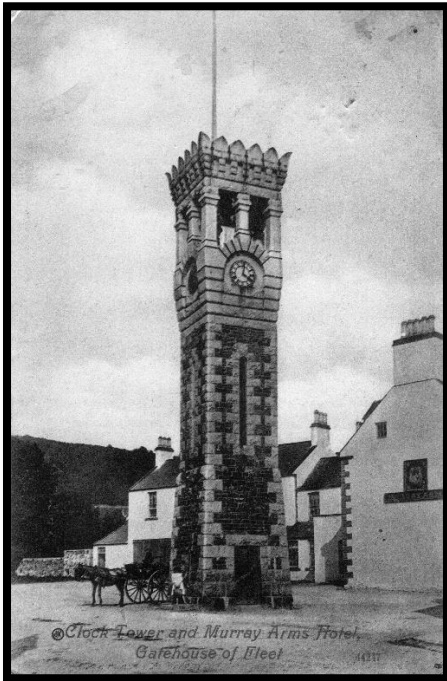


“Roon the Cape” walk

about one mile.

We do not know the true origin of the name of this walk but it has been used locally for generations. The route follows some of the lades (man-made water channels) which were part of the power system for the cotton mills. One reason for the title is that when viewed on a map it's shape was thought to resemble a cape. Water is piped underground through the garden at Barwhill and is understood to have had a sluice gate to hold back or divert the water. A local name for the sluice gate was “kep”, so the walk may originally have been known as “Roon by the kep”.

Start at the **Town Clock**



Andrew Finlay, a Gatehouse watchmaker, left £30 in his will to start a fund which would eventually finance the building of a prestigious town clock for Gatehouse. A committee was formed in 1868, headed by Provost McTaggart, who travelled by boat to Liverpool and on horseback to Edinburgh and Glasgow to visit former Gatehouse folk with the aim of collecting donations. Eventually the fund amounted to £313.

F.T. Pilkington, an architect from Edinburgh, submitted the successful design for the tower. He was well known for his church buildings. The tower is 55' high with 4 clock faces - each 3'6" in diameter. It is made of Dalbeattie granite.

John Cairns, a Gatehouse builder, was chosen to build the tower, and was assisted by masons from the McGaw family. Sadly Mr Cairns died shortly before the building was finished.

The clock mechanism was gifted by Horatio Murray Stewart, Laird of Cally. The bell weighted 3½ cwt and struck on the hour and half hour. The Tower was opened in 1871 by Mrs Murray Stewart.

In 1883 a piped water supply reached Gatehouse. Mrs Murray Stewart paid for a drinking fountain, a horse trough and dog bowls to be added to the clock tower. These are now filled in with concrete.

Murray Arms Hotel

In 1662 Richard Murray, laird of Cally, was ordered to build a bridge over the River Fleet, as well as an inn and a toll house. As a result The Murray Arms was built, maybe on the site of an earlier inn.

Until the mid 1800s it was known as The King's Head or Head Inn.

The hotel has been used for a number of purposes including:-

- the central dining room was used as an assembly room before the town hall was built
- a small building (now demolished) at the eastern end of the building was a canteen for the military during WW2. At the start of the war commandos trained in the area and later many American troops passed through Gatehouse on their way to the south of England.
- Part of the garden contained the first bowling green in the town.

The bungalow beside the hotel was built by the Payne family in 1945, who at the time, owned and ran the Murray Arms. The original name for the house was 'Kedah'. Mr Payne had worked at a plantation in Kedah Province, Malaya.

Across the road are **The Old Posting Stables**

Until the 1820s the road into Gatehouse came down Ann Street, so the area between the Murray Arms and the mill dam (behind the War Memorial) was not a through road. On the opposite side of High Street from The Murray Arms are The Posting Stables where horses belonging to hotel guests could be tended during their owner's stay. When Mail Coaches came through the town, the horses used were kept at the stables.

In 1895 William Crosbie from Borgue entered into partnership with Horatio Murray Stewart of Cally.

Crosbie had over 20 horses but by 1908 he had bought his first motor car.

In the 1930s the Crosbies moved to a larger purpose-built garage further up the road. (the vacant site is awaiting redevelopment)

For some time the posting stables continued to provide garaging and storage but now have been converted into homes.



Cross the road and walk towards the War Memorial.

This part of High Street is called Woodside Terrace.

The picture shows Woodside Terrace before the clock was built in 1871

Mile End was built about 1839 by Joseph Tait, a painter & glazier. The house name comes from the old milestone which used to be outside the house but was removed during World War Two. It said London was 363 miles away and Port Patrick (the

crossing point for Ireland) was 51 miles. Part of the mill lade water supply system passes under the house.

Salamanca Cottage was built in 1836.

It is believed this house was named after the Battle of Salamanca (1812) - one of the battles in the Spanish Peninsular War. The first owner was Thomas Plunkett, an Irishman who had served with the 5th Dragoon Guards, under the Duke of Wellington. He seems to have lived mainly in Exeter at the army barracks there. However, various census records show that his wife Elizabeth was born in Gatehouse.

Later the house belonged to the Cairns family - the builders of the Clock Tower.

Bengray

Built in 1843 and was originally called St Mary's (Cottage). Like the others in the row it was originally single story. George McMurray, ironmonger, bought the property in 1921 and added the second storey. He also changed the name to Bengray - a favourite local hill near Loch Whinyeon.

Hopedene was originally called Hope Cottage. It was built in 1844 for Mary Carson, a straw bonnet maker. The name was later changed to Hopedene. In the 1970s the house belonged to Sir John McMichael the eminent surgeon who had been born in Gatehouse, and loved to return for holidays.

Toll House (sometimes simply called Woodside), was built in 1823 when the new road 'The Cut' came into Gatehouse. The building served as a tollhouse for that road and also the 'new' road to Laurieston. It also included a 'lock up' in the days before there was a police station. In 1905 it became a girl's school, the round end was added to the building, and a house was built behind. Later the building became an architect's office and craft studio. The cottage behind was originally a stable.

This site was probably the Lochans Quarry which provided stone (whinstone) to build many of the Gatehouse buildings.



The Mill Pond or Mill Dam

This was created as part of the lade system to provide waterpower to the Birtwhistle Mills complex (now the Mill on the Fleet). The original pond covered a much larger area but was cut in half by the new road 'The Cut' in 1823. The water supply is still connected under the road in several places.

Crosbie's Garage

The dam on the east side of "The Cut" was drained when Crosbie's built a garage there in 1935. Crosbies operated the garage until 1968 when it was sold as a going concern. The garage finally closed in 2005.



War Memorial

Anwoth & Girthon War Memorial was built in 1921. It is built of granite and is a copy of the Dupplin Cross, a Pictish stone from Perthshire. A board alongside explains the various carvings.

There are 88 names from World War I and 14 from World War 2. They include the family of 4 Davidson brothers all killed in 1917. One brother survived and returned home and was later Provost of Gatehouse.

At the War Memorial [take the road towards Laurieston](#).

There are streams running alongside both sides of the road. These are part of the old lade system.

Tennis Courts

An early tennis court existed around the time of WW1. It used an old tarmac curling rink near where Castramont Road meets Memory Lane, but by 1923 a purpose-built tennis court was built in the field at the side of Laurieston Road.

In 1928 the tennis club moved to its current site next to the golf course. There were 2 'blaes' courts and a pavilion. Blaes was a hard crushed shale, a by-product of mining.

Golf Club

The golf course was opened in 1922 - described as 'a nine hole sporting course'. It was not until after 1925 that play was allowed on Sundays and ladies were allowed to become members.

Barlay Mill

If you continue along the road for a short distance you will come to Barlay Mill (also called Miln of Barlae). This was a corn mill and was the home to the Faed family. (*The name Faed rhymes with 'made'*). Five of the six Faed children became well known Victorian artists.



Return to the tennis court and take the narrow road opposite.

Barwhill

The name means *hill with hazel trees*.

At one time this building was two cottages and across the road was a sawmill (probably where the tennis court now stands).

We believe that a 'kep' or sluice gate existed in the garden of Barwhill. This was used to control the water flow into the marshy area opposite tennis court. This marshy area was almost certainly a pond at one time ; part of the lade system.

Continue along the narrow road until you reach the junction of [Castramont Road and Memory Lane](#). This junction is called Carney's Corner. This road was at one time the 'old' road to Laurieston.

The area across the road to the right (where the new houses are built) was known as [Burgh Park](#). (*the term park is a local name for a field*). During the wars this area was used as allotments to supplement food supplies.

Behind it (now the Galloway Lodge factory site) was a sawmill and later a large chicken house. There was also a tarmac area belonging to the Curling Club. This was flooded with a thin layer of water in winter to provide outdoor curling facilities. In summer it was rented by the tennis club.

Carney's Corner

Originally a small cottage stood here where the Carney family lived. One daughter Nancy was a great beauty and features in a number of paintings by the Faed family. She and her sister used to make toffee to sell at their door.

The road to the right leads to the Girthon Cemetery. Appropriately named 'Memory Lane' by Mrs Murray Usher after the death of her mother.

Turn left along Castramont Road, back towards the clock tower.



The building on the right is the old **Girthon Parish School**. It was probably built in the early 1800s and may have originally incorporated a schoolmaster's house. Anwoth and Girthon schools combined about 1918 although both sites operated until 1925 when this school was closed.

It was later used by the local Territorial Army unit and was known as the **Drill Hall** before being renovated into housing. For a short period in the 1970s, the renowned potter Bridget Drakeford had a studio in the building.

Pause at the end of Birtwhistle Street.

East View (the next house on the right)

This house incorporates what was 1 Birtwhistle Street. It was probably built by Andrew McLean, a local shoemaker, who owned all of the north side of Birtwhistle Street. His brother-in-law James Dalrymple bought the properties from him.

James Dalrymple was born in Manchester in 1859 but was sent to live with his grandfather in Gatehouse. When he started work in the Union Bank in Gatehouse, the manager recognised his potential and James was soon promoted to be a banker in Glasgow. He worked his way up to become the chief accountant with Glasgow Corporation and then the General Manager of the Glasgow Tramways. He is remembered for encouraging many of his tram workers to join the army in WWI and recruiting women to take their place on the trams. A number of Gatehouse lads went to work on the trams in Glasgow.

While he was living in Glasgow, his mother and sister lived at Eastview. He died in 1934 and is buried at Girthon Cemetery.

Woodlyn (the opposite corner of Birtwhistle Street)

Woodlyn was built in 1877 and involved the partial demolition of 8 of the houses on the south side of Birtwhistle Street. James Nichol Cox, a local doctor was the first owner of the house.

Later it was owned by Sir Phillip MacDonell - a lawyer who work abroad. He was Chief Justice of Ceylon. He too is buried at Girthon Cemetery.

During WWII Woodlyn was the home of Thomas and Elma Gibson. They were prominent members of the movement to gain Scottish independence. Their son Ninian is remembered for always wearing a kilt, which was unusual at that time.

In 1945 it became the manse for Girthon Church until it was sold to the Abbeyfield Society in 1977 and became a retirement home. At this time sheltered housing was built in the garden.

In 2006 it became a private house again and is now a guest house

Ellfoot

When the house opposite Woodlyn was being built, the remains of an elephant's foot was discovered. In 1938 a visiting circus was using the land and sadly their elephant, who was called Rosie, died suddenly and was buried there.

Pause at the end of Catherine Street

At one time there were buildings on both sides of the street but nos.1 to 7, the first four 2-storey houses on the north side were demolished when the Castramont Road council houses were built in 1937. They included a large boarding house which had been frequented by the many Irish workers who came to work in Gatehouse.



Gatehouse Farm / Murray Arms Farm

On the left opposite the east end of Catherine Street a farm existed which probably predates the estate village of Gatehouse. It was a working farm until the 1970s. The modern name **Stellage Court** reflects the fact that the town market was probably just across the road. [*Stellage is an old Scots word for a market.*] Similarly, the area to the left is known as Market Hill, where a number of council houses have been built.

Girthon Parish Church

Before this church was built this may have been the site of a townhouse for James Murray, the founder of Gatehouse before his new house at Cally was built in 1765. The family also owned a townhouse in Kirkcudbright (now Broughton House).

Girthon Parish Church was built in 1817 to replace the old Girthon Kirk 3 miles away on the Sandgreen road. The tower was added in the 1890s. The stained glass windows came from the Chapel at Cally House in 1947. It now serves Anwoth, Girthon, and, Borgue parishes.

Horatio Square (Opposite the Clock Tower)

The house in the square was built in 1783 on part of the land that may have at one time been the town market.

For many years it was owned by the McNish family who owned plantations in Georgia, USA and Jamaica. In 1866 Mrs Anne Eliza Murray Stewart, wife of the Horatio, the laird of Cally bought the house. This is probably why the area is known as Horatio Square.

In the 1960s and 1970s it was run as an annex to the Murray Arms Hotel, providing extra guest accommodation.

In 1894 **The shop** (now **Iron Brew**) was bought by the Henderson family, who installed the windows and door facing the clock. The Hendersons were grain merchants who lived at Barlay Mill, near the golf course, but also ran a general store. Dumfries & Maxwellton Co-operative Society bought the property in 1947. The Co-op also had a butchers and a household goods shops elsewhere in the town.

Mrs Murray Usher bought the property in 1968 and for many years it was a gift shop known firstly as **The Giftie Gie Us** and later as **The Lunky Hole**. Latterly it has been run as a deli and a cafe.



This completes the Roon the Cape walk – we hope you found it interesting.

Margaret Wright

April 2025