

EDWARD SAID

B.E. & A.(HONS) (MELIT.), P.G. DIP. (MELIT.), M.SC. (BATH)

ARCHITECT & CIVIL ENGINEER

57 / 27, Abate Rigord Street,
Ta' Xbiex, XBX1120
Tel: 99447075 – 21320520
Email: edwardjsaid@gmail.com

The Director of Planning,
MEPA

1-v-2015

Location: Torri tal-Qawra, Id-Dwejra, inhawi ta' San Lawrenz, Ghawdex
Proposal: Restoration of facades

Restoration method statement

Dear Sir,

The submitted application seeks to restore the external elevations of the historic tower in caption which is presently under the custody of Din l-Art Ħelwa. For a historical background kindly refer to the annexed excerpt from 'The Coastal Fortifications of Gozo and Comino) by A. Samut-Tagliaferro (*vide* Appendix 1). The principal scope of the this application is to ensure the preservation of all external elevations of the structure which despite interventions carried out some fifteen years ago, require urgent attention for which corporate funding has been made available.

Given its age, exposed location and subjection to harsh weather conditions there are many severely decayed sections of masonry. The following points identify the types of deterioration observed and the remedial interventions proposed:

- 1) **Open joints and cavities** - Raking out of loose and open joints only, followed by repointing using a lime-based mortar.
- 2) **Stonework deterioration** - Chiselling out of severely decayed (alveoli-filled or back-weathered) stone elements and insertion of new replacements using the most durable globigerina limestone available. Individual sizes, profiles and surface finish will be replicated.
- 3) **'Piecing-in' repairs** - In the past, as a way of restoring the back-weathered stonework in a reversible and economic manner, stone pieces were embedded in lime mortar infilling the erosion cavities. After thorough inspection, this system, where

found to be in sound condition will be retained and possibly emulated where practicable.

Yours sincerely,



Edward Said
Perit

cc. Ms Simone Mizzi o.b.o. Din l-Art Helwa

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Figure 1



Figure 2

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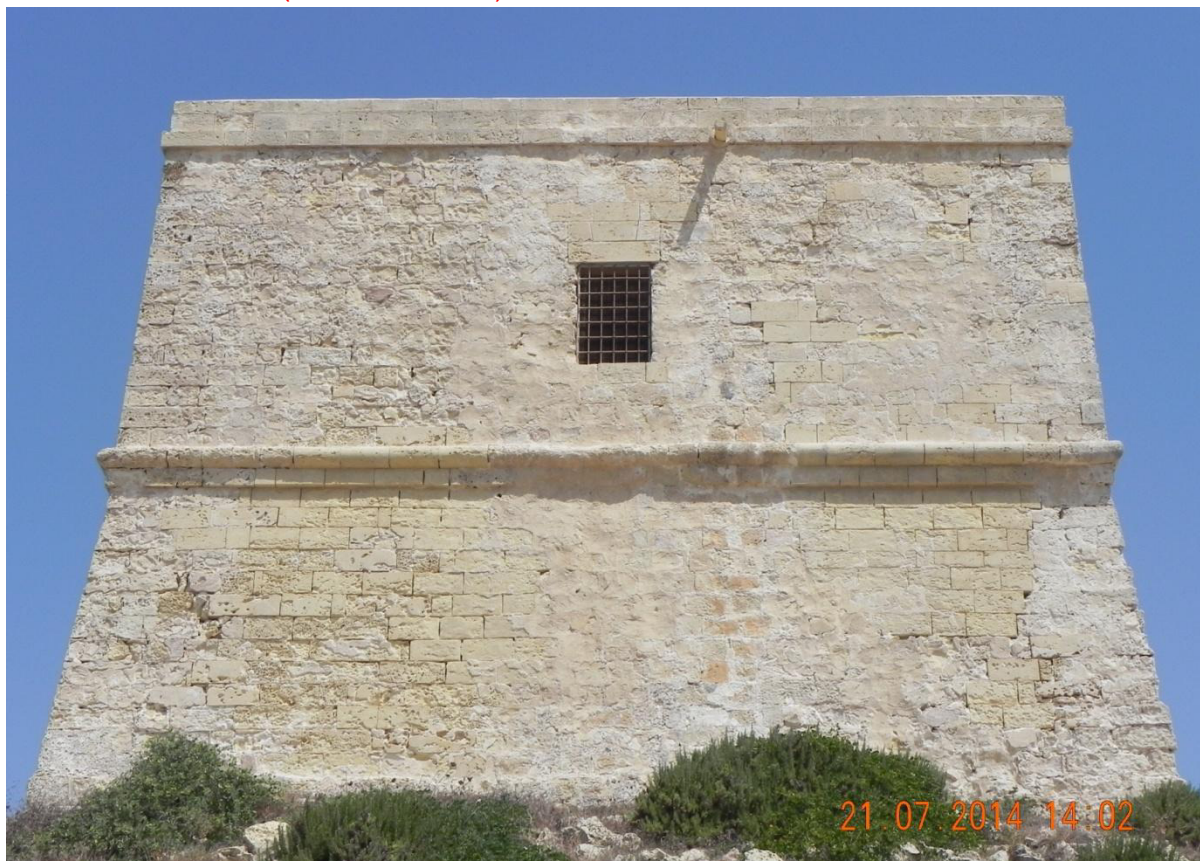


Figure 3



Figure 4

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Figure 5



Figure 6

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Figure 7

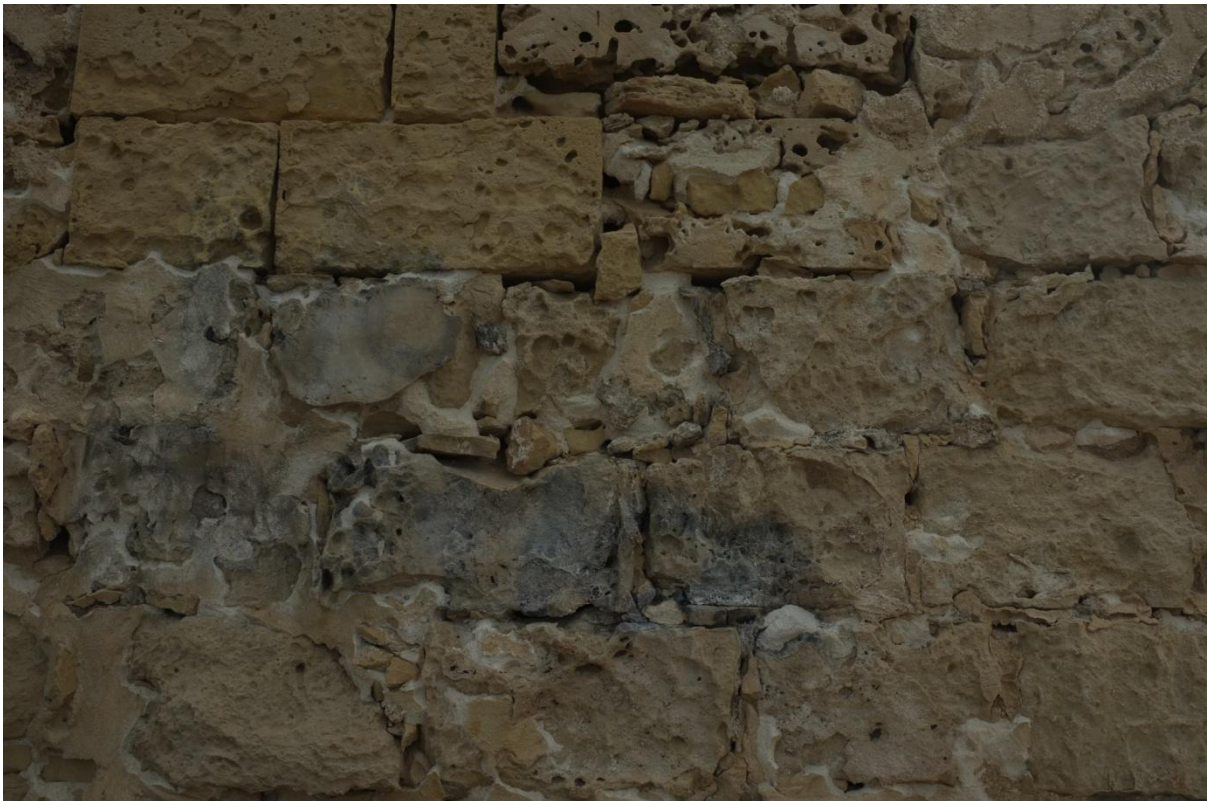


Figure 8

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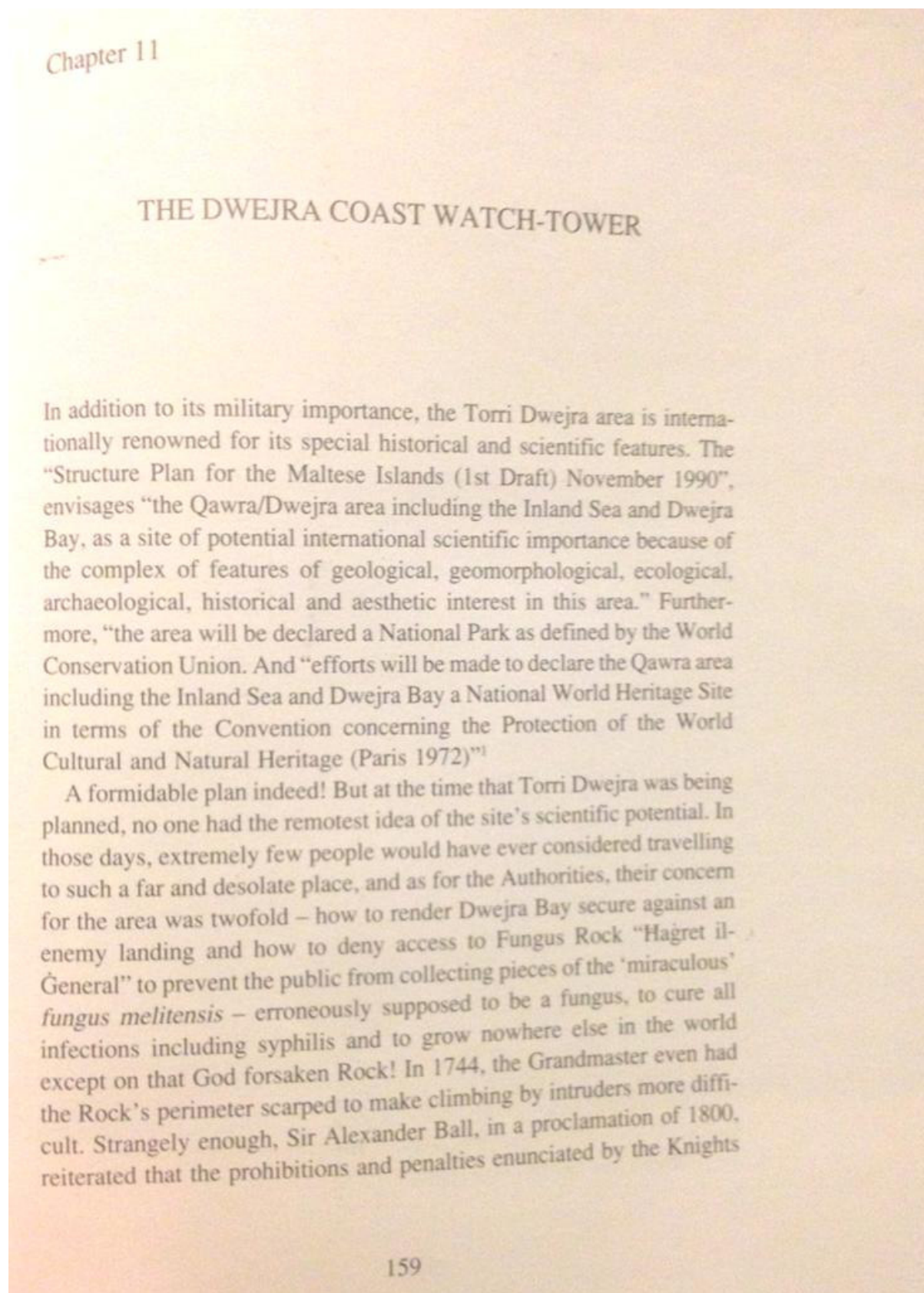
Figure 9



Figure 10

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APPENDIX I - Excerpt from 'The Coastal Fortifications of Gozo and Comino) by A. Samut-Tagliaferro, Midsea Publications Malta 1993, Chapter 11, pp. 159-169.



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Plate 41:
Dwejra/Qawra area with its Tower (1973).

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Torri tal-Qawra, Id-Dwejra, inhawi ta' San Lawrenz, Ghawdex - Restoration of facades 9

THE DWEJRA COAST WATCH-TOWER

against unauthorized collection of the fungus were to remain in force.² Years later, a senior Royal Engineers Officer, recorded, in pencil – “At Dwejra is the rock on which grows the *fungus melitensis*, the access to which is by a wooden trough or box, which by means of four small wheels runs on two strong ropes made fast to the rocks of each extremity.”³

Well aware of the ever present danger resulting from an undefended Dwejra coast, the Università of Gozo at last determined to pay for the erection of a coast watch-tower, which, when completed in 1652, was furnished by the Order with guns, powder, fuzes, ammunition and equipment allied to the Tower's role.⁴

At its base the Tower is 40 feet square with walls 11.5 feet thick, inclined slightly upwards, so that at its first (main) floor it becomes 37 feet square and its walls 8.5 feet thick. This first floor consists of one ‘all purpose’ room for the guard on duty; the room, 19.5 feet square, has a window in the centre of each of its four walls, a well head and two niches. Hewed into the masonry within the corner of its east-north walls is a narrow flight of steps (2.5 feet wide) leading to the roof which is 36 feet square with a 2.5 foot wide parapet skirting its four sides. The room on the roof, though considerably smaller at the time than it is now, was the Tower's Santa Barbara or Powder store.

It is interesting to compare the Tower as it was in 1824 (Plate 42) with how it had changed by the time I photographed it, from the same angle as the earlier painting, in 1974 (Plate 43). In the intervening period, the following main alterations had been effected:

- a. The structure of the stairway ramp.
- b. The gap between Tower and stairway previously spanned by an elevating drawbridge had been closed and a stone built passageway provided instead.
- c. The roof parapet was an extra course or two higher, and had drop-boxes on its landward right corner.
- d. On the other hand, the small covered entrance to the roof (with sloping back), as seen in the photograph, does not appear in the 1824 painting.
- e. The room on the roof, originally a gunpowder store, was considerably enlarged in length and width between 1824 and 1974.

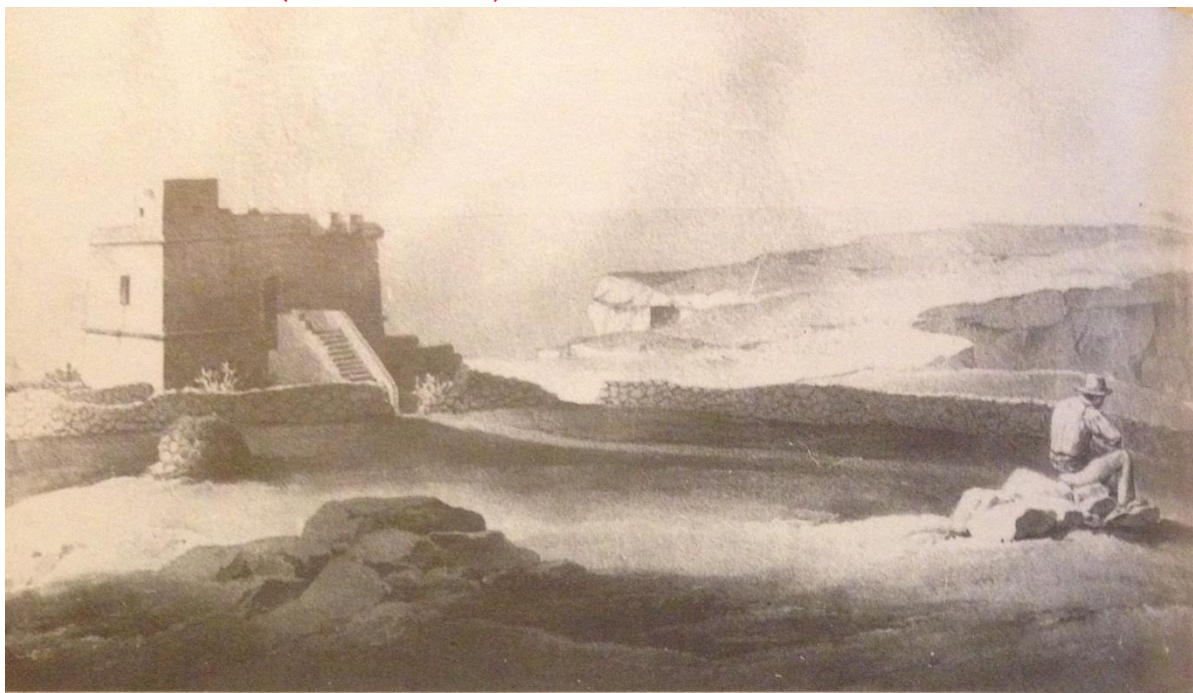


Plate 42:
Dwejra Tower in 1824 (from the painting by "A.B.").

Plate 43:
Dwejra Tower in 1974. Photographed from the same spot as the above painting.



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THE DWEJRA COAST WATCH-TOWER

The Castellano or Capo Mastro (Detachment Commander) of Torri Dwejra was a Bombardier to whom the Order paid a regular salary of 40 scudi per annum, while the Università of Gozo paid him a further 20 scudi and an oil allowance (for lighting) of 1 scudo yearly. He also held the salt pans on the stretch of coast in front of the Tower, from which he derived an additional income from selling the salt. The Università also paid 25 scudi annually to the *Aggiuntante*, who was the second in command of the Tower. Three men were on guard duty at the Tower every night, and either the Capo Mastro or his *Aggiuntante*, or both, were present at the Tower throughout the twentyfour hours of the day.⁵

It was decided, in 1670, that although Torri Dwejra had been built by the Università of Gozo and that therefore the latter was responsible for its upkeep, yet, because its Capo Mastro was being salaried by the Order, any repairs to the Tower had first to be approved by the Commander of Artillery and subsequently paid for by the Università.⁶ This procedure was followed in 1681, when the Knight Ugo de Vauvilliers reported that Torri Dwejra's outer walls were in need of repair, the upper part being very worn *è molto consumato*; also its stairway ramp and stairs leading to the entrance door. He further pointed out that the roof parapet facing north (i.e. landwards) was too low and needed raising by at least two palms (20.6 inches) in order to afford some protection to the men in the eventuality of a land attack against the Tower.⁷

Notwithstanding the relatively frequent military inspections that were being made in Gozo at this period, little attention was given to Torri Dwejra. Even Blondel missed it out when investigating the damages incurred by the Gozo fortifications after the great earthquake of 1693. However, the Knight Renato de Gras, in his capacity as Commander of the Artillery, did call at Dwejra in May 1722, but all he had to say about the Tower was that it mounted three 6-pounder iron guns!⁸ Those same three guns appeared in the general Armament inventory of 1761.⁹

Again, Bourlamaque and the French Engineers reported on July 28, 1761,¹⁰ that Dwejra Bay was *eloignee des secours* and that it was defended by a tower armed with three 6-pounder guns. A landing at this Bay, they said, was not easy for although the rocks are accessible in calm weather, they are high and steep, but, having landed, the enemy could advance from the left of the Bay and along the coast. They advised that

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a Retrenchment be erected to block that approach line of attack and at the same time offer shelter to our men against bombardment by enemy support vessels; in addition, two small cannon were required to enfilade the beach.

To the left (east side) of the Tower, lies a mound which rises behind the Tower and commands it tactically; a small dry stone Redoubt with two small cannon was required in order to obstruct any infiltration by the enemy from that quarter. On the right side of the Tower, between two ravines, lies another minor elevation of land on which a defensive traverse should be built. The construction of these minor works, the Engineers said, could well be undertaken by the troops posted there to defend the area; 150 men would be adequate for this task and would ensure that the northern coast from Cape San Dimitri to Xwejni Bay was absolutely inaccessible; it being only 500 toises away from this Bay:

150 hommes suffiront pour la Calle Duera; on assure que la Cotte du Nord depuis Le Càp St Dimitri jusqu'à La Calle Sciacini, est absolument inaccessible; il y a seulement a 500 toises, de cette Calle...

They also pointed out that further north on the west coast there existed a small landing beach *un petit débarquement* on which careful watch should be kept. None of those recommendations was implemented.

The armament, equipment and stores held at Torri Dwejra varied little over the years. In 1787, the Capo Mastro, Francesco Grima, held fortytwo items on charge, including:¹¹

Guns, 6-pounder (iron)	3
Gunpowder (Polvere di Malta)	1 quintale
Ammunition – Round Shot	162
Grape Shot	44
Rammer rods & Sponges (sets)	4
Ladles, brass	2
Gun carriages	3
Swivel guns (Spingardi)	2
Muskets with bayonet	12
Musket cartridges with bullet	550
Bandoliers	12
Musket Racks	2

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Spontoons	12
Lanterns	3
Bronze Bell	1

In June 1798, the French, with lightning speed invaded Gozo, and after capturing the Castello and Fort Chambray and severing the Island's lifeline with Malta, rightly foresaw that the rest of Gozo would fall into their hands with little resistance. Thus, the Dwejra Tower at the then desolate western end of Gozo, did not become involved in any action with French troops. Under the British, the Tower continued to be manned, though its role was chiefly anti-smuggling and guarding against evasion of quarantine regulations. George Percy Badger, writing in 1838, remarks that "on the whole southern coast and towards the west, Gozo is guarded by inaccessible cliffs sometimes rising to a height of 300 feet above the level of the sea. In this division are the two bays of Shlendi and Dwejra, where a landing might easily be effected; but these are secured by forts [towers] built for that purpose."¹²

In 1839, Dwejra Tower was being manned by a Royal Malta Fencible Regiment detachment consisting of 1 Corporal and 3 Privates, but the Royal Commissioners who were then conducting investigations into "the affairs of the Island of Malta" recommended that the guards be withdrawn from Torri Dwejra.¹³ Apparently no action was taken on that proposal, because even as late as July 15, 1871, the Commanding Officer of the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery¹⁴ was requesting various repairs to towers in Gozo including that at Dwejra. But by then, the end was in sight! On April 1, 1873, the R.M.F.A. gave up its Coast Guard commitment,¹⁵ and withdrew its men from Dwejra and other posts. The Towers were deserted and sadly, though inevitably, open to vandalism. In the First and Second World Wars, Torri Dwejra and other fortifications in Gozo were re-acquired for defence purposes by the Army, manned accordingly and in the process repaired and maintained whilst in occupation by the troops. But fortunately, wars don't last for ever and any benefits they may confer can only be temporary.

On August 2, 1914, Sir Leslie Rundle, Governor of the Maltese Islands¹⁶ (1909-15) announced a series of Emergency Proclamations, including the embodiment of the two Battalions of the King's Own Malta

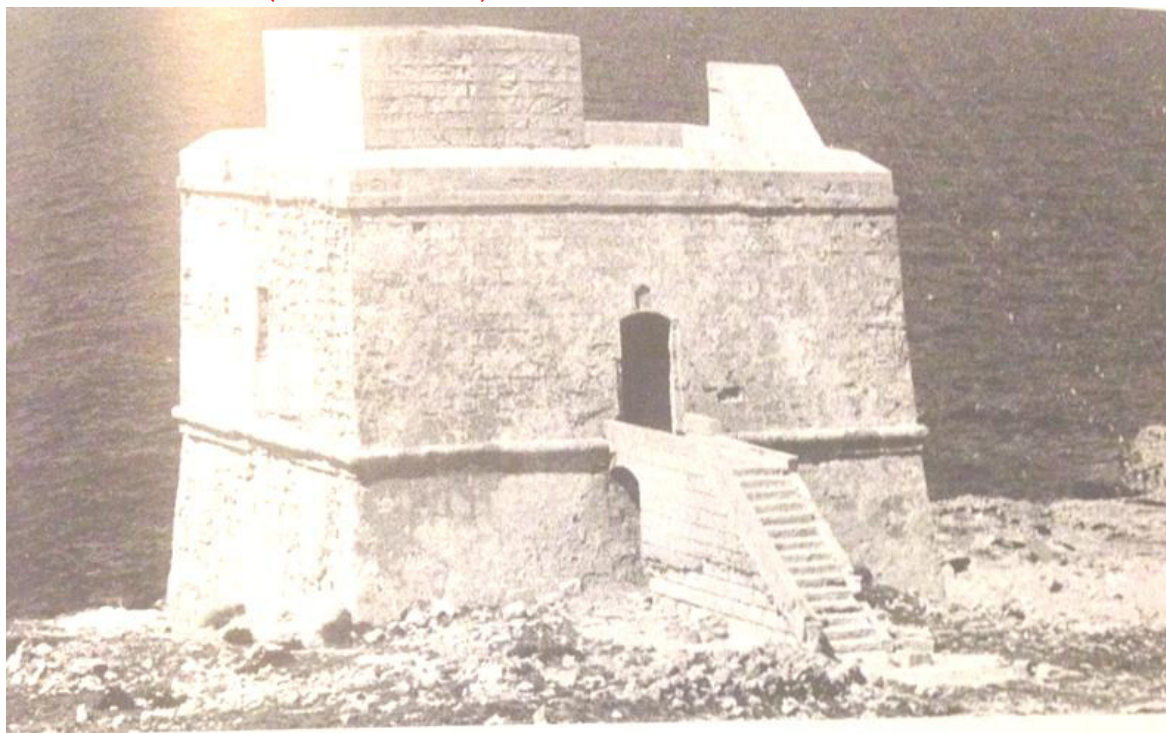
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Regiment of Militia. Within a short time the KOMRM was organized on a war footing and its Companies dispatched to their War Stations manning the numerous Defence Posts, including old watch-towers on the coasts of Malta. The Royal Malta Artillery Reservists were also recalled to military duty and the Regiment immediately undertook its wartime role of manning the operational Outer Harbour Forts and Batteries in Malta, while its No. 3 Company moved two 12-pounder field guns (later increased to four) to Gozo, manning one, later two, at Dwejra and holding one, later two, in reserve at Rabat. The Dwejra Tower was also manned in the Second World War as one of the Observation Posts which had been established round the Islands on August 10, 1940. There were eventually eleven such posts in Gozo, permanently manned by Observers whose task was to watch out for and report suspicious occurrences in their areas including sounds of approaching enemy air and sea crafts. Thus:

Observation Post No	1	was at	Torri Mgarr ix-Xini
"	"	No 2	" Torri Xlendi
"	"	No 3	" Torri Dwejra
"	"	No 5	" Qolla l-Bajda (Qbajjar) Battery
"	"	No 11	" Qala (St Anthony) Battery.

When, on April 18, 1942, a Royal Air Force Spitfire, in trouble, made a crash landing on the rocks at Dwejra Bay, Captain Frank Debono and 051 Carmelo Zahra of Victoria, the Observer on duty at Torri Dwejra immediately rushed to the scene of the crash, rescued the pilot, a New Zealander, and conveyed him straight to hospital. Happily the pilot's life was saved.¹⁷

After the War, the Army moved out and gradually the Tower fell back to its bad old ways. From time to time, people reported on its worsening condition, and one was relieved to hear, that Government had granted Torri Dwejra to Mr. Gerald de Trafford on emphyteusis for a period of fifty years, reckonable from January 12, 1956. Nonetheless, when I saw the Tower in 1960, it seemed as if hardly any attempt at renovating eroding stonework had yet been made. Later that year, however, Mr. Charles Zammit, the then Director of Museums, informed me that a general survey had been carried out to establish exactly what restoration



works were required and that the repairs involved would cost an estimated £600 – a not inconsiderable sum for those days and obviously one which the Treasury would not have accepted lightly. Whatever the reason, the project was dropped.

In 1974, the situation had not changed, nor on my next visit on March 17, 1979 (Plate 44). Then out of the blue, as it were, the Sunday Times of Malta of October 7, 1979, reported:

“Mr. Gerald de Trafford has offered to meet expenses for the restoration of the Dwejra Tower. New windows and doors, which went missing some years ago, will be put up and other works will be undertaken.”

When I went there again (1985) I found the Tower heavily camouflaged to look like some remote desert outpost (Plate 45). A film was being produced there in which Torri Dwejra and its surroundings were prominently involved. The film was called “Among Wolves” and dealt with a Terrorist plot resembling in several aspects the kidnapping, some time later, in Italy, of the American Brigadier General Dozier. Also

Plate 44:
Dwejra Tower in
1979. Note the erosion
of the stonework.

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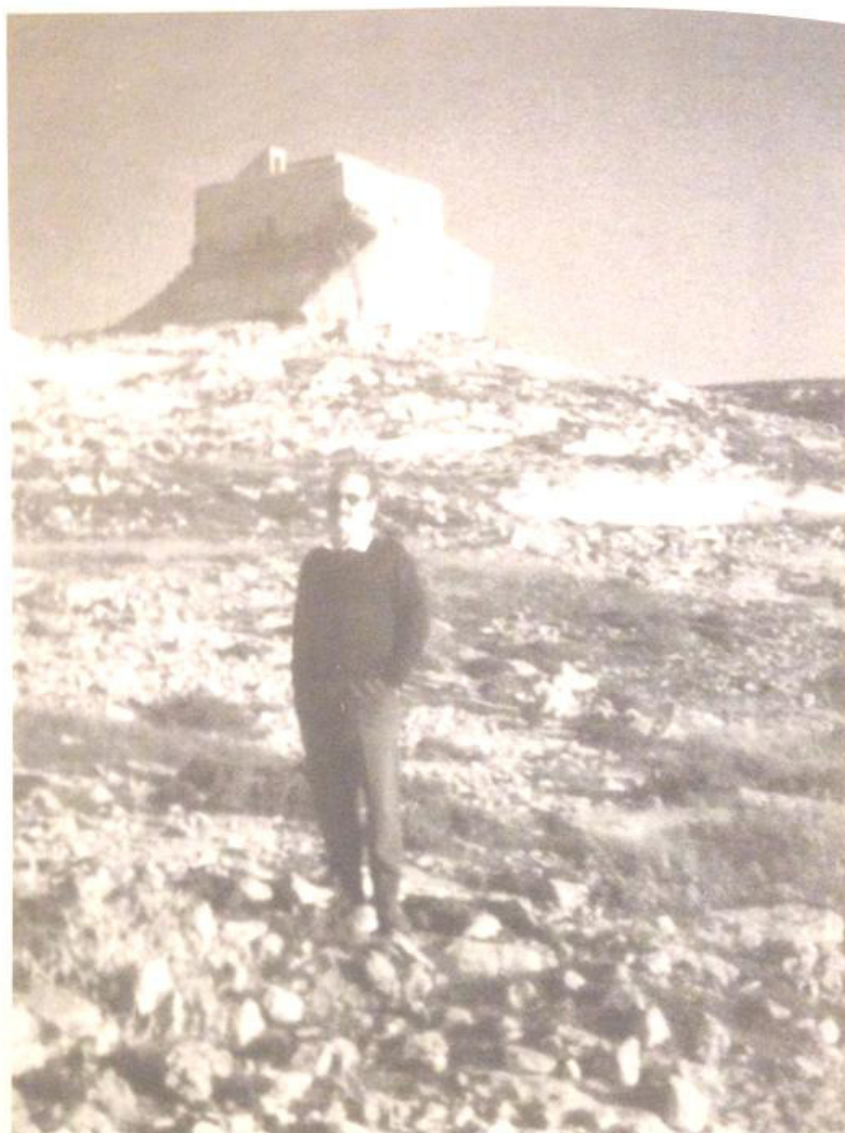


Plate 45:
Dwejra Tower (1985)
camouflaged as a
remote desert outpost
during the production
of the film "Among
Wolves". In the
foreground is the
author.

featuring in that film was the Comino coast watch-tower.

NOTES

1. The Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands (1st Draft), November 1990, pp. 88-89.
2. BOFFA - *Haġret il-Ġeneral*, Maltese Medical Journal 17, Vol. 1, 1989. Sir Alex-

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ander Ball's Proclamation stated:

Si proibisce a tutti di raccogliere il Fungus Melitensis. Avendo a caro Sua Eccellenza, che in luoghi produttivi le radici comunemente dette Fungus Melitensis, ossia Ghirch Signur (Gherq Sinjur) si erano mantenuti, ed illesi, come si mantenevano nell'antico governo, ha perciò proibito a qualunque persona di qualunque stato, condizione, di non ardire di raccogliere dette radici senza il permesso di Sua Eccellenza, o del suo Segretario.

Barone F. Gauci, Capitano di Verga.

3. A.O.M. 6563, f.22.
4. A.O.M. 259, f.53v. (22 October 1652) – Grandmaster Lascaris and the Council ordinarono alli Ven. Procuratori del Commun Tesoro, chè proveggano d'artiglierie, polveri, meccio, e di altri munitioni necessarie per la Torre di nuovo fatta fabricare nel Gozzo alla Dueyra, acciò quivi resti vietato lo sbarco al nemico, e difesa quella parte occidentale dell'isola.
5. NLM 142 (vi), f.183.
6. A.O.M. 645, f.194r.
7. A.O.M. 6551, f.103v.
8. A.O.M. 1011, f.49v.
9. A.O.M. 6549, f.3v.
10. A.O.M. 6563, f.23.
11. A.O.M. 1062, f.123.
12. BADGER – Description of Malta and Gozo, p. 293.
13. Reports of the Commission appointed to inquire into the affairs of Malta, 1839, Part III, pp. 21, 27.
14. The Royal Malta Fencible Regiment was converted from an Infantry Battalion to an Artillery Regiment on January 25, 1861, and on March 23, 1889, it was renamed "Royal Malta Artillery".
15. SAMUT-TAGLIAFERRO – History of the Royal Malta Artillery, Vol 1, 1976, pp. 235, 362.
16. This Governor took a special interest in Gozo. The public gardens at the bottom of Republic Street, Victoria, were acquired through his influence and named "Villa Rundle" after him.
17. BEZZINA – *F'Ghawdex fi Zmien il-Gwerra*, pp. 33–35.