

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM



in collaboration with the National Archives of Malta

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

A visual perspective of the
Silver Jubilee celebrations in Malta
5 to 12 May, 1935



CREDITS

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*Entertainment for non-school children as part of the Jubilee Festivities;
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FOREWORD

APS Bank actively supports cultural events on the Maltese Islands. The Bank organises projects directly: its annual concerts present works by past and contemporary Maltese composers; photographic exhibitions have so far been based on images exploring given themes; art exhibitions by Maltese painters, sculptors and ceramists transcend the exhibits and address the artists' motivations and struggles to develop new forms of expression. These projects are generally spread over three years and they centre on several facets of the subjects under discussion. Besides, the Bank also co-finances other projects which are undertaken separately by artists themselves.

Together, these activities explore and highlight the rich heritage that has marked the development of Maltese society over the centuries. They also encourage and give scope to the present generation of artists to continue expressing their views on contemporary events using media reflecting the evolutionary stage in the respective cultural domain in which they are operating.

This year's Photographic Exhibition combines the art of photography with the political and social history of the Maltese Islands. It is a one-off event. It marks the transition between two cycles. The first cycle consisted of three annual competitions with given themes and the presentation of forty of the prints submitted; in addition 12 of these photographs were reproduced in the Bank's calendar. The second cycle starts in 2016 and will combine the experience of a selected group of photographers when expressing emotions emanating from chosen subjects in imagery. The project will also examine the technical issues involved in embodying photographs with a purpose and meaning.

This year's Exhibition resurrects from the Malta National Archives and other private sources, memories of historical events that marked the uneasy years of the mid-1930's. Humanity had to endure the harsh realities of the World War of 1939-1945. These photographs freeze a series of events in Malta's recent history.

They refer to various social activities organised with the specific intent of generating popular support for the British Monarchy – and hence the British Empire - on the Maltese Islands at a time when international relations were becoming strained and even hostile. The photographs by themselves would have been interesting as a documentary of the series of events and participants but, for many viewers, they might have lacked the historical political and social contexts. The significance of the events could perhaps have been lost. This publication fills in this missing information gap. The two together – the text and the photographs – address several realities which marked everyday life for the Maltese at the time but which may be somewhat incomprehensible for today's generations. Some of the present elderly Maltese actually lived through the experiences described in the following text and re-enacted in the photographs.

This publication and exhibition complement two other publications issued by APS Bank, namely, *Il-Parlament Malti: Kif Beda, X'Inhu u X'Jagħmel* written by Henry Frendo (2011), and *The Unione Cattolica San Giuseppe* authored by Joseph F. Grima (2013). Both publications presented new material which enriches our knowledge of Malta's history in the 20th century.

APS Bank is pleased to co-operate with both the National Archives, and especially Messrs Charles Farrugia and Leonard Callus, who wrote the text, as well as Mr Kevin Casha who promoted this project and saw to its fruition. I also wish to thank Judge Giovanni Bonello who shared his collection of photographs and gave us permission to reproduce some of them for this exhibition. A deserved thank you also goes to those who mounted the exhibition and worked on the booklet. Events like these are the outcome of a collective effort and dedication; that collaboration is in itself a value-added to any project undertaken by APS Bank.

E. P. Delia
Chairman, APS Bank



Auberge d'Italie, Vittoriosa, c. 1935.
National Archives of Malta
Photographic Collection 1845.

THE POWER OF THE PRINTED PHOTOGRAPH

Photography has been with us for nearly 200 years¹. It has become a constant companion in our everyday lives - particularly since digital technology took over by storm from conventional film technology. Today's civilised society is ceaselessly using imagery, in some form or another, for multiple ends as far apart as forensic criminology and medical imaging, to Fine Art and 3D movies. Never in the history of mankind are images so ever present, and at the same time, so seemingly effortless to produce. Photography as an artistic and creative medium is being constantly further explored and stretched to limits that in precedence were not considered possible.

Yet, although the advancement of technology has made photography accessible to all as well as widened the horizons of its many uses, there is a slow yet rather steady rebirth of traditional darkroom processes. The sudden disappearance of most wet darkrooms, when digital technology first appeared, is now being nostalgically revived by people who have not had the opportunity of experiencing the magic of the darkroom: that of viewing a blank piece of chemically treated paper come to life, before their very eyes, in a chemical liquid under the iconic red safelight. This is just one of the main factors why there is currently a marked resurgence of conventional Fine Art printing, particularly within the artistic photographic community.

Unfortunately, modern digital technology has also had what I consider a detrimental side effect - the wholesale suppression of printed photographs. Fewer and fewer photographic prints are being produced as most users are happy to just keep their images on hard drives, laptops and USB sticks. Many are not thinking of backing up their images with the often disastrous result that valuable files are being lost through the, as yet, lack of reliability of digital storage devices. One needs various double backups and regular monitoring in order to ensure that there is no loss of data. So what is likely to happen in

¹ *The first successful photographs were made by a French inventor, Joseph Nicéphore Niepce, about 1826. He succeeded in capturing an image that did not immediately fade when light struck it. In 1839 Jacques Mandé Daguerre announced the first widely successful photographic process, the Daguerreotype. Concurrently, William Henry Fox Talbot invented the first practical process that produced a negative from which prints could be made.*

the foreseeable future is that a lot of important imagery will be lost forever.

We should be very thankful for previous conventional technology where negatives could be printed, archived, treasured and proudly shown whenever the urge or the need arises. It is through these same hard copy photographs that most of our recent history can be traced back, researched, studied, immortalised, proved and enjoyed.

Personally, I find little things as fascinating as perusing a vintage photograph. The fact that one is looking at a split second of 'frozen' history, which can never again be repeated, coupled with the ability to glean so much information from a single picture, is amazing. On one hand, a photograph is reincarnating something which has expired back into life, yet, at the same time, it is proving that something is 'dead'. As philosopher Roland Barthes aptly said: "Is not the image therefore producing Death, while trying to preserve Life?"

For sure, the value of printed photographs, particularly vintage ones, is their documentary and storytelling values. For example, would we really know what happened in the Nazi concentration camps if we did not have photographic proof? It is with this mindset that I had successfully campaigned for setting up a National Picture Archive on our island.

In 1840, Photography fortuitously came to Malta at a very early stage of its appearance on the continent. The first recorded photograph taken in Malta was the Daguerreotype image of the Manoel de Vilhena statue, then at Lazzaretto, Manoel Island. The photograph was taken by Émile Jean-Horace Vernet (1789-1863) and his assistant, Frédéric Auguste Antoine Goupil-Fesquet (1806-1893).² Vernet, a famous artist regularly commissioned by Napoleon, was crossing to Egypt and on a stop in Malta, was quarantined at Manoel Island. With good luck for us, he whiled away the time experimenting with his new Daguerreotype equipment, demonstrating the process to the then Governor of Malta, Sir Henry Bouverie. Following this, there has always been a wealth of photographs, mostly undiscovered, that depict not only the life and society of our islands but also record some of the earliest attempts in the history of photography.

It was with great satisfaction that, through the help of National Archivist Charles Farrugia, together we managed to set up the Malta National Picture Archive in Santo Spirito, Rabat in 2003. This way, the process of digitising and saving local photographs for research and posterity was initialised. A sizeable amount of images have already been digitised and archived but there is still a long way to go, and much more effort is needed both by private individuals as well as governmental authorities in order to further consolidate and enrich

2 *Portafoglio Maltese, 16th March, 1840, p.817, Malta Public Library*



*Float at the Battle of
Flowers 11 May 1935,
Castille Place, Valletta.
National Archives of Malta,
Photographic Collection
2079.*

this process - yet the first steps have thankfully been accomplished.

This exhibition is a product of some of the work that has already been accomplished by the National Picture Archive. The photographs on show make up part of the National Archives' own photographic collection and have been reprinted from the digitised versions. Although some post processing has been done, in order to crop to a particular size and to bring out the tonal range as best as possible, no attempt to alter or change the essential content of the images has been done. This is in order to keep the photographs factual and remain faithful to reportage and journalistic ethics. Furthermore, the same deterioration that usually affects a photographic print seems to make it so much more magical and mysterious.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the help of Charles Farrugia, National Archivist and Leonard Callus, who researched the event depicted in the exhibits. Finally, I would like to thank APS Bank for making this exhibition materialise. The Bank has always believed in making Maltese society aware of our heritage and it has always been on the forefront for helping artists. The Bank's belief in photographic art is extremely beneficial not only for local photographers but also for enabling the general public to further appreciate and cherish our inimitable heritage.

Kevin Casha

Master of Fine Arts in Digital Arts

Exhibition Curator

Technical Coordinator, National Picture Archive



Decorated lorry at the
Battle of Flowers 11 May
1935, Castille Place, Valletta.
Giovanni Bonello Collection.



*"Malta on Jubilee Day"
Il-Berqa, 4 May 1935.*

SPRING 1935: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM?

“All nature is getting ready for spring, and all the country for the Jubilee.”¹

This is how *The Times of Malta* described the mood in Malta on the last day of the winter of 1935. A flurry of activity was sweeping across the island in preparation for King George V's Silver Jubilee festivities.

“The Authorities are to be congratulated upon their spring cleaning activities in Valletta and district, obviously a prelude to the general smartening up of exteriors in the preparation for the Royal Jubilee celebrations. Much-needed paintwork is being restored; stone facades are being repaired, monuments and statues scrubbed. Everywhere there are signs of feverish activity and cleanliness – except behind the wretched Market.”²

The Royal Jubilee celebrations were held with great pomp between the 5 and 12 May, in a country awash with Union Jacks, brimming with euphoria and loyalty towards the King. Fireworks, military parades, tea parties for children, garden parties, receptions, a gala evening, bands, film shows, free distribution of food and cigarettes to the poor, scout jamborees, illumination of churches, a state dinner, a searchlight display, bonfires, *Te Deums*, sport rallies and horse races were crammed into this week.

Sixteen days later, Major Edward John Briffa Depiro, the Secretary of the Jubilee Festivities Committee, handed “an album containing photographs of the different items of the Festivities in connexion with His Majesty's Silver Jubilee”³ to Hannibal Scicluna, the Librarian. These photos are now preserved at the National Archives⁴.

In line with its mission “to preserve the collective memory of the Maltese nation”⁵, the National Archives of Malta is collaborating with photographer

1 *Times of Malta*, 20 March 1935.

2 *Mid-day Views*, 17 April 1935.

3 NAM, CSG 01 826/1935.

4 “A number of photographs showing various aspects of the celebrations” were also sent to London by Governor Campbell together with his report about the Silver Jubilee celebrations in Dispatch 168 (31 May 1935).

5 *The National Archives Act, Cap 477 of the Laws of Malta*, art 3(1).

Kevin Casha and APS Bank in an exhibition of a selection of these photos.

Photos may show more than the persons, places and objects portrayed. In order to see beyond, research was carried out at the National Archives of Malta, and the newspapers of the time were reviewed in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the context and the spirit of these Jubilee celebrations. Hopefully, this note provides a key to ‘see’ these photos better.

PREPARATIONS

A Jubilee Festivities Committee, that included Colonel Percy Reginald Worrall⁶, Captain Lewis Harris and Squadron Leader Marix, was entrusted to organise a “magnificent manifestation of the loyalty of all classes of the population”⁷. The prime mover in the committee was Major Edward John Briffa Depiro, Assistant Secretary to Government at the Lieutenant Governor’s Office and secretary to the organising committee. On 15 February 1935, Press Notice 6/1935 was issued, giving a first hint of the preparations being envisaged for a “fitting celebration of the Silver Jubilee of His Majesty”, including a week-long programme of activities in May.

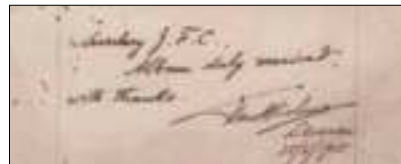
Parallel to this committee, a Central Committee was set up “to ascertain what functions the Services had in contemplation in connexion with the festivities”⁸. This committee was chaired by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Harry Luke and included the Chief Justice, Sir Arturo Mercieca, Brigadier E.F. Falkner, Air Commodore C.E.H. Rathborne, Edward R. Mifsud, Dr Albert V. Laferla, Director of Education, Captain Harris and the ADC to the Governor, Lieutenant Matthews. An item discussed during the meeting of 17 January 1935 was whether, similar to previous similar occasions, the public was to be asked to contribute towards the cost of the festivities. The Lieut. Governor reported that “perhaps on this occasion it would be better if Government bore the whole expense.” As “times were hard”, the Chief Justice agreed that Government should bear the whole expense; the rest agreed too. Luke informed the committee that “His Excellency [Governor Campbell] had expressed a wish that one of the items of the festivities should be a meal to poor children.”

- 6 Colonel P.R. Worrall was sent to Malta to re-organise the Kings’ Own Malta Regiment. While in Malta, he also took the voluntary post of the Island’s Commissioner for Boy Scouts, promoting both the regiment’s resurrection and the Boy Scout movement.
- 7 The Malta Chronicle, 22 March 1935.
- 8 NAM, CSG 01 826/1935.



Minute by Maj E. Briffa Depiro handing over photographs of the Jubilee Festivities to the Library. (above)

Receipt by Hannibal Scicluna, Librarian. (below)
NAM CSG 01 826/1935



It was agreed that “collections can be made from the public to meet the expenses of the charitable part of the celebrations.”⁹ As indicated later on, the children’s participation and the public collections for the ‘charitable part’ turned out to be a major aspect of the festivities.

The records of the workings of the Jubilee Festivities Committee⁹ include these preliminary estimates of the activities that were being considered:

Date	Event	Estimated Cost (£)
Sunday, 5 May	Horse races at Mdina	50
Monday, 6 May	Te Deum: Hire of Chairs, etc	5
	Village games for children	10
	Bands at Palace Square, Valletta	50
	Bands in villages	270
	Fireworks at Fosos, Floriana	120
Tuesday, 6 May	Sports Rally of School Children	100
	Water Carnival and fireworks, Grand Harbour	300
Wednesday, 8 May	Bands at Palace Square, Valletta	50
Thursday, 9 May (Gozo)	Illuminations	70
	Bands	70
	Decorations	40
	Fireworks, bonfires by Scouts	30
	Food to the poor	50
	Transport, char-a-bancs hire, etc	50
	Contingencies	20
Saturday, 11 May	Battle of Flowers	80
Sunday 12, May	Bands at Palace Square, Valletta	50
	Bands in villages	270
	Fireworks in villages	150
		£1,835

PROPOSED PROGRAMME

OF

FESTIVITIES ON THE OCCASION OF HIS MAJESTY'S SILVER JUBILEE - MAY 1935.

Malta

Sunday - May 5th

11.15 a.m. Blessing of Colours to be presented to L.O.S.N.

4 p.m. Horse Racing at Notabile.

Monday - May 6th

10.30 a.m. "The Mass" at St. John's Co-Cathedral Church.
"The Mass" in Villages.

*Masses in all
parishes*

p.m. Village Games for Children.
p.m. ~~Games~~ *Games* including writing races, at the parcs.
7 p.m. Bands on palace square. *etc*
8 p.m. His Excellency's ~~reception~~ *reception* Dinner.
p.m. Illumination of Churches.
8 p.m. Massed Marine Bands in Colours Gardens, Floriana.
8.30 p.m. Illumination by Fleet.
~~8.30 p.m. Illumination by Fleet.~~
10.30 p.m. Fireworks on terraces at Floriana.

Tuesday - May 7th

10 a.m. Combined Parade at parcs.

p.m. Band Sports Rally of School Children.

p.m. Water Carnival and aquatic Fireworks.

8.30 p.m. Illumination by Fleet.

Wednesday - May 8th

8 a.m.

2.30 p.m. His Excellency's Garden Party

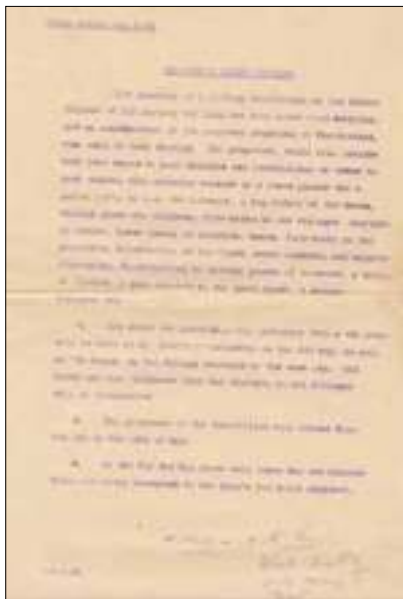
7.30 p.m. Bands on palace square

8.30 p.m. Illumination by Fleet

Thursday - May 9th

His Majesty's Day

His Excellency proceeds to ~~parcs~~ (The programme to be submitted later, but will include His Excellency's official luncheon, rally of school children and toy boats, bands, horse-racing, illuminations and fireworks)



Press statement about the Silver Jubilee Festivities, 13 February 1935.
NAM CSG 01 826/1935

OTHER

	Entertainment of poor and school children (6-8,000)	300
	Food to the poor	300
	Prizes for best decorated shops	60
	Broadcast of King's Speech	100
	6,000 flags for children	80
		£840

TOTAL

Events	1,835
Other costs	840
Contingencies	295
Total	£2,970

These estimates are an indication of the goals and the spirit of the festivities and provide several insights into Maltese society in the 1930's. The largest sums were being dedicated to bands (£760) and fireworks (£600, incl. water carnival). The money dedicated to these two events was more than double of that earmarked to provide entertainment for the poor children and the 6-8000 schoolchildren (£300) and the food for the poor (£300). Eventually, this money was topped up by various private donations. The significant sum of £80 was being voted so that 6000 children may waive the Union Jack!

BACKGROUND

European background

Hitler was appointed German Chancellor on 30 January 1933. Following the Reichstag Fire (27 February 1933), a decree overriding all guarantees of freedom was issued and violence intensified. The Enabling Act, granting plenary power to Hitler was approved after the March elections, led to the systematic takeover of the state governments throughout Germany. On 19 August 1934 Hitler became the Führer of Germany.

The year 1935 began with Germany getting back its coal-producing Saar region, entrusted to the League of Nations by the Versailles Treaty. A plebiscite was

to decide the region's future; 90% voted to join Germany.

As 1935 progressed, Europe moved closer to war. Britain announced an increase in armaments, and the French increased conscripted military service. Hitler said he was responding to the failure of other European powers to disarm and to the Soviet Union's increase of its military forces. He announced that Germany was rearming, establishing military conscription, enlarging its army to 36 divisions and increasing the airforce, all in violation of the Versailles Treaty.

Representatives from Britain, France and Italy met on April 11 at Stresa, Italy. They agreed to maintain their 1925 Locarno Treaty obligations and agreed that Germany should not be allowed to absorb Austria. France had a defensive treaty with Czechoslovakia, and on May 2, moved to enhance its security by signing a mutual assistance treaty with the Soviet Union. On May 16, the Soviet Union promised that if France fulfilled its defensive obligations towards Czechoslovakia it too would support Czechoslovakia. Hitler denounced these French and Soviet moves.

In Italy, Mussolini was talking about expanding into Ethiopia, a move he had been preparing for since 1933. In the Stresa Conference Britain had not voiced its opposition, and Mussolini thought that Britain would not stand in his way. The British government wanted to maintain its friendship with Mussolini, and tried to talk Mussolini into taking just a portion of Ethiopia. Mussolini refused, seeking a great military victory to impress his nation and to signify fascism's success. The relationship between Great Britain and Italy was turning increasingly sour with a marked impact on Malta. Fears of an Anglo-Italian war increased following the British-led move in the League of Nations¹⁰ to have economic sanctions imposed on Italy for invading Abyssinia. The increased tension led to the emptying of Maltese harbours, as the Mediterranean Fleet moved to Alexandria in 1935.

On the eve of the Jubilee festivities, the Maltese papers' headlines read 'Dark Clouds gathering over Europe'¹¹ and 'Mutual Confidence in Europe Destroyed'.¹²



*"The hats that will soon be in fashion."
Il-Berqa, 15 May 1935.*

10 *Ethiopia and Italy were members of the League of Nations, and aggression against Ethiopia was a violation of the League of Nations Charter.*

11 *Lehen is-Sewwa, 30 March 1935.*

12 *Times of Malta, 1 May 1935.*

Local Scenario

“An early impression of Malta, and one that persists and becomes stronger the longer one stays in the Colony, is the density of the population: density not only in relation to the superficial area, but, what is more important, in relation to opportunities of economically productive activity. It is usually a fallacy to attribute all evils to a single cause; but it can I think, fairly be contended that over-population is the main factor giving rise to many of the evils which afflict Malta at the present time. It is responsible, solely or partially, for the relatively low standard of living; the lack of employment combined with excessively long hours for many of those who are employed; the undue severity of competition in business; the multitude of young and irresponsible agents who start in business with slender hopes of establishing themselves permanently; the excessive number of middlemen who hamper and complicate internal trade; the apparently undue proportion of priests and lawyers – two professions which are apt to foster a disputatious and propagandist tendency; and many other ills and abuses existing in the Colony. As I see it, the fundamental problem which the Malta Government has to solve on the economic side is that of achieving a balance of population and useful economic activity.”¹³



“The source of all confusion troubling Europe.”
Il-Berqa, 10 April 1935

This assessment of 1935 Malta is part of the *Memorandum on Certain Economic Conditions in Malta*, dated 27 February 1935, drawn up by J.B. Greaves of the Department of Overseas Trade at the Empire Division. On 25 May 1935, Governor Campbell sent a copy of this “most valuable report”¹⁴ to Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

In 1935, the Maltese population stood at 255,185. Total live births were 8,544, a birthrate of 33.48 per 1000 population¹⁵. The infant mortality rate was alarming, over 25% of the children died during their first year¹⁶: gastrointestinal diseases caused over half of these deaths.

“The appalling infant mortality rate, of course, works in the direction of limiting increase of population; and, distressing though the present rate is, it is difficult to recommend any campaign to diminish it while general conditions remain as they are. Other direct methods of preventing increase of population are presumably not practical politics at the moment and are unlikely to be so

13 *J.B. Greaves, Memorandum on Certain Economic Conditions in Malta, 27 February 1935.*

14 *Confidential Dispatch to Secretary of State, 25 May 1935.*

15 *In 2013, Malta's birthrate stood at 9.5 per 1000 population.*

16 *The rate of deaths of children <1 year per 1000 live births was 277.03.*

for many years to come.”¹⁷

A heated debate on emigration was raging in the papers. 1,431 persons emigrated during the fiscal year 1934/1935¹⁸ compared to 3,280 five years earlier and 3,277 during 1924/35. The pro-British media insisted that “in such a scheme of mass migration there lies a distinct solution of the most pressing problem that confronts the people of these islands – over-population.”¹⁹ The Nationalist media was adamantly against: “We were always against, and still are, against a programme of mass emigration.”²⁰

The gathering storm in Europe was casting shadows over Malta. Two Strip Mirror Locators, an early warning defence system focused on the detection of enemy aircraft (prior to the invention of radar), were completed and tested in 1935 at Magħtab; air raid practice started with the first test blackout on 18 September, while an anti-gas training school opened at Kordin on the 23. Gas masks distribution followed.

These developments were accompanied by a clampdown on pro-Italian movements and personalities in Malta. The first half of the 1930’s was marked by the Colonial Office’s gradual shift away from “its hitherto fairly tolerant attitude towards Italian cultural activities in Malta and towards a speedier process of Anglicisation.”²¹

The operations of *Umberto Primo*, a school set up by the Italian Government to train artisans, and those of the *Casa del Fascio* were hampered. Since his arrival in Malta in 1930 as Garrison Intelligence Officer, Major Bertram Ede was busy developing a network of collaborators and informers. In 1934, the year when the use of the Italian Language at the Law Courts was stopped by decree, Major Bertram Ede was appointed District Security Officer. The Defence Security Office and the Criminal Investigation Department kept the Italian Consulate at Old Mint Street Valletta under constant surveillance, to the extent that suspects visiting the Consulate were photographed by a policeman hidden in an empty cask outside a wine shop opposite the building.²² The Italian Consul’s driver was also put on the British security’s payroll²³.



“The hand that is stopping her.”
Il-Berqa, 13 April 1935.

17 Greaves, 1935.

18 Most departmental reports cover the fiscal year, namely 1 April – 31 March.

19 *The Malta Chronicle*, 11 April 1935.

20 *Malta*, 16 April 1935.

21 J. M. Pirotta, ‘Enrico Mizzi Targeted for Deportation in 1934’, *The Sunday Times*, 4 June 2006.

22 E. Attard, *Deportations of Italians from Malta and espionage convictions in the 1930s*, *The Sunday Times*, 27 January 2013.

23 J.M. Pirotta, 2006.

A pervasive atmosphere of paranoia, fear and suspicion was developing²⁴ and was becoming so charged that on 7 November 1934, Alison Russell, the Administration's Legal Adviser proposed "the deportation of one, or at least two, traitorous citizens from loyal Malta" as this "would check this anti-British propoganda, and would show that tolerance must not be misinterpreted, as it now is in Malta."²⁵

In 1935, Prof. Giorgio Romanini published a report entitled *Nuovo Centro d'Italianità a Malta* with designs for a project combining a *Casa del Fascio*, the quarters hosting the *Istituto di Cultura*, the Italian Consulate and the Consul's residence.²⁶ This same year, the British colonial administration dissolved the *Comitato Permanente Universitario*, led by Giorgio Borg Olivier, later to become the Prime Minister that led Malta towards independence. *The Times of Malta* echoed the Admistrations's views that the *Comitato Permanente Universitario* was:

"responsible for most of the mischief and ill-feeling that has hitherto been a feature of our University. It also indulged in brow-beating those among the undergraduates who favoured the principles of the pro-British parties, or who did not wish openly to take sides in politics. Its ringleaders, being in close touch with pro-Italian or Italian professors and examiners, succeeded beyond expectation in wielding the weapon of moral terrorism and giving the University a colour-wash of 'Italianism'..."²⁷

Complimentary to this, the authorities sought to provide alternatives to cultivate the pro-British loyalties of the population, in particular those of the younger generation. Under the direction of Colonel P.R. Worrall, these years were very active ones for scouting in Malta. In 1934, Colonel Worrall was awarded the CBE in recognition of his efforts, raising the Maltese Boy Scouts movement from a few hundred to over 3,000. Scouting was seen as an ideal vehicle of British propaganda. Groups spread all over the island and were given a generous helping hand by the authorities. During the first meeting of the Central Committee mentioned earlier, Brigadier Falkner reported



Gozitan boy scouts during Governer Campbell's visit to Gozo, 9 May 1935. National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2119.

24 *In H. Frendo, Europe and the Empire, Midsea Books, 2012, 527 a letter, dated 11 October 1935, where Alfred Micallef assures F. Schembri that he can vouch that during an earlier discussion, Schembri uttered nothing that "could possibly be construed as anti-British" is reproduced. The letter followed 'a strong warning' that Schembri received about alleged 'anti-British statements' he expressed during a conversation with Micallef few weeks earlier.*

25 *Secret Dispatch to Secretary of State, 21 November 1934.*

26 *C. Thake, A Project for a Centro d'Italianità in Malta, Melita Historica, xv, 4, 2011, 433-448.*

27 *Times of Malta, 13 March 1935.*

Colonel Warrell's request that separate shows by Boy Scouts and Girl Guides be included in the Jubilee festivities programme. Lieut. Governor Luke replied that there was no doubt that this could be met. Eventually, a Jamboree was held at the Empire Stadium on 12 May, several bonfires were organised by the Boy Scouts and part of the Water Carnival programme (7 May) was reserved exclusively for the Scouts.

These positions were echoed in the lively debate, raging in the papers, about the origins of the Maltese. The pro-British faction traced the Maltese origins to the Phoenicians. In a public lecture about Malta and the Phoenicians, Lord Strickland referred to *The Phoenician Origin of Britons, Scots and Anglo-Saxons* by Colonel Woodhall. "This book naturally thrilled me, because it created an additional link between England and Malta..."²⁸. On the other hand, the Nationalist media, tracing the Maltese origins to the Neolithic Age, was trumpeting the work of archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini. In the week preceding the Jubilee festivities, beneath an article entitled 'We Must Resist as we did in the Past' (referring to the "denationalising policy of the Imperial Government"), the *Malta* announced "the illustrious Italian archaeologist Dott Luigi Maria Ugolini, a most welcome guest" arrived in Malta. His works showed that "our island, where any kind of humiliation is allowed and suffered, is the cradle of the Mediterranean civilisation."²⁹

Evidently this debate didn't rank very high in the agenda of most Maltese who didn't follow the papers. Their concerns to procure food for their families and to make ends meet didn't leave them with much energy to search for their forefathers and debate about who they were.

The local political scenario was still marked by the dismissal of the Maltese Ministers in November 1933, the suspension of the 1921 Constitution that had granted self-government and the concentration of power in the Governor's hands. Some faulted the arrogance of the British Government, others blamed the Maltese politicians. Three days before the festivities started, *The Malta Chronicle* claimed:

"In 1921, Malta embarked upon a great experiment, an experiment ending in bitter disappointment through the failure of the experimentalists who strained and finally broke the apparatus."³⁰

28 *Times of Malta*, 3 April 1935.

29 *Malta*, 25 April 1935.

30 *The Malta Chronicle*, 2 May 1935.

Contrary to the Nationalist and Constitutional parties, this paper was not claiming a return to self-government, as it considered that something “rotten” “exists and thrives” in Maltese politics. “When that ‘something rotten’ remains but an unhappy memory, then we shall claim for the people of Malta, their right to instant return of self-government.”³¹ The paper was worried that the Nationalist Party’s claim for self-government would lead to a boycott of the Jubilee celebrations. In an editorial, entitled *The Mizzians and the Jubilee*³², the paper stated that:

“The entire population, except only that mercifully narrow circle that alone is represented by the Malta, will join in a spontaneous display of heartfelt loyalty to the King Emperor, without thought of Constitution, reforms or politics which have no possible connection with the Jubilee celebrations or with the loyalty of the inhabitants of British Malta.”³³

It turned out that the Nationalist Party did not boycott the festivities, while not giving up its claims. On the eve of the celebrations, the *Malta’s* editorial, entitled *‘Per il Giubileo di SM il Re’*, read:

“In the current sorrowful environment, this nationalist medium has no difficulty to submit its best and most sincere wishes at the feet of George V. However, we cannot forget, even in this homage, the bitterness of the fight and the blows of the humiliations and disappointments we have suffered. We cannot not reiterate our belief, expressed sometimes in a low tone and in other times in cries full of passion, that the British Empire cannot find its real and peaceful unity in the superficial triumph of violent and despotic tyranny, with all its harmful results. Rather, it is found in freedom, in the justice of social institutions and in the profound respect of civilisation and of the faith of the different peoples that are subject to the British Crown.”³⁴

Lord Strickland too was for a return of self-government, facing *The Malta Chronicle’s* ire³⁵. Two days after the festivities ended, the “leaders and the Press of the Strickland Party” were heavily criticised for being:

31 *The Malta Chronicle*, 2 May 1935.

32 *This refers to Dr Enrico Mizzi, co-leader with Sir Ugo Mifsud of the Nationalist Party and his followers.*

33 *The Malta Chronicle*, 28 March 1953.

34 *Malta*, 4 May 1935.

35 *Besides the emerging political differences, competing business interests within the press industry were hampering the relationship between the owners of The Malta Chronicle and Lord Strickland, although sharing a pro-imperial policy.*

“vociferous in the demands for the restoration of the Constitutional regime, yet they are by their intolerant attitude, militating against the eventuality for which they profess to be agitating.”³⁶

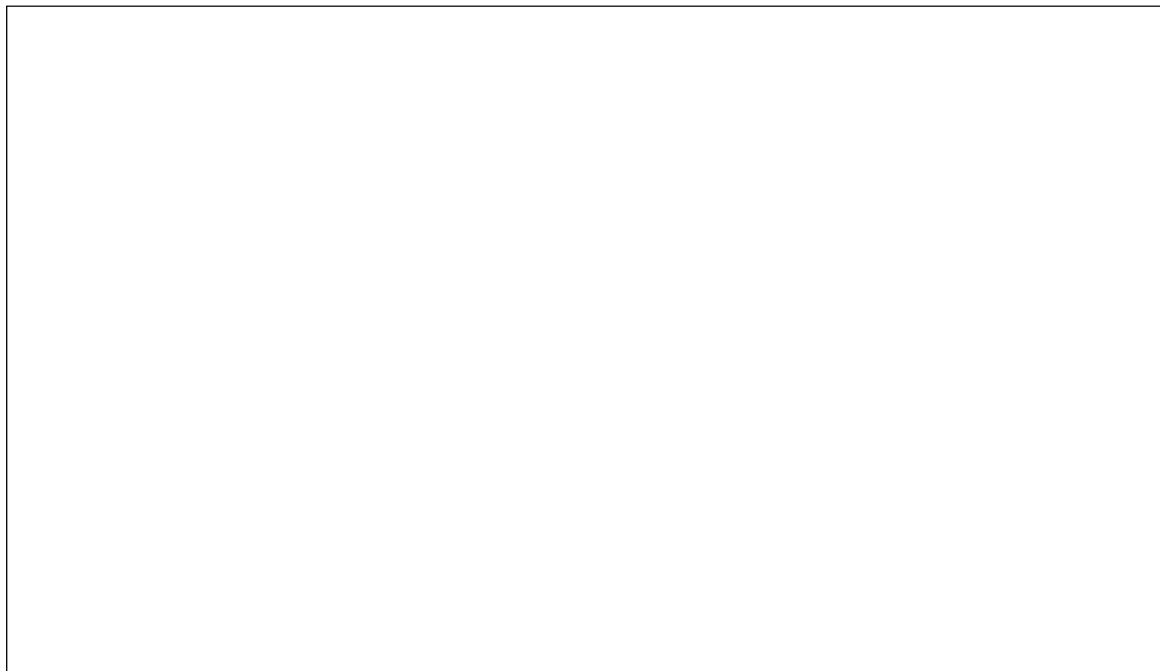
But these positions did not disrupt celebrations; the editorial ‘Political Climate’ read:

“it is fortunate in the extreme that the Jubilee should have occurred at a time when active politics is in abeyance One notes the unanimous loyalty displayed, for instance, in the Jubilee articles in the entire local Press and the efforts of all political Clubs to vie with one another in outward manifestations of loyalty, such as decoration and illumination of premises ... The politicians have a common meeting ground in their loyalty to the Crown....”³⁷

Within this context, it is proposed that two aspects of the festivities are analysed in order to gain a better understanding of Maltese society in 1935, namely children and technological innovation.

*Fighting for the pennies.
A cruel ‘game’ where money
was thrown at a group of
children, leading to a fight as to
who would get it.*

Giovanni Bonello Collection



36 *The Malta Chronicle, 14 May 1935.*

37 *The Malta Chronicle, 9 May 1935.*

CHILDREN

As already indicated, this period is marked by the authorities' efforts to cultivate the younger generations' pro-British loyalties. The King's Silver Jubilee proved to be a golden opportunity.

“The best possible feature of the celebrations will be the arrangements whereby the children of these islands are able to have a leading share. There is not the slightest doubt that a definite basis for loyalty and service to the Crown is created in the minds of children by making loyal celebrations ‘red-letter’ days in their memory...The bumper tea-parties that are to be given them, the parades and exhibitions which they will take part (sic!) and all the plans of lighting and decorations will serve to impress upon the future men and women of Malta the greatness of the British Crown and the joy there is in loyal service and tribute to the Crown and Empire.”³⁸

In July 1935, 25,807 children were on the infant and primary schools' registers³⁹. During the year, the School Medical Officers inspected 24,136 of these children, 21,002 in Malta and 3,134 in Gozo. 799 cases of trachoma (359 in Malta, 440 in Gozo) were encountered; the preventive and curative measures being undertaken led to a significant drop of 389 cases (of which 210 in Gozo), compared to the previous year. However, similar progress wasn't registered in dental health: only 56 children, out of 796, had their “marked” dental problems attended to. Wearing glasses was still embarrassing: a mere 356 children applied for glasses, less than half of the 873 children presenting vision problems.

1,136 children were found to be suffering from malnutrition and anaemia, “primarily confined” in Valletta, Cospicua, Floriana, Senglea and Marsa. The cases in rural areas were few. On follow-up, 387 were found to have improved. A Milk Service for the very poor and anaemic children was set up in 1935. However, child malnutrition and anaemia remained a significant challenge for several years. During the following year, 2,679 children were reported as suffering from malnutrition and anaemia. Prepubescent girls faced particular problems. Out of these 2,679 children, 1,989 were girls “mostly between the ages of 10 and 13”. Contemporary newspapers carried frequent adverts of tonic drinks for such girls. 886 cases (247 boys and 639 girls) were found improved on later inspections.



“They will restore the Brightness to her Eyes and the Glow of Health to her Pale Cheeks.”
An advert published in *The Malta Chronicle*, 3 May 1935.

³⁸ *The Malta Chronicle*, 22 March 1935.

³⁹ *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1934-35*.

Child cleanliness appears to have been improving “due to the efforts of teachers in infusing in parents the importance of cleanliness not only from the health point of view, but also as part of the education of the child.”⁴⁰ In fact, ‘only’ 506 children required improvement in cleanliness. Once again, girls in urban areas were more at risk. A 1935 report by the Director of Education claims that “the greatest difficulty is experienced in the towns and suburbs where overcrowding and slum life affect the cleanliness of children, of the girl’s heads in particular. Sliema and Floriana constitute special problems and, in spite of the efforts of the Head Teachers and staff, the proportion of unclean children is high.”⁴¹

Uncleanliness wasn’t a children’s monopoly.

“...foul refuse dumps are rising throughout the countryside and on the beaches; in the summer, residences are infested with flies battenning on the refuse which is collected when and how the ‘zibel’ boys will it, and old tins, broken bottles, etc., are later dumped on the nearest wasteland, a symbol that civilisation is near. The present position, is – well, sheer rubbish.”⁴²

One aspect of this situation was the rat infestation plaguing the country. In the midst of Jubilee festivities, on 10 May 1935, Lieut. Governor Harry Luke asked the Chief Government Medical Officer and the Director of Agriculture for their “observations and recommendations” about the “acute plague of rats which are doing considerable destruction”⁴³. According to the Director of Agriculture, the rat population “increased enormously as a consequence of the World War”, arriving on ships from battle front countries where “for several years easily accessible edible waste was abundant” leading to an explosion in rat population. He estimated that the local rats and mice population stood at around half a million, double the human population, and was costing annually around £522,826⁴⁴, not including “the huge quantities of cereals and other foodstuffs, as well as the poultry, pigeons and rabbits they destroy and the food they foul with their filth”.

Wryly, he concluded: “it costs more to keep them than to destroy them.”

40 *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1934-35.*

41 *Report by the Director of Education, quoted in The Malta Chronicle, 23 March 1935.*

42 *The Malta Chronicle, 26 April 1935.*

43 *NAM, CSG 01 497/1935. This letter marks the starting point of a flurry of exchanges and correspondence that lasts over 11 years, up to 2 July 1946.*

44 *This is a huge sum, almost 50% of the 1935 Government expenditure. According to the 1935 Estimates, Government expenditure was projected to be £1,178,030.*

OQTLU L-ĠRIEDEN
IL-ĠRIEDEN JAGHMLU
HSARA KBIRA U JĠORRU IL-MA



**Il-Ġurdien huwa Animal Moqziez. Ixerred
il-Mard. Iharbat u Jnigges l-Ikel. Jaghmel
bosta Deni fil-Bini, fl-Imniezel tal-Ucuħ**

Poster forming part of the Rat
Eradication Campaign, 1936.
NAM CSG 01 493/1935.

This file also includes a discussion about a suggestion by the Officer administering Gozo to reintroduce the scheme of a financial reward for “every dead rat or rat’s tail brought in to the various Police Stations in Gozo”⁴⁵. The Treasurer was not so keen; on 20 July 1935, he submitted his views that such a scheme “is likely to create a new trade – i.e. of rat breeding, as happened about 30 years ago when similar action was taken”!

Children in institutions faced added problems.

“Unfortunate children in some institutions are dressed in drab uniforms that set them apart from their happier fellows; little girls dressed like female convicts are permitted to beg for alms from the public from door to door and at public places. These little mites, pale of face and of unnaturally serious men, are often to be seen standing in the street holding out a collection bag or being shepherded from place to place... The legalised beggar girls never shout or run and rarely smile. They look weak, subdued, dressed in child fashions of generations past. The continued existence of this mute tragedy is a mockery on the name of charity...”⁴⁶

It was calculated that there were “25,000 poor children”⁴⁷ in Malta in 1935. The organisers of the Jubilee festivities worked hard to ensure that every child in Malta take part in these festivities, including the quintessential tea party! “The Poor will not be forgotten in the midst of all this rejoicing for there will be free meals for poor children and bread will be distributed. There will be village games for children, bands, fireworks, and horse racing at Notabile.”⁴⁸ The Mid-Day View proposed that:

“the entire juvenile population between the ages of five and fourteen years [is] gathered on the Marsa or some other wide open space, entertained to clowns and amusements and sat down to tea and buns, and a tangible souvenir of the great occasion.”⁴⁹

During the weeks prior to the celebrations, the papers, in particular the pro-British ones, campaigned the well-to-do to support these efforts and reported their donations. For example, on 8 April it was reported that by then, 9,725

45 *A similar campaign was in place between 29 December 1919 and 5 March 1920 and 1 penny was paid for each dead rat submitted. 11,147 rats and mice were destroyed at a cost of £46.8.11.*

46 *The Malta Chronicle, 9 April 1935.*

47 *The Malta Chronicle, 8 April 1935*

48 *The Times of Malta, 20 March 1935.*

49 *Mid-day Views, 17 April 1935.*

children had been provided for. The latest subscriptions, in pounds sterling, were by Lady Strickland: 600 (above the 400 already subscribed); Capt. Roger Strickland: 50; Mr Alfred Bartolo Parnis: 50; The Proprietors, McNish Whisky: 50; Lieut. J. Busuttill: 50; Magistrate William Soler: 50; Teaching Staff and pupils at the Lyceum: 100; Mr G. Scivagnotis: 100 and Colombos Ltd: 150. An anonymous donor sent 10 shillings⁵⁰. There was also support in kind: Messrs Camilleri & Sons (Valletta) promised a bag of sweets to 150 children; Rex Theatre in Hamrun promised 2 free “Talkie shows” (400 children each); the Anglo Maltese Bank promised 3,000 rotoli of bread, while Barclays Bank promised to entertain 720 children⁵¹.

The organisation of these tea-parties and entertainment for non-school children at schools met some problems, that may seem absurd today.

Some opposed it claiming that “contact with the undisciplined, ill-behaved ‘outsiders’ would be derogatory to the discipline of the elementary school children!”⁵² The paper vehemently opposed this claim “let the kiddies of all classes enjoy themselves together, and, if we may be colloquial, hang discipline!”⁵³ Another problem arose about dress. Some children were instructed to buy new clothes to participate in the Jubilee treats, such as “new white shoes, socks and blue-back berets, and white silk jumpers”⁵⁴. The matter was raised with the authorities as this would have penalised “children of impoverished parents – and they are a legion...”⁵⁵. Eventually, teachers were instructed to tell children that new clothes were not necessary. The last problem originated in an attempt to protect the King’s interests! Some of his Maltese subjects were concerned that some compatriots, unfriendly to the Administration, might behave ‘unpatriotically’ while supervising children sitting at the King’s tea party. To this end, *The Times of Malta* suggested that “in order that the patriotic atmosphere may be everywhere present, we ask that the government exercise careful supervision throughout.”⁵⁶ Obviously, this was not necessary at the garden party thrown by the Governor at San Antonio for “2,000 guests, representative of every section of the Anglo Maltese community” on 8 May and where “the fair sex were in charming summery attire, floral frocks and picture hats being much in evidence.”⁵⁷

- 50 *The Malta Chronicle*, 8 April 1935.
51 *The Malta Chronicle*, 13 April 1935.
52 *The Malta Chronicle*, 6 April 1935.
53 *The Malta Chronicle*, 6 April 1935.
54 *Mid-day Views*, 4 May 1935.
55 *The Malta Chronicle*, 9 May 1935.
56 *The Times of Malta*, 17 April 1935.
57 *The Malta Chronicle*, 9 May 1935.

In his report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Governor Campbell stated that:

“no less than 27,000 [children] were given tea by private individuals and firms, while Government entertained another 12,000. Most children were also given a suitably decorated box of chocolates as a Jubilee souvenir, while those who were not fortunate enough to secure a box were given packets of sweets decorated with the British colours.”⁵⁸

Besides the tea parties, a sports rally was organised for school children on 7 May at the Empire Stadium, made available by the Malta Greyhound Racing Club. Only “whole-day pupils on the registers of a school” were able to attend and participate in the rally.

The 1935 departmental report by the Director of Education illustrates the elementary school challenges, ten years before school attendance became compulsory.

“Under present circumstances we have not the staff, premises or means required for compulsory education. In fact, we cannot even cope with our present system and a number of children have to be refused admission every year. All we can do at present is to face the difficulties which our system of compulsory attendance implies. This, as already explained, lays down that, once a child is admitted into school at the request of their parents, he or she has to remain there up to the age of 14 or alternatively, until they pass the final examination of the highest class in their school.

The child, however, is only obliged to attend 75% of the lessons and, if dull and backward, may obtain exemption at the age of 12. If absences exceed 25%, the parents, after due notice, are summoned before a Magistrate and condemned to the payment of a fine or imprisonment.

The normal Elementary School course consists of two infant stages and six standards, but in Gozo and certain villages the highest standard is the fourth. This is partly due to a flaw in the law which does not oblige children to remain in beyond the highest standard in any given year and partly to lack of staff and accommodation. The law can be amended but the staff is not obtainable at present.”⁵⁹

58 *Dispatch to Secretary of State, 168, 31 May 1935.*

59 *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1934-35.*

The circular by Albert Laferla, Director of Education, dated 8 April 1935 was emphatic. “All boys’ and girls’ schools in Malta are expected to take part” while “a contingent of children” was coming from Gozo. “It is important that the children will be under strict control not only during the sports but also from and to the Ground. There is to be no interference whatsoever with the Committee and every decision will be final. There will be a special part of the Ground reserved for competitors and on arrival at the ground they should be sent to this enclosure. There will also be an enclosure for the winners under Miss Teresa Mallia, and Head Teachers are requested to see that all such children who win a prize go immediately to the place reserved for them. During the distribution of prizes no one is to move out of his or her place.”⁶⁰

CSG 01 826/1935 held at the National Archives includes Laferla’s lists of school children and children that attended the Sports Rally, as well as the number of children who, according to the parish priests, did not attend school. This table puts together these three lists, reflecting the urbanisation patterns and social milieux of pre-war Malta.

Children registered at Elementary Schools, 1935 (attended the Sports Rally on 7 May 1935)					Children who don't attend school, according to parish priests
	Boys	Girls	Infants	Total school children	
Attard	see Lija				50
Balzan	see Lija				100
Birkirkara	431 (182)	364 (182)	304	1099	300
Birżebbuġa	75 (25)	55 (25)	80	210	200
Cospicua	546 (209)	411 (209)	536	1493	350
Dingli	65 (21)	39 (14)	64	168	75
Floriana	250 (183)	242 (180)	224	716	150
Għargħur	58 (19)	47 (16)	67	172	150
Għaxaq	55 (18)	47 (17)	80	182	150
Gudja	49 (18)	41 (17)	88	178	150

Gżira	-	232 (177)	222	454	100
Hamrun	638 (210)	585 (218)	692	1915	300
Kalkara	70 (18)	75 (17)	120	265	100
Kirkop	19 (18)	29 (17)	50	98	75
Lija	177 (35)	179 (35)	197	552 (incl. Attard and Balzan)	50
Luqa	121 (35)	125 (35)	153	399	100
Marsa	241 (70)	228 (70)	327	796	250
Marsascula	-	-	-	-	80
Marsaxlokk	26 (18)	17 (17)	47	90	80
Mdina	(70)			320	50
Mellieħa	198 (35)	186 (35)	166	550	300
Mġarr	59 (18)	49 (17)	73	181	100
Mqabba	59 (18)	43 (17)	79	181	100
Msida	222 (130)	229 (130)	340	791	70
Mosta	259 (35)	232 (35)	359	850	200
Naxxar	165 (35)	90 (35)	123	378	100
Paola	-	267 (70)	323	590	500 (incl. Tarxien)
Qormi	310 (105)	316 (105)	594	1220	300
Qrendi	52 (18)	38 (17)	46	136	150
Rabat	-	232 (70)	370	602	300
Safi	-	-	-	-	100
Senglea	373 (210)	295 (210)	362	1030	200
Sigġiewi	96 (35)	103 (35)	68	267	150
Sliema	330 (367)	546 (367)	725	1601	400
St Julian's	-	-	-		100
St Paul's Bay	60 (18)	63 (17)	125	248	80
St Venera	-	-	-		100
Tarxien	758 (100)	209 (110)	129	1096	see Paola

Valletta, Lower Baviere	940 (138)	-		940	450
Valletta, Upper Baviere	-	544 (141)	488	1032	
Valletta, Central	88 (88)	227 (227)			
Valletta, Zecca	-	112 (37)	260	372	
Vittoriosa	252 (90)	250 (90)	323	825	200
Żabbar	319 (35)	223 (35)	271	813	150
Żebbuġ	204 (35)	166 (35)	229	599	120
Żejtun	268 (73)	230 (72)	314	812	400
Żurrieq	191 (56)	142 (55)	185	518	250
GOZO					
Għarb	75	63	68	206	1000
Għasri	23	36	14	73	
Għajnsielem	77	55	73	205	
Kerċem	62	46	59	167	
Nadur	168	156	163	487	
Qala	73	81	85	239	
Sannat	57	59	71	187	
Victoria	154	167	164	425	
Victoria Central	-	55	-	55	
Xagħra	162	157	158	477	
Xewkija	107	106	117	330	
Żebbuġ	41	42	44	127	

The Sports Rally, which started at 3.30pm, included 32 events, including a physical training display of “Swedish exercises” by 62 Tarxien boys, a Maypole Dance by Floriana girls and a “smartest boy competition”. 18 events were organised for boys and 10 for girls; some were open for boys and girls over 12 years. A 100-yard Flat Race was organised for male teachers. Some of the events make interesting reading, e.g. Balloon Race, Running Backward, Sack Race, Potato Planting Race, Thread the Needle, Lucky Race and Floating Apple Race. A Consolation Race, open to all competitors who had not won a prize, was the last event on the programme. Sliema beat Baviere at the tug-of-war, while the latter won most events and were awarded Lord Plumer’s Challenge

Shield, Sliema Girls being the joint winners. At 5.00pm, the Band and Drums of the 1st Battalion Duke of Wellington's Regiment gave a display.

Families of children were also present. According to a "conservative estimate", 21,000 were present of whom 10,000 were children with Union Jacks "producing a maelstrom of red, white and blue, the while their youthful voices rang out, unprompted and unchecked, in the strains of the National Anthem. The spirit underlying it all was one tugging at the heart-strings, for it was so obvious that the children were aware that they had been foregathered at this sports rally to add their quota to the paean of loyal praise, to the chorus welling up from every heart all through the great and glorious British Empire. And right royally did the thousands of citizens-of-tomorrow respond to the call. They sang 'God Save the King' spontaneously and frequently with their heart and soul in every note and phrase. They cheered rapturously and unrestrainedly when the band played the Anthem."⁶¹

Although several photos of school tea parties are included in the album handed by Major Briffa Depiro, there is no photo of this event.

The Gozitan children played a key role during Governor Campbell's visit to Gozo as part of the festivities (9 May). The scouts and the Nadur, Qala and Għajnsielem children welcomed him at Mgarr. On his way to Victoria, he was welcomed by the Sannat and Xewkija school children and upon arrival, Victoria, Xaghra, Għarb, Żebbug and Kerċem schools lined Corso Fortunato Mizzi. At the Tokk, the scouts gave a display of "physical drill and games." The efforts whereby scouts in Gozo increased from 59 to 359 in just 4 months were commended by the Governor during the official luncheon at the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel. "What impressed all visitors to Gozo on her Jubilee Day, namely the appearance and deportment of the Gozitan school-children, a revelation to those who had the impression that the sister isle was still back in the middle ages."⁶²

In a letter to *Il-Berqa's* editor⁶³, *Xwejjah* expressed his certainty that the public collection will cover the cost of the children's parties and suggested that the Administration should use part of the money voted for children's parties to organise a "festin" to the elderly in private institutions. *Xwejjah's* wishes were met. The official programme stipulated that 5,000 poor persons in Malta



Following the Combined Parade at Marsa,
7 May 1935.
National Archives of Malta,
Photographic Collection 2061.

61 *The Malta Chronicle*, 8 May 1935.

62 *The Malta Chronicle*, 10 May 1935.

63 *Il-Berqa*, 20 April 1935.

and 1,000 in Gozo were to receive 1 rotolo of bread, 1 rotolo of pasta, 100 grams cheese and a tin of canned meat. Once more, financial support was sought from the 'private' sector; and it was forthcoming. The Bank of Malta distributed 3,500 rotolos of bread, including one-day supply of bread to the Little Sisters of the Poor (Hamrun) and one-day's supply to the Congreve Fund for Feeding Necessitous Children. The Franciscans Minor Conventuals donated a meal (baked macaroni, meat and potatoes, fruit sweets) to 260 poor persons of Valletta. Omega Cigarette Factory and Arnold Manufacturing Co Ltd donated 1,000 cigarettes and 1,000 cigars respectively to be distributed among the poor.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION



Governor Campbell at Corso Fortunato Mizzi, Victoria, Gozo. 9 May 1935. National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection 2078.

The Jubilee Festivities coincided with the initial stages of the reshaping of Maltese life, prompted by the advent of several technological innovations, including the telephone, electricity and the car that were slowly, but surely, invading and redefining every space, private and public. This process is discernible in the King's Silver Jubilee festivities in Malta.

In his report for the year ending March 1935, Hannibal Scicluna, Librarian at the Public Library, reported a fall in the circulation of books. Besides "the noise of hawkers in the street below the Silence Room and the considerable extension and development of the District Libraries", he attributed this fall to:

"i) the abnormal, rapid development of popular entertainments – football, 'talkies', etc, which take from many thousands of youths a considerable amount of time that used to be spent in quiet reading; and

ii) the cheap and extremely various supply of journals and periodicals which, filled as they are with up-to-date news, seem to have a stronger appeal to modern minds and dispositions."⁶⁴

Cinema was the rage of the day. In 1935, while many homes were still without electricity, "31 cinematographs and theatres" were active in Malta and 1 in Gozo; the Board of Film Censors dealt with 1,295 films. 394 of these films were passed for exhibition to adults only, 45 had to be modified and 28 were

rejected⁶⁵. In March 1935, “the Bishop declared war on bad talkies”⁶⁶.

The official festivities were preceded by a Gala Charity performance of the film “Twenty five years a King” at the Manoel Theatre on Saturday 4 May, in aid of local charities. 283 seats and 28 boxes were sold, raising £36.19.3 that were eventually donated to the Malta Ex-Service Men’s Benevolent Fund.

The new telephone system, introduced in 1933, was constantly developing. This is a comparison of the developments in the telephone infrastructure between 1933 and 1935⁶⁷.

year	Exchange lines	Extension lines	Stations	Kiosks (1 penny coin boxes)	Kiosks (2 penny coin boxes)	PBX
1933	690	222	912	8	18	9
1935	1431	450	1881	15	28	50
Increase %	107.3	102.7	106.2	87.5	55.5	455.5

In 1935, the capacity of the Valletta exchange was expanded from 1,200 to 1,560 lines leading to an 84% increase in revenue from telephone coin boxes, £800.17.3 from £435.6.6 during the previous year⁶⁸.

Local radio broadcasting started in November 1935, following an agreement reached the year before with Broadcast Relay (Service) Malta Ltd to set up a sound wired system. With the countering of propaganda from Italy as one of the initial aims, the company had the license to operate sponsored and commercial radio programmes.

The broadcast of the King’s speech was a key feature of the Jubilee programme, with a budget equal to that of the Children Sports Rally (£100). The Jubilee Broadcast sub-committee, composed of Capt. R.D. Paterson (Command Signal Officer) and Lieut. Comdr. Murray G. Edwards, met on 19 February “to make the necessary technical arrangements for the maximum

65 *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1934-35.*

66 *Leħen is-Sewwa, 10 March 1935.*

67 *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1934-35.*

68 *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1935-36.*

number of people in Malta to hear HM the King's Jubilee speech."⁶⁹ Public spaces for this broadcast were identified after an analysis of the 1934 King's Christmas broadcast in Malta⁷⁰. On 28 March the committee agreed that part of the broadcast programme should be in Maltese, using Dr Laferla's services. Prior to the event Dr Laferla was "to practise talking through microphone if not already accustomed."

The final programme of the King's Speech broadcast was

19.10-19.24:	Testing and tuning
19.24-19.34:	A talk in Maltese about HM the King by Dr Laferla
19.34-19.40:	Broadcast of the Address of Congratulations submitted by HE the Governor on behalf of the people of Malta
19.40-19.57:	Broadcast from BBC of congratulatory messages from the Dominions
19.57-20.03:	Broadcast of the King's speech from the BBC
20.03-20.05:	The National Anthem, relayed from the BBC

The King's speech, "a father to his family"⁷¹, was broadcast on 6 May in various places, including Valletta (Palace Square, Opera House, Manoel Theatre, Capitol), Hamrun (Simonds-Farsons Brewery), Birkirkara (ex Railway Station), Rabat (Adelphi Cinema), Żebbuġ, Żejtun, Paola (Empire Cinema), Sliema (Carlton Cinema, Gaiety Cinema), Mosta (Constitutional Club), Żurrieq, Żabbar (Labour Party Club), Mellieħa, St Paul's Bay, Central Civil Hospital (Floriana) and Victoria Gozo (it-Tokk). The next day, *Il-Berqa* reported "huge crowds, listening silently, in every place where the Jubilee Programme was broadcast. When the God Save the King was played, people erupted in deafening applause. In some places, those present sung the God Save."⁷² Along these lines, Governor Campbell reported to London about "the awed hush of the great multitudes as they stood bare-headed in the Palace Square and adjacent streets on the evening of May 6 to listen to His Majesty's speech, the reception of which over the wireless was perfect, was proof, if proof were needed, of the deep feeling towards the Crown and State which animates the Maltese people."⁷³

69 *NAM CSG 01 826/1935.*

70 *The first Royal Christmas speech on the radio, was broadcast in 1932 and since then became an annual event. Originally King George was not in favour of the idea, but was persuaded by the argument that it was what his people wanted. See D. Sinclair, Two Georges: The Making of the Modern Monarchy, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1988.*

71 *The Times of Malta, 8 May 1935.*

72 *Il-Berqa, 7 May 1935.*

73 *Dispatch to Secretary of State, 168, 31 May 1935.*

MINUTES FOR MEETING OF JUBILEE BROADCASTING SUB-COMMITTEE
AT CASTILLE ON 28th. MARCH, 1935.

.....

Present. Sub-Committee, Captain E.D. Paterson (Command Signal Officer)
and Lieut. Comdr. M.G. Edwards.
Major Briffa, de Piro, Secretary Main Jubilee Committee.
Mr. Montemaró kindly agreed to attend

1. Letter to Director B.B.C. re Time of Broadcast and importance of reply.
2. Places at which the main Jubilee Committee wish Broadcast produced subject to apparatus available.
3. Sets probably available. Number of sets normally employed by Service. Present uncertainty owing to possible sale.
4. Importance of early publicity both as to places where the re-broadcast will be given and for the Firms providing apparatus.
5. Form of actual programme from B.B.C. in view of letter from Colonial Office forwarded from Lieut. Governor's Office.
6. Possibility of advance copy of speech being obtained and failing this, notes on His Majesty's Reign to be given to by Dr. Laferia in Maltese after His Majesty's Speech.
7. Co-operation of Mr. Farrugia and Cinema Projectors.
8. Co-operation of Mr. Sammit-Marsara.
9. Offer by Sir Phillip Pullino to sell Loud-speaker and Microphone.
10. Programme of Malta W/T Trials to Fleet and subsequently to public to be prepared for approval immediately on return of Commander in Chief.
Arrange to give Dr. Laferia opportunity to practice talking through microphone if not already accustomed.
11. Estimate of technical financial commitments to date £30 -£30 including microphone specially obtained for these broadcasts.
12. Gramophone records for trials.
13. Microphone and Loudspeaker apparatus required at Marsa on 2nd. and 7th. May.

Minutes of the Jubilee Broadcasting
Sub-Committee meeting, 28 March 1935.
NAM CSG 01 826/1935.

Electric lighting was introduced in Malta in 1882. The Central Power Station at Crucifix Hill provided the first public electricity service in 1894. Following modest increases in the generation capacity in 1904 and 1915, a recommendation was made in 1920s for a steam turbine system set of a higher capacity. The project was shelved. In 1935, the proposals for a larger plant and the conversion of the out-dated distribution system were brought up. The onset of war in 1940 meant that these projects were put on hold again.

“The public has been intrigued by the activities of the military authorities in various parts of the island obviously in connection with the scheme of floodlighting and searchlight display that is part of the general programme for the Jubilee. Bastions are draped with sinister looking cables...”⁷⁴ “The Malta of 1935 will see a spectacle no other generation has, and it is possible that as much as the Jubilee marks the completion of an era of technical progress, so it will mark an inception of a new theory of illumination that has already been successfully applied to interior effects.”⁷⁵

It may be difficult to fully comprehend the impact of the floodlighting exercise during these celebrations, particularly when a good number of households were still without electricity. The large number of photographs of floodlit buildings during the night confirms that this was the talk of town.

Several buildings were floodlit for the Jubilee festivities, including St Michael and St Andrew Bastions, Porta Reale, St James Cavalier, the Royal Opera House, St John’s Co-Cathedral, the National Library, the Main Guard, Auberge de Castille, St Paul’s Anglican Cathedral, St Angelo, Gun emplacements and bastions at St Elmo as well as Mdina, Naxxar, Żejtun, Msida, Mosta, and Mellieħa churches. Not all was plain-sailing. *Il-Berqa* protested against the change of the electrical lighting in front of the Court from the “Empire colours”⁷⁶ (blue, white and red) to white.

Free electricity was promised to those participating in the shop and house façade decoration competition that was organised, obviously limited to that consumed for the decorations. Governor Campbell reported to London that “the applications for electric current were so numerous that it was necessary to impose a quota of about 40% of the amount asked for. In fact, some 2,400 Kilowatts of electric current were applied for and it was only possible to allot 1,000 KW”⁷⁷.

74 *The Malta Chronicle*, 26 April 1935.

75 *The Malta Chronicle*, 1 May 1935.

76 *Il-Berqa*, 3 May 1935.

77 *Dispatch to Secretary of State*, 168, 31 May 1935.

This may explain why some electrical contractors tried to exploit this occasion to make more money. The *Mid-Day View* suggested “that this ramp be ended, if only to safeguard the interests of people who wish to use electric light for decorative purposes but who find themselves unable to meet the exorbitant charges asked by contractors.”⁷⁸

“Even small shops and houses in out-of-the-way streets in villages, which are not illuminated even on the day of the village festa (the most important event of the year for the villagers), put up decorations to this occasion.”⁷⁹ Edward Caruana Dingli, John B. Caffari and C. Mangion chose the best entries and the prizes of £15, £10 and £7 were awarded to Messrs Gieves, Royal Restaurant and the Crown and Anchor Bar. The jury decided that several other participants deserved a Diploma of Merit following their participation in the Jubilee Shop Decoration Competition. These were National Restaurant; Victoria Pharmacy; Royal Pharmacy; Captain’s House of Fashions; C. Camilleri & Sons (Confectioners); Charing Cross Stationery; Shensa House; Greenburgh Bros (all in Valletta); Tony’s Bar, Sliema; Direct Store, Sliema; Blackman Photo Studio, Hamrun; Desira, SdaReale, Hamrun; Tops Hall, Paola; Major Woodhouse, Floriana and J. Gasan, Valletta.

The car was rapidly changing the Maltese life, including the landscape, the concept of space and distance, and leisure. The co-existence of car and people was not easy; departmental reports of the time testify to the huge problems the Traffic Control Board was facing in trying to strike a balance between horses, humans and cars. Legal provisions took time to adjust. The prison departmental report for the fiscal year 1934-35 indicates that an extraordinarily high number of people, 868 car drivers,⁸⁰ opted to serve one day in prison rather than pay the hefty 10 shillings fine.

Decorated horse drawn-carts competed during Mnarja. Why not include a decorated cars’ competition in the King’s Silver Jubilee? The solution was a Battle of Flowers. This event was probably inspired by the Jersey Battle of Flowers, inaugurated in 1902 to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. In Jersey, this festival consisted of music, dancers, majorettes and a parade of flower floats. The 1935 Jubilee festivities included 7 competitions: light/spring carts, *karozzini*, private touring cars, touring cars for hire, *char-a-bancs* and lorries. Two lines of decorated vehicles, one running against the other, engage in a battle where “hostilities will consist in



Direct Store (Sliema) decorated for the Jubilee Festivities. National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection 2072.

78 *Mid-day Views*, 16 April 1935.

79 *Dispatch to Secretary of State*, 168, 31 May 1935.

80 *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1934-35.*

the occupants of the decorated vehicles, which will be marshalled into two streams of traffic, pelting each other. Missiles are to be confined to confetti and flowers only!”⁸¹ There were prizes for “originality, completeness and general effectiveness in the decorations” of £7 (first) and £4 (second) for each competition. Participation in these competitions was low at the beginning. *The Malta Chronicle* tried to rally participation stating that artificial flowers may be used and recalled that, when a Maltese band went to Bone (Algeria), a battle of flowers was organised and almost every car took part. “What the Bonois, who are mostly Maltese like ourselves, can do, we can in Malta.”⁸² On the eve, there was also a rumour that the Battle was going to be called off. *The Malta Chronicle* strongly denied it⁸³. Eventually there was a good turnout along the route from Castille through South Street, *Strada Reale* (Republic Street), Archbishop Street and Merchants Street. The cars proceeded twice round the route with band clubs playing music. There was also a competition for the best decorated bus with four prizes of £8; £4; £3 and £2.

These technological innovations, in particular electricity, were also reflected in the Harbour Fete held on 7 May from 9.00 pm onwards. Seven competitions were organised: three for the best floating model of the Cunard Liner Queen Mary, Nelson’s Victory and a Maltese galley; a competition, open to boy scouts only for the best model of a Viking Ship and competitions for the best decorated boat (not being a *dghajsa*); best decorated *dghajsa* and best decorated power boat. An additional prize of £10 was awarded to the best entry in any competition that included “in the decoration the happiest connexion with the Jubilee celebrations.”

The *San Giovanni*, a galley built by the voluntary labour of 60 men from the Constructive Department at the Dockyard, opened the event. £25 were given by the Government to the Manager of the Constructive Department to organise an “outing of all the men who have had a share in the building of the Galley, as a small sign of the general appreciation of their work.”⁸⁴

A letter by G. Micallef on the eve of the Jubilee celebrations gives a sombre view of the situation at the Dockyard:

“The Dockyard employees have suffered a cut in their wages and suffered still more on learning that the restoration was made to be good only to their English colleagues. The conditions under which workmen toil are only



Covering letter from C. Camilleri & Sons to the Governor sent with a photograph of the firm’s shop in Valletta decorated for the Jubilee Festivities. (see page 59)
NAM CSG 01 826/1935.

81 *The Times of Malta*, 3 April 1935.
82 *The Malta Chronicle*, 2 May 1935.
83 *The Malta Chronicle*, 10 May 1935.
84 NAM, CSG 01 826/36.

comparable with coolies of tea or coffee plantations. They are watched by warders, recorders, chargemen, inspectors, foremen, etc, liable to be searched four times a day (at least) and while those watching the workers may have a cup of tea, it is a great crime if a workman does so... .While wishing that our beloved King may reign prosperously over us for ever and ever, we also implore Him to intervene on behalf of the Maltese Dockyard workmen to better their lot..."⁸⁵

An illuminated arch, suspended from the dockyard's floating crane, formed the starting gate. HMS Queen Elizabeth, the fleet's flagship, HMS Resolution, HMS Ramillies and HMS Revenge were decorated with lights and the illuminated Union Jack was placed on the floating dock. Several illuminated boats sailed in the Grand Harbour. "Among the spectators of this Carnival were the inhabitants of the Leper Hospital, for whom special accommodation had been provided."⁸⁶ A fireworks display, followed by the National Anthem (God Save the King), concluded the event.

The Battle of Flowers, Castille Place, Valletta. 11 May 1935. National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2083.



85 *Mid-day Views, 2 May 1935.*

86 *Dispatch to Secretary of State, 168, 31 May 1935.*

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM?

At a first glance, one might be tempted to apply Juvenal's rebuke to these Jubilee celebrations and brush them off as "bread and games"⁸⁷, organised by the ruling elite to cynically distract the Maltese from their real problems. However, a deeper look seems to indicate something else besides this. Apart from the pageantry expected of a loyal colonial administration, there was a marked effort at whipping up pro-imperial hype to plaster certain cracks that were becoming visible in the island fortress's edifice. New wine was challenging the old skins: demographic, political, social, economic and technological forces were testing the status-quo. Maybe this explains why "whereas on former similar occasions most of the festivities were confined to the capital, for the Silver Jubilee a programme was provided which enabled every village in Malta and Gozo to participate"⁸⁸ and the strong focus on the younger generations.

On the day following the conclusion of the Silver Jubilee festivities, *The Malta Chronicle* ran an editorial entitled 'A Lesson of the Jubilee'.

"No one can prophesise with anything approaching accuracy, future developments, even those affecting these islands. But it is clear to those who are not wilfully blind, that there is a new atmosphere, a changing outlook and rescinding from the previous mode of thought. The world itself stands on the threshold of a new era, and is not a little afraid. There are dangerous whirling currents of political thought, and from this Malta stands apart in shelter, few even of her intelligentsia realising how much their future and that of their children and their children's children depends upon world changes that will come to pass in the next few years. What happens in Europe must inevitably have its reaction in Malta. The preparations for war that are being hastened throughout the Continent concern the Maltese people vitally. Their sword and buckler is the whole-hearted allegiance to the Crown which is indeed the only shield against personal experience of the veiled enslavement and restriction of liberties which are now commonplace in Europe. Many who have watched the happy concourse of school-children this week and will watch the enthusiasm of the Scouts tomorrow, may perhaps wonder what kind of world they will find on attaining manhood, or will war prevent that attainment?"⁸⁹

87 *Juvenal, Satire 10.77–81.*

88 *Dispatch to Secretary of State, 168, 31 May 1935.*

89 *The Malta Chronicle, 13 May 1935.*

This week in May 1935 reflected the calm before the storm of war. World War II was to be a seminal event in recent Maltese history, irreversibly breaking the waters towards radical changes within Maltese society. By and large, all classes of society were facing the same bombs, sharing the same damp and unhealthy underground shelters and queuing in the same Victory Kitchen lines. In a twist of irony, the fighting of a war together meant that the relationship between Malta and Great Britain couldn't remain the same. Malta's loyalty as a colony was soon over and twenty years after the Jubilee festivities, the way ahead was either integration or independence.

However, war alone did not bring about these changes; such seismic changes had longer and deeper roots, developing silently and silenced over a longer gestation period, already somehow discernible in 1935.

Indeed, Spring 1935 was longer, wider in scope and very different than that being prepared to celebrate the King's Silver Jubilee.

Leonard Callus



The Malta Chronicle, 7 May 1935.

Secret

36A

From :- His Excellency,
The Governor & Commander-in-Chief, Malta.

To :- The Under Secretary of State,
The War Office, London, S.W.1.

G.S. Malta 22, 22216/14/A.

Fortress Headquarters,
Valletta, Malta.
4th Nov. 1935.

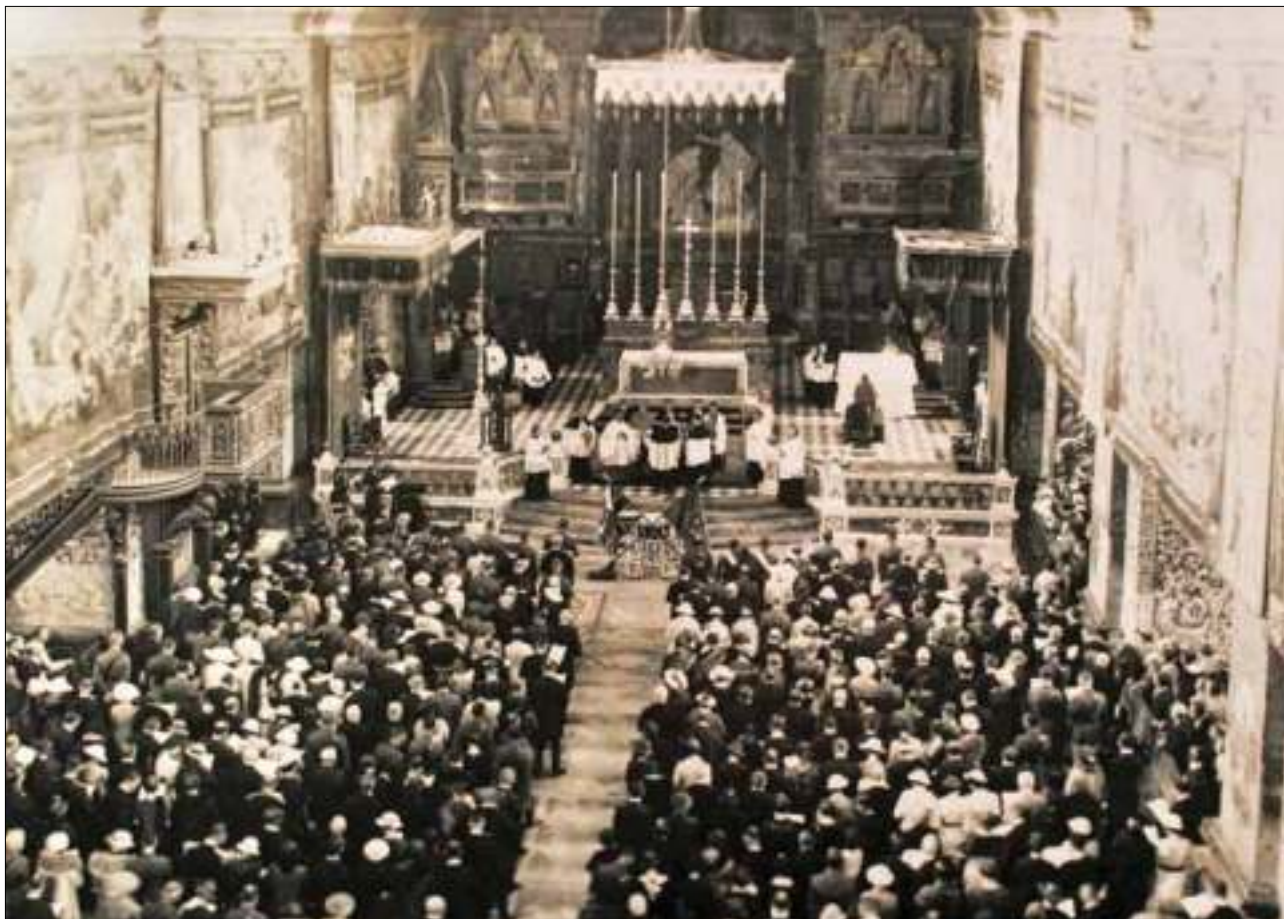
Sir,

1. I have the honour to report that in my capacity as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Island and Fortress of Malta, I have given the question of the Active and Passive Defences of the Island the greatest possible attention. Active Defence measures are now well in hand and pace of development largely depends on money available.
2. The whole question of Passive Defence has been considered by an Inter-Services Committee, which included officials of my Malta Imperial Government, and - (with the aid of the Committee of Imperial Defence's handbook on Passive Air Defence, dated 1934 - No. A.P.D. (C).310) - a plan of Passive Defence has been developed and accepted for inclusion in the Island Defence Scheme as Appendix XI.
3. This scheme makes each of the three Fighting Services entirely responsible for their own Passive Defence measures within their own areas, barracks, dockyard, hospitals, etc., and for the protection of regular personnel, including those civilians employed by them during working hours.
4. In addition we must consider now the Civil population of Malta outside areas which are under the direct control of the three Fighting Services in peace.
5. This Civil population is, however, divided into two categories :-
 - (a). Those located in the towns round the Dockyard and Grand Harbour (i.e. Valletta, Floriana, Gormio, Senglea and Vittoriosa and which has been termed the "Vital Sector" in the Defence Scheme).
 - (b). Those located elsewhere in the Island - and not so near the above danger zone.
6. When considering the Civil population referred to in 5(a) above, it must be remembered that there are some 15,000 civilians directly employed in the Dockyard, Fighting Services and Garrison, and the vast majority of them not only have to work in this Vital Sector but their families and dependants reside there also.

Spd. 2/-

In 1935, the preparations for war were well underway in Malta. On the eve of the Silver Jubilee celebrations (4 May), Governor Campbell sent a secret despatch to the War Office outlining the defence schemes being planned in Malta and requesting the necessary funds.

NAM ARP, 1



Blessing of Colours to be presented to KOMR
Sunday, 5 May 1935 – St John's Co-Cathedral, 11.00am

“The week opened fittingly with the solemn blessing, on Sunday May 5th, of the Colours presented by His Majesty the King to the King's Own Malta Regiment.”
Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

An overview of the congregation in St John's Co-Cathedral during the Blessing of the Colours. These can be identified at the centre of the aisle, directly between the congregation and the officiating priests. The high viewpoint captures the grandness of the occasion yet, the tapestries hanging at the sides of the Cathedral, are quite devoid of detail. Factors such as the then lack of latitude of film material, coupled with the large contrast range between the light falling on the congregation and the light on the tapestries, would have played a significant hand in the quality of the photograph.

Photographer: The Grand Studio.
National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2057.



Governor's visit to Gozo:
Thursday, 9 May 1935

"What impressed all visitors to Gozo on her Jubilee Day, namely the appearance and deportment of the Gozitan school-children, a revelation to those who had the impression that the sister isle was still back in the middle ages." The Daily Malta Chronicle, 10 May 1935

An impressive, well executed group photograph taken at It-Tokk in Victoria, Gozo. The lens used, combined with the photographer's viewpoint, has relatively compressed the various lines of spectators, school children and dignitaries into one, seemingly compact crowd. Thankfully, this square, which is a Gozitan landmark, has not changed much during the intervening time.

Photographer: Unknown.
National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2141



Governor's visit to Gozo:

Thursday, 9 May 1935

"All school children were uniformly dressed, each school having fixed upon a distinctive dress. The children were extremely neat and tidy and the inexpensive 'uniforms' of boys and girls, the different colour scheme of each school and the waving forests of Union Jacks made a gay and impressive spectacle."

The Malta Chronicle, 10 May 1935

This photograph looks more like a 'snapshot' than a studied image, yet, keeping in mind the hardware of that period, the image still manages to capture the atmosphere and enthusiasm of the children. The tilt of the camera, although probably unintentional, actually makes the image slightly more dynamic and alive.

Photographer: Unknown.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2076.



Battle of Flowers:
Saturday, 11 May 1935, Valletta, 5.00pm.

"The crowd which thronged Valletta on Saturday afternoon to watch the 'Battle of Flowers' (better described as floral pageant) greatly exceeded expectations, as did the procession itself." The Malta Chronicle, 13 May 1935

This photograph depicts the majesty of the Royal Opera House at the entrance to Malta's capital city, Valletta. Looking at the details, one notices the precariously seated children in between the Opera House's columns as well as one of the many advertisements for Simonds and Farsons products. Naturally beer must have been an obvious catalyst for the good mood of the celebrating throngs.

Photographer: Unknown.
National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2082.



Water Carnival & Fireworks:
Tuesday, 7 May 1935; Grand Harbour, 8.30pm

“Around the brilliantly illuminated Fleet Flagship and her sister ships, there moved continuously a multitude of illuminated dghajisas drawn from every creek of the Harbour; and spectators also lined every part of the water front.”

Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

This impressive photograph of the Three Cities shows, on close scrutiny, dozens of little Maltese *dghajjes* and boats which curiously resemble little, busy fireflies. One can notice the outlines of some of the boats' shapes - the ones which were relatively static - and the blurred, streaks of light of other vessels which were in movement during the camera exposure.

Photographer: Hammet Photo Studio.
National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2124.



Water Carnival & Fireworks:
Tuesday, 7 May 1935; Grand Harbour, 8.30pm

“One of the most beautiful and most popular celebrations was – as might be expected in the premier harbour of the Mediterranean – the Water Carnival. An arch, lit by electric light, and surmounted by the Royal Emblems was suspended from a floating crane formed the starting point for the procession of boats.”
Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

The quality of night photography of the period was still rather challenging to the photographer. Slow film emulsion necessitated the employment of slow camera shutter speeds. Combined with lower quality lenses, this often resulted in blurring and lack of tonal quality. Yet, the warships in this picture, being solidly berthed in the calm waters of the Grand Harbour, have aided the photographer to attain a sharp, steady image.

Photographer: Hammet Photo Studio.
National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2123.



Governor's Visit to Gozo

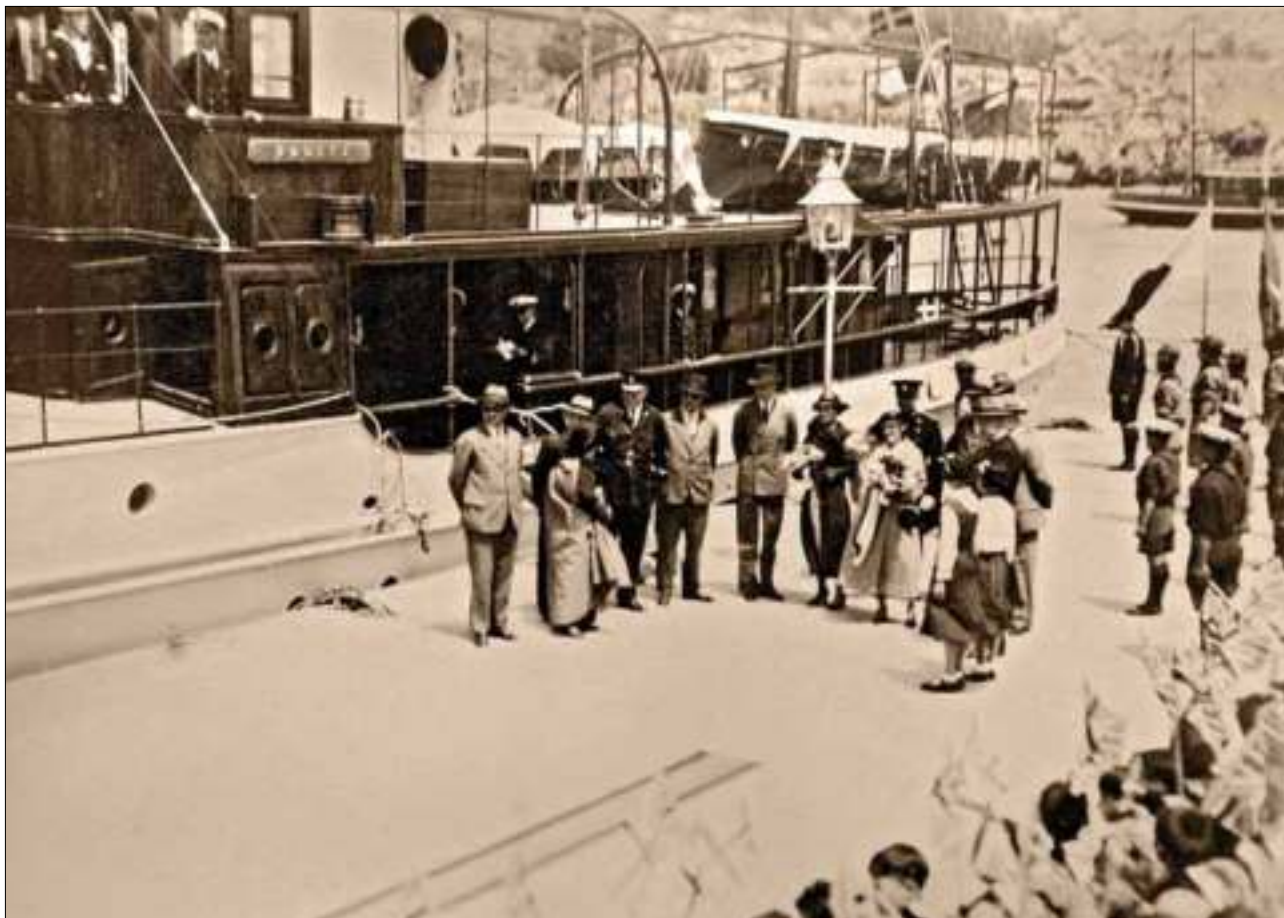
Thursday, 9 May 1935

"All the way down to the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel, where the official luncheon was held, His Excellency was received with frantic applause, and he was obviously delighted with his reception." The Malta Chronicle, 10 May 1935

Although the quality of this photograph is not optimal, it still serves as a valuable record of the Governor's visit to Gozo - which was also very much part of the celebrations. The smart lines of the Scouts as well as the presence of the police and the strong participation of the clergy, frame the VIPs in the centre of the photograph. The streaks of light showing at the lower right hand corner are most probably due to a camera light leak or bad processing of the negatives.

Photographer: Unknown.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2117.



Governor's Visit to Gozo

Thursday, 9 May 1935

"My visit to Gozo, where I was very kindly welcomed, resulted in one of the most remarkable manifestations of loyalty. Throughout the day, wherever we went, the enthusiastic applause of people was an unmistakable expression of spontaneous and genuine loyalty."

Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

Another interesting photograph depicting the visit to Gozo by Governor Campbell as part of the Jubilee celebrations. The ever present flag waving children, together with a Scout guard of honour are clearly visible but what enriches the photograph is the romantic Gozo ferry boat, the Malita, berthed in the background and manned by very smartly dressed servicemen. The viewpoint works well in this image, yet the large, empty white space to the lower left together with the random cropping of the boat points towards a not-so-skilled or inexperienced photographer.

Photographer: Unknown.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2136.



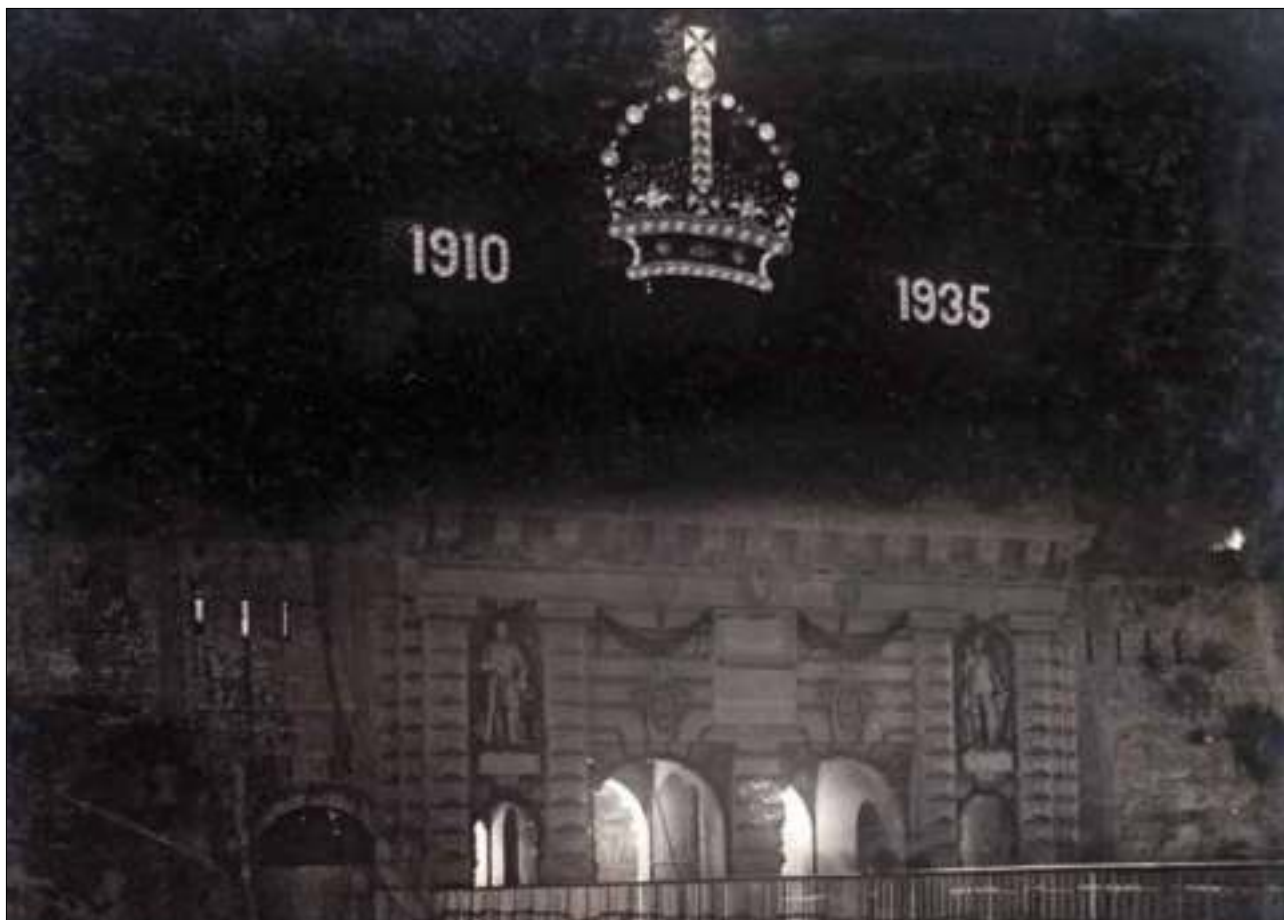
**Water Carnival & Fireworks:
Tuesday, 7 May 1935;
Grand Harbour, 8.30pm**

“The bastions of St Angelo and Valletta were outlined by innumerable cressets, which formed a frame of fire for the whole. The Carnival concluded with a display of fireworks, all of which were manufactured locally.”

Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

Taking into consideration the limits of the photographic medium at that time, this job must have been a truly challenging brief for the photographer employed in capturing the fireworks in the Grand Harbour. Yet, the task has been done well. During the camera's exposure time, several fireworks have registered on top of each other and the little puff of blurry smoke above Fort Saint Angelo adds to the atmosphere of the moment. Although a night capture, the light from the fireworks adds some remarkable detail to the bastions and fortifications.

Photographer:
*Hammet Photo Studio,
National Archives of Malta,
Photographic Collection, 2131.*



Decorations

“The Malta of 1935 will see a spectacle no other generation has, and it is possible that as much as the Jubilee marks the completion of an era of technical progress, so it will mark an inception of a new theory of illumination that has already been successfully applied to interior effects.”

The Daily Malta Chronicle, 1 May 1935

An image which is a precious record showing the structure and look of the 1853 gateway to the city of Valletta. Without photography and photographic archives, we would have had to depend on artists' paintings and impressions which, at times, might not be so faithful of the original subject.

Photographer: unknown.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2134.



Children activities

“The bumper tea-parties that are to be given them, the parades and exhibitions and all the plans of lighting and decorations will serve to impress upon the future men and women of Malta the greatness of the British Crown and the joy there is in loyal service and tribute to the Crown and Empire.”
The Daily Malta Chronicle, 22 March 1935

An obviously low light interior photograph challenging the photographer of that time. Many persons in the photograph, (for example, the ones on the far right), are caught with eyes closed, in between blinking their eyelids. Today’s photographers can hardly realise the difficulties encountered by these early photographers due to the technical limitations of the medium at that time. Fast lenses and films, automatic focus, viewing screens, prisms and sharp lenses were still far away!

Photographer: S.L. Cassar.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2103.



Children activities

“There is not the slightest doubt that a definite basis for loyalty and service to the Crown is created in the minds of children by making loyal celebrations ‘red-letter’ days in their memory.” The Daily Malta Chronicle, 22 March 1935

A studied and most probably rehearsed group photograph. The extensive length of the table puts up a daunting task for the photographer. One notices a gradual defocusing of the image the further the eye moves away from the children posing at the front. The photographer has chosen to focus on the girls that are closest to the camera, with the resulting loss of sharpness on the children at the back. Although the area does not lack in light, the shutter speed is still not fast enough to arrest all subject movement.

Photographer: *Unknown.*

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2087.



Battle of Flowers:
Saturday, 11 May 1935, Valletta,
5.00pm.

“The general remark among the thousands of spectators was what an enormous amount of patient labour the decorated cars, lorries and vans had entailed.”

The Malta Chronicle, 13 May 1935

One can here see the problem with sharpness and movement: the slight blurring all over the picture is probably due to an unsteady grip on the camera by the photographer. In some places, the blur is more evident as some people in the picture are in what appears to be relatively fast movement. Yet this blur gives a more faithful and natural rendition to the captured instant. One should also notice the three men viewing the proceedings from the window at the top of the scene.

Photographer:
J Cassar Photo Studio.
National Archives of Malta,
Photographic Collection, 2080.

Decorations

“Every shop had its illuminations, blending the bizarre with the traditional, the modern and the beautiful: all evidence of the people’s regards to Their Majesties”

The Malta Chronicle, 7 May 1935

The impressive decorated façade of C. Camilleri & Sons in Merchants’ Street, Valletta is well depicted by Blackman’s Photo Studio. The text on the postcard would have been hand written most probably on the negative by the Photographer or an assistant. Skilful hand retouching of the print and negatives were a necessary requirement of the successful photographer of that time. In fact, many early photographers had a sound grounding in painting and art.

Photographer:

Blackman’s Photo Studio.
National Archives of Malta,
Photographic Collection, 2114.





Combined Parade

Tuesday, 7 May 1935 - Marsa, 10.00am

"They swung past in rigid line, company after company, seeming without end. Dust rose from thousands of marching feet, the dull glint of bayonets, beneath an overcast sky. Overhead roared squadrons of fighting planes, dipping in thunder to salute." The Malta Chronicle, 8 May 1935

What a spectacle this must have been! The crowd must have surely been awed by both the immaculately turned out military formations as well as the impressive fly past of the biplanes over their heads! Flight, like photography, was still much in its infancy and warplanes had appeared just a few years earlier in the First World War. Little must have been realised at that time, the crucial and devastating role that air photography would generally play in future conflicts. Furthermore, little would the crowd have realised that just a year from those jubilant celebrations, all hell would rain down on them from more advanced war machines of the Axis powers.

Photographer: Richard Ellis.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2121.



Battle of Flowers
Saturday, 11 May 1935, Valletta, 5.00pm.

"The Battle of Flowers proved a great popular success. In all classes the entries were striking and beautiful, and aroused great enthusiasm from the dense crowds which lined the streets of the capital." Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

The high viewpoint of this photograph enables the viewer to gain a realistic insight into the festivities of the event. One can notice the slight blur of the float due to its movement. From this capture, much can be gleaned from what people wore at that time - the elegant and smart hats of the crowd, interspersed with the caps of British service sailors and personnel, sometimes punctuated by the Maltese faldetta, it records a wide range of societal dress and customs. At least two photographers, struggling with their cameras, can be noticed right in front of the float.

Photographer: Richard Ellis.
National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2146.



Decorations

“Even small shops and houses in out-of-the-way streets in villages, which are not illuminated even on the day of the village festa (the most important event of the year for the villagers), put up decorations to this occasion.” Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

A typical image which has all the qualities of what today is termed as ‘Street Photography.’ The photographer has made sure to capture the atmosphere of the event, not leaving out the human element. A huge amount of information can be obtained by a researcher due to the many clues present in this photograph such as the shop fronts, advertising posters, the attire of the people and the house façades.

Photographer: Royal Navy Photographic Section, HMS Chrysanthemum
Giovanni Bonello Collection.



Massed Royal Marines and Army bands
Saturday 11 May 1935 – Palace Square, Valletta. 8.00pm

“It will be noted that the programme provided for the playing of bands in the villages on every day of the week. At the end of each programme, the villagers gave vent to outbursts of enthusiastic loyalty.” Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

A very impressive and technically sound photograph of the musical part of the celebrations. The naval and military massed bands are strategically placed in front of the Main Guard, with the huge crowd filling Palace Square to its limits. The only little space visible in the image is the area left in front of the VIPs so that they could get an unobstructed view of the band. Although taken at night, this image is remarkably sharp, and must have been recorded with the camera on a tripod, yet here the exposure must not have been too long as there is no distinct evidence of blurring.

Photographer: The Grand Studio.
National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2149.



Children activities

“The participation of children, especially school children, in the Jubilee Celebrations has been one of the most satisfactory items of the programme. There is no doubt their enthusiasm was genuine and that the ceremonies will leave an abiding impression in their minds and will foster the ideals of loyalty and consciousness of their partnership in the Empire which are already inculcated in their normal curriculum.”

Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

School children were an ever present element of the Jubilee celebrations. Here they are lined up in what is most probably the main yard or playground of a school. In those days, the photographer tended more towards capturing the ‘general shot’ or view, rather than close ups or details. Things changed dramatically after the Second World War when lenses became faster and cameras became lighter and significantly easier to manage.

Photographer: Unknown.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2152.



Children activities

“Most children were also given a suitably decorated box of chocolates as a Jubilee souvenir, while those who were not fortunate enough to secure a box were given packets of sweets decorated with the British colours.” Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

This is a really engaging group photograph of children and hints at the hardships of lower income families or orphaned children. The remarkable sharpness and fine detail in this photograph helps the viewer to notice not only the policeman’s collar service number, but also the footwear, or lack of it, of the children. The fact that some children in the front rows are without shoes, points at the social differences and culture of that period. Due to the thick clothes of most of the children, it must have been rather uncomfortable for those not wearing socks and shoes. The photograph was taken in May, so the weather would still not have been warm enough for barefoot walking to be a simple choice. For whatever reason, the children in this photograph do not seem to be very happy and comfortable to be posing.

Photographer: Unknown.

National Archives of Malta, Photographic Collection, 2153.



Water Carnival and Fireworks

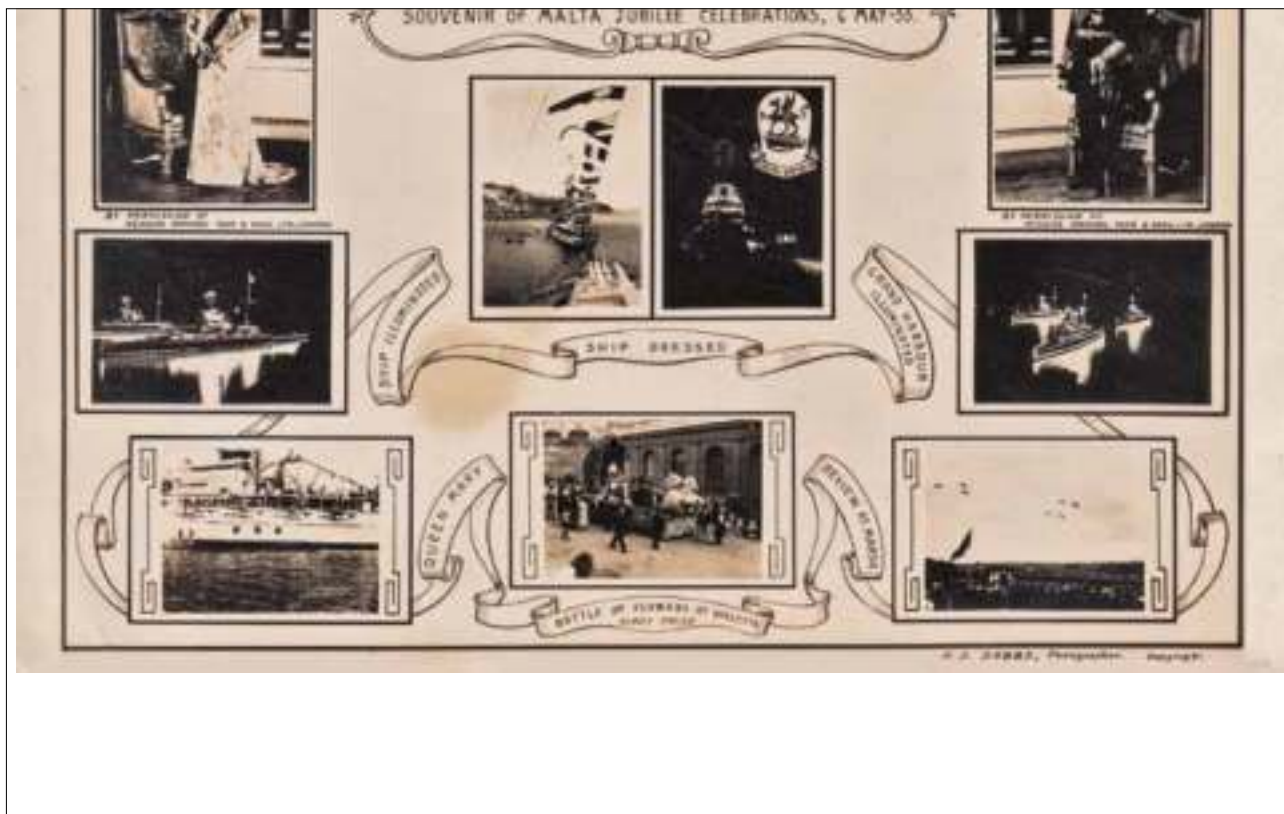
Tuesday, 7 May 1935 – Grand Harbour, 8.30pm

“One of the most successful entries from every point of view was the model of a Maltese galley, built for the occasion by members of the Dockyard staff in their spare time and manned by a crew dressed in reproductions of the XVIth century clothes.”

Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

Although photographic emulsion had made huge improvements after the First World War, it was still relatively difficult to capture and freeze movement. The speed of the film or plates used was still rather slow so it was preferable for a photographer to shoot in bright light. This photograph of a celebratory Maltese galley or barge, prepared for the occasion, has been well documented, both through choice of viewpoint and background. Cassar has not made the mistake of merging the barge with the bastions of St Elmo and thus has further managed to create depth in this image. The rowers are obviously posed and knew that the picture was taken. Cassar was also lucky with the right wind which makes the galley's flags and banners flutter in a very aesthetic manner.

Photographer: S.L. Cassar
Giovanni Bonello Collection.



**Water Carnival & Fireworks:
Tuesday, 7 May 1935; Grand Harbour, 8.30pm**

"The success of the Carnival, as of many other events in the crowded programme, was largely due to the energetic and wholehearted of the Admiral Commander-in-Chief and his staff." Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

This souvenir postcard, produced by Umberto Adinolfi of Senglea, depicts various aspects of 'commercial' photography popular at that time. The card is copyrighted to a 'P.O. Dabbs, Photographer' but two of the images, of the King and Queen, are marked as being by permission of 'Messrs Raphael Tuck & Sons Ltd; London.' Naturally, the British naval base generated a great amount of work for photographers in Malta and five of the other six photographs depict images associated with the British navy and services. The night images, due to the restricted latitude that material of that time had, are quite devoid of fine detail and the high contrast burns out highlights and blocks shadow areas.

Photographer: Umberto Adinolfi.
Giovanni Bonello Collection.



Decorations

*“Decorations in the towns were lavish. All the main streets were gay with flags by day and ablaze with lights after dark.”
Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935*

In this image, the photographer cleverly used a very low viewpoint to give the scene a more important and majestic ‘feel.’ Here, the festive atmosphere and the buzz of anticipation reverberate around the whole picture. A notice for Kodak products can be identified just below the sign of ‘Griscti’s’, at the top left. One can also note that there is only one single Maltese flag amongst the host of British flags and banners.

Photographer: Unknown
Giovanni Bonello Collection.



Battle of Flowers
Saturday, 11 May 1935, Valletta, 5.00pm

“Saturday’s fine show was further indisputable evidence of the wish of the Maltese people to demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown on the occasion of His Majesty’s Silver Jubilee.” The Malta Chronicle, 13 May 1935

Another image laden with signifiers for the historian and researcher. The photograph, again taken from a well chosen viewpoint - most probably from a Maltese balcony - gives an interesting overview of the triumphant ‘float’ depicting the ‘King and Queen.’ The corners and edges of the original image have started to show signs of fading, most probably due to either not enough washing or uneven sepia toning of the print. One can also note the gradual reduction of sharpness of lenses of the time, which were generally sharp in the central areas but then lacking detail and becoming softer at the edges.

Photographer: Unknown
Giovanni Bonello Collection.



Decorations

“Looking back on the eight days of celebrations, I feel no doubt that the festivities have given an outstanding demonstration which must be of abiding value, of the devotion of Malta to the Crown and loyalty to the Empire.”

Dispatch from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 168, 31 May 1935

A photograph showing the elaborate decorations purposely and meticulously prepared for the occasion. Most architectural photographs of the time would usually show converging verticals and perspective distortion, yet this image is rather straight. The photographer must have managed to keep the right distance from the façade enabling a solid perspective.

Photographer:

*Hammet Photo Studio,
National Archives of Malta,
Photographic Collection, 2075.*

Several of the professional photographers or studios, active in Malta in the 1930s, took advantage of the Jubilee celebrations to record and market images of the festivities. In alphabetical order those known so far are:

Ugo Adinolfi, an Italian who settled in Malta in 1914 and resided and worked from Senglea. He specialised in naval photography for the British fleet.

Blackman's Photo Studio, run by Anthony Blackman. Active c. 1930 – c.1943.

J. Cassar Photo Studio. Joseph Cassar owned a successful photographic business in Hamrun, specialising in portraiture and domestic events.

S.L. Cassar. Salvatore Lorenzo Cassar, born in Vittorosa, was a prolific and high-quality photographer whose last and longest-standing studio was almost opposite St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta. After he died in 1928, his business was carried on in his firm's name by others.

P.O. Dabbs. Nothing is known about this photographer, except that some of Adinolfi's images credit him as the photographer.

Richard Ellis was one of the earliest and most prestigious photographic firms, established in 1860. When the founder died in 1924, his son John carried on the business. Their activity covered the whole range of image-making, from portraiture to landscape, from events to industrial recording.

The Grand Studio, owned first by J.Mallia and later by F. Tabone was based since late Victorian times, in Kingsway, Valletta. Its activities included portraiture and current events.

Hammet's Photo Studio, was active in the inter-war years and operated from premises in Kingsway, Valletta.

Photographic Section, HMS Chrysanthemum. Many photographs of Malta and events in the island and the Mediterranean in the inter-war years bear this subscription.

J. Tabone. Nothing is so far known of this photographer. He may have worked for The Grand Studio.

