

Life in a Perthshire Village

St. FILLANS

1939 – 1945



BY

Janey G Bryce

As time has gone by, I have thought it would be interesting to put on record a little of what happened in wartime St. Fillans, 1039-1945, for both our family and the people of the village. I have in my possession my mother's Minute Book of Red Cross activities. I quote from it for its contemporary record.



My parents were John & Jean Gavin, living in Edinburgh. John (*b 1894 d 1961*) Jean (*b 1900 d 1991*).

My father who had served in the First World War was a WS., and as well as his legal business he was secretary of the Church of Scotland's Chaplains' Committee and Chairman of the Royal Blind Asylum and the National Institute for War Blinded. All these responsibilities added to the strain of life. His partner although over-age, rejoined the navy and that left him alone in business. There were many nights in Edinburgh when he undertook night fire watching duties thus adding to the strain.

(His partner was discharged in 1943 on compassionate grounds, as my father was ill for three months with a tired heart).

With war clouds gathering and with the threat of mass destruction of our cities from the air, I set off with my father by car on my 12th birthday in February 1939 in search of a suitable venue that we could be evacuated to in the event of war. The promise of renting Ellenfern, Braemar, for the duration of the war had fallen through and now we were off to Perthshire to Callander, Lochearnhead and St Fillans. As we were passing through St. Fillans there were two properties available, Allt-an-Fhionn and Port Mor. It was dark, so we pressed on to Crieff where we stayed the night. My parents returned in April, and while mother was in love with the woods filled with daffodils at Allt-an-Fhionn, my father was more practical and Port Mor, was purchased. A good family house with four bedrooms upstairs and three rooms downstairs, and a large garden, electricity with its own generator and a solid fuel central heating system. Above the garage, a separate building was a billiard room, W.C. and small bedroom. When the Red Cross started meeting there it was necessary to have heating and lighting. Electric light was installed, blackout blinds fitted and a Courtier Stove costing £9 was installed, but still no hot water.

St. Fillans, a small village on Loch Earn, had a normal population of 200 and had an active social life, including a W.R.I. (Woman's Rural Institute) and a Dramatic Club. The centre of the village was the Dundurn Parish Church and the village shop.. The Rev John McLaren was the minister and Mr Mudie ran the shop and Post Office Albert Hunter was his assistant sadly killed on war service, and Ian McDuff the messenger boy.

We settled in during the summer holidays of 1939 and mother said she must have her piano and books, which were duly transported from Edinburgh. Curtains were made and orange boxes, painted, served as bedside tables.

There was a regular bus service between Crieff, Comrie and St. Fillans, and daily trains linked Edinburgh and Glasgow to St. Fillans, the evening train was via Balquhidder and Lochearnhead along Loch Earn, this was a lovely journey by moonlight in the winter

My father travelled up from Edinburgh at weekends, returning on Monday by the 7.30am train via the Crieff route.

The family consisted of my sister Grace, 15, myself aged 12, my brother John 9 years old, and. In addition there was Bruce the Cocker Spaniel, a cat, 2 rabbits, and within a few months 4 hens - Jeanie, Sheila, Nora and Daisy, called after my mother and her friends!

On September 2nd 1939 a train load of approximately 100 evacuee children from Glasgow arrived and Miss McKinnon the village schoolmistress was responsible for placing them in homes. With some help everyone had been fixed up by that evening.

My grandmother, Mrs. Willis, aged 59, widowed in 1912 had arrived for "*The Duration*" (of the war), an elderly friend of hers, with a broken leg, was being looked after, and two Australians, who found themselves stranded while on holiday, were also staying. One, Edith Dickson, returned by convoy after a month, but Ive Piesse stayed until April 1940.

Port Mor became the haven for many relatives and friends seeking respite from a war torn world.

There is in existence our Visitors Book covering the whole period which discloses that during the war years there were 194 guests, and in 1940 alone on 219 nights there were friends staying.

Many of the evacuees returned home within a few weeks as they were homesick and could not bear the silence of a country village. Some mothers stayed with their children and integrated well.

Kay McLeod and her family were in Rose Cottage, with Mr and Mrs John Mills, they eventually moved to a cottage on the golf course. Kay worked in the village shop and married John Hepburn son of James Hepburn Ingleside, sadly John died young after serving in the war.

Mr Mudie from the shop was mother's '*confidante*' if she wanted to start up anything he would tell her if it would be acceptable.

Rationing

Vans called regularly round the village from Comrie Baker, Butcher and Greengrocers twice a week: fishmonger once a week: Milk daily delivery: These services continued throughout the war, manned by elderly men. We shopped with Mr. Mudie as much as possible, and shops from Crieff would send orders by bus, and the conductress would hand them out as she passed, and come running up the pathway of the house if we were not there to meet her.

Rationing came in immediately and we had to register with a grocer and butcher. All guests coming to stay would bring an "*emergency ration-card*" and we would be able to get an allocation of meat, butter and sugar, and a few "*points*" to buy tins of fruit or vegetables.

We grew a lot of vegetables and fruit, and of course our hens kept us in eggs – mostly! Chicken, rabbit and sausages were not rationed, but were scarce

Mrs. Henderson, proprietrix of the Drummond Arms Hotel and Mrs. Gibson, Achray Hotel, were very generous when catering was needed. On the occasion of the wedding of Clarkie – my mother's right hand – she made a tea and wedding cake.

In January 1940 we were off to our school, Rothesay House School, evacuated to Paxton House, North Berwick. There was some doubt about the safety there, and in June 1940, at the time of the Dunkirk evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, my father telephoned the headmistress to say he would like us home as he thought the Great North Road would be cut off in the event of a German invasion. We both changed schools to Seymour Lodge in September. This school was evacuated from Dundee to Ochertyre House near Crieff. This proved an excellent move for me - I had a happy year there. I enjoyed being near home and having a freedom unknown and unthinkable at Paxton House. Despite the remoteness of Ochertyre we still had air raids as German planes passed overhead en route to bomb Glasgow, and there was a danger that they would off-load their bombs on their return journey. My father gave mother and us three children bicycles as this was to be our only independent mode of transport.

Mother's motor car allowance was 6 gallons a month, with a small supplement when John was a day pupil at Cargilfield School, evacuated to Lawers House. Comrie from Edinburgh. He travelled each morning by bus and was collected in the evening. My parents had an offer from a cousin of my father's in Canada to look after all three of us for the duration of the war, but I am glad this was graciously declined!



Very soon the L.D.V. (Local Defence Volunteers), later named the Home Guard, were mobilised in the village under Major MacGregor-Whitton. He lived at Àrd Choille with his mother. He seemed a real eccentric, marching around the village in a shabby kilt and deerstalker with shepherd's crook. His mother only appeared rarely to post a letter at the lane – she was always dressed in black – widow's weeds – and looked just like Queen Victoria. Among the troops were Mr. McLaren, the minister, and they all used to practice shooting at Àrd Choille

In March 1941 there was a Parade Service and the Home Guard were to have been there but they were called to duty. The major turned up to read the lesson – closed the Bible, and said “*Your men were to have been with you today, but with the threat of invasion they have been called to their posts, **BUT DO NOT PANIC***”. Everyone imagined the Germans were at the top of the hill and felt very panic stricken. Mr McLaren was caught unawares by these stupid remarks but somehow the service continued amidst much speculation and fury at the Major’s misleading statement.

My mother was anxious to start a red cross and after she had sought the permission of Matilda, Lady Dundas, who was Commandant of the Red Cross, residing at Comrie House, permission was granted and everything went ahead with her blessing

The following pages are from my mother’s Red Cross book dated June 1940.

The work party was started in the Billiard Room, Port Mor, at the beginning of July, to do Red Cross work, Bandages T & Y and to pick moss. Everyone was most helpful in coming to work & giving donations of money to pay for material & it was decided to charge 3d for tea & biscuits in the afternoon to go to funds. But as work was going on so enthusiastically, something more had to be done to raise money & a Garden Fete was got up hurriedly at Allt-an-Fhionn by kind permission of Mrs. Riddell & Mr. Pawley-Smith and £87 was made, and a kind anonymous donor made it up to £100.

In the meantime we had written to Perth headquarters, who said they would supply us with materials and would be glad to receive our work and moss.. Mrs Riddell and I went through to Perth and saw the various departments and heads of them, they were very helpful and when we told them of our money in hand, they said we could use some of it to buy materials, and that they would continue to send us materials for bandages, which they could buy much cheaper. We offered to send them a donation of £25.

Before we were affiliated to Perth we made for the L.D.V.s 100 triangular bandages & 100 Field Dressings & a lot of roller bandages, some of which we gave to the District Nurse for the local Dressing Station, keeping the rest in reserve.

A committee meeting was held on August 12th to discuss installation of electric light, black out and heating. It was agreed that the Red Cross should pay half the cost of putting it in and according to the amount used weekly. It was also agreed to putting in a Courtier Stove at £9. And to pay £2.6s for blinds.

1940

July 19th sent 4 boxes picked moss: 30th sent 10 Many tailed chest bandages & 30 tailed bandages.

Aug 15th sent 1 sack of coarse moss: 1 box fine moss: 23rd sent 12 dressing gowns

Sept 5th sent 12 shirts: 10 many tailed Abdominal Bandages

Oct 5th sent 18 Rubber Pillow Cases: 14th sent 6 Day Shirts: 30th 6 under vests

Nov 17th 17 many tailed Abdominal Bandages: 22nd 6 under vests: 27th 14 children's nightgowns'

Dec 20th 6 pair pyjamas & 2doz triangular bandages.

J. M.G

1941

8th January: Miss Hunter, Fernside, gave an exhibition of her Dolls furniture and Dolls, in the Red Cross Room for our funds. They were all laid out on a table. *(All made by herself showing a day in the life of a doll from her early morning bath to dinner party at night, with an addition of Red Cross Workers in the white caps and overalls, rolling bandages.* It was all very original and wonderful workmanship. Miss Hunter gave tea and biscuits which could be had for 3d and 6d was charged for admission. A large number of people came and £4 was taken – a grand result.

27th January: a committee meeting was held at Port Mor – Miss White, Miss Langden and I being present. It was suggested that another two members should be nominated; Mrs. Armstrong & Miss McLaren were proposed and accepted. A statement of accounts had been drawn up to the end of the year, showing a balance in the bank of £69. A donation of £10 to the General Fund had been sent at the beginning of the year.

St Fillans adopted a Prisoner of War and it was agreed that our tea money *(now reduced to 2d a head)* should go to his weekly subscriptions.

Mrs. Bremner gave 6 onions to be raffled for the funds and tickets were drawn on the 27th January. £2. Was raised.

Jean M Gavin

On 20th Feb we received £5 from headquarters as a donation from the Farmers Fee Gift Sale in Perthshire, with a request that some of the money should be spent on wool for

comforts for prisoners. We spent £2 15s on wool which we distributed among workers to knit up.

Our ordinary work came to a standstill for a week while everyone worked feverishly sawing Divisional Signs on Army tunics.

Dundurn Parish Church presented us with the Collection from the parade service on 23rd March – the Special Day of Prayer - £3. 10s.

Mrs Bremner sold 200 tickets for one of Miss Peter's pictures of Loch Earn and raised £5. 3s. we sent the cheque to Headquarters, as tickets had been sold in so many districts that we felt we could not take it for St Fillans Funds: Miss Peter's offered to give an exhibition of her pictures for our funds and a meeting was held to arrange a date: the 11th of June was fixed. It was suggested that, rationing permitting, a snack tea should be sold for 6d in the garden, and 6d to see the Exhibition – this date was postponed.

My recollections of that time

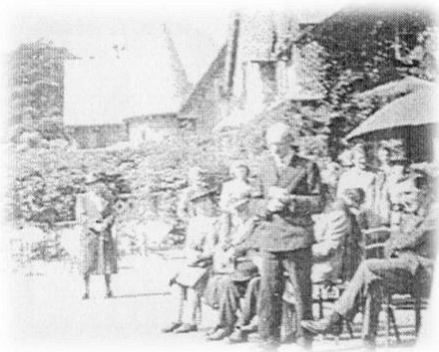
The Red Cross worked hard during the war and it was always an enthusiastic group. Everyone wore white overalls and caps, and our duty when at home was to help to serve tea and to wash out the billiard room with Dettol and prepare the room for the next meeting. We used to bicycle across the golf course to the 4th hole where we gathered sphagnum moss which was hand cleaned and packed in sacks and used for dressing wounds.



Mother and Daisy Broom from London after a Red Cross Meeting

Mrs. Riddell, Allt-an-Fhionn was my mother's deputy and the suggestion of a *fete* in her garden seemed a wonderful idea. It was all organized in 10 days everyone doing their share eagerly, with lovely summer weather.

Father opening the garden fete



Reference must be made here to so many who helped.

The Rev David McLaren

The Parish Minister – he always encouraged all the activities and took part himself. He was a familiar figure in the village as he went on his rounds of visits – always dressed in black with a large pancake hat. He often visited us and usually arrived at 4.00pm., but was always welcome. He was reticent, but all knowing with a real twinkle in his eye.

Miss Blair – *Cruachan*

She was from Edinburgh and living in her house with her brother Dr. Blair. She was later to run the canteen in the village hall and her brother gave first-aid lectures.

Mrs. Muir

A guest at the Drummond Arms Hotel, staying with her daughter who knitted lovely garments to be sold.

Miss. White

She was one of a family of three sisters and a brother who rented Tigh-na-Craig for the duration. They were middle aged and her sister, Mrs. Watson, also worked hard for the Red Cross and Canteen. They were in Miss McLaren's House (*no relation of the minister*), and she lived in her cottage. They all became great friends and spent many evenings together, chatting and playing card games. One sister Isa was an invalid and Miss Sherrit was there as her nurse. She dressed a doll to be raffled.

Mr. & Mrs, Nicol – *Colleopard*

They came from Manchester, and we called him the Manchester Magnet. They had two young sons. Mr. Nicol helped with the side shows at the *fete* and Mrs. Nicol baked and worked with the Red Cross.

Mrs. Gibson – ***Achray Hotel***

She always helped and encouraged all activities. Her teenage son Darrell helped with side shows at the *fete*.

Miss Hunter – ***Fernside***

She was from Edinburgh and lived in her house for the duration with her brother The Right Hon Lord Hunter – a Judge of the Court of Session.

Mr. & Mrs. Beadie

She was the daughter of Mr. McLaren's housekeeper, Mrs. McNiven; they lived at Ault-an-Fhionn Lodge, and worked in the main house and garden.

Mr & Mrs Hepburn - ***Ingleside***

She was President of the W.R.I. but supported the Red Cross as well. Mr. Hepburn was a gardener to many households, and we were glad he could continue to look after Port Mor garden. He also kindly acted as caretaker to the house, attending to the heating and fires if we were coming up. He often used to come in at n7.00a.m. and light the fires and fill the coal buckets. He was a good friend to us all and on Sundays he became the Beadle – *Church Officer* – in the Parish Church.

The Misses Langden – ***Craigdarroch***

Isa and Jean lived next door; they were originally from Glasgow. Both loved to help, but they did not get on with everyone, so care had to be taken not to let them be at the canteen with the wrong person, as my grandmother learned to her cost.

Mr. and Mrs. Cockburn – ***Beaconsfield***

He was the Air Raid Warden and if he saw a chink of light he would blow his whistle and shout "*Put out that light*". He would alert the west end of the village if there was an air raid by walking down the road as far as the Hotel, blowing his whistle. We had one

or two visitors who came on holiday to get away from bombing and air raids, and one of them said *"I can sleep through the air raid siren, but that stupid whistle always wakes me up!"* Mr. Cockburn enjoyed his boat but his was the only one with an outboard motor, everyone else on the loch side had a rowing boat. This boat in these days was a great disturber of the peace and tranquillity.

Mr and Mrs Buchan – *Ivecote*

She helped a lot in the Red Cross and with Mrs Mills ran the *penny-a-week* collection for the organisation.

Mrs. Armstrong

Was the widow of a previous Minister who stayed on in the Birran, and a manse was built for the Church. She was on the Red Cross Committee, but when my father had scarlet fever at Port Mor she would not walk past the house – the house being well set back from the road – in case she picked up any infection!

Mrs. McNaughton and Grace – *Oakbank*

Mrs McNaughton had a large family but during the war she and Grace were the only ones at home. They ran a delightful guest house and both were beautiful bakers and cooks. They saw many interesting guests, and when they were quiet, in the winter, we would all be invited for the evening to play Rummy and were always treated to lovely home baking, in which we all indulged. It was a special treat to spend the evening with them, which was always a cheerful night out. We would walk by torchlight, as there were no street lights until long after the war, and anyway it was blackout time.

Helen Campbell

Lived at Woodside Cottage with her brother and parents and she took an active part in all activities.

Mr. and Mrs. Bremner – *Findoglen Cottage*

Mr Bremner was gamekeeper to the Stewarts of Ardvorlich and they were both good friends of ours. Mrs Bremner helped at every turn and they both gave generously of

their time. We used to bike 4 miles up the south side of Loch earn to have tea with them in their cottage.

Mrs. Riddell and her brother The Rev. Pawley-Smith

They came up from London and settled in Ault-an-Fhionn. She was deputy leader of the Red Cross. And her brother was a retired Church of England Clergyman. On his death his brother Mr Frank Smith, also a Church of England Clergyman, came to reside with his sister. He took services from time to time in the St Fillans Episcopal Church, where I played the harmonium when I was art Port Mor.

Jessy – our '*help*' dressed as a gipsy and sat in a tent reading fortunes at the *fete*, which all added to the fun, as she by now knew so many of the people.

Mr. and Mrs. John Mills

He ran a painting business with his brother in Comrie and St Fillans. He hired out rowing boats to visitors. He was always helping us with our boat problems. Mrs. Mills worked hard in all war efforts and had a family of evacuees for some time.

There were three or four other families staying in the village and their teenage daughters helped as waitresses at the *fete* as we did.

In February 1941 an Army company came to be stationed in St Fillans. Several houses including Rathearn and Lake Cottage were commandeered, and we had an officer, Captain Bob Fawcus, billeted with us for some months.

My mother wanted to start a canteen, as the men had nowhere to go, and she enlisted the help of Miss Blair, Cruachan, where she was living with her brother, Dr. Blair.



Miss Blair had worked with the Huts and Canteens in France in the First World War, and everything was to be run on the same strict lines. Blue Caps and overalls for all the helpers and the young kept at a discreet distance in the kitchen filling rolls and washing up! The canteen was open each

morning and evening in the village hall, and as we had a telephone my grandmother, Mrs. Willis, was the deputy, giving a daily order to Hamilton's the bakers in Comrie, at 9.00 p.m. each evening.

On many occasions Mrs. Cairns – renting "Holly" – would play the piano and sing, with the men joining in. Mrs Cairns was very talented, having been an entertainer, and she picked up all the favourite songs of the time, along with singing songs requested by the soldiers.

A young English artist came to the village named Joyce Peters. She pitched her tent on the south side of the River Earn near the golf course next to the Roadman's Cottage. She soon became a familiar figure in the village, dressed in trousers, a large flowing coat and beret on top of her flame red hair.

The village had a dramatic society, but no choir, so with Mr. Mudie's guidance my mother started a choir with a view to carol singing round the village at Christmas. Rehearsals were at Port Mor, and those in the choir included Mr. Mudie, Mr. Brotherston, Stationmaster, Miss. Campbell, Woodside cottage, Mr. and Mrs. Mills, Rose Cottage, Miss. Hood, Church Organist, and some of the younger girls. This choir along with me and my sister went round the village during three evenings, always ending up at some-ones house for juice and mince pies.

They also performed solos, duets and groups at concerts in the Sandison Hall. All choral and dramatic concerts were well supported by at least 100.

On the 22nd of May 1941 a seaplane made an emergency landing on the loch near the island, having run out of fuel. Lieut. E Goddard, R.N. was brought ashore and my grandmother, who loved a little excitement, took him to Port Mor where he was given tea and he was eventually able to re-fuel and take off for his base again.

Further excerpts from my mother's Minute Book

Miss Peter's exhibition took place in July. The pictures were arranged most artistically in the Red Cross Room – with large jars & jugs of flowers & leaves about making the whole setting very effective. A buffet was served in the garden for 6d, and owing to the restrictions everyone was rationed to a bun or sandwich and a cake with a cup of tea. Catering for this came from Hamilton's, but in the end people generously sent home

made scones and cakes, so that there was a large selection and the surplus was sold afterwards. Then there was a Red Cross Birthday Cake, for which 3d tickets were sold for a quarter share of it, so that four people were lucky enough to get a piece. Altogether £19.11.3 was paid into the Bank after expenses were paid – the Exhibition itself bringing £10. The picture was sold for £3.3. – Miss Peter's had arranged that the red Cross would get one third of any picture sold and that gave us another guinea.

Before the rationing of clothes came in we had luckily bought with our funds enough material to make 12 dressing gowns, and we were given permission to give them to Dunira (*convalescent home for wounded*) in time for Christmas.

In September, Miss Sheritt dressed a large doll, all in woollens, and sold tickets to the villagers, this added another £5 to our funds.

It was suggested that something should be done in the village for Mrs. Churchill's Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund. Joyce Fleming and Ruth D'Arcy Thompson very kindly agreed to the suggestion that they bring some of their students up and give a concert for the purpose and a date was fixed. Everyone in the village, as usual was most helpful. The Misses Longden's kindly gave the tickets and undertook the selling of them – Mrs. Willis paid for the Hall, so that no expenses were incurred and we were able to send a cheque for £20 clear takings to the Fund. The Misses Longden's put 3 of the students up, and Mrs. Buchan 2. The rest with Joyce and Ruth stayed with us. It was all great fun, and the girls were all out to thoroughly enjoy themselves, which I think they did, and we certainly enjoyed having them. Mrs. Gibson gave us all a most delicious cold supper beforehand as her donation.

It was unfortunately a pouring wet night, but in spite of that the Hall was full. A few minor mishaps occurred such as Miss Ratray missing the train and not arriving until the last minute, and my piano giving out in the middle notes which entailed the scratching of Audrey Haddon's piano solos and Grace Ratray's Ave Maria, which is so dependent on the accompaniment. But Joyce substituted another item of Scots Songs and made the audience sing along. I think everyone enjoyed the concert. A lovely tea cloth was donated to sell tickets for Russia and another £5.10s was made.

We ended the year with a Balance of £91.14.9d

J.M.G.

CONCERT
By
The Student Singers
(Edinburgh)
In aid of
RED CROSS AID to RUSSIA

St. FILLANS

13th December 1941

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PROGRAMME

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1. Part Songs (17th Cent.)

(The Student Singers)

Sweet and Low – Barnby

Music When Soft Voices Die – Wood

Sweet Kate – Jones

2. Songs

(Grace Ratray)

Who is Sylvia – Schubert

Piping Down the Valleys Wild – Somervell

Villanelle – Del Acqua

3. Violin Solos

(Mary Leggett)

4 Piano Solos

(Audrey Haddon)

Spring Song – Greig

Romance – Sibelius

5 Scots Songs

(The Student Singers)

Caller Herrin'
Bonny Banks of Loch Lomond

INTERVAL

6 Duets

(Lorraine Vass – Audrey Haddon)

Barcarolle from the Tales of Hoffmann – Offenbach
Waltz of my Heart from the Dancing Years – Novella

7 Violin solos

(Mary Leggett)

8 Songs

Lorraine Vass

Deirdre's Farewell to Scotland

9 Part Songs

(The Student Singers)

Deep River & Weeping Mary – Negro Spirituals
Farewell to Fiunary – Can Ye sew Cushions – Hebridean arr. R Burnett

10 Songs

(Grace Rattray)

Ave Maria – Schubert
Young Love lies Sleeping – Somervell

11 Scots Songs

(The Student Singers)

Annie Laurie
Charlie is my Darling

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The Student singers were a group of 8 pupils of the singing teacher, Joyce Fleming in Edinburgh. Her, great friend Ruth D'Arcy Thompson, daughter of the distinguished Professor D'Arcy Thompson, of St. Andrews, was a pianist and they ran the choir. They were friends of my mother and contributed to the musical life of the village.

Two Newspaper Cuttings

Review –

The music lovers of St Fillans had a real treat on Saturday evening at a concert organised by Mrs. Gavin, Port Mor, in aid of the Help-for-Russia Scheme. The soloists were Grace Rattray and Lorraine Vass; duets were sung by Lorraine Vass and Audrey Haddon and part songs were sung by the Student Singers. The solo violin was played by Mary Leggett. The conductor was Joyce Fleming and the accompanist Rose D'Arcy Thompson. The pieces chosen were of the highest order and the renderings were worthy of them. Loud applause greeted each item, and the vote of thanks at the close was carried with acclamation by the crowded audience. As a result the sum of £20 has been sent to the Mrs Churchill appeal.

St Fillans, Red Cross Party.

It is just over a year since a Red Cross Party was started in St Fillans, which meets twice a week. During that time the following articles have been sent to headquarters in Perth, who supplied materials and instructions:- 23 pairs pyjamas – 20 dressing gowns – 15 shirts – 37 surgical pillow-cases – 12 surgical pillows – 8 bed jackets – 10 under-vests – 14 children's nightgowns – 11 women's nightgowns – 5 helpless case shirts – 151 bandages, including many-tailed, T, and triangular. In addition, a considerable amount of sphagnum moss has been collected, picked and dispatched.

Some Cuttings from the Perthshire Advertiser

St Fillans War Charities

A fund to provide gifts for prisoners of war of which Mrs. Willis is treasurer has collected since September 1941. The sum of £60 14 8d in the period June 1940 to July 1942, the Red Cross Work party has raised the sum of £210. Mrs Gavin is

secretary/treasurer. A statement is being prepared showing the total war charities effort of the parish up to September 3rd.

Sandison Hall



The minister wrote and produced the play which is to be staged tomorrow in the hall. This minister playwright-producer is a very busy man, for he is clerk to the Synod of Perth and Stirling – almost a full time job in itself. He is also an office-bearer in the golf club, though when he finds the time his real recreation and hobby is gardening, it's in his garden, while he works away quietly, that he gets

ideas for his plays. His fame as a preacher is more than local and every St Fillans resident speaks in flowing terms of his magnificent extempore speaking.

Three Years of War in St Fillans

Since the outbreak of the war notable work has been done by various organisations in St Fillans. The Woman's Guild of the Parish Church, aided by their friends, and has sent gifts to members of the forces belonging to the parish to the value of £66. The W.R.I. has made 814 garments, and their War Savings Group has collected £1007 during the period March 1940 to September 1942. The Red Cross Society, founded in June 1940, has collected £210 and made 600 articles, while their Prisoners of War Fund has gathered £110. The Warships Week effort produced £10,484 in May last. Collections taken in church and by collectors for special purposes raised over £50. Since the waste paper collection was taken over by the W.V.S. in November 1941, the sum of £21 has been received. A Church of Scotland canteen has been run by the ladies since June 1940, which has been gratefully recognised by the officers of the various units which have been stationed here. The Scholars of the Public School have collected for war savings the sum of £75.

Youthful Endeavour – August 27th 1941

Three schoolboys, John Gavin, and John and Andrew Gilmour held a sale in aid of war charities on Saturday in the grounds of Port Mor, which was kindly lent by Mr. and Mrs. Gavin. In addition to the varied articles for sale, there were numerous games and tea. The effort was well rewarded, for the sum realised was £10 18 6d. this has been divided by the promoters between the Prisoners of War Fund and the Women's Guild Fund for gifts to those from the parish who are serving in the Forces.

Sandison Hall Show - Raising the Choir –

Mrs Jean Gavin is to lead the musical part of the show. A popular figure, she had important musical associations in Scotland's capital before coming to St Fillans. For the past week or two, with the show in sight, her home has become a sort of musicians' club, for at least once a week the '*choir*' goes to Port Mor, where they receive hospitality as well as instruction. '*Choir*' is quoted for the reason that there is no official choir in the village. One of the members modestly described it as a 'scratch choir' – but most St Fillans people know better. Mrs. Gavin plays the piano and has a splendid singing voice, at the end of last year she decided to get her 'scratch choir' together and they went through the village singing Christmas carol, hoping she would be able to raise £5 for the Red Cross Society. The village got its carols and Mrs. Gavin got £20 for the society! Incidentally the show includes the post master, Mr. P Urquhart Moodie; the stationmaster, Mr R. T. Brotherston; a gardener, a shop assistant, and a house-worker.

1942 - Final excerpts from mother's notebook

We started this year with £91 14 9d in the Bank, and felt we could afford to be generous and almost extravagant, so we sent £20 to Head Quarters and bought a Singer Treddle Sewing Machine for £12 17 3d and a supply of cottons.

But we never have to wait long in St Fillans for donations & in February Mrs. Henderson and Miss Gray arrived with £1.1s An article had been left in the Hotel a year ago, and as it had never been claimed, it had been sold to Miss. Gray and she very kindly gave the guinea to our Funds. Then at the beginning of April Miss. Muir sent us £4 which she had got for jumpers she had knitted. So already our early expenditure is being gradually made up.

We closed for the Easter Holiday from 1st April to 15th as did head quarters.

On 7th April we called a meeting of all Red Cross workers to elect 2 members to be Committee for War Weapons Week, and Mrs. Riddell and I were elected.

I took the opportunity of telling them that, as I should have to go up and down to Edinburgh a good deal more in the future, I did not feel it fair to keep the business part of the work party in my hands. Miss Jean Langden proposed that Mrs. Riddell should take it on, and Miss McLaren seconded it and it was unanimously agreed. She kindly accepted the proposal.

I shall do all I can to help her, when I am in St Fillans and wish her and the work party every success. If everyone is as helpful and encouraging as they been to me, I am sure there will be no difficulty in redoubling our efforts this year as Headquarters requested.

Jean M Gavin 9th April 1942

As Mrs. Riddell was unable to carry on after a little, it was decided that mother would hold the work party as usual when she was in St Fillans and that people would take work home and carry on as much as they could when she was not.

No one else would come forward to take over complete charge. I continued to keep the Bank Book, as it was going to entail too much trouble to change over for so little work.

So our work party carried on like that until the winter of 1944, when mother came back to Edinburgh all together and then Mrs. Watson kindly agreed to run our work when required. But she, too opened her house in Edinburgh, so it was felt that we should close down and hand over the balance of money to H.Q.

The war in Europe had ended, but we were still at war with Japan and we felt that the money could be put to good use in the Far East, though the war there came to a sudden ending so we were almost able to complete the whole war time.

Altogether 694 garments were made: 653 bandages: £95.5s sent to H.Q. which with a balance of £60 1 8d in the Bank, after selling 2 machines and Red Cross Equipment made a total of £155.6.8.

A meeting was held on 25th June 1945 at which the Red Cross Work Party came to an end.

Excerpt from a letter dated 17th July 1945 from the Perthshire Branch of the Scottish Branch of the British Red Cross Society.

Dear Mrs Gavin,

Thank you so much for your letter. You achieved a splendid result with your work party, which I was very glad to hear about, and everyone concerned deserve to be congratulated for working so well. I suppose you will be sending the money to the Perthshire Branch. The Hon. Treasurer is Mr. John MacDonald, c/o The Union Bank of Scotland, George Street, Perth.

Will you very kindly make out a list of the names of all your workers who have given six months work to the Red Cross, and send it to me as soon as possible. There will be a letter of thanks sent to all who have qualified, from headquarters.

M. M. Bulloch

Collections of Red Cross Penny a Week

1943	January	£4.	7s	4p
	February	£3	14s	9p
	March	£8	6s	3p
	April	£4	9s	1p
	May	£3	17s	2p
	June	£4	9s	5p
	July	£4	1s	9p
	August	£3	17s	
	September	£3	12s	9p
	October	£2	13s	
	November	£3	0s	3p
	December	£3	11s	3p
	Total	£50		

1944	January	£4	15s	3p
	February	£7	0	4p
	March	£3	17s	6p
	April	£2	9s	6p
	May	£4	5s	9p
	June	£3	18s	2p
	July	£3	17s	0
	August	£5	5s	0
	September	£5	7s	0
	October	£4	1s	0
	November	£4	8s	0
	December	£4	17s	3
	Total	£54	1s	9p

1945	January	£8	5s	0
	February	£3	16s	0
	March	£4	0s	0
	April	£4	3s	0
	May	£3	12s	0

June	£5	10s			
Total	£29	6s	0	Grand Total	£133 7s 9p

Mrs Buchan and Mrs Mills thank you very much for your kind support while they were collecting for the Red Cross.

I hope this gives a personal picture of life in the village of Saint Fillans in stirring times.

This war effort along with others throughout the kingdom was called “THE HOME FRONT”, and contributed in no small way to ultimate Victory.

Janey G. Bryce. Edinburgh 1996.

*Cover plate:
a view of the Loch from the Lake Cottage Jetty
watercolour by P. R. Bryce*