

THE ST. JOHN AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION, MALTA

The St. John Ambulance Association, founded in England in 1877, established a Teaching Branch in Malta in 1882, at much the same time as the Ophthalmic Hospital was being established in Jerusalem. The St John Ambulance Brigade was created in the UK in 1887. With the approval of the Governor of Malta, General Sir Henry Fane Grant (*1848 - † 1919), the “formation of a Unit of the St. John Ambulance (later the Valletta Ambulance Division, Malta) in accordance with instructions received from Headquarters in London” on the 18 September 1909. It was later formally sanctioned by Colonel G Bowdier, Commissioner for Special Services on 1 December 1909. Initially the membership came from the Armed Forces, that is Surgeons and Ambulance attendants attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps, similarly Nursing professionals.

With the outbreak of the First World War (1914 - 1918), the Malta Corps was able to supply the Naval and Military Departments with auxiliary medical and nursing help when required. In September 1914, a detachment, composed of four surgeons, three divisional officers, six nursing sisters and thirty-four other ranks, was formed for service in France. The offer was not accepted, as it was considered that their services would be more appropriately utilised in Malta. The wisdom of this decision was soon proven correct.

In February 1915, a British-French fleet of 16 major battleships and numerous other auxiliary craft assembled to take control of the strategically important Dardanelles. Prewarned, the Turks were well prepared. The Gallipoli campaign (also known as the Dardanelles campaign, the Battle of Gallipoli or the Battle of Çanakkale) took place on the Gallipoli peninsula from 17 February 1915 to 9 January 1916. The result was a slaughter involving British, Australian and New Zealand troops.

In Malta, plans were made to receive the sick and wounded. The island was turned into a veritable hospital; so much so that it earned the title of *Nurse of the Mediterranean*. The need for extra medical staff to manage the large number of sick and wounded evacuated from Gallipoli to Malta led to over 40 Surgeons & 100 Ambulance assistants being placed in Naval and Military Hospitals

The unused postcard below is scarce, the details of its production unknown. It was printed using Chromo-lithography, and postally used examples with cancellation stamps date it early in 1915.



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