

Memories of Mary Cameron --- Evacuee – (St Fillans 1939-40)

I was born in Garngad in Glasgow on 2nd February 1934 to Allan and Robina ‘Beannie’ Cameron. I was five years old in 1939 when the war started. On 31st August 1939, fearing that the Germans would bomb Glasgow, the order came to ‘Evacuate Forthwith’ and so, over the next 3 days, 120,000 children evacuated Glasgow. On 2nd September 1939 I was evacuated with my mum ‘Beannie’ my three sisters Nan aged 11, Ruby aged 9 and Jessie three and my brother Dougie aged 7. We were really lucky that my mum was able to come with us, many children had to travel alone or with siblings and must have been terrified, but for us it was a huge adventure. My Ma was able to come because my younger sister Jessie was under school age and only pregnant woman and mothers with preschool children were allowed to go with their children. My Ma and Da would never have split up the family, or allowed us to go alone.

We left Glasgow on the train and arrived at St Fillans train station. I remember everyone at the train station having gas masks and marching down the road to the village school. We all gathered in the school hall. It was very well organised and the villagers already had names of the children, or families they were going to take in. we were so lucky that we were allocated to Mr. Mudie and he allowed our family to have his cottage next to the village shop that he owned. He then lived above the shop with his wife and daughter.

BRAEHEAD COTTAGE

We were allocated to live in Braehead Cottage, right next to the village shop. We lived in a really large ‘single end’ in ‘the Maddie’ in The Garngad in Glasgow, with gas lights, a tin bath in front of the fire and outside toilet. ‘The Maddie’ was an old mental asylum that had been turned into flats – hence its local name. so for us having a cottage with a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, electricity, indoor toilet and believe it or not, a bath was a real luxury. My Ma had a key and always kept the front room of the cottage locked as it had the Mudie’s piano and lovely furniture in there. We were not allowed in and we all wondered what delights were in there and imagined that it was a huge room filled with wonders. We



all loved the lovely large garden at the back of the cottage that we shared with the Mudie's. Mr. Mudie's wee girl had a hut in the garden full of toys. Given that we had few toys or dolls and shared one roller skate between the five of us (yes one skate – not a pair!), we were overwhelmed by this

Mr Mudie and all the other people in the village were very kind to us, when we arrived at the cottage there was a big bag of food awaiting us on the table. That was the first time that I had had a whole chocolate biscuit to myself (in Glasgow we always bought broken biscuits), it was like a Kit-Kat and to this day I still have a real real soft spot for Kit-Kats.

Trains, Boats and Automobiles

We were used to trams and buses in Glasgow, but Mr. Mudie had a car, which was rare in those days. I had never been in a car in my life before, so I couldn't believe it when he ran us into Comrie. We all thought it was great.

My friend Margaret McNair was also evacuated to St Fillans. She was housed in a big house opposite the loch (Craigdarroch I think). She said that the people who took her were very good to her. They had a boathouse in the garden and we used to play games sitting rocking in the boats. To this day I have a scar on my finger where it got jammed between two of the boats. I didn't tell my Ma though as I knew she wouldn't let me play there again.

Sheep, Swans and Hedgehogs

My eldest sister Nan who was aged 11 helped look after some young children that lived in the house across the river, close to the golf course, we loved going there too as they had a pet sheep called Molly and we used to ride on Molly's back. We used to collect acorns from the oak tree beside the bridge for Molly and take off the hard shell for her. She loved them and we loved her.

One day one of our new neighbours gave my friend Margaret McNair and I a bag of brown sugar to feed some swans that had landed on the loch. We couldn't believe it as during the war we didn't get many sweet things, so most of the sugar went to us!

We were lucky that we had a huge park in front of our house in Glasgow (the grounds of the old Asylum), but we loved the large garden that we shared with the Mudie's. There was a hedgehog that lived in the garden that we loved, it was the first time we had seen one and it was great to watch it rolling into a wee ball.

A run in with the local Bobby

Having never seen an orchard before, some of the Glasgow boys couldn't believe their luck when they stumbled across a whole load of apple and pear trees. So, with no idea that they were stealing, they gathered as many as they could carry and brought them back to my Ma delighted with their foraging finds. The villagers were all really kind and often gave the evacuees gifts, such as eggs, so she quickly got busy turning them into crumble.

Scrumping apples and pears was a pretty serious crime in St Fillans in those days (and I am delighted to say probably still is!) and the local constable was sent round the village to locate the culprits. He arrived at the cottage while the fruit was stewing in the kitchen and my Ma realizing their mistake, had to apologise profusely and appease him with promises of apple and pear crumble for the village and a skelp round the ear for the culprits.

Fond Memories



I remember the blackout blinds and the warden coming round to check if any light was showing and if it was he would shout 'put that light off!'

Although I don't remember my teacher's name, I still remember her and I remember walking to and from school and I could still remember the route we took today. It was lovely to visit the school again, which is now being transformed into a beautiful house.

As we settled into St Fillans life, my Ma got a job working in the Drummond Arms Hotel, working in the kitchen.

My Da, Allan Cameron was a carter, who worked for the cleansing department in Glasgow. He had a Clydesdale horse called Sunshine that we loved. He had lost half of

his 'trigger finger' in an accident years ago, so couldn't go to war, although many of his seven brothers did.

My Da came to visit us every weekend, travelling from Glasgow to Comrie. Then on to St Fillans: If he missed the last transport he would have to walk the 6 miles from Comrie to St Fillans. He was a great walker so didn't mind too much. But when the cold, dark winter nights set in my Ma decided that it wasn't fair on him to have to go home to an empty house every night and to walk all that distance after a long day's work, plus he missed us all terribly, so she started making plans for us to go home.

The first of us to leave was my brother Dougie. Once the excitement of evacuee country life had died down and winter set in he decided that he wanted to go back and stay with my granny in Glasgow. Many of his pals had gone home by this time as the feared German Blitzkrieg hadn't happened and he missed the buzz of Glasgow life and his friends. Shortly after this my mother decided to take us all back home to Glasgow and to bring the family back together again.

We were all very sad to leave St Fillans but in 1940, we returned to ***'CLOSES N CORS'***

The evacuee returns

St Fillans had a huge impact on all of our lives and we all had really fond memories of living there. I had visited on occasion, however it was a wonderful surprise to spend a week living in Braehead Cottage once again 77 years after we first moved in there. Although the inside of the cottage had changed beyond recognition it was amazing to discover that the 'huge front room' was in reality very small and also to lie in the bath on 2nd September 2016, thinking that I had spent my first ever night there, in my first ever bedroom, 77 years ago to the day. The villagers were as helpful as ever and it will be wonderful to return next year for the celebration of 200 years of St Fillans Life.

Mary Boath (nee Cameron)

November 2016