

Two days later the two vessels anchored at the island of Scarpanto. After a short stop, they headed south-southwest all the way to the coast of Tripolitania where they made another stopover at Cape Luco, near Tobruk, on 12 September. Chambray had sailed south rather than continue west towards Malta because he may have received instructions from Malta prior to his departure to seek potential hideouts of Tunisian corsairs. According to his memoirs, however, the real reason was that Chambray was somewhat frustrated by the northerly wind, forcing them to keep the sails trimmed in at the beam reach position; rather than wrestle with the currents, they went along with them crossing the Mediterranean once more. In addition, Chambray was very much enjoying that rare cruise to the Levant and, although he had several reasons to head straight to Malta, he did not want to forgo the opportunity to visit Cyrenaica.

From the Barbary Coast, the ships-of-the-line sailed north-northwest towards Goze, a small island just south of Candia, arriving there on 20 September. Following yet another stopover four days later at Cape St John in Candia, the vessels sailed north-west arriving on 1 October at Cape Spartivento at the southern tip of Calabria. The next day they landed at Cape Passero, where the commander learned that in June the Spaniards had recaptured Oran and all the forts surrounding the city.<sup>25</sup> That brought further joy for Chambray as he still bore physical as well as emotional scars from his experience there. At Cape Passero, they came across a French ship that had left Alexandria on 4 September and was heading towards Marseille. Prior to their departure, a courier from Damietta had brought the news that Maltese warships burned the *Reale Nuova* and all Turkish merchant ships were forbidden from sailing until further notice.<sup>26</sup> There was no doubt that within a few days all of Europe would know about Chambray's magnificent victory over the Turkish sultana in the Levant, off Damietta. The celebrations commenced in Malta as the *San Giorgio* and the *Sant'Antonio* made their triumphant entrance into the Grand Harbour, completing a cruise of around 3,000 km lasting 73 days.

Congratulatory letters from the grand master as well as from several leading figures of the European courts soon followed. In his letter, Grand Master Vilhena wrote, '*This glorious triumph has overwhelmed us with joy; it is genuine evidence of your gallantry, your*

*wise conduct, of the skill of your officers and the bravery of your crew.*'<sup>27</sup> The viceroy of Naples remarked, '*how much we share in such a glorious event*'. The bailiff of Mesmes, the ambassador to Paris, congratulated him in a similar manner. The duke of Bouillon, grand chamberlain of France, wrote to his brother, the Marquis Chambray on 24 November 1732 and stated, '*I do not have anything else to desire after such a complete victory as the one he has just accomplished against Rear Admiral Kali, whose reputation was so well accredited, that he was feared in all the seas of the Levant. All of Christendom owes him a compliment for such an accomplishment which has been attributed to his courage and prudence.*'<sup>28</sup> The minister of the king of Spain ended his congratulatory letter with, '*I kiss the hands of Your Most Illustrious Lordship.*'

At the request of the grand master, Pope Clement XII honoured Chambray by nominating him grand cross of the Order of St John. On 22 December, the Order received the letter of confirmation from the pope and he was sworn in to the council for the grand crosses the following day. During the ceremony, the grand master placed the cross on his chest, thus making him a bailiff entitling him to sit with the pillars of his langue during the council of the Order, presided by the grand master. In August 1733, he received the magistral commandery of Metz along with a pension of six hundred francs for the commandery of Chantereine, which brought his annual income to eighteen thousand French livres net of all taxes.<sup>29</sup>

Each of these two commanderies had an *annata*<sup>30</sup> totalling 12,763 Maltese *scudi* that had to be paid. At that time, Chambray did not have that amount of money. '*Fortunately, real friends got him out of trouble, knowing well enough that with such large incomes and such exemplary conduct as the bailiff's, there was nothing to fear for their capital. In three years, in fact, he repaid both.*'<sup>31</sup>

In his memoirs, Chambray narrates how the European newspapers, just as they had done in 1723, vied with each other to report the famous naval victory. In 1734, the bailiff sent the flags of the Turkish rear admiral, pierced by cannon shots, to France. The queen placed one in the church of the Dames Saint-Cyr-lès-Versailles. The flag, which was 55 feet tall and 25 feet wide, was made of silk with large white and green stripes. Below the flag, was placed a laudatory inscription in gold letters on black marble.



Dame Helene Marthe de Chambray was the abbess at Almenêches abbey, the Benedictine nunnery at Almenêches in Orne, Normandy – Christian Laheyne Wikimedia Commons



The abbey of Almenêches where one of the flags of the *Reale Nuova* was placed – Romain Bréget Wikimedia Commons

*This flag of the rear-admiral of the Turks, taken in the depths of the Levant, near Damietta, on 16 August 1732, by the illustrious lord, Fra Jacques-François de Chambray, knight Grand Cross of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, lieutenant-general commanding the ships of Malta, commander of the magistral commandery of Metz and that of Virecourt, after having fought a whole day, with second-in-command Fra Jean-François de Picot de Combreaux, was presented by Messier Nicolas, Marquis Chambray, his brother, to the Queen; and Her Majesty had it offered to this church in thanksgiving to God for his favours for the preservation and triumph of the Christian Religion, and to renew the memory of the great exploits of King Saint Louis against the infidels. Et ad majorem Dei gloriam et perpetuam rei memoriam.*<sup>32</sup>

Another flag was placed at the royal abbey of Almenêches in the city of Argentan. A third flag was exhibited at the parish church of Saint-Lèger near Beaumont-le-Roger.<sup>33</sup>

The echo of that victory recorded by Chambray in the Levant was so great in the west that in 1734 the admiral of the king of Sweden sent his son, Baron Tauben, to gain some experience on the vessels of the Order. This was by virtue of the great reputation they had earned in Europe, most particularly in Sweden, after the capture of the rear admiral of the grand sultan. In April of that year, Bailiff Chambray had the honour and the pleasure to take him along on his fifty-second campaign.<sup>34</sup>

The king of Spain twice tried to tempt Chambray to put himself at his service with mouth-watering

offers. On both occasions, he told Chambray that he would nominate him commander of the Spanish navy with the prospect of promotion to lieutenant-general. The bailiff very politely declined the offer and replied that he was being honoured more than he deserved. The truth, however, was that it annoyed him tremendously to serve under Lieutenant-General Don Andrea Reggio,<sup>35</sup> a Sicilian who at that time enjoyed the favour of both the grand master as well as that of his catholic majesty. Reggio had confessed to him that he did not have any experience fighting pirates and he did not have anyone on board who did. Chambray commented in his memoirs that title without competence was worthless and also reasoned that a proud spirit was never tempted to accept a subordinate position under a leader judged to be incompetent.

Bailiff Chambray, being just 48 years old, thought that he would be able to serve his Order out at sea in the capacity of lieutenant-general for a few more years. The farthest thing from his mind was that his squadron, which along with him had just reached the pinnacle of its glory, would disappear. Nevertheless, that was exactly what happened. On 9 December 1735, Grand Master Vilhena and the council publicly declared that they were decommissioning two ships-of-the-line, the *San Giorgio* and the *San Vincenzo*, together with the frigate *Santa Teresa*. The drastic and unexpected measures to significantly scale down the squadron were adopted on the grounds that the Barbary



Jacques François de Chambray attributed to Antoine de Favray – *Plaisse*, book cover



Andrea Reggio – *Coloured by the author*



In the battle of Cape Passero fought between Britain and Spain on 11 August 1718, Don Andrea Reggio was the captain on the 60-gun *Santa Isabel* that was captured by the 80-gun HMS *Dorsetshire* of Rear Admiral George Delaval – *National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London*

corsairs and pirates had been so weakened that they would not have posed a threat for several years. There was also talk that eventually another vessel would be decommissioned, which would leave only one man-of-war, one frigate, and the galleys. With the Order heavily indebted, it was deemed appropriate to reduce its fleet. The lieutenant-general of the squadron, Bailiff Chambray, was sailing in Spanish waters and the decision was taken in his absence. When upon his return the grand master communicated that decision to him, Chambray did not hesitate at all in resigning from his position of lieutenant-general. Politely Chambray told him that *'henceforth the command of the squadron would not be so important as to require a grand cross and his knowledge'*.<sup>36</sup>

Chambray was quite distraught at having been 'forced' to quit the squadron after over thirty years of service during which he had participated in so many victories. He felt let down by that decision taken so abruptly. In the set of memoirs that he gave to his brother<sup>37</sup> the disapproval, the frustration, and the regrets emerge quite sharply, especially with phrases such as *'mysterious project'*, *'caprice'* and *'a blunder'* to describe the decision of the grand master. Subsequently offered the post of president of the congregation of the squadron that he had so well commanded and governed, Chambray courteously declined the offer and asked Vilhena *'to be exempted from consideration for such a post, as any grand cross was quite capable to administer such a meagre fleet, even though he was not born a sailor'*.<sup>38</sup>

The news brought considerable concern all over Europe as the service that the squadron was doing, protecting the shipping lanes to facilitate trade and commerce, was very much appreciated. The inhabitants of the villages and towns located along the Italian and Spanish coasts were also left exposed to the frequent incursions of Barbary corsairs and pirates. The prospect of a return to the days when pillaging and ransacking was a common occurrence, with entire families carried away into slavery, was a source of apprehension for many. The first to rejoice at the decision of the grand master were the beys of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. *'We shall no longer meet Le Rouge de Malte at sea'* they said.<sup>39</sup> In all the ports of the Maghreb *Le Rouge de Malte* was much feared.

Were Chambray and the squadron victims of their own success? Had the threat from the Barbary

corsairs and pirates become so insignificant in 1735 to warrant the elimination of the squadron? Was it really the concern over the indebtedness of the Order that prompted the change in strategy? Was it a political decision? What were the real intentions behind that drastic decision to abolish the squadron? Whatever the motives, it was hard for Bailiff Jacques François de Chambray to accept how his illustrious naval career ended.

The balance of power in the Mediterranean had shifted during the eighteenth century. Spain was deeply immersed in the New World, fully focused on protecting its convoys of precious metals crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Its preoccupation with the Barbary corsairs was fairly diminished. The Turkish navy was by then also in decline. Spain did not see the point in maintaining a significant presence in the Mediterranean and it was the French navy that filled that void and started to dominate the inner sea. The separation of the Kingdom of Sicily from Spain in 1713 also meant that Spain lost its tutelage and much of its influence over Malta and the Order. On the diplomatic front, it was France, along with the pope, who acted as the Order's protector in international disputes. The French influence on the Order was evident on a number of occasions. Between 1727 and 1730, when France was at war with Tripoli and its ships were blockading Tripoli harbour, the galleys of the Order cruised off Algiers and Tunis to prevent them from sending assistance, while the ship-of-the-line squadron sailed at the edge of the Aegean Sea, just off Morea, keeping a lookout for Turkish warships.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, the lure of the Spanish nobility to the New World also took its toll, as there was a significant decline in the number of Spanish knights joining the Order. Whereas in the previous centuries the number of knights from the Spanish langues of Castile and Aragon had matched those from Provence, Auvergne, and France, in the eighteenth century two-thirds of the knights were French.<sup>41</sup> In a similar manner, there was a shift in the revenue of the Order generated from its commanderies. The twenty-four-fold increase, in some two hundred years, of the revenue originating from France was not matched by a similar increase in revenue from Spain.

Still, to judge whether their financial position at that time was sustainable, one needs to take into account the outlays of the Order. In any case it





Chevalier Bartolomeo Tommasi was appointed lieutenant-general of the squadron on 27 February 1736 to replace Bailiff Chambray. On 6 November, while sailing on the *San Vincenzo*, he attacked three Algerian vessels capturing the frigate *Ciulac* near Marbella – *Detail from a lunette at the grand master's palace, Valletta*



The vessels of the Order returning to port as dark menacing clouds and rain drift towards Valletta, the Three Cities, and the squadron itself – *Painting by Giuseppe Caloriti, courtesy MUŻA*

should be kept in mind that, never in its glorious and often arduous history, did the Order refrain from performing its duties or from fulfilling its *raison d'être* due to financial difficulties. It always found a way to beg or borrow, and at times even make personal sacrifices to ensure its survival.

On the other hand, the annual cruises of the squadron were taking a heavy toll on the three major forces of Barbary. The Algerians lost their largest four vessels, whereas the navies of both Tunis and Tripoli were reduced significantly because of the considerable number of vessels the Order's squadron captured or destroyed. That did not in any way change their strategy or their objectives. Corsairing remained their most important source of income. The successes of the squadron of the Order were heavy setbacks for the Barbary states, but were not remotely devastating enough to bring about their demise.

The hypothesis that the decision to abolish the squadron was a political one was based on the premise that the Order received support from the Christian European nations for its service to Christendom against its Muslim enemies. With the Ottoman threat diminishing, due to the fact that the Turks had signed several peace treaties and started developing diplomatic relationships with many European nations, the Barbary corsairs represented the Order's *raison d'être*. To allow the Barbary corsairs to exist was necessary to justify the policing and patrolling missions of the Order in the Mediterranean, which, in the absence of valid Muslim enemies, would become obsolete. As early as 1728 Bailiff Froullay, then the general of the galleys, had observed that the hunt for Barbary corsairs was being conducted in a manner that was too sweeping. *'Should we have used as much politics as zeal, we would not have driven them away so decisively, as we have come to the point of destroying them.'*<sup>42</sup>

In reality, the reassessment of the strategy for the squadron initiated in 1733 when the seaworthiness of the *San Giovanni* came into question. At the time, the Order was aware that the Barbary corsairs, in an effort to counter the dominance of the squadron, had built a large number of smaller and swift vessels. At that stage, Grand Master Vilhena and the council decided to build two corvettes to replace the *San Giovanni* instead of another man-of-war. The two corvettes, the *Santa Teresa* and the *San Francesco di Paola*, were constructed by 1734.

With these additions, and with the *San Giovanni* remaining in service, the squadron reached its greatest strength during that period, having 282 guns on its six ships. When the issue resurfaced in 1735, however, the council and the grand master decided to reduce the size of the squadron and to replace the battleships with corvettes. The reasoning was that the smaller and faster corvettes *'were better suited to the scouting warfare, which was the normal way to engage the new swift xebecs'*<sup>43</sup> of the Barbary States. The *Santa Teresa*, which turned out to be too slow, was sold in 1741, whereas the *San Giorgio*, the *San Giovanni*,<sup>44</sup> the *San Vincenzo*, and the *San Francesco* alternated their missions with only two sets of crews until 1741 when the *San Giovanni* was finally decommissioned.<sup>45</sup>

Due to this change in naval strategy, Chambray's association with the squadron came to an unexpected end in February 1736. From the time he had assumed command of the first vessel of the Order, in February 1723, when he was given command of the *San Vincenzo Ferreri*, until he stopped navigating, Chambray embarked on twenty-four campaigns, captured or destroyed eleven Muslim vessels, and brought to the treasury of the Order one million four hundred *livres* worth of spoils.<sup>46</sup> There is no question about the abilities and the achievements of this great knight who was widely considered as the most prominent seaman of his time and one of the most extraordinary knights in the history of the Order.

Chambray's naval achievements, however, came during a period when the Order he served with so much dedication was in decline. The seeds that were to bring about its demise were being sown while he was a member. The diminishing Muslim threat resulted in idle and unmotivated knights who turned to *la dolce vita*, developing a taste for luxury and earthly pleasures. The age of enlightenment that had originated in France and was changing the European social and cultural landscape with all its positive and negative connotations was embraced by many members of the Order. It was in that environment that Bailiff Chambray retired from the navy. From his memoirs, it is evident that he was aware of the changing times and, in describing his experiences, he provides some insight as to how such events influenced him.



A corvette was a small and fast naval vessel ranking in size below a frigate. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century corvettes were three-masted ships with square rigging similar to that of frigates and ships-of-the-line, but they carried only about 20 guns on the top deck. The *Santa Teresa* and the *San Francesco di Paola* were the first two corvettes of the Order – Courtesy MMM



The xebec was a lightly-constructed vessel that featured lateen sails as well as oars. It was considered as an elusive ship that in the expert hands of Barbary corsairs *'arose, raided, and disappeared'* – Hugh Evelyn Prints



The Age of Enlightenment was an intellectual and philosophical movement that developed in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with global influences and effects – *Reading of Voltaire's tragedy, Orphan of China, in the salon of Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin in 1755*



François-Marie Arouet known as Voltaire, was a French Enlightenment writer, philosopher, and historian. He was famous for his wit, in addition to his criticism of the Roman Catholic Church and of slavery. Voltaire was an advocate of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the separation of Church and state – *Painting by Nicolas de Largillière, c. 1720s*

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> André Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte* (Rennes, 1991), 241.
- <sup>2</sup> Anton Quintano, *The Maltese-Hospitaller Sailing Ship Squadron 1701–1798* (Malta, 2009), 285–297.
- <sup>3</sup> Charles Lee Lewis, *Admiral de Grasse and American Independence* (USA, 1980), 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Quintano, 102 and André Plaisse, 'La grande croisière du Bailly de Chambray contre les Turcs en 1732', *Marins et Océans III* (Paris, 1992), 85–101.
- <sup>5</sup> Scarpanto (Karpathos), the second largest of the Greek Dodecanese islands, is located in the south-eastern Aegean Sea.
- <sup>6</sup> AOM 268, f. 213.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 214v.
- <sup>8</sup> Rosetta (Rashid) lies on the Egyptian coast, just east of Alexandria.
- <sup>9</sup> Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte*, 52.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 235 and AOM 268, f. 214r.
- <sup>11</sup> A gulet is a traditional design of a two-masted or three-masted wooden sailing vessel from the south-western coast of Turkey.
- <sup>12</sup> A lugger is a sailing vessel defined by its rig, using the lugsail on all of its masts. It was widely used as working craft. Satalia or Adalia lies on the southern coast of Anatolia, north-west of Cyprus.
- <sup>13</sup> Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte*, 51–54.
- <sup>14</sup> The transom is the vertical surface that forms the stern of a vessel.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 236–237.
- <sup>16</sup> 'Mémoires de Jacques-François de Chambray a sa très illustre et vénérable famille et remis entre les mains du marquis de Chambray aine de la mesme', Copie. Bibl. Nat., Paris N.A.F., no. 9397 – Vol. II, f. 81.
- <sup>17</sup> AOM 268, f. 216.
- <sup>18</sup> 'Mémoires de Jacques-François de Chambray', Vol. II, ff. 81–82.
- <sup>19</sup> Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte*, 237.
- <sup>20</sup> AOM 268, f. 216v.
- <sup>21</sup> Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte*, 53–54, 238.
- <sup>22</sup> AOM 268, f. 216r.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> 'Mémoires de Jacques-François de Chambray' Vol. II, f. 98. The Spanish conquest of Oran and Mers el-Kebir took place from 15 June to 2 July 1732.
- <sup>26</sup> AOM 268, f. 217v.
- <sup>27</sup> 'Mémoires de Jacques-François de Chambray', Vol. II, ff. 99–100.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 117.
- <sup>29</sup> L'abbé Charles Guéry, *Le Bailli de Chambray* (Évreux, 1904), 75, and Joseph-François-Gabriel Hennequin, *Biographie Maritime ou Notices Historiques sur la Vie et les Campagnes Des Marins Celebres Francais et Etrangers* (Paris, 1836), 22.
- <sup>30</sup> *Annata* was the payment made by the recipient of an ecclesiastical benefice to the ordaining authorities when they first took up their post; it could equate to a third, half, or the whole of the first year's profits or income of the benefice. *Annatae* represented a large source of income for

the papacy, but were deeply resented.

- <sup>31</sup> Guéry, 76.
- <sup>32</sup> 'And to the greater glory of God and the perpetual memory of the matter.' *Ibid.*, 74.
- <sup>33</sup> 'Mémoires de Jacques-François de Chambray', Vol. II, ff. 266–268.
- <sup>34</sup> Baron de Tauben was already a captain in the Swedish navy when he arrived in Malta. *Ibid.*, ff. 234 & 236.
- <sup>35</sup> Andrea Reggio, who was born in Palermo in 1692, joined the Spanish navy as a young man and served in the War of the Quadruple Alliance seeing action in the invasion of Sardinia and at the Battle of Cape Passero. He also took part in operations including the reconquest of Oran in 1732 and Naples in 1734.
- <sup>36</sup> Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte*, 59.
- <sup>37</sup> There are three sets of memoirs. Those at the Archives of the National Library in Valletta include only the highlights of his military career up to 1731. At the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, there are two volumes with more information about his military career until 1739. There is an indication that a third volume existed. The third set was intended for his family and given to the Marquis Chambray. It is a bound manuscript (format 30 x 21 cm) of 1,199 pages supplemented by a table of 24 unpaginated sheets relating to the campaigns carried out from 1700 to 1739. There is also an addendum with instructions on the distribution of crews on warships, description of ports and anchorages in the Mediterranean, religious service ceremonies at the conventual church of St John in Valletta, along with garrison numbers and ammunition necessary for the defence of Malta and its forts. In the copy handed to his family, there are comments not present in the other copies where Chambray speaks frankly about certain controversial matters.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Hennequin, 22–23 and Guéry, 78.
- <sup>40</sup> Roderick Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders – The Knights of St John and Malta in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 2009), 50.
- <sup>41</sup> Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte*, 69–70.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.
- <sup>43</sup> Quintano, 99.
- <sup>44</sup> René Burlet, [www.chasse-maree.com](http://www.chasse-maree.com)
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.
- <sup>46</sup> 'Mémoires de Jacques-François de Chambray', Vol. II, f. 325.



# CHAMBRAY IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

# 4

*All the poor are not unhappy. The majority were born in that state, and continual work keeps them from feeling their position too keenly; but when they do feel it, then one sees wars, like that of the popular party against the senate party in Rome, like those of the peasants in Germany, England, and France. All these wars finish sooner or later with the subjection of the people, because the powerful have money, and money is master of everything in a state. I say in a state, for it is not the same between nations. The nation that makes the best use of the sword will always subjugate the nation which has more gold and less courage.*

*All men are born with a sufficiently violent liking for domination, wealth, and pleasure, and with a strong taste for idleness; consequently, all men covet money, the wives, or the daughters of other men; they wish to be their masters, to subject them to all their caprices, and to do nothing, or at least to do only very agreeable things. You see clearly that with these fine inclinations it is as impossible for men to be equal as it is impossible for two preachers or two professors of theology not to be jealous of each other.*

*The human race, such as it is, cannot subsist unless there is an infinity of useful men who possess nothing at all; for it is certain that a man who is well-off will not leave his own land to come to till yours, and if you have need of a pair of shoes, it is not the secretary to the Privy Council who will make them for you. Equality, therefore, is at once the most natural thing and the most fantastic ... All men have the right in the bottom of their hearts to think themselves entirely equal to other men.*

Voltaire<sup>1</sup>

Jacques François de Chambray had a difficult childhood as up to the age of six he suffered from chronic health problems. He was so weak and feeble that for long his parents had feared of losing him. After that arduous period, however, his health improved and he developed into a healthy and robust young man with excellent strength.<sup>2</sup> In narrating his exploits in the army of Louis XIV, at the siege of Oran, and during some

of his numerous naval battles, he often made a point of mentioning his extraordinary physical attributes, including his strength and excellent eyesight. His eyesight was so good that he could distinguish the smallest objects at a great distance, even at night. This advantage proved useful at sea more than once. From his portraits, made later on in his life, one can easily tell that Chambray was a large man, very stout with a martial appearance.

Still, the health issues he had while growing up remained imprinted in his mind. It was likely for that reason that he often commented about his physical attributes in his memoirs. He probably needed to reassure himself that his health concerns were a thing of the past, and that he was as strong as anyone else, or even stronger.

Writing about his successful naval career and the wealth he managed to amass, Chambray attributed his fortune to God and his superior. Still, he considered himself ‘a great expert of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as highly proficient in his profession, and good at manoeuvring, not to mention all his other qualities that were well known among the Christians, for the success of his fortunate encounters with the Infidels, attributes that made him formidable’.<sup>3</sup> Yet he described his victories at sea without boasting excessively about himself. In fact, it was because he insisted, that there is no mention of his achievements on his tombstone at the co-cathedral of St John’s in Valletta. He felt that those who really wanted to learn about his exploits should consult the archives. Bailiff Chambray was more preoccupied with achieving internal peace than acquiring fame. His will drove him to follow his illustrious courageous predecessors, fuelled by his determination to respect the rules of his Order and by his commitment to remain faithful to the vow of obedience. His greatest concern was to accomplish the missions the grand master assigned him. Whenever he succeeded in his endeavours, he was convinced that God Almighty had guided him. His spiritual side is also evident in his memoirs that include forty-six pages with descriptions of religious ceremonies in Malta, another thirty-eight pages covering in detail the arrival of the pope’s chamberlain at the conventual church of St John’s, and four pages narrating the story of the shipwreck of St Paul in Malta.<sup>4</sup>

Chambray’s character was shaped by a lucid faith, a rare modesty, an exemplary integrity, an acute sense of duty, and a great loftiness of thought. He was very demanding of himself and of those around him. His leadership qualities, which he must have inherited from his father, evoked respect and obedience from his subordinates. ‘The Sant’Antonio had more than 600 seasoned men, blindly confident in their commander who had always led them to the most brilliant successes.’<sup>5</sup> Such intrinsic qualities

undoubtedly contributed to his success during his naval career, as mistakes at sea could be fatal, especially during battle. Still, these characteristics did not prevent him from being a fascinating and outgoing person who thoroughly enjoyed the company of others. He had a great appreciation for delicious food, classic wine, baroque music, luxurious furniture, and other treats typical of the first half of the eighteenth century. Writing about Chambray in 1904, Abbé Charles Guéry remarked that he ‘possessed an exquisite urbanity, a distinctive feature of our former nobility’.<sup>6</sup> This is quite evident in his memoirs, which are not just an account of cruises, pursuits, and combat. His descriptions of incidents, occasions, and events provide us with a glimpse into his life and enable us to discover his personality.

#### AN AUDIENCE WITH POPE CLEMENT XI

One such important occasion for Chambray was meeting Pope Clement XI in Rome. Following reports from Constantinople that the Ottoman fleet was being prepared to attack Malta, a delegation of the Order, led by Captain Jean François de Chevestre-Cintray, went to Rome in April 1708 to ask the pope for assistance. In the delegation, there was also Jacques François de Chambray, an ensign on the *San Giuseppe*. The delegation was received very well by the pontiff who, during their first audience on 3 April, promised to supply the Order with ‘his four galleys, four hundred soldiers, five hundred rifles, a quantity of stones and rods, five thousand pounds of gunpowder along with his chief engineer and master bombardier’.<sup>7</sup> Chambray felt very proud and quite fortunate to be present during that first audience with the pope. Their visit coincided with the celebrations of Holy Week. Two days later, they attended the celebrations of Maundy Thursday along with their host, Bailiff Saquetti, the ambassador of the Order to the Holy See, and His Eminence the Cardinal Joseph Emmanuel de La Trémoille. They received the general blessing of the pope during a ceremony where he excused and absolved those who committed some wrongdoings against the Holy Church, particularly on that occasion the family of Nogaret ‘whose history we know’.<sup>8</sup>

*There were perhaps more than one hundred thousand people in front of the façade of St Peter’s church. Immediately afterwards, they accompanied His Holiness to the Last*



Adolph von Menzel’s *The Flute Concert of Sanssouci* depicting Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, playing the flute in his music room at Sanssouci in Potsdam, near Berlin – Google Art Project



Pope Clement XI 1700–1721



Arcangelo Corelli, the famous Italian composer and violinist of the baroque era



The Imperial Gate leading to the outermost courtyard of Topkapi Palace was known as the Sublime Porte until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Sublime Porte, Ottoman Porte; or High Porte was a synecdoche for the central government of the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul



Antoine de Favray's portrayal of an audience of Charles de Vergennes, ambassador of Louis XV in Constantinople, with Sultan Osman III

own to negotiate the sale of the captured Ottoman vessel. Pinto and the council were satisfied with these developments. The diplomatic solution put forward by France respected the Order's sovereignty and freedom.

*We believe that we cannot make a more dignified and pleasant use of our freedom than in honouring the propositions of the Most Christian King by giving the appropriate faculties to the venerable procurators of our Venerable Common Treasury to negotiate, and conclude with the Venerable Bailiff Fleury the sale of the ship by stipulating the necessary deed.*<sup>80</sup>

The value of the *Corona Ottomana* was estimated at 700,000 *scudi*.<sup>81</sup> The sum that was agreed upon between Fleury and the common treasury for the purchase of the vessel and the forty Turkish slaves that had arrived in Malta with it, was to be deducted from the impositions owed by the Order on its commanderies in France. This deal was effectively a good one for France, as it was always going to be difficult to recover the Order's back taxes.<sup>82</sup>

The council was also informed that the Ottoman fleet that had been assembled earlier that year, and which had departed from Constantinople in the spring, was destined for somewhere else. On 27 August 1761 the council revoked the general citation, allowing the knights who had travelled to Malta to return to their homeland as there was no longer a threat of war with Turkey.<sup>83</sup> The sultana departed from the Grand Harbour for Constantinople on 8 December of that same year, flying the French flag, under the command of French naval officers and manned by French and Maltese sailors. The forty freed Turkish slaves<sup>84</sup> were also on board the sultana. It was accompanied by two French vessels, the *L'Oiseau*, a frigate, and the *Marie*, a polacca.<sup>85</sup> The sultan was so delighted to have his flagship back that he gave five hundred *piastre* to the Maltese crew, the knights and the officers who brought it back. They were also allowed to roam freely around the streets of Constantinople donning their '*candid Cross*' open wide on their chest.<sup>86</sup>

Once again France, albeit to safeguard its own self-interest, was instrumental in dissipating tensions between the Order and the Ottoman Empire. Maybe as consideration, shortly afterwards, the Order's squadron of galleys joined the French fleet for an attack on Tunisian harbours along the Barbary coast, as France was then at war

with Tunis.<sup>87</sup> For the knights that was a small price to pay to emerge unscathed from that predicament.

Both the Order and the Ottoman Empire came out weaker from this incident. Despite the initial fury of Mustafa III and the accompanying sabre-rattling, Turkey did not have the stomach for a war with tiny Malta. The Sublime Porte had to resort to the imposition of an ultimatum on France, putting into question their excellent relationship, to force a diplomatic resolution to the crisis, as Malta was readying for war, refusing to be intimidated by the might of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, although this was not its doing, the Order was the cause of much distress for its allies, most particularly for France. For Alain Blondy, in his study of the incident, one of the repercussions of the taking of the *Corona Ottomana* was that it became apparent that the Order had lost its *raison d'être*. There was no longer the need of a barrier against the enemies of Christendom.

*The case of the Turkish flagship, dealt with by diplomatic negotiations, marked, in the eyes of Europe, the inability of the Turks to engage in a European war, and showed that the Order could create more problems than it rendered real services. The powers thus became aware of the powerlessness of the Porte and the obsolescence of the Order. The international policy of the latter half of the century, especially that of the Mediterranean, was the result.*<sup>88</sup>

Bourlamaque, Pontleroy, and the rest of the French military delegation departed from Malta on 14 December on board the *San Giovanni*.<sup>89</sup> In the weeks following their departure, Marandon finished off the works that were in progress within Fort Chambray, and returned to Turin early in 1762. Whether his resignation from the post of resident military engineer of the Order had anything to do with the visit of the French engineers is not clear. Nevertheless, the Order was satisfied with the state that Fort Chambray was in when Marandon departed. From then onwards, it was a matter of maintaining the fort in a state of readiness to fulfil its role. A small garrison was stationed there with sufficient artillery to defend the fort against any surprise attacks. The plan for Fort Chambray was to gradually replace the *Castello* in Rabat, which was destined for demolition. The *capomastro* of the *Castello* was to eventually replace the *capomastro* of Fort Chambray.

*Have 14 scudi 4 tari from 5 August 1761 which, by decree of His Eminence, becomes capomastro of the new*





A meeting between Charles Gravier, the French ambassador, and the grand vizier in Constantinople with their respective entourages looking on – *Antoine de Favray, oil on canvas, Maritime Museum, Marseille, photo by Rama, Wikimedia Commons, Ccby-sa-2.0-fr*

*fortification of Ras-el-Tafal with an annual salary of 60, and with the condition expressed in the margin until the end of October 1761.*

In the margin of the manuscript: *At 60 scudi a year in total until the Gozo Castello is demolished, once that happens only one capomastro will have to remain ...*<sup>90</sup>

The *Castello* in Rabat was never demolished. Only the threat of a major attack on the islands would have instigated the Order to carry out such a plan, and the confrontation with Turkey of 1761 happened to be the last time that the Order made serious preparations for an impending war. There would have certainly been much resistance from the locals anyhow.

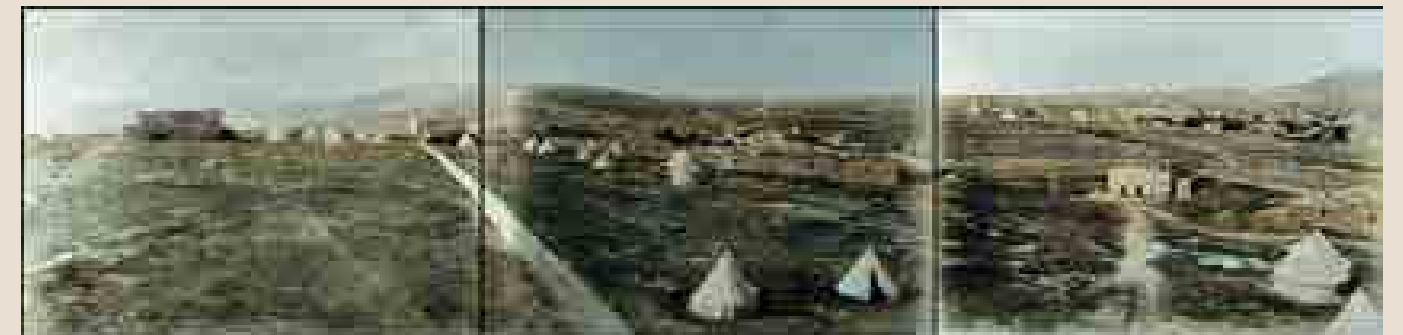
Fort Chambray was also to take over the roles that Garzes Tower had at the time. On 5 February 1762, the governor of Gozo, Charles de Guast, was ordered by the congregation of war to start firing the gun salutes upon the arrival of dignitaries at

Mġarr Creek from Fort Chambray instead of from Garzes Tower.<sup>91</sup>

Unfortunately, Fort Chambray did not develop into the fortified city that it was intended to become. The fort, however, proved very important in the development of the neighbourhood into the village of Ġħajnsielem. Whereas a few decades earlier people had still been somewhat hesitant to live in the vicinity of Mġarr Creek because of the prevailing fear of piratical attacks, the construction of Fort Chambray made them feel more comfortable to build their homes in the area. It was a convenient place both for fishermen and for those who worked on the sponaras that ferried goods, livestock, and people between Mġarr and the Grand Harbour to settle in Ġħajnsielem. The existence of the freshwater springs nearby also helped. The fort also turned out to be a source of employment for the locals. This became even



The 'Castello e Borgo San Giorgio' from Triq ir-Rabat that leads to Marsalforn, with the Capuchins convent on the left and Gelmus Hill on the right – *Coloured by the author*



A panoramic view of the south-west side of Fort Chambray taken in the 1880s from the roof of the barracks. Starting from left there is the officer's quarters located close to the entrance of the sally port and the southern curtain, the *ospizio*, the church, and adjacent buildings at St Anthony Bastion, the parapet of the left curtain, and the building above the water cistern at St Paul Bastion with several tents of the British soldiers scattered in the grounds – *Courtesy John Cremona*



A panoramic view of the north-east side of Fort Chambray taken in the 1880s from the roof of the barracks with some British soldiers playing cricket – *Courtesy John Cremona*



Archpriest Saverio Cassar negotiating with Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson aboard *HMS Vanguard* in October 1798 – Painting by Paul Camilleri Cauchi, photo by Anthony Grech, private collection



A Girolamo Gianni painting of Mġarr Harbour with Fort Chambray in the background – Photo Anthony Grech, private collection

more so a century later when Fort Chambray was transformed into a convalescence camp by the British for their regiments.

The fort did not see any military action either. When the French invaded Gozo in June 1798, they marched towards Fort Chambray where the locals from neighbouring villages were locked up. The defenders did not put up much resistance and the fort surrendered fairly quickly. Just about three months later, it was the turn of the French troops to end up besieged within Fort Chambray by the Gozitan militia under the leadership of Archpriest Saver Cassar. Following attacks on the fortress, the French garrison escaped under the cover of darkness towards Malta on speronaras that had been sent from Valletta to resupply them.

It is worth remembering that it was only through the sheer determination of Bailiff Jacques François de Chambray that Gozo finally had a fortress that turned out to be such an asset for the island. Unfortunately, the Norman knight did not live long enough to see the materialization of his ambition. Maybe, if he had lived longer,

Fort Chambray would have been completed much earlier. One could also easily conclude that the baroque city within the fortress would have developed the way that it was planned to be, with a stately governor's palace and an imposing church right in front of it, surrounded by lavish buildings. The pull would have been too great for the locals of the time to snub. Owning property within Fort Chambray would have represented status. Those with money and wealth would have been at the forefront, lining up for a house within one of the *quartieri*. It is highly conceivable that this would have occurred, if the bailiff had lived long enough. Perhaps he would have also ensured that the Order followed through to implement the rest of the holistic project as designed by Tigné and fortified the area around Mġarr Creek.

Nonetheless, what was delivered by the Order through the efforts of the Piedmontese engineer, Francesco Marandon, turned out to be of great importance for Gozo, especially for Ġhajnsielem, as the fort helped shape the history, the culture, and the character of that village, particularly during the latter half of the nineteenth century.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> AOM 6558, f. 2 The introduction of the commissioners' report submitted to the grand master and the sacred council on 19 February 1761.
- <sup>2</sup> A.F. Gervais de Palmeus map, dated 1757, shows the three bastioned landfront with the aggressive outworks designed by Tigné to protect Garzes Tower, as well as a redoubt for the knoll that was referred to as Busutil Hill.
- <sup>3</sup> G.A. Ciantar, *Malta Illustrata* (Malta, 1772), 103.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.
- <sup>5</sup> AOM 271, f. 145.
- <sup>6</sup> AOM 262, f. 276.
- <sup>7</sup> The Republic of Ragusa (*Dubrovačka Republika*) had a commercial relationship with the Ottoman Empire.
- <sup>8</sup> Alain Blondy, *Malte et Marseille au XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle* (Malta, 2013), 116.
- <sup>9</sup> AOM 262, f. 277.
- <sup>10</sup> Ciantar, 104.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.
- <sup>12</sup> AOM 262, f. 278.
- <sup>13</sup> Pierre Rousseau, *Journal Encyclopédique*, 15 Décembre 1760, Tome VIII, Troisième Partie (Bouillon, 1760), 151.
- <sup>14</sup> Ciantar, 102.
- <sup>15</sup> AOM 271, f. 144.
- <sup>16</sup> Carmel Testa, *The Life and Times of Grand Master Pinto, 1741–1773* (Malta, 1989), 247.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> AOM 262, f. 279.
- <sup>19</sup> AOM 271, f. 144.
- <sup>20</sup> AOM 262, f. 279.
- <sup>21</sup> The Order of St John was referred to as the Religion.
- <sup>22</sup> Pietro Gelalich, also known as Pietro de Giovanni Gelali and Petar Zelalic, later settled in Malta. Pinto appointed him captain of the galliot *St Ursola* in 1764. He enjoyed a lot of success attacking Muslim shipping over the years. In August 1765, he was involved in a bloody encounter with and sunk the Tripolitan galliot of Raid veli Dobrac near Cape Passero, but sustained heavy casualties. Testa, 273.
- <sup>23</sup> AOM 271, ff. 144–145.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 146.
- <sup>25</sup> AOM 262, f. 194.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 283. 'Sentiment de Monsieur de Monclar Avocat General au Parlement D'Aix le 3 Décembre 1760.'
- <sup>27</sup> The freed slaves included 13 Schismatic Greeks, AOM 271, f. 246.
- <sup>28</sup> Rousseau, 151.
- <sup>29</sup> AOM 634, f. 29.
- <sup>30</sup> AOM 271, f. 147.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 150.
- <sup>32</sup> NLM, Lib. 13, f. 374 and Testa, 348-349, 'pistola, schioppo, sciabola e bastone d'oro'.
- <sup>33</sup> Rousseau, 149.
- <sup>34</sup> NLM, Lib. 13, f. 444.
- <sup>35</sup> AOM 6558, f. 1.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 3.
- <sup>37</sup> AOM 1517, Letters dated 27 February 1716 and AOM 271, ff. 198–201.
- <sup>38</sup> AOM 6558, f. 5r.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 7–10 The list was made up of 139 knights as follows: Provence 21, Auvergne 9, France 17, Champagne 2, Aquitaine 7, Rome 12, Venice 7, Capua 8, Lombardy 14, Pisa 10, Barletta 5, Catalonia 5, Alemagna 6, Castile 11, and Portugal 5.
- <sup>40</sup> AOM 6558, f. 11r. 'Siamo per tanto a supplicare l'Eminenza Vostra e Suo Sagro Consiglio perchè si compiaccino imporre col sudetto Venerabile Consiglio compito la pensione di scudi cento venti due mila d'oro, sembrandoci essere positivamente il caso prescritto nella Ordin: 4. del Tesoro, e questi caricargli a rata sopra il vero valore di tutti beni dell'Ordine, pagandoli in una o più volta sino al totale pagamento di detta somma in scudi d'oro effettivi, o giusta loro valuta secondo il prezzo corrente.'
- <sup>41</sup> A fougasse is a stone mortar made by digging a large pit in the rock, generally on one side of a creek, and filling it with gunpowder and projectiles, normally stone boulders of various sizes. These were dug at an angle so that when fired the projectiles would land somewhere in the middle of the bay where the fleet of the enemy would be approaching towards the shore. In most cases, there was one on each side of a creek. There were several fougasses in Gozo, all of which were by Francesco Marandon.  
*In May 1742, his highest eminence, being satisfied with the successful detonation of an experimental fougasse on 28 September 1740, instructed me to excavate some at the harbours of Gozo. Having taken three Maltese stone cutters with me, I marked,*  
*One below Garzes Tower at Mgarr*  
*One at Ras it-Tafal*  
*One inside Mgarr ix-Xini beach*  
*One below the church of St Paul at the right side of Marsalforn*  
*One at the left side of the same beach*  
*One at the right side of Qbajjar Creek*  
*And one inside Xwejini Creek following the excavation of which by the three Maltese mentioned above along with another three Gozitans, I returned to the said island at the end of August and marked another five, that is:*  
*One at Ras il-Hobz (Ix-Xati l-Ahmar)*  
*One at the right side of Ramla*  
*Another at the left side of Ramla*  
*And one at the left of Marsalforn.*
- Clerkenwell MS 21 f. 13.
- <sup>42</sup> AOM 6558, ff. 14–15.
- <sup>43</sup> Testa, 253.
- <sup>44</sup> AOM 634, ff. 40–41.
- <sup>45</sup> Testa, 257.
- <sup>46</sup> An anspressade was a police officer within French regiments of foot that ranked below corporals and above the common sentinels.
- <sup>47</sup> The Seven Years War (1756–63) was a global conflict that spanned five continents, involving most of the major European powers and many smaller European states, as well as nations in Asia and the Americas. The most powerful belligerents in each of the opposing alliances were Great Britain and France, with both seeking to establish global pre-eminence.
- <sup>48</sup> AOM 1054, f. 20.
- <sup>49</sup> AOM 6558, f. 40.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 41.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 41. 'en patte d'oye' refers to crow's feet, which was another name for iron caltrops or four spiked iron balls.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 46. *Plan of La Città Vilhena proposed on the height of Mgarr to defend the disembarking, and ensure the retreat to the inhabitants.*
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 47.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 47, 48.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 49–50.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 46.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 48.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 51–52.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 49.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 53–70.
- <sup>61</sup> Translation from French by Pierre Camilleri.
- <sup>62</sup> Marsalforn Tower was built with the idea was that it would eventually be the keep or the citadel of the fortified city intended for that hill.
- <sup>63</sup> Ramla Redoubt was built in 1715–16.
- <sup>64</sup> San Blas Bay.
- <sup>65</sup> AOM 6558, ff. 53–70.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 70–86.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 87–99.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 100–133.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 24–36. Purification of saltpeter (potassium nitrate), review on the price of gunpowder, and paper on how to make powder.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 134–157.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 134.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 148. The French military engineer Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1 May 1633–30 March 1707), was considered as the greatest engineer of his time.
- <sup>73</sup> The Ottoman Porte, also known as the Sublime Porte or High Porte, was a synecdoche for the Ottoman central government.
- <sup>74</sup> Alain Blondy, 'La France et Maltè au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le problème de la double nationalité', in Stanley Fiorini and Victor Mallia-Milanes, *Malta. A case study in International Cross-Currents* (Malta, 1991), 179.
- <sup>75</sup> Étienne François de Choiseul (28 June 1719–8 May 1785) was a French military officer, diplomat, and statesman. He was twice foreign minister of France in 1758–61 and 1766–70. He had a strong influence on the global strategy of Louis XV during that period.
- <sup>76</sup> AOM 271, ff. 195–196.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 198 A quote from a letter Pinto wrote to the members of the Order.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 198–201.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 196.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 198 Pinto's letter to the members of the Order, dated 27 August 1761.
- <sup>81</sup> NLM, Lib. 13, f. 623.
- <sup>82</sup> Blondy, 180–181.
- <sup>83</sup> AOM 271, ff. 194–195.
- <sup>84</sup> One of the 40 Turks who arrived in Malta died of the wounds sustained during the uprising. In an effort to avoid any further resentment on the part of the Porte, the Order freed a Turkish slave so that forty Turks boarded the vessel on the return trip to Constantinople. AOM 634, f. 48.
- <sup>85</sup> AOM 271, f. 215.
- <sup>86</sup> Ciantar, 106.
- <sup>87</sup> Vertot, Vol IV, 392 and Boisgelin, Vol 2, 253–254.
- <sup>88</sup> Blondy, 182.
- <sup>89</sup> Testa, 259.
- <sup>90</sup> AOM 998, f. 179.
- <sup>91</sup> AOM 1015, f. 23.

# EPILOGUE

## AFTER THE END ...

On Sunday 31 January 1904, the Free Society of Eure, the department that includes the city of Évreux, celebrated the life of Jacques François de Chambray, one of their own, a son of the French region of Normandy. It was neither the anniversary of his birth, nor of his death, nor of one of his famous naval victories. The Society decided that a local who had made such a name for himself abroad deserved to be commemorated. The event was held outside the house that in 1844 replaced the one where he was born and where he spent his childhood, 12, Rue de l'Horloge, located a stone-throw's away from the cathedral of Our Lady of Évreux and from the town hall.

The ceremony started at two in the afternoon as the brass band of Charles Hérissey performed a piece that was very much appreciated by the numerous crowd in attendance. Abbé Charles Guéry, who wrote about the event, listed all the dignitaries that were present. The never-ending list included lawyers, bankers, university professors, editors of the *Courier de l'Eure*, members of the clergy, representatives of the military, architects, and the president of the civil court just to mention a few. Louis Passy, president of the society, then delivered his introductory speech. He started by explaining what led to the decision of his organization to remember the grand cross of the Order of Malta and to attach a marble plaque to the façade of the former house of the Chambray family, a decision *'which our population has received with favour'*.

*By coming to pay homage to the memory of one of the most valiant children of our dear Normandy, the Free Society of Eure conforms to the new custom of our time. Everywhere, all the time, don't you see?, in a unanimous spirit, cities, associations, individuals erect monuments and statues to perpetuate the memory of those who during their lives have left the lasting marks of their courage and their talent.*

He went on praising the bailiff's ancestors, *'wishing to consecrate the memory of one of the representatives of this ancient Chambray family who, from the time of the Middle Ages until the wars of the Empire, has always been part of our history'*.

Passy concluded by pointing out the remarkable feats of *'Bailiff Chambray (who) participated (as captain) in twenty-four campaigns at sea, repeatedly defeated the corsairs and the Turks, took eleven ships and had the glory of raising at his expense, in the island of Gozo, a city, or rather a fortress, which was called the new city of Chambray. He deserved to be placed, in the memory of men, near Jean-Bart and Duguay-Trouin (both from Normandy).'*

To put this significant remark into context, one needs to point out that Jean Bart (1650–1702) was a French naval commander and privateer who captured 386 ships and sank or burned a great number more. The town of Dunkirk honoured his memory by erecting a statue and by naming a public square after him. The French named a battleship, launched in 1940 following the outbreak of World War II, *Jean Bart* in his honour.

Moreover from 1781 onwards the French have named no fewer than eleven ships *Duguay-Trouin*, including the recently launched, Barracuda-class nuclear attack submarine, to honour René Duguay-Trouin (1673–1736), a French naval officer, nobleman, and privateer best known for his exploits during the War of Spanish Succession. He had a brilliant privateering and naval career and eventually became lieutenant-general of the naval armies of the king.

Hérissey's brass band played another piece but when it was time for Abbé Guéry to deliver his speech about Chambray, it started to rain. The ceremony had to be cut short to the dismay of those in attendance. Guéry did write a book highlighting the achievements of Chambray that covers some issues which were not mentioned in



the two versions of his memoirs available to the public.

Not much was written on either Chambray or his fort after Guéry's book until 1949, when Mgr Pawlu Buttigieg wrote an article that was published in two parts in *Lehen is-Sewwa* to commemorate the two hundred years from the laying of the first stone of Fort Chambray. Mgr Buttigieg had relatives from Ghajnsielem, and also lived for some time in a house adjacent to *Casa di San Giuseppe* in Ghajnsielem.

Mgr Gużepi Zerafa, archpriest of the village from 1981 to 2006, was also fascinated with the fortress and did his best to collect information especially on the British regiments stationed at Fort Chambray in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He wrote several short articles for the *Ghajnsielem* magazine and also encouraged others to contribute with articles on the subject as well. The most interesting was *Chambrai*, a four-part series by Victor Wickman in his regular column *Ghajnsielem fi Tfuliti*. Similarly in the Ghajnsielem Band Club magazine, *Festa Madonna Ta' Loreto*, Fort Chambray or the bailiff himself featured on numerous occasions. In this manner, the memory of Jacques François de Chambray was kept alive in the village that benefited the most from his generosity. Fittingly a street that connects the centre of Ghajnsielem with Mgarr Road has been named Triq J.F. de Chambray.

In 1991, André Plaisse published *Le Rouge de Malte* based on the three manuscripts written by Chambray. The book was translated from French to Italian and *Il Rosso di Malta* was published in 1993. This was the most thorough work on Jacques François de Chambray covering his major

naval accomplishments. The book, however, only mentioned the fort in passing. There were numerous books written by local and foreign historians about the fleet of the Order of St John, with some focusing on the men-of-war squadron, which had references to Chambray.

A. Samut-Tagliaferro was the first to write at length about the fort itself, dedicating an entire chapter on Fort Chambray in his book *The Coastal Fortifications of Gozo and Comino* (Malta, 1993). There were mentions of Fort Chambray in Hoppen's *The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St John 1530–1798* (Malta, 1999). The first to conduct a thorough research on the construction of Fort Chambray was Dr Stephen C. Spiteri. There are numerous references, photos, illustrations, and graphic reconstructions in *The Art of Fortress Building in Hospitaller Malta* (Malta, 2008) providing insight on the techniques used in building the fortress, while an entire chapter was dedicated to the fort in his book *Fortresses of the Cross – Hospitaller Military Architecture (1136–1798)* (Malta, 1994).

A life-size statue of Chambray at the roundabout that leads to the fort or naming a ship after the bailiff might have gone a long way to honour the contribution that this illustrious Norman knight made for Gozo and Malta. Even naming a major road or dedicating a day in the year for him would help to keep his memory alive. Still, the most important monument in honour of the bailiff survives, and he built it himself. There is no doubt that the grandest way to commemorate the life and achievements of Jacques François de Chambray is by preserving the fortress for the benefit of future generations.



Fort Chambray, Ghajnsielem – Courtesy Marlon Grech and Anthony Grech