

Skibo's New School.

Splendid Gift from Mrs Carnegie.

Opening Ceremony Performed by Mrs. J. P. Whittet.

"Mr Andrew Carnegie's name in the educational world, and more especially in Scotland, will be forever held dear in many a home." With these words, Mr John Ross, Brora, convener of the County of Sutherland, accepted the title deeds of the splendidly equipped new school which Mrs Carnegie of Skibo, wife of the Scotch-born American steel magnate and philanthropist, gifted to Sutherland Education Authority to replace a school in Clashmore which had outlived its day.

For some years the Education Committee have been thumping at the question of how best the interests of the children at Clashmore and Skibo could best be served educationally. Sometime ago it was stated that the old school, erected and gifted to the School Board of the time, was under modern conditions, cold, dull and drab. The suggestion was made that the pupils might with advantage be transported daily to Dornoch Academy. Mrs Carnegie, who heard of the suggestion, immediately offered to pay the travelling expenses of the pupils to and from Clashmore, not as a hint that the old school should be closed down but as a test, as to whether the children would be better off in going to Dornoch or remaining at school in their own township. Somehow or other the Education Committee departed from their original idea of "centralizing" education in the parish of Dornoch, and Mrs Carnegie, in continuing the benefactions which she and her late husband were noted for, immediately guaranteed a complete new and modern school at Clashmore, on condition that the old school would be handed over to the estate so that the building might be removed.

Happy Opening Ceremony.

At a happy ceremony held within the new school yesterday (Wednesday), expressions of appreciation were extended to Mrs Carnegie on the very fine addition she had made to educational facilities in the county. Mrs Carnegie's gift of such a neat and modern building, which, along with equipment, must have cost something like £2,000, is but a further indication of her personal interest in the welfare of children in the area. The new school is built of Lairg brick and the feu, which extends to about one acre, will be held for the nominal payment of one penny if this is asked for. A princely gift indeed.

In the arrangements, Mr J. P. Whittet, her factor, played a leading part, and to him, as to Mrs Carnegie, it must now be pleasing to see their efforts so appreciated by county educationists.

years as an experiment. (Applause). I wish to explain and add, however, that this suggestion was by no means to Mrs Carnegie's liking as she did not wish in the slightest to see Skibo School closed permanently. Her greatest desire was to see a new school with happy children getting the best possible education. The suggested offer was made only with the desire of delaying repairs to a school some 90 years old in the hope that a new school would still be forthcoming. That offer was not accepted. Mrs Carnegie subsequently decided to uphold the Carnegie interest in education and at the same time mark the wedding of her granddaughter by a gift to the community of this district of a new school and this the County Council generously accepted. (Applause).

"I do not wish to expatiate on the generosity of the late Mr Carnegie and of Mrs Carnegie, as I know Mrs Carnegie is one of the last to mention any such acts and promptly treats them as closed chapters, but I do think it is fitting just to remind ourselves that in addition to presenting the old school to the late School Board, they also presented the front wing to the schoolhouse of Bonar-Bridge School."

Mr Whittet issued a safety first warning to the children when they left the school daily. In the course of time it was hoped, he said, to have a barrier erected at the entrance gate.

Title Deeds Handed Over.

The Chairman, amidst applause, called upon Mrs Whittet to hand over the title deeds to the Convener of the County.

On behalf of Mrs Carnegie, Mrs Whittet said she had the greatest pleasure in doing so.

Convener's Tribute to the Carnegie

Mr John Ross said he accepted the title deeds of this fine new building, erected and equipped through the generosity of Mrs Carnegie. He asked Mr Whittet to convey to Mrs Carnegie the County Council's grateful thanks, and he promised her that the building and its surroundings would be kept in good condition for all time coming. "We are sure," said Mr Ross, "that the parents and children of the district will appreciate this gift. (Applause). On their behalf I wish you to send Mrs Carnegie their appreciation and wish her at the same time 'a guid New Year and mony may she see.'" (Applause).

Continuing, Mr Ross said: "For a considerable time, the old school was becoming totally inadequate for the requirements of the Education Department and in procuring estimates for repairs and additions, the cost was so high that it was felt better to a new school having an adequate playground. Here Mrs Carnegie stepped in and offered

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Yesterday's gathering included Mr John Ross, Brora, convener of Sutherland; Rev. William Macleod, Dornoch, vice-chairman of the Sutherland Education Committee; Provost John Murray, Dornoch; Mr and Mrs J. P. Whittet, Clashmore; Mr Archd. Argo, county clerk, Golspie; Mr H. A. Ross, director of education, Brora; Mr E. W. Branzen, architect and sanitary inspector, Dornoch; Councillors Mrs Macdonald and John Mackintosh, Dornoch; Miss Graham and Miss Polson (teachers), parents and children.

The proceedings opened with prayer by Rev. Mr Macleod.

Very Auspicious Day.

Mr J. P. Whittet, who presided, said that as this was a very auspicious day in the history of Clashmore it was with feelings of regret that this occasion was celebrated without the gracious presence of Mrs Carnegie. He was, however, happy to say that although Mrs Carnegie was not present in person she was with them in spirit. In a recent letter he had received she had sent her greetings and wished the new school every success in the future. (Cheers). The Chairman also read an apology from Mr A. M. Mackay, vice-convenor, who also sent his best wishes.

The Chairman expressed regret at the absence of Mrs J. F. Gordon Thomson, who was to have opened the school.

Interesting History.

In an interesting manner, Mr Whittet explained the history of the old school, Mrs Carnegie's interest in it, and all that led up to the present situation.

Addressing the assembly, he said:—"In a few words I would like to take this opportunity of explaining Mrs Carnegie's interest in the Skibo School leading up to the present situation, and in education generally in these words. The old school was what was known as a General Assembly school, and was built about 1859 under the auspices of the Church of Scotland with assistance from Mr Dempster, then proprietor of Skibo, the Duke of Sutherland and others. After the passing of the Education Act of 1872, the Church of Scotland gradually, as vacancies occurred, gave up all its schools. Round about 1874 Skibo School ceased to be a General Assembly School and became a 'voluntary State-aided School' under the management of Mr Sutherland Walker of Skibo, a person nominated by him, and the parish minister. This management continued until November, 1898, when the managers practically ceased to act and the school was closed.

"The late Mr Andrew Carnegie then came along and purchased Skibo and he and Mrs Carnegie gifted the school and old school-house to the School Board who took it in hand and since that date I think the school has been carried on without interruption and successfully.

"This now brings us up to modern times and in these days when it is the desire of everyone to have the most up-to-date equipment it has been felt for some time the old school was rather out of date and I know for one—the late Miss Brown who was a most excellent headmistress—advocated for and was most anxious a new school should be built. This brings us up to 1938 when, I think, the powers that be felt the expenditure too great, and at that time a suggestion was made by one of the members of the County Council that the pupils might be transferred to Dornoch, but that suggestion was turned down and it was decided to proceed with the repairs. Mrs Carnegie at that stage asked me to put forward an offer to the effect that she would be willing to defray the cost of transport of children from Clashmore to Dornoch for a period of two

to build a new school and defray the cost. This has now been accomplished. The school is built to the requirements of the Department, with everything necessary for the welfare and comfort of teachers and pupils. Mrs Carnegie, when she returns to her Scottish home, will no doubt visit the school, and I am confident you children will give her a very hearty welcome and tell her how pleased you are. (Applause). I have much pleasure in accepting this handsome gift on behalf of the Sutherland County Council." (Cheers).

Speaking of the educational benefits which the Carnegies bestowed upon many homes, the Convener said:—"Mr Andrew Carnegie's name in the educational world and especially Scotland, will forever be held dear in many a home. Through his beneficence the poorest has access to our universities, and this for all time. His record as a benefactor to the land of his birth stands unequalled and although America was the land of his adoption Scotland he never forgot. In politics he was a democrat, who believed sincerely in the brotherhood of man, and a lover of peace, believing that by arbitration all disputes national or international could be settled by arbitration. Hence his magnificent gift of two millions, towards the 'palace of justice' at the Hague.

"Just listen to this—an extract from a speech to the St. Andrew's Society, New York, 30th November, 1891, nearly 50 years ago:—"The elemental trait of the Scot is inextinguishable love of liberty, both civil and religious, and a passion for education."

"What, gentlemen, is the greatest glory of a State? The universal education of its people. John Knox is immortal not because of his theological beliefs but because he resolved that in every parish of Scotland a public school should be established. For the education of their children the poorest Scotch family will suffer privation, but rear their children in ignorance, they will not. (Cheers). Just think of the strides education has made since those words were uttered. Education is now free and is brought to our very doors, children living at a distance having a claim to a school near their homes." (Applause).

The Convener handed Mr Whittet the title deeds of the old school, and Mr Whittet accepted them with thanks.

Rev. Mr Macleod and Provost Murray, Dornoch, also addressed those present, as also did Mr H. A. Ross, director of education.

Rev. Mr Macleod, in heartily corroborating what the Convener had said about the late Mr Andrew Carnegie, congratulated the children on having such a fine new school. He did not think John Knox would have supported parish schools but for his theological beliefs. (Laughter).

In his address, Provost Murray touched on the advantages of education, and how they could receive any amount of instruction but no education. If they had men like John Knox now Scotland would be revolutionised.

Munificent Generosity.

The Director of Education said there was no happier person present that day than himself. The munificent generosity of Mrs Carnegie made the new school possible. Mr Whittet had given an interesting resume of the old school. When a man or school reached 80 years they were past their best. After some interesting remarks, Mr Ross said the Sutherland Education Authority had spent some £100,000 on new schools in the county. Mrs Carnegie had now come along and provided a new school with adequate water supply and modern sanitary arrangements. It was now up to the teachers and children to do their part, and he hoped the children would refrain from marking

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their desks and walls of the school in any way. He thanked Mr Whittet for the part he played in the arrangements.

Mr Argo extended thanks to Mrs Whittet who, as Mrs Carnegie's representative, so ably handed over the title deeds.

The singing of the first two verses of Psalm 121 and the Benediction concluded the happy proceedings.

Members of the Education Authority and officials were entertained to luncheon following the ceremony.

Description of School.

The school is built of Lairg brick and roughcast in a cream shade. The accommodation consists of two large class-rooms, entrance hall, boys' and girls' cloakrooms, staff room and offices and an outside shelter.

The school is heated by central heating.

The class-rooms are decorated in a cream colour and have modern friezes.

The complete furnishin of the school, which has also been undertaken by Mrs Carnegie, is carried out in oak and consists of all the usual up-to-date desks for pupils, desks for teachers and large cupboards.

The playground extends to approximately one acre.

The Contractors.

The tradesmen who carried out the work were as follows:—

Excavations and brick work — John Sutherland, Dornoch.

Carpenter and joiner—A. McAughtrie and Son, Bonar-Bridge.

Plumber work — Alexander Thomson, Dornoch.

Slater work—John Reid and Son, Inverness.

Plaster and cement work—Alex. Reid, Abers.

Roughcast work—Donald Fraser, Conon Bridge.

Central heating—Mackenzie and Moncur, Edinburgh.

Painter work—Andrew Innes, Dornoch.

Roads—Kenneth Ross, Embo.

Boundary wall—John Maclean, Dornoch.