

THE MALTESE / TREGENNNA MYSTERY



Sun, November 5, 2006

On September 17, 1940, the merchant ship Tregenna was hit by a torpedo fired from a U-boat some 78 miles northwest of Rockall. The ship sank with 33 crew members, one of them a Maltese by the name of Emanuel Grech. There were four survivors, which were picked up by the vessel Filleigh and landed at Avonmouth. I would be very grateful if anyone could name the four survivors, especially if a Maltese was among them. **Mr Paul N. Xuereb, Zabbar.**

To follow on from the enquiry by **Mr Paul N. Xuereb, Zabbar, In The Times of Malta, Sun, November 5, 2006.** We have received a communication from "Paul Pace", Subject: Tregenna. Dated: Sat, 18 Nov 2006. On the 16th November 2006 I wrote to the Editor of The Times of Malta RE: The letter by Paul Xuereb. The Editor passed these comments to Paul Xuereb who in turn passed them to Mr. Paul Pace. Replying on behalf of his close friend Mr Paul Xuereb. Thanks for the interest shown were passed on.

Mr. Pace mentioned our website which unfortunately listed those who died, but at that time did not name the 4 survivors. He further suggested that we may be interested to know what both he and Mr. Xuereb were seeking. At the Zabbar Sanctuary Museum they have a pencil drawing of **Tregenna** with a name on it, **V. Cassar**, who may be the one who painted it or the one who donated the picture to **Our Lady of Graces**, or maybe he is the same person. Both Mr. Xuereb and Mr. Pace, would like to know if V. Cassar was one of the survivors?

We have since accounted for all crew and survivors,
(Please see full crew list on our home page).
V.Cassar, was not a crew member.

The MALTESE / TREGENNNA MYSTERY is an important research project, being conducted by both Her Name Was SS. and the Merchant Navy Association, Wales - (Barry Branch) and until now selected researchers and is on-going. We now ask for any further information and the help of all interested parties to solve the puzzle. Who may have pencilled the drawing? etc.

Often referred to as the 'Fourth Service' or sometimes ruefully as the 'Forgotten Service' the Merchant Navy has always played a key role in Maritime History. Maltese seamen have served on ships of many nations, and in times of conflict have lost their lives.



There were FIVE Tregenna's.

In January, 1880 the second steamship built for Hains was named Tregenna. Like many other large tramp companies, their ships were registered in small places on the coast; Edward Hain used the family birthplace, St. Ives.

TREGENNA 1880-1892

(92-To Leith Owners 20-CAP LA HEVE. 23-CARRIE 33-Broken Up)

TREGENNA(2) 1892-1915

(15-STATHE 26/09/1916-War loss)

TREGENNA (3) *Torpedoed/sunk 9 miles South of Dodman Point by UB57 on her maiden voyage from the Tyne to Gibraltar with coal. 26/12/1917*
26/12/1917-War loss on her maiden voyage

TREGENNA(4) 1919-1940 ex-WAR BULLDOG 17/09/1940-War loss

TREGENNA Torpedoed/sunk NW of Rockall on voyage from Philadelphia to Newport in HX71 with steel, thirty three crew lost. 17/09/1940

TREGENNA(5) 1949-1959 59-SAFINA-E-NUSRAT 76-Broken Up Gadani Beach

Maltese Merchant Seamen

V.CASSAR, died 13th March 1917. He was Fireman on the **SS. Brika** which was torpedoed by a German U-boat.

M. CASSAR, died 18th August 1917. He was a Fireman on the **SS. Rosario**, which was torpedoed by a German U-boat in the Atlantic. The Master and nineteen crewmen died, one survivor was picked up by the U-boat.**V**

Emmanuel GRECH, died 17th September 1940. He was a Carpenter on the merchant ship *Tregenna*. His ship left Halifax with convoy HX-71 bound for Newport, South Wales, with a cargo of about 8,000 tons of steel. In the North Atlantic about 80 miles north west of Rockall. They were torpedoed by a German U-boat. Thirty-three men died and there were four survivors.

Recorded are the names of **V.CASSAR**, died 13th March 1917. and **M. CASSAR**, **Maltese Merchant Seamen**, May they Rest in Peace. If we assume that we have the correct **V.CASSAR**. This man died on 13th March 1917 and take into account the dates that are recorded for each Tregenna, then with :

TREGENNA (3) *Torpedoed/sunk 9 miles South of Dodman Point by UB57 on her maiden voyage from the Tyne to Gibraltar with coal. 26/12/1917-War loss on her maiden voyage.* Then this Tregenna was to late). **Lost on her maiden voyage, 26/12/1917 (Boxing Day)**

It seems therefore that TREGENNA(2) 1892-1915 (**15-STATHE 26/09/1916-War loss**) Is a moré likely candidate. It is again an assumption and further research will be conducted, as to which "Tregenna" – "Her Name Was". But, **Mr. V Cassar, can be presumed to be an ex-crew man of TREGENNA(2) or knew her well. possibly surviving her fateful voyage, and later perishing aboard the SS. Brika, 13th March 1917.**

In memory of **V. Cassar**, who may be the artist, the one who drew a pencil drawing of **Tregenna** with his name on it or the one who donated the picture to **Our Lady of Graces**, now at the Zabbar Sanctuary Museum, or maybe he is the same person.

**Could the two gentlemen be related ?
of the same family ? Brothers etc?
Have we the correct V. Cassar ?**

SS.Tregenna

I am no expert on ships, The artists work is to good to have lost detail, unless from memory etc, I BELIEVE HER TO BE Tregenna 2, Malta were convinced she was Tregenna 4. This seems to be becoming very unlikely. The above to me looks nothing like her, **Is it the earlier Tregenna 2 ?** KG.

However, Tregenna (2) became the SS.Stathe. 1915. So we need to get an idea of which ship the artist, has drawn. It may be coincidence that I found **V.CASSAR**, (Died 13th March 1917. He was Fireman on the **SS. Brika** which was torpedoed by a German U-boat), so easily on the Maltese Merchant Navy site And that a **V.CASSAR**, signed the picture.

Could this have been another V.CASSAR ? OR A LATER / EARLIER SHIP ?

Or, do we follow the Tregenna 2, theory, V.CASSAR, a Maltese Seaman, sailed on or knew the Tregenna, may have continued on other ships or remained on the Tregenna / Stathe. With his possible survival from the Stathe sinking, It is fairly usual to make such a donation to the church and this may have followed his survival of the ships demise, he may have gone on to end his days on the **BRIKA**, 1917.

**V.CASSAR is in capitals on tribute etc, V.CASSAR is in capitals on drawing.
COINCEDENCE ?**

The name on ship, Tregenna distorts with enlargement and seems to be wrongly placed, but I feel the drawings ships name may have been altered ? This is only speculation. KG

TREGENNA(2) 1892-1915
(15-STATHE 26/09/1916-War loss)

As an aside, the Captain of the Mersario, Elias Lloyd, had also been the captain of the SS Stathe in 1916 when she was lost in different circumstances. Then, with German submarine commanders abiding with maritime law, his ship had received a warning,

STATHE, ex-TREGENNA, collier, built 1892, 2,623grt, owned by Ferrier & Rees Ltd, Cardiff, sailing Penarth for Leghorn with coal; 26 September 1916 in western Mediterranean - captured by German submarine U.35, sunk by gunfire 50 miles E by S of Barcelona, NE Spain (L/te - in 41.25N 03.20E) - H/L/te)

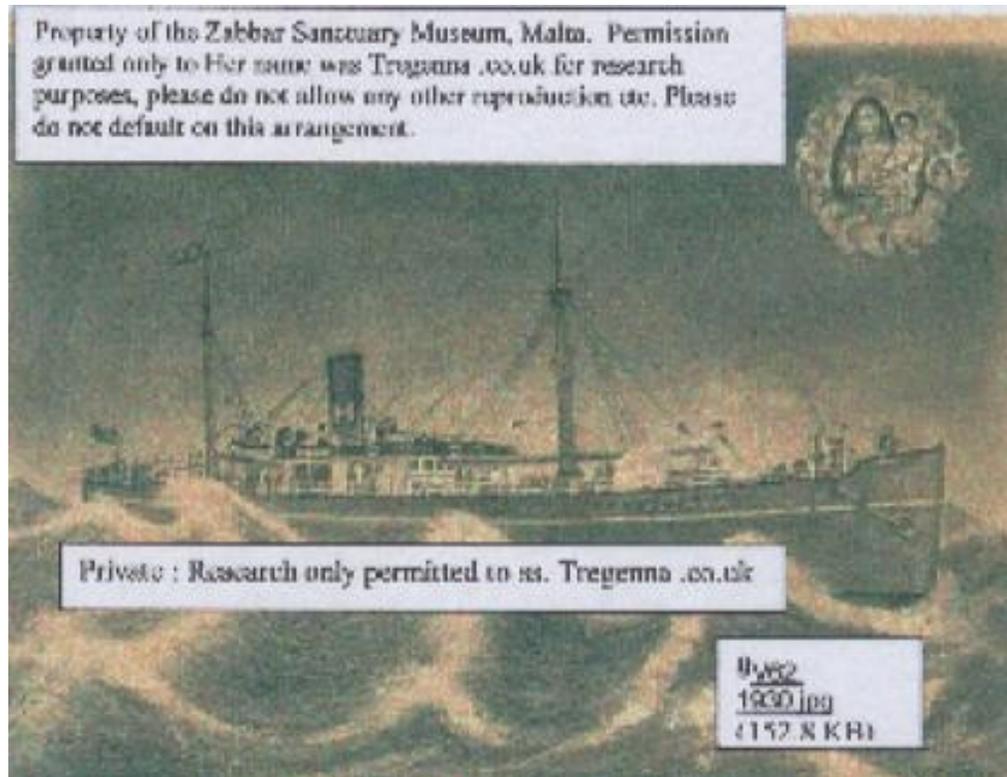
I think it is the 4th TREGENNA. Do you agree?

Somebody at (hernamewas.ss@tiscali.co.uk) sent me a lot of material on the subject, but most of it was not new to me. **The Cassars they mention died before Tregenna 4 was launched.** There seems to be a lot of interest on the subject.

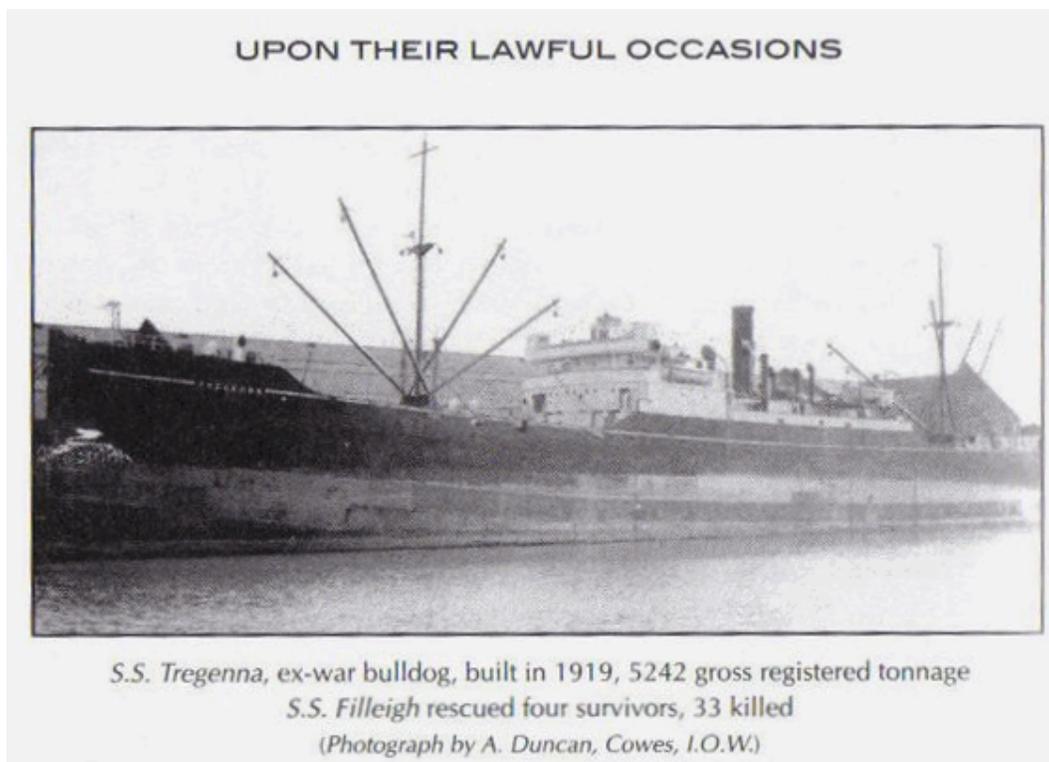
Regards, Paul Pace. **MALTA**

We have entrusted copies of a Tregenna (Pencil Drawing), to certain researchers to assist in our evaluation and have asked that they may assist in the research. If other bodies need to be involved please contact Keith and hernamewas.ss@tiscali.co.uk We cannot express how important this is and ask that you help us in solving the mystery. Our full findings will be passed on to the Church Museum. We have speculated our finding and ask for your views, etc.

The pencil drawing is a mystery.



In order to protect the rights of the Zabbar Sanctuary Museum, Malta. We have not posted the best view of the picture, this will give an indication only of the artists work. The actual picture is truly beautiful and has also just been restored. The detail is amazing, with permission we may release a better picture in the near future.



The pencil drawing is a mystery.

Mon, 4 Dec 2006

A funny one: The pencil drawing is a mystery.

In many ways it seems like a modern hull.

The masts and derricks are not right...there are no cross trees so that two derricks could be rigged... and there is no such thing as single-derricks for cargo work.

The anchor cable is led back from the hawse pipe and the anchor [one assumes] is lashed on deck - well that is old sailing-ship style.

There is no bridge and wheelhouse.

There is no bunker hatch.

The House flag does not seem to be anything like a Hain's flag of the period.

I am mystified. May be just an artist reminding himself of ships he sailed on.

David Simpson

I have studied the painting and the photo from your website and they are definitely not the same ship.

Wed, 13 Dec 2006

I have studied the painting and the photo from your website and they are definitely not the same ship. My guess is the painting is of the Tregenna (2). I'm discounting Tregenna (3) as she was lost on her maiden voyage.

The ship has the classic look of a steamer built in the late 1800's. You will notice the painting shows single span derricks with rigging, while the photo shows double derricks rigged for union purchase.

The bridge deck is higher in the photo compared to the wheel house in the painting. The photo also shows a raised fo'csle deck, where as the painting is flush deck. The large white ventilator on the painting is well known on steamers from the late 1800's.

You will also note in the painting the ships hand rails run the entire length of the deck, which shows she has a walkway from stem to stern. In the photo there seems to be a continuous bulwark from the front of the housing to the end of the accommodation block just aft of the lifeboat.

Rgds Billy

Billy McGee

LATEST

10/01/2007

Let me tell you the whole story.

I am the Curator of a small Parish Museum. A section of the Zabbar Sanctuary Museum is dedicated to paintings ex-votos, mostly connected with ships and the sea. These paintings date from about 1550 to 1960. One of the relatively recent pictures is the TREGENNA.

The only hint we have about it comes from a book published in 1947 where the picture is described as being donated by V. CASSAR after being saved from a tempest while on board the TREGENNA. (There is a long standing tradition that when in danger, villagers promise Our Lady of Graces that if they are saved from the difficult situation, they will donate a gift to the Sanctuary.)

Another book published in 1989 by A.H.J. Prins, a Dutch marine anthropologist adds that the donor V. Cassar has done the picture himself and that the picture has to be dated between the thirties and early fifties.

This is all that is known. We thought that maybe V. Cassar (a common Maltese surname) may have been one of the 4 TREGENNA IV survivors, but this is not the case.

Besides comparing our picture with the photo on your website one notices that the bridge is different in both pictures. Our picture also shows what I call ladders hanging to masts which remind me of the sail era.

I now think that our TREGENNA is an earlier ship maybe the TREGENNA III.

If you come across any other information I will be glad to receive it.

I must end by congratulating you and your colleagues for the TREGENNA website. I would also like to express my admiration at the way you show respect towards those who lost their lives.

I will be glad if you keep in touch.

Regards, Paul Pace

Zabbar Sanctuary Museum, Malta

You are invited to visit the website of the
Zabbar Sanctuary Museum, Malta

<http://zsmm.bravehost.com>

Her Name was SS.Tregenna.

Cargo ship Tregenna, 5,242grt, (Hain SS Co.) had loaded a cargo of 8000t of steel in Philadelphia for Newport, Wales and sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia where the ship joined the Liverpool bound 34 ship Convoy HX-71, which left Halifax on 5th September 1940. During the crossing the convoy encountered a number of fog banks and by the 16th September had entered a severe North-Westerly gale. On the 17th September 78 miles North-West of Rockall in position 58' 22N 15' 42W, U-65 breaks through the escort screen looking for a target. Through her periscope she sights SS Tregenna who is struggling along at 8 knots in heavy seas with her bow rising high and plunging back into the sea. As her bow enters the next trough she is hit by a single torpedo in her bow, which does not rise again and the 413 foot ship continues to descend beneath the waves and disappears in 40 seconds, taking 33 men with her. By some miracle four men who had been on watch survived and were picked up by the ship which had been astern of her.

Billy McGee.



MERCHANT NAVY ASSOCIATION IN MALTA

ON ALL THE OCEANS WHITE CAPS FLOW
YOU DO NOT SEE CROSSES ROW ON ROW
BUT THOSE WHO SLEEP BENEATH THE SEA
REST IN PEACE FOR YOUR COUNTRY'S FREE
IN GRATITUDE AND TO THE MEMORY OF ALL
MERCHANT SEAFARERS OF ALL
THE ALLIED COUNTRIES WHO SACRIFICED
THEIR LIVES DURING WORLD WAR TWO

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE
IN GODS GOOD KEEPING

WE ALSO REMEMBER

MUSCAT, Fireman, MICHAEL, S.S. "Daybreak" (West Hartlepool), Mercantile Marine. Drowned, as a result of an attack by an enemy submarine 24 December 1917. Age 39. Son of the late Guiseppe and Rosa Muscat; husband of Carmela Muscat (nee Carnane), of 103, Sda Reale, Casal Zebbug, Malta. Born at Bona.

BIANCHI, Fireman, PAOLO, S.S. "Daybreak" (West Hartlepool), Mercantile Marine. Drowned, as a result of an attack by an enemy submarine 24 December 1917. Age 37. Son of the late Giorgio, and Consdata Bianchi; husband of Elena Bianchi, of 52, Sda Sta Maria, Casal Zebbug, Malta. Born in Malta.