

Introduction

This edition of *The Gozo Observer* contains five articles, mostly of a historical nature, as well as a book review and a brief account of recent activities at the University Gozo Campus. The *Observer* is in its 18th year, with two editions annually. The articles contained in past issues covered a variety of subjects, all with a focus on Gozo. Most articles related to historical aspects, but there were others with an economic, cultural and environmental orientation. This edition carries a list of titles of all articles carried in the *Gozo Observer* since 1999.

The first article in the present edition, on Pregnancy and Childbirth in Gozo between 1867 and 1914, authored by Sandra Portelli, contains a very interesting account of the practices associated with this very important stage in one's life. As the author states, the data sheds light on the way of living during those times and on the mentality of the Gozitan women with regard to health, at a time when the benefits provided by medicine and health-care were replacing traditional methods. The article also covers a number of related matters including the social particulars and the physical conditions of women, the forms of treatment during and after delivery, and the role of the midwife (*Qabla*). The article is very detailed and should serve as a useful source of information for researchers on cultural aspects associated with childbirth.

Godwin Vella, an expert on Gozitan heritage, authored the third and concluding section of an article which adds to the materials published by the same author in the two previous editions of *The Gozo Observer*. The article is an account of *Caxaro's description of Gozo (1704)*. Most of this section of the article deals with the governance of the island during the 17th century, and refers to the documentation that was kept for this purpose. An issue that is often referred to in the text is that the government archives relating to that period preserved civil and criminal cases and related registers and documents from 1551 onwards, as earlier records were destroyed during the Turkish invasion. Likewise all court registers, acts, case files and related documents from 1551 onwards were kept, but previous records were lost during the 1551 assault. This article is full of detailed and useful information for those interested in the history of Gozo during the 16th and 17th century.

Gozo abounds with talented craftsmen, and one of the articles featured in the current edition of *The Gozo Observer*, authored by Geoffrey Attard, focusses on a well-known personality in this regard. His name was Ġorġ Gauci, known as Ġorġ ta' Frallillu. He spent a good portion of his working life as a carpenter employed with the government, but he offered most of his spare time to help in the enlargement and

embellishment of St George's Basilica in Rabat, Gozo. He is well known for his involvement in the building of the side-chapels and for the completion of the dome of the Basilica, as well as for the fabrication of the canopy (*baldacchino*) for the main altar of the same church. A masterpiece with which Ġorġ Gauci is associated is the piece of furniture (called *bredella*) on which a statue of St George is put for veneration. The author argues that the fact that the parish chose Ġorġ to do this important piece of work shows the high esteem in which he was held. Ġorġ Gauci died on the 28th of December 2016 at the age of 90 years. The author states that whenever one looks in St George's Basilica, he is expected to see artistic works on which Ġorġ worked and dedicated his time and energy.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries, the boom in car manufacturing, particularly in Detroit and Michigan, was at its initial stages and many young men were being employed in this growing economic sector. Word among young Maltese, but it seems especially amongst Gozitans, encouraged migration to the USA where many took up secure jobs and built fortunes for themselves and their families. In the fourth article in this edition of the *Gozo Observer*, Joe Zammit Ciantar writes about one such emigrant, with the name of William Pace. The author, through assiduous research, managed to find information about Pace's entry into the USA and his volunteer services to the Civil Defence in Detroit. Persisting in his research endeavour, the author managed to find information about William Pace and his Gozitan family. This article shows that a perseverant researcher can bring to light detailed information which would otherwise remain buried in archives and family collections.

A characteristic of the Island of Gozo is the important role that the Parish church plays in the lives of the residents. A major parish in Gozo is that of Nadur and the zealous life of one of early parish priest, Don Giovanni Andrea Falson, is the subject of an article authored by Daniel Meilak. Falson was born on 23rd September 1670, ordained priest on 23rd October 1695, and was appointed Parish Priest of Nadur when he was 38 years old. The author lists a number of achievements of this priest through tireless work for the parish. Documentary evidence about Falson portrays him as a caring and prudent pastor in charge of a growing parish. The author dwells at some length on Falson's legacy as evidenced in his last will, a document which gives a detailed record of the parish priest's possessions, and his generosity in dispensing of these possessions for the good of the Nadur parish church and a number of deserving persons.

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