

# ***Tribute to Dornoch's 'student of golf'***

Harvey Drummond, in his classic, "The Greatest Thing in The World—Love," wrote that the ingredients of love were kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, sincerity. These qualities come to mind as I think of Jim Macrae, the Dornoch golfer, whose death was reported in these columns recently.

I want to write about him as a golfer; but Jim Macrae was more than a good golfer. He was a thoughtful, interesting citizen, a typical educated Scot, ready and able to discuss a wide range of questions affecting our society and our nation.

As a schoolboy Jim was shaping that way; as a man, in the shop, in the bake-house, in the street, on the golf-course, on any golf-course, he lived pretty close to that Christian norm. I want to say that for I know it is true.

I write of him now as a golfer, a truly great golfer, who brought honour to the club, to the county, and to the Royal and Ancient game itself.

## **The ideal way**

Like other Dornoch boys half a century ago, Jim, in school holidays, went to the links, and grew into the game of golf in the ideal way as a caddie throughout the long summer days. But Jim was committed to golf already as a very small boy. For the master-baker in the Macrae establishment, Castle Street, through to St Gilbert Street, was none other than T. E. Grant, the master-golfer! As a toddler Jim knew that T. E. had beaten John Ball, the famous champion, at Muirfield, in the South; knew, too, that T. E. was one of Dornoch's steady full-backs in football, as well as the top golfer and long driver.

In his early teens Jim was caddie to Miss Joyce Spurling, whose father, if I remember rightly, was for a time, early in this century, captain of the Dornoch club. Joyce Spurling was an English international golfer devoted to golf and to Dornoch. Now well over 80, she lives in Lavender Cottage, near London. She spoke of Jim and his golf when I visited her a few months ago; showed me, too, a snapshot of a group of Dornoch boys in which Jim stood beside the bag of clubs, a definite person, young as he then was, about 1912 or 1913.

## **Fine teacher**

As a young member of Royal Dornoch G. C. Jim quickly played his golfing way right to the top. About his achievements as a golfer I hope I may be allowed to write, later, a briefer article—for the record, as it were. In the meantime I have the greatest interest in writing about Jim Macrae as a real student of the game, as well as an accomplished "shot-maker". He had all the shots and could fully explain and demonstrate how each different golfing stroke was made. To watch Jim coaching a younger golfer in the technique of playing a "real iron-shot," or, perhaps more advanced, a leisurely executed, high No. 8 iron-shot to the pin, was to see the master-teacher quietly, and with enjoyment, at work.

Three years ago I wrote about the talks I often had with the late George Macbeth about "the great Montmorency." For George, as a boy, was Monti's caddie. Just as I looked forward to a talk with George about one or two golfers, so I looked forward in the past near forty years to a talk with Jim Macrae—but a talk unlimited about golf, especially about golfers around the world.

Soon after my arrival in Dornoch I would, in these recent years, nip into the bake-house for a talk with Jim, or, at a later hour, into the kitchen-sitting room. Ever a welcome; time for talk; talk of the Walker Cup match, the Ryder Cup match; for I had been travelling and had seen so much, even met and talked with so many of the great golfers, from Bobby Jones to Arnold Palmer. I shared with Jim, and he, always a reader and a thinker, had much to share with me.

Twenty years ago, and more, after one of my specially rewarding swings around the United States, I called on Jim; spoke of meeting Ben Hogan, Jimmy Demaret, Byron Nelson; fortunately Jim was always a good listener—

an admirable quality, and this was a two-sided discussion. I remember mentioning well-known American golfers like Skee Riegel, Smiley Quick, Bud Ward. They all belonged in Jim Macrae's golfer's repertory. Sometimes his detailed knowledge even surprised me.

Historically, John Sutherland, of Dornoch, was the great, fully-informed golfer and student of golf, both in theory and practice. In the early decades of this century and up to 1922 or 1923, a special golf article appeared each Monday morning in the "London Daily News," signed with the authoritative J.S. (John Sutherland, Dornoch.)

## **Comparable**

In terms of golfing information, golfing technique, the rules of golf and (to a less degree) the politics of golf. I feel that I can compare Jim Macrae with John Sutherland.

Nearly 20 years ago, in the Carnegie Shield match play after qualifying, I met George Calder in the first round and met Jim Macrae in the second round. Each time, I write from memory, I reached the turn in 36. I thought I had done well. But Jim kept up his fine form and beat me at the fifteenth.

I last saw Jim on April 14; he was, as usual, helping in a neighbour's garden. Next morning I learned that he had quietly slipped away from this earthly scene during the night.—D.G.

