

# *Naxxar*

*Four Walks to Discover a Village*



Naxxar  
Local Council



*Din l-Art Helwa*

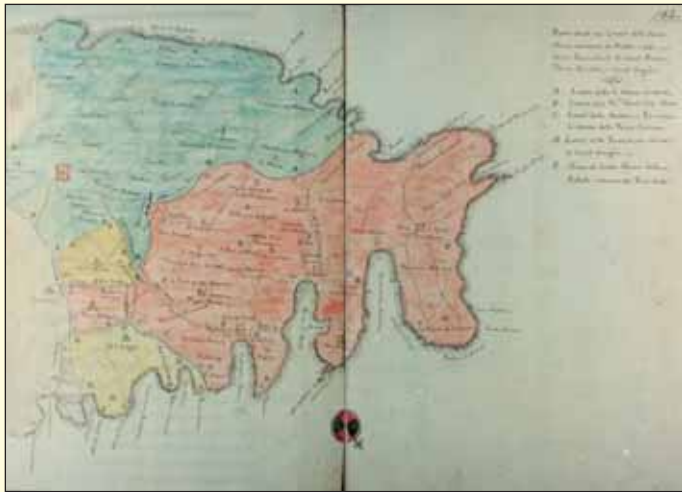
*Paul Catania*



*AX Holdings*



PALAZZO PARISIO  
& GARDENS



*Old Naxxar Boundary*

## Naxxar – A Historical Overview

The presence of the vast system of cart-ruts leading up from the valley to the San Pawl tat-Tarġa ridge, the numerous burial places found in the present central area, as well as a number of Bronze Age storage wells, are the earliest signs of habitation in the village of Naxxar. The origins of the village, therefore, go back to prehistoric times.

The early establishment of the parish, maybe in the 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century, is another proof of the presence of the village on the map of the island. The Naxxar parish was indeed the first to be established in the countryside.



*Aerial view of Tal-Qadi Temples*

Although the dedication of the church is the Nativity of Our Lady, however, the strongest tradition in the village is that concerning the shipwreck of St Paul, the inhabitants having been presumably among the first to accept the new

*Aerial view of Cart Ruts*



religion. In fact the motto of the village is *Prior Credidi*, 'First to believe'.

Throughout the middle ages and under the Order, the village served as the gateway to the north of the island. The area leading to the north was always strongly fortified. The presence of the Captain's Tower and the entrenchment walls just before the steep slope, are evidence of the strategic importance the Knights gave to this area.

From the earliest documented periods, it is evident that the village was always primarily an agricultural area, the production of cotton being for



*Aerial view of the Captain's Tower*

centuries the prime produce. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this industry was really thriving and the village was flourishing. The demise of this industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a real blow to the community and poverty became rampant. However, the arrival in the village of a number of well-to-do families began to change this picture. The presence of people like the Marquis Bugeja and later, the Marquis Scicluna, was a boom to the skilful abilities of the village craftsmen who now found new energies to deliver all that was asked from them including works of great artistry.

The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century could indeed be considered as a golden age in the village. Not that people became rich in money terms but the skills of the master blacksmiths and carpenters of Naxxar were second to none. This tradition was continued into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today a few blacksmiths still survive while carpenters still abound.

These early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the enlargement of the church by the addition of side apses and a new façade. This was followed by the new decorations of the church ceiling and later, a new organ balcony. In the last forty years the side chapels have all been decorated with baroque reliefs and paintings were placed in the cupolas. Today the church is excellently decorated even though there is no real uniformity in styles.

By the 1960s the village saw the opening of two important roads, Labour Avenue and 21 September Avenue. These not only opened up the square but created a new area which soon developed into a thriving business area as well



*Old Postcard of San Pawl tat-Tarġa Hamlet*

as a large residential area. This building boom has been going on ever since and the small village of 4,000 inhabitants of the sixties has developed into a town of over 12,000! Today's population is very cosmopolitan, with a high percentage having been born outside Naxxar.

Most of the new development has taken place on the fringe areas. However, the old centre has seen its changes too. As families left their old homes to move into newly-built modern houses, outsiders moved in into the old, restored 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century 'houses of character' along St Lucy Street, Castro Street, Main Street, etc. The closely knit, relatively intimate community of the early sixties, is not the same today.

Traditions, however, are still strong. The village festa on 8 September is still celebrated with great pomp and the Good Friday and Easter processions once again bring the Naxxarin very much together creating a strong sense of community.

## Getting to Naxxar

Bus numbers 55 & 56 from Valletta to Naxxar

Bus number 65 from Sliema to Rabat via Naxxar

Anyone arriving from Bugibba/Qawra area should stop at Mosta and take bus number 56 or 65 to Naxxar; or arrive directly on route bus number 59

A circular bus operates on a daily basis through the locality only

## Acknowledgements

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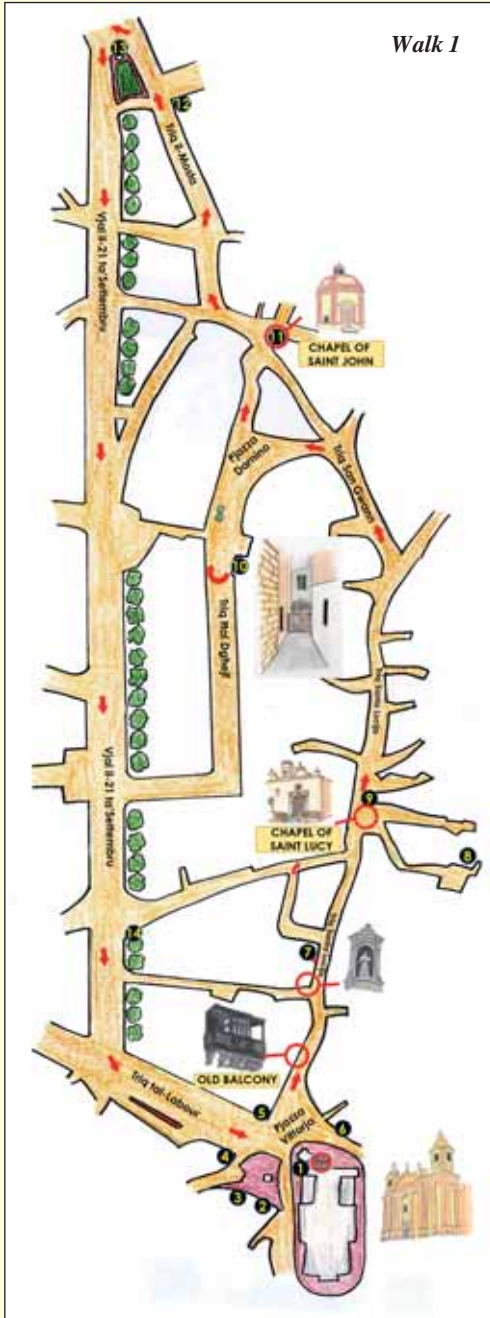
Photographs by Mr. Victor Rizzo, Mr. Gottfried Catania and Naxxar Local Council

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Front Cover photo by courtesy of Palazzo Parisio – View of Belfry from Palazzo Parisio Garden

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Walk 1 (approx. 1 hour – 1.59km)

## The Village Core and Palazzo Parisio

*This tour takes you through the heart of the village from Piazza Vittorja, through Triq Santa Luċija, Triq il-Habs, Triq Zenqa back to Triq Santa Luċija, down to Triq San Ġwann, through Piazza Darnino, down to Triq il-Mosta and then up again through Vjal il-21 ta' Settembru, returning to Piazza Vittorja. Having reached the square you can go to Palazzo Parisio. The tours in the palace begin on the hour.*

The tour begins in the village square. Facing the parish church (1), one has to imagine the area as an enclosed one. Vjal il-Labour, the wide avenue to the right, is a relatively modern street having been opened in the late 1950s. At the beginning of that street stood two old chapels, the last two of a number



A busy village square

of chapels which originally were to be found in the area around the square before the building of the present church in 1616. At the same time the street was opened, there were no streets leading to the back of the church either.

Hence the village square was the real centre with three streets leading out in different directions: facing the church, *Triq Santa Luċija*; to the right of the church, *Triq il-Markiz Scicluna* and *Triq Castro*; and to the left of the church, *Triq il-Kbira*. Just take a few minutes in this square. Standing to the left of the church you can see the old Armoury, today the football club (2); moving further to the left is the house which for many years served as the law-courts, today Victory Pharmacy (3); across the street is the house of the noble family Ellul Bonici (4); then across to the other side of Vjal il-Labour is the former Palazzo Vittoria, the residence of the noble Marquis Bugeja, today the Peace Band Club (5); and to the right is the imposing façade of Palazzo Parisio, the residence of the Marquis Scicluna (6).

By far the most important of the streets was *Triq Santa Luċija*, the longest one and the real hub of the village. Over the years this street became the centre of all commercial activities in the village as well as the centre of the social life of the villagers. There is barely a house which has not at some time in the past served as a bar, shop, or workshop for the many craftsmen of this village. In 1874 there were in this street nine blacksmiths, this being the prevailing trade. There were bakeries, bazaars, greengrocers, butchers, confectioners. There were carpenters, barbers, shoe makers and repairers, winemakers, and even a silversmith!

*Palazzo Parisio*



*St. Lucy Street by Cedric Galea Pirotta*

*Triq Santa Luċija* is, however, unique in another respect: it has the largest number of alleys in Malta: fourteen in all. It also has the same number of small statues adorning various houses.

Turning away from the square and into this street you come face to face with 300-year-old houses at the very beginning of the street. In the façade of the first house on the left, you see one of the many statues adorning the houses; facing it, there is a very old small house with unusually nice, but fast eroding, stone decorations. It also has a wrought-iron balcony worth noticing. A little further down on the left side is a big house, which was the residence of the Marquis Bugeja's mother. This same building with its magnificent

*Old house with large balcony*





*Arch at end of Sqaq Nru. 1*

balcony, later housed the Victoria Social Club as well as a small theatre at the back.

You are now facing, on the right side of the street the first of the fourteen alleys. This alley ends with an arch beneath which are the entrances to a number of houses. The door on the left just before

the arch led to the first mechanized carpentry shop in Malta! This is where the master craftsman Emmanuel Pirotta made many of his masterpieces.

Back in the street, you are faced with *Triq l-Ifran* so called after the two bakeries that used to serve the village in former years. This used to be Alley No 2. At the corner is a butcher's shop. This place has served as a shop for over a hundred years, having been a grocery before. A little further down from this shop, on the same side of the road, is the Vittoria Band Club (7), the former municipal law court of the fourth district of the countryside. This was purposely built and served only towards the end of the existence of these law-courts in 1899. Facing this building are the unique twin niches, one showing the statue of the Infant Mary and is exceptionally interesting in the way the baby Madonna is presented in swaddling clothes.



*House with twin niches*

Turn into *Triq il-Habs* next to the Club. The Prison (*Habs*) and the Law Courts have nothing to do with one another, the former preceding the latter by over a century. A prison in a village outside the walled cities was unique in the eighteenth century. It probably housed those who failed to pay their debts. It actually has a number of houses and not prison cells, the condemned person being allowed to live with his family in a sort of house arrest. It is right at the end of the street. Above the entrance, dominating the street is a small but beautiful niche with the statue of the Assumption.



*Details in Triq il-Habs*



*Niche of the Assumption in Prison Street*



*Inside Sqaq Nru. 3*

Walking through the narrowest stretch of this street, you come into *Triq Żenqa*. Turn right and up back to *Triq Santa Luċija* turning left into a small square. There are two interesting alleys in this square. At the very end of one of these is one of the five windmills (8) of the village. These alleys have



recently been upgraded by the Local Council and the inhabitants are indeed proud of them. *Sqaq Nru 3* is a beauty. Having moved out of the alleys, turn right once again and you come to the chapels (9). The one you see first is St Lucy's chapel from which the street takes its name and one of the earliest in the parish. It was held in high esteem by the faithful. It existed before 1500 although it was rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Adjoining it is another chapel dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady. The little square in front of the chapels has three other alleys.



*Windmill at end of Sqaq Nru. 3*



*Niche of the Holy Family*



*Chapels of St. Lucy and the Nativity*

The part of the street down from the chapel has seen fewer changes over the years and hence the houses are mostly older. Still punctuated by another five alleys, this last part leads to a widening of the road where it actually ends. Some of the restored houses here are really quaint. You might also see the last of the shoemakers/shoe repairers of the village. Just before you reach the shoemaker, on the same side of the road, the right side, you can notice a house

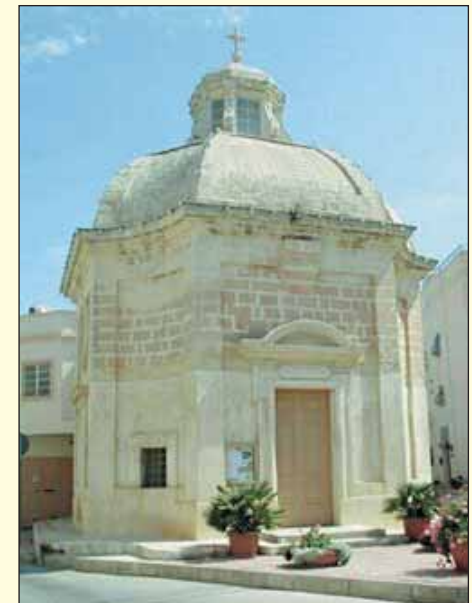


*Darnino Square*

with a recessed entrance, today often serving as a garage. This house was used as a hospital during the revolt of the Maltese against the French. At that time Naxxar had welcomed no less than 1,300 persons from the harbour cities!

Proceed further down to *Triq San Ġwann*, going through the street on the left. Once again this is one of the earliest areas where very old houses

abound. Coming to a point where you are faced with a street on each side of *Triq San Ġwann*, take the one to your left and enter *Pjazza Darnino*. This is so called because a wealthy person way back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century built a house which was seen as extravagant by the village people. They nicknamed the owner *Ta' Hala Ta' Dar* (waste of a house) and the parish priest who first gave names to the village streets named this area after the house, *Dar – Ninu*, 'Anthony's house'. Walking a little further up the square, you can see another of the windmills (10). Walk down again and take the narrow stretch of street to your left.



*St. John's Chapel*

You will end up facing the chapel of St John (11). This is a singularly-shaped chapel built in the form of an eight-pointed cupola. Walking further down, you come into *Triq il-Mosta* where you can see two of the remaining blacksmiths of the village. At the end of the street there is a third windmill (12).



*Millenium Monument*

Before turning into *Vjal il-21 ta' Settembru* one can see the Millenium monument (13) erected to commemorate the third millenium. Turn left and up back towards the church from this modern street. This is a completely new area,



*Civic Centre*

the street having taken the role previously held by *Triq Santa Luċija* as the commercial hub of the village. At the upper end of this avenue is the Local Council's office (14) and the playing field on the opposite side. As you reach *Vjal il-Labour*, turn left and back up to *Pjazza Vittorja*.

A tour of Palazzo Parisio is a must. This is one of the most impressive buildings in Malta. Its baroque works are indeed unique. You can also enjoy the magnificent walled Mediterranean gardens and relax in the coffee shop.



*Palazzo Parisio Ballroom*



*Palazzo Parisio Garden*







Internal View of Parish Church



Parish Church Organ

Among the embellishments which are not to be missed in this church is the organ balcony; the wonderfully-decorated Rosary altar encompassing the whole face of the left transept; the main altar with its fine marbles; the stucco figures representing the four evangelists just below the dome; the choir apse, the work of Lorenzo Gafà; and most impressively the wrought-iron work especially the chancel gate and the lectern in the choir. Among the paintings the titular at the back of the choir is attributed to the school of Mattia Preti, with the two others on each of its sides being by Guido Reni. Francesco Zahra is well represented by a number of paintings, especially noticeable being the *St Lawrence* in the first chapel on the right and *Our Lady of the Rosary* on the altar in the left transept.

Among the embellishments which are not to be missed in this church is the organ balcony; the wonderfully-decorated Rosary altar encompassing the whole face of the left transept; the main altar with its fine marbles; the stucco figures representing the four evangelists just below



Side Altar



Statue of Madonna

You may also find it interesting to visit the small museum at the back of the church which houses the Good Friday processional statues. The church Museum lies upstairs in the same building.



Entrance to Triq il-Kbira

Leave the church through the side door in the right nave, the one next to the statue of the Baby Madonna. Having crossed the street, you come in front of the football club, the former Armoury building (2). Keep walking down and you enter *Triq il-Kbira*. Previously this was known as *Strada*

*Reale*, and it was the main street leading towards Valletta. In the 1720s, when the parish priest first began to refer to streets by name, he normally divided this street into parts. This upper part he referred to as the part from the parish house

to the church square. In fact as you walk further down this street, the first important building you will meet on the left side, is the Parish House (3). This is an old building dating back to 1736. It has a typical Maltese structure with a central yard surrounded by the various living rooms and a garden at the back.



*House with sculptured balcony and Parish House*

Note the wonderfully-sculptured stones at the top of this one-storied house. Originally these formed the organ balcony of the old parish church before the new façade was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Detail of Old Police Station by Cedric Galea Pirotta*

A little further down on the same side is a big house (4) with steps leading up to it. This must have belonged to an important person, possibly a knight. Notice the sculptured balcony. Unfortunately the nice wooden upper part was removed some years ago when the building served as a police station. Previous to that, it housed the village primary school for many years. Note the small door at street level beneath the steps. During the war this underground area served as a maternity hospital!

Now take the street to your left, *Triq San Ġorġ*. A little further into this street is an old house right at the corner with *Triq id-Dejqa* to your right. This was the home of the tax

collector in 17<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The parish priest used to refer to this street as *Strada del Fiscale* (Street of the Tax Collector). The houses opposite this house were built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They replaced the garden which had been built at the beginning of that century at the request



*House of Tax Collector*

of Sir Alexander Ball. In some other villages such gardens are still extant.

Walk down the narrowest street in the village with 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century houses on both sides. In 1725 it was already being referred to as *Strada Stretta*. When you reach the end of the street turn left into *Triq Ġużeppi Stivala*.



*Typical Old Houses*



*Typical House in Triq id-Dejqa*



*Typical old Houses*



*Chapel of the Immaculate Conception*

Most of the houses on the left side of this street were built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But there are a number of very old ones on the other side. One of these, recently restored, has been dated to 1676! In it lived a family of whom three male members served on the galleys.



*Typical alley in Hal Dghif*

In fact an excellent graffito of a galley can be seen in the entrance hall. Walk further up to the windmill (5), another of the five that can be counted in the village. This particular one was still functioning in the 1920s. Opposite the windmill are to be found a number of government schools. Note also that this upper part of the street at the *Telgħa ta' l-Għaqba* (Għaqba Hill) is actually cut deep into the Globigerina limestone. This levelling of the street took place in the 1880s after a request by the people of the village. This was the street leading to Valletta.

Retrace your steps back through *Triq Ġużeppe Stivala* up to the church of the Immaculate Conception (6) and turn into *Triq l-Imdina*. The church was built in the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is the newest of the old churches of



*Square in Hal Dghif*





Houses in Cross Street



Old houses

the village. Today it is looked after by the Dominican Sisters whose convent adjoins the church. Going down *Triq l-Imdina*, you are actually in the heart of the mediaeval hamlet of *Hal Dghif*, the village of Dghif, this being then the surname of probably the most important person. This street was so called because it led towards the old capital which could be seen from the end of the street. When you reach the small square, turn to the right into *Triq is-Salib*. Originally in this area there were two old chapels dedicated to Our Lady, which chapels disappeared after being profaned in 1659. Very probably, as was customary then, a cross was built to show the place where the churches stood. This would be the reason of naming the street Cross Street. Having reached the upper part of the street, walk straight on not taking the street on the left. The next part of *Triq is-Salib* has indeed some very old buildings.

At the end of the street, turn left into *Triq il-Kbira* again. Here too are a number of very old houses with typical open stone balconies. A little further up, on the left side are a number of seemingly new houses. These were built towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This area was then known as *Fuq l-Ibjar*, on the reservoirs. In fact there stood a number of wells at the inner end of these houses some of which are still in existence.

Walk up to the former police station building and then to the left up towards the square. You are back where you began.

## Towards San Pawl tat-Targa

*This tour takes one through the other two old streets of the village, Triq Castro and Triq il-Markiż Scicluna, and out to the small hamlet of San Pawl tat-Targa and further down the hill towards the famous cart ruts.*

The tour begins once again from *Pjazza Vittorja*. To the right of the church is the statue of St Joseph (1) put up by devotees in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Just behind this statue is a cute little Museum “Memories of Childhood”. Walk up to the bus stop, look up to the wonderful statue of St Paul. This was fortunately restored in recent years but was not given its previous colouring which made it so distinguishable.

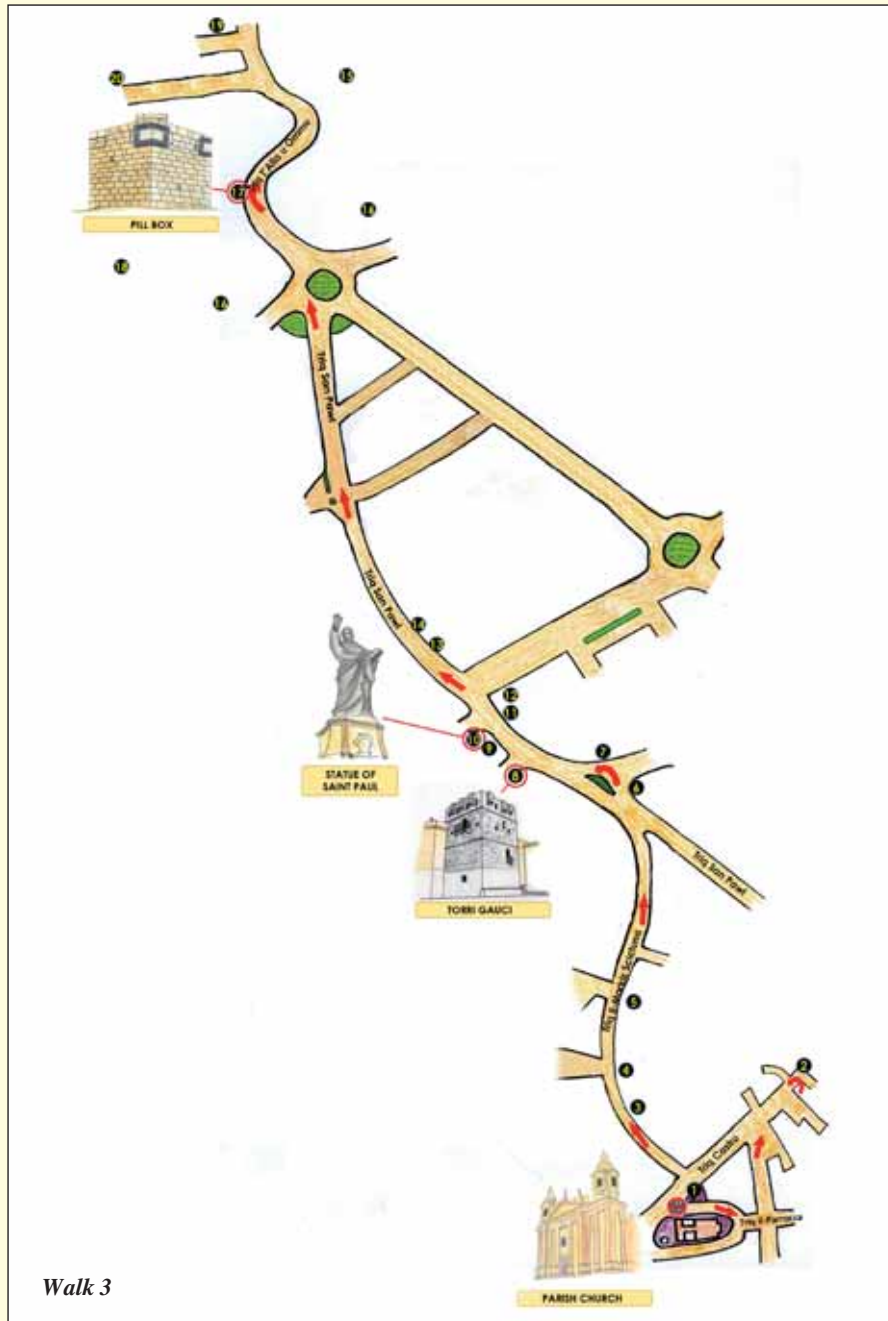
You are now in *Pjazza Toni Bajjada*, named after the legendary figure of the Great Siege who is traditionally held to have been from Naxxar. Some elderly persons maintain that the old house which stood here before the street towards the area behind the church was opened, was the very house where Bajjada lived.



Statue of St. Joseph



Statue of St. Paul



Walk 3



*Piazza Toni Bajada*



*Palazzo Castro*

Walk towards *Triq il-Parroċċa* up to the first corner. On the opposite corner you see the Master Wine buildings, a company which is 100% local, the family having begun producing wine many years ago in a small shop in the old *Triq Santa Lucija*. Opposite this factory is the Oratory, or parish hall, and a little further on the primary school. You need not cross over to the other side. You are also in the area where a new church was planned to be built early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Return to the corner facing the Master Wine shop in *Triq l-Oratorju*, and walk straight on. These are modern houses but you will end up in *Triq Castro*, another of the old streets of the village. Most of the



*Triq Castro*



*View of Belfry from Triq Castro*

houses here are 300–400 years old. Walk to your right up to the very end of the street and facing you at the turning of the street right in the corner is Palazzo Castro (2). This is the house which gave the name to the street. A knight with this name lived here before the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The parish priest referred to this name in the 1720s; in later years another knight named Perelli lived in the house. Turn back and retrace your steps walking up to the other end of the street reaching *Triq il-Markiż Scicluna*.

This too is an old street and for many years it was referred to as *Strada Sebħa* (Dawning Street). At the beginning of the street, high up on the wall of the second house on your left is an interesting statue of St. Anne with the baby Madonna. It is in fact a half figure! And at the very corner turning into *Triq il-Markiż Scicluna* is another small statue of St John the Baptist. Midway through the street on your right is Loyola House (3). This big house which



*Statue of St. Anne*



*Niche of St. John the Baptist*



*Madonna tat-Triq*

today houses the Jesuit community was the house where Marquis John Scicluna was born. It was he who just after World War II donated the house to the Jesuits who had actually taken care of him after he was orphaned at the tender age of 11 years. Notice the wonderfully-decorated small statue of the Madonna on this building, a statue which has given rise to a new devotion to the *Madonna tat-Triq*, the Madonna of the street. A chapel in the Jesuits' house is also dedicated to this Madonna.

As you come to the opening, which is *Pjazza Celsi*, on your right is the



*Pjazza Celsi*

entrance to the Holy Family Home (4), a home for the elderly. This was originally built for the Jesuit novices but was later on given to the Little Sisters of the Poor who ran the old people's home in the early years of its existence. It has recently been extended

to accommodate more senior citizens. This little square is known as *Pjazza Celsi* because a number of cherry trees grew in this open space many years ago.

Continuing further up the street, you reach on your right the small chapel of St James (5). This is a very old chapel, the original one having been in existence already before 1594. The present chapel was rebuilt in 1627.



*Chapel of St. James*

Right opposite this chapel way back in 1958 the British Petroleum Company drilled the first borehole in search of oil. It was an unsuccessful attempt, the first of many others. The former Malta Trade Fair Corporation Grounds can be seen further to the left.

As you reach the end of the street, cross over *Triq San Pawl*, the main street, and walk to the small pine garden. The first old building to your right is one of the oldest farmhouses (6) still in existence. The date on top of its window reads 1730! Walk around the pine garden by the houses. The old house with a small



*Hunting Lodge of Grandmaster Hompesch*

stone balcony was the hunting lodge of Grand Master Hompesch (7). Walk towards the chapel and you come right in the centre of the little hamlet of San Pawl tat-Targa, *Hal Misilmiet*, the hamlet of the Muslims. An old tradition says that way back in the early mediaeval times the



Muslims lived in this area while the Christians lived on the other side presumably in *Hal Nasciar*. The latter name is interpreted by some to mean the followers of Christ.

When the parish priest was drawing up the list of people in his parish, he always referred to this area as *Hal Misilmiet*, almost a separate community. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries there was an average of 140 inhabitants in the area. With the arrival of well-to-do families in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, several villas were built which can still be seen today. However, the major interest in this area are the earlier buildings.

Before you reach the chapel, just behind it, is Torri Gauci (8) a tower with a unique story. In 1548 when the knights sent a captain to lead the militia of the area, the tower had already been built, and the captain had the right to live in the tower. However, the owner, Francesco Gauci, presented a petition to Grand Master D'Omedes, saying that he had built the tower to defend his children, having already lost his wife in a piratical attack. The petition was accepted and the family had the right to use the tower; in fact they continued to do so up to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was sold to the Bugeja family. Today it is owned by the Ellul Bonici family (related to the Bugejas by marriage) and is presently on a 50-year lease. It has been recently restored to its pristine beauty.



*Torri Gauci*

The chapel of St Paul's Shipwreck (9) was built in the last years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, replacing another which was of much earlier origin but which had been completely destroyed in the beginning of that century. In this chapel there is one of the most impressive paintings of Francesco Zahra, the prominent 18<sup>th</sup>-century Maltese painter depicting *St Paul preaching to the Maltese after the shipwreck*. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the church was patronized by the late Marquis John Scicluna. Mass is held here regularly on Sundays and feasts of obligation. The large statue of St Paul (10) in front of the church was built in 1770 as an



*Chapel of St. Paul*



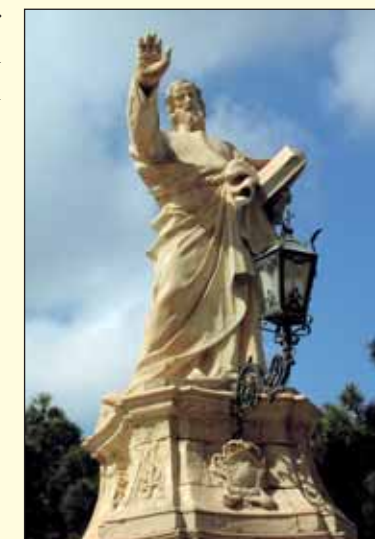
*'St. Paul Preaching'  
by Francesco Zahra*

act of devotion by the people. Facing the statue on the other side of the road is a column with a cross at the top (11) which marks the position of the earlier church demolished in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The other tower on the right side of the road is the one which the knights built for the captain, the Captain's Tower (12). It was built during the reign of Grand Master La Vallette, the earliest fortification



*Old photo of St. Paul's Chapel*



*Statue of St. Paul*



*Torri tal-Kaptan*

built by the knights outside the harbour area. Looking out towards the north of the island one can enjoy a full view of St Paul's Bay and further up to Gozo. The continued enjoyment of this view is a result of the fact that the owner of the fields on the left side of the road, left it in his will that these were not to be built so that people would be able to enjoy the view.

Walk down *Triq San Pawl* with Villa Arrigo (13), formerly Villino Agius, on your right. This was one of the first villas to be built. Next to it is Villa Degiorgo (14), presently the British High Commissioner's house,

actually built in the 1820s by the cotton merchant Robert Peel, an Englishman. Most of the other villas are newly-built. This is one of the most sought after areas in Malta and land prices are indeed high.



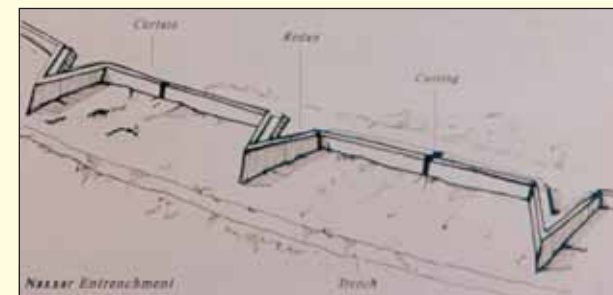
*View to the North*



*Parabolic Wall – Il-Widna*

Having reached the roundabout before taking the road downhill, enjoy the view of the north of the island as far as Gozo. On a clear day you might be able to see Mount Etna in Sicily! Looking towards the right away from the high ridge and down into the plain below you, you will see a high reddish-coloured wall with a modern antenna next to it. This is the so-called *Widna (ear)* (15), a parabolic wall built by the British before World War II as a primitive radar station. Its acoustics were so perfect that planes leaving Sicilian airfields were detected immediately.

In former times this street was very important as it was considered the gateway to the north of the island. Passage to the north was controlled and one had to go through a gate. In fact this area was known as *Fuq ir-Rixtelli* (literally on the gate). The knights



*Plan of V-Shaped Redans*





*Pillbox*

had also recognized the strategic value of this point and had, in the 1720s built four v-shaped redans (16) linked by straight walls. Three of these can still be seen from this point. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Victoria Lines were built and the Naxxar entrenchments were incorporated into the system.

Walk further down up to the small yellowish room (17) at the turning of the road downhill. This is one of the many pillboxes built in the 1930s as part of a defence system. This pillbox has been restored. Having reached the platform of the pillbox, you are faced with a most elaborate system of cart ruts (18). These mysterious ruts have given rise to many a discussion but the general opinion is that they did indeed serve as a means of transport and can therefore be said to have been the earliest organized transport system. The leading line is right



*Cart Ruts*



*Cart Ruts Crossing*

beneath the modern wall, walk down to it and then follow the ruts as they wind down to the valley. At a certain point, midway down the hill, you will encounter a crossing, very much like a modern railway lines crossing in the form of an X. The main line goes uphill beneath the modern road from left to right and further up towards the direction of Mosta. As you walk up back to the roundabout you can see this line on the right side of the road.

From this high point one can also see the Plague cemetery (19), on the road leading to Burmarrad, and right down in the valley beyond the quarries, the church of St Catherine (20). But venturing this far would be testing on your poor feet. So retrace your steps and walk back to the Naxxar square.



*St. Catherine's Chapel*

## Out in the Countryside

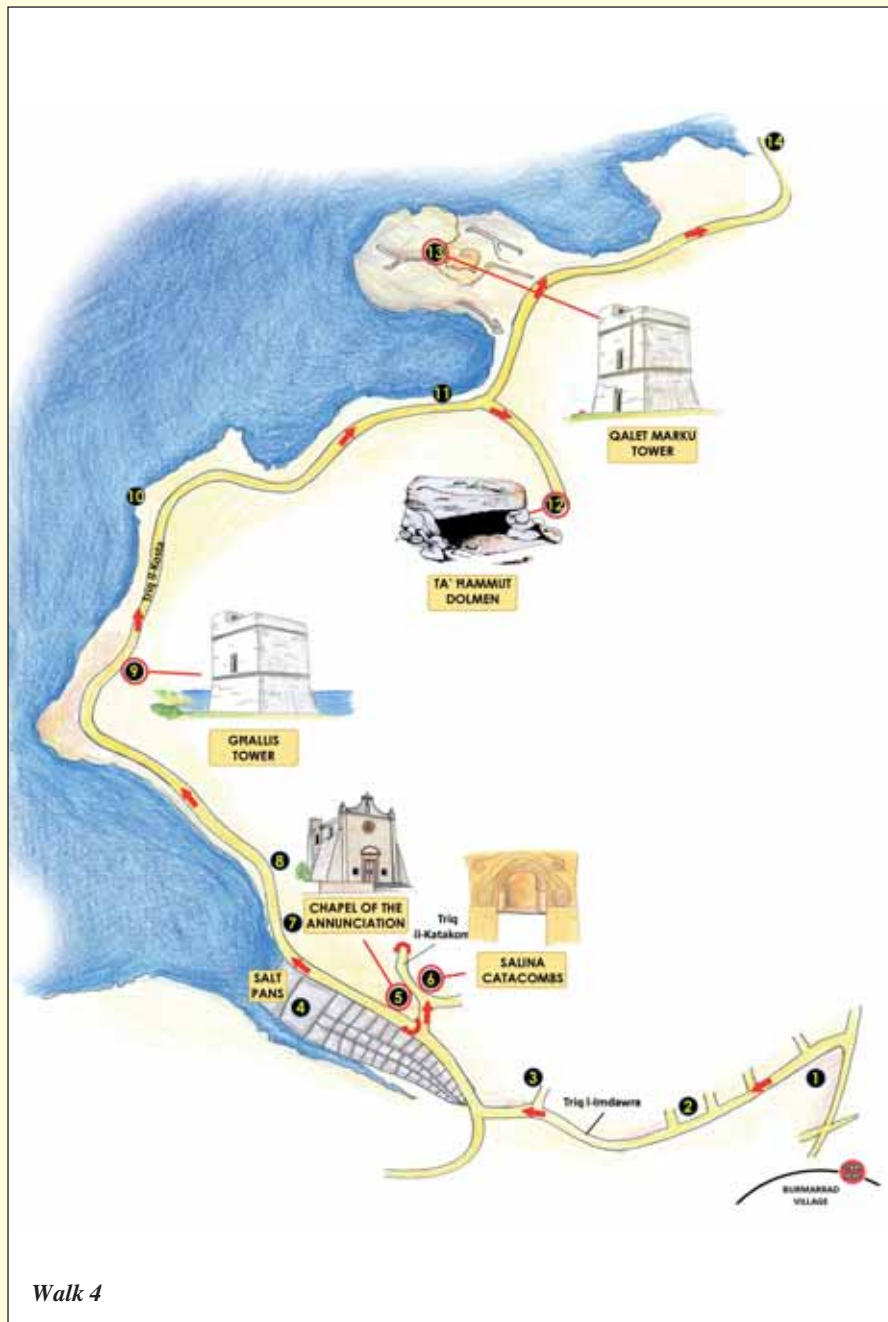
*This tour, although within Naxxar territory, begins from Burmarrad. Take the route bus to Mellieħa and alight at the first stage in Burmarrad. A secondary road takes you to Tal-Qadi temple, then towards Salina by St Michael's chapel, and on to the Coast Road. Along this road you will encounter a number of historical sites: the Catacombs, Ximenes's redoubt, the Fougasse, Ghallis Tower, Qalet Marku Tower, the Dolmens at Magħtab.*

The tour begins from Burmarrad church. Cross the street on the left side of the church and take the secondary road next to the garden shop.

After a few hundred metres, and after crossing a small bridge, you will see a number of mulberry trees on the right side of the road. These trees were planted early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when there was an attempt to establish a silk



Burmarrad Church



Walk 4



*Road next to garden shop*

industry. Walk a little further and take the first turning to the left leaving the main road into *Triq l-Imdawra*. In Roman times the sea probably extended up to this point. This is the reason for the flat area that you see to your left.



*Bridge near Mulberry Grove*

It was all formed from deposits from the rain water coming down from the higher areas in the Mdina/Rabat area.

About a 100 metres into this road you should see a British government property stone pillar (1) with the letters GR (*George Rex*) standing for King George. These were put up soon after the British arrived on the island and they



*Entrance to Triq l-Imdawra*



*British Property Stone Pillar*

designated areas which were previously the property of the Order and which passed to the British government.

After about 700 metres into *Triq l-Imdawra*, take the fourth turning to the right next to some palm

trees. Go uphill for about 100 metres and you should come to the Tal-Qadi (2) ruins. These are remains of a Neolithic temple. Like the temple at Bugibba, this one had a relationship to



*Side road to tal-Qadi Temples*



the sea, it was very probably close to the shoreline. The site was first excavated in 1927 by Sir Temi Zammit. Unfortunately very little remains to give any clear indications, but the form of two apses is evident. Walk back down to the road and turning right, continue towards



*Tal-Qadi Temples*



*Tal-Qadi Temples*

it was profaned. The present chapel was built in 1652 from contributions from the people of Naxxar many of whom worked fields in this area. Its recent restoration was financed by a private individual.



*St. Michael's Chapel*

Salina. Before reaching the Coast Road at a point opposite Kennedy Grove, you will come to a small chapel (3). This is dedicated to St Michael. A church dedicated to St Michael is already referred to in 1618 by Bishop Cagliares when

This country road reaches the main road, *Triq il-Kosta*, by the Salina Salt Pans (4). These salt pans were built by the Knights at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and were an important industry. When you reach the road leading to Naxxar, turn into it and then walk immediately towards another chapel (5). This one is dedicated to the Annunciation. Notice the buttressed side walls, built in 1776 because the walls were sliding out. Walk beyond the chapel and on the right side you should see a sign saying *To the Catacombs* (6). Going through the fields you will come up to a clutter of Paleo-Christian catacombs cut in the hard coralline



*Interior of St. Michael's Chapel*



*Chapel of Annunciation*

limestone. In one of these you can also see a fine example of an agape table. A little further away from these is a much finer hypogea with handsomely decorated canopy tombs. This is normally closed. There are many such tombs in this area which fact gives rise to the possibility of a community living in this harbour area in the early years of Christianity on the islands.



*Decorated Canopy Tombs in Salina*

Walk down back to the Coast Road by turning right and along the salt pans. More or less where the salt pans end, but on the other side of the road, is an old building. This is known as Ximenes's Redoubt (7) built during the time of this grand master as a fortification. A little



*Ximenes Redoubt*



*Fougasse*

further from this, towards the Coastline Hotel is a fine example of a fougasse (8). This is a massive rock-hewn stone-firing mortar, intended to protect the entrance to the bay. You have to walk up to this from the road area. There was another one of these on the opposite side of the bay.

Continuing the walk along the Coast Road, one reaches the Ghallis Tower (9), one of the De Redin towers built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This particular one was the second to be built in 1658. In recent years it was restored by *Din L-Art Helwa*. Such towers



*Old Photo of the Firing of the Fougasse*

were built in strategic positions along the coast. Another tower, built earlier during the reign of Grand Master Lascaris-Castellar, can be seen on the opposite side of the entrance to the bay on Qawra point.



*Ghallis Tower*

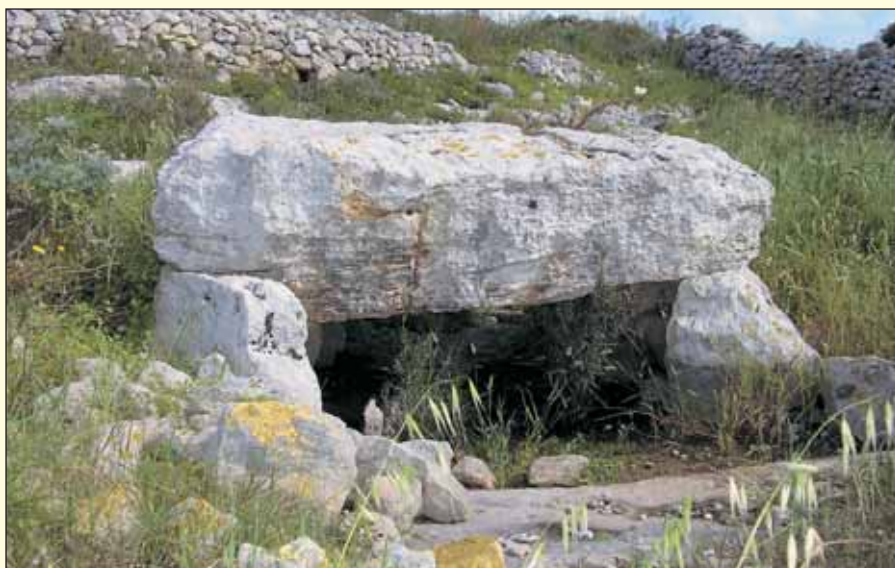
The next interesting point on the Coast Road is the area between the

road and the sea at the next turning of the road. This is known as *Ghadira s-Safra* (10), (*the Yellow Pool*), a typical marshland where a source of fresh water encounters seawater. This area is particularly important because of its ecological value. The acacias on the other side of the road are actually alien to the Maltese islands and were 'imported' by the north-westerly wind.

At the next turning of the road, going a little uphill, one can still see the



*Ghadira s-Safra Marshland*



*Ta' Hammut Dolmen*

remains of another redoubt (11) built by the knights. Unfortunately when the road was built most of the building was pulled down to make way. Walking further down the road, you will come to the sign pointing towards the little village of Maghtab. At the beginning of this road on the left is another marshland. Walk another 300/400 metres along the Maghtab road and parallel to the road on the right side there are three dolmens, known as the *Ta' Hammut* dolmens (12). They are not very easy to find because they are low and not intact any more. But they are very important because they are a most remarkable group being the only examples to have furnished some evidence of dating. One is still in perfect condition. You should go beyond the only building there is on the right side of the road.

Walk back to the Coast Road and you face a small sandy beach. This is slowly disappearing as a result of the road building. Some 60 years ago the sand reached from one end to the other, but the action of the waves against the wall is slowly removing the sand.

When you reach the highest point at the turning of the road, turn left and walk towards the *Qalet Marku* tower (13). This is another De Redin tower also built in 1658. It has also been restored by *Din L-Art Helwa*. Enjoy the wonderful sea breeze while resting on the cement platform between the



*View of Qalet Marku*

tower and the coast line. If you have brought a packed lunch with you, this is the place to eat it. It will taste like honey!

Now walk back to the Coast Road, and towards the little village of Bahar iċ-Ċaghaq or as the British called this area, Palm Beach. The building standing on its own next to the water today serving as a bar, was also a redoubt (14) built by the Order.

The tour ends here. One can now take the bus to Sliema or Valletta. The bus stage is only a little further up from the bar on the same side of the road.



*Qalet Marku Tower*





NAXXAR  
*'Prior Credidi'*  
*'First to Believe'*