

A short walk to discover some “Curious Things” in Gatehouse

Starting at the car park, walk up the street to the Angel Coffee House.

Look on the corner of the building for this mark engraved on the wall.

This is a typical **benchmark** symbol, used by early surveyors as a reference to measure height above sea level. The heights were shown on old Ordnance Survey maps.

This mark is 13.4m above sea level. There are several others around Gatehouse.

One at the Rutherford Hall (8.34m above sea level)

One on Anne's house at Barwhill and another at Castle Cottage.

Online there is a **Benchmark Archive** with details of benchmarks throughout the UK.

<https://interactivemaps.uk/os-benchmark-archive>



Walk further up the street and look across to the library building.

Most of the old Gatehouse houses were built in terraces. Access to the rear gardens is via a **close** (a passageway) or a **pend** (a covered passageway) which was often shared between two or more houses.

At one time the **library building** was used as the **office for the mill**. There was a path from the mill to a pay office in the grounds behind. Once they had collected their pay, the workers could then exit onto the High Street via the pend.

Cross the street to the corner of Victoria Street and High Street.

Look back across at 56 High Street.

- to the right of the Old Town Hall.

Notice that this house, like many in the High Street has a **double front door**.

Double-leaf storm doors often feature in houses built in the Georgian period.



Morva, 56 High Street.

Far left - the pend with white door.

Centre - double-leafed green front door.

Morva has a pend for access to the rear of the building. This would probably have been shared with the house next door which was demolished when the Town Hall was built.

The house you are standing in front of (**57 High Street, Callander's**) also has double doors. Here they are very useful as the doors open onto a limited space inside, opposite a flight of stairs.

Walk into Victoria Street to see the newly installed **haulage ropes** at 3 Victoria Street. This building has been used as a salt store, probably a grain store and a blacksmith's store so the pulley would have been helpful to lift heavy loads to the upper level.

Similar ropes would have been used in Digby Street (Market Cross Stores) and Church Street (back of Iron Brew cafe)

Walk back to High Street.

Before you reach the corner, notice the filled-in **cellar** at the side of 57 High Street. The small building to the left was at one time the **Victoria Inn** and was joined internally with 57 High Street. The cellar was probably used to store beer.

Not all houses in High Street had cellars but many did – see how many cellars you can spot.

Still **outside 57 High Street**, notice the pavement has very large slabs. Originally the pavements were made up of cobbles (granite setts). At some point these have been replaced here by **Caithness slabs**.

This stone from Caithness, a type of siltstone, is known for its durability and the way it splits to produce large flat slabs.

Continue up the High Street

Look across the road to the Bakehouse (40 High Street) and its neighbour 42 High Street.

Notice the **fire insurance signs** for Sun Life Insurance on walls. The Bakehouse was a working bakery for nearly 200 years. Bakeries, with their hot ovens were rather prone to catching fire so insurance cover was imperative.

Continue up the High Street

As you cross Digby Street notice the high window on the corner house where a haulage rope (like those in Victoria Street) would once have been used.

Across the High Street is the arched **Well Entry** – a path leading to the town well. The house to the right (**38/40 High Street**) owns storage on both sides of the arch and has an upstairs room over the archway.

As you pass **3 High Street** (Fergusson's old shop) notice the cellar flap, where coal would have been delivered.

Turn left into Church Street. (Castramont Road)

As you turn into Church Street notice the high window where grain and other goods were delivered by haulage rope. (side of **Iron Brew cafe**)

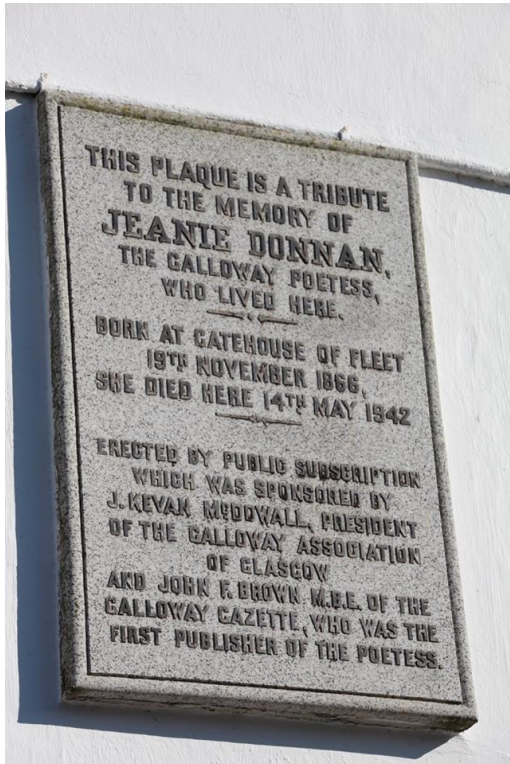
Look across the road at the strange looking **pole**. This was part of the system of gas pipes. The gas works was at the end of Fleet Street (now Fleet valley Care Home). This pole may have been part of the gas street lighting, which was installed in 1852, or perhaps a stench pipe. There are other poles like this in Gatehouse – one in Hannay Street and one on Dromore Road opposite the school and one opposite Carney's Corner.

The **lade** (a man-made stream built to provide water power to the cotton mills) passes under the road here. Before you reach the church, in the high wall, look for the now infilled **water pipe**. This pipe was used by traction steam engines e.g. road rollers to fill up their tanks with water from the lade but during World War 2 the local fire brigade also used it when practicing, in case a bomb was dropped on Gatehouse and a large volume of water was required urgently. (You can just see the edge of a circular ceramic pipe in the wall)

There is another **benchmark** on **Girthon Church**. Go through the gates and turn left. It is on the church wall, just round the corner. Can you find it? It is 18.1m above sea level.

Turn left into Catherine Street and walk down to the end of the street.

As you pass 21 Catherine Street, notice the **Blue Plaque** on the wall, commemorating the famous mountaineer **Hamish MacInnes**. Although he was born in this house in 1930, his family moved soon afterwards to 31 Catherine Street. They eventually left Gatehouse in 1942.



After you pass Digby Street, notice that the houses between Digby Street and number 44 Catherine Street have been demolished. This was to make way for the council houses in Digby Street. In one of the now demolished houses lived a young lady **Jeanie Munro** who became known as the Galloway Poetess. She was born in Gatehouse and was largely self-taught. When she married James Donnan, she moved to Whithorn. There is a blue plaque on a wall there to commemorate her.

Turn left into Victoria Street.

As you turn the corner, notice the large granite stone at the corner. This is a **guard stone**. Stones like these were often placed at sharp corners and were intended to protect the house corner from cartwheels coming too close to the wall.

It may also have been used as 'beetling stone'. Home woven cloth, particularly linen, was beaten against stone to help provide a smoother finish to the cloth.

Notice the small 'garage' with wooden doors between Bobbin Cottage and the old Police Station.

Inside there is evidence of an old fireplace so probably a cottage stood here, which was demolished in the 1850s when the Police Station was built.

At one time the space may have provided access for workers to the Mill behind (the steps at the end of the street didn't exist at that time)

Later the space was roofed and for a period the building was used as the **town morgue**.

Continue along Victoria Street, noticing where the lade runs under the street and continues under the Old Fire Station building.

At the end of the street, turn right into High Street and cross the road.

As you pass the **Angel Coffee House** – notice the cellar door entrance.

Across the road are the **Red Steps**. The slope on the Brewery Brae was altered c1820, leaving the front doors of these houses high above the street level. The double set of red sandstone steps were added for access and to help support the houses.

Return to car park.

