

The 2008 *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards

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Introduction

In 2005, the Circolo Gozitano established the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award to honour those persons and organisations who, through determination and hard work, offer outstanding contributions to the economic and social development of Gozo or to the promotion of Gozo's identity. The 28th October is a significant date for the Circolo Gozitano as it commemorates the day when Archpriest Saverio Cassar, the Gozitan patriot, successfully led the Gozitans against Napoleon Bonaparte's French forces in 1798. Following the departure of the French from Gozo, Saverio Cassar became the head of government in Gozo and administered Gozo for two years while Malta, during this period, was still part of Republican France.

The Awardees to Date

The *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards were handed out for the first time in 2005. During this first award ceremony, there were six awardees, namely Dr Censu Tabone (Former President of Malta), Prof Lino Briguglio (Director of the University of Malta Gozo Centre), ET Nikol Cauchi (Former Bishop of Gozo), Prof John Cremona (Former Chief Justice), Il-Hajja f'Ġhawdex (Monthly Magazine) and L-ARKA Foundation.



Prof Lino Briguglio receiving the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award in 2005 for his outstanding contribution to higher education in Gozo.

In 2006, four *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards were given to Mr. Anton Tabone (Former MP and Speaker

of the House of Representatives), Ġorġ Pisani (Gozitan Poet who died in 1999), Dun Manwel Cordina (Founder of 'Il-Fondazzjoni Oasi) and the Oratorju Don Bosco.

The 2007 *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards went to Miriam Spiteri Debono (Former Speaker of the House of Representatives), Joe Zammit Ciantar (Writer and Broadcaster) and the Victoria Scout Group.

The *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards 2008

The fourth *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards ceremony was held at Palazzo Palina at the Hotel Ta' Ċenċ, on October the 29th 2008. In his speech, Dr Grazio Mercieca, the President of the Circolo Gozitano, said that the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards ceremony had become one of the most important events on the Circolo Gozitano calendar and was one of the activities in which Gozo Day could be commemorated. He stated that the awarding of the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award to a person or group was not just a formal award but a reward in recognition of the contribution these certain individuals have given to Gozo through their hard work so that they would be remembered for it and not forgotten as was Archpriest Saverio Cassar. The *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards, continued Dr Mercieca, are a way to forward the Circolo Gozitano's mission statement in that it recognises the contribution by those who work towards preserving and promoting Gozo's distinct identity. The Circolo believes that through such acknowledgments Gozo, doubly insulated from the rest of the world, can move forward and benefit its hard working, diligent, and entrepreneuring people.

Dr Mercieca then thanked the members of the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards selection board, for the effort they put in to choosing the recipients of this year's *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award. He reminded the guests that it was due to the suggestion by Frank Psaila that the Circolo Gozitano started presenting these awards four years ago. He also thanked the sponsors, namely HSBC and the proprietor of the Hotel Ta' Ċenċ.

Finally he thanked His Excellency, the President of Malta, Dr Edward Fenech Adami, for generously accepting to present the 2008 *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards which by doing so, gave more prestige to this annual activity.

The 2008 Awardees

Franco Masini, *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* selection board member, read out the curriculum vitae of the three awardees. The first person to receive the award was Ms Maria Attard, the director of the Dar Giuseppe Debono in recognition of her work, which includes her ever present support to unwed teenage mothers. Ms Maria Attard is one of the leading philanthropists in Gozo's social sphere, particularly in the educational and support fields.



Ms Maria Attard receiving the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award in 2008 for her contribution to Gozo's social and educational sector.

Mr Joseph M. Attard Tabone was given the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award for his untiring work in protecting Gozo's archaeological heritage. It was the detailed research undertaken by Mr Attard Tabone that led to the discovery of the site of the Gozo Stone Circle.

Chev John Portelli, the third awardee, is renowned for his pioneering entrepreneurship within Gozo's tourism industry. His endeavours proved instrumental in the development of the hospitality industry on Gozo, thus contributing towards the socio-economic development of the island during the past five decades.



Mr Joseph M. Attard Tabone receiving the 2008 *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award for his significant contribution towards the preservation of Gozo's archaeological heritage.



Chev John Portelli receiving the 2008 *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award for his pioneering endeavours in promoting the tourism industry in Gozo.

Guests Present

Besides His Excellency, the President of Malta, Dr Edward Fenech Adami, the audience included Mrs Fenech Adami, the Honourable Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, His Excellency Monsignor Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, Mr. Anton Tabone, Former Speaker of the House of Representatives and Prof Lino Briguglio, Diector of the University Gozo Centre.

Caroline Camilleri Rolls possesses the degree of Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies and currently assists in the administration as Academic Coordinator at the University Gozo Centre.