

THE IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN RELATED WATERLOO MEDAL AWARDED TO AN OFFICER OF THE 54TH FOOT WHO WAS WOUNDED WHILST CARRYING THE REGIMENTS COLOURS AT THE BATTLE OF MERXEM, 1813 AND WHO AFTER SERVING AS BIRMINGHAM'S FIRST POLICE COMMISSIONER, IN 1843 BECAME CHIEF POLICE MAGISTRATE OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND WHERE HE EFFECTIVELY DEALT WITH THE BUSHRANGERS AND NUMEROUS OTHER PROBLEMS. LATER HE SERVED AS A MEMBER THE THEN TASMANIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, A POSITION WHERE HE WAS EFFECTIVELY AN AUSTRALIAN MP. FINALLY BECOMING A STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATE AT RICHMOND IN 1859, HE RETIRED 3 YEARS LATER AND DIED AT HIS HOME BELMONT, RICHMOND IN 1864



WATERLOO 1815 'LIEUT. FRANCIS BURGESS, 54TH REGIMENT FOOT'

Francis Burgess was born in Leicester in 1793 and became an Ensign in the Leicester Militia, 31 May 1809 and was advanced to Lieutenant, 5 July 1811. He purchased an Ensigncy in the 54th Regiment of Foot on 4 June 1812 and was present with his battalion during the campaign in the low Countries in early 1813. During the campaign, he took part in the battle of Merxem, near Antwerp, 2 February 1813, where he carried the colours of the Regiment into battle. Here the 54th Foot formed part of the Light Brigade of General Gibbs's 2nd Division and were heavily engaged, forcing the French back during a charge. They however sustained heavy casualties later in the battle when engaged with a militia battalion. Ensign Burgess was one of those wounded.

https://www.napoleon-series.org/military-info/battles/1814/c_lowcountries1814.html

Promoted Lieutenant (without purchase), 16 December 1813, during the Waterloo campaign, Burgess served as an extra Staff Officer to General Johnston, commander of the 6th Brigade of Lt General Colville's 4th Division. Only lightly engaged during the battle of Waterloo, Wellington compensated the Division by giving them the duty of storming the fortress of Cambrai on 24 June 1815. Johnson's

Brigade was one of two tasked with the successful storming the fortress, one of the three storming columns being commanded Major Campbell of the 54th.

Placed on Half Pay in 1817, Burgess chose a career in Law, becoming a senior judge before being appointed Birmingham's first police commissioner in 1839. At the time there was much trouble in Birmingham but Burgess's three years in charge met with remarkable success, so much so that in 1843, on the recommendation of Sir Robert Peel, he was appointed Chief Police Magistrate of Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania). Based at Hobart:

"If Birmingham had its fair share of criminals, Tasmania was overrun with them, many of them escapees from the merciless penal colonies. The tension between the free settlers and the criminal interlopers made for a highly charged atmosphere, and one in need of a firm hand. Birmingham must have seemed like a kindergarten in comparison. Nevertheless, Burgess brought the same efficient, zero-tolerance policing to Tasmania and made a success of it. By 1846 his talents as a police commissioner were rewarded with elevation to the bench to serve on the chief penal colony of Norfolk Island. Ill health, however, forced him to return to Hobart. Burgess still had the approbation of the British Government as an effective administrator and, in addition to his duties in Hobart, he was appointed to the colony's Executive Council in 1843 and its Legislative Council four years later.

By the mid-1850s Burgess was at last beginning to think about slowing down, especially since, with the end of transportation, Hobart was no longer the Wild West town it had once been. And here, in his final years, Francis Burgess began to feel let down by the British Government, which did not show the kind of pecuniary gratitude to which he felt entitled.

He was offered a pension of only pounds 170 a year, and refused an army officer's land grant. Burgess continued to serve as a member of the Legislative Council - effectively an Australian MP - and as a stipendiary magistrate at the same time"



Note: Burgess's brother a Lieutenant in the 4th Bengal N.I. had been killed in India in November 1804 whilst leading a party of the 76th Foot against a battery.

Obituary from the Launceston Examiner 5 March 1864:

"THE LATE FRANCIS BURGESS, ESQ. The late Francis Burgess, Esq. for many years Chief Police Magistrate of the territory of Tasmania, with a seat in the Executive Council, and who died at Belmont, Richmond, on 24th February, was the oldest surviving son of Francis Burgess, of Leicester, and of Bridget, sister of the Rev. Thomas Scott, rec tor of Aston-Sanford Bucks, the well-known author of the "Commentaries," the "Force of Truth," &c; and was consequently nearly related to the Rev. Dr. Scott, the present Master of Baliol College, Oxford, and to George Gabriel Scott, the architect. At the age of 18, Mr. Burgess was appointed to an Ensigncy in the 54th Regiment, and served in Holland in the campaign of 1813, under Sir Thomas Graham, afterwards Lord Lyndoch. He carried the regimental colours at Merxem, near Antwerp, in which action he was wounded; and during the next year's campaign, under the same commander, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, in which rank he served with his regiment under the Duke of Wellington in the campaign of 1815. On the eve of the Battle of Waterloo, Lieut. Burgess was directed by Lord Waldegrave to join General Johnston at Braine le Compte, as an extra staff officer, and in the language of his commanding officer, "succeeded in carrying the order, for the march of the brigade for Enghien, notwithstanding the impediments which lay in his way." On the reduction of the army on the establishment of peace in 1817, Mr. Burgess was placed on half-pay.

He engaged for some years in agricultural pursuits in Warwickshire, but subsequently removed to London where he became a member of the hon. society of the Middle Temple and was called to the Bar in 1835. Mr. Burgess joined the Midland Circuit, and was appointed Revising Barrister for Northamptonshire, he also reported law proceedings in exchequer and equity, for the Times and Law Journal, and contributed various articles on rural sports and agriculture to the magazines. In consequence of the Birmingham riots in 1839, a government police force was established, and Mr. Burgess was appointed by Her Majesty, Chief Commissioner of Police under a special act of Parliament. Under very trying circumstances, Mr. Burgess succeeded, not only in maintaining the peace of that Borough, but also in repressing disturbances in more remote districts, and his services were warmly acknowledged by the Ministry of the day, as well as by the leading magistrates of Warwickshire and the neighbouring counties. On the expiration of his commission, Mr. Burgess was appointed by the present Lord Derby, then Lord Stanley, and Secretary of State for the colonies, Chief Police Magistrate for Tasmania; and on his arrival in this colony, in September in 1843, was sworn of the Executive Council and appointed an official member of the Legislative Council. Mr. Burgess was an active and energetic chief of the Police Department and was very successful in his arrangements for the apprehension and dispersion of bushrangers at a time when the colony was much infected by those desperadoes. On the proclamation of the new constitution, Mr. Burgess still retaining his official position, was elected a member of the Legislative Council; and on the abolition of the office of chief Police Magistrate by act of Parliament in 1857, vacated his seat by the acceptance of a pension, and was immediately re-elected. Mr. Burgess was subsequently appointed Visiting Magistrate at Richmond, from which appointment he retired finally from public life on the election of a Warden and Councillors for the Rural Municipality of that district.

Mr. Burgess who wore the Waterloo Medal for his services in 1815, and was in the receipt of a pension from the Colonial Government of £300 a-year, was married in 1818, to Amelia, daughter of Jacques Husbands, Esq. of Swansea and Barston, Warwickshire, who survives him, and by whom he had six children. His oldest son-Francis Jacques Burgess, Captain of the 74th regiment, Bengal Native infantry, -was among the victims of the last Indian mutiny. His other sons are Murray Burgess, Secretary to the Board of Education and to the Tasmanian Council of Education, and Gordon Burgess, a Government District Surveyor, now stationed at Swanport. Two of his three daughters predeceased him. Mr. Burgess was a gentleman of a kindly disposition, and courteous bearing; a liberal friend to those who needed his aid, a genial host to all who partook his generous hospitality.

He was a conscientious, pains taking, and energetic public officer and magistrate, and esteemed and respected by those who knew him, for his social and domestic virtues as a citizen and a private gentleman. H. T. Advertiser."

Burgess's entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography:

<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/burgess-francis-1853>

Also:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Burgess

Much information can be found on Burgess's career in Tasmania online



Condition NVF, contemporary replacement clip and bar suspension, with period but wider ribbon, suspended by a heavy silver buckle. Sold with a small amount of digital research, including obituary and his 1828 record of service which is particularly detailed, with several pages of testimonials from fellow officers (quite hard to read)