

# Migration from Gozo: 1870 -72

MARK CARUANA

During most of the 19th century, migration from Malta was largely to North Africa.

By 1870, formal recording of passport applications and renewals became available in a bound ledger format and these can be consulted and obtained (for a small fee) at the Malta National Archives at Rabat, Malta. The ledger contains the day, month and year of issue of passport, name and surname of the applicant, name of applicant's father, age place of birth and residency of applicant, as well as the occupation and destination of applicant.

In this study, passport applications for the years 1870 to 1872 were analysed. Unfortunately, ledgers for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1870, as well as the period June to December 1872, are non-existent, so that the 1870 to 1872 period is incomplete by around 10 months. Moreover, for the subsequent years 1873 to 1886 passport application records are also missing.

During the period of 1870 to 1872, a total of 3,005 passports were issued. The majority of the applicants were Maltese by birth or by descent. Of these, 311 applicants were born in the Maltese Diaspora, namely Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Gibraltar, the Greek Islands and Turkey. One applicant was born in the West Indies where several Maltese had emigrated as a result of the failed scheme which encouraged Maltese migration to Grenada in the mid-nineteenth century (1839 to 1841).

## Migration from Gozo

During this time (1870 to 1872), a total of 277 persons from Gozo applied for a passport. This represents nine percent of the total number of applicants. Twenty-one Gozitans stated their destination to be Italy or Sicily. These are not included in the table as their purpose was most likely to have been for study, for health reasons or as a holiday.

There were no passport applicants from Qala, Kerċem, Għasri, Munxar, San Lawrenz or Fontana.

However these may have been recorded as Gozo (not stated) or with other parishes (e.g. Fontana and Kerċem could have been included under Rabat.

Birthplace	Number of passport applicants
Xaghra	73
Nadur	65
Rabat	49
Gozo (not stated)	41
Sannat	21
Gharb	16
Xewkija	9
Għajnsielem	2
Żebbuġ	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>277</b>

**Table 1:** Birthplace of persons applying for passports, 1870-72

As shown in Table 1, allowing for the fact that the birthplace of a considerable number, around fifteen percent, was not stated, most of the Gozo-born applicants gave their birth-place as Xaghra, Nadur and Rabat.

The ages of these persons ranged from sixteen years to fifty seven years. There were twenty five females (nine per cent) included in these applications, all wives joining husbands, except for one who was a widow and was accompanied by her son.

The majority of applicants were born and resided in Gozo while forty one were Gozo-born but lived in towns and villages in Malta, mainly in Valletta and the Harbour side area.

## Destination

As shown in Table 2, the most common destination was Algeria (82 percent). Some were specific as to which locality in Algeria they were going, namely Bone (97), Philippeville (59) and Algiers (7).

None went to the Barbary States (Tripoli and Benghazi). Those who stated Turkey were destined for Constantinople.

Birthplace	Destination
Xaghra	Algeria (71), Egypt (1), Tunisia (1)
Nadur	Algeria (55), Tunisia (7), France (1), Gibraltar (1), Odessa (1)
Gozo (not stated)	Algeria (22), Egypt (6), Tunisia (6), Turkey (5), Gibraltar (1), Corfu (1)
Rabat	Algeria (43), Egypt (2), Gibraltar (2), Marseille (1), Tunisia (1)
Sannat	Algeria (21)
Gharb	Algeria (14), Egypt (1), Tunis (1)
Xewkija	Algeria (8), Greece (1)
Għajnsielem	Algeria (1), Turkey/Gibraltar (1)
Żebbuġ	Egypt (1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>277</b>

**Table 1:** Birthplace of persons and destinations, 1870-72

## Conclusion

At the April 2010 Convention in Malta, I became increasingly aware of the frustration of many Maltese from Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt (in particular) of their desperate need to find out more details of their ancestry. They needed to find out their ancestral place of birth in Malta, in order to obtain a baptismal certificate, confirm



Maltese migrants arriving in Australia in 1949.

their Maltese ancestral origins and be eligible for Maltese citizenship. Hopefully this database may be able to assist.

For a copy of the passport application, however, one needs to make contact with the Malta National Archives on-line at [customer-care.archives@gov.mt](mailto:customer-care.archives@gov.mt) or through their website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.mt](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.mt).

Further details, including information about individual migrant movements and Gozo migrants' database may be obtained from Mark Caruana ([caruanamark@optusnet.com.au](mailto:caruanamark@optusnet.com.au))

Mark Caruana is migration researcher, Sydney. Email: [caruanamark@optusnet.com.au](mailto:caruanamark@optusnet.com.au)