

CONTENTS

	Preface [vii]
	Introduction [ix]
	Glossary of Maltese sailing vessels [xi]
	Equivalents [xvii]
	Abbreviations [xix]
	A background of 19 th century events [xxi]
	Acknowledgments [xxxiii]
	Illustrations [xxxv]
1	The Master Shipbuilders and their Venues.....1
2	Construction of Sailing Vessels.....17
3	Tonnage Measurement.....47
4	The Registers.....51
5	The list of the Maltese Master Shipbuilders and the Vessels constructed in their Shipyards.....61
6	Sculptors of Figureheads.....217
7	Comparisons.....233
8	Marine Insurance.....243
9	Papers and Mediterranean Passes.....251

10 Regulations to guide Masters of Vessels.....255
11 In the wake of the advent of Steam.....265

Conclusion [273]

Appendix A: Tables [275]

Appendix B: Bibliography [289]

Index [293]

INTRODUCTION

I hail from the maritime City of Senglea,¹ which is situated in the core of Grand Harbour, and working at the Malta Maritime Museum located in the neighbouring peninsula of Vittoriosa, I'm immersed in all things maritime.

It is understandable therefore that I should be motivated to explore in depth the Malitense *historia de maritimus*. After a somewhat lengthy period of contemplation I opted to focus mainly on the 19th century commercial shipbuilding activity in Malta.² My hankering to dig for more information on the topic was further stimulated upon coming across prominent Senglean citizens connected with the maritime sector, like Colonel Juan Battista Azzopardo founder of the Argentine Navy and Louis Scicluna who established a shipyard in St. Catherine's in Canada and was a principal contributor to that community. For centuries my hometown accommodated many commercial shipyards. In view of all this, I grew up to become a maritime aficionado.

I would spend long hours observing the intense commercial shipping movements in the Malta Drydocks area as well as the countless naval activities that occurred within the confinements of the Naval Base basin. My attention then concentrated on the Royal Navy and at a young age I attempted to build my first scratch model until finally I managed to master the skill of ship model-making. Profound research goes part and parcel with ship modelling since investigation is imperative if the final product is to be authentic and academic.

Sea crafts are the embodiment of maritime culture as their structure reflects the economic and technological level of the society that builds them. The decoration reveals a system of concepts and beliefs reflected in the community. Therefore the vessel is a key element in understanding a maritime society. Seamen refer to their vessels as their second home, and in a most natural way they become very attached to their crafts. The variety of Maltese traditional models depicts the skills of our boat and ship builders who for hundreds of years managed to cater with merit for the local maritime community.

The epitome of my work focuses on the local master shipbuilders and their production of crafts that ranged from the massive nave to the tiny speronara. The substance of the research is based on the Ship Registers of the Port of Malta as from 1817 to 1855 which are kept in the National Archives at Rabat. Several tables are presented for statistical purposes, and the body of the research demonstrates a chronological list of the Maltese master shipbuilders and the types of vessels that were built in their yards as well as other records about each of the vessels.

The advent of steam engines together with the expansion of the British Naval Facilities in Malta had an impact on traditional shipbuilding in Malta. The Malta Maritime Museum is setting up a permanent display to credit the Maltese Merchant Fleet of the 19th century.

Joseph Abela

1. Senglea was founded by the fifth Grand Master of Malta, the French Claude de la Sangle in 1554. The walled city withstood the 1565 Great Siege and as a result earned the title *Cittas Instricta* along with the motto *Quo pugnant instricta conitudo*. During World War II Senglea was devastated by Nazi warplanes and was considered the most bombarded place on earth.
2. Malta is an island of approximately 316 square kilometres in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, southernmost point of Europe.