



'Mên-an-tol', Cornwall

I am not sure what I was hoping to cure by trying the remedy, but the photograph does show that the stone is not quite as large as it would seem in books. It is fun to think of people seriously doing this 2,000 years ago and who knows, it might have worked miracles then. I have since read that you are meant to do it seven times running to get the full benefit!



A few miles from Mên-an-tol is the Celtic village of Chysauster. The village is very like Skara Brae in many respects but adapted to the much kinder climate of Cornwall. Here, instead of the whole village being underground, the rooms are placed around an open yard. Each little hut had a hearth and was presumably occupied by a separate couple. I can imagine three generations of the same family living as a group and perhaps sharing a common room as seen

in the large house, top-left corner. The animals would have also shared the enclosure for protection from wolves that roamed the moors at night. The wheat harvest can be seen in the field behind.



Aerial view of the 'Celtic village' today



Margie and Holly house-hunting again!

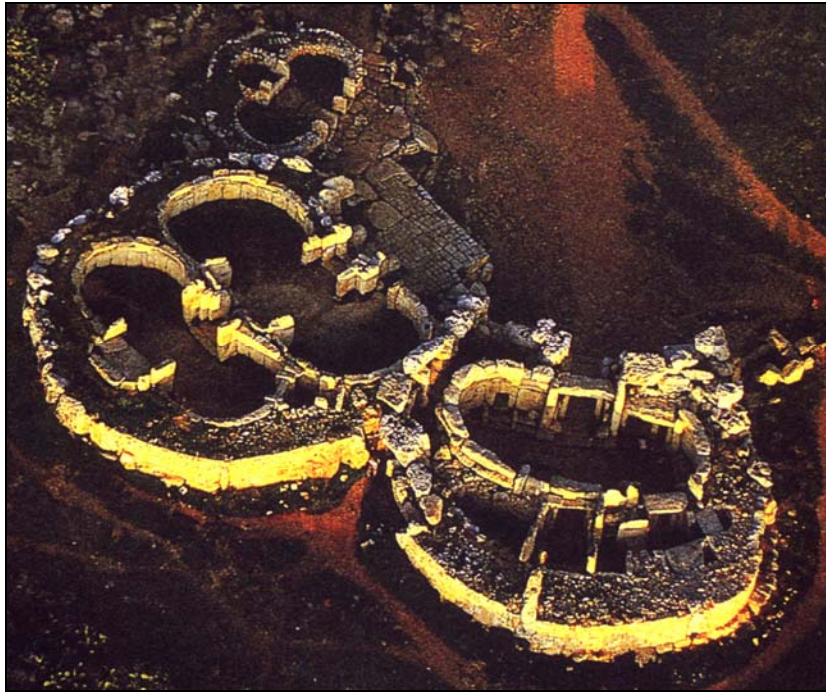
MALTA



Malta and Gozo, land of the Neolithic temples

Some of the most incredible sites that we have ever visited were in Malta. The temples date back to the flowering of the Celtic civilisation that spanned a period of over 7,000 years. *The Maltese temples are the oldest buildings in Europe and predate the Pyramids.* They are a remarkable accomplishment of engineering by a stone-age people, and equal Stonehenge.

At the beginning of the 1980s we were able to take a few days' break from the foundry in Pietrasanta and fly to Valetta from Pisa to see the world's oldest freestanding architecture.

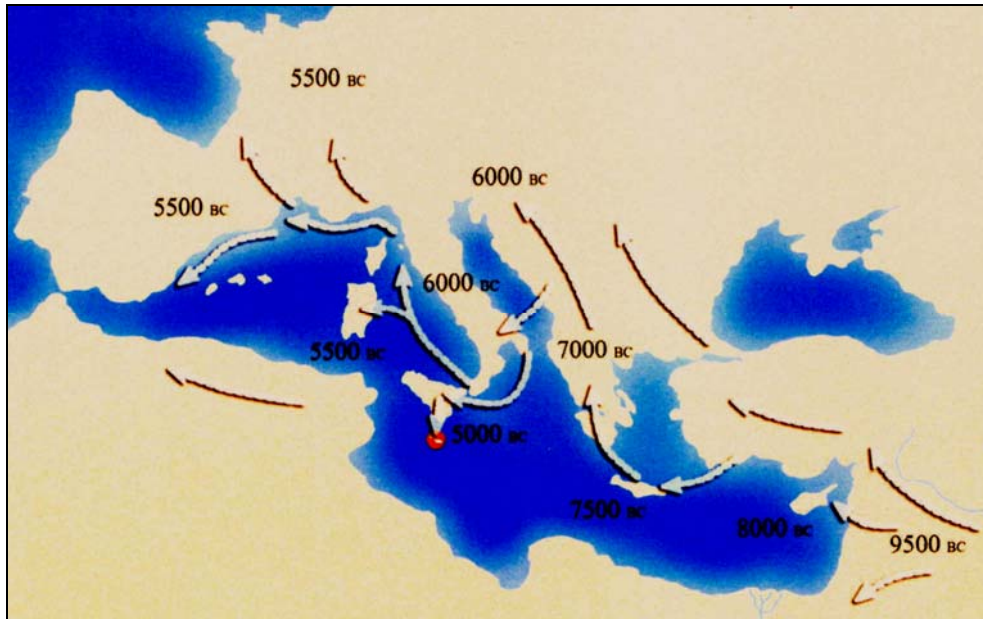


Bird's eye view of 'Mnajdra' temple

The oldest building on the Mnajdra site is the small temple at the top of the aerial photograph. This only has two apses, one on either side of the altar chamber in the centre. Later two larger temples were built beside it using the Fat-Lady floor plan, similar to the statuettes that have been discovered buried in the ruins. The archaeologists are trying to play down this relationship, but I firmly believe the Maltese farmers made a unique leap of imagination to adopt the Fat Lady to the floor plan, and why not? The oldest of these fertility sculptures was discovered in Turkey at *Catal Hüyük* and is dated at 7,000 BC.

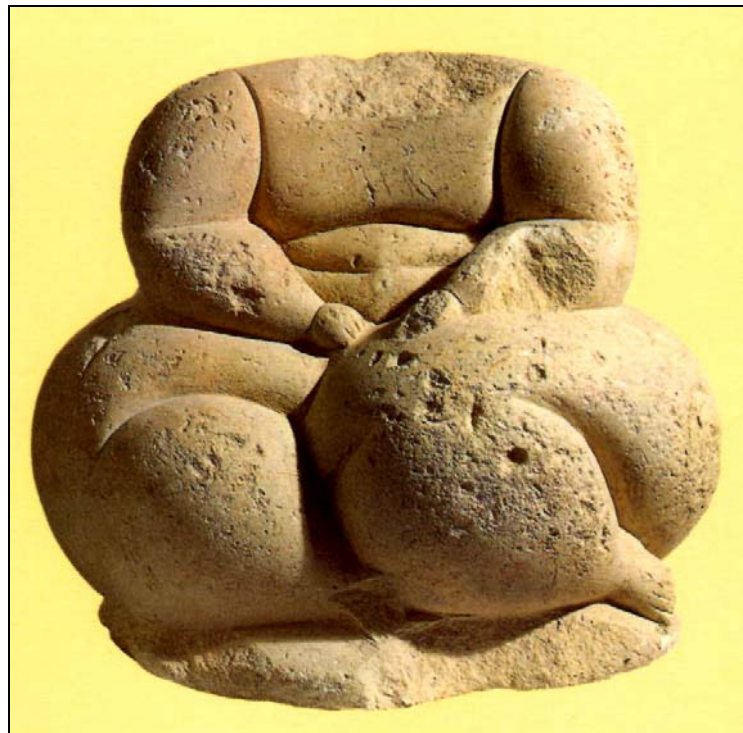


'Fertility Goddess', Catal Hüyük, Turkey, circa 7,000 BC



Showing the expansion of farming from the Fertile Crescent

Similar 4,000 year old sculptures were later found in Malta. The ancestors of the Malta peoples came from Catal Hüyük. The Celts survived by farming the land to grow crops, so the worship of the fertility of the soil must have been of paramount importance, as their survival depended on its produce. What more natural way to celebrate this than by worshipping an over-nourished pregnant woman! The entrance to the temple leads to the womb, then to the breasts before entering the *Holy of Holies*, the head. Entering and leaving the temple must have been an extremely symbolic act.



'Fertility Goddess', Hagar Qim, Malta, circa 2,800–2,000 BC

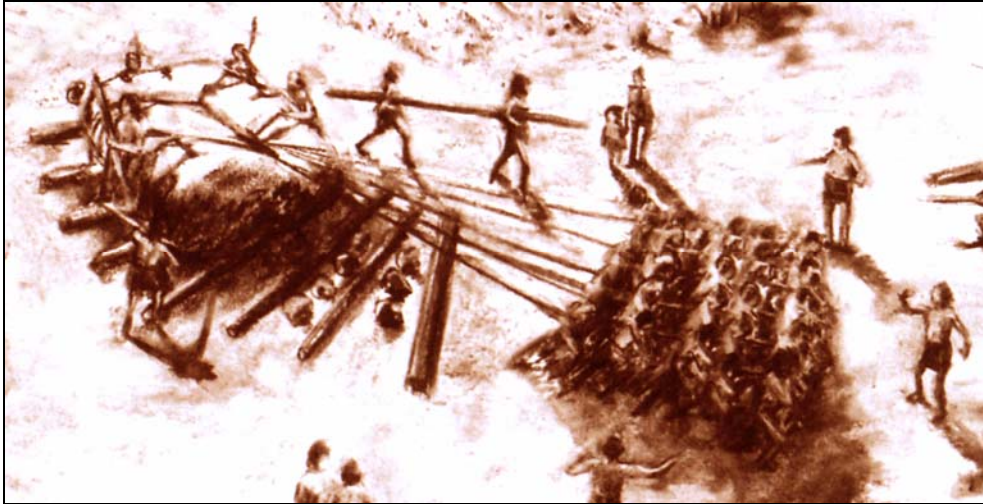


'Hagar Qim', circa 2,800–2,000 BC



How they moved these giant stones to the temple sites is a matter of conjecture. The island was never well timbered, but I am sure that these ingenious people were quite capable of importing logs from Sicily. They needed tree rafts to carry their livestock from Sicily, and then possibly used the logs as rollers, and later as rafters for roofing. Under some of the raised slabs in the walls the archaeologists found 18-inch diameter stone balls that must

surely have also been used as rollers. The drawing below reflects the use of both logs and stone balls, with organised labour and hide ropes.



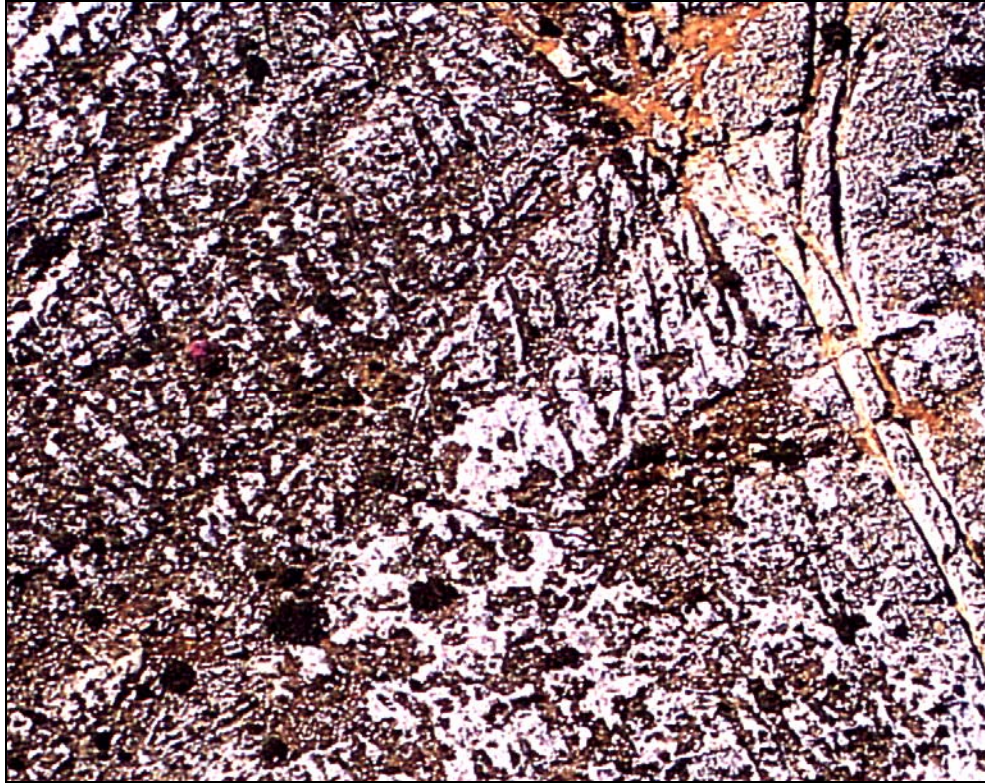
Logs, stone balls, hide ropes and organised manpower



Retaining walls 15 foot high

Another of the island's mysteries are the *cart tracks* that are found in some places, the best example being near *Mdina*, in an area that is aptly named Clapham Junction after the Great Western's train-marshalling yards in London!

Some archaeologists have suggested that these tracks were dug to guide the stone balls that carried the giant slabs. However, after seeing them I am convinced that they were cut by iron-rimmed wheels. Looking at the colossal fortifications of the Arab-built town of Mdina close by, it seemed to me that an enormous amount of rubble must have been transported in carts from the quarry to the city to infill the wall cavity. I have seen a similar track that runs over bare rock in the south of France made by Roman iron-shod wheels that looks identical to the cart tracks of Malta, so I really don't believe they have anything to do with building the temples, and were created much later.



'Clapham Junction', bird's-eye view



Clapham Junction

When we began to build the Bradshaw Foundation website, Malta was the first page to follow the Australian Kimberley paintings and the Brazilian Campeche petroglyphs. The page was based on my old photographs and the guidebooks that I had bought at the time, backed by memory. In 2004 Damon suggested that we should revisit the island, and offer the Maltese Cultural Heritage authorities free space and access to our millions of web-viewers. On this trip we revisited Clapham Junction, and Damon agreed with me that iron tyres on fixed axles, either pulled by oxen or slaves, had made the tracks.

The Maltese National Agency very kindly arranged for an official guide called Mario to show us the temples. The first site he took us to was the Hypogeum outside Valetta. This is one of the most intriguing places in the world, as the temple is *underground*. It was discovered by accident in 1902 when workmen were digging the foundations for a house when suddenly their pickaxes went through the bottom of the trench. They found themselves in the most astonishing complex of caves that had been dug and dressed by hand to resemble the temples above ground! This complex of mined caverns is called the *Hal Saflieni Hypogeum* and is as awe-inspiring a place as the King's Chamber in the Cheops Pyramid.

When Margie and I first visited Malta in 1980 the two of us clambered around the underground chambers that go down some three levels with a guide that spoke no English. The chambers were lit by bare light bulbs and the atmosphere was electric! All this has changed now as the site is run by Unesco World Heritage. A new entrance has been created containing a small museum and a cinema. Only ten people at a time are allowed in and a limited number each day, so if you're thinking of going make a booking!

The Hypogeum was mined in the late Temple Period and has been dated at between 3,300 and 3,000 years old and pre Bronze Age. This means that the interior was cut using flint chisels and stone hammers. In three of the rooms on the main level the rough walls have been smoothed by carving the rock surface so that it resembles the walls of the Hagar Qim Temple.



'Holy of Holies' in the Hypogeum

The Hypogeum must have been used as a crypt as the bones of 7,000 individuals were discovered there. The experts say that it was a place where people spent the night to practise *Incubation*, i.e. healing through dreams. This interpretation of the Hypogeum's use has come about because this is where the archaeologists found the statuette of the *Sleeping Goddess*.

This beautiful sculpture is only some four inches long, but is quite exquisite. The Fat Lady is so deeply asleep you can almost hear her snoring!



Sleeping Fertility Goddess

The scientists think the cult of the *dead ancestors* was closely linked with that of the Fertility Goddess. Perhaps these people believed that their entry into the bowels of the earth for certain religious rites symbolised a return to the womb. Whether this is true or not I don't know, but because such lavish workmanship has been used in the carving of the chambers it seems highly likely that it was not just a crypt used only for burials.

Going down into this quite *incredible* space is *incredibly* exciting, because it is such an utter surprise when you actually arrive in the carved chambers. There are three different levels, the bottom one of which has an *oracle cavity* cut into the wall. If you speak into this two-foot wide by 18-inch deep ovoid cavity, your voice resonates through the whole complex. Can you imagine what you would feel like if you were seeking divine help, spent the night in such a place, and heard a mysterious voice issuing from the bowels of the earth! I think you would believe anything you were told!

UNESCO and the Maltese authorities have done a wonderful job of preservation by putting in a stainless-steel walkway, but somehow all the magic seems to have been drained away now the chambers have become sanitised.

The largest and latest of the temples is called Tarxien but it was begun some 5,000 years ago by the original stone-age temple builders. It is very near the Hypogeum, so probably the two places were used in conjunction, as our churches and cemeteries are today.

Another of the mysteries of Malta is the fact that there seems to be evidence of a 200-year gap between the end of the Stone Age and the beginning of the Bronze Age. What happened to the stone-age temple builders? Were they forced to leave because of drought, or did they all die from a disease? By the time the Bronze Age people arrived on the island between 2,500 and 2,000 BC the temples appear to have fallen into disrepair.

Tarxien is a vast complex made up of three temples, the original, the second phase and then the final temple. The same design of the Fat Lady is

used in all three temples. The Bronze-Age people altered the temple slightly, and started to cremate their dead instead of burying them in underground caves like the Hypogeum. They continued to use the Tarxien temple right up to 800 BC as a crematorium.



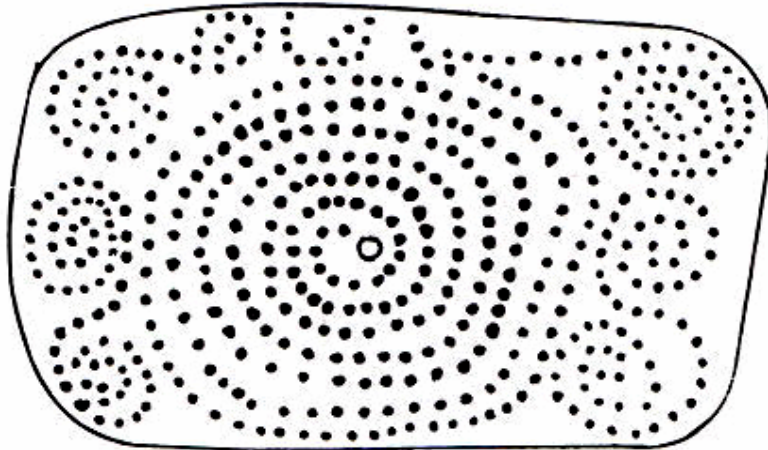
Tarxien spirals

The double-spiral carving found at Tarxien is so important that I think it is worth looking at the history of the spiral and where it appears. The *Lady of Pazardzik* dated circa 4,500 BC has double spirals engraved over her womb.



'Fat Lady of Pazardzik', circa 4,500 BC

The oldest example of the use of spirals as an art form that I know of is from Lake Baikal in Siberia at a place called Mal'ta, where a mammoth ivory plaque dated at 16,000 BC was discovered with double spirals around a central single one that disappears through a hole in the middle and turns into three snakes! This means that the symbol was of significant importance to the hunter-gatherers long before the invention of agriculture.



Double-spiral snake plaque found in Siberia



North African hartebeest with double spiral by David Coulson

In the Tassili Mountains north of the Sahara Desert the double spiral was also used on a hunter-gatherer's sacred carving of an extinct hartebeest.

In 1976 I sculpted a series of maquettes using the double spiral to symbolise Mystic Knowledge. I did these sculptures before I knew of the importance of the double spiral in mythology. I have already mentioned double spiral used by the Anasazi in the Grand Canyon! In my sculpture *Birth Cycle* I tried to capture the essence of the *continuation of life*. (p 590, 591, 606, 614, 616)



Birth Cycle

The other sculptures of the series that used double spirals were named *Adam and Eve*, *Vortex of Ecstasy*, *Marriage of Minds*, *Conception*, *Mother and Child*, and *Fertility*. I used the 'double spiral' of *Bonds of Friendship* as a logo for the Freeland Gallery. Is the spiral etched into our *collective unconscious*?



Bonds of Friendship



Running-spirals at 'Tarxien'

Apart from the spirals found at Tarxien there were carvings of bulls, pigs and goats, as well as a gigantic stone urn that was discovered broken in several pieces, which have been reassembled. It really is an amazing feat of carving.



Giant stone urn

However, the most outstanding sculpture that was discovered when the temple was excavated was the lower half of a giant *fertility goddess*. She measures four foot to the waist and is the fattest *Fat Lady* yet found!



The Queen of Tonga 'Fertility Goddess' of Malta

The cult of the Fertility Goddess must have existed since the dawn of time for Modern Man. Our earliest image is a charcoal drawing of a fat woman found in the Chauvet Cave of France that is dated as over 30,000 years old.



'Fertility Goddess', Chauvet, dated 30,000 years old

Painted beside the Chauvet goddess is an aggressive male hunter wearing a bison skin. The image is a powerful symbolic mixture of Fertility and Sorcerer, Provider and Protector, the Giver of Life and Guardian.

The whole of the astounding exhibition of animal drawings in Chauvet is centred on this image. The drawing is suspended on a natural tongue of rock that juts down from the ceiling of the last cavern that makes up the vast system of caves. The cave is a cathedral of worship, where the hunter gatherers worshipped the thing essential to Life: *Fertility*. The Bear Clan's awareness of a spirit world hidden behind the walls of the Chauvet cave could be the *prototype of all man-made cave system from the Hypogeum in Malta to European Gothic cathedrals* and the beginning of the *Belief of an Afterlife for Man*.

The population of hunter-gatherers that lived beside the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates grew in numbers beyond the carrying capacity of the Fertile Crescent's hinterland. The fact that the hunting of wild animals and the gathering of native fruits no longer could sustain the population, forced the invention of agriculture and urbanisation, so the Celts were born. With the advent of towns, the worship of the *Fertility Goddess* by the farmers changed her role from a huntress to an agricultural deity, and the Sorcerer became the priest who presided over the new cult. If I ever find I have a need to believe in a supernatural being the *Mother Earth Goddess* will definitely get my vote!

As I have already said, when Margie and I first visited the temples 25 years ago, things were much more relaxed, as the tourist stampede had not yet begun. In those days there were no fences, guards or entrance fees, so we were allowed to wander around and sit on the temple wall and eat our picnic. They were marvellous times, as you never felt overlooked or hurried. I am not complaining because I do understand the present problem, but I do miss the good old days when those who were interested were trusted not to despoil our heritage with graffiti, or leave their rubbish behind!



'Mnajdra' temple in 1980

Many of the stones have doorways cut in them that you can pass through and some of these have tie holes for skin curtains, giving the whole place a domestic air. Rooms with cupboards and doors with curtains!



Doorway into the past at 'Mnajdra'...



...and 'Hagar Qim'

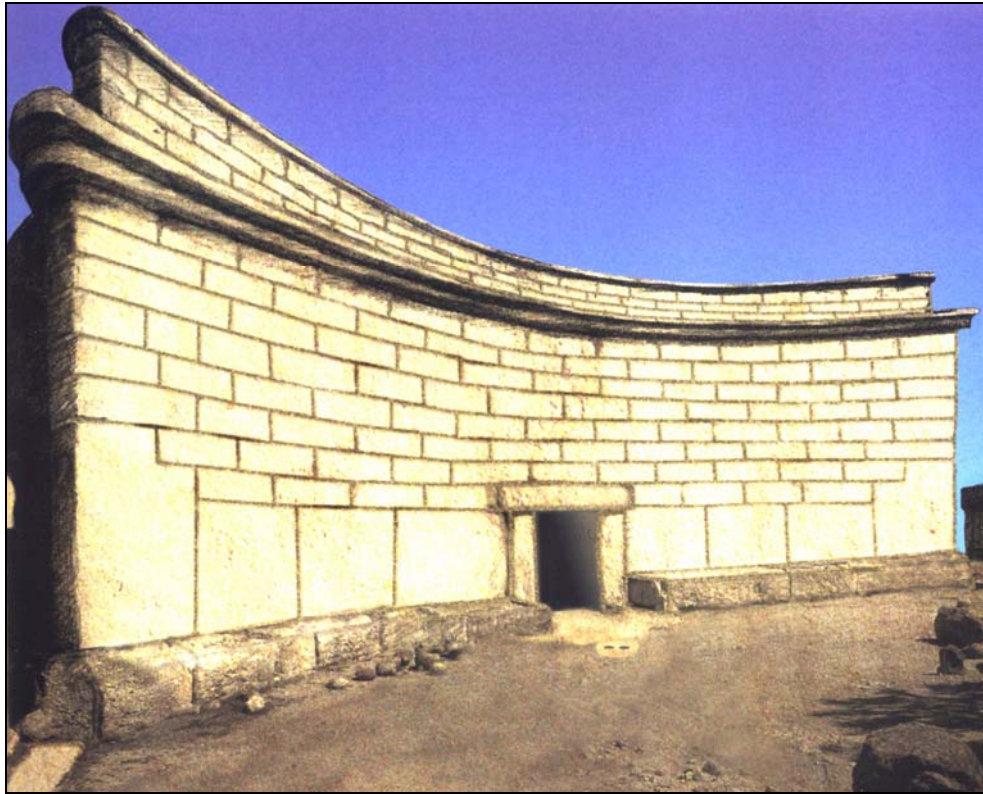


'Mnajdra' apse decorations

To roof the temples the builders must have used wooden tree trunks for rafters, probably imported across the sea from Sicily, and then covered them with wattle and mud daub, or skins. Fortunately the archaeologists have found a model, so we have a very good idea of what the façades must have looked like. To think that these are the oldest buildings in Europe, predating the Egyptian Pyramids, really does make the mind spin with wonderment!



Two fragments of a model found in the excavations



A drawing based on the model above

We also know what the temples looked like when they were roofed because there is an engraving of one on the wall of the Hagar Qim temple.



▲
'Mnajdra' temple wall with architectural carving

The shape of the temples almost echoes the shirt covering the Fat Lady's knees and the pillars her legs, or is this just my imagination talking?



Architectural carving, or Fat Lady's skirt and legs!

The Maltese temples are as mystical as anywhere I have seen in the world. In fact, my first experience of the body vibrations similar to the ones I later felt in the Cheops Pyramid with R III, were at the temple of *Ggantija*.

In those days, I was recording our trips on Super 8 film and to get a shot of the temple interior I backed right into one of the altar recesses, the first one to the right of the main entrance. When I held the camera up to my eye I found I couldn't hold it still because my hands were shaking so much. Somewhat startled, I stepped away and taking a big breath, tried to film again. Perfect, no shakes! What was going on? I stepped back onto the first spot and began to shake again. Luckily we were alone, so I called Margie over and asked her to stand on the same spot. She said she felt something, but nothing worth mentioning, so I showed her what happened when I had stood there. It was all very odd and left me with the sense that some kind of powerful force was emanating from the earth.

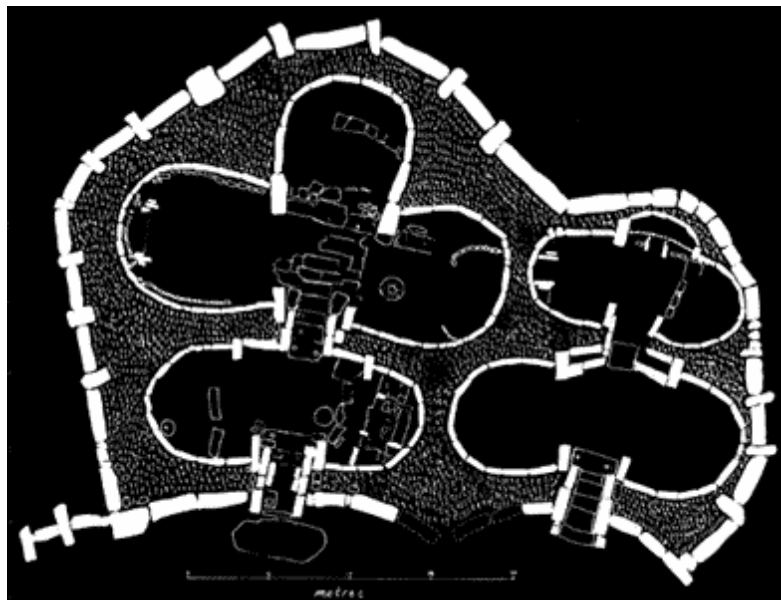
When we crossed over to Gozo with Damon on our 2004 visit to see the Ggantija Temple I couldn't wait to see if the same thing happened again. The museum had arranged for a young man called Albert to show us around, and when I told him about my experience, he said that other people had also felt odd things happening to them on the site, which was somewhat reassuring!

We walked over to where I had vibrated and found that the apse had been roped off, but Albert said I could step inside and see what happened. Nothing did, my batteries were dead! Damon was dying to have a go as he had discovered that he could dowse for water using two wires. Albert disappeared to find a wire coat-hanger, which Damon divided in two, and then set about exploring the area I indicated. Soon we had gathered quite a crowd of onlookers wondering what the hell we were up to! Sure enough as Damon slowly walked over the area the wires opened. Not only for him but also for his wife Sam and Margie, much to their delight, but not mine! Old Age?



The massive back walls of 'Ggantija' on Gozo

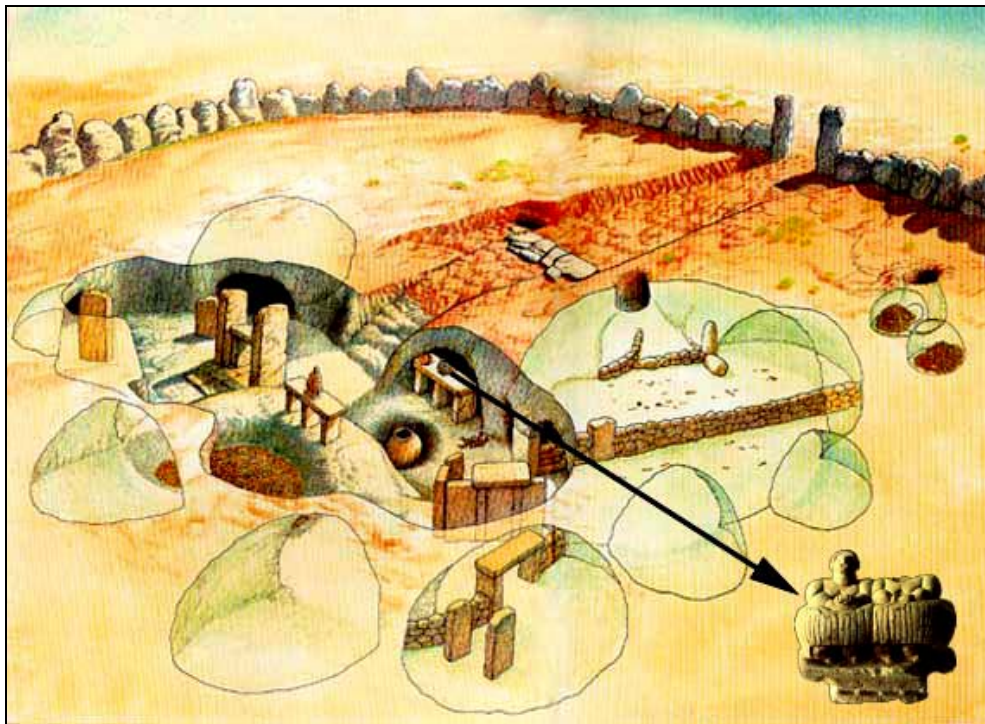
Ggantija is the world's tallest free-standing stone architecture. The cupboards built into the Ggantija Temple walls remind me of the houses of Skara Brae in Orkney. The people in Malta were Celts, the same race as those who built Carnac, Stonehenge and Skara Brae. The Celts dominated the whole of Europe; from Turkey across Brittany into Ireland, down to Portugal and up to Scotland, and they all worshiped the *Fertility Goddess*. At Ggantija the same design was used right throughout the whole temple-building period. To me when you look at the plans of the temples there is no doubt that the layout of the buildings represent a *giant fat woman, the Fertility Goddess, Mother Earth*.



'Ggantija', on Gozo

One of the interesting things about the Maltese goddess statuettes is that most of them have heads that can be removed. No one knows the reason for this, although it's suggested that different heads were used for the four seasons.

On Gozo near Ggantija there is an underground mortuary similar to the Hypogeum on Malta. Intriguingly in this mortuary the bones of women were found stored in a separate cave from those of men!



'Xaghra Circle' on Gozo



Twin Goddesses of 'Xaghra'

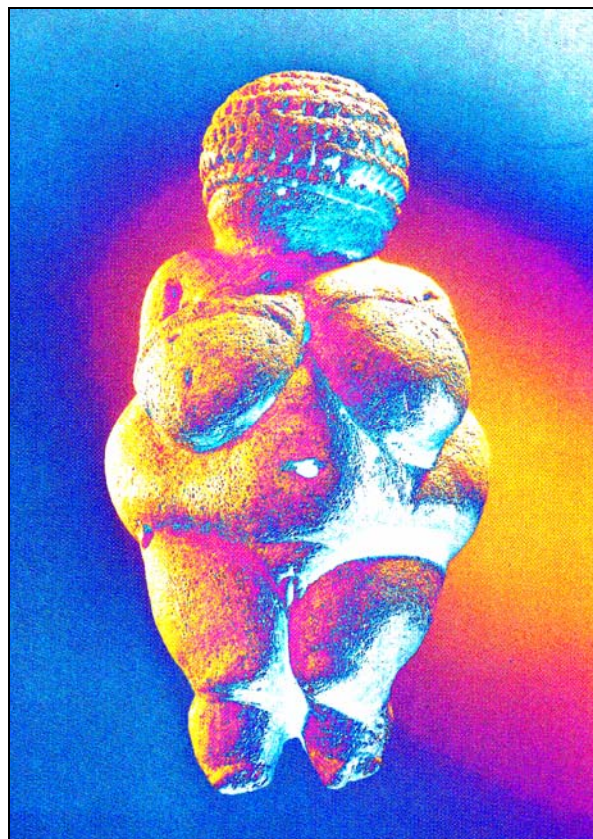


Detail of Twin Fat Ladies' hands

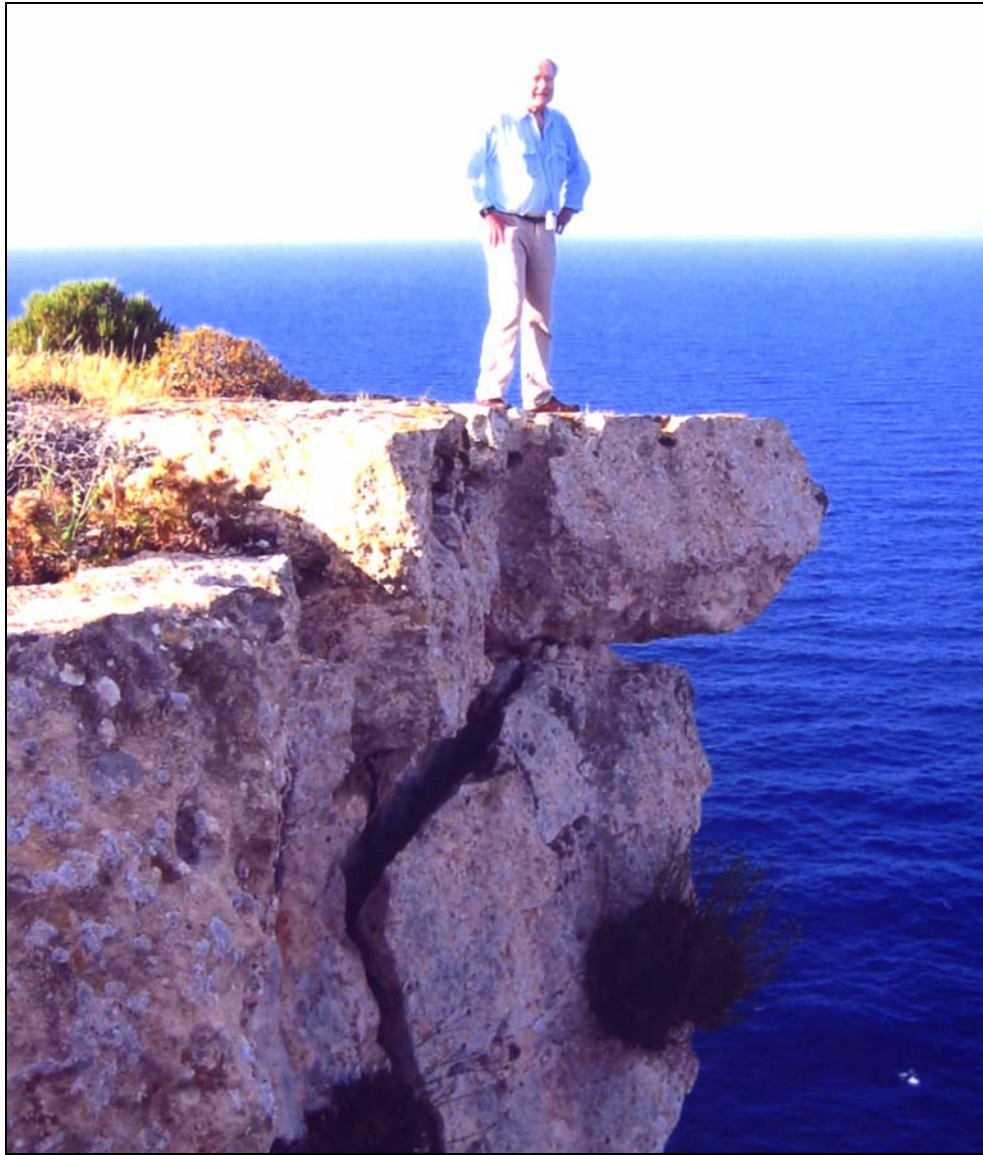
The twin Fertility Goddess sculpture found in the underground vault at Xaghra Temple on Gozo also has removable heads, and fortunately one was found still in position. The lady on the left holds a basket containing a small statuette of herself, while her twin holds a libation cup in her left hand.

The Unesco booklet has a *Foreword* by the Maltese Minister of Education. *In terms of vision and design, the monuments reflect universal values and elements of authenticity that make them unique not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in the fact that these remarkable creations in stone have never been repeated in time.*

Before leaving Malta we went to visit Ghar-Dalam, the oldest inhabited cave yet discovered. The evidence collected here dates the arrival of the first Celtic farmers on the island to be around 5,200 BC.



'The show's not over until the Fat Lady sings'
Venus of Willendorf, Austria, circa 20,000 BC



▲
*The south cliff of Gozo plunges nearly 1,000 feet into the sea below.
The white blob in the bottom right corner ▲ is a fisherman in a dinghy!*

Two nights after our adventure of climbing Silbury Hill with the grandchildren on the Lammas Eve, the still nearly full moon rose as a *blood-red orange*. Through the binoculars it was even more awe-inspiring. Five hours later a storm brought torrential rain, and rolling-drum thunder ending in ear-splitting claps and flashes of lightning that lit the garden with a ghostly white glare. Holly dog was petrified and woke me up by pushing her face into mine and put a paw up for me to hold! Surely the Neolithic farmers, 7,000 years ago, would have been just as petrified by such awesome displays of heavenly fury. The priests and priestesses would have had a heyday! I sometimes wonder if knowing so much about our world doesn't strip it of its enchanting mystery.