

## **“Girthon Stræts” walk**

### **Start at the Town Clock and walk into Ann Street.**

Gatehouse is a planned Georgian town, starting in the 1760s by James Murray of Cally.

The main street was for larger houses and businesses. The parallel back streets for workers houses.

The cross streets for workshops and services. The original names used were very unimaginative **Front Street, Back Street, Upper and Lower Cross Street.**

New names were eventually introduced but house numbers were not really used until after World War II.

Before Gatehouse started to develop, the entrance to the town from the east came straight down Ann Street. The large white house at the top did not exist. The road then crossed the River Fleet either by the ford or the bridge. This road is often marked on maps as **Old Military Road** as it was constructed by the Government to take large numbers of troops to and from Ireland.

James Murray's son Alexander continued to develop Gatehouse and built the stone walls around the Cally Estate and constructed a new road into Gatehouse, The Cut, in about 1820.

**Ann Street** is named after Alexander's wife **Lady Anne Bigham**, daughter of the Earl of Lucan. Lady Anne is also remembered for starting a charity school for girls near Cally Lake and a walk through the Cally grounds into Gatehouse, known as 'The Ladies Walk'.

Other names used for parts of Ann Street have been **Rosebank** for the top part, including the house now called Cheriton Wood and **Nurseryville** for the southern side, when the Credie family ran a plant nursery in what is now Garries Park, behind the building.

### **Walk back to the clock and look towards the War Memorial.**

Today's entrance into Gatehouse is via **The Cut**. This road, built c.1820, divided the large mill pond in half although now only one of the two ponds remain.

A number of Irish workers helped construct the Cut. One of them was killed and is said to haunt the road. The Cut was a toll road and the house opposite the War Memorial was built as the toll-keepers house. The **Toll House** also became the place where tolls were paid to access the road to Laurieston. The Toll House also contained a small 'lock-up' in the days before there was a police station in the town.

Before the construction of the Cut, the area from the Murray Arms to the millpond was a dead end - it is called **Townend** in some old documents.

The houses between the Toll House and the Posting Stables were built in the 1830s and 40s – it's current name of **Woodside Terrace** was not used until the 1881 census.

**Cross the road at the bottom of Ann Street** - notice the name Horatio Square. Named after, **Horatio Granville Murray Stewart**, who was the Laird of Cally between 1845 and 1904.

**Walk along Castramont Road and past the church.** The old name for this part of the road is **Church Street**. Girthon Church was built in 1817 but strangely there are no street signs for this street although the name is used in censuses and maps.

A market place is believed to have existed in the ground opposite the church.

The first houses after the church are named **Stellage Court** - stellage is an old Scots word for a marketplace.

### **Continue along Castramont Road to Birtwhistle Street.**

The houses and streets on the right mostly contain the name **Market Hill** - continuing the 'market' theme.

One block is named **Usher Gardens**

Usher was the surname of Mrs Murray Usher's husband **Neil Usher**. As part of the inheritance process for the Cally Estate the name 'Murray' had to be retained. So Miss Elizabeth Murray Baillie became **Mrs Elizabeth Murray Usher** (EMU).

Church Street, **Castramont Road** and the road beyond leading up to the Golf Club was part of the original road to Laurieston before The Cut was constructed and also led further up the Fleet valley to Castramont. When you reach the swings at the end of Castramont Road, **Memory Lane** continues towards Girthon cemetery. It was named by Mrs Murray Usher in memory of her mother **Mrs Alexandra Murray Baillie**. Beyond the cemetery, there is a path along the edge of some fields. This path is part of what is called the **EMU Walk** - after Mrs Murray Usher.

**Turn left along Birtwhistle Street.**

The contract between **James Murray** and the **Birtwhistle family**, cotton mill owners, allowed for the construction of workers homes in Birtwhistle Street as well as Swan Street and Rosebery Terrace. They are regarded as unusual in this area being brick built terraces - more like houses found in the mill towns in northern England. The local name for this street is 'Whistle Ra'

**Continue past Old Ford Road**

Old Ford Road leads from Ann Street more or less in a straight line to a ford over the River Fleet and is known locally as **The Wee Road**.

**Continue into Swan Street and Rosebery Terrace.**

Rosebery Terrace is unusual - numbers 2 and 4 are attached to Swan Street whilst 6 and 8 are round the corner abutting Digby Street. The origin of the name is unknown but in the 1890s, about the time this street name was first used, there was a prime minister called Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery.

The street name changes to **Digby Street**. Horatio Murray Stewart's wife was **Anne Eliza Wingfield Digby**.

**Turn right into Catherine Street.**

The original name of this street was **Back Street** but was renamed Catherine Street about 1890. **Catherine Stewart**, granddaughter of the Earl of Galloway, was the wife of the founder of Gatehouse, James Murray.

**Turn left into Victoria Street.**

Originally known as **Lower Cross Street**, it became known as **Bankhead Street** (sometimes **Bank Street**). It runs along the top of the steep bank above the mills. By the 1880s it had become **Victoria Street**, named after the British Queen.

**Turn right into High Street.** Originally known as **Front Street**, it has been called High Street since the 1850s. High Street continues downhill as far as the bridge over the River Fleet, but the local name for the steep hill is **Brewery Brae** - after the old brewery, one of the first industries in Gatehouse.

The small inlet near the top of the hill, part of the brewery complex, was known as **Hunter Square** in 1881 and **Murray Square** in 1901 - both names of the brewery owners at that time.

The local name is **The Deil's Elbow** (Devil's Elbow). It has been suggested that this dark corner may have been the 'red light district' of Gatehouse.

**This concludes our short walk around the Streets of Girthon.**