

STILL MORE HOUSES IN VALLETTA

by

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OLD MINT STREET

In the early days of Valletta, Old Mint Street was known as Strada San Sebastiano, later, owing to the Mint being housed in this street, it became known as "Strada della Zecca" or "Strada Zecca". The French, during their short occupation of the Island, named the street "Rue de la Monnaie".

As early as 1570 the French Langue acquired a site measuring 572 square canes (1) (22 canes x 26 canes) for the purpose of building their auberge. (2) This site was bounded by South Street, Scots Street, Windmill Street and Old Mint Street. On this site the first Auberge de France was raised, however, the French knights soon found out that the site was unsuitable and in the Chapter of April 2, 1588 (3) the French Langue insisted on transferring their auberge to a site in South Street and to incorporate into it the house of Bali Fra Christopher le Bolver dit Montgauldry which stood at the corner of South Street with Old Bakery Street. Thus after only fifteen years the first auberge was abandoned by the French knights, and on the 10 February 1604, by a decision of the Chapter General, we find the old auberge lent to the German knights until repairs were effected in their auberge. (4)

Today, of this first auberge, we can still see the supports for the standards of the langue and the Religion, four windows and one rusticated pilaster, and except for the door the facade is nearly intact. In the interior, on the ground floor, part of the groined vault with the fleur-de-lis on the boss is still visible. (5)

In due course, part of the premises (Nos. 2 and 3 Old Mint Street) were leased by French Langue to the Treasury at a rent of Sc. 65 per annum (6) and here the Mint or "Zecca" of the Order was set up until it was transferred to the Conservatoria in 1788.

The earliest known coins of the Order are the silver pieces struck in Rhodes in 1310 during the grandmastership of Fulke de Villaret. Grand Master Dieudonne de Gozon was the first to introduce gold coinage. In Malta, the Grand Masters continued to mint their own coins and the art of striking gold coins went through a steady progress until we come to the exquisite finesse of the

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- (1) One cane equivalent to 2 yards 10½ inches.
 - (2) Records of Notary Placido Abel of 19 July 1570.
 - (3) *Liber Bullarum* 1588-1589 R.M.L. Arch. 444, fol. 32.
 - (4) DARMANIN DEMAJO, G., *Archivio Storico di Malta* Vol. II page 61.
 - (5) The writer is indebted to Chev. Vincenzo Bonello for this information.
 - (6) CARAVITA, Giov. Maria, *Trattato del Tosoro* Vol. I R.M.L. Arch. 1679 fo. 120.

coins struck by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736). Grand Master Marc'Antonio Zondadari was the first Grand Master to substitute his bust for the head of John the Baptist on the coins of the Order. (7)

In 1566 the Master of the Mint was a Fleming, Simon Prevost, who engraved and struck the special coins and medals which were placed in a copper urn under the foundation stone of Valletta. (8)

The salary of the Master of the Mint was Sc. 20 per month up to 1673 and this was then reduced to Sc. 15 per month. On 15 September 1682 a certain Valentino Gandolfo was appointed as assistant to the Master of the Mint at a salary of Sc. 5 per month. (9)

The standard or sample coin in Malta was the zecchino and we find that over two hundred thousand of these coins were struck at the mint between 1722 and 1727.

Token coins, were first struck by Grand Master de la Valette to provide for the pay of the workmen during the building of Valletta, other Grand Masters continued to coin these. Grand Master Lascaris coined Sc. 250,000 in copper coins in pieces of 2 and 4 tari (10) but, perceiving and regretting his error, he sought means to withdraw these from circulation and, for this purpose, proposed that a tax of 5% be levied on the property of the Order. In this manner Sc. 60,000 were withdrawn from circulation when the death of Lascaris put an end to this project.

About the year 1758 a monetary crisis seems to have arisen in Malta due to the increase of the price of the Spanish doubloon from 7 sc. 6 tari to 8 sc. 5 grains without a proportional increase being made in the price of the Maltese zecchino and from 1738 the zecchino began to disappear from circulation. This brought about a severe shortage of gold and silver coins in Malta, causing the Mint to close. Zenobio Paoli was called in to suggest remedies to improve the situation. (11)

In 1774 a report was drawn up by the Balis Debarres and de Tibas, Commissioners of the Mint, to the effect that the Master of the Mint, either through ignorance or otherwise, was causing the coinage to be debased and was thus deceiving the public by uttering coinage which was not up to the standard value. Three pieces, taken at random by the Commissioners, were assayed by a former Master of the Mint and then sent to the Mints of Lyons, Genoa and Naples for a further assay. The Assayers General of Lyons and Genoa confirmed the finding of the former Master of the Mint. (12)

(7) CAULEJA SCHUMPERI. Canon H., *Coins and Medals of the Knights* page 8, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London 1908.

(8) BOSIO, Giacomo, *Storia della Sacra Religione* Vol. III, page 745, A. Pazzi, Napoli 1684.

(9) CARAVITA, op. cit. p. 120.

(10) One tari equivalent to $1 \frac{8}{12d}$.

(11) PAOLI, Zenobio — *Trattato della Zecca*, R.M.L. Arch. 6409.

(12) *Relation présentée a S. Emee. par les Ven. Baillys Debarres et de Tibas* R.M.L. Arch. 6409.

About 1788 the Mint was transferred to the Conservatoria, as the premises in Old Mint Street were required by the French Langue. (13)

During the French occupation the Master of the Mint was a certain Joseph Lebrun and his notes, still preserved in the Royal Malta Library, (14) give us interesting information regarding the melting of the treasures seized by the French from St. John's Conventual Church and other churches as also from the Monte di Pietà. The story of the Mint has been dealt with by the writer in an article which appeared in the Numismatic Chronicle. (15)

In a public auction at the Court of the Castellania held on the 8 March 1706, the Bali Fra Trajano Gironda bought, for Sc. 2,015, the house in Old Mint Street corner with St. John Street, No. 34 Old Mint Street. (16)

The Bali Gironda, in his disproprium, appointed the knights who at any time lived in the Camerata as administrators of this property, stipulating that out of the rents, after provision having been made for repairs and maintenance, a yearly sum of Sc. 60 was to be earmarked to pay for the celebration of a daily mass for the repose of his soul. Foreseeing the time when the knights would no longer occupy the Camerata, the Bali Gironda ordered that in such an event the house was to be administered by the Prior of the Hospital. (17)

Fra Trajano Gironda died in the Convent in August 1719 at the age of 71 and was interred in the Conventual Church. (18)

The "Casa Casaux" (Nos. 115/116 Old Mint Street) was the property of the family de Beon de Casaux and was enjoyed by members of this family who formed part of the Religion. As in 1739 there were no knights of the de Casaux family in the Order, the premises were leased for the term of two lives to Comm. Bisigniani. (19) From the 1st May 1779 the house was incorporated with the Plaignes Commandery (20) which had been founded, in juspatronage, by Fra Paul François de Beon de Casaux, Prior of Toulouse. (21)

Opposite the Casa Casaux is a house (No. 40 Old Mint Street) which once belonged to Chev. Fra Louis d'Essuard Besaure who, in his disproprium of the 5 December 1663, (22) directed that the property was to be enjoyed by knights in the Order who bore his name and arms, failing which, the premises were to pass to the Assembly of the Conventual Chaplains with the sole obligation of offering prayers for the donor's soul and for the souls of his parents. (23)

(13) BOISJELIN, Louis, 'Malta Ancient and Modern' Vol. I, p. 316, T. Davidson 1805.

(14) R.M.L. Library Ms. 437.

(15) DENARO, Victor F., 'The Mint of Malta' Numismatic Chronicle, Sixth Series, Vol. XV. 1955, pp. 173/187.

(16) *Dispronriamenti Italiani* Fascio No. 8. R.M.L. Arch. 931.

(17) Records of Not. Giuseppe Callus of 31 January, 1714.

(18) CARUANA, Pietro Paolo, 'Collezione dei Monumenti etc. nella Chiesa di San Giovanni' Tav. CCV.

(19) *Decreti della Ven. Camera* 9. 11. 1739 R.M.L. Arch. 650 fo. 81.

(20) *Decreti della Ven. Camera* 1. 5. 1779 R.M.L. Arch. 657.

(21) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, 'Historia della Sacra Religione Militare di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano' Vol. I., p. 347 Giovanni Berno, Verona, 1703.

(22) *Libro Dispronriamenti Francesi* "B" fo. 230. R.M.L. Arch. 931.

(23) *Cabreo Assemblea Vol. IV* fo. 29 and 525 R.M.L. Treas. B 295.

Fra François de Vion Tessancourt, Prior of Champagne and later Grand Prior of France, owned two houses in Valletta, a large one (No. 54 Old Mint Street) and a smaller one opposite the Carmelite Church, which he bequeathed in usufruct to Chev. Fra François Charles de Vion Tessancourt, to be enjoyed during his lifetime, stipulating that the latter could not sell or mortgage the property in question which, after the death of Chev. François Charles, was to pass in usufruct to the knights of the house of Vion Tessancourt who might be residing in Malta. In the event of there being more than one knight of the family residing in the Convent, the property was to be occupied by the knight nearest to the main line. If there were no knights of the family in the Order, the Treasury was to enjoy the rents, for the time being, on condition that the property was kept in a good state of repair.

Chev. François Charles de Vion Tessancourt died in the Sacra Infermeria on 16 January 1675. We now find the larger house occupied by the Prior of Auvergne, Fra Jacques de St. Mours, from 19 December 1674 to 7 April 1676, and by the Venerable Bali of Morea, Fra Christophe Perot de Malmeyson, from 8 April to 7 October 1676. On 24 April 1676 the Noble Pierre de Vion Tessancourt was admitted into the Order and was entitled to enjoy the usufruct of these premises. After having been occupied by Chev. Fra Gerlando d'Alfano and the Nobles Schrosberg and Vestram, we find the house leased, in 1685, to the Bali Carlo Filippo, Baron Freidac, to be enjoyed during his lifetime. (24)

At the corner of Old Mint Street with Old Theatre Street stood the Priory of Navarre. This consisted of four houses, two fronting Old Mint Street and two Old Theatre Street. In 1731 Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena, wishing to erect a theatre, purchased the two houses of the Priory which had a frontage on Old Theatre Street for Sc. 2,186 and paid a further Sc. 2,000 to the knights of Navarre to enable them to reconstruct the two remaining houses (Nos. 87 and 88 Old Mint Street) which henceforth became known as the New Priory of Navarre. (25)

The houses Nos. 81/84 Old Mint Street once formed part of the Fiol et Allard Foundation.

The Manoel Foundation owned house No. 63 Old Mint Street. This was bought from the widow of Isidoro Gambalina (26) and then completely demolished and rebuilt. From 1787 to 1798 this house was occupied by Comm. Vespoli. (27)

ST. PATRICK STREET

Even lowly St. Patrick Street, what was until recently known as the Mandeggio quarter, had a house of considerable interest. Here at No. 10 was the house which belonged to Mattia Preti, "Il Calabrese", who painted the vault of

(24) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"* fo. 63 and 270 R.M.L. Treas. A. 1.

(25) *Repertorio Fond. Manoel* — R.M.L. Treas. A. 25 fo. 65.

(26) Records of Not. Gaspare Domenico Chircop of 11 Nov. 1730.

Repertorio Fondazione Manoel R.M.L. Treas. A. 25 fo. 41.

(27) *Conti Economo Beni Fond. Manoel* R.M.L. Treas. A. 28.

the Conventual Church of St. John. Mattia Preti was born in 1613 at Taverna (Calabria) and studied art in Rome. Besides being a brilliant painter he also seems to have been a brilliant swordsman as, at the instance of Donna Olimpia Borghese Aldobrandini, Princess of Rossano, he challenged to duel and killed a German knight who had insulted the Roman aristocracy. Preti fled from Rome and escaped from Civita Vecchia to Naples on one of the galleys of the Order. Here he met the Prior of Navarre, Fra Martin de Redin, then Ambassador to the Court of Naples. On his being elected Grand Master, de Redin invited Preti to Malta to paint the vault of the Conventual Church. De Redin died soon after and the painting was commenced in 1662 under Raphael Cottoner and completed in 1675 during the rule of Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner.

On 15 September 1661 Mattia Preti was admitted into the Order as a Knight of Grace. (28)

In his disproprium on 28 December 1698, Mattia Preti directed that the house under review was to be enjoyed by Cleria Loret and after her death it was to pass to the Chapel of Our Lady of Philermos in the Conventual Church, the rents of the property being devoted to the celebration of masses for the repose of his soul and for the repose of all the souls in Purgatory. (29)

Mattia Preti died in the Convent on the 3 January 1699 at the age of 86 and was interred in the Conventual Church which he had done so much to embellish.

Unfortunately the house in which the great painter lived has been demolished owing to the scheme for the reconstruction of the Manderaggio area.

WEST STREET

There are a number of interesting houses in West Street which was known as Strada San Michele in the days of the Order and then Strada Ponente up to 1941. Under the French this street, together with Scots Street, was named Rue des Moulins au Vent.

In this street, the first house of any interest is number 10. This belonged to Chev. Fra Pierre Mailly who, in his disproprium of the 26 April 1617, donated the premises, together with other property, to the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains with the obligation of their celebrating a daily mass for the repose of his soul. (30)

On the site of a palace often referred to as the "Palazzo Britto", today occupied by the St. Paul's Buildings (No. 20 West Street), stood, in 1658, the palace of the German Bali Christopher ab Andalau, Grand Bailiff of the Order. Later it passed into the possession of Bali Antoine de Puget St. Marc who died in the Convent on the 26 March 1664 when the property passed to the Treasury through his spoglio. From May 1667 to April 1696 it was let to Comm.

(28) *Lib. Bull.* 1661-2 R.M.L. Archives. 478 fo. 328.

(29) *Dispropriamenti Italiani* fasc. 5 No. 28. R.M.L. Arch. 931.

(30) *Cabreo Assemblée Fiermalda* Vol. III fo. 23 and 326 R.M.L. Treas. B. 299.
Urbani Vol. III 1808-1814 R.M.L. Treas. B. 107 fo. 152.

Fra Antonio Correa de Sousa at a yearly rent of Sc. 110 and on the 1st May 1696 it was let to the Bali Fra Melchior Alvaro Pinto, Grand Chancellor of the Order, to be enjoyed during his life time (31); then, this palace was occupied by the Pereyra Coutinho family. (32)

Soon after the British occupation the premises were converted into the Beverley Hotel which numbered among its illustrious guests Sir Walter Scott who, together with his son, Major W. Scott, 15th. Hussars, and his daughter, Miss Anne Scott, arrived in Malta on the 21 November 1831 on board H.M.'s Frigate *Barham*. (33) Here he remained until the 13 December 1831 being feted by all sections of the population. Scott was enamoured of Malta calling it "an island or rather a city like no other in the World"; he described Valletta as "the splendid town quite like a dream." (34)

On the death of Comm. Fra Gerolamo Bolino, early in the 17th. century, his house (No. 85 West Street) passed to the Langue of Italy. In 1684 the house was provided with water by means of a subterranean channel (35), whilst in 1702, for the greater comfort of the Italian knights, it was decided to add another storey to the premises. The architecture of the new floor was to be in the same style as that of the rest of the building, and on the 5 July 1702 Comm. Fra Mario Bichi and Chev. Fra Annibale Vimercati presented to the Langue the designs submitted by various architects (36). The estimate cost of the new floor was Sc. 2,600 and it was agreed to fix the rent of the Casa Bolino at Sc. 100 per annum. It was let to Comm. Fra Giuseppe Emanuele Palla in 1699 (37) and in 1731 we find it occupied by Chev. Fra Pietro Crescimanno. (38) When Self Government was restored to Malta in 1947 the Prime Minister's Office was housed here, however, when this Ministry was transferred to the Auberge d'Aragon on the 25 November 1950, the Casa Bolino was converted into the British Institute.

Near the Church of Our Lady of Pilar is a house (No. 22 West Street) which was built in 1647 by the Langue of Aragon as residence for the chaplain pro tempore of their church. (39)

The Jesuit College owned house No. 23 West Street which has been totally rebuilt and converted into flats. (40)

(31) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro* "B" fo. 28 R.M.L. Treas. A. 1.

(32) *Strade* — R.M.L. Arch. 902.

(33) Malta Government Gazette of the 23rd November 1831.

(34) LAFERLA A.V. — *Sir Walter Scott's visit to Malta*, Arch. Melitense Vol. II p. 71/e.

(35) *Deliberazioni Lingua d'Italia* 1. 7. 1684, R.M.L. Arch. 2133 fo. 278.

(36) *Deliberazioni Lingua d'Italia* 5. 7. 1702, R.M.L. Arch. 2135 fo. 207.

(37) *Ibid.* fo. 190.

(38) *Procure della Lingua d'Italia*, R.M.L. Arch. 2179 fo. 4.

(39) *Liber Concil.* 1674 R.M.L. Arch. 125 fo. 7.

(40) *Libro Maestro Comp. di Gesù* — R.M.L. Treas. A. 122 fo. 140.

Opposite the Pilar Church was the house of Comm. Silvestro Fiteni (No. 71 West Street) referred to in rent books as the "Casa dell'Alba" (41). Comm. Silvestro founded the Commandery of St. Silvestro donating various houses and lands for this purpose, on condition, however, that he was to be admitted into the Religion with the exemption of presenting the required proofs of nobility. On the death of Comm. Silvestro Fiteni, the knights of the Langue of Aragon petitioned that the property of the St. Silvestro Commandery be applied to the new church of Our Lady of Pilar and it is probable that this house was thus affected. (42)

At the corner of West Street with St. Christopher Street (No. 64 West Street) stands the house of the Bali of Maiorca, Fra Raymondo Soler, a great benefactor of the Pilar Church in which he established a chaplaincy, for the maintenance of which he assigned a house near St. Elmo in Valletta. The house under review came to the Religion on the 6 May 1687 in virtue of a sentence of the Camera dei Conti (43). Later this house was referred to as the "Casa Cintraj" possibly owing to its having been occupied at some period by Bali Fra Jean François Chevestre de Cintraj, Grand Prior of France. Among the tenants of this house were Comm. Fra Carlo Sarvio in 1786 and Comm. Fra Giovanni Spelletta from May 1787 to April 1796.

The house (No. 63 West Street) at the corner opposite the Soler house came to the Treasury, together with a house in St. Christopher Street, through the spoglio of the servant-at-arms Fra Filippo Burgess. It was let to Chev. Fra Paule Antoine Quiqueran de Beaujeu from 1677 to 1679 and from 1679 to 1680 to Chev. Fra Ignace de Valbelle Merargues. Comm. Fava held it from 1680 to 1681 Chev. Fra Paolo Bindi Peruzzi from 1687 (44). From 1767 this house is found, in the rent books of the Treasury, under the designation of "Casa Buongiardina". Other tenants were Chev. Nett 1767-1775, Comm. Fra Giorgio Serra 1775-1778, Bali d'Abri Descallar 1780-1781 (45), Chev. Fra Giuseppe Rogadeo 1791 and Chev. D'Andelare 1791-1796. (46)

CHAPTER VII

ZACHARY STREET

Zachary Street the short narrow street opposite the main entrance to St. John's Conventual Church, was occupied, on the right hand side facing the Church, by the Auberge of Italy from South Street to Britannia Street and by the houses of the Priory of Castille from Britannia Street to St. John's Street.

(41) *Urbani* Vol. II 1808-1814 R.M.L. Treas. B. 106 fo. 328.

(42) *Scritture Fondazioni Lingua d'Aragona*, R.M.L. Arch. 2189 fo. 322.

(43) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"* R.M.L. Treas. A. 1, fo. 25.

(44) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"* R.M.L., Treas. A. 1, fo. 26.

(45) *Libro Esigenziale dei Beni del Tesoro 1767-81* R.M.L., Treas. A. 2, fo. 14.

(46) *Libro Esigenziale dei Beni del Tesoro 1781-1790* R.M.L., Treas. A. 3, fo. 11.

At the corner of Zachary Street with South Street stood the house (No. 55 Zachary Street) of Fra Paul Antoine de Robin Graveson, Prior of Toulouse, who died in the Convent on March 10, 1674, at the age of 87 years and was interred in the Conventual Church. (47)

On the 20 June 1667 the Prior of Toulouse left the usufruct of the premises to his three nephews, all knights of the Order, Fra Richard, Fra Jean François and Fra Guys de Robin Barbantane, directing that after their death the property was to pass to those descendants in the male line of Paul Antoine de Robin Barbantane, who formed part of the Religion, and should these fail, it was then to pass to those members of the Order, descendants from the male line of Jean de Robin Beauregard. If there were no knights of these families in the Order, the property was to pass, for the time being, to the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains, subject to the celebration of a certain number of masses. (48)

The house was restored, in September 1819, to Chev. Etienne Claude de Barbantane Beauregard to be enjoyed by him during his lifetime (49). These premises have now been greatly modified.

In the records of Notary Gio. Batta. Curvisier of the 26 February 1663, Comm. Fra Giulio Vitelli donated his house (No. 42 Zachary Street) to Don Vincenzo Bonafede on condition that after the death of Don Vincenzo the premises were to pass to the Treasury. Don Vincenzo Bonafede died on the 7 May 1697 and the Treasury then took possession of the property. (50)

The house was leased in 1767 to the Bali Suffren de Saint Tropez for the duration of his lifetime. (51)

Contiguous with the Casa Vitelli is the house (No. 40 Zachary Street) of Notary Ascanio Scaglia who was nominated Secretary of the Langue of Italy in 1595. (52)

Notary Scaglia had a son, Fra Gio. Bartolomeo, a chaplain of the Langue of Italy, who had the misfortune of falling into Moslem hands whilst serving as chaplain on board one of the two galleys of the Religion, the San Francesco and San Giovanni, which were captured by the Tunisians on the 26 June 1625 off Augusta.

Fra Gio. Bartolomeo was at first enslaved in Tunis from whence he was transferred to the dread bagno of the Seven Towers in Constantinople. Here, young Scaglia continued to minister to the needs of his fellow slaves, administering the sacraments, tending the sick and comforting and exhorting the poor Christian slaves to bear their plight with fortitude. Later, on leaving the Seven Towers, we find him the slave of a man reputed to be of saintly character by his own people and who was willing to give Fra Gio. Bartolomeo

(47) CARUANA, Pietro Paolo, op. cit. Tav. XI.

(48) *Fondazioni Assemebla dei Cappellani Conventuali dal 1727 al 1795* fo. 29 R.M.L., Treas. A. 80.

(49) *Libro Maestro — Famiglie Estere 1814-27* fo. 45 R.M.L. Treas. B. 121.

(50) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"* fo. 64 R.M.L. Treas. A. 1.

(51) Records of Not. O.V. Grillet Xiberras of 9 June 1767.

(52) *Deliberazioni della Lingua d'Italia* of R.M.L. Arch. 2127 fo. 251.

his liberty in exchange for that of two Turkish slaves of the Religion. Heart-broken, Notary Ascanio Scaglia turned for help to the Langue of Italy which he had served faithfully for thirty years pointing out that he was a poor man and that it was impossible for him to fulfil the conditions which would obtain the ransom of his son. In the deliberation of the 19 June 1627 the Langue of Italy granted the sum of Sc. 100 to Notary Scaglia to help him out of his difficulty. (53)

For some unknown reason Notary Scaglia was forced to leave the house in Zachary Street in which he had resided for twenty five years and was lodged in the Casa Pensa, which he petitioned the Italian Langue to be allowed to occupy during his lifetime, so as to enable him to serve the Langue better by residing close to the auberge in which he worked. (54)

TREASURY STREET

At the rear of St. John's Church is Treasury Street, the greater part of which is occupied by the Royal Malta Library or Bibliotheca and underlying shops.

The Casa Cabrera (No. 26 Treasury Street) is at the corner formed by this street with St. Lucia Street. This building once belonged to Comm. Fra Bernardo de Cabrera and in the records of the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains it is stated that the premises first appeared on their books in 1605, in which year the Assembly took possession of one half of the property and the Priory of Catalogna of the other half, although it had not been possible to trace the will of Comm. Cabrera. In the notes of the administrator pro tempore of the Assembly it was indicated that out of the rent of the one half accruing to the Assembly, one third was to be earmarked for repairs and maintenance and the remaining two thirds were to be devoted to the celebration of masses for the repose of the soul of the donor. (55)

In 1724 the premises were demolished and rebuilt in their present form, one house fronting St. Lucia Street and the other Treasury Street. The Conventual Chaplains took the house in St. Lucia Street as their share and the Priory of Catalogna the one in Treasury Street (56), the latter house being acquired by way of purchase by the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains in 1787. (57)

The Malandrino Commandery owned house No. 30 Treasury Street which was originally the property of Dr. Gio Batta Piotto and sold by him to the Langue of Italy. As the Commandery owed the Treasury the sum of 300 doubloons for passage and mortuary fees, the Ven. Camera del Tesoro decided that rents for the house in question should be paid into the Treasury until the debt was extinguished. At a later date the house was given on perpetual lease to the Monte della Redenzione de Schiavi.

(53) *ibid.* fo. 261.

(54) *Deliberazioni della Lingua d'Italia* R.M.L. Arch. 2129 fo. 210.

(55) *Cabreo Assembla Fienalda Vol. I* fo. 28 R.M.L. Treas. B. 297.

(56) *Cabreo Assembla Fienalda Vol. II* fo. 79 R.M.L. Treas. B. 298.

(57) Records Not. Alessandro Patricio Spiteri of 7 July 1787.

The Malandrino Commandery was founded by the Baron of Regifili, Gio. Matteo Malandrino of Noto, for the Chaplains of the Italian Langue (58) and it was accepted by the Venerable Council of the Order on the 25 February 1641. (59)

Comm. Fra Simone Rondinelli leased the premises from 1667 to 1669 and Comm. Fra Nicola Valadier St. Andiol occupied them in 1670. From March to August 1670 the house was let to Chev. Fra Pietro Novi and from 1670 to 1676 to Fra Giovanni Marion.

The Cottoner Foundation owned a house (No. 16 Old Treasury Street) which was indicated on the old rent books as the "Casa Formosa".

FREDERICK STREET

In narrow Frederick Street there is a house (No. 8 Frederick Street) which once belonged to the Langue of Castille and which today is annexed to the Exchange Building whilst the house contiguous to it (No. 9 Frederick Street) once formed part of the Spinola property. This, together with other houses was granted on perpetual emphyteusis to Marquis Testaferrata Bonici on the division of the Testaferrata Bonici property in 1824 this house passed to the Marchioness Angelica Apap. (60)

In this street we also find a house numbered 16 which was owned by the Monte della Redenzione de Schiavi. (61)

ST. PAUL STREET

It is remarkable that, in comparison with other streets, very few records can be traced relating to the houses in St. Paul Street and St. Ursola Street. This is perhaps due to the fact that most of the buildings in these streets belong to private local families who have kept no records of their property.

At the head of St. Paul Street is a fine house (No. 348 St. Paul Street) which originally belonged to the de Robertis family. Count Ciantar in his *Malta Illustrata* (62) writes that this property belonged to Captain Giacomo de Robertis, a Bolognese. The house passed to the Testaferrata family and is today owned by Marquis Cassar Desain.

In the street under review we find house No. 335 which belonged to the Jesuit College (63) and No. 99 which was owned by the Monte della Redenzione de Schiavi. (64)

On the 17 April 1809 the Governor ordered that part of the University (Collegio del Gesù), including the large hall (Aula Magna) was to be segregated

(58) *Fondazioni della Lingua d'Italia Vol. II* fo. 71 and Vol. III fo. 26. R.M.L. Arch. 2160, 2161.

(59) *Liber Concil.* 25 February 1641. R.M.L. Arch. 113.

(60) Records of Not. Cristoforo Frendo of the 12th April 1824.

(61) *Cabreo Monte della Redenzione de schiavi* fo. 12 R.M.L. Treas. B. 309.

(62) CIANTAR Conte Giovannantonio, *Malta Illustrata, Vol. I* Lib. I. Not. I, XVI.

(63) *Libro Maestro Comp. di Gesù 1739-48* fo. 119 R.M.L. Treas. A. 122.

(64) *Cabreo Monte della Redenzione de Schiavi* fo. 28 R.M.L. Treas. B. 309.

from the University building and let to the merchant community to serve as a meeting place or Bourse (65). The lease was for 8 years certain and 8 years optional and the entrance was from a shop No. 112 St. Paul Street. Today the premises are once more annexed to the University and Lyceum.

Nearly opposite the University is a house (No. 217 St. Paul Street) which once belonged to the Bonnici family. This house is worthy of mention because it was the birthplace of Gerald Lord Strickland, Baron Sizergh and 6th. Count della Catena, who was elected to the Malta Council of Government in 1887 and in 1888 was appointed Assistant Secretary to Government and shortly after Secretary to Government. On returning to Malta, after having served as governor of the Leeward Islands, Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales, Sir Gerald Strickland, as he was then known, formed the Constitutional Party in 1921 and was elected to the Malta Legislative Assembly. He was raised to the peerage in 1928 and from 1927 to 1932 was Prime Minister of Malta. Lord Strickland died on the 22 August 1940 and was interred in the Cathedral Church, Mdina.

The houses numbered 117 to 131 St. Paul Street formed part of the Cottoner Foundation and were built on the site of the "Polverista" or powder magazine. This site bounded by St. Paul Street, St. Christopher Street, Merchants Street and St. Dominic Street had been reserved for the Auberge of England in the event of the re-establishment of the English Langue when England returned to the Catholic faith. On the 12 September 1634 there was a serious explosion at the Polverista when twenty lives were lost and the site was abandoned for forty years. On the 22 September 1664 Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner informed the Council that he intended to build a block of buildings on this site, the rents of which were to go to the Cottoner Foundation.

House number 198 in this street was acquired by the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains in virtue of the dispositions contained in the will of Petrisa Scaramuri. (66)

Among the exiles in Malta during the Italian Risorgimento was Nicolò Fabrizi who came to Malta in 1837 and resided at No. 183 St. Paul Street, Valletta (67). He was the connecting link between Mazzini and other Italian exiles. Fabrizi left Malta in 1848 but again returned after the failure of the Venetian revolt. Here he prepared a small expedition which he called 'I Cacciatori del Faro' and which, from Malta, disembarked at Pozzallo in Sicily on June 2, 1860. (68)

The Tressina Commandery, founded by Comm. Fra Giovanni Tressina, owned premises numbered 180 to 182 in this street. (69)

(65) *Libro Ordini 1800-1812* fo. 84 R.M.L. Treas. B. 210.

(66) *Cabreo Assemblea Fiermalda* Vol. I fo. 27 R.M.L. Treas. B. 297. Records. Not. Vincenzo Xiberras of 22 August 1641.

(67) Laferla A.V. — *British Malta Vol. I* page 251. A.C. Aquilina & Co., Malta 1947.

(68) *Enciclopedia Italiana — Fabrizi, Nicolò*, Vol. XIV page 704.

(69) DENARO, Victor F., *Houses in Kingsway and Old Bakery Street, Valletta*. Melita Historica Vol. II No. 4 p. 211.

ST. URSOLA STREET

St. Ursola Street was known in the days of the Order as Strada San Pietro and during the French occupation as Rue de la Constitution.

House number 4 in this street was held by the Langue of Italy and probably formed part of the old Casa Caraffa.

In 1699 Comm. Fra Giovanni Marion of the Langue of Provence purchased from Maruzza Bonifacio, widow of Didaco d'Amico, house No. 6 St. Ursola Street for the price of Sc. 2,500 (70). Comm. Marion bequeathed the property to his sister Anna Boneu Marion (71) who left as her sole heir, her son, Captain Aloysio Marsiglia Marion. In 1724 Captain Marsiglia Marion, represented by Fra Melchior Alpheran, Prior of the Conventual Church, sold the premises to the Manoel Foundation. This house was later used as a home for spinsters under the management of the Conventual Prior and a Commission. (72)

The premises numbered 248 to 254 in the street under review belonged to Cesare Passalacqua, an old clerk of the Common Treasury, who in 1660 donated all his property to the Religion as a sign of gratitude and devotion. In 1682 he added, to his donation, other property of a total value of Sc. 20,000, the yearly rental value of which was Sc. 600. The donor directed that the property could not be alienated and that the rents were to be employed in the purchase of candles and incense for the use of the Conventual Church (73). Cesare Passalacqua died in 1683 and the foundation, which included the premises in St. Ursola Street, was approved by the Council. (74)

Fra Stefano Maria Lomellini, Prior of England, President of the Monte della Redenzione de Schiavi, on the 12 July 1672 bought, on behalf of the Monte, the premises 104 and 105 St. Ursola Street from Isabella, widow of Notary Lorenzo Grima, for the price of Sc. 1,900. (75)

EAST STREET

There is very little to record in East Street which under the Order was known as Strada San Luigi and then Strada Levante.

A mezzanine numbered 102 was the property of the Vice Chancellor Fra Francesco Abela who donated it in 1655 to the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains on condition that the rents were to be applied to pious works. (76)

House No. 70 in this street was erected by the Manoel Foundation on the site of an old house belonging to the bequest of Domenico Bologna. In exchange for the site of this house the Manoel Foundation gave to the trustees of the bequest the fields "tad-Dar", "ta' Roner" and "tan-Nudar".

(70) Records of Not. Michele Giovanni Bonavita of 4 April 1699

(71) Sproprii Francesi "E" fol. 554 to 556 of 17 July 1719. R.M.L. Arch. 929.

(72) *Repertorio della Fond. Manoel* R.M.L. Treas. A. 25 fo. 17.

(73) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, op. cit. Vol. II page 507.

(74) *Registro Cons. Cancelleria* 1681, 1682 and 1683 fo. 204. R.M.L. Arch. 127.

(75) Records of Not. Pasquale de Bono of 12 July 1672.

(76) *Cabreo Procura Anziana Vol. I* fo. 20. R.M.L. Treas. B. 292.

Records of Not. Andrea Vella of 2 May 1655.

ST. CHRISTOPHER STREET

St. Christopher Street was at first named "Strada della Fontana" as a spring or fountain of fresh water was struck in its vicinity whilst a well for the storage of water was being excavated during the building of Valletta. The French Republican Government altered the name to "Rue des Droits de l'Homme" this being again changed to Strada Cristoforo by the British Government.

The first house in this street (No. 2 St. Christopher Street) belonged to the Manoel Foundation. This, together with house No. 70 East Street, was erected by the Manoel Foundation on the site of an old house belonging to the bequest of Domenico Bologna.

Opposite this house, on the site at present occupied by a very large block of flats, stood the Slaves' Prison or bagnì. After the conspiracy of the slaves during the reign of Grand Master Pinto, it was decreed that all slaves were to be locked in the bagnì during the night.

At the corner which this street forms with St. Ursola Street, is the Maison Shelley, which belonged to the English knight, Sir James Shelley, later Prior of England, brother of Sir Richard Shelley, the Turcopilier.

On August 2, 1577, Sir James bought the house under review and later bequeathed it to the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains with the express reservation that "should the Kingdom of England return to the bosom of Mother Church and if the English Languge were re-established the premises were to serve as an Auberge for the English knights.

In the records of the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains (77) we read that the house was enjoyed by the Assembly, from the early days of the new city, through a donation made by a knight of the name of Angles and, in a petition by Comm. Pier Antonio Fiore, we find that it was presumed that this house was burthened with five masses per week for the repose of the soul of the said Chev. Angles. This discrepancy in names is probably due to the error of some copyist who omitted the name James Shelley and only inserted Cavalier Angles (i.e. English Knight). From this petition we also learn that, in the event of the re-integration of the English Languge, the house was to revert to this Languge, free of all burthens, naturally, the Assembly being also freed from the burthen of masses.

In 1718 the building was judged, by the Assembly, to be in a ruinous state. The old house was demolished and rebuilt in its present form at the expense of the Assembly which, for this purpose, employed Sc. 2,500 from the Foundation of Fra Don Carlo Caraffa, Prior of Rocella (78). As in 1789 the Shelley Foundation was debtor by Sc. 6,319 towards the Assembly and the Caraffa Foundation, it was decided to suspend the celebration of masses until the debt was paid up.

(77) *Cabreo Assemblea Fiernalda Vol. I* fo. 38 R.M.L. Treas. B. 297.

(78) *Decreti della Ven. Assemblea* 18 January 1718 fo. 230 R.M.L. Arch. 1989.

The French Demanial Commission, in 1799, still called the house in question "Maison Anglez et Schelley" and described it as being situated in front of the residence of the then Justice of the Peace for the West (Valletta-Floriana). (79)

Adjoining the Maison Shelley is a house (No. 173 St. Christopher Street) which once belonged to the Balbiano family. By a letter dated March 30, 1824, the British Government restituted the premises to Marquis Gaetano Simeone Balbiano, who was the rightful owner, through his attorney in Malta, Dr. Filippo Torregiani. (80)

The next house, number 168 in this street, belonged to the Marchesi family whilst house No. 24, today the Office of the Notary to Government, was the property of Comm. Fra Anacleto Zarzana. (81)

The Hospital for Incurable Women came into possession of premises Nos. 37/39 St. Christopher Street on the death, without issue, of Gio Martino Pitardi in 1728. (82)

This property originally belonged to Flaminia Pitardi and was later inherited by Anna Maria Pitardi who, in her will (83), left as her universal heir Gio. Martino Pitardi, subject that if he died without issue the property was to go to the Hospital for Incurable Women or "Casetta".

Casa Corti (144 St. Christopher Street) belonged to the Italian Langue.

In the Deliberations of this Langue we find that the house was taken on life lease by Comm. Fra Augusto Piccolomini in 1683 and on March 3, 1711, it was given on ordinary lease to Comm. Fra Felice Orlandini. It was successively occupied by Chev. Fra Lorenzo Ruggieri (1717), Chev. Fra Giuseppe Provana da Colegno (1732), Chev. Fra Deodato Capitani (1745), Chev. Fra Tommaso Dini (1749), Comm. Fra Diego Gargallo (1752) and Chev. Fra Guido Sambrani (1752).

On the death of Chev. Fra Guido Sambrani in 1753, it was taken by Comm. Fra Antonio Grisella and then by Comm. Fra Diego Emle Roveri (1773) and Comm. Fra Gio. Maria Nobili (1782).

In 1807 the British Government gave the house on lease for 99 years (84) at a rent of Sc. 130 per annum (85) to Marquis Giuseppe Vincenzo Testaferata K.C.M.G. to whom it was sold in 1828.

These premises have been considerably modified.

The Sant Fournier family own the palace (No. 143 St. Christopher Street). Here, on the 28 October 1864, died Monsignor Publio de' Conti Sant, Bishop of Malta.

(79) Mons. A. Mifsud — *Knights of the Ven. Tongue of England* page 102/3 The Malta Herald 1916.

(80) *Libro Maestro Famiglie Estere* 1814-27 fo. 37 R.M.L. Treas. B. 121.

(81) *Beni Urbani Vol. II* fo. 80. R.M.L. Treas. B. 90.

(82) *Cabreo Ospedale delle Donne* fo. 9 R.M.L. Treas. B. 307.

(83) Records of Not. Gaspare Domenico Chircop of 12 February 1717.

(84) Records of Not. Diego Vella of 28 January 1807.

(85) Records of Not. Diego Vella of 27 October 1828.

The French Republican Government sold the house to Citoyen Francesco Sant (99) (Count Francesco Sant) on the 14 Fructidor year 6 of the Republic (21 August 1798). Later, the premises were purchased by Count Messina from whose heirs they were purchased by the late Professor Vittore Stilon de Piro. The estimated value of the Casa Rocca Grande, in 1685, was Sc. 4,478.

In a Deliberation of the Languge of Italy, confirmed by the Council on July 16, 1783, it was agreed to revalue the rent of the houses belonging to the Italian Languge, and the rent of the house under review was fixed, by the Commissioners appointed for this purpose, at Sc. 360 per annum.

Comm. Fra Francesco Mazzei, the lessee at the moment, thought that the estimate was exorbitant, especially as a few years previously the rent for this same house had been assessed at Sc. 135. Mazzei appealed to the Council which, on June 3, 1786, after having appointed assessors, reduced the rent to Sc. 240 per annum.

The block of flats at No. 139 in this street stand on the site of the house once the residence of Nicholas Cottoner before his elevation to the Grand Mastership, and nearly opposite this was another house (No. 62 St. Christopher Street) belonging to Grand Master Adrien de Wignacourt which, in his disproprium, (100) he directed was to be enjoyed by Comm. La Marche and Chev. Vespe during their lifetime. On the death of Comm. La Marche the premises passed to the Treasury.

The Assembly of Conventual Chaplains owned house No. 77 which, in the records, is found under the name of "Casa Staina" (101). One half of the premises was acquired at a sale of the Court of the Castellania on the 27 May 1683 for Sc. 661 and the other half was purchased from Dr. Pasquale Xiberras. (102)

House No. 117 together with No. 63 West Street came to the Treasury through the spoglio of the servant-at-arms Fra Filippo Burges.

ST. DOMINIC STREET

St. Dominic Street, once known as "Strada di San Marco" and under the French as "Rue des Patriots", lies parallel to St. Christopher Street. Here we only find two houses of interest.

Monsignor Gaspare Gori Mancini, Bishop of Malta (1722-1727), owned house No. 122 situated under the Nunnery of St. Catherine (103). In his disproprium, dated July 19, 1721, the Bishop left his house to the Treasury on condition that the usufruct was to be enjoyed by his nephew, Rev. Gio Francesco Gori, and by a relative Rev. Rocco Vannoccini. Bishop Gori Mancini further stipulated that the two cellars beneath the house were to be enjoyed by his freed slave, Anna Maria, during her lifetime.

(99) *Stati Beni Urbani Vol. II*, R.M.L. Treas. B. 90.

(100) *Sproprio Emti. Lett. B.* fo. 15 R.M.L. Arch. 925.

(101) *Cabreo Assemblea Vol. IV* fo. 32 R.M.L. Treas. B. 295.

(102) Records of Not. Michele Giovanni Bonavita of 3 June 1685.

(103) *Dispropriamenti Italiani "G"* fo. 2 R.M.L. Arch. 927.

The Treasury took possession of the house after the death of Rev. Gio. Francesco Gori on the 9 January 1733 and it was let to the Bali Trento from 1767 to 1776, to the Chev. Bonelli from 1777 to 1783 (104) and to the Conventual Chaplain Fra Felice Grixti from 1783 to 1798.

Contiguous with Bishop Gori Mancini's house is a fine building (No. 120 St. Dominic Street) often referred to as the "Casa Diannuzzi Vivier" (105). It is recorded that this property belonged to Rev. Gio. Batta Vivier and was sold by him, in 1712, to the Cottoner Foundation for Sc. 6,300. (106)

The premises were later occupied by Comm. de Rouville, and in 1741 were taken on life lease by Comm. Fra Alessis de Montefroy (107). In 1767 the house was let to Comm. Fra Giovanni Battista Amalfitani (108) of the Langue of Italy who took it on lifelease on the 1st. April 1772 at Sc. 140 per annum.

OLD HOSPITAL STREET

In Old Hospital Street, formerly "Strada della Fortuna" is a house, numbered 82, which once belonged to Comm. Fra Prospero Lopresse. By a deed in the Records of Notary Ascanio Scaglia, dated March 6, 1606, Comm. Lopresse donated the premises to the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains, subject to the celebration of a certain number of masses. (109)

NORTH STREET

Comm. Fra Massimiliano Dampun bought house No. 10 North Street, then known as Strada di Sant'Elmo, and later as Strada Tramontana. In 1640, Comm. Dampun gave this property to Suor Speranza, sister of Pietro Balzano, to be enjoyed by her during her lifetime, after which it was to revert to the Religion. (110)

(104) *Libro Esigenziale Beni Tesoro* fo. 90 R.M.L. Treas. A. 3.

(105) *Fond. Cottoner Libro Esigenziale — Urbani* fo. 156 R.M.L. Treas. A. 51.

(106) Records of Not. Giuseppe Callus of 6 July 1712.

(107) Records of Not. Giuseppe Callus of 8 March 1741.

(108) *Registro Beni Urbani Fond Cottoner 1753-92* fo. 66 R.M.L. Treas. A. 43.

(109) *Cabreo Assemblée Fiernalda Vol. I* fo. 27 R.M.L. Treas. B. 297.

(110) Records of Not. Tommaso di Candia of 26 Nov. 1640.