

# Up Dyce to the Academy

Issue No.25

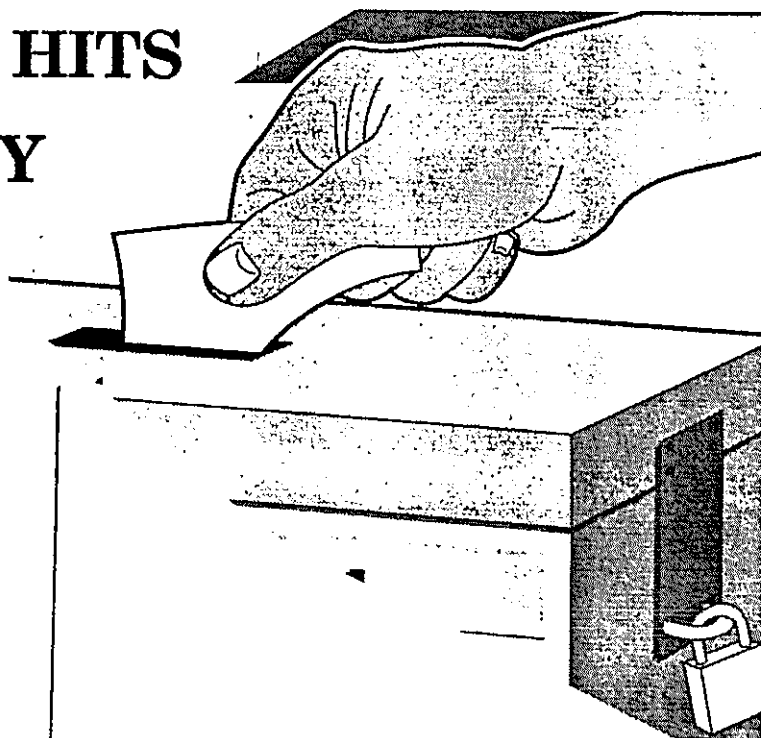
May 1992

## ELECTION FEVER HITS DYCE ACADEMY

Picture the scene. A packed hall. Tension increasing. An empty top table. Suddenly, the strains of 'Entry of the Gladiators' accompanies the arrival of the four Prospective Parliamentary Candidates for Gordon Constituency - Brian Adam (SNP), Malcolm Bruce (Liberal Democrat), Peter Morrell (Labour) and John Porter (Conservative). Well ... not quite the music, perhaps exaggerated atmosphere but the occasion was real enough ... Question Time had arrived at Dyce Academy - the candidates were taking 'time out' from the real campaign to listen to the voters of tomorrow and answer their questions with our Rector, Mr Taylor, realising a lifetime ambition - to impersonate Robin Day as Panel Chairman.

The first two questions were tame enough - everyone more or less agreed on the standard of the London Evening Standard and the need for more crime prevention. But then the controversial issues began. Should we change the voting system? "Yes!" said two, "No!" said another, "Perhaps" said one more. This was followed up by three against one in favour of Trident, although the audience seemed more sympathetic towards the minority view.

"What about public spending?". Mr Porter started off his answer in Doric - dealing with a question that we would not have time to consider because of lack of time. "Health" - he went on to say. "Housing", said Mr Morrell, refusing to be drawn into national controversy over Labour's Party Broadcasts. "Education" was Mr Bruce's emphatic reply, struggling to be heard above the one o'clock bell.



And there we were, just like the TV - out of time - but not of opinions. The candidates and their supporters were impressed by the questions, the general behaviour, the level of interest shown and the political awareness of the pupils. Then off they went to a well-deserved lunch - equally impressed by the quality of the food and no extra helpings to the cook's favourite!

The next day, pupils were invited to vote for their favourite candidate and party.

The result was close - perhaps a warning for the victor, Malcolm Bruce, that the campaign ahead was to throw up a few surprises. However, as he was heard to say at a later date, "One is enough" and in Dyce Academy Mr Bruce had the luxury of six times that number! Well done, Malcolm, and hard luck to the runners up but thanks for making the effort to allow Dyce pupils to sample an Election Campaign in full flow.

# THEATRE CLUB

The 'Culture Vultures' have made two excursions into the Arts world this term.

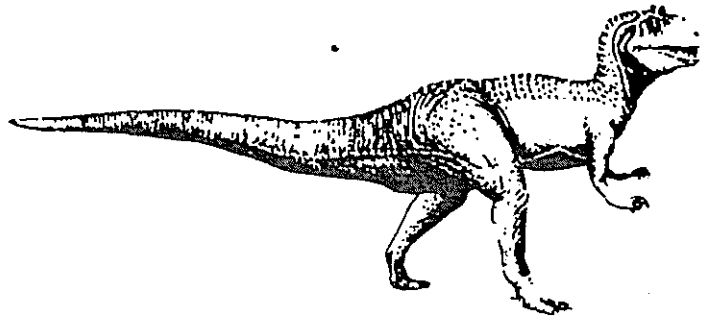
In March, we attended a performance of Willie Russell's 'Shirley Valentine' at H M Theatre. This was, to our surprise, a one-woman show starring Pamela Power (of 'Bread'). Her performance was outstanding, keeping us all spellbound for two hours. A funny, but moving play.

Our second excursion was, unfortunately, less successful. Only five members managed to attend the Arts Centre on 6 May to see Wildcat's production of 'Eight to the Bar'. The cast struggled manfully (and womanfully) with what was a rather mediocre script. Disappointing, as Wildcat has produced some very good performances in the past.

## Future Attractions :

We hope to brave the Arts Centre again on 1 June, to see Trestle Theatre's (PG rated) production of 'Crime of Love'. 'Trestle' is an excellent company who have produced some first-class material, so we're keeping our fingers crossed for this one!!

**NB** As this is a PG rating, it will be open to senior pupils (S4-6) only. Any pupil or member of staff interested, please contact Miss Smith (English Department) or Mrs Fennell, during exam leave time.



## THEATRE IN EDUCATION

This year the Drama Department ran a new general studies course, 'Theatre in Education'. The idea was to produce a play or plays which would involve a young audience and would be educational.

There was an encouraging uptake for the course and eventually after many weeks of hard work we performed two plays at Dyce Primary School. The first was 'Treasure Island' which involved the Primary 3s being recruited as sailors for 'The Jolly Tar', being captured by pirates who were after their treasure map and escaping only by their wits. Then, after some map reading, they discovered the treasure, only to find it was guarded by fierce cannibals. Fortunately our 'sailors' were obviously well used to bartering and 'swapped' the Captain's parrot for some chocolate coins.

The second, 'Polly the All-Action Dolly', was about a doll who had been sent to Dyce Primary School as a present for a pupil, Nancy Olivia Body. Polly has been invented by Nancy's Uncle who is a Swiss inventor; she can learn to walk and talk by copying everyone else. Unfortunately, she doesn't know how to behave herself and does some very naughty things, ie stealing the postman's letters and hiding in the staffroom. Only with the guidance of Frank Stamp, the postman, Nancy and the children, can Polly learn how to behave.

Both performances were much enjoyed by the primary school pupils and were a credit to the fourth years who produced them. Thanks to the Technical Department who made the props, to Mrs Young who helped with props and scenery, and to Lindsay Drummond, the student who was with us and worked so hard on 'Polly the All-Action Dolly'.

# DINOSAURS ALIVE!

On the afternoon of 24 March, 111 second year pupils visited the Dinosaurs Alive Exhibition at the Bridge of Don Exhibition Centre. The trip was arranged jointly by the Social Subjects and Science Departments as the topic of the exhibition was of interest to us both.

Unfortunately, it seemed as if every other school in Grampian Region had also chosen to attend that afternoon and we had to queue for some time before getting into the actual exhibition.

Eventually we entered the darkened hall where the dinosaurs were lurking. Each pupil had to identify various kinds of dinosaurs and had a passbook which could be stamped before entering the next section.

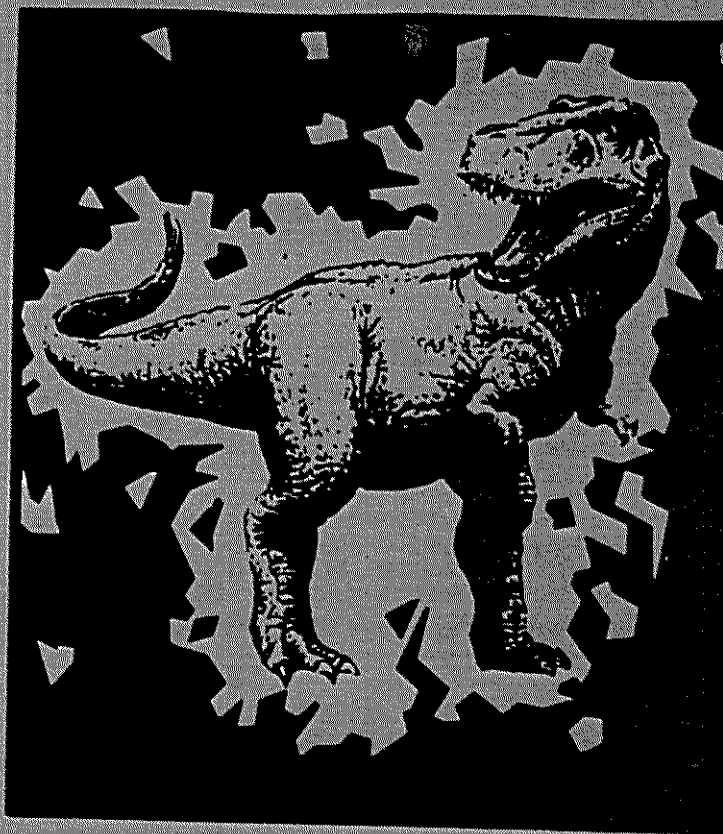
The exhibition itself had been organised by an American company who had created both half and full-scale dinosaurs from their knowledge of the ancient reptiles. It started with tiny dinosaurs being hatched from eggs and moved on to show many different species including the well-known Tyrannosaurus or "tyrant lizard". The animations were excellent and when the long necked Apatosaurus swung round towards you, it felt as if your movements were being followed. The hall was filled with the realistic roaring of dinosaurs - and also a less pleasant aroma perhaps also associated with them.

The first part of the exhibition was rather overcrowded and we had to pass through this quickly initially and go back later. One wondered if the swarms of small primary children were more awed by the dinosaurs or by the hordes of other children of all sizes streaming past them.

As well as digging for bones and watching videos on the history of the dinosaurs, our pupils could also try their hand at drawing and tracing dinosaurs - and of course make purchases from the host of dinosaur novelties available. (Mr Young and the school shoppe missed out on that one!). Models of how the dinosaurs for the exhibition were constructed were also provided for the more mechanically minded, and there was a 'touch exhibit' where you could feel what dinosaur's skin was like.

On our return to school pupils went back to the departments involved to pool their newly-found knowledge on dinosaurs and perhaps work out why they really did become extinct!

M FORREST



## MOCK INTERVIEWS

Every year the school organises a scheme which gives all fourth year pupils the opportunity to go through a mock interview. The aim of this is to give pupils the chance to experience what being interviewed for a job or place in further education is really like. This should help them to be better prepared for the real thing when they leave school.

A large number of businesses, colleges and other organisations in the Aberdeen area co-operate with the school to make the project as realistic as possible. Details about jobs or courses are advertised to pupils in Social Education classes; they then decide which one they would like to apply for and complete either a formal letter of application or the standard application form which the various organisations normally use for real jobs or courses.

These applications are then sent off and interviews are arranged for all candidates. In most cases the pupils have to find their own way to the premises of the various firms, colleges and other organisations who participate in the scheme. The pupils are treated as if they are candidates for real places. They have to arrive on time, be suitably dressed and are expected to be prepared for a serious interview - no mercy is shown! Following the interview pupils receive feedback and constructive criticism on their performance - either directly from the interviewers or via a written report which is sent to the school.

The school receives a lot of feedback from the participating organisations and it is pleasing to note that this year all of the feedback has been very positive and indeed complimentary to the pupils, no matter how successful they may have been in the interviews. Some examples of comments received in feedback help prove this point -

"Extremely impressed with the ability of candidate"

"Polite, friendly and knowledgeable"

"Really done their homework"

"They answered well and exhibited maturity of outlook"

"Each was easy to interview, extremely articulate and well prepared"

"They made a good impression and did the school credit"

"They will succeed in whatever field they choose"

Over sixty fourth year pupils participated in the project this year and a lot of credit must go to them for taking the whole process so seriously. They have certainly created a good impression with the businesses and other organisations who co-operated with the school in organising the project. We are of course indebted to all of the organisations for devoting valuable time to helping to make the mock interviews possible - they have added a vital dimension to the education of the pupils who took part.

We plan to run the project again between January and March 1993 for next year's fourth year. We hope that they will be equally willing to take part and gain from the unique experience which the project offers.

## WHAT'S ON

**CITY LIGHTS 2 - THE LIFE AND DEATH OF WILLIE MELVIN** - Scottish TV cult comedy now on stage. **HILARIOUS.**  
25 May - 6 June + Saturday matinee.  
Tickets from £6.50.  
Children etc **HALF-PRICE**

**THE LEMON TREE**  
(formerly St Katherine's Centre,  
5 West North Street)

**SHIP OF FOOLS** - Columbus' epic journeys performed by a shipload of clowns.  
30 May 8.00 pm. Tickets £5,  
£4 concessions.

### ABERDEEN ARTS CENTRE

**DRAMA WORKSHOPS** - Theatre games improvisation and FUN. Saturdays in May.  
Over 10s : 9.15 - 10.30 am  
All ages : 2.00 - 3.30 pm  
£1 per session at door.

### DANCE

**GRAMPIAN YOUTH DANCE** - Sundays throughout May. New members always welcome.  
McClymont Hall 1.00 - 3.00 pm. £1.50

### ABERDEEN ART GALLERY

**ANN FRANK IN THE WORLD** - Exhibition about the life of Ann Frank, whose diary about her family's life hiding from the Nazis in Holland became world famous. Interesting photographs.  
30 May - 27 June. **FREE**

**REELING BACK** - Glimpses of the early days in cinema in Scotland.  
2 - 30 May. **FREE**

## 5 - 14 DEVELOPMENTS

The government's 5-14 Development Programme has already attracted media attention, not all of it favourable.

This very wide-ranging plan aims to set up a nationwide basic curriculum for pupils between these years, with five agreed levels of achievement, from A to E. Most youngsters will be working at level A by the end of their first three years in primary school. Some pupils will achieve level E by primary 7, but most will work towards it during their first two years in their secondary school.

Besides the setting up of teacher working parties to cover the curriculum, '5-14' also gives guidelines on the reporting of pupils' progress and primary-secondary liaison, and this is where we come in.

Since Dyce Academy opened, teachers from here and from our three main associated primary schools have formed liaison groups and curricular working parties to try to ensure smooth transition for local pupils moving from one level of education to another. From the point of view of the secondary teachers, it has never been easy to take in pupils from a considerable number of primary schools, and begin to build on the variety of learning experiences which they have encountered. On the other hand, primary teachers have had to mark time in the early years of their secondary courses until others in the classes have 'caught up'. The 5-14 Development Programme acknowledges these anxieties and suggests that it must be beneficial to a pupil in transition if the primary and secondary teacher speak the same precise educational language when referring to his/her level of attainment - hence the use of 'levels'.

Last year volunteer members of staff from Dyce Primary, Newmachar, Hatton of Fintray Primaries and Dyce Academy met regularly and discussed liaison procedures. This year, the working group has taken on the task of implementing the 5-14 recommendations as far as our 'unit' of Dyce, Newmachar and Fintray is concerned.

The programme is so far-reaching that it is difficult to know where to begin. We are fortunate in that staff of all four schools already have a tradition of visiting each other, sitting in on lessons, and exchanging resources, so that in many areas the foundations for this government plan have already been laid. We have decided to begin by reviewing the documents and reports which we use at present to pass information on primary 7 pupils to the secondary schools, so that the teachers in Dyce Academy have realistic expectations of what the S1 pupils can achieve. We have also asked for staff in all four schools to be given in-service days on the same dates, so that they can meet together and discuss teaching methods and assessment in the top primary and early secondary stages. There are already subject working parties of staff in several areas of the curriculum, particularly Maths and English, but they are very pressed for time.

Our 5-14 co-ordinating group has met only twice so far, but we have set up a plan of regular monthly meetings, to work on what we see as the most urgent areas of the plan. By this time next year there should be more to report.

MAIRI STEELE

## THE EARLY SHIFT

It was a day like any other day - mid-March, cold, wet and at 7.30 am, still quite dark. The solitary figure crossing the school playground watched as the crows - seemingly hundreds of them - lifted and then settled again. At his back the sun was just appearing above the trees, and he could sense the distant roar of the airport and the sickly-sweet smell of high-octane fuel. Ahead the school buildings appeared lifeless, although a few lights showed and two or three cars sat empty outside the swimming pool.

Dark and lifeless ... but wait a minute. The community door opens and some figures emerge, on their way HOME after having been in school since 6.00 am. These are the members of the Dyce - Aberdeen Amateur Swimming Club, who attend for training two or three mornings per week. Academy pupils including Alison McKenzie, Fiona Buchan, Rachel Robertson, Vicky Rose and Claire MacKenzie are part of this dedicated band.

Claire has been training both for competition and keep-fit purposes for nearly five years now. A training day starts at 5.30 am with a quick breakfast - then to the pool for a 6.00 am start. A training session will last for about an hour and a half, and in that time she'll swim between 80 and 120 lengths.

Then it's out of the pool, at around 7.30 am, home to collect school materials, and the journey back to school may start at around 8.00 am. Certainly a demanding start, when many pupils are still gradually awakening. There are also regular inter-club competitions, some of which are single day competitions, like the recent one at Banff (at which Claire won a gold medal) or longer weekend competitions, as at Golspie.

No less dedicated are the group who regularly arrive in school at around 7.45 am. This group, mainly boys, have come to enjoy some weight-training with Mr Thorn in the PE Department.

The 'regulars' - Graeme Veitch, Craig Cook, Malcolm Thom, Ross Wemyss and Euan Pittendreigh - have been occasionally joined by others - Ross Sangster, Alison McKenzie, Vicky Rose, Emma Golder - as the group has undergone circuit training. Bench presses, arm curls, squats, and stamina work with minute repetitions have all helped to get the blood pumping. Some of the group are building towards some proper lifting, though the techniques necessary are difficult. The group obviously enjoys this start to the day, which lasts until approximately 8.30 am.

Outside, it's lighter now. The clank of weights can still be heard faintly in the MPA, and gradually pupils arrive - in two and threes, and then a crowd as the Newmachar and Fintray buses arrive. The day shift has arrived, and another school day 'begins' as the bell rings at 8.45 am.

D PYLE



Back row (l. to r.): Rachel, Claire, Kern  
Front row (l. to r.): Carol, Sandra, Karen

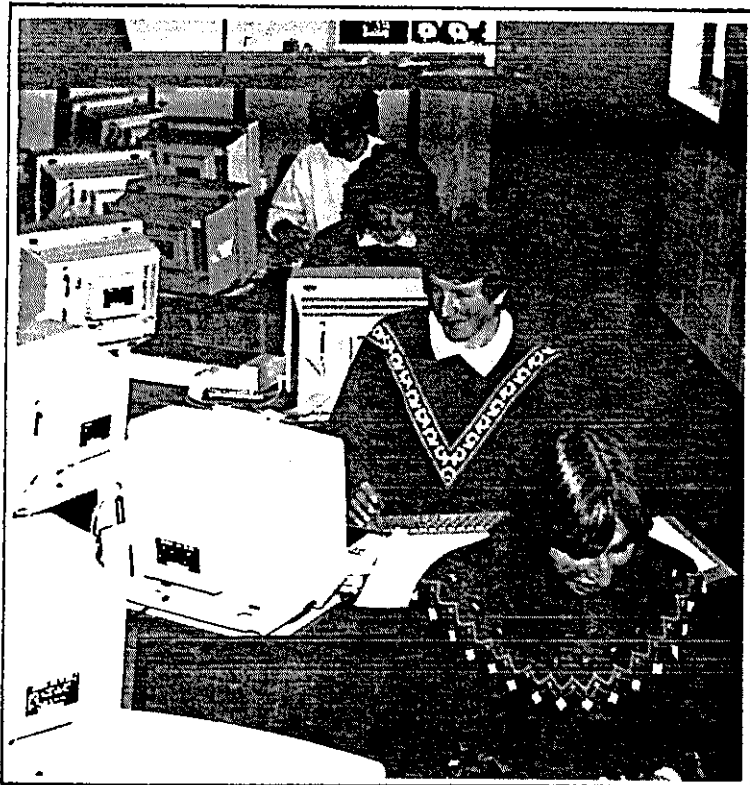
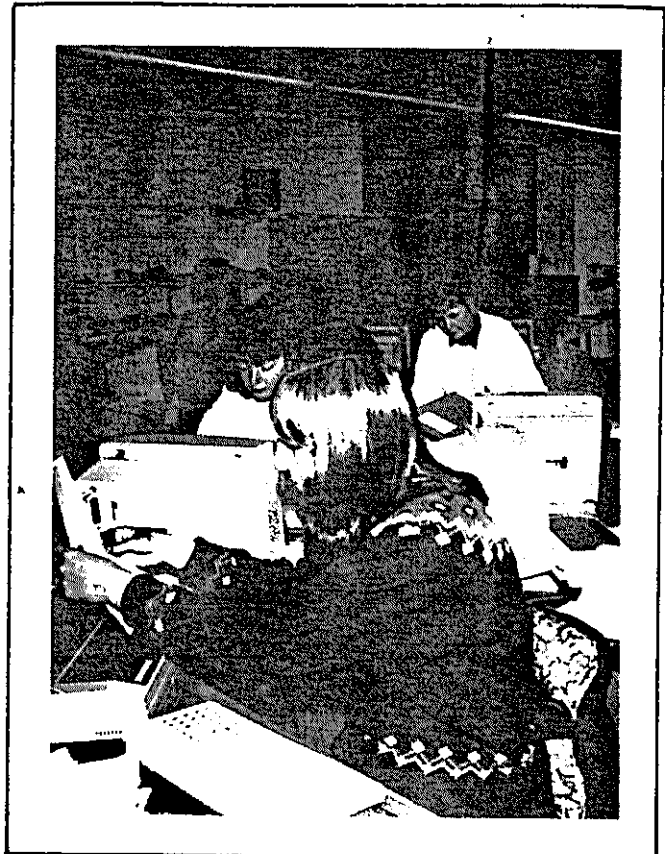
# MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS

## -DYCE ACADEMY OPENS DOORS

Dyce Academy has now been taking adult pupils into spaces in its teenage classes for 8 years. The scheme has worked extremely well with benefits for the whole school as well as for the adults themselves. Dyce Academy, with 59 this year, takes more adult pupils than any other school in Grampian Region.

However, we have been convinced for some time that there is considerable scope for an expansion of the scheme and we have now managed to persuade the Education Department to allocate some additional teaching time especially for adults. While the extra allocation for the next school year is fairly small, it is at least a start and will allow a number of new initiatives to take place.

At the time of going to press we are about to advertise 40 places a week in Business Studies courses covering subjects such as keyboarding, word-processing and information technology. Later in the year we hope to be able at last to respond to the demand for computing courses for those who know ABSOLUTELY NOTHING about computing!



Other new courses will be publicised in Update and elsewhere later in the year and we will continue to offer places in any Standard Grade or Higher course where we have space. We have just carried out a survey of the adults who are doing Standard Grades and Highers this year and all stated that they had really enjoyed their year at the Academy.

Education at Dyce Academy is local, takes place during the school day, has creche provision and is as cheap as we can possible make it (free to those on benefit).

Education at Dyce Academy is available for adults of all ages, so watch for the publicity and take YOUR chance to get involved.

DAVID MONTGOMERIE  
Community Education Office