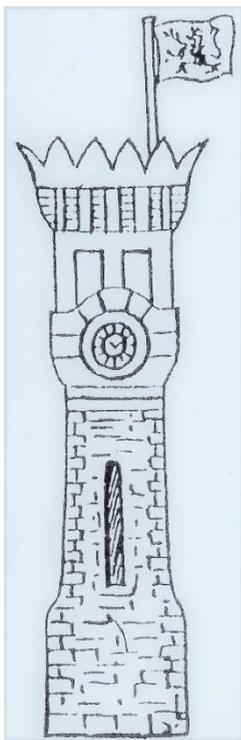


# GATEHOUSE MEMORIES



**Edited by  
George McCulloch**

**Illustrations by  
Alexandra Wolffe  
and Jeremy Carlisle**

Gatehouse of Fleet Community Council  
Bicentenary Committee

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Edited by George McCulloch

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Published by Gatehouse of Fleet  
Community Council Bicentenary Committee

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Bicentenary Committee is grateful to local residents for this collection of memories of Gatehouse of Fleet; 'I Remember...' by Willie McMurray was tape-recorded for the Monday Club, the memories of James Murray Usher by George McCulloch, and the History of the Bands was found in the late Mrs Elizabeth Murray Usher's papers, written in about 1921 by a person unknown.

The collection is one of the publications issued to celebrate the Bicentenary of the granting of Gatehouse's Charter as a Burgh of Barony, on June 30th 1795.

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ISBN 0 9525320 1 8

Typeset in CG Times by PhotoMiles, Gatehouse of Fleet  
Printed by Solway Offset, Dumfries DG1 3PQ

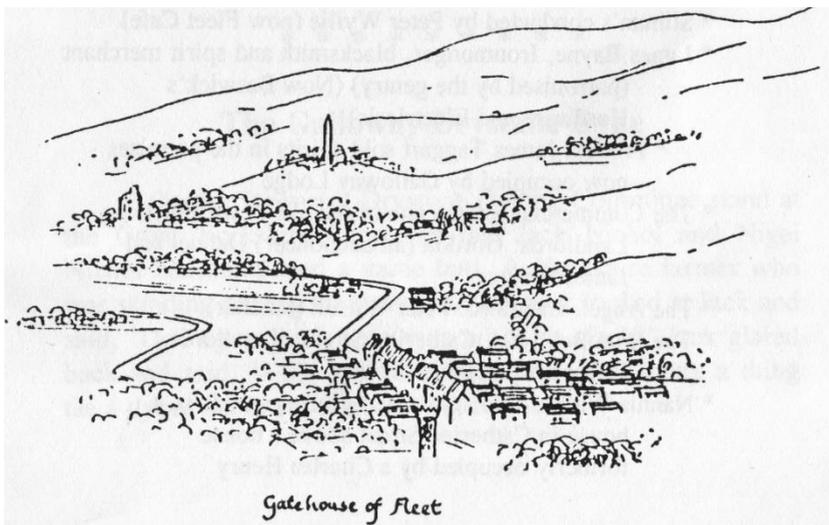
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## The Image That Has Stood the Test of Time

(A Description of Gatehouse of Fleet as recorded in  
'SLATERS' records of 1846)

'Pleasingly seated on the east bank of the Fleet, it has, on account of the favourableness of the situation, and the moderate feu duties, in less than half a century, risen from a single inn, or stage house, to a manufacturing town of considerable note. It is well built, regular and clean, the houses being generally of the same height, the streets running in straight lines, and crossing each other at right angles. Its situation is in a romantic, fertile vale, embosomed in hills and mountains, which form a spacious amphitheatre. Some of the hills have their summits crowned, and their sides covered with hanging woods, interspersed with rich pasturage, while the higher and more distant mountains point their naked blue heads to the sky.'

Contributed by  
**JOHN DAVIDSON**



*Gatehouse of Fleet*

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## **The Old Pub Scene in Gatehouse of Fleet Circa 1850**

When the population of Gatehouse of Fleet and district was 1,920 around the period 1850 it was more than double of that of today - hence the need for more pubs and liquor-selling establishments. At one time the list read:

- \* Mason's Arms. Landlords: Johnstone (a gamekeeper), James Galbraith (also a gamekeeper) and David Kelvie
- \* The Bay Horse. Landlord: James Cowan (joiner)
- \* The Murray Arms. Landlords: Carson and Henry Foster (guard of the Royal Mail)
- \* The Misses Henry's Shop
- \* Thomas Fuller, whisky and shoe merchant
- \* The Black Swan (formerly Macadam's shop and now Peter Martineau). Landlord: Gildy Milroy
- \* Sam Petrie's store and pub. Carried on by John Hyslop and much frequented by the mill people
- \* Sliman's conducted by Peter Wyllie (now Fleet Cafe)
- \* James Bayne, Ironmonger, blacksmith and spirit merchant (patronised by the gentry) (Now Beswick's Hardware and Electricals)
- \* Provost James Taggart sold spirits in the premises now occupied by Galloway Lodge
- \* The Commercial (on the site of the old Town Hall) Landlords: Gordon (an auctioneer) Dalziel and James Wilson
- \* The Angel. Landlord: Peter Wilson (butcher)
- \* The Blue Bell (10a, Catherine Street). Landlord: William Munroe
- \* Nannie Walker sold spirits and grocery goods in a house in Catherine Street above a house formerly occupied by a Charles Henry

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- \* The Dighy Street Store was carried on by Alexander Purdie (flesher). He was banished for swindling. He had the reputation of swallowing £1 notes!
  - \* Mary Carson's house was tenanted by James Robertson, the carrier to Dumfries and was used by him as a pub.
  - \* David Kelvie (tailor) sold whisky in the house formerly occupied by a Robert McDonald.
  - \* Jessie Thompson had a pub in Victoria Street where a Mrs Bertram used to reside. It was a great
  - \* rendezvous for those who frequented the Smithy.
  - \* The Crown Hotel (a house formerly occupied by an R. McMillan) had as tenants T. Tait and David Breconridge.
  - \* Peter Shannon had a shop further down the street.
  - \* The Ship Inn (now the Anwoth Hotel) was tenanted by John Rae who also kept a horse and cart.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **The Galloway Drystane Dyke**

On the Stewartry Drystone Dyking Committee stand at the Great Yorkshire Show the late Jack Nichol and Nigel Nichol had completed a game butt. A Yorkshire farmer who was standing poking the dyke with his stick looked at Jack and said, 'Don't you think your pins are a bit slack?' Jack glared back and said, 'I hiv seen a blackie yowe dae mony a thing tae a dyke, but never attack it wi' a stick.'

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## **The Birth of the Library and Reading Room in 1856**

Of great importance to life in a rural community is the provision of a good library and reading room, and provides the means of 'spice and flavour' to fill out many an hour after the day's toil is done. The mind is stored with a feast of fat things, and the world and life are viewed from a broader and more intellectual standpoint.

Such were the reasons which induced Mr Murray Stewart to initiate a project of this nature in the community over which he was the Superior. In 1856 he called together the local ministers and a number of local gentlemen of the district and laid before them his proposals. The library and reading room were to be on a small but efficient scale and he gave a subscription of £100 to make a beginning. A committee was formed to carry out the scheme and it set to work with vigour and zeal. Another £100 was speedily obtained from the community, suitable premises were rented in the High Street, and on 1st January, 1857 they opened to the public with a total of 883 volumes to suit the taste of every class of reader.

The number of those who availed themselves of the advantages of the library and reading room was surprisingly good for Gatehouse. It proved conclusively that the new institutions were fulfilling an important part of the life of the community hut, though a reading room was created, unfortunately the income did not cover the expense, and at the end of five years there was a deficiency of some ten pounds. Not to be denied, however, in his praiseworthy attempts for the public weal, Mr Murray Stewart not only wiped out the debt but allowed the use of the premises rent free, provided fuel and light, paid the wages of the caretaker, and subscribed £5 annually towards maintenance and upkeep.

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Success followed. The membership steadily increased, the finances improved, and more books and papers adorned the shelves and tables. In 1897 the library contained 2,168 volumes and in the reading room there were set out for perusal the leading daily papers, 'Punch', 'The Graphic', 'The London Illustrated News', some weekly and monthly magazines, and the local organs of the press. The reading room was filled at nights with old and young eagerly and earnestly settling the affairs of church and state to their hearts' content. When books were taken in or given out, the library was the centre of attraction for youth and maid, and there were those in Gatehouse and elsewhere who look back in happy memory to the days long ago when they met and loved within its hallowed walls.

Mr Murray Stewart died in 1904 and, according to his will, the property became vested in trustees, these being the Provost of the Burgh of Gatehouse, the parish Ministers of Girthon and Anwoth, the Minister of the United Free Church of Anwoth and Girthon, and their successors in office and the Cally Estate Factor. The legacy was greatly appreciated by the community and it considerably lightened the burden of those who were responsible for the management and efficiency of the library and reading room.

Some years later the trustees managed to raise further funds and the whole premises were modernised following the holding of a successful two day bazaar in September which was officially opened by Lady Ardwall and Lady Maxwell.

Alas, the first world war came along and depleted the membership. Other forms of amusement crept in to occupy the time of young and old. However, a dedicated readership kept it going and today it thrives again, having just undergone another enlargement and refurbishment in Bicentenary year, 1995.

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## A Farm Flitting by Train

The Baird family from Newton Farm, on the Cardoness Estate, decided in 1947 not to renew their tenancy there but to try farming in England. Finding a farm to rent in Buckinghamshire, between Marlow and Henley, they arranged to hire a train from Creetown to Henley to take the animals down to the new farm.

Everything was prepared, and transport for the 101 cows and a crate of chickens was booked from Bowman's Hauliers of Creetown to ferry loads to Creetown Station, and arrangements were made to have cattle trucks to meet them at Henley Station. A few days before they left it was announced that there was an outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease down in England, but the Ministry of Agriculture agreed that they could move the cattle (from a 'clean' area, after all) with a permit which would be sent by post.

The day of departure dawned - alas - with no letter in the post. Mr Baird was instructed to telephone Castle Douglas Post Office to ask sorters to look through the mail for the letter. The train driver would be instructed to stop at Castle Douglas so that a postman could hand over the letter!

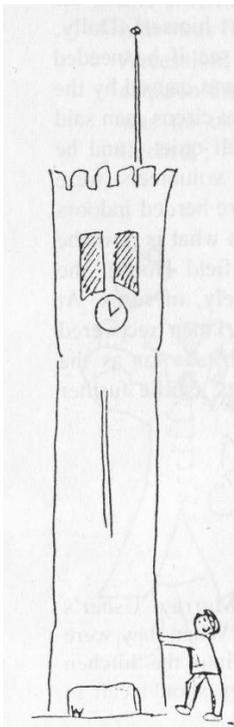
The train consisted of a coach for the humans (two brothers and three nephews) and trucks for the animals, and thirteen year old John Baird remembers looking back along the train after they had crossed the Big Water of Fleet Viaduct and marvelling at the wonderful view.

Having stopped at Castle Douglas and collected the vital letter, next stop was Preston where they were able to ask the driver if it was possible to have some heat in the carriage as they were all frozen. After they set off again the men dozed in the individual

compartments while the boys ran up and down the corridor. Suddenly one of the boys noticed that one of the compartments appeared to be full of smoke, so they rushed in to wake up their uncle who seemed to be on fire, and flapped him with a coat, only to find that it was steam from the leaking, antiquated heating system!

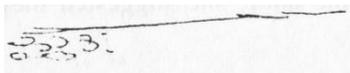
When the train stopped at Oxford Station the porters seemed to be indicating that they could not go any further because of the disease, but each found the other's broad accents impossible to understand. Eventually Mr Baird, a good Scot, said 'We've paid to go to Henley, and Henley we're gaun to!' And get there they did.

*Contributed by John Baird,  
formerly of Newton Farm  
now of Kirkpatrick Durham*



## A Walled City

One night, John Hunter, who had been imbibing rather freely, was found standing with his back to the door of the Town Clock and muttering to himself, 'There's your road, John Hunter, there's your road, John Hunter'. Several times he essayed to find his way home but invariably stumbled across the road and landed against the gable of the Bank of Scotland. 'Ay, ay' he said, 'I never kenned this was a walled city before!'



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## **Rosie's Final Trunk Journey Ends near Memory lane**

The excitement of the Circus coming to town was never greater than the event in 1935 when the word got round that the elephants and ponies were coming down the Cut, having walked from their last performance venue in Castle Douglas. Dolly McMurray (nearly a teenager then) was amongst the excited youngsters as the entourage settled on to Market Hill, which did not have any houses on it then, and which was surrounded by a fairly high wall. Later on that first evening Dolly found one of the circus men weeping amongst the animals and she ran home to tell her mother, who assured her that he had probably hurt himself. Dolly, helpful and as concerned as ever, went back to see if he needed bandages or the like, only to be told that his grief was caused by the sudden death of Rosie, the lovely big elephant. 'The circus man said she just rolled over, blew her trumpet and went all quiet - and he knew she would not wake up'. As a team of volunteers were rounded up to dig a large grave all the children were herded indoors by their parents. Rosie was laid to rest on a plot in what is now the garden of Ellfoot, the bungalow opposite Abheyfield House; the spot is now covered by a flower bed - appropriately, of roses. At the time of the construction of the bungalow workmen recovered some ivory when moving a large mound of earth. As far as the children of 1935 are concerned Memory lane starts a little further down than the official one.

## **The RSVP Man**

Miss Mills was for many years Mrs Murray Usher's housekeeper-companion and intensely disliked cats. When they were at Murrayton there were so many there, diving into the kitchen every time she opened the door, she suggested they should call in the RSVP man!

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## "The Watter's Ga'n Aff"

The last Town Crier in Gatehouse of Fleet prior to the tradition being restored in 1995 was the celebrated Ned Fitzpatrick, who is remembered for telling residents such important things as 'the water would be turned off at a certain time', or reminding them that the 'Campbell's bus to the pictures in Kirkcudbright would be leaving at 6 pm'. He started his round, bell in hand, at the bottom of the town, and worked his way up, calling at each junction till he got to the Town Clock; he then went round into Catherine Street and Birtwhistle Street. The last time the bell was used by him was for the proclamation of Queen Elizabeth 11's Accession, at the Clock Tower. Ned does, however, have a critic in the person of Jim Campbell ('Slim') who says Ned was no use - "you could not hear him behind the Daily Record".



In recent times this criticism cannot be levelled against the popular figure of the new Town Crier, Jane McGivern, who gives a full dress performance every Saturday morning at 11 am and also on other special occasions. The deputy Town crier of 1995 is also worthy of note - John Chambers, who stands in for Jane from time to time and does a marvellous job

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## Curling Poetry

### Baillie McCutcheon - 10th December, 1929

Four Anwoth curlers did puff and blow  
The Girthon rink they'd make feel sma'  
So one December morn took hoof  
To gie oor licks at Crossmalooft.

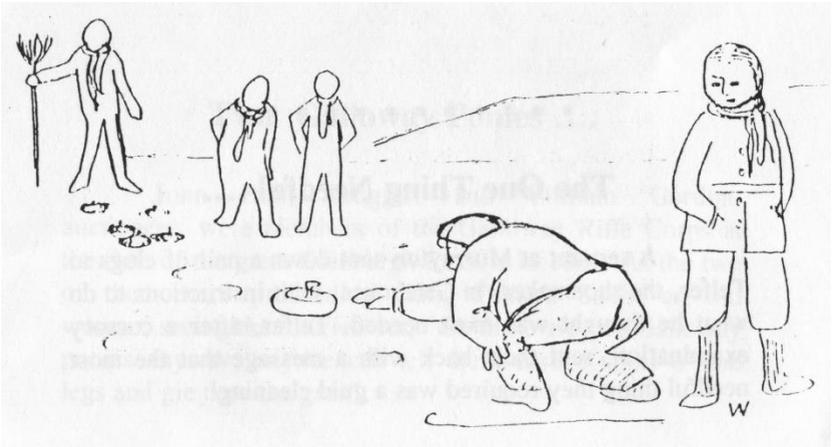
Three boors we played the roarin' game  
Then up went Girthon Curlers' fame  
And Jock and Joe and Dave and Tam  
They didna play - not worth a dam  
They did not e'en gie us a run  
So this is how the game was won.

The Baillie, he could put them up  
And Flerrick roon the big ring stuck  
And Stanley he could surely draw  
And Wullie Gaw, he hate us a'.  
And when the time to stop had come  
And counted shots told who had won  
To twenty-one we did arrive  
And Anwoth - they had only five.

Noo Dave and Joe may go in Co.  
For oh, their spirits got so low,  
But Jock and Tam were aye the same  
And joked and laughed right through the game.  
Jock the hero from Pulchree,  
A reg'lar sport and curler he,  
A had played stane he ne'er did blame  
But shouted "Ah - tae hell, Gae hame".

Then we had three hoors wi' Graham  
Wha had four curlers all of fame  
But hoo our rink wi' skill and play  
The laurels o' Twynholm's men did lay.  
Ah, what a win we had for certy  
For at the end we counted thirty  
And wheesht twixt only you and me  
The Twynholm men - they got but three.

Then on the journey home again  
We all rode on the same good train  
When in come Dave to oor third class  
And bounced and blew as bold as brass.  
"Again he'd play the Girthon men  
If they would say just where and when"  
But bounce ne'er won a game, ye ken,  
So here's tae us, oorsels, - and them.



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## **The New Year's Day Fish Loup 1954**

There are no doubt many recorded escapades featuring the late Provost Colin Jardine, but Jimmy Gilmour recalls the New Year's Day when he and Colin set off for a pike fishing trip to Loch Skerrow. As the particular train did not stop at Dromore they drove to Creetown in Colin's van knowing that they could alight at Loch Skerrow Halt when the train stopped to take on water. There they were told that there would be a return train at 5.30 pm.

It was a bitterly cold day and they were frozen, especially when darkness fell, so when, at about 4.30 Jimmy thought he could hear a train in the distance, puffing up the hill towards Mossdale, they decided to go to the station to see if they could get on it. The driver agreed to take them but said he could not stop at Creetown but he would slow down so that they could jump off! What a landing that was with fishing gear and all - and on ne'rday! (Apart from the fact that trains ran on Scotland's most celebrated public holiday, what on earth would the present Health and Safety executive say about that practice today!)

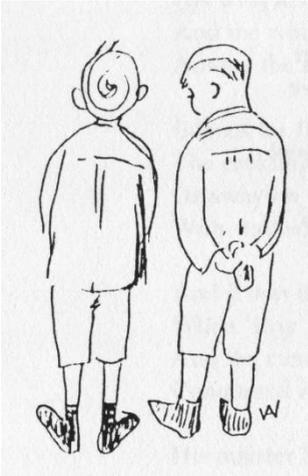
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## **The One Thing Needful ....**

A servant at Murrayton sent down a pair of clogs to Telfer, the shoemaker, in Gatehouse, with instructions to do what he thought was most needed. Telfer, after a cursory examination, sent them back with a message that the most needful thing they required was a guid cleaning!

## A' The Wains at Mrs Murray Usher's Wedding

When Mrs Murray Usher was married at Cally House in 1929 all the children from the school were invited to the house. The older ones were marched through the park to Cally while the youngest were ferried there in the estate shooting lorry with its rows of seats. On arrival they were all lined up and each presented with a commemorative medal and a silver threepenny hit - some of which are still in the possession of older residents.



*Contributed by Jackie Paterson*

## Twa Galloway Ponies ....

John Hall, druggist and William Gordon, auctioneer, were members of the Galloway Rifle Corps at the time of the great Edinburgh Review in 1861. As the two of them were proceeding along Princes Street an old woman, seeing them, cried out, "Oh these are twa Galloway ponies anyway; anyone can tell them easily: short o' the legs and gie near the grun".

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## In Memory of Robert McConchie

He was for thirty years tenant of High Creoch, Gatehouse, after having been a shepherd for George B Sproat Esq., at High Creoch and High Barlay.

Mochrum famed for its mighty men  
Was the place of his birth I believe,  
A bonny wee cottage on Alticry glen  
Where his father for years was grieve.

But Robert decided when he left school  
A shepherd he would be,  
So he held away to the Glen o'Trool  
And the Laggans room Loch Dee.

Frae Minnigaff's wild hills remote  
He came to High Barlay  
As shepherd to George G.B.Sproat,  
The bard of Galloway.

It was there wi' him I first did meet  
And there for twenty year  
As neighbour herds upon the Fleet  
We tended our fleecy gear.

And I'll remember all my life  
How kind to mine and me  
Was Robert and his gracious wife,  
A queen among women was she.

Now fifty years have passed away  
And with them many a one  
Who on a lang sair handlin' day  
Was cheered wi' Conchie's fun.

For there at his best in the huchts he was seen,  
Hardy and yaul and fit,  
The dipping tub and the clippin green  
Playgruns for his humour and with

Roun' the gathering mornings what memories cling  
His weel kent hooch at the skraigh o' day  
And the whistle that gait the echoes ring  
Among the rocks on dark Ben Gray.

Echoes far Flung that shall rise no more.  
The cackling grouse on whirring wing  
Or away on Loch Whinyeon's pebbled shore  
With startled quack the wild jeuck sprung.

And it was that he would lift her  
When 'Roy' and 'Yarrow' the hillside swept  
And the cunningest jeuker and wildest skifter  
Conquered into the wide faul's crept.

His mister loved a gamble  
In the sheep and cattle trade;  
Rob loved a cross country ramble  
To collect the deal he'd made.

And when the summer herdin' bye  
The Autumn droving took its place  
We was off on the road wi' the twinklin' eye  
And a smile on his sun burnt face.

Blin hoyin knives and swapping sticks  
Wi' every herd we met,  
Cracking jokes and playing tricks  
For he did enjoy the set.

---

Quick and keen to scan the view  
Exploring the countryside  
The hazel bus' where clickies grew  
Or the den where auld puss' might hide.

If he heard o' a young dog wasted,  
Condemned to droon or swing,  
Rob to the rescue hasted  
And led it away on a string.

Through time it had confidence gained  
And was learning fast and faster  
To finish a topper when trained  
In the hands of a sheep dog master.

Some of the droves he lifted  
Sweir to part frae their native hill  
Would strongly object to be shifted  
And tested the drovers skill.

But Rob would tackle ocht ye like  
For ever at his heel  
There followed on a hardy tyke  
Would face the very Deil.

A hunner wild Carsrigan cattle,  
Maist o' them Galloways pure,  
Dom ower the Minnigaff brig wi' a brattle  
And away in a cloud o' stour.

'Yarrow' bye wide we maun steady the pace  
And Rob kent that the kep was sure  
And he stared the leader in the face  
Away near the Burn o' Palnure.

---

If it hadna the sense to turn ahoot  
When it saw auld 'Yarrow' there  
So it paid the price wi' a well stanged snout  
And heel and houghs that were sair.

A drove o' auld wethers of Cairnsmuir o' Fleet,  
Bardrochwood, the Cull and Falbae,  
Would jaffle and run and get a hit heat  
And nae end o' damage would dae.

But Rob was a man could tak them in han'  
And place a guid dog at the head.  
Doon through the Ferry they steadily ran  
And right round to Gatehouse would lead.

Six hunner cross lambs I kent him start  
Of Creoch and High Barlay,  
Entered for sale at Wallets Mart  
Gathered and speaned that day.

Up through the Nick ahune Laghead  
And away ower Lochenbreck  
Wi' sheep spread a' the way to feed  
Alang the open track.

While 'Yarrow' led the drover road clearing  
'Roy' did the flanking wark  
Wi' ticht quick turns the sputers wearing  
And forced wi' a rousing bark.

A sheep dog demonstration rare  
Worth travelling far to see  
And only one spectator ther  
And that was me.

---

Twas late when we reached our camping grun  
On the edge o' the water o' Dee.  
Could you guess the distance our collies had run  
Since we started to gather at three?

Says Rob, 'Ye'll be tired the nicht, old chap,  
For the miles we hae padded this day'  
And he bent doon and gave auld 'Yarrow' a clap  
As he sported aroun' us in play.

Yes, played like a puppy fu' o' glee.  
This problem I often hae pondered,  
If the dogs today as hardy can he  
As they were in nineteen hundred.

But they hadna the same stern test to gae through  
For we live in an altered world,  
And the drafts and the sale and the drovers too  
Are a' in a transport hurled.

Easier nae doot, but as for me  
I love the old time ways  
Wi' their memories of Rob Conchie  
And his dogs and the droving days.

*Written by William Caig  
Shepherd at Grobdale of Girthon*

This poem first appeared twenty-eight or thirty years ago in the Blackface  
Sheep Breeders Journal.

\* \* \* \* \*



### **'Moreover' - the Dog**

James Kelly, Farmer at Goatend, was a rather witty individual and many good stories were told concerning him. One day, when coming down the Dromore Road accompanied by his dog, a rough-haired grey collie, he was met by the Rev. R.B.McGlashan, the Free Church Minister. After a conversation of some minutes Mr McGlashan enquired for the dog and asked his name. "Moreover" said Kelly in blunt but cheery manner. "Where did you get that name?" asked the Minister, "I've never heard that name before". "In the Bible" replied Kelly, "and it's the only name I could find for a dog there. Man, dae ye no ken that old story in the hook about Lazarus where it says, 'Moreover, the dog licked his sores?'"!

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## **"I Remember ....."**

by Willie McMurray, Skyreburn

My first day at school, Fleetside Primary, and Miss J. Henderson was my teacher. I ran home in tears at dinner time, past the old cast iron pumps which stood on nearly all of the streets in the town, as a relic of the original water supply. They still worked then, lots of the pavements were still cobbled, and the road where Girthon Church now stands wasn't surfaced, so that in winter time it was just a quagmire. Girthon School stood at the top of that road, Carstramont Road was the name of it. The school was under the headmastership of Mr Learmonth and it was the senior school. However, a new school was built on the north side of Garden Street, 'Wee Ireland' we used to call it. All pupils from both schools settled there in 1924 under a new headmaster called Mr Stewart. Miss Henderson was still the infant teacher, and Miss Bain and Miss Purdie were the other Primary teachers.

There we moved up into the First, Second and Third years, under Miss Gillone, Mr Langlands and Mr Stewart, and Miss McConnachie who was a language teacher. She and I did not get on; I ran away and would not go back. English and Art under Miss Gillone, 'Auntie May' as we called her, was mostly good fun; she could teach, and kept control without the aid of the belt.

Charlie Langlands taught science, gardening and religion; I liked him, although he could use the metre rule! Mostly for untidy jotters or had spelling. It was he who started Scouting in the town; the first troop was formed in 1929 under Mr Ainsworth, who was a banker, and Mr Newton who worked at the Chemist's. We met on Friday nights, in a small store room behind the Fleetvale garage that's up beside the Angel Hotel, now part of the Spar Shopping centre.

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## **Power comes to town**

The only electric lights in the town then were in Hendersons shop, opposite the Clock (now the Giftie Gie Us) and George Starks, the Chemists. They ran their own generators. McMurray Brothers, Ironmongers and Jewellers, had petrol lights, as did Cochrane the Butchers, now the 'Thirtyfour Salon'. The streets had acetylene lamps then, later changed to petrol.

Then in the early thirties the Dalbeattie Electric Company came into the town. They took over the store in Dighy Street and installed two diesel generators, with poles and supply lines round the streets. When the Galloway Power Company came into being around 1936 there was great excitement when the big pylons were erected over the Gatehouse Hill and down past the tennis court and across the Fleet past Rusco. The contractors used the half track lorries to carry their supplies along the line. This created great interest. I got a hiding for climbing up to the top of one of the pylons, in the tennis court, and sitting in the square where the insulator is; of course that was before the insulators or the cables had been installed.

## **Childhood entertainments**

We used to look forward to the circuses coming to town. Pinders was a great yearly event, but sometimes Lord George Sangers, and Fawcetts came too. We also had a mobile cinema, John Henry. The circuses were sometimes held on the Market Hill site, where the council house are now, and sometimes on the 'Showground' opposite Memory Lane houses.

During the summer holidays we enjoyed the company of many of the children from Glasgow, whose parents had gone from Gatehouse to work on the Glasgow tramway system. The then manager was a Gatehouse man called James Dalrymple. He came back every year to East View at the top of Birtwhistle Street.

### **Activity at Port Macadam**

My cousins also came down from Glasgow for the summer breaks. Cousin Eric and I could always be found at the harbour, where coal boats brought coal from Whitehaven, and loaded up with timber for the return journey. The 'Duress' and the 'Solway Lass' were regulars, and if we were lucky we would perhaps get a sixpence from the skipper to run down the river bank and tell Miss Stewart to open the swing bridge. If she was in a good mood she would let us help, and we could stand on the swing bridge and watch the boat go out. Most of the coal would be put into a big shed at the harbour, but some of the families came with horses and carts.

### **Mrs Murray Usher**

1929 was the year that Mrs Murray Usher was married, and she gave all the children at the school a medal, and a 1929 shilling. She also gave the school a lovely Christmas party every year until the war started. The teachers organised the concert part of it, and taught us dancing. Mrs Murray Usher gave out the presents off the tree, and we had a bag of buns and lemonade.

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## Apprenticeship

In 1931 I left school, to start an apprenticeship at Cally as a joiner and cabinetmaker. The workshop was in the east wing of the house. I had a hard time finding my way around, being only thirteen and a half years old. Everything about the house looked vast. I often got lost, and my boss, Bob Stevenson, would give me 'what for'. He came from Balmaclellan, where his brother had a blacksmith's shop and another brother was a blacksmith in Annan. The workshop at Cally had no power tools; everything was made by hand, no bad thing really, and of course, not knowing what power could do we never missed it. There were three moulding planes to match every moulding in the house, and three, I remember, had a harness so the apprentice could pull it while the boss held it firmly in the wood. I didnae like that too much - too much like hard work!

## The Cally Flitting

In 1931 we saw big changes: Cally was sold to the Forestry Commission, and Castramont House was renovated. The old house of Castramont was a 'T'- shaped plan, with the top of the facing down the valley. Mrs Murray Usher had that part demolished, and built a new part in line with the remainder which became a kitchen and service quarter, and with staff bedrooms above. The name was changed to Carstramon, the 't' being dropped. The flitting from Cally started. What a job!.. When everything needed from Cally had been taken to Carstramon the remainder went under the hammer. McDowells of Edinburgh conducted the sale down at Cally House. Various items and all the remaining books in the library were taken to Edinburgh in the estate lorry, my first time in the Capital.

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## Relationship with Mrs M. U.

Mrs Murray Usher had the idea that it would be better if all the same articles were in separate rooms for the sale: all the fire irons and fenders in one room, dressing tables in another, mirrors in another etc. I met her on the main staircase with seven mirrors in my arms. She stopped me, counted them and said, "Seven mirrors, Willie. Forty-nine years' had luck if you drop them". I replied, "Aye, starting with the sack, likely!" She laughed and said, "Well, I don't know about that". On the whole I got on fine with her; she never forgot my birthday or Christmas.

She was always on top of everything, and she had an eye like a hawk. Once I was erecting a wicket gate up at Woodfoot, and had both posts in and was hanging the gate when she came whizzing past in the car. I thought she hadn't even seen me, but later, when I went back down to the office, the factor, J.D. Ferguson, told me that I had one post higher than the other. So I had to cycle all the way back up, and sure enough, one post was half an inch higher than the other! That's the kind of eye she had.

The Estate Office was down at Cally stables; my boss lived in one of the cottages there. The generator, powered by gas, made on the site, supplied the house with light only. the gas retort, engine house and battery room all occupied one side of the stable complex. The office and all the contents were moved down to Durweston in Ann Street, where it is just now, which used to be the old Cally School whose headmaster was Mr Phillips. After the office we moved the workshop down to the saw mill, where we occupied two floors above the mill itself (now Millhouse at the top of Ann Street).

## **The Penny Blacks**

A story about the Penny Blacks: one day I was told to report to the office, and Mrs Murray Usher showed me boxes and boxes of papers, mostly old accounts and receipts she wanted burned. She made me swear on the Bible that I would make sure every single thing would be completely destroyed. I set to, and started a fire in the garden behind the school, but discovered that to get the papers properly burned, I had to throw them on nearly singly. In one box I found a lot of papers with stamps on them, and when I looked at them casually, I found that they were Penny Blacks. I tore a lot off and put them on one side, but at the end of the week I put the lot on the fire.

Many years later, after the war in fact, Mrs Murray Usher and I were talking about old times, so I reminded her about making me swear on the Bible to burn all the old papers, and told her about the Penny Blacks and what I had done, and she said, "Why didn't you tell somebody!" "Because you made me swear on the Bible to burn the lot and say nothing about it". "Did I?" she says.

## **Parties**

She loved having parties, and those early days at Carstramon were full of big dos. Christmas was hectic as we had all the staircase to hang with boxwood and laurel Garlands and we had them all to make. All the doors were removed from the drawing room, the dining room and the study, and most of the furniture from the drawing room was taken to the attic - two floors up. Little did I think then that in the early sixties I would be doing the same - a World War later, and into the sixties and seventies!

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Mrs Murray Baillie lived at Cushat Wood and had a great head gardener called Bert Cox. The gardens at Cushat Wood were on a list at Kew gardens in London from where they sent apprentices on two year courses. A young lad from Kidderminster, called Bert Roberts, came about 1934. He and I became friends. For a dare we once spent the night at the old Temple near the Barrhill Lodge, hoping to see the ghost of the grey lady. She obviously didn't like the look of us as she didn't show up! Bill and I spent the summer camping at Mossyard. We cycled in to work every morning and out at night. My cousin Robert had started the camp, but he joined the RAF in 1935. He was also Scoutmaster for a considerable time before that.

## **War clouds gathering**

Then Bill went away back to his job at Kew, and by that time war was beginning to show on the horizon. I cycled round England in 1938, and for part of the journey, from Durham to York, I had the company of a young German. He and I got on fine, but he was very worried because it was the time of the Munich crisis, and he couldn't get to a radio quick enough every night. he was terrified he would be kept in this country. But that's another story....

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## **The Fleuchlarg Cow Cure**

At one time the traditional cure for an ailing cow at Fleuchlarg was a gill of whisky. One day the farmer (known as 'Fleuchlarg' after his farm) sent two of his lads down to the town to buy some whisky. When they failed to return a search party found them sitting in the hedge dosing each other, one saying to the other, 'You be Fleuchlarg and I'll be the coo'!

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# A History of Bands

## in Gatehouse of Fleet

Happily, in Bicentenary year, Gatehouse of Fleet is home to a live band, and interestingly, a pipe band for the first time. The Stewartry Pipe Band Society is now in its second year and holds its rehearsals in the town's Community Centre and sports the 'Flower of Scotland' tartan. It has already proved to be a prize winning band and was able to produce no less than 29 trophies on display at its first Annual General Meeting. It is led by Pipe Major Ross Irving and Dr David Hannay of Kirkdale is Honorary President. However, the town's past record in having its own bands is one of which any town or village may be proud. In the course of history it can boast of Lady Anne's Silver Band, Donaldson's Drum and Fife Band, the Gatehouse Flute Band, the Whistle Raw Band and the Gatehouse Brass Band. The following account of these bands may not be uninteresting to natives of Anwoth and Girthon, harking back to the older tales and stories of bygone days and inspiring the younger to go forward and carry on the band tradition in Gatehouse of Fleet.

*Editor*



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## Lady Anne's Band

This band received its name from its originator, Lady Anne, who came to Cally in 1816 as the wife of the laird, Alexander Murray. She was the daughter of the Earl of Lucan. Closely identifying herself with her husband's interests and keenly realising her responsibilities as the lady of the manor, she initiated schemes and projects which had as their object the moral, intellectual and social advancement of the town and district. Whatever tended to relieve the dull monotony of rural life and add to the zest and enjoyment of the people had her heartiest sympathy and unstinted support. About this time brass bands had become all the rage, and towns and villages vied with one another to possess a band. In many cases financial difficulties barred the way. Not so in Gatehouse. A band for the town appealed to her musical tastes. It would brighten up the life of the inhabitants and enable them to spend many a pleasant and profitable hour. Accordingly, at her own expense, she entered into an engagement with one called Hopkins, an Ayrshire man and a first class musician, to come to Cally and undertake the formation and training of a band. On arrival Hopkins set about this task. Recruits were speedily obtained, instruments and music purchased, and practices begun. The members met twice a week in that building to the left of the back entrance to the parsonage, now Cushat Wood, and numbered twenty-two in all. To obtain regular attendance they were paid so much per practice night. The names of some of the players have been obtained from Mr Alexander McDonald Blacksmith, the oldest resident in the town, over 93 years of age (in 1921), then still hale and hearty, and possessed of a retentive memory, and are as follows:

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Thomas Tait, Painter,	Clarinet
George Milligan,	Clarinet
James Halliday, Rustic worker,	Trombone
John Sayers, Shoemaker,	Trombone
Thomas Dalrymple, Wood forester	
Thomas Bryan, Cally Boots	
John Dryhurgh, Shoemaker	
John Beattie, Labourer	
William Beattie, Miner	
John Clinton, Tailor	
John McKinnel, Shoemaker	
William Woodside, Forester	
Hugh Hopkins,	Piccolo
Thomas Spence,	Drummer with two sticks

## Fame

In due course the band appeared and received a hearty welcome from the public. It soon established itself as a Gatehouse institution and took part in all the important functions. Frequent calls for its services came from Cally, and Cally was Cally in those days. There was no super tax, no income tax, hardly any tax at all to depress the countenances of the laird or factor. It was a time of balls and parties, feasting and rejoicings. On special nights the avenue was lit with brightly burning lamps, and presented a never to be forgotten scene to the crowds following the band on its way to play varied selections on the lawn in front of Cally House.

The fame of the band having spread abroad, requisitions for its services were received from various parts of the county. An interesting and memorable performance was that given at Creetown in 1833 when it united with the band of Newton Stewart to do honour to the teacher of both bands, the 'immortal' Hopkins.

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## Foundation Stone Ceremony

On a fine summer's day in June 1834 the band was proud to be playing at the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone at the new monument to be built on the Newton Stewart to New Galloway road at Duncraig in honour and memory of Alexander Murray, who in spite of many difficulties and disadvantages, physical and financial, rose to be Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Edinburgh, and the greatest living philological authority. According to the Dumfries Times of June 25th, 1834, amongst the official organisations present were:

The Band of Newton Stewart

The Trades of Newton Stewart with their respective banners

Bands of Gatehouse and Castle Douglas

Masonic Lodges of Kirkcudbright, New Galloway, Gatehouse, Castle Douglas and Dumfries.

(The Gatehouse Lodge was represented by Bro. Stewart, Master, and Bro. Turner, S.W.)

There were some 3,000 people in attendance.

## Calamity

After helping Alexander Murray in his two parliamentary campaigns, which were both very demanding upon the band, they embarked on most successful tours to places such as Stranraer, Carlisle and the Isle of Man where they brought much credit upon themselves. However, disaster struck in July 1845 by the unexpected death of the laird while he was in Ireland in connection with his Killyheg properties. His remains were brought back to Cally via boat to Ardrossan and then by coach via Laurieston and Lochenbreck and interred in Girthon Old Kirkyard. As he

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had no heir it meant the departure of Lady Anne from Cally and, amongst other things, the end of her dearly beloved band. For twenty years the band had been the life and soul at functions of importance in the town and district. The good it did can never be computed.

### **Donaldson's Flute Band**

During the later years of Lady Anne's Silver Band the flute and fife band made its first appearances, whose teacher and founder was John Donaldson. His father, a former Provost of the Burgh, was the contractor for making the shore road which makes the short cut to the shore at Skyrehurn (the A75 today). After a sojourn into England to try and make his fortune Donaldson ended up in the employ as a spy in the pay of the British Government and, in a narrow escape which was described 'he was more nearly elevated on a gibbet than exalted in the State', he returned to Gatehouse and opened a grocery shop on the corner of High Street/Dighy Street (the present market Cross Stores). Describing the popular Flute Band David Macadam writes: 'Their wonderful proficiency and the masterly manner in which they are conducted reflects great merit on their able and vigilant preceptor, Mr John Donaldson, and honour to themselves, and from the progress they are making, bids fair to vie with the first musical bands in Galloway'. They were called upon by the Freemasons Lodge to play at the funeral of John Hornsby, dyker, and this is recorded as the first time a band was ever present at a funeral in Gatehouse.

## **Fire Ends Band**

On October 14th 1840 the upper cotton mill, leased by Messrs. Davidson, took fire and was burned to the ground. The destruction was followed by a general exodus. Many left without paying their debts and John Donaldson was a sufferer to the extent of several hundred pounds. In the beginning of 1845 he left Gatehouse to seek his fortune elsewhere, much to the regret of the various societies and organisations in which he took an active part and proved a tower of strength. With his departure the band, which had already been considerably depleted, finally bust up and ceased to be.

## **Gatehouse Flute Band**

On the marriage of King Edward VII to Princess Alexandra of Denmark on March 10th, 1863, there were great rejoicings throughout the country and in true fashion 'wee' Gatehouse pulled out the stops to take part. A feature of the day was a procession to Cally House joined in by old and young and followed by fathers and mothers carrying their children in their arms. The remaining members of Lady Anne's Band gave a spirited display and this led to a meeting some time afterwards and the question of forming a new band in town. A brass band was ruled out for financial reasons and a flute band agreed upon. Amongst the flautists were James McKinnel, Dan Henderson, G. McNeillie, Robert Hornsby and Robert Halliday. Robert McNaught, Plasterer, Castle Douglas acted as the big drummer and William McMinn as kettle drummer. The band caught on and took a prominent part in the public and social life of the community. As the interest in the formation of a brass band began to grow the Flute Band became depleted and finally disappeared, having served the community well for several years.

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## **The 'Whistle Raw' Band**

This band came on to the scene sometime in the late 1860's and, though it was not taken seriously, it provided great amusement. Whistle Raw is the affectionate nick name for Birtwhistle Street and the band was composed of about two dozen boys with tin whistles and a drum. The drum was made by a local tradesman, John McKeand, Joiner, Fleet Street, and the flag, which was brought out on special occasions, was presented by a shopkeeper called Waugh. John Queen, son of Patrick Queen, long a worker on Cally Estate, was the leading spirit. A rival band was later formed by the boys at the Fleetside end of the town under the leadership of John McKeand and, between the two bands, Gatehouse had lively times. After short but merry careers both bands became defunct.

## **Gatehouse Brass Band**

A new generation had grown up since the demise of Lady Anne's Silver Band, when in an effort to inspire the new recruits, the Gatehouse rhymster lines describing Lady Anne's Band were quoted to them:

The Gatehouse Band through all the land  
Was famed in days of yore  
And music sweet rolled like the Fleet  
From hill to ocean shore.

This had a profound appeal to the younger members of the community and in 1868 they resolved to form the Gatehouse Brass Band and to solicit subscriptions from the public. This took about a year, most of it under the secretaryship of Alexander McClellan. The local minister sums up the situation:

In '69 the ban' was started  
 Wi a' the Hornsby pith imparted,  
 An' Henderson aye manly hearted  
 An' brave McClellan,  
 Three chiefs that wer'na easy thwarted.

The following formed the band:

Soprano cornet: Alex. McClellan

1st cornets: George McNeillie, John McKnight and  
 Thomas McQuie

2nd Cornets: William and A. Hewitson

3rd Cornet: James Walker

1st tenor horn: John McQueen

2nd tenor horn: William McMillan

Baritone: James Brian

Euphonium: John Byres

Bombardon: Dan Henderson

Trombone: Rob Hornsby

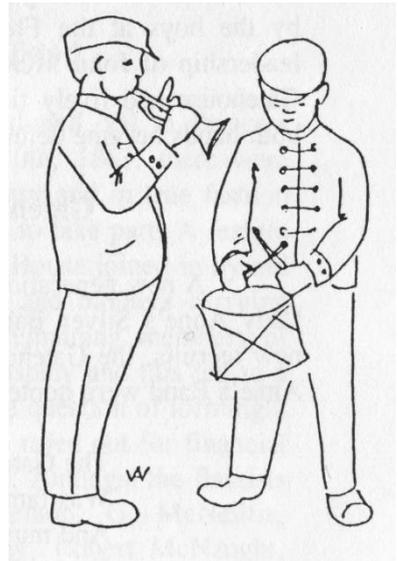
Bass Drum: James Buchanan

Side Drum: C. Briggs

Cymbals: John Campbell

Triangle: William Laurie.

Three of the early main events at which the band took part were the foundation of the Rusko Lodge of Oddfellows, the Gatehouse Cattle Show and the setting agoing of the Town Clock. After a distinguished career the usual country band difficulties came its way and the band broke up and ceased in 1889.



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## A Camp - Fire Duet

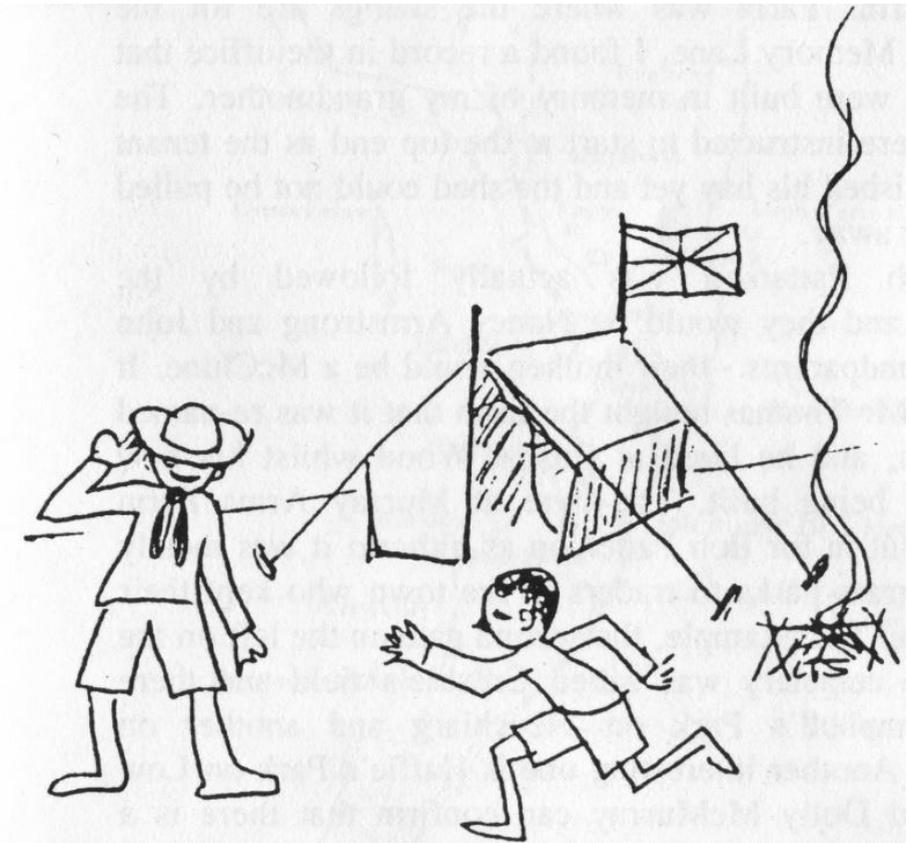
Dedicated to the People of Gatehouse  
and the 1954 Gala

The following poem was sent to Hamish Holmes JP, in his capacity as Gala Chairman, by Mr and Mrs J. Walker from Poulton le Fylde when they heard that Gatehouse of Fleet was searching out its history. In their letter they explain that the Baines's Grammar School Scout Group held their summer camp on the 'Haughs' in 1953 and 1954, and at Skyreburn in 1960. 'We always invited local people to one of our Camp Fires and were delighted when Lady McCulloch of Ardwall joined in the singing of the camp-fire songs. An abiding memory is of the singing of 'Will ye no come back again' as they departed down the track to Anwoth. We shall always remember the many kindnesses shown to us by Gibby and Mrs Parkhill at the Post Office.'

1. The village policeman, he was there  
For him it was hard labour;  
First he won the hundred yards  
And then he tossed the caber.  
Camping at Anwoth  
Is a lot of fun.  
We went to Gatehouse Gala  
Though we canna run.
2. The Gala Queen, she was there  
THE lady of the town.  
First they drove her up the streets,  
Then they drove her down.  
Camping grounds in Scotland  
We find the best of sites;  
We play through the day  
And sleep through the nights

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3. The bank teller, he was there  
Dressed in his very best,  
Playing against the ladies  
For the team known as 'the rest'.  
    Camping at Anwoth  
    Way upon 'the Haughs'  
    Half a mile from the road  
    Everybody walks.
  4. The schoolmaster, he was there  
In charge of all the races,  
Lined up the competitors  
Before they showed their paces.  
    Camping in Galloway  
    We go for a ramble  
    To see the lovely countryside  
    In the bus of Mr Campbell.
  5. The local Provost, he was there  
Surveying the whole scene.  
Indeed it was the finest day  
The town had ever seen.  
    Camping at Anwoth  
    Upon the hill we sit.  
    Swimming in the little loch  
    Keeps us very fit.
  6. The postmistress, she was there  
It was her busy day:  
In charge of Highland dancing  
She set them on their way.  
    Down to Gatehouse we go  
    Upon the mail run;  
    Call in at the Dairy  
    For a tea and bun.

7. Later in the evening  
We all went to the ball  
Which went with such a mighty swing  
In Gatehouse Town Hall.  
Camping near Gatehouse  
The people are so kind.  
We can expect no better  
In any place we find



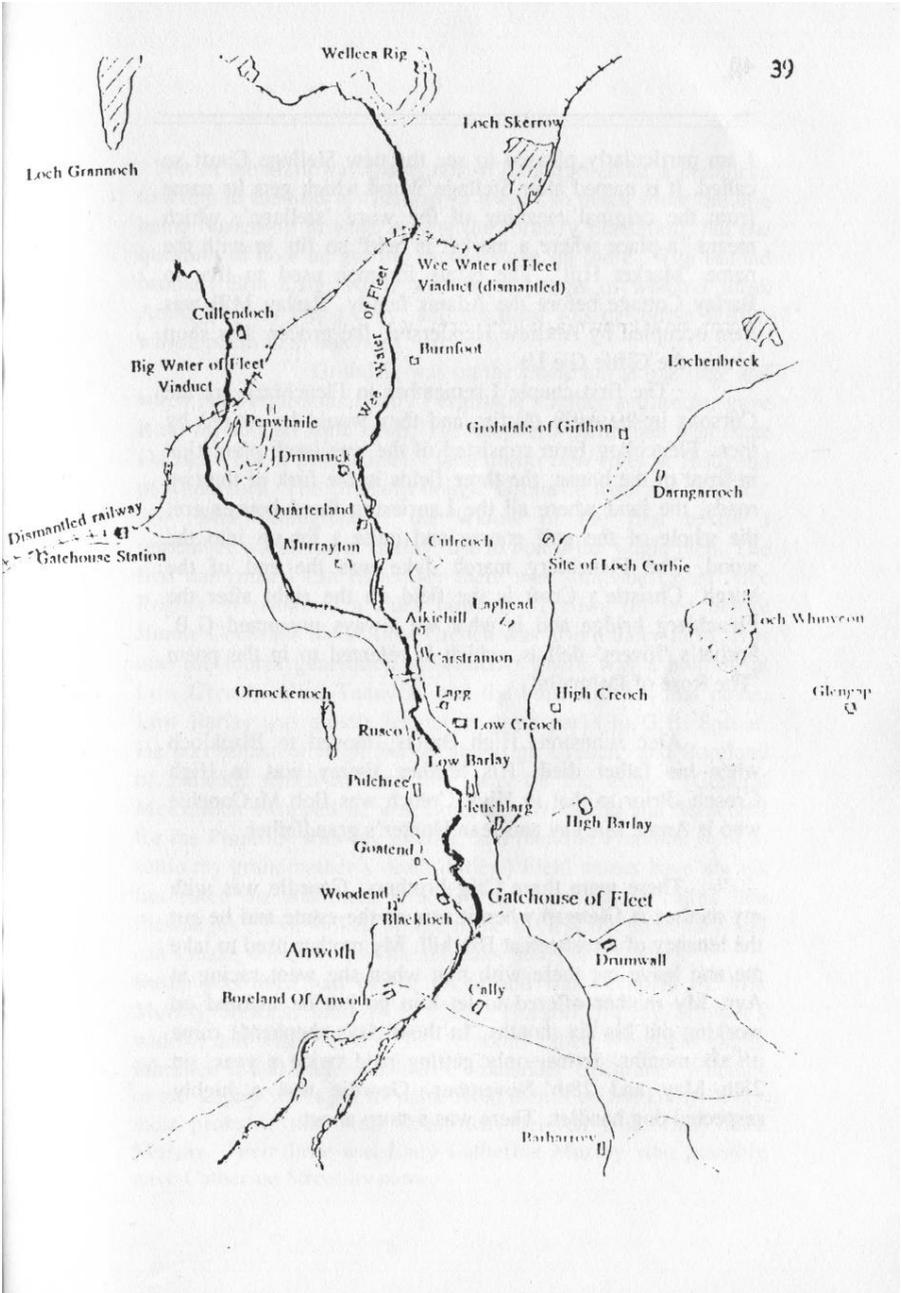
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## The Valley of Fleet

A recorded reminiscence  
by James Murray Usher

The first tenant I remember at the Murray Arms Farm, now known as Fleet Farm, was Bob Patterson, that's Jackie Patterson's father. I am not quite sure when they went out of there but I remember that Jackie's Uncle Bill came to Murrayton as ploughman and then my mother bought the two horses that came with him - an old white faced mare called Lily and another called Jean. I recall that Jean lived to a great age and worked on most of the farms on the estate at one time or another. The hayshed for the Murray Arms Farm was where the swings are for the children at Memory Lane. I found a record in the office that the houses were built in memory of my grandmother. The builders were instructed to start at the top end as the tenant had not finished his hay yet and the shed could not be pulled down right away.

Bob Patterson was actually followed by the McClunes and they would be Nancy Armstrong and John Clark's grandparents - their mother would be a McClune. It was when Mr Thomas bought the farm that it was re-named Fleet Farm, and he lived at Cushat Wood whilst his new house was being built. The byre at Murray Arms Farm would be put in for Bob Patterson as hitherto it was mostly let out in grass parks to traders in the town who kept their horses there. For example, the second gate on the left on the way to the cemetery was called Croshie's field and there was a Campbell's Park on Fleuchlarg and another on Blackloch. Another interesting one is Haffie's Park on Low Barlay, and Dolly McMurray can confirm that there is a McHaffie somewhere in the registers



I am particularly pleased to see the new Stelage Court so called. It is named after Stelage Wood which gets its name from the original meaning of the word 'stellage', which means 'a place where a market is held' so fits in with the name 'Market Hill'. The estate foreman used to live in Barlay Cottage before the Adams family. Barlay Mill was then occupied by Andrew Henderson, the grocer. His shop is now the Giftie Gie Us.

The first couple I remember in Fleuchlarg are the Corsons in the early thirties and they would be retired by then. Fleuchlarg farm consisted of the wee larch plantation in front of the house, the three fields in the fork of the two roads, the land where all the Laurieston Road houses are, the whole of the golf course and quite a lot up into the wood. The Fleuchlarg march dyke was the end of the burgh. Christie's Croft is the field on the right after the Fleuchlarg bridge and is what we always presumed G.B. Sproat's 'lovers' dell is, which is referred to in the poem 'The Rose of Dalmalin'.

Alec Johnston, High Barlay, moved to Blackloch when his father died. His brother Jimmy was in High Creoch. Prior to that in High Creoch was Bob McConchie who is Annie Mackay and Jean Hunter's grandfather.

There were three Caig brothers: Geordie was with my mother at Glengap when it was on the estate and he got the tenancy of Arnsheen at Barrhill. My mother used to take me and leave me there with him when she went racing at Ayr. My mother offered to let him go but he insisted on working out his six months. In those days shepherds came on six months' terms, only getting paid twice a year, on 28th May and 28th November. Geordie was a highly respected dog handler. There was a story about

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him in the Galloway News not so long ago about a memorial to a dog in the hills at Glengap: it wasn't so much about the dog being buried up in what is now the forestry plantation, but the question of how he got the carved stone up there.. The second brother, Bob Caig, wrote a book of poems of which I think Annie Mackay has a copy, and the third was of course Willie, whose poem is in this hook.

Grobdale was on the estate too at one time and when the Fergussons, Andy Fergusson's father and uncle, gave it up my mother took it on. The shepherd there then was Isaac Dalziel - that's Bill Dalziel's father who now lives at Bridgend of Kildarroch. The Grahams bought Grohdale from my mother.

Mrs Montgomery, the widow of the first tenant I remember who lived at Barlay, use to board the single men. The first dairyman I can remember there was someone called Alec Rogers. It remained a dairy farm of 52 cows till just before Jimmy Cochrane died,. Low Creoch was also a dairy farm. It is into the fourth generation of Veitchs. There was a holding at Low Creoch called Tannyfad and the burn still has that name. Low Barlay was mostly let out as grass parks to G.B. Sproat. He was tenant of High Barlay and High Creoch, and Boreland of Anwoth which at that time was on the estate. (General McCulloch swopped it. wee foreland, Woodend and Merkland for the Pluntons with my mother, and then the Pluntons went to settle my grandmother's death duties.) Field names have always fascinated me and there is a field on Low Barlay called 'the Piewaughs': I've looked up the name in a Scots dictionary and can't make sense of it: to me it means 'magpie screeches'. Rusco was once part of the estate and was occupied by Mrs Murray Stewart, hitherto of Cally, Horatio Murray Srewart's widow, and when she died her relations called Wingfield Digby inherited it and they sold it to Commander Cochrane. Whether or not Digby Street got its name from them I do not know. It is most probable that Ann Street was derived from Lady Ann Murray. Then there was Lady Catherine Murray who possibly gave Catherine Street its name.

Lagg was occupied by two old bachelor brothers, William and Sam Henry. Lagg was made up of several holdings and what we know as Lagg hill used to be part of Carstramon. Willie, who was the quiet one of the two, had been to Canada as a young man and was someone I really thought the world of; he was quiet and one of the fastest clippers of sheep I've ever known. He was very knowledgeable, a very good fisherman and a brilliant hand clipper. When they retired and moved to Woodend the smell of pigs there was something unbelievable. Willie was asked 'How can you stand the smell?' He said, 'Oh, it's OK - Sam has lost his sense of smell and I'm beyond caring!' Sam was quite a character: he wore little rimmed glasses and he had a baby Austin which had the near side boarded up with plywood. One day he was going to turn down the Cape and somebody had been about to overtake him, when somebody said 'Sam, did you no see that car' 'Oh, I saw a car fleeing though the air'. On another occasion I was at a clipping at High Creoch when it was bitterly cold and Sam said, 'By, you could do with a brassiere here to warm our hands on!' I thought Captain Forrest, then at Laghead, was going to explode with laughter. The Henrys always kept a shed empty for the tramps. There was a wee lady Miss Farmer who went up to look after them and I still refer to the gate this side of Lagg as 'Jeanie's pad' because that's where she got off her bike and went up through the field to save going round by the road.

The first person I remember in Laghead was John Wilson who retired to Hopedene; Mrs Wilson was the sister of Professor McMichael. Prior to that in Laghead there was a Mr and Miss Halliday. When Miss Halliday retired she moved into Catherine Street and she always wore a fur coat, even to take the dog out last thing at night; everyone said she got full use out of her fur coat as she wore it wherever she went. She used to walk from Laghead to Anwoth Kirk, across the stepping stones below Lagg.

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When my mother went to Murrayton Sam Fergusson, who moved from Darngarroch (now a ruin on the Laurieston road) to Quarterland, always wore breeches and a soft tweed hat (bonnets came into fashion later). There was a big family of Fergussons and Jock, one of his sons, and his mother moved into Woodfoot after Sam died. She was bedridden for many years and was either in bed or a chair. The door was always open and she would call you in to wherever she was. One day he had a cow tied up and I said, 'Jock, that poor old devil'll never get up if you keep her tied in a stall,' and he said, 'She'll just have to lie like my mother till I get there'. Jock had a black and tan bitch called Ena and she was one of those dogs that raced round the perimeter of the field the minute you opened the gate and somebody asked Jock, 'How's that dog bred?' and he said, 'I don't think she was ever bred, she was just created'.

Roger Armstrong was in Culreoch - the brother of James at Barharrow. My mother took over Culreoch from Roger Armstrong and then when Glengap was sold to the Forestry the shepherd at Glengap, John Meikle, moved to Culreoch. Mrs Meikle was a tiny wee woman and knelt on a mat to milk the cows, and once got badly kicked. There was always a heap of cats in front of the big black range. When the clippers came to the farm they were provided with food, paid for by the boss, and you were never quite sure whether it was a pudding on the stove or a cat. John had a collie hitch called Vera who was one of those sneaky kind who would be quite likely to come in and nip your heels while you were standing talking. During the war they drove the cast ewes and the big bullocks to Castle Douglas Mart and the stock stayed the night near Laurieston while my mother fetched the men home and took them hack the next morning to take the animals on to Castle Douglas. The famed Vera once leapt over the Glenlochard Bridge as if it was a dyke, and swam back to the shore, shook herself and calmly came hack on the road. That was some drop if you look over the bridge!

Tam Thorhurn was the shepherd at Burnfoot, followed by Gib McClure who was Billy Johnstone's uncle. Gib was the last person to live at Burnfoot. There were odd bands of Irishmen who

lodged in it, cutting bracken and digging out stones, sometimes eight of them in it; these were the sort of bands that, if you paid them, they then vanished until the money was drunk and they reappeared again.

In Murrayton before my mother was her cousin, Basil Falkner; his wife came here for many years for holidays with her children and grandchildren and it is her family that have planted the tree in memory of her in Ann Street. Prior to him there were McCutcheons and before that the Gardiners who were the same Gardiners as in Upper Rusco; two Gardiners sisters went to live at Falkirk; when they were on holiday here a few years ago they told me that the Murrayton Kist (which would have been a big sort of blanket box) had recently been shipped out to relatives in Australia.

When my mother took over Murrayton there were four shepherds: Willie Irvine of Drumruck, Willie Johnstone, Billy's father, at Cullendoch, and a single shepherd would lodge at Cullendoch with him, and Sam Fergusson at Quarterland. Actually the Cally Estate stretched from the Newton Stewart/ New Galloway road to the sea plus about two acres of land on the far side of the road near New Galloway. Barneywater was also on the estate, away beyond Loch Skerrow, and was occupied by an old couple called Patterson who had a son called Nat. I had been fishing up at Loch Skerrow with Jack Henderson and we went up into the signal box to wait for the train and Nat came in and I was so impressed. as a small boy, at his ability to spit from one side of the signal box into the fire at the other side!

Billy Johnstone's mother used to go to Castle Douglas, I presume by walking to the station and getting the train, and then come back by train, which slowed down at the viaduct to let her get off to walk back to the Cullendoch, so that she didn't have to walk back from the station.

I can remember the brick work being built round the big viaduct at the beginning of the war to take the troop trains coming from Ireland. In the 1960s they brought 100 men every day from Dumfries who walked up on to the viaduct to lift all the wooden sleepers on the section between the two viaducts and relay it with concrete sleepers. It was a very short time after that that it was closed. No wonder they couldn't make the railways pay. The railway created hill fires, some quite savage fires, caused by sparks from the cinders thrown off the engines.

The sheep were taken off the top side of Murrayton beyond the railway in the early 1950s. I have mixed feelings about the forestry, though they did make use of bad land and also brought employment, especially with the nursery. It will still bring employment with the harvesting but now that it's mechanised not as much as in the old days.

The top side of the railway on Culreoch was called the 'Wellies Rig' and was a horrible place to gather the sheep because it was a lot of little ridges and you sent the sheep down one hollow and, if you didn't watch what you were doing, they came bolting hack up through the next one and you couldn't see them. The places which I reckon should never have been planted are the White Top of Culreoch, Glengap and High Barlay Hill. They were tremendous places for sheep.

'Bel Adams family lived at Aikiehill and her father was the road man who kept from the burgh boundary, at Fleuchlarg bridge right down the other side to the Pulchree burn, absolutely beautifully tidy, all scythed and spotless. Mrs Adams was a Hughan from Drumwall. When the Cut was made the Irish tenants of the Murrays' Killyhegs estate were brought over to pay off their rents. The story goes that one of the forebears of the Hughans hurt himself and was given the job of pushing Lady Ann Murray in her wheel chair, and he was so diligent and kind that he got the lease of Drumwall. 'Bel's brother Alan was estate foreman, working up at the sawmill. At one time Philip Thomas had a pigman who was in

cahoots with someone else and they were obviously selling the small pigs and saying they had died. Alan had gone into the Murray Arms one night and said, 'Whoever heard of burying a pig with a braid nosed shovel?' Alan, up at the sawmill, could obviously see this fellow at the back of Back Neilson scratching about to make out that he'd been digging holes and obviously just had a shovel.

My mother created this loch Corbie, at the Nick o' Laghead; she'd only just got it insured when the dam burst and the loch disappeared, taking away two stone bridges, one at Culreoch cottages and one at Aikiehill. 'Bel Adams always said 'thank goodness they were all at school, or they'd quite likely have gone out to see what was happening and got swept away. Willie McMurray can remember standing on the bridge and seeing everything coming down the river - sheep, gates and such. My mother can remember someone rushing in shouting, 'Corbie's awa', Corbie's awaT The loch was there for about two years.

In the latter days of the Town Council Antony Wolfe was Burgh Surveyor and from the Burgh Office the job of attending the lades, street cleaning, grave-digging and the water works were carried out. Adam Milligan walked twice a day to attend to the water works at Loch Lea on High Barlay.

The sheep handlings in the old days were a really big event. I think at the Cullendoch they sometimes fed the men in the wool shed as there were too many to get round the table in the kitchen. The first clipping included the marking, the castrating etc of the lambs; of course all the sheep were lug-marked then. When I took over Culreoch the sheep were actually going off the Rig and the White Top and we started on Saturday morning and we gathered the Rig and we marked the lambs; now the old buchts are probably surrounded by trees by the Wee viaduct. The hogs were brought home on Saturday morning and we gathered the sheep off the White Top, went out on Sunday afternoon and gathered the Doon and on Monday we clipped Culreoch. I have been at a clipping at Culreoch where we went in for our tea at half past eleven and we were on

Penwhaile on Murrayton at half past four next morning to gather, because if you didn't have them in by six o'clock, if it was hot the ewes started to lie down. These are things of the past but I'm actually glad I've been on such gathers. Things are very different now. Then, the shepherds' wives only went to town in the pony and trap about twice a year; the kist would be full of oatmeal and a locked door was an unheard-of thing.

Over the years transport and communications have broken up communities; Fleet valley was a community in its own right and holds many childhood memories. Castramont Wood is of national importance and is now under the care of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The big tree by the turn to Rusco is know as Parliament Corner and is where the old men gathered to discuss all and sundry and the young men played football.

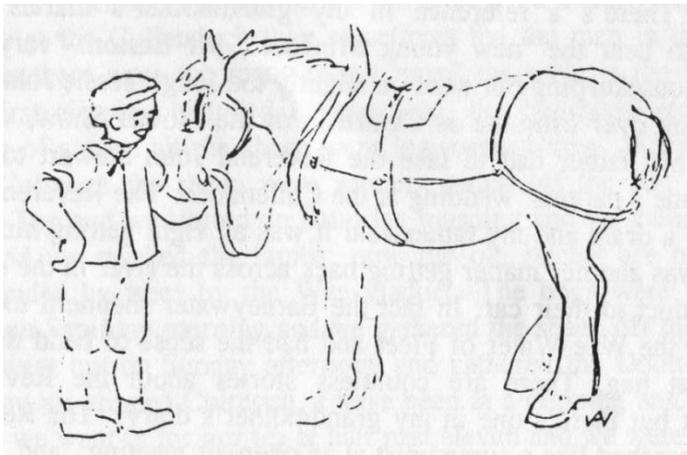
I asked 'Slim' Campbell where some of the places were that are mentioned in the Charter. Where did the ford go, for instance, and he said, 'somewhere about Nigel Hesketh's (at Bleachfield), roughly up through the Penny Well and then away up over Shit Hill'. I said, 'What's Shit Hill?' and he said, 'Och, they call it Planetree Park now'. It was of course where they put the butchers' rubbish.

There's a reference in my grandmother's diaries about going to hear the 'new young Minister', Mr Easton: 'very good about housekeeping but went on slightly too long'. Jessie Johnstone, who took over from me as Chairman of the Flower Show, was his sister. My father had to take the Reverend John Stewart to Billie Johnstone's parents' wedding at the Cullendoch. The Reverend John fancied a dram and my father said it was all right getting him there but it was another matter getting back across the river in the dark to the viaduct to their car. In fact the Barneywater shepherd took one look at the Wee Water of Fleet and had the sense to bed down in the peat hag. There are countless stories about the Rev. John Stewart but there's one in my grandmother's diary: 'The Reverend John preached like a communist at an open-air meeting, and Mrs

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Gallacher told me one about Lady Ardwall saying, in a loud stage whisper, when the Reverend John was ranting on a bit, 'There'll be lot of good dinners spoiling'.

James Murray of Broughton built Cushat Wood as the Episcopalian Academy, whose lands included what became the forestry nursery, right up to the cricket pitch. I have also heard it called the Parsonage. When James Murray died his son, Alexander, was a minor and the trustees paid off the Rector as it was thought to be a burden. It was the Presbyterian Minister, Robert Jeffrey, who then took Alexander to court for failing to uphold the wishes of the late Superior. They also took Mrs McCartney to court as well as Alexander Murray (who by this time had inherited Cushat Wood). Mrs McCartney had bought a feu from James Murray to build a house, now known as Cheriton Wood, on what was the driveway up to the Academy (and part of the main road). When the lawyer representing Mr Jeffrey was addressing the court he said that 'it was an extremely stupid thing to do to build a Episcopalian Academy when most of the populus was 'smit' with the Presbytery and was likely to remain so!' There were plenty of academies - even one in Borgue. It was said that Alexander pulled down the academy 'in the silence of the night' to use the stone for the building of the stables for his inn (the Murray Arms).



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## Bicentenary 1995

by Jane McGivern

Jane is the Town Crier in Gatehouse and is well known for her recitations and poems. This was her contribution to the entertainment at the Town Picnic which was held, in Garries Park on June 30th, to mark the 200th anniversary of the signing, by George III, of the town's Charter as a Burgh of Barony.

Thoughts can wake up memories  
Deep in our minds  
When we think of Gatehouse of Fleet  
In the days of lang syne.

When industries flourished  
And ales from breweries ran free  
A heritage left  
For you and for me.

We are grateful to Lord Murray  
And the kin of his line,  
Who have cared for our Gatehouse  
For us to enjoy in our time;

This beautiful land  
Between the Nith and the Cree,  
But the valley of Fleet  
Is the dearest to me.

To wander those hills  
By Cairnsmore steep,  
Or down the Fleet vale  
Where Rutherford sleeps,

Go up by Loch Grannoch  
Or sleepy Bengray  
To stand by Loch Whinyeon  
And watch ducklings play,

To roam through Cally Wood  
Where Nicholson sang  
And gart his pipes skirl  
Till the wild echoes rang;

Thro' shaggy Castramont  
Or Rusco's grey toor,  
Or Cardoness and Cally  
That kiss the seashore.

We think of past sons of Gatehouse,  
Painters, authors of note  
Whose names are immortal,  
Faed, Murray and Sproat.

With delicate touches  
O' paint brush and pen  
They captured a landscape  
That has not changed since then.

Now we celebrate this  
Bicentenary year.  
Just look around you  
And you need have no fear

For as long as there are heirs  
To the Murray Usher line  
They will cherish our Gatehouse  
And keep it divine.

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ISBN 0 9525320 1 8