

Scotland Redux

— Case #81 —

Having a son who says he prefers his other mother is a common irritant that many stepmothers might be resigned to face; but what if there *is* no other woman and the son whom you bore claims to like his “other” mother better than you?

That was the strange situation that Norma Macauley experienced soon after her two-year-old son, Cameron, learned to talk. Over the ensuing few years, Cameron repeatedly, almost incessantly, spoke of living as a young boy on Barra, a remote island some 200 miles from his actual home in Glasgow, Scotland.

As a struggling single mother of two — Cameron had an older brother, Martin — Norma was in no position to satisfy Cameron’s strident pleas to be taken to Barra. Both his brother and his neighboring playmate grew frustrated with his talk of having another family, and when Cameron began to attend school, his teacher expressed some concern over his persistence in claiming that his “fantasies” were factual descriptions of reality. But Cameron would not yield. For four years, he persistently, almost relentlessly, asked, begged, and demanded to be taken to Barra to see his other mother, whom, he told Norma, she would like very much.

Then Norma was told of a notice in a local newspaper that sought people who felt that they had lived a previous life. In her desperation, she ignored the advice of her family and responded to the paper. The newspaper management was impressed enough with Cameron’s claims that

they contacted a television company called October Films. Soon thereafter, Dr. Jim Tucker became involved in investigating the case.

When Cameron was 5-years-old, the television company flew him and his family to Barra and filmed the boy as he explored the island and pointed out familiar places and things.

The sources consulted¹ spend some time presenting what I think of as in-direct evidence. This sort relies on logical “if-then” arguments, *i.e.* “If this was true, then that should be true.” For example, the television show contains a scene in which Norma visits Karen Majors, an educational psychologist, specialist in children’s imaginary lives. The doctor notes: “How Cameron describes his world seems to be quite different from how children with imaginary friends describe their experience. ... Children who have imaginary creations feel in control of those creations; they can determine what’s going to happen in that world and it feels like Cameron isn’t able to direct what’s going on there.” Dr. Majors concludes that Cameron’s experiences do not fit the expected pattern and other explanations need to be sought. The fact that Cameron is able to recall (make up?) numerous details but cannot name his family members is a good example of this characteristic. If he was imagining his house and neighborhood, then why can’t he imagine his mother’s name, or his siblings’ names, or, at the very least, his own name?

A large amount of in-direct evidence such as this can be very convincing, but it can also be

¹ Robertson, Tricia, *Things You Can Do When You’re Dead*, White Crow Books, 2013, pp. 107-114; October Films, *The Boy Who Lived Before*, Lesley Katon producer, 2006; and Tucker, Jim B., *Return to Life: Extraordinary Cases of Children Who Remember Past Lives*, St. Martin’s Press, 2013, Chapter 3.

a distraction in cases where there is a solid block of more direct evidence, as does exist in Cameron's case. Why divert the viewer's attention with opinions about what ought to be true, when the revealed facts prove what is true?

Cameron described the house where he had lived on Barra as large, white, single-story, and isolated. He was currently living in a row house in the city. He could see a beach, he said, from his bedroom window. There were rock pools on the beach, some large enough for swimming, others in which he would play and "catch things." He claimed that his previous home had a telephone with a dial with holes in it. He also said that the house had three toilets, unlike his current home which had only one. He said that his previous family name was Robertson, that he had three sisters and three brothers, and that his father, who had been killed in an auto accident, was named Shane (or Sean). Furthermore, he often mentioned a black-and-white dog and that there were sheep in the yard that would come right up to the front door.

When the entourage arrived on the island of Barra, the plane landed on a beach --- much to Norma's surprise, even though Cameron had repeatedly claimed that that was how it was done. During the bus ride to the hotel, and throughout the entire next day of driving around the island, Cameron seemed happy but never claimed to recognize his home. On the second day, after being told by the local historian, Callum MacNeil, that a family named Robertson had owned a vacation home on Barra during the 1960s and '70s, they drove unfamiliar roads to the location. They were careful not to tell Cameron where they were headed or why. As they neared their destination, Cameron said that he once knew the family who lived in a house they were passing, but he could not remember their names. He also

pointed to an abandoned building sitting off of the shoreline saying, "It's hard to get to that bit; because then you'd have to swim back." In fact, one could easily wade to the structure during low tide, but would have to swim to return if the tide had come in.

As they turned down the track leading to what had been the Robertson's house, Cameron pointed at it and said "That's it, that's my house there." Although it had undergone some renovations over the decades, the home matched Cameron's description in all relevant particulars. It was isolated, single-level, white, and relatively large. One could, indeed, see the beach from the window of the bedroom that Cameron claimed he had shared with a brother. The rock pools were there, some large enough for swimming. And, yes, the house sported not one, not two, but three toilets.

Later, the researchers used a genealogical company to find a living member of the Robertson family. This was Gillie (Gillian), who may have been a young girl during the time that Cameron recalled on Barra. In the film, her photo album showed the house and beach as it was then. There was a dog in one of the pictures that matched the description Cameron had given of a dog he had played with. One photo was of sheep grazing near the front door just as Cameron had described. Gillie, however, could not recall anyone named Shane in the family; this is not too bothersome, as names are traditionally the most difficult facts for spirits to recall, especially those who transitioned at a young age. Also, Gillie did not remember anyone in the family being killed by a car; again, that could have happened to someone else the boy was with, or it might be that the girl was around at the time of the incident. Then again, Jim Tucker may have brought up the true solution when he said: "He

could have had memories from more than one life and they could have gotten mixed in together." The most puzzling statement Gillie made, though, was that there were no deaths of young children near the pertinent timeframe. If her memory is accurate, and assuming that she is being truthful, (neither of which are certain) we are left with a most difficult conundrum.

Perhaps Cameron's case is an unusual instance of possession? Perhaps Cameron's past life was as a friend of the Robertson's or he was related to the house's caretakers? Perhaps Seth's probable universes are the answer? Certainly further research is called for. I would be especially interested to know if there is a record of a child dying young anywhere in Scotland, who had witnessed his father being killed by a car.

But, whatever the explanation, the case remains good evidence for the persistence of the human personality beyond this physical life, for the memories of planes landing on a beach, children playing in rock pools, and a house owned by the Robertson family that had three toilets and an old-fashioned telephone, those memories must have survived somewhere before being so incessantly and exclusively recalled by a 2-year-old boy some 200 miles away in Scotland.



A Survival-Top-40 Case

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