

Est. 1826

**THE FIRST TWENTY FIVE YEARS**

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### **Health Warning**

This book contains strong language.

It was written about the people  
of their time in the  
language of their time.  
Do not be offended,  
just understand and enjoy it.

**James Aiken Sheetmetal**  
accepts no responsibility for anyone  
failing to adhere to this health warning.

## Twenty five years ago

The present James Aiken (Sheetmetal) was formed by George Cowie, then an accountant with A.S.C.O. and Neil Stewart, a sheetmetal worker with the old James Aiken Sheetmetal. This was brought about when the old company was in financial difficulties and was about to go into liquidation. George and Neil bought it as a going concern in 1977 and subsequently inherited the bad debts. They moved premises from John Street to Wellington Street, where they still are today.



*George Cowie*



*Neil Stewart*

The staff at that time consisted of a manager George Anderson (Toffee Dod), a foreman Neil Anderson (no relation), Bill McWilliam (Auld Wullie) although he had many other titles, most of them unprintable, Sandy Innes, Steve Malcolm and Peter Grimmer (both apprentices). Neil Stewart took over the running of the workshop, while George Cowie handled the financial side (while still retaining his position at A.S.C.O.).

The premises at 10 Wellington Street were bought from the Harbour Board and consisted of four units. The first unit, on the Wellington Street side (which was formerly occupied by Halliburton as their first foothold in Aberdeen) was taken for the workshop, as it was the most habitable of the four

units. The small unit at the back, which faced York Place, lay empty for two years then rented out to Norfast, who were involved in electro-plating. The third unit, the large unit at the York Place side, was taken on by Strachans of Peterhead. The fourth unit, the large unit on Wellington Street was empty for three years, and was used occasionally for storage purposes.

When Norfast vacated the premises, the unit was divided into two separate units. One was occupied by Winchload, a wire rope and lifting company, the other by a marine engineering company, Nomis, who used it as a storage facility for three years, after that it was occupied by a panel beater/coach painter briefly and then by Harbour Engineers, a joint venture between James Aiken and Jubilee Engineering. At about this time (1981), the empty premises was occupied by Gray Makenzie, an underwater exploration company, who undertook the refurbishment of the unit. The next company on the move was Winchload, who had changed their name to John Barnsley (Scotland). That premises were then occupied by James Aiken (Offshore), another new venture entered into by James Aiken (Sheetmetal), which quickly outgrew the unit and moved to Altens.

Gray Makenzie also moved out, but Aiken Sheetmetal were also growing, so the workshop was moved through to the larger premises and the old workshop was used for a store. With the winding up of Harbour Engineers, that unit and the John Barnsley unit were taken up with another Aiken Sheetmetal venture, James Aiken Ventilation Supplies. In the meantime, Strachans had moved out and that unit was briefly occupied by SEEL, a specialist coatings company who eventually moved premises to Stonehaven. That unit lay empty for a while, during which time the partition was moved to

provide more workshop space. Later it was fitted out as a store for our steel stock holding facility Harbour Engineering, so in effect the entire building was occupied by James Aiken (Sheetmetal) in some shape or form.

The next transformation took place when the Harbour Engineers name was resurrected to form a steel stockholding company which took over the Aikens store, which in turn outgrew itself and moved to Tipperty. Hard on the heels of that move came the latest venture, James Aiken Precision Engineers, which, along with James Aiken (Sheetmetal) occupies the whole of the Wellington Street area. The latest development is the moving of James Aiken Ventilation Supplies through to the steel store to make way for a coating and electro plating venture, which is called F.Q.C. That brings us up to date with history of James Aiken (Sheetmetal) Limited.

## Employees & Characters

The history of the company is one thing, the history of its employees is another story entirely. Through the years of change and advancement, the nucleus of the staff has remained quite consistent. Of the original staff who moved to Wellington Street, George Cowie, Neil Stewart and Peter Grimmer are the only ones remaining today. Although Peter did have a spell away, to try his hand as a “North Sea Tiger”, shortly after completing his apprenticeship. Their first venture into the “Transfer Market” was Bill Lumsden (yours truly) who was



*Bill Lumsden*

taken on as a foreman. Shortly after this Toffee Dod died while on holiday. On hearing the news, Auld Wullie, a long standing and faithful colleague of the deceased was heard to say, by way of an epitaph “He was nae fuckin’ use ony wae”. This is just one of the many immortal phrases which were uttered by the revered old Tin Smith, Mr McWilliam.

Wullie’s hatred for other colleagues was brought into play on many occasions. One, known to Wullie as the Glasgae Tink was actually his supervisor.

The transformation of James Aiken (Sheetmetal) in the early days from a rudderless ship to an organised company had it’s teething problems. One example occurred when Aikens was commissioned to manufacture and install

a rather large radiator guard for Torry School. When the manufacture was completed, rather than hire transport to deliver the guard (we didn't have the luxury of a van in those days), our intrepid crew decided to set off on foot which, for one thing, the journey would take them past ASCO where George Cowie's office was situated and for another the journey took about two hours. As the journey had taken most of the afternoon, no time was left for fitting the aforementioned guard, so a fifteen minute wait for the bus, a fifteen minute bus ride and then, this is the clever bit, back to the workshop to recover the coveted piece bag all of which took place on overtime.

Another amusing incident took place while the workshop was in John Street and involved another walk for Neil Anderson, this time to Torry Research (Torry again) with an eight foot section of ducting, now as this meant travelling down George Street, then a busy rather narrow thoroughfare, the journey was fraught with danger and sure enough as a slight turn of the body as he checked for traffic coming from behind was enough to tilt the angle of his eight foot



Neil Anderson ~ *Smashing time at the Rubber Shop*

burden, which was tilted roadwards, was met by the very bus he was looking out for. The glancing blow which ensued was enough to cause him to lose his balance and send him crashing through the window of the Rubber Shop. Laugh at this if you may but the unfortunate incident was thought worthy of a quarter page in the Evening Express pictures, names and all. So you see, Aikens had made their first tentative step into the heady world of advertising. Thankfully though, Neil Anderson escaped with nothing more than a few bruises and the scorn of his superiors and the manager of The Rubber Shop.

The next member of the staff worth a mention is "Auld Wullie", a quiet unassuming bachelor, who, what he lacked in hearing ability, was certainly made up for vocally. To say that Wullie was outspoken is like saying Maradona kicks a ba'. Little things that would mildly irritate normal people took on enormous proportions with Wullie. Get on his wrong side (which over the years, most of us did at some time) would subject you to a tirade of abuse and saliva second to none. As I was saying earlier, he had a lack of hearing, which necessitated him wearing a battery operated hearing aid, over which Wullie had little or no control, and on many occasions you could hear the whistling of the contraption above the noise of the radio, but Wullie was oblivious to this. However, on one occasion the workshop was empty, except for our abrasive old journeyman and the phone was ringing constantly, which must have reached the parts which raised his hackles, so he promptly snatched up the phone and in his best receptionist's tone shouted "There's nae cunt here an' I'm deaf". To this day we do not know if the caller on the other end of the phone fully appreciated James Aiken Sheetmetal's strange brand of customer care.

In the early days, as I said, the workshop at Wellington Street was small

and the route to the toilet passed through the office. One morning an important customer was discussing business with Neil Stewart. The hubbub of noise from the workshop and the gentle noise of conversation was irreverently shattered, as the formidable figure of Wullie, dungarees at his feet, came crashing through the corridor "A'v shit ma'sel for fuck sake!" was his plaintive cry. Now Neil Stewart (Stewarty, to Mr McWilliam) is a resourceful man, but he was left wanting, as to how to explain to our valuable customer how this apparent regular event did not reflect in the overall performance of the company.



**Auld Wullie** ~ "Good Morning, James Aiken Sheetmetal, how may I help you."

On another occasion the old warrior collapsed in the workshop and was whipped off to hospital in an ambulance. Now even though the old fellow was cantankerous in the extreme, the lads at Aikens thought the world of him, and during his stay in hospital, the boys took turns in visiting him, which, I may say was fraught with danger. On one occasion the ward was busy but quiet as hospital wards usually are, a smart gentleman in the next bed to Wullie was

sitting up in bed, very smart in his dressing gown and cravat, eagerly awaiting his visitors. Now as I mentioned, Wullie has a hearing problem and imagines everyone else is the same, as he shouts rather than speaks, so to his hospital visitors he announces "See him next door, pished the bed last night". The poor gentleman slid down his bed looking for somewhere to hide and Wullie's visitors felt no better. On another occasion Neil Stewart (Stewarty) visited him and took along a box of chocolate whisky liqueurs to cheer the old codger up. The present was greeted with Wullie's usual good grace (a withering glower that would blister paint). The morning following Neil's visit, we received a message that Wullie had been rushed to the operating theatre during the night for emergency surgery, on enquiring as to the nature of the surgery, we were informed he had a burst ulcer and was in a serious condition. But the old dog bounced back and a couple of days later was informing his visitors "That cunt Stewarty tried to kill me wi' that sweeties".

On another occasion he was hospitalised after falling on icy pavements and damaging his back, and was being examined by a coloured doctor. Wullie was treating the unfortunate gentleman to one of his withering glowers to which the doctor said, "What's the matter Mr McWilliam have you never seen a black man before?" To which Wullie replied "Aye, bit I didna think ye got to be doctors". Another man totally deflated.

In the twilight of his years, he gradually eased his working hours from full time to part time. In the summer, he worked mornings and in the winter, afternoons. This eventually ceased when his long suffering landlady sold her boarding house in Constitution Street and bought a house in the Bridge of Don. Wullie was given an upstairs room, but was not fit enough for it and

eventually was fixed up with a room in Aberdon Old Folks Home, which, much to everyone’s surprise, he liked. Again the lads made regular visits with “Survival Packs” consisting of fags and an occasional snifter of the “Amber Nectar” of which he had particular affinity.

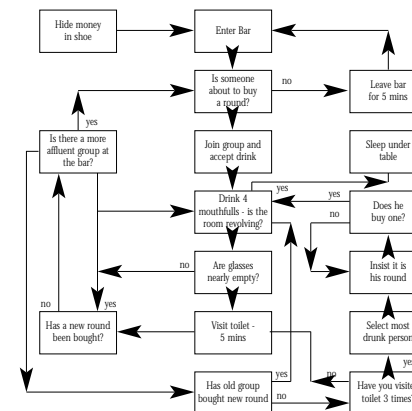
**“I hate Grouse  
it’s Bell’s I drink”**

On one occasion, George Cowie went in to see him and peeping round the door, he saw the old war horse in fitful slumber. Not wanting to disturb him and suffer untold retribution, he backed out and informed the Matron he had called and would leave his parcel. To his consternation, however, the Matron insisted on waking him as “he had slept long enough”. On waking him, she informed him a George Cowie had kindly popped in to see him. “George fa? niver heard o’ him”. After a short confab, he condescended to see his unwelcome visitor, there followed a strained monosyllabic conversation terminated with “Ye better fuck off now, I’m tired and dinna tak ony mare o’ that shite in, I hate Grouse, it’s Bell’s I drink.” So you see even the chairman of the company was not immune from his wrath. Sadly, all great things come to an end and in 1992 he “popped his clogs” and went to the great sheetmetal shop in the sky where, doubtless, he is keeping them all on their toes.

The next member of the original employees was the infamous The Tap or Mr T. The nick name, The Tap, has nothing to do with his prowess as a plumber, but to do with his tendency to tap money, cigarettes, drink, you name it, he’ll tap it. One of his LEGendary taps occurred when he was invited to a fancy dress party and decided to attend dressed as Rolf Harris’s “Jake The Peg”,

the problem of procuring the “extra leg” proved to be no problem to this man as his neighbour had the misfortune of (1) being a neighbour of Mr T and (2) had a leg amputated several years before. So, brass neck himself tapped the man’s artificial leg (how the strange request was received will remain with me until my dying days). The same unfortunate gentleman was the victim of another of Mr T’s boldness. On this occasion, he was complaining of cold feet while working on site. On hearing of his plight, Mrs T, equally as resourceful as her spouse, remembered on one of her visits to the drying room (they lived in a multi-storey flat) seeing thick woolly socks belonging to the one-legged chap. On mentioning this to her partner-in-crime, he immediately confronted the chap as to whether or not he actually needed “pairs” of socks when one was sufficient. The poor chap conceded the point of his selfishness and was promptly relieved of two pairs of “spare” socks. The sting in the tail of this story is that, due to the constant wearing of his artificial leg on the fabric of the socks, there were no feet to them, but as he said that he didn’t feel the cold in his “gammy” leg and Mr T, to his eternal credit, said “at least they kept my legs warm”.

THE TAPS BAR TECHNIQUE



Another of his habits was to enter a bar (any bar) totally skint and emerge several hours later, legless. This was achieved in two ways. Either by “putting it on the slate” or, which was more often the case, tapped drink from whoever he could. One such unfortunate was a gentleman from Aberdeen Radiators, who was imposed upon frequently for drink, fags or money (none of which were ever honoured with reciprocation). However, on one occasion, he came into the bar and announced to his erstwhile sponsor, “fit are ye for?” to which the stunned gentleman replied, “a nip and a half pint”. This was promptly ordered, along with a pint and a nip for himself and a pint to a companion. On receiving the change from the proffered £10 note, Mr T gave the change to his sponsor and announced “that’s the tenner I’m due you”.

On the occasion of Peter Grimmer’s wedding, Mr and Mrs T were invited to the reception, after which, a party was being held at the new Mrs Grimmers mother’s home in Blackburn, and as Mr and Mrs T resided in the town, it was presumed they would not take up the offer to attend the party. Wrong! They attended the party, drunk the poor woman out of house and home and on being asked how they were getting home, announced “we’re bidin wi’ Neil’s father in law” which came as a complete shock to him. Well not only did they stay all night, they had a full breakfast and “borrowed” two pints of milk, as it was Sunday and the shops would be closed.

On another occasion, we had organised a snooker and darts evening in the basement of Henderson and Smith in the Adelphi, which was owned by a mate of George’s, Eddie Tough. The basement was kitted out with a full sized snooker table and an area for darts. James Aiken supplied the drinks, which consisted of two bottles of whisky, vodka, rum and cases of beer. We were having

a great night and the quality of the snooker and darts gradually deteriorated as the drink was being consumed. Eventually, the playing ceased completely and everyone sat chatting and telling jokes. During this time, following a lull in the conversation, it was observed that Mr T was missing from the group. Although we were all privately hoping he had “buggered off”, we enquired, “has anybody seen Sandy?” to which we heard a muttering and a scuffle coming from under the snooker table, and Mr T emerged on his hand and knees and was struggling to open the second bottle of whisky, an effort, which on hindsight proved too



**Peter Grimmer** ~ *partial to a drop of Watsons Dark Rum*

much for him, as he proceeded to vomit all over the floor and continued on into the toilet. After he was removed from the premises, George, Neil and myself cleaned the place up, thanked our host and vowed “never again”.

The next member to be mentioned in dispatches is Peter Grimmer. Now Peter, compared to our previously mentioned associate, led a quiet, unassuming life and although he is partial to the occasional refreshment (Watsons Dark Rum) no tales of drunken, or otherwise, misdemeanours readily spring to mind. Not until the fateful golf trip to Majorca. This was a weekend trip organised by the lads themselves (more about the outing later). This was Pete’s first trip abroad without the protection of Ruth, his wife, and to say he made the best of it, was the understatement of the decade. As the journey from

Aberdeen was to be made through the night, it was quite important to get some food inside us, to soak up the considerable amount of alcoholic beverage about to be scoffed on the trip to the airport. The Fittie Bar kindly stayed open for our departure ceremony and laid on stovies and sandwiches for us. Now Peter, having a discerning palate, shunned the offer of food and decided (wrongly, as it turned out) to build up his fluid level so as to cope with the dehydration problems that go with the extreme heat on a tropical golf course.

The bus trip to the airport was a 4 hour binge interspersed with occasional melodies extolling the virtues of our beloved football club “Aeberdeen, Aeberdeen, Aeberdeen” and some unfortunate woodpecker (again, more of this later). Sandwiches and crisps were on offer, but again, Pete declined our offers of all but alcoholic refreshment. On arrival at the airport and our subsequent check in, the carry-out was all but exhausted and it was too early for the bars to be open, so Pete’s liver had a short respite, only until we boarded the plane for Majorca. The flight was relatively uneventful, and the gentle noise of boozed up Aberdonians snoring wafted pleasantly through the aircraft (on reflection, the noise may not have been so gentle if we had removed our earphones before retiring) and the occasional reference to the unfortunate woodpecker might have been louder than we thought.

However we digress. Pete’s progress from plane to Palma Airport was a circuitous one, due I dare say to the turbulence on the flight and the ample duty free bag he was carrying. On through passport control he staggered with more than a few “Spanish Eyes” on him. The next hazard our intrepid drunkard had to negotiate was the recovery of our luggage and our golf clubs. Now this presented Pete with a problem as although he had no golf clubs with him, due

to the fact he had a broken wrist, which I neglected to mention, he still had the problem of his duty free bag and his luggage. We thought the extra bag would equalise his equilibrium, but it had the opposite effect of pulling him to the right and we had the devil’s own job guiding him through the gates to the waiting bus.

Next hazard, the hotel check-in desk. Now, as I have already said, Pete’s a fine lad but in his present condition, no one was rushing to be his room mate and during this “evasion and persuasion” episode, the hotel receptionists were getting a little apprehensive. The deed was finally done, and after a bit of horse trading, we retired to our rooms for a Siesta. But the call of the sunshine and the splashing of the pool proved too strong and despite the fact we had been on the go for 24 hours we retired to the poolside for some San Miguel and Sangria, except Pete, who, on discovering Majorca did not have an over-abundance of his favourite tippie, Watsons dark rum, he set himself the stern task of finding an equivalent as near to his beloved Watsons as possible.

**“Anywhere he could  
lay his head”**

After “Shit, Shave, Shower and Shampoo”, we were ready for some food and check out the local hostelries. Yet again Pete shunned the food in favour of some grog. The night went well (more later) and the following morning, bright eyed and bushy tailed we headed for the golf course. There were a few late comers and a couple of absentees, notably Pete. This was the trend on the following day and it transpired that although Peter had paid the same as the rest of the boys for his week-end, he didn’t play golf, he didn’t eat any of the meals,



he didn't even sleep in his bed, preferring lobbies, lifts or "anywhere he could lay his head". The lads highjacked him in one bar as he slumbered fitfully, stretched out on a settee, and attempted to shave off one side of his moustache and his opposite eyebrow, but failed, not due to the victim waking up but to the bluntness of the razor or the toughness of his hair. Undaunted, they wrote cryptic messages on his plaster from a dark eyed Senora thanking him for a good time.

By the time we were ready to return home, poor Pete was wasted. I have never seen anyone so drunk for so long and still standing. The journey home must have been a nightmare for him as he went practically 4 days without food and must have drunk his own weight in booze. He reflected later that although he was on holiday the rest of that week, he could not bring himself to look at a drink let alone have one, and must have been grateful for his understanding wife, who gently nursed him back to his former glory with not as much as a cross word.

When we talk about booze, the name of Norman Morgan automatically springs to mind. Norman retired from the Co-op where he was manager of the drapery department. He was a neighbour of George Cowie out at Pitmedden and Norman's wife pleaded with George to give him a part time job "to keep out of the pub". We granted her wish in as much as we gave him a job, but as for keeping him out of the pub, powers much stronger than ours were required for that exercise. Norman was employed by us as a driver (Norman was to driving what Frank Bruno was to lace making) on a part time basis. He worked from 8 a.m. till 12 noon, darted into the Fittie Bar for a couple of glasses of Johnnie Walker Black Label and a beer, then dashed out to the Whitecairns (en

route to Pitmedden) for a double doze of the same. This routine was repeated five days a week, and always ended with him arriving home 15 minutes before his school teacher wife, and like a dutiful husband had a cup of tea ready for her. She always suspected he was up to no good but could never actually prove it.

In his prime Norman was a scratch golfer, but the ravages of the "amber nectar" and time took it's toll, so by the time he attended one of our golf outings to Braemar, he was no real threat to the major prizes. The year he attended, he had been imbibing until three or four in the morning so when he



**Norman Morgan** ~ *a part time job fairly keeps you out of the pub*

rolled out of George's car to board the bus for Braemar, Norman was not a sober man. To his credit, however, not to offend his hosts he graciously relieved us of half of a bottle of Johnnie Walker on the ninety minute journey to Braemar. On disembarking, the usual routine is to head for the club house restaurant for coffee and bacon butties. Not so our Mister Morgan who stormed into the bar, threw his jacket over a magnificent specimen of the "Monarch of the Glen" hanging above the bar and declared "I'm parched, let battle commence". He was tactfully informed that the bar was closed and that a coffee and a bacon roll might be better for him, which he grudgingly agreed to.

His round of golf was a short run affair, on the third hole, he was playing a bad lie and his back swing rapidly developed into a backward somersault

which prompted the response “Stuff this, I need a drink”, so he retired to the club house to indulge in some small libations and a game of cribbage with the bus driver. He could not be tempted out for the second round as he was concerned that his new found cribbage partner might be lost without him. So when we weary golfers finally shuffled in after 36 holes of golf, our old friend was well and truly sozzled, then an amazing thing happened, he sat down to the club’s excellent three course supper, had a quick wash and then challenged George Cowie to first hole winner-takes-all competition. Norman using a putter only and George with a driver, a seven iron and a putter. Norman won by two strokes.

After the prize giving and much merriment it was time for the homeward journey and more boozing and sing-songs and then into the Fittie Bar for a couple of dozen night caps, all of which Norman joined in eagerly, he was then taken back to Pitmedden with George, who invited him in for a cup of coffee to which the reply was “Why, have you no whisky?” Twenty four hours of solid drinking, what a character.

Reference was made earlier to his prowess as a driver, Norman’s philosophy was “It’s all right, he’ll stop” and he used to charge through red lights and crossings as if they didn’t exist, and roundabouts were treated with the same disdain. While Norman was our driver, the only thing on the truck which was not worn out was the flashers (his presumption was that they must know where he is going).

Another incident involving Norman occurred in Pitmedden. George and his wife, Sheila had a night out arranged, but the baby sitter backed out at short notice. On hearing of this, our bold hero volunteered his services and arranged

to turn up at seven thirty. The Cowies’ gladly accepted this offer and hurried home to prepare themselves. While Sheila was adding the finishing touches to her make-up, George was taking in the panoramic view from his lounge window, part of which takes in the bowling green. What he saw prompted to turn to his lady wife and state “There’s been a change of plans, dear” and on joining George by the window they observed their prospective baby-sitter flat on his face in the middle of the bowling green “bleezing drunk”, bless him.



**Norman Morgan** ~ *Bowled over by the amber nectar*

## Après Golf

The noble sport of golf has cropped up a couple of times so far, so it might be fitting to mention a few incidents concerning James Aiken (Sheetmetal) Annual Golf Day commonly referred to as J.A.A.P.U. (James Aiken Annual Almighty Piss Up). The golf itself is of secondary importance, firstly it is a day out for the staff and a few good friends who have the same things in common as ourselves, namely, liking a good laugh and a propensity to a liking for the falling down liquid. Someone once said a game of golf is a good walk spoiled and at Aiken's outings this is never more accurately put.

The handicapping system is quite unique to Aikens in as much it is governed, in the case of the staff, by how much overtime they have worked or how many cock-ups they have made and their handicap is worked out accordingly. As far as visitors are concerned, it is based on how much drink they buy the chairman, and the final figures are drafted on the bus on the way to Braemar. Other factors come into it, such as inside leg measurement, your willingness to carry the chairman's clubs, your willingness to turn a blind eye to the chairman doctoring his card and a host of other anomalies. As you have probably gathered, George Cowie is in charge of this department.

One of the main functions of the golf outing is by way of a thank you to the guys for their efforts over the previous year and it gives them a chance to let off steam and hurl abuse at us poor managers (which they do with great vigour). We are also made very welcome by the Braemar Golf Club and its staff, could this be due to the vast amount of drink that is consumed during the day out? Surely no! The first round is usually a docile affair, as just a few amber

nectars have been sunk, but as most have either a hip flask or a few cans of beer (or both) by the time they reach the 19th hole for soup and sandwiches the feel-good factor has crept in.

The second round is a "Stableford" format, which for the un-enitiated is played by pairs with both partners teeing off, then selecting the best lying ball and playing alternate shots. This team selection usually causes a flurry of activity and negotiations, but as the chairman is also the "selection board", most pleas fall on deaf ears and duffers (like myself) are paired with good golfers (like the chairman) Fair? of course it's fair!

So the second round progresses with varying degrees of success and failure. Balls that are lost, mysteriously turn up on the edge of the green. Balls which are hit out of bounds miraculously end up with a perfect lie and so on and so forth. So back to the club house for a 3 course dinner and a couple of shandies. Time has been marching on and it is now about 6.30 - 7.00 o'clock and the bus driver starts shuffling his feet and making noises to let us know he's there, but he's usually been told (1) "it'll be a long night" and (2) "they're good tippers". Eventually we board the bus in varying degrees of drunkenness and begin the long and winding road home.

Now this stage of the outing sets Aikens aside from the rest in as much as the prize giving takes place on the bus. The main reason for this is the fact that normal prize giving events are accompanied by polite applause and "well done", but the Aikens event is more like "tarry bastard", "cheating sod" and "I hope you choke on your Glenlivet single malt, arsehole". And we feel the Braemar Golfing Fraternity deserve to be excused this unusual ritual. So the winners, runners-up and booby prize recipients receive their accolades and



accompanying abuse and, due to our customer's overwhelming response to our begging for prizes, invariably there is a prize for everyone, ranging from best dressed, worst dressed, most drunk, most sober (he's a queer sod), longest drive etc. One year Kenny Innes slept in and missed the bus so he took his car up and he won the prize for the longest drive (Aberdeen to Braemar).

At this stage too, another Aikens peculiarity occurs in as much as the overall winner (the best round of the morning) receives his prize, but, if he is a visitor, he doesn't get invited back and if he's an employee, he's sacked. George Cowie is a poor loser. One year, the celebrations really run on time wise as we had stopped at a hotel just outside Braemar and we didn't leave there till 12.30. One of the lads, who happened to be severely henpecked, by the way, was staying in a caravan in Ballater for the week-end so was dropped off in the square in Ballater. Picture the scene, a drunken giant "loaping" down the main street with a set of golf clubs over his shoulder, whereupon he was accosted by an equally large member of the local constabulary who enquired "Is your name Graham Porter?" The drunken giant was taken aback and blurted out that he was that man, whereupon P.C.Plod informed him "Your wife's looking for you". The poor sod got stick for that for months.

The trips home in the charabanc as I have said is a rowdie affair with much singing and general mirth. The back half of the bus is commandeered by the rabble, which in more sober times is the workshop staff with a light sprinkling of junior management in the shape of Robert Adam (Big Bob) and George Paterson (Georgie P) who, by the time we reach Aberdeen are usually legless to put it mildly. They insist its travel sickness because they are travelling at the back of the bus, but I remain sceptical. Anyway, the ritual is to entice the

junior member of staff, such as a first year apprentice or younger up to the "Bear Pit" which is the back of the bus. Coke liberally laced with Voddy or Rum in the pretence that it's "Black Sugar Ailly". The poor sod goes through life thinking that a combination of golf and "Black Sugar Ailly" is bad for your health.



**Bob Adam**  
*"Bear Pit" Manager*



**George Paterson**  
*Black Sugar Ailly really makes you sick*

One such victim was George Cowie Jnr. Now George Cowie Snr. had fallen into a slumber (due to the over-abundance of fresh air) and was un-aware that his first born had fallen into the clutches of the bears. So on wakening as the bus stopped to let them off at the top of his street, young Georgie was a quivering wreck shouting tearfully to the world "My father's a fucking alcoholic". Picture the scene, if you will, little George Snr. half carrying half trailing a very large, very drunk George Jnr. down Pitstruan Place with two sets of golf clubs and a puzzled look on his face to the strains of "My father's a fucking alcoholic" and to be confronted by an outraged Sheila with a scream of "What have you done to my wee boy, you alcoholic". But George Snr. reaped sweet revenge in the morning by wakening his very green at the gills son with a huge plate of greasy fried eggs and bacon, the stains of which can be seen on the back of the bedroom door to this day.

On another golf outing, John Scott from Aiken Offshore was invited along as a guest and he was magnificently turned out with a designer outfit and a brand new, very expensive, set of golf clubs. He strolled up to the first hole and proceeded to take 10 strokes from the tee. His first swing only succeeded in frightening the ball off the tee, his second, third and fourth trundled a couple of yards. Poor John panicked, if he had hit the ball where it had landed, he would not have forfeited all these shots. Obviously, the first tee is in full view of the club house, so all the club members and of course the Aiken's punters were witness to John's demise, which with the typical Aiken's subtlety was greeted with gales of laughter. John, however, got the last laugh as he got a hole in one at the thirteenth (tarry git), which, if he hadn't been such a miserable sod, would have cost him a fortune at the bar.

Another year that we were running late, we arrived at Ballater and had to stop for the bears to relieve themselves, the only problem was that the public toilets were closed. As the local plods were on the prowl, peeing against the side of the bus was out of the question, so it was agreed that we would head for Aberdeen and stop in a lay-by for a "trees" call. Good idea? not for Big Bob, who's bladder was at bursting point, so he headed for the nearest hostelry for a "Jimmy Riddle". Now, to let you understand, Bob is a big lad, and when the booze is about him, co-ordination between arms and legs desert him and he is like a whirling dervish. Picture the scene as the Ballater locals peacefully sip their refreshments and mentally prepare themselves for kirk the following morning, when suddenly an out of control windmill comes charging through the door with his flies undone demanding the whereabouts of the toilets.

Tables, chairs and glasses went flying as our Big Bob answered the call

of nature. The bewildered locals were just cleaning up the debris when he came charging out of the toilet, flies still undone, shouting "Oh fuck, I'll miss the bus". The locals must have been relieved that his loss of fluid had not given him a thirst.



*A Windmill out of control*

The year of 1989 was a year to remember as one of the prizes was a bottle of Black Label Whisky, but when presented to the prize winner, the bottom fell out of the bottle for no apparent reason. I promised the winner a replacement bottle and, for a laugh, sent a poem to Arthur Bell Distillers pleading for a replacement (AT LEAST). The poem went as follows;

### **Black Bottle without a bottom?**

*When Aikens golf day comes around they come from near and far  
We jump aboard the charabanc and head up to Braemar  
From clubhouse to the eighteenth green the thrills come thick and fast  
The birdies, bogeys, eagles; it's prizes time at last*

*The Aikens champ of '89 hands in his winning card  
They say through moans of discontent that next year he'll be barred  
All eyes are slowly focused on the prizes on the table.  
The trophies, clubs and brollies and the coveted Black Label*

*The champ accepts his trophy and picks the Johnny Walker  
But the envy turns to disbelief, oh! what an awful shocker  
The bottom falls out from the box and it's contents 12 years old  
And we all stare in horror at the pool of liquid gold*

*The Aikens champ is crying now the sobbing uncontrollable  
He's offered other bottles but the poor man's inconsolable  
Now bad news travels very fast, it's soon all round Braemar  
"The bottom's out of Johnny Walker", you know how rumours are*

*A market slump? oh not again, we knew the shares were risky  
But never since 1820 odd could be Black Label Whisky  
The mis-informed were re-assured and the panic it subsided  
But our champ was tearful as homeward bound we glided*

*So if this tragic tale of woe finds sympathetic ears  
A replacement box of liquid gold would wipe away the tears  
Although you're from the land of verse a Robbie Burns I'm not  
But if you look kindly on this plea I'll be a happy Scot.*

Not a bad bit of doggerel and it did earn us a replacement bottle of Black Label and a complimentary letter. We were hoping for a case, but the poem surely wasn't that good.

### **“Majorca Golf Outing - Sun, Sea and some Golf”**

The golf outing to Majorca, referred to earlier, was an outing organised and paid for by the boys themselves as opposed to the annual “freebie”, but it was none the less quite an event. There were 14 of us all told and we were leaving from Glasgow in the early morning, which meant bussing down through the night. The Fittie Bar stayed open to serve us stovies and sandwiches and the occasional libation, but the booze that went on to the bus scared the pants off me, and what scared me even more, it was all scoffed by the time we got to the airport. We somehow got through customs and on to the plane uneventfully and arrived at Palma in a reasonable condition.

The transfer to our hotel went smoothly and as mentioned earlier, there was a bit of horse trading for room-mate status. I pulled rank and announced that I was sharing with Colin Middleton, who later regretted the move as he couldn't get to sleep for my snoring. He commented that he didn't think that the range of noises emanating from me was possible from one human being, but, I digress.

Once the room situation was sorted out we dispersed to our rooms for a freshen up and a rub down with a wet Green Final and wended our way down to the poolside bar to relax in the sun with a few beers. Colin and myself had a walk along the beach then into town where we encountered Big Bob with a



“Jet Lag” sway to him, holding aloft a little dress he had bought for Chery, his little daughter. “Do you like it?” he roared at this two elderly ladies, who, luckily saw no harm in the big man and replied, “It will never fit you”, which brought gales of laughter from us, but just a grunt from Bob.



As we strolled through the town, we encountered some of our lads. Now Dave Taylor (Bumper) is not one of the most subtle men to grace God’s earth, but the chat-up line he used to two English tourist lasses left even me cringing. Needless to say, even if the poor girls had understood what he said, I fear their answer would have been in the negative. Another chat-up line of his,

this time shouted from the eighth floor balcony, referred to his rather large appendage of which he is justly proud and most of us are quite envious.

After returning to the hotel for showers and a spruce up, it was down to the dining room to take the buffet by storm, then out for a night on the town. Now, with me being the senior citizen of the party, I told the lads all to be in the foyer tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. to get transport in plenty of time to take us to the golf course. During the evening, I was becoming rather sceptical of a full turn out the following morning, as we witnessed our motley crew falling about in varying stages of drunkenness. We went into one disco, B.C.M.’s, apparently one of the biggest discos on the island, where they had Go-Go dancers dancing in big bird cages suspended from the roof. On closer inspection we noticed a young lad strutting his stuff aloft in one of the cages, and low and behold it was our very own Bruce Finnie (Brucie Baby) adorned in his Aberdeen F.C. flashing hat, giving it laldy. Now it transpires, that this was his first trip out of Scotland, and George Paterson had been asked by Bruce’s mother to look after her wee boy, what she didn’t know was that Georgie P couldn’t even look after himself, poor sod. Anyway, I trudged my weary way back to the hotel and left the “Young Ones” to get on with it, which was a smart move on my behalf, but a disaster for Colin, as by the time he got back I was dead to the world braying like a demented donkey (his words, not mine).

Now morning came as mornings will and those who were hungry or even conscious came down for breakfast, after which I was delighted to see most of our crew milling about the foyer. I was congratulating them on their promptness to be ready for the golf, only to have my illusions shattered with the information that most of them were just returning home from the night out

and were heading for kip. So to the golf course. The depleted squad were booked through and on the first tee ready to do battle. Now as for myself, I play golf once a year and that's at the Aikens Braemar Piss Up, so you might well say to yourselves what's that idiot doing on the Santa Ponsa Golf Course (which, incidentally, the week before had held the Majorcan Open) when he couldn't hit a ball to save his life, my sentiments entirely, but there I was. I won't go through the round hole by hole, but suffice to say the course is more than twice the yardage of Braemar and as at Braemar, I covered every blade of grass and every bunker.

On one particularly long hole, I asked Colin where the pin was and he replied that this hole was a dog-leg and I wouldn't see it till I had driven, to which I replied "well I've played seven strokes, and still haven't seen the friggin' pin". On another hole, you tee off by the side of a lake, which was like a magnet to me and I proceeded to slice 5 balls into the water, after which I took a ball and threw it twenty yards down the course. Another incident at this hole is worth a mention. Georgie P was in our group and his tee shot was supposed to rise over a reed bed which was directly in front of the tee. He gave the ball an almighty clatter, but it was a daisy cutter and took off through the reed bed like an Exorcet, well there was an almighty squawk and a flurry of feathers came from the reeds and the three of us dissolved into tears of laughter, I can still hear that unearthly squeal today. Incidentally the poor bird never rose from the reeds, so is probably still hirpling along with a "Maxfli" stuck up it's jacksie, wandering when the bloody thing's going to hatch.

Apart from the balls I hit in the lake, I didn't lose another ball, this is due to the fact I couldn't hit it far enough to lose it. About half way round the

course we were invaded by a bunch of hooligans in golfing buggies, who just happened to be our late night revellers fresh from a couple of hours kip and raring to go. Some had topped up their already overloaded livers and some were just out for some sun and fresh air, at any rate, they were most welcome as they ferried San Miguels and sandwiches from the watering hole so that we could keep body and soul together.



*"Can I have my ball back please!"*

When we got back to the clubhouse (which, incidentally was definitely 5 star) we ordered 4 pints of the foaming ale (although there were only three of us in our group), we found the sun kissed body of Kev McLaughlan in drunken repose at the poolside, so we bought him a pint too. We were informed by the barman that they only served half pints (so we had to look for Chris), no seriously, we just ordered 8 half pints. The poor sod couldn't keep up, as soon as he had poured the 8 half pints, we were ready to go again then the rest of the mob started arriving, so by the time we were ready to head back to the hotel, the poor barman knew what it was like to be "Aikened".

During that night's festivities the celebrations were a little more subdued due to the "mad dogs and Aiken's men out in the mid-day sun" syndrome, but not subdued enough for there to be even more absentees for the second round. But the steward was pretty good and let the stragglers on, as the course was quiet in the morning. He might have regretted his decision by late afternoon as he trawled the course in search of abandoned buggies, empty San Miguel bottles and various other forms of debris left in our wake.



**Ian Rae** ~ *"Want to buy a watch"*

The trip to the airport in the morning was not entirely incident free either. Dave Taylor (Bumper) could not or would not be roused and the bus driver (a barrel of laughs, he was) would not wait, so off we went without Bumper. We had other pick-ups on the way. Derick Burr was under the weather to say the least and threatened to bring up the entire contents of his stomach any moment. Always eager to help, Ian Rae (Razer) jumped off the bus as it stopped to pick up other passengers and despite a stream of protests "General Franco" drove off without him too, so we were two down on the original party.

As it was, when we reached the airport, the two bold heroes were there waiting for us. Both had caught taxis, but Razer's experience was more harrowing as when he jumped from the bus, his wallet, passport and all were left on the bus, but being a resourceful chap, he gave the driver his watch as

security until the bus came along (it must have been a cheapie as the driver didn't bugger off with it).

So it was all board "Buddy Holly Airways" for the return flight to Glasgow, again not without incident as Kevin and Derick didn't hear the flight calls and were driven out to the plane by airport security, and boarded to the scowls of the passengers and murmurs that "hanging was too good for them" and the like, but, undeterred, they plonked themselves down and were snoring their heads off before we had taken off, and were still dead to the world when we touched down at Glasgow.

The return flight and the bus journey were pretty uneventful, although I got dropped off at the Stonehaven Road roundabout (a two minute walk from my house) my problems didn't end there as I had forgotten my key and as it was the middle of the afternoon, there was no-one in. "Ah!" I said to myself, it's down to the Gillies Lair for a couple of shandies, but on ordering my "first" pint, I found I had only £1.50 in Sterling, the rest was in Pesetas, but my lady wife came to the rescue and left work early to collect me just as the froth was fading on the warm dregs of my pint, bless her.

## Social Exploits

So that just about covers the golfing stories, but there are plenty of other tales concerning our social exploits. One that springs to mind was a night out the lads arranged, and informed Neil Jolly (Jolzer) that it was a fancy dress do, so he dutifully turns up in a magnificent Dracula outfit, only to be confronted by the guys in their jeans and casual gear, poor Jolzer was pig-sick and retreated from the Grill Bar amid howls of laughter to rush home to change. On another occasion, Ian Crighton (a mad-cap mate of George Cowie's) arranged a night



**Ian Crighton** ~ *If you want to get ahead - buy a hat*

out with everyone wearing balaclavas and going into the Balaclava Bar. Well, we arranged to meet in the Prince of Wales and go up to the Balaclava in groups of 4 and have a bit of a laugh, but as Crighton left in the first group, our suspicions were roused that this might be a wind up, so I phoned the Balaclava and asked for Ian Crighton, "You'll easily recognise him, he's wearing a balaclava". "There's dozens of silly buggers in here wearing balaclavas" was the curt response, so we knew it wasn't a wind up. So we all met up in the bar with our unusual head gear and it went down a treat with the punters in the bar. The pub crawl that followed was well received in the Loch Street Bar, The Lochside

Bar and The Blue Lamp, but when we went into the Kirkgate Bar (which, incidentally, is frequented by the student fraternity) the site of a dozen lunatics dressed in balaclavas didn't as much as cause a stir, so they must have been even more weird than us.

Now George Cowie, who by the way was not wearing a balaclava, but a Lennie the Lion head, decided to head for the Fittie Bar and despite our warning that it was probably closed, off he staggered. Picture if you will, the scene. The diminutive figure staggering down Little John Street with a Lennie the Lion head on and hell bent on reaching his beloved Fittie Bar. The rest of us took a more conventional route via the Castlegate pubs then down along the Quay, and on reaching the Regent Bar found George holding court with some of the lads from Homco (an oil company, who at that time had a warehouse across the street from us) who had found him dozing fitfully, lion's head and all outside the closed up Fittie Bar. To their eternal credit, they didn't even ask George about his unusual apparel, and to George's eternal credit, he didn't tell them.

### “Aberdeen Oil Exhibition - Entertainment in the good old days”

Speaking of Homco, another story springs to mind. This took place during the first oil exhibition to be held in Aberdeen. Now to say that this was a boozy affair is the understatement of the decade, the stuff was flowing more than the oil they were exhibiting and George and Neil were invited along. Now the hospitality suites at these occasions are legend and Neil and George proceeded to get as entertained as newts and when they were leaving, having

decided to abandon the car (very wisely) instead of phoning me to pick them up, decided to take a short cut and land up at the Don View Bar, where they would phone me and I could join them for a pint on my way home.

Wrong! They ended up trudging through a field of mud and muck and got totally lost. They were in such a state they feared they would be refused entry to the bar and were standing contemplating their next move when the Homco truck drew in about and offered them a lift out to Pitmedden. Again picture if you will, the two senior directors of James Aiken (Sheetmetal) Limited lying on the back of a flatbed truck covered in mud and totally rat-arsed and to make matters worse, they passed by the very door of the company's bank. There was quite a bit of leg pulling about that one for a while.

## “Big Bob doesn't know the difference between a kitchen and a toilet”

Another wind-up was carried out on Big Bob and it was a classic. It involved a charity dinner where Big Jack Charlton was a speaker and as Aikens had the top table, we were next to the speakers. Now Bob had “A head of steam on” when he arrived and was well on by the time the speeches came round, so when Jack related to us that is little brother, Bobby also played a little football, Big Bob shouted out “Aye and he was a lot better than you, ye big bastard.” To his credit, Jack just carried on speaking. Bob got up to go to the toilet and being a bit boozy, went into the kitchen by mistake. He went in the “in” door and promptly came out the “out” door, went to the toilet and promptly vanished.

THIS FAX IS SENT FROM ABERDEEN, U.K.  
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FAX REF NO.	: A/13902/VS	PAGE 1 OF 2
DATE	: 17TH MARCH	REF: AM/DF/VS
TO	: JAMES AIKEN (SHEETMETAL) LTD.	
ATTENTION	: MR G. COWIE - CHAIRMAN	
FROM	: VICTOR SHINNIE, ABERDEEN MARRIOT HOTEL	
SUBJECT	: A.I.F.F. DINNER	

Dear Mr Cowie

*I am somewhat perturbed as to how to approach this subject with you, and have thought long and hard but feel it is necessary to advise you of certain events which occurred on Saturday evening.*

*I have been informed by my Duty Manager that James Aiken (Sheetmetal) Ltd. occupied Table 2 at the A.I.F.F. Dinner Evening. Towards the end of this evening a guest at your table namely a Mr Bob Adam caused some damage and severe embarrassment to our kitchen staff. After consultation with said staff, apparently Mr Adam entered our main kitchen, mistakenly assuming it was the gentlemen's toilet, where he had made motions towards relieving himself. When approached by staff he became most aggressive and pushed our Commis Chef against a stack of crockery causing it to be smashed, Mr Adam then left the area. Our security people were alerted but could not find him in the hotel premises. Further investigation revealed his name and your company's table number.*

*I did not want to raise this point then and also wanted to consult with staff on Monday upon return.*

*The damage to crockery amounts to £104.00 which I do not feel the hotel should bear, I am however, in your hands and understand that you cannot be totally responsible for the immature and inebriated behaviour of one of your guests but hope that we can reach an amicable agreement.*

*I would at the very least, expect Mr Adam to apologise to our kitchen staff, especially the female members present.*

*Thanking you in anticipation*

*Regards,*

VICTOR SHINNIE  
BANQUETING MANAGER

I would appreciate a call

Aberdeen Marriot Hotel  
Overton Circle, Dyce, Aberdeen AB21 7AZ  
Telephone (01224) 770011 Fax (01224) 722347



Following a brief search of the hotel, we surmised Big Bob “had left the building.” On the Sunday morning, I got a call from Bob asking me if he had behaved himself as he had no recollection of the evening’s proceedings. “A wind-up’s on here, Willie my boy” thinks I, so I replies “apart from walking into the kitchen, I didn’t see you again after that.”

The wind-up went as follows. I obtained a piece of Marriot Hotel headed paper and typed a letter to George Cowie to the effect that a certain member of our table, namely a Bob Adam had caused a disturbance in as much as he entered the kitchen with the intention of urinating and during the impending fracas, a trolley of crockery was smashed and the damage amounted to £104.00 (letter enclosed).

I gave the letter to George Cowie, who just went into Bob’s office, threw it on his desk and stormed out. George told me not to let Bob go home at night without letting him know of the wind-up, so later on, I went through to his office and enquired if all was well. Bob’s reply was that he had “fucked up his career” and that he was finished as a potential director of James Aiken Sheetmetal. I decided to let him off the hook and when I told him of the wind-up, he stared at me in disbelief then dived for the phone. It seems he had written a letter of apology to the manager of the Marriot Hotel along with £110.00 and sent Ian Rae (Razer) straight to the hotel. Luckily, the van had a phone so he was able to save face and £110.00. Needless to day, my parentage was brought into question along with that of the chairman.

## Pitmedden in the early years

As you have probably noticed, Pitmedden comes up in conversation quite a lot. George Cowie set up home there, and in the early days was quite a close community, but as usual as places grow, the character of the place gradually disappears. Talking about characters, the host of the Pitmedden Arms, one George Barclay certainly falls into that category. As I said, in the early days, it was an easy going community and as George Barclay was one of his own best customers, it was not uncommon for George to come tottering down from his flat upstairs to the bar and announce “whoever is last out, put the lights out and snib the door”. And so it was, the regulars who were still drinking, helped themselves and left their money by the till.

Another of his favourite tricks was when he was playing cribbage with some of his cronies by the hatch at the end of the bar, some punter would try to attract his attention craving for another pint, but George carried on with his game oblivious of the poor punter’s pleadings. Usually, out of pure frustration, the punter would push his way behind the bar, saying “it’s okay, I’ll help my bloody self”, and George, as quick as a flash would slam down the hatch and say “While you’re there, put a wee voddie in there for me and see what that lad over there’s wanting, he’s been waiting a whiley”. The punter usually just laughed and did his bidding, after all he was conned by an expert.

One week end a mate of George Cowie, Bill Murray, who hailed from Morningside, Edinburgh, was a bit nervous as his sister was coming to visit and was eager to see his local, but his sister was of a delicate nature and a real lady. Bill was worried that the local watering hole and it’s wayward proprietor might



be a bit much for the old girl. His fears were well founded when, on asking what she would like to drink, she shyly replied, "A very small sherry, if it's not too much trouble, please". Well George swung into his perfect "Mine Host" mode and came sailing across with a pony glass brimming with the stuff "Oh!, I'll never drink all that" said the flustered old lady. George's response was instant, he swigged down more than half the glass and said "Now, you'll manage the rest, won't you". If poor Bill could have turned back the clock, he would have taken her to The Linsmohr Hotel, which was slightly up-market to the "Spit and Dribble", which was the endearing nick-name the locals gave to Mr Barclay's emporium.

**“That’s a nip of Bells, far the hell  
do you think you are, in the Linsmohr”**

My brush with the revered inn-keeper was not quite so harrowing, but none the less worth a mention. I'd gone out to Pitmedden with George Cowie and he invited me in to the pub for a pint. Now at this time, my favourite was a half of lager and a Johnnie Walker Black Label whisky. George ordered and had a pint for himself, Mr Barclay returned and proffered the beer and a glass of the amber nectar and announced, "That's a nip of Bells, far the hell do you think you are, in the Linsmohr?" George Cowie must have been aware of the limited selection from the optics, because he left the counter with his shoulders jiggling up and down, and me with a red face.

After Mr Barclay's wife died he lost a bit of his sparkle, but he kept going for a while. George Cowie tells us of passing the pub early on Sunday mornings

on his way for the papers and seeing George beckoning him from the window offering a pint of lager and this at 8.30 on a Sunday morning, an offer which George usually declined, but many of his regulars eagerly accepted.

As I mentioned earlier George Cowie lived in Pitmedden, where he built his own house as part of a self-build group. As soon as the house was wind and water-tight, George and Sheila moved in, which apparently did not go unnoticed by the planning authorities, who sent along one of their minions one dreech winter night to point out to the Cowies the error of their ways. Now George does not take kindly to bureaucracy and it's accompanying civil servants, so when this fine upstanding officer of the crown appeared on his doorstep, he was in for a hard time.

He first stated that the domicile was not habitable as the rooms were not cross ventilated. When George asked him to explain he was informed that each room needed a form of ventilation on the walls between each room. "No



*Ventilation - I'll gie you Ventilation*

problem!” shouted George and proceeded to knock a hole through the wall with a five pound hammer. “Next?”. To say the minion was taken aback is a bit understated, but he bounced back and explained to Mr Cowie that his back garden was unsafe for Sheila as there was no path from the back door to the clothes line. “Right!” said George and hefted a 3 ft. x 2 ft. concrete slab into the centre of the offending area, totally soaking the unfortunate inspector. “Next?”. But that was enough for the poor sod who bid them goodnight and beat a hasty retreat.



*The Pitmedden Bar*

The self build system involved the guys working in groups, with the owners clearing and preparing their own plots and all mucking in to erect the kit-houses when they arrived and then finishing off the building themselves, so it made the area a bit special in as much as they were all involved in the scheme and it made them a close community when all the houses were complete. One guy made a magnificent gesture when his house was completed. He had been ferrying everything from building materials to furniture and central heating equipment in an old beat up Mini, which finally gave up the ghost just as he completed his house, so as a tribute to Sir Alex Issagonis's invention, he instructed the digger driver to dig an extra deep hole in his front garden and buried it there for posterity. (He was perhaps hoping to grow Baby Austins).

## Fittie Bar - our Salvation

The history of Aikens would be pointless without the mention of the Fittie Bar, which is only a twenty yard (18.28m) stagger from our front door, and many an ale has been supped by us in the time since our formation. The first owners we can recall lived down south and it was managed by George and Edith Newman, who kept the place spotless, with all the woodwork polished regularly, and considering it was a dockland pub, it was immaculate and the cellar was equally as clean and tidy, which was probably the reason why they served one of the best pints in town.

This was important because at this time Hall Russell Shipyard was in full flow and employed upwards of two thousand men, a lot of who devoured pints as though they were going out of fashion. If you ever went into the bar at 11.55 there were 20 or 30 pints of all kinds lined up along the counter and at 12.05 they were all tightly held in a mucky fist and being downed at a great rate of knots. Each punter had his allocated space at the bar and woe betide anyone unlucky enough to roam into the wrong territory. Having said that, in all the time we have been going there, I have never seen a punch-up yet.

In the early days, one group we nicknamed the Monday club were well known, for shall we say extending their lunch break, especially on Mondays. Their lunch break was 12 till 1, so we used to go for our lunch from 1 till 1.30 to get a bit of peace, but on Mondays this group were usually still there and by the time we left, there was the gentle strains of a song emitting from the corner with maybe the gentle tap of a booted foot. By the time we went back for our 5 o'clock pint, it was a fully blown ceilidh, with an accordion, a moothie and

a dozen roaring drunk welders, platers or whatever. The ring leader went by the name of Titch, who was as they say these days, vertically challenged, but what he lacked in height, he more than made up for vocally. His favourite ploy was to say to the barman, as he went out the door, "I've forgotten my piece bag, I'll have to come back for it", sure enough, two minutes later, in he rushed and started again on his unfinished pint. He had went back to the main gate of Hall Russell's, stamped his card, then told the time-keeper "Shit, I've forgotten my piece bag" and the time-keeper, who were never the brightest of men, would let him back to the bar to rectify this memory lapse.

### “Hall Russells - University of Life”

The Monday Club were so well organised, they had spare clothes and boiler suits hanging up in a cupboard behind the bar for emergencies, such as getting boozed up all afternoon, change out of the boiler suit into civvies and head for their local hostelrys a little nearer home. On one occasion Titch was well drunk and was like a glove puppet prancing about in his boiler suit, which, due to his lack of height was 3 sizes too big for him (they tried him with "Action Man" suits, but he didn't like the flack jackets). One of his mates commented that it was time to get the little bugger home, so he just picked him up and literally shook him out of the boiler suit and carted him out the door to the strains of "A'm no' awa' tae bide awa'."

The Hall Russell night shift were a different breed of men. When we used to go through for our tea time pint, the backbone of this squad were already "stoking the boilers" for the ensuing night's toil, which usually



consisted of whisky or dark rum by the glassful and usually a quarter bottle “in case it got chilly through the night”. One evening this particular punter must have heard there was a big freeze coming, as he ordered a half bottle, I made a comment along the lines of “Good lad, looking after your squad.” to which he replied “Fuck off, he can get his own”. The night shift squad were not much for singing and dancing in the bar, but maybe they kept it for their “hidey hole” on the boat, because I don’t think there was a lot of work done at night, a fact on



*The Fittie Bar*

which I commented to them one night. One wag piped up and said “We have a theory about this and we reckon some bastard comes in at the weekend and builds these fucking boats.”

On one of our lunchtime sorties, the bar was exceptionally busy with the usual squads and a lot of new faces and on our return at tea-time, they were still there drinking as though it was going out of fashion. Now the reason for their merriment was a strange and ritualistic ceremony brought about by receiving

their “Deef Money”. This is apparently a periodic payment given to some men who have contracted hearing difficulties whilst working in the yards. The mind conjures up a picture of these dumb riveters getting blind drunk on their “Deef Money”.

Another occasion for celebration is a funeral. Now don’t they just love a funeral! It must have been written into some of their wills, that when they died, they had to be buried or cremated at 2 p.m. in the afternoon, as this gives the busloads of comrades time to get tanked up in the bar, go to the service (in the specially laid on buses) and return to the bar to give him a good sending off. By this time, of course, it’s hardly worth going back to work, so they stay on for a few more scoffs and by the late afternoon they’ve usually forgotten who the hell the deceased was anyway.

Another ritual was the “Slate”. A lot of the regular punters ran up a slate, and to their eternal credit, most of them honoured this debt on pay-day, but some would have some right sessions, and would need practically their wage packet to clear it, so they would pay it off in installments. One instance confirms this, was when a punter had gathered a few of his mates together for a session, now he had paid his slate off to the owner, who had left for the day, leaving the bar manager to take over and on enquiring the reason for the celebration, was informed, “We’re celebrating clearing my slate”. The downside of this story was that the slate was so much, he had to open a new one to pay for his celebrations.

Another occasion that brings a smile to the face happened one teatime on payday. Now this punter, who was a low paid labourer, came in for his usual pint before going home to his loved one to hand over his “hard earned” intact.

This week, however, he had received the wrong pay packet by mistake, and the wage packet he had belonged to a welder, who had a lot more in his packet than the labourer. Now, on confronting the poor sod, the welder asked for the exchange to take place immediately (a not unreasonable request). The labourer fidgeted and stuttered, but the welder stood firm, and so with a sigh the lowly paid gentleman began the laborious task of relieving himself of his windfall. He took the original pay packet from his pocket, which had what would have been his wages in it, then he took a couple of pounds from his shirt pocket, a couple of pounds from his piece bag and his final humiliation was when he removed his boots and took a couple of quid from each. On questioning him about this strange affair, it appeared his beloved trusted him just about as far as she could throw him and used to frisk him when he went home on pay day.

The Fittie Bar has changed hands a couple of times over the years. The last owner was Sandy Rayne, who sold it a year ago to an Englishman, who is a diving consultant and he runs the bar with the help of his wife and her sister (who was our receptionist until she was poached from us by her sister). Sandy, the previous owner was a strange chap, and basically hated the place and did everything in his power not to be there. He employed a bar manager, Ian Findlay, who is a barman of the old school (more of him later) and he employed part-time staff to work shifts to cover the twelve hour day. He employed young George Cowie, our storeman, Bill McQueen, Susan, our receptionist and various other bodies from far and near. In fact it was stated by Ian Findlay that he had more part time staff than "Markies". Sandy was more at home at the other side of the bar or wheeling and dealing in anything from duty free fags to lawn mowers and cars, in fact we called him the Arfur Daly of Fittie. His

favourite shift was from eight in the morning till eleven (when the bar was closed), but just like the Pitmedden Bar, a knock on the window gained you admission and an illicit pint, an offer which was pounced upon by some of the guys from the stand-by vessels when they were in the harbour. This was also Sandy's chance to down a few Light Carlsbergs or a white wine or three, or even a few ports to which he acquired an affinity for. All this brought out the poet in me, so I penned this little ode.

## The Rayne Man

*The Fittie Bar is a dockland pub  
owned by Sandy Rayne  
who's not a very pleasant chap  
In fact, he's quite a pain*

*He mopes about the whole day long  
Drinking Carlsberg Light  
Has a greet, a bite to eat  
Then runs off for a shite*

*He has a whine, then a glass of wine  
and says it's Perrier Water  
He swears this on the Bible  
But to us it doesn't matter*

*He wheels and deals with a bunch of feels  
And keeps his swag in the cellar  
Where he's scared to go when it's after dark  
In fact, he's a real strange fella*

*He keeps his finger on the pulse  
By way of a mobile phone  
With this by his side, he can call worldwide  
He's an international moan*

*God's gift to women is what he is  
Well, that's the view of Sandy  
But if you tell him that's not so  
You'd better keep a Kleenex handy*

*All in all he's quite a lad  
And not the worst, somehow  
There must be worse men goin' about  
Though I can't think of one right now*

*Here endeth the ode to Sandy Rayne  
A much maligned young man  
Who, written on his epitaph  
Will be "HE NEVER STOOD HIS HAN"*



It was made up into a scroll for presenting to him, but I don't think he ever received it as, (a) I still got to drink in the bar and (b) he didn't go and jump in the harbour.

As I mentioned earlier, another character of the Fittie Bar was Ian Findlay, who Sandy took on as bar manager. Now this man was your true "dyed in the wool barman", he had a joke for every occasion, poured a great pint and looked after the cellar as if it was one of the family. He was also very frustrating, as when you told him a joke, 90% of the time he had heard it before and he would let you go on, then finish off the punch line for you. But he had a vast array of stories as well as his jokes and a lot of the time you weren't sure if he was telling a joke or a story.

One tale he related to us was the occasion he went to Australia with his family to visit some relations. On arrival after an arduous 24 hour flight, and were going through immigration control. He was asked a load of questions, "How long are you staying?", "What is the purpose of your visit?" and the last question was "Have you got a criminal record?" to which Findlay replied "I didn't think I needed one these days". Now he must have fallen in with an Aussie with no sense of humour, because they were detained for about 3 hours then left to go on their merry way without any explanation, after which, he got a bollocking from his wife.

Before coming to the Fittie Bar, he was the barman at the Frigate Bar, which is in the town centre and it has the Public Bar on the ground floor and the lounge above, up a rickety stair, and it was here that Findlay held court. He and his cronies, who I might add are equally as daft as himself were always up to mischief of some kind. One day his boss was moaning that he was here to

work (which he was doing, anyway, but enjoying himself at the same time) and to get on with it and less of the horse play. Findlay left that day with a twinkle in his eye, and sure enough, the following day his boss was alarmed by a terrible commotion on the stairs and when he went to investigate, lo and behold there was Findlay struggling up the stairs with a Shetland Pony "Now, boss" says Findlay, "this is horse play". His boss took it in good heart and the resultant endeavours of the poor pony was good for his roses.

Ian had also a strange impression about the shape of the world because he said to me one day, "Bill, I have a brother in Australia, one in Canada and myself in Bonny Scotland, so the Findlays are in every corner of the world". That, if I am not mistaken, makes the world triangular. Sad to relate, Findlay was tempted back to the Frigate bar, so he was rewarded with a rousing send-off and a poem from yours truly which went as follows.

### Doctor Findlay's Bookcase

*The Fittie Bar acquired a star  
When they took on Big Ian Findlay  
The medicine he prescribed  
Was never dished out thinly*

*His medicine, a joke, a laugh  
Were served up with your beer  
And trouble makers got short shrift  
"Bugger off! get out of here"!*

*To try to educate the hordes  
He prescribed the written word  
With piles of books of every kind  
To help impress the bird*

*The library had grown a lot  
With books of all description  
From Robert Ludlum, Ed McBain  
To science, fact and fiction*

*The Fittie Bar's a poorer place  
Because of your new venue  
But lots of luck in your new post  
And long may it continue*

*Your regulars in the Frigate Bar  
Will soon hear roars of laughter  
As Findlay's back in the old routine  
Living happily ever after*

Not a dry eye in the house!



## “Pre-Nuptial Arrangements”

As you may have gathered by the last few pages, the Fittie Bar has quite an influence on the history of Aikens. It is not only our watering hole at lunch time or teatime, we also have our Christmas “break-up piss-up” which generally lasts from early afternoon until late at night. The tradition used to be a few pints there, then a pub crawl along the Quay and finish off up town somewhere, but speaking personally, I found the pub crawl getting a pub shorter every year so now most of us just stay in the Fittie Bar. We also have other sessions, such as, if the lads have had a particularly busy spell we have a bit of a blow out, which



Neil Jolly ~  
beware of the “Yellow Peril”

is usually a good night.’ Another special event is when any of the lads get married. They are usually blackened then paraded round the block on the back of the truck.

One hapless trouper, however, was not so lucky. He, Neil Jolly (Jolzer) got the usual treatment, but the lads got carried away with themselves. They carried on up Union Street, tied him to the traffic lights at Bridge Street outside the then C&A’s, drove round the block for a while, then picked the poor sod up. While he was handcuffed to the post, he was even harassed by a thicko traffic warden who told him to behave himself and move on. The mere fact that he was standing there in his jocky shorts covered in treacle, raw eggs and sawdust and handcuffed to a traffic light, didn’t deter the “Yellow Peril” from threatening to book him. When he was finally released, cleaned up and given a few beers in the Fittie, he went to meet his prospective bride, who happened to mention that she was on the bus passing C&A’s and she saw some poor sod blackened and chained to a traffic light. Neil replied “Oh dear”!

Two of the main instigators in the blackening ceremonies are invariably Chris and Graham Troup (Troopie), so it’s not unnatural for the boys to be eager to get their hands on them when wedding bells are ringing. Now for obvious reasons, this won’t happen to Chris (more of that later) but Troopie’s blackening was looked forward to with relish, so when the announcement was made he was to marry a Norwegian lass named Mary, the wheels were set in motion. Mr Troup, however, had other ideas and threatened legal action and police intervention if his bodily temple was violated. As he could see these threats did not have the desired effect, he resorted to good old fashioned bribery and offered to put £100 behind the bar if they would leave him alone,

this, however, was not the answer, as they would only blacken him, then drink the money to toast his marriage. The man was beside himself with panic when I intervened with a short note on the notice board which went as follows:

IT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO THE NOTICE OF THE MANAGEMENT THAT THERE ARE MOVES AFOOT TO BLACKEN OUR FUTURE GROOM MR G.R.TROUP ESQ. AS THE COMPANY HAS BEEN THREATENED WITH LITIGATION IF THIS IS CARRIED OUT AND THE DIRE CONSEQUENCES WHICH WOULD ENSUE PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT DUE TO MR TROUP'S SENSITIVE SKIN AND HIS MORE SENSITIVE NATURE NO BLACKENING WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE PREMISES. IT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION HOWEVER, THAT A LONG STANDING VIKING TRADITION INVOLVES TYING THE PROSPECTIVE GROOM TO THE MAST OF A LONGSHIP WITH SEVEN VESTAL VIRGINS AND CASTING THEM ADRIFT FOR THE NIGHT THEREFORE IF YOU CAN FIND A VIKING LONG SHIP (WHICH I DOUBT) AND SEVEN VESTAL VIRGINS (WHICH I DOUBT EVEN MORE) YOU WOULD BE CARRYING OUT A LONG STANDING VIKING TRADITION GOING BACK THROUGH THE CENTURIES (AS IS THE ORIGINAL BLACKENING PROPOSAL).

The notice had the effect of lightening the proceedings somewhat but it went ahead outside the premises but broke down when he had an asthma attack, so the lads drank to his health (in absentia) anyway.

The other member of the crew who loves blackenings is, as I said earlier, Chris. Now he just loves organising and making up the mixture, but the exact opposite of Troopie, if the boys didn't blacken Chris, he would probably do it himself, he's that kind of laddie. He is five foot nothing (the same width and breadth which makes him the perfect cube) but with a drink in, he thinks he's John Wayne and is willing (but not able) to take on any man and his dog. He is so eager to please and do things for you, that he ends up a bloody nuisance



**Chris Leiper** ~

*Get off your horse and drink your milk*

and is told 90% of the time to "bugger off", which usually starts the water works. Two things have been said about Chris. One is, when he was born the midwife turned round and slapped his father, and second that following the birth, she threw away the wrong bit. That brief resume of Chris gives a rough indication why in my opinion, he will not have to endure a marriage blackening.

Kevin McLaughlan (Kev) was another of the original "Young Bucks" who succumbed to the charms of the fairer sex and subsequently the blackening. Kevin's final swing before ending his bachelor days was to throw a stag party. Nothing unusual in that, you'd say, but Kevin did it in style and threw the party in Amsterdam, much to the chagrin of Sandra, his prospective

bride. A few stories filtered back, but I get the impression they all signed the official secrets act before setting off.

George Paterson (Georgie P) was another victim of the blackening squad and the apprentices had a field day with him as he was the one that meted out the punishment to the loons (some orthodox, some not), but he took it well and we went through to the Fittie and had a right "sweel", so much so that the blushing groom was absolutely legless, and when Carol, his future intended, arrived to pick him up in her little Fiesta, it was a pantomime. She was trying to persuade him to go in the back seat, but as it was only a two-door and Georgie P is a big lad, it was proving a little difficult. She would get him in minus a leg, then she would get him in again but an arm was sticking out. Have you ever tried to put toothpaste back in the tube? that was the task facing poor Carol.

## Shop Floor Antics

Although the blackening ceremony is traditional in every work place, another ritual seems to be fading out, that being the scragging of apprentices. It used to be quite common to see a poor lad tied to a machine or stuck in a piece of duct, just for the hell of it. We were all put through it in some shape or form some time or other. One story springs to mind concerns an old colleague of ours, Alex Black. Now Alex served his apprenticeship at Inverurie Loco Works and



**Alex Black ~**

*Could sell fridges to the Eskimos*

that was a hard school. One day his journeyman told him to go to the stores for a dozen 1/2in. bolts 2in. long. Alex came back and told the guy the stores had only 4in. long bolts, to which he got an almighty kick up the backside and was told to cut them in half. Now, Alex being a cocky little sod, decided to have a bit of fun with the bully boy, so instead of cutting the bolts down to 2in., he cut them longways and presented them to the gaffer. Big mistake! The gaffer grabbed him by the hair (which was long in those days) put it into the vice and hammered the vice closed and kicked his backside, and ordered everyone who passed during the next half hour to do the same. By this time poor Alex was screaming blue murder, and was only released by his fellow apprentices during the tea break, when the tradesmen were away. A hard school indeed.

Alex had a spell in the Merchant Navy when his time was out, and later on teamed up with a former fellow apprentice Jock Massie. Now Jock and Alex were like chalk and cheese, Alex was outgoing and could sell fridges to the Eskimos while Jock was a quiet, unassuming bachelor who lived with his "Mither" at a farm in Kintore that went by the romantic name of Bogfold. The partnership worked well for many years with Alex wheeling and dealing for the work while Jock was at his happiest up to his neck in plate and pipes and welding. On one occasion Jock had cocked up a job and he said to Alex "Ye ken it wid be right fine if I wis a baker, then I could jist eat a' my mistakes". "And a right fat little bastard ye wid be an na'," was Alex's reply. But all good things come to an end, the company was wound up and Alex is running a boarding house in Inverurie and Jock is married and owns a bar in Inverurie.

On the subject of blackenings, there is always one person in a company who stands out as the organiser, the instigator, the sadist, who makes up the concoctions and is heavily involved in the administering of the ritual. Our such person is Chris, The Poison Dwarf. He takes great pleasure in mixing up the dreaded gunge and even a hysterical delight in the ceremony. Some of the lads comment that, when it comes to his turn, they will "punish him more than any man was ever punished". I disagree, the worst pain that you could inflict on him would be to ignore him totally and my theory is that he would probably blacken himself. (This being on the basis, that he ever gets married, Porche or no Porche).

As you have probably noticed, nick names play a big part in everyday workshop life. Our lots nicknames are generally a derivation of their names, Jolzer - Neil Jolly, Razer - Ian Rae, and so on. Dave Taylor (Bumper), I think got

his name due to his propensity to bash his cars. It's foot to the floor or nothing for Dave. An amusing nick name I heard recently was Ron Slater, who on signing his name R.Slater, was nick named Head First (think about it).

## **“The Bear - excrement from Glasgow”**

Another one that springs to mind is The Bear. Now this is a common nick name in Glasgow and this particular Bear and a mate worked briefly for us on a "one off" basis many years ago, and the stories told by these guys abound. On one occasion, the Bear was working as a welder in the Glasgow shipyards. Now at that time, many years ago, there was no such thing as remote controlled welding leads, and all the leads went back to a central generator so that when, as in this particular instance, the Bear popped down his hood and struck an arc, nothing happened, so he had to follow his lead (usually hundreds of yards long) back to the source and plug it in. On tracking it back he found it was in place. He gave it a wiggle and a kick and trailed back to the welding torch and got the same result. It then dawned on him that he was being set up. Some smart ass had slipped in another glass in his welding hood making everything totally black, so that even though his welding plant was working it didn't show up through the double glass, an old welder's trick. When he looked round for the culprit, he saw one of his mates, hood down with his shoulders jiggling with laughter. A string of oaths ensued where the perpetrator's parentage was brought into question and indeed his life expectancy and the Bear's promise that revenge would be swift and terrible.

The following lunchtime the hapless practical joker was back at his



workplace, slipped on his welding gauntlet only to discover it was full of crap (yes, excrement). Now it was the Bear's turn to laugh as his mother's virtue was brought into question, but the Bear cautioned the guy by saying that it was a good job they were friends, otherwise he would have smashed a light bulb into the glove and the stinging would cause the guy to rapidly remove his hand and stick it in his mouth to relieve the pain. Gads!

Another tale of the Glasgow shipyards was of this particular guy who every Monday morning had a severe dose of the runs, due to his ritual of getting totally legless over the week-end and rounding off his break with a huge helping of Ruby Murry (curry) which, by his way of thinking, purged his system for the following week's graft. True to form, he was witnessed heading for the toilets at full tilt with his boiler suit round his ankles, the door slammed, a flurry of activity was heard followed by an anguished cry and the poor guy emerged with his trousers and pants at his feet, absolutely covered with his previous night's feast. Now it emerged that some rotten sod had lifted the toilet seat, fitted cling film over the pot, then put the lid down again.

Another occasion that the Glasgow wit comes to the fore, this time took place in the grandure of a luxury hotel being built next to Glasgow Airport. We were authorised to fit the grilles to the V.I.P. lounge and, as it was fully furnished and carpeted to the highest quality, we were ordered to come prepared, that is no working boots or coveralls, but trainers and clean clothes. Now we were beavering away in this luxurious environment, when along comes a Glasgow plasterer and his mate, covered from head to toe in dust and half-set plaster looking for a peaceful haven where upon to partake of their lunchtime feast. In bowls our two heroes and promptly plonks themselves down on the calfskin

Gucci designer suite and proceeded to empty the contents of their piece bag. The site agent, a little Englishman who by this point of a long and harrowing contract, was reaching the point of a nervous breakdown, passed the door, did a double take and came into the room screaming hysterically for them to remove their grubby personages from the V.I.P. lounge forthwith. "Aw, gwa'n bile yer heed, Jimmy" was the response from our dusty little diner. The, by now apoplectic site agent ranted, "Don't you know who I am?" To which the wee man turned to his crusty colleague with a concerned look on his face and said "Hey Jimmy, we have a man here who disna know who he is!". This was all too much for the site agent, who ran sobbing from the site and to this day is "Still taking the tablets".

Another story emanating from that site was, one day a truck loaded with provisions for the catering services at the airport, came hurtling off the M8 motorway and negotiated the roundabout outside our site too quickly and shed a couple of cartons of food just at the gates of the site. Now by the time the driver had recovered control and reversed back for the goods (about 90 seconds) they were gone, being divided up in the site hut by the quick thinking Glasgae Ceilidh's. Caviar and truffles between their baps was the menu for the next few days.

Generally, on the building sites on the West coast, the labourers are Irish, with a ganger being thought of as the most intelligent of the squad. The basis of the next story is built round the time we were leaving to come home for the week-end, which we did just before lunchtime on Friday afternoons. As we approached the slip-road one Friday, an ambulance came screaming into the site, but as we were into the flow of traffic, we would have to wait till Monday

to find out what had happened. It appears that, as we were leaving in a thunderstorm, the labourers were instructed to cover up all the roof openings to prevent the rain soaking everything inside. This is normally done with plywood boards, but in their haste they covered one opening with tarpaulin and when, after the storm had passed and were removing the covers, poor Paddy stood on the tarpaulin and fell 20 feet to the floor below, breaking both legs and various other bones. Ignorant of these facts, I was just told that a labourer had fallen and when I asked the ganger "How did he fall?" "Oh! down" was the educated response. And he was the smart one.

At the time of this contract, Celtic were playing Feynoord of Holland in the final of the European Cup in Barcelona. Now as the hotel overlooks the airport we were witness to a site never to be forgotten. At about 11 o'clock on the Wednesday morning, about 30 guys were seen leaving the site (still in their working gear), armed with their plastic carrier bags "Glasgow Gucci", vanishing into the airport concourse and later dancing Conga-style onto the waiting aircraft and away they went, only to return the following lunchtime, armed with their duty free "Electric Soup" and wearing sombreros, back onto the site and carried on where they left off with tales of daring being related to their mates. The fact they were beaten in the Final mattered not a jot. It could only happen in Glasgow.

## Our M.D. and old bangers

So far, in my stroll down Memory Lane of Aikens, I have neglected to mention much of our M.D. Neil Stewart. Now Neil's passion is vintage motor bikes and cars. He scours the country in search of parts for bikes dating back to the First World War, where-upon he renovates them and assembles the parts to bring them back to their former glory. A very rewarding hobby, you would say, but



Neil Stewart ~ *A gallus young man*

not his partner, George Cowie, any time Neil mentions anything about his bikes he is treated to one of George's "over the glasses" scowls, as a purist of the finer points George is not. At one time, Neil had a Maigret type Citroen garaged in the back of the store, as his garage at home was full to capacity with bits and pieces of bikes. The amount of times George wound Neil up with comments

like “The scrappie was round emptying the skip, and I got a fiver for your car” or “When are you getting that heap of shite out of here?” but Neil soon got used to it.

Neil frequently exhibited some of his bikes at rallies and Highland Shows and the like, and on one occasion, one of his nephews, who had been pestering him for ages for a run on one of his bikes, finally wore Neil down and he took him along to one of the shows. On arrival, the young lad was delighted with himself and was eagerly anticipating the return journey. However, by late afternoon, the weather had turned cold and wet and as the lad only had light clothes on, his relish for the second leg had waned more than just a little. Now Neil, ever the resourceful chap, had the answer. In the pannier of the bike, he had an old leather biker’s jacket he used to cover up the engine in the winter. On producing the jacket, which was about five sizes too big for the young chap and lacked a zipper to close it, the lad was not overly impressed, but again, Neil’s resourcefulness came into play and promptly fitted the young lad up with the jacket back to front and tied it with a piece of string, and with that set off on the return leg.

Now, on the first leg, the young lad had mastered the art of leaning with the bike on the bends and curves and was now considering himself as a bit of an expert pillion passenger, but life can throw up a few obstacles, and one was on it’s way. He leaned the wrong way on one corner and the collar of the jacket blew up over his face (it was back to front, remember) and he lost his rhythm, on the next bend he was unceremoniously dumped off the bike and into a hedge. Now, Neil, who was concentrating on keeping his trusty steed on the road, was unaware of the drama behind him and was a few miles down the road

before it dawned on him. Full of foreboding, he retraced his route until he noticed a couple of farmers looking at a bundle at the side of the road. Neil jumped off his bike and enquired if the lad was all right, to which one replied “He was a richt till we tried to turn his heid the richt wye roon!”.

On another occasion, going to a show (alone this time) he was buzzing along on a Second World War despatch rider’s bike, when he was overtaken at speed by a car, seconds later he drew along side the car, much to the driver’s surprise, so the guy put the boot down only to see Neil again draw level with him. Now the guy was getting agitated so he really sunk the boot, but again, he couldn’t lose him. Finally in exasperation he pulled over and asked Neil what kind of souped up engine the bike had to which he replied “Just an ordinary engine, but my braces got caught on your wing mirror”.

On the subject of old vehicles, I had a harrowing experience myself many years ago. The old banger in question was a Morris Minor circa 1958. On one occasion I had driven into a hotel car park at Bucksburn to buy a “cairry-oot” for me and my mates (this was pre holy wedlock days) and when I came back out two minutes later, the car wouldn’t start. I jumped out ready to give it the Basil Faulty treatment when I noticed that I had reversed into the grassy bank so the exhaust was choked. I pushed the car away from the bank and found a clump of grass was still stuck up the pipe. Now being an ever resourceful chap and the old car still had the old fashioned starting handle, I had the answer. Picture if you will, me down on my hands and knees with the starting handle stuck up the exhaust, when who would chance along but the local “plod” “Hello, Hello, Hello, what have we here then?”. “It’s O.K. constable” says I. “My car won’t start.” “So how much have you had to drink,

you stupid bugger, the engine's in the front." I stuttered out an explanation, started the car and scarpered before he wheeled me off to the funny farm.

Another amusing vehicular anecdote concerns an amorous member of the company, who will remain anonymous, who on wining and dining his new girlfriend, stopped in the country lane for a bit of slap and tickle. Now the lass in question was a bit shy and wasn't too keen "in case someone saw them". Undaunted, our Romeo suggested that if she was worried, they could nip underneath the car for their love-making. After a bit of persuasion, she agreed and they slipped under the car and were really getting carried away with themselves, when a voice was heard booming, "Hellow, Hellow, what's going on here, then?" Panicstricken, our lover boy blurted out, "It's all right constable, my exhaust has come loose!" "You had better check your brakes too, then" said the constable, "Your car's down at the bottom of the hill!"

This same fellow was finally hooked by the right girl and got married. After the wedding service, as is customary, he invited the minister along to the reception, which, to his dismay, the reverend eagerly accepted. Now this minister chap was one of the more liberated of the clergy, and he very soon got wired into the food and grog, which was in abundance. After the meal, the groom felt sure the minister would make his excuses and leave the festivities, not this one! Later on in the evening, he was still there dancing with one of the very attractive and sexy bridesmaids and he had her in an embrace that would have got you ejected from the Beach Ballroom in the late 50s. This prompted the indignant groom to comment to the Very Reverend "It's yer troosers that should be back-to-front, nae yer collar!"

The ministry is another area where the services of James Aiken

(Sheetmetal) Ltd. have come into play. The occasion in question was a small job we carried out for a church, and on presenting the minister with the bill, he threw up his hands and shouted "I'm a poor minister" to which I replied "I know' I've heard your service!"



*Thank god we weren't on CCTV*

## Clients are Characters

Still on the subject of old bangers, one of our customers by the name of Charlie Pirie (pronounced Peeree), who resides in a romantic sounding area of rural Scotland, namely Glack o' Midthird (near Huntly). Now Charlie is a one-off, a cracker of a man, who despite his job description as a blacksmith, will tackle any task from mucking out the byre to manufacturing and installing kitchen ventilation for the Chinese Restaurant fraternity.

His company vehicle, up till quite recently was a battered old Morris Maxi, which was lovingly cared for and although, never washed, it frequently got a new coat of paint (Dulux Satin Emulsion), applied with a six inch brush. The interior is such that you wipe your feet when you come out of the car. Everything was transported by Maxi, like half a dozen 8ft. x 4ft. stainless steel sheets. One time he needed heavy duty hollow sections and undeterred by the fact the nearest supplier was in Dundee, he drove down to collect them. By the way, the fact that the total weight was around 300 Kilos (over quarter of a ton) and the lengths were 7.5 Metres (25 feet) and the Maxi has an overall length of 10 feet, phased not our brave blacksmith and the fact he didn't have a roof rack, and he was not stopped by the law, is a complete mystery.

As I mentioned earlier, Charlie dabbled in the noble art of ventilation and on one occasion he phoned me to get a price for a kitchen canopy for a Chinese restaurant. And after giving me the dimensions of the canopy he recited the immortal phrase.

"FITNAFANSNOUGHTFORRATNOO".

Now my grasp of the Doric was, up till then, reasonably good, but I had

to take a deep breath and a long hard think to work it out. But after consulting various dictionaries and a thesaurus, I translated it thus; "What type of fan is required for that, now". Quite a character, our Charlie.

Another customer from the rural area was a farmer who treated every pound as a prisoner and we were always chasing him to pay his bills. One time I was chasing a four month overdue invoice. He responded with "Hud on a meenite", two minutes later he came back to the phone "Na' laddie ye'r name hisna came oot o' the hat yet!". I'm not often stuck for words, but I was then.

One of our less savoury customers was always looking for a bargain and always moaning about this and that. He came in one day for a price of a particular article, which I quoted for him. As predicted he moaned, saying "I can get it cheaper down the road". When I asked him why he didn't get it from them, he informed me that they didn't have any, so I said to him "Well come back to me when I havn't any and I'll match his price." He didn't see the funny side.

Next on my customer list was a fly guy. He had passed through the reception from the workshop, where he had dropped off some item or other to be altered, and when he passed me just as I was coming into the office, he was sticking a magazine into his jacket pocket. Now, this was the time just after the Tall Ships Race and I had bought a couple of the sponsors magazines to leave in the reception for customers to browse through when waiting, as it had some interesting items in it concerning the area, and this is what our esteemed customer had nicked. It turned out to be quite an expensive acquisition for him as I stuck a tenner on to his next half dozen jobs and he was none the wiser, silly bugger.

Another of our clients was also in the fabrication business. He told us



of an incident that's worth a mention. It involved him manufacturing and fitting a double gate to this guy's drive-way, up in the west-end somewhere. The guy had agreed to pay him as soon as he completed the job, well the man ducked and dived, avoided him and finally told him to bugger off, he would pay him when he was ready, big mistake! Our client was a somewhat volatile character and he waited till both cars were in the driveway, drove up and proceeded to weld the gates closed. When his customer came blustering down the driveway, steam coming out of his ears, he was told to pay up or the gates would stay welded, and don't bother with a cheque, it's cash only. Well the guy reluctantly paid up, after which our friend jumped into his truck, popped his head out of the window and informed the red faced gent he was off on holiday for a fortnight, "but I know a good company who will cut your gates open for you at a reasonable price". A hard lesson on man management.

Another former customer was a Chinese gent who owned the take-away at the Lang Stracht. He was a guy of about seventy, and on completion of the job, I broached the subject of money. "No plobrem Mr Rumsden, how much you wan? I told him, and he produced a wad that would have choked a horse, and he proceeded to count the twenties into my grubby palm, stopping forty pounds short of the original total. "I take ris for cash discount", said he. "Okay!" says I, resignedly "You're a hard man". (I had stuck on sixty pounds for exactly this contingency which we call the buggeration factor). But he was a great old guy. It appeared the wad of money was for him to go back to the home country and come back with a fat little wife. "Will I take one back for you, Mr Rumsden?". "No, take me back a thin one, I'll make her fat myself".

The Chinese in general are good enough to deal with. They hate

invoices and always prefer to deal in cash. Another Chinese guy once said, holding up a wad of notes, "This is the only paperwork that works". I wonder if he was the author of the Chinese Cook Book "Forty Ways To Wok Your Dog".

Another customer I had a run-in with was H.M Prisons Peterhead, where we were contracted to carry out some ventilation work in a newly constructed kitchen. As you can imagine, security was tight to say the least.



*Bill Lumsden escapes from Cell Block H*

When I went up to survey the job, the car was searched and I was searched. I was escorted from the office through a yard to a steel fence where another warder escorted me to the site. I measured up the job and was scrutinised all the way. On completion of the survey, I was searched again, taken to the compound and "released".

It was a strange experience and I reflected, on my drive back to Aberdeen, on the guys that are banged up there for all manner of deeds. On my return to the office, Neil told me to 'phone Peterhead Prison as the Chief Warder was upset about something.

Uneasily, I called the "Main Man". Upset!? this man was apoplectic. It appears, I had been escorted to the steel fence where the warder had told me just to follow the other warder and he would see me out, but he went out another door and into the car park, so I just followed him out, into my car and back to "Blighty". Big mistake! I hadn't checked out so it was presumed that I was still in stir. By the time they had noticed this slight indiscretion, I was on my way home, so when they called the office and were informed that I wasn't there they issued a major alert and were in the process of carrying out a cell-to-cell search of the klink.

The warder called me from heaven to hell, brought my parentage into question and warned me never to darken his doorstep again.

Imagine my trepidation when I had to return again with the guys who were to carry out the work, but it had cooled down a little by then and the worst remark was "Oh, here comes Johnnie Raminski". (An old safe blower who they took from prison during the war to carry out espionage work against the Germans then banged him back in the slammer, from which he escaped on a regular basis, only to be caught and given even more time). Enough of the customer stories, I'm getting stir crazy, and back to the boys.

## Stanley Stewart (Stan the Man)

Now Stan's a character right out of the top drawer. He was the chief engineer at Twin Spires where we carried out a lot of work over the years but as they ran down the Creamery (as they do) Stan was made redundant. We offered him a job as our maintenance man and general dog's body, which he was a bit apprehensive about, as he was coming from giving our boys orders to taking orders from them but he took it on and hasn't looked back since.



**Stanley Stewart** ~  
*Makes the best of the Happy Hour*

Now Stan has a great love of anything Scottish, by that I mean Bells, Grouse, McEwans and Tennents and his normal routine is a couple of drams at the Fittie, home for supper and out to catch the "Happy Hours" at his many local watering holes. His wife, bless her heart tolerates his routine even though she doesn't bother much about drink herself. A Malibu and Lemonade are about her stretch.

On the occasion of their anniversary recently Stan was on his usual pilgrimage when it struck him "No card, no present". Auch, said Stan, "She likes Malibu and Lemonade" so he bought her a bottle of lemonade. When he told us the story, the bar erupted with laughter. "Did you not buy her the Malibu?" I said. "She can get her ain bloody Malibu, it's only our Ruby Anniversary".

It was his sixtieth birthday a couple of weeks ago, and as we were due a bit of a blow out we had a bit of a bash in the Fittie bar, so we arranged a stripper and a presentation of a wallet with some spending stuffie in it so the whole occasion prompted another poem.

## Stan the Man

STAN THE MAN DRIVES THE AIKENS VAN  
 ALONG WITH OTHER CHORES  
 FROM H.S.E TO MAKING TEA  
 HE EVEN SWEEPS THE FLOORS

HE STARTED LIFE AS AN ENGINEER  
 A ROLL AT WHICH HE SUITED  
 AND THEN HE JOINED THE R.A.F.  
 OUT OF WHICH HE SOON WAS BOOTED

HIS CAREER IN THE RAF WAS A BIT OF A LAUGH  
 NOT LIKE BIGGLES OR BADER  
 TRUST THEM TO FIND HE WAS COLOUR BLIND  
 SO HE DIDN'T CLIMB THE RANKING LADDER

IT THEN TRANSPIRES THAT HE JOINED TWIN SPIRES  
 AS THE ENGINEERING BOSS  
 IF HE COULDN'T BE FOUND ON TWIN SPIRES GROUND  
 TRY THE CLUB AT MUGIEMOSS

THE PATH HE TOOK TO THIS COSY NEUK  
 WAS TRODDEN DEEP AND WIDE  
 SO IF YOU HAD TO LOOK FOR HIM  
 YOU KNEW HE COULDN'T HIDE

NOW STAN THE MAN IS AN AIKEN'S HAN'  
 HIS WATERING HOLE HAS CHANGED  
 FROM THE FITTIE TO THE SCOTIA BAR  
 A ROUTE HAS BEEN ARRANGED

STAN THE MAN LIKE THE WHOLE STEWART CLAN  
 HAS A THIRST THAT HAS SOME POWER  
 AND TO THIS END OUR LITTLE FRIEND  
 MAKES THE BEST OF THE HAPPY HOUR

HE SUPPORTS THE 'GERS IT'S WHAT HE PREFERENCES  
 HE GETS STICK BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER  
 SO ENJOY YOUR SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY STAN  
 WITH A FEW LARGE BELLS AND WATER

The whole occasion went great and Stan coped with the stripper (a lady policemannie) like a true professional. He was later escorted from the premises by a real policeman, his son, who gave him a hand home with his presents from the lads.

So even though he is quite a recent recruit, he has made quite an impact. He is almost another Auld Wullie and that's a hard act to follow.

Isabel, his wife, is partial to holidays abroad and Stan goes along "to keep the peace" although he is not a sunny beastly, as a matter of fact, his only concession to the heat is a short sleeved shirt. No shorts, he even keeps his socks on and he likes nothing better than sitting out on the hotel veranda (his words, not mine) with a couple of cannies.

On another foreign holiday, his wife left him to organise the travellers cheques, which he did, but when it came to cashing them in Majorca, he found it very difficult. It appeared he had obtained Co-op travellers cheques and



received dubious looks and summary dismissal from several banks and hotels before finally finding a sucker, I mean willing trader, who even then took a great deal of persuasion to part with Pesetas for Berryden Bouncers. Needless to say Isabel handled any future financial transactions when on holiday.

## Holidays & concluding stories

Holidays bring to mind one of my own dilemmas, namely this. As you probably know, I am not blessed with a sylph-like figure, no I have a pot belly. Now, when it comes round to holiday time, my wife, bless her little cotton socks, tends to shop for over-sized clothes for me, namely socks and shorts. Another item which seems to be a tradition of the Lumsden household, is a new toothbrush which is only opened on our arrival at our hotel.

Picture if you will, me arriving poolside, distended stomach, shorts with the crotch down to my knees, socks down round my ankles and my gums bleeding. My fellow sun worshippers must say to themselves "Look at that poor sod, he must have scurvy". As the wife says "The only thing slim about my figure is the chances of me getting it back" cheeky besom.

On another occasion on holiday, we met a couple we hadn't seen for years. The chap was O.K. but his wife was a bit of a haemorrhoid. She said to me "God, you're not half getting fat!", which prompted the classic retort from myself, namely, "You're ugly, but I can always get thinner". Her husband killed himself laughing, but his spouse stormed off to take her spite out on some unsuspecting waiter.

When on holiday, my wife and I like a bit of culture, so we often head for museums or art galleries. On one of these occasions, we were looking at this

rather unusual painting of three black men completely naked, two had black penises, the other had a white penis. Eileen and I were discussing this with rather puzzled looks when a gentleman introduced himself to us, saying as he was the artist, could he be of assistance. I said that I could not understand a painting of three very black men and the one in the middle had a white penis. "Oh!", He said "you are misinterpreting the picture, they're three Welsh coal miners and the one in the middle went home for lunch".

A final thought on the subject of weight. If Mamma Cass had shared more of her burgers with Karen Carpenter, they'd both be alive to-day.

That classic retort I mentioned earlier is a variation on a retort from Winston Churchill in the Commons many years ago. During a heated debate, he was getting the better of Bessie Braddock, when she announced "Sir! you're drunk". To which he replied "Madam, you're ugly but i'll be sober in the morning". His next retort is not repeated so often. It appears a certain Jeremy Pailing MP jumped to her defence and shouted at Churchill "Sir you are a dirty dog!" to which Churchill replied "Yes, and you know what dirty dogs do to pailings". Ordeeeer, Ordeeer.

Another amusing story I heard a few years ago at a dinner concerned a Polish fighter pilot seconded to the RAF during the Second World War, who was asked to address a Woman's Guild Meeting recalling some of his wartime experiences.

He was recalling a dogfight over the skies of London one day during the Battle of Britain and he was in full flow. You have to imagine this speech in broken English and a Polish accent.



"The first foker came at me out of the sun, but I out manoeuvred him and blasted him out of the sky. A second foker came at me from below, but I looped behind him and shot the foker down. A third foker saw this and retreated into the clouds". The master of ceremonies had noticed a lot of the gentile ladies in the audience were distinctly uncomfortable and it suddenly dawned on him. He leapt to his feet and announced "Excuse me for interrupting, but ladies, a Focker is a type of German Fighter plane!".

"No, no!" said the pilot, "These fokers were Messerschmits!".

Another wartime hero, in the mould of Douglas Bader, lost both legs during battle but opted for wooden legs as opposed to the modern "tin legs". He was employed as a night-watchman but his love of the amber nectar would always be his downfall. The fateful night arrived when the factory he was minding caught fire while he slumbered on unaware of proceedings. Well, the factory was saved but the watchman was burned to the ground, and what was worse, he couldn't claim insurance, as he didn't have a leg to stand on.

Legs brings me on to another event of note. This concerned the admirable Crighton, namely our old friend Ian Crighton the eccentric mate of George's I mentioned earlier on. Now Ian was a bit of a lad with the ladies and with a drink in (which was not just occasionally) he would throw caution to the wind. The event in question finds our hero in hospital with a broken leg, which prompted another ode.

CRIGHTON'S IN THE HOSPITAL  
HE BROKE HIS LEG WHILE RIDING  
WHICH WE'VE SAID'D BE THE DEATH OF HIM  
BUT WE WERE ONLY CHIDING

THE BUGGER HAS BEEN COMPROMISED  
ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION  
BUT HIS QUICK AND READY WIT  
HAS BEEN THE MAN'S SALVATION

ONE DARK EVENING IN HIS CAR  
WEARING NOTHING BUT ONE SOCK  
HE AND THE LADY UNDER HIM  
WERE GIVEN QUITE A SHOCK

THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN AND STANDING THERE  
WAS HIS LADY WIFE  
HE NEEDED A ONE LINER  
THAT MIGHT JUST SAVE HIS LIFE

THOUGH THE SITUATION MUST HAVE BEEN  
PRETTY HARD TO SWALLOW  
HE GOT OUT OF IT CLEVERLY  
WITH JUST A SWEET "HULLO"

BUT JUST BEHAVE AND GET WELL SOON  
AND ALL THE VERY BEST, IAN  
WE REALISE YOUR INJURY  
WASN'T SEXUAL BUT EQUESTRIAN



Another ex-colleague (a friend of a friend) suffice to say was, how do you put it? “Intellectually challenged” and on meeting him, I enquired how was it going, to which he replied that he was just recovering from a vasectomy operation. I enquired if all was well as he had only been married a short while and had no children. His response was that he had heard it was easier to obtain a mortgage if you didn’t have children. Strange! His ploy must have worked as I met him later and said he now had a flat in Orchard Street. “Good granite houses” I said. “This one is even better” he replied “It’s re-enforced granite” Poor sod.

Our Aiken’s empire seems to be getting a bit boring as no new characters are emerging to make comment on, or maybe the fact is we are getting on and “Tempus is nae half Fidgetin’”. Three out of the four directors are now grandfathers. Myself with two girls Zoe and Jasmin (Jazz to her friends), George with one grandson Conner, who George is determined will be a footballer even to the extent of when he was toddling (Conner that is) George tied Conner’s hands behind his back to stop him picking up the ball. Call the RSPCC!

Neil has a grandson (Finn) our recent edition. At a recent Directors Meeting I mentioned to Bob that he was failing to keep up the standards expected of Aiken’s directors in as much as he is not conforming to the norm. “For Christ sake Cherie’s only ten”. Only joking, Bob.

Old age, there’s a thing. Nowadays I sit down to put on my socks. When I’m bending down to tie my shoe laces, I say to myself “Now is there anything else I could do while I’m down here?”

George and myself are driving Saabs (the al’ mannie’s car) Neil and Bob are still boy racers with “Rice Rockets” (Japanese Sports Jobs).

My last venture into the sporty cars was brought home to me when I had my Vauxhall Cavalier SRI Sport. One day as I went back to the car in the car park, a couple of young lads were drooling over my “Mean Machine”, so I swaggered manfully over to the car and opened the door. Their response deflated me somewhat as one said to the other “Fancy an old bastard like that being let loose with a car like that”. My Saab (with heated seats) and my cloth cap were ordered the next day.

Still on the subject of cars, a while back, my wife Eileen had a Fiat Tipo which was her pride and joy, and Mike, our mechanic at Deebridge Garage nursed it along tenderly through it’s stressful lifetime (sorry Darling). One morning, slightly behind schedule Eileen was tearing along Riverside Drive beside the Duthie Park when P.C. Plod appeared from behind a bush with his trusty “hair dryer” and clocked her speeding which roused my poetic bent.



## The Riverside Pocket

*When Eileen's on her way to work*

*She really doesn't tarry*

*Although she drives a Tipo*

*She thinks it' a Ferrari*

*Screaming past the Duthie Park*

*She thinks she's Damon Hill*

*But doesn't make allowance*

*For P.C.Plod- The Bill*

*She was slowing down to 40*

*When the camera caught her fair*

*And what's her only comment?*

*Thank God I did my hair*

Talking about Eileen's hair, a while back she had an unfortunate brush with breast cancer (which was caught in time) and was having chemotherapy which resulted in a certain amount of hair loss which is very upsetting for any woman but her sense of humour carried her through on many occasion. One in particular sticks in my mind. We had a potted plant by the front door which, on reflection, was wrongly situated as the leaves started falling at an alarming rate. Now Eileen speaks to her plants regularly (she says she gets more response from them than she gets from me) any way she turned to the beleaguered plant and asked "When did your chemo' start?"

On another occasion, she was getting fitted for a wig in the unlikely event of severe hair loss. She asked if she could try a blonde wig and the hairdresser, although puzzled produced one, which when it was right, got her sister, who had accompanied her to take pictures, and in response to the hairdresser's look said "I always wondered how I would look as a blonde". However, thankfully, the only use the wig had was the grand children posing as Shirley Temple look-alikes.

This story just about brings up to date with the history of James Aiken (Sheetmetal) Ltd. but just before we "go to press" I have another amusing story. It involves our Peter Grimmer. Quite recently, he borrowed the truck for the evening to move some stuff. He arrived in the morning with a sheepish look on his face and confronted Bob Adam, the Works Director. Bob, fearing the worst, said "You havn't smashed the truck, have you?" "No" replies Peter. "What is it then?" said Bob "I forgot I had it, I got a lift in from the wife as usual, I've left it at home". Speak about getting stick he got a whole bloody forest.



Another little story which might tickle your fancy.

This is an actual of a transcript of a radio conversation between a US Naval vessel and the Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland.

*Americans*; Please divert your course by 15 degrees South to avoid collision.

*Canadians*; Recommend you divert your course by 15 degree North to avoid collision.

*Americans*; This is the Captain of a US Naval vessel. I say again You Divert your course.

*Canadians*; No. I say again you divert Your course.

*Americans*; (Shouting) This is the US Aircraft Carrier USS Lincoln, the second largest vessel in the United States Atlantic Fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers and various support vessels and I demand that you change your course by 15 degrees South that's one five degrees South or counter measures will be taken to ensure the safety of this vessel.

*Canadians*; We are a lighthouse. Your call...

Well that just about concludes my journey through the Aiken's Empire. My original book was going to be The history of the Ghurka Killing Knife but I thought "what the hell, everybody is doing Kukri books".

