

## THE BOY WHO LIVED BEFORE.

### A MOTHER DECIDES TO INVESTIGATE HER SON'S CLAIMS OF REINCARNATION.

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In most respects Cameron Macaulay is a typical six-year-old boy. He loves playing football and drawing pictures of his home. Except the pictures Cameron draws are not of his two-story house in Clydebank, Glasgow but of a single-story house next to the beach, located on the tiny Scottish island of Barra. A house he claims he occupied in a former life.

As soon as he could talk Cameron started telling his mother, Norma, that he had lived in this house along with three brothers and sisters. Norma, who at first dismissed the stories as childish imagination, soon became disturbed when Cameron insisted his Barra parents collect him from school.

Cameron is one of several thousand children whose spontaneous recall of an apparent past life has been carefully examined by scientific investigators.

## REINCARNATION

Reincarnation, the belief that the soul transmigrates from one lifetime to another, is popular among Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. But it is also surprisingly prevalent in the west. A 2001 Gallop poll showed that as many as one in four westerners believe in reincarnation. However, belief in reincarnation is no measure of its possible reality. The scientific consensus, based on materialism, rejects any possibility of life after death.

But not all scientists agree. And a huge body of evidence from thorough research into life after death, contradicts the theory that consciousness is solely a byproduct of electrochemical activity in the brain.

This includes: near death experience, mediumship, apparitions and the scientific investigations into reincarnation.

## SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

The late Dr. Ian Stevenson from the University of Virginia has conducted the most famous scientific investigation into the spontaneous recall of past lives. Stevenson's research was only possible because of an endowment given to the university by the founder of the Xerox Corporation, Chester Carlson.

Part of Stevenson's approach to investigating reincarnation was to find children who recalled past lives and then to try and locate friends and families they say they lived with in the former life. After forty years of research Stevenson cautiously stated: "My conclusion so far is that reincarnation is not the only explanation for these cases, but that it is the best explanation we have for the stronger cases."

Today, Dr. Jim Tucker, also at the University of Virginia, continues Stevenson's research. Tucker was invited to participate in a documentary made for British TV on the Cameron Macaulay case. For the film he interviewed the family and then accompanied them to Barra to see if they could locate the house that Cameron claimed he lived in during his previous incarnation. I subsequently visited the family shortly after the film was aired in order to shoot interviews for my own documentary about the evidence for life after death.

## MEMORIES OF BARRA?

"Virtually the third word that came out of Cameron's mouth was Barra," explains Norma Macaulay, his mother. "He would tell everyone I'm a Barra boy, I'm a Barra boy. He kept telling me over and over that he was worried that his Barra parents would be missing him and he really wanted to go back there."

Norma was utterly perplexed by Cameron's obsession with Barra. She claims none of her family had any connections to the island nor had she ever mentioned the place to him.

“At first we just put his stories down to a vivid imagination.” Then she began to really worry when Cameron started to become distressed at being away from his Barra family. “It was awful and went on for years,” she states. “When he started nursery school his teacher asked to see me and told me all the things Cameron was saying about Barra. He missed his mummy and his brothers and sisters there.” Cameron also complained about how he missed playing in rock pools on the beach beside his house. He even complained about the fact that his Glasgow house only had one toilet while in his Barra home he said there were three. “He used to cry for his Barra mum”, she states. “He said she’d be missing him and he wanted to let his family in Barra know he was all right. He was desperate to return there. It was very distressing. He was inconsolable.”

At one point Cameron told his mother he didn’t want her picking him up from school, he wanted his ‘other’ parents to collect him.

As Cameron played with his brother Martin, I asked him if he remembered his father on Barra. “Yes,” he states. “His name was Shane Robertson.” Whenever Cameron was talking about his past life, I was struck by how serious he became. It was quite clear that he completely believed what he was saying.

Was it possible to see his father I asked? “No, because he is dead”, he states bluntly. How did he die, I asked? “He didn’t look both ways,” replied Cameron. I ask him if he means his father was run over by a car and he nods his head.

When Norma asked Cameron how he ended up with her, he explains, ‘he fell through a hole and went into my tummy.’

## A HOUSE ON BARRA

Cameron described to me the house he claimed he used to live in. “It was a white house by the beach,” he states. “In the back there was a secret path that led to a gate and from there you could go down to the beach. I used to love to play in the rock pools on the beach.” Cameron also states that the house was on one floor only. He also said that the family owned a black car and had a black and white dog as a pet. But perhaps the most interesting piece of information, besides, the name of his father, was his memory of

seeing planes flying over the house. "I could see the planes landing on the beach," he told me.

Norma and Martin kept telling him that planes don't land on beaches. They land on concrete runways. But Cameron insisted that the planes he remembered landed on the beach. Subsequently Norma discovered that Barra is the only place in Britain that's uses a beach runway. Norma insists that neither she nor any of her friends or family know anything about this tiny island or have been there.

Diane Miller used to live next door to the Macaulays. And her son Aaron used to go to school with Cameron. "One day, when Cameron was about four," she explains, "he told Aaron not to worry about dying because after we die we come back and have another life. That's a very remarkable thing for a small child to say." When I spoke to Aaron, he told me how Cameron would go on and on about Barra. "It would drive me crazy," he explains. "We kept telling him to shut up because we thought he was making it all up. But he never did."

## OCTOBER FILMS STEP IN

In 2006 Norma was told about a documentary production company in London that was looking for any children who had spontaneous memories of an alleged past life. She contacted October films who became intrigued with Cameron's claims. For some time, Norma had wanted to take Cameron to Barra to see if she could find the house he described. But being a single mother, she lacked the money. October films agreed to fly child psychiatrist, Dr Jim Tucker into Glasgow so he could accompany the family on a trip to Barra.

Norma was not convinced that Cameron's memories were from a past life but she wanted to explore the possibility and believed that the trip would help ease Cameron's anxieties. This was not a view her family or Cameron's father shared. Although already separated, once Norma made the decision to take Cameron to Barra her former husband was so furious, he immediately cut her off financially. Skeptics who might accuse Norma of colluding in some kind of hoax would have to take this into consideration as it was a very high price to pay.

As part of the film psychologist Prof. Chris French, editor of the UK's Skeptic Magazine, confronted Norma. French insisted that Cameron's case was probably the result of false memory. That Cameron had picked up the information via TV or the Internet, forgotten where the information had come from and then twisted it into his story about an alleged past-life. "I suppose that is possible," replied Norma. "But I've never seen Barra on the TV and we don't own a computer. Also, October films checked to see if any documentary or news programs about Barra had been broadcast on British TV in the last six-years. And none had." Norma also pointed out to French that Martin, who is inseparable from Cameron, had no knowledge of Barra and so thinks it unlikely that Cameron would have so much information and Martin would have none.

Norma was also introduced to Karen Majors, an Educational Psychologist who was asked to look at Cameron's story and give her professional opinion. "How Cameron describes his world seems very different from how children with imaginary worlds and imaginary friends usually describe their experiences," she states. "Cameron is saying his memories are real. Even very young children with imaginary friends will tell their parents these are imagination and call them my invisible friends. And they usually feel in control of this world. Cameron doesn't appear to be able to control this world at all. I would not say that Cameron's experience falls into the usual pattern of children who create imaginary worlds. So, it's more about looking at other ways of explaining his experience."

## FLYING TO BARRA

Dr Tucker was enthusiastic about accompanying the Macaulay's to Barra since the chance to follow a case as it unfolds is a rare opportunity. He also found the case interesting because Cameron claims to remember the family name and on a small Island like Barra if someone with that name did own a house it should be easy to trace.

Flying to Barra takes about an hour from Glasgow airport. The Macaulay family and Dr. Tucker climbed aboard the small twin-engine aircraft. When it came into land on the beach Cameron proudly says. "I told you so." As he strode across the beach he shouted. "I'm back."

Driving across the island to the hotel Cameron became very excited saying over and over 'I've come home.' He frequently pointed to places he says looked familiar to him. The next day Tucker and the family contacted Calum MacNeil, the local Historian, and asked him to check his records to see if any one called Robertson owned a house on Barra.

Cameron also said that the house he previously claimed to live in had an old-fashioned phone with a rotary dial. MacNeil believes the time period could be anytime between the 1930s and 1970s when rotary phones first became widespread and were then replaced slowly by push button models. At first, he found nothing. But then checking the names of families who owned holiday properties on Barra but were no longer residents of the Island, he discovered a Robertson family who owned a house on the coast.

October films then took Cameron to that house without telling him they had previously discovered one formerly owned by the Robertson family. He was simply driven up to the door and his reactions filmed.

At this point something very strange happened. The normally bubbly Cameron becomes visibly disturbed. He then clings to his mother for reassurance and was reluctant to go inside. Eventually they entered.

Whilst going around the house Cameron points out the location where he claimed to have once slept, along with which bedroom his sisters supposedly slept in. Cameron states that although much of the décor has changed the fireplace has not. The owners later confirm this to be correct. The house does contain three toilets as he recalled. At the back of the house a small path leads to a gate that goes down to the beach. 'The Secret Path' as Cameron previously described it. The beach has numerous rock pools.

Although excited by the visit Cameron was also clearly sad. When asked why he replies." I miss my Barra mum."

## TRACING THE FAMILY

After returning from the island a genealogist was hired to try and trace any remaining members of the Robertson family. A Gillian Robertson was located in the Scottish town of Sterling. She agreed to be interviewed. Gillian also agreed to share with the Macaulays her albums containing

photos of Barra. “Cameron was eager to see old family photographs in case he found his dad or himself in any,” states Norma. “He’d always talked about a big black car and a black and white dog. Both of these were in the photos.”

Gillian explained that she didn’t know of any family members called Shane Robertson, but she did have an uncle and a cousin called James. In Celtic, the name Shane and James are often interchangeable. However, Gillian could not recall any family member who died in a car accident.

Since the family returned to their home in Clydebank, Glasgow, Cameron has been much calmer. Dr Tucker notes that this is a common feature among past life cases he has investigated. Norma explains: “Going to Barra was the best thing we could have done. It’s put Cameron’s mind at ease. He no longer talks about Barra with such longing. Now he knows we no longer think he was making things up.”

Although not all the information Cameron provided was accurate Norma believes past life memories might be like ordinary memories. “We often forget things or incorrectly remember them.” And she concludes, “We didn’t get all the answers we were looking for in terms of conformation, but according to Dr. Tucker, past life memories fade as the person gets older.” She then continues saying, “when I ask him what his name was before, he says, ‘It’s Cameron. It’s still me.’”

As a mother Norma has been remarkably supportive of her son’s claims of having lived a previous life. Instead of rejecting them out of hand she had the courage to explore and reach out to experts in the field. One can only guess at how many other mothers would just dismiss such claims as childish fantasy.

The journey has been hard and supporting him has meant rejection and ridicule, especially from her family. Asked if her views about reincarnation being a reality have now changed, she states emphatically. “Previously there is no way I would have even considered reincarnation a possibility. Now it is totally the opposite.”