

HISTORY

Three generations of family values

There's hardly been a minute to look back since the young optician, James Reid Mackellar, embarked upon his exciting new business venture in 1930s Greenock. He was aged just 29 when he bought over an established practice at 86 West Blackhall Street, in the heart of Greenock town centre, and opened the doors of Reid Mackellar Opticians.

The year was 1936 and although the original shop was just a third of the size it is today, it marked the start of decades of development and growth. While he gave his middle and last name to the practice, he became more fondly known to staff and customers simply as Mr Mac.

From the late 40s, he employed another optician to work alongside him and, in 1952, moved his business next door to take on a shop double the size. Thanks to a growing reputation, he continued to build up the business year on year. His son Jimmy joined him in the 70s and grandchildren Mhairi and Campbell were welcomed onto the team in the 90s. The only break he had from the practice was when he was requisitioned by the Navy during the war years.

While he sadly passed away at the age of 92 in 1999, Mr Mac dedicated more than 50 years to the business and continued to work into his 80s – without a doubt an enormous achievement! The whole team are hugely proud to be continuing his great vision, and to be part of a practice that has become synonymous with the highest quality of ophthalmic services.

In his footsteps

It is clear to see that Mr Mac's son Jimmy was a chip off the old block, with his passion for optics and customer care, plus a pioneering spirit that emulated that of his dad. Jimmy, who qualified as an Ophthalmic Optician in 1972 and gained his Diploma in Contact Lens Practice in 1973, worked in the practice during his studies before joining his dad full time in 1973. He recognised great opportunities for Reid Mackellar Opticians and the people it served.

With the introduction of contact lenses in the UK at that time, Jimmy was quite the pioneer. He introduced this revolutionary new service, fitting hard contact lenses in the days before even textbooks had appeared.

Jimmy continued to build the optometry practice and, by the 80s, expansion was essential. Seizing upon the opportunity in 1988 to buy back the original neighbouring shop at 86 West Blackhall Street, the premises were knocked through to create one big practice that was three times the size of the first.

Continuing in the footsteps of their dad Jimmy and grandfather, Mr Mac, Mhairi and Campbell joined the team in the 90s. Mhairi qualified with a Degree in Management before going on to become a Dispensing Optician in 1993. She joined the practice in 1995 and after spells in Australia, London and Dublin, returned to the business in 2003.

Campbell graduated with a Degree in Optometry in 1998 and qualified in 1999 as an Optometrist. He gained experience first working with opticians in Glasgow before joining Reid Mackellar full time in 2002. He took over the day to day running of the practice in 2006, helping to oversee a major renovation two years later, which transformed the practice into the modern facility that welcomes customers today.

Again, just like his dad before him, Jimmy continues to work part time, as does Mhairi who now has two young children. Perhaps along with Campbell's two children, they will continue in those well established, familiar footsteps and become the next generation of Mackellar optometrists?