

The Maltese Countryside is rich in traditional buildings, some of which go back centuries in time. These buildings shed valuable light upon the social life, the beliefs, the living standards and the skills of past generations of Maltese. Explain and comment on this statement.

In the past, more than today, the majority of the males were farmers and lived in the countryside. Every day the farmer went to his land where he worked his fields and stayed there till late evening. His land was usually very organised and had certain buildings that have specific uses, some for recreational purposes, some for labor purposes and others for the farmer to practice his belief.



One traditional building that is still very visible today is the rubble walls. These are walls that separate one land from another. They are built by the Dry Wall Method meaning that no cement is used but only rocks with infilling of soil. These rubble walls have many uses. They are used to avoid soil erosion, to separate fields, for wind protection and as a natural habitat of lots of wildlife

species. Nobody knows exactly from where the rubble walls originated. The rubble walls are ideal for the geographical conditions of the Maltese Islands.

Like rubble walls, the dry wall method is also used in the building of the Dura. This was a place where bird hunters and trappers used to organize himself to catch birds. The hunter used to hide in this building in order to shoot. It usually had a semi-circular shape.



Also built in the dry wall method, are the Giren. These were usually round but some were also found as squares. In the past, the main use of the girna was for a home and a place to live in and also for keeping the tools. Nowadays it is a recreational building used by the farmer to relax. Unfortunately, nowadays these buildings are rarely built as now the farmers have fast transport

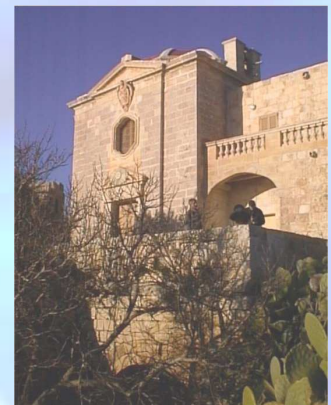
facilities and is easier for them to go home than stay in their girna.

Another traditional building found in the countryside is the razzett. This was usually found in the middle of the farm and small in order to save arable land. They were also built on hard rock for stability and were usually flat based on Arab idea. The razzett offered asylum and security for the farmer in case something happened. It used to have a flat roof in order for water to be stored there in case water was scarce. The razzett was mainly divided into four areas, the maqjel, the għorfa, the yard and the mandra. The yard was found in the middle and used to have access to all the other areas in the razzet.



Another building was the għorfa. It was very small generally not more than three rooms with one on top of the rest. It was used as an asylum for the farmer to escape the extra strong sun in summer or to escape the rain in winter. Sometimes also tools, produce and animals used to be kept in an għorfa.

This building used to be built similar to the way we build our houses now but also in the past it was also sometimes built of rubble but both of them were used for the same reasons.



Other things seen in the countryside are chapels and niches. These show that the farmers were very serious of their belief and built these religious buildings in order for a patron to protect their land or also to visit the chapel every day.

These buildings are very important for Maltese. These are part of our culture and of our identity as Maltese. Unfortunately these buildings are nowadays scarce but the government and other organizations are working as hard as they can in order to keep these buildings and traditions alive among the Maltese.