

## They kept their cool

Sir,—My husband and I have been visiting Glen Derby by Kirkmichael for more than a dozen years and this August was the warmest and driest we can recall.

From the moment we arrived we realised that it was too dry for comfort and when fire broke out on the moors above us we were not altogether surprised.

At first the fire was far away on the distant moor and a very spectacular sight, especially as darkness fell, when great flames could be seen leaping high into the sky.

By August 15, however, thick smoke engulfed the valley around us and firemen and volunteer helpers came up the glen with all their fire fighting equipment.

Shopping in Kirkmichael over that weekend when the garage pumps were manned by Mrs Jock Blair, wife of the garage owner, he being the local fireman now in charge of the volunteers, there was a "wee blether" about the fire and the smoke but everyone went about their business in the normal way. No alarmists amongst them! Just good Scottish common sense.

We constantly heard it said: "Och, well, the menfolk know what they are doing, we trust them—there's no need to worry."

Mrs Ian Duncan, whose husband is also a volunteer fireman, came racing up the glen in her blue Cortina at Monday lunchtime just to make sure that the owner of a log cabin who has recently had a hip operation was managing all right, what with the smoke and all.

Flames were plainly visible

from our log-cabin homes, but it would need an "ill wind," we felt, for the fire to catch the Kindrogan forest and thus endanger the glen and its timber houses with dry turf-roofs.

At one anxious moment, however, the wind did change suddenly but by then a deep trench had been dug and foam sprayed in before back-burning to prevent the flames leaping to the forest.

"Must have been quite bad then," said Mrs John Milne in the general store, "they only use foam as a last resort because it is so expensive!"

Later in the week we could still see the smoke over the hills and wafts of pungent peat burning came down the glen.

Well-timed, just before the Strathardle Games on Saturday, August 20, the drama was over and the last fire-engine left the field, the volunteer firemen were all back at work and it was only then that we were told: "Well, it just could have been very nasty for you people in the log-cabins—we thought about you a good deal."

We would just like to say thank you to all the folk in Kirkmichael and neighbouring areas who kept their cool—not easy if you are a fireman in the middle of a hot spell!

This was a memorable August for us in more ways than we had expected and we cannot wait to be back next year amongst the friendly people of the Strathardle region, even if we may perhaps see more of the good Scottish mist which was so absent this summer.

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