



MacKenzie Bay is a relatively small [embayment](#) of the western extremity of the [Amery Ice Shelf](#), Antarctica, about 20 nautical miles (37 km) northeast of [Foley Promontory](#). On February 10, 1931, the [British Australian New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition](#) (BANZARE) sighted a much larger embayment here and made an airplane flight to sketch its limits. They named it "MacKenzie Sea" after Captain [K.N. MacKenzie](#), the master of the expedition's ship [Discovery](#) in 1930–31.

RRS *Discovery* is a [barque-rigged auxiliary steamship](#) built for [Antarctic](#) research, and launched in 1901. She was the last traditional wooden three-masted ship to be built in the [United Kingdom](#). Its first mission was the [British National Antarctic Expedition](#), carrying [Robert Falcon Scott](#) and [Ernest Shackleton](#) on their first, and highly successful, journey to the Antarctic, known as the [Discovery Expedition](#). After service as a [merchant ship](#) before and during the [First World War](#), *Discovery* was taken into the service of the British government in 1923 to carry out scientific research in the [Southern Ocean](#), becoming the first [Royal Research Ship](#). The ship undertook a two-year expedition - the [Discovery Investigations](#) - recording valuable information on the oceans, marine life and being the first scientific investigation into [whale](#) populations. From 1929 to 1931 *Discovery* served as the base for the [British Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition](#) under [Douglas Mawson](#), a major scientific and territorial quest in what is now the [Australian Antarctic Territory](#). On her return from the BANZARE, *Discovery* was moored in [London](#) as a static [training ship](#) and visitor attraction until 1979 when she was placed in the care of the [Maritime Trust](#) as a museum ship. After an extensive restoration *Discovery* is now the centrepiece of a visitor attraction in the city where she was built, [Dundee](#). She is one of only two surviving expedition ships from the [Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration](#), the other being the Norwegian ship [Fram](#).

MacKenzie was born in [Oban, Argyllshire](#) on the west coast of Scotland in 1897. His father, Duncan, worked in the town's legal administration. Kenneth was the third of four sons – eldest was William (born 1893) who emigrated to be with his mother's family in New Zealand. He was killed at the age of 22 in 1915 whilst fighting with the [ANZACS](#) at [Gallipoli](#). Second was Hamish (born 1895) who emigrated to Canada. He served the [Canadian Bank of Commerce](#) and was the bank's Chief Inspector at the [Toronto](#) head office until he died of a heart attack in 1949, aged 54. Kenneth was third and Douglas (born 1903); the youngest; was fourth. Douglas spent almost his entire career with the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company and spent his last eight years out of [Southampton](#) as Master of the express mail liner *Arundel Castle* – a famous ship built with four funnels. He died of a heart attack in 1969. MacKenzie's parents divorced in 1904 when his mother, Catherine MacKenzie, took her four sons to her father's home in Baugh on the [Inner Hebrides](#) island of Tiree. Her father, Duncan MacFarlane, served as the minister in the Baugh Church. Duncan was one of a family of four brothers, all of whom became parish ministers in Scotland (in [Tiree](#), [Elgin](#), [Greenock](#) and then in [Glenorchy](#) and [Tobermory](#)) and all of whom were born on Tiree. Their schooling in Tiree was considered unsatisfactory, being only a small island, so the four MacKenzie sons were sent to stay for their school days with their maternal uncle, Dugald MacFarlane, parish minister for 51 years of St Columba's Church in Kingussie, in Inverness-shire in the heart of the Scottish Highlands. From 1938 to 1939 Dugald was the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Kingussie Public School would seem to have served the boys well and Kenneth MacKenzie learnt to play the bag pipes. In his subsequent life, he was often in demand to write and to give lectures on his experiences.

Following the outbreak of the [First World War](#), MacKenzie was the first recruit from Tiree. He joined the army by falsifying his age with his mother's connivance. The army quickly identified his correct age and engaged him as an underage soldier, keeping him under training for two years, until he was 18. He was then dispatched to the [Western Front](#) to help fill the gaps in the front line of the 2/8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders before the [Battle of the Somme](#). He was posted for promotion in-the-field as an officer but, immediately before, he was captured, gassed and buried. Soon, he was rescued and repatriated in a broken condition. He spent over a year in a recuperation hospital in [Ripon](#), emerging grey haired and gaunt.

Having been honourably discharged from the army, he joined the [merchant fleet](#) for a year long training as a [radio](#) officer. With the war by now drawing to a close, he went to sea in a variety of ships. Shortly after, with his first class *Marconi* certificate, he was sailing to the far east as Chief Radio Officer in the Blue Funnel liner *Titan*. However, without any prospect for further promotion, his career was stalled when he resigned to take up employment in the [Union Castle Line](#) as an ordinary seaman sailing aboard their cargo liner *Dromore Castle*, mostly between the USA and South Africa till he was promoted Bosun. Subsequently he sat his certificates as a Watch Officer and then as Master whilst sailing with Glasgow tramp ships and then with liners of the [Ellerman City Line](#).

Whilst berthing in [London's](#) West [India](#) Docks, MacKenzie, as 2nd Officer of the *City of Valencia* on an inward voyage from South Africa, saw the wooden sailing ship *Discovery*. Inquiring of the docking pilot, his enthusiasm was fired; immediately he went aboard, seeking employment for her forthcoming voyage of scientific research and exploration in Antarctica. Shortly after, he was appointed as the ship's Chief Officer when the City Line granted him 'leave of absence with full promotion'.

Kenneth MacKenzie sailed as first officer on the *Discovery's* first voyage of Antarctic research and exploration.^{[1][2][3]} She sailed from London on August 1, 1929 under the command of Captain John Davis, a well-known Antarctic explorer and shipmaster. He had to train his crew, as they were unfamiliar with the ways of a sailing ship. He did this well, and the first voyage of exploration was a success. The ship sailed on and off the Antarctic coastline between 80 and 45 degrees east with the sighting of Kemp and Enderby Lands and the discovery and naming of MacRobertson Land. The ship returned to Melbourne from the Antarctic where MacKenzie took command^[4] during November 1930 whilst Captain Davis returned to the service of the commonwealth government as Director of Navigation.

On the *Discovery's* second Antarctic voyage (from 1930 – 1931), she navigated along the Antarctic Coast from 178 to 62 degrees east with sightings and landings on King George V land and the discovery and naming of Princess Elizabeth Land and Banzare Land. The name "Princess Elizabeth Land" was selected on MacKenzie's suggestion.^[5] And the newly discovered '[MacKenzie Sea](#)' in 72 degrees east was named after him.^[6] Again the voyage went well; she returned to [Hobart](#) and then [Melbourne](#) in March 1931. With her scientific and exploration work completed, MacKenzie sailed the ship back to London by way of Wellington and the Cape Horn arriving back in London's East India Dock in August 1931. She was found to be in an excellent condition and undamaged. Subsequently MacKenzie was awarded the Polar Medal^{[7][8]} inscribed "Antarctica 1929–1931", by [King George V](#) at Buckingham Palace, London.

The *MacKenzie bay*, located on the edge of the [Amery Ice Shelf](#), Antarctica, is named after him.^[9]

MacKenzie returned to the service of the City Line who appointed him as Chief Officer of their steamer *City of Dieppe*.

^[10] On one of her voyages to Australia, MacKenzie met Lillian Green, an Australian farmer's daughter whom he subsequently married.

Then, in 1933, MacKenzie was invited by the committee of the John Murray Expedition to take command^[11] of the new research ship *Mabahiss*, an Egyptian naval vessel. She was to conduct voyages of oceanographic research of the north western Indian Ocean with scientific staff from Cambridge and Cairo Universities. Again MacKenzie was granted "leave of absence with full promotion" by the Ellerman City Line, whilst he was gazetted into the Egyptian Navy with the rank of "Bimbashi" (commander). He then sailed in command from Alexandria in September 1933 making continuous voyages of research in the Indian Ocean until the ship's safe return to Alexandria in May 1934.^[12]

On his return to London, MacKenzie was appointed as Assistant Marine Superintendent of the Ellerman Lines based in the firm's London head office. Shortly after, he resigned to join the London, Midland and Scottish Railways, subsequently British Railways, as Assistant Marine Superintendent in their London Euston head office in the administration of the railway's fleet of cross channel steamers and mail ports. In 1935, he was promoted to Harbour Master and Marine Superintendent at Holyhead in Anglesey serving the express London to Dublin mail route.

MacKenzie and his wife had two daughters, born in 1934 and 1943 and a son, born in 1938. His later life was troubled by ill health but he greatly enjoyed his family life and his work managing the port of Holyhead, its fleet of express mail and cargo steamers, its dry docks and shipyard and its major port of refuge.

His health, never really good after his experiences in the First World War, had a sharp setback when he suffered a heart attack in 1938. He never recovered but worked on under increasing debility and strain till he died in 1951, still only 53 years of age.