LIFE&WELLBEING HISTORY

Sliema Landing Place in the 1920s. The Victoria Hotel visible on the right.
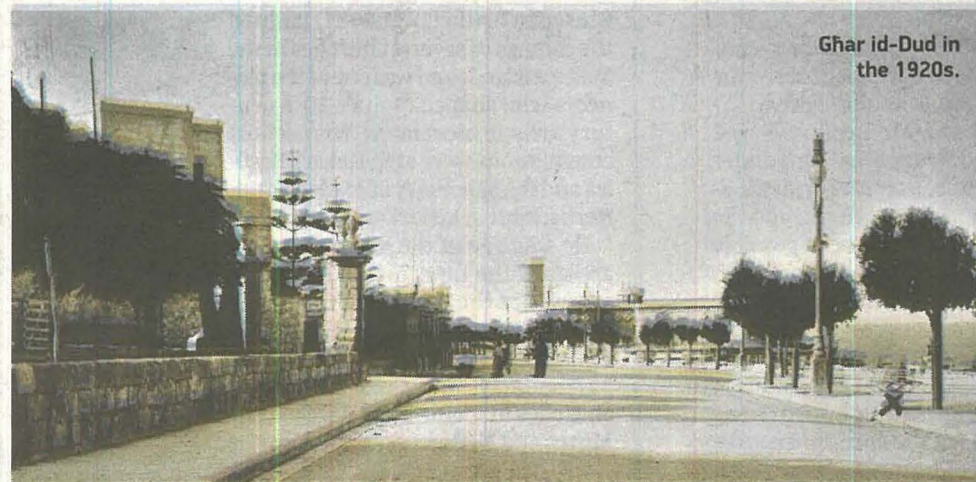

A stately old town house in Sliema, c. 1890s.

The Sliema Ferries on a feast day in the 1910s. Note the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel on the right.

Sliema – lost city (part three)

GIOVANNI BONELLO

Like most once-peripheral areas in Malta, pre-war Sliema suffers from a dearth of pictorial documentation. Photos and postcards with Sliema as their subject are rather difficult to come across, especially those depicting the inner cores, the minor spaces and events.

Market forces explain this: photographers and postcard-publishers offered for sale images that had some selling appeal. And the buyers would then be mostly the British army and navy personnel with their families and guests, and the very rare tourist. These were interested in the picturesque of the familiar. They would lap up the *karrozzin*, the *luzzu*, the *għonnella*, the *dgħajsa*, the Grand Harbour, the military parades, St John's, royal visits and the Opera House, and ignore the villages and the hamlets. Who would want to buy *Strada San Pio, Lazy Corner*, or *Pjazza Nunzjata*?

Now that's changed, and radically. Although almost no landmark in Sliema is all that strikingly photogenic, it has today become a mini, but thriving, metropolis. Modern postcards and photos of Sliema abound.

Despite this handicap, sufficient visual material survives of the Sliema that is no more. These three features are meant to be just an appetiser for a more comprehensive survey of the pictorial evidence of a town that time has now archived. There is plenty more to unearth.
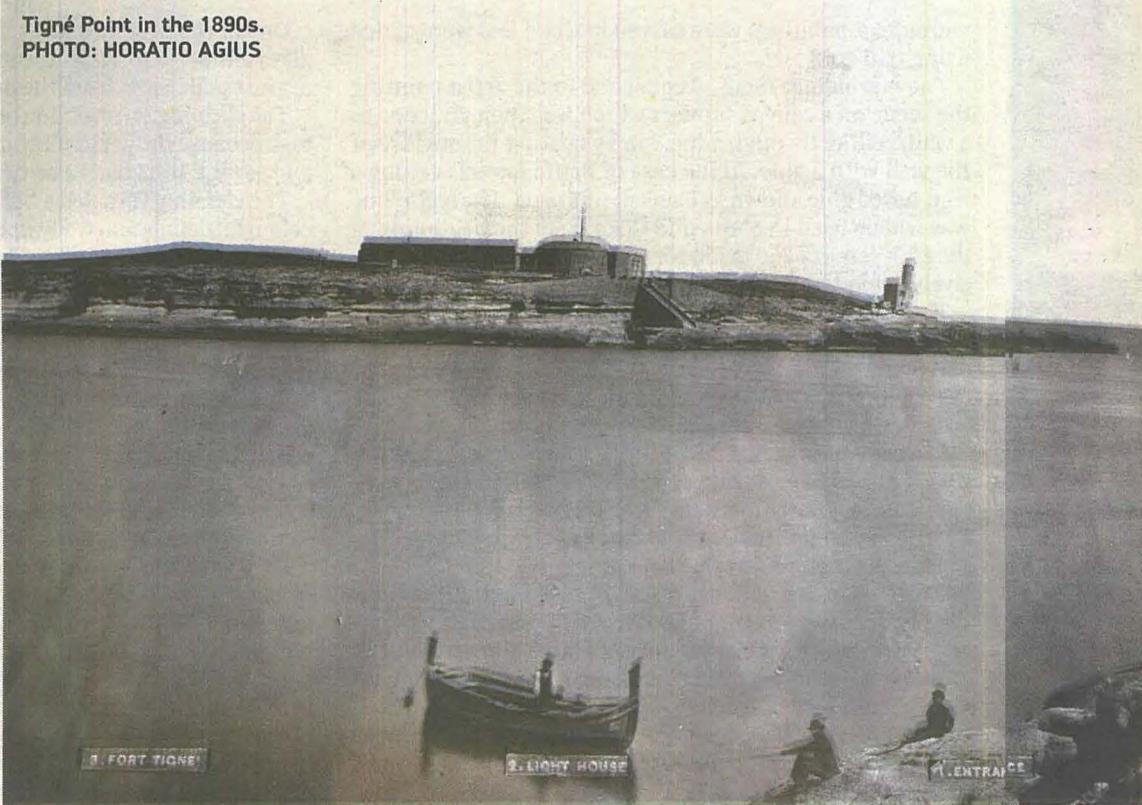
All images are from the author's collection.

(Concluded)

Stella Maris parish church damaged in the 1942 blitz during World War II.

Tigné Point in the 1890s.
PHOTO: HORATIO AGIUS

Ghar id-Dud in the 1920s.

Prince of Wales Road on a feast day in the 1910s.

Another view of Tower Road in the 1920s. Not one vehicle in sight.

A different stretch of Ghar id-Dud in the 1900s. PHOTO: RICHARD ELLIS
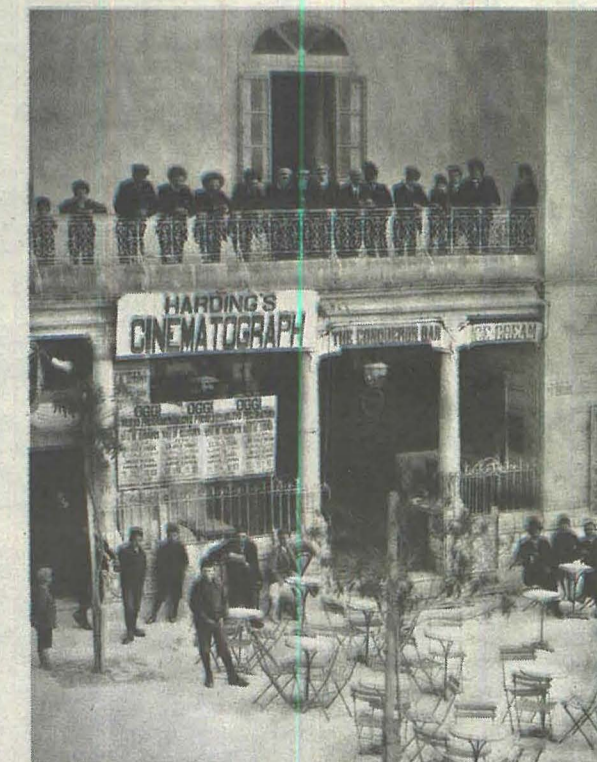
St Anne Square, Sliema, showing Harding's Cinema in the early 20th century. PHOTO: RICHARD ELLIS