

# Malta and Gibraltar

ILLUSTRATED



GIBRALTAR, THE KEY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. (From the "Queen of Spain's Chair.") [Photo: A. Beanland.]

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE  
COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL  
FACTS, FIGURES, & RESOURCES

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## THE MALTESE NOBILITY.

**T**HE fact that Malta, a mere speck in the blue Mediterranean, has had a Nobility from very remote times is not the least of the many interesting and uncommon characteristics that distinguish the island from all other oversea possessions of the British Crown. Indeed, there is no place on earth comparable in this respect with the little country that has figured so much in the world's history, and that had a highly-developed civilization when the great lands of the British Empire were absolutely unknown, and Britain itself had not yet emerged from primeval barbarism.

Mention is made in the works of Livy and Cicero of the Maltese Nobility; but the local Aristocracy as constituted to-day was founded in 1090 A.D. by Count Roger of Normandy, who divided the population into Barons, Nobles, Knights, Citizens, Burgesses, and Rustics. The ancestors of many of the present Maltese families were amongst his followers, and he conferred fiefs on several of the most distinguished of them for their brilliant exploits against the Saracens.

After its conquest by the Normans Malta formed part of the Sicilian Monarchy, and the Aragonese Kings of Sicily augmented the Nobility by many new creations.

Margaret of Aragon, who died in 1418, and from whom the Testaferrata, Sceberras, and Stagno families descend, was a daughter of Count William of Aragon, natural son of Frederick III. Clear proof that she was of blood royal is afforded by the words used by Frederick III. on April 7th, 1365, in his Diploma granting certain prerogatives to her husband, James Pellegrino, a Maltese Noble, as follows:—*Fredericus, etc. Presentis scripti serie notum fieri supplicationem noviter Excellentia garitam de Aragonia, Consortem saneuineam, familiarem et fidelem gratiose, etc.*

During the four hundred years of the Maltese Nobility, the history of Malta to the after the grant of Malta to the Emperor Charles V. in 1530, and Sicily were identical, as the held Malta only in fief from the The governorship of Malta almost hereditary in the family of and Bucana; and the keeper- was strictly hereditary in that of

The Governor of Gozo, the administrator of Government pro- tors), the Commanders of various who kept both horse and foot at their own expense. They military commands and all execu- had an hereditary right to sit in Council. The Barons, or possessors century the right to sit in the Nobles were entitled to elect and that Council a certain number of The exclusive privilege of the Nobility by King Ferdinand the special right of keeping galleys, whereby they rendered signal

The historian Bosio, describing the state entry into the City of Notabile of Grand Master L'Isle Adam in 1530, when the Knights of St. John came to Malta, mentions that the Nobles received him at the gates of the city, and that one of them, after reading an address, handed over the keys of the city, the Grand Master promising to respect the rights and privileges of the Maltese. This ceremony was repeated on the election of every succeeding Grand Master. Canon Panzavecchia, in his work *L'ultimo Periodo Della Storia di Malta*, says that Grand Master de Rohan was received at the gate of Notabile by four Noble Senators of the ancient families of Xara, Cassia, Bonnici, and Muscati, with the Capitano di Verga, Baron Pasquale Sceberras Testaferrata, at the head of the Civic Cavalry. Previous to the advent of the Knights of St. John in Malta, the Capitano di Verga was the Governor of the island, but he became Lieutenant-Governor when the Grand Master assumed power, and as such next held precedence over everyone including the Balis and Grand



The Most Noble  
MARY SCEBERRAS D'AMICO-  
INGUANEZ (wife of Colonel A. C.  
McKean, C.M.G.), Baroness of Diar-  
el-Bniet and Bucana, created by Louis,  
King of Sicily, January 4th, 1350,  
and of Castel Cicciano, created by  
Charles II. of Sicily, June 11th, 1695.

and forty years from 1090 to 1530 of the Nobility of Sicily; and even Knights of St. John of Jerusalem 1530, the Nobility of both Malta Grand Master of the Order Sovereigns of Sicily. before the advent of the Knights was Inguanez, Barons of Diar-el-Bniet ship of the Castle of St. Angelo Nava, Barons of Marsa. Vice-Admiral, the Secreto, or party, the Jurats (Municipal Sena- regiments, etc., were all Noblemen soldiers and several war galleys were also invested with the chief tive and judicial authority, and the Consiglio Popolare, or National of fiefs, had up to the sixteenth Consiglio Popolare, and the other depute as their representatives in themselves.

keeping falcons was granted to in 1495. The Gatto family had service to King Alfonso during

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The Most Noble  
**FRANCESCO SANT-CASSIA**,  
K.O.M.M., Baron of Gharixem and  
Tabia created by Grand Master  
Lascaris April 16th. 1638; and Count  
by the Empress Maria Teresa of  
Austria December 22nd, 1770

the precedence be regulated

**FIRST.**—Any person who

said city Notabile and

**SECOND.**—The Titolato hav-

existing here, though

**THIRD.**—The Titolato who

fief really existing in our

the title in the Chancery

of our Religion, and in

the High Court of our

Castellania, and the pay-

ment for the respective

registrations of 116 scudi

of our money, to be

divided in equal shares

between the said Chan-

cery and Castellania.

**FOURTH.**—A descendant in the male line from any person who was Capitano della Verga, if he lives on rent of his own property, and if his intermediate ancestors lived also on rent of their own property.

**FIFTH.**—A descendant in the male line from a Titolato, with title founded on a fief really existing here, if he lives on rent of his own property, and if his intermediate ancestors lived also on such rent.

**SIXTH.**—Any person who was First Jurat of Notabile.

**SEVENTH.**—Any person who was First Jurat of Valletta.

**EIGHTH.**—The Junior Jurat of the University to which he belongs.

**NINTH.**—Any person who was Judge of Appeal, Criminal Judge, or Civil Judge of the Court of Castellania, or the Courts Capitanale and Governatoriale.

Crosses of the Order. When the Grand Master was seated on the throne the Capitano stood at his right hand; he was Commandant-in-Chief of the country districts, and was invested with both criminal and civil jurisdiction, having a Court of Justice of his own, with power to banish any persons from the island without reference to the Grand Master. The Capitano di Verga also presided over the Consiglio Popolare. When Sir Alexander J. Ball, the first Governor under the British rule, made his entry into Valletta, he was accompanied by Baron Gauci, the Capitano di Verga, who was afterwards appointed Lieutenant-Governor.

Precedence amongst the Nobles is determined not by the degree of the title but by the date of its creation, which results from a Proclamation of Grand Master Despuig, dated September 16th, 1739, and another in confirmation by Grand Master de Rohan, dated March 17th, 1795. The first Proclamation is as follows:—

THE MASTER OF THE HOSPITAL AT JERUSALEM  
AND OF  
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.



The Most Noble  
**UGO TESTAFERRATA-ABELA**,  
C.M.G., Baron of Gomerino created  
by Grand Master Perellos December  
24th, 1710.

To remove differences about precedence among the persons who will be appointed to the Juratships of the Universities of Notabile and Valletta, it is our will and pleasure, and we ordain and command, that they shall all be preceded by the under-mentioned, and that among the latter in the following order, namely:—

1. Who was Capitano della Verga of the of our Island of Malta.

2. Who is in possession of a title founded on a fief really existing here, if he has not a title founded upon a dominions, on the registration of



The Most Noble  
**THE BARONESS OF GOMERINO.**

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TENTH.—A Doctor of Law, or a Doctor of Medicine. We declare that, among persons of the same rank, the antiquity of the original title must be attended to, and that a person who was a Jurat, if he be appointed Console di Mare, shall have precedence over other Consoli, and among the latter the precedence shall be regulated by the date of appointment.

Given at the Palace, the 16th Sept., 1739.

(Signed) DESPUIG.

By this enactment of Grand Master Despuig it will be seen that he regulated the order of precedence into two classes: first, a title based upon a fief existing in Malta, and secondly, a title conferred by a foreign Government, provided it was registered in the Chancery of Malta.

Grand Master de Rohan's Proclamation of 1795 is as follows:—

THE MASTER OF THE  
HOSPITAL AT JERUSALEM,  
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE,  
AND OF THE ORDER OF  
ST. ANTHONY OF VIENNA.

It being a principle greater lustre of Nobility antiquity, nothing is more just Nobles should have precedence therefore, determined to ordain among the Nobles of this our



The Most Noble  
Sir GERALD BOLOGNA-STRICK-  
LAND, K.C.M.G., LL.B., B.A., Govern-  
or of New South Wales, Count Della  
Catena created by Grand Master Pinto  
January 20th, 1745.



The Most Noble  
COUNTESS CHAPELLE.

Court of the Castellania. But in cases of grants bearing the same date, the person possessing two or more titles shall have precedence over another who has less titles according to the rule established by the magisterial decree of our lamented predecessor, Grand Master Despuig, of the 16th September, 1739, which, with our present enactment, we intend hereby fully to confirm.

Given at the Palace, the 17th of March, 1795.

(Signed) ROHAN.

The rank of Marquis was unknown in Malta until the year 1717, and was in many instances merely a titular distinction, and considered inferior in every respect to a feudal Barony.

With the exception of foreign Marquises, which were only recognised by the Grand Masters when duly registered in the Chancery of the island, this title only dates from the time of Grand Master de Rohan (1775-1797). The title of Count dates from 1718. Even in England the title of Marquis was unknown until the beginning of the reign of Richard II., in 1386, when



The Most Noble  
GIOVANNI CHAPELLE,  
Count created by Ferdinand I.  
January 10th, 1722.

universally acknowledged that the depends chiefly on its greater and reasonable than that the older over the more recent. We have, that, in regulating the precedence dominion, whether first-born cadets indiscriminately, regard should only be had to the greater or less antiquity of the title by which their family was ennobled, whether that title had been granted by ourselves or our predecessors, or by foreign princes: provided, however, it was registered in our Chancery and in the High

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The Most Noble  
**EDUARDO SANT-FOURNIER,**  
 Count created by Empress Maria  
 Teresa January 29th, 1770.

The word *baro* was originally Kings of France, instead of calling gave them the appellation of the Nobility was called *le baronage*. Barons except those who held Crown, and to every grant of *Dignitatis* a jurisdiction was always

During the French occupation possessors of Diplomas of Nobility were ordered to take them on July 14th, 1798 (the French National Festival) to the public square and there burn them in a huge bonfire close to the mast of Liberty which had been erected; so that only one or two Diplomas now exist. Official recognition, however, during the time of the Grand Masters necessitated the registration of all titles at the Government Cancellaria and at the Castellania of the High Courts. Fortunately, these registers were preserved and can still be referred to.

The Maltese Nobility consists of such holders of titles as are recognised by His Majesty the King, no other title receiving official recognition.

On March 8th, 1877, a Commission was appointed to inquire into the claims of titles of Nobility in Malta, when the claims of twenty-eight Noblemen, some of them having more than one title, were upheld.

The oldest existing title goes back to 1350, and it is a feature of the Maltese Nobility that no title has been conferred since 1796, so that to-day the most recent title is 118 years old.

On October 26th, 1887, a Commission of Noblemen was authorised to draft Standing Orders and Regulations for the Committee of Privileges and other meetings of the Nobility of

Robert de Vere, then Earl of Oxford, was created Marquis of Dublin for life.

There are very few titles in England older than that of the Barony of Diar-el-Bniet and Bucana, and comparatively few older than that of Castel Cicciano.

Lord Coke observes that in ancient records the Barons included the whole Nobility of England, because all Noblemen were Barons; but in Malta Marquis was only a titular distinction, and, with one exception, that of the Baron of Goriexem and Tabia, the title of Count was in the same way given to those not formerly Barons. It is, therefore, easy to understand the just view taken by the Grand Masters in regulating precedence according to local traditions and feudal customs. It would indeed have been impossible at the period in question to have accorded a Maltese Baron of the fourteenth century precedence inferior to that of a titular or foreign Marquis having none of the landed status which

was the basis of all Nobility from the earliest times. All the feudal writers agree that, where a tract of land was granted by a Sovereign Prince to one of his followers, to be held immediately of himself, by military or other honourable services with a jurisdiction, it was called a *Feudum Nobile*, and conferred Nobility on the person to whom it was granted.

synonymous with *homo*. The their immediate vassals *homines, barones*, and the whole body of Formerly none were accounted by an immediate grant from the a *Feudum Nobile* or *Feudum* annexed.



The Most Noble  
**FRANCESCO CHAPELLE,**  
 Baron of San Giovanni created by  
 Ferdinand I, King of the Two  
 Sicilies, July 16th, 1777.



The Most Noble  
**THE BARONESS OF SAN  
 GIOVANNI**

Malta, and a Committee of Privileges with functions analogous to those of the Committee of Privileges of the House of Lords was sanctioned.

According to Lord Granville's despatch of February 26th, 1886, the Nobles are entitled to the prefix "The Most Noble," and their eldest sons enjoy the courtesy title of Marchesino, Contino, Baroncino, and the other sons and daughters that of "dei Marchesi," "dei Conti," "dei Baroni" with the family name. Precedence is always derived from the father or husband except in the case of a Peeress in her own right. A Dowager Peeress, while a widow, takes precedence of the holder of the title.

### THE MALTESE NOBILITY IN ORDER OF PRECEDENCE, according to Date of Title.

THE MOST NOBLE MARY SCEBERRAS D'AMICO-INGUANEZ (wife of Colonel A. C. McKean, C.M.G.), BARONESS OF DIAR-EL-BNIET AND BUCANA created by Louis, King of Sicily, January 4th, 1350; and of CASTEL CICCIANO created by Charles II. of Sicily June 11th, 1695.

THE MOST NOBLE FRANCESCO SAINT-CASSIA, K.O.M.M., BARON OF GHARIEKEM AND TABIA created by Grand Master Lascaris April 16th, 1638; and COUNT by the Empress Maria Teresa of Austria December 22nd, 1770. Motto: *Virtus, Honor et Gloria.*

THE MOST NOBLE UGO TESTA-GOMERINO created by Grand Master Perellos December 24th, 1710. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.*

THE MOST NOBLE GIUSEPPE DE created by Grand Master

THE MOST NOBLE DANIELE MARQUIS OF SAN VINCENZO Spain November 10th, 1716; by Vittorio Amadeo, King of CULEJA created by Grand Master Perellos December 24th, 1710. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.*

THE MOST NOBLE ROBERTO Vittorio Amadeo, King of Sicily, October 19th, 1718. Motto: *Pretiosum quod utile.*

THE MOST NOBLE GIOVANNI Ferdinand I., King of Sicily, October 19th, 1718. Motto: *Ingenio et Prudentia.*

THE MOST NOBLE CALCEDONIO created by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena June 14th, 1726. Motto: *Galea spes salutis.*

THE MOST NOBLE ROSARIO VIANI, BARON OF TABIA de Vilhena December 11th, 1728. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.*

THE MOST NOBLE GIUSEPPE BENUARRAT created by Grand Master Despuig August 6th, 1778. Motto: *Duriora*

MARQUIS DE PIRO created by Philip V. of Spain November 6th, 1742. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.* [This title is vacant.]

COUNT STAGNO-NAVARRA DELLA BARRIA created by Grand Master Pinto May 16th, 1743. [This title is vacant and is contested by the Noble A. Stagno Navarra, LL.D., by Raimondo Palermo Stagno, and Mrs. Maria Teresa Biasini.]

THE MOST NOBLE SIR GERALD BOLOGNA-STRICKLAND, K.C.M.G., LL.B., B.A. (Governor of New South Wales), COUNT DELLA CATENA created by Grand Master Pinto January 20th, 1745. Motto: *Sans mal.*

THE MOST NOBLE LUIGI TESTAFERRATA-OLIVIER, MARQUIS created October, 1745. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.*

THE MOST NOBLE RICCARDO GIORGIO CASSAR-DESAIN, MARQUIS created by Vittorio Amadeo, King of Sicily, July 13th, 1749. Motto: *N'espoir n'envie.*



The Most Noble  
GEORGE CRISPO BARBARO,  
Marquis of San Giorgio created by  
Grand Master de Rohan September  
6th, 1778.

FERRATA-ABELA, C.M.G., BARON OF Master Perellos December 24th, 1710. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.*

PIRO GOURGION, BARON OF BUDAK Perellos April 23rd, 1716.

TESTAFERRATA - BONICI ASCIAK, FERRERI created by Philip V. of MARQUIS TESTAFERRATA created Sicily, July 13th, 1717; BARON OF Master Despuig June 2nd, 1737. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.*

PREZIOSI, COUNT created by Sicily, October 19th, 1718. Motto: *Pretiosum quod utile.*

CHAPELLE, COUNT created by Two Sicilies, January 10th, 1718. Motto: *Ingenio et Prudentia.*

GALEA, BARON OF S. MARCIANO Manoel de Vilhena June 14th, 1726. Motto: *Galea spes salutis.*

TESTAFERRATA - ABELA MORONI created by Grand Master Manoel 1728. Motto: *Non nisi per ardua.*

ATTARD-MONTALTO, BARON OF Grand Master Despuig August 6th, 1778. Motto: *Duriora*



