



Clan Cameron New Zealand; founded 1935, incorporated 2000

Cameron

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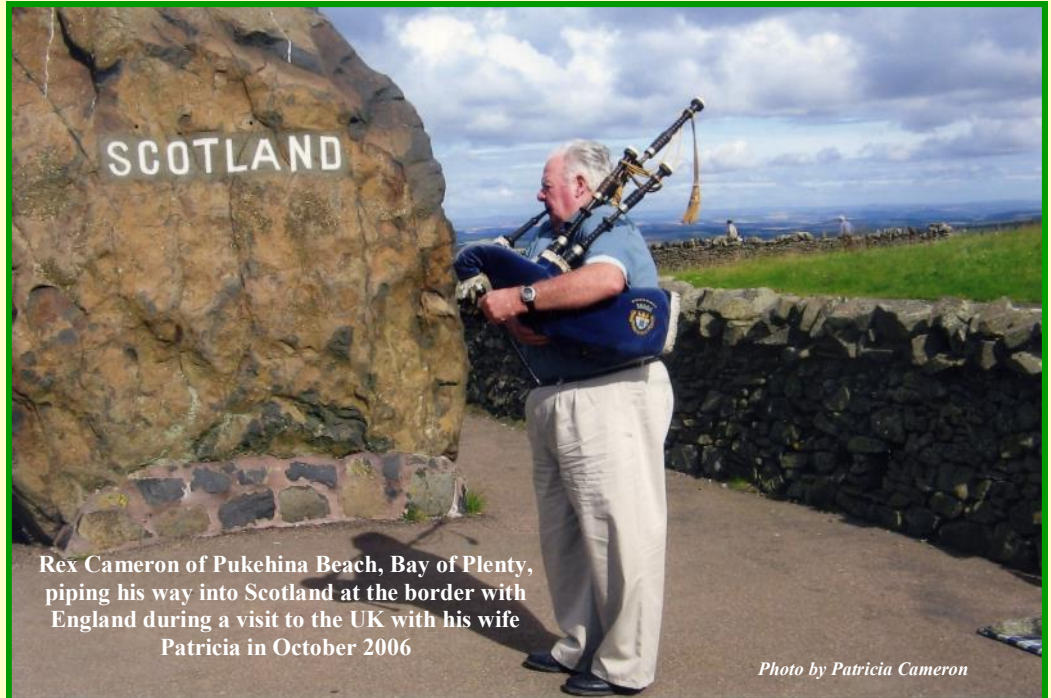


**A Merry
Christmas**

and

**A Happy
New Year**

To you all



Rex Cameron of Pukehina Beach, Bay of Plenty, piping his way into Scotland at the border with England during a visit to the UK with his wife Patricia in October 2006

Photo by Patricia Cameron



Will you be there in 2009?



Photo by Bill Cameron

**Autumn near
Achnacarry**

The waterfall at the end of the dark mile - Eas Chia-aig, referred to locally as the Caig falls. This waterfall was featured in the film Rob Roy, with Liam Neason and Jessica Lang; in the scene where Rob Roy MacGregor hides inside the rotting carcass of a Highland cow in the pool beneath the waterfall.



Welcome to the following Members who have recently joined us:



Bay of Plenty Branch

Ray Terrill (Tauranga)
Gloria Davies (Tauranga)

Manawatu (Hawkes Bay Chapter)

Robyn & Pat Vuleta (Napier)

Canterbury Branch

Rob Cameron (Christchurch)
Linda Hurndell (Christchurch)
Lynette Phillips (Christchurch)

Auckland Branch

Alistair (Al) Cameron (Auckland)



Top Left: Members of the Executive Council get down to business at Turangi. From left Don, Alex, Graeme and Fraser Cameron, Mike Topham and Rex Cameron.

Photo: Neil Cameron

Top Right: Members of the Manawatu Branch at a farewell for First Lighter Kimberley Walker just before she left for Lochaber. It was held at the home of Harry and Mary Lampen-Smith.

Photo: Ewen Grant



North American Journey

On my recent trip to Canada and the USA the name Cameron popped up at regular intervals! It began in Medicine Hat in Alberta when I discovered Cameron St. which we regularly passed on our daily outings. Walking down the street in Banff I was suddenly aware of the notice



for R Cameron Designs. On the way to the Monument Valley in Utah we passed through a small town called Cameron in North Arizona. Unfortunately the photo I took of the Trading Post is a bit blurred as it was taken from a moving bus.

In Las Vegas there is a Cameron Road and in Grand Junction, Western Colorado, a business called Cameron Boat and Marine. In all my previous world travels I have never seen the name so many times.

By Helen Shaw (Hawkes Bay)



Helen under a Cameron Road sign

The International Clan Gathering 2009

The Gathering 2009 will take the form of an international clan gathering which will be the largest highland games ever held in Scotland, and will be one of the key events of **Homecoming Scotland**. This will be at Holyrood Park, Edinburgh, on **25 and 26 July 2009**. More in the last newsletter.

It has just been announced that His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, will be Patron of The Gathering 2009.

Lord and Lady Sempill will be at the Waipu Highland Games on January 1 to promote the gathering to the Clan Associations.

For up to date details go to: www.thegathering2009.com

and www.homecomingscotland.com

Clan Cameron Gathering- Achnacarry 2009

The Clan Cameron gathering will follow the gathering above and will run from **30 July to 2 August 2009**. It is expected to follow the very successful format of previous gatherings and will include tours of the castle and estate, lectures on Cameron history and culture, historic walks, informal dinner and reception, the Gathering itself, a ceilidh and a church service.

The detailed programme is expected to be promulgated by the end of the year and, if so, will be published in the next newsletter.

If you are considering attending the above **please register your interest** with President Denis. This will help us with planning and negotiating various tour options. So far 21 clansfolk have indicated interest. It is proposed that we all leave as a group, attend both gatherings and tours of Cameron interest together and then, if we wish, break away and travel independently while still retaining group benefits.

Canterbury Branch

by Alex Cameron



The Cameron Tent Alex looking a little blue

We received an invitation to the Northwood Village Fair from the local residents association, to take part in what is to be an annual event.

We shared our tent with the Heritage Council, Clan Donald, Clan Gunn, Clan Grant and others.

All had static displays and of course the banners, much interest was shown in the displays. Clan Cameron decided to sell cold drinks and haggis sandwiches, "thanks for the tips Joy" these went down well, of course there always has to be a clown (the one with the blue face) Altogether a very exciting and interesting day, the City of Christchurch pipe band and highland dancers completed the Scottish section of the day.

Photos by Gavin / Pauline Cameron



Right: Some of the Canterbury Branch that attended the A.G.M on November 18th at the Equestrian Hotel Hornby

Back row: (L to R) Nick Cameron, Alex Cameron, Gavin Cameron, Cath Powell, David Powell, Lena Cameron, Pauline Cameron,
 Middle row : Ewen Cameron, Lynette Phillips
 Front : John Hurdell Linda Hurdell



Cameron Jigsaws

Christmas Special - 40% off

The limited edition Cameron Jig-saw is available this Christmas for only \$15 plus \$5 P&P.

There are two 500 piece puzzles in one box and show Ben Nevis and Achnacarry Castle. This box will make a great Christmas present.



Cameron or Thistle Tartan Cards

No text - ideal for Christmas Cards
 Two designs in Cameron tartan, showing either the Cameron Crest or the thistle.
 \$10 for pack of 10, \$6 for pack of 5
 Add postage of \$1 for up to two packs



All of the Jig-saw money and profits from the cards go to The First Light Exchange Scheme. Both may be ordered from Neil Cameron (editor). Address on page 7.

Auckland Highland Games

The Games this year were held on 17 November in perfect weather. A large and appreciative crowd watched the many activities of piping, dancing and tests of strength and showed great interest in the informative clan tents. Several Camerons helped with or visited the Cameron tent.

Shown in the photo on the back page are (from left) Duncan McQueen, Fiona Cameron, Miriam Cameron, Maida Cameron, Ruth Cameron and John Gavin.



Ace jig-saw seller Ruth with son-in-law Duncan outside the Cameron tent.

Ruth sold six jig-saws on the day

Next Issue: An article about the six **Mounts Cameron** in New Zealand by Mike Topham (Hawkes Bay)

The Scots in New Zealand

Exhibition at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 2007

The exhibition *The Scots in New Zealand* opened at Te Papa in August 2007, and features the Scottish community in New Zealand. Many New Zealanders can claim some degree of Scottish ancestry, and there is much evidence of pride in this fact throughout New Zealand.

The Scots in New Zealand is the fifth community exhibition to be staged in the Community Gallery of Te Papa (on level 4) and opened on 18 August 2007. The exhibition has a proposed duration of approximately 2.5 years, closing early in 2010. The Community Gallery explores the experiences of different ethnic groups in New Zealand and provides a forum in which these communities can tell their own stories.

The Scots in New Zealand was developed in partnership with the Scottish Community Advisory Group. Many other people and organisations around New Zealand have assisted with information and lending their treasured objects for display.

This exhibition is primarily focused on New Zealand rather than Scottish history. The Scots were one of the major immigrant groups in New Zealand. Their settlement over time has become widespread and pervasive, and is now thoroughly integrated into New Zealand life.

The overarching theme of the exhibition is the contributions Scots have made to New Zealand history, society and culture. There are three main themes to the exhibition: migrations and settlement (including case studies on the Scottish settlements of Waipu, Turakina and Otago); contributions made by the Scots (e.g. education, science, civic responsibility, business, engineering, architecture); and expressions of identity (e.g. clans, art, sport, music, dress).

Through this exhibition Te Papa hopes to show visitors that Scottish culture is a pervasive influence in contemporary New Zealand culture. The achievements of Scottish New Zealanders are celebrated.

A very good 'impression' of the Scots contribution to NZ'
- Harry and Mary Lampen-Smith

'Very tastefully done and a credit to those who organised it'
'I was fortunate enough to be able to visit this display on the way home from the Executive meeting in Turangi I was unsure of what to expect, possibly the Shortbread Tin and Haggis images that are so often associated with Scotland'

But no, what I found was a delightful presentation, one that has had a lot of thought and research put into.

I have seen many exhibitions and displays about Scotland and I must say that this would have to be close to the top of the list.

*I have heard comments that this display did not tell anything about Scotland, but if you read the name of the project it quite clearly states **The Scots in New Zealand**'*

I say to Roz, Bruce, Maisie, and all that put this together a big thank you, you have done well.'

-Alex Cameron



These photos of two exhibition displays refer to the Turakina settlement and were taken by Ewen Grant



Ram's head snuff mull, 1875.

On loan from Otago Settlers Museum



The New Zealand Police Pipe Band perform during the opening celebrations for The Scots in New Zealand exhibition at Te Papa, Saturday 17 August 2007



'Keyhole Knox Kirk' brooch, made by John Z Robinson, 2003.

On loan from Gillian Pope and courtesy of John Z Robinson



'Fern' bowl, made by Elizabeth McClure, 2001.

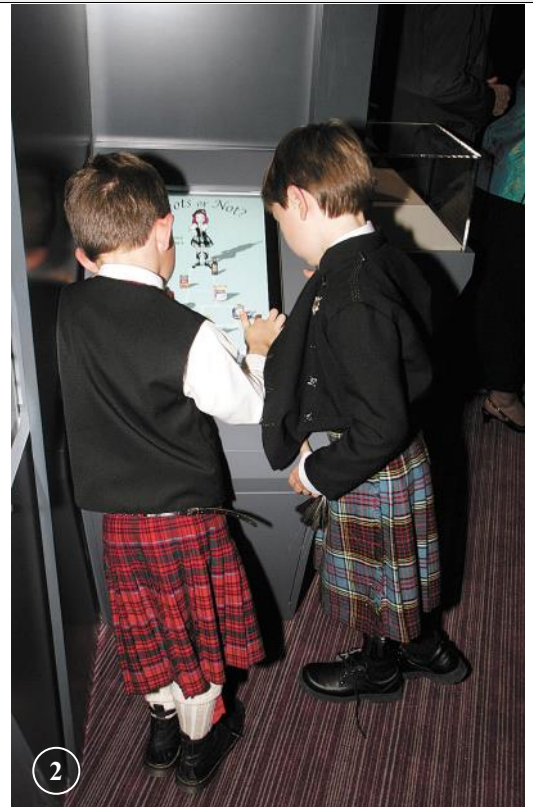
Courtesy of Elizabeth McClure

These four images kindly supplied to 'Cameron' by Te Papa

The Scots in New Zealand Opening



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2



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4



5

1. Bruce Cameron speaks at the opening -17 August
2. Angus Grant and Louis Collins intrigued with an interactive display.
3. Maisie and Dick Earle enjoy the speeches.
4. Dr Seddon Bennington, Chief Executive of Te Papa, and Geordie Fergusson, British High Commissioner, sample whisky aromas.
5. Bruce Cameron with, on his left, Dr Seddon Bennington and Susan Superville, Community Relations Manager of Te Papa.

See also photo on the back page

All photos by Tracey Grant

We spoke to Sonia McKenzie at the Auckland Highland Games. She and several well known members of Clan Cameron were part of the Scottish Community Advisory Group which helped develop the exhibition. Sonia (and Alex- page 4) said that some people had expressed disappointment that the exhibition was not more about Scotland but she had pointed out to them that it is about the Scots in **New Zealand**, not Scotland. As comments on page 4 show, it is well worth visiting and we recommend you make time to visit Te Papa when next in Wellington. We would be interested in your impressions.

Editor

A message from our President



Dear Clan Cameron Members

The Gathering 2009 [25th and 26th July, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh] will take the form of an International Clan Gathering and will be a golden opportunity for the New Zealanders to be present during the weekend before the International Clan Cameron Gathering, over the

weekend 30 July to 2 August 2009 at Achnacarry. How would you like to be part of a trip to Scotland to help celebrate the "Homecoming of the Clans" back to Scotland. The opportunity will be present as we are in the process of getting costs and other information about the tour from two travels agents. At this time we have twenty-one members who are definitely coming along for the experience of a lifetime. Are you coming with us?

Both Joy and I had a great time meeting the members of the Hawkes Bay Chapter and the Gisborne Branch during the weekend of 15th [Saturday] and 16th September. We were delighted to be present at Napier where 36 people had gathered on a fine sunny day at the Quayside Restaurant for luncheon overlooking the Napier Wharf. Our time with the members was a very relaxed affair and our thanks to Shane East for all the hard work she had done in the planning and it was great to meet the new members of a very fast growing chapter. Our welcome by the members of the Hawkes Bay Chapter was just wonderful and we look forward to seeing you all at some other social function in the future.

The next day [Sunday] we left Napier for the trip to Gisborne and followed Mike and Trish Topham on a leisurely trip to Gisborne arriving at the Tatapouri Fishing Club in time for lunch overlooking the Gisborne Harbour. This too was a leisurely and very relaxing affair and it was just great to meet old friends and at the same time to meet some new Cameron's. Although low in numbers the members made up with enthusiasm and candour. After a very nice lunch we sat down and had a frank discussion with members about the planned trip to Scotland in 2009 and the AGM to be held at Opotiki next year, which will be a combined operation between the Bay of Plenty and Gisborne Branches. Their enthusiasm was infectious and we hope that we can carry this on and manage to recruit some new members for them.

My sincere thanks to the Bay of Plenty members for making the effort of travelling to Opotiki for a social gathering at the Opotiki Lodge rooms on Sunday 2 September. This was a good time to take a look at some of the venues for next year's gathering. We were able to have a good round table discussion about the plans and venues for the coming event and I am sure we all went away well satisfied with everything. Fraser Cameron has been hard at work since last Christmas with his planning and we thank him for all the effort he has put in for a successful Clan gathering. All we now need is plenty of Clan members being present to make this a very successful occasion.

As this year is rapidly coming to an end and Christmas is nearly upon us, Joy and I would like to wish you the Cameron's a very happy Christmas, with lots of quality time with your families and enjoy your time together and may you

all have a wonderful New Year. Do make the most of

your family and friends over the festive year – they are so important in our lives. Please do take care everybody and **drive** safely.

"Leis gach deagh dhurachd and Slainte mhath"

[With every good wish and good health]

Denis Cameron

**'The Homecoming of the Clans'
- are you coming with us?**

Clan Cameron Forty-third Annual General Meeting and Clan Gathering

Friday 16th and Saturday 17th May, 2008 at Opotiki.

Venue: Opotiki Lodge Rooms in St John's Street

Friday night: 16th May 2008: Executive Council Meeting starting at 7.00pm.

Saturday Morning: 17th May 2008: The Gathering will open at 10.00am for Registrations and morning tea to be followed by the 43rd Annual General Meeting commencing at 10.45am. A light luncheon will be served after the AGM (at the Lodge Room).

Saturday Evening: 17th May 2008: Clan Cameron Dinner starting at 6.30pm.

Venue: The Waiotahi Hall on the Main Road towards Whakatane, about 5 kms north. The evening will begin at 6.30pm with pre-drinks (buying own) with the Piping in the Haggis at 7.00pm, followed by a Smorgasbord at 7.30pm with wine/juice supplied on the tables. There will be a variety of entertainment during the evening.

There are 3 motels and 3 camping grounds with ample room for camper vans. There are also a number of B&B's; plus a new Lodge recently opened on the edge of town.

A full breakdown of the programme and registration information will be in the February issue of the Clan Cameron Newsletter.

Opotiki is looking forward to the Clan Cameron Gathering and for those staying longer, brochures on things to do will be made available.

Great news: Saturday and Sunday breakfast are the only meals you have to worry about.

SO COME ONE, COME ALL, DO JOIN US IN OPOTIKI FOR A TRULY WONDERFUL WEEKEND - THIS IS WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT!

A TRADITIONAL CAMERON WEEKEND WILL GREET YOU ALL!

Inserted by the Secretary, Clan Cameron Bay of Plenty



Aonaibh ri Cheile

Cameron

is the newsletter of the Clan Cameron Association of New Zealand (Inc) and is published on or near the 1st day of every even month of the year

Deadlines for articles are on the 15th of the month before publication. Items of urgency or importance may be accepted up to 10 days later.

Articles about Camerons, Branch activities with photographs, and advice of Coming Events are especially welcome.

Deadline for the February issue:

15 January 2008

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Coming events

Saturday 8 December

Square Day in Palmerston North. As usual, Manawatu Clan Cameron will be holding a stall selling a sausage sizzle and haggis sandwiches, always popular. Enquiries to Joy Cameron.

Tuesday 1 January 2008

Waipu Highland Games Caledonian Park, Waipu. Gates open 8.30am. Clan March 9.30am. Official Opening by HE The High Commissioner of Canada 12.45.

The Cameron tent will be there. Join us for a great day of competitions, culture and fun. Lord and Lady Sempill will attend to promote to the Clan Societies **The Gathering 2009**, one of the signature events of **Homecoming Scotland 2009**

Saturday 26 January 2008

Turakina Highland Games Cameron Rd. Turakina New Zealand's oldest Highland Games. Commences 8.30am. Come and enjoy a cultural day in the country and visit the Cameron tent.

Saturday 9 February 2008

Paeroa Highland Games

9am to 9pm
Call at the Cameron tent.

Friday 7 / Saturday 8 March 2008

NZ Pipe Band Championships. Bruce Pulman Park, Papakura. Concert in the Park Friday evening. Cameron tent will be there.
Website: www.rnzpbanats2008.org.nz

16/ 17 May 2008

Clan Cameron AGM and Gathering. Opotiki.
See page 2

Useful Websites

Clan Cameron New Zealand website
<http://camclan.orcon.net.nz/>

Clan Cameron Online
<http://www.clan-cameron.org/>

Clan Cameron Scotland
<http://www.clanccameron.org.uk>

Clan Cameron Australia
<http://www.clan-cameron.org.au>

Scottish Clans Association Auckland District
<http://www.scottishclans.co.nz>

Clan Cameron DNA project
<http://www.clan-cameron.org/dna/>

A Great Site showing Images of Lochaber by J.A.Cameron (includes archive of old postcards)
[Http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/FortWilliam](http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/FortWilliam)

Clan Cameron NZ Web master:
Warren Cameron
camcraft@orcon.net.nz

Remembrance Day in the Highlands



“Moving tributes to the Highland war dead took place throughout the region yesterday.

In Inverness, the main Remembrance Day service took place at the Cavell Gardens war memorial, with its largest attendance for many years. It is thought high-profile losses suffered by the forces during current fighting in Iraq and Afganistan may have helped to heighten the profile of the occasion.

Royal British Legion Scotland members joined various regimental association cadres and other uniformed organisations to march from the Legion Headquarters to the war memorial, accompanied by the Legion and the **Queen’s Own Highlanders’ Association** pipe bands.”

“--A high turnout in good weather also marked yesterday’s ceremony in Fort William Two companies of ex-Commandos, two companies of Royal Marines and three cadet forces joined the parade, with over twenty wreaths laid.

The Commandos also had their dedicated service in Spean Bridge, which this year included the presentation of a statue by marshal of the ceremony, John Quarrie BEM, to Colonel Richard Spencer OBE, of Rosyth-based Royal Marines Fleet Protection Group.

The statue marks the completion of a new memorial garden built beside the war monument by current serving commandos.”

Left: Royal Marine Commando veteran James Chalmers lays a wreath at the Spean Bridge Memorial

From The Press and Journal 12 November 2007.

(This article is of interest because of the links between the Commandos and Achnacarry, which was their wartime training base - Ed)

First Lighter David Cameron

On November 6th we were able to catch up with David as he was leaving Auckland after a very short visit to New Zealand. Leaving home in November last year, David spent a week in each of China, Japan and Vietnam en route to Australia. After the best part of a year in Australia, mostly in Sydney and Melbourne but also visiting Queensland and Tasmania, David is on the way home. He worked as an insurance salesman in Sydney and Melbourne and was hosted in Sydney by Sue Catterall, vice president of Clan Cameron NSW.

Before coming to Auckland David had spent three days in Queenstown where he enjoyed a tandem sky dive. See picture on right. (David is the slightly worried looking one with the white helmet).

David is traveling via Fiji and USA and was due home on November 24th, a year and a day since he left. He was due to start work again at his old job in Inverness two days later. It was good to see him again.

by Editor.



Wonderful news from Lochiel:

*“I thought you would like to know that my eldest daughter, Catherine, has got engaged to be married to Henry Trotter who is a wonderful young man who we know well. Cecil and I are absolutely thrilled especially as we are old friends of his parents who live in the borders of Scotland. It’s early days so we don’t yet know where or when they will get married.
Very best wishes to you all”*



- and from President Denis Cameron:

“Please convey our sincere congratulations to Catherine and Henry Trotter on their recent engagement. We in the Clan Cameron of New Zealand are delighted to receive the news and our very best of good wishes go out to both of them for a wonderful life together.”

A Visit to Scotland

by Heather and Andrew Lowes

We boarded our plane on 10th August heading to Scotland. It was to be a surprise visit for my father's 80th birthday. My father lives in Kirkwall which is in the Orkney Islands. The Orkney Islands are made up of 70 islands. During the second world war, Orkney played a major role and in particular the sheltered waters of Scapa Flow, hosted the British Fleet. Of which there are many stories e.g. the sinking of the *Royal Oak* and the Italian prisoners of war who built the Churchill barriers which is a causeway, now a highway linking many of the islands together. Another feature of Orkney is the underground dwellings which were built by the Picts and discovered by accident and excavated.

We arrived in Orkney on a very stormy day. Our original ferry having been cancelled due to rough seas saw us driving from John O' Groats to Scrabster after having made some frantic phone calls to meet the other ferry. Luckily, we made it with minutes to spare. After a very bumpy ride we eventually berthed in Stromness. We arrived at the hotel where the birthday meal was being held with minutes to spare. Andrew and I had an apartment which overlooked the car park and we stood watching everyone arrive, including my aunt and her family from South Africa, who I had not seen since I was in my teens. Eventually we made our way down the stairs, Andrew playing his pipes, as we walked into the reception. It was a complete surprise to everyone as they did not know we were coming!

Back on the mainland once again from Orkney, we called in to meet more Camerons at the Castle of Mey. Donald Cameron and his wife Isabel, who had visited us while on holiday in New Zealand, live in the Gatehouse at the Castle of Mey. After lunch they gave us a tour of the Castle and grounds. The Castle is just as the Queen Mother had left it. Nothing has been touched.

Over the next few weeks we travelled between Orkney, Inverness and of course Fort William. Andrew's Mum had passed away a few weeks before we left and we took her ashes back to be interred at Innis Na Birlinn Cemetery which is near Onich and overlooking Loch Linnhe.

While in Fort William we were able to catch up with all our friends and Andrew's school chums. It was wonderful to renew old friendships after all these years. We also took the opportunity to visit Clan Cameron Museum. Here we met many people from all over the world. It is certainly a popular place even although the midges are quite fierce. Just as we were leaving a car drew up and it was Sir Donald, so we were able to have an impromptu chat. He was certainly pleased to see us and makes everyone feel welcome.

One of the highlights of our trip was the Cowal Games which is held every year in Dunoon. These games date back to 1894 and are the largest Games in Scotland. Highland Dancing, Field Events and Piping are the major events. The Games last for three days and are one of the "must see" events for those travelling to Scotland. There must have been near 200 bands there. Another attraction that we attended was the Braemar Gathering. Braemar is 1000 feet above sea level and because of this, pipers have to compensate in the tuning of their pipes. The field in which the games take place is

really very small, everything was happening on it, piping, dancing, and field events. Here we met another Cameron, Alan Cameron who is President of Clan Cameron Scotland.

At the piping events we met several New Zealand pipers who were competing in the solo competitions.

Staying with Andrew's cousin just outside Inverness was a wonderful opportunity to research my genealogy as my Cameron connections come from the Black Isle. I was most fortunate that I was able to visit a second cousin, who lives on her family's original croft. She was able to tell me where my ancestors were buried. Nothing would have it that I had Andrew clambering over old grave stones and taking photographs.

Before leaving New Zealand I had researched the 1841 census and found that my ancestors were farm labourers on farms just above Strathpeffer. These farms are still being farmed today. It was such an eerie feeling walking the same paths that my ancestors had. In fact the house that they lived in is still occupied today, although it has been renovated over the years. While speaking to the farmer he informed me that back in 1841 over 200 people would have worked on the farm. Amazing!

We had a wonderful time and our six week trip went passed all too quickly.

P.S. We would be very interested to hear from anyone who has Black Isle connections.



Heather standing outside the house her ancestors lived in while working at Woodlands Farm in 1841



The Castle of Mey

The Sweet Singer of Loch Eil

by Ian Abernethy

*Oh! for a sight of Ben Nevis!
Methinks I see him now.
As the morning sunlight crimson
The snow-wreath on his brow.
As he shakes away the shadows
His heart the sunshine thrills,
And he towers high and majestic
Amidst a thousand hills."*

Had it not been for a dramatic sea rescue off the German coast almost a century and a half ago, the lines above would never have been written.

Nor would a whole host of poems and prose works, in Gaelic and English, have issued from the able pen of one of the best loved poetesses of the Highlands - Mary (Cameron) MacKellar, of Fort William and Corriebeg.

With her husband, John, joint-owner and captain of a trading vessel named Glencoe, the newly married Mary had clung for twelve hours to the rigging of their battered boat after it had capsized near the mouth of the storm-swept River Weser, until a rescue ship came to their aid. Such determination for survival characterised much of the life and work of Mary MacKellar, the Sweet Singer of Loch Eil.

Largely self-taught, she rose to become Bardess to the Gaelic Society of Inverness, and was chosen to translate into Gaelic the second series of Queen Victoria's "Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands". Born at Fort William on October 1, 1834, Mary was the daughter of Allan Duncan Cameron, a native of nearby Druimarben.

Mary's mother, Janet McDiarmid, belonged to Locheilside. The Camerons carried on a bakery business in a tiny shop in Fort William High Street, but, at the early age of 41, Mary's father died. She was then but eleven years old, but Mary was obliged to help run the shop, despite her tender years.

Needless to say, Mary's work in the bakery did not allow her much scope for study, and she was only able to attend school for an hour or two on each alternate day until she was 15.

Part of her childhood was spent at the home of her maternal grandparents in Corriebeg, Locheilside.

Her grandfather, Duncan McDiarmid, was a fine old storyteller and this, combined with the singing of her grandmother at the spinning wheel, fostered Mary's poetic instincts.

Thus Corriebeg was instrumental in the awakening in the young Mary Cameron of a love of the Gaelic language and history, and of Celtic lore, which was to be nurtured to her dying day.

An apt and eager - if independent - scholar, Mary was completely in her element amid mountain, moor and loch. While still a young girl, Mary moved to Glencoe with her family members.

The awe-inspiring wild beauty of "The Glen of Weeping" and its legendary fame, heightened and developed Mary's flair for poetic expression. It was from Glencoe that the first of many pieces came tumbling forth from her pen, and

Mary's early contributions were published in the Inverness Courier and People's Journal.

Whilst living in Glencoe, Mary met and married villager and ship's captain, John MacKellar.

With him she visited Scottish and Island ports and, later, many European destinations, and the Baltic in particular.

People and places intrigued Mary MacKellar and, in turn, her cheerful disposition endeared her to a wide circle of friends both at home and abroad.

She was equally interested - and interesting - in conversation with fisherfolk along the Scottish coastline and, as she learned to speak passable German, with those she met in Europe.

Although these travels helped Mary broaden her outlook on life, the constant voyaging in all weathers began to have an adverse effect on the MacKellar marriage. John and Mary quarrelled bitterly - and often - and eventually their differences in nature and temperament caused them to part.

For a time Mary lived in a cottage in Fort William, devoting herself to her writing.

Then, in 1876, Mary went to Edinburgh and, soon afterwards, obtained a judicial separation from her husband.



From *Lochaber in War and Peace*

From then on Mary MacKellar fairly threw herself into the literary life which had been denied her while sailing the seas. If her initial writings from Glencoe had been sporadic and, therefore, somewhat lacking in continuity, her output from the Capital became prodigious.

Mary's main talent, of course, lay in the ease with which she could express herself in the Gaelic, and to this was added her devotion to all things Celtic.

Soon her poems, articles, stories and serials were appearing regularly in *The Highlander*, the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, *The Oban Times*, *People's Journal*, *Highland Monthly*, *Celtic Magazine*, *The Scotsman*, *The Scottish Highlander*, and *The Ladies' Own Journal*.

Many of Mary's works reflected some of the sadness and suffering of her earlier life, as evidenced in these lines :

*'Affection never was wasted,
I've read in a poet's hymn.
But they who bitterness tasted
Say that's but a poet's dream."*



Mary's Grave by Iain Ferguson

This wistful quality is also illustrated in "Homesickness", "Lame Willie", and "To a Sprig of Heather" of her poems, and in some of her best remembered prose pieces like "Waulking Day", "The Shieling : Its Traditions and Songs", "The Superstitions of the Highlander", "The Educational Power of Gaelic Poetry" and "The Bodach Glas".

Mary MacKellar's volume of Poems and Songs, Gaelic & English, was published in Edinburgh in 1880. These were culled from her columns in newspapers and magazines, and were largely related to her native Lochaber, and the Clan Cameron of her birth.

Contemporary critics considered that Mary's Gaelic verses had "great merit, showing force and grace of expression - some of her lyrics and shorter items rising to high flights of poetic fancy".

Other authorities reckoned that Mary's English pieces were as good, "and often superior in imagination and feeling to the Gaelic ones". There is no doubt that Mary MacKellar's literary contributions appealed to a wide cross-section of the Scottish community - and to the Highlander in particular.

Her extensive "Guide to Fort William, Glencoe and Lochaber" was published in Fort William in the mid-1880s.

At that time, too, she produced an intriguing work entitled "The Tourist's Hand-Book of Gaelic and English Phrases for the Highlands".

Mary rendered much assistance, too, to Sheriff Alexander Nicolson when he was compiling his book of Gaelic Proverbs.

When she was 40, Mary MacKellar was appointed Bardess to the Gaelic Society of Inverness.

Hereabouts, Professor Blackie was carrying the Fiery Cross for the Gaelic language and, in Mrs MacKellar, he found a true ally.

Due mainly to their joint efforts, something of a Renaissance took place in the field of Gaelic literature, and this culminated in the setting up of a Chair of Celtic Studies at Edinburgh University. The literary adviser to Queen Victoria commissioned Mary to translate into Gaelic the second series of the Queen's "Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands". When it was completed, in 1886, Mary received a substantial fee for her labours.

The translation is regarded as "a masterpiece of forcible and idiomatic Gaelic".

Mary MacKellar was a devoted member of the Free Church

of Scotland. However, in the words of William T Kilgour, author of *Lochaber In War and Peace*, and *Twenty Years on Ben Nevis*, "she was equally happy in the company of clerics like Dr Maclachlan of St Columba's, Dr Clerk of Kilmallie, Father Coll of Fort William and Dr Stewart of Nether Lochaber". The latter described her as "a woman of high spirit, warm heart, and fine intellect".

Following an attack of chronic bronchitis in the winter of 1889, which was aggravated by an existing heart condition, Mary MacKellar died at 10, Leven Street, in Edinburgh on September 7, 1890, three weeks short of her 56th birthday

For a number of years prior to her death Mary MacKellar strove towards the founding of a Clan Cameron Association, of which she became bardess. The large number of Cameron Men who accompanied her cortege on her last journey to Kilmallie Churchyard - midway between Fort William and Corriebeg - testified to the success of that venture.

At Mary MacKellar's funeral it was left to Dr Alexander Stewart - "Nether Lochaber" - to pay his own eloquent eulogy, which he ended with the words :

"A great Heart has been lost to the Highlands, A great Spirit has gone to God".

A fine Celtic cross, with a harp engraved on the base, marks the last resting place, amidst Camerons of Lochiel and of Fassfern, of Mary MacKellar,

The Sweet Singer of Loch Eil.



The author of this article, Ian Abernethy, is the former editor of the *Lochaber News*. This article was published in the local magazine *Lochaber Life*.

Ian has kindly allowed this to be reprinted in our newsletter



Aonaibh ri Cheile

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In This Issue... *'The Scots Exhibition at Te Papa* and *'The Sweet Singer of Loch Eil'*



Photo: Gavin Cameron

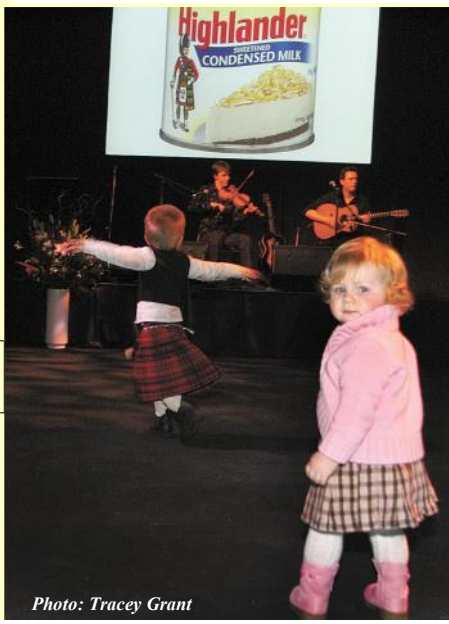


Photo: Tracey Grant



Photo: Denis Cameron



Cameron people

Clockwise from top left:
Alex explaining Cameron history and septs - page 3
Roz Grant's grandchildren Isaac and Abbey Grant dance at the opening of the Scots Exhibition - page 5
Camerons outside their tent at the Auckland Games- p.3
Janet Crafts presenting raffle prize to Betty Kearney at the BOP Xmas luncheon in the Tauranga RSA on 17 Nov
The Executive Council meet at Turangi
First Lighter David at Auckland Airport - page 8