



MALTESE DGHAJSA

Grand Harbour, Valetta in Malta consists of a number of long creeks of deep non tidal water. Because of this and also because many visiting ships prefer to moor away from the Quays (to save money) a “water-taxi” was developed for carrying passengers and their small baggage across the creeks and to and from the ships.

This “water-taxi” is the Dghajsa (pronounced Dysa). It is usually propelled by one man standing, facing forward and pushing on two oars. He stands to one side of the craft probably because by doing so he can provide a larger space for baggage, but most Dghajsas are now equipped with outboards.

Over the years Dghajsas were used by Royal Navy personnel as they could be used for cutting across the creeks instead of going around them and they were considered a legal means of sailors returning back to their ship if they missed the last liberty boat, so could be used as a means of staying out later when on shore leave.

The high stem and stern pieces seem to be mainly ornamental but they are certainly useful in handling the boat and in the boarding and disembarking of passengers.

The decoration follows a strict pattern. The various symbols e.g. “the hands that defeat the evil eye” vary from boat to boat and the name is frequently a popular heroine – “Queen Victoria” – or hero, “Wilson Picket”.



DGHAJSA DATA

Name: Wilson Picket

Use: Transport

Build Date: 1960

Area of Origin: Valletta, Malta

Length: 6.3m

Width: 1.7m