

August 4, 2001

Clan Cameron Gathering at Achnacarry



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Welcome to the Gathering!

Colonel Sir Donald Hamish Cameron, K.T., XXVI Chief of Clan Cameron extends a warm and friendly welcome to Cameron clansfolk visiting his home. The gates to the estate opened at 10:30AM, and scores of visitors began entering the grounds shortly afterwards. For many, this was a “pilgrimage” of sorts, returning to the ancestral homelands of their forefathers. Some brought their parents or grandparents, yet others their children. Regardless of their age, attending Camerons brought home memories that will last a lifetime away from their Saturday visit to Achnacarry.

While events did not begin until Noon, the Clan Cameron Museum opened early, with scores of Camerons enjoying complimentary admission to its exhibits free-of-charge this day.

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Lochiel, with the international branch Commissioners, planting the oak on the grounds of Achnacarry.

Many clansfolk arrived early to participate in Donald Andrew Cameron's Ecotour of the Lochiel Estate, which highlighted the planting of a special red oak tree at Noon, in commemoration of Lochiel's fiftieth year at the head of the clan. This oak's roots will run strong and deep, just as Lochiel's leadership of the clan has done over the past one-half century.

Also at this time Astie Cameron, the Scotland Branch's piper, presented Lochiel with a new composition, which likewise was given in commemoration of his fifty years as chief.

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Lord Cameron of Loch Broom addressed Lochiel and the assembled clansfolk at this time:

“Sir Donald, loyal Camerons, friends far and wide. We are gathered here ‘neath Nevis’ lofty peak once more to celebrate our bonds of kinship, ancient heritage and historied name.



But before all, heartily, aye gladly, to pledge our allegiance to our chief, fifty years our chief, Donald Dubh, as unstinting as his illustrious forebears in his dedication and devotion to us, his proud and thankful clansmen.



Under his stalwart leadership the Camerons, wherever in this world’s four corners they may be, have prospered; their name revered, their heritage honoured and their history renown.



Lochiel, the clan salutes you. May this oak tree stand as a symbol for future generations of the Cameron’s sturdy tradition, strength of fellowship, hopes for the future and enduring roots in the heart of Lochaber.”

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A call was issued for clansfolk to each bring a stone to the 2001 Gathering, for inclusion into “The Cameron Cairn.” This impressive international effort, located on a small hillside just above the Clan Cameron Museum, was only partially completed during the Gathering weekend, and promises to reach an impressive height.

Shown here is Donald Angus, Younger of Lochiel, just after sealing the time capsule, which was then inserted into the middle of The Cameron Cairn. This capsule includes 2001 coins from the nations participating in the Gathering, in addition to pins from various cities, states and provinces, and a computerized copy of the Clan Cameron Association’s “Millennium Newsletter.”



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Shown here are both Achnacarry, with scenic Beinn Bhan in the near background, and the massive white marquee tent, which held hundreds. The marquee featured ample room to socialize, a myriad of vendors, and delicious grilled salmon.

Such striking views of the castle were possible from a helicopter, which was on-site for clansfolk to enjoy throughout the day.

Before long eight hundred Camerons would arrive at Achnacarry, and the rain, which had greeted clansfolk late in the morning, cleared just after Noon.

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Beginning at 1:45PM, the various nations of the Clan Cameron began assembling on the grounds of Achnacarry to march past Lochiel. An estimated 350 Camerons participated in this, the ultimate Cameron parade of Tartans, giving various salutes and greetings.



Soon after the Camerons “fell out” from the March Past, Lochiel addressed the clan, welcoming them to Achnacarry. His speech reflected upon fifty years leading the clan, and also on the future. He made special mention of the “Light Exchange Program,” under which young clansfolk visit other countries of the Association, with cultural, communication and occupational goals.

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There were also animals on hand throughout the day. Perthshire Falconry had numerous birds of sport displayed, which was quite popular with both young and old. There were also sheepdog demonstrations provided by Ian MacRae.

Among the planned activities that followed were Highland dancers - the assembled clansfolk were quite impressed by their level of talent. There were also opportunities for Camerons to shoot clay pigeons and try their hand at archery. Music was by no means in short supply, with both the Lochaber Schools and the Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Association Pipe Bands performing. There was also a day long display and historic re-enactment by the Historic Saltire Society, with the sounds of steel crossing steel resounding on the Lochiel Estate - a sound no doubt familiar in centuries past.



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A rare “treat” for clansfolk was on hand during the Gathering. Lochiel is shown here welcoming Camerons into Achnacarry Castle. His home was opened for viewing for a few hours during the afternoon.

Portraits of past-Lochiels, in addition to other clan oriented heirlooms awaited visiting Camerons. Swords, targes and gifts from clansfolk are on display throughout Achnacarry.

As shown here, Camerons were given a glimpse into Lochiel’s home, which is a beautifully decorated and quite fitting residence for a Highland chief. It was a common belief that if the tour had been a guided one, that it would have taken hours for each group to complete - so many items on display must have their own “story,” spanning the last few hundreds years of the Lochiel family at Achnacarry.

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Both the Cameron men and also the “Cameron Kids” took part in tug-of-war contests toward the end of the afternoon. Despite their best efforts, the Cameron men lost to the local Lochaber team, while the Cameron Kids took on...other Cameron Kids... with the winner being - - **Cameron Kids of course!**



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With the afternoon coming to its end, Camerons began leaving the Lochiel Estate prior to 6PM. For so many clansfolk the day's Gathering would be the highlight of their visit to Scotland, and memories of Achnacarry, with their fellow Scots re-kindling past friendships and forging new ones, will no doubt last a lifetime. Many Camerons had travel plans, and would cast one last departing glance at Achnacarry as they departed - for others, the day had just begun, with planned festivities continuing on into the evening in Fort William...