

MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

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THE JOURNAL FOR MALTESE LIVING ABROAD



MALTA

The Nurse of the Mediterranean

ANZAC DAY

25 April

HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

DIED
21 APRIL 2025

Maltese Living Abroad mourn
the death of this beloved Pope



RUSSIAN ANZACS

IN AUSTRIAN
HISTORY

ANZAC DAY

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

lest we forget

25 April

IN MEMORY OF THE MALTESE ANZACS
WORLD WAR 1
 1914 - 1918

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES

AGIUS ALBERT	MOSTA	1401	FARRUGIA WILLIAM WALTER	MATTIANDI NSW	2632
ACQUILINA CARMELLO	NAXXAR	1052	FERRES JOSEPH	VALLETTA	36
ATTARD EMANUEL	GOZO, QALA	4991	GALEA JOHN	SLIEMA	4123
ATTARD PAUL	ZEJTUN	3592	GAUCI FRANK	NAXXAR	1659
ATTARD VINCENT	QORNAI	3005	GAUCI JOE	ATTARD	7390
AZZOPARDI ANTHONY	MELLIEHA	7352	HENRY HUGH	SLIEMA	38346
BALDACCINO GEORGE	SIGGIWI	7399	MATTEI CHARLES	VALLETTA	810
BARTOLO CHARLES	MELLIEHA	6402	MICALLEF PAUL	MOSTA	1393
† BARTOLO FRANCESCO	MELLIEHA	823	MICALLEF SALVATORE	BIRKIKKARA	3876
BARUN JOSEPH	VITTORIOSA	227	MIFSUD JOSEPH	GHARGHUR	1382
† BECK WALDEMAR	MSIDA	6969	MIRIZZI ANTHONY	VALLETTA	373
† BELLIA FRANCIS	FLORIANA	7209	PACE JOSEPH	VALLETTA	646
† BONAVIA CHARLES	SLIEMA	157	PALMIER JOSEPH	MSIDA	4262
BORG LORENZO	VALLETTA	2130	PALMIER VINCENT	MSIDA	1106
† BROWN FRANK	VALLETTA	31803	† REZZO ANTONIO THOMAS	MELBOURNE, VIC	3084
BUSUTTIN BASIL CHARLES	AYR, QLD	3260	REZZO CHARLES	SENGLEA	7543
CAMILLERI ANDREW	MICQUBA	7212	SCHEMBRI CHARLES	NAXXAR	4617
† CAMILLERI BENEDETTO	RABAT	2145	SCHEMBRI FIDELE	NAXXAR	1178 / 83821
CAMILLERI PADO	NAXXAR	4753	SCIBERRAS JOHN	COPIGUA	2868
CASTALDI ELIGIO	SLIEMA	3615	SCOTT JOSEPH	VALLETTA	94
DALLI JOHN	VALLETTA	1823	VASSALLO CARMELLO	ATTARD	2267
DARMANIN GIUSEPPE	COPIGUA	6730	WEST ALFRED	COPIGUA	3517
DEBONO ANDREW	BIRKIKKARA	2160	XUEREB ANTHONY	ATTARD	1053
DEBONO PAUL	BIRKIKKARA	4695	ZAMMIT MICHAEL	MOSTA	1645



NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

CAMILLERI CHARLES	MOSTA	57364
CREMONA LOUIS	GOZO, RABAT	55923
MALLIA CHARLES	SENGLEA	10 / 3343
PILLOW JOHN RICHARD	SLIEMA	15 / 74
VELLA FRANK VICTOR	INVERCARGILL, NZ	35930

† SUPREME SACRIFICE

LEST WE FORGET

MALTESE EX-SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION, NSW SUB BRANCH
 RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA



ALL GAVE SOME - SOME GAVE ALL

Between 2014 and 2018, Australia and New Zealand commemorated the Anzac Centenary, marking 100 years since the nations' involvement in the First World War.

The First World War was one of the most significant events of the 20th Century, claiming the lives of more than 16 million people across the globe.

Even now, over 100 year on, we are all connected to the Anzac Centenary (2014 – 2018) through our own family history, the heritage of our local communities or the lasting impact it left on generations of Australians and New Zealanders.

From the Declaration of War to the various bloody battles and surrenders, and finally to the armistice and the global impact left in its wake, every detail has been recorded in hundreds, if not thousands, of books.

During the Anzac Centenary we remembered not only the original Anzacs who served at Gallipoli and the Western Front but commemorated more than a century of service by Australian and New Zealand servicemen and women.

This special edition of the Maltese eNewsletter – the Journal for Maltese Living Abroad is a compelling account of Malta's involvement in World War I.

Even the little island of Malta, just in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, played an important part during the First World War so much so that it earned the title of The Nurse of the Mediterranean. The Editor



**JOHN CALLEJA WRITES FROM MALTA
AUSTRALIA HALL - NEW LOOK ENTRANCE**



Dear Frank and readers of the Maltese Journal,

Yesterday, we completed our first mission in Malta before ANZAC Day .
Our ANZAC Rowing Teams from New Zealand and Australia plus parents and staff joined in for an afternoon workshop outside the Australia Hall Entrance pathway.

A 4-metre green carpet was laid after removing the grass,

58 Rosemary Plants were laid on the green mat and

Australia and New Zealand Flag banners stretching 4 metres on each side of the green mat.

Each Rosemary Pot has the inscription :

1914-1918 : ANZACS TREATED IN MALTA

WE THANKYOU - [followed by a name from our 53 Group members

+ 5 Names selected from Maltese Seniors in SA]

The quantity 58 Rosemary Plants represented the 58,000 wounded ANZACs treated in Malta during WWI and their recovery within the Australia Hall .

It was a special moment for my family having my Grandfather serve in WWI and was based at St ANDREW Army barracks, as well as my father during WWII ...

Both had spent many, many visits within the Australia Hall and have passed on many stories of the Australia Hall.

The ANZAC Rowing Group and parents have been enjoying their stay in Malta: Water training in the morning at Marsaxlokk, Easter activities, and the amazing tourist attractions.

On Monday afternoon, I will be on the Malta TV news with two of our rowing students - a 25-minute segment informing locals of our work and promoting our ANZAC Rowing event at Pretty Bay in the afternoon on ANZAC DAY.

I will send photos after the ANZAC Rowing event and at the ANZAC service .

MALTA SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH THE ANZACS

ANZAC CENTENARY

1914 - 1918 2014 - 2018



This photo was taken in May 2013 when the new memorial was inaugurated. - (From left) H.E. Anne Lambert – Australian High Commissioner, Mr. Nicholas Bonello – Chairman, ANZAC Memorial Committee, Malta, Mrs. Vella, Hon Dr. George Vella – Minister for Foreign Affairs

battlefield of Gallipoli and hospitalised in Malta. This little island was justly described as **The Nurse of the Mediterranean.**



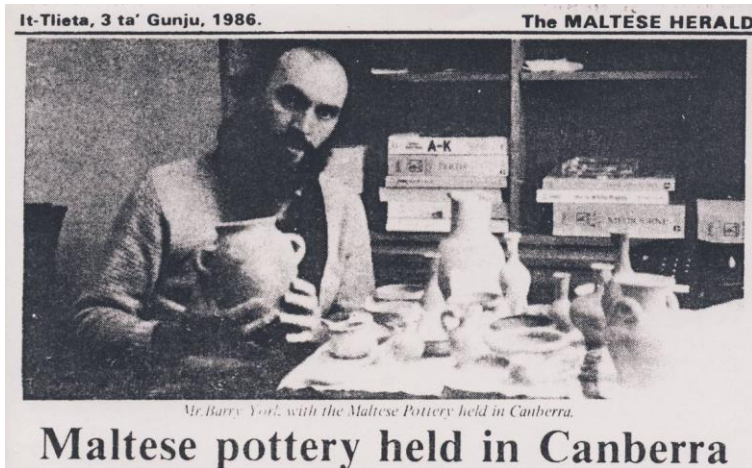
Tragically, many of those wounded soldiers never made it back home. Approximately, 300 Australians and New Zealand servicemen are amongst those buried in Malta.

In May 2013, a memorial to those ANZACS (pictured above) was unveiled at the beautiful Argotti Botanical Gardens in Floriana, Malta and this monument is a profound and lasting tribute to those ANZACS who paid the ultimate price fighting for freedom and democracy of their country.

The memorial symbolizes the shared history and the deep and enduring bonds that exist between the people of Australia, New Zealand and Malta. The members of the Maltese community of South Australia have always been known for their generosity, energy and strong community spirit.

The building of the ANZAC monument is just one example of this, with South Australian Maltese community playing a key role in raising funds for this memorial.





DR BARRY YORK (MEILAK) REMEMBERS

Little did I realize in the 1980s when researching my PhD thesis into the history of Maltese migration to Australia that my research would lead to the discovery of some neolithic Maltese pottery held at the then Parliament House in Canberra.

I think it was the late George Griffiths who first alerted the community to the existence of the pottery, which had been given as a gift to the Australian Government by the Maltese Government

in 1935.

But there was a puzzle: No-one seemed to know where the pottery had ended up!


During a research trip to Canberra, I arranged with the Parliament's Joint House Committee to go to Parliament House and, accompanied by a committee officer, to search for the pottery.

Gifts from other governments were either displayed or kept in an old vault at the back of the House. I still remember entering the vault and marvelling at all the gifts in storage - some were quite exotic. The ancient Maltese pottery - which had been carefully selected by Sir Themis Zammit - was up high on a top shelf in a shoe-box, each piece wrapped in tea-towels. The oldest piece, I later learned, was 2,500 years old. I couldn't believe that such a magnificent collection could be treated in such a shoddy manner but was none the less relieved to locate it. (It had probably been there, like that, for 50 years).

The story has a happy ending with the pottery was put on display in Sydney and then, later, at the new Parliament House in Canberra.

I'm assuming it has been back in storage for many years, and that the storage is undertaken at the highest professional standards in the new Parliament House.

In Loving Memory



**FRANCES JANE BARTLETT
(NEE TESTA)**

2025 • Wollongong, NSW of Barrack Heights
Aged 74 Years

Passed away peacefully surrounded
by her loving family
on Sunday 23rd March 2025.
Beloved wife of John.
Dearly loved mother and mother-in-law
of David and Christie,
Paula and Crystal.
Cherished grandmother of all her
grandchildren.
Frances will be sadly missed by her loving
Testa and Bartlett families and her many dear friends.

Frances was the daughter of
Frank and Carmen (both deceased)
and sibling to Mary, Alfred (Dec),
Fr. Leonard, Joseph (Dec) George, Doris (Dec)
Gejtano (Guy), Pauline, John and Tony

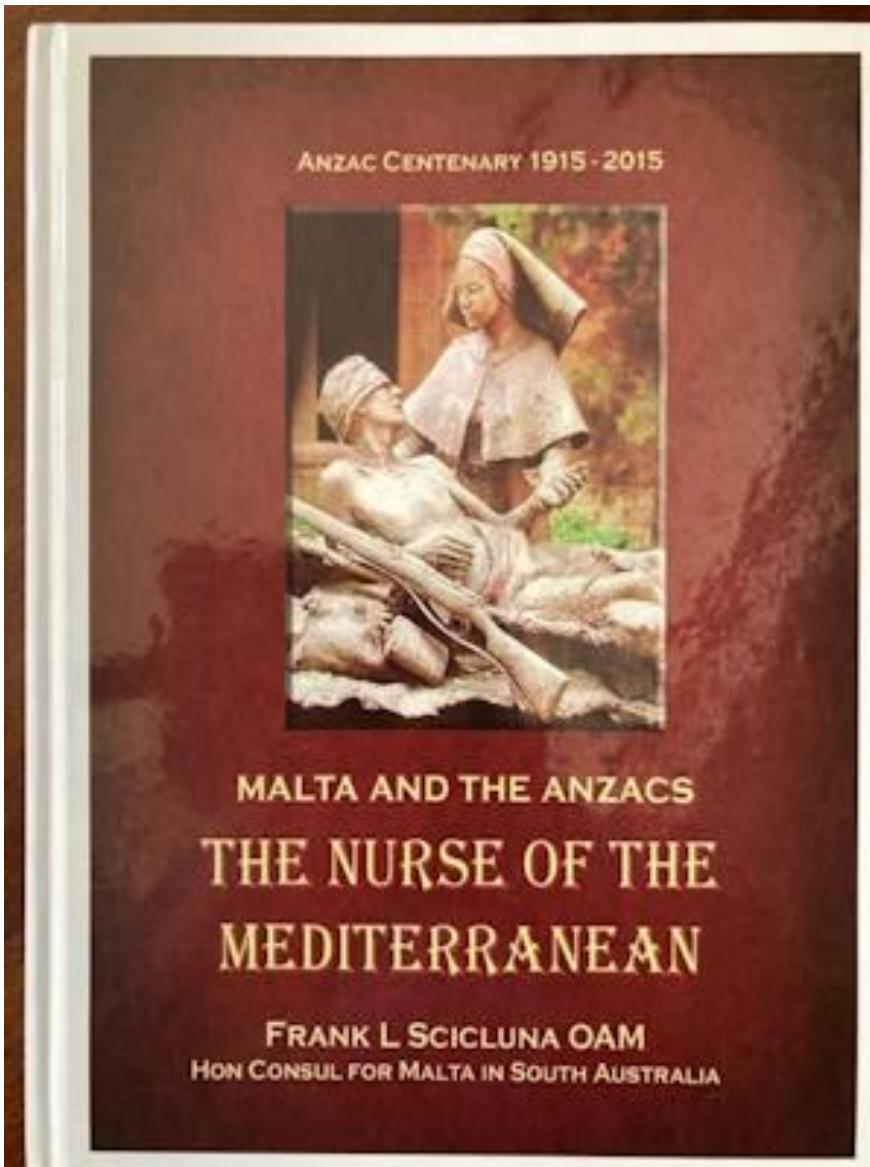
*We
Remember
In our
Payers all
The Maltese
Migrants
who died in
faraway
places
R.I.P.*



Above is our Maltese ANZAC plaque which we installed at Civic Park, Pendle Hill, NSW. A copy was installed at the Maltese Community Council building at Parramatta, NSW and a joint effort Plaque being installed at the George Cross Falcons Community Centre at Cringila, NSW. These men who immigrated to both Australia and New Zealand early 1910's joined either the Australian Imperial Forces or the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces WWI with seven of these brave souls paying the supreme sacrifice. One of those brave souls, Private Charles Bonavia dying on the landing at Gallipoli, 25th April, 1915. Lest We Forget. Our Association remembered these men at a ceremony at the Community Centre at Cringila on 19th April. Laying a wreath at the Cenotaph, Martin Place, Sydney approx. 3pm, 24th April. Our contingent also marched on ANZAC Day in Sydney.

Sent by Andrew Magro from the Maltese Ex Servicemen's Association of NSW..sub Branch RSL of Australia

MALTA - THE NURSE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN



The British War Office did not allow the Maltese to raise their own battalion, so they had no choice but to serve in other battalions. Piecing together all the information is difficult, but it has been established that 85 Maltese officers served in various fields with six receiving distinctions for bravery at Gallipoli. Some 650 Maltese served with the British navy and over 300 with Canadian and Australian Army contingents.

In January 1915, 550 men of the King's Own Malta Royal Militia volunteered for active duty in Cyprus, freeing the troops stationed there to join the Dardanelles campaign. The overall contribution of the Maltese can be gauged by the fact that nearly 70 per cent of males who were of military age were directly involved in the war. A little known fact about the Gallipoli campaign is the Maltese Labour Corps. This consisted of 1,000 workers under the direction of Maltese officers who unloaded ships and performed other activities at Anzac Cove. Most of provisions for the 24,000 men in Anzac Cove came from Malta, including the water that was towed in water barges. Men of the Maltese Labour Corps worked in the

leeway of a hill with enemy fire landing either short or sailing overhead into the sea. Remarkably, only one was killed and two slightly wounded. Two of the Officers later served as Maltese Commissioners to Australia.

Malta was declared a military hospital base in early 1915 and within a short time was in a position to cater for 20,000 wounded ANZAC soldiers. A large number of public buildings, including schools, were converted to hospital use. In all, 27 hospitals were established. The convalescent camp at Ghajn Tuffieha, which had over 4,000 beds, was one of two tent cities catering for the wounded.

The first 600 wounded arrived in May 1915 and by March of the following year the Governor estimated that over 60,000 wounded had been cared for. It is estimated that the hospitals and convalescent camps dealt with over 135,000 sick and wounded, primarily from the campaigns in Gallipoli and Salonika. This included 20,000 Anzacs.

While the vast majority of Anzacs transported to Malta did recover and returned to Australia or to the European Front, for others Malta was their final resting place. The number of Australian deaths would have undoubtedly been higher but for the work of Maltese doctors who served with the Anzacs.

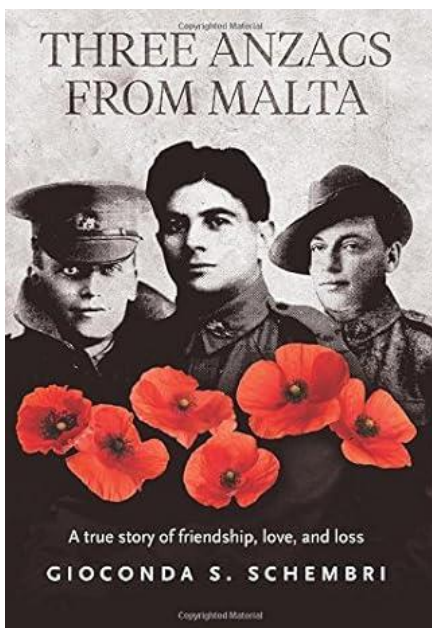
The "low percentage of sickness among the troops of this Division is largely attributable to the work of a Maltese physician. In the first four months of the campaign, the dressing station at Anzac Cove treated over 15,000 wounded. Dr Mattei had migrated to Western Australia in the 1890s. He served with the Western Australian

contingent in the Boer War as well as with the Anzacs. He landed in Gallipoli with one of the first waves and immediately established a sanitation station at Anzac Cove. He was rapidly promoted to major and then lieutenant colonel. In the first four months of the campaign, the dressing station at Anzac Cove treated over 15,000 wounded. On 15 April 1916, the first Anzac Day was commemorated in Malta at the Pieta Cemetery, possibly the first Anzac ceremony in the world. At that time there were 107 Anzacs laid to rest in the cemetery. The number had increased to 204 Australians and 72 New Zealanders by the end of the campaign. It increased further as the result of WWII and today about 220 Australians are buried on the island. An ANZAC memorial was erected in 2013 at the Botanical Gardens in Floriana, Malta in honour of the 300 ANZACS who succumbed to their injuries after reaching Malta and lie buried on the island.

Under the auspices of the RSL Maltese Sub-branch of SA, Frank L Scicluna OAM published a commemorative book MALTA AND THE ANZACS – THE NURSE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN to coincide with the ANZAC Centenary 2015. This book commemorates the invaluable and lasting friendship that exists between the people of Australia, New Zealand and Malta formed during the Gallipoli campaign in 1915. It is a lasting tribute to our shared wartime history, the stories of those who served and the close relationship of our countries, which continues today.

THREE ANZACS FROM MALTA: A TRUE STORY OF FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND LOSS PAPERBACK by Dr. Gioconda S. Schembri (Author)

Three friends... Big dreams... One war that shook their world... 'Three Anzacs from Malta' tells the story of three young men, Charles, Waldemar and Anthony, who, in their early twenties, leave behind all they hold dear to pursue their dreams for a bigger and brighter future in a faraway land. Educated, charming, and adventurous, they soon settle in their adoptive home, securing steady jobs, forging new friendships, and finding love. But their carefree days end abruptly when the sombre clouds of a global war darken their world. What unfolds is one of the deadliest conflicts humankind had ever seen, one that would destroy a whole generation of youth. From the tiny Mediterranean island of Malta to the vast Australian continent, and from the unforgiving slopes of Gallipoli, all the way to the muddy trenches in Flanders, 'Three Anzacs from Malta' follows these young men as they carve out their destinies amidst unprecedented bloodshed and suffering. This is a timeless story about migration, the heartache of separated families, loss and war. But this book is mainly a tribute to the tenacity of the human spirit in the face of enormous adversity, as well as a celebration of the virtues that transcend borders and time: courage, friendship and love. The book also includes various photos, extracts from letters and a war diary.



WE THANK ALL THOSE WHO SENT A DONATION

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ANZAC CHAPLAINS

SOLDIERS OF FAITH

The National Defence Chaplains' Memorial Grove

This memorial grove honours Australian Defence Force Chaplains. Their dedication and selfless commitment in serving Australia's service personnel and their families, during times of peace and conflict, is commemorated.

Chaplains have served in the Australian Army since its inception in 1901. In 1912, Chaplains began serving at sea and ashore with the Royal Australian Navy, before joining the Royal Australian Air Force in 1926.

Throughout this history, the role of the Chaplain has been integral to Australia's Defence capability and the wellbeing of its people. Today, Chaplains continue to faithfully serve in the Australian Defence Force, domestically and on international operations, providing religious ministry, spiritual guidance, and pastoral care.

LEST WE FORGET

Just finished of ANZAC Day 2024, *The National Defence Chaplains' Memorial Grove* in Toowong's Anzac Park honours the unsung gallantry, sacrifice and humble devotion to Australian Defence Force personnel, in times of war and peace, of our military chaplains.

It is the first time — anywhere in Australia — that a portion of a civic park has been set aside for a public memorial dedicated to ADF Chaplains and the incredibly significant role they have performed — in effect since the First Fleet arrived and “nationally” since the Commonwealth formed in 1901 — for the spiritual and material wellbeing of our fighting men and women.

Designed by Brisbane City Council architects and delivered by Council staff and contractors, the Memorial Grove consists of a circular polished and engraved concrete circle, flanked by dainty flowerbeds set inside a grand guard of eight magnificent, mature pine trees. At the ends of the east-west arms of a "Maltese Cross" motif, outlined on the ground in ochre-coloured, decomposed granite, is a backless, monolithic "seat" of Brisbane tuff sandstone, that entices visitors to pause awhile and contemplate the simple proposition advanced in the Memorial Centrepiece inscription:

THE NATIONAL DEFENCE CHAPLAINS' MEMORIAL GROVE
Dedicated to Australian Defence Force Chaplains who have
humbly served this nation in times of war and peace.
LEST WE FORGET



ANZAC DAY

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
 Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
 At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
 We will remember them.

lest we forget *25 April*



ANZAC COMMEMORATION AT THE SOUTH COAST NSW BY THE GCFCC PRESIDENT LOUIS PARNIS

It was 6 years ago when I, as President of the George Cross Falcons Community Centre of Cringila NSW, contacted the former Honorary Consul of Malta in South Australia and Editor of the Maltese Newsletter Frank Scicluna to assist me in designing a plaque to remember the Maltese Anzacs fighting with the Australian Army during WW1. The RSL Maltese Sub Branch of NSW were also approached and partnered with Cringila in producing the plaque holding the names serving during WW1. I contacted the Department of Veterans Affairs to enhance the monument by assisting the club to install a water fountain, an eternal fire pit plus extending the roof for protection from the elements.

A stainless-steel bench was erected for anyone visiting the shrine to sit and reflect. Two large flagpoles were installed to hoist the Australian flag supplied by the Australian Federal Government, and the Maltese flag which was supplied by the Malta High Commissioner of Malta in Australia. This year the ANZAC commemoration was held a week before ANZAC DAY so it does not clash with other events allowing us to invite nine dignitaries including Malta Consul-General NSW, Federal Member and State Minister, President of the Wollongong Sub Branch of the RSL, MCCI, the local Parish Priest, Admiral Bruce Kafer MC and the RSL Maltese Sub Branch NSW. We also like to thank the committee and many members and visitors attending the ceremony and the volunteers who provided lunch for all attendees.

Malta heals the wounds of the ANZACs from Gallipoli



The first arrivals in Malta of the wounded soldiers from the theatres of war made history. A stream of ambulance wagons and motor-cars swept through Valletta on their way to the landing places, attracting crowds of spectators along the route. **Michael Gale**

The first arrivals in Malta of the wounded soldiers from the theatres of war made history. A stream of ambulance wagons and motor-cars swept through Valletta on their way to the landing places, attracting crowds of spectators along the route. Afterwards, the vehicles returned in different directions for the hospitals and other places where accommodation had been provided. In Strada Reale, "hats were raised and handkerchiefs waved as the vehicles approached,

the crowds pressing forward to catch a glimpse of the soldiers recumbent on stretchers or seated".

From among the frequent arrivals from the Dardanelles, one would single out "a remarkable episode providing the material for a romance in real life". The ship was moored in Sliema Creek. "During the landing of the wounded, the shrieks of a woman were heard among the crowd. The excited woman had recognised her husband whom she had not seen for nine years."

British wounded from the Balkan front were brought to Malta, which provided hospital accommodation for well over 18,000 sick and wounded. The island's resources were taxed to the utmost

The hospital ship Asturias, with wounded from the Dardanelles, was torpedoed in the channel but the torpedo missed its mark. Arrivals included the New Zealand hospital ship Maheno.

The French government placed at the disposal of the French Red Cross, a vessel belonging to the Messageries Maritimes, the Charles Roux, which was fitted out as a hospital ship. It was used for both French and British casualties.

For the first time since Italy's intervention in the world conflict, the hospital ship Re d'Italia of Lloyd Sabaudo Coy arrived in Malta, and berthed at Sa Maison. Four Maltese doctors, namely P. Biasini, Balzan, Azzopardi and Inglott, and several English nurses, proceeded with the ship. Other Italian hospital ships followed. The Lloyd Sabaudo provided six of its fine fleet for the purpose.

The hospital ship Assaye arrived in Malta with a large party of Canadian and English lady nurses. The novel uniform of the Canadians attracted great attention. The ship was en route to the Balkans.

Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht Erin arrived in Malta on her second voyage from South Hampton to Salonika. She was carrying a number of nurses and medical stores. Sir Thomas embarked on the yacht to Marseilles.

The British steam yachts Sunbeam, owned by naval writer Lord Brassey, and Liberty, owned by the eminent physician Sir James Porter, were converted into private hospital ships. They called at Malta en route to the Dardanelles.

A French ship arrived in Malta with 720 Syrian Jews, mostly French citizens. They were embarked at Beirut upon escaping massacre by the Turks. These refugees were being conveyed to Corsica.

Among the wounded who arrived in Malta were several Turkish officers, some of whom died of their wounds on board the hospital ship on their way to Malta. They were buried at sea.

Egbert Rizzo, a Maltese residing in Constantinople prior to the outbreak of the war, was deported to Urfa and was subsequently allowed to return to Constantinople with several other British citizens, including Maltese. The Turkish government issued instructions that all British citizens were to be well treated.

The more serious cases were sent on to England from Malta, while a good number of the first arrivals left Malta to rejoin their respective regiments.

Strong contingents of medical officers and trained nurses continued to arrive from England and were absorbed in the various hospitals on the island. Male nurses at the Central Civil Hospital, Floriana, spontaneously offered to devote their off-duty days to the wounded in the hospitals. When Italy joined the Allies, plans were mooted towards establishing convalescent homes in Sicily.

British wounded from the Balkan front were brought to Malta, which provided hospital accommodation for well over 18,000 sick and wounded. The island's resources were taxed to the utmost.

As the conflict continued, a local newspaper wrote: "Funeral services will be held in the churches of the island by order of the Archbishop for the souls of those who have fallen in the war. It would be suggested that the people of this island might give further appropriate expression to the feelings which animate them by bedecking with flowers the honoured graves of those who succumbed to their wounds in Malta."

It would be added that the ringing of bells “so highly favoured by custom is not always a necessity, especially in view of our limited area, so we trust that bell ringing will be restricted as much as possible in certain areas”.

In the event of any cases of cholera developing on board a hospital ship during the voyage to Malta, the patient was to be at once transported to Comino, where arrangements were made for a small hospital. If disembarkation was impossible, the patient would be taken to the Lazaretto on Manoel Island, where complete isolation was arranged. If any cases of cholera occurred at the Dardanelles, they would be treated at Lemnos.

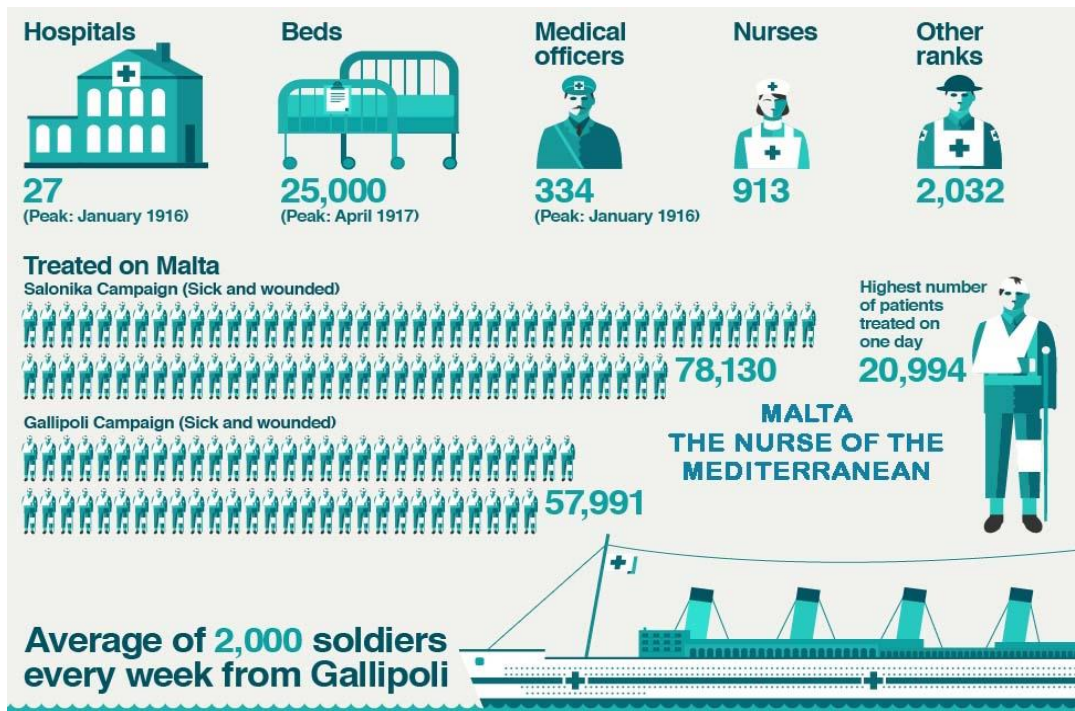
Following an appeal for help in connection with the housing of convalescent patients, unfurnished private houses in different parts of the island were placed at the authorities’ disposal

There was a remote danger of cases developing on board ship. For this reason, Governor Methuen set up an ad hoc committee which included Dr G. Caruana Scicluna, Prof. Temi Zammit and Dr A. Critien to decide on the best means to meet this possible danger.

Following an appeal for help in connection with the housing of convalescent patients, unfurnished private houses in different parts of the island were placed at the authorities’ disposal, including the Archbishop Palace in Mdina.

The Marchesa Scicluna placed at the disposal of the authorities the palatial Villa Dragonara. The Carmelite Friars offered the upper floor of their convent at St Julian’s. The Vincenzo Bugeja Institute at Hamrun was equipped as a hospital. The Army Pay Office at Auberge de Baviere in Valletta was moved elsewhere and the building converted into a hospital.

The government school in Sliema was turned into a hospital to house 450 patients; it was known as St John Hospital. Nevertheless, school started as usual as alternative premises were made available, including the Juventutis Domus and part of the Carmelite Convent by Fr O’Grady and Rev. Prof. A. Cuschieri, respectively. San Anton Palace and Verdala were also used to accommodate patients.



There was also a generous response from Maltese owners of motorcars and carriages who readily lent their transport for the conveyance of the sick and wounded from the quay to the hospitals on the arrival of hospital transport ships. Besides, owners of motorcars and carriages offered to take out

convalescents for drives.

During the war years the Malta Centre of the St John Ambulance and the British Red Cross Society were amalgamated for the better and more efficient organisation in aid of the sick and wounded. They became known as the Ladies Committee, which was composed as follows: The Countess Lucan, Miss Calvocoressi, Mrs Clapp Zammit, Mrs F. P. Denaro, Mrs A. M. Galea, Mrs Lewis Hall, Miss Gatt and Mrs Pringle.

It was a very active committee, organising concerts by local civic bands, variety entertainment and performances, cinema shows (sometimes screening scenes of the war), excursions, tea sessions, talks; promoting donations in kind such as cakes, fruit, flowers, books (a box of books was received in Malta from Queen Mary), magazines, newspapers, games, playing cards, gramophones, cigarettes, cigars and tobacco.

The committee actively supplied caps, mufflers, gloves (these were with a thumb piece but without divisions for the fingers), mittens (with short fingers or at least a knitted hole to cover the palm and were long above the wrist). The government provided for exemption of custom duties on gifts to the troops received from abroad.

A novel initiative was the holding of a hospital football league. Some 17 hospitals entered their teams. One of the first matches, which took place at the Marsa, was played between two Royal Army Medical Corps teams – Valletta Hospital and Baviere, ending with the score: Baviere 2, Valletta Hospital 0.

Another novel idea was the setting up of a club for nurses; they used to meet in the Ladies Room at the Union Club. No wonder Malta earned the title of “nurse of the Mediterranean”.



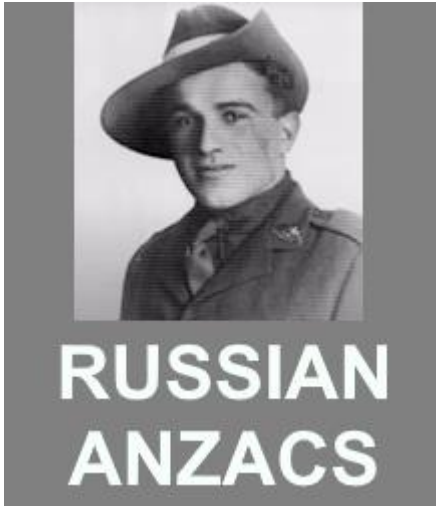
ANZAC MONUMENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

On ANZC DAY 2019 Chev Charles Farrugia, President of the RSL Maltese branch together with Frank Scicluna, the former Consul for Malta in South Australia and Mr. Edgar Agius, President of the Maltese Community Council of South

Australia laid a wreath at the foot of the Monument at the Prospect Gardens, Adelaide in remembrance of the ANZACs who died and are buried in Malta during the Gallipoli tragedy of WW1. The late Charlie Vidal, a war veteran, was also in attendance.

This monument was made in 2015 with funds received from the Australian Ministry of Veteran Affairs. This monument carries the names of South Australian servicemen buried in various cemeteries in Malta. The memorial was unveiled by the RSL state president Brigadier T. Hanna, accompanied by the president of the Maltese sub-branch, Chev. C. Farrugia — a veteran of the Royal Malta Artillery. Attending the ceremony were Frank Scicluna, the Hon Consul for Malta in SA, David O’Loughlin, Mayor of the Prospect City Council and Robert Banton, President of the Prospect RSL Branch. Brigadier Hanna said “Almost 58,000 ANZAC s were taken to Malta (4000 alone in May 1915) after the first weeks of the landing at Gallipoli, Turkey - to be treated for their wounds. This contribution resulted in Malta becoming known as the Nurse of the Mediterranean.”

He added that Maltese immigrants had contributed significantly to the multicultural character of contemporary Australia. “It is most fitting,” he said, “that the Maltese community in South Australia are amongst those doing something special to commemorate the centenary of the war which was supposed to be the end of all wars”. Charles Farrugia – Former President of the RSL Maltese Branch SA



**RUSSIAN ANZACS:
RUSSIAN EMIGRANTS
WHO VOLUNTARILY
WENT TO FIGHT FOR
AUSTRALIA**

How many Russian Anzacs were there?

The total number of Russian born servicemen in the 1st AIF was at least 1036.

During the First World War over a thousand Russian-born servicemen enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). They were the largest national group in the AIF after British, New Zealand and Canadian born servicemen. Besides ethnic Russians, these Anzacs included members of a score of different ethnic groups born within the borders of the Russian Empire. Their story is told in my book:

Elena Govor, *Russian Anzacs in Australian History*, Sydney, UNSW Press in association with NAA, 2005, 310 p., 44 ills

Ethnic and territorial composition of Russian Anzacs

Russian-born Anzacs were of diverse ethnic-territorial origins. Their ethnic breakdown is shown in the table below.

Country of birth	ANZACS
USA	545
Switzerland	84
Sweden	384
Spain & Gibraltar	42
South Africa	628
Russia	969
Norway	284
New Zealand	4215
Netherlands	138
Malta	95
Italy	151
India	606
Greece	49
France	178
Fiji	109
Denmark	466
Canada	718
Belgium	78
All Australians	376060

INTERNATIONAL ANZACS

Eastern Slavs (ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians)	236	23%
Poles & others (of non-Jewish origin) born in Russian Poland	63	6.2%
People born in the Baltic Provinces (excluding Slavs and Jews, including Germans)	241	23.5%
Natives of the Caucasus (of non-Slavonic origin) and Tatars	21	2.1%
Finns and other Scandinavians from Finland	295	28.8%
Western Europeans born in Russia or posing as Russian subjects	26	2.5%
Jews (including Jews from the Polish and Baltic Provinces)	143	13.9%
Total	1025	100%

RUSSIAN-AUSTRALIAN ANZAC

[Nikolay Korotkov](#)

Nikolay Korotkov was born in Samara, Russia. Having deserted from the Russian army, he spent two years in Manchuria. In 1912 he came to Cairns Australia and worked as a sugarcane cutter at Port Douglas, North Queensland.

After enlisting in the army in Cairns, he joined a group of Russians serving in the 9th Battalion. In June 1915, they landed at Gallipoli. In 1916, after the withdrawal of troops from Gallipoli, Korotkov was transferred to the Field Artillery Brigade, where he served as a carter on the Western Front. In October 1917, he was wounded in the battle for Passchendaele but returned to the ranks. When, after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Russia withdrew from the war, a group of Russians who had served in the Australian Army asked to be discharged from the army. They, including Korotkov, were returned to Australia and demobilized.

Korotkov returned to North Queensland and worked as a sugarcane cutter and night watchman. During World War II, he re-enlisted in the army and served in the Voluntary Defense Corps.



GEPRGE CROSS ISLAND ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL SERVICE TO COMMEMORATE THE AWARD OF THE GEORGE CROSS TO MALTA 2025
 Members of GCIA UK and Malta branches joined other veterans' organisations and diplomatic representatives of many countries at the Saluting Battery in Valletta in Saturday 12 April to commemorate the award of the George Cross to the people of Malta. The event was hosted by Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna who also provided a gun salute. The service forms part of the programme of the current GCIA annual Malta reunion, which continues with a wreath-laying at the major war memorials in Floriana on the morning of Tuesday 15th April.



As we have just celebrated Easter with our families and friends, remember in our prayers those families in Australia and those around the World who are not as lucky as we are that they find Peace, some form of happiness, and Freedom during this time.

Please stay safe, keep well, and have a wonderful Easter.

Let us all do what we can to support those in need. That truth, justice, Freedom, love, and happiness reach all, That we are not driven by greed and unnecessary want, Those in power remember that we are all one people, My goodwill drives our leaders to achieve peace in our World and to do away with self-interest and greed. That the Love of God strengthens us during these times.

Sam CJ Muscat JP, KSJ

***President - Australian American Association Victoria
 & Treasurer - Federation of Australian-American Associations, Inc***

Easter 2025

Private Simpson and his donkey at Gallipoli



This photograph shows Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick – better known as John Simpson – leading a donkey carrying a wounded soldier through Shrapnel Gully, Gallipoli, during the First World War. Nicknamed the ‘man with the donkey’, Simpson has become an iconic figure of the Gallipoli campaign, and is perhaps the best known Anzac.

The ‘man with the donkey’

John Simpson was a stretcher-bearer in the 3rd Australian Field Ambulance. He came ashore during the Anzac landing of 25 April 1915 and was killed less than 3 weeks later.

Simpson used donkeys to transport wounded men from the fighting in Monash Valley down to the dressing (first-aid) station at Anzac Cove. He was probably the first stretcher-bearer on Gallipoli to use a donkey to transport wounded men.

The donkey used by Simpson was landed on the first day of the Gallipoli campaign, one of a number brought ashore to carry water. Simpson later used a second donkey. It is believed that Simpson called the donkey in this photograph ‘Duffy’ – although other records indicate that either this or the other donkey was known as ‘Abdul’ or ‘Murphy’.

The legend that has grown up around Simpson suggests that he saved seriously wounded men. However, as the photograph makes clear, only those with relatively minor wounds could be brought back in this manner. Men with life-threatening head,

chest or stomach wounds could not have ridden a donkey down the valley, even with Simpson’s assistance.

Acknowledgments

Learning resource text © Education Services Australia Limited and the National Archives of Australia 2010.



Sandy (Major General Sir William Bridges' horse)

The only horse to return from the First World War

In the First World War 136,000 “walers” (the general name applied to Australian horses abroad) were sent overseas for use by the Australian Imperial Force and the British and Indian governments. One horse from the 136,000 made it back to Australia.

Sandy belonged to Major General Sir William Bridges, who subsequently died at sea of wounds he had received at Gallipoli.

He was one of 6,100 horses who had embarked for Gallipoli. However, very few of the animals were put ashore, as Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood decided there was not room or requirement on Anzac Cove. On 5 May Birdwood sought approval to send the horses back to Alexandria.

From 1 August 1915 Sandy was in the care of Captain Leslie Whitfield, an Australian Army Veterinary Corps officer in Egypt. Sandy remained in Egypt until he and Whitfield were transferred to France during March 1916.



MALTESE SERVICEMEN IN WW1

EW Bratchell and Group, Malta, 3rd London Regiment, 1915-1918

Situated in the Mediterranean Sea, the Maltese islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino have a land area equal to twice the size of Dublin. The population of the islands in 1914 was approximately 217,000, nearly a third of which were concentrated in the capital Valletta. Due to its central position in the central Mediterranean and its role as a naval base, Malta has been strategically important since Roman times.

When war was declared, the garrison on Malta totalled 6,000 servicemen of all ranks. These forces came under the command of the governor, General Sir Leslie Rundle, who was replaced in 1915 by Field Marshal Lord Methuen. Many Maltese who fought in the war joined the armed forces of Canada and Australia as well as the British Army.

In January 1917, 95 Maltese officers served outside of Malta with a further 13 serving as surgeons on British hospital ships. Locally raised units included the King's Own Malta Regiment of Militia with a strength of 3,393, the Royal Malta Artillery with a strength of 1,032 and the Royal Engineer Militia which a contingent of 136 men. None of these units served at the front but by taking part in garrison duty they allowed British troops to be deployed overseas.

The total number of Maltese from Malta who served in the army in any capacity during the war is estimated at 15,000, with the Maltese Labour Corp accounting for 7,000. One battalion unloaded ships at Gallipoli with a further two battalions serving at Salonika. A further 1,500 Maltese were employed in the motor transport work of the Army Service Corps. The number of men killed and injured in the Labour Corps totalled 300. Maltese also served at various Royal Naval establishments with 10,000 employed at the Dockyard Naval Ordnance Depot, 2,400 in coaling, 1,300 on sea-going service and 200 in mine sweeping. A number of Maltese also served aboard British ships at Jutland with 778 employed by the Royal Air Force.



MILITARY HOSPITALS

RNA Seaplane base, Malta, 1917
Malta's most significant contribution to the war was its role as a military hospital base. Following the first landings in Gallipoli in April 1915, a total of 4,000 wounded servicemen

were treated in hospitals in Malta. By June over 6,000 beds were made available and the end of September 13,000 men were under treatment in hospitals, camps and schools. At its height, the number of wounded reached 20,000, with dysentery and typhoid accounting for the same number of casualties as gunshot wounds.

As a result of the Gallipoli campaign alone, approximately 2,500 officers and 55,400 other ranks received treatment in Malta. To deal with the casualties, the size of the Royal Army Medical Corps increased to 334 medical officers, 913 nurses and 2,032 other ranks. In July 1915, Sir H R Whitehead was appointed Surgeon-General. He was succeeded in March 1916 by Surgeon-General Sir Thomas Yarr. Women assisted the injured via the Voluntary Aid Detachment, the Red Cross and the Church Army. Private subscriptions to the British Red Cross and St. John Ambulance amounted to £18,562. Due to its role in tending the war-wounded Malta became known as the nurse of the Mediterranean.



In 2017 All City Walls was commissioned by Queensland Rail's Positive Partnerships to produce this mural for the 100 year anniversary of the ANZACs. The mural acknowledges the contributions made by Indigenous soldiers and the significance of the roles women played in the ANZAC campaign.



Sergeant Saunders with fellow soldiers of the 2/7th Infantry Battalion in North Queensland, October 1943.



To commemorate ANZAC Day on 25 April, this article provides an overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in the armed forces and reflects on key themes and legacies of that involvement. ANZAC

stands for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. ANZAC day is held each year on 25 April. This date marks the anniversary of the first military action fought by Australia and New Zealand, at Gallipoli (Turkey) during World War 1 in 1915. ANZAC day was first celebrated in 1916. Over the years, the rituals and observances held each ANZAC day have developed into what they are today – including the dawn service,

marches, memorials and more. The day has also become a commemoration of all wars Australia has participated in and a time to reflect on war and its legacy.

Aboriginal Service People

Military service and war are a significant part of our mob's history and current experience. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have served in large numbers in every conflict since Australia's Federation in 1901 and some signed up to colonial forces before this.

It is hard to know the exact number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service people because the Australian Defence Force did not record the cultural background of members until recently. In the early 1900s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not legally able to join the Army, so many hid their identity in order to sign up.

More recently, many families, Community-members and organisations have been working to bring to light the stories, contributions and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service people. We now know that:

A number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served in the Boer War (1899-1902)
 Over 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served in World War I (1914-1918) and around 70 fought at Gallipoli
 At least 3000 Aboriginal and 850 Torres Strait Islander people served in World War II (1939-1945)
 In both World Wars, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had the highest participation rates in the military as a proportion of their population in Australia
 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have participated in all military conflicts since the World Wars, including in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan and in peacekeeping operations including in
 In 2011 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 1.7% of the Australian Army.
 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have also been involved in work at home to support the war effort. For example, during World War II, entire Aboriginal communities in Northern Australia did defence work such as construction, farming and butchery for the army.
 There have also been Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units. During World War II, the Torres Strait Light Infantry was started to patrol the Torres Strait Islands and support ships going through their waterways. At the same time the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit was formed. This unit was made up of Yolngu men from Arnhem Land and aimed to use Aboriginal tactics and weaponry to fight the Japanese military. In 1981, the NorthWest Mobile Force or NORFORCE was created in the Northern Territory. This unit continues today and has 60% Aboriginal membership.

Women at War

Aboriginal women have and continue to make an important contribution to Australia's defence forces. Their roles ranging from fighting on the front lines to working support roles behind the scenes.

Our mob fought in large numbers during the World Wars, despite the fact that they were legally barred from serving. Laws at the time meant that people “not substantially of European origin or decent” were not allowed to serve in the military. Those who could hide their Aboriginality, claim descent from another culture or who had sympathetic medical or other staff approve their registration were able to sign up regardless. Some people who were rejected from the army in one place travelled elsewhere to try and sign up again. At times during both wars, these restrictions were relaxed to fill the need for more soldiers. Restrictions on enrolment in the armed forces based on race were removed in 1949.

The legacy of military service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia is a complex part of many families' history and current reality. Communities throughout the country have felt the loss of loved ones who did not come home or those who have had to grapple with post-traumatic stress disorder and discrimination back in Australia. It is important that the stories, contributions and bravery of our service people are

recognised and respected.



‘OAK ISLAND’ PREVIEW: SHOCKING KNIGHTS OF MALTA FIND?

By John Witiw

History Channel News Reality TV

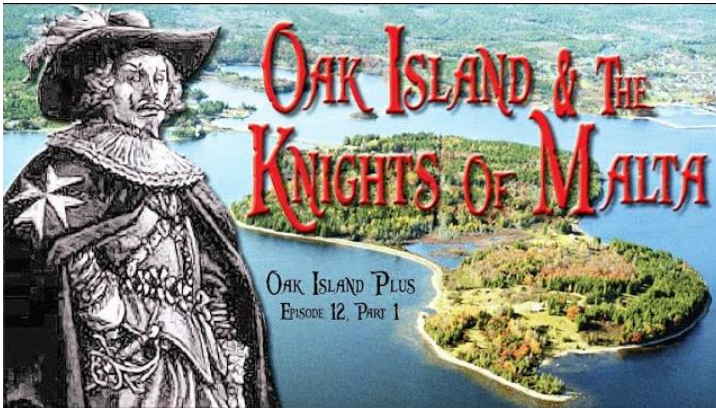
The Lagina brothers and their team have long searched for treasure on *The Curse of Oak Island*. A preview for the most recent episode suggests they might have found a treasure relating to an ancient order, the Knights of Malta. Notably,

fans might have a good reason to keep knights in mind during the following episodes.

Even A Small Find Could Turn Into Something Big On *The Curse of Oak Island*

The Curse of Oak Island is a History series that depicts the Lagina brothers, Marty and Rick, and their team’s search for treasure on the titular Oak Island. The area, found off the shore of Nova Scotia, has long been haunted over stories of treasure hidden in the area.

The series is currently in its twelfth season, which premiered back in November. Recently, a preview has come out for the season’s episode 20, “Just Bead It.”



Rick Lagina & Marty Lagina from ‘The Curse Of Oak Island’ – YouTube

As noted by *IMDB*, the episode was giving the following synopsis, “As new research identifies who may have been behind the Oak Island mystery, the Lagenas and their team are stunned by what they find in the Money Pit area.” The episode is expected to air on April 15, 2025.

Recently, a preview has already given fans a tease on what to expect during the episode. While a voice over initially focuses on “big boulders” in the area, attention is soon drawn to something smaller.

A button is discovered which is soon described as “the find of the day.” It’s later noted, “There was a button found on Lot 5, similar on a Knight of Malta uniform. There’s a chance the Knights of Malta made it to Oak Island.” Soon, the team is told to “cross your fingers.”

Fans Might Have A Good Reason To Keep Knights In Mind This Season

Following this, it appears that the team already has plans on where to find the next treasure. The preview closes out on the words, “Shaft 6.” A recent dig is even hailed with, “That’s a grab!”

Following this episode, the season has at least two more episodes to go. This includes, “The Solution Solution,” which airs on April 22.

Notably, the episode airing the following week is titled, “Knight After Knight.” This suggests fans should keep knights on the mind.

Stories of knights bringing treasure to Oak Island has long been part of the legends surrounding it. As noted by the *Order of Malta* website, “In the 11th century the Knights of Malta, known then as ‘Knights Hospitaller,’ established a hospital in Jerusalem to care for pilgrims of any religious faith or origin.”

“The work of the hospitallers grew in fame and in 1113 Pope Paschal II officially recognized the monastic community as a lay religious order. The Pope identified the Hospitaller Gerard as the Order’s founder, together with an established group of monks – the ‘Professed’ – who are still at the heart of the Order of Malta today.”

As the website notes, in the modern era, “The Sovereign Order of Malta is one of the oldest institutions of Western and Christian civilization. A lay religious order of the Catholic Church since 1113 and a subject of international law. The Sovereign Order of Malta has diplomatic relations with over 100 states and the European Union, and permanent observer status at the United Nations. It is neutral, impartial and apolitical.”

Have you been keeping up with *The Curse of Oak Island*? What do you make of the recent find? Make sure you come back to TV Shows Ace for all the latest TV and celebrity news.



THE MALTESE QUEEN OF VICTORIES BAND OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA IS 44 YEARS OLD

Raymond Grima

Since the band's inception on the 8th of February 1981, we have seen many a member come and go, from band co-founders, band Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers, Musical Directors and Assistants, Spiritual Directors, committee members, musicians, librarians, Editors, flag bearers and general volunteers and helpers.

Together we achieved so much, took part and performed at many a Maltese, Italian Festa and Community event, both in South Australia and also in Victoria. Who remembers those first 20 years especially? The Memorable Melbourne trips to firstly the feast of Our Lady Queen of Victories, followed by the St. Paul's Feasts, the San Gaetanu festa, the Good Friday processions in the streets of St. Albans and the feast of the risen Christ? They were exciting and memorable times for everyone especially the musicians.

We performed for Maltese dignitaries, Presidents of Malta, the Archbishop of Malta, at Australian and Maltese community events in Rundle Mall and at Elder Park, Anzac Day commemorations, at the George Cross memorial at Prospect, Multicultural events and those unforgettable and successful 15th and 20th Anniversary concerts held at the Parks Community Theatre?

Sadly a big number of our members are no longer with us, it is a time of reflection, remembering especially those who have passed. We thank all past musicians for their past contribution to the band and the Community over the Band's colourful history. Many of us have had their Grandparents, parents, children, siblings, uncles, aunties and cousins in the band. There are just too many to mention, but I'm sure a lot of you know who these were and what roles they played. The MQVB remembers and thanks them all!

A special big thank you to those remaining few who are left behind to fly the flag and manage the affairs of the band, the committee and musicians who are still representing the Maltese Community of S.A as best they can performing Maltese traditional and popular music.

Our band is unique and I'm sure it's the only Community based Concert band going around in the state of South Australia.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the MQVB for the anniversary and we wish them a bright future. Thanks for all your achievements and our Maltese community is very proud of you. The Editor.

THIS MALTESE JOURNAL IS SO POPULAR AND READ AND RESPECTED BY SO MANY THOUSANDS OF MALTESE LIVING ABROAD BECAUSE IT ONLY HIGHLIGHTS THE MALTESE CULTURE, HISTORY AND HERITAGE AND IT IS NON-POLITICAL. IT IS A TRUE FRIEND OF EVERYONE, IT IS OF A VERY HIGH STANDARD AND NEVER CRITICIZE ANYONE. Charles Abela – Queensland, Australia

ANGELO and FELICIA CHETCUTI MIGRATING STORY



By Joseph Chetcuti from Adelaide -South Australia

Angelo and Felicia Chetcuti decided to migrate to Australia in 1954. At the time they had 6 children Joe, Tony, Charlie, Doris, Mary and Fred. Angelo worked as a labourer at the Maltese dockyard. His wages were very low and mum could hardly make ends meet. Their only option for a better life was, to do like many other Maltese people, to pack up, leave their loved ones, their country and culture and migrate.



Angelo had 3 brothers and 1 sister who have already migrated to Australia. One day while he was visiting his mother, his younger sister Rita was writing a letter to her older sister Kitty in Australia and he mentioned that one of these days he will ask her if

she was willing to sponsor his family, before we knew it, we started the proceeding to migrate. We sailed from Malta on the 29th January 1955 on the ocean liner Arosa Star. Our journey took 33 days. On the last day before we were due to dock at Port Melbourne we had some drama on our ship.

While doing some maintenance work, they accidentally caused a fire, we were instructed to put on our life jackets and immediately head to the upper deck. Thankfully they were able to control the fire and avoid any danger, and so on the 2nd March 1955 we arrived in Melbourne.

That evening we caught the train and travelled to Adelaide arriving the next morning. The first few weeks were very hard to get accustomed to the new life in this new country. Angelo found employment with Balfours



Cakes and the children started school at St Joseph Primary School in Kensington. Angelo found it very difficult to get use of the odd working hours at Balfours, so he found a new job with the PMG where his brother-in-law Sam was working. He only was there for a short time before joining the South Australian Gas Company to improve his income by working overtime and although it was hard work he remained there for 25 years until he retired in 1979. On April 1956 Angelo and Felicia had another additional to their family when a new son {Con} was born. The decision Angelo and Felicia made to come to this country was a good one. They fulfilled their life dreams and ambitions to have their own house, to have good living and most of all to see the future of their children flourishing which was always their main reason to migrate.



We, their children, are very grateful for their decision and huge sacrifice they took to give us a future that every parent dream to give their children.

May God grant them both eternal peace.

Send us your story to be recorded for future generations. - Editor



THE TRADITION OF BELL-RINGING IN MALTA

Perhaps one of the most characteristic sounds of Maltese towns and villages, especially during the summer months, is the euphony of church bells filling the air all throughout the day. There are between 500-600 church bells in Malta. Every church has from three to seven bells.

The art of bell-ringing is one that has a long tradition in [#Malta](#). The island's oldest bell, which is still on display at the Mdina Cathedral Museum, dates

back to 1370, and hundreds more have been commissioned since then.

While some people do not even realise someone is ringing the bells, and others complain about the noise, nowadays bell-ringing is a technical skill which is diminishing and one which requires precision, musicality and patience. That's because you are basically playing a very loud 'musical instrument' that can be heard for miles around.

Unfortunately, in certain parishes, live bell-ringing is sometimes replaced by mere recordings of bells, but dedicated parish vergers and volunteers are doing their utmost to keep this tradition alive, thus safeguarding our Malta chimes for the future.

In the 20th century, the Maltese islands had dozens of bell-ringer groups, but nowadays there are only around eight groups of 'kampanologi', as bell-ringers are known in Maltese, that cover both Malta and [#Gozo](#).

Church bells have left such an impact on people visiting the island that in many cases they have become the defining trait by which the country is remembered. The most famous example of this phenomenon is probably the English poet Lord Byron, who (rather unkindly) labelled Malta as "an island of yells, bells, and smells", when he visited in 1809.

Every church has a set of bells – also known as 'ring of bells' – each of which has a different tone. The size and thickness of a bell affect the sound produced. Some bell foundries make sure that every bell reproduces a musical note as perfectly as possible. When a set of bells is rung together, they produce a harmony.



19 NEW CHRISTIANS FROM 8 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

On Easter Saturday the Archbishop baptized 19 adults who through the Sacraments of Initiation into Christian Life (baptism, confirmation and communion) became members of the Catholic Church.

The newly baptised are from Albania, the United Kingdom, China, India, France, Malta, Turkey and the Philippines.

The Archbishop said: "These are 21 workers who in our time, not in ancient times, gave their lives. Their blood is mixed in the sea that surrounds us and in which we swim.

When you look at our sea, remember that mixed with it is the blood of these workers who gave their lives so as not to deny Jesus... Their faith was simple but profound. How can you give your life for the poor if not because in your heart there is the experience of peace, of joy, and of righteousness that no one can take away from you and that comes from Jesus crucified and risen?" On this holy night, the best of all nights, the archbishop urged us to welcome these new Christians and give them our support. He also prayed that "with humility our faith may always be a living faith, steadfast and that we may never give up and never deny Jesus".

THE CAVE CHURCHES OF MALTA: SYMBOLS OF ENTOMBMENT AND RESURRECTION

Image Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Malta *MTA - Malta Tourism Authority - Early Christians in the archipelago turned caves and pre-existing catacombs into chapels that could accommodate a growing community of believers.*

OLD CHAPELS IN MALTA From prehistoric cave dwellings and burial chambers to medieval and modern military tunnels, the history of Malta is deeply intertwined with its relatively 'soft' rock formations and its limestone caves. **Early Christians turned caves and pre-existing catacombs into chapels that could accommodate a growing community of believers, resulting in a series of churches which appear to have formed naturally out of the beautiful Maltese underground landscape.** As explained by Dr. Charlene Vella to the website Guidememalta.com, (the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Malta), **cave churches also took a symbolic meaning as they were seen as a "figuration of the Entombment and Resurrection" of Jesus Christ.**



Known as **troglydite churches**, from the Greek word τρωγλοδύτης (troglo-dýtis) *troggle-dyein (troggle: "hole" or "cave" and dyein: "get into")*, **cave churches are one of the most interesting architectural developments in the history of Christian culture.** Part rock, part sculpture, they contain elements that display the fine skills of local sculptors and artists. While other cave churches have appeared across the Mediterranean, from Southern Italy to France and Egypt, **Maltese cave churches are unique for the quality of their finely decorated interiors,**

featuring limestone carvings and colourful murals. The way functional elements were hewn out of raw rocks is simply impressive. Many features could be carved out of limestone, while natural protrusions were carved to make "natural" seating and altars.

Often, **it was hermit-monks who discovered suitable natural enclaves for prayer and meditation which were later used by Christians as places of worship.** Sometimes, when local parish communities experienced fast growth, cave churches were annexed to existing catacombs built by the early Christian community way back, when Christian burials were not allowed within the city walls.

Following is a list of the most interesting cave churches, developed in Malta from the 4th century to the 15th century AD. **This list is not exhaustive, as there are other existing cave churches, and others which are documented but unfortunately have been completely lost.** Also, it is beyond doubt that in Malta and Gozo there are several other cavern churches buried under the ground or hewn deep in the hill sides of our steep valleys. Our rock formations are mostly of globigerina limestone, soft and easy to burrow, and caves and caverns are common in such geological environment. **To unearth or discover some of these is a long and arduous task.** However, we have faith that in the future more cave churches and subterranean treasures will be discovered.

ST. AGATHA'S CRYPT CHURCH.

In an area of modern Rabat, **one finds a network of Early Christian Catacombs called the St. Agatha Complex.** Local tradition has it that **during the persecution of the Roman Emperor Trajanus Decius (AD 249-251), Agatha, together with some of her friends, fled from her native land of Sicily and took refuge in Malta.** The underground crypt-church of St. Agatha is hewn in live rock. It is an underground basilica which was venerated by the Maltese since Antiquity. At the time of St. Agatha's stay, the crypt was a small natural cave, which during the 4th or 5th century was enlarged and embellished. The cave church is the perfect example of Maltese cave churches' development. **First built as a place of worship out of a small natural cave, it later came to engulf the nearby catacomb, also dedicated to St. Agatha, in order to accommodate a larger number of believers.** The altar dedicated to Saint Agatha, at the far end, was in use until at least AD 1647. This cave church stands out because of the number of colourful mural paintings



The Fourth Century Fresco – Courtesy of Saint Agatha's complex, Rabat

dating as far back as the 12th century. Of the 30 images painted on the cave walls, 13 represent Saint Agatha while the rest represent bishops, saints, martyrs and the Virgin Mary.

Saint Agatha's Crypt – Courtesy of Saint Agatha's complex, Rabat.

One of the chambers of these Christian catacombs seems to be their *Sancta Sanctorum*. This primitive chapel is decorated with a 4th century fresco representing a scallop shell painted in various colours. It symbolizes the source of life, that is God. In the middle there is a cross with the Greek letter "R" (rho) with a horizontal line passing through its middle, an artistic variation of the Greek letter "X" (chi), which signifies Christ. On both ends of the horizontal line, there are the alpha (α) and omega (ω). The fresco also has flowers on both sides, and a dove with leaves or flowers in its claws. Being the best-preserved fresco from the earliest age of Malta's Christian age existing in the Catacombs, the fresco underwent restoration in the year 2000 by Mr. George Farrugia from the art conservation department before Heritage Malta was established in 2004. Unfortunately, certain parts were completely destroyed and could not be recovered



NATIVITY OF OUR LADY – SANCTUARY OF THE VIRGIN, MELLIEħA.

The cave church in the [Malta National Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of Mellieħa](#) stands out from the others because it holds a wall painting of the Virgin Mary called *Hodegetria* (the Virgin who shows the way). The *Rollo* document of AD 1436, of Bishop De Mello, clearly states that a parish already existed in Mellieħa. This Sanctuary was visited by Pope St. John Paul II during his visit in 1990. It is very probable that Christian practice, on this site and the cave church, vastly predates the present 13th century fresco. A tradition maintains that in AD 409, a number of Catholic Bishops visited the hallowed grotto and consecrated it as a Church. Indeed, the ceiling mural (which can be seen in the

accompanying image) is a late depiction of this event. This would have been very close to the Council of Ephesus of AD 431 when the Blessed Virgin was universally recognized and acclaimed as *Theotokos*, (Birth-giver of Christ God – *Mater Dei* in Latin). An interesting fact is that after Ottoman corsairs attacked the church, causing damage to the *Hodegetria* painting, the whole mural was covered with silver, apart from the faces of Mary and the Child Jesus. It was only thanks to scientific restoration in 1950, that art historians and expert art restorers were able to uncover the rest of the painting.

The cave church of the Mellieħa National Marian Shrine. The *Hodegetria* can be seen above the altar, and part of the ceiling mural depicting the Bishops can also be seen | Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Malta

Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Malta

Between 2013 and 2016 further restoration was carried out by Atelier del Restauro, in order to preserve the Holy Icon for posterity. Another grotto forms part of the complex of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Mellieħa. It consists of a chapel hewn in the 17th century out of the hard, brownish limestone– a dream come true of a Sicilian devotee of Our Lady, Mario de Vasi, who was a regular visitor to the Mellieħa Sanctuary. It is located across the street from the Church of Our Lady of Victory, adjacent to the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Mellieħa. To fulfil his life-long wish, de Vasi later erected a white statue, of Our Lady holding the Holy Infant Jesus on her left arm, at the far end of the chapel. Over the years thousands of pilgrims visited the underground Shrine and prayed before the Madonna, attributing to her many miraculous interventions and healings, spiritual and temporal.

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