

Three people from the remote Scottish village of Skipness have come to London as guests of the American Air Force; Miss Cook, the postmistress; Mrs MacGougan; and her husband, the village carpenter and man-of-all-trades. And the reason why they have come is --- quite a story. Some months ago, a radio beacon was installed in this Argyllshire fishing village; and Mr MacGougan agreed --- without payment --- to switch it on when requested. Its purpose was to guide American planes from Iceland on their way to Prestwick Airport --- a short-cut run-in that was vital because aircraft at this point were always dangerously low in fuel. Then came the occasion when Prestwick phoned ~~the~~ Skipness Post Office that the radio beam was urgently needed to guide in twenty-nine Sabrejets fighting their way home against a storm. Miss Cook the postmistress, accepted the message and set out to warn MacGougan to switch on the beam. Without it, the approaching jets could not reach the airport; twenty-nine pilots and over three million pounds' worth of fighter planes, were in mortal ~~peril~~ danger. But the ~~carpenter~~ carpenter had gone to visit his mother, who was sick; so Mrs MacGougan volunteered ^{that} she would try to switch on the radio beam.

The problem was --- which was the switch?

But she remembered the instructions her husband had given her for just such an emergency. She remembered the sequence; --- the steady beat of the Skipness beam reached the ~~ears of the~~ pilots out over the storm-wracked Atlantic --- and the Sabrejets landed safely, with ten minutes flying-time in hand. So that was why the U.S. Air Force gave Miss Cook and the MacGougans, a fairy-godmother promise to grant them any wish in the world. And they chose --- a visit to London.