



# MerHbA

Maltese Historical Association (Aust) Inc  
(Għaqda Storika Maltija (Awstralija) Inkorporata)

MHA Newsletter 2021#2

[www.mha.org.au](http://www.mha.org.au)

April 2021

Dear Members and Friends of the MHA,

Woohoo! Your association is up and running! Inspired by Julie Sultana, we are rebranding our image, updating our Facebook page, and looking at improving our website. Our core activity is to provide interesting and informative lectures, and Frances Bonnici certainly did that with her talk about the history of Maltese cuisine. It was our first lecture for a year, due to Covid, and what a lecture it was! Thank you, Frances! See pages 3 and 4 for a summary of her talk and a link to her PowerPoint and audio recording.

On Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April, Joseph Borg will speak to us about the significance of Maltese nicknames. It promises to be very interesting. More details are on the inset this page and on page 2.

Last Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021, Benny Soler of the Maltese Australian Association organised a [wreath laying ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance and the Shelter of Peace](#), to commemorate the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the award of the George Cross to Malta on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1942. The fighting in the Mediterranean was so fierce that the award could not be delivered until several months later. Edwidge Borg attended and took plenty of photos. See page 5.

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April, the MCCV will unveil an ANZAC plaque at 5 pm at the Community Centre in Parkville. Please ring Irene Grillo on 9387 8922 if you wish to attend. The Maltese Ex Services Association of Victoria has organised a Mass Celebration afterwards at St. Paul's at 6pm, followed by refreshments. All are Welcome. For catering purposes, please ring Joe Stafrace on 9848 4786 or 0466 589 553. See page 5 for more details about this and other events.

I see that Malta is opening up for visitors from many countries, including Australia. Tempting!

If you use Facebook, check the [MHA page](#) often for articles, links, and updates on the latest activities, both here and in Malta. Similarly, the MCCV [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) are excellent resources for keeping in touch.

I hope you can attend to our lecture on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April. Please RSVP [secretary@mha.org.au](mailto:secretary@mha.org.au) if you would like to attend.

Saħħa u Sliem,

Charlie G.

Charles Gatt (MHA Secretary)

MHA April Lecture

*Maltese Nicknames*

by

*Joseph Borg*

Joseph Borg was a founding member of the MHA in 1987. He has served on various positions on committee, including several as President, and has given us many lectures over the years.

Maltese nicknames were widely used in many villages. Some give insight into the various activities of bygone days. Come along and maybe find out what your family nickname means!

Enjoy a cuppa and chat afterwards.

**7.30 pm Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April**

Maltese Community Centre

Royal Parade, Parkville

(Enter from Ievers St)

All Welcome!

Free

Bring family and friends

## MEMBERSHIP

Fees were waived in 2020, so if you were a Member in 2020, your membership is current until 30 June.

If you would like to become a Member, contact us. The annual fee is only \$15, or \$20 for a family.



Dear MHA Members and Friends,  
We are delighted to announce our next MHA talk. We really hope you can join us!  
Please feel free to share this invitation!

***'Il-Laqam Malti - Maltese Nicknames'* by Joseph Borg**  
**7:30pm Tuesday April 20<sup>th</sup> April**  
**Maltese Community Centre in Parkville.**

In many Maltese and Gozitan villages, most people are much better-known by their nickname (laqam) rather than by their Christian name or surname. From time immemorial, nicknames were used to refer to a particular individual, to discriminate between people with the same name and surname living in the same town or village.

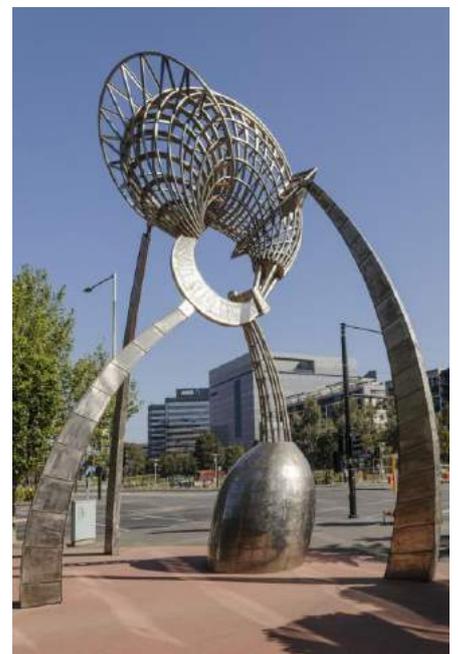
Nicknames therefore gave one the chance of using a more personal or individualised form of describing a person, while official names and surnames established by society were retained only for the dotted line of the birth register. The relation between an individual, or his/her family, and their nickname grew to be an intimate one. Maltese nicknames reveal the popular mind and bring back to life the world in which our forefathers lived.

**About the speaker:**

Joseph was born in Rabat Malta and came to Australia as a youth. He earned a Diploma of Mechanical Engineering from Swinburne Technical College (1967), then a Degree of Mechanical Engineering from the University of Melbourne (1969). As well as his work as an engineer, he was behind the design of many prominent public sculptures found in Melbourne, interstate, and overseas.

Joseph is a past president of the MCCV (1991-1993) and was a founding member of the MHA in 1987. He served as secretary and president of the MHA many times and has presented numerous lectures on a diversity of topics over the years.

Joseph is a Member of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM), a member of the Institute of Engineers, Australia, and a life member of the Catholic Walking Club of Victoria.



# March 2021 Lecture

## ***A Brief History of Maltese Cuisine***

by

**Frances Bonnici B.Ed., OAM**

**Summary: Charles Gatt**

25 People attended the MHA session on 16<sup>th</sup> March and signed in as they arrived. As our president, Robert Blythe, was away on honeymoon, the new Vice president, Julie Sultana, welcomed everyone, and introduced herself and the new committee. She outlined the new directions that the MHA is taking and requested feedback from our members to help shape our future. She then introduced the speaker, Frances Bonnici.

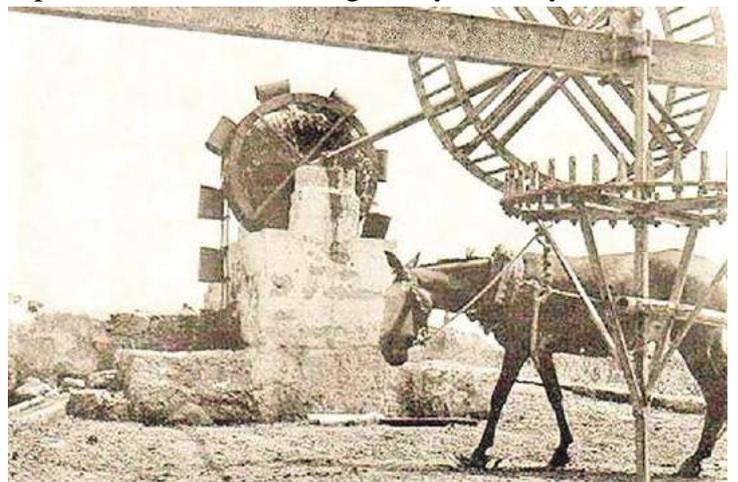


For a long time, the Maltese diet was a potpourri of Continental, North African and Anglo-Saxon dishes, adapted to Maltese tastes.

Archaeological evidence shows that early inhabitants were involved in dairy, meat and fish production, as well as agriculture. Bread has been the backbone of the Maltese diet as far back as the Neolithic era. It was probably discovered by accident when some dough fermented naturally, then caused another batch of dough to rise. This old or “mother” dough is called “it-tinsila”, and traditional bakers still use this system to give Maltese bread its special taste and texture. Malta needed to import grains, and respect for bread was shown by blessing it. Recently the decrease in bread consumption caused the iconic “fira” to fall from favour but it is now making a resurgence. Qormi has the reputation for the best bread and an annual festival is held there. The price of bread was fixed until 2009, when the EU imposed the removal of the subsidy, but this is continuously monitored. Massive increases in bread prices were a significant cause of the Sette Giugno riots of 1919. Despite a fall in popularity recently, there has

been a push for restaurants to serve Maltese bread, and to re-market *ħobż* as unadulterated.

In Phoenician times, Poultry, Carob and Olive production brought prosperity. The Romans brought a varied diet and exotic dishes, and improved irrigation for crops. There was a thriving honey industry. The Arabs introduced the terracing of fields and devices to raise water from wells. They brought lemons and oranges to Malta. Though bitter, Seville oranges were widely grown for their beauty and their sweet-scented blossoms, which were used to make orange flower water, ‘ilma zġhar’. This was added to confectionary, and was highly regarded for upset stomachs. It was even given to animals to keep them healthy. Maltese blood oranges became a delicacy in Europe, but the trade was later taken over by the European mainland. Every year the ‘Festa taċ-Ċitru’ showcases citrus products at San Anton Gardens.



The Normans realised that insufficient food was grown to sustain the population. Grains and pulses had to be imported leaving Malta vulnerable. The knights dug granaries and encouraged farmers to make better use of the land, especially in the more fertile Gozo. They introduced sugar to the island. The Knights also rented a cavern on the upper slopes of Mt Etna so they could have a continuous supply of ice, which was brought to Malta on a special transport ship. The ice was used in their famous hospitals. Ice-cream, in a variety of flavours and in the shape of fruits became fashionable. Chocolate was introduced.

Meat, especially beef, was reserved for special occasions. Il-minestra, a thick vegetable soup, was widely eaten. The better off enjoyed kawllata, with a bit of pork added. Grandmaster Ximenes banned hunting rabbits for a while, to allow them to breed up, but this led to the “The Uprising of the Priests” led by Don Gaetano

Mannarino. It failed and the ringleaders were executed. When the ban was lifted, hunting rabbits on common land restricted the damage they caused, and rabbit dishes were included in the celebrations of l'Imnarja.

When Napoleon invaded in 1798, he left a garrison, which was soon barricaded in Valletta, along with the food stores. 20,000 Maltese out of a population of 100,000 died of fever and starvation. The Maltese, however, adopted a number of French culinary terms, such as "għad-dobbu" from "en daube", a slow-cooked Provençal stew, 'buljut' from "bouilli" and 'stuffat' from "estouffat".

The British brought heightened activity and personnel, especially at the time of the Crimean war, which saw the rise of Restaurants and cafes, especially in Valletta and later in Sliema, such as the Army and Navy restaurant. Potatoes were introduced and crop rotation improved yields. Potatoes, onions, and Cumin were exported. Mediterranean fever was found to be caused by goats' milk and pasteurisation eventually took place.

In anticipation of World War 2, the cricket ground and golf course were used to grow vegetables, and farmers were encouraged to breed rabbits. However, by 1942 starvation set in. The Santa Marija Convoy brought much needed supplies and food was distributed by the Victory kitchens around the island. Diabetes, which had been prevalent prior to the war, due to a diet high in bread and potatoes, diminished, but deficiency diseases were rampant. After the war, the situation reversed again.

The introduction of Rediffusion and the popular cooking programme of Carmen Carbonaro improved the cuisine and Maltese recipe books were published. *L-Imghallem tal-Koki* was a series of 5 small cookbooks by Salvu Aguis (1883-1941). They were written in Maltese and catered for low meat and introduced the idea of desserts.

The introduction of fridges and gas cookers in the 1950s improved the lot of the housewife, no longer slaving over a spiritera. The influx of tourists in the 1960s saw the introduction of foreign menus into Maltese restaurants. After Malta joined the EU in 2004, British foods were gradually displaced by a wide range of cuisines from around the world, including specialty Maltese and Italian restaurants. The Maltese are becoming more aware of the benefits of a healthy diet.

Special events showcase special foods. We see Prinjolata and Perlini at Carnival, Kwareżimal at Lent, Qagħqa tal-Appostli in Holy Week, and Figolli at Easter. June sees L-Imnarja for the feast of St Peter and St Paul, the Fenkata at Buskett Gardens, Stuffat tal-fenek, and baked or fried rabbit. Summer Village festas are celebrated with a diversity of foods, including Lasagna, roast chicken, trifle, gateaux, and fruit, with Qubbajt (Nougat) throughout. November brings All Souls' Day and "Għadam tal-Mejtin", literally dead man's bones. It is followed by the Feast of St Martin and "Il-Borża ta' San Martin", usually given by grandmothers to the children. Shops display marzipan in the shape of fruit. Christmas brings Qagħaq tal-Għasel. The Maltese are moving away from the English Christmas tradition towards a more Italian style. Eating out is becoming popular. Imbuljata after midnight mass is being replaced by breakfast at a hotel. Traditional sweets include ricotta-filled cannoli, 'pasti' (small cakes) and 'biskuttini tal-lewż' (almond biscuits).

The talk was followed by audience participation, which provided further insight into this fascinating topic.

For more details, click [here](#) for the audio recording of the lecture and Frances Bonnici's PowerPoint. Thank you, Charlie Portelli, for recording and sharing.



## Coming Events:

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April:** 5 pm ANZAC plaque unveiling at the Maltese Community Centre Parkville. Please let Irene Grillo know on 9387 8922, followed by:

[ANZAC celebration by the Ex-Services Association:](#) 6 pm Mass at St Paul's, Parkville, followed by refreshments. Please phone the president, Joe Stafrace on 0466 589 553 for catering purposes.

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May:** [Mother's Day High Tea](#) 1 pm to 4 pm at Parkville

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May:** [Maltese Movie Night](#) (Free) 7 pm at Parkville.

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May:** [Ladies night with the Maltese Own Band](#), 5pm in Albion. Phone 0410 982 829



Maltese Ex Services Association of Victoria

Malta - George Cross R S L Sub - Branch (since 1956)

c/o 477 Royal Parade Parkville 3052  
Joseph A. Stafrace President  
Andrew Gatt Secretary

Tel: 9848 4786 Mobile: 0466 589 553  
Email: joe.stafrace1@bigpond.com

**NOTICE TO ALL EX SERVICES  
KIN FOLK AND MEMBERS OF  
THE MALTESE COMMUNITY**

**DUE TO COVID 19**

**Restricted Conditions apply**

*For this reason we are not Participating with MARCH*

**But we are Celebrating ANZAC with a Mass at St. Paul's Chapel  
477 Royal Parade Parkville on Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> of April at 6pm**

This is an invitation for all those who wish to attend this special Mass. Please wear your medals be it yours or your kin folks. If the medals belong to you of course you wear on your left lapel otherwise on your right. We urge you all to attend. **Lest We Forget**

We will be serving refreshments at the Centre afterwards  
If you are attending please call me on **0466 589 553** for catering purposes.

Joe Stafrace  
President

NB. We are unable to celebrate Mass on Sunday, April the 25<sup>th</sup> due to unforeseen circumstances



## Maltese Australian Association (George Cross Award Day)



Twice a year in April and August, the Maltese Australian Association organises a ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance followed by the Maltese [Shelter of Peace](#) in Birdwood Ave, Melbourne. The first commemorates the award of the George Cross to the people of Malta on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1942, during the height of hostilities. The second is associated with the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady on 15<sup>th</sup> August. It celebrates the 1942 arrival of the 5 surviving supply ships of the 14 sent out in Operation Pedestal, better known as the [Santa Marija Convoy](#).

*Photos by Edwidge Borg:*



[Video of the ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021](#) (45:40)

## ***Interesting links:***

[MCCV Facebook Page](#) The MCCV is the umbrella organisation of the Maltese community in Victoria. Keep up to date with news and activities, and interact with the 3874 followers.

[MHA Facebook Page:](#) With 1845 likes and 1877 followers and growing, this is the best way to keep in touch!

[Voice of the Maltese](#) is based in New South Wales but it is published regularly and contains many articles relevant to Maltese around the world.

Frank Scicluna's [e-newsletters](#) are always a good read.

Lots of great photos can be found on [Bay Retro's facebook page:](#)

[Malta Underground's facebook page](#) has many interesting articles, as does [Temple Rescue's facebook page:](#)

[Malta Vintage History](#) is a private Facebook group with many amazing old photos. Well worth joining! If you have only one Facebook link to Maltese history, this is it!

[Kappa Vision's Facebook page](#) contains many stunning photographs and interesting snippets of information.

### **TV and Radio Programmes**

**3ZZZ** 92.3 FM Melbourne Ethnic Community Radio - *Maltese*. Mondays 5-6 pm, Fridays 5-6 pm, Saturdays 10 -11 am or catch it [here](#) by clicking on "LISTEN TO A SHOW" and scrolling down.

STEREO 974 97.4 FM Wednesdays (Maltese Magazine) & Thursdays (Merħba): 6.00pm to 8.00 pm, Co-ordinator –Ray Anastasi

98.9 Northwest FM [Showcase:](#) Fridays 6 pm – 7 pm with Emmanuel Brincat, and [Here, the Maltese Heart:](#) Mondays 7 pm – 8 pm with Emmanuel Brincat.

SBS Radio [Maltese programmes on demand.](#)

**SBS MALTESE NEWS:** *L-Aħbarijiet* on SBSTV twice a week nationwide; Sundays 8.00 am on SBS2 (Chan. 32), and Thursdays at 8.00 am on SBSTV32. Also [on demand.](#)

Watch the latest programmes, news, and radio from Television Malta [TVM programmes on demand](#), and [the latest news in English](#)

[In pictures: Malta begins second shutdown](#) ToM article. 4 weeks of restrictions introduced until 11 April.

[WATCH: US success for film featuring 1919 uprising in Malta:](#) TVM article introducing *Blood on the Crown*, a new film about the Sette Giugno riots.

[The air raid that devastated Sliema:](#) ToM article on the 80th anniversary of the bombing which killed 21.

[Feature: Haż-Żebbuġ - Birthplace of Famous Maltese Personalities:](#) A fascinating article by Matthew Camilleri in *the Malta Independent online.*

[Multi-million euro Rabat palazzo sells after five years on the market:](#) by Solomon Cefai in *Business Now.* Villa Luginsland, a historical palazzo in Rabat will be renovated. Some great photos from KappaVision

[‘The time for compromise on the environment is over’:](#) Albert Galea in the Malta Independent reports on Moviment Graffiti taking direct action to block destruction/development in Dingli.

[MALTESE HERSTORY: Meet Malta's First Female Patron Of The Arts:](#) Sam Vassallo in *Lovin Malta* describes Cosmarra Navarra, who commissioned several works in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

[90 years today since the demise of the Malta Railway:](#) Mario Bonnici shares this ToM article, which includes a 30-minute video about the Railway.

[It Tempju ta Skorba:](#) (16:47) Video in Maltese, no subtitles.

[Fort St Elmo - Memorial](#) (9:28) Video by Heritage Malta, in Maltese, no subtitles.

[Saints And Heroes of The Knights of St John:](#) (11:31) Video in English from St John's Co-Cathedral.