

# The Cameron Family Of Mataura, New Zealand by Geoff Hore

## Introduction

This is a composite of two articles – one, called *A.A.CAMERON the Strathspey: Some further information*, was written in December 1996 and published in the *Piping Times* Vol 49, No 11, August 1997, page 46 and the other written in May 2010 for a series on New Zealand Composers of Bagpipe Music for the *New Zealand Pipe Band* magazine. Much of the information overlaps and it has become expedient to compress it into one article.

## General

The earliest records of piping in the Highlands of Scotland show that family involvement was common. Some of them had very short tenures with brothers or fathers and sons standing out as great players but there are families whose piping genius spanned a number of generations. Some of the more famous of these are the MacKays of Gairloch, the MacArthurs, Rankins and MacLeans of Coll, the Campbells of Argyshire and the MacIntyres. Another famous family are the MacDougalls of Aberfeldy and they excelled not only as pipers but also bagpipe makers. One family, the Crimmons of Skye, stands out and many believe they were the greatest of all with a direct line spanning 300 years and 8 generations although the evidence proving the first few members of this dynasty is spurious.

When the heyday of the piper to the chief came to an end in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century a number of titled people attempted to carry on the tradition but this too, with a few exceptions, died out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has been the humble piping competition that has filled the gap since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the records show a proliferation of families of pipers who have reached the top of the piping tree. Three families stand out; from the late 18<sup>th</sup> through to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the MacKays of Raasay were supreme players, teachers, bagpipe makers and recorders of bagpipe music. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the MacPhersons and Camerons became preeminent names in piping in Scotland.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century there have been a number of fathers and sons, and brothers who have made names for themselves. These seem to fade out and it is now rare that the talent extends beyond two generations. New Zealand too has had its share of piping families and in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the solo piping field has produced a number of these. Louis MacKinnon, his two sons Louis jnr and Frank and, briefly, Frank's son Louis are one notable family. Neville and Sir Ian McKay are brothers who have made a name for themselves as players, administrators and historians. John Hanning and his sons Ross and Alistair are also names that come easily to mind when one thinks of successful players. One other family that is worthy of mention, not only because they are all very good players, but the piping talent has gone from father to two daughters. John McVean was a very good piper from Oamaru and his daughters Rosalie Heaney and Marion Horsburgh are perhaps two of the more successful pipers New Zealand has produced.

The pipe band world is another hotbed of family involvement and although those mentioned above have all actively participated, there are many bands nationwide that have mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, wives, husbands, grand children and even great grand children in their ranks. In many cases they are the unsung heroes of our pipe band movement.

## The Camerons of Mataura

One family of pipers who have achieved almost folk-lore status in New Zealand are the Cameron's of Mataura. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Alexander Cameron migrated from Scotland and settled in Southland but it is not known when he arrived or if other members of his family came with him. One family source states (although it has not been proven) that he was a drover who arrived in New Zealand via Australia before the Otago Gold Rush of the 1860s, and later joined the Gold Rush<sup>a</sup>.

One online source<sup>1</sup> suggests he was born in Lanark in Scotland 10 February 1833 and died in 1891 but his death certificate states he was born in Banavie near Fort William in Scotland and died in 1921 at the age of 91. There is no doubt there is an error somewhere but if the information on his death certificate is accurate then his year of birth is either 1830 or 1831. Sources from within the Cameron family suggest Alexander was born in Ardchattan in 1829<sup>a</sup>.

According to one source Elizabeth Taylor was born in Dublin, Ireland, 31 January 1830<sup>1</sup> and died in 1930 at 100 years of age. This information is contradicted by family sources who suggest Elizabeth was born in Banavie in Scotland and died in 1917 aged 77<sup>a</sup>. More research will need to be carried out to clarify these points. She married Alexander Cameron in Dunedin on 10 July 1862<sup>1</sup> and they were soon living on their farm called Banvie just out of Mataura in Southland. There seems to be no doubt the farm was named after Banavie in Scotland.

Alexander and Elizabeth had at least eight known children but there could be more. The oldest was Jane and she died aged 18 on 24 October 1883<sup>2</sup>. One younger daughter, apparently the last born in the early 1880s, was still alive in the 1950s<sup>3</sup>. Known as Miss Cameron she worked behind the counter of the Chief Post Office in Invercargill for many years. The family deny this was a daughter of Alexander and Elizabeth and add that there were three daughters who all died young<sup>a</sup>.

There were six boys who survived into adulthood, Duncan, Alexander, Donald, John Angus, Angus and William and all were pipers except Angus. One son, Thomas, died as a child<sup>a</sup>. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest their contemporaries considered them better than average players and they were also sought after as teachers and composed vast numbers of tunes.

The *Otago Witness* has two accounts of how some in the audience at competitions believed the Camerons were harshly treated. On 21 January 1903 the following letter appeared:

#### **Judging of Pipe Music in Southland.**

TO THE EDITOR

Sir, - Being like a great number of your numerous readers, a true patriot of the national music of Scotland, I was naturally lured on the 1<sup>st</sup> inst. To your recent Caledonian gathering at Invercargill to hear good pipe playing, and trusting that satisfactory judgement would be given to the competitors. I must say that some of the piping was grand, but the judgement was a miserable failure, and I am strongly of opinion that young John Cameron of Maraura, has now got sufficient reason to turn his back on the Caledonian Society of Invercargill for ever (sic), if he has inherited a spark of the pride of the race he belongs to. It is a deplorable thing that such a thriving society as that of Southland cannot find a judge or judges who are capable of giving general satisfaction to the pipers and public, - I am etc

Lamh Dearg

And on 6 March 1907 this letter appeared:

#### **Pipe Music at the Exhibition.**

TO THE EDITOR

Sir, - Kindly allow me space for a few remarks concerning the judging of pibroch music at the sports ground, Christchurch, on January 24. According to the opinion of three competent pipers present - and their names were not Cameron - the brothers Alexander and John Cameron should most certainly have been awarded the leading places in the competition. The treatment accorded to them on the first day was the sole and only reason for their withdrawal from the competitions held on the second day, and will in all probability be the cause of their withdrawing from competitions in the future, unless judges qualified to judge pipe music are appointed. - I am etc

Truth

There is much that can be written about these two letters but comment here will be limited to the fact that the Cameron pipers evidently had the respect of some who heard them play. Part of the opinion expressed in these letters is supported by a number of living and recently deceased people who agree that the Cameron family of pipers were a talented lot.

When he was young the late Airdrie Stewart of Dunedin heard John Cameron play and was of the opinion that he had the finest crunluath he ever heard. Others, including his elder brother Alexander Taylor Cameron<sup>5</sup>, have also commented that John was the best piper.

It has not been ascertained who taught them but one source<sup>7</sup> states that Alexander Snr was a piper and taught all the boys. Many people believe Alexander Snr was not a piper and did not have any role in tutoring them. We will probably never know for sure but it is possible that the younger brothers could have been taught by their older siblings. Alexander Snr was chief of the Mataura Pipe Band in its early days<sup>10</sup>.

Although the Camerons were considered by contemporaries to be top class pipers in their day, there were matters of technique and style that the modern piper would find unusual. There were shades of this in the playing styles of other Southland pipers and the late Bruce McCann is one who springs readily to mind. This does not mean they were 'wrong' in what they played. We know that piping in Scotland (particularly ceol beag) went through some radical changes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and what was being played in Otago and Southland up until the 1950s may have been similar to that heard in Scotland before these changes.

In the 1950s the late Seumas MacNeill of the College of Piping, Glasgow, was invited to teach in Nova Scotia and heard the locals playing and was aghast that they should play that way. When he tried to change them they ignored him and carried on as they had been taught. The younger generations did, however, follow his teachings and these days that is what can be heard throughout Canada.

Fortunately, recordings exist of some of the older pipers playing in their local style and there are those who believe it has a lot of musical merit. There are some who accept that this playing style represented a survival of what had been going on in Scotland in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is just possible that we in New Zealand had something similar but was swept away in the 1950s when the Scottish model was adopted. Sadly, recordings of early New Zealand pipers do not exist.

In the writer's collection are many dozens of tunes by the Camerons and there is evidence they began composing at a young age. A hand written MS book (which the writer calls **The Cameron Family Manuscript Book**) contains tunes by Donald, Alexander jnr. William, John and Duncan Cameron as well as David McClure Walker.

In its original form this book appears to have consisted of thirty numbered pages (with tunes on one side only). All pages had one, two or three tunes and they have had individual tunes cut out or the whole page removed. This process has been carried out in such a way that the stub of the page remains in the book. There are 32 tunes remaining and by careful analysis it can be determined that there were originally between 62 and 87. Only one, a strathspey called *Alexander Anthony Cameron* appears to have been published (see below). All tunes have the appearance of having been written by the same person although six different composers' names are given. There is no date anywhere in the book.

The paper is very heavy and has ledger lines on both sides although as stated earlier, the music is on one side only. The watermark is a blackboard on an easel with the word '*Academy*' running from the top LH corner to the lower RH corner. In the bottom LH corner are the initials 'SBL Y'

The cover is of heavier almost cardboard-like material and the outside is a dark blue marbled pattern on which the words 'Music Book' are embossed. The inside of the front cover is white and has the following hand written information:

To David Glen Edinburgh with all rights of Publication and Copyright signed by	
(1) Alick Cameron	
<i>(Gap where the reverse of the embossing occurs)</i>	
(2) Donald Cameron	I hold myself
	responsible for giving
(3) William Cameron	David Glen all rights
	of publication and
(4) John Cameron	copyright of the tunes
	of the other composers
(5) Duncan Cameron	who are not here to
	sign their name
(6) David McClure Walker	(Sgnd) Alick Cameron

Despite the declaration in the right hand column the signatures on the left appear to be those of different people. All the remaining pages have the words 'To David Glen Edinburgh with all rights of Publication and Copyright' and these endorsements along with all the writing inside the front cover have been scored through with red ink pen.

It is believed the book was sent to Glen, he considered a number of tunes were suitable for publication, removed them and then returned the book to its owners. This premise is supported by the fact that Glen published a number of tunes by Duncan Cameron and David McClure Walker.

David Glen published two major collections of music in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the first of these was *David Glen's Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music* in 17 parts which appeared for sale at regular intervals between 1876 and 1900. The 11 parts of *The Edinburgh Collection* followed between 1903 and 1908.

Duncan Cameron has five tunes in Part 13 and another five in Part 17 of *David Glen's Collection* and later one tune in Part 1 and two in Part 5 of *The Edinburgh Collection*. David McClure Walker has three tunes in Part 8 and two in Part 11 of *The Edinburgh Collection*.

If we are correct in the assumption that these tunes did come from the manuscript book, then dating it becomes relatively simple. In Part 13 there is a Duncan Cameron tune *The Hon J G Ward's Return to Parliament*. Sir Joseph Ward was forced to resign from the New Zealand Parliament in 8 July 1897 but in 5 August 1897 was able to stand in the ensuing by-election and won back his seat with an increased majority<sup>8</sup>. Sir Joseph was the member for Awarua in Southland and there seems little doubt he received Duncan Cameron's vote on that occasion. He became Prime Minister of New Zealand in later years.

Based on this information the compilation date of the manuscript book can be calculated to within about nine months. The earliest possible date was at, or soon after, the by-election of 5 August 1897. The date of the British Library acquisition of Part 13, 1 November 1898, is the latest date but there would have been a 5 or 6 months period to get the book from New Zealand to UK and then to have the publisher, engraver and printer get the book ready for distribution. Realistically, this leaves a 9 month period between 5 August 1897 and May 1898 during which the manuscript book would have been compiled.

The Cameron brothers were not happy with the way they were treated by David Glen and withdrew permission to publish the tunes<sup>6</sup>. This possibly explains an anomaly in relation to the manuscript book. We can tell from the way the pages are numbered, and by the way the tunes are set out in the remaining pages, that between 30 and 55 tunes were removed.

David Glen published a total of 18 Cameron/Walker tunes and this falls well short of the number removed. Perhaps the altercation between the two parties prevented Glen from publishing any more of the Cameron tunes. The fact that Walker had tunes in two of the later books of *The Edinburgh Collection* suggests he was not party to the dispute.

If the above is correct then somewhere there are a number of tunes composed by the Cameron family. If anyone has any tunes that appear to have been cut from a book it would not be difficult to compare them with the manuscript book to confirm their origin. Naturally, the writer would be delight to assist.

Earlier mention was made of a strathspey called *Alexander Anthony Cameron* by John Cameron and as can be seen it is the same tune that these days is called *A.A. Cameron*.

*Alexander Anthony Cameron's Strathspey*  
By J. Cameron

*Alexander Anthony Cameron Reel*  
By J. Cameron

By David Glen Edinburgh with all rights of publication and Copyright

It has been published in *John MacFadyen's Book One* (1967), *The Cabar Feidh Collection* (1983) and *The Duntroon Collection Volume 3* (2010) but no composer's name is given.

The writer was told in 1996 that Alexander Anthony Cameron was the father but family input states this is not so. However, to find out who A A Cameron may have been is not too difficult to determine for above the tune in *The Cabar Feidh Collection* is the note 'The tune is believed to be named after the well known heavyweight athlete from Blarnafodach in Lochaber.'

Also, the writer has a photocopy of a manuscript book with 1073 tunes compiled in the 1950's by John Lumsden of Glasgow and this too has the tune. Above it appears 'Farmer from Lochaber, he was a famous heavyweight athlete in the early years of the century. He toured the games with success and broke many records with the light and heavy hammers: The tune is by Duncan Cameron, Dunedin, New Zealand'.

At around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the famous Scottish heavyweight athlete, A A Cameron, visited New Zealand and competed in many Highland games in the Southland area. He would have met the Cameron family and it is not too difficult to believe it was he after whom the tune was named.

The David McClure Walker who had tunes in the manuscript book is a relatively unknown piper who died in the 1940's. In the writer's collection are a number of early pipe music books as well as tunes written or composed by him. The Cameron Family Manuscript Book was acquired from the estate of the late Bob Skinner who died in Wellington in 1993. He was taught by one of the Cameron family.

The following lists the six brothers and the information available at this time.

### **Duncan Cameron (Born c1866 – Died 14 Oct 1948 age 83)**

The eldest son and by all accounts a very good player and teacher. At an early age Duncan was admitted into Seacliff Mental Hospital where he remained until he died<sup>4</sup>. A number of informants over the last 50 years have told how pipers gained employment in, or near the hospital so they could visit him to get lessons. This may suggest that Duncan's problems were only minor and if they occurred these days could well have been treated with medication. Whatever the situation it is evident he was

regarded highly as a teacher. He married in the late 1880s and had five daughters – one born 13 April 1894 at Matura..

The following list details those tunes known to have been composed by Duncan:

#### **David Glen's Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music**

Part 13

*Mr John Boyle's Farewell to Lochaber* 6/8 March,  
*The Hon J G Ward's Return to Parliament* 6/8 March,  
*Captain Norman McDonald's March*,  
*Willie Mitchell's Farewell to New Zealand* 2/4 March,  
*Duncan Cameron's Reel*,

Part 17

*Mrs Norman Macdonald Reel*,  
*Sandie Duncan's Welcome Home* 2/4 March,  
*John Boyle's Jig*,  
*Mrs Duncan Cameron's Strathspey*,  
*Duncan Cameron's Farewell to Dunedin* 2/4 March,

#### **The Edinburgh Collection**

Part 1

*Achnacarry Castle* 2/4 March,

Part 5

*The Highland Society of Southland NZ* 6/8 March,  
*Duncan Cameron's Farewell to Southland* 6/8 March,

#### **The Cameron Family Manuscript Book**

There are no Duncan Cameron tunes in the manuscript book and this may be explained away by the fact that they were all removed and published in the David Glen books.

The following are all in hand written manuscript:

*Leslie McKillip Reel*

*Donald McKechnie's March*

*The Rights of Women* Slow Air

*Alexanderina Cameron* 2/4 March.

*John Hay* 2/4 March

*Marshall Foch* 2/4 March (Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929), Marshal of France and Allied Supreme Commander in World War I)

*Mrs Frances Susan Cameron* Strathspey

*The Piper's Bairns* 2/4 March

*Mrs Stratton's Favourite* 2/4 March (Someone has written 'I think this is one of Duncan Cameron's but am not sure.)

*Strathnaver* 2/4 March (This has a note 'I might have sent you this one. It's a nameless march by Duncan Cameron. Believed to be called Strathnaver).

*On the Road to Armageddon* or *Armageddon* or *My Mother* Slow Air

(In the writer's collection are seven sheets with two different tunes and combinations of these three names. One sheet has both tunes and an explanation as to the correct name of each tune. All the above pages have Duncan's name appended as the composer except one that has 'By Alec T Cameron'.)

#### **Alexander Taylor Cameron (Born c1868 - Died 2 September 1957 aged 89)**

Commonly called Sandy but he often signed his tunes Alick or Alex. He lived for many years in Balclutha, married late in life and had no children.

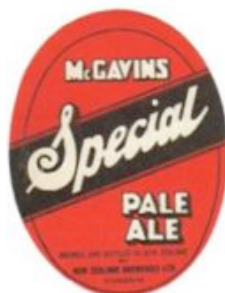
By far the most prolific composer and in 1934 published 188 tunes in *A New Zealand Collection of Bagpipe Music*. He followed it two years later in 1934 with 15 more tunes in *The Second New Zealand Collection of Bagpipe Music*. Both of these books were privately published.

A further 25 tunes in the writers collection show how huge his output was. Some consider he was the best composer and indeed, there are a few of his tunes that are very nice. However, it is the writer's opinion that John has more tunes that fall into the category of being very good.

In later life Sandy Cameron started to show the effects of excessive alcohol consumption. Two ex pupils who were teenagers when they visited him for lessons tell of occasions when he was not available because of illness. They later found out he had been taken away to 'dry out'. He also had a strong religious bent and the writer has some documents in his collection that attest to this. He would write out music and other material for anyone who wanted them and many have found their way into the writer's collection. Those that were written in his last few years show a very shaky hand.

None of Alexander's compositions are in **The Cameron Family Manuscript Book**. It is not proposed to list all the tunes in his published books as space does not allow, but the following are all the hand written manuscripts in the writer's collection:

*Kaka Point Jig*. (A kaka is a large NZ parrot and Kaka Point is a small settlement on the Otago coast.)  
*New Zealand Soldiers* 6/8 Quickstep. (This tune has the alternative name *Reason*).  
*Miss Annette Falconer* or *New Zealand Nurses* 6/8 March. (Composed 13/12/1942).  
*The Late Piper John Angus Cameron* Slow March (Composed 17/12/1949). (This tune also appears with the title *Piper John Angus Cameron*.)  
*Barclay Smill Strathspey* or *Highland Schottiche*.  
*Miss Margaret Park* 6/8 March.  
*William John Ross 'Liberty'* 6/8 Quickstep.  
*Frances Mary Ross 'Justice'* 6/8 Quickstep.  
*Truth* 6/8 Quickstep.  
*General Montgomery's Parents Jig*.  
*General Montgomery* 6/8 Quickstep. (Composed 15/12/1947).  
*Ian Park Reel* (His first name should be spelt Eion<sup>7</sup>).  
*Friends in Celestial Life* Slow Air.  
*Mrs Susan Fraser Cameron* Slow Air,  
*Mrs Peter Dow Strathspey*.  
*Len Copland Reel*.  
*The Flemings of the Clan Murray* 2/4 March.  
*Piper William Milne's Welcome to Stirling* 6/8 Quickstep.  
*Mrs J Gardner of Stirling Pipe Band Waltz*,  
*The Transition of Sister Tibbie Watt* Slow Air.  
*Edgar James Kain 'Cobber Kain' DFC* Slow March. (Kain was a New Zealand born fighter pilot in World War II and the first RAF air ace and DFC recipient of the War.<sup>8</sup>)  
*Colin's New Chanter Reel*.  
*Miss Elizabeth McPherson Strathspey* (Composed 13/10/1948).  
*Donald McInnes* 6/8 Quickstep.  
*Mr & Mrs Calam Morrison* Common Schottiche.  
*McGavin's Special* Hornpipe. (This was named after a well known Dunedin beer of the same name. The writer has a label from a bottle and it is shown below.)



Many of the tunes listed above are named for people who are still alive or recently deceased and some are still active in the piping world<sup>10</sup>.

### **Donald Duncan Taylor Cameron (Born c1872 - Died December 1924 age 51)**

Donald's bagpipes went to his son Angus who then gave them to Murray Henderson who played them in 1975 when he won the Highland Society of London Gold Medal for ceol mor at Inverness<sup>6</sup>.

Donald has five tunes in **The Cameron Family Manuscript Book**:

*Miss McKearn's Wedding Day* 2/4 March.

*John McKay of Ardoch* Reel. (Ardoch was a farm about three miles from Wyndham, Southland. It may have been named after the village of the same name in Perthshire, Scotland.)

*Sandy Simpson* Reel.

*John Mitchell (Esq) of Kenwyn* 2/4 March. (Kenwyn was a farm near Studholme Junction in South Canterbury. Mitchell was involved in many clubs and organisations, including piping, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.)

*Robbie Lang* Hornpipe.

## **Angus Cameron**

Little is known about Angus at this time but we do know he was not a piper. A son was born to Alexander and Elizabeth in 15 August 1874<sup>2</sup> and it may have been Angus.

## **John Angus Cameron (Born c1878 - Died 24 September 1945)**

According to those who heard him play John was the best piper in the family. In the opinion of the writer he composed more quality tunes than his brothers and after Donald Sargent and Stuart Finlayson is probably New Zealand's next best composer of bagpipe music.

He never married and in his will left his trophies, bagpipes, Highland dress and all 'strictly personal belongings' to his nephew, also called John Angus Cameron. His brother, Alexander Taylor Cameron, received £300 and Mary MacDonald of the Ross Home in Dunedin £50. The remainder went to 10 nephews and nieces, four sons and one daughter of William McKay Cameron and five daughters of Duncan Cameron.

The late Lewis Turrell of Auckland owned a set of bagpipes that once belonged to John Cameron. On the base drone stock is a silver shield engraved 'Made by G C MacDougall, Aberfeldy, 1910'. On the chanter stock is another shield with 'John Cameron, Banvie, Mataura, NZ, 1910'. The Cameron family imported a number of sets of bagpipes from Gavin MacDougall, sometimes six sets at a time, and then gave them away to piping friends<sup>6</sup>.

On 4 July 1892 John was home from school with a cold and wrote a letter to a lady called Dot who compiled a column in the *Otago Witness* newspaper called *Letters from Little Folks*. He was in the Fourth Standard at school and helped out on the farm and states he and his brother Willie milked four cows. He had a pet puppie and asked Dot to help name it and she suggested he take the first two letters away from Mataura and call him Taura. In the 1950s in the South Canterbury area where the writer spent his childhood, this name was being used by farmers for their dogs.

### **Tunes by John Cameron in *The Cameron Family Manuscript Book*:**

*Miss Joanna McDonald* Highland Scottiche.

*Mrs R Smith of Onslow Park* Reel.

*Better Luck Next Time* Reel.

*Michael MacAuliffe* Jig.

*Willie McKenzie of Springfield* Reel.

*Mrs John McDonald's* Reel.

*Alick Murray's* March.

*Alexander Anthony Cameron's* Strathspey.

*Alexander Anthony Cameron's* Reel.

*Dr Kennedy's* Reel.

*The Cobler* (sic) Reel.

*The Broad Leaf Tree* Common Schottiche.

*William Dickson* 2/4 March. (William Cable Dickson, born in 1875 in Southland and was a piper. In 1903 was in Canada and died of Typhoid fever.)

*The Devil is Tied Up* Jig.

*Any Thing You Like* Clog Hornpipe.

*Alick Finlayson's* Reel.

*Spuds and Buttermilk* Jig.

*The Christchurch Highland Society* 2/4 March.

*The Sailor's Wife* Hornpipe.

*An Irish* Jig.

*Miss Bessie Cameron* Common Schottiche.

*The Heather in the Garden* Strathspey.



*Mind your Own Business* Jig.

*Miss Jane Currie* Jig.

*Lizzie McCartney's Jig*. (In the 1890s a John McCartney featured in the prize lists of some piping competitions and with that link it is possible Lizzie might well be John's daughter.)

*Peter McDonald's Reel*.

*The Heather Hills* Strathpey.

The following tunes in manuscript are in the writer's collection:

*Melrose Abbey* Strathspey.

*H. M. S. Renown* Hornpipe.

*Geordie Bland* Hornpipe.

*Angus Robertson's Hornpipe*. (Angus Cameron Robertson, 1867-1945, was a Skyeman who ran away to sea as a cabin boy at the age of 15. He became an extra master mariner sailing throughout the world and eventually in 1899 settled in New Zealand. He became Honorary Bard of the Gaelic Society of NZ and published many poems as well as a book in the 1930s called *The Bagpipes: History and Traditions*.)

### **William McKay Cameron (Born c1880 – Died 1958 age 78)**

Nothing much is known about Willie Cameron. His name appears in the results of competitions which suggests he may have had reasonable playing ability. He had at least four sons (one named John Angus Cameron) and one daughter.

Having seen his older brother John's letter in the *Letters from Little Folks* column he too wanted to see his name in print and on 15 July 1892 wrote in asking if Dot could she could suggest a name for a pet pony. True to form, she took the last two letters from Mataura and calling the pony Mata.

Only one tune has been located that can be attributed to him and that is in **The Cameron Family Manuscript Book**:

*Jessie Linton's Wedding* Reel.

### **Conclusion**

The Camerons were a very complex family and had their demons throughout their lives. At least two of them had problems with alcohol and this was made clear in 1921 when Alexander Snr died and his will was read. A codicil demanded that Alexander and John refrain from alcohol for six months from his death or they would forfeit their inheritance. It is not known how they fared but it does show how the father viewed consumption of liquor. It also, perhaps, reveals how he exercised some degree of control over his children in adulthood.

Much detailed information about the Cameron family has been lost with the deaths of many people who knew them or were taught by them. There are a few of Alexander Jnr's pupils still alive but they were all youngsters when they went for lessons and did not know him other than they would a school teacher. In fact, one 11 year old who went to him for a few months admits to being more than a little afraid of him<sup>5</sup>.

For many years the writer had heard stories of the family and they have a certain consistency that suggests a common source. The surviving pupils of Alexander agree that much of what they know comes from the stories of their elders. There are also the issues of the mental problems some of the boys experienced. Some prefer the details not be made public but they are out there. Almost everyone the writer has spoken to has been profoundly aware of the difficulties they experienced.

Perhaps in finishing it is appropriate to reflect that despite these demons, the Cameron family were a highly intelligent group of men who punched well above their weight as pipers, teachers and composers.

<sup>1</sup> [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>2</sup> *Otago Witness* newspaper.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Gilmour, Christchurch. Jim was born and raised in the Southland area and besides having met two of the Cameron family, heard stories from many who knew them well.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Pullar of Oamaru. Barbara is a member of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists and is also the writer's sister.

<sup>5</sup> David Sinclair, late of Balcluth and now of Queenstown. As an 11 year old in 1946 received lessons from Alexander Taylor Cameron.

<sup>6</sup> Grant Henderson of Bluecliffs, South Canterbury. Grant is a piper and the father of the famous Murray Henderson. He was good friends with Angus Cameron the son of Donald and has inherited much of the Cameron family lore.

<sup>7</sup> Andy Christie of Gore. Andy is a piper and knew many people who had links to the Cameron pipers.

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia.com.

<sup>9</sup> Alastair Munro, Christchurch. Alastair was raised in Dunedin and his father Neil knew many of the older pipers and heard many of the stories about the Camerons. Alastair died in February 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Neil McMillan, Invercargill. Neil has lived in and around Invercargill all of his 77 years and has been researching pipe bands and piping on the area. Neil died in December 2010.

<sup>a</sup> Penny Kidd, a great great granddaughter of Alexander Cameron Snr. Unfortunately she has not provided any source for any of the information.