

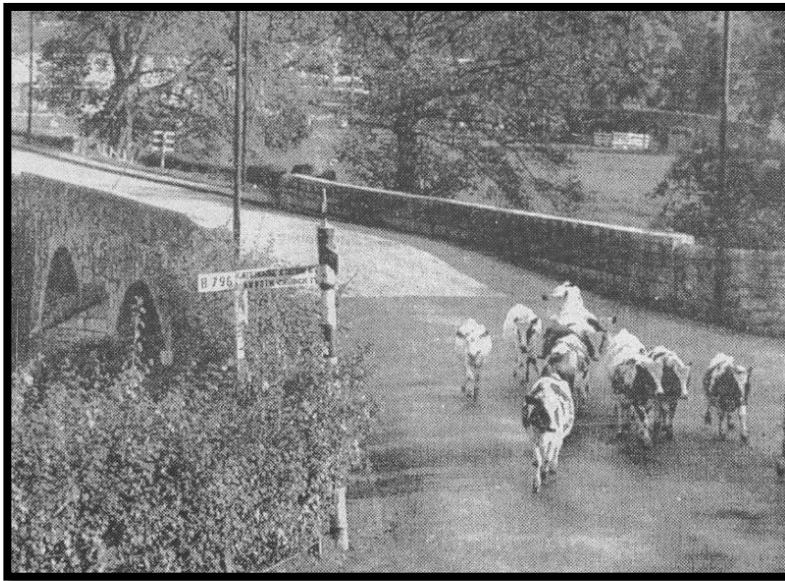
“Roon the Watter” walk

6 miles.

This is a six mile walk or cycle ride, going up one side of the Fleet valley and back down the other side. The full name of the river is the Water of Fleet - hence the name of the walk. It is the route of a popular fun run held every year during Gatehouse Gala Week.

Start at the Fleet Bridge

turn right up Dromore Road keeping the Ship Inn to your left.



Fleet Bridge

This is part of the original road out of Gatehouse to the west. Sometimes named as the Old Military Road on old maps as this was part of an important route to Ireland for the military during the 18th century.

This was also the road to Gatehouse (or Dromore) Railway Station. The signpost says 'Gatehouse Station 6 miles, Anwoth Church 1½ miles'. The railway (Carlisle to Portpatrick) opened in 1861 but was closed as part of the 'Beeching' cuts in 1965. The railway was known as 'The Port Road'.

As you walk out of town you will pass **Gatehouse Community Centre** on your left. Gatehouse is contained within 2 parishes. This side of the river is in Anwoth parish, the other side is Girthon. The Community Centre was originally built in the 1920s to serve as the **Gatehouse School**, taking children from **Anwoth & Girthon**. Behind the Community Centre is the new Gatehouse School which was built in the 1964.

On the right is the **Riverbank** housing scheme, built in the late 1940s to help alleviate some of the overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions in some of the old Gatehouse homes.

On the left, beyond the school, is **Baker's Dozen**, one of the newer private developments.

A baker's dozen is 13. The term evolved during medieval times as a way of making sure the baker did not sell underweight bread for which he could be fined. - so he gave an extra portion e.g. 13 rolls instead of 12.

Continue on the road past the end of Riverbank. Notice the **fire station** on the right. The original fire station was a small building on Victoria Street. The Fire Station moved to its current location in 1978. It is run by volunteer fire fighters.

Before Gatehouse had a public park (Garries Park), the field on the right was used as a football ground. At the time Gatehouse had 2 football teams, White Star and Fleetside Rovers. They amalgamated in the 1940s to form Fleet Star FC.

Walk past **Blackloch** farmhouse on the left. Although there is a small pond beyond the farm, the real **Black Loch** is on the road to **Anwoth Church**, and it is also known as **Woodend Loch**, at the edge of **Killigowan Wood**.

The road to the left (which is not part of this walk) was a continuation of the Military Road and led to **Old Anwoth Kirk**, and then over the hills to **Creetown** via **Skyreburn Glen**.

The house you can see to the right of the road to Anwoth is known as **Lucky Harg's**. It was possibly an inn on the old road many years ago. The name is interesting. A 'lucky' was an old name for an elderly lady, a midwife or the hostess of a tavern. Harg is a not uncommon surname in the area. So probably named after a lady who lived there.

Also off the road to Anwoth are 2 modern housing developments - **Ramsay Wood** and **Bracken Wood**.

Carry on past the **Anwoth Road**, away from **Gatehouse**

At **Goatend** farmhouse, notice the **milepost** on the left showing the mileage to Gatehouse Station.



GH (Gatehouse) **1**(mile) **DS** (Dromore Station) **5½** (miles)

When Gatehouse became a burgh or town in 1795, the burgh boundaries were mapped out. They reached as far as Goatend as James Murray of Cally, the founder of the town had hoped that his town would become 'The Glasgow of the South', but due to the demise of the cotton industry, the town never grew much beyond its original size, in area, until the 1950s.

Continue, but pause at the bend in the road.

by the edge of the wood. This is officially known as Killiegowan Wood but the local name is **Bambastie Wood**.

The path through the wood from Anwoth is believed to have been used by smugglers. During the 18th century smuggling was rife in Galloway. Goods were landed in secluded bays. The smugglers quickly brought their booty (tea, tobacco, wine, brandy, silk etc) on ponies to hidden places to redistribute them.

The name may be a corruption of 'balance the beasties' - reload the ponies.

However the word seems to come from 'bam' (Old English) meaning to trick and 'baise' (Old Scots) meaning to puzzle (e.g. as in bamboozle). So maybe it was a wood where you could easily get lost, or maybe trick the excisemen.

In springtime it is a very pretty bluebell wood.



Keep straight on.

The next road on the left leads to **Ornockenoch**. This area is part of the **Rusko Estate**. A previous owner constructed a dam at Ornockenoch Loch to produce electricity in 1933. The electricity was used for milking at **Pulcree Farm** - seen on the right - and for Rusko House. It was not very powerful as the lights in the house dimmed when it was milking time at the farm.

Keep straight on.

The next road on the right, opposite a pretty lodge cottage, leads to **Rusko House**. This was built in the early 1800s when the owner of the estate moved out of **Rusko Castle**, to live further up the road.



Rusko House

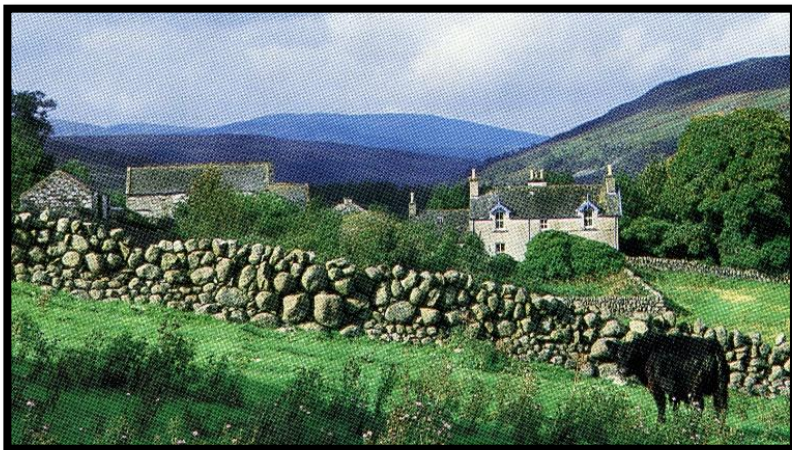
Nearby, on the left, look for the next **milepost** to Gatehouse Station.

Milepost **DStn 4½ miles, GH 2 miles** (Dromore Station 4½ miles, Gatehouse 2 miles)

Keep straight on

Once the road emerges from the trees, you will get a view up the Fleet valley. The farm down to the right is **Nether Rusko**. (*Nether often means lower, There is an Upper Rusko further up the road.*)

The name Rusko can be spelt several ways. It may mean a boggy glen (from Gaelic) or possible a wood with roe deer (from Norse).



Nether Rusko

Turn right down the very steep hill, past Nether Rusko farmhouse. Stop half way down at the bend in the road. Look to your left for a view of **Rusko Tower**. This 15th century keep was built by the Carsons and then owned by the Gordon of Lochinvar family. It is thought to be the inspiration for Sir Walter Scott's poem 'Lochinvar'.

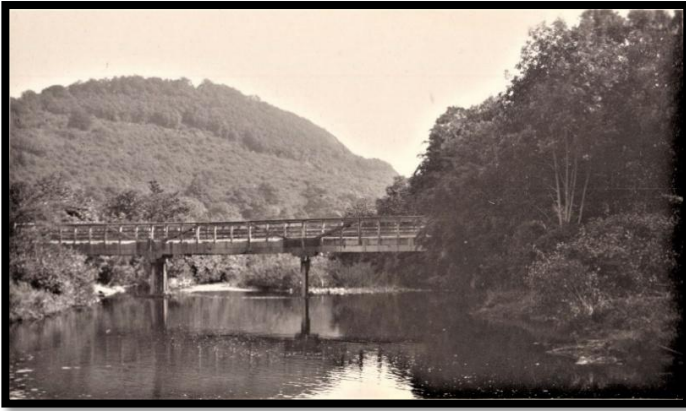


*'O young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was
the best'*

After the laird moved to his new home at Rusko House, for many years farm labourers lived in the castle and there are tales of a pig being kept on the roof.

It was bought and renovated by a different Carson family in the 1970s and is now a family home.

Stop at **Castramont (or Rusko) Bridge**. Just upstream the Big Water of Fleet is joined by its tributary - the Little (Wee) Water of Fleet. Until 1862, the only way to cross here was by stepping stones - which can still be seen south of the bridge when the water level is low. A new stronger bridge was built about 1925.



Continue and take the sharp right at the end of the straight.

The road to the left goes up the Wee Water of Fleet valley. The large house is called **Carstramon**, formerly the home of Mrs Elizabeth Murray Usher, Laird of Cally in 2nd half of the 20th century.

The road now goes through **Castramont Wood** - a beech wood which is filled with bluebells in the spring. It was a managed woodland with the wood supplying a local Bobbin mill.

A large oak tree nearby was known as **The Parliament Oak** - a popular meeting place for locals to discuss their problems.



As you exit the wood you pass **Lagg Farm** on the left. There is a pathway from here up to Laghead on the moor, which was probably the old road to Laurieston. Ignore this path and **continue along the road** past **Low Creoch Farm**. The next buildings on the right are **Low Barlay** and **Dalmalin Lodge**. The farm land is now incorporated into other farms but Dalmalin was once the farmhouse for Low Barlay Farm.

Continue down a steep hill, over a bridge and round a bend.

The house on the left is **Fleuchlarg** (pronounced to rhyme with derrick). Near the bridge over the burn is a **Lovers Dell**, where young courting couples would go and engrave their names in the stone at the sides of the burn.

Fleuchlarg was a small farm with a corn mill. Water was diverted from cotton mill lade system to power the mill. The Gatehouse town boundary, set in 1795, came out as far as Fleuchlarg.

On the right, notice a signpost to **EMU Walk** which cuts across fields to **Girthon Cemetery** on **Castramont Road**. (Note: if you use this path please keep dogs on leads). EMU stands for Elizabeth Murray Usher.

In 1975 Mrs Murray Usher proposed an eighteen hole championship golf course on the land to right of the road but the plan was never fulfilled.

At the road junction, bear right. This junction is known as '**The Sinnerins**', possibly named as the roads 'go asunder'. To the left leads to Laurieston, and was the 'new' road built in the 1820s – it was a toll road.



At the "Sinnerins"

The road sign says Castramont 2½ miles, Laurieston 9½ miles. The next buildings on the left are **Barlay Mill** (or Miln of Barlay). A corn mill making use of the lade water for the cotton mills. **James Faed** was the miller here 1819 to 1843. All but one of his children became well known Victorian artists. The surname is pronounced to rhyme with maid.



Barlay Mill

On the left is the 9 hole **Gatehouse Golf Course** which was formally opened in 1922. The tennis club next to it was built here in 1928. The house opposite (**Barwhill**) was at one time a sawmill - again using the lade water to provide motive power.

Continue to the War Memorial, turn right along High Street and over the bridge to the Ship Inn.

You have now been “**Roon the Watter**”.