

AN OUTSTANDING 5 CLASP MGS 1793 TO AN OFFICER OF THE 4TH FOOT, WHO AFTER SERVING IN THE PENINSULAR WAR, WHERE HIS REGIMENT WAS CONSPICUOUS FOR ITS GALLANTRY ON MANY AN OCCASION, SAILED FOR AMERICA, TAKING PART IN THE BATTLE OF BLADENSBURG WHERE HE WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED, AFTER WHICH THE CAPITAL, WASHINGTON WAS TAKEN AND THE WHITE HOUSE BURNED. LATER ON CONVICT DUTY, HE COMMANDED THE 4TH IN AUSTRALIA BEFORE RETIRING FROM THE ARMY AND SETTLING IN THAT COUNTRY



MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793, 5 CLASPS, CORUNNA, SALAMANCA, VITTORIA, ST SEBASTIAN, NIVE 'J.K. MCKENZIE. LIEUT 4TH. FOOT'

Lt Colonel John Kenneth McKenzie was born in Edinburgh in 1791 and purchased an Ensigncy in the 4th Foot on 19 March 1807 as an Ensign of the 1st Battalion, 4th Foot. He served in the expeditions to Copenhagen in 1807 and Sweden, 1808, before landing in Portugal in August 1808, taking part in the retreat to and battle at Corunna in January 1809. Taking part in the *expedition to Walcheren, July 1809, he was shortly after* promoted Lieutenant, 9 November 1809 (without Purchase). Transferring to the 2nd battalion, two years stationed in Gibraltar followed, before he returned to the Peninsular, landing in Spain in April 1812. Joining Wellington's army in July that year, he took part in the great battle at Salamanca, 22 July 1812 and the subsequent entry into Madrid in August. He next served at the siege of Burgos, September 1812 – October 1812, taking part in the terrible retreat from that place. During the retreat, he also took part in the actions at Villa Muriel (Battle of Tordesillas), 25 October 1812, where; *'the 4th protected the blowing up of the bridge over the river Carrion, and afterwards assisted in driving the enemy out of the village'*. Transferring back to the 1st battalion, he was present at the battle of Vittoria, 21 June 1813, where his battalion were involved in the vicious street fighting at Gammora Mayor. In August, he was

present at the siege of St Sebastian and the storming on 31 August 1813. At the latter, the 4th Foot, part of General Robinson's Brigade, *'had the honour of taking a conspicuous and important part in storming the breach'*, the battalion loosing 299 Officers and men killed and wounded. After the fortress was taken, all order was lost for a time, Lieutenant Mackenzie being *'instrumental in saving both life and honour from the infuriated soldiery'*. He further took part in the crossing of the Bidassoa and the battle of Nive, 9 – 13th December 1813, the battalion loosing a further 182 officers and men during the fierce fighting. The battalion's final service of the war was the blockading of Bayonne.

Embarking for North America in May 1814, the battalion formed part of the small army under Major-General Patrick Ross, that took part in the expedition against the American capital, Washington. On 24 August, the British arrived at village of Bladensburg, just 6 miles from the capital the battle for that place began. During the fierce fighting that followed, which was a British victory, Lieutenant Mackenzie was severely wounded. Later that day the British Army entered Washington, where public buildings, including the White House were burned by the victorious Army, this noted as *'the greatest disgrace every dealt to American arms'*. Staying in America until July 1815, he subsequently served in France April 1817 – August 1818 and the West Indies, January 1819 – March 1824. During this period, the 4th Foot suffered a great many deaths by disease and Mackenzie's service record shows he left the West Indies between June 1821 and July 1822, probably on leave. He further took part in the expedition to Portugal in 1826, being stationed in that Country until April 1828, having been promoted Captain 20 July 1826 and Major 17 June 1828 (both by Purchase). Promoted Lieutenant Colonel 24 Feb 1832, he embarked on the *Clyde* for on Australia on convict duty, 14 April that year. On arrival, the Regiment under Mackenzie's command, provided garrisons for the settlements in New South Wales, Tasmania and Norfolk Island, guarding convicts. Leaving the Army in 1834, he settled in Australia, farming in various parts of NSW including Maneroo, Summer hill and Nerriga.

OBITUARY FROM THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD IN 29TH AUGUST 1857

'MEMOIR OF THE LATE LT COLONEL JOHN KENNETH MACKENZIE

Lieutenant Colonel John Kenneth Mackenzie was the elder and only surviving son of Andrew Mackenzie, W. S., of the family of Dolphinton and of Janet, a daughter of the last Campbell, of Auchlyne. He was bom in Edinburgh, in 1791, and left an orphan at a very tender age. In April 1807, at the age of 16, he joined the 4th, or King's Own Regiment, as ensign, and in the following August embarked with it at Harwich, on the expedition to Copenhagen, in May 1808 he accompanied with his regiment, Sir John Moore's expedition to Gottenburg, and returning to England in July, went on to Portugal, where he landed three days after the battle of "Vimiera. He participated in the miseries of the retreat to Corunna, and in the miserable battle of the 16th January, in which his regiment bore a distinguished part. The next foreign service on which he was engaged was the expedition to Walcheren, the 4th forming part of the reserve under Sir John Hope, in the island of Bevelaud. In January 1810 he embarked for Gibraltar, with the second battalion, which was afterwards 'stationed at Cents, on the opposite side of the Straits. In April, 1812, he joined the army under Wellington ; in July he was present at the battle of Salamanca, and in August at the triumphal entry into Madrid ; in September he was at Burgos, and accompanied the retreat to Portugal ; he was in the affair of the 25th October, at Villa Muriel, where the 4th protected the blowing up of the bridge over the river Carrion, and afterwards assisted in driving the enemy out of the village ; he was present with his regiment at the battle of Vittoria and the siege of St. Sebastian, and, after the storming of the latter place, was instrumental in saving both life and honour from the infuriated soldiery. The battle of the Nive was the next in which he was engaged.



In May, 1814, he embarked at Boudreaux for America ; and in August was present at the battle of Bladensburg where he was wounded in the thigh and heel. With the wounded of the division under General Ross, he embarked, in September, from the Chesapeake for Halifax, Nova Scotia ; and was there attached to the 64th Regiment. In December he embarked to rejoin his own regiment, and, after a stormy passage of six weeks, arrived at Bermuda on the very day that the American frigate President captured by the Endymion, anchored in the roads. In January 1815, he embarked in the Statira frigate, with a detachment under Colonel Brown, 85th regiment. The Statira was wrecked on the great Heniaga, but the troops on board and their baggage saved by the transports in company. He reached Jamaica in three days, and sailed in a transport for Dauphin Island, where the fleet containing the army lately repulsed at New Orleans, was at anchor. In April he returned to Bermuda, and in July sailed for England. In April 1816 he embarked for France, "with a, detachment, to join the first battalion attached to the army of occupation. The regiment next received orders to embark for the West; Indies, where he was quartered successively at Grenada, Barbados, and Antigua. In December of the year 1826, he embarked with his company, at Portsmouth for Lisbon in the Pyramus frigate, and remained in Portugal until the expedition sent out by the British Government returned.

In 1832 he arrived in this colony in command, of the regiment in which, from his boyhood, he had spent the whole of his existence; and in 1834 was induced, by the prospect of making provision for his numerous family by the pursuit of sheep-farming (at that time so profitable) to become a settler. In those days of pastoral prosperity, when the cost of production was so small and the catarrh, that scourge of the Australian flock holder unknown, " he was enabled for some years to live upon a footing equal, at least in point of affluence, to that of his former vocation; but with the ensuing period of calamity it was not to be expected that the high-minded open-handed soldier should escape the wreck in which so many of his brother-colonists were involved. To shorten a melancholy story, after surrendering to his creditors the fruits of so many years of toil and peril, the aged and destitute veteran betook himself with a portion of his family to a humble farm near the coast, und there, after four years 'more battling with the cares, infirmities, and misfortunes, which overclouded the evening of his life, at length, on the morning of the 14th August, he yielded up his spirit so calmly that it was not until some hours afterwards that his afflicted family were aware of the mournful fact. On the evening of the Sabbath following his demise, a few kindly neighbors assembled, with those of

his sons present, around his humble grave, the burial service was read by one of the eldest and most respected among the former, and there, without pomp or circumstance, as best befitted one whose latter days were days of affliction, was committed to the earth, the care and war-worn frame once inspired by as noble a heart as ever beat beneath the uniform of a British soldier.'

The Memoir of Captain Peter Bowlby, an officer of the 4th Foot who was also at Bladensburg, adds a little about an unnamed subaltern who is certainly Mackenzie:

"The men who had been on board the transport and myself were sent to the Madagascar frigate the wounded men being sent to Halifax under the command of a subaltern. At Halifax he fell desperately in love but had resolution enough to leave to rejoin his regiment sailing in the Statira frigate which was wrecked on the coast of Cuba, he escaping, and the vessel that he got on board of going back to Halifax he thought this was fate and was quickly married. He had a large family was disinherited by his father and finally became a settler in New South Wales. His daughter married an officer of the regiment who also became a settler."

It thus seems likely, Mackenzie's wounds were not of a serious enough nature for him to have been invalided. The lady he fell in love with in Canada was Charlotte Solomon, daughter of a Captain Solomon, Nova Scotia Regiment. The couple married on 17 May 1815 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. They had 14 children between 1816 and 1841.

THE STORMING OF ST SEBASTIAN FROM THE REGIMENTAL HISTORY

".. After the enemy was driven beyond the frontiers of Spain, the regiment was engaged in the siege of the strong and important fortress of St. Sebastian, and supported the unsuccessful assault of the works on the 25th of July: it also had the honour of taking a conspicuous and important part in storming the breach on the 31st of August. When the assaulting party, led by the King's Own, filed out of the trenches, it was saluted with a tempest of shells and grape-shot which blazed in the air, tore up the ground, and menaced the brigade with instant destruction; yet, urged forward by their native ardour and[110] thirst for glory, the soldiers rushed through this dreadful storm of bullets towards the breach, where they encountered difficulties almost insuperable. Many of the King's Own, evincing their inborn valour and contempt of danger, rushed up the breach and perished; others following, shared the same fate. Every exertion and device which the most determined bravery could inspire were repeatedly tried in vain, no man outliving the attempt to gain the ridge. Lieutenant Le Blanc of the Fourth, who led the light infantry company of the regiment immediately after the forlorn hope, particularly distinguished himself, and was the only surviving officer of the advance. At length the British heavy guns were turned against the curtain, and the bullets, which passed a few feet only above the heads of the soldiers at the breach, having produced some effect, another strenuous effort was made to gain the high ridge. The officers and soldiers rushing forward with enthusiastic gallantry, were favoured by the explosion of a mine, and the breach was forced. The town was immediately captured, and the citadel surrendered a few days afterwards.



The gallant behaviour of the King's Own on this occasion is set forth in the following copy of a letter from Major-General Robinson to the colonel of the regiment.

"St. Sebastian, 5th September, 1813.

"My Lord,

"I feel it my duty to inform your lordship of the gallant conduct of the first battalion of the King's Own at the attack of the breach of these works on the 31st August. The first attack was the exclusive duty of the second brigade, consisting of the Fourth, forty-seventh and fifty-ninth, with a company of Brunswick Oels sharp-shooters; or rather of a thousand men of the brigade; the remainder, to the amount of two hundred and fifty, were in the trenches and waited further orders. "The Fourth led, and perhaps in the whole history of war there cannot be found a stronger instance of courage and obedience to orders, for the instructions were to make a lodgement on the breach only; there to wait support. The lodgement was effected under the most tremendous fire of grape and musquetry that can be imagined, and our loss was dreadful, that of the Fourth only is twelve officers, nineteen serjeants, and two hundred and thirty rank and file killed and wounded. The other regiments emulated the Fourth, and called forth the acclamations of the generals, and thousands who were looking on. It was not until after three hours hard fighting that the lodgement was certain, after which, by the premature springing of one of the enemy's mines, the town was soon carried.

"This action, so soon after that of Vittoria, requires that I should report the conduct of the regiment in the warmest manner to your lordship, and I feel it but justice to a few individuals, who from accidental causes had opportunities of doing more than others, to mention their names. Captain Williamson commanded the regiment, and was twice wounded after he had reached the top of the breach. Captain Jones succeeded, not only to the command of the regiment, but on my being obliged to quit the field, to that of the brigade, and acquitted himself most admirably. My acting aide-de-camp, Captain Wood, left me at my request, and by his judgment and example contributed materially to the success of the daring attempt. The three are[112] excellent officers, and will ere long, I hope, prove themselves equal to the duties of a higher station.

"I have, &c.

"F. P. Robinson,

"Major-general, commanding second brigade, fifth division."

THE BATTLE OF BLADENSBURG;

At the battle of Bladensburg, 24 August 1814, an American Army of 7000 faced the British of only 4000 under the command of Major-General Ross, but they were all experienced regulars. The American position seemed quite strong, at least to General Ross. He described the Americans as being “strongly posed on very commanding heights, formed into two lines”, with artillery covering the bridge over the East Branch. The main weakness in the American position was the lack of regular troops. When the British attacked over the bridge the militia only stood their ground for a short time, before abandoning the field. Part of the panic was apparently caused by Congreve Rockets fired into their ranks. Only Barney’s sailors stood and fought, until they were outflanked by the British, at which point Barney ordered them to retreat. Although the battle rapidly turned into a British victory, it was not without cost and fighting was heavy. The British suffered 64 dead and 185 wounded (including 87 of the 4th Foot), three times the American casualties of 26 dead and 51 wounded. The lack of American prisoners was attributed to the speed of their retreat. The British victory at Bladensburg left Washington exposed to attack. Madison and his cabinet were forced to flee into the surrounding countryside, while later that day the British entered the city. In the previous year the Americans had captured York, the capital of Upper Canada, and burnt the parliament buildings and Government House. In retaliation the British now burnt the White House, the Capitol, the Treasury and the War Office and seized large quantities of munitions. On the next day they began their march back to their ships.

From the regimental history;

“Marching through Bayonne on the 15th of May, the regiment proceeded to Bourdeaux, embarked on the 29th at Pauillac on the river Garonne, under the command of Major Alured D. Faunce, and quitted the coast of France in the early part of June. The expedition consisted of the fourth and forty-fourth, about eight hundred bayonets each; the eighty-fifth, about six hundred bayonets; with a brigade of artillery and a detachment of sappers and miners: the whole under the command of that very gallant and experienced leader, Major-General Patrick Ross: the navy, consisting of one seventy-four, two sixty-fours, five frigates, and two bomb-vessels, was under the orders of Rear-Admiral Malcomb.

After twenty days' sailing, the fleet approached the Azores, and the high land of St. Michael's appeared like a blue cloud rising out of the water: as the shipping drew near, the troops were delighted with the view of the numerous villages, seats, and convents which ornamented the beach, and the lofty mountains adorned with groves of orange trees and green pasturage rising behind. After remaining a short time at this pleasant island to take in provisions, the fleet again put to sea, and anchored on the evening of the 24th of July opposite the tanks in the island of Bermuda in the West Indies, where the expedition was joined by the twenty-first fusiliers, mustering nine hundred bayonets.

The fleet remained at Bermuda, taking in stores, and establishing a magazine for the future supply of the expedition, until the 3d of August, when it once more put to sea, and directing its course towards North America, entered the bay of Chesapeake, where reinforcements joined, and Rear-Admiral Cockburn took charge of the navy. On the arrival of this squadron, a powerful American flotilla fled for refuge up the Patuxent river, and was followed by the British fleet. In order to insure the destruction of the enemy's vessels, the troops were directed to land: on the 19th of August the stream was suddenly covered with boats crowded with soldiers, and by three o'clock in the afternoon the army was in position about two miles above

the village of St. Benedict, on the right bank of the Patuxent. The troops were divided into three brigades; the first, consisting of the eighty-fifth regiment, with the light companies of the Fourth, twenty-first, and forty-fourth, a company of marines, and a party of disciplined negroes, was commanded by Colonel Thornton; the second, consisting of the Fourth and forty-fourth regiments, was commanded by Colonel Brooke; and the third, consisting of the twenty-first fusiliers, and a battalion of marines, was commanded by Colonel Patterson; for want of horses only one six-pounder, and two small three-pounders were brought on shore.

The army remained in position near St. Benedict until four o'clock on the afternoon of the following day, when the bugles sounded, the regiments turned out in marching order, and proceeded in the direction of Nottingham, a town on the banks of the Patuxent, which was found deserted, while the appearance of the furniture, and in some places the bread left in the ovens, showed it had been abandoned in haste. On the 22d the army proceeded[118] to the delightful village of Upper Marlborough, situate in a well-cultivated valley about two miles broad; and during the march loud explosions were heard, which proved to be the enemy destroying his flotilla to prevent its falling into the hands of British seamen.



The object of the expedition had thus been accomplished; but, as the army had advanced within sixteen miles of Washington, and the enemy's force was ascertained to be such as would authorize an attempt to carry the capital, the troops moved forward on the 23d of August. They had scarcely proceeded three miles when the advance-guard encountered a party of American riflemen, who maintained a sharp contest before they gave way; and arriving at a point where two roads meet, the one leading to Washington and the other to Alexandria, twelve hundred Americans and some artillery appeared on the slope of a height opposite. The army turned along the road leading towards Alexandria, and the Americans fled before the detachment sent against them. Having deceived the enemy respecting the real design of the expedition, the route was changed, and the troops proceeded in the direction of Washington.

About noon on the 24th a heavy cloud of dust was seen to arise at a distance, and the British troops turning a sudden angle in the road and passing a small cluster of trees, discovered above eight thousand American infantry, with a numerous artillery and three hundred

dragoons, commanded by General Winder, occupying a formidable position beyond the village of Bladensburg, where they were awaiting the advance of their opponents.

The British, though not half so numerous as their adversaries, advanced boldly to the attack; on entering the village the enemy's artillery opened a tremendous fire, and as the light brigade traversed the bridge across the[119] eastern branch of the Potomac river, from whence a strait road ran through the enemy's position to the capital, numbers fell before a heavy fire of musketry and artillery. The survivors having gained the opposite side of the stream, carried a fortified house which commanded the bridge, then dashed into the thickets on the right and left of the road, and drove back the American riflemen, who fled with such precipitation that they threw their first line into disorder, and it fell back in confusion, leaving two guns on the road. The British light infantry, throwing off their knapsacks, pushed forward in extended order to attack the enemy's second line; but a heavy fire of musketry and artillery checked the assailants, and the Americans advancing in force to recover the lost ground, drove the first brigade back to the thickets on the brink of the river, where an obstinate fight was maintained. Meanwhile the second brigade passed the river; the forty-fourth moving to the right, turned the enemy's left flank; and the Fourth, emulating their gallant companions, advanced in firm array, preceded by a flight of rockets, to charge the enemy's right, which was broken and driven from the field: many of the American sailors who acted as gunners were bayoneted, and eight guns were captured. The American infantry fled in dismay, and diving into the recesses of the forests, were quickly beyond the reach of their pursuers; and their cavalry turned their horses' heads and galloped off: thus in one hour the battle was won, and the third brigade, which had formed the reserve, pushed forward at a rapid rate for Washington.

The three British regiments which had thus defeated about nine thousand adversaries (three times their own number) halted a short time on the field of battle to reform their ranks. The loss of the King's Own was Lieutenant Thomas Woodward, killed; Lieutenants E. P. Hopkins, J. K. Mackenzie, John Staveley, Peter Bowlby, and Frederick Field, with Ensigns J. A. Buchanan, and William Reddock, wounded; also seventy-nine serjeants and rank and file killed and wounded.

After a short halt, the King's Own, with the remainder of the first and second brigades, moved towards Washington, where the third brigade had already arrived and had commenced destroying the arsenal, docks, magazines, and other public property. The sun had set, and as the two brigades approached the American capital, the conflagration of buildings, ships, and stores illuminated the sky, while the exploding of magazines shook the city, and threw down houses in their vicinity, and the scene exhibited the awful reality of the horrors of war, from which Great Britain has happily been preserved by the enterprise and gallantry of her army and navy. As it was not the intention of the British government to attempt permanent conquests in this part of America, and as it was impossible for this small body of troops to establish themselves in the enemy's capital, the destruction of the public property, which by the customs of war is the just spoil of the conqueror, was completed; and the army marched back to St. Benedict, where it re-embarked without molestation. The conduct of the King's Own was commended by Major-General Ross in his public despatches, and they were rewarded with the honour of displaying the word Bladensburg on their colours."

CONVICT DUTY IN AUSTRALIA

The 4th Foot served in Australia between 1831 and 1837 and the Regimental museum holds in its collection the following regarding the 4th's service in Australia, these the views of Mackenzie's successor to command of the Regiment in 1834; Lieutenant Colonel Henry William Breton:

“Almost amalgamated with convicts as soldiers are in New South Wales, irksome and harassing as are their duties, it requires the most unremitting care on the part of the commanding officer to keep even common order in his regiment. With proper defaulters’-rooms, and means of hard labour, he may do much, but new barracks must be first built. Hard labour, as inflicted in New South Wales, is utterly ruinous to the discipline of a regiment, the soldier being compelled, either in the hulks or at Norfolk Island, to herd with the greatest villains possible. At the expiration of a term at Norfolk Island the man should be discharged the service. Approves of solitary confinement. From one to six months. When a man is sent away for a long time from his own corps, he thinks himself forgotten, and becomes callous or heart-broken, and either way becomes bad.



Temperance societies might be established, but that is impossible while the men receive spirits as a part of their ration. Far more is to be gained by example among the officers. He has discouraged the commemoration of particular days, and does not allow cheering at the mess table. “What must follow a great mess dinner in the centre of a barrack? The men will surely reason upon the conduct of their officers, and wonder why they also should not be allowed to enjoy themselves.” The man in solitary confinement should be allowed his great-coat and no bed, and his food should be bread and milk. Hard labour should, as far as practicable, be in view of the regiment, such as cleaning drains, forming a regimental garden, and cleaning and washing the barracks. Cannot, however, call to mind, during twenty years’ service in the same regiment, more than two or three cases of permanent reform, and these had no reference to any particular system of management.”



Lt Colonel Mackenzie died at Moelly, near Shoalhaven, New South Wales on 15 August 1857. He was 64 years of age. Charlotte died in 1876. The following website by one of Mackenzie’s descendants, which includes portraits of the couple, notes;

<http://www.monaropioneers.com/mackenziejk.htm>

Condition NEF, original ribbon and much research, paper and on CD, including a copy portrait and original service record. A quite outstanding medal