

Inver Evacuation 1943

**This booklet has been written by
classes 5, 6 and 7 of Inver Primary School
to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the
Evacuation of Inver and surrounding area
during the Second World War 1943-1993
Revised edition for the Millennium**

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INTRODUCTION

This book has been written by classes 5, 6 and 7 of Inver Primary School to preserve some of the stories and memories of the evacuation of the village and surrounding area as sadly there are few left who can remember that period in the life of the village.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved in any way in helping to produce this book, whether in sharing their memories and spending time with us or in lending photographs and memorabilia.

The enthusiasm and support that everyone has shown towards this venture is typical of the spirit displayed by those evacuated making it a truly community effort, for which we are very grateful.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people who have given us information and help with our booklet:

Mrs Maribel Corbett

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Mrs Mary Sleith

Miss Jillian Scott

Mrs Nina Swanson

and the Ross-shire Journal

We would also like to thank David Sleith for printing it out and for all the time he has put into it.

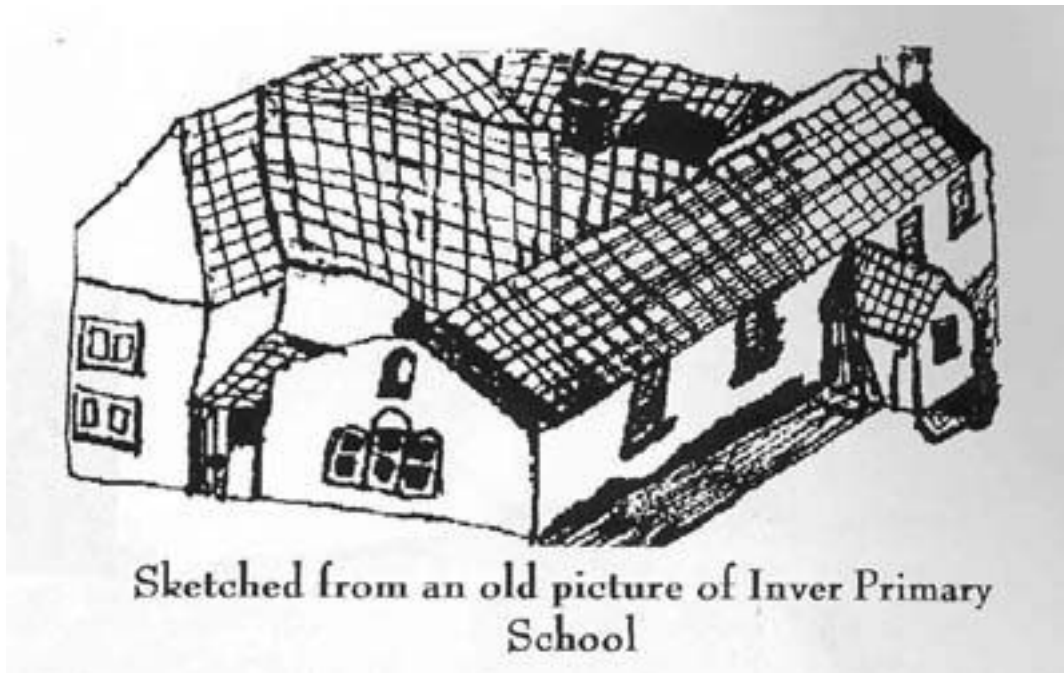
This booklet was compiled by David Sleith on behalf of the children of Inver Primary School. All stories written and edited by the children. All proceeds of the booklet go towards Inver Primary School Funds.

Extracts from School Log

- 4.9.39 School closed for one week, owing to outbreak of war.
15.9.39 Attendance for week is 90%. Seven pupils admitted. Number on roll is now 56.
22.9.39 Two more pupils admitted.
3.11.39 Number on roll is now reduced to 52 owing to so many evacuees returning home.
1.12.39 Last of the evacuees have returned to their homes reducing the number on roll to 48.

Changes at the School

The effect of the war on school life was felt from the very beginning with the children having time off and the local Home Guard unit using the school for training. However, little did the children suspect when they were welcoming evacuees from Glasgow that they themselves, in four years' time, would be in the same position.



Extract from School Log

Nov 26th 1943 - School closes for an indefinite period

Mrs Jessie Macdonald from Hilton Village was ordered by the Divisional Office to report to the school during the evacuation to help the Head Teacher make up an inventory of all that was in the school.

The school was to be used by the Military for a different kind of teaching and presumably slates and crayons wouldn't be needed. What happened to the equipment is unsure but there was a lack of it recorded on the opening of the school on August 21st 1944.

The pupils were sent to Tain Public School but the excitement must have been too much for them as they are described as being 'backward' on their return. No wonder, with nearly a year of their education being disrupted.

Extracts from School Log

Aug 21st 1944

School re-opened today. There are 48 children on the roll.

Aug 25th 1944

A good beginning has been made. There is a shortage of school equipment and pupils are backward after the evacuation. A fresh supply of school material will be ordered shortly. (Signed by N. MacDonald)

Sep 1st 1944

Attendance is disappointing. Some of the boys absent themselves from School for no apparent reason.



Inver Bay - just behind the hall.

The Summer of 1943

The summer had been good to the people of Inver and the surrounding areas with an excellent harvest. Women could be seen busy tending to their neat flower beds next to their small lime and thatched cottages or carrying two buckets of water hanging from a hoop around their waist with children playing or going to school.

It appeared to be like any other year but the world was at war. The cottages had blacked out windows and the children carried gas masks to school but worst of all Inver was empty and deserted of most of their young men who were called up on the 1st September 1939. With the prospect of a few weeks away on camping holidays many had joined up much earlier during a big recruiting drive never suspecting they would find themselves at Tain railway station waving goodbye to their loved ones. Many locals were given time off work to bid them farewell.



Main Street, Inver - looking towards the bay.

The Evacuation

The villagers had heard rumours that the area was going to be evacuated but no one knew for certain if these rumours were true until late October.

Extract from School Log

Nov 12th - 1943

Owing to an evacuation order issued last evening by the Admiralty there has been a very poor attendance today. The older children have all gone to help farmers - Dr Thomson and Mr Gunn H.M.I. visited school today. No assistant teacher has come to the infant room owing to the local emergency since re-opening of School on 9th November.

A meeting was held in Inver hall on November 11th when Lord Rosebery, the Regional Commissioner, and Sir Andrew Thorne, G.O.C. Scottish Command, explained the reason why the evacuation had to take place, but all that the people were told was that they had to leave their homes because the area was going to be used for battle training purposes.

It wasn't until the Normandy beach landings on June 6th the following year (1944) that the people realized why they were "really" evacuated and the reason for all the secrecy. The people and the land had to be cleared by Saturday the 11th of December 1943 which gave them only four weeks to remove everything - food, clothing, furniture, animals and crops.



Road leading down to Inver - centre of the picture is Inver Inn. To the left of the picture is where Inver Hall is now.

The Evacuation of the Land

After the official order to remove everything from the land the local farms sprang into action. Children from the South camped at Balnagown helped lift the remainder of the potatoes which then had to be dressed, the good sorted from the bad and the seed potatoes set aside. The corn stacks from the bumper harvest had to be threshed in just over four weeks. One machine wasn't enough to thresh it all in that time and more machines were brought up from the south. With all the fit men in the army they had to bring in Italian Prisoners of War to help with the threshing. The P.O.W.s were fed in one of the steadings at Balmuchy. About three hundred Home Guards, from around the area, were called in to help as well. They had to work on Sundays, which you might find surprising.

At one farm three threshing mills, two hay baling machines and machines for dressing seed potatoes for England at a rate of 80 tons a day, could be seen. Land Army girls were kept very busy and had no time for training. At this time they were staying at the Oyster Catcher at Portmahomack which wasn't a hotel then but a shop.

In an area that had over 40 farms, 15 of which was a fair size, there was the problem of over 1600 head of cattle and some 9600 sheep to remove. Some farmers managed to get neighbouring farms to help out but the majority of the stock were sold at special auctions held at Dingwall. Unfortunately these couldn't be advertised because of the secrecy of the battle training and prices weren't very good. The sight of all the farm stock lorries heading for Dingwall made such an impression on the minds of those who saw them pass that it was never forgotten.

DINGWALL AUCTION MARTS.

GREAT
DISPLENISHING SALE

OF
1050 CATTLE

(Removed from various Farms in Ross-shire for convenience of Sale),
within

Reith & Anderson's Mart,

On MONDAY, 6th DECEMBER, 1943,
at 10.45 a.m.

NOTE.—This Sale is conducted under Displenishing Sale Conditions, copies of which are exhibited on the Walls of the Auction Mart, or can be had from the Auctioneers.

Ballot was drawn by Bailie George Souter, Dingwall.

HAMILTON'S AUCTION MARTS, LIMITED,
REITH & ANDERSON (Dingwall and Tain), LIMITED,
Auctioneers.

Telegrams:
Auction, Dingwall.
Hamiltons, Dingwall.

'Phone 2178.
'Phone 2230.

Dingwall, 6th December, 1943.

JOURNAL DINGWALL

Sale Notices for animals from evacuated farms

When the people were evacuated and they left anything behind it wasn't there when they came back. There wasn't even a partridge or pheasant in sight because the soldiers had shot them all. Even the rabbits had vanished to the safety of the Morrish.

Newspaper reports

The evacuation of Inver and the surrounding area was well reported in the local paper the Ross-shire Journal and further afield in the Scotsman and the Glasgow Herald with a photograph of the shop being boarded up appearing in the Glasgow Bulletin. The papers reported the evacuation as a Highland Clearance because the army was going to put tanks on to the land instead of sheep and everybody was to be cleared off the land. No matter how carefully you read the articles on Page 15 the real reason for clearing off the people and the animals was not given because it was Top Secret. In fact it was more than 'Top Secret' it was called 'Bigot'.

Farmers returning the following year would find no harvest to look forward to because it had been too late to sow. The tanks had packed the ground hard, walls and fences were knocked down.

Arboll and Tarrel were the worst affected. Any money the farmers got for compensation was at 1939 prices and only for the damage done and loss of earnings. They didn't think it was nearly enough to put the damage right as it would take years for the land to recover.

The farmers had to try and restock their farms again and with their horses sold they had to buy in tractors instead. Also farm workers returning to the farms didn't stay long because they had found better conditions where they had been evacuated to.

Sale notices for animals from evacuated farms

NOTE.—This Sale is conducted under Dispenising Sale Conditions
Copies of which are exhibited on the walls of the Auction Mart,
or can be had from the Auctioneers.

ORDER OF SALE.

Store Cattle and Weaned Calves in Cattle Ring at 10.45 a.m.;
Milch and Farrow Cows, Calving Heifers and Bulls in Sheep Ring
at 10.45 a.m.

SPECIAL LIVE STOCK TRAINS will leave for South and East of
Scotland on Monday and Tuesday.

CATALOGUE.

BULLOCKS AND HEIFERS.

Messrs REITH & ANDERSON (Dingwall and Tain), LIMITED, AUCTIONEERS

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1.—Mr J. Mackenzie, Lower Geanies | 2 Heifers. |
| 2.—Mr D. Oman, Lr. Pitkerrie | 6 Polled Heifers. |
| 2.—Mr D. Oman, Lr. Pitkerrie | 2 Polled Bullocks. |
| 3.—Mr A. Johnstone, Wr. Seafield | 10 Polled Heifers. |
| 4.—Mr A. Johnstone, Wr. Seafield | 3 Polled Bullocks. |
| 5.—Mr G. Douglas, Geanies | 5 Cross and Polled Heifers. |
| 6.—Mr G. Douglas, Geanies | 9 Cross and Polled Bullocks |
| 7.—Mr G. Douglas, Geanies | 9 Cross and Polled Bullocks |
| 8-9.—Mr G. Douglas, Geanies | 15 Cross and Polled Heifers. |
| 10.—Messrs Gill & Co., Hilton | 11 Polled Heifers. |
| 11.—Messrs Gill & Co., Hilton | 11 Polled Heifers. |

MILCH. and FARROW COWS and CALVING HEIFERS.

Messrs REITH & ANDERSON (Dingwall and Tain), LIMITED, AUCTIONEERS

- 80s.—Mr H. Corbett, North Balmuchy—1 Polled Cow, due to Calf in February; in Milk.
- 80s.—Mr H. Corbett, North Balmuchy—1 Polled Cow, 5 year old, April Calver; in full milk.
- 80s.—Mr H. Corbett, North Balmuchy—1 Polled Cow, due to calf in March; in Milk.
- 81s.—Mr W. Macleod, No. 2 Wester Arbol—4 Cows, in Calf.
- 81s.—Mr W. Macleod, No. 2 Wester Arbol—1 Cow.
- 82s.—Mr W. Macleod, No. 2 Wester Arbol—3 Calving Heifers.
- 83s.—Mr J. Mackenzie, Lower Geanies—1 Polled Cow, 4 year old, Time Up 15/12/43.
- 83s.—Mr J. Mackenzie, Lower Geanies—1 Polled Cow, due March.
- 83s.—Mr J. Mackenzie, Lower Geanies—1 Polled Cow, due April.
- 84s.—Mr Hugh Mackay, Inver—1 Cow.
- 1s.—Mr A. Johnstone, Wester Seafield—1 Polled Cow, January Calver.
- 1s.—Mr A. Johnstone, Wester Seafield—1 Cross Cow, not long calved, blind in one teat.
- 2s.—Mr A. Johnstone, Seafield—1 Roan Polled Cow, in Milk.
- 2s.—Mr A. Johnstone, Seafield—1 Blue Grey Farrow Cow.
- 2s.—Mr A. Johnstone, Wr. Seafield—1 Polled Cow, 6 year old, with 2 Calves at foot.
- 3s.—Mr George Douglas, Geanies—1 Polled Cow.
- 3s.—Mr George Douglas, Geanies—2 Cross Dairy Cows, both in calf.
- 4s.—Mr George Douglas, Geanies—1 Cross Dairy Cow, in milk and served.
- 4s.—Mr George Douglas, Geanies—1 Polled Dairy Cow, due end of January.

s—Refers to Sheep Pens.

DINGWALL AUCTION MARTS

GREAT DISPLENISHING SALES

of

**8000 Sheep, 60 Horses,
50 Pigs.**

Removed from various Farms in Ross-shire
for convenience of Sale, on
**TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY, 7th and
8th December, 1943.**

TUESDAY, 7th December, at 10.45 a.m.
—In HAMILTON'S AUCTION MART—

8000 H.B., G.F., Down Cross and
Cheviot Lambs. H.B., G.F., and
Cheviot Ewes and Gimmers.

A great selection, including many lots
of Lambs in forward condition, H.B. and
Cheviot Ewes (Regular Ages), and H.B.
and Cheviot Ewe Lambs, Dinmonts and
Wedders.

Note.—Certain of the Sheep to be offer-
ed may not have been dipped. Intend-
ing Buyers should arrange with their
Local Authorities for late dipping permits
at destination.

WEDNESDAY, 8th December, at 11 a.m.
—In REITH & ANDERSON'S MART—

60 Clydesdale Geldings and Mares,
Colts and Fillies, including a num-
ber of powerful Young Geldings and Mares
right out of work, and several promising
Colts. Also several Strong Highland
Ponies.

50 PIGS.

NOTE.—The Auctioneers direct the
Special Attention of Buyers to the above
Important Displenishing Sales, affording
one of the finest selections of Breeding
and Feeding Stock obtainable in Scotland.
Practically the whole of the offering of
Cattle have been bred by the Owners, and
will afford Breeders in quest of both
Cattle and Sheep, of noted-doing Stock,
an opportunity of securing a class of ani-
mal which seldom comes into the Open
Market. The Sheep are bred from the
best Stocks in Ross and Sutherland. Many
excellent Horses, right out of work, will
also be presented.

SPECIAL LIVE STOCK TRAINS will
leave for the South and East of Scotland
on Monday and Tuesday Night.

No outside Stock will be accepted for
the above Sales.

REITH & ANDERSON (Dingwall and
Tain), LIMITED,
HAMILTON'S AUCTION MARTS.
LIMITED,
Auctioneers.

Telegrams:
Auction, Dingwall
Hamiltons, Dingwall.

Phone 2178.
Phone 2239.

Stock Sales

The three days dispensed sale of cattle, sheep, horses and pigs at a North-east Mart was attended by buyers from the North of England and the North and East of Scotland, and a large number of the stock presented were transported to these areas. The transport of the animals from the farms to the Marts involved 290 float-loads.

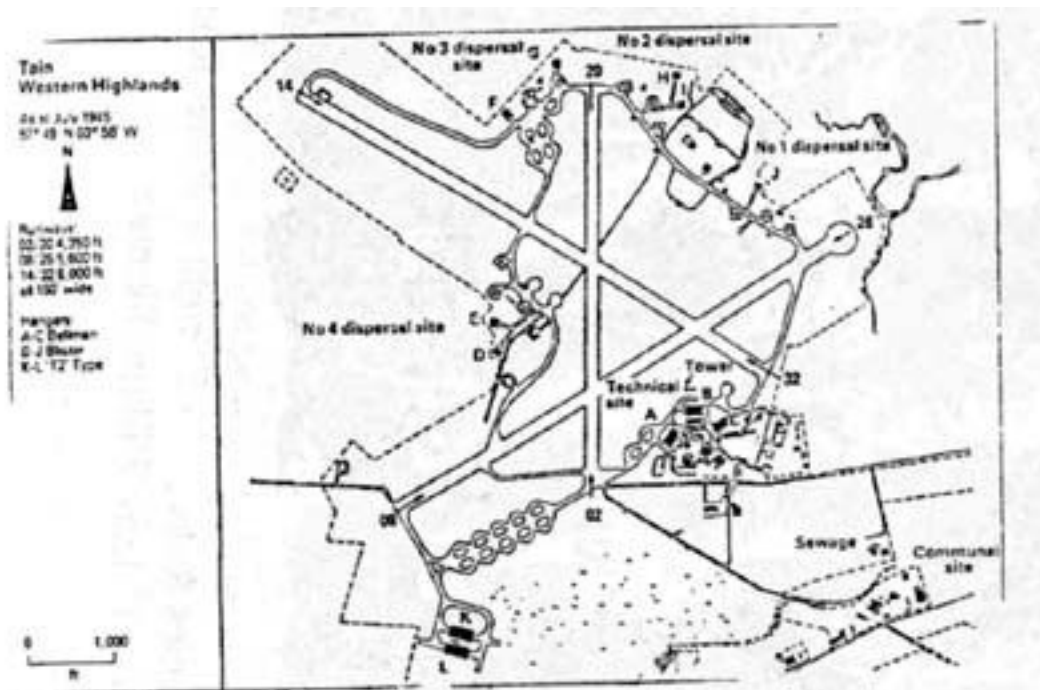
The arrangements for the sale were carried out most expeditiously by Reith & Anderson and Hamiltons Marts Ltd., under considerable difficulties.

On the first day over 1000 cattle were presented. Unfortunately the local demand was limited, as at this season of the year farmers' requirements of both feeding and breeding stock had been provided for. The cattle forward included many excellent lots. Feeding cattle and those in forward condition, notwithstanding the absence of local competition, met a wonderful trade in the circumstances. Calves made the best trade of the day.

Breeding cows, as was to be expected, suffered a very considerable reduction in normal values, and farmers, who have spent a lifetime in breeding this class of stock, were very depressed as the various lots passed through the ring. With the exception of one lot of Irish cattle, all the stock was bred in the area. Irish bullocks sold up to £38 17s 6d, while home bred bullocks fetched up to £40 17s 6d. Calves were topped at £21 7s 6d; breeding cows sold up to £40 10s and dairy cows up to £55.

The second day was devoted entirely to feeding and breeding sheep. Those suitable for feeding met a fair demand but here again local buying was limited. Prices suffered a considerable drop both for lambs and ewes. Hoggs in forward condition realised up to 84/6; half-bred ewes to £6 2s. 0d; Cheviot gimmers to £6 4s 0d; Cheviot ewes to £5 9s 0d; Cheviot rams to £14 10s 0d; Cheviot tup lambs to £12; Border Leicester rams to £10; and Down rams to £7 12s 6d.

The third day was confined to horses and pigs, and in both sections there was an excellent demand. Horses made the dearest trade of the season, considering the quantity exposed. Mares sold up to £108, £103, and £100; geldings to £90 and Highland ponies to £60. In the pig section sows with litter at foot realised up to £34 10s 0d. while stirk pigs fetched up to £5.12s 0d.



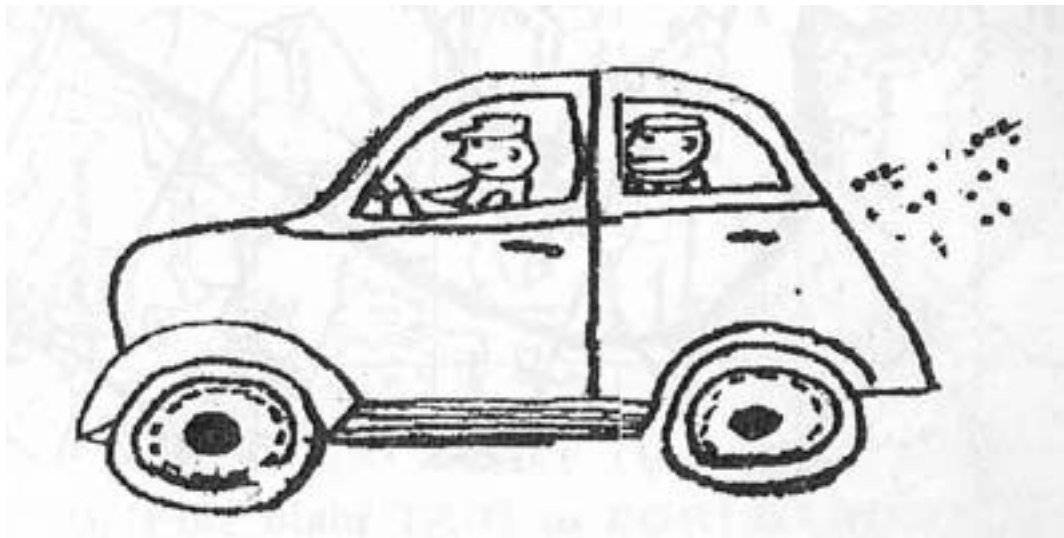
The map shows all the areas around Inver that people were prohibited to enter because the army was using live ammunition. The villages of Portmahomack and Rockfield and the farming areas on Tarbat were cut off completely from the rest of Easter Ross. The only way you could pass through was by travelling at the times laid down by the military, which was at 8.30am and 4.30pm. Unfortunately these times were frequently changed to suit themselves which led to quite a few problems. It was almost impossible to get a doctor or a nurse to visit when they were needed and on a few occasions a teacher who taught at the school but lived in Hilton village had to stay overnight because the guards at the barriers wouldn't let her through.

Once when going to school she found the barriers across the road at Hilton when they should have been open. She had an argument with the sentry who wouldn't let her pass and in the end it was the local police constable who managed to persuade him to allow her through. Being late for school she set off as fast as she could, which wasn't very fast because the tanks had broken dykes and ploughed up the roads and when she rounded one corner to her astonishment and surprise a truck load of soldiers was coming her way.

She couldn't get past because they were taking up the whole road so she had to pull up. The officer in charge gave her permission to carry on but only after some dispute, so she drove away to the cheering of the soldiers who must have enjoyed seeing this schoolteacher get the better of their officer. To get through the area you needed a special certificate attached to your identity card and everyone had to have this and it didn't matter who you were!

Once a very important officer from the naval dockyard at Rosyth arrived at the roadblocks but didn't have the necessary certificate. He wasn't allowed through. You can imagine how the officer felt being told he wasn't allowed to pass by someone who was under him in importance!

We know this gentleman must have gone and got the correct papers because a beehive complete with bees from Rockfield managed to find its way back to Rosyth nailed to the boot of his car much to the horror of his chauffeur.



Andrew's adaptation of the chauffeur driving the officer back to Rosyth.

Extracts from Newspapers at that time

NORTH AND NORTH EAST BATTLE TRAINING

Visit of Regional Commissioner Lord Rosebery, Regional Commissioner for Scotland, and General Sir Andrew Thorne, G.O.C. Scottish Command, have held meeting in the North and North East in the areas concerned by the temporary occupation for battle training purposes. A general statement was made explanatory of the necessity of the step taken.

Replying to questions, the senior surveyor of land for the Royal Navy, explained the methods farmers would require to take in making claims for compensation. The Regional Commissioner for the areas stated that the Authorities appreciated how well they had co-operated and remarked that some of the farmers had been settled on farms by successive generations. The Authorities, he added, were determined to make the disturbance as easy as possible for everyone. Lord Rosebery, in reply to a question, said it seemed that farmers must accept the March 1939 land valuations. He reminded them, however, that their land was not being taken away from them. It was hoped they would soon all be back on it. The compensation to be paid was not compensation for loss of land but for damage. An official of the Department of Agriculture gave an assurance that every assistance would be given to farmers in clearing their land, while General Thorne said it did not mean that access would be restricted immediately operations started. He thought arrangements would be made to give access after that date for the removal of crops.

MOVE OUT ORDER .

Battle training, as already reported, is to take place in the near future in the North and North-East of Scotland. Naturally, according to the territorial extent of the area, the fact, while not resented, will

bring with it relatively an appreciable measure of unsettlement, inconvenience, and it may be real hardship. It will intensify warlike conditions where hitherto these may have been less appreciable. Other parts of the country have, on a vaster scale, had the experience and have faced it with more or less patriotic complacency. The North and North-East cannot and will not do less. Eleven hundred people (not eleven thousand as has been otherwise stated in error) have been 'told to move on.' Relatively, it is a small number, but the fact does not make it less unpleasant, nor less of a sacrifice to those whom it concerns. To them, it is as a bad dream come true. They leave their homes! Even those who have relatives, friends or not distant neighbours, who open their doors to them, will still have regrets, some of them poignant, particularly the aged, the halt or the married. Civil authorities, it is stated, will assist those who are displaced, and it can be assumed that this will be done in the fullest possible way. Meantime, central authorities have been visiting the areas affected, supplementing the instructions with helpful advice. December 15 is the appointed date by which all who have been notified must inevitably 'move out.'

FARMERS' FLITTINGS

Battle training demands wide spaces and not seldom what may be good arable land, land that has been long cropped and nurtured in rotation, producing much foodstuffs. To what extent this will happen in the North and North-East is not stated. Individual farmers affected know. Land so diverted, obviously, will not always be readily restored to cultivation. Nor is it a sure thing that it will all be restored again in our own time. Commitments of international responsibility are yet to be determined, if this Greater War is to be the last war. Farmers have been given until December 15 to disperse their live stock, dispose of their grain, and uplift roots, so far as that may be possible within the date fixed. Wise will they be who make their clearance timeously. Any amelioration as to the date of 'moving out' may be but an idle dream. In other parts of the country many thousands of people have been evacuated overnight and farm stocking moved of in less than two rounds of the clock. Livestock dispersal may be overcome by parcelling out the stock to more distant farms. The major difficulty will be with pedigreed herds, if there are such, that must be shifted. Sympathy with the evicted there will be, but the hardship of it all will be much relieved where the measure of 'good neighbourliness' reaches its highest heights.

CLEARANCE COMPLETE

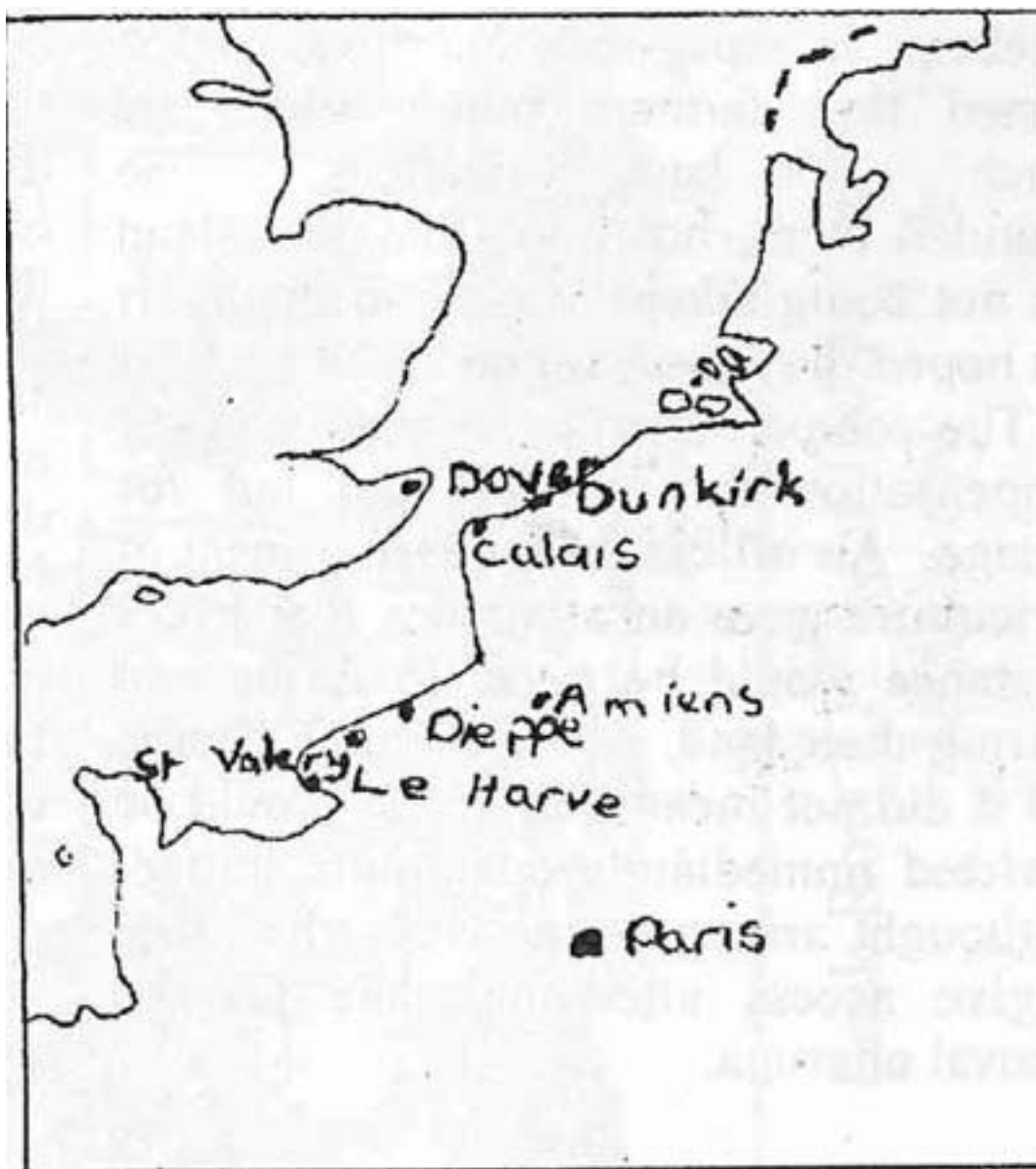
Tomorrow (Saturday, December 11th), the 'Clearances' in North and North-East Scotland, will be officially completed and restrictions will begin to operate in the battle-practice areas wherever located. The way-going has been a hurried, hectic operation; the return whenever it comes, will be less expeditious and if fraught with many difficulties will be faced far more blithely. On the domestic side, particularly where the old and infirm have been cut adrift from the home of a lifetime and all its familiar scenes and associations, the parting has been most keenly felt. Consideration for the disappointments and strange intrusion of it all, has not been lacking. Farmers and small landholders have been greatly helped by the official facilities provided. Grain, roots, feeding stuffs, manures, fertilisers, equipment and house furnishings, these have all been 'flitted' with remarkable speed and with less inconvenience than may have been anticipated when the general order to move off was issued. Regret and disappointment is naturally expressed that Agricultural Executive Committees had not been advised much earlier, and farmers and others could not have been told by these Committees in time to exercise due caution against laying-in winter requirements of the farm. Livestock would have been less numerous than it was and that is but one of the many commitments that could have been avoided. However, there were doubtless sound reasons for secrecy till the last inevitable moment. By last week-end, the 'Clearances' had advanced to its last febrile stage and livestock was dispersed; some to not distant farms and over a thousand head of cattle and 8000

sheep, with 66 horses and 46 pigs has since been sold by auction the removal of which was a masterpiece of order and method.

ST. VALERY

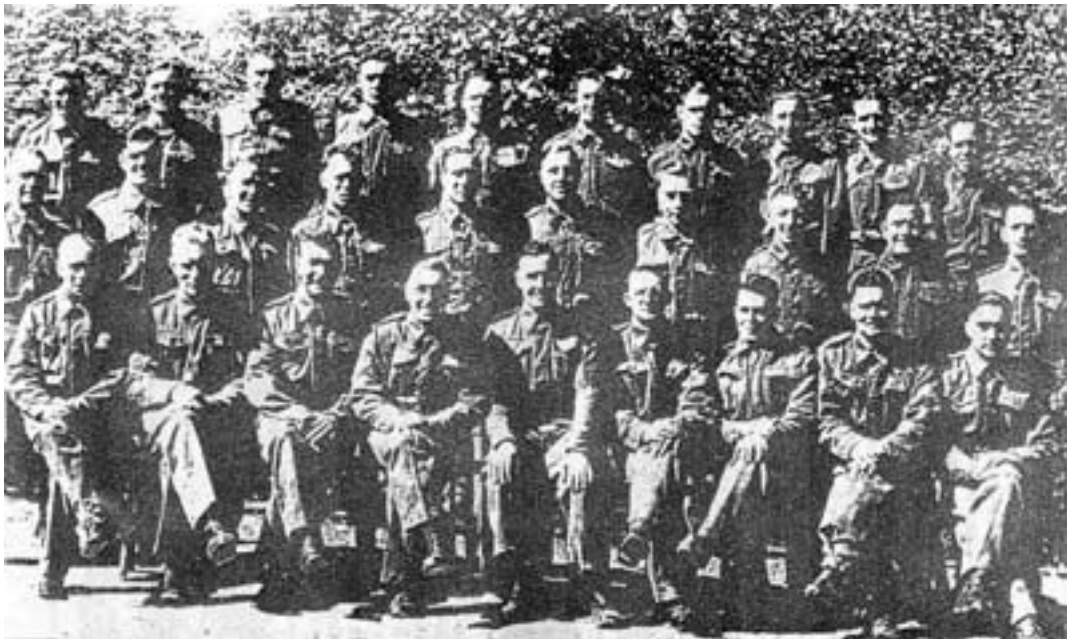
Many local men wanted to join the territorial army because it meant that they would be able to get away from the farm, camp away for two weeks at an annual summer camp and, plus, they would get an extra pay of £3.10s.0d. per year, an army pay for their time at camp. They belonged to the Seaforths in the 51st Division after they were called up.

They were taken to practise at Inkerman Barracks. After further training and practising, they were moved south to Bordon, still training, and then in January 1940 were shipped out on troop carriers to Le Harve in France. It was so cold. They camped in a barn and had to sleep on straw. They washed from a big barrel and their portion was 'McConnachie's Stew'. They added curry to destroy the taste! One of the section's 51st Division was split up in the confusion of the German forces pushing them back.



They were one of the 43 B.E.F. divisions facing 137 German divisions. There were many injuries. The troops made for St. Valery because it was free of Germans. They were totally surrounded and they thought they would get a boat there. They were the rearguard and were pushed towards the coast. They were surrounded by Germans and Stukas were dive bombing them. They had been continuously fighting for 6 days! The men were heartbroken, astonished and dismayed when they heard the bugle play and had to surrender on 11 th June 1940. They were marched through France, Belgium and Holland to Germany. They were put in cattle trucks and transported to prison camps.

They were hungry and cold. Food was scarce. Only when stopping work at Noon did they get a bowl of soup. Work could be digging trenches, down mines, on farms or in stone quarries. At last the Americans liberated them on the 2nd of May 1945. They spent almost five years of their lives locked in prison camps in Germany.



Back row: 1st right James Ross 5th right Walter Ross Middle row: 4th left William Skinner

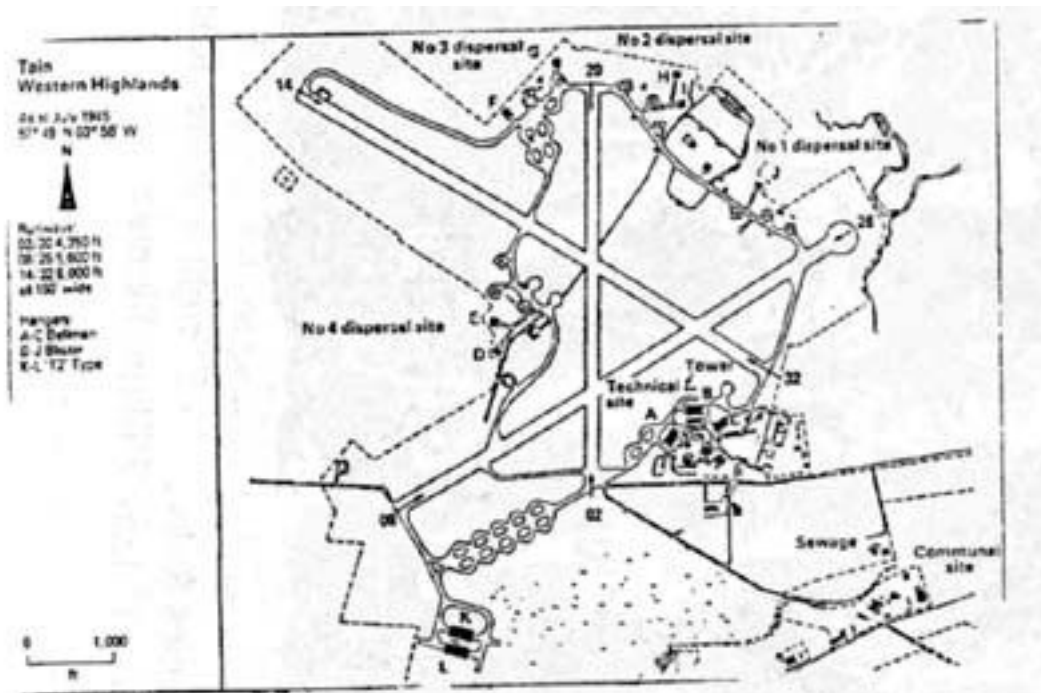
RAF TAIN

At the end of October 1942 a party of American engineers arrived to make extensions to the north-east & south-west runways. F.A.A. aircraft were now using the airfield for night flying and servicing. On 22nd February 1943 the station was transferred to Coastal Command. No Squadrons were stationed there permanently but the station was used as an advanced base for attacking shipping in the Norwegian area.

These Squadrons included Beaufighters of 254 Squadron, Wellingtons of 311 and 347, Hamptons of 405 and Beaufighters of 404.



Tain Range was constructed between the wars and used by both the RAF. and FAA. aircraft. There was also a small landing area and this was blocked with coils of barbed wire, old cars and tractors during an invasion scare in May 1940. The landing area which had served the Tain ranges was developed and opened on September 16th 1941 as a fighter sector station to bridge the gap between Scapa Flow in the North and Turnhouse in the South.



Tain Range

On March 27th 1942 the Halifaxes of 76 Squadron landed at Tain. After some preparation they took off for Norway on the evening of March 30th. One aircraft failed to return. After five days they left and Tain had no more operational flights until late April when the Halifaxes came back. These made bombing raids against the Tirpitz and other German warships in Norwegian waters. Four hundred pound bombs were dropped on the Tirpitz but no hits could be seen because of the smoke screen.

On April 29th 801 Squadron left for Turnhouse and the following day 76 Squadron followed. Tain was now without operational aircraft. The first American aircraft to land here was a Vindicator on April 23rd 1942. The pilot had lost his way flying from Hatston to Longman. In May a Liberator landed in Tain. This was a taste of the aircraft to be stationed here later in the war.

During 1944 Tain was home to a lot of detachments from other airfields and in June another runway was extended. Also at this late date in the war it was decided to build two T2 hangars on the south side of the airfield. From this time until the end of the war Tain airfield continues to be in use.



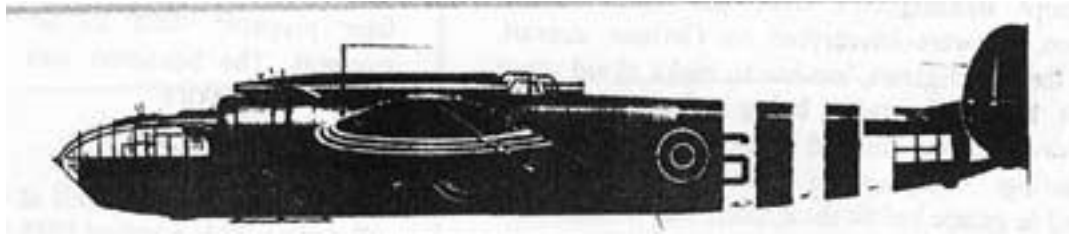
A Halifax Mk VII makes a demonstration supply drop.

No. 311 Squadron was the only Czech bomber squadron. It formed at Honington in No 3 Group on 29 July 1940 and was equipped with Vickers Wellington MkICs going into action almost immediately on night raids on Germany and the occupied countries. It suffered heavy casualties but was fully occupied in these raids until April 1942, when it was transferred to Coastal Command for anti-submarine duties, still with its Wellingtons. It was based at Aldergrove in Northern Ireland, then at Talbenny covering the Western Approaches. In May 1943 it moved to Beaulieu where it re-equipped with Consolidated Liberator Mk VIs in the summer of 1943.

These it flew out over the western end of the English Channel for long patrols over the Bay of Biscay to intercept U-boats coming in and out of the French Atlantic ports. This work continued until after D-Day, the Squadron then transferring to Tain in Scotland for work off the Norwegian coast for the rest of World War 2.



In June 1945 the squadron transferred to Transport Command and began a schedule between England and Czechoslovakia, being based in Prague. It was disbanded there, as an RAF unit, on 15 February 1946.



Although not renowned for being one of the more famous military aircraft the 'Armstrong Whitworth Albemarle' made its mark in more ways than one. In October 1942 an Albemarle, allegedly of Coastal Command, crash landed at Tain and as no Albemarles were deployed yet to any RAF squadrons it was probably a prototype on test trials.

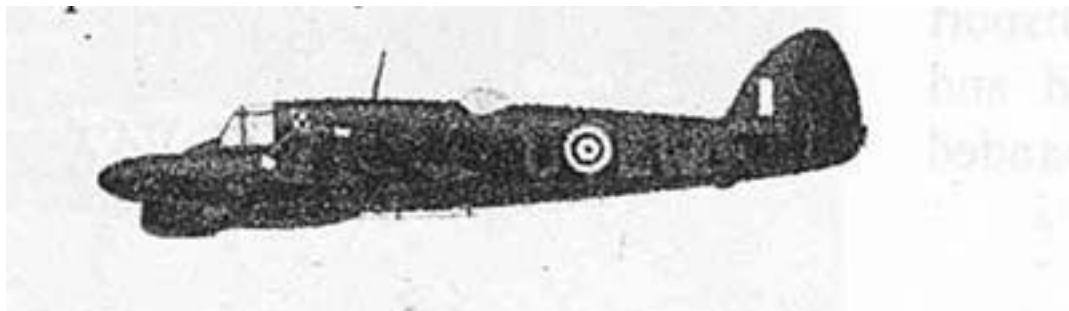
Just some of the Squadrons stationed at Tain during the War.



In April of 1943 Beaufighters of the 404 Squadron made their first sorties from Tain, in the North of Scotland, attacking shipping off the Norwegian coast. In the same month Beaufighters from 144 Squadron arrived from Leuchars and made many operational flights.



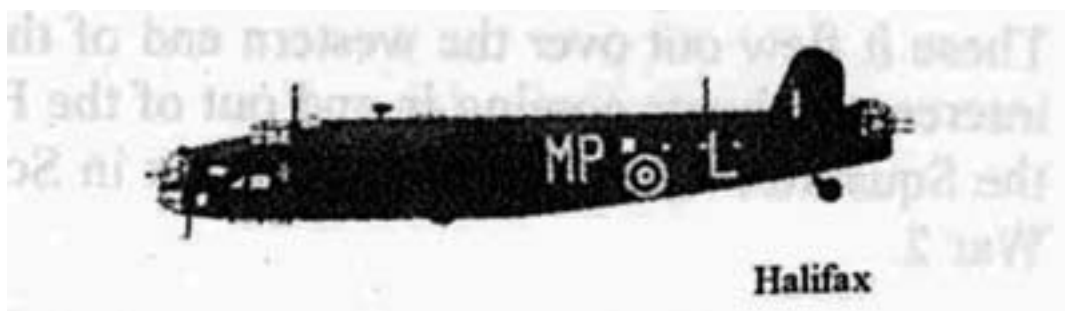
One in particular was on the 8th April when four Beaufighters took off on a patrol and sighted a ship of 4,000 tons with two escorts alongside her. The ship was listing heavily and covered in smoke, and the two escort ships were badly damaged.



Two more Beaufighters went out again in the afternoon but were intercepted by German aircraft. One of the Beaufighters, too late to make cloud cover was hit badly, the radio being wrecked and the navigator wounded, limped back to Tain. The undercarriage collapsed on landing and the crew managed to escape before the aircraft was ablaze.

Tain was already a designated advanced base for Bomber Command and the USAAF was now allowed to use it if necessary. In October 1942 a party of American engineers arrived to extend the runway. Maintenance of FAA aircraft was carried out here until Fearn Aerodrome was fully developed.

Throughout the duration of World War II many RAF Squadrons came and went from RAF Tain with many types of aircraft. There are at least 12 different Squadrons ranging from 'Bomber Command' to 'Coastal Command' The aircraft were mostly British made. There were Hurricanes, Wellingtons, Beaufighters, Spitfires, and Liberators, to mention a few.



Many other RAF Squadrons used Tain as a base during the war. One of these was No 417 Squadron which became operational in 1942, moved from Charmy Down to Tain and one month later prepared itself to be deployed overseas. The Squadron was equipped with Spitfire MkII's.

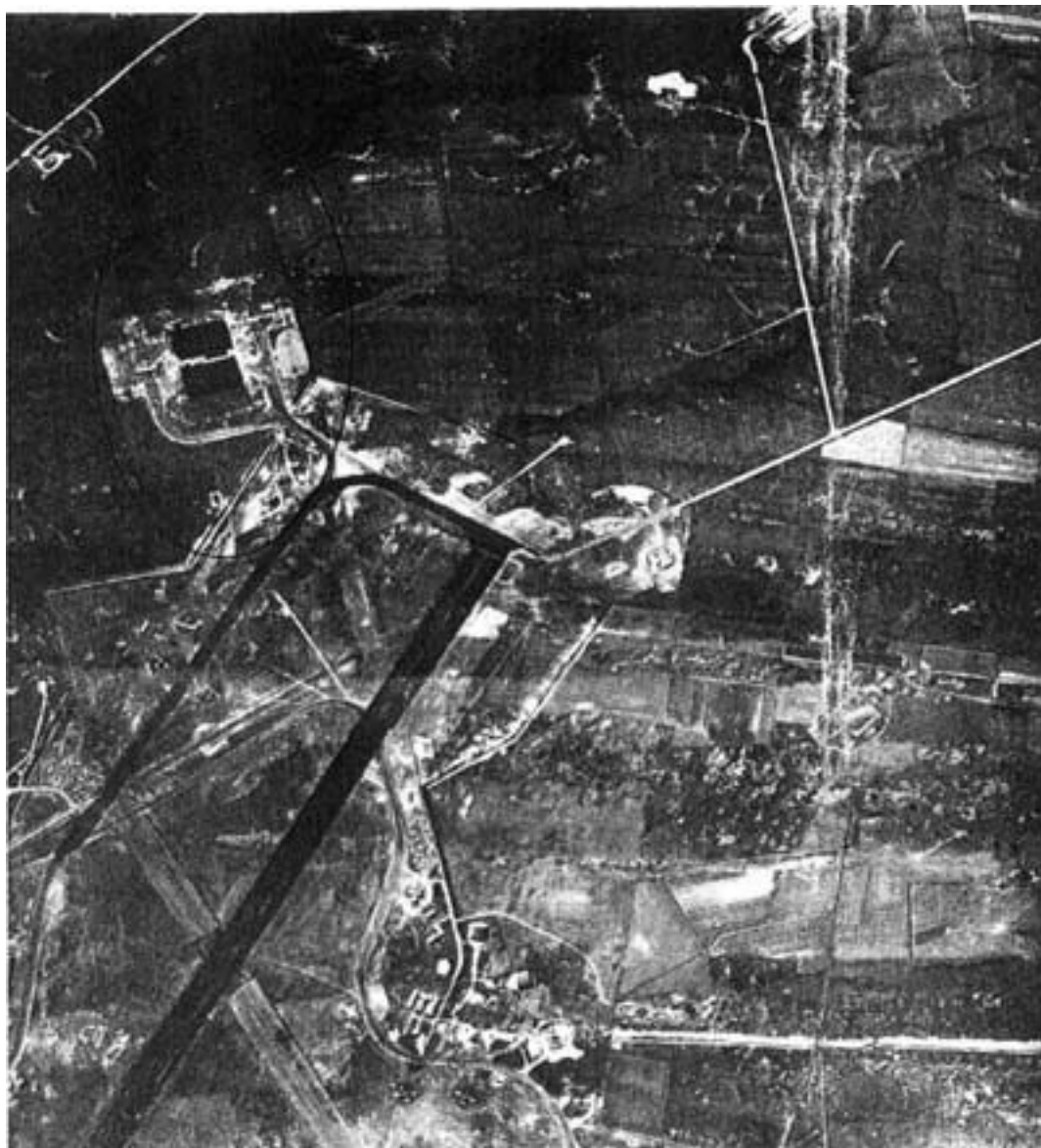
No. 417 Squadron formed at Charmy Down on 27 November 1941 and was equipped with Supermarine Spitfire Mk II's in the following month. Although it became operational in February 1942, it then moved to Tain in Scotland and a month later was prepared for overseas deployment



In a small copse about a mile from the airfield is an impressive and atmospheric survival - the operations block. It was originally intended to control the Tain Sector and the usual miniature theatre with raised balcony was provided. Surprisingly, it is unvandalised. One enters through a door marked 'All Aircrew' and an arrow points down the steps. Other readable inscriptions include 'Tactical Library'. A good torch is essential to penetrate the gloom as no windows were provided of course. The trunking for the gas filtration and air supply is all still in place.

One feels an intruder in this building; it seems like a piece of history suspended in time. It needs to be preserved as a memorial to all the Beaufighter and Liberator crews who jostled through its doors with their charts and wind forecasts and flying gear to the waiting truck for the dispersal point. So many never saw Scotland - or anywhere - again.

RAF TAIN 1945



Photograph kindly supplied by RAF Tain

This aerial photograph of RAF Tain taken in 1945 shows the main runway and if you look closely you can see the planes in the holding area beside the smaller runway (circled top left). This runway cost a few of the young ladies of Inver to lose their precious stockings and have their mothers buy them dungarees! This particular runway was built across the road leading from Inver to Tain and to get to work the young ladies in question had to cycle along the runway from where the road stopped to where it started again (straight white line running across centre of picture from top right to bottom left). In the winter it was a sheet of ice - hence frequent falls and torn stockings. Eventually in despair one young lady at least started to wear dungarees - changing of course into more respectable clothing on arrival at Tain.

Returning

The great fear of the people that they might not be allowed back to their own houses wasn't realized and permission to return was granted. Everyone was not allowed to return at the same time but in May and June of 1944 a steady stream of nearly 200 villagers could be seen making their way back to the village. Despite the sight that was to meet them they were absolutely delighted to be returning.

The houses were damp after the long hard winter, windows were broken and the streets churned up by the tanks. The minutes of a Ross and Cromarty Council meeting of that time reported considerable malicious damage being done to the property in the evacuated area. One person recalls that the mantelpiece in one of the houses was ripped out from the wall, the work of vandals looking for any money that might have slipped down behind it. Another recalls the house being filthy because the soldiers had used it for eating in.



One of the first cars in Inver after the war. Taken in Shore Street.

IN CONCLUSION

It's rather ironic that the people were being evacuated so that the combined forces could practice the Normandy beach landings, but this was not really the case.

The area around Inver had been picked out from the air as the nearest resemblance to the 'Normandy Beaches' where troops were to be landed back in France. But they never asked any of the local people who could have told them the tide moved the sand and the water channels.

At last when they sent the barges from Invergordon to Arboll, the conditions round Tarbat lighthouse were treacherous and only one actually made it, and grounded under Lower Arboll. Things got worse when the barge opened up and out came tank, and disappeared in the channel, which runs from Inver to Portmahomack.

By good luck the tank came out at the other side of the channel. So the army decided that they could not practise the landings but instead they brought the tanks by land and used the area as a shooting range.

Evacuation Claim To Fame

Inver can claim to having the oldest evacuee in Great Britain. Mrs Skinner, who was born in the village in 1851 and had spent her 92 years there, was moved with her daughter to a neighbouring village.

Proud of her grandson, Hector, who gained a Distinguished Service Medal as a gunner in a Russian convoy, Granny Skinner, as she was known, said she was willing to help the fighting men in any way she could.

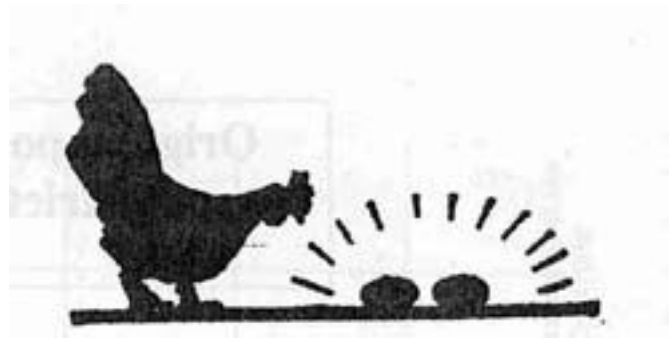


One of the less pleasant finds when the people returned were the tanks and unexploded bombs that were left lying around, and the rolls of barbed wire that were all over the beaches.

The farmers had a very interesting way of removing the shells that hadn't exploded. They used to pull the unexploded shell out of the ground, cover the shell with straw, light a match and RUN! Some shells were still being found as recently as twenty years ago but these were left to the army bomb disposal squad who would get rid of them in a safer way.

Incidents Remembered

During the time of the evacuation people had to move everything from the houses. That was fine apart from some problems namely 'the hens' !. Most people had hens at that time as a source of fresh eggs because as you know eggs were scarce during the war and people got powdered egg, which tasted horrible. Everyone had hens but they couldn't take them with them when they were evacuated. At that time people used to just have chicken for their New Year's dinner, but with all the hens having to have their necks wrung it was boiled chicken every night. A great treat for the youngsters. There would be two fires going at both ends of the house with boiling water and there were so many hens to be plucked that the feathers were floating on top.



Another woman had even greater trouble with her hens. She had wrung all their necks and packed them into boxes ready for taking with her. When the woman came out to her garden after having a meal she found to her dismay that all the boxes were empty. Had they been stolen? No, she hadn't wrung their necks properly and the hens were running wild all over the village. No doubt with their heads to the side watching to make sure they weren't caught again.



It seems the people weren't the only ones who didn't want to leave. There was an old sheepdog belonging to elderly crofting people in Inver. His name was 'Tyne'. They were all put into a house just outside Tain, but Tyne didn't like it, and one day he made his way back to his dear old Inver. He stayed there on his own until the evacuation of Inver was over and his master came home. The soldiers made friends with him and were very kind to him, feeding him what food they had. He lived for some time after that period. He was a shaggy dog and everyone loved him.

Two ladies and their families were evacuated to Embo. One of the ladies prize possessions was a tall new paraffin lamp, which she decided to carry in case it got broken. One of her family was carrying the lamp into their new house in Embo when she spotted a man with a beard. It was the first time she had ever seen a man with a beard. Her first reaction was of fear and she dropped the lamp and shouted, " Oh! Look at that man with the feathers on his face!" and bang went the lamp.

One day a lady and a friend walked five miles from Tain to Inver. The village looked beautiful but eerie and she declared that not a bird was singing. They were both in her house when they heard a bell ringing. Her hair nearly stood on end with the fright she got, but when she recovered she suggested they should go and investigate. They walked to the hall and looked in. A boy was standing in the pulpit addressing two or three other children sitting in the hall, while another boy was ringing the bell. They were from a farm outwith the evacuated areas and when they saw them they ran away.

Despite the orders that were given there were inevitably things left behind in the rush. One man's dog for example refused to leave the house and was still sitting on the doorstep when his master returned several months later. How it survived is a mystery. Maybe the army fed the dog, or it caught its own dinner in the form of rabbits.

In Inver before the evacuation tinkers used to go around the village in ones or twos selling brushes or pans. When they heard that Inver was going to be evacuated they seemed to appear from nowhere and lots of them were knocking on doors. They weren't selling anything now but looking for the furniture and things people were throwing out.

One lady, even though she was only young then, remembers tinkers coming round and her mother and father trying to sell a couch to them. They only wanted two shilling & six pence but the tinkers wouldn't give any money, so they got it for nothing. Other bits of furniture went onto the beach for a bonfire. Anything else that wasn't wanted found its way to the shore as well, and many a promised 'spring cleaning' was carried out then.



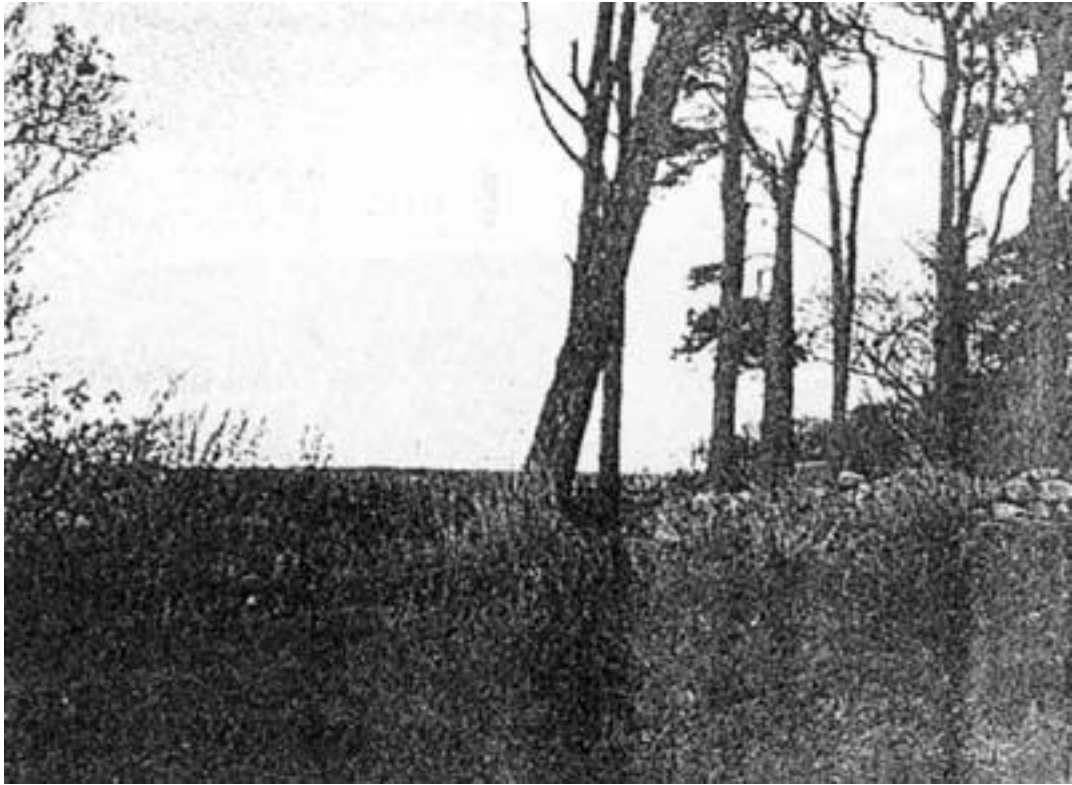
An interesting story was told of an old man in Portmahomack who lived in a small shed at the back of the 'Oyster Catcher'. He was a cabinetmaker and he wasn't very pleased with the quality of the coffins that were being made so he decided to make his own. During the war there were evacuees staying with him, a small family, but the coffin was taking up precious room so it was upended with lined shelves and used as a cupboard. This unusual piece of furniture could be seen if you glanced through the window.

Once Finlay Munro saw a plane swooping down low over an area of ground where he had newly buried a sheep, and once he thought a bomb had been dropped at the back of the steading which was in the restricted zone where he shouldn't have been. On going round the steading he bumped into a sergeant who was looking for the bomb, but he didn't find anything. Strangely nothing was said as to why Mr Munro was there in the first place.

Extract from 'Third Statistical Account of Scotland the County of Ross & Cromarty'

At the 1951 census, the population of Inver numbered 191, of whom 97 were males and 94 females. This shows an increase of 40 compared with the year 1836, as reported in the new statistical account of 1837. The census also revealed 71 persons in the parish as able to speak both English and Gaelic. Most of these 71 live in Inver. The village was completely evacuated from December 1943 to May 1944 on account of pre-military manoeuvres.

The evacuees were housed in the burgh of Tain and adjacent parishes. For long primitive to a degree, the village has been greatly modernised within the last ten years, houses have been enlarged, gravitation water and sanitation have been introduced, and electric light power made available. When the evacuation took place, it was widely felt that Inver was finished as a community; instead, it seems only to have received a new lease of life, at least as a residential village



Many dykes damaged by the tanks were never repaired.

WORLD WAR I ROLL OF HONOUR

This commemorative plaque is housed in the Church of Scotland Meeting House, New St, Inver. It was put there to honour the soldiers from Inver who fought in World War I. We have tried to name the men below as accurately as possible, but the ink has deteriorated in some places with age.

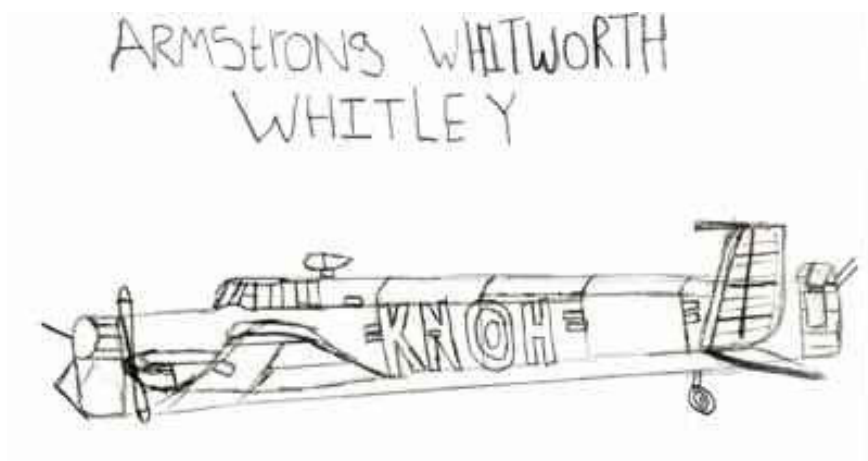
Sergeant Major James Skinner 2nd Seaforths
Staff Sergeant John Ross Cape M Rifles
Sergeant James Ross 4th Seaforths
Farrier Sergeant James Ross 1 st Army Corps
Sergeant James Fraser Australian Contingent
Corporal Donald Fraser Lovat Scouts
Lance Corporal Donald Ross Lovat Scouts
Private Alexander Ross Lovat Scouts
Private Munro MacRae Lovat Scouts
Private William McKay Lovat Scouts
Private Andrew McKay Lovat Scouts .
Private Ronald Wilson Lovat Scouts
Private John Ross Lovat Scouts
Private Donald Mackay 4th Seaforths
Private Walter Mackay 4th Seaforths
Private James Mackenzie 4th Seaforths
Private Donald Skinner 4th Seaforths
Private Alexander Ross 4th Seaforths
Private John Fraser 2nd Camerons
Private James Ross Welsh Fusiliers
Private Andrew Skinner Canadian Contingent
Kenneth Ross A.B., R.N.R.

A PLANE CRASH AT INVER, APRIL 30TH 1942

MAP REF. O.S pathfinder sheet 124 885833

Early in the morning, a Whitley bomber Z6641 from No. 19 Operational Training Unit at Kinloss crash landed on a sandbank at Inver near Tain because of engine trouble. This area is known locally as The Eash. The crew were unharmed and having launched their emergency dinghy, they paddled ashore and found their way to the village shop on Main St. which was the only place in the vicinity with a telephone. When the owner "Jimsie" arrived he found the whole aircrew outside waiting for him!

The next thing to be considered was how to remove the aircraft from the sandbank which was separated from the mainland by sea and mud. It was decided that the only way would be to dismantle it and bring it across in bits. In the words of the official report ... "Salvage conditions were rendered extremely difficult owing to the strong current (10-12 knots) in the channel between the mainland and the sandbank; to the considerable rise and fall of the tide in this area and to the strong winds prevailing at the time". Salvage was successfully completed, the aircraft being dismantled on site and floated across to the mainland on a raft constructed of 24 fifty gallon drums and plank secured to a rope on the shore which was used to pull it backwards and forwards.



Each day the parts were taken away on a long low-loader lorry known as a 'Queen Mary' and these activities provided entertainment for the villagers and at times as many as 30 people would gather on the shore to watch the activities. The aircraft parts were dragged up the slope, now concrete but then just a sandy cart track.

Three men working on the crashed plane were billeted with Jock and Annie Moore at Summerton farm. A Mr Len Harvey kept in touch with them for several years and I am indebted to him for much of this history and extracts from his diary. The pilot was Sgt. Einarson but no other crew has been traced.

It is rather ironic that having survived at least twelve bombing raids over Germany, it was transferred to a training unit at Kinloss and within a few months it ended up on a sandbank at Inver!
Kindly contributed by John Fleming

And 50 Years Later!

PLANE CRASH IN EASTER ROSS

An RAF pilot ejected to safety on Monday seconds before his Jaguar jet plane crashed in a ball of flame on the RAF Bombing Range at Morrish Mhor, Tain.

The plane came down at the Eastern end of the range, only half-a-mile or so from the village of Inver, and directly across Inver Bay from the local school.

First on the scene was a helicopter from RAF Lossiemouth, which picked up the pilot and flew him to Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, where he is suffering from a fractured shoulder and other minor injuries. According to a RAF spokesman, he will be detained for a few days for observation and tests.

The pilot was on detachment from RAF Bruggen, West Germany, and had been on a routine training flight from RAF Lossiemouth. The RAF said a Board of Inquiry had been set up to probe the cause of the crash.

Among those nearest the crash were the 55 pupils of Inver School. Their headmaster, Mr John Niven, said the first they knew of it was when they heard a bang and felt the vibration. Then they saw the smoke and flames. The children had got excited when they saw the fire, but Mr Niven did not think the noise had particularly frightened them, as they heard bangs and felt vibrations regularly.

The crash was also seen by office workers at an engineering firm at Balmuchy, Fearn, one of whom Mr Sandy Mackenzie, 80 Obsdale Park, Alness, had witnessed the last crash at the Tain Range four years ago, when two U.S. Air Force 1.11s collided in mid-air on a practice bombing flight.

The incident has given rise to considerable concern in the area.

Jet crashes near school

A RAF Jaguar jet crashed near a school yesterday while on a practice bombing run at a range near Tain. The pilot ejected safely and landed on the range near his aircraft, which burst into flames. Mr John Niven head teacher of Inver Primary School, Easter Ross, said the fighter had crashed between half a mile and a mile from the school, which is the closest inhabited building to the range. The pilot, who has not been named, was flown by helicopter to hospital in Inverness. The aircraft was flying out of RAF Lossiemouth but was based in Germany.

School in jet scare

A school shook yesterday as a jet bomber plunged out of control. Children at Inver Primary School in Easter Ross felt the force of the crash a mile away. The pilot of the RAF Jaguar fighter-bomber ejected safely and was taken to hospital in Inverness suffering minor injuries. Firemen took more than three hours to extinguish the blazing aircraft, which was on a training exercise from RAF Lossiemouth.

1945 Photo Gallery



Clearing the road.



Snowdrifts at Red Dyke, Tarrel.



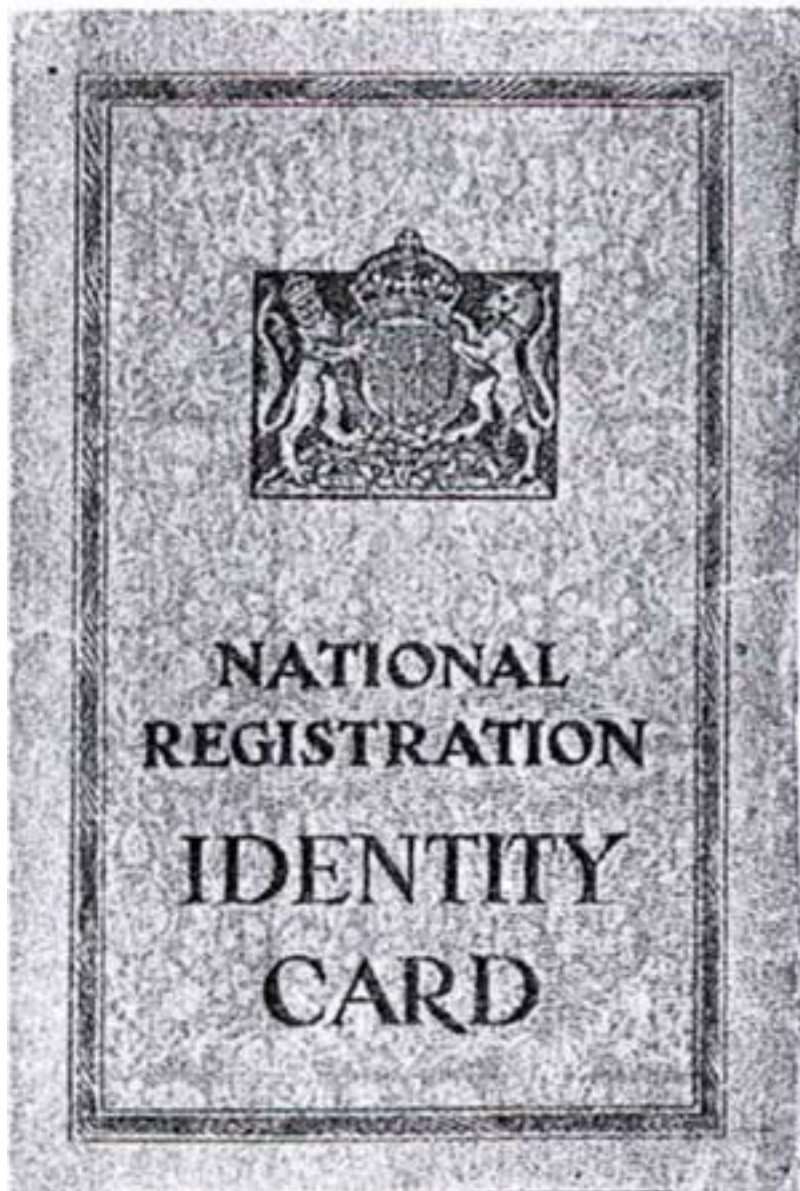
Romance still blossomed even in wartime. RAF wedding (taken outside Royal Hotel, Tain.)



Czechoslovakian children. Their fathers were stationed at RAF Tain.



On the buses. Work still had to go on and many jobs were now taken up by women.



You needed one of these to get about.



RAF party at the Tain range.



Street parties on 8 June 1946 to celebrate VE Day (8 May 1945).



Street parties on 8 June 1946 to celebrate VE Day (8 May 1945).

Normandy Beach Landings



This aerial photograph shows the 'white' sands which were chosen for their resemblance to the beach landing sights at Normandy, but they proved unsuitable due to the channel and shifting sands. In fact an aerial photograph taken during the war would probably have shown quite a different picture.

Photograph kindly supplied by RAF Tain.