

SOCIETY NEWS

At the beginning of the period under review, the Historical Society passed its 30th year and is now looking ahead towards its 34th birthday. Yet it has retained its vigour and has undertaken solid steps forward which conform to its statutory aims of furthering the study of the history of Malta and its diffusion.

The present number of *Melita Historica* is the 32nd consecutive publication and now comprises eight complete volumes. The published articles on the various subjects have all continued to enhance the publication's well-earned reputation and it is regularly sent to various countries including the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Western Germany, Switzerland and even Nigeria and Finland. Throughout this period under review, a list of Melitensia has been published in each of the four numbers comprising the eighth volume and now, for the benefit of all readers, we are publishing an index of all the articles and book reviews published during the past 32 years. Thanks go to all the contributors and the three editors who worked on this volume.

As in previous years, the Committee organised conducted visits to places of historical interest which included the *Wignacourt Museum* of Rabat, the *Capuchin Museum and Crypt* at Floriana and the *Wickman Maritime Collection* at Xghajra, Żabbar. Thanks go to Can. J. Azzopardi, Rev. F. Azzopardi OFM Cap. and Mr V. Wickman who willingly guided us on these visits. Attendance was satisfactory on all occasions but, frankly speaking, one expected interest to be shown by a larger number of members.

In each of the four years under consideration, the Society has continued to organise History Week in October or November. Thus the initiative started in 1979 has been continued and has also flourished. Unfortunately, the weakness of such undertakings usually lies in the fact that most of the lectures presented are never published and a lot of original research can never be fully and properly presented to the public. However, the Society — on the suggestion and initiative of Mgr. Prof V. Borg who, incidentally, was also the originator of the idea of holding "History Weeks" — managed to overcome this hurdle by attracting sponsors for the publication of the talks held in 1981, 1982 and 1983. The idea is that sponsors meet most or all the expenses of the publication which is then sold to the public (and at a reduced price to members) thus creating a fund for the publications of the talks when no sponsor is available. Our thanks go to the first three sponsors, Simonds Farsons Cisk Ltd., Charles A. Micallef Ltd. and Mr. & Mrs Paddy J. Stubbs for their generosity. Unfortunately, although a number of members regularly buy this publication,

entitled *Proceedings of History Week*, the response has not been satisfactory and, for the publication of future editions, the Society is still constrained to find other sponsors.

Yet History Week has proved beneficial in that it has been instrumental in presenting about 30 published papers and giving a chance to new faces to read out and publish their research. In this respect, one must thank all contributors and the editor, Mr. M. Buhagar, for a job well done.

The Society did not just present public lectures in History Week. In 1980, a series of four papers were read about aspects from Maltese 19th century history, the principal aim being to help Sixth Form students preparing for their Advanced Matriculation Examinations. In 1981, another two lectures, but of a more advanced and academic nature, were organised. Our thanks go to the speakers, Dr. E. Sammut, Mr. J. Cassar Pullicino, Dr. P. Cassar, Mr. L. Grech, Mr. Ch. Galea Scannura and Brigadier A. Samut-Tagliaferro for accepting our invitation to deliver these lectures.

In 1983, our Society also produced another publication entitled *Marian Devotions in the Islands of St Paul 1600—1800*, a book of no less than 383 pages edited by Mgr. V. Borg, who also wrote over 200 pages of the text. This profusely-illustrated book was published under the auspices of the local organising committee of the Mariological Marian Congress held in Malta in September, 1983. Our sincere thanks go to Mgr. Borg and his team of 10 researchers for producing such a scholarly and learned work of reference. Naturally, this book was offered at a reduced price for members.

The Society's 30th anniversary was celebrated by a dinner at which the guest of honour was the centenarian historian, Sir Hannibal P. Scicluna. The function was held at the Europa Hotel in Sliema and a satisfactory number of members attended. Sir Hannibal was also elected as the Society's first — and, so far, the only — honorary member, an honour he greatly appreciated as expressed in his correspondence with the Secretary on 24th March, 1980.

Between the 6th and 14th November, 1981, an exhibition on *The History of Transport in Malta* was organised by Mr Guido Lanfranco, under the auspices of the Historical Society, at St John's Co-Cathedral Annexe. The exhibition was a very successful venture and thousands of visitors literally flocked in to see it. It was inaugurated by Mr. A. Miceli Farrugia and blessed by the Vicar-General, Mgr. C. Xuereb. Special thanks go to Mr Lanfranco who was not only the organiser but also mounted the whole exhibition, including the construction of all the furniture and all the scale models, literally on his own.

In 1982, the Din l-Art Helwa Committee was kind enough to place at our disposal one of their rooms which is being utilized as a store for the Society. In this way, the many back-numbers of our publications and exchange copies of other journals are being collected from various 'repositories' and placed in one central store. Our thanks go to *Din l-Art Helwa*, not only for placing this store at our disposal, but also for making their premises available for our public lectures and History Week. Shelving and ancillary furniture was constructed by Mr Guido Lanfranco *gratis* and, for this, we are deeply grateful.

Overall membership has increased by 94 over the past four years but it should be borne in mind that no defaulting members have been struck off the Society's lists. There is quite a large number of listed members who are in arrears extending over a number of years. The deletion of about 50 such defaulting former members was effected about four years ago after various notices had been sent. Unfortunately, it seems that the axe will have to fall again since the Society is not in a position to carry lame ducks, even though *Melita Historica* has been withheld from such members. Unfortunately, some new members seem to find difficulty even to effect their first subscription and, although the register boasts of over 400 members, the truth is that about one-third of them seem to exist on paper only. In spite of all this, the number of 'active' members remains very encouraging.

For the immediate future, the Society aims to continue with its annual publication of *Melita Historica* and *Proceedings of History Week*. An exhibition on *Maltese Titular Statues and their Statuaries* is scheduled for November 1984, and another exhibition for 1987.

JOSEPH F. GRIMA
(Hon. Secretary)

APPRECIATION**Rev. Joseph Micallef Lic. D.**

I was really shocked on Saturday, 27th August 1983 to learn of the untimely demise of my good friend, Fr. Joseph Micallef or, as he was more popularly and affectionately known, Dun Gużepp. I felt a certain emptiness for I felt that I had lost not only a respected colleague but a real friend in the truest and fullest meaning of the word.

I count myself fortunate that I knew Dun Gużepp, more so since on a number of occasions — including on the eve of his death when we met at the Notarial Archives in Valletta — I benefited from his advice and, at times, consoling words. He always had the appropriate word for the particular occasion or situation and I am sure that there were many other fortunate people who, during his lifetime, profited from his advice and counsel as was amply shown by the great number of people from all walks of life who flocked to Luqa to pay their last respects.

But Dun Gużepp was not just an exemplary priest: he was a conscientious teacher and educator who always strove to do his work properly and carry out his duties to the best of his ability. Colleagues and students are now that much poorer. In particular, one could not but admire his humanity and humility.

In the academic field, Dun Gużepp also proved his worth. His properly-researched and painstaking works are second to none. His two books about his beloved village Luqa, *Hal Luqa Niesha u Grajjietha* and *Rahal fi Gwerra*, his monograph about *Hal Safi* and his social history of Malta during the Second World War entitled *When Malta Stood Alone* are first-class works. Above all, Dun Gużepp had become a social historian, a mantle which well-befitted the character of a man who loved his fellow human beings and felt mostly at home when he could discretely help his neighbour without fuss or fanfares. When he died, he had started to prepare a social history of the Great Siege of 1565 and he had finished the manuscript for a history of the Great Plague of Malta in 1676. Happily, this last work is in print. I have read the manuscript and can vouchsafe for the tremendous amount of research it contains. I sincerely believe that this posthumous publication will be a fitting tribute to one of Malta's foremost social historians. One must not omit his historical novel, *Għaxar Snin Wara*, based — appropriately enough — on his native Luqa and dealing with social problems caused by the Corso.

Dun Gużepp was a dedicated and indefatigable priest, teacher and social

historian and Malta is all the poorer for his loss for we certainly do need more *true gentlemen* of his ilk in our island. The only really consoling thought is that he is in a far, far better world praying for us.

^ Dun Guzepp, rest in peace and pray for us.

JOSEPH F. GRIMA

Deceased Members 1980—1983

Mr. C. Buhagiar
 Professor Lionel Butler
 Mr. A. J. Docherty
 Chev. John Frendo Azzopardi
 Mr. V. A. S. Gorissen
 Bro. Henry Grech F.S.C.
 Rev. Joseph Mizzi
 Rev. Joseph Micallef
 Mr. Erin Serracino Inglott
 Sir Hannibal P. Scicluna

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The *Editorial Board* for *Melita Historica* is composed of the Editor, the Sub-editor, the Secretary and the Treasurer *ex-officio* and Mgr V. Borg and Dr. A. Ganado (members).

The editor of the Society's new publication *Proceedings of History Week* (for 1981, 1982 and 1983) is Mr. M. Buhagiar.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY**NEW MEMBERS 1930-1983****1980**

- Mr. Anton Quintano — 39, Cospicua Road, Paola
 Dr. Eugene Montanaro — 35/1, Market Street, Floriana.
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 Mrs. Anne Crosthwaith — 3, Narrow Street, Lija.
 Sir Hannibal Scicluna — c/o Europa Hotel, Sliema.
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1981

- Mr. Michael Riccioli — P.O. Box 238, Osmanbey, Istanbul, Turkey.
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 Major Claude Gaffiero — "Ta' Stronka", Madliena, Limits of Gharghur.
 Dr. Alfred Bonnici — "Casa Bonnici", Sir Augustus Bartolo Str., Ta' Xbiex.
 Mr. Alfio Micallef Grimaud — "Clio", Birkarkara Road, St Julians.
 Mr. Christopher Busuttill Leaver — 3, Circle Flats, Nazju Falzon Str., Msida.
 Mr. Edward Spiteri — 42, Dingli Street, Sliema.
 Dr. Dominic Fenech — c/o University of Malta, Msida.
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 Prof. Dr. Reinhold Kontzi — Doblerstr. 6, 74 Tubingen, West Germany.
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 Mr. Elia Galea — 7, St Thomas Street, Rabat, Malta.
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 Mr. Joseph Sammut — "Santa Maria", Indrj Calleja Street, Birkirkara.
 Mr. Godfrey Bonello — "Villa Messina", Gwardamangia Hill, Gwardamangia.
 Marquis Dr. Bruno de Martinez la Restia — 57, Castel Maniace, 96100 Siracusa, Sicily, Italy.
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 Mr. Carmel Cilia — "Bowie", N/S off Tower Street, Birkirkara.

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 Mr. Alfred Mallia — “Is-Sebuka”, The Village, Mensija, St Julians.

1982

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 Mr. Anthony M. Vassallo, — “Hubara”, Antonio Micallef Str., Misrah Kola, Attard.

1983

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 Miss Catherine Busutil, 62, Workers' Street, Żurrieq.
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