

## Memories of Invergordon in World War II

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Attending sessions:

Peter Agate, Graham Applegate, Barbara Brandon, Alasdair Cameron (AIC), Valerie Campbell-Smith, Simon Campbell-Smith, Donald Clark, Ann Crawford (AnC), Peter Dolan, Uisdhean Douglas, Jean Durdle, Elizabeth Fraser, Catherine Gaston (CatG), Carol Graham (CaG), Colin Graham (CoG), Martin Graham, Sue Hamilton, Alan Kinghorn, James McCaig (JMC), Jim MacDonald (JM), Iain MacGregor, Una McIntosh, Anne McKerracher, Duncan MacLean (DMn), Duncan MacLeod (DMd), Veda McClorey, Rosemary Mackay, Margaret MacPherson (MaM), Murdo MacPherson (MuM), Eddie Malicki, Sheena Markam, Kay Milliken, Anthony Mitchell (AnMi) Mary Patullo, Fiona Porter, Jacky Roberts (JaR), Joan Ross (JoR), John Ross (JR), Margaret Ross, Jacquelyn Rother (JaqR), Nigel Ross, Carolyn Samsin, Amy Seaton, Donna Sinclair, Malcolm Standing, Ron Stewart, Rona Thomson, Preston White

Also interviewed / other memories published elsewhere / information forwarded to us:

CCC: Memories of C.C. Chapman - information supplied by AK, in Marinell Ash's papers at HA D161/1/2/51; CD: One of the Few: A Wren's Story by Jim Peter published on line <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/85/a4139985.shtml>; GG: Grace Gorman, interviewed 9/2016; DAH: Donald Hendry (extra memories); DAH-I: 'The Tunnel' – notes about Inchindown (copy in Museum); AKK: Allan Kilpatrick; EM: Memories of WRNS at Invergordon – information supplied by AK; in Marinell Ash's papers at HA D161/1/2/20; HM: Hamish MacLeod; RR: Richard Rostock; GS: Royal Navy locations at Invergordon Remembered by Stoker 1<sup>st</sup> class David Gillies who was based at HMS Flora and HMS Flora 2 during 1943 (copy in Invergordon Museum); 1980 panel: panel prepared by schools for Community Council exhibition in 1980s (held in Invergordon Museum)

Published accounts:

DAH1: Invergordon September 1939 (Tain & District Picture Post), DAH2: The Cromarty Firth in WW2 (Tain and District Picture Post), DAH3: Airfields around the Firth (Tain and District Picture Post); DAH4: High on Bully Beef and Carrots (?Tain and District Picture Post), AAF: Air Field Focus: Invergordon by Jim Hughes, 1999, STTS: Steep Turn to the STARS by Jim Hughes, rev. ed 1999; AAW: Alness at War, booklet produced by Alness Heritage Centre; PS: Invergordon: a Town at War (booklet produced by Park School); TNH: *This Noble Harbour* by Marinell Ash, 1991; INCH: Allan Kilpatrick 2010. 'There was oil in them there hills,' *Subterranea*, Sept. 2010, issue 24.

Other abbreviations: AP= aerial photograph, HA=Highland Archives, IA= Invergordon Archive [www.theinvergordonarchive.org](http://www.theinvergordonarchive.org), ITCM= Invergordon Town Council Minutes (available at Highland Archive Centre, Inverness), TNA=The National Archives,

### Accommodation of troops

- Army.
  - There was a fairly big army camp in the Castle Grounds, and some of the foundations are still there. It was there for much of the war (DC). This is remembered as the **Transit camp** (for Jellicoe trains). JR remembers that the first part of the camp was on the avenue leading from Tomich Road to the Memorial,

with timber framed huts (shown in some photos at the end of the war) and later the camp was extended into the Castle Gardens. The camp had a cinema and after the war when it was used by the Poles, a dance hall in one of the big sheds (JR).

Seaforts are remembered there (JR). HM remembers that the camp was built at the beginning of the war, to serve as a transit camp for troops to and from Orkney and Shetland. He remembers that the huts were nissen huts, half round clad inside and out with corrugated iron [some ribs survive in the Castle Garden area]. All the huts were sited under large trees for camouflage. Later in the war when it was not necessary to keep a garrison in the Northern Isles, other regiments were stationed there. At the end of the war Polish soldiers were stationed there for some time. HM has marked on a map where the wartime buildings were located. The huts on the avenue where the Poles were frame-built, not nissen, and other foundations elsewhere in Castle Gardens area show that there were frame bit huts there too. Some concrete foundations survive in the Castle Gardens area. In the area near the dance hall, there are also a number of masonry fragments probably from the Castle which was demolished in 1928. To the northeast of the area with the dance hall are some deep pits, function unclear.

- 200<sup>th</sup> Battery of 67<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment were quartered in huts at Saltburn from Jan 1941. No. of men who could be spared to use a rifle is 220 (TNA WO 199/2900). APs clearly show gun emplacements and huts which could have been accommodation.
- Document from Feb 1941 mentions the A Company, 8<sup>th</sup> Seaforth Highlanders (TNA WO 166/2328). Document also refers to some Invergordon defences by 6<sup>th</sup> Cameron Highlanders
- Seaforts & Camerons were near the present Catholic Church, where they had offices (the first house on the north side of the street) (JR). This was the HQ for the 5<sup>th</sup> Bn Territorials (Caithness & Sutherland) Seaforth Highlanders (DAH1).
- Army accommodation is also remembered at Joss Street near the old gasworks, where there was also a NAAFI, established late in the war or perhaps even postwar (JR). The site for huts for the NAAFI first appears in the 1943-1944 valuation rolls. (however, documents also show Joss Street as Naval – see below)
- October 1944 Operation Uplift took army personnel from Iceland, and ferried out replacements. Lorries driven by WAAF drivers collected army personnel from the Yankee Pier at Dalmore. They came armed with blankets to thaw out personnel after the journey, drove them to huts in Invergordon. The men were later sent south. (AAW pp. 4-5).
- Captain Hay stayed at House of Rosskeen during the war (HM)
- 1939: 5<sup>th</sup> Bn Territorials (Caithness & Sutherland) Seaforth Highlanders provided guard for oil storage tanks and dockyard, and were billeted in the Drill Hall and local Church Hall (DAH1)
- 6 men from 105<sup>th</sup> Battery billeted in 'Eilendonan' [Ellan Donan], Saltburn [now no. 9 Saltburn] (TNA)
- Hutsments arrive in Oct 1939 for 105<sup>th</sup>. Also arrived a hut 21' x 16' for erection as Medical hut for 297<sup>th</sup> AA Battery (TNA)

- RAF

- In 1939 there was a lot of tented accommodation, but unsatisfactory and problems with gales (TNA AIR 28/397).
- **The Links Camp** within the current distillery property held men from the Air/Sea Rescue just postwar (BB), but it probably also held personnel from other RAF units during the war. Invergordon Town Council Minutes show that at the end of the war

it was used by the Navy (ITCM 4-3-1946). The buildings in the camp were still there until the late 1950s, when it was demolished to make way for the distillery (DMd, DC). It appears quite clearly in the 1947 AP. In the late 50s after the buildings had been cleared and before the distillery was built children played there (AS, RS).

- There were also RAF troops in huts at the **school**, and billeted in parts of the school. JR remembered tents there first in the fields before the huts were built, and initially very rudimentary latrines of corrugated iron, with buckets needing to be emptied (JR). However in Oct. 1942 Secondary II and III returned when the RAF moved out of the lower classrooms (PS). After the war some buildings were also erected on the foundations of wartime huts, for example in the southeast corner of the field (RS).
- According to docs, there was an RAF accommodation ship, the **S.S. Batavier II**, which was in Invergordon from July 1941 and sailed south in Dec 1942 to become converted into a hospital ship (TNA ADM 199/646). When at Invergordon it held RAF officers (before they had accommodation at Dalmore) (JR, DAH). DAH remembers that it was for the RAF Operational Training Unit, and was a pre-war Dutch ferry. He remembers it there until 1944. Research by RS notes that it was a Dutch owned ferry built in 1921 which had been providing a packet service between Rotterdam and London, and returned to commercial service after the war.
- Documents in TNA record other buildings in the town taken over and used for accommodation by the RAF. Eg Royal Hotel, Ship Hotel (Ship Inn), 43 High Street (meningitis case required evacuation). Valuation Rolls show that between 1938 and 1946 the Proprietor of the Ship Temperance Hotel was Isabelle McIntosh
- Documents record that there was also some accommodation near the **Naval Playing Fields ('the Rec')** for OTU4Coastal: June 1941 hutt camp for senior NCOs, and corporals and airmen in tents nearby. Officer's mess however in Dalmore House (TNA AIR 29/609). The buildings to the east of the Naval Rec building are remembered as RAF accommodation, mainly for training of air crew. They were used by squatters after the war (JR).
- Accommodation pressures were so great that in Sept 1940 36 airmen moved to granary at Inverbreackie Farm. Only available for 3 weeks until the threshing started (AIR 28/397)
- Documents from TNA stated that the Caledonian Hotel had been earmarked for the navy, but due to pressures was used by the RAF on the condition it would revert to navy or rescued mariners should need arise (TNA AIR 28/397). DMd was told that at the Caledonian Hotel, the Macdonald family were living in the end flat as the other flats were taken over by the RAF. Two of the young girls in the family, who left early for work in the bakery, found it easier to climb out of the window and down the drainpipe due to the corridor being full of RAF equipment.
- In early 1942 work was already underway for accommodation and other buildings for RAF at Dalmore, but it didn't open until early 1943 (TNA AIR 29/609)
- Early in the war some airmen slept on the floor of the Masonic Hall (PS)
- Valuation rolls list WAAFS at Achnagarron. However, JR does not remember a camp there, although there were WAAFS were also at Milnafua, Alness (Obsdale Road) (AK, CS, JR). These were approached via the Achnagarron cross roads (JR).

- Navy
  - Some documents describe buildings earmarked for naval accommodation, eg. Caledonian Hotel (28 King Street; later taken over by RAF), YMCA. DG records his billets as being in the building at the end of the path to the Naval Canteen/Recreation Building [this may be the building later used as changing

rooms]. His son recorded on the IA (picture 650) that the Navy billets for HMS Flora 2 were in the field across the railway from the church.

- A WRNS rating recalls being stationed Oct 1943 at the Links Camp, off the shore road, and later in High Street. (EM). Invergordon Town Council Minutes confirm that the camp was used by Navy towards the end of the war (ITCM 4-3-1946).
- Royal Navy requisitioned Royal Hotel (PS).
- Docs mention 'R.N. Barracks (Cromlets)', which also had a Sick Bay Feb 1941 (TNA WO 166/2328). This is remembered as the site of the first Naval Hospital on Cromlet Drive which between the wards was part of the Primary School (DAH1).
- Valuation Rolls also mention accommodation including Joss Street (where there was also a NAAFI and canteen, and 161 High Street).
- Naval Officers stayed in the house opposite the War Memorial at the bottom of Seabank Road (Ardnamara). This was the former provost's house (JR, DAH). They were also in Cherrybank near the entrance to the dockyard (JR)
- WRNS were at the Wrennery on the 163 High Street, a half-built site that the Admiralty took over and converted for accommodation for WRNS (AK). When the Wrennery opened it held 6 officers and 73 ratings (TNA ADM 199/646); memories in PS booklet say it held 200. DG recorded that in the back garden of the wrennery were 2 nissen huts for them; these show up on the 1947 AP. One of the nissen huts was for sleeping in and one for dining (DG)
- Other WRNS were at HMS Flora. AK read that they were here in preparations for the D-Day landing (source: Marinel Ash notes in HA).
- EF remembers WRNS at the building which was the YWCA in WWI and later became the **Viewfirth Hotel** (currently Tuckers Inn). AK was told that WRNS used to use it as accommodation when coming off duty when they didn't have time to go home. Valuation rolls show that during the war it was owned by Roderick Allan and called Viewfirth House. UM spoke to Davy Murdoch, who purchased the building in 1965. He said that during WWII the Viewfirth was taken over by the War Office for use by Land Girls, with the Matron the only permanent resident, living in a room above the front door. He said that after the war it belonged to Andrew Allan. In 1952 Mr Askew bought it for around £500. He cleared out the top floor of all the cubicles, leaving only two empty rooms, and then held dances and whist drives. Mr Murdoch bought it from Mr Askew in 1965, and sold it in 1979 to Mr Cuthbertson.
- There was said to be a WRNS camp at Rosskeen holding c. 150 WRNS (PS). CS was told there was a WAAF camp at Rosskeen, though perhaps the WRNS were meant, or this refers to Achnagarron. DMd was told there were Polish women at the Rosskeen camp. A former WRNS remembered the camp as very uncomfortable, with corrugated iron huts and small stoves (PS p. 58)
- Documents describe two houses on Joss Street requisitioned, and then handed back in 1945 and let locally (ITCM 1-10-1945). These are remembered as the two opposite the air raid shelter.
- John Ross remembers Combined Operations Force at the Transit Camp during the war.
- Personnel were also billeted throughout the town, including in the homes of BB, DC, DMd's grandmother, MaM's aunty at Ness Cottage (now demolished, but was situated opposite 75 Clyde Street). It is likely that almost everyone in the town had someone staying with them. Sometimes there were whole houses requisitioned, eg Craigmore which housed Col Mackintosh from Kirkcaldy (PS)
- YMCA originally earmarked for the navy, but due to pressures 20 cubicles used by RAF (TNA AIR 28/397). It also held a forces canteen, staffed by lady volunteers in the town (DAH1).
- Land Army girls were in Rosskeen West Manse later in the war (JR)

## Buildings – see also notes from TNA

- The Naval Recreation building near the site of current Invergordon Academy was for Naval personnel. The buildings to the northeast however were for the RAF (DC), and this is verified by Naval plans.
  - The large building to the north of the RAF accommodation huts is remembered for use with parachutes. . After the war the building was occupied by Highland Poultry Products and known locally as 'The Hennery'. Eggs and poultry products were processed there in the 1950s and possibly up until the early 1960s. It was eventually demolished and the site is now occupied by the BT Telephone exchange (RS).
  - After WWI, in memory of Mr Harry Dodds and his wife and three children, lost on HMS Natal, a brick building containing a billiards table was built at the north end of the Naval canteen. Mr Dodds was factor at Novar Estates. This building was demolished. (JR)
  - A corrugated iron building in the field to the west of the current Academy was used by the groundsman (James Chapman, known as Groundy) as his storage hut. It still survives, and has a plaque commemorating its use, erected by his son in 2013.
  - The building situated near the Castle Road entry to the Recreation Grounds on the path leading towards the Naval Canteen building was later changing rooms for the academy pupils. A wartime plan from 1943 in HA labels this Fire Party's Accommodation (R111 14-1-3), which ties in with DG's memoirs. RS and JR remember it as a wooden structure.
  - The 1945 AP of the area clearly shows the Naval tennis courts which had a wooden fence around them, and playing fields (RS, DC).
  - CCC described the area in detail, and all the different playing fields (his father was the groundsman) (see separate sheet). He noted the following buildings in the area: NAAFI Canteen and Officer's Club (which was actually on Cromlet Drive, unless there was another nearer the playing fields)..
  - DAH remembers 10 football pitches, a Fleet Canteen, Naval Tennis Courts and Officers' Club, all used by the fleet during their pre-war visits, and once war declared open now to all servicemen in the area (DAH1). The Officers' Club is remembered as on Cromlet Drive [on the site presently occupied by 'Lismore'], though perhaps this is what CCC remembered.
  - The playing fields were numbered
  - Air raid shelters are also remembered there and are visible on the AP (see below, under defences). One still survives.
- A building is visible at the NE corner of the tank farm in the APs, particularly 1947. This building still survives with large doors, and is remembered as a fire engine shed (DMd). On a 1943 Naval plan it is labelled 'Trailer Pump House,' Similar other buildings survive in the field behind the carpark near the church, just inside the Seabank Road tank farm entrance and to the west of the Admiralty Pier. The first two are also labelled Trailer Pump House.
- The King's Harbour Master's House and the adjacent properties were taken for Naval HQ (DAH1). This is remembered as 45 Saltburn Road, which has a surviving air raid shelter behind it.
- Old Naval Hospital on Cromlet Drive had between wars been used by school. It was now taken over again by the Navy.
- RAF HQ was originally in Masonic Hall but at outbreak of war had to move. First it went to 41 High Street (TNA AIR 28/397), and in Feb 1940 to Oakes Villa (TNA AIR 28/398). By Dec 1941 it had moved to new offices adjacent to Training Section (TNA AIR 29/609).
- HQ for 5<sup>th</sup> Bn Territorials (Caithness & Sutherland) Seaforth Highlanders who provided guard for oil storage tanks and dockyard in 1939 was in the large house beside the current R.C. Church (DAH1)

- Dwelling house at Saltburn requisitioned for HQ of 297<sup>th</sup> AA Battery Sept 1939 (TNA WO 166/2328)
- Park School was used by different groups:
  - The Navy had offices and post office there as well as detention centre (DG). They also used the Cromlet primary rooms and art room (the old Naval WWI Naval Hospital main building) on Cromlet Drive (PS)
  - RAF had lower classrooms, library, and added buildings in the playing fields (PS). JR remembers parachutes hanging from the ceiling of the lower Academy building (now the library)
  - 1940 ITCM 13<sup>th</sup> April 1940 note that RAF are using the Science and Art Room for RAF Sergeants, but Navy would like to use it for a Chief Petty's Officer's Mess if the RAF vacate it.
  - Primary school pupils went only half days, P6-7 went to Bridgend in Alness, S1 went to Invergordon School, S2-S6 went to Dingwall by train. (1980 panel, JR)
- Naval Signals Office. A WRN records that in 1939 this was in the Royal Hotel, but when she returned to Invergordon in 1943 it had moved to a bungalow on the shore road next to K.H.M.'s on Saltburn Road. She also worked at the Dockyard Signal Station on the Central pier. (EM).
- Commercial Buildings (probably referring to Commercial Hotel at 84 High Street)
  - RAF mess in their premises there, feeding so may there had to be relays (PS)
- Church Hall taken over by military (PS p. 82)
- The YWCA was in a wooden hut on Clyde Street, where the car park is now to the west of Bank Street (JR). The council offered £10 in rent for it, but refused, and it was dismantled (ITCM 4-12-1944). It was dismantled (ITCM 5-2-1945) and ended up in Avoch.
- Taylor's garage at the east end of the High Street had just built an extension before the war, and then the army took it over (JR). Military also took over A. Taylor's garage on Clyde Street and a house, as well as all the Naval Tailor's shops on the harbour front as workshops for the Marine Craft Unit (JR).
- 'Re Garages there was also Andrews garage further up that lane between Outram Street and Clyde Street. This was split into two parts, the large garage and smaller one alongside. If I remember right the RAF took over this garage during the war. Correct me if I'm wrong.' (IA added by Doug Will on 23 June 2012).
- A garage is at 1 Shore Street, and a structure appears on the APs, suggesting it may be wartime. A wooden building is remembered at the junction of Shore Road and Clyde Street near the garage, but no longer survives (DMn, RS). It appears in the APs.
- The RAF control tower is remembered between the NAAFI and David Ross's house at the end of the Ferry Slip. There is a picture in AFF p. 26, and STTS p. 37. Alness Heritage Centre also has a picture of it.
- The building to the west of the end of the Ferry slip appears to be without a roof in some APs, but it clearly had one later. It was Willie MacLean's store, and burnt down on a Sunday afternoon in the 1950s (DMn). They had to push the fire engine there as it wouldn't start.
- Jetties were built on the Admiralty and Central piers. These are remembered as being made as part of D-Day preparations (JR). They were steel piled and concrete decked structures some 4 metres wide with bollards, ladders and railings, usually referred to as the 'Inner Arms' of the piers. They were demolished in the 1970s by METREC who had been engaged in recovering salvage material from HMS Natal, and the deck sections of the pier were dumped along the foreshore west of Invergordon as coastal defences (still visible). (RS)
- The owner of the building to the east of the Admiralty Pier (on the WWII plan labelled 79/94 (Workmen's Dining Room and N.S.O. Tractor Garage) was told by a visitor that during the

war this buildings was used for a top secret function. He was also told that his building had the only telephone line on the base at one time.

- Invergordon Town Council minutes mention an Emergency Auxiliary Fire Service Station built in 1939. This is thought to be the one on Clyde Street, behind the Council Chambers at 56 High Street (JR, RS).

## Defences

- In 1939 the only A.A. defence ashore was a 3 inch gun of WWI vintage manned by gunners from a T.A. Unit from Dingwall [DAH1]. **Was this also used during WWII? Where was it?**
- Gun Emplacements were remembered at
  - **Saltburn** (at the west end of Saltburn). These appear clearly on APs but nothing remains of the camp (it is now under cultivation). Only the sewer pipe on the beach remains. It was manned by ATS women and Royal Artillery (DAH). The rubble is still visible beyond the east end of the layby at the east end of Saltburn (a distance from the original camp). (RS) They had been demolished by the time of the 1975 AP.
  - On **Bull's Hill**, behind King George Street, where Queen's St and Bermuda Road are now (JR). This is remembered near the pillbox (DMn). On the 1947 AP (NCAP-000-000-153-574) a nissen hut and another building appear to the west of the Cromlet tank farm on an elevated position, and this might be the site.
  - Shore Road (for the RAF). (DC). Nothing survives. It was located on a strip of ground on the seaward side behind the first house on High Street. There was a dump area behind it which had concrete bases (JR). This is probably what other accounts refer to when they mention the gun emplacement at the old **Coalyard**. The area appears to be present on 1950s maps, and didn't disappear until the road was built in the 1970s (RS). In the 1945 AP there seems to be a wall around the emplacement, but in later APs it is not there. DMn played on concrete bases there as a child postwar. He remembers a windsock with a pole there. Gone by 1981 AP. In the IA no. 1238 Doug Will remembered it as possibly having Bofors, but no documents refer to Bofors in Invergordon, nor are they remembered by others. including DAH and JR.
  - On the Saltburn Road, just to the northeast of the Hospital (DMd). The remnants of a small gun emplacement can be seen on aerial photographs, and the pillbox which protected it on the shore below.
  - On the shore at the end of the Ferry slipway was a wooden temporary gun emplacement (JR).
  - Guns of the minesweepers and store ships etc were at the pier and anchorage, most equipped with Lewis guns (DAH).
  - 'There was a gunpost **between the middle pier and the dockyard.**' (Invergordon Archive 1238 Added by [Doug Will](#) on 18 August 2009). No one else remembers a gun emplacement there nor can one be seen on the 1947 AP (the 1945 AP is too indistinct, but there is a gap between the boat slips and the easternmost petrol tank). However, documents mention other gun positions at the dock area (see summary below). There is a gun post labelled on a wartime map in HA, situated to the west of the Admiralty Pier (HA R111 14/2/11).
  - Documents list following gun posts in Invergordon in Jan 1940: two 3" guns at ING1 [probably Saltburn], two 3" guns at ING2 [probably Rosskeen], 1 Vickers twin at Saltburn, 1 Vickers twin at Donkey Bridge, 1 Lewis gun post with two guns west of Recreation Park, 1 Lewis gun post with two guns at Inverbreakie, 1 Lewis gun post with two guns at docks. In addition, the RAF have light automatic posts at the docks (two guns to guard seaplane anchorage) and four guns SW of oil tanks (TNA WO 166/2328)

- **Rosskeen** near the boat club. The APs show a cluster of buildings and gun emplacements in the field next to the Thief's stone. Documents mention the Rosskeen heavy AA battery. Nothing remains here – it is now under cultivation. Until relatively recently the Command Post survived (PA).
  - ‘I understand that during World War Two Invergordon was protected by two Ack-ack batteries, one to the east ... and one to the west. The western battery was in the field beside the boatyard bend at Rosskeen and the grey concrete building still in that field was, I think, the Admin block [more probably the Command Post]. There is no remaining visible evidence of the eastern battery. However I have seen an aerial photo taken 1945 where it can be seen, although, by 1945 the guns themselves had been removed to be used in areas by then more in need of their services, such as the south of England.’ (Invergordon Archive 560 Added by [Alasdair Drummond](#) on 17 March 2008).
- To the **north of the Naval Recreation Building** in the next field on the road to the farm was a gun emplacement (JR). It may not have been there for all the war years – though the 1945 AP shows some buildings still in the field. Nothing remains here – it is now under cultivation.
- Duncan MacLeod’s father was a member of the Auxiliary Unit. The bunker was said to be in Newmore Wood.
- Air Raid Shelters are remembered:
  - At either end of the naval Recreation Building. The one near the current academy and Grundy’s hut is no longer there, but a large one further to the north survives, although both entrances are blocked. They are visible on the APs.
  - A large one was at near the tennis courts and school. It was built of concrete. It was demolished to build a skate park c. 10 years ago (MaM).
  - Two large air raid shelters are depicted on APs to the southeast of the school, and one is remembered there until relatively recently (DC). Both no longer survive.
  - An air raid shelter was behind (to the north of) the old hospital/Cromlet school on Cromlet drive (RS). This appears on some wartime plans in private collection (217243). The plan shows another to the west, at the south of the Cromlet Tank Farm. Neither survive.
  - The brick building at the end of Joss Street is remembered as an air raid shelter by some (eg DG, who remembered as in use by Navy and locals), but by others as a fire watch duty shelter for WRNS (DC). DG noted that the mound of earth to the east of the end of the structure was not there during the war, and that it used to have concrete facing on the brickwork. Post war it has been used as coal sheds by houses opposite. There are chimneys – are they original?
  - 39 High Street. No longer there. Foundations survive, which may be those of a garage. (RS)
  - Behind 41-43 High Street (JR). No longer survives.
  - JR remembers wooden (!) air raid shelters covered in earth in the High Street gardens, but later the concrete one near the tennis courts was used.
  - 45 Saltburn Road (one of the Admiralty Houses). Still survives.
  - Links Camp area (RS, MaM). It can be seen on the AP, near the long building which was used by the distillery. No longer there.
  - Within the hospital grounds (JD).
  - Town Council Minutes in 1940 discuss where air raid shelters should be placed for members of the public away from their homes. They decided on Municipal Buildings,

Commercial Bank, Royal Hotel, Commercial Hotel, Glasgow Warehouse, Cherry Cottage (21 Feb 1940). It is not known if they were built or what format they took.

- Town Council Documents mention that there were 450 **Anderson Shelters** for Invergordon: 350 four-person ones and 100 six-person ones.
  - Small sheds are near houses off Outram Street and Clyde Street. They are clearly remembered as Anderson shelters (DG, JR, JR, UD, AS). Although many have been reused as sheds and are now above ground, during wartime they were sunk into the ground. AS remembers going in one which had bunks.
  - Similar small sheds on 1947 aerial photos behind Joss Street could be surplus shelters supplied as sheds when the houses were built. The houses do not appear on the 1945 AP but do appear on the 1947 photos.
  - Anderson shelters are also remembered at Admiralty Cottages.
  - An Anderson Shelter is said to be in garden of 46 High Street. Not seen.
  - 142 High Street had an Anderson Shelter, but this was removed in 2016 (CG). Some pictures were taken prior to removal.
  - 11 Gordon Terrace. It has recently been taken down (MaM)
  - 15 Cadboll Road had one (CoG)
  - Near Balintraid pier (MaM)
  - After the war Grace Gorman's family bought two Anderson shelters for 5 shillings each (GG)
- Trenches were dug near the school in what had been backyards of houses on the High Street (PS p. 66).
- Home Guard had shooting practice at target range at Polnicol, and had sniper instruction at the huts where the distillery is now (PS p. 71)
- Documents mention 4 Home Guard section leaders (see Defences resources sheet). The Home Guard trained in the yard where the WWI Fitting shop was, off the High Street and extension of Munro Street, at the end of the Admiralty Pier (where the Fitting Shop was located in WWI). (DC)
- Pillboxes:
  - A Pillbox survives on Inverbreakie Road (guarding pipeline route and access to town).
  - Another is to the south of King George Street in heavy vegetation.
  - A third is lying on the shore near the Donkey Bridge, not in its original position. It is relatively intact suggesting it was not dragged far, but no one remembers a pillbox in this area.
  - 'Talking about pillboxes is the one just past the tanks going along the path to the Bulls Hill; also the one just before the Donkey Bridge at the bottom of the Bulls Hill; also the two great square lumps of concrete by the Donkey Bridge.' (Invergordon Archive 1238 Comment Added by [Doug Will](#) on 30 July 2009)
  - Pillbox remembered near South Lodge (not too far from present school) (JR). Presumably this guarded the road block which was there.
  - A pillbox was situated at the entrance to the dockyard area, on the road leading to the pier and at the intersection with the High Street (JR)
  - NE corner of Seabank tankfarm (on APs?)?
  - Allan Kilpatrick has identified from APs a pillbox to the NW of Cromlet tank farm, and another possible one to the N.
  - There appears to be a pillbox on the 1947 AP on the road from Blackpark Farm to the dump.
  - DMd played in the pillbox near the road on the Saltburn Road just to the northeast of the Hospital. It probably guarded the road and gun emplacement set to the north.
  - Castle Dobie at the camp for workers on Inchindown tunnels. ***Is it still surviving?***

- Documents mention 27 road blocks, with three major ones at Saltburn Road (Roadblock no. 1), Tomich Road (no 2) and Alness Road (no. 3)). These are said to have the up-to-date V steel inserting pieces (TNA WO 199/2900)
  - DC remembers two road blocks on Castle Road. The one near South Lodge School was a tree on a concrete block on one side, and a cartwheel on the other so that it could be rotated. The other, closer to the castle, was simply criss-crossed wires which could be pulled across.
  - Allan Kilpatrick has identified a road block near Links camp and another possible one on Saltburn Road.
  - No. 22 road block was near the station (TNA WO 166/2328)
  - A road block on the road from Blackpark Farm to the dump appears on the 1947 AP and what appears to be pillbox nearby.
- Remains of a rail block are still lying near the Donkey Bridge.
- The documents mention flame traps, but no one remembers any.
- Barbed wire can be seen on some aerial photos (particularly 1941 and 1945 APs). MaM remembers wartime barbed wire at Milnafua still into the 1960s.
- Armed soldiers patrolled the tanks and dockyard (DAH1)
- JR remembers poles in all the fields around Invergordon, said to be there to prevent enemy aircraft.
- Ammunition was stored at Northfield. The gatehouse had a flat roof (DMd). After the war it was converted to a house, with a pitched roof. To the south of the gatehouse is original fence and gate. Three large ammunition stores still survive, with camouflage paint, as well as some brick buildings to the south. The two to the west have been modified later by the farmer.

### **Camp on North Side of Alness-Invergordon road near Thief's Stone (Rosskeen Battery)**

- This is remembered as site of AA Battery (see above).
- The camp is remembered as having dances, with ATS personnel (UD)
- There were also buildings for storing ammo (JR)

### **Links Camp**

- See Accommodation RAF. Before moving to Dalmore/Alness this appears to have been mainly RAF. After that it was used by the Navy.
- Later we hear of other forces using it: a WRNS (EM), workers bricking up the oil tanks (DAH).
- At the turning into the Links Camp, just before a gate, a lane led to towards several buildings near the shore. These are listed on Naval plans as the S.C.E. (Superintending Civil Engineers) Offices, so were Naval, even before the Links camp was taken over by the Navy. Aerial photos show gardens, sheds and an air raid shelter in the complex. The large building was not demolished when the rest of the Links camp was demolished to make way for the distillery. RS recalls this as a wooden single-storey building in the east corner of the site, used as office accommodation in the early-mid 1950s. It was used as an admin block for the distillery until replaced. JR said his father had worked in that office after the war, working for the Admiralty.

### **Entertainment**

- Cinema in the Arts Centre, where films were shown Mon, Tues, Fri & Sat (JR). DG recorded that films were on Mon, Tues and Wed., and on Fri, Sat & Sun the same films were shown at the Naval Canteen over near the Cromlet storage tanks (DG)
- Dec 1939 Documents mention a mobile cinema (AIR 28/398)

- Peaches and Screams gave frequent concerts – eg E.N.S.A. Concert party in Town Hall in July, Aug and Sept 1940. (TNA AIR 28/397)
- Sports often listed in the documents – eg see TNA AIR 28/397 for Nov 1940 which include a rugby match with Abbey School from Fort Augustus, and football teams from Fleet Air Arm, Evanton and Royal Navy Hospital
- John Ross remembers Canadian Forestry personnel playing softball in Invergordon.
- Dances were held at Town Hall, YMCA and Bissets Hotel (now occupied by Easter Ross Vets at 25 High Street).
- There was a shooting lodge for officers at Kincraig (JR)

### **Aircraft maintenance etc**

- Crews came ashore at the Ferry Slip (BB). Plans show mesh there.
- Refueling of flying boats was from the Central Pier (PS p. 62), though JR remembers that this pier was for naval use, and that flying boats were generally refuelled at sea by RAF boats.
- Floating dock remembered anchored near target near Ferry Slip. Research by Malcolm McKean says a floating dock came c. 1938 from Pembroke (Invergordon Archive 1380). Admiralty accounts also mention an RAF floating dock based at Invergordon which was towed to Bowmore in Dec 1942 (TNA ADM 199/646).
- There was also a small Admiralty floating dock (AD16), perhaps to service craft which dealt with seaplanes. Research from Malcolm McKean suggests it was in Invergordon 1942-1943 (Invergordon Archive 1489).

### **Polish Camp (see also display in Museum and Invergordon Archive)**

- Advance party came in 1945 to set up in Castle grounds and their first task was to clean around the huts (PS p. 86). This suggests that there were already buildings there – possibly from the Transit camp? There are also some memories that Norwegians might have been there before the Poles.
- There were also Poles in 1945 at Saltburn according to documents in TNA (an advance party arrives July 1945)
- There was a hall for dances, and the concrete foundations might still be there (UM). Later some of the concrete bases at the camp were used as car parking for the Games which took place there from the 1950s-1980s (CS, MaM, RS, V C-S)
- ...there is nothing to show where the camp once was apart from the monument itself. My father told me to the right of where the monument is standing now used to be the check point entrance into the camp. It was the 25th Battalion that was there. Brigade headquarters was in Saltburn. The monument was built by the soldiers of the camp with stones taken from the beach. My father was one of those who helped build it as was Edmund Gorecki and Max Malicki. I have some old photos of the camp which I will look out for you to see. The camp was also famous for its dances! That was where my Father met my Mother Margaret Shivas. (Invergordon Archive no. 82. Added by [Vanda Hardy \(Zawinski\)](#) on 22 January 2008)
- The water tank was one of the last remaining remnants of the Polish camp - it was certainly still there in the early 60s. I notice in this picture that there are female troops on parade. (Invergordon Archive 81, Added by [Bill Geddes](#) on 04 December 2005). The females in the picture are Polish women - members of the Polish army stationed in Invergordon...nothing to do with the WRNS!!! (Added by [Irene Bell \(nee Grant\)](#) on 17 August 2008). The water tank appears in a photo in Invergordon Museum and IA no. 571.
- 'The polish monument was built by the soldiers of the polish army who were camped there. The camp stretched from the castle road right to the Tomich road connection'(Invergordon Archive 85 Added by Harry O'Neill on 14 July 2004)

- ‘They were the 25th Infantry Division, a unit of the Polish 4th Infantry Division, and finished their training in Northern Scotland. The original plan was to move the division to 21st Army Unit in NW Europe for action there, but with the end of the war the move never took place. The 25th remained in Scotland at Castle Camp Invergordon (interesting I never knew the camp had a name other than the Polish camp). On the gradual demobilisation of the Polish army at the end of the war, many of the soldiers returned to Poland eventually forming a basic unit of the Polish Re-settlement Corps. By then (1947) it was no longer based at Castle Camp at Invergordon.’ (Invergordon Archive 571, Added by Harry O'Neill on 04 January 2008)
- ‘When Dad first came to the camp some huts were already there. He thinks the Norwegians were in them before the Polish soldiers. One of the first things they did when they arrived was build the Polish Eagle in the picture. They then went on to build more huts. There was an officer’s mess, the soldiers mess, dance hall, chemist, doctors and cook house. The communications hut is on the right of the picture. The commander’s hut is on the left. When they built the eagle Dad told me they used to keep chasing the cats off it as they kept scratching the mound!’ (Invergordon Archive 1091 Added by Vanda Hardy on 26 February 2008)
- Documents from July 1945 describe advance parties arriving in Invergordon at Saltburn (WO 166/16584). August 1945 note Polish troops at Saltburn, Castle Gardens and Rosskeen camp (with officers named) (WO 166/16584)

#### **Area at top of Seabank Road near entrance to tank farm**

- Wartime APs show complex with nissen huts and other buildings. 3 nissen huts, a framed building, an air raid shelter and the garage still survive.
- One story is that the large building behind sign shop was used as a brick factory during the war (Reids of Forres) (JR). It is thought they were made for facing the tanks. However, none of the buildings have chimneys, kiln or other indication for locally made bricks. Perhaps this was a storage area during work to line the tanks?
- DAH remembers that this was a Naval area. Several nissen huts were used for storage. The garage and workshop were used from 1940 until the dockyard closed.
- DG states that HMS Flora 2, later renamed to HMS Flora was on the road to Saltburn, to the south of Seabank Cottage. He placed the Royal Navy transport and pay office as near the location of the Sign Works/Garage on Seabank Road

#### **Tank farms**

- All tanks in Seabank and Cromlet tank farms had bricks lining on the exterior (DMn, JR, CoG, RS). The brick protection was made after Tank 13 was demolished in the German air raid. DAH remembers that the Links camp was used for huts and dining for bricklayers and helpers who were from a firm of building contractors from Edinburgh (DAH). Long after the war, perhaps the 1970s, the bricks were removed from the exterior of the tanks and the resulting rubble was used to provide coastal defence to the road and grassed areas between Invergordon and the Donkey Bridge.
- Mrs Gorman’s mother was hurt when the oil farm was bombed in 1941, when the explosion shattered glass at her home.

#### **Inchindown / Pipeline**

- A big bonfire was said to have been ready to light if there was an invasion
- AAW has account from Alan Ross of working on the camp.
- See also ‘There was Oil in them there hills’ by Allan Kilpatrick [originally published Sept 2010 edition of Subterranea].

- EF worked at Inchindown during the war, one of two women doing office work in the office situated in a field below the farm. She started there in 1938, and remembers the large workforce including locals, Irish and Norwegians. DMn's father and MR's uncle also worked at the camp, and after finishing work there left to Inchindown. The construction caused a lot of dust, and this is remembered to have been a real health risk for those working on the tunnels. EF remembers it as a very busy place. She worked 8:30-16:30, and bicycled to get there. The contractor was Baldry, Yerborough & Hutchison
- VM's father was a driver working for a London firm (Burn Transit) and hauled the spoil away. There are some stories that some of the spoil went to Strathrory. He also went to Scapa Flow later in the war. Later much of the spoil near the tunnels was crushed and used for foundations of the smelter (MDm).
- The pipelines and heaters were in use until 1982 (DAH-I). The tanks were being run down before that, but the Falklands War meant a revival of the tanks (DMn). One Pump House was situated at Tomich. It has now been converted into a private home.
- Another Pumping House was the building near the church (a WWI Generating Station). Sturrock Power installed the heaters in the later 1950s for pumping oil up; before that the pipeline relied on a heating line in the pipe. *Is this correct?*
- The brick building near the pillbox on Tomich Road housed equipment which provided cathodic protection in order to control corrosion on the oil pipelines. Another building approximately 1 km east of the junction on Scotsburn road (beside the water storage tank for Castle Dobie) contained this equipment also (RS). Both date to post WWII (AKK). Bannermans own the building at Wester Stoneyfield. There were two large transformers inside (since gone) and a time clock/controller to feed the heaters for the pipeline, some remains of the power feed (cable is approximately 2.5 inch braided and coated), emerge in RR's garden, along with a cable pole. The land was originally gifted by Major Pollock McColl for the war effort. There was a sump outside and dockyard workers would come up periodically to drain waste water from the valves pit. (RR)
- The non-local workers on the Inchindown tunnels were housed in a camp at **Castle Dobie**. The parish records note that the Castle was ruinous by the 1700s, and it is not clear whether any remains were there during wartime (CS). EF remembers just one long building of brick or concrete for them to stay in. There was also a pillbox. Gracie Fields performed at the camp (MR).
- Conditions during building were dangerous and unhealthy, and there were reports of fatalities and injuries from rock falls. Many workers later contracted lung and chest problems. (DAH-I)
- All work was by hand digging. A small railway was built to take spoil away to the heap (DAH-I)

### Dockyard area

- Maps in private collections show Naval buildings. 1947 AP also shows details.
- Gate at entrance – see picture on IA 1610. 'I think the item shown is a Chacon. This was basically a weatherproof, iron-framed wooden container, about 7 feet by 10 feet and 8 feet high. They had lockable doors at one end, and four metal rings on top for craning. They were widely used in the Navy and dockyards for transporting naval stores (by road or rail), or as temporary 'Lay Apart Stores'. Named after the Chatham dockyard and stores depot (CHAthamCONtainer), they were the forerunner of the modern ISO containers used by shipping, lorries and for storage. Wasn't the dockyard gatehouse just a few yards further 'in'? (IA Added by [Rod Bell](#) on 18 November 2014). DMn remembers an elevated building there, which was used as a watchhouse for the dockyard area after the war.'
- The building which was the Boiler Shop in WWI was remembered as a target repair shed before and during WWII (JR)

- There was an RAF floating dock anchored near the ferry slip from 1938 until it was towed away, perhaps 1942? The dock was only suitable for the older flying boats, the Londons and Stranraers, and not the Sunderlands and Catalinas (DAH). See IA 1380 for summary of research by Malcolm McKean
- The area from the road running N-S to the east of the Natal gardens was fenced off with barbed wire all the way down to the dockyard area (where MSIS is currently located) (DMn)
- DMn remembers targets being pulled up on the slipways near the Boat Shed
- The Boat Shed is a WWII building, but has been reclad. Inside it has been stripped out and refurbished. JR has a picture of the boat shed in WWII.
- JR's farther worked shunting trains at the dockyard. After the war trains took goods to the west of the Ship Inn, at approximately NH 70681 68382, stopped there, and then a Fordson tractor pushed the wagons to the dockyard (Dmn).
- The current Pier Shop is a building on stilts, the ones to the south are concrete, the ones to the north are brick. This building was situated near rail lines. It is not on the 1930 AP, where three sidings and a coal dump are shown. The wartime plan lists it as N.S.O. Transit Shed, with western side transferred to become an S.C.E. store, and the eastern side to become a B.A.O. store. It currently has metal windows, but these date post war (DC). There is still coal underneath.

### Piers

- The Admiralty Pier was used by the Navy, the Central Pier primarily by Navy, and the West Pier by the RAF. In practice there was some flexibility in usage of all three piers at Invergordon by military and requisitioned commercial vessels (RS).
- Crews came ashore at the Ferry Slip (BB). Plans show mesh there. The Ferry Slip, built by Telford in the early 1800s, was on the shore road opposite The Ship Inn. It has been engulfed in recent developments in the area.
- There was D Day training at the piers, with extra jetties attached to the piers for D-Day training.
- The current Signal Tower on the Admiralty Pier was built in the 1950s when the pier was substantially rebuilt (DC, DAH). The original Signal Tower at the end of the pier was manned during visits of the Home Fleet from Sept 1939. It was manned by Navy Signalmen and marines, and was very primitive (DAH). AK thinks WRNS were there involved with signalling in the Firth, but DAH does not remember this. (This was different from the RAF control tower which was near the Ferry Slip, between the NAAFI stores and a house.) It can just be made out in several 1947 APs.
  - According to AFF, a control tower of temporary brick and timber construction to a local design (EN/ALS/49/43) was built on the Admiralty Pier to help the RAF (AFF p. 23)
- RAF O.T.U. air-crews who were training as pilots and engineers were ferried out to the flying boats at anchor in the west harbour by RAF marine craft which came alongside. (DAH)
- The Central pier was truncated after the war, perhaps in the 1960s, when the navy had finished using it. (DMn, RS)

### Lights on Nigg Bay

- RS has identified a number of wooden posts these in the intertidal zone along Nigg Bay. The wooden poles were each supported by three stays anchored in the seabed, with a light on top of the wooden pole and connected by a cable. Most are now stumps only. No one could remember hearing what they might have been used for. CoG suggested they might have been 'dummy lights' to fool enemy aircraft.

- For night flying in the firth, a flarepath consisting of 8 buoys on the points of a compass were used. Navigation warning lights were situated at Invergordon, Saltburn, South Suter (AFF p. 21)

## Other

- The hospital had been built at the end of WWI as a Naval hospital, and was taken over by the County after the war. During WWII it reverted to being a naval hospital. There was a nurses' home at the back of the hospital. Casualties arrived at the Admiralty Pier by hospital ship (DAH1).
- CS met a woman who drove an ambulance which was based at Invergordon Hospital. She remembered getting an army escort through to Evanton aerodrome to pick up anti-biotics and other medicinal supplies which arrived by air.
- Academy School pupils went to Dingwall once school buildings were taken over (PS, p. 66, DAH1), though BB remembers some pupils going to Alness. JR remembers going to school for only half a day.
- The car park near the church was the site of the Royal Navy Fire Fighting Instruction Course (DG). He remembers there being a mess hall and cook house, and the main Royal Navy Office. There were no gates here to the base, but the oil field had the tall fence round it during the war. After 1943 the unit moved to the area now where the distillery is located (the Royal Navy unit site did not go back as far as the distillery).
- There were pigeons: TNA AIR 28/397 mentions in 1939 that S/LDR. Vernon, R.A.F. Pigeon service arrived to discuss the formation of a pigeon loft at Invergordon. Mrs Elma Leslie remembered that there were pigeons in RAF HQ at Oakes Villa (PS). JR also remembers the pigeons there. DAH notes that pigeons were taken onto boats, and were released if the boats went down at sea (DAH1).
- Four troop carriers were based at Invergordon: the Amsterdam, the Prague, the Lady of Mann and the Ben My Chree between 1941 and April 1944. (The Amsterdam and Lady of Mann arrived July 1941 and the Prague in December 1941). They were used to send army personnel up to Orkney, Shetland and Faroe Islands (RS, DAH2) with The Ben My Chree ferrying troops as far north as Iceland (RS). JR remembers that the personnel marched down King Street Tuesdays and Thursdays to join the ships.
- An ammo dump survives at Northfield, with three hangars (two altered), including original camouflage paint. Another was also near the shore in Invergordon, perhaps for Seaplanes (FP, JR, AK)
- Servicing of boats used by RAF flying-boat units was initially a floating dock off Dalmore pier, but then after 1942 also at Meikle Ferry (88 Maintenance Unit). Initially very primitive conditions with tents but later some permanent buildings (AFF p. 21, 24-5).
- Early in the war gas masks were assembled in Invergordon for distribution around the country (TNH p. 232). As elsewhere, in Invergordon people advised to carry their gas masks (DAH1).
- Local men and women were employed for a variety of tasks including by the Admiralty in the naval stores (DAH1)
- For several months before D-Day (6 June 1944), the piers and harbours were crowded with landing craft preparing for D-Day invasions.
- There were female dockyard workers (DAH2) and women working at the railway station too (JR)
- Plane crashes remembered.: early on in war at Castle Gardens (DC), a Sunderland near railway line at Saltburn Nov 1944 (described AAW pp 57-9), 2 Baracudas at Barbaraville late in WWII (MR). The remains near Barbaraville are still visible at low tide. A damaged Stranraer flying boat was towed to Belleport pier (presumably to be dismantled and taken away by road transport in October 1941. Also a Botha crashed into the Firth in November 1941 (RS).

- The main NAAFI was at the Naval Rec during the war (JR), and there was a corrugated iron building behind the Naval rec grounds where NAAFI women worked. Some were local and some non-local ones lived there (JR). The site of a NAAFI is also mentioned in the valuation rolls (1944-5); this later became the drill hall when it moved from High Street after the war. NAAFI stores (a wooden building in WWII and later replaced with a concrete one (JR)) are remembered at the west of the end of the West Pier, from where the NAAFI boat took supplies out to ships at anchor in the Cromarty Firth (DC). People also remembered a mobile NAAFI.
- Naval presence remembered in Invergordon known as HMS Flora and HMS Flora 2. HMS Flora 2 was based at what is the car park near the church (David Leslie Gillies in IA picture 650). He also says it was the site of HMS Flora 3. AK believes Flora 2 was a satellite unit responsible for signals. According to a posting by Ted Else on <http://www.worldnavalships.com/forums/showthread.php?t=13111> ‘HMS Flora was commissioned as a naval base at Invergordon in the Cromarty Firth, an offshoot of the Moray Firth, on 1 Oct 1939. It paid off on 16 Jul 1945. The name was also used for a base at Aultbea in Loch Ewe. HMS Flora II was commissioned as the Coastal Forces base at Invergordon on 1 Sep 1942. On 4 Nov 1943 it dropped its ‘II’ prefix but continued to use the name HMS Flora.’
- CD worked as a WRNS signal operator, one of few women. The base at Invergordon was a small ship / shore station. Her base was ‘was a small wooden hut in a field, alongside other huts up above Invergordon. The hut was divided in two: one half housed all the equipment, plus a stove which the girls kept going from a pile of coal outside. ( It also came in useful for boiling a kettle.) The other half housed the batteries, which the Wrens had to keep charged, and two bunks for sleeping when on night watch.’ See published account for a summary of her duties.
- Some masonry fragments from the Castle are in the area of the camps near the dance hall site in Castle Gardens. The Castle was demolished in 1928, and various bits of it were re-used throughout the town, including wood at the Town Hall (JMC), a staircase at Johnny MacDonald’s, wood panels at Wilson’s Solicitors 107 High St (UM), and a stone in the Museum, which was originally from a fireplace at the Castle, but was given to the Museum from a property in Saltburn (MaM).
- A second bomb is remembered at Colliemore by several people though we have not seen it reported elsewhere. JR went to see the crater. Date may have been 1942. Another person remembered an unexploded bomb at Heathfield which the bomb disposal unit dealt with. The targets of these two bombs could have been the fuel depot or the oil pipeline.

**Letter from C.C. Chapman to Marinell Ash (held in Highland Archive Centre D161/1/2/51.  
(transcribed by Alan Kinghorn)**

There were two Recreation Grounds, known fondly to the Fleet and the locals as "The Rec." The main ground, now the school playing fields had three football pitches on the lower level, on the higher level there was one rugby pitch, one hockey pitch, and the Number One Ground in front of the N.A.A.F.I. Canteen was the ground on which the Inter Ship Cup matches were played. They were used for cricket in the summer. The lower field, now returned to agricultural land contained two rugby and three football pitches. There was also an Officers Club, hockey ground and tennis courts on Castle Road.

When the Fleet was in, all of these grounds would be in use from noon onwards, when one match finished so another would begin. The white rails round the pitches would have the ship's crews standing round cheering their teams on, the sound of which could be heard all over the town. These recreation grounds together with the N.A.A.F.I. Canteen were the main attraction for the hundreds of sailors who would come ashore from the Fleet during the Spring, Summer and Autumn cruises. Apart from being the groundsman, my father would also look after the coke boiler which heated the canteen, changing rooms and shower block. The canteen was always crowded when matches were being played, as there was little else for the sailors to do whilst ashore apart from the local pubs and dance halls. My father was affectionately known throughout the Fleet as "Groundy" and maintained the grounds in first class condition, on his own, only assisted by a working party from the Fleet during their stay in the Firth. These working parties of eight or so sailors were billeted in local houses, we always had two of them staying with us. There was usually a P.T.I. in charge. The Royal Marine Band always marched up to the "Rec" in the morning, followed by an additional working party who would clean out the canteen, and any other sportsmen who would come ashore for practice.

These grounds were my father's pride and joy having spent 36 years of his life looking after them, having practically made them from scratch. He loved them so much that it was his wish that his ashes were scattered on them.

The hockey pitch would be marked out as an athletic field for all the main field events and was the start and finish for the marathon. The fields were also used for the annual school sports day.

I was not fortunate enough to visit the Firth on any ship I served on, and was only able to go home on leave on the odd occasion during the war years and after. When I did get home on leave I used to help with cutting the grass and marking out the fields etc., as I used to during school holidays.

I vaguely remember the "Mutiny" and was home on leave when the Fleet sailed for Scapa Flow at the outbreak of the war. It was feared that the entrance to the harbour at Cromarty could be blocked. I have a few photographs which may be of use to you, and may be able to help with the names of some locals who may also be able to assist.

Memories sent by D.A. Hendry August 2016

**Additional memories sent by D.A. Hendry.**

Donald Hendry published a number of articles in Tain and District Picture Post (copies in Invergordon Museum. In addition, he sent the following additional memories:

The former provost's house 'Ardnamara', Seabank Road, opposite war memorial used by R.N. as stores and victualing department. At rear of house there were several nissen huts for storage. Adjacent to these was the dockyard garage and workshop – a large wooden building used from 1940 until dockyard closed.

RAF floating dock at Invergordon anchored near Invergordon-Balblair ferry slip from 1938 until towed away – 1942?. Some local men in crew. Dock was only suitable for older flying boats –

Londons and Stranraers – biplanes. Unsuitable for Sunderlands and Catalinas. During 1942/3 slipways, hangars and accommodation sites built at Dalmore. In 1943 base at Invergordon and Alness renamed RAF Alness.

Brick protection of oil fuel storage tanks at Seabank and Cromlet after Tank13 Seabank demolished by German bomber in Feb. 1941. At the site of Invergordon distillery in 1942/3 there was a huttet camp and dining hut for bricklayers and helpers laying a brick wall around each tank. They were from an Edinburgh firm of building contractors. After the war these brick walls were demolished and the rubble used for sea defence to the west side of the town beside the old A9 road<sup>1</sup> Anti-Aircraft defences Invergordon WW2.

After the departure of the A.A. Cruiser, HMS Curlew camps of nissen huts and gun installations were constructed at Rosskeen and in the field at the east end of Saltburn. They were units of mixed batteries ATS girls and Royal Artillery men. They were 3.7 guns never fired in anger. All that remains of Saltburn Camp is a 4 inch sewer pipe on the beach<sup>2</sup>. The camp was completely demolished after the war and was used for sea defence adjacent to sewer pipeline.<sup>3</sup>

There was also a ring of light A.A. guns manned by men of the Royal Artillery around the town using various light A.A. guns. But I can't remember Bofors. The RAF Regiment had at least one site at the west end of the town beside a coalyard. There were also the guns of the minesweepers and store ships etc at the pier and anchorage. Most equipped with Lewis guns. The RAF Regiment used twin Vickers K guns.

Signal Tower on Admiralty Pier. There was a signal tower on the old Admiralty pier which was manned during the visits of the Home Fleet from Sept 1939. It was manned by Navy Signalmen and marines. I cannot remember any WRNS there as it was very primitive. Cannot remember seeing any RAF personnel there. Tower was upgraded when new pier built 1952- 53. Used only on visits of fleet.

H.R.H. The Duke of Kent embarks on RAF launch to Sunderland flying boat on his ill-fated trip to Iceland. In August 1942 H.R.H. the Duke of Kent Hon. Air Commodore was to make an official visit to H.M. Forces stationed there. A Sunderland flying boat from an operational squadron based at Oban with an Australian pilot. Half an hour into his flight the Sunderland crashed into a hill in fog near Dunbeath on the Caithness Coast. The tail gunner Ft Sgt Jack survived the crash; the Duke and rest of crew perished.

Accommodation ship 'Batavier' [BATAVIER II] for RAF aircrews. When RAF Operational Training unit was formed in 1940 or 1941 there was a shortage of accommodation at the base and a Dutch cross-channel ferry with her pre-war was sent to Invergordon and was berthed at the Admiralty pier until 1944 [NOTE: documents in TNA state it left Invergordon in Dec 1942]. RAF O.T.U. air-crews who were training as pilots and engineers were ferried out to the flying boats at anchor in the west harbour by RAF marine craft which came alongside. The vessel remained at Invergordon until she sailed south for conversion to a hospital ship for service at Normandy.

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<sup>1</sup> The current B817

<sup>2</sup> Actually 6 inch internal diameter: RS

<sup>3</sup> Most rubble was dumped 100 metres east of the pipe and is now landscaped: RS.