



# Deeside outdoor lessons

SEPTEMBER, 1939... and evacuees at a Deeside school go outdoors for lessons

## THE WAY WE WERE



## Letters: Our readers remember The matron who did not forget

I WAS one of 30 navymen sent to Arbroath to help build HMS Condor, the first air station to be built for the Fleet Air Arm.

My wife, Margaret, and I were married shortly before war broke out. She was living in Edinburgh, but came to stay in digs at Arbroath.

Eventually, she was expecting a baby and was booked in to Ward 1 at Arbroath Royal Infirmary.

I was so sure that Margaret was going to have a wee laddie that I marked all the nappies "Kenneth Alexander Scott".

Anyway, she went into hospital and my daughter, Sheila, was

born. When I went in to visit them, the matron sent for me.

"What's the meaning of all this?" she demanded.

"Well," I explained, "I got my marking ink from my kitbag and just marked the nappies. I thought the baby was going to be a wee boy. But don't worry, matron, I'll be back."

Not long after that, I was posted to the Far East and served at various places out there. But I was eventually sent back to Arbroath.

Margaret went into hospital again to have our second baby — and Kenneth was born this time.

The matron sent for me again. "Do you know, I remember you," she said. "You're the guy who said you'd be back, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"And I see you've got your Kenneth?"

"Yes."

"Good luck to you, then," she said.

So I've got a soft spot for Condor.

I was really lucky in the war, though. I was on a small anti-aircraft ship — only 150 crew — and we were told to prepare to sail for Norway.

First, we were given a few hours' leave. But I forgot my gas mask and, as I hurried to get it, I slipped on a steel ladder in the ship and chipped a bone in my ankle.

That put me into hospital. The ship sailed without me — and she never came back. Later, I heard that she was attacked by an aircraft in one of the Norwegian fjords and never stood a chance.

I come from Fife and my wife is from Edinburgh. We moved to Inverurie a year or two ago and we are enjoying it fine.  
John Scott, 3 Millfield Terrace, Inverurie.

## Strangers in night

ONE cold, foggy night in July, 1942 or 43, three men who were not village residents were seen coming along the main street at Newburgh. One, on a bicycle, was weaving about and was thought to have had one over the eight as it was just after 10 p.m.

Next morning, a man found his bicycle was missing as he prepared to set off for work. That same morning, a retired police inspector found a dinghy inflator in his garden. He knew immediately what it was for and reported the matter to the police.

The instant reaction in the village was that spies had come ashore. It transpired that one of them had stolen the bicycle but

abandoned it just south of the village.

I never heard who they were and how far they got before they were captured. But long afterwards it was assumed that they were German airmen whose plane had been shot down. After that, the Home Guard had to patrol the beach, looking out for footprints in the sand or for marks of anything having been pulled over the sand. This was done half an hour before sunrise. I remember it well and having to cycle three miles home to start a day's work.

William F. Mitchell, Mill of Ardo, Newburgh.

## Close encounter

IT was an ordinary Sunday afternoon in Aberdeen. My friend and I — both in our early teens — were taking our Sunday-afternoon walk and we had with us Elsa (3), who was very pleased to be taken out by her cousin.

We had gone quite far and the little one was tiring, so we turned into Merikland Road, heading for the upper end of George Street where the cousins lived.

Suddenly, there was the sound of an aircraft flying very low. Then we saw it coming towards us down the street. As it came nearer, I could see the big black crosses on the wings and the sound was unmistakable.

"It's a German," I called to Margaret and, to confirm it, machine-gun bullets spattered the pavement. Bundling Elsa between us, we ran into a gateway and knocked on the door — well-brought-up little girls never forget their manners.

Eager hands pulled us in and soon after came the sound of a bomb exploding and, a little later still, the siren sounded.

I wonder what the aircrew reported? Certainly not frightening three little girls and killing an old man tending his plot.

Mrs Margaret Thomson, 38 Whitehall Place, Aberdeen.

## When evacuees came to Banchory

ONE of the most vivid of my wartime memories concerns the coming of the evacuees. With Chamberlain's last visit to Hitler, the possibility of a war loomed, and the dour citizens of Banchory had to brace themselves over the news that, before long, they might have to accept strangers into their homes.

We were told the evacuees would arrive from Dundee. Bilingual officers were appointed and I was one of them. The late William Emslie, town clerk, dealt with the many forms and administration and we, the bilingual officers, visited the houses with spare rooms to

assess their accommodation. We were not very popular.

The day of arrival came. The evacuees were met at Banchory Station and transported to the Town Hall. There, the late Provost James Burnett had provided, with his usual generosity, tea and delicious London buns.

We had allocated a maximum of two and a parent to each house. It soon became evident, however, that some had families of four or five, presently to become even larger, and those families had never been separated in their lives.

As we struggled in a hall, now

littered with squashed buns, food and spilled tea, we tried to bring some order out of chaos.

Alas, it was almost midnight before the last of our guests were settled and we stumbled to our own beds with two evacuees of our own.

Monday morning came and those of school age, with accompanying teachers, had to attend.

Before a week had passed, an outcry had started to get back to Dundee and perhaps there was no legal reason for keeping them at Banchory.

Week by week, month by month, they drifted back to their familiar surroundings, not without a sense of relief on the part of their reluctant hosts. Many tales were told of the experiences endured on both sides.

To my knowledge, only one large family stayed on and today I am sure their descendants are still scattered around the vicinity of Banchory.

Books have been written about that special bit of social history. We remember it well.

Mrs Jean Grant, Ordeans, Arbeadie Terrace, Banchory.



A RAID on Aberdeen on February 13, 1942, led to a death toll of 17. Among the buildings destroyed was McBride's Bar in Loch Street.

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