

# GOZO

## THE ISLE OF JOY ON STAMPS



*Nature and Culture*







GOZO  
GOZO

*the isle of joy on stamps*



a publication of

**Gozo Philatelic Society**

in collaboration with



VICTORIA – GOZO

November 2011



# Forward

Since its inception in 1999, the Gozo Philatelic Society has strived unstintingly to promote the hobby of philately among its members and among the public in Gozo.

From its humble beginnings thirteen years ago, the Gozo Philatelic Society has established itself and grown to a reputable NGO, actively and visibly present by its regular meetings, the publication of the society's quarterly magazine and the organization of the annual exhibition. I note with satisfaction that the educational aspect of the hobby is given its due importance and I am aware that the members of the Gozo Philatelic Society regularly visit schools and hold talks for students with the aim of promoting philately.

It was therefore with pleasure that I accepted to write the foreword to this publication which is yet another initiative taken by the society not only to promote the hobby of philately but also to promote our small island, Gozo. The present publication was made possible through the aid scheme to NGO's which was launched by the Ministry for Gozo as part of the strategy in the implementation of the Eco Gozo Action Plan 2010 – 2012. The present publication features a number of stamps issued by the Maltese postal authorities over the years which show subjects related to Gozo. I am sure that this book will be welcomed not only by philately enthusiasts but also by all those who have the promotion of Gozo at heart.

I should like to commend the endeavours of the members of the committee whose tireless efforts have resulted in the flourishing of this society and have ensured that the society will not be limited only to the more established collectors but also promote this hobby among the young.

**Giovanna Debono**

Minister for Gozo

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*this book is dedicated*

*to the memory of two philatelist friends:*



**Anthony Fenech**

who offered his impressive expertise as an essential support towards the strengthening of the

**Gozo Philatelic Society**

**and**

**George Scicluna**

publisher of the “Gozo & Malta Courier”

- Malta’s first international stamp magazine -

and

**Gozo Philatelic Society**

life member until his demise at 90



*and to all dedicated*

*postal workers,*

*past and present*

*for*

*their reliable service*





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# To Gozo

Haste to the boat, swift spread the swelling sail!

'Tis early morn, and o'er the clear blue sea  
Curling its gentle waves, light blows the gale-  
An April day-my Muse! repair with me  
To Gozo's little Isle, Malta's twin sister she.



Cumin<sup>(1)</sup> and Cuminotto<sup>(2)</sup> in the main  
Two barren rocks appear; but Industry  
Has called his manly sons, an active train,  
To fertilize the soil and clothe with golden grain,

Where shall we rest? In Chambray's guarded fort,  
Or rather chuse in Rabbato<sup>(3)</sup> our dome,  
Or to the humble villages resort  
And 'midst the charms of rural nature roam,  
Watching the loaded bee that to her home,  
The horizontal hive, conveys secure  
Her precious freight (to fill the waxen comb)  
Borne from thy blossomed garden, sweet Nadur!  
Where on her active wing she flies to gather more.



We need not downy bed nor room of state;  
Sound sleep from exercise is Nature's due:  
-But when Aurora opens morn's eastern gate,  
Let us, my Muse, our pleasing toil renew,  
And first that rock renown'd will we review,  
Whereon the *Fungus Melitensis* grows  
Famed Styptic! All the world thine aid shall sue,  
If future cent'ries like the past compose  
Such comments on thy worth as Linnaeus<sup>(4)</sup> bestows.



Bring here the cypress bough, and let us twine  
 A wreath, Mamona!<sup>(5)</sup> for thy lonely tomb;  
 Why so obscure a resting place is thine,  
 And if far distant from thy native home,  
 Is all untold-weather compell'd to roam  
 By cruel outrage, or the choice thine own  
 To visit Gozo's Isle through seas and foam,  
 Nought of the story, gentle maid, is known,  
 Save on the marble tomb "Mamona's" name is shown.



Scarce more of record has that wondrous pile  
 Of stone enormous, called the Giant's Tower,<sup>(6)</sup>  
 The mightiest vestige, Gozo, is thine Isle,  
 Of former arts. Of former strength and power;  
 Astonishment, is this enlightened hour,  
 Looks with smile on sciences improved,  
 And bids the feeble artist from his bower  
 Bring forth the vast machines which once removed  
 The pond'rous massive heap, and its firm fixture proved.



Gozo, farewell for see where lovely May  
 Wreathing the *sulla*<sup>(7)</sup>-flowers of brightest red,  
 With ears of barley and vetches-gay,  
 Forms the light garland for her beauteous head.



*From the poem "Malta" by Mrs Stiff. (published in 1818)*



(1)-Cumin=Maltese Kemmuna-island of Comino (2)Cominotto=Maltese Kemmunett (3)-Rabbato=Rabat, today Victoria. (4)-Linnaeus-Carl Linnaeus Swedish botanist known as father of modern ecology.(5)-Mamona=Mejmuna-name of a Moslem girl. (6)-Giant's Tower=Ggantija prehistoric temples .(7)-Sulla-today Silla=Clover.

# *Għawdex speċjali!* Gozo is special!



The idea for this publication developed from the popular series “Promoting Gozo through Philately” (by numerous guest authors) which has been appearing in the Gozo Philatelic Society Newsletter for quite some time. The spark was then provided by the Assistance Scheme for projects by



NGOs contributing towards the implementation of the Eco-Gozo Action Plan promoted by the Ministry for Gozo late in 2010.

We do hope that there will be no misgivings for the decision to accept our proposal!



Our wish is that these glances at our island will offer an interesting read for all – and actually whet the appetite for more information. Deciding about the format was not straightforward but two-page spreads seemed appropriate as a medium to give illustrated facts about the various villages. There was obviously no attempt at exhaustiveness – or at standardization - but we did aim at including all essential items. As you can see from the Contents list, the chapters are not limited to just “official” villages: we have also treated separately the three legally-recognized hamlets (Marsalforn, Santa Luċija and Xlendi) and three other locations which do so merit (Comino, Mġarr and Ta’ Pinu) - to reach a total of twenty. The capital itself covers treble the space.

This chapter serves as an introduction for both the book and for the “Gozitan experience”.

So let’s begin with an answer to an unasked question. As is now established even legislatively, “Gozo” also includes Comino. However it is still normally treated as a single island – singularly!

Seemingly obviously due to the contact with Mediterranean civilizations over the ages, the island has had numerous names (ogigia, gwl, gaudos, gaulos, gaudisium, godso, gozzo . . .) but the local appellation stabilised as *Għawdex* well before the language itself got its structure. Actually there is uncertainty about the etymological derivation. What is certain is that the “official international” name is Gozo – in most languages. This is very “fortunate”: this Spanish word simply means JOY – and, related to our island, is both realistic and optimistic.

Our natural resources are a powerful magnet; our human resources make any visit unforgettable: nature and culture of the highest level! Yes, joy can be a *leitmotif* for all: from permanent residents to

daytrippers. Joy is expressed during our village festas; joy is shown through the characteristic welcoming attitude.

But this is not really the time and place for an “Ode to Joy”. Neither is it feasible to give an overview of Gozo’s history; a list of dates (necessarily rather subjective) will have to make do.

Going headlong into some general aspects of Gozitan life, we could linger on the unexpectedly big number of community radios (all owned and run by parishes who seemingly are not happy with the way national media cover us!). We could treat the substantial choral crop – of a varying level of competence and audacity – but built (with rare exceptions) on a solid liturgical base. On an associated topic, we could give the long list of churches and chapels (let’s say, a different one for each week) – in any case, many will be noted in the individual chapters.



Also since this is being published during the European Year of Volunteering, we should however begin by referring to an essential aspect forming Gozitan society: maybe due to Gozo’s small size, its people have always manifested a vast interest in the voluntary sector. This is evidenced by the large number of non-governmental organizations operating on the island. In 2003 the Gozo N G O s Association was founded to encourage co-operation between them and to promote their interests. This Association, through its council officers, represents the sector on numerous bodies and is often involved in consultations with official institutions. An important aim is obviously the co-ordination of efforts to eliminate conflicts of interest, reduce useless duplication and increase the efficient use of the limited human and financial resources.

The Association has been serving as a strong platform, also through the existence of the NGO Centre on the outskirts of Xewkija. As in the case of so much that is Gozitan, this building can be described as a “unique animal”: being state-owned, it is administered by the Ministry for Gozo (who provides staff and is responsible for all running costs). Outsiders might not consider this as “non-governmental”! Confirming that we cannot do without non-remunerated efforts, the Ministry in fact offers many support schemes to individuals and organizations.

Philanthropy has always been deemed a cornerstone for our communities: the reason certainly lies in the good heart of our people, joyfully ingrained by Christian principles. There is no need to emphasize that, even today, most initiatives emanate from the Church or its “branches”. Philanthropy has simply been expanded into “volunteering”: covering all those in need of support, as well as culture in all its guises.

It is never possible to give a thorough coverage of the village festivities in honour of the patrons; however some aspects are treated in the various chapters and a list of dates (almost wholly during the summer, so that practically no day is “free” during these four months) is given separately. There is no need to emphasize that the majority of villagers have volunteer duties all year long in preparation! Gozo and Gozitans would certainly be unrecognizable in their absence!

Except for sporadic examples, Gozitan participation in sports has not been “tainted” with success – but we can thus easily identify ourselves with foreign teams or champions. And we are second-to-none in acting as coach potatoes – and then discussing interminably and vociferously! Football – never “soccer” but previously *il-ballun* (= the ball) and now (to some diehards, sacrilegiously, *futbol*) – is by far the premier spectator sport (especially on TV). It is promoted in schools and youth centres but, in spite of the numerous clubs, active participation is proportionately unsatisfactory. The Gozo Football Association was founded in 1936; however, quite understandably, World War II brought competitive football to a halt. Fighting (or, rather, the defence of our island home) over, the previous clubs started to rebuild their teams – beginning with friendly matches against British Servicemen. The ball was again set rolling already in

the 1944-45 season. Nowadays the league is divided into two divisions, with further competitions for lower age groups. The season is also interrupted for a number of trophies. Although the Gozo Stadium remains the main venue, a number of other grounds are used too – also to allow for turf replanting.



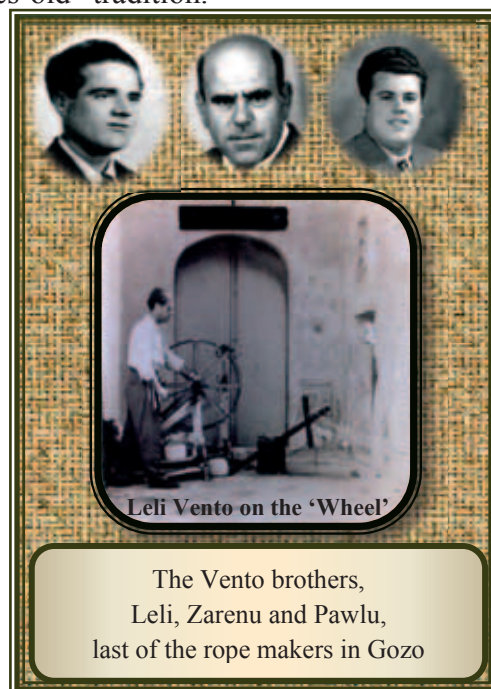
Other sports in Gozo include horse-riding, road-running, tennis and team games. We tend to be more attentive to our health and appearance nowadays: due to sedentary lifestyles, there is a demand for health centres. Sports Centres have facilitated participation – not necessarily competitive– in a number of sports. To appreciate how “culture” changes, it is worthwhile to mention the existence of a strong baseball team! In spite of the surrounding sea, swimming is however not popular as a sport.



To revert to something more “down-to-earth”, crafts surely do not have a marginal role. Pottery, sculpture and weaving can be considered as dating back to prehistoric times – essential for existence along the centuries, they tend to serve now as souvenirs (and as a source of additional income for the producers). Some crafts have fizzled out such as rope making and cotton production which was still a major industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century; others have received a new lease of life or been “gozitanized” (filigree or decorated clocks). Family-run shops and more “commercial” vendors offer glassware, knitteds, canework, wrought-iron artefacts and carvings in stone. Furniture of all types (not always in wood) can also be considered as craft-based. However, with tourists and locals alike, “Gozo crafts” tends to be equivalent to lacemaking: Dun Ġużepp Diacono is said to have introduced this Spanish art form to help poor spinsters in the 1880’s but it has been transformed into an “ages-old” tradition.



A typical hand-made Gozo lace design.



Leli Vento on the ‘Wheel’

The Vento brothers, Leli, Zarenu and Pawlu, last of the rope makers in Gozo



The list of crafts available is practically limitless, not least through the existence of the Arts Centre (in Ghajnsielem) named after Wistin Camilleri. But a particular aspect surely meets the eye: the artistry (and attention to detail) that goes into all buildings – from private homes to majestic churches. Wandering round the streets anywhere, one is bound to meet artisans offering their work: paintings, flags, terracotta crib statuettes!

Food is another class of crafts. The Maltese islands were historically famous for honey (a possible etymological derivation for “Malta”) and wines. Traditional bread and the *ftira* are strongly popular here. Probably Gozo is best represented by *gbejniet* – cheeselets of various types which taste differently if genuinely made in Gozo. Olive oil production has resurfaced – with the addition of modern “inventions” such as citrus liquers. *Kunserva* tomato paste is among processed foods which integrate advanced technology with ancient crafts.

Obviously the raw materials themselves are not enough: this is especially so in the case of food! Although our restaurants also offer continental fare (some even venturing further away), domestic highlights are called *fenek*, *timpana*, *pudina*, *ross il-forn*, *lampuka*, *minestra*, *tigieġa*, *majjal*, *kawlata* and *aljotta* – to mention a haphazard ten. *Pastizzi* can be considered - without any pejorative intent - as our “junk food”; *prinjolata* (Carnival), *kwareżimal* (Lent) and *figolli* (Easter) are our seasonal sweets.

There are many ways to discover Gozo. The first step may be reading about it but the best is to taste its “specialness”. A suitable conclusion to this introduction is to invite you to walk around: on foot, by car or bicycle or even using public transport! Suggestions could be (always beginning from Victoria – the centre): Xewkija and Mġarr (taking in Mġarr ix-Xini); Sannat and Ta’ Ċenċ; Fontana and Xlendi; Ta’ Pinu and Dwejra (taking in Għarb and San Lawrenz); Żebbuġ and Marsalforn; Xagħra and Ġgantija (taking in Calypso’s Cave); Nadur and Qala (taking in Ramla, San Blas and Daħlet Qorrot). A simpler recommendation (or command) could be: “Put on your walking shoes”! Every lane and street can lead to interesting – even life-changing discoveries. Especially outside the trodden path – for example along the coast.



Card commemorating the 150 anniversary of the Gozo Agricultural Show

To bring this introduction to a close, one should note that many Gozitans made a name for themselves – and for Gozo – by settling in Malta or emigrating even further away. We always remain “Gozitans” at heart! Two Victoria-born examples (who reached the top of their respective fields) can be considered as representative of a whole host - mostly, unfortunately, unsung - along the centuries.

Dr Vincent “*Ċensinu*” Tabone served as a WHO trachoma consultant in numerous Asian countries – after carrying out an intensive campaign in Gozo. He had a long political career first becoming a minister in 1966, remaining a member of parliament till 1989, and also held the post of vice-president at the Council of Europe. In 1989 he was elected President of Malta.



H.E. President Vincent Tabone



H.L. Archbishop Joseph Mercieca

Mgr Joseph Mercieca was appointed a judge of the *Sacra Romana Rota* in 1969 (and later of the *Segnatura Apostolica*), also acting as consultor to Holy See Congregations. In 1974 he was appointed auxiliary to Archbishop Gonzi and metropolitan archbishop of Malta in 1976, his resignation due to age being accepted in 2007. A member of the *Xirka Ġieħ ir-Repubblika*; he was also invested as Sovereign Order of Malta conventual chaplain.

# GOZITAN HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

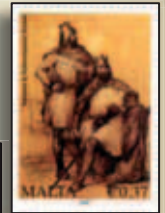
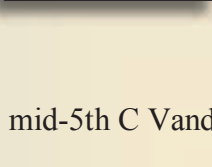
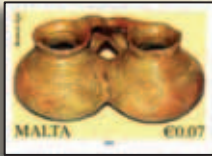
BC

circa 8000-Maltese islands cut off from European mainland by 5000 human inhabitants in Malta. - circa 3400 copper introduced.

circa 3200 Ġgantija Temples, Xagħra. - circa 2000 bronze. - circa 900 iron. - circa 800 under Phoenicians. - from 480 under Carthaginians. - from 264 Punic Wars. - before 200 incorporated in republic of Rome

AD

41 Maltese allowed municipal privileges



60 St Paul's shipwreck  
early 2nd C Roman municipality  
395 under Byzantines

mid-5th C Vandals followed by Goths and, again, Byzantine Empire  
870 under Arabs

1090 under Normans from Sicily  
1154 Bishops of Malta under Sicily  
1194 under German Swabians  
1266 under French Angevins

1283 under Spanish (Aragonese, followed by Castilians)

1350 establishment of Maltese nobility

1397 *Università* (local government) established

1518 under Holy Roman Empire

1530-1798 Order of St John (under French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and German Grandmasters)

1551 most of Gozo's population taken to slavery

1565 the Great Siege

1798 Napoleon occupies the Maltese islands

1798 following surrender of French forces here, Gozo for some months autonomous from Malta

1814 Paris treaty definitely grants Malta to Britain

1831 Bishops of Malta become independent from Sicily

1835 First Council of Government

1864 Diocese of Gozo separated from Malta

1914-8 WWI

1919 *Sette Giugno* riots

1921 First Parliament

1939-45 WWII

1942 Award of George Cross

1957 last new parish in Gozo

1961 Birth of semi-autonomous Gozo Civic Council

1964 Malta becomes an independent state

1973 End of GCC experience

1974 Malta becomes a Republic

1987 Creation of the Ministry for Gozo

1993 First Local Council elections

23 September 1999 birth of the Gozo Philatelic Society

2004 Malta become a member of the European Union

2008 Euro adopted

2010 Three "official" hamlets created in Gozo





# list of main feasts in Gozo

<p>St. John Bosco</p>  <p>Victoria (L-Oratorju) January last Sunday</p>	<p>St. Gregory the Great</p>  <p>Kercem March 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>St. Paul Shipwreck</p>  <p>Munxar May 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>Christ the Saviour</p>  <p>Għasri June 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday</p>
<p>St. Anthony of Padua</p>  <p>Mġarr (Għajnsielem) June 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>Sacred Heart of Jesus</p>  <p>Fontana June 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>St. John the Baptist</p>  <p>Xewkija June 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>St. Peter &amp; St. Paul</p>  <p>Basilica S. Pietru S. Pawl Nadur 29<sup>th</sup> June</p>
<p>Visitation of St. Elizabeth</p>  <p>Għarb July 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>Our Lady of Soccour</p>  <p>Kercem July 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>St. George the Martyr</p>  <p>Victoria St George's Basilica July 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>St. Margaret the Martyr</p>  <p>Sannat July 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday</p>
<p>St. Joseph</p>  <p>Qala August 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>St. Lawrence</p>  <p>San Lawrenz August 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>The Assumption of Our Lady</p>  <p>Victoria The Cathedral 15<sup>th</sup> August</p>	<p>The Assumption of Our Lady</p>  <p>Żebbuġ August 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday</p>
<p>Our Lady of Loreto</p>  <p>Għajnsielem August 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>Our Lady of Mount Carmel</p>  <p>Xlendi September 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>Our Lady of Victories</p>  <p>Basilica Maria Bambina Xagħra 8<sup>th</sup> September</p>	<p>Our Lady <i>tal-Grazzja</i></p>  <p>Victoria September 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday</p>
<p><i>Ġesù Nazzarenu</i></p>  <p>Xagħra October 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday</p>	<p>Immaculate Conception</p>  <p>Victoria 8<sup>th</sup> December</p>	<p>Immaculate Conception</p>  <p>Qala 8<sup>th</sup> December</p>	<p>St. Lucy the Martyr</p>  <p>Santa Luċija December 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday</p>

this list of dates (usually preceded by numerous days of activities of a social, liturgical and cultural nature) may vary slightly, depending on the year's calendar.



# Fontana

Fontana is a small village on the road to Xlendi from Victoria. Its local name is “*Triq tal-Għajn*” which can be rendered as “the way to the spring”. In fact the locality is very well known for springs and valleys, the main road running along the east bank of the Wied il-Lunzjata watercourse. The motto (Latin) is *Inundatione Ferax*, translatable as “Fertile through Inundation”. The general area was also rich in game.



“*Għajn il-Kbira*”



Fontana

Actually Fontana (first recorded in the 14th century) owes its name to the “*Għajn il-Kbira*” (the Great Fountain), a spring at the lower part of the road. An ornate stone shelter was built in 1698 (with three medieval coats of arms: those of Sicily’s King Charles III, Grand Master Carafa and Gozo’s Universitas – which has become that of Gozo itself). People went there not only for water but also to do their washing (a sort of manual launderette), a custom which has not become completely extinct – even cars can sometimes be seen getting a refreshing all-over! For a long period these waters were rationed out to farmers on a rotating basis. This irrigation was so essential that those whose turn was on Sunday had a special permission to work without committing a sin! Historian Rev. Dr. Joseph Bezzina (in his ‘Gozo a historical glimpse’) gives a list of five natural fountains found in this locality; namely *Għajn il-Kbira*, *l-Għajn tal-Bhejjem*, *l-Għajn tal-Wied*, *l-Għajn ta’ Bendu* and *l-Għajn tal-Loġoġ* - the one that used to appear on the old coat of arms of Fontana. Today only two still exist: *il-Kbira* and *ta’ Bendu*. The public slaughter-house was located opposite. Today this building serves as a weaving factory which caters mainly for tourists who want to see one of the oldest local crafts and maybe acquire a souvenir or a decoration for their home.



10 JULY 1993



26 MARCH 2011



A little further up (in practically the village’s centre), one comes upon the Fontana parish church – dating from 1905 - dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The two statues in the front represent St. Peter and St. Paul, formerly in St. George’s. Among the more important artists who decorated the interior, one should note Cali (with the titular altarpiece), Camilleri Cauchi and Pisani. Great feasts were organised in 1993 when the titular altarpiece was solemnly crowned. To commemorate this occasion, the Malta postal authorities issued a special postmark on 10 July 1993. Although seemingly not much more than a suburb, Fontana is a separate parish. Dun Ġużepp Hili (who was to become its first parish priest) was instrumental in this development, grasping the opportunity offered by the 1909 visit by Apostolic Visitor Cardinal La Fontaine.



The village also encompasses a few other streets, not excluding Hospital Street which reminds us of the former St Julian's Hospital nearby (now the Seminary). Just as it happens elsewhere, others are named after personalities hailing from – or connected with – Fontana. These include Grace Grima, John Gaspard de Le Marchant and Mgr. Michael Buttigieg. An alabaster she-wolf found in 1720 amongst debris in a field is now exhibited at the Gozo Museum in Victoria.



Historically, the community started out as a fishermen's – who earn their living from the sea and thus devoted to St Andrew, their patron saint. They used to gather around a niche (“*in-niċċa tas-Salvatur*”) until they succeeded to build a fully-fledged church. The locals wished to have it dedicated to “their” St Andrew; but Bishop Camilleri was such strong devotee of the Sacred Heart that he “amended” their alternative to this more recent title of Jesus (also wishing to thus commemorate Pope Leo XIII's episcopal Golden Jubilee)

In any case, the November feast in honour of the fisher apostle remains an important highlight of the year, among quite a few regular religious appointments. His statue (the work of Karlu Mallia) was acquired for the procession organized by the specially founded Andrean confraternity in 1906.



The most important week obviously remains mid-June with fireworks (road and sky), band marches, church liturgies and procession – which belie the limited number of inhabitants. All this is centred around the 1923 titular *papier-machè* statue (gilded in 1985) – a distinct example of Wistin Camilleri's skills. The parish is the “official” diocesan centre for devotion to the Sacred Heart, with organized occasions aimed specifically at priests. A “Millenium” project undertaken by a committee created by the then parish priest aimed at having all Gozitan families consecrated individually – quite a complicated task, even though receiving wide cooperation!

In spite of the small population (less than nine hundred, according to the 2005 census), the parish has numerous sectional groups, such as those for altar servers or adolescents, the guitar group and the “street leaders”. The founder of the diocesan Eucharistic Movement (Mgr. Rużar Borg) hails from this village. This small village possesses its own community radio: Radju Sacro Cuor; and formerly even had a football team. One of the very limited number of Presidents of the Gozo Civic Council originally represented Fontana (Anton Vassallo). The Local Council is quite active in socio-cultural activities (including traditions and crafts); but it also focuses on the environment, undertaking various restoration projects (sourcing national and EU funding opportunities).



Relationships continue with emigrants and their families, which may result in the foundation of overseas committees. As an example, one can mention the Sacred Heart Fontana Association (of Victoria in Australia) which succeeded in importing a statue for their own feast (a copy of the original). A final philatelic note: there is a letterbox (MaltaPost's reference is L527) in Triq Tal-Ghajn.



# Għajnsielem

The name Għajnsielem is derived from Arabic; some historians define it as meaning ‘*Hani Salem*’ (= Salem's Spring), others as ‘*Għajn is-Sliem*’ (The Spring of Peace). This name originated from an old water spring. For the benefit of the population, Grand Master Perellos built an arcade on it and stone washbasins were added. This spring was the main reason that attracted the first inhabitants to this area. Connected with the water spring is the village motto *Ob fontem prosperitas* (‘I flourish because of the Spring’).



Artist's impression of the old water spring

Both for ecclesiastical and civil purposes, Għajnsielem consists of Għajnsielem proper, Mġarr and the island of Comino. Situated on the South coast of Gozo, it is the first village to greet the visitor arriving from Malta. Some 2,570 residents (2005 census) make up the village population. The new towering Għajnsielem Parish Church is not just a landmark but also an attraction.



The most eminent personage that Għajnsielem ever gave to Gozo was Archpriest Saverio Cassar. Born in 1746, Cassar was appointed Archpriest of the Matrice (now the Gozo Cathedral) in the capital. This patriot is rightly remembered as the mastermind of the 1798 revolt of the Gozitans against the French occupier. During this turbulent period, Saverio Cassar was provisionally appointed Governor General of Gozo. He died in 1805.



MaltaPost issued a stamp in 2002 to commemorate this hero. A special handstamp was also issued in 2005 on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his death.



The original parish church knows its beginning to a legend that states that a certain shepherd, Anġlu Grech, while attending his sheep in the vicinity of the spring, saw an apparition of a young Lady dressed in immaculately white garments. She invited him to raise a statue in her honour in an area close by. Anġlu informed his fellow shepherds, friends and farmers of the vision and of the Lady's wish. In no time, a life-size statue of the Virgin Mary was erected and the residents started meeting together in front of it, reciting the Rosary and other prayers.

At that time, Għajnsielem was within the limits of the parish of Nadur. The inhabitants were finding it difficult to go up to the Nadur to hear mass. Permission to build a small chapel was granted by the Nadur Parish Priest Dun Frangisk Sapiano, who laid the first stone in 1810. By 1820 the church was completed, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loreto. On 1 January 1854, Għajnsielem became a vice parish and a year later (on 26 January) was officially established as a parish. Some 50 years later it was felt that a larger church was needed for the ever increasing population. Parish Priest Dun Frangisk Mizzi was of the same idea. Architect Ugo Mallia was given the assignment to design a church on a Gothic-Lombard style in the form of a Latin Cross. Work started on 4 June 1922 and the foundation stone was officially laid in a special ceremony on 14 September 1924. When the first master mason retired, it took years to find a replacement. Then the Second World War brought the project to a standstill. Several other reasons were the cause for more delays that hampered the progress of the new church. One should mention a near double tragedy since builder Toni Vella fell from up high on two different occasions. Moreover, architect Mallia was replaced by Ġużè D'Amato. After the latter's death, his successor Joseph Mizzi was again replaced after eight years by the last architect: Joe Ellul Vincenti from Sliema. Under the leadership of Archpriest Espedito Tabone, the people of Għajnsielem saw their dream fulfilled: at long last the church was completed in 1979. The next Archpriest, Mgr. Joseph Zerafa continued to enrich the church with works of art, including an elaborated wooden niche for the statue of the Madonna ta' Loreto.



Ghajnsielem Parish Church

The 'Apparition Memorial'

Ghajnsielem can boast of having the first Football Club on the island, officially founded in 1936 - though its story started before 1933. British soldiers resting at Fort Chambray started to frequent the village wine bars; up to this day, Ghajnsielem bars still carry the original British names such as 'Glory of England' and 'City of London'. These servicemen made friends with the Ghajnsielem locals: this was the first spark that ignited the football game in Gozo. Matches between soldiers' teams and Ghajnsielem youths gave birth to this sport first in the village and later all over Gozo.



St. Joseph Band Club of Ghajnsielem was born at St. Joseph Institute also found in the same village. The Band Club was founded by Monsignor Ġużeppi De Piro in 1928. On 1 September 1983 the Malta Post Office issued a stamp to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this generous person.



A talented youth, Lelio Spiteri, was instrumental in setting up *Radju Lauretana*. It was yet another dream come true for the Ghajnsielem community, with the first transmission taking place in August 2007.

*Fondazzjoni Betlehem f'Ghajnsielem*, an environmentally friendly ISO-certified NGO, organizes an impressive re-enactment of the Birth of Our Lord. This replica of the timeless Christmas story attracts thousands of visitors during the month of December. It is held in the 'Nativity Village' constructed on an area of 20,000 square metres. Complete with live farm animals and birds, horses turning mills, villagers going about their jobs, shepherds in natural caves and the Holy Couple in the cowshed tenderly caring for their newborn, it is simply a unique Christmas experience.



The first postmark used by the Ghajnsielem Branch Post Office was a 23mm single ring metal postmark with the words GHAJN-SIELEM/GOZO and AM and Date. First used in 1900, this is very rare. The present Branch Post Office was officially inaugurated on 19 September 1989 and is located in J. F. De Chambray Street. Lately this Post office was temporarily closed for refurbishment and services were provided from Ta' Loreto Church premises at Fawwara Street. The extensive renovation work has resulted in a most spacious and welcoming post office.

On the eve (13 August 2011) of the Blessing of a set of 8 new bells for the parish church of Ghajnsielem, MaltaPost issued a commemorative postmark designed by artist Paul Stellini. These bells were cast in France by Cornille-Havard of Villedieu-les-Poêles.





# Għarb

The name Għarb comes from Arabic, meaning ‘sunset’, symbolizing the position of the village at the West of the island of Gozo. The motto of the village is ‘*In extremo vigilat*’ which means ‘Sentinel at the border line’. According to the November 2005 census there were 1,160 persons living here.



The people of Għarb have always been skilled and prudent farmers, working from sunrise to sunset. During harvest time they used to spend the whole day in the fields as the wheat and cotton crops demanded a lot of hard work. Produce was also scarce in time of drought. Every evening women and girls used to work lace at home or separate cotton from its pod.

Archeologist Dr. Trump describes excavations carried out at *il-Mixta* caves near Ghajn Abdul which brought to light pottery from the Neolithic period: this area was inhabited between 3800 and 3600 B.C. Other excavations indicate that people lived in these caves during the Bronze Age i.e. 1400 to 800 B.C. Up to quite recently, ‘Cart Ruts’ could be seen at Dwejra and in the San Dimitri area. It is also believed that Phoenicians used to stay at Għarb and there carried out their final preparations for westward-bound sea voyages. Punic remains were also discovered at *ix-Xaqqufija*. In Għarb we also find Byzantine names such as *Ta’ Kardusa*. The Arabs later brought us their language and archaic words such as *għannewwel* (meaning last year) and *ċuplajs* (prickly pear trees) are still in use. Għarb also played an important part during the Corsair raids on Gozo: smoke signals were sent to other parts of Gozo when the enemy was sighted off San Dimitri Point and Dwejra.

Since ancient times the people of Għarb had a special reverence for the visitation of Our Lady to her relative Saint Elizabeth. This devotion made the faithful refer to her as ‘Our Lady of Virtue’. The small church known as ‘*Taż-Żejt*’, built on the site of an older one, was completed in 1678 and it was to be the first parish church as proclaimed on 29 August 1679.

But the inhabitants soon planned to build a new bigger church. The work began around 1699, but it had to stop for ten years as the master mason died; work started again in 1717. In 1724 the building was completed and on 26 October 1729 the new church was consecrated. It is in Baroque style, similar to the church of St. Agnes in Rome’s Piazza Navona. It became a Collegiate church on 19 May 1774 and a Basilica (united with that of Ta’ Pinu Shrine also within the limits of Għarb) on 28 November 1967. The main altarpiece was painted by the Maltese artist Fra Gian Nikola Buhagiar and was donated by Grand Master Antonio Manuel de Vilhena in 1773. The statue representing the Visitation of Our Lady is the work of the Maltese artist Joseph Vella, while the ceiling and dome paintings are by the renowned Gozitan Chev Paul Camilleri Cauchi.



Main Altar Piece

On the titular feast day the unique ‘*Inflorita*’ is displayed in front of the church. This is a new tradition consisting of a colourful carpet of fresh flowers depicting some religious image and/or personality.





Besides Ta' Pinu and *Taż-Żejt*, other churches within Għarb's limits include the chapels dedicated to St Publius (at Għammar) and to *S Dimitri*.

Four well known personalities from Għarb, who lived almost exactly during the same period, were Karmni Grima, Franġisku Portelli, Frenċ Mercieca (popularly known as *Frenċ tal-Għarb*) and Fr. Joseph Portelli, the first rector of 'Ta' Pinu'. These four devout persons had a common denominator: they did their utmost to spread the devotion towards Our Lady of Ta' Pinu. Their bodies are now laid to rest in Her Shrine.



Another beloved son of this village is the late Bishop of Gozo, Mgr. Nicholas Joseph Cauchi. Bishop Cauchi was born on 2 March 1929 and served as diocesan Bishop from 1972 (previously Apostolic Administrator) until his retirement on 22 January 2006. This prolific writer and great preacher went to meet the Lord on 15 November 2010.

A fascinating site at Għarb is '*It-Tieqa ta' Wied il-Mielah*'. This is almost identical to the Azure Window at Dwejra though much smaller in size.

The Għarb Local Council has embarked on rehabilitating this area, including the valley, and turned it into a recreational spot for all to enjoy. This extensive work was done through EU Funds. On the social and cultural side, the Council organizes events such as '*Seher il-Punent*', an activity which has become quite a popular item in Gozo's cultural calendar.



Għarb has its own Band Club, the *Għaqda Mużikali Viżitazzjoni*, founded on 22 November 2003. On the 5th Anniversary of its foundation, MaltaPost issued a special handstamp given from the post office in Għarb. Other NGOs found in this village include Għarb Rangers Football Club.



The church facade was featured on the 10d+2d stamp in the 1970 Christmas set (by Emvin Cremona). On the first postmarks of Għarb, this village was known as Garbo. The postmark consisted of a 23mm single ring with AM only and date and with the words Garbo-Gozo. It is known that the first post office in this village existed from 1910 to 1912. The present post office is situated in the primary school complex. There are also three letterboxes (in Triq Santu Pietru, Triq Il-Knisja and Triq Il-Viżitazzjoni respectively); stamp vendors are not missing either.



The *San Dimitri* legend was featured on the 5 May 1997 Europa 35c stamp. This legend states that the only son (Mattew) of a Gozitan widow (Żgugina) was taken away by the Corsairs during one of their frequent raids on Gozo. She invoked San Dimitri for the liberation of her son, promising to keep a lighted oil lamp day and night in his chapel for the rest of her life. The Saint appeared galloping on his horse out of the shrine, pursued the pirates and returned Mattew to his mother. Żgugina kept her word and the lamp remained alight for many years to follow.

A typical Gozitan ornate open stone balcony, complimented by a recessed seashell form doorway, was featured on a postage stamp issued on 28 April 2007. This balcony (unfortunately, now an extremely rare – and quite weathered - example of this type of domestic architecture) is located in Għarb's church square. Yes, we really like to adorn our homes – even on the exterior!



# Għasri

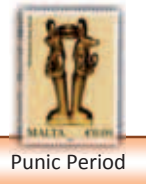
Għasri is a village in the Western part of Gozo. With a population of 417 inhabitants (census of November 2005), it is thus the smallest village in Gozo and the third smallest in the Maltese Islands. But the number of residents opting to settle down in Għasri is constantly on the increase; maybe this is due to the fact that it is a very peaceful village. Moreover it covers a substantial area.



'Għasri' is a Maltese word of Semitic origin which means 'to squeeze' - probably being the place where the olive produce cultivated in the nearby village of Żebbuġ was brought to be pressed to make olive oil. Other historians are of a different opinion. E Serracino Inglott says that Għasri may mean 'l-għasar' = vespers, the time before sunset; as the village is cuddled by hills, it gives one a feeling of a place at rest. G Wettinger thinks that the name came from a nickname or a name of Arabic origin of someone who might have lived there between 1055 and 1249. The name 'Jel hasri' is shown for the first time in the archives in Valletta in the act of Notary J.D. Formosa of 4 March 1587.

The coat of arms of the village shows three olive trees on a golden background with three pressing wheels at the top on a blue band, while the motto is *Ex Labore Fructus* = 'Through work the fruit'.

Dutch archaeologist A. van der Blom reports that, on Ġordan hill, he had found Neolithic remains dating from about 4500 BC; and hence it might have been inhabited so many millenia ago. In 1979 a Punic burial place was discovered at Triq Wied Il-Għasri.



*Tal-Patruċinju* is a little chapel situated at the end of Triq il-Knisja and at the beginning of Triq Wied il-Għasri. It was the first basilica erected in Gozo. The chapel, after having been rebuilt several times through various eras, was aggregated with Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome. Thus, from 3 September 1786, this chapel ceased to be under the jurisdiction of the local ecclesiastical authorities. It was consecrated by Bishop Vincenzo Labini on 10 May 1789; the rector at that time was Rev. Ġużepp Schembri (1776-1821). Hence this chapel became the first (and, for the following 161 years, the only) country chapel that was consecrated in Gozo.



The painting of the 'Patronage of the Virgin Mary' on the main altar was painted by Francesco Zahra in 1739. This chapel served the community until the new parish church was built. In fact Għasri received the status of a Vice Parish on 15 October 1872, with Rev Ġużepp Diacono as its first vice parish priest.



The foundation stone of the new parish church, which was designed by the same Rev Diacono, was laid on 6 September 1903. It was blessed and consecrated to the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ (or the Eucharist) on 9 January 1916 by Bishop Camilleri. On 16 December 1921, Għasri became a Parish with Rev. Fr. Ġużepp Galea as its first parish priest.



A chapel dedicated to Saint Publius (traditionally Malta's first bishop) is located in a lane off Għammar Street. It was built on the site of an older chapel dedicated to Saint Leonard, when Fr. Ġużepp Cassar (1803-1866) was rector. Its foundation stone was laid on 26 July 1850. It took just over two years to complete and was blessed on 10 October 1852 by the Għarb Archpriest Rev. Salv Mizzi. It has two bells named *Publiju* and *Pawlu*.



Construction on the Ġordan Lighthouse, standing about 21 metres high, started in June 1852. Its lantern, which used to produce light by means of oil, was inaugurated by the Governor of Malta Sir William Reid on 15 March 1853. Its beam flashed at a few seconds' intervals by means of a rotating reflector. The lighting system was improved several times throughout the years to make it stronger and more efficient. The present electrical system works automatically and needs much less maintenance and surveillance. The lighthouse played an important part in World War II, being instrumental for the defence of the Maltese islands as the radar installed here could anticipate enemy attacks at an early stage. On 7 December 1996, Ġordan Lighthouse saw the beginning of a new project, run jointly by the Universities of Malta and Cologne: an international study on atmosphere pollution and the effect of carbon monoxide on the ozone layer is being carried out; the necessary sophisticated instruments have been installed on the premises.

*Wied il-Għasri* is believed to have its source at Dbieġi Hill. It winds through Għasri, between Żebbuġ and Ġordan Hill and flows between impressively high cliffs into the sea. This part of the sea is very popular with scuba divers, offering them spectacular underwater caves and other interesting sub aqua places to explore. The very narrow bay is a paradise for those who seek a quiet bathing area. An interesting site here is a cave close to the shore in which a shaft was hewn up to the top of the cliffs. A mill made up of several pails used to be rigged up in order to bring up sea water to fill the neighbouring saltpans.



Għammar Hill, just in front of Ta' Pinu National Sanctuary, is 188 metres above sea level. Besides its natural beauty, this hill offers a spectacular work of art in the form of a set of life-size marble statues representing the episodes of the Way of the Cross. These statues were designed by the well-known Gozitan artist Alfred Camilleri Cauchi and sculptured in Italy.

Two of the three '*maxrabija*' windows that have survived in Gozo are found in Għasri. These types of unique windows, from which one can look and see without being seen, are entirely made of stone. The two Għasri examples can be found close to St. Publius Chapel and in Lighthouse Street, respectively.



Like other villages, Għasri has its Local Council which is instrumental towards the betterment of life in the locality. Its aim is to sustain and promote the traditions of Għasri, keeping the spirit of the village alive.

A daughter of Għasri who recently made a name for herself, her village and for all Gozo is H.E. Ms. Theresa Cutajar. On 25 February 2011 she presented her credentials as High Commissioner of Malta to the President of the Republic of India, thus becoming the first Gozitan to occupy such a high post.

There has never been a post office in Għasri. There are only two letter boxes: in Pjazza Salvatur and in Triq ta' Għammar. An important philatelic connection occurred on 21 March 2001, when the Ġordan Lighthouse was included (16c value) in a set of three stamps showing Lighthouses in Malta. Naturally the Gozo Philatelic Society issued in limited edition of a commemorative cover for this occasion.



# Kemmuna

As one can also confirm through the numerous stamps showing maps of the Maltese archipelago, Comino sits right between the two bigger islands - to the south east of Gozo and the north west of Malta. But in fact it is administratively part of Gozo, thus presently under the responsibility of Ghajnsielem Local Council. Etymologically its name probably refers to the cumin seed which long flourished there – but its general shape could also have been an influence.



Although *Kemmuna* is described as almost uninhabited, the “permanent” population is increased considerably by the stream of visitors who come to taste its natural beauty. One of the most attractive sites (already included during the Postal Labels “experiment” in 2002) was featured on one of the 19c Occasion stamps.



The Cumin plant once very abundant and a good source of income for the Maltese islands

The Blue Lagoon on the western side (“*Bejn il-Kmiemen*” – literally “between the Cominos”, due to its location between Comino proper and the adjacent 400-metre islet of Cominotto or *Kemmunett*) offers one of the most spectacular views in the Maltese islands with its clear waters. Frequented by large numbers of tourists and tour boats daily, the Blue Lagoon is a much-photographed picturesque bay, with a brilliant white, sandy base and a rich marine life that make it popular with divers, snorkelers and swimmers.



The Blue Lagoon

The Blue Lagoon is also a paradise for sunbathing and relaxing, offering something for everyone, whether an experienced scuba diver (exploring the depths and the underwater caves) or a child in the safety of warm, shallow waters.

Comino, just some 2km long by 1.7km wide, is obviously ideal for a range of sea sports, including windsurfing. Other beaches on Comino include the sandy beaches of St. Mary Bay (*Ramla ta' S. Marija*) and St. Nicholas Bay (*Bajja S. Niklaw*). The former is located on the North side of Comino and is also popular for picnics and swimming; Santa Marija Cave is a diving attraction too which can also be reached through a tunnel. San Niklaw Bay, located near the Blue Lagoon, is the access point for the hotel ferry (bungalows above St Mary are also owned by this only establishment - dating from the 1960s - which also has its own small beaches). Divers also recommend the coral reef near Cominotto.



Hikers (and photography enthusiasts) can find plenty of paths to follow on Comino, around the edge of the island’s cliffs and enjoying the views while picking up the scent of wild thyme and other herbs. The best time for a hike is definitely spring time, when everything is in bloom – and without the heat of summer. Comino’s granite goes down to a depth of about two hundred and eighty feet; towards the south there is widespread erosion caused by the wind and the incessant pounding of the waves, resulting in large chunks having fallen down into the sea.

Especially during the high season, numerous operators provide popular day trips (for both tourists and locals) to Comino by boat, with various points of operation in both Gozo (Mġarr) and Malta. Boat trips around the caves surrounding the island offer an added opportunity of viewing the dramatic coastal cliffs with the navigable caverns beneath.

The island is known to have been inhabited by farmers during Roman times; however for long periods since then it has been sparsely populated, often privately owned or even abandoned. Its rugged coastline is delineated by sheer limestone cliffs, and dotted with deep natural caves which were popular with pirates and marauders in the Middle Ages – and thus described as “mysterious” in many literary works. The caves and coves were frequently used as staging posts for raids on hapless boats crossing between Malta and Gozo – the “*fliegu*”. The “Knights of Malta” used this island for recreational purposes, mostly



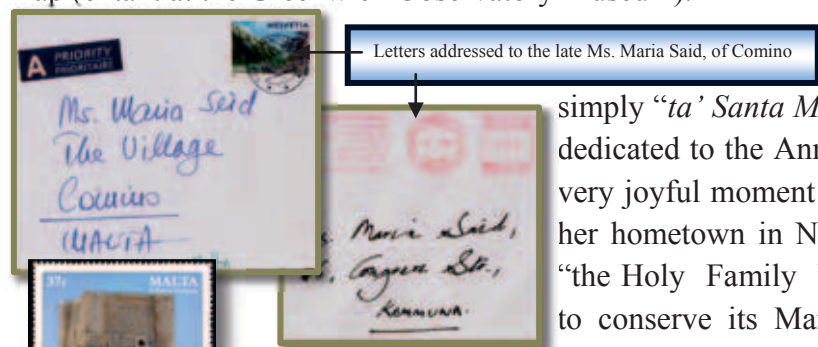
hunting. They were fiercely protective of the local game, which consisted of wild boar and hares (*fenek tal-grixti*): unbelievably, convicted poachers were liable to a penalty of three years as a galley slave! Comino also had an alternative use: a place of imprisonment or exile for errant knights. The British too found it ideal as a prison for some time during the nineteenth century and thus *Kemmuna* was actually made out of bounds for all civilians - with sailors ordered to give the island a wide berth or face the consequences, including confiscation of the vessel.

Luckily, this tranquil third member of the archipelago can still be described as substantially undisturbed: noises are very contained and traffic problems non-existent! Today, Comino is a bird sanctuary and nature reserve; it is very interesting for its rich flora and fauna - especially migratory birds. Bird hunting and trapping are prohibited all year round but ringing projects are held there regularly (with an annual average of well over two thousand birds ringed and released).

This tiny island may bear few marks of civilization; but it is not completely deprived of buildings with historical interest. The most prominent is certainly *Santa Marija* Tower: a landmark for miles around, it is visible all over the island and from some distance out at sea. Perched on the edge of Comino's high cliffs, it offers a most dramatic subject for photography enthusiasts! The fortress, with its eighteen-foot thick walls, is 65 feet above the ground. In 2002 it was used to represent the prison *Chateau d'If* in the movie "The Count of Monte Cristo" starring Jim Caviezel. The Tower is now often open to the public, evidenced by the flying flag.

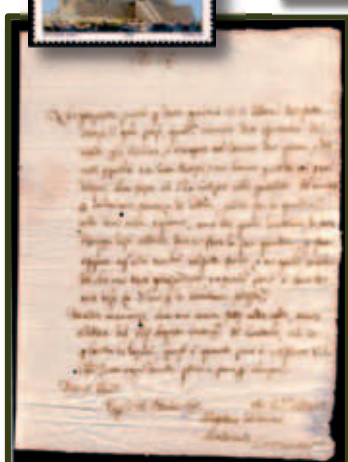


St. Mary's Battery (or "*It-Trunciera*") is a semi-circular structure with a number of embrasures facing the sea. St. Mary's Redoubt, an additional defensive structure, was constructed in 1716 on the northern coast of Comino but subsequently demolished. The Knights also built army barracks, periodically used as an isolation hospital. There is a final notable Comino building: a chapel located above *Santa Marija* Bay – quite an uncommon setting. One can reach this single-storey building (surrounded by trees) by walking up from the sands, past the police station. Known to have been built in 1618 (because of the new security offered by the Tower – and enlarged in later centuries), it has been desecrated and re-consecrated at least once in its history. The earliest record of a chapel here can be seen on a 12<sup>th</sup> (or 13<sup>th</sup>) century navigational map (extant at the Greenwich Observatory Museum).



Comino church is often called simply "*ta' Santa Marija*" (like the bay itself). It was originally dedicated to the Annunciation but this was changed to another very joyful moment in her life – her safe return from Egypt to her hometown in Nazareth. This is sometimes described as "the Holy Family Upon its Return from Egypt"; however, to conserve its Marian nature, it is usually referred to as

Our Lady on the Return from Egypt – probably uniquely! Another unusual feature is what can be described as a wooden trellis separating the presbytery from the rest of the church; this surely counts as proof of antiquity! A priest crosses over from Gozo to offer his services: interestingly, though the island is under Ghajnsielem's responsibility, it seems that he has usually been from Qala. His presence is confirmed by bell peeling, rung from the tiny sacristy. When rough seas stopped him, the residents gathered on the *Tal-Ħmara* rocks to follow Mass said for them in the Immaculate Conception chapel ("*tal-Blat*") above *Ħondoq ir-Rummien* (Qala) across the channel.



A letter sent on 28 October 1797 by Antonio Caruana, the man in charge of the Comino tower,



# Kerċem

As one travels through Victoria to the South West reaching a winding road leading downhill to the picturesque valley of Lunzjata, one notices the clustered houses of a characteristic Gozitan village: Kerċem. “*Ta’ Kerċem*” lies between the hills of *Tal-Mixta*, *Ta’ Għar Ilma* and *Ta’ Dbieġi*. Its boundaries reach as far as the *Għadira ta’ San Raflu* overlooking Xlendi and the road to Ta’ Pinu Sanctuary. The population is around 1,654 people.



Kerċem’s coat-of-arms consists of a white background with a red ribbon crossing horizontally and three yellow circles within. The name dates from the sixteenth century but its meaning is uncertain, possibly derived from some family nickname (etymologically, “short-nosed”?) who lived there. Some suggest that the village motto “*Felctar non Frangar*” (= “Bent but not broken”), referring to the oak tree, can indicate another origin: ‘oak’ in Latin is in fact ‘*quercus*’ (reflecting the strong character of these people).

According to archeological findings, Kerċem has been inhabited by man since the earliest times. The evidence lies in the Għar Dalam phase (5000-4500BC) remains found at Tal-Mixta. Between Lunzjata Valley and Kerċem lie the remains of Għar Gerduf which (as recorded by De Soldanis in his monumental *Gozo*) served as an early Christian cemetery (in the late Roman period). This was also known as *l-Għar tal-Mara l-Bajda* (= the White Lady’s Cave) because of frequent purported sightings of this ghost.

Covered-up Roman baths (seemingly receiving their supply from the *Għajn tal-Hammimiet* (a word meaning warm or heated water) on the Victoria – Għarb road) are in the vicinity. The remains of a house pertaining to the Phoenician period were excavated in 1906 while enlarging the parish church. More recently, tombs and human remains were found beneath the church sacristy – and are now on permanent display.

Over the years, several medieval chapels were built around Kerċem: *San Girgor*, *Santa Lucija*, *San Anton Abbati*, *San Ġorġ*, *San Ġużeppe*, *Ta’ Santa Katarina* and others. Today only the first two are still standing, built around 1581.



The village of Kerċem began to form up with an increasing population; the need was felt to build a new larger church and in 1846 the first stone was laid. On the 23 November 1851 the church was finished, blessed and opened to the public. Pope Leone XIII’s bull “*Nostro Pastoralis*” raised Kerċem to a parish on the 10 March 1885 (further expansions became necessary later, with consecration taking place in 1911). Since 17 August 1885, it is



(unusually) co-dedicated to our Lady of Perpetual Help (“*tas-Sokkors*”) and Pope Gregory the Great.



The titular altarpiece (showing both) is a major painting from 1854 – also important for the socio-historical details contained - by a member of the productive Busutil family: Salvatore. It depicts the traditional solemn votive procession that took place annually on 12 March (until 1967) from the Cathedral with the participation of all Gozo’s parishes and organizations.

It has now been transformed into a much simpler lenten pilgrimage. St Gregory’s feast had in fact been a highlight of the social year in Gozo: it was a “duty” to participate from all over the island, dressed in holiday best! On the parish’s initiative, a special postmark was issued to commemorate the XIVth centenary of St Gregory’s death.

The hamlet of Santa Luċija lies within the village boundaries – and Lunzjata (valley and church) is often assumed to be so too. Xlendi’s church does fall (ecclesiastically) under Kerċem’s parish priest.

*Ta’ Kerċem* has its own primary state school built in 1921 and a church school run by the Carmelite Sisters (who also have a chapel open to the public). A private school opened in 1997, for English language teaching to foreign students. Kerċem has its community radio: Radju Sokkors.

The village band *l-Għaqda Mużikali San Girgor* was founded in 1997. Although this band is quite young, it achieved several musical success. Apart from playing in foreign countries, the crowning glory was probably reached on 20 February 2011, when it performed an outstanding concert at the Manoel Theatre in Valletta. Present for this concert were H.E. Dr. George Abela, President of the Republic and other distinguished guests.



Dr Anton Calleja (a popular member of the – rather restricted – *literati* class) was elected to Parliament in 1947 in the name of the Gozo Party – that successful, if shortlived, experiment. Together with Peter Paul Grech (an innovative educator), he founded Kerċem Ajax FC in July 1953 – in time to participate in that football season. Its experience has been quite difficult, though some positive results have been achieved – even becoming Gozo’s champions. There is now a fully-fledged sports complex (named in memory of Raymond Mercieca who introduced futsal to Kerċem).



Madre Margherita Debrincat is another Kerċem personality after whom a street is named. She was the founder (or, more accurately, co-founder) of the congregation of the Franciscan sisters of the Sacred Heart which is now established in various countries. Her beatification process is well-advanced: on a diocesan level, it was the responsibility of another Kerċem resident: Fr Mario Grech (now Gozo bishop).



An event which was organised by the Kerċem Local Council for the first time in 2009 and which is becoming quite popular is a three-day festival called ‘*Is-Sagra ta’ San Girgor*’, which consisted of concerts, parades, band marches, traditional crafts, exhibitions, food and wine. For this festival various artistes, folk groups and dance companies take part. The festival comes to an end with a procession with the statue of Pope St Gregory the Great.

Projects undertaken by the Local Council include public spaces, restorations, environmental measures and town twinnings. There will soon be a complete civic centre. Public Gardens were opened for the millennium.



Pjazza Orvieto is a spacious square named after the Italian town Orvieto. Kerċem and Orvieto signed a twinning agreement in 2003. On 17 February 2011 a Sub Post Office was opened at the Local Council Office which is located in this square. As usual on such occasions the Gozo Philatelic society issued a commemorative postcard, cancelled with the first postmark. An other special commemorative postmark was issued on 11 March 2004, by MaltaPost on the occasion of the XIV Centenary from the death of St. Gregory the Great on 11 March AD 604. There are two letterboxes around Kerċem: in Pjazza San Girgor (MaltaPost’s reference is L522) and in Pjazza l-Avukat Anton Calleja (L529).





# Marsalforn

From just a fishing village on Gozo's north (or north-east) coast, Marsalforn has now become the island's most popular resort: it has gradually extended along the crescent-shaped rocky bay - hotels, apartment blocks, shops, restaurants and diving centres are nowadays more prominent than the few fishing boats that still dot the little harbour and "il-Menqa" artificial port. Its size means that everywhere is within walking distance; despite increasing numbers of Gozitan, Maltese and foreign visitors and residents, Marsalforn can still be very tranquil in the off-peak seasons. Its motto is still suitable: *Tranquillitatis plenissimus* – "abounding in serenity". The small central beach may attract the crowds - but there are numerous other bays, including Għar Qawqla, Qbajjar and Xwejni. On the scenic road skirting the shore (or cliff edge) under Żebbuġ, the salt pans merit attention: centuries old, they still produce several tons of sea salt annually. The fertile valley to the south offers another "natural" aspect.



Though NW winds do create a strong swell, Marsalforn served as the link between Gozo and the world until the development of Mġarr harbour: where imported food and other supplies were unloaded and where passengers boarded to travel abroad. The Knights of the Order of Saint John, the rulers of Malta at the time, even considered abandoning the fortified citadel in the centre of the island and building a new town overlooking the port. However the islanders protested that they were too poor to pay the additional tax needed to finance the move and that the disruption caused by the transfer of their homes would be too great.

The name of this village confirms its value as a seaport: etymologically *marsa* means 'port' or 'bay' while *forn* (derived from Arabic *lifurna*) refers to 'ship'. However popular legends have developed based on the "normal" meaning of *forn* (oven, bakery or even kiln). The name might possibly also have been derived from *forna*, referring to "a cave hollowed out by the sea", of which there are several around here (including Għar Qawqla).



A grand view of the whole area is viewable from the top of *il-Merzuq*, probably the hillock which most beckons for attention – especially since 1901 when a large wooden cross was erected on its peak, replaced with a stone statue of Christ when the island was consecrated to the Saviour. The model for the present fiberglass-and-concrete statue towering twelve metres above what is now *tas-Salvatur* is said to have been the young Mario Grech (the future diocesan bishop), chosen by the artist (his uncle). The volcano-like form has resulted in the strongly-held (even if completely scientifically erroneous) belief that Gozo has such an origin: both *merzuq* and the alternative *mungbell* confirm this idea, having "volcanic" etymological connections. Another interesting site is *ta' Kuljat*, once a Bronze Age settlement.

The battery (commonly called “tower” and formerly known as “*Fortina tal-Qolla l-Bajda*” and now used as a commercial establishment) on the promontory between Qbajjar and Xwejni is the last vestige of a chain of fortifications built around Marsalforn to defend against enemy landings. It was raised between 1716 under the direction of two military engineers.



Marsalforn can be reached by foot or by car from Victoria (some 4 kilometres); or – through zigzagging panoramic roads – from Xagħra or Żebbuġ. Though traditionally divided by the valley between the two villages which overlook it, the whole is now the responsibility of Żebbuġ local council (with an elected “hamlet” committee). However the Catholic Church has kept to its “separation”: thus the church dedicated to St Paul (supposedly re-built on the recommendations of Bishop Pietro Pace who lived and even bathed there each summer) falls under Xagħra parish.

The foundation stone of the present church (constructed by Antonio Giardina) was laid in 1730, with feast days on 10 February and 12 September; it has been enlarged various times – possibly losing its character – to better cater for the increasing number of residents and visitors. In fact the community is also served through centres run by religious congregations, often, used as summer residences (“*villegġjatura*”). They include chapels and halls suitable for meetings – on the other side of the bay.



Marsalforn of yesteryear.  
  
A tranquil and peaceful Saint Mary Street.

Legend maintains that it was from Marsalforn that St Paul embarked to continue his voyage after his shipwreck in 60AD (as narrated in the Biblical Acts of the Apostles); this is symbolised by the village's emblem which consists of a viper encircling a sword (on a shield encircled by a golden border), the blue colour obviously representing the sea. An alternative one includes the church belfry.

The first Gozitan waterpolo clubs were probably established in Marsalforn in the early 60's: ‘Dolphins’, ‘Sharks’ and ‘Whales’, later joined by the ‘Water Hippies’, ‘Penguins’ and ‘Otters’. Frank Masini and George Vella were among the founders. Others followed too but only the last are still active – Otters ASC play in ASA competitions, still headquartered near their old haunt.

Marsalforn addresses carry an MFN postcode. There is a letterbox (MaltaPost reference L508) in Triq il-Port and at least one registered stamp vendor.



# Mġarr



Mġarr is an integral part of the village of Għajnsielem both for ecclesiastical and civil purposes. According to the Gozitan historian Joseph Bezzina, the name Mġarr is Arabic - meaning 'the place or track along which a thing is dragged or drawn'. Depicted several times on Malta postage stamps, it is the visitor's first beckoning view. It is a welcome scene for tourists - and especially for Gozitan emigrants returning home.

Dominated by the neo-gothic Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Fort Chambray on the left, Għajnsielem's towering Parish Church together with a five star hotel and St. Anthony's Church and Convent on the right, Mġarr offers a spectacular postcard image with fishing boats, yachts and ferries and dotted with the typical flat-roofed houses on the hillside.



It is Gozo's main harbour and the most important fishing village of the island. In 1841, the first breakwater was constructed to provide more shelter to the port. Strengthened and extended several times up to 1906, a larger breakwater was constructed in 1935 - followed by two more in 1969 by Socomar of Italy.



The Gozo Boat - 1926

Today Mġarr offers shelter not only for the small fishing boats and the Gozo ferries but also to yachts and pleasure boats. A modern ferry terminal inaugurated in February 2008 was built at a cost of €9.3 million. It has facilities for around 600 passengers and 200 cars. Still under development, Mġarr has a yacht and pleasure boat marina.

This little village developed around the harbour area. The harbour is full of activity all year round; it never seems to sleep with the Gozo Channel ferries operating even during the night, fishing boats leaving and returning all the time, and with numerous restaurants serving local and foreign menus, also fish and sea food. There is also a police station and a tourist information office.

At Mġarr, home of the Gozo Boat (or *Dgħajsa tal-Latini*), there was once an important small boat-building industry mainly run by the Caruana brothers (Giuseppi and Eugenio) and their sons. This industry today is almost extinct due to modern technology. Recently Gozo Channel commissioned Mr. Peter Caruana, son of the late master boat builder Giuseppi who was the original builder, to restore to its former glory one of these boats, the '*Sacra Famiglia*'. Once restored, it will be donated to the Gozo heritage society, *Wirt Għawdex*. It is the intention of the promoters that this boat be placed on permanent exhibition in a prominent site around Mġarr Harbour.



*Dgħajsa tal-Latini*



The old 'Barrakka' with its tilted roof

Locally known as *Il-Barrakka*, the Gleneagles Bar is run by the Grech family. It is the oldest bar in Mġarr. It was constructed with a unique sloping roof and served as a cabin for ferry passengers. It stands next to the original jetty in the harbour. During World War II, *il-Barrakka* was destroyed by air enemy action. Also sunk and destroyed on 8 May 1942, while at anchor in the harbour, was the Gozo ferry the '*Royal Lady*'. Another tragedy hit the Gozo ferry *Il-Banċinu* in 1957 during a terrible storm that hit Gozo. It broke off from its moorings and was carried away to Żewwieqa beach where it was wrecked, taking down the night watchman with it. But probably the worst tragedy occurred on 30 October 1948 when 23 people lost their lives in the channel between the two islands when the fishing boat they were travelling on sank due to the turbulent sea.

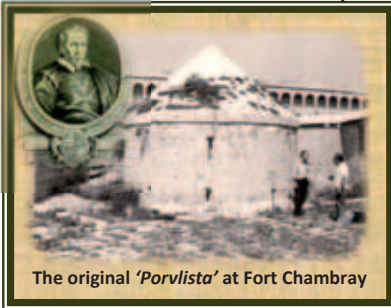


The small yet imposing church dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, a replica of the famous *Notre Dame de la Garde* in Marseille, was built in 1888, It is complete with a cave in the cliffs underneath and a statue of the Virgin as found at Lourdes in France.

One of the treasures that Gozo lost was Garzes Tower. Grand Master Martin Garzes built this fortified tower overlooking Mġarr port to protect the maritime traffic between Malta and Gozo. This however was demolished and its stones used to build the road known as *Ta' Passi* which leads from Mġarr to Ġhajnsielem. Luckily we still have a water colour painting of this tower, treasured at the Ministry for Gozo.



Postcard of Mġarr - 1904



The original 'Porvlista' at Fort Chambray

Work on Fort Chambray started in 1749. Designed by military engineer de Tigne', all expenses were paid by Governor Jacques François de Chambray. It was the last fortification built by the Order and it stands on top of the *Ġnien Migiarrow* slope. This was the last fortification complete with a '*Polvrsta*', Gunpowder Magazine., built by the Knights; its only active service came during the resistance to French occupation of the Islands in 1798. It was planned to be a miniature of Valletta but this

idea never materialised. Later it was used by the British Forces as a resting and convalescent place for soldiers. The Malta Health department used it as a hospital for the mentally sick. It is now in its final developing programme as a high class tourist village. A great number of villas and apartments were added but two historic British cemeteries were sacrificed and demolished.

On the opposite side of Fort Chambray stands another small church and convent dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua and run by the Franciscan Order of Friars Minors (*Ta' Ġiezu*). The church was blessed on Sunday 28 October 1906 by Bishop Giovanni Maria Camilleri. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of this event, MaltaPost issued a special commemorative postmark.



The last Post Office of Mġarr



Mġarr Branch Post Office Postmarks



Mġarr is linked to Ċirkewwa on mainland Malta by the Gozo Channel Company ferries and to Comino by the Comino Hotel boat and other small maritime companies. A bus route connects Mġarr to Victoria. Mġarr was once officially known as 'Migiarrow'. This is evident from the postmarks used at the Mġarr Sub Post Office and which also served as a Customs Office. Opened on 1 December 1885 together with the Victoria branch, they were the first post offices opened in Gozo. At that time only the Valletta post office existed in Malta. This is proof enough of the importance of Mġarr! Nikola Zammit was its first 'Sub Postmaster' who received £15 per year and another 4s.5d per day as first class Sergeant of Marine Police. The first postman was Francesco Buttigieg whose beat included Mġarr (*Migiarrow*), Ġhajnsielem (*Għajn Sielem*), Qala (*Kala*), Nadur, Xewkija (*Xeuchia*) and Xagħra (*Caccia*). First located at Victory Street, the Migiarrow Sub Post Office was transferred to 21 Mġarr Road, then to 22 Shore Street until its closure in 1933. It was reopened as Mġarr Branch Post Office on 27 November 1958 operating, from 58, St. Anthony Street, next door to what was the Grand Lady Hotel. On 10 July 1998 the post office was closed on the pretext of refurbishment. Not only was it never reopened, but (together with the Grand Guest House) it was demolished to make space for the present five star hotel. The only sign left was a letterbox but this too was removed on 13 April 2003. On 15 September 2011, MaltaPost and Iceland Post issued Miniature Sheets as a joined issue. The Icelandic sheet shows the fishing town and port of Húsavík, while the Maltese sheet shows the fishing village and port of Mġarr.



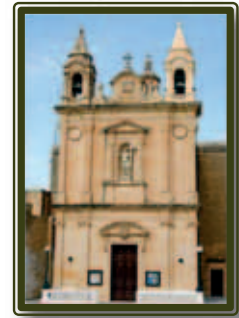
Malta-Iceland joint issue.- Mġarr Harbour (15/09/2011),



# Munxar

Wedged between the sloping sides of two parallel valleys, Munxar is a closely knit village community; a characteristic suggested by its own motto '*Parvulus set minitus*' = Small but secure. According to the 2005 census, the population of Munxar numbered 1,019. The name Munxar is first recorded as '*Il Monxar*' in a deed on 2 July, 1584. Munxar is Maltese for bucksaw, a saw set in an adjustable H-shaped frame used for sawing firewood on a buck. The imagery is evoked by the promontory that runs from behind the village church sawing into the two surrounding areas, creating Għancija valley on the Munxar side and Xlendi on the Fontana side. Munxar is made up of Munxar proper and Xlendi Bay.

For many centuries, despite having an identity of its own, the village of Munxar formed part of Sannat. To satisfy their religious duties, the people of Munxar had to frequent St. Margaret's Church in Sannat. Late in the nineteenth century, Sannat parish priest Alessandru Cauchi - becoming aware that the spiritual needs of the Munxar community were not being adequately catered for - filed a request to the Gozo Curia authorities for the building of a chapel at Munxar. The matter was pursued by Fr. Ang Spiteri, a zealous priest who presented Bishop Giovanni Maria Camilleri with a further petition in this respect. On 22 March 1916 the foundation stone was laid by Vicar General Mgr. G. Farrugia on a site donated by Lorenzo, Giuseppe and Maria Cassar, known as *Ta' Katalla*.



Munxar parish church & 1919 St Paul Shipwreck Malta stamp

The building plan was duly sketched by master mason Luigi Vella, also helped in the building by mason Francis Farrugia. One must not forget Fr. Spiridione Gauci who at this stage was the person who injected new energy to the flagging morale of the community. It was decided that the church would be dedicated to Saint Paul's Shipwreck in Malta. For the community of Munxar it was an occasion of surging pride and optimism when Bishop Michael Gonzi consecrated the new church on 18 October 1925. Painters represented within include Robert Caruana Dingli, Ramiro Cali and Lazzaro Pisani. A valuable artefact is the silver frontal (wrought in Milan) for the main altar, depicting the Last Supper.

The post-war years saw a steady embellishment programme. By then it was fast becoming evident that the village was ready for 'independence'. On the memorable day of 12 December 1957, Mgr. Bishop Ġużeppi Pace issued the decree *Pro Munere Nostro Pastoralis* by which Munxar was declared a parish in its own right. On 8 March 1959, ex-Dominican friar Fr. Alan Fenech was installed as the first parish priest.



The titular statue of Saint Paul is the work of the leading Gozitan statuary Wistin Camilleri. It cost £40, £29 of which were donated by Gianni Saliba. It was blessed by Bishop Michael Gonzi on 3 January 1933 and a week later was carried in procession from Sannat to Munxar.



Throughout the years, Munxar has retained exclusive features and traditions. Street niches around the village throw a light on older customs. In the last decades, however, young people have been inclined to abandon their parents' ploughshare, herd and household chores in favour of books and a more rewarding job. In any case, the villagers have always been guided by a strong sense of duty and belonging towards the community.





Munxar Falcons Football Club always tried to build its team on home youths. Established in 1972, the team participated for the first time in a youth championship. In the early 80s this team of youngsters grew up, achieving impressive success in the following fifteen years.

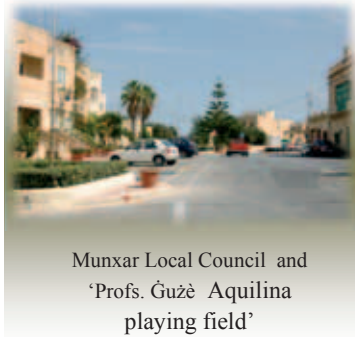
Since its inception in 1994, the Munxar Local Council has done its best to improve community life and services. Two projects which the council lately succeeded to bring to completion were a five-a-side synthetic turf pitch and a well equipped playing field for the young generation (the need for which had long been felt). An example of EU-connected activities was a twinning agreement with the Sicilian town of Ragalna. It should be noted that Xlendi Bay is included among the Council's responsibilities, now through a hamlet committee.



There never was a Post Office in Munxar but a Temporary PO operated from the Parish Centre on Munxar Day Sunday 12 December 2004. However the normal Victoria metal handstamp was used. On this occasion, the Local Council - in collaboration with the Gozo Philatelic Society - issued a commemorative postcard. Moreover, the G.P.S put up a stamp exhibition with Saint Paul as the theme.



One of the 2004 Letter Boxes set issued by MaltaPost features the old wall-type King George V letter box (manufactured by London's Allen & Co) found on an old building in St. Paul Street, not far from the parish church. Furthermore, in the 2008 Pauline year set, the titular statue of Saint Paul was reproduced on the €0.68 stamp. Moreover MaltaPost issued a special postmark on 7 April 2011 to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Professor Ġużè Aquilina who has an eminent place among the natives of Munxar.



Munxar Local Council and 'Prof. Ġużè Aquilina playing field'



Commemorative postmark -100 Birth Anniversary of Prof. Ġużè Aquilina



# Nadur

Nadur is situated on Gozo's easternmost hill. It has a population of around four thousand, making Nadur one of the largest localities in the island. Nadur's emblem shows the sun emerging from blue seas with the motto "*Vigilant*", which can be translated as "watchful against danger". The name itself means lookout or dominating peak (so generic that it also exists elsewhere).

While most of the population lives in the centre of the village, numerous residential areas are found all around Nadur. The majority of housing areas look over beautiful valleys, while others have marvellous views of the islands of Comino and Malta.

The village was made a parish (for this eastern third of the island) in 1688 by Bishop Davide Cocco Palmieri (together with others). The parish is dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul ("iż-*Żewġ*" = the Twins) and the feast is celebrated on the 29 June – *l-Imnarja* (derived from a word meaning illumination, referring to the festive decorations), a strongly traditional holiday (with rabbit cooking as an "essential" component) previously centred on *il-Buskett* – now "normal" fields. Participation in *l-Imnarja* used to be an expected matrimonial promise by the groom to his sweetheart! This district was a favourite hunting reserve of the Grand Masters, with dire consequences (even exile) for trespassers.



A special handstamp was used on 24 June 2004 at the Nadur post office to commemorate the bicentenary



of the blessing of the parish church, the Gozo Philatelic Society issuing its own card too. This collegiate basilica is superbly decorated, mainly by professors Francesco Sciortino and Lazzaro Pisani. The titular statue was brought from Marseilles in 1884. Also notable are the stained glass windows, the marble *Via Crucis* set and the body (*korp sant*) of Saint Coronatus – a relic received in 1763. An interesting legend is recounted regarding the choice of site: a stone-laden blindfolded donkey (owned by Girgor Buttigieg, a holy man said to have the gift of prophesy about a range of subjects from disasters to race winners) was left to its whim – or God's will. Architect Giuseppe Bonnici built a larger church on the same spot in 1760 – to be again enlarged at the beginning of the 20th century.



Numerous voluntary and religious organizations are found within the parish, including four confraternities (the first of which dates from 1690). One important fact is that the first M.U.S.E.U.M. centre in Gozo was opened in Nadur in 1915. The founder of this religious society, Fr. Ġorġ Preca (today San Ġorġ Preca), gave great support to the first Diocesan Superior Rakela Camilleri - from Nadur itself. Fr. Preca used to communicate with her through letters, many of which still survive. Another church (originally privately-owned, known as *Ta' Karkanja*) just off the main square is dedicated to the Sacred Heart, "specializing" in Eucharistic Adoration. This village is also quite rich in street niches, usually elaborate ones.



Nadur hosted the first known school apart from the one in Rabat (in 1842). The Mnarja Philharmonic (with its own theatre) services Nadur's festivities but does not limit itself to its village – foreign shores have been visited too. Actually the village possessed another band at the end of the nineteenth century, the present one being founded in 1967.



Nadur Youngsters FC (founded in 1958) has been one of the strongest participants in the Gozo Football Association competitions, winning their first honour in season 1961-62. Eddie Vella, one of its “products”, was the first Gozitan to play in the Malta national team (receiving his first call in 1966).



One can still find here a lot of farmers and seafarers. Fruits and other produce such as apples, figs, peaches, pears, plums, oranges, lemons and melons from Nadur’s rich fields are distributed all over the islands.

Along Nadur's coastline one can find the peaceful bays of San Blas and Daħlet Qorrot - wonderful places to visit. San Blas is a quiet, sandy little bay mostly frequented by tourists. Daħlet Qorrot (a word popularly taken to refer – probably incorrectly – to the hermit Saint Corradus) is a delightful cove from where numerous fishermen set sail every day. The picturesque boathouses here were converted from natural caves and ledges underneath the cliffs. These two areas were inhabited during prehistoric times. The Kelinu Galea Maritime Museum in Nadur has innumerable exhibits; some are extremely rare and priceless such as authenticated pieces of timber from Lord Nelson's battleship "HMS Victory" and the "Constitution" (the first US warship), as well as one of the gold epaulettes Lord Mountbatten wore during his period of duty in the Mediterranean. The impressive assortment (including models, uniforms, historic photographs, vessel parts and over three hundred vessel crests) was painstakingly collected over a period of 65 years.

The restored Ta’ Soppu Tower (built in 1667) surely merits a look too. The French invading troops in 1798 landed at nearby *Għajn Riħana*. Kenuna Tower was built in 1848 as a telegraph link between Malta and Gozo but now its neighbourhood has been changed into a public “Maltese Garden”. The Local Council of Nadur has been very active in the years since the first elections in 1993, aiming to ameliorate the experience of residents and visitors. Emphasis can be noted on international twinning contacts and sourcing of funds towards restoration and environmental projects. It organizes a range of socio-cultural activities, including the Nadur Carnival (especially noted for the “spontaneous” evening aspects).



On 25 March 2007, Europe celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. The official national celebrations were organised in Nadur. MaltaPost issued a special commemorative postmark, given from the Nadur Local Council office which served as a provisional post office for the occasion.

At the dawn of the 20th century, a post office was opened at Nadur and a postmark bearing the name of the village was introduced. It consisted of a circle of 23mm diameter, with AM, PM., or nil. It was opened on 10 July 1900, closing in 1921. The “modern” branch is at 13 Triq It-Tramuntana and was officially inaugurated on 19 July 1980. The present Post Office was inaugurated on 13 October 1988. Nadur has a registered stamp vendor and three further letterboxes: in Triq Hanaq, Triq Diċembru Tlettax and Pjazza San Pietru u San Pawl (with MaltaPost references 545-7, respectively).



# Qala

Qala's name could mean 'port', probably because of nearby Mġarr or of *Hondoq ir-Rummi* bay. Although other etymologies have been proposed, the harbour theme is reflected in the village's coat of arms – with its *In Tempestate Perflugium* (Haven from Storms) motto. Qala is well known for its hard coralline type of stone, used locally (for monuments and breakwaters) and abroad (famously Liverpool's Christ the King Cathedral).



Liverpool's Christ the King Cathedral



Occupying the easternmost corner of Gozo, this traditional village of a few hundred families is clearly off the beaten path: the farthest village from Gozo's capital Victoria but the closest to the rest of the Maltese archipelago. Its rocky hillsides enjoy an unobstructed - and breathtaking! - view of the islands of Malta and Comino. Except for a few sheltered inlets, the coastline is a rocky trek to which nature and history have both contributed richly. The prettiest among several caves is probably *Għar Minka*, which is accessible only by boat. The foremost among the mainly defensive structures designed to deter enemy landings is the mid-eighteenth century St. Anthony's Battery, known locally as *it-Trunciera*.

Salt pans constitute another interesting feature: they are found near *Hondoq*, which also “boasts” of the disused concrete desalination plant.

The titular painting at Qala parish church was chosen to illustrate the 1971 stamps to celebrate the centenary of the proclamation of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. This was painted in 1899 by Giuseppe Cali', a prolific artist who is widely honoured as the founder of the modern school of Maltese painting. It was solemnly crowned in 1971 by H.E. Cardinal Giovanni Colombo but ten years later the crown was stolen; so in 1999 a gold and diamond replacement was fixed to the painting.



The church - designed by Fr Joseph Diacono (the then parish priest) in a baroque style - was built between 1882 and 1889, consecrated in 1904 (with a centennial handstamp in 2004) and expanded during the twentieth century. It features many paintings (including the *Salus Infirmorum* Marian one which is considered miraculous), together with various statues and an interesting baptismal font made from Qala stone. The gilded titular statue, brought from Marseilles, is carried in procession

around the streets of the village during the annual *festa* ( first Sunday of August). A small museum consisting mostly of prehistoric pottery from the many Qala sites was latterly added.

Actually Qala's parish church is not dedicated to St. Joseph alone, but also to the Immaculate Conception; all three churches in Qala are dedicated to Our Lady under this title. The smallest is the *tal-Blat* chapel, supposedly built to enable Comino residents to follow Mass from across the strait when rough weather precluded a priest from crossing over!



The much more famous Qala Immaculate Conception Sanctuary has long been a pilgrimage base and boasts of numerous legends. Tradition holds that Count Roger the Norman prayed there in the twelfth century. The origins of the (modern) adjacent cemetery are likewise buried in the mists of time. Graffiti depicting three-hundred-year-old ships can be seen on the outside wall of the sanctuary: votive offerings from shipwreck survivors. The fifteenth-century *San Kerrew* is believed to have lived in a cave by the sanctuary and what purport to be his remains are preserved in the underlying

crypt, still venerated as a miracle maker. Bishop Cagliares changed the dedication from the Assumption to the Immaculate Conception, donating a new titular painting by Federico Barocci in 1615.

When Bishop Cocco Palmieri decided to create a separate parish in the eastern part of Gozo in 1688, *Santa Marija tal-Qala* was, quite naturally chosen. On the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event the Malta Postal Administration issued a commemorative machine cancellation used from 4 to 7 May 1988 with the words ‘*Tliet Mitt Sena / Mit-Twaqqif Tal-Parrocča / Santa Marija tal-Qala/1688-1988*’.

Qala (referred to as such in a fifteenth century navigation chart preserved at the Vatican) acquired parish status in its own right in 1872; however, because it was deemed to be too small and since it is away from the village core, the Sanctuary was later replaced by the present parish church.



Qala hosts the Institute for Tourism Studies and offers many attractions to the hordes of tourists, including its – practically unique - windmill which is still in working order (to which can be added the surviving tower of *Ta' Sufa*). But its history goes back thousands of years.

Six sites have been identified as Temple period settlements, others as Punic structures. The *Ġebbla l-Wieqfa* (an eleven-foot high roughly pyramidal megalithic known in Gozitan mythology as the seat of a giantess) is acknowledged as a cornerstone of a lost temple site. Ancient “cart ruts” are found in at least three locations in Qala, one of which near the surviving temple period settlement at *il-Wileg*. Another cart rut site is at *il-Wardija* but the best is at *is-Sidra* where the ruts extend for over two hundred feet, directing the visitor towards a veritable forest of *xkattapietra*, used for gallstone treatment.



Like many other communities in Gozo, Qala too has its own radio station – ‘*Lehen il-Qala*’.



The village football club is Qala St. Joseph F.C. The club was founded in 1968 and is named after the village patron Saint Joseph. The team's traditional colours are maroon and light blue. The nicknames used for the players are the "Maroons" or the "Saints". In the summer of 2010 the club changed name to Qala Saints F.C.

*Ite ad Joseph* Band is the official band of the village of Qala. It was established on 8 December 1996. Since then the band has offered numerous services to most of Gozo's feasts. Moreover the band has had services in a number of localities in Malta.



The Local Council premises are at the Civic Centre next to the state primary school which is named after a distinguished son of Qala, Dr. Anton Buttigieg, an important poet and one of the Presidents of Malta. The village had previously an administrative committee as part of the Gozo Civic Council experience, in which Anton Buttigieg (a school inspector and experienced researcher) had an influential say. Qala gave many more personalities; Mr. Horace Mercieca, (although from Nadur, he resided in Qala) a dedicated teacher and later A/Director for Gozo, Brother Guzepp Porelli S.J., a saintly man who spent his life as a missionary in India and Bishop Mikiel Buttigieg Gozo's first diocesan bishop. By referring to these local personalities, we are including a host of others who would merit a mention! The Council has carried out quite a few projects aimed at improving both image and infrastructure (using national and EU funding), the latest being *Ġnien il-Hajja* Picnic Area. It also organizes an annual international Folk Festival, through the Menhir Group.



Mr. Anton Buttigieg Dr. Anton Buttigieg



Bishop Mikiel Buttigieg



Mr. Horace Mercieca Br. Guzepp Portelli



Qala has also entered into twinning agreements with other European towns, actually becoming the first Gozitan village to enter into such an experience.

The Sub Post Office was inaugurated on 27 /11/ 1989, stopped operating on 15 March 2011. There are three letterboxes in Qala: on Pjazza San Ġużepp (L512) in Triq it-28 ta' April 1688 (L513) and in Triq Wied Simar (525).



# San Lawrenz

San Lawrenz is found in the west of Gozo. It is situated upon a flat surface near the 'Ta' Dbiegi' hill which is 195 metres above sea level and is considered to be the highest point of Gozo. The San Lawrenz coat of arms consists of a golden shield on which there is the symbol of an iron grid with two palm leaves, one on each side, symbolising the martyrdom of the Patron Saint of the village. The motto of the village is 'Dominus Protectio Mea' (= The Lord is my shield). The 1995 census established the population at around 552 people.



The parish of San Lawrenz was founded on 15 March 1893. Before this date the village was known as 'Ta' Ċiangura'. It is not known when the village was established; some documents, however, mention Ta' Ċiangura before the Siege of Gozo in July 1551. The first record of a chapel dates back to 1545. An interesting legend goes that, when the locals were trying to rebuild this chapel, there was lack of water in the area. Suddenly a brook seeped out of the rocks. This facilitated the completion of the chapel. The brook dried up as soon as the building was finished. The need for a bigger church was felt years later. Work on a new church began on 21 November 1886 and it took three years to finish. Everybody gave a helping hand in the building; women carried a load of stone every morning, before they started work, while the men carried stones before sunset after returning from work in their fields. In 1898 the village was officially declared a parish. The titular statue of Saint Laurence arrived in Gozo on 4 August 1895.

Again the church was becoming too small for the increasing community and in 1952, parish priest Rev. Girgor Vella set out to enlarge it. Master mason Karlu Vella, the parish priest's brother, completed the works in 1957. It is worth noting that, instead of collecting donations in the usual manner, the parish priest raised up the necessary funds - in those economically difficult times - by distributing chickens so that the parishioners could fatten them on their farms, later to be sold.

Dwejra Bay (administratively part of this village) is recognized locally and internationally for its unique ecological aspects. It has rare geological features, both on land and under the sea, rich and diverse wildlife and habitats, dramatic seascapes dominated by a rocky shore line and a general feeling of wilderness. From Dwejra one can also enjoy the wonderful scene of sunset. The Dwejra area is made up of marine tertiary sedimentary rocks deposited around 24 million years ago. In this area one finds Globigerina limestone, Lower Caroline limestone and even some blue clay. Underwater caverns and interesting marine fauna in the crystal-clear waters make Dwejra a paradise for scuba divers. The word 'Dwejra' is derived from a small house which was built on the cliffs surrounding the inland sea. Dwejra Bay has often been chosen as a filming site by producers and directors of international fame: examples include 'Single handed' and 'Clash of the Titans', as well as documentaries such as 'The First Eden'.

Many are the visitors to this spot, but a most unexpected visit some years ago was by a lone Mediterranean dolphin that found itself inside the Inland Sea and was unable to find a way out. Eventually it was helped by well-wishers to find its way back to the open sea.



The Dwejra Tower started to be constructed by Grand Master Antoine de Paul in 1651, but it was during Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris de Castillar's reign that the project was completed a year later. Its function was to keep a lookout for Turkish raiders. From 1744, it served to guard *Ħaġret il-Ġeneral* (Fungus Rock) where the supposedly medical fungus grew. After 1873 the tower ceased to act as a coast guard and was deserted. The name of *Ħaġret il-Ġeneral* refers to a Knight Commander of the Order of St. John who discovered there the plant locally known as 'Għerq is-Sinjur', for long years believed to possess thaumaturgic properties. In 1992 this rock was declared a nature reserve and it is prohibited to climb on it without due permission - only given for educational and scientific purposes.



The Azure Window is the result of extensive faultiness as well as wind erosion, thus creating the majestic window towering one hundred metres. Because of its unique and majestic look, this natural phenomenon is a favourite



site for professional photographers, artists and tourists. The Inland Sea known as *Il-Qawra* by the locals constitutes the lowest spot of Gozo. It is an expanse of shallow sea water set in a deep recess in the rocky coastline produced by the caving in of the surface above subterranean caves. This pool is connected to the outside sea by means of a narrow, sixty-metre natural tunnel in the cliffs. This only entrance to this pebbly lake is called 'Għar iż-Żenqa' (= the Blue Cave) because of the colour of the sea within and around it.

San Lawrenz Local Council is very active. It embarked on a twinning system with other villages in Europe which resulted in joint projects. This includes co-operation in administration, culture and education, as well as in agriculture and in historical and environmental aspects - not forgetting sports and youth exchanges.

A dear son of the village of San Lawrenz was Dun Ġużepp Cauchi, still remembered for numerous spiritual writings together with the sufferings he had to endure. In fact he is so loved by the community that, on 14 July 2006, a monument was inaugurated in his honour. Today his house at Triq ta' Bieb il-Għar is open to the public in general and especially to those who need the intercession before God of this priest so renowned for his saintly life.



On 3 September 2007, for the first time, a Sub Post Office was opened here - operating from the Local Council premises. It is interesting to note that the Azure Window has featured on a Malta postage stamp and on a Postage Label. It also appeared on the Occasion Card issued by MaltaPost for the Gozo Philatelic Society's 10th Annual Exhibition in November 2009. MaltaPost also issued a special commemorative postmark in connection with the celebrations organised in the village on the occasion of the 1750th anniversary of Saint Lawrence's martyrdom. The postmark was given on Sunday 10 August 2008 in the sacristy which served as a temporary post office for this occasion. To conclude on a further philatelic note, there are two letterboxes and a couple of stamp vendors in San Lawrenz.





# Sannat

Sannat is a rustic village located in the south of the island of Gozo. It has an overall area of 3.77 square kilometers i.e. 5% of the total of Gozo. On the west it is adjacent to the village of Munxar and on the Eastern side, it is adjacent to the village of Xewkija. It extends from Victoria up to the cliffs forming the southern coastline of the island known as Ta' Ċenċ.



The original coat of arms of Sannat was designed for the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales which occurred between the 6 and the 10 of April, 1876. It was designed and painted by Professor Nikolo' Zammit (1851-1899), who was a doctor, philosopher, architect and painter. This coat of arms consists of a standing bale of wheat with two scythes above it. Zammit was apparently implying that a lot of wheat used to grow in Sannat. The motto of Sannat says "*Labor Ante Omnia*" which means: "Work before everything".

At Ta' Ċenċ there is *L-Imramma* Temple, a primitive-type prehistoric temple made up of a sort of an oval court with a series of oval rooms to the north. Other interesting remains are three dolmens. Ta' Ċenċ is also famous for its spectacular precipices or cliffs, that are the natural home of several wildlife species, both flora and fauna. These cliffs are about 140 metres in height. The population of Sannat according to the November 2005 census amounted to 2,200 persons.



Another place of interest found in this locality is The Lace House known also as 'Tax-Xelina'. Princess Elizabeth (later Queen Elizabeth II), accompanied by Dr. George Borg Olivier (then Prime Minister of Malta), visited this house to see the craft of lace making - so popular in Sannat - being worked. Although not as common as in the old days, there's a good chance that you will see lace making in the streets especially during summer evenings. The wonderful lace articles produced vary from religious vestments to table mats, shawls, etc.



The old palace *Palazzo Palina*, located beside Ta' Cenc Hotel, together with the ancient Cart Ruts are another three places of interest.

Sannat was one of the first places in Gozo to become a separate parish. Bishop Davide Cocco-Palmieri established the parish of Sannat on 28 April 1688. The present church dedicated to St. Margaret Martyr was initiated on the site of a smaller one in 1718 and was consecrated on 16 October 1755. However, after significant structural changes, it was consecrated again on 22 November 1868. It was raised to Archipresbyteral status on 19 December 1893.



The village of Sannat

The people of Sannat were always proud of both church and patron saint. They continued to embellish the church with two bell towers; a majestic dome was raised in 1910. A statue of St. Margaret was first brought to Sannat in 1863 and the present beautiful one reached the village in 1891. The church has a very good altarpiece by Stefano Erardi, a famed Maltese painter. The village feast is celebrated each year around the fourth week of July. St. Margaret was from Antioch, in Pisidia (now Turkey). Her father was a pagan priest and her mother died soon after she gave birth. She was brought up by a devout woman and grew up to become a Christian. She refused to marry Olybrius, a Roman prefect and was threatened with death if she would not



renounce her faith. She stood firm in her faith and so had to suffer harsh punishments. She was beheaded in A.D. 304 during the persecutions of emperor Diocletain.

Sannat can also boast of having a very popular five star hotel, Ta' Cenc Hotel and Spa.

The village football club, Sannat Lions, was founded in 1936. One of the more prominent teams in Gozo, "the Lions" were champions for 5 times in 7 years between the late 70's and early 80's. The 10<sup>th</sup> championship for The Greens was won in the 2010/2011 season.



Saint Margaret Band, the philharmonic society of Sannat was founded in 1997. The society obviously participate during the village feast, but it is also invited to take part in other villages' feasts. It also holds concerts and performances in important festivals organized in Sannat.

In 2005, Sannat signed a twinning agreement with Pisoniano, Italy. The Sannat Local Council aims to fulfill its obligations as a local government in the common interest of all residents. For this reason, the council has embarked on several projects such as local traffic control, maintenance of the local environment, restoration of the Lime Kiln and a most ambitious project (together with the Xewkija Local Council) the Mgarr ix-Xini Regional Park.



For a very short time Sannat had its Post Office. It opened in 1900 but was closed soon after 1901. The postmark used was a 23mm single ring metal handstamp with the words SANNAT-GOZO, A.M. or P.M. and date. This postmark is very rare and almost impossible to obtain.

Ta' Ċenc Cliffs were depicted on the 0.67c stamp issued by Maltapost on 19 October 2010. This stamp formed part of a set in the new series Treasures of Malta. As usual on such occasions, the Gozo Philatelic Society issued a commemorative card in a limited edition, franked with this stamp.

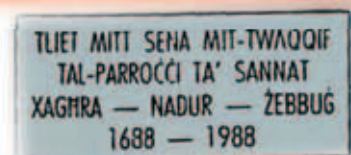


Another occasion for a commemorative cover was the XVII Centenary of the Martyrdom of the patron saint of the village. Sannat held great festivities and MaltaPost issued a special postmark from its Victoria Branch Post Office on 20 July 2004.



*Set of four old stone larger than life statues that used to decorate the parvis of the Sannat parish church*

On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the parishes of Sannat, Xagħra, Nadur and Żebbuġ, a commemorative machine cancellation had been used by the Malta Postal Authorities between 25 and 28 April 1988.





# Santa Luċija



This hamlet was awarded the title of European Tourist Destination of Excellence (“EDEN”) in Intangible Heritage in 2008. Besides being surrounded by rich hill scenery and natural water springs, it is endowed with cultural and historical monuments and offers numerous interesting customs and events (such as a light festival and traditional meals). Life here seems to concentrate on a great sense of belonging and to what Santa Luċija represents. This is evident by the strong participation in social activities held.

Santa Luċija lies to the west of Victoria, positioned between three hills (Għar Ilma, Il-Mixta and Santa Luċija proper) each with its natural water source, resulting in a most fertile area. From the capital, this hamlet can be reached either taking the direct road (St. George's Fief Street) or going through Kerċem. In fact, on diocesan and civil levels, Santa Luċija is within the latter’s territory.

Pottery found at *Il-Mixta* has been interpreted as meaning that this area was the oldest inhabited place in the Maltese Islands. A settlement of late medieval houses exists around the *Għar Ilma* plateau. A 1667 census documents describes *tal-Qabbieža* or *Santa Caterina* (the modern Santa Luċija) as a major district including the “smaller” Dwejra, Għajn Abdul, Għar Ilma, ta’ Kerċem and San Lawrenz. In the mid-nineteenth century, the capital, Rabat was supplied with water from the springs at *Għajn Abdun* and *Għar Ilma*, with the help of underground tunnels and reservoirs.

Santa Luċija also offers even more ancient items of interest. In the area around *Ras il-Wardija*, one can find various Punico-Hellenistic remains including a sanctuary. Its upper part consists of a rock-cut chamber and a cistern. The Phoenician deity is as yet unknown but archeologists assure that cultic use continued under the Romans. Following centuries of disuse, the sanctuary became a troglodytic dwelling in the medieval period.

The hamlet got its own Administrative Committee in 2010, following amendments to Local Council legislation. Actually, no elections were held since exactly the required five candidates registered. Interestingly, they all hailed from the “*Għaqda Għall-Għan tal-Komunità*” – which meant (uniquely) that none of the “national” political parties was represented! New and continuing initiatives are ubiquitous, one of the most recent involves the embellishment of Għar Ilma.

Although technically a hamlet, this locality can be described as a village, with all the community typically gathered around the main square dominated by the central stone cross and the church (first recorded in the early sixteenth century but rebuilt more than once). This is – obviously – dedicated to Saint Lucy (the Sicilian patron of those having eyesight problems). Devotees who visit and participate in the social and religious festivities - over practically a fortnight - are not lacking, also since the day of its liturgical memorial (13 December) is one of our national feasts. The “external” feast was in fact only allowed by the ecclesiastical authorities in 1990 (under rector Dun Frangisk Sultana).



Although this is not the only feast celebrated here, the highlight can probably be considered to be Wistin Camilleri’s statue. It was commissioned as the result of a vow by a group of emigrants to Australia who had to suffer a difficult odyssey. The titular painting represents Our Lady (and the Souls in Purgatory) with Saint Lucy – and dates from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Ionic exterior does not give an immediate impression of such a big Baroque- style interior, decorated by artist Gużepi Briffa.



Lateral altars are dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul and the Holy Family's Flight to Egypt respectively. The dome was painted in a more modern style by Gozitan Austin Camilleri. This church (sometimes described, more technically, as a chapel) also possesses other statues: the Sacred Heart and Saint Thomas. It served as a vice-parish until the Kerċem one was built (the whole area had not yet been separated from Victoria). The belfry encloses four bells (brought from the UK's John Taylor after WWII).

What for many decades was the village bakery, centre ("Ċentru") – acquired by the church Members of the community meet there most religious lessons in the rooms, for a pint in even dinner in the main hall! Much



today hosts the imposing communal through the last owner's will. of the time during the day: for the bar, for comedy sketches or of these efforts now stem

from the *Fundazzjoni Ta' Klula*. It was founded in 2005 and in 2006 it was registered as a non profit making Non Government Organisation. The aim of the foundation is to preserve and renew the local traditions, culture, habits and history. Various activities are organised during the year. These include the traditional meal "Tan-Nanna", the wine festival and the festival of light. For the *Fondazzjoni Ta' Klula's* work Santa Lucia Gozo was declared by the European Union as the European Destination of Excellence for the years 2007-2008.

But Santa Luċija has an older claim to cultural fame: the birthplace of "*il-banda (or l-oskestra) tad-Dudi*" – described as Malta's first organized string band (probably originating round about the 17th century). "Dudi" was the nickname of a family which lived for decades in Sant'Ġuż square (corner with Triq Klula). The ensemble usually consisted of five Santa Luċija men, led by at least one member of the Debrincat family. Documents suggest that they were sometimes accompanied by a female dancer.

Besides participating in Carnival, the *Orkestra* used to go all over Gozo for an unlimited range of "private" occasions: births, weddings, returned migrants or successful exams. When there were no "outside" commissions, it simply played on the church parvis to the delight of locals – especially in summer evenings. Changed social circumstances meant that the "Gozo Quartetto" (as called by the British) did not survive beyond the 1920s. Unfortunately in popular parlance *Dudi* now tends to refer to an inferior type of music – compared to more "professional" bands.



Margerita Debrincat wife of Ġużeppi d-Dudi with 2 of her grandchildren.



*Tad-Dudi Orchestra.*



Regina Grech, daughter of Ġużeppi, id-Dudi, with 7 of her 8 children.



Ġużeppi Debrincat, id-Dudi, on a postage stamp issued on 7 March 2000 as part of a 'Malta in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century' set.

A casualty happened during World War II: a young man, known as '*tal-Loqqu*' was killed in 1942 by an anti-personnel bomb he appears to have been playing with while tending his flock at *Il-Mixta*. There is a letterbox in the square (with MaltaPost reference number L528) and there is a stamp vendor. A final "philatelic" point can be added: a hunting-dog named Champ owned by Louis Cassar of Santa Luċija was included among the dogs depicted in the 2001 set.



Commemorating 'Champ' the hunting dog from Santa Luċija



# 'Ta' Pinu'



The origins of the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Ta' Pinu are lost in the mists of time. The first records of its existence are in the archives of the Gozo Curia, referring to a visit to the chapel by bishop Domenico Cubelles. He noted that the chapel had just been rebuilt and that it belonged to the noble family 'Tal-Ġentili'. When the Apostolic Visitor Mgr. Pietro Duzina (delegated by Pope Gregory XII to visit the Maltese Islands) made his pastoral visit to the church in 1575, he found that it was in a very bad state. He ordered the church to be closed and demolished and its incumbent duties to be passed to the parish church (now the Gozo Cathedral). But according to tradition, when the workman struck the first blow with his pick, he broke his arm. This was taken as a sign from Heaven that this chapel had to be preserved for future

generations. In fact this was the only chapel, from among several, that survived Mgr. Duzina's decree ordering demolition.

In 1585 the church property changed hands and consequently its name from 'Tal-Ġentili' changed to 'Ta' Pinu', meaning 'Philip's'. Pinu Gauci had become the chapel's procurator and in 1611 he willingly offered money for its restoration. He also commissioned a painting of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. This altarpiece was painted by Amadeo Perugino. The chapel remained anonymous until 1883 when, on 22 June of that year, Karmela Grima (a forty-five year old spinster from Għarb), was passing by the chapel on her return home from the fields which surrounded the chapel. She heard a female voice calling: "Ejja, Ejja" ("Come, Come"). Looking around and seeing nobody, Karmela became confused and frightened and started to run away from the place. The voice called again: "Come, because it will be another year before you will be able to return". After the second call, Karmela realised that the voice was coming from within the chapel. She went inside and began to recite her usual prayers. Then the voice spoke a third time: "Say three Hail Marys in honour of the three days my body remained in the tomb". She did so and then went on her way. Shortly afterwards Karmela fell ill and remained confined to her bed for more than a year. Two years later she revealed her secret to a friend, Frangisku Portelli. He in turn told her that, at about the same time, he had also heard a woman's voice asking him to say prayers in honour of the Hidden Wound which Jesus received whilst carrying the Cross. Shortly after this conversation, Frangisku's mother was miraculously healed by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Ta' Pinu. From then onwards, the lonely chapel became a place of pilgrimage for many people from the island and beyond. Bishop Pietro Pace was informed about these events and asked to speak to Karmela and Frangisku. After a thorough examination and enquiries, he concluded that the voices were of Heavenly origin. Devotion to the Virgin Mary grew rapidly and numerous pilgrims flocked to the chapel.

Architect  
Andrea  
Vassallo



Meanwhile a decision was taken to build a worthy sanctuary to accommodate the crowds. The construction of today's magnificent Romanesque sanctuary began in 1920.

Architect Andrea Vassallo did the plans and master mason



Master  
mason  
Vitor  
Vella

Vitor Vella was in charge of the building. In 1932, the new church was blessed and opened to the public by Gozo Bishop Mgr. Michael Gonzi. In 1935 the church was raised to the dignity of Basilica by a Bull of Pope Pius XI. In the same year the miraculous image of Our Lady was crowned by the Apostolic Delegate Cardinal Alessio Lepicier. The decree was signed by the Secretary of State of the Vatican Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII.

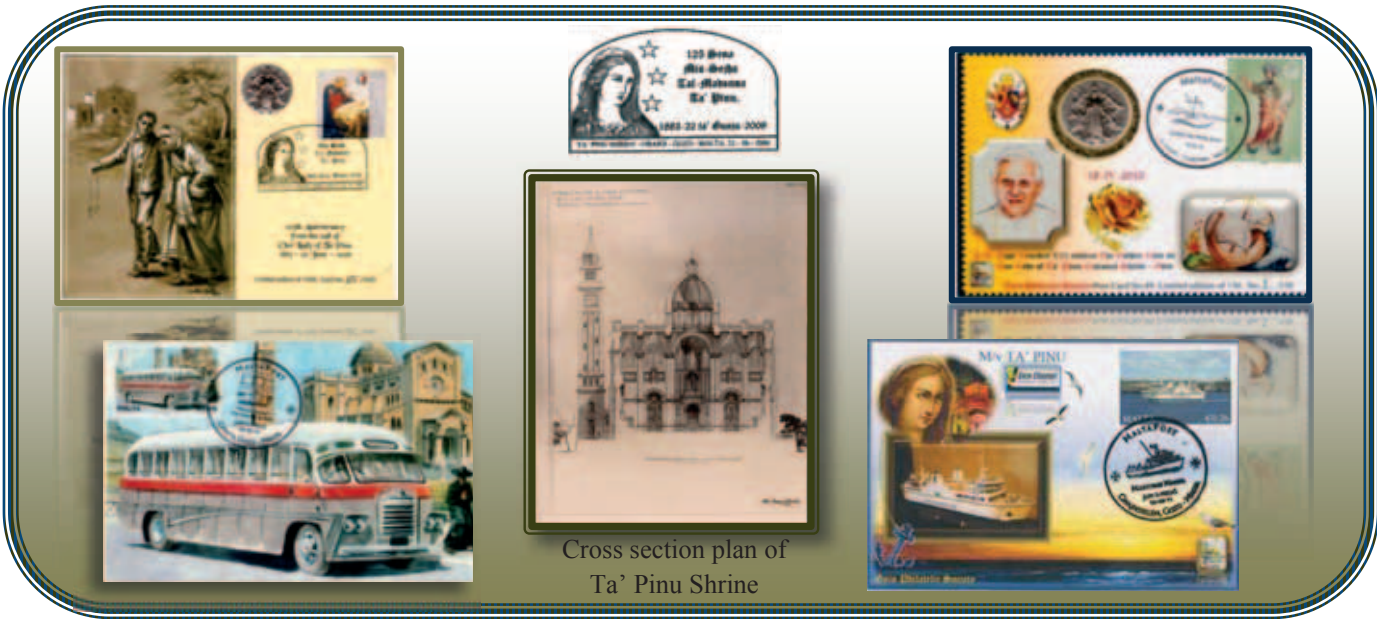
From among the events occurring along the years, one must not leave out quite a remarkable episode which happened in the afternoon of 8 April 1942 (during World War II) when enemy planes attacked the vicinity. World War II historian Charles Bezzina is of the opinion that these raids might have occurred to destroy the *Tal-Ġurdan* lighthouse which is nearby. Presumably through miraculous intervention, the Sanctuary escaped destruction from what seemed a direct hit. The bomb fell in a field just below the church's portico, shattering 29 stained glass windows in the church and another 9 in the cupola, while the building itself remained intact (except for some shrapnel scars in the stonework which are still evident to the present day).

On May 26, 1990 H.H. Pope John Paul II visited Ta' Pinu National Sanctuary. After praying privately in the old chapel, he celebrated Mass on the forecourt of the basilica. In front of a jubilant congregation he decorated the Holy image with five golden stars, each with a diamond in the middle, as a testimony of our people's love to Our Lady of Ta' Pinu. The Vatican postal authorities chose Ta' Pinu to represent the whole Papal visit to Malta in the set issued the following year: the Sanctuary is shown as a background to



the waving Pope in his liturgical vestments. Ta' Pinu had received previous philatelic recognition: for the 1988 Marian Year, the Malta Postal Administration issued a 12c stamp featuring the altarpiece.

The 2005 Christmas set of 4 stamps depicts paintings found at this church. These paintings, together with others, were executed by Chev Emanuel Vincent ("Emvin") Cremona and later copied into mosaic. Many of these paintings were produced on the initiative of Frenċ Mercieca (*Frenċ ta' l-Għarb*) – who can be considered as probably the greatest benefactor of the Sanctuary. Each stamp also shows sculptures from the two thousand different ones found in and outside the church, the work of prolific Gozitan artist Chev. Agostino ("Wistin") Camilleri. The designer was P Camilleri Cauchi, son of the last named. Another son designed the Way of the Cross statues on Għammar Hill a stone's throw away.



Cross section plan of Ta' Pinu Shrine

On the occasion of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Call of Our Lady, MaltaPost issued a special commemorative postmark. This postmark was given on Sunday 22 June 2008 from the sacristy of the Sanctuary. On 2 July 2011, on the eve of the new public transport service, MaltaPost issued a set of 20 stamps and maximum cards depicting Maltese Buses. The Gozo bus is seen with Ta' Pinu National Sanctuary at the background. Just a month later, on 10 August 2011, the Gozo Ferry 'Ta' Pinu' was featured on a postage stamp in the 'Maritime' set.



# Xaghra



Xaghra is the second largest village in Gozo. In the past, it was also known as *Caccia* - the name by which Xaghra is referred to in the majority of written documents even up to the Second World War. However a Xaghra reference exists as far back as a 1518 notarial act. Xaghra's Latin motto reads *Librat et Evolat* which means "Poised and Soaring". Xaghra lies approximately four kilometres from the capital city of Gozo and was one of the earliest inhabited areas in prehistoric times. "Xaghra" literally means a rocky plateau with patchy soil – quite an accurate description.



This locality can boast of a *Guinness Book of Records* entry: the oldest free-standing monuments in the world. The *Ġgantija* (a word referring to the huge stones) Temples are dated to about 3600 BC. The site was excavated in 1827 and two temples brought to light, surrounded by the same outer wall. The South Temple is the earlier and larger, approximately 100 feet in length and nearly 100 feet broad. Some spherical limestone balls were found beneath the threshold. The front



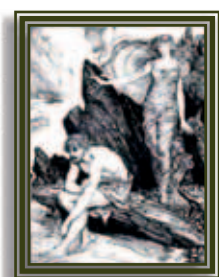
chambers are smaller than the ones at the back of this temple. On the other hand, the front chambers of the North Temple are larger than the ones at the back. Its overall length and breadth is about 23 metres. The first of numerous stamps featuring *Ġgantija* was issued in 1975 to commemorate the European Architectural Heritage Year: Richard England depicted the floor plan. Later stamps showed other aspects. Halfway between *Ġgantija* Temples and Santa Verna in *Triq il-Qaċċa*, lies another prehistoric site of great importance known as the Gozo Stone Circle. Previously called the Brochtorff Circle, this is an underground funerary complex. A chambered tomb on the site dates to the period between 4100 and 3800 BC. The site was first discovered by John Otto Bayer in the 1820s and rediscovered in 1964 after researcher Joe Attard Tabone examined a painting by Charles Brochtorff (or Brockdorf) in the Valletta National Library. Amongst the most interesting artefacts were two finely carved stone figures on a couch portraying a pair of obese (probably female) figures, seated side by side. Another was a symbolic family group, assumed to be representing deities. These items are now exhibited separately at the Archeology Museum at the Cittadella.

Easily accessible from the village square, there are two caves "decorated" with stalactites and stalagmites: "*l-Ghar ta' Ninu*" and "*l-Ghar ta' Xerri*". Though situated within private houses, they are accessible to the public. The calcium carbonate formation has not stopped since the water continues dripping.



A most popular natural attraction is Ir-Ramla: an unspoiled bay covered by golden sand that has given it its name, *ramla* meaning sand. Endemic flora and fauna inhabit the sand-dunes on the inner end of the beach. A bathhouse from the Roman period was discovered in 1910 but covered up again: excavations showed numerous rooms equipped with hot and cold water, supplied through a canal system. The "common room" had a most impressive pavement of polychromatic marble. Since this bay offered easy disembarkation for invaders,

the Knights of St John began a series of defence fortifications. These consisted of four batteries (including two at *Għajn Barrani* and *l-Irdum tax-Xaghra* respectively), a redoubt (named after French Grand Prior Philippe de Vendosme) in the very centre, a fougasse (with a bore of almost two metres) and an underwater obstruction (consisting of a wall about two metres across and over two high). Overlooking Ramla, we find Calypso Cave – traditionally the quarters of the nymph described in the *Odyssey* as having given refuge to the shipwrecked Ulysses. Gozo has long been identified with Ogygia – in spite of the bewitching views, there is not really anything to see inside.





A well-worth visit is to the Pomskezillious Museum, a privately-owned collection of toys (name borrowed from Edward Lear who visited Gozo in 1866) set within two rooms of an eighteenth century converted farmhouse.



Situated half-way between Ġgantija and the village square, visible far and wide, one comes across *il-Mithna ta' Kola*: a typical Gozitan windmill – most of which have unfortunately been lost. Built in 1725, it is still in a very good condition. Designed on the same plan as most contemporary mills, it consists of a quadrangular building which encloses a circular tower (about fifteen metres high and three metres in diameter). It is said that this windmill was put into good use during the dark World War II days, saving many people from starvation. It still stands as a monument to the long list of hard working millers, its last one being a certain Ġużeppi Grech who died in 1987 at the age of eighty-seven. After his demise, the place was restored and a museum set up. (inaugurated in 1992).



The Xagħra parish church is dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady ("*il-Bambina*").

Established as a parish on the 28 April 1688, the original church was a medieval chapel dedicated to St Anthony (the Abbot or the Hermit) – *Sant'Anton*. The foundation stone of the present church (which boasts of the works of important artists) was laid on 2 October 1815. Another sector of the village "*ta' Gajdoru*" was possibly named after a chapel (now destroyed) dedicated to Our Lady of Joys (*gaudiorum* in Latin). Because of a newer chapel, it is now referred to as "*tan-Nazzarenu*" or, more simply, as "*t'hemm isfel*" (= downunder). This active parish also runs a community radio: Radio Bambina. "*Il-Milied fix-Xagħra*" is an organization which works all year round to develop Christmas traditions such as crib-building.



The year 1933 saw the introduction of two youth movements in Xagħra: the Scouts and *Azzjoni Kattolika* (Catholic Action). They were considered as rivals (because of pro-British and pro-Italian undertones respectively). This early strong competition led to rapid innovations by them: drama, film shows, choirs, an orchestra and a band. These last two were amalgamated in 1939, leading to the birth of the Victory Band.



Although Gozitan scouting can look at this village as its birthplace, the troop had to be relaunched a number of times – the latest, in 2008, seems to have flourished into a very strong troop in a range of ages.

Xagħra Scouts had their football team, in 1936 at the newly opened Silver Jubilee name was changed to Blue Stars, the team Football Club; with its ups and downs, it has



participating in the first competitive games Ground (now the Gozo Stadium). After the developed into the present Xagħra United won numerous honours.



The Local Council has been very active, undergoing a substantial volume of projects. Among its responsibilities, it runs the public library named after Patri Ġiġi Camilleri S.J. – a missionary in India for 44 years.



In September 1900 the village Police Postal Agencies were issued with a date handstamp measuring 23mm. This Xagħra (known at that time as Caccia) postmark is now very rare to acquire. According to the Malta Study Circle Study Paper 'The Post offices in Gozo', the original handstamp of Caccia is today held (together with that of Sannat) in a vault in Valletta under Court Seal due to being illegally used in the late 1960's. The current Post Office was inaugurated on 22 May 1980. Xagħra has five letterboxes (numbers L536-40): in Triq it-Tigrija, Vjal it-8 ta' Settembru, Triq Ġnien Xibla, Triq tal-Masri and Triq il-Knisja.



# Xewkija



Xewkija is the oldest village established as a separate parish outside the capital: in 1678. It had become the first district '*contrada*' to be known as '*casale*' or village. The name Xewkija is derived from the Maltese word "*xewk*", meaning "thistles" or "thorns". The coat of arms of Xewkija consists of a golden shield with a broad horizontal red band



across the centre, between two green thistle plants in flower. The motto is '*Nemo me impune lacessit*', that is, no one shall attack me with impunity. The population of Xewkija is 3,115 (2005 census): the fourth largest in Gozo. It is on the left hand side on the way to Victoria from Mgarr Harbour, after leaving the village of Ghajnsielem. The first important building on this side is a small ancient chapel known as *Madonna tal-Hniena*, but the main landmark is the imposing Rotunda dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. The work on the building of this monumental church started in November 1951, whilst the first stone was laid in 1952. The Rotunda was blessed in 1973. The Xewkija church - which is the largest is the Gozo seat of the Order of St. John. The *Xewkin* can be described as the best Gozitan stone masons and also the finest decorators of Maltese stone. A proof of this is the parish church and, even more, the salvaged old church. Traditionally Xewkija folk are also able fishermen.

This village has numerous historically associated buildings and sites such as Mgarr ix-Xini - a well-known beach with a history from the times of the Romans and with its tower, built during the reign of Grand Master de Redin in 1661.



The fragmentary *trapetum* or olive-mill preserved in the Museum of Archaeology (within the Citadel) was discovered in the vicinity of *Tas-Salvatur*, close to *Wied Hanzira*. A complete second *trapetum*, on display outside the same Museum, was found at *Tal-Hamrija*. Recently, *Ghar ix-Xih* and *tal-Logga* were excavated and are undergoing further archaeological studies. The Xewkija Local Council and the neighbouring Sannat Local Council are working on an ambitiously large project: the Mgarr ix-Xini Regional Park. The aim of this project is to protect, safeguard, sustain and enhance the eco-sensitive, geo-cultural landscapes of that valley. These two local councils are actually developing a regional park

based on the concept of inclusivity, with the active involvement of landowners and occupiers of properties falling within its boundaries.



The famous Gourgion Tower gave way to the aerodrome built (in fourteen days in June 1943 to support the Allied invasion of Sicily) by the American Engineers between Xewkija and Ghajnsielem. After serving its purpose, the land used was reclaimed.

A windmill still stands in Xewkija. Erected in the times of Grand Master Perellos, this is a unique mill in Gozo because it has points which show the eight principal wind directions.

*Ta' Mejmun* is an area between Xewkija and Sannat, first recorded in 1398 (Archivio di Stato, Palermo, Real Cancelleria). According to tradition, it was in this area that the magnificent marble tombstone of Mejmuna - depicted on a 1965 Malta Stamp and preserved at the Museum of Archaeology - was unearthed. Mejmuna was a Muslim girl who died on 21 March 1174. The script on the tombstone is in Cufic (primitive Arab characters) and in it is a prayer by her father to be given spiritual strength to face the loss of his daughter. It also includes a quotation from the Koran.



A still-standing tower is found in Triq Santa Teodora. It is in fact a fortified house also known variously as *Ta' Ċirpisin*, *Tal-Kosta* and *San Teodora*. It seems that it possessed some sort of drawbridge, to seal it in times of danger. There is a sundial with the inscription ENCHOR, dated 10 April 1546. Basing on a similar mid-thirteenth century inscription in a manuscript, historian Rev. Dr. Joseph Bezzina suggests that this means "Behold! I am accurate. Are you?"





Although Xewkija Tigers Football Club was officially founded in 1939, they played their first competitive game 5 years after: in 1944, during World War II. The Tigers have won several honours down the years.



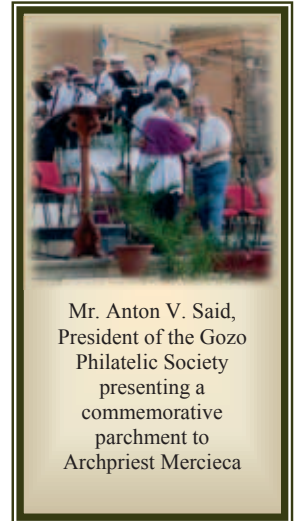
On the initiative of Wenzu Camilleri the Prekursur Band played its first marches in 1930 on the feast (Xewkija's patron saint); The band also gives musical services to other villages in Gozo and it has also played abroad in Sousse and Castelvenero.

The University of Malta's Gozo Campus (in a historically interesting building) and the Gozo offices of the Employment & Training Corporation are also located in Xewkija. Moreover, this locality hosts the Gozo Stadium, the main Industrial Estate in the island and the Government Farm; St. Mary's Cemetery is next door to the actual Xewkija one.



The Rotunda Bell Tower was built on the east side at the back of the Rotunda, between 1988 and 1991 - the four bells from the old church were raised inside on 2 September 1991. The largest was founded by Giulio Cauchi (Għajn Dwieli-Bormla, 1893) and weighs 2828kg; the second by Fratres Trigance (Valletta, 1788);

The third by Aloysius Bouchut (Valletta, 1738) and the smallest by Paccard (Annecy-France, 1949). The clock on the belfry was formerly on the façade of the old church. It was assembled by Mikielang Sapiano in 1875. In June 2006, new bells were brought from Loughborough, UK. Joining the two old bells (which were restored), they have been named Giovanna, Elizabetta and Maria Addolorata. The other two bells, which were also restored, were used for the clock on the belfry. The Gozo Philatelic Society presented Archpriest Mgr. Carmel Mercieca with a commemorative parchment, using a special postmark slogan issued by Maltapost and designed by Anthony Grech.



Mr. Anton V. Said, President of the Gozo Philatelic Society presenting a commemorative parchment to Archpriest Mercieca

*Wied Mġarr ix-Xini* is one of the deepest valleys in the island. It is rich in biodiversity, supporting varied flora and fauna - including some rare species such as the Spanish Broom (*Spartium juneum* - *ġenista safra* in Maltese) and the Shrubby Champion (*Silene fruticosa* - *sabbara*), as well as the Blue rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*, in Maltese *Merill*). It was also a nesting place for the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba* - *Barbaġann* in Maltese) and the Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*, in Maltese *Ċawla*).



Mikielang Sapiano  
Stamp issued  
5 October 1995

In 1900, various village Police Postal Agencies were issued with metal hand date stamps. That for Xewchia (the modern Xewkija) consisted of a 23mm single ring, with the words XEUCHIA – GOZO, AM or PM and date. This Post Office served for only a short period, but probably the postmarks were not withdrawn before 1921. The Gozo hub is located in Xewkija and there are five letter boxes in this village. The Xewkija sub post office which was at number 16 Triq il-Kbira closed down on 30 July 2011.



Xewkija post last postmark of the millennium 31 December 1999



Early postmark of 'XEUCHIA'



Xewkija Hub Postmark



Last postmark of the Xewkija S.P.O. 30 July 2011



Qniepen Godda  
Knisja Rotunda  
Xewkija  
Għawdex



# Xlendi

Xlendi Bay is a popular beach on the southwest coast of Gozo. It can easily be reached either through Fontana or from Munxar. Its small sandy beach is considered ideal for both young and old, while the more adventurous can snorkel off the rocks bordering the bay. Actually, because of its reef formations, Xlendi is an ideal diving site even for beginners - the caves and rugged reefs providing suitable conditions.



Nestled within a valley and boasting a secluded harbour (home to a fleet of colourful fishing boats), this attractive resort offers a serene and tranquil atmosphere. It has been described as an idyllic landlocked bay and the glorious blue-green water was for many years a haunt of artists and photographers. This delightful fjord-like inlet lies at the end of a deep, lush ravine which was a river bed.

Xlendi is now equipped with several tourist-related amenities, scuba diving schools, bars, restaurants and hotels. In fact this formerly sleepy fishing village sees its population swell substantially during the summer months, as visitors flock to sample the fine eateries situated along the waterfront. Moreover it seems to be on the must-visit list of most day-trippers to the island. Actually, a walk in the crisp and nimble air and the welcoming smile or acknowledging nod of the local farmer and shepherd serve as an excellent appetizer!



One can also climb the stairs on the right to ascend the cliffs which flank the resort, thus being able to enjoy the interesting - even dramatic - views. You will find here the 1650 Xlendi Tower perched on the promontory, "protecting" the bay's entrance. The scenic coastline is pitted with hand-dug salt pans - a previously important industrial occupation.

A visit to the *Ghar ta' Karolina* - a natural grotto which was once used by nuns for swimming - is often considered a must, especially because of its historical connection with the well-known philanthropist Carolina Cauchi. Maltapost commemorated her centenary in December 2007.



First recorded as *xilendi* in a 1550 contract, the name is probably derived from *xelandion* - a type of Byzantine vessel which may have been quite common anchored there.

A statue of the apostle Saint Andrew, patron saint of fishermen, stands looking out over the port.



However the church (built with the enthusiastic “sponsorship” of Carolina’s father, Notary Cauchi, on land offered by Mdina’s Carmelite community) is dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel – with a Salvatore Micallef 1869 titular painting; her statue was only commissioned in 1964, in thanksgiving following an ugly storm. The annual feast in her honour combines a variety of entertainment and sea sports activities, attractions and traditions. Importance is also given to devotion towards St. Joseph. The front section of the building dates back to 1868 (thus becoming the first new church in the diocese of Gozo, newly separated from that of Malta). It was enlarged at the rear in 1969 and consecrated in 1974. The belfry contains five bells, acquired separately. The diocese (who only became its owner following Carolina’s death) treats it as falling under Kerċem's responsibility but, for civil and administrative purposes, Xlendi is part of Munxar since the creation of local councils (with its own Committee). It has its own motto: *Navium Tutela* ("protection for vessels").



Both the hamlet committee and the church rector organize festivities along the streets, on the shore and even in the bay itself. These include the traditional ‘*Il-Ġostrà*’ which involves youth overcoming the obstacle of a greasy pole to reach a small flag at the very tip of the pole. This will result in gifts, a trophy and the honour of being the champion for that year. For several years the champion always was a member of the Galea family of Fontana, especially Paul who won this title year in year out.

Excavated in the cliffs behind the church, there is a reminder of the Cold War: the only one in Gozo among a total of eight around the whole of Malta following a decision by the British Colonial Office over fifty years ago to build underground flour mills which would at least provide the staple bread should other sources be cut off. The project was a huge undertaking, consisting of an entrance tunnel (30 metres long, 2.5 high and 3 wide) leading into a large chamber which was divided into three floors housing storage, grinding and milling equipment. The silo at the rear (connected to the machinery by mechanical augers) had a storage capacity of approximately 1,000 tons of wheat. Installation of this “emergency mill” was in the hands of Thomas Robinson (from Rochdale, England).



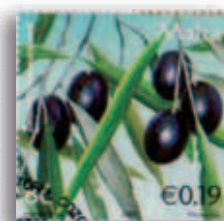
This being a “philatelic” publication, it is worthwhile to mention that a sub post office exists in Xlendi and in fact is included in the set of “Millennium” cards the GPS produced in 1999. After a period of closure, it was reopened on 3 September 2007, using the previous metal postmark, an occasion for us to offer a special cover. To really be exhaustive, one should add that it is located in The Serena Hotel at Triq San Xmun, while Triq ir-Rabat hosts a letterbox (MaltaPost’s reference code being L516). There are also a couple of registered stamp vendors.





# Żebbuġ

Żebbuġ is situated about 3.5km away from Rabat, the capital of Gozo, and it is situated in the northern part of the island. Built on two major plateaus (*Ta' Abram* and *Iż-Żebbuġ*), it is considered to be the highest village in Gozo; so high that it can easily be seen from all parts of Gozo. Żebbuġ derives its name from the Maltese word meaning olive tree or from its fruit products or tools which were used to produce olive oil. Some wild olive trees must have been growing beneath the South East ridge of the village – and surely not on its top, where the north-westerly winds are strong enough to uproot them. It was from these *żebbuġ* that eventually the hill got its name.



The name of the village is first recorded as *Żebuġi* in a document related to the foundation of a religious charity on 1 September 1492.

The motto of the village is '*Terra Sublimis*' - a land giving the best meaning of the village. The coat of arms consists of a silver shield with an olive tree on a slope and on it a red band with three six-pointed stars.



*Iż-Żebbuġin* live, as already pointed out, on two hills connected by a narrow strip of land. The land drops abruptly all around. This can best be experienced going down *Għajn Mhelhel* road that leads from Żebbuġ to the coastal inlet known as *Ix-Xwejni*. The highest point of the village, appropriately called *Ir-Ras* (= 'The Head'), rises 126 metres above sea level.

The history of Żebbuġ goes back to very early times; so much so that there was a Bronze Age (1500-700 B.C.) settlement next to the village on the flat topped hill of *Il-Kuljat*. This is evident from several Bronze Age silo pits that are still visible on top of the hill, as well as a wide scatter of pottery shreds datable to that period.



The area leading from the hill to Qbajjar, and the inlet beyond the fishing village of Marsalforn, contained several Punic tombs (700-218B.C.). Then, for a millennium and a half, the area was probably inhabited only by a handful of farmers. From the Arogonese onwards (A.D. 1282), a community began to take shape which even succeeded in raising a chapel for its spiritual needs. The community was recognised as an autonomous entity and the area of Żebbuġ and its vicinities was raised to a separate parish.

*Iż-Żebbuġin* are known for the high quality of their lace, weaving and woollen blankets. The villagers are very proud of their religious heritage.

The village church dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven ("*Santa Marija*") and her Queenship is impressively covered on the inside with a type of unusual semi-precious stone, similar to onyx or alabaster. This "marble" was discovered in 1739 by the owner of a field in Żebbuġ itself.



The titular altarpece is from the 1730s, solemnly crowned in 1980. The two main lateral paintings are from the mid-nineteenth century. Miraculous qualities are attributed to an old painting of the Immaculate Conception "*tal-Virtu'*".

This parish was established on 28 April 1688 by Bishop Davide Cocco-Palmieri. On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the parishes of Żebbuġ and three others, the Malta Postal administration issued a commemorative machine cancellation which was in use from 25 to 28 April 1988.

The building of the present church was initiated in 1690 and it was consecrated on 30 September 1726. It was conferred archipresbyteral status on 12 March 1963.

The titular statue was brought from France in 1863. Others housed in the parish church include those of St Joseph, St Therese and the Risen Christ. Like numerous parishes, Żebbuġ possesses the *korp sant* (the body of a martyr from the Roman catacombs): Saint Fortunatus. In spite that this is quite a small village, we find here a full set of thirteen Good Friday statues dressed up in cotton clothes (hand-made locally).



An interesting folkloristic-cum-religious celebration takes place in September (usually on the second Sunday). Roundish pieces of pastry (bearing the letter M for Mary) are blessed to be distributed to the parishioners to take home. These *għażziela* are then hung behind main doors and above beds to ward off bad luck, such as earthquakes and storms.



*Dar Stella Maris* is situated on the edge of a ridge, at the highest point of the village of Żebbuġ. It is a retreat home open to individuals and groups and also caters for the formation of new members of the Missionary Society of St Paul, which it owns and runs. Its attached chapel offers various services.

The Philharmonic Society *Santa Marija* was established in 1995 with the aim of teaching music amongst young people and to raise awareness about the culture and tradition of the village of Żebbuġ.



Żebbuġ Rovers Football Club played their first game in the 1976-1977 season. The 1988-89 season was the best in the history of the Rovers: it surprisingly won honours over more accredited teams.

Żebbuġ obviously has its own Local Council. Instituted in 1994, it has done its best to promote positive aspects throughout the village: emphasis has been given to embellishment and to the environment in general, especially in the rural areas pertaining to it. It has undertaken numerous initiatives – to the appreciation of the communities. These include the annual socio-cultural events of *Ilwien ir-Rebbiegħa*. Marsalforn is now under separate responsibility as a hamlet.

There has never been a Post Office in this village, but two stamps depicting localities found in the Żebbuġ area were issued by MaltaPost as part of a scenery set of four on 16 September 2009. The 2 cent stamp shows a scene of the coastline at *Ras ir-Reqqa* quite near Xwejni Bay. This area is popular with divers for its clear water and interesting sea fauna. Another stamp in the same set (with a face value of 37 cents) depicts the saltpans located at *Ix-Xwejni*; these are among the many stone saltpans that one finds along the shores of Malta and Gozo. Producing salt direct from seawater is a tradition that the Maltese have kept alive for thousands of years. This stamp has been selected to form part of the bi-annual Small European Postal Administrations Cooperation collection. The S.E.P.A.C. issues, aim to highlight its members from a tourism point of view and to promote the hobby of philately.





# Victoria

Gozo - substantially smaller than its sister island Malta - is nonetheless rich in history, art and tradition: numerous different civilizations have left their mark.

Victoria itself (which got its present “foreign” name – from Rabat – in 1887 on Queen Victoria’s Jubilee) also offers much to visit. The motto *A Magna Maximo* (= from great to supreme), though sounding too exaggerated to modern ears, may be considered as essentially correct! The capital is so identified with Gozo as a whole that its emblem (or coat of arms) is practically the same as the island’s (three hills)-with the addition of VR *Victoria Regina*.



One of Gozo’s best-known landmarks (previously known as the *Gran Castello* – or, in Maltese, *il-Kastell* and *is-Sur*), stands at a most important strategic point in the island’s centre, offering magnificent views. The new transport service makes it easier to visit, without the need of trudging up the hill!

This four-century old fortification network is still surviving in a fairly good state of preservation since successive administrations have been investing in its restoration and rehabilitation throughout the past decades – including projects supported by European Union funding. Works on the modernization of the Citadel actually commenced as early as 1599 under the direction of Giovanni Rinaldini, an engineer from Ancona. The fundamental rebuilding of the fortifications, possibly on a plan by Laparelli modified by Rinaldini, was in an advanced stage by 1603. Its construction was supervised by the Maltese military engineer Vittorio Cassar.

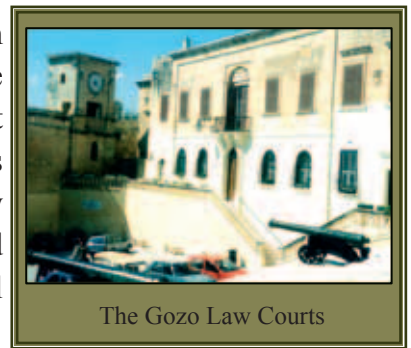
Much more recently, one of the most ambitious and successful projects was the restoration and reconstruction of the gunpowder magazine (polvrista) and protruding battery adjoining the demi-bastion of St John. The local specialized NGO *Wirt Ghawdex* (= Gozo’s Heritage) entered into a management agreement with the Gozo Ministry to open this site for the public by its volunteers. Access was obtained to three large silos behind the tunnel, leading to the St John’s demi-bastion, through another management agreement - this time with the Water Services Corporation.

The east end of the ditch is closed by a low battery projecting at right angles from the walls. It is reached from the platform of the demi-bastion through a tunnel cut in the rock and it was served by a powder magazine. The Battery is built with very thick masonry able to withstand shots from an eighteen-pounder gun. It has a sentry box towards the east and six embrasures, three of which overlook the ditch. Through these, the gun could be swung round to fire in an arc. The stonework is in part embossed with a stringcourse. A whole complex of



around 100 silos appears to have existed within the Citadel, some of which were discovered in 1860 when the present road to the Citadel was being remodelled. Three fairly large silos (approx. 13 metres deep) in this area were originally built by the Knights for storing grain in order to have enough staple food in store for the people of Gozo in times of siege. But, since 1877, they were converted into water reservoirs. Entrance to these silo pits is through the tunnel leading to the Low Battery, on the left-hand side of the Gunpowder Magazine.

The Gozo Law Courts and the Museum of Archaeology are also situated in the Citadel. The Museum of Archaeology, boasts of a varied representative collection of the numerous different civilizations mark. It is housed in what was formerly a two storey house consisting of nine rooms, known as *Casa Bondi*'. On the initiative of Sir Harry Luke, it was restored shortly before the Second World War – in 1937, after which its name was changed from *Palazzo Bondi*'. This was the surname of one of Gozo's old influential families – and this residence was used along the centuries by quite a few VIP visitors. Of great interest is the balcony situated on the main door, entirely sculpted in limestone.



The Gozo Law Courts



On entering, one can admire drawings by renowned artist Charles Frederick Von Brockdorff (1775-1850) showing the Xagħra Ġgantija Temples. This same section also houses several clay artefacts which make some archaeologists think that the first inhabitants, from Sicily, lived in Gozo before settling in Malta. Another part of the museum, on the second floor, is dedicated to the Punic and Roman era. Amphorae

and anchors, made of lead and wood, have been found on the seabed – mainly in Xlendi Bay in 1961. Apart from coins dating from Phoenician, Carthaginian and Roman times, there are also items made of silver and other ornaments. A full human skeleton (found on Comino) is also interesting. The Latin inscriptions and statues dating from Roman times attract attention too. One of the latter is the headless Julia (sister of Julius Caesar and grandmother of Augustus) – or rather so attributed, although associated with Ceres the goddess of creation. A further section of the museum concentrates on Medieval times: one of the tombstones is dated March 1174. This is outside the period when the Arabs ruled over the Maltese islands (869-1091) but their way of life was not hindered immediately by the Normans who invaded and took over. This artefact is called *il-Ġebbla ta' Majmuna* since the inscription refers to the death of this 14-year-old girl. The museum also boasts of a good assortment of *mnaras* (oil-lamp holders) from different times.



The Gozo Archeological Museum served as an extension of the Victoria Branch Post Office on 22 January 2006 for servicing the special handstamp issued on the occasion of the consecration of Mgr Mario Grech as Bishop of Gozo at the Cathedral. On this occasion a commemorative card was issued by the Chancery of the Bishop of Gozo in collaboration with the Gozo Philatelic Society. The hand stamp was designed by Anthony Grech, while the painting 'St. Paul consecrating St. Publius as first bishop of Malta' by Gozo artist Chev Paul Camilleri Cauchi.



Unfortunately there is no space to discuss any other building – except for the Cathedral. What was previously the *Matrice* became a Cathedral when Gozo and Comino were separated from the diocese of Malta in 1864 - by Pope Pius IX, whose effigy one meets on the steps. The other bronze shows John Paul II – the only Pope to visit the island; actually the “official” memorial of this important day in our history is another statue (at the beginning of the road to Ta' Pinu). An arresting sight as glimpsed through the main archway (dating from 1956), the Cathedral of the Assumption is a fine baroque structure: built of local limestone in the form of a Latin cross and planned by Lorenzo Gafa' towards the end of the seventeenth century (replacing at least one previous church). Items to especially notice (outside the packed-up Cathedral Museum) are funerary monuments, the titular statue (on its silver pedestal), the bust of St. Ursola (donated in 1614),



Michele Busuttil's 1791 titular altarpiece, the 1739 *trompe l'oeil* dome and the series of "modern" paintings by Chev.Paul Camilleri Cauchi.

Victoria is not just Gozo's geographic heart: archeologists and historians tell us the area has been settled



'It-Tokk'-popular meeting place for political and other activities.  
A political meeting 3 October 1909

for millenia. Today it manages to combine market hustle with a relaxed atmosphere. The central square ("it-Tokk" or *Pjazza Indipendenza*) cannot be missed. It is dominated by the *Banca Giuratale* (the seat of the medieval administration, the semi-autonomous 1961-73 Civic Council and (from the year 2000) the newly-established Local Council. This building has its direct philatelic interest since it housed the first postal branch in Gozo (of which century the Gozo Philatelic Society promoted a commemoration on 1 May 2000).



The square also hosts a War monument (showing Christ the King) by Carlo Pisi and one of the incredibly numerous churches and chapels around Victoria: the recently rebuilt St James's (which holds the statue used for the popular devotion of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady).



Model of Carlo Pisi War Monument

Interestingly, on a 1975 Architectural Heritage stamp, Professor Richard England showed the town as a typical village clustered around its parish church – St George's Basilica. The present building was "offered" in 1676 by the Governor to the patron saint for protecting Gozo from the plague. It is now a treasure house of artefacts possessing substantial artistic and historical importance (and will soon be accompanied with a separate museum). Important artists represented include (to keep to a "baker's dozen") Apap, Azzopardi, Buhagiar, Cali, Camilleri, Conti, D'Arena, Dimech, Erardi, Grima, Pisi, Preti and Zahra.



Two other churches are interesting as the Mother Houses of congregations of female religious founded



The letterbox in front of the old hospital.

in Gozo itself. The Franciscan sisters of the Heart of Jesus (in Palm Street) owe their origin to Dun Ġużepp Diacono and Madre Margerita Debrincat; the Dominican sisters (Enrico Mizzi Street) to Karolina Cauchi. Along the latter street, we find the diocesan seminary (with an annexed boys secondary school). Rather astoundingly, its chapel is also used regularly by the Anglican community. As evidenced by certain architectural features, this was formerly a hospital; even the Gozo Ministry (and administrative centre, a glance of which can be seen on one of the 2004 Letterboxes stamp set) in *Pjazza San Frangisk* was one – until the new complex was built on the outskirts at the Xewkija side.



On the road there, one notices a small church – some 12 square metres - dedicated to St Martha (also called *tal-Għonq*, from the area) built as a vow out of fear during the 1865 cholera epidemic. In fact just opposite there are the remains of a cemetery (still called *tal-kolera*) which continued to be used until the main (state-owned one, known as *Ta' Santa Marija*) was opened in what is now within the Xewkija limits. Though small, this chapel still has space for paintings – and even a statue! And legends have cropped up about it – especially connected with devotion to the Souls of Purgatory.



Band clubs have traditionally served as cultural institutions and – more generally - even as educational centres, their committees being interested in more than just marches! The two Victoria ones own what can well be described as full-blown theatres (which even venture successfully two

annual operas). Probably uniquely, they are located quite near together: in Republic Street (formerly “*it-Tigrija*”, because of horse races up it – as still happens on the occasion of the two main summer feasts.

Other social organizations include two community radios (*Lehen il-Belt Victoria* and *Radju Katidral*) and as many as three football clubs – besides the numerous others that have fallen by the wayside. SK Victoria Wanderers was previously known, among others, as Victoria United. Oratory Youths FC is the successor of a number of clubs, beginning in 1948 with Salesian Youths. Victoria Hotspurs FC, founded in 1948, has won over twenty honours.



But, as the geographical and practical centre of the island, Victoria hosts the headquarters of a long list of organizations - even those which are not limited in their actions to the capital itself. Three surely merit a mention: the Victoria Scout Group, the Crib Society and the *Oratorju Don Bosco*. This last includes a theatre, a turf pitch and halls which offer opportunities for entertainment and formation to youths of all ages. As evidenced by the bronze *alto rilievo* above the main door, it was founded by Dun Pawl Micallef *tal-Barkuna* (sometimes hailed as the “Don Bosco of Gozo”); for a period it was in the hands of the Salesians of Don Bosco. The *Oratorju* also served indirectly as the impulse for the creation of the first-mentioned: what for long years was the only Boy Scout troop in Gozo, now owns an impressive purposely-built centre in *Triq Santa Dminka*. This street merits mention also for other reasons.

Dating from the early nineteenth century, Jesuit-run Manresa Retreat House – designed by Salvatore Bondi - offers opportunities for locals and foreigners alike (individually or in groups) and is popular for conferences. A touching (in both senses) building is the newly-founded Poor Clares monastery – which is not detached from the Gozo Association of the Deaf centre.



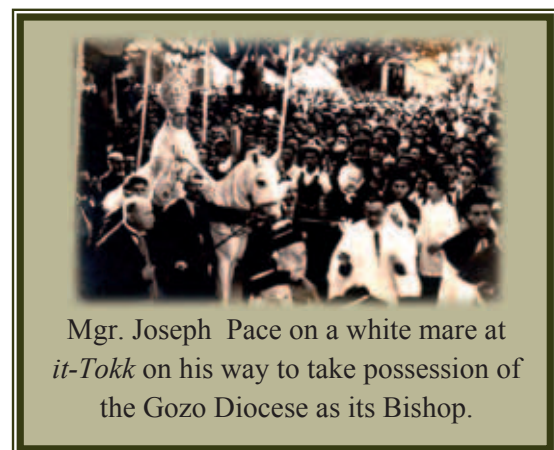
The *Għaqda Hbieb tal-Presepju* (which represents the whole of Malta internationally) aims at promoting the crafts connected with crib-building– and offers a permanent exhibition in Republic Street: in the cellar under the Bishop’s Curia. Some more information is due about Manresa: it is often still referred to locally as *San Kalċidonju* (one of the saints – including St Martin of Tours, St Domenica and *il-Madonna tal-Ħerba* – the cult of whom existed here). The chapel (which also serves the neighbouring residents) has two side altars (dedicated to St Jerome and St Paul the Hermit, such that the altarpieces really seem a pair). The titular painting was painted in 1857 by Giuseppe Hyzler: possibly his best work.

A big, semi-autonomous, community has developed in the *Taċ-Ċawla* area – with its own Pastoral Centre (and a modern church which, possibly on purpose, has the appearance of a meeting hall), a proportion of the inhabitants do not identify with either of the two parishes (which, possibly uniquely, do not have a geographic delineation). Other expanding parts of Victoria are located around, respectively, the Cana Movement Family Institute and the Capuchin Convent. All three can be described as being on the outskirts of Victoria; in fact the old Rabat centre tends to become depopulated, with new families preferring more modern housing.

The oldest remaining buildings (medieval) are around the recently restored statue of St George “*tal-Ħaġar*”. In fact open-air statues and other niches are numerous and the Local Council is trying to give them its attention. One could probably exclaim: there is too much to defend! St George’s Square has been transformed from a parking area to a very attractive venue. Three more squares should also be mentioned.

*Pjazza Savina* (often called St Sabina in error) is the location for the church of Perpetual Adoration (re-established last century but the original one is mentioned in 15th-century notarial deeds. Just off it we find the *Circolo Gozitano* – a rather unusual institution which concentrates mainly on the organization of public discussions and activities connected with our identity.

*Pjazza San Frangisk* was expanded substantially through the demolition of a central block (replaced by a fountain); it is so called because of the convent and attached church of the Franciscan Conventuals (who are said to have arrived in the island before 1500). The main altarpiece (by Dutch Van Loo in 1675) and the statue of St Anthony are attractions but the spotlight is mainly on the Immaculate Conception, a most beautiful statue around which impressive celebrations are held in December for *il-Kunċizzjoni*.



Mgr. Joseph Pace on a white mare at *it-Tokk* on his way to take possession of the Gozo Diocese as its Bishop.



*Pjazza Santu Wistin* (alternatively – though not exactly - *Fuq it-Tomba*) is named after the church and convent (which has been transformed into a retreat home) of the Augustinian friars. It is certain that they first arrived before the fourteenth century but the church is rather later: it holds various important artefacts, most notably a Preti titular painting. The *Oratorju* is also here, built upon what was the *Ċimiterju tal-Franċiżi*: a cemetery with numerous chapels which was covered with ornate headstones under which returnees from the last Crusade were buried following an epidemic. This square (which now serves mainly as a parking lot) is noticeable too because one side is made up wholly of practically identical residencies in quite a classic format.

In the street joining these two squares (the etymologically mysterious *Triq Vajringa*) – above the state primary school – the Public Library merits a visit, both for architectural reasons (designed with a huge hall by Renaissance-style master of all Mgr Giuseppe Farrugia) and because of the presence of an enormous collection of *Melitensia* (publications connected – not necessarily directly - with these islands). It dates from the nineteenth century and now has the Gozo Archives



Victoria Primary School, The Gozo Public Library and the Gozo Archives

attached. The library had originally started as a private club (for the limited intelligentsia); the building (now a normal residence) is in *Triq il-Liberija*, so-called in commemoration.

A few minutes walk away is picturesque ever-green Lunzjata Valley, a game reserve for the Grand Masters. The ancient chapel, practically nesting in the cliff, is dedicated to the annunciation (hence the name). This valley also had a miniature washing area with fresh water (then suitable for drinking). To revert to a more commercial aspect, all customers' needs are covered through a wide selection of shops (big and minute, as well as hawkers and market stalls), bars and restaurants. Most bank branches are in Republic Street (or thereabouts), together with the Police station.



One of the many alleys in old Rabat

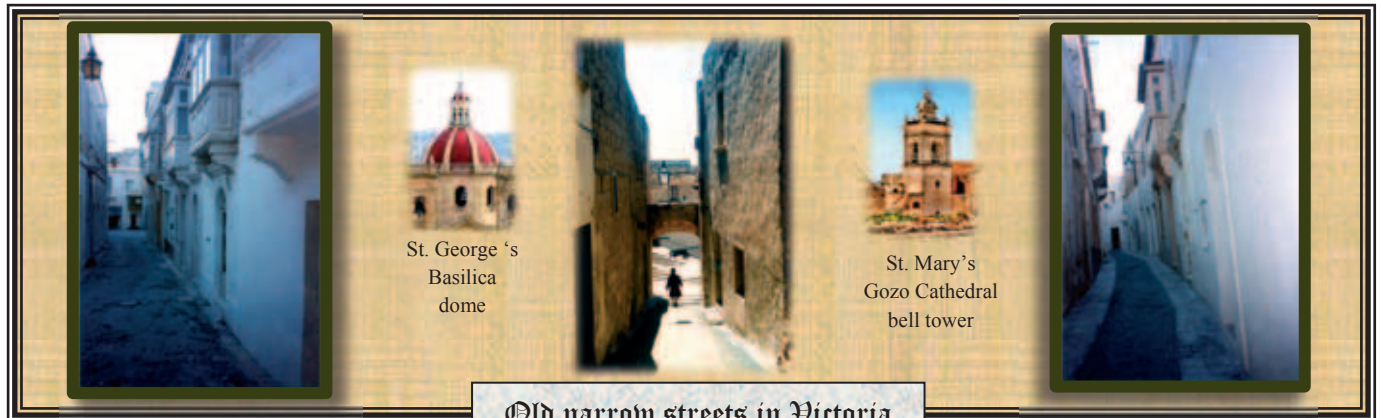


A unique balcony (*ta' Mamanti*) depicted on a stamp issued on 28/4/2007

All secondary schools in Gozo are in the capital: a total of

(two each – for either of the sexes - owned by the State and the Church). They have both built a Sports Complex (in *Triq l-Ewropa* and *Triq Enrico Mizzi* respectively).

The Post Office is at the top end of Republic Street but there are numerous registered stamp vendors (who however prefer selling other articles besides these low-margin items!) Letterboxes can be found at the Hospital (with MaltaPost reference L519), *Triq ir-Repubblika* (501 and 506), *Triq Ġużè Ellul Mercer* (502), *Pjazza San Franġisk* (503), *Triq il-Librerija* (504), *Triq Ġwanni Pawlu II* (505), *Triq Fortunato Mizzi* (507) and *Triq il-Kapuċċini* (524).



Old narrow streets in Victoria



Victoria Branch Post Office postmarks

Yesteryear postman delivering mail in Foreman Street, Victoria



**AGIUS DE SOLDANIS**

Commemorated  
by a stamp designed by  
Harry Alden  
issued on 24 July 1971

Canon Gian Piet Agius Sultana (known as de Soldanis) was born in Gozo's capital in 1712. At the age of 17, Bishop Alpheran de Bussan made him canon of the Matrice of Gozo – thus providing him with a regular income to further his studies (in Classics, Philosophy, Theology and Jurisprudence). He followed courses abroad for long periods, becoming a member of important institutions – and chosen as the first Valletta Librarian. He was a pioneer in Maltese linguistics and philosophy, writing several scholarly theses including *Gozo Antico e Moderno, Sacro e Profano* (still a manuscript but published in translation). Other important works include those on Maltese linguistics, such as *Della Lingua Punica Presentamente Usata dai Maltesi* (the first known Maltese grammar), *Damma tal Kliem* and *Aforismi e Proverbi Maltesi*. He died in 1770.



**GUŻÈ AQUILINA**

Commemorated  
by a handstamp  
from the Victoria BPO  
on 7 Anril 2011

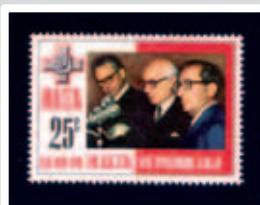
Professor Gużè Aquilina – linguist, lexicographer and author - was born in Munxar on 7 April 1911. He received his education at Sannat Primary School, the Gozo Seminary, the University of Malta (LLD) and London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (PhD). Aquilina was the first holder of Malta University's Chair of Maltese and Oriental Studies and laboured incessantly to promote Maltese and our culture, also publishing both scholarly and popular works. His writings included broadcasts, drama, poetry, essays and a socio-historical novel. He received several prestigious awards for this and other productions. Professor Aquilina passed away on 8 August 1997. This commemorative postmark, designed by Gozo Philatelic Society's Anthony Grech, was issued on the initiative of Munxar Local Council in collaboration with the GPS.



**GIUSEPPE BAJADA**

Commemorated  
on a stamp designed by  
Luciano Micallef  
issued on 7 June 1985

On 7 June 1919 the pent-up frustrations of the Maltese demanding representative government and better living conditions exploded into a riot in Valletta: the mob got completely out of control, resulting in much damage. Troops were called in to restore order, opening fire unnecessarily. One of the four people killed was Giuseppe Bajada from Xagħra: he was in Valletta preparing to emigrate. He is reported to have been hit in Strada Teatro, felled holding the Maltese flag. A Carmelite friar assisted him with the last Catholic rites before he died on the spot. *Is-Sette Giugno* is now a national feast and an official commemorative ceremony is also held annually in Xagħra, near Bajada's residence.



**ANTON BUTTIGIEG**

Depicted  
on a stamp designed by  
Chev. Emvin Cremona  
issued on 31 March 1975

Dr Anton Buttigieg - Poet, Politician and President of the Republic of Malta - was born in Qala on 19 February 1912. He studied at the Gozo Seminary, later graduating Bachelor of Arts in 1934 and Doctor of Laws in 1940 from the University of Malta. He first worked in the police force and as a journalist. He won his first parliamentary seat in 1955 and was re-elected in all subsequent elections, serving as Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. He resigned his seat to be elected the second President of Malta on December 27, 1976. He had represented Malta in numerous institutions. His literary output includes several books of romantic poetry, some of his works also appearing in translation. His output included a four-volume autobiography. He was also President of the St. Gaetano Band Club of Hamrun. Anton Buttigieg died on 5 May 1983.



**CAROLINA CAUCHI**  
Commemorated  
by a stamp designed by  
Harry Borg  
issued on 29 Dec 2007

Carolina Cauchi was born in Senglea on the 25 December 1824, the only child of Notary Nicolò Cauchi (from Victoria) and Theresa née Galea (from Senglea). In spite of the fact that in those days girls rarely received any education, Carolina was sent off to school. Above all she received a strong Christian upbringing. She used the material goods she possessed for the glory of God and the good of humanity. Together with a cousin, she began contacts with the Vatican to found a female Dominican order in Gozo (which was not even a separate diocese yet). The congregation was officially founded in 1889, using a first convent she built in Victoria. Pontifical recognition for the Dominican Sisters, whose charism is nursing, arrived in 1966. Carolina Cauchi, who is also connected with Xlendi, passed away in Gozo on 17 July 1907.



**WISTIN CAMILLERI**  
Commemorated  
by a handstamp  
from the Victoria BPO  
on 3 July 2004

Agostino (“Wistin”) Camilleri (1885-1979) was born in Victoria. After beginning his studies under Giuseppe Calì, he continued at Rome’s Accademia di San Luca (where he also befriended Antonio Scortino). From his studio in Victoria, he produced *papier-mâché* statues for churches, processions and streets of most localities in these islands – as well as for Maltese communities overseas. Stone sculptures included the Apostles at Ta’ Pinu (where he made hundreds of designs too); he also used mixed concrete (the previous “Christ” overlooking Marsalforn and numerous funerary monuments). He was a sought-after designer for lacework and church decorations (winning the 1923 Wembley competition). He was awarded the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* and knighted Commander of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. Four sons have become artists too.



**SAVERIO CASSAR**  
Commemorated by a stamp  
designed by Harry Borg  
issued on 18 Oct. 2002  
and by a handstamp  
on 16 Dec 2005

Archpriest Saverio Cassar was born in Ghajnsielem in 1746. He obtained the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Rome’s *La Sapienza* University. In 1773 he was appointed by Pope Clement XIV Archpriest of the Matrice (now the Cathedral) in the Gozo capital – and later Pro-vicar. Just a few months after the French under the leadership of General Bonaparte ousted the Knights from Malta, in September 1798 the Maltese rose against the new rulers. The Gozitan uprising was led by the dynamic Archpriest Cassar and succeeded in incarcerating all the troops on the island within the Citadel walls. In fact they surrendered on 28 October. For two years Cassar acted as head of the provisional government when Gozo was practically independent: *la Nazione Gozitana*. However the British replaced him as governor. This patriot died in 1805, the bicentenary receiving a handstamp.



**GIUSEPPE DE PIRO**  
Commemorated  
by a stamp designed by  
Esprit Barthet  
issued on 1 Sep. 1983

Monsignor Giuseppe de Piro (1877-1933) is best known as the founder of the Missionary Society of St Paul (in 1910) and his beatification process is ongoing. The son of Marquis Alexander de’ Marchesi De Piro, he studied at the University of Malta and Rome’s *Gregoriana*. He was installed dean of the Cathedral chapter and appointed the Archbishop’s general secretary. He was a leader in the post-*Sette Giugno* riots National Assembly and a mediator during the 1930 Strickland crisis. He was elected senator in 1932. Among numerous services to the Church, he was entrusted with St Joseph’s Home (for boys in need) in Ghajnsielem. While here, he was very active – even founding the St Joseph Band. In spite of his poor health, he continued working hard to the end, dying after falling unconscious at the end of a procession he conducted.



**ADRIAN DINGLI**

Commemorated  
by a stamp designed by  
Harry Borg  
issued on 18 Oct 200.

Sir Adrian Dingli (1817-1900) was the son of Sir Paolo (a Gozitan President of the Court of Appeal) and was elected to represent Gozo in the Council of Government under the new 1849 constitution. As crown advocate, he voluntarily reformed Malta's legal system and was created Companion (and later Knight Commander) of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. He was also the first Maltese to become a Companion of the Order of the Bath. He was regularly entrusted with important tasks connected with legislation and international negotiation; he was even chosen as legal advisor to the British Commissioner of Cyprus. In 1880 he became the first-ever Maltese Chief Justice. He was a strong linguist, interested in all aspects of culture. He was instrumental to Gozo finally succeeding in becoming a separate Diocese (1864).



**MARIO GRECH**

Commemorated  
by a hanstamp  
(22.1.2006)  
and an Occasion Card  
(21-26/1/2007)

Mgr. Mario Grech was born in Qala in 1957 but has lived most of his life in Kerċem (where he was parish priest for some months). He was ordained priest in 1984 and consecrated the eighth diocesan bishop at the Gozo cathedral on Sunday 22 January 2006 by his predecessor Nicholas J Cauchi. Besides other responsibilities (not solely within the diocese), he had been in charge of Gozo's ecclesiastical tribunal (as judicial vicar). MaltaPost issued a special postmark (designed by the GPS's Anthony Grech) to commemorate the event, given during the ceremony from a provisional post office set up at the Gozo Museum of Archaeology within the Citadel. On the first anniversary, it then produced an occasion card (dated 21-28.01.07); thus Bishop Grech became the first Gozitan personality to be so honoured.



**MANWEL MAGRI S.J.**

Commemorated  
by a stamp designed by  
Harry Borg  
issued on 26 Dec. 2007

Fr Emmanuel (known as Manwel) Magri was born on 27 February 1851 in Valletta and joined the Society of Jesus in 1871. He was ordained priest in 1889 (in Spain). He was an ethnographer, archaeologist and writer. Magri taught in Jesuit Colleges in Malta and abroad. He also served as Rector of the Seminary in Gozo (1902-1906). He was one of Malta's pioneers in archaeology and, as a member of the first Committee of Management of the Museum of Malta, Fr. Magri was responsible for the excavation of the Hypogeum at Hal-Saflieni, a megalithic temple in Xewkija (Gozo) and a number of other sites. His comparative studies about Maltese folklore and the collected folktales he published are considered as most significant contributions towards Maltese culture and language. Magri died unexpectedly on 29 March 1907 in Sfax, Tunisia.



**MARY MEYLAKE**

Commemorated  
by a handstamp  
from the Victoria  
BPO  
on 9 August 2005

Mary Meylak (1905-75) was born in Victoria where she continued living all her life. Between the years 1944 and 1962 she was a Gozo state secondary school teacher. She showed early talent for writing verse, thus receiving the limelight from Maltese literary circles – even though a woman (and a Gozitan!) Her first poem in Maltese was published in 1931 (under a pseudonym). This first (or even only) Gozitan female poet won several contests. A member of the *Akkademja tal-Malti*, she also wrote essays, novels, short stories (on the different villages), an operatta and two five-act operas (wholly in verse). An outstanding feature of her poetry has been noted as the monorhyme characteristic of Arabic verse. Her birth centenary was commemorated with a handstamp designed by George Vella founder member of the Gozo Philatelic Society.



**DUN PAWL MICALLEF**

Commemorated by a handstamp from the Victoria BPO on 30 January 1997

Born in Victoria in 1897, Dun Pawl Micallef was ordained priest in 1923. An admirer of Saint John Bosco, he immediately began teaching catechism to Rabat boys – helped by Dun Ġużepp Spiteri. St George’s sacristy becoming too small, they acquired a house (in Charity Street) which developed into a recreational centre animated by Dun Pawl. He again had to find more spacious premises and in fact planned a complex to contain a theatre, a football pitch, a chapel, classes and lecture rooms. This was eventually built instead of a long-unused cemetery: the present *Oratorju Don Bosco*. Till his 1956 demise, Fr Micallef was a great fundraiser - enthusiastically helped by Bishop Pace and innumerable prominent and anonymous benefactors who appreciated the essential work he was undertaking.



**ĠORĠ PISANI**

Commemorated by a handstamp from the Victoria Branch Post Office on 6 May 2006

George Pisani, (born on 6 May 1909) was a Gozitan patriot, poet and writer. He is considered as a giant in Maltese literature. Ġorġ Pisani’s poems and writings about Gozitan history and culture are a legacy which continues to teach and please readers. Pisani’s writings give a vivid picture of his native Gozo as a beautiful place full of peace. While talking about many social and human problems, his best works are inspired by the temples and the ancient neighbourhood. Guze Chetcuti rightly calls him the "the poet of history" because a large number of poems he wrote have a prehistoric theme. But he was also known as the poet of youth, as Prof. Guze Aquilina wrote. in 1945 in the preface of the book of Pisani, *The Easter of Youth*: "Remove ... timing black daunting or despair, the greatest motive of the poetry of Pisani remains brave youth looking forward passionate and quick in the race of life." Pisani won numerous awards with his poetry and novels. His plays and radio broadcasts were also popular. After an experience with the Capuchins, he became a journalist and teacher. Pisani as an official in the Department of Information, was instrumental in the wheat-gathering campaign which helped Malta to keep its ground during the worst period of World War II and not to surrender to the enemy. In 1992 he was honoured with the Medal for Service to the Republic in recognition of his work. On the occasion of the 100 anniversary from his birth, MaltaPost issued a special postmark designed by Anthony Grech, member of the Gozo Philatelic Society.



**EMANUELE VITALE**

Commemorated by a stamp designed by Harry Borg issued on 18 Oct. 2002

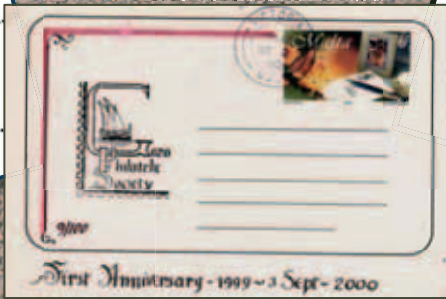
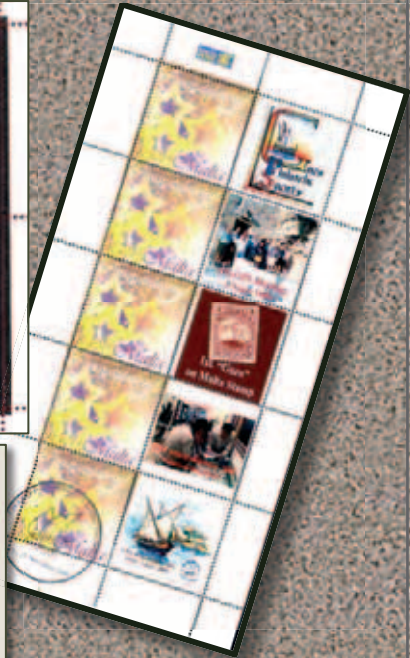
Emanuele Vitale (born in 1759), a notary by profession, succeeded his father as *Università* chancellor and also became the rector of St. Joseph’s Archiconfraternity. Soon after their arrival, the French appointed him judge of peace for Żurrieq; but, not agreeing with the radical changes being introduced, he resigned on 2 September 1798 to join a group of farmers in attacking the garrison at Mdina. By popular acclamation he was made commandant general of the Maltese and, when the National Congress was constituted as an autonomous legislative body the next year, chosen to represent his district. After the French capitulation, two medals were struck to commemorate the blockade of Valletta. The gold medal inscribed *Patria Liberata* was awarded to Emanuele Vitale. Alexander Ball nominated him Senglea lieutenant. In August 1801, Commissioner Cameron made him Gozo Governor. He was also awarded a good salary to act as superintendent and director of health in Gozo.



**ŻGUGINA**

Depicted on a stamp designed by Joseph L. Mallia issued on 5 May 1997

Legend has it that Żgugina was a poor woman from Ġharb. Her only “possession” was her son Mattew who was kidnapped by pirates. They carried him away in their boat to an unknown place. Żgugina went to the little chapel dedicated to *San Dimitri* and prayed for his intervention in bringing her son back. Saint Demetrius heard her fervent prayers and out from the painting on his horse he went across the sea. Moments later the Saint returned with Mattew. Żgugina was overjoyed and, as she had promised, lit the oil-lamp in the chapel in front of the painting. This she did day in day out until she died. The legend also has a variant which concludes with a perpetually lit light in a chapel on the sea bottom.



Gozo Philatelic Society Exhibition Issues





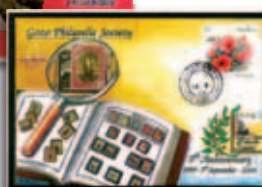
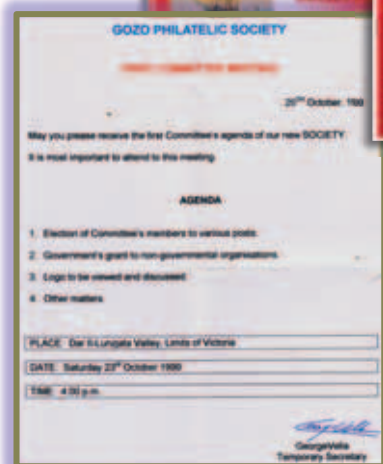


# Gozo Philatelic Society

The **Gozo Philatelic Society** was founded for “promotion of the hobby”, “provision of a point of reference” and “co-ordination”. The foundation meeting was held on 3 September 1999 at *Dar il-Lunzjata* in that idyllic valley. On 9 October 1999 the Statute was approved and the first Committee elected. The first public activity was held on 28 December. Also 1999 saw our first production (“Millennium covers”). All members receive a regular copy of the quarterly Newsletter, can participate in meetings, will be informed of GPS productions and are able to participate in the annual Exhibition.

The GPS Newsletter – launched on 12 February 2000 – is distributed to members quarterly: some thirty full-colour pages of information and news. It is among the more popular benefits enjoyed through membership.

The Gozo Philatelic Society has practically become synonymous with the Covers (Cards/Envelopes) produced on the occasion of stamps or handstamps with Gozitan connections. The designer is founder-member Anthony Grech, who has himself been involved in commemorative handstamps and other philatelic activity.



The GPS Exhibition (in the Gozo Ministry Halls on Victoria's St Francis Square) has developed into an annual (November) philatelic highlight but the Society has been involved in numerous smaller exhibitions, including joint ventures.

Do contact the Secretary [secretary@stamps-gozo.org](mailto:secretary@stamps-gozo.org) (or GPS POBox 10 VCT 1000) for information about membership or for a copy of the Statute. Currently, the annual membership fee is €5 (Overseas – including Newsletter postage – €12) but Juniors (under 16 years) pay €2 only.

On 28 June 2011, the Gozo Philatelic Society was enrolled as a Voluntary Organization (VO/0546) in the “Culture, Arts and National Heritage Advancement” class. It was a founding member of the Gozo NGOs Association in August 2003.



## *The Founding Members of the Gozo Philatelic Society.*

John Muscat, Anthony Grech,  
Anthony Said Cremona, Antoine Vassallo,  
Saviour Grech, Daniel Sciberras,  
Maria Assunta Sciberras, Michael A. Refalo,  
Frankie Masini, Donald Theuma Xerri,  
George Vella.





# Bozta & Comino

