

Donald Glencoe McIntyre

(1890 – 1966)

This belated obituary of Donald McIntyre has come about because its omission was discovered during recent investigations into a bequest he made to the Society. The story of those investigations appears on the following pages.

Donald McIntyre was educated at Diocesan College, Cape Town (Bishops) and later studied accountancy. He was employed by E.R. Syfrett & Co in Cape Town for many years. During the Great War of 1914-1918 he served in East Africa with the South African Forces.

He had a wide range of interests and became an authority on Africana, chess, astronomy and other subjects. Over many years he wrote articles on various subjects and also wrote leaders for the Cape Times. His interest in music and astronomy led to his *Early Organs and Organists at the Cape*, *Alexander William Roberts (Astronomer and Teacher)* and *The Translucency of Saturn's Rings*, all of which were published in the early 1930's. McIntyre had been one of only about four people to observe a star through Saturn's rings in 1920. He had a strong interest in history which affected all his other interests and writings, of which his *Comets in Old Cape Records* is possibly the best known in the astronomical world.

He was probably South Africa's greatest expert on chess problems and was described as such by the magazine *SA Chess*. Problems which he devised were published as far afield

as England and Czechoslovakia and he maintained contact with chess enthusiasts worldwide.

McIntyre had donated many astronomical books and a 10-inch reflecting telescope to Bishops Astronomical Society. The telescope is no longer in use and enquiries at Bishops failed to reveal its whereabouts.

He was President of ASSA in 1933-34 and was also a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. On his death, after making various bequests, he left the residue of his estate equally to the "Old Diocesans' Union and ... The Astronomical Society of South Africa."

However, the capital was not paid out and only the interest earned by the funds was distributed to the two beneficiaries. At the time, Council for the Society decided to use the funds received to establish a prize to be known as The McIntyre Award (see details incorporated in Appendix II of the Society's Constitution). This award is still in existence, although it has only been awarded twice – in 1971 and 1983.

Donald McIntyre was a bachelor and had few relatives but one nephew living in Rondebosch still remembers him with affection. (C. Turk)

The McIntyre Bequest

It had long been understood by the Society that funds from the Estate of the late Donald McIntyre provided an income which was shared equally by the Society and Diocesan College (Bishops) but that the capital would never accrue to either organisation. That was not the true state of affairs but it took over 30 years for the true facts to emerge. Here is the story.

The writer's earliest knowledge of the "McIntyre Award Fund" was when he was asked to assist with the audit of the Society's accounts in 1975 due to the absence of one of the regular auditors. It was then explained that there were funds invested in a participation bond through Syfret's Trust from which the income was divided equally between the Society and Bishops.

For many years the regular receipt of the interest continued and was accrued towards The McIntyre Award expenses. The Award was presented twice and everything seemed normal.

Then suddenly, in 1998, the interest payments stopped. The Treasurer enquired from Syfrets, which was by this time part of Nedcor Investment Bank, and was told that their auditors had told them they must stop paying the interest. Enquiries of Bishops showed that their interest too had stopped. Clearly such decisions cannot be taken by auditors who could only make a recommendation to management, but when the writer made further enquiries he was told the same story. We then demanded, through Syfrets, that the senior partner of their auditors give us a written explanation of his firm's actions. Naturally this was not forthcoming.

The writer searched back copies of *MNASSA* and found the following information in the annual reports of the Society:

1966. "...of Mr D.G. McIntyre ... a past President of the Society and an Honorary Member. The Society will benefit financially from a legacy from his Estate and ..."

1967. The Financial Statement showed "McIntyre Bequest: Interest on Capital ... R68.75. Balance of Capital R36.09"

1968. "The balance in the McIntyre Award Account now amounts to R184.62, being balance of Capital R36.09 and Interest on Capital R142.47, with Savings Bank Interest R6.06, and this has ... The Society will in due course receive a further amount of approximately R1150.00."

1969. The same note as 1968 except that the figures were updated.

A visit to the librarian at SAAO produced a copy of the obituary of Donald McIntyre which appeared in Diocesan College Magazine under the heading "O.D. Notes 1966" This informed us that he had studied accountancy and had been employed by E.R. Syfret & Co. It also showed he was a bachelor and, "at the time of his death, had no close relatives living."

During a subsequent visit to Syfrets' offices we were given a variety of surprising pieces of information among which were: (1) Syfrets did not know who owned the money in the participation bond; (2) the interest unpaid to ourselves and Bishops had been placed in a suspense account; (3) Syfrets had tried to contact the investor but had been unsuccessful; and (4) the investment was in the name of "Syfrets Executors"

We told Syfrets that McIntyre had worked for them and we felt it safe to assume they had been his executors. We asked to see a copy of the will to find out the truth about

the invested funds and were told that we would have to ask the Executors and that Syfrets did not know who they were. However Syfrets did ask for a copy of the Diocesan College Magazine obituary which we supplied to them and they promised to contact us shortly.

Further enquiries were made at the Office of the Master of the Supreme Court in Cape Town where the helpful staff were able to provide the estate number (1218/66) and we completed a very simple form and paid the necessary fee. Just over a week later, a copy of the will was waiting for us.

As expected, the will showed that the executors were "Syfret's Trust Company Limited." It also showed quite clearly that, after certain bequests, the residue of the estate was shared equally between:

"(a) The Old Diocesans' Union, to be expended on encouraging Chess at the Diocesan College, Rondebosch, Cape Province.

(b) The Astronomical Society of South Africa."

By this time the "missing" interest had been paid to the Society's Treasurer. The covering letter advised the Society that the "R2000-00 participation bond" capital would be repaid on 1 February 1999. But we had understood that there was probably nearer R1150.00 due to each of the beneficiaries.

Clearly another visit to Syfrets was due. Our previously telephoned request for a copy of the Liquidation and Distribution Account was repeated and we were politely informed that Syfrets did not keep files for that length of time and that it would have been destroyed. However the manager we were now talking to agreed that he could obtain a copy of the one filed with the Master's Office for a small fee, just as we

had paid for a copy of the will. We had provided him with the will and he would provide us with the account.

Early in February 1999, the Liquidation and Distribution account arrived and showed the total capital to be R2400.00. Shortly thereafter the Society received its share of R1200.00 and the same amount went to Bishops. Council has decided to put the Society's R1200.00 in the Trust Fund where it will continue to generate income on a permanent basis and provide for any future McIntyre Award. At the time of writing it is not known what plans the Old Diocesan Union have for the promotion of chess at Bishops. (C. Turk)