

VC Biog 4 Donald Mackintosh VC

Morag Cross 11 Feb 2014

*** VC4.1a or b

Lieutenant Donald Mackintosh of the 2nd Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders, was only 21 years of age when he died while in the action which earned him the Victoria Cross on 11 April 1917. His battalion was fighting the first Battle of the Scarpe, part of the 'Arras Offensive', between 9 and 14 April 1917. The Germans had withdrawn from the Somme to more strongly-defended farther east, known as the Hindenberg Line, in north-eastern France. [Sources: 'Unit History: The Seaforth Highlanders', *Forces War Records*, at www.forces-war-records.co.uk; 'The Arras Offensive', *The Long, Long Trail*, at www.1914-1918.net; J Banning, Remembering the Battle of Arras, *Jeremy Banning Blog*, 8 April 2012, at <http://jeremybanning.co.uk>].

*** VC4.2

The 2nd Seaforth's war diary (a daily field report) gives unit strength at the end of March as '880 men all ranks'. On the 1 and 2 April they practised '*attacks carried out on ... trenches marked out by flags. Attack not very well done ... In the evening the 4th Division Follies gave an entertainment to the Battalion in the village*'. [Source: 4th Division, 10th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders, *War Diary, Jan-Dec 1917*, WO 95/1483/6, March p6 (31.3.17); April p1 (1&2.4.17)].

*** VC4.3

April 8th, Easter Sunday, was '*a beautiful day ... the big offensive was due to open at dawn*' on 9 April, when British and Canadian divisions advanced several miles. They captured '*the straggling village of Fampoux ... in the nearest ... to open warfare*', (ie with mobile troops) seen for years. Despite this Allied success, the heavy bombardment designed to cut the Hindenberg Line's characteristic barbed-wire defences had largely failed to do so. [Source: 4th Division, 10th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders, *War Diary, Jan-Dec 1917*, WO 95/1483/6, April p2 (8.4.17); A Conan Doyle, 1919, *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*, London, Vol 4, p40].

*** VC4.4a, b and c use all three

It was planned to capture further lines of enemy trenches on 11th April. On going 'over the top' at noon, the Seaforths '*were immediately subjected to intense machine gun fire*'. Their diary pinpoints one of the reasons for the day's disaster. British artillery could not see the German machine-guns ('*beyond the barrage area in invisible and unknown positions*') to accurately target them. Therefore, the '*creeping barrage*' (shelling) protectively shielding the troops' advance was '*very weak ... of little assistance*'. This '*tactical problem*' was '*responsible mainly [for] the failure of the attack*', and continued to '*cause heavy casualties among attacking infantry*.' [Source: 4th Division, 10th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders, *War Diary, Jan-Dec 1917*, WO 95/1483/6, April pp13-14, (11.4.17)].

*** VC4.5a and b use both

The Seaforths lost '12 officers and 363 other ranks' from the 432 in total who were involved. All the officers were killed or wounded, and over 85% of the attackers were casualties. The diary records: 'A single wave of 400 men who had to advance an average distance of 1600 yards ... could not obtain their objective in face of such machine gun and rifle fire'. [Source: 4 Div, 10th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders, *War Diary, Jan-Dec 1917*, WO 95/1483/6, April pp14-15 (11.4.17)].

***** VC4.6a or b use one or the other**

The war diary does not detail Mackintosh's specific actions amid the confusion of battle, but a sergeant witnessed them: "As soon as we went over [the top] it began to rain shells and ... machine-gun bullets ... [Mackintosh] was hit ... and the men hesitated. He shouted from where he lay, 'Never mind Seaforths, keep it up'. He rose in pain, reaching the enemy trench, and 'under his leadership the men [from various scattered companies] got back their confidence, repelling repeated enemy counter-attacks'. Mackintosh was again wounded, but to secure the trench, they had to seize the part still in German hands. [Source: *Sunday Post*, 10 June 1917, p3].

***** VC4.7**

'It was the strangest sight ... A doubly-wounded man, with the nervous twitching of his face telling the agony he was enduring, toiling painfully'. He continued to direct his remaining 15 men, who 'rushed the position', expelling 'about ten times their number' of Germans. Mackintosh was bleeding profusely, but refused to be moved until the captured trench was secured, and later died of his wounds. [Source: *Sunday Post*, 10 June 1917, p3; *London Gazette*, Issue 30122, *Second Supplement of 8 June*, Published 8 June 1917, p5703].

***** VC4.8a and one of either VC4.8a or VC4.8b; must use VC4.8a as it is whole point of story**

Mackintosh (1896-1917) was honoured at Glasgow as much for the respect in which his remarkable father was held, as for his own selfless heroism. He was the son of Dr Donald J Mackintosh CB, MVO, Medical Superintendent of the Western Infirmary for 45 years, and a noted hospital administrator. Mackintosh enlisted in 1914, obtained a commission six months later, and was wounded in April 1916. His parents received his posthumous VC from the King in July 1917, although surprisingly, their son was hardly mentioned in the *Glasgow Herald*. [Sources: 'Mackintosh, Donald, VC', *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour 1914-24*, Online Resource, at www.ancestry.co.uk; *Glasgow Herald*, 23 May 1917, p5; 23 July 1917, p4; *The Scotsman*, 11 June 1917, p3; 'Investiture', *British Medical Journal*, 28 July 1917, p132].

***** VC4.9**

Dr D J Mackintosh advised on South African hospitals during the Boer War, the rebuilding of Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and was active in local military medical provision. One of his staff in the 1900s was Dr Harry S Ranken, who was posthumously awarded the VC (see separate story). 'By November 1914 he was supervising the ... organization of all military, war and Territorial general hospitals in the Glasgow area'. He was an official of the Red Cross, nursing and ambulance associations, the British Medical Association and various Government committees. [Sources: *The Scotsman*, 11 Nov 1920, p8; 16 May 1923, p9; Dr D J Mackintosh Obituary, *British Medical Journal*, 21 June 1947, p905; Dr D J

Mackintosh Obituary, *Glasgow Herald*, 13 June 1947, p6; E J Thurston (publisher), *Scottish Biographies 1938*, London & Glasgow, pp493-4].

The following pics are all different versions of the same two windows – use as required – different photographers

***** VC4.10a and either VC4.10b or VC4.10c; Or use one of VC4.10c or VC4.10d**

In December 1925, two windows commemorating Lt Mackintosh were unveiled in the newly-opened Elder Memorial Chapel (itself a war memorial), in the Western Infirmary. They depict the Infant Christ and were designed R Anning Bell. The windows were dedicated 'By the Nurses' League ... in acknowledgement of the many services to the nursing profession rendered by the father of the fallen officer', namely Dr D J Mackintosh (here called 'Colonel'). [Sources: *Glasgow Herald*, 14 Dec 1925, p13; *British Medical Journal*, 19 Dec 1925, p1196; 'Site Record: Elder Memorial Chapel', Site NS56NE 1768, ID 162147, Canmore Online Database, *RCHAMS: Scotland's National Collection of Buildings*, at <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk>].

***** VC4.11a or VC4.11b (two versions of same subject by different photographers) AND ALSO use one of either VC4.11c or VC4.11d**

Wealthy jeweller's daughter and hospital benefactress Alice Davis donated a further window for Mackintosh, showing the angel Gabriel, also designed by R A Bell, and fabricated by Glasgow glaziers J & W Guthrie. In another tribute, Mackintosh's parents instituted the 'Lt Donald Mackintosh VC Memorial Prizes for Nursing' in his memory. [Sources: A J Davis Obituary, *Glasgow Herald*, 4 Aug 1930, p12; Davis Bequest, *The Scotsman*, 8 March 1913, p1; Prizes, *The Scotsman*, 22 Dec 1939, p9; 'Site Record: Elder Memorial Chapel', Site NS56NE 1768, ID 162147, Canmore Online Database, *RCHAMS: Scotland's National Collection of Buildings*, at <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk>].

*****VC4.12a; and use one of either VC4.12b or VC4.12c**

Mackintosh is listed on his former school, Fettes College's War Memorial in Edinburgh, which depicts a fallen Highland officer urging his men to 'Carry On'. Sculpted by W Birnie Rhind and unveiled in 1921, it has sometimes been described as depicting Mackintosh himself. However, contemporary newspaper accounts confirm that the incident was inspired by the 'Carrying On' military novels by Fettes schoolmaster and soldier J H Beith, also known as 'Ian Hay'. Mackintosh is buried in Brown's Copse Cemetery, Roex, France, but his Victoria Cross is now displayed at The Highlanders Museum, Fort George, at Ardersier. [Sources: *The Scotsman*, 17 Oct 1921, p8; *Glasgow Herald*, 17 Oct 1921, p11; 'Edinburgh: Fettes College War Memorial', Canmore ID 267036, Site No NT27NW 35.11, Canmore [Online Database], Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, at www.rcahms.gov.uk; 'Casualty Details: Mackintosh, Donald', *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, at www.cwgc.org; Information supplied by A Galleitch, Curator, and M Low, Director, The Highlanders' Museum (Queens Own Highlanders Collection), Fort George, Ardersier, at www.thehighlandersmuseum.com].

*****VC4.13a, and VC4.13b use both**