



Aberdeen shipyard service

A CHRISTMAS service in the boiler-makers' shop at Alexander Hall and Co. shipyard, Aberdeen, on December 24, 1943.

THE WAY WE WERE



Letters: Our readers remember

Ominous sound . . . then planes opened fire

MY memories of the big raid on Aberdeen on April 21, 1943, are still very clear. I was a few days away from my 17th birthday and working as a domestic servant at the Church of Scotland Eventide Home, Balmorie. There were five of us on the staff, Mary Witty, Ruby Pert, Anna Borthwick, Annie Emslie and me.

On that day, Ruby had gone to Aberdeen to spend her half-day and we knew she would be on the last bus, just after 9 p.m. Anna and I walked along the avenue to the lodge gate on the main road to meet her. But the bus did not stop and no Ruby got off. We started to walk back, wondering where she could be.

About halfway between the lodge and the home we heard the noise of planes approaching from

the North. I knew the difference between the sound of the British planes and the German ones and this sound was very ominous indeed.

In no time at all, they were overhead and we could see quite clearly that they did not belong to us. All at once, we were startled by the noise of machine-gun fire. Anna screamed and I shouted at her to get down.

We flattened ourselves, face-down, at the edge of the tree-lined drive. After what seemed an eternity, we decided it was safe to move on again, but we had moved only a few steps when another plane loomed overhead and it, too, opened fire. Down we went again.

When we did get up, our feet hardly touched the ground as we

ran for the safety of the eventide home. The back door was open and we were literally pulled inside. What a relief to find Ruby there, almost in a state of collapse.

She had got off the bus at Balmorie village and had taken a short cut through the wood to the home. All alone when the firing started, she was very, very scared.

Mr Parrot, the superintendent, did a round of the residents' rooms to make sure they were all right. He also went up to the tower of the building and, by this time, he could see that Aberdeen was being attacked.

Afterwards, Mr Parrott remarked that he had seen a man camping in the woods near the

home only a few days before, and he was sure he had been up to no good. In the North-east, it was not unusual to find a company of soldiers under canvas among trees, but a solitary camper was a rarity.

Two of the home's windows had bullet holes in them and the lawn in front of the house had quite a number of holes as well.

I was born and brought up on a farm in Aberdeenshire — Mill of Fiddes, Udry Station, about five or six miles from Balmorie. I have happy memories of the time I worked at the eventide home, but it must be 40 years since I last saw it. I am sure it is still the peaceful, lovely place it used to be.

Mrs Violet Garrick, Roadside, Weisdale, Snetland.

Scapa Flow cauldron

I WAS a crofter on the Orkney island of Graemsay during the war. I cannot recall the date or even the month, but I think it was about sunset in an April evening when I became aware of the sound of aircraft.

The deep, undulating drone was unmistakable and I knew at once that another raid was imminent. The anti-aircraft guns around the naval base at Scapa Flow and those of the fleet opened up simultaneously.

The noise was devastating. The ground trembled and dust fell from roofs and ceilings. The searchlights were also switched on and their beams, with the blinding gun

flashes, accentuated approaching darkness.

The beams picked out what looked like little silver crosses circling far overhead awaiting the order to attack. They dived and came in low, one at a time at irregular intervals and from different directions.

At each attack, the machine-guns of friend and foe opened up with their quick-firing rattle and the red tracers crossed and recrossed as they sped towards their targets with their messages of hate.

It went on and on for about an hour without a let-up, although it seemed much longer.

Scapa Flow was like a huge

cauldron spitting fire and shrapnel and all around was an inky blackness. One pilot, coming in for an attack, made a navigational error and was in trouble. In a vain attempt to clear the surrounding hills, the bomb-load was jettisoned on to a lonely moor. Men and machine were soon reduced to ashes and scrap.

The barrage ended as suddenly as it had begun — and the night was not really dark at all. The sky was clear, the stars were twinkling. And away to the north a gossamer curtain was shimmering and weaving. The aurora borealis was doing its mystery dance.

Frank Davidson, Senang, St Andrew's Drive, Turriff.

Watch duty

DURING the war, another woman member of a city school and I fire-watched. We were accompanied by a male member of staff. The shifts involved night-watching, getting up at 5.30 a.m., rushing home to Culter by bicycle for breakfast, then returning to teach until 4 p.m.

The evenings meant returning to school to hump up iron bedsteads with sleeping bags and blankets. We did not dwell on the dangers but enjoyed ourselves in various ways.

At first, we had no wardens and we carried pails of water to the roof until we were told to stop. On the first night, flak lit up the nearby river. I remember the face of a fire-watcher turning white.

Once, when another member of staff and I were making our way to Great Western Road, we met an elderly man who told us that Hess had landed in the South of Scotland. We thought he was either joking or drunk.

The suburbs were fairly free of incidents, but during the big raid on Aberdeen when many people were killed, the railway line was lit up by anti-aircraft fire and a local nursery garden had lots of panes of glass broken.

The saddest sight was the arrival of children, refugees from Glasgow. I remember seeing the pathetic little band crossing the railway station at Culter with their small cases and bundles. There were mothers with babes in arms and toddlers hanging on to their skirts.

At first, the only shelter for pupils was under the desks, but later there were air-raid shelters.

Ella Walker, 54 Forest Road, Aberdeen.



JULY, 1942 . . . and they are enjoying a stay-at-home holiday in Aberdeen



JULY, 1944 . . . and it is still stay-at-home holiday fun for Aberdonians

Swing against Germans

WHEN I lived in College Bounds, Old Aberdeen, I was about eight years old. The old man down the road, a Mr Simpson, gave me two wooden-shafted golf clubs and told me to use them to fight the Germans when they came.

I remember the day Hall Russell Shipyard was bombed. I jumped off a fence and left the seat of my trousers on the piling. I

remember the German plane being chased over Aberdeen and being shot down in the sea.

As we ran up Orchard Walk to the sound of gunfire, the old man, Mr Coutts, who had the shop on the corner, shouted to us to run home as the German invasion had begun.

If the siren sounded after midnight, we did not have to

go to school until 10.30 a.m. in the morning. One morning, we went to Sunnybank School and were very upset to hear that some of our school friends had been killed the night before in Bedford Road. There is still a plaque in the school to their memory.

Stanley S. Donaldson, Fairwinds, Bradford, Skye.

Westhill Inn

FOR ALL YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS

- 52 well appointed bedrooms, all en suite, with Teletext, TV, radio, telephone, hair-dryer, tea, coffee and most with trouser press.
- Choice of conference, function rooms catering for the smallest of events up to parties of 250 (labelled 100) theatre style, all modern conference facilities available — 50 inch TV, video and camera projectors, P.A. system, screens and flip-charts. Special requirements catered for.
- Newly refurbished restaurant and cocktail bar with choice of menus. Lounge and public bar with snack or bar menus — STEAKS A SPECIALITY.

For further information contact Mr Angus or Mrs Hampton, who will be pleased to help.

WESTHILL, ABERDEEN AB9 6TT. TEL: 740388 FX: 739925

Alexander Buchan & Son
Your Local Funeral Service

Family firm giving Personal Service Day and Night
Private Rest Rooms and Chapel

9 DENMARK STREET FRASERBURGH
Fraserburgh 28245 (Day)
Fraserburgh 24916 (Night)
Inverallochy 2497 (Night)

Visit the Award Winning . . .

Grampian Transport Museum

Only 25 miles west of Aberdeen

Open Every Day till end of September 10.30 a.m. till 5 p.m.

Please Telephone (0336) 2292 for further details

Extensive range of NATHAN Wall Units and Extension Units on display in our BANFF and HUNTLY Showrooms

Large selection of wall units on display including NATHAN, STATEROOM, SAKOL, ROSSMORE and ELITE and PAGENT range by Morris of Glasgow.

ORDER NOW FOR PRE-CHRISTMAS DELIVERY

FREE DELIVERY OPEN 7 DAYS SUNDAYS 2-5 p.m. Instant Credit Available Written details on request

CRICKSHANKS
Castle St. The Square
BANFF HUNTLY
Tel. (02612) 5572 Tel. (0466) 2136
1/2 Day Wed.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO FRASERBURGH... FOR BANG & OLUFSEN

FRASERBURGH
Come and see Bang & Olufsen superb hi-fi systems, colour T.V.s and videos. Murray Mackie are authorised to sell and service Bang & Olufsen products, hi-fi, sound and television technology all at competitive prices.

MURRAY MACKIE Bang & Olufsen Center
MURRAY MACKIE (Fr.) LTD.
30 High Street, Fraserburgh. Tel. (0346) 28630.