

**PRESS & JOURNAL**



Next January we will be providing an opportunity to enjoy the good life on the High Seas by offering a super 2 week Cruise aboard the Black to Madeira and the Canary Islands. From Only £449.

Would you like to set sail on a super Winter Cruise? Come along and see how easily you can turn a dream into reality at our Special Promotional Evening in the New Marliffe Hotel, Queen's Road, Aberdeen on Monday, July 1, at 8 p.m. Tickets 50p.

Full details of this exciting holiday opportunity will be given and all your questions answered over a glass of Madeira wine, with talks and a film. Plus a special free raffle with lots of prizes.

Admission will be by ticket only (price 50p) which are obtainable by completing the coupon below. Plan your dream holiday now!

Tickets also available from our City Centre Office, McCombes Court, Aberdeen.

To: Madeira Cruise, Retail Unit, Aberdeen Journals Ltd., Lang Street, Mastrick, Aberdeen.

Please send me ..... tickets for your Winter Madeira Cruise promotional evening.

I enclose cheque/PO to value of £..... made payable to Aberdeen Journals Ltd.

Name.....

Address.....

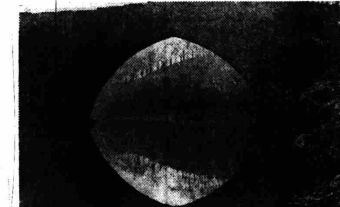
Tel. No. ....

**HALF PRICE**  
All drinks Half Price  
5-7 p.m. Fridays in  
**BOODIE'S**  
*The Huntly*  
YOUR FRIENDLY HOTEL  
IN ABERDEEN  
122 HUNTLY STREET, ABERDEEN AB1 1SU.  
Telephone (022) 630404.

# Growing pains of the Bridge of Don

## People are disappointed by promises and lack of facilities

THE romantic view of the bridge of Don — best represented by the oil-painted and photographed Brig o' Balgownie (below) — is rapidly being overtaken by the residential explosion seen in the picture (right) of the giant new Danestone estate. HAMISH MAC-KAY looks at the changing face of a suburb which seems to have borne many of the problems caused by the oil industry and reaped few of the benefits.



ABERDEEN'S Bridge of Don suburb now ranks as the UK's most rapidly expanding township, with its physical appearance literally changing by the day as new housing and industrial development continue apace.

But such is the pace of development in what is believed to be now Scotland's largest housing estate that the area is beset with acute growing pains.

And there is a groundswell of opinion among residents — predominantly owner-occupiers — who are increasingly concerned about the detrimental effects of this seemingly relentless policy of growth.

The suburb's listening post — Oldmachar Community Council — is fast

coming to the conclusion that central and local government must begin to pay more attention to examining and solving the many problems facing Bridge of Don before the situation deteriorates even further.

I have talked extensively to councillors and leading members of the community in Bridge of Don and there is a strong feeling of disquiet about virtually every aspect of community life, except for the education provision, which is acknowledged to be of a very high calibre.

Until the 1950s, the Bridge of Don was a sleepy little village — surrounded by huge expanses of rolling farmland. But when it was then identified as a prime area for Aberdeen's local housing needs, the suburb was set on an irrevocable course of change. Between 1955 and 1973, 1400 new houses replaced farmland.

The North Sea oil and gas boom dramatically changed the face of Bridge of Don, with an explosion of housebuilding between 1975 and 1983 — providing around another 3750 homes.

Concurrent with the houses came considerable industrial development, and the area now has three industrial estates — two of them cheek-by-jowl with housing developments.

And Aberdeen City District Council are backing plans for a major science park in one of the area's most attractive parcels of green belt.

The growth in housing stock is unlikely to diminish before the end of the century. So a population of 4858 in 1971 is expected to grow to 26,500 by 1991, and may well reach 35,000 to 40,000 by the year 2000.

Meanwhile, ancillary facilities are not match-

ing this massive development.

Indeed, Bridge of Don faces a massive corporate identity crisis — both literally and metaphorically. The area has three intertwining name tags — Bridge of Don, Balgownie and Oldmachar. Visitors can face nightmares in finding their destination.

Although the shopping provision was eased by a superstore, there is still a lamentable lack of smaller shopping units in the different estates, and there is only one postal delivery a day.

The public transport authority has struggled manfully to keep abreast of developments, but routes constantly have to be changed or modified, and all services still have to operate via King Street.

Perhaps the biggest headache of all is the massive traffic congestion on all the main roads, but particularly at the east crossing of the River Don.

Grampian Region and the city district spent a total of around £80,000 on reports examining a third crossing of the Don near Tillydrone — only to produce diametrically opposed views on the issue.

Grampian's Chief Constable Alistair Lynn, seeking a second police office for Bridge of Don, reports a crime rate up between 1980 and 1984.

Police staffing is 50% below the acceptable figure for the area's population, and although police officers on the ground feel that crime is not yet a serious problem, there has been a disturbing increase in vandalism.

But with the Bridge of Don on course for a population with 60% of the inhabitants under 30, and unemployment steadily rising, there are fears that teenage crime could become a serious problem in the years to come.

There are many other serious shortcomings — no indoor sports facility; an inadequate library; only one health centre; only one small hotel and totally inadequate provisions for nursery and playgroup facilities.

The local regional councillor is John Young who, with an electorate of 14,000, has the largest regional division in Scotland. He, probably more than anyone else, is fully

aware of the disturbing lack of facilities in the area. And he is highly critical of the lack of foresight shown by the local authorities.

He cites nursery provision. "The City North Local Plan speaks of numerous small sites for nursery school accommodation and parents subsequently find that sites earmarked for this purpose have been used for housing."

"I accept that the regional council have failed to develop any nursery schools, but it is unfortunate that the city district council have given permission for housing. I feel it is imperative that the district council reserve sites identified for nursery schools until there is a change of policy by the region."

He cites community facilities. "It is apparent that the local plan is not committed to the provision of community centres and, within the context of large-scale housing, this is essential. Policy must be changed to ensure provision will be made to meet the demand."

"Although I applaud the provision of community facilities in local authority housing developments, I am appalled at the lack of such provision in private estates. The need in the private sector is as great, and sometimes greater, than in the public sector. Surely as ratepayers they have equal rights in this respect."

"I would like to see the district council make a written commitment to build a community/indoor sports facility at Danestone, Middleton Park or Denmore."

The lack of leisure and recreational facilities and any co-ordinated policy for those that do exist is one of the main fears where residents feel the area is being significantly neglected.

The district council, who are responsible for these functions, are the target for much criticism and a number of councillors will admit privately that Bridge of Don is getting a bad deal.

Publicly, they will declare that cash constraints imposed by the Government limit their options.

There is little doubt that the political differences between the Tory-controlled regional council

## Suburb the loser in political battle

and the Labour-controlled city council have not helped Bridge of Don's cause.

The city council, anxious to preserve the green belt, vigorously opposed the massive 1400-house Danestone development, but the region's advocacy won the day.

And the region, who shoulder the criticism for roads' provision, point out that roads require long-term planning and they must follow in the wake of housing development, which is controlled by the city council.

Admittedly, there are a number of comprehensive plans which cover development at Bridge of Don, but the layman, should he initially understand them, will find a number of anomalies and differing theories. And

will make a commitment to ensure that the mistakes of the past will not be allowed to happen in the future."

Community council chairman Mr Iain Martin is adamant that the area's community facilities must be improved.

"Bridge of Don is a suburb which is neither town nor country, an area of very rapid growth where few of the residents have well-established roots, and as a result there is very little community identity."

"This is why as a community council we are giving priority to a booklet which will define existing community facilities and which, hopefully, will identify major gaps in the overall provision."

While Mr Martin has a dossier of complaints from residents, he cites one example of the overall apprehension felt by many.

"There has been much media publicity in connection with the impending closure of the Gordon Barracks. Unfortunately there has been a paucity of information regarding the future use of this complex. Is it to become a ghost area frequented by security guards and their dogs?"

The community council often find information difficult to come by. When they inquired to Grampian Region about the possibility of sporting facilities at the new exhibition/conference centre, all they received in reply was a publicity brochure and a bland accompanying letter which directed inquiries to a marketing company.

The recent rates revaluation has also angered many Bridge of Don residents. "It appears that Bridge of Don and Westhill have come out as the two areas in Grampian Region which have faced the largest increases in rates payments," explains Councillor Young, and he is organising a block appeal on behalf of all the residents in some of the newer housing developments.

The area's problems will be compounded by forthcoming electoral boundary changes. The existing one regional seat will be split into two next May and there will be four

district council wards instead of two come the district elections in three years.

Currently the area is represented on the city council by an Independent/Labour and a Liberal councillor, but it is felt that the Independent/Labour councillor's influence in the council chamber has been considerably diminished since he was expelled from the ruling Labour Group.

It could be easy to get the Bridge of Don's problems out of perspective and paint a picture of disillusionment and frustration, and this would not adequately reflect the spirit of an enterprising and adaptable community.

But many of the residents do feel uneasy and uncertain about the shape of things to come in Bridge of Don, and it would seem the time is opportune for both the regional and district councils to take a much more concerned attitude to the acute growing pains of the area.

It is felt that Bridge of Don has had to shoulder a disproportionate share of the North Sea oil-related industry, with previous little in the way of beneficial compensatory factors.

If an all-embracing, cohesive overview of the area's community needs is not forthcoming, and it continues to be an overlooked appendage of Aberdeen, the Bridge of Don may well become the "bridge over troubled waters" of the Simon and Garfunkel pop classic.

Bridge of Don now rightly regards itself as an important township in the economy and cultural life of North-east Scotland. It is only seeking its entitlement of appropriate social and recreational infrastructure, community leaders will argue.

Should it become increasingly isolated and estranged from Aberdeen, that would serve nobody's best interests — not least the citizens of Bridge of Don, who feel they have been patient for long enough, and now want a fair share of the cake.

**CASUAL JACKET**  
FREE AND THE CHANCE TO WIN A HOLIDAY IN MONZA  
BOOK YOUR TEST DRIVE OF THE LEYLAND ROADRUNNER TODAY!

**Right, now it's your turn.**

You've seen the Leyland Roadrunner being driven by that slightly unbalanced Frenchman. So you know it's tough. But now we'd like you to test it yourself—preferably using all the wheels provided—and discover more of the features that have left other 7.5 tonne trucks standing.

The luxuriously appointed driver's cab. The unique kerbside observation window. The impeccable handling and manoeuvrability. The huge payload. The low service and maintenance costs. (To name but a few.)

A special free souvenir and a chance to visit Italy. Your test drive successfully completed, you'll receive a specially-made casual jacket. You'll also be able to enter a free competition in which you can use your experience of 7.5 tonne trucks to win one of five long weekends for two at the spectacular Italian Truck Grand Prix in Monza in October.

But please note that to qualify for the jacket and the competition, you must book your test drive before June 30th 1985. So don't put off ringing us for too long. In fact, ring now, before everyone else does.

**ABERDEEN MOTORS TRUCKS**

Greenwell Road, Tullis, Aberdeen. Telephone (0224) 873641.

24hr. break-down service and accident repairs.

Veedor Roof Tachograph Centre.

Also in the picture are, from left to right, Mr Roderick McIntosh, 36 Ivanhoe Place, Aberdeen; Mr Robert Buchan, 49 Silverbank Crescent, Ban-

## Official thanks — for risking their lives



AWARDS for bravery were made to five North-east men by Councillor James McPherson, chairman of Grampian Regional Council's public protection committee yesterday. All had helped to rescue people from fire in different parts of the area and received Certificates of Commendation from the Society for the Protection of Life from Fire.

In our picture Councillor McPherson is handing a certificate to Mr Alan Thomson, 5 Johnston Road, Laurencekirk, who rescued a couple from a fire in their home.

Also in the picture are, from left to right, Mr Roderick McIntosh, 36 Ivanhoe Place, Aberdeen; Mr Robert Buchan, 49 Silverbank Crescent, Ban-

chery; Firemaster Neil Morrison; Councillor McPherson; Grampian Chief Executive Mr Douglas Macnaughton; Mr Thomson; Mr Ian Ciesal; Mr James Rose, 164 Morrison Drive, Aberdeen.

Mr McIntosh, Mr Rose and Mr Alex Lyon, 34 Ivanhoe Place, Aberdeen, were rewarded for their part in rescuing two children and their mother from a house fire in Garthdee, Aberdeen. Mr Lyon was unable to be present to receive his certificate in person. Mr Buchan got his award for helping to pull two people from a blazing car. Mr Ciesal-Harding was recognised for his part in rescuing four people from the house next door to his home.

