



SOCIO-CULTURAL INITIATIVES FOR THE LOCALITY OF XAGHRA GOZO

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1.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 THE BRIEF

The fourth Xagħra Local Council deemed imperative the identification of potential, implementable, socio-cultural initiatives for the locality in order to develop in a coherent manner the resources falling within its boundary. The scope of this study is to identify these initiatives; initiatives aimed to enhance and promote the heritage of Xagħra. Heritage, the legacy that past societies developed and exploited for their existence, is forming the present, the medium through which it is being transformed and sustained for posterity for future generations.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The focus of the study is the social environment. No culture exists without society: society forms and transforms culture. Knowing the way Xagħra people perceive the locality is imperative. So is knowing what they like, dislike and would like to have in their locality. Although the initial brief for this study was exclusively focused on the physical aspect of Xagħra, this was altered at the project's outset to include community development. When using this approach, salient references to human and social aspects of community development were incorporated into the overall equation, a form of community empowerment exercise.

The following are the objectives of this study:

- (i) List and assess the socio-cultural assets falling within the boundaries of Xagħra Local Council;
- (ii) Outline a philosophy to ground assets within an inclusive integrative, holistic, environmentally sustainable design concept;
- (iii) Identify socio-cultural initiatives for the locality of Xagħra compatible with contemporary socio-economic and environmental management practices; and
- (iv) Prepare an implementation programme for initiatives identified.

2.0 THE CONTEXT

2.1 BACKGROUND

The Local Council had been working during its term in office, which lapsed on 31st March 2007, on a number of initiatives for the locality. Various appraisals of the cultural heritage of the locality were undertaken in recent years, either through the initiative of the Local Council or heritage sensitive organisations.

2.2 GENERAL METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted is directed to develop an integrated approach to review and assess the socio-cultural assets falling within the legal boundaries of the locality of Xagħra. The following were the main elements of the method adopted:

- (i) Undertake baseline surveys to identify and map socio-cultural assets in Xagħra and undertake research, including fieldwork, where applicable and possible;
- (ii) Identify and undertake consultations with agencies and/or organizations active in the community of Xagħra;
- (iii) Assess and interpret findings of surveys;
- (iv) Draft a design philosophy aimed at an inclusive, holistic, environmentally sustainable concept; and
- (v) Prepare an implementable programme for socio-cultural initiatives identified.

Following commencement of the baseline studies and surveys, the methodology had been refined such that the local, socio-economic realities of the locality of Xagħra are addressed. Whilst the Local Council was keen to undertake environmental surveys to identify initiatives for the locality, the objective was re-defined during the course of these surveys to include an extensive consultation process with the various stakeholders active in the community of Xagħra.

A number of themes were developed as an approach to the locality of Xagħra. These are:

- (i) The physical aspect of Xagħra encompassing the geomorphology and geology of the area;
- (ii) An assay of soils occurring in Xagħra in relation to the geology of a given site;
- (iii) The ecological aspect of Xagħra;
- (iv) Land use assessment;
- (v) Semantics of place names;
- (vi) An appraisal of the cultural heritage of the area; and
- (vii) A sociological profile of the Xagħra community.

For the sociological profile, a grass-roots approach to community analysis was adopted. Consultation meetings were held not only with non-governmental organisations involved in the locality, including the main political parties¹ and the Church, but also directly with different strata of society, whether they were children, youths, the elderly, returned migrants or foreigners (Appendix 1). Legal, medical and other professionals from the community were consulted (Appendix 2).

Sociological data was obtained through conducting consultation meetings. Different strata of society were invited to express their views about Xagħra and to put forward suggestions. Using unstructured and unobtrusive approach, bars, restaurants and the village pjazza were visited and important village events attended. This is a good method of observation to comprehend further suggestions put forward by individuals and/or groups during the consultation process.² Although all consultation meetings, being focus groups or

¹ Although only the Malta Labour Party and Nationalist Party are present in Xagħra, the Gozo representative for Alternattiva Demokratika was also consulted.

² This methodology has been based on Larson's assertion that "entering other people's lives and representing their stories is far more complex than many would assume" (Larson, C.L., 'Representing the subject: problems in personal narrative inquiry', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 10(4), 1997, p.469). The participant observation method induced further questions from the perspective of an outsider to the village that would otherwise have remained unraised.

individuals, were minuted, the contents of same are intentionally not reproduced in this report.

Consultation meetings were held through Ms Carmen Bajada, a local councillor responsible for cultural and natural heritage and education. Mr Joseph Spiteri, then Mayor of the Xagħra Local Council and who was instrumental in piloting this study, attended most of these meetings although he did not interfere with the consultation process. To respect confidentiality, meetings with the professions, all held at the Local Council premises, were neither attended by the Mayor nor by any other council member.

Once the locality was thoroughly assessed, Xagħra was divided into nine (9) zones (Drawing 22_06_1). In each zone, the social, political and historical elements of the place names, the cultural and natural heritage, the physical characteristics, land use and official protection listings were examined.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF TIME AT XAGĦRA

Xagħra, meaning garigue, occurs on a plateau of sedimentary rocks of shallow marine origin formed during the Oligo-Miocene age, that is circa 26 million years ago in terms of the geologic time scale. The highest point of this plateau is the site of one of the earliest recorded settlements in world civilization, historically referred to in notarial deeds until the mid twentieth century as Caccia, Tal-Qacca or Tal-Kaċċa as some refer to it.

The three prehistoric periods—namely the Neolithic (ca 5,000 to 4,100 BC), Temple (ca 4,100 to 2,500 BC) and the Bronze Age (ca 2,500 to 700 BC, the age of Homer's epic 'Odyssey') are present at Xagħra. Santa Verna belongs to the first period whilst two architectural monuments of world heritage significance, namely the Ġgantija megalithic temple complex and the Brochtorff Circle hypogeum, belong to the Temple period. The Bronze Age is represented by the settlement at In-Nuffara.

The notion of prehistoric time scale is relevant to Xaghra due to the Ġgantija Phase, dated 3,600 to 3,200 BC, which phase is synonymous with the architecture at Ġgantija, one of the oldest free standing building structures in the world. The architecture does not only predominate the cultural landscape of the ancient settlement of Xaghra but also gives it an identity in world civilization.

In terms of geologic time scale, prehistoric time is absolute present. The current topography is the resultant of the underlying geological formations. Based on the Ordinance Survey Sheets of 1965,³ a computer model was generated based on topographical contours covering the locality of Xaghra. The landscape of Xaghra as present at the time of the temple builders was plotted (Drawing 22_06_10_1) and same model was used to generate views of the locality from different view points (Drawing 22_06_10_2).

Since the early Roman period, the population of Gozo was centred around Gaulos Oppidum, the Gozo Citadel, and until the year 1637 had to spend the night within. Once legislation was repealed, Xaghra was one of the areas sought after. Within half a century, Xaghra was designated as a village and an autonomous parish was established. The present parish is dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, locally known as Il-Vitorja after the 1565 siege.

2.4 THE SPIRIT OF XAGHRA

An understanding of the meaning of one's life as being a dweller of Xaghra is not suddenly acquired at a particular age. The understanding is the achievement of long developments; as such, the village spirit does not burst forth fully developed like Athena out of Zeus's head. It is built up incrementally from most irrational beginnings. On an overt level, the Xaghra

³ Survey Sheet nos 3288, 3289, 3290, 3291, 3292, 3488, 3489, 3490, 3491 and 3492.

myths teach little about the specific conditions of contemporary life in Gozo since these myths were created long before they came into being, but more is learnt from their covert allegory. Since the Xagħrin, as the inhabitants of the village are referred to, at every moment of their lives are exposed to the community legends, they learn to assimilate them and are thus provided with inner psychological resources. Through the centuries during which these legends have been told and re-told, they have become ever more refined and have come to communicate simultaneously to all levels of the village personality of Xagħra, carrying important messages to the conscious and unconscious mind.

The principal myth enveloping this village is Sansuna who carries stones - megaliths - to build a temple embodying strength and female fertility. A legend that creates positive feelings lending strength and hope which can sustain adversities that the Xagħrin unavoidably encounter. This translates into a Ġgantija—a religious shrine—that although cast in megaliths and lives in the present, symbolizes the past, which is connected to female strength and fertility. This relates to all aspects of the Xagħrin personality. It is here that Sansuna and Ġgantija have unparalleled value, because they offer different dimensions to the psychological imagination and possibilities. A Sansuna, a female version of Samson renowned for his strength, who carries the big stones, the arduous task, which represents not only a positive perspective, since life may be difficult, but also the working struggle; against difficulties in life which are unavoidable - the carrying of megaliths - that hard work is an intrinsic part of human existence. The understanding is that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets these hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious—the temple. The legend also presents a symbolic metaphor that Sansuna is leaving a legacy to the generations which will come after her. Of course, the re-telling of this tale simplifies the situation, draws a clear figure; details, unless important, are eliminated. Sansuna is not typical, but rather unique with a conviction

that hard work pays. There is not much polarization, no good or bad, stupid-clever; rather a clear message that virtuous and industrious exertion brings success and God's blessings. This permeates the village with a mythical character that is cut in simple and straightforward female terms, which makes it easier for the Xagħrin to identify with her, because her diligence makes a contribution to all. Morality is not the issue in this myth, but rather, assurance that one can succeed and that whether one meets life with a belief in the possibility of mastering its difficulties s/he will win. The legend, takes this existential dilemma seriously and addresses itself directly to it, the 'lived happily ever after' applies in the permanence of the temple. A legend that is future oriented in that a heroine has to go to Ta' Ċenċ, a number of kilometres away, and follows the right way with deep inner confidence. A heroine who is touched by primitive things—stones—but also a Sansuna who will convince the Xagħri that s/he may be an outcast, abandoned in the world, groping in the dark, but like her, in the course of life s/he will be guided step by step. And today, more than in past times, Xagħrin need reassurance offered by the image of the isolated woman who nevertheless is capable of achieving meaningful and rewarding relations with the world around her.

While entertaining the Xagħrin, the legends enlighten them about themselves and foster their personality development. They foster meaning on so many different levels and enrich the existence in so many ways. They are also a work of art. The legends are unique, not only as a form of story, but as works of art which are fully comprehensible, even to children, and through which different people can extract different meanings at various moments in life, depending on interests and needs of the moment; and when ready, return to the same myths and enlarge old meanings or replace them with new ones. Cultural heritage is thus also preserved and passed on. It is also clear that the legends originated in a period when religion was an important part of life; thus, they deal directly with a religious theme. In more than one way then, the

legends help to inculcate the norms of society into young minds consciously, but subconsciously provide an attractive stereotyped role which touches the most primitive parts of the psyche; the process of individuation, the achievement of self-realization, by telling of a strong woman who built a temple.

The other myth, rooted in Homer's *Odyssey*, talks about Ulysses, the heroic Greek warrior who was shipwrecked and landed at Ogygia, and seduced by the captivating nymph Calypso. Like the former, this legend touches the collective unconscious of this village population in the sense that all humans are basically alike; have the same basic intra-psychic structure and activity, the same basic needs, go through the same stages of life, and have basic ways of perceiving and responding to the world, emotionally and behaviourally. The Ulysses-Calypso story is all about seduction, temptation, romance and faithfulness to one's journey in life. In being retold, it touches the universal emotional expressions in the people of Xaghra. Archetypes which symbolize basic life themes and which are poised with masculine and feminine energy, especially when one considers that the nymph Calypso seduces then captivates the hero—a man who was married to Penelope and who had a son, both of whom awaited him back home in the island of Ithaca. It is also told that when he expressed his desire to return to his homeland, the nymph puts barriers to his departure and schemes a seven year stay, which is told was as pleasant as possible, by offering Ulysses all the delights of the island. Still, the legend proclaims, Ulysses did not give up hope of returning home to his wife and begged the Gods to suit his wishes which are then fulfilled. In this way the myth touches many aspects of personality: the hero, the trickster, the seductress, the 'puer aeternis'—eternal youth—all of which are recognized by the villagers in the way they have learned to adapt, to mask their individual psyche and mould it by social mores, values and expectations of the village psyche. Then, of course, the friction between oneself, the worldly pleasures—the id in psycho-analytic terms—the defiance of such and the after affect. Then the epitome, that

one turns to God which expresses the return to salvation, the return to union and wholeness and towards a core of love. This is where, in the legend, one learns how Zeus, the highest divinity, sent his messenger Hermes to force Calypso to liberate the captive. This is where each Xaghri is set with a challenging task, to discover one's own life journey and take a courageous attitude in dealing with life's difficulties. The story of abandonment, leaving behind, loss of love is a very basic human issue.

Altogether the two legends bring out the understanding that the unconscious is led by a force much deeper and wiser than the individual conscious ego—God, Soul and so on—towards a self which extends beyond the boundaries of time and space and which may shape a sense of fate and destiny, a sense of meaning in one's life, a process of individuation. It is recognized that Xaghrin, like other communities, will not undertake the journey into the wholeness unless compelled to do so, an allegory to Ulysses' journey and Sansuna's plight, but it is only after this journey that the Xaghri will be able to confront the cross one is to bear and which becomes a stepping stone to a greater sense of wholeness and depth into the Xaghri way of life.

3.0 THE LOCALITY OF XAGHRA: A THEMATIC APPROACH

3.1 THE GEOLOGY OF XAGHRA

3.1.1 STRATIGRAPHY

The island of Gozo, which covers an approximate area of 67 km², has topographic features that are quite dissimilar from those present on mainland Malta. This particular scenario is a direct consequence of the subtly differing geological conditions present on the two islands. The geological stratigraphy is horizontal with a marked absence of a general relief incline. Horst and Graben fault system is absent with the interior of the island forming a heavily dissected plateau.

Composed of a Tertiary succession of limestone of Oligo-Miocene age, the geological sequence is made up of five lithostratigraphic formations, namely, Lower Coralline Limestone, Globigerina Limestone, Blue Clay, Greensand and Upper Coralline Limestone.⁴ All these formations, with the exception of Greensand, outcrops within the territory of Xagħra which covers an area of circa 7.6 km², that is nearly 11% of the island of Gozo (Drawing 22_06_4). Three faults, inferred from the geology of the island, have been identified at Xagħra.⁵

Lower Coralline Limestone Formation, the oldest formation, is composed of massive bedded, pale grey to white, algal limestone, frequently detrital and rich fauna of shallow marine origin. Only a small outcrop of the Xlendi Member, marked by a prominent echinoid bed which is characteristic of the formation, is present at the south-western periphery of the locality, a periphery otherwise crowned by the Globigerina Limestone Formation apart from the northern fringe bordering with Marsalforn, a fact which accounts for the absence of softstone quarries in the area. This formation consists of yellow to off-white, fine grained, massive bedded limestone with abundant Globigerinidae and planktonic foraminifera. Lithologically, the formation is subdivided into three discernible subdivisions, namely the Lower Globigerina Limestone Member, the Middle Globigerina Limestone Member and the Upper Globigerina Limestone Member, marked by phosphorite horizons at the top of the lower and middle subdivisions. This formation is overlain by the Blue Clay formation which reaches a maximum thickness of 75m at Xagħra.⁶ This unit is composed of alternating pale grey and dark banded marls with lighter bands containing higher carbonate content. Being impervious, Blue Clay forms the

⁴ Office of the Prime Minister, Geological Map of the Maltese Islands: Gozo and Comino, Sheet 2, Malta, 1993.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Pedley, H.M., M.R. House and B. Waugh, 'The Geology of the Pelagian Block: The Maltese Islands', In: The Ocean Basins and Margins, Vol. 4B, The Western Mediterranean, Plenum Press, 1978, p. 426.

base of the perched aquifer, a source of numerous springs occurring around Xagħra. The Upper Coralline Limestone Formation, the youngest of the Tertiary formations, comprises a varied succession of coarse fossiliferous limestone intervened with soft micritic marly limestone. Two of these members outcrop at Xagħra: GĦajn Melel and Tal-Pitkal Members. The former consists of massive bedded, pale brown, foraminiferal limestone whilst the latter consists of brownish grey, coarse wackestones with frequent well developed patch reefs and biohermal mudstone containing abundant molluscan, algal and coralline fragments.

3.1.2 THE GEOMORPHOLOGY OF XAGĦRA

Xagħra is rich in geomorphological features: it is essentially a large high-lying Upper Coralline Limestone mesa—Gozo's second largest after Nadur, the main town of the island—surrounded by a number of open valleys outcropping in Blue Clay leading to Globigerina Limestone plains, one such valley leading to the important sandy beach of Ir-Ramla (Drawing 22_06_2_2). The valleys surrounding Xagħra are Wied tal-Belliegħa/Wied ta' Gerxija/Wied ta' Marsalforn to the west, the Wied il-Ħanaq/Wied ir-Ramla to the east and the Wied ta' l-GĦajjun to the south.

The north-western flank of the Xagħra plateau is incised by two deep valleys, known as Wied Ta' Ġnien Imrik and Wied Ta' L-GĦeżien, both of which are feeder valleys to Wied ta' Marsalforn. The north-eastern flank of the plateau has a deep, but short valley of Wied il-Pergla. The north-eastern side of Xagħra consists of scenic coastal Globigerina Limestone steep cliffs overspilled with Blue Clay taluses, known as Rđum ta' Kililu, Rđum tas-Surgu, Rđum tas-Sekkek, Rđum tax-Xagħra and Rđum tal-Marin. The eastern flank of the plateau has two small and open feeder valleys, Wied ta' Fellis and Wied GĦajn Watar, both leading to Wied ir-Ramla. Two tributary valleys, Wied tal-Furnar/Wied tal-GĦajjun and Wied ta' Xħajma, lead to Wied ir-Ramla, both flanking a small Upper Coralline Limestone outcrop, known as In-Nuffara.

Since the plateau is a high lying one, its flanks form inland cliffs known as *sisien*, important ornithological havens witnessed by a good number of hunting lodges. Due to decreased anthropogenic pressure on these *sisien* in recent decades, the Carob/Almond/Fig tree clusters have flourished, reaching *maquis* standards in certain areas, such as at Ta' Gajdoru, Il-Pergla, Tal-Gabdol and at Ta' Sruġ.

3.1.3 HYDROGEOLOGY

Given the peculiar geomorphological setting, the geology of the area is conducive to the formation of a perched aquifer. The linear stratification and extensive Blue Clay outcrop give rise to freshwater springs which drain into dry valley systems which surround the Upper Coralline Limestone plateau of Xagħra. Thus, various place names occurring in Xagħra include the word *GĦajn*, literally translated as spring. This is indicative that Xagħra always had a rich supply of the perched water table. This ready supply of water may testify to the early human settlements in the area. Although the significance of the mean sea level aquifer may be disregarded, the perched aquifer is of importance and the area underlying the Upper Coralline Limestone Formation is designated by the Malta Resources Authority as an aquifer protection zone (Drawings 22_06_9_1 to 4).

3.2 A DESCRIPTIVE ASSAY OF THE SOILS OF THE AREA

Maltese soils can be described as young or immature soils with an incompletely developed profile, formed from calcareous parent material under the influence of a non-leaching climate, with the exception of terra soils and, possibly Tal-Barrani series, which are claimed to have formed under a more humid climate. The ensuing description is based on Lang⁷ and the type of classification presented is the Kubiena classification.

⁷ Lang, D.M., Soils of Malta and Gozo, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1960.

The main types of soils found in the Maltese Islands are terra calxis, xerorendzinas and carbonate raw soils. The distribution of these soils in Xagħra is mapped on Drawing 22_06_5. The most dominant soil forming factor in Maltese soils is the parent material. Upper and Lower Coralline Limestone Formations are associated with terra soils, Blue Clay Formation with carbonate raw soils and Globigerina Limestone Formations with xerorendzinas.

Carbonate raw soils are only slightly differentiated from their parent material and are characterised by an (A)C profile. The (A) horizon is normally strongly colonised by organisms and the organic matter content, less than 1.5%, is characteristically low. The calcium carbonate content, more than 80%, is usually high and the pH, between 8 and 9, is also relatively high. Carbonate raw soils, often rich in clay content, can be divided into four main types, depending on the nature of the parent material: Nadur, Ramla, Fiddien and San Lawrenz series. The Ramla series is essentially compacted calcareous brown sand covered by a thin decaying grass leaf mat. The San Lawrenz and Fiddien series are dominated by their high content of Blue Clay and are largely anthropogenic, greyish soils. The clay loams and light clays of San Lawrenz and Fiddien series are sticky and water retentive, but become hard in summer. They are used for a wide variety of crops. The heavy clays of Fiddien are little used due to their high salinity and alkalinity. The Nadur series is weathered Greensand with a sandy texture, the colour usually being greenish yellow. All Ramla and Nadur soils, being sandy loams and sands, are easily worked, but lack moisture and warm rapidly; they are mainly allocated for vines and fruit trees.

The main characteristic of Xerorendzinas, which differentiates them from carbonate syrosem, is the type of humus present, which is usually rendzina moder rather than the mummified non-humified organic matter of the latter. Being more weathered, xerorendzinas have an AC profile with a greyish brown, humified, calcareous horizon passing through a well

developed whitish calcareous horizon. The organic matter content averages 2% and the calcium carbonate content is lower than in carbonate raw soils, varying between 50 and 80%. Most xerorendzinas are well structured loams with pH slightly above 8. Three main types can be identified as xerorendzinas — San Biagio, Alcol and Tal-Barrani series. The San Biagio series is always under cultivation and its main characteristic is its humus deficient but distinctive mull-like rendzina moder; colour is generally light brown and texture is silty loam. The Alcol series is a rendzina-like clay loam; its parent material is alluvial-colluvial. The colour is often reddish brown due to the presence of terra clay in the parent material. The Tal-Barrani series is a brown silt or clay loam and is the weathering product of the lower Globigerina Formations. Both San Biagio and Tal-Barrani soils are mostly terraced except where present on plateaux and plains. The Alcol series is practically never terraced. Having a good structure, xerorendzinas are the most exploited soils, even though they have low nutrient availability and average water retention.

Terra soils usually have an A(B)C profile with a humus deficient, thin grey brown or reddish brown A horizon in which the humus form is mull. The A horizon overlies a thicker reddish brown ferruginous (B) horizon which usually lies directly on the parent material. The texture of these soils varies according to the clay content but is usually loams or clay loams. The pH varies from 7.5 to 8.5 and the calcium carbonate content is less than 15%. The organic matter content is about 5%. Three main types of terra soils can be distinguished — Tax-Xaghra series, the most natural of the three types, is characterised by the karstic landscape in which it forms and is a reddish brown clay of shallow depth; Tas-Sigra series which is often found in unterraced fields and is generally a red clay or clay loam; and Armier Complex which is essentially windborne sand incorporated with Tax-Xaghra soils. Although the clay loams and clays of terra soils are the most fertile soils with excellent nutrient availability, such

soils are only cultivated if they occur in alluvial plains, where they are intensively cultivated, often with protected cropping.

In addition to these three main types, there are purely anthropogenic soils, referred to by Lang as L-Inglin Complex and Tad-Dawl Complex. These soils are mainly characterised by their high degree of disturbance, principally carting, quarrying and terracing. Anthropogenic disturbance can be identified either by random variations in the surface soil colour, or non-intimate mixtures below the uniform surface layer. Quarrying activity is relatively high in the Maltese Islands and Tad-Dawl Complex is essentially terra soils mixed with rock flour and heaped over rubble and organic refuse as a form of past quarry reclamation. L-Inglin Complex is found along valley sides with strong terracing and is usually carbonate raw soils mixed with rock flour and terra soils. Due to the high active calcium content of these complexes, such soils are often only suitable for dryland farming.

3.3 INTRODUCTION TO MEDITERRANEAN ECOSYSTEMS

Xagħra, being a locality in the Maltese Islands, a Central Mediterranean country, shows a number of natural Mediterranean ecosystems, depending on the stage of ecological succession. The natural assets of Xagħra are plotted on Drawing 22_06_8_1 to 4. The main terrestrial ecosystems are:

- (i) Steppe, in Maltese known as steppa. Characteristic plants of steppe ecosystems are spring-winter flowering annuals such as fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), giant fennel (*Ferula communis*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) and the Southern Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum narbonense*). Anthropogenic disturbance or interference of garigue or maquis, such as flytipping and clearance of vegetation, or natural degradation, such as fire, results in regression to steppe, where the characteristic plant communities would be thistles. A steppe may also form as progression from abandoned agricultural land.

- (ii) Garigue, in Maltese known as xagħri, which is characterised by small, evergreen, xerophytic shrubs, such as Mediterranean Thyme (*Thymus capitatus*), Mediterranean Heath (*Erica multiflora*), Tree Spurge (*Euphorbia dendroides*) and Maltese Fleabane (*Chiliadenus bocconeii*). These perennials are characteristic of karstic landscapes, typical of Coralline Limestone Formations. Coastal garigue systems are characterised by the Golden Samphire (*Inula crithmoides*), Sea Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*) and the Maltese Sea Lavender (*Limonium melitensis*).
- (iii) Maquis, in Maltese known as makkja, characterised by large, evergreen, sclerophyllous shrubs and small trees. Typical vegetation consists of carob (*Ceratonia siliqua*), olive (*Olea europaea*), lentisk (*Pistacia lentiscus*), wild fig (*Ficus carica*), wild almond (*Amygdalus communis*) and bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*). A number of typical annuals grow beneath the shrub/tree level. Naturally, maquis occurs on valley sides and rdum, however, these have to be steep and inaccessible due to the excessively high anthropogenic disturbance in the Maltese Islands.
- (iv) Woodland, in Maltese known as masġar, characterised by sclerophyllous trees with an undergrowth of shrubs. Dominating trees are holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) and Aleppo pine (*Pinus halapensis*). Coastal woodland are characterised by tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.) and chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*). White poplar (*Populus alba*), Mediterranean willow (*Salix pedicellata*) and grey-leaved elm (*Ulmus canescens*) are typical of riparian woodlands.

Other ecosystems found at Xagħra include:

- (i) Freshwater rock pools, in Maltese known as għadajjar ta' l-ilma ħelu, occur only in the rainy season, that is from late autumn to early spring, and are the result of erosion of Coralline Limestone Formations. Characteristic vegetation is Maltese waterwort (*Elatine gussonei*) and Maltese horned-pondweed (*Zanichellia melitensis*). Due to anthropogenic

disturbance, freshwater rock pools are considered highly threatened throughout the Maltese Islands.

- (ii) Sand dunes, known in Maltese as għaram tar-ramel, are characterised by perennial halophytes such as sea rocket (*Cakile maritime*), prickly saltwort (*Salsola kali*), sand couch grass (*Elytrigia juncea*), sea holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*) and *Ononis natrix*. Again, due to anthropogenic disturbance, sand dunes are extremely rare and highly threatened ecosystems.
- (iii) Valley watercourse ecosystem directly depends on the degree of seasonal rainfall and the presence of Blue Clay which favours the formation of freshwater springs which continue to feed the watercourse during the dry season. Typical vegetation includes perennials such as water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and water speedwell (*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*). A dominating reed in valleys is the giant reed (*Arundo donax*). Where the watercourse meets more saline conditions, the common reed (*Phragmites australis*) takes over. Watercourses have high species richness and are a habitat to a number of rare and threatened invertebrates and also to the once common painted frog (*Discoglossus pictus pictus*). Unfortunately, this type of habitat is highly disturbed; most watercourses are polluted with rubbish dumping and runoff from nearby agricultural fields and are thus one of the most highly endangered ecosystems in the Maltese Islands.
- (iv) Caves, in Maltese, għerien, mostly known for bats.
- (v) Coastal cliffs, known in Maltese as rdum, naturally occur where the Coralline Limestone Formation outcrops. In Gozo, halophytic shrubs that thrive in this type of ecosystem include the Gozo Hyoseris (*Hyoseris frutescens*) and the Maltese Everlasting (*Helichrysum melitense*). Cliffs are often important ornithological havens. Due to their inaccessibility, anthropogenic disturbance has so far been minimal.

Given a natural time scale absent from anthropogenic intervention, the Xagħra Upper Coralline Limestone plateau would have been a rich garigue—hence the name Xagħra—and

the Blue Clay flanks would be rich maquis, verging on wood, with freshwater ponds and springs. Due to anthropogenic intervention since prehistory, the natural assets of the area have been highly tampered with, although the area still retains some of its scenic beauty with typical Mediterranean landscapes, a rare asset for the Maltese Islands.

3.4 LAND USE ASSESSMENT OF XAGĦRA

3.4.1 LAND USE AT XAGĦRA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The natural features of Xagħra, with its plateaux, promontories, valleys and sisien, were the determining factors in the development of the village with its urban sprawl over the centuries of its human occupation, starting from prehistoric times. These features also provided, to a great extent, the sources of livelihood for the Xagħra village population.

Anthropogenic disturbance has been the key modifying factor of the Maltese natural landscape, creating a cultural landscape which has become a characteristic feature of the islands. Terracing is a wholesale modification of a landscape to maximise agrarian returns from a given land, resulting in marked pedological changes and the destruction of the natural habitat. Rubble walls were built to retain soil along the formed terraces. Traditionally, a number of trees, namely carob trees (*Ceratonia siliqua*),⁸ fig trees (*Ficus carica*) and almond trees (*Prunus amygdalus*) were cultivated to act as windbreakers and soil enhancers through improvement in soil fertility and prevention of soil erosion. The greater the gradient of the contours, the higher the degree of terracing and the number of trees cultivated (Photos 48 and 60).

Thus, the natural landscapes of woodland, maquis and garigue would have been transformed into a cultural landscape of

⁸ Listed as a protected tree as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

dryland farming with steppic verges of land. Lower demands of agricultural land and decreased grazing of ovicaprids means a reversion of abandoned land to more steppic conditions and tree clusters from a low to high maquis ecosystem. The main challenge facing natural and cultural landscapes nowadays is irresponsible development planning.

The land use survey undertaken in the late 1950s indicated that the locality of Xagħra was overwhelmingly agrarian.⁹ As in the rest of the Maltese Islands, dryland farming was the dominant form of agriculture with wheat and barley being the major products of Xagħra. Sulla, also at the time an important dryland product, was observed to be intensively cultivated at Xagħra, especially on the clayey slopes of the coastal area. Legumes, such as broad beans and peas, and solanaceae, such as potatoes, were observed to be cultivated throughout the area, but not extensively. The other important solanaceae product, the tomato, was observed to be cultivated solely along Wied ir-Ramla, together with cucurbits. Brassicaceae, that is cabbages and cauliflowers, were observed to be grown intensively only at Ta' Lablab area. Vine growing was observed to be a substantial industry at the time and was, together with citrus growing, most intensively cultivated along the valley sides, especially at Wied Ta' I-Għeżien, Wied Għajn Watar and Wied ir-Ramla.

Natural land, termed 'wasteland' in the Bowen-Jones report, such as garigue and steppe, was observed to occur at the edges of the Xagħra plateaux, namely at Santa Verna, Ta' Bullara, Ġgantija, Il-Qortin ta' Għajn Damma, along Wied ir-Ramla, Irdum tas-Sekek and at Ir-Ramla. Fallowing and grazing land was observed in areas covered by Xagħra soils at Għajn Damma, Ta' Kaċċaturi and at In-Nuffara.

⁹ Bowen-Jones, H., J.C. Dewdney and W.B. Fisher, Malta: A Background for Development, Durham University, 1960.

The report describes the area of Xagħra, thus:¹⁰

On the eastern side of the Wied ta' Marsalforn, the ramped slopes of sulla, cereals and vines pass into embayments in the edge of the Xagħra Plateau ... Around the tiny urban nucleus of Xagħra itself are clusters of farms, beyond which farmsteads are strung out in long lines along tracks and roads and around the plateau edge. The thin, red, stony soul of the plateau supports a scatter of cultivated fields. Some of these are intensively worked gardens, others carry patch cultivation of poor cereals, vegetables and fruits, while many are now waste. To the north, density of settlement and intensity of farming diminish on the exposed qortin lands, the Qortin ta' Ghajn Damma ... being completely waste. The remote rdum areas are completely covered by sulla, much of it self-sown ... The neglect of such undercliff areas which, in Malta, are among the most intensively worked, reflects the lower intensity of pressure on land in Gozo.

Topographically, the Wied ir-Ramla ... is similar in type to the Wied ta' Marsalforn. The wied channel becomes progressively more sharply incised downstream before opening out into the sandy, bay-head lowland ...

Below the mesa scarps there are the usual gnien zones and these give way downhill to a belt of sulla and cereals on the heavier, drier parts of the Blue Clay outcrops ... On the remainder of the main valley floor, mixed cultivation in which vines and sulla predominate is diversified by relatively large scale potato-growing and some fruit production. The floors of the tributary wields Il-Ggantija ... and il-Hanaq ... are characterised by particularly intensive viticulture which merges into flanking zones of cereals and sulla. The small mesa of in-Nuffara ... has similar characteristics to those of the western Coralline fragments.

3.4.2 CURRENT LAND USE ASSESSMENT

The local landscape is characterised by a large Upper Coralline Limestone mesa formation and gently rolling plains that have been utilised extensively for agricultural practices. Drawings

¹⁰ Ibid. p.277-297.

22_06_2_1 to 4 are topographical maps of Xagħra that indicate the process of development since 1968 to date. Based on these drawings and on a comparative assessment of aerial photos since 1957 (Drawings 22_06_3_1 to 4), a profile of the urban settlements of Xagħra was developed. The pattern of urbanisation for the last forty years is a continuation of development of the plateaux of Xagħra, with post 1988 over spills into valleys at Ta' Gajdoru and Ta' GĦajn Damma.

Pre-1968 buildings were mostly concentrated at the village core, namely at Tal-Bajda area, although hamlets developed along main roads such as Triq Marsalforn, Triq il-Knisja, Triq Ġnien Xibla and at Ta' Sruġ. During the 1970s and 1980s, the major developments taking place at Xagħra were the formation of the Housing Estate at Il-Ġgantija, the Cornucopia Hotel and other developments at Ta' Bullara promontory and Tal-Ġnejna/Ta' Kazzol plateau. These areas continued to expand post-1988 where Tal-Ġnejna/Ta' Kazzol plateau was practically all built up all the way to Ta' Wenzici and Il-Ġgantija areas. Ta' Sruġ promontory and Ta' GĦajn Damma became largely built-up.

Ground survey of the land use at Xagħra were undertaken during the winter 2006/2007 (Drawings 22_06_6_1 to 4). The use of aerial photographs and orthophotos greatly facilitated the interpretation of more inland areas. Land types identified are:

- (i) Developed land including residential units and agricultural buildings;
- (ii) Community buildings such as sports facilities, schools and churches;
- (iii) Commercial buildings;
- (iv) Arable land classified according to the presence of protected cropping, namely cloches and greenhouses, and commitment of land to viticulture (*Vitis vinifera*), olive trees (*Olea europea*) and citrus trees (Citraceae). Another class is abandoned fields, mostly reverting to a steppic ecosystem;

- (v) Tree clusters whether they occur cultivated along sisien, Eucalyptus tree clusters or the solitary carob tree;
- (vi) Ecological areas including Ir-Ramla sandy beach, coastal cliffs, sisien and garigues;
- (vii) Road network; and
- (viii) More specific classes such as the former Xagħra waste tip, cultural heritage sites, freshwater ponds and old quarries.

Table 1 expresses the area of each land use type as a percentage of the total land area. The following observations are noted:

- (i) Xagħra is still overwhelmingly agrarian, with a thriving fruticulture industry. Since the traditional aspect of agriculture is still strong, agro-tourism on a local level is to be given its due attention.
- (ii) The area developed for residential, communal or commercial use is comparable to the area dedicated for trees. Given the excellent pedological and hydrological setting for tree growth, this healthy tree to development ratio is to be encouraged or, at least, maintained.
- (iii) The *Eucalyptus* tree, an alien species which does much harm to the soil and surrounding vegetation, is favoured by hunters and trappers. This should be replaced by Mediterranean species such as white poplar (*Populus alba*), bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*)¹¹ and the national tree, the Sandarac tree (*Tetraclinis articulata*)¹² and elm (*Ulmus* sp.)¹³, depending on site characteristics.
- (iv) Ecological areas comprise almost a tenth of the area and are an important asset to Xagħra. Their geomorphological diversity lends an interesting opportunity for eco-tourism.
- (v) The road network is thorough and new roads will detract from the rural character of Xagħra. Pathways should be

¹¹ Listed as a protected tree as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

¹² Listed as a strictly protected tree as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

¹³ Ibid.

appropriately designed in a contextually sensitive manner and be well maintained.

Table 1: The different land use types expressed as a percentage of the total area

<i>Land Use Type</i>	<i>Area (m²)¹</i>	<i>Percentage² (%)</i>
Developed/ developing land ³	849 984	11.1
- community buildings	18 523	0.2
- commercial buildings	12 873	0.2
Agrarian land	4 177 399	54.8
- protected cropping	7 396	< 0.1
- fruticulture	196 144	2.6
Tree clusters ⁴	758 249	9.9
Abandoned/clayey steppe	543 336	7.1
Ecological areas	644 216	8.4
Road network	354 406	4.6
Waste tip	63 488	0.8
Other ⁵	17 571	0.2

1. Areas were digitally computed using Drawing 22_06_6_1 to 4. The percentage error of the observations made during the ground surveys is approximately proportional to the extent of the area under study.
2. Percentage is calculated as a fraction of the total area of the locality of Xaghra, that is 7 624 840m².
3. This includes residential buildings.
3. Even though a substantial number of the tree clusters were in a quasi-maquis stage, this category is not being considered as an ecological area due to the substantial number of *Eucalyptus* trees in the area.
4. These include sites of significant cultural heritage value, old quarries, etc.

3.5 INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMANTICS OF PLACE NAMES

A way by which a place acquires its identity is through its name. A name does not only give an identity, but it embodies social, political and historical overtones. The name is the visible tip of a larger construct which is hidden under the waves of time and tradition. Wettinger establishes the date of the actual recording of place names on written mediums as

being post 1551, although their actual origin may hint to the Middle Ages.¹⁴

Inherently, various place names betray episodes, almost as flashbacks, from the history of the place. Moreover the names of places may refer to vital communal needs, such as the names starting with the term GĦajn meaning spring.¹⁵ Some places may also have derived their names from the landowner, the most recurring examples being lands with the precedent Ġnien. The names of some places may also be connected with bonds of property to a clan, extended family or person who may have had influence or may have owned estates or lands. In these cases, the nickname, family name or personal name is preceded by the prefix Ta' or Tal-, such as Ta' Gajdor, Ta' Ħamet, Tal-Kaċċia, Tal-Qanfud or Ta' Stellini (Drawing 22_06_1).

Some names are connected to mythical overtones of the area like Ta' Sansuna and Ġgantija, referring to the giantess who is protagonist in the legends surrounding the building of megaliths and temples of Xagħra.

Sites with particular topography or physical characteristic placed a particular influence on its name, which in turn may have influenced its history. A case in point is the hillock of Nuffara on the southern part of the village of Xagħra - a name which does not only hint to the use of this hill in bygone times, but also reveals the use of a communal defence strategy. Other names are more directly connected with the geology and morphology of the place, such as It-Taflija and places with the adjective Sinit or Sinet before its name such as Sinet il-Gheżien.

¹⁴ Wettinger, G., 'The Place-Names and The Personal Nomenclature of Gozo, 1372-1600' In: R.Y. Ebied and M.J.L. Young (eds), *Oriental Studies*, Leiden, 1980, p.181.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.190.

3.6 AN APPRAISAL OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE AT XAGĦRA

3.6.1 INTRODUCTION

The core of any settlement or settled community is the habitation area or the place where the settlers live. It is also the place where they feel secure. However, to survive, they have to sustain themselves by means of subsistence forms often provided nearby, if not within the habitation area itself. As they often realise their dependence on supernatural forces for their survival, the settlers may acknowledge some form of divinity or divinities to which they offer their worship in return for their protection. Nonetheless, a settlement is not complete without a proper place - usually outside the boundaries of the settlement - where the dead members of the community are disposed of in a dignified and respectable manner. For the ensuing discussion on the cultural heritage at Xagħra, reference is made to Drawings 22_06_7_1 to 4.

3.6.2 HABITATION

Habitation in Xagħra may have spread - rather than shifted - from certain isolated and scattered units to the entire plateau. Wherever they are found, caves were often utilised by the earliest settlers as prompt dwellings with minimal adaptations. Similar to other localities with strong prehistoric links, Xagħra provides troglodytic evidence. The earliest settlers were responsible for the construction of Ġgantija megalithic complex (Photo 18), Santa Verna prehistoric temples (Photo 55) and possibly one near Ta' GĦejżu Cave (Photo 21). They also developed the prehistoric underground mortuary complex now known as the Xagħra Brochtorff Circle (Photo 41). Other prehistoric burial sites point to some form of dwellings in the vicinity. However, the only documented prehistoric cave-dwelling was discovered towards the beginning of the twentieth century in the area known as Tal-

Maqgħad,¹⁶ quite some distance away. A number of other caves, evidently used as animal pens in later times, may have also originated as human habitations (Photos 83, 88 and 97). This is especially true for multi-chambered caves. The gradual abandonment of caves led to the building of huts.

A unique residence of the Classical (Roman) period incorporating bathing facilities was excavated at Ramla Bay in 1910 (Photo 89).¹⁷ To date, no other similar structure is known to have been discovered in the Xagħra area. Its context has not yet been detected or analysed. It definitely cannot reflect the lifestyle of the Gozitan folk then and few individuals could have afforded that type of luxurious premises.

In subsequent periods, habitation in Xagħra does not seem to have followed any established pattern, but simply spread throughout the plateau. In Xagħra, there are a small number of houses—often surviving in ruins—that may date a number of centuries back (Photos 24, 34, 47, 57, 64 and 86). Most modest and relatively sizeable houses surviving in good condition date to the Knights' period that is, from the sixteenth to eighteenth century, and to the nineteenth century British period. Only a few of them have enough architectural refinement indicative of high standard of living. This implies a fairly low living standard for the majority of the Xagħra inhabitants during the Knights' period and for most of the British period.¹⁸

It was the twentieth century that witnessed a gradual but steady improvement in the lives of the Xagħra people as manifested in the architectural level of residences (Photos 9, 37 and 38). Sizeable and architecturally ornate houses made

¹⁶ Museum Annual Report 1913-4, p. 2.

¹⁷ Museum Annual Report 1910-1, p. XI-XII.

¹⁸ A good number of huts, possibly built during the last centuries, found isolated among fields or on a plateau, were probably utilised as tool sheds (Photo 61).

their appearance in the 1920s and 1930s, a tendency that persisted to the recent past with the building of modern housing sometimes extending over an entire estate.

3.6.3 SUBSISTENCE

Subsistence forms do not appear to have changed significantly over the centuries of human settlement on the Xagħra plateau. Agriculture appears to have provided the Xagħra community with their essential means of living. Agriculture and, particularly, horticulture (Photos 81 and 82) have always relied heavily on the fertile soils present in the area and irrigated either by fresh spring water from the perched aquifer present throughout the Xagħra plateau (Photo 100) or from rainwater collection cisterns. The exploitation of these natural resources was always and still is vital for the Xagħra farmers in earning their livelihood. The constant supply of water enables a likewise constant supply of horticultural products, even during the dry summer months.

Agriculture and horticulture appear to have contributed to the daily needs since prehistoric times. Recent pathological analysis on human remains unearthed at the Xagħra Brochtorff Circle revealed that, even in those early times, agriculture was already providing the contents of their daily diet; analysis has also shown that they were healthy people. Therefore, agricultural yields must have sufficiently satisfied the dietary needs of the prehistoric community of Xagħra, further confirming the indispensable contribution of the natural resources enriching the terraces surrounding the plateau.

Linked to the cultivation of wheat, one finds at least two windmills in Xagħra associated with flour processing (Photos 10 and 33) and a number of bakeries (Photos 13, 30 and 31) provided the Xagħra households with their daily bread. Most of these traditional bakeries with their characteristic chimneys are now out of use. During ground surveys, a

traditional stone oven was noted in the vicinity of Calypso Cave (Photo 87).

A traditional technique which used a resource common along the Xagħra clayey slopes is the use of the giant reeds (*Arundo donax*) to make sun shades for domestic use. This technique is still practised nowadays to a lesser extent in Xagħra (Photo 44). Another traditional technique still practised by the farming community of this area is that of protecting horticultural products and citrus trees by setting up reed barriers, known as qanniċ, as wind breakers (Photos 82).

Another relatively recent industry, now no longer in operation, is that connected with torba extraction from particular quarries (Photo 43). Torba is abundant in Xagħra on account of the presence of the Upper Coralline Limestone Formation outcropping on the Xagħra plateau. High demands for torba for the paving of street surfaces and for preparing the layer beneath the deffun surface on rooftops ensured a healthy extractive industry. When torba no longer remained in demand, this industry died out naturally.

Depending heavily on such natural resources as freshwater which occurs most abundantly only in specific places dictated by its geophysical status, agriculture, horticulture and the torba quarrying industry hardly ever shifted locations unless the resources they depended upon were exhausted and hence location had to be shifted to new grounds. This explains why agriculture and horticulture remained concentrated along the slopes around the Xagħra plateau - although to a lesser extent around Is-Sruġ and along Ta' Bullara - while torba quarrying remained more or less restricted to the southern zone of the village, particularly at Ix-Xagħra I-Kbira. Bakeries, on the other hand, seem to have decreased rather than shifted.

3.6.4 RELIGIOUS LIFE

Religious life seems to have long been concentrated along the southern part of the Xagħra plateau. The surviving temples

and associated finds at Ġgantija, the remains of the temple at Santa Verna and near Ta' GĦejżu Cave testify to religious practice and rituals in Xagħra since prehistoric times. Prehistoric burial finds are a strong manifestation of associated ritual practices. This is best exemplified by the mortuary site of the Xagħra Brochtorff Circle at Ix-Xagħra I-Kbira. This site has recently shed light on ritual practices associated with burials, hence implicitly on their religious beliefs.

The wide gap in the religious history of the Maltese Islands following the Maltese adherence to Christianity is also reflected at Xagħra. The earliest evidence of Christianity in this locality is perhaps best provided by the relatively large number of rural chapels which preceded the present Parish church. None of these remain, with the exception of St Anthony Abbot's chapel—the first seat of the Xagħra Parish (Photo 46)—and St Paul's at nearby Marsalforn. Agius de Soldanis mentions some twenty chapels, six of which were dedicated to the Madonna under four different titles. The rest were dedicated to various saints, both male and female, including another one to St Anthony Abbot at nearby Ramla.¹⁹ The chapel at Ta' Ġermida was built in the first half of the twentieth century (Photo 11).

By decree, dated 28th April 1688 and issued by Mgr Davide Cocco Palmieri, bishop of Malta and Gozo, Xagħra was elevated to the status of a Parish together with three other Gozitan localities. The first seat of the Parish was St Anthony Abbot's chapel at Ta' Grabejla, but soon after the promotion to Parish status, a new church started to be constructed at Tal-Bajda, now the village centre, with its belfry being completed in 1743. It is dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the church was

¹⁹ Agius de Soldanis, G.P.F., *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, Trans. by Mgr Dun Ġużepp Farrugia, vol. II, Malta, 1953, p. 62-3, 68-74, 76-7.

Bezzina, J., *Xagħra: the Village of the Goddess and the Madonna*, Gaulitana 21, Malta, 2001, p. 47-50.

modified as at present (Photo 22). Towards the late nineteenth century, the Parish church was raised to a Collegiate and to a Basilica in 1967.²⁰

Important evidence to the religious piety of the Xaghra locals is the good number of niches spread throughout the entire village. Excluding the more recent niches, some twenty-eight niches were documented for the purpose of this study (Photos 12, 17, 29, 32, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 53, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73 and 74). Out of these, eleven are dedicated to the Madonna under seven different titles; the most popular Marian title appears to be that of Our Lady of Sorrows represented by three niches. Strangely enough, there is only one niche dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady, the titular of the Parish (Photo 32).²¹ The most eye-catching niche, due to its Baroque rendering, is that dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady in Triq Marsalforn (Photo 70).²²

Two of the remaining niches are dedicated to the Sacred Heart and another six to saints among whom St Joseph appears to be the most popular with four niches dedicated to him. St Rita is the only female saint represented. One particular niche—dedicated to St Augustine—is exceptional in having its image rendered in relief (Photo 72). Located in Triq Gajdoru, this niche may bear relationship to the tradition holding Ta' Gajdoru as the location of the first Augustinian community in Gozo. Different from these niches, but serving the same religious function, is a medallion, showing the Holy Family in relief, on the façade of a house in Triq Għajn Qamar.

²⁰ Bezzina, J., *Xaghra: the Village of the Goddess and the Madonna*, Gaulitana 21, Malta, 2001, p. 37-38.

²¹ The statue in this niche happens to be the earliest surviving one to whom indulgences were granted by Bishop Bartolomeo Rull on 10th September 1768.

²² It was granted indulgences by Bishop Vincenzo Labini on 5th May 1781 (S. Borg (ed.), *Niċeċ f'Għawdex: Storja, Reliġjon, Folklor, Storja 13*, Malta, 1987).

3.6.5 DEATH

Since prehistoric times, the Xagħra community found means to dispose of the dead. The underground communal burial complex of the Xagħra Brochtorff Circle at Ix-Xagħra I-Kbira, the only prehistoric burial complex known in Gozo, was created by the prehistoric community precisely to satisfy their obligations towards their dead (Photo 41). Individual tombs were discovered: one in Triq il-Qaċċa,²³ the partially-surviving one at Ix-Xagħra I-Kbira (Photo 45) and the recently discovered, possibly prehistoric, at Triq il-Knisja. As tombs were often dug in torbazz, preferred for its relative softness and hence ease of cutting, a greater number of tombs are expected to have been encountered during torba quarrying operations, but, consequently, destroyed.

No burial grounds of Classical or Mediaeval periods have yet been detected at Xagħra. Like other village communities, the more recent burial practice at Xagħra is communal and above ground. The earliest surviving burial place is the renowned 1814 Plague Cemetery (Photo 49) situated at the foot of the GĦajn Lukin plateau; mass burial in a communal pit in the centre of the cemetery is likely to have taken place. Not far from this cemetery and slightly further uphill, one finds two Parish cemeteries adjoining each other, with the earlier at the rear of the cemetery currently in use (Photo 51).

3.7 A SOCIOLOGICAL PROFILE OF XAGĦRA

3.7.1 INTRODUCTION

A community profile of the village of Xagħra has been drafted to analyze the current perception of the village residents and the direction they would like to take. A combination of neighbourhood model and social planning model of community

²³ Museum Annual Report 1926-7, p. III.

development was adopted for this assessment.²⁴ Current actualities in the neighbourhood are referred to and a resume` of desired changes from the perspective of residents is presented.

A community is assumed to be based on locality, geographical area and a sense of place. It is assumed that an association exists amongst, at least, certain residents of the area, but more imminently causes them to differentiate themselves from people hailing from other localities. Rothman uses the term locality development instead of community development,²⁵ yet this term may prove to be constraining within the context of this study as it may give the impression that aspects of a particular area that are shared between different localities may be of lesser interest than others that are more clearly defined, boundary-wise, as being in the context of a particular locality. As a result, action to lodge pressure for the conservation of an object of heritage, for instance, might be less emphatic, than if people perceive it as a part of what is 'theirs'. The advantage of adopting a joint neighbourhood model and social planning model is that it appeals to a somewhat unified community and grounds itself mainly on consensual problem-solving at a community level. Yet, it does not exclude the possibility of residents of the locality liaising with policy-makers and service providers to bring about desired outputs and thereby does not subscribe to such limiting factors as would be the case if it is entirely dedicated to bottom-up interventions without having the input of people who are leaders within their community or within designated fields that impact their community.

The notion of a community presented in this study is one that is demarcated by its being in a state of flux rather than static

²⁴ Twelvetrees, A., *Community Work*, British Association of Social Workers, 1991, p. 6.

²⁵ Rothman, J., 'Three models of community organization practice,' in F.M. Cox et al., *Strategies of Community Organization*, Illinois, 1976, p. 22-38.

or fixed. To a certain extent, community in this sense is therefore an achievement, but this does not negate that, most often, people tend to form part of a community to “different degrees - according to their sense of their belonging and adherence”.²⁶ Nonetheless, there is an assumption that solidarity and shared interests tend to be created amongst people in given localities simply on their basis of sharing a notion of common residence and, for this reason, the initial brief for this study, that of focusing exclusively on the physical aspect of Xagħra’s development had been altered at the project’s outset. Community development includes salient references to its human and social aspects, implying that opportunities for action which would otherwise be disregarded would be more likely to be incorporated when using this approach.

There are a number of principal approaches to the study of communities.²⁷ One such approach attempts to describe communities as types, classifying communities as having certain characteristics and excluding from their definition, any social groupings that lack those characteristics. This approach has been avoided since it has been noted by reputed sociologists that “it is the essence of such typologies that they exaggerate the facts on which they are based”.²⁸ Another approach that has been adopted by sociologists looks at communities as representative microcosms of a wider society. Unfortunately, assertions from such approaches cannot be widely substantiated, especially due to the dynamic evolution of communities. A third approach looks at the analysis of communities simply as a source of data. This approach is normally adopted by sociologists to prove or to refute a theory that had been previously proposed. It normally serves as a

²⁶ Abela A., *Transmitting Values in European Malta - A Study in the Contemporary Values of Modern Society*, Jesuit Publications (Malta) in conjunction with the Gregorian University of Rome, 1991, p. 91.

²⁷ Bell, C. and H. Newby, *The Sociology of Community*, London, 1974.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 171.

means for further sociological theorizations and it has also been avoided since it tends to be rather desk-study centred rather than focused on an understanding of the way people interact in a community and on an understanding of the goals they propose.

This study regards the community as a separate entity. It provides a holistic account of social reality that takes into account the observations of the people living in Xagħra. It is qualitative in nature and is geared at providing an understanding of the more subjective aspects of the study. Although qualitative approaches have occasionally come under fire since it may be argued that they do not use the methods of verification that are accessible with quantitative studies,²⁹ the qualitative input does not imply that procedures of verification, control and reliability have not been inserted into this study; rather, they have been inserted in a different manner than in more quantitative sociological assessments. This study employs a system of method triangulation, implying that different methods of data extrapolation—interviews and focus-groups—have been used alongside participant observation. Such triangulation allowed for internal checks upon the validity and reliability of data by noting if any inconsistent replies were genuine 'deviant cases'³⁰ or if they reflected an aberration in the selected methodology or the adopted approach.

Proposals put forward in this study centre around the following three themes that appear to provide common denominators against which any observations made or proposals put forwards can be best ascribed:

- (i) the religious and spiritual aspect of Xagħra;

²⁹ Silverman, D., *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*, London, 2000.

Silverman, D., *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*, London, 2001.

³⁰ Glaser, B. and A. Strauss, *The discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago, 1967.

- (ii) the cultural aspect of Xagħra; and
- (iii) the physical aspect of Xagħra.

Ordering the data in this manner makes it possible for specific concepts, ideas and even life-experiences to be assigned their due importance amongst the rich myriad of data that has been presented during the compilation-stage of this analysis. This approach of employing the use of themes and sub-themes that are derived from existing data is also extensively used when employing ground theories in sociological research.³¹

3.7.2 POPULATION PROFILE OF XAGĦRA

The population of Xagħra numbers circa 3,960, roughly equally divided between males and females (Table 2). The majority of residents are in the 25-49 age category (31%), followed by the middle-aged (21%) and children (18%). Youths and the elderly each form 15% of the population, 3.5% of which are octogenarian. There are slightly more males and females in most of the age categories, except for the children with equal gender distribution and the elderly where females slightly dominate males. This pattern closely follows that of Gozo (Table 3).

The population of Xagħra had increased from 1995 by about 8%, a trend sustained for the Gozo average (Figure 1). The Xagħra population had remained more or less stable throughout the Census periods, with a World War II increase due to an influx of refugees from mainland Malta, followed by a drop in the late 1950s through to the 1980s due to emigration and then an increase during the 1990s and the new millennium due to returned migrants.³² This pattern is more accentuated when applied to Gozo.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Accompanying the transition from Xagħra's being a mostly agrarian society some thirty years ago to one that is more based on the provision of services, is the increase in the number of villagers with a higher level of education.

The population of Xagħra as a ratio of the Gozo population has remained at circa 13% for the last ten years, a slight increase from the 1985 figure, but a slight drop from pre 1967 ratios (Table 4). The population density for Xagħra is 552 persons per square kilometre, that is 100 persons per square kilometre higher than the Gozo average.³³ The Xagħra average remained roughly constant for the period 1995 to 2005 while there was an increase of thirty persons per square kilometre for the Gozo average during the same period.

Table 2: The population distribution of Xagħra³⁴

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
0-14	360	18.1	357	18.1	717	18.1
15-24	319	16.1	292	14.8	611	15.4
25-49	626	31.5	594	30.1	1,220	30.8
50-64	418	21.1	402	20.4	820	20.7
65-79	208	10.5	244	12.4	452	11.4
80+	54	2.7	86	4.4	140	3.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>3,960</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 3: The population distribution of Gozo³⁵

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
0-14	2,795	18.2	2,621	16.7	5,416	17.4
15-24	2,321	15.1	2,160	13.8	4,481	14.4
25-49	5,100	33.2	4,903	31.2	10,003	32.2
50-64	3,047	19.9	3,165	20.2	6,212	20.0
65-79	1,614	10.5	2,099	13.4	3,713	12.0
80+	472	3.1	756	4.8	1,228	4.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>15,349</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>15,704</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>31,053</i>	<i>100.0</i>

³³ National Office of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2005: Preliminary Report, Malta, 2006, Table 6.

Although the two figures are much lower than the Maltese average of 1282 persons per square kilometre, they are much higher than the EU25 average of 117.5 persons per square kilometre.

³⁴ National Office of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2005: Preliminary Report, Malta, 2006, Tables 8 to 13. The Census notes that the boundaries of some localities were modified between 1995 and 2005. Population figures include a number of Maltese citizens registered as residing in Gozo.

³⁵ Ibid.

Table 4: The population of Xagħra as compared to Gozo, for the last 100 years³⁶

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Gozo Population</i>	<i>% Gozo population</i>
1931	3,522	23,837	15
1948	4,759	27,680	17
1957	4,056	27,601	15
1967	3,517	25,978	14
1985	3,202	25,682	12
1995	3,669	29,026	13
2005	3,960	31,053	13

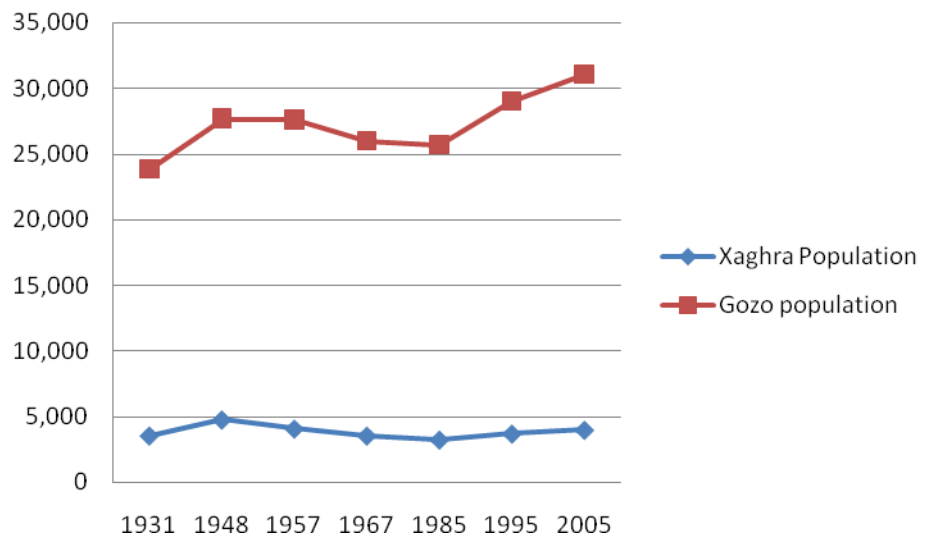


Figure 1: The population trends for Xagħra as compared with Gozo based on National Office of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2005: Preliminary Report, Malta, 2006, Table 4

³⁶ National Office of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2005: Preliminary Report, Malta, 2006, Table 4. The Census notes that the boundaries of some localities were modified between 1995 and 2005. Population figures include a number of Maltese citizens registered as residing in Gozo.

3.7.3 THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF XAGĦRA.

3.7.3.1 The Parish Church and the Pjazza

Like other villages in Malta and Gozo, Xagħra's pjazza, the main village square, is dominated by the Parish Church.³⁷ This church is a source of pride to all persons hailing from Xagħra as evidenced by the regular reference to it by primary school children who participated in this study and who claim that it is something that features prominently and positively in their idea of the village. The pjazza is a central landmark in the village that has been described as "il-qalba tar-raħal", the heart of the village. It has also been described as an active place "mhux bħal Paceville, izda b'ċerti ħajja ... tgħaddi fil-11.30 ta' fil-għaxija, għada għadejja".³⁸ Like typical villages in Malta and Gozo, this area is characterized by commercial outlets such as the village pharmacy, local banks, bars and restaurants.³⁹

The Parish Church is intended to be a focal point within a village with which villagers readily associate with. This seems to be the case in Xagħra, but certain persons, particularly the elderly, prefer instead to go to smaller chapels closer to their residence. There are two main chapels where Holy Mass is celebrated, the Ġesu` Nazzarenu Church and the St Anthony

³⁷ The people of Xagħra are mainly Roman Catholic (practising and non-practising), although some foreigners are of other religious denominations.

³⁸ English translation:

... not like Paceville, yet with a certain amount of life ... even if one passes at 11.30 in the evening, it is still characterized by the hue and hub of people's meeting together.

Paceville is a town in Malta that has been described as the country's 'entertainment mecca' since it is characterized by a wide patronage to its considerable number of night clubs and similar venues of entertainment.

³⁹ Boissevain J., *A Village in Malta*, New York, 1980.

Boissevain, J., *Saints and Fireworks - Religion and Politics in Rural Malta*, Malta, 1993.

Abbot Church.⁴⁰ These serve to reinforce a tendency amongst certain villagers to conceptually divide the village into three zones, the pjażza, the Nazzarenu area and the San Anton area.⁴¹ This division was emphasized during a focus group with young people from the Nazzareno area, some of whom were University graduates, who defined their area as “self-sufficient”. The Church is active in the community of Xagħra and a number of committees and sub-committees proliferate in this locality. These youths perceived them as often overlapping in scope, reflecting a degree of mismanagement rather than purposeful community action.

As an institution, the Church at Xagħra has an influence on people’s thinking. This was reflected by the outcome of certain focus groups of youths who perceive the Church as a means of social control. For example, they want more insistence from the Church that parents find more time for their children, teach them the principles of religion and set an example to them.⁴² A participant suggested that people with special needs to be more on the front-line of the Church’s educational campaign, to provide inclusive activities for such persons and to promote more awareness about their requirements.⁴³

The emphasis of Xagħra residents on Church-going, their overall attitude towards the Church as an institution of influence and their association of this with the family can be

⁴⁰ Other chapels that are used during the traditional visits to seven different churches on Good Friday are the Ta’ Ħamet chapel and Le Spigolatrici Chapel.

⁴¹ In the past, people from the Nazzareno area were referred to as Menaċiti and those from the San Anton area were called Seraċini.

⁴² Even though there are no Church schools at Xagħra, the Church is active in the educational field through the provision of informal education. The MUSUEM organisation offers classes aimed at religious knowledge and character formation. One participant proudly explained that 95% of Gozitan families assign their children to derive religious instruction from this association. These classes are mainly attended by school-age children and young people. Other organisations include the Azzjoni Kattolika, Ċirklu taż-Żgħażaġh and the Legion of Mary.

⁴³ A participant suggested that this brief should not apply solely to the Church, but also to the Local Council and social organizations.

perceived as an expression of what Banfield refers to as familialism.⁴⁴ This is reflected in their daily lives: the people of Xagħra, in their seeming majority, manifest a belief that the Church outreaches to families particularly in their respective family role rather than any work-related role. They insist to look to the Church to emphasise the family unit to counteract today's materialistic and consumerist culture. A young participant pointed out that the Church was always active in the locality and how, during the 1814 plague, the Parish Priest of the time, a certain Dun Vincens Cauchi, became a victim of the plague as he did not isolate himself from the community in order to keep with his duties at the Parish.

3.7.3.2 Substance Abuse

Young participants highlighted the problem of substance abuse and the need for greater law enforcement. They asserted that:⁴⁵

... nissuġġerixxu u ninsistu bil-qawwa kollha li min jinqabad [jmexxi d-droga] għandu jgħaddi mill-proċess ġudizzjarji kollha (mingħajr l-ebda indħil ta' persuni, li minħabba l-kariga li jservu fil-pajjiż, jinfluwenzaw il-ġustizzja). Min jinstab ħati jrid jhallas tal-hsara li għamel mingħajr l-indħil ta' hadd.

In this assertion, it is implied that the rules within the village are unjustly applied, something that was also corroborated in a personal interview with a member of the medical profession who alleged that on taking a particular drug-trafficker into custody, the police in Xagħra were promptly contacted by

⁴⁴ Banfield, E., *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, New York, 1967.

⁴⁵ English translation:

... we suggest and insist in a most emphatic manner that whoever is caught [trafficking drugs] has to be subject to the whole judicial process (without any interference by persons, that due to their position [of political power] in the country, alter the course of justice). Whoever is found guilty [of committing such crimes] has to pay for his wrongdoing without interference being levied in his favour.

telephone by “someone in Malta” and the arrested person was released without further interrogation.

Yet, by associating this assertion with socio-spiritual aspects, the young participants were simultaneously reflecting upon their social values. Again, their appeal to the Church was for it to improve Xagħra from a spiritual aspect by insisting on a healthy education of children at home and to encourage their participation in religious associations from which “dejjem ħarġu ċittadini tajbin li għamlu unur u ġieħ lir-raħal u lil pajjizhom.”⁴⁶ In this manner, they asserted their belief that the voice of the Church, as well as proper law-enforcement, is instrumental in the fight against such a “pjaga” (social malady) of “dan il-miṣħut abbuż” (this cursed [substance] abuse).

The notion of retaining honour in Maltese society is not new to Maltese sociological and anthropological community studies,⁴⁷ yet it is not to be confused with prestige. In Mediterranean societies, honour is a manner of remaining faithful to the status quo, of remaining within certain moral boundaries, and of avoiding shame.⁴⁸ Prestige, on the other hand, is an acknowledgement that is conferred upon individuals for engaging in activities that are esteemed by the society concerned. The above excerpt is referring to the Xagħra people’s holding at heart certain moral values and behaviours. Drug trafficking was described not only as harming society, but

⁴⁶ English translation:

[From Xagħra], there always emerged good citizens who gave honour and pride to the village and to the country [Gozo].

⁴⁷ Vide for example,

Spiteri, D., In Search of Community - A case-study of Hal-Merhba, a village in Malta, Unpublished thesis, University of Malta, 1996.

Mizzi O’Reilly, S., ‘Gossip - A means of social control’ in R. Sultana and G. Baldacchino (eds), *Maltese Society - A Sociological Inquiry*, Malta, 1994, p.369-382.

⁴⁸ Peristiany, J.G., *Honour and Shame: The Values of a Mediterranean Society*, London, 1966.

also because it was shameful to the village and thereby contrary to its acquisition of honour and respect:⁴⁹

Jeħtieġ li jsiru raids għall-għarrieda mill-forza ta' l-ordni biex jinqabdu dawk kollha li, biex iħaxxnu bwiethom, ma jimpurthom xejn mill-unur u r-rispett li dejjem kien igawdi r-raħal maħbub tagħna.

3.7.3.3 The Parish Church and Village Activities

A group of youths referred to the importance that the Church had in organizing village events and hinted that Xagħra is nothing without these activities; here, Xagħra becomes both a physical entity and a psychological fact. As a physical entity, the Church is an imposing structure that lends character to the village in a manner similar to other villages around Malta and Gozo.⁵⁰ As a primary school pupil stated, "Jiena kburi bil-knisja li għandna fix-Xagħra. Hija knisja sabiħa u ddedikata 'l Marija Bambina".⁵¹ On the other hand, the intangible psychological aspect of the Church as a highly influential entity is reflected in its intertwining with political motives of individuals who aspire to obtain political power by bringing themselves into what they consider as powerful positions within that community. When there are no such powerful positions, these positions are created through the

⁴⁹ English translation:

It is necessary that on the spot raids are carried out by the police to take into custody all those whose only concern is to make money and do not care about the honour and respect that our village always had.

Not all participants referred to the drug-problem: a particular participant pointed out that until recently some twenty people used to agglomerate in the village square in order to engage in drug related activities, but this did not appear to be the case any longer as one of them was severely admonished, another was now over sixty years of age and the remainder have not been seen in the area for quite some time.

⁵⁰ Boissevain, J., *A Village in Malta*, New York, 1980.

Boissevain, J., *Saints and Fireworks - Religion and Politics in Rural Malta*, Malta, 1993.

⁵¹ English translation:

I am proud of the church we have at Xagħra. It is a beautiful Church dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady.

manifestation of conflicts; conflicts which are manifested in Xagħra.

3.7.3.4 Village Factions

All young participants claim that jealousy is rife within Xagħra, resulting in conflicts. During an informal discussion with a group of pre-teens at the feast of St Anthony Abbot, it was evident that jealousy is manifested.⁵² A group of youths in their early twenties from the Nazzareno area pointed out that if they tried to develop an initiative for the village, other people from Xagħra would deliberately attempt to put pokes in their wheels, simply due to the fact that they are from the Nazzareno area or because they envy others being better.

Conflict is a neutral condition: it is its management that could be positive or negative. Positively-managed conflicts are managed and resolved in an all-embracing win-win manner or that have an element of give and take in them. Negatively-managed conflicts are spruced up with ulterior motives and hidden agendas and are usually aimed at having one's way at all costs regardless of what the conflict is about. If jealousy deliberately obstructs the outcome of beneficial activities for the village or if it is perceived as obstructing when it is not actually the case, the competitive element increases.

Competition is the basis of conflicts in Xagħra. Competition can relate to practically anything. For instance, in a focus group for pre-teens from the Nazzareno area, on queering whether one was in the San Anton area, booing took place whilst they claimed in a both serious and laughing manner that this was the Nazzareno area and there was to be no question about that. On enquiring what was so special about being in the Nazzareno area, they responded that the others, alluding to residents of the San Anton area, are different and do not

⁵² Thus, if a person were to see someone hanging up a climbing Santa Claus on the veranda, others would want to hang up their own Santa Claus.

organise activities such as the kumittiva, the traditional carnival dance (Photo 28). On soliciting what they wanted for the village, they claimed that they wanted greater cooperation between the youths of Nazzareno and San Anton. Such somewhat conflicting assertions about the relationship that they had and the ones that they wanted implied that they were still territorially bound to the Nazzareno area and the conflict stemmed from the belief that they were in some way different. Yet, this conflict was not allowed to escalate. When one of the participants managed to have a photo of the Nazzareno youths on the front cover of a local Church magazine, this was objected to by the rest of the photo participants, as they perceived Xagħra as being beyond the Nazzareno area: for them the photo emphasised the division that exists in Xagħra, implying that they did not want to be separated from the other factions, but only wanted to be different to them.

On asking the youths from the San Anton area what they thought about the youths from the Nazzareno area, one participant commented that “dawk qishom maqtugħin għalihom”.⁵³ On asking them what they wanted for Xagħra, they highlighted their wish for a greater assimilation of the Nazzareno area. On asking them whether this assertion also applied to the village pjazza, they replied that they perceived the pjazza as an extension of the San Anton part of Xagħra and hence as their territory.

It is no coincidence that the Church has two separate chapels for the respective areas of Xagħra. Yet, Church associations and groups do not necessarily cater for people from one part of the village to the exclusion of the other. Rather, what develops is that young people from one part of the village assimilate with people from the same part of the village, not only because their meeting-place is located near-by, but also

⁵³ English translation:

... those act as if they are cut off for themselves.

because they would be more familiar with attendants from their area of the village. There are no strict social ties with one part of the village over the other; it seems more a situation of convenience and habit that drives certain people to form affiliations with others from their vicinity. This has not always been the case, however, as a history graduate from the Nazzareno area confided that jealousy between the two areas of Xagħra was rampant in the 1940s and 1950s because of the kumittiva.⁵⁴

3.7.3.5 The Church and Village Associations

The Church is readily associated with a considerable number of associations. A young participant claimed that there were as many such associations in Xagħra as there would collectively occur in two Maltese villages. These associations actually provide a breeding-ground for power relationships. At Xagħra, if there are no conflicts between these different associations, there would be no winners and no losers. To be a winner is an attractive tenet for many people and this is the force inducing many to be leaders and few to be followers. A multi-leader, multi-group situation results in leaders vying for a greater say in the leadership of the area. Had there been only one group, this type of politics would cease. Within a particular focus group that took place within a youth-club run by the Church, it was suggested that it was imperative that extra committees are removed and that the Church has an active say in putting its representatives in select groups from all parts of the village.⁵⁵ A suggestion put forward in a particular focus group was that members of all active associations in Xagħra, be they religious, cultural, or political, use seminars or informal

⁵⁴ The rift between the two areas was so deep that a few decades ago an individual ran away from his/her Nazzareno home because one's parents were against marriage with outsiders, that is from other areas of Xagħra (personal communication).

⁵⁵ It was no coincidence that within this particular focus group, two members of the Local Council, each from opposite political parties, were present and tried; their presence possibly implying a desire to know what discussions were taking place, their being 'in the know' automatically reinforcing their coming from a position of power.

gatherings as platforms to co-ordinate activities they are undertaking.

3.7.3.6 The Local Council

Some participants expressed apprehension about the manner in which the Local Council is run: not only is sectarian politics providing a rift in the council's operations, but certain councillors having their personal agendas that could get in the way of the council's overall aims and aspirations, further impede the council's initiatives. The council needs to identify particular areas of intervention and develop these holistically, possibly in liaison with central government. Moreover, communication between the local council and residents needs to be improved.

3.7.3.7 Kinship Relationships

Marriage is a historical way of cementing ties between two families. Although marriages within the same community are fairly common at Xagħra, it does not appear to be the resultant of family feuds.⁵⁶ Rather, it seems to be based more on the notion that familiar persons are easier to trust than someone less known, as could be the case with outsiders. Marriages within the same community still occur at Xagħra and members of the medical profession claim that there is a higher rate of ischemic heart disease in the area, although no severe birth defects or disabilities can be identified. A member of the legal profession commented on the residents of the Nazzareno area that "li jiżżewġu flimkien huwa dak li jagħmilhom qaqqoċċa".⁵⁷ However, nowadays, youths from the

⁵⁶ The Roman Catholic Church prohibits consanguinity and affinity in marriage, a prohibition legally encouraged by most Western societies.

⁵⁷ English translation:

... it is that they marry one another that unites them.

Nazzareno area prefer partners from outside their community; furthermore, a number of outsiders had moved into the area.⁵⁸

3.7.3.8 Marriage Failure

Unlike other localities in Gozo, failed marriages was not highlighted to be a problem at Xagħra. Some participants attributed this success in marriage to 'the man of the family' still retaining his traditional position as head of the household. The man's social status is associated with the honour that he derives from family life, through serving as the father of his children and performing his overall family roles.

Notwithstanding, marriages still fail because a perfect relationship is being sought after rather than a perfect, life-long companion.⁵⁹ In fact, certain participants blamed marital failure on lack of adequate preparation stemming from too much emphasis on materialism and pre-marital sex, a practice viewed as a distraction from a couple really getting to know one another during this preparatory period. A participant suggested that the Church should emphasise marital preparation courses based on compatibility of the spouse, the requirements of new parents, the child's (or children's) needs, differentiating between luxury and necessities, the role of entertainment, the role of religion (attention to Church teachings) and the role of work.

In Xagħra, there is increase in the number of single parents and cohabitation prior marriage, both being significant shifts from Church teachings. Homosexual relationships are not openly practiced in Xagħra; a medical doctor claimed that two men had lived together for a number of years, yet chose to retain their intimate partnership private.

⁵⁸ Personal communication.

⁵⁹ Giddens, A., *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*, Cambridge, 1992.

3.7.3.9 The Parish Church and the Elderly

Most elderly participants claim that, although the Church generally plays an important part in their lives through its celebration of Holy Masses, more activities can be organized on a regular basis specifically for them, either by the Church itself or by other concerned bodies.

3.7.4 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT OF XAGĦRA.

3.7.4.1 Sense of Belonging to the Village

On a societal level, particularly the elderly, emphasized their sense of belonging and attributed this to Xagħra being an essentially small place. They claimed that modern Xagħra was no longer the Xagħra they knew as children essentially because it had seen an influx of people from other localities. Many of the elderly referred to their younger days as being based on such activities as work, especially in the fields, trades and family-life. They pointed out that families were traditionally much larger than they are today and were perceived as even larger by being extended families. They noted that certain village events were assigned a more communal aspect uniting the villagers. This aspect was facilitated by the village being smaller with minimal influx of outsiders. On the other hand, a young participant expressed his concern that the majority of young people had Maltese partners and expressed an apprehension that Gozo may finish up mainly inhabited by old-aged pensioners.

The elderly noted that such things as the 'festa tal-Bambina', the village feast, the kumittiva, the Societa` Filarmonica La Vittoria, the football team, the staged plays and especially the Church itself were sources of pride to Xagħra residents.

3.7.4.2 Sense of Belonging to the Parish Church

Reference to the Bambina as patron of the village is of socio-cultural significance since the identity of this Bambina, as an elderly participant explained, is related to the whole of the

Maltese and Gozitan population in virtue of the 1565 siege. He claimed that people visit the Parish Church or attend the village festa simply because it is dedicated to the Bambina. The Church is viewed of central importance to Xagħra's identity. Traditionally, any skilled worker would be serve as an artisan—whether for the painting of frescoes, the insertion of marble-works, wood-carving and other skills and/or crafts needed for church building from the planning stage to its completion. Skilled residents, regardless of their social class, were involved at the outset since the Church was their church.⁶⁰

The Church represents the collective wealth of all the people living in the Parish.⁶¹ Yet, it is more than this, not only because the church is ornately adorned, as is characteristic of most Roman Catholic churches particularly in the Mediterranean area, but also because church activities such as choir singing, are kept up over generations. Change has been witnessed in this context. For instance, traditionally, the priest was a main organizer of plays in Xagħra, but nowadays, this role is undertaken by Parish associations or sometimes as a result of personal initiatives. The original socio-educational focus of the priest's role is now more often expressed using media other than plays, including participation by priests and members of other religious congregations on live talk-shows directly delivered on radio, television or even the internet.

3.7.4.3 Sense of Pride of Sites of Cultural and Natural Heritage Significance

When asked what they liked most about Xagħra, all primary school participants mentioned the Ġgantija temples, Ta' Kola windmill, Ninu's cave, Xerri's grotto and Calypso cave. Older

⁶⁰ The parents of Carmelo Buttigieg and Louis Refalo, now retired Members of Parliament hailing from the village, collaborated together in embellishing the Parish Church, despite divergence in their political opinions.

⁶¹ Boissevain J., *A Village in Malta*, New York, 1980.

participants also associated Xagħra with these cultural and historical attributes. Ramla l-Ħamra was another site mentioned.⁶²

All participants were appalled by the development of the Ġgantija Housing Estate, not only because they did not approve of its design, but also because they had personally observed the destruction of prehistoric relics during the construction phase.⁶³ On the other hand, the ongoing restoration works at the Ġgantija temples have heightened the awareness of the cultural significance of this site. Yet, the residents' perception is that the site is simply a pile of stones. A group of young participants complained that only the scaffolding for conservation works are noticeable and had been there for an excessive length of time. The existing entrance to the temples was an eye-sore and it should be replaced by an appropriately designed one.

To capitalize more on this impressive site, some participants suggested that a short video be commissioned, using appropriate technology to virtually reconstruct the original temples. Further to this, permanent exhibitions of artefacts, tools, methods of construction and other relevant images of prehistoric life such as agricultural and farming methods and practices of the time are set up.⁶⁴ These could also include references to agricultural and farming methods and practices

⁶² One participant pointed out that Ramla l-Ħamra had a particular type of sand and that an application for a rave-party was turned down a few years back on conservation grounds.

The bay was traditionally shared with Nadur. Another participant claimed that Xagħra residents approached the beach from Triq ir-Ramla and used that part of the beach while Nadur residents approached and used the other side of the beach; in between lay a rocky outcrop that was rarely occupied by either.

⁶³ A participant asserted that the area was a burial ground that had been desecrated when excavations for the construction of the estate took place.

⁶⁴ A suggestion put forward by a visually impaired participant is to construct models of the temple so that one could gain 'a feel of the place' prior the actual visit.

Primary school pupils suggested the return of all artefacts, originally excavated in Xagħra, to a local cultural heritage museum.

that were used at that time together with details of species of fauna and flora that are known or that are reliably understood as most likely to have been present. Another suggestion was the initiation of a visual experience of the 6000 years of Gozo history, with emphasis on Xagħra. Another suggestion was the setting up of a tourist information office near, say, the entrance to Ġgantija temples to act as a starting point of day or walking tours around Gozo; as a distribution centre of booklets/leaflets with a historical and cultural overview of Xagħra (complete with a guidance map of Xagħra); and to advertise heritage days or quality packages, possibly with discounted entrance fees to locals to serve as an incentive.

Many participants pointed out that much is to be desired when it comes to conserve certain sites from ruin, such as Santa Verna, the 1814 plague hospital and cemetery and the Ġebbla ta' Sansuna. The World War II shelters were recommended to be opened to the public as tourist attractions and wartime narratives be published. Overall management of the shelters was suggested to be entrusted to the Local Council.

Ta' Kola windmill has been widely perceived by participants as an important historical site, with the need for a properly designed parking space. The need to maintain the rubble walls in the alley-ways near the windmill was highlighted due to recurring vandalism on same. Another participant called for urgent repairs of parts of Ta' Kola windmill that were damaged during a storm in the winter of 2006.

Some areas have been turned into rubbish dumps, with wrecked cars and construction rubble. This is commonly perceived as an eyesore and an attraction for further dumping. Many participants recommended that such areas are cleaned up and, possibly, converted into a recreational area or even with socio-educational value if indigenous trees and shrubs are planted; the involvement of residents as an educational and empowerment exercise as a guarantee of the project's success was highlighted. Another suggestion was to restore disused

quarries and thus mitigate impacts on surrounding environs. Bird hunting and trapping was recommended to be prohibited in the interest of public safety.

3.7.4.4 Underutilisation of Houses

Like mainland Malta, Gozitan villages have a problem of vacant houses. Many participants highlighted this problem with a participant referring to the street where he lives as a 'ghost-town.' Some participants suggested that planning permits for more residential units be stalled; rather the renovation of old properties is to be encouraged.

The Xagħra population fluctuated over time. In the post-war period and especially in the 1950s and 1960s, Government incentives coupled with a significant lack of economic activity, forced large-scale emigration to United States or Canada and especially Australia. In Xagħra, there are some returned migrants, further cementing their sense of community and identification with their village.

3.7.4.5 Revival of Traditional Skills

The revival of traditional skills such as carpentry, stonemasonry and metal-forging, was one of the recommendations of participants.⁶⁵ Government policy to shift specialization to a post-secondary level was perceived as creating a lacuna in education in Gozo and some participants suggested the introduction of skills teaching as an extracurricular activity. The traditional bakeries could be converted into a live exhibit of historical and cultural interest.

Certain craft courses that take place at GĦajnsielem were suggested to locate them at Xagħra or at least to provide transport to facilitate attendance to such courses. One

⁶⁵ During an interview with a retired baker from Xagħra, it transpired that he was not keen to pass his bread-making skills to the young generation due to the long hours and arduous labour involved. He had started helping out in the bakery at the age of twelve before taking charge of it in his late twenties.

participant noted that a particular course 'tan-newl' that used to take place at the Żebbuġ Primary School could be reintroduced in Xagħra since there is a demand for it.

One participant claimed that his grandparents used to tell him that Xagħra's citrus trees were one of its main sources of pride. He also noted the lower rate of young people taking up farming as a living. He recommended incentives to be offered to young people to explore this line of work as a possible opening, better access to modern machinery to increase profitability and the conversion of land to viticulture.

3.7.4.6 Sports Facilities

The lack of sports facilities, such as a well equipped football ground with the provision of a reputable coach, was highlighted by a group of young participants. Training facilities for other sports are non-existent. Certain residents noted the importance of having a gym or a complex possibly with an indoor pool, an asset not only to young people, but also to elderly who could benefit from physiotherapy. Other young participants highlighted that the Local Council played a part in organizing different sports tournaments even involving residents from other localities.

3.7.4.7 Cultural Events in the Village Calendar

Xagħra residents are particularly proud of the kumittiva which is a tradition that has been orally passed down generations and is believed to have been introduced to the Maltese folklore by Maltese or Gozitan sailors who travelled to neighbouring countries such as Sicily or France. The kumittiva is a traditional dance performance accompanied by musicians using traditional instruments.

The kumittiva has survived only in Xagħra and the Fondazzjoni Kumittiva Għawdex has been instrumental in its preservation and perpetuation. Originally, it was an all male event, with half of the men dressed up as women. The dance lasts for

about ninety minutes and is split up into many parts including il-Mina, il-Franċiża, l-Ingliża, is-Salib, il-Parata and il-Bixkilla; the names referring to different aspects of Maltese history.

The Easter pageant is an annual event that offers a dramatic celebration of Easter and is conducted in Maltese. Another important activity in the religious calendar of Xagħra is the blessing of animals at the feast of St Anthony Abbot (Photo 27). It has been suggested to produce a leaflet in English for the benefit of foreign tourists and residents. The issue of portraying important village activities in other languages was highlighted.

3.7.4.8 Village Activities

Village activities, such as meetings, events and activities of local associations, should be better notified and posted at well designed points in prominent places, for example, at the ground floor of the administrative centre of the Local Council, at the pjażza and at the entrance to the Ġgantija temples. To some participants, this is a better distribution strategy with greater tourism potential than loose posters and leaflets. The Gozo Cultural Calendar has been criticized as being inaccurate and sometimes late in distribution.

The absence of a drama group at Xagħra was highlighted by some participants. This could serve to involve young people, especially in view of the legacy in drama and dancing enjoyed by the villagers. It was suggested that more activities on the cultural heritage of Xagħra and involving youths should be organized. The psycho-social benefits of drama were highlighted and it was suggested that an ad hoc professional body involving the Church, Local Council and/or central government, be set up.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The suggestion emphasises the importance of setting up an independent structure, away from voluntariat with a risk of a premature end.

Xagħra has its own Band Club and a number of choirs that are particularly active in the village feast of 8th September.

3.7.5 THE PHYSICAL ASPECT OF XAGĦRA

This aspect was mainly approached by asking participants what they thought of when they heard the word 'Xagħra' and then asked to describe their village and to suggest what improvements they would like to see after they had made that description. There were different connotations of Xagħra, but all positive. They hinted at aspects of Xagħra that were of personal interest, which included the place where they grew up or, as a participant put it, "the place where I grew from a boy to a man". Other references included mention of Ġgantija temples or in the case of primary school pupils, their Parish Church. Mention of the welcoming board to Xagħra in the Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru as "something that badly needs an overhaul" betrayed a certain pride of the villagers.

3.7.5.1 Thoroughfares

Streets in the inner core of the village are relatively narrow, except for the Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru and Triq Ta' Ħamet. An important landmark at Xagħra is the pjazza, a central meeting place of the village, which is in reality a main thoroughfare and offers an intersection point to various parts of the village. It is geographically located mid-way between the Nazzareno area and the San Anton area, each accessed from opposite sides of the pjazza. Commercial outlets, banks, bars, cafeterias and restaurants and the Parish Church are all heavily patronized venues and this has led to some participants to suggest that a better balance be found between the space allocated for vehicular parking, the area assigned to eating space for the bars and restaurants and the pedestrian area.

The buildings in the pjazza and in Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru are mostly terraced houses, many of which are characterized by balconies and louvered windows. Many participants expressed

concern on the location of the petrol station in the pġazza for environmental health and public safety reasons; it is also a source of traffic congestion at certain times of the day.⁶⁷ It has been suggested that it is relocated to a more decentralised location, possibly in Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru.

Some participants highlighted the inconvenience caused by noisy conglomerations of people outside the Band Club late at night and by the excessive noise of car stereos. A common complaint regards the lack of parking space at the pġazza and the lack of enforcement on obstruction of pedestrian areas. Some participants suggested the designation and subsequent enforcement of a timed parking zone. Others recommended the establishment of a pedestrianised pġazza for evenings only to create a more enjoyable and pleasant atmosphere which would then encourage more families and visitors to use the cafés and restaurants.

The deficiency in available parking space was highlighted a number of times by various participants. MCAST students require ample parking space and better parking facilities, possibly through the creation of an underground parking space.

Clearly marked road signage was another practical suggestion. For example, there are no signs to indicate who has the right of way in main thoroughfares. A stop sign between Triq it-Tiġrija and GĦajn Qamar should be imprinted on the road surface to prevent accidents. Moreover, traffic calming measures in the streets leading to the pġazza and in other desirable locations should be set up.⁶⁸ Changes to the position of zebra crossings have also been suggested. An elderly participant noted that a zebra crossing is needed at the start of Triq il-Knisja and Triq Spira. A participant with poor

⁶⁷ A participant cautioned that, once, during one of the village feasts, a young person climbed on one of the petrol pump fixtures to light up a suffarrel (hand-held firework).

⁶⁸ Traffic calming measures were suggested to be set up also in locations to and from Xagħra and at a point near Qronfli Kiosk.

eyesight pointed out that zebra crossings should be accompanied by adequate sound and light indicators as a road safety measure; the zebra crossing of Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru is notoriously dangerous in this regard. A participant complained that, in Xagħra, there is a deficiency of signposts to important sites.

A fairly common complaint was that not all roads were in good condition: Triq ir-Ramla, Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru, Triq Marsalforn and Triq is-Sellun needed asphaltting. Moreover, better surface runoff management is required in Triq ir-Ramla to avoid problems in the arable fields of the area. The inclusion of bicycle lanes in the main streets was another suggestion since the bicycle is still a relatively popular means of transport. This measure would have positive environmental and health impacts.

Street lighting was another aspect that was raised by participants: Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru, Triq Kalipso and Triq Ġużeppi Grech and Triq il-Miṥna were pointed out to be poorly lit. Efficiency in replacing spent light-bulbs was called for, for better road safety.⁶⁹

Another suggestion was for a consistent design of pavements throughout Xagħra, with full access to persons with special needs. Undue pavement obstruction was a common complaint. These range from illegal or untimely placement of domestic or commercial rubbish bins, irrational positioning of signage poles, restaurant tables and chairs, wares, stands, out-jutting shutters and even eye-level shop signs. The need for better enforcement combined with an educational campaign was suggested.

⁶⁹ A certain alley near Ta' Kola windmill has had no lighting since 23rd June 2005. The lighting of the dome of the Parish Church was positively received (The dome of Xagħra was the first to be lit up in Gozo).

Another suggestion is the provision of Automatic Teller Machines at the pjazza, with a no parking zone or a timed parking zone as a security measure.

An obstruction that brought about disparate suggestions from the participants was the church parvis (iz-zuntier) itself. One participant noted that it abutted onto Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru, presenting an untimely obstruction as one entered the pjazza. Another participant suggested that it could be made larger so that it could be utilized for appropriate outdoor activities as is the practice in other villages and towns in the Maltese islands. The position of the cross in the pjazza was widely viewed as discordant by participants. It was suggested to reposition the cross such to create better pedestrian flow.

3.7.5.2 Public Transport

Accessibility in and out of Xagħra is relatively easy considering the width of the winding road.⁷⁰ The bus service has been the source of numerous suggestions for its improvement. More bus-stops are needed; for example, at Triq Kalipso in the vicinity of Calypso Cave, in Triq Marsalforn and Triq il-Knisja in the vicinity of the Parish Cemetery. In summer, it was suggested to provide public transport to and from Ramla in the mornings and afternoons and to and from Marsalforn in the evenings. A further suggestion is to provide a direct bus-route from Xagħra to Mġarr, particularly on Monday mornings and on Thursday and Friday evenings. A positive community measure is the provision of a cyclical bus-route to allow wider access to different parts of Xagħra. An increase in the number of transits to and from Rabat was also suggested. Punctuality and regularity of the public transport, particularly in the afternoons, was another complaint.

⁷⁰ An elderly person remembers that when buses were first introduced to the island, the conductor would have to alight from the bus at one point to help the driver negotiate his way along the serpentine roads leading into the village.

3.7.5.3 Recreational Facilities

The location of the playing fields was noted to be dangerous due to traffic and not central to particular zones of the village; the establishment of other playing fields was suggested.⁷¹ Another suggestion is the inclusion of amenities in recreational facilities for persons with special needs. Suggestions for the creation of more open spaces include a camping area near Ramla, skateboard areas and picnic areas.

Some participants suggested the construction of a multi-facility complex to include a gymnasium, with commercial outlets such as a cinema, shops, restaurants and pubs as a source of attraction.

3.7.5.4 Embellishment of Public Spaces in the Village

One participant complained that there are a number of unscrapped, unregistered vehicles that have been left on the roads.

A need which was identified by locals, parents and children alike, was for a public lending library. Participants commented that such a library neither need be a specialist one nor a collection of dated books. On the contrary, they highlighted the importance that it hosts recent publications on various disciplines and interests in order to widen and vary the readership potential. Another need identified was a Town Hall for indoor cultural activities and art exhibitions.

Public gardens, which enhance the feeling of space and vitality of a given area, need maintenance to give a sense of pleasantness to a locality and certain participants have questioned whether the public gardens are being given as much attention as they merit.

⁷¹ For example, a participant from the Nazzareno area complained that the current location of the playing field is too far away from home for her to be practical and suggested that other sites for playing fields be explored, possibly even in the Nazzareno area itself, if such an area could be appropriately identified.

Existing recreational facilities could be better embellished to increase social interaction. One participant suggested the setting up of benches in appropriate places throughout the village, such as Triq il-Ġnejna and in the small pjazzas.

The cemetery was also included in the list of sites that needed embellishment.⁷²

Increase in the number of litter bins, skips and bring-in sites in key locations was a common suggestion.⁷³ The selected sites should be easily accessible and preferably at the exit/entrance points of the village to serve an additional function of reminding residents to keep their village clean.

3.7.5.5 Development Planning in the Village

Public notification of development proposals in Xagħra, other than newspapers and site notices was a suggestion for a better involvement of the community. A sense of place and belonging should be increased; for example, people who inherit a property should feel a sense of duty not to allow the property to fall into disrepair. Measures should be introduced to prevent building developments from taking place at the height of the tourist season on the grounds that development has a negative effect on tourism and Xagħra is promoted as a tourist attraction for its quiet and idyllic sites.

Some participants claimed that development was taking place sporadically. As in the case of the Ġgantija Housing Estate, development took place with irreversible damage to the village. Many participants complained about the numerous flats that are being erected in Xagħra and the older participants reminisced about their past when Xagħra had no flats, a characteristic mainly of neighbouring Marsalforn. They

⁷² A participant suggested the erection of a monument dedicated to Xagħra's departed.

⁷³ There appears to be an insufficient distribution of litter bins outside the village core.

suggested that development can take place in specific areas around Xagħra, such as along Triq Marsalforn, to cater for the demands of young couples.

A participant emphasized that as Xagħra is a village with rich cultural heritage remains, it is important that the necessary coordination and authorization from the competent entities are carried out.⁷⁴

Better design and organisation of spaces of public buildings to accommodate persons with special needs was given due weighting by participants. A case in point is the location of classes for Gozo lace: these could take place at the ground floor, hence improving attendance.

Further points raised are to discourage the use of galvanized steel metal and aluminium apertures in historical parts of the village; to relocate mini-factories currently housed in residential areas, hence mitigating noise and air pollution; A campaign to educate drivers to switch off stationary car engines to decrease air and noise pollution; to increase the number of public conveniences which should be located in key locations, such as near Ta' Kola Windmill, Nazzareno area and San Anton area; and the setting up of a sanctuary for stray dogs and cats combined with an educational campaign on animal welfare.

3.7.5.6 The Elderly

Most of the elderly live in their own homes and are cared for by relatives. In a focus group that was conducted with the elderly, the need for a local residential home for those who depend on carers or relatives, but who would prefer to opt out of the responsibility, was highlighted. Such a home would incorporate a short-stay facility to create brief breaks for

⁷⁴ It was pointed out that when excavation works for a centre for footballers and football enthusiasts were being carried out, these were halted by the then Museums Department since it was not notified of the development.

carers. Participants hoped that the home would be located in a central position, such as in the vicinity of the football ground, so that they could still identify with the community of Xagħra. Such an initiative could be undertaken either by the Church, in the manner in which it operates its homes, by the State or by private enterprises ready to charge reasonable fees.

A further need highlighted by the elderly was that of a short-stay geriatric facility for certain medical conditions, accompanied by a community nursing service to administer routine medical tests.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Xagħra has been described as a locality with a special character, especially due to its location in the small island of Gozo. Even though Xagħra, and for that matter, Gozo, does not boast of the “wide open spaces, hills and woods” of larger countries, as a foreign participant put it, it is characterized by people who live in villages that are generally separated from one another in a distinct manner and who also derive part of their identity from occupying that particular village. This was evident in this study, particularly on asking returned migrants why they returned. One participant summed it up as, “Twelidt hawn u trabbejt hawn. Hawn posti”.⁷⁵ An elderly participant phrased this somewhat differently and asserted that “Ix-Xagħra art twelidna. Bqajt inħobbha dejjem. Hawn għext. Hawn immut. Hawn”.⁷⁶

Xagħra is essentially constituted of three zones, the Nazzareno area and the San Anton area with the Parish Church area in the middle. This can be seen by the manner in which young

⁷⁵ English translation:

I was born here and brought up here. Here is my place.

⁷⁶ English translation:

Xagħra is our birth-place. I have always loved it. I lived here. I will die here. Here.

people readily identify with one zone and not with the other. Nonetheless, they claim that they would like this state of affairs altered and to identify more with one other. Several community-level interventions may be suggested that could include team-building workshops and the integration of young people into different aspects of Xagħra to further unite them.

Another comment made by a foreign participant was that “the description of farmhouses here raises [quite] a few quizzical eyebrows and much amusement from visitors who look for the farmyard and byres, barns and outbuildings, fields and pastures of an English farmstead and see only row upon row of houses.” Nonetheless, there is a definite rural feel to Xagħra and this can be witnessed by the natural areas that surround the village and thereby merit due consideration if Xagħra is to retain its rural character.

One participant went so far as to say that “the village, denied a proper voice, is full of apathy and seems resigned to the pressure and inevitable fate of the majority at the hands of those with the means to over-ride or short-circuit proper procedures”. He noted that “the strength of the community lies in its ability to have a positive and democratic voice on its future and see positive results as an outcome of action and opinion”.

Much of the leanings of participants were towards a clean and healthy environment, free from substance abuse and other psychological pollutants, respect for culture and the perpetuation of heritage for future generations and respect for the physical ambience of Xagħra. Young participants felt that there were far too many associations, committees and sub-committees operative in Xagħra. They aspired that decisions are assigned to a competent body, “study, forecast and control, legislation, and rectification of our effect on the environment and its effect upon us all should be in the hands of ... a body of people large enough and broad enough to iron out differences of opinion, shades of interpretation, and

representative of all who gain benefit from a stable, environmentally sound economy”.

For effective community development, such a body needs regular grass-roots input, that is from residents who do not occupy a seat on such a committee. Although this does not imply that smaller associations are not or cannot form, there seems to be a natural tendency for residents to join the influential associations. Local associations should collaborate together for added benefit of the residents. Unfortunately, this collaboration is often more a clever camouflage of hidden agendas of charismatic people who appear to care for their village. Hence, assessing their role and their activity in the village is often vital.

4.0 A WALKTHROUGH OF PLACE NAMES, PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND HERITAGE OF XAGHRA

Reference is made to Drawings 22_06_6_1 to 4, Drawings 22_06_7_1 to 4 and Drawings 22_06_8_1 to 4 for the land use, natural heritage and cultural heritage respectively. When inference is made to geology and soils, reference is made to Drawings 22_06_4 and 22_06_5 respectively. Drawings 22_06_9_1 to 4 depict the official protection listings of the locality. Reference is also made to photos at the end of this report sorted by zone.

4.1 ZONE I: FROM TA' IN-NUFFARA TO TAL- ĠORF

4.1.1 IN-NUFFARA AND TAN-NUFFARA

On the south-eastern outskirts of Xaghra, there is the hillock known as in-Nuffara and the fields around are thus called Tan-Nuffara, literally meaning 'of/belonging to Nuffara'. In-

Nuffara is located in an Upper Coralline Limestone plateau⁷⁷ surrounded by sies, a rocky ridge, flanked by Blue Clay outcrops (Photo 1). The plateau is karstland with soils described by Lang as Nadur series and the ecosystem of the area is karstic steppe, mainly fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) as key species (Photo 2) and with a community of the rare Mediterranean legume *Hymenocarpus circinnatus*, Nefel t'Għawdex, found only in Gozo.⁷⁸ Soils at the sies are described by Lang as L-Inglin Complex while the gentler slopes leading to Wied ta' L-Għejjun are described as Fiddien series. Just below the sies there are a number of carob trees (*Ceratonia siliqua*), giant reeds (*Arundo donax*) and a substantial number of *Eucalyptus* specimens which are cultivated for hunting purposes. Given the clayey texture of the soils at Tan-Nuffara area, the agrarian land is largely unterraced and a substantial area is abandoned, which area is slowly reverting to a clayey steppe.

The place name Nuffara appears in the archives of two Notaries L. de Apapis (1577) and Ferdinando Ciappara (1582), respectively under the name "ta niffara, contrata in Insula Gaudisii".⁷⁹ The name Nuffara may have originated from a sort of defence role played by this hillock. Serracino Inglott translates Nuffara as 'scarecrow',⁸⁰ whilst Wettinger refers to the place "as a signal station by the Gozitan Militia ...".⁸¹ The latter theory is supported by the fact that the view from this

⁷⁷ Two members of the Upper Coralline Limestone outcrop at In-Nuffara—Tal-Pitkal Member at the plateau and Għajn Melel Member at the sies.

⁷⁸ Schembri, P.J. *et al*, Localities with Conservation Value in the Maltese Islands, 1987, p.17.

Hymenocarpus circinnatus has a Red Data Book status of locally vulnerable and restricted distribution in the Maltese Islands (P.J. Schembri and J. Sultana (eds) Red Data Book for the Maltese Islands, Malta, 1989, p.18).

⁷⁹ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 419.

⁸⁰ Serracino Inglott, E., Il-Miklem Malti, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1984, Volum S-U.

⁸¹ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 419.

plateau ranges from Mġarr Harbour to the south, to Ir-Ramla Bay to the north-east and is conveniently close to Rabat, making it an ideal signal station for the militia.

Until recent years, In-Nuffara was integrated with the locality of Xagħra and, according to Aguis de Soldanis, the valley separating it from Xagħra, that is Wied ta' I-Għajjun, was the border between Xagħra and Rabat:⁸²

... waqt li n-naħa l-oħra li taħkem fiha il-muntanja "tan-Nuffara" sa "Wied Ħarruba" tibqa' mar-Rabat.

Archaeological findings in 1960 on the plateau of In-Nuffara indicate a Bronze Age settlement. This is suggested by the presence of silo-pits (Photo 3) and by the abundance of Borg in-Nadur phase (ca 1500-700 BC) ceramic material found in one of them.⁸³ Traces of original clay lining survived on the walls of the investigated pit, while the ceramic assemblage retrieved included small clay anchors and spindle-whorls. The latter suggest textile weaving.

The use of these pits for burial purposes is excluded by the remaining traces of the clay lining and also by the absence of any skeletal remains. Water storage is also excluded on account of the fissured rock into which the pit was cut. The remaining possibility would be that of its use for storage of food supplies, like grain.

Storage facilities like the ones described above would qualify In-Nuffara as a settlement site. Likewise does the evidence of textile weaving. On the other hand, from the strategic point of view, the site's location on a hill-top must have secured a certain degree of relative safety for a Bronze Age community;

⁸² Aguis de Soldanis, G.P.F., *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, Trans. by Mgr Dun Gużep Farrugia, vol. II, Malta, 1953, p. 62.

English translation:

... while on the other side there is the hill "tan-Nuffara" up to "Wied Ħarruba" which remain with Rabat.

⁸³ Museum Annual Report, 1960, p.5 and Fig. I.

hill-top locations are, in fact, typical of settlements anywhere in Bronze Age Mediterranean.

Tan-Nuffara area is a scheduled site and has a Proposed Ecological listing of Level 4. In-Nuffara plateau is considered as an Archaeological Site.

4.1.2 WIED TAL-FURNAR, WIED TA' XĦAJMA AND IL-MEJDA TAL-ĦMIRA

Wied Tal-Furnar and Wied Ta' XĦajma are two gorge-like tributary valleys (Photo 4). Geologically, Blue Clay outcrops in the area except at the valleys proper where Upper Globigerina Limestone Member outcrops. Soils in the area are described as Fiddien series with San Lawrenz series at the valleys. The area is agrarian with a singular olive grove.

Wied il-Furnar and Il-Mejda tal-Ħmira are associated with bread making, even though they are well out of the village core—in the past, they may have belonged to a baker, furnar. According to Serracino Inglott, xĦajma is the diminutive plural of skink, xaĦmet l-art (*Chalcides ocellatus*).

Legend holds that a man had sought shelter in a cave at Ta' XĦajma, reputed to be haunted by evil spirits, during a storm. On hearing an evil voice in the cave, he sped out and is still running. Another narration is that two men made a bet of who has the courage to drive a nail at the heart of the said cave during the night. One of them managed, but nailed his cloak by mistake and, thinking that the devil held him, he died out of fear, three days later.⁸⁴

Wied Tal-Furnar is listed as Proposed Ecological Level 2 or higher and Wied Ta' XĦajma is listed as Proposed Ecological Level 3.

⁸⁴ Bezzina, J., Forty Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p.17.

4.1.3 WIED TAL-GĦAJJUN AND TA' L-GĦAJJUN

The valley separating In-Nuffara from Xagħra is called Ta' l-GĦajjun. It is entirely composed of Blue Clay Formation and the soils are therefore entirely of carbonate raw—Nadur series at sies giving way to Fiddien series at the slopes. As the place name implies, the area is rich in springs, għejjun in Maltese. The area is fully agrarian, with parcels of land dedicated to vines and olive-growing (Photos 5, 7 and 8). During ground surveys, a number of natural freshwater ponds were encountered which, however, were highly tampered with as hunting havens (Photo 6). From this area, one may enjoy spectacular views of in-Nuffara. Given the geology of the area, caves abound along most of the rdum of Xgħara and Ta' l-GĦejjun is no exception.

The name of these places derivates from the word GĦajn meaning spring or when the plural of the noun is used—GĦajjun meaning springs. These may refer to the natural springs which originate from Ix-Xagħra ta' Fuq l-GĦajjun and In-Nuffara and which then flow into Wied il-GĦajjun.

In the contract by Ferdinando Ciappara of 13th August 1582, the valley which lies between Xagħra and In-Nuffara is termed Wied Ta' Ħarruba:⁸⁵

(In-Nuffara) diviso dalla Montagna di Casal Caccia dal
vallone ta' harruba

It is assumed that Wied Ta' Ħarruba was renamed as Wied ta' l-GĦajjun in the early sixteenth century.

⁸⁵ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 419.

English translation:

Divided from the hill of the village of Xagħra by the valley called ta' Ħarruba.

4.1.4 TA' ĠERMIDA, TA' KAZZOL, IĊ-ĊENS AND TAL-ĠORF

Geomorphologically, the area is a continuation of the Ta' GĦajjun area, with the Ta' Ġermida/Ta' Kazzol/Iċ-Ċens Upper Coralline Limestone (Tal-Pitkal Member) plateau giving way to spectacular sies where GĦajn Melel Member outcrops and flanked by Blue Clay slopes at Tal-Ġorf. Soil distribution is similar to Ta' I-GĦejjun area with Nadur series at the sies giving way to Fiddien series at the slopes. The sies are sheltered by an interesting mixture of carobs, almonds (*Prunus amygdalus*), giant reeds and the ubiquitous *Eucalyptus* species and the odd Date Palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*)⁸⁶ and the invasive *Ricinus communis*.⁸⁷ Terracing in the area varies from heavy terracing beneath the sies to partly terraced, at times unterraced, at the slopes.

The area has been largely engulfed by building development in the past decade, the least developed being Ta' Ġermida. Occurring at Ta' Ġermida, in Triq Ġnien Xibla, is one of the two windmills present in Xagħra (Photo 10) and the church dedicated to Ġesù Nazzarenu (Photo 11).

Ta' Ġermida and Ta' Kazzol probably refer to nicknames of landowners. Regarding the place name Iċ-Ċens, information is fragmented. Under the entries of Notary C. Canchur of 9th September 1508, there is a transaction relating to a field "chens glacula", meaning the census paying land.⁸⁸ This may be a possible explanation because it was common to lease land to peasants who paid a percentage of their income or crops to the owner. Tal-Ġorf has a connection with the topography of the land. In fact, Wettinger states that Tal-Ġorf means 'the

⁸⁶ Listed as a protected tree as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

⁸⁷ Listed as a damaging or invasive species as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

⁸⁸ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 92.

cliff' indicating the panoramic views that exist there (Photo 14).⁸⁹

Tal-Ġorf area is listed as a Proposed Ecological Level 4.

4.2 ZONE II: FROM TA' BRANDIN TO TAL-BAJDA

4.2.1 TAL-QANFUD, TA' BRANDIN AND TA' KAĊĊIA

Ta' Brandin and Ta' Ħamet are adjacent agrarian areas and refer to names of individuals.⁹⁰ The name Ħamet, similar to the district name of Ħamed in Xewkija, betrays a persistent albeit diminished Arab presence after the Norman invasion of the Islands. Ta' Brandin may indicate a Latin Christian presence and may have been a local distortion of the name Brandano. The place-name Ta' Kaċċia may hint to hunting due to its similarity to the Maltese word for hunting, however its origins are from the surname De Cache/Cachi family to which this land belonged.⁹¹ The element of nicknames in the area is reflected in such place names as Tal-Qanfud.

The area is a Blue Clay slope flanking the Upper Coralline Limestone plateau, characterised by a mixture of giant reeds and carob trees just below the cliffs leading to gently sloping agricultural fields (Photos 15 and 16). Vine growing and a number of olive groves occur in the area, together with some protected cropping. The Upper Globigerina Limestone Member outcrops to a minor extent at Ta' Ħamet, reflected by a change in soil type from Fiddien to San Lawrenz carbonate raw soil. Again, field terracing changes from heavy terracing

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 164-165.

Wettinger refers to

Cusa, 211/185 .../rupis; A. Pellegrin, 166: 'Jorf, ...Est une "falaise qui surplombe la mer."

that is, "a cliff which overlooks the sea". Although this cliff is not directly facing the sea, the land at tal-Ġorf occurs on the cliffs which face the Wied Ta' l-Għajjun.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 168.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 337.

below the sies to slight terracing or no terracing at the gentle slopes. Agrarian land at Ta' Brandin has waterlogging problems.

4.2.2 ĠNIEN TA' JUKBU, IL-ĠGANTIJA AND IT-TAFLA

Geologically, Il-Ġgantija forms part of the Upper Coralline Limestone Formation plateau (Tal-Pitkal Member). Lang describes the soils as L-Inglin Complex where agrarian land stood at the time and Nadur series in the temple complex area. The temple complex stands at the south eastern periphery of the plateau overlooking Nuffara hillock.

The name Ġgantija is obviously linked with the megalithic temple complex and Neolithic remains present in the area. The area is largely influenced by archaeological finds of universal significance, namely the megalithic temple complex (Photos 18 and 19). Other archaeological finds include the North Cave (Photo 20) and, at the western periphery of the area bordering on Xagħra I-Kbira, Ta' GĦejżu cave (Photo 21).

The northern part of the Ġgantija area has been entirely built during the 1970s well into the 1990s. It is largely residential, although there are community related premises such as the football pitch, playing fields and the premises of Società Filarmonica La Vittoria. This area also houses the residence of the late President Anton Buttigieg with the former coat of arms of the Republic of Malta emblazoned on the façade.

The Ġgantija area is listed as a Proposed Level 4 and the area is scheduled for its archaeological importance.

Ġgantija megalithic complex is composed of two temples both of which were built during the Ġgantija Phase (ca 3600-3000 BC) and are enclosed by a single huge outer wall, but originally having two separate concave façades.

The larger southern temple was the first to be built. Composed of five large apses, it still retains the torba and stone-slabbed floors, traces of plaster which once covered its irregular walls,

stone blocks with pitted decoration, altar blocks with carved relief spirals, and a fire-reddened circular hearth. The later northern temple is composed of four apses and another central one reduced to a mere niche at the back. Altar niches can also be seen. The huge outer wall, within which both temples are enclosed, is built in the 'long and short' technique. The forecourt of the temples may have played an important ritual role.

The temples had attracted the attention of curious learned observers who wrote about them as early as the sixteenth century. It was known to Gio-Francesco Abela who wrote in 1647 and was pictorially documented by Jean Houel in 1787. Other drawings of Ġgantija were also made later in the 1820s by Charles de Brochtorff.

Ġgantija was the first megalithic monument on the Islands to be cleared of debris in the 1820s at the initiative of John Otto Bayer, the representative of the British Governor on Gozo and in 1827, Louis Mazzara produced the first description of the cleared monument which was published in Paris. The temples were examined by General Alberto de la Marmora in 1834 and surveyed and described again by the German Albrecht Mayr in 1900. The last excavations at Ġgantija Temples were carried out in 1954 by David Trump.

In 1980, Ġgantija Temples were inscribed on the World Heritage List as per UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The inclusion of the site in this list implies that it is a site of world heritage significance which merits protection and preservation for present and future generations. Ġgantija Temples are recorded also on the Guinness Book of Records as the World's oldest free-standing structures.

During building operations for the housing estate next to Ġgantija undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s led to the destruction of a number of prehistoric burials encountered whilst undertaking site excavations. None of these were

officially reported, however a complete Żebbuġ Phase (ca 4100-3800 BC) pear-shaped jar together with broken pottery and human skeletal remains reached the Gozo Archaeology Museum. These were discovered and collected in 1973 from a building development site in what is now Triq Mikiel Farrugia. In March 1983, other burials were unofficially reported during building operations along Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru. Some of the broken pottery encountered reached the Gozo Archaeology Museum.

The North cave was discovered on 13th April 1949 during quarrying operations. Situated close to Ġgantija Temples, this cave could have been the temples' rubbish pit in the Tarxien Phase (ca 3000-2500 BC), as the quantity of Tarxien phase material found in it suggests. However, prior to the Tarxien Phase, it could have been a rock-cut tomb. Some ceramic sherds of the Ġgantija Phase, together with fragments of a human skull and some animal bones, have also been retrieved.⁹²

When cleared in September 1933, Ta' Għejżu cave, situated along Vjal 8^{ta'} Settembru, yielded large quantities of ceramic sherds of the Ġgantija Phase, some of which had abundant traces of red ochre.⁹³ Megaliths scattered nearby may have formed part of a temple of which part of an apse can be figured out.

Ġnien Ta' Jukbu may indicate a Latin Christian presence and seems like a corruption of the name Giacobbo. As the name implies it is a garden, although now somewhat abandoned. It-Tafla is precisely a Blue Clay outcrop. The area is agrarian with Fiddien soils, but has a number of abandoned fields.

⁹² Museum Annual Report 1949-50, p. 218-9.

⁹³ Museum Annual Report 1933-4, p. VI-VII.

4.2.3 TAL-BAJDA AND TA' STELLINI: XAGĦRA CENTRE

The area forms part of the Upper Coralline Limestone plateau where the Tal-Pitkal Member outcrops. The natural ecosystem for this type of topography is karstic garigue. However, due to anthropogenic intervention since prehistory, disturbance is significant and in fact, Lang describes the soils of the area as L-Inglin Complex that is, anthropogenic mixture of terra and carbonate raw soils. The zone was practically all built up by the 1960s, although Ta' Stellini area was mostly built up during the 1970s right through the 1990s.

The term Tal-Bajda relates to the soil composition occurring in the area, even though it may have connections with the surname Bajjada. In a notarial contract of the 22nd December 1536 by Notary Brandano de Caxario, there is an indication that the land may have consisted of two fields:⁹⁴

bayda et tal bayda, duae clausurae,

Ta' Stellini is a place name indicating the surname of the landowner and the origin of the name is certainly post medieval.

Tal-Bajda and Ta' Stellini areas form the village core which is dominated by the Parish Church, dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady, overlooking the main village square, Pjazza l-Vittorja (Photo 22). The typical stone cross faces the church (Photo 23). This pjazza is the commercial hub of Xagħra with the presence of two commercial banks, commercial outlets, catering outlets, service providers, the premises for the community radio station and even a petrol station. The Police Station, the administrative building of the Local Council, a

⁹⁴ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 14.

English translation:

Bajda and tal-Bajda, two enclosures.

Sports Club and the Clubs of the two main political parties occur in the vicinity of same.

Buildings in the village core often have important architectural features such as old stone balconies (Photo 24). Of historical interest, there is the World War II shelter (Photo 25), a telephone booth dating to the British period (Photo 26) and Ta' Kola windmill (Photo 33) at Ta' Stellini which was built in 1725 and takes the name of the last of the millers family—a certain Joseph Grech—known as Zeppu Kola.⁹⁵

Most of the streets leading from the square to all directions of the village are characterized by a number of religious shrines or niches adorning the façades of private residences (For example, photos 29, 32, 35, 36). They attest to the religious piety of the village folk.

A number of traditional bakeries are concentrated within the village core, while some isolated others seem to have served the more remote parts of the village. Their easily detected chimneys seem to act like landmarks (Photos 30 and 31 and photo 13 of a traditional bakery at Ta' Ġermida). The presence of such a number of bakeries coupled with two surviving windmills not far from the village centre—attest to a village industry much involved in sustaining the local population. Ta' Kola windmill is a scheduled property.

A legend is tied with the village of Xagħra: a man tamed a thrice widowed wife, with a reputation of showing disrespect to her former husbands, by forcing her to carry his own cart on their way to the parish feast of Xewkija, with threats of death if she disobeyed.⁹⁶ Another story is tied with the Parish Church which enshrined a precious statue of the Madonna with solid silver head and hands and adorned with an embroidered

⁹⁵ <http://www.xaghraparish.org/xagħrazmien.htm>

⁹⁶ Bezzina, J., *Forty Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times*, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p.12.

silk dress. This statue was a gift of Grandmaster Pinto to the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin of the Holy Rosary around 1760. However, this statue was ransacked by the French militia in 1798.⁹⁷

4.2.4 IX-XAGĦRA L-KBIRA AND TA' GRABEJLA

Ix-Xagħra l-Kbira is enclosed by Triq it-28^{ta'} April 1688, Triq il-Qačča and Vjal it-8^{ta'} Settembru. The area is bordered by old farmhouses with alleys with the inlying land largely unbuilt enclosing fields and a number of carob tree clusters, some of which are quite old (Photo 42). From here, there are magnificent views of the village core.

The adjective Kbira, meaning large, in Ix-Xagħra l-Kbira may indicate that it was the original village centre, an assumption corroborated by the presence of the former village church, that of Saint Anthony Abbot (Photo 46) which was already in existence in 1400⁹⁸ and which served as the Church of Xagħra throughout the Middle Ages and for most of the period of the Knights of the Order of St John. Ix-Xagħra l-Kbira may be the oldest settled part of the village. Grabejla is probably a corruption of the name Grabel.

This area is the location of the first Parish chapel when Xagħra was elevated to the status of a parish by decree, dated 28th April 1688, of Mgr Davide Cocco Palmieri, bishop of Malta and Gozo. The chapel dedicated to St Anthony Abbot still exists although in a modified form due to World War II damage. In a narrow alley not far from the chapel, there is the site of the residence of the first Xagħra Parish priest, although recently altered (Photo 47). A number of noteworthy buildings occur here—for example, the Parish Domus (Photo 37) and a townhouse of architectural value (Photo 38), both built in the early twentieth century. Buildings in the vicinity of the

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.20.

⁹⁸ Agius de Soldanis, G.P.F., *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, Trans. by Mgr Dun Ġużepp Farrugia, vol. II, Malta, 1953, p. 63.

village core has a number of niches (for example, photos 38 to 40).

Ix-Xagħra l-Kbira is rich in typical country lanes flanked by rubble walls and a square dry-stone corbelled hut (girna) was also identified. The area is the host to a number of sites of archaeological potential and its preservation is highly commendable. Most notable is the prehistoric funerary site, the Xagħra Brochtorff Circle (Photo 41). This once prehistoric underground burial complex originally consisted of a series of natural underground and interconnecting caves which have been adapted by prehistoric man for burial practices. Its close proximity to Ġgantija Temples is noteworthy. It was also marked by a megalithic circular enclosure, of which very few megaliths remain, mostly integrated in rubble walls. Already in prehistoric times, the caves' roofs started to collapse and prehistoric man later dug burial pits in them. This multi-period site, excavated between 1987 and 1994, was already being occupied for burial practices during the Żebbuġ Phase (ca 4100-3800 BC) as evidenced by the presence of a Żebbuġ Phase double-chambered tomb on site. It reached its peak of occupation during the Tarxien phase (ca 3000-2500 BC) although evidence shows that it still remained in use at least as late as the Tarxien Cemetery Phase (ca 2500-1500 BC).

Other conspicuous features are the now disused torba quarries concentrated in this area (Photo 43). One of these quarries appears to have been the cause of serious damage to a prehistoric tomb (Photo 45). Given the proximity of Xagħra Brochtorff Circle, the potential of this area for remains should not be excluded; a prehistoric tomb was reported to have been found in June 1926.⁹⁹ The area is scheduled for its archaeological importance.

⁹⁹ Museum Annual Report 1926-7, p.III.

This is possibly the same tomb recently detected in Triq il-Kaċċa, formerly known as Triq Ta' Ħamet, but found to have been heavily

4.3 ZONE III: FROM GĦAJN LUKIN TO TAL-KAPPILLAN

4.3.1 GĦAJN LUKIN/TA' GĦAJN LUKIN

Being an essential element for human life, names of places connected with springs (GĦajn) and other sources of water would be recorded orally or in written format. Wettinger connects the origins of the noun Lukin as a name which indicate possession by an individual or a family¹⁰⁰. Lukin may be a diminutive of the name Luke (Luqa), unless it is a metathesis of Kulin.¹⁰¹ However, Lukin may indicate Jewish presence before their expulsion in 1492. In fact, Aguis de Soldanis makes an allusion of the word Lhudin meaning 'of the Jews' giving a Jewish connection to the name.¹⁰²

The area occurs at the periphery of the Upper Coralline Limestone plateau (Tal-Pitkal Member) flanked with sies where GĦajn Melel Member occurs, with a number of caves and trees (Photo 48), leading to Blue Clay slopes with Globigerina Limestone Formation outcropping halfway down the slope. It is largely agrarian with some vine growing. The Globigerina outcrop, in the area known as Ta' San Anard, is mostly developed. Soils of the area reflect the parent material, with L-Inglin Complex at the plateau and a sequence of Fiddien, San Lawrenz and San Biagio soils going down the slope. The watercourse junction at Ta' San Anard is listed as Proposed Level 4. The elevated position of the area lends to spectacular views of nearby towns and villages (Photo 54).

At the foot of the sies at GĦajn Lukin, there are three cemeteries: the present-day Xagħra Parish Cemetery (Photo

tampered with, with its last use evidently having been that of an animal pen.

¹⁰⁰ Wettinger, G., 'The Place-Names and The Personal Nomenclature of Gozo, 1372-1600' In: R.Y. Ebied and M.J.L. Young (eds), *Oriental Studies*, Leiden, 1980, p. 192.

¹⁰¹ Wettinger, G., *Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800*, Malta, 2000, p. 186.

¹⁰² Agius de Soldanis, G.P.F., *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, Trans. by Mgr Dun Ġużepp Farrugia, vol. II, Malta, 1953, p. 77.

51), the older Parish cemetery adjoining it (Photo 50), and the 1814 Plague Cemetery on the westernmost extremity (Photo 49).¹⁰³ In connection with the mentioned 1814 Plague Cemetery, a makeshift hospital which was set up in a farmhouse cut off from the residential area during the notorious Xagħra plague. The hospital came to be known as the 1814 Plague Hospital (Photo 52). The Plague Hospital and Cemetery are scheduled. Adjacent to the 1814 Hospital there are a number of caves which were likely used for animal breeding in the recent past. Gozo was free from the 1813 plague which hit Malta, except for Xagħra. A villager happened to be at Qormi seeking work in Malta when the epidemic broke. He passed through quarantine before visiting his home village in Gozo. The gift he had with him was however infected and before long he died and 104 villagers with him. As thanksgiving to the end of the plague, the villagers erected a niche dedicated to the Blessed Virgin of Mercy at Għajn Lukin (Photo 53), close to the Capuchin's Church and opposite Tal-Fewdu area where plague victims were confined. A certain deaf-mute villager used to keep an oil lamp lit day and night by collecting alms. The bell he used to carry soon gained miraculous virtues.¹⁰⁴

4.3.2 SANTA VENERA/VERNA

The land of Santa Venera is obviously connected with the saint bearing the same name. In fact, there was once a chapel in the area dedicated to her, which was commissioned by Ugolino Novarra in 1265¹⁰⁵. It was built on the same land known for the prehistoric megalithic temple of Verna. One may conjecture of a continuation or of a takeover from the fertility cult to the Christian religion.

¹⁰³ Bugeja, G.M., A Study in Local History Since 1800 - Xagħra, unpublished B.A. (Hons) dissertation, 2006, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Bezzina, J., Forty Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p. 21-22.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.xaghraparish.org/xaghrasmien.htm>

This site, situated on the plateau facing Rabat, was first excavated in 1911 by the British archaeologists Thomas Ashby and R.N. Bradley.¹⁰⁶ Flint and chert knives, together with abundant pieces of obsidian, were among the finds reported by Bradley. The site was again further excavated in 1961 by David Trump whose excavations revealed that the site had been occupied since the Neolithic period.¹⁰⁷ The only visible remains are a group of three upright megaliths and three horizontal blocks lining the eastern side of the upright megaliths - resembling the benches which one encounters along the façades of *Haġar Qim*, *Tarxien* and *Ġgantija* temple complexes.

The area is an Upper Coralline Limestone plateau overlooking the *Għajn Lukin* slope. It largely consists of abandoned fields used for hunting and trapping.

A slightly disturbed steppe with fine specimens of carob trees is present further west; the steppe is listed as Protected Ecological Level 4 (Photo 56). The *Santa Verna* area is scheduled for its archaeological remains. With its carob trees, rural stone huts, field lanes and rubble walls, the area is of scenic beauty.

4.3.3 IX-XAGĦRA, TA' FRENDO, TA' LABLAB AND TAL-KAPPILLAN

Ix-Xagħra is an Upper Coralline Limestone plateau situated on the top of the *Ta' Sruġ* ridge. Soils are described as *L-Inglin* Complex due to past anthropogenic interference. The name implies the garigue ecosystem which such geomorphology supports. Part of the area is scheduled for its archaeological importance.

The nearby lands of *Ta' Frendo*, *Ta' Lablab* and *Tal-Kappillan* are a continuation of the plateau and are rapidly developing.

¹⁰⁶ Museum Annual Report 1911-2, p. I-II.

¹⁰⁷ Museum Annual Report 1961, p. 5.

The agrarian land is rapidly diminishing with Tal-Kappillan area being mostly developed. The associated place names all indicate the name, nickname or status of the landowner.

4.4 ZONE IV: TAS-SELLUN TO IS-SRUG

4.4.1 TAS-SELLUN, TAL-BELLIEGĦA AND GĦAJN FUTNI

Tas-Sellun is a group of fields between GĦajn Futni and GĦajn Lukin on a steep Blue Clay slope leading to more gentle gradients when it reaches the Globigerina Limestone Formation. The corresponding soils are Fiddien and San Lawrenz series. Due to the steepness of the land, fields are heavily to moderately terraced. The place name is connected to the series of terraced fields present in the area.¹⁰⁸ A fault goes through Tal-Belliegħa area expressing the entire geological strata to the Xlendi Member of the Lower Coralline Limestone Formation at the valley bottom. In fact, the place name means chasm and it may refer to the Ta' L-GĦalluq ditch occurring in the area, the source of Wied Belliegħa.

According to a legend, Belliegħa, etymologically meaning Swallower, is a Maltese mythical monster which lives in wells and springs. Indeed, the area is conducive to watercourse formation. The legend holds that once a widow was tending her fields together with her seven beautiful daughters. A renowned and much feared hag appeared there and praised their beauty. By the evening, the mother sent the eldest to the pool there to fetch some water. When the latter did not return, she sent the others in order, but all failed to return. Eventually, she herself went to find only their pitcher.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 526.

¹⁰⁹ Pisani, G., Għawdex Joħlom fil-Leġġendi, Malta, 1999, p.69.

Bezzina, J., Forty Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p.14.

GĦajn Futni is further upland and is a Blue Clay slope conducive of spring water formation. Futni is a Semitic name of Arab or Berber origin,¹¹⁰ indicating either that this land was under cultivation at the end of the Arab period or that it was already cultivated by the late medieval community of Xagħra. Most of the fields in this area are abandoned, with gradual progression to a clayey steppe.

4.4.2 IĊ-ĊIANTI AND IS-SEMBLIJA

These lands are a continuation of the GĦajn Futni geomorphology. The Upper Coralline Limestone sies gives way to Blue Clay slopes, gently leading to a valley—Wied iċ-Ċianti/Wied Ta' Gerxija—where the Lower Globigerina Limestone Member outcrops at the valley bed. The associated soils are Fiddien/San Lawrenz/San Biagio series which correspond to the parent material outcropping in the area, although at Is-Semblija, Lang describes the soils as Alcol series due to greater interaction with the San Lawrenz carbonate raw soils further uphill. The carob/reed mixture at the bottom of the sies gives way to unterraced/slightly terraced abandoned fields, again slowly reverting to a clayey steppe. At the lower gradients of the slope, cultivation is still active with some viticulture abounding in the area (Photo 58). The odd *Eucalyptus* clusters occur at the clayey slopes.

The name Ċianti is certainly of Romance origin and it may denote a family name. However, Ċianti may be a deformation of the Sicilian word 'Canti' which means 'new vineyards'.¹¹¹ Is-Semblija may either refer to an assembly of people or a collection point for water; the geomorphology of the area may favour the latter meaning since there is a watercourse at Wied Belliegħa.

¹¹⁰ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 182.

¹¹¹ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 571.

4.4.3 IS-SRUĠ

Ta' Sruġ area consists of a narrow promontory made of Upper Coralline Limestone Formation (Photo 59), with Blue Clay slopes leading to Globigerina Limestone Formation at the valley bed of Wied Ta' Gerxija/Ta' Marsalforn. Lang describes the soils as Fiddien/Nadur series at the top of the ridge and a sequence of Fiddien, San Lawrenz and San Biagio down the slope to correspond with respective underlying parent material. The land use of the area is a continuation of that at Iċ-Ċianti with the sies and impressive heavily terraced fields with trees (Photo 60) leading to a reverting clayey steppe and cultivated fields (Photo 61). As with other agrarian areas, a number of duri were observed. The entire sies and clayey steppe is listed as Proposed Level 4.

According to Serracino Inglott, the word Sruġ derives from the plural of the Maltese word for saddle, sarg;¹¹² this meaning may be linked with the form of the ridge. However, Wettinger argues that the name Sruġ may be connected to the name of a person or family, that is, Sruġ is the collective family name, possibly Sergi or Sergio, or the surname of the landlord.¹¹³

The ridge itself is archaeologically rich and is listed as an archaeological site. The first prehistoric find reported from this area was that discovered in December 1938 during the digging of trenches on the property of a certain priest, Rev. Francesco Mercieca.¹¹⁴ The find consisted primarily of an archaeological deposit lying beneath and extending beyond a low rock shelter. This deposit contained many potsherds described as Neolithic together with fragments of bones of ovicaprids.

¹¹² Serracino Inglott, E., *Il-Miklem Malti, Klabb Kotba Maltin*, 1984, Volum S-U.

¹¹³ Wettinger, G., *Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800*, Malta, 2000, p. 540.

¹¹⁴ *Museum Annual Report 1938-9*, p. IX.

A stretch of land at Triq Sruġ was the object of a small-scale archaeological excavation by archaeologist Malitor, aided by Joseph Attard Tabone, during July and August 1985. The excavation revealed evidence of a prehistoric settlement. More recent investigations revealed evidence of another prehistoric settlement or an extension of the earlier discovered one.

A building development along Triq il-Knisja, off Ta' Sruġ, has recently yielded evidence of a burial site. Ceramics and human bones were recovered. Dating of this burial has not yet been established.

4.5 ZONE V: FROM ĠHAJN XEJBA TO TA' ĠHAJN DAMMA

4.5.1 ĠHAJN XEJBA AND ĠNIEN IMRIK

This area is a valley between the promontories of Is-Sruġ and Ta' Bullara. The geology of the area is Blue Clay and the corresponding soils are Nadur/Fiddien series. The main land use is agrarian with abandoned patches of land rounded by reeds and carob trees (Photo 62). A large freshwater pond occurs in the area (Photo 63). The sites at both flanks of the valley are listed as Protected Ecological Level 4.

The name Xejba is indicative of a surname present in fifteenth century Gozo. In the *Registrum Foundationum Beneficiorum Gaudisii* (Register of the Foundation for the Benefit of Gozitans) there is a certain 'Margarita Xeibe'. One may assume that the origin of the name Xejba is Semitic and was transformed into Xejba in the course of time.¹¹⁵

Ġnien Imrik hints at names of landowners. In Mosta, there is a place with a similar sounding name 'Ġnien Imlit' which Wettinger hints implicitly as a nickname. Wettinger states

¹¹⁵ Wettinger, G., *Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800*, Malta, 2000, p. 192.

that Imrik may derive from the Arabic 'Mirih', meaning 'to be vile, remiss' and thus the place name may refer to a nickname 'Mirih's Garden'.¹¹⁶

4.5.2 GĦAJN DAMMA, TA' KITTINA, TA' XAMAN, IL-WILĠA AND GĦAJN MEDDEW

The area is a continuation of the Wied Ġnien Imrik which leads to an agrarian plain where the three Members of the Globigerina Limestone Formation outcrop. The land is agrarian with a number of *Eucalyptus* tree clusters. The soils in this area are partly Fiddien/San Lawrenz carbonate raws and partly San Biagio xerorendzina, mainly with Alcol series at Ta' Kittina area. At the area known as Ta' GĦajn Meddew, the soils are clayey Fiddien/San Lawrenz series reflecting the underlying Blue Clay slope.

The place name GĦajn Damma is present in a notarial contract by notary L. Apapis dated 6th October 1565 as 'hayn damma, contrata in Insula Gaudisii'.¹¹⁷ Damma denotes the ownership of this land by a woman since Damma was a popular female name in fifteenth and sixteenth century Gozo. Il-Wilġa appears in the archives of notary J. Sabbara in 1496 as 'il huylge, terra'; under the name 'tail guilge beneficium in insula gaudisii' in the archives of notary C. Canchur in 1506 and as 'huelge, clausura in contrata casalis Laman' in the documents of notary J. Bondin in 1522. Wettinger argues that the meaning of such a place name may be attributed to the geomorphology of the place, as the word actually stems from the Arabic word 'walajah' meaning a bend in a valley. Ta' Kittina, Ta' Xaman and GĦajn Meddew may all be names connected to nicknames.

¹¹⁶ Wettinger, G., 'The Place-Names and The Personal Nomenclature of Gozo, 1372-1600' In: R.Y. Ebied and M.J.L. Young (eds), *Oriental Studies*, Leiden, 1980, p. 190.

¹¹⁷ Wettinger, G., *Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800*, Malta, 2000, p. 182.

4.6 ZONE VI: FROM TA' BULLARA TO ĦABEL IL-KNISJA

4.6.1 TA' BULLARA PROMONTORY

Ta' Bullara promontory is similar to Ta' Sruġ, except that it is wider and more developed. Like Ta' Sruġ, the plateau is Upper Coralline Limestone and the corresponding soil is L-Inglin Complex. Most of the area is developed, except for inlying fields which are agrarian with clusters of carob trees. The Blue Clay slopes, flanking the promontory on both sides, are rich in freshwater springs leading to Ġnien Imrik on the western side and Ta' I-ĠHezzien on the eastern side. Scenic views of Marsalforn area may be enjoyed from the elevated position of Ta' Bullara promontory.

Bullara is a female Semitic name and hence the place name is probably that of the landowner.¹¹⁸ In a notarial contract, dated 7th January 1585, by notary J. D. Formosa, Ta' Bullara is referred to as 'tal bullara, territorium in contrata ta marsalfurno, Gaudisii'.¹¹⁹ Thus, Ta' Bullara and possibly adjoining areas used to belong to Marsalforn, while at the time of Aguis de Soldanis formed part of Xagħra.¹²⁰

Triq Ġnien Imrik on this promontory is host to a minor archaeological site in Xagħra. On this small site, one finds Il-Ġebbla ta' Sansuna: a huge and irregularly-shaped Coralline Limestone block supported on one end (Photo 65). It seems likely to be what remains of a surface quarrying activity in the area that may have taken place there, possibly even at prehistoric times. A legend is tied with this boulder: it is identified as one of the building blocks used for the megalithic temples in the locality. The legend holds that there once lived a giantess, named Sansuna, whose physical strength emanated from a diet of broad beans. The megalithic temples

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 72.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Agius de Soldanis, G.P.F., *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, Trans. by Mgr Dun Ġużepp Farrugia, vol. II, Malta, 1953, p. 62.

of Ġgantija are alluded to Sansuna who built the temples from limestone blocks hewn from Ta' Ċenċ.¹²¹

Along the same street, a Coralline Limestone mortar was discovered in September 1946 during street widening works.¹²² On the basis of prehistoric sherds found in association with it, the mortar is probably prehistoric. Il-Ġebbla ta' Sansuna and Triq Ġnien Imrik are listed as archaeologically important.¹²³

4.6.2 TA' PALOX, TA' L-GĦEŻIEN, TAL-MASSAR AND TAL-LEWŻI

This area is characterised by a valley between the plateaux of Ta' Bullara and Ta' Vuljak, known as Ta' l-Għeżien. It consists of Blue Clay and the soils are Nadur/Fiddien series. Similar to Wied Ġnien Imrik, the land use is agrarian with carob trees and giant reeds (Photo 66), but with substantial number of abandoned fields at Tal-Lewżi area.

The areas of Ta' Palox and Tal-Lewżi are adjacent to Ta' l-Għeżien and all take their names from the nickname of landowners. Tal-Massar took its name from the occupation of the landowner. Serracino Inglott defines the word Massar as¹²⁴

raġel li bħala sengħa jieħu ħsieb id-dar, speċjalment fil-kampanja, negozju ta' mrieħel u li jkollu fi ħsiebu wkoll il-ħaddiema l-oħra bdiewa.

However, Wettinger attaches the name Massar to the office of the massaro, an official in charge of the Royal Curia.

¹²¹ Bezzina, J., Forty Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p.10.

¹²² Museum Annual Report 1946-7, p. VI-VII.

¹²³ One of the victims of the Sette Guigno of 1919 used to reside in this street, now a plaque remains (Photo 67).

¹²⁴ Serracino Inglott, E., Il-Miklem Malti, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1979, Volum M-O.

English translation:

a man who as a trade is to take care of the house in the countryside, to trade herds and who has to supervise the other farmer workers.

4.6.3 ĦABEL IL-KNISJA

The area of Ħabel il-Knisja is a continuation of Wied Ta' I-Għeżien. Blue Clay and Upper Globigerina Limestone Member outcrop in this area and the corresponding soils are Fiddien carbonate raw and San Lawrenz carbonate raws. It consists of agrarian land with *Eucalyptus* tree clusters and some viticulture. The name Ħabel may mean 'rope or better still a field-strip'. In fact, Ħabel is a Maltese unit of measurement for lands. The name indicates the land as Church property leased to farmers, a common practice in the Maltese Islands as in most of Europe until the late eighteenth century.

4.7 ZONE VII: TA' VULJAK TO TAL-WERRIER

4.7.1 TA' VULJAK, TAS-SINJURA AND IL-MAQQĦAD

This area is an Upper Coralline Limestone plateau. Lang describes the soils of this area as basically carbonate raw, Nadur series, but inlying fields are described as terra soils, Tas-Sigra series. The area is characterised by agrarian land, largely interspersed by carob and almond trees.

Tal-Vuljak, possibly meaning 'of the coward' and Tas-Sinjura, meaning of the landlady, are probably connected to nicknames or past landowners. In old Maltese, Il-MaqqĦad means a place where somebody sits, however it can also be used as 'the place where water stagnates',¹²⁵ the area being a plain on the Upper Coralline Limestone plateau.

An important cave or gallery was discovered while digging vine holes in fields at Tal-MaqqĦad early in the twentieth century.¹²⁶ The rich corpus of prehistoric material retrieved included pottery, human and animal bones, shells and lithic implements.

¹²⁵ Wettinger, G., Place-Names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800, Malta, 2000, p. 361.

¹²⁶ Museum Annual Report 1913-4, p. 2.

4.7.2 TAL-KANAL, TA' DON ANTON, TA' WENZICI AND IX-XAGĦRA TAL-ĦAWWILA

This area is a continuation of the same plateau with similar characteristics, except that Ix-Xagħra tal-Ħawwila is more developed and hence any soils present are described as L-Inglin Complex due to more intensive anthropogenic interference. Triq Marsalforn, the longest road in Xagħra, has several side alleys and pathways leading to the gardens and fertile fields at Ta' L-Għeżżien valley and to fields at Tal-Kanal.

Tal-Kanal and Ix-Xagħra tal-Ħawwila are names connected to the geography of the area, while Ta' Wenzici indicates the nickname or name of the landowner. Dun Anton, probably refers to Dun Anton D'Avola, a Gozitan priest and later a canon of the Cathedral Chapter in Mdina.¹²⁷

Triq Marsalforn, situated along Ta' Nenus and Tal-Kanal, holds the most beautiful and one of the oldest niches in Xagħra. Dating back to the last decades of the eighteenth century (indulgences granted in 1781), the niche is one of the most beautiful in Gozo. The architecture of the niche seems to be heavily inspired by the Baroque tastes of the period, making it one of the few remaining examples of its kind in Gozo (Photo 70). The niche is known as Ta' I-Indju, the nickname of the person who erected the niche as a vow to Our Lady after he and his family, who were taken captive by Turkish corsairs while tending their fields, were redeemed within two years from slavery.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Dun Anton D'Avola had placed a mark in Gozitan history in that he worked hard to obtain Papal permission for the diocese to create new parishes in eighteenth century Malta (Agius de Soldanis, G.P.F., *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, Trans. by Mgr Dun Ġużepp Farrugia, vol. II, Malta, 1953).

¹²⁸ Bezzina, J., *Forty Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times*, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p.27.

4.8 ZONE VIII: FROM IL-QORTIN TA' GĦAJN DAMMA TO WIED TA' GĦAJN WATAR

4.8.1 IL- QORTIN TA' GĦAJN DAMMA, TA' NENUS, IRDUM TA' SURGU, GĦAJN BARRANI

Il-Qortin ta' GĦajn Damma is an Upper Coralline Limestone plateau which is partly garigue and partly a disused waste tip, currently used as a waste transfer station (Photo 75). Ta' Nenus further south has a number of buildings along Triq Marsalforn. Occurring also in the area is a highly disturbed garigue. Soils are described by Lang as terra Xaghra series at Il-Qortin ta' GĦajn Damma and L-Inglin Complex at Tal-Gabdol area. The plateau hosts remnants of the Knights' Tower (Photo 76) which was demolished by the British authorities in the early twentieth century as it obstructed their communication system. The same plateau has also been recently claimed to have some megalithic remains which, however, require further study. Although part of this area served as a waste dump in the recent past, it may hold cultural features, yet undetected, and thus, in view of this potential both the plateau and ridge should be given their due attention. Thus, Il-Qortin ta' GĦajn Damma and Tal-Gabdol areas are listed as an area of archaeological importance. The garigue at Il-Qortin ta' GĦajn Damma is listed as Proposed Ecological Level of 2 or higher while the Tal-Gabdol area is listed as Proposed Ecological Level of 3.

The Rdm Ta' Kililu, Rdm Ta' Surgu and GĦajn Barrani are coastal Blue Clay slopes with Globigerina Limestone Formation outcropping at the littoral zone (Photos 77 and 78). The slopes are clayey steppes with self-seeding sulla (*Hedysarum coronarium*), cape sorrel (*Oxalis pes-caprae*) and thistles, with a number of *Eucalyptus* tree clusters. Soils are described as Rdm Sequence.

The area is of high landscape value with excellent scenic view points and ornithological havens. In fact, they are scheduled as Areas of High Landscape Value. The rdm are listed as

Proposed Ecological Level of 2 or higher.¹²⁹ The entire area between II-Qortin ta' GĦajn Damma and II-Pergla is listed as a Protected Area.¹³⁰ The II-Qortin ta' GĦajn Damma, rdum and part of Tal-Gabdol area is part of the Natura 2000 Special Area of Conservation.¹³¹

The name Surgu may be a corruption of the Maltese word *sogru* meaning danger or dangerous, but could also be a case similar to that of *is-Sruġ* (Section 4.4.3). The coast below II-Qortin ta' GĦajn Damma is reputed to have been the embarkation place of the French troops when they invaded Gozo in 1798. Three French soldiers, allegedly killed during the invading operation, are said to be buried there. Hence, the probable origin of its place name, *barrani* meaning foreign.¹³² Serracino Inglott gives two meanings to the word *Gabdol* – the Maltese name of two local species of pelagic fish and an expert navigator, 'navigatur espert'.¹³³ The latter version is more likely since the article 'tal-' or 'ta'' refers to a nickname of past landowners.

¹²⁹ As per Government Gazette 935 of 7th November 2006, the freshwater springs of the area were assigned as Level 1 Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance while the slopes at II-Qortin Ta' GĦajn Damma were scheduled as Level 2 Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance. The Tal-Gabdol area is given a protection level of 3 to act as a buffer zone.

¹³⁰ Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

¹³¹ Natura 2000 is a network of protected areas at the European Union level. Such sites are special areas of conservation having important habitats and species, in accordance with the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds. A Natura 2000 site is thus an area that merits special management and conservation/protection measures as a guarantee for its survival. [A Natura 2000 site is referred to as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) if it merits special conservation measures and is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) when the site is known to be particularly important for the conservation of wild bird species.]

¹³² Although one may also maintain that the place name is due to the cliffs being the northernmost point of Xagħra, furthest from the village core.

¹³³ The fish are *Physter macrocephalus* and *Cetorhinus maximus* (Serracino Inglott, E., II-Miklem Malti, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1976, Volum Ġ-H).

4.8.2 IL-PERGLA

Wied il-Pergla is a relatively small, but fertile valley. Geologically, the valley is entirely Blue Clay. Soils are described by Lang as Rdm sequence along the coastal area and the alluvial xerorendzina soil, Alcol series at the mouth of the valley. Further inland, soils are described as Nadur series. The presence of a rich supply of freshwater is attested by the presence of giant reeds. The fertile soils are exploited by farmers along most of the valley (Photos 81 and 82). The use of reeds as windbreakers could be noted. The valley sides are used as citrus groves. The trees at Il-Pergla are a high maquis consisting of carob, olive (*Olea europea*)¹³⁴ and Aleppo pine (*Pinus halapensis*)¹³⁵ (Photo 80). The area has a high landscape value with panoramic viewpoints (Photo 79).

Legend runs that once, Dragut, the feared Turkish corsair, was steering along the coast and became thirsty. On spotting a vineyard in the limits of Il-Pergla, he sent a slave who managed to cut a bunch of grapes, but since he was spotted by one of the peasants there, he cut some vine leaves in haste. Since the vine is considered sacred to Islam, Dragut killed the slave at the site of this huge boulder at Għajn Barrani, still known to this date as Il-Ġebbla ta' Dragut, the boulder of Dragut.¹³⁶

The name Il-Pergla probably originates from the Latin pergola meaning vine orchard or kannizzata, that is a wooden trelliswork for climbing plants.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Listed as a protected tree as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

¹³⁵ Listed as a strictly protected tree as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

¹³⁶ Bezzina, J., Forty Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p.11.

¹³⁷ Serracino Inglott, E., Il-Miklem Malti, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1981, Volum P-R.

The mouth of the valley all the way to the coast is listed as Proposed Ecological Level 2 or higher and forms part of the Natura 2000 network as a Special Area of Conservation. Further inland the protection listing is 3. Wied il-Pergla is considered as a Category A valley.¹³⁸

4.8.3 RDUM TAS-SEKKEK, RDUM TAX-XAGĦRA AND FUQ IL-PERGLA AND TA' KAĊĊATURİ

Ta' Kaċċaturi and Fuq il-Pergla are a continuation of the Tas-Sinjura/II-Magħqad Upper Coralline Limestone plateau, leading to steep Upper Coralline Limestone cliffs which drop to the Blue Clay in turn ending in Globigerina Limestone Formation at the littoral level. Soils are described as Rdm sequence at the cliffs/clay slopes. Fuq il-Pergla is partly Nadur series at the Wied il-Pergla side and partly L-Inglin complex enclosing Tax-Xagħra series at the Ta' Kaċċaturi area, towards the cliffs.

Ta' Kaċċaturi and Fuq il-Pergla areas are mostly agrarian land with giant reeds and tree clusters of almond and carob trees with an odd *Eucalyptus* tree cluster for hunting. As one progresses towards the cliffs, one encounters a higher incidence of karstic steppe. As one approaches the Tal-Biżiel area further east, the land becomes dominated by carob/almond trees reaching quasi-maquis levels. The Rdm tas-Sekkek and Rdm tax-Xagħra are majestic cliffs leading to agrarian land and clayey steppe with some *Eucalyptus* tree clusters, betraying the ornithological significance of the area (Photo 84). Panoramic views may be enjoyed from these points (Photo 85).

The rdm have a proposed ecological listing of level 2 or higher and forms part of the Natura 2000 network and the plateau has a proposed listing of 3. The area at Ta' Kaċċaturi/ Magħqad is highlighted as an area of archaeological significance.

¹³⁸ Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Gozo & Comino Local Plan, July 2006, Map 13.2.

The word Sekkek may have two meanings – the verb to plough and the action of loitering around in search of information.¹³⁹ The latter meaning may hold more due to the strategic importance of the range of cliffs overlooking Ramla Bay. Tal-Geddum may either be derived from a nickname or from the geomorphological appearance of the site.

4.8.4 TAL-BIŻIEL, TA' GĦAJN QAMAR, TAL-MARIN AND WIED GĦAJN WATAR

Tal-Biżiel area is a small promontory of Upper Coralline Limestone, overlooking Ramla Bay and flanked by Blue Clay slopes of Rđum tal-Marin towards the north east and Tal-Marin towards the south leading to Wied Ta' GĦajn Watar. Lang described soils at Tal-Biżiel area as the fertile Xagħra series, Rđum sequence at Rđum tal-Marin and Tal-Marin is described as partly Fiddien series and partly San Biagio series, reflecting the change in geology to Globigerina Limestone Formation at the Wied ir-Ramla valley bed.

Tal-Biżiel partly consists of a continuation of the carob/almond quasi-maquis of Ta' Kaċċaturi area and partly agrarian land. At points, garigue ecosystems could be observed. The Rđum tal-Marin are a continuation of the Rđum tax-Xagħra, but with clayey slopes at sharper gradients. The Ta' Marin area is characterised by quasi-maquis ecosystem consisting of carobs and almond trees at the upper levels of the clay slope, leading to agrarian land, dotted with *Eucalyptus* tree clusters. Wied GĦajn Watar and Il-Bajjada are agrarian lands with important viticulture at Il-Bajjada.

At Tal-Biżiel promontory, there is Calypso Cave (Photo 88), the legendary cave where the mythological nymph Calypso is said

¹³⁹ Serracino Inglott, E., Il-Miklem Malti, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1984, Volum S-U.

to have dwelt and looked after Odysseus during his sojourn on the island.¹⁴⁰

The Rđum tal-Marin and part of the Tal-Biżiel promontory are proposed to be ecologically listed at level 2 or higher while the rest of the area is listed at level 3. Also, the Rđum tal-Marin form part of the Natura 2000 network. Tal-Biżiel promontory is listed as an area of archaeological importance.

Għajn Watar is most probably named after a whip-like instrument traditionally used for cotton processing,¹⁴¹ implying a connection with the cotton industry, more specifically in situ processing of the cotton buds, prior transport to residential units uphill.

Il-Bajjada may either have pedological connections, the area being San Biagio, in Maltese known as Tal-Bajda or may be a reference to the landowner's nickname, the term meaning plasterers.

4.8.5 RAMLA BAY

Ramla Bay provides one of the most beautiful beaches in the Maltese islands (Photo 89). Apart from its natural beauty, it hosts a number of natural habitats and a number of equally important cultural features most of which survive in ruins.

Ir-Ramla is one of the last sand dunes in the Maltese Islands with a thriving dune ecosystem. Important populations of dune flora such as sand restharrow (*Ononis variegata*), sea spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) and *Echinophora spinosa* are found

¹⁴⁰ Gozo is usually identified by various scholars as the island mentioned by Homer in the Fifth book of 'The Odyssey' in connection with this story. The same story is narrated by Virgil in 'The Aeneid' where Odysseus appears under the name of Ulysses.

¹⁴¹ Serracino Inglott, E., Il-Miklem Malti, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1989, Volum W-Ż.

għamla ta' nerv rġiq u niexef mgħamul mill-musrana ta' l-
animal li jservi għad-daqq tal-maħluġ biex isir it-tajjar

here,¹⁴² with important dune invertebrates such as the earwig (*Labidura riparia*).¹⁴³ More inland, common reeds (*Phragmites australis*) give way to giant reeds. Minor clusters of *Tamarix* spp.¹⁴⁴ occur in the area. A seasonal marsh forms in the middle of the beach supporting a wetland community of *Phragmites* sp. and *Bolboschoenus* sp. (Photo 90).

Ir-Ramla bears important cultural features, the earliest known are the remains of a Roman villa excavated in 1910, but subsequently re-buried under the sand for conservation reasons.¹⁴⁵ The Roman villa lies at the foot of an eighteenth century redoubt, now also in ruins. These remains need further study in view of any possible associations with related yet undetected features.

Other eighteenth century remains are those belonging to another redoubt in the middle of the beach, a fougasse on the Nadur side of the bay and a stone wall submerged below the sea-water surface and running along the whole length of the bay. The latter was intentionally built to hinder access of alien vessels, particularly those involved in piracy or coastal incursions to the beach. A statue dedicated to Our Lady of Hope was setup as a vow in the late nineteenth century.¹⁴⁶

Ir-Ramla forms part of the Natura 2000 network as a Special Area of Conservation of International Importance, with a scale of ecological scheduling from 1 to 3. Moreover, the area is listed as an area of archaeological importance.

¹⁴² These have a Red Data Book status of locally endangered and restricted distribution in the Maltese Islands (P.J. Schembri and J. Sultana (eds) Red Data Book for the Maltese Islands, Malta, 1989, p.19, 22). Their distribution is confined to Ir-Ramla.

¹⁴³ Schembri, P.J. et al, Localities with Conservation Value in the Maltese Islands, 1987, p.17.

¹⁴⁴ Listed as a strictly protected tree as per Legal Notice 12 of 2001 (Trees and Woodlands (Protection) Regulations).

¹⁴⁵ Museum Annual Report 1910-1, p. XI-XII.

¹⁴⁶ Bezzina, J., Forty More Legends from Gozo: stories of bygone times, Gaulitana 9, Malta, 1997, p.38.

4.9 ZONE IX: TA' GAJDORU TO ĠNIEN XIBLA

4.9.1 ĠHAJN QAMAR, TA' GAJDORU, TA' PACE AND TAL- WERRIER

The area is a Blue clay slope with Nadur series at the upper levels of the slope where the land largely consists of quasi-maquis carob/almond trees with giant reeds giving way to Fiddien series where the land becomes fully agrarian with the odd *Eucalyptus* tree cluster for hunting purposes (Photos 95 and 96). The area is fully agrarian.

Tal-Werrier and Ta' Pace are probably respectively connected to a nickname and to a surname of past landowners. Ta' Gajdoru derives from the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Joys, in Latin, Gaudiorum, that once stood in the area.¹⁴⁷

The upper slopes of the area are listed as proposed ecological level 2 or higher and the lower slopes are listed as level 3.

4.9.2 L-IXPRUN, IĊ-ĊIRKU, TA' FELLIES AND WIED IR-RAMLA

The land leading to Wied ir-Ramla valley bed changes from Blue Clay to Globigerina Limestone Formation. This change in geology is reflected in the soil description as Fiddien series at Ta' Gajdoru area changes to San Lawrenz series and eventually to San Biagio towards the valley bed.

The land use is fully agrarian, with a marked investment in vine growing at L-Ixprun/Il-Bajjada area. Unlike other agrarian areas at Xagħra, protected cropping was observed in this area, probably due to the higher percentage of sand in the soil texture of the area. Unfortunately, the watercourse at Wied Ir-Ramla is neglected and littered with rubbish (Photo 91). Bridges and access points to fields were noted to be poorly designed and non-contextually sensitive (Photos 92 and 93). Traditional rubble walls in the area need immediate attention (Photo 94).

¹⁴⁷ Bezzina, J., Xagħra: the Village of the Goddess and the Madonna, Gaulitana 21, Malta, 2001, p. 9.

The lower slopes and valley beds of Wied ta' Fellis and Wied ir-Ramla are listed as proposed ecological level 3.

The name Iċ-Ċirku reflects the topography of the area which forms a circular depression, reminiscent of Greek theatres. Again, Ta' Fellis may refer to a nickname of the landowner.

4.9.3 TA' LAGAN, ĠNIEN XIBLA AND GĦAJN HOŻNA

Ta' Lagan, Ta' GĦajn Hożna and Ġnien Xibla areas are Blue Clay slopes flanking a sharp sies and ending in Globigerina Limestone Formation at Taħt ix-Xagħra. The soil descriptions of this area comprise a spectrum from Nadur at Ta' Lagan to Fiddien to San Lawrenz series, ending with San Biagio at Taħt ix-Xagħra.

At Ta' Lagan and at Ta' GĦajn Hożna, the land use consists largely of carobs, almond trees, giant reeds and citrus orchards (Photo 101), reflecting the presence of freshwater springs (Photos 98 to 100). This leads to agrarian land with some vine growing and the odd *Eucalyptus* tree clusters at Ta' GĦajn Hożna and Ġnien Xibla.

As in most of the sies flanking the entire plateau of Xagħra, natural and man-made caves abound in this area (Photo 97). Some of these have their entrances screened by rubble walls to provide shelter either to troglodytes or animals. Prehistoric cave dwelling is not excluded or else may have been used for burial purposes. Subsequent uses have obliterated much of the evidence pertaining to earlier periods.

Ta' GĦajn Hożna is listed as proposed ecological level 2 or higher and Ġnien Xibla and Taħt ix-Xagħra are listed as level 3.

According to Serracino Inglott, Ġnien ix-Xibla means 'the garden of the lioncel', a lioncel being a diminutive of lion.

5.0 RECOMMENDED INITIATIVES

A coordinated assessment of the consultation process, field surveys and research was undertaken to develop socio-cultural sensitive initiatives listed below. These initiatives are compatible with the spirit of place and grounded in the perceptions and expectations of the locals, the medium through which past heritage is conveyed to future generations.

The various initiatives identified are classified in terms of: social, education, access for all, heritage, environmental health, embellishment, economic, infrastructure and administration which are listed in Table 5. The initiatives are prioritised as follows: short term, medium term, long term and ongoing. Provided that financial resources are available, short term initiatives are projected to be completed with one calendar year whilst medium and long term initiatives are projected for the current and later legislatures respectively.¹⁴⁸

Table 5: Socio-cultural initiatives for the locality of Xagħra: a summary

<i>Type of Initiative</i>	<i>No. of Initiatives</i>
Social initiatives	11
Educational initiatives	4
Initiatives for Persons with Special Needs	6
Heritage initiatives	13
Environmental Health Initiatives	2
Embellishment Initiatives	10
Economic Initiatives	9
Infrastructural Initiatives	20
Administrative Initiatives	8
<i>Total</i>	<i>83</i>

¹⁴⁸ Possibilities of external funding, in conjunction with local financing, should be exploited for their implementation.

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Social Initiatives						
1.	Preparatory courses for marriage	Short term	Community workers	Central Government	Social benefits	Long-term analysis of the reasons for failed marriages is needed in order to better design such courses. The Church has been organising preparatory courses for a number of years and yet the number of failed marriages is on the increase; hence the need for such an analysis
2.	Educational campaign against marriages within the same community	Short to medium term	Community workers	Local Council, Central Government	Health benefits	Such a campaign should encourage a greater mix with communities of other localities
3.	Enforcement regarding trafficking of substance abuse	Ongoing	Malta Police, NGOs, Local Council	Central Government	Health and social benefits	This initiative has to be combined with an ongoing, effective educational campaign against substance abuse
4.	Greater cooperation between communities, especially the youth, from various zones of the village	Short term	Community workers	Local Council, Central Government	Social benefits	Community workers need to be qualified and experienced in community development; often, ideas for further work develop as the project is under way. A primary aim should be greater synergy between the various zones of the village
5.	Better coordination of local associations	Short term	Community workers	Parish Church, Local Council	Social benefits	Unnecessary competition between associations within the community is undesirable. A possible initiative would be for the various associations to affiliate in common organizations. Better coordination for village events, including the village festa, ensures a better result

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Social Initiatives (cont.)						
6.	Improve playing field near Ġgantija	Short term	Local Council	NGOs including Playing Field Association	Social benefits and public safety	The fourth Xaghra Local Council commenced with the refurbishment of the playground and applied for partial funding from Malta Environment and Planning Authority
7.	Set up more decentralised playing fields	Medium term	Local Council	NGOs including Playing Field Association	Social benefits	Participants highlighted the need for playing fields outside village core
8.	Enlarge Parish Church parvis (iz-zuntier) to cater for village activities	Medium term	Parish Church	Local Council, Stakeholders	Social benefits	A better, less expensive solution is to pedestrianise the pjazza for the evenings, hence increasing social interaction
9.	Establish well designed sports facilities, such as football ground, gymnasium, indoor pool	Medium term	Local Council	Central Government, Sports Associations	Health and social benefits	Giving priority to the well being of residents is a long term investment with significant positive externalities. Flexibility in use should be introduced: a football pitch may be used, say as a jogging track during mornings
10.	Organise sports events with other localities in the Maltese Islands	Ongoing	Local Council	Sports Associations	Health and social benefits	Greater interaction with persons outside the village renders positive results
11.	Set up neighbourhood watch	Short term	Local Council	Malta Police	Social and health benefits	To improve security for the community, ranging from safety in homes for the elderly to drug trafficking, security cameras and lights should be considered. Having a police station open at all times certainly aids in preventing crime

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Educational Initiatives						
12.	Education in parenting skills	On going	Local Council, Parish Church	Central Government	Social benefits	Education in applied parenting skills, relating say to more quality time with children and teaching skills on principles of religion
13.	Training seminars on various topics of interest to young people	Short term	Local Council, Parish Church	Local Council/Central Government/interested stakeholders	Social benefits	Attendance from various zones of the village should encourage better integration of residents from the different zones
14.	Establishment of a drama group	Short term	Local Council, Stakeholders	Drama Unit within Education Division	Psycho-social benefits Increases level of cultural tourism	Drama encourages interpersonal interaction and increases the personal awareness of inner strengths and dispositions
15.	Set up a public lending library ¹⁴⁹	Short to medium term	Local Council	Central government	Educational benefits	The readership of a community is widened; educational facilities, including internet services, will facilitate and ensure access of all even to sectors of the public who fail short of having such a facility at home

¹⁴⁹ This was established and officially inaugurated on 3rd March 2007.

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Initiatives for Persons with Special Needs						
16.	Village activities to cater for persons with special needs	Ongoing	Local Council, Parish Church, event organizers	NGOs, community workers	Increased sense of well being and belonging	Community-level initiatives that involve persons with special needs should be tailored with the individual in mind. Various inclusive activities can be organized and these involve participation in sports, dance and drama and even a simple walk through the countryside
17.	Promote and enforce access for all in public spaces and activities, including playing fields	Ongoing	Local Council, Parish Church, event organizers	NGOs, community workers	Increased sense of well being and belonging	Increased communal awareness on the specific requirements of persons with special needs and incorporating same into the design of public spaces will have positive social benefits
18.	Ad hoc activities for the elderly or other persons with special needs	Ongoing	Local Council, Parish Church, event organizers	n/a	Psycho-social benefits	The involvement of the elderly in the organisation of such events has strong empowerment effects
19.	Establishment of a residential home for the elderly	Medium term	Central Government	Parish Church, Local Council, interested stakeholders	Psychological benefits to individuals with wider social benefits	The residential home should cater for those elderly who are unable to lead an independent life, either for a long or short term
20.	Establishment of a regular service of a community nurse to attend to geriatric needs in the community	Medium term	Central Government	Local Council	Health benefits to individuals	The service of a community nurse is non-existent in Xaghra. The service should ensure timely and regular preventive care for the elderly

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Initiatives for Persons with Special Needs (cont.)						
21.	Braille version of all Local Council and heritage site notices	Short term	Local Council	NGOs	Increased sense of belonging	Increased communal awareness by persons with special needs has positive social benefits
Heritage Initiatives						
22.	Restoration of cultural and natural heritage, for example, rubble walls, and enforcement against their vandalism	Ongoing	Local Council	Environmental wardens, NGOs	Benefits to aesthetics, cultural and natural heritage	Conservation and restoration of cultural and natural heritage enriches a society and renews the identity of the place
23.	Consideration given to conservation issues when issuing development planning permits	Ongoing	Malta Environment and Planning Authority	NGOs	Benefits to cultural and natural heritage	Due sensitivity should be shown when issuing full development planning permits to sites and/or properties of conservation value
24.	Restore Santa Verna temple, Ġebbla ta' Sansuna ¹⁵⁰ and Nuffara remains	Medium term	Local Council	Heritage Malta	Cultural heritage and economic benefits	Well maintained cultural heritage sites are a tourist attraction. The present landscape should be restored and conserved, both for its cultural and ecological values

¹⁵⁰ Fourth Xagħra Local Council had undertaken restoration works on site of Ġebbla ta' Sansuna

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Heritage Initiatives (cont.)						
25.	Restoration work at Ġgantija temples and create a well designed entrance gate, sensitive to cultural environ ¹⁵¹	Medium term	Heritage Malta	Local Council	Cultural heritage and economic benefits Health and safety issues	Well maintained cultural heritage sites are a tourist attraction and ensure that health and safety measures are taken on board. Ġgantija temples were noted to be a source of pride for Xaghra residents. Many participants want restoration works to be completed as soon as possible and the entrance changed to a better design
26.	Restore and conserve Plague cemetery and hospital and convert sites and surrounding environs into a cultural interpretation facility	Medium term	Local Council	Heritage Malta	Cultural heritage and economic benefits	Well maintained cultural heritage sites are a tourist attraction. The interpretation facility should provide a permanent exhibition for cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, such as crafts. Through the proposed interpretation facility, initiatives such as the Xaghra archaeological and historical experience shall be implemented
27.	Setting up a permanent exhibition of artefacts originating from sites of archaeological interest	Medium term	Heritage Malta	Central Government	Social, cultural heritage and economic benefits	A number of participants expressed their concern over the loss of such artefacts and they showed interest in their return to their source. This exhibition can be housed within the proposed cultural interpretation facility at Għajn Lukin

¹⁵¹ Work has already commenced on the implementation of this initiative

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Heritage Initiatives (cont.)						
28.	Restoration of features of cultural heritage such as bakeries, niches, Second World War shelters and others	Long term	Local Council	Heritage Malta	Cultural heritage and economic benefits	Xaghra has a legacy of cultural features and their conservation has tangible externalities
29.	Improve the cultural calendar for Xaghra	Short term	Local Council	NGOs	Social, cultural and economic benefits	Additional cultural events to current calendar should be introduced in the shoulder months to attract more socialising and commerce ¹⁵²
30.	Protection of trees and the areas of giant reeds as natural heritage	Short term	Local Council	Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Environmental wardens	Natural heritage and economic benefits	Xaghra still has long stretches of quasi-maquis and reed ecosystems; their conservation has significant tangible externalities such as eco-tourism since they form an important part of the Mediterranean landscape
31.	Protection and conservation of sites of ecological importance, such as cliffs, In-Nuffara, Ir-Ramla and the watercourses	Short term	Local Council	Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Environmental wardens	Natural heritage, educational and economic benefits	Għajn Barrani area was scheduled in November 2006 and Ir-Ramla area forms part of the Natura 2000 network. Xaghra has other natural assets which need attention. Protection of such sites should be inclusive. The geomorphological diversity present lends an interesting opportunity for eco-tourism. The involvement of the public is an educational and empowerment exercise

¹⁵² Initiatives such as Ġgantija Alive should form part of this calendar.

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Heritage Initiatives (cont.)						
32.	Improve soft landscaping of the locality. Although no oak, bay laurel or sandarac gum trees were encountered during ground surveys, they are good arboreal species to be introduced to a maquis context	Short to medium term	Local Council	Malta Environment and Planning Authority	Natural heritage, psychological and health benefits	<p>Converging evidence suggests that health and emotional stability of a given community may be alienated by poorly designed, biologically artificial soft landscaping, where one is no longer able to design rural structures in convergence with their surroundings, but rather exploit the land for speculation and economic returns.</p> <p>Given that Xaghra, as a locality, is still highly rural, completely surrounded with green verges and given that these green verges are pedologically and hydrologically rich, they are priceless assets which are unfortunately not being appreciated enough, with development planning permits being issued even in sensitive sites such as valley sides and promontories, further alienating residents from their natural surroundings</p>
33.	Remove invasive species such as <i>Ricinus communis</i> or soil damaging species such as <i>Eucalyptus</i> sp. and plant a mix of Mediterranean species such as carob, almond, olive, pine, ash, elm, white poplar, bay laurel, sandarac gum tree and oak trees	Medium term	Local Council	Malta Environment and Planning Authority	Natural heritage benefits	<p>The natural landscape at Xaghra is characterised by quasi-maquis tree clusters, karstic garigue and steppe, clayey steppe, coastal cliffs and the sandy beach of Ir-Ramla. These are synchronised with the agrarian areas. Preserving and augmenting the sense of semi-wildness of the area has many intangible benefits; trying to tame with urban and exotic species kills the landscape.</p> <p>Man is genetically programmed to perform best in natural surroundings with clean air and varied green landscape. Thus, nature is no longer a luxury to be made available only if possible, but becomes part of a community's inherent indispensable need</p>

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Heritage Initiatives (cont.)						
34.	Embellishment of all the watercourses that occur at Xaghra by removing coarse debris, enforce against flytipping and restore retaining walls	Short term	Local Council	Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Environmental wardens	Natural heritage and economic benefits	Watercourses are a seriously threatened ecosystems in the Maltese Islands and their management ensures that they become important assets, both for aesthetics and eco-tourism
Environmental Health Initiatives						
35.	Relocate petrol station in pjazza	Medium term	Malta Environment and Planning Authority	Local Council	Environmental health benefits	Petrol station should be relocated to outside development zone
36.	Relocate small industries and service providers causing bad neighbourliness and nuisance	Medium term	Central Government	Malta Environment and Planning Authority	Socio-economic and environmental health benefits	Small industries and service providers which cause nuisance, such as mechanics and sprayers, need to be relocated to industrial zones
Embellishment Initiatives						
37.	Embellishment of Pjazza I-Vittorja	Medium term	Central Government	Local Council	Social, economic, touristic benefits	For the Xaghra, Pjazza I-Vittorja is a main focus of the locality and the socio-geographical fulcrum of same. Pedestrianisation (evenings only) will enhance the pjazza spirit and allied activities

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Embellishment Initiatives (cont.)						
38.	Set up appropriately designed street furniture such as wooden benches and lamp posts in pjazez and other key locations	Short term	Local Council	n/a	Social and aesthetic benefits	This initiative should increase social interaction while improving the overall image of Xaghra. The present benches in the main pjazza are not functional and are a safety hazard to their users due to their close proximity to the parking bays
39.	Clearing up of illegally dumped rubbish, scrapped vehicles and builders' rubble	Medium term	Local Council	Central Government	Prevention of secondary dumping Aesthetic and psycho-social benefits	Illegally dumped waste has serious negative public health effects, due to increase in disease vectors, and negative psychological effects due to increased sense of neglect
40.	Enforcement of illegal dumping	Short term	Local Council	Central Government	Prevention of secondary dumping	Although enforcement is an added cost to the Local Council, it has positive externalities worth investing in, such as more pleasing surroundings and better maintenance efforts
41.	Restoration of disturbed natural sites and disused quarries, for example to recreational areas	Medium term	Central Government	Local Council	Aesthetic and psycho-social benefits	Mitigating impacts of derelict sites improves not only the visual amenity of a given landscape, but gives inherent positive sense of belonging to a spirit of a place rooted in landscape archaeology

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Embellishment Initiatives (cont.)						
42.	Set up more waste bins and skips ¹⁵³	Short term	Local Council	WasteServ Malta Ltd	Environmental health and other environmental benefits	Inconvenience to neighbouring residents should be minimised when planning their location
43.	Set up more public conveniences	Medium term	Local Council	n/a	Social and health benefits	Their location should be central but unobtrusive. Their design should cater for persons with special needs
44.	Embellish public spaces; set up well designed public gardens, camping areas, and other recreational spaces	Medium to long term	Local Council	n/a	Social and health benefits	Recreation has significant health and psychological benefits with significant economic externalities
45.	Improve the design of field access routes	Medium to long term	Central Government	Local Council	Aesthetic and economic benefits	Contextually designed access routes to fields enhances the aesthetics of an area, increasing the sense of culture, which in turn renders significant economic externalities. Traditional access routes are case studies and a source of inspiration to contextually sensitive design
46.	Design walkways in a contextually sensitive manner	Medium term	Local Council	n/a	Social and economic benefits	This initiative is the infrastructural basis which complements the initiative on establishing a walkthrough of Xaghra

¹⁵³ In Xaghra, there are three bring-in sites which are sufficient for the locality (correspondence of WasteServ Malta Ltd, dated 27 January 2006 and 3 November 2006).

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Economic Initiatives						
47.	Reviving interest in farming activity amongst youths	Medium term	Central Government	Local Council	Social and environmental benefits	Although current economics lowers the demand for agrarian activity, the loss of agrarian land due to labour shortage is undesirable, with potentially negative effects on the natural areas
48.	Promote agri-tourism in Xaghra	Long term	Central Government	Local Council	Economic benefits	The agro-touristic potential of Xaghra should be studied and implemented, thus encouraging rural regeneration; the traditional aspect of agriculture still thrives which is an aspect that should not be underestimated
49.	Promote viticulture in the area	Medium term	Central Government	Local Council	Economic benefits	Central government has identified viticulture and olive-growing as the two main agrarian investments for the Maltese Islands. Both are being economically exploited at Xaghra and the promotion of these two industries will aid in securing a better future for agrarian activity in the village
50.	Promotion and training of people in the traditional trades, including carpentry, stone-masonry and metal-forging	Medium term	Central Government	MCAST, Malta Enterprise or other interested stakeholders	Cultural benefits with possible economic benefits	Current economics precludes and discourages traditional skills. Such skills shall be encouraged and, if perished, revived for posterity with potential economic benefits through the establishment of a cottage industry, itself a tourist attraction.

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Economic Initiatives (cont.)						
51.	Set up Project 6000-7000: an audio-visual presentation going back into 6000 years of Gozo history	Medium term	Private enterprise	Local Council, Heritage Malta	Economic benefits and more awareness of heritage and its potential	The Local Council may act as a promoter of the idea for private stakeholders to invest in
52.	Set up a tourist information office at Xaghra	Medium term	Malta Tourism Authority	Local Council	Economic benefits	A tourist information office at Xaghra, one of the richest localities in Gozo, with respect to cultural heritage is a necessity
53.	Establish professionally organised guided walking tours around Xaghra	Short term	Local Council, Malta Tourism Authority	Malta Ramblers Association	Economic and health benefits	The best way to experience the natural and cultural heritage wealth of Xaghra is to walk around it
54.	Publish a guidebook (including a map of important sites) on the cultural and natural heritage of Xaghra	Short term	Local Council	n/a	Economic and heritage benefits	The walkthroughs and guidebooks form an interesting package that can be sold to Xaghra residents and tourists, local and foreign
55.	English version of activities with touristic potential, such as the procession of St Anthony Abbot, the Kumittiva and Ġgantija Festival	Short term	Local Council, NGOs, Parish Church	Malta Tourism Authority	Economic benefits	These publications, possibly made available on the website of the Local Council, could form part of the tourist package offered. They could also be affixed to key notice boards for the benefit of foreign residents

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Infrastructural Initiatives						
56.	Establish parking bays for MCAST students	Medium term	Local Council	MCAST	Social benefits	A socio-economic and traffic impact assessment should be carried out prior carrying out this initiative
57.	Set up proper parking bays at Ta' Stellini area, near Ta' Kola windmill	Short term	Local Council	n/a	Social and public safety benefits	A socio-economic and traffic impact assessment should be carried out prior carrying out this initiative
58.	Establish a better balance between pedestrianised, parking and commercial spaces in pjazza	Medium term	Local Council	Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Awtorita` dwar it-Trasport	Social and public safety benefits	A socio-economic and traffic impact assessment should be carried out prior carrying out this initiative. The pjazza is a central thoroughfare in Xaghra and hence traffic management is a priority
59.	Set up timed parking zones near commercial banks at pjazza	Short term	Local Council, Central government	Commercial banks	Social benefits	Enforcement is a priority for this initiative to be successful. Timed parking spaces may be extended to persons wishing to carry out a quick shopping errand at pjazza
60.	Set up bus stops at key locations, such as in vicinity of Calypso Cave, at Triq Marsalforn and near cemetery	Short term	Public Transport Authority	Local Council	Social and cultural heritage benefits	The Public Transport Authority should cater for demands placed by its clientele
61.	Establishment of a bus route to cater for decentralised zones of the village	Medium term	Local Council	Public Transport Authority	Social benefits	Costs may have to be borne by the Local Council or charge of using the service is increased to make it viable

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Infrastructural Initiatives (cont.)						
62.	Increase frequency of bus transits of Rabat-Xagħra	Medium term	Public Transport Authority	n/a	Social benefits	A cost-benefit analysis may have to be carried out, however, the involvement of residents must be included
63.	Provision of public transport to and from Ramla and Marsalforn in the mornings and afternoons during summer months	Short term	Public Transport Authority	Local Council	Social benefits	This initiative mobilises locals including persons with special needs and the youth to two important recreational sites
64.	Provision of a bus-route from Xagħra to Mġarr Harbour, on Monday mornings and on Thursday and Friday evenings ¹⁵⁴	Short term	Public Transport Authority	n/a	Social benefits	This initiative may have economic benefits, rendering mainland Malta a more attractive source of employment
65.	Set up signposts at key locations	Short term	Local Council	Awtorita` dwar it-Trasport	Social and economic benefits	An effective infrastructure has economic externalities; for example, for the walkthrough guide to be effective, one needs to find oneself around easily. Appropriately designed signposts of commercial outlets help their economic viability

¹⁵⁴ This service was recently suspended due to low demand; smaller vehicles may help viability of this initiative.

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Infrastructural Initiatives (cont.)						
66.	Set up a stop sign between Triq it-Tigrija and Għajn Qamar ¹⁵⁵	Short term	Local Council	Awtorita` dwar it-Trasport	Social and public safety benefits	Given the importance of this initiative and the minimal input to implement it, its immediate execution is commended
67.	Set up traffic calming measures at both ends of Vjal 8 ^{ta} Settembru and similar roads in the village core	Short term	Local Council	Awtorita` dwar it-Trasport	Social and public safety benefits	Effective calming measures, such as lying policemen, should be used in zones close to community buildings
68.	Planned asphaltting of roads, such as Triq ir-Ramla, Vjal 8 ^{ta} Settembru, Triq Marsalforn and Triq is-Sellun	Medium term	Local Council	Central Government	Social and public safety benefits	A priority list of roads that need asphaltting is recommended. Asphaltting gives a clean image to the locality, with economic externalities
69.	Insertion of zebra crossings at key locations ¹⁵⁶	Short term	Local Council	Awtorita` dwar it-Trasport	Social and public safety benefits	Zebra crossings can be an important safety measure for persons with special needs. The use of visual and/or acoustic aids is recommended at locations that require extra safety caution

¹⁵⁵ A technical report had been prepared by the fourth Xaghra Local Council and referred to the Awtorita` dwar it-Trasport a number of months ago, but no position has been taken by said authority (personal communication).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Infrastructural Initiatives (cont.)						
70.	Insert bicycle lanes in most thoroughfares	Medium term	Local Council	Awtorita` dwar it-Trasport	Environmental health and public safety benefits	Given the pleasant surroundings of Xaghra, the use of bicycles as an alternative transport is commendable; this entails public safety measures
71.	Maintenance of street lighting at Vjal 8 ^{ta} Settembru, Triq Calypso, Triq Guzeppi Grech and Triq il-Mithna	Medium term	Local Council	Enemalta Corporation	Public safety benefits	Well lit thoroughfares enhance the image of the village while ensure public safety
72.	Maintenance and more uniform design of pavements	Medium term	Local Council	Central Government	Public safety and aesthetics	Pavements are an important feature of a thoroughfare and should not be underestimated
73.	Remove pavement obstructions	Short term	Local Council	Central Government	Public safety and aesthetics	Obstructions limit accessibility of pavements to pedestrians
74.	Increase the number of public telephone booths ¹⁵⁷	Medium term	Telephony providers	Local Council	Social benefits	At this age of mobile telephony, a telephone booth may be the only means of communication for visitors to the village, both local and foreign
75.	Provide ATMs at pjazza, with timed parking facility ¹⁵⁸	Short term	Commercial banks	Local Council	Social benefits	Modern banking practices increase convenience to clientele, while reducing traffic congestion at the pjazza

¹⁵⁷ The main telephony provider on the Islands removed most of the public telephone booths because of low demand.

¹⁵⁸ The fourth Xaghra Local Council tried implementing this initiative in the recent past, but without success.

<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Administrative Initiatives						
76.	Improve administration of Local Council	Short term	Local Council	n/a	Social benefits, with a wide range of externalities	Initiatives should aim at team-building. The Local Council is divided on the lines of political loyalties. Personal agendas of local councillors and staff should be set aside and not allowed to interfere in public office
77.	Improve public relations	Short term	Local Council	n/a	Social benefits	This initiative should help in improving marketing efforts of the Local Council while increasing the sense of participation of residents in village activities. For example, foreign residents and youth often feel left out: their involvement in subcommittees would help remedy the situation
78.	Construct new Civic Centre ¹⁵⁹	Medium term	Local Council	n/a	Social benefits	Housing the local council administrative offices, police station and other community services provides one stop service to residents
79.	Overhaul of the Welcome Board of Xaghra	Short term	Local Council	n/a	Economic and social benefits	A well designed and maintained welcome board has economic and social benefits
80.	Set up boards at key locations so that residents can follow Local Council and village activities	Short term	Local Council	n/a	Social benefits	Well designed boards, accessible by all, advertise notices of the Local Council that facilitate better public relations and induce community development

¹⁵⁹ Full development planning permit is already in hand.






<i>Initiative No.</i>	<i>Initiative Title</i>	<i>Prioritisation</i>	<i>Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Supporting Responsibility</i>	<i>Type of Benefit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Administrative Initiatives (cont.)						
81.	Town twinning initiatives	Medium to long term	Local Council	n/a	Socio-economic benefits	This initiative exploits the touristic potential of Xaghra and helps residents to appreciate their legacy
82.	Exploit funding resources	Ongoing	Local Council	Central Government	As applicable	External funding, European Union or otherwise, should be exploited to supplement and/or sponsor the development and implementation of initiatives
83.	Set up an action committee on environment within the Local Council	Short term	Local Council	NGOs	Natural and cultural heritage benefits	This initiative should serve as a watchdog on development planning, conservation and other environmental issues and to oversee that undue developments do not take place at the height of the touristic season. The term environment encompasses not only natural and cultural environs, but also the human and social environment



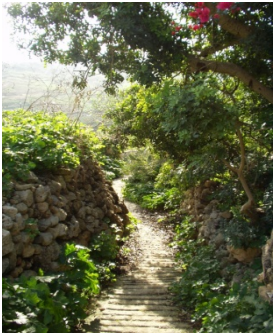


APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONSULTED ORGANISATIONS





Xagħra Parish Church, Clergy
Community, Gesu` Nazzarenu Church
Community, St Anthony Abbot Church
Alternattiva Demokratika, Regional Committee Gozo
Malta Labour Party, Local Committee Xagħra
Nationalist Party, Local Committee Xagħra
Azzjoni Kattolika Rġiel u Nisa
Ċirklu taż-Żgħażaġĥ
Għaqda Armar
Għaqda Dilettanti tan-Nar
Gozo Amateur Athletic Association
Legion of Mary
M.U.S.E.U.M., Boys Section
M.U.S.E.U.M., Girls Section
Societa` Filarmonica La Vittoria
Xagħra Primary School pupils
Xagħra United Football Club
The elderly (Day Care Centre)
Foreigners, non-Maltese, residents

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF CONSULTED PROFESSIONALS

Mgr Carmelo Refalo ST.L., Lic.P.Th.Sc, Archpriest Xagħra
Mgr Eucharist Sultana, Archpriest Emeritus Xagħra
Rev. Anthony Refalo, Rector, Gesu` Nazzarenu Church
Rev. John Sultana, Rector, St Anthony Abbot Church
Carmel Buttigieg M.Q.R, former Member of Parliament for Gozo
Louis Refalo M.Q.R, former Member of Parliament for Gozo
Dr Marlene Attard M.D., general practitioner
Dr Anton Grech M.D., M.Sc.(Psych), MRC Psych, psychiatrist
Dr Mario Victor Masini M.D., general practitioner
Dr Josette Rapa M.D., general practitioner
Dr Kevin Cutajar B.A.(Hons), B.A., LL.D., lawyer
Dr Angele Formosa LL.D., lawyer
Dr Carmelo Galea LL.D., lawyer
Georgette Bugeja B.A.(Hons), historian
Mariella Camilleri B.E. & A.(Hons), architect and civil engineer
Angelique Cremona B.E.&A.(Hons), architect and civil engineer
Joanne Sultana B.Com, P.G.C.E., teacher, special education
Maria Attard, teacher and co-ordinator Dar Ġużeppe Debono
Miriam Attard, midwife
Vitorina Camilleri, former Xagħra Primary School teacher
Mro Joseph Camilleri A.(Mus.)L.C.M., photographer and former musical director
of Societa` Filarmonica La Vittoria




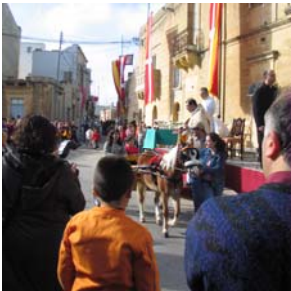
<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
I	1	In-Nuffara hillock as viewed from Tal-Kaċċa	
	2	Karstic steppe ecosystem on the plateau of In-Nuffara with <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> as the key species	
	3	A silo-pit typical of Bronze Age settlements at In-Nuffara	
	4	Wied tal-Furnar	
	5	Agrarian land at Ta' I-Għejjun. To the right, a freshwater pond may be noted and, to the left, giant reed and citrus groves	



<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
I (cont.)	6	A freshwater pond surrounded by a Eucalyptus grove at Ta' I-Għejjun	
	7	Rocky ridge (sies) at Ta' I-Għejjun	
	8	Country-lane off Triq I-Għejjun leading to agricultural fields and orchards	
	9	Premises (seat of Le Spigolatrici della Chiesa) with unique wooden balcony at no. 12, Triq Ġnien Xibla	
	10	Windmill with empty niche on facade in Triq Ġnien Xibla, at Ta' Ġermida	





<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
I (cont.)	11	Church of Ġesù Nazzarenu and adjoining Franciscan sisters' convent in Triq Ġnien Xibla, limits of Ta' Ġermida	
	12	Niche: Our Lady of Mount Carmel at no. 17, Triq Mannar, limits of Ta' Ġermida. Indulgences granted by Mgr Gio-Maria Camilleri, bishop of Gozo, on 6 th July 1906	
	13	Traditional bakery at no. 5, Triq Mannar at Ta' Ġermida	
	14	ĠĦajn Melel Member minor rdum with carob trees, almond trees and giant reeds at Tal-Ġorf	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II	15	Terraced minor rdum at Tal-Kaċċa with prickly pear, almond trees and pine trees	
	16	Gentle slopes at Ta' Ħamet	
	17	Niche: Our Lady of Lourdes in Triq Ta' Ħamet. Indulgences granted by Mgr Gio-Maria Camilleri, bishop of Gozo (1889-1924)	
	18	Ġgantija megalithic temple complex	
	19	Megaliths integrated within rubble wall on the approaches to Ġgantija	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II (cont.)	20	'North Cave' near Ġgantija	
	21	Ta' Għejżu caves/tombs and megalithic remains at Vjal 8 ^{ta} Settembru	 
	22	Xagħra Parish Church in Pjazza I-Vittorja	
	23	Old village cross in Pjazza I-Vittorja	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II (cont.)	24	Typical old stone balcony in Pjazza I-Vittorja	
	25	Entrance to World War II shelter on northern side of the Parish Church parvis	
	26	British colonial period telephone booth in Pjazza I-Vittorja	
	27	Procession with statue of St. Anthony Abbot from Pjazza I-Vittorja to Pjazza San Anton followed by the blessing of animals	 






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II (cont.)	28	The kumittiva at Pjazza I-Vittorja (Courtesy Mro Joseph Camilleri A.(Mus.)L.C.M.)	
	29	Ninu's Cave in Triq Jannar. Discovered by Ġuzepp Rapa, at Tal-Bajda, on 18 th December 1888. Also, niche: St Joseph on facade of same premises	
	30	Traditional bakery at no.29, Triq il-Knisja, limits of Tal-Bajda	
	31	Traditional bakery (with chimney bearing the year: 1934) at no. 8, Triq Ta' Bullara, limits of Tal-Bajda	
	32	Niche: Maria Bambina in Triq il-Knisja, limits of Tal-Bajda. Indulgences granted by Mgr Bartolomeo Rull, bishop of Malta and Gozo, on 10 th September 1768. Statue: original; niche: modern	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II (cont.)	33	Ta' Kola windmill, an 18 th century windmill built by the Fondazione Manoel	
	34	Traditional farmhouse with <i>setah</i> facing south at no. 63, Triq Ta' Stellini	
	35	Xerri's Grotto at Triq I-Għar ta' Xerri, limits of Tal-Kappilan. Discovered in 1923. Also, niche: St Michael. Indulgences granted by Mgr Giuseppe Pace, bishop of Gozo, on 13 th October 1955	
	36	Niche: Our Lady of Sorrows at no.1, Triq I-Ispiera at Tal-Kappilan. Indulgences granted by Mgr Michael Gonzi, bishop of Gozo, on 11 th January 1933	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II (cont.)	37	Parish <i>Domus</i> at no. 8, Triq 28 ta' April 1688, displaying the coat-of-arms of Mgr Michael Gonzi, bishop of Gozo (1924-1944) on main entrance	
			
	38	Sculptured house facade incorporating niche dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at nos 39-40, Triq 28 ta' April 1688	
	39	Niche: St Rita at no. 1, Triq 28 ta' April 1688. Indulgences granted by Mgr Giuseppe Pace, bishop of Gozo, on 12 th July 1951	
	40	Niche: St Joseph at no. 163, Triq 28 ta' April 1688	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II (cont.)	41	Brochtorff Circle at Ix-Xaghra I-Kbira	
	42	Ix-Xagħra I-Kbira	
	43	Disused <i>torba</i> quarries at Ix-Xagħra I-Kbira	
			
44	Karmnu Refalo from Xagħra working on a ħasira (curtain made from reeds)		





<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
II (cont.)	45	Damaged and rifled prehistoric tomb at Ix-Xagħra I-Kbira	
	46	The chapel of St Anthony Abbot at Ta' Grabejla: seat of first Xagħra parish erected on 28 th April 1688	
	47	Residence of first Xagħra parish priest at no.77, alley in Triq San Anton at Ta' Grabejla	
III	48	Rocky ridge (sies) and ancient terrace (sined) at Għajn Lukin	
	49	1814 plague cemetery	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
III (cont.)	50	Old Xagħra cemetery	
	51	Present-day Xagħra cemetery	
	52	1814 plague hospital	
	53	Free-standing niche: Our Lady of Mercy (Il-Madonna tal-Ħniena). Indulgences granted by Mgr Ferdinando Mattei, bishop of Malta and Gozo, on 2 nd May 1822	
	54	Spectacular views of Rabat and Citadel from Għajn Lukin	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
III (cont.)	55	Santa Verna prehistoric temple remains	
	56	Slightly disturbed steppe at Santa Verna	
	57	Old arched doorway at no.8, Triq il-Knisja at Ix-Xaghra	
IV	58	Agrarian land at Is-Semblija	
	59	On the way to farthest point of Is-Sruġ promontory	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
IV (cont.)	60	Heavily terraced sies, Ta' Sruġ	
	61	Rural room amongst terraced fields, Ta' Sruġ	
V	62	Agrarian land at Għajn Xegħjba, the mouth of the valley, Wied Ta' Ġnien Imrik	
	63	A large freshwater pond at Ġnien Imrik. At the background, qanneċ line fields to act as windbreakers	
VI	64	Stone-carved open balcony at no. 26, Triq Ġnien Imrik	




<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
VI (cont.)	65	Ta' Sansuna megalithic ruin at Triq Ġnien Imrik	
	66	Agrarian land at Sinet I-Għeżien	
	67	Late Ġużeppi Bajada's (Sette Giugno 1919 victim) former residence (now replaced by premises no. 105) in Triq Ta' Bullara	
	68	Niche: Our Lady of Sorrows in limits of Tal-Massar. Indulgences granted by Mgr Francesco Saverio Caruana, bishop of Malta and Gozo, on 5 th October 1847	
VII	69	Niche: Sacred Heart of Jesus at nos 172-173, Triq Marsalforn	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
VII (cont.)	70	Niche: Assumption of Our Lady at no. 30, Triq Marsalforn. Indulgences granted by Mgr Vincenzo Labini, bishop of Malta and Gozo, on 5 th May 1781	
	71	Niche: Sacred Heart of Jesus at no. 53, Triq Għajn Qamar. Indulgences granted by Mgr Gio-Maria Camilleri, bishop of Gozo, on 1 st April 1921	
	72	Niche: St Augustine (in relief) at no. 38, Triq Gajdor. Indulgences granted by Mgr Giuseppe Pace, bishop of Gozo, on 5 th September 1958	
	73	Niche: St Joseph (dated: 1928) at no. 1, Triq Għonqa at Xagħra tal-Ħawwila. Related indulgences granted by Pope Pius IX on 3 rd June 1874	






<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
VII (cont.)	74	Niche: Our Lady of Mount Carmel at nos 107-108, Triq Ġnien Xibla, limits of Ta' Wenzici. Indulgences granted by Mgr Michael Gonzi, bishop of Gozo, on 13 th December 1940 (or 1941?)	
VIII	75	Il-Qortin t'Għajn Damma with disused waste tip at background	
	76	Corner wall remains at Il-Qortin t'Għajn Damma. Possible remains of Knights' tower(?)	
	77	Irdum ta' Kililu below il-Qortin t'Għajn Damma	
	78	Irdum tas-Surgu below il-Qortin t'Għajn Damma	



<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
VIII (cont.)	79	Spectacular views from Wied il-Pergla	
	80	Maquis ecosystem at rocky ridge (sies) of Wied il-Pergla	
	81	Fertile soils at Ta' Fuq il-Pergla	
	82	Fertile fields at Wied il-Pergla with citrus groves at the foreground. Note the use of qanniċ as windbreakers	
	83	Cave at Rđum tax-Xagħra	

<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
VIII (cont.)	84	Rdum tax-Xaghra with terraced fields	
			
	85	Spectacular views of Ramla Bay from Ta' Masini	
	86	Red-painted rural structure at Ta' Masini	
	87	Remains of stone oven in the vicinity of Calypso Cave	

<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
VIII (cont.)	88	The legendary Calypso Cave overlooking Ramla Bay	
	89	Ruined 18 th century redoubt at Ramla Bay, the site of Roman villa (now, covered up) excavated in 1910. In middle of bay: Statue of Our Lady of Hope (<i>Madonna ta' I-Isperanza</i>) holding an anchor (symbol of hope) and standing on plinth. Original dated: 1881; present one: modern concrete replica. Also seen is submerged 18 th century wall at Ramla Bay to prevent embarkation of approaching enemy	
	90	Seasonal inland saline marsh at Ir-Ramla	

<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
IX	91	Polluted watercourse at limits of Taħt ix-Xagħra	
	92	Poorly designed access bridges at limits of Wied ir-Ramla, which do not tally with surroundings. Note polluted watercourse at foreground	
			
	93	Non contextually designed access to field along Wied ir-Ramla	
	94	Rubble walls along Wied ir-Ramla that urgently need maintenance	

<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
IX (cont.)	95	Għajn Qamar overlooking Ramla valley	
	96	Għajn Qamar (foreground) and Ta' Gajdoru (background)	
	97	Caves with walled-up entrances overlooking Triq Ta' Għajn Hożna	
			
	98	Fresh-water spring at Triq Ta' Għajn Hożna	

<i>Zone Number</i>	<i>Photo Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Photo</i>
IX (cont.)	99	Għajn Hożna	
	100	Ġnien Xibla fresh-water spring	
	101	Citrus garden at Ġnien Xibla near fresh-water spring bearing the same name	