

SOME 19TH CENTURY HOTELS IN MALTA

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Novelty, pleasure and information may be considered as the three objects which principally occupy the mind of every traveller who meditates an excursion into foreign countries. However, good fare and comfortable accommodation also help travellers to cherish happy memories of faces and places they have seen in the course of their journeys.

There is an appreciable volume of travel literature by English, Spanish, German, Italian, Belgian and other visitors to Malta between the 15th and the 18th centuries, and their accounts contain some information on the provision of inns or lodging accommodation in those days. We read, for example, in Edward Brown's account that the author — the book is really by John Campbell — who reached Malta on December 14, 1662, immediately went ashore with his companion Mr Perez "and took up lodgings at the house of one Mr Nicholas, a Frenchman, with whom also our Captain lodged while we staid". (1) M. De Non, Gentleman-in-Ordinary to the King of France and Member of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, was another traveller who called at Malta between September 5 — 16, 1778. He wrote: "They have two inns at Malta, the *Falcon* and the *Three Kings*. We took up our lodging at the latter, where we were very well entertained and lodged for three livres (half a crown) per diem." (2)

One of these inns may have been the one to which Patrick Brydone (3) refers when he recounts how, on getting on shore in Malta on June 4, 1774, he met Mr Rutter, the English consul, for whom he had letters of recommendation. "Mr Rutter immediately conducted us to an inn, which had more the appearance of a palace. We have had an excellent supper, and good Burgundy; and as this is the king's birthday, we have almost got tipsy to his health. We are now going into clean, comfortable beds, in expectation of the sweetest slumbers. Think of the luxury of this, after being five long days without throwing off our clothes! Good night. I would not lose a moment of it for the world."

Under the date 21 June, 1763, Ignazio Saverio Mifsud recorded in his diary, (4) the arrival in this Island of a Prelate, Mgr. Barretta, who stayed at the *Osteria della Stella* where he was immediately attended by Canon Agius De Soldanis, who had made his acquaintance in Rome.

Sir Richard Colt Hoare's *A Classical Tour Through Italy and Sicily* (1819) is in fact a journal of a tour through the Islands of Sicily and Malta in the year 1790. Sir Richard, who landed in Malta on Friday, June 11, 1790 recorded

1. *The Travels and Adventures of Edward Brown*. London, 1739, p.174.
2. DE NON, M. *Travels through Sicily and Malta*. Perth, 1740, p.136.
3. BRYDONE, P., *Tour through Sicily and Malta* — Vol. 1, London, 1774, p.33.
4. [N]ational [L]ibrary of [M]alta: Ms. 14, p.100.

that "during my residence in Malta I lodged at the house of Carletti; a tolerable inn, but it is not improved since his change of habitation." (5)

We get a much clearer picture of the hotel situation in Ma'ta in the 1840's from the pen of George French Angus (6) "... The hotels of Valletta are good; *Morell's* is the first, where the English may find excellent accommodation; but the *Minerva*, where a table d'hôte is daily kept, I found to be very comfortable, and the charges moderate. A person in this manner may live very cheaply in Ma'ta. The finest Marsala wine is 10d per bottle, and the common Sicilian, 2d. The best beef is 4d per pound, macaroni soup 4d per basin; and a person may dine sumptuously for 1s 6d per diem. Breakfast is best obtained at the cafés, which are opened at a very early hour. Travellers passing only a short time in Malta will find these places extremely convenient, as they can drop in at any hour of the day and take coffee or ice, which latter article is consumed in Malta to a very great extent. It is obtained from Mt Etna in the form of snow, and boats are constantly arriving from Catania laden with this useful and cooling substance. In the cafés it is not an uncommon thing to see them grinding up whole vats full of frozen snow, which at first sight appears very singular to a stranger in so warm a climate. Most of the cafés are situated in the Strada Reale, opposite the Library. I found the best attention at *Saits* (Said's?), and some of the prices are as follows: Cup of Coffee 1½d; breakfast 5d; ice cream, 2½d; lemonata ice, 1½d; Rogiata ditto 1½d; other ices, including chocolate, coffee, cherry, strawberry, and pine apple 2½d or 3d. The *Mediterranean Hotel* is French, and the *Albergo del Sole*, Italian. Foreigners of these nations find good accommodation at these hotels. Liqueurs, particularly Rosolio, and many rich cordials, may be obtained in Malta at very low prices. Owing to its being a free port, cigars may be had at the rate of ten for a penny, and sugar from 2d to 4d per pound. The butter is bad, and is chiefly imported from England. The native cheeses are made of goats' and sheep's milk, pressed into small rush baskets; these, when fresh, are very pleasant, but are obliged to be eaten a very few hours after they are made. Tea is rarely used as a meal, except by the English..." Such details, one may add, also provide invaluable material for the study of social life in 19th century Malta. Between 1800 and 1860 Malta came more and more to be considered as a place to be included in the Mediterranean itinerary of British and other travellers. After the downfall of Napoleon the travelling British in Europe outnumbered all others combined. They were now joined by tourists from America, enthusiastic visitors who viewed the Old World with clear eyes and fresh minds. Some of these visitors spent several months in the Italian peninsula, and visited all its historic cities from the Alps to Rome and Naples, sometimes travelling as far south as Sicily and Malta. A few were men of letters who recorded their impressions of Malta in their books of travel.

5. Vol II, p.290.

6. ANGUS, George French, *A Ramble in Malta and Sicily in the Autumn of 1841*. London, 1842, p.69.

They were people who had been attracted to these shores for a variety of reasons. Political considerations specifically contributed to the influx of British visitors to Malta. As Sir Harry Luke put it. (7) "With the advent of British rule to the late domain of the Knights of St John and the advent of peace to the Mediterranean after the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars, travellers of a new type began to make their way to the Maltese Islands. Dwellers in the UK were now casting interested eyes on the latest "jewel of the British Crown", to adapt the phrase of King Alfonso of Aragon; and a steady stream of men of letters, politicians and mere d.lettanti from the British Isles soon followed in the wake of the British Governors, of the officers and men of the Royal Navy and the military garrison, and of officials of the new Administration".

We can also quote from the 'Prospectus' of a periodical entitled 'The Mediterranean Literary Register', of which the first number was published in Malta on the 10th April, 1827: "Pleasure, business, health and the extended Empire of Great Britain bring into these seas numbers of the most enterprising and best informed of our fellow-countrymen, who at times necessarily visit this island, which presents her secure and hospitable ports for the refreshment or repose of all who traverse the Mediterranean, among whom are many intelligent individuals who have enriched their minds with a variety of knowledge, the results of their particular inquiry and observation..."

This new type of visitor created a demand for what one would nowadays call tourist literature — guide books, accounts and descriptions of Malta, and the like. G.P. Badger in the Preface to his 'Description of Malta' (1838), stated that "the chief design has been, in the following papers, to afford to the numerous English travellers, who are continually going to and coming from the Levant, now on pleasure, now on business, and in their route making a shorter or longer stay at Malta, some assistance in the knowledge or investigation of these islands. The late facilities afforded by steam-navigation to all the curious and the learned, to make researches in the Mediterranean seas, have greatly increased the number of Strangers in Malta; — as also, the facilities and conveniences, which the generosity of the truly paternal Government of Malta has granted to foreign shipping, have equally augmented the concourse of travellers and strangers in this far-famed port".

What sort of people were the English visitors who made up the vast majority of the travellers calling at Malta? No doubt they shared the general characteristics of the English who travelled abroad in the 19th century and about whom C.P. Snow wrote as follows under the title 'The English on Tour' in a book review appearing in the 'Financial Times' of January 17, 1974: "The 19th Century English don't seem to have liked travelling much, and were relieved when they could get back home. They didn't speak any language but their own... They complained interminably. They thought all foreign countries were unhealthy, dishonest and dirty (though in reverse Russians such as Dostoevsky thought, as they do to this day, that London was the scruffiest and

7. LUKE, Sir Harry, *Malta: an Account and an Appreciation*. London, 1949., p.121.

most untidy town they had ever seen). The English wanted, of course, to carry their own customs with them, and above all their own food — which their hosts, who didn't share their opinion of English food, regarded as, of all their unreasonable grumbles, the most bizzarrely so".

Much of Malta's popularity was also due to the technological advance that marked this period and greatly facilitated sea communications, as well as to the climate of these islands which enhanced their reputation as a health resort. From 1830 onwards the rise and progress of steam communication between England and India stimulated overland traffic between these two countries and by 1845 a scheme had been adopted by the Peninsular & Oriental Co. and the East India Co. advertised in J. Barber's 'The Overland Guide Book', as "a means of extending commerce and civilisation and of the approximation of our vast Indian empire to the rest of its superior rule". This Overland Route, as the journey to and from India, by way of Egypt, came to be called was then considered as "even now one of comparative ease and pleasure".

Improved steam communications with the Mediterranean countries, coupled with the advantages which the Island offered as a place of residence for invalids, led slowly to its adaptation for its new role as host to an increasing number of visitors, attracted to its shores by its climate no less than by cheaper living compared to England or the Continent. This is amply borne out by the impressions of contemporary visitors to these Islands. C.W. Vane, Marquess of Londonderry, was in Malta in 1841 and had this to say in his account: (8) "Occasional visitors and persons of note, especially since the Government steam conveyance has been so successfully and splendidly established with Malta, add much to the society of the place. Since the royal visit i.e. of Queen-Adelaide in 1838, Malta has been brought far more into repute as beneficial, for its climate, for invalids, and as being more quiet, and cheaper, as to living, than Italy..." In the early 1840's Francis Sankey, M.D. addressed members of the Medical Association and among other things he pointed out that "the course of the last few years has brought about a rapid amelioration in the island, whereby the mode of life is almost entirely assimilated to that in England and France ... The inns are numerous and good. There is no longer any difficulty of obtaining commodious apartments or furnished houses; and living is much cheaper than in England". Besides, Sankey noted "another advantage which Malta possesses — the almost daily arrival and departure of English, French and Italian steamers, will enable him (invalid) to try other countries, to make excursive trips, and again to return — thus frequently changing the air and scene, both of acknowledged use to the infirm". (9)

Indeed, Malta had come a long way since 1800 as regards board and lodging facilities. John Galt, a traveller to Malta, commented as follows: "There was no tolerable hotel in Malta while I happened to be there; but one, sufficiently

8. VANE, C.W., *A Steam Voyage to Constantinople by the Rhine and the Danube in 1840-1841* — Vol. II, 1842, p.84.

9. SANKEY, Francis *Malta considered with reference to its eligibility as a place of residence for invalids*. Edinburgh, pp.4, 6, 20.

spacious, was preparing and has since, I understand, been opened. The house, in which I obtained lodgings, had formerly been a tavern; but the owner was induced to give it up for a singular reason. "When it was an inn" said the waiter, a Sicilian who spoke English, "it was so full of noises that there was no living in it. The officers of the men-of-war came making noises. They went to the play, and came back making noises. Then there were the stranger gentlemen, all English, making noises — sitting up in the night, singing, roaring, jumping on the tables, breaking plasses. O, my God! what terrible noises! So we put down the sign from the wall; and, if there be less money now, we have no noises." (10)

Thomas MacGill gave further information in 1839: (11) "Some 30 years ago, there were neither a decent inn, or lodging house, in the city of Valletta; at that period, strangers arriving on the Island were forced to depend on the hospitality of the English residents for a dinner; and such was the hospitality of the day, that all were well received, and kindly treated. The palace, now occupied by the Admiral commanding on the station, was fitted up by Sir Alexander Ball for the accommodation of strangers of distinction:- now, we have three good inns where a prince may be accommodated; and 5 or 6 most excellent lodging houses; the inns are also lodging houses, — we consider the best inn, in the English style, that of Morell, in strada Forni No. 150. The *Clarence* hotel kept by Madam Goubau, No. 249 strada Reale, where every thing is very comfortable; a table d'hôte, as also hot and cold baths, a great luxury in a warm climate; — the Inn of Micallef is in Strada Stretta No. 53, where baths are also to be found.

"The best lodging houses are *Dunsford's* in strada Reale No 254, *Madam Morelli*, No 224 in the same street, *Crockford's* in strada Zecca No 124, also *Miss Atkinson's* No 38; *Vicary's* in strada Vescovo No 111 and *Madam Calleja*, near the entrance of the upper Barracca; there are many other very good, but of less note; the charges at the inns and lodging houses are moderate."

Nevertheless, the experience of the above mentioned George French Angus in finding lodgings (12) must have been shared by many others coming to Malta in those days. "I found Mr S at his residence in the Sda Zecca," he wrote, "and after a little conversation he recommended me to take lodging with an English family who resided in the adjoining street ... Finding that the lodgings I was in search of were all engaged, I was recommended to try those kept by Signor Fabreschi, a Leghornese merchant in reduced circumstances. Here I engaged a bedroom only, and I found it to be the most convenient method to take my meals at the café, or restorateur in the adjoining street."

M. J. Girandea in 1835 wrote that in Malta 'when the commission agents

10. GALT, John, *Voyages and Travels in the years 1809, 1810 and 1811 containing statistical, commercial and miscellaneous observations on Gibraltar, Sardinia, Sicily, Malta ...* 2nd ed., London, 1813, p.117.
11. MacGILL, Thomas, *Handbook or Guide for Strangers visiting Malta*, Malta, Luigi Tonna, 1839, pp. 66-67.
12. ANGUS, G.R., *op. cit.*, p.16.

accost a foreigner they commence in English as a rule but finish in Italian: "Will you, Sir, una locanda?" (13) Which were the principal inns and hotels operating in and outside Valletta between 1840 and 1880? Useful sources for this information, besides the newspapers, are the following guide books and almanacks: J. Quintana (ed.) 'Guida dell'iso'la di Malta' ... (circa 1844), Rev. G.N. Godwin, 'A Guide to the Maltese Islands,' 1880; 'Muir's Malta Almanack and Directory' (1844-1865); 'Steven' Malta Almanack and Directory' (1868-1880). From a perusal of these publications one finds that the hotels in the main streets of Valletta were the following:-

McLelland's Hotel, centrally situated at No. 278 Strada Reale (now occupied by Ellis Photographers in Republic Street) and originally kept by a Mrs. Bentley, had passed into the hands of a lady bearing this name. It lodged both families and single persons at moderate rates.

The *Clarence Hotel*, situated at 249 Strada Reale (now Regency House gallery) near the Governor's Palace, had been kept for more than twenty years by a Madame Goubau, with a Tavola Tonda at fixed prices. It had a good selection of wines, and provided hot and cold baths at all hours.

Sir Richard Bourke, who was Governor of New South Wales from 1831 to 1837, stayed in this hotel in 1845. He kept a diary of his voyage from Southampton to Malta and his return to England via France and Germany in 1846. Under the date December 2, 1845 he recorded how, on being given permission to land "I called the Artilleryman alongside and in a short time I found myself bag and baggage at the *Clarence Hotel* in Strada Reale". He immediately sent his letters of introduction to the Governor, Sir Patrick Stuart, apologizing for not presenting them in person. "In the afternoon His Excellency, who had been inspecting a Regiment when my note reached him, called at my Hotel with Sir Hector Greig, the Secretary to Government, and very civilly offered me his services. This visit was more than I had any right to expect, as it was my duty to make the first call on the Queen's Representative..." During the morning Sir Richard learned that his hostess, Mme. Goubau, a French widow, had not put him into the good rooms which Lt. Col. Whitty, to whom he had been recommended by letter from Col. Cator sent from Limerick, had engaged for him. "She made a sort of excuse and told me they would be again vacant in three days. The present sitting room is good enough, but the bedroom is bad. I pay 4/- a day for rooms, my servant's bed included — 1/6 for breakfast and 3/- for a very decent dinner and dessert. Wine is an extra — good Marsala, a Sicilian wine, is charged 1/6 a bottle, but French and Spanish wines and Port, paying a higher duty, are nearly as dear as in London. Mme. Goubau keeps a good cook and the house is clean. She presented me with a very pretty nosegay on my arrival..." (14)

Dunsford's Clarence Hotel was established in 1824 and occupied Nos. 249 and 254, Strada Reale. Muir's Almanack for 1845 states: "Grace Dunsford's

13. GIRANDEAU, J., *L'Italie, La Sicile, Malte, La Grece.....* Paris, 1835, p.184.

14. N.L.M. GA BE 197; also ZAMMIT GABARETTA, Canon A., in "Sunday Times of Malta" of December 4, 1977.

Houses combine the privacy with the domestic comforts of an English Establishment; she trusts that by her continued attention to clean apartments, good cuisine and moderate charges to ensure a continuance of that Patronage she has so long enjoyed". The prices charged were as follows:

Suite of Apartment per diem	From 5sh — 10sh
Single sleeping apartment	1sh 6d.
Breakfast	1sh 1sh 5d. 1sh 6d.
Luncheon	1sh
Dinner	3sh
Tea	6d./1sh

Families by the Month

By 1860 J. Dinning, for many years Chief Steward, P. & O.S.N. Company's Service, had become its proprietor and he inserted the following advertisement in the same Almanack for that year: "The proprietor of this old Establishment begs to inform the Public in general and Visitors to the Island that the Hotel has been much enlarged and improved to meet its extensive patronage. Neither trouble nor expense has been spared to place it on a footing second to no other, and nothing will be found wanting, conducive to the comfort of those who may honour it with their patronage. From the eligibility of the situation and the number of sitting rooms looking into the main street, this Hotel is particularly adapted for the residence of families, and the new coffee room which is the largest in Malta, overlooking the Victoria Gardens and Library, renders it equally so for single Gentlemen". Among the comforts provided there were "warm and cold baths always ready", while an added advantage was that J. Dinning & Co. manufactured on the premises double aerated soda water, lemonade, ginger beer, seltzer water, potass water, magnesia water and every description of aerated fruit beverages. These aerated waters were "manufactured by the latest improved Machinery supplied by the most celebrated Machine Maker in London" and the Company had "engaged a man to manage the factory from one of the first Establishments in London, from which place they import all the ingredients of the best quality, and which cannot fail to give every satisfaction (one trial will be sufficient to prove the genuineness of the above)". This establishment also kept a lodging house in the country, about a mile and half from the city, for persons of delicate health looking for a quiet place.

By 1880 J.R. Falcon had become its proprietor and the name was changed to *Grand Hotel and Dunsford Clarence Hotel* at 247 Strada Reale (now occupied by the Casino (1852)). It was advertised in Stevens' Almanac for that year as "the first-class new establishment and Dunsford's renowned hotel under the experience of a first-rate Manager and Proprietor", situated "in the best portion of the City, facing the Palace Square and Queen's Gardens...". On Friday, May 27, 1887, 5th Lieutenant Prince George, later King George V, wrote from Admiralty House to Admiral Sir Henry F. Stephenson, informing him that "... a dreadful thing happened yesterday, — the Marine Officer of the

Téméraire shot himself in the *Grand Hotel* and was found dead in the room with the revolver in his hand; they believe he was in debt, but he has been odd for some time. He tried first to kill himself by taking morphine and eventually blew his brains out ..." (15)

Vicary's occupied No. 111, *Strada Vescovo*. Andrew Bigelow referred to this hotel in *'Travels in Malta & Sicily'* in 1827 (Boston, 1831, p. 113): "*Vicary's*, where I am lodged, is built on the square formed by *Sda Reale* and *Sda. Stretta* and fronts on *St. George's Piazza*, a spacious court before the old *Palace of the Grand Masters*. The windows of my apartments are provided with the general appendage of balconies, and from the central position of the house I have many materials of observation without stirring abroad."

By 1845 the name had been changed to *The Princess Royal Hotel*, owned by E. Baker. Besides providing "a well served *Table d'Hôte* at half past 5 o'clock for residents, visitors and their friends", all the continental languages were spoken there. *'Muir's Almanack'* for 1845 contained the following insertion in French: '*Hotel de la Princess Royale de E. Baker ... a été honneur de la presence des familles royales de Prusse, de Mecklenberg, de Lippe et de Bavière*'. Under the heading *Baker's Princess Royal Hotel*, facing the *Pa'ace Square*, we read that "this Hotel, patronised by most of the Royal and distinguished personages who have visited the Island, offers to families and single gentlemen comfortable and economical accommodation. The apartments are pleasantly and airily situated, overlooking the Square, and may be occupied either by the day, week or month". It had warm and cold baths, and served "wines of the most recherché quality direct from the *Vigneron*".

The *Imperial Hotel* at No. 91, *Strada Santa Lucia* (now rebuilt and occupied by the Embassy and Ambassador Theatres) replaced another hotel, the *Mediterranean* in 1858. *'Muir's Almanack'* for 1845 referred to the *Mediterranean* as a "spacious establishment kept by Mr. B. Evrard" while Quintana (p. 166) described it as "a magnificent establishment recently furnished in a new building kept by Mr. B. Evrard". Its cuisine catered to French and English tastes. *'Muir's Almanack'* for 1851 mentioned that it had also a lodging house at *Pietà*.

When *Gioacchino Ellul* took it over in 1858 it was re-named *Imperial Hotel*. *'Muir's Almanack'* for 1859 advertised "*Imperial Hotel*, lately *Mediterranean*" in these terms: "This splendid and renowned establishment offers to the travelling gentry very comfortable, large and small apartments. *Table d'Hôte* and Restaurant. Warm, cold and shower baths".

On March 23 - 24, 1864 the famous Italian patriot *Giuseppe Garibaldi*, accompanied by his two sons *Menotti* and *Ricciotti* and some other persons, lodged at this hotel before leaving for *Southampton*.

Mr Ellul seems to have been an enterprising person and with great foresight in 1875 he opened an hotel bearing the same name at *S'iemma*, which is still in existence, on the site formerly used by the *Shooting Club*. *'Godwin's Guide'* (p. xxii) described this establishment as "situated in the highest part

15. *A Royal Correspondence: Letters of King Edward VII and King George V to Admiral Sir Henry F. Stephenson*..... Macmillan, 1938. p.95.

of Sliema and commands an uninterrupted view of Valletta, the sea and country. The apartments, suites and single, are more than usually lofty, well ventilated and elegantly furnished". According to 'Stevens' Original Malta Almanac & Directory for 1880', Girolamo Ellul's *New Imperial Hotel* also offered good facilities in Sliema.

The *Malta Cross Hotel*, run by Michele Pisani at No. 74, Strada Santa Lucia, was described in 'Muir's Almanack' for 1859 as "a splendid and renowned establishment" offering "to the Travelling Gentry very comfortable large and small apartments, Table d'Hôte, Restaurants", and "warm, cold and shower baths".

In the same street, but with its entrance through No. 34, Strada Stretta (now occupied by business offices and Dr. Manchè's Clinical Laboratory) there was the *Hotel d'Angleterre*, established in 1856 by Vincent and John Belluti, brothers. The amenities advertised by 'Muir's Almanack' for 1860 included "slate billiard tables ... British India and Foreign newspapers, Superior Havannah Cigars, Tobacco, etc. always on hand". There is a reference to this hotel in Col. N.R. Raven's 'Story of a Visit to the "Dried Monks" of Floriana' (16) where we read: "Of the hotels in Valletta, from personal experience the writer knows nothing except that kept by Mr. Belluti, in Sda. Stretta, the *Hotel d'Angleterre*, where he once stayed with his family for some days, and he is glad to have this opportunity of testifying to the excellent accommodation provided there. A good table is kept, food being abundant, and of good quality, and the charges are moderate. Both Mr Belluti and his son are highly respected, winning the regard of the visitors by their civility and courteous attention".

In Strait Street there were six other establishments which considered it worth their while to advertise their services. The *Oriental Hotel* at No. 29 was to be recommended for its good cuisine as well as for its reasonable charges. The *Minerva*, at No. 57, was a restaurant, with a lodging house opposite at No. 142, where travellers could be comfortably accommodated. Mea's could also be served to private homes on order. *Micallef's* was "one of the oldest inns in Malta, at No. 53, kept by a person of this name". Between 1880 and 1888 S. Vella was the proprietor of the *Hotel* (later *Grand Hotel de Paris*) at No. 44 Strada Stretta, while E. Vassallo kept the *Australian Hotel* at No. 35. In 1880 we also find the *Crown Hotel* at 69, Strada Stretta, included among the principal hotels of Valletta. (17)

Coming to Zachary Street, there was, according to 'Stevens' Malta Almanack' for 1868, the *United Services Hotel*, kept by Davis at 30D. Housed in No. 43 (now occupied by various offices, including the Malta Union of Farmers, and E. Said Stamps & Coins) there was *Wise's Commercial Inn* which provided its patrons with London and local papers. 'Muir's Almanack' for 1847 added that "J. Wise having furnished his house in a most elegant style and

16. Malta, 1887, p.40.

17. QUINTANA, J., *Guida*....., p.166; *Muir's Almanac for 1845*, p.91; *Stevens' Original Almanac & Directory for 1880*; *The Malta Commercial Almanac & General Advertiser for*..... 1888; GODWIN, G.N. *A Guide to the Maltese Islands*, 1880, p.55.

with every comfort of an English establishment, he trusts that by his constant attention to cleanness, good cuisine and moderate charges, to insure a continuance of that patronage he was always enjoyed". In 1880, and again in 1888, we find the *Europe Hotel*, by Michele Saguna, advertised at No. 58, Strada Zaccaria.

Quite original in its approach was the *Windsor Castle Hotel*, situated at No. 22 Zachary Street (later re-numbered 43, now occupied by Bebé Children's Wear Establishment) "directly opposite the principal entrance to St John's Church". The proprietor was Edward Harris "late of London, Melbourne and New York". It offered its services "including American Fancy Drinks to passengers, captains and Officers of Vessels calling at Malta". Besides refreshment rooms it advertised "Tea Gardens and a Museum of Curiosities". 'Godwin's Guide' (p. xxvi) printed the following rather unusual advertisement in the form of

AN UNKNOWN POEM ON A WELL KNOWN SPOT

Now as the Sun gains height and strength,
 And days are stretching out their length,
 'Tis well to know some shelter'd spot,
 To cool our thirst when 'tis so hot.
 A shady place I would suggest,
 Where weary, parched, or "peckish" guest,
 May calm enjoy, 'mong trees and shrubbery,
 The blessings of a quiet snuggerly.
 Within the WINDSOR CASTLE's walls,
 Are fresh and green embower'd stalls,
 Hid from the throng'd and busy street,
 Affording all! a cool retreat.
 Near, and in front, St John's Church door,
 The street's direct and straight before,
 Called Zaccaria, Twenty Two,
 But at the front there's nought to view:
 'Tis when the house we enter in
 Our int'rest and delight begin.
 There ease and quiet reign sublime.
 Choice drinks, made antidote to clime,
 Refresh and cheer our drooping "spirits",
 And stimulate our appetites.
 The cheapest Lunches have such zest,
 We bless OLD HARRIS and the rest,
 For his cheap bills of fare I think,
 Exhaust the lists of food and drink.
 He caters well, just go see him,
 And his Museum kept so trim,
 Cocktails, grins, and smiles preparing
 Prairie Oysters so ensnaring;

Pleasing all with well spun "cuffers",
 Anecdotes of "ancient buffers,"
 And yarns both truthful and polite
 For HARRIS is "Cosmopolite";
 Treats all his friends as they desire,
 His suavity you must admire.
 He loves to please, but not for "pelf",
 For pleasing *us*, he's pleased *himself*;
 But call on him and then decide,
 From St. John's Church 'tis but a stride,
 Call morning, noon or e'en at night,
 He'll welcome you with much delight.

The *Great Britain Hotel* was situated near the Opera House at No. 42 (later re-numbered 67) South Street "in the best part of the town". Nowadays the site is occupied by Mifsud Brothers Travel Agency and offices. It was advertised by Godwin as a "first-class family hotel" with "large and small suites of apartments and bedrooms commanding a view of the street" where "visitors to Malta will find home comforts combined with moderate charges". Under the personal superintendence of the proprietor, C. Lawrence, it was "highly recommended by English families". This establishment was advertised with the principal hotels in 'Malta and Gibralt'ar Illustrated' (18) with a note that "it was started about forty years ago (i.e. c. 1875) by Mr. C. Lawrence, who died in 1892 and has since been conducted by his son, Mr. F.C. Lawrence, who spares no pains to satisfy his guests".

The *Victoria Hotel* occupied a big house in the centre of the city, facing St. John's Church. 'Muir's Almanack' for 1845 gave the address as No. 34, Strada San Giovanni, while Quintana placed it at No. 43.

In 1874 'Stevens' Malta Almanac' advertised the *British Hotel* in Nos. 267 - 268, St. Ursola Street (same numbers today) as "commanding a delightful view of the Grand Harbour and kept by A.W. Perham, late Scott" where, besides "wines, spirits and ales and Stout, on draught" one could have "to order all kinds of refreshments, sandwiches made".

The *Beverley Hotel* stood on the site of a palace often referred to as the "Palazzo Britto", today occupied by St. Paul's Modern Building, No. 20, West Street. Worthy of note is this hotel's association with two great English men of letters. The late Sir Harry Luke (19) wrote that "Sir Walter (Scott) remained in Valletta for three weeks (Nov. 21 — Dec. 13, 1831) residing, as had Disraeli the year before, at *Beverley's Hotel*. Sir Frederic Ponsonby, the Governor, had placed a house at his disposal, and several residents had made similar offers. Scott preferred the greater freedom of his "excellent apartment in the *Beverly Hotel*" on whose site the Maltese Ministry under Self-Government were to place a commemorative tablet on the occasion of the centenary

18. London, Macmillan, 1915, p.361.

19. LUKE, Sir Harry, *op. cit.*, p.135.

of his death in September, 1932".

Quintana's 'Guida' referred to *L'Aquila d'Oro* as a restaurant "lately established at No. 131, Strada Teatro (now occupied by the *Egyptian Queen* restaurant) and to the *Clarendon Hotel*, housed in two big houses in Nos. 59 and 56, St. Paul Street, run by a Mr. Sparks. The latter place was advertised as *Spark's Royal Clarendon Hotel* in 'Muir's Almanack' for 1847. The advertisement said, inter alia, that 'in this splendid establishment, newly finished and fitted, families and travellers have all the comforts of a private residence; a first-rate cook and attentive waiters. All the continental languages spoken. Hot and cold fresh salt water and shower baths; also a private furnished house in Strada San Paolo and one in Sliema".

In 1880 'Stevens' Almanac' included the *St. George's Hotel*, by V. Muscat, at No. 74, Strada Teatro (situated, according to present numbering of doors, just opposite the Manoel Theatre, next to Vzo. Borg, *Pastizzeria tal-Hbieb*).

The *Royal Hotel*, is No. 94, Strada Forni, stood on the site of a big palace "in one of the most quiet places in Valletta", as Quintana put it. This big palace, bearing the same door number to this day, is the Palazzo Caraffa.

Morell's Hotel was a bigger establishment in the same street, No. 150, where the proprietor also had caresses, carriages and saddle horses for hire. 'Muir's Almanack' for 1859 underlined its "excellent sleeping rooms for gentlemen, with the use of a good Coffee Room; private lodging and country houses" and added that it supplied "picnick parties and etc. at Boschetto". V. Denaro traces the history of this place: "The princely Rospigliosi family owned the palace adjacent to the Correa de Sousa palace (No. 150, Old Bakery Street) ... On July 1, 1806 it was let to the British Naval Authorities for £86. 13. 4 per annum for the use of the Commissioner of the Navy appointed to superintend the shore establishments in Malta. This house was so used until 1832, when this officer took up his residence at the Admiralty House, Vittoriosa ... On its being vacated by the Admiralty the palace was converted into *Morell's Hotel* and among the many people who lodged there, was the painter Sir Frederick Watts. Later the premises housed Flores College and (the late) Chev. Vincenzo Bonello has informed the writer that the famous Italian novelist and playwright Luigi Capuana delivered a lecture here during his visit to Malta. During the sale by auction of the effects of *Morell's Hotel*, Chev. Bonello, then a boy, remembers seeing paintings being sold which bore the "blue lozenge", the arms of the Rospigliosi family. The premises are today the College of St. Albert the Great ..." (20)

Under the title 'Glimpses of Malta', the "Malta Penny Magazine" carried an extract, in the form of a letter, from the 'Glimpses of the Old World' published early in 1840. The writer had been recommended to put up at *Morell's* and on December 5, he wrote: "... we soon found ourselves at *Morell's* snugly fixed in our lodgings. I said that many of the edifices by which we passed resembled palaces. This very house in which I have my lodgings, now used as an inn, was built by a knight as his private palace. The room I occupy is

20. DENARO, V., *Houses in Valletta*, 1967, p. 55.

like a spacious saloon, and my door opens out upon the flat stone roof, which covers that portion of the edifice less elevated than the part I occupy, giving me the benefit of an extensive promenade on the roof, from which I can overlook the city, the harbours, the surrounding fortifications, and wide-spread waters of the Mediterranean. In the centre of our mansion there is a small open court, where are a great variety of flowering shrubs and where thrives a huge vine, which is several feet in circumference, and which, sending up its massive trunk above the third storey, spreads itself out over an immense framework erected upon the flat roof, and thus forms, by its innumerable tendrils and outstretched branches, an agreeable canopy over our heads, while we here take our promenade ..." (21)

We have already seen that some hoteliers in Valletta soon began to look beyond the city gates for their catering activities. Few hotels, however, seem to have been set up outside the capital by 1880. Stevens' 'Malta Almanck' for 1874 advertised the *Crystal Palace Hotel*, an English establishment in Nos. 43 - 47, Sda Conservatorio at Balzonetta, Floriana "between Porta Reale and the Argotti Gardens". Here dinners and suppers were promptly served, and there was a pleasant garden for the recreation of customers. "The proprietor", we read "has established the above hotel, with good and airy rooms and bedding, and every necessary for the accommodation of persons patronising the same". Also at Floriana was the *Rising Sun Hotel*, kept by W. Reid. Godwin's 'Guide' (p. xvii) mentioned amongs its attractions "photography in all its branches; studio open from 8 a.m.; a fine collection of views of Malta; H.M. Ships etc. on view".

Hamrun was late to develop as a populous suburb. Nevertheless, the following notice appeared in the 'Malta Times' of the 20th March, 1842: "*Melita Inn and Dairy — San Giuseppe*: ... Mrs Richardson takes this opportunity of returning thanks to the officers of the Navy and Army and Inhabitants of Malta for past favours and trusts by strict attention to the cleanliness and comfort of the Inn to merit a continuance of their patronage and support; Lodgings for invalids and their families".

Villa Paris Hotel was the name of a country hotel at Lija, within four miles of Valletta. Stevens' 'Malta Almanack' for 1868 stated that its proprietor was G. B. Mallia, adding: "This hotel is pleasantly situated and has two entrances, one in the Casal Musta Road and the other behind the Church of Casal Lia. Dinners provided for large parties on having a day or two notice. Breakfasts, luncheons and suppers at any hour. Skittle, Quoit and American Playground". The above-quoted Col. Raven gave some additional information: "Mention, too, must be made of the well-known *Ville de Paris Hotel* at Casal Lia, which is kept by Mr Spiteri, the able caterer of the Malta Union Club. This is a charming place at which to spend a few hours, or even days. It is much frequented by officers and others who are fond of spending a pleasant hour or two in the country. The accommodation is good and the charges very reasonable. A good dinner can be served at a short notice, and light refresh-

21. MALTA PENNY MAGAZINE: No. 58 of Oct. 17, 1840 — No. 65 of Dec. 5, 1840.

ments are always obtainable". (22)

Coming to Sliema, we have already mentioned the *Imperial Hotel* and the *New Imperial Hotel*, both run by the Ellul family. As early as 1854 the *Malta Times* in its issues of the 3rd and 10th January advertised some lodging houses at Sliema, viz. *Jevons Lodgings*, at Strada Marina and Tigné, where Col. Forester and Lady Henry Russell, together with the Misses Kennedy, Rev. T. Levy and Mr. W. Medlycott were staying, *Luigi Pollacco's Lodgings* in Strada Reale and Mrs Love's Lodgings, known as *Mount Eagle Lodge*, at Strada Ghar id-Dud. Stevens' *'Almanack'* for 1868 mentioned the *Prince of Wales Hotel*, at 37, Tower Road, Sliema, kept by M. Calleja.

As regards the *Imperial Hotel*, the *'Croce di Malta'* of the 20th December, 1875 referred to the newly opened hotel as being considered "one of the chief hotels in Europe" while the *'Corriere Mercantile Maltese'* of the 12th November, 1875 described it as magnificent, adding: "... Grande il numero delle stanze, elegante il mobilio, ottimo il servizio. Il novello albergo è degno di città di prima ordine". Some prominent visitors to Malta, including members of Europe's royal families, stayed in this hotel. "L'Ordine" of the 30th December, 1875, carried a news item to the effect that the members of the Bavarian royal family who spent a few days in Malta staying at the magnificent new Hotel at Sliema, left on Monday, the 21st December for Tunis on the ship *Lancefield*. His Highness Prince Leopold of Bavaria and his young wife Archduchess Giselda, daughter of the Emperor of Austria, were travelling under the name of Count and Countess of Elpen, and were accompanied by the Princess Teresa of Bavaria. The *'Public Opinion'* of the 9th October 1878 reported that Mr. Patrick Keenan, whose report on Education in Malta constitutes a milestone in local educational history, "who is accompanied by Mrs Keenan and the Misses Keenan is staying at the *Imperial Hotel*, Sliema". On Wednesday, 12th September, 1888 the members of the Executive Council gave a farewell luncheon to His Excellency the Governor, Sir J.A. Lintorn Simmons, at the *Imperial Hotel*, Sliema, and, according to 'L'Ordine' of the 19th September, 1888, the philharmonic society 'I Cavalieri di Malta' executed a select programme during the banquet. (23)

Stevens' *'Almanack'* for 1887 advertised the *Alexandra Hotel* "With a very fine garden, by Angelo Borg" at Nos. 2 - 4, Strada Marina, "opposite the landing place at Sliema", while in the following year the *'Malta Commercial Almanack and General Advertiser'* included in its list of hotels the *Duke of Edinburgh Hotel*, also near the Sliema Landing Place.

In the same publication Antonio Bartolo listed two hotels at Balzan in 1888, i.e. the *Clarence Hotel*, kept by Peter Spiteri, and the *Alexandra Hotel*, at No. 145, Strada Reale.

Quintana's *'Guida'* (pp.94,118) referred to a hotel at Tarxien "kept with great propriety by an English lady". As for the rest of Malta, one looked in

22. RAVEN, N.R., *Story of a Visit to the "Dried Monks" of Floriana*. Malta, 1887, p.40.

23. Thanks are due to Mr. Winston L. Zammit, M.A., for his help in tracing material on hotels in Sliema.

vain for an hotel; nor, for that matter, were there any restaurants, with the exception of Rabat and Lija, and, possibly, St. Paul's Bay. Travellers intending to spend the day in the country were advised to take a packed lunch with them.

What about Gozo? Hotel accommodation in that Island was totally in-existent at the end of the 18th century, though some friaries may have provided a night's lodging to travellers. One such traveller was Sir Richard Colt Hoare whose journal includes an entry under the date Wednesday, June 16, 1790 to the effect that "at the close of the evening I reached the small port of Gozo, but too late to ascend to the town, where I secured a lodging in the Convent of St. Francis. I therefore contented myself with a room in a house on the sea shore, where I put up my bed". (24)

By 1839 the position had definitely improved, for 'Thomas MacGill's Guide' (p.144) stated that "only a very few years ago strangers visiting Gozo were forced to carry with them not only their bedding but even the common necessaries of life, and trust for cover to the hospitality of some Convent; but such is the march of improvement that now, within the walls of the citadel, there is an excellent house of entertainment, kept by an Englishman named Griffiths, where clean and comfortable beds can be had, and dinners, with good wines, in English style, at a moderate charge; in the town also, there are now some houses of reception kept by natives — one kept by a man named Filippo is very comfortable ..."

A few years later this was more or less corroborated by Quintana's 'Guida' (pp. 130, 139) which, after giving the information that a stranger on landing at Imġarr found a wretched restaurant where carts, asses and, if need be, calesses could be procured, went on to say: "Otherwise there is nothing on this island but an hotel and a restaurant: the first lies within the city walls; it is well furnished and is kept by an Englishman who resides mostly at Chambray; but he has a man who looks after the house and who can also supply a good meal at a moderate price. This hotel may be recommended to travellers who have their families with them. The restaurant is in Rabat and is kept by Mr Filippo Fenech. It is very decently kept; but the restricted premises do not allow him to maintain this establishment as he would have liked to do. He also provides lodgings to travellers who, if they are not accompanied by a numerous family, could not find anywhere better to stay. The prices are also quite reasonable".

By 1880 the Rev. G.N. Godwin, Chaplain to the Forces, recorded in his guide-book (p. 238) that at Rabat in Gozo, "a comfortable little hotel, the *Imperial* by name, receives the traveller within its hospitable doors, and Peppina, hostess, is one of the most motherly natives of these islands that I have as yet discovered. Take up that universally to be found volume, "The Visitors' Book" and there shall you read alike in prose and rhyme the praises of Peppina. Suffice it to say that you will be well lodged and fed and, a word in your

24. COLT HOARE, Richard, *Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily* — Vol. II, 1819, p.291.

ear, for most moderate cost, at this hotel. There is also the *Calypso Hotel* nearly opposite the Imperial”.

In 1888 the 'Malta Commercial Almanac and General Advertiser' listed these two hotels as being owned by G. Bugeja and Sons (*Imperial Hotel*) and Luigi Mei'ach (*Calypso Hotel*) respectively. *Gleneagles Hotel*, in Nadur, was also advertised. In 1892 we read of another hotel in Victoria, Gozo. This was the *Duke of Edinburgh Hotel*, with Spiro Ax.sa as proprietor, advertised in the 'Guida Generale di Malta e Gozo' for that year as having "large apartments for families and comfortable rooms for single gentlemen where Luncheon Dinner and Supper are served at a short notice ... English and Italian papers provided”.

This reference to the *Calypso* and *Duke of Edinburgh* Hotels of former times brings this survey to a close. A great change had come over Malta since the opening years of the century, and there was much that Malta could offer by way of comfort to visitors. In the words of Dr. Nikol Zammit, "its auberges, its twenty three hotels and restaurants, its theatres, where performances are given during two seasons of the year, its fifteen clubs or casini, a large number of shops of all descriptions, two gymnasiums, three libraries with their reading rooms, twenty-two local newspapers, besides the foreign ones, are the advantages offered to native residents and visitors alike. Besides this diversity of innocent means of relaxation, there are the 'festas', which are of almost daily occurrence, horse-races, national bands, agricultural shows, trips by land and sea, and many other amusements too numerous to mention". (25)

Within the broad spectrum of these amenities, the establishments we have mentioned flourished and carried out their useful function catering to the needs of visitors and promoting tourist traffic by their ready service, good food and comfortable accommodation. We have seen how more than a century ago the main lines of the hotel industry, with its international jargon that is still accepted to this day, had already been established. With a few notable exceptions, the initiative in Malta had come from foreigners, mostly English, but with a sprinkling of Italian and French men and women. Some Maltese showed admirable foresight and joined their English counterparts in setting up hotels outside Valletta — an approach which seems quite modern and appropriate.

I sincerely hope that the material brought together in this study will serve as an introduction to the history of Tourism in Malta and that it will encourage others to take up where I left off and follow its progress up to modern times.

25. ZAMMIT, N., *Malta and its Industries*. London, 1886, p.5.