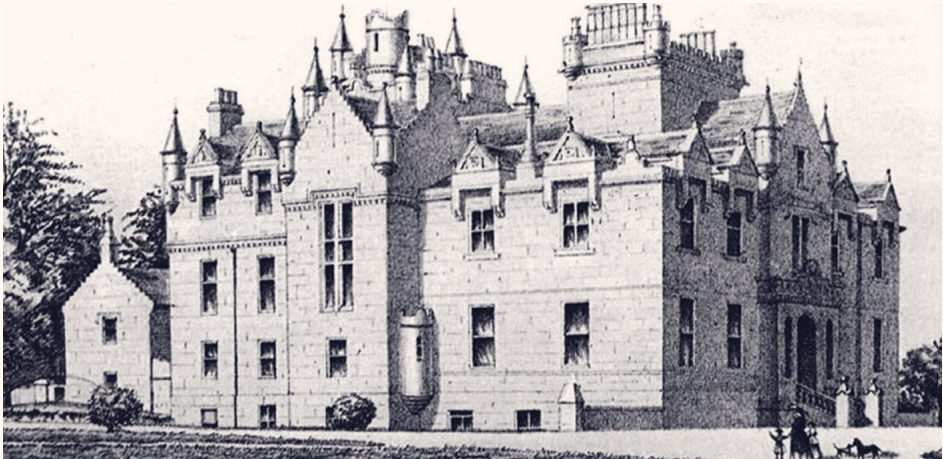


THE HISTORY OF CAMERON HOUSE



FAMILY HOME OF THE SMOLLETT

The crooked strip of land juts out into Loch Lomond like a nose upon a face. In Celtic times it was called *cam sron*, or crooked nose, and from this comes the name Cameron which it has borne ever since.

There was never a Cameron family living there, the names of the earliest inhabitants are now lost in the mists of time, but by around 1400 there was a fortified stone keep with curved ceilings on the site now occupied by Cameron House.

Those were warlike times, when it was prudent to guard one's home against attack. The builders of the keep constructed two secret tunnels as escape routes from the cellar – one landward and one to the loch, allowing flight in either direction.

The cellar, however, is all that remains of the first structure. By the mid-16th century, the old keep had become a small square house.

Since the start of the 16th century, the land had been owned by the charterhouses of Amiesfield, who eventually sold it to the Deinniston of Colgrain.

In time it was purchased by the Colquhoun's of Luss, whose family seat, Rossshu, was the next big house up the loch.

But the name that became synonymous with Cameron House for the best part of three centuries was Smollett. The Smolledds were a family of merchants and ship builders in the town of Dumbarton, where they had a mansion house in High Street.

John Smollett, a Burgess of Dumbarton, acquired a number of estates in the 1650's and 1660's and his son, James Smollett, extended the family's landholdings with the purchase in 1684 of Bonhill, now an estate in the Vale of Leven.

In 1690 he received a knighthood from William of Orange. The Smolledds of Bonhill were by now substantial landed gentry, and Sir James added to the estates again in 1692 when he acquired Dalquhurn – the estate where 29



SIR JAMES, THE FIRST SMOLLETT OF BONHILL

years later, Tobias Smollett the 18th century novelist had the distinction of being born under a tree.

Land acquisition was one of Sir James' many talents. He was one of the commissioners responsible for drawing up the Act of Union in 1707, under which the Scottish parliament merged with that of England and Wales, and he went on to become the first Westminster MP for the Dumbarton Burghs.

On his death, the estates passed to his grandson, and then to another grandson, known as Commissary Smollett, a judge of the commissary court at Edinburgh.

Commissary Smollett bought Cameron estate in 1763 and moved the family seat from the place of Bonhill.

Upon Commissary Smollett's death in 1776, the house and land were inherited by his cousin Jane Smollett, sister of the novelist, and her husband, Alexander Telfer of Scotstoun and Symington.

Their son, also Alexander, took the surname Telfer Smollett, and it is from this band of the family that the subsequent owners of the Cameron estate descended.

Alexander Telfer Smollett married Cecilia Tenton, sister of the beautiful 'Miss R.' who had taken his Uncle Tobias' fancy and featured in his novel, Humphrey Clinker.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

The most famous Smollett of all was Tobias Smollett, the 18th century novelist, whose works are known around the globe. He was born and grew up at Dalquhurn in the Vale of Leven, not far from Cameron House and went to school in Dumbarton, before going on to Glasgow University. In 1736 he became an apprentice surgeon.

He had literary ambitions which took him to London in 1739, but he failed to make an impression at this stage and was forced by financial necessity to take a job as a surgeon's mate in the navy, on board HMS Chichester.

Four years later, on returning to London, he set up as a surgeon in Downing Street and eventually made his name as one of the most humorous writers of his time.

He was not, however, a rich man. When at the age of 45, he came to visit his cousin James at Cameron House in 1766, three years after he had bought the estate, at least one of his motives was to seek financial assistance.

Much of his later years were spent travelling – the Rue Smollett in Nice is named after him – and he was virtually penniless in Lehorn, Italy 1771.

Six years after Tobias visited Cameron House, Commissary Smollett entertained another literary celebrity there – Dr Samuel Johnson and his indefatigable biographer, James Boswell, who said of their stay 'Mr Smollett was a man of considerable learning, with an abundance of animal spirits; so that he was a very good companion for Dr Johnson.'

Johnson himself wrote later: 'we have had more solid talk in this house than in any place where we have been'.

Other famous visitors to Cameron House have included the Empress Eugenie of France and Don Pedro, Emperor of Brazil. Winston Churchill and Antony Eden both stayed there and amongst royal visitors this century were Princess Margaret, Princess Alexandra and Earl Mountbatten.



TOBIAS SMOLLETT

TWO CENTURIES OF SERVICE TO KING AND COUNTRY

Alexander and Cecilia Telfer Smollett had two sons who distinguished themselves in the service of their country.

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Smollett, who succeeded his father, fought with the Coldstream Guards and was killed at the Battle of Alkmaar in Holland in 1799. A village near Cameron House was named Alexandria in his memory, and grew over the next two centuries into the town it is today.

Alexander's brother, John Rouet Smollett, was a Rear Admiral in Nelson's navy. In his early days as a midshipman he had served on board the same ship as the Duke of Clarence.

In the close quarters of an 18th century warship they did not always get along together. On one occasion, a quarrel led to blows, and the young Smollett proceeded to give the future King William IV a good thrashing. In later years, Admiral Smollett was less pugnacious. With The Napoleonic Wars behind him, he returned to the estates inherited from his brother and embarked on some improvements at Cameron House. The main road to Inverary was moved further away from the house,

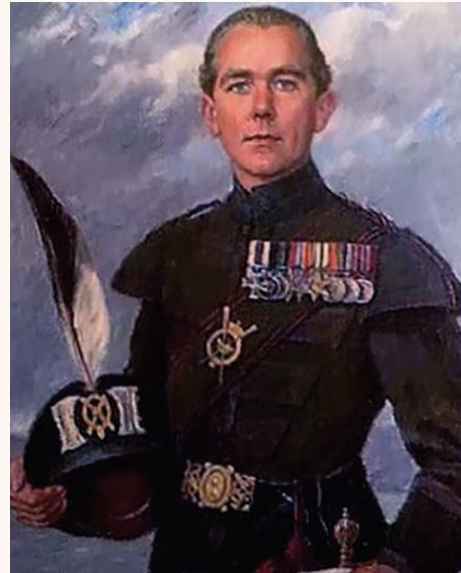
to which a new front section was added by the admiral in 1806.

He proved as successful in the field of diplomacy as he had in battle when, during the Chartist Riots, a mob from the Vale of Leven came heading towards Cameron House, intent on forcing the admiral to show them his title deeds on the land of Bonhill, whose ownership they contested.

But the wily Admiral Smollett was ready for them, and defused their attack with an invitation to lunch, during which he raked their resolve with broadside upon broadside of intoxicating beverages from his well stocked cellar.

By the time the Chartists had taken this treatment for an hour or two, those still able to stand up to it, if they could stand at all, were happy to reduce their demands to a request for a small piece of land on which they could play shinty, the gaelic Scots ball game akin to Irish hurley.

The admiral was happy to grant their request, and they parted the best of friends.



PATRICK TELFER SMOLLETT



ADMIRAL JOHN ROUET SMOLLETT
CAME HOME FROM NAPOLEONIC WARS

John Rouet Smollett had two sons, both of them members of parliament, who succeeded him in turn. The second son, and last of his line, was Patrick Boyle Smollett.

Boyle Smollett had built a grand mausoleum for the admiral and his wife behind the church of Scotland Kirk in Alexandria, but the family changed denominations suddenly one day when he arrived in his carriage to find some people sitting in the family pew.

He asked the minister what the people were doing there, and demanded that they be removed. When the minister refused to do this, the Smolletts promptly became episcopalians.

Boyle Smollett gave land for the building of St Mungo's Episcopalian Church in the main street in Alexandria, but the family still makes payments towards the upkeep of the mausoleum.

It was during Boyle Smollett's lifetime that catastrophe struck at Cameron House in the shape of a large fire, after which it was rebuilt extensively.

Upon his death, Cameron Estate was inherited by captain Buchan Telfer Smollett, RN, descended through another of the family from Jane Telfer Smollett. The estate then went to Colonel Alexander Drummond Smollett, who served with the Worcestershire Regiment until 1891, retiring with the rank of major. He was the recalled, however, on

the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 and received special promotion to lieutenant colonel.

His son was Major General Alexander Telfer Smollett, commander in chief of the international garrison in Shanghai in 1937, and father of Patrick Telfer Smollett.

Patrick Telfer Smollett was also a soldier and won the military cross while serving with the Highland Light Infantry. When he retired from the army in 1954, the Smolletts were the third longest-serving family, father-to-son, in the British forces.

In 1972 the owners decided to diversify their offering and opened the much anticipated Cameron Bear Park. Then in 1986 after more than 200 years in Smollett ownership, Cameron House was sold to become the iconic Scottish hotel it is today. In addition to the hotel, luxury time ownership lodges were built on the grounds, plus leisure club, golf course and marina. So many families are able to share in the pleasures of Cameron House Resort.

'I'm absolutely delighted with the way Cameron House has been restored', 'it's far better this way than having the place become derelict. It couldn't have been done better' commended Mr Telfer Smollett.



JOHN'S BROTHER, LT-COL ALEXANDER SMOLLETT,
DIED IN BATTLE AT ALKMAAR

ENJOYING THE BARE NECESSITIES

Perhaps the most exotic time in the history of Cameron House was when wild animals roamed the grounds. Black bears, brown bears, Himalayan bears and a big herd of bison were all part of the scenery when Patrick Telfer Smollett and his wife Gina decided to set up a safari park.

'It was at the start of the safari park idea, when places like Longleat and Woburn and so forth had just started up' he said. 'I wrote to Jimmy Chipperfield and said 'how about a bear park?' He flew up and said immediately, 'ah, this is just the right site for bears.'

'It went from strength to strength - we were getting 150,000 visitors a year'

'We knew most of the animals well. My wife once brought up an orphaned black bear cub - we used to play with it, running round the bushes and taking it for a swim in the loch.'

The Telfer Smolletts said goodbye to the bears when they left Cameron House, but they will always have fond memories.

'We thoroughly enjoyed it,' he said.



Cameron House is just one mile from Balloch, beautifully set on the banks of Loch Lomond. Tobias Smollett, the famed poet and writer of the area, who had family associations with Cameron House, once said of Loch Lomond:

“I have seen the Lago di Garda, Albana, de Visco, Bolsetta and Geneva. Upon my honour, I prefer Loch Lomond to them all. A preference which is certainly owing to the Verdant Islands that seem to float upon its surface.”



Here are a few suggestions for tours from Cameron House, which is ideally situated for visiting most areas of Scotland.

Not far from Cameron House in the ancient town of Dumbarton sits Dumbarton Castle, where William Wallace, the hero of “Braveheart”, was imprisoned, before his journey to London for execution. The famous “Cutty Sark” sailing ship was built here in the last century.

From the hotel, you are ideally placed to explore the south and west sides of Loch Lomond. Short excursions up the east side of the loch, to Balmaha and Rowardennan, offer excellent views and walks. Balmaha has an excellent ferry service, which will take you onto the loch for a short tour among the islands, including Inchcailloch, ancient resting place of the chiefs of the clan Macgregor. A few miles from the hotel is the delightful Glengoyne Malt Whisky Distillery. Built early in the 19th century, it is well worth a visit.

Turning north from the hotel, takes you to the conservation village of Luss, with its old church and viking grave, dating back to the 14th century. Luss has many times been voted the prettiest village in Scotland and it has been remarked that it closely resembles the village in the film “Brig-a-doon”.

Continue up the north side of Loch Lomond to Tarbet and follow the road over the “rest and be thankful” to the 18th century town of Inveraray, where you can visit the Duke of Argyll’s castle; one of the finest “fairytale” castles in the country. If you enjoy fresh seafood, a spot of lunch at the Loch

Fyne Oyster Bar is a must. Return to the village of Arrochar and drive down the east side of Loch Long to Helensburgh, birthplace of John Logie Baird, inventor of the television.

The magnificent Hill House, in Helensburgh, is well worth a visit. It was designed at the turn of the century by the celebrated architect, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, who was responsible not only for the design of the house, but all the furnishings, fittings and even the cutlery! He was, you might say, one of the first ‘bespoke’ architects.

PLACES WITHIN EASY REACH OF THE HOTEL:

STIRLING AND STIRLING CASTLE

From medieval times Stirling was strategically the most important place in Scotland. Whoever held Stirling, controlled the nation. Fortunately, much of the Stirling’s heritage has survived.

Centred around the castle and the old town is the finest concentration of historic buildings in Scotland. Nearby, there are still more places of national historical significance. These include the mighty national monument, which commemorates Scotland’s greatest patriot, Sir William Wallace and Bannockburn Heritage Centre, marking the site where Scotland’s king, Robert the Bruce, won his greatest victory and effectively secured Scotland’s independence for more than 300 years.

There are many hills worth climbing from which there are stunning views, but driving through The Glen offers equally spectacular views. From Glencoe you may follow the scenic coast road to Oban – an old fishing town known as the ‘gateway to the islands’, including Mull and Iona.



ROB ROY AND THE TROSSACHS

Cameron house is an excellent base from which to visit the Trossachs area, known as Scotland in miniature due to the spectacular views and history.

The mountains and lochs of the Trossachs were Rob Roy McGregor's hunting ground. Here, at the gateway to his beautiful Trossachs homelands, you will learn of the daring exploits which him a hero to his own people – and Scotland's most notorious outlaw.

Stop first at Aberfoyle and visit the The Scottish Wool Centre, before taking the Duke's Pass road to the town of Callander and the Rob Roy Visitor Centre. There are plenty of craft shops and restaurants in this area to satisfy all tastes.

Continue north to Balquhider and visit Rob Roy's grave, before continuing to Lochearnhead. This is wonderful to drive through.

Take the road to Killin and see the Falls of Dochart, before returning down the west side of Loch Lomond to the hotel.



GLENCOE AND RANNOCH MOOR

Glencoe is one of the most spectacular areas in the country. With wild mountain scenery and a history second to none. In 1692, the infamous massacre of the MacDonald clan took place.

You may return to the hotel via Tyndrum, where Scotland's only remaining gold mine is still in good working order.

Head south now for the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, passing through Crianlarich and Glen Falloch.

Step back 300 years with a visit to the Drovers Inn at Inverarnan, before you tackle the 23 miles of Scotland's largest fresh water loch, passing scenery you thought you would only ever read about. Cameron House and a well deserved rest are now within easy reach.

THE CITY OF GLASGOW

Glasgow is a wonderful city, which in 1990, was voted the European City of Culture. The Hunterian Art Galleries and Museum, Charles Rennie Macintosh House, The Burrell Collection and Glasgow Cathedral should not be missed.

Glasgow dates back to 543 AD and has some wonderful architecture. It is indeed well named as the 'ultimate Victorian city'.

Glasgow can be reached in approximately 30 minutes by car, or 40 minutes by train from Loch Lomond.

EDINBURGH (THE CAPITAL)

The city of Edinburgh is only a short drive from Cameron House, either via Glasgow or Stirling. The local train service can also take you to the capital in just over ninety minutes.

There is so much to see in this wonderful city: the castle, with Scotland's Crown Jewels and the Stone of Destiny; The Royal Palace of Holyrood, which is the Queen's residence when in Edinburgh and the world famous Edinburgh Crystal Factory and shop in Penicuik.

In August, the world renowned Edinburgh Art Festival takes place, enhanced by the lively 'Festival Fringe' and Military Tattoo. United States president Thomas Jefferson said of Edinburgh:

"No other city in the world can begin to compare with it"





CAMERON HOUSE ON LOCH LOMOND

HISTORY OF CAMERON HOUSE

