

CAPTAIN JOHN GLADSTONE MACKENZIE

Aust Army Medical Corps

John Gladstone Mackenzie was born on February 23, 1886 in Scotland, the son of John and Margaret Mackenzie. He studied at Glasgow University to become a Medical Practitioner with degrees for a Bachelor of Medicine (MB) and Bachelor of Surgery (ChB). He came to Australia around 1910.

In 1914 he was a medical practitioner at Kaniva, Vic. Also residing there was his sister Catherine Johnstone Mackenzie with the occupation of home duties and later recorded as a nurse. On 11 November 1914 he was groomsman when his cousin, William Smith Mackenzie married Rita Shewring Heriot in Thornbury, Victoria.

The following year the unmarried twenty-nine year old applied for a Commission with the A.I.F. on May 28, 1915. Passing the preliminary medical examination, particulars taken show he was 172cms (5ft 7½ins) tall, weighed 76.3kgs (168lbs) with a chest expansion of 88-94cms (34½-37ins). Normal was the results of his eye test. Next-of-kin nominated was his father John Mackenzie of Bay View House, Mordialloc, Vic. and Presbyterian his religious faith.

The appointment of Captain was recommended the next day with posting to the No.1 Aust General Hospital. On June 2, 1915 at the Aust Medical Corps he was re-examined and his description on enlistment was 172cms (5ft 7½ins) in height, a smaller weight of 73.6kgs (162lbs) with a chest expansion of 84-89cms (33-35ins). Eyesight was good. His appointment was approved on June 4, 1915 and gazetted in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No. 70 on July 9, 1915.

Captain Mackenzie embarked from Melbourne, Vic on November 10, 1915 on the transport HMAT A11 *Ascanius* with the B & C Sections of the 8th Field Ambulance. He is listed as a surgeon and other volunteers were a physician and medical practitioner. The ship arrived at the Suez on December 7, 1915.

At Tel-el-Kebir on February 23, 1916 he was transferred to the 15th Field Ambulance then re-transferred on March 8 to the 6th Field Ambulance at Moascar. The unit proceeded to join the B.E.F. in France embarking from Alexandria on March 19 on the transport *Londonderry Castle* for Marseilles where they disembarked on March 28, 1916. In addition to his medical duties with the Field Ambulance it is recorded that on May 19, 1916 he was detailed as Gas Officer with the 7th Brigade.

Two days later on May 21, 1916 Captain Mackenzie was killed in action on May 21. The events which brought his demise are written in the Unit Diary as follows:

War Diary: 6th Australian Field Ambulance – May 1916:

21.5.16 Erquinghem – 11.40pm

... Some shelling occurred about 7pm but nothing fell in the town. It ceased about 8pm. At 9.35pm a shell fell near by while most of us were in our mess room followed by others in quick succession much closer. We hurried to stations at hospital. Capt. MacKenzie missed on arrival & subsequently found dead with both legs missing.

Abridged

Extracts from Red Cross files held by AWM for John Gladstone Mackenzie:

Red Cross files:

McKenzie J. G.

“We were in billets in Erquinghem and at 10 o’clock at night we were shelled. Captain McKenzie and I were on our way to the hospital when he was killed outright – knocked to pieces. I was by his side and had a slight wound and a button was knocked off my coat. A car close to me was riddled all over”

Pte. McLeod, (6558)

11 Gen.
Etaples 2nd August 1916

Red Cross files:

McKenzie J. G.

"I knew Capt. McKenzie well he joined us at Moascar Egypt and was killed at about 11.30 p.m. in front of the Aubroges Estaminet, Erquinghem. He was struck by a shell in the legs which severed his left leg and cut him about very badly. Death was instantaneous. He had just made his round of the billets and was proceeding to his own. He was about 5ft 6 or 6 and a very dapper little Scotchman. He had only just returned from the Gas School. He was buried in the Churchyard of Erquinghem and the boys erected a cross on his grave with his name on it and the Australian badge. I have seen the grave.

There was only on Capt. McKenzie in the 6th Field Ambulance and he was out first casualty in France. He was very popular amongst his men. Colonel Stewart, of the 6th Field Ambulance, could I think give further particulars."

L/Cpl. H.P.K. Morris, 3388, 6th Aus. Field Coy, Engr
(formerly 6th Field Ambulance)
22 Gen. Etaples 8.8.16

Burial took place 1¾ miles West of Armentieres within the Erquinghem-Lys Churchyard Cemetery Extension in Plot 3, Row J in grave No. 23. Rev. P. Bladen was the officiating minister.

The Medical Officer advised General Headquarters on May 31, 1916 as well as the Governor General so family could be advised. A copy of his service was made for the War Pension Department on June 6 and confirmation that the Cable had been received.

Hawthorn, Kew, Camberwell Citizen – Vic – Friday 16 June 1916:

CAPTAIN J. G. MACKENZIE

Captain John Gladstone Mackenzie, the news of whose death from wounds received in action has been received, was a son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Mackenzie, Maling street, Canterbury. A letter from him written in France, was received by his parents on Saturday, only a few days ago after the intimation of his death had been forwarded to them.

Born in Scotland, Captain Mackenzie was 27 years of age. He obtained his medical degrees at the Glasgow University, and came to Australia in 1910. For several years he acted as locum tenens in country towns, and was practising at Birechip and Kaneira for some months before his enlistment.

Appointed as an assistant surgeon in a hospital in Egypt, Captain Mackenzie preferred to undertake work in the firing line. Securing a transfer, he left Australia in November with a field ambulance corps.

A Pension was granted to his parents on August 28, 1916 to commence from August 1, each receiving \$5.89 (£2 18s 9d) per fortnight.

The Argus – Vic – Tuesday 5 September 1916:

JUDICIAL AND LAW NOTICES

NOTICE is hereby given, that after the expiration of fourteen days from the publication hereof application will be made to the Supreme Court of the State of Victoria, in its Probate jurisdiction, that PROBATE of the LAST WILL and TESTAMENT of JOHN GLADSTONE MACKENZIE, formerly of Orrong road, Toorak, in the State of Victoria, medical practitioner, but late of parts beyond the seas, captain in the Australian Imperial Forces, deceased, may be granted to Arthur Spence Wilkinson, of 413 Collins street, Melbourne, in the said State, solicitor, the sole executor appointed by the said will.

Dated this 4th day of September, 1916.

WILLIAM JOHN HOME., 413 Collins street, Melbourne, proctor for the said executor.

As information came through of the date and place of burial place of his son official confirmation of the regrettable loss were forwarded on September 7, 1916 from Base Records.

His personal effects contained in a small tin box arrived in Australia on the transport *Ajana* on December 12, 1916 and his brown leather trunk came on the transport *Ayrshire* on January 4, 1917 while the transport *Wiltshire* returned with a cabin trunk, valise and a sack containing a stretcher on January 23, 1917.

In Memoriam notices were placed in 1919 and 1921 in the following newspaper by his family:

The Argus – Melbourne, Vic – Wednesday 21 May 1919:

IN MEMORIAM
On Active Service

MACKENZIE, -in proud and loving memory of our loved son and brother, Captain John Gladstone Mackenzie, A.A.M.C., who was killed in action in France, May 21, 1916.

Till the day break and the shadows flee away.

-(Inserted by his loving parents, sisters, and brother.)

MACKENZIE. -In ever-loving memory of our brave brother, the late Captain John Gladstone Mackenzie, who was killed in action near Armentières, in France, on May 21, 1916.

"He died that others might live."

-(Inserted by his loving brother and sister-in law, Niel and Eva, also his loving nieces, Mona and Sheila.)

The Argus – Melbourne, Vic – Saturday 21 May 1921:

IN MEMORIAM
On Active Service

MACKENZIE, -in proud and loving memory of our beloved son, Captain John Gladstone Mackenzie, 6th Field Ambulance, A.A.M.C., killed in action in France, May 21, 1916.

Our cross, his crown.

(Inserted by his father and mother.)

MACKENZIE. - In ever loving memory of our beloved brother, Captain John Gladstone Mackenzie, 6th Field Ambulance, A.A.M.C., killed in action in France, on May 21, 1916.

(Inserted by brother and sisters, Will, Isabel, Kate and Betty.)

MACKENZIE. - In affectionate and proud remembrance of our brother and uncle, Captain J. G. MacKenzie, 6th A.F.A., killed in action in France, May 21, 1916.

(Inserted by his brother and sister-in-law, Niel and Eva, and his nieces, Mona and Shiela.)

For his supreme sacrifice Captain John Gladstone Mackenzie, 6th Field Ambulance, A.A.M.C. was issued with the 1914/15 Star (11110), the British War Medal (24102) and the Victory Medal (23934) in service for his country.

The 1914/15 Star and War Medal were collected by his brother Daniel Mackenzie from Victoria Barracks on February 7, 1922. The Victory Medal was sent to his father on January 31, 1923.

The Memorial Scroll (356275) was posted on October 18, 1921 and receipted by his father on November 8, 1921 and the Memorial Plaque (356275) dispatched to the 3rd Military District on December 4, 1922 but was returned to Base Records on May 10, 1923 uncollected. On June 1, 1923 it was sent direct to his father.

Photographs of his grave, circular and booklet 'Where the Australian's Rest' were also sent to his parents.

After the war the numbering of the Plots of Erquinghem-Lys Cemetery were changed and his grave is located in Plot 1, Row J, grave 23.

His entry from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission reads:

Killed in action 21/05/16 Aged 29 I. J. 23. Son of John and Margaret Mackenzie, of 238, Bambra Rd., Caulfield, Victoria, Australia. Native of Scotland.

John Gladstone Mackenzie is commemorated on Panel 183 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial.



Photo of headstone and Erquinghem Lys Churchyard
Extension by kind permission of
The War Graves Photographic Project
www.twgpp.org

LEST WE FORGET