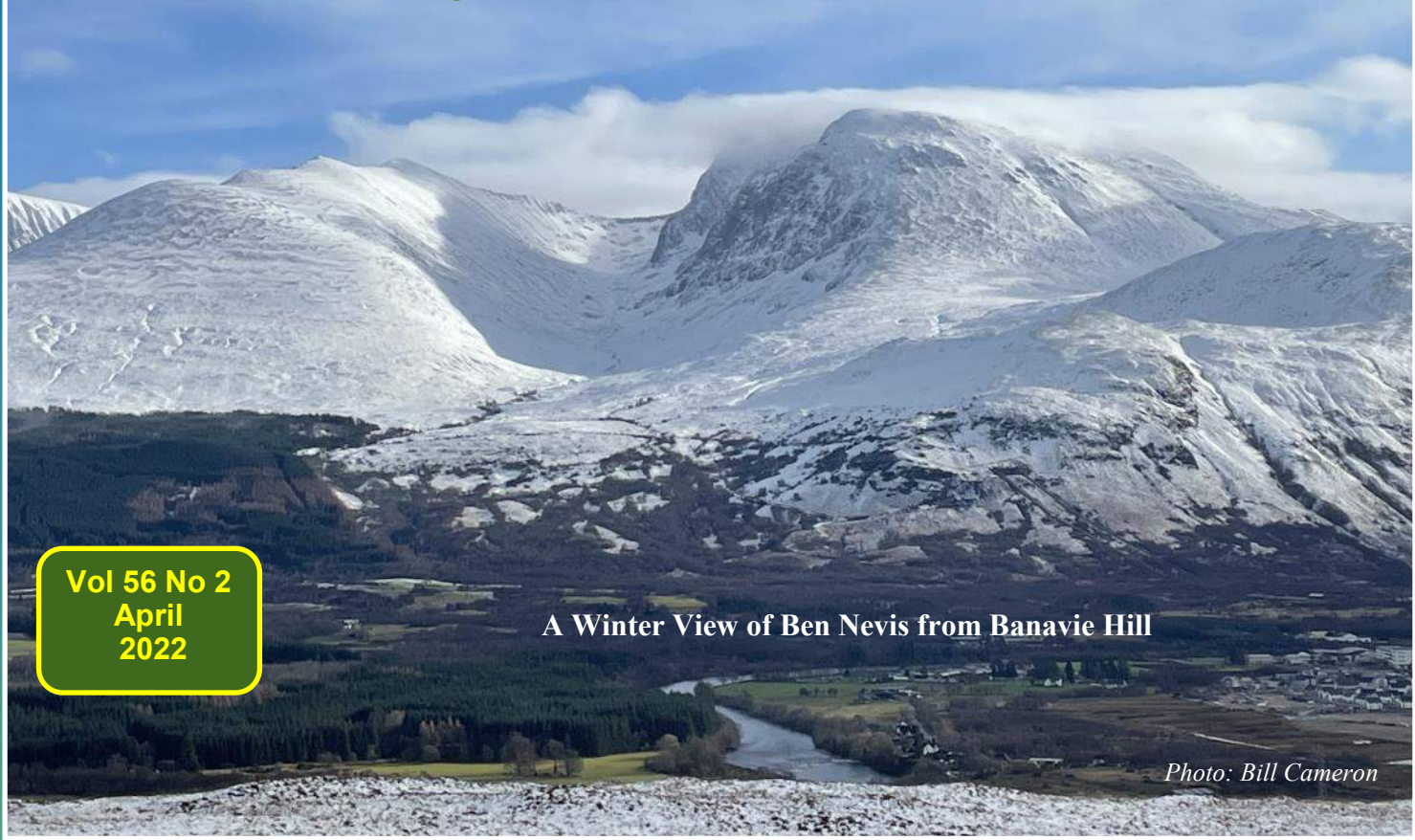




Cameron



The Magazine of Clan Cameron New Zealand Inc.



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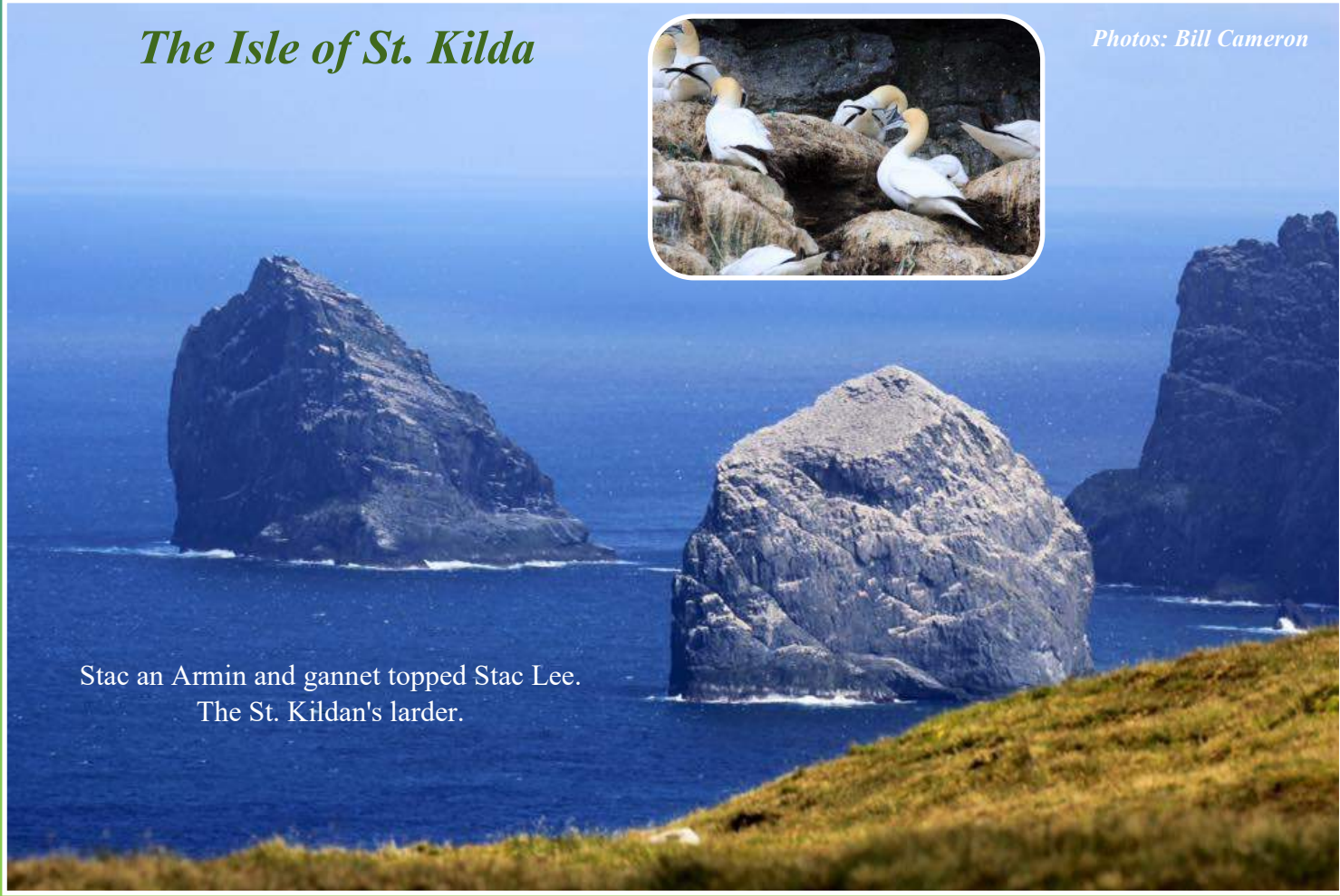
A Winter View of Ben Nevis from Banavie Hill

Photo: Bill Cameron

The Isle of St. Kilda



Photos: Bill Cameron



**Stac an Armin and gannet topped Stac Lee.
The St. Kildan's larder.**

“Cameron”

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

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A Message from our Commissioner...

Dear Clansfolk,

Covid issues have again dominated our lives over the last several months with the omicron variant now rampant throughout New Zealand. This has severely impacted most of our Clan events and workplaces.

My daughter Rowan and grand-daughter Andrea have both recently succumbed to the virus along with some other members of my extended family. Thankfully they have survived and have returned to normal health.

Having spent most of last month on the end of a hand sickle cutting thousands of individually labelled bagged grass plants in what has been a difficult wet harvest season and being forced to bin dry everything, I am pleased to have been able to complete this work in time. Now that seed harvest is complete my task at present is to catalogue thousands of packets of seeds and prepare seeding lists for our staff to re-seed. Our bumble bee nests are doing a great job pollinating tents of chicory plants selected for forage yield.

Our garden at home has been a great source of pleasure with good crops of potatoes, tomatoes, zucchinis, pears, apples, peaches, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and to my ever interested sister Fiona ... Walnuts!!

Another task has been to develop a cell phone application for our company products entitled the “Cropmark Forage Guide”. I have been able to write this in a programming language called “Flutter” which has meant the app can be used on android and i-phones and is now available on the APP and Play Stores. I have always been fascinated by how many of our Clan members have an interest in computer programming ... is this a Cameron trait?

This reminds me of my mother Margaret Cameron's favorite saying ... “an idle brain is the devil's workshop”.

So with that in mind...

Keep Busy... good wishes, stay positive and keep safe.

Cheers Nick.



Auckland Branch Clan Trailer—New Home Sought

The editor is the current custodian of the trailer but as he is moving into a retirement home later this year a new storage for the trailer is needed.

The box trailer contains the clan tent, chairs and tables and display material. It is used at least three times a year, for Auckland, Waipu and Paeroa Highland Games. It may also be used on other occasions, such as pipe band contests.

Storage should be within a property and under cover if possible (cover is not essential but desirable—it has been in the open up till now!)

Are any Auckland members willing to take custody?

It will be collected by clan members when required and contents checked and updated prior to use. It is insured.

If you able and willing to take custody please contact the editor.

Clan Cameron New Zealand Website

www.clanameronnz.co.nz

The Clan Cameron Interactive Network

<http://clanameron.ning.com/>

Next Magazine Deadline is 15 May 2022

Printed By



early twentieth century. This photo was taken in the 1980s ahead of a thorough renovation.

Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Footprints 00346

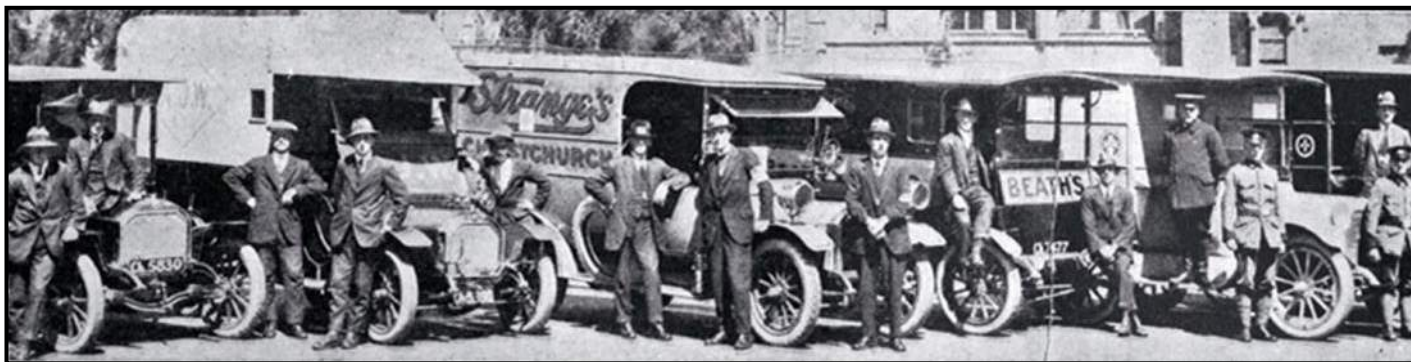
<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/photos/id/35870/rec/93>

'Cameron's Castle' in Onewhero, a house built by Duncan Cameron early in the twentieth century, using eight-inch thick ferro-concrete throughout. The three-storey building had its own private chapel, servants' quarters and a coach house.

This photograph was published with the article, 'Cameron's Castle, Onewhero, to be the venue of the Onewhero Plunket Society's craft day on Saturday,' in the Franklin Courier, 11 November 1980, p. 11. In subsequent years the house was neglected and fell into a state of disrepair. However,

in March 1988 new owners were able to celebrate the completion of a year-long restoration project ('A labour of love', Franklin County News, 15 March 1988, p. 27).

From the heritage photograph collection of the Auckland Library a lovely photo of a wonderful home in the Counties region south of Auckland. Known as Cameron's Castle in Onewhero it was built by Duncan Cameron in the



Some members of the St John Ambulance Brigade with the vehicles used as ambulances during the influenza epidemic 1918

"As the Brigade's ambulances were not sufficient for the demand, a number of private firms placed their motor delivery vans at the disposal of the Brigade, and these were used as ambulances to convey patients to the hospital.

" Pictured from left are: R. Foot, S.S. Baird, A. Stewart, I. H. Balkind, A. Smith, B. Day, P.S. Ramsay, A. Cameron, E.

Cambridge, J. Heslop, J. Reidy, Pvte. Lockwood, R. Quickenden, Corpl. Middleton.

A Cameron stands in front of the van of Stranges Christchurch, a rival department store for the more well known today Ballantynes. I wonder if any members of Clan Cameron can identify him?

This image is part of the impressive and searchable photo database know as Discovery Wall

Photograph in the collection of the Christchurch City Library.
<https://discoverywall.nz/album/499/22921>



A race between a Go-kart, a Lotus Seven and a 750cc Honda. 21 September 1974

A go-kart, a Lotus Seven car, and a 750cc Honda motorcycle at Ruapuna Speedway ahead of a six lap race. The car is being driven by "Star" reporter Colin Bryant, the go-kart by Max Haydon of NZBC and the motorcycle by Euan Cameron. The 750cc Honda motorcycle came first, the go-kart came second and the Lotus Seven third.

Creator: Christchurch Star

Area: West / Yaldhurst

Another image from Discovery wall showing motorcyclist Euan Cameron

From the Branches....

Auckland by Rob Cameron

It seems like we are not out of the woods yet with this pandemic. I hate to mention it again however it is still impacting the Auckland branch. Hopefully after this current outbreak it will start being more of a background issue and we can start returning to normal.

I took some time off over the Christmas break and headed back to my family batch in the Marlborough sounds. I left Auckland just before Christmas when the region was still in the red level, watched move to orange and then back to red before returning in early February. I have since decided to stay in Blenheim for the time being while I do not need to return to the office. I will return to Auckland once the current outbreak dies down a bit. It has been good as I have been able to do a bit more family research while I have been back in Blenheim particularly on my Maori side.

In the meantime, the Auckland branch has not been up to much. We have had to move our AGM which is usually scheduled for some time in March to an unknown future date. We have postponed this due to the current covid outbreak. While the virus is rampant in Auckland, it is probably best that we give it some time before getting together. We want to make sure that our members feel safe to attend meetings of this nature. Providing things improve soon, we should start to see the daily case numbers drop. **The latest we will be holding the AGM will be 1st of May. If things improve, we may have it earlier. Auckland members will be advised by email.**

Bryan Haggitt, the First Light Convener, can start the planning phase for the exchange and offering young Finlay Cameron some solid options. This will become clearer in time as we open our borders and plans for our upcoming Bagpipe and Pipe band competition season are made. More details around this will come out at our branch AGM. Providing we have no more surprises with the pandemic, summer should bring back all the Scottish events that we have been missing over the past 2 years. This should provide plans for early next year which could cover the Pipe band Nationals, and several Highland Games around the country.

The NZ Pipe Band Association held their AGM on Sunday 13th March. The Auckland Centre of the association has had a change in president to Glen McPhee. It seems like the main focus of the association in the immediate future is to try and get more youth involved. It was also decided that Auckland will host the 2024 Pipe Band Nationals which is great news for Auckland. As Auckland was supposed to host it this year, current plans can just be moved out by 2 years.

I think that all Scottish related associations have had it pretty tough over the last little while, Auckland is no exception. It does look like there is light at the end of the tunnel. We will be starting to plan our spring and summer events starting with our annual Clan dinner in August.

Manawatu by Anne Walker

The AGM of Clan Cameron Manawatu was held in the Summerhouse at Mt Lees Reserve, near Feilding on Sunday 20th February. It was a small gathering this year but nevertheless it was a beautiful summers day and members enjoyed a brief and informative AGM, followed by a shared potluck luncheon.

President, Russell Cameron, provided a good overview of our year of activity, which was busy despite the impact of Covid.

The Branch elected a full committee, with Russell Cameron re-elected as President, and John Cameron, as Vice-President.

Clan Cameron Manawatu are busy planning the AGM and gathering on 13th – 14th May. Please come and bring family



and Cameron friends to share an enjoyable weekend in Palmerston North.

The programme includes a Welcome event on Friday night, meetings and workshops on Saturday, and a Gala Dinner on Saturday night. Registration is open now and details have been forwarded by email to all Executive and Branch Presidents for sending onto members, and is also included in this newsletter. Please RSVP by 1st May.

The Gala Dinner will be held in the Wharerata Conference Centre at Massey University. Our guest speaker, Prof. Glyn Harper QSM, is one of New Zealand's most highly respected military historians and author of numerous books on WWI history. Entertainment will be provided by Manawatu Scottish No:1 Pipe Band members. Please come and enjoy the event and our Manawatu hospitality.

Hawke's Bay by Hamish Cameron

As I write this, H.B. is struggling to cope with another difficult growing season ---- I say "struggling" for the simple reason the "normal" number of workers are just not available. Border closures have kept thousands – yes, thousands of pickers etc away. Some have been coming every year for well over a decade. The net result of this means growers are closing up and not trying to pick certain blocks.

-----The old adage ---"you don't know what you've got " till its gone"----- is so true – look along your Supermarket shelves. One of the bigger growers, who sells nationally into the supermarkets, is continually running "work available" ads on the local radio stations. These ads are imploring anybody, just about anybody, with spare time - and who wants to turn that into money - to come down to the Packhouse where multiple choices exist of jobs, with the chance to work whatever hours suit. Even if it is only a Saturday or Sunday afternoon – such are the gaps in the workforce.

Right now the latest hiccup is the official confirmation that our region, for the first time, has a number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 !! --- so now the "close contact" rules kick in ---further decimating the workforce. A continuing consequence of COVID, and the new mandates, sees many shake-ups to the way we conduct our businesses. (probably not a bad thing – opportunity accompanies change)

It almost feels like being at war ---nobody can reliably predict for how long or to what extent people, and therefore the ability to supply, will remain restrained. At every turn our previous complacency about our systems and practises and the "old order" have been questioned.

Now, all acknowledge that the workforce "IS" the business. THEIR needs are influencing how business operates. In an attempt to retain seasonal workers, some operations are moving into similarly skilled enterprises just to be able to offer all year round employment as an incentive.

While H.B is engrossed with its seasonal marathon, we as a Clan Branch are once again planning for our involvement in the Easter Hastings Highland Games. Here again the changing rules of COVID, and even if the games will go ahead or be postponed once again, are influencers on what we plan.

That old malaise of "Oh – I'll just wait and see", has surfaced again. I somehow think we'll be sitting tight until Games organisers determine just where we sit in the "Traffic Light System" relative to crowd distancing and numbers..

Bay of Plenty by Tanya Cameron

The Bay of Plenty Branch has done nothing new since the last report, and only a couple of meetings in the last 3 years.

Our branch is continually having trouble finding Officers and at the next Branch AGM we will have no standing Secretary or Treasurer.

If you would like to be considered for a position in our



branch, please let me know, otherwise we will be discussing whether our branch can continue to exist.

I understand that COVID has caused a lot of disruption to our outings and meetings and the age of our members has also contributed to a lack of ability to fill these positions, or attend outings in the current climate.

I will be asking around to see what other branches have done to combat this, but at this stage it is looking dire.

Please let me know if you have any thoughts on this by email or phone.

Canterbury by Rae Magson

No happenings for Clan Cameron in this area. Everyone seems to be staying at home where possible and living quietly.

It is a difficult time but we will get through it.

Keep well everyone.



Iar (Taranaki/Whanganui) by Neville Wallace →

Our clan had a meeting of members at Badgers café at the Tawhiti Museum on Sunday March 6th, with a number of members present. It was a meeting just to have a social get together following the Covid outbreak prior to Christmas. Several clan topics were aired with the main problem of travel in an era of rising fuel prices, with petrol now over \$3 a litre. Covid is another hurdle that people have trouble adjusting to. The other aspect is our geographic isolation 70 km between Hawera and Wanganui. Our members also enquired about Clans in the major centres how were they coping with membership; was Covid a damper on their Clan activities as well?



We are an aging membership with no interest being shown in the clan activities by the younger generation (even Shona's local cousins aren't prepared to come along and participate.) Therein lies our difficulty, with age and declining agility dictating how far older members can travel and be active.

Having discussed the above, discussion moved to the First light with the suggestion that instead of grovelling to Scotland and paying for their people to come to NZ, why couldn't that effort be put into getting our Assn, here in NZ, into progressive mode, maybe tossing the caber as an Olympic sport?

Vale *Ronnie Campbell*

By Bruce Cameron (Manawatu Branch)

Ronnie Campbell of Bohuntin, Glen Roy (1931-2022) was a wonderful host to people from all around the globe who returned to Brae Lochaber to discover their ancestral roots.

Ronnie's mother was a MacDonald, his grandmothers a MacIntosh and a MacMartin Cameron. Ronnie was the last native speaker of the Brae Lochaber Gaelic. he was also the last drover in Scotland. Ronnie was a wonderful storyteller, a traditional singer, a hill runner, badminton player and his true sporting love was Shinty. Ronnie hosted Bernie Cameron from Mabou Cape Breton and taught Bernie the Brae Lochaber Gaelic. Ronnie was always very proud of Bernie's Gaelic.

Our relationship with Ronnie and his sisters Sally and Ishbel began in 1991 when my sister Monica was doing her OE and bicycling around the Western Highlands. After meeting the late Ann MacDonell the local historian in Roy Bridge, Ann said visit the folk up Glen Roy. At the 3rd house Monica told the Campbells what she knew of our pedigree and the Campbells said "we're cousins"! Monica rang home straight away and told dad I've found our cousins....they're Campbells!" Silence from dad, "are you sure!!!" The Campbells treated Monica as family during her stay. Monica asked Ronnie about farming in the Glen and asked Ronnie what he did if a thick fog descended up on a high ridge? Ronnie replied "get the hell off there because the fog might come down for three months!" As Monica was leaving to tour Ireland that autumn Ronnie spotted Monica wearing a black Balaclava, 'are you going to be wearing that in Ireland?' "Yes". "Don't, you may be mistaken for a bicycling IRA hit woman!"

In 1999 when visiting Lochaber I caught up with Ronnie, his pride was the new local Mart up Aonach Mor which Ronnie had been instrumental in having constructed.

In 2001 Ronnie visited NZ and Australia to both meet relations and also developing his plans to commemorate the Blessed Mary MacKillop (later St Mary MacKillop) in Brae Lochaber, the birth place of both her parents. Ronnie stayed with his cousin Barry Keane in Palmerston North. Ronnie charmed us with his wit and grand story telling. I took Ronnie to visit Ewen and Roslyn Grant at Tullochgorum, as Ronnie managed the flock for the "Club", the Bohuntin Crofter's cooperative grazing flock. Ewen and Iain were weighing and drenching ewes when we arrived. Ronnie took a keen interest in the quality of the ewes then spied the ear mark, it was the

same as the Bohuntin flock! Ronnie started a story. "In the 1969 we were watching the lunar landing on TV, my father leaned toward the TV and said, "the first thing the astronauts will find will be Bohuntin ewes! "

In 2010 Ronnie led a group of Lochaber Pilgrims to Rome for the Canonization of Mary MacKillop. Ronnie took up the offering and presented Pope Benedict with a cromach and probably offered some advice on the logistics of flock management. Ronnie also got an audience with the Pope and a Papal blessing to end the MacDonald/Campbell feud. My sister Sheila and her sons met Ronnie in Rome.

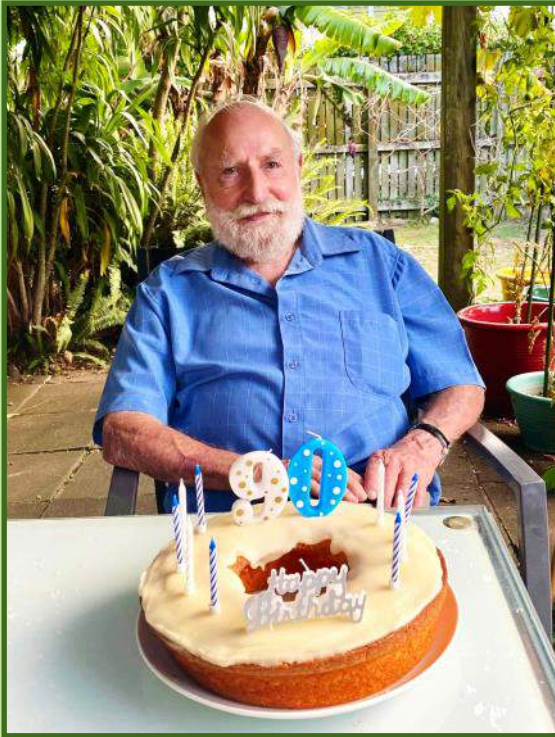
Ronnie said to me "your ancestor Samuel Cameron will be a MacMartin. Later Ronnie told an Australian relation Anne Hammond that Samuel was buried in Gairloch. In 2008 my uncle and Aunty Ron and Mary Cameron visited Bohuntin. It was shearing time, uncle Ron asked Ronnie what he was paying the shearers? Ronnie replied "1 pound 50." Ron said "they're paying more on Mull." Ronnie commented "we'll keep that to ourselves!"

Ronnie Campbell was a living link to the Gaelic past of Lochaber, yet Ronnie was always planning for the future. A true highland gentleman, So fortunate our paths crossed. Last month Ronnie was laid to rest at Cille Choirill, the ancient Brae Lochaber Cemetery. RIP Ronnie Bohuntin!



Local youth hanging out with Ronnie Campbell outside his croft at Bohuntin, Glen Roy. (July 2005)

Image: Elizabeth Shearer



Editor's 90th Birthday

Neil became a nonagenarian in March but has put off any celebration until a later date.

He has been newsletter editor now for 16 years and is happy to continue as long as you want him and he is able. This edition is his 95th issue.

On the right is a rather younger Neil, with younger brother David and father the Rev. K. Ian Cameron, taken in the grounds of the manse in Arrowtown.

The manse was new—in fact they were the first occupants, but had no electric power. Lighting was by kerosene lamps and water was heated by a coal range. The parish car, we think, was a Model T Ford and there were many hair raising journeys up the Crown Range and to Skippers.

Rev. Cameron was later the minister of the historic church in Turakina, but by that time Neil had left home to join the Navy.



St. Kilda



Soay sheep roam freely around the island. They are an ancient breeds of sheep brought to the island by Vikings as a food source. The sheep have formed part of an research study going back over thirty years. New lambs are tagged and levels are monitored by research students visiting the island during the summer months.



One of the slates in the fire place declaring who stayed in the house at the time of the evacuation.



The Gaelic Bible in the pulpit (opened at Exodus) looking out over the church on St. Kilda.

Services were held in Gaelic and could last up to four hours. The St. Kildan's were apparently great singers.



Inside the St. Kilda school. The school was usually taken by the resident missionary or his wife. Classes were often suspended for bird fowling activities when the community would gather to carry out their specific duties.

The school taught in both Gaelic and English as well as mixed classes - long before this was the case on the mainland!!!

Bill Cameron has made several visits to St. Kilda Here are his images which are complementary to Mark Bridgeman's story on pages 8 and 9.

A Tartan for the Royal Canadian Navy

Source: Govt. of Canada



This tartan was registered in the official Scottish Register of Tartans on 25th May 2021

A 31-year veteran of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) is honouring his Nova Scotia roots by helping to create the service's first tartan.

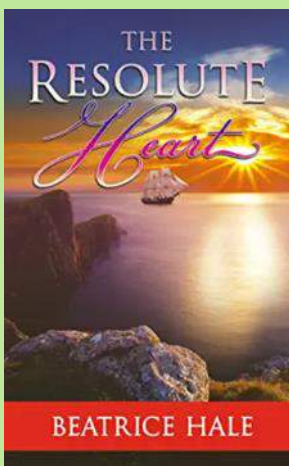
Petty Officer 1st Class (PO1) Norman Phee was born in Antigonish, N.S., and grew up around the Scottish lifestyle in what he calls "the highland heart of Nova Scotia (New Scotland)" "Having the last name Phee, originally MacPhee, I have been in love with my Scottish ancestry all my life," he says.

In 2011, when Canada decided to restore the historic names of the three environmental commands of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), PO1 MacPhee thought the RCN should have its own tartan. "I did some research into the traditional colours of the naval uniform, as well as what makes the RCN stand out from other navies (around the world) and branches of the CAF," he explains. "I also researched which navies from around the world have tartans. Then I talked to tartan designers for some insight into what was needed to create a tartan."

In choosing the colors and pattern for the tartan, he wanted to tie the traditions of the old RCN to the new. "While remembering the older sailors and those lost in all conflicts past and present, I also wanted to ensure that any CAF member wearing the naval uniform is represented." The five colours of the new tartan were chosen to represent different aspects of the RCN: black is its new uniform; dark blue represents the old traditional uniform; yellow is for the laurel on the cap badge; white is for the anchor on the cap badge; red symbolizes ties to the sovereign and also sailors lost; and purple represents non-seagoing members who wear a naval uniform.

Designed by Gordon Kirkbright of GK Textiles in Burnaby, B.C., the new tartan can be worn by anyone with an affiliation to the RCN, including family members. Currently, RCN tartan items available for purchase are not authorized to be worn with the RCN uniform. The Naval Dress Committee will discuss the matter at its next meeting this spring. Until that time, personnel should wear RCN tartan items as part of their civilian attire only.

New Book by Clan Cameron member Beatrice Hale



The time is late summer in 1805. Napoleon is threatening the shores of Britain, and Nelson's navy needs all the men it can get – and they're not all volunteers.

Mary Watson's husband and some mates are snatched from the shores of Fife to serve in the biggest naval battle of the age. But Mary is no sit-at-home wife: She's going after him; And she has picked up a document which might incriminate the Campbell, one of the senior officers of the Navy, currently in the press-gang. He has to get this document back!

The chase is now on! Mary takes the coach to London, whence Harry and his mates are said to be going. With her in the coach is a

friendly older woman, and a quiet watchful man, Ewan Cameron. Campbell chases after the coach. Cameron is certain that Mary has something which the Campbell wants. She decides to trust him, and when they reach London, they look at the document she captured. It is seriously incriminating, mentioning the Campbell along with Napoleon and his captains. Cameron's official capacity is lieutenant, but secretly, he is working for the British government as a spycatcher. He takes possession of the document.

It is time to find and board the boat.

Mary disguises herself as a sailor to get on board, but once on board, is recognised as a woman, and then offers her services as a nurse. Cameron and the Campbell are also both on board.

Secretly, Campbell leads a small group of saboteurs who have plans to sabotage Nelson's tactics and ensure victory for the other side. He recognises Mary and is once more determined to regain his document to ensure his own safety.

Cameron is determined to foil his plans.

After considerable action, Campbell is unmasked and arrested and with Ewan Cameron in charge, the plans to sabotage Nelson's tactics fail.

And Britain won the Battle of Trafalgar.

NOTE

Harry Watson was indeed press-ganged into Nelson's Navy, and his wife Mary went too, and became a nurse on board the boat. According to documents she had a baby before the Battle of Copenhagen. I have altered the story somewhat, and transferred the action to Trafalgar.

Like the rest of us in this Clan I have some interesting ancestors. From my father's side of the family, I am a Cameron. My mother, though, was a Watson, her father came from Cellardyke, and they belonged to the Buchanans. And I lived in Torry, Aberdeen, until my early twenties, when I went to Edinburgh University, and from there, went to Canada where my husband had a teaching job, and thence on to New Zealand – fifty-one years ago!

But 'still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland.' And none of us Scots down under forget our homeland!

The Resolute Heart is based on historical material of the press-gangs, and of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and of Mary Watson, wife of press-ganged Harry, becoming a nurse. Some of this material is in Anstruther Museum, in Fife, which I've always enjoyed visiting. It is definitely just from written source material, pictorial, and imagination.

If buying from Beatrice (<beatricehalenz@gmail.com>) price is \$20 postage inclusive, otherwise from Amazon.

St Kilda - - the Residents Return

By Mark Bridgeman

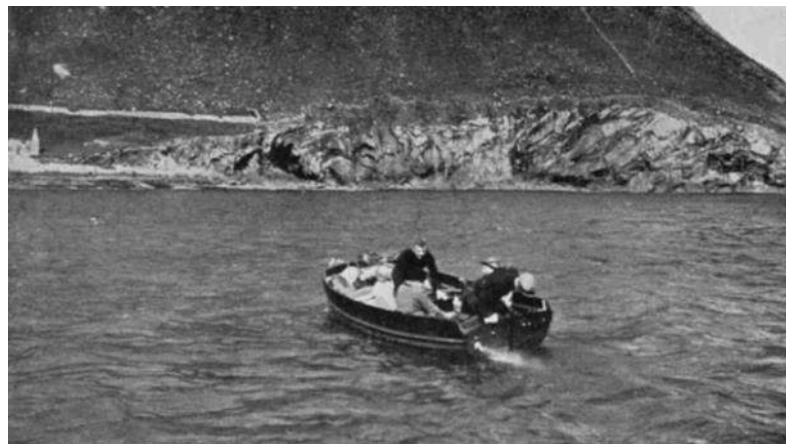
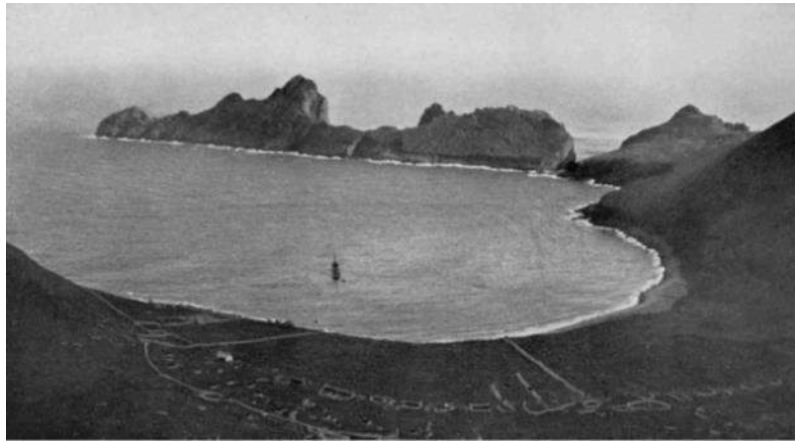
During the lockdown of 2020 Mark Bridgeman wrote a series of articles, about the remote and unique island archipelago of St Kilda. Somehow the isolation of lockdown matched the mood of the islands. Perhaps the most poignant piece was the story of islands' mass evacuation in 1930.

Following years of hardships, depopulation, food shortages, disease, and growing feelings of isolation, the remaining 36 residents finally and reluctantly recognised that life on St Kilda could no longer continue. On 10th May 1930, twenty of the islanders petitioned the British government, pleading for resettlement on the mainland. With most of the able-bodied young men already left to work in Scotland the heart-breaking plea read, 'it would be impossible to stay another winter'.

After months of discussion, government penny-pinching, and cautious questioning, the 36 remaining residents were finally evacuated on 29th August 1930. The islanders' homes were locked up, and the HMS Harebell steamed eastwards away from St Kilda carrying the 13 men, 10 women, and 13 children that made up the remaining population of the islands. The Harebell's Commander later recalled the mood of the islanders, 'Contrary to expectations, they had been very cheerful throughout, though they were obviously very tired.' However, a different account reveals that the residents left the 11 remaining homes on the island like 'an open grave, doors unlocked, with a small pile of oats and an open bible left on the tables', as if they had merely stepped out for the day.

Once on the mainland the ex-residents of St Kilda were exposed to a multitude of new experiences – such as the motor car, the wireless, and even seeing a tree for the very first time. Meanwhile the new owner of St Kilda, the Earl of Dumfries, received many requests from people who wished to move to the islands, but he always refused. Just as the evacuated islanders had come to appreciate, the Earl also accepted that a 19th century style existence on St Kilda was no longer possible in the 20th century.

Nevertheless, this was by no means the end of the exiles' association with the islands. For many years several former islanders made a summer pilgrimage to Hirta (the main, and only previously inhabited island), partly to reminisce, partly to recuperate from the common colds they appeared to regularly pick up on the mainland (from which they oddly seemed to have no immunity), and lastly as tourist guides.



It is not commonly known, however, that a group of ten St Kildans actually returned to live on the bleak archipelago in the summer of 1935 for a rather unusual reason. The group's return to St Kilda also very nearly ended in disaster . . .

When the SS Hebrides departed from Glasgow on Thursday 30th May 1935, it contained a party made up of representatives from four of the five families originally evacuated from the island in 1930. Fergusons, McQueens, Gillies, and MacDonalds were onboard. Only the MacKinnons were unrepresented, due to a recent family bereavement. The party was joined by Earl of Dumfries, the islands' owner, and the photographer and filmmaker Niall Rankine. The St Kildans, who had previously refused to give permission for their evacuation from the islands to be filmed, were now going to ensure that St Kilda would live again, if only on the screen.

After several delays, caused by the worst storms for 40 years, the vessel eventually managed to land its passengers on Hirta. This time the group was well prepared. The Earl of Dumfries has provided a 14 ft motor boat for easier transportation between the two outlying islands. The visitors were lodged at

the old manse and in one of the other remaining dwellings on the island. The Earl, who had purchased the island primarily as a bird sanctuary, had brought the group back to St Kilda for the two purposes. Firstly, the intention was to study, ring, and film the countless varieties of sea birds that nested on the archipelago. Niall Rankine shot over 5,000ft of film during the course of the visit, including some distinctive images of the islands in their uniquely transitory state between occupation and later development for other purposes. The St Kildans assisted Rankine with his photography and filming. Apparently, they had become accustomed to the camera in the five years since the evacuation.

Secondly, the islanders intended to weave a special tweed (to be later tailored into a suit) as a jubilee gift for His Majesty King George V. The King had expressed an interest in receiving the tweed and the islanders felt honoured to

undertake the task. The unique tweed was to woven from the wool of the island sheep, under the direction of Mrs Gillies, the uncrowned 'queen' of St Kilda. Upon their return to the mainland the tweed would be presented to the King at a special ceremony.

Unbeknown to the King, however, was the extraordinarily difficult and dangerous travails involved in collecting the wool from the ancient island flock of Soay sheep.

Mr Neil Ferguson, the island's former postmaster, explained, 'The sheep on Hirta and Soay will have to be rounded up and cornered, in order to lay hold of them. They are now wild and frightened and think nothing of leaping high into the air over your head. The rams are particularly aggressive too. Also, the sheep are not white woolled; they are more or

less brown and black in colour. Natural dyes, but mostly crotal (a yellow lichen, common in the Hebrides), will be used to bring the wool to the right shade, after which it is carded, spun, and mixed to give the blend required.'

Even with the use of the Earl's motor boat, the journey to the other islands to trap the flock became fraught with danger as the storm intensified, 'The sound of the Atlantic rollers breaking on the rocks round the island', as described by Neil Ferguson, 'is the only sound we can hear, apart from the screeching of the birds. But this year the weather is wilder than it has been for forty years, our ears are resounding to the

thunder of the waves as they dashed themselves on the rocks near the village on Hirta, and as they licked greedily on the cliffs behind us. Out at Bororeagh, the grim island which stands like a sentinel in the Atlantic guarding the approach to the main island, tumultuous seas leapt hundreds of feet high against the grey cliff sides of Stac Lee, the 1,300 ft high rock which stands bare and barren next to Bororeagh, its spume and spray flicking ledges which normally were safe from the water. It was one of the most awe-inspiring experiences of my life.'

If the dangerous and life-threatening storm was not enough, a near tragedy almost blighted the small group's time on the island of Hirta. Neil Gillies (a natives of St Kilda) had undertaken to clear away the remains of some huts built on the island by the British Government during the Great War. He had successfully demolished one and lit a bonfire to burn the wreckage, when there was a sudden and huge explosion. Neil, who was stood less than 12 yards away, was knocked to the ground by the force of the blast. Boulders and stones were thrown hundreds of yards in all directions by the explosion and the windows of the church and manse were shattered. It was the loudest noise ever experienced on an island constantly pounded by the ravages of Atlantic storms and breakers. Neil Gillies miraculously escaped without serious injury. The only possible explanation seemed to be that an enemy artillery shell had lain buried there since a German U-boat raid on St Kilda during the Great War.

The story of an attack by a German submarine in 1918 was generally kept quiet, to avoid public discontent, at a time when the Allied forces hoped to be bringing the war to an end. However, it was discussed in parliament a year later, as this extract from Hansard reveals, 'Wednesday 28th May 1919 Dr. Donald Murray asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether he "is aware that a considerable number of the buildings on the island of St. Kilda, including the church and the nurse's house, were destroyed by shell-fire from a German submarine last summer; and whether the Government propose to pay compensation with a view to restoring these buildings?'

The President of the Board of Trade (Sir Auckland Geddes) in response: "My right hon. Friend has asked me to answer this question. I am aware of the facts stated in the first part of the question. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the Air-raid

Compensation Scheme, and if the circumstances of the damaged property comply with the conditions of the scheme the owners will be entitled to compensation. I may mention that compensation has already been granted by the Air-raid Compensation Committee in three cases at St. Kilda and four other cases are under investigation".'

Whilst the explosion may have been caused by an unexploded German shell, it was also possible that the explosion had resulted from a consignment of gelignite left over from a long-forgotten blasting operation on the island. Whatever the reason, St Kilda almost claimed yet another victim during mankind's struggle to eke out an existence in this harshest of environments.

Neil Gillies (apparently none the worst for his adventure) together with one other native of the islands, decided to remain on Hirta longer than the other ex-St Kildans. They waved goodbye when the SS Hebrides steamed away, carrying the remainder of the group safely back to the mainland. It is difficult to imagine the emotions and sensations that the two men must have experienced, as their link with civilisation vanished into the mist, away to the east, leaving the two men to a life there had left so suddenly five years earlier. Now settled on the mainland, into a new world of electricity, cars, radio, and cinema, did they find the ghostly remains of the town on Hirta an alien and unbearable experience? Or perhaps they secretly yearned for a return to a time that had long since passed?

The pair returned to the mainland on the last tourist ship to visit St Kilda, at the end of the summer season in August 1935. The islands, once again, resounded only to the cries of fumars, puffins, and the relentless bleating of the Soay Sheep, as the perilous seas of winter pounded its isolated and dizzyingly high cliff faces for yet another menacing Atlantic winter.

Despite the remote location and the harsh nature of St Kilda, its draw to visitors remains as magnetic today as it has since the first curious Victorian tourists began to arrive 150 years ago. For Neil Gillies, born and bred on the island, the compelling wish to return lingered deep inside him for the rest of his life.

Neil passed away in 2013. The final surviving resident of St Kilda, Rachel Johnson, died in 2016 at the age of 93. She had been only 8 years old at the time of the evacuation. At the moment of her passing, the compelling and magnetic emotion to return to the island, known only to St Kildans, disappeared too.

As outsiders, we can all sense the strange attraction that the island offers, although I suspect it is a very different sensation.

Mark Bridgeman is an author. His book "Blood Beneath Ben Nevis" is available in the museum's shop.

(With thanks to Mark Bridgeman and the West Highland Museum)



The Fort at Fort William

by Betty Bruce (Lochaber)

After the civil war the Lord Protectorate, Oliver Cromwell, ordered General Monck to create order and peace from the chaos in the Highlands of Scotland. General Monck built a fort where the River Nevis enters Loch Linnhe. It could easily be supplied by sea and defended routes south much loved by Highland reivers. It was stoutly built with earth works supported by local oak timbers. (the oak woods of Achdaliu and Annat have only recently recovered from the denuding). It was known as the Fort at Inverlochtiu commanded by Colonel Brayne. So for a time it was said great quiet was in Lochaber. However gradually the fort fell into some disrepair.

In 1688 James II and VI fled to France and William of Orange fearing Highland Jacobite sympathies ordered the fort to be massively rebuilt and strengthened. The refurbished fort was named after King William.

It was to the fort that McLan of Glencoe came unwillingly to sign the oath of allegiance to William and the English government. Unfortunately the Governor was not authorised to accept the oath and McLan was forced to walk through winter blizzards to Inverary. He arrived too late. The deadline



The Fort's Sally Port - Photo: Bill Cameron

had passed. The way was open for the government to make an example of a highland clan.

In 1692 from here Colonel Hill sent forces to assist Campbell of Glenlyon to subdue the MacDonalds of Glencoe. Later in 1752 James of the Glen was brought to the Fort before being hanged at Ballachulish as an accessory to murder.

The Fort took little part in the 1715 rebellion but in the '45 rising in 1746 was unsuccessfully besieged by the Jacobites. Cannon balls from the siege are on display in the Governor's room.

After the harsh reprisals following the 1745 uprising the clan system changed forever. A military presence was not really necessary. The Fort governor was allowed to live outside the fort at Parade House. By 1855 there remained only a sergeant and twenty four men of the Staffordshire volunteers. Finally in 1864 the War Office decided to sell the Fort to Alexander Campbell of Monzie. In 1889 the West Highland Railway was planned and Mrs Cameron Campbell Superior of the town was forced by act of Parliament to sell the site of the Fort.

Although the railway did move in, the officers' quarters were still occupied as council housing. The final demolition order was granted in 1938 but World War II delayed the bulldozers until 1947/48. All that is now left is the sea wall and one sally port.

Highbridge in History

By Betty Bruce

Having been brought up in Lochaber I have always known where Highbridge is.

I have walked past it, cycled past it and driven past it and I knew that this was where the first shot of the '45 Rising was fired. However it was not until I spent a most interesting afternoon with two classes at Spean Bridge Primary School that I fully appreciated the story of Highbridge's place in our history.

Highbridge was completed in 1736 as part of General Wade's plan to help police the Highlands. It was to replace the ford over the River Spean at Inch and facilitate the movement of troops through the Great Glen from Inverness to Fort William. As such it served its purpose well. Why was the bridge necessary in the first place? Why were the garrisons at Fort William, Fort Augustus and Inverness so important in the Highlands? The first seeds were sown in 1688 when Mary of Modena, wife of James VII and II gave birth to a boy in London.

Amid fears that the new heir to the throne would be Roman Catholic unrest allowed William of Orange at the request of the British government to land in England. James VII fled to France and William and his wife Mary were offered the throne. However not everyone supported William and Mary. There was strong support for the absent James and so the Jacobite cause was born.

There were armed uprisings in 1689 and 1715. Both were crushed but many highland chiefs still felt their loyalty was to the Stuart cause.

This was why General Wade and his road making became necessary in an attempt to keep the Highlands under control. Highbridge was part of the plan. In 1745 there were rumours that Prince Charles Edward Stuart had landed in Scotland in an attempt to regain the throne for his father.

The Government responded by ordering two new companies of troops south from Inverness to strengthen the Fort William garrison. News of this reached Jacobite supporters at Spean Bridge.

A party of MacDonnells under Macdonnell of Tirindrish decide to guard the Highbridge and stop the advance. They numbered only twelve but sent out runners to gather reinforcements.

As the Government troops advanced to the bridge, the intrepid twelve ducked in and out of scrub and bracken, plaids waving, shots firing and wild shouts echoing. This wild ballet of deception fooled the advancing military captain.

Fearing an ambush, he halted and then retreated. Now Keppoch, answering MacDonnell's summons arrived with twenty men. Then joined by the Camerons they pursued and fought off the military at the head of Loch Lochy. The Government troops were forced to surrender.

Three days later, on August 19 1745, Prince Charles raised his standard at Glenfinnan. But the first shots of the 1745 rebellion were fired on Cameron country at Highbridge.



The remains of Highbridge. Photo: Bill Cameron

From 'Cameron' 10 year's ago

Achnacarry at War

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the start of Commando training at Achnacarry in 1942, Donald Cameron of Lochiel kindly agreed to tell the Braes newsletter a little about life at Achnacarry during the war and the immediate post-war era.

"We are very proud of the Commandos and our association with them" said Donald Cameron. "Achnacarry was requisitioned during the war, so my grandparents could not have done much about it. However, my grandfather was a military man and he was happy to let the Commandos train here because he felt he was doing his bit for the Second World War. He and my grandmother moved to Clunes two miles away, so he could keep an eye on things. My father and his two brothers were away at war."

Many of the Estate workers went to war, leaving women and children behind on the Estate with a few men able to produce food for the remaining population. Sheep and cattle continued to be reared and farmed on the Estate. However, the area was completely militarised and locals were not involved in operations at Castle Commando. Indeed land west of the Caledonian Canal was a restricted zone and access to the Estate was therefore restricted, although Donald believes that the people who lived there could come and go easily, and security was not too excessive despite the fact that there was a protected area checkpoint located at the swing bridge in Gairloch.

The Commando course at Achnacarry was notoriously tough. When recruits arrived by train at Spean Bridge Station they had to run the eight miles to Achnacarry and if they didn't do it in under an hour they got sent back. The park at Achnacarry was covered in Nissan huts and a parade ground was constructed that has now been buried and covered with turf.

"On arrival at Achnacarry recruits were greeted by mock graves and told that this was what happened to men who put their heads above the skyline and got shot. New recruits who questioned the validity of the graves were told not to speak like that in the presence of the dead." Donald confirmed that the graves have now been removed. The use of live ammunition on the training grounds inevitably meant there were casualties. Lochiel estimated that around 10-12 men were killed in training incidents, although official figures have never been revealed. The Commando training was famously tough and in one raid where there was a lot of ammunition flying about, one Commando turned round to the officer and said 'Oh my God, Sir, its nearly as bad as Achnacarry.'

At the Beech Avenue you can still see marks on the trees from the Tarzan Assault Course. Recruits used to tie ropes and slide over the river with live ammunition going off around them. Apparently my grandfather was watching once and the ammunition they used blew a salmon up. Everyone

tried to divert his attention and then this American came up and presented him with the fish and said 'I've got a big fish for you here'. My grandfather wasn't best pleased!"

The military occupation did not leave the Castle or Estate undamaged. Famously, in November 1943 a fire gutted the roof of the house. Another fire destroyed part of the ancient Caledonian Forest. The fire raged from the hill adjacent to the Castle, down Loch Arkaig and into the Glen burning furiously for three days and nights. The remnants of the charred Scots pines can still be seen from the Castle. Donald said "I never

saw the fire because I wasn't born, but it must have been a great loss, with all the old Caledonian pines gone. I was told that it was started by a discarded cigarette butt,

After the war the Commandos left the Castle, but the house was not returned to the family in pre-war condition. "After the war my parents didn't move back to Achnacarry, but stayed at Clunes until the death of my grandfather in 1951. It was quite difficult to decorate places after the war because of coupons, so the re-decoration of the house took a long time. My parents moved back in about 1952 and so did I. They continued to gradually re-decorate the Castle."

Servicemen had put their own stamp on the house. Many of the rooms featured beautiful murals painted by Corporal Brian Mullen of No 4 Commando who was sadly killed in action on D-Day. "People ask why we didn't keep the murals because they were so lovely, but actually you couldn't really live with nude mermaids staring at you!"

"There was a lot of unexploded ammunition left around the place. I remember when I was a boy and the field was being ploughed, they'd occasionally turn up the odd rusty

grenade. And, when we installed a new water system in the village in 2008 we had to have the ground swept by experts who found seven mortars and a hand grenade during the search."

Donald believes that most of the Estate workers would have returned after the war, though life would have been very tough for them by modern standards even into the 1950s. Life up the Glen was very isolated, there was no electricity and it was very difficult to get to places. Donald recalled that when he was a boy "a man called Cameron would climb over from the Glen into Glen Loy where he had a motorbike waiting, drive

to Fort William for his shopping and return back to the Glen the same way." Times were much harder than they are today.

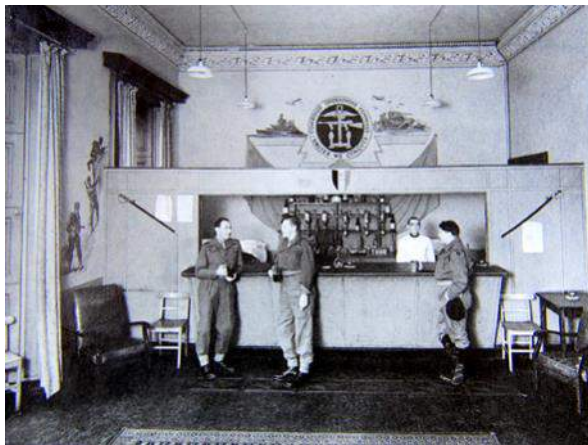
By Editor: Thanks to Lochiel and the Braes newsletter for permission to use this story, and to Bill Cameron for providing the photos.

Lochiel featured in a recent BBC documentary 'Castle Commando' explaining Achnacarry's important wartime role. 'Lt-Col Charles Edward Vaughan commanded the training centre. It was a historic moment when he first met Lochiel. Not since the Duke of Cumberland in 1746 had an English soldier and his troops occupied Achnacarry. On that occasion they had burned and ravaged the place. What would they do to Achnacarry in 1942?'

- from 'Castle Commando' by Donald Gilchrist.



Murals on the walls in Achnacarry



Commandos at their bar in Achnacarry



Aonaibh ri Cheile

The Back Page



By Editor:

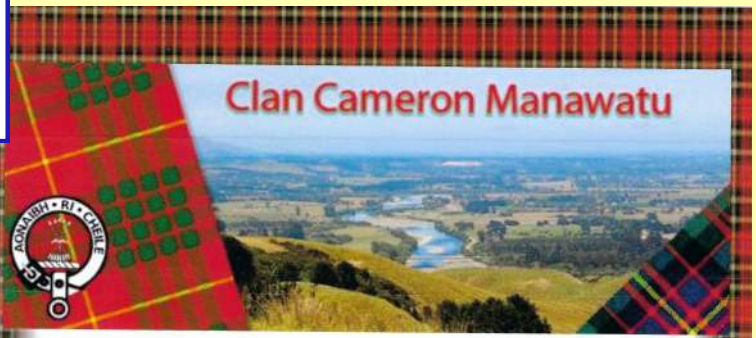
We welcome Betty Bruce as an occasional correspondent from Lochaber. As you can see below Betty has Cameron ancestry and has links to New Zealand.

“I was brought up in Lochaber, my mother being a Cameron, my father having come to work in the aluminium factory. Went to school in Fort William, university at Glasgow. Always worked in the book trade, book selling and publishing.

Got married in Wellington when my husband to be landed a job in New Zealand and left me to pack and follow. From Wellington to Melbourne to Sydney and finally back to Scotland mostly for family reasons.

Having reached age of retiring I joined the West Highland Museum as education officer– had to keep active. Have now finally retired after more than twenty years as director and chair of education and collections.”

Two of Betty’s stories are on page 10.



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