

**THE WAR DIARY OF A  
LONDON SCOT  
1796-7, WITH A  
REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649282944

The war diary of a London Scot 1796-7, with a review of the year by George Mackenzie  
Macaulay & W. C. Mackenzie

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Cover @ 2017

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**GEORGE MACKENZIE MACAULAY & W. C. MACKENZIE**

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LONDON SCOT  
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THE  
WAR DIARY OF A  
LONDON SCOT

(ALDERMAN G. M. MACAULAY)

1796-7

WITH A  
REVIEW OF THE YEAR

BY

W. C. MACKENZIE, F.S.A. (Scot.)

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

PAISLEY: ALEXANDER GARDNER

Publisher by Appointment to the late Queen Victoria

1916

DA520  
M3

LONDON

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO., LMD.

*History Alumnus*

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE AND  
INTRODUCTION.



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CALIFORNIA

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE AND INTRODUCTION.

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THE author of this diary, George Mackenzie MacAulay, was a native of the parish of Uig in the island of Lewis, Outer Hebrides, where he was born in the year 1750. He was a cousin of Lord MacAulay, whose ancestors, the MacAulays of Uig, can be traced back to the sixteenth century as the dominating (and turbulent) clan of that district. The name of the Rev. Aulay MacAulay, Vicar of Rothley, Leicestershire, and uncle of Lord MacAulay, appears in the diary.

Of the early life of George MacAulay, nothing is known, but his use of nautical phrases is suggestive. The lure of London tempted him, when still a boy, as it has since tempted many a youth from the distant Highlands, to take the plunge that leads sometimes to wealth or distinction, sometimes to poverty and obscurity, and, perhaps most frequently, to the neutral region of suburban smugness. MacAulay, as he tells us himself, came to London at the age of fifteen. In 1774—at the age of twenty-four—he was admitted to the Freedom and Livery of the Company of Bowyers, and in 1782 he

was elected Junior Warden of the Company. In 1786 he became an Alderman of the Ward of Coleman Street, and in the same year was elected Warden of the Bowyers Company. He was Sheriff in 1790, and on the occasion of his being sworn in to that office, the Bowyers Company joined his procession, and provided "2 French Horns, 2 clarinets, and 1 bassoon." He was Master of the Bowyers Company from July, 1788, to July, 1790. He died in 1803, and his widow (of whom nothing is known) survived him until 1848. His youngest daughter died as recently as 1882 or 1883.

Alderman MacAulay was in business as a merchant and insurer at 6 Leadenhall Street, E.C. His London residence in 1796-7 was at Number 2 Bridge Street, Blackfriars. He had a house at Bedford, where apparently his family lived at the time the diary was written.

The entries in the diary are a revelation of character, and by their means it is not difficult to form a mental picture of the man from the Hebrides. His career, as sketched above, was obviously that of an energetic City man who had lost no time in mounting the ladder of success, nor in entering the civic doorway that leads sometimes to the coveted Chair in the Mansion-House. We can see him as he reads his *Morning Chronicle* (which, like the frugal Scot that he was, he gave up when the duty was raised to sixpence), and drinks his "Padre Souchong"; and we can hear him as he fulminates at the breakfast-table to his patient wife on the

“duplicity” of Mr. Pitt, and the “infamous conduct of an unprincipled and flagitious administration.” We can follow him to his office in Leadenhall Street, where he rules his clerks much in the same way as his Highland ancestors ruled their dependents—namely, as a benevolent despot; and where he conducts his business with method and despatch. We can observe him at Lloyd’s Coffee-House, in the midst of a throng of excited underwriters, by whom the Alderman is regarded as an authority on all things on the sea, in the sea, and about the sea. From Lloyd’s, we trace his footsteps to the Hall of the Bowyers Company, where he sits in the chair of the Master, a dignified but choleric Scot, against whom the accusation could never be made, that he suffered fools gladly. And after the business of the day is over, and he has dined *solus* at the York, we can accompany him to Drury Lane (for the Alderman prided himself upon his knowledge of the drama), and listen to his discriminating praise of Elizabeth Farren. Thence to John’s Coffee-House, where he eats his oysters and enjoys a political argument with his sanguine friend, Mr. Nutt, a hardened Pittite, who was prone to look at the international situation through rose-tinted spectacles. And then home to Bridge Street and bed.

A shrewd man of business, a Young Whig in politics, a Deist in religion, a patron and critic of the drama, and what Dr. Johnson would have called a “clubbable man,” such was Alderman MacAulay as we see him in his diary. Apparently his tongue