

Development of Schooling around Gatehouse

1616 – State backed by the Kirk demanded a **school in every parish**.

1633 – Scottish **Parliament ratified this idea** and said that it should be paid for by local heritors (landowners) from the taxes. The pupils also paid a fee to attend.

1642 – The **act became compulsory**. Teachers were to be supervised by the church authorities.

In the 17th century there were also **many private schools** which were funded by the fees paid by the children. Rich landowners and the gentry also provided money for charity schools in some areas. There are no records of any schools in Gatehouse or Girthon and Anwoth parishes at this time but a survey in 1792 recorded that there were 1150 people living in Gatehouse and one was recorded as a schoolmaster.

Girthon and Anwoth Parochial schools were probably built sometime after 1696 when a Parliamentary Act placed the responsibility of providing a school with the feudal superior (heritor) in the area – in Girthon this was the Murray family, and in Anwoth it was the Maxwell and McCulloch families. The first recorded head teacher at Anwoth School was Samuel Gordon between 1736 and 1743. John Armstrong was recorded as head at Girthon School between 1784 and 1828. The Girthon Parochial School on Castramont Road together with a schoolhouse were built about this time. Anwoth parish had more than one school. There was a school at Laggan (near Mossyard) as well as the main one at Anwoth clachan.

James Murray of Cally funded an academy in Gatehouse. Rev. Matthew Vicar was the rector (head) of **Cally Academy in 1796**. The school was situated near to the present day house called Cushat Wood and the land nearby is still called Academy land. Rev. Vicar was also the priest for an Episcopal Chapel (now Cross Cottage). James Murray had intended the school to serve the children of English workers on his estate and at the mills in Gatehouse, but by 1820 the school was running out of pupils and was closed and then demolished.

Most of the population of Gatehouse were Presbyterian and they sent their children to either the Girthon or Anwoth Parish Schools. By the middle of the 19th century it is thought that the majority of people in the area would have been able to read and write to some degree. The schools taught reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3 R's) and also maths and book-keeping and geography. When Mr Dun was head of Girthon in 1830 Latin and Greek were also taught. There was a great emphasis on the Bible and often it was the main reading material in the school.

An example of fees at a parish school could be 1/6d per quarter for reading and writing, 2s for Latin and arithmetic with the Kirk Session providing fees for the poorest in the parish. **Before 1820, education was not compulsory** and it was left to the parish minister to exert pressure on the parents to send their children to school. Parish teachers were paid by the heritors, supplemented by pupil's fees. There were complaints that teachers were paid less than country craftsmen and that the housing provided to them was of a very poor quality.

In **1833, Althrop's Act**, made it illegal to employ children in mills **below the age of 9** and those between the ages of 9 and 13 could not work for more than 13 hours a day. This was difficult to implement as official **birth registration did not come into place in Scotland until 1855**. However it meant that more children were sent to school rather than to work or they worked part time and attended school at other times. There were many children who never attended school, or did so infrequently. The poorest children were often sent to work by their parents and boys were more likely to be given an

education than girls. There was a perception that children from better off homes had 'good heads' and were given more academic work while those from poorer homes had 'good hands' and did not need to learn academic subjects.

As well as parish schools, there were also charity schools in Gatehouse. **Cally Boys' School** was built behind the Cally Estate Offices in Ann Street which has a date of **1812** on it. Between 1816 and 1826, Alexander Murray's wife Ann opened a charity school (known as **Lady Ann Murray's School** (also known as the Lake School) near Cally Lake, which provided free education and also a basic uniform for the pupils. Miss Isabella Anderson was the teacher there in 1841. Henrietta H. Gunn who died in 1845, aged 27 was also a teacher at this school. (ex death notice in Wigtownshire Free Press).

(Henrietta Haldane Gunn was born in Edinburgh in 1818. In the 1841 census she was a school teacher in Edinburgh)

Later Mr Horatio Murray Stewart of Cally made this a girls' only school while the boys continued to go to the school in Ann Street.

There were also private schools in the town. Pigot's directory of 1837 notes two such schools. One was run by Eliza Watson and another by Alexander McAdam, who had a school in Digby Street and then at 10a Catherine Street.

About **1859 the Lake School closed** when the teacher, Miss Anne Tittley married Mr Joseph Bartlett the teacher at Cally Boys' School in Ann Street. The **Cally School was enlarged** and became a school for both boys and girls (about 40 in number). After Mr and Mrs Bartlett left Gatehouse in 1873, the **Cally School** was extended to take about 115 pupils run by Mr William and Mrs Sarah Phillips, subsequently being assisted by their daughters Edith, May, Emily & Alice. By 1904 this school had its name changed to the **Rusko School**. Mrs Murray Stewart who supported the school had moved from Cally House to Rusko House after she was widowed. The school closed when Mr Phillips retired c.1914.

In 1845 the **Laggan School** in Anwoth parish opened only to close again c.1872 when the pupils were moved to a new building at Skyreburn on the site of the old lint and waulk mill. In the 1851 Anwoth census, James Campbell, a schoolmaster was lodging at Laggan School House.

1872 Education Act for Scotland

This made **education compulsory for everyone between the ages of 5 and 13**. Each parish had a school which was managed by a special board of rate-payers. The law was not popular with poorer families who relied on their childrens' wages to make ends meet. In rural areas attendance often dropped during busy periods such as harvest time, when the children were needed to help on the farm.

Classes were often large and there was an emphasis on 'godliness and good manners'. Many of the lessons were taught by rote learning – such as times tables and passages from the bible. This was understandable to some extent as there were school inspections and this was the easiest way to teach a large number of children the basics. Payment to a school was partly related to the inspector's report. However this system left little room for subjects such as the arts and the development of individual children. Good discipline was expected and the class was ruled by the 3 B's – belt (or tawse), bible and blackboard.

The responsibility for the schools was transferred from the Parochial Council to the new **Parish Education Boards**, who also took over the running of Presbyterian schools (e.g. the Free Church School) and charity schools. Mr Murray Stewart of Cally took an interest in the parish schools and was chairman of this committee for a number of years.

The decision was made to close Anwoth School at the clachan (opposite the old Anwoth Kirk) and move into the building in Gatehouse on Dromore Road which had '**Bland Female School erected 1866**' engraved on the front. Nothing is known of this girls' school (it may have been a Free Church of Scotland School) but it had closed before the building became known as **Fleetside School** to serve the children from Anwoth Parish who lived in or near the town. Mr David Clark became headmaster and he lived in the school house attached to the school.

(We have a photo c.1900 of Dominie Clark with a class outside the Fleetside building. It includes John A Veitch who, we believe, attended the Free Church School)

Children who lived in the country areas of Anwoth still attended Skyreburn School.

By **1878 a Joint Education Board** was in control of **Girthon and Anwoth** Parish Schools and Mr Hume became clerk of the new board.

In **1883** – the school **leaving age was raised to 14**. Children who worked part time and attended school at other times (half timers) were allowed to leave school early if they had reached Standard 3 in the 3 R's.

In **1891** Girthon Census William Barron (age 37, born Inverness) is listed as **head teacher of a public school**.

William Learmonth became head teacher at Girthon Public School about **1894**.

About the turn of the century a private school existed in the Woodside Toll Bar and was run by Miss Swan and Miss Spencer.

In **1902 Education Act** allowed the state to pay for secondary education.

Kirkdale School at Carsluith opened in 1913. It replaced an earlier charity school supported by Miss Hannay of Kirkdale House. Although it was in Kirkmabreck Parish, Anwoth children from the western end of the parish attended Kirkdale School until it closed in 1964.

Mr George Salmond became head at Fleetside School about 1906 (his daughter Lena was born at Anwoth in 1907), at a time when Mr William Learmonth was head of Girthon School. When Mr Salmond left to move to Creetown about 1920, Mr Learmonth took over as head of both schools. Fleetside became the junior section of the school while the old Girthon School became the senior section.

Mr William J. Stark was headmaster at **Skyreburn School** in 1881 & 1891. By 1901 census Mr John Pritchard was the head and he continued there until the late 1920's.

In **1901** the school leaving age was **officially** raised to 14.

Supervision of the schools was taken over by Stewartry County Council.

In 1923 Alexander A Stewart became head of **Gatehouse School**. Plans for a new school were agreed in 1925 and this **school opened on 11th August 1927**. It combined both sections of Gatehouse School under one roof and the old Girthon parish school building was closed. (It became the Drill Hall for the local branch of the T.A.) The old Fleetside school building nearby was still used as domestic science and woodwork rooms.

In 1939 the Cally Palace Hotel had closed because of World War II. The building was taken over by the Stewartry Education Committee as a residential school for about 200 pupils from Glasgow - the **Cally House School**. Four Nissan huts were built on the front lawn to be used as classrooms. The teachers were from Glasgow and the head was Mr Filche and later Mr Burt. This school **closed in 1944**.

There was also an influx of evacuees to Gatehouse which raised the school roll. More teachers were needed and some, such as Miss McCaffey and Miss Kelly, came from Glasgow to teach at the school.

In **1940** the school **leaving age was raised to 15** but this was never ratified and took time to implement. By **1945** the school leaving age was **officially** raised to 15.

About **1963 Skyreburn School closed** and most of the pupils transferred to Gatehouse Primary. Dr James Russell was the headmaster at Gatehouse school (primary & secondary) between 1951 and 1963.

In 1961 plans were agreed to build a new secondary school and a headmasters house. This new school **opened in 1964** with Mr George Waddell as headmaster.

In **1973** the school **leaving age was raised to 16**.

The **Gatehouse Secondary School closed in 1981** with the pupils being transferred to Kirkcudbright Academy. Gatehouse Primary School building closed as the pupils transferred into the old secondary school building. The old school building became the Gatehouse Community Centre.

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