

Lifestyle & Culture

Part 1

Malta Maritime History: B. Tagliaferro e Figli



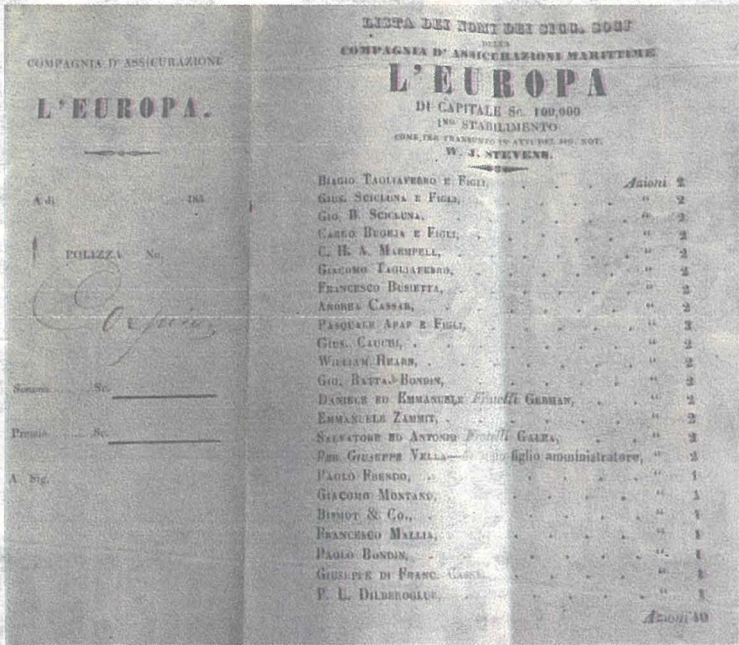
ANTHONY ZARB-DIMECH

B. Tagliaferro and Figli were bankers and general merchants situated at Piazza San. Giovanni, Valletta. A founder member of the Chamber of Commerce was Biagio Tagliaferro, a Genoese by birth but he settled in Malta very early during the British presence.

Biagio Tagliaferro was born in Genoa in 1777 into a seafaring family. The recent discovery of a cache of 16 very well-preserved certificates of insurance (maritime) from the mid-1800s, (1845-1860), pertaining to B. Tagliaferro e Figli give a detailed account of information on how insurance business was carried out.

The Table below gives interesting data of the date of certificates of insurance, insurance firms, policy number, vessel, vessel's captain, sum insured, premium and firm insured. Included in this feature is also a list of the gentlemen who were stakeholders in the Shipping Insurance Company, L'Europa. On 19 November 1856, this company had a capital of scu. 100,000 and was registered in the Acts of Notary W. J. Stevens.

The above is a rare find meriting further research on Biagio Tagliaferro and, among other matters, how the grain trade was conducted in the mid-1800s in Malta.



Shareholders in the Maritime Insurance Company - L'Europa

Historical currency and units of measure of Malta

The salma (plural salme), sometimes written in English as salm, was a Maltese unit of volume, and was 98.5% of an imperial quarter, that is, 286.59 litres. From 1875 it was declared exactly equal to an imperial quarter, that is, 290.95 litres.

The silver scudo (plural scudi) was the currency of Malta until 1798, and remained in circulation until 1825, when it was replaced by the British pound at the rate of £1 = 12 scudi. It was subdivided into 12 tari (singular taro), each of 20 grani with six piccioli to the grano.

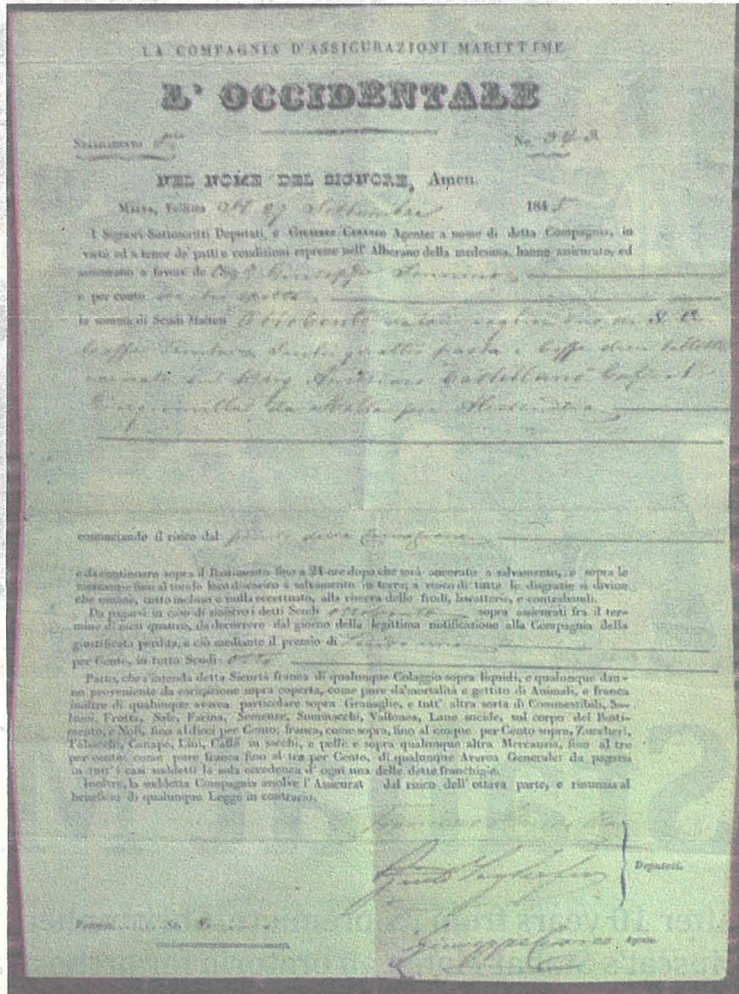
The exchange rates used here are those given by Mallia-Milanes (1988, p. 135), that is, £0.1 to the scudo from 1781 until 1798 and £0.083 to the scudo from 1801 until its replacement by the pound in 1825. The UK pound (£) was equal to 20 shillings (s.), which were equal to 12 pennies.

Who was Biagio Tagliaferro?

Dr A. Bonnici KM, MD, MRPSL in his research paper titled, *En-*

tries addressed to Sigri. B. Tagliaferro e figli, in Malta gives a very wide exposition of who was Biagio Tagliaferro. Tagliaferro was born in 1774 in Genoa. He had come to Malta around 1804 together with his brother Francesco, who had become the longest serving Russian Imperial Consul in Malta, from 1836 till his death in 1878.

In 1812, Biagio Tagliaferro (1777-1862) established a private bank in Malta called B. Tagliaferro e Figli. This bank, which he fully owned, had its offices at 106 St John Street, Valletta, on the left hand side of St John's Cathedral. In its early days, it dealt mainly in ship handling and grain financing. By 1816 Tagliaferro was master of the full rigged ship spelt in Maltese *Strangier* which means stranger, owned by John Stuart of Valletta. This ship was acquired by the Tagliaferro family in 1822. It was in this period that they established themselves as the leading grain merchants in the Russian Black Sea grain trade.



Certificate of Insurance by L'Occidentale insurance firm



Biagio Tagliaferro (1777-1862). Master mariner, shipowner and merchant banker. Tagliaferro, founder of Malta's third bank in 1812. This bank introduced merchant banking in Malta

Date of Certificate of Insurance	Insurance firm	Policy No.	Vessel	Vessel's Captain	Sum Insured	Premium	Firm Insured
27 September 1845	L'Occidentale	343	Castellano	N. Giacciomilla	Scu. 800	Scu. 8	Giuseppe Sonnino
23 July 1853	Amista	193	N/A	N/A	Scu. 2000	Scu.15	B. Tagliaferro & Figli
22 August 1853	Anglo-Grega	84	Haggi Dervish	B.M. Vunovis	Scu. 1000	Scu. 11.3	"
23 August 1853	John Mogmor	N/A	Haggi Dervish	P.M. Pamovis	Scu. 1500	Scu.16.10.10	"
26 November 1855	Attiva	321	Due Cugini	G. Azzopardi	Scu. 500	Scu. 11.3	"
13 November 1856	L'Europa	824	Cospicua	F. Morettio	£200	£2	"
18 November 1856	Amaltea	400	Cospicua	F. Morettio	Scu. 600	Scu. 6	"
14 August 1857	San Vincenzo	50	Reggente		Scu. 1200	Scu. 22.6	"
19 August 1858	San Giovanni	351	President	N. Diandria	£50	18s.9d	"
2 September 1858	Alma	886	Reggente	A. Maringo	Scu. 1200	Scu 22.6	"
13 September 1858	Etna	339	Reggente	A.Maringo	Scu. 600	Scu. 11.3	"
20 July 1859	Iperia	2217	Arianna	A.Tagliaferro	£150	£6	"
20 July 1859	La Providenza	539	Arianna	A.Tagliaferro	£50	£3	"
1 August 1859	Santa Filomena	264	Arianna	A.Tagliaferro	£50	£3	"
6 August 1859	L'Orientale	878	Arianna	A.Tagliferro	£50	£3	"
12 April 1860	Argo	779	President	N. Diandria	£50	18s. 9d.	"

Table: B. Tagliaferro & Figli - Certificates of Insurance (Shipping)