

# HONOUR TO DR JAS. MACLACHLAN, DORNOCH

## PRESENTATION OF CHEQUE AND HIS PORTRAIT

### AN APPRECIATION OF THE DOCTOR'S CAREER

On Thursday evening a large and representative gathering met in the Council Chambers, Dornoch, to present Dr James MacLachlan, M.B.E., with an appreciation of his long and valued services as Medical Officer of the town and parish for forty-one years, and in recognition of his many public services to the town and district.

Provost Murray occupied the chair, and Mr J. H. Arthur, secretary of the testimonial fund, intimated many apologies.

#### PROVOST'S SPEECH.

The Provost referred in fitting terms to the doctor's long and valued services to the community, especially pointing out the medical aspect of his work. He then alluded to his public work as civic head of the burgh, he himself having served under him. His acquaintance extended over a period of thirty years, and it was superfluous for him to give any details of the doctor's work to a Dornoch audience. There were few indeed of the improvements for the betterment of the people that he had not taken a leading part in. The doctor would be surprised to see the number of contributors who had given to the testimonial, and it was safe to say that few appeals in town and parish had ever met with such a ready response. He then said he had the greatest pleasure in handing over a handsome cheque and also the fine portrait in oils painted by a local artist, and hoped he would enjoy long life and prosperity.

#### DR MACLACHLAN'S REPLY.

Dr MacLachlan, in reply, was visibly affected by the cordiality of the reception he received. He said:—Mr Provost, I should like to thank you, sir, for the very kind remarks of appreciation that you have said about me. It is true that you and I in our earlier years were closely connected in public work. Many a battle, politically and municipally, have we fought together, and you might say in a minor degree ecclesiastically. The Provost had always taken the high road, but he had taken the low one; yet he thought the lamp still burned, and he was not without hope and faith to get on the high road and see the light that faileth never. He then thanked the audience for the cordiality of the reception to him. He might say that the friendship of the people of the parish and town had always been of a very warm and affectionate nature. He did not think it was possible for any medical man to receive the kindness that had been extended to him. From the castle to the croft from Badninish to Embo that had always been given to him, and he often thought if he deserved it. He had sprung from the people, he had lived amongst the people, and he hoped to pass away amongst those with whom he had expended the greater part of his life. He then thanked them for the handsome testimonial, which had been of such a generous nature, and also the donor of his portrait, who had been his neighbour for many years. Not only did he value it as a work of art, but also for the fine feeling that prompted him to do it. To those who were absent, might they convey to them his appreciation of their generosity. There was one thing more—he would like to thank publicly his medical confreres in Sutherland for the very handsome dressing-case and solid silver cigarette case with the inscription to him. He would value that much. Nor could he forget to recognise the nice gift from the matron and staff of the Cambusayie Hospital. It was a book he would value, and the inscription in the inside of it would remind him closely of his association with the hospital. He would like especially to thank all those who had been the means of collecting the

While practising on his own account in Alexandria, Dr MacLachlan took an active part in the life of the district, becoming a member of the Dumbartonshire County Council and Bonhill School Board. He was one of the founders of the Jamestown Liberal Association, and was elected its first president. On leaving his native district, he was publicly entertained and made the recipient of handsome testimonials from a grateful public.

#### ENTERS THE TOWN COUNCIL.

In November, 1901, the doctor entered the Dornoch Town Council, and to him promotion came early. He was raised to the Magistracy in 1902, and in 1903 was promoted Senior Bailie. His first term of three years on the Council having expired in 1904, he again sought the suffrages of the electorate, and was returned unopposed. In the same year he was elected Provost of the Royal Burgh, and for nine years which followed he remained its civic head, during which time it may be truly said that he fully maintained the best tradition of the high office of the Chief Magistrate.

Throughout that period and in the days when the royal burgh was not given the publicity that is so freely given now, Dornoch became widely known as a golfing and health resort. During all those years scarcely any meeting for the public weal, secular, social or political, was held without Provost MacLachlan either presiding or taking some prominent part therein. He was its willing servant, and never recognised political or ecclesiastical distinctions, and whatever his defects may have been, no one can accuse him of partisanship during his official reign. He acted on various committees, notably that of the Works Committee, for which he was specially thanked by the Council, and on his retirement the Council resolved to record in their minutes their appreciation of his services as Provost of the burgh.

Amongst the gifts presented to the town during his Provostship, mention might be made of the Carnegie Free Library Buildings; the gold chain of office and the picture of Queen Victoria by Winterhalter from the late Duke of Sutherland, K.G.; the fumed oak furniture which the Council use at their deliberations, by Mrs Donald Taylor; and a varied collection of books which formed the nucleus of the lending library; as well as photographs of former Provosts, given by Mr Hugh F. Campbell, M.A., LL.B.

Ex-Provost MacLachlan had not been much troubled with contests since he entered the Council in 1901. He had but two. On the wave of a popular election he made his entry into municipal life, and in 1910 history more than repeated itself by returning him at the head of the poll in a hardly fought contest.

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES.

Dr MacLachlan was one of the founders of the Dornoch Burns Club, and was elected its first president in 1912, as well as being made a life member. He was president of many societies and agencies, including chieftain of the Highland Games from 1901 until 1914, president of the Football Club, Boy Scouts, &c.

As a fitting tribute to the martial race from which he sprung, the doctor joined the Volunteer movement in the late eighties. He had held the rank of surgeon captain in the 1st Dumbartonshire Rifle Volunteers from 1887-1895, but on his appointment as medical officer of the burgh and parish of Dornoch, he preferred to take his place as a combatant officer in the local Company, 1st Sutherland Rifle Volunteers and 5th Seaforth Highlanders, 1896-

ing the many people who had sent him letters with enclosures from far and near.

The doctor then said no bells would ring for him at Burnside; that day was now passed; but there was a bell—the Cathedral bell—which was first impressed on his memory on the third Sunday of May, 1895, when his wife and he were passing the Cathedral. Her comments were too sacred for him for publication, but the message in effect was this, that "all things pass away, the lust of the flesh, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever."

Several ladies and gentlemen spoke of their appreciation of the doctor's services and to his many acts of kindness to the poor.

Before the dispersing the audience sang "For he's a jolly good fellow."

## AN APPRECIATION

With the retirement of Dr James MacLachlan, after 41 years' service as Medical Officer of the burgh and parish of Dornoch, the capital of Sutherland loses the services of one of its best known and devoted citizens.

Dr MacLachlan, the son of David MacLachlan and Mary Young Allison MacLachlan, was born at Alexandria, Dumbartonshire. His paternal forbears came from Strathlachlan in Argyll, the original seat of the old Clan MacLachlan, and through his maternal grandmother, Catherine Macdonald, he is connected with the Macdonalds of Glencoe. With the death of his mother, Mary Young Allison, at the age of 84, her family surname died with her, but it has been preserved as a Christian name among her descendants. The Allisons were a well-known family in the city of Edinburgh up to the early Victorian period, but little now remains of them but a landmark of one of their properties, which is situated in the Cowgate, the Allison Close.

On the 30th April, 1895, Dr MacLachlan was married to Christian Paul Cullen, eldest daughter of the late J. F. Cullen, M.D., and Mrs Cullen, Alexandria.

Mrs MacLachlan passed away on 8th November, 1926. She was a lady of intellectual accomplishments, and spoke German, French and Italian with fluency. Gifted with exceptional musical talent, she composed a number of pieces of music herself. Despite the fact that she was precluded, on account of her health, from taking an active part in public work, she, in her own quiet way, cordially supported her husband in all his efforts on behalf of the people.

Educated at the Parish School and Dumbarton Burgh Academy, the doctor's first start in life was in the office of the *Dumbarton and Lennox Herald*, but the fascination of medicine proving too strong for him, he threw up journalism and studied at the University of Glasgow, graduating M.B., C.M. in 1886. His medical career began with the Coltness Iron Company, Newmains, where he became assistant to Dr James Rutherford, one of the leading physicians of the West Riding of Yorkshire. At the request of his people, however, he returned to his native town and practised for fully five years on his own account there.

## HIS APPOINTMENTS.

In March, 1895, Dr MacLachlan was appointed Medical Officer to the town and parish of Dornoch. Other appointments which followed were:—Conjoint-Physician to County Infections Hospital; Factory Surgeon to parishes of Creich and Dornoch; Surgeon to Post Office officials; Immigration Medical Officer to the county of Sutherland, and examiner of recruits and several insurance societies. In addition, he was representative of the Scottish Insurance Commission on the County of Sutherland Insurance Committee.

In 1887 Dr MacLachlan was known as one of the early pioneers of ambulance work in Scotland. In 1922 he was president of the Northern Counties branch of the British Medical Association, and in the same year the Association held its first meeting in Sutherland, taking place in Dornoch. Dr MacLachlan is a life member of the Caledonian Medical Society, chairman of the local branch of the Sutherland Benefit Nursing Association, member of committee of the Sutherland Ambulance Association, and one of the examiners for St Andrew's Ambulance Association.

In the crisis affecting the medical profession under the Insurance Act, Dr MacLachlan played a part, for he saw that the democratic measure had rightly come to stay, and held that the medical profession, to be true to its tradition, should give it that hearty co-operation which was essential to its success.

During the years 1905-1913 he was chairman of the Sutherland Licensing Court, and he is still a member of the Appeal Court.

Majesty King George V.

Dr MacLachlan took an active part in war work. He initiated and organised a recruiting campaign in the town and parish of Dornoch, and acted as M.O. in charge of the 11th Service Battalion Gordon Highlanders and Seaforth Highlanders when stationed in Sutherland.

From 1910-1925 he was county director and honorary secretary of the Sutherland branch of the British Red Cross Society; he was a member of the Dornoch Tribunal Advisory Committee, and took part in inaugurating the Volunteer movement in 1917. He was a member of the War Savings Committee. He was also a member of the Sutherland Territorial Association, a position which he still retains.

The craft of Freemasonry is strong in the burgh, and in his early years Dr MacLachlan associated himself very closely with it, being Right Worshipful Master of Lodge *St Gilbert*, No. 790, from 1889-1901, succeeding in the chair the late Dr Grant, the founder of the Lodge. The doctor's term of office was marked with a great addition of members to the craft, and a valuable collection of nursing implements, which the Lodge placed at the disposal of any sick person in the community. On vacating the chair, the doctor was presented with the jewel of his office from the brethren of Lodge *St Gilbert*, No. 790.

## PUBLIC FUNCTIONS.

During his Provostship and otherwise, the doctor had taken part in many ceremonials, some of which may be enumerated.

In 1905 he welcomed the journalists representing the British Press during their first visit to the Highlands. Then came the entertaining of the officers of the 2nd battalion the Seaforth Highlanders, commanded by Colonel Douglas Campbell, on their recruiting campaign in the north. In 1909 he presented, on behalf of the Council, the address to the Most Noble the Marquis of Stafford, as well as the presentation from the community to His Lordship on the occasion of his attaining his majority. Next came the presentation at Dunfermline to Mr Andrew Carnegie from the Lord Mayors, Mayors, Lord Provosts and Provosts of the various towns in Great Britain which had received Free Public Libraries from Mr Carnegie.

When His Majesty the late King held his first Court at Holyrood the doctor, in his capacity as Provost, was to have been presented, but was delayed by a storm in the North Sea while on his way home from a visit to Norway. He was, however, in time to take part in the services in St Giles and in the other ceremonials which took place during that memorable week. In 1912 he had the distinguished honour of conferring the freedom of the Royal and Ancient Burgh on the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith.

## ON THE BENCH.

In 1906 Provost MacLachlan's public services were recognised by his being appointed one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of Sutherland, and in 1908 he had the signal honour of being made an Honorary Sheriff-Substitute, and in 1918 was made a member of the British Empire as well as receiving the Red Cross Medal for services.

During the autumn of 1912 and in the absence and at the request of Sheriff Principal James Mackintosh, K.C., he had the privilege of installing Sheriff Substitute George Campbell to the Sheriffdom of Ross and Cromarty and Sutherland at Dornoch. In March, 1935, under similar circumstances, Sheriff Substitute James Rattray Gibb was also installed by him into the Sheriffdom.

It may be said that in his later years, while not playing such a prominent part in the recent developments of the burgh, he closely identified himself with the inaugurating schemes of the telephone and the electric lighting of the burgh. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to have been present and taken part in the Septcentenary Commemoration of the Cathedral in 1924, and four years later in the tercentenary celebrations of the granting of a royal charter in converting the town into a royal burgh.

It is well known that Dr MacLachlan, while recognising that, materially, Dornoch lives, moves, and has its being in golf, and that without it Dornoch would never have attained the wide prominence that it has to-day, yet he thinks that golf is not enough, that an effort should be made either by the municipality or by county representations to explore and investigate what industries could be promoted to give employment to people, as the depopulation of the Highlands is one of the saddest pictures in its history.