

# Dr Alexander Craig

*Doctor in Gatehouse 1922 to 1950*

## **Birth and Early Years**

Alexander Currie Carruthers Craig was born in 1894 at Johnstone Bridge, Dumfriesshire.

His father was Thomas Craig, a schoolmaster, who was born c.1858 in Holywood, Dumfriesshire. His mother Elizabeth Carruthers was born c.1862 at Applegarth, Dumfriesshire. The couple married at Dryfesdale, Dumfriesshire in 1886.

In the 1901 Dumfriesshire census the family lived at the Schoolhouse, Johnstone. Alexander was 7 years old and had 3 older siblings (Jane, Mary and William) and 3 younger siblings (Margaret, Elizabeth and James).

Alexander's schooling is unknown, but he probably attended Johnstone School, where his father was headmaster, and maybe later moved to Dumfries Academy.

He attended Edinburgh University as a medical student, graduating MB ChB in 1917.

In the 1911 census he may have been living in Dalkeith, outside Edinburgh. (*Scotlands People index lists an Alexander C. C. Craig aged 71 – this should probably be 17*)

## **Qualification**

After graduating, Alexander worked as a temporary Surgeon-Lieutenant with the Royal Navy during 1918 and 1919. He also worked at the West Hertfordshire Hospital and the Bristol General Hospital.

He came to Gatehouse as the local doctor about 1922, moving into Roseville, a large house in Ann Street. His surgery was a room in his house.

His father Thomas also lived in Gatehouse until about 1927 and three of his sisters, Margaret, Elizabeth and Mary were living at Roseville when they each married during 1924 and 1925.



*Roseville in the 1930s*

**CRAIG, Alex. Currie Carruthers**, Roseville, Gatehouse of Fleet, Kirkcudbrightsh. (*Tel. Gatehouse 21*) —M.B., Ch.B. Ed. 1917 ; (*Univ. Ed.*) ; Med. Off. Girthon & Anworth Parishes ; Certif. Fact. Surg. ; Mem. B.M.A. ; Temp. Surg.-Lt. R.N. 1918-19 ; late Res. Med. Off. W. Herts. Hosp. ; Ho. Phys. Bristol Gen. Hosp.:

*Medical Directory entry 1925*

## **Marriage and Children**

On 11<sup>th</sup> September 1927, Alexander married Margaret Wilson Armstrong at the United Free Church, Gatehouse of Fleet. Margaret, born 1902, was a farmer's daughter from Littleton, Borgue, a farm just outside Gatehouse.

The couple continued to live at Roseville in Ann Street.

Alexander and Margaret had 5 children:

Thomas Allan  
Robert William (Billy)  
Jean Elizabeth  
Douglas  
Sheila



Craig Family at Roseville c.1949.

Douglas, Margaret, Jean at back, Sheila at front, Alexander & Billy.

## **Doctor in Gatehouse**

Alexander took an active part in the social life of Gatehouse. During the winter months he enjoyed curling and in the summer he played green bowls. He served on the committees of both clubs and was present at the opening of the new bowling club at Cow Park (its current venue) in 1938. He was also on the management committee for the Gatehouse Golf Club, and meetings were sometimes held at his house, Roseville.



Dr Craig was a much loved and respected man in Gatehouse. David (Sam) Gray remembers that men would tip their hats as they passed Dr Craig. If a home visit was required by the doctor, the house would be scrubbed and polished as a way of showing respect.

When the Shaw twins were born in 1926, one was named Alexander Craig Shaw, after the doctor. The other twin was named Hunter after the District Nurse.

Son Billy remembers his father attending to a pilot who had crash landed near the Big Water of Fleet viaduct during the Second World War. The alarm was raised by the young Johnstone twins, Billy and Robin who ran to the nearest phone at Gatehouse Station to raise the alarm. Sometime later the pilot visited Gatehouse to thank Dr Craig. He also visited the Johnstone family at Cullendoch to thank them, and the doctor remembers that the pilot's car was full of toys for Billy and Robin.



## Refrigeration

Penicillin was invented in 1928 but it didn't come into general use until 1945. This new "wonder drug" was very effective at treating many bacterial infections, but it had to be kept cool. Dr Craig, like most other people in Gatehouse, didn't own a refrigerator. Willie Wilson, the fishmonger and greengrocer in the High Street, solved the problem by giving the doctor a key to his shop where he could store his supplies in the fish shop fridge/freezer.

## National Health Service

Dr Craig was the last doctor in Gatehouse before the introduction of the National Health Service in May 1948 which allowed free medical care for all. Prior to this the doctor sent out bills to the patients he attended. Often he would also get a little extra from a grateful patient - perhaps some freshly laid eggs or some newly dug potatoes.

## Sheep Farming

As a provision for retirement interest and income, in 1930 Alexander took out the tenancy of a nearby farm - Grobdale of Balmaghie, just off the Laurieston Road. This was a sheep farm with a Highland bull and some cows. A shepherd lived in the farm house but the doctor and his friends and family helped out with such activities as hay making in their spare time. The Craig family still own and work on this farm.

## Death

Alexander died at Roseville and wife Margaret died in Kirkcudbright. They are buried at Girthon Cemetery (Grave D286).

**Headstone Inscription :** In loving memory of Alexander Currie Craig M.B. Ch.B. medical practitioner in Gatehouse for 28 years, died at Roseville 24<sup>th</sup> March 1951 aged 56 years. Also his beloved wife Margaret Wilson Armstrong died 27<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1986, aged 83 years. Also their eldest son Thomas Allan Craig, died 19<sup>th</sup> July 2006 aged 77 years.



### Death Of Gatehouse Doctor

We regret to record the death of Doctor A. C. Craig, a much respected physician of Gatehouse. Dr Craig passed away at his home on Saturday after a long and painful illness, and the news of his death was received in the town with feelings of personal loss and sorrow.

Dr Craig, who was 56 years of age, was a graduate of Edinburgh University, and served in the Royal Navy during the first World War. He came to Gatehouse 27 years ago and his sterling qualities soon earned him the respect and affection of the community.

Doctor Craig took a keen interest in the affairs of the district and was an elder of Girthon Parish Church for 12 years and last year was elected to the chairmanship of the Vacancy Committee. He was a regular attender of the church.

He had suffered from an illness for a long time, but he never allowed it to stand in the way of his duty.

A keen sportsman, he was particularly fond of shooting, golf, curling and bowling and had been a committee member of various sporting organisations in the town.

Dr Craig is survived by his wife, three sons and two daughters, to whom the sympathy of the community is extended.

The funeral, which was private, took place to Girthon Cemetery and was conducted by the Rev. J. B. F. Montgomery. A memorial service will be held in Girthon Church on Sunday.