

Fishing – Quarantine Regulations during the Plague Epidemic of 1813-1814

Permission Granted to Fisherman from Gozo to fish in Comino Channel

by Dr A. Bonnici KM, MD

The plague of 1813-1814 extinguished itself in Malta on the 7th March 1814, but not before invading Gozo which, thanks to the strict quarantine measures adopted in that island, had so far enjoyed a complete freedom from plague during the whole period of the disease in Malta. Governor Maitland cut off all communication with Gozo under penalty of death. A man was killed by firing squad because he had concealed that he was infected with plague (J. Attard, Xaghira Gozo). The first case is reported as that of Angelo Galea on the 18th February 1814. The number of persons who died in Gozo was one hundred and four.

The pratique for Malta and Gozo was proclaimed on the 8th September 1814.

I believe that no historian has so far made reference to permits issued individually to Gozitan citizens/fisherman to fish in the Channel between Gozo and Comino, and I am happy to publish today two such certificates one issued on the 24th June 1814 to Mr Michele Debrincat by Salv Carter, Captain Comanding in Gozo and another issued on the 27th June 1814 to Dr Giuseppe Grima issued by N. Andora, *Ispettore Generale di Pulizia*.

They read as follows:

(Illustration No.1)

It is permitted to Mr Michele Debrincat and two sailors in his company to fish from sunrise to sunset in the channel between the island of Malta and Gozo, not to approach Comino, nor to pass beyond a straight line beyond Comino and to have a yellow flag flying.

The above mentioned Debrincat has taken an oath not to communicate with other boats at sea neither from the island of Malta or Comino under any circumstances. He and his companions were subjected to the most severe penalties, in case of contravention.

Rabato, 24th June, 1814

Given Salv. Carter
Captain Commanding in Gozo

(Illustration No.2)

Is a similar permit given to Sig. Dottore Giuseppe Grima on 27 June 1814, to go fishing in the Comino Channel, and to observe the same regulations and to be subjected to the same penalties in case of contravention

Rabato, 27th June, 1814

Signed N. Andora
Inspector General of Police

È permesso a Michele Debrincat, e due marinari in sua compagnia di pescare dalla punta del giorno sino al tramontar del Sole nel Canale tra l'Isola di Maltosa e quella del Pop non dovendo avvicinarsi a Comino, né oltrepassare la direzione in linea retta di quest'ultima Isola lungo il detto Canale; dovendo avere una bandiera gialla.

Il suddetto Debrincat ha giurato di non comunicare con barca alcuna, né con Detta Isola di Maltosa, né con quella di Comino, e sino Egli sottoposto, come pure i suoi compagni alle più rigorose pene in caso di contravvenzione.

Salute sino a nuovi ordini.

Sabbato 6 24. Pugno 1816.

Adm. Capata

Cap. Com. n. 430

Esposero al Ser. Sig. D. Giuseppe Grimo, con due manovani in sua compagnia di poter pervenire dalla punta del giorno uno al tramontar del Sole dalla punta della Mandia di Bonate fino la meta del Canale fra i Lodi di Malta e quella del Gopp, non dicendo avvicinarsi a Canino ne' oltre a parare la direzione in linea retta di quest' ultim' Isola lungo il Canale, dovendo aversi una traversa giusta al pte. Sig. Grimo, per giurarlo di non comunicare con barca alcuna, ne' con detti Lodi di Malta, ne' con quella di Canino, e per il Colli, come pure i suoi compagni soggetti alle piu' rigorose pene, in caso di contraddizione.

Fate sino a nuovi ordini.

Sabbato li 27. Giugno 1814.

M. Audace

Il Ser. Sig. D. Grimo e i suoi compagni