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Front Cover Picture: Sunset at Xlendi Bay,
Courtesy of Joseph Calleja

Editorial: Gozo's Construction Mayhem

It is well known that construction activity has a number of economic benefits, including direct employment and income by persons employed in the sector. Beside construction generates indirect employment and income to those providing goods and services to complete the building, including apertures, tiling, bathroom fittings, and finishing. Construction also increases the stock of residences, office spaces and tourist accommodation. This activity also generates income to the owners of small properties that are purchased by developers in order to transform them into blocks of flats and other large scale developments.

However construction also has major downsides including environment damage (notably intrusions into ODZ and air pollution by emissions of dust and diesel fumes) and social discomfort, principally among the residents in the neighbourhood of a construction project. These downsides are especially significant in a small island like Gozo, with limited carrying capacity. In the case of Gozo, an additional downside relates to aesthetics when large projects degrade the islands' iconic landscapes, and disturb the harmony of village cores.

The environmental effects of construction may also have negative economic repercussions. Quality tourism, for which Gozo was renowned some decades ago, will continue to be undermined, as this depends on the very qualities that construction is destroying. The difference between Gozo and mainland Malta is increasingly being eroded. There is also the matter of the rising costs of public health, given that residents in Gozo are likely to be increasingly suffering from construction related pulmonary complaints, apart from the construction-site injuries.

Because of these disadvantages, many Gozitans are openly expressing their opposition to the growing construction activity on the island, accusing the Planning Authority and the developers that they are destroying "the diamond in the middle of the Mediterranean".

Pending development applications in Gozo indicate that hundreds of new projects are in the pipeline, a good proportion of which on ODZ land. From what we already experienced, the developers care very little for Gozo's unique landscapes, and tend to put aesthetic and proportionality on the back burner. Gozo therefore is in for a continuation of the so-called building frenzy.

The two major political parties in the Maltese Islands do not show any inclination to reverse the trend, possibly because they consider that construction is the main motor of the economy, and also, possibly, because they fear alienating major developers who are known to be important donors to these parties. In addition, many Gozitans are benefitting from the Annex 2 PA policy (called Annex 2) which allows a three-floor residence to be increased to 5 floors, as a result of which many Gozitans found themselves able to build extra apartments which can be sold off or rented out. It is likely therefore that in the foreseeable future Gozo will continue to be overbuilt, many of its beautiful landscapes will continue to be ruined, and many of its beaches will continue to lose their charm due to monstrous construction. In short, the uglification of Gozo is likely to continue unabated. The many Gozitans who want to see the end of the construction ascendancy are therefore not likely to see their wish materialise.

And to add insult to injury, the rapid increase in construction activity is not generally being supported by an improvement in infrastructural facilities, including the sewer system, and we all know what the likely result would be. There seems to be very little planning in this regard, and one wonders why the institution overseeing construction in Gozo is called Planning Authority.

Lino Briguglio

Herbal and Traditional Medicine in Gozo

RENALD BLUNDELL

There is no doubt about the natural beauty of the Island of Gozo. As some people call it, it's a diamond in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Apart from its importance for tourism, gastronomy, culture and rural environment, Gozo has also a hidden secret. This is the secret of Herbal and Natural Medicine that has been used successfully though the years especially by some local farmers that acquired this precious information through the years. One of the most famous names in Gozo is Francis Xavier Mercieca, more commonly known as Frenč tal-Għarb, a gentleman that used herbs to heal people. I have admired greatly Frenč tal-Għarb, both for his simple life, humbleness as well as his vast knowledge in natural medicine and spirituality.

As a scientist specialising in biochemistry and natural medicine, I am very curious about this knowledge and great powers of these botanicals. As they say; just by listening to nature, you will learn a lot; and I truly believe in this. While in Gozo, I also like to listen to a number of stories about the successful use of these herbal medicines. Thus, in this brief article, I would like to list and describe some common botanicals that are found on the Island of Gozo and try to describe briefly their medical importance.

In order to make things a bit simpler, I will list and describe the botanicals according to their uses, and for this article I will be describing gastrointestinal, dermatological, respiratory and urinary tract disorders.

1. Gastrointestinal Disorders.

Borago officinals L. – **Fidloqqom** – Borage
Cerantonia siliqua L. – **Harrub** – Carob
Citrus limon L.B. – **Lumi** – Lemon
Cynodon dactylon L. – **Nigem** – Bermuda Grass or Dog's Tooth Couch Grass
Foeniculum vulgare Mill. – **Busbies** – Fennel
Malva sylvestris L. – **Hubbejza** – Common Mallow, High Mallow

2. Skin Disorders.

Borago officinals L. – **Fidloqqom** – Borage
Dittrichia viscosa L. – **Tullier** – False Yellow Head
Hordeum vulgare L. – **Xghir** – Barley
Matricaria chamomilla L. – **Kammomila salvaġġa** – Wild Chamomile
Ruta chalepensis L. – **Fejġel** – Wall Rue or Wild Rue
Malva sylvestris L. – **Hubbejza** – Common Mallow, High Mallow
Urtica dubia Forsk. – **Hurrieq** – Large-leaved Nettle
Verbena officinalis L. – **Buquxrum** – Vervain
Vitis vinifera L. – **Dielja tal-Gheneb** – Grapevine

3. Respiratory disorders.

Borago officinals L. – **Fidloqqom** – Borage
Cerantonia siliqua L. – **Harrub** – Carob
Citrus limon L.B. – **Lumi** – Lemon
Hordeum vulgare L. – **Xghir** – Barley
Rosmarinus officinalis L. – **Klin** – Rosemary
Vitis vinifera L. – **Dielja tal-Gheneb** – Grapevine

4. Urinary tract disorders.

Cynodon dactylon L. – **Nigem** – Bermuda Grass or Dog's Tooth Couch Grass
Hordeum vulgare L. – **Xghir** – Barley
Micromeria microphylla (D'Urv) Benth. – **Xkattapietra** – Small leaved Micromeria
Zea mays L. – **Qamh ir-Rum** – Maize

Medicinal Species and Uses

1. *Borago officinals* L. – **Fidloqqom** – Borage
A common plant from autumn till spring. Its flowers are upside down, blue in colour but black with white on the inside. Some of its medicinal properties that have been reported include for cold and bronchitis, helps with cough, diuretic, helps to increase breast milk, heals inflamed skin, and raised skin bumps.



Borago officinalis L. – **Fidloqqom** – Borage.

2. *Ceratonia siliqua* L. – **Harrub** – Carob

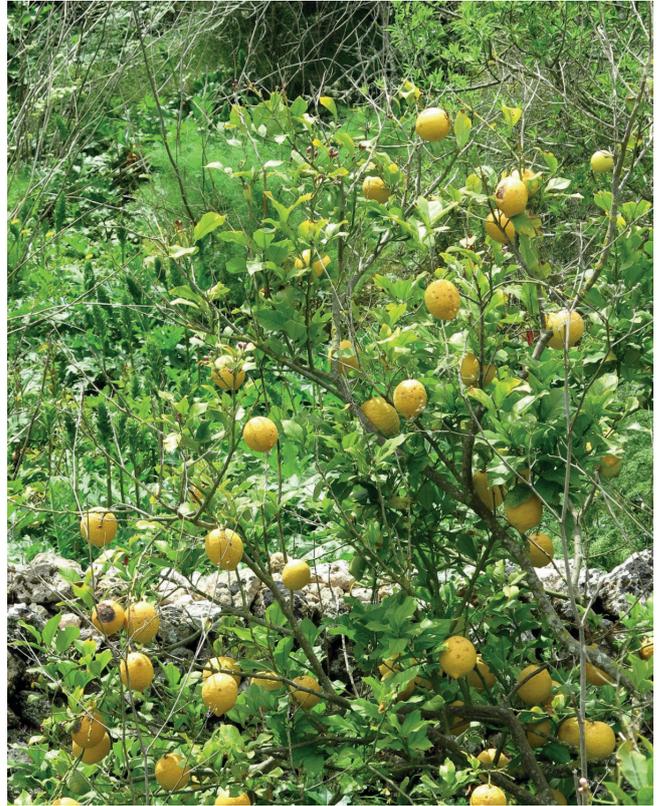
Although carob is used as animal feeds, it is widely used for coughs. It is also a good source of proteins and carbohydrates.



Ceratonia siliqua L. – **Harrub** – Carob.

3. *Citrus limon* L.B. – **Lumi** – Lemon

Lemon is used widely in our everyday cooking. Some of its medicinal benefits includes the amelioration of cough and circulation problems. Its juice can be used for some dermatological problems such as skin infections, warts, corns and calluses. Lemon juice is also a good source of vitamin C and also a disinfectant.



Citrus limon L.B. – **Lumi** – Lemon.

4. *Cynodon dactylon* L. – **Nigem** – Bermuda Grass or Dog's Tooth Couch Grass.

A very common plant that grows below the soil surface and has its flowers in the shape of birds' feet. This plant is a good diuretic and helps with urine problems, colds, flu, and helps to control blood pressure.



Cynodon dactylon L. – **Nigem** – Bermuda Grass or Dog's Tooth Couch Grass.

5. *Dittrichia viscosa* L. – **Tullier** – False Yellow Head

A very common plant that has aromatic leaves that are very sticky, and yellow flowers. This plant is a very good diuretic, helping with skin problems such as itching, used with oil for pains, venereal diseases, and to help vision.



Dittrichia viscosa L. – **Tullier** – False Yellow Head.

6. *Micromeria microphylla* (D'Urv) Benth. – **Xkattapietra** – Small leaved Micromeria

It's a very small, thin plant with white, pink or violet flowers. As its name suggests, this plant has long been used for the removal of renal and gall bladder stones. It is also commonly used as a diuretic.



Micromeria microphylla (D'Urv) Benth. – **Xkattapietra** – Small leaved Micromeria.

7. *Foeniculum vulgare* Mill. – **Bużbież** – Fennel

Fennel is a very common plant. Some of its medicinal properties include: anti-inflammatory, diuretic, helps with milk production and menstrual pains, and helps to remove stomach gas and bloating. The leaves can also be used to help with skin acne.



Foeniculum vulgare Mill. – **Bużbież** – Fennel.

8. *Hordeum murinum* L. – **Xghir** – Barley

Barley is usually cultivated. Apart from being used in food, the water used to boil the barley in has a number of medicinal benefits including reduces inflammation of the skin, helps with sore throat, and helps with urinary tract infection.



Hordeum murinum L. – **Xghir** – Barley.

9. *Malva sylvestris* L., – **Hubbejża** – Common Mallow, High Mallow

There are a number of species that have similar plants and leaves. In natural medicine, this plant is commonly used against tooth pain, to help relieve from cough, sore throat, urinary tract infections, and upset stomach.



Malva sylvestris L., – **Hubbejża** – Common Mallow, High Mallow.

10. *Matricaria chamomilla* L. – **Kammomila salvaġġa** – Wild Chamomile

This plant is found in the wild and has white flowers and a very distinctive smell. It is claimed that Kammomila salvaġġa cures stomach upset, stomach ulcers, skin rash and burning, varicose veins, eye inflammations, is antiseptic, and promotes sleep, asthma, sore throat, tooth and ear aches and tape worm.



Matricaria chamomilla L. – **Kammomila salvaġġa** – Wild chamomile.

11. *Rosmarinus officinalis* L. – **Klin** – Rosemary
Although in the wild it is not so common anymore, it is widely cultivated especially in public gardens. Some of its medicinal properties include actions against upset stomach, bad breath, colds and flu, promotes hair growth, muscle relaxant, helps with

pain, blood circulation, cleans liver, increases blood pressure, and good antiseptic.



Rosmarinus officinalis L. – **Klin** – Rosemary.

12. *Ruta chalepensis* L. – **Fejġel** – Wall Rue or Wild Rue

This plant has a very strong smell and has yellow flowers. Some of its medicinal properties include: skin disorders and injuries such as burns, inflammation, cuts and bruises, rheumatism, ear aches, upset stomach, promotes teeth and bone formation, and helps during epilepsy.



Ruta chalepensis L. – **Fejġel** – Wall Rue or Wild Rue.

13. *Urtica dubia* Forsk. – **Hurrieq** – Large-leaved nettle

This plant is very popular since it has an irritating substance. Some of its medicinal properties include: dry feet, helps with bronchitis, promotes and strengthens hair, nails and teeth, helps diabetes, increases milk flow, helps with nerve pain and inflammation, helps with sun burns, and helps with urine problems.



Urtica dubia Forsk. – **Hurrieq** – Large-leaved Nettle.

14. *Verbena officinalis* L. – **Buqexrem** – Vervain

This plant is not so common anymore, it has branching long stems with small purple flowers. Its medicinal properties include treatment for varicose veins, cough, skin injuries and infections, inflammation and nerve pains, diabetes, blood iron deficiency, and fever.



Verbena officinalis L. – **Buqexrem** – Vervain.

15. *Vitis vinifera* L. – **Dielja tal-Gheneb** – Grapevine

Some the medicinal properties from boiled leaves include treatment of stomach upsets, increases metabolism, hormonal menopause control, weight control, eye problems, and skin acne.

16. *Zea mays* L. – **Qamh ir-Rum** – Maize

This plant is mostly cultivated. Its medicinal properties include: helps with urine and kidney infections, helps to control diabetes, antiseptic properties, used against acid build up in gout and to wash haemorrhoids.

Some of these plants, although without any doubts have great medicinal properties, have also toxic properties, thus one should be careful and knowledgeable about their use and also quantities to be used in combination with other medicinal plants. These medicinal plants, can also interact with medicinal products, so it is recommended to seek medical advice.

In life, I am always curious and like to learn about new things, apart from always keeping busy. As part of my ongoing research, I am interested in phytochemicals of local species of mushrooms, and hopefully will be able to write and an article in the future about the medical properties of such mushrooms, which they too are found in Gozo. Thus, whoever has any knowledge they would like to share or an old curious story about their medicinal use, I would be more than happy to listen and to learn.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to botanist Stephen Mifsud for supplying some images from his website MaltaWildPlants.com

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Manging the Dangers of Soil Erosion in Gozo

CHARLES GALDIES

Introduction

Food security is becoming an increasingly important issue for small island states because of climate change, which has recently been exacerbated from armed conflicts in regions deemed to be the world's primary source of staple food crops (Brown et al., 2008). With changing weather patterns, Mediterranean islands are experiencing ever increasing incidences of flooding and extended drought conditions, which impacts the crops they rely on.

Our most recent research shows how, on the basis of an analysis, Malta's latest climatological trends could in effect lead to a fall in the productivity of principal crops in around 54% of Malta's usable agricultural area (Galdies & Meli, 2022). We have showed how the period 1946–2020 is characterized by a mean annual air temperature anomaly of + 0.17 °C per decade and a corresponding reduction of –6 mm per decade in the total yearly precipitation. This study reveals how this climate period was accompanied by a significant decrease in revenues from grape (down by 69%), olives, wine and wheat (down by 22%) production, amongst other crops. This reduced sustainability of local agricultural productivity is adversely affecting the livelihoods of Maltese and Gozitan farmers.

Food Security in Small Island States Under a Changing Climate

As a small island state, Malta is highly dependent on imports for its food security. With the rise of global warming and climate change, small island countries become more vulnerable to food insecurity due to changes in agricultural productivity and crop production. So far the public's perception has been that climate change is a problem that would happen in the future. However, this is not the case anymore since climate change is already happening here and now and it is already having an impact on our everyday lives. Climate change is already having an

impact on food prices across the world, leading to increased food insecurity for many people around the world. In February 2022, the FAO Food Price Index increased by 3.9% from January 2022 to come to an average of 140.7 points. This is equivalent to an increase of 20.7% above the corresponding month in 2021, which is so far considered to be an all-time high (FAO, 2022). This justifies why local authorities need to be cognisant of how changes in climate will impact small island states, and work towards solutions that help maintain their food security.

This need is becoming even more relevant in view of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine which supplied a big portion of the global wheat trade, which is now at risk. Fearing shortages in staple foods as well as natural gas (which is a key ingredient in nitrogen-based fertilisers like urea), countries are already turning inward, which could ultimately leave less food for those in need.

Climate Change Impact on Local Agriculture

Climate change is a global phenomenon and it has an impact on all aspects of life. Agriculture is no exception to that. A change in climate will have an impact on the future of food production, which will have a huge influence on the world population. As the temperature rises, there is an increased risk of starvation and famine. In fact, climate change could result in declines in crop yields, reduced quality and nutritional value, and increased pest damage. Farmers are already experiencing climate change's negative effects as they have seen changes to the weather patterns that have thrown off their farming schedules and made it difficult to produce enough. This means that we are going to see more food shortages in the future because it will be difficult to grow crops with higher levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

Malta's climate change projections for Malta point to a reduced availability of natural freshwater

resources in the future (Galdies and Vella, 2019). This work is based on the analysis of eleven CMIP5 climate change model projections for 2050 and 2070. The analysis of an ensemble of climate model outputs over a single one (contrary to the practice of other local researchers) provided a robust evaluation of the possible climate change attribution to local agriculture. Our study showed how the expected losses in productivity and food quality will continue to be significant in the coming years. As a result, the distribution of the already stressed local arable land will change, modifying production patterns and economics. Locally, any of the current fragmented adaptation measures that are being applied to this sector expose a lack of awareness of the nature of the agriculture-specific changes that are expected to occur on the basis of the multi-model projections and on their variability.

Soil Erosion as Another Detrimental Factor for Food Security

Soil erosion is one of the most significant threats to food security anywhere in the world. Soil is a natural resource, and its protection is important for both current and future generations. Soil is made up of organic matter, minerals and water. While this organic matter provides food for crops, minerals constitute a vital source of nutrients for plants. Moreover, soil plays an important role in both water and carbon cycle, and actively participates in carbon dioxide sequestration, which in turn also help in climate regulation.

In 2016, EuroStat's estimated that erosion-prone land in Europe, which is equivalent to 43 million hectares, suffers from moderate to severe soil erosion. These soils are being washed away from the fields by rain or rivers and streams, leading thus to a reduced crop yield. A European-wide study conducted in 2015 placed Malta as having a mean soil loss rate higher than the European average (Panagos et al., 2015).

According to Forbes (2018), soil erosion washes away 8 billion dollars every year worldwide. This may seem like insignificant to some, but when you look at the effects of agricultural land lost, it becomes quite a serious matter. This is why soil erosion can lead to a loss in food security and increase in food prices. It constitutes part of the

problem associated with undernourishment of 842 million people, which is equivalent to about 9.9% of the global population (FAO, 2021).

Common Causes of Soil Erosion

Soil erosion is the process of soil being gradually worn away by the action of water and wind. The most common cause of soil erosion is due to water flow, which can cause soil erosion through processes like sheet erosion, rill erosion and gully erosion (Behera et al, 2020). This process can be taken to an extreme due to landslides and major floods. The other major cause of soil erosion is that caused by wind, which can cause soil erosion by blowing away loose particles from the surface of a slope or depositing material on a slope that was not there before. This can cause soil to be blown away from a surface in small particles and take nutrients with it. While wind (aeolian) erosion is a natural process that will occur, even without human interference, this process can be triggered by changes in land cover type coupled under increasing drought conditions.

Estimates of Soil Erosion Rates in a Principal Watershed in Gozo under Current and Future Climatic Conditions

A recent study aimed at making an estimate of the current and future annual soil erosion rate in the Ramla watershed in Gozo was published in the renowned scientific Journal *Catena* (Galdies et al, 2022). Ramla's erosion rate was estimated using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE; Renard et al, 1997; Millward and Mersey 1999; Park et al., 2011) using a Geographic Information System (GIS) platform (fig. 1). This study introduced a completely new approach at national scale, such as the inclusion of the highest possible Digital Elevation Model (DEM) data (ERDF 156 data, 2013) as well as the use of downscaled climate model projections reflecting the future precipitation projections over Gozo that have been derived from eight different CMIP6 climate change models. The consideration of climate change attribution stemmed from the fact that the climate of the Ramla watershed will be subject to significant changes in the future.

Specific hydrological sub-watersheds were identified within the study area that warrant

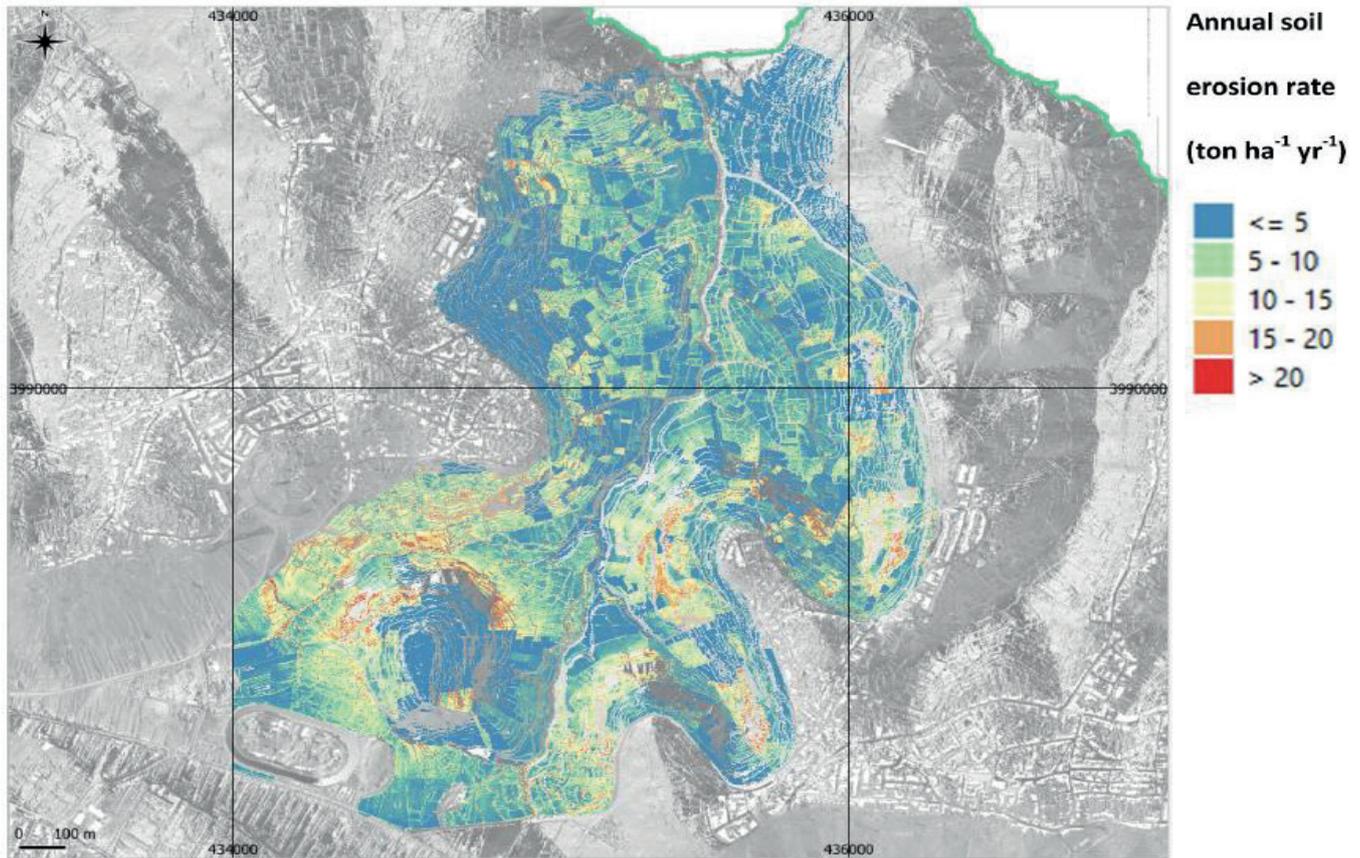


Figure 1. Soil erosion risk map of the Ramla watershed.

urgent considerations. This climate change impact analysis (conducted for the periods 2021–2040; 2041–2060; 2061–2080 and 2081–2100) showed for the first time, that the estimated annual soil loss within the Ramla watershed, as a percentage of its total area, varies from low (85.1%), to moderate (13.3%) and high (1.6%). Within a climate change context, a projected reduction in the annual soil erosion rate has been estimated for the period 2080–2100, ranging from $-5 \text{ ton ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ (under sustainable and “green” pathway SSP126) to $-6 \text{ ton ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ (under the fossil-fuelled development SSP585). These results are to be interpreted within an understanding of the underlying controlling processes, the relative spatial and temporal variations, and of possible future climate scenarios. Still, this GIS modelling work is seen as the first study which can be used to provide some objective guidance on the reduction of potential soil losses within the Ramla watershed. Our estimated soil loss and the mapped hotspots resulting from this study can assist in a fuller management plan for the sustainability of this watershed.

Similar studies are ongoing over other parts of Gozo.

Why Conservation Programmes are Important to Farmland from Soil Erosion

Conservation programmes are important because they help to protect the farmland that is available. There are many ways to prevent soil erosion from happening or worsening further. Locally-assisted farmers can apply a number of practices aimed at reducing soil erosion around the edges of their farmland. They can also plant particular trees or shrubs on their property to help with soil retention. However, this needs to be done under expert advice in view of the delicate ecological balance of erosion-prone sites. Farmers should also keep in mind that they should never plough too close to the edge of their field because this will cause more erosion than if they had ploughed farther away from the edge of their property.

It is being strongly recommended that holistic conservation programs aimed specifically at reducing soil erosion are launched as soon as possible. In view of its topographical nature and soil type, Gozo is particularly prone to soil erosion, and therefore ideally suited to take up such programmes, aimed at the holistic preservation of soil, water, air

quality by respecting their ecological integrity and connectivity. These programmes should also provide a way for farmers to get loans and other resources so that they can continue their work as well as make sure that they are not putting themselves in financial risk. The results and recommendations of a 2015 study that studied the beliefs, concerns and attitudes of Gozitans can be extremely helpful to select those farmers that are ready to invest in new practices aimed at adapting to a harsher climate.

Conclusion

The estimation of soil erosion in the Ramla watershed is unique in that for the first time, there is now a study that provides objective guidance to minimise potential soil losses within this ecological and agriculturally sensitive area. Our estimated soil loss and its spatial distribution can assist local authorities to come up with a fuller and detailed management plan for the sustainability of the Ramla watershed. This study moves away from the coarser studies made at the pan-European (Panagos et al., 2015) and at national level (ERA, 2018).

Unless properly managed, the estimated soil erosion occurring in the Ramla valley may continue to have serious environmental and agricultural consequences. Any selected conservation measures that may be selected to minimise this danger must take onboard the future impacts posed by a changing climate such as increased evaporation rates, higher temperature, and the increased occurrence of rainfall extremes.

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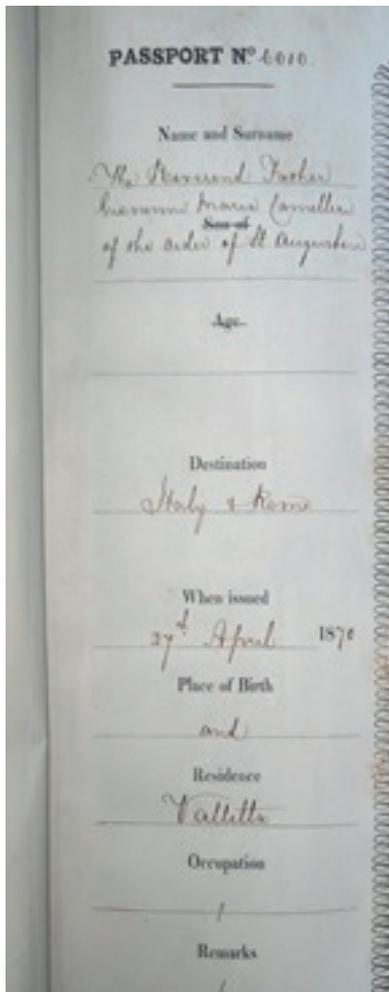
Who Were They and Where Did They Go? Gozitan Applicants for Passports 1871-1921

MICHAEL REFALO

Emigration is a popular subject with local historians.¹ However, few, if any historians, have focussed on Gozitan nineteenth century migration. Admittedly, this lacuna is difficult to fill because of the paucity of primary material concerning the smaller of the Maltese Islands. Nevertheless, persistent research could yield some interesting results. One source that could repay laborious mining is, of course, the Passport Records at the National Archives of Malta. An added bonus is the possibility to browse through the passport applications on line.² These records can be supplemented by an internet site listing, in database form, the passports issued in Malta and which allows for searching/sorting through the various records.³ Despite some glaring mistakes in the latter site, the two together allow for some preliminary thoughts on the subject of Gozitan migration during the period under review here (but not only). Of course, it is not correct to lump together under the title of ‘migrants’ all the persons listed in either site. Some, no doubt, applied for a passport to visit particular localities for touristic, business or other (non-migratory) purposes. Thus, for example, when Giovanni Maria Camilleri (1843-1924), bishop of Gozo, applied for a passport to visit Italy on 14 May 1919,⁴ his motivation was not the wish to escape the small, economically and culturally backward island but rather to confer with his superiors in Italy, presumably Rome. To some extent, the same could be said in respect of males holding professional qualifications.⁵

This paper proposes to introduce and discuss the subject of Gozitan passport applicants under four principal headings, namely: provenance (i.e. the locality where the applicant resided at the time of the passport application); age at time of application; occupation and/or profession, and, finally, destination. Being a preliminary study, it should be read as such. It is intended as a cautious and early foray into a niche area of Maltese migration studies. It is also intended as an introduction to further in-depth attention to the subject. In this connection, a word of warning and some preliminary observations are in order: (a) the total number of passports issued to persons resident in Gozo at time of application is, according to the internet site referred to earlier, 1,048. Of these, 516 (49%) were issued between 1871 and 1921. Each of them lacks at least some of the information relative to the intended area of analysis. Thus, 447 applications (87%) indicate the place of residence; 480 (93%) give the age; only 98 (37%) the occupation and/or profession and 513 (99%) indicate the destination locality of the applicant. It is within these constraints that the present analysis is carried out. A level of comfort as to reliability – one that will eventually need confirmation through other sources – is provided by the relatively high percentages of the various subjects of analysis (except for occupation); (b) the passport database referred to contains some glaring mistakes and – it is not hard to discover –

- 1 Cf. among others Lawrence E. Attard, *Men and Means. The Great Exodus (1918-1939)*, P.E.G. (Malta, 1989); Maurice N. Cauchi, *Maltese Migrants in Australia*, Maltese Community Council of Victoria (Victoria, Australia, 1990); Lawrence E. Attard, ‘Emigration’ in Henry Frendo and Oliver Friggieri (eds.), *Malta. Culture and Identity*, Ministry of Youth and Arts (Malta, 1994); Lawrence E. Attard, *L-Emigrazzjoni Maltija. Is-Seklu Dsatax u Ghoxrin*, PIN (Malta, 1999); Lawrence E. Attard, *Profiles of Maltese Migration. A series of nineteen biographies covering the period from 1792 to 2000*, P.E.G. (Malta, 2003); Henry Frendo, *Diaspora. Maltese Overseas Settlement*, Midsea Books (Malta, 2020); Michael Refalo, *Among Others. The Maltese in Egypt: Life, Crime and Death (1860s – 1923)*, Kite Publications (Malta, 2021).
- 2 <http://arkivji.org.mt/atom2/index.php/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-passport-applications>; cf. also archivesportaleurope.net [both last accessed 1 Nov. 2021].
- 3 <http://www.geneanum.com/malte/bases/passeports.html> [last accessed 15 Oct. 2021].
- 4 Two passports were issued to bishop Camilleri. The first one on 27 April 1870 at a time when he was described simply as ‘The Reverend Father Giovanni Maria Camilleri of the Order of St. Augustine (1870 NAM MFA01 6010). The passport was granted for travel to Italy, most probably to take up the post of lecturer of dogmatic and moral theology in Bracciano (cf. Michael J. Schiavone, *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies*, Vol. I, PIN (Malta, 2009). On the second occasion, the 76-year-old bishop was, once again, visiting Italy (1919_NAM_MFA01_0877).
- 5 For professional Maltese individuals migrating to (or resident in) Egypt cf. Michael Refalo, *Among Others. The Maltese in Egypt: Life, Crime and Death (1860s-1923)*, Kite Publications (Malta, 2021): 196-203. Among professional persons who applied for a passport without any intention of emigrating were: Dr Giuseppe Cremona LL.D. (on 13 Dec. 1887); Dr Emanuele Mallia (on 8 July 1891); Dr (medical) Alfonso Portelli (28 May 1889) and notary Giovanni Xuereb (on 10 May 1887).



Left: First passport issued to Fr Giovanni Maria Camilleri (later, bishop of Gozo) in 1860. NAM-1870-MFA-6010.
 Right: Passport application of bishop Giovanni Maria Camilleri: 1919_NAM_MFA01_0877 (courtesy The National Archives, Malta).

some omissions. By way of example, one applicant born in Valletta but resident in Rabat, Gozo, named Cesare who applied for a passport on 19 April 1871, is listed under the surname ‘Of’ which is hardly correct.⁶ Similar mistakes can be observed in other cases even if their number is minimal; (c) although a total of 1,048 passports issued to Gozitans for the whole available period (and 516 for the period under review) has been mentioned, this does not mean that it was only those individuals who left Malta’s shores during the period. Indeed, among the passports issued to individual males one frequently finds an accompanying note specifying that the applicant was to be accompanied by family members. Thus, for example, Giuseppe Formosa of Għarb, who intended to go to Algeria, was to be accompanied

(according to his passport) by his 28-year-old wife Liberata and his four daughters aged between six months and six years.⁷

A very short introduction to the demography, and social stratification of Gozo is conducive to a better understanding of the present analysis.

Gozo (1871-1921)

Commenting upon the topography of Gozo, Professor Bowen-Jones and his colleagues noted that ‘[t]hough covering little more than one-third of the area of the main island, Gozo is topographically more varied than Malta.’⁸ The same, however, could not be said for Gozitan society and social stratification. During

6 The issued passport is, in fact, in the name of 19-year-old Cesare De Cesare, born in Valletta and residing in Rabat, Gozo whose passport was issued on 19 Apr. 1891 for travel to Constantinople (1871_NAM_MFA01_7116).
 7 1872_NAM_MFA01_8677.
 8 H. Bowen-Jones, J.C. Dewdney, W.B. Fisher, *Malta. Background for Development*, Department of Geography, Durham Colleges in the University of Durham (Durham, 1961): 39.

the period reviewed here, Gozo was a rural society steeped in illiteracy, lack of hygiene, religious bigotry and fanaticism. The rate of demographic growth in Gozo was much slower than that of Malta,⁹ and there was only one urban centre: Rabat (later named Victoria). There lived the island ‘elites’ consisting prevalently of a small number of professionals (doctors, lawyers and notaries public) together with a substantial number of men of the church (a few of whom rose through the ecclesiastical ranks thus acquiring even greater power and influence over the rest of the population). A wealthy commercial class was inexistent; traders and merchants with ambitions of growth had to migrate to the larger island, particularly the areas around the Grand Harbour.¹⁰ Whereas ambitious traders and merchants settled on Malta and the elites could capitalise on their literacy, on religion and moral influence, the mass of the population was left with two options: remaining within the constricted economic, social and cultural environment that was Gozo, or migrating. A few chose the latter and it is these that concern us here.

Provenance

Life on Gozo centred around the field, the home and the church with clerical or professional occupations being reserved for a small number of men. Such a quasi-static existence could, however, be shaken by periods of extreme economic distress, by epidemics or other similar calamities. One particular such period occurred during, and in the immediate aftermath of, World War I. Then, the island experienced what a local wine merchant writing to his son in Detroit euphemistically called *la grande calma*.¹¹ Migration, although at lower percentage rates than Malta, was the last resort of the mass of the local population aspiring to better prospects.

The figures referred to here need some caution when it comes to their interpretation considering that 68 applicants out of a total of 516 (13.2%) indicate simply Gozo as place of residence. In this context, it is important to note that the number of individuals leaving Gozo was correlative to the size of the

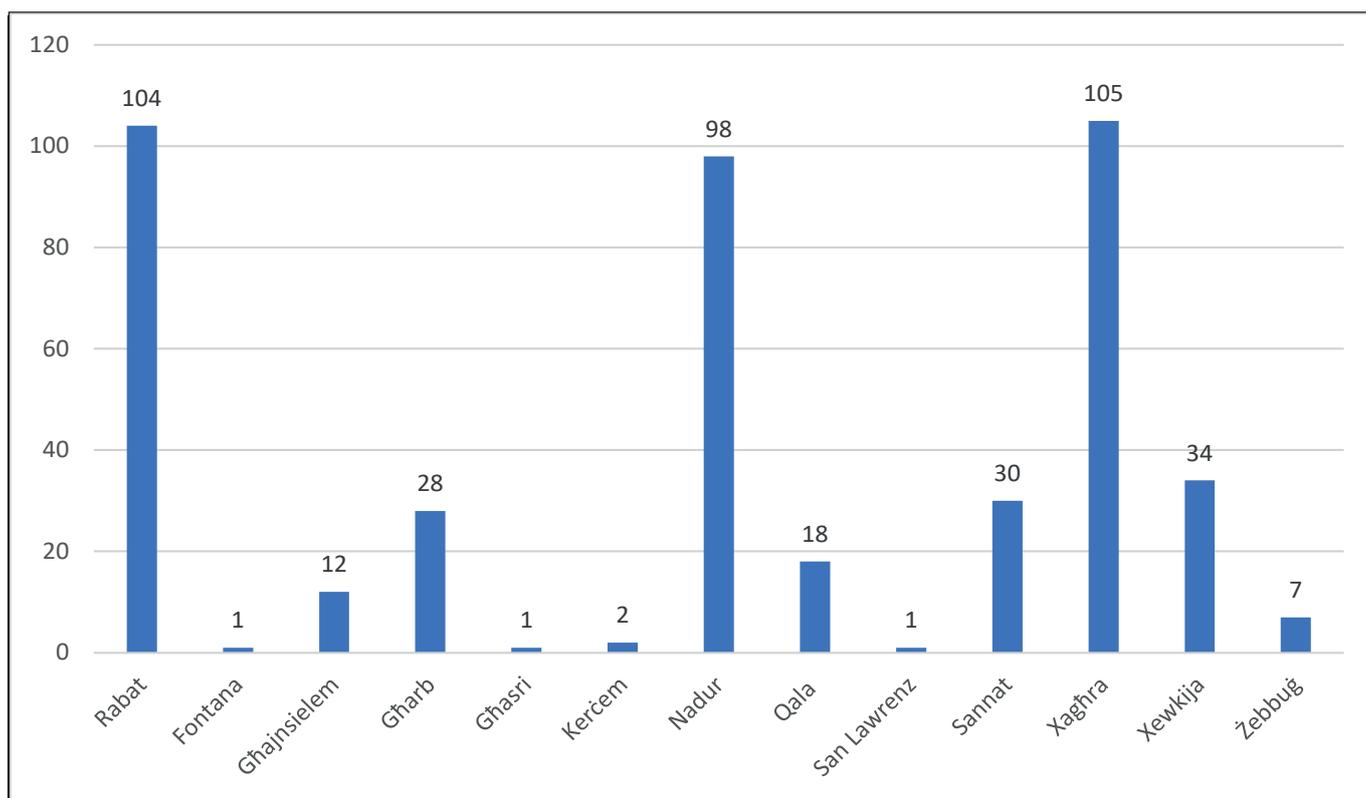


Fig. 1: Provenance of Gozitan passport applicants (1871-1921).

9 Between 1871 and 1921 Gozo’s population increased by just over 30%, that of Malta by over 60%. Bowen-Jones et. al. note that the slower demographic growth ‘is one indicator of the growing socio-economic differences between the two islands’ (ibid.: 140).

10 cf. Michael Refalo, ‘Joining the Fray of Commerce: Gozitan Entrepreneurs in Malta (c. 1870-1914)’ in *Melita Historica*; Vol. XV, No. 3 (2010); pp. 255-72.

11 Michael Refalo, *Giuseppe (De)Brincat. A Gozitan Wine Merchant 1890s-1930*, KITE Publications (Malta, 2018): 121.

respective centres.¹² Thus, Rabat – the only town – together with Xagħra and Nadur sent the largest number of migrants. Surprisingly, however, it was from Xagħra (also then known as Casal Caccia) that the largest number of passport applicants is recorded (105 equivalent to 23.4% of the total) even if it ranked third as a demographic centre. Together, Rabat, Xagħra and Nadur (which, for the early period included Qala) account for over 68% of the total. As Figure 1 well illustrates, the smaller rural centres (Għasri, Kerċem, San Lawrenz) sent only a few individuals away. The four individuals from these latter three centres appear to have left unaccompanied by family members. All four left for North African destinations, a clear indication that emigration was the aim.

It is interesting to examine, albeit briefly, in some detail the typology of passport applicants from one particular locality. Rabat has been chosen for this purpose because it was the only urban centre of the island and hence it can be assumed that there was a greater variety of occupations available to its residents. At the same time, very few applicants declared their occupation to the authorities, presumably because they did not hold any. Among those who did declare their occupation/profession, the majority were not migrants but had other reasons for going abroad. Of the fourteen who did declare their occupation two were lawyers, two doctors and six were churchmen. The rest were a cabman departing for Tunis, a carpenter for Algeria and one merchant.¹³

A few of these applicants were to be accompanied by family members. Lawyer Emanuele Mallia – not a migrant – was visiting Italy and Turkey accompanied

by his wife¹⁴ but Alessandro Grima, 48 years old, intended to go to Algeria with his wife Rosa, two years younger than him, and their two children Antonio (12) and Maria (7),¹⁵ and Barcelona-born Elena wife of Paolo Cachia (who at the time of the passport application was residing at 27 Strada Corsa) was taking her 15-year-old daughter Dolores with her to Algiers via Tunis.¹⁶ Accompanying Elena was also 24-year-old Maria Cachia of the same address,¹⁷ possibly her sister in law.

Age

It will be obvious from Figure 2 that the majority of passport applicants (and hence, necessarily, migrants) were comprised in the age bracket 16 to 30. Together, these account for 70% of the total. In examining the passports of Maltese bound for Egypt during the same time period, it was observed elsewhere that migrants within that age bracket accounted for over 60% of total Egypt-bound migrants, thus confirming that the prime years of life were those when such momentous decisions were taken.¹⁸

What is particularly interesting, however, is an analysis of those applicants who, insofar as age is concerned, were on the fringes of the majority, namely those below 16 years of age and those older than 30 years but more particularly those in their late middle age or beyond. Whereas for the former it could possibly be assumed that they were joining other family members abroad, the same conclusion is not a foregone one for middle-aged migrants. In any case, it certainly takes more than the list examined here to discover the reasons leading one to cut off one's roots.

12 According to the censuses of the period the population changes during the period 1871-1921 (source: 1871 & 1921 Censuses) and the number of passport applicants from some Gozitan centres is the following:

	1871 pop.	1921 pop.	no. of passport app.
Rabat	4615	5219	102
Żebbuġ	857	1006	7
Xagħra	2313	3262	105
Xewkija	1484	2314	34
Nadur & Qala	3425	4710	116

13 Nicola Mizzi, of 28 Strada Arciprete, Rabat, obtained his passport on 13 June 1916 stating as reason for his visit to Algeria as being 'about his inheritance' (1916_NAM_MFA-01_1451).

14 1918_NAM_MFA01_-251. Mallia was not a migrant as proven by his insertion in the list of voters for 1891 at a time when he was resident at 106 Strada San Domenico, Valletta (M.G.G. 26 Feb. 1891 No. 4328).

15 1887_NAM_MFA01_1748.

16 1918_NAM_MFA01_0252.

17 1917_NAM_MFA01_0251.

18 Refalo (2021): 6.

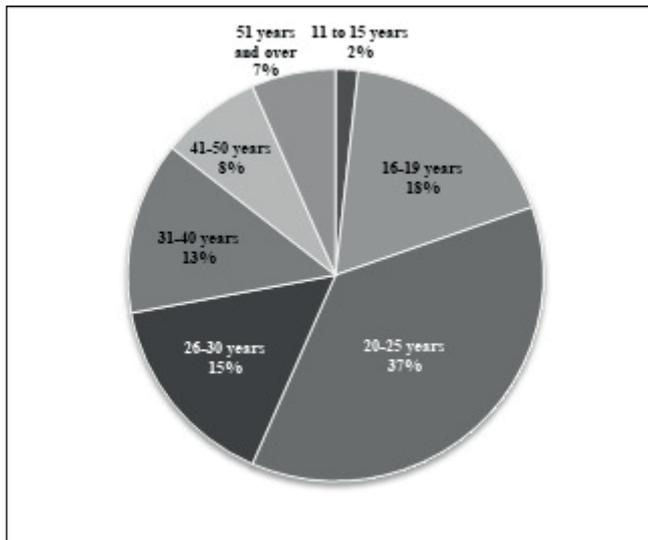
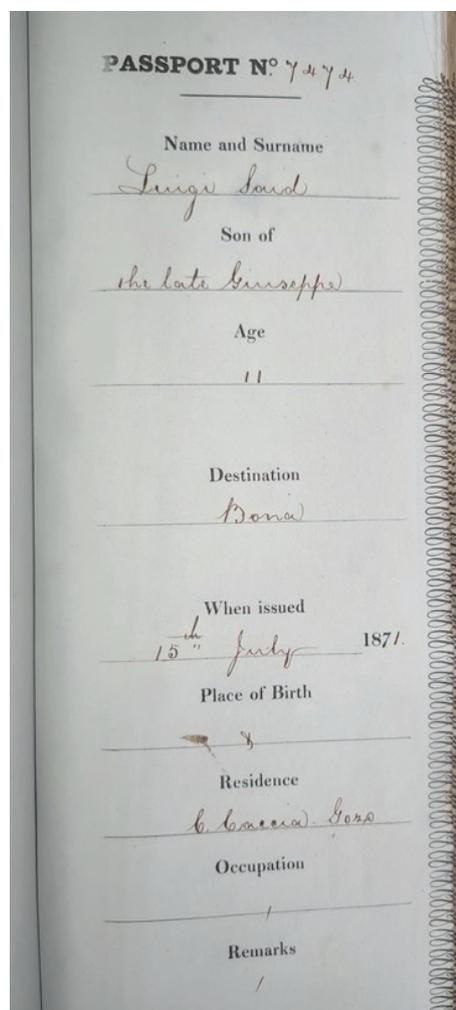


Fig. 2: Age of Gozitan passport applicants (1871-1921).

Children under the age of 15 account for just 2% of the total number of applicants. However, it should be borne in mind that a substantial number of children were included in the passport applications of either of their parents and thus do not figure in the current analysis. It is logical to assume that those children who were granted a passport in their own right (i.e. not being in the company of parents) were migrants rather than mere visitors to foreign lands. Eleven-year-old Luigi Said from Xagħra (whose father was deceased) was granted a passport on 15 July 1871. His destination was Bône, Algeria and he was neither accompanied by an adult nor was there a certificate of parental consent for emigration.¹⁹ The same could be said of Paolo Manuli (13) from Nadur²⁰ and Antonio Buttigieg (14)²¹ from Xagħra both of whom intended to depart for the same destination. However, Maria Rosa Camilleri residing at Gnien Imrik Street, Xagħra, 12 years old, though travelling alone, was joining her father also in Bône.²² The four 15-year-olds who were granted a passport during this period appear to have travelled alone. But Salvatore Carmelo Cassar born on 21 September 1901 who obtained his passport on 15 July 1916 had an uncle waiting for him at Bône.²³ Additionally, he was travelling with parental consent and was determined to leave the island even

if the passport official ‘warned [him] about getting financial assistance from the Consul.’

When perusing the other end of the age spectrum, particularly in respect of applicants who had surpassed fifty years of age (7% of total), it will be seen that the oldest ‘migrant’ was 83-year-old Giuseppe Caruana, son of Nicola from the St George parish of Rabat, who was granted a passport to travel to Lampedusa on 27 August 1887.²⁴ Probably Caruana was not a migrant in the true sense of the word; the small Italian island hardly being – then – a migrant destination. However, Francis Xerri (75) of Xewkija certainly was. He had been residing in Philippville, Algeria for the twenty-five years prior to his being granted a passport



Passport of 11 year old Luigi Said from Casal Caccia issued on 13 July 1871 to travel to Bône, Algeria (NAM-1871-MFA-7474).

19 1871_NAM_MFA01_7474.

20 1871_NAM_MFA01_7543.

21 1871_NAM_MFA_8110.

22 1920_NAM_MFA01_228.

23 1916_NAM_MFA01_1823.

24 1889_NAM_MFA01_467.

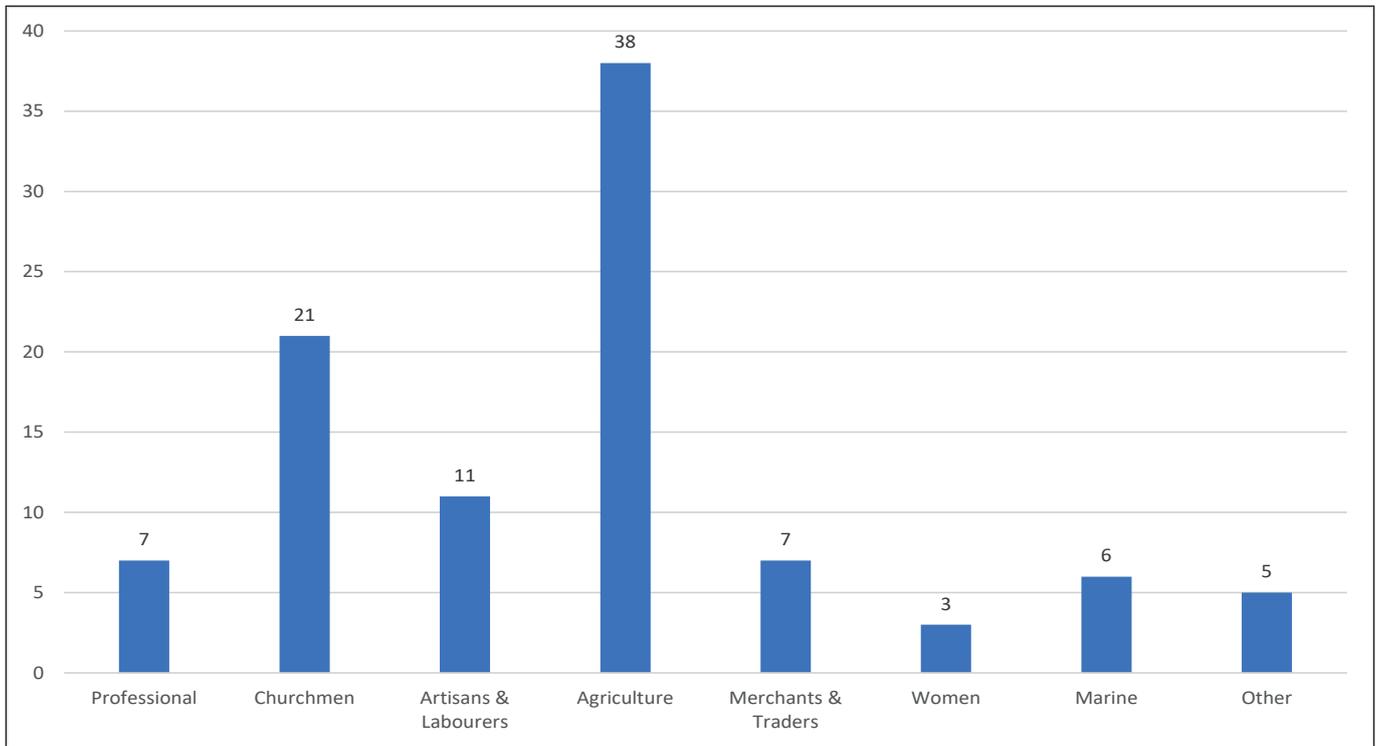


Fig. 3: Occupation of Gozitan passport applicants (1871-1921).

on 17 February 1915.²⁵ He returned to Malta for what appears to have been a short visit ‘to see his relative’ and would be retiring in Philippeville. Two women, respectively aged 64 and 69, both from Xagħra, were also travelling to Algeria. The former, Grazia Grech,²⁶ was unaccompanied but the latter, Vittoria Zerafa widow of Francesco, had her five-year-old grandson Salvatore in her company.²⁷ It does appear (but the scant information available from passport lists is hardly sufficient to confirm) that applicants aged fifty-one and over had been residing abroad and that their passport application was a consequence of a short visit to the island of their birth.

Occupation or Profession

Only 98 individuals (37%) of passport applicants declared an occupation; a clear indication that the majority of applicants held none and were intent on seeking their fortune elsewhere. Nevertheless, insofar as a distinction between migrant and

occasional traveller is possible, one needs to exercise caution in respect of certain professions (e.g. the legal and the medical as well as the men of the church), the destination, and any particular observations noted against each particular passport applicant.²⁸ In the case of the few Gozitan professionals who applied for a passport during this period, it is safe to say that none of them was a migrant. The position is slightly more complicated where men of the church are concerned. We know that bishop Giovanni Maria Camilleri was not a migrant; nor was the archpriest of Rabat, Alphonso Maria Hili (1865-1943) who applied for a passport to visit Italy on 14 May 1919, both of whom intended to visit Italy.²⁹ Where ordinary priests or monks are concerned, however, it is not as easy to distinguish between mere visitors to foreign countries or migrants (including those on pastoral and/or missionary duties). The intended destination might afford some indication. Thus, for example, it is unlikely that Sr Virginia Debrincat,³⁰ Rev. Aurelio Farrugia³¹ and some others were migrants, considering that their destination was

25 1915_NAM_MFA01_0120.

26 1891_NAM_MFA01_7992.

27 1872_NAM_MFA01_8269.

28 Some lawyers, doctors and other professionals did migrate from Malta but they were in a very small minority (for Egypt cf. Refalo, 2021: 196-203).

29 In 1921 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly.

30 1889_NAM_MFA01_626.

31 1889_NAM_MFA01_625.

Italy (most probably Rome). On the other hand, both Rev. Luigi Constantino³² bound for Tunis, and Rev. Francesco Buhagiar (Algeria)³³ intended to perform religious duties among migrants in those localities and could be considered migrants, at least in certain respects. Constantino twice applied for and obtained a passport. The first time on 8 October 1908 when he was 44 years old stating that he would be visiting Tunisia and Algeria at which time his clerical status is not indicated.³⁴ The second time, seven years later, as ‘a religious priest’ his passport issued on 6 May 1915 declared that his destination was Tunis.³⁵

Only in a few cases did the passport authorities feel the need to append observations against the names of the applicants. However, in the case of the three individuals who obtained a passport on 3 December 1912 such a note appears to have been required. This was to the effect that Francesco Muscat (60 years old) of 11 Strada Seguna, Sannat,³⁶ Giovanni Gambin (51 years old) from the same village (109 Strada Reale)³⁷ and Vincenzo Gambin (57),³⁸ also from Sannat (31 Strada Seguna) intended to go to Constantine, Algeria³⁹ ‘in connection with an inheritance.’⁴⁰ These, of course, can hardly be considered migrants.

Figure 3 classifies the various applicants into categories of occupations. It is no surprise that the majority of passport applicants were engaged in agriculture at the time when they obtained their passports (39%). What is perhaps surprising is the fact that only six applicants (6.1%) were sailors or fishermen and 11 (11%) were artisans or labourers. One word in particular should perhaps be devoted to women.

The three women (excluding one nun) who were granted a passport in their own right (i.e., not listed

in their husbands’) included an Antonia Scicluna who was one of the few passport applicants during the period under review, intending to visit the United States of America (possibly to join her husband or other relative there),⁴¹ and Maria Mizzi, wife of Salvatore, from Nadur, Gozo, 39 years old, who was travelling to Bône with her daughters Maria Assunta (9) and Rosaria (5) to join her husband.⁴²

Destination

The years covered here are still far from the surge of migrants to Australia, Canada and the United States of America. Although there had been some form of unorganised emigration/settlement in Australia as early as the first decades of the nineteenth century, it was not a popular migrant destination until later. Charles A. Price notes that ‘a few Maltese availed themselves of one Australian offer in 1883 ... but the great majority of Maltese either displayed complete indifference or else opposed the schemes with all the vigour and bitterness they possessed.’⁴³ As for the United States, the same author, referring to passport records, notes that ‘one or two stray Maltese had gone to America early in the century, but it was not until the sixties that there appeared anything like a regular movement.’⁴⁴ As Figure 4 well illustrates, Gozitans venturing across the Pacific or Atlantic Oceans were few indeed until 1921.

For Gozitans, the most popular migrant destination was Algeria. That French colony accounted for over two thirds of the total number of passports issued to Gozitans during the period under review (and which have the destination country indicated). Algiers, Philippeville (today Skikda), Bône (today Annaba) and Constantine (which some passport authorities placed in Tunisia rather than Algeria) were the more popular destinations even if 42% of the passports

32 1815_NAM_MFA01_391.

33 1889_NAM_MFA01_625.

34 1908_NAM_MFA01_355.

35 1915_NAM_MFA01_391.

36 1918_NAM_MFA01_447.

37 1918_NAM_MFA01_448.

38 1918_NAM_MFA01_449.

39 The note erroneously places Constantine in Tunisia rather than Algeria.

40 For similar instances of Malta residents who sought to pursue possible benefits from inheritance, limitedly to Egypt, cf. Refalo (2021): 325-327.

41 1919_NAM_MFA01_842.

42 1915_NAM_MFA01_580.

43 Charles A. Price, *Malta and the Maltese. A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration*, Georgian House (Melbourne, 1989): 193.

44 *ibid.*: 140. For migrants in the United States of America cf., for example, the sons of wine merchant Giuseppe Brincat (Refalo, 2018).

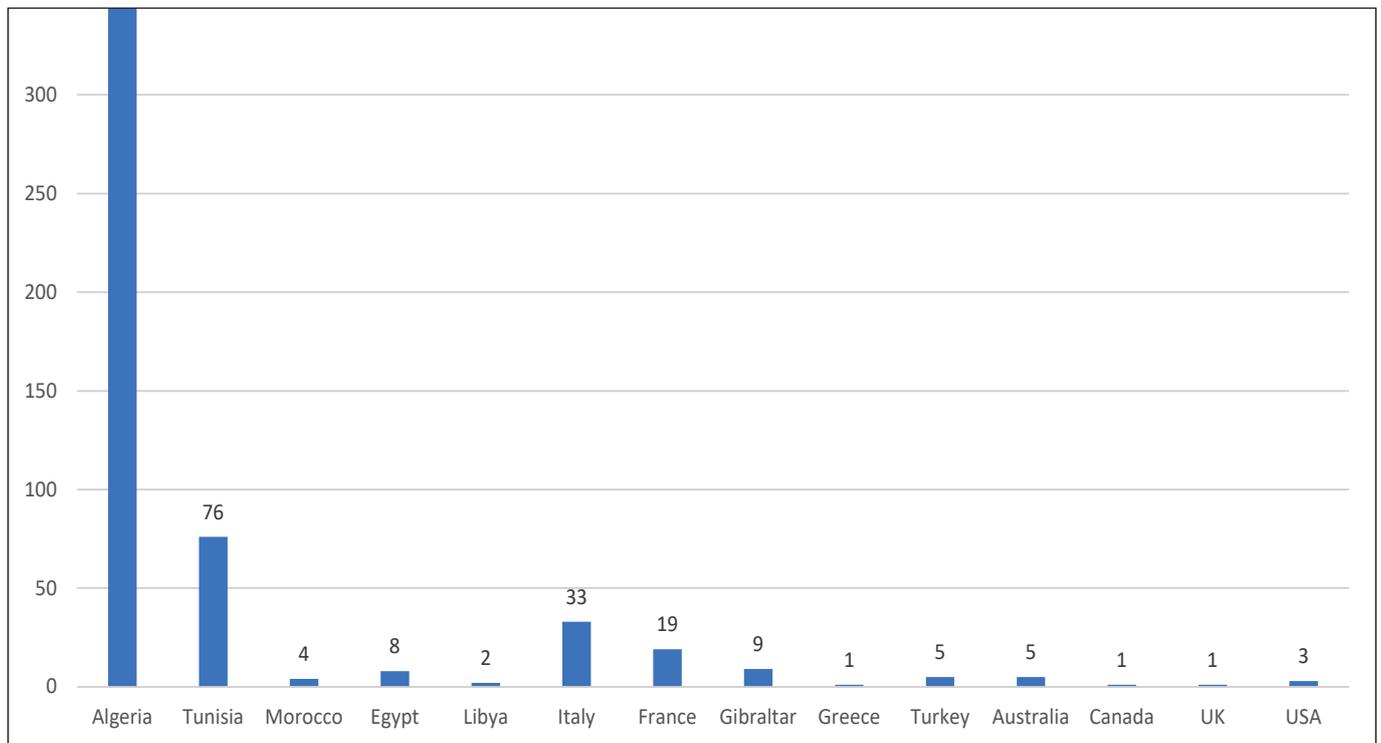


Fig. 4: Destination of Gozitan passport applicants (1871-1921).

merely mention Algeria rather than a specific destination. The next popular destination was Tunisia but only 15% of Gozitan passport applicants mention it as their destination of choice.

Egypt, Morocco and Libya, together with Algeria and Tunisia account for over 85% of destinations mentioned by Gozitan applicants. This confirms that, until at least the early decades of the twentieth century, North Africa was still the preferred migrant destination. This migratory direction was, of course, not limited to Gozitans; Maltese migrants equally preferred the North African or Near Eastern Mediterranean destinations. Although it is not possible in the present context to analyse in depth this phenomenon, vicinity and the possibility of quick return and similarity in language (rendering commerce – particularly the petty one – easier) must have been positive factors encouraging settlement there. At the same time, not all North African centres were hospitable, nor were the possibilities of finding work or trade the same throughout. This is reflected, for example, by the low number of migrants intending to go to Morocco. Three of the four passport applicants intending to go to Morocco

were probably related (or, alternately friends), having all applied for the passport on the same day (31 January 1913);⁴⁵ the fourth, Cospicua-born Antonio Tabone,⁴⁶ a hairdresser, was warned by the passport official that ‘he is not likely to find work.’

According to Charles A. Price, even before mid-19th century, Algeria – a French colony – was attractive to migrants because, among other reasons, ‘the French authorities had come to realize the value of indigent but potentially thrifty Maltese colonists.’ This enabled those who settled there ‘to take advantage of the land settlement and public works programmes of the early forties and later fifties.’ In fact, despite outbreaks of plague and insurrection, Algeria (and later Tunisia, another French colony as from 1881) ‘retained their position as the most popular place of Maltese settlement, attracting in most years some two thirds of all emigrants from Malta.’⁴⁷ Later on, prospective migrants from Gozo (and, of course from Malta) would choose Algeria because of relatives already settled there. This, to a certain extent can be confirmed by the observations noted against passport applications specifying that the applicant had relations or friends there.

45 Salvatore Asciani (1913_NAM_MFA01_089); Emmanuele Azzopardi (1913_NAM_MFA01_088); Giuseppe Farrugia (1918_NAM_MFA01_090); Antonio Tabone (1914_NAM_MFA01_283).

46 1914_NAM_MFA01_283.

47 Price: 112-13.

This was the case with two brothers from Nadur (passports obtained on 28 July 1914) who were warned by the passport official not to expect any help from the British Consul in Algiers. Both stated that ‘his friend told him that he is sure he will find work.’⁴⁸

Insofar as European destinations are concerned, the possibility of distinguishing between tourist and migrant becomes more difficult. Gibraltar (9 applicants), Turkey (5) and Greece (1) would possibly have been migrant destinations. Italy (33), France (19) and the United Kingdom (1) less so even if one could not exclude the fact that at least some of those travelling to France intended to settle in Algeria or Tunisia. For Italy, some clues might be gleaned from the occupation and/or profession of the applicants. Of course, with Libya being an Italian colony (from 1911) and Algeria and Tunisia being French, it cannot be excluded that specifying the colonial power as destination could include also the colony as final destination.

The occupational division of intending travellers to France and Italy is shown in Table 1.

Occupation	France	Italy	Observations
Advocate	1		
Agriculture	11		of whom 3 for Marseilles
Churchman	1	13	of whom 1 for Rome
Decorator	1		
Fireman			
Merchant		1	
Seaman	1	2	
Watch repairer	1		
Not Specified	5	15	of whom 7 for Sicily & 1 for Lampedusa

Table 1

Two conclusions could possibly be drawn, namely: men of the church, the advocate and the merchant would not be migrants but rather travellers on professional duties/work or pleasure. On the other hand, those employed in agriculture or seamen were probably migrants in search of work (as would have been those whose occupation is not specified). Of course, these conclusions are only tentative, it being difficult to determine the

difference between migrants and tourists from the available list.

Conclusion

This short analysis serves as a preliminary step towards a more comprehensive study of migrant flows from Gozo during the latter part of the nineteenth century (and ideally earlier) and the first two decades of the twentieth. Admittedly, what has been written needs much more detailed study and analysis; the available list of passport applicants is far from enough to study the nature of migration from the smaller of the Maltese Islands.

There are many questions that need to be answered, ones that an examination of passport lists alone cannot answer. The present writing can only be considered as a first step, one taken in the awareness not only of the possible faults and lacunae. Nevertheless, there is the certainty that delving deeper into the primary sources, though far from being an easy task, would be fruitful and rewarding.

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48 1914_NAM_MFA01_724 (Michele Mifsud) and 1914_NAM_MFA01_725 (Giuseppe Mifsud).

From Ratings to Officers

Gozitan Seafarers who Achieved Certificates through Education between the Early 19th Century and the Second World War – Part I

KENNETH GRIMA

Introduction

Gozo has produced some fine and skillful merchant seamen throughout the years. Mostly hailing from Nadur, Ghajnsielem, Xewkija, Qala, Sannat and Victoria. This can be seen through the various censuses¹ of the 1800s and through Merchant Navy Roll of Honour from the First and Second World Wars.

For example, in 1861, only Vittoriosa, Cospicua and Senglea each had more mariners than “Nadur and Kala” in the whole of Malta. Although Valletta, lies on the Grand Harbour the number of seamen from that city was less than that of Xewkija and Ghajnsielem, during the same year.²

During the Second World War Nadur paid the highest price in Gozo with 43 victims in total, 31 of these perishing at sea. *The Times of Malta* of Saturday 10th January 1942 reported that “In Nadur, in Ghawdex, there was hardly a family that had not a member sailing the seven seas in the Royal Navy or the Merchant Service.” The victims from Ghajnsielem numbered 21 victims, 14 of whom died at sea and Xewkija had a toll of 13 victims, 9 of whom were seafarers (Bezzina, 2006).

Gozitan seafarers, often below the age of 18, were men who left their homes for a life at sea in search of better salaries or simply because there was no other job available in Gozo at the time. However, some of them proved more ambitious and wanted to advance from a simple deckhand to the rank of Officer or even be in command of the ship as Master Mariner. They were examined for their certificates by the Navigation Board in Malta or by the Board of Trade in the UK. This required a considerable

amount of study during times when even basic education was not available to all.

In order to obtain data on these Master Mariners, the present author carried out research through the *Index of Master Mariners and Mates*³ at the National Archives of Malta in Rabat. The Index included Officers who were certified as Second Mate, Master Mariner of the Third Class or *Padrone* (Skipper), First Mate, Master Mariner of the Second Class, and Master Mariner of the First Class.

The First (or Chief) and Second Mates assist in navigation and other duties on board, but a Master Mariner could take command of a vessel. According to the law at the time, a *Padrone* could captain a small merchant vessel that navigates the waters between Malta and Gozo and also up to Sicily, Sardinia, Tripoli, Tunis, and Bône (Annaba) in Algeria. A Second Class Master could command merchant ships in the whole of the Mediterranean Sea and up to Cadiz, on Spain’s Atlantic coast and the Portuguese coast, also in the Atlantic Ocean. A Master Mariner of the First Class had no limitations whatsoever.⁴

The *Index of Master Mariners and Mates* contains a Register⁵ showing their sea service – its first volume relates to the period approximately between 1813 and 1847 and the second volume from 1847 to 1907. Unfortunately, the first volume did not survive the test of time, however, we can still extract limited information from the Index. Also, during the second half of the 19th century both the Index and the Register were not updated regularly and some individuals were left out. Some Officers that I will be mentioning below were not included at all in the list.

1 NAG (National Archives of Gozo), ST/01/5 (1861 Census), ST/01/6 (1871 Census) and ST/01/7 (1881 Census).

2 NAG, ST/01/5 - Census of Malta, Gozo and Comino. Taken on the 31st October 1861.

3 NAM (National Archives of Malta), CSG 28/1.

4 NAM, CSG 27/1.

5 Ibid.

What follows is brief information about the careers of some notable Gozitan seafarers who obtained their certificates during the British period prior to the Second World War.

Master Mariners of the Third Class (*Padroni*)

A quick look through the Index gives us some rough statistics for the period between 1813 and 1907. Nadur was listed as having 63 certified Skippers, Xewkija had 29, Victoria 19, Sannat 3, and another 2 were only identified as being from Gozo. It is also important to note that during most of the 19th century Nadur included both Qala and Għajnsielem.

Having at least a total of 116 *Padroni* from the island of Gozo in almost a century is certainly a good number. Ninety-six of these had their certificates issued before 1847. The boom of the Maltese merchant fleet of the early to mid-19th century lured many men to sea. Such a high number of Third Class certificates yields information about the size of the vessels the Gozitans captained and/or owned and the voyages and business they normally executed on short-sea trade to North Africa and southern Italy.

Of these 116 *Padroni* two have exceptionally stood out. They were Chev. Luigi Aquilina and Chev. Joseph Camilleri, both from Nadur. We present a brief profile of these two mariners below.

Chev. Luigi Aquilina

Chev. Luigi Aquilina was born on 14th May 1817 into a maritime family. His father and brothers were all certified *Padroni* and were also owners of various sailing vessels (Grima, 2016).

In 1836 he moved from Nadur and was the first European to establish himself in La Calle, Algeria with a fleet of coral fishing vessels. (Fèraud, 1877) What really stands out in this personality was his courage.

He was involved in different rescues at sea. In 1848 he was decorated with the Gold Medal of Honour for

Courage and Devotion from the French Ministry of War for saving two French seamen from the sailing vessel 'Tafna'. An Official Statement of Satisfaction was issued from the Ministry of the French Navy in October 1851 for the salvage he performed on the French vessel 'Albatros'.⁶

In March 1854 the sailing vessel 'Caroline' capsized at the entrance of the port of La Calle. With the help of 24 of his fishermen employees he managed to rescue the Customs Officer from drowning. He also salvaged the 'Caroline' by pulling her onto the beach inside port.⁷

On the 26th of May 1858, another severe gale hit La Calle. In total, two sailing vessels went aground or were stranded on the beach inside port, with one of them colliding with a third one. Immediately a rowboat manned by nine people was mobilised, with Chev. Luigi Aquilina on board. Incredible efforts were made to give assistance to the sailing vessel 'Boberach' and to seamen of the other sailing vessels involved. With the help of these nine brave men, no one died on that day – Aquilina himself saved a young deck-boy of the 'Boberach' from drowning.⁸

This was the pinnacle of Aquilina's career, and for this act of courage on 15th August 1858 he was awarded the highest order of merit from the state of France, the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur;⁹ the first Maltese seaman ever to be decorated with this honourable title from France.

Chev. Luigi Aquilina passed away in La Calle, Algeria, on 8th November 1880 at the age of 63.¹⁰

Chev. Joseph Camilleri

Chev. Joseph Camilleri was born on the 25th of September 1858 in Nadur, also into a maritime family. His father, Francesco Camilleri, spent years as a *Padrone* of various Maltese sailing vessels.¹¹

On the 27th of March 1876, at 17 years of age, Camilleri was issued the certificate of Second Mate

6 <http://web.archive.org/web/20180108042748/http://www.amicaledescalloisetamis.fr/Personnage.html>

7 Ibid.

8 [gallica.bnf.fr / BnF](http://gallica.bnf.fr/BnF)

9 <https://www.leonore.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/ui/notice/7015>

10 <https://gw.geneanet.org/evechevaleyre?n=aquilina&oc=&p=antoine+louis+felix>

11 NAM, CSG27/1.

from the Navigation Board of Malta.¹² I could not, however, find the date of issue for his Master of the Third Class certificate. He immediately set off to then French North Africa where he started to excel in numerous rescues at sea, despite his young age. Between 1878 and 1901 he was decorated with five Silver First Class Medal of Honour for Courage and Devotion and two Gold Medal of Honour for Courage and Devotion from the state of France. He was also given the decoration of Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy and on the 7th February 1900 he was given the title of Commander of the Order of Nichan Iftikhar, an honorary decoration from the state of Tunisia. Finally, he was given the *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*, the highest order of merit from the state of France, on 29th June 1901 at La Goulette, Tunisia.¹³

In around 1881 he helped a lot of French soldiers whilst they were engaging against the Khoumir people in Oued Djenan during the conquest of Tunisia and carried many wounded French soldiers, as well as Maltese and Tunisian civilians on his shoulders to hospital camps.¹⁴

During the invasion of Bizerte, Tunisia, he served on numerous French Navy ships as a Pilot. A Maritime Pilot is a certified individual of great knowledge of the area or port, and serves to advise the captain of the ship. Admiral Conrad of the French Navy requested Chev. Camilleri to be the sole Pilot for the Gulf and port of La Goulette. At the age of 23, Chev. Camilleri, piloted all of the arrivals of French Navy ships into Tunis.¹⁵

From 1885 onwards he was Skipper of the La Goulette (Tunis) lifeboat, named '*Louise et Renè Millet*', after the persons who funded her. Along with his lifeboat crew, they would row out to ships in the worst of weathers, rescuing crew and passengers from sailing vessels. He was involved in 18 salvages, rescuing a total of 78 persons while being Skipper.¹⁶ This explains the many medals and decorations he had.

He retired to his hometown of Nadur after making a name for himself as a great salvor and passed away



Chev. Joseph Camilleri in 1901. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF

on the 24th December 1937 at 79 years. Undoubtedly, he is one of the most decorated seamen in Maltese seafaring history.

Master Mariners of the Second Class

As already mentioned before, many of the Gozitan mariners who achieved a certificate in the 19th century opted to stop at the rank of *Padrone*, that is, a Master Mariner of the Third Class or as a Second Mate. During the last quarter of the 19th century and up to the First World War, five Gozitan seamen climbed the ranks further to achieve the certificate of Chief Mate and that of Master Mariner of the Second Class. These were, by order of date of issue of their certificate; Salvatore Pisani from Nadur, Giuseppe Pisani from Nadur, Giovanni Xuereb from Xewkija, Giovanni Pisani from Xewkija (also Giuseppe's son), and Andrea Camilleri, my great-grandfather, also from Nadur. They all came from

¹² NAM, CSG02, 4661/1876.

¹³ <https://www.leonore.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/ui/notice/64053>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ gallica.bnf.fr / BnF



The ex-Voto that Capt. Pisani and his crew commissioned showing the brig-schooner 'Cometa Donati' in heavy weather. Used with permission from the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Tal-Ħerba, Birkirkara.

maritime backgrounds. Until the end of the Great War they were the highest certified Gozitan Deck Officers.

Brief profiles of these Master Mariners are given below.

Capt. Salvatore Pisani

Pisani was born in Nadur on 20th September 1847. His father, uncles and grandfather were all certified *Padroni* and were also owners of various sailing vessels.

At the tender age of 11, he was already a Deckboy onboard the schooner 'Oliva' along with his

15-year-old brother Carmelo and their father, *Padrone* Antonio Pisani.¹⁷ On 5th May 1866 he was successfully examined by the Maltese Navigation Board for a certificate of Master Mariner of the Third Class which was issued two days later.¹⁸

His first command was the 58-ton¹⁹ Maltese brig-schooner 'Cometa Donati', departing the Grand Harbour for Annaba, Algeria, on 23rd July 1866²⁰ – at 19 years of age. The owner of the 'Cometa Donati' was his father.²¹ Between 1866 and 1874, he made a total of 47 voyages between Malta and various ports in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Sicily.²² He was *Padrone* of the 'Cometa Donati' between 1866 and 1872, and he then transferred to the larger 87-ton²³ brig-schooner 'Vittoria'.

17 NAM, CUS, Series 18 Item 137-M-00116.

18 NAM, CSG02, 2444/1866.

19 'Ton' is a measure of volume in the maritime industry. Therefore it is different from the word 'Tonne' which measures weight..

20 NAM, CSG02, 3140/1874.

21 Mercantile Navy List 1866.

22 NAM, CSG02, 3140/1874.

23 Mercantile Navy List 1875.

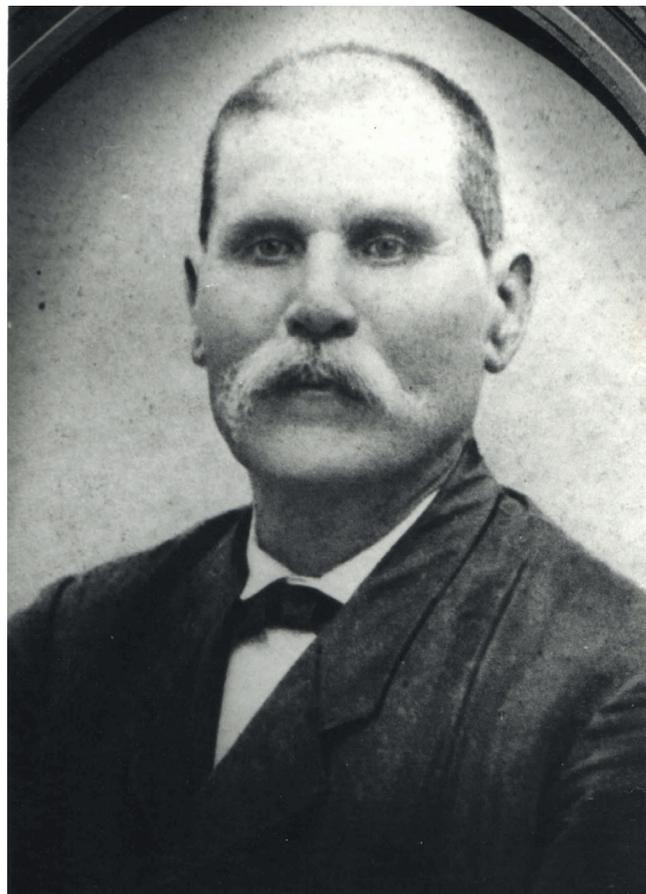
On the 9th of June 1871 the ‘Cometa Donati’ departed the Grand Harbour bound for Tripoli²⁴ with a crew of six. His brother Carmelo Pisani was the Bosun²⁵ (one of the highest ranks of a Deck Rating and is therefore at a level of a Chief Petty Officer; the Bosun or Boatswain acts like a foreman in the Deck department). Four days into the voyage, on the 13th June, and just nine miles out of Tripoli,²⁶ the brig-schooner was hit by a severe storm. The crew experienced a lot of problems; their sails were ripped by the very strong winds²⁷ and they were in danger of foundering. In fact, they made a vow to Our Lady of Tal-Ħerba to keep them safe through the ordeal. To this day the ex-Voto painting that Capt. Pisani and his crew commissioned is kept at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Tal-Ħerba in Birkirkara.

Pisani was the first Gozitan to achieve a Chief Mate certificate and a Master of the Second Class certificate, higher ranking certificates that gave him the opportunity to navigate as Master to any Mediterranean port. This was issued on 5th June 1875,²⁸ when he was 26 years old.

Capt. Giuseppe Pisani

Not related to Capt. Salvatore Pisani, Capt. Giuseppe Pisani was born in Nadur on 23rd March 1841. His father, uncles and grandfather were all certified *Padroni* and owners of sponararas (type of small sailing vessels). Capt. Giuseppe Pisani is the grandfather of the Gozitan poet Ġorġ Pisani (Grech, 1986). Although in parish records Capt. Giuseppe’s surname is found as ‘Pisano’, in maritime records he is always found as ‘Pisani’.

He was issued with the Master of the Third Class certificate on 5th September 1859,²⁹ at 18 years of age, and took command of a small 14-ton sponarara called ‘Superba’ just a day later.³⁰ In 1869 the ‘Superba’ was bought by his father *Padrone* Giovanni Pisani³¹ and in 1876 Capt. Giuseppe Pisani is found to be the registered owner of the ‘Superba’.³²



Capt. Giuseppe Pisani. Source: Not. Paul Pisani.

At some point, possibly in 1869, Capt. Pisani found himself in difficulty at sea. While he was *Padrone* of the ‘Superba’ his crew may have feared sinking and, like many other seamen, made a vow to Our Lady of Safe Haven. They may have been assisted by an Italian vessel, and somehow the ‘Superba’ did not sink (not as written in the reference to this paragraph) as she was in operation at least until 1883. In return for keeping them alive, Capt. Pisani, nicknamed *iċ-Ċimċem*, commissioned a niche of Our Lady of Safe Haven. He had the statue sculpted in Sicily from Gozitan stone, which he transported from Gozo himself (Grech, 1986). More than 150 years later, it still stands in Nadur, right in the street named after him, Triq Ċimċem.

24 NAM, CSG02, 3140/1874.

25 NAM, CUS, KL283.

26 Ex-Voto ‘Cometa Donati’, Cap. Salvatore Pisani, Sanctuary of Our Lady of tal-Ħerba, Birkirkara.

27 Ibid.

28 NAM, CSG02, 3700/1875.

29 NAM, CSG27/1.

30 Ibid..

31 Mercantile Navy List 1869.

32 Mercantile Navy List 1876.

On the 12th and 13th February 1879, Pisani was examined by the Navigation Board in Malta and was issued the Chief Mate's certificate.³³ Then on 1st March 1879 he was issued with the certificate of Master Mariner of the Second Class.³⁴

Until at least 1883 he was still the Captain of the 'Superba', mainly doing voyages to Sicilian ports like Mazara del Vallo³⁵ and Porto Empedocle³⁶ carrying cargoes of wine, olive oil and other products to Malta.³⁷ After this he captained two other sailing vessels – the martingana (another type of small sailing vessel) 'St. Dominique'³⁸ and the 54-ton³⁹ brig-schooner 'Maria',⁴⁰ both of which he was the owner.⁴¹

During his married life, Capt. Giuseppe Pisani moved to Xewkija, and later to Victoria. He died on 20th January 1904 aged 62 years (Grech, 1986).

Capt. Giovanni Pisani

Capt. Giuseppe Pisani's first-born child was Giovanni Pisani. He was born in Xewkija on 16th December 1870.

His first command as a certified *Padrone* was at the age of 23 years – his father's brig-schooner 'Maria' departing 7th April 1894 bound to Mazara del Vallo in Sicily. He made a total of 11 voyages onboard the 'Maria' during the following two years and another 21 voyages on the 'Sacra Famiglia' between January 1897 and November 1901. These were all bound to Mazara del Vallo or Marsala, in Sicily, bringing back mainly wine as cargo.⁴² The 'Sacra Famiglia' was a 68-ton brig-schooner also owned by his father Capt. Giuseppe Pisani.⁴³ On 30th August 1902 he was issued with the certificates of Chief Mate and Master of the Second Class.⁴⁴

33 NAM, CSG02, 875/1879.

34 NAM, CSG02, 905/1879.

35 NAM, CUS, KL423.

36 NAM, CUS, Series 18 Item 169-M-00083.

37 Ibid.

38 NAM, CSG27/1.

39 Mercantile Navy List 1893.

40 NAM, CSG27/1.

41 Mercantile Navy Lists 1887 and 1893.

42 NAM, CSG02, 5655/1902.

43 Mercantile Navy List 1900.

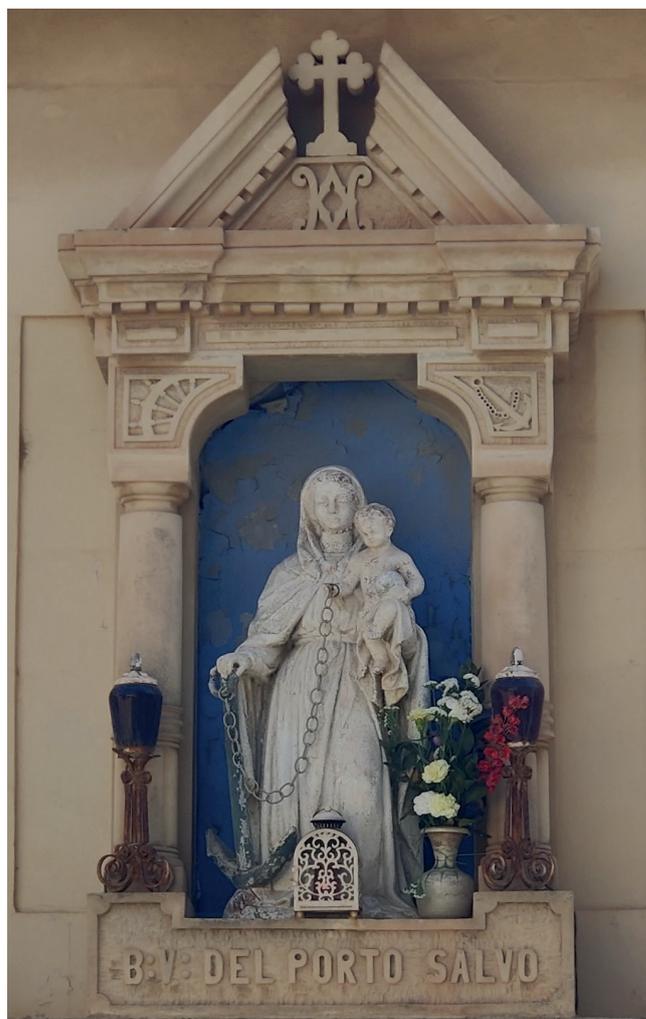
44 NAM, CSG02, 5655/1902 and 6029/1902.

45 Mercantile Navy List 1900.

46 NAM, CUS, K931.

After his father's death in 1904, Pisani is found sailing onboard vessels of the Gatt family from Nadur, relatives of his. In 1907 he was the Captain of the 89-ton⁴⁵ schooner 'Nuova Provvidenza S' arriving in May from Heraklion in Crete with a cargo of 80 drums of wine.⁴⁶

On 22nd May 1909, a 210-ton three-masted barquentine was added to the Maltese merchant fleet – the 'Gesù e Maria'. Michelangelo Gatt



The niche of Our Lady of Safe Haven in Nadur commissioned as an ex-Voto by Capt. Giuseppe Pisani.

Photo: Kenneth Grima.

from Nadur, owned 32 of her 64 shares, and Capt. Giovanni and three of his brothers jointly owned the other 32. Capt. Pisani was also her first Master,⁴⁷ remaining at least until January 1915.⁴⁸ Interestingly, in a voyage starting in May 1913 there was Orazio Mizzi, a 19-year-old Gozitan Able-Bodied Seaman who years later became a Master Mariner.⁴⁹

As already mentioned, during the First World War he was in command of the 'Gesù e Maria'. However, he is not found in the records for Merchant Seaman's Campaign Medals⁵⁰ of that war. Despite being a Master of a British vessel, for unknown reasons, his medals were not issued, and they may have remained unclaimed for.

After the War, during the early 1920s he is found as Master of the 125-foot Maltese Customs steamer 'S.S. William Beeton', later renamed 'S.S. Girolamo Cassar', plying between Malta and Sicily on mail service.

Finally Capt. Giovanni Pisani spent many years teaching Navigation to Deck Apprentices and Cadets at the University of Malta; one of his students, Capt. John Elia Zammit Haber (Grech, 1986), will be mentioned later on in the next article .

Capt. Andrea Camilleri

Capt. Camilleri is my great-grandfather and he was born in Nadur on the 28th November 1879 into a maritime family. His grandfathers and uncles were seamen and his father owned a brig-schooner⁵¹ while sailed as a Bosun.⁵²

In May 1892, at the age of just 12 years he embarked onboard the Maltese brig-schooner 'Giovanna

Rosa'.⁵³ Ten years later, on the 26th May 1902 he was issued the Second Mate certificate,⁵⁴ and on 8th July 1904, the certificate of *Padrone*.⁵⁵



Capt. Andrea Camilleri. Photo taken in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1919.

Photo: Kenneth Grima.

Between 1911 and 1914 he worked as Second Officer onboard the British passenger ships of The Khedivial Mail Line. These include the 'S.S. Abbassieh',⁵⁶ 'S.S. El Kahira',⁵⁷ 'S.S. Tewfikieh',⁵⁸ and the 'S.S. Neghileh'.⁵⁹ These steamers traded between Alexandria, Egypt, Istanbul, Turkey, and other Eastern Mediterranean ports. They also traded

47 Transport Malta, Merchant Shipping Directorate, Register of Ships Belonging to the Port of Malta, Certificate of British Registry O.N.123507 'Gesù e Maria'.

48 NAM, CUS, L387.

49 NAM, CUS, L368.

50 TNA (The National Archives, Kew, UK), BT 351/1.

51 Mercantile Navy List 1880.

52 NAM, CUS, KL374.

53 NAM, CSG02, 5566/1902.

54 Ibid.

55 NAM, CSG02, 582/1904.

56 MHA, (Maritime History Archives, University of Newfoundland, Canada), Abbassieh O.N. 115845, Crew Lists and Agreements 1911-1912 and TNA, BT99/2944, O.N. 115845, Abbassieh Crew Lists and Agreements 1912-1913.

57 MHA, Tewfikieh, O.N. 102108, Crew Lists and Agreements 1913-1914.

58 Ibid.

59 MHA, Argyll O.N. 121323, Crew Lists and Agreements 1913-1914.

in the Red Sea down to Hodeidah in Yemen.⁶⁰ Back in Malta he was examined and issued with the Chief Mate certificate on the 13th October 1913.⁶¹ The Master of the Second Class certificate was issued on 10th November 1913.⁶²

On the 14th June 1914 he took command, as Master, of the British steamer 'Argyll',⁶³ remaining her Captain for the first half of the First World War until 8th April 1916.⁶⁴ Owned by the Sinai Mining Company, the 'Argyll' traded between the ports of Suez, Abu Zenimah, Ras Gamsah and Zeitieh in the Red Sea.⁶⁵

After serving as Chief Officer of various British cargo ships,⁶⁶ in 1918 he embarked as Second Officer of the United States Army cargo ship 'S.S. Kerlew'.⁶⁷ At the time American ships offered a much better pay than British ships – a Second Mate's salary was more than twice that of a Chief Officer's in the British Merchant Navy. Onboard the 'Kerlew' he was involved in the so-called 'Coal Convoys', whereby around fifteen merchant ships sailed under the escort of naval trawlers crossing the treacherous English Channel carrying mainly coal to French ports.⁶⁸

For his service in the British Merchant Navy he was awarded the British War Medal and the Mercantile Marine War Medal.

In November 1922, the 230-foot steamship 'S.S. Pontypool' was registered in the port of Malta and a passenger and cargo service was inaugurated between Malta and Tunis. Her first Master was Capt. Andrea Camilleri. She was owned by the Anglo-Maltese Steamship Company.⁶⁹

For the rest of the 1920s and 1930s he was Master of other Maltese steamships⁷⁰ like the 'S.S. Taurus' and the 'S.S. Dorry' and also Master of brig-schooners like 'Sant' Antonio', 'Giuseppe Padre' and 'Massimo

Padre' of the Coleiro family. He made numerous voyages to ports in Greece, Sicily and Spain bringing many drums of wine to Malta.⁷¹

Capt. Andrea Camilleri, my great-grandfather, died suddenly at the age of 56 on the 24th of February 1936 in his home in Nadur.

As we now can see, Capt. Giovanni Pisani and Capt. Andrea Camilleri were the only Gozitan seafarers in the rank of Master in service in the British Merchant Navy during the Great War. They were therefore the only Gozitans who held command of a foreign-going⁷² British merchant ship during the war.

This is the first instalment of two articles discussing some notable Gozitan Officers of the Merchant Navy. The second part will deal with Master Mariners of the First Class and Engine Officers.

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60 MHA, Abbassieh O.N. 115845, Crew Lists and Agreements 1911-1912.

61 NAM, CSG02, 1386/1913.

62 NAM, CSG02, 1558/1913.

63 MHA, Argyll O.N. 121323, Crew Lists and Agreements 1913-1914.

64 MHA, Argyll O.N. 121323, Crew Lists and Agreements 1915-1916.

65 TNA, BT 165/1185, O.N. 121323, Argyll Official Log Book 1914-1915.

66 MHA, Silvia O.N. 119158, Crew Lists and Agreements 1916-1917 and MHA, Bylands O.N. 112409, Crew Lists and Agreements 1918.

67 MHA, Clematis O.N. 109887, Crew Lists and Agreements 1919.

68 <http://www.navsource.org/archives/12/171325.htm>

69 Transport Malta, Merchant Shipping Directorate, Register of Ships Belonging to the Port of Malta, Certificate of British Registry O.N. 152043 S.S. Pontypool.

70 NAM, CUS, L460 and MHA, Taurus O.N. 81644 Crew Lists and Agreements 1924.

71 NLG (National Library of Gozo), Lloyd Maltese 1925-1930.

72 A foreign-going merchant ship is a ship engaged on international voyages.

My Xlendi

JOE ZAMMIT CIANTAR

Today I do not enjoy having to go down to Xlendi Bay, in Gozo, not even for a meal in one of the many restaurants that have opened during the last 50 years. It is not the Xlendi I loved so much, anymore.

My Childhood Xlendi

My childhood Xlendi – the name is a mythical Byzantine word which resonates ‘xelandion’, ‘a ship’ – was one of the most romantic, serene, tranquil places in Gozo. It was a fabulous bay. I loved Xlendi much more than any other bay in Gozo, where I was born and brought up.

Xlendi is a very picturesque bay, geologically resembling a small fiord. It is situated on the western coast of the island, indenting the otherwise high ridge of cliffs which stretches from Dwejra on the northwest to those of Ta’ Ċenċ, on the southeast.

Facing almost directly the setting sun, the small bay used to enjoy seclusion and, then – at least till the 1950s – only the few fishermen who dwelt in the small houses built on the Front, a few meters away from the greyish sandy beach, and those who lived in It-Triq tal-Għajn, alias Il-Fontana, about a kilometre up on the outskirts of the capital city, Rabat – officially named Victoria in 1887 – used to frequent it to make a living with their colourful *dghajjes* [boats], when the sea allowed, but especially in the months of March to October. It was a summer attraction for swimming for my family. And we grew to love it.

Foreigners

Again, then, more foreigners rather than natives used to be attracted to the bay for quiet, relaxing strolls, and remote peace! The Gozitans preferred



Part of a 1950 post card showing lace-makers in the shade of a large tamarisk tree on the front of the bay in Xlendi [Photo: Josef Karl Bajada of Facebook ‘RetroGozo’].

larger and more popular Marsalforn Bay on the northern coast of the island. In winter, the bay and its surroundings used to be almost empty and, especially at night, one could ‘kill and bury’ as a Maltese proverb ‘*Toqtol u tidfen*’ implies, and only the sea waves, smashing against the rocks around, broke the sacred silence of day and seagulls’ cries that of night.

I remember when the only artificial street light provided was by paraffin lamps in large lanterns – today used as decorating artefacts – fixed to walls some three meters above the ground, which were lit by a Maltese ‘Larry’¹ the lamp-lighter, every evening around twilight, and put out early the following morning, at dawn.



A lantern with an oil lamp within, affixed to the corner of a house in Xlendi [Photo: Josef Karl Bajada of Facebook ‘RetroGozo’].

A Chapel

As far as I remember, there was one such lantern affixed to the façade or perhaps to one of the sides of the small chapel on the rocks on the right, at the end of the road that from Victoria leads to the bay. The chapel used to be seen alone, perched high up

on the rocks, beside the great cave in which an old mill is to be found. But today the buildings erected around, almost hide it – as in the case of many of our village churches dwarfed by much higher constructions around them.

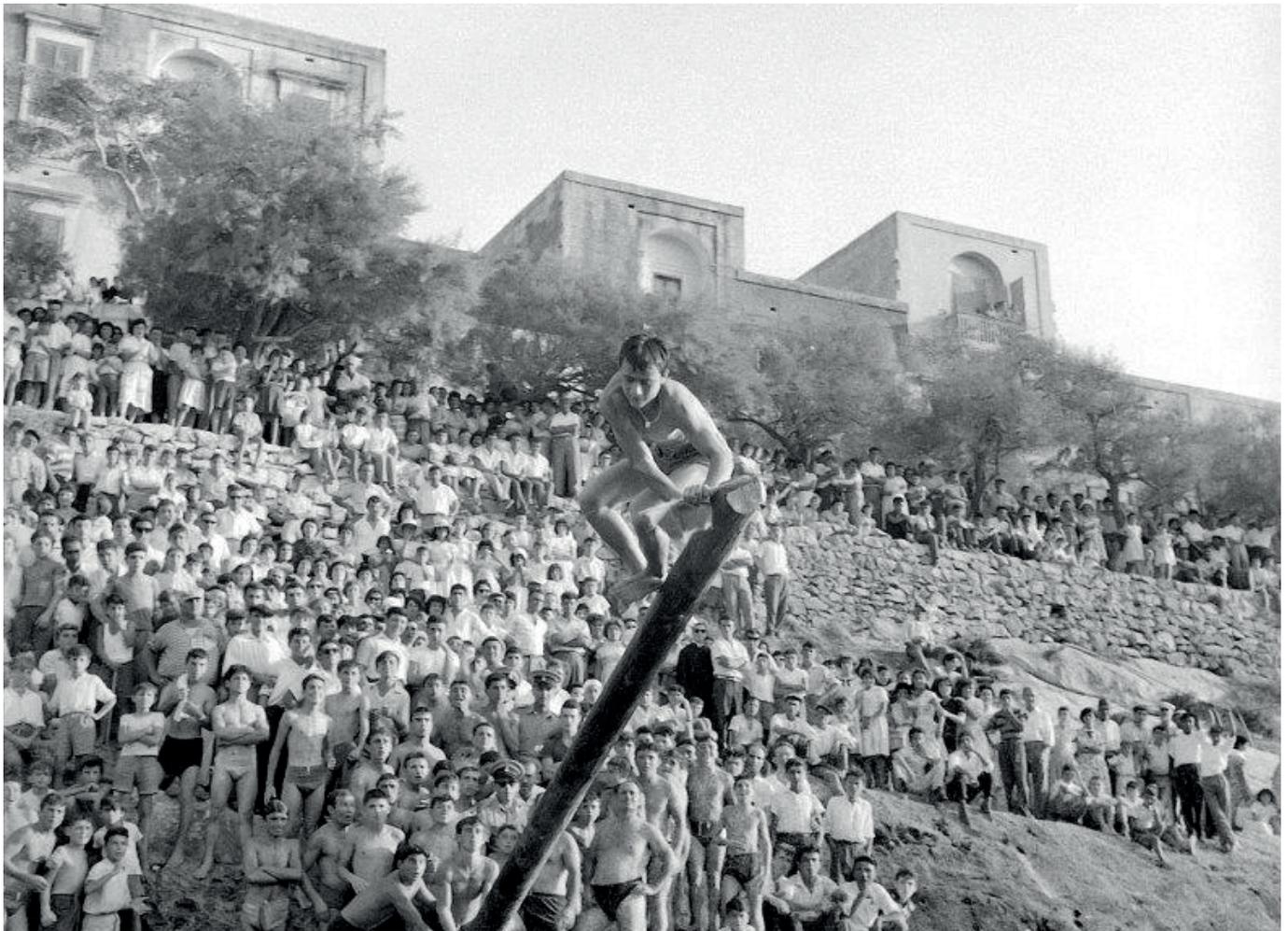


The chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in Xlendi [Photo: jjpzammit].

It is a small chapel that, fortunately, still retains much of its years old architecture and aesthetics. The only one surviving from some other four chapels, it is dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It was built in 1868 and had been enlarged only at the rear.

I still have an impression of a ‘*gostra*’ – consisting of a greased pole fixed on the rocks on the left of the bay, slantingly protruding high up out on the sea, on which players tried to walk to catch a flag at the end – held as part of the water games organised on the feast of the patron saint, on the first Sunday in September. A large crowd clapped and jeered and filled the bay with unusual thunderous shouting, encouraging the arduous daring youths that entertained with their running for the flag, and

¹ ‘Larry’ is the name of a man who used to light and put out similar street paraffin lamps in street lanterns, cited in the poem ‘The Lamp Lighter’, by Robert Louis Stevenson. The Maltese counterpart was ‘Majsi’ – immortalized in a poem most probably inspired by that of Stevenson, ‘*Il-Kebbies tal-Fanali*’ (The Lamp Lighter), by Gozitan poet and once President of Malta, Anton Buttigieg.



The youth who got the flag from the top of the oily-pole, 'Il-Ġostrà', organised on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Xlendi, with crowds watching in the 1950s [Photo: Kikku Cremona].

most of them slipping splashing into the sea beneath. It was quite a spectacle.

Electricity Takes Over

When electricity power reached the bay only a few low-wattage lamps replaced the lanterns, or were fixed on top of poles planted in the ground rocks around, and with their new 'brightness' broke the otherwise pitch darkness of night in Xlendi.

Today the picture is quite different. The building boom of the 1960s and the more recent large construction projects often driven by speculative motives by the owners of the barren rocky sloping heights on the left hand side of the bay. All this, in a few years, led to the uglification of the site, with little – if any – respect for the environment and particularly aesthetics. They disturbed the enchanting characteristics of Xlendi once and for all.



The statue of St Andrew with berthed boats and buildings around [Photo: jjpzammit].

Xlendi and Its Surroundings

The confines of Xlendi include some interesting places. On the right hand side of the bay there are: a large sea cave called L-Għar tad-Dgħajjes, another sea cave L-Għar ta' Karollina under the heights beneath the village of Ta' Kerċem, and large and wide 'Id-Dkieken' – old Maltese for 'stone benches' – on which salt pans used to provide large amounts of the precious mineral, at the foot of the cliffs, at the mouth of the bay.



The bridge over the inlet Il-Kantra [Photo: Giovanni Zammit].

On the left, there are Il-Wied tal-Kantra and Il-Kantra tax-Xlendi (a little inlet), and a centuries old bridge – 'kantra' is an Arabic word for 'bridge' – over it, which helps one cross from one side to the other and, a rough path that leads to the honey-coloured plain promontory on which still stands majestic, enduring time, weather, and corrosive salty atmosphere, It-Torri tax-Xlendi (Xlendi Tower), built by the Knights of the Order in 1650, to help watch against, and pass on news of threatening approaching enemy galleys.² Further up on the left lays the village of Munxar of which Xlendi makes part, geographically, and is under the jurisdiction of the same Munxar Local Council.



Xlendi Tower built by the Knights [Photo: Giovanni Zammit].

Magic Moments

Fortunately enough, some magic offered by my Xlendi may still be enjoyed.



A couple enjoying the sun set over Xlendi Bay [Photo: jjpzammit].

The sun – that has witnessed all the changes that the bay has gone through over many centuries from when it was used as a harbour by the Phoenicians – never betrayed her charm when setting; it has never ceased to bewitch the beholder with indescribable, spectacular, colourful skies before it descends on whatever mood is the stretch of sea between her and the bay.

Today the tranquility of yesteryear is gone and the nights are no longer deserted, but the memories of Xlendi of my younger days will never fade.

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² This tower has been lately restored by the Munxar Local Council and the NGO Wirt Ghawdex.

The Work of the District Nurse in Gozo in the Past

MARIO SALIBA

About one hundred years ago, the health system in the community, in Gozo as in Malta, consisted of the District Medical Officer (DMO) who was resident in the district and was responsible for the health of the people of that district. This service was introduced by Governor Sir Richard More O'Ferrell in 1848.¹ Gozo was divided into four districts. District A consisted of Victoria, Żebbuġ, Għarb, Għasri, San Lawrenz, Kerċem, and Santa Luċija. District B consisted of Nadur, Qala, Għajnsielem, Mġarr Harbour and Comino. District C of Xewkija, Sannat and Munxar. District D of Xagħra, and Ta' Hammet. In 1920 the DMOs of the districts were as follows: A: Dr Tommaso Cauchi, B: Dr Peter Paul Agius, C: Dr Daniel Marguerat, and D: Dr Joseph Micallef. They had an annual salary of £180 with £30 extra if they also did extra service like physician i/c of Lazzaretto and £5 extra for acting as anaesthetist at the Gozo Hospital.² They could also practice privately. The DMO used to attend the village clinic (*berġa*) every day and visit the village school to examine the children. To help him he had a nurse, also called a district nurse, as she was also a resident of the district and would always be with the doctor in the performance of their duties.

So, the nurse would always be with the doctor when he attended the *berġa*. She oversaw the making of medications for minor injuries, treating cases of eye disease and especially cases of trachoma which was very common, and also visiting mothers at home when they gave birth. The district nurse was responsible for the health of the children and advised the mothers on food and cleanliness in raising the young children. This was done under the care and guidance of the DMO, and she also made sure that what the doctor ordered was done.

The district nurse also visited the village school regularly with the doctor and administered all which the doctor prescribed as treatment especially in the treatment of the numerous cases of trachoma disease which would take a long time to heal.

When there were cases of communicable diseases reported, the district nurse would make sure that the children remained at home for a period of quarantine and that the doctor's instructions would be followed. She kept a register of children she visited, and worked in collaboration with the headmaster of the village school.

She also had a duty to inform the doctor and consequently the public health authorities if she noticed any conditions in the homes which were a risk to the health of the children or other family members such as lack of ventilation, lack of cleanliness, unfavourable food for children and any possible illness, such as lice on children or any suspicion of other communicable diseases, parental neglect or extreme poverty.

The district nurse was also required to keep a record of her daily work detailing the families she had seen and the illnesses and conditions she had treated. This register would be inspected regularly by the DMO and monthly by the public health doctor and even in case of need by the Chief Government Physician. The district nurse could also be forced to do other work if needed in a nursing home and even orphanages.

Nurses were required to wear a white uniform while performing their duties. The material for the uniform could be bought from a shop in St John's Square, Valletta. The hat could be bought at another store in the city from Strada Forni. The badge was given away for free by the department. To show that they were district nurses they would have a small piece of ribbon next to the badge.

It is worth mentioning that most of these district nurses were Maltese. They had to settle in Gozo and therefore were given an allowance to cover their rent and transport costs as they would need to visit their relatives in Malta. They generally worked in Gozo for a period of two years but as from 1930

1 National Archives CSG/04/21 Letter Dr Mifsud 18-XII-1848 pp.303/304.

2 Malta Blue Book (1921) L25.



[Source <http://mmdna.com/>]

they were required to work in Gozo for three years. They therefore claimed that their allowances be increased and as an example they cited that the Commissioner for Gozo had an annual allowance of £50. Their request was rejected, however the department later allowed them to rent a car at the rate of one shilling per hour which was refunded when they presented a receipt.

To avoid extra expenses on the department, in December 1936 an order was issued for the district nurses to be resident in the district where they worked. This measure was not practicable for all the districts because, for example, the nurse responsible for District A (Victoria, Żebbuġ [including Marsalforn], Għarb, Għasri, San Lawrenz, and Kerċem [including Santa Luċija]) had a large area to cover and she argued that it would have been better for her if she had stayed in Victoria. In addition, it would still have cost a lot to move from one village to another. This was also true for sanitary inspectors. This did not go down well with the nurses, and they complained that they were having trouble finding a place to rent in their district. There was often correspondence between several nurses and the department about their problems. In 1937 the transportation problem for health inspectors was solved by allowing them to use their car for the compensation of three shillings per mile. The present author found no evidence showing that this arrangement applied to district nurses as well. However, the district midwife was paid £30 as compensation for renting a place to live in the district.



[Source <http://mmdna.com/>]

As most of the district nurses hailed from Malta, they visited their relatives in Malta for the weekends. It was common for several of them to report illness the following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Because of this routine 'abuse', they were asked to present a medical certificate on the first day of illness proving that they were, in fact, sick.

At the end of the Second World War, most of the work done by district nurses was taken over by the nurses of the Malta Memorial District Nursing Association (MMDNA), a voluntary non-profit and non-governmental organisation which provided district nursing services to the islands of Malta and Gozo for seventy years.

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Mario Saliba studied at the Gozo Lyceum and the University of Malta graduating MD in 1982. In 1990 he followed a post-graduate course in Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine in Aberdeen, Scotland. In 2009 he completed a Master's Degree in Family Medicine at the University of Malta. He is a Fellow of the European College of Baromedicine. He practices as a General Practitioner and is a registered Specialist in Family Medicine and Baromedicine. He published several articles including a book about the socio-medical history of Gozo.

Book Review:

1551 – the Siege that Stifled Gozo

Joseph Bezzina
Victoria-Gozo 2021, 164p

REVIEWED BY GIOVANNI BONELLO

What scourged Gozo in July 1551 is just too tragic to recount. Never, in the known history of the Maltese Islands, had so much befallen so many in so brief a time. A marauding Ottoman fury virtually annihilated a peaceful rural community. The author uses the verb ‘stifled’ in the book’s title.

I generally applaud political correctness, but that is taking things too far. When almost the entire population of an island is butchered, raped or enslaved; when the entire country is plundered, or handed over to arson; when not one church or chapel is left standing; when the archives are destroyed and the wealth of the land looted; when only relentless devastation survives; bitter words can be the solitary deliverance left from hurt and outrage.

There! That gets my one and only criticism of this fine book off my chest. Joseph Bezzina, probably the most prolific, stubborn and encyclopaedic researcher of the history of his native Gozo, has just published a book – the only one – dedicated exclusively to the major calamity of the nation so dear to his heart – its antecedents, its protagonists, its victims, its politics, its context, its narrative, its aftermaths.

Up to the erection of a rightful memorial in 2016, in the approaches to the Ċittadella, designed by the irrepressibly creative John Grima, nothing in Gozo kept alive the memory of the catastrophe, except for a humble tablet in Italian walled up in a narrow street in 1579, to perpetuate the memory of one of its ‘heroic’ defenders, the Sicilian soldier Bernardo de Opuo, long settled in Gozo.

This solitary memorial leaves many questions unanswered. Why is it topped by a large fleur-de-lis, usually the symbol of the French monarchy, when the grand master of the Order was a Spaniard

who put the blame for the devastations currently suffered by the Order on the alleged cowardice of the French defenders?

Again, it is generally accepted that Opuo was a Sicilian, and yet the tablet says he was from Villa Mirados (or Mirandos, the ‘n’ implied by a ‘macron’, the abbreviating sign ~ between the a and d). No one I know of has managed to identify anywhere in Sicily called Mirados.

Aware that the Ottoman looters had penetrated the Citadel and were advancing on his home, Bernardo stabbed his two teenage daughters and his wife to death to spare them rape and enslavement. He then rushed out in the street to fight the approaching hordes who overcame him and killed him.

It may be me, but I find little heroic in all this. He preferred his wife and daughters dead to their being carnally known by others. That surely salvaged his manly ‘honour’. But did the three females have any say in all this? Who authorised him to appoint himself their mouthpiece and their executioner, and to believe that they would rather be dead than allow his machismo to be dented?

The ferocity unleashed in Gozo by the Muslim invaders can be explained as a personal vendetta of their leader, the awesome corsair and military strategist Turgut Reis, popularly known as Dragut. He was no stranger to Gozo – before 1551, he had already stormed the island at least three times, in minor but bloody razzie.

In 1544, on his return from a lightning raid in which he had captured several Gozitans for ransom, the Governor of Gozo, Fra Juan Ximenes, bravely retaliated and, in the scuffle, Dragut’s brother was killed.

The corsair asked for the return of his body to give it proper Muslim burial, but the governor refused and instead mockingly roasted the corpse on an open fire to outrage Dragut. The corsair swore revenge and served it on the inhabitants seven years later. Is it ironic that both brothers were killed in the Maltese islands, Dragut in 1565, quite likely by friendly fire.

The 1551 Gozo Siege was not only cowardice, looting, evil and defeat. It also gave the lie to the fabled generosity of the Maltese. Deep down, these Muslim (or Christian) razzie camouflaged, and rather thinly, thriving business enterprises. Apart from plundering everything worth anything, the corsairs saw themselves as cutting-edge entrepreneurs – they captured as many people as possible, in the expectation of selling them off as slaves, or, better still, of raking in handsome profits by their subsequent ransom. A roaring business. All legit commerce carried out in recognised slave marts by ‘official’ slavery middlemen.

Once captured, slaves were left with only one hope of regaining their freedom – that of paying the ransom money requested by their captors. The Order of Malta had an official policy of not shelling out one dime for the ransom of captive knights. Once they fell into enemy hands, they were really and truly on their own.

If the captive, knight or layman, happened to be wealthy, or belong to a family that was, he or she arranged for the money to be paid by digging into private wealth. If, on the other hand, they had no means, the only hope of regaining freedom lay in good heart of philanthropists, private or organised. In the 1551 Gozo razzia, it is estimated that at least 5000 (others say more) Gozitans, knights and soldiers, ended captives in Turkey and North Africa.

A public subscription was immediately launched throughout every corner of Malta to raise funds for the ransom of the captives. In spite of the best efforts of the organisers, backed by the promise of extravagant spiritual indulgences, the outcome proved devastatingly unspectacular – the whole of Malta only contributed a beggarly 56 ounces in total, barely enough to buy back three or four captives, let alone 5000. The myth of the boundless unselfishness of the Maltese was put to the test, with problematic results.



Juan de Homedes y Coscón (1477-1553), the 47th grand master of the Order and the fourth in Malta (1536-1553), by a French engraver. Photo: Daniel Cilia.

The fate of the commander of Gozo, Fra Galatian de Sesse, proves emblematic of the unpredictable fortunes of those in the public eye. Appointed governor in recognition of his acknowledged military valour, in defeat he ended vilified, persecuted, humiliated, enslaved in Turkey and imprisoned on his return to Malta after negotiating his ransom.

His surrender to the heathen Muslims of a Christian decrepit fortress, which he was defending with the meagre aid of very few soldiers and of one solitary British gunner, proved an indelible stain on the honour of a knight of St John.

What thundered the prosecutor’s hollow rhetoric during the governor’s trial held while still in captivity? A knight of St John dies rather than surrender to the infidel. If he accepts to defend a fortress, he also accepts that the fortress would be his grave. De Sesse was only released from prison by La Sengle on the grand master’s deathbed in 1557.



'Il-Ġebbla tal-Halfa', on the east coast of Gozo, where, according to legend, Dragut took a 'halfa' (an oath) to avenge the burning of his brother by the Gozitans during a razzia in 1544. Photo: Paul Falzon.

It took many long years to repopulate Gozo, by the trickle of returning ransomed captives, and by the invasion of wily Maltese and foreign squatters who 'colonised', read misappropriated, the rich estates abandoned by the wretched Gozitans.

This gave rise to a myriad bouts of litigation during the period of the Order, some of which dragged on up to the 19th century, exacerbated by the fact that most notarial records had been destroyed or transferred to Constantinople. Normality somehow limped back, but it took aeons for all the wounds to heal.

Part of Bezzina's fascinating narrative concerns those many Gozitans who never made it back to their homeland, either because of their inability to put up a ransom or because they chose to. Some hard evidence survives as to their fate, supplemented by credible legends. In Tarhuna, to the south-east of Tripoli, their descendants survive to this day. The destiny of the many sold as slaves in Constantinople is just as intriguing, but less linear.

A number of valiant historians had taken the Gozo siege as a focal point of their research, among others Godfrey Wettinger, Stanley Fiorini and Edward R. Leopardi, their contributions nothing short of precious and trailblazing. But it had to be Mgr Bezzina to weave all the strands together, adding his own meticulous studies, into one complete and organic reader-friendly narrative, flowingly recounted, though academically buttressed and structured. I could not discover one detail omitted or one fact warped.

This is the first and only book on the Gozo calamity, a nightmare that the passage of almost 500 years has not exorcised, exuberantly illustrated, enriching alike to scholars and readers with inquisitive minds. The Ministry for Gozo, which munificently sponsored this publication, has also pledged its widest dissemination in schools and elsewhere. The nation thanks.

Recent Activities at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus

JOSEPH CALLEJA

Island Tourism and Culture Study Week for SEA-EU

Island tourism and culture was the theme of an intensive study week and cultural event organised for the European University of the Seas (SEA-EU) by the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture (ITTC) at the University of Malta, and supported by UM's Institute for Earth Systems and Heritage Malta.

The course consisted of morning lectures held at the University Gozo Campus, afternoon fieldwork and evening debriefing sessions, supported by guest lecturers from the University of Malta as well as Prof. Vinko Mustra from the Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism at the University of Split, Croatia, a SEA-EU partner university.

This course was attended by a diverse group of students who travelled to Malta for this course from the SEA-EU partner universities of Gdansk, Split, Kiel and Brest. The course included several fieldwork experiences around the island of Gozo: from the Xwejni salt pans to food sampling, from the Ġgantija Temples site to a treasure hunt in Xewkija, giving the opportunity to the visiting students to experience first hand what island tourism in Gozo offers. Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino, Rector's Delegate for SEA-EU, and Dr Marie Avellino, ITTC Director, were the resident UM academics for the complete study week.

Throughout the week, all lectures and fieldwork visits aimed to create an interdisciplinary approach in addressing island tourism economies and to discuss tourism in Gozo and how this impacts on island life and livelihoods.

This intensive course and cultural visit marks another successful collaboration between UM and SEA-EU universities in providing more opportunities for student and academic collaborations and exchanges.

Examinations

Gozitan students following courses at the Msida Campus, were again given the opportunity to sit for their end-of-semester exams in Gozo. Around 110 exams were organised at the Gozo Campus, during the January/February session of examinations, while during the May/June session, around 370 exams were held.

Award of Certificates

Thirteen participants completed with success the Pre-Tertiary Certificate Course in the Baroque Culture of the Maltese Islands, held at the Gozo Campus. The course was intended to improve the students' general knowledge of the historical context and traditions of Baroque culture. It aimed to equip





The participants who successfully completed the Pre-Tertiary Certificate in the Baroque Culture of the Maltese Islands, together with Prof. Dennis De Lucca, Director of the International Institute for Baroque Studies (front row: fourth from right), Ms Joyce Farrugia, Director Gozo Services at the Ministry for Gozo (front row: fifth from right), Dr Hermann Bonnici, course coordinator (front row: fourth from left) and Mr Giovanni Zammit, representing the Dwejra Opportunity Fund (front row: third from left).



Professor Denis De Lucca awarding the certificate to one of the participants.

the students with the necessary skills to observe, identify and analyse works of visual culture as well as with the critical tools required to understand the culture of preservation and conservation. The course was offered at the University Gozo Campus during 2021 and 2022, by the International Institute for Baroque Studies and was financially supported by the Ministry for Gozo.

Certificates were awarded to the successful participants on 30th May 2022. During the ceremony, Professor Denis De Lucca, Director of the International Institute for Baroque Studies, delivered a short speech during which he explained how the multi-disciplinary approach taken by this course is specifically designed to satisfy the knowledge requirements of the participants in order to enable them to disseminate this knowledge responsibly to third parties. Also present for the event were Dr Hermann Bonnici, coordinator of the course, and Ms Joyce Farrugia, Director Gozo Services at the Ministry for Gozo. Mr Giovanni Zammit, representing the Dwejra Opportunity Fund, also awarded the participants with a book entitled 'Treasures of Gozo' recently published by the same fund.



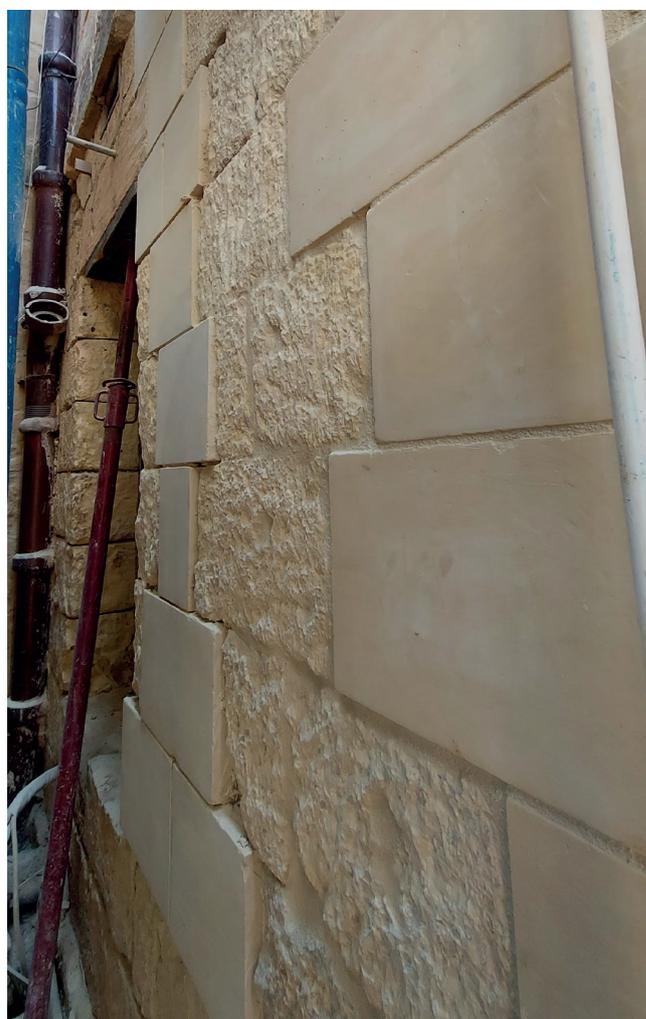
Professor Philip Von Brockdorff addressing the audience during the information session.

Information Session

An information session regarding courses on offer at the Gozo Campus was held on Friday 8th July. During the session various course-coordinators from a number of faculties at the University of Malta, provided information about the courses on offer at the Gozo Campus. Prof. Philip Von Brockdorff, Rector’s Delegate for Gozo, explained how the Gozo Campus is working with various faculties, institutes and centres at the University of Malta in order to increase the programmes and activities at the campus. One such example is the the arrangements made with the Centre for Liberal Arts and Sciences, which will be extending its courses to Gozo as from October 2022. He also mentioned the agreement reached with the Gozo Regional and Development Authority to partially sponsor a number of courses offered at the campus. The event which was well attended, ended with a small reception in the main courtyard of the campus.

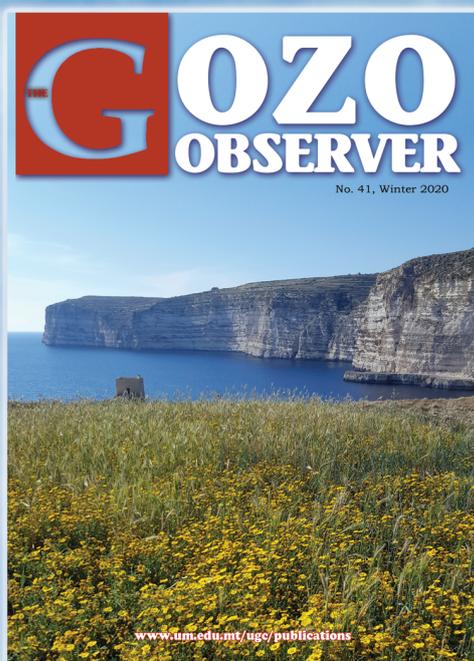
Restoration Works

In May, extensive restoration works commenced on the external facades of the old part of the Gozo Campus building. These works include the restoration and consolidation of the stone fabric, repointing, and the removal of cement, wires and iron objects, which have accumulated over the years. Restoration of all apertures will also be undertaken. This project was entrusted to Zappetti Restoration Ltd. and is being financed by the Ministry for Gozo.



Restoration works on one of the walls at the back of the campus in progress.

Joseph Calleja is Manager at the University of Malta – Gozo Campus.



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