

Lieutenant Thomas Karran Maltby writes home from Armentieres

Rain, rain, and more rain, needless to say much mud, too; still we smile and say the Hun has it as bad as we have. What a variety of news we are having of late. What with the doings of the fleet the "push" by the Italians and Russians and the hundred and one other things, the old world seems to be quite up-side down. Still, we don't care a bit for we know full well that sooner or later the tide will turn for us, then, heigho for home

By george, we have got the Huns thinking. They have long since recognised that the English "tommy" is no longer opposite them. In fact, English officers have told me on several occasions that we have made the fighting more vigorous than it has been for 14 months; and I am inclined to believe them.

When I first came into the trenches, the Huns appeared



Jock (in captured trench): "Coom Awa' up here Donal'; it's drier."

to be quite impudent and aggressive, but they have now found, that no matter what they do, we go one better. In fact we have made it a principle to have the last word, and we do.

When either sides determine to flatten things out, it is just "Hades", for the earth seems to crack and heave out fire. Old campaigners say that Gallipoli never knew artillery fire like it. I saw a place so treated and not an inch was left untouched.

Some of the craters are 22 feet wide by 12 feet deep. I measured them myself so it is not just hearsay. At night the conditions change completely, for in addition to all we get in the day, the rifle fire increases 500 per cent and both sides fire star lights and rockets, to such an extent that one is constantly reminded of Henley night.

Weekly News (Yarraville) (Vic. : 1914 - 1918)
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Maltby, Sir Thomas Karran (1890–1976)

by **Robert Murray**

Sir Thomas Karran Maltby (1890-1976), politician, was born on 17 October 1890 at Barnadown, near Bendigo, Victoria, second child of Thomas Karran Maltby, a storekeeper who came from the Isle of Man, and his Victorian-born, second wife Ada Agnes, née Fascher. His father died in 1893 and his mother remarried in the following year. Tom was educated at Camp Hill Central School until the age of 11, when he left to take three concurrent jobs, each earning him 2s. 6d. a week. He then worked as a battery-boy in a local gold-mine and studied at night at the Bendigo School of Mines for the engineer's certificate. His tough early life developed in him self-reliance, ambition, determination, a strict code of rectitude, and a love of the country and nature.

Moving to Melbourne, Maltby was employed as a tramway labourer. He joined the Militia and earned a commission in 1912 while working as a clerk for Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd. On 29 January 1913 at the Presbyterian Church, Yarraville, he married Eliza Margaret McDonald, a 20-year-old typist. Appointed lieutenant, Australian Imperial Force, on 16 May 1915, he embarked for Egypt in September. Maltby fought on the Western Front with the 5th Battalion from March 1916 and was promoted captain in August. On 8 April 1917 he was wounded when a rifle exploded and part of the bolt-head entered his arm. He was selected as a staff trainee in July 1918. Mentioned in dispatches, he returned to Australia in 1919 and his A.I.F. appointment terminated on 28 June.

Maltby took a job as a storekeeper at Drysdale before becoming an estate agent at Geelong. Thrice president of the local branch of the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia, and founding president of the East Geelong Progress Association, he was involved in numerous other community affairs. In 1924 he stood unsuccessfully against **William Brownbill** as National candidate for the Legislative Assembly seat of Geelong.

Elected member for Barwon in a by-election on 6 July 1929, Maltby rapidly assumed parliamentary responsibilities as Opposition whip (1929), government whip (1932-33) in the **Argyle-Allan** coalition, secretary to cabinet (1933-34), honorary minister (1934-35), minister for lands and forests (1935), president of the Board of Land and Works (1935), and temporary chairman (1937-45) and chairman (1945-46) of committees. Mobilized in the Citizen Military Forces in 1940-43, he rose to temporary major while on the staff of the assistant adjutant and quartermaster general, Southern Command. He was a vocal opponent of the release of the *Dunera* detainees, whom he considered 'dangerous'. For several months from December 1941 Maltby dissociated himself from his United Australia Party colleagues and sat as an Independent, in protest at their refusal to support a conference seeking reform of the United Australia Organisation. In April 1943 he was appointed general secretary of the U.A.O. in Victoria.

Maltby was one of five politicians—another was **(Sir) Archie Michaelis**—who voted to defeat the **Dunstan-Hollway** Country Party-Liberal Party coalition in September 1945. In the resulting **Macfarlan** ministry, composed of dissident Liberals, he was—from 2 October to 21 November—chief secretary, deputy-premier and minister for electrical undertakings. Although he was expelled from the Liberal Party, he was readmitted in 1946. After the **Hollway-McDonald** Liberal Country Party coalition took office, he served as Speaker (2 December 1947 to 12 April 1950). In 1949 he was knighted. For eight days before Hollway lost office on 27 June 1950, he held the portfolios of electrical undertakings and mines.

On 28 May 1955 Maltby won the seat of Geelong. He was appointed (7 June) minister of works in (Sir) Henry Bolte's first cabinet, where his years of experience were much appreciated. In 1959 he visited Britain, Europe and the United States of America to study road-making and public-building construction. He was closely associated with three major projects: the construction of the Country Roads Board building at Kew, the opening of Kings Bridge and Kings Way,

Melbourne, and the building of a highway between that city and Geelong, with a by-pass at Werribee named after him.

'Tall, slim and straight of bearing', dapper in dress and fond of bow-ties, Maltby was a forthright speaker with an eloquent turn of phrase and a crackling wit. Labor's premier **John Cain** advised new members: 'When Sir Thomas Maltby speaks, don't interject—he will cut you to shreds'. Fellow parliamentarians on both sides enjoyed his 'puckish charm' and held him in high regard for his earthy wisdom, tolerance, fairness and help to newcomers.

Maltby retired in July 1961 after thirty-two years in parliament. Apart from politics, his interests included angling, walking and reading. He was a member of the Naval and Military Club, the United Services Institute and the Geelong Chamber of Manufactures. An active Presbyterian, he preached occasionally in Geelong churches. In retirement he remained a director of the family company, Geelong Markets Pty Ltd. He died on 2 June 1976 at Geelong and was buried in Footscray cemetery; his wife survived him, as did two of his three daughters and one of his two sons.

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/maltby-sir-thomas-karran-11045>

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