

2018

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**A CONCISE HISTORY OF:**

# **MALTA COMMAND (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)**

A concise history of Malta Command, a static command covering the British territory in the Mediterranean. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1930 and 1950 are included.

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**A Concise History of Malta Command (History & Personnel)**

This edition dated: 10 April 2018

ISBN: Not Yet Allocated.

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Published privately by: The Author – Publishing as:

[www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk](http://www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk)

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## Malta Command

Malta is an island in the central Mediterranean. Under the Treaty of Paris, which was signed in 1814, Malta became part of the British Empire. Its strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean halfway between Gibraltar and Egypt made it an ideal naval base for the Royal Navy. The Grand Harbour in Malta is reputed to be the largest natural harbour in the region, and is suitable for large ships with significant drafts.

In the Twentieth century and for first half of the Twenty-First, the United Kingdom was primarily a naval power and maritime nation. Britain's naval power was projected across the world, including the Mediterranean. One of the reasons the Mediterranean was so important to the United Kingdom was that with the opening of the Suez Canal, it was the main sea route from Europe to the Far East, including British India. The United Kingdom had three key naval bases in the Mediterranean; Gibraltar in the west (and at the entrance to the sea), Malta in the middle and Alexandria in Egypt in the east.

Each of British territories had an Army garrison to protect the naval base and provide internal security. The Army garrison also provided a visible reminder to the civilian population of the power of the British Empire. Malta had a small garrison between the First World War and the Second. This usually consisted of between two and four infantry battalions. The other main Army presence was coastal artillery to protect the naval base. There was a small presence of Royal Engineers and other supporting arms and services.

The representative of the Monarchy on Malta was the Governor-General, who also acted as the Commander-in-Chief of the military forces on the island. Following the First World War, the Governor was a senior General in the British Army, usually at the end of the operational career. There was a small staff, headed by a Brigadier, who was in charge of administration.

As the Second World War approached, the garrison on Malta was slowly increased, but it was not until the entry of Italy into war on 10 June 1940 that a serious military threat to the island appeared. The first bombs fell on Malta on the same day, and the air campaign against the island of Malta started. A threat of invasion of Malta also increased, by either air or sea requiring an increase in the Army garrison on the island. At its peak, no less than four infantry brigades were located on the cramped island with fifteen infantry battalions under command. As the Army garrison in the island grew, so did the Army staff needed to administer them. A Major General was appointed as the commander of troops on Malta shortly after the declaration of war with Germany; the first holder of the post being a retired officer recalled to service. Malta Command came under command of General Headquarters (G.H.Q.), Middle East Forces on 11 March 1942.

Malta sustained a most heavy aerial bombardment over many months. In addition, the difficulty in supplying the island meant that supplies were scarce. The resilience of the Maltese people resulted in His Majesty awarding the island the George Cross, the highest civilian award of the United Kingdom. Malta is the only country ever to be granted a gallantry award.

The Allied forces invaded Italy on 3 September 1943, and the Italian government agreed to an armistice. This signalled the removal of military threat to Malta, and peace came to the island. Malta Command ceased to be under command of G.H.Q. Middle East Forces on 2 December 1944 and returned to be an independent command. Malta became an independent nation on 21 September 1964 and a republic on 13 December 1974. The British maintained a military presence on the island until 31 March 1979.

**Governor and Commander-in-Chief**

4<sup>th</sup> May 1927 – 1931

General Sir John P Du CANE, G.C.B.

June 1931 – 12<sup>th</sup> March 1935

General Sir David CAMPBELL,

12<sup>th</sup> March 1935 – 1940

Lieutenant General Sir Charles BONHAM-CARTER, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

27<sup>th</sup> April 1940 – 7<sup>th</sup> May 1942

Lieutenant General (Temporary) Sir William George Sheddon DOBBIE, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., retired pay, Col Comdt. R.E., *p.s.c.*

7<sup>th</sup> May 1942 – 26<sup>th</sup> September 1944

Field Marshal The Right Honourable The Viscount GORT, V.C., G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.V.O., M.C., LL.D., *p.s.c.*

26<sup>th</sup> September 1944 – 10<sup>th</sup> July 1946

Lieutenant General Sir Edmond Charles Acton SCHREIBER, K.C.B., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*

10<sup>th</sup> July 1946 – 16<sup>th</sup> September 1949

Sir Francis DOUGLAS,

16<sup>th</sup> September 1949 – 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1954

Sir Gerald Hallen CREASY,

**General Officer Commanding**

27<sup>th</sup> October 1939 – 1941

Major General S. J. P. SCOBELL, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., retired pay (Reserve of Officers), *p.s.c.*

15<sup>th</sup> January 1942 – 14<sup>th</sup> July 1942

Major General Daniel Marcus William BEAK, V.C., D.S.O., M.C.\*

14<sup>th</sup> July 1942 – 4<sup>th</sup> August 1942

Major General (Acting) Clifford Thomason BECKETT, M.C.

6<sup>th</sup> August 1942 – 27<sup>th</sup> March 1943

Major General Ronald MacKenzie SCOBIE, C.B., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

28<sup>th</sup> March 1943 – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1943

Major General (Acting) Walter Hayes OXLEY, C.B.E., M.C., *p.s.c.*

23<sup>rd</sup> August 1943 – 1945

Major General William ROBB, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

**General Staff Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Grade**

11<sup>th</sup> November 1940 – 1942

Colonel (Acting) W. J. R. BEDFORD, R.A., *p.s.c.*

April 1942 – 1943

Colonel (Local) Robert John SPRINGHALL,

**General Staff Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade**

@ 1937

Major J. S. W. STONE, M.C., R.E.

31<sup>st</sup> March 1940 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel R. K. A. MACAULAY, D.S.O., retired pay, *p.s.c.*

29<sup>th</sup> October 1940 – 1941

Captain Fitz R. H. FYERS, C.V.O., Reserve of Officers

**Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General in charge of Administration**

24<sup>th</sup> September 1935 – 1937

Colonel (Local Brigadier) G. C. STUBBS, D.S.O.

31<sup>st</sup> July 1939 – 6<sup>th</sup> August 1940

Brigadier (Local) Walter Hayes OXLEY, M.C., *p.s.c.*

**Deputy Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General i/c Administration**

9<sup>th</sup> January 1941 – 1942

Brigadier (Acting) E. D. CORKERY, M.C., Devon R., *p.s.c.*

25<sup>th</sup> September 1942 – May 1944

Brigadier (Acting) Gerrard Francis Hood STAYNER, O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

**Assistant Quarter-Master-General**

Vacant

**Staff Captain**

Captain L. M. B. RATHBONE, Rifle Bde

**Commander Royal Artillery**

1937 – 15<sup>th</sup> July 1938

Colonel E. LeG. WHITTING, D.S.O., M.C.

16<sup>th</sup> July 1938 – 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) D. PAIGE, M.C.

25<sup>th</sup> May 1940 – May 1941

Brigadier (Acting) Basil Edward FLOYD, M.C., *g., .y.*

19<sup>th</sup> January 1941 – 4<sup>th</sup> August 1942

Brigadier (Acting) N. V. SADLER, D.C.M., R.A. (T.A.)<sup>1</sup>

15<sup>th</sup> May 1941 – 13<sup>th</sup> July 1942

Brigadier (Temporary) Clifford Thomason BECKETT, M.C.

25<sup>th</sup> July 1941 – 13<sup>th</sup> July 1942 (Fixed Defences)

Colonel (Acting) Cyril Jennings WHITE, M.C., R.A.<sup>2</sup>

**Major General Royal Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Defence Commander**

5<sup>th</sup> August 1942 – 28<sup>th</sup> December 1942

Major General (Acting) Clifford Thomason BECKETT, M.C.

12<sup>th</sup> December 1942 – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1944

Major General (Acting) Campbell Manning CHRISTIE, M.C.

**Brigadier Royal Artillery**

24<sup>th</sup> May 1944 – 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Francis George CLARK, R.A.<sup>3</sup>

**Commander Fixed Defences**

14<sup>th</sup> July 1942 – 5<sup>th</sup> August 1942

Brigadier (Acting) William Edmund VAUDREY, M.C., R.A.

<sup>1</sup> SADLER was in fact the commanding officer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade, although it appears he is also listed as a Commander Royal Artillery as he had responsibility for all anti-aircraft defences at this time.

<sup>2</sup> Promoted Acting Brigadier on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1941 whilst in post.

<sup>3</sup> Was commanding officer 10<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade on Malta from 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1942. With the decrease in threat, brigade disbanded and CLARK assumed role as B.R.A.. Awarded the C.B.E. on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1944.

6<sup>th</sup> August 1942 – 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1942

Brigadier (Temporary) Cyril Jennings WHITE, M.C., R.A.

**Staff Captain, Royal Artillery**

Captain Theodore Edward Dudley KELLY, R.A.

**Major Instructor in Gunnery**

14<sup>th</sup> December 1936 – 24<sup>th</sup> May 1940

Major Cyril Jennings WHITE, M.C., R.A.

15<sup>th</sup> April 1937 – 1941

Major D. A. J. BOWIE, R.A.

**Captain Instructor in Gunnery**

@ 1937

Captain D. A. J. BOWIE, R.A.

**Chief Engineer**

1937 – 11<sup>th</sup> January 1940 (Died on Active Service)

Colonel Reginald Gordon Pulteney HUNTER, O.B.E.

13<sup>th</sup> January 1940 – 1941

Colonel (Acting) F. B. BARKER, O.B.E., R.E.

9<sup>th</sup> January 1941 – 7<sup>th</sup> November 1942

Colonel (Acting) Gordon Joseph EATON-MATTHEWS, R.E.

8<sup>th</sup> November 1942 – 28<sup>th</sup> September 1943

Colonel (Acting) Arthur Bertie Duncan EDWARDS, O.B.E., R.E.

29<sup>th</sup> September 1943 – 1944

Colonel (Acting) Laurence Carr HILL, D.S.O., M.C., B.Sc., R.E.

**Staff Officer, Royal Engineers**

Major H. T. S. KING, R.E.

**Command Signal Officer**

1938 – 25<sup>th</sup> June 1940

Major F. H. BURY, R. Signals

26<sup>th</sup> June 1940 – 1941/2

Major (Acting) E. L. ELLIS, Reserve of Officers

24<sup>th</sup> July 1942 – July 1943

Colonel (Acting) Hubert Victor George BLOODWORTH, R.Signals.

**Assistant Chaplain-General**

Revered J. J. E. O'MALLEY, O.B.E., M.A. Chaplain to the Forces 1<sup>st</sup> Class

@1941

Reverend D. B. L. FOSTER, M.A., Chaplain to the Forces 1<sup>st</sup> Class

**Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport**

@1937

Colonel R. M. AIREY, O.B.E., M.C.

28<sup>th</sup> March 1938 – 1941

Colonel H. A. C. GARDNER

9<sup>th</sup> June 1940 – 1943

Colonel H. P. RAYMOND, O.B.E., A.D.C.

**Deputy Director of Medical Services**

1938 – 1941

Colonel J. S. McCOMBE, D.S.O., M.B.

5<sup>th</sup> November 1942 – 1944

Colonel William Kenneth MORRISON, D.S.O., M.B.

**Deputy Assistant Director of Pathology and Hygiene**

Major E. C. LINTON, R.A.M.C.

**Assistant Director of Ordnance Services**

@ 1937

Lieutenant Colonel C. E. De WOLFF, C.B.E., R.A.O.C.

1939 – 11<sup>th</sup> January 1941

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) Bernard Alfred GOLDSTEIN, R.A.O.C.

**Deputy Director of Ordnance Services – (D.D.O.S.)**

12<sup>th</sup> January 1941 – 17<sup>th</sup> August 1942

Colonel (Acting) Bernard Arthur GOLDSTEIN, O.B.E., R.A.O.C.

18<sup>th</sup> August 1942 – 20<sup>th</sup> December 1942

[Colonel \(Temporary\) William CAM, M.C., R.A.O.C., o.](#)

21<sup>st</sup> December 1942 – 1<sup>st</sup> May 1943

Colonel (Temporary) George Arthur VINER, O.B.E., R.A.O.C.<sup>4</sup>

**Chief Ordnance Mechanical Engineer**

@ 1937

Major E. R. THACKERAY, A.M.I.Mech.E, R.A.O.C.

@ April 1940

Major L. N. TYLER, B.Sc. (Eng), A.M.I.Mech.E, R.A.O.C.

**Command Paymaster**

1938 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 1941

Colonel Gordon Henry CHARLTON, M.C.

10<sup>th</sup> January 1942 – 1944

Colonel (Acting) Ernest Thomas Cobley SMITH, R.A.P.C.

**Assistant Command Paymaster**

Major H. C. PEWSEY, R.A.P.C.

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<sup>4</sup> Promoted Acting Brigadier on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1942. It is presumed he was promoted whilst in post on Malta remaining there until leaving for Italy on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1943.



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