

63 & 65 High Street – Library

The Library has been on the ground floor of this building since 1857 and is designated 63 High Street. The upper floor is currently used as an accountancy business and is no.65 High Street.



In the parade photo above, the middle chimney stack is above a darker building. This was the library building before it was “modernised”, and the extra window added upstairs.

◀ Chronology of Ownership & Occupancy ▶

- 1788** Part of William McKinnell, mason’s feu.
- 1789** William McKinnell sold part of feu to Joseph Carson, joiner. Papers in the sequestration of John Papple state that Carson stole the wood for the house from Alexander Birtwhistle of Dundee.
- 1796** New charter granted to William Birtwhistle of Balmae and Alexander Birtwhistle of Dundee after Joseph Carson had renounced the property ‘for a consideration’.

1841 census (Front Street 93 & 92)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Whirk	Mary			f	80		Kirkcudbrightshire
Menzies	William			m	45	draper	Scotland
Menzies	Jean			f	76	independent	Kirkcudbrightshire
Menzies	Mary			f	35		Kirkcudbrightshire
Kennedy	Charles			m	50	R.N.surgeon	Scotland

1851 census (High Street N10)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Stewart	Agnes	head	w	f	58	grocer & spirit dealer	Kbts, Girthon
Stewart	Anne	dau.	s	f	24	house serv.	Kbts, Anwoth
Stewart	Grace	dau.	s	f	22	seamstress	Kbts, Anwoth
Stewart	Charles	son	s	m	18	druggist app.	Kbts, Anwoth
Stewart	Robert	son		m	16	scholar	Kbts, Anwoth

1854 Sold by the Birtwhistle family to Mr Murray Stewart.

1857 Became the library.

1859 Valuation Roll : Horatio G Murray Stewart is listed as owning many properties in Girthon, but none in High Street. There is also no mention of a library.

1861 census (High Street N30 & N29)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Shaw	William	head	m	m	53	shepherd	Kbts, Kirkmabreck
Shaw	Janet	wife	m	f	55		Kbts, Anwoth
Shaw	Margaret	dau		f	11	scholar	Kbts, Borgue
Thomson	John	head	m	m	69	cotton weaver	Kbts, Gatehouse
Thomson	Margaret	wife	m	f	56		Ireland
Thomson	Barbara	dau	s	f	18	dressmaker	Kbts, Gatehouse
Thomson	Jane	dau		f	14	scholar	Kbts, Gatehouse

1871 census (High Street N07)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Shaw	William	head	m	m	64	shepherd	Kbts, Kirkmabreck
Shaw	Janet	wife	m	f	62		Kbts, Anwoth
Shaw	Mary	dau.	s	f	28		Kbts, Anwoth
Bonin	Janet	dau.	m	f	26		Kbts, Anwoth
Bonin	William T	g-son		m	5		Kbts, Girthon
Bonin	Philibert	g-son		m	2		Germany
Bonin	Theodore	son-in-l	m	m	50	chancellor of the consulate of France	France

1878 Valuation Roll : Horatio G Murray Stewart is the owner of the library in High Street. There is also a house which is occupied by William Shaw, shepherd.

1881 census (High Street N20 & N21)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Shaw	William	head	m	m	75	shepherd	Kbts, Kirkmabreck
Shaw	Janet	wife	m	f	77		Kbts, Anwoth
Shaw	Margaret	dau	s	f	28		Kbts, Borgue
Carson	Janet	g-dau		f	7		Kbts, Girthon
Carter	Agnes	head	w	f	40	laundress	Kbts, Kirkmabreck
Carter	Joan	(dau)		f	14	apprentice dressmaker	Kbts, Gatehouse
Carter	Samuel	(son)		m	11	scholar	Kbts, Gatehouse

1884 Valuation Roll : The only property listed as being owned by Horatio G Murray Stewart in High Street is a house & garden occupied by Mrs Mary Gardiner. *Mary Gardiner lived at Horatio Square in 1881 & 1891.*

1891 census (High Street N06)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Shaw	William	head	m	m	85	shepherd	Kbts, Kirkmabreck
Shaw	Janet	wife	m	f	87		Kbts, Anwoth

1901 census (High Street 19)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Docherty	James	head	s	m	45	garden labourer	Kbts, Anwoth
Docherty	Catherine	sister	s	f	35	housekeeper	Kbts, Gatehouse

1904 Property passed to library trustees on the death of Mr Murray Stewart.

1911 census (High Street)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename(s)</u>	<u>Rel.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Docherty	James	head	s	m	57	garden labourer	Kbts, Creetown
Docherty	Catherine	sister	s	f	45	housekeeper	Kbts, Creetown
McClymont	James	boarder	wr	m	73	retired shepherd	Ayr, Barr

1912 Valuation Roll : The Library Trustees own (a) a library & house, and (b) a house, both in High Street. The house was occupied by James Docherty, caretaker. Trustees representative was Robert Jardine.

1920 Valuation Roll : The Library Trustees own (a) a library & house, and (b) a house, both in High Street. The Library Trustees were tenants of both properties. Trustees representative was Robert Jardine.

1930 Valuation Roll : The Library Trustees own (a) a library & house, and (b) a house, both in High Street. The Library Trustees were tenants of both properties. Trustees representative was Robert Jardine.

1940 Valuation Roll : The Library Trustees own (a) a library & house, and (b) a house, both in High Street. The Library Trustees were tenants of both properties. Trustees representative was Sadie McMurray, Bengray.

2006 Passed from Gatehouse of Fleet Library Trust to Murray Usher Foundation

The Birth of the Library and Reading Room in 1856 at Gatehouse-of-Fleet

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 but, 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.

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.