

## MACDONALD, GORDON, first Baron MACDONALD of GWAENYSGOR (1888 - 1966), politician

**Name:** Gordon Macdonald  
**Date of birth:** 1888  
**Date of death:** 1966  
**Spouse:** Mary Macdonald (née Lewis)  
**Child:** Elsie Williams (née Macdonald)  
**Child:** Gordon Ramsay Macdonald  
**Parent:** Ellen Macdonald (née Hughes)  
**Parent:** Thomas Macdonald  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** politician  
**Area of activity:** Politics, Government and Political Movements  
**Author:** Deian R. Hopkin

Born 27 May 1888 at Gwaenysgor, Prestatyn, Flintshire, son of Thomas Macdonald and Ellen (née Hughes), but the family soon moved to Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire, where he was brought up in a Welsh -speaking home. He left S. Luke's Elementary School, Stubshaw Cross, at the age of 13 and worked as a miner until the beginning of World War I, apart from a period as a student at Ruskin College, Oxford. In 1920 he was elected a member of the Wigan Board of Guardians of which he was chairman in 1929, and he became president of Bryn Gates Co-operative Society, 1922-24. In 1924 he was elected Miners' Agent for Lancashire and Cheshire in the Mineworkers Federation of Great Britain, a post which he held until he was elected M.P. (L) for Ince, Lancashire, in 1929. He showed energy and balanced judgement during a difficult period for Labour members. Although he was a friend of Ramsay Macdonald, he did not support him in 1931. He became a whip of the Labour Party, and took a prominent part in debates on the coal industry and social matters. He was also Chairman of Committees in the House of Commons, 1934-41. In 1942 he resigned from Parliament on his appointment as manager for the Lancashire, Cheshire and North Wales region of the Ministry of Fuel and Power, and he was widely acclaimed for his work in this important post during World War II. In 1946 he received a knighthood and despite his inexperience he was nominated Governor of Newfoundland. The province was poor yet proud, and was in great financial difficulties, but Macdonald made a name for himself for his work among the fishermen, colliers and small farmers who called him 'the governor of the poor'. He steered the state to independence within the dominion of Canada and on the day of confederation in 1949 he returned to Britain and was elevated Baron of Gwaenysgor.

Though he held the post of Paymaster General during 1949-51, Commonwealth and international affairs interested him most. In 1950 he attended a meeting of the United Nations, and he was active in the preparations for an important conference in Australia on economic aid to countries of south-east Asia. From 1952-59 he was a member of the Colonial Development Corporation, a body which made an important contribution to the economic and social development of countries of the old empire when they were laying foundations for their independence.

After the fall of the Labour government in 1951 Lord Macdonald returned to Wales, where he became prominent in a number of societies and public bodies, and his dedication to the welfare of Wales became apparent. He took a great interest in religious and missionary societies, and he was elected president of the Band of Hope Union of Great Britain, 1951, and president of the National Society of the Blind. But it is as the first chairman of the National Broadcasting Council for Wales throughout the 1950s that he became best well known in Wales. He published speeches and radio addresses he had made in Newfoundland in *Newfoundland at the cross roads* (1949), and his parliamentary impressions, *Atgofion seneddol* (1953).

He married, 1913, Mary Lewis of Blaenau Ffestiniog and they had four children. He died 20 January 1966 : his eldest son, Gordon Ramsay Macdonald (born 1915), succeeded to the title.

### Author

Deian R. Hopkin

### Sources

*Debrett's Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage, and Companionage*

his memoirs, *Atgofion seneddol* (London 1953)

*Prestatyn Weekly*, 19 January 1946, 3

## Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Gordon Macdonald, 1st Baron Macdonald of Gwaenysgor](#)

## Additional Links

NLW Archives: [Lord MacDonald of Gwaenysgor Papers](#)

Wikidata: [Q333437](#)

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