

Cllr Roger Robinson, OBE, JP

In 1940 my mother, father and me lived in Glasgow in Cathcart. The bombs from German aircraft were incessant and on one occasion my mother came home from relatives to find my father and me snoring away in our top floor room with the whole ceiling ripped apart by a bomb blast and open to the sky.....

My mother, a tough and determined woman and politically active, decided there & then to move us all to Crieff, and with her persuasion 14 Jewish people, relatives & close friends, moved there too. My father joined the Army.

We mostly initially all lived in the north part of Burrell Street near the church, and some lived in North Bridge Street and some eventually lived in Croftweir where we all gathered for the Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement and for Sunday classes for the children.

Jews had not lived in Crieff before then except for the aged Jewish pedlar in the 18th century who allegedly begat a child with a young woman at that time!

My mother and me went to live eventually in Burrell Street with the Duff family and lived in there for the whole war. I have many happy memories of the Duff family; Mr Duff being a carpenter made me my first and only sledge – we called it a Snowskimmer, and my lovely friends, Barbara and Elizabeth, their daughters and Mrs Duff. My mother and Mrs Duff were the only 2 members of the Labour Party in Crieff. I was friends with Barbara until she sadly died and still speak to Elizabeth in Dundee.

The 14 Jewish people were involved in Crieff life and were warmly accepted as part of the town. The children went to Morrison's Academy and my happiest memories are of the school and the excellent teaching we received. To this day I still belong to the London Morrisonians and attend any get together it arranges in London. I am very proud to have been a pupil at Morrison's Academy and I learnt so much there which has helped me in later life. I also loved the school uniform.

Many of the men in the Jewish community had joined the Armed Forces, my friend Jeffrey Segal's father was an Army doctor serving in Burma with the RAMC.- my father, we learned after the war, was in Military Intelligence; Uncle Lionel fought at Anzio and other beach landings; we saw little of them due to the war. I saw dad once leaving the house in North Burrell Street in the early hours after a few days leave in 1941 and didn't see him again until 1946.

I have wonderful memories of playing on the Knock with Jeffrey Segal and my dearest friend then, Stuart Small, and Barbara Duff and another school friend who went onto become a missionary in Africa after the war. Playing near the so-called witches hut has memories for me too. I also remember aunts from my Glasgow life whose husbands were away overseas fighting for their country.

Mum went on to establish, with the help of the then Earl of Ancaster, the club for servicemen and women in Crieff which provided good refreshments throughout the War.

My friend Cynthia Landes has written about Croftweir and her time in Crieff and we have remained friends. There were others like Monty Cowan; Carol Levinson, and Sylvia Bernstein who I remember with affection always.

Many years later in 2001 I was about to become Mayor of Camden in London when a phone call came through to my home from someone who pretended to be a constituent but was after all those years my Crieff friend and fellow Morrisonian Stuart Small and we met again and our friendship, renewed, lasted until alas, he passed away. But we found we had served in the same Corps in the British Army, he as a Colonel and me as a Sergeant!

We, the Jewish Community, left Crieff after the War in tears and went back to Glasgow or London and I still miss it.

Crieff was so friendly to us Jewish families and I have taken my wife and children to Crieff and showed them the Hydro used by US officers as accommodation and the Drummond Arms Hotel where my late cousin, Ernest, an officer in a Scottish regiment was turned upside down to see if he and his fellow serving members wore pants under the kilt!!

When I pass away I will have my ashes scattered on the Knock.

So many thanks, people of Crieff and wonderful Morrison's Academy for a making our life during the last war so much happier.