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DEEP FAMILY ROOTS UNEARTHED AT NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND PROPERTIES

Three National Trust for Scotland employees have discovered deep family roots connecting them to Inverewe Garden, near Poolewe in Wester Ross, and Brodie Castle, near Forres in Moray, stretching back over 200 years.

Jacqui MacLennan and Izzy MacDonald, who are both part of the food and beverage team at the world-famous Inverewe Garden, are the fifth and fourth generation of their families respectively to work at the conservation charity's most northerly heritage garden.

Julie Armour, who works as Visitor Experience Manager at Brodie Castle, is the third generation of her family to work at this stunning property, with her children following in her footsteps doing seasonal work at the Castle.

Jacqui is now the longest-serving staff member at Inverewe where she has worked for 26 years, starting out as a 13-year-old working in the restaurant in the school holidays. Izzy joined last year, continuing a family line at Inverewe which goes back to 1927 when her great grandfather, Francis MacDonald, was employed as a ploughman on the farm by Mairi Sawyer, daughter of garden founder Osgood Mackenzie. Over a dozen of Izzy's relatives have worked at Inverewe over the decades including two uncles, her father, Kenneth, and her two brothers, Alasdair and Callum.

For Jacqui, it was only when she started doing some genealogical research that she discovered the extent of her family's association with Inverewe. She said:

"In doing my family tree I discovered that I'm the fifth generation of my family to have worked here, but who knows, I may discover more in the future depending how far back I can go. Both my parents had worked at Inverewe. My dad Fachie MacLennan was a gardener and my mum Greta worked in the restaurant and went on to be housekeeper in the house, something which I ended up doing as well. Working here you meet a lot of people from all over the world, many of whom I have become friends with. I am hugely proud of my family's history with Inverewe and the estate. I never thought that I would end up being the longest-serving member of staff 26 years later."

Her maternal great grandfather Alexander Cameron, known as "the Tournai Bard", began working for Osgood Mackenzie as a shepherd lad, before rising to become sheep manager at the estate. Jacqui added:

"Osgood Mackenzie taught him English by giving him access to his library as my great grandfather could only speak Gaelic at the time. His wife, Jessie, my great grandmother

was maid to Osgood's mother and when they married in 1880, Osgood acted as a witness to their nuptials, I couldn't believe it when I discovered their wedding certificate!"

Izzy joined the team at Inverewe in 2021 and, like Jacqui, a long line of her relatives have been employed there before her.

In 1927, her great grandfather Francis MacDonald became a ploughman on the farm, working for Mairi Sawyer. Her great aunt, Jean MacDonald, spent all her working life at Inverewe including working as housekeeper, while another great aunt Cathie MacDonald ran the former Caithness Glass shop which was situated on the site of the modern-day restaurant. Izzy's two uncles, dad Kenneth and her two brothers Alasdair and Callum, have all worked at Inverewe at different times. Izzy added:

"I really enjoy working at Inverewe and it's very special to think that my family connection goes right back to my great grandfather. As well as being colleagues and both having long family links with Inverewe, Jacqui and I have also been neighbours for 17 years - she lives just across the field!"

At Brodie Castle, Julie's granddad worked for the Brodie family and was there when the National Trust for Scotland took ownership. He worked at the Castle from age 14 to the day of his 65th birthday.

Julie added: "My Granny was Ninian Brodie's cook and worked there from the 1960s to 1995. My mother also worked for Ninian as housekeeper, often working alongside her own mother, my granny. My auntie and cousin worked in the tearoom when it first opened and worked for Ninian when special occasions were on, so it really was a family affair."

Martin Hughes, Operations Manager at Inverewe Garden which has been in the custodianship of the Trust since 1952, said: "The team at Inverewe is one big family and Izzy and Jacqui's ancestral roots are testament to that. We're very fortunate to have such dedicated staff and the Trust is proud to be an important local employer, helping to support the economy in Wester Ross and encourage visitors to area thanks to the beauty of our most northerly heritage garden."

For more information on visiting one of the National Trust for Scotland's properties go to: www.nts.org.uk.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

Images available to download:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/td9hu51s033dtpswmimnd/h?dl=0&rlkey=bqkzb5fs5vn rjc0bvzsn0z308>

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

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