

reading some of her work at the meeting.

Also assisted by the forum committee was the Rev Angus Haddow, Methlick, with a grant

look into the potential for direct commissioning of artwork by the forum and to ensure availability of grant aid from the £5,000 award by the

to a total of 7,000 copies every two or three months.

Plans are going ahead for a Photography Workshop in October and the forum has agreed to subsidise the event.

# Those magnificent men

AS raft race day approaches, many people are making their final arrangements.

With up to 200 rafts already entered captains and crews are frantically completing their vessels in hopeful anticipation that they might be amongst the winners as, although there are over 20 categories to compete in, not everyone can take home a coveted prize.

But everyone should note that, unlike most other races, the Ythan Raft Race has no losers, for apart from the charities who obviously benefit, everyone involved in this spectacular event gains something from the experience, all be it just a great day out in the company of like-minded people.

This year the race organisers have pushed back all previous boundaries by securing the services of 'Monty Python's Flying Circus' who will attempt one of the most amazing stunts ever to be seen in the North East as they manoeuvre their vintage aircraft - 'The Spirit of St Olaf' - under Ellon road bridge on raft race day.

As reported in last week's issue, the attempt is to be recorded for BBC Scotland's 'Big Country' programme hosted by Jenni Faulkner and Dougie Vipond.

In the first programme in the ten week series, the daring duo were seen at a sky diving school in Perth and, exhilarating though it was, Dougie confirmed to the Ellon

Times this week that the raft race stunt will be the most hair-raising to be covered during the series, even before he was offered, and daringly accepted, the chance to be a passenger during this death-defying manoeuvre.

Dougie will receive full instruction from the expert 'Fly Boys' who have over many years entertained thousands with their exploits in their magnificent flying machine 'The Spirit of St Olaf'.

As mentioned last week the 'Flying Circus' have been carrying out essential maintenance on their aircraft at the Park Garage in Boddam, and following that report we were approached by the public

relations department of the MOD to arrange a meeting and photo opportunity for the pilots and ground crew of 'The Spirit of St Olaf' and the officers and airmen of RAF Buchan.

Arrangements have been made to clear all traffic from Harbour Street in Boddam tomorrow (Friday) and on Saturday to allow the airplane space to take off for test flights.

It is hoped that collections for raft race charities can be made by the 'Flying Circus' during their stay in the North East so, if you see 'The Spirit of St Olaf' between now and raft race day, then please dig deeply into your pockets and give generously for very worthwhile local causes.

## Ideas wanted

A North East arts group is planning to send out hundreds of questionnaires to gather the public's views on a possible new theatre complex.

Gordon Forum for the Arts hopes to secure National Lottery funding to build the complex and wants to hear suggestions as to how it might be used.

A forum steering group has been looking at the possibility of having a custom-built centre which could be used for arts, crafts, theatre, exhibitions and a community meeting place.

A feasibility study is to be made to assess likely demand, costs and viability.

Arts group chairman Douglas Prosser said he would like to see the centre built in Inverurie and has asked council chiefs to keep the proposal in mind during the transfer of council property to the new local authority in 1996.

Mr Prosser admitted the scheme is just an idea at present but he is keen to hear from local people and pointed out the arts complex could be up and running within four years.

The questionnaires are likely to be sent out next month.