

Evacuation 1943.

Memories of Miss Rita Talor,
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One Saturday evening in October 1943 a neighbouring farmer phoned my father to say that he had heard a rumour that we were to be moved out of our farms etc. to allow the land to be given over for wartime uses. Sure enough on the following Monday three gentlemen from the Admiralty arrived with the expected information. We were given three weeks to clear out.

The area involved stretched from Findhorn Bay to Maviston farm near Nairn. This meant that all the farms and the village of Kintessack which lay between the sea and a line from the Bay, including Lingieston farm, to the road which runs past Moy House to Kintessack and along the back road to Maviston. A large number of families lived in the area and all had to find accommodation for the time we were to be away. No help was given but everybody was housed before the three weeks were up. There was no D.H.S.S. then and no bleating that the government should help.

Neighbours who were outwith the area were most helpful but more of that later. In 1943 October and November were very busy months on the farm. Prior to the advent of the combine harvester the crop was all in stacks and had still to be threshed and the grain sold. Potatoes had to be lifted - they lifted them later in those days. Then they had to be dressed and graded into seed or ware. Sugar beet was grown extensively at that period and it had to be lifted, shaken and driven to Brodie station en route for the factory at Cupar. You can imagine the work that had to be done in three weeks.

We were given eighteen Italian prisoners of war for a week to help with the threshing. They came from a camp at Archieston and arrived every day. Neighbours also helped with tractors and men to help drive the potatoes and beet to the station. I shall never forget the lorries thundering down to the farm steading to take the grain away to the merchants. My father had ordered a new tractor and it arrived in time to be of great help.

The store cattle which had been bought in over the summer months had to be sold at Forres Auction Mart. Floats were thin on the ground if there were any at all so the seventy- five cattle

had to walk the five miles to Forres. The milk cows spent the seven months we were out at Brodie Castle farm. We still had two Clydesdale horses. They, along with one of my brothers, went to my uncle's farm for the duration of the evacuation. A good neighbour was quick to offer an empty cottage at Broom of Moy and the use of a field in which we put a mobile henhouse so we had eggs. Neighbours also took carpets and surplus furniture and kept them until we needed them again.

The women in the house spent their time making food, washing dishes and packing belongings. There seemed to be an open buffet in the farm kitchen every day.

I was teaching in Nairn at that time and asked for time off to help at home. Dr MacLaren, the Director of Education was quick to grant me a week of f and with pay! I think I must be the only teacher ever given a week off with pay.

We got out by the end of the end of the three weeks and my father and mother took up their abode at Broom of Moy. Down in the evacuated area things began to happen. Briggs' men arrived with their machines and widened all the corners on the roads to allow tanks to travel along. That is why the corners in that area are so wide.

Across the Firth the army was in the Black Isle and they "invaded" the empty area. Over in the parish of Alves invasions took place although that area was not evacuated. The farmers were always warned to keep animals inside when the landing craft were to be used on an exercise. Those landing craft rolled over the farms through fences and dykes and I am told did a lot of damage to drains.

Down in our area battles were going on. Some days the whole area seemed to be on fire and the noise was frightening. But of course we were much more fortunate than the many people on the continent who didn't know if they would ever see their homes and country back to normal. We were confident we would be back in our homes.

During this time the Highland Area was out of bounds for most folk. Only those with legitimate business were allowed in and they were issued with a passport. My brother-in-law had one to enable him to continue his cattle-dealing. At the beginning of June we were given permission to return but my brothers, fearing that they would not manage to prepare the ground for the next crop, went back when the land was cleared. The army had set off for the south in readiness for D Day.

My father received a letter from the Admiralty telling him that they had returned at their own risk and this was borne out when a fortnight after we were back having been given permission, an unexploded land mine was found in a field - cattle having been grazing in the field for the fortnight. How they, inquisitive animals that they are, were not blown up was a miracle. Royal Engineers dealt with the land mine. Though the crop was late by over two months in being sown they had a wonderful return that year.

Of course Normandy was invaded on June 6th 1944 and we knew that in a very small way we had helped in that.

Quite a lot of looting went on and gardens were relieved of fruit trees, lawn mowers and all stoppers from the sinks were removed. I understand that the troops carried their personal stoppers wherever they went But I hasten to add the soldiers took the stoppers only.

There was great secrecy over this whole exercise. It seems hard to believe that many people in the nearby town of Forres didn't hear of the events out in the Kintessack area. Some of those who had been evacuated from their homes didn't return but the majority did. And now it is like a dream though at that time it was a traumatic experience for all concerned.

(Kintessack comprises a scattered rural community a few miles north west of Forres, Moray, Scotland).