

Gatehouse Folk

Who Did What — Policemen

Gatehouse developed during the second half of the 18th century, reaching a peak population of 2700 in 1845, after which it declined gradually to its current level of about 950.

Despite this, Gatehouse didn't have its own police station until sometime between 1864 and 1871.

There were 'lockups', firstly in Ann Street at Cox's Lodge, then later in the Tollhouse at Woodside.

It's likely that policing of Gatehouse was originally based in Kirkcudbright.

In 1851 a young constable was boarding at a house in High Street, but that does not seem to be the case in 1841 or 1861.

The Deeds for 10 Victoria Street, indicate that there was a feu disposition in May 1864 by Horatio Granville Murray Stewart in favour of The Commissioners of Supply for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. The Commissioners were the "managing authority" for the police at that time and the feu appears to refer to the land that the Old Police Station and the Old Fire Station occupy and may well have been a gift rather than a sale. This ties in well with the fact that a police station first appears in Gatehouse in the 1871 census.

Censuses between 1871 and 1921 give us names of policemen who were based at Victoria Street. It is clear from the birthplaces of the children that police officers moved around the district on a regular basis.

1871

Enumeration District 3 Page 3

Surname	Forename(s)	Rel.	Mar.	Sex	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Police Station							
Thompson	Anthony	head	m	m	32	police constable	Kbts, Kirkcudbright
Thompson	Joan Jardine	wife	m	f	33		Kbts, Kirkcudbright
Thompson	Jessie Jane	dau.		f	5		Dumfries, Tinwald
Thompson	Grace Jardine	dau.		f	3		Kbts, Dalry

1881

Enumeration District 3 Page 6

Surname	Forename(s)	Rel.	Mar.	Sex	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Victoria Street - Police Station							
McGill	James	head	m	m	37	police constable	Kbts, Rerrick
McGill	Ann	wife	m	f	40		Kbts, Twynholm
McGill	John	son		m	10	scholar	Kbts, Castle Douglas
McGill	Jane	dau.		f	9	scholar	Kbts, Colvend
McGill	James	son		m	7	scholar	Kbts, Maxwelltown
McGill	Samuel	son		m	6	scholar	Kbts, Maxwelltown
McGill	William	son		m	4	scholar	Kbts, New Abbey

James McGill joined the police force in Liverpool in 1867 but later transferred to the Stewartry force. He served with the police for 34 years with only having 3 days off for illness. As can be seen from the birthplaces of his children he moved around the Stewartry every year or so. He was stationed in Gatehouse during the 1880s with his wife Annie and family, when his youngest child William, and presumably his older siblings attended Girthon School. James later became a sergeant.

1891

Enumeration District 3 Page 1

Surname	Forename(s)	Rel.	Mar.	Sex	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Victoria Street 3							
Halliday	William	head	m	m	37	police constable	Kbts, Kirkcudbright
Halliday	Agnes	wife	m	f	39		Kbts, Balmaghie
Halliday	George	son		m	12	scholar	Kbts, Maxwelltown

1901

Enumeration District 2 Page 1

Surname	Forename(s)	Rel.	Mar.	Sex	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Victoria Street 3, police office							
Henry	Herbert	head	m	m	45	police constable	Dumfries, Tinwald
Henry	Matilda	wife	m	f	47		Kbts, Dalbeattie
Henry	Elsbeth	dau.		f	10	scholar	Kbts, Dalbeattie
Henry	Herbert	son		m	8	scholar	Kbts, Castle Douglas
Henry	Wilhelmina M	dau.		f	5	scholar	Kbts, Kirkcudbright
Henry	Nathan M	son		m	3		Kbts, Gatehouse
Henry	Jane D	dau.		f	1		Kbts, Gatehouse

1911

Enumeration District 2 Page 1

Surname	Forename(s)	Rel.	Mar.	Sex	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Victoria Street							
Rennie	John	head	m	m	34	police constable	Kbts, Tongland
Rennie	Mary	wife	m	f	39		Kbts, Urr
Rennie	Jessie	dau.		f	16		Dumfries, Dumfries
Rennie	William	son		m	13	school	Lanark, Motherwell
Rennie	John	son		m	11	school	Kbts, Troqueer
Rennie	Norval	son		m	8	school	Kbts, Dalbeattie
Walker	George Albert	nephew		m	7	school	England

William Robert Gordon McGill was the son of PC James McGill (see 1881 census). He was born in New Abbey in 1876 but he attended Girthon Parish School in Gatehouse when his father was stationed there in the 1880s. He joined the police force in 1898 and served at police stations in Kirkcudbright, Castle Douglas and Mainsriddle before moving to Gatehouse just prior to the start of World War I. By this time he was married to Hannah M. Crosbie and had 7 children.



Three more children were born while they were in Gatehouse ; Christopher C. in 1914, William R. in 1916 and Catherine in 1919. William was moved to Dalry where, in 1921, he was promoted to sergeant and later moved to Maxwellton where he became an inspector, The couples' twelfth and last child, was born here.

1921

Enumeration District 2 Page 1

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Victoria Street							
Wright	Robert	head		m	41	police sergeant	Urr, Kirkcudbright
Wright	Jane	wife		m	37	h.d.	Mull, Argyll
Wright	Bessie	dau		s	17	Postal Clerk	Buittle, Kbts
Wright	Alexander Gillespie	son		m	13	scholar	Troqueer, Kbts
Wright	Margaret Gillespie	dau		f	5	scholar	Kirkcudbright
Wright	Robina Jean	dau		f	<1m		Girthon

There may well have been more policemen in Gatehouse in between successive census returns.

William Muirhead was the Gatehouse policeman between 1921 and 1928. He was born in 1892, joined the Kirkcudbrightshire Constabulary in 1913, served at Gatehouse 1921 to 1928, served elsewhere in the Stewartry until local government re-organisation in 1948 created the Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary, where he served until his sudden death in 1950.

After he had moved to Mainsriddle, he and **Thomas Tait** who succeeded Muirhead at Gatehouse, were both selected to represent Galloway at the National Parade of Police at Hyde Park, London.

The photo below, showing Gatehouse Police Station before the dormer windows upstairs, is of Constable Willie Muirhead, his wife Ann and his father.



The only transport available to Constable Muirhead was a bicycle and he used to meet the Creetown Officer at Auchenlarie.

The Police Station in Gatehouse was the only house with an all-night 'phone and anyone who needed to contact the Doctor at Kirkcudbright came to the Police Station to use the 'phone. If the constable was out his wife had to deal with callers, and she had to search female prisoners.

After the last publicly-available census in 1921, we have to rely on Valuation Rolls to identify who owned which property and who lived where. Unfortunately, prior to 1940 these returns did not include the police station – maybe because any rates payments (if there were any) might have been paid directly to the relative council.

From later Valuation rolls we find the following constables who were living at 10 Victoria Street.

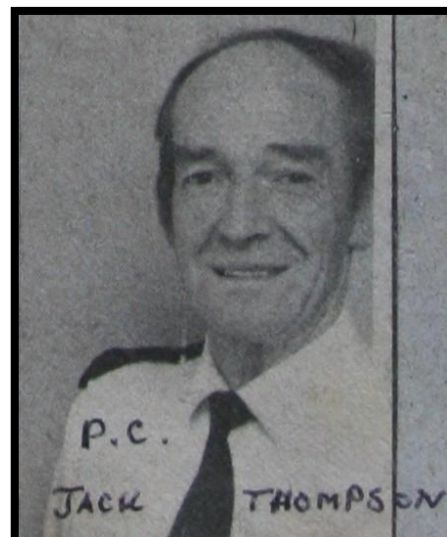
1900-01 Herbert Henry	More recent policemen who occupied 10 Victoria Street are :-
1920-21 Robert Wright	
1930-31 Thomas Tait	Unknown Dennis Strange
1940-41 Donald Proudlock	
1950-51 John McClymont	Unknown ? McGinley
1950s Hugh McCorkindale	to 1988 Alan Ruddick
1960-61 John R Thomson	1988-1991 Mike Kneeshaw
1960s Willie Duncan	1991-1995 Harris Campbell
1974-75 William Scott	1995-1999 Ian Bradley



PC Donald Proudlock



PC Hugh McCorkindale



PC John R Thomson



PC Dennis Strange



PC Mike Kneeshaw



PC Harris Campbell



PC Ian Bradley

The photo below was taken in 1962 and it shows that dormer windows have been added and that a wall still separates this property from what became the Old Fire Station.



The police station was entered by the side door of the building. There was a small office area with a door leading to two cells, a toilet and a sink.



With few exceptions, all one-man police stations in Dumfries and Galloway were closed in 1999.

When the Gatehouse of Fleet Police House/Station was closed, a temporary police station used part of what is now “The Kiosk” in the car park. This was manned from time to time by the Kirkcudbright and Gatehouse of Fleet Area Community Officer, Constable **Iain Currie**. This was eventually closed and now there are no police buildings within Gatehouse of Fleet.



Gatehouse Police Station.
Photo taken in 2016.

The small building with brown doors is believed to have been used as the town mortuary.

The photos below are of the old Auchencairn Police Station. The similarities between Gatehouse and Auchencairn suggest that the buildings were probably purpose-built and to a common design.

