

A photograph of a field of white daffodils with yellow centers, growing in a lush green field. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, and the background shows a dense field of similar flowers stretching towards a hillside under a clear sky.

Joseph Bezzina

A heritage trail through the village of
Santa Luċija • Gozo
and its environs

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Main photos: **Paul Camilleri**

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Santa LuċijaGozo
FONDAZZJONI FOLKLORISTIKA TA' KLULA
2011

First published in 2011
by the FONDAZZJONI TA' KLULA
23, Triq Ta' Klula, Santa Luċija, Gozo. KCM 3050. Malta.
and
ECO-GOZO

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Cataloguing in Publication Data

Bezzina, Joseph, 1950-

A heritage trail through the village Santa Luċija-Gozo and its environs / Joseph Bezzina with input by Joe Mizzi. Santa Luċija, Gozo : Fondazzjoni Ta' Klula Eco Gozo, 2011

40 p. : col. ill. ; 18 cm.

1. Santa Luċija (Gozo) History 2. Santa Luċija (Gozo) Churches 3. Churches Gozo, Malta
I. Title

DDC: 945.8575

LC: DG999.N336C358B4

Melitensia Classification: MZ8 SLC

Computer setting in font Times
Printed and bound in Malta Gozo Press, Ghajnsielem-Gozo. Gsm 9016

Message by
The Hon. Giovanna Debono
Minister for Gozo



The Ministry for Gozo, as the competent Ministry for the administration of the island, has been entrusted with the implementation of the Eco-island vision for Gozo. This vision is based on the target of achieving high sustainable development standards for the island, while ensuring that Gozo's tangible and intangible heritage is protected and is made to play a significant role in the island's social, economic, environmental and cultural development.

The walks being promoted by *Ta' Klula Foundation* through this publication, is in line with our objectives in this regard. Thus this initiative was favourably considered to benefit through the Eco-Gozo scheme for NGO's that was launched by the Ministry for Gozo NGOs. This scheme enables Gozitan organisations to participate actively in the implementation of the Eco-Gozo project, and more specifically the short-term measures identified in the document *Eco-Gozo: A better Gozo Proposed Action 2010-2012*. The financial assistance provided under this scheme facilitates the implementation of projects by the respective organisations thus contributing towards the strengthening of Gozo's environmental and social fabric.

The establishment of a heritage trail by the *Ta' Klula Foundation* aims to promote the culture and heritage

of the quaint village of Santa Luċija. This locality is also endowed with picturesque environs that also characterise its attractions within the island's tourism product. This gives added value to this initiative and through promoting the locality it will also contribute towards the promotion of the island of Gozo.

Ta' Klula Foundation is one of the multitude of NGO's that strengthen Gozo's potential in various socio-economic sectors through their voluntary work. This initiative also comes towards the end of the year dedicated by International and European Institutions as the 'Year of Voluntary Organisations'. It will therefore remain as a tangible reminder of the dedicated commitment of the Foundation's members who work whole-heartedly for the benefit of their community. This also benefits Gozitan society at large.

What has been achieved so far augurs well for the future. We are certain that the heritage trail in Santa Luċija will become established as a favourite tourist attraction on the island and will also prove instrumental in exposing other 'secret' parts of Gozo that are waiting to be explored and enjoyed by all those who venture to walk on the island's heritage trails.

Giovanna Debono
Minister for Gozo

This circular walk starts and ends upon the village square of Santa Luċija. The whole length of the trail traced here is about 7500 metres or 7.5 km long. It is possible to make a number of diversions, indicated by the word *Detour*; some of them prolong the walk; others cut short the indicated trail. A number of tracts are over some rather rough terrain so it is imperative to be prepared. The walk is divided into six segments; distances from one point of the walk to another are rounded up.

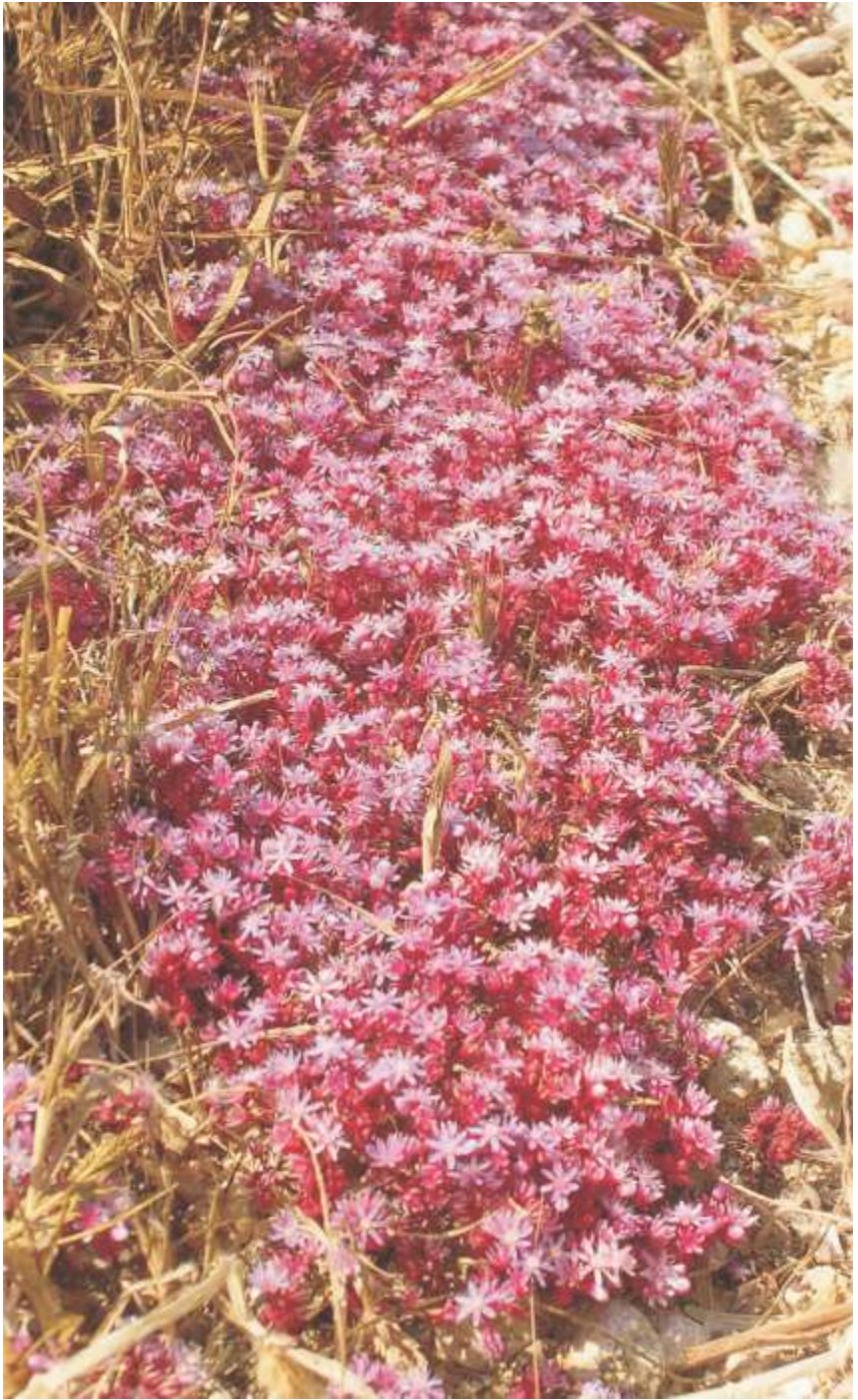
Santa Luċija got its name from the dedication of an old church that had stood on the site since about five hundred years. It encompasses within its confines what is probably the first human settlement in Malta and Gozo and, as such, the locality can be called the first *village* in the Maltese Islands. The present village is one of the earliest that developed in Gozo in the late Middle Ages.

The places of interest range from the ancient caves at *Il-Mixta* to a Punic sanctuary at Ras il-Wardija, from hills with neat terrace works to valleys brimming with vegetation. These and all the places worthy of a visit, including the village church, are all described during this walk. *Enjoy it!*

A. From the village square to San Niklaw (1000 m).

The first part of the walk is from the village square down the main street up to the corner with Triq San Niklaw, on the Santa Luċija Rabat road, easily identifiable by a niche on a massive plinth, and beyond.

The village square is dominated by the church on its north side and by the characteristic cross on a stone



pillar at a corner. The typical cross dates to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was raised to remind passers by that they were on holy ground. People were prompted to say a prayer for the holy souls buried there; shepherds were to keep an eye on their flocks of sheep and goats lest they graze in that area.



The large house on the left was the former village bakery and now houses a communal centre. The niche embedded in its corner, with a fairly large stone statue of the Madonna carrying Baby Jesus, is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary of Snow. On 5 August, the feast day, it is bedecked with greenery and banners and a huge bonfire used to be lit in the middle of the village square at nightfall. This house has the extremely rare feature of not one *ġifna*, but two. It is probably the only house with this double feature in Gozo. A *ġifna* was a large tub for the washing of the bronze and iron kitchen utensils. It was on the edge of the *setaħ* or first floor open space of the house so that, after washing, the water could be run off into the street.

Four streets radiate from the village in different directions. This walk proceeds along *Triq Bir Rix*, the road leading to Rabat. The street's name, unique in the Maltese Islands, means literally the well of feathers; it may have originated from a nickname. Along the street there are several old houses with interesting balconies worth of notice. The first on the right belonged to





Dun Anton Grima (1901-1972), a father figure who dedicated all his life to improve the village and its church. Further down, on the same side, there is the house of Canon Michelangelo Dandalona (1732-1808), the priest who built the present village church. It is over two hundred years old.

The narrow street on one's right, *Triq l-Orkestra tad-Dudi*, is named after Gozo's best known quartet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Tradition has it that one of the old houses on this lane was a summer lodging house for the Grandmaster the head of the Order of the Knights of Malta, rulers of Malta and Gozo between 1530 and 1798.





It was in this lane that the first *ghajn* or public water fountain of the village was situated; water was pumped up from a water reservoir that the British built off the village square in 1873. *Il-ghajn* was situated under an arched recess that was soon turned into a gossip corner. Throughout the day, women, men, and children went with their pails to fetch water for their needs. The introduction of running water in houses was still eighty years away. The water tap was embedded on one side of an oval plinth about a meter high; on the other side of the oval, there was a small low circular trough with running water for the commodity of horses and donkeys, cows and cattle, sheep and goats, as well



as dogs and cats. Santa Luċija had two other such fountains, one at the lower end of *Triq Santa Luċija* leading to Ta' Kerċem; the other close to the niche on the Santa Luċija Rabat road.

The walk proceeds upon *Triq Tlettax ta' Diċembru*, with still another old house on the right. It belonged to Dun Ġużepp Gatt (1887-1974), a renowned maker of Maltese clocks.

The walk proceeds up to the niche on the Santa Luċija Rabat road. It has a stone statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus in her arms. The community in the vicinity raised this plinth with a statue in thanksgiving for their deliverance from a plague outbreak in 1837. Ćelest Cassar, who lived in a nearby farmhouse, enclosed the statue in a niche, lit a candle in front every day, and adorned it regularly. It is a witness to the living and tangible faith of past generations. The running water fountain, just mentioned, was close by.







By the plinth, one is make a right angle upon *Triq San Niklaw* and proceed for about 450 m. On both sides, there are a number of very old houses with the original *mizieb* or water-sprouts. There is also a typical *barumbara*, a pigeon loft with a number of pigeonholes. On one side there is a deep well known as *il-bir ta' San Ġorġ*, St George's well. It lies close to the underground water gallery that feeds the aqueduct built by British in 1841 to provide running water to Rabat. Part of the underground gallery were used as a shelter during the Second World War.

B. Triq San Niklaw up to Għar Ilma down to Triq Ghajn Għabdun (1200 m).

At one point on the left, there is a clearly visible path going uphill to the summit of Għar Ilma Hill, a moderately rough climb of some 300 m. Midway there is a reservoir built by the British that fed the water gallery leading to the aqueduct. Parts of this majestic aqueduct still stand on the road that leads from Rabat to the west of Gozo and it is clearly visible from this point. The British Government financed the building of this two and a quarter kilometre-long aqueduct to carry the bountiful water from this hill to the town of Rabat. The path leads up to the summit of *Għar Ilma*, literally the hill of the water cave. The hill dominates the western part of Gozo.



The **geology** of the hills and valleys is related to the rock that forms the island. The uppermost layer is known as the Upper Coralline Limestone. The flat typical hills of Gozo, as *Ghar Ilma*, are topped by a plateau of this rock and the hills are separated from each other by low-lying plains where the rock has been eroded down to the globigerina limestone strata another layer of rock that is relatively softer. Wied il-Mans, referred to further down, parts from the plains between the hills of Ghar Ilma and Ta' Dbiegi flows into the deeper Wied il-Kbir and comes to end at Il-Qawra in the port of Dwejra. Layers of the yellowish globigerina limestone are clearly visible all along the valley bed of Wied il-Mans. Due to its relative softness, this rock is excellent for building purposes. All houses on the island are built of this limestone. The area of Wied il-Mans is in fact known for its many quarries.



Detour At this point, it is possible to follow the path on the right, past a refurbished farmhouse, and take a walk around the perimeter of the hill. On the opposite is *Ta' Dbiegi* hill that rises 195 metres (638 feet) above sea level making it the highest point in Gozo. On its summit, there was once a chapel dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and another chapel dedicated to Saint Anastasia was nestled in the valley between the two hills.

This walk proceeds in the street straight ahead on the south perimeter of the hill. The southern part of the island is spread beneath and the islands of Comino and Malta are visible in the distance. In medieval times, there was a settlement of some fifteen households along this lane. Except for one or two, they were all built facing south east and below the ridge of the plateau. They were perfectly located sheltered from the prevailing winds and in a position to guard the fields below. A winding path linked the doorways to the lane upon the plateau. They were still untouched until the early 1980s but they have now been converted without recognition.

Legend 1 The story goes that one of these houses belonged to a widower who lived with his two sons. When they grew up and understood their utter poverty, they decided to emigrate and seek their fortunes in nearby Sicily. The old man was left alone, for though his sons implored him time and again to join them, he declined. He could neither leave the fields that had been in the family for generations, nor the peacefulness of his farm. One night he heard a persistent knock at the door and a voice implored him shelter. A poor fellow, who had nothing to eat, had

tried to fill his empty stomach with some melons from a nearby field. He had been caught red-handed and apprehended, but he succeeded to flee.

The widower kept him in hiding and he repaid him by helping him in the fields. He decided to dig up a well to save rainwater, but at a point he discovered Għar Ilma, a cave with a stream of running water inside. In times of drought, their fields remained green, the production increased, and they could live better the rest of their lives.

Detour After about 300 m, almost midway in the walk on the hill, there is path on one's left descending down the hill to *triq Għar Ilma*, close to the point of departure.

After about a walk of 500 metres on the perimeter, one reaches the street descending down the hill. The hillock on the opposite is known as *Il-Mixta*. It had caves hewn all around before they were destroyed through the excavation of a hard-stone quarry. It has been ascertained that a troglodyte community lived in these caves some seven thousand years ago.

Detour This detour is a must. The street going left proceeds past the quarry and onto a path that goes up inside the caves. Pottery unearthed in this area is of a purer pedigree than any other pottery in the Maltese





Islands. For this reason, archaeologists believe that the first humans to inhabit the islands lived in these caves. These reached Gozo from Sicily 79 km away. The closest point and port to Sicily is Dwejra that lies in the area beneath these hills and clearly visible from this point. The caves were inhabited until the Second World War.

The downward slope from the summit of *Għar Ilma* Hill to the *triq Għajn Għabdun* is around 400 metres. Going down on left, there are the remains of one of the earliest mechanical stone crushers on Gozo. A little further down on the same side, a path leads up to *Għar Ilma*, the water cave that gave its name to the hill. However, it is not accessible to the public.





Detour At the end of the descent, the street going left brings one back to the village square, the point of departure. Just before the square, on the left, there is a three-storey house that belonged to Lorenzo Gatt (1871-1960), a master mason involved in the building of part of the village church, of the monumental Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Ta' Pinu, and of the neo-Gothic parish church of the village of Għajnsielem.

C. Triq Għajn Għabdun to Għajn Għabdun (1000 m).

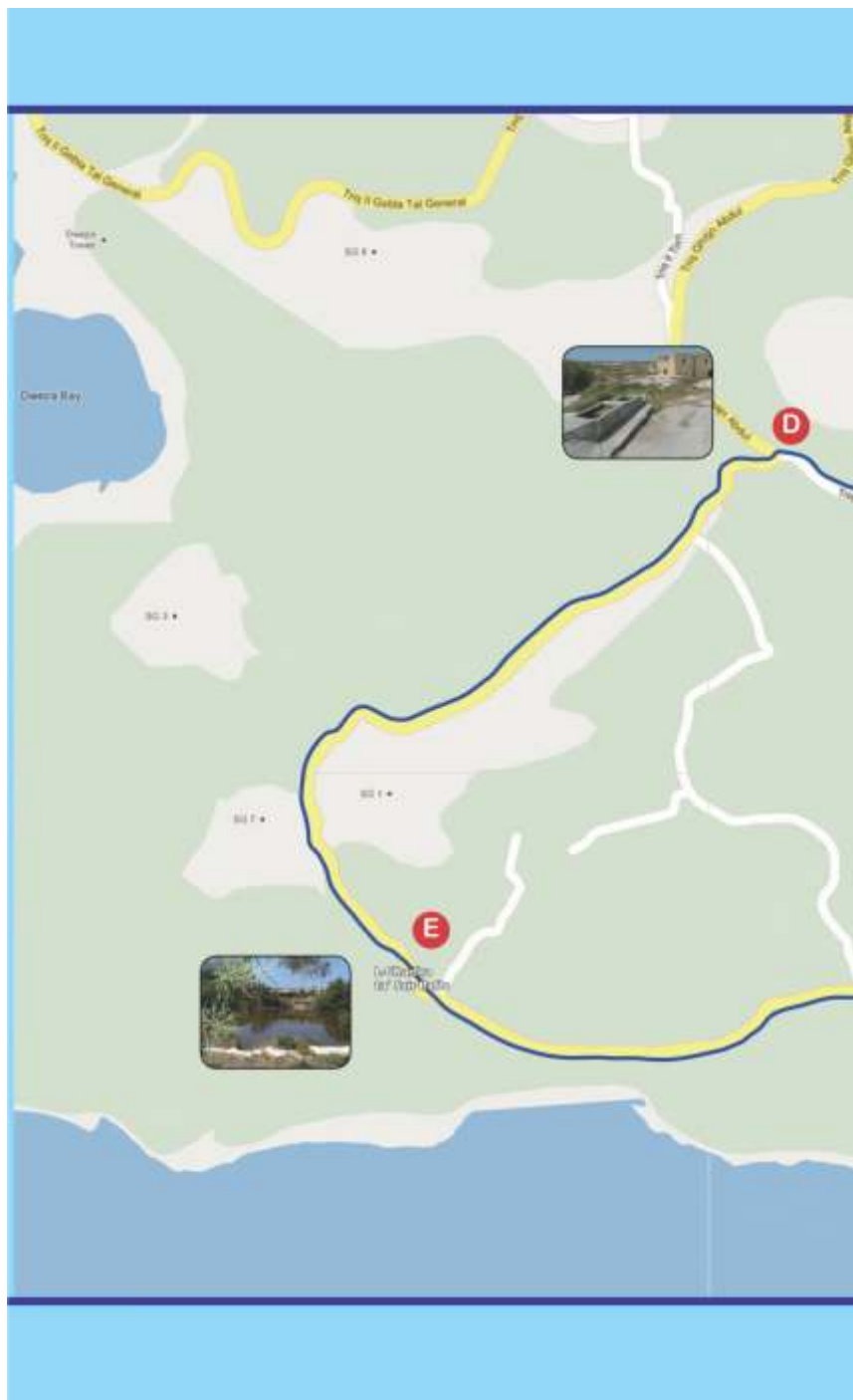
This walk continues to the right along *triq Għajn Għabdun* for slightly less than 1000 m up to a fresh water spring known as Għajn Għabdun. The road runs in a semi-circle beneath *Il-Mixta* and *Ta' Dbiegi* hills up to the village of San Lawrenz. The valley beyond the spring is known as Wied il-Mans.

Għajn Għabdun, that the spring of Għabdun, a common Arabic name, is a bountiful natural spring close to a large farmhouse commanding the whole area. The spring is directed into two inter-connected stone troughs from where people can fill their pails with water, wash their clothes, take their farm animals to drink, and direct the overflow in stone canals to nearby fields.



Legend 2 The island of Gozo was for many centuries subject to continuous raids by marauding corsairs. They caused widespread havoc, stole whatever they could lay their hands upon, and kidnapped people to sell them on the prosperous slave markets abroad. One evening a galley sailed into *Dwejra* Bay, not very far away. Its captain was Għabdun, a daring corsair always asking for more. As soon as darkness enveloped the bay, he led a party inland in search of water and food. By chance or by design, the party detached itself from its leader. He proceeded in his greed, while the corsairs returned to the galley. When he never returned at dawn, the men hauled the anchor and left without him.

Għabdun succeeded to elude the people in a hideaway for some days, but one early morning he was spotted by some farmers in the vicinity of *il-Mixta* and apprehended. Their wrath for the plunder they had suffered throughout the years was vented upon him. They decided to revenge themselves by starving him to death. It was in vain that he begged for water, for he was given none. Hoping that he would find a trickle, he began to dig with pieces of pottery potsherds. All of a sudden water began to trickle and it soon became a tiny stream. He drank and drank; in fact he drank so much that he soon fell down lifeless besides the spring that bears his name to this day.





D. Ghajn Ghabdun to L-Ghadira ta' San Raflu (1800 m).

The walk proceeds down the lane to the left of the spring for close to 1800 m. After about 650 m, on one's right, there is a well-preserved typical *barumbara* or pigeon loft. A few more steps and comes upon the bridge at the point where *Wied il-Mans* flows into the deeper *Wied il-Kbir*.

Wied il-Mans means literally the valley of the tame. This toponym escapes the compilers of Malta's dictionaries. More than a nickname, this place name is probably derived from the topographical feature a flatland *tamed* between hills.

The valley is a haven for the lover of wild flowers. It is possible to see here and there the rare *Sempreviva ta' Ghawdex* Maltese Everlasting (*Heli-chrysum melitense*) recognizable, in May and June, by an intense yellow flowering stem. It is endemic to these parts of Gozo. Another rare plant that can be found in the valley is a form of *Kurrat ta' Malta* Wild Leek (*Allium melitense*) that can grow up to one metre and has small light violet flowers. The *Papoċċi tal-Madonna* the Maltese Toadflax (*Linaria pseudolaxiflora*) with white or light violet flowers on a stalk also grows in crevices along the valley wall.





The valley supports important bird nesting sites. It is a stronghold of the *Merill* the Blue Rock-Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*) the national bird of Malta. The crevices on the side of the valley and the wild plants are breeding grounds of the *Durrajsa* Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*). The place was also a breeding ground for other species, but most of them have been literally blown out of the area and out of the Maltese islands.

The rubble walls, at least, are still there to admire: a line of laced stones running hundreds of metres apportioning the countryside; an unparalleled testimony of the history and culture of this tiny speck in the Mediterranean and of the murderous work of generations of anonymous farmers.

As soon as one passes the bridge of Wied il-Mans and past another old farmhouse, a magnificent view of Dwejra Bay springs at a distance on the right. It is possible to make out *it-Tieqa taż-Żerqa*, the megalithic window-like opening upon the sea, and one of the most photographed spots on the island. In the far distance to the north, there are the cliffs of *Ras San Mitri*, the closest point of the Maltese archipelago to the European continent, some seventy nine kilometres

(79 miles) south west of *Capo Passero* in Sicily. The hillock to the right is known as *Bir Rix*. It is interesting to note the *sined*, the neat terraced fields rising one row upon another to the top.

Proceeding up a slight incline, one is to keep walking to one's left. On the right, very clearly visible, there are the large gaping holes in the middle of the fields created by the stone quarries.

The *Globigerina* limestone, which abounds in this area, is the only raw material available on the island and it is widely employed in the building of houses. It is excellent for building purposes as it is freestone, which means that it can be cut in any direction unlike many other rocks which can be cut only along the *grain*. It is known locally as *tal-Franka* due to the ease with which it can be sawn and chiselled. Besides it becomes harder a few weeks after being cut from the quarry turning yellowish brown as one can observe in old houses. Its softness makes it possible for masons with primitive instruments to cut it into whatever shape they desire: pigeonholes, ventilators, and rain water channels, as in the farmhouses observed during this walk.



This lane eventually comes to an end next to a fresh water pond known as *L-Għadira*. Another lane straight ahead proceeds to *Ras il-Wardija*.



Detour From this point it is possible to make a detour to the coastline up to Ras il-Wardija, the site of a Punic Sanctuary. It is over 3000 m return, partly along rough paths. The detour commences in the lane that turns sharply to the left between the fields. After about 1000 m, the lane comes to end and one is make a right angle turn on one's right up a narrow pathway going up and proceeding on the edge of the fields up to the remains of *it-Torri tal-Wardija*, Wardija Tower, on the south western tip of Gozo. The cliff goes down a height of some 152 metres (500 feet) vertically into the sea.

Nothing remains of the tower, except its foundation, but right below there are the remains of the only surviving Punic settlement in the Maltese islands. The settlement was discovered through the study of aerial photographs by a team from the Institute of Archaeology of the Catholic University of Milan. Beneath the knoll upon which the tower rose, there is a rectangular recess cut out in the rock. It is said to be singular and unique in the Punic world. Large niches have been carved into the walls, one of which had the sign of Tanit cut inside. Baal and Tanit, the equivalent of the Phoenician goddess Astarte, were the principal gods of the Carthaginians and at one time their religion involved human sacrifices to these gods.

In the centre of the floor at the entrance to the recessed chamber and extending into it, there is a large rectangular table for



offerings. A wide terrace has been cut in front of the temple. On the south side there is a large, deep bath with ten steps leading to its floor; it apparently served to allow worshippers to enter and perform ablution rites. This sanctuary, which was Punic with many Hellenistic characteristics, is said by the excavators to show the transition from the influence of Carthage to that of Hellenistic Rome.

To return to the original track, one has to walk back the same way.

E. L-Ghadira ta' San Raflu to Ta' Klula (2000 m).

L-Ghadira ta' San Raflu or simply *L-Ghadira*, is a natural fresh water pond surrounded by an expanse of trees, where there is also ample parking space. These trees grow around a low circular depression that fills up naturally with water for most of the year. It lies about 152 metres (500 feet) above sea level.

Its designation is either derived from a nickname or from a niche of the Seraphim Raphael *San Raflu* in

Maltese that was hollowed out on the wall of a room on the western edge of the pond. Its name is quite recent, as Gozo historian Agius de Soldanis does not record it in his monumental work of 1745. It is the only natural large pond on the island and is a favourite spot for picnics when the weather is warm. A number of fish thrives in the pool.

Legend 3 Women from the nearby farmsteads, not so long ago, used to go to the pond to launder their clothes. The water level was reached down a flight of steps on one side. The corsairs that frequented the island of Gozo, alas, also knew of this fresh water source. One day a party lingered in the area till early morning and surprised three young girls busily washing clothes in the pond. They blindfolded them and chained them in a hideaway nearby. The following night they dragged them to the port of Xlendi, signalled to their companions to approach land, and transferred them on their ship to put them up for sale on the slave market. Their families soon understood what had happened as their searches were in vain. Their fate and destiny like that of many others before and in the following decades remained a mystery ever after.

The walk proceeds beyond the pool along the road *triq Santa Katerina ta' Qabbieža* where one can enjoy fantastic scenes of the coastline. In relative vicinity, there is the entrance to the port of Xlendi guarded by a tower raised in 1650 by the Universitas, the regional government of Gozo. Though dwarfed by the surrounding cliffs, it is in fact a massive building able to resist gunpowder shots. The promontory upon which it stands is known as Ras il-Bajada. After about 950 metres, the street slopes down and crosses a valley known as *Wied Sansun*. Here and there, in the midst of



the fields, one can observe a *kamra tal-indukrar*, a room where the farmer stayed to watch over *jindokra* in Maltese the products of his field.

Detour At one point on the right, it is possible to follow a path on the edges of the field until a precipice where there are better and closer views of the port of Xlendi. Up the country lane on the left, there is a VOR automatic station. Short for visual omnirange, a type of navigation system using a series of radio beacons, this station guides all north incoming air traffic towards the runway at the Malta International Airport. It has been in operation since the late 1950s. About a kilometre further down the same country lane at *Tax-Xifer*, there is the Fifteenth August Fireworks Factory. It is necessary to follow the advice on a large board on the site: *Keep away!*

Proceeding further up for just over 100 m, the street splits into two. This walk follows the one on the left.

The fields nestled between the two streets are commonly known as *il-Vapur*, the ship, possibly from their shape. The whole area is known as *Ta' Qabbieža* and it once had a chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine in its midst. The origins of the village of Santa Luċija were a number of farmsteads at this spot. It is interesting to note that the folk also refer to this spot as *Ta' Santa Katerini*, the proper name of Catherine in the plural, unknown elsewhere in the Maltese islands. This due to the fact that for some time, there were possibly two tiny chapels on either side of *il-Vapur*; one dedicated to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a martyr of the fourth century; the other to Saint Catherine of Siena, a virgin and doctor of the Church who lived in the fourteenth century.

A further 200 m or so ahead on one's right, there is another clearly marked pathway running between the fields up to the cliffs where there is another wonderful view of the sheer cliffs outside the port of Xlendi and the countryside beyond.





The road proceeds down to the area of Ta' Klula. The walk proceeds along *triq Ta' Klula*, a narrow street on one's left just before a refurbished farmhouse.

Detour About 100 metres further down, on one's right, one can follow *triq Ta' Doti*, past some old farmhouses, and into the middle of cultivated fields and in an area above Xlendi valley and the port of Xlendi.

F. Ta' Klula to village square (500 m).

The district of Ta' Klula is possibly the vestige of an estate and the toponym might be the nickname of the owner. The large farmhouse at the beginning of *triq Ta' Klula* might have been the residence of the owner as it was a diffused custom for estate owners to build a house on their country property. Along the street there a number of alleys and old houses that must have

formed the village core in the seventeenth century. It is possibly that Madre Margherita Debrincat, foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1880) was born in one these houses. It was also here that id-Dudi, of the famous quartet, had its abode. Andreina Sultana (1925-2005), a Dominican sister who pioneered a mission of her Order in Pakistan where she was referred to as the Mother of Martyrs for her total dedication to the sick and poor was also born in the area. Wistin and Ġanna Borg, two philanthropists who dedicated their life to the village lived at the end of the street, where it opens upon the village square, the point of departure of this walk.



Detour *Triq Santa Luċija*, the other street that from the village square goes towards the village of Ta' Kerċem is also worth a glimpse. There are a number of alleys and several buildings with attractive stone balconies. Just after leaving the square, on the left, there are two small rooms, one upon another, used for the production of local cheeslets. The room below was used for the curding of milk and the preparation of the cheese, eventually placed in the upper room to dry.

About one hundred metres down the street, on one's right, there is the tower of *il-miħna*, a windmill. It was originally surmounted with sails that turned in the wind so as to generate power to grind grain into flour. It was built by Francesco Gatt in the mid-1850s. It used to cater for the people of Santa Luċija and Ta' Kerċem. This and other windmills thrived until the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the first steam-driven mill was introduced in Gozo. Slowly but surely, all windmills went out of business.

Further down the street, on the left, the area is known as *Tal-Warda*, of the flower, after a chapel of *Santa*





Marija tal-Warda that stood there in the sixteenth century. The flower must have referred to a lily pictured in the altarpiece, a common symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

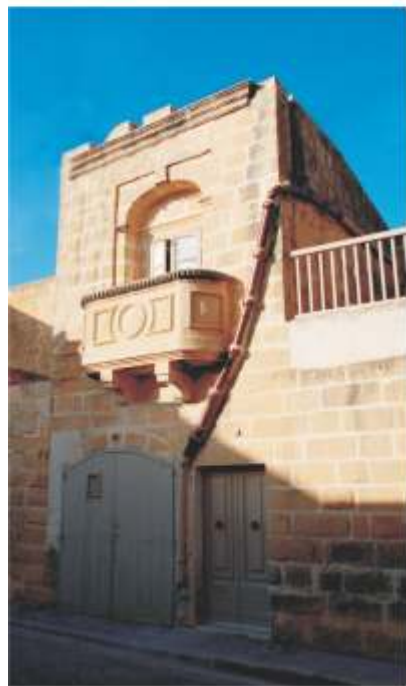
On the same side, in the middle of the field, there are the remains of an old building known as *it-Torri*, the Tower. With all probability, this tower-looking building in the middle of fields served a landlord to oversee his field labourers and to guard the products from theft. The theft of products was a rampant problem in the eighteenth and nineteenth century when extreme poverty led many to resort to stealing to satisfy their hunger. This tower crashed down during a storm in August 1966.

Further down, on the left, the house opposite the entry of triq l-Għadira was once the Santa Luċija infant and primary school. At the end of the street, there is a niche known as *Tal-Patri*, one of three oldest of the village;



now embedded in the façade of a house. The bas-relief sculpted in local stone originally stood inside a niche on a plinth and it was reached up four steps. It always had a lamp burning in front. The bas-relief commemorates the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, depicted with Saint Francis and Duns Scotus (c.1265-1308), a Franciscan Scottish theologian and scholar who defended the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. He was a friar, a *patri*, and is dressed as such, hence the name.

The village square is the stage where the principal events of the village take place. One very popular event is a traditional dinner *al fresco* in the last weekend of July. The most important, however, is the village festa in honour of Saint Lucy in December,





when there is a procession with the statue of the saint accompanied by a band and concluding with a fireworks display.

Saint Lucy is a virgin who was martyred in Syracuse, Sicily, during the persecution of Diocletian in 304. Her memory was venerated at an early date. The name Lucy is suggestive of light and for this reason she is popularly invoked against disease of the eyes and, in art, she is often represented holding two eyes in a dish.

The chapel of St Lucy is first recorded in 1575. It was in such ruinous conditions that it had to be desecrated. Yet by 1598, it was functioning again. The few farmers living in the vicinity had seen to its reconstruction. By 1608, a beautiful tempera on wood of the saint was hanging on the altar and a smaller image of the saint was fixed on the chapel's door. On Saturdays, a lamp was lit in front and the chapel was kept open for devotees.

The chapel was rebuilt from its foundation late in the 1770s through the munificence of Canon Mikelang Dandalona. It served as a vice-parish for Santa Lučija and Ta' Kerčem between 1848 and 1851. The chapel was enlarged in the early twentieth century and again in 1951-52. It was consecrated in 1952,

The parvis of the chapel is reached up three steps. The façade is articulated by Ionic pilasters having a base and a capital that carry a boldly projecting cornice





above which there is a tympanum and ornamented end finials. A heavily ornamented bell-cot is placed centrally above the main door. Four bells by the British firm John Taylor were blessed and raised in position on 5 December 1948.

The interior is in the form of a Latin cross. The main altarpiece, by an unknown local artist, is dominated by Saint Lucy with her unmistakable emblem of two eyes on a platter. She is beseeching the Virgin Mary of Snow, in the upper part of the picture, for the souls in purgatory, pictured in flames on the opposite side of the saint. The nave is flanked on the right by a niche with a statue of the saint, sculpted by Wistin Camilleri (1920), and a door leading to the vestry on the left.

The dome has a modern painting depicting *The Transcendence of the Pious into Heaven* by contemporary artist Austin Camilleri (Santa Lucija, 2004). It is inspired by passages from the Apocalypse, the last book of the Bible. It represents a series of pious souls modeled on village residents seemingly casting off their tunics and, in the process, detaching themselves from earthly existence. This detachment transcends them upwards as if in a whirlwind towards the promised glory of heaven.



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