

# **THE G OZO OBSERVER**

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## The Gozo Observer

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**Front Cover Picture:** Courtesy of Charlie Farrugia. The photo shows the Azure Window which collapsed during a storm on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

# Editorial:

## Tertiary Education in Gozo

It was a red-letter day for Gozo when for the first time a new University campus was opened in Xewkija, promising new courses, combined with easy access and obviating the need for time-wasting travel and unnecessary expenses for students undertaking courses in Msida.

This campus was set up in 1992, largely through the vision of the late Prof. Fr Peter Serracino Inglott, the continuing interest in the project of the then first Minister for Gozo, Mr Anton Tabone, and the energetic work of the first director, Prof. Lino Briguglio. It was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister in May 1996: 'with the aim of assisting in the logistical aspects of degree and diploma courses which are from time to time offered in Gozo by the University of Malta', to offer short term courses and caters 'for the needs of Gozitan students following courses in Malta and in Gozo.' It currently offers part-time courses at undergraduate level, part-time post graduate courses and some short courses.

Was it too much to expect? Was there sufficient interest among the population to justify the financial burden commitment for such a project?

There is no doubt that this centre has proved to be a boom to Gozo and Gozitan students. Very few of those living in Malta can understand the inconvenience involved in daily travel to attend courses in Malta, or the equally punishing expense and other disadvantages involved in renting accommodation on the mainland.

On the other hand, one can understand that being isolated on a tiny island leads to major challenges which are not financially negligible.

The number of Gozitan students who have to undertake studies in Malta is not negligible: last year there were 1,120 Gozitan students studying at the University in Malta, of whom 878 were full-time students and 38% were female.

The idea that the Gozo campus is meant primarily for Gozitan students is already a minus. While most universities throughout the world these days have several campuses, and while one of the aims of such

campuses is to provide local facilities for students who live within reasonable distance, it is also essential that such campuses specialise in certain topics to become attractive to a wider audience, and help maintain sufficient support.

It is therefore disappointing to note that the Gozo University Group (GUG) claim that, compared to other institutions, the Gozo campus was 'always being put aside' and that it is not being used to its full potential.

They believe the Campus could be energised through expanding its scope by the institution of daytime courses, specialising in courses relating to agricultural studies and other niche courses, which would be available not just for Gozitan students, but for anyone in Malta or even overseas.

In the wider context of tertiary education in Gozo one cannot but bring to mind the one bright light on the horizon, namely the planned medical school by London's Queen Mary University. This will no doubt have flow-on benefits on health services in Gozo, but also would, one hopes, stimulate an increased investment and interest in health education in Gozo. It is a great opportunity for the development of synergy and cooperation between the two institutions to provide a first class health education centre on this tiny island, where overseas as well as local experts can attract an audience from a wide perimeter.

Interesting also is the experiment referred to as Café Scientifique in Gozo which is meant to 'provide a forum for debating science issues and keeping up to date with latest developments'. It aims at providing 'exploratory discussion on the contested nature of science itself and will lead to a shared understanding of the kind of topics and debates that will be explored in the future'.

Any efforts aimed at increasing intellectual involvement within the community are welcome anywhere, but particularly welcome in a small island which has always suffered from double isolation.

*Maurice Cauchi*



# A Small Breeding Population of Barn Swallows in Gozo

JOE SULTANA

## Introduction

The Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (in Maltese Huttafa) is a member of the family *Hirundinidae*. (swallows and martins). It is well adapted for a life in the air. The adult bird has long pointed wings and a deeply forked tail with long streamers. It is bluish-glossy black above and white or buffish white below, with a small bluish-black breast band and a dark red throat and forehead. When it spreads its tail it shows white spots on the outer tail feathers. It has small, short legs and a small bill but with a large gape. Sexes are alike but the male has noticeably longer tail streamers. Its diet consists of insects which it exclusively catches in the air.

The Barn Swallow is a long-distance migrant and the Barn Swallows which breed in the European

countries migrate south in autumn to spend the winter south of the Sahara, and return to their breeding quarters in spring.

It is a very common passage migrant during spring and autumn migration in the Maltese Islands, mostly from mid-March to mid-May and in September and October, although it may occur in smaller numbers a couple of weeks before and after these main migration periods. It is usually seen for most of the time in flight although sometimes it can be observed resting on wires. Ringed recoveries and controls of Barn Swallows published in bird ringing reports by BirdLife Malta (formerly Malta Ornithological Society), show that this species may reach the islands on migration from most European countries (see fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> In the evening migrating Barn Swallows congregate to roost in



Fig.1. Ringed recoveries of Barn Swallows in Europe and North Africa up to 2012. Forty-nine birds (black numbers) were ringed in Malta and recovered abroad. Sixty birds (white numbers) were ringed abroad and recovered in Malta. One Malta-ringed bird was recovered in Central African Republic (not in map).

<sup>1</sup> This map by Victor Falzon appeared in Sultana, and Borg, 2015: 290.



Fig.2. A few examples of nests built in different sites on Gozo since the first breeding record on the Island in 2006. (A) Ta' Sannat 28.05.2012; (B) Ghajnsielem 11.07.2011; (C) Kerċem 26.06.2009; (D) Victoria 01.09.2001.

large flocks, preferring sheltered reed beds such as that at Lunzjata Valley.

The half-cup-shaped nest is skilfully built by both adults using pellets of mud, reinforcing it with some dry plant material and saliva, and lined from the inside with horsehair, soft plant material and feathers, and placed on a beam or a projection in outhouses, barns, stables, derelict houses, but also under balconies (see fig.2). A clutch consists of three to six eggs; white sparingly marked with light reddish-brown or greyish spots and blotches. These are mainly incubated by the female for about fifteen days. The nestlings are tended to by both parents and fledge after about eighteen days (plus or minus a couple of days). In the early days after fledging, the young return in the evening to roost on the nest.

### Documented Breeding Records

The first and only reference to breeding in the Maltese Islands of this species before the

1970s was made only by Antonio Schembri, who simply stated in his *Catologo Ornitologico* (1843), that some pairs bred in Malta – “*Qualche coppia nidifica fra noi*” (Schembri, 1843). However, the first documented breeding record for mainland Malta occurred in 1974 when a pair of Barn Swallows bred in a house in the middle of Mqabba.<sup>2</sup> Twenty years later the second documented record of a breeding pair of Barn Swallows occurred in a derelict farmhouse in the limits of Bidnija, when a nest containing four fully grown young was found on 28<sup>th</sup> July, a day before they fledged. The next record, also on mainland Malta, occurred in 2004 and since then a small breeding population established itself on the islands (Sultana, 2011).

Table 1 shows the breeding records on the islands, during the three-year period 2004-2006. It was during the last year (2006) when the first breeding record for Gozo was confirmed. Since then a small breeding population established itself in Sannat, Xewkija and recently in Victoria.

<sup>2</sup> Toni Ellul, the elderly and only resident in the house noticed a pair of Barn Swallows entering his home to build their nest, so he left a window open day and night. The pair raised four young successfully, which fledged on 2<sup>nd</sup> August (Sultana, J. and Gauci, C. 1975). An unusual occurrence – swallows breeding in Malta. In *Eight Ornithological Notes: 1974-1975. Il-Merill* 15: 2-4.

Year	Site	Breeding Log
2004	Buskett	Pair breeding twice (two broods) in an old room. Both broods fledged successfully.
2005	Ghadira	Family party on 3 <sup>rd</sup> August – pair with four recently fledged young, observed being fed at times by the adults in the reedbed and also in flight.
2006	Tas-Sellum (Mellieha)	A pair bred and raised two broods in an open corridor above garages. First brood of four young fledged by 21 <sup>st</sup> July. Adults noted incubating second brood in August.
	Ta' Gajdoru, Xaghra, Gozo	A family party consisting of a pair of adults and three fledged young were observed on 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2006 at Ta' Gajdoru, Xaghra, Gozo. One of the adults was noted feeding one of the young perched on a wire. Family party was still in the area the following day (5 <sup>th</sup> July). A pair must have bred somewhere in Gozo, probably in Xaghra (first breeding record for Gozo).

Table 1: Breeding records of Barn Swallows during the three-year period 2004-2006, when a small breeding population was established in the Maltese Islands.

The first nest in Sannat was found in a small derelict room in an area of horse stables. Three newly-hatched young were being brooded by the female on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007. By 2011 there were three to four pairs breeding in the same horse stables area at Sannat. Due to disturbance this area was deserted by the breeding Barn Swallows in 2014. However a couple of pairs moved elsewhere in Sannat and were still nesting in old houses during the last breeding season (2016).

Two other breeding records of single pairs were also recorded in a derelict hunting lodge in Kerċem in 2009, and under a balcony in Għajnsielem in



Table 1: Breeding records of Barn Swallows during the three-year period 2004-2006, when a small breeding population was established in the Maltese Islands.

2011 respectively. In Xewkija three to five pairs have been breeding annually in the past few years, while in Victoria, after the first pair starting nesting in an old house<sup>3</sup> in Dr Anton Tabone Street in 2001, the number has gone up to three pairs nesting in the same house (see Table 2).

Year	Nesting log of the breeding site at Victoria
2011	Pair with nest containing two fully-grown young located on 22 <sup>nd</sup> August; ready to fledge by 1 <sup>st</sup> September.
2012	Two pairs; each raising successfully a brood of two and three young respectively in July-August.
2013	none returned to breed.
2014	Two pairs; each raising successfully a brood of four and three young respectively in July/August.
2015	One pair with four young in nest on 19 <sup>th</sup> May; fledged successfully in early August.
2016	Three pairs; each raising successfully two broods in May- July; a total of 22 young fledged successfully.

Table 2: Breeding records of Barn Swallows using the same old house in Victoria during a six-year period 2011-2016.

After the breeding season all the Barn Swallows, both adults and juveniles, migrate south like their European congeners do.

It would be interesting to find out in which African country, the Gozitan Barn Swallows spend their winter. Some 140 young birds were ringed before they fledged, hoping that in future one or two may shed some light where they spend the winter. However, so far none have been recovered.

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Joe Sultana started a teaching career in 1957 and retired as Principal Environment Officer in 2000. He served on the PA Board (1992–7), and on the Ornis Committee (2003–6). He also participated in the formulation of legislation for the protection of sites and birds and in setting up nature reserves at Ghadira and Simar and a bird observatory on Comino. He authored several publications and writings about birds and nature.

<sup>3</sup> The owner of the house leaves the windows open purposely for the Barn Swallows to freely enter the house.



# A Description of Gozo at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century

GODWIN VELLA

*This article is a continuation of the one published by the same author in the previous edition of The Gozo Observer. This edition continues with Caxaro's description of Gozo (1704).*

## Annual Emoluments, Allowances and Salaries of the Governor, Lieutenants, Sergeant, Soldiers and Drummer

The Governor's basic emoluments total 312.4.10 scudi<sup>1</sup>, being 294.4.10 scudi from the Order's Treasury and 18 scudi from the Gozo University. He is entitled also for an allowance to cover half of the expense required for keeping a guard and a horse besides other fringe benefits, namely six tari from each herd of ten or more sheep, a cartload of hay from every farmer who ploughs his fields with two oxen, two tumoli<sup>2</sup> of barley and a bale of hay from every owner of the militia horses, ..., six tari per month from every tavern outside the Castello, one fourth from all fiscal penalties imposed, and other benefits. These add up to circa 700 scudi per annum.

The Lieutenant has a salary of 100 scudi, while the Sergeant gets 82.7 scudi from the Order's Treasury plus 33 scudi for ... and 8 scudi to cover half the expense required for keeping a guard. Soldiers are paid 25 scudi each, while the drummer receives 20 scudi. The master bombardier gets ... scudi from the said Treasury whereas the Gozo University recompensed

him four scudi for the home-rent, another four scudi for the making of signalling bonfires from May to St Martin's, and 4.2.9 scudi for the manufacture of mortar paraphernalia. His assistant receives a salary of 23 scudi from the Treasury.

## The Suburb of Rabat

Rabat stands at the foot of the Castello and has a much higher population count. A few modern residences include several commodities, but the majority follow an archaic idiom and are built of rubble.<sup>3</sup> Rainwater is harvested and collected in four good cisterns built with two skinned walls of dressed stone, coated with pumice-based mortar, and located in different houses. Other domestic wells are employed for the storage of spring-water, albeit relatively hard due to the underlying clayey deposits. Freshwater is fetched from the Grand Fountain and from Bendu's Spring both sited in the magistral estate of the Great Spring.<sup>4</sup>



An early twentieth century photo of the 'Grand Fountain'.

<sup>1</sup> A scudo equals 12 tari, and each tari equals 20 grani.

<sup>2</sup> A tumolo is equivalent to 18.18 litres.

<sup>3</sup> The main walls must have consisted of roughly shaped stones cemented together with terra soil (wet rubble), while the corners, jambs, lintels and arches must have featured ashlar blocks.

<sup>4</sup> The Great Spring Estate lies 750m to the Castello's south-southwest.

Rabat's parish church of St George was reconstructed between 1672 and 1680, and became to share the same parish priest of the Matrice as from 1687.<sup>5</sup> The Island's Militia occupy a loggia-fronted building overlooking a spacious square that serves for the grouping of the cavalry and all men of arms whenever required.<sup>6</sup>

The rural church of Santa Maria Savina<sup>7</sup> houses many of the altar paintings formerly belonging to the profaned chapels and the tenth Canon of the Matrice, being the beneficiary of the resultant annual incomes, is obliged to celebrate their respective feast days by singing vespers and saying mass.

Two conventual churches are sited in the immediate outskirts of Rabat, namely that on the eastern side and adjacent to the beautiful Franciscans' Friary reconstructed in 1675,<sup>8</sup> and that belonging to the Augustinians' Friary<sup>9</sup> currently under construction on the opposite side. Both churches enjoy strong devotion and attract substantial donations for their upkeep and

for the running of the adjoining friaries.

Lying half a mile to the northeast of the Castello and overlooking a wide floored valley, the chapel of Our Lady of Graces<sup>10</sup> is frequented by the neighbouring folk on a daily basis, and draws many pilgrims on Wednesdays and for the annual thanksgiving procession held on the second Sunday of January in fulfilment of the vow in connection with the aforementioned earthquake.

Another rural chapel is dedicated to the Annunciation and forms part of the magistral benefice known as *ta' nunziata*,<sup>11</sup> which comprises several fields, a lovely garden abounding in pomegranate and other fruit trees, and two copious water springs for the irrigation of the vegetables cultivated in this estate and in the adjacent fields. The holder of the said benefice sponsors the vespers and solemn feast which falls on 25<sup>th</sup> March, supplies the chapel with candles and related consumables, and is obliged to say mass on a regular basis.



Early twentieth century view of Rabat from the Ghajn Hamimiet neighbourhood. St Augustine's Friary and Church stand on the right hand side.

<sup>5</sup> The two parochial units of Rabat kept sharing the same parish priest until 1976.

<sup>6</sup> A 1798 pen drawing of the French Forces capitulation at present day Independence Square shows a protruding arched veranda to the left of the Banca Giuratale and corner with St Joseph's Street (De Bono, p 46). Independence Square is still known popularly as *it-Tokk* 'the central meeting place' (Aquilina Vol. II, p 1463).

<sup>7</sup> The term rural may sound somewhat confusing as the church of Santa Maria Savina lied within the footprint of Rabat's historic core. Most likely this relates to transfer of the incomes and obligations of many profaned rural chapels. The then cubic, austere and low profile construction was replaced by the present edifice in 1902.

<sup>8</sup> According to tradition the first Franciscan friars that settled in Gozo inhabited a series of caves underlying the same convent, while some form of above-ground premises were erected by the beginning of the sixteenth century (Agius De Soldanis Vol. II, pp 103-9).

<sup>9</sup> The Augustinian friars were already in Gozo by 1453 and occupied an exposed site on the Xaghra plateau before moving to the outskirts of Rabat (Agius De Soldanis, BKII, pp 95-100).

<sup>10</sup> The chapel of Our Lady of Graces was replaced by a spacious church annexed to the Capuchin Friary, the foundation stone of which was laid on 17 July 1737 (Agius De Soldanis, Vol. II, pp 113-5).

<sup>11</sup> The Saqqajja benefice seems to have been established during the first half of the 14th century by Sibilla d'Aragona (Fiorini, 1999).





Detail of Kerċem Parish's main altar painting by Salvatore Busuttil (1854) showing the annual procession of St Gregory winding its way down from the Castello.

1693 Camilleri was appointed chaplain of obedience of the Order and Don Domenico Habela was chosen as his successor.

The parish establishment decree stipulates that the canons of the venerable matrix retain the right to celebrate mass on the altar of St Elias erected within the same parish following the

A third rural and much frequented church in the vicinity of Rabat is in honour of SS Cosma and Damian.<sup>12</sup> Mass is celebrated every Saturday as per explicit foundation.<sup>13</sup> Another country chapel bears the title of St Gregory and stands in the neighbourhood of Għar Gerduf.<sup>14</sup> Its feast day is celebrated by a popular and grand procession<sup>15</sup> as is customary on mainland Malta.

## Villages

Xewkija heads the island's village list. Its church of St John the Baptist was erected parish in 1678, while the Blessed Sacrament was placed permanently therein on the following January 25th, being the festivity of the conversion of the glorious apostle and our national father St Paul. Don Gratio Farrugia served as Xewkija's first parish priest until his replacement in 1688 by Don Gregorio Camilleri. In

the profanation of his rural chapel<sup>16</sup> whenever a general penitential procession for the island's needs is held.<sup>17</sup> Along the way to Mgarr and within the parish's boundary is St Bartholomew's chapel.<sup>18</sup> Xewkija has an overall population of circa 630 inhabitants, the greater part of which are poor.

Għarb comes second and occupies the western corner of the island. The parish church is dedicated to the Visitation of Our Lady to St Elizabeth and is locally known as tal-Virtut.<sup>19</sup> It was established in 1679 and has since been administered by Don Giovanni Maria Camilleri.<sup>20</sup> The village of Għarb is sizeable, boasts of a number of learned priests and clerics, and incorporates a church dedicated to St Lawrence. Its inhabitants include a number of prosperous and modest farmers though many are poor. A noteworthy garden known as Ta' Camenzuli produces white sour apples that can be preserved for the winter months.

<sup>12</sup> The cult of Sts Cosmas and Damian would seem to have been well-rooted in late medieval and early modern Malta. This chapel is recorded as early as 1364 (Agius De Soldanis Vol. II, p 64), and stood on the north side of "Il-Hotba" hillock along the way from Rabat to Għarb (Galea, 2001). The then Women's Hospital inside the Castello adopted their name at some stage before the mid 18th century (ibid, p 134), while one of the two altars adorning the Males' Hospital wards was dedicated to them (ibid, p 136). Besides, the Mdina Cathedral treasured their reliquary (Abela, p 351).

<sup>13</sup> This Foundation was established on 21.X.1623 by Bastjan Grima (Agius De Soldanis Book II, p 65).

<sup>14</sup> Before its mutilation in the 1870s (Vassallo p 40), the catacomb complex of Għar Gerduf featured a series of deep arcosolia-tombs capable of accommodating up to seven burials.

<sup>15</sup> St Gregory's procession used to take place on 12<sup>th</sup> March, the Saint's feast-day, and entailed the participation of all the members of the clergy in Gozo as well as all established confraternities. After 1851 it started to follow a different route that ended up at Kerċem's new church. St Gregory's procession was eventually suppressed in 1968 (Gauci, pp 52-3).

<sup>16</sup> St Elias Chapel stood to the east of what is not the heliport and was deconsecrated in 1657 (Bezzina, 2004, p 64).

<sup>17</sup> Votive processions for the alleviation of droughts and related natural calamities were still being held with great zeal during the late 19th century (Vella, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> St Bartholomew's chapel is known popularly as the chapel of Our Lady of Mercy because the present altar-painting, executed by Gian Nikol Buhagiar in 1735, represents St Bartholomew interceding with the Virgin Mary of Mercy for the release of souls from the flames of purgatory (Bezzina, 1999, p 378).

<sup>19</sup> 'Virtut' or 'virtute' means 'miracle' in Italian. According to tradition, a nearby miraculous oil spring that was to be harvested solely to replenish the church's oil lamp turned into fierce flames once a few greedy individuals aspired to turn it into a business venture (Galea, p 61).

<sup>20</sup> Don Giovanni Maria Camilleri was the brother of Xewkija's Parish Priest Don Gregorio Camilleri. They donated all their possessions for the setting up of a men's hospital in Gozo. (Vella, in print).

Sannat comes third, is on southern side and has a parish church dedicated to St Margaret. Since its establishment in 1688 Sannat's parish was administered by Don Lazzaro Camilleri. Sannat has a total population of 370 souls, who except for a few stable farmers, consist of poor peasants.

Sitting on a prominent northeast hill is Nadur. It was erected parish in 1688 and is dedicated to the Apostles SS Peter and Paul, while Don Bernardino Haber administered it ever since. Associated with the Nadur Parish is a devotional church in Qala commemorating the Immaculate Conception of our Lady. This church is believed to impart huge miraculous favours and attracts many pilgrims from both Gozo and Malta in fulfilment of their vows.<sup>21</sup> The parish of Nadur encompasses around 494 inhabitants, many of whom are poor. It is endowed with several beautiful and well-watered gardens full of different fruit trees. One such garden was that constructed in 1678 in the locality of St Blaise and exploited for the cultivation of vegetables and long-lasting Neapolitan apples.

The above mentioned Qala church overlays a cave which according to an old tradition was the abode of a holy hermit.<sup>22</sup> He was interred therein following his demise and many individuals were nursed back to health after visiting his burial place. Likewise, all general processions to this sanctuary to surmount distinctive communal hardships yielded the desired outcome thanks also to the mediation of Our Lady.

St Anthony tal Caccia,<sup>23</sup> comprising the neighbourhoods of ix-Xagħra tal-Għażzenin and Ta' Lukin, is Gozo's fifth village. It abounds in fresh water springs and boasts of a number of exquisite orchards. Erected parish in 1687 its church venerates the Nativity of Our Lady, known popularly as tal-Vittoria,<sup>24</sup> and has as parish priest Don Mario Antonio Grima. Don Grima succeeded Don Bernardo Formosa who was promoted to canon at the matrix church. Caccia has an extensive



Plan of Marsalforn Bay defences (including an underwater seawall) erected during the the first half of the eighteenth century. (National Library of Malta Collection) The time honoured chapel of St Paul marks the right hand extremity of the shoreline defences.

footprint, a population count of circa 563 and two affiliate chapels in honour of St Anthony and St Paul respectively. St Anthony's is endowed with a number of benefices while St Paul's, which overlooks the beach at Marsalforno bay, enjoys widespread popularity as attested by numerous general processions to save the island from calamities.

Żebbuġ is the sixth and remaining village. The parish church is dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady and has been lead since its establishment in 1687 by Don Francesco Vella. Żebbuġ's 367 inhabitants are predominantly poor.

Further to the *dretto della primitia* the annual income of each of the four parishes established in 1687 was augmented with the relocation of 20 scudi formerly due to St George's parish, while the most

<sup>21</sup> Abela (p 386) confirms the widespread popularity enjoyed by this sanctuary in the early 17th century, while a modest pilgrim's hostel and adjoining animal stable were erected before 1745 on the opposite side of the square (Buttigieg, p 31).

<sup>22</sup> This holy man is popularly known as San Kirrew and is thought to have lived during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. His tomb was allegedly discovered on the 3rd October 1937 (Vella Haber, p 26).

<sup>23</sup> Present day Xagħra.

<sup>24</sup> Besides being the liturgical feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, on 8 September 1565 the Turks lifted the Siege on Birgu and Senglea (Spiteri, 2005, pp 502-15).





Pencil drawing of Ta' Pinu Chapel by Giuseppe Calleja, dated 1887 (Heritage Malta Collection).

serene and late Grand Master Gregorio Caraffa<sup>25</sup> transferred to them the revenues from a number of public territories. Their parish priests are obliged to present a white candle to the Archpriest of the Matrix every August 15th.

The island of Gozo has three more rural churches dedicated to St Martin, St Domenica and to the Assumption of Our Lady respectively. St Martin's<sup>26</sup> and St Domenica's<sup>27</sup> are frequented regularly between Easter and Pentecost. That of the Assumption is located in the neighbourhood of Ta' Għammar and is known popularly as Ta' Pinu, its founder and owner of adjacent lands.<sup>28</sup>

## Hills and Hillocks in Gozo<sup>29</sup>

- In-Nadur hill has a vast plateau and was erected parish in 1688.
- Id-Dabrani hill
- Il-Merżuq<sup>30</sup> hill
- Il-Qolla s-Safra hillock
- Il-Ħarraz hill
- Ta' Kuljat hill
- Ta' Gelmus hill sits next to the Castello and abounds in precious minerals like gold, silver, vitriol and sulphur which according to tradition were exploited by the ingenious ancient inhabitants to produce gold.
- Ta' Dbiegi hill is the highest on the island and was formerly crowned by a small chapel in honour of Our Lady that was built in thanksgiving by a captain who survived a severe storm at sea. It was eventually deconsecrated during Bishop Beuno's<sup>31</sup> pastoral visit of 1667.
- Ta' Għammar<sup>32</sup> hill bears the name of its ancient owner.
- Ta' Ġiordan hill is also named after a former proprietor.

## Coastal Towers Guarding the Bays and Ports of the Island

Constructed out of the generosity of the Eminent Grand Master Garzes,<sup>33</sup> Garzes Tower overlooks Mġarr harbour and follows the design of a miniature castle. Besides a small chapel dedicated to St Martin where mass is celebrated on Sundays, obligatory festivities and other popular devotions, it accommodates the castellan, soldiers and their families. Garzes Tower incorporates also an armoury and a gun powder magazine, and is armed with artillery, mortars, rampart guns, muskets, halberds, gun powder, cannon balls and related ammunition.

<sup>25</sup> Grand Master Gregorio Caraffa ruled the Order from 1680 to 1690.

<sup>26</sup> St Martin's chapel was incorporated within Garzes Tower.

<sup>27</sup> St Domenica's chapel was originally hewn-out of live rock. Its precise location is unknown, but could have formed part of an extensive network of spacious caves bordering Xlendi Valley. After being declared unfit for worship in 1637, the statue of St Domenica was transferred to the Chapel of St Martin's in the whereabouts of present day Manresa Retreats House (erected 1810) along the road from Rabat to Munxar.

<sup>28</sup> Pinu Gauci lived during the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century while his son in law, the noble Giovanni Gourgion, sponsored the restoration of the chapel's fabric. In the 1880s two spinsters from Għarb heard a miraculous voice while in the chapel and Ta' Pinu soon evolved into Gozo's most popular Marian shrine. The present monumental basilica was consecrated on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1931, (Gauci, pp 108-9).

<sup>29</sup> Featured list is not comprehensive. Xaghra, Nuffara, Żebbuġ, Għar Ilma and il-Mixta are omitted.

<sup>30</sup> In 1904, a large stone statue of Our Saviour holding a wooden cross was placed on a high pedestal on the summit of Il-Merżuq Hill to commemorate the consecration of Gozo to Christ the Saviour by the Gozo diocese. From then on, the hill started to be popularly referred to as Is-Salvatur (Attard Hili, p 67).

<sup>31</sup> Mgr Luca Beuno served as Bishop of Malta from 1666 to 1668.

<sup>32</sup> The via crucis running all the way to the summit was created during the early 1970s.

<sup>33</sup> Grand Master Martin Garzes ruled the Order from 1595 to 1601.



Its artillery pieces and those of Comino Tower<sup>34</sup> traverse and intersect fire to shield Mgarr harbour.

Garzes tower is run by a castellan, a resident bombardier and three soldiers. These soldiers are salaried by the Order, follow a watch roster of three 24-hour shifts, and are obliged to spend the night therein. The castellan receives an annual salary of 60 scudi and two oil measures, and is licensed to operate a tavern for the benefit of the tower's soldiers and neighbouring inhabitants. The fixed salary of the resident bombardier is supplemented by ten scudi, while each of the soldiers is entitled to 48 scudi per annum. Moreover, a small plot of arable land is assigned to the castellan and soldiers for their use.

St Martin's chapel is supplied with candles and related consumables by the Order. In addition to the soldier on constant watch, four guards are deployed in an underlying coastal station in the evening.<sup>35</sup> A second group of four sentinels used to patrol the tower's hinterland but owing to personnel shortages this practice had to be abolished.

The prominently sited New Tower<sup>36</sup> at Dahlet Qorrot was constructed by the Island's University during 1669 and 1670. The Order contributed the artillery, rampart guns, muskets, spontoons, cannon balls and

related equipment. Both castellan and his assistant are paid by the University, and receive 36 scudi and 25 scudi per annum respectively. Said castellan is entitled also to a yearly allowance of 10 scudi for oil consumption. They alternate every hour during the day coast-watch shift and remain on constant call after nightfall. Night shifts are manned by three guards.<sup>37</sup>

Marsalforn<sup>38</sup> Tower was erected during the reign of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt on the tip of the north facing promontory overlooking Marsalforn Bay.<sup>39</sup> Its construction comprises a fine design and offers comfortable accommodation. Marsalforn Tower is equipped adequately with artillery, rampart guns, mortars, muskets, spontoons, cannon balls and other ammunitions. The castellan, a bombardier by training, receives an annual salary of 60 scudi and two oil measures. He is entitled also to cultivate a nearby plot of public land, while the University pays him 4 scudi per annum extra to man signalling fires<sup>40</sup> from May to St. Martin's feast. Said castellan is assisted by two bombardiers paid by the Order and who alternate every other week, and by four night guards stationed in the tower's sentry box.<sup>41</sup>

Built by the University in 1658, Dwejra Tower guards the underlying bay along the western coast and is provisioned with artillery, muskets,



Early nineteenth century drawing of Garzes Tower attributed to Salvatore Busuttill (Heritage Malta Collection).

<sup>34</sup> Comino Tower was constructed at a hefty cost of 18628 scudi, 5 tari and 10 carlini (Samut-Tagliaferro, p 128).

<sup>35</sup> A total of 28 guards per week.

<sup>36</sup> The tower at Dahlet Qorrot was frequently referred to as Torre Nuova.

<sup>37</sup> Totalling 21 guards per week.

<sup>38</sup> The "marsa" component of the word "Marsalforn" means a place of anchorage (Aquilina, Vol. II, p 788).

<sup>39</sup> Present day Ghajn Damma Plateau. In 1599 Giovanni Rinaldini Anconitano identified it as the most advantageous site for Gozo's new fortified town (Vella, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> Ghajn Damma enjoys a direct line of vision with the sentry box at St John's demi-bastion.

<sup>41</sup> Totalling 28 guards per week.

spontoons, cannon balls and other armaments by the Order. The post of castellan, who needs to be a bombardier by training, carries an annual salary of 60 scudi, namely 40 scudi by the Order and 20 scudi by the University. He receives also 2 scudi for oil consumption and is entitled to harvest the underlying saltpans. Each year, said University forks out also 23 scudi for the salary of his assistant. During daylight the castellan and / or his assistant remain on constant watch and are both obliged to stay on call after sunset when three guards are deployed therein.<sup>42</sup>

Xlendi<sup>43</sup> Tower oversees the small southwest-facing port. Once more its fabrication was undertaken by the University in 1658<sup>44</sup> whereas the Order supplies the artillery, muskets, pontoons, cannon balls, and

similar necessities. The University covers the annual salary of both castellan and his assistant whereby the former, who acts also as bombardier, receives 20 scudi plus 2 scudi for oil consumption. The latter earns 29 scudi. Three guards are stationed here all year round for the night watch.<sup>45</sup>

Mġarr ix-Xini<sup>46</sup> Tower dominates the tiny southeast haven and was built by the University sometime after 1658.<sup>47</sup> The Order furnishes all defence equipment like artillery, muskets, pontoons, and cannon balls, while the University contributes the annual salary of the castellan and his assistant, namely 36 and 25 scudi respectively. The castellan is entitled also to 2 scudi for oil consumption and shares with his assistant the income generated from the nearby saltpans. Night watch entails three guards per roster.<sup>48</sup>



Coloured drawing of Mġarr ix-Xini Bay and coast watch tower (Casa Rocca Piccola Collection).

<sup>42</sup> Totalling 21 guards per week. <sup>43</sup> Xlendi echoes a type of Byzantine boat (Aquilina, Vol. II, p 1579).

<sup>44</sup> Xlendi Tower was completed by 29<sup>th</sup> June 1650 (Samut-Tagliaferro, p 147).

<sup>45</sup> A total of 21 guards per week.

<sup>46</sup> Mġarr ix-Xini means the wharf of the galley (Aquilina, Vol. II, p 1573).

<sup>47</sup> Mġarr ix-Xini Tower was completed by June 1661 (Samut-Tagliaferro, p 171).

<sup>48</sup> A total of 21 guards per week.



## Eleven Coast Watch Huts Complementing the Towers<sup>49</sup>

Guards on duty, who are to be armed with a sword, a spontoon and a sling<sup>50</sup>, report one hour after sunset and remain on watch until sunrise. These huts are sited at:

... (close to Dahlet Qorrot Tower), with three guards;  
St Mary's<sup>51</sup> with three guards and a horseman to relay urgent messages to the Governor;  
... with three guards;  
Qolla l-Bajda<sup>52</sup> with three guards and a horseman;  
Ras ir-Reqqa with three guards;  
Wied il-Għasri with three guards and horseman;  
Tas-Salvatur at Dwejra<sup>53</sup> with three guards and a horseman;  
St Simon's<sup>54</sup> with three guards and a horseman;  
Ras il-Hobż with three guards;  
It-Twaġen with three guards and a horseman;  
Ras it-Tafal<sup>55</sup> with three guards.

Each night, a total of 56 sentinels,<sup>56</sup> that sum up to 392 a week, supplement the aforementioned castellans and supporting full-time personnel in guarding the island's ports and easily accessible foreshore. In addition, horsemen are stationed in six huts as listed above from May to St Martin's, while two more guards monitor vessel movement during daylight from the island's west and east capes respectively. All information regarding suspicious vessel movement is conveyed to the Governor for eventual communication to mainland Malta.<sup>57</sup> After sunset, a sheave is set on fire and dropped into the Castello's ditch for each vessel spotted.

*The third and concluding part of this article will be published in a forthcoming edition of The Gozo Observer.*

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<sup>49</sup> Agius De Soldanis (Vol I, p 58) gives a list of eleven guard stations. These were setup following a visit to Gozo by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt in 1622 (Agius De Soldanis, Vol. 1, Sec 6.2).

<sup>50</sup> Gozitan men manipulated the sling with admirable skill and were capable of hitting distant targets with relative ease. (Samut-Tagliaferro, p 348).

<sup>51</sup> St. Mary's Point Battery was subsequently constructed by 1716 (Samut-Tagliaferro, p 208).

<sup>52</sup> Qolla l-Bajda Battery was subsequently constructed by 1716 (Samut-Tagliaferro, p 208).

<sup>53</sup> The chapel of the Holy Saviour at Dwejra, which overlooked the Azure Window, was profaned in 1657 (Agius De Soldanis, Vol. II, p 90).

<sup>54</sup> Planted on the Munxar side, St Simon's Chapel at Xlendi was already in ruins by 1615 (Agius De Soldanis, Vol. II, p 91).

<sup>55</sup> Fort Chambray was subsequently constructed on Ras it-Tafal between 1749 and 1761 (Samut-Tagliaferro, pp 257-292).

<sup>56</sup> Namely 33 guards in listed huts, 20 guards in respective towers, 2 guards at St. Martin's and St. John's stations inside the Castello, and a soldier at Garzes Tower.

<sup>57</sup> One of the main advantages listed by Rinaldini vis-à-vis the relocation of Gozo's new fortified town at Ghajn Damma's promontory was precisely the control of vessel movement along the north coast (Vella, 2006).



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# From Midwives to Funeral Directors: The Attard-Gatt Connection

GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

## Introduction

Having become a formal colony of Britain with the publication of the Treaty of Paris in 1814, Malta's lifestyle and costumes were definitely influenced by that of England as it was expected to be in an age of imperialism and colonialism. Although much nearer to continental Italy than isolated Britain, the influence of the British *mens* on the people of the Maltese islands is a fact that no serious historian would dare to challenge. The presence, unto this day, of the British post box, the 'VR' slabs and the fire-places in some of our homes, are certainly among the main relics of what was once British Malta.

## Family Life

It is against this background that family life in Malta evolved in Victorian times and even later on during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Malta, like Ireland, was very much a Catholic colony where the British governors of Malta were extremely careful how to act in order to not hurt the feelings of a traditional Roman Catholic people. The town of Rabat in Gozo had been given the status of a 'city' by Queen Victoria on the occasion of her diamond jubilee. This happened on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1887. Mgr Pietro Pace, the bishop of Gozo who eventually became the archbishop of Malta, was instrumental in the acquisition of this honour. Those clerics who wanted to climb to the highest echelons of the Catholic hierarchy of the islands, had to exhibit their pro-English leanings as did Pietro Pace and later on Michael Gonzi. However, on a local level, the pro-Italian population was still going strong even in Gozo's Rabat.

The establishment of Victoria's two band clubs in 1881 was proof that the language question had its implication felt also on the little island of Gozo. It has to be said that although the 'La Stella' and 'Il Leone' Band could have expressed pro-Italian or pro-English sympathies respectively, it would not be right to say that the division was so clear-cut.

The very Italian names of both band clubs prove this point. From a general point-of-view Italian was still strong, especially in ecclesiastical circles. In the lower levels of society, the man-in-the-street would rarely have the possibility to express his own sympathies in public.

The Gatt Family of Victoria whose residence was then in Charity Street had connections with the 'Il Leone' Band. It is known that Ġorġ Gatt, the head of the household, was the bandsman who, on the day of the band's christening, appeared on the doorstep of the premises and said: 'Leone huwa isimha' (Grech, 2012: 26). The reason for the name of the newly-established band has been the subject of discussion; it is unanimously accepted that the crest was inspired by the lion present in the Royal coat of arms. It is not known what Ġorġ Gatt did for a living but he must have been



Adelina, who married Ġużeppi Attard, was the eldest child of Ġorġ Gatt.

a prominent citizen in his own town; a couple of his grandchildren agreed upon the fact that he was called 'il-Pupu' due to the cleanliness for which he was known. Thankfully a photograph of him has survived and it is enough to prove the point referred to herein.

## Life in Gozitan Society

Ġorġ Gatt married Marirož nê Scicluna, daughter of Ġużeppi Scicluna and Ġiovanna Xuereb. Ġorġ was fifteen years his wife's senior. The baptismal records show that Ġorġ was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1858 while his wife was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1873. Incidentally, her sister Maria Antonia, who later married Ġanni Vassallo of Victoria, was to become the grandmother of Mgr Ġużeppi Mercieca, one of the archbishops of Malta. From the marriage, four children stemmed; one son and three daughters. The eldest child was called Adelina and she was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1894. Ġużeppa followed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1907. Anastasia followed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1910 and Tarċisju – who later on became a priest – was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1912.

The main focus of this article is the connection between the family of Adelina, the eldest child of the Gatt family and her future husband Ġużeppi Attard. Ġużeppi was born in Victoria, the son of carpenter Baskal Attard and M'Conċetta Buhagiar<sup>1</sup>; his baptism is recorded on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1889<sup>2</sup>. Ġużeppi was to follow in the footsteps of his father and became a carpenter; his workshop – now used by his grandchildren – was at the upper half of what was then Triq Santa Dminka, and which now is Sir Arturo Mercieca Street. Ġużeppi and Adelina were married at the Cathedral Church on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1916<sup>3</sup>.

After their marriage, Ġużeppi and his wife Adelina obtained a house in this street, the house in which they died. They had eight children; Feliċ, Baskal,



Ġużeppi Attard (ta' Kunċetta) one of the best 'klarinetisti' of Gozo.

Ġorġ, Ġużeppi<sup>4</sup>, Anton, Ġiovanni, M'Conċetta and Ġiovanni. The first Ġiovanni mentioned died when he fell out of a window, while M'Conċetta did not survive childhood. A look at the baptismal records of St George's Parish, Victoria, show that two of the children, Baskal and Ġorġ, are not listed. They were baptised at the newly-established parish of Fontana.

Ġużeppi Attard earned his living as an established carpenter. He was also one of the first funeral directors on Gozo, in the modern sense of the term. Two of his sons and many grandsons of his are funeral directors to this very day. His wife Adelina followed in her mother's footsteps and helped out as a midwife. She used to accompany her mother Marirož, known in Rabat as ta' Qaraboċċu (nicknames were very popular then), even to various villages in Gozo, whenever they were

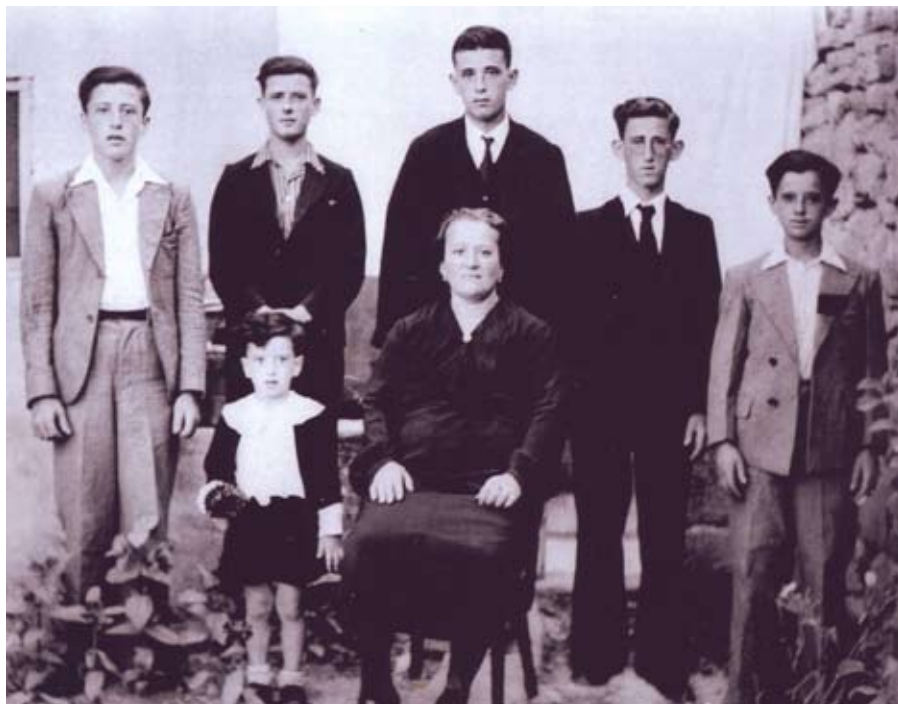
<sup>1</sup> The family is now known simply as *Ta' Kunċetta*. M'Conċetta Attard nê Buhagiar was the daughter of Michelangelo Buhagiar who was also a carpenter and who is mentioned in documents related to the festivities held in honour of the first bishop of Gozo, Mgr Michele Francesco Buttigieg. Cfr. Toni Calleja, "L-E.T. Mons. Mikiel Frangisk Buttigieg – isqof b'maternità Għasrija" in *Il-Korpus* 39 (2014), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Liber Baptizmorum St George's Basilica.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. NAG (National Archives Gozo) Ġuljana Masini.

<sup>4</sup> Ġużeppi eventually became a police constable and was in charge of the siren in the Citadel in Victoria, Gozo during the second world war. Cfr. (Bezzina, 2015: 43). A photo of him features also between pages 24 and 25. The page is unnumbered.





The Attard Family left to right. Standing: Ġużeppi, Baskal, Feliċ, Ġorġ and Anton. Seated: Giovanni and their mother Adelina.

called upon. This must have helped in the running of the family since families were constantly short of needs and being so numerous, it was not easy to run them.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Rabat was smaller than it is now, with the inhabited area located around St George's Church and the area leading to St Augustine's Square to the west and St Francis' Square to the east. Places of leisure were more restricted and the band clubs must have been one of the few outlets for passing time. Ġużeppi was a member of the 'La Stella' Band Club and was in fact a renowned clarinet player; he was considered by one and all as one of the best *klarinettesti* on both islands.<sup>5</sup> Being such a proficient clarinet player, Ġużeppi must have been asked by the band director to teach the new students who wanted to learn the clarinet; Ġanni Vella was one of those students who learnt at his hand.<sup>6</sup> Later on, Ġanni became the director of the 'La Stella' Band himself and his son Joseph was also to become director of the same band. A photo featuring Ġużeppi Attard with the 'La Stella' Band still survives. His cousin was Dun Andrea Buhagiar, who also hailed from Victoria, and was ordained priest on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1920 (Attard, 2014: 21).

## The Two Band Clubs of Victoria

One has to keep in mind that up to a certain point in time, the members of the 'La Stella' Band used to play during the funeral of bandsmen of the 'Leone' Band and vice-versa; unfortunately the tradition was discontinued.

Before the separation of the parishes, which took place in 1955, the inhabitants of Rabat who lived in the area that was within the circumference of the old Roman wall, used to be buried from St George's parish while those who lived in Victoria in the area that was outside these Roman walls used to be buried from the Cathedral parish. This tradition was also discontinued with the establishment of the formal division of the parishes and I can still remember my grandfather speaking about it.

## Conclusion

Life in Gozo after the war was not easy. Gozo was always the backwater of Malta and the reality of the double insularity was stronger than it is now. The people in the town of Rabat earned their living either by running a little shop such as a grocery or a butcher, or by doing manual work such as

<sup>5</sup> Information given to me verbally by Mr Mario Attard, son of the late Anton, bandsman with the *La Stella Band*.

<sup>6</sup> *Lehen il-Belt Vittoria* September 1957 (Numru 4), 3. I quote 'Tah l-ewwel prinċipji tat-teorija u fil-prattika tal-istrument is-Sur Ġużeppi Attard, illum mejjet, li kien wiehed mill-aħjar klarinettesti li kellna Għawdex'. See also *Lehen il-Belt Vittorja* Lulju 1957 (Numru 2), 4. I quote: 'Mro Ganni Vella tgħalliem tajjeb il-klarinet għand is-Sur Ġuże Attard'.



Clarinet player Ġużeppi Attard seated in the middle, fifth from right.

carpentry and similar works. Others earned their living by being employed with the government (Bezzina, 2012: 13-23). In the villages, life must have been harder since many people were full-time farmers or fishermen and the like. It was only when the ferry service between the islands was upgraded that young Gozitans began to frequent the main island and seek work there or to further their studies according to the ability of their financial means.



The 'Ta Kuncetta' Brothers from left to right: Ġovann, Anton, Ġużeppi, Ġorġ, Baskal and Felič during a family reunion.

In spite of all the changes that took place during the last three decades, Gozo has still managed to keep some of its unique characteristics and has been aptly nicknamed 'the island where time stood still'.

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# Ogygia\*

JOHN VELLA

## Transdisciplinary Approach

A study titled “Homer’s Ogygia: Imaginary or Historiography?” by the author of this article sheds additional light on the island of Gozo during the 2nd millennium BC. This was not the first study by the author about toponyms and how they reveal history not told on formal texts. The author claims that toponyms reflect much more than just topographical features.

Through a transdisciplinary approach, the author analysed the Odyssey, Homer’s epic poem, using local legend and oral lore, toponyms (place-names), languages (including ancient Greek and Maltese), as well as classical texts. Sources of information also included pictography, sea-level changes, maritime transport and astronomy.

Homer’s Odyssey especially Book V is the oldest known reference and written record that mentions the Maltese Islands, but there was never an attempt to analyse its content from all the perspectives presented in the present author’s study.

The research focusses on Ogygia and its mention in Homer’s Odyssey. Could Homer’s reference to Ogygia be simply imagined or does it refer to reality? The transdisciplinary research conducted by the present author between 2014 and 2016 sought evidence about this matter from various ancient and more recent sources. The study attempted to show how reference to toponyms in Homer’s epic poem actually refers to facts and real history. The study argues that the Ogygia toponym was a transliteration of an ancient Gozitan toponym which survives but which, over time, lost its meaning and ancient connections.

Probably based on the oral lore of ancient Greek maritime communities, Homer’s narrative provides scenarios and information through which one could derive information about the Gozitan-Maltese realities of the 2nd millennium BC.

## History and toponymy

One can compare Homer’s epic poetry with that of Troy as narrated through the Iliad. Troy was thought to be an imaginary place and a legend, but archaeological studies have proved otherwise. Through an analysis of the information supplied by Homer in the Odyssey, the present author attempted to prove that Ogygia really existed and formed part of the once larger Gozitan-Maltese island of four thousand years ago.

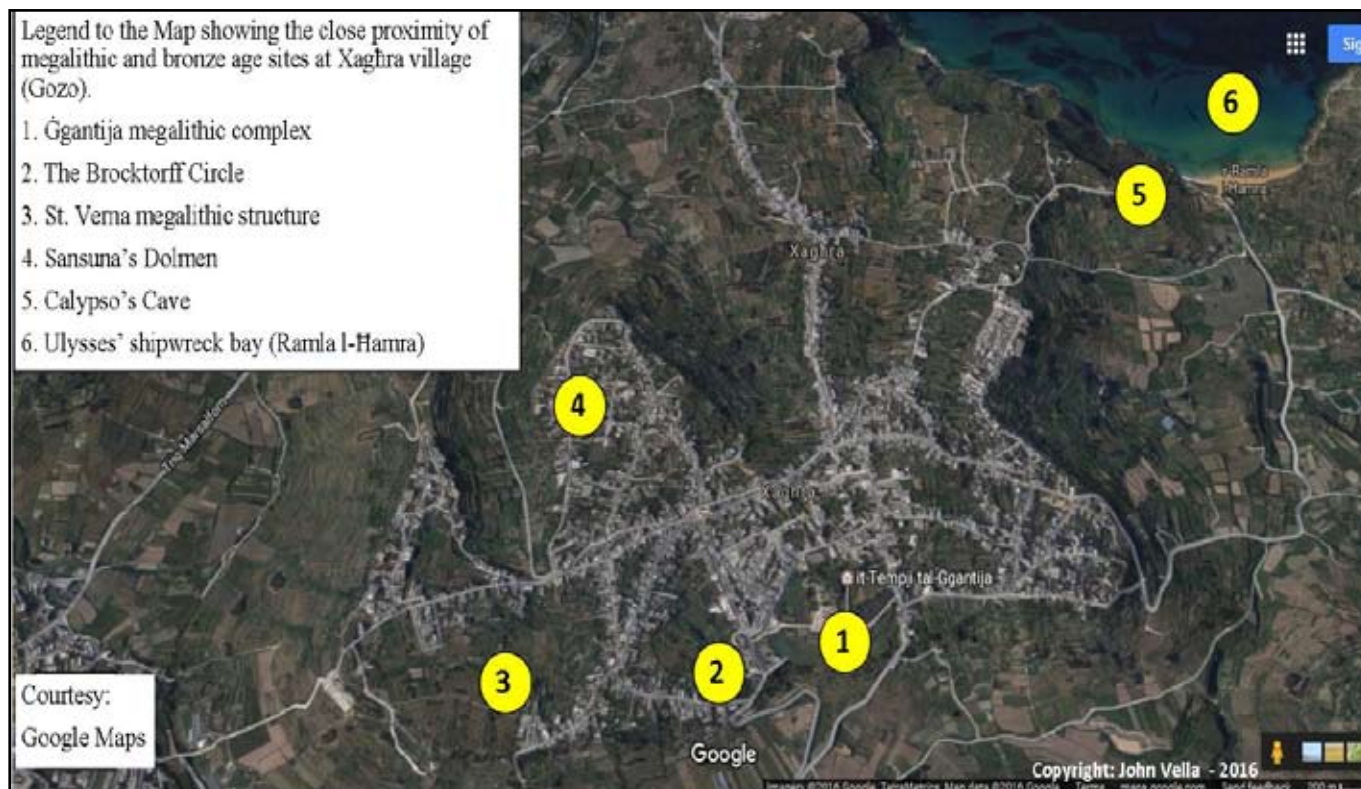
The author argues that an analysis of Homer’s description of Calypso’s Island, presents an authentic picture of the natural environment, the landscape, the vegetation, the types of plants, fruits and wood available on the island. It also presents a picture of ancient Gozitan-Maltese people, their crafts, their beliefs and their cultural contacts at the time of the Odyssey. According to the present author, the procurement of shipbuilding materials and tools for Ulysses’s vessel came from the wooded areas south of the then Gozo-Malta island.

The author attributes various abilities to Calypso, who is depicted as representing the island’s inhabitants. She would instruct Ulysses to find his way home on the waves aided by the signs of the night sky. Besides her charm and her natural beauty, she also possessed wisdom and knowledge useful for survival on an island, where solitude and isolation were also felt.

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\* This is a brief account of a paper presented in March 2016 at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies held in Athens, Greece. It was published in October 2016. The full paper as published on the double-peer reviewed ‘Athens Journal of History’ is available at <http://www.atiner.gr/papers/MDT2016-2007.pdf>. The published paper should be cited as: Vella, J. (2016). “Homer’s Ogygia: An Imaginary or a Historiography?”, *Athens: ATINER’S Conference Paper Series, No: MDT2016-2007*.





Distribution of Ogygia sites in Xaghra.

## Ogygia and Ġgantija

The author argues that certain changes over time may have led to a real story being transformed into a legend. A factor emerging from the study is that the changes in sea-level were determinant to the formation of the islands as we know them today. Due to the fact that there was an absence of the written documentation relating to these natural changes, there was the perception that Homer's Ogygia was an imaginary narrative. Yet both intangible and tangible evidence would seem to prove otherwise, as most of the details given by Homer, according to the author, are a faithful description of the Xaghra environs in the years 1188-1178 BC.

Reference to various classical authors suggests that the legend of Ogygia continued to be narrated for millennia. Later authors, and geographers in particular, contributed to the doubts, misinterpretation and misplacement of Ogygia. Changes in the landscape were major contributors to such geographic confusion by later authors including Strabo and Pliny. According to the mentioned study, a major contributor to such uncertainty, misplacement and misunderstanding of the Ogygia toponym was the fact that most

authors had few or no knowledge of the Maltese and Gozitan language, culture and traditions.

In a further analysis, the study argues that there is a relationship between the toponym of Ogygia in Homer and that of 'Ġgantija' on Gozo. The study connects the two toponyms of Ġgantija and Ogygia linguistically through the word "Giant", the Giant being an astronomical figure in the Homeric narrative.

The author explains how Greek mythology connects the same meaning with the constellation of Orion, which in Greek mythology relates to the giant hunter. This argument contrasts with that of Agius De Soldanis who referred to the presence of giants on Gozo.

The research also delved into pictographic sources, in search of nineteenth century etchings, drawings and lithographs showing Ġgantija. These described it as 'tower of the giants' since they did a literal translation of what they could perceive or understand.

The natural environs and the megalithic remains at various sites in the Xaghra village boundaries are



View from a distance of the Temple of Giants on the Island of Calypso, today the Island of Gozo. Source: Mazzara (1827).

evidence of human activity in antiquity. The study, apart from associating Calypso with the Ġgantija megalithic structure, also briefly refers to legends connected with other remains on Gozo.

The toponyms are studied from the perspective of the Maltese language, derived from ancient Greek, relating to mythological, navigational and astronomical aspects.

## Conclusion

The study may therefore be considered as a well-studied attempt to show that Homer's epic poetry, especially the content about Ogygia and Calypso, were not an imaginary narrative but an account of authentic historical events which kept being told from one generation to another among ancient Greek maritime communities. They were kept alive through local oral lore, but over time the

real events were transformed into an imaginary legend.

John Vella is an independent Maltese scholar and researcher. He is also the founder and curator of Bir Mula Heritage museum. In 2011, he obtained a Master of Science from the University of Leicester (U.K.) in Human Resource Management and Development. He is currently a PhD student at the University of Malta researching on grassroots museums with the Mediterranean Institute of the University of Malta.



# Cittadella - the Re-Discovered Treasure

JOHN CREMONA

## Introduction

The cranes, excavators and heavy machinery that for more than five years invaded the peacefulness and tranquility of Cittadella are gone and almost completely forgotten. Visitors to Cittadella are struck with awe when they see the bulky mass of the fortifications from a distance or when they actually stroll along the narrow winding streets of the old city of Gozo. Cittadella is like a re-discovered treasure, a newly polished pearl that surprises one and all with what it has to offer.

This was possible through a long process of thinking, planning and action undertaken by the Ministry for Gozo over the last decade in order to conserve, restore and rehabilitate one of Gozo's major historic sites and a prime touristic attraction.

Cittadella is a unique site because in a space bound by a one kilometre stretch of fortifications it embodies important and sometimes unique characteristics be

it of a historical, natural, military, architectural, archaeological, religious or social nature.

## The Projects

During these last years, Cittadella has seen a spectacular transformation through two EU co-funded projects under the European Regional Development Fund. One project, coordinated by the Restoration Unit in Malta, addressed the problem of the fortifications. Not only were the high and massive bastions consolidated and restored but a pressing issue of the stabilisation of the underlying soft 'green sand' bedrock was addressed for the first time in the history of Cittadella. This has ensured that not only the fortification walls look as new but the underlying bedrock has also been secured. This project cost around €7 million.

The other project, also co-funded by the EU and coordinated by the Ministry for Gozo, was responsible for the implementation of a number





of key actions recommended by the Cittadella Masterplan. This document was drawn up in 2010 through funding by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanisms (EEA) following a wide consultation process with all the stakeholders of Cittadella. Funding for this project was secured in 2012 and following years of preparation, works on site kicked off in March 2014. The project was inaugurated just two years and three months later by the Prime Minister on 30 June 2016 and cost around €14 million.

A quick glance at the major components of this project includes :

The conversion of two unused water reservoirs built during the nineteenth century into a multi-lingual Visitors' Centre which has become one of the main attractions at Cittadella and which since its inauguration has attracted more than 170,000 visitors. The Visitors' Centre and the responsible architect Martin Xuereb were the winners of the prestigious awards for architecture and restoration awarded by the Kamra tal-Periti and Din l-Art Helwa during 2016.

Up till recent years there were attempts to convert the Cittadella ditch into a car park. Fortunately this did not materialise, rather, it has been ably rehabilitated and converted into a leisure area with the possibility of offering unique space for the holding of cultural and social events.

The piazza in front of the cathedral has been levelled and all the streets and open spaces within Cittadella have been paved. In the process all services, including drainage and rain water as well as electricity and telephony, were re-routed underground. In the process numerous steps around the Citadel were eliminated thus facilitating and increasing accessibility.

The ruins, which form a substantial part of Cittadella, were acquired by Government from private individuals. All these areas were cleaned and the rubble walls re-built or consolidated. These ruins are of great importance for Cittadella because they conserve important archaeological deposits which may shed invaluable information on Cittadella's past.

The façades of the most important buildings in Cittadella have been expertly restored and freed from layers of cement and other accretions. This includes the lower part of the cathedral façade as well as all the buildings around the main piazza.

The newly installed floodlighting and street lighting system has given Cittadella a magical aura at night and a completely different experience from that of the morning. Apart from using energy-efficient light fixtures, which help to reduce the carbon footprint, the floodlighting system has been designed to protect the roosting sites of the endemic bat species which live in the dark crevices of the bastions.

Accessibility has been significantly improved with the installation of two lifts, two stair lifts and a lifting platform as well as a number of ramps. Safety and security have been increased with the installation of railings, gates and well covers.

The large breach in the bastion walls has been closed with a specially designed door which is opened according to need.

## Conclusion

All these interventions and works were carried out under the continuous and vigilant eyes of archaeological monitors and of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and the Heritage Protection Unit of MEPA. During the execution of the works, several spectacular archaeological discoveries were made, including the mysterious stone circle in the Cathedral Square, the Knights period access road, the Bronze Age silos and the Roman wall all of which have been incorporated in the project and are now added attractions.

With the aim of maintaining to the highest standards what has been achieved through these projects, the Ministry for Gozo has set up the Cittadella Management Committee which is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of Cittadella.

John Cremona is the administrator of Cittadella and a member of the Cittadella Management Committee. He was the project leader of the Cittadella Masterplan project and of the project for the Implementation of the Cittadella Masterplan Recommendations ERDF 246.

# **Book: Gozitan Crossings. The Impact of Migration and Return Migration on an Island Community**

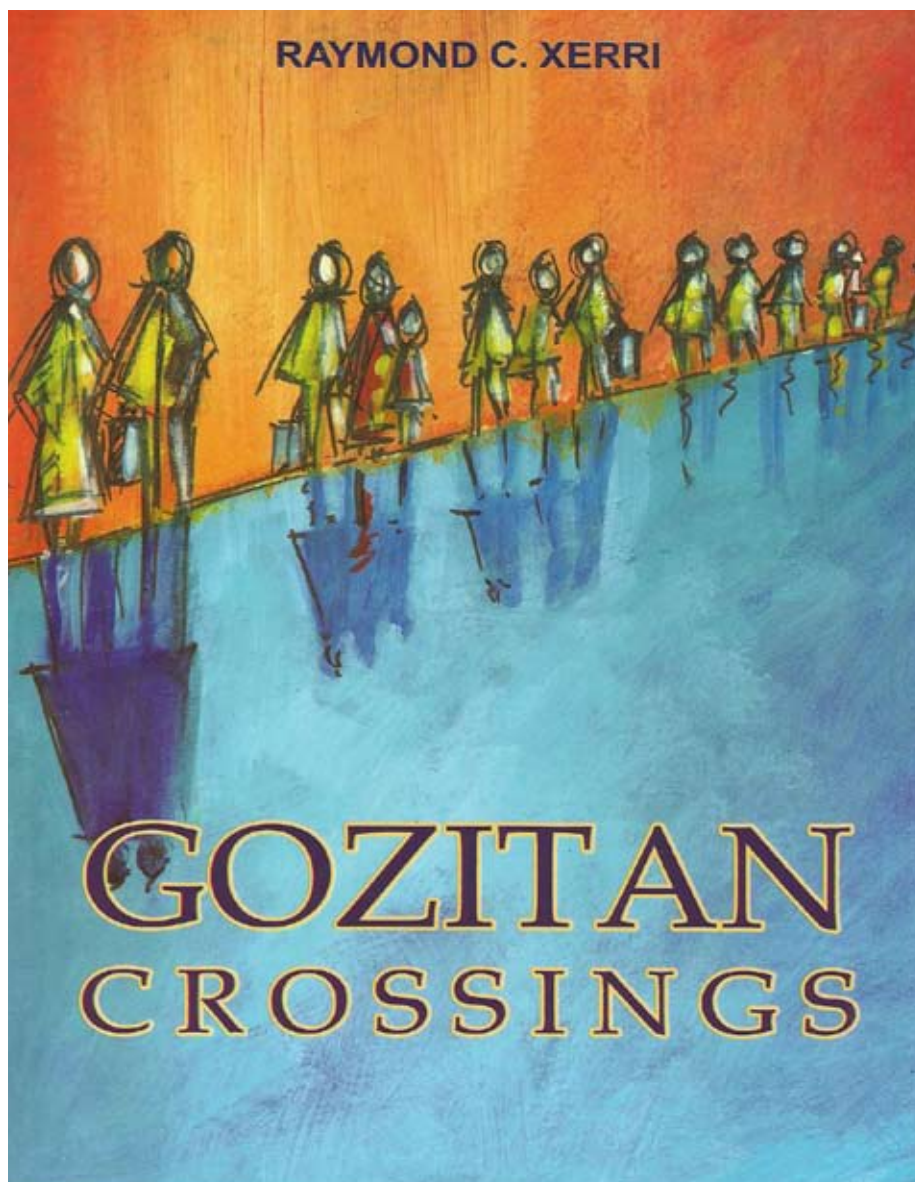
Raymond C. Xerri

Malta: A&M Printing; Qala, (2005); 317 pages

REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Living on an island offers both advantages and disadvantages. Many people on the Inner Hebrides off the north-western coast of Scotland have to travel to the mainland either on a daily or on a weekly basis in order to go to work. The same can be said to islands such as the Isle of Man or the Orkney Islands. The same might also be said for the inhabitants of the Aeolian Islands, off the western coast of nearby Sicily. Gozo is no exception.

It is a fact that hundreds of Gozitans have to travel to mainland Malta for work or in order to study either on a daily basis or quite frequently. However, Raymond C. Xerri's *Gozitan Crossings* looks further away from this reality. The subject for his doctorate dealt with those hundreds of Gozitans who left the Maltese Islands to go and settle either 'down under', that is, in far-away Australia, the farthest continent from Malta, or in



other countries such as the UK, the USA and other destinations. *Gozitan Crossings* can be considered a practical summary of the Ph.D. thesis that Dr Xerri wrote about this engaging subject. Xerri states that the book ‘owes its origin to a Ph.D thesis I completed at Victoria University in Melbourne between 1996 and 2002’.

Dr Raymond C. Xerri is in many ways ‘the right person at the right time’ to deal with such a particular subject. Having himself lived in both the United States and in Australia, and having been involved with the Maltese communities on both continents, Xerri was able to gather useful information about the reality of Maltese immigration. He delved deep into the subject by dealing with it from different points-of-view. He opens his book with a chapter that focuses on the ferry crossings that take place between Malta and Gozo. Carrying an autobiographical imprint throughout the entire book, Xerri opens his first chapter by quoting a conversation between himself and his grandfather. He creates a contrast between the ferry-crossing between Malta and Gozo and the long voyage that his grandfather undertook when he left Gozo for Australia. Taking this experience as his point of departure, he then moves on to discuss the Australian experience of the Gozitan community which has now left its mark on Australian society at large with various prominent people hailing from Gozo holding significant offices in the country.

In trying to describe the ethos of the Gozitan people who have done well in Australia, Xerri quotes a certain Captain Lewis Ritchie C.V.O. who in his book of 1838 ‘*The Epic of Malta*’ has this to say about the people of the tiny island of Gozo: “The Gozitans have certain definite characteristics that set them apart from the people of Malta themselves. They are a tougher, less gay race and they make excellent colonists and pioneers. They have been called ‘The Scots of the Maltese people’”. By quoting Captain Ritchie, Xerri manages to say in a nutshell what many anthropologists have struggled to say over the period of many centuries.

The chapter on linguistics might easily be considered the most interesting of all since, in it, Xerri provides an entire glossary of Gozitan phrases which even on nearby Malta might have a different meaning altogether.

‘*Gozitan Crossings*’ is a book to be recommended to both anthropologists and historians alike. However the general public will find it useful in order to understand better the roots of Maltese migration around the world. One of the authors cited above compared the Gozitans to the Scots; I would even consider comparing them to the Irish since both the people of Gozo as well as the people of the Irish Republic, having been both colonised, have so much in common within the reality of their far-flung diaspora.



# Recent Activities at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus

JOSEPH CALLEJA

## Courses at the Gozo Campus

In October 2016 the University of Malta opened two courses at the Gozo Campus, namely the Bachelor of Commerce and the Executive Master of Business Administration in Public Management. Both courses are on a part-time basis and the latter is being offered via video-conferencing.

In February 2017 the Maltese Department of the University of Malta opened, for the fourth consecutive year, the course leading to the Certificate in Proof Reading. During the same month, the Faculty of Education opened a Postgraduate Certificate in the Teaching of Ethics in Schools. This course is being offered through the video-conferencing system.

Other courses running at the Gozo Campus during this academic year are: Diploma in Commerce, Bachelor of Psychology (Hons), Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies, Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education and Master of Business Administration in Public Management. A course leading to the BA (Hons) in Public Management is partly being offered at the Gozo Campus through video-conferencing.

## Graduation of Students

During the graduation ceremonies held at the University of Malta in November and December 2016, a number of students graduated after having successfully completed courses at the University Gozo Campus.

Eight students obtained the Diploma in Commerce, while six students graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce. Six students obtained a Higher Diploma in Public Accounting and Finance, and seven students graduated with an Executive Master in Business Administration.

Certificates were also awarded to a group of eight students who successfully completed a course leading to a Certificate in Proof Reading: Maltese. Another group of sixteen students were awarded a certificate in Baroque Architecture.



The students who followed the Diploma in Commerce.



The students who successfully completed the Higher Diploma in Public Accounting and Finance.



The group of students who were awarded the University's Certificate in Proofreading in Maltese and the proofreading warrant from the National Council for the Maltese Language.



The group of students who were awarded the University's Pretertiary Certificate in Baroque Architecture.

## Examinations

Similar to the other Gozitan students following courses at the Msida Campus, Gozitans studying at the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery were, in January 2017, given the option to sit for their written exams in Gozo. These were the remaining group of University Gozitan students who at that time did not have this option.

During the January 2017 session, around 640 University examinations were held, partly at the Gozo Campus in Xewkija and partly at the Examination Centre in Victoria. All Gozitan

students following courses at the University of Malta, now have the option to sit for their written exams in Gozo, in the vicinity of their homes.

## Book Presentation

In October 2016, Mr John Magro presented a copy of the book "A Century of Enterprise" to the library of the Gozo Campus. Present for the occasion were the author of the book, Mons Joseph Bezzina, and the book photographer and designer Mr Daniel Cilia. Another copy of the book was also presented to the Main Library of the University of Malta in Msida.





Mr John Magro presenting the book "A Century of Enterprise".

## First Meeting of the CCGC

The first meeting of the Consultative Committee for the Gozo Campus was held on Friday 17 March 2017. This first meeting was chaired by the University Rector, Professor Alfred J. Vella.

The committee is made up of Professor Louis F. Cassar, Rector's Delegate for the Gozo Campus, Ms Joyce Farrugia (Ministry for Gozo), Mr Joseph Grech (Gozo Business Chamber), Ms Hilda Grima (Gozo-based students' representative), Professor Mary Anne Lauri (University of Malta), Mr Joe Muscat (Gozo Tourism Authority) and Mr Manuel Xuereb (Grupp Universitarji Ghawdxin).

Also present for the meeting were Perit Christopher Spiteri and Perit Susanne Pace (Estates and Works), Mr Joseph Calleja and Mr Marvin Grech (Gozo Campus administrators) and, for part of the meeting, Dr Consiglia Azzopardi.

Presentations were delivered by Mr J. Calleja, who delved on the historical aspect of the campus, outlining milestone events covering the twenty-five years of its existence. Perit C. Spiteri presented an architectural brief on the envisaged maintenance and refurbishing works. He also described the proposed extension of the campus. Dr. C. Azzopardi outlined the programme she directs on Maltese Lace.

Among the various points discussed during the Committee meeting, it was agreed to approach the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture with a view to explore the possibility of offering courses in this area, in Gozo. Meanwhile, a follow-up meeting is to be held with the Gozo Business Chamber in order to identify specific lacunae in human resource development needs on the island. This could be done through focus group meetings with key stakeholders, and subsequently prioritise on both degree courses and short intensive training seminars, as well as on out reach, in particular, in rural sciences and agricultural practices.

Joseph Calleja is Administrator of the University of Malta - Gozo Campus.



The first meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Gozo Campus in progress.





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