

## *Newsletter*

### *4th Issue - Whitsun 2018*

#### **Note from the Editor – Duncan Beaton**

The members of the committee of the Friends are delighted with the positive feedback to our newsletter so far, we have even had some in writing! Long may that continue. Of course feedback is always welcome. In this issue we will again feature another of our hard-working volunteers in our Pen Picture section. As always, read on, enjoy, and please let us hear your thoughts.

#### **Comment from Ishbel Mackinnon, our former archivist, via email**

“I just wanted to say how good I thought the last newsletter was – interesting, informative, entertaining – I think it hit just the right note, so congratulations and thanks for pulling it together so well”.

(Ishbel is now Archivist – Culture, Perth and Kinross).

#### **Dates for your Diary**

**Mon 20 Aug**, training day for volunteers wanting to help with cleaning and repackaging the Argyll Papers maps and plans between Sept 2018 and March 2019. A couple of places remaining on the reserve list. Email [archives@inveraray-castle.com](mailto:archives@inveraray-castle.com) if you're interested.

**Sat 22 Sept and Sun 23 Sept**, afternoons only. Doors Open Day in Argyll and Bute. We hope to offer tours of the archives,

tours of the old town of Inveraray, and possibly some palaeography sessions.

**Sat 6 Oct**, the second annual Friends outing. Destinations to be confirmed but will be in the Oban area – two visits, lunch and informative and entertaining talks. Further information to follow - keep the day free!

#### **The Dewar Manuscripts, as told by Ronnie Black**

The last Newsletter featured Elizabeth Kraus, our Argyll Papers volunteer from Victoria, Australia, and the fun she is having transcribing Hector MacLean's translations of tales from the Dewar Manuscripts – 'One-Eyed John MacColl', 'The Gift of Tیره to MacLean of MacDonald of the Isles', 'The Castle of the Red-Haired Maiden', and so on. So we thought that in this issue we would explain a little more about these Dewar MSS. What are they, who Dewar was, and what are we planning to do with the transcripts?

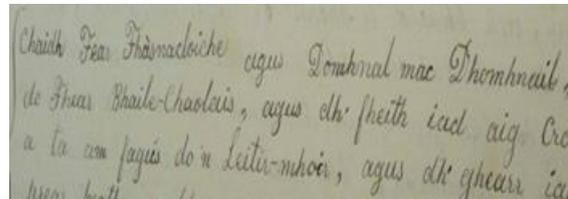
The Dewar MSS have been called 'the first oral history project ever conducted in Scotland'. In 1859 John Francis Campbell of Islay (1822–85) launched the pioneering project that led to his four-volume *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860–62). Inspired by the brothers Grimm in Germany, the huge efforts then being made to collect Scandinavian folklore, and George Dasent's English translation of *Popular Tales from the Norse*, Campbell had a whole team of collectors tramping the Highlands, looking in particular for ancient tales of mythical warriors and the supernatural. One of his most enthusiastic contributors proved to be John Dewar (1802–72), a Gaelic-speaking native of Arrochar in Dunbartonshire who was in the service of the 8th duke of Argyll as a

woodsman and sawyer. Through him Campbell discovered an entire genre of Gaelic stories which is of greater interest to historians than the mythical and supernatural ones – tales of the not-so-distant past, devoid of supernatural elements, which can be called ‘non-supernatural tales’ or indeed ‘historical tales’.

So Campbell arranged with the Duke to keep Dewar in his employment, but now as a ‘collector of traditions’ rather than as a woodsman. Campbell continued to provide advice and supervision as before. Crucially, this advice included the careful logging of informants, so ensuring that this project, like its predecessor, was on a proper scientific footing.

The total number of informants named by Dewar is 328. He spent the 1860s roaming Argyll, Arran, West Perthshire and Lochaber as well as his native Dunbartonshire, listening to historical tales and writing them down in Gaelic. They are now contained in ten stout manuscript volumes, seven of which are in the Argyll Papers at Inveraray, and three in the National Library of Scotland (Adv. MSS 50.2.18–20). Also in the Argyll Papers is the material currently being transcribed by Elizabeth Kraus and others – twenty slim volumes of English translation, made for the Duke and his son Lord Lorne in 1879–81 by the Islay schoolmaster Hector MacLean (d. 1893), who had also been involved in the *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. MacLean’s translations are rather old-fashioned, and sometimes confusing or even misleading, but they have proved to be of immense value with regard to specific points. They are bound together as six thick tomes. John Mackechnie’s book *The Dewar*

*Manuscripts Volume One* (Glasgow, 1963) consists of the first tome, equivalent to two-thirds of Dewar’s first manuscript volume. So in terms of publication there is still a long way to go.



Copy of John Dewar’s handwriting

The manuscripts shed a good deal of light on Dewar’s collecting methods. The texts as we have them vary from scrappy notes about a single event, full of abbreviations, to long historical tracts in beautiful handwriting, produced by dovetailing accounts from different sources. Dewar was an honest man with a prodigious memory, and he let his informants tell their stories in their own way, writing them down afterwards. Whether he was in the habit of reading his text back to his informants to obtain their approval (or additions and corrections!) is currently unclear. This is one of many questions which it may be possible to answer once the whole of the material has been thoroughly analysed.

Dewar had another type of source – himself. In a note appended to a story about Clann Bhuclach and the MacGregors he says he got it ‘from old people from Braidalbainn in 1812’. Quite often he describes informants as having died in the 1820s, 1830s, 1840s or 1850s. Clearly he had been hearing and remembering stories all his life. As Ronnie Black puts it, “It therefore appears that the Dewar Manuscripts constitute the earliest authenticated collection of historical tales ever made in Scotland.”

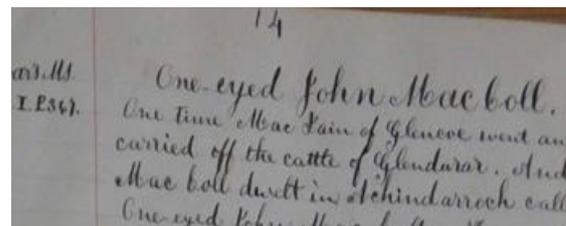
There seems to be a consensus that the collection should be published in an organized way and in Gaelic with a modern English translation – that is, bringing together everything pertaining to a particular theme, rather than simply reproducing the texts in the order in which they appear in the manuscripts. Ronnie has provisionally divided the Tales into ten parts, with the idea that someday each will become a book. Alphabetically, these parts are as follows:

1. Appin and Lorn
2. Arran
3. Cowal
4. Glencoe, Lochaber and the North
5. Inveraray, Mid Argyll, Knapdale and Colonsay
6. Islay and Jura
7. Kintyre
8. Mull, Coll, Tiree and Morvern
9. Perthshire and Loch Lomond
10. Texts with no geographical location

Some of Ronnie's nine regions may look a little odd geographically, but as he explained that's because they combine local interest with the dynamic of the texts. "No. 1 has a lot on Stewarts, MacDougalls and Campbells, including what appear to be the crucial facts about the Appin Murder. No. 4 is all about MacDonalds and Camerons, including the Massacre of Glencoe. No. 5 contains stories about the earls, marquess and dukes of Argyll, but also Colla Ciotach and his son Alastair mac Colla, who ravaged the mainland from their base in Colonsay in the seventeenth century. And no. 9 consists mainly of

material on MacGregors and MacFarlanes, including the most detailed description of the battle of Glen Fruin that I've ever read. Dewar's mother was a MacFarlane, and he was born just up the road from Glen Fruin."

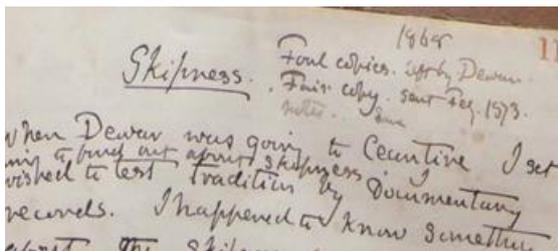
Our archivist, Alison Diamond, would be happy to hear from individuals who have on-the-ground knowledge of any of the above areas – particularly concerning lost settlements and families, as the texts contain many obscure place- and personal names. More volunteers like Elizabeth are also needed to help with the work of transcription, both on the MacLean MSS and the Dewar MSS themselves. The manuscripts have all been digitised, and images will be supplied. Knowledge of Gaelic is unnecessary, as Dewar's handwriting was excellent.



Copy of Hector MacLean's handwriting

In the long term the aim is to transcribe the whole of MacLean and the whole of Dewar, every word. But of course there are priorities. At the moment it looks as if the first parts to be got ready may be nos. 6, 7 and 9. The Dewar MSS contain many alternative versions of the same stories, or parts of them. These will not all be published in full, but will have to be taken into account in the editing process. And fresh modern translations by Ronnie and others will be given to transcribers page by page as the work of transcription goes on, but Hector MacLean provides a valuable 'second opinion' on key words and phrases. So his work will frequently be quoted in the published editions.

There are three hands in the collection. The MacLean MSS were written by MacLean, and the Dewar MSS were basically written down by Dewar, but also contain countless pages of notes written by Campbell of Islay. For example, Ronnie points out that Campbell tells us in his notes that he sent Dewar to Skipness as an experiment because he was of the Skipness Campbells himself, and knew their history. After reading the results of Dewar's expedition he declared: "Accuracy does not exist in traditional history. Traditions will preserve vaguely knowledge which is not recorded in writings, and so aid history, e.g. till I read Dewar's papers I did not know of the slaying of Walter Captain of Skipness at Dunavertie 1647."



Example of John Francis Campbell's handwriting

Of the three handwriting examples, Dewar's is the best, MacLean's is pretty good, and Campbell's is easily the worst. Ronnie says: "What this means is that in transcribing MacLean, priority should be given to his transcriptions of Campbell's notes. There's no point in picking through his dreadful handwriting in the original when that job has already been done for us by MacLean"

(Ronnie Black is a Gaelic-speaking member of the Friends' committee and retired lecturer in Celtic Studies at Edinburgh University. Ronnie's most recent work was *The Campbells of the Ark: Men of Argyll in 1745*).

### ***Kenneth Cameron's Ancestry Discovered at Cherry Park, by Gordon Cameron Richardson***

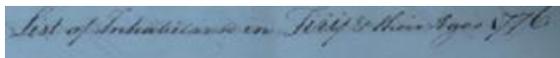


My journey of discovery began seven years ago when curiosity took hold about my mother's family the Cameron's of Rossburn, Manitoba. My mother had told me stories of my grandfather, William, stringing a rope between the house and barn not to perish in a wild Manitoba snow blizzard or the challenges her mother Bella Cameron faced in the late 1880s as a young bride from Ontario living with her husband and three brothers in a small log house. I learned where my great grandparents Kenneth and Annie Cameron homesteaded in 1850 from the Grey County, Ontario — Osprey Township History. But, where did Kenneth Cameron and family come from in Scotland?

A hint of their origin in Scotland was provided in the Argyll Cemetery, Shoal Lake, Manitoba where my Cameron grandparents are buried. It has several family grave stones of McLeans and Lamont's indicating Tiree, Argyllshire as their homeland. When the 1841 census was made available on the Isle of Tiree Genealogy website I found my great grandfather Kenneth Cameron age 25, labourer on Tiree. The Scotlandspeople website documented Kenneth's birth and his 1844 marriage to Agnes (Annie) Morrison in Campbeltown, Argyllshire.

However, the trail went cold when I tried to go back beyond Archibald, the tailor of Heylipoll, Tiree—Kenneth’s father.

By chance, I met Flo Straker at the Tiree Homecoming in May 2016. She researched descendants of Kenneth’s siblings on the Island of Tiree, in addition she suggested I approach the Duke of Argyll’s Archives at Cherry Park to learn more. Alison Diamond had just arrived as the new Archivist when I contacted them. She kindly assembled information from the Duke of Argyll’s 1776 and 1792 census.



This was my Eureka moment, it filled the gap created by the missing Tiree Kirk baptism and marriage records. There was my ancestor Archibald, his father John, and Archibald’s grand-father Kenneth, who would have been born before 1750. These records showed that John Cameron’s family lived close by that of Flory Lamont whom he later married. A copy of the 1776 census from the Archives is below; this with the 1792 census added two more generations to my Cameron family tree.



(Gordon Cameron Richardson lives in Ottawa. He grew up in Douglas, Manitoba; after completing a BSc in Agriculture and an MSc in Economics in Marketing and Trade he worked in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. After 37 years in government and 6 years as a consultant he retired 2012).

### **Book offer – A History of Kintyre.**

Andrew McKerral's seminal historical study, *Kintyre in the Seventeenth Century* examines perhaps the most turbulent century in the entire history of Kintyre: the founding of the burgh of Lochhead (Campbeltown); the ravages first of Civil War, culminating in the massacre at Dunaverty in 1647, and then of bubonic plague; the plantation of Lowlanders and Campbells; the Earl of Argyll's Rebellion in 1685; plus social and industrial history and four valuable appendices, including genealogical surveys of native and Lowland Plantation families in Kintyre.

The Kintyre Antiquarian & Natural History Society is offering copies of *Kintyre in the Seventeenth Century*, at the reduced price of £4. The book was originally published in 1948 and was for decades out of print and difficult to obtain. The Society reissued the work in 2001 as a 160-page paperback, with the addition of 20 colour photographs. For information on how to purchase the book, contact Elizabeth Marrison, 'Glunimore', Fort Argyll Road, Campbeltown, Argyll PA28 6SN, or, by e-mail, [elizabeth.marrison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:elizabeth.marrison@yahoo.co.uk)

The author, Andrew McKerral CIE, was born into a farming family in Southend, Kintyre, in 1876 and died in 1967. He began his working life as a pupil-teacher in Southend School and then, by his own efforts, worked his way through university, obtaining an M.A. He had a distinguished career as principal of an agricultural college in Burma (now Myanmar) and devoted his retirement to the study of Kintyre history, the main fruit of which was *Kintyre in the Seventeenth Century*.

### ***Pen Picture – Mrs Linda Fryer***



From school at Paisley Grammar, Linda went to Domestic Science College in Glasgow, and completed the four year teaching diploma, specialising in needlework and textiles in her final year. Following periods of teaching and lecturing, she matriculated at Glasgow University in 1987, to embark on a part-time M.Litt in the Scottish History Department, under the supervision of Dr Allan Macinnes. The research topic was the Shetland Hand Knitting Industry, thus combining her enthusiasm for textiles with the socio-economic aspects of the industry. This work was published in 1995.

Shortly after graduating Dr Macinnes offered Linda the job as his research assistant working on the Argyll Project which was funded by the British Academy. Much of the work was based at Inveraray Castle under the vigilant but kindly eye of Alastair Campbell of Airds. This research continued when Dr Macinnes was appointed to the Burnett-Fletcher Chair at Aberdeen. Linda was also fortunate to have time to continue her own research work, and was made a Research Fellow at King's College, Old Aberdeen. In addition to time spent at Inveraray and Aberdeen, much work was

carried out at Dumfries House and other repositories of Campbell papers in Scotland, England and America. Linda found the transcription of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century documents particularly fascinating.

2010 saw the start of volunteering at Dunollie Castle, Oban – home of the MacDougalls of Dunollie. Linda was appointed archival adviser and asked to create an archive. She says it was every historian's dream – trunks, boxes, chest etc. of largely virgin material waiting to reveal their secrets!

Linda is now one of the Tuesday volunteer team in the new archive at Inveraray Castle, about five of us in the group who are retired. We call Tuesdays our 'dementia-prevention day! We all regard our visit to Inveraray as one of the highlights of the week – good company and absorbing work.

### ***The Second Annual Meeting of the Friends***

The second annual meeting of the Friends was held on Sat 14 April in the Nicoll Hall, Inveraray. It was attended by a small but committed and enthusiastic group of the Friends and, with a couple of new members, we were quorate for the business meeting!

Following a quick round up of Friends' events and the past year in the Argyll Papers, we were treated to a very enjoyable talk from local author, Marian Pallister, about not just the research she has done but her motivation to uncover the stories of those who were not able to speak for themselves.

The meeting finished, as always, in The George.