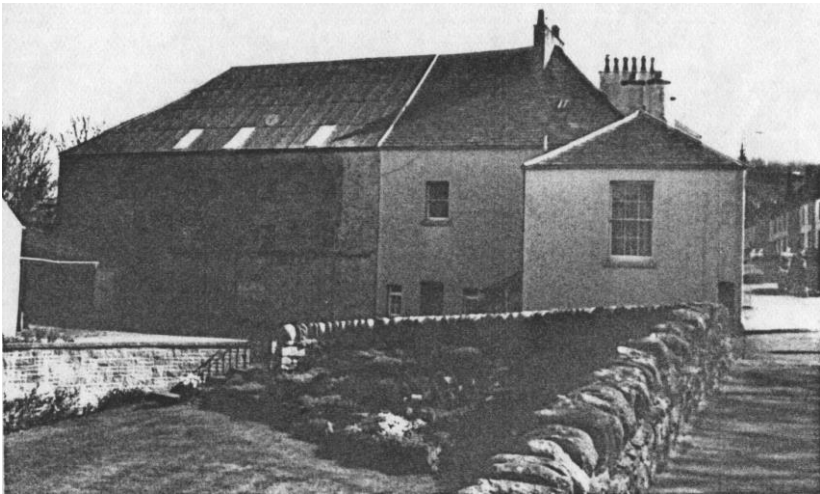
The brewery worked in conjunction with Barlay Mill, a water-driven grainmill (just north of Gatehouse) which was served by the main lade system. The Barlay Mill was one of many corn mills built in Galloway during the eighteenth century as the result of increased local grain yields. Barlay Mill was the birthplace of John Faed, brother of James and Thomas Faed, a celebrated family of Victorian Scottish artists, brought up at Barlay Mill, who did many paintings of Galloway long before Kircudbright became a famous artists' colony. John Faed RSA (1819-1902) returned to Gatehouse, became involved in burgh affairs and was the driving force behind the construction of a Town Hall in 1884. Barlay Mill is now a garage for the miller's house. The wheel has gone, but the axle remains in situ.

Despite its regional establishment, brewing in the nineteenth century was increasingly taken over by large city breweries which were able greatly to expand their distribution following the dramatic improvements in the Galloway road network. With the loss of control over local supply, the Gatehouse brewery gradually declined in importance. In 1911 it finally closed. The brewery is now used for storage.

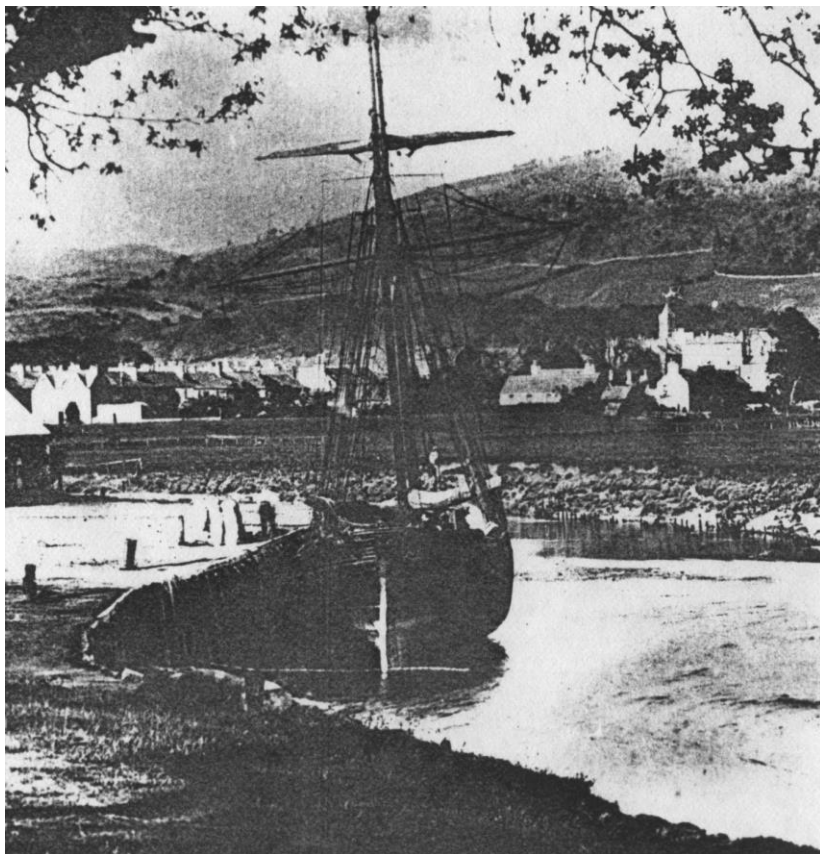
THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Growth, Change & Decline

There was also a much smaller brewery, employing three men, situated in a stone building in Ann Street. (The brewery is now a private garage).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a wine company was established in Gatehouse.



The Brewery



Port McAdam

5) COMMUNICATIONS: The Vital Factor

The closure of the brewery demonstrated the profound effect of communications on the economy of Gatehouse. This relationship can be demonstrated even before the village was built. The economy was then geared to subsistence farming, although the region developed important military and trading links with Ireland.

Sea travel was obviously the means by which this contact was maintained. From the earliest times Galloway people naturally relied on the Solway for both local coastal travel and trade and for long distance communication with other regions of the British Isles.

On shore it was left to the cattle droving trade to develop a linked pattern of droves; the first organised, systematic means of overland travel between the main Galloway centres. The cattle droves also provided troops bound for Ireland with their first mapped marching routes, and the army soon established its authority over these vital tracks. One of the main droves ran between Dumfries and Portpatrick, passing in mid-route through the valley of the Fleet.

In 1642 a rebellion in Ireland necessitated the establishment of a 'gait house' by the strategic Fleet Bridge. This was one of a series of staging posts designed to assist travel along the important post road to Portpatrick. Military use of the

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Communications

cattle traders - droves significantly increased Galloway's links with Ireland. The importance of good inland communications led, in 1763-64, to Highland regiments under General Wade constructing a military road between Dumfries and Portpatrick, specifically for the use of the army. Largely it followed existing tracks but several new sections were built. One of these was the hill-land stretch between Creetown and Gatehouse which was completed in 1763. The Old Military Road still survives and is a popular route for walkers.

In the eighteenth century the development of the economy created a general realisation of the importance of civil road maintenance. This led to an Act of Parliament in 1780 allowing the formation of numerous turnpike trusts who maintained local roads in return for the right to levy a graded system of usage charges. Locally this resulted in a new coast road being constructed between Gatehouse and Creetown, in the period 1785-90. This new turnpike road was designed to replace the upland military road as the main route between the two Solway harbour towns. The Cally turnpike trust established control over the road with the construction of an elegant Toll House in Gatehouse, situated at the bottom of Gallows Hill. In 1820 Alexander Murray diverted the main road round Cally estate and - at the cost of £3,000 - constructed the Cut through Gallows Hill into Gatehouse. Previously the road entered Gatehouse via Ann Street (named after Alexander Murray's wife, Lady Ann Murray). The toll house was built circa 1828 and is an attractive single-storey building built in an L-shape, complete with bay windows and semicircular ends to the two wings of the house.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Communications

The improvement of the road between Gatehouse and Creetown coincided with similar upgrading along the entire length of the Dumfries to Portpatrick road. But despite the development of the road network, the Solway remained the easiest way of continuing trading contact with western Scotland. The growth in the size of sea-going ships meant that if Gatehouse was to remain a competitive factory town it must urgently improve navigation along the River Fleet between Gatehouse and Wigtown Bay. Also the size and location of the port must be upgraded.

Alexander Murray (James Murray's son) was keen to allow vessels of 160 tons to sail right up to Gatehouse. In 1824 he oversaw the canalisation of the meandering stretch of the River Fleet which ran from the sea to the harbour, at Boat Green (just below Fleet bridge) two miles up the river. The estimated cost of the project was £5,000, but Murray's factor Alexander Craig was able to reduce the actual cost of the venture to £2,204. This was achieved by the abandonment of extensive engineering schemes included in the original costing. Instead Craig planned to harness the strong Fleet tide to create the canal naturally. Also, Craig used 200 Irish labourers from Alexander Murray's Donegal estates, many of whom were in arrears with rent.

Craig instructed the labourers to cut a straight trench of 1,400 yards along the proposed route of the canal. The Fleet water was forced into the trench and over two days the scouring flow cut a navigable canal of sufficient width and depth to allow large sea-going vessels to reach the newly improved harbour facilities at Boat Green, the site of a small shipbuilding and boat repair yard.

THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Communications

Port McAdam

Later in 1836-7 a new quay, Port McAdam, was built by a local ship-owner, David McAdam.

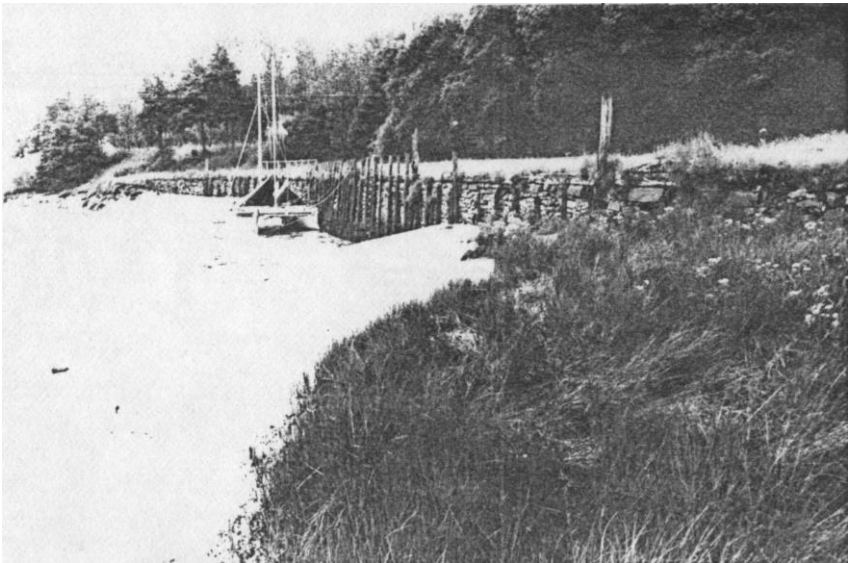
The canalisation of the River Fleet also enabled over 170 acres of land to be reclaimed. While the canal was being cut, two large rocks were unearthed opposite Cardoness Castle and were later used, in situ, as pillar foundations for a swing bridge across the canal. This greatly improved access to the Cally estate from the new coastal road. The canal continued in regular use until the late nineteenth century and was still used to unload coal until 1930.

The upgrading of the town's sea-trading facilities demonstrated the crucial connection between communications and the success of local industry. Ultimately, however, the manufacturing industries were strangled by the engulfing rivalry of other industrial regions.

During the 1860s the railway age arrived in Galloway, but the Murrays surprisingly failed to capitalise on its full trading potential, thereby perhaps preventing a possible industrial revival. They refused to allow the Dumfries to Portpatrick line to pass through Gatehouse, insisting that it should take a different route through the hills more than five miles inland. The Portpatrick. Railway opened in 1861. The national connections of the Glasgow and South Western Railway resulted in the rapid decline of the steamship as a long distance bulk carrier in south-west Scotland.

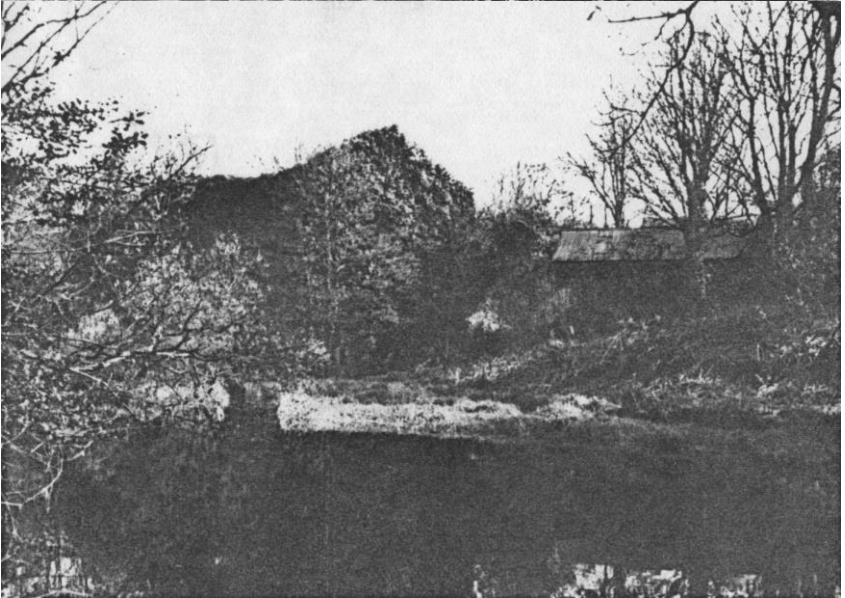
THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT: Communications

Local coastal shipping remained viable until the modern development of the road system, which connected every small community with the main centres in Galloway and beyond. By this time the region was rightly concentrating on agricultural development, utilising the new transport facilities to supply the large industrial regions to the north and south with produce.



Port McAdam

The Canal Bridge : Piers



The Bobbin Mill

6) A ROLE FOR TODAY

Gatehouse remained comfortably prosperous until the eighteenth-forties. But despite the founding efforts of James Murray and his fellow entrepreneurs, the industrial era of Gatehouse was over.

Latterly the Gatehouse mills were associated with the local timber trade and commercial forestry has in this century become an important adjunct to arable and stock farming. The relative decline of industrial enterprise was substituted by the genteel grace of well-proportioned cottages and houses peopled by a settled, stable community. Gatehouse was to find a new role, a role for today. Recently tourism has greatly enriched the economy. The experiment with industry had left a pretty little Georgian town with developed tourist amenities and an agricultural hinterland. Robert Burns is reputed to have written 'Scots Wha Hae' - at the Murray Arms Hotel, a coaching Inn dating from the mid eighteenth century. The Clock Tower, which dominates the north of the village and is a symbol of Gatehouse, was built of Graidair granite in 1871. The population of Gatehouse peaked in 1841 reaching a recorded figure of 1,832. By 1901 this had shown a gradual decline to 1,013 falling further to 822 in 1961. Today the Fleet Valley is an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Gatehouse-of-Fleet is an Outstanding Conservation Area. The elegant houses are complemented by the white-washed walls, set against the green hills, and a careful control on development. Gatehouse has all the attractions of a planned town and reveals intriguing glimpses of its dynamic industrial past.

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THE GATEHOUSE EXPERIMENT

To the passing tourist Gatehouse-of-Fleet is just another pleasant little Galloway town. It reveals little of its dynamic past. There are few obvious indications that this was once a thriving centre of industrial enterprise. Yet for more than a century vigorous attempts were made to establish here a new Glasgow.

To some extent, and for perhaps two generations, there seemed good reason to believe that this unlikely venture might succeed. Yet ultimately it was doomed to failure. This was the Gatehouse experiment. This is our theme. It is in part the story of a community. It is also the story of a few extraordinary social pioneers.

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