

# Ange René Armand de Mackau (1788 – 1855)

**B**orn in Paris on 19 February 1785, Ange René Armand de Mackau was a descendent of Irish McCoys who arrived in France with the exiled King James II in 1696 and established themselves in Alsace. They were made nobles of the Holy Roman Empire in 1698. His father Armand-Louis, Baron de Mackau, was French minister to the Duke of Württemberg. His mother Angelique Madeleine Felicity Alissan of Chazet, governess to the children of the King of France, died during the Reign of Terror when Armand was six, whereupon he was sent to board at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The castle on the outskirts of Paris had long been the refuge of the exiled king and supporters of the Jacobite Stuarts, and is now the National Museum of Archaeology. At the Catholic College of Juilly, Mackau's friendship with Jérôme, the youngest brother of Napoléon Bonaparte, undoubtedly influenced his vocation.

When the future King of Westphalia was given command of the naval vessel *Veteran*, he invited his fellow student to join him in Brest. In November 1805 Mackau enlisted as a cadet and sailed under him to the Caribbean, the first of a series of operations in which his conduct and knowledge took him rapidly through the ranks from midshipman to second in command. Temporarily in charge of the brig-of-war *Abeille* in the Mediterranean when HMS *Alacrity*, of larger size and superior strength, was encountered and captured, he was rewarded with the rank of lieutenant and Knight of the Legion of Honour. In 1812, at the age of 24, he was appointed commander. In ensuing years Mackau sought and obtained important missions to the colonies to investigate issues such as settlement and slavery.

In command of the frigate *Clorinda* in 1821, he traversed the Pacific Ocean to forge diplomatic relations with newly independent Latin American countries in South America. On 17 April 1825, as French government envoy, he formalised Haiti's independence from France, with a crippling demand of 150 million francs to compensate the slave traders. He then returned to a succession of personnel management positions with the Admiralty. After the death of his wife Marie-Francoise Brochet de Verigny in 1827 and their infant daughter a few months later, he married Albina Muguët Varanger in 1830. Two of their four children died in infancy, but a son, Armand, born in Paris in 1832 and a daughter Annette, born in Martinique in 1837 when he was governor there, lived well into their eighties.

Returning to France with his family on the frigate *Terpsichore*, Mackau assumed supreme command when the vessel was in extreme danger during a storm, and assisted by the commander, staff and crew, directed the ship to the safety of the port of Cork in Ireland. As Minister of Marine and the Colonies 1843–1847 and president of the Geographical Society of Paris in 1844, he advocated modernisation of the fleet and encouraged scientific research. His fellow-countryman, botanist and naval officer Étienne Raoul named a Banks Peninsula daisy after Baron de Mackau, who approved funding for his 1846 publication *Choix de Plantes de la Nouvelle-Zélande*. In 1845 Mackau was awarded the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour and two years later was promoted to admiral. He became a politician and mayor of the town of Vimoutiers in his retirement, and died in Paris on 25 May 1855, aged 67.

## ***Celmisia mackaui***

The Akaroa daisy *Celmisia mackaui* is a large, showy plant up to about 45 cm tall, with dark green leaves that are unusual in lacking a felted or satiny coating of hairs on the underside. The flower stems and leaf-bases are usually vivid purple; the flower heads (January–February) open out white and become flushed with purple as they age, and at the same time the bright orange discs darken to purple-brown. Growing in sun or semi-shade from sea level to 800 m, it is endemic to Banks Peninsula where it is restricted to a small area in the southeast. As its major threats are habitat loss and browsing by introduced mammals such as sheep, it is largely found on cliffs, banks and rocky places, and may be seen along roadsides near Hinewai Reserve.

