



Major General John Fletcher Owen KCB, RA

[1839 – 1924]



Major General John Fletcher Owen RA (1839–1924) Commandant Queensland Defence Force 1891–94. Founding President 1892. (By courtesy of the John Oxley Library)

General Owen was elected to Life Membership of the United Service Club – possibly after 1910.

General Owen was the first President of the Club in 1892

Major General John Owen, when Commandant of the Queensland Defence Force, approached the Queensland Minister for Local Affairs for support to establish the Club. The Queensland Colonial Government responded by providing a building and grant of 50 pounds per year.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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The third son of the Rev. John Owen, M.A., J.P. and D.L., Hon. Canon of Bangor, of Hendrevinws, Caernarvonshire, and rector of Llaniestyn - John Fletcher Owen was born on 9 April 1839. He was educated at the Royal Military College, Woolwich. He was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1857, and in 1877 was appointed Assistant Superintendent of the Royal Gun Factories.

His only experience of active service was with Wood's column in the Zulu War in 1879, when he commanded a mounted Gatling battery at the Battle of Ulundi. For this service he was mentioned in dispatches and received a brevet lieutenant-colonelcy.

From 1885 to 1888 he was Commandant of the Military Forces of South Australia, and, after a year or so as commandant of the camp and school coast defences, Golden Hill, Isle of Wight, he returned to Australia and from 1891-1894 was Commandant of the Defence Forces of Queensland.

From 1895 to 1899 he was Major General on the staff commanding artillery brigade at Malta. He was promoted to Lieutenant General in 1899, invested with CB in 1902; and after serving as President of the Ordnance Committee promoted to General in 1904. He was elevated to KCB on his retirement in 1906, and honoured with appointment as Honorary Colonel Commandant, Royal Artillery.

The London Times record's the death on June 10th of Gen. Sir John Fletcher Owen, K.C.B., Colonel-Commandant RA at Henley-on-Thames, at the age of 85 years. His obituary, in *RA Regimental News*, August 1924, ended with the words: 'At bottom he was thoroughly kind-hearted, eminently just and a very good friend. He entered into sport with the same zest that he threw into work and was a good shot and a very keen (fly) fisherman.

Sir John Owen was unmarried. In his younger days he was fond of shooting and fishing. He had lived at Henley-on-Thames for his last 11 years.

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents