

A word from Jack Cowie

"Just a loon frae Aiberdeen"

This is the article promised in the last edition of Packchat after Jack's retiral as Club Treasurer, (editor).

As a young man, I had an interesting time in the RAF.

I did my square-bashing at Arbroath and then went down to the Northern Polytechnic at Holloway Road for a 6 months course on wireless (usually 3 years in peace-time). We were in civilian billets and had quite a lot of spare time in London. We then went on another course at Yatesbury in Wiltshire on radar (which was then in it's infancy), which brought us back to the realities of service life after our previous experience in London!

I qualified as a radar mechanic and was posted to a station just outside of Fraserburgh.

My luck didn't last however and after 4 short weeks I was posted back to Wiltshire at a station near Bath where I remained for the rest of the war.

Security was tight requiring special passes to get to the test lab where I worked, which consisted of a 2 storey brick building and 2 converted aircraft crates surrounded by a 10 foot high wire fence. At the gate was stationed a small Dundonian of 1st world war vintage with a sten gun.



He was very useful at keeping out unwelcome visitors!

We were 50% Canadian and British, about 30-40 men in all. I got on well with the Canadians, many of whom had Scottish roots.

We tested and installed radar equipment on various types of aircraft, particularly night-fighters, like the Mosquito (pictured). I found the work very interesting and quite a contrast to my earlier education in classical Latin and Greek.

The war ended and I met my then future wife, whose sister was a District Nurse in Arnisdale and who luckily also had a cottage there.



I first visited this area in the early forties and it became my favourite area in all of Scotland, holding many happy memories of the times my late wife and I spent together. Also, my favourite hill without doubt is Ben Sgritheall, which rises above Arnisdale on Loch Hourn.

I have climbed this mountain often and would dearly love to climb it once more.

After coming to Glasgow, I joined the club in 1948 and I elected to become its treasurer in 1959 on the invitation of one of the committee members, Tom Carter. The club was staying at Glencoe Y.H. that particular weekend and I quite fancied going on Tom's walk the next day which

was for Stob Coire Nan Lochain. It turned out to be a glorious winter's day, cold but sunny with a cloudless sky. One very experienced club member who was known as "Curly" however, advised me not to go on Tom's walk as it would be too difficult for me, so I joined him, Alec Gray and a few others on Buchaille Etive Mhor, where we practiced with instep crampons.

In the late afternoon all of the parties except Tom's gathered to pick up the bus and a rumour was circulating that they had got into trouble. In fact on descending a steep section, one of Tom's party slipped and Tom had tried to save him, but they both had gone over the edge.



Ben Sgritheall