

Dr James Nichol Cox

Doctor in Gatehouse 1867 - 1909

James Nichol Cox was born in c.1841 in Dornock Parish (Annan), Dumfriesshire. His father John was a farmer and his mother was Margaret Moffat.

In the 1851 census he was living at Woodhall, Dornock with his parents John and Margaret and a younger brother David C. Cox. James also had another brother Rev. W. J. Cox, a Congregational Minister who assisted at his marriage in 1887. (*Newspaper article*)



By 1861, James was a medical student in Edinburgh. He was living as a lodger in Montague St. and was 18 years old. He graduated from Edinburgh University as L.R.M.S. (Licentiate of Medicine) in 1862 and as a Medical Doctor in 1870.

James Nichol Cox painted by Murray MacDonald (*Stewartry Museum*)

James came to Gatehouse about 1870. In the 1871 census he was a bachelor, a general practitioner, living in the High Street, (*possibly modern day No.55*) with a servant.

In 1900 he purchased a house on Castramont Road, although he had lived there since about 1880. This house was built by the Gatehouse Improvement Society, which was essentially a property company who had purchased land which included a terrace of houses along the south side of Birtwhistle Street. The terrace was demolished and a large house was built facing Castramont Road with stables and other outbuildings along Birtwhistle Street. The house had a large garden behind a brick wall.

James named his new home Woodlyn. In 1881 he was a 39 year old bachelor with a house keeper living in the house which had 9 rooms with windows.

COX, JAS. NICHOL, Gatehouse-of-Fleet, Kirkcudbrightsh.—L.R.C.S. Edin. 1866; L.M. Edin. 1862; (*R.C.S. and Univ. Edin.*); Mem. Brit. Med. Assoc.; Paroch. Med. Off. Girthon and Anwoth; Surg. Odd Fells. and Rechabites.

1875 Medical Directory

James Nichol Cox was married on 23rd August 1887 at Meggatland House in Edinburgh.

His bride was Maggie Grant Hall, widow of John Hall formerly the chemist in Gatehouse. (*John Hall had died on 3rd December 1884, aged 56 - Girthon headstone*).

Maggie was born in 1849 at Trumisgarry, North Uist, daughter of Rev. Donald MacDonald. The family later moved to Alvie, Invernesshire (near Kingussie) where he was the Church of Scotland minister for 25 years until his death in 1873.

In 1874 Maggie G. McDonald married John Hall at Alvie, Invernesshire. The couple lived in Gatehouse and had a son Donald George Hall in 1876 and a daughter Isabella in 1878 who died in 1885, aged 7. (*Girthon gravestone*).

By 1891 James and Maggie had settled at Woodlyn and had a 6 month old daughter Margaret MacDonald Cox.(born 1890)

By 1901 the couple had another daughter Janette Budden,(aged 7, born 1894).

Also living with them was Maggie's son Donald George Hall aged 24 who was a medical practitioner. He had graduated as a doctor in England and seems to have lived in Sussex most of his life. He married Marjorie Colman there in 1910 and died there in 1949.

In common with other Gatehouse doctors, a number of children in the town were named after him. James Nichol Cox Crosbie, son of William and Jessie Crosbie was born in 1901.

Dr Cox also acted as a local dentist. An elderly lady recalled, as a young lass, having a tooth removed by the doctor, with no anaesthetic. After a great deal of pushing and pulling the tooth shot out and landed across the room. The doctor instructed her to 'Awa' ower and pick it up, lassie You'll never get another like it!"



Dr & Mrs Cox in Town Hall with Margaret & Janette c.1900 (*Taken by James McAdam. Thanks to Sybil Prentice*)

James played an active role in Gatehouse and was a member of the Town Council. He was elected Provost in 1879, a post he held until 1887 when he resigned due to ill health. During his tenure on the council he was involved with the new waterworks which opened in 1883 and the building of the Town Hall. The well known local artist John Faed painted his portrait, a copy of which was gifted to the council to hang in their council chamber after Dr Cox's death.



Dr James Nichol Cox with wife Maggie and daughters Margaret & Janette c.1908
(McMurray Archive)

Dr Cox was an elder in the Free Church of Scotland from 1888.

He was the President of the Girthon and Anwoth Horticultural Society and helped to reintroduce an annual show after a break of 25 years.

He was a member of the 'Odd Fellows' and the 'Rechabites'.

(These were both Friendly Societies. They were founded before the days of the NHS to help provide protection for members against illness and death. The Rechabites also promoted an abstinence from alcohol)

James Nichol Cox died in 1909.

His widow Margaret and his daughter Margaret were still living at Woodlyn in the 1911 census. As a result of her upbringing in the Highlands, Mrs Cox stated that she could speak both English and Gaelic.

The family moved to the south of England soon afterwards. In 1916 Margaret Cox, daughter of the late Dr Nichol Cox and Mrs Cox of Hove, Sussex married Lieut. Reginald Sparkes in Hove. (*Kirkcudbrightshire Advertiser 14th Jan. 1916*)

Margaret Grant Nichol Cox died in Longtown, Carlisle on 30th August 1922, aged 74, although her usual residence was Hove in Sussex. (*Death Index & Probate*)

Girthon Grave Headstone Inscription : Sacred to the memory of James Nichol Cox for 42 years surgeon in Gatehouse died November 8, 1909, aged 68 years.

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