

OVERSEAS MEDICAL GRADUATES AND STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

PAUL CASSAR

The presence of students from overseas in our Medical School to-day is not a modern phenomenon. Indeed no less than 40 individuals sought entrance to, or followed, the course of medicine or graduated as medical doctors during the nineteenth century between 1826 and 1886.

The following 26 candidates, listed in chronological order, obtained the doctorate:-

1. JOSEPH GANTES. After being approved at the private examination in medicine on the 16th September 1826, he publicly defended his dissertation *De remediis excitantibus* on the 31st January 1827. The doctorate was conferred on him on the 1st February 1827 at the Gesù Church by the Rector of the University. The examination was conducted by the Police Physician (i.e. the District Medical Officer) of Valletta and "three other eminent" medical practitioners (1).

2. COSTANTINO (BAMBA) SCHINAS. A native of the Greek island of Zante, he studied medicine at Pisa University and came to Malta in 1823 where he passed his qualifying examination on the 28th September 1828. The doctorate was conferred on him on the 19th February 1829 by the Hon. John Hookham Frère, instead of the Rector, as he was a non-Catholic (2). In 1833 he was appointed Professor of Medicine at our university, a post which he held until his death in May 1856 (3).

3. GIUSEPPE MARIA STILON. A native of Calabria, he studied medicine at the University of Naples before coming to Malta. He was exempted from the private and public examinations and awarded the doctorate on the 19th February 1829 (4).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Southern Italy was overrun by French troops and Dr. Stilon was pressed in the French service. At the battle of Maida (4th July 1806), the French were defeated and Dr. Stilon was taken prisoner by the British. In due course he reached England where he gained his freedom. He was appointed to the British naval service on the 17th August 1815 and, after serving at sea, became surgeon in the Malta Dockyard

1. *Acta Academiae Melitensis* 1800-32, fol. 90, Department of History, University of Malta, Msida.
Malta Government Gazette 7th February 1827, p.46.
2. *Acta Acad. Melit.* 1800-32, fol., 94.
3. *Portafoglio Maltese* 14th May 1852.
4. *Acta Acad. Melit.* 1800-32, fol. 95.

and the Malta Naval Hospital at Bighi. When he retired from the navy in 1846 he entered into civilian practice in Valletta where he resided until his death in 1848. (5)

4. JOSEPH JAMES STEWART. He was Principal Physician on His Majesty's ship *Asia* (1828-30). The doctorate was conferred upon him by the Hon. John Hokkham Frère *ex indulgentia consilii* on the 5th March 1829. He died in 1855 (6).

5. ROBERT MARSHALL. A physician on *H.M.S. Rattlesnake* (1827-32), he obtained the doctorate *ex indulgentia consilii* on the 30th March 1829. He died in 1837 (7).

6. FRANCIS FREMAULT SANKEY. He entered the navy on 17th January 1814. He was engaged on board the *Mosquito* in the Battle of Navarino (1827) and received the Silver Naval Medal and Clasp (8). While serving as surgeon on *H.M.S. Madagascar*, he had the doctorate conferred upon him by the Hon. John Hookham Frère on the 31st July 1832 after being exempted from the private and public examinations. He retired in 1852. In 1855 he was Physician to the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigating Company (9). His name is associated with the early use of chloroform anaesthesia in Malta and with the first recorded fatality with this anaesthetic. It occurred on the 20th April 1855 during the amputation of a finger of a thirty-five year old man in Dr. Sankey's home (10). He placed Malta on the map of medicine by directing the attention of physicians to the island's assets as a winter resort for invalids from Britain; and by publishing what seems to be one of the earliest, if not the earliest, First Aid books to be printed in Malta (11). He died on the 2nd March 1871 in his 81st year (12).

7. CESARE USIGLIO. An Italian from Modena, he studied medicine in our medical school, passed his private examination on the 27th July 1832, but was exempted from the public one. The doctorate was conferred on him in a private

5. Cassar, P. Maltese Medical Journals 1838-1952, *Melita Historica*, 1952, 1,19.

Bailey, F. personal communication.

6. *Idem*.

7. *Idem*.

8. *The Beacon* 26th November 1855, p.2.

9. *The Beacon* 26th November 1855, p.2.

Acta Acad. Melit. 1800-32, fol. 103.

Bailey, F. personal communication.

10. *Malta Mail* 24th April 1855, p.4.

11. Cassar, P. British Doctors and the Study of the Medical and Natural History of Malta in the Nineteenth Century, *Melita Historica*, 1963,3,33.

Sankey F.F. *Malta Considered with Reference to its Eligibility as a Place of Residence for Invalids*, Edinburgh, n.d.

Sankey, F.F. *Familiar Instructions in Medicine and Surgery*, Malta, 1846.

12. *The Malta Times* 22nd March 1871, p.2

ceremony on the 9th November 1832 by Dr. John Davy as he was a non-Catholic (13). He may have been related to the Italian refugee Emilio Usiglio who was in Malta on and off, between 1835 and 1842 and who was in class touch with Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian patriot of the *Risorgimento* (14).

8. DAVID GEDDES (OR SEDDES). A surgeon on *H.M.S. Belvedere*, he passed his examination on the 3rd March 1832 and had the doctorate conferred upon him on the 25th September 1832 by the Hon. John Hookham Frère. He retired from the Navy in 1856 and died in 1870 (15).

9. GIORGIO BUCCIA. He passed written and oral examination in botany, anatomy and physiology on the 1st March and in chemistry and pathology on the 18th April 1836. He obtained the Licentiate on the 23rd April and was successfully examined for the doctorate on the 22nd November 1836 (16).

10. EDWARD DALSEL DICKSON. He passed written and oral examinations in botany, anatomy and physiology on the 1st March and in chemistry and pathology on the 18th April 1836. He was granted the Licentiate on the 23rd April and was approved at the qualifying examination in the practice of medicine, forensic medicine and *materia medica* on the 6th July 1836 (17)

11. ISAAC TOLIT (OR TOBIT, FOLIT OR IOLIT). He passed the written and oral examinations in chemistry and pathology on the 18th April 1836 and was granted the Licentiate on the 23rd April. On the 6th July of the same year he was approved at the qualifying examination in the practice of medicine, forensic medicine and *materia medica* (18).

12. CHARLES GALLAND. He graduated Doctor of Medicine from our university in 1838 (19). He was appointed Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at the university in 1839. As a member of the Special Council of the Faculty of Medicine he endeavoured to promote the study of anatomy and clinical surgery and the establishment of an out-patient Surgical Clinic. He resigned from the chair in March 1858 (20).

13. JOSEPH DICKSON. He was successful at the examinations in chemistry, natural history and botany on the 26th October 1837 and obtained the Licentiate on the 2nd July 1838. He qualified for the doctorate on the 4th July 1839

13. *Acta Acad. Melit.* 1800-32, fol. 103.

14. Fiorentini, B. *Malta rifugio di esuli*, Malta, 1966, pp.54, 55, 59 and 71.

15. *Acta Acad. Melit.* 1800-32, fol. 104.

Bailey, F. personal communication.

16. *Acta Acad. Melit.* 1800-32, fols. 24-29.

Collegio medico, Vol. 2, 1826-38, fol. 9t.

17. *Collegio medico*, Vol. 1, 1833-36, fols. 24,28-30.

18. *Idem.*

19. Ganado Mss., Valletta.

20. *Consiglio speciale di medicina* 1839-46, no pagination.

Malta Government Gazette 15th March 1858, p.74.

and received the degree at the Church of the University on the 19th July 1839 (21).

14. PAOLO FABRIZI. He came to Malta on several occasions between 1834 and 1848 as an Italian political refugee. He obtained the doctorate with the medical students of the course of 1839-40. He later operated on no less than twenty-seven patients suffering from various deformities including cleft-lip and nose malformations. He died at Nizza in 1859 (22).

15. ULISSE MORDO'. Italian (?). He passed the examination in chemistry, natural history and botany on the 28th October 1837 and obtained the Licentiate on the 2nd July 1838. He qualified for the doctorate on the 4th July, the degree being conferred upon him on the 19th November 1839.

After a successful examination in surgery on the 3rd June 1842 he was awarded the Doctorate in Surgery (*Diploma di dottorato in chirurgia*) on the 3rd January 1842 (23).

16. NICOLA ZIONGO. He was approved at the examination in chemistry, natural history and botany on the 28th October 1837 and given the Licentiate on the 3rd July 1838. He qualified for the Doctorate in Medicine on the 4th July and received the degree on the 19th July 1839. Dr. Ziongo was active in Malta in 1858 (24).

17. HENRY HANDFIELD WOOLLEY. He was approved in chemistry and botany on the 14th September 1839; in physiology on the 30th January 1841; and in obstetrics on the 11th January 1843. He qualified, and was awarded the doctorate, in medicine and surgery on the 26th January 1843 (25). He seems to have practised in Malta for some years as there was a *Farmacia Woolley* kept by H.H. Woolley at 225 Theatre Street, Valletta. It was in existence by 1843 but it was no longer on record by 1848 (26).

18. GIORGIO FILIBERTI. He passed the examination in botany on the 30th January 1841; in anatomy, hygiene and pathology on the 7th January 1842; in

21. *Collegio medico*. Vol. 2, 1836-38, fols. 14 and 16.

Atti dell'Universita di Malta, 1839-83, fol.7.

Consiglio speciale di medicina 1839-46, no pagination.

22. Cassar, P. Dottor Paolo Fabrizio, *Melita Historica*, 1970, 5,239., and *Minerva medica*, 1973, 64, 31.

23. *Collegio medico* 1836-38, Vol. 2, fol.15.

Atti dell'Universita di Malta 1839-83, fol. 11.

Consiglio speciale di medicina 1839-46, no pagination.

24. *Portafoglio maltese* 27th March 1858, p.3.

Collegio medico 1836-38, Vol. 2, fols. 15-17.

Consiglio speciale di medicina 1839-46, no pagination.

25. *Atti dell'Universita di Malta* 1839-83, fol. 21.

Consiglio speciale di medicina 1839-46, no pagination.

26. *Almanacco di Malta, Malta*, 1843, pp.xlv.

Almanacco di Malta, Malta, Edit. G. Vassalli, 1848, p.70

materia medica, practice of medicine, forensic medicine and therapy on the 14th October 1843. He qualified on the 3rd November 1845 and was awarded the doctorate on the 19th March 1846 (27).

19. FRANCESCO BARSIA. He followed the Academical Course of 1842-46 and passed the qualifying examination on the 20th July 1846. He received the doctorate on the 5th August 1846 (28).

20. CARMELO CROCCO. He belonged to the Academical Course of 1842-46. The doctorate was conferred on him on the 5th August 1846 (29).

21. LUIGI GIAMMALVA. He qualified at the end of the course of 1853-56 and had the doctorate conferred upon him on the 5th August 1856 by the Rector in the Church of the University (30).

22. ENRICO RAULL. He joined the Academical Course in 1861 but interrupted his studies and obtained the doctorate on the 5th August 1868 (31).

23. HENRY FREDERICK NATHAN. He studied medicine and surgery at St. Bartholomew's Medical School in London. By December 1868 he was Assistant Surgeon at the British Naval Hospital at Malta. Between 1868 and 1870 he underwent the four examinations prescribed for the Academical Course of Medicine and Surgery of the University of Malta. He was approved unanimously in each of these examinations qualifying on the 9th February 1870. He was promoted Staff Officer in 1872 and died in 1874 (32).

24. SALVATORE CACCIOLA. He followed the Academical Course of 1870-74 successfully and had the doctorate conferred on him on the 5th August 1874 (33).

25. THOMAS RICHARD MULRONEY (OR MULVONEY). He studied medicine and surgery at Grant Medical College in Bombay. Between the 15th May and the 4th June 1870 he successfully passed the four examinations prescribed by the Statute of the University covering all the subjects of the curriculum of the four-year Academical Course of Medicine and Surgery. He was awarded the

27. *Atti dell'Universita di Malta* 1839-83, Vol. 2, fol.29.
28. *Atti dell'Universita di Malta* 1839-83, Vol. 1,2, fol.30.
Consiglio speciale di medicina 1839-46, no pagination.
Consiglio speciale di medicina 1846-68, fol.1.
29. *Idem.*
30. *Atti dell'Universita di Malta* 1839-83, Vol. 1,2, fol.78.
Consiglio speciale di medicina 1846-68, fols. 119-123.
31. *Atti dell'Universita di Malta* 1839-83, Vol. 2, fol. 188.
Consiglio speciale di medicina 1846-68, fols. 214 and 293.
32. *Consiglio speciale di medicina* 1868-1880, no pagination.
Bailey, F. personal communication.
33. *Atti dell'Universita di Malta* 1839-83, Vol. 2, fol. 251.
Consiglio speciale di medicina 1868-80, no pagination.

doctorate on the 4th June 1879 (34).

26. SAVERIO REPACE LICASTRO. He obtained the qualification in medicine and surgery of the Malta university in July 1886 (35).

Fourteen students joined the Course of Medicine and Surgery or sat for the entry examination but did not complete their medical studies in Malta:-

1. FREDERICK HARVEY. He passed the written and oral examinations in anatomy, physiology and botany on the 5th January 1836 and in chemistry and pathology on the 18th April 1836. He was granted the Licentiate on the 23rd April 1836 (36).

2. HYACINTHUS GANTES. He presented himself for examination on the 14th January 1832 but does not seem that he actually sat for it (37).

3. WILLIAM MARTIN. He was approved in the examinations of chemistry, natural history and botany on the 28th October 1837 and was granted the Licentiate on the 2nd July 1838 (38).

4. JOSEPH COLLINGS. He passed the examination in botany on the 19th September 1839 and then went to Edinburgh where he attended medical classes between 1841 and 1843 but did not graduate there (39).

5. WALTER SIMPSON. He was born in St. Helena in 1820. He was approved in the examinations of zoology and anatomy at Malta University between the 19th September 1839 and 25th June 1840. He then went to Edinburgh University and followed the classes of 1841-43 graduating M.D. in 1843. He joined the army in 1844 and died in camp before Sebastopol in 1855 (40).

6. HENRY BECK. He followed the course of medicine from the 10th June 1840 to 22nd June 1844 (41).

7. ROBERT GRAHAM DICKSON. He was born in Tripoli in 1832. He passed the examinations of the first and second years of the academical course between the 4th October 1849 and the 13th November 1851. He then proceeded to Edinburgh where he attended classes between 1852 and 1854 graduating M.D. in 1854. He entered the army but resigned in 1860 to practice in Tripoli where, in 1890, he was Medical Official of the Sanitary Department (42).

34. *Atti dell'Universita di Malta* 1839-83, Vol. 2. fol. 310.

Consiglio speciale di medicina 1868-80, no pagination.

35. *Crepuscoli*, 27th July 1886, p.93

36. *Collegio medico* 1836-38, Vol. 2, 23rd April 1836.

37. *Acta Acad. Melit.* 1800-32, 14th January 1832.

38. *Collegio medico* 1836-38, Vol. 2., 2nd July 1838.

39. Finlayson, C.P. personal communication.

40. *Consiglio speciale di medicina*, no pagination, 1839-46.

41. *Consiglio speciale di medicina* 1839-46, 22nd June 1844.

42. *Idem.* Finlayson, C.P. personal communication.

8. JOHN VERNON SEDALL. He was born in Malta where he joined the Academical course of medicine and surgery between the 4th October 1849 and the 13th November 1851. He then went to Edinburgh to finish his studies (1852-54) graduating M.D. in 1854. He joined the army as surgeon, dying at Cape of Good Hope in 1870 (43).
9. JAMES FIDDES. He passed the entry examination for the academical course of medicine and surgery on the 4th October 1849 (44).
10. FRANCIS SANKEY. He did only the first year of the medical course (14th December 1850) (Cfr. Dr. F.F. Sankey 1832) (45).
11. SALVATORE MASABINI. He passed the examination at the end of the first year on the 28th June 1856 (46).
12. ROBERT LAWLESS. He joined the first and second year of the course from the 11th October 1858 to the 2nd July 1860 (47).
13. GIORGIO REVORCK OR REVORK. He failed in the entry examination for the academical course on 11th October 1861 (48).
14. W. CHARLES RIKORD(?). He failed in the entry examination for the course of 1870-74 (49).

Comment and summary

Although none of the above-named graduates became great doctors, they deserve remembrance, if for no other reason, for their association with our medical school at an early evolutionary phase of its history.

The University of Malta with its three Faculties of Theology, Law and Medicine was founded in 1769. It was abolished by Napoleon when the French occupied the island in 1798 but was re-established on the 6th November 1800 by Great Britain (50). During the first two decades of the 19th century only a Licentiate was granted by the Faculty of Medicine to candidates who were successful at the final examination. The Doctorate was introduced in 1822 but the Licentiate was retained until 1838, the Doctorate being awarded months later.

Of the twenty-six foreign graduates who obtained the M.D., twelve were from the United Kingdom, thirteen from the Italian peninsula and one from the Greek archipelago.

43. *Idem*.

44. *Consiglio speciale di medicina* 1846-68, no pagination. 4th October 1849.

45. *Idem*, 14th December 1850.

46. *Idem*, 28th June 1856.

47. *Idem*, 2nd July 1860.

48. *Idem*, 11th October 1861.

49. *Idem*, 1st July 1869.

50 Cassar, P. *Medical History of Malta*, London, 1965, p.448.

The majority of the candidates — twenty of them — were awarded the doctorate in the twenty-year period 1827-46; after an interval of ten years, the remaining six had the degree conferred on them during the thirty years from 1856 to 1886.

Four graduates were granted the doctorate without undergoing examinations or *ex gratia consilii* (by the favour of the University Council). These degrees — corresponding to the *honoris causa* of to-day — were conferred exclusively on medical men serving in the British Navy at Malta.

The United Kingdom candidates, besides the medical staff of the navy, belonged to British families residing in Malta. The Italians were political refugees who had sought asylum in Malta from neighbouring Sicily and Italy during the turmoil of the *Risorgimento* (1821-70), with the exception of Saverio Repace Licastro and Salvatore Cacciola who graduated in later years.

Two of the graduates — Dr. Charles Galland and Dr. Costantino Schinas — eventually became themselves teachers at the Malta Medical School as Professor of Anatomy and Surgery and as Professor of Medicine respectively. Dr Francis Fremault Sankey, though not achieving academic status, made his mark in connection with the early use of chloroform anaesthesia in Malta (1855).

The Licentiate was conferred on eight of the candidates in our lists between 1836 and 1838.

Of those who sought admission into the medical school or who began their studies there but did not qualify, one was from Italy and thirteen were from the United Kingdom. Three of the latter eventually graduated from Edinburgh University and later joined the British army; two of them died on active service on foreign soils and the third one set up private practice in Tripoli after resigning from the army.

Attempts were made to trace the records of the professional careers of all the candidates but in spite of persistent efforts to do so only the information given above could be gleaned.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Prof. Andrew Vella for allowing me access to the archives in the Department of History of the University at Msida and to Mr. F. Bailey, Head of Naval Historical Library of the Ministry of Defence, London and Mr. Charles P. Finlayson, Keeper of Manuscripts, Edinburgh University Library, for their help in my quest for biographical material.