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2003

# Balzan 2003

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# *THE BALZAN VILLAGE FIESTA*

It comes in with a bang, but bangs are the lifeblood of our fiesta on these islands. The Balzan fiesta is the event of the year for our village in Malta. A culminating celebration, this multi social affair is dedicated to Annunciation.

The tradition originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and has show, no indication of losing its popularity. Because of the weather, fiesta is celebrated in summertime on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of July, instead of original date on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, which allows optimum conditions for a successful outcome. Colourful banners adorn the street and balconies, lights go up and huge flags fly high on the flat Maltese roofs. But the most splendid of all is the adornment of the Balzan Parish church, which reigns supreme between Main Street and the Main Square.

From weeks ahead preparations are in full swing, with band clubs churning out music scores of specially, composed hymns, marches and orchestrated fanfare. Extensive internal church decorations are put up with damask, flowers and pedestals placed in evidence.

During the three hectic days leading to the day of the actual fiesta on Sunday, the parish priest organises all the religious celebrations, procession, eulogies and special functions.

Most imperative of all is the general cleaning urge, which affects all the house-proud womenfolk of the festive village in question, as the fiesta demands a spot loosely clean, house. Sunday-best curtains and finest crockery are all placed in full view of any invitees for the massive Sunday luncheon, where all the family gets together after the traditionally, exhilarating morning revelry.

So what's in it for visitors? Well, "a lot" is putting it mildly. First of all the Balzan village fiesta, its' 100% worth it for you to visit.

Major festivities begin on a Friday. The roads leading onto the main village centre are closed off in the evenings and traffic is deviated to allow the villagers and their visitors free access around the area. Street vendors look forward to each and every fiesta to sell special wares, which include the very popular traditional sweet called "qubbajd" (nougat). This is normally sold from stalls, which seem to step right out of the Victorian era.

Just walk about the milling crowds and observe how the Maltese dress up in extreme elegance for the day, how the villages seem to yearn for this day when they can get together and meet up with old friends and acquaintances. Then walk in and out of the church, lit up majestic and with all its glorious architecture (especially in our church) in full evidence.

Fireworks are a must for a fiesta, with village vying for the best aerial display, that start's at 10.00pm (22.00hrs) on Saturday night. After this display, everybody gathers around the church square to view the noisy and vibrant ground fireworks display at street level, with wheels of burning fire whizzing around at extreme speed, thrilling one and all. A surprise or two usually awaits the spectators.

Sunday night closes the weekend's events with a colourful and thrilling show of fire in the aerial, which usually manages to wow all spectators present. The fireworks are easily seen from distance. At around 11.00pm (23:00 hrs) a brass band march (for the enjoyment of all the voluntary workers of the "St Gabriel Fireworks Factory") starts to play in the upper part of the village.

You will discover more if you mingle with the crowds, who will be more than pleased to see you sharing in the fun and enjoying the festive mood. Which ever, part of the fiesta you attend, it is sure to remain as one of the highlights of your visiting to the island. All in all, the Balzan fiesta is definitely a traditional event, which should not be missed by anybody wishing to experience one true face of Maltese life.

# BALZAN PARISH CHURCH

The Parish of Balzan is dedicated to the “Lunzjata” i.e. to the “Annunciation”. This is the only Parish church of Balzan. The church of Balzan has been for a long time dedicated to the “Annunciation” as is very clearly evident from the pastoral visited by Monsignor Pietro Dusina, the First Inquisitor, during the year 1575. The church used form part of the Parish of Birkirkara and it was separated from this Parish church and set up as a separate Parish on

on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1669. After 26 years of labour the Parish church was ready and on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1695. It was solemnly consecrated by, Bishop Labini on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1781.

## THE FIRST BENEFACTORS OF THE PROJECT OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW PARISH CHURCH.

In the acts of notary Kalcidon Fenech we find that



the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1665, following a popular petition by the people of Balzan on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1665. The first Balzan Parish Priest was Fr Andrianu Zarb on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 1655, under the Bishop Balaguer.

The old church dedicated to the “Annunciation” which used form part of the three churches was felt to be inadequate as it lacked many basic and necessary items. Therefore after some four years the Parish Priest Fr Duminku Ellul gave start to the project of the new church. The, first stone of this church was officially blessed by Fr Dumiku Ellul

on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1653, Mrs Marietta, widow of late Mr Giovanni Frendo and Mrs Valentina, widow of late Mr Giljan Chetcuti who bequeathed part of her estate in favour of the construction of the new Parish church. A member of the clergy who worked incessantly in order to see this new Parish church erected was Fr Duminku Debono, a portrait of his may be seen in the church Sacristy. Fr Debono gave all his earnings for seven whole years towards the



building of this new church he was barred inside this church.

### **GENERAL LAYOUT OF THE BALZAN PARISH CHURCH**

The Balzan Parish Church whose Façade faces the West, was build in the form of Latin cross, precisely in the form of a Latin Cross and consists of a choir Airborne, two side chapels an aisle and a sacristy.

This church has ten Altars.

This church has one dome and one belfry towel with six bells. The length of the Pries Church is 128 feet and its width with side chapels included, is 92 feet. The width of the aisle is 27 $\frac{1}{2}$  feet.

### **PRINCIPAL ALTAR**

The main altar in the Parish church was completed in 1824 and is the work of Masters marble cutters Giuseppe Dalli and Vincenzo Adrarto from Cospicua

### **THE TABERNACLE**

The present Tabernacle was made

during the time of Parish Priest Canon Carmelo Sciberras. It was blessed by the same aforementioned cleric on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1967. The design of this tabernacle was of Canon Spiridione Sammut and was crafted by, silversmith, Frances Cassar of Cospicua. This tabernacle is made out of silver and is adorned with a number of precious stone. This, tabernacle was paid for, by some local villagers benefactors.

### **THE "TUZZEL"**

Above the principal altar of the church their hangs the "Tuzzel" i.e. a type of a canopy, which is usually found hanging above the main altar inside Catholic Churches. This "Tuzzel" is changed during the feast village time. Our feast time "Tuzzel" is one of the

most beautiful existing on the Maltese islands and it is composed of some thirty wooden pieces. This "Tuzzel" which is the voluntary work of Salvu Grixti on the designs of Guzeppi Calleja, both from Balzan village, was first used during the tenure of office the Parish Priest Guseppe Salnistro.

The mechanize system Used, to hold the "Tuzzel" hanging over the main, altar is in itself a unique piece of engineering the product of the Maltese genius of master Miekelang Sapiano, who descend, the system in 1877.

### **THE TWO LARGE CANDLESTICKS**

A magnificent work of art in wood that is found in this church is the pair of large candlesticks that are used to decorate the presbyter during the titular feast. These candlesticks are about seven and a half

feet high and are the hand product of a design by the master Jamous Zahra from Senglea

### **THE CHANDEL- IERS**

In 1985 during the tenure of office of

Parish Priest

Tarcisio Delicata, thanks the generosity of the, benefactors, twelve Chandeliers were commissioned. These Chandeliers are used during the Feast Time.

### **PAINTINGS FOUND IN THE PARISH**

The titular painting of the "Annunciation" and other paintings found in the Balzan Parish, Church. The titular painting depicting the "Lunzjata" i.e. "Annunciation" is the work of Guzeppi Calleja and was painted in 1857. It was placed in the church on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1859. The painting depicting the "Annunciation" and other painting depicting the "Virgointacta" of the HOLY VIRGIN that are hanging on the side walls of the choirs tribune along



side other works were painted by Rokku Buhagiar (1725-1805 from Cospicua) of outstanding beauty is the painting adornment one of the side altars showing St. Paul the first Hermit and the small painting depicting "Our Lady of Sorrows". Giuseppe Calleja painted the painting of "St. Joseph" and "St Catherine of Siena" that were provenance situated in the old church. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1961 the painting made by Chev Emrin Cremona between 1957 and 1961, for the side chapel of the "HOLY CRUCIFIX" was unveiled. The final work on the painting was completed and finalised in the year 1999 by Chev Paul Camilleri Cauchi.

### **THE TURKISH CLOCK**

This clock was presented to the church by certain Ms' Kristina Seychell on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1815. This clock, which is presently, situated in the sacristy, apart from showing the time show also the day, the months, the season, the moon phase and the zodiacal signs. Unfortunately it is not know who has build up this clock.

### **THE BOOKSTAND**

In the middle of choir's tribune we find a large bookstand made out of red deal wood. This, bookstand is first mentioned by Bishop Alpherin during his pastoral visit in 1725. Laying on this bookstand there is a book of "Psalms" that was printed in Venice-Italy by P. Balleoni in 1700.

### **THE STANDARDS OF THE CONFRATERNITIES**

The Balzan Parish Church has four "Fratellanzi" I.e. confraternities and each one of these have a standard. These standards, were, hand made a long time ago and contains very rich gold embroidery. These four confraternities take part in the procession, which is held in the honour of "Our Lady of the Annunciation" on the feast day and their order in the procession is determined by the following, procedure. The first to go out is a small red standard know as the standard "Tal-Vjatku" namely of the "Viaticum". This standard is not connected in any way with any of the confraternities. Following this standard there as usually the standard of the purple colour know as the "standard tad-Duluri" namely the standard of "Our Lady of Sorrows" secondly comes the standard of a greenish colour know as ta' San Mikiel" i.e. the standard of the confraternity of "St. Michael", the third standard

to come out of the church is usually a white colour as "ta' Ruzarju", standard dedicated to the "Holy Rosary" and the fourth and the last standard to go out in the procession is usually of reddish colour know as "tas-Sagrament" i.e. the standard of the confraternity dedicated to the "Holy Sacrament". The last place in the order is the place of honour reserved for the confraternity first formed in the Parish. The third place in this procession is reserved for the confraternity formed in the parish after the first one and so on and so forth. For example the confraternity of "St. Micheal" which was the third one in the parish to be set in 1777 was accorded the second place in this procession. Each and every confraternity has its own member. There, this usually a member who carry the cross/crucifix, another two members carry two lanterns, there is usually another member who is usually carrying the "Surgettina" some sort of long thin wooden stick bearing a holy medal or image at its upper end carried by the member of a confraternity in charge of the orderliness, each confraternity procession including some Guild-brothers, and each confraternity member worn the "Mozzetta or Muzzetta" capes of the same confraternity standards colours.

### **THE ANTIPHON OF MAESTRO NANI**

Another masterpiece of art, which is used during the village feast, is the beautiful Antiphon, which is usually played during the liturgical function in the honour of the Annunciation. This Antiphon, which bears the name of "Spiritus Sanctus" was composed by Maestro Antonio Nani and was played for the first time, by Maestro Paolo Nani during the feast of 1875.

### **THE CLOCK OF THE BELFRY TOWER**

The old belfry tower clock was manufactured 1744 by Pietru Tanti at the cost of 300 "Scudi" (One Scudi = 20 pence) on the 25<sup>th</sup> December 1970 the new clock powered by electrical energy came into operation. This clock was build by the Dutch Firm "Petit and Frtien" This clock was paid by one village lady.

### **BALZAN'S RELIGIOUS EVENTS**

A list of Balzan's religious events reveals links with other prominent families. The statue of, "Our



Lady of Rosary” (procession on 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in October) was donated by Count Bernardo Manduca Piscopo Zamitt Macedona. Another benefactor of Noble descent, M o n s i g n o r Lawrence Grech Delicata, launched a secondary feast in 1820 when he presented the parish with remains of St Valentine’s. This feast became so popular that the authorities had to guard it from over shadowing the main one (The



*This art paint was made in June 1997 by Chev Paul Camilleri Cauchi, showing the figures of San Filippu (St. Philip) and San Bert (St. Albert).*

Annunciation). St Valentine’s feast is held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in July, a few weeks after “Corpus Christi” and the “Sacred Heart of Jesus” just one week before the “Annunciation”, other outside celebrations are “Our Lady of Sorrows” (last Friday in lent), the “Blessing of the Tombs” (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in November) and a Christmas eve procession.

*Ref: “Towns and Villages in Malta and Gozo”, by Mr Charles Fiott.*

### **THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF CASAL BALZAN IN 1881**

Has a very beautiful interior, consists only of a nave. Its architecture is ancient and on the whole regular, but some of the minor details are in very bad taste. The church can boost of two of the best pictures of the native artist Buhagiar. They are an “Assumption” and “Purification” and are over entrances of the large chapels. The principal picture is the “Annunciation” by Sig. G. Calleja. There are two beautiful gilded, candelabrum, near the High Altar, which were carved in wood from the design of F. Zahra from Senglea.

*Ref: “The works of art, in the churches of Malta”. By, Guiseppe Calleja-1881.*

### **GIUSEPPE CALÍ (1846 –1930).**

The Parish church of the Annunciation in Balzan. Giuseppe Calì was born in Valletta of Napolitan parents. He studied in Naples under Mancinell but was attracted to the art of Domenico Morelli. He dominated the artistic scene in Malta, but he is best remembered for his religious paintings, when Giuseppe Cali’ completed the painting of the Balzan Dome in time for the titular feast of the Annunciation in 1894, the general, comments was that the artist succeeded in transforming the Balzan Dome into paradise.

Cali’ depicted the Holy Spirit radiating the light of love upon an um, which in turn transmits it to the segments where seven seraphs carry the gifts of the Holy Ghost, namely, Wisdom, Intellect, Counsel, Fortitude, Piety, Science and Fear of God.

A flimsy cloud filters into every segment maintaining the unity of the scheme not with standing the division of the ribs inside the dome.

This, painting with its softened modalities, has been considered by art critics as a turning point in the art of Giuseppe Cali’s abundant later commission.

*Ref: Bank of Valletta, Calendar of Year 2002.*





**NEW YEAR'S DAY.**

First day of the year, January 1<sup>st</sup> in the Gregorian calendar. In the middle Ages, most European counties used the Julian calendar and observed New Year's Day on March 25, called Annunciation Day and celebrated as the occasion on which it was revealed to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God. With the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1600; Germany, Denmark, and Sweden about 1700; and England in 1752.

Traditionally, the day has been observed as a religious feast, but in modern times the arrival of the New Year has also become an occasion for spirited celebration and the making of personal resolutions. The Jewish New Year is called Rosh Hashanah, or the Feast of Trumpets, and is prescribed by the Old Testament as a holy Sabbath. It is celebrated on the first and second days of Tishi (generally in September). The Chinese celebrate New Year's Day sometime between January 10 and February 19 of the Gregorian calendar. It is their most important holiday.



**1952**



**1949**

# NEW BELLS NEEDED

As first War ended, it was a difficult task to commence collecting funds, in order to install new bells to replace the 1890 Guljo Cauchi's set of bells. Since, the Balzan counted up to nearly 1000 residents. At once the "Maria Annunciation Club" offered to help. Funds were low and in view of this a committee was set up on the year of 1919 to help collect the amount required for such an ambitious project. It had been decided that to cut down on expenses, the external celebrations of the titular feast of the "Annunciation" would not be carried out until their aim has been reached. This was a tough decision the committee had taken and as expected not everyone was of the same opinion. At the time a great more rivalry existed between the Balzan and Lija villages and should the feast be not carried out, it would have been considered a humiliation for the Balzan Community.

An action committee was formed from amongst the youths of the same club lead by Mr Piju Ebejer and in

tune these resigned, from this club. It was thereupon decided that the external celebrations should still be carried out as planned. Arrangements got underway with our neighbour town of Birkirkara feast committee for the lease of part of the festive decorations and equipment required. It is believed that half the expenses involved were covered by Mr Piju Ebejer himself, while the rest were collected from amongst parishioners that were in favour of this, idea.

A decision had also been reached from within the action committee that as from the year after they will be responsible in celebrating the 2<sup>nd</sup> major feast of the village, that of "St. Valentine" and also made plans to open a new club of their own.

Meanwhile, the parish priest of the time Rev. Amabile Sisner, had been kept informed on how the issue was developing and thus kept a watchful eye on all that was happening within the village. On many occasions he had expressed his sincere desire of keeping the Balzan



## The New Bells Committee 1919-1925

*Back row standing from left to right: Salvu Debono, Fredu Camilleri, Frangisku Sammut, Karmenu Muscat, the Director of **Paccard Bells Company**, Mikiel Micallef, Ġużeppi Sammut, Karmenu Pisani and Ċensu Brincat. Front row seated from left to right: Wigi Briffa, Ġużeppi Vassallo, Gauco forno (Notary) and Salv. Pisani.*





community united as a family. In the wake of such events he decided to meet the leading members of the new group. This took place at his own home in the presence of Attard Salvatore, master Piju Ebejer, Falzon Guzeppi and Muscat Guzeppi. The parish priest put forward his proposal, that the new club celebrates the same feast of the "Annunciation" and the new club would be named after "St. Gabriel" in this way the community will celebrate only one feast and of one statue, and the thus both clubs would work towards the same objective. Should the proposal be accepted the parish priest offered to hire them a temporarily building for the club. An agreement was reached on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1920 and the "St. Gabriel Club" was officially inaugurated at No 5 in St. Mary Street. From then on the St. Gabriel Club committees never looked back and worked voluntarily hard to find a suitable replacement for their club. It had been up to the hard work between all the club members mainly of master Ebejer nephews, Gabriel Caruana and Pius Ebejer (junior), make the required negotiation and so on and eventually buy the new premises as still know today at "villa Balzan" in the Main Street on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1957.

Once the situation had returned to normal within the village the previous committee that had initially taken up the task to collect the required, funds for the new bells project, tried to find other alternatives from where to collecting the money. The initially turned to the parish priest for help but since the parish income was not a satisfactory one, he had no other option as to refuse. It was then decided that donations would be accepted from door-to-door collections every Sunday morning. During the next six years the committee also organised, on a regular basis, get-togethers for the Balzan community within the club, fairs at St. Anton gardens at Balzan and at Argotti gardens in Floriana, all the income was direct towards the bells project.



*The big bell "St. Anna", on the Balzan Parish Churchyard.*

In 1923, the village suffered a great loss when they mourned the loss of Rev. Amabile Sisner. During this time a new Parish Priest was appointed and on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August of the same year, the Rev. Frangisk Zahra was officially presented as the new Parish Priest within the Balzan Community. Shortly after his appointment, he expressed his desire to help on the project and thus aided the committee with the initial proposal they had put forth to Amabile Sisner during his reign.

The amount to be collected had been figured out to be £1100, and as the funds steadily approached this figure an agreement had to be reached on whom was to be the Manufacture of the bells, It was decided that the works should be carried out within the, French industry, the factory know as "Piccard" in Annency, very much renowned for such works at the time and still today, was

Chosen. During this time the committee also thought of the idea of saving the best one of stricken bells to form part of the new set. A representative of the "Piccard" Company had to be brought over and with the help of the Composer Maestro Antonio Nani (1842-1929) and they used a set of "Tube-bells/Chimes" on the churchyard near the church belfry to make sure that the tuning of the bell

conformed to the new set. At the time it was the biggest bell of the community and today stands the third, it is better known as the "Oldie Annunciation" of the lot.

Since the bells had been ordered it had taken some time for the Balzan community to bear with. It was the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1925, a normal Sunday morning for many, as the news had spread that they where in port on o their way to Balzan. In no such time the square was brimming with enthusiasm and soon the place was crowded as expected. The bells arrived in the afternoon on two horse-driven carts, one of Carmelo Giordmaina from Balzan and the other of Lippu Sammut from Birkirkara. Four days later, on the feast of St. Joseph, the bells were,



# THE SET OF BELLS IN THE BALZAN CHURCH BELFREY

The Parish church of Balzan has a belfry with five bells. There existed previously another set of bells before the present set was commissioned. The set was the largest set of bells castor by founder Gulju Cauchi at the cost of £220. Later on his son castor the other three bells. However there seems to have been some defect with all of these bells, with the exception of one.

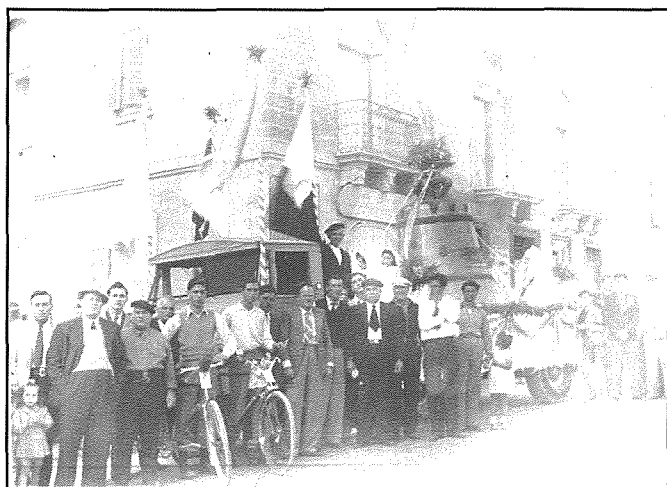
There fore the people of Balzan Decided to have these bells replaced by another set of bells. It was decided that the French foundry "Piccard" be commissioned with the casting of these new bells.

The set of the new bells was castor in due course and was blessed by Bishop Caruana in 1925. The bells were christened (New) "Annunciation", "Josephine", "Valentine" and "Joan of Arc", later on the need for another bell was felt considered as complete.

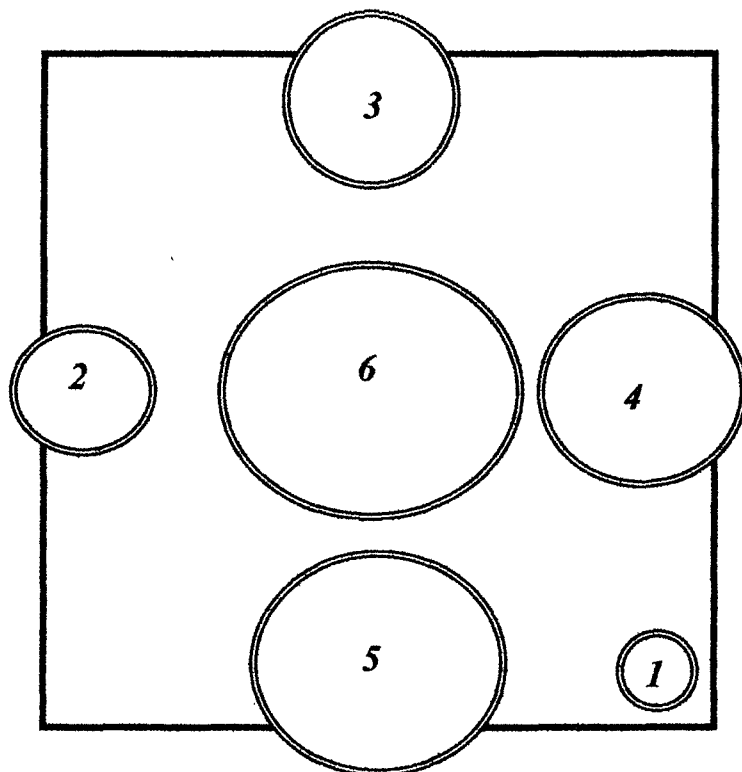
This bell was blessed by Bishop Michael Gonzi on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1949 and was christened with the name of "St Anne", with this latest addition this set became the most beautifully tuned set of bells in Malta.

From the previous set of caster of Cauchi's just one bell, which appeared to be good and free from any defects, was retained.

Today this bell is referred to as the old bell of "Annunciation", two bells from the old set were sold to other churches in Malta and the remaining were crushed and the bronze was sold to the foundry "Piccard" of France. Blessed by Archbishop Mauro Caruana on the churchyard and rung for the first time in front of an



*The big bell "St Anne" at Valletta Port, December 1948.*



**FRONT {west} SIDE.**

*Bird's – eye view of the position of the set of six bells in Balzan Parish Church Belfry*

**No. 1: "Joan of Ark" cast 1925 by Piccard, in France.**

**Weights 628 Kilos.**

**No. 2: "Valentina" cast in 1925 by Piccard, in France.**

**Weights 851 Kilos.**

**No. 3: "Old Annunciation" cast by G. Cauchi, in Cospicua, Malta. Weights 1.050 Kilos.**

**No 4: "Guzzeppina", cast by Paccard, in France.**

**Weights 1.427 Kilos.**

**No 5: "Annunciation" cast 1925 by Piccard in France.**

**Weights 2.100 Kilos.**

**No 6: "St. Anne" cast 1948 by Piccard in France.**

**Weights 4 \_ Tons.**

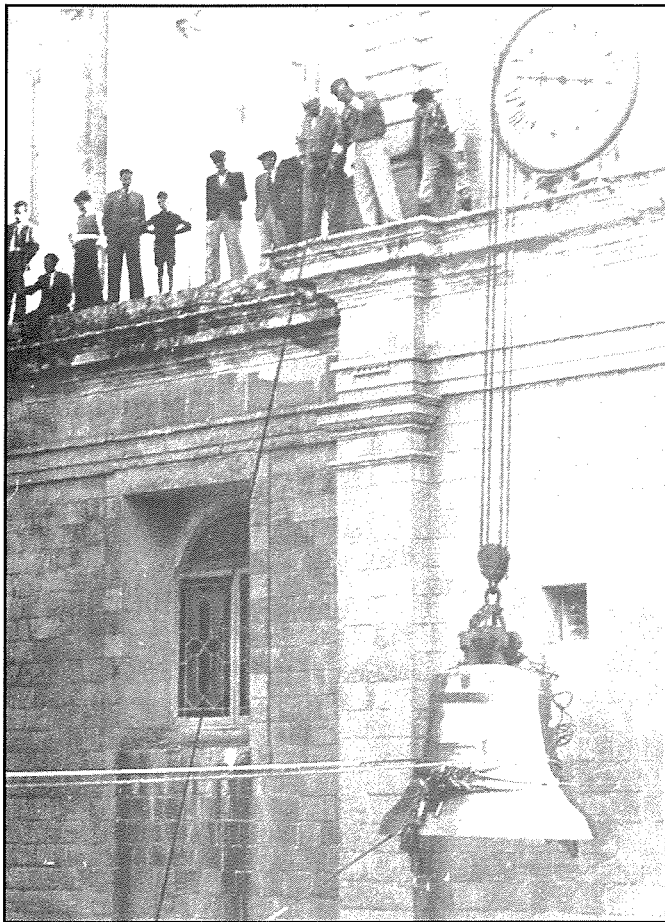
ecstatic crowd which had gathered for the occasion, The godfathers where, Sir Ugo Mifsud, Mr Cassar Torregiani, Mr Zammit Hammit and Mr Menie' Sicluna.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March the Balzan Community witnessed a great moment of satisfaction and belonging when the bells where put up in place and rung for the first time from the belfry of the Balzan Parish Church. However the founder of the project believed that the set was not complete and that another bell was required. This only happened 23 years later after the hard work of the Rev. Frangisk Zahra, Con Spiridione Sammut and the Head master Valentinu Muscat.

This bell had cost the community another £2100 and it is still known till today as the bell of St Anna.

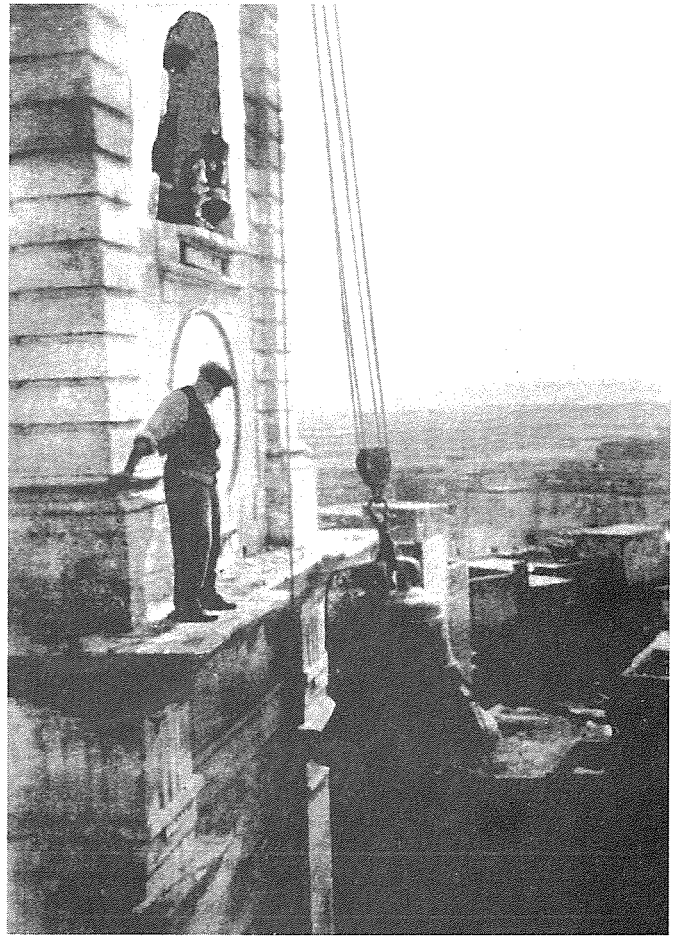
### “The Great bell shall ring out”

The weekend saw great happenings in the Parish of Balzan. They centred, around the blessing and installation



**Both photos: taken on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1949.**

*Left to Right: Leli Callus (Is-Sokkes), Pawlu Muscat (Il-Bahri), Guzeppi Brincat (IL-Bazzas), Karmnu Zarb (Tat-Toqbi), Karlu Zarb (Tal-Lakku), Guzeppi Grech (TA' Budajda), Ninu and (his son) Joe Muscat (Ta' Vukali), Karmenu Camilleri (Ta' Karamelu), Michael Micallef (Is-Sagristan) and Gabriel Muscat (Ta'Kasopja).*



*Above photo shows, the temporarily removal, of the Annunciation bell, to make entry space to the new bell, St Anne.*

of a new “Paccard” bell in the Titular church of the Parish.

His Grace Mgr, Michael Gonzi, Metropolin Archbishop, blessed the new bell, which weights 55 \_ Qnatar (4 \_ tons), on Saturday evening, The Hon. Mrs H. de Trafford, acted as sponsor on behalf of the Lady Strickland, D.B.E. who has been great benefactress of the parish church. The other sponsor, the Most Noble Count Bernardo Manduca Piscopo Macedonia Zamitt, was indisposed and unable to attend.

Large numbers of the clergy, including those of the Balzan Parish, were present for the ceremony and guests were later entertained to refreshments by the Parish Priest Rev. Fr frangisk Zahra.

On Sunday morning, witnessed by a large crowd, the huge bell, which ranks third after the Birkirkara and a major one in the belfry of St. John's Co-Cathedral at Valletta.

Mr Michael Micallef was responsible for the success of the operation.

The bell was made in Annecy, France, especially for the Balzan Parish Church.

Ref: Times of Malta, Tuesday, January 4, 1949.



# FIREWORKS

Balzan, our village is famous for fireworks production, and its not surprise that in the passed years won some international fireworks displays competitions.

We are proud because we have the best fireworks in Malta, such as the (magnesium rockets), that light up with a green bright light. We are proud that a native from Balzan, Mr. Gabriel Brincat was the inventor of a type of firework called "Size" in 1961, and up to this day, this type of fireworks is still very popular on our island.

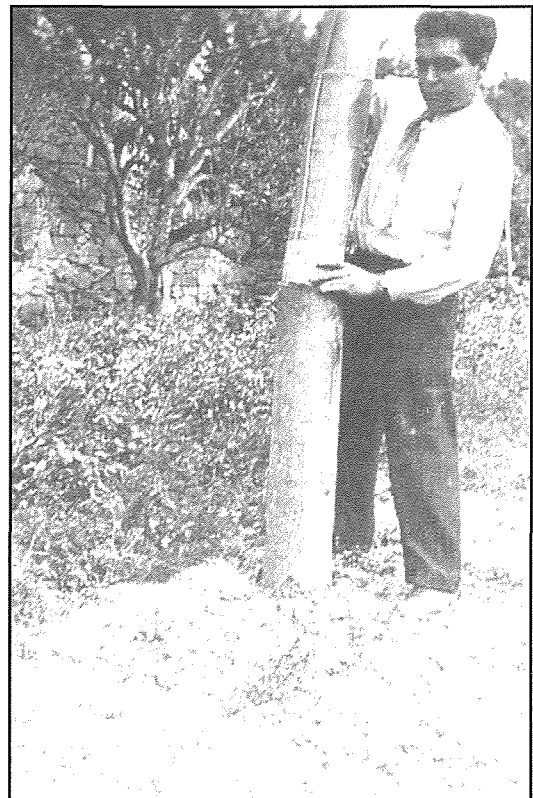
## Introduction

Fireworks, incendiary devices or materials used signaling or entertainment, and sometimes known as pyrotechnics.

The term pyrotechnics also connotes the skills involved in the making and employment of such materials. Fireworks include substances or devices that produce, when ignited or activated, sound, smoke, motion, or a combination off these; thus military flare and smoke devices are also considered fireworks. The First Coloured Fire In the year 1786, the French chemist, Count Berthollet produced a new chemical, salt, which he called hyperoximuriate of potash, now known as potassium chlorate, which was to bring about the result that all pyrotechnics were blown to pieces before their cannon-balls attempts were made to use it in place of saltpetre in the manufacture of gunpowder but it was so violent that guns often get out of the muzzles. Samuel Parkes, writing in 1811, said of it: "The shocking deaths of two individuals in October, 1788, and the burns others have suffered by it, render it were feared by chemists in general". However, in the early days of the nineteenth century, firework-makers, in spite of the danger involved, were using the new chemical to tint their fires. It was a long time before it was discovered that, the danger was caused, by including, sulphur in a mixture in which it was present, and it was not until 1895 that such mixtures were made illegal. In the meantime, explosions in firework factories were

happening almost daily.

The reason why potassium chlorate imparted colour to a flame is the great Heat at which it burns. This turns into a glowing gas the metal of any metallic salt that is present in the mixture. Salts of the metal strontium give red, those of barium green, of sodium yellow and those of copper blue. The last-mentioned result may comers, surprise to those of you who have noticed what happens when a soldering "iron" which is of course made of copper is heated over a gas-burner; it tints the flame green, but, in the presence, of the gas known as chlorine, given off by the burning potassium chlorate, the result is a blue fire Roman Candles and Rockets Fireworks are divided into two main classes: "aerial" and "ground". The first having their effect in the air and second displaying themselves on the



*Mr. Gabriel Brincat, with a smile on his face prepares to fire his first invention of "Sizes" for the fiesta of the Annunciation in 1961 at Balzan Valley area.*

ground. The best known of the former class is the rocket, which is driven into the air by the pressure of the burning composition in its "body". When it reaches the highest point in its flight, the fire enters the "cap" to light and expel its "garniture" of stars.

Another is the shell often mistaken for a rocket which is a hollow ball of paper "mache" filled with stars, blown into the air, by a lifting charge, from a "mortar", or short cannon; a time fuse which burns during its flight lights a "Bursting charge" to scatter the "garniture" of stars.

The shell carried a much greater show of stars, but the rocket goes to a greater height and has a "tail" of sparks. Another aerial firework is the tourbillion, so-called after the French word for whirlwind, although, in France, it is known by the name "artichaut", or artichoke. It lies flat on the ground and has a curved of wood fixed across it, on which it spins, until two other jets of fire come into action to drive it into the air, rather like a helicopter. A firework, which, although it remains on the ground, has its real effect in the air and is therefore classed as aerial, is the Roman candle.

This throws up a succession of stars at regular intervals. It was originally known as a "fire pump", and received its present name from the constant blowing out and relighting of the wax candles, which everybody carried at the Lenten Carnival at Rome. However, whatever its name, it was certainly

invented in this country.

Constituents of Fireworks the essential constituents of most fireworks are a substance such as, potassium nitrate (saltpetre) that supplies oxygen, and substances such as charcoal and sulphur that combine with the oxygen, producing heat and light. A mixture of saltpetre, sulphur, and charcoal constitutes black powder (gunpowder), used for pyrotechnics before it was adapted for military purpose. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, elaborate displays of such fireworks accompanied important celebrations. Shortly after 1800 potassium chlorate was substituted for some or all of the potassium nitrate in the explosive mixture, and potassium chlorate or perchlorate is still a key part of most fireworks mixtures.

A large number of inflammable substances, such as starch, gums, sugar, shellac, and various petroleum derivatives, are frequently used in the mixture in place of charcoal and sulphur, colour is given to the fire by incorporating compounds of various metals.

### **Type of Fireworks**

Most fireworks are made by incorporating, a suitable mixture in a paper case. Among the best-known types of fireworks are the following: firecrackers, used primarily to produce sound; Roman candles, cylindrical containers that are placed in the ground and emit balls or starts of fire at intervals; Catherine



*This is a photograph of a group of Balzan fireworks factory volunteers.*

wheels and pinwheels, groups of fireworks mounted around the periphery of a wheel that, when discharge, force that wheel to rotate by rocket effect; sums similar wheel the fireworks are discharged out ward from the centre, of the wheel and hence do not produce any rotation; and pastilles, spirally coiled tubes that rotate when lighted. The most elaborate and spectacular of the fireworks is the skyrocket, a rocket-propelled projectile that explodes high in the air to produce any of several types of display.

### History

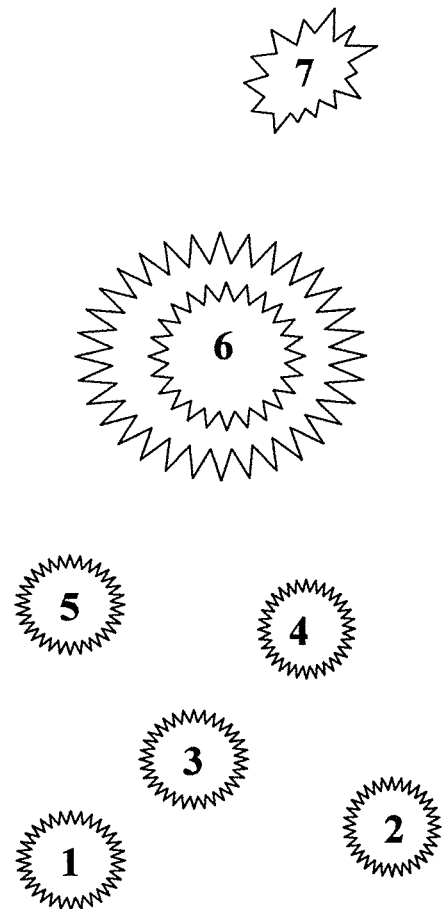
The craft of blending pyrotechnic mixture and packing them is an ancient one, having existed in China for centuries before it spread in Europe. The Chinese made war rockets and Craft spread to Arabia in the century.

The Arabs called the rocket Chinese arrows. The Chinese claim to have made gunpowder during the Sung dynasty (960-1279), and their chronicles mention the use of war rockets against the Mongols invaders in 1279. Historians generally agree that Mongols probably introduced Chinese gunpowder and rockets into Europe date from 1258.

In spite of China's initial progress, Europe surpassed it in pyrotechnic development in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, about the time the gun was invented. Shot and gunpowder for military, purposes were made by skilled military tradesmen, who were later called fire makers, and who were also required to make fireworks for celebrations of victory explosive as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and the or peace. During the renaissance, two European schools of pyrotechnic thought emerged, one in Italy and the other at Nuremberg, Germany. The Italian school of pyrotechnic emphasized elaborate fireworks, and the German school stressed scientific advancement, both schools added significantly to further advancement, of pyrotechnic, and by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century fireworks were used for entertainment on an unprecedented scale in Europe, being popular even at resorts and public gardens. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century fireworks become popular in the United States.

The kings of France, from Louis XIV (1638-1715) onwards spent enormous sums on fireworks displays, and many, of which were carried, out by members, of the Ruggieri family, Italians from Bologna, who had settled in Paris. The many, engravings, which record these shows, in which everything is depicted, going off together, look very fine, although one misses the colour in a black and

white picture. It is difficult for us today to realise that, in those days, except for the tints of ordinary flame, there was no colour whatever. The pyrotechnics of the time tried every possible way to give colour to the sparks of their works; they added powdered coal, sawdust of various woods and even Powdered pottery, to say nothing of such odd admixtures as onion juice, ink and even the draining of a dunghill. But the appearance of the fire must still have been very much the same.



*"SIZES" the firework shape while on display*



# GENERAL INFORMATION

**Balzan Parish** was established as Parish on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1655 by Bishop Balagauer Camarasa; Dedicated to the Annunciation, consecrated 7<sup>th</sup> October 1781 by Bishop V. Labini.

Balzan Parish Priests.  
1655-Adriano Zarb.  
1662-Domenico Ellul  
1696-Mario Calleja.  
1712-Mario Tonna.  
1750-Aloisio Dine.  
1765-Michele Sant.  
1773-Salvatore Cachia.  
1781-Pietro Decelis.  
1792-Felic Calleja.  
1797-Francesco Decaro.  
1801-Pietro Farrugia.  
1809-Pietro Paolo Psaila.  
1816-Michelangelo Borg.  
1849-Francesco Caruana.  
1855-Paolo Licinio Micallef.  
1874-Guiseppa Salnitro.  
1890-Giovani Sarreo.  
1896-Amabile Sisner.  
1923-Francesco Saverio Zahra.  
1950-Guiseppa Minuti.  
1954-Carmelo Sceberas.  
1981-Tarcisio Delicata.  
1991-Paul Raggio.  
1996-Joseph Magro.  
1999-Kalcidon Vassallo.

Streets dedicated to the "Annunciation" in the Maltese Islands are at:

**Malta:** Balzan, Gudja, Hamrun, Paola, Rabat, Sliema and Square, San Gwann, Santa Venera, St. Julians, Tarxien, Zabbar and Zebbug

**Gozo:** Fontana and Victoria.

**Annunciation**, name of a valley in the limits of ta' Kercem-Gozo.

**Annunciation**, name of a cliff in the limits of Rabat-Malta.

**Churches and Chapels.** From the area of "Bir Miftuh" limits of Gudja out the "Annunciatiion Parish Church of Tarxien in 1592. The statue of, the "Annunciation" was sculptured in 1854 by Xandru Farrugia from

Zejtun. The annual celebrations of the Annunciation feast are held on the last Sunday in May or the first Sunday in June.

**Annunciation** (Il-Lunzjata) a chapel at "is-Salini" is situated on the opposite side of the salt pans, not far from Kennedy Grove. It is located in an archaeological area close to nearby early Christian tombs. Formerly it formed part of Naxxar, whose parish priest used to lead an annual pilgrimage to this chapel on the feast of the Annunciation in fulfillment of a vow. The chapel now falls within the boundaries of the newly created parish of Burmarrad. The Franciscan Friars have recently modernized the church. The present main altarpiece was depicted by, Chev Emvin Cremona.

**Annunciation**, (Il-Lunzjata u s-Salib tal-Gholja, s-Siggiewi). This chapel is located on the hill known as "Tal-Gholja" and is visible from several parts of Malta. The present church was rebuilt around 1694 on the site of a previous chapel datable to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which was destroyed by an earthquake. The altarpiece of the Annunciation has been attributed to Guido Reni. In the same area stands the fifty, two foot cross on top of a pedestal chapel. This cross was erected in the Holy Year 1900 through the efforts of Fr Paul Laferla and is known as the Laferla cross. The fell after a violent storm sometime before World War II and was replaced by the present bronze one in the 1960's. On the hill leading to the cross, are four statues representing various moments of the Passion of Christ whereas in the small chapel beneath the cross is a painting of the "Virgin of Sorrows" by Joseph Calleja.

**Annunciation.** (Il-Lunzjata tal-Fawwara, limits of Siggiewi). This chapel is situated on a narrow roadway out of Siggiewi in an area known as "and the open Gebel Ciantar", panoramic views of Ghar Lapsi and enjoys sea view. The present church was rebuilt in 1708 replacing an earlier chapel constructed some ninety years earlier, which had been design another chapel dedicated to the Annunciation.

This chapel was build at Siggiewi by John Paul Cassar in 1619, and was blessed by Bishop Balaguer on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1658. Later on the son of John Paul, Lawrence Cassar and his father in law Dr John Dominic Sciberras asked Bishop Balaguer to open this church again. In 1708 was rebuild again by the money sponsored of Ms' Marija Sciberras.

**Annunciation**, a chapel at "Ghar Barka", limits of Rabat-Malta. This chapel is under custody of Carmelites Order of Mdina. The building of this chapel first was sponsored by Mrs Margerita D'Alagona in 1418 and rebuild again in 1570. During World War II was used by the military as "Mess-room".

**Annunciation**, old church in Hal Kirkop. First was build in 1450 and rebuild again 1640, under this church there are many barred people who died with pest, when Bishop Alferan visited this church on the 25th April 1754, he order the Parish Priest of Hal Kirkop, that once every year, he blessing these, tombstones.

**Annunciation, old church in Qormi.** First was build 1550 was blessed by Bishop Balaguer on the 5th November 1656, was build for the second time on 1663, and later on was repaired, on the end of Century XVIII by family Xuereb. This, church owners are the Confraternity of the "Holy Sacrament".

**(Il-Lunzjata) Kercem-Gozo, Annunciation,** This chapel is situated on the outskirts of Kercem on the road from Victoria and looks down on the fertile valley of "Wied il-Lunzjata". A chapel in the locality dates from Middle age's and is already referred to as founded by Donna Sibila of Aragon in 1347. The chapel was however rebuilt in 1629 by Fr Pawl Tabone. In 1644 its rector was Fr Nicola Mangion who commissioned the main altarpiece to artist Fra Luca Garnier. In 1959 the chapel was, consecrated by Bishop Joseph Pace. The chapel has a lovely statue of the Annunciation by the Gozitan Artist Wistin Camilleri. The feast day, held in August, attract a number of people from all Gozo.

**In 1697**, the Spanish Grand Master Fr Raimondo Perells appointed various councils in Malta included two for Hal Balzan.

**Idmejda** (Topcon) name of an area in Hal Balzan. [The word, which could orig. Have bee Demjda, seems to be a corrupt of Demejna Possible the name of a woman. Can. John Dimech, gave Prof Aqulina the full, information: 18th and 19th Cent, documents refer to the area as "Scach Dimeijna" (Will of Ms' Orazio Psaila in the acts of Notary Giovan 10th September 1724) or "ta' Demeina" As in various entries in the books of the confraternity of the Holy Rosary of Hal Balzan.

The procurator of the Confraternity for 1793-1798 used to write "Ta' Idduima"].

*Ref-Maltese English, Dictionary volume one by Prof Dr Joseph Aqulina.*

**In 1760**, the population of Hal Balzan was 491 included 13 priests, 3 clergies and 3 married.

Commission of Government, appointed by the General in Chief Bonaparte on the 13th June 1798, for Municipality of Balzan, was Mr Angelo Grech, Landowner.

**The Balzan Deputy**, made by Captain Sir Alexander J Ball R.N. between the years of 1799 and 1804 was Mr. Giuseppe Frendo and first was elected on the 18th February 1799, and second was elected 1802. His private residents was, were today stands the house door number 51, at Three Churches, Balzan.

**Civil Commissioner Sir Alexander Ball.** Did you know that (who though generally known as Governor Ball) in one of his orders sent to a Balzan representative regarding brawls and disorder all day long that men who were supposed to be on their job so as to earn money and raise their families were doing. Also, it continues that there were instances where crimes did occur. Ball, in this law stated that he who ever is caught not obeying in consequence would be find five "Skudi", which would afterwards go for the poor in the Same village. Selling of Brandy was disallowed who ever was caught selling it would be confined to hard work, with out getting any pay, and with his legs chained together.

Infect on the 31st March 1800, Ball wrote to Dr Borg Olivier, who was a judge in the Criminal Hall, where he informed him that some people are to be sent, under arrest, Because they were caught in possessions, of a, bottles of Brandy. These were: Peter Carabott (Birkirkara) Vincent Axiaq (Zebbug), Benedict Pace (Luqa), Francis Said (Qormi), Michael Darmanin (Zejtun).

They hid the Brandy, in "Santu Cascun" House in Birkirkara, and Caption Ball confiscated, that the judge had to be harsh in his decisions and to extend a house search as well, in the house of those being accused for having Brandy in their possession.

**A new bridge**, was needed by "Malta Railway Co Ltd" at Hal Balzan and was build, in 1880 and the cost exceeded £1600.

Three girls, schools were opened during the reign of Governor Bouverie in 1838. These schools were in Hal Balzan, Mdina and Zejtun. He was also responsible during 1840 for the separation of Malta. In, seven districts, on the suggesting of commissioners Austin and Lewis. The third district constituted of Hal Balzan, H' Attard, Hal Lija and Birkirkara.

**Perfume medicates.** To whoever needs an medicate perfume recommended, about 300 years ago in Malta, that cover all illis is to be prepared this way. On the "Lady Day" (25th March) a fresh egg is to be collected and hidden in a dark place like in cupboard on a shelf,

this egg is to see no light at all in a period of a year. After the year on the 25th March the egg may be used as a mediate. The cure is certain.

**The word Raħal**, originated from Arabic word *Raħ* that means to go. Those who travelled are called *Raħhalin*, the final destination of their travelling is called *Raħal*. The last part of the word *Raħal* that is *ħal* was used in front of village name and is still used until today. Some have other theories and argue that the word Hal originated from the word *ħalla*, which means to leave, so those villages that were separated from *Nħallu* from their original Matrix, left the word *ħal* in front of the village *irħula*. The word *Diar* was used some of which are still named as, *Diar Limara*, *Diar Handul*, *Diar id-Dwieb*, *Diar il-Bniet* and so on. The names of some Maltese villages originated from the names or surname of the first settlers that used to live there, some examples are, *Hal Ġħargħur* from the name Ġħirgo, Siggiewi, from the surname of the family Sageyo, as well as **Hal Balzan Ħ'Attard, Had Dingli and Hal Kirkop.**

**“Wied il-Kleja”**, at Mosta in 1830. A 14 feet wall was built in this valley, to serve as a reservoir. The reserving capacity was of about 2.240.000 of gallons of water. The rain, water collected and was later on used to irrigate fields and gardens in Hal Balzan, Ħ'Attard and Lija areas.

**The Corpse of St Valentine**, are at Balzan Parish Church, to be praised by the Christians. It was exhumed from a cemetery in Rome-Italy, and brought to Malta by Fr Anton Grech Delicata on the 26th January 1820, and given to our Balzan Parish Church.

Three days before Bishop Micallef departure Gozo/Malta to Rome, Mgr Anton Grech Delicata was appointed Bishop of Gozo.

Mgr Grech Delicata was born in Malta on February 22, 1823. He studied in Rome colleges. At the age of 20 he was nominated, Canon of the Cathedral Chapter of Gozo. On he was appointed Referenda of the Signature of Justice and assistant at the Papal Throne. As Bishop he attended the first, “Vatican Ecumenical Council” in 1868. He, elevated the church of Qala-Gozo to Parish, and obtained, privileges of the Cathedral Canons. He was an able character keen in the performance of his duties and most generous towards the poor. After most painful disease, he died in Valletta on the 31st December 1876, at the age of 53. He was buried in the Parish church of Balzan.

Ref: “A History of the Parishes of Malta” By Fr Pelagius-1905.



**Bishop. Anton Delicata de' Marchesi Tastaferata Cassia, (1823-1876).**

*Photo right - Gozo Curia.*

**The Population of Balzan**, In 1420 Balzan had only a population of 20 people the number of Houses unknown, in 1646 Balzan had a population of 584 with 140 houses, at this stage Balzan was part of Birkirkara Parish. In 1655 the two localities were divided and Balzan Parish was established, it was found that the Balzan population diminished to 530 but the number of homes remained the same, statistically it has proven that populations vary in number as time goes by some increase and some decrease. In the year 1760 the population reduced to 130 homes, after six years the population went up to 584 people, with 140 homes, in 1830 it had 646 people and 129 homes, in 1851, 638 people, in 1865, 622 people. In 1890 it increased to 1070 with 220 homes, then in 1901 the population was 1096, in 1911 went up to 1263 people, in 1921 to 1313 people. During the world war two, many people who lives in the harbors area left her homes and came for refuge at Balzan and brought the village population 2633, in 1985 the Balzan population was 4781, and last year (2001) 4017.

**Ganni Ebejer.** In the upper part of the Main Street, one can find, the old church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This church was built, by the master builder Ganni Ebejer, from Balzan (his private residents is where today



stands the house with numbers 83/84 in Main Street, Balzan). This church was built for the second time in 1846 and from the outside of the church you can see statue of the Virgin Mary, sculptured in the Maltese stone by Jesmondo Dimech in 1837.

### **Churches, Parishes and Chapters.**

The number of churches in the Maltese Diocese went on steadily increasing during the 16th Century, we gather from Mgr Duzina's apostolic Visitation that, in 1575, there were in the Maltese islands Diocese 428 churches the greater part of which were little chapels. Of these 381 were in Malta, 46 in Gozo and 1 in filfla<Dedicated "The Assumption of Our Lady".

The Apostolic Delegate desecrated about 60 of them, either because they were in a ruined, some churches, were without gates, and had a free access thereto. They were consequently filthy and indecorous to celebrate mass therein. Mgr Duzina gave instructions to repair or reconstruct several churches and stressed the importance of keeping churches clean by sweeping them at least once a week.

The ever-increasing population of the Maltese islands (which had almost doubled itself in the span of a century, i.e. from 1582 to 1682), the consequent settlement of many inhabitants in new areas, and the new lease of religious life called for the erective of more parishes in the 17th Century. As a matter of fact, during that century, 8 more Parishes were set up in the following villages of Malta: Mosta (1608), Gharghur (1610), Zabbar (1615), Qrendi (1618), Ghaxaq (1626), Luqa (1634), **BALZAN (1655)** and Dingli (1655).

Ref: "History of the Churches in Malta". By Arthur Bonnici. 1903.

**Malta Catholic Action.** Balzan was one of the pioneers, who founded "The Maltese Catholic Action". It was Fr Albert Pantalleresco with the cooperation of Fr Michael Azzopardi, secretary of the confederation and member active of the "Youth Catholic Federation" He had founded the "Malta Catholic Action" in Country. The Youth Federation was the first to be organized on the 11th October 1931 Dr Albert Magro LL.D. was the General President, Fr Albert Pantalleresco was, assistant. On the 31st December 1931. The first General Congress was held at Senglea at which the new members of Balzan, Valletta, Floriana and Senglea were present.

Ref: "Rajt Malta Tinbidel" ta' Dr Herbert Ganado LL.D.

**In 19th March 1888,** Malta and Gozo were divided in ten districts with a total of eligible voters of 10.630. The Balzan district was made by Attard, Naxxar,

Gharghur, Naxxar, Lija and Birkirkara.

**Explosion.** On Thursday, 23rd October 1903 exactly **100 years ago**, a big explosion occurred at 8.00pm. When a group of voluntary men were working on fireworks. These fireworks were for our village feast of the Annunciation at the feast club. The fireworks were made in the basement of what today is the "Music Society of Mary Annunciation" club. During this explosion the club itself and two neighboring houses were destroyed. One of those destroyed houses was the home of Parish Priest Fr Sisner, the explosion resulted in the death of Six people. These were Valentino Debono, Tony Falzon, Paolo Muscat, Joseph Muscat, Annunziata Muscat and including the Parish Priest sister Konketta Sisner and another 42 persons were seriously wounded.

**Annunciation,** Order of, order founded, by Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy, of Italy, in 1362. The order is represented by gold medal Portraying, the Annunciation, entered with a chain of knots and roses.

**Bishop Pietro Pace.** Became Bishop of Gozo in 1877, and Bishop of Malta in 1889. His private residence was



*Pietro Pace, K.C.V.O., Archbishop of Rhodes and Bishop of Malta.*

in Balzan, at the Main "Casa Pace". Because he refused to stay at the Bishop Palace in Valletta, and preferred to stay at Balzan. At that time it was a tradition, that the bishop, welcome in his Balzan home the children from all parts of the island for the sacrament of confirmation. In Bishop Pace era the "International Eucharistic Congress" was held in Malta between the 24th and 27th April 1913, at Mosta Parish Church.

Ref: "L'XXIV Congress Eucaristiku f'Malta", P. Dominico Azzopardi O.P. 1913.

**Bishop Pietro Pace.** Yesterday His Grace Mons Pietro Pace Archbishop Bishop of Malta celebrated the anniversary of his translation from the See of Gozo to that of Malta. Naturally the celebration of so important an event caused much rejoicing, not only at the Palace, to which congratulatory messages poured in from all parts of the island, and at which many congratulatory calls were made, but also throughout all Valletta, and even in the most distant parishes. An additional cause of satisfaction and congratulation was given this year in this that His Grace had received the dignity of Grand Cross of the Order of the Knights of Malta; our Bishop's many merits in the eyes of the Grand Master of the Order Fra Giovanni Battista Ceschi a Santa Croce entitling him to be raised to this great honor – an honor not conferred upon many. We congratulate his Lordship upon his elevation to higher rank; we trust that he may long be spared to celebrate his recurring important anniversaries. The dignity of Grand Cross of the Knights of Malta was in this island last conferred upon Mons Ferdinand Mattei.  
Ref: "Daily Malta Chronicle", Thursday, February 12, 1903.

**Patron of telecommunications.** A Papal Apostolic Brief, naming the Archangel Gabriel the Patron of Telecommunications has been published by the Vatican.  
Ref: *Times of Malta*-April 18, 1952.

**The Aqueduct** – The Aqueduct of Wignacout was named after Grand Master Alof de Wignacut as he was the person responsible for building it. Works on the aqueduct started on the 9th January 1610, by the Sicilian

Jesuit amok architect Nate Mesuccio. The aqueduct started from the location known as "Djar Handul", Rabat and water was transported via an underground canal up to Attard. At one point the Jesuit monk abandoned the job and left Malta.

Later on his three assistant architects Indri Trapanis, Guze Palermitan and the Maltese Ganni Attard took up the project. They build arcades for the water to pass through. The whole project was a success and it, was approved by the new architect Bontadio Bolonis who came to Malta on purpose to see the work.

On the 21st April 1615 water from the aqueduct reached the palace in Valletta for the first time. The total cost for the building of the aqueduct was around £13.000. About £3.350 of the sum was collected from the Maltese people the rest of the sum was donated by Grand Master Wignacourt himself. The whole project took around five years to be completed and about 600 worked on it. The waterway from Rabat to Valletta is 15.69 km.



**ABRAHAM GATT (1863-1944)**

Abraham Gatt was from Cospicua, A well-known person on these Islands, he was known for his art in both design and sculptures. Some modifications were carried out on the Annunciation Titular Statue of Balzan, during 1930 according to designs, prepared by both Abraham Gatt and Manuel Buhagar from Cospicua City.

# THE SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD CONVENT

by Cedric Cassar

The Dominican Sisters of the Good Shepherd convent in Idmejda Street, Balzan, as they are known in Malta, made their appearance in Malta in 1858. Two sisters made their best to find a suitable place in Valletta to start their mission as they did everywhere in the world.

When Canon Falzon heard about these nuns and their efforts to help the soul, did his best to encourage a young lady to join their convent. This fact encouraged the nuns to come to Malta, with the permission of Archbishop Pace Forno, from their community in 'Smirna'. Two nuns, one a mother superior and a Matese nun 'Sammut' were sent to Malta where they were greeted by Canon Falzon. The French Consul gave them a great welcome and made it possible for them to stay at his house in Valletta, while he went to reside in the country. Their efforts to find a place in Valletta was in vain and they had to accept one in Lija Village. The other nuns who came from 'Smirna', brought with them all kind of properties like doors, beds, and many other things which are still being used up today.

When they were settled, a boarding school was instituted for Maltese and Italian girls. They even formed classes for orphans and another one for young girls who wanted to dedicate their lives to the Lord.

Monk Ġużepp da Palagonia celebrated the first mass at the new chapel on 15th October 1858. After seeing the nun's intention to enlarge their convent he obtained a large plot in Balzan to do so. The people's generosity made it possible for them to have a new convent which was inaugurated officially on the 26th November 1868 by Archbishop 'Pace Forno'.

In 1870 all the work was done and on the 4th April a new chapel was dedicated to St. Joseph. Afterwards the community felt the need of a new church. The first stone was blessed officially on the 10th March 1898 and on the 7th February 1901 the church was dedicated to the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus'. Architect V. Busuttill offered voluntary work. All the work was done by contractor Piju Ebejer from Balzan. An interesting fact was that this contractor introduced a new system to transport stone slabs from outside to get inside by means of a wire rope instead of transporting it by hand.

In 1912, the Boarding School had to close down because a new college was opened at St Julians.

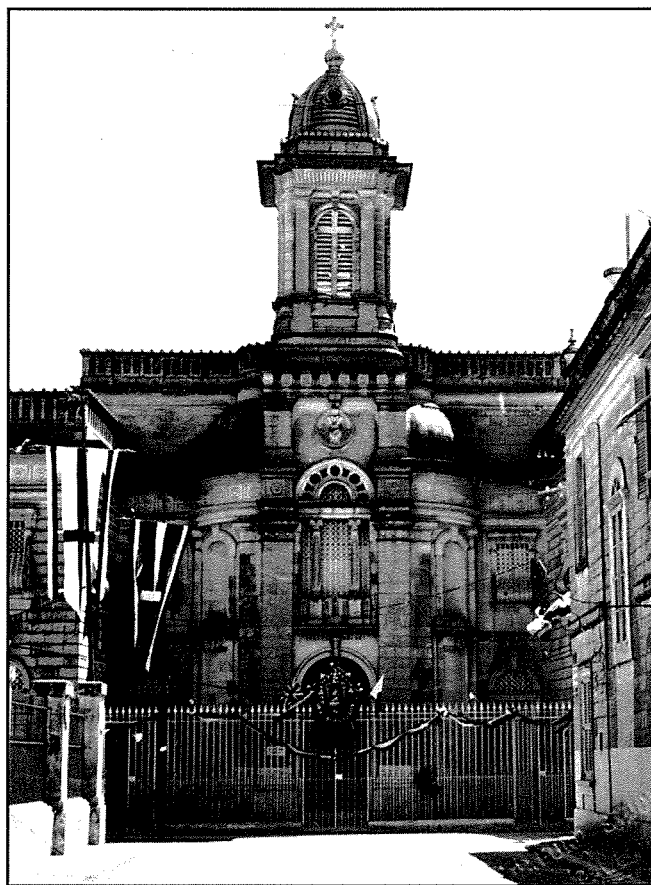
The Sisters of the Good Shepherd now dedicated their lives for the orphans and the lonely ones.

This mission was so much appreciated by Pope Pius IX that he blessed it and wrote this saying: "*BENEDICAT VOS DEUS ET OPERA VESTRA BONA*".

Two of the many V.I.P. visitors who visited this monastery, were His Eminence Cardinal Ferra in 1965 and Queen Elizabeth II who in 1951 was still a princess.

Lately this chapel was very popular with couples who wished to celebrate their wedding ceremony at this chapel.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd even have a very famous Christians crib made in the 18th century. All the figures are made from whale bones, and the crib is made of cork.



The above gate was removed in 1971.



## ARTIST:

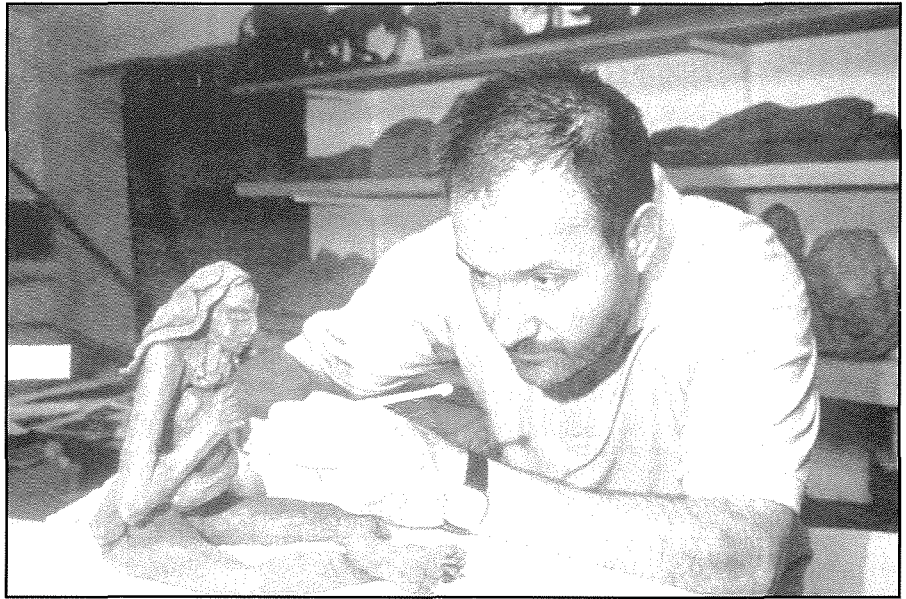
# *Antoine Paul Camilleri*

## *Reflective, caring, observer*

*The works of Antoine Paul Camilleri reflect the patient, caring observer in him. His serene, contemplative approach surfaces explicitly in his work. He treats the commonplace and unique, the ephemeral and permanent with the same rigour and attention. But family themes are his speciality.*

He is a kind, family man and the love he reserves for his daughters is also lavished on his work, usually in metal, baked clay or terracotta, or graphics.

Antoine Paul is essentially a sculptor. He models clay with certain effortlessness. He mainly took after his father Antoine Camilleri (1922-), who was his constant mentor, tutor, father and friend. He is also grateful to Gabriel Caruana (1929-), whose open



*The artist Antoine Paul Camilleri*

studio became Antoine Paul's cave of mystery, magic and delight.

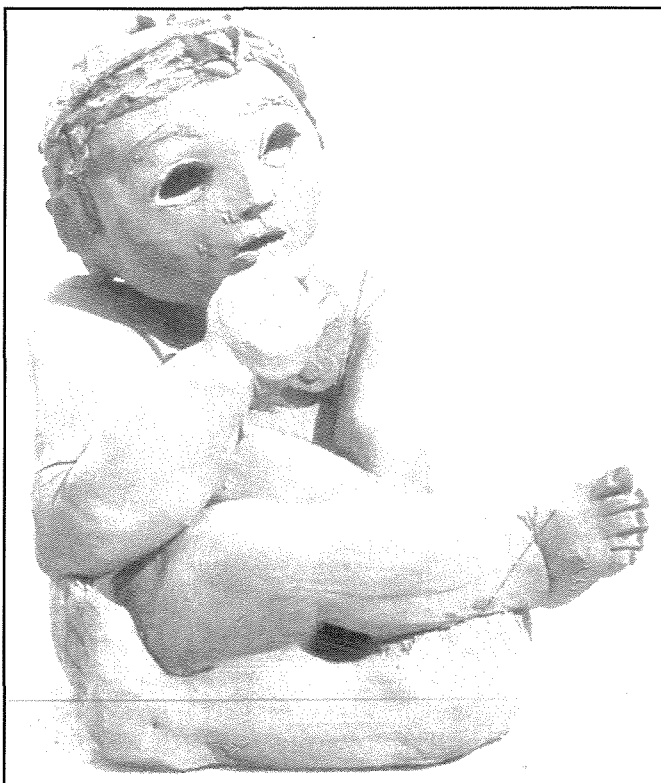
His upbringing and environment in Balzan, a small enclave with cosy spaces made to man's measure, helped him nourish a quiet and gentle disposition. This space was congenial and conducive to nurturing in him a contemplative, meditative and reflective approach.

Antoine Paul is a romantic expressionist and, although he embraces a degree of distortion and decadents, he reins in his emotions and strikes a fair balance, avoiding the often-harsh, strained, stressed and tormented qualities his father evokes.

Antoine Paul's work is more commonplace, but not less lyrical. It is not intended to stimulate an emotional impact. It is silent and quiet and invites contemplation. It is nevertheless intimate.

A Moment is an image of chubby Nicole with finger in mouth, fatalistically waiting for the inevitable or otherwise staring vacantly. Perhaps she longs to leapfrog her childhood and grow fast into a woman. Nicole stands in space doing exactly nothing or fighting shy, embarrassed by admiring adults. Or perhaps she is thinking – a silent, fast and wonderful activity that gives

*A Moment, (sitting with finger in mouth)*



her complete independence. Nicole 2 crouches with hands touching the ground, a monument to immobility. These are just fleeting reminiscences about Antoine Paul's daughter – moments that inspire him to create.

He prefers the rough baked terracotta surface and hardly attempts glazes or polychrome. In *Dreaming*, a recumbent nude, the hair is jet-black. It is the only part given glaze. In another figure, *In the Bath-tub*, both the tub and nude are simply baked clay. A *Mother and Child* in terracotta have the statuesque quality of *My Father* (1986). Bold, simple forms are Antoine Paul's speciality.

A recurring theme in his repertoire is horses. In metal, wire, repertoire and gesso Antoine Paul, like his father, finds great pleasure in expressing this heroic, elegant and much-loved mythical form. He allows distortion, but hardly to an extent that his horse loses its figurative and evocative form. Both father and son are fond of horses as noble animals that demand respect.

Lately the congregation at Pembroke church has been regaled with a larger than – size resurrected Christ in cold cast. Giacometti, thin and tall. Antoine Paul's *Risen Christ* has presence. It is the abrupt release of dynamic hope, rising and reaching towards the sky. It is a striking impression of a moving form.

Possibly this "powerful force" should stand freely in the middle of this fabulously – lit space and not stand imprisoned and chained under a low arch and behind a heavy altar. It should stand freely, on the lip of a marble sarcophagus.

Looking forward is a monument at St Joseph School, Blata l-Bajda. A six-year old child stands in front of tree trunks looking upwards. Trunks and child stand parallel. A dove of peace has flown away but is resting on the

topmost twig, almost unreachable.

The subject of the sculpture is peace, a state that, like happiness and love, is evasive and elusive and quite difficult to attain. Like an exotic butterfly it can to roost on one's shoulder just for an instant, but dies immediately if it is caught and held tight.

The fragile wings are easily broken and their powder transferred to our hands and fingers. This dust is merely a former relic of their colourful wings and magnificent flight.

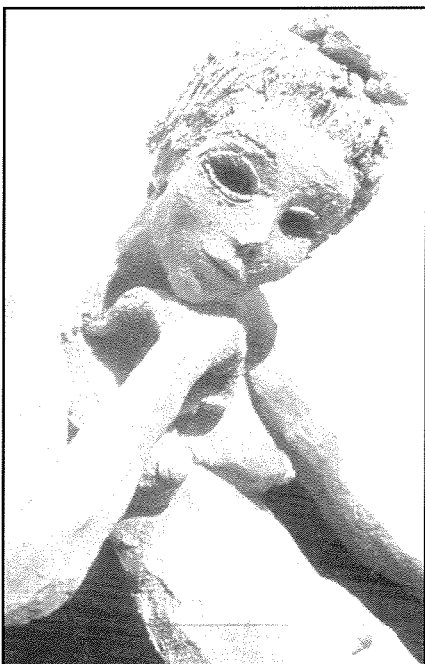
Antoine Paul is also fond of the universal symbol of sacrifice and love: the crucified Christ. He has various versions of this recurring subject, with a fine example in the gardens of a private villa at l-Iklin.

Suffering, pain, distortion and decadents are homogeneous, abstract qualities. The crucifixion of Christ is a figurative rendering of these abstract elements. Antoine Paul's reflective and philosophic stances find nourishment, strength and comfort in this universal symbol.

Born in Balzan in 1959, he has lived in old walled towns such as Valletta, Vittoriosa (where father and son shared an art studio) and Floriana for many years. At 44 this experience has mellowed the man and has inspired his graphics, especially his landscapes.

His tuition under Esprit Barthet (1919-1999) at the Lyceum, Hamrun and under Joseph L. Mallia (1937-), Harry Alden (1929-) at the local School of Art has given him a basic and sound grounding in design. Yet his expression is hardly flat or a scratched, graffito outline. On the contrary, it is modelled and plastic.

Unlike his father's works scratched in resin, Antoine Paul loves forms in the round.



*In the Bath-tub*



*Horse*



*Nicole, (standing)*

# DOOR TO DOOR STREET HAWKERS

by Guido Lanfranco

There was a time when housewives hardly left their homes except for some church devotions: everything for the home could be obtained from hawkers who plied the streets from dawn to dusk. These hawkers or pedlars did not all come at the same time, but appeared on the scene at times conveniently spread out during the day.

Each pedlar or hawker had his own particular cry not only to

advertise his wares, but also to announce his arrival in a particular street. The regularity of time of day, as well as day of the week and season, were most convenient for the clients who expected them.

Hawkers, of whom a large percentage were women, arrived on the streets often after travelling long journeys on foot, balancing pails or baskets on their heads and using their hands for the rest. Others arrived pushing a small hand-cart loaded with wares, and several came with horse or donkey pulling a bigger cart. Milk was delivered warm in the container, straight from the goat. There were no refrigerators, so the goatherd came morning and early afternoon with a handful of goats. Fresh eggs, herbs for pot and remedies, fruits, vegetables of all types in sacks or canework baskets, soft cheeselets in pails of brackish water, also peppered or dry.

Another milk product was the *rikotta*, warm-processed in salt water. The hawker carried it in wicker baskets to keep shape, and took it out to cut portions with a string for his customers.

Live chickens and rabbits in cages or odd ones in a sack; the housewife often wanted them killed on the spot, and the rabbits skinned and cleaned before payment. Salted fish, local sausages, capers, red peppers, boiled beans and other choice preparations for the salad dish.

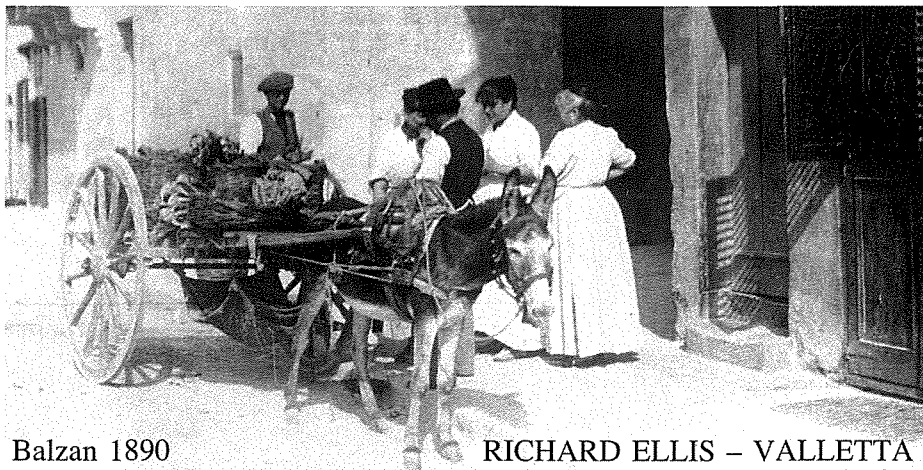
The fishmonger came any day, but definitely on Fridays when religious custom discouraged the eating of meat. He also came on New Year's day when fish brought good luck to the family, but was often unavailable when bad weather made fishing impossible.

Odd small-time hawkers came with other commodities such as local honey and range-blossom water, both valued, apart from herbs, for their medicinal properties. Salt came in sacks, collected from local saltpans well before first rains.

The breadseller came with a large, lidded, wooden box on a cart, containing small or large loaves from which he cut proportions to weigh out for the customer. Later breadsellers, coming mainly from the Qormi region, had large, yellow horsedrawn boxes, specially made for all their needs. In summer came black and white mulberries in small, long narrow baskets covered with vine leaves to protect them from insects. Prickly pears, which were skinned for customers on their plates, came in pails of water on a cart.

Sea urchins were carried on the hawker's back in a large, elongated cane basket; this he deposited on the ground, and with a large knife cut the prickly urchins into halves on a block of wood attached to the basket edge. He was often followed by some boys selling clams and limpets straight from the sea.

Summer could also bring out the water seller, with a small barrel suspended on a shoulder strap. Apart from these items one would have needed could be obtained from the street hawkers. Cloth came on the hawker's shoulder supported with the very yardstick he used to measure it out. All these hawkers, coming on foot or riding, also congregated in convenient marketplaces close to the churches, especially on Sundays. They were the precursors of the present, post-war generation of hawkers who carry their wares in vans and trucks, while most other items are conveniently found in supermarkets by the modern, active, working housewife ...



Balzan 1890

RICHARD ELLIS – VALLETTA



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# BALZAN - Old Railway Road

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by Arthur Leaver

The constant evolution through the march of progress over the ages is also reflected in the successive means of transport. In Malta we have had the characteristic donkey and horse carts, the elegant sedan and *kaless* of the aristocratic Knights, the typical Maltese *karrozzin*, the horse-drawn omnibus – before *char-a-bancs* came into their own – the gondola-like *dghajsa* and the seaworthy *luzzu* and lateen-sail boat. Then on to more modern transport with the advent of the train, the tram, the steam ferries of our harbours, the Barrakka Lift and the buses.

Of the foregoing means of transport there is still much fascination in recalling the Malta Railway, which trudged from the outer part of the Valetta Bastions on to the middle of the island and thence to end up beyond the Mtarfa Valley.

Despite the fact that distances in Malta are relatively short – the railway in fact covered just about eight miles – the Malta Railway turned out to be a great success. Suffice it to mention that between 1904 and 1905 no less than 1,045,398 passengers used the railway.

The history of the railway in Malta goes back to 1869, when the Suez Canal was opened, sparking off an economic impetus in the Mediterranean. Malta became an important coaling station en route to the East.

A year later various English companies, after carrying out a number of surveys, put forward plans for the introduction of a railway linking various parts of Malta.

Eventually the local authorities granted Messrs Edward Rosenbrush ^ Andrews an exclusive privilege for 99 years, subject to some 23 conditions, for a modified railway line to link Valetta to Notabile (Mdina). As a result the Malta Railway Co. Ltd was formed on June 12, 1879.

Since the service was to start from the ditch below Valetta Bastions – below today's City

Gateway – it was necessary to build a ramp to reach the tunnel now used by the Yellow Garage.

Two separate tunnels had to be constructed, one leading from Floriana to Portes des Bombes and the other emerging finally under Princess Meltia Road, past Ta' Braxia Cemetery, where the link was made, necessitating the construction of a five-arch stone bridge.

The route from Valetta to Notabile went past Hamrun, Msida, Birkirkara, Balzan, San Salvatore, thence uphill on to Notabile to end below Mtarfa Valley. Along the route were various stations, the most important one being that at Hamrun where the company installed an engineering and repair workshop and foundry.

The official opening of the Malta Railway took place on February 28, 1883, when following a short procession from Our Lady of Victories Church, Archbishop Count Scicluna carried out the blessing ceremony.

After running for seven years the Malta Railway Co. had to close down due to heavy financial difficulties. Consequently the Government had to take over and there was a cessation of service for two years. In that period many repair and development works had to be carried and the Malta Railway reopened its service on February 25, 1892 under a new management.

In time even this new company had to face very stiff competition from the introduction of a tram service feeding many parts of Malta and, later, the commencement of a Motor Bus Co. service.

As a result, when the passengers using the railway had dwindled to half their number – just 500,000 passengers using 31 trains on the Valetta–Notabile run and 14 on the return journey – the Malta Railway came to a stop by a decisions taken by the Colonial Government on March 31, 1931, when the Malta Constitution was suspended.