



# Maltese e-Newsletter



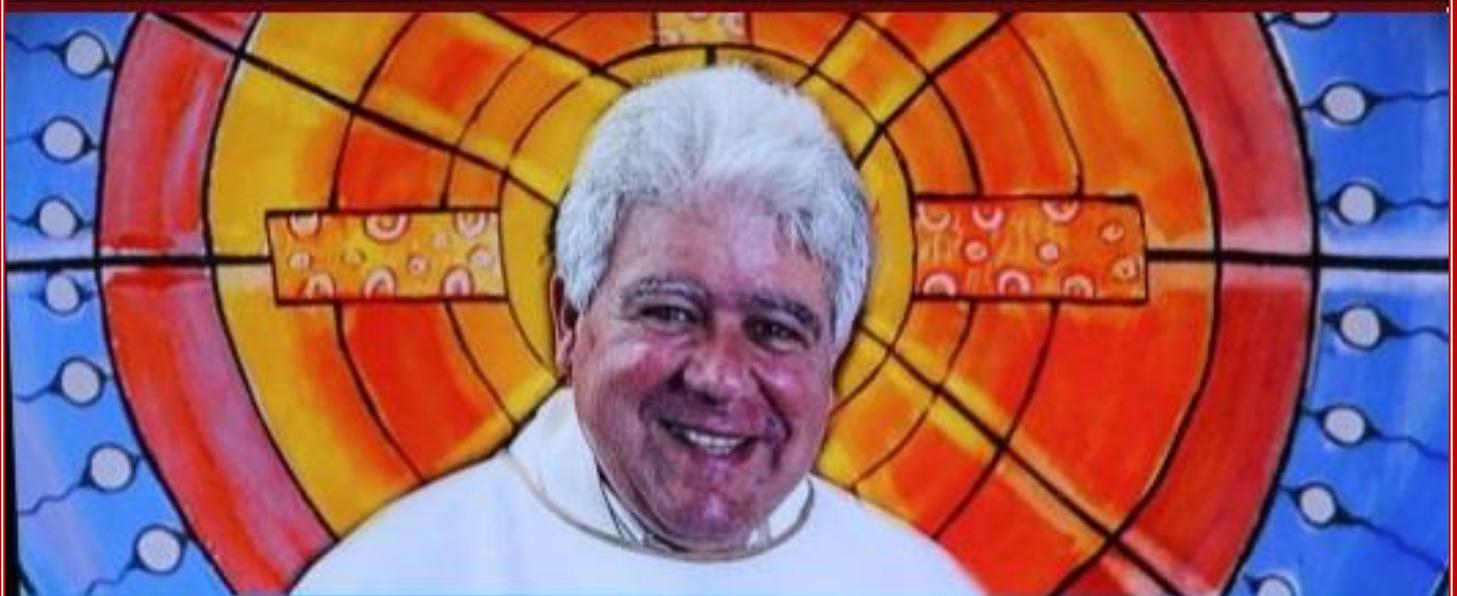
The Journal of the Maltese Diaspora

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Partway between mainland Europe and Africa in the Mediterranean Sea lies the small island of Malta and its even smaller neighbour, Gozo. These islands are best known for their megalithic temples built by Neolithic inhabitants some five to six thousand years ago. The temples are a testament to a tradition of prehistoric architecture that is totally unique to this part of the world. UNESCO classified six of them as parts of the 'Megalithic Temples of Malta'



The Episcopal Ordination of the Most Reverend  
Charles Victor Emmanuel Gauci

## Bishop Charles Gauci ordained fifth Bishop of Darwin

In a ceremony rich with Catholic tradition and Aboriginal culture, the Diocese of Darwin on Wednesday night welcomed Bishop Charles Gauci as its new shepherd.

In June, Pope Francis announced that Fr Charles Gauci, then-administrator of St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Adelaide, would succeed Bishop Eugene Hurley, who had served in Darwin for the past 11 years. Pope Francis' ambassador to Australia, Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, read the apostolic mandate from the Holy Father, announcing Bishop Gauci's appointment. Bishop Hurley served as principal consecrator at an overflowing St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral.



In his homily, Bishop Hurley welcomed Bishop Gauci to the Diocese, but also reminded him of the task that lies ahead. Bishop Hurley said trust between the people and the Church in Darwin has been built over

more than a century.

"This is a sacred trust, well-earned, but it brings with it a grave responsibility to walk with the people as a good shepherd must," he said.

"Our diocesan family consists of people from almost every part of the world. Many of these people, dislocated from their own culture and homeland, look to the Church for comfort and reassurance. They will look to you as their bishop for understanding and support."

Bishop Hurley said that the special bond between the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a privilege, but there are also significant duties.

"The trust, reverence and love shown by our Aboriginal sisters and brothers over such a long time are sacred, and demand an equal commitment from the Church and from you as bishop," he told Bishop Gauci.

"You will need to listen carefully, observe closely and walk humbly with them as you assess the situation which confronts them. "You will find that they need your support and your voice as they search for proper housing, dignified employment and an urgent review of the heartbreaking rate of incarceration of our Aboriginal sisters and brothers, particularly the young people."

Earlier this week, speaking with ACBC MediaBlog, Bishop Gauci spoke of his commitment to responding to those challenges, among others.

"When I visited the Indigenous people a few days ago, it was an eye-opener for me – their hopefulness, their warmth and their need to be connected spiritually," he said.

"I think to myself, 'I need to learn from these people'. I'm sure the Indigenous people can teach us a lot."

Bishop Hurley said despite the geographical size of the Diocese of Darwin – more than three times the size of France – there remains a closeness.

"Even though the Diocese is vast, we have a strong and abiding sense that we are a diocesan family, united in faith and united in care and love of one another, however far apart we might be," he said.

"This is an exciting and joyful time for all of us. Welcome to the diocese. Welcome among us as a bishop. Welcome among us as our bishop."

At the conclusion of his ordination Mass, Bishop Gauci declared: "I am now a Territorian – and very, very glad to be here as one of you."

He expressed his desire to follow the example of Bishop Hurley, who has been "such a good bishop, so loved", and in "continuing to build the Body of Christ" in the Diocese of Darwin.

## LILL-ISQOF IL-ĠDID TA' DARWIN

I-E.T. Charles Victor Gauci

L-istedina lqajt mill-ewwel  
Illi nikteb poezija;  
Isqof Malti ġewwa Darwin –  
Ġrajja sbejha w mistennija.

Kellu biss tlettax-il sena  
Meta rikeb il-vapur  
Lejn l-Awstralja huwa salpa  
Biex hemm jibni l-futur

Fil-Furjana huwa twieled  
Fis-sena tnejn u ħamsin  
U fl-Imtida ħasel rasu  
F'dak it-tempju Guzeppin.

Issa l-Providenza riedet  
Li taħtru tal-merħla Ragħaj  
Sabiex lilha jmexxi, jgħallem  
U jehliša minn kull gwaj!

F'isem il-qarrejja kollha  
Ta' dal-Journal popolari  
Nawguralek dehen u għaqal,  
Nies fl-Awstralja, bħalek rari!

Ara illi qatt ma tinsa  
L-għeruq tiegħek il-Maltin  
Għax minn hawn beda jissawwar  
15-V111-2018

Għalkemm issa ġo l-Awstralja  
Ilu hemm għal bosta snin  
Jaf jittellem, jikteb sewwa  
Bl-ilsien tagħna l-Maltin.

Għal qalbu għandu ż-żgħażaġħ  
Fosthom jaħdem bla waqfien  
Għaliex bi sħiħ huwa jemmen  
Tal-futur dawn is-sisien.

Saċerdot ġie ordnat f'Adelaide  
Fis-sena sebgha w sebghin  
Ma' ġnus differenti ltaqa'  
Bi skop wieħed: lilhom jgħin!

Żgur ta' ħajtek id-destin.  
Ejja żurna, toqgħodx lura  
Meta jkollok ftit tal-ħin  
Tkun milqugħ u maħbub sewwa  
Minn ħutek kollha Maltin.

Minn qiegħ qalbi nawguralek  
Hena w saħħa daqs ta' plier -  
Dax-xewqat nitolbok tilqa'  
Minn tal-Għawdx i-Kavallier!

Kav Joe M Attard  
Victoria Għawdex

## Bishop Elect will visit Malta

After his ordination as bishop OF Darwin at St Mary Star of the Sea cathedral on 26 September, Fr Gauci hopes to visit Malta for two weeks later this year and meet his relatives. He is especially looking forward to meeting his uncle, the Jesuit Fr Joseph Gauci Sacco, who is returning to Malta after 60 years in India.

Fr Gauci was born in Floriana, Malta and emigrated with his parents to Australia in 1965 as a 13-year-old. He has been a priest in the Archdiocese of Adelaide since his ordination in 1977 and has served in several parishes.. He has also held a number of archdiocesan leadership roles, including as chairman of the Council of Priests.



Bishop Elect Charles Gauci pictured at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mass on July 1  
Photo: Ben Macmahon

## BISHOP GAUCI WILL RETURN TO ADELAIDE TO CELEBRATE A MASS OF THANKSGIVING

In a circular issued on 11 July 2018, Administrator Delegate for the Adelaide Archdiocese Fr Philip Marshall said that the ordination of the seventh bishop of Darwin will take place in St Mary’s Star of the Sea Cathedral

in Darwin at 7pm on Wednesday September 26. Bishop Gauci will return to Adelaide to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving at St Francis Xavier’s Cathedral on Sunday October 7 at 11am.

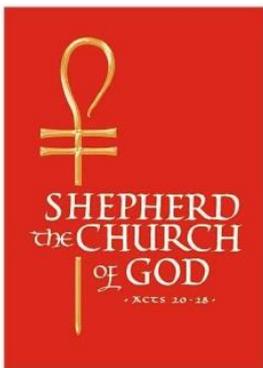
“We are privileged as an Archdiocese to support Bishop Elect Gauci into this service of the wider Australian Church, and an occasion of joy for us all.

“On behalf of us all I assure Bishop Elect Gauci of our prayers and congratulations as he prepares for this new ministry and send our congratulations and prayerful best wishes to our sister diocese of Darwin,” Fr Marshall wrote.

Bishop-Elect Gauci will replace retiring Bishop Eugene Hurley, who has served in Darwin for the past 11 years and as a bishop for almost 20 years.

The current Administrator of the Adelaide Cathedral parish, Bishop Elect Gauci will be the first Adelaide Diocesan priest to be ordained a bishop in 45 years.

AD MULTOS ANNOS



## First Peoples recognised in Bishop’s coat of arms

### NEWS

A unique Indigenous design has been incorporated into the coat of arms for Australia’s newest bishop, Charles Gauci, who was ordained in St Mary’s Star of the Sea



Cathedral, Darwin on September 26.

Bishop Charles Gauci ordained in Darwin Different cultures honour Italian saint Who do you say I am? Trust needs to be rebuilt: Zollner Funding changes welcomed Bishop-elect Gauci with local Indigenous children in Darwin.

The former Adelaide priest said one of his priorities was to “listen to and walk with our Aboriginal sisters and brothers”, hence the inclusion of the Indigenous symbol as a central element of the otherwise traditional coat of arms.

Named *Many Yet One*, the symbol is based on a design by Aboriginal artist Lyn Walker, whose brother is John Lochowiak, from the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and Centacare Catholic Family Services.

### **Boy from Malta heads north for next adventure**

“It represents the coming together as one people with different journeys and much diversity into the infinite love of the Holy Trinity,” Bishop Gauci said.



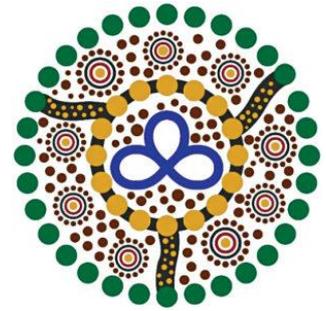
While Broome Bishop Christopher Saunders has a boomerang from the south Kimberley and a Woomera from the North Kimberley on his coat of arms, Bishop-elect Gauci is believed to be the first to incorporate an Indigenous art design.

The coat of arms also contains elements of his Maltese origins including a castle derived from the Gauci family coat of arms.

Bishop-elect Gauci said the castle also represented the "interior castles of our hearts leading us into contemplative union with God as expressed by St Teresa of Avila".

The arms were designed by Richard d'Apice AM KCSG and Fr Guy Selvester, and illustrated by Sandy Turnbull. He also included the Maltese Cross in his Coat of Arms.

Bishop-elect Gauci chose as his motto, which also appears on his coat of arms, 'the word made flesh'. "Verbum Dei Caro Factum Est."



## Planning Authority approves plans for Santa Luċija tunnels project



The Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects welcomes the Planning Authority's decision to approve Infrastructure Malta's project towards the building of two tunnels beneath the Santa Luċija roundabout.

This project will result in around a 30% reduction in travelling time and a lower risk of accidents for thousands of people who travel to and from the south of the country every day, as well as improved access for Santa Luċija, Tarxien and Paola residents. The drastic reduction of traffic congestion at this roundabout also means improved air quality for localities in the area.

The Ministry said the Planning Authority has asked Infrastructure Malta to implement several precautionary measures to ensure that while the project is being implemented, the environment of the area is fully protected. Among others, measures safeguarding the area's residents and others protecting natural heritage were requested.

Following the approval of the necessary development permits for this project, Infrastructure Malta is expected to begin the necessary works in Triq tal-Barrani and Vjal Santa Luċija before the end of this year. The call for tenders for necessary contractors for this project was issued earlier this year. The evaluation process of the six offers submitted with a median value of €19.8 million, to choose the project contractor, is expected to conclude soon.

The project started being planned in the last quarter of last year, on the request of the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, to continue easing traveling difficulties for residents and workers in several localities in the south of Malta. The investment in this main junction in the Maltese road network includes the redesign of the roundabout to improve safety and the building of two tunnels of around 100 metres each to directly link Vjal Santa Luċija with Triq tal-Barrani. In this way, when passing from Vjal Santa Luċija to Triq tal-Barrani or vice versa, there will be no need to enter the roundabout, with the possibility of passing through the tunnels without stopping.

This roundabout is also one of the main access points to Santa Luċija, Tarxien, and Paola. Following completion of the new tunnels, difficulties for residents to enter or exit their home in these localities will also be reduced as the roundabout will be designed to reduce the risk of accidents, while also being used much less.

The project also includes the development, replacement and strengthening of several distribution services for water, electricity and telecommunication which are currently underground in these roads.

## Roman Malta 1000 Years of Ancient History at the Centre of the Mediterranean Sea

Dear Mr. Scicluna, I am an historian at the University of Queensland (UQ) in Brisbane, and I have a research interest in Malta. I have invited a scholar with interests in ancient Malta to the University of Queensland for the next two weeks. If you are able to publicise our events among the Maltese community in Brisbane, I would be very grateful. Associate Professor Josephine Crawley Quinn (Oxford University Lecturer in Ancient History) is the 2018 Milns Visiting Professor in Classics and Ancient History at UQ, and will be here for the next 2 weeks. She is a particular expert on the Phoenicians (author of a recent book), and also studies the history and archaeology of ancient North Africa, Malta and Sicily. She is co-Director of excavations at Utica, and the Oxford Centre for Phoenician and Punic Studies (OCTOPUS), as well as co-editor of a recent book on Malta with Dr. Nick Vella. Her upcoming book is entitled "How the World Made the West."

Her 3 events are on the School of Historical & Philosophical Inquiry website, and the attached posters (pdf and word docs). <https://hapi.uq.edu.au/event/session/3519>

No registration necessary; all welcome in Brisbane.

Dr Amelia R. Brown

Senior Lecturer in Greek History & Language, ARC Senior Research Fellow (DECRA)

School of Historical & Philosophical Inquiry (HaPI)

526 Michie Building, University of Queensland

St Lucia, Brisbane, QLD 4072 AUSTRALIA

The Maltese islands lie at the exact centre of the Mediterranean Sea, with fine harbours and over 7000 years of history. Malta's monuments range from Neolithic stone temples to Crusader castles, but the Roman era is relatively unknown, despite its long duration, from the Punic Wars to the Byzantine Empire. In this free public lecture, find out about the achievements, artefacts and mysteries of Roman Malta from Amelia R. Brown (Senior Lecturer, UQ) and Josephine Crawley Quinn (2018 Milns Visiting Professor, UQ; Associate Professor, Oxford University).

**About Classics and Ancient History Seminars** - Classics and Ancient History seminars are followed by a wine-and-cheese reception (\$2 coin donation per person). Enquiries about the seminars may be made to Dr David Pritchard

*The Friends of Antiquity*, an alumni organisation of the University, runs its own series of public lectures, which take place on Sunday afternoons. The Friends' program for 2017 can be found at <http://www.friendsofantiquity.org.au>

Venue Room: E212 Forgan Smith Building

**Other upcoming sessions**



**Carthaginian Dido: Reclaiming a Roman Queen** 5 Oct 2018

**The Phoenicians from Antiquity to the Arab Spring** 7 Oct 2018

**Epistemology and Geography in T. Livius ab urbe condita libri** 12 Oct 2018



## The Phoenicians from Antiquity to the Arab Spring

SEMINAR - 7 October 2018 2:00pm–3:00pm

The Phoenicians are often forgotten in histories of the ancient Mediterranean that focus on Greece and Rome, but long before the Greeks

and Romans these sailors and traders built the first city-states, invented the alphabet, discovered the pole star and colonised the west. They still remain mysterious, however, and there is a serious question over whether they even existed as a self-conscious political, ethnic or cultural group. Yet since their own time, 'being Phoenician' has been a powerful political and cultural tool in the hands of politicians and writers from Roman emperors to Irish-Enlightenment scholars to Lebanese nationalists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, playing a particularly important and interesting role in the invention of new pasts for new nation-states. This public lecture looks both at the Phoenicians in their own terms and at their different reinventions over time.

*Maltese e-Newsletter*



The Journal of the Maltese Diaspora



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We sincerely thank all our readers, contributors and supporters for making this journal Number 1.

Keep on sending your stories, comments, articles and emails. Your appreciation keep us going and we will continue to producing a journal of a very high standard which makes us, Maltese wherever we, proud to belong to such a vibrant community.



## Office of the Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC

MC18-002154

Mr Frank Scicluna  
11 Anne Street  
ROYAL PARK S.A. 5014

17 SEP 2018

Dear Mr Scicluna

Thank you for your letter of 17 June 2018 to the former Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, concerning Australia Hall at Pembroke in Malta. The former Prime Minister has referred your correspondence to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Darren Chester MP, and he has asked me to respond on his behalf.

The area around Pembroke was home to a number of convalescent camps and, as you know, the funds raised by the Australian Red Cross enabled the construction of Australia Hall to provide a valuable place of amusement and social activities for Australian and British Empire soldiers who spent time on the island.

The Minister acknowledges the current state of Australia Hall however, repairs to commemorative structures outside Australia do not fall within the guidelines of any grant programs administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

I wish you success with any efforts to raise awareness of the role Australia Hall played in our wartime history and the need for its restoration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RC', written over a white rectangular area.

**Robert Curtin**  
Chief of Staff



## VISITING THE MEGALITHIC TEMPLES OF MALTA & GOZO

Posted by Ethan Doyle White



Partway between mainland Europe and Africa in the Mediterranean Sea lies the small island of Malta and its even smaller neighbour, Gozo. These islands are best known for their megalithic temples built by Neolithic inhabitants some five to six thousand years ago. The temples are a testament to a tradition of prehistoric

architecture that is totally unique to this part of the world. Recognising their international importance, UNESCO classified six of them as parts of the 'Megalithic Temples of Malta' World Heritage Site. Not surprising then the temples are a popular tourist attraction. Read my tips for visiting the megalithic temples on Malta and Gozo.

The megalithic temples on Malta and Gozo were made using large limestone blocks, hence the label 'megalithic' – large stone. Typically they have circular features that have been called 'apses' and are often found to have contained carved female figurines. Eager to see these enigmatic ancient structures for myself, I visited the islands in November 2017, a time of year which avoids the crowds, sweltering heat, and heightened prices of peak tourist season. At the same time, the Mediterranean climate ensures that the autumnal weather is mild and for several hours a day I needed only a light jumper. Although Malta is a great place for archaeological explorers, particularly those interested in prehistory and ancient religion, one thing I soon realised was how important it is for visitors to plan ahead so that they make the most out of their adventures. Here then are my top ten tips for visiting the Megalithic temples on Malta and Gozo. Click on these links, or scroll down:

**WHAT SHOULDN'T I MISS?** - Over the centuries, archaeologists have discovered at least twenty megalithic temples on Malta and Gozo. Unfortunately many are not open to visitors, but the six that make up the UNESCO World Heritage Site are. No keen prehistorian can visit Malta without seeing these at least.

By far the best-known temples are Mnajdra and Hagar Qim, perched within 500 metres of each other on Malta's south-eastern coastline. Built from limestone, both temples have suffered from weathering since archaeologists excavated them in the 19th century. To prevent further destruction, large protective tents now cover both sites, while a visitor's centre exhibits a small collection of the artefacts discovered there. Within walking distance of the temples are the Misqa Tanks, potentially prehistoric water storage tanks carved into the natural rock, as well as the Hamrija Tower built for defence in the 17th century.

Back in the more urbanised eastern side of Malta is the Tarxien Temple, a complex of Neolithic buildings that were later used as a Bronze Age cemetery. Like Mnajdra and Hagar Qim, a large protective tent now encloses them to prevent any further destruction from the Mediterranean elements. A short walking distance from the Tarxien Temples is the Hal-Saflieni Hypogeum, a subterranean rock-hewn cemetery complex discovered in

the early 20th century. Although considered separate from the megalithic temples themselves, since 1980 it has been classed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in its own right.

Heading to the north of the island, one can find the Ta' Haġrat and Skorba temples. The former is in the town of Mgarr and the latter in the nearby village of Żebbiegħ. Although not as impressive as temples like Tarxien and Mnajdra, both sites are highly recommended. Neither currently have a protective tent, and therefore offer a sensory experience of the sites as they exist in their fully outdoor environment.

In Gozo, the Ġgantija temples are among the most impressive of all those on the Maltese islands. Here, two temples stand side by side, encircled by the same megalithic wall and overlooking Nuffara Hill, home to a Bronze Age settlement. Like the temples at Skorba and Ta' Haġrat, the Ġgantija temples are still open-air, although the overall impression is hindered slightly by scaffolding and metal girders holding parts of the temple in place.

### WHAT ABOUT THE MUSEUMS?

As well as the temples themselves, the Maltese islands boast several museums containing artefacts found during site excavations. In several cases, the two are linked: with impressive modern exhibits on display at Ġgantija as well as the Mnajdra and Haġar Qim visitor's centre. The latter even includes a brief interactive cinema experience taking the viewer through thousands of years of history.



*Permanent exhibition on the megalithic temples in the National Museum of Archaeology, Valletta.* Definitely worth a visit is the National Museum of Archaeology in Valetta. Although some of the rooms and labels are a bit dated and tatty, the museum's collection of prehistoric artefacts is among the finest in Europe. It includes various engraved and patterned megaliths as well as a fascinating collection of rounded female figurines, including the famous Sleeping Lady sculpture. I recommend visiting this museum

before any of the temples themselves, to get a better appreciation for the periods in question. Set aside at least two hours to ensure that you see everything.

When in Gozo, consider popping into the Gozo Museum of Archaeology, a small affair located in the Medieval citadel of the Gozan capital city, which is known as either Victoria or Rabat. Although its prehistoric collection is restricted to a few sparse cabinets, it includes several interesting items excavated from the Ġgantija Temples and Xagħra Stone Circle (the latter sadly closed to the public). For those with an interest in later periods, the rooms devoted to Roman and Medieval archaeology are more likely to impress. The entire museum can be seen in 20 to 30 minutes, and is ideally paired with a wider exploration of Victoria's Medieval fortifications.

## AHBARIJIET MINN GHAWDEX Mill- Kav Joe M Attard

**INAWGURATA L-PLAYING FIELD TA' VICTORIA** Nhar il-Gimġha wara nofs inhar, Jum l-Indipendenza, is-Sindku tal-berlt Victoria Dr Samuel Azzopardi jnawgura uffiċċjalment il-Playing Field ta' Victoria fil-preżenza tal-Ministru għal Ghawdex Dr Justyne Caruana, is-Segretarju Parlamentari l-Perit Clint Camilleri, l-Onor Frederick Azzopardi, Kunsillieri tal-Kunsill Lokali tal-Victoria u għadd ta' mistednin oħra. Ha sehem il-Cordia String Quartet filwaqt li l-kelliema kienu l-Perit Edward Xerri li kien responsabbli mill-pjanta u x-xogħlijiet tal-Playing field u li tkellem dwar it-trieq twila li ħadet sa Jum l-Inawgurazzjoni kif ukoll is-Sindku innifsu li dejjem emmen f'dan il-post rikrejattiv u ta' mistrieħ mhux biss għar-Rabtin imma għal dawk kollha li f'xi hin imiddu riglejhom fil-belt Kapitali. Dr

Azzopardi awgura li dan il-post jinżamm nadif u fi stat tajjeb u stieden lill-familja kollha biex tagħmel użu minnu waqt li tibza' għalih.

**SAN GORĠ LURA GĦAL LI KIEN!** Wara d-diversi lmenti li għamilt fil-ġurnali dwar l-istat miżeru li fih kien sab ruħu San Gorg li jinsab imperreċ fuq haġt faċċata tal-Knisja tal-Madonna Ta' Pompej Victoria, issa nieħu gost ngħid li dawn l-ilmenti ma waqgħux fuq widnejn torox imma xi hadd reponsabbli ta widen għal kumment li għamilt u qata' u żabar il-ħafna ħaxix li kien qed johnoq din l-istatwa hekk sabiħa u li bla ma trid tieqaf quddiemha int u għaddej minn dawk in-naħat. Grazzi u Prosit lil min ħa din l-inizjattiva li ma nafx min hu; nitolbu biex hekk kif il-pjanta li hemm biswita terġa' tazzarda tgholli rasha, ikun pront ma jħallihex terġa' tieħu r-riħ fuq din id-daqsxejn ta' statwa hekk ħelwa. Din l-istatwa tinsab ukoll imdawla sewwa matul il-lejl u mill-ġdid grazzi lil min kien ħa ħsieb idawwalha biex hekk tkun tista' titgawda matul l-erbgha u għoxrin siegħa tal-ġurnata!

**IL-HARIFA MAGĦNA WKOLL!** U mal-ftuħ tal-Playing Field bdiet ukoll il-Ħarifa, it-tielet stagun tas-sena meta t-temp jibda jqalleb xi ftit u l-arja tibda tiffriška billi tibda tagħnel xi bexxa xita wara li jriegħed u jberraq. 'Wara l-beraq jiġi l-meraq' jgħid il-qawl u hekk hu, l-art tibda tixxennaq għal xi bexxa xita u niesna ddu il-bjut u taħseb għal xi taqliba tal-arja. Nibdew inxiddu xi pullover u xi qmis tal-flaneletta u kekk kif jidlam tibda tħoss is-sirda; shana issa għamlet biżżejjed. Il-festi jisparixxu, jifthu l-iskejjel u l-familja terġa' tingabar taħt saqaf wieħed; it-tfal medhijin jagħmlu l-homework u l-mara taddar toħroġ it-twapet u ssahħan id-dar u kollox jerga għan-normal. Malajr jitgerbeb iż-żmien u nibdew naħsbu għall-festa tal-Erwieħ u l-Qaddisn kollha u malajr tfigg il-festa tal-Immakulata u dritt wara l-festa għaziża tal-Milied. U ngħidu s-sena kif spicċat!

**XAHAR MINN MEWTU:** Nhar it-Tlieta 9 ta' Ottubru '18, il-Gozo Retired Teachers' Association se tagħmel quddiesa fis-6pm fil-Knisja tal-Madonna tal-Karmnu fix-Xlendi f'għeluq ix-xahar mill-mewt tas-Sur Joe Grech, President tal-Gozo Business Chamber u Teżorier tal-GRTA li kienet ġrat għal għarrieda fis-6 ta' Settembru 2108. Iqaddes u jagħmel kelmtejn tal-okkazjoni r-rettur ta' din il-Knisja Mons d. Karm Gauci. Kulhadd huwa mistieden.



## IL-GIRNA

### MALTESE STOEN HUT

Nothing typifies the Maltese countryside more than the ubiquitous dry-stone wall that wind their way all over the land dividing the hot, dry soil into tiny parcels, from which the farmer ekes out an existence (*Il-hajt tas-sejjieh*). There, in the middle of it in the countryside of the western and northwestern part of the island lies the "girna", the Maltese stone hut.

The "girna", is a single room erected to meet the needs of farmers and herdsmen. It has a double wall built of undressed stones, which are left unplastered. Internally, its ceiling is shaped like a dome, while the external wall is usually circular, although it can be square or rectangular or, in rare instances, oval-shaped. Its convex-shaped roof is covered with fragments of rotten rock and stone and sometimes with sand and lime, and rarely, with ground pottery (deffun).

The Maltese "girna" looks an extremely plain structure; its beauty ties in the skill of its construction, built as it is with fairly sized stones ably laid next to one another. Since the "giren" are mostly located in the west and north west of Malta, where there are large quantities of loose limestone rocks on the surface, many of them are constructed with such material. The "girna" has one horizontal slab, or else is arched or triangular in form.

There isn't fixed rule that determines the size, height or width of the "gima"; it is probably built according to the needs of the owner and the actual skills the builder. The most beautiful and the largest circular "giren" are to be found in the stretch of fields and rocky ground between the Red Tower and Cirkewwa, while the largest square ones are to be found at **Ix-Xaghra Il-Hamra**, in the limits of Manikata.

Although some Maltese did use the 'giren' for habitation, these structures were originally built to meet the personal needs of farmers and herdsman and for the raising of live stock. Very often it was necessary for farmers to work fields situated a long way from their farmhouses and they had to have somewhere to shelter during the hot summer hours or during some sudden downpour.

In this shelter or "girna" they used to keep the food and drink they took with them and any small children they could not leave behind. In it they kept their tools, stored potatoes, onions, hay, etc. Some farmers used to dry figs, tomatoes and carobs in the suit on the roof of their "girna".

Today, the "giren" are almost completely abandoned because their owners do not have any further use for them. There are still many "giren" in the Maltese countryside, but a large number of them have collapsed or have suffered damage. As such, the future of these primitive structures part of Malta's architectural heritage, is not at all heartening.

## Brilli (A Game unique to Gozo)

Explore the Traditional Lifestyle of Gozo



Brilli is a game still played by adults in Gharb Gozo. Part of this remote area is undisturbed by cars, where streets have retained their function as a meeting place for the villagers.

**To play you need these objects** Nine skittles (brilli) and a spherical wooden ball. The skittles are arranged to form a square with three rows, each row containing three skittles. A different term is used to describe the skittles according to their position in the square. The four brilli at the corners are called qriemec, while the central skittle is referred to as is-sultan. The remaining four skittles are known as is-sekondi. Each skittle is conical in shape, stability being provided by a metallic ring placed around the base. Is-Sultan has a spherical projection at its top to distinguish it from the other brilli.

**To Play the game** At least five to six people are needed for the game to be played. The place chosen for the first throw (messa) is marked by a stone.

The first throw (il-moll) gains points according to the number and type of skittles dropped. Thus is-sultan gains 18 points, is-sekond 12 points while the qriemec 1 point. If however more than one type of pin is dropped (example: sultan and qarmuc) only 2 points for each dropped pin is gained.

A line (il-Hazz) is drawn at the place where the ball stops after the first throw. The second attempt is thrown from this line and gains two points for every skittle dropped.

## SHIPS USED BY MALTESE MIGRANTS



### Migrant Ships on Charter

*The final adieu, November 1950* Regular shipping for migrants to Australia really began in April 1948 when the **Asturias** left Malta, on April 23. In fact she had made a previous trip, on November 20, 1947, when one hundred emigrants had left on her, but many of them were returning emigrants who had paid anything from \$58 to \$80 to get as far as Melbourne. However from April 1948 to August 1952 the **Asturias** made fifteen trips to Australia thus earning for herself the sixth place among those ships which made most trips from Malta to Australia. The undisputed primacy goes to the aptly named **Sydney** which between December 15, 1951, and February 13, 1966, made thirty-nine trips between Malta and Australia. When the **Columbia** carried on her 1,075 migrants, that was considered then as the largest group ever carried to

Australia in one voyage. The **Columbia** left on November 21, 1949. On that day Mr Cole expressed his obvious satisfaction at practically solving the problem of providing a reliable shipping service for emigrants.

This is not to say that Mr Cole had solved the shipping problem to the satisfaction of everybody. While it was true that the Maltese Government had successfully obtained enough ships to carry those who wished to emigrate, there were complaints about some ships and about their sea worthiness and the kind of accommodation provided on board. Complaints appeared in the Maltese press about the **Columbia**. Although during question time in the Legislative Assembly Mr Cole had stated that the **Columbia's** trip was normal he did admit that during her journey three babies, only a few months old, had died at sea.

On April 26, 1949, the ship called **Misir** took to Australia seven hundred Maltese passengers. The ship had been built in the U.S.A. only six years before and was now owned by the Soc. Misr de Navigation Maritime of Alexandria, Egypt. In 1947 the **Misir** had embarked on her first voyage to Australia carrying on board a number of passengers who had originated from the Middle East. When the Maltese arrived on the **Misir** and disembarked first in Melbourne then in Sydney, some sections of the Australian Press had taken them for Levantines. Once on dry land the Maltese themselves complained about the accommodation they had been given in common dormitories. Complaints reached Malta about the ship **Ocean Victory** which had left on February 26, 1950. On her were 1,024 emigrants and these included forty-two babies, one hundred and sixty children between the ages of one and five years, and one hundred and eighteen between five and eleven years. Three qualified nurses were in charge of the child. Labour representatives in the Legislative Assembly asked for a discussion on the accommodation provided on some of the ships being chartered by Mr Cole's department.

Labour politician, Mr N. Laiviera, claimed that he had received letters from emigrants he knew who had bitterly complained about conditions on board the **Ocean Victory**. Mr Laiviera did admit that better accommodation meant more expensive fares. His colleague, Mr D. Mintoff, wanted to know if there was any truth in the rumour that a child had died. Mr Mintoff quoted from the Australian newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph* of April 3, 1950, which said that customs officials had described the **Ocean Victory** as a hell-ship. The captain himself admitted that a baby boy of ten months had died and so did another of sixteen months. Many of the passengers claimed they had suffered from dysentery while their linen was changed only once. Mr Anthony Cassar said that rain seeped into their sleeping quarters and Mrs Mary Grech, a mother with three girls and a boy, said that they lived on boiled potatoes and spaggetti.

Complaints were also raised about the ship **Florentia** which made three trips from Malta to Australia between December 15, 1950, and August 21, 1951. She had been built in Dunbarton, Scotland, in 1914. Some of those who travelled on her felt that the ship was not fit to cross the Indian Ocean, especially between May and September when the monsoons were likely to occur. One particular trip created quite a stir. The **Florentia** was expected in Grand Harbour, Valletta, on April. She was to carry 1,039 passengers but these were kept waiting for a number of days until she finally made port eleven days later.

The trip to Australia was uneventful, but chaos was let loose when she finally berthed at North Wharf, Melbourne, on May 31. Many relatives had been anxiously waiting for a very long time and tempers were short. On disembarking, one immigrant decided to run towards his relatives while his luggage was still being inspected by immigration officials. He was soon caught, but other waiting relatives and friends joined the fray. In the fracas that ensued three immigration officials were hurt and so were two Maltese. Five were arrested. One was accused of causing bodily harm to an immigration official while the other cases deferred.

An official comment from the Maltese Department of Emigration said about the incident "The man in question was only trying to kiss his mother before customs formalities had been finished. He had been already warned to wait, but he insisted on rushing to his mother. The other Maltese were all waiting on the quay. None of the arriving immigrants were involved".

It was obvious that the Maltese Government could not ignore the criticism in Malta and abroad about some of the chartered ships, particularly the **Ocean Victory** and the **Ocean Triumph** that if the decision to hire both ships had been solely on his own he would have never decided in hiring these two ships. He had sent a telegram to Malta expressing his favourable impression about the behaviour of the Maltese and that he thought that they would make good settlers. Source: *The Safety Valve* (1997), author Fr Lawrence E. Attard, Publishers Enterprises Group

## OTHER MIGRANT SHIPS

**ANGELINA LAURO** 2 VOYAGES 1970, 1972 401 Maltese Migrants  
**ARCADIA - P & O SN COMPANY** Number of voyages - 2 1962 -63 3 Maltese Passengers  
**AURELIA** 1949-1960 Number of voyages - 15 3,288 Maltese Passengers.  
**AUSTRALIA Lloyd Triestino** 1952 Number of voyages - 1 268 Maltese Migrants.  
**ASTURIAS** 1947 -52 Number of voyages - 18 4770 Maltese Passengers  
**CASTEL FELICE** Sitmar Lines Number of voyages - 6 1955 1958 3,276 Maltese passengers.  
**CASTEL VERDE - Sitmar Line** 1954 Number of voyages - 2 556 Maltese Migrants.  
**CYRENIA** 1950 - 1954 Number of voyages - 6 999 Maltese Passengers.  
**FAIRSEA** 1954-1962 Number of voyages - 1,724 Maltese Passengers.  
**THESEUS HOBSONS BAY Shaw Saville line** 1934 -36 Number of voyages - 6 72 Maltese Passengers.  
**LARGS BAY Shaw Saville Line** 1948 - 56 Number of voyages - 28 324 Maltese Migrants  
**MOOLTAN P&O SN COMPANY** 1952 Number of voyages - 1 352 Maltse Passengers  
**ORCADES** 1939 Number of voyages - 1 Number of Maltese Passengers - 2  
**ORIANA P&O SN COMPANY** 1962 Number of voyages - 1 Number of Maltese Passengers - 156  
**ORAMA - ORIENT LINE** 1936 - 37 Number of voyages - 3 Number of Maltese Passengers - 12  
**ORONSAY - ORIENT LINE** 1936 - 37 Number of voyages - 3 Number of Maltese Passengers - 4  
**ORSOVA - ORIENT LINE** 1958 Number of voyages - 1 Number of Maltese Passengers - 2  
**ROMA - FLOTTA LAURO** 1959 - 65 Number of voyages - 22 Number of Maltese Passengers - 3849  
**SKAUBRYN** Departed Greenock Saturday, 22 September 1883 Arrived MALTA 2 October Sailed 3 October Arrived Port Said 7 October via Suez Canal Arrived Aden 14 October Sailed 14 October Arrived Colombo 23 October Sailed 25 October Arrived Batavia 1 November Sailed 3 November Arrived Thursday Is. 13 November Arrived Cooktown 15 November Arrived TOWNSVILLE 16 November 1883  
**JERVIS BAY** 1934 - 39 Number of voyages - 9 Number of Maltese Passengers - 107  
**OCEAN TRIUMPH** 1950 Number of voyages - 1 Number of Maltese Passengers - 905  
**RANGITIKI - N.Z.S.S. COMPANOY LIMITED** Passengers: 598 Sister ships: Rangitane (1), Rangitata 1946 Number of voyages - 1 Number of Maltese Passengers - 64  
**STRATHNAVER** 1948 -59 Number of voyages - 10 Number of Maltese Passengers - 111  
**STRATHMORE 1940 - 58** Number of voyages - 3 Number of Maltese Passengers - 470  
**STRATHAIRD 1940 - 58** Number of voyages - 3 Number of Maltese Passengers - 1732  
**STRATHNAVER** 1948 - 59 Number of voyages - 5 Number of Maltese Passengers - 1732  
**SURRIENTO FLOTTA LAURO** 1949 - 1955 Number of voyages - 10 Number of Maltese Passengers - 3381  
**TAHITIEN Messageries Maratimes** 1959 Number of voyages - 1 Number of Maltese Passengers - 60  
**TOSCANA - Lloyd Triestino** 1948 - 57 Number of voyages - 5 Number of Maltese Passengers - 1202  
**UGOLINO VIVALDI Lloyd Triestino** 1949 Number of voyages - 2 Number of Maltese Passengers - 18  
**H.M.S. VICTORIOUS** 1946 The VICTORIOUS carrying 1088 passengers from the United Kingdom wartime evacuees returning to Singapore, picked 15 men from Malta. These Maltese migrants completed their voyage to Australia on the Blue Funnel Line Steamship 'GORGON' and arrived at Fremantle on 12 December 1946  
**NUDDEA** British India Stf Navigation Company. BUILT 1883. Gr. T. 2964.

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**Frank Scicluna - Editor**



### St Catherine's Feast – Reminiscing Joseph Chetcuti from Adelaide, South Australia

I was born in November 1941. In January 1955 at the age of 13 years I migrated to Australia with my parents Angelo [son of Consilio and Consilia Chetcuti] and my mother Felica [daughter of John and Lela Mifsud] together with my 3 brothers and 2 sisters

As far as I can remember, I have always loved our village feast, the feast of Saint Catherine. When I was a small child I loved our feast because as the feast was approaching our mother would take us to Valletta to buy some special new clothes for us to wear at the feast. On the actual feast day I remember our parents would prepare some special good food for this special occasion such as baked macaroni, or ricotta or meat pies or Rabbits

stew. These special meals were always completed with a nice desert, wine and soft drinks. As I got older and began to understand what was the feast all about, I started to enjoy the church services, the way the church was dressed up with the colourful red damask hanging on the walls, the many huge chandeliers hanging all over the church, all the altars were decorated with huge silver candles holders and dressed up for this special occasion, the beautiful canopy [it -tusel] which hangs over the main altar one of the best in Malta. The beautiful and artistic statue of Saint Catherine positioned in the middle of the church on the beautiful bradella, and surrounded by huge flower arrangement in front of it. The beautiful church organ and the orchestra playing beautiful hymns together with the choir and celebrating priests. When you step outside the church, the street are decorated with pavaljuni, many colourful flags of many different colours. The streets, the church façade and the band clubs are all lit up with lots of colourful lights. The two local band clubs participating with their beautiful Maltese marches as they parade around the village with many people following them.

The last feast I have experienced before migrating to Australia was in November 1954, I remember my parents let me enjoy this feast with my school and Musew friends. I can still remember we were trying to keep up with everything that was going on, either following the procession or one of the band marches. Little did I know that this would be my last time I will be enjoying this feast for such a long time.

In 1994 I had the good fortune to come to Malta for a 3 months holiday. I was present for our beloved village feast of saint Catherine. But now this feast is different, it is held in June in the summertime. For us migrants the idea of changing the feast to June was a brilliant and good idea, because summer is much better for us to have holidays, and because the feast of Saint Catherine and Good Friday / Easter occurs mostly within 3 months of each other, so we can be present and enjoy the Good Friday procession and then stay for the village feast too .

After a period of 40 years absent, I was enjoying the feast of Saint Catherine again in a much more suitable circumstances. Since then I had the good fortune to be present for the feast of saint Catherine on 3 other occasions, in 1998, 2005 [for the centenary celebration] and the last time in 2008, when both my wife Carmen and myself were joined by our 2 sons and their families. It was such a great occasion for me to share this feast with them.

During my 63 years in Australia I have always kept my interests in the Maltese culture, an although I have been away from Malta for many years I have never lost my love for Malta my country of birth, the

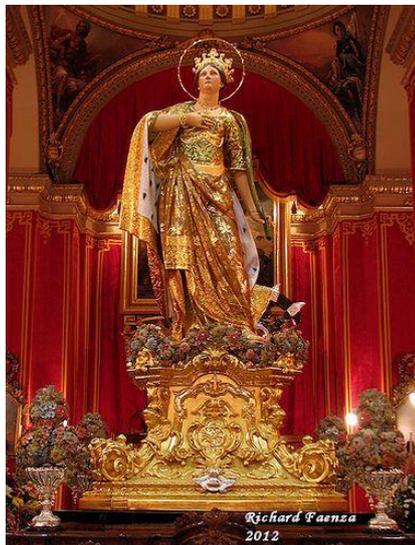


## MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

The Journal of the Maltese Diaspora

*Serving the community for five years  
Thanking our readers for their patronage*

Maltese language and the Maltese traditions and cultures. In Adelaide where I live the Maltese community celebrate some of traditional feast held in Malta, such as the Shipwreck of Saint Paul in February, Good Friday and Easter, Mnarja, Our Lady of Victories [Il Vitorja] and the feast of Saint Catherine. We also have a Maltese Band Club under the name of THE MALTESE QUEEN OF VICTORIES BAND establish in 1981. I am one of the founders, and have been one of the musicians since it's inception. I Have served this band with many other official positions including, President for 6 years, Treasurer 7 years, Librarian 5 years. I have also served as a member of the Maltese Chaplaincy Council under he direction of the Maltese Franciscans Friars of S.A as their Treasurer for 8 years, and one of the feast organizer for Our Lady Queen of Victories feast. During the last 10 years I have served in the St Catherine Society of S A as the editor of the Saint Catherine Feast program book.



With the aid and help of the internet and Television now we, who live far away from Malta can participate directory of what is happening in Malta. Now we can also communicate instantly with our family and friends in Malta with the help of the mobile phones, e-mails, messenger and Facebook. Here I wish to thank my friend Joe Mercieca who has always kept me posted and informed with the activities going on, especially in our village of Zejtun through our communication with the aid of e-mails, books and interesting information.

In Adelaide the feast of Saint Catherine is organized by the Saint Catherine Society of South Australia. The feast is held on the third Sunday in November, the Sunday before the Universal feast of Christ the King. The feast start on Friday when the many Maltese societies present floral tributes and read poems in front of the artistic statue of Saint Catherine which is a replica of the Saint Catherine statue in Zejtun. The evening concluded with Eu- charistic Benediction. On Saturday we have the Annual Feast Ball were a good number of people attend this popular ball. Around midnight the briju starts, when Maltese traditional marches are played on CD and the audience participate waving colourful flags, streamers and balloons in the middle of the of the ballroom, this generate a joyful and cheerful atmosphere.

Then on Sunday the actual feast day. At 3pm a solemn Mass is celebrated by our Maltese chaplain Father Gabriel Micallef ofm with the participation of the Maltese Chaplainy Choir.

At the conclusion of the mass the procession with the artistic statue of Saint Catherine commence. The statue of Saint Catherine was sculptured by Gilormu Dingli from Rabat Malta and arrived in Adelaide in 1985. It was blessed by the late emeritus Archbishop of Adelaide Most Rev. Mons. Leonard Faulkner. The procession take place around the surroundings streets of Saint Brigid's church where the statue kept during the year. During the procession the statue is accompanied by the Maltese Queen of Victories Band playing religious hymns and traditional Maltese marches. Once the procession is returned to the church the Eucharistic Benediction is held and that conclude the religious celebration.

The feast continue with the people moving to the church hall for the social evening, were Maltese favorited and traditional foods and drinks are on sale including the popular Pastizzi, Oassatat and Imqarret and the popular Maltese beverage drink the Kinnie. The Maltese Queen of Victories band continue to entertain the audience with Maltese traditional marches, concert music and more briju until the conclusion of the feast. As we get older and we are unable to travel long distances due to old age or because of il-health we have no other options, but to follow the feasts in Malta from far far away.

*The above article appeared in Maltese in the Parrocchia Santa Katarina taz-Zejtun Feast Program in June 2018 for this year Saint Catherine Feast .*



## Henry Felix Vincent Casimir Creni Curmi (1890–1967)

Henry Felix Vincent Casimir Creni Curmi (1890-1967), diplomat, was born on 2 October 1890 at Sliema, Malta, eldest of eight children of Giorgio Curmi, civil servant, and his wife Paolina, née Decelis. Educated at the Royal University of Malta, Henry served in various civil service departments, among them the lieutenant-governor's office, before taking up a commission in the King's Own Malta Regiment of Militia in 1910. After being mobilized in the Royal Malta Artillery in 1915, he served from 8 September at Gallipoli where he was mentioned in dispatches. He was also stationed on Lemnos, in Egypt and in Palestine, and was promoted lieutenant in 1917. During the war he met Bessie Evelyn Simmonds, an English nurse stationed in Malta. She converted to Catholicism and they were married on 23 April 1919 at St Polycarp's Church, Farnham, England.

Captain Curmi's interest in Maltese emigration was stimulated by his successive appointments as secretary (1921) to the minister for labour, posts and agriculture (who had responsibility for migration) and as secretary (1922) of Malta's emigration committee. In 1928 he was made commissioner for labour and in 1929 was appointed to Australia as Malta's first commissioner for migration. His arrival coincided with the Depression which provoked intense anti-immigrant feeling. Having undertaken gruelling trips from Perth to Cairns (Queensland) and Melbourne, in 1930 he returned in ill health to Malta. He was replaced by H. W. Potts and then by the Melbourne solicitor Frank Corder.

In June 1936 Curmi came back to Australia as commissioner for Malta. Next year he was appointed O.B.E. His office at 108 Queen Street, Melbourne, became a focal point for Maltese settlers throughout the country, as well as a base for the Malta Relief Fund, which raised money and food for the besieged Mediterranean island during World War II. A central and recurring issue for Curmi was the Federal government's refusal to recognize the Maltese as 'white British subjects'. He worked patiently to alter Australian policy and attained formal success in 1944. In addition, he played a key role in negotiations which led to the Malta-Australia Assisted Passage Agreement in 1948. During Curmi's second period as commissioner, the Maltese in Australia increased from some 3000 to about 10,000. He retired in 1952 and was appointed C.B.E. that year.

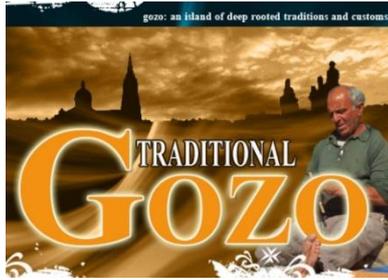
Curmi's strong and charming personality was born of a sense of personal worth which carried over into his dignified representation of Malta. While fully Maltese, he was very aware of things British. In Malta he had been general secretary of the Boy Scouts' Association. He was an avid reader of European and Church history; in his retirement, he indulged his interest in wood, leather and ivory work, and was secretary of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria. Predeceased by his wife, and survived by their three daughters and two sons, he died on 5 March 1967 at Kew and was buried in Springvale cemetery.

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## Traditional Gozo

Explore the Traditional Lifestyle of Gozo Gozo is renowned for its cottage industries, particularly spinning and weaving, and the creation of jumpers and jackets from the wool of sheep and goats.

Lace is the most widespread doorstep craft. It was introduced on a large scale after the 1840's. The craft soon proved its worth for the product was sold to the higher classes of society and even abroad. It was very common, especially in the afternoon, to see mothers with their daughters sitting on empty wooden lemonade crates with a lace pillow in their lap rested against the wall, their hands moving bobbins swiftly and deftly creating the most intricate and delicate of designs. Gozo lace is an object d'art and it continues to flourish despite competition from machine made lace.

The men make lace of a different variety: silver filigree, twisted into miraculous pieces of jewellery. And there is fabulous glass, with remarkable shapes in subtle shades of blue and green. Pottery is widely available, ranging from decorative pots and statuettes to imaginative house name plaques and door numbers.

Crafts that are rarer still include palm work, palm leaves that are woven into sun-hats or baskets, cane work, especially practised by fisherman during winter during winter to make cane curtains, carvers or sculptors, working the local stone or papier mache, producing statues and other objects to their own design, wood-workers that can construct anything from frames of grandfather clocks to limitation antiques chests of drawers and guilders, a craft that is gaining popularity.

Change is slow in Gozo, which adamantly sticks to its tortoise-like pace. Gozo has still succeeded in retaining its dream-like qualities of peace and solitude.



## Another Maltese Star Is Born! Gaia Cauchi Sails Through X Factor UK Audition

by Johnathan Cilia

It's official! Gaia Cauchi has made it to the next phase of X Factor UK after a stunning performance earned her four yeses from the judges.

Simon Cowell, Ayda Williams, Robbie Williams and Louis Tomlinson were floored by the 15-year-old Maltese singer's vocal abilities, and all four of them gave her the thumbs up to continue to the next round of X Factor UK. Her successful performance now places Gaia firmly in the spotlight, with all eyes on her as fans and viewers alike will watch to see how she progresses in the famous competition.

Her audition, which aired Saturday night on ITV, showed the singer performing Paloma Faith's 'Only Love Can Hurt Like This'. Her talent impressed Robbie Williams so much he even said: "You're incredibly charismatic and I think you have The X Factor." Williams also shared his concerns that Gaia was too young and should probably have a go joining a group, though the audience booed him when he suggested it.

Gaia Cauchi made waves in 2013 when she won Junior Eurovision for Malta with her song The Start. Her first international showcase came two years earlier when she appeared on the popular Italian TV show Ti Lascio Una Canzone and belted out Tina Turner's 'Proud Mary'. She won the prestigious Sanremo Junior Music Festival a year later in her category when she was just nine years old, singing 'One Night Only', from the hit film Dreamgirls.



Leading the Procession: Edgar Agius, Fr. Gabriel, Charles Zarb and John Mangion



Pauline and Joe Monsigneur



Peter Mallia - (Photos: Mary saliba)

**The Queen of Victories feast was celebrated at Lockleys South Australia on the 30 September 2018. The Maltese Chaplain, Father Gabriel Micallef OFM, and the Maltese Chaplaincy Group organised the feast and the Maltese community of South Australia and the Maltese Queen of Victories Band participated in the celebrations**

Posted by Emanuel Camilleri NSW

## 27 March 1942: Breconshire Sinks – Maltese Dockyard Worker Earns a Meda



### **MALTA SUPPLY SHIP BRECONSHIRE LIES STRICKEN OFF COAST**

HMS Breconshire, hit and set on fire during yesterday's heavy air raids, is now barely afloat with only six feet of her bilge above water. Enemy bombing prevented all attempts at taking off her cargo of oil yesterday. At daybreak this morning, fires broke out again and the ammunition supplies on board began to explode – creating a real risk of blowing the entire ship and the loss of all her cargo. Moments after her Captain and officers had abandoned an attempt to scuttle her, Breconshire rolled onto her side and capsized. .

### **DESPERATE BID TO SAVE PRECIOUS CARGO**

Breconshire's cargo was far too valuable to be abandoned to the ocean. Len Austin, Foreman of the Dockyard, was given the dangerous task of recovering her desperately-needed cargo of oil.

“She looked like a huge whaleback sticking out of the water. This is how I first saw her, and heavy seas were breaking over her. We were desperately short of oil fuel and my job was to try to make it possible for the fuel on board to be pumped out from the two cargo tanks on the [starboard] side, and also if possible to break into the engine room and holds.

When the sea subsided, it was possible to walk on the ship's side and make a survey to devise a plan of action. A hole in the side looked to be the only way to obtain access to the air space surrounding the cargo tanks, and the physical removal of ship's side plates for the engine room and hold.

All my men were ready volunteers and we got on with the job, which was interrupted by air-raids, bombs falling nearby. The work continued and, in a day, or so we were able to drill a small hole in one tank, through which the oil flowed out by water displacement, the water getting in via the tank air escapes beneath the surface. The oil filled the air space and a wooden plug was driven into the drilled hole in the tank.

The navy now took over and pumped the oil into drums using hand pumps. The system...worked and we recovered hundreds of tons of oil. The ship's side plates 5 No. were removed and hauled clear. Diesel oil was now available from the Engine room and a host of items from the hold: milk, explosives, bombs, timber, medical supplies etc.”

Maltese Shipwright Supervisor Mr Zammit was also to earn himself the British Empire Medal:

*“At the bottom of the air space was the tank margin of one of the ship’s own OFT’s, and this was full of fuel oil. Our manner of winning the oil from the cargo tanks had resulted in the air space getting smothered in thick fuel oil. To get down to the margin tank was very hazardous and to drill the necessary hole almost suicidal. This would have to be carried out in complete darkness and there was the danger of oil fuel vapour exploding. I told Mr. Zammit that under no circumstances was he to send a man to this job, and he obeyed the order.*

*One day when I visited the ship I was told that he was doing the job himself, and then he appeared through the access hole we had made. He was naked, smothered all over in oil and looked like a negro. He climbed out and jumped overboard to swim round for a while. When he climbed on board, I could see that much of the oil had emulsified which made him look even worse. He was rubbed down and then dressed. He told me, ‘You said I was not to send a man, so I went myself.’ He had succeeded in doing the near impossible and so more oil was recovered. It was a brave if foolhardy action. Malta could carry on again for a while...”*

### MALTESE CIVILIANS JOIN LABOUR BATTALION

The Governor and Commander in Chief has announced that a complete register of civilian workers has been compiled for call-up to work as civilian units as required, for the Services or Government. These groups are not under military discipline. Gangs of civilians to work on aerodromes have been formed under special Defence Regulations, recruited from residents in nearby villages.

Frequent and heavy bombing – and the absence of slit trenches or any form of shelter for civilian labour – on the aerodromes has made it difficult to maintain sufficient manpower. Numbers of volunteer workers have been encouraged with the offer of higher than normal pay and have been working regularly on aerodromes for last twelve days. As many police as can be spared are assisting.

### LUFTWAFFE PINPOINT BOMBING DESTROYS SHIPS IN GRAND HARBOUR

*“Never during the War years was I overtaken by fear more than on the night of the 26th March 1942”*

For nearly six hours today, 120 enemy bombers accompanied by massed fighters attacked in wave after wave, dropping over 350 high explosive (HE) bombs of 250kg and 500kg



on ships, docks and gun positions in Grand Harbour and 40 more on **Breconshire** in Marsaxlokk Bay. “Unfortunately on this day the German Air Force achieved a degree of accuracy with their bombing which they had never attained either before or since. **Talabot, Pampas** and **Plumleaf** were all hit in a single raid and in the evening **Breconshire** too was hit and set on fire.

By the evening with **Legion** sunk, **Penelope** badly damaged and a large part of the small craft in the harbour sunk or out of action from near misses it was felt that there was little further injury that the enemy could do...**Talabot** which caught fire and blazed furiously as a result of her hit, had to be scuttled to avoid her cargo of ammunition exploding. All her holds were flooded and the ship was aground with her gunwale just above water...”