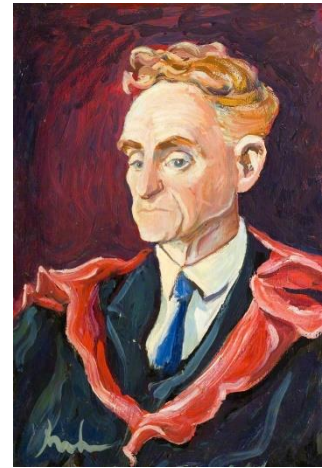


Dr. James A. Russell - Headmaster

James Anderson Russell was born in Glasgow in 1900.

He was a graduate of Glasgow University where he gained an M.A. and a Ph.D. He won the university poetry prize 3 times and was also a good athlete.

After training as a teacher he taught in various schools including ones in Glasgow and Coatbridge. In 1944 he came to Gatehouse to teach English at the Cally House School, the school for Glasgow wartime evacuees. After the war he was head of English and History at Castle Douglas High School. He was appointed headmaster at Gatehouse School (primary and secondary) in 1951. He came with his wife Phyllis and daughter Marion to live in the house attached to the old Fleetside School building.



*Caricature painting of James Russell
by art teacher Archie Graham*



As a teacher he was a keen member of the E.I.S. (Educational Institute of Scotland) and was made a Fellow of the Institute in recognition of his

teaching work and also his work on the History of Stewartry Schools.

He took a keen interest in local affairs both in Castle Douglas and Gatehouse, particularly in encouraging gala days and other civic events.

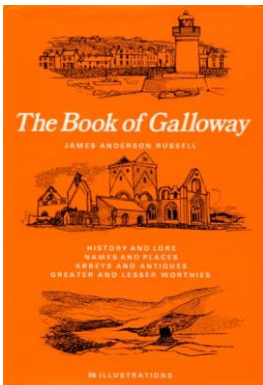
He served as a J.P. in the Stewartry for many years.

He wrote frequently to magazines and local newspapers, often about his research into local history, surnames and place names. In 1962 he wrote 'The Book of Galloway' on folk lore, names, places and famous people from the area.

He is fondly remembered by his former pupils in Gatehouse. Most remember seeing him walking across the playground from his house to the school

with his black academic cloak (and sometimes his hair) billowing in the wind. Mrs Russell is remembered for her fur coat.

Doc Russell, as he was usually called by pupils, introduced some new ideas to Gatehouse School. He introduced prefects to help with the running of the school and Christine Edgar née Davidson remembers proudly wearing her prefect's badge.



(1953 Christine as Dux and Head girl & Drew McFadzean)

The top academic achieving boy and girl were recognised by the award of a "Dux" prize. Russell arranged for a Dux Board which contained names of each years Dux winners. He introduced a Citizenship award (he had written a school text book on citizenship), one of the first winners being Drew McFadzean (*above*). He also approved of several other prizes - a sewing prize, and prizes for bulb growing and gardening to encourage the less academic pupils.

Each pupil in certain years was allotted a small garden to keep. These gardens were between the headmaster's house and the hut used as the dining room.

He thought that many Gatehouse pupils led a rather sheltered life so he encouraged trips to help the older pupils broaden their horizons. Trips to Edinburgh and Glasgow were popular which sometimes included a theatre trip (Andy Stewart's White Heather Club at the Empire Theatre in Glasgow) or a museum such as the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow, maybe an historic monument such as Edinburgh Castle and sometimes exciting transport such as a 'Doon the Watter' trip on the River Clyde. Of course the yearly 'all school' trip to Sandgreen Beach went ahead, weather permitting, as well.

Secondary 1 — Peter Wishart, Isabella M'Lachlan, Graham M'Lachlan; II — Isobel Grieve, Gillian Craig, Muriel Scott; III — 1st Christine Davidson; runner-up, Agnes M'Quarrie.
 Special prizes — Sewing (given by Mrs Russell) — Muriel Scott, Citizenship — Andrew M'Fadzean, Florence Moffat, Barbara Galloway, William Glendinning; chess championship John Cameron; Bailie Mrs Welsin gardening cup — Alex Johnston; Learmonth Prizes — 3rd year — Christine Davidson; runner-up Charles Park; 2nd year — James Main; 1st year — Barbara Galloway, Galloway.
 Miss Murray Bailie Sports championship cups (girls) — Mabel Proudlock; (boys) — George Stenhouse; runners-up (Coronation



Doc Russell was a 'hands on' headmaster. On more than one occasion, inclement weather such as heavy snow or a deluge of rain meant that hardly any teachers and not too many children made the journey to school. He would collect all the pupils in the largest room he could find (usually in one of the huts) and teach the whole school together. This often involved learning a new Scottish poem.

Class sizes at Gatehouse could be quite small after the 11 plus exam split the children up- sometimes only 6 or 7 pupils in an 'A' stream class. This had its advantages. When Princess Margaret was married in 1960, Doc Russell took all Margaret Hunter's class to his house to watch the wedding on the TV. A great excitement as few of the class had a TV at home.

Margaret Wright née Hunter remembers one poem about a rather wilful sheep dog. The poem was called Dandie by WD Cocker and Margaret can still remember some of the words:

Come in ahint, ye wan'erin' tyke!
Did ever a body see yer like?
Wha learnt ye a' thae poacher habits?
Come in ahint, ne'er heed the rabbits!
Noo bide there, or I'll warm yer lug!
My certie! ca' yersel' a doug?
Noo ower the dyke all' through the park:
Let's see if ye can dae some wark.



Doc Russell was very keen to keep old Scottish words alive and a keen supporter of the local Burns Club. Just before Doc Russell left Gatehouse a new secondary school was being built. Doc Russell was very proud that at last Gatehouse School could offer 'O' Levels to pupils. It also meant that the school finally had a hall for assemblies, plays and the annual prize giving and a proper gym. The pupils no longer had to march through the town to Girthon Church or the Town Hall for such things.



Outside his school life he was an elder in Anwoth Parish Church and occasionally he held services in the old Royal Coach Hall at Gatehouse Station.

He regularly visited Penningham Open Prison, near Newton Stewart, to talk to the prisoners.

He was happy to give talks and lectures to any interested group about Robert Burns and other Scots poets, and the history of Galloway.

In 1963, after he retired from Gatehouse School, he moved to Bishopbriggs where he continued writing and studying until his death in 1976.



Dr Russell with his staff in early 1950s.