

# Archibald Arnott

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Archibald Arnott



<b>Born</b>	18 April 1772 <a href="#">Ecclefechan</a> , <a href="#">Dumfries</a> , <a href="#">Scotland</a>
<b>Died</b>	1855 (aged 82–83) Ecclefechan, Dumfries, Scotland
<b>Occupation</b>	British Army surgeon
<b>Known for</b>	<a href="#">Napoleon</a> 's doctor on <a href="#">St. Helena</a>

**Archibald Arnott** (18 April 1772 – 1855) was a [British Army surgeon](#) best remembered as [Napoleon](#)'s doctor on [St. Helena](#), who was present at the Emperor's [autopsy](#).<sup>[a]</sup> In his retirement he returned to Ecclefechan, where he is buried.

## British Army surgeon

He entered the British Army on 14 April 1795 and was posted to the [11th Hussars](#) as an assistant surgeon. Arnott was promoted to surgeon on 23 August 1799. He followed his unit to [Holland](#) and was present at the storming of the [entrenchments](#) at [Krabbendam](#). He was later transferred to the [20th Regiment of Foot](#) at [Menorca](#) and was present at the [storming of Alexandria](#). He continued to served with the 20th Regiment at [Malta](#), [Sicily](#) and [Calabria](#) and was present at the [Battle of Maida](#).

He continued to serve with the 20th Regiment at the [Vimiera](#) and in the retreat from the [Battle of Corunna](#). He followed his unit in the [Walcheren expedition](#) where his [military unit](#) was decimated by fever. In 1812 Arnott served with the [Duke of Wellington](#) in his campaigns until the end of the war, including the [Battle of Vittoria](#), in the [Pyrenees](#) and in [India](#).



Arnott's belt buckle worn whilst attending Napoleon on his deathbed. Buckle is the Regiment Badge of the 20th Foot. Collection of the [Yuko Nii](#) Foundation.

As the fourth and last of Napoleon's physicians on St. Helena, Arnott arrived, following his regiment in 1819, and on 21 April 1821 visited Napoleon in his professional capacity. He quickly established excellent relations with the Emperor, becoming his most trusted doctor, and attended to him until his death. The Emperor was bedridden for some days as a result of persistent [vomiting](#) and Arnott [prescribed](#) potions, with no initial results, eventually prescribing a [sedative](#) generally thought to be [opium](#), which relieved the Emperor's symptoms. On 3 May, Arnott prescribed [calomel](#) for the Emperor's constipation with good results. Prior to his death, Napoleon ordered a [snuff box](#) brought to him and carved an "N" with a [pen knife](#) and presented it to Dr. Arnott, along with a locket of his hair, a pair of duelling pistols and a handkerchief. The snuff box was last known to be in the possession of [Alan Cunningham](#), a British Army officer. The pistols are in the collection of the Small Firearms Museum, [Warminster](#), Wiltshire.

During the night following the Emperor's death, Arnott took a death mask made from surgical wax (as no gypsum was available on the island) and inscribed it with his signature and the date 6 Mai 1821. This is now in the collection of the Musée Masséna in Nice, France.

On 3 May 1821 Napoleon gave instructions that should he become insensible, no English physician but Arnott was to touch him. Napoleon died on 5 May 1821, and Arnott attended his [post-mortem examination](#).<sup>[1]</sup> The Emperor [bequeathed](#) Arnott six hundred [Napoleons](#) and the British government gave him an additional payment of five hundred [pounds](#).

## Writings

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After his retirement to Ecclefechan and his estate of Kirconnel Hall, Arnott acquired a collection of anecdotes of the period and wrote an *"Account of the last illness, Decease, and Post-mortem appearances of Napoleon"* in 1822. Respected by his neighbours, he was buried in Ecclefechan churchyard.

## References

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1. ^ Jump up to:<sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Wilson, J.B. (1 January 1970). "[Dr. Archibald Arnott: surgeon to the 20th Foot and physician to Napoleon](#)". *Br Med J*. **3** (5978): 293–  
5. doi:10.1136/bmj.3.5978.293. PMC 1674241. PMID 1097047.