



Plate 1: Donald Cameron of Lochiel, 24th Chief c.1861-76

The Cameron Tartans

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There are a number of tartans associated the Clan Cameron, some are more common than others and several are available in more than one colour palette which can make it appear that there are even more tartans. This article will consider the most commonly seen tartans and give an overview of the standard colour palettes to contextualise what is offered commercially.

Tartan is not unique to Scotland but only in Scotland did it develop to become a national and cultural icon. Early references are sparse but there is evidence to support to use of tartan in Scotland by the time of the Roman invasion of Britain in 43 AD. However, it was not until the 18th century and particularly the Jacobite Risings that tartan became universally recognised as a Scottish, principally Highland, icon. At the time, people wore what they liked, could afford or was available and it was not until the early 19th century that the concept of 'clan tartans' was developed and later codified. With this in mind, the Cameron tartans are discussed in broad chronological order.

Cameron of Erracht

The Cameron of Erracht is the oldest of the tartans associated with the Camerons, it is amongst a small number of clan tartans that began life as a military tartan. It was designed specifically for the 79th Regiment of Foot (Cameron Highlanders) raised in 1793. Although designed for the military, it was submitted by the chief to the Highland Society of London as his/the clan tartan when they formed their collection in 1816-22. It quickly became a popular fashion tartan, especially at the time of George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822. In some early sample books, it was simply called 'Cameron'.

Erracht tartan suit, NMS



Cameron of Lochiel, Modern (Lochcarron)



Cameron of Lochiel

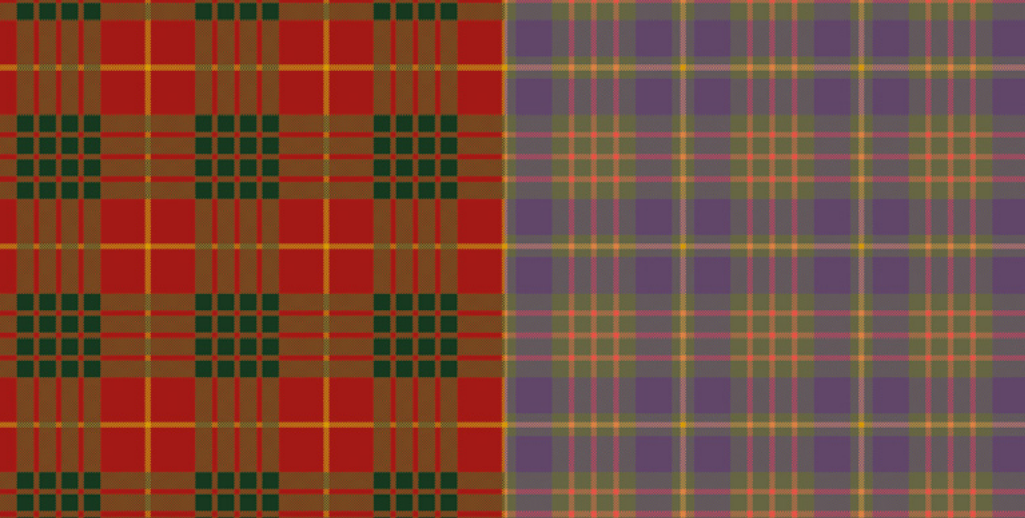
The Cameron of Lochiel is amongst the small number of clan tartans that is claimed to date to the mid-18th century. However, research by the author casts doubt on this and it is much more likely that it was originally an early 19th century fashion tartan. The name was probably a reference to The Gentle Lochiel at a time when there was a great interest in, and romanticisation of, the Jacobites as part of the Highland Revival. The design itself is similar to the Chisholm tartan and like it, the Lochiel was often woven with white silk stripes in early specimens. From its earliest appearance, this tartan was a popular fashion tartan that was worn by people irrespective of their name. This continued to be the case until the late 19th century when it seems to have become less popular and in terms of clan use, restricted to the chief's family. (plate 1) is Donald Cameron of Lochiel, 24th Chief c.1861-76 wearing the tartan.

Clan Cameron

By far the most popular and commonly seen of the Cameron tartans is the red Clan Cameron tartan. It first appeared in the *Vestiarium Scoticum*, published in 1842, a book that is widely discredited because the authors invented an historical narrative to support its authenticity. That aside, the tartan can be traced to the unpublished version produced in 1828 meaning that the tartan is therefore roughly contemporary with many of the then recently adopted clan tartans still in use today.



Cameron tartan from the *Vestiarium Scoticum*, 1842



The comparison with the red sett < The authorised Cameron Hunting sett compared with the red sett

Lochcarron graphic of the cloth
Cameron Hunting, Ancient (Lochcarron)



Version in Weathered Colours
Cameron Hunting, Weathered (Lochcarron)



Cameron Hunting (Official)

The late Col. Iain Cameron Taylor said of this tartan that "This new design was evolved in the 1940s by J G MacKay of Portree and first put on show at the Cameron Gathering at Achnacarry on 16th June 1956." MacKay based the design by replacing the red ground with purple and surrounding the yellow stripe with green guard lies.

A recent version of the standard Cameron Hunting palette is also compared with one manufacturer's variation in Weathered colours which are currently popular, although not strictly as authorised.

Additionally, some manufacturers incorrectly label this tartan as 'Cameron of Lochiel Hunting'. At the time of the 1956 Gathering, Col Cameron Taylor noted of this tartan that it "has been copied, not too carefully" by various weavers and manufacturers – see the following comments on the Unofficial sett.

Cameron Hunting (Unofficial)

Little is known about this tartan which was a popular fashion tartan in the 1980s. Mention has already been made to variations of the Official Cameron Hunting tartan that were being produced by the time of the 1956 Cameron Gathering; this may be one of them. It is clearly derived from the Official Hunting tartan but omits one of the three red lines, making it incorrect, and colouring is in a non-standard Reproduction or Weathered palette, the purple changed into blue, and the green into brown.



Cameron Hunting, Muted (House of Edgar)

Tartan Palettes

Modern Colours – Strong/dark shades based on the early artificial dyes produced after 1856.

Old/Ancient Colours – A range of mid/light shades that are supposed to represent the colours obtained in the past from natural dyes, their use can be dated to the mid-1930s.

Muted Colours – These date to early 1970s and fall somewhere between the old and modern colour ranges.

Reproduction Colours – The term 'Reproduction' is restricted to those patterns produced by D.C. Dalglish Ltd, who were the originators of this range. Said to be based on a piece of tartan that was dug up at the Culloden battlefield in 1946 after 200 years buried in the peat, the story was a marketing ploy.

Weathered Colours – Similar to Reproduction colours, produced by other weavers to pick up on the popularity of the duller shades.