



IN MEMORIAM

† Mgr Professor Arthur Bonnici

On 21 October 1978 our Society lost its Founder and President, Mgr Prof. Arthur Bonnici DD, HEL, BA, who died at the age of 75. He was born at Senglea on 17 Dec. 1903 and on his death had just celebrated the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

Immediately after his ordination to the priesthood, he was called to join the staff of the Diocesan Curia and from 1929 till his death he held various offices there. In 1942, he succeeded Bishop E. Galea as General Secretary, while five years afterwards he was nominated Canon Co-adjutor of the Cathedral Chapter. Previously, since 1932, he had been Canon Theologian and Canon Primicerius of his town's Collegiate Chapter. When his Grace Mgr. Gius. Mercieca was appointed Archbishop of Malta, he nominated Mgr. Bonnici as his first Vicar General.

His active insertion in the life of the Diocese brought with it various onerous duties among which one may mention the editorship of the Catholic paper "Lehen is-Sewwa" from 1930 till 1933; the organisation of the Marian Year Exhibition in 1950, the Directorship of the Catholic Institute as well as the Chairmanship of the organisation for the Co-ordination of the Lay Apostleship, while the centenary celebrations of St Paul's Shipwreck in 1960 involved him in the preparation of the exhibition held on that occasion.

In 1937 he was appointed to the Chair of Church History in the Faculty of Theology at the Royal University of Malta. Whereupon, he proceeded to Rome for a two year course at the Faculty of Church History of the Pontifical Gregorian University. On the completion of this course he was awarded the Licentiate in this science and began his teaching career, which came to an end on his retirement in 1965.

His interest in the historical sciences led him to call a meeting in 1950 of all those who cherished our island's history. This meeting was held in April of that year, a meeting which gave birth to our Society. Since then, each year, on the occasion of the annual general meeting of the Society, Mgr Bonnici was always acclaimed President of the Malta Historical Society.

Mgr Bonnici's historical writings cover different subjects, but he focussed his attention particularly on certain aspects of 19th century Malta. After his retirement from the University, he harboured plans to re-edit A. Ferris' *Storia Ecclesiastica di Malta*. But, on second thoughts, he decided to embark on his own account of local ecclesiastical history, and between 1967 and 1975 he managed to publish in three volumes a *History of the Church in Malta*, which

is undoubtedly his greatest contribution. Apart from these scholarly works, he was also keen to write articles of a popular character in order to help our fellow citizens appreciate our island's past. These were published every fortnight in the local paper "Lehen is-Sewwa", the last one appearing a few months before his death.

His funeral at St John's Co-Cathedral was a clear manifestation of the high respect that he enjoyed among us all. His optimistic attitude to life — deeply rooted in the Christian values of human life — radiated itself through his gentlemanly behaviour towards all who needed his help whether he had to guide a Head of State visiting St John's Co-Cathedral or assist a country woman seeking advice from a Curia officer.

The Church in Malta has lost a dedicated priest. Our Society will never forget its founder, whose deep sense of appreciation of those that stood near him in the management of its activities was a source of encouragement and inspiration. May the Lord grant him eternal rest.

Vincent Borg

† Professor JOSEPH GALEA

The sudden death of Prof. Ġużè Galea on 26 March 1978 shocked his innumerable friends including members of the Historical Society, where he was very active as committee member and vice-president for many years.

Hailing from Qormi, where he was born on 17 July, 1901, Galea showed deep interest in his native town as early as 1925, when he was still a medical student. His publication *Il-Knisja ta' Hal Qormi*, 1925, was followed six years later by *Storja Qasira ta' l-Ordni Kostantinjan ta' San Ġorġ*.

When he turned to novel writing, a field in which he was destined to excel, his themes remained mainly historical: *Żmien l-Ispanjoli*, 1937; *San Ġwann*, 1939; *Raġel bil-Għaqal*,

1943; *Meta Nħaraq it-Tejtru*, 1946; *Id-Dinja Rota*, 1966. His historical research produced also interesting short biographies such as *Anton Manwel Caruana*, 1939; *Maurice Magnus: His Stay in Malta*, 1943; *Il-Kanonku Caruana bħala Diplomatiku*, 1947; *Coleridge in Malta*, 1948; *Kittieb Spanjol f'Malta*, 1950.

Folklore was yet another field in which he was well versed, and in fact he gave us accurate studies like *The Taglia and the Tacca*, 1962; *The Old Flour Mills of Malta*, 1963; and particularly *Xoġhol u Snajja ta' l-Imġhoddi*, 1969, which ran into different editions.

His contributions to *Melita Historica* were always well received. These include: "Malta and the Second World War: A Bibliography", published in the first issue of the journal in 1952; "A Captain of the Port of Malta and a Grand Vizier of Constanti-

nople", IV, 1, 1964; "The Great Siege of Malta from a Turkish Point of View", IV, 2, 1965; "The Quarantine Service and the Lazzaretto of Malta", IV, 3, 1966, and "The Sea Board and Marshes of Qormi", V, 1, 1968.

Numerous medical articles by Professor Galea appeared in Maltese and foreign journals. It is really astonishing that he found enough time to devote to his writings and to attend various committees engaged in social and philanthropic work, when one remembers that for many years he was burdened with a post of great responsibility, that of Chief Govern-

ment Medical Officer.

Gužè Galea was undoubtedly a highly cultured man. He was also a perfect gentleman of the old type, always ready to go out of his way to help other people, whether they were students, old friends, handicapped children or needy persons. To the circle of close friends he was known as *Raġel bil-Għaqal*, because he managed to be friendly with everybody and never created enemies. He was upright, unselfish and truly philanthropic.

Gužè Cardona