

CHAPTER SIX

DYNAMICS OF MIGRANT PLACES IN TIME AND SPACE

The migrant presence in the Australian cultural landscape is pervasive and diverse. In some places, such as the inner city suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne, there are many layers of migrant groups over time. This has been explored in Chapter Four where each layer has contributed an environment which facilitated the assimilation of the next.

The sense of place derived from the migrant presence in the cultural landscape arises through complex processes. Chapter Five looked at the way unselfconscious transformations of culture occur within specific migrant communities and the way place-making changes over time. The focus in Chapters Four and Five has been on inner suburban areas. Many migrants who came to Australia settled in country towns or on the edge of larger cities where they created market-gardens in areas of fertile soil. Thus large Australian cities in the late 1990s, more than forty years after the major post WWII migration program, reveal complex changes in the migrant cultural landscape. Many Greek and Italian migrants of the 1950s have moved from their inner city terraces to affluent houses on the city outskirts. Others, whose first destination was the rural fringe, have sold their small farms for new housing developments and moved into inner suburbs.

Chapter Six looks at the changes that occurred within one migrant group in space and time, thus challenging the perceived harmony and seamlessness of pre- and post-WWII migrant groups. The chapter examines how one migrant group occupied niches in both the periphery and the centre of a major Australian city as two separate and distinct communities, despite coming from one country of origin. Some of this can be attributed to the opportunism associated with migration whereas other aspects lie in the particular cultural heritage of each migrant group which predisposes them to settle in particular ways. The chapter examines the particularities related to migration from Malta to Australia resulting in a Maltese profile in Australia which ties together cane-cutting in Queensland, market-gardens and small farms at the periphery of Sydney and inner city enclaves associated with factories, wharves and the Catholic Church. Despite having occupied two significant niches in the urban fabric of Sydney, their presence is barely

discernable in contrast to the migrant groups examined in Chapters Four and Five. A study of this group shows how vulnerable migrant places are in rapidly changing cities of the 21st century, particularly those exemplifying the culture of 'little traditions'.

The Maltese Context

The history of Malta, an archipelago of small islands, is one of occupation, starting with the Phoenicians in approximately 800BC and finishing with the British who departed in 1964. Perhaps the most significant period of occupation occurred from mid 16th century to the end of the 18th century. During this period, the Crusading Knights of St John transformed the archipelago from rocky, windswept islands supporting a few exposed citrus and olive groves to massive limestone fortifications behind which were towns, orchards and intensive agriculture. The Knights, recognising the strategic importance of these barren islands, carried soil and other essentials as ballast for their ships thus transforming the difficult and unproductive landscape into one of intensively cultivated small farms and towns behind fortified walls. This established the practice of small-scale, family-based agriculture; a tradition the Maltese brought to Australia (McCracken, 1997; Seward, 1995; Sire, 1994).

Despite the ingenious use of rock walls, imported soil and intense cultivation, the islands had little natural water and were subject to strong prevailing winds. As a result, they could only support a limited population. To ensure sustainability, the islands were dependent on seasonal emigration, predominantly to North African countries to the immediate south. The possibility of migrating permanently to more distant lands was not considered until population crises demanded such drastic choices. In these circumstances, North America was the first preference, particularly in the 19th century, however, Australia, Canada, Brazil and Argentina were other possibilities.

In association with the culture of seasonal migration, everyday life in Malta focused on small farms surrounding villages whose core was the Church. The whole family worked on farms and in village cottage industries. In the larger town of Valletta, those workers not working on the docks were mainly involved in assembling goods. Maltese migrants translocated these traditions to Australia.

Throughout the continuous occupation by different cultures, the Catholic Church has been the most consistent element in Maltese culture. As a result, the Catholic Church

and the State of Malta have been closely interwoven; the interaction of religious and secular life being as much a part of the Maltese migration profile as they are a part of everyday life in Malta. Another factor impinging on secular life and emigration has been the role of the British. As the most recent occupiers, Britain realised Malta's high strategic value, particularly as the opening of the Suez Canal provided easier access to other British dominions in the East including Australia. By the 1880s they had embarked on massive dockyard and harbour works which continued into the first decade of the 20th century. This was followed by unemployment when the British encouraged Maltese migration to Australia (York,1988, 1990; Cirillo,1959).

Maltese Emigration

The British exploited the islands' vulnerability to population numbers and the need for emigration as they saw advantages in having agricultural labour, loyal to Britain, in colonies such as Australia where the climate in northern areas was too hot for British workers. As a result they encouraged the Maltese to migrate under the banner of 'peopling the Empire' with passports designating them as white British settlers (York,1988:693). For those Maltese who migrated to Australia, the status given to them by their passports contributed to the particularly unfortunate experiences many of them suffered. Australian attitudes to migrants were consistently dominated by Union positions about importing workers. This position was inextricably locked into the racism born from the Chinese migrants' willingness to work diligently for low wages. Policies associated with this racism, described in Chapter Two, affected all people who did not speak English and whose skin colour was not similar to the British. When the Maltese arrived with passports which indicated they were 'white British' and yet their skin colour was swarthy and they did not speak English, they became marked for particularly vindictive racism by Unions and politicians (Campbell,1992;York,1990).

The first organised migration to Australia did not help the reputation of the Maltese as suitable migrants for Australia. More than fifty Maltese men, led by a Catholic priest, arrived in Townsville in 1883. They were contracted to work on the cane-fields, however, they found the bright lights of Townsville too attractive and refused to go to the cane-fields. They were scrappily dressed, lacked shoes and moved around Townsville in groups of ten to twenty. They refused to obey the priest's instructions

and ultimately had to be arrested in order to get them to fulfill their contractual obligation. Many subsequently absconded and the enterprise was considered a failure (York,1990). Nevertheless, a few Maltese migrants recognised they could earn sufficient money in the cane-fields to buy small farms in the southern cities of Sydney and Melbourne. This was the situation in Australia until the early 20th century.

The next era of Maltese migration began in 1912 when Maltese migrants, mostly illiterate labourers and farmers in groups of twenty or so, started to arrive in Australia. The powerful Australian Workers Union, having been instrumental in the White Australia policy, mounted a fierce anti-Maltese campaign which climaxed in 1916 with the prohibition of Maltese migrants, even though small numbers of Italians and Greeks were acceptable. The Maltese were particular targets because they entered Australia with British passports, deemed by the Unions as a British plot to rid themselves of unwanted workers (Campbell,1992). The demeanour and behavior of the Maltese migrants, however, helped feed community anxiety. Unlike the 19th century group who were led by a priest, these Maltese were unaccompanied groups of up to twenty men who moved around the city, badly dressed, unkempt, and bare-footed (York,1990).

Maltese bravery during the First World War forced many Australians to relinquish their prejudices particularly as they fought beside each other at Gallipoli. But more significantly, the Maltese community provided hospitals and nursing care for the allies during World War I. They were renowned for their compassionate care of war casualties, many of whom were Australian soldiers. This inevitably tempered the Australian racist attitudes towards Maltese migrants (Dugan,1988).

After World War I, Malta was again faced with unemployment and the need for emigration. Britain was particularly alarmed at the growing Socialist unrest in ports associated with a pro-Italian Nationalist revival. In this climate, they saw large scale migration to Australia as a 'safety valve' (York,1988:694). Using the rhetoric of 'bonds of Empire' and shared war experiences between Australians and Maltese, they succeeded in having the Australian ban on the Maltese lifted. Maltese migrants could come to Australia if they were agricultural workers of good character and literate with at least colloquial English (Dugan,1988). Under this scheme Maltese migrants began arriving in 1924, prompting further outcries from the Unions. Once again debates raged

about who was eligible to occupy the Australian national space. The government had initiated a migration program to develop the country, particularly the large Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme in south-west NSW and the mining and sugar industry in the north, through a policy of accepting 'white friendly aliens'. But the Maltese, despite being skilled as agricultural workers, were still victimised because of the colour of their complexion, preference being given to agricultural workers from Czechoslovakia, Estonia, and other northern European countries (York,1990:115).

Nevertheless, the Maltese consolidated their presence in the 1920s in the Queensland cane growing areas of Mackay and Innisfail gradually purchasing small farms on fertile soils of Pendle Hill and Blacktown, west of Sydney where they established market-gardens and poultry farms. Smaller numbers settled in Woolloomooloo near the wharves. With this sense of stability they began to bring out their wives and children. Apart from Union hostility, a further serious problem for Maltese migrants was their lack of literacy. They arrived as agricultural workers where entire families worked on small farms, including the children, as a result there was little schooling (York,1990).

During World War II, Malta was subjected to such intense bombing that little remained after the war. Despite their award for bravery, the post-war Australian migration campaign once again discriminated against the Maltese. Although criteria for entry now encouraged skilled trades-people rather than agricultural workers, British migrants were sought. The Australian authorities drew up a racial priority list with British on the top, followed in decreasing order by Scandinavians, Netherlanders, Swiss, Czechs, then Italians and Greeks. The Maltese did not even appear on the list (York,1990:196). Maltese government representatives in Australia requested, characteristically politely, that the Maltese be given white British status. This was strongly debated but finally agreed to, however without all the benefits that British migrants received such as assisted passage and housing. As a result of these protracted negotiations, sixty four Maltese migrants arrived in 1949, marking a trend away from Queensland in favour of Sydney and Melbourne (Dugan,1988; York,1990).

This overview of Maltese history and the migration profile has been explained in order to provide the necessary background to the following interpretations about Maltese places in Australia.

The Maltese in Australia: a Culture of Little Traditions

Building on the techniques developed last chapter, a discussion group of Maltese migrants was set up in order to reveal the heritage of the Maltese in Australia and how this is reflected in places. In the last chapter, the Lebanese group migrated at a specific time, that is the early 1970s. The Maltese group, in contrast, was made up of people who had arrived in the 1920s, children of the 1920s group who were born in Australia, as well as people who came to Australia immediately after WWII. So there was strong variation in time of migration. The group also varied in location, some having spent all their lives in Western Sydney, some having spent their adult lives in Woolloomooloo, inner Sydney and others who had moved between the two groups. Another unusual aspect to the Maltese group compared with the groups in Chapters Four and Five is that it included a priest. Thus, this group was diverse representing the profile of the Maltese in Sydney.

Discussions were held in a Maltese community centre in Western Sydney in late 1995. All the participants were elderly, one having arrived in Sydney as a child in 1914, and all spoke English comfortably. The location, dates and participants are listed in Appendix A. The sequence of discussions followed the methodology described in the last chapter. The first meeting discussed Maltese cultural heritage, the second, Maltese migration experiences, the third, everyday life of the Maltese in Sydney and the final meeting explored potential heritage places for the Maltese community in Sydney. The following thematic analyses are considered within these four areas. Participants, locations and dates are listed in Appendix One. Quotes are coded as MM1-4

The Cultural Heritage of the Maltese.

The Maltese described their culture as Mediterranean with a British overlay. Despite a long history of foreign occupation, from the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Saracens, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Franks, Knights Hospitallers, French and finally the British and the great traditions associated with each culture, the Maltese group insisted that their cultural heritage lay in being people of small islands. Associated with this was the culture of farming and being 'masters of little things'. They did, however, acknowledge that their heritage was closely connected with the Catholic

Church. Table 6.1 summarises phenomena and places associated with the cultural heritage of the Maltese.

TABLE 6.1

Cultural heritage of the Maltese

Phenomena	Places telling the story
Being a small island culture: masters of little things.	The islands of Malta, farms, small industries.
Catholic Church as cultural heritage.	Churches in Malta. St. Pauls Bay. Festas in villages.

Being a Small Island Culture; Masters of Little Things

Because the islands making up Malta are small and there is little natural water, the group felt that their culture lay in small industries involving the whole family. As John, a post WWII migrant who came from the village of Dingli as a young man, said with warmth in his voice ‘[in] Malta, everything is there - on a miniature scale. What there is, is in miniature and it is beautiful’ (MM1). It is interesting to compare this with what was said about the Maltese settlement in Western Sydney when John would have been a young boy in Dingli. The *Sun* in April 1930, described the Maltese settlements at Pendle Hill, Prospect and Greystanes as ‘Little Malta’ where ‘farms and market gardens look a picture of productivity’. The *Sun* attributed their success as farmers to qualities they brought with them from Malta (York,1990:160).

The island culture also focused on the sea and protected bays. The group spoke of how everything had to be imported and reassembled on the island. Because of this, a culture of cottage industries involving the whole family developed including women’s fine lace-work. Maltese women developed particular strengths associated with seasonal emigration because they were required to maintain farms or cottage industries while their husbands were away. York (1990:135) points out that Maltese women are not just housewives maintaining the home; they are also required to administer family finances and ‘this role of wife/mother as financial manager occurred in all social classes’. The group discussed how Maltese migrants were independent. The priest in the group spoke of Maltese people as ‘ingenious, with a strong work ethic and a desire to do things their own way’ (MM1).

Given the culture of continuous occupation, these comments imply that the Maltese existed as two classes; the educated elite who were closely affiliated with the different cultures of occupiers and the uneducated workers who appeared to ignore changing mores and power structures. George, a retired administrator in a shipping company and post WWII migrant, remarked ‘ *Maltese heritage in Australia would have to be working class – farming, village – the values you have to survive.*’ John, a similar post WWII arrival, reflected ‘ *what George says is partly right, that we are “masters of little things” but it has produced a people ... they are jack of all trades and they do it right...*’ (MM1). The Maltese migrants’ independence and disregard for authority came through repeatedly in discussions.

The Catholic Church as Cultural Heritage

In contrast to disregard for rules and authority, the group showed intense allegiance to the Catholic Church. In this aspect of their cultural life they acknowledged the significance of ancient events and traditions, in contrast to their dismissive attitudes to the heritage of the Knights other occupiers. They suggested that their most significant heritage place in Malta was St Paul’s Bay where St Paul is said to have been shipwrecked, bringing Christianity to the island. The pervasive evidence of the church and its role in the culture of the Maltese was brought out by George ‘s observation, ‘*[I]f you stood on a hill you could see all the church domes. You could identify all the villages by the churches. You practically could see them all because the island is flat*’. The group agreed with Father B, a priest who came to Sydney to give pastoral care to the Maltese in the 1960s, also observed,

...places of culture are our churches – built by our forefathers...and when you realise they follow the same thing in Australia. So it is in their blood...so wherever they go they look at the church as something that combines them, gets them together. Where there is a density of Maltese, you always find the church there...(MM1).

The church is seen as comforting and supportive. Priests are part of everyday life in the community and are considered essential for pastoral care. George explored this further by pointing out,

Father has highlighted the closeness of the church – not the hierarchy as such, but with the church. What is the church? It means fathers, nuns, big dome, stone, festas, the bells. One of the things we used to listen for when

we first arrived in Australia were the Bells of St Mary's – "Oh gee!" We would say, "this sounds like Malta!"

Mary, an Australian born Maltese who had lived both in Woolloomooloo and Pendle Hill, added when she made her first trip to Malta,

As soon as you go to Malta, the first thing they take you to see is the church – as soon as I went to my Auntie's, before she even made me a cup of tea she said, "Come with me" and she takes me to show me the church.

Father B agreed with Mary saying '*...the churches are monuments. They were built in poor villages, so you can see them everywhere*' (MM1).

Earlier emigrant groups set out from Malta accompanied by a priest who would be responsible for their pastoral care, whether they were migrating to Australia, United States, Canada or even Brazil. As York (1990:57) points out 'The Roman Catholic faith is inseparable from the Maltese identity and way of life and such rituals as Confession must be conducted in the Maltese language.' Because Confession is regarded as essential to Maltese spiritual well being, York suggests that the lack of success of Maltese settlements in Northern Territory and Tasmania could be attributed to the lack of priests in contrast to their success Queensland, Sydney and Melbourne (York,1990). Mary T., an Australian born Maltese who grew up in Western Sydney, confirmed that the Maltese church in Australia is her cultural heritage. She indicated how much the Maltese mass meant to her even though she did not understand it,

[the Maltese mass] draws them ... especially like us, we were are born here...as you know [speaking to Father B] I come to mass here [the church in Blacktown]. I can't understand all the mass in Maltese but I am getting better ...I prefer to come here because ... it draws me, as a Maltese born in Australia... (MM1).

Another aspect of the heritage of the church are the festas. George and John, both post WWII migrants, spoke of village festas where patron saints of villages are celebrated with street processions and feasts. Although the group considered festas were part of their cultural heritage, there was much tension about this between those who were born in Malta and those who were born in Australia. The following discussion reveals palpable nostalgia for something experienced in the context of the country of origin compared with the translocated facsimile in Australia,

... every village had its festas and saints and everything ... you know how it starts, continues –a lot of fireworks and you eat certain things, you know?

George, post-WWII migrant

No! Because we were born here – to us, we don't know.

Mary, Australian born

Well, I think the fascinating thing about the festa is leading up to the festa ... all the kids, they go there make flowers, post flags ... it doesn't only relate to the religious part of it. It relates to the way we think ... I would say here [in Australia] we are dead in that respect we do not have that back up leading to something. John, post-WWII migrant (MM1).

The Feast for St Peter and St Paul is considered very significant. In Sydney it is held at the Maltese Centre, La Valette Centre, in Blacktown. A Maltese mass is conducted with Maltese folk singing known as *ghana* and celebrations continuing for many days. Frank, a post WWII migrant who had a farm in Western Sydney, renowned for his folk singing, described the atmosphere in Malta ‘... *this ghana for the feast of St Paul and St Peter goes on all night under the trees with little bit of light and there is groups everywhere and you can go and listen. They go all night...*’ Marc interrupted ‘*It doesn't happen here [like that]*’ (MM3). Nevertheless a typical calendar for the Maltese in Australia consists of numerous Saint Day festivals and masses. The role of the priest was fundamental and yet Marc, a Maltese historian, indicated that from 1928 to 1946 there was no Maltese priest in Sydney.

Maltese Migration Experiences in Australia

The culture of emigration in Malta resulted in a different form of migration experience to that described by the Greeks, Lebanese and Vietnamese, all of whom fled wars or civil unrest. Nevertheless, for the Maltese, migration to Australia appears to have been particularly fraught. It would appear that they were the target of particularly vicious racism led by the tabloid press. This was invariably initiated by the unions who feared the arrival of non-British workers. Unions in Australia were very powerful, often led by militant migrant British unionists. In 1924 there were only eight Maltese amongst the 792 other British immigrants arriving on the *Ormonde*. Despite this the *Daily Guardian* (8 April 1924) reported ‘Maltese...Smelly Migrants by the *Ormonde*’ and subsequently called for ‘deodorisation’ of all future Maltese arrivals (York, 1990:109). *The Bulletin* on 25th December 1924 described the Maltese as ‘...a little Asiatic, a good deal African, undersized, the wrong colour of head, the wrong kind of hair; and in the main no fighters except with a carving knife and from behind.’ Another tabloid, the

Truth (18/6/1925) suggested that the Maltese ‘strong sexual passion was a menace to our womanhood’. It was not only the tabloids who marginalised the Maltese, *Punch* writing in June, 1925 described the Maltese as ‘descended from the Phoenicians, Western Asiatic people...They are by our standards, illiterate and backward.’ York (1990:110) points out that all these disparaging articles were published and discussed in Malta. Despite suffering such levels of discrimination the discussion group made little reference to it unlike the Greek group who still felt distressed by the humiliations they experienced. It seemed that the Maltese were not concerned about these aspects of their reputation, as negative publicity about Maltese migrants was quite common. In a report prepared for the British Foreign Office in 1959 about Maltese migration, most of which was to Australia, there were frequent references to the bad behavior of young male migrants (Cirillo,1959: 21). Table 6.2 summarises the phenomena emerging from the Maltese migration experience.

TABLE 6.2.

Maltese migration experiences in Australia

Phenomena	Places telling the story
Tensions between earlier & later migrants. Why Australia? Arriving in Australia. Culture of boarding houses. Culture of single men.	Farms at Pendle Hill. Destruction of Malta during 1939-45 war. Woolloomooloo and Walsh Bay wharves. Boarding houses in Darlinghurst. Il Boys Club, Darlinghurst.

Tensions Between Earlier and Later Migrant Groups

Maltese migration experiences were similar to Italians in Australia in that they started arriving in the last century mostly as small groups of men. They worked in cane-fields and mines eventually gravitating to Sydney and Melbourne. Differences lie, however, in their British status which seemed to act against them rather than giving them more opportunities than other Mediterranean groups. In Sydney, earlier Maltese ultimately became market-gardeners or poultry farmers in Western Sydney, although a smaller community in Woolloomooloo worked on the wharves.

The group arriving under the post-WWII migration scheme occupied an indeterminate space where their stories of hardship and bravery during the war resulted in them being seen as British heroes, worthy of the George Cross, while at the same time, they were treated as ‘dirty Dagos’. There was also tension within the Maltese community itself

where children of the first Maltese had grown up in Australia in surprisingly deprived conditions. This tension was palpable in the group, emerging with intensity when discussions occurred about expectations of Australia held by the post-WWII migrants.

Mary T's father had come to Australia in the 1920s and eventually settled on a farm in Pendle Hill. She felt particularly disconcerted that the plight of the Australian-born Maltese was not recognised. She argued heatedly,

...youse came to Australia when Australia was coming good. After the war, Australia was starting to come good. We were born when Australia was bad. I guarantee that you Maltese that came to Australia [post WWII] were far better off than the Australian Maltese that were here and that's right!

The children of my age, Mary and me, we weren't educated. Our parents had farms. We had to stay at home to work. We had no welfare – welfare would not send for you to come to school. I was never educated. If I went to school for 2 or 3 years I would do very well- but at that time... I can remember not having a pair of shoes and I was born in Australia!! (MM1).

Why Australia?

Given the humiliating experiences the Maltese suffered, why did they continued to come to Australia? It would appear the need to emigrate was so pressing, that negative stories about Australia were overridden by propaganda from Maltese officials suggesting Australia as the preferred destination. Members of the group indicate that they came 'to better ourselves.' John indicated that 'I wanted to get out. England lost the War and they needed to rebuild London and I wanted to get out...' (MM2). This is a revealing remark as England had won the war and so was ineligible for the post-war rehabilitation money available to those who lost. Malta was in the invidious position of having been almost destroyed by the war but, although witnessing the rehabilitation of nearby Italy, was unable to get assistance because of their allegiance to Britain.

George indicated that the Maltese came to Australia for economic reasons 'running away from insecurity'. The Australian-born greeted this remark with derision. Mary V. remarked 'everybody seems to think that because we were in Australia we were wealthy. But we didn't own our own property. We only rented it.' Mary T. joined in 'They thought we were shoveling it[money] in a bag – one held the bag – the other shoveled it in.' John tempered these remarks by saying,

... there was big expectation. Why? Because we always had people migrating from Malta and the few that came back, they struck luck or something...that left an impression on people that if you go out and do something outside, you can be rich, ... that must have been on everybody's mind, including mine...(MM2).

Arriving in Australia

Arriving in Australia shows how the earlier and later Maltese migrations connected. Unlike Greek and Lebanese migrants, the Maltese were examples of chain migration, also characteristic of Italians in Australia. Jean arrived in 1914. She indicated there was already a small community of Maltese in the streets near the wharf, '*...when we arrived in Nicholson Street,[Woolloomooloo] our father got a house ready for us. There was twelve [Maltese] families there, all just around that area.*' (MM4). Her home in Nicholson Street, now gentrified, is shown in Plate 6.1.



PLATE 6.1.

Woolloomooloo house formerly occupied by Maltese, belonging to Jean B. (A.P.1996).

John, a post-WWII migrant, explained 'my two uncles left Malta late last century, one went to Canada and one went to Australia ... he cut cane for 27 years. My uncle was here fifty years before me ...'(MM2). Although this implies close kinship ties, they were often quite tenuous. John, arriving in Sydney as a young man of twenty, described his uncle's greeting at Woolloomooloo wharf.

The S.S. Asturias, a former British troop carrier docked at Woolloomooloo at about 8 am and by 10 am I was cleared by Customs, as I ambled between moveable mounted wooden railings ushered into a world I've had yet to discover. A sudden hard clasp on my right elbow brought me face to face with a familiar face. I could swear he looked like my archangel. Joseph M, like myself from Dingli, had arrived in Sydney two trips ahead of me.

My uncle appeared. Joe yelled out “Ganni, here is your nephew, Johnnie, your sister Berta’s son”. Uncle looked quite old and his toothless grin didn’t help either. Years of living by himself in some humpy under the stars, in hard times, in the outback of Queensland as I found out later were no basics to promote for an ebullient or talkative extrovert. He was exactly my opposite.

Here I was 10,000 miles from home confronted by my lost relative. These were the thoughts as I rushed over for a hug, shouting “We’ve met at last, Uncle John”. As we pulled apart, Uncle stood silent with his piercing black eyes searching all over me as if to elevate and to evaluate some miniscule trait or resemblance passed on to me through our forebears. In real Dingli drawl and with a deep familiar voice and shaking his head, he declared “I do not know you”. He followed with a long pause, and then “truth is that I have never set eyes on your mother. I left well before she was born”. (personal correspondence, 31st Jan.1996).

Despite the camaraderie, there were clearly as many painful experiences for the young men as there were for the young Greek ‘brides’ described earlier. Points of arrival for migrants in Australia are highly significant aspects of the migrant cultural landscape.

The Culture of Boarding Houses

Maltese migrants were neither accommodated in hostels as European migrants nor given assisted housing to which the British were entitled. Once again they were caught between identities. As a result, from the early 1920s a culture of Maltese boarding houses for men grew in Woolloomooloo, shown in Plate 6.2.,



PLATE 6.2.

Early boarding house for Maltese men, Woolloomooloo. (A.P.1996).

The phenomenon was not only attributable to particular disadvantages suffered by the Maltese, it was also a result of their willfulness and independence. Although bureaucrats in Australia and Malta wanted the Maltese to go to the tropical north to work as agricultural labourers in the 1910s-1920s, the Maltese tended to settle in Sydney or Melbourne. The Maltese desire to ‘*do things our way*’, indicated by John and Father B, was a strong factor in the types of communities they created. York (1990:50) describes the boarding house phenomenon,

Maltese boarding houses, located near the wharves in both cities, fulfilled an all important function guaranteeing the new arrival an immediate “home” in which the mother tongue could be spoken [In Melbourne], the ‘Rizzo rooms’ assumed special importance to new arrivals from Malta in the years 1911 – 1914.

Jean, Mary V’s mother, had arrived in Sydney in 1914 as a young girl. By the 1920s she was married and operated her home in Woolloomooloo as a boarding house. Mary V recalls ‘...we were the first ones. Mum always had people with us to help pay the rent.’ Jean remembered a number of other boarding houses around them in the area, ‘Mrs F. run her house like a boarding house - men only. But she had a lot of men there ... when she had no accommodation she used to put a mattress on the floor under the stairs...’ (MM4). These stories were greeted with much amusement by the group. Clearly there was a sense of camaraderie about the living conditions, unlike the sense of distress expressed by the post-WWII Greek group. This may have related to bonding through marginal status, but also because they had come from two small islands and extended families were well known. Frequently discussions were interrupted as the group tried to make family connections, as the following exchange revealed,

<i>Excuse me ,but don’t mind me asking. You talk about your brothers– what nickname did they have?</i>	Mary V
<i>Dante, they call them both Dante , even at home. Sam was Cilla.</i>	John
<i>Sam! That’s Rosie’s Sam?</i>	Mary V
<i>Yeh, that’s from my fathers –</i>	John
<i>What is he - your cousin Sam, is he?</i>	Mary V
<i>Yes he’s a cousin to my first cousin to my father.</i>	John (MM2).

Despite the solidarity, John acknowledged the poor conditions in some boarding houses for single men working to earn money to send back to Malta. John said,

...things were so bad... I know an area down Woolloomooloo way, they used to rent the house, three shifts. So you have a bed and you alternate the

bloke that's on the morning shift – and eh, will sleep and the one at night – you know, they rotate like that. They have only the one bed for three of them... sometimes four bunkers, so twelve - ... They would have a bite at the club...(MM2).

Maltese had to be 'guaranteed' that someone would provide them accommodation. Jean confirmed this saying,

I made many guarantees for single men. All right, I had a big house – kept three in a room, just until you get them settled. You know what I mean! My husband used to take them to find work ... just to get them wages, the first week they get here. You know it was easy to get work then.(MM4)

Father B reflected that boarding houses not only provided immediate accommodation for Maltese migrants but by the 1960s they were also places for retired cane-cutters. He reminisced,

I remember a boarding house in Stanley St [Darlinghurst]... so I think it is an historical place for the Maltese people ... I remember in the 60s it used to have these old blokes who used to work in the cane fields, one was always with a cutting dog ... it was like a meeting place for them ... ten, fifteen, twenty people talking in the house ...(MM2).

Thus place attachment for the Maltese in Australia continued over generations and reflected the movement of seasonal workers, a characteristically Mediterranean phenomenon.

Boarding houses were typical terraces in the Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst area. The following conversation conveys the way the group recalled the different boarding houses,

'234,236,238 Bourke Street, there were always Maltese there.' John,
Farrugias, in a lane off lower Riley St –John,
Joe and Tony Attard, Corner of Riley and Liverpool St, ... they were two bachelors - they had that corner. They had a residential in that street. There was a lot around there." Vince,
De Piro House, 19 Stanley St, Meilak's, Ta' Gizumina - rooms available upstairs, Godfrey,
Row of terraces between Crown and Riley St, on the northern side of Liverpool St. There were about five boarding houses there. John (MM2).

Plates 6.3 and 6.4 show some of the buildings in Darlinghurst which were former Maltese boarding houses.



PLATE 6.3

Maltese boarding houses in Darlinghurst.
(A.P.1996).

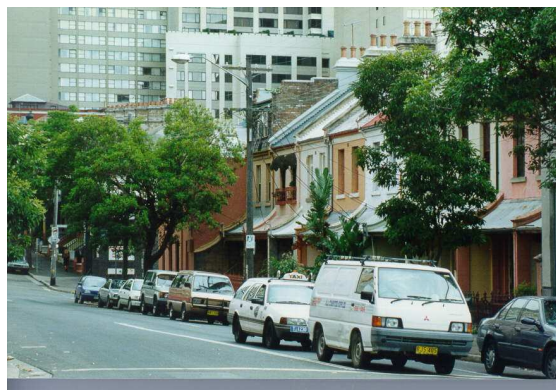


PLATE 6.4

Maltese boarding houses in Liverpool
Street, Darlinghurst – pastizzi factory was
located in one basement (A.P.1996).

The exchange above conveys a tightly knit community, providing an important service for the Maltese migrants. Jean, the oldest in the group, spoke of the way they helped each other,

... my husband had his brother coming from Malta and he went down to meet him and this David S was with his brother. He had no accommodation and my husband's brother said 'You think you can take David home?' ... so my husband - you wouldn't say no to anyone - so he brought him home and introduced him. I said to David 'I've got a boy ... he's got a room on his own. You go with him and then we will try and get something...' (MM4).

Despite this compassion, Jean recognised that the help they provided was basic '*... well I can tell you, in those days, you had no kitchen for them. You only gave them a room and that was it. They all went down to the restaurant to eat.*' (MM4).

The Culture of Single Men

Although society in Malta was described as being sustained by women, in Australia, the culture was dominated by single men. The descriptions about life in Woolloomooloo and Darlinghurst provide insights into the life led by seasonal male migrants whether in Europe or Australia. Maltese men worked on cane -fields, then moved to mines in Broken Hill during the off-season, returning to the cane-fields when cutting recommenced. John, post-WWII, and Therese, an Australian-born Maltese who grew up in Blacktown, discussed this,

... my uncles used to mention going to Broken Hill. During the off-season they would travel and end up in Sydney or Broken Hill because you don't make enough money; in fact your lucky if you just exist. The wages for the

Maltese were poorer than the wages for the locals. It was the Kanak legacy that hit us.

Therese added,

My uncle was like yours. He used to work in Queensland, working backwards and forwards.... (MM2).

During these journeys, they also came to Sydney for brief periods joining the Maltese wharf labourers. John tried to convey what it was like in Darlinghurst before the Maltese men's clubs were established

...all the migrants [Maltese], on Sunday, it used to spill out into- about four or five hundred people- on the footpath every Sunday or Saturday for those that didn't work...After the War, when all the Maltese were coming in droves -all around the area of Darlinghurst ... where we lived, they all congregated there in huge numbers and they were all young like myself...(MM2).

John described how in the late 1940s there were laws against assembly where no more than three people could congregate. His descriptions add to the social situation which sustained prejudice against the Maltese,

...and during this time there was no meeting place until the Club was opened in 1951 and the Maltese were coming in numbers. We used to go along William St [a main street in Darlinghurst] where there would be a bit of light - like moths to light - and we used to gather around and hope that when the coppers come - you would see the Paddy Wagon coming - and you just disperse. But that was how it was. There was no meeting place until the Club opened in 1951. There were too many of us and we were all single and living in boarding houses - it was very hard (MM2).

Throughout discussions, the phenomenon of two distinct Maltese communities emerged. Early cane-cutters either settled in Western Sydney on farms or in Darlinghurst /Woolloomooloo living in existing terraces, working on the wharves and in numerous factories in the area. The everyday life in these two areas is a clear example of the 'little traditions' that Stilgoe (1982) refers to in the cultural landscape created by migrants to America.

The distinction between pre- and post-WWII was less evident. There was nevertheless a change after WWII. Previously, priests looked after the interests of the community. After WWII, the migrant profile changed from farmers, often illiterate, to include educated industrial workers. George, one of the educated workers, described how post-war Maltese formed a Maltese Settlers Association in St Peters Hall in Darlinghurst in 1946. Increasing bureaucratic approaches to the needs of Maltese migrants had to compete with the tight support system embedded in the clubs and the church.

Recent writings about cities often appear to be ‘enthralled by diversity’ (Fincher & Jacobs,1998; Hayden,1996; Sandercock,1996), however, this diversity is often evident in mundane aspects of everyday life (Bass Warner,1987; Westmacott,1992). As a marginalised group, the Maltese could be said to occupy the in-between spaces described by Fincher and Jacobs (1998) where they ignored the way society had marginalised them and developed group solidarity around everyday activities. This confirms Jacobs (1998:259) observation that ‘the accounts of social polarization rarely attend to the various ways in which racialized groups might negotiate and subvert their historically constituted marginalization.’ In many ways they also exemplify Anderson’s (1998) claim that contests around identity and poverty turn space into place. This is brought out by the descriptions of everyday life in Woolloomooloo and Pendle Hill.

Everyday Life In Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst

Because of the place sensitivity of group discussions and their heightened sense of locality, it is important to describe the cultural landscape of Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst. Many quotes bring out the way that the Maltese occupied the urban landscape as a close-knit neighbourhood.

Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst occupies a valley sloping north to Woolloomooloo Bay and the large wharf. The western ridge enclosing the valley is part of the old City with its impressive Catholic Cathedral, St Mary’s, surrounded by parkland which originally made up the Government Domain. The eastern ridge consists of terrace houses and occasional mansions of Kings Cross. To the south, the ridge-line is defined by the main thoroughfare of Oxford Street, an old but vibrant shopping precinct. Half way up the southern ridge Woolloomooloo becomes Darlinghurst but it is not a clear demarcation. The precinct consists of parallel roads running north-south intersecting with lesser streets and narrow lanes forming a complicated grid. At the peak time of the Maltese presence, houses in the precinct were mainly terraces of various sizes, many with rooms in attics, some humble single and two-storey dwellings, others large three-storey terraces with below street level basements. Interspersed in the close fabric of

terrace housing were occasional factories, schools and churches. There were also corner shops and pubs along the waterfront. Much of this still exists.

The area is renowned for its Australian working class character and has been the site of intense battles between urban development and Australian worker housing culminating in the Builders Labourers' Federation Green Bans (Ashton,1993). Despite all the notoriety that this area has received little has been said about the fact that this has been a strong Maltese precinct since the 1920s. The following descriptions of aspects of Maltese life in the area reveal a cultural landscape of little traditions that appear to have gone unnoticed by the mainstream Australian community. Table 6.3 shows the phenomena and places developed about everyday life for the Maltese in Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst.

TABLE 6.3.

Everyday life for the Maltese in Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst.

Phenomena	Places telling the story.
A religious community.	St. Mary's Cathedral, Sacred Heart, Darlinghurst.
A gambling community.	Wentworth & Harold Parks, the clubs, corner stores.
A working community.	The wharves, Crown St hospital, factories.
Life for women	Streets of Woolloomooloo, Maltese shops.
Meeting other Maltese	Clifton Gardens picnic sheds, Paddy's Markets, La Perouse.

A Religious Community

Maltese migrants are considered to be one of the most devoutly Christian ethnic groups in Sydney (York,1988:699). The Parish church is the centre of community life. In Woolloomooloo, St Mary's Cathedral was the Maltese parish church. It was important, however, for the Maltese to be able to confess in Maltese, and the only Maltese priest, Father Bonett, was at St Fiace, Leichhardt. Father Bonett came to Australia in 1916 and was the first resident Maltese priest in Sydney. His particular importance emerged during the meetings.

When we were living in Nicholson St [Woolloomooloo] - the beginning of our life here[1914], the Maltese used to go to Leichhardt to Father Bonett for confession.
Jean B.
There was no one else though. They had to find someone who spoke Maltese.
Mary V (Jean's daughter) (MM4).

Father Bonett died in 1928 leaving the Maltese without a priest until 1946 when Father Cassar, a Maltese migrant who had grown up in Woolloomooloo and trained as a priest in Malta, returned to take on the pastoral care of the Maltese in Sydney. Both men are highly revered and their graves at Rookwood were suggested as important heritage sites for this community.

The church not only provided pastoral care, it also provided schooling for Maltese children growing up in Woolloomooloo. Members of the group also describe their school days at St. Mary's school. All their weddings, christenings, and funerals occurred in St. Mary's Cathedral.

Thus the Maltese lived in Woolloomooloo as if they were in a village, working locally, and worshipping in similar large impressive churches to those in their villages in Malta. As George said '*One of the things we used to listen for when we first arrived in Australia were the Bells of St Mary's - "Oh gee!" We would say, "this sounds like Malta!"*' (MM1).

As the Maltese community grew in Woolloomooloo people began to move up the hill towards the convenience of Oxford St, as a result, Sacred Heart Church in Darlinghurst became the focus of community worship. George tried to analyse the changes which occurred,

...they went to St. Mary's because it was closest and that was their parish church and they all lived down there, ... And when they started moving up, after the war, ... Darlinghurst - Sacred Heart is up here and it became Maltese-ish ...

John, corrected him,

St Mary's was just as far, only you go down hill for us ... the first one we baptised in St Mary's, the other three was in Sacred Heart and college, they went to St Mary's, but for primary the four of them went to Sacred Heart. (MM2).

Tensions between George, the bureaucrat who tried to speak for the Maltese people, and John, the factory worker who spoke anecdotally about himself and his community, highlights the value of discussion groups where generalisations can be challenged by individual experiences.

A Gambling Community

Despite being such a devout community, there was an equally strong male culture of clubs and gambling. Men's clubs in Malta play a key role in everyday life. They are places to eat, drink and gamble as shown in Plate 6.5. In Malta clubs are part of village life, but in Australia, because the Maltese were mainly single men, clubs also had a significant role as migrant places.



PLATE 6.5.

Interior of Sydney Maltese club in 1957.

(Photo supplied by Joe B., Maltese group participant).

There had been one club in Woolloomooloo in the 1930s, the Ta'Rizzu Club. York (1990:149) indicates that although they were little more than gambling dens, clubs fulfilled important functions associated with boarding houses, including acting as post offices for the cane-cutters. In an attempt to provide something more wholesome the Melita Club was established in William Street, Woolloomooloo in 1922, with Father Bonett as the honorary president. It had a family orientation, holding dances on Saturday nights and prohibiting betting but did not last long in this form. By the early 1930s it had moved to Bourke Street, changed its name and reverted to a male gambling club (York,1990:165). By the time the large number of Maltese men arrived after

WWII, it no longer existed. John conveyed the pressing need for a club in the late 1940s,

...after the War, when all the Maltese were coming in droves -all around the area of Darlinghurst ... where we lived, they all congregated there in huge numbers and they were all young like myself. ... There was no meeting place until the Il Boy Club opened in 1951. There were too many of us and we were all single and living in boarding houses - it was very hard... (MM2).

John added 'Il Boy lasted from 1951 and right through to about 1976-78.' Joe, the post WWII migrant who supplied the photograph above, explained the atmosphere of the clubs,

... it was a carry on from the old coffee shops in Malta - we had one in our village. They [the men] come from work - they talk about football - you don't see any women in there; the women are at home cooking... (MM2).

John spoke very warmly about Il Boy club, 'The twenty five years that I lived in the 'Loo I didn't miss one night of going to the Club - I couldn't live without it!' ... when I went back to Malta ...that's what my father did and my grandfather' (MM2). Plate 6.6 shows the site of the former Il Boys club in Darlinghurst, now a restaurant, while Plate 6.7 shows the back of the club which is relatively unchanged.



PLATE 6.6.

Site of former Il Boys Club, now a restaurant, Woolloomooloo. (A.P.1996).



PLATE 6.7.

Back lane behind former club with few changes. (A.P.1996).

Post-WWII clubs were more than gathering places, they were also kitchens and dining rooms for single men. The network of boarding houses relied on the clubs to feed their

boarders who were not given cooking facilities. To accommodate the need for Maltese food, particularly ‘pastizzi’, a cottage industry making these specialised pastries, grew in the basement of one of the large terraces opposite the back entrance into Il Boy Club. Clubs were always hidden from the mainstream community, often as rooms on the first floor of terraces, or at the back of shops or their location was not fixed because of strict laws against gambling. They were further examples of the many hidden migrant places in Australia.

Clubs not only sustained cultural practices, they also fulfilled the important role of providing scribes because many migrants were illiterate, having grown up on farms in Malta where they received no schooling. Again John described ‘... *at the Boy’s Club, there would be half a dozen or so [scribes] – and someone would say “I received a letter from Malta”. Others would go to the priests or come back and said “The priest wasn’t there; read it for us”*’(MM2).

George had been a scribe, however, his activities were within a formalised system. He describes how the Catholic Centre, Cusa House, made available a small room where George and a few other men were able to read and write letters for illiterate Maltese in Sydney,

...In 1948, Father Cassar gave us a little room in Cusa House in Elizabeth St. The room had a couple of desks and every Saturday we used to go there for these poor people to come for us to read their letters. I mean read letters in 1948 that were written in 1939 from mothers. I also read police summons.... We used to say “listen this is what the letter is saying - your wife has been waiting for you to write to her. So we had to write back...”(MM2).

Gambling was an everyday aspect of life. Mary described how as a child she would take her father’s bets to the corner shop in a jar of sugar. Illegal SP betting operations were located in different terraces. Maltese were also keen followers of grey-hound racing and trotting at Wentworth and Harold Parks. Some of the big punters of the time were Maltese living in Woolloomooloo. John explained,

... well, when there was the trots, the dogs, remember, these were all single men and races and horses were just the only pastime ... Wentworth Park was full of Maltese. They had their own dogs. Some had dogs, some of them were just punting. It became an affliction (MM2).

Some members of the Maltese community were also closely involved with the prostitution which was located in three interconnected laneways in Darlinghurst. John described the Maltese man who control the prostitution as the '*Vice King*'. But as Mary pointed out most of Woolloomooloo and Darlinghurst residents were families, the prostitution being confined to three lanes. Despite this, Mary described her unwitting involvement in a local Maltese counterfeit racket when she carried shiny 'two shilling pieces' to the local shop to get 'a penny worth of lollies' and return the change to some local men (MM2).

York (1990) brings out the frequent references to the Maltese being involved in petty crime, particularly during times of economic hardship. Maltese were not eligible for the dole and were not allowed to register for work, resulting in acute poverty during the depression. York (1990:161) highlights that at this time, the Maltese in East Sydney were noted for their poverty, and as a result their crimes were frequently singled out in the press. One Judge remarked in 1932 'in my experience, the Maltese are the most troublesome class of migrants that have come to Australia.' (York,1990:157). Such negative attitudes were not limited to Australia. In Cirillo's report about Maltese migrants in London, he pointed out that 'The opinion of the English people about Maltese residents is not consistently good. This is due chiefly to the court cases of some Maltese concerning their immoral earnings from exploiting prostitutes.' (1959:31).

A Working Community

In contrast to this image, the Maltese were thought of as hard working migrants. Those who lived in Woolloomooloo worked on the wharves, shown in Plate 6.8, as they had done in Malta. John explains, '*...a lot of Maltese worked at the wharf. Even today there are a lot of Maltese...*' (MM2).



PLATE 6.8.

Woolloomooloo Wharf, a site of work for Maltese men in 1950s-70s. (A.P.1996).

Others worked in the numerous large factories in South Sydney. Crown Street Hospital, a leading hospital in Sydney at that time, employed many local Maltese. Women also worked in small industries in the area. The members of the group who lived in Woolloomooloo commented that due to their ingenuity they would work wherever there was work. John explained,

...Sergeants Pies factory, hundreds of Maltese worked there; others worked in the Glass Factory - a lot of Maltese worked there. ... in 1962 they were making the Mini Minor at General Motors. There were a lot of [work] places where if you didn't speak English, it didn't matter. I brought a lot of people from my village. ...Crown St. Women's Hospital, they always had a lot of Maltese working there - always - even after 1950s, 60s, 70s...(MM2).

Jean recalled a Broom Factory, corner Crown and Liverpool St,

...a lot of Maltese worked there - women especially...in Riley St near Oxford St. There was a factory there and I went there to work making men's shirts and underpants and pyjamas and things like that...12s6p a week. ... the girls working with me in the beginning, they used to go to an Italian factory opposite. (MM4).

The Maltese tradition of fine lace-work often resulted in women working as seamstresses in clothing factories. The Portuguese women from Madeira, similarly known for their fine lace-work, worked at Paramount Shirts in Surry Hills where the factory became known as 'little Portugal' (Santos, personal interview, 1994).

George summarised the work profile thus,

You had in East Sydney, 'the wharfies'. They started in cane-cutting and when that dwindled, they came to Sydney. There were two of us [types of Maltese] -there was the one who was a farmer at heart and came to Pendle Hill, bought an acre and started a garden - and the other who knew nothing about farming, decided to go on the wharf - had plenty of muscle, didn't

need literacy and he became a wharfie. So you got the East Sydney wharfies and the Pendle Hill farmers (MM2).

Thus like their relationship with the church, the nature of work had some similarities with Malta where women worked locally in small industries and men worked on the wharves. In Australia, differences lay in work associated with large industries and that village farms, unlike their proximity to the cities in Malta, were geographically separated from the centre of Sydney.

The picture of a tightly-knit community, devout and hard working families, priests and nuns, criminals and prostitutes and an endemic culture of gambling conveys much of the culture of 'little traditions'.

Life for Women

Lives for men and women were quite different. Women ran the boarding houses, younger women worked in factories, children attended school and played in the streets because there were few parks in the Wollloomooloo/Darlinghurst precinct. Mary who grew up in the area, but moved to Blacktown when she married, described everyday life for the women,

... When we lived in Bourke St, Riley St, Crown St - they were all terraced houses. Well, of a night, after tea, everyone came outside there. It was nothing to have twenty, all with their chairs sitting out there. And that was the only enjoyment we had. We would all sit out there. That is why when I went to Malta I thought it was fascinating because it was like how I was brought up [in Darlinghurst]. I used to think 'Oh, this is good!' Not like when we moved out to the suburbs. I used to say to my mother 'It is like a cemetery.'

But when we lived down in Woolloomooloo, East Sydney, everyone sat out there and we knitted and crocheted (MM2).

Maltese women used the Greek shops along Oxford Street but there were also some Maltese shops, particularly small corner shops. Plate 6.9 shows some of the Maltese shops scattered through Woolloomooloo.



PLATE 6.9.

Former Maltese corner store, Darlinghurst. (A.P.1996).

Mary recalled, when she was in Woolloomooloo, ‘...my father used to send me down to Gato’s shop to back a horse for him.’ To which John replied ‘They used to back winners after the race was over because he couldn’t write.’ Mary agreed ‘Dad used to rip it out of the paper and wrap it in a thing of sugar and send me down to the shop’(MM2). Plate 6.10 shows corner the site of the former Gato’s shop.

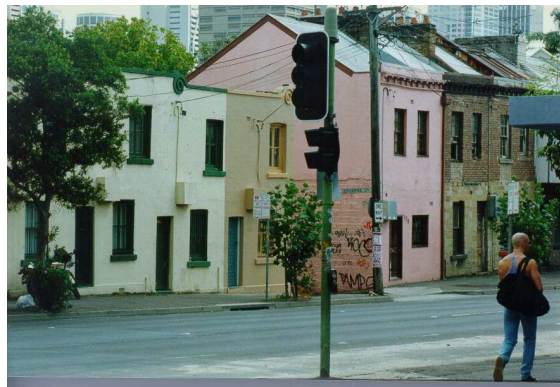


PLATE 6.10.

Former corner store (Gato’s) near lane. (A.P.1996).

Once Il Boy Club opened in 1951, even though it could not be seen, ‘... everything grew around the club’, John remarked, ‘We had the Pastizzi shop - the barber on one corner - three Maltese groceries - all in the area between Liverpool, Crown and Riley Streets’ (MM2). Plates 6.11 and 6.12 show the Pastizzi shop which still exists.



PLATE 6.11

Maltese pastizzi shop in Darlinghurst.
(A.P.1996).



PLATE 6.12

Interior of shop, Maltese men eating
pastizzi. (A.P.1996).

Before the 1950s, Mary recalled *'Well, I remember, when we lived in Woolloomooloo, a man used to come with a horse and cart and sell rabbits and he would kill the rabbit while you were there and skin it! I used to think what an awful thing to do! Because the Maltese wouldn't buy it unless he did that to them.'* Most of the Maltese in Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst kept rabbits for eating in hutches in their tiny back yards. John explained they were kept for rabbit pie, *'...a Maltese dish and no-one will do it like the Maltese do. It is always the same wherever you go. It is a tradition'* (MM2).

On weekends, families would go to Clifton Gardens picnic area by ferry or visit the Botanic Gardens. Mary remembered family picnics and outings *'Dad rolled up a blanket with a tent, make it with a handle and off we would go to Clifton Gardens. ...The Botanical Gardens - on a Sunday, we would all go down there and buy 3d worth of peanuts. That was our big outing. We lived in Woolloomooloo and it wasn't far and you went round there [to the Gardens] and all the Maltese, that is where they used to be...'*(MM2).

The families would also fish from wharves. John described,

... we used to like to fish on the wharves. There was every kind of fish in the Harbour. We used to go there when the mackerel was on. ... We fished from all the wharves, Woolloomooloo, under the Bridge, Walsh Bay - all the different communities - Greek, Maltese - all with a bucket....These were families ... that was our entertainment...'(MM2).

Meeting the Other Maltese Community

There were a few places where the two communities met. One was Paddy’s Market. When inner city Maltese went to the market for fresh produce they met the Maltese from Western Sydney. John explained, ‘*When I came[to Woolloomooloo] in 1950s, a lot of the Maltese went to the Markets - from Darlinghurst to get cheap vegetables - It was all full of Maltese farmers...(MM3).*

Nostalgia for Maltese farms took on many aspects of ‘imagined communities’ (Jacobs, 1990, Anderson, 1993) for some Maltese men who had no farming experience. Mary described how her father longed to have a farm but when he tried he failed due to lack of experience. John similarly spoke longingly of the desire to farm. It was the Maltese farming experience that recreated Maltese small farms on the rich soils of Blacktown and Pendle Hill.

Everyday Life in Pendle Hill/Blacktown.

Table 6.4 summarises the phenomena and places which tell the story of the Maltese in Western Sydney.

TABLE 6.4

Everyday Life for the Maltese in Western Sydney.

Phenomena	Places telling the story
Tradition of little farms.	Market gardens, chicken farms and mixed farms at Blacktown and Pendle Hill.
A religious community.	Wentworthville & Toongabbie Catholic Churches, St Bartholomews at Prospect.
Places for scribes	Solicitors’ offices at Wentworthville, Cusa House.
Life for Women	Farms & selected shops.
Getting together	Ettalong Hall, La Perouse.

Tradition of Little Farms

The first Maltese developed farms in the Blacktown/Pendle Hill area in 1927. Nick’s father was one of these early farmers.

My father came here in 1927 – settled on ten acres of bush and that developed into one of the biggest poultry enterprises in Sydney. Before that why did he come here? He came to Sydney in 1916. At that time the biggest industry in Australia for the Maltese was a season cutting cane in Queensland... We were one of the first families in Blacktown and in those days if you done a season on the cane, you could if you were frugal enough to save money to come here in Blacktown, Pendle Hill with 100 pounds ... would buy you anything from two to ten acres of land...(MM2).

The Maltese tradition of small intensively cultivated family enterprises translated well in the Blacktown/Pendle Hill area. Most farms were only two to three acres. Nick describes how the area was like a Maltese garden ‘...all that was hill after hill of little farms. The biggest farm was two to three acres - ... they were all small farms and they used to grow their vegetables to markets...’ (MM2). Mary B., a younger member of the group who was born in the area, described how one could see the Maltese farms ‘...you’d stand on Windsor Road and you’d look down and it was all farms, all farms you know ...’(MM2). Therese described how her parents started to farm in the area,

...well my father, he traveled cutting cane, then he went to his uncle ... who had a poultry farm...and he worked there....He married my mother in 1939 and they bought land in ... partnership with another gentleman...after they paid for that property they bought their own... near Uncle Paul and Uncle Vince ... they drew lots to see who would draw the corner ‘cause it had a house. There was fifteen acres and they each had five acres...(MM2).

Therese’s description is characteristic of the process of cane-cutting, share-farming, often within families and then owning individual farms.

Many farms grew vegetables, particularly lettuce, however, the Maltese became well known as chicken farmers and by the 1970s-1980s, they dominated the poultry industry in Sydney. Plates 6.13 and 6.14 convey some of the qualities of these farms. Early stages of this industry involved selling eggs from door to door as Nick described his father,

... started growing chickens and he would go to Sydney from Pendle Hill ... with fifteen dozen eggs to sell – half a dozen here , a dozen there. Go and knock’n on the doors to sell ‘um – in the park with the sulky, he had a little sulky and that’s how things started so whether that’s called ‘ingenuity’!(MM2).

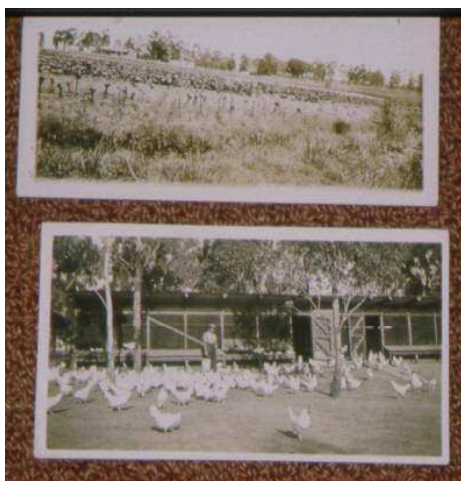


PLATE 6.13

Maltese chicken farm, Pendle Hill in
1950s, photo supplied by Mary V.



PLATE 6.14

Maltese chicken farm, Pendle Hill in
1940s. Photo supplied by Therese G.

Although the farms looked like Malta, houses were generally rudimentary cottages with pitched roofs characteristic of farming communities in Western Sydney. There was however one house which was built with a flat roof. Therese described how her father,

... built a big house. It was mostly corrugated iron and he tried to make it like in Malta. He planted all Maltese plants like prickly pear and figs. We had rabbits ... and another thing my father planted was olives ... he planted a lot of olives, yes he wanted to make it look like Malta as much as possible... (MM3).

Mary V. recognising the description of the house commented ‘...*I used to think ... you still had to put the roof on.*’ This remark was prompted by her commenting in an earlier discussion that when she saw the flat roofed houses in Malta, because she had grown up in Australia, she thought they were incomplete (MM3).

Going to Market

The sense of community was strengthened by sharing trucks which carried produce to market, shown in Plate 6.15. Nick described ‘...*Chileste used to take the vegetables down to the markets. There was two or three other Maltese carriers and there was a lot of growers used to take their own vegetables down there – and there was little stalls ... and you’d sell your vegetables case by case...*’ (MM2).



PLATE 6.15.

Maltese carriers – lettuce trucks in 1940s. Photo supplied by Mary V.

Mary B spoke about the excitement of going to the markets with her father. She commented ‘...*the old markets [Paddy’s Markets], they would be all Maltese.*’ Others agreed with her. She evoked a child’s experiences, ‘... *that was a good experience. We used to get up at midnight, put on a dress because you’re going to the markets ... and all the Chinese with their vegetables ... There was Chinese and Maltese...*’(MM2).

A Religious Community

Unlike many other migrant groups, the Maltese did not build their own churches instead they used existing churches. Only recently have significant financial contributions resulted in the new Maltese Catholic churches in Pendle Hill, Horsley Park and Greystanes.

Maltese in western Sydney were just as devout as the inner city Maltese but their churches were small weather-board buildings and they would walk for long distances to worship unless they were lucky enough to get a lift in one of the trucks. Mary T. said ‘*we used to go to church in the truck. All of us. The ten of us sitting in the back [on lettuce boxes] (MM2).* They frequented local catholic churches in the area following the Maltese or Italian priests from Leichhardt. Mary T explained,

...the Churches were Wentworthville Church, Toongabbie and Prospect - St. Bartholomew’s. You had to do the circuit, because ‘Wentie’ was one day - Toongabbie was another Sunday and Prospect was another Sunday. ... But there were about two to three and a half miles we had to walk to get to church ... (MM2).

There were no schools associated with these churches. In the 1920s –30s, this did not concern the Maltese community because their children did not go to school. Later, children went to Catholic schools in Parramatta.

Places Associated with Illiteracy

Maltese farmers in western Sydney had grown up in Malta without formal education and their children in Australia had similar childhood experiences. As a result many were illiterate. Mary V described the anxiety her father felt about his lack of literacy,

...Dad couldn't write. Dad had no education. I can always remember every cigarette paper that has a top, they had all had written E. Barrett. Every piece of paper you could find. 'Cause Dad had learnt to write his name and when Mum used to say to him "Every paper! You're wasting the pens!" He used to say, "So I won't forget." (MM2).

Isolation generated by this phenomenon was compounded by the fact that few farmers had trucks and unlike Woolloomooloo, clubs were few and far between. As a result men walked to the nearest township to find someone who could read their correspondence and advise them. They described a particular solicitor in Wentworthville who acted as their scribe. Mary B. conveyed the impact of this,

...my father could only sign his name so when he had to write letters home to his family he had to walk from Baulkham Hills to Wentworthville to get somebody to write a letter back home and when he received any bills, he would always go to the solicitor... this solicitor had an orchard up near Bilpin ... Dad used to go and help him with the fruit trees...if he got a bill, say the water or electricity or anything like that, he'd always go to him ... (MM2).

The 'little traditions' and ingenuity are again evident in this quote. There is also a hint of bartering expertise which would have lessened the humiliation caused by illiteracy for those in outer Sydney where there was not the camaraderie of clubs.

Isolation for Maltese Women

Illiteracy and intense work involved on farms meant that many women led isolated lives in contrast to Maltese women in inner Sydney. Therese, Australian-born, spoke of her mother's life unreflectively and yet her simple description provides a strong contrast to the way Mary described life for the women in Woolloomooloo,

...she never went out. ... The only friend she has was Mrs S up the road here [gesturing out the window] and she used to go there. But then the grocers used to come and he used to bring the groceries and then you give

him the order for next week. The baker used to come every day with a horse and cart – beautiful fresh bread, crusty crust and the butcher used to come, twice a week, I think and we used to eat the meat fresh then. But then the rest of the time, we'd kill a chook... and the milkman used to come but we only ever bought when the cows were dry because we always had our cows at home. Then Dad started to go to the markets – well he used to bring fruit home by the box, macaroni by the box...

- rice by the bag, interjected Mary T. remembering.

-sugar too, flour by the bag, added Mary B. (MM2).

The convenor asked 'So you were buying food from the Italian shops. You were not establishing your own Maltese food?' This prompted an interesting response from the women in that it provided clear examples of the cultural diversity already present in Australia in the 1920-30s.

No, our shop was the Chinaman's 'Sings' ...They used to come. Therese replied.

We used to get Bortelli's. Mary B. added.

What was that man used to come in the van? Mary V asked. There was a gentleman who used to come and he had material and he'd have dresses.

The Lebanese man! All the women replied in unison. (MM2).

Isolation was considered acceptable because women worked hard from sunrise to sunset on the farms. Mary V, married at sixteen, went from Woolloomooloo to a Blacktown farm. She described her farming life,

...when I married a farmer, I was only brought up on a block of cement in Woolloomooloo. I'd never seen soil ... and I think three weeks after I was married, I was cutting out lettuce and we worked. You didn't need a clock ... he would say from when you could see in the morning to when you couldn't see at night...(MM2).

Living conditions were poor for the Maltese on farms, furniture was often made of lettuce boxes and houses were makeshift. Mary V described the house in which she started married life,

...I went to a timber house that wasn't lined inside. My husband, he put bags on the inside of the bathroom so when you went to the bathroom and got undressed you couldn't be seen ... you had all bags pinned up there ... (MM2).

Therese described how her mother came from Malta via Woolloomooloo to a tin shed on a farm in Wentworthville. She 'had a few chooks' and ran the rented farm while Therese's father worked on the railways, selling eggs in Sydney before and after work. When they had saved enough money, they bought a ten-acre farm in Blacktown. Therese said 'We had a market garden and poultry and like she said, we used to thin

out the lettuce and pick beans and cauliflowers. We were famous for our cauliflowers.'
(MM2).

Mary T described how her mother ' *used to work a two acre ground she had a market garden by herself and us kids.*' This prompted another exchange as members of the group tried to connect the stories with their own memories. Mary V suddenly called out,

Youse grow strawberries!
We grew strawberries. Mary T replied.
Your brothers used to sell them on the corner of Western Highway and, what was that, Greystanes Road? Mary V. exclaimed remembering.
(MM2).

Getting Together

Social life for the Maltese in western Sydney was quite different to life in Woolloomooloo. There were a few men's clubs, usually in sheds on properties or part of someone's home. The women would meet at dances in a Hall on Ettalong Road in Greystanes. Mary V described the way they would gather in the hall on a Saturday,

...for a long time we used to go there every Saturday. The mothers used to sit down while the girls danced and the men used to sit that side and the girls this side.... It used to have a verandah on the side ... used to leave the prams there – it was a closed in one and ...Charlie F... he was single at the time and it was his job to rock all the prams when the babies started to cry...(MM2).

This light-hearted description evokes different images to dances held at the Trocadero or Paddington Town Hall for inner city Maltese.

Picnics were occasionally places where the two Maltese communities would meet. La Perouse was a favourite picnic place for the western Sydney Maltese. Mary V

...La Perouse was another spot. You would see the Maltese trucks - the farmers would have their trucks and in those days you could put as many people as you liked on the truck....We would put lettuce boxes in the back of the truck, ... and people would sit on them... You would always see someone you knew! ... It wouldn't take us long because at 5.00am in the morning we'd be gone (MM2).

They were, however, always conscious of the responsibility of having a farm. Mary V explains, '*And when we went to the beach, all we had on our mind was if it is too hot, the lettuce won't come up or we've got to leave because we got to go back and cut the lettuce...*' (MM2).

The close proximity of the Maltese community in the inner city was in strong contrast to the distance and separation experienced by Maltese in outer Sydney. They would walk long distances to go to the cinema in Parramatta on Saturdays.

These descriptions convey the everyday life of the Maltese in inner and outer Sydney and how the Maltese experience in Sydney resulted in a set of places which tell their particular migrant story. Many of these places in inner Sydney continue to exist but are not known as Maltese places. In contrast, few Maltese places in western Sydney remain. The following discussion summarises Maltese heritage places in Sydney.

Heritage Places for the Maltese Community

Unlike the Lebanese group in Chapter Five, the Maltese did not reflect deeply about the significance of their heritage places in terms of Australian cultural heritage. They considered that the Maltese cultural landscape can best be described as two distinct precincts with some tenuous connections, Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst and Blacktown/Pendle Hill. They represent a form of continuity which linked the early cane-cutters, farmers and dock workers. Both precincts evolved in parallel representing a time-line of Maltese migration to Australia from the late 19th century to the present. The communities were known about in Malta, so the Maltese knew before they arrived in Sydney where to go and whom to see. Because of the tightly knit community structure built around the Church, precincts rather than single places more clearly represent Maltese heritage places in Australia. The following Statements of Significance describe the meaning of their heritage for the Maltese.

Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst Precinct.

The Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst precinct from Woolloomooloo Wharf up to Oxford St and from Bourke St west to St Mary's Cathedral represents the site of the inner Sydney Maltese community from 1910s to 1970s. The precinct still has the same street layouts despite the intervention of the Eastern Suburbs Railway and the Eastern Distributor Tunnel. It also has sustained much of the nineteenth century building fabric which was used by the immigrant Maltese. The precinct includes a number of Maltese heritage items including the boarding houses along the north side of Liverpool St between Crown and Riley Sts, sites of shops and clubs and the existing churches (St Mary's and Sacred Heart) and their associated schools. Other buildings are sites of former factories where the Maltese worked. Woolloomooloo Wharf at the northern edge of the precinct was a point of arrival in Australia, a site of work for Maltese wharf labourers. It was also a site for recreational fishing for Maltese families.

FIGURE 6.1.

Statement of Significance for Woolloomooloo/Darlinghurst Maltese precinct.

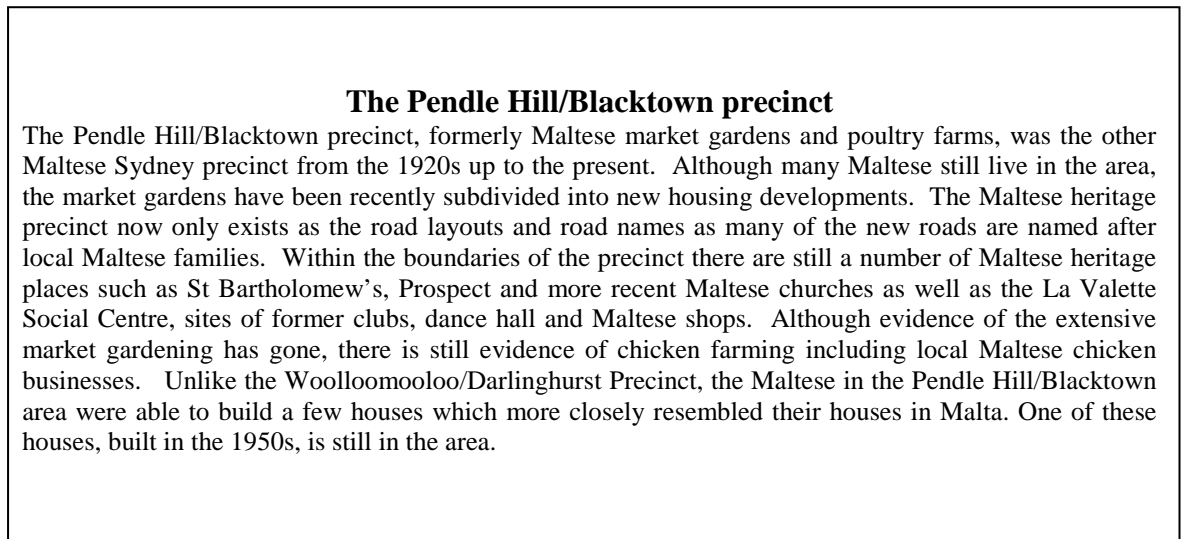


FIGURE 6.2.

Statement of Significance for Pendle Hill/Blacktown Maltese Precinct

Maltese heritage in Australia highlights the vulnerability of migrant places as tangible evidences of heritage. Tangible Maltese heritage in western Sydney has virtually disappeared, whereas in Darlinghurst, the physical fabric of old houses, streets and lanes remain but perceived as working class Anglo-Australian heritage. The Maltese presence persists as anecdotes within the Maltese community, with few clues to an outsider of their former presence.

The Maltese contribution to a sense of place in the urban cultural landscape of inner Sydney has been subtle. In contrast, the Maltese presence in the peripheral areas of western Sydney has been more tangible as a collection of small market-gardens and poultry farms. The Maltese study draws attention to the ephemerality of migrant places. Most farms have disappeared under new housing developments and the visible Maltese presence in Darlinghurst exists as one shop – the pastizzi shop in Crown Street. These are Hayden's (1995:100) 'fragile traces' but not because the Maltese have been

marginal economically, but because the community has aged. Such 'fragile traces' were willingly relinquished in order to realise their economic assets in their retirement.

Spatial Relationships Emerging from the Maltese Study.

In Chapter Two, I argue that the central concept that links migration, place attachment and identity is 'national identity'. For the Maltese, a culture of continuous occupation by others, there is a schism in the concept of national identity. This appears to be based on class, the educated aligned with the national identity of the occupiers and the uneducated aligned with the church rather than 'nation'. This apparent lack of identification with the nation appears to have enabled Maltese migrants to occupy a marginal space of their own making. Within this space, they have been able to live out their lives of 'little traditions' creating, unselfconsciously, an environment which is in many ways similar to that of Malta.

The experience of migration has also resulted in their occupying a different space; the space of itinerant cane-cutters and miners, both activities unknown in Malta. There were nevertheless some similarities, as the Maltese island culture has long been based on seasonal migration. The distinguishing characteristic of self-sufficiency and independence may also result from their small island culture on which they only ever had a tenuous hold because of the ever-present threat of over-population and unemployment.

By avoiding competition for a position in the exclusive white national space of Australia, they have been unaware of changing policies from assimilation, integration to multiculturalism. Such changes did not affect their self-contained lives in inner and outer Sydney. Because they had been victims of a form of dispossession by the British and early and persistent victims of White Australia, their world was assuaged by the Catholic Church. They coped by showing intense interest in their local space and their effective and independent forms of support in this space. Interestingly, despite the racism experienced by early Maltese migrants, Australia was the preferred destination for the post-WWII migrants. Propaganda about Australia being the appropriate place for the Maltese, explained by York (1990), was a clear example of the British trying to control 'colonial space'.

The mainstream Australian essentializing of Maltese identity (Bhabha,1990) has often been associated with petty crime. For the Maltese, however, it became evident from discussions that petty crime was seen as a larrikin phenomenon associated with Maltese male culture. In the main, the Maltese saw themselves as predominantly devout and family-based and were not embarrassed about their reputation in the mainstream community. I would argue that the stigma of marginality (Shields,1991) is only a stigma if the group accept 'positional inferiority' (Said,1978). The Maltese, fortified by the church and the pastoral care of their clergy, maintained a social autonomy which accommodated opportunistic behaviour as legitimate within a marginalised group, particularly in times of economic hardship. The role of the Catholic Church transcends Australian national space. Maltese clergy answered to the Vatican, not Britain nor Australia.

Their disregard for authority, noted by York (1990) and Cirillo (1959), and freely discussed by the group, could be attributed to their independence and disinterest in being accepted by the keepers of the national space. It is interesting that they created few territorial signs. Their presence was palpable but invisible in contrast to the Greeks, Lebanese, and Vietnamese. Nor have the Maltese been exoticized as different. For the inner city Maltese, their cultural identity has eluded appropriation by those seeking the 'exotic other' because their humble and everyday traditions superficially appeared to be so similar to the working class Australian.

The Maltese are an example of a group who has occupied a form of 'space-in-between' where they have been neither British because of their complexion nor European, because of their British passports. In a similar vein they have occupied a space where they have eshewed connections with the noble traditions of their various occupiers unlike other peasant communities such as the Greeks, Italians, Lebanese and Vietnamese. There has also been space between their geographic locations where they occupy both centre and peripheral spaces with only slight connections. Similarly their connections over time are ambivalent. The apparent seamless connection from the late 19th century up to the present is tenuous, shown when a nephew met his uncle, who had never known his sister, the boy's mother. The Maltese have shown their continuity more by being true to their 'little traditions'. They have not moved into the gentrifying

phase of the last period of the migration process so evident in the Greek, Italian and Lebanese communities.

In this space-in-between, most of the traditions have been translocated from Malta unmediated in the inner-city enclave however, the farming community has been separated from traditional village life in Australia. In many ways the Maltese farmers explored Jupp and Freeman's (1992)'frontier space', sustaining the isolation of the frontier despite their proximity to Sydney. Unlike the notion Australian frontier space described in Chapter Two, the Maltese in western Sydney have occupied a frontier space which has been egalitarian and communitarian and therefore similar to the North American model. They have sustained this until recently when they have sold their farms for residential developments thus obliterating any evidence of their quiet presence.

Traditionally, place attachment for the Maltese migrant was tempered by their reluctance to relinquish Malta as their home. Their migration was always contained within the ethos of a geographically- and time-extended version of seasonal migration. It is therefore interesting to witness the place dislocation experienced by Australian-born Maltese who were having to identify their Maltese culture, such as Mary T's description of trying to learn the Maltese mass in a church in western Sydney. Place attachment for the Australian-born was more evident as memories in Australia. It was here that Lechte and Bottomley's notion of hybridity and the collage/montage effect (1993) was located but in a reverse order, Australian-born incorporating Maltese traditions rather than Maltese incorporating Australian culture.

Place attachment is revealed in the power of everyday life and 'little traditions'. The Maltese exemplify Greenbie's (1981) 'proxemic-distemic' descriptions of space/place territorial dynamics. Inner-city Maltese sustained a 'proxemic' village community life within the urban fabric of a major 'distemic' city where the main Cathedral complex was their parish church and local school. The Maltese also exemplify Low's (1992) observation that the process of place attachment can simply occur by unselfconsciously living in a place. Like other migrant groups, they sustain 'genealogical' (Low,1992) attachments to Malta even though for half the community these attachments are for an 'imagined community' (Anderson and Gale, 1992; Jacobs,1992).

For the farming community, their cultural identity was visibly evident as a collection of small farms, but not strongly sustained as a close-knit village community. Instead their isolation provided a tenuous hold on what it was to be Maltese. The physical evidence of the farms has now gone, but the Maltese presence has evolved into a new form, a retirement village and community centre associated with the church. It is here that we see Fincher et al's (1998) concept of migrant culture as a 'recomposition' of cultural identity, the result of two forms of place making in Sydney finally coalescing in a retirement centre. It should be noted that this is also true for the Croatians in Sydney.

Finally, although much has been written about urban redevelopment and gentrification of inner cities and the resulting loss of cultural heritage (Zukin,1988, 1995; Harvey,1993; Hayden,1995), little appears to have been written about the loss of the cultural heritage in the peripheral landscapes of large cities. The cultural landscape of migrant market-gardens and small farms are as much a part of the cultural heritage of Australian cities as the dynamic migrant presence in the inner city. They pose problems, however, for cultural and planning theorists because the migrants themselves are the developers, erasing their own history. They do not conform to the concerns about marginal disadvantage expounded by Sandercock (1998a,1998b), Hayden (1995) and Jackson (1993). As a result, such heritage will be lost to both the migrant and mainstream communities.