



The Laird and his team curl at Fintry

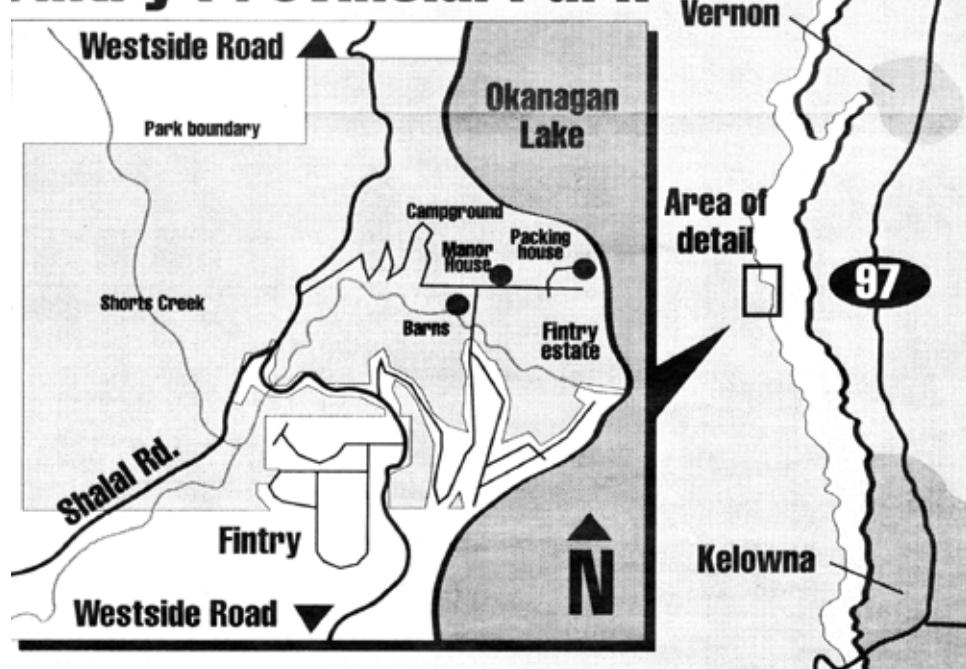
J.C. Dun-Waters, Jack Reid, Geordie Stuart, and Angus Gray

Photo courtesy of Greater Vernon Museum and Archives

Fintry and the Laird

Okanagan History Vignette

Fintry Provincial Park



John McDonald graphic courtesy of *Capital News*

Fintry and the Laird

Once upon a time, a wedge of land began to appear on the west side of Okanagan Lake. A waterfall tumbled down steep cliffs, leaving soil and gravel at the base of the cliffs. Slowly a delta was formed. A creek ran through this gently sloping land and entered the lake. This land was sometimes called the Garden of Eden because it was rich and beautiful. It was home to bighorn sheep, deer, black bears, and many species of birds. Kokanee and rainbow trout spawned in the creek. First Nations people spent time on this land. The Okanagan Brigade Trail passed through it. Captain Shorts lived here when he was king of navigation on Okanagan lake. In the 1920s, this land was turned into peaceful green meadows, apple orchards, pasture lands, and gardens. It was called Fintry. It was the home of Captain Dun-Waters, a man known as the Laird of Fintry. Imagine it is now late September 1939. Can you see granite cliffs, rolling hills, grazing cows, golden orchards, and sturdy buildings? Can you see a man standing by the lake? He's wearing a kilt and a tam on his head. He's walking forward to speak to us. It must be Dun-Waters himself. What will he say?

Meet the Laird

Welcome to you all. Aye, I'm J.C. Dun-Waters. For 30 years, I've lived on this land, the home I call Fintry. Let me tell you my story.

Although I'm a Scotsman through and through, I was born in England in the year 1864. I was named John Cameron Waters. I grew up on my family's estate in Scotland at a place called Fintry. As well as growing crops and feeding cattle and sheep, the land on the estate was perfect for hunting. As a young man, I enjoyed hunting partridge, rabbit, pheasant, and deer. When I was 21, I inherited a great deal of money from my uncle Dunn. He was one of the owners of the *Glasgow Herald* newspaper. He wanted me to take his name to keep the fortune in the family. So I changed my last name from Waters to Dun-Waters, dropping an "n" from my uncle's name. In 1887, I married Alice, a quiet woman from a well-to-do family.



J. C. Dun-Waters

Photo courtesy of Kelowna Museum

One of the great passions in my life was, and always has been, hunting. Just after the turn of the century, we sold our Scottish lands and moved to England. There, I organized hunting parties and became Master of Fox Hounds. But in 1908, I went on a hunting trip that would change my life. I came to Canada.

Early Days in the Okanagan

Aye, I was very impressed with the hunting in the Okanagan Valley. I could see that the land itself had great potential. I said to myself, “J.C., this is where you want to live.” I was probably bored with my life in the old country. I loved being outdoors. Here in Canada I could make a fresh start. I could make something of my own, not live in the shadow of my ancestors. So in 1909, I bought 1,174 acres (475 hectares) of land at what was then called Shorts Point. I paid \$22,500 for it (about \$382,500 in today’s money). Although this was thought to be very expensive for land, cost was not important to me. I wanted to create a thriving estate for my own satisfaction.

Fintry Orchard

Right away I set about establishing an orchard. I had 100 acres (about 40 hectares) of apple trees planted. In time, the trees produced bumper crops. I hired a crew to look after the fruit farming. They pruned, sprayed, picked, and packed. I built a sawmill that prepared the

wood needed for apple boxes. I built a packing house next to the wharf to handle our fruit. Apple boxes were filled in the packing house and wheeled across the wharf to be loaded into a boxcar that sat on a barge at the wharf. At the height of the season, our orchard was turning out a boxcar load of apples per day. That was 670 boxes per boxcar. One season, we shipped 85 carloads of apples.



Scenic view of Fintry showing orchard and Okanagan Lake

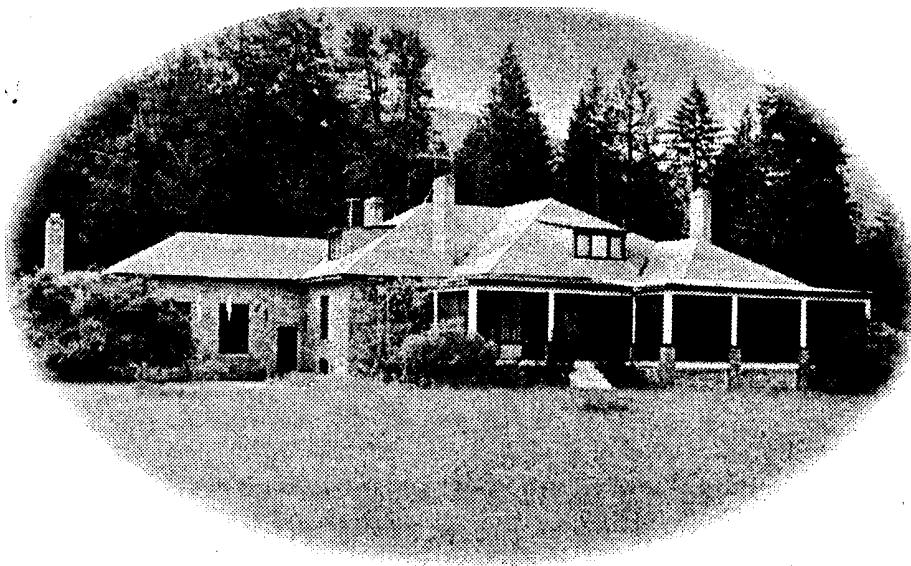
Photo courtesy of Greater Vernon Museum and Archives

To ensure that the orchard would be a success, I installed a full-scale irrigation system in 1912. A wooden pipe brought water down from the waterfalls behind the orchard. Two suspension bridges were built to support the pipe. Flumes took the water to the rows of trees, and the trees were watered by sprinklers. Other orchards had open ditches of water for irrigation. Bringing water down from the cliffs behind the orchard gave us the water pressure we needed to run sprinklers. I was keen to use the best techniques available.

Fintry Manor House

I decided to call my new estate in Canada “Fintry” after the name of my old home in Scotland. In 1911, I started construction on the large manor house where we would live. The stone for the walls, fireplaces, and chimney came from the hills behind the house. I brought over furnishings from the old country, and the house shone with mahogany, silver, and brass. On the walls were pictures of my horses and foxhounds. I even had a stuffed black bear standing outside the front door. This used to startle my friends when they stepped outside for a breath of air after having a wee dram of whiskey. I always got a laugh out of their reactions. There was a kennel behind the house for my beloved hunting dogs. From the veranda, we had splendid views of the lake and the hills. There were acres of lawn with trees and shrubs and

vegetable and flower gardens. My wife was particularly fond of the flower gardens. We were very happy living at our new Fintry.



Fintry Manor built 1911-1912

Gordon Bazzana photo courtesy of *Capital News*

Then in 1914, war broke out in Europe. I returned to England and joined the army. Although I was 50 years old, I saw action at Gallipoli (ga-LIP-o-lee) in Turkey, and I was wounded there. I left the army with the rank of captain. I then paid to have a small hospital set up in Egypt as a place for soldiers to recover. My wife, Alice, and her companion, Miss Katie Stuart, were a big help in running the hospital. At the end of the war, we were happy to return home to Canada. I was glad that Katie's brother, Geordie, joined us on the estate as my accountant.

Fintry Prospering

In the years that followed, the estate grew steadily. All along, I had been buying more property in the area, and now I started to add buildings. I had a large house built for the estate manager. It was called the White House. A two-story log cabin called The Chalet was built for the gardener. I later built another large house on the estate. We called it Burnside because it was located near a creek. Burn is the Scottish word for creek. As well as houses, we had all the barns and sheds needed for a busy farm. We had a wharf on the lake. We even had our own telephone system with seven phones.



The White House is the manager's residence at Fintry

Photo courtesy of Greater Vernon Museum and Archives

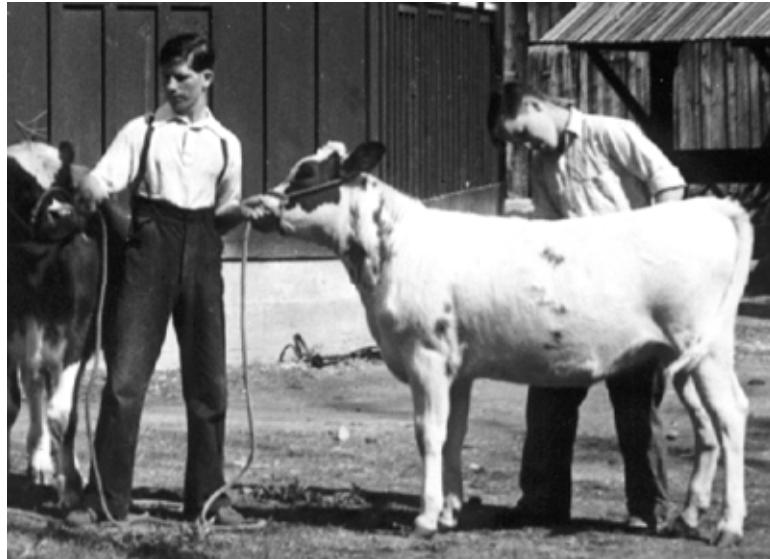
As soon as I bought the land here in the Okanagan, I hired my cousin James Godwin to be the estate manager. He had experience farming in South Africa, and I needed someone to help me start a farm here. I promised to leave Fintry to him in my will if he would come to Canada and work for me. But you know, I couldn't get along with that fellow. I didn't like the way he treated the farm workers. So in 1921, I bought him off. I paid him \$40,000 to leave (\$400,000 in today's money), and I changed my will. Then I hired the Pym brothers, one to manage the ranch and one to manage the orchard. Guy Pym lived in the White House while Ronald Pym lived at Burnside. I had bad luck with managers. The Pym brothers were not good workers. It wasn't until 1924, when I hired Angus Gray, that I found a capable manager. In fact, Gray worked as overall manager of Fintry for the next 24 years.

I did not want to be involved in the day-to-day running of the estate, so that is why I hired a manager to look after it for me. I wanted my time free to make plans for the estate and, of course, to go hunting. Sometimes I liked to work on the farm myself. I liked the physical labour involved in pulling out stumps, and I bought myself a one-person stump puller. Aye, there is a grand sense of accomplishment to get a stubborn stump out of the ground. Once, I decided to work alongside some men

digging ditches on the estate. I was wearing old work clothes. They didn't recognize me, and I didn't tell them who I was. Soon one man started to complain about the boss. It was hot work, and they were sure the boss was sitting in the shade having a cold drink. When the manager came to ask my advice on a farm matter, those laddies were sure surprised to find out that I was the boss. I had a good laugh to myself about the whole thing. Just because I owned the estate didn't mean I was better than anyone else.

Fintry High Farm

Just before the war, I had bought more land just below the cliffs and called it Fintry High Farm. In 1923, I employed over 200 men to clear the area to make hay meadows. This was pasture for 100 horses. Then I got the idea to bring in some Ayrshire (AIR-shur) cattle. We always had Ayrshire cattle in Scotland, and I thought they would thrive in the Okanagan. I was right. Every one of my cows gave over 10,000 pounds of 4% milk in a year. Some won records for milk production. In 1928, Alloway Miss Crummie was first in B.C. and White Lily was second. I always exhibited my best cows at the Armstrong Fair. I liked nothing better than to lead my cows into the ring with me wearing my kilt and the sound of bagpipes filling the air.



Ayrshires at Fintry High Farm

Photo courtesy of Greater Vernon Museum and Archives

I soon needed a new barn for my cows. My old friend, the architect J. Honeyman, designed the perfect barn for me. It was round. Actually, it was an octagonal barn. There was a central silo where the hay was kept. The 50 stalls faced inward toward a circular manger. Although my herd was small, it had been said that I had the finest Ayrshires in the world. I brought in the best breeding stock from Scotland and across Canada. I donated some cows to the farm at the University of British Columbia. I also sold cows to my neighbours at auction, sometimes selling them for less than they cost me. I was forever urging farmers to invest in Ayrshires. My neighbours probably thought I was an overbearing nuisance, but I had become very

enthusiastic about the advantages of these dairy queens. I wanted to see Ayrshires established in my new homeland.

Curling at Fintry

Life at Fintry wasn't all work and no play. I enjoyed curling in Scotland. So I thought, why not curl in Canada. We were able to divert some water from Shorts Creek to a flat piece of ground near Burnside. There we had our own outdoor rink. Later a covered rink was built behind the barns. Aye, we had grand times in the winter. I organized two teams from workers on the estate. I chose only the best players to be on my teams. As well as playing at home, we travelled to other



Curling on the outdoor rink at Fintry

Photo courtesy of Greater Vernon Museum and Archives

towns to compete. Little work was expected of the lads on the teams during the curling season because they were up at night travelling to competitions. Ach, I never let work get in the way of a good time.

In fact, it was during the curling season that I got my nickname, The Laird. Laird is a Scottish word meaning master or lord of the manor. One day Angus Gray saw me walking down to the curling rink and surveying my property. I suppose I had a proud look on my face. "Aye lads," Gray called, "here comes the Laird of Fintry." Well, I liked to think I had created at Fintry an estate that was the equal of any in the old country. I liked being called The Laird, and the name stuck. Indeed, I even had a \$5,000 shipment of scotch whiskey sent over with special labels on the bottles that read "Laird of Fintry."

The Trophy Room

Hunting for sport has always been a favourite pastime for me. In 1924, I decided to have a trophy room added to the manor house. Unfortunately, the house caught on fire before the trophy room was finished. Some paintings and furniture were saved. And best of all, a secret room in the cellar I had filled with whiskey and wine was not damaged. I had the house rebuilt right away. The trophy room had a special wall made to look like a mountain slope with rocks, moss and a waterfall. This is where I put the grizzly that I bagged during a hunting

trip in Alaska. I lined the walls with the heads of elk, mountain goat, buffalo, timber wolf, and deer to remind me of my adventures. I even had thick green carpet put on the floor to add to the natural look. The carpet cost me \$1,000, which was big money in those days.



J. C. Dun-Waters out shooting with his dog

Photo courtesy of Greater Vernon Museum and Archives

Affairs of the Heart

My wife Alice, whom I liked to call my Old Missus, died in 1924. We buried her in the garden at Fintry. Her headstone read, "Here lies my dear Old Missus in her garden. 1924. J.C. Dun-Waters." We planted red roses around the grave. This small rose garden was called "The Missus' Place." Later, I became very close to Katie Stuart, Alice's

companion. We travelled together and went on hunting trips together. She called me “Dunny,” and I called her “Bunny.” She was a grand lass, and she was devoted to me. But I did not fancy marrying her. Instead, in 1931, I proposed to a bonny, young Scottish woman in Vancouver. Margaret Menzies was working as a secretary. I met her when she typed some letters for me when I was staying at the Vancouver Hotel. I was 61 at the time. Margaret was 30. Katie and her brother had been living with me at Fintry Manor. However, when I returned home with Margaret, they moved to the Burnside house. Katie and I still remain friends. Every day I stroll over to Burnside to have tea.

The Fairbridge Boys

By 1936, I was beginning to feel my age. I was always wiry and tough, but I was soon going to be 72. Fintry was becoming too much work for me. I put the estate on the market for an asking price of \$100,000 even though I had spent over half a million dollars building it up. But no one offered to buy it. Sadly, I do not have a son or daughter. There is no one to inherit Fintry. So last year, in 1938, I decided to donate Fintry to the Fairbridge Farm Schools. This organization takes underprivileged lads and lasses from England and brings them to Australia or Canada. They live on farms and part of their schooling is teaching them how to be farmers and farmers’ wives.



Fairbridge boys with
Ayrshires beside the
octagonal barn at
Fintry High Farm

Photo courtesy of
Greater Vernon
Museum and Archives

Last summer, a handful of boys came here to work. This year, 35 boys came to live and work on the estate. After the Armstrong Fair earlier this month, I gave them a party at the National Hotel in Vernon. As a little treat, I secretly put a silver dollar under the ice cream each boy had for dessert. The lads live at the manor house and sleep on cots on the veranda. One night, I even joined them in a pillow fight. Ach, but it's good to have young people around.

A Good Life

So here I've lived for 30 years on the shores of Okanagan Lake at Fintry. When I first came to this area, I could see that this land on the lake had great potential. I have created a successful orchard and dairy farm. Aye, some people thought I was nuts to pay so much to bring out Ayrshire cattle. But I have always done what strikes my fancy, even if this makes some people think I'm eccentric. Although I have always insisted that my workers toe the line about work, I have gotten on well with everyone on the estate. Just the other day, I saw the wife of one of the herdsmen out for a walk with her dog. Her little Pekinese looked like a bundle of wool. I said to her, "I see you have your knitting travelling behind you." This comment gave her a good chuckle. All and all, I have enjoyed every minute of my life here. My dream for Fintry has been fulfilled.



The Laird and his dog

Photo courtesy of
Greater Vernon Museum
and Archives

Fintry Park

In the fall of 1939, J.C. Dun-Waters, the Laird of Fintry, died of cancer. His obituary said, “To what held his interest, he gave his heart.” Dun-Waters left money and property in his will for Margaret, Katie, and her brother, Geordie. The Fairbridge Farm continued to operate until 1948 when the organization ran out of money. At that point, the Fintry estate was put up for sale. For the next 37 years, the land at Fintry had several different owners who tried to turn it into a retirement haven or a resort club. In 1995, the BC government working with the Central Okanagan Regional District bought 360 hectares (889 acres) of Fintry land to be saved as a provincial park. This prime site begins with a 2-kilometre stretch along the shoreline of Okanagan Lake and then reaches back across the delta and climbs through forested hills and deep canyons. There are places for picnicking and camping, and trails for hiking, horseback riding, and cycling. Some of the old orchard land and some of Dun-Waters’ buildings, like the manor house and the round barn, have been preserved. Fintry Park now provides a wildlife habitat for many species of animals and birds and a playground for Okanagan residents and visitors.

Glossary

aye	yes (Scottish word)
bonny	good-looking (Scottish)
delta	land formed at the mouth of a river
estate	large piece of property with a large house
flume	pipe or channel to carry a stream of water
herdsman	person looking after a herd of cattle
lad, laddies lass, lassies	Scottish words for young men and young women
laird	owner of large property (Scottish)
manor house	large country home
Master of Fox Hounds	organizer of a fox hunt (England)
octagonal	having 8 sides
old country	the home country of an immigrant
saw action	fought in a war
tam	Scottish hat
toe the line	follow the rules
trophy	something taken during hunting as a sign of success; in this case, a stuffed animal head
veranda	porch or balcony running along the side of the house
wee dram	small drink