

A scenic landscape in Lochaber, Scotland. In the foreground, a man wearing a dark kilt and sporrans stands on a grassy hillside, looking out over a valley. The valley contains a river that winds through a lush green landscape. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains under a blue sky with some clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Travel in Time

Revisiting places from the past

Lochaber, Scotland
Estelle Slegers Helsen

TRAVEL IN TIME

Revisiting places from the past

LOCHABER, SCOTLAND

Photography by
Then - © W. S. Thomson
Now - © Estelle Slegers Helsen

New Traces
Waltham on the Wolds, UK
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CONTENT

- 4 | **FORT WILLIAM** | St. Andrew's Episcopal Church | Let's See Fort William and Lochaber (Kilmallie House edition), p. 13
- 6 | **FORT WILLIAM** | The Railway Station, the Station Hotel, Grand Hotel, Highland Hotel, Macrea and Dick's Bus Station and MacBrayne's Bus Station from the pier | Let's See Fort William and Lochaber (Cameron Square edition), p. 10
- 8 | **CAMUSNAGAUL** | Banavie, the Caledonian Canal and the Great Glen with Loch Eil in the foreground | Let's See Fort William and Lochaber (Cameron Square edition), p. 9
- 10 | **GLEN NEVIS** | Glen Nevis, near Fort William, Inverness-shire, one of the finest glens in Scotland | Postcard #3473
- 12 | **ACHNACARRY** | Aonach More, Carn Mor Dearg and Ben Nevis from Loch Lochy | Let's See Fort William and Lochaber (Cameron Square edition), p. 28
- 14 | **BANAVIE** | Ben Nevis from Banavie | Colourful Scotland, p. 32-33
- 16 | **CORPACH** | Winter sun and hoar frost above Corpach, Ben Nevis in the distance | Colourful Scotland, p. 42
- 18 | **GLENFINNAN** | Loch Shiel and the Monument of the '45 Rebellion | Highlands in Colour, p. 37
- 20 | **BACK OF KEPPOCH** | The Island of Skye from Back of Keppoch, near Arisaig | Beauty Spots Inverness-shire, plate 11
- 22 | **MALLAIG** | Mallaig and the Sound of Sleat | Let's See Mallaig and the Road to the Isles, p. 2
- 24 | **MALLAIG** | Auctioning the night's catch at Mallaig Pier | Let's See Mallaig and the Road to the Isles, p. 21
- 26 | **ARDTOE** | Rhum and Eigg from Ardtoe | Beauty Spots of Argyll, plate 2
- 28 | **ACHARACLE** | Acharacle and Ben Resipol | Let's See Ardgour and Ardnamurchan, p. 13
- 30 | **SALEN** | Salen and Loch Sunart | Let's See Ardgour and Ardnamurchan, p. 11
- 32 | **KILMORY** | Rum and Eigg from Achateny, Kilmory | Let's See Ardgour and Ardnamurchan, p. 20
- 34 | **WEST ARDNAMURCHAN** | Ardnamurchan Lighthouse, the most westerly point of the mainland of Scotland | Let's See Ardgour and Ardnamurchan, (Cousland edition), p. 19
- 36 | **KILCHOAN** | Kilchoan from the West | Let's See Ardgour and Ardnamurchan, p. 17
- 38 | **LOCHALINE** | Entrance to the sand mine at Loch Aline | Let's See Ardgour and Ardnamurchan, p. 24
- 40 | **STRONTIAN** | Scotstoun, Strontian, site of the former lead mines | Let's See Ardgour and Ardnamurchan, p. 11
- 42 | **CORRAN** | The "Loch Fyne" passing through Corran Narrows | Let's See Fort William and Lochaber (Cameron Square edition), p. 21
- 44 | **ONICH** | Nets drying at Onich, Loch Linnhe | Highlands in Colour, p. 27
- 46 | **SOUTH BALLACHULISH** | The "Prince Louis" from Gordonstoun School passes through Ballachulish Ferry | Postcard #AS5/433 | Collection John Park
- 48 | **SOUTH BALLACHULISH** | Loch Leven and the Pap of Glencoe | Highlands in Colour, p. 25
- 50 | **BALLACHULISH** | Loch Leven and Ballachulish Village | Let's See Glen Coe and Loch Leven (Corpach edition), p.25
- 52 | **NORTH BALLACHULISH** | The Pap of Glencoe and Bidean nam Bian from Loch Leven near Callart | Colourful Scotland, p. 39
- 54 | **KINLOCHLEVEN** | Kinloch Leven and the Pap of Glencoe | Let's See Glen Coe and Loch Leven (Cameron Square edition), p.22
- 56 | **GLENCOE** | Glen Coe Village | Postcard #147
- 58 | **GLENCOE** | Torren Lochan and Stob Coire an Lochan, Glencoe | Highlands in Colour, p. 26
- 60 | **GLEN COE** | The Pass of Glencoe and the Three Sisters | Highlands in Colour, p. 24a
- 62 | **RANNOCH MOOR** | Loch an Achlaise on the Moor of Rannoch looking to Clachlet and Meall A' Bhuridh | Let's See the West Highlands (Kilmallie House edition), back cover

The then and now pictures are printed side-by-side. On the left are W.S. Thomson's photographs with his original captions. On the right are Estelle Slegers Helsen's remakes with updated captions.

As a history researcher, I have unravelled the life of W.S. Thomson (1906-1967), a forgotten entrepreneurial Scotsman operating at the forefront of colour photography. From the late 1930s to his sudden death, aged 61, the photographer roamed his beloved country to capture the beauty of landscapes. He published his work in two pictorial books, 'The Highlands in Colour' (1954) and 'Colourful Scotland' (1956), in his series entitled 'Let's See' and 'Beauty Spots' and as postcards. When a friend gave me a copy of 'The Highlands in Colour' in 2019, the quality and the classical approach of Thomson's pictures struck me.

I have always been fascinated by the aspect of time and the transience of life. Photography is an ideal method of capturing one single moment in time. Comparing two or more pictures taken from the same place within a time frame of a minute, a day, a season, a year, a decade, a lifetime, or a century reveals what has changed and what has not. The Travel in Time project tracks places through time. By showcasing the old and new pictures side-by-side, the differences become apparent and reveal the effect of time. Using both as visual cues, I then

gather recollections from local people, all blending into stories of historical interest, which I give back to the local communities.

Hundreds of W.S. Thomson's photos have been printed, but as far as I know, no archive of his original black-and-white negatives or colour transparencies has survived. For this first booklet, I wandered in Thomson's footsteps with a selection of photographs he had taken in Lochaber. Why Lochaber? Thomson lived in Fort William and nearby Corpach from 1946 to 1961. There he was a well-known photographer, who also produced family portraits in his home studio, took school pictures in the local area and provided images for the printed press.

A family member has very kindly granted me permission to publish W.S. Thomson's photos. This Lochaber series was made possible with the support of the West Highland Museum in Fort Williams and a grant from the Year of Stories 2022 Community Fund. I would also like to thank everyone who has shared their recollections. To read the stories and find the locations on a map, please visit www.travelintime.uk.

GLEN NEVIS



Glen Nevis, near Fort William, Inverness-shire, one of the finest glens in Scotland



WEST ARDNAMURCHAN



Ardnamurchan Lighthouse, the most westerly point of the mainland of Scotland



SOUTH BALLACHULISH



The "Prince Louis" from Gordonstoun School passes through Ballachulish Ferry



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Travel in Time is a photography and story project. The old photographs and postcards and new remakes taken from the same spot served as visual cues to talk to local people, asking about their recollections and sharing their stories of the past, present and future of the places featured. This booklet, with 30 then and now pictures covers the Lochaber area in West Scotland.

You can find the stories at www.travelintime.uk.

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www.newtraces.uk - UK £ 7.50

William Sutherland Thomson MBE (Glasgow, 1906 - Isle of Skye, 1967) was a Scottish photographer who roamed his beloved country. As a proud and entrepreneurial Scotsman, he published books, booklets, and hundreds of postcards depicting Scotland in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. During his life, he lived in Glasgow, Kirkwall, Fort William, Corpach and Edinburgh.

This booklet is a homage to his work.



© Family archive

Estelle Slegers Helsen (Belgium, 1965) is a photographer and history researcher who has contributed to various social and cultural projects. Her passion is connecting people to each other, their roots in the past and present, and the beauty of life itself. Travel in Time is her latest project, revisiting landscapes, streetscapes and seascapes from the past. She has been living in the UK since 2018.

You can find her work at www.newtraces.uk



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