

ALEX DINGWALL HISTORY

Early On:

Alex was born on the 23rd May 1921 in a house in Gowrie Street in Bridgend, Perth to Alexander Dingwall and his wife Bella. He lived there until he was married.

He was the first of what would be a family of four: Isobel (1923), Irene (1927) and Jack (1930). Alex and Irene still survive today.

School Days:

He spent all of his time at Kinnoull School, still in existence in the same building. This was a common feature in those days. All pupils moving on to secondary came much later.

His favourite subjects were spelling and singing; at the other end of the spectrum were history and geography. He was good at arithmetic.

Jobs:

On leaving school at 14 Alex started to work in Wood's the Bakers at the foot of the High Street. Thereafter, he moved on to Hume's, an ironmonger's, in St John's Square, now demolished to make way for the St John Centre.

The employer he worked for longest was Bell's the whisky company which was headquartered in Perth and continues as part of the Diageo drinks multi-national. With them he was a driver for 34 years until his retirement in 1986. He wasn't finished with work even then and did some part-time work with the Renault garage currently run by Ness Motors.

Married Life:

Alex married quite late, at the age of 41, to Jemima Auchterlonie on the 2nd March 1963. They are looking forward to their 50th anniversary in 2013. They had 3 children: Irene (1964), Stuart (1967) and Gordon (1969). Gordon passed away in 2009.

Chloe, Megan and Nicola are their three grandchildren.

Military Service:

Alex enlisted for national service on the 1st December 1938 when he joined the RASC. A few months later he transferred to the 79/80th Scottish Horse to serve alongside his father. (His dad had seen action with the Royal Engineers in the first world war.) The Scottish Horse, as its name suggests was a cavalry unit. On the outbreak of war he was transferred to Worksop in Nottinghamshire, on the edge of Sherwood Forest. Here the Scottish Horse converted to artillery using Bedford trucks and Chevrolet vehicles to pull the guns.

A posting to Cairo with the 8th Army followed a little later. Alex remembers being under canvas only a few yards from the Sphinx! When the African campaign was won the Scottish Horse transferred to Italy to continue fighting the Germans. At one stage he was positioned near to the famous Monte Casino, where a rear guard German action lasted for weeks, and close by the landing area at Anzio. When Rome was evacuated by the Germans Alex was one of the players in the 250-strong massed band which entertained the city's inhabitants for 5 days. Not many pipers and drummers have performed inside the Coliseum!

Poor Alex finished up being treated for blistered hands with all the continuous beating of his bass drum. His last station on the continent was Athens from where he departed for home in 1946.



Alex and his dad in the 1940s.

Later that year he re-enlisted into the army in Dundee and spent part of that 5 year stint in Germany. Back in the RASC he ended up in charge of one of the canteens.

Alex's military connection saw him as part of the 6th/7th Black Watch territorial band in Kirkcaldy for 3 years after encouragement to come along by their Drum Major, Tom Robson. Tom was also Drum Major with the Perth and District.

P&D:

Alex followed his dad, who had come along to the Perth and District Pipe Band in 1903 and joined as a schoolboy. Alex believes that they practiced a lot at the South Inch.



Alex taking over a band bass drummer from his dad in 1948.

His tutor was his dad, also a bass drummer. Brother, Jack, was a band member too, also in the bass section as a tenor drummer.

The first band engagement in which Alex took part was at St Johnstone's previous ground at Muirton Park on the Dunkeld Road (now the location of an ASDA store) around the time when he was about to leave school. In those days the band was present at every home game. How apt then that his very last engagement with the band was at the final game ever played at the same stadium.

One major difference between nowadays and when he started out was in the instrument he played. Many years ago the bass drum was considerably lighter, narrower and was tuned very much lower in pitch.

Alex enjoyed being involved in the many band 'street jobs' but for many years was also a member of the competing band as its bass drummer.



Alex on the bass drum in Aschaffenburg in 1986.



Playing in his final season in the competing band at Blackpool in 1986
(6th from left)

There were quite a number of Pipe Majors in Alex's career with us: Jimmy Peggie, Willie Peggie, David Sinclair, Jimmy Sinclair, Sandy Smith, Finlay McIntosh, Greg Henderson and twice under Charlie Munro.

In 2008 Alex was made an Honorary Member of the band by unanimous vote.



Presentation of his honorary membership by Pipe Major Alistair McIntosh.

Alex continues to pop along to watch practices in Upper Springland on a regular basis and attends a lot of our local engagements in the Perth area.