

More wartime newspaper snippets from 1918



Cdr Karl Friedrich Max von Muller. COURTESY OF WOLFGANG JUNCKER

POW Karl Friedrich Max von Muller sent to Holland

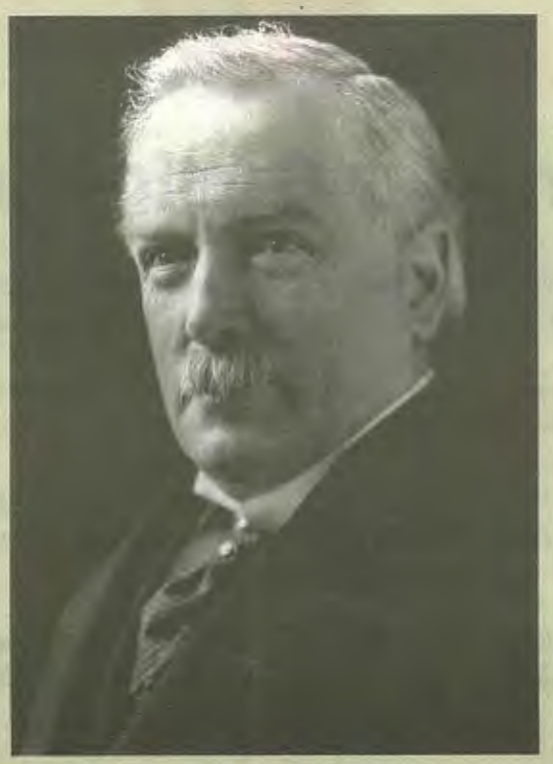
In January 1918 there was an exchange of British and German prisoners under the aegis of the International Red Cross, including Karl Friedrich Max von Muller, commander of the German raiding cruiser *Emden*, who was transferred to Holland. Von Muller had spent most of his years of captivity as a prisoner-of-war (POW) at Verdala Barracks and St Clement Camp in Malta. However, due to his health, in 1916 von Muller was transferred as a POW from Malta to Kegworth, England, as he suffered from attacks of malaria. He had had a meteoric career in the German Navy and the *Emden* had made history: it had sunk 17 merchant ships, a Russian cruiser and a French destroyer. The *Emden* was eventually itself sunk by the Australian cruiser *Sydney* in November 1914 in the Indian Ocean. The 137 survivors of the *Emden*, including von Muller, were brought to Malta as POWs on board HMS *Hampshire*.

Message from British PM David Lloyd George

As World War I dragged on into its final stage, the year 1918 opened with the Allies sensing a cautious touch of optimism that the final victory would be theirs.

In a message to the nation, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George issued an appeal to all at home "to do their utmost in these later trying days for the cause for which the democracies of the world are now league together. The sacrifices which the men - and the women also - are making at the front we all know. Despite all they have gone through, they are still facing frost and mud, privation and suffering, wounds and death, with undaunted courage that mankind may be freed from the tyranny of militarism, and rejoice in lasting freedom and peace.

"No sacrifice that we, who stayed at home, are called to make can equal or fairly approach what is daily and hourly demanded of them. So long as they are called upon to endure these things, let us see to it that we do not take our ease at the price of sacrifice. There is nobody too old or too young or too feeble to play a part. The road of duty and patriotism is clear before you; follow it, and it will lead ere long to safety for our people and victory for our cause."



British Prime Minister David Lloyd George

MICHAEL GALEA

Col. Achille Samut awarded CB

In the New Year's Honours List, Colonel Achille Samut, CMG, AOD, who was serving with a British Expeditionary Force, received the award of Companion (CB).

Malta's heaviest single loss during the war

Late in January 1918, news reached Malta "with deepest feelings of mourning pride" that 70 Maltese naval ratings had lost their lives: a German submarine had sunk the armed British steamer *Louvain*. It was the heaviest loss that Malta had sustained at any one time during the war. A Naval and Dockyard Families Help Society was set up for the purpose of meeting "the distress occasioned by heavy casualty lists among Maltese ratings afloat". Mass for the repose of the souls of the Maltese naval ratings who perished on that occasion was said at the Jesuits' church in Valletta. Mgr Luigi Attard officiated; the vocal and instrumental accompaniment was under the direction of Mro Giuseppe Caruana. It was estimated that during the war Malta's Roll of Honour in the Fleet amounted to some 300 men.

Lt Percival Micallef Eynaud killed in action

News of Maltese who fell in action continued up to the last months of the war. In March

1918, Lt Percival Micallef Eynaud of the 1st Bn KOMRM, attached to the Royal Munster Fusiliers, fell in Battle of the Western Front at Epehy, France. He volunteered his services for the front in the early part of the war.

On his return from Cyprus he was detailed to the Dardanelles where he experienced hard fighting and was wounded and invalided to Malta. After a protracted convalescence he saw service in Egypt and then on the Western Front, but he was again invalided he was sent to England and attached to a service battalion. Later he re-joined his regiment in France. Lt Micallef Eynaud was the fourth officer of the KOMRM killed in action during the war. His brother, Dr Max Micallef Eynaud, civil surgeon, was attached to the Valletta Military Hospital.

Capt Alfred de Bartoni Sceberras Trigona made POW in Germany

In April 1918, Captain Alfred de Bartoni Sceberras Trigona, 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was at first reported missing during heavy fighting in France, but later it transpired that he was a POW in Germany. Capt Sceberras Trigona qualified from the Royal Military College Sandhurst, joined the army in 1905, was promoted lieutenant in 1909, and obtained the captaincy in 1914. He was later appointed major. His record of active service in the war started from the beginning of hostilities. He was the first Maltese combatant officer to land in France with the British Expeditionary Force, and took part in the retreat from Mons, where he was one of the few survivors of his battalion. He went through strenuous days of the first battle of Ypres in 1914, and invalided.

On recovery, he went out to Gallipoli, being a brigade machine gun officer in the 29th Division. After some time in Egypt he proceeded to France and was in the great push on the Somme in 1916. The connection of the Sceberras family with the British Army went back to early 19th century when Capt Rinaldo Sceberras - there is a memorial to his memory at the Upper Barrakka Garden - of the 80th Regiment, fell in action at Ferozeshah, India, in 1845, during the Sutlej campaign, and later Col. Attilio Sceberras was Commanding Officer of the 98th Regiment.

Major George Monreal dies in France

In May 1918, the Army Council announced that Major George Monreal, Wiltshire Regiment, had died of wounds in France. He was



One of the four sides of the war memorial, Floriana. At the base of the stonework is reproduced an extract from the citation of King George V.



The Armistice

Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, finally arrived as the German government accepted the armistice terms. The 'ceasefire' was sounded on the whole front at 11am. Local papers splashed the headlines: 'The Final Victory of the Allied Cause - Great Demonstrations in Malta - Indescribable Enthusiasm'.

The *Daily Malta Chronicle* reported: "November 11, 1918, will stand out most prominently in the modern chronicles of our island. The day dawned bright and glorious as though in confident anticipation of the bright and glorious event. It was reminiscent of the loveliest day of springtime of this land of 'azure sea and azure sky'. The spirit of enthusiasm was in the air and it had spread like wildfire throughout the length and breadth of the island. The busy hum of exultant conversation had developed into

applause, which finally resolved itself in loud and frequent outbursts of cheers."

The bands of the Casals assembled at Portes des Bombes and marched to music through the surging crowds. On Palace Square, the La Valette and the King's Own bands were formed up, and alternately played the Allied anthems, whose effect created the wildest excitement.

"Valletta was en fête. Flags were flown on public buildings, bells rang, ships blew their siren, aeroplanes zoomed overhead."

The Governor, Lord Methuen, in a clear voice and with manifest emotion, addressed the multitude from the Palace balcony: "The day has at length come which we have long during the last four-and-a-half years. This war has been waged for religion and freedom from thralldom. When I knew Germany 40 years ago, I liked her people next best to our own, but like ivy destroys a tree, so militarism had



Enthusiastic crowds in London at the declaration of the Armistice. PHOTO: THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF WWI

which stood him good stead while assisting the Admiralty.

Last Maltese to die in WWI action, perhaps

During the final drive of hostilities in France, the young Maltese Lance

Corporal Fortunato Borda paid the supreme sacrifice on the field. He was probably the last Maltese of World War I to die in action. He was serving in a British regiment. Educated at St Aloysius' College, Birkirkara, and at the University of Edinburgh, he joined the Scottish Borderers as a volunteer.

Public prayers for peace with victory

As there were prospects of cessation of hostilities in the air, the Church in Malta ordained public prayers for peace with victory. The circular issued by



A special edition of the *Evening Standard* proclaims the good news. PHOTO: THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF WWI

ruined the Germany as I remember her. Let us hope in years to come she may find herself free from militarism and the nation she once was."

Frequently interrupted by tremendous applause, the Governor concluded by thanking the Maltese for all they had done in the war, warmly commending their loyalty and devotion.

In the evening, the lights of the lamps were switched on. The newspaper reported: "A fairy wand seemed to have dispelled the depressing gloom of the war. As the time was suddenly flooded with light, the excitement and enthusiasm became intense and absolutely indescribable, the situation being commotional in the extreme, the crowds cheered, and cheered and cheered again! The night was turned into day."

The War Anniversary Committee, which organised and conducted its annual meeting on August 4, undertook "to organise the celebration of the great victory".

A solemn Te Deum in thanksgiving for the cessation of hostilities was performed at St John's Co-Cathedral. "It was one of the notable features in the victory celebrations - a grandly impressive function."

Another "memorable event" was the gala performance at the Theatre Royal. The orchestra played the anthems of the Allies. The curtain was raised for the singing of the US national anthem - *The Star-Spangled Banner* - by the entire company of artistes "costumed for the opera *Andrea Chenier*", which was to be performed that evening, the ladies wearing ribbons in the Allied colours.

In a message to Lord Methuen, King George V said: "I am fully conscious of the important and patriotic part that Malta has played during these years of warfare."

The war ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

Lt William Parnis awarded the Military Cross

Among the gallant band of Maltese officers who were serving at the various fronts with credit to themselves, early in 1918, 2nd Lt William Parnis was awarded the Military Cross "for conspicuous bravery in the field". Lt Parnis had proceeded to England where he volunteered for active service. Having obtained a commission, he was posted to the Buffs, and afterwards transferred to the Machine Gun Corps. He was active on the Western Front for a considerable time. Lt Parnis participated in an extensive move which resulted in the biggest capture of the war. His brother, Lt H. Parnis, was serving on the Western Front with the Royal Army Medical Corps and was mentioned in despatches.



The Military Cross

church of Our Lady of the Grotto at Rabat, in the event of the island being spared the horrors of war till the conclusion of hostilities.

Waldemar Beck killed on British western front

Waldemar Beck, who was serving on the British western front, died of wounds received on the field. He had left Malta for Western Australia in 1912 after having successfully completed his studies at the University of Malta, obtaining the degree of Bachelor of Engineering and Architecture, and the warrant of land surveyor and architect. He filled an important billet but in 1916 he gave it up, and enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force, being attached to a Battalion Fourth Brigade.