

From : Captain W. D. LANG, Royal Navy

Royal Naval Air Station,  
Lossiemouth,  
Morayshire.

Lossiemouth 2121

704/18

*Ref 5B*

G F Trowbridge Esq  
Town Clerk  
Town Clerk's Chambers  
High Street  
Dornoch

5 July 1972

*Dear Sir,*

Thank you for your letter of 20 June 72. The cause of your local complaints have been investigated by my Commander Air who has, I understand, had several telephone conversations with yourself on the subject.

I can find no evidence in support of the assertion that the 1960 agreement has been broken, but I can well see that some misunderstanding of the factors involved has grown up through the years. I believe that the initial complaints which led to the meeting at Dornoch in 1960, were caused by aircraft making Range circuits to the north of the town, often at low level and frequently in formations, which were of course noisier than single aircraft. As a result of the meeting, a circuit for formations was evolved which entered at Loch Fleet, remaining above 2000 feet until the Hospital at Cambusavie had been passed. Additionally, for single Hunter aircraft on low level or night bombing, a circuit was introduced which crossed the coast just south of Embo and about 2 miles north of Dornoch, remaining above 2000 feet until Cuthill had been passed on the Southerly leg of the pattern (normally at night the height has been above 4000 feet). This latter arrangement was specifically for Hunter aircraft and the circuit has been used consistently since 1960.

Investigation has shown that the recent complaints of operations at Tain have been caused by single Hunter aircraft using the last described circuit. Their sequence of training, lasting approximately 2 days, has in fact regularly occurred three times per year, and I am of the opinion that this last series, already significantly conspicuous against the current background of declining range activity, has evoked criticism mainly because of the somewhat uncivilised hours of operation caused by the limited hours of darkness in midsummer.

The cause of these complaints is unlikely to occur again, as this was in fact the last night bombing training for Hunter aircraft before the Squadron disbands later this month. I can reassure you that no deliberate contravention of the 1960 agreement occurred and that in fact, the procedures used have been employed periodically since 1960.

I and my/...

I and my staff are very much aware of the noise nuisance which can be caused to the local population, and every attempt is made to minimise any irritation wherever possible. The increase in size and weight of aircraft in recent years has made the task of operational training more difficult to reconcile with the interests of the civil population. To this end it is essential that any cause for genuine complaint is investigated promptly, and I am most grateful that your Council has progressed this matter in such a co-operative manner. They may rest assured that every attempt will be made to safeguard the interests of the local population.

Yours faithfully,

W. Henry

Ref:5B

20th June, 1972.

The Commanding Officer,  
Royal Naval Air Station,  
Lossiemouth,  
Morayshire.

Dear Sir,

I refer to my recent telephone conversations with you regarding the noise nuisance, etc., over Dornoch during Bombing Operations at Tain.

There have been a number of additional complaints regarding both day and night operations and I have been instructed to bring the matter to your attention again.

I am given to understand that the recent operations have not been in keeping with the arrangements agreed upon some years ago and for your information enclose copy of minute of meeting with a previous Commanding Officer and members of the Town Council held on 14th January, 1960. I also enclose a copy of letter dated 25th January, 1960 from the Town Clerk in office at that time to Sir David Robertson who was the local Member of Parliament.

Would you please give this matter your attention and let me have an assurance that the original arrangements will be adhered to.

Yours faithfully,

P.S. I have also been asked ~~Town Clerk~~ to your attention the fact that a number of caravanners at the Caravan Site have been greatly disturbed by the noise and have left the site for a quieter spot elsewhere. This is rather an alarming situation as Dornoch depends to a great extent economically on its tourist trade.