

ORAL HISTORY CENTRE

Department of History

University of Malta

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Mission Statement

The heart of the Oral History Centre [OHC], which has just been established within the Department of History, is the Oral History Archive [OHA]. Being the first of its sort in the Maltese Islands, the OHA seeks to collect, catalogue, index, store and make available to researchers, audio and video recorded first-hand chronicles of the common people.

Led by this principle, the OHC is commissioning and directing a major oral history project to record genuine reminiscences and life histories of people who lived in the Maltese Islands during the twentieth century. Entitled: **MALTESE VOICES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**, this project gives preference to the recording of authentic oral recollections by working men and women, functional illiterates and members of minorities/subcultures, whose voices and material culture have been ignored by the established archives and by standard Maltese historiography.

Without excluding any other personal oral accounts, the underlying policy of the OHC is to create a space where repressed or hidden voices can be expressed, appreciated, recorded and preserved for today's researchers and for future generations. This concern is indicated by the following themes of research which make up this project:

Working class experiences: work, leisure and culture [I]

Female issues: outside and domestic work, leisure [II]

Fertility, contraception and childbirth [III]

Childhood, play and school [IV]

Voluntary social organizations [V]

Subcultures: both 'indigenous' and 'imported' [VI]

including folk singing (l-ghana)

Emigrants and immigrants [VIII]

Daily life experiences during War [IX]

Experiencing the Sea: Fisherfolk - work, life, traditions [X]

Although this list of topics forms the spinal column of our main oral history programme, the OHA also accepts, as part of its growing collection, other recorded testimonies by private individuals, on other themes.

Although officially established in 2001, the OHC already holds a substantial number of audio and video recorded interviews, most of which have been conducted by undergraduate and post-graduate students, as individuals or in teams. These interviewers have been provided with the necessary training (which includes a theoretical background, questioning techniques and recording practice), through the programme: 'The Use of Oral History', which is offered by the Department of History. Moreover, an increasing number of independent researchers are applying oral history as part of their on-going research work. These oral history practitioners are in continuous contact with the OHC: gaining technical support and, in turn, providing the Centre with new experiences and essential contacts in the community.

As well as directing projects and training oral historians, the OHC routinely deals with the

transcribing, cataloging and indexing of incoming tape recorded interviews. For this purpose standard stylistic requirements for transcribing are being adopted [Note that *The OHC Stylistic requirements for Transcribing*' sheet is available from the OHC].

In conformity with the fundamental principle to introduce back these oral chronicles to the community at large, from where they originated, the OHC plans to start publishing in full, or in parts, a selection of oral chronicles in a thematic series.

The bulk of the recorded interviews held in the OHA are by Maltese people living in the Maltese islands and abroad. However, our archive seeks to get hold of audio and video taped interviews with non-Maltese individuals who have had connections with Malta and the Maltese (including immigrants, refugees, ex-servicemen, settlers and travellers). Therefore, while the OHA collection is made up mostly of interviews in the Maltese language, it also includes recordings in English and Italian.

The Oral History Centre makes available to bona fide researchers and educationalists, all the video/audio taped interviews it holds, their transcripts, and collateral materials such as photographs and artifacts [subject to any conditions made by the interviewee]. For the present, tapes and all supporting material *cannot* be loaned out of the depository.

The Oral History Centre is responsible for all the recorded interviews and related material left in its care.

CONTACT:

Dr. John Chircop

Director OHC

Department of history

Faculty of Arts

University of Malta

Tel: (356) 32903084

e-mail:jchir@arts.um.edu.mt

One primary objective of the **Oral History Centre** is:
to create a space for the past experiences of the common people to be voiced, valued and recorded.



MALTESE VOICES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The following is a - periodically upgraded - list of interviews conducted as part of this Oral History project. The interviews entered in this catalogue are transcribed and available for public access in the OHA. A growing number of audio and video taped recordings, which vary in length, are still in the process of being transcribed and hence are not included here. A full catalogue of all interviews deposited in the OHA is available from our office.

The collection comprises a unique chronicle of life in 20th century Malta as told first hand by a growing number of people.

Each entry in this list indicates:

- i. Individual audio or video taped interviews, together with their respective transcript. These are indexed by a common deposit number [d.n.].
- ii. Roman numerals in square brackets, which indicate specific themes dealt with in the interview [corresponding to the list in the *Mission Statement*]. More details on the topics found in each interview are marked in the OHC index catalogue and the *Reference Aid* forms, which carry the corresponding deposit number of each tape.
- iii. Name and date of person interviewed, followed by nickname (in *italics*), if any, and his/her date of birth in round brackets.
- iv. Duration: length of interview in minutes.
- v. Details on the interview: name of interviewer, date, place and language used.
- vi. Any other material provided with the recording (including photos; birth; marriage; school or work certificates; copies of passports or artifacts), is indicated at the bottom of each entry.

[Deposit no.004]: Childhood in the country [IV] [11]
Callus Grace (b.1930)
audio tape. duration: 23 min.
Interviewed by Bezzina D., Siggiewi , 27 March 2000.
Lang: Maltese
set of photographs provided.

[Deposit no.005]: Childhood of a peasant girl [IV] [11]
Schembri Salvina (b.1937)
audio tape. duration:
Interviewed by Bezzina D., Siggiewi, 27 March 2000.
Lang. Maltese
set of photographs provided.

[Deposit no.006]: A MUSEUM member experiencing War[IX] [IV] [V1]
Cassar Lawrence (b.1935)
audio tape: duration 28 min.
Interviewed by Teeling R., Zabbar, 20 April 2000.
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.007]: Adolescence in the Sixties [1] [V] [V1]
Ancillieri Lawrence (b.1949)
audio tape. duration:
Interviewed by Spiteri D., Santa Venera, 1 April 2000.
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit No.008]: Working in Pyrotechnics (Fireworks) [1] [V1]
Bonello Ganni (b.1925)
audio tape. duration:
Interviewed by Micallef M., Had-Dingli, 12 May 2000.
Lang: Maltese
set of photographs and copies of marriage certificate provided.

[Deposit no.009]: Experiencing War in Gozo [1X]
Attard Antonio (b.1931)
audiotape. duration:
Interviewed by Buttigieg R., Rabat (Gozo), 28 May 2000
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0010] Greek Orthodox community in Malta [V] [V1] [V111].
Papas Vito Borgia
videotaped. duration: 30 min. approx.
Interviewed by Saillard W., Valletta, 18 April 2000
Lang: English

[Deposit no. 0011]: Being a Teddy Boy in the fifties [1] [V1].
Bezzina Salvu (b.1944)
videotaped. duration:
Interviewed by Anastasi J., Mosta, 7 May 2000
Lang: Maltese.

[Deposit No.0012]: Life as a member of the MUSEUM [1V] [V]
Vidal Joseph (b.1955)
videotaped. duration: 30 min.
Interviewed by Vella C., Msida, 25 April 2000
Lang: Maltese.

[Deposit no.0013]: War experience in Gozo as a soldier [1X]
Xerri Pawlu (b.1925)
audiotaped. Duration: 12 min.
Interviewed by Rapa E., Gozo 12 May 2000
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0014]: Working as a Tailor [1]
Bezzina Gorg
videotaped. duration: 30 min.
Interviewed by Aquilina M., Birgu, 15 December 2000
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0015]: Adventures of an Emigrant [V111] [1] [IX]
Busuttil Majsi (b.1919)
videotaped. duration 40 min.
Interviewed by Agius N., Zejtun, 14 December 2000
Lang: Maltese.

[Deposit no.0016]: NAAFI man turned merchant [1X] [1]
Fenech Alfred (b.1937)
videotaped: duration 30 min. approx.
Interviewed by Buttigieg E., Zabbar, 1 December 2000
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0017]: Work in the Dockyard [1] [V] [1X]
Grech Carmelo (b.1926)
videotaped: duration 36 min.
Interviewed by Attard J., Santa Lucia, 19 December 2000
Lang: Maltese
copies of safety on work certificates and other photos available

[Deposit no.0018]: Experiencing War and the Ration System [1X].
Mizzi John A. (b.1925)
videotaped: duration 23 min.
Interviewed by Caruana Galizia A., Birkirkara, 29 November 2000
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0019]: A Life spent working with in stone [1] [V1]
Cassar Zaren (b.1935)
videotaped: duration 19 min.
Interviewed by Scicluna K., Rabat, 27 Dec. 2000.
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0020]: University life during the War [1X]
Paris Joseph (b.1921)
videotaped: duration 12 min.
Interviewed by Helgerid M., Sliema, 7 December 2000
Lang: English

[Deposit no.0021]: Memories of a Dentist [1X]
Mercieca John (Dr.) (b.1912)
videotaped: duration 45 min.
Interviewed by Cremona A., Sliema, 17 December 2000
Lang: English
copy of photograph and article provided.

[Deposit no.0022]: Memories of a 'working woman' [1] [11] [V] [V1]
Biancardi Mary (wife of poet Nikol Biancardi)
audiotaped: duration 60 min.
Interviewed by Chircop J., Pieta', 27 September 1991
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0023]: Life as an Actor [1] [VI] [1X]
Buontempo Giuse'
a audiotaped: duration 50 min.
Interviewed by Chircop J., Gzira, 10 November 1991
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0024]: Memories of a Midwife in Cottonera [III] [1] [1V] [1X]
Bezzina Tereza
audiotaped: duration 110 min.
Interviewed by Chircop J., Bormla, 13 September 1991
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit No.0027]: An SDC (MUSEUM) Activist. [V] [1] [1X]
Borg Wistin (b.1921)
audiotaped: duration 25 min.
Interviewed by Borg C., Birkirkara, 17 April 2000
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0028]: A life in the SDC. (MUSEUM) [V] [1X] [1V]
Zammit Joseph (b.1916)
audiotaped: duration
Interviewed by Borg C., Birkirkara, 14 April 2000
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0029]: Past Farming [1] [11] [V1]
Mifsud Ganni 'Ta'Guda' (b.1930)
audiotaped: duration; 30 min. approx.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Zabbar, 18 Feb. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0030]: Living on a Farm [1] [11] [1V] [1X]
Maria Muscat 'Tal-Habib' (b.1898)
audiotaped: duration; 25 min. approx.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Mosta, 20 February 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0031]: On the fields [1] [IX]
Mifsud Ganni (b.1919)
audiotaped; duration: 25 min approx.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Magtab, 27 Feb. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0032]: A Peasant's Reminiscences [1] [V1]
Mifsud Bertu (b.1908)
audiotaped: duration: 31 min.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Mosta, Hal-Gharghur, 20 Febr. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0033]: Memories of a Farming family [1] [11]
Abela Annunzjata 'Ta'Canca' (b.1925)
audiotaped: duration 25 min.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Zejtun, 17 Feb. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0034]: Past ways of Labour on a farm [1] [1X]
Agius Mikiel (b.1915)
audiotaped: duration 30 min. approx.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Zebbug, 21 Feb.1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0035]: Life as a Peasant [1]
Azzopardi Gilard '*Ta'Matti*' (b.1917)
audiotaped: duration 30 min.approx.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Luqa, 17 Feb. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0036]: On the fields in the past [1]
Borg Censu '*Tal-Lira*' (b.1921)
audiotaped: duration 35 min. approx.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Luqa, 16 Feb. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0037]: Life as a Peasant [1] [V1]
Muscat Karmenu '*Tal-Mitalla*' (b.1920)
audiotaped: duration 30 min. approx.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Mgarr (Malta), 24 Feb. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0038]: Living in a Farm [1] [1V]
Gauci Rosa '*Tat-Tuta*' (b.1914)
audiotaped: duration -
Interviewed by Sammut C., Mosta, 23 Feb. 1999
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0039]:

[Deposit no.0040]: A Farmer's reminiscence [1] [1V]
Falzon Leonardu (b.1914)
audiotaped: duration 35 min.
Interviewed by Sammut C., Zebbug, 22 Feb 1999.
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0041]: Past farming lives [1]
Gatt Mose '*Ta' Lazzru*' (b.1929)
audiotaped: duration
Interviewed by Sammut C., Luqa
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0042]: Memories of a Gozitan Fisherman [X] [1]
Cordina Frans [with wife Maria]
audiotaped: duration 15 min.
Interviewed by Grech H., Fontana (Gozo), 21 June 2001
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0043]: A Fishing Family [X]
Xuereb John [and wife Elena] (b.1931)
audiotaped: duration 12 min.
Interviewed by Grech H., Xewkija (Gozo), 10 June 2001
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no.0044]: Life in a Fishing family [X]
Xuereb John (Junior)
audiotaped: duration 27 min.
Interviewed by Grech H., Victoria (Gozo), 9 June 2001
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no 0045]: Life as a Shipwright [X] [1]
Vella Anthony (b.1929)
audiotaped: duration
Interviewed by Grech H., Victoria (Gozo), 1 June 2001
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no. 0046]: Surviving a drowning tragedy [X]
Buttigieg Michael (b.1925)
audiotaped: duration
Interviewed by Grech H., Victoria (Gozo), 21 June 2001
Lang: Maltese

[Deposit no. 0047]: The migrant past of a cotton cultivator [V111] [1]
Saliba Ganni (b. 1910)
audiotaped: duration
Interviewed by Aquilina R., Ghasri (Gozo), 24 July 2001
Lang: Maltese
photographs of person on machinery and material used in weaving cotton

[Deposit no. 0048]: The Cotton and Lace making days of a woman [1] [11] [1X]
Vella Cetta (b. 1940)
audiotaped: duration; 30 min. approx
Interviewed by Aquilina R., Ghasri (Gozo)
Lang: Maltese
photographs of machinery and tools related to the manufacturing of cotton and lace

[Deposit no.0049]: Interwoven Past [11] [1V]
Memories of three sisters who worked cotton
Zahra, Rosa (b.1924), Maria and Giuseppa (both b.1923)
audiotaped: duration: 23min.
Interviewed by Aquilina R., Zebbug (Gozo), 27 July 2001
Lang: Maltese
Photos of lace products and the three sisters included.

[Deposit no.0050]: Memories of a Cotton Weaver [1] [11]
Cauchi Maria
audiotaped: duration 40 min.
Interviewed by Aquilina R., San Lawrenz (Gozo), 31 July 2001
set of photos included

[LAST UPDATE October 2001]

Excerpts from recorded interviews in the OHA

With English translations

- 1.** Living through the Second World War: i. The Victory Kitchens; ii. Surviving the Shelters.
- 2.** 'Everybody Saturday Night': Youth culture in the fifties and sixties.
- 3.** 'My Ass over here, my mind over there': Reminiscences of Wandering emigrants.
- 4.** On the Fields: Past experiences of Maltese Peasants.
- 5.** Exploiting the Sea: Life on the Fishing boats.

Living through the War:

“Real war does not get into the History books”
(Walt Whitman)



The following excerpts have been selected from our recordings as they provide fragments from the common people's experiences of the Second World War.

i. The Victory Kitchens

Grace Callus (b.1930):

‘Kont ghadni zghira u bil-guh! Kelli l-guh! U ma nafx minn fejn gabuha kellhom bicca hobz...u jien nigri warajhom [...]. Ommi filghaxija kienet tghidilna: “Mela issa nehodkom gox-xelter filghaxija, halli jekk immutu ma mmutux kollha. Imqar tibqghu intom jahasra! Ahna ha mmutu, issa kbar, imma intom ghadkom erbat itfal zghar”. U morna. U guh! X’nieklu ma kellna xejn. Dejjem bil-guh. Imbghad la damet naqra l-gwerra gew tal *protection* konna nghidilulhom... tal-*Victory Kitchen*. Kienu jtuna mill-*Victory Kitchen*. Daqqa naqra ghagin, u daqqa naqra hekk. Imma qatt ma xbajna. Qatt ma kellna, qatt ma kellna x’nieklu.

Darba minnhom kellna ghalqa pastard u gie wiehed nghidulu *Skaligg*, kien joqghod hawn. Qallha “Anni”, qallha “tbieghielhi dik l-ghalqa pastard?”. Qaltlu “Jien ahjar gibtli xkora dqiq ghal dawn it-tfal li ghandi”. Qallha “Mela ha ntik xkora dqiq u inti tini l-ghalqa pastard!”. Ommi qaltlu iva. U tatu l-ghalqa, jaqta’ l-pastard u gabilna xkora dqiq. Konna nghagnuha. Nghamlu l-ftajjar filghaxija, naqluhom. Pazzulati konna nghidulhom’.

[Translation:]

‘I was still small and hungry. I was hungry! And I don’t know from where, they brought a piece of bread...and I running after them [...] At night my mother used to tell us: “So we will now take you in the shelters at night, so that if we die, we will not die all together. At least you will still be alive! Alas! We can die, now we are old, but you are still four small kids”. An we went. Hungry! We did not have anything to eat. Always hungry. Then because the war took long, the ‘Protection’ people came, that was how we used to call them... those from the Victory kitchen. And they provided us from the Victory Kitchen. Sometimes a little pasta and, in other times, some little other. But we were never satisfied. We never really had to eat.

Ones we had a field full of cauliflower and a man, nicknamed *Skaligg* came, he used to live here. He told her [my mother] “Anni will you sell me all that cauliflower in you fields’. She replied “It is better to bring me a bag of flour for these children of mine”. He said “So I’ll provide you with a bag of flour and you will give me this field produce”. He gathered all cauliflower and brought us a bag of flour. We used to knead it in pancakes and fry them at night. *Pazzulati* we used to call them.’

Antonio Attard (b.1931):

'Il-Victory Kitchen ...konna niehdu pjacir immorru ta' tfal li konna. Imma l-Victory kitchen ma kienetx ittik biex tixba' tafx ! Imme kinna mmoru bil-kazzola f'idejna, biex ingibu nitfa, ittijna nitfa minestra, tigrizibeg go l-ilma, u kienu jtuna fazola u sardin. U ahna, konna niehdu pjacir noqghodu nghidu hemm barra, nistennew [tibda' tkanta]:

Minestra u ghagin

fazola u sardin

tal-victory kitchen!

...u kienu jghidu izjed twila. Imma jiena l-ohra nsejtha, ma nafhiex

[f'Ghawdex] jiena wahda niftakar, tar-Rabat, it-Triq ta' l-Ghajn. Kien fil-bidu tat-Triq ta' l-Ghajn

.Hemmhekk kinna mmorru. Imme l-irhula, jiena mbaghad ma nafx ta' l-irhula igifieri...kien hemm nahseb, ghax ahna tar-Rabat kienu jmorru kollha go dik'

[Translation:]

'The Victory Kitchen....we used to enjoy going there as children. But the Victory Kitchen did not give us enough to satisfy our hunger. But we used to go with a saucepan in our hands, to get a bit, they gave us a bit of minestrone, pasta 'beads' in water, and they also gave us beans and sardin. And we, waiting outside, used to enjoy [singing]:

Minestra and pasta

beans and sardine

from the Victory kitchen

...and it was longer. But I forget it. I don't know it.

[In Gozo] I only remember one of these kitchens at Rabat, *Ghain* street...we used to go there. It was at the very beginning of *Triq tal-Ghajn*. There we used to go. But the villages, I don't know about those in the villages...I think there were some, but we at Rabat, we all used to go to that one'.

John Mizzi (b.1925):

‘Ghall-ahhar...vicin ta’ l-ahhar tal-gwerra, qisu ghall-habta ta’ l-elf disa’ mija tlieta u erbghin, biex jikkontrollaw l-ikel ghaliex l-ikel kien skarsissimu... ma’ kienx hawn. Infatti kien hemm perjodu meta kien ser jispicca l-ikel, introducew il-*Victory kitchen*. Il-*Victory kitchen* kienet... kienu jifthu f’kull villagg, u kien jkun hemm *Victory kitchens* b’certu distanza min xulxin u kienu jimpjegaw in-nies. U dawn kienu jsajru l-ikel li tiehu int ir-razzjon. Kienu jghaddihulom [...] tmur bil-platt u jghatik sehemek.

Infatti hija parti mill-istorja illi fil-*Christmas* tal-*forty three* jew forty two, l-ikla tal-*Christmas* mill-*Victory kitchen* kienet bicca laham zghira zghira, bicca patata...xi nofs patata, jew patata maqsuma u nofs xemgha. Daqshekk kien il *Christmas dinner* ta’ dak iz-zmien.’

[Translation]:

‘At the end...near the end of the war, at about nineteen forty three, to control the food because it was very scarce... There wasn’t any. In fact, there was a time when all food was going to finish, and they introduced the Victory Kitchen. The Victory Kitchen...opened in every village. There used to be a Kitchen at every distance from each other and they employed people. And these cooked food that you take as ration. They used to provide us [...] you would go with a plate for your share.

In fact, it has become part of history that in the Christmas of nineteen forty three or forty two, Christmas dinner from the Victory Kitchen was made up of a very small piece of meat, a piece of potato...half a potato...and half a candle! That was Christmas dinner during these times !’

ii. Surviving the Shelters



Lawrence Cassar (b. 1931):

‘Meta jdoqq ir-raid, igri ghax-xelter, u jkun tant dlam li ma tarahiex it-triq. Avolja fuq il-bacir kien hemm erba’ lampi blu...Imma trid twahhal ghajnejk maghhom biex tara issibhomx ...[L’Isla] veru kien hemm xelters u darba ntradmu. Kien hemm fl-*entrance*, min jimblokka ruhhu hemmhekk, kien hemm hafna minnhom li kellhom *entrance* ohra, pero’ kienu naqra l-boghod biex tohrog minnhom...

L-ikel kien batut, il-hobz ...kull ma kellna kwart u nofs, li llum tiehu mall-*breakfast*. Kien ikollok tghaddi. Il-gwaj ghax hobz biss kellna. Mhux per ezempju m’hawnx hobz, niekol il-biskuttelli, niekol il-qaghaq...ghax id-dqiq kien ghalhekk biss...

Nirringrazjaw l’Alla li meta tidhol fix-xelter ma tihux xi marda... ghax dak li konna nghidulu l-iscables. Il-hakk u li tintela’ ponot kienet komuni. Ahna kellna ninhaslu bil-mohbi b’patalott taht il-bank bl-ilma, u nahslu idejna fih biex nieklu baxx. Imma kellna wiehed li kien jahsel idejh fil-laned kollha. Kien jghid “Mela jien biss !! Halli haddiehor ikun bhali!” Meta konna mmorru ghax-xelters ahna u li jsib ta’ l-ikel jiehd.

[Translation:]

‘When the raids sounded, run for the shelter and it would be so dark that you won’t see the street. Even though on the dock basin there were four blue lamps...but you’ll have to fix your eyes to find them...[in Senglea] it is true, there were shelters, ones they were buried in them. There were those who in the entrance used to block themselves there, there were others that had another entrance [to the shelter], but these were far away to get out of them...

Food was scarce, bread...all we were given was a quarter and a half [pounds], today you take this for breakfast! You had to be satisfied with that. The only trouble was that we had only bread. It was not as if there is no bread and you can eat biscuits or honey rings...because flour was used for [bread] only.

We thank God not to have been infected with any disease in the shelters...because there was ‘scables’. Itching and the growth of pimples was common. We had to wash ourselves secretly a water basin, and wash our hands in order to eat. But we had one person who used to wash his hands in all these containers. He used to say “Only myself ! Let everyone else be like me !” When we used to go to the shelters, he would eat all food which he found !’

Joseph Paris (b. 1921):

[original in English]

'[My father] was building [his own shelter], but it wasn't ready. We never slept in the shelters. We just convinced ourselves that we were safe. But, we were not safe at all. You see, because if it chopped, we had just one outlet, so we would be enclosed inside...

Then the Germans came and things became more serious on the 16th of January nineteen forty one... there was a whole evacuation of the three cities And we left with our father again in Birkirkara.

I had claustrophobia staying in the shelter, I used to be unhappy...So better on the roof, getting hit straight away. Better than waiting to be hit underground. Ha! Ha!'

Antonio Attard (b. 1931):

'Ahna x'hin nisimghu s-sirena ddoqq, omni qatt ma riedet tmur gox-xelter ...missieri kien bil-forn u omni kellha tnax tfal, u ma, ma kinetx tista' tmur gox-xelter. Kienet toqghod id-dar, u ahna konna mmorru maz-zija. Ta' tfal li ahna, konna mmorru ...

Ix-xelters kienu... toqba kbira fl-art, imbaghad tinzel bit-tarag...x'hin ikun l-air raid ghaddej. Kulhadd imwerwer. Imma ahna, ahna ta' tfal li konna, ma konniex noqoghodu nibzghu. Konna niehdu xkora...bit-tiben, u norqdu fuqha. U mbaghad kien ikun hemm il-brieghed !...ghax it-tiben igib il brieghed u l-hmieg heqq !...ikun hemm dawk il-brieghed jigdmuk f'ghonqok, f'ghonqok kollu brieghed... u idejna. Insomma kien hemm hafna ghaks kbir ... Ix-xelters kif tridhom ikunu nodfa ! In-nies bicca minnhom joqoghdu hemm il-hin kollu...il-gurnata kollha, ghax jibzghu johorgu.

Niekl u xi bicca hobz, niehdu xi zewg kaghkiet maghna. U hekk ngħaddu z-zmien...u kulhadd jghid ir-ruzarju...ir-ruzarju...u jitlob bil-kuruna.'

[Translation:]

'When we used to hear the sound of the air raids, my mother did not want to go to the shelter because...my father had a bakery and my mother had twelve children. She could't go to the shelter. She used to stay at home, and we used to go with my auntie. As children we used to go...

The shelters were...a large hole in the ground, you go down the stairs...whilst the air raid was going on. Everybody was terrorised. But we, as kids, we were not frightened. We used to take a bag filled with hay and sleep on it. And there were fleas...because hay brings fleas and filth, heqq!...Fleas used to sting. With your neck full of fleas...and our hands.

Anyway there was much misery. Shelters...how can they be clean! People, most of them, used to stay in there for so long...all day, for they feared going out...We ate a piece of bread and took some pastry rings with us. And we passed the time away like that...everybody saying the rosary...the rosary...and praying with the rosary beads.'

‘Everybody Saturday Night’:

Youth Culture in the fifties and sixties

Salvu Bezzina (b. 1944):

‘Jien spiccajt teddy boy ghax kont dilettant tal-muzika u kont dilettant taz-zfin. Ghallinqas nizfen hafna ma kontx, nara min jizfen, niehu pjacir, u ghat-tfajliet naturalment [...] Nizfnu, dak iz-zmien konna mmorru, 1957, konna mmorru ‘Ghar id-Dud’ jew il-‘Café Riche’, jew ir-‘Rockyvale’. Qed tifhem ? X’ imkien kien hemm il-kbar...u mbaghad beda ghaddej iz-zmien, qiesu naqas hafna dak iz-zmien, u bdejna immorru il-‘Bamboo’, il-‘Granada’...x’ imkien fejn dejjem...fejn kien ikun hemm daqsxejn zfin.

It-Teddy Boys kienu iben il-haddiema...*just* tixtri,...flus mill-inqas ghax dana paga hames liri u erbgha liri, u tara kif tghamel biex tixtri qalziet tat-Teddy Boys. Xi drink, dak iz-zmien mill-inqas, Koka, Pepsi, Kinnie, kultant birra, xi kultant daqsxejn wisiki, affarijiet bhal dawn. Imma bhala tmur tizfen, dejjem tajjeb... tiehu pjacir, u tara in-nies, u tfajliet dejjem tara ma saqajk...

Kien hawn kantanti min hawn...il-‘*Big Beaters*’ ezempju...antiki...ma kienux iddoqqu hemm kien hemm il gubox...l’aktar l’isib gubox fil-hwienet ...gubox sbieh hemm, twadbilhom tlett soldi, jew xelin iddoqq hamsa...tlett soldi il-wahda u hamsa xelin. Vuldieri anki s-‘Sirens’, hemm San Pawl, mmorru ukoll nizfnu...U dak iz-zmien hemm kien ikun ippakjat. Il-gimgha kien ikun hemm imma mhux daqs kemm kien ikun hemm is-Sibt...ghax ‘*everybody Saturday night*’...

Teddy Boy, l-ewwel ma jkun *liebes drainpipe trousers* jew biz-zip hawn..hafna buttuni, in-nokklu quddiem, jipprova jgibu iktar ippuntat, igibu qisu sunvisor ta’ karozza...hekk mgħotti...imejtu fuq mohhu vuldieri. Dak iz-zmien hekk konna nghanlu x-xghar...u qomos intellghu l-ghonq minn wara... bwiet daqsxejn *fancy* tal-qomos, hafna minnhom.’

[Translation:]

‘I ended up a teddy boy because I loved music and dancing. I did not know how to dance very well, but I used to like seeing people dance and naturally, the girls...In those times, 1957, we used to go dancing either at ‘Ghar id-Dud’ or ‘Café Riche’ or at ‘Rockyvale’. Somewhere else there were others, larger [dancing places]...and then as time passed, and as this slowed down...we used to go to ‘Bamboo’, ‘Granada’...any place where a little dancing took place.

Teddy boys were working-class kids...with little money, because a wage was five or four pounds, and you would do anything to buy a teddy boy trousers. A drink at that time, not in abundance, Coke, Pepsi, Kinnie, sometimes a beer and at others a little bit of whisky, things like this, but going to dance was always a pleasure, always good... take pleasure seeing people and girls everywhere...

There were local singers...The ‘Big Beaters’, for example. There was the juke-box...most of them in the bars...very nice juke-boxes these were, you put three pence or one shilling, three pence each or five with one shilling. At the ‘Sirens’, at St.Paul’s [Bay], we used to go to dance there also. And at the time it used to be packed with people. There used to be people on Fridays but not as much as on Saturdays...because ‘everybody Saturday night’...

A teddy boy, the first thing he wore was a drainpipe trousers either with a zip or with a lot of buttons, with the large curl in front of the eyes, always trying to twist it sharply, like a car’s sunvisor on his forehead. At those days this is how we used to make our hair...and shirts with the collar up our neck...with pockets a little bit fancy, most of them.’

L.Ancilleri (b.1949):

‘Ahna per ezempju li twelidna wara l-gwerra, it-tfulija taghna hafna drabi kienet imdawwra bit-tkissir tal-gwerra... grupp ta’ tfal telghin b’kollox imkisser ...

Kellek l-effett tar-radji jiet li bdew jinstemghu f’Malta. Jien niftakar l-ewwel *fridges* u *washing machines* dehlin fid-djar taghna u l-effett li kellhom fuq il-genituri taghna. Ahna konna ta’ l-ewwel li bdejna nsajru fuq il-cooker u ta’ qabilna jsemmghulna l-fuklar u l-hatab [...].

Allura ahna qed nitkellmu fejn l-aktar haga li kienet effettiva fuqna bhala zghazagh... kien it-talkies u l-passiggjati tax-Xghajra. Kont tmur u litteralment tara mitejn, tlett, erba’, hames mitt ruh, sitt mitt ruh, fi pjazza kbira jippassigaw l’hemm u l’hawn, l’hemm u l’hawn, u inti dejjem tixtarr biex tara ssibx xi tfajla biex min hemmhekk issir il-girlfriend tieghek jew tghamel date.

Ir-radju, speċjalment il-B.F.B.S., ir-radju tal-Forzi Armati, jitkellem bl-Ingiliz, jaghmillek is-songs ta’ dak iz-zmien. Allura kellek *exposure* ghall-ingliz...kellu effett kbir fuqna... Dan kien zmien allura tal-bidu tal-‘Beatles’...ta’Elvis Presley u Little Richards, qed tifhem? Dawn kienu assocjati xi ffit jew wisq mal-guvintur meqjusa mqarba...ma’ l-imqarbin. Kienu jmorru fl-irhula, fil-barrijiet tax-xorb, hwienet tax-xorb ta’ l-irgiel biss, iddoqqu l’guboks, il-famuza guboks. Jintefghu f’dawn il-bars, eh!!! ...u joqghodu jizfnu litteralment hemm, u niftakar subien bejniethom, zghazagh bejniethom, eh!!!... ghalina kienu kbar. Bin-noklu niezel fuq mohhom, bil-gijns inkaxxat...qisu lenbut ma saqajhom...ma nafx kif kienu jdeffsuh jigifieri. Iz-zraben bil-ponta, ponta ma tispicca qatt u bit-tkaken gholjin.

Il-barbetti ... nezlin ihokku max-xuftejn. Qed tifhem? Dawn kienu l-imqarba. Haga ohra li rrid nghid li l-Knisja bdiet tkellimna kontra *l’french kiss*...kien hemm censura kbira sal-1964, mara ma tistax tilbes bikini. Niftakar konna mmorru fejn il-breakwater ha naraw ir-Wrens ghax kien hemm in-nisa bahrin bl-uniformi Ingliza li kienu jghumu bil-bikini fil-port.’

[Translation:]

‘We, for instance, were born after the war, our childhood was surrounded with the destruction left by the war...a group of children growing up with everything destroyed. You had the effect of the radios that started to be listened to in Malta. I remember the first fridges and washing machines entering our homes and their effect on our parents. We were the first to start cooking on cookers, as those before us used to cook with wood and fire. We are talking of those things which effected us as youth...this was the talkies and the walks (passiggjati) at Xghira. You would go there and literally see two hundred, three, four, five, six hundred people, in a square, all walking up and down, here and there, and one always looking around in search of a girlfriend...to make a date.

The radio, especially the B.F.B.S. of the British military services, used to broadcast in English the songs of the day. So, the exposure to the English language...had a tremendous effect on us...

This was the time of the early Beatles...and then Elvis Presley and Little Richards. These were associated with these guys who were a little troublesome...They used to go to the villages, in the bars frequented only by males, in order to play the juke-box, the famous juke-box. They used to dance there, I remember...males with males, youths between themselves, eh!!!...for us they were grown ups. With the long curl on their forehead, with their jeans trousers like funnels stretching their legs...I don’t know how they used to wear that. A sharp pointed shoes and heels. Their long painters left to grow towards their lips...These were the troublesome ones.

One other thing I would like to add, the Church used to condemn the french kiss. There was great censorship... up till 1964, women could not wear a bikini. I remember we used to go near the breakwater to see the Rens, these were English women sailors, who used to swim in their bikinis in the port.’



‘My ass over here, my mind over there’:

Reminiscences of wandering emigrants

Majsi Busuttil (b.1919):

‘Fl-1939, sewwa, jiena ridt immur l-Awstralja fuq il vapur...ghax dik il-habta hekk konna nsiefru, tahrab, minghajr ma tkun taf fejn sejjer...Morna Haifa l-ewwel port. Hattejna l-faham hemm. Min hemm morna fil-*Black Sea* biex nghabbu t-trab tal-hadid, u m’ghabbejniex ghax iccaqlaq moviment tal-gwerra. Ergajna lura, ghabbejna crate biex suppost ikollna mmorru l-Awstralja...Imbaghad bdiet il-gwerra...Insomma ghabbejna bit-truck tal-hadid, qisu deheb kien, u hadnieh l-Amerka. Ghamilna vjegg ghall- Amerka. Ghall- Amerka...bejn 27 jew 28 *days*.

Imbaghad spiccajt fl-Amerka. Mhux spiccajt, hrabtlu l-vapur...mort Baltimore... Konna jien u iehor Ingliz, hu konna inzilna l-art nixorbu tazza birra. U lil dak l-Ingliz, insumma, ghidtlu “sa nhallik”, ghidlu “inti gej” ? Qalli “le..ghax jien engineer” u dan qalli li “mhux lant li nitlifha”. Dhalt is-*city* ta’ Baltimore, sebt fejn noqghod...Kelli l-problemi [u sibt noqghod] fis- ‘Salvation army hotel’ f’ Baltimore [...]

Wara issitiljajt New York.... Ma dawk in-nies tal-Maltin. Gewwa New York imbaghad sebt ix-xoghol, sabuli x-xoghol. Insomma *dishwasher* fil Kcina ... imbaghad mort fl-army ... u ergajt tlaqt ghax weggajt sieqi...Kien hemm il-Maltin. Kienet ‘*the best of company*’ ...li tghodd kienet ghalina, ghax konna nghixu. Ghalkemm ahna ikollna dik in-naqra *jealousy* ghal xulxin, imma l-ahjar socjeta ghalina innifisna, ghax konna nghixu lil xulxin fl-istess hin, mhux ser naraw xi Malti bil-guh. [Il-Malti] tkun bil-guh jitimghak, tifhimha, ghax kien hemm xi giex restoranti, kull min jigi fuq il vapur li jahrab u dan jintafa hemm u kien jitimghu, jtih tama ta’ l-ikel [izda xorta], konna nghidu Ha! Haj ! “my ass over here u my mind over there”...Il-hajja tieghi hekk qattajta mitlufa.’

[Translation:]

‘In 1939, exactly, I wanted to go to Australia on a ship...because at that time this was the way to emigrate, escaping without knowing where you were going... We went to Haifa the first port. We unloaded coal there. From there we proceeded to the Black Sea to load iron dust, but we didn’t because war broke out. We went back, carrying a crate so that supposedly we would go to Australia. [taking] between 27 to 28 days.

Then I ended up in America. I escaped from the ship. I went to Baltimore... Myself and an Englishman went on land to have a beer together, and I said to him “I am going to leave you” and asked him “are you coming?” He said “No...because I am engineer” and he told me “it is not opportune to loose this job”. I went into Baltimore city and found a place to sleep...I had problems...but found were to live in the ‘Salvation Army hotel’...

Afterwards, I settled in New York, with the Maltese...In New York I found work. Anyway, they found me work as a dishwasher in a kitchen...then I joined the army...but again I resigned because I hurt my leg...

There were Maltese. It was the best of company...that suited us, for we could live with each other. Even if there was some jealousy between us, it was the best society for us, for we lived and helped each other, we did not leave any Maltese without food. [The Maltese] fed those who were distressed for there were a couple of restaurants, and all those who came in as stowaways and escaped, found a place there and found to eat...[About Malta] we used to say “Ha Ha! My ass over here, my mind over there”...I spend my life like this....forgotten.”



Ganni Saliba (b.1910):

‘Jiena l-ewwel li emigrajt mort Franza. Taf kemm kelli? *Seventeen years* kelli u illum ghandi wiehed u disghin. Ara kemm jigi...l-1927. U `mbaghad minn hemmhekk morna nahdmu x-xatt, jghidulu fil-Guletta [Goletta], fejn jidhlu l-vapuri, l-port... fix-xatt, fuq il-vapuri ta’ Franza. F’Marsilja... ma kontx nistgha nahdem minghajr karti. Ahna karti, passaport, biss kellna. Rid ikollok, nghidu ahna, ‘identity card’ tal-pajjiz. ‘Karta stranjiera’, bil-Malti nghidula, umbaghad kienu jtellfuni hafna xoghol, ghax kienu jehduna id-depot, il-pulizija. U x’hin jehduk id-depot, kienu jehdulek ismek u jghidlek ‘Purkez’. Dak il-hin ma tantx iwahhlek, forsi iwahhlek nghidu ahna ‘*fifty francs*’, ghax hemmek bil-franki kienu. Jekk jerga’ jaqbdok iwahhlek doppju. U mbaghad morna l-Afrika min hemm. Bil-vapur...dejjem bil-bahar.

Xi gurnata u nofs, l-ewwel dhalna Tunes umbaghad minn Tunez ergajna vapur iehor u morna Marsilja [...] Kien hemm Maltin hafna. Franciz kont tghallimt ghax niddobba nixtri mill-hanut... imma kelli mmur l-Afrika ghax il-Pulizija ta’ Franza kienu xebbewna jaqbduna. Tkun sejjer ghax-xoghol insomma, jigu jghidulek ‘la papier’ bhal li kieku, bil-Franciz ‘Ha nara l-karti’. [Mort] Bona. L’Afrika kont qbadt ma’ kumpanija li tiehu l-bhejjem min hemm ghal Franza, Marsilja, ghall-laham. l-Gharbi hemmhekk kont nitkellmu sewwa.’

[Translation:]

‘I first emigrated to France. Do you know how old I was? Seventeen years I had and today I have ninety one. Count them out...in 1927. And from there we went to work in the Harbour known as Guletta [Goletta], where ships moored... on French ships. In Marseilles...I could’t work without the documents. We only had passports. You had to have a sort of ‘identity card’ of the place. ‘*Karta stranjiera*’ we call it in Maltese, and then they made me loose so much time, because they [the police] would take us to the police depot and there they would take your name and say to you ‘Purkez’. That time he would not fine you, he would make you pay let’s say fifty francs, for there they paid in francs. If he caught you again he would make you pay double that sum. Then we went to Africa from there. With the ship...always by sea. A day and a half it took.

First we went to Tunis and then again, with another ship, to Marseilles. There were many Maltese. I learned French in order to be able to buy from the shop...But I had to go to Africa, because the French police, hastled us. You were going to work and they came to ask you for “la papier”, as if in French “I want to see your papers”. Then, I went to Bona. In Africa I had engaged with a company that transported cattle from there to Marseilles for meat. I used to speak Arabic very well.’

On the Fields:

Past experiences of Maltese Peasants

Marija Muscat 'Tal-Habib' (b.1898)

'Dejjem fir-raba' jien...kont nirgha 'n-nghag, imbaghad meta tfarfarna, kont immur naqta' t-tadam...talli konna nifilhu ahna. Imbaghad bdejt nahdem l-eghlieqi. Dak iz-zmien bl-imghazqa, ghax hekk konna...Ahna bil-qbiela konna u kellna ftit frank. Insomma, jien u huti, konna nahdmu flimkien.

[Il-prodott] konna nihduh ghand il-pitkal, hemm kien jispicca. Konna nlestuh filghaxija u jmur bih filghodu missieri. Imbaghad bdejt immur bih jien. Kelli baghal u kont immur jien. Birkirkara kont immur jien. Qabel missieri kien imur il-Marsa. Bormla kien imur ukoll...Konna naslu, nhottu, jghidlek "X' gibt" ...u jtina lura l-mezez vojta. Dejjem l-istess rutina kuljum.

Kienu jifthu kmieni dak iz-zmien mhux bhal issa, kwazi tista' tghid il-lejl kollu. Ahna kellna l-kumdata' taghna, mmorru x'hin irridu, min imur filghaxija, min imur filghodu, min imur mal-gurnata u hu qieghed hemm jistenna. Li niehdu jikteb kollox, imma ahna ma konniex nithallsu kull darba. Qiesu meta jispicca l-istagun, nghidlu biex jghamel il-kont...U anke sitt xhur, ghax mhux kollox xorta. Il-patata konna nbighuha ghas-safar ukoll, bicca minnha ghas-safar. Meta ma kienx ikollna aktar x'nieklu kont nghidlu biex jghamilli l-kont.'

[Translation:]

'I was always in the fields...I used to herd sheep and when we grew up, I used to go picking tomatoes... as much as we could. Then, yes, I started to work the fields. At that time with the hoe, for that's how we were...Our lands were rented and had some free land. Anyway, me and my siblings, worked on it together.

We used to take [the produce] to the middle man [il-pitkal], there it always ended. We used to prepare it at night and early next morning my father would take it there. Later, I began to go with it myself. I had a mule and I used to go with it myself...I carried it all to Birkirkara. Previously, my father used to go to Marsa. He went to Bormla also... On arrival, we unloaded and he [the middle man] asked "what have you brought?"... and he gave me back the empty containers. Always the same daily routine.

The market used to open daily and very early in the morning, not like today, one could say nearly all night. We had our easier ways, we could go when we wanted, there were those who went during the night, others who went during the day and found him [the middle man] always there waiting. He wrote everything which we brought, but we were not paid each time we went. Nearly with the end of every season, I used to ask him to settle our bill...Even every six months, because not everything was the same. We sold potatoes for export also, part of it for export. When we did not have more to eat, I would ask him to settle the bill.'



Ganni Mifsud (b.1919)

‘Min mindu bdejt nahdem, il-gurnata fiha tnax il-siegha, u jekk jista’ jkun kont nahdem sittax. Meta kont immur ir-razzett, kont insib x’ naghmel ukoll ghax jew taghlef bhima, jew jekk ikun zmien il-hsad, kont immur nghamel l-irbabat biex norbot. L-anqas bil-lejl ma kont nieqaf kultant. [Ir-raba’] kien tal-Gvern il-bicca l-kbira. Kien hemm naqra taghna. Kull sitt xhur konna nhallsu: fil-Milied u f’ Santa Marija.

Fuq il-pitkalija... tridni nghidlek kif inhi? Min kienu jarawh darba fis-sena, jisirqulu li jkollu u min imur ta’ spiss, dak igahgah kien magghom. Bhali, kien jghamillek *voucher* fl-gholi u jfottik fil-piz. Qatt ma hadt oggett hemmhekk u sibna l-piz... Jirrangaw bejniethom il-pitkal u l-venditur... Il-fottament l-aktar li kien isir fil-piz.’

[Translation:]

‘From when I started to work, the day has twelve hours and if possible I would work sixteen. When I went to the farm, I would find other things to do, either feeding an animal or during the harvest season, I would go to make ‘*irbabat*’ to tie up. Sometimes, I did not stop even during the night. [The fields] were mostly owned by the Goernment. A small parcel of them was ours. We payed rent every six months: at Christmas and on St.Mary’s day.

On the pitkalija [the green market], you want me to say how it worked? Those who went there only ones a year were robbed of their true worth of produce, and the others who went more frequently, would fare a little better. For ones like me, the middleman used to quote a very high price and cheat me in the weighing of the products... The middleman and the vendors would always sort things between themselves... the worst cheating occured with the weights in use.’

Marija Zahra (b.1923)

‘Konna mmorru ma’ missieri, kien jghidilna “imxi halli nizirghu il-qoton”. Imbaghad konna niehdu z-zerriegha. Hu jaghmel it-toqob u ahna nixhtulu z-zerriegha, insaqquha bi ffit ilma, jghattiha u jinsiha sa x’hin tinbet. Kienet issir sigra daqshekk [tlett piedi] u mbaghad taghmel il-gewz, u mbaghad tiftah u ssir tajjar. Imbaghad kont iddur taqtghu...ghax-xahar ta’ Mejju, fi zmien il-bettieh ridna nizirewh...xoghol tas-sajf kien. Ehe, dak kien irid ix-xoghol, u mbaghad ried jinqata’ fi xkejjer u mbaghad kont trid tiftu, ‘indommuh’ konna nghidu. Naghmluh gozz qoton, inxemxuh mahlug u mbaghad konna immorru indoqquh...iz-zerriegha bajda u z-zerriegha hamra kienu jintgharfu. Xorta’ indaqs. Min dawn [tal-ahhar] kienu jaghmlu il-kutri u l-imhadet.’

[Translation:]

‘We used to go with our father, he used to say to us “Let’s go to sow cotton”. And then we took with us the seeds. He used to dig holes and we threw seeds in them, water it a little, cover it and forget about it until it starts to spring. It would grow in a small plant this size [three feet] and then it would bud and ..then opens into cotton. Then one would go around picking it...by the month of May, during the melon season we had to sow it....it was a Summer’s labour. Ehe, it needed so much work. Then it would be picked, put in bags and then one would open [separate the cotton] it...we used to say ‘indommuh’. We then gathered it in piles and put it under the sun to dry, and started to work it...The white or reddish seed were recognised. They were the same size. From [the red cotton] they used to make blankets and pillows.’

EXPLOITING THE SEA:

Life on the Fishing boats

An Invitation

The Oral History Centre

An Oral History Centre is being organized under the auspices of the Department of History, the University of Malta. All those who have utilized oral sources as part of their studies, dissertation, or as a private initiative, are invited to donate any recordings (in audio or vide tape), which they still possess, to this OHC.

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Contact:

Dr. John Chircop

Department of History

University of Malta

Tel:3290 3084

e-mail: jchir@arts.um.edu.mt

The Oral History Archive

Information

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HELP:

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CONTACTS:

The Oral History Centre is interested to learn of potential interviewees, who have an experience to recollect (and who would like to be recorded), or from their relatives or friends. If you can help, please contact the Director of the OHC.

CATALOGING:

In order to aid the processing of transcripts and cataloging as well as to facilitate access to researchers, each interviewer is asked to indicate key topics [key words] dealt with in the interview on the *Reference Aid* form. A summary of each interview is also to be found on this form.

The main themes dealt with in every interview are indicated in square bracketed roman numerals [e.g [III]] corresponding to the thematic list found in the *Mission Statement*.

All audio and video tapes deposited in the OHA are given a *deposit no.* which corresponds to their transcript and all other material accompanying them.

OPENING HOURS:

Tuesday, Friday: 11.00 -15.00 hrs.

By appointment.

Copyright on access and use

In order to avoid problems at a later stage, a set of standard forms have been designed to regulate access and use of the recorded oral chronicles deposited at the Oral History Centre. The **Clearance and copyright** form is filled by the interviewee to assign copyright to the Oral History Centre. This is very important, as normally it is the narrator who has the actual copyright of the information he/she provides on tape.

The Deed of deposit form is to be filled by the interviewer in order to grant all rights, on the recording being deposited, to the Oral History Centre.

Indeed, the copyright on all the recorded interviews commissioned by our Centre instantly becomes the property of the OHC.

Clearance and copyright form

Oral history depository

Department of History

University of Malta

The purpose of this form is to ensure that your audio/video recorded interview is deposited in the Oral History Archive at the Oral History Centre of the Department of History, the University of Malta, and utilized in accordance with your wishes.

Tapes and all related material will be preserved as a permanent public reference resource for use in research, publication and educational activities only.

If you wish to limit public access to your contribution (for up to a twenty five year period) please state this and any other conditions you may wish to make:

I hereby assign the copyright of my interview to the Oral History Centre, the Department of History, University of Malta.

Signature: _____

date: _____

Full Name:

Date:

Address:

Tel./fax/ e-mail:

For official Use Only

Deposit No:

Series Title:

Length in minutes:

Registered by :

DEED OF DEPOSIT

ORAL HISTORY CENTRE

Department of History
University of Malta

To be filled by interviewer/depositor

Full Name:

Address:

Occupation:

Age:

I am hereby depositing in the Oral History Archive [in the OHC], at the Department of History, the University of Malta, the audio/video recordings of my interview/s conducted by me with _____
on _____
for research and educational purposes only.

I grant to the above Oral History Centre all of the rights I possess in those recordings. I understand that the OH Archive at the Department of History grants me license to make and to authorise other bona fide researchers to make use of the contents of these recordings.

The foregoing gift and grant of right is subject to the following restrictions (if any):

Sign. by depositor:

For official Use

Deposit no:

Registered by:

(Full name and sign)

TIPS TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

Preparations:

1. An informal pre-interview meeting with the person you want to record is recommended: this will help you to start knowing him/her better. Take the opportunity to note any problems which you think will influence the interview. You can jot down short biographical details [fill in the **Biography Card**] with the help of the interviewee. You should also explain the purpose of your interview.
2. Set date and place for the interview. Always keep in mind the suggestions given by the person in focus. The interview should be conducted in a location which is comfortable and without noise distractions.
3. Prepare yourself well through background research on the subject. Read about and acquire as much information, by all means possible, on the specific themes of your concern.
4. When structuring the interview questions, keep in mind the topics of your interest and relate these to the person you are going to record.
5. Each question must be short. Ask only one question at a time. Avoid questions that solicit simple yes or no answers. Ask open-ended questions.
6. Although you need not follow the exact sequence of the questions you prepare, a structured question list will provide you with a clear plan and logical sequence. This will give cohesiveness to your interview.
7. Check that your equipment is in working order before parting for the interview. Always use good quality tape.
8. Arrival on location: Greetings. Then, set your video or audio recorder in the best possible position, without hindering communication and eye contact. Do not hold microphone in hand. You will have to test the voice level of the person concerned before starting the actual recording.

The Interview:

9. Always treat your host/interviewee with the expected courtesy. Make yourself available to answer any questions he/she might want to put to you.
10. Begin the interview by recording short biographical details on your informat. Then proceed with your questions.
11. During the interview, make the interviewee feel relaxed. *For this reason:* minimize paper work; be careful of any formal and paternalist tonality of voice or body gestures; speak clearly; adapt physical posture accordingly.
12. Do not challenge what the person is recollecting, even if it sounds strange or exaggerated. Use probing questions.
13. Never interrupt his/her reminiscences. If need be, slowly ask other questions to redirect the narrator to talk on those issues of your concern.
14. Be careful not to lead or 'spoon-feed' by your questions or gestures.
15. Do not stop the recorder except when asked to by the interviewee. If asked to, stop the recording at once.

16. Interviews should not take more than sixty to ninety minutes each session. Be alert to any signs of fatigue, unrest or boredom.
17. After finishing the interview, do not 'pack and go': leave politely, with the intention of keeping a friendly contact. Courtesy and gratitude towards your host are to be shown throughout the interview process and afterwards.
18. Make sure that you have the interviewee's approval to be quoted and to deposit the tape in the Oral History Centre. For copyright protection ask the interviewee to fill the **Copyright and Clearance** form. One can choose to record his/her consent on tape.

After the Interview:

19. Label the tapes carefully. Labels should include full name of person interviewed, place, date and time of the interview as well, as the sequence number of the tape. Write your name and duration of the interview in minutes.
20. A full transcription of the interview has to be done. When transcribing, keep in mind: that an EXACT transcription of the oral recollection is required. Therefore, do not edit, juxtapose or standardize language (e.g. transcribe accent or dialect). The OHC can help in the transcribing and in the double-checking process, in order to secure that the transcription is as accurate as possible. The Centre also provides a sheet - *'The OHC Stylistic requirements for transcripts'* - in English and Maltese.
21. List ten or more key themes [as key words] which have been discussed during the interview. Fill in the **Reference Aid** form. You can download this and all other necessary forms from this web site.
22. Expand on the bits of field notes which you may have jotted down during the interview. Note anything which you consider important and which had a bearing on the recording process. Take note of the information supplied to you after the recording. Also underline problems, both technical and human, which you faced during the whole experience: this will help in your future interviews.
23. Getting to deposit your tapes: Together with the original recording, you should also bring in a copy of the transcript and the ready-filled **Deed of Deposit** and **Copyright and Clearance** forms. Any collateral material, artifacts or documents, including photographs, personal diaries, certificates or family papers, should accompany the respective video or audio cassette/s. Make sure that all the supplementary material is labelled and indexed. It would also be helpful if you can deposit a copy of the correspondence you had with the interviewee.
24. Remember to give back all documents/material which the interviewee has loaned for copying, accompanied by a 'Thank You' note.
25. It is recommended that you provide the interviewee with a copy of the recorded interview and/or transcript.

These were basic tips to help you organize and conduct a successful oral history interview. However, it is recommended that interested interviewers contact the OHC for guidance and technical support.

Records of Daily Affairs

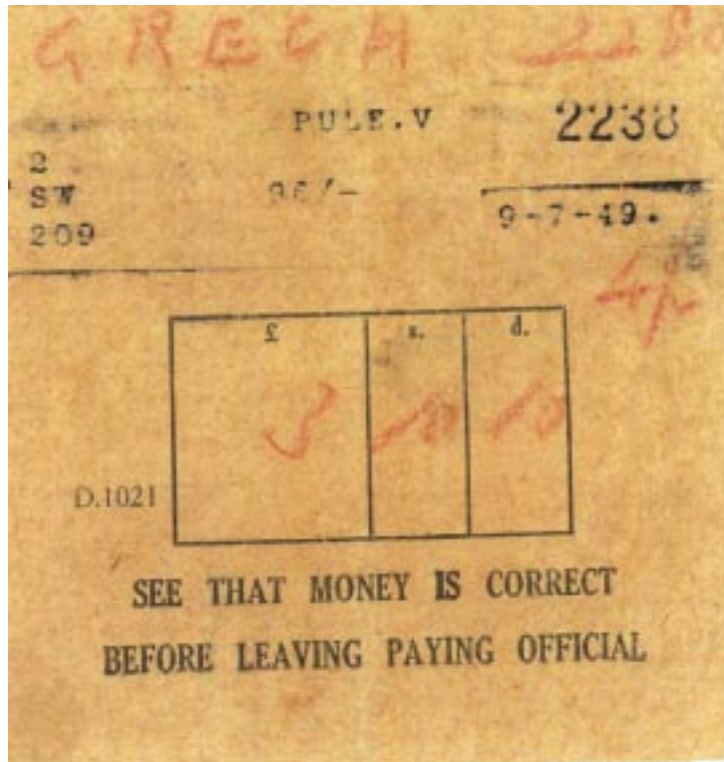
Through its oral history work in the community, the Oral History Centre is bringing into light, giving value and preserving people's personal and family artifacts, photographs, memoirs and other papers. Donated by interviewees, to supplement their oral recollections, this material - either original or in copy - is cataloged and held in the transcripts section in the OHA. The following are a few samples of the personal or family papers, documents and photographs which supplement the oral recordings in our collection:

Ritratti mill-imghoddi

Old family photographs



Il-paga (£3.00) ta' haddiem tat-Tarzna bid-data 9 ta' Lulju 1949.
 A dockyard worker's wage- £3 - envelope dated 9 July 1949.

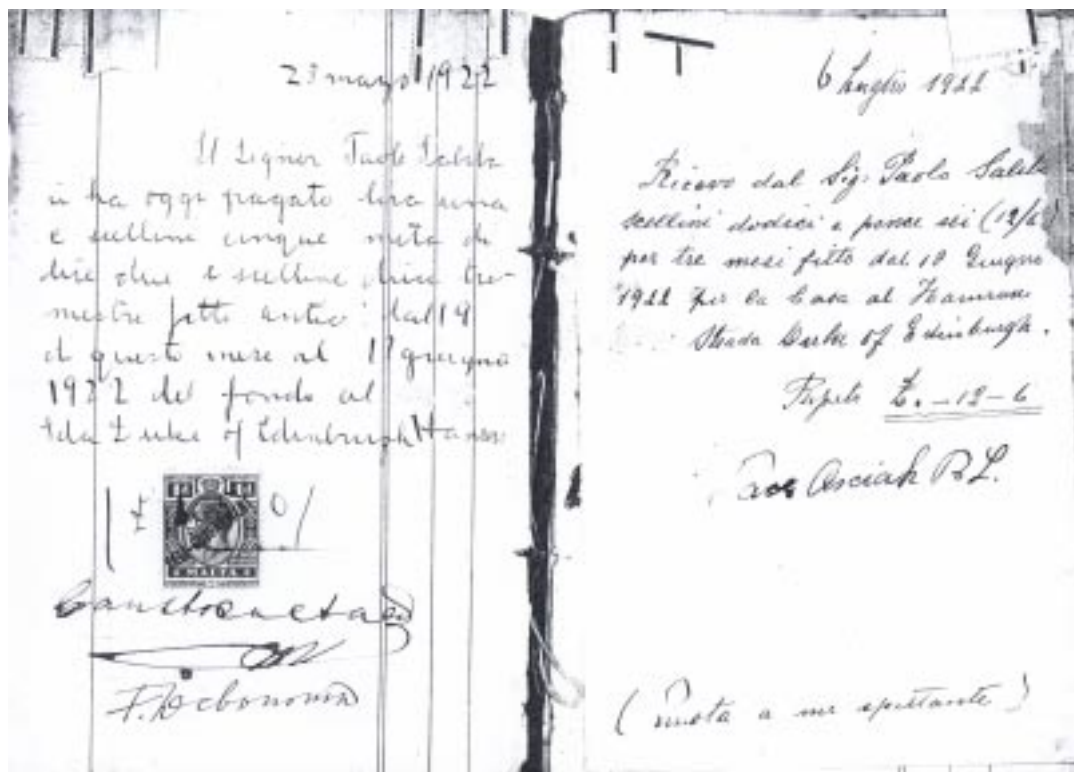


Ktieb tal-Qbiela ghall-ghalqa lill-Elena Sciberras u Vincenzo Parnis, datati 20 ta' Jannar 1907 u 28 ta' Jannar 1908. Bit-Taljan.

Rent Pay book marking the payment for the yearly rent of fields - E. Sciberras and V. Parnis. In Italian.



Ktieb tal-kera ghal dar fil-Hamrun imhallsa min Pawlu Saliba.
 A Quarterly rent pay book for a house in Hamrun paid by Pawlu Saliba.



Ktieb iehor tal-kera tad-dar ta' Giovanni Falzon bid-data 7 t' Awissu 1944/45
 Another House Rent Pay book (Giovanni Falzon) dated 7 August 1944/45. In Maltese.



Certifikat tal-Maghjudija ta' Pius Borg, mahrug mill-Parocca ta' Birkirkara, juri data ta' twelid 14 t' Awissu 1896.
Baptismal record of Pius Borg, issued from the Birkirkara Parish Church, showing the 14 August 1896 as his date of birth.



EXTRACT FROM THE BAPTISMAL RECORDS HELD IN THE PARISH OF B'KARA, MALTA.

Name Pius

Surname Borg

Father's Name Carmel

Mother's Maiden Name M. Concetta Mallia lawfully married

Place of Birth B' Para

Date of Birth 14th August 18 ninety six (96)
15th



Can. Vincent Micallef
Provost & Archpriest.

Biography Card and Reference Aid form

An interviewer can utilise the **Biography card** presented here. Filling this card will further facilitate cataloging and provide ready at hand information on all interviewees.

In order to help the indexing process, each interviewer/depositor should fill in the **Reference Aid form**, by listing ten key topics discussed in the interview and including a short summary.

BIOGRAPHY CARD

Dep.no.

Isem u kunjom:

Full name

Post u data tat-Twelid:

Place and date of Birth

Ahwa:

Brothers and sisters

Xoghol tal-missier:

Xoghol tal-Omm:

(Father's and mother's occupation)

Safar/Emigrazzjoni: fejn (Where)
emigration

dati (dates)

Xogholijiet: fejn
occupations

dati

Bliet jew irhula fejn ghex/ghexet:

Places where he/she lived

Tfal:

Children

Xoghol fil-prezent:

Present Occupation

Xi noti biografici ohrajn:

Other biographical notes

Reference Aid Form

*Oral History Centre
Department of History
University of Malta*

Deposit no:
Depositor [full name]
And/or interviewer:

Details on Interview:

Interviewed person [full name]:
Date:
Place:
Duration:

In order to help in the indexing process and to facilitate research kindly fill in the following:

a. **Enter the key topics dealt with in your interview [Use Key words]:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

b. **Please write a short summary of the above oral reminiscence:**

Oral History Centre Newsletter

This space is left for the biannual publication of the official OHC newsletter. The first issue is under construction and will be available in March 2002.

As well as furnishing information on the activities, and the new acquisitions of the Oral History Centre and Archive, this newsletter provides an open space for discussions on both the theoretical and technical aspects of oral history as practiced in the Maltese islands and abroad.

Brief research reports, descriptions/plans for oral history projects, articles and commentaries, are welcome and will be included.

All correspondence to be sent, preferably by e-mail, to the Editor of the OHC Newsletter.