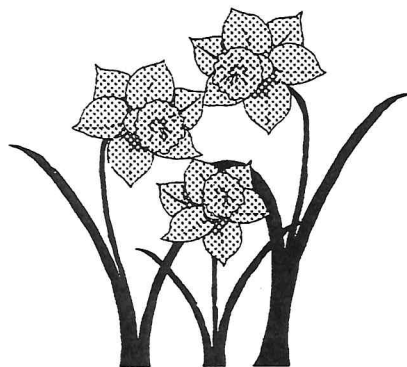


The Isobel Fraser Residential Home

Magfield Road, Inverness

A BRIEF HISTORY



Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge assistance from Miss Ray Skinner, the Inverness Courier and Miss Janice Cumming.

Mrs Eleanor Beevers,
Ladies Committee Member

March 1997

Addendum

The General Committee and the Ladies Committee amalgamated in May 1997 to form one Management Committee. The Home continues to be run on a non profit making principle and in 1999, its Centenary Year, the Home's capacity increased to 28 residents.

February 1999

The Isobel Fraser Residential Home

Mayfield Road, Inverness

———— A BRIEF HISTORY ————

What was eventually to become known as the Isobel Fraser Residential Home started out in a small way about 1899 in a cottage on Crown Street, Inverness. Its originator, Mrs Isobel Fraser, née Leith, widow of Frederick Fraser, tailor, Inverness and mother of seven children, was a woman of great humanity and imagination, keenly aware of the needs of others and determined to do what she could to alleviate the distress of the elderly who found themselves infirm and destitute.

Her father was the first Inspector of the Caledonian Bank in Inverness and her maternal grandfather Andrew May, was a civil engineer on the Caledonian Canal. Her people were of a philanthropic bent, well known and highly esteemed in the town. She herself was of a happy disposition, extremely musical and had a beautiful singing voice.

The sad death of her husband, leaving her with a large family to care for, could have proved too great a stumbling block on the road towards fulfilling her dream of a home for the elderly but she never lost faith and such was the force of her personality that, without any organised collecting, sufficient funds were

forthcoming. With Dr Norman MacLeod, Dr Black and Mr John MacIntosh as guarantors, Mrs Fraser was enabled to begin the good work in a little house, 'up the hill', on Crown Street.

Here, her fondest wish realised, she set about creating an atmosphere of cheerful homeliness where the residents, all women at first, felt themselves to have found a safe and peaceful haven.

She visited the Home daily, always attentive and keenly interested in the ladies' welfare ready to listen and to read their favourite passages from the Bible. Her bright loving personality was instrumental not only in creating a happy atmosphere in the little Home but in establishing a wider interest throughout the town. Soon a larger property was needed and a house at 42 Charles Street was bought, enlarged and furnished at a cost of £600. Yet again demand outstripped supply and another cottage on Denny Street was rented at £20 a year.

In the Inverness Courier of June 19th 1906 we may read that a sale on behalf of the "Cottage Home" was to take place in the Town Hall, the contributions consisting of "fancy articles, needlework, dairy produce, plants, cut flowers etc." Funds were needed to reduce debt and to provide for maintenance. Since the Home had been opened, fifty elderly women had been fed, clothed and cared for in their declining years. The 'Courier' felt sure that the sale would be well attended and that the goods would find ready purchasers.

There can be no doubt that the Home filled a real need at the time and the town of Inverness can be justly proud of its

daughter, Isobel Fraser, who in times of difficulty and indifference, never gave up until her goal was reached. She died at Kilmartin, 17 Southside Road, Inverness on 12th May 1918 aged 65 and was much mourned by a wide circle of friends. After her death, the Home was named "The Isobel Fraser Cottage Home". A fine sepia photograph of its Founder can be seen hanging in the sitting room of the present building.

Of like mind but covering a wider field of philanthropic endeavour, offering pensions or grants, as well as places in the Cottage Homes, the Aged Christian Friend Society of Scotland was founded in 1889 and some years later a branch was opened in Inverness. The committee running the Home in Charles Street, considered that it would be advantageous to combine with the Society and this took place about 1921. The amalgamation proved to be a valuable one and the ever increasing need for larger premises was met, firstly by the acquisition in 1927 of 'Viewmount' 10 Culduthel Road and then by gaining a site on Mayfield Road upon which a purpose built Home could be erected.

On Thursday 25th August 1938 the new Isobel Fraser Home of Rest of the Aged Christian Friend Society of Scotland, having cost £10,000 to build, was officially opened by Mrs Mackintosh of Mackintosh. During the ceremony which was conducted in the open-air, there were no fewer than nine speakers, among whom were Mr D A Small, President of the Aged Christian Friend Society of Scotland, Baroness Burton of Dochfour, Mr Leslie Graham-Thomson, Edinburgh, the architect of the Home, Mrs D H Mackintosh, Drumalin, Convener of the Home Committee and Viscountess Gough of Inshes House. Donations amounting to

£72 7s 6d in aid of the Building Fund were raised on the day from those present - a clear indication of the support for and appreciation of the project. Mention was made of the work done by the Committee responsible for the administration of the Home, and special credit was given to Mrs E C Jack, Honorary Secretary, wife of Mr Jack, Grocer, The Exchange, Inverness. She it was said "worked day and night for the Home. They could not do without her". The Home is proud to display a pretty coloured photograph of Mrs Jack in the sitting room today.

The new building was deemed to be worthy of the Capital of the Highlands, offering comfort and beautiful surroundings with the old people's quarters all situated conveniently on the ground floor. The central portion of the Home consisted of sitting rooms and dining rooms for either sex (with sliding partitions enabling the rooms to be made communal), kitchen and sick rooms and an upper floor containing matron's and staff rooms.

On either side of the central portion were wings consisting of sleeping accommodation for forty people, partly in single bedrooms, partly in dormitories - twenty in each wing, with one wing for male, the other for female residents.

The garden was attractively laid out, with many of the plants and shrubs having been donated by Baroness Burton, who had been a close personal friend of Isobel Fraser. In 1959 the addition of a beautiful sun room was presented to the Home by Mr and Mrs James Allan, dentist, Mayfield, 11 Culduthel Road, Inverness, a gift which was to prove of great value and continuing pleasure to the residents.

Over the years the Home was to know many benefactors - donors not only of money and goods, but of time and effort. Mr W G D Cumming, Chartered Accountant, Moraystone, 27a Southside Road, Inverness, occupied the position of Treasurer for a period of no less than 35 years until his retiral in 1971.

The General Committee and the Ladies Committee worked and continue to work today voluntarily and diligently to ensure the smooth running of the Home, which is non profit making, and the standard of care given to the residents by Matron and staff could not be bettered, far exceeding the call of duty.

Many improvements have been carried out in the Home since 1938. There is no longer dormitory accommodation. Each of the 27 residents has a comfortable room of his or her own, almost all with private toilet suite facilities. The communal dining room is warmly carpeted and brightly decorated as is the Home throughout and an on-going programme of modernisation is being assiduously followed in order to create ever higher standards of comfort. The happy atmosphere remains unchanged and it is the fervent wish of all connected with the Isobel Fraser Residential Home that, from its small beginnings almost a century ago, the Home will continue to provide a place of ease and contentment for many elderly people who in the evening of their lives, find that they are no longer able to remain in their own homes.

The Isobel Fraser Residential Home is a registered charity.

Donations and gifts in kind may be sent direct to:
The Isobel Fraser Residential Home,
Mayfield Road,
Inverness,
IV2 4AE