

“Anwoth Street & House Names” walk

Starting at the town car park, walk over the Fleet Bridge.

The **River Fleet** or **Big Water of Fleet**, starts its life on the slopes of Cairnsmore of Fleet and is joined just north of Rusko Bridge by its main tributary - **Little (or Wee) Water of Fleet** which comes from Loch Fleet.

The name **Fleet** is possibly an old Norse name meaning a watercourse and often refers to a tidal river. Today high tides affect the river to just beyond the Mill on the Fleet.

Stop at the corner of Hannay Street, opposite the Ship Inn.

Before the first houses were built in Fleet Street the road turned right immediately after Fleet Bridge and was part of the **Old Military Road**, which headed westward via Anwoth Clachan. At that time the area was called **Bridge End**, but it is now called **Dromore Road**.

An early name for this road was **Rusko Street** as it led up the valley to Rusko Castle.

It was changed to Dromore Road after the railway was built and **Dromore (Gatehouse) Station** was opened in 1861 - 6 miles up the valley.

Fleet Street development began 30 years after the first houses in Girthon.

The Ship Inn was the first building in Fleet Street, built in 1794.

Diagonally opposite The Ship Inn, beside the bridge, is **Bridge House** - another early building. This was, for over 50 years a pub - **The Crown & Thistle**.

Hannay Street & Boatgreen

Hannay Street leads down to **Boatgreen**. The two names are often confused in old documents.

Boatgreen was the original harbour for Gatehouse. It was difficult to reach from the sea because of the meanders in the river and was only accessible at high tide. A new harbour was built further downstream at **Port Macadam** c.1836.

Hannay Street is a bit of a mystery. A Hannay family lived at Rusko. They were involved in the building of the Wee Kirk across the road so maybe it was named after them although the name was not used until much later (in the 1890s).

Stay on this side of Fleet Street and walk to the end of the terraced houses.

Not many of the houses in Fleet Street are named but several have names associated with the river.

22 Fleet Street was known as the **Custom House**. In the 1850s and 60s it was the home of the local excise man (known then as a tidewaiter), who would check the goods landed at the harbour.

Beyond the end of the terrace, the house sitting in its own grounds is called **Portville**. This house is close to **Boatgreen** and would have had a view of the boats in the new harbour **Port Macadam**, further down the river.

Look westward along the street

On the north side, the house just beyond the caravan park is **Riverside**. The furthest away house (at the foot of Vennie Hill) is called **Alderlea**

>>>>> After the bend and pool in the river across the road. Look directly across the road to **Garden Street**.

31 Fleet Street - on the corner of Garden Street was known as **Fleetview**. For a period it was the home of Mr Learmonth the headmaster at Girthon Parish School and where his son James was born in 1895. James later became a neurologist, and was knighted by King George VI after he successfully operated on the king.

29 Fleet Street - on the other corner of Fleet Street / Garden Street, was once part of a very short lived cotton mill (along with **23, 25 and 27 Fleet Street**). These properties were sold for housing and **no.29** was bought by the Hume family - well known builders in the town.

Maybe that is why it looks grander than the other houses - with fancy gutters and a distinctive front door. For a period it was known as **Moravia**. Moravia is the name of a district in Czechia (old Czechoslovakia), but the name also has connections with the Murray family. Maybe it was a nod to the owners of the Cally estate. <<<<<<<<

Cross the road and walk up Garden Street and then turn round to the right.

Many of the houses on the north side of Fleet Street owned land right back to **Garden Street**. Perhaps that is where the street name came from.

The old name for Garden Street was **Back Fleet Street**.

Houses occupied the south side of the street, but on the north side there was only one large house at the bend (known as **Northview** - home of the well known Heron family) and a few houses at the corner with **Dromore Road**. Some of the houses were of poor quality and many Irish migrants rented homes there - giving rise to the local name of **Wee Ireland**.

Turn left into Dromore Road, and walk to the school carpark.

The housing development on the right, known as **Riverbank**, was started in 1949. The 56 houses were built by the Town Council in an attempt to improve the living conditions as some the older houses in the town had multiple occupation and shared toilets. The development was later expanded to include **Fleetside** and **Riverbank Court**.

The part of Dromore Road which runs along the back of Riverbank is locally called **The Back Road**.

Beyond the school on the left is **Baker's Dozen**. This private development of 13 houses started in 1966. A baker's dozen is 13 of something. In the past bakers were fined if they sold under-weight goods. They would add an extra roll to a batch of 12 to be on the safe side.

Recently a new house has been built in one of the gardens - amusingly named **Cherry Bakewell**.

Cross the road and walk down the footpath.

This path gave easy access to the school for the Riverbank children and was known as the **Wee White Road**. Originally it was paved with light coloured flags.

Turn right and then right again. Follow this road until it comes back to re-join Dromore Road.

The house opposite is known as **Fleetbank**. This house was built by the owners of the Ship Inn about 1824, at the foot of their garden.

For many years it was rented out and has served as

The manse for the Wee Kirk across the road. (1830s)

The home of Mr Newbiggin, the manager of the cotton mills. (1840s)

Retirement home of Mrs Faed, mother of the artist brothers John, Thomas & James. (1860s)

A boarding house run by Mrs McMillan. Children who lived too far from the school to walk there every day would live there during the week. (early 1900s)

About 1930 it was bought by the Murchie family. Many local children received music lessons from one of the Miss Murchies.

Trevvarthen Place. For a very short period in the 1920s and 30s, while Joe Dignam was the inn keeper at The Ship, the stretch of road as it passed the inn was known by this name. The source is unknown and it is no longer in use.

Turn left - back to the bridge and the car park.