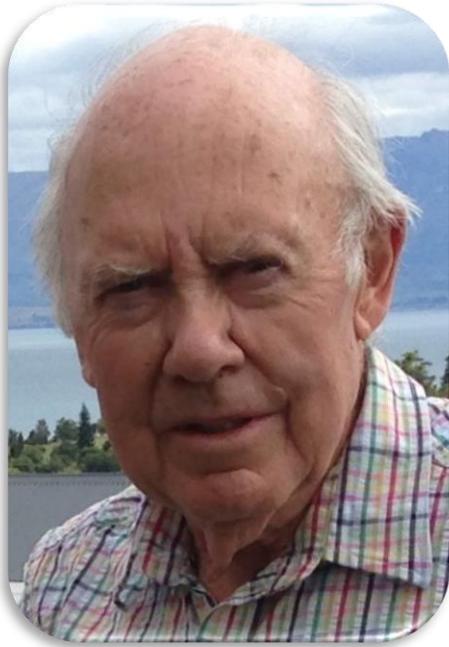


William Erskine McKie (1932 - 2018) : Snooker Club Founder

On 20th April 2018 many of us in Gatehouse lost a dear friend when Willie died suddenly at home, 51 High Street.



Willie is survived by his 2 children Ian and Kate, and 4 grandchildren James, Georgie, Euan and Emma.

After the Community Centre was refurbished in 2010 Willie spearheaded the formation of Gatehouse Snooker Club, which he also partially funded.

Apparently Willie used to tell people about the way snooker came into his life. He was brought up on an estancia in Argentina. The then Prince of Wales was planning a trip to Argentina which included a visit to the McKie ranch. He expressed an interest in snooker so Willie's father arranged for a snooker table to be purchased. The Prince's visit never happened, but Willie was smitten with the game from then onwards.

Willie in Gatehouse

Willie and his wife Dee retired to Gatehouse in 1995 when they acquired 49 & 51 High Street. The couple knew Gatehouse well as they had previously bought Laghead Cottage as a holiday home.

Sadly Dee died in 2002 after a protracted illness.

After Dee died Willie immersed himself in activities largely for the benefit of the people of Gatehouse.



- The ground floor of 49 High Street was used as shop. In 2003 this was rented by the YMCA (under the auspices of the Drop-In Centre), for use as a charity shop. Willie later sold the property to the Drop-In Centre.
- He sat on the Vestry Committee of St Mary's Church and later became their treasurer.
- He joined the Royal British Legion where he became branch secretary and later chairman.
- He joined the Gatehouse Development Initiative and became treasurer.
- He founded the Gatehouse Snooker Club in 2010.
- In Spring 2010 he edited the first edition of Gatehouse News, a role he fulfilled 3 times a year for 5 years.
- In 2012 he was voted "Citizen of the Year" for Gatehouse, largely because of his work in setting up the snooker club and the Gatehouse Newsletter.

- He was a great supporter of the Gatehouse Golf Club.
- He was a major and generous patron of Galloway Cricket Club
- He took a keen interest in Stewartry Rugby

He loved his dogs and after many walks through the Cally Woods he found a kindred spirit in Mary Cousins and her four-legged friend Darcy. They became close companions and Willie later twice visited Mary in New Zealand.

In late 2016 Willie became very ill and spent several weeks in Dumfries Infirmary.

In early 2018 he sailed from Southampton, across the Atlantic to the West Indies, through the Panama Canal and down the Pacific to New Zealand. There he met up with Mary and they sailed together to Sydney before Mary returned to Auckland and Willie flew back to the UK. The experience was not as exhilarating as Willie had hoped but he was pleased that it was an item to cross off his “bucket list”.

Willie before Gatehouse

Born in 1932 in Buenos Aires of British parents, Willie grew up on an “estancia” that was run by his father and where the young Willie very much appreciated the active life - horse riding gaucho-style and cattle ranching.

His early education was at a prep school in Buenos Aires, a 3-day ride away from home. At some stage he learned the finer arts of enjoying Argentinian malbec wines, even though he must have been too young at the time he lived in Argentina.

At the age of 14 he was sent to boarding school at Glenalmond in Perthshire.

He entered National Service with the Kings African Rifles and fought in the Malayan Emergency, learning Swahili in the process.

His higher education was completed with a degree in history at Keble College, Oxford. Here he developed his athletic prowess and one of his notable memories was being there on the day that Roger Bannister ran the first sub-4 minute mile in 1954.

In 1955 he married Dee MacLeod and soon afterwards gained a graduate training position with what was then BOAC, later British Airways. Assignments involved setting up home in Nairobi, Santiago, Bombay, Basra, Lagos, Khartoum and Berlin, but home remained at Fleet in Hampshire, until he retired to Gatehouse in the mid 1990s.

Finally

Willie was an active character, always on the go with some project or other, so much so that he earned the nickname of “Billy Whizz” among his family.

Maybe in Gatehouse a more appropriate name by which we should remember him would be “Oor Willie” - oor friend.