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The Gozo Observer

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Front Cover Picture: Xlendi
Courtesy of Joseph Calleja

Editorial: Spotlight on Gozo

The *Gozo Observer* has been highlighting issues of significance in Gozo for the last 20 years and has now established a regular audience among readers in both islands. It is worthwhile from time to time to pause and reflect on the contribution of Gozo to the wider international scene.

Without any doubt from the prehistoric point of view, Ġgantija temples can be proud of an international audience with an annual number of visitors in excess of 186,000, one of the largest and first above-ground temples built inexplicably on one of the smallest islands in the world.

Another phenomenon attracting several thousands of tourists to Gozo is the international appreciation of the beauty under the sea. Dwejra is widely regarded as one of the most attractive spots for scuba diving in the Mediterranean, another gift which the gods bestowed for our benefit without being appreciated for generations, as such things usually are.

On the intellectual scene Gozo has suffered in the past from the tremendous isolation. On the musical scene this isolation has been considerably overcome through the extravaganza of musical concerts over several weeks in summer, originally set up and largely directed by a dedicated team under the baton of the late Mro Joseph Vella.

The obvious question that arises: are the Gozitans ready to take advantage of these jewels? Too often one gets the impression that non-Gozitans make the bulk of the participants, and while international tourists as well as our own siblings from the larger island are most welcome, Gozitans, and especially the younger ones, should be encouraged to visit these attractions and attend these events.

Maurice Cauchi



Ġgantija temples, one of the largest and first above-ground temples built inexplicably on one of the smallest islands in the world.
[Source: <https://www.visitgozo.com/where-to-go-in-gozo/archaeological-sites/ggantija-temples/>]

Late Mediaeval Anchoritism in Europe and the Mediterranean and its Surviving Elements in Gozo

GEORGE AZZOPARDI

Abstract

By the late Mediaeval period, a new phenomenon in the form of what is known as 'anchoritism' made its appearance in Europe and the Mediterranean. This phenomenon did not remain alien to the Maltese Islands and to Gozo in particular. This contribution seeks to trace any of its surviving elements in Gozo through two case studies: that of San Kerrew in Qala and that of San Elijū in the limits of Għajnsielem. But as it was a European and Mediterranean phenomenon, anchoritism and any of its surviving elements in Gozo are looked upon through these two case studies within the broader European and Mediterranean context.

Introduction

A phenomenon that marked Christianity during the early centuries of its existence was asceticism. To flee persecutions and also to lead a life of seclusion immersed in prayer and meditation, a number of individuals took it to the desert where they led a solitary life as ascetics. Better known as hermits, these ascetics wandered in the desert or in remote rural areas leading a life of prayer, meditation, and penance in preparation for the life to come (McAvoy, 2011: 1-3, 11-13; Rees, 2011: 7).

As the end of the Mediaeval period was drawing near, this form of asceticism entered a new phase or witnessed a new development when, throughout the Mediterranean and Europe, a number of ascetics sought cells or caves for their secluded life. These cells or caves provided a fixed and restricted space in comparison to the open desert and were usually linked to or associated with a monastery or church. These cells or caves were, therefore, the 'desert' of these ascetics now better known as 'anchorites' (McAvoy, 2011: 1-3, 11-13). This new phenomenon, known as 'anchoritism', started to flourish from around the 12th century onwards and, in certain places, dragged on until the 16th and 17th centuries (see below).

Anchoritism in Europe and the Mediterranean

Throughout the entire Middle Ages, several individuals across Europe and around the Mediterranean sought to lead a life as hermits and, later, as anchorites. The majority of the known ones were considered as holy individuals whose advice and prayers were very in demand by the local people who venerated them both throughout their earthly life and, even more, after their demise. Examples range from as far as Britain like Saint Columba (AD 521 – 597) of Iona, a small island off the western coast of Scotland (Rees, 2011: 114-21), to as close as Sicily like Santa Rosalia (AD 1130 – 1170) of Palermo (N.A., n.d.: 1-2). In many instances, their public cults are still active today.

After their death in particular, these holy people began to be venerated publicly by their respective local communities to such an extent that they were referred to as saints and carried the prefix 'saint' before their respective names. Thus, we come across such holy people or regional saints like Saint Petroc of Cornwall and Saint Swithun at Winchester (Rees, 2011: 139-44), both in southern England, to mention but a few.

The official canonisation of saints by the Roman Catholic Church underwent a gradual process. In the 4th century AD, a person's claimed sanctity was subject to the local bishop's approval for purposes of public veneration while, in many places, the approval of the provincial or regional primate or patriarch also had to be secured. Beginning in the 10th century AD, the Roman Church asserted that no one could be venerated as a saint without its approval and, by the end of the 11th century, the local bishop's authority in these matters was restricted to the effect that one's claimed sanctity was to be examined and approved in general councils. Finally, by a Bull of Pope Urban VII in 1634, both beatification and canonisation processes (and eventual proclamations) came to be reserved exclusively to the Holy See (Hallett, 1952).

Nevertheless, there could be circumstances where a public cult centred around a holy person may become established without any formal act of canonisation. Such holy persons never became officially canonised. Their saintly character was, however, recognised and acknowledged by their respective local communities who, thus, ‘canonised’ them by popular approval and referred to them as ‘saints’ (see Rees, 2011: 7; Schmitt, 2004: 116). This popular practice, however, may have not ended abruptly with the complete consolidation of the official canonisation procedure by the Roman Church but, in several places, appears to have continued for a long while afterwards.

Anchoritism in Malta and Gozo

In early Mediaeval times, islands ranked (especially for ascetics) among what Paul Rainbird calls ‘metaphorical deserts’. They could substitute deserts or other isolated places as ideal locations for a ‘perfect society’, personified in a monastic community insulated from the rest of the world (Rainbird 2007: 4-6).

Thus, small and remote islands like Malta and Gozo provided an ideal setting for both earlier hermits and the late Mediaeval anchorites to lead their preferred way of life. While hermits may have also lived on the Maltese Islands, anchorites and the places (on the Maltese Islands) where they led their solitary life are, perhaps, better evidenced. This evidence is

largely of a toponomical or of a material nature and involves memory which is thus transmitted either through place names or through surviving material remains.

Toponyms like Ras ir-Raheb in Malta and Wied ir-Raheb in Gozo could be indicative of a place where a hermit – or an anchorite, if his abode was connected to a chapel – might have lived. Hermits might have also lived in a number of hypogea at Bingemma, near Mgarr in Malta (Bonanno (with Cilia), 2005: 334-5) while the Abbatija tad-Dejr catacombs (Bonanno (with Cilia), 2005: 270-1; Dalli (with Cilia), 2006: 132) and St Agatha’s catacombs (Bonanno (with Cilia), 2005: 328-30; Dalli (with Cilia), 2006: 35), both at Rabat in Malta, may have had one of their chambers turned into an oratory or church by an anchorite or anchorites who lived there but, having no chapel to which his / their abode was attached, evidently created one himself / themselves. Also at Rabat in Malta but as late as the first decades of the 17th century, a certain Spanish anchorite named Juan de Venegas is reputed to have lived in St Paul’s Grotto, leading a life of abstinence and penance for a number of years (Freller, 1996: 100, 108 (Plate 31, top)). Visiting Malta in summer of 1664, the Dutch designer and painter Willem Schellinks left us pictorial evidence of a hermitage associated with a chapel (or small church) and inhabited by the Capuchin friars without, however, indicating where in Malta it was located (Aikema et al., 1983: 11, 132 (58), Plate 58). In Gozo, a holy



Figure 1: Church of the Immaculate Conception, Qala. Photo: the author.

man is said to have lived as a hermit (or, rather, as an anchorite) in the chapel of Our Lady of Mercy (Tal-Ħniena) and in its adjoining sacristy on the outskirts of the village of Xewkija. A tale is narrated of him having prophesied the wicked intentions of a visiting stranger to his chapel in the midst of a stormy night and the consequences that ensued to the latter (Camilleri, 1984: 34-7). While the tale itself remains within the realm of conjecture, the presence of an anchorite living in close association with the chapel might have been historically true.

Another anchorite seems to have been the one who, according to tradition, lived in a cave at Wied il-Għasel in the limits of Mosta in Malta and, then, crossed over to Gozo and settled in a cave by the church of the Immaculate Conception in Qala (Agius (de Soldanis), 1746: f.338, citing Abela (1647: 373-4); Ciantar, 1780: 244-5; Vella Haber, 1946: 7, 9-10, 12, 18-19, 23-5, 27). His name was held to be Kerrew and he was befriended to another anchorite who lived in (or by) the chapel of Santa Maria on Comino (Agius (de Soldanis), 1746: f.338 (footnote b); Vella Haber, 1946: 10, 18, 22). Later, around 1726, the church of the Immaculate Conception in Qala (Figure 1) was to host another anchorite: Fra Antonio di San Carlo from Piemonte, Italy. He stayed there for five months, after having arrived from the island of Lampedusa (Agius (de Soldanis), 1746: ff.338-43; Vella Haber, 1946: 24).

San Kerrew

Leaving popular stories aside for a while, a holy man whose name 'Kerrew' survived in the local collective memory of the Gozitans and, especially, in that of the people of Qala, lived as an anchorite in a cave adjacent to the Immaculate Conception church in Qala. His holy life earned him popular 'canonisation' after his death whereby the local folk acknowledged him as a saint, calling him 'San Kerrew'. After he died, he was buried in the same cave in which he had lived and which, now, came to be his tomb. His cave / tomb lay outside of but adjacent to the Immaculate Conception church (see below). However, while his name remains a matter of surviving memory or, perhaps, conjecture, his physical presence has been confirmed by what was actually found there.

Following the latest enlargement of the Immaculate Conception church in 1635, as a consequence of which a newly-built wall passed over the holy saint's tomb, a new access to the tomb was created from the church's interior while a small cross was hewn on the external side of the church's wall (Figure 2) to mark the tomb's location (Vella Haber, 1946: 13, 24-6). This would seem to reflect a prevalent practice whereby holy men's / women's tombs frequently used to have their location accordingly marked. An example would be that provided by the tomb of Santa Rosalia of Palermo, in Sicily, who had her tomb's location marked by a *diple* sign.



Figure 2: Cross (arrowed) carved on an external side wall of the church of the Immaculate Conception in Qala. The cross marks the location of the tomb of San Kerrew. Photo: the author.

In a bid to test the tradition held so far in connection with the holy man Kerrew, an initiative was undertaken by the then parish priest of Qala, Dun Ġużepp Vella, who sought and gained permission from the relative authorities to look for the remains of the holy man. Human skeletal remains were brought to light during excavation works undertaken on Sunday 26th September 1937 and on the following Sunday 3rd October 1937. They were found at a depth of three feet, precisely under the spot indicated by the small cross carved on the external side of the church's wall. A complete and undisturbed skeleton extended beyond both sides of the church's wall beneath which it was found resting on bedrock but covered in a layer of fine and undisturbed soil. The skeleton was laid to rest with his face up and facing the church. Next to him was found a stone oven or hearth consisting of two adjacent stones, about half a foot apart, with ashes in between. No other burials were found nearby. Tests on the bones revealed that the skeleton belonged to an old-aged man who had lived around the 14th century. The presence of the oven / hearth, on the other hand, would seem to confirm that the man's burial place was also the same place in which he had lived. The bones were elevated and stored in a box in the church's sacristy (Vella Haber, 1946: 23-7). There they remained until a purposely-made urn was prepared for the holy man's bones which are now displayed for public veneration in his own tomb beneath the church.

Surviving memory recalls the practice whereby sick children used to be lowered in the grave of San Kerrew to secure relief as a result of their contact with his tomb or with dust contained in his tomb while a prescribed prayer was recited, summoning the assistance of the holy man. On retrieving the child from the tomb, his / her clothes were exchanged with fresh ones, leaving his / her previous clothing inside the grave in representation of the sickness that was believed to have left the child (Agius (de Soldanis), 1746: f.340; Cassar, 1965: 285; Vella Haber, 1946: 14-16).

A similar custom to the above – albeit involving a holy well instead of a holy man's tomb – is recorded from Bede's holy well in Jarrow, in the north-east of England. As late as 1740, sick children used to be brought to this holy well in which they were immersed (Doel, 2009: 76). In Dombes, about forty kilometres north of Lyon in France, local villagers used to carry their sick children to a nearby river where they dipped their sick children as part of a ritual associated with a certain Saint Guiniforte (in reality, he was a dog!) and in the belief of having their (originally) healthy children given back to them (Schmitt, 2004: 117-8). The same villagers used to take their sick children to the (imagined) saint's tomb before dipping them into the nearby river (Schmitt, 2004: 116-7).



Figure 3: Altar-tomb of San Agrippino in the Catacombs of San Gennaro in Naples. The small window-like opening on the front of the altar-tomb allowed pilgrims to touch the saint's relics or collect dust from his tomb. Photo: the author.

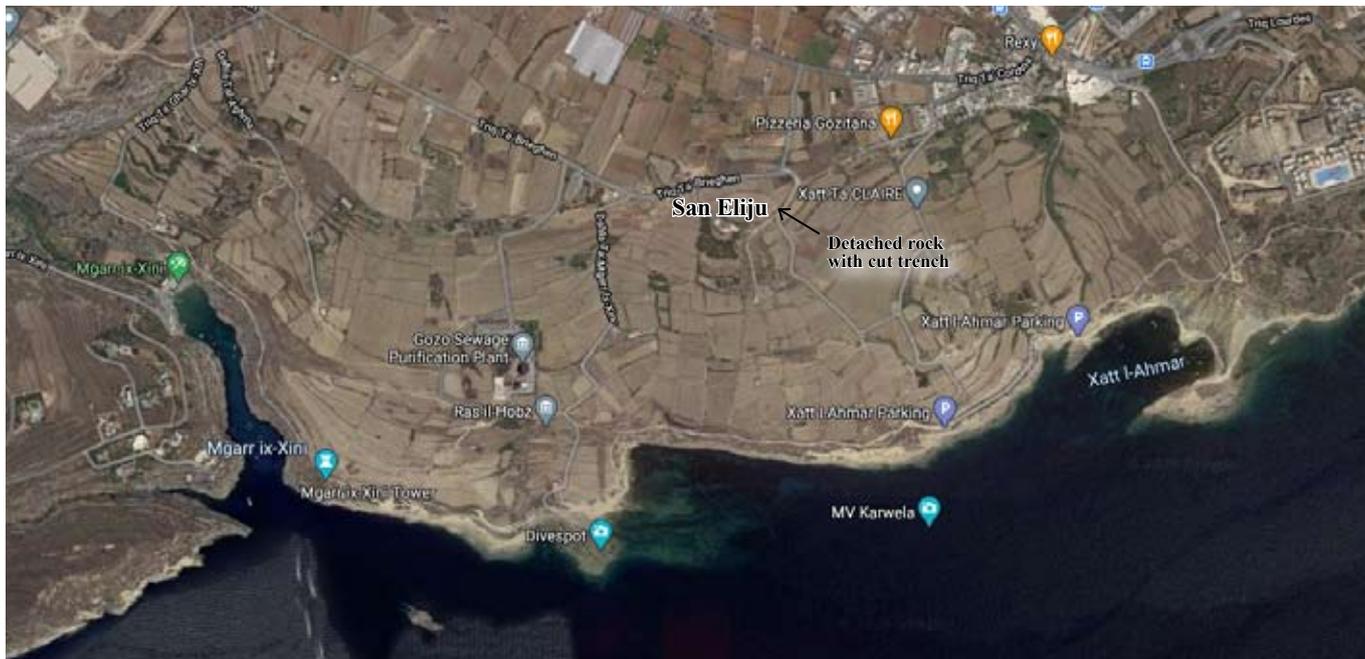


Figure 4: Aerial photo showing the area known as ‘San Eliju’ / ‘Ta’ Sant’ Eliju’. It also shows the location (arrowed) of the detached rock with cut trench. Image: Google Earth; Graphics: Joseph Calleja.

Dust from the tomb (of San Kerrew) was also taken through a hole in the church’s pavement that lay directly above the tomb (Ciantar, 1780: 245) in belief of the dust’s healing qualities (Agius (de Soldanis), 1746: f.338; Vella Haber, 1946: 13, 15-17, 20). This immediately reminds us of a practice widespread throughout the Christian world where holy saints’ or martyrs’ graves were provided with access holes so that pilgrims might be able to touch the saint’s tomb or even collect dust from his / her tomb. An example is provided by the altar-tomb of San Agrippino in the Catacombs of San Gennaro in Naples (see Figure 3) amongst others. The Virgin Mary’s tomb in the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem has a transenna which is likewise provided with similar access holes (Boas, 1999: 229-30 (Plate 9.1)).

San Eliju

Another holy man and his name ‘Eliju’ also survives – albeit to a lesser extent – in the local collective memory. His associated place – particularly, that of his burial – lies in the vicinity of Ġhajnsielem, in an area known to this day as ‘San Eliju’ / ‘Ta’ Sant’ Eliju’ (Figure 4). A chapel is also documented to have stood there (Bezzina, 2004: 64) and the holy man’s grave is held to have been near this chapel, some four metres away (Figure 5). Both chapel and

alleged tomb stood on a ridge but the tomb, which is said to have been in the form of a trench long and deep enough to hold a corpse, was closer to the edge of the ridge part of which later collapsed and caused the destruction of the tomb.¹



Figure 5: The raised ground marked by the tall structure where the chapel and nearby grave of San Eliju presumably stood. Photo: the author.

¹ Mikiel Bugeja personal communication on 1-3-2014, then aged more than 70 years. The late Mikiel Bugeja hailed from Xewkija but, having been familiar with the area where he also possessed fields, he still remembered the chapel remains and the alleged tomb.

No chapel remains are visible today. Perhaps they were cleared and the stones were recycled to build nearby existing structures. On the other hand, visiting the place in 2012, the present author was struck by the presence of certain man-made cuts in a rock-boulder evidently detached by natural processes from the rock-face bordering the site of the alleged tomb (and chapel) to the south-east (Figure 6). On a closer examination of these cuts, they resulted to be part of a rock-cut surface trench

about 0.60m wide (Figure 7). But it appears that, as the rock-boulder rolled down following its detachment (and possible further breakage into other smaller parts), the rock-cut trench found itself upside-down but when it was in its original position and location prior to the rock collapse, it was evidently a rock-cut surface trench forming part of the plateau where the above-mentioned chapel is supposed to have stood. As a result of the breakage suffered by the rock-boulder following its



Figure 6: The detached rock-boulder with the cut trench (next to the standing scale rod) facing down. Photo: the author.



Figure 7: Close-up view of the overturned trench. Tool cutting marks can also be seen. Photo: the author.



Figure 8: Clouties, or strips of cloth, tied to tree branches at Saint Madern's holy well near the village of Madron in Cornwall in southern England. Clouties are still hung on tree branches there as symbolic prayers for healing or in gratitude for a cure. Image source: Matthews, 2002: 3.

detachment and collapse, the length of the trench cannot be determined but its surviving width and depth could hold a corpse quite comfortably, thus suggesting that it might have been an open air floor-tomb of the *fossa* type.

Surviving memory recalls a practice connected with the alleged grave of this holy man named 'Eliju' who could have lived in very close association with the chapel. The practice was very similar to that carried out at the tomb of San Kerrew. Early at dawn or at dusk, sick children used to be taken there and lowered into the holy man's grave which was in the open air and, after recitation of the relevant prayers, had their clothes exchanged with fresh ones, leaving their previous clothing inside the grave. Sometimes, 'token' handkerchiefs were also left inside the holy man's grave as symbolic prayers or in gratitude for benefits received.² This custom looks similar to

one once practised at the Rag holy well in Benton, England, where votaries used to leave fragments of garments on the trees and bushes (Doel, 2009: 75) or to one still practised in connection with Saint Madern's holy well located a mile north of the church of the village of Madron in Cornwall, also in England. Bubbling up through marshy ground, this holy well is set in a grove of ancient trees on whose branches are hung hundreds of clouties, or strips of cloth, as symbolic prayers for healing or in gratitude for a cure (Figure 8). This ancient custom can be seen at some other holy wells in Britain and Ireland and is also to be found across Europe, Africa, Asia and South America (Matthews, 2002: 3; Rees, 2011: 145-6).

Conclusion: converging similarities

San Kerrew and San Eliju were both anchorites that led their solitary life of prayer, meditation,

² Mikiel Bugeja personal communication on 1-3-2014, then aged more than 70 years. The late Mikiel Bugeja hailed from Xewkija but, having been familiar with the area where he also possessed fields, he still remembered these practices. Bezzina (2004: 64) also mentions the practice involving sick children but he puts it in association with the chapel rather than the holy man's grave.

and penance in association with a church or chapel in rural Gozo. Popular devotional practices traditionally associated with them included those sought for the well-being of sick children and, in both cases, were enacted in a very similar manner at the respective grave of each of the two. Both were held in holy esteem by the local communities who popularly referred to them as saints – calling them ‘San Kerrew’ and ‘San Eliju’ – in spite of having never been officially canonised by the church (Vella Haber, 1946: 23, 25 in respect of San Kerrew).

On a wider dimension, San Kerrew and San Eliju share the last characteristic of ‘popular’ canonisation with several other ‘saints’ known from elsewhere in Europe and in the Mediterranean. The practices marking their respective cults can also be claimed to be part of wider cultic practices prevalent in Europe and in the Mediterranean, like the physical contact with their graves or the collection of dust from the same for its healing attributes or the deposition of ‘cloth’ tokens as symbolic prayers or signs of gratitude.

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A Snippet of Undulant Fever in Gozo One Hundred Years Ago

MARIO SALIBA

Introduction

Undulant fever, also known as Remittent fever, Malta fever, Mediterranean fever, Brucellosis and up to 40 other names, is a type of infectious disease producing fever which goes up and down for a protracted time, leading to physical weakness. It is caused by the bacteria *Brucella* of which *Brucella melitensis* is the most common type in humans (The Centre for Food Security and Public Health, 2018). It is called Brucellosis because the bacterium causing it, *Micrococcus melitensis*, was discovered by David Bruce in 1887.¹ It was a disease which caused complications in bone and other organs and lead to debilitating consequences rather than a high mortality rate. It should be noted that as early as 1904, Sir Themis Zammit had already discovered that goats were the reservoir for *B. melitensis* and so they were the vectors of the disease so that when humans consumed raw goats' milk they got infected with the disease (Rizzo Naudi, 2019).

On 7th October 1919 the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) for Gozo, Dr Adriano Cremona wrote to the Superintendent of the Victoria Hospital informing him that from the returns of deaths from 24th to 30th September 1919 there was a case of death from Acute Bronchitis of a male patient aged 70 from Nadur, whereas annexed certificate of death states that the patient died from undulant fever. The Superintendent was asked by the MOH to clarify which of the two causes of death was correct. If it was from undulant fever he was asked to report the case immediately and to state for how long the patient had been an inmate of the Gozo Ospizio. This shows the importance assigned by the health authorities of tracing all cases of undulant fever. This was important to see if the patient had contracted the disease while he was an inpatient at the Victoria Hospital.

The attention of medical practitioners was called for the early notifications of infectious diseases by the MOH. According to the MOH several cases had been reported after recovery or death. Other cases were reported during convalescence. The MOH stressed the point that the report must bear the date on which it was sent to his office. He gave notice that he was instructed to report at once to Head Office in Malta any medical practitioners who delayed in sending in the usual notifications. Reminders of the obligation by law for medical practitioners to issue a certificate and to send it to the Superintendent whenever they became aware that a patient was suffering from an infectious disease, were issued on a regular basis to all medical practitioners.

Sanitary Measures

A circular issued on 1st July 1921 by the Chief Government Medical Officer (CGMO) to Sanitary Inspectors stated that when cases of undulant fever occurred in premises where goats for sale of milk were kept, every endeavor should be made to induce the patient to go to the hospital and the matter should be referred to the MOH for his instructions.

Disinfection of premises was performed regularly. In fact a certain worker who used to carry out these disinfections asked to be given remuneration for his extra work. The MOH for Gozo, at that time Dr Adriano Cremona, wrote to the CGMO on behalf of that worker and he was allowed £4 for the disinfections performed the year before, which worked out at about -/6 (six pence) per disinfection.

Reported Cases

There were 31 cases of undulant fever reported from June 1919 to June 1920. Three of the patients died. From June 1920 till June 1921 there were 26 cases reported and only one of the patients died.

¹ Bruce worked in collaboration with Dr J. Caruana Scicluna, the microbiologist at the Public Health Laboratory in Valletta but very little credit was given to Caruana Scicluna who presumably carried out all the work in his laboratory to isolate the *Micrococcus melitensis*.



The general belief was that having the goats milked at the door meant that contamination of the milk was not possible.
[Source: <https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/street-vendors/a-malta-dairy-history/>]

According to the Annual Report, from June 1921 till June 1922, 61 cases of undulant fever were reported, of which three patients died. In this report it was stated that two years before, 31 cases had been reported and the year before only 26 cases had been registered. So in the 1921/22 report, three times as many cases as the previous year were reported.

Apart from the common reason that milk was not boiled by the people at large, the principal reason of such an increase in the number of cases was due to the number of infected goats found in connection with undulant fever cases, which in that year (1921/22) amounted to 49 infected goats.

Goat-breeding and Trading in Gozo

There were a good number of animal dealers who were in the habit of carrying on a trade in Malta and conveying well-bred goats and sheep from Gozo to obtain a good price for them. On their return to Gozo these dealers always brought back a good number

of goats obtained in Malta at a lower price, which they distributed among the village people who were attracted by the low price of the animals. On many occasions the sanitary inspectors examined the herds newly arrived from Malta; but they never examined the whole lot as some of the goats were sold during their transit from Mgarr to Victoria and other places and very frequently during night-time.

According to Dr Cremona, MOH for Gozo, the possibility of infection of the herds of goats in Gozo was consequently evident and hence the number of infected goats were expected to continually increase if special steps were not taken to check the spread of undulant fever.

Dr Cremona also remarked that the late CGMO, Dr J. Caruana Scicluna,² had on many instances taken note of the facts stated above and he was inclined to check as far as possible the spreading of undulant fever by supervising the goat trade between Malta and Gozo. He used to call Gozo the “hospital for

2 Dr Joseph Caruana Scicluna was Chief Government Medical Officer from 1905 till 1917. He was one of the first doctors to study and train under Louis Pasteur in Paris. Previously he was the analyst in the Public Health Laboratory and carried out most, if not all the bacteriological work. It should be recorded that Caruana Scicluna had drawn the attention of Themis Zammit to the fact that there had been several cases of Mediterranean fever amongst goat breeders in the Sliema area. Then Zammit made the important discovery that Mediterranean fever was primarily a disease of goats.

goats” and he used to call one of the old goat dealers from Xagħra the “Goat Doctor”.

Government Notice 178 of 1921 as amended by another Government Notice of the 25th November of the same year, though intended for “Foot and Mouth Disease” could have been availed of in order to check the transit of goats from Malta to Gozo or viceversa, by having all goats examined and tested before the permit was issued. The duration of the examination did not cause any hindrance to the goat trade between Malta and Gozo, as it took only a couple of days to have the goats examined.

Dr Cremona stated that if the above mentioned Government Notice could not be availed of, he was of the opinion that special legislation be brought forward to supervise the goat trade between Malta and Gozo in order to check the future spreading of undulant fever.

In a circular dated 5th July 1923 it was noted that there were certain expenses incurred by the Health Office in Gozo in connection with infected goats.

A curious application was received at the office of the MOH Gozo where a goat keeper applied for a goat pen on the same premises. The doctor hadn't encountered a similar situation before but he was advised from Malta that it was not going to affect the regulations as far as each owner kept his goats in a separate room and was responsible for them even though they were on the same premises.

Another curious application dated 1st September 1923 consisted of a request by a person from Ghajnsielem, who kept goats in his house for the selling of milk, to be exempted from Government Notice No 111 of 1909. His argument was that he was keeping only two goats and he was asking for the exemption in order to save expenses. The reply was that due to the fact that he was in possession of goats for the supply of milk to the public, no matter the number of goats being small or large, the Department could not exempt him from fulfilling the regulations laid down in the mentioned legal notice.

By the year 1924, according to the annual report of that year, the incidence of undulant fever had gone down by two-thirds (34 cases and 1 death) of the number reported the year before (120 cases and 5 deaths). It was a fact that the strong measures adopted by the Department to check the spreading of the disease were beneficial and this trend continued when the several provisions to combat the disease, proposed by the Mediterranean Fever Committee³ came into effect.

In this connection the MOH had raised several complaints regarding the frequent conveyance of goats clandestinely brought from Malta to Gozo in spite of Government Notice 151 of 1922. The practice was that in order to elude provisions of the aforesaid Government Notice, goats were first conveyed from Marfa to Comino and then, when convenient, the same goats were transported to Gozo sometimes escaping the Police notice or that of the Custom House Officer at Mgarr. The fact that there was only one policeman stationed at Marfa, who occasionally would not be around in order to rest, and the absence of a policeman at Comino except in some instances for a few hours once a week or once a fortnight, showed quite clearly that Government Notice 151 of 1922 could have been very well eluded. The authorities therefore had to take the necessary steps in order to ensure that the provisions mentioned in the Government Notice would be efficiently carried out.

The improvement laid down in Government Notice 111 of 1909 were implemented by some goat keepers, while some required more time before works recommended were completed as they had to construct new buildings to have goat pens properly remodelled and rendered up-to-date. All the goat keepers in Gozo had been duly informed. Goat pens duly remodelled were constructed in Victoria, three at Nadur, one at Sannat and two at Kerċem. The number of goat pens was then rather limited owing to the fact that a good number of goat keepers availed themselves of provisions laid down in article 0 of the 3rd Law as amended by Ordinance VI of 1906 and consequently reduced the number of goats to be kept for the supply of milk within the limits of the aforesaid law.

3 In 1904 the Secretary of State for the Colonies proposed to the Admiralty and the War Department the appointment of a Joint Commission to investigate cases of Mediterranean fever. Under the chairman Colonel David Bruce, a number of members were appointed to the sub-committee: Major William Heaton Harrocks, Staff-Surgeon E.A. Shaw; and Dr Themistocles Zammit, Government Analyst Malta. Sir Themis Zammit was the only Maltese member of the Mediterranean Fever Commission.



All goats are tagged to show that they are disease free.

Disinfections and Examinations

On the 4th February 1924, Dr A. Cremona, the Gozo MOH, met the veterinary surgeon Dr J. H. Bardon about the proposed disinfections and the planned general sheep and goats examinations. They agreed that two tin boxes specifically made for the purpose containing the milk and blood samples together with the mailbox could be given to the captain of the steamer to be taken by boat to Malta and then delivered to the Department of Health Laboratory by an employee from Malta without the need of an employee from Gozo Health Office to accompany the boxes. Two empty boxes were then sent from Malta to Gozo for new samples to be sent to Malta in a similar way on a daily basis. In this way, the personnel at the Gozo Health Office were better utilised for disinfections and for all emergencies and this also resulted in reduced expenses. Two hundred samples of milk and blood were sent daily in two boxes. Dr Cremona also asked the veterinary surgeon to inform him when he could examine the animals. The test used to check the milk of goats was a modification of Wright's Agglutination Test by Sir Themis Zammit. This was another important discovery credited to the Maltese scientist. Together with Eyre and Kennedy he carried out work on the infectivity of milk products containing *Brucella melitensis*, including the local cheese, the 'gbejna' (Rizzo Naudi, 2019).

Government Notice No. 93 dated 1st April 1924, stated that in the case of animals slaughtered under Article 86, because they were suffering from undulant fever infection or because of any reason specified in (a) and (b) of the said Article, the compensation payable shall be on the basis of the full value of such animal, regard being taken to whether it was pregnant, in milk or dry.

One hundred years ago undulant fever was endemic to the islands of Malta and Gozo. The occurrence of undulant fever among the civilian population, especially in Gozo was very high compared to the military and naval population. The main reasons for this was that Gozo did not take part in the First World War effort and the 1904 Mediterranean Fever Commission prohibited Navy and Military officers from consuming fresh goats' milk and instead they were supplied with condensed or tinned milk (Tripp & Sawchuk, 2015).

On the other hand, the Gozitans (and the Maltese) preferred goats' milk to sheep and cow's milk in its fresh form. The general belief was that boiling milk ruined its quality and flavour, that the local goats were free from tuberculosis and that having the goats milked at the door meant that contamination of the milk was not possible. They also erroneously believed that any problem associated with goat's milk occurred because the goat had eaten a

poisonous plant, the Spurge (*Euphorbia aleppia*). So the disease continued to spread both in Malta and in Gozo.⁴

Before existence of the Mediterranean Fever Commission, there were certain health regulations regarding the keeping and dairying of goats which were not intended to reduce undulant fever per se but rather to ensure healthy goats and good quality milk. Even these initial measures created unrest among goat herders, as they felt that they were being blamed for Undulant fever. They believed that the government wanted to ruin them and went on strike from May to June 1906 (Tripp & Sawchuk, 2015).

Despite this opposition, the authorities took all the measures deemed necessary to reduce Undulant fever. They distributed pamphlets on the dangers of drinking unboiled milk and increased the testing of the herds and the slaughtering of all the animals found to be ill. Dr Cremona's report extracted from the Health Office registers proves this. Eventually boiling goats' milk was made law in 1923 (Cassar, 246).

More Recent and Modern Times

Later on in 1933, the government thought that the best way to ensure that drinking of safe milk was only possible by introducing the process of pasteurisation on a national basis and in 1938 the first Milk Pasteurisation Plant in Ħamrun was opened (Tripp & Sawchuk, 215). In 1939 goats were prohibited from entering Valletta and also the sale of goats' milk was banned from streets (Cassar, 246). But it was not until 1957 that raw milk was completely prohibited to be sold (Cassar, 246).⁵

Nowadays all goats, sheep and cows are examined, tested and certified by the veterinary services and nobody drinks unpasteurised milk any more. In spite of this we cannot say that Brucellosis has been entirely eradicated from Malta and Gozo but we should always remain on the lookout for any local or

imported cases. Fortunately we have very effective antibiotics⁶ and if we catch the disease early it can be cured without any complications.

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4 The Malta Sanitary Ordinances No. III of 1904, Chapter II, Section V, Articles 79-100.

5 "The Pasteurised Milk Regulations, 1938," published by the Government Notice No. 504 of the 23rd December 1938, established that on and after the 1st February 1939, no milk other than pasteurised milk shall be sold or offered or kept for sale in any town or village specified by the Regulations and also prohibited the entry of goats in these areas."

6 Tetracycline is the antibiotic of choice for the treatment of Brucellosis. It was discovered in 1949 and Prof. J.E. Debono, who had a vast experience of the disease with a worldwide recognition, was given supplies of this antibiotic for trial.

Safeguarding Gozo's Cultural and Environmental Heritage

MARK FARRUGIA

Gozo has long been considered as a tranquil island, sought for its natural beauty, heritage and calmness which provides a break from the fast, busy and noisy everyday life in Malta. Tourists from all over the world flock to the jewel in the middle of the Mediterranean for a holiday consisting of a mixture of cultural, geographical and gastronomical experiences.

Besides historical buildings such as the Citadel and the various churches around the island, tourists are in particular attracted to the naturalistic aspect of Gozo, such as Dwejra, Ramla and Wied il-Għasri, and are awed by the countryside through which they pass to reach their destinations. Whilst roaming the streets of Gozo's villages, they are charmed by the traditional buildings and their decorations such as the wooden balcony and the various sculptured decorations found in a number of facades on the island.

Malta prides itself on its natural heritage and VisitMalta makes use of it to promote the island as a destination, rightly so. However it is a shame that not enough effort is being made to safeguard it. The poster below (Figure 1), showing Xewkija church, clearly illustrates the irony behind VisitMalta's promotional poster and the actual reality due to lack of planning and enforcement.

Up until March 2017, it was unthinkable that one visits Gozo and not gaze upon the natural wonder of the Azure window. The disappointment following its collapse gave us a bitter taste of what we were to experience in the years to come, only that currently, we are losing our natural heritage not via 'acts of God' but through a combination of local developers' disregard of the natural heritage and the permissive manner in which the National Planning Authority is dispensing construction permits. Furthermore,

we are also risking losing a part of our identity due to the fact that developers are opting for high-rise concrete structures, at times replacing or dwarfing elegant existing houses, as can be clearly seen in Figure 2, showing changes in Triq il-Qbajjar, Marsalforn between 2016 and 2020.



Figure 1: The irony of a VisitMalta billboard.



Figure 2: Triq il-Qbajjar: Marsalforn 2016 vs 2020

Worrying Statistics

According to figures presented in Parliament, since 2017, over 666 permits for construction outside development zones (ODZ)¹ in Gozo have been issued by the PA.² Of course, certain projects were essential and include agricultural structures. However, there were permits issued for several controversial buildings which, besides ruining Gozo’s countryside, definitely do not conform with the ambience in which they are located.

Considering that Gozo’s population is only around 37,000 people, it is quite worrying that besides construction within development zones, a large number of permits in green areas have been issued. Xaghra has witnessed the largest number of these ODZ permits, as can be seen from the table below. The village with the oldest free-standing temple in the world, Ġgantija, is now home to a fleet of cranes.

A Gozo Planning Authority

In order to maintain Gozo’s charm, any approved construction designs should reflect the character of the island. However, for some reason, current decision-makers deem it acceptable that structures, including high-rise buildings, which would be given the go-ahead in St. Julian’s or in Sliema, should also be allowed to be erected in Gozo.

Locality	ODZ permits
Fontana	6
Għajnsielem (includes Comino)	54
Għarb	45
Għasri	37
Kerċem	47
Munxar (includes Xlendi)	23
Nadur	60
Qala	47
San Lawrenz	41
Sannat	32
Victoria	29
Xaghra	114
Xewkija	56
Żebbuġ (includes Marsalforn)	51
projects spanning multiple localities	24

Table 1: The 666 permits issued since 2017 by locality

1 ODZ refers to rural or green areas.

2 This information was requested in a Parliamentary Question made by Gozitan MP Kevin Cutajar.

For such examples, one must only look at how the once picturesque fishing villages of Xlendi and Marsalforn have been transformed with blocks of concrete. Another example is the manner in which a townhouse was converted into a boutique hotel in the heart of Victoria and resulted in apertures within the Citadel walls. This is ruining Gozo's heritage and its uniqueness, as a result of planning mistakes, intended or otherwise, which mostly satisfy the interests of the developers. It is specifically for this reason that serious consideration must be given to the possibility of setting up a new body: a Gozo Planning Authority (GPA).

It is admitted that this would not be easy. For starters, it is very much doubtful whether the PA would be happy to relinquish its powers over about 25% of the Maltese Islands' land area. Secondly, with Gozo being a small island where nearly everyone knows each other and thus the notion of 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' would be much easier to fulfil, there remains the million-dollar question as to how to avoid corruption and greasing of palms. Perhaps one way to mitigate this would be through a provision that no board member of the GPA should hold office for more than a term of 2 or 3 years, should not be affiliated to a band club or political party and should be a Gozo resident.

A member of the Local Council of the town or village where the development is scheduled to take place should also form part of the committee approving development permits. One would think that a councillor who wishes to get re-elected from votes from that same locality would not dare go against the well-being of his/her locality. A representative of an accredited environmental NGO and another of an accredited cultural NGO should also form part of such a committee.

One may ask as to what is the point of establishing a new body if policies to safeguard Gozo's character could be adopted by the existing National PA. The main reason is the existing Planning Authority has often allowed construction that blatantly degrade Gozo's environment and disregarded its cultural heritage. It is the view of the present author that setting up of the GPA stands a better chance of safeguarding the environment and the cultural assets of Gozo.

The GPA would need to adopt building policies which would comply and safeguard the Gozitan character and charm. There ought to be more encouragement to restore abandoned buildings rather than build new ones, and if new ones are to be built, there ought to be schemes – besides the ones already in place – that entice, and possibly compel, developers to respect Gozo's heritage. In addition, such a body could also lead to a reduction in the excessive influence that developers seem to wield at present. Furthermore, such an authority might ease worries that Gozo will just become an extension to Malta if the tunnel between the islands is indeed realised.

Other Reforms

Apart from the Gozo Planning Authority there need to be other changes to ensure that both locals and visitors improve their quality of life. For example, during the summer months, all but essential construction work (not just excavating works) should be halted in sea-side villages and certain rural areas such as Xlendi, Marsalforn, Dwejra, San Raflu, Ramla and San Blas just to name a few. The Local Councils should be given the power to enact bye-laws to enforce such restrictions, in collaboration with the police.

Malpractices in construction should also be reined in, by giving more power to Local Councils. At present we often see dust and debris being emitted from construction sites, damage to pavements and village roads, by heavy construction vehicles, muddy tyre marks on nearby streets, and illegal parking, with parking spaces being occupied by heavy objects such as loose bricks. Empowering Local Councils to enforce bye-laws, in collaboration with other competent authorities, should reduce such malpractices.

Another matter that needs to be controlled is the blatant abuse by restaurants and bars who occupy pavements and public areas (including streets). Stricter enforcement must be adopted as these establishments seem to be uncontrollably taking up every piece of concrete or tarmac surrounding their establishment. Again in this case, Local Councils need to be given effective power to enable them to enforce limits to the number of tables and chairs that may be placed on pavements and within the

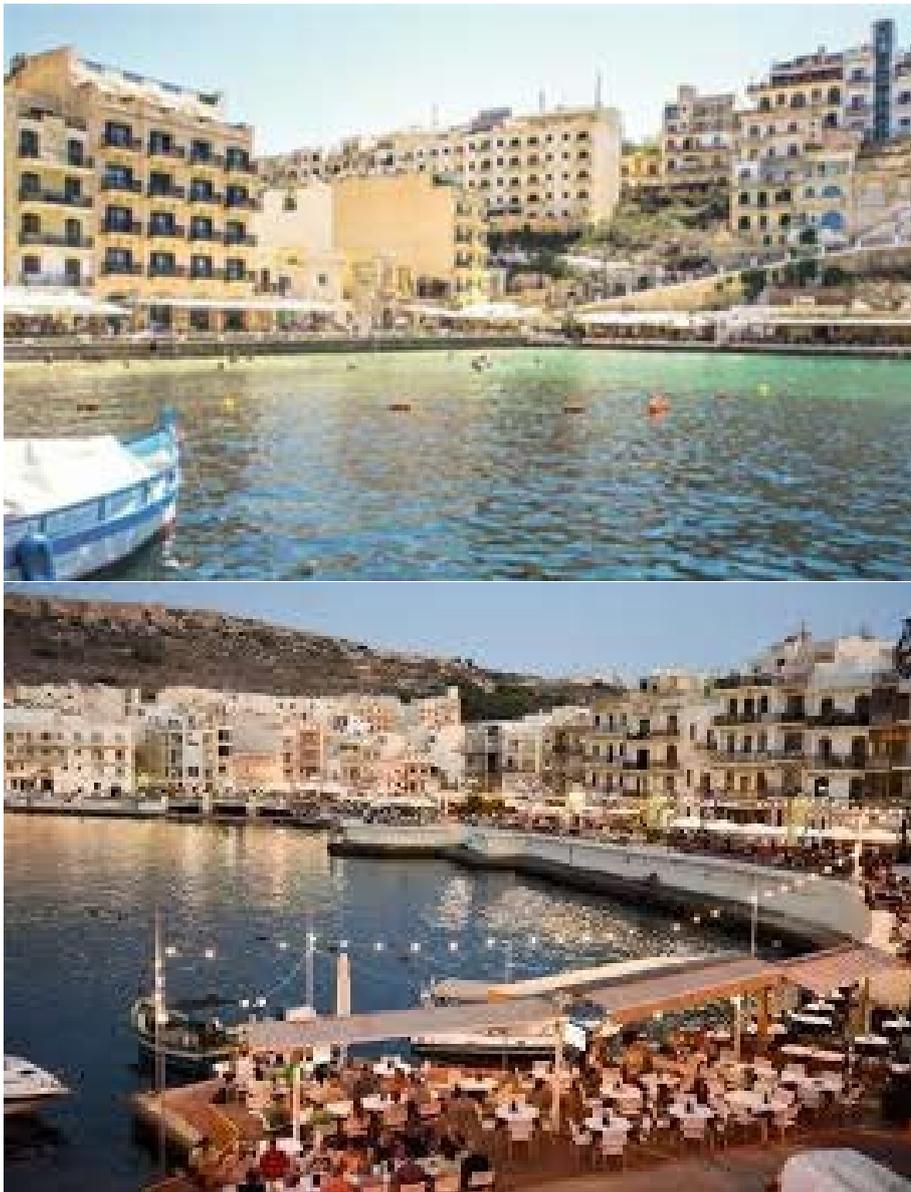


Figure 3: The promenades of Xlendi and Marsalforn.

street, especially in village squares and on seaside promenades. Although these establishments are important for the economy and recreational purposes, a balance must be sought between the issuing of these permits whilst leaving room for pedestrians to walk safely on pavements and to enjoy a stroll in the area.

Conclusion

Many residents in Gozo are not happy with the way the national PA is acting in Gozo, with little or no regard being given to the island's environment and its cultural heritage. A GPA might put a stop to such abuse if it works competently within clear parameters of safeguarding the environment and protecting the cultural heritage. As argued, Local Councils, and environmental and cultural NGOs

should form part of the decision-making structures of such an authority.

However, setting up the GPA would not be enough in this regard. Local Councils must be enabled to enforce control of construction malpractices and abuse, as well as the use of public spaces by business concerns.

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Curious Gozitan Place Names

SIMON SALAFIA

Introduction

Information about place names can be derived from three factors: the source (or sources) in which the place name is documented; the locality where this place is or was situated; and the time during which this place name was or is still in use.

Sources

The source of any toponym can be classified under the following three categories: documentary sources, where the place names are written in a document, such as notarial contracts, manuscripts and books; cartographic sources, such as portulans, maps, surveyed maps, and *cabrei*; and oral sources, where the place names are 'stored' in the 'collective memory' of some people living in a particular locality.

Here one must stress the importance of knowing where a place to which the place name refers, is located, since there are instances where the same place name occurs in two, three or more locations. As an example from Gozo, the place name "il-Blata l-Bajda" is situated in three different locations in Gozo: in Rabat, Għajnsielem (close to Żewwieqa) and in Nadur (facing the sea, on the right hand side of Ramla Bay). The same applies to the toponym "il-Fgura", which is located both in Għajnsielem and in Għarb. Hence for just one place name there may be multiple locations.

Time period

The period of time during which this place name existed or is still in use, is also to be considered for at least two reasons. The first reason is that some place names are not used any more simply because nowadays the places do not exist anymore. A classic example from Gozo is the place name, "Ħaġret l-Armi", documented in Maltese by Aguis de Soldanis (1766) in his 'Damma', but mentioned earlier by Gian Frangisk Abela (1647), in Italian as Pietra delle Armi.

This place name was close to the tower of Mġarr ix-Xini, according to Agius de Soldanis' description in his 'Damma'. According to Gozitan historian Joseph Bezzina (2004), this place name could have been very close to a collapsed cave known as "il-Qniepen", which is also close to Mġarr ix-Xini Bay. Another well-known example is the famous landmark "it-Tieqa tad-Dwejra" or simply called "it-Tieqa". In this case, we know almost exactly the date and time when "it-Tieqa" ceased to exist: 8th day of March, 2017 at about 09.15hrs. In the case of "Ħaġret l-Armi", we do not have a clue in this regard.

The second reason why the period of time is essential when studying toponymy is the fact that on the same location there could be some form of development and/or buildings which can lead to a complete change to a different toponym. A well-known example is the hill on the left-hand side as one approaches Mġarr harbour (known as "ix-Xatt" and/or "il-Port" by locals). About 300 years ago, the hill would have been called "il-Qortin ta' Ras it-Tafal". However, about 200 years ago, the hill would have been called "il-Forti Chambrai" or simply, in Maltese orthography "Xambre", as it is still called today. Hence the first place name fell into disuse, and eventually today nobody uses this place name to refer to this location. Other place names which emerged in the transitional period when this fort started to be constructed are the following: "il-Belt il-Ġdida" and "il-Belt ta' Ras it-Tafal". Hence, here we experience another aspect in the study of toponymy: there can be multiple place names for just one location.

Etymology

The etymology of place names is a very intriguing and interesting subject. First of all one must say that some toponyms were coined by the people living near or quite close to the place. These were common folk, mostly illiterate, who spoke the vernacular language, which was the only language known to them. Hence, here we have another

aspect of toponyms: their linguistic relevance through which one can appreciate and be able to date which words were in use at the time. Let us consider two examples from Gozo. What is today known as “iċ-Ċittadella”, was known as “il-Belt” and/or “is-Sur” in the middle of the 18th century. This is documented by Agius de Soldanis. It was natural to answer the simple question, “Where do you live ?” in this way: “*Jien noqgħod il-Belt*” or “*Jien noqgħod ġos-Sur*”. These semitic words were the ‘natural’ choice for this place name, at that time rather than the Italian word “iċ-Ċittadella”.

Classification of Toponyms

One can classify toponyms in at least three different ways, as follows:

Location on a map. Place names may appear on maps and the whereabouts of the place can therefore be identified. There is also the possibility that there may be sufficient sources to be able to indicate the whereabouts of a toponym on a map, but not with precision.

Syntax or structure. Place names may consist of only one word (known as lexeme) or more than one main lexeme. Examples already given of the first type are: “il-Belt”, “iċ-Ċittadella”, and “il-Qniepen”; whilst those of the second type are “il-Belt il-Ġdida”, “il-Blata l-Bajda”, “it-Tieqa tad-Dwejra”, and “il-Qortin ta’ Ras it-Tafal”.

Etymology. The meaning and/or etymology of the place names can also be used to classify place names, with the two main categories being descriptive toponyms and anthroponyms (place names indicating the owner or the user or the benefactor/protector

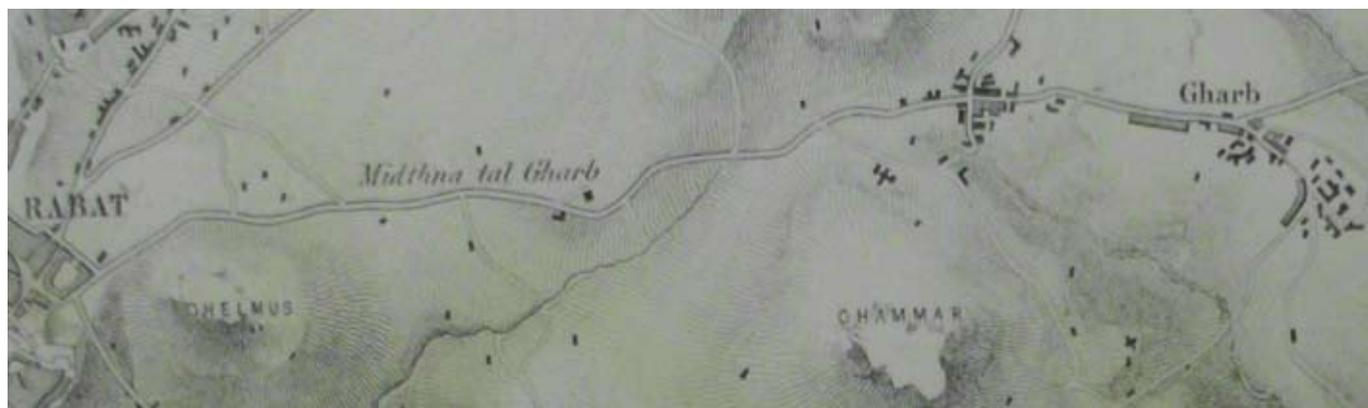
of the land or place mentioned). These two main categories can be further sub-divided. Such sub-sections are not dealt with in this article.

Another aspect of toponyms relates to the meaning of the place name. Here again there are three possibilities to consider. Sometimes the place name is so strange that its meaning is very difficult to decipher. Hence, one has to wait and hope that at some future time there would appear a new document which could give a clue to the meaning. The other opposite scenario is when the meaning of the place name is so obvious and/or there are so many sources that the meaning is correct with certainty. The intermediate situation is that when there is a plausible meaning. In the last situation, there may be more than one plausible meaning.

So, these three possibilities can be summarised as follows:

- a. a toponym with a correct meaning (examples: Victoria, il-Għarb);
- b. a toponym with one or more plausible meanings (il-Qala, Ta’ Sannat);
- c. a toponym to which, to-date, one cannot attribute a plausible meaning.

The place name, “Victoria” is quite obvious: there is sufficient documentation that shows that this refers to Queen Victoria who elevated the status of the administrative capital (ir-Rabat). The same applies to “il-Għarb”, a descriptive toponym meaning ‘the west’, referring initially to the western ‘contrada’ of Gozo, elevated to the status of a parish (and hence that of a village) in 1679. Here one can have the certainty of this meaning using comparative toponymy, where one finds Algarve, the southern region of Portugal, but the



Detail from a Map of Gozo (Source: Private Collection), dated 1824 showing Midthna tal Gharb and Gharb.

western region of Al Andalus. In fact this region is also documented as “Garb al-Andalus”. Another example is “il-Mithna tal-Għarb” which is clearly shown in a map of Gozo, dated 1824. This is the mill on the way towards Dwejra, from Rabat, seen on the right after passing Gelmus Hill. Today this windmill is not located within the boundaries of the municipality of Għarb, but it is clear that “tal-Għarb” refers to the fact that it is located on the western part of Rabat.

Two place names to which, to-date, one cannot attribute with meaning with certainty, but both have plausible meanings, are “Ta’ Sannat” and “il-Qala”.

In his excellent contribution towards the village of Sannat, “Sannat fi Ġrajjet Għawdex”, Joseph Bezzina (1989) lists various plausible meanings of the toponym Sannat, quoting Agius de Soldanis (1746) (remotely plausible), Erin Serracino Inglott (1984) (plausible), Joe Zammit Ciantar (1982) (plausible), and Wettinger (1980) (plausible). Based on the corpus of Gozitan place names researched and collected so far, the two most plausible meanings of Ta’ Sannat are (a) a descriptive meaning derived from the roots of the lexeme sined (roots S-N-D) and (b) the anthroponym plausible meaning suggested by Wettinger (the name could be of Greek origin, as suggested by Wettinger but also of Arabic/Hebrew origin). If I were to choose, and to give my opinion, I would consider the anthroponym as the more plausible meaning. This is because the place name “Ġebel Sannat” is documented directly by Agius de Soldanis twice, in his book about Gozo (1746) and in his dictionary (1766). Another source for the same toponym is the Agius de Soldanis map (dated 1745), although this map was prepared by Fr. Luigi Bartolo and not Agius de Soldanis. The fact that there is this phrase in construct state (*stat kostrutt*) as “Ġebel Sannat”, as opposed to *Ġebel is-Sannat*, is indicative that “Sannat” is a proper name. The second reason is that in my research I came across another identical place name, “Ta’ Sannat”, described as *isem ta’ biċċa raba’* (cultivated land) in the locality of “il-Qala”.

With reference to the meaning of the place name of the locality of “il-Qala”, in my opinion there are two equally plausible meanings: one refers to a creek or sea inlet (same meaning as “Qalet Marku”

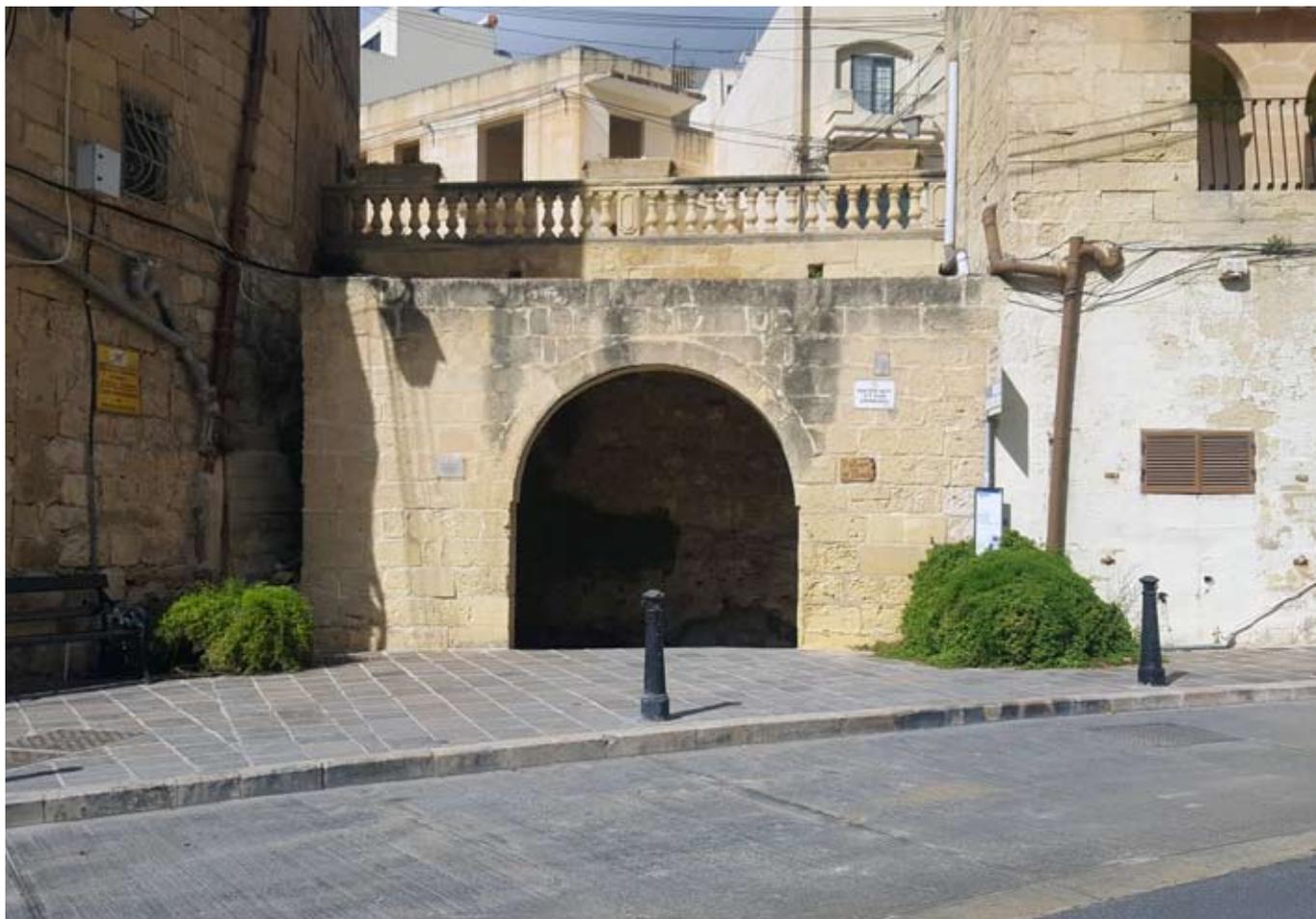
in Malta, and “Qalet ix-Xilep”, found both in Malta and Gozo) and the other refers to a fortified structure on a hillock or just the hillock. In the latter case, the place name should be written as “Qalgħa” not “Qala” to be grammatically correct. In Malta there are hillocks recorded both as “Qalgħa” and “Qala”. However in Gozo, the diminutive of “Qalgħa”, that is, “Qlejgħa” exists in two different place names: “il-Wied tal-Qlejgħa” and “il-Qlejgħa” (both in the locality of iż-Żebbuġ). In my opinion, both are plausible meanings, which might have converged into just one toponym: “il-Qala”. But if I were to choose the better of the two, for reasons I shall not explain here, I would opt for the meaning of a hillock.

Bendu

An interesting place name in Gozo is “il-Għajn ta’ Bendu”. This is a spring located in Fontana, more or less in front of the more famous “il-Għajn il-Kbira”. Agius de Soldanis, in his “Damma” records this place name slightly differently as “Għajn Bendu”. Before explaining the meaning of “Bendu”, one might ask whether there are other toponyms in Gozo and in Malta containing this word. The answer is yes: there are three references in Gozo and at least one in Malta:

- a. Ta’ Bendu: *isem ta’ biċċa raba’* (cultivated land), located at Ta’ Kerċem;
- b. Ta’ Bendu: *isem ta’ biċċa art* (piece of land), located at Ta’ Kerċem;
- c. Ta’ Bendu: *isem ta’ biċċa raba’* (cultivated land), located at il-Munxar; and
- d. Ta’ Nadur Bendu: *isem ta’ biċċa art* (piece of land), located at iż-Żurrieq (Malta).

From the structure or syntax of these place names, one can conclude that “Bendu” is a proper name, presumably a masculine name, as in the colloquial expression “nagħaġ ta’ Bendu”. I always had the gut feeling that Bendu is the contracted form of “Benedettu” (Benedict in Maltese) similar to “Ġużu” as the contracted version of “Ġużeppi”. However I never found a document to confirm this... until I started collecting all the place names from Agius de Soldanis’ dictionary. Under the word Ghain, in folio 191, one finds: *Ghain Bendu o Benedetto, un altra, poco lontano dalla prima...* This is a clear indication that Bendu refers to Benedetto (in Italian) or Benedittu (in Maltese).

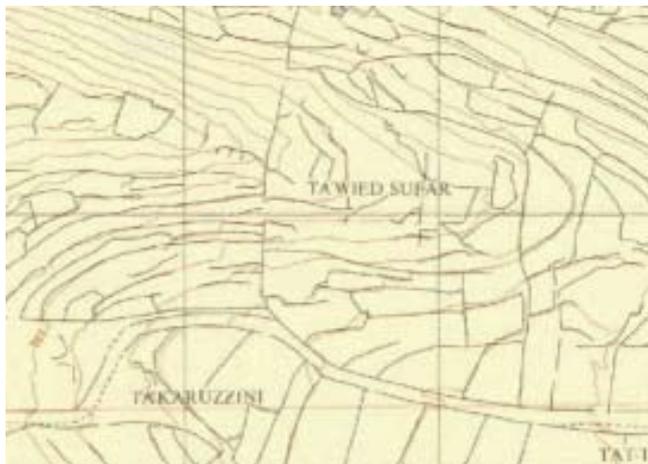


Il-Ghajn ta' Bendu, Fontana.

Sufar

I came across this place name when I was collecting all the toponyms from Gozo from the set of Survey Sheets printed in 1968. These were the following: “Ta’ Wied Sufar” and “Wied Sufar”. The first toponym refers to the lands in the vicinity of the valley itself while the second is the name of the valley. This valley is located in “San Lawrenz”, very close to “il-Qawra” (now known as the Inland Sea for tourists). When analysing all the toponyms from Joe Zammit Ciantar’s unpublished thesis (1978) about Gozitan place names, the valley is recorded as “Wied Sofar”, in the vicinity of “id-Dwejra”. So far nothing new: Sofar is a phonetic variation of “Sufar” or vice-versa. But the lexemes “Sufar” and/or “Sofar” puzzled me for quite some time until ‘new’ information from two completely different sources enable me to be able to give a plausible meaning. Chronologically, I will start with the most recent source: a very interesting article published by Alex Camilleri (2006) about the place names in the area of “id-Dwejra” (Gozo).

When analysing all the place names, I became aware and moreover I was convinced that I was pronouncing mentally this place name wrongly: in this article, the same place name is given as “Wied Sôfar”. Mentally, I was always pronouncing wrongly the valley as Wied Sufâr and/or Wied Sofâr (that is, stressing the last syllable, like we pronounce “buqar”). Here one might ask: why are you convinced that this is the correct way to pronounce these two ‘strange’ words. The answer is given in the same article, in which the author thanks and mentions his relatives from Għarb who helped him to collect these toponyms. Here one must stress the importance of oral sources: one advantage or asset is the fact that oral sources are very important to be able to pronounce place names ‘correctly’. The other source was very crucial to solve this puzzle in a logical way. When researching the rural tenements in Gozo, from the Archives and Records’ Section of the Public Works Department (Floriana, Malta), I came across the following: Lands *Ta Wied L’Ghasafar* limits of *Dueira*.



Ta Wied Sufar: Extract from Survey Sheets (dated 1968) (Source: <http://geoserver.pa.org.mt/publicgeoserver>)

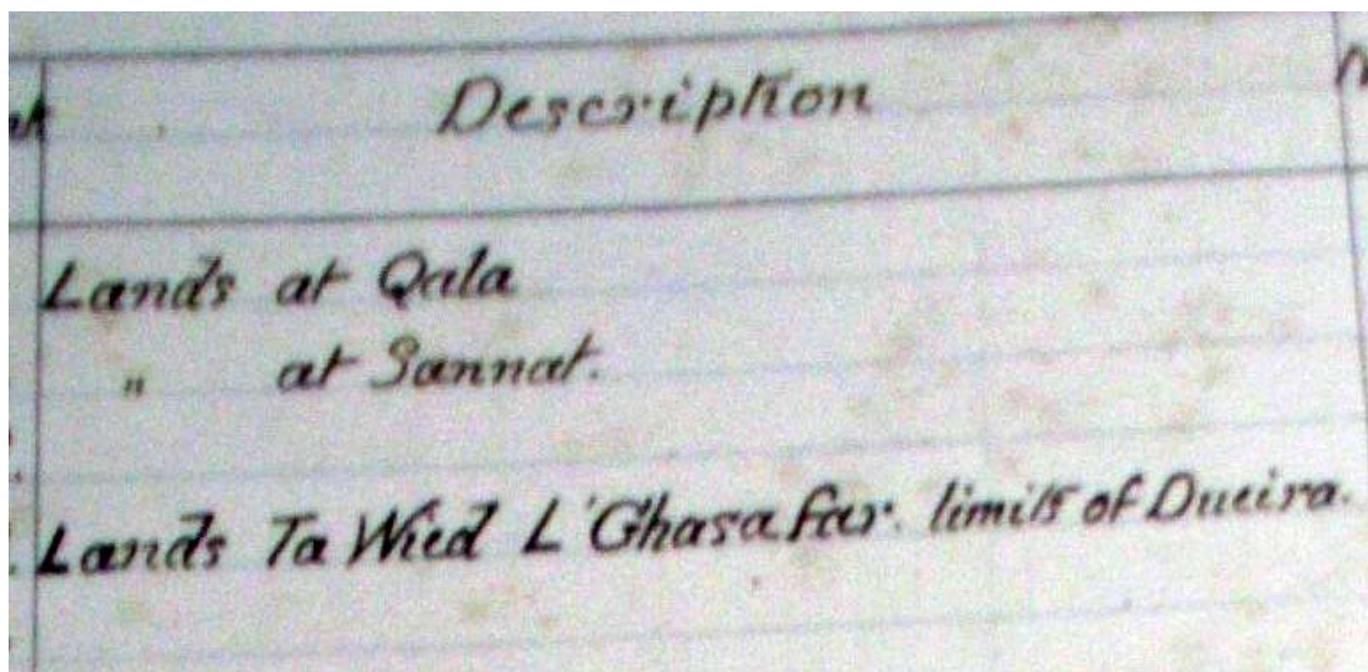
Using today's orthography, the place name is "Ta' Wied l-Ghasafar". Given that dialectal variations of "Ghasafar" can be "Ghasofar" and "Ghasufar", the plausible meaning now becomes clear. "Wied l-Ghasafar" becomes "Wied l-Ghasofar", and with "Gha" being softly pronounced the toponym is recorded as "Wied Sofar". The same process obviously applies with "Wied l-Ghasufar", which is recorded as "Wied Sufar". To be completely sure of this mutation, one needs to verify that the valley "Wied Sufar" and lands "Ta' Wied Sufar" are located where the lands "Ta' Wied l-Ghasafar" are also located. From the survey sheets, the first two places can be located with precision BUT we know just the whereabouts of

the latter, which is in the limits of "id-Dwejra". Hence, one can conclude that this is a plausible meaning. To conclude this part, one might ask: are there any other place names in Gozo with the lexeme "Ghasafar"? The answer is yes. To-date, I have also encountered "Tal-Ghasafar" (*bicča art*) at San Lawrenz, "l-Iskoll tal-Ghasafar" close to Mgarr Harbour, and "is-Sined tal-Ghasafar" (*bicča art*) at Ta' Kerċem.

Iż-Żurrieq

This place name is mostly known in Malta as a village in the southern part of Malta. But what about Gozo? I admit that when I came across this place name in Gozo, I was puzzled. The source was a book printed in Italian in 1915, which describes hundreds of plants found in the Maltese Islands: *Flora Melitensis Nova* authored by A. Caruana Gatto and S. Sommier (1915).

There are three direct references to Zurriek in Gozo, and the three references mention the 'old telegraph' (*il vecchio telegrafo*). I will quote the third reference in Italian: *abbondante in una grande pozza d'acqua fra San Paolo e il telegrafo di Zurriek*. This led me to speculate that this referred to "il-Ghadira ta' Sarraflu", or simply as "il-Ghadira", as it is known by the locals from Ta' Kerċem. San Paolo could easily refer to Qasam



Ta Wied L'Ghasafar: Extract from Gozo Tenements Register (Source: Archives Public Works), undated (but circa 1880)

39. — **Matthiola incana** (L.) R. Br.: GD. p. 3; Cleghorn p. 120; Gulia Repert. p. 24 et Barth I p. 379; CG. Nat. Malt. p. 8 et Medit. Nat. p. 277; Caruel in Parl. Fl. it. IX p. 796; Duthie Barth p. 544. *Cheiranthus incanus* Z. p. 12.

Vecchi muri e rupi specialmente marine. — **Malta**, in vari luoghi, per es. a *Coltonera* e sui muri dei forti della *Falletta!* **Gozo**, dove l'abbiamo raccolta al castello di *Rabato* e al Telegrafo a *Zurriek!* *Migiarro* (Gulia). — Febbraio-Maggio.

Vecchi muri e luoghi aridi rocciosi. — **Malta**, piuttosto rara, *Bingemma*, spalti della *Falletta*, *Delinara*, *Musia!* *Xarvi tal Vardia* (Gb.), *Zurrico*, *Melleha*, *Selmun* (Duthie!), presso *Crendi* (Borg!). **Gozo**, a *Zurriek* sui ruderi del vecchio telegrafo, nell'interno del castello di *Rabato*, *Torre dei Giganti!* **Comino!** **Cominotto** (Duthie). — Marzo-Maggio.

786. — **Heleocharis palustris** (L.) Rob. Br. *Eleocharis palustris* Z. p. 47; Gulia Barth II p. 9 (a. et var. b. *minor*). *Scirpus palustris* GD. p. 38.

Luoghi inondati e lungo i corsi d'acqua. — **Malta**, frequente, *Intahleb*, *Fiddien*, *U'ied Gherzuma*, *Ghain Mula*, *Ghain Rihana* ecc. **Gozo**, abbondante in una grande pozza d'acqua fra *San Paolo* e il telegrafo di *Zurriek!* — Aprile-Giugno.

Extracts from *Flora Melitensis Nova* (1915), clearly indicating the toponym *Zurriek* in Gozo.



Map of Gozo (Source: National Archives of Malta), dated 1893 where the toponym *Zurriek* is located close to *Cala Dueira*.

San Pawl, which is also located nearby. Luckily at a later stage I came across a navigational map, which indicated this toponym in Gozo, confirming that my intuition about the location was correct. But what about its meaning? This will be explained in the next part of the article.

Conclusion

These few examples demonstrate how intriguing and interesting is the study of place names. And how difficult it sometimes is to decipher and hence be able to attribute a plausible meaning related to a place name. And more curious place names from Gozo are yet to follow!

To be continued.

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Collaboration and Innovation: The Way Forward for Gozo

DANIEL BORG

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need for the diversification of the Gozitan economy. During the past months the Chamber has published two important documents: ‘**Post COVID-19 – Strategic and Policy Document**’¹, and ‘**Rethinking our Economy – GBC Budgetary Proposals**’².

These documents outline the Chamber’s vision for the diversification of the Gozitan economy, a vision based on considerations that we need to plan for the long term in order to have a sustainable economy which can benefit Gozitan society as a whole. This article is based on the considerations, and analysis outlined in these documents. The Chamber is seeing two potential areas of economic growth for Gozo, mainly the Green Economy, and Digitalisation, two areas which the Government is seeing as having substantial potential, not only for Gozo, but for the economy in its entirety. Nonetheless, there are also some underlying issues which need to be resolved in order to enable progress in these and other economic sectors which can assist in the diversification of the Gozitan economy. These issues relate principally to transport and connectivity, public infrastructure, and putting the right incentives into place in order to attract the right type of investment.

An Analysis of the Gozitan Economy

In 2018, 64.5% (7,030) of the people working in Gozo full-time were working in the private sector,

while 35.5 % (3,876) worked in the public sector. In 2019, the numbers had fluctuated as follows: 66.8 % (7,697) in the private sector, and 33.2% (3,820) in the public sector.³ 60.3% of the business units employed between 1 and 9 persons.⁴

GDP per capita in Gozo at € 15,997 is 64% of the national economy (2018). The growth in GDP in Gozo has lagged behind with the average rate of growth over the period 2014-2018, amounting to 9.8%, compared to 10.29% in Malta.⁵

Tourism plays a very important part in Gozo’s economic texture. From a study published in 2015⁶ it is estimated that tourism contributes around 50% of Gozo’s Gross Domestic Product, and around 20% in terms of both direct and indirect employment. While the main island of Malta constantly exhibited significant increases in consecutive years, fuelled principally by an increment in foreign inbound tourism, the same cannot be said for Gozo.

In 2019, the number of domestic tourists in Gozo was 215,272, a decrease of 5.2% over the previous year (227,121). On the other hand the number of foreign inbound tourists, amounted to 180,978 a decrease of 11.7% over the previous year (204,849).⁷ Same-day visitors to Gozo continued to increase between 2016 and 2019. As indicated by the 2020 regional statistics, “tourism in Gozo and Comino remained highly skewed towards same-day

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- 1 The Gozo Business Chamber (2020), *Post COVID-19 Strategic and Policy Document* (online) : <https://gozobusinesschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GBC-Post-COVID-19-Strategy-Documents-.pdf> [accessed 20 October 2020].
 - 2 The Gozo Business Chamber (2020), *Rethinking our Economy – GBC Budgetary Proposals* (online) : <https://gozobusinesschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Re-thinking-our-economy-GBC-Budgetary-Proposals-2021-1.pdf> [accessed 20 October 2020].
 - 3 National Statistics Office (2020), *Regional Labour Supply by Place of Residence and Work: 2017-2019. News Release 159/2020*, p.8. The statistics being portrayed here refers to ‘employment by place of work’.
 - 4 National Statistics Office (2020), *Overview of Social and Economic trends in Gozo* (power point presentation), delivered at the Gozo Regional Committee 28 August 2020.
 - 5 EMCS (2020), *Stakeholder Consultation Committee. Programming – European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027. Gozo* (Power Point Presentation).
 - 6 Ministry for Tourism (2015), *The Contribution of the Tourism Industry to the Maltese Economy. Report prepared for the Ministry for Tourism by EU-Cubed Consultants* (online) : <https://tourism.gov.mt/en/Documents/The%20Contribution%20of%20The%20Tourism%20Industry%20to%20The%20Maltese%20Economy%20-%202014.pdf> [accessed 19 August 2020].
 - 7 NSO (2020), *News Release 110/220 Regional Tourism 2017-2019* (online) : https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/07/News2020_110.pdf [accessed 11 September 2020].

visitors” (p.207). In 2019 the number of same-day visitors to Gozo amounted to 1,346,550 an increase of 37.3% when compared to 2016 (980,553). While same-day visitors have a significant environmental impact, their economic impact is very limited. This means that despite Gozo’s over reliance on the tourism sector, the economic activity generated is not correlated to the environmental impact of this sector. This points out to the need to emphasise the importance of quality tourism.

Gozo’s over reliance on certain sectors is shown also by the percentage contribution of certain economic segments to its regional Gross Value Added (GVA). Thus for example while in the main island of Malta **construction** contributed 3.5% to its regional GVA in 2018, in Gozo this contribution goes up to 7.5%. The same can be said for **real estate activities**. In the main island of Malta the contribution of this sector to its regional GVA was 4.6% in 2018, while in Gozo this contribution went up to 8.9%.⁸

Gozo’s over reliance on these sectors calls for a rethinking of our economy in order to have sectors which should ensure Gozo’s long-term economic future.

The Effects of Covid-19 on Gozitan Businesses

During the pandemic the Gozo Business Chamber conducted two surveys. The first survey was conducted during March 2020, when the Government had not yet introduced important measures such as the COVID-19 Wage Supplement. When asked, on a scale from 1 to 5, how the outbreak of the COVID-19 had affected their business, from 5 being very negative to 1 having no effect, 72.5% of the respondents highlighted that it had affected them very negatively.

In the second survey, conducted between the 09th and the 14th September 2020, businesses were again asked from a scale of 1 to 5, how did the COVID-19 pandemic affect their business, with 5 being ‘very negative’, and 1 having no effect. The majority (46.7%) outlined that they were effected in a very negative way. One can note that the fact that the Government had introduced a number of measures which sought to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 on businesses may have led to this decrease. Nonetheless this shows the urgency to act on projects and initiatives which now have become a priority.

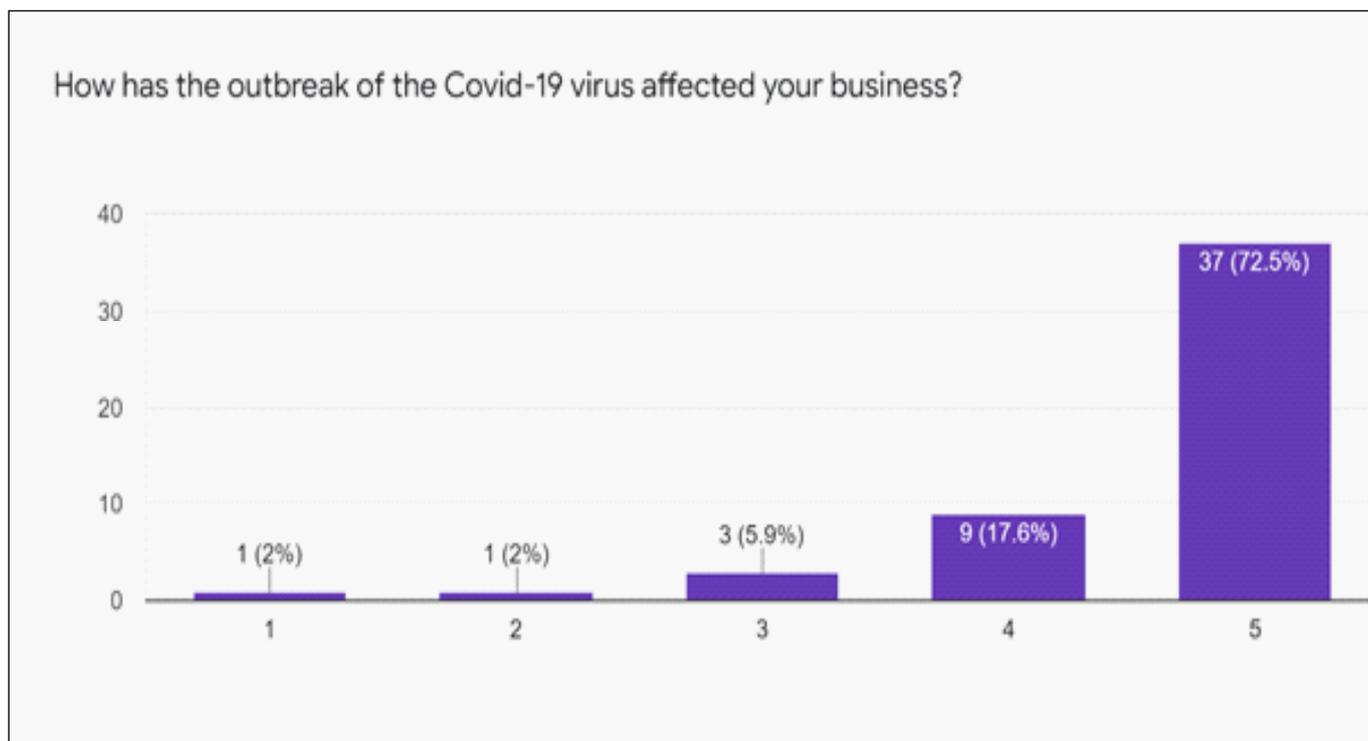


Figure 1: Outcome of Survey conducted in March 2020

⁸ National Statistics Office (2020), p. 29.

How has the outbreak of the COVID 19 affected your business?

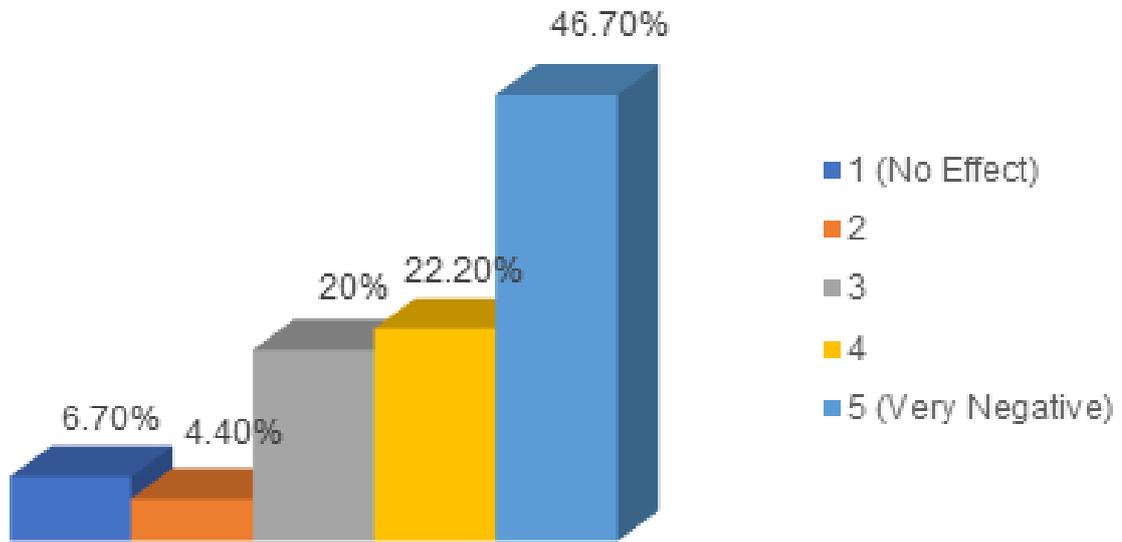


Figure 2: Results of Survey 09 - 14 September 2020

Transport and Connectivity

Gozo is presently connected to the main island of Malta via a scheduled ferry transport between the two islands. All the island is served with a public transport system through a scheduled bus service reaching all localities on the island. In the past Gozo also had a scheduled helicopter service linking Gozo to the Malta International Airport. A heliport was built for the purpose. Air Malta's subsidiary Malta Air Charter operated a helicopter service to Gozo for ten years when due to subsequent losses the service had to be stopped in 2004. Spanish company Heli Sureste took over but abandoned the route in 2006. Harbour Air Malta deployed seaplanes between Malta's Grand Harbour and Gozo between 2007 and 2012. In May 2019 a call for proposals for a helicopter service between Gozo and Malta was launched by state company Malta Air Travel Ltd.⁹ At present the service is not yet being offered.

Steward Health Care which runs the Gozo General Hospital also operates an air ambulance from the heliport in Gozo.

In the past few years plans for a **permanent link** between Gozo and Malta are under way. In June 2020 four bidders participated in the pre-qualification questionnaire for the design, building, financing, operation and maintenance of the Gozo – Malta tunnel. Transport Malta has also launched a request for proposal for a conventional ferry service linking Gozo to various other localities in the main island of Malta.

Gozo is often termed as suffering from 'double insularity'. As indicated by the current president of the Gozo Business Chamber, Joseph Borg, during a seminar discussing SME policies in remote areas of the EU, double insularity implies "being a remote area off another island".¹⁰ To this end the plans to

⁹ The Times of Malta, 2019. *Malta Gozo helicopter service plans get off the ground*, The Times of Malta, 21 May. Available at: <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/call-for-proposals-for-helicopter-service-between-malta-and-gozo.710588> [accessed 11 September 2020]. And CH Aviation, 2019. *Helicopter Services brands Gozo tender discriminatory* (online) : <https://www.ch-aviation.com/portal/news/79772-helicopter-services-malta-brands-gozo-tender-discriminatory> [accessed 11 September 2020].

¹⁰ Joseph Borg (2010), *Giving Gozo its Due* (online) : <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/borg-speech.pdf> [accessed 12 August 2020].



Gozo is presently connected to the main island of Malta via a scheduled ferry transport between the two islands. While the introduction of a fourth ferry service has helped in easing mobility between the two islands, it is still important that further accessibility both through air and maritime links should be sustained. Photo: MGOZ - George Scerri.

ensure that accessibility to Gozo is increased should continue unabated.

While the introduction of a fourth ferry service has helped in easing mobility between the two islands, it is still important that further accessibility both through air and maritime links should be sustained. Encouraging further maritime services to Gozo targeted towards specific segments such as Gozitan employees and students, working and studying in Malta would be a step in the right direction. Moreover, a helicopter service would ensure further accessibility for international travellers.

Furthermore, the Chamber believes that the permanent link between Gozo and Malta is an important project for Gozo. The initiatives taken up till this stage, including the publication of the pre-qualification questionnaire for the design, building, financing operation and maintenance of the Gozo-Malta Tunnel and the submissions made, bode well for the project to be implemented successfully. The Chamber believes that this project will solve

Gozo's accessibility issues and put Gozo on an equal footing with the main island of Malta.

As its name suggests the permanent link would provide the required assurances to the Gozitan economy if any of the above indicated services, including also the ferry service would have to stop for some reason or another. **Gozo needs multi-modal forms of accessibility.** As already reiterated various times by the Chamber, this project should not mean an increase in construction. Development policies for Gozo should be in place which would adequately cater for this situation, which is presently unsustainable. The incessant development currently taking place in Gozo, has also been pointed out by the Gozo Regional Council, who highlighted, the ruining of charming urban historic centres, and the environmental and urban degradation currently taking place.¹¹

The Chamber maintains that proper regulation should be in place in the construction sector, and that in the case of Gozo, development should never

¹¹ The Times of Malta (2020). *All Gozo Mayors unite to warn against irresponsible development*, The Times of Malta, 16 October. Available at: <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/all-gozo-mayors-unite-to-warn-against-irresponsible-development.825130> [accessed 20 October 2020].

come at a cost to the environment. Safeguarding Gozo's environment means that the green belts between localities are maintained, and that the urban conservation areas are protected. This was already proposed by the Gozo Business Chamber in its budget proposals for 2019¹² when it highlighted that the subsea tunnel project between Gozo and Malta:

should be accompanied by a holistic plan ensuring the sustainable development of the island of Gozo, such as for example that the green belts between localities are retained, and that the unique character of each locality is preserved. The Chamber believes that the present Outside Development Zones (ODZ) in Gozo should not be touched. Accessibility needs to be accompanied by a sustainable development approach.

Required Infrastructure

Gozo's success during the past few years has been sustained by the fact that Gozo is now being considered as an important contributor to the national economy. This has seen for example the construction of the Malta campus of the Queen Mary University of London here in Gozo. Work on important capital projects for Gozo such as the new hospital for Gozo, the new primary school in Victoria, the park and ride facility (which should see the start of a service of E-buses to the Mgarr terminal), and the Gozo Museum should start, or continue as planned. Even when this crisis is over such important public capital projects would sustain the confidence in the economy with a positive spill-over effects on other sectors. There should also be an important re-thinking on capital projects which have been on the shelf for a very long period of time. Such projects would not need to consider the uptake of any green areas but should consider the redevelopment of existing or polluted areas. An important project in this direction is a multi-storey parking in Victoria, in place of the existing parking facilities. This should be done underground so as not to impinge on Victoria's historical and authentic landscape.

The Green Economy – Sustainability is Key

The strengths and challenges being faced by Gozo with respect to sustainability are multifaceted. Islands are more exposed to the effects of climate change. On the other hand due to their small scale, and geographical boundaries they form an ideal lab to test technological innovation aimed at environmental protection.

In 2017 the number of cars per 1,000 residents aged 18 years and over in Gozo was 840, the largest share when compared to other regions on the main island of Malta.¹³ Sea transport between the two islands also increased year on year. In 2019 the number of sea trips between Gozo and Malta was 27,631 an increase of 17% over the previous year. The number of passengers and vehicles crossing between the two islands also increased. In 2019 the number of passengers who crossed between Gozo and Malta was 5,917,780, an increase of 2.7% over the previous year (5,758,318). The number of vehicles crossing between the two islands in 2019 (1,782,909) also experienced an increase of 7.4% over the previous year (1,659,902). Surely at this stage the pointers do not point towards a sustainable economic model. There needs to be a complete overhaul in the way we perceive our economy starting from the environment.

The sustainability of our economy will surely be one of the key themes of the post-COVID-19 scenario. Joseph Borg, President of INSULEUR,¹⁴ in his letter to members highlighted how sustainability is the way forward in order to ensure the sustainability of island economies:

Due to the fragile situation of islands, we were always looking ahead. In this context we always believed that it was only through sustainability that we could survive . . . we believe that islands will be the first to benefit from it ('Green Deal'), as they are also the first to experience the negative impacts of climate change. After the world emerges from this crisis there are a lot of lessons that we have to learn, and that we have to

12 The Gozo Business Chamber (2019), *The Gozo Business Chamber's Proposals for the Budget 2019* (online) : <https://gozobusinesschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GBC-Press-Release-081019.pdf> [accessed 20 October 2020].

13 NSO (2020), *Regional Statistics Malta 2020 Edition*, p. 148

14 The Network of the Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union. Joseph Borg, President of the GBC is also President of INSULEUR.



Gozo's over reliance on certain sectors is shown also by the percentage contribution of certain economic segments to its regional Gross Value Added (GVA). Thus for example while in the main island of Malta construction contributed 3.5% to its regional GVA in 2018, in Gozo this contribution went up to 7.5%.

share together. This pandemic is clearly showing that we cannot continue to plod ahead as if nothing has happened. We need to do things differently.

The Chamber has made a number of proposals in this regard, mainly targeted towards increasing the uptake of electric cars, substituting the present fourth ferry with a hybrid ferry. Moreover, Gozo can set the pace for the whole nation being the ideal test bed for innovative, new and sustainable technologies, and therefore there exists the concrete possibility of attracting industries in this area. Given the European Union's focus on the 'Green Deal'¹⁵ the potential in this area is significant.

A Clear and Focused Digital Strategy for Gozo

Gozo has registered important steps in this area. A number of projects and initiatives have been

initiated or completed. These include the second fibre optic cable between Gozo and Malta to cater for issues related to redundancy, and the setting up of the Digital Innovation Hub in Xewkija. Digital Innovation Hubs were a key priority of the 'Digitising European Industry Initiative' adopted in April 2016. The objective of Digital Innovation Hubs are to act as "one-stop shops where companies especially SMEs, start-ups and mid-caps can get access to technology-testing, financing advice, market intelligence and networking opportunities."¹⁶

At this point in time however Gozo necessitates, with reference to companies in the digital sector, a "holistic incentive package specific to Gozo . . . to really ensure the take-off of this industry on the island".¹⁷ This would ensure the development of an eco-system of companies in the digital sector in Gozo.

¹⁵ The European Green Deal is Europe's plan to make the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities, and making the transition just and inclusive for all. See: European Commission, *A European Green Deal* (online) : https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en [accessed 21 October 2020].

¹⁶ Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) in Europe - *Shaping Europe's digital future* - European Commission, 2020.

¹⁷ Gozo Business Chamber (2020), *Post Covid-19 – Strategic and Policy Document*, p.3 (online) : <https://gozobusinesschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GBC-Post-COVID-19-Strategy-Document-.pdf> [accessed 13 August 2020].

As discussed during the INSULEUR Forum held in Gozo in October 2019, the digital economy poses great potential for islands. The Conference recognised that:

Digitalisation can serve as a roadmap for small and insular islands to tackle the difficulties that are generally associated with their geographical isolation by developing stronger links with the main centres of economic activity, developing innovative products and services and diversify business activity . . . islands lend themselves well as proving grounds for new and innovative models targeted at physically bound communities.¹⁸

Conclusion

This pandemic has shown the importance of all stakeholders collaborating actively together to achieve common aims and objectives. During the prayer of the Angelus on Sunday 2 October 2020 Pope Francis highlighted how (with reference to the COVID-19 pandemic):

At the same time I hope that, with the converging commitment of all political and economic leaders, work might resume: families and society cannot continue without work . . . It is and will be a problem in the aftermath of the pandemic: poverty and lack of work. A lot of solidarity and creativity will be needed to resolve this problem.¹⁹

These are the underlying values that must sustain our recovery.

Gozo's governance structure is very peculiar. The Ministry for Gozo though being a dedicated structure for Gozo is directly responsible for a limited number of areas. To this end it is important that all the Ministries, authorities and agencies work in cooperation so that Gozo can develop not only in the short, but also in the long term. In his budgetary speech on the 19 October, Minister for Finance Edward Scicluna, highlighted that Government will be formulating various strategies in such important sectors such as the economy, digitalisation, and

tourism.²⁰ It is important that Gozo is tackled specifically in these strategies.

To this end the setting up of the Gozo Regional Development Authority is an important milestone in order to ensure that Gozo continues to be included in all the national strategic plans issued, as it will play an important part in bringing all the entities together in the present multi-level governance scenario.

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18 INSULEUR (2019), *Statement of Conclusions and Intent on Developing a Common Digitalisation Strategy for EU Islands* (online) : <https://gozobusinesschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Statement-of-Conclusions.pdf> [accessed 21 October 2020].

19 Pope Francis (2020), *Angelus. Saint Peter Square, Sunday 2 August 2020* (online) : https://m.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2020/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20200802.html [accessed 24 August 2020].

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Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex: a 75-year old voice for Gozo

GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

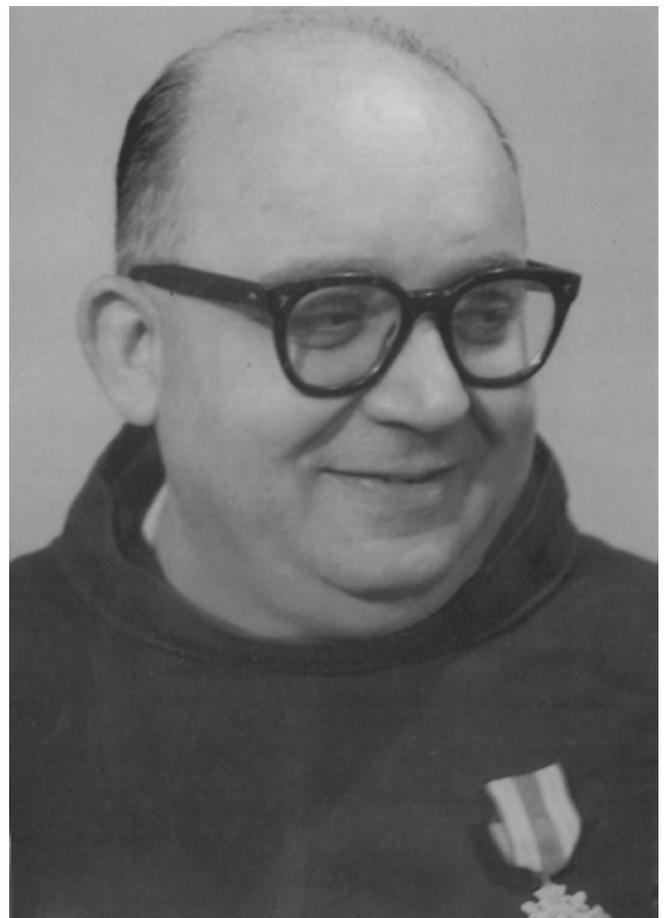
Freedom of expression is recognized as a human right under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and recognized in international human rights law in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Church – an institution which throughout its ages did not always defend or practise this right – was ironically enough, the first institution in Gozo to have its own periodical or magazine entitled *L-Ghawdex*, which gradually changed its name to its present one – *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex*. Seventy-five years ago, the first issue of this magazine was published in Gozo by the Orphans' Press, also owned by the diocese of Gozo.

The publishing of a monthly magazine is quite a feat in itself. In an age where many people have turned their back on books in favour of e-books and on-line

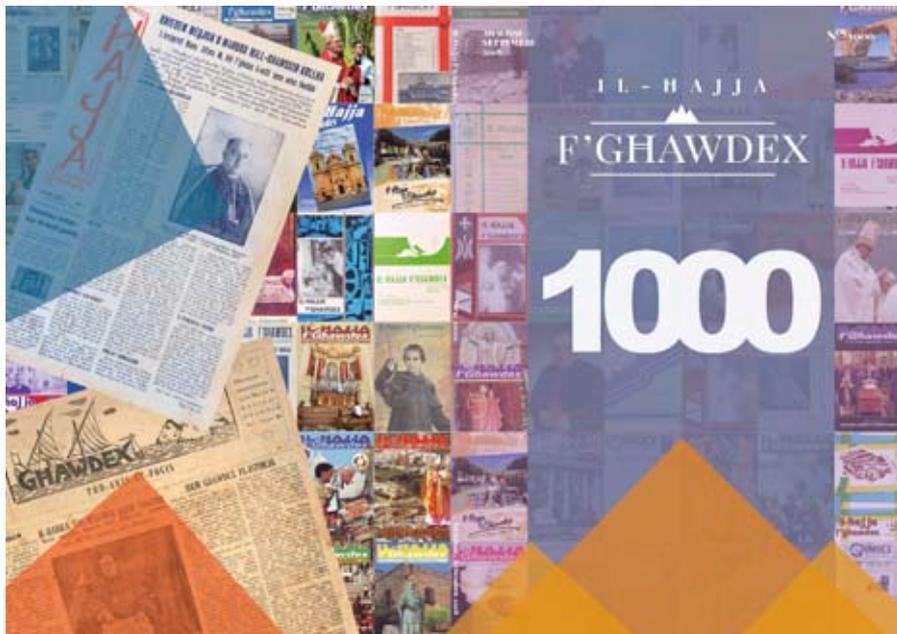
reading and considering the fact that in 2019, nearly 130 public libraries closed across Britain with our own Cathedral Library in Victoria dismantling its books and preparing to close its doors on a permanent basis, celebrating the 75th anniversary of a local periodical presents us with a moment to stop and reflect seriously. The future may not be so promising for books and publishing but *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex* has – at least up to this moment in time – managed to swim the deep seas. There is still a longing for a physical contact with the published word; the recent development of the diocese of Gozo's official publication has tried to satisfy this longing. There are still people out there who make a point to have their own little library in their home. *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex* almost has a sacred right for a place in the heart of every decent Gozitan household. There are ample reasons for the justification of such a statement!



The first edition of *Ghawdex*, 10 June 1945.



Patri Akkursju Xerri OFM, the first magazine's editor.



The cover for the 1000th issue two years ago.

From the social to the religious, from the historical to the cultural, from the political to the environmental, *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex* throughout its life-span of 75 years has managed to address these themes and realities and much more. A quick look into the editions of the last decade will prove the point. Different writers and contributors have been generous in answering the plea of the periodical's editors for fresh contributions. With its semi-scholarly stance and being neither too academic nor entirely amateurish, *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex* has managed to find the right balance and address the interests of its many readers both locally and even abroad. One should not forget the many Gozitan emigrants who through their subscription keep abreast with what is happening in Gozo and at the same time build up an encyclopaedia of, if I may use Rev. Dr. Joseph Bezzina's chain of publications, *Gaulitana*. As you can imagine, this is a name that refers to all that has to do with Gozo and the Gozitans. The periodical seeks to address this through an open-minded and down-to-earth perspective while at the same time keeping in mind the regional status that Gozo enjoys especially in the eyes of the European Union.

Over the period of three quarters of a century, *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex* has had the privilege of covering issues of greater or lesser importance. From the first-ever visit of a Roman pontiff to the launching of the new Ministry for Gozo, the editorial board of the periodical have sought to leave no stone unturned as it provides coverage of the main events that have marked Gozo's course in time and history. The

constant development and innovations in technology have only served to make *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex* all the more attractive. Although it is basically a diocesan publication, the periodical strikes a balance in addressing both religious as well as social, cultural and political issues and events. Through the wisdom of its various editors throughout its existence, it has avoided controversies without keeping away from the use of direct and clear statements whenever the need arose. This sense of pastoral care and love for all that is Gozitan are, in my opinion, the reason for the respect that *Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex* has earned over these 75 years.

As a new decade unfolds, the 'voice of the Gozitans' will continue to make itself heard even to the point of trying to put Gozo's agenda on the bigger table of national policies thus helping out by keeping constantly in the minds of its readers the disadvantages of double-isolation. At the same time, may it continue to be an eye-opener to politicians and developers alike that they may never forget that Gozo can only benefit if and when its natural heritage is protected. May this take place the sooner the better so that future generations will be able to live in harmony with the land of their ancestors.

Geoffrey G. Attard was ordained priest for the diocese of Gozo in June 2004. He graduated M.Th. in Ecclesiastical History from the University of Edinburgh in November 2005 and he graduated M.Lit. in Practical Theology from the University of St Andrews with a dissertation entitled "Climate Change and the Catholic Church" in 2008. He has published his dissertation in book form.

Book Review:

Dies Irae, Dies Illa. Jum ta' Ghadab, dak il-Jum

Aaron Attard-Hili

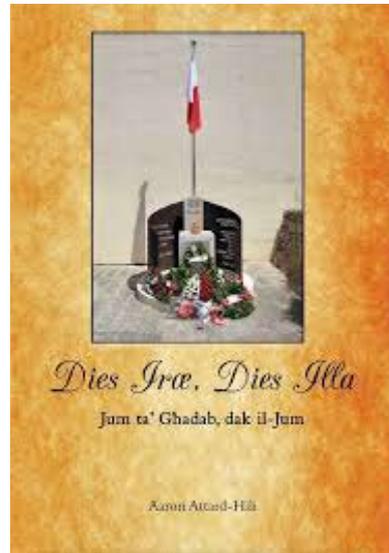
Cacciensia 6: Xagħra Local Council (2019); 86 pages

REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

The 7th of June 1919 is an important date in the history of our islands; it reminds us of the hard life our forefathers led during some particular periods of their colonial experience. The 164-year long era of British colonialism in Malta was not an easy one; there were particular moments when our forebears understood that, sadly enough, the adage 'might is right' is one to be fearful of.

Many publications in both Maltese and English, focusing on the events of the *Sette Giugno*, have appeared over the last century. Last year, our islands commemorated the centenary of this fateful event. Inspired by this milestone in our history, Xagħra historian and researcher Dr Aaron Attard-Hili published a book about the subject. As he himself states in the introduction to the publication, it was the death of Ġużeppi Bajada, the victim from Xagħra who died on that day, that inspired him to delve deeper into the subject and come out with this valuable publication which as far as I know is the only one from Gozo that covers the *Sette Giugno* events. Dr Attard-Hili's publication is of the utmost importance because it presents the general reader with the history of such an important incident in Maltese history from a purely Gozitan perspective; the author manages to do this without underestimating the other important details of the proceedings.

The title of the publication is quite suggestive; the author quotes an ancient liturgical Latin poem which features in the Mass of the Dead and which has been attributed to different authors varying from Thomas of Celano to Saint Bernard or Saint Bonaventure. The quoted phrase meaning 'Day of wrath and doom impending' with a Maltese translation provided in the subtitle of the book could not be more ideal. It expresses the emotional atmosphere and the mood of the Maltese people on that fateful day. Our writer bases his work on a wide variety of documents; he is selective in his choice of his primary sources so much so that Dr Paul Bartolo, the author of the book's short



presentation, refers to them as 'unusual sources' thus emphasizing the originality of Attard-Hili's work. A most important fact connected with the events is the reality that the colonial administration was wrong in its judgement of the case since it picked up the wrong information about Ġużeppi Bajada and even accused him of acts he did not do in order to strengthen its case.

Dr Aaron Attard-Hili's publication about the *Sette Giugno* events should be very useful for those students of History who want to become as familiar as possible with this particular date in our past. The photographs of documents, events and personalities make the publication a very informative one. We should all be grateful for Dr Attard-Hili's reading of History as presented in this latest book of his and I am sure that it will be enjoyed by one and all. I recommend it not only to those who cherish the history of our islands but to all those who enjoy reading in the Maltese language. Last but not least this publication leaves no stone unturned to show the various evils of the colonial system, a system which is certainly at odds with the democratic system that has now almost become the order of the day. Copies of the book can be obtained from the Xagħra Local Council (Gozo) via xagħra.lc@gov.mt.

Book Review: F'Qalbi, Ma Tmut Qatt

Michael Galea

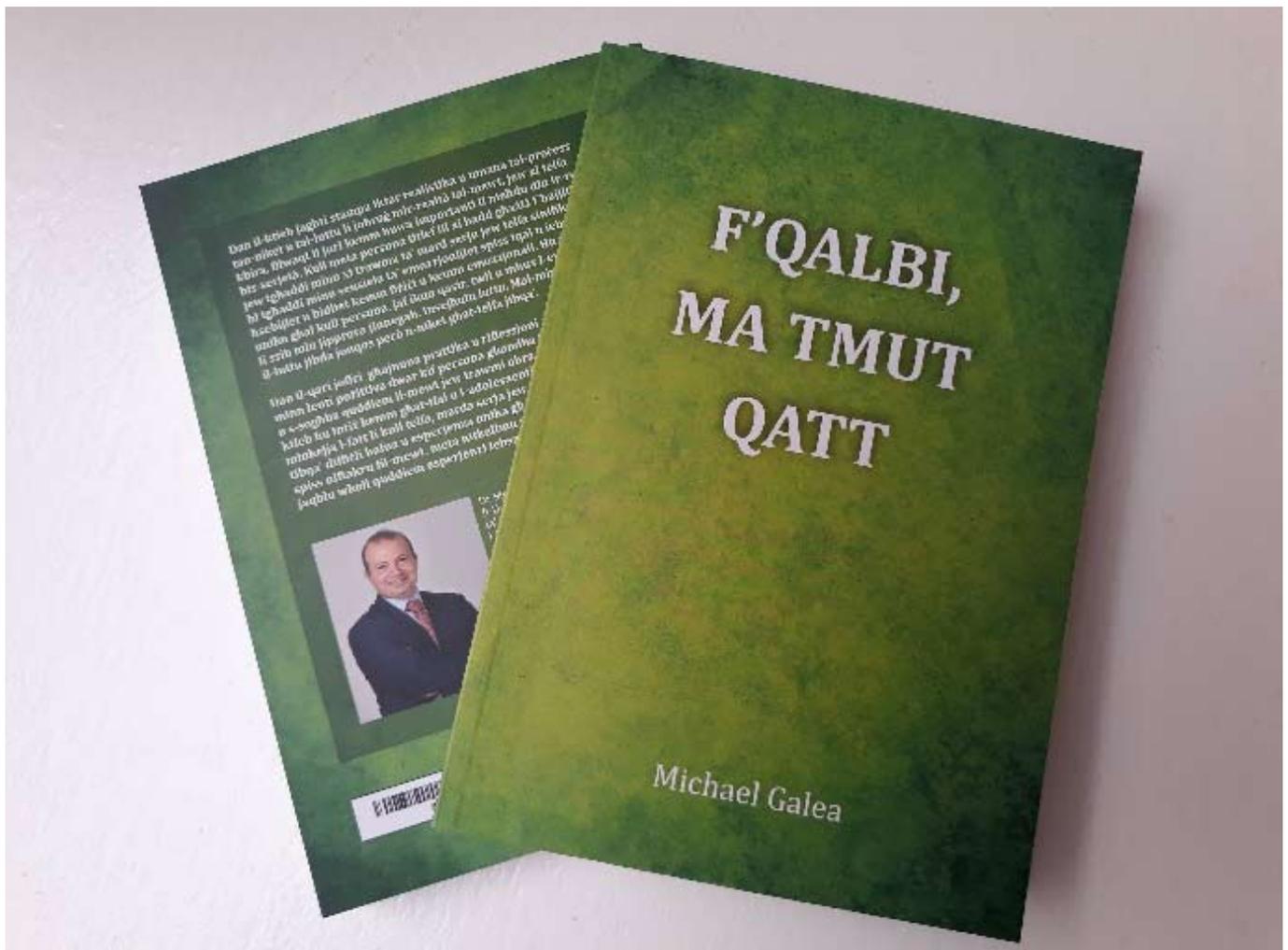
Gozo: JDB Printing Press (2020); 220 pages

REVIEWED BY MARIO SALIBA

The loss of a loved one is considered a natural, universally experienced life event, but for most of us, it is among life's most challenging experiences. We expect people to react normally to bereavement and we seldom think that those closest to the deceased may need our support. During such a time most bereaved people feel alone and their isolation increases the intensity of their grief. Most people try to cope with their loss and grief on their own without seeking help from a health care professional. Normally grief experience is endured without complications and people get over it with time. However, sometimes the pathway through grief can go awry. Each one of us including

children, need to understand what is normal grief so that this reality can be experienced without much trauma.

Dr Michael Galea, a clinical psychologist and senior lecturer at the University of Malta, is presenting us with a well-researched text in Maltese which explains the process of grief and mourning in a step by step approach, enabling the reader to understand this process. The book is written not just for professionals who need to understand the signs and symptoms of a grief experience in order to help their clients, but also for the general public. The more we know about



this reality the more each one of us can deal with it in a natural way.

The author presents his topics in a structured way explaining how a loss of a loved one affects the various members of the family including children and the family as a whole. He offers explanations to various signs and symptoms which we experience, guides us to cope positively with them and offers solutions and ways how we can respond to our grief and depression which can affect us after the loss of someone dear to us. He provides practical advice and in a friendly way, as if he is talking to a client, offers personal help rather than superficial advice.

Although this book is like a textbook about grief it is never boring or difficult to understand. Without the use of any jargon or technical terms, the book can be understood and serves as a useful tool to all. It gives easy explanations to psychological and medical terms and psychological concepts making them easy to be understood by everyone.

Albiet the book deals mainly with grief and mourning, it also contains subjects like the process of healing, suicide, as well as practical hints to enable parents to answer some difficult questions which their children may ask them about suffering, death, death rituals and life after death.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is about grief in general when we are faced with death, the second part is about the challenges we face when we experience a death in the family and the third part is dedicated to children and the death experience. Finally there is a detailed section where the author gives practical aid during the time of mourning. At the end of the book the author gives a list of references he made use of as these may be useful to the reader who is interested in further reading about the subject.

I highly recommend this book not only to professionals who are involved in the care of persons but also to everyone who wants to understand this reality which we call death and its effects on our psychological health.

Michael Galea PhD authored “Kuraġġ biex nikber: Ma’ Niket il-Mewt lejn Tama u Ħajja Ġdida (2006 – out of print) on mourning and “Nghix Ħajja Sabiħa” (2019).

This present publication is printed by JDB Printing of Xewkija Gozo. It contains 220 pages, costs €15, and may be found in the main bookshops. The book can also be obtained directly from the author by emailing: michael.galea@um.edu.mt or calling 79551651.

Recent Activities at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus

JOSEPH CALLEJA

Courses at the Gozo Campus

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, the University of Malta was constrained to adjust to a different routine in the delivery of lectures. Technological facilities made it possible for both lecturers and students to stay at home and connect with each other through a number of online platforms. Consequently, all lectures of the courses being held at the Gozo Campus started to be delivered online. This made it possible for the complete delivery of all study-units in time for the end-of-semester assessment process.

Similar to lecturing, the pandemic brought a change in the way students were assessed. A number of exams were held remotely through a number of online

assessment platforms. The assessment of other study-units consisted of the submission of assignments. It was only in September that a number of examinations were held physically. As in previous years Gozitan students following courses at the Msida Campus, were allowed to sit for these exams in Gozo.

The courses running at the Gozo Campus during academic year 2019-20 were the following:

- Certificate in Proof Reading: Maltese
- Diploma in Lace Studies (Yr 2)
- Diploma in Commerce (Yr 1)
- Bachelor of Commerce (Yr 1)
- BA in Facilitating Inclusive Education (Yr 2)
- Bachelor of Psychology (Hons) (Yr 5)
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Criminology (Yr 2)
- Executive Master of Business Administration



The opening ceremony of the U3A scholastic year, at the Gozo Campus

Of these courses, the Diploma in Lace Studies and the Bachelor of Psychology came to an end. Successful students are expected to graduate later this year.

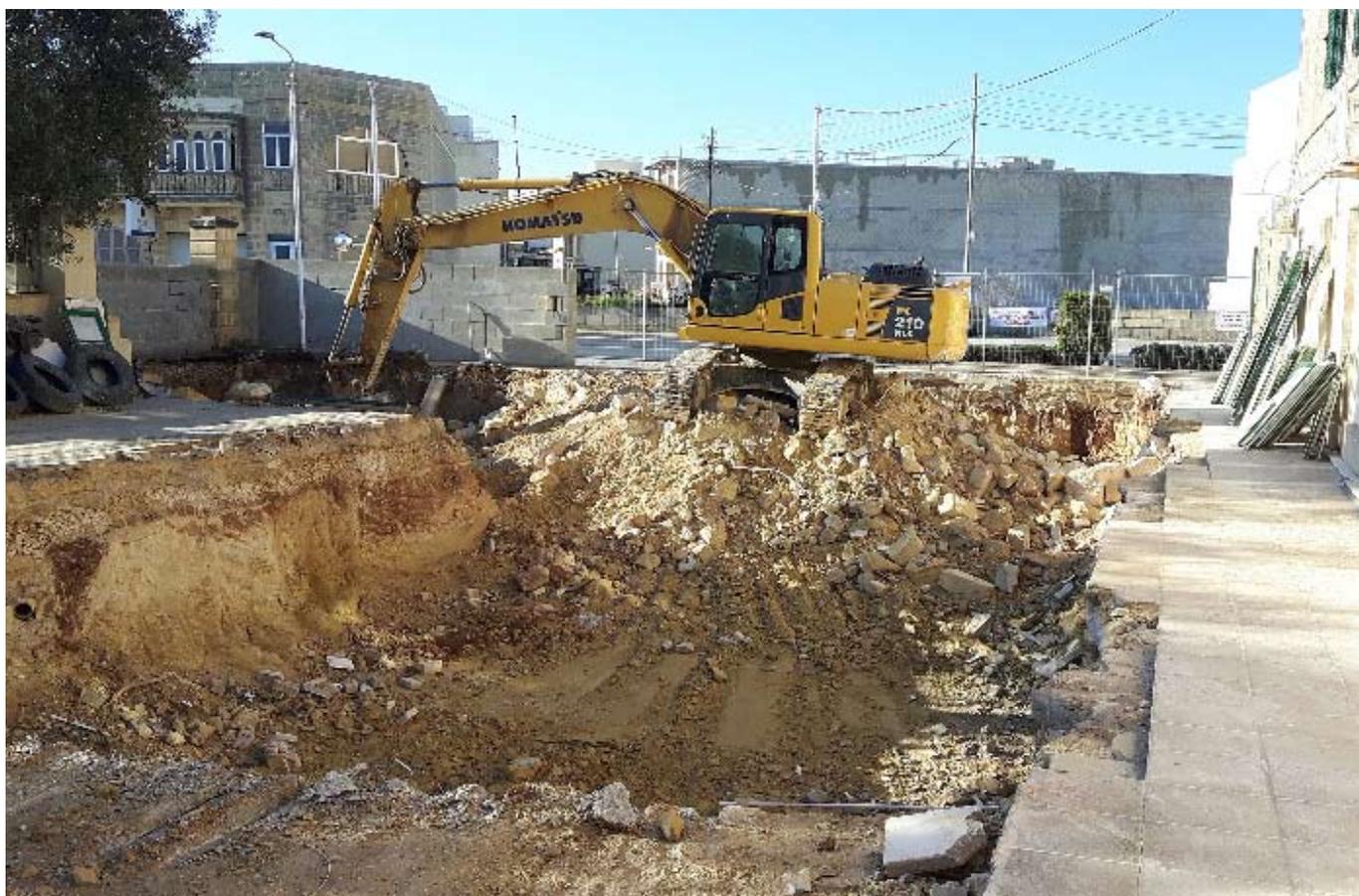
In October 2020, three new courses opened at the Gozo Campus. The Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, opened once again the popular two-year course leading to the Diploma in Commerce. This course, which is offered on a part-time basis, introduces students to Economics, Management and Accountancy, Tourism Studies and IT and to prepare them for further studies leading to the Bachelor of Commerce degree. The Faculty for Social Wellbeing opened for the second time the Bachelor of Psychology (Hons). This course, which is spread over five years on a part-time basis, offers a number of compulsory and elective study-units in Psychology. It also includes a research component, which requires students to understand and apply research methods by means of a dissertation.

For the first time the Faculty of Theology opened a degree course leading to the Bachelor of Arts in Theology. The programme for this course introduces

the students to a comprehensive study of the biblical sources of Christianity as well as its history, and its doctrinal, ethical and pastoral aspects, including its relations to economics, politics, culture and biotechnology. The course is spread over 5 years on a part-time basis, and is being offered partly through the video-conferencing system.

University of the Third Age

On 23rd October, the University of the Third Age opened its academic year at the Gozo Campus. The opening ceremony included an introductory meeting with Ms Simone Ellul, administrator at the University of the Third Age, and with Holy mass celebrated by Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina. This year's programme includes a series of lectures by Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina on the history of Gozo. During the next semester, Mr Anthony Caruana will be delivering a number of lectures on 'Understanding Sculpture', and Ms Mary Rose Gatt will be dealing with 'Psychology from Birth to Death'. During May and June, Ms Sina Bugeja will be delivering lectures on 'Staying Healthy in Later Years'. All lectures are planned to be held at the Gozo Campus.



Demolition of the old computer laboratory and other rooms in progress.



The construction of the new facilities has reached an advanced stage.

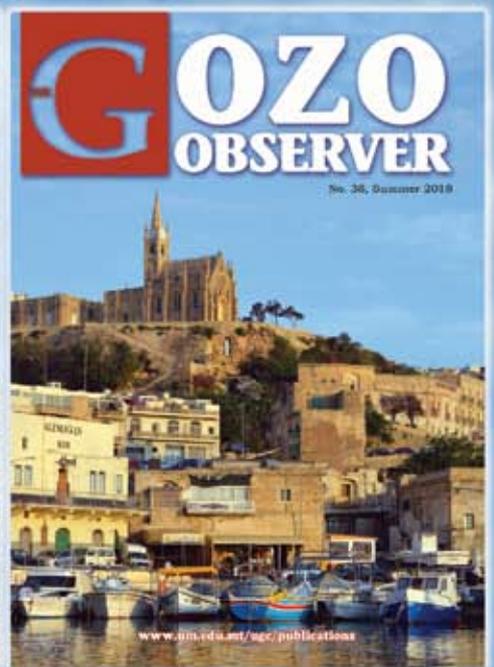


Another view of the new building during its construction.

Rebuilding of wing at the Gozo Campus

Last year, the University of Malta embarked on a project consisting of the demolition and rebuilding of the east wing of the Gozo Campus premises. Construction works commenced in January with the demolition of a number of existing rooms at ground level. The new building block will incorporate a computer laboratory, a number of lecture rooms and a conference hall, together with a number of offices and group work areas for students. Accessibility will be enhanced with the installation of two lifts. All this will provide additional space and facilities that will significantly enhance the services provided by the Gozo Campus to students.

Joseph Calleja is Senior Administrator at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus.



The Gozo Observer is published twice a year by the University of Malta - Gozo Campus. It contains articles relating to all aspects of life in Gozo, including culture, education, business, arts and literature. Those wishing to submit articles for inclusion in the Gozo Observer should contact the Editor of the magazine (contact details below).

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