



# Cameron



*The Magazine of Clan Cameron New Zealand Inc.*



Vol 57 No 1  
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2023

*The Massed Bands lead the Clan March at Waipu (Finlay in front rank)*



*Christmas Parade (Finlay and Rob Cameron in front rank)*



*Street March to open the Games at Waipu*



## “Cameron”

is the magazine of the  
Clan Cameron Association of New Zealand Inc.

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## A Message from our Commissioner...

Naumai haere mai, Failte. Welcome

All the very best for 2023. I hope you were able to enjoy the Christmas and New Year period and spend some relaxing time with family and friends. We have stayed close to home this year. A special memory for me this year was to climb Rangitoto on the 27th December with Finlay Cameron, Rob Cameron, Alan & Morea Cameron and my brother Neil. The day was hot and the harbour was living up to its name Waitemata (sparkling waters). We were treated in a wee glen near the lava caves to a short piping recital by Finlay, check it out on our Clan Cameron facebook page. Passers-by were intrigued to find the pipes being played in the bush, as were the native birds!

The summer period has been a little disrupted by the rain, however it's been great to be at a couple of events. In early December Finlay and I travelled to Square Day in Palmerston an annual piping competition. John Cameron had set up the Clan Cameron tent and we had lots of visitors and members. The haggis tasting was popular. Everyone pleased to have the opportunity to be out and about. The rain held off for most of the day.

On January 1st we attended the 150th Waipu Highland Games. The Clan Cameron tent had a wonderful outing, thanks to Neil Cameron, Bryan Haggitt and Duncan McQueen. Many visitors dropped by enquiring about their own Scots heritage. Rob Cameron and Finlay played in the massed band and Finlay competed as well. It was extra special to welcome Finlay's parents Ken and Rhona Cameron on holiday from Fort William. Alan and Morea Cameron, Hillary and Cass Hakaraia also supporting the tent. Great to have so many of us sporting the Erracht tartan on the day. Luckily the rain held off on the day, despite a light sprinkle early on the Brynderwyns.

At both of these events we were able to hand out free copies of the Scottish Banner newspaper thanks to their generosity. We have a few left to give to attendees at Turakina and Paeroa games in the coming weeks. Thanks to the Banners generosity and support of Clan Cameron.

Just before New Year I was able to attend the Northcote invitational piping competition at the historic Northcote Tavern to support Finlay in his piping competition. Finlay was awarded third place in the medley. Finlay has been enjoying getting about the country meeting our members and enjoying learning about New Zealand. Thank you to all members who have been generously supporting our First Lighter.

I am looking forward to the year as your President. It's a great time to reinvigorate our clan activities after the hiatus of the pandemic. People are eager to get back to their usual lives. Looking forward to seeing you in the coming year.

Aonaibh ri Chéile

Dale Cameron Bailey



### Clan Cameron Gathering. Achnacarry, Scotland.

August 2nd/4th 2024

Accommodation is often difficult in Fort William at that time of the year so early booking is essential.

It would be nice to have a strong representation from New Zealand.



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[www.clancameronnz.co.nz](http://www.clancameronnz.co.nz)

## Welcome to the following Members who have recently joined us:

Auckland Branch

Manawatu Branch  
Canterbury Branch

Jo-Anne Joiner  
Paul Craig Martin  
Debbie Jones  
Virginia and Steve Ashby  
Jacob Stevens

Mangawhai Heads  
Warkworth  
Point Wells  
Ashurst  
Christchurch

*Ceud Mìle Fàilte*  
*One Hundred*  
*Thousand Welcomes*

## Letters from Lochaber

*By Bill Cameron*

It's twenty years since David Cameron (not the former Prime Minister) and myself visited New Zealand as first lighters back in 2003. Over these past two decades much has changed in the world, particularly in the last couple of years with the covid pandemic.

Throughout this time, the bonds between New Zealand and Scotland have been strengthened with the continuation of the first light scheme. Alongside this, the advances in technology now allow us to instantly communicate aspects of our shared and different cultures at the touch of a button.

On my return to Scotland in 2004, I went back to university and trained as a secondary school teacher. Serendipity may have been at work as I returned to live and work in Lochaber, teaching in my former school, Lochaber High School. Something I had not planned on, however, it's been a rewarding and varied sixteen years working in secondary education.

Following on from my involvement in the first light scheme, I have taken an active role in the Clan Cameron Association Scotland over the past twenty years. This has involved a variety of activities; such as assisting in the planning of international gatherings at Achnacarry, helping people with genealogy enquiries and maintaining the Clan Cameron Association Scotland Facebook page.

Throughout the past twenty years one constant has been my involvement with the Clan Cameron New Zealand

newsletter. I was asked to write something for the newsletter on my return to Scotland back in 2004 and have continued to do this throughout the years.

Since 2003 I have now gathered two full box files filled with back issues of the Clan Cameron New Zealand newsletters, from the simple black and white copies dating back to 2003, to the most recent colourful December 2022 edition with Finlay Cameron from Lochaber piping on the front cover. The newsletter, unlike social media, allows us to have a hard copy record of stories, events and history. Something we can go back to as a reference document.

As editor of the New Zealand newsletter, Neil has been a great ambassador for all things clan Cameron. Over the years he has kindly included a good number of my photographs and articles in the newsletter and for this I am very grateful. For twenty years he has also kindly posted over hard copies of the newsletter to me, which I in turn post on to Astie, the Clan Cameron museum, as well as to Robert Nairn and David's mum, Florence.

The New Zealand newsletter has successfully documented a great deal of clan activities over the years and

shows a continued sense of kinship and interest in the our shared Scottish and New Zealand cultures.

I would like to pay tribute to Neil for his long standing commitment as editor of the newsletter and for his continuous hard work in developing and updating the format to the interesting publication it is today.

We have come along way from sharing the handwritten parchment letters of family news from Lochaber to New Zealand and vice versa back in the 1840's. Thankfully there's still a lot more that unites us as a clan and is worth recording in the newsletter.



*From "Cameron" twenty years ago. First Lighters at a fund raising ceilidh in Scotland. From left: Bill, David, Shona and Astie. Bill and David would shortly leave for New Zealand.*

## Ex President Denis makes TV

1 - 7 Sharp News *by Denis Cameron*

I was surprised to receive a telephone call from Julian Lee to see if I was available for a meeting at Ashburton Borough School (my old Primary School) the following week.

On the weekend of 25 and 26 November 2022 the school held its 150th celebrations and during the research in to the history of the school, they found a number of former pupils had excelled in a variety of areas – cultural, academic, and sports to name a few.

"What is in the water here" they said when it was discovered that seven little boys had made their mark in rugby and represented New Zealand as All Blacks.

Alan Robilliard 1924-26,28, Jack Kelly 1949, 53-54, Ross Smith 1955, Bruce McPhail 1959, **Denis Cameron 1960**, Jock

Ross 1981, and Adam Thomson 2008-12:

Ashburton Borough School is a small provincial school and feel they have created some sort of national record. New Zealand Rugby records the Secondary School/College which All Blacks have attended but no official record is kept of the Primary Schools they attended. As far as I am aware, there has not been any response from other Primary schools. There is a billboard of the seven photos proudly displayed behind the school's reception desk.

I had an interesting weekend catching up with several former class mates and we all lined up for photos. There was also a group of us who travelled on the old canvas topped school bus with many tales to tell. It was a 10 mile trip – freezing cold in the winter and hot and dusty in the summer. A very long day when you are only 5 or 6 years old.

It was an interesting and enjoyable experience and I appreciate the follow-up I have received from family and friends around the country.

# From the Branches....

*Auckland* by Rob Cameron

Firstly, happy new year to all reading this report, I feel that we have been able to finish 2022 on a really good note, hopefully we can keep up the momentum this year.

This report will mainly be about Finlay and his Auckland stay. I must say we have given him plenty to do and he had no trouble fitting it all in.

Finlay arrived in Auckland on 19th November a couple of weeks earlier than originally planned, however we were able to fill those couple of weeks with activities for him. During December I tried to introduce him to as many Auckland pipe band members as I could ranging from learners to grade 1 players. If the Auckland Highland Games had gone ahead, he would have been made a part of that.

Some of the pre-planned events included a recital at the Parnell Cricket Club, an event that went very well in front of cricketer's, piper's, Cameron's, and other Scottish enthusiasts and musicians. A BBQ proceeded the recital which allowed others to chat and learn more about Finlay and First Light. Overall it was a good evening and quite a few donations came in, most going directly to Finlay.

I had participated in many of the Auckland suburb Santa parades, mostly in the rain. Finlay was able to join me in 3, the Auckland Farmers Parade (raining), the Ellerslie Santa Parade, and the Papakura Santa Parade. I went on to do Mangere Bridge and Howick (raining) helping out Pipes and Drums of Manukau and Onehunga and Papatoetoe (raining) with City of Sails Pipe Band.

During December Finlay Flew to Palmerston North with Dale and attended the Jenny Mair Square Day, only some of it was raining. Finlay also stayed with the Chia family at their house stay. There he was able to fix his trad music itch and learn where he could attend some sessions while in New Zealand. Some of our Auckland clan members will know the Chias through our annual dinners performing with Originz on several occasions.

During Finlay's stay in Auckland, his parents decided to come over for a holiday and travel the country. It was great meeting Rhona and Ken while they were in Auckland. It was during a busy time where Finlay was concerned, and I hope they were able to spend more time with Finlay in Christchurch. Finlay also got a paid performance to play at a birthday celebration for a Cameron family. Janet Horn (nee Cameron) turned 90, and Finlay got to pipe the family in and play some music on their lifestyle block in Karaka.

The pointy end of Finlay's stay was between December 30th till January 7th, starting with the Northcote invitational competition. Although not initially on the list, he was called up on the day due to one of the competitors getting Covid. With an unplanned but vital practice in the morning, Finlay pulled off a 3rd place in the open medley, behind Stuart Easton and Campbell Wilson. The afternoon was attended by several clan members in support for Finlay.

The Waipu Highland Games including the Helen McGregor Memorial Competition started on New Year's Eve. Slightly altering his medley to suit the occasion, Finlay got second place, beating out Campbell Wilson and Callum Carn. A quick new year celebration and an early morning rise for a full day of competition on January 1st for the Waipu Highland Games.

Many clan members attended the 150th Highland Games. A huge thanks to Neil, Duncan, Dale, Morea, and Allan for helping out with the tent.

After a full day competing, It was about 6pm when the prize giving finished, then it was off to Whangarei Heads to start the Gaidhealtachd (pronounced Gael-tac) Summer School, a week of informal tutoring around the Celtic arts. During the 7 days, Finlay offered lessons for bag pipes, flute, whistle and how to learn music by ear.



On Finlay's return to Auckland, Finlay had another paid performance, this time for a wedding in Ardmore before Flying to Christchurch the next morning ending his Auckland stay. A huge thanks has to go to Bryan and Jenny for hosting Finlay most of the time he was in Auckland, and to Dale for helping out on some of the activities while Finlay was here.

I will be traveling to the Turakina Highland Games, something that I have been meaning to do for several years, but as it clashes with Auckland anniversary weekend, I usually have a Clan Celtica performance in Whangarei, however not this year. It seems like a few of us will be there including Neil and Bryan Haggitt.

The Auckland branch tent will be at the Paeroa Highland Games on February 11th. I have no band commitments that day but will be there with Neil and Duncan. We also hope to see Finlay travel up from the Manawatu to attend this.

The committee will be meeting in February to start organising our annual dinner for this year and upcoming branch AGM. We also intend to hold a farewell lunch for Finlay on Sunday April 2nd at the St Aidan's Church Social Lounge.

*Manawatu* by Anne Walker

Happy New Year to all. We hope that 2023 will be full of good fortune for you all.

Clan Cameron Manawatu had a good day out at the annual Jenny Mair Square Day on 10th December. Some local members were unavailable this year, but we were very happy to have Dale Bailey and Finlay Cameron there to help. The tent provided haggis tasting, and whisky marmalade sales, which provided a good point of conversation.

Clan member Jessie Annabel reported "Despite being overcast and the occasional rain, Square Day morning proved very pleasant. Thanks to Dale and Finlay, John Cameron got our tent put up, and the haggis from Greytown Butchery was heating in the pot. While foot traffic wasn't as plentiful as on a good day, many old friends came past to say hello and taste the haggis. We sold all the whisky marmalade. It was wonderful to find Finlay so personable and helpful and it was a distinct advantage to have Dale there".

Clan Cameron Manawatu are looking forward to hosting Finlay Cameron, our First Light Exchangee visiting from Scotland. Finlay will be in the Manawatu-Wanganui for 6 weeks from Tuesday 24th January, and will be hosted by various families over that time, where he will experience a little of NZ hospitality, and have an opportunity to pipe and share his love of traditional music with us all.

Clan Cameron Manawatu's first formal event this year, will be our usual presence at the Turakina Highland Games on Saturday 28th January. The Clan will have a hospitality tent where we can all catch up with Clan members, enjoy a little hospitality, the piping and highland games competitions and haggis tasting, and generally enjoy a great day out.

On Sunday 19th February, a Branch gathering for Finlay will be hosted at 2pm at 28 Palm Ave, Hokowhitu, Palmerston North. This is an opportunity to hear from Finlay, as he will share a little of his personal background and will pipe for us. Afternoon tea and a relaxed early evening barbeque will follow. All Camerons are welcome. For catering numbers please email [clancameronmanawatu@gmail.com](mailto:clancameronmanawatu@gmail.com) by 12th February.

*Hawke's Bay* by Hamish Cameron

For so long I have been extolling the completely predictable weather we have come to expect here in Hawkes Bay. Summer means hot and dry conditions for weeks on end and everything happening in a pre-ordained fashion, allowing harvest to finish when planned and at expected quantities.

Well, the "weather gods" have surely been up to some disruptive mischief over the holiday period, for it has done nothing but shower, clear, shower again these past few weeks. The only people enjoying this are the





horticultural chemical companies supplying yet more sprays to cover for those that just got washed off.

Definitely not socialising conditions as can be attested to by the number of spiders, etc, residing in the neglected barbecue.

On a more reflective note – there has been way more disruption to people lives up North, and while we are inconvenienced, we have been spared the devastation suffered by other areas.

On the theme of “counting one’s blessings,” I note with a certain amount of wonder at the milestone this edition of “Cameron” achieves.

This is the 100th newsletter edited by Neil Cameron, spanning more than one-and-half decades. Neil has turned this into more than just a “Newsletter” with his constant searching for relevant articles of interest on all things Scottish. I believe it is the quality and relevance of this publication that has played no small part in maintaining Clan Cameron membership at such a constantly healthy level. I know personally, that the newsletter is what – for many – retains their continued membership and for that I personally thank him. --- Congratulations, Neil !

### *Bay of Plenty* by Tanya Cameron

Clan Cameron Bay of Plenty has had little going on at the moment.

I have sent an email out asking for opportunities to host Finlay Cameron from Scotland and thoughts for his week with us.

We are heading toward the Paeroa Highland Games & Tattoo 30th Anniversary Event very quickly and I hope some of our members will be available again this year to help man the tent. Unfortunately the games were cancelled last year, so I am sure the weather will hold and it will be a great weekend for all.

Stay Safe and look out for your Neighbours, Friends and Family



### *Canterbury* by Rae Magson

Happy 2023 to all the Camerons and associates. Over the holiday period there have been no Clan Cameron activities however we hope to do better than this in the future. We had Denis Cameron receiving lots of publicity for being one of the seven All Blacks that had attended the Borough School in Ashburton. This was celebrated at their 150th anniversary held last year. Otherwise all has been quiet. Let us wish for a happy and healthy year to come.



### *Iar* by Neville Wallace

Yesterday Shona got a phone call from Janet Horn of New Plymouth telling us that she had just had her 90th birthday and Finlay Cameron had played the pipes at her 90th birthday. She paid her sub the other day so she could continue to receive the Clan newsletter.

Janet is a long time member from New Plymouth who has always supported the club in various ways but now finds that ill health is limiting her participation in Clan activities.

Happy 90th birthday Janet Horn and best wishes from Clan Iar we love you!  
See Photograph on page 6.



### *First Light News* by Bryan Haggitt—First Light Convenor

After a fortnight in Canterbury, Finlay arrived in Auckland mid November and was straight into a hectic schedule. He willingly piped at a number of functions – Remuera Heritage, Remuera Rotary, Newmarket and Parnell Probus Clubs, William Sanders Retirement Village and, most particularly, gave a recital for Clan Cameron Auckland members at the Parnell Cricket Club. He has been hugely well received



and so many folk have gone up to Finlay to relate details of their Scottish heritage.

Then there were the Santa Parades – Finlay piped in the main Farmers’ march down Queen Street in the pouring rain, then those at Ellerslie and at Papakura.

And the sightseeing – Finlay has climbed to the summits of Mounts Wellington and Eden and to the top of Rangitoto. With an old school mate of mine, I took him down to the King Country where he experienced the 5.7 earthquake, saw glow worms at Kakahi, geothermal hot spots at Tokaanu, went to (but didn’t see – cloud thicker than Scotch mist) Mt Ruapehu, but sun was out for Lake Taupo and the Huka Falls. In addition, we visited MOTAT and the gannets at Muriwai.

Finlay spent a week at Huia with the Chia family including a night in one of the Whatipu caves and, of course, there was Christmas. On the Eve he attended the midnight service at St Aidan’s. A swim next morning was compulsory followed by a picnic lunch with Pres. Rob and his parents on the cricket club verandah. Then family dinner for 16 at the Haggitts, the Day ending with coffee, malt sampling and an impromptu tin whistle recital.

Finlay’s mum and dad flew in on 29 December – wonderful to meet Rhona and Ken – just in time for them to see him piping at the Northcote Tavern and at the competitions at Waipu.

Auckland President Rob’s report gives more details of those events and also of the Gaidhealtachd camp at Whangarei Heads. Only report back on the latter is that Finlay “survived the storm and that the tent held”! Finlay is currently tutoring at the Summer Piping School at St Andrews College and, judging by the clip on TV1 News this evening, the School is wonderfully well attended and that the enthusiasm is immense. Finlay is about to head to Nelson to meet with another piper and then to the care of Roz and Ewen Grant and will compete at the Turakina Highland Games on 28 January.

My thanks to all who have greeted Finlay so positively – particularly NZ Commissioner Dale and Auckland President Rob. Their planning, booking of flights and organisation has been brilliant.

Finlay is now booked to leave on 11 April – he heads to Basel, via Zurich, where he has been invited to tutor, as he did last year, at their Summer Piping School.

### *PS*

Finlay had intended sending a Report on his piping at Northcote, Waipu and the Gaidhealtachd camp at Whangarei Heads but has had to change his plans. The piper he was meeting up with in Nelson has been called away to a funeral and, instead, Finlay is camping at Marahau in the Abel Tasman National Park. A very experienced “hill walker”, he will be in his element tramping in the Abel Tasman - superb bush walks and golden sand beaches. Report writing can wait - let him enjoy the outstanding scenery of the Abel Tasman!! I, personally, couldn’t imagine anywhere better in the World for Finlay to go tramping - would be tragic to cut him short, he will tell us all about it in due course!



By Roger Tobin (Canterbury member)

The Glencoe article in the latest magazine reminded me of this memorial cairn in rural Southland. It is by the road joining Winston and Matura. Many of the settlers were McDonald’s.





*Fort William at Christmas photos by Bill Cameron*



*Finlay with parents Rhona and Ken*



*Morea, Allan, Finlay, Dale and Dale's brother Neil on top of Rangitoto*



*Allan and Morea Cameron with Hillary Hakaraia at Waipu*



*Finlay entertains at the William Sanders Retirement Village*



*The above photo shows the Cameron relatives of Janet Horn (nee Cameron). Right to Left is Nova Horn, Axel Horn, Felix Horn, Finlay Cameron, Murray Horn, Ajax Horn, Janet Horn, Brian Cameron (Janet's brother), Max Horn, Grant Cameron, and Matthew Cameron. Janet is a member of the Iar Branch and Finlay played for her 90th Birthday, celebrated in Auckland.*





**Above: Clan Cameron Manawatu branch members Jessie and John Annabell, Vice President John Cameron, Bruce Cameron of Rata and Patrick Coogan Clan Cameron, Manawatu member and Manawatu Scottish Society Number 2 band member.**

**Below: Virginia and Steve Ashby new members of our Clan Cameron Manawatu branch, Red Hackle Juvenile Pipe Band from Tawa, Wellington, and the Cameron tent.**



*Photo: Ewen Cameron*



**Wellington-Wairarapa Branch  
Gathering - Opaki - 21 January  
2023**

*Back row: Hamish Cameron, Rob Cameron, Cath Cameron, Kerryn Cameron, Graeme Cameron, John Thompson, Eoin Cameron,*

*Middle row: Hylton Tuckett, Oliver Cameron, Skye Cameron, Finlay Cameron, Jan Thompson.*

*Front row: Hazel Cameron, Robyn Tuckett, Lorraine Cameron, Warren Cameron, Heather Cameron, Hannah Cameron.*

*The Branch are looking forward to hosting the Clan Cameron National Gathering and AGM in Masterton on 20th May 2023 and hope to see you there.*

*Details on Page 11*



# The Sweet Singer of Loch Eil

By Ian Abernethy

**“Oh! For a sight of Ben Nevis!  
Methinks I see him now.  
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 exactly one hundred years ago these lines would never have been written. Nor would a whole host of poems and prose works in Gaelic and English have been published from the pen of one of the best loved poetesses of the Highlands – Mary MacKellar.

With her husband John, captain and joint-owner of a trading vessel named Glencoe, she clung for nearly twelve hours to the rigging of their battered boat after it 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 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 the Gaelic the second series of Queen Victoria’s “Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands”.

Born at Fort William in 1834, she was the daughter of Duncan Cameron, a native of nearby Drimarben. Mary mother, Janet McDiarmid, belonged to Loch Shiel side. The Camerons carried on a bakery business in a tiny shop in Fort William but, at the early age of 41, Duncan Cameron died and Mary, then about 11 years old, was obliged to help run the shop despite her tender years. Her work in the bakery, needless to say, did not allow her much scope for studies and she could only manage to attend school for an hour or two on each alternate day until she was 15.

## Corriebeg Seannachie

Part of her childhood was spent at the home of her maternal grandparents at the hamlet of Corriebeg on the north shore of Loch Eil. Her grandfather, Duncan McDiarmid was a fine old seannachie (teller of tales) and, in the winter evenings, he would hold Mary spellbound with his stirring stories of the Rebellion which had been handed down to him by his own grandfather who had been “out” in the ’45 and with whom Duncan had been brought up. Corriebeg saw the awakening in the young Mary Cameron of a love of the Gaelic language and history and of Celtic lore which was to be fostered and nurtured until her dying day.

An apt and eager scholar she was completely in her element amid the mountains and lochs of Corriebeg and Kinlochiel, a section of the Highlands steeped in memories of the Prince and his followers, many of whom were Cameron and McDiarmid ancestors.

It was at Kinlochiel that Prince Charles and his men rested on their first night after leaving Glenfinnan and here that the Prince learned of the price of £30,000 which had been set on his head by the Government. His immediate rejoinder was

to offer a reward of a similar sum to anyone who could “seize and secure the Person of the Elector of Hanover”. One of Mary’s favourite legends, which was surely recounted by her grandfather, must have been the one which claimed that one of her forebearers had slain the last wolf in Scotland. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Corriebeg was densely wooded and one day a woman by the name of McDiarmid was attacked by a wolf which surprised her from the cover of some trees. It is asserted that this lady, having been endowed with quick thinking powers, immediately wrapped her shawl round her right arm to try to fend the beast off. As she struggled with the wolf she succeeded in grasping its tongue with her free hand managed to hold on “until the animal expired”. There are of course, traditions of “the last wolf” having been despatched in other parts of Scotland but this episode ranks as Lochaber’s claim.



When still a young girl Mary Cameron moved to Glencoe. The wild, scenic beauty of “The Glen of Weeping” and its fame in story and legend heightened and developed her flair for poetic expression and it was from Glencoe that the first of many pieces of prose and verse came tumbling from her pen. Her early contributions were frequently published in the “Inverness Courier” and the “Peoples Journal”.

Whilst living at Glencoe Mary met and married John MacKellar. With him she visited ports all over Europe via the Scottish mainland and the Hebrides. People and places intrigued Mary MacKellar and, in turn, her cheerful disposition endeared her to a wide circle of friends and acquaintances both at home and abroad. She was equally interesting – and interested – in conversation with folk along the Scottish coastline and, as she quickly learned to speak passive German,

with those whom she met in Europe.

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

For a time Mary lived in a cottage at Fort William and devoted herself to her writing. Then about the year 1876 she went to Edinburgh and soon afterwards obtained a judicial separation from her husband.

From that time onwards Mary MacKellar fairly threw herself into the literary life which had been denied to her whilst sailing the seas. If her initial writings from Glencoe were sporadic and therefore, somewhat lacking in continuity, her output now became prodigious. Her 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 Inverness Gaelic Society’s “Transactions”, “The Oban Times”, “People’s Journal”, “Highland Monthly”, “Celtic Magazine”, “The Scotsman”, “The Scottish Highlander” and “The Ladies Own Journal”.

Many of her works reflected her life of sadness and suffering as evidenced in these lines from “wasted Affection”.

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

This same wistful quality is 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” and “The Shieling; its Traditions and Songs”, “The Superstitions of the Highlander”, “The Educational Power of Gaelic Poetry” and “The Bodach Glas” are a few more of her prose efforts.

Mary MacKellar’s volume of “Poems and Songs, Gaelic and 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 of her birth.

Celtic authorities of the period stated that her Gaelic verses had “great merit, showing force and grace of expression – some of her lyrics and shorter pieces rising to high flights of poetic fancy.” Other critics tempered their reviews by asserting that “though generally marked by felicity of diction, it cannot be said that all her songs and poetic pieces contain that subtle indefinable element which constitutes poetry in the highest sense. Yet her poems have much vigour and freshness, and, occasionally, rich thought and melody. The English pieces are as good, often superior in imagination and feeling to the Gaelic one.” Certainly there is no doubt that Mary MacKellar’s works 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 1880s and also about that time, she produced an intriguing book entitled “The Tourist’s Hand-Book of Gaelic and English Phrases for the Highlands”. Mary MacKellar rendered much assistance too, to Sheriff Nicolson when he was compiling his collection of Gaelic proverbs.

In 1876 she was appointed Bardess to the Gaelic Society of Inverness in succession to Angus MacDonald of Glen Urquhart. Hereabouts Professor Blackie was carrying the fiery torch for the Gaelic language and, in Mrs MacKellar, he found a true ally. Due mainly to their 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.

## Literary Adviser

The literary adviser to Queen Victoria commissioned Mary MacKellar to translate into Gaelic the Queen’s second series of “Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands” and, when it was completed in 1886, she received a substantial fee for her labours. The translation is regarded as “a masterpiece of forcible and idiomatic Gaelic”.

Mrs MacKellar was a devout member of the Free Church but, in the words of William T. Kilgour, author of the book “Lochaber in War and Peace”, “she was equally happy in the company of Dr Maclachlan of St Columba’s, Dr Clerk of Kilmallie, Father Coll of Fort William or Dr Stewart of Nether Lochaber. “A contemporary 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 aggravated an existing heart condition, Mary MacKellar died at 10 Leven Street, in Edinburgh, on September 7<sup>th</sup> – 1890 – three weeks short of her 56<sup>th</sup> birthday.

For a number of years prior to her death Mary MacKellar had striven towards the foundation of a Clan Cameron Association. 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 this venture.

It was left to “Nether Lochaber” of the day, Dr Alex Stewart, to pay this eloquent tribute to Mary MacKellar’s burial.

**“A great Heart has been lost to the Highlands,  
A great Spirit has gone to God.”**

A fine Celtic Cross with a harp engraved in the base marks the last resting place, amidst the Camerons of Lochiel and Fassfern, of the Sweet Singer of Loch Eil

*(With thanks to Bill Cameron for this transcription)*

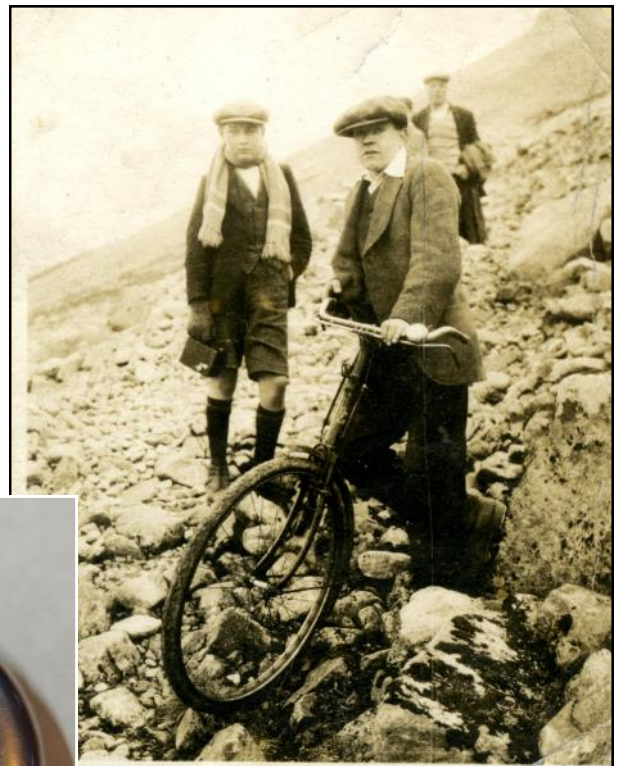
## Grand Day Out

by Vanessa Martin

(Curator Manager West Highland Museum Fort William)

In September 1928, Fort William lad, John MacDougall climbed Ben Nevis. What was so unusual about his ascent and descent was that he achieved it on a bicycle in the days before mountain biking had become a popular local sport. He pushed the bike up Britain’s highest mountain and then rode it back down the path. John managed this amazing feat on an Overdale Cycle. To thank him for his accomplishment, the bike manufacturer, James Robertson of Glasgow gifted John a silver pocket watch, engraved with the words “Presented by James Robertson to John MacDougall for Climbing Ben Nevis on an Overdale Cycle, Sept. 1928. John worked in Fort William High Street for local retailer Marshall and Pearson, a family firm that still operates in Fort William High Street to this day.

The watch was gifted to the museum last month by John’s daughter Ann and will soon be on display in our Highland Life gallery alongside other Ben Nevis related memorabilia such as a Ben Nevis race medal. Also in the museum are a film and exhibits relating to the ascent of Ben Nevis in 1911 by Henry Alexander in his Model T Ford. This feat has been honoured with a bronze statue of Henry sat in his car which is located in Cameron Square outside the museum.



Above: John MacDougall with his Overdale Cycle on the Ben Nevis path in 1928

Left: The silver watch gifted to John by James Robertson



# Fort William in the 1890s. by the Editor

This is edited from “*Mountain, Moor and Loch*” published in 1894.

Various attempts have been made to re-name the town after it was raised to the dignity of a burgh of barony. First it was called Maryburgh, in honour of William’s Consort; but it remained Fort William, in honour of William himself.

From the Rannoch Line train, the hills of Loch Arkaig and Achnacarry are seen on the right, the country of the Clan Cameron. By Sir Allan Cameron of Erracht, a cadet of Lochiel, the 79th Cameron Highlanders were raised at the end of the last century (1794). Their achievements have many times been written on the role of fame, since Byron wrote on Waterloo, “when wild and high the Camerons’ gathering rose”. Their tartan is a beautiful blend of the two clans of the district, Cameron and MacDonald.

The Cameron men were once so numerous as to almost justify the strange reply given to a belated but suspected traveller who, in a wild night of storm and sleet, besought entry to a solitary house. “Are there no Christians here?” he demanded piteously. “No, no,” was the stern answer, “we are all Camerons here”

After passing Inverlochy we enter Fort William, the railway passing through the old fort, now dismantled, from which the place took its name. The town is a minute one, with a population of only about 2,000, but it looks quite an imposing city after the wilderness we have come through. The houses struggle along the shore of Loch Linnhe, the wide arm of the sea that stretches up from the Mull; but the township is well supplied with hotels; and, as Aunt Gilchrist says in William Black’s *In Far Lochaber*— “It’s a grand place for being in the middle of things.”

Now that the West Highland Railway has been constructed, it will be more in the middle of things than ever. The railway, after passing through the fort, runs along the esplanade to the pier, thus making connection with the MacBrayne’s fine service of steamers, by which the traveller may go south to Oban and round through the Kyles of Bute to Craighendran, or take him north by the beautiful route of the Caledonian Canal to Inverness.

The little township has sprung up around the fort, which was originally built by General Monk, in Cromwell’s time, as a rude fortification of turf, to act as a base for the troops to keep in subjection Evan Dhu of Lochiel, the Chief of the Camerons, who stood out like a Scottish Hereward against the forces of the Commonwealth, long after the other clans had submitted. Many a fierce skirmish between Lochiel and the Sassenach red-coats took place around Fort William and Inverlochy, the Highlanders generally getting the best of it, as is recorded in Scott’s *Tales of a Grandfather*.

In the time of William the Third the fort was rebuilt in its present form (or rather its late form, as the railway works have cut much of it up) by General MacKay. It was a strong fortification of its kind, with ditch, glacis and ravelin, of which portions may yet be seen, mounting fifteen twelve-pounders and with a regular garrison of about a hundred men; while in times of trouble more soldiers were thrown into it. Both in the ’15 and ’45 it was besieged by the Jacobites, but was never taken.

Some interesting particulars of the second siege will be found in Mrs MacKellar’s handbook. “There was no village here” says this authority, “previous to the erection of Cromwell’s fort. Then some houses began to arise on the face of the hill. Afterwards, when the present fort was built, the people were encouraged to erect houses there, to form a village to be a sutlery to it. They might build where and how they liked, only the houses were to be composed of turf and wattle, so to be easily set on fire in case of a rising, or of an enemy effecting a lodgement there. This village was demolished, and then the people began to build at the seaside, where the lower streets of the town are now, and the free charters given them accounts for the irregularity of the buildings, which, from the sea, look so disorderly”.

Later, the Duke of Gordon was made superior of the township, and it was called Gordonsburgh, but it remained Fort William. Afterwards Sir Duncan Cameron became superior, and called it Duncansburgh; but it still remained Fort William. We do not think there is any reason to regret the popular rejection of the three names suggested.

From the Fort William side, Ben Nevis appears a somewhat shapeless mountain, piled shoulder on shoulder, in vast folds of granite into the sky, as if disdaining symmetrical form, and depending on sheer bulk alone to vindicate its grandeur. It is from Banavie, lying about 3 miles north-east of Fort William, that the best view of Ben Nevis may be obtained.

To reach the summit of Ben Nevis means a climb of five miles up a bridle path on a steep gradient. This is not a task for the weak lunged or weak legged; but the journey may be partly done on a hill pony, and at the top there is a small Temperance Hotel, with sleeping accommodation for over a dozen guests, where tea, bed and breakfast may be obtained for half-a-guinea—a small sum to pay for the proud boast in future years that you have spent the night on Ben Nevis. The view from the summit is mostly mountain peaks, except where broken by three sheets of water—Loch Linnhe, Loch Eil and Loch Lochy.

On the summit is the Observatory, where two meteorologists keep watch on the weather, day and night, summer and winter, watch and watch about, so that ghourly readings of the instruments may be taken, and telegraphed to the low-level Observatory at the base of the hill in Fort William.

From Fort William there are various attractive day trips, one of the most notable being up Glen Nevis, along which a coach runs for about six miles. The Glen is a very wild and picturesque one, threaded by the crystal waters of the River Nevis. At Achariach, about six miles up, beyond the Druidical ‘rocking–stone’ and the ancient vitrified fort are the Lower Falls of Nevis, a beautiful cascade, and a mile further on is one of the most striking waterfalls in the Kingdom, a stream foaming down the side of Ben Nevis at an angle of about sixty degrees, for a distance of about 1,000 feet.

Another enjoyable trip is up Glenfinnan, seventeen miles, to the spot where Prince Charlie raised his standard in the ’45. A monument now marks the spot, crowned by the figure of the prince himself, looking up the glen for the Camerons, who had been delayed by the skirmish at Highbridge.

## By Editor:

The story above was written nearly 130 years ago and Fort William is still very much ‘in the middle of things’.

Fort William is now a modern town of 5600 in the heart of Lochaber and Cameron country, from which we can visit many areas rich in Cameron history. The Clan Museum at Achnacarry and the West Highland Museum in Fort William have an amazing collection of exhibits which are relevant to the history of Clan Cameron and Lochaber.



The 2024 Clan Gathering at Achnacarry will be a marvellous opportunity to visit these museums and the places we read about when researching our history, such as Glenfinnan, Culloden and Glencoe

We hope you will join us there in August 2024.



## Coming Events

**Saturday 11 February 2023**  
**Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo**  
9am to 9pm Paeroa Domain.  
The Cameron tent will be there.  
[www.paeroahighlandgames.co.nz](http://www.paeroahighlandgames.co.nz)

**Friday/Saturday 10 and 11 March 2023**  
**New Zealand and South Pacific Pipe Band Championships**  
Hagley Park, Christchurch.  
[info@rnzpb.com](mailto:info@rnzpb.com)

**Saturday 20 May 2023**  
**National Gathering and AGM**  
Masterton Club, Chapel Street, Masterton.  
Morning ~ executive meeting, morning tea, AGM, finger food lunch.  
Afternoon free but we will offer a couple of visits to local places of interest, wineries etc  
Evening ~ entertainment with music, dancing, meal, haggis etc.

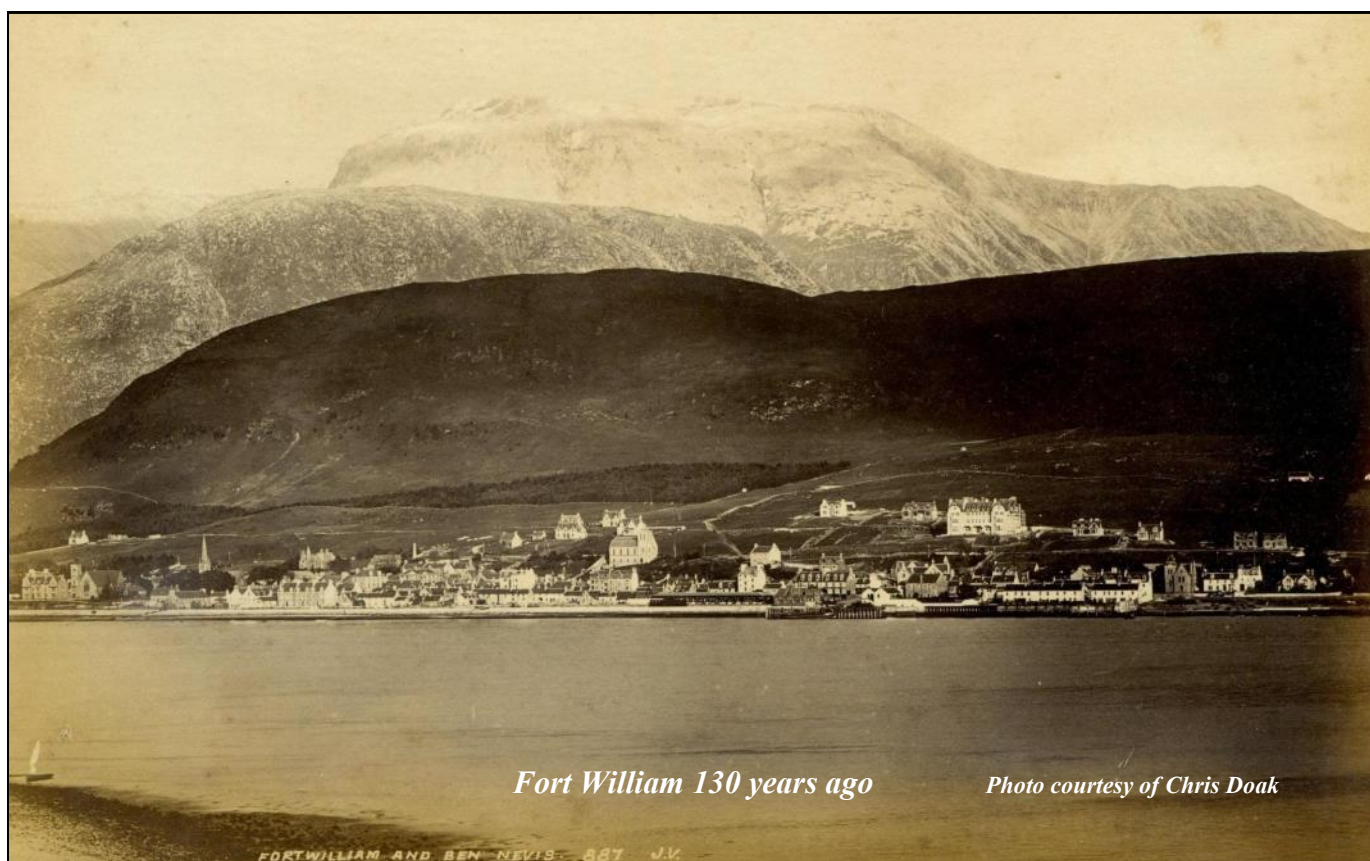
Plans are progressing well with the only holdup being getting final evening meal menu items and costings from the Masterton Club. This will be done very shortly and we can then finalise the Registration form and put it online on the Clan Cameron website and in the next newsletter. I anticipate this will be within the next 10 days.

In the meantime I would suggest that if you intend coming and staying for a night

or two you book your accommodation asap. Masterton has the following hotels/motels within easy distance of the Masterton Club venue:

Copthorne Hotel and Resort  
Amble Inn Motel - walking distance to the venue  
Masterton Motor lodge  
Gateway Motor Inn  
Discovery Motor Lodge  
BK's Chardonnay Motor Lodge  
A few Airbnb's  
See you in Masterton in May - Rob Cameron

**Pipe band competitions are;**  
Paeroa Highland Games - 11th February 2023  
Auckland Centre Contest - 19th February 2023  
Central North Island Contest 25th February 2023



*Fort William 130 years ago*

*Photo courtesy of Chris Doak*



*Photo: Royal New Zealand Navy*

***Congratulations to Sam Olsen who has just completed his basic training.***

***He was awarded the Stoker First Class William Dale Cup for the most improved Trainee. His mother is Clan Cameron Hawkes Bay member Monica Olsen.***

***This prestigious award is named for a Naval sailor who won an award for bravery by putting a fire out in Achilles during the 2nd World War.***

***In this photograph Sam is shown cutting the Royal New Zealand Navy's 81st anniversary cake with the Chief of Navy, a tradition within the Navy of the youngest sailor being given that honour.***





# Aonaibh ri Chéile

## The Back Page



Left: Dale Bailey and Lena Orum



Right: Dale Bailey, Finlay, Allan, and Neil Cameron, Bryan Haggitt, Morea and Rob Cameron



Lisa Brown-Hatchard from Hamilton with Glen Rodgers, the drumming Judge on the left and Ryan Marsich, the drumming event organiser, on the right. Lisa won the Clan Cameron Cup for the most points in the C grade snare drumming.



Bryan, Allan and Morea



Finlay on the march



Hillary Hakaraia and Bryan Haggitt



Presented by the Auckland Branch of Clan Cameron  
**OVERALL WINNER**  
of C Grade Drumming  
Waipu Highland Games



Finlay Cameron with his parents, Rhona and Ken, on holiday from Lochaber



Below: The opening ceremony. Above: Marching off.

