

An exclusive set of ten stamped and postmarked cards from the NAG (National Archives Gozo Section)

JOSEPH BEZZINA
FRANCESCO PIO ATTARD
nag@gov.mt

The NAG – the *National Archives (Gozo Section)* – serves as the deposit for the records produced or received by Government entities in Gozo in the transaction of their affairs. It is housed in a purposely built hall adjacent to the National Library in Victoria-Gozo.

1 ▪ The National Archives Gozo

The ball was set rolling on 1 August 1989, when the Ministry for Gozo engaged Joseph Bezzina, an archivist by profession, to set up the archives. The first documents to be moved in were the registers of the former *Universitas Gaudisii* – a regional government founded around 1350 to manage the island and promote local interests. The NAG was officially inaugurated on 24 November 1989 by Anton Tabone, then Minister for Gozo, and Dr Ugo Mifsud-Bonnici, then Minister of Education.

The NAG was conceived as the public record office for the documentation produced and received by past and present Government departments and establishments in the islands of Gozo and Comino. In 1991, the *Staff Development Organisation* of the Office of the Prime Minister clearly laid down that: *Records originated by the Ministry for Gozo, Gozo sections of government departments, and by public bodies established for Gozo should be deposited at the Gozo Section of the National Archives which has been set up adjoining the Gozo Library* (Circular OPM/E/82/83 [July 1991]).

The NAG has twenty-eight different **FONDS**, deposits coming from an equal number of entities. Each fond is divided into as many **SECTIONS** as is deemed necessary to reflect the various responsibilities or activities of the entity. Sometimes, a particular office produced records related to various activities. In that case, each activity is considered a separate *section* and numbered accordingly to avoid the splitting of sections into sub-sections. Every single **ITEM** in each section is given a consecutive number.

2 ■ Ten commemorative cards

Since 1989, the NAG had organised sixteen major exhibitions. The first was held on the occasion of the inauguration of the NAG in November–December 1989; the last between March–April 2018. Since the seventh exhibition held in October–November 2007, the NAG has issued a commemorative card on the day of the opening. A limited number of cards were stamped and hand postmarked at the Victoria Post Office on that day.

The idea of a stamped and hand postmarked card were of the late George Vella (1948-2014) of the Gozo Philatelic Association. The choice of both the subject of the exhibition as well as that of the card was made by Joseph Bezzina, the Assistant National Archivist, in charge of the NAG. George Vella eventually designed the card, prepared it for printing, and took care of their stamping and cancelling. George Vella designed Cards 1 to 5; Francesco-Pio Attard, archives assistant, designed Cards 6 to 8; while Paul Falzon, another archives assistant, designed Cards 9 and 10.

The following hand list includes: (1) the number of the card; (2) the topic of the exhibition; (3) the date of the inauguration and postmark; and (4) the subject of the card. It must be noted that the hand-written digit on the back indicates the number of postmarked cards, while the printed digit refers to the total number of cards issued.

CARD 01

THE CITADEL THE CROWN OF GOZO

18 OCTOBER 2007

Iċ-Ċittadella (1536)

An artistic impression of the Citadel as depicted in the map of Malta and Gozo reproduced by JEAN QUINTIN D'AUTUN in his book *Insulae Melitae Descriptio ex commentariis rerum quotidianarum*, printed in Lugduni (Lyons) in the year 1536. The bell-tower of the *Matrice* – built sometime after 1424 – dominates iċ-Ċittadella. This book is considered as one of the earliest guide books to Malta and Gozo.

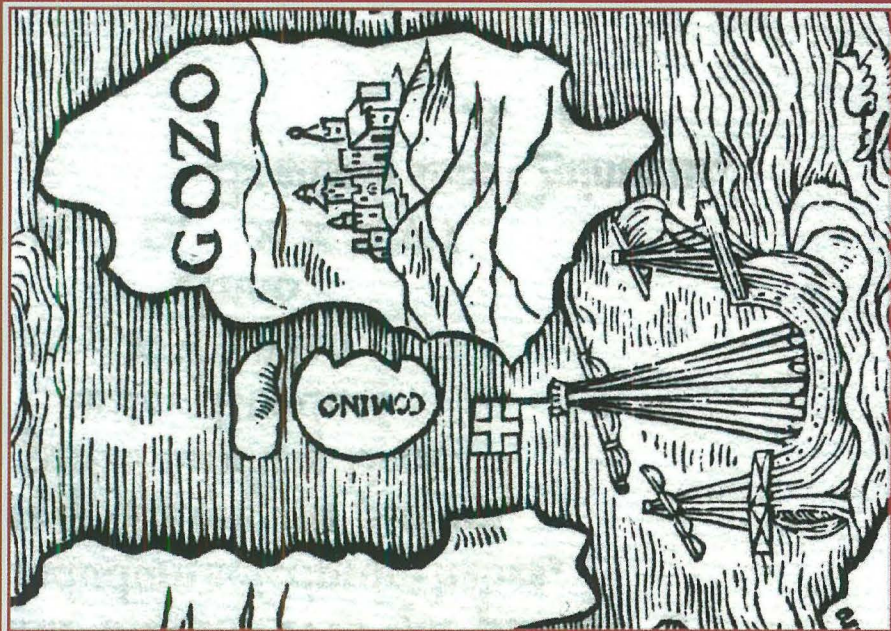
CARD 02

THE COASTAL DEFENCES OF GOZO

30 OCTOBER 2008

Garzes Watchtower (1821)

An artistic impression of the *Garzes Watchtower* guarding Mgarr Harbour in a lithograph by Edouard de Montuélé (1821). In a report of 1599 on Gozo's defence problems, Giovanni Rinaldini, a military engineer from Ancona, emphasized the necessity of a tower to guard the Gozo-Malta channel. Grandmaster Martin Garzes, aware of its urgency, decided to finance its building out of his own purse. He died on 7 February 1601 and six years after his death, a tower was raised on the promontory



Card 01



The Citadel - the crown of Gozo
 Exhibition opening • 18 October 2007
 Archives Awareness Week • 2007

• Impresjoni artistika ta' Ċittadella kif tidher fil-mappa ta' Malta u Ghawdex stampata fil-ktieb ta' Jean Quintin d'Autun, *Insulae Melitae Descriptio*, stampat Lugduni (Lijon) fis-sena 1536. Il-kampnar tal-Knisja *Matriċi* - mibni wara s-sena 1424 - jiddomina Ċittadella.

• An artistic impression of the Citadel as depicted in the map of Malta and Gozo reproduced by Jean Quintin d'Autun in his book *Insulae Melitae Descriptio*, printed in Lugduni (Lyons) in the year 1536. The bell-tower of the *Matriċe Church* - built sometime after 1424 - dominates the Citadel.

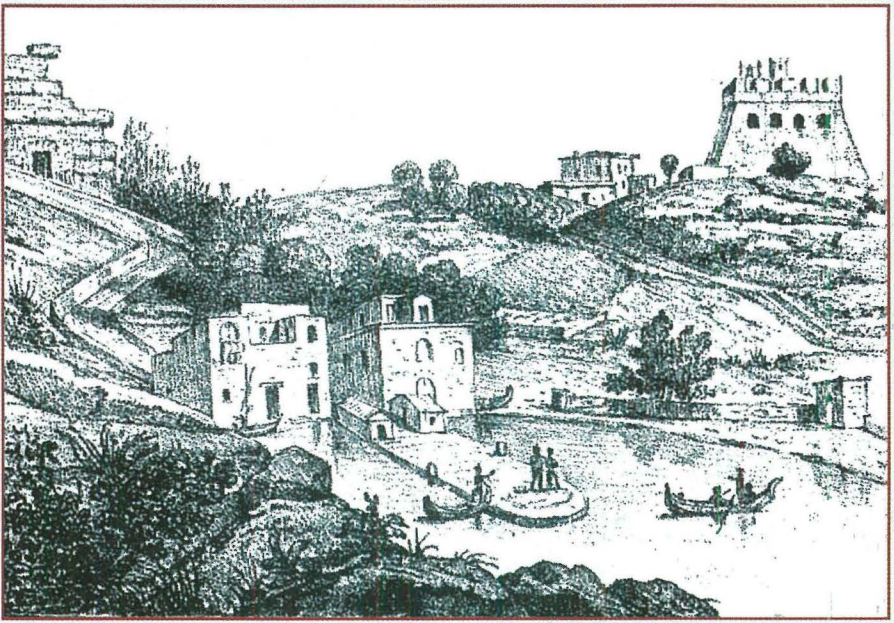
J. J. J. J.

• Sponsored by HSBC - the world's local bank
 • Limited edition of 200 cards

1/200



© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 01



NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • 02

Card 02



The Coastal Defences of Gozo
 Exhibition opening • 30 October 2008
 Archives Awareness Week • 2008

• *It-Torri ta' Garzes* fuq ir-rih tal-Port tal-Imġarr litografija ta' Edouard de Montule (1821) (kollezzjoni privata). It-torri nbena fis-sena 1607 u ssemma għall-Granmastru Martin Garzes li hareġ il-flus għall-bini tiegħu. Kien mahtut għall-ġebel tiegħu fis-sena 1848.

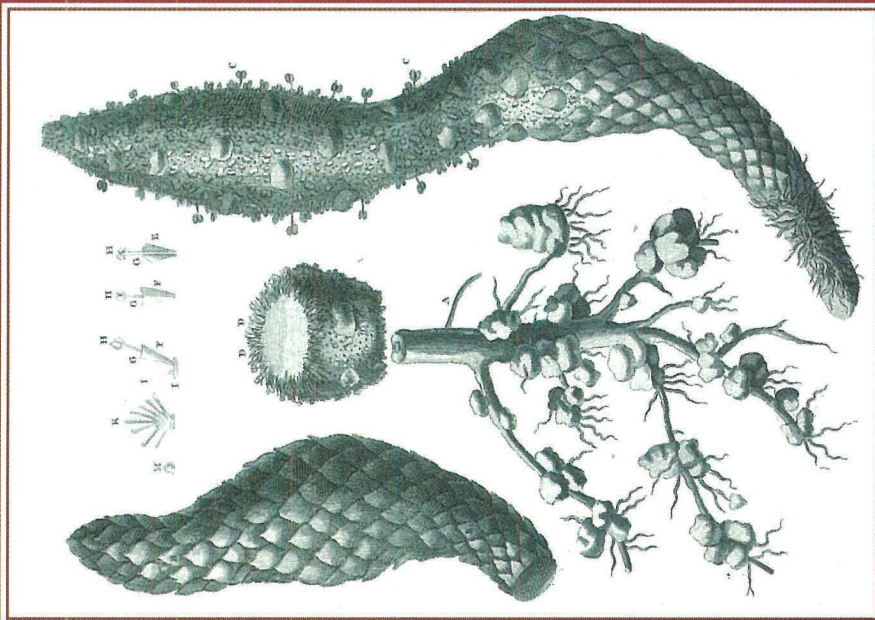
• *Garzes Watchtower* guarding Mġarr Harbour in a lithograph by Edouard de Montule (1821) (private collection). It was built in 1607 and named after Grandmaster Martin Garzes who financed the construction out of his own purse. It was also dismantled in 1848.

• Sponsored by HSBC – the world's local bank
 • Limited edition of 200 cards

1/200

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 02





Card 03



Herbs, health, and hospitals of Gozo past
 Exhibition Opening • 1 October 2009
 20th Anniversary of the Archives Inauguration

• **Gherq Sinjur** – the *Cynomorium coccineum* – l-iktar haxixa mediċinali magħrufa ta' Malta u Għawdex tikkonsisti f'zokk lixx, bellusi, tawwali, ahmar skur, u hi parassita fuq gheruq ta' hxejjex oħra. Kienu jemmnu li tikber biss fuq *Flaġret il-General* (Dwejra-Għawdex). Inċiżjoni ppubblikata minn G. & I. Robinson, Londra, 1 ta' Mejju, 1804 (kollezzjoni privata).

• **Gozo fungus** – the *Cynomorium coccineum* – the medicinal herb *par excellence* of Malta and Gozo is a stocky, very deep red plant without branches and with reduced leaves. Believed to be endemic to *Flaġret il-General* (Dwejra-Gozo), the plant is *not* a fungus but a herb without chlorophyll and parasitic on the roots of other plants. Etching published by G. & I. Robinson, London, 1 May 1804 (private collection).

• Sponsored by HSBC – the world's local bank
 • Limited edition of 200 cards

1/200

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 03



flanked by Wied il-Kbir/Mġarr valley on one side and Wied Biljun on the other. The site is now occupied by apartments. The workmanship as well as the design was possibly borrowed from the tower at Capo Passero on the southernmost tip of Sicily, the closest point to the Maltese archipelago. Its construction was concluded in 1607 and was spontaneously called *Torre Garza* after the late Grandmaster. It was alas dismantled in 1848.

CARD 03

HERBS, HEALTH, AND HOSPITALS OF GOZO PAST

1 OCTOBER 2009

***Għerq Sinjur* or the Gozo Herb (1804)**

The etching – printed by G. & I. Robinson, London, 1 May 1804 – depicts one of the most prized medicinal herbs of Malta and Gozo – the *Cynomorium coccineum*, the Gozo fungus, known in Maltese as *Għerq Sinjur*, literally the rich root. It is a stocky, very deep red plant without branches and with reduced leaves. The supposed fungus is in fact a rare leafless herb without chlorophyll and parasitic on the roots of other plants. It lives invisibly below ground for most of the year attached to the roots of the Golden Samphire and other succulent shrubs which grow near the sea. In late spring and early summer it sends up spikes covered in hundreds of minute red flowers. It was sought due to its astringent and haemostatic properties and considered the best cure for haemorrhages and diseases of the blood. The dried stalks were pulverized and mixed with wine or water and taken as a potion. It was believed that the herb is endemic to *Ħaġret il-Ġeneral*, an islet at the mouth of il-Qala tad-Dwejra on the western coast of Gozo.

CARD 04

GOZO DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE – A DWINDLING HERITAGE

7 OCTOBER 2010

Stone balcony at *Il-Mandraġġ* (1909)

This watercolour by Vittorio Boron (1909) was printed in colour in the book by FREDERICK W. RYAN, *Malta*, London 1910. Ryan wrote that “Gozo, even more than Malta, presents its people and its buildings a distinctly Oriental appearance”. This early eighteenth century balcony embedded in *Il-Mandraġġ* area of Rabat-Gozo is embellished with a beautiful floral design sculptured on its fronts

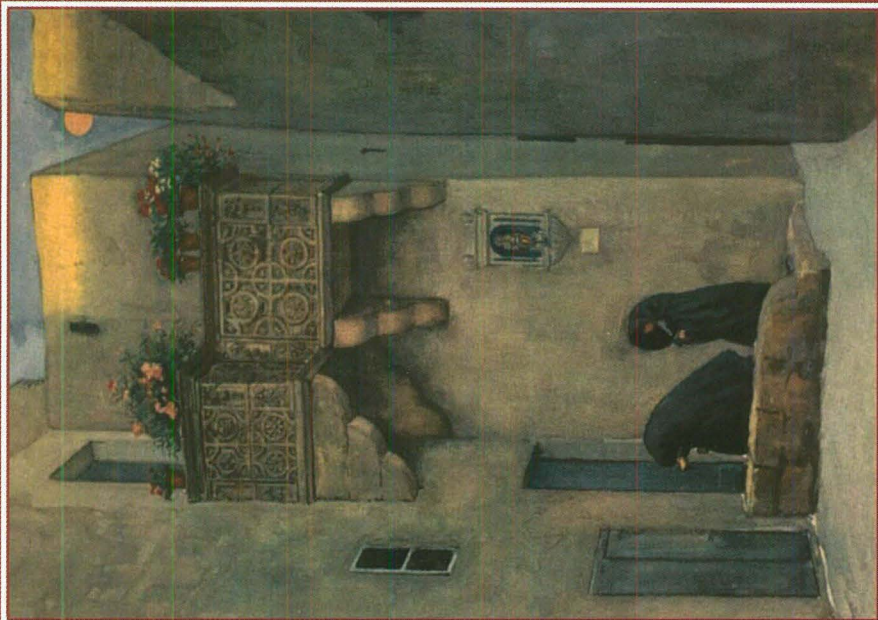
CARD 05

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE GOZO CIVIC COUNCIL

9 JULY 2011

Coat-of-arms of Gozo, Comino, Victoria, and the villages of Gozo (2011)

On 14 April 1961, the Government enacted *An Ordinance to make provision for*



Card 04



Gozo Domestic Architecture
a dwindling heritage
 Exhibition Opening • 7 October 2010

• **Gallerija ornamentali tal-ġebel** - gallerija tal-bidu tas-seklu tmintax, *Il-Mandraġġ*, Rabat-Ghawdex, imżejjna b'disinn floreali sabih skolpit fuq il-faċċati tagħha (akkwarella ta' Vittorio Boron (1909), stampata fil-ktieb ta' FREDERICK W. RYAN, *Malta*, London 1910).

• **Ornamental stone balcony** - this early eighteenth century balcony in the *Il-Mandraġġ* area of Rabat-Gozo is embellished with a beautiful floral design sculptured on its fronts (watercolour by Vittorio Boron (1909), printed in the book by FREDERICK W. RYAN, *Malta*, London 1910).

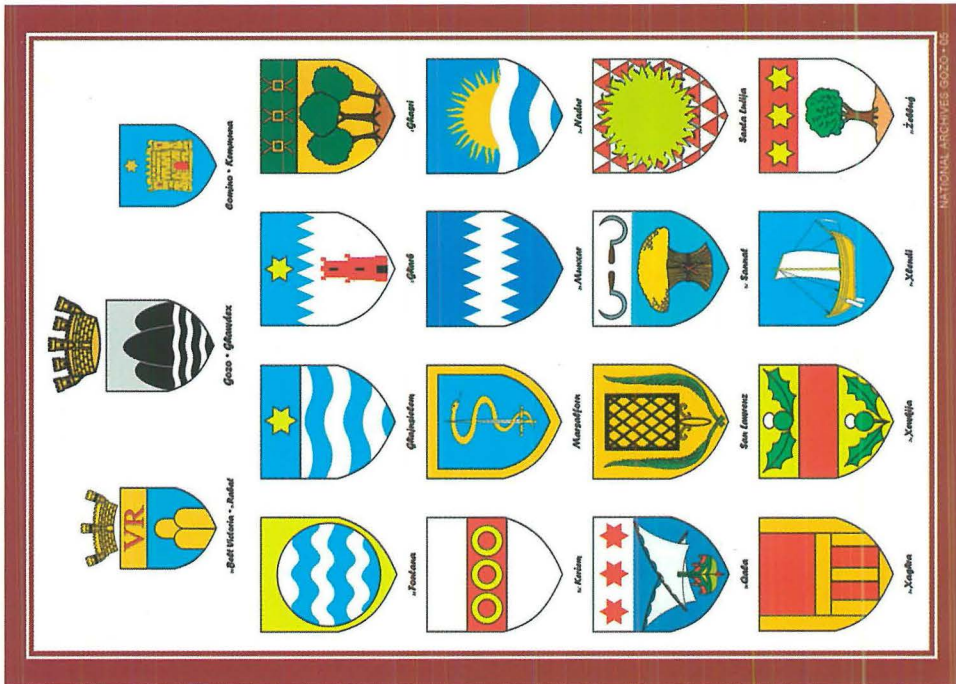
• Sponsored by Dr Victor Bajada LL.D. **VB Holdings Ltd**
 • Limited edition of 200 cards

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 04



1/200





Card 05



*Il-Klamsin Anniversarju mit-twaqfiq
tal-Kunsill Ċiviku ta' Għawdex
1961 - 2011
Fiftieth Anniversary from the foundation of
the Gozo Civic Council
Exhibition Opening • 9 July 2011*

[Handwritten signature]

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 05



• With the collaboration of the National Archives Gozo Section
• Limited edition of 500 sets

1/100



NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • 06

Card 06

NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Il-Belt Victoria
Mija u Kamsa u Għoxrin Sena Belt
1887-2012
Città Victoria
One Hundred and Twenty Five Years a City
Exhibition Opening • 8 June 2012



John Grima

VICTORIA 125 SENA 1887 - 2012
A MAGNA MAXIMA BELT

• Detail of painting by John Grima at the Victoria Local Council.
• Sponsored by the Città Victoria Local Council.

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 06



100

Local Government in Gozo and for purposes connected therewith. The Gozo Civic Council was born as a statutory local government. It was elected by general suffrage on 4 June 1961 and met for the first time on 4 July. It was officially inaugurated on 10 July 1961. This commemorative card issued on the occasion of this fiftieth anniversary depicts the coat-of-arms of the island of Gozo, the island of Comino, the town of Victoria, the fourteen districts, and the three localities.

On this anniversary, a separate set of twenty cards (not in this general series) was issued with each of the above mentioned coat-of-arms and each card carries the motto of the respective locality in Latin, in Maltese, and in English.

CARD 06

CITTÀ VICTORIA – ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE YEARS A CITY

8 JUNE 2012

Oppido Ius Civitatis Attribuit (1887)

A particular from the painting *Oppido Ius Civitatis Attribuit Et Victoriae Nomen Indidit* by John Grima (2004) that hangs at the *Banca Giuratale*, the official seat of the Victoria Local Council. On 10 June 1887, Queen Victoria acceded to the wishes of leading Gozitans to declare their town a city. Sir John Lintorn Arabin-Simmons, Governor of Malta, issued this official *Notice* declaring Ir-Rabat as a *City*: “*His Excellency the Governor directs it to be notified that Her Majesty The Queen, in compliance with a prayer of a petition signed by the Lord Bishop of Gozo, the members of the Chapter, and of the principal inhabitants of Gozo, has been graciously pleased to consent to the town of Rabat in that island being on the occasion of Her Majesty’s Jubilee officially declared a CITY and its name changed into that of VICTORIA*” (*Government Notice* No 75 of 10 June 1887).

CARD 07

ENGAGEMENTS AND WEDDINGS IN GOZO PAST

29 NOVEMBER 2013

A typical Maltese Wedding (1888)

An engraving of a typical Maltese wedding executed by GIUSEPPE BROCKTORFF (d. 1894) and published in the book by P.P. CASTAGNA, *L-Istorja ta’ Malta bil-gżejjer tagħha*, I, Malta 1888, between pages 360-361. A Maltese love story in bygone years often began with the planting of a pleasant smelling shrub in a flower pot. A mother who had a marriageable daughter planted and tended with care a plant of *ħabaq*, or *merqtux*, or *nagħnigh*; basil, or sweet marjoram, or spearmint. When the plant matured and filled the air with its sweet smell, she placed it on the *ħarriega*, a stone jutting out about a span from the wall of a house beside a window, to attract the attention of marriageable young men. Marriage customs vary greatly from one culture to another, but the importance of the institution is universally acknowledged.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO 07

Card 07



*Gherusija u Tiggjiet
f' Għawdex ta' Imghoddi*

*Engagements and Weddings
in Gozo Past*

Exhibition Opening • 29 November 2013

- *A Wedding Procession* — engraving by GIUSEPPE BROCKTORFF (d.1894) in P.P. CASTAGNA, *L-Istorja ta' Malta bil-gżejjer tagħha*, I, Malta 1888
- Sponsored by HSBC plc
- Limited edition of 200 cards

1/200

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 07





NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO - 08

Card 08



Gozo Anniversaries
on the 25th anniversary of the inauguration
of the National Archives Gozo

Anniversarji Għawdxin
f'għeliq il-25 anniversarju mill-ftuh
tal-Arkivju Nazzjonali Għawdex

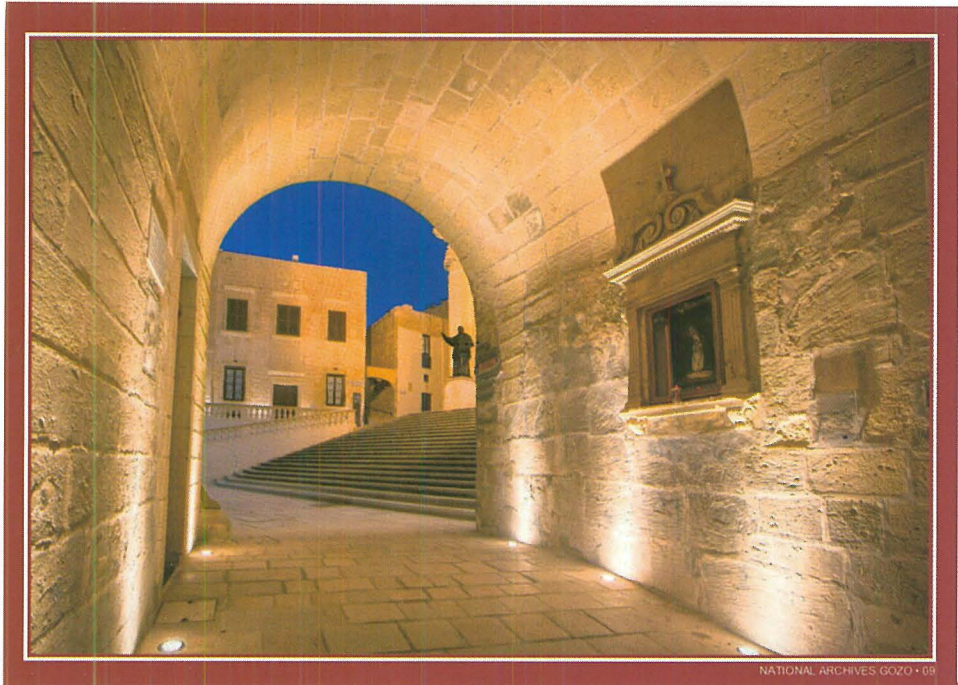
Exhibition Opening • 24 November 2014

- *The Solemn Entry of His Lordship Mgr Michele-Francesco Buttigieg, first Bishop of Gozo, into the Cathedral (23 October 1864) — monochrome painting by PAWLU CAMILLERI-CAUCHH (private collection) (1984)*
- *Sponsored by HSBC plc*
- *Limited edition of 150 cards*

1/30

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 08





NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • 09

Card 09



*Historical Niches of Gozo
on the 27th anniversary of the inauguration
of the National Archives Gozo*

*Niċċ Storici ta' Għawdex
f'għelug is-27 anniversarju mill-fevri
tal-Arkivju Nazzjonali Għawdex*

Exhibition Opening • 12 October 2016



- The niche of *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad* – the Blessed Virgin Mary of Solitude by an unknown artist (1559) under the arched entrance of the Pjazza tal-Katidral, site of the earliest documented shrine in Gozo – photo Paul Falzon (2016)
- Sponsored by HSBC plc and by the fourteen LOCAL COUNCILS OF GOZO
- Limited edition of 150 cards

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 09



CARD 08

GOZO ANNIVERSARIES

24 NOVEMBER 2014

The solemn entry of the first Bishop of Gozo (1864)

A number of anniversaries were celebrated in Gozo during the year 2014 and they were all commemorated in this exhibition. The most important was the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Diocese of Gozo. It was established by Blessed Pope Pius IX through the apostolic bull *Singulari Amore* on 16 September 1864. Michele-Francesco Buttigieg, a priest from Gozo, was appointed first bishop of the new diocese. He made his solemn entry into the Cathedral Church on 23 October 1864. This artistic impression of the solemn entry was painted by Pawlu Camilleri-Cauchì (1985) and first published in the book by JOSEPH BEZZINA, *Religion and Politics in a Crown Colony. The Gozo-Malta Story*, Valletta 1985, pages 312-313.

CARD 09

HISTORIC NICHEs OF GOZO

12 OCTOBER 2016

Nuestra Señora de la Soledad

The *niċċa* (plural *niċċeċ*) or shrine is a religious image, usually in some sort of a small shelter or niche, placed at a crossroads, by a road or pathway, or in the middle of the countryside. The niche of *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad* – the Blessed Virgin Mary of Solitude – is in Triq Bieb l-Imdina under the arch leading upon the Cathedral Square. It is by an unknown artist and dated 1559. Devotion to *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad* goes back to the rule of the Aragonese (1283-1530) who promoted this devotion in their possessions. It is one of the oldest niches still standing in Gozo.

CARD 10

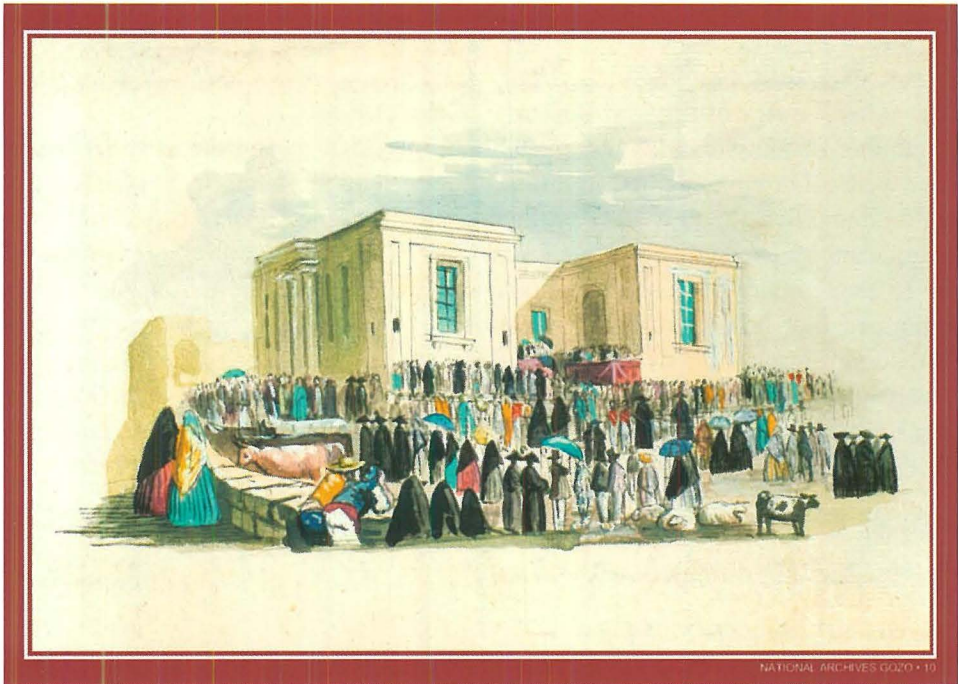
HISTORIC ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE ACTS OF NOTARY ANTONIO PORTELLI

21 MARCH 2018

Il-Wirja ta' Santa Marija

Notary Antonio Portelli practised his profession in Gozo between 1839 and 1877. He whiled away his free time by embellishing the title-pages of some of his notarial volumes with ink drawings and water colours. This water colour is an exceptional eye-witness record of the first organised *Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition* of 14–15 August 1855 – known to this day by its original name as *Il-Wirja ta' Santa Marija*.

The mid-August festivity of Santa Marija has attracted large crowds of people from Malta to Gozo for at least half a millennium. The mainly farming community of the island capitalized on the occasion to market their products. The first *Wirja*



NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • 10

Card 10



*Historic Illustrations
in the Acts of Notary Antonio Portelli
on the 29th anniversary of the foundation
of the National Archives Gozo*

*Illustrazzjonijiet Storici
fl-Atti tan-Nutar Antonio Portelli
f'għeliq id-29 anniversarju mit-
iwagġif tal-Arkjvu Nazzjonali Għawdex*

Exhibition Opening • 21 March 2018

ANTONIO PORTELLI (1809–1877)
Il-Wirja ta' Santa Marija
The Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition
(1855)

- This water colour is an exceptional eye-witness record of the first organised *Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition* of 14–15 August 1855 – known to this day by its centuries-old name as *Il-Wirja ta' Santa Marija*.
- Sponsored by the **Ministry for Gozo and HSBC plc**
- Limited edition of 150 cards

© NATIONAL ARCHIVES GOZO • CARD NO 10



1/100

on the feast of Santa Marija can be traced back to 1738 when, according to a contemporary diary, it was already an established event.

It was held in the grounds of the new Government Schools complex in Triq Vajringa, Ir-Rabat, pictured in the background, and was inaugurated on 14 August at six in the morning and remained open up to the following morning. This watercolour provides a bird's eye view of this *Wirja*. People can be seen entering into the grounds from both sides of the school. In the foreground there are a number of cows and some sheep. The crowd is made up people from all walks of life – peasants dressed in their best; ladies from the higher classes wearing the *għonnella*, the traditional head-dress; a number of gentlemen formally dressed with jackets and top-hats, notwithstanding the mid-August heat; a number of women with brightly coloured umbrellas to shield themselves from the sun; as well as several priests in black cassocks and copes, a circular cape reaching to the ankle, complete with a *cappello Romano* or *saturno* hats, a hat made of beaver fur or felt. The podium in the middle is draped in red damask and a number of exhibitors are queuing up to get their prizes.

On the occasion of this exhibition, a separate set of ten cards (not in this general series) was issued. They depict the ten best watercolours of Notary Antonio Portelli. Further info: nag@gov.mt

The journal is distributed free of charge to members

Membership fees are:

1. Local Members (under 16.....€03.00
Seniors.....€10.00

- 2 Overseas Members.
Australia (AUD) 40.00
Euro Countries €20.00
UK. GBP..... 15.00
USA US \$..... 21.00

The Treasurer:
Mr John A Cardona
56 Triq Santa Marija
Tarxien TXN 1703
Malta.
00356 2189 2141
johnacardona@gmail.com