GUZGO (, AL, I,

LEGEND HAS it that Gozo's arcadian paradise once hosted Ulysses for ten years, while his poor wife Penelope moped at home doing her housework and warding off suitors. Unfortunately, communication technology was still in its nonexistent stage then so Ulysses could not call home and tell his wifey wife that he would be late for dinner.

Alex Vella Gera

Well, one hundred years ago all that changed and Gozo joined the modern world. It is rumoured that Gozitans now even have internet.



Melita Telephone Company formed in 1885 three years after the first telephone was installed on the mainland, expanded to

entered the daily life of this isolated community.

The cost to rent a telephone was eight pounds a year, a hefty sum in those days.

It is no exaggeration to say that the introduction of the telephone sparked off a total revolution in communications and also in the everyday life of the people. Gozo began to

nel in a storm to get a message

reveal details of the gradual modernising of Gozitan society, all through the telephone.

"The necessity of these communications is apparent," wrote the Superintendent of

Although just a short mile

away by sea from Malta, Gozo has always been somewhat isolated from the mainland, and this explains the unspoiled beauty of the island. Communications via smoke signals were the norm.

One hundred years ago Gozitans with running water at home were enjoying a luxury, streets were illuminated by gas lamps. So it was little short of a miracle when telephones

It was no longer needed to risk one's life crossing the chanacross. One just picked up the telephone and in no time at all Valletta 20 kilometres away

It was in 1901 that steps were taken to improve the police force in Gozo by using the telephone.

Documents from the era



Secretary of Government on 10 July 1901. "Considering the prohibitive distance between the Main Police Station and the said casals, combined with the very limited number of police-

men in each station."

So the years travelled by and in 1933 the Government Telephone System was inaugu- developrated. The Government was in ments were control of telecommunications and telephones were rapidly becoming a need instead of a

The first telephone exchange telephone was in Valletta, with a capacity of 2000 lines. And just three years later Gozo earned her rib- through

Police to the Acting Chief bons, a small magneto switch- the Gozo exchange exchange.

islands, binding them ever closer. In the post

n. Anton Refalo and Hon. Joe Mizzi viewing old telecom documents

made. On 16th June 1947: the overseas service began

board connected to the Valletta

Just a year later a submarine cable was stretched between the demand for a second telephone

sister

war fever further

with London.

A decade later, the manual exchanges were replaced with automatic ones and in 1963 Gozo's own very exchange was

Rabat. It had a capacity of 600

inaugurated in

Today in Gozo there approximately 13000 lines. In just one month (August 97) some 1,150,000 telephone calls passed through

Spread around the island are Malta's heritage. 140 cardphones and 250 Telecare sets. There is now

> next year the World Conference Telecommunications Development will be taking place in Malta

> "Over 2000 delegates from 200 countries will be here and one hopes that this conference will result in a more equal development in this sector."

to arrange for its Gozitan employees to work in Gozo, instead of having to catch the ferry to and from Malta every

radio connec- line in homes, due to the increasing popularity of the internet.

The 150 year old Kenuna Tower in Nadur will soon begin service as a Maritime Coast Station, equipped with highly sophisticated equipment.

Telemalta is also studying ways to restore the structure known as il-widna in Maghtab, Malta.

This was used as a sound mirror during WW2. What a sound mirror does is capture the sounds of planes still far from Malta in its deep circular shape. It is known as an Aircraft Detection System. It is the only one in existence outside England.

Manager of General Telemalta, Joe Azzopardi, recently expressed pride for telecommunications

"In many underdeveloped countries this service is still considered a luxury," he said. He also recalled that early

With regards Telemalta itself, it is the first public corporation The Telephone
(a brief history)

OF ALL the various telecommunica- calls not only within a single building or comtions services in existence today, the one most used is the telephone.

Although there have been striking advances in the way telephone messages are transmitted over long distances, the basic operation has remained little changed since acts as its own telephone company. Alexander Graham Bell's words were spoken over the first telephone.

A telephone set consists of a transmitter, a receiver, and a dial or push-button mechanism. The transmitter converts sound into a fluctuating electric current, while the receiver converts such a current back into sound. The telephone can be made to work

because sound travels through the air in waves. Speech is carried by waves in the air stirred up by the vibrating vocal cords in the throat.

Transmission

As technological advances replaced old electromechanical switches with modern digital electronic ones, in recent years some companies, especially within the United States, have set up their own switching networks that connect

plex, but also between separate parts of the company located in different cities or even on different continents.

In such systems, the local or interexchange companies are bypassed, and the corporation

With the greater need for communication over longer and longer distances, wireless communications started to take hold.

Bell's Telephone

A pioneer in the field of telecommunications, Alexander Graham Bell was born in 1847 in Edinburgh, Scotland. He moved to the United States, settling in Boston, before beginning his career as an inventor.

Throughout his life, Bell had been interested in the education of deaf people. This interest led him to invent the microphone and, in 1876, his "electrical speech machine," which we now call a telephone. News of his invention quickly spread throughout the country, even throughout Europe.

By 1878, Bell had set up the first telephone exchange in New Haven, Connecticut. By 1884, long distance connections were made between Boston, Massachusetts and New York City.

Bell imagined great uses for his telephone, phone. but would he ever have imagined telephone lines being used to transmit video images? Since his death in 1922, the telecommunication industry has undergone an amazing revolution. Today, non-hearing people are able to use a special display telephone to communi-

Fiber optics are improving the quality and speed of data transmission.

Actually, your ability to access this information relies upon telecommunications technology. Bell's "electrical speech machine" paved the way for the Information Superhighway.

Famous words

"Mr. Watson, come here - I want you" were the first words transmitted by tele-

On March 10, 1876, while setting up his equipment, Bell accidentally spilled battery acid on his trousers and called out to his assistant.

Watson was waiting on the other end of the telephone circuit on another floor of the building when he heard the call.











