



TAIGH-TASGAIDH NA GAIDHEALTACHD AN IAR

whm

West Highland Museum

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2013

## Message from the Chairman



We have reason to be proud of our achievements this year. Our Newsletter articles have the common theme of enthusiasm and success. More visitors, more volunteers, more activity, more commendations and more fun for everyone involved in the Museum family, whatever their role.

Some members would have attended the series of talks and activities organised by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, culminating in the detailed account and analysis of the Appin Murder. While the events were very enjoyable, the question of legacy remains and I hope that it will be possible to encapsulate that appetite for serious cultural meetings and we must work with kindred bodies to ensure that happens.

Those who attended the AGM in May will be aware that we are setting out to broaden our trustee base and thus improve outreach in the community. We have invited the Lochaber History Society, the Fort William Chamber of Commerce and the Fort William Community Council each to nominate a trustee. I am delighted that the latter has nominated Thomas Wynne, a well-respected family butcher and community activist whose West Highland roots are very deep indeed.

I do hope that you find something of interest in this excellent Newsletter. We are very grateful to all contributors, especially Vanessa Martin, our Editor and Sharon Donald our Production Editor. The article on the importance of legacies should interest us all and illustrates that this need not be a complex or stressful matter to deal with.

To finish on a plea – we now have an established place as a specialised bookshop and have developed our own voucher scheme that should be of interest for Christmas gifts. Please consider this and also tell your friends!

**John Hutchison**  
Chairman of Trustees

## Message from the Manager



We have had a good summer this year at the Museum ... and not just weather wise! Our visitor numbers at the end of August were up 27% on 2012, donations by visitors were up 20% and sales in the shop were up 26%. This is great to see as it all helps towards the running costs of the Museum.

The Commando Exhibition is now open. We still have a few changes and additions to make, but it looks really good and has been very well received by visitors. If you have not been in to see it yet, please do pop in and tell us what you think.

As the Commando Exhibition is located in Room 1, we have needed to create a new temporary exhibition area. During last year's winter closure we constructed a new exhibition area in Room 6. During the summer we displayed tapestries made by Fort William Primary and Upper Achintore Primary depicting Lochaber Life. This display brought in quite a few locals, many of whom had never visited the Museum before, or had not visited us for a while.

*Continued on page 2*



*Tapestries displayed in the Museum made by students from Fort William Primary & Upper Achintore Primary*



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West Highland Museum

## Message from the Manager - continued

We are now on TripAdvisor and are receiving some wonderful reviews. It is great to see our visitors appreciate our Museum as much as we do. Here is one we recently received:

*"My Dad loved this place as he is a war buff. The exhibits are very good and informative. They have several exhibits from different eras and it's not all war, so something for all the Family. For such a small museum there is lots in it, without going over the top. They even provide a stair lift for the stairs for the less able and a disabled toilet. The staff are lovely and chatty, and it's all free, they only ask for a small donation, which to be honest is miniscule compared to the enjoyment the people and place provides. Big thumbs up!!!!"*



To advertise the Commando Exhibition, the Museum sponsored a flower barrel in Spean Bridge this summer near the Commando Memorial.

We now have forty volunteers helping us welcome visitors at reception and in the shop, and with the cataloguing of our collection. We are still looking for more volunteers, so if you live locally and have four hours to spare weekly or fortnightly why not give it a try?

This year we invited local accommodation providers to tour the Museum. Those who attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves and some joined the Museum and adopted a show case! We plan to do this again next year.

The BBC visited the Museum in August to film the "Secret Portrait" for The Culture Show. The programme is scheduled to be aired in early 2014.

To help raise funds for the Museum we are taking two tables at the Rotary Club's Christmas Festival in November this year and shall be doing a bag pack in Morrisons on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November. If you can help at either of these events please contact us.

If you are receiving this newsletter in paper format but you have access to email, please could I ask you to consider receiving the newsletter electronically in future as it saves us the significant cost of printing & posting newsletters. If you would like to be added to our email list, please send your details to [colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk](mailto:colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk), or telephone me on 01397 702169.

Best wishes

**Colleen Foggo**  
Museum Manager

## The West Highland Museum: The next hundred years ... after 2022

The history of the Museum is well documented and several papers have appeared in various publications over the years; our archive of annual reports gives a valuable record of the facts, and information on the less tangible issues is there for those who wish to enquire.

The story is one of vision, commitment and a passion to preserve and expand our collection; it is one of successes and disappointments, rising and falling admissions, unexpected windfalls and of our precious possessions being trundled along the High Street between its summer and winter quarters. It tells of the euphoria of a successful grant application, and of staff deferring payment of monies due to them because, as the accountant would say, of poor cash flow.

I venture to suggest that our finances and the morale of those who are in the building on a regular basis are better than they have been for years and, most importantly, the Trustees and Management Committee are well advanced in addressing the issues pinpointed by the Lottery Commission when it turned down our last grant application for funding for a plan to redevelop and extend the present building.

So much for the past. We celebrate our centenary in 2022, only nine years away, and given the length of time it takes to make decisions, obtain the necessary approvals and raise the funds, it is not too early for our members and supporters to be thinking as to how we should mark this milestone with a project of lasting and significant value. Celebrating this major event in our history cannot be left to a handful of enthusiasts as was the case ninety one years ago, and if we are to play our part in bearing faith with our founders, we should start planning now.

By "we", I do not mean the Trustees and Management Committee; they are well aware of the situation. I mean our members, our other local supporters and local businesses which benefit directly or indirectly from our reputation as one of the best amenities which Lochaber has to offer. I also mean the local, regional and national communities with which we share mutual relevance.

To do this we must:

- Decide what form the celebration of our centenary should take.
- Examine costs, including both capital and those of a continuing nature.
- Consider funding, from public and private sources.
- Establish a body of supporters who can commit their time and energy, in addition to that of the professionals who will be involved, over the next nine years.
- Appoint a "Centenary Czar" whose role is to guide rather than to do.

Ad Multos Annos!

**Richard Sidgwick**



# A volunteer's day

*You never know what lies in store when you walk in the door of the West Highland Museum at the beginning of your volunteer's shift. Some things are predictable. If you are on the morning shift, you open up the building. Shutters are opened, lights are flicked on and doors unlocked.*

*(For the afternoon shift, you just do the same thing in reverse at the end of the day).*

*A bit of hoovering and cleaning, and it is time to open the front door. You have probably opened a little early anyway, because the young couple at the door knocked so politely.*

You know that the first moment you can, you check the visitor numbers for previous days. Your mission is of course to top the previous days' numbers.

You know that the moment you go off for a coffee, your partner on the shift is going to be faced with dealing with a shopper with a number of items to buy whilst simultaneously greeting a French family of six that are coming in through the door. It is fairly certain that you are unlikely to complete a shift without a visitor asking about 'the funny walnut-like object at the top of the stairs', and you know that at least once during your shift someone will come in to ask where the Tourist Office is.

You might well have time to do a bit of polishing of the glass on the cases. This allows you to linger, of course, over the objects in the case. I always enjoy cleaning the glass in the Natural History room, where children have pressed their noses against the glass case to get a better view of the stuffed otter.

There are also individual certainties, like ringing up the till for £100 instead of £1 for the Museum Guide. But, above all you know that whatever you do wrong, either Colleen or Sonja will descend from the office above and cheerily sort it out.

What you don't know is that at some point in the summer there will be a queue of visitors actually building up outside the front door. Your finely-honed four sentence spiel of welcome will in no time be truncated to a quasi-military single-sentence bark, with accompanying sweeping arm movements.

You also don't anticipate that you might be asked to give a brief outline of the Clearances in less than two minutes. Unsurprisingly, you will fail that test.

You certainly don't expect to hear some of the wonderful tales told by visitors. A lady from Derby told me that the room where the leaders of the



Jacobite army discussed turning back to Scotland is now part of a Council-owned building. The current employees of the Council are convinced that echoes of the Jacobites arguing can still be heard from that room. Well, I believed her.

Of course, what you don't know is bottomless. You might start off confidently enough explaining to a charming North American couple about the blossoming of Gaelic culture from Ireland in the Dark Ages. You will realise quite shortly that you are failing to convince even yourself. Fortunately, the not-so-busy times at the desk have enabled you to get a good working knowledge of the books for sale in the shop, so with any luck you can turn your talk into a sales pitch.

Finally, at the end of the shift your greatest certainty will be the number of visitors who will have stopped at the desk on the way out to tell you how much they have enjoyed their visit, and what a great Museum we have.

**Fiona Maclean of Ardgour**

# Carmichael Watson Collection now online

The University of Edinburgh and the National Museum of Scotland were awarded grants to make the Carmichael Watson Collection available online. The West Highland Museum is privileged to include the majority of items within its own Collection. The items were initially loaned and then gifted to the Museum by the late Michael Carmichael. The Carmichael Watson Collection focuses on the papers of the pioneering folklorist Alexander Carmichael (1832-1912), and is the foremost collection of its kind in the country, a treasure-chest of stories, songs, customs, and beliefs from the Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland.



*Eoghan Carmichael and Alasdair Carmichael launching the website at the West Highland Museum*



*Lochaber musicians entertain guests at the launch party.*

The University of Edinburgh hosted a party on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2012 at the West Highland Museum where Alexander's descendants Eoghan Carmichael & Alasdair Carmichael launched the website.



The collection can be viewed at:

[www.carmichaelwatson.lib.ed.ac.uk/cwatson/](http://www.carmichaelwatson.lib.ed.ac.uk/cwatson/)

## A lasting memory

The history of the people of Lochaber is captured at its best at the West Highland Museum. We all have our special recollections of the old days, whether it is the farming or fishing life, its remarkable contribution to the army, Bonnie Prince Charlie, or the ascent of Ben Nevis in a Model T Ford. Everything within the museum collection, just about, has been a gift or a legacy from someone who like you hold Lochaber dear.

One of the best ways we can help the Museum educate our young, and display unique treasures for locals and visitors alike is to help the staff and trustees care for and enhance the collection. The museum is free to enter and has a very small income. What I have committed to do is to leave a legacy to our museum and I hope reading this you feel you could do the same. You could leave a percentage of your estate, or a fixed sum. You don't need to rewrite your will, you just need to attach a letter to it, known as a codicil.

There are real tax advantages in doing so that might be of interest too.

If this appeals to you please do something about it now.

Speak to Colleen, or one of the trustees and get it written down.

Your love of Lochaber will encourage other people to share that same love.

**Angus MacDonald, Roshven**

A life member



# The St. Kilda Mailboat

*When the last thirty-six St. Kildans left their island homes in August 1930, a unique Gaelic culture that had existed out in the furthest reaches of the British Isles for thousands of years finally succumbed to the pressures of the outside world.*

Earlier this month a uniquely St. Kildan tradition was recreated eighty-three years after the island was evacuated. The St. Kilda mailboat was a slow and unpredictable means of communication between the islanders and the outside world in sending messages long before today's instant broadband and Wi-Fi connections.

Lying one hundred and ten miles from main land Scotland, the St. Kildan community lived independently and resourcefully mainly through crofting and communal wild fowling on the highest and remotest sea stacs in the British Isles, providing their food, oil and feathers from which they lived and also paid their rent.

Visited by occasional passing trawler boats in the summer months, the St. Kildan community largely lived independent from mainland Scotland and could be cut off from the rest of Britain for up to nine months of the year out in the temperamental North Atlantic Ocean.

An original St. Kildan mailboat can be seen on display at the West Highland Museum in Fort William. It was donated to the museum in 1930, the same year the island was evacuated. This unusual communication device is made up of a simple boat shaped piece of wood with a carved out compartment in to which a message would be placed and sealed. The mailboat was then tied by a length of rope to a float made from a sheep bladder that was tied around a wedge of wood to function as a

buoy. The mailboat would then be launched out into the ferocious and unpredictable North Atlantic, floating on the waves with pleas of help when food or medical assistance were required. From the distant shores of St. Kilda it would then be carried at the mercy of tidal currents until it made landfall some weeks or months later.

Although not enclosed with SOS messages or using a sheep bladder as a buoy, a modern day version of the St. Kilda mailboat was launched out in the St. Kilda archipelago earlier this year, enclosed with information to make contact with those involved in the recreation of this uniquely St. Kildan tradition. The St. Kilda mailboat was launched into the dark waters of the North Atlantic by the furthest travelled member of a group, Chris Hunter from Saskatchewan Canada whose grandfather had emigrated from Island Flodda, Benbecula many years ago.

The last St. Kilda mailboat was launched in August 14th 2010 by Mr. Neil Ferguson from Ayrshire, grandson of the St. Kilda Postmaster of the same name. This mailboat commemorated the 80th anniversary of the evacuation and was found a month later on the west coast of Lewis. St. Kilda mailboats have been found as far afield as Thurso and Norway. Where and when the 2013 St. Kilda mailboat will end up is still in the hands of the North Atlantic tidal highway.

**Bill Cameron**

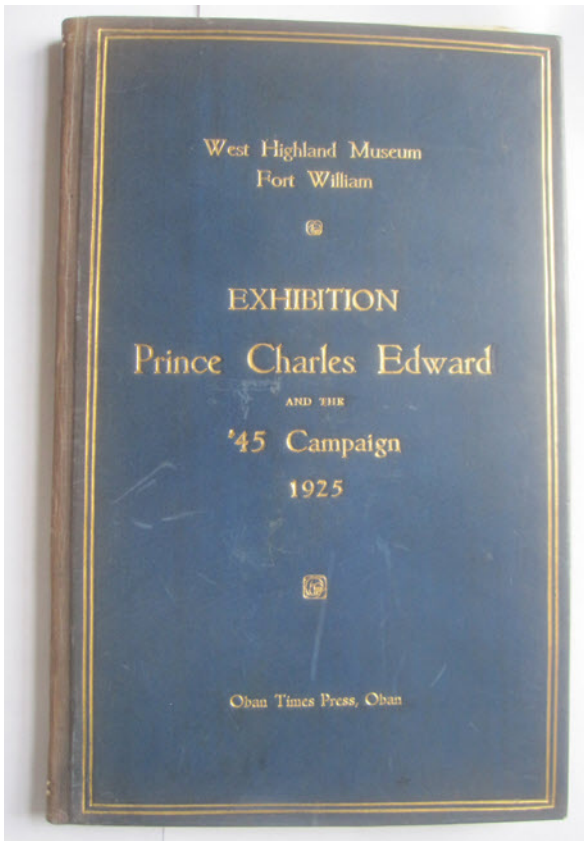


*Left: Original St. Kilda mailboat in the West Highland Museum.*

*Below: Alasdair Maceachen and his cousin Chris Hunter who launched the 2013 St. Kilda mailboat out in front of Stac an Armin in the St. Kilda archipelago.*



# The West Highland Museum in 1925



A relic of the Museum's early days in Fort William has recently been donated to the Museum which turned up in a bookshop in Western Pennsylvania in the USA. It's a finely leather bound catalogue of the exhibition held in the Summer of 1925 by courtesy of the British Lined Bank – the very first exhibition in our present building. This copy of the catalogue belonged to one Duncan Grant and tucked inside is a letter from our founder Victor Hodgson thanking him for sending the packages which arrived safely “which are lying in the bank safe until we arrange the Exhibition”. “The catalogue of the exhibition is disgracefully late getting to the Oban Times Office for printing - (People have been slack in letting me know what they were really going to send....)”

Together with a list of books donated is a flyer for the “Prince Charles Edward & the '45 Campaign Exhibition” with a letter from the then Chairman – Dr. A.C. Cameron Miller, local Medical Practitioner.

The letter requests support “in the shape of gifts of suitable objects and contributions of money, not only to cover any excess expenses of the Exhibition..., but in order to purchase as a permanent home the building in which it is held” – things don't change!

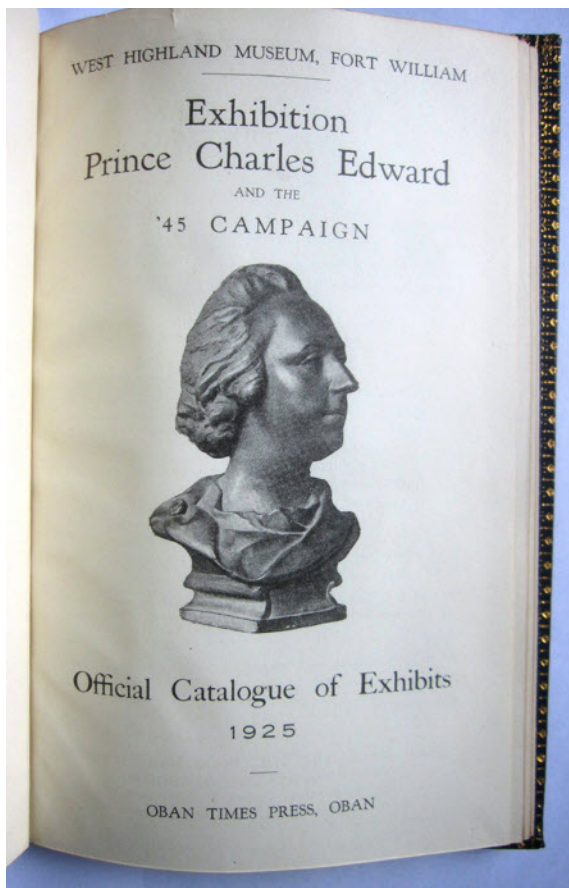
The 59 page catalogue lists 416 items gifted or loaned to the Museum for the Exhibition, including a total of eight separate rings and brooches containing locks of Prince Charlie's hair – perhaps the Queen was close to the truth when on her visit to the Museum in 1995 she retorted “if every lock of his hair I've been shown is genuine the poor man must have been completely bald!”

The secret portrait is there “which was probably used on the table when drinking toasts, the portrait of the prince only being exposed when all the company present were known to be loyal Jacobites”.

The Strange Plate, used in an attempt to print banknotes in 1746 (an early example of “Quantitative Easing?") is not in the Exhibition – but a print from the plate was on display. The plate itself was bought later for the Museum from the effects of Coln. A.C. MacPherson of Cluny.

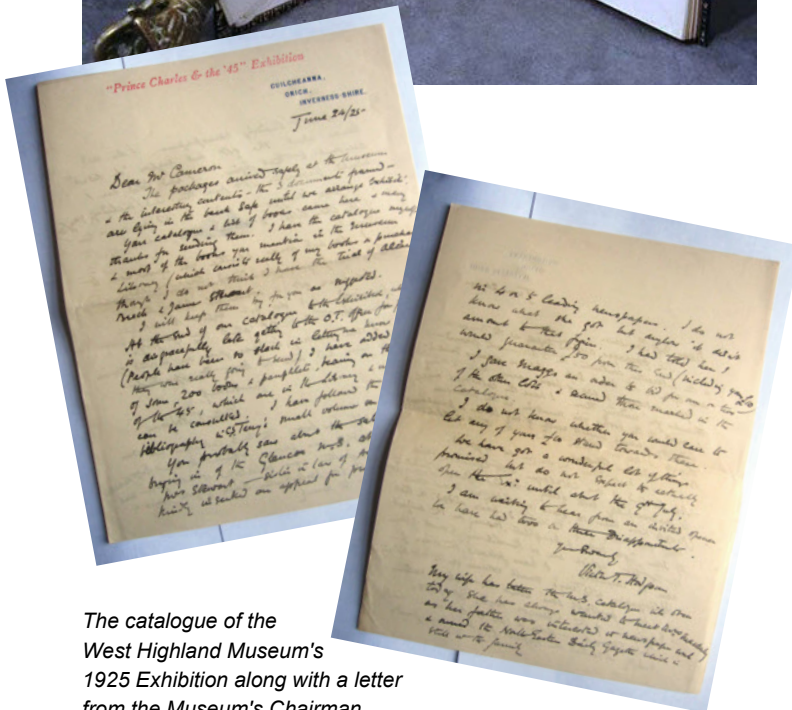
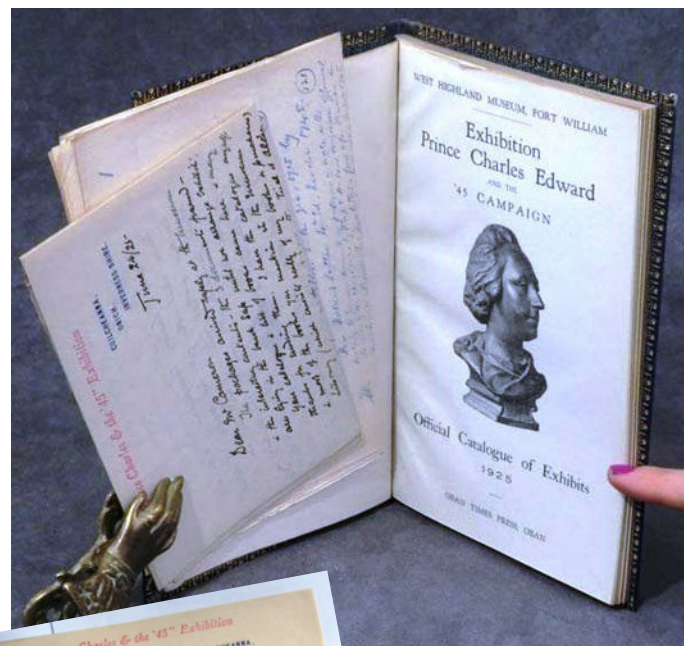
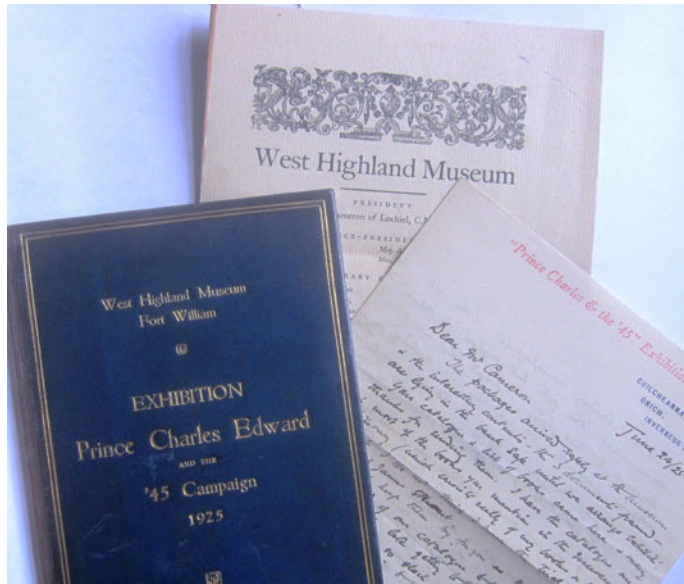
Donors and lenders to the Exhibition included Lochiel, Miss Alice MacDonnell of Keppoch, other museums, auction houses and libraries, and a host of other private individuals. Much of the material was already “The property of the West Highland Museum, which our founder however admits in relation to (at least) the library “consists really of my books and purchases”.

What generosity of spirit in time and commitment! “The Museum serves not only Fort William, but the whole of the Western Highlands”. One would like to think that Victor Hodgson's vision of a “Museum Service” continues 88 years later as we now offer that service to five times the number of visitors we entertained just four years ago - and not just from the Western Highlands but from across the globe.



**Chris Robinson**





The catalogue of the West Highland Museum's 1925 Exhibition along with a letter from the Museum's Chairman, Dr A. C. Cameron Miller.

## *In Memory of*

**Margaret Lorna Carey Roady**

March 1942 - June 2013

Margaret's great grandfather came to Spean Lodge in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and her family lived there until her mother sold it in the mid 1980s; since then, four generations of her family have been involved in local affairs, none closer to our hearts than those of the West Highland Museum. A brief review of our annual reports will show that her grandfather, Major Alistair, was a member of the Management Committee in 1934, her grandmother, Mrs Lorna Davy, was a vice president in 1973, and her mother Jean, fulfilled the same role in the 1970s.

Those who knew her well would agree that she was never one to lead from the front; a better supporter would be hard to find and, as such, she was a member of our Management Committee for some years, and latterly, a volunteer. Last year's annual report contains a photograph of her helping with the winter 'spring clean'.

Occasions like this should make us think of the future. Although relevant, what has happened in the past is of little practical help today. Margaret would wish to look at our permanent staff and our volunteers, of whom she was one, and see our future in their energy, generosity and commitment which is the foundation for our coming centenary.

RTS

# Achnacarry at War

*The Museum's permanent Commando Exhibition opened in early 2013. In 2012, to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of Commando training at Achnacarry in 1942, Donald Cameron of Lochiel, President of the West Highland Museum, kindly agreed to tell us 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 Lochiel. “Achnacarry was requisitioned during the war, and 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 War effort. He and my grandmother moved to Clunes two miles away, so he could still 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 North of the Caledonian Canal was a restricted zone and access to the Estate was therefore limited, although Lochiel 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.

*Murals at Achnacarry Castle. Courtesy of Donald Cameron of Lochiel*



*Achnacarry Castle today.  
Photograph by Iain Thornbe*

“On arrival at Achnacarry recruits were greeted by mock graves and told that that was what happened to men who put their heads above the skyline. New recruits who questioned the validity of the graves were told not to speak like that in the presence of the dead.” Lochiel confirmed that the “graves” have long since been removed. The use of live ammunition on the training grounds inevitable 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



*The Officers' Mess. Courtesy of Donald Cameron of Lochiel*



where there was a lot of ammunition flying about, one Commando turned round to an officer and said 'oh my God, Sir it's nearly as bad as Achnacarry'

"At the Beech Avenue you can still see marks in 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 but an American retrieved the fish and presented it to him. 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 vigorously for three days and nights. The remnants of the charred Scots pines can still be seen from the Castle. Lochiel 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 its pre-war condition. "After the war my grandparents 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 move back in about 1952 and so did I. They continued to gradually re-decorate the Castle." Serviceman 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 also 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."

Lochiel believes that most of the Estate workers would have returned after the war, although 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 still difficult to travel long distances. Lochiel recalled that when he was a boy "a stalker called David Cameron would climb over from Glen Mallie into Glen Loy where he had a motorbike waiting, drive to Fort William for his shopping and return back the same way." Times were much harder than they are today.

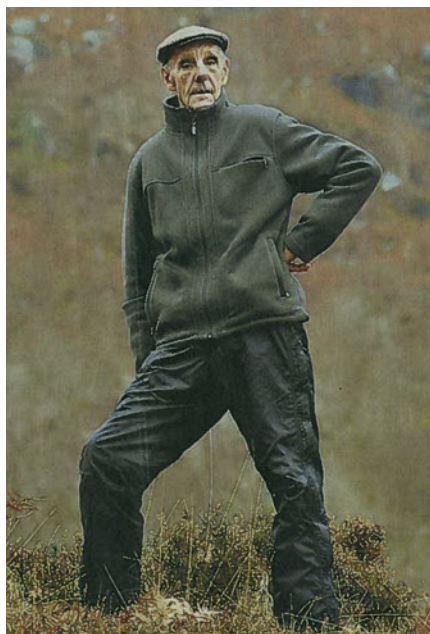
**Article courtesy of the Braes Community Newspaper, 2012.**

## ***Down Memory Lane with Donald Cameron***

*Donald Cameron lives in Lochaber and is featured in the Museum's Commando Exhibition. Here he shares some of his wartime memories of commando training at Achnacarry.*

"I joined up on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1941 in what was called the General Corps and went off to Plymouth for three months basic training—the first time I'd ever been away from Lochaber! After that I was drafted into the 2nd Royal Warwickshire Regt. And I don't think there was another Scotch boy in the whole squad. I had five or six months and at Company Details it came out that they were wanting volunteers for the commandos and the captain said to me 'On you go, you'll be right up in your own part of the country.' Ach well, I thought, nothing venture, nothing gain, so off I went and found myself at Spean station with a full pack. Eight or nine of us got off the train—all English lads- and they must have known we were coming because there was a man shouting and bawling, saying he was going to sort us out and we didn't know what was coming to us. The outcome was that we marched in full kit to Achnacarry.

This was spring 1942 and we were the first intake, no Nissen huts yet and we



were mostly in tents. I remember the CO. Col. Vaughan and a training officer called Lieutenant Leach; we called him Spider Leach because he could climb anything! We went through the whole 2 month

training schedule, the assault course, armed and unarmed combat, canoes, opposed landings, endless exercise out on the hills; I can remember walking from Achnacarry through Glen Pean and on to Meoble from where I could see home just across the loch before getting the train back from Inverailort. And, of course there was weapons training with mortars, grenades and small arms and Bren guns. I can remember crossing the river on ropes and more than once seeing a man go in with a full pack. After passing out, we went to Inverary to train for D Day; the beaches were more like Normandy and we practiced with landing craft; we were stationed briefly at Liberton, outside Edinburgh before heading for Littlehampton and the invasion of Sicily."

**Recorded and edited by  
Richard Sidgwick**

*Extract from the Braes Community  
Newspaper, 'Down Memory Lane' 2013.*

## The Glen Roy Cruet and Cranachan Road Mass Stone

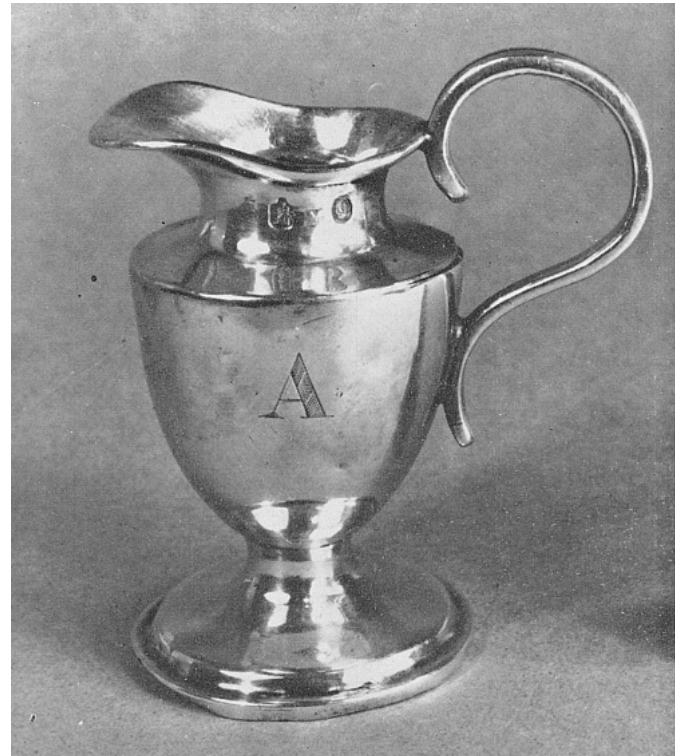
*A silver water cruet was donated to the West Highland Museum in 2011 and now forms part of the collection. The small silver water cruet was found in a burn in Glen Roy just over one hundred years ago. The cruet was used in the celebration of mass and it is believed it was used at the nearby Cranachan Road Mass Stone.*

In 1966 A MacDonell and D McRoberts published an article in the Innes Review titled 'The Mass Stones of Lochaber'\* featuring the story of the Cranachan Road Mass Stone and the discovery of the lost water cruet.

The Mass stone was originally sited high above the burn, but due to the erosion of the landscape, the stone fell into the burn and broke in two. It was retrieved and placed back in its original position. However, when erosion again threatened the safety of the stone at the end of the 19th century, local men moved the stone to its present position on the other side of the Cranachan Road. According to the Innes Review "About 1870, Donald Campbell Macpherson (1842-80), a native of nearby Bohenie and a noted Gaelic scholar, carved a chalice and a host on the front of this stone to perpetuate the local tradition of its use for the celebration of mass during the Penal Days."

The following edited extract from the Innes Review tells the history of the water cruet's rediscovery:

"An elegant little silver Mass cruet, 2 1/4 inches high, was found in the burn, near the Mass Stone by Angus Cameron. Angus Cameron found the Mass Cruet when he was a young man. The date of its discovery must be placed somewhere about the year 1880. The cruet has a capital A (for aqua)engraved on its side, showing that it was the cruet which held the water used in the mass (the corresponding cruet for wine would have the letter V - for Vinum - engraved on it). One can visualize the priest preparing for mass at the 'Clach na h-aifrinn' and the 'cleireach,' or alter -server, taking the water-cruet to the burn to fill it with water : something



*The silver cruet*

untoward happens and the cruet disappears into the burn only to be recovered by a young man in the 1880s. And the most intriguing thing about the Mass Cruet is its date. The silversmith's mark clearly shows that it was made by James Moore, Warden of the Dublin Guild of Goldsmiths in the year 1837 or 1838, and this seems to indicate that the Mass Stone was still in use as late as perhaps 1840. At first sight this seems unlikely since Lochaber had a church at Bunroy, built in 1826, and before that, there was the chapel at Achluachrach, built in the 18th century. However, there is nothing impossible in the idea that mass was still being celebrated occasionally at the Cranachan Road site perhaps for the convenience of the neighbouring population, or because the congregation at a festival may have been too big to celebrate in the chapel. It was by no means unknown for religious ceremonies to be held outdoors in the Highlands in the 19th century." The Mass Stone still stands in Glen Roy.

*\*Innes Review. Volume 17, Page 71-81 DOI 10.3366/inr.1966*

**Vanessa Martin**



*The Cranachan Road mass stone*



# A Royal visit

*On 18 August 1958 Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke of Edinburgh and their young family visited Lochaber. In glorious sunshine the Royal family embarked on a tour of Fort William and the Great Glen. Among the West Highland Museum's recent acquisitions are a series of contemporary newspapers reporting the Royal tour in great detail.*

The Royal yacht Britannia brought the Royal family on their first visit to Lochaber. These extracts from the **Oban Times** described the excitement and pageantry that marked the first visit of a reigning monarch since 1906: "Cheering crowds greeted the Royal family when they disembarked at Fort William in brilliant sunshine on Monday at the end of their holiday cruise in the Britannia. Looking fresh and sunburned after her rest, the Queen laughed and joked freely to make the visit one of the most relaxed and certainly one of the happiest of her tour."

"For days the townspeople had prepared for this occasion, Fort William's first official visit from the reigning monarch since 1906. Everywhere flags and bunting fluttered a welcome to the Royal visitors. In High Street a beautiful heather archway under which the visitors would pass carried a banner bearing in gaelic the greeting 'Welcome to the Fort', while at the Station a large gilt crown surmounted yet another banner on which was displayed another Gaelic greeting

'Ceud Mile Failte' (a hundred thousand welcomes)."

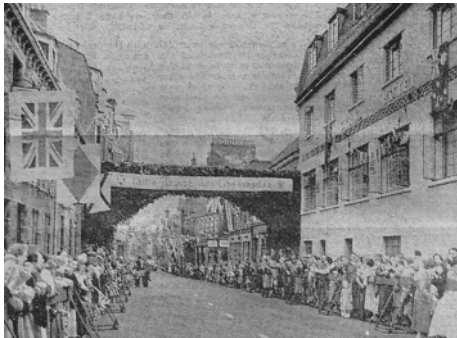
"As early as 5 am, sightseers, many of whom carried flasks of tea and sandwiches, sought vantage points along the Royal route, and by 8.30am the station square was packed with hundreds of people including many holidaymakers."

"At 9.30 am the guard of honour drawn from the 4/5th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders marched down the High Street headed by the pipes and drums of the battalion and swung into position on the Pier under their commanding officer."

"As Her Majesty stepped on the pier to be welcomed by Lord MacDonald, the pipe band played 'Scotland the Brave'. Wearing a geranium-pink suit and fine velour with wide lapelled short loose jacket and a togue hat to match, the Queen smiled charmingly as the welcoming cheers rang out."

"At Spean Bridge the whole village seemed to be lining the roadside as the cavalcade passed by. At the Commando Memorial where hundreds of people had gathered, the procession slowed down to a walking pace while the Royal party turned to look at the Memorial unveiled by the Queen Mother in 1952.

Another large crowd had gathered at Gairloch where the Queen, the Duke and their two children alighted from their car. After chatting with Lord Macdonald for a few moments, the Queen led the way down the steps to the pier where the Royal barge was waiting to take the party up through the Canal to Loch Oich."



*The People's Journal, 23 August 1958: Welcome to Fort William*



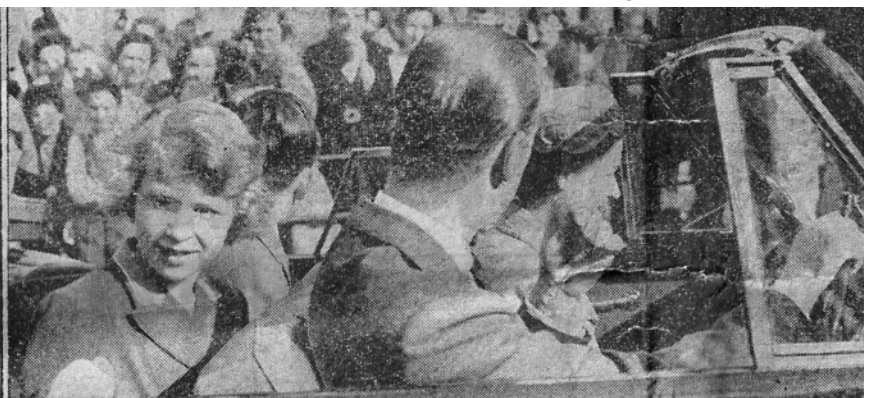
*The People's Journal, 23 August 1958: The Queen and the Duke chat with Provost Mrs Murphie and Lord Macdonald, Lord Lieutenant*



*Oban Times, 23 August 1958*



*Daily Record, 19 August 1958*



## A Royal visit (continued from page 11)

The **Daily Record** described the events at the Caledonian Canal: "At Gairloch Prince Charles, the Heir to the Throne, met the Heir to Lochiel, 12 year old Donald Angus Cameron. He and his brother, John, four, presented Prince Charles and Princess Anne with cromaks. The Queen was presented with 300 year old maps, one of Scotland and the other of the Highlands."

The **Oban Times** concludes that "After speaking to Lochiel and Mrs Cameron, the Queen said goodbye and with the Duke and Prince Charles and Princess Anne boarded the barge. As it pushed off and moved up the Canal the Queen turned and waved to the crowd lining the bank. The barge was soon through the locks and speeding into the open waters of Loch Lochy ..."



## Dates for your diary

- **Saturday 2nd November 2013:**  
Morrisons bag pack, Fort William to raise funds for the Museum.
- **Saturday 30th November 2013:**  
Rotary Club Christmas Fayre, Nevis Centre, Fort William.
- **Museum closed from Christmas 2013 - March 2014**
- **Thursday 29th May 2014**  
West Highland Museum AGM

## Youth update

For almost fifteen years, the junior membership of the West Highland Museum have been meeting once a month for "fun with local history". This is the Saturday Club, open to young people from six to fourteen years old and it is still flourishing in 2013.

Perhaps it is time for an update on those members who have gone on to give valued assistance to the Museum over the years. Our very first member Lee Groundwater, continued to help at the club until he became a volunteer at reception on the Saturday shift. He has now gone on to full time employment with Highland Council.

Kirsteen Allison, a very early volunteer, helped at the Saturday Club and with summer activities until her final years at High School when she worked Saturdays and Sundays in the Museum. Keen to further her interest in museum administration, she spent a week at Edinburgh's National Museum shadowing the education programme. She has also served on the Committee of the Local History Society. Kirsteen has just graduated with an Upper Class Second in BSc (Hons) Marine Science with Arctic Studies and she was also awarded the SAMS-UHI (Scottish Association for Marine Science - University of the Highlands and Islands) prize for Student of the Year. She hopes to undertake a Master's degree at Stavanger. Loyal to both the Local History Society and the West Highland Museum, she gave a most interesting and amusing talk on her experiences in Arctic Norway.

Among the younger generation, Fergus Munro carried out work experience at the Museum and is now a Saturday volunteer. From 2013, Robert Galloway has decided to help out at the Saturday Club. Hopefully the Club will continue to flourish and prove to young people that Museums are magic!

**Betty Bruce**

**If you would like to help as a volunteer  
in the West Highland Museum,  
contact Sonja McLachlan.**

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