

Mr. Richard Stedall



Following 27 years working for the UK Met Office, specialising in winter weather, I decided I needed a change so followed my heart and moved from the UK to Malta at the end of 2017 to head up the new "Malta Bus Archive" project within the National Archives of Malta. It forms a key part of "MEMORJA" which aims to record a more personal history of Malta and Gozo via the preservation of films / DVDs, photographic collections, diaries and other documents, and carrying out interviews with those who have worked in specific industries (such as Malta's rather unique bus industry as it existed up to 2011).

I first visited Malta just before my 15th birthday in the Spring of 1987 on a short family holiday, staying at the now demolished Mellieha Bay Hotel. On that visit I was not really interested in the rather strange old buses that were running - I wanted to see the ex-UK buses that had replaced around a third of the fleet between 1981 and 1987. However on return from that trip I was given a list of Malta's buses which gave me some basic details of all members of the fleet and I started to wonder what exactly the old buses were that were listed.

I came back to Malta in 1992, age 20, and started to take photographs of all the buses and coaches I saw operating, and slowly started to return more frequently to get more photos and start to do some of my own research. From 2001 I started coming every year, slowly bringing more and more people with me - around 2009 the size of the visiting party exceeded 40!. From 2006 onwards I was given permission to start to make limited notes from the old paper files that ADT (now Transport Malta) had in their archive - in some cases going back to the early 1930s for the buses.

This meant that by the time I arrived here full time in late 2017 much of the initial work to log the history of every single bus and coach on the island had reached a certain level of detail from which I could then move on. As well as the public route buses and private hire buses / coaches, notes have been compiled for the buses the British military used to run on the island, and privately owned buses run by some of the schools and religious houses down the years. Since 2017 the research has moved somewhat to starting to compile notes on the People employed in the industry - owners, drivers, conductors, dispatchers, bus body-builders, and so on.

November saw me publish a major book celebrating 100 years of the bus industry on Gozo. It was 624 pages long and of the nearly 700 copies printed, all bar a very small handful have now been sold. Work has now started on a similar themed book but this time covering the old "orange" route serving Zurrieq, Qrendi, Mqabba, Kirkop, Safi and Luqa, with the hope that will be ready for launch around Easter 2027.