

by Hector Mackenzie

ARMY chiefs are trying to track down descendants of a distinguished soldier with family roots in Ross-shire ahead of a poignant ceremony in France later this year.

Ewart Alan Mackintosh was born on March 4, 1893. Pictured in his distinguished Army uniform, he was the only son of Alexander Mackintosh and his wife.

Although born in Brighton, his father's roots were in Alness and the young Alan is known to have studied Gaelic and learned to play the pipes in his spare time.

Now best remembered as a poet who served with distinction with the Seaforth Highlanders during the first world war, his memory will again be honoured at the dedication of a Highlanders war memorial on a site dedicated to marking the battle of Cambrai. In excess of 90,000 men lost their lives during the bloody two-week campaign noted by military historians as one of the earliest examples of the first successful use of tanks. Mackintosh was killed in action on the second day of the Battle of Cambrai, 21 November 1917, whilst with the 4th Seaforth Highlanders. A distinctive cross outside Dingwall Railway Station is dedicated to the Seaforth Highlanders who died at the battle.

Plans are now well advanced to erect a memorial to Scots who died in France in a chapel called Neuve Chappelle. The inauguration will take place on November 23 and it's hoped that as many families as possible can be reunited on that date.

2/Lt. Mackintosh, who was commissioned from Oxford University, received the Military Cross in June 1916 after bringing back two wounded men under heavy fire. His citation for conspicuous gallantry states that he organised a successful raid on the enemy's trenches with great skill and courage.

"Several of the enemy were disposed of and a strong point destroyed," it reads.

Biographical information reveals that Mackintosh, who was a member of the University of Oxford Officers' Training Corps, tried to join the Army immediately war broke out in August and while still in his university course. He was rejected on the grounds of his poor eyesight. He

reapplied and was accepted by the Seaforth Highlanders and was commissioned as a second lieutenant on December 31, 1914.

At the age of 23, it has been said, Mackintosh regarded himself as a father to his men, and they affectionately called him "Tosh".

His poetry has been said by some to have been as good as the more famous war poet Rupert Brooke. Lines from his poem "A Creed" are used on The Call, the



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JOURNAL

10.2010

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Scottish American war memorial in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens.

The French authorities have made contact with Major Frank Blicow of the Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Association at Cameron Barracks, Inverness, to seek help in tracking down any descendants from the area who might be keen to attend the planned inauguration of the new memorial site. He can be contacted on 01463 224380.