

Mackinnon Memorial Hospital 1914 Broadford, Skye



Mackinnon Memorial Hospital c1920
Courtesy of Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre

Rev Dr Donald Mackinnon DD died in 1888 after 30 years as minister. He was the last of four generations, father to son, of ministers of Strath from 1748 to 1888. He was 'Chair of the School Board, a road contractor, breeder of setters, judge of cattle, occupant of three sheep farms.' At 70 year old, he preached two sermons every Sunday, one in Gaelic and one in English.¹ In 1888, a public meeting agreed to erect a cottage hospital as a memorial to him to serve the parishes of Sleat and Strath. By October 1888, a committee, convened by Lady Macdonald of the Isles, had raised over £300 and they decided to seek subscribers.² In 1889, a public appeal was made by Sir Henry Knight¹ and a bazaar was held at Broadford to which Sir Henry gave £20 and at which a boat was raffled.³ The first subscriber, L Macdonald of Skeabost, gave £20. Other subscribers were a mix of local and national people but none from

¹ A prominent Londoner and former Lord Mayor.

overseas in contrast with earlier voluntary Highland hospitals. In 1901, the trustees were Lady MacDonald, Lachlan MacDonald of Skeabost, James Ross, Broadford Hotel and Donald MacDonald Solicitor, Portree and a sub committee was formed which collected £237.⁴

In the 1890s, there was ongoing debate about the location of the hospital particularly whether it should be located at Broadford in Strath parish or further south in Sleat, for example at Isleornsay, and it was not until May 1910 that the site was finally established. At that point, the fund had £1600 and it was decided to delay building until more funds were available.⁵ Mr James Coates of Paisleyⁱ had given £50 in 1903 and subscriptions were mainly from mainland Britain. The first identifiable overseas subscription came in 1911 from FJ Jackson Governor of Uganda. In 1912, a two day bazaar was held in the school, as well as a concert and dance which raised over £600. In October 1912, James Dewar MP gave £52, presumably when visiting Skye to gather evidence as part of the Dewar Enquiry.ⁱⁱ By then, over £3,000 had been raised of which £2000 was invested.⁶

Plans, presumably by James Mackenzie, Architect, Portree were in existence by 1904 when, in February, an advertisement called for estimates for a hospitalⁱⁱⁱ to be erected at Broadford.⁷ However, Mr Mackenzie's plans were rejected in May 1910 and Henry Burdett^{iv} recommended Hall and Young of London who produced plans which were approved by October 1910. These included two three bed wards, an operating room, matron's sitting room, bathroom, lavatories, kitchen and scullery with, upstairs, the matron and servants bedrooms.^v The

ⁱ Of the textile family.

ⁱⁱ Which led to the Highlands and Isles Medical Service.

ⁱⁱⁱ In 1908, it was reported that Sir Donald Currie, who owned Scalpay stated that he was ready to erect and equip a hospital at his own expense but this seems to have gone no further (Northern Chronicle & General Advertiser 16 September 1908).

^{iv} Who produced a hospital year book and was a noted expert in hospital design.

^v The hospital constitution required 'matron and servants' to live in as was normal.

work was carried out by architects Carruthers and Alexander of Inverness.ⁱ According to a 1914 report, they also drew up the plans although it may just have been the 'mural tablet' placed over the door which was done by sculptors D&D Davidson Inverness.⁸

In September 1912, the foundation stone was laid by Dr A D Mackinnon, son of the Rev Mackinnon. At the laying ceremony, the Rev Lamont, Strath parish minister reviewed the history of funding and noted that funds were now at £3074. The energy of the secretary Mr James Campbell, Broadford merchantⁱⁱ was praised.

The hospital was erected by November 1913. Only the mason, John Macleod, Broadford, and painter, John Fraser, Kyle of Lochalsh were local. The carpenter was from Fort Augustus, the plasterer from Tobermory and the slater and plumber - John Reid from Inverness. The cost of the building was £1213 with a further £308 for furnishings and fittings. This left only £1700 in the fund, yielding around £70 per annum. This was insufficient to allow it to open and an appeal was issued in September 1913 (re-issued in November 1915) to address the shortfall and to fund additional outbuildings.

In 1914, a grant from the new Highlands and Island Medical Service (HIMS)ⁱⁱⁱ was awarded and Mrs A.D. Mackinnon of Kyleakin opened the hospital^{iv} on 3rd September 1914 in the presence of a large crowd. The

ⁱ William L Carruthers set up in 1883. Samuel G Alexander, also of Inverness, was partner from 1901 but eventually emigrated to USA after Carruthers died in 1914 (www.scottisharchitects.org.uk).

ⁱⁱ In 1903, James Coates, Paisley was on his schooner off Broadford. Mr Campbell secured a meeting and not only gained a good order for Skye Tweed but also secured a £50 donation towards the hospital (Highland News 15 Aug 1903).

ⁱⁱⁱ The annual grant was £50 until 1918 when it increased to £100. It reduced to £40 from 1926 when the hospital was financially secure but increased to £80 p.a. in 1940.

^{iv} This was the official opening. Evidence to HIMS in April 1914 suggests it may have been open then (information courtesy of the late Professor Norman Macdonald and P&J 24 April 1914).

trustees were the Church of Scotland ministers of Strath and Sleat parishes and the sheriff at Portree. The cost of annual subscription was 5/- and life subscription £5. Any church taking an annual collection became a subscriber and could send a representative to the Annual General Meeting. The three trustees were joined by seven others selected at the AGM (four from Strath and three from Sleat) to form a management committee which met regularly in the hospital. In September 1917, James Campbell continued as secretary and the treasurer was George Fraser of Portree who, along with the convenor, Rev. Maclean of Broadford, were ex officio members of the management team.⁹

The hospital was primarily for the people of Strath and Sleat but patients from other areas could be admitted if beds were available or if their case was urgent. Patients paid towards their maintenance according to their means and the amount was agreed at admission.ⁱ As elsewhere, paupers were charged to the Parish Council and cases of mental illness, infectious disease and incurables were not admitted. Maternity was also excluded although this later changed and, by the 1930s, the hospital contained maternity cases. Patients were required to keep the hospital tidy, only smoke with matron's permission and not stay longer than 21 days without the managers' permission. Convalescing patients were expected to assist with light duties both inside and outside the hospital. Matron's word was law in the hospital but, in turn, her freedom was fairly well curtailed. As in most other cottage hospitals, she was the sole nurse and domestic manager. She had to live in the hospitalⁱⁱ and she could not be absent from the building for more than two hours. Even then she had to ensure someone was left in charge and that they knew where she was going.¹⁰ The hospital started with just matron and cook but, by 1918, had also a probationer nurse and maid.

ⁱ This was common in rural hospitals where everyone's circumstance was generally known. Matron would normally carry out the negotiation on fees at admission.

ⁱⁱ This continued until 1966 when Matron Robertson requested that she live out.

There seemed to be limited capacity locally to generate large amounts of ongoing funds but the hospital benefitted from legacies and donations which allowed it to slowly increase its capital. In 1922, a sale of work at Broadford brought in £308 and one at Armadale Castle £90. In the early 1920s, there were at least two rounds of special government grants administered through the Local Voluntary Hospitals Committee of the Highlands and Islands from which the hospital got £95 in 1923. By the mid-1920s, money was regularly transferred from revenue to capital which, by 1930, was around £8000 and it continued to steadily increase. There is evidence of a major appeal for funds in 1936ⁱ when there was a sudden increase in subscribers from across Scotland, particularly businesses, and, although most were one-off donations, there continued to be increased subscriptions and more evidence of community fund-raising such as concerts, dances and sales of work. By at least 1938, a Linen League was in operation and the hospital had benefitted from a donation of materials which had been collected by the Red Cross as wartime emergency supplies.¹¹

By 1926, the hospital had telephone and, in 1930, it acquired a radio. In 1931, electric lightingⁱⁱ was installed by Edmundson of Inverness costing £559 and this allowed X-ray to be installed, which was financed by Miss Mackinnon of Balinakill.ⁱⁱⁱ Heating - apparently electrical - was installed in the operating theatre. By 1938, a new Lister engine was required to power the electricity.¹² Both projects were donated as shown on the table on the next page. A common method of making a major donation was to endow a bed which would have a brass plate displayed near it. Some endowments specified that certain families or districts would have priority over the bed's occupancy.

ⁱ Although it is not clear if it was for a specific project.

ⁱⁱ Apparently generated by diesel plant.

ⁱⁱⁱ Miss Mackinnon visited annually in her yacht. The hospital received several significant donations from visitors to the area in their yacht.

Mackinnon Memorial: Endowed Beds and Selected Donations¹³

Date	Sum	Donor
1913	£200	Mr Edward Davis, Cheltenham. ¹⁴
1915	?	The Thomson Strathaird bed apparently dated from around this time. We have no details but donor is likely to be Mr RL Thomson, proprietor of Strathaird, Eigg and Muck who died in 1913.
1918	£1,600	Lady Currie to endow the Sir Donald Currie Bed. Also note of unknown person donating a bed. ¹⁵
1918	£500	Duncan Macleod, Kinloch to endow Breakish bed. The brass plate was inscribed <i>Breakish Bed to the memory of Malcolm, John and Donald Mdeod 1918</i> . Sergeant John McLeod was in the 4 th Camerons.
1918	£800	Miss Mackinnon, Balinakill, Argyll to endow the Duncan Mackinnon bed. The brass plate was inscribed <i>In Memory of Duncan McKinnon of Loup and Balinakill, Argyllshire</i> Duncan Mackinnon died on 27 February 1918. He also had a Hyde Park Square residence and had been chair of the British India Steam Navigation Company.
1921	£500	Donated by Mr Audley of London, a friend of Mr Macleod of Skeabost. The brass plate was inscribed <i>Audley Bed 1921</i> . ¹⁶
1923	£75	Via Glasgow magistrates, from the estate of James Mackay, Wellington New Zealand 'to such charitable institutions in Scotland as they may select'. ¹⁷
1923	£500	Lachlan S Mackinnon, Melbourne to endow the Emma Flora Mackinnon bed. He was one of the 4 sons of Dr Mackinnon who had annual subscription from 1910 and made substantial donations to the hospital. ¹⁸ Mrs EF Mackinnon was his mother and wife of Dr D Mackinnon who the hospital commemorates. ¹⁹
1924	£500	Estate of Mrs Charlotte Marian McIntosh, Havering Park, Romford in memory of her brother Egerton Tower of Havering Park who died suddenly in 1906 while staying at Corry Lodge, her Skye home, on a shooting holiday. She had donated £20 p.a. since 1911. She died in 1924. ²⁰
1929	£150	Estate of Donald Clow, sheep farmer at Kiltaraglen, Portree.

History of Highland Hospitals

1930	£300	Miss Mackinnon, Balinakill for X-ray equipment
1930	£248	Legacy from estate of Donald M Mackinnon, South Africa
1930	£150	Charles Maclean, Australia towards electric lighting.
1937	£1000	In stock left by Miss May Mackenzie to endow 2 cots - 1 in memory of John W Mackenzie and 1 in memory of Mary, Margaret, Roderick and John Mackenzie.
1938	£500	Estate of Major AD Mackinnon, Kyleakin. He seems to have been treasurer for many years. ²¹
1938	£1000	Estate of Donald Maclean, joiner, Portree
1942	£1000	Estate of Rev W Connan Smith, Aberdeen
1946	£2000	Estate of Donald Mackinnon

Source: Macdonald Papers HC Archives Highland Archive Centre HHB24

Some patient details

	Admissions	Surgical	Out-patients	Note
1917	27	20	20	First year of organised out-patients - all surgical. ²²
1918	39	22	1040	23 major operations
1919	43	23	1036	19 major operations
1930	42	27	n/a	
1936	n/a	90	n/a	16 major operations
1942	117	n/a	n/a	59 operations, 32 of which were 'serious'. ²³

n/a = not available

The table above shows annual patient numbers. As with other small hospitals, bed occupancy probably varied although evidence is limited. On census day 1921, there were two male in-patients but the 1931 census recorded none. In 1942, 57% of patients came from Strath parish and 31% from Portree. Of the remainder, eight patients came from Sleat, four from Uig and two from Glenelg.²⁴

By the 1940s, it was staffed by a matron, assistant nurse (from at least 1936), probationer nurse and maid.²⁵ In 1946, it was described as a two storey stone building with eight beds, being chiefly surgical with a few

History of Highland Hospitals

maternity cases. It had mains water but private electricity and sewage system. Heating was by open fire. It had a small operating theatre with old equipment.²⁶ In 1947, a new operating table was presented in memory of Rev Hector Maclean of Strath.²⁷ At the hand over to the NHS in 1948 the hospital had around £11,000.²⁸

Hospital Capacity

Year	Beds	Note
1913-37	6	
1938	8	2 cots endowed in 1937. ²⁹
1962	10	³⁰
1963	24	20 general, 4 maternity
1979		4 extra beds planned. ³¹
2014	20	³²

The hospital's capacity stayed at two three bed wards until 1937³³ but in 1938 it is noted as having eight beds. The extra two beds may be the two endowed cots but the active fund raising around this time may also have allowed the increase in capacity although we have no evidence of any extension to the building.



Dr Mackinnon Memorial c 1965³⁴

The hospital was extended in the early 1950s with accommodation for X-ray and outpatients and, after the Gesto Hospital ceased surgery in 1953, it became the only hospital in Skye doing surgical work with its own GP surgeon, Dr G Sinclair, who had taken over in 1950.³⁵ In the 1950s, patient numbers averaged eight with about two thirds general surgery and the remainder medical cases. There were small and varied numbers of orthopaedic and gynaecological cases and a range of out-patient clinics.

In July 1961, work began on substantial renovations and an extension and the hospital (photo on previous page) re-opened on October 1963 with 20 general and four maternity beds, new reception area, A&E and out-patient facilities. However, occupancy of maternity beds declined (eventually averaging below one) and, in the 1970s, they were reduced in favour of geriatric beds in response to local need.³⁶

In 1972, Dr Sinclair resigned due to ill health but retained his GP practice and no other local GP would take on surgical procedures.³⁷ Mr JR Ball, then locum, was appointed consultant surgeon although it was recognised that the post gave insufficient experience and was professionally isolated by 1970s standards.

After a campaign for an extension in the 1970s, the Health Board agreed to provide an extra four beds³⁸ and there was fund raising around this time to raise £30,000 towards an extension.³⁹ In the 1980s, a new day room was formed. By 2008, the hospital had an emergency room, out-patient suite, X-ray department, 25 beds, a delivery room, office, reception space and staff accommodation.

In March 1992, the Health Board agreed to retain full time surgical services until Mr Ball retired which he did in 1998. By 2008, it continued to carry out minor operations, staffed by a team of rural practitionersⁱ

ⁱ General Practitioners with additional areas of expertise.

with visiting surgeons from Belford and Raigmore Hospitals and with transfer on, if required, to Inverness, Glasgow or Fort Willam depending on the need. By then, there was a range of outpatient clinics including medical, paediatric, orthopaedic, ENT, eye, audiology and podiatry.⁴⁰

For more than a century there had been debate in Skye about the need for a central hospital and whether it should be located in Portree or Broadford. The existing facilities at Broadford had encouraged expansion there from the 1960s on and, after a public consultation, it was agreed to replace the hospital with a new one nearby - recognising the effect of the Skye bridge which made it central to the wider area of Skye and Lochalsh. The go-ahead was agreed in 2019 and the new Broadford Hospital was opened in 2022.

Matrons

1914-15	Maclaine Campbell.
1915-21	N Addison.
1921-23	Isabella Macdonald. Job advertisement said Gaelic preferred. ⁴¹
1923-26	Ella Menzies.
1926-28	K MacCrimmon. ⁴²
1928-29	Nurse Cameron and Grace MacDonald.
1929-30	Helen Mackay.
1931-36	F Mackinnon.
1936-42	Kay Reid. Job advertisement asked for theatre experience. ⁴³
1942-75	Marion M Robertson. ⁴⁴
1976	Mr J Gordon is senior nursing officer. ⁴⁵

Medical Officers

As elsewhere, local doctors provided medical supervision and the Highlands and Islands Medical Service confirmed in 1914 that there was no need to offer a salary because they were treating their own patients, although this contrasted sharply with the salaries paid at the John Martin (£60 p.a.) and the Gesto (£200 p.a.). However, the hospital paid an annual travelling allowance of £20 to each doctor in 1918 and this appears to have been normal practice elsewhere.

Dates	Medical Officer
1914	Dr William Macleod Had moved to New Zealand by June.
1915-19	Dr Hastings, Sleat Killed in a car accident. ⁴⁶
?-1917-?	Dr Watt, Portree Also local Medical Officer of Health. ⁴⁷
?-1922-?	Dr McColl, Sleat
?-1922-4	Dr WD Mackinnon
1931-49	Dr MacInnes, Sleat Main surgeon. Medical Officer of Health Sleat until 1935 then Medical Officer of Health Strath. Died 1949. ⁴⁸
1931-?	Dr MacColl, Dalmally
1935-70	Dr Campbell, Sleat is depute medical officer. ⁴⁹
1950-71	Dr Fraser Sinclair Retired as consultant surgeon in 1971 and from general practice in 1976. ⁵⁰
1971-98	Dr John Ball Died 2008. ⁵¹



Dr Mackinnon Memorial Hospital 2008

References

- 1 Charnley and Miket *Skye A Postcard Tour* Maclean Press Skye 1992
- 2 Scottish Highlander 5 April, 11 October 1888
- 3 British Medical Journal 23 February 1889 p447: Mackinnon Memorial Hospital Constitution Cash Book No 1 Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre
- 4 *Burdett's Hospitals and Charities* 1894, 1895: Northern Chronicle 2 October 1912
- 5 British Medical Journal 19 November 1910 p1653
- 6 Highland News 7 September 1912: North Star & Farmers Chronicle 12 September 1912: Oban Times 23 November 1912
- 7 Northern Chronicle 3 February 1904
- 8 Highland News 24 September 1914
- 9 Highland Archive Centre HHB21: Highland News 19 September 1914 p6: Constitution of Mackinnon Memorial Hospital Highland Archive Centre
- 10 Hospital Constitution in Cash Book No 1 1888 Skye and Lochalsh Archives
- 11 Report of Linen League 1944 Highland Archive Centre HHB21
- 12 Highland Archive Centre HHB21
- 13 Christie and Fergusson papers HAS
- 14 Northern Chronicle 12 March 1913
- 15 Oban Times 6 October 1917
- 16 Oban Times 18 Nov 1922: Bill for engraving dated 8/7/1920 courtesy of Am Baile
- 17 Dundee Courier 16 August 1923
- 18 Christie and Fergusson papers *op.cit.*
- 19 Oban Times 24 February 1923
- 20 Chelmsford Chronicle 12 October 1906
- 21 P&J 5 February 1938
- 22 Oban Times 6 October 1917
- 23 Oban Times 15 May 1943
- 24 *ibid*
- 25 Receipts of salaries 1944 NHS Highland Archives Centre
- 26 *Survey of Scottish Hospitals Northern Region* Edinburgh 1946
- 27 Oban Times 5 April 1947
- 28 NHS Act 1947 Transfer of Hospitals National Archives of Scotland HH107
- 29 *Survey of Scottish Hospitals op.cit.*
- 30 Aberdeen Evening Express 12 February 1962
- 31 P&J 29 March 1979
- 32 The Herald 21 March 2014
- 33 Oban Times 20 February 1937
- 34 Picture courtesy of Highland Archive Service

History of Highland Hospitals

- 35 Oban Times 12 August 1850: Northern Region Health Board Medical and
Surgical Committee 27 January 1949
- 36 Northern Region Health Board Minutes Book 17 p132, Book 18 p9, Book 27
p255
- 37 Northern Region Health Board Medical and Surgical Committee 2 March 1972
- 38 P&J 29 March 1979
- 39 P&J 6 March 1980
- 40 Courtesy of Dr Leo Murray
- 41 Oban Times 28 October 1922
- 42 Scotsman 21 December 1925
- 43 Scotsman 5 August 1936: Oban Times 2 August 1941
- 44 P&J 9 April 1975
- 45 P&J 14 December 1976
- 46 MacGillivray, Neil *History Scotland* May/June 2017
- 47 Oban Times 6 October 1917
- 48 British Medical Journal 5 November 1949
- 49 British Medical Journal 19 July 1975
- 50 British Medical Journal 4 November 1978
- 51 British Medical Journal 12 April 2008