



# Cameron

*The Magazine of Clan Cameron New Zealand Inc.*



*The Present - massed bands on parade*

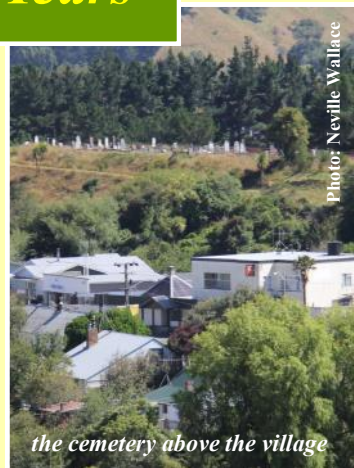
Photo: Editor

## *Turakina Highland Games - 150 Years*



*The Memories - A prayer and lament for the forebears*

Photo: Ewen Grant



*the cemetery above the village*

Photo: Neville Wallace



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*The Future - massed highland fling*

Photo: Neville Wallace



## "Cameron"

is the magazine of the  
Clan Cameron Association of New Zealand (Inc)

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## A message from our President.....

Dear Clan members and friends,

Welcome to the New Year and let me remind all to please attend to your A.G.M. registrations as quickly as possible. Time will travel faster now the weather has warmed up - with you all going swimming. It was my intention to visit the Turakina Highland Games but circumstances have not been in my favour so have cancelled. This evening I have spoken with Neville Wallace with regards to support they may be giving for the games. Manawatu will no doubt be in attendance and by the time the newsletter is read the day will be over. We will attend the Paeroa games in February and enjoy the hospitality of the day as usual.

In my last newsletter I failed to mention a visit to Maisie Earle following the Manawatu meeting. It was most enjoyable to meet with our First Light supporter, as well as a cuppa provided by Dick. It was a pleasure to be able to discuss Clan matters once again with our very stalwart member. We trust we will have results from our new sub-committee and hope they are making progress on First Light.

What have we been doing this year? Well Christmas day was spent in Turangi with relatives at the cottage because the refrigerator needed some attention which had been neglected earlier. Before we left Opotiki there was a delay as Shona was already on the way from Rotorua to visit us for Xmas, then we all travelled to Turangi for Xmas eve.

New Years day was spent at Te Kaha where most of the family was camping for a couple of weeks enjoying the weather and the fish, but it was not self caught as one would expect. Well that is all for now. We will see you all in Tauranga in March for the Annual General Meeting.

Regards to all

*Fraser Cameron.*



## Coming Events:

### Saturday 8 February 2014

#### Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo

Paeroa Domain from 9am. Join us for the Clans March to the town centre at 11am. Cameron tent will be there. Tattoo at 6.30pm.  
Details: www.paeroahighlandgames.co.nz

### Thursday 13th February 2014.

#### Gisborne Branch

#### 2014 Annual General Meeting.

12.00pm - 1.00pm Lunch  
1.00pm A.G.M.  
Tatapouri Sports Fishing Club  
Esplanade, Gisborne

### Sunday 23 February 2014

#### Manawatu Branch AGM

12 noon. We have decided to combine the AGM with a potluck lunch at Mount Lees. Please bring a plate. If you would like to come but have no transport please contact Jessie 06 355 2705  
or email jannabell@xtra.co.nz

### Friday 7 March 2014

#### Auckland Branch AGM and BBQ

Parnell Cricket Club, Shore Rd, Remuera.  
6.30pm. Please let Jenny know if you are coming and if you are bringing a sweet or salad.

Meat provided. No charge but donation to defray costs welcome.

Jenny: 09 524 5254 bchecho@xtra.co.nz

### Friday/Saturday 7/8 March 2014

#### National Pipe Band Championships Tauranga

### Sunday 16 March 2014

#### Wanganui/Taranaki Branch

We will be holding our AGM at Ashley Park, Waitotara at 11 30 am followed by lunch. Please members try and attend  
Enquiries to Shona Wallace. 06 278 6005

### Weekend 28-30 March 2014

#### National Annual Gathering and AGM.

at Daniels in the Park, 11th Avenue, Tauranga. Registration Form available on the Clan Cameron web site.  
Enquiries to Joy Cameron 07 575 4659

### Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 April 2014

#### 64th Easter Highland Games

at Lindisfarne College, Pakowhai Road, Hastings (near Stortford Lodge). Come and soak up the atmosphere at this annual event. You will be sure of a great welcome in the Cameron tent.  
Enquiries to Mike Topham 06 879 8215

Clan Cameron NZ is now on Facebook



www.facebook.com/ClanCameronNZ

Next Magazine Deadline is 15 March

Printed By



## Auckland Branch

Peter and Cressida Cameron  
Valerie Ussher  
Suzanne O'Rourke

Auckland  
Auckland / Waipu  
Whangarei

## Manawatu Branch

Ian and Sue McKelvie

Palmerston North

*Ceud Mile Fàilte One Hundred Thousand Welcomes*

## History Corner *by Fiona Cameron*

### Cameron on the map.

Camerons have definitely made a mark on New Zealand, and it shows on our maps. Land Information New Zealand recently launched an online version of the New Zealand Gazetteer of Official Geographic Names. This Gazetteer allows you to search for any official or recorded names and we can proudly claim 29 official or recorded Cameron place names and 8 for Camerons.

The eleven official names cover places and features such as Cameron Col, a pass in the Arrowsmith Mountains in Canterbury to Loch Cameron, a small lake formed by the Pukaki Hydro Canal construction near Twizel. The recorded names include five Cameron Creeks and four Mount Camerons.

So what's the difference? Names become official if they have been assigned or validated by the New Zealand Geographic Board or other legislation (such as Treaty of Waitangi settlements) and have appeared in the New Zealand Gazetteer of Official Geographic Names. Recorded names are names that have appeared in at least two publicly available authoritative publications or databases. With the recorded names, we are in good company. Our capital city is not officially called Wellington. Many recorded names, such as Wellington, were commonly in use before the creation of the New Zealand Geographic Board and have not yet been processed by the board to become official.

The North Island (or Te Ika-a-Maui) and South Island (Te Waipounamu) only became the official names in October 2013. An alternative suggestion (albeit from Twitter) of Hokey and Pokey was not adopted.

Anyone can propose a name and make a submission to the New Zealand Geographic Board. It looks like a lengthy process (<http://www.lin.govt.nz/placenames/propose-a-name/geographic-features-places>) but it would be an interesting exercise to see if Clan members know of any other Cameron places in New Zealand that could be added.



*Loch Cameron near Twizel*

A footnote for those possibly planning to visit every official or recorded Cameron landmark in New Zealand - the New Zealand Geographic Board also covers territories in Antarctica. So a trip to the Cameron Nunataks may be a little more difficult to arrange. A Nunatak (from the Inuit word nunataq) is rocky peak sticking up through an ice field. The Cameron Nunatks are a small cluster at the south end of Freyberg Mountains in Antarctica. They were mapped by the US Geographical Service in the early sixties and named after Roy E. Cameron, a biologist at McMurdo Station.

You can search the Gazetteer to view all the Cameron place name on the Land Information New Zealand website under the New Zealand Geographic Board. <http://www.lin.govt.nz/placenames/about-geographic-board>



## Lake Wakatipu (Pt.2) *by Mike Topham*

D.A.Cameron and A.A. MacDonald returned to Dunedin, applied for Southland Run 331 "Staircase", then returned to South Australia to purchase the sheep to stock the Run.

The Barque 'Peregrine Oliver' was chartered to transport 3592 sheep from Guichen Bay, South Australia to Bluff in two trips which were made in June and July 1859. 2333 sheep died on the voyage to New Zealand. The surviving 1259 sheep were quarantined at Te Wai Point. Donald's brothers John, Angus and Alexander plus Donald Hay also travelled to Bluff on these two trips.

Donald Hay travelled to Lake Wakatipu via Glenquoch, and surveyed the area around the Lake.

He found a Moki (a raft built of drift wood and flax) and in August 1859 he became the first white man to sail on Lake Wakatipu.

The stock drove up country, from Te Wai point, commenced in October 1859 and arrived at "Nokomai" early April 1860. A further 452 sheep were lost on this trip. In March 1860 Donald A. Cameron left his brothers with the stock and went to Dunedin where he applied for Southland Run 354 in the Nokomai Valley. He named this run "Glen Falloch" (Hidden Valley)



This station was also about 30 km south of the Lake and approx. 12 km east of Glenquoch.

Due to the large number of sheep lost at sea and on the trek to Nokomai, The Staircase lease was relinquished.

In 1860 William Cameron sold Glenquoch to William Rogers, transferred Bucurochi to his father-in-law John Howell, and moved to Mount Linton Station to the west of Ohai. Howell changed the name Bucurochi to "Fairlight" the place of his birth in Sussex, England.

The Cameron's youngest brother, Duncan, came to Glen Falloch in 1864 and their father Ewen Cameron (1800 – 1874) in 1867 or 1868.

In 1874 the brothers Donald, John and Alexander purchased Closeburn Station at Wilson's Bay, Lake Wakatipu (about 8 miles from Queenstown)

The Cameron Clan could also claim Angus Alphonse MacDonald (1824 – 1916) as his mother was Mary Cameron.

**Note :** The William Cameron in this data is the Great Grandfather of six members of our Gisborne Branch, and the John Cameron in this data is the Grandfather of Auckland Branch President Donald J. Cameron.

The laying of the Invercargill to Kingston Railway commenced in 1870 and was completed in 1878.

This link is no longer in existence, but the tourist steam train *The Kingston Flyer* still travels the line from Kingston to Fairlight Station.

*Abridged - Editor* ☆

# From the Branches....

**Auckland** by Neil Cameron

On Friday 6 December we enjoyed a convivial Christmas barbecue, hosted by Jenny and Bryan Haggitt at their Remuera home. Although numbers were low, there was a great feeling of being part of one family. Thank you Jenny and Bryan for a wonderful evening. We were also pleased to be able to welcome Peter and Cressy Cameron into the Clan Association.

New Year's eve was a warm, sunny day and we managed to tow a lightened Cameron trailer to Waipu behind our small car. Ruth and I set up the tent during the afternoon, helped by members of other clans. Although the weather forecast for New Year's Day was initially good we were alarmed to find, at the end of the day, a last minute change in the forecast - for the worse.

The day of the games dawned reasonably fine and a large number of people arrived to enjoy the day. We started at 9.30 with the formal march into the grounds by the clans past the saluting base. It was rather lonely being the sole Cameron in this march!

Waipu is always interesting due to the diversity of people coming into our tent - holiday makers from all over New Zealand and from overseas. We signed up two new members, Valerie Ussher and Suzanne O'Rourke. Ruth also sold five jig-saws.

One or two showers of rain dampened the morning but cleared in time for the clan march and official opening at 12.30. Several Camerons who had been active elsewhere in the games, joined in this parade. The Games were officially opened by Pat Hellier. Pat won the NZ Highland Heavyweight competition for 18 consecutive years and announced his retirement last year at the age of 40.

Corryn Parry from Hawera won the Clan Cameron Drumming Cup for the C Grade Championship (see photo back page) This cup, presented by Clan Cameron Auckland, was first competed for last year.

Early afternoon came the downpour. The ground under the tent became a lake. The waterproof (?) tent began to leak and the tent filled with dripping people trying to shelter, much to the detriment of the books on display, although they were hastily put away. Some of the display boards were damaged by water and will require renewal. Finally the sun shone again but, for the clans, this was the end of the day and we started packing up.

The McQueen family, here for the Highland Dancing, kindly towed the trailer home, and we spent the next day drying everything out. The weather reminded me of our visits to Lochaber!

The disappointing thing for me both here and at the Auckland Games was the poor support from our Cameron members. There is a lot of work involved preparing and setting up for these events and Ruth and I are not getting any younger. There is a need for at least one person in the tent to attend to the many visitors who have often difficult questions and need explanations of the displays. There are many very interested people out there. This is what we are here for - to tell people something of our Scottish, and in particular, Cameron heritage and history. It would be really appreciated if other Camerons could come, even for a short period, to help man the tent so at least we could appreciate some of the other Clan displays and the Games themselves.

We hope you will come to some of the other Games in the next few months; Riccarton Bush, Paeroa and Hastings.

**Canterbury** by Rae Magson

Christmas greetings were sent to members via e-mail. On 25 January we are having an executive meeting to organise our stall for the Scottish Cultural Festival to be held at Riccarton Bush on 9 February 2014. This is an exciting day with Piping & drumming solos, Highland dancing, Scottish Country dancing, Pipe Bands and lots of other entertainment. Our President, Nick Cameron is usually very busy on this day. In other years we have given away tastings of haggis and this brings lots of people to our tent, so we plan to do the same in 2014. Haggis seems to be something people either love, or

just won't touch. In other years we have found there is a lot of interest in Clan Cameron and the literature that we have on display. Colin and Isabel Cameron have been visiting their daughter, Shona (a former First Lighter) in Scotland for Christmas and New Year. No doubt they will have had an enjoyable time but we look forward to welcoming them back home again. We expressed our sympathy to Isabel on the passing of her mother, 99 years of age, in Auckland.

**Bay of Plenty** by Denis Cameron

**W**elcome 2014 and I hope you have all had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year with family and friends.

One month of this year has flown by and we are on the countdown to the Annual General Meeting on the 28 - 30 March in Tauranga. Our thanks to those members who have already registered and paid and we look forward to many more to make our week-end a success. If you have mislaid your registration form it can be down loaded from the website - [www.camclan.orconhosting.net.nz](http://www.camclan.orconhosting.net.nz) as detailed in the December newsletter. Our thanks to Neil for sending out the registration form. It is always a pleasure to receive the Clan Cameron Newsletter which is the envy of other Clans.

Don't forget the 21st Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo on Saturday 8th February and also the National Pipe Band Championships being held in Tauranga on 7th and 8th March.

**We will be there!**

**Hawke's Bay** by Helen Shaw

**E**leven members gathered on Friday the 13th December at The Clansman Motel for Christmas "Cheer". A very pleasant few hours was spent catching up with each other. Our Host and Hostess Leigh and Maree always make us so welcome. Our next gathering will be mid- April (19th & 20th) for the Hastings Highland games.

**Manawatu** by Jessie Annabell

**T**he branch held a lunch in conjunction with the midyear executive meeting in Palmerston North at the Chalet on the 29th of September. The intention was to allow lower North Island members to meet our national president Fraser. A good idea, but perhaps the expense, the weather and the reluctance to travel deterred many.

At Square Day on Saturday the 14th of December, our haggis sandwiches were more successful than ever. However, due to competition from professional stands in the Square, sales of our traditional main seller sausages were way down.

Our AGM this year will be a pot luck lunch at Mt Lees at midday on Sunday 23rd of February.

By the way, keep a look out for an exhibition at the Wanganui Regional Museum. The Museum inherited hundreds of swatches of locally made tartan fabric from the Wanganui Woollen Mills and wants to feature them in an exhibition. No date set yet

**Wellington/Wairarapa** by Rob Cameron

Clan Cameron Wellington/Wairarapa had an outing late in the year. We met at Pukaha Mt Bruce, The National Wildlife Centre, where Rob Cameron, who works as a volunteer there, gave a conducted tour of a number of the aviaries. The white kiwi Manukura was probably the highlight but with the fine weather all the birds were easily spotted. The easy walking and the fact that most of the birds were nesting made for a lovely morning. After the tour we went to the Paper Road Vineyard for lunch. A number of clans folk joined us there and a very pleasant meal and get together ensued. This was a successful day enjoyed by those able to attend.

The Wellington/Wairarapa branch wishes everyone a wonderful enjoyable 2014



# The Turakina Highland Games

by the Editor

They may not be the earliest - the first were reported to be in Wellington in 1848 - but the Turakina Highland Games are the oldest still running in New Zealand. First held 150 years ago in 1864 they are believed to have been held annually since then, although they were affected by the 'flu epidemic of 1919, the great depression, and the two World Wars.

The *Wanganui Chronicle* of Dec 24 1863 reported that the settlers of the district have arranged for a day of Rural Sports to be held at the Ben Nevis Hotel, Turakina on New Year's Day. It was to conclude with a shinty match with a supper and ball to take place in the evening. In the event (because of the Rangitikei races) the supper and ball took place on New Year's night and the Games the next day, Jan 2 1864.

The village and surrounding countryside were settled by highlanders from 1849, after the Rangitikei Purchase by Sir Donald McLean from the Ngati Apa tribe in 1848. Further west halfway to Wanganui John Cameron had already settled at Marangai in 1841, along with his cousin Jessie Cameron Campbell and her husband Captain Moses Campbell. The first settlers at Turakina were predominantly of the "Blenheim" people who landed at Kaiwharawhara, Wellington in 1840. They were the "Big" John Cameron and Donald "Bane (Bain?) the Cooper" Cameron and their families.

These families established farms near the village. Over time further Cameron families arrived including the Angus Cameron family (Angus was a nephew of Big John) in the late 1850's, this family also took up farming. Also resident for a while in the village was Thomas Ross Cameron who was employed constructing the roads in the district. To the east on the Rangitikei river at Parewanui, Annie Cameron McDonell (daughter of Donald "The Weaver" Cameron, wife of James McDonell) and Alexander Cameron (nephew of Thomas Ross Cameron) and families also settled and were farming.

In later years descendants of these many Cameron families spread throughout the Rangitikei, Wanganui, Manawatu and King Country areas.

The committee of the first games included three Camerons; John Cameron of Marangai and Messrs D Cameron and Thomas Cameron. At the committee meeting for the 1865 games, now called the Celtic Games, the three judges appointed included two Camerons; J. Cameron of Marangai and J Cameron of Invermaille.

Over the years the games have reflected the changing times and for a time focussed on athletics and have included shinty playing, wrestling, tent erecting and equestrian sports among the events. Also, in the 50's and 60's, beauty competitions, fashion shows, archery and weightlifting were some of the events competed for or demonstrated.

Since the Second World War the Games have returned to more traditional Scottish competitions, with the emphasis on highland dancing, pipe bands and solo piping and drumming.

Although the first games are recorded as being held in grounds adjoining the Ben Nevis Tavern, for many years they were held in the paddocks of local farmers. It was not until the 1960's that the games were established on the Public Domain and have been held there ever since.



Dr. Tanja Bueltmann

## The 2014 Highland Games.

On the evening before the games a moving ceremony of "The Pipes of Remembrance" took place in the Turakina cemetery, overlooking the village. With a congregation of over 50 people, most of whom had ancestors buried there, piper Tom Whittle played a lament and the Rev. Trevor Jurgens said a memorial prayer.

This was followed by the launching of the commemorative whisky at the Ben Nevis Tavern. This was a specially labelled 10 year old single malt, brewed at the Ben Nevis Distillery in Fort William, Scotland. This, of course, is Cameron country. The Ben Nevis Tavern has always had a close association with the Turakina Highland Games.

This year's games included the New Zealand Solo Piping Championships and a record number of pipe bands were competing.

A new dancing board, funded by the Middle Districts Lions, was opened by Mrs Sue McKelvie, wife of local MP Ian McKelvie. (Ian McKelvie became a member of Clan Cameron Manawatu during the day)

A highlight was the talk on the Scottish diaspora history in New Zealand, with emphasis on the Turakina Games, given by Dr. Tanja Bueltmann, Senior Lecturer in History, Northumbria University. To learn more go to: <http://thescottishdiaspora.co.uk>

The weather was perfect and a large number of competitors and spectators were present. The field was a hive of activity with field events, piping, drumming and dancing providing a wonderful spectacle. A marquee, provided for the first time, gave a shaded venue for talks and performances and a respite from the sun.

Turakina Games are always something special, with a more country atmosphere compared to other Games in New Zealand. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and will remember it fondly.

I will conclude by adding the letter below from Trish Topham, who says the things I mean to say so much better than I can.

"On Saturday we attended the Turakina Highland Games and enjoyed the beautiful sunny weather which was the icing on the cake.

Although not many of our Manawatu Branch Members were in attendance, those who hosted us should be very highly commended for all the hard work and dedication they put in to promoting Clan Cameron N.Z. The Cameron and Grant display and hospitality tents gave a very warm welcome to all, including people from other Clans who popped in to say hello during the course of the day. Bruce Cameron as Chief of the Turakina Caledonian Society was kept very busy with his duties but made time to greet all visiting Cameron members.

In true Scottish fashion the hospitality extended to a very nice shared lunch, and a Barbecue meal at the close of the day was greatly appreciated by all. Roz and Ewen, Jessie and the two John's gave 200% and worked tirelessly throughout the day. Roz's fruit cake and a dram served in a classy crystal glass for those who had participated in The Clan March really set the tone and was an unexpected bonus. Thankyou Roz! In the early 1850's the founding settlers of Turakina, were the families of Donald "Bain" Cameron, John "Mor" Cameron and Alexander "Sandy" Grant. To honour those Pioneers the Grant and Cameron Clans were given the honour of leading the Clan March.

There was a very large attendance at Turakina and seeing very young children proudly wearing their Clan Colours was heart warming. The smallest and youngest child I saw wearing a kilt would have been no older than six months.

But the best part for me always, is the meeting up with our Cameron friends and family and it was good to note that on this occasion there were representatives from all seven North Island Branches of Clan Cameron New Zealand.

Congratulations to Turakina on 150 years."

(with thanks to Bruce Cameron and Roz/Ewen Grant - Editor)



# Mountain, Moor and Loch - (Part 2)

*'The Braes' newspaper takes a look at how Victorian travellers viewed Lochaber*

In the last magazine 'The Braes' took a look at how the guide book described Glen Roy and Roy Bridge. This month the journey continues along the route to Spean Bridge and beyond to Fort William.

In another extract from the chapter titled "In Far Lochaber" the guide describes points of interest to the tourist where the West Highland Railway passes through Lochaber. The railway now follows the south bank of the Spean until Spean Bridge station is reached (three miles from Roy Bridge), where the river strikes off to the north-west to join the River Lochy, the combined waters flowing south-west and entering Loch Linnhe at Fort William.

At Spean Bridge there is a good hotel, with coach communication to Fort Augustus, the bridge being in the midst of a large pastoral district, while it is also within easy distance of the Caledonian Canal. We are now only nine miles from Fort William, and are in the very midst of the Lochaber mountains, which are ranged to the south in stupendous groups: Ben Nevis surmounting all, although several of its neighbours are over 4,000 feet in height. All along the glen, from Tulloch, we have been following the course of the Spean, while to the south the



glen lies High Bridge, one of General Wade's famous viaducts, built when he made one of his military roads from Fort William.

It was here that the Jacobites, in the '45 had their first skirmish with King George's troops, a party of soldiers marching from Fort Augustus to Fort William having been surprised here by a large body of the Clan Cameron on their way to Glenfinnan, on the west of Loch Eil, where the Prince Charlie had that day raised his standard.\*

The railway now follows, on the right, the public road that stretches from Fort William to Kingussie, and on the left is General Wade's military road. Presently new Inverlochry Castle, the seat of Lord Abinger, is seen on the right, and at this point a magnificent view is obtained - Loch Linnhe, Loch Eil and the Glenfinnan hills in

front and Ben Nevis to the left. Presently the famous Nevis distillery is passed, a building no more picturesque than other distilleries, but which inherits a little romance from the fact that it lies in the shadow of the mighty Ben. Amongst those who drink that well-known brand of

whisky, "Long John," it is often a source of wonder what the name means, so we give tourists the explanation to carry back to the south. Originally the distillery was a smaller establishment at Millburn, a few miles off, drawing its water from 1,500 feet up the side of the Ben, and its whisky was named "Dew of Ben Nevis." Subsequently the current distillery was built ... drawing its water from Glen Nevis. The distiller was anxious to get a distinctive name for the new whisky, and he hit upon the title "Long John" as that was the nickname of his grandfather, the original distiller, who was a

man of six feet four in height."

"After passing Inverlochry we enter Fort William - a hundred miles from the start - the railway passing what is left of the old fort from which the place takes 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 straggle along the shore of Loch Linnhe, the wide arm of the sea that stretches up from

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 Victorian version of the High Bridge skirmish described here is not the generally accepted version of events today. Recent historic opinion adheres that it was Major Donald MacDonald of Tir nan dris with 11 men and 1 piper who tricked the enemy into believing they were a much larger force when they engaged with the enemy at High Bridge*

## High Bridge

Passers by on the walk past our historic High Bridge were treated to a spectacular scene last month as workers took on the task of making the ancient structure safe. A team from Ballachulish-based Geo-Rope took on the hazardous task of cutting up the old metal railings and girders. As they did so showers of sparks cascaded to the ground.

The project was a challenging one for the expert team who had to suspend themselves to wires to carry out the job. The bridge is being preserved thanks to a grant of around £200,000 from the late Dr. Alan Reece, recently named as the third biggest philanthropist in the UK. He had walked the area and said it was one of the most wonderful places he had visited.

A local footpath group was set up and arranged for a new footpath to be constructed so that people could have easier access to the area.

The bridge which used to span the River Spean is the site of the first skirmish of the Jacobite rising of 1745 when 11 men and a piper fooled a large force of government troops into fleeing after tricking them into believing they were surrounded. Each year Jacobite group Na Fir Dileas, the Loyal Men, march to the bridge to commemorate the event.

*With thanks to 'The Braes' newsletter of Lochaber for the above two articles.*



*Braes of Lochaber from near Spean Bridge*

vast congregation of mountains has been gradually opening out, glowing in all the colours of the rainbow according to variations of light and shade; for, bare as a Highland Ben may seem at first sight, it is marvellously tinted, and its many hues melt and change, like the plumage of the "burnished dove," with every new level of the sun's rays and every new change of atmosphere. From Spean Bridge we draw nearer and nearer to Ben Nevis and his brethren, but we lose the river, which disappears to the right down a birch and oakclad glen. A short distance along this

# The Last Cameron Seanachaidh

by Bill Cameron (Lochaber)

Almost anonymously a small granite stone stands behind Strontian Parish Church. It has been there for forty years now, all but camouflaged by lichen.

And it marks the resting place of the last Seanachaidh of Clan Cameron. Alasdair Cameron - North Argyll, Hon MA, FSA 1896 - 1973.

With his death, more than sixty years worth of continuous historical research dies with him. The extensive collection of papers, documents and memorabilia he had amassed over a lifetime from many local sources and latterly from a legion of correspondents around the world remains virtually unknown. Alasdair's passing marked the end of a continuous oral tradition going back many generations in Lochaber.

Long before the internet made information so easily available, yet not necessarily correct, many facets of Highland culture and tradition were handed down from one generation to the next through a rich oral tradition. Within the Highland clan system, this oral tradition was usually passed on in Gaelic, and more recently in English. It would then be memorised by the bard, or as they are known in Gaelic, the seanachaidh.

These scholarly individuals spent a lifetime continually gathering recollections, stories, poems, genealogy and information on a wide range of subjects - enabling them to connect kinsfolk with their ancestral past and the landscape in which they had lived.

The vast amount of knowledge the seanachaidhs accumulated over many years was mainly kept in their heads, yet many of their surviving papers and notes within the modern era would make for a fascinating insight into our collective history.

The information the seanachaidh held was often shared and added to by people within the local community, and in more recent times, by descendants of those who left the Highlands to make a new life in New Zealand, Canada, America and Australia.

Alasdair, or as he was more widely known by his literary pen name "North Argyll" - due to his geographical location in West Lochaber, is widely regarded as the last seanachaidh of Clan Cameron.

Brought up speaking Gaelic at home, and English at school. Alasdair was raised by his mother and grandparents at a small croft house at Bun Allt Eachain (Hectors burn) in Sunart - West Lochaber. From there, Alasdair would walk four miles along a rough track to and from the now closed school at Salen in all weathers. This rough track was to feature heavily in his later life.

Leaving school at the age of fourteen, after only seven years of formal education, he went on to work on the family croft, as well as taking on casual employment as a farm labourer at nearby Resipole Farm.

Looking back on Alasdair's formative years in Sunart, and although he did not go on to pursue studies at university, his keen interest in both reading and writing would be served in an alternative and homegrown education that would last a lifetime.

In a copy of The Oban Times from 1912, we read the first of

many letters North Argyll as he styled himself would write to the editor throughout his lifetime. At the age of sixteen, only two years after leaving school, he writes with an already informed mind to the readership of the paper relating to the infamous Jenny Cameron - a lady who was closely associated with the 1745 Rising at nearby Glenfinnan.

This notable event in Scottish history was still talked about with local connections by the elders of North Argyll's youth.

It was this strong oral tradition that existed in North Argyll's early years that planted the seed of knowledge from a young age in his native Gaelic language, of the local traditions and history of his surroundings in Lochaber.

This interest would be fed, not by the modern day journey through academia. Instead, North Argyll would follow his own compass through life. This would involve speaking to the elders within the community who had the old stories, reading many books from the people's lending library and many late nights spent with his uncle who passed on a lot of history to him as a young man.

Although Alasdair was only sixteen when he wrote his first public letter, in the years that followed, he would build up an extensive correspondence through the columns of the Oban Times, including the publication of a number of small booklets on Lochaber history produced by this well known weekly broadsheet.

The knowledge he built up over sixty years was often shared with fellow Camerons and other individuals with an interest in the historical connections of old Lochaber from all over the world.

Alasdair remained a bachelor all his life. His varied employment would keep him busy as a crofter, farm labourer and eventually as a roads man. Alongside these occupations, he was also a writer, historian, genealogist and linguist. North Argyll was truly a man of many parts.

Speaking to a few people who had known him, they recall a mild mannered gentleman with a typically easy-going West Highland manner. A postman who visited his house over a number of years

recalled how sharp his mind was in remembering and explaining things in great detail, and from a very informed perspective.



*(To be continued in the April magazine - Editor)*

## Vale

### Felicity Cameron

We were saddened to hear of the death of Felicity, wife of Colonel Charles Cameron, brother of the late Lochiel, 26th Chief. Felicity suffered a stroke a few months ago and has been in a coma.

There will be a funeral service at Roy Bridge RC Church on February 1st, then a private burial at the Cameron graveyard at Achnacarry.

Colonel Charles and Felicity visited us in 2005 for our International Gathering, when Charles represented Lochiel, and also on several other occasions over the years.

Felicity will be remembered by many of us who attended the gathering as a very friendly person who took a great interest in Clan Cameron. She had a great many friends in New Zealand.

Our condolences go to Charles and his family.





**Aonaibh ri Cheile**

*The Back Page*



Photo: Glen Rodgers

Corryn Parry from Hawera holds the Cameron Cup as overall winner at Waipu for C grade drumming



Photo: Editor

Piper Tom Whittle plays a lament at the Turakina cemetery in the "The Pipes of Remembrance" ceremony



Photo: Editor

At the informal opening parade, Waipu. From left: Duncan McQueen, Glenis Cameron, new member Valerie Ussher, Chris and Caitlin Lines.



Photo: Graeme Cameron

Wellington/Wairarapa outing to Pukaha Mount Bruce. From left: Rob Cameron, Jennie Vogel, Graeme, Hazel, Catherine, Warren, Lorraine, and Sonja Cameron, Don Cameron, Shirley-Anne Thomson.



Photo: Editor

Cameron's outside the Cameron tent at the Turakina Games. From left: Helen Shaw, Trish Topham (sitting), Tanya Cameron, Shirley-Anne Thomson, Shona Wallace, Jessie Annabell, Ruth Cameron, Peter Cameron, Cynthia Bovey and Elizabeth Shearer.



Photo: Ewen Grant

The Clan March at Turakina, lead by the Camerons and Grants.



Photo: Ewen Grant

Callum Cameron holds the Turakina Caledonian Society Cup for C Grade - Most Points, and the Ewan MacLean Cup for the C Grade Slow Air. With him are his proud mother and father, Heather and Eoin, and his sister Kristina



Photo: Ewen Grant

Waiting to march. Four Cameron banners on display