

Hamish MacInnes – Mountaineer & Inventor.

Hamish MacInnes was born in Gatehouse of Fleet in 1930. His parents Duncan and Catherine (Katie) moved to Gatehouse about 1920 when Duncan took over a general store - the Market Cross Stores in the High Street. Duncan was originally from Mull and Katie from the Isle of Skye and they both spoke Gaelic.

Hamish was the youngest of five children. Brother Archie was born in Skye before the family moved south. His three sisters Effie, Chrissie and Flora were born in Gatehouse. The family lived at 21 Catherine Street, before moving to Landale, 31 Catherine Street.

Hamish attended the local Gatehouse School but he loved working with his hands and spent many hours 'helping' local joiner Jim Hunter in his workshop at 6 Catherine Street and once built a large wooden tank, of which he was very proud. His other great love was being outdoors playing with his older brother Archie and as he grew older he enjoyed the challenge of scrambling up rock faces such as the Clints of Dromore near the old Gatehouse Station (*see below*).



The family also owned a caravan - more like a wooden hut on wheels - at nearby Sandgreen Beach, to which he could cycle with friends. (It was actually commandeered in about 1941 and taken to the army range in Kirkcudbright and returned to the family after the war.)

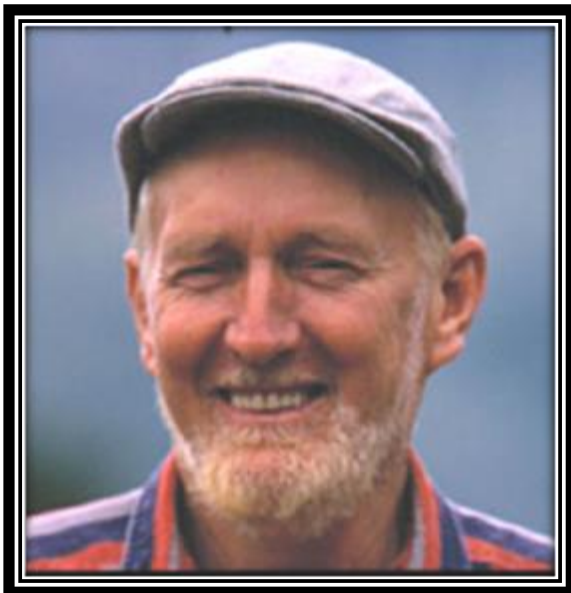
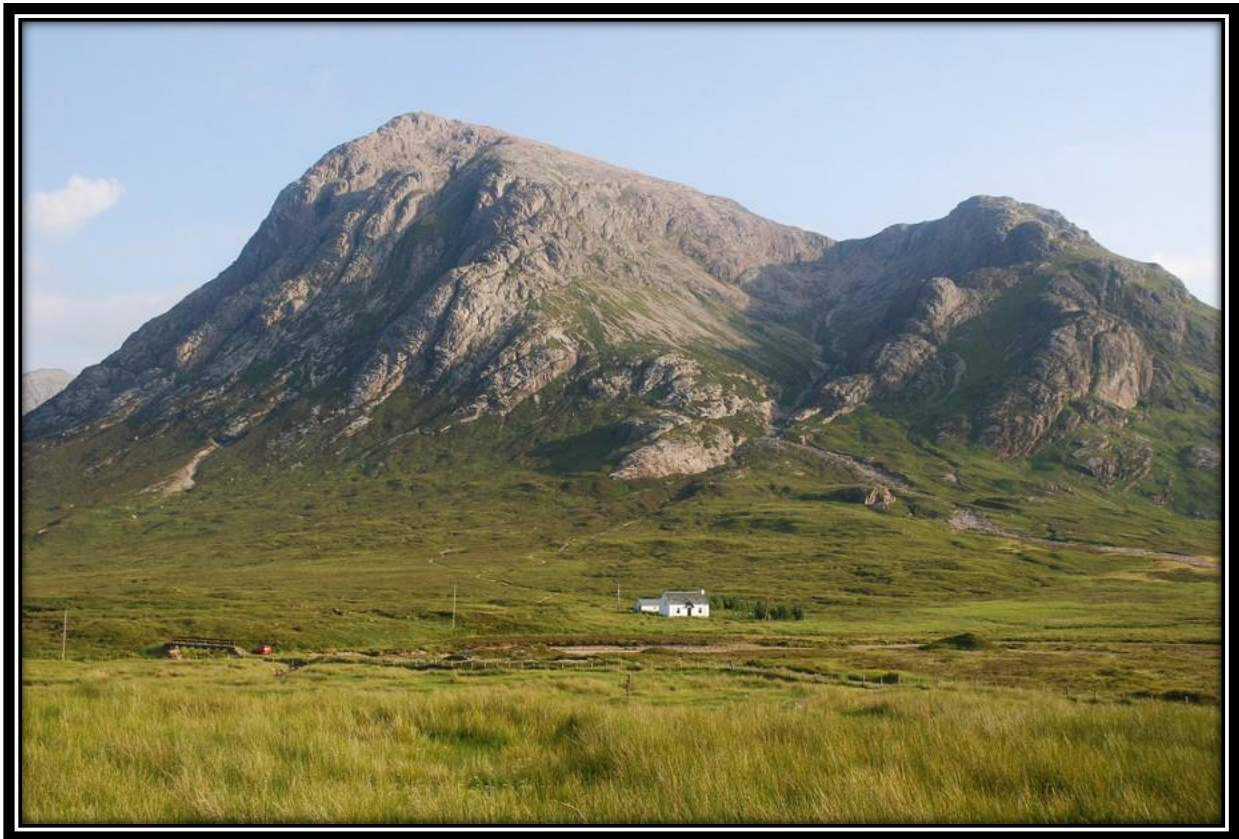
The MacInnes family left Gatehouse in 1942 to live in

Greenock. It was while living there that a family friend, Bill Hargreaves took Hamish on a day trip to The Cobbler in the Arrochar Alps, that his real interest in mountains started and he began learning his mountaineering skills.

Hamish served his National Service between 1948 and 1950 and spent much of this time climbing in Austria with British troops who were on breaks.

In 1961 he was appointed resident climber and climbing instructor at Glencoe and he has done much to encourage and promote the safe ascent of mountains in the area such as Buachaille Etive Mor. (*See photo below*) This led to the formation of the Glencoe Mountain Rescue Committee - The Team - the voluntary group which continues to save hundreds of lives in the area. In conjunction with this, he

designed an ice axe 'The Terrordactyl' and a much improved folding, aluminium rescue stretcher and helped with the formation of the Search and Rescue Dogs Association.



Hamish has climbed all over Scotland often finding new routes and he has tackled all the main climbs in the Alps, New Zealand, South America and the Himalayas. He was on 3 expeditions to Mount Everest led Chris Bonnington along with Dougal Haston and Doug Scott in the 1970s.

He has written over twenty books on various aspects of climbing and been an advisor on mountaineering and safety issues on several films such as 'The Eiger Sanction'.

Hamish has been awarded many honours including a B.E.M. and an O.B.E. as well as 5 Honorary Doctorates. He was inducted into the Scottish Sporting Hall of Fame in 2003.

In later life, he suffered from a severe urinary infection which made him very confused. This delirium was miss diagnosed as a psychiatric problem and he was hospitalised. Hamish, in typical fashion, made several attempts to escape, including climbing up a wall onto the hospital roof.

The illness left him with no memory of his past life. He used his many books, photos and film footage to rekindle his memory.

This was documented in 2018 in a film 'Final Ascent: The Legend of Hamish MacInnes'

Hamish died peacefully at his home in Glen Coe on 22nd November 2020.

File last saved : 25 November 2020

Thanks to Chrissie, Patricia & Jill Leighton. Chrissie is a sister of Hamish MacInnes.