

## "Fleet Street" walk

about half a mile.

A short walk highlighting buildings on the Anwoth side of Gatehouse

Start the walk on the south side of Fleet Bridge, next to the large house (Bridge House)

Gatehouse is a planned estate village - started by the laird (landlord) James Murray of Cally.

Most of the town lies within Girthon parish - to the east of the River Fleet. The first houses to be built in Gatehouse were in 1763 - starting at the Murray Arms end of High Street.

The houses on the Anwoth side of the river were not started until the 1790s.

### Fleet Bridge and through roads



On the ground at the end of the bridge parapet are some dates (maybe a little weathered).. These are the dates when the **stone** Fleet Bridge was constructed and widened.

Prior to the first stone bridge being built in **1730**, there had been several wooden bridges, which were eventually washed away - and there was also a ford a little further upstream.

In **1662** Richard Murray of Cally was commanded by an Act of Parliament to replace the bridge and given permission to build a toll house to collect

fees. (The Toll House was in Ann Street, near the Town Clock).

The last widening in 1985 was to add pavements. At this time the A75 still came through Gatehouse - there was no bypass at the time - but the old stone bridge remains underneath the modern road.

The crossing of the River Fleet was an important part of the 'Great Road' from Gretna to Portpatrick used by the military, drovers and others. This road took a different route to the west of Gatehouse, taking a sharp right turn at the Ship Inn, then to Anwoth Kirk and over the hills to Creetown.

The 'new' coast road along Fleet Street and out to Cardoness Castle and beyond was not built until the 1790s.

### Bridge House



The house beside the bridge was for many years a pub known as

**'The Crown & Thistle'** or **'The Scotch Crown'** before becoming **'Bridge House'**, a private house.

In one of the outbuildings, in the early days of Gatehouse industry, there was a soap works which used by-products

from the two tanneries in the town. These 2 industries caused a lot of pollution in the river.

Stop at the corner of Fleet Street and Hannay Street.

Most property on the north side of Fleet Street was feud in 1794 - about 30 years after the town of Gatehouse was started.. Many of the properties had feus which stretched back to Garden Street (or Back Fleet Street as it was originally known). (*A feu is an old Scottish form of land tenure, now abolished*)

**The Ship Inn** was probably the first building on the street in 1794. The building included an attached house to the rear, and a garage beyond - and for many years a petrol pump existed near the front door.

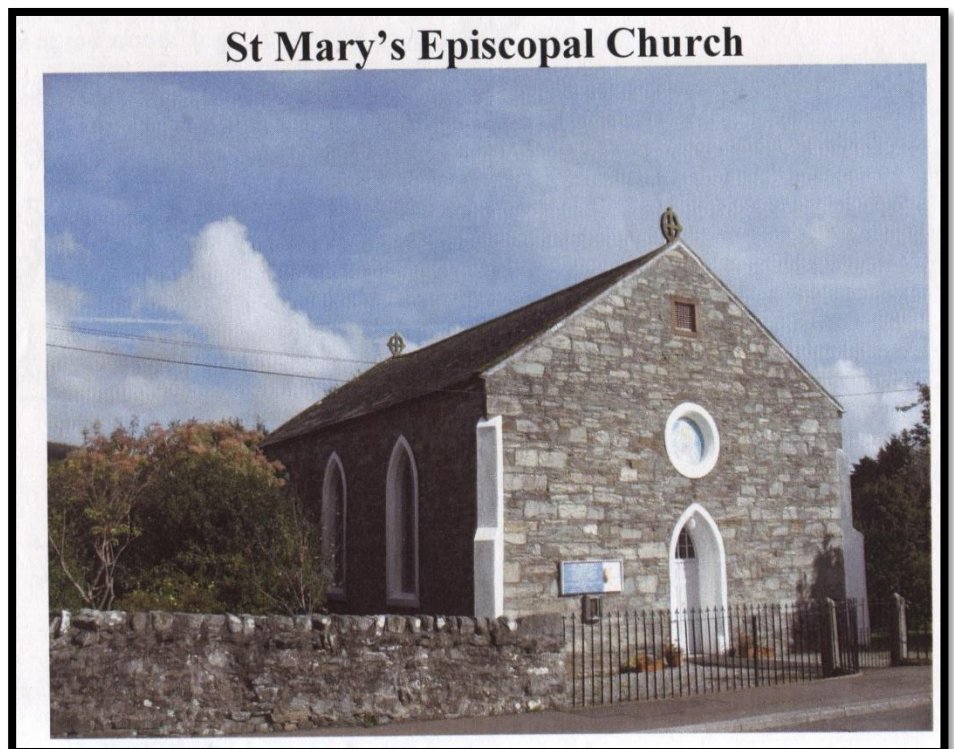
In the 1920's part of the front, and to the left of the door, was a butcher's shop.

In the 1920s and 30s the hotel was a popular meeting place for various artists who lived in the town - e.g. Aleck Sturrock, Hamish Paterson, Mac Fleming. The latter was the husband of Dorothy L. Sayers the novelist, who, on one of her visits to Gatehouse wrote the crime novel 'Five Red Herrings' which was based on the artist and fishing groups around the town. At the time the landlord was Joe Dignam and the hotel was called the 'Anwoth Hotel'.



Much of the rest of the north side was feud by a local surgeon - John Papple who planned to build a cotton mill on the site. There was probably a small mill with hand driven machines at the west end of the street but Papple became bankrupt in 1795 and the land was sold for houses.

Like most streets in Gatehouse, Fleet Street it was not completely residential. In the past, here have been several pubs and a few shops e.g. butchers, grocers, fancy goods and even a cyclists café.



Look up the road opposite (Dromore Road). The small church (now St Mary's Episcopal Church) was originally built as the United Sessional Church in 1840 - a breakaway group from the Church of Scotland. It

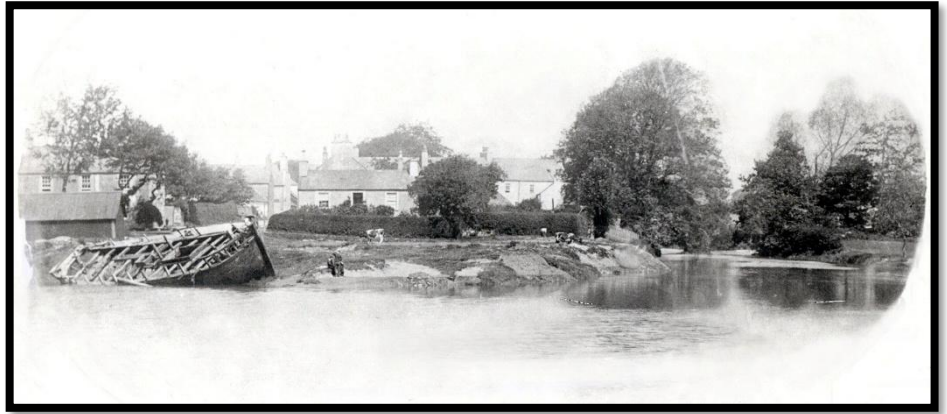


was known locally as the Wee Kirk. The Anwoth Beer Garden belongs to the church - this was originally intended to be the site of the church manse and glebe (a field for use by the minister).

Dromore Road, part of the original Military Road through the area, leads to Gatehouse (Dromore) Station which was 6 miles away and was on the Carlisle to Portpatrick Railway, also known as 'The Port Road'. It closed in 1965.

### Walk down Hannay Street heading towards the river.

This street leads down to the original Gatehouse harbour - **Boatgreen**. As road conditions were generally quite poor, shipping was the easiest way to move bulk goods. However reaching Boatgreen was not easy as the Fleet has many meanders before it reaches the sea. It is also tidal so the harbour could only be used at high tide. Later a new harbour was built closer to the estuary. This photo is taken from the south side of the river. There was a small boat-building yard here and at the end of the street was the second tannery in the town.



### Retrace your steps to Fleet Street but on the way notice the following:

Before turning the corner at Boatgreen, notice the **large area of grass**. This was the town **quoiting green**. Pronounce locally as 'kyting' it was a popular summer sport of curlers. Games were played until the 1920s .

The second house on the east side of the street was once the home of artist Aleck Sturrock who had a wooden studio at the foot of his garden (now part of the new riverside property.)

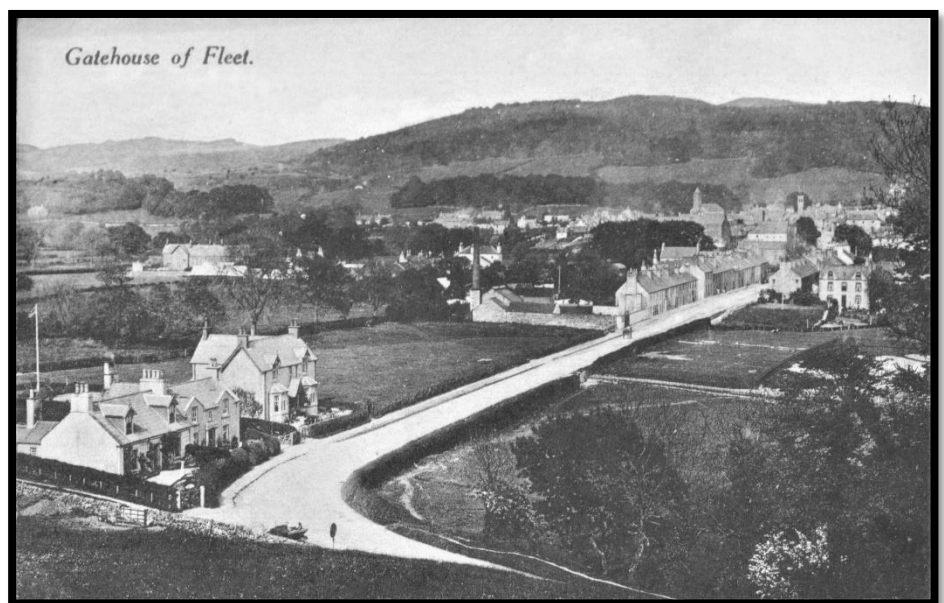
Notice the unusual pole on the west side of the road. This was part of the gas lighting system used in Gatehouse until the late 1800s.

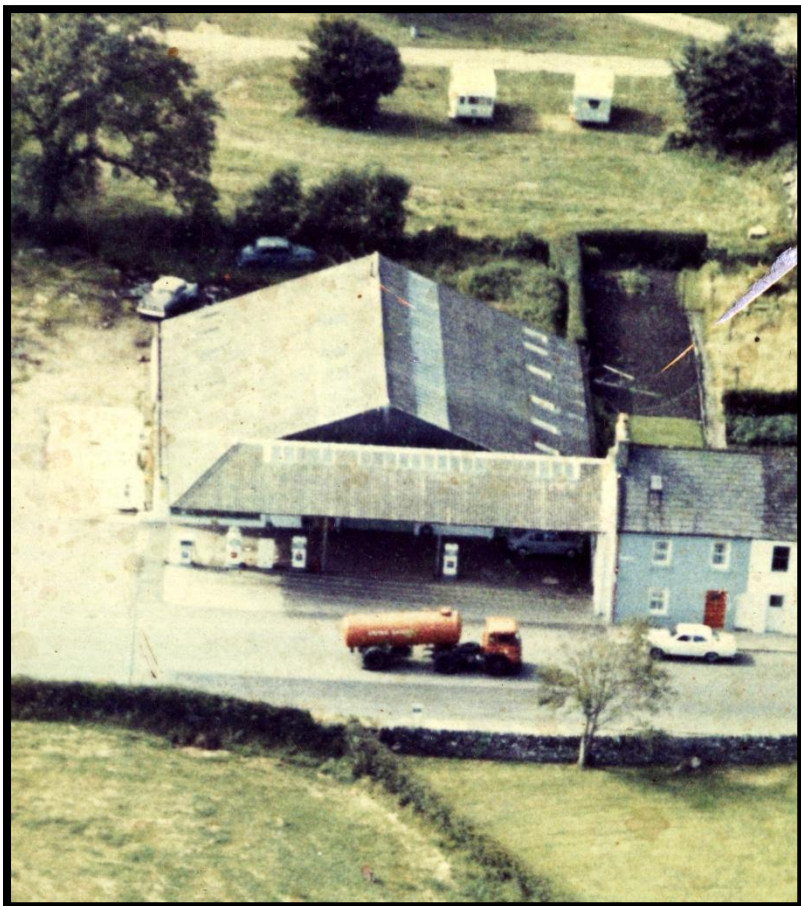
### At Fleet Street turn left

Most houses on the **south side** of Fleet Street and those at Boatgreen were feued in 1795. 22 Fleet Street was known as the **Custom House** as it was home to the Customs Officer, or tidewaiter, for the port. The last few houses were built by Robert Murdoch about 1840. He worked in the tannery behind his house.

The last terrace of property on the **north side** is now the **Fleet**

**Valley Care Home**. This site was originally used by the **Gatehouse Gas Works** which operated between 1842 and 1918, providing street lighting in the town.





In 1936 a large garage was built on the site to service the increasing number of motor vehicles. It was owned by the Campbell family who also operated popular bus tours and taxi services. It closed in 1992.

Walk back along the north side of Fleet Street and turn first left into Garden Street.

The house on the corner, 31 Fleet Street, was the birthplace, in 1895, of Sir James Learmonth. His father, William Learmonth, was headmaster of Girthon Parish School but there was no schoolhouse so the family rented elsewhere. James became a well renowned doctor specializing in nerve surgery. He performed an operation on King George VI at Buckingham Palace in 1949 and was knighted (in the King's bedroom) for his work.

The large house on the other corner, 29 Fleet Street, was part of Papple's mill. It was bought by the Hume family who were builders. This may explain why there are some rather fancy features e.g. gutters and entrance door.



Walk along Garden Street and stop at the caravan park gates.

After World War II there were efforts to boost the tourism industry in the area. Mrs Elizabeth Murray Usher, then laird of Cally, was keen to encourage this. She already had a caravan park at Sandgreen but also opened this one in the town. In the north east corner there was a large wooden hut. It was originally used by Land Girls as a hostel during World War

II, and later by forestry workers before being used by the caravanners.

Beyond the western end of the caravan park, for many years there was a **brickworks**. In old photos you can see the tall kiln chimney. Many Gatehouse houses are built with locally-made bricks as was the Little Ross Lighthouse in Kirkcudbright Bay.





Where Garden Street makes a right-angled turn, and on the site of the current Medical Centre, there once stood a handsome Georgian house called Northview. Latterly it was lived in by the Heron family. The father Fred was a local 'character'. For the first eight years of his marriage to Caroline, they lived on Laurie's Isle (also known as Ardwall Island) at Carrick, where some of their 12 children were born. Northview was demolished to make way for a doctor's surgery in 1967. This was replaced by the present [Health Centre](#) in 2008.

Continue round the corner along Garden Street

Most of the south side of Garden Street had houses, some of rather poor quality. On the north side, only Northview and one or two properties at the other end of the street seem to have been built. The rents for these houses were low, and this was where many of the Irish workers lived who came to Gatehouse to find work. As a result Garden Street became known locally as **"wee Ireland"**.

The building on the north side of Garden Street is the [Gatehouse Community Centre](#). This was built in 1927 as [Fleetside School](#), when the parish schools of Girthon and Anwoth joined forces. The modern school building behind was built in 1964 as a secondary school, whilst the primary school continued to use the Fleetside building. The secondary school closed in 1981, and now Gatehouse secondary pupils travel to Kirkcudbright Academy. The primary school moved into the secondary school building and the Fleetside building became the Community Centre in 1984.

#### Turn left when Garden Street meets Dromore Road

To the left there is a boundary wall between the Community Centre the school car park, into which a plaque commemorates the **'Bland Female School 1866'**.

Roughly where the school car park now is, there was a school building with a headmaster's house attached with the aforementioned plaque attached at the front. Little is known of the Bland School but it was probably run by the Free Church of Scotland.



In 1872, because most of the pupils at the Anwoth Parish school at the clachan now lived in Gatehouse, that school closed and pupils moved into the Bland school building. In later years the building

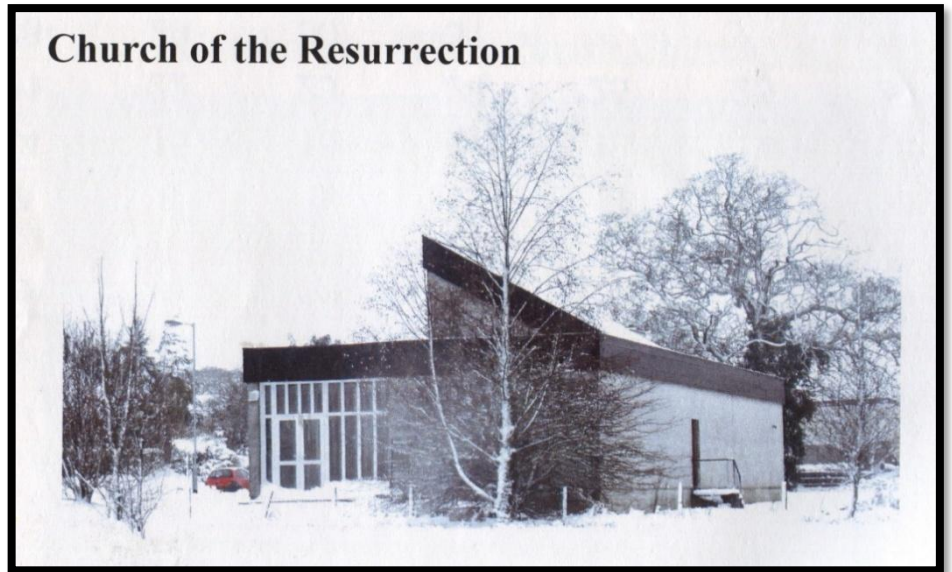
was used for domestic science and woodwork until the new senior school was built, after which it was demolished.

Cross the road and take the narrow path towards Riverbank.

Riverbank was started about 1948 to provide council housing as many of the older houses in Gatehouse were cramped and had shared toilets.

Bear right where the path reaches Riverbank.

Straight ahead are 2 modern houses. From 1971 to 2016 this was the site of the **Roman Catholic Church**.



Turn right and cross to the park side of the street.

The park is divided into 2 by a path which leads to a footbridge over the river to the Mill on the Fleet. The bridge was located here in 1995 as part of the **Gatehouse Bicentennial** celebrations. In 1795 Gatehouse was created as a **Burgh of Barony** with rights to hold certain markets and fairs and had a Town Council to run its affairs.

There is another entrance to the park where a plaque is built into the wall. The park is named Burger Park in honour of Mrs Elizabeth Murray Usher, Laird of Cally. She did much in Gatehouse to encourage businesses and tourism and kept a strict eye on how the town should look. In 1973 she became an Honorary Burgess of the Town.



Continue to the junction with Dromore Road

As you reach Dromore Road, notice the Georgian house on the other side of the road. Known as **Fleetbank**, this house was built about 1824 by the owners of the Ship Inn at the end of their feu. It has had some interesting residents.

The minister of the '**Wee Kirk**' opposite lived there for a while, as did Mr Newbiggin, the manager of the cotton mills between 1837 and 1846. Later it was the home of Elizabeth Faed, mother of John, Thomas and Susan Faed, the renowned Victorian artists,.

Turn left onto Dromore Road.

This completes the Fleet Street walk – we hope you found it interesting.

**Margaret Wright**

April 2025