**MARSA (Malta)**

<http://www.worldbanknotescoins.com/2015/05/malta-5-maltese-lira-banknote-1979.html>

Besides Marsa there are four other places in our country whose name consists of the word Marsa joined to another word. These are Marsamxett, Marsaxlokk, Marsascala, and Marsalforn. Each have something to do with the sea, and all make part of a harbour, if they themselves are not harbours. Il-Marsa was so known as doubtlessly it controlled the inner important port. The megalithic remains in Kordin and close by areas, as well as other Phoenician and Roman remains on the Gholja tal-Gizwiti indicate clearly that the harbour was regarded as an important necessity by these people.

The Marsa creek had been an important port for the Romans, and therefore throughout the years, people who were interested frequently noticed some remains of this empire that had reigned in our country for many centuries. Gan Frangisk Abela even mentions a tiny islet in the inner creek where we nowadays find Marsa tal-Inglizi and says that a Greek cemetery was found on it. During Grand Master Pintos reign in 1766-68 the foundations of two groups of storage silos were found beneath the Kordin hill, each having rectangular rooms. On each side of the large building a rock-cut cistern was found, one slightly larger than the other. H. Lewis states that the dimensions were as follows: 115 feet by 80 feet and 100 feet by 65 feet respectively. The Marquis Carl Antonio Barbaro had shown interest in this discovery and had written about it in a book he published in 1794. Amongst other things 260 containers or amphorae with Greek lettering engraved on them were found, and these were used for the transport of wine and other products. Coins that varied since the 3rd Century B.C. when the Romans took Malta shortly before the Arabs were found. Other findings that occurred during the Knights time included baths or thermae, columns, and a marble statue. Other findings occurred later every time that some excavation was taking place.

While excavation in a field was taking place for a foundation in front of the Biccerija (Butchery), in 26th June 1947, some tombs were found. In these, some bone remains and pottery of the Roman time were found. A few years before, in the 22nd of May 1933, excavation was being carried on so as to build the foundation of a house in San Mikiel Street and a tomb dug in rock was found. It also contained some bones and pottery, and it was said that this tomb was most probably of the 3rd Century A.D.

In May 1874 in the northern side of the Gizwiti Hill, a catacomb or cemetery was found dug in the rock. It consisted of 43 tombs. It was said that it had been constructed by the Romans and was used by Christians. Amongst the interesting remains in the catacomb, which was closed some time later, a tombstone was found. This tombstone was said to have been of the fifth or sixth century A.D. On its face an inscription and a carved vessel were found:
Alla Kbir
Fluvius Titus
Ghex LV sena
Il-pajzani,
ghat-tjieba li jisthoqqlu
ghamlulu.
A plan of the cemetery was placed in the Museum of Archaeology. Almost a hundred years later, in 1969, while work on the Power Station was taking place, some remains of a catacomb were found. Some skeleton heads were found, but the pottery had been stolen. One should keep in mind that this area had been disturbed often to make way for industrial buildings and other works.

It is probable that the Romans had their storage silos in Marsa so that there they would be able to unload the cargo and goods from the coast. The historian G.F. Abela mentions a large stone on which there was written that the quay was 1500 steps long and made by the Romans. Quay buildings with large stones were found in the lower part, and most probably its streets went up to the silos. One of the roads went towards Wied il-Kbir where it connects with Wied Qirda, went along the hill and up to Siggiewi. Both sides had rectangular stones beside each other, and small stones in between.

Remains that were found in 1956 indicate all this. These remains show the foundations of olden silos and barriers in Triq l-Istalel that could have served as a sheltered passage for small vessels that went there in search for shelter from storms. Other parts of Roman buildings were found while digging the foundation of a house in 6th April 1939, in Tigrija Street. In the exposed part a layer covered with burnt bones and some rectangular holes cut in rock and cemented over could be seen. Pottery and money from the 4th Century B.C. up to the 3rd Century A.D. were found in these areas. These were proof of the commercial activity taking place in those times.

