

# New book tells story of 40 Glendale men at war

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The bravery and remarkable stories of the 40 men whose names are carved on the Glendale war memorial in Skye are the subject of a new local history book.

'The Glendale Heroes' has been researched, penned and published by Waternish man Roland Lopez with help from several natives of Glendale.

Documenting the compelling stories of the 40 men and their families, the 486-page book covers the two world wars, interspersed with many colour and black and white photographs.

It is the second such project for Roland, a retired teacher who is a volunteer for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Three years ago he collaborated with his neighbour and friend, historian Donald John "DJ" Campbell, to write 'The Names on the Memorial', a book which recounts the background and service of Waternish men who fell in the wars.

The latest book was sparked when Roland was checking Glendale cemetery as part of his war graves duties and, out of curiosity, began asking about the men who are buried there.

"This turned into a project suggested by born and bred Glendale woman, Mary Beaton, who now lives in Glasgow, although her sister Margaret still lives at the family home," said Roland.

"Thanks to other Glendale natives such as Mairi Fawkes, Sam Thorburn and Donald John MacRaild, the stories, photos and medals started to appear."

Anne Beaton and Catherine MacPhee at Portree Archive Centre pointed Roland to Archie Rhodes of Kensalyre whose mother, Irene Maclean, was another Glendale native.

"Archie's genealogical expertise is simply wonderful and I became inundated with information that filled out and made sense of the anecdotes I'd been hearing," said Roland.

"DJ Campbell provided such information as he knew and also suggested Morag Mackinnon at Lusta as a further source of information.

"Added to this, a trip to the National Archives at Kew and then I had service records, diaries, accounts and medal cards which filled in all the men's service details."

As was the case with the Waternish book, the Glendale research turned up some very sad, surprising and inspiring details of lives lived to the full, said Roland: "Like the 50 year-old fisherman/crofter who lied about his age to join up

in WW1, a volunteer who spent six months training to fight in the trenches and lasted only six days when he got there, and a pilot in the RAF who won the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) on low-level raids off Norway."

Roland and DJ are now working on another book about Dunvegan memorial but are keen for other communities to follow suit before their heroes' stories are lost forever.

Said Roland: "It would be great if this kind of project could be emulated across Skye by local residents, and speaking as an incomer, native Skye women and men!

"Certainly local historians could take up the mantle, but amateurs like me can get involved, too. As an ex-high school teacher with no knowledge of crofting and limited knowledge of the world wars, these projects have really opened my eyes as to the land struggles, hardships and sense of honour and fun of the Skye families of those times. And not only have I learnt loads, but I've had the pleasure of meeting so many lovely people whose ancestors make them proud. It'd be an injustice to do anything but my best for them.

"If there's anyone out there who'd like to get going on their local memorial, I can certainly provide the pointers for service records and Archie Rhodes has already gathered all the genealogical data for those, like me, who find navigating ancestry daunting. It'd be a shame to let slip the identities of these brave women and men of Skye slide into obscurity forever."

'The Glendale Heroes' is dedicated to teacher and broadcaster Murdo Beaton from Struan who died last year and who was an authority on the contribution of Skye men and women during WW1 and WW2.

However, there was one serviceman Roland was unable to find a name or any details for – until after the book was published. The faded and tattered studio photograph of the kilted soldier was handed to him after being found in a croft house in Glendale. Roland gave the soldier pride of place on the book's front cover, but he has since discovered he was Corporal John Mackenzie (1880-1918) of North Tolsta, Lewis, who had a Glendale family connection. A Free Presbyterian divinity student, he was killed on 9th June 1918.

"It's good that our unknown soldier now has a name," said Roland.

'The Glendale Heroes' is on sale at Glendale Post Office/Shop and Dunvegan Post Office, priced £25, or direct from Roland by post. Contact Roland on 07729 318 822 or email: rolandlopezuk@yahoo.co.uk.

All profits will go to the Glendale community.



Roland Lopez, author of 'The Glendale Heroes', at the village cemetery with Mairi Fawkes, the niece of James Macdonald whose name is carved on the memorial.

