

Update of *Sardinia: Women, History, Books and Places* for [www.holobooks.co.uk](http://www.holobooks.co.uk)

In the Preface to *Sardinia: Women, History, Books and Places* (2022), I wrote, 'I managed to book a ten-day tour round the island in 2018, but had to cancel it, and it has since been impossible to return.' With the death in April 2020 of my husband, Derek Roebuck (to whom the book is dedicated), the end of Covid restrictions and an improvement in my own health, I re-booked that tour (with Jules Verne) for 6-13 October 2022. Its purpose was to visit the places I wish I'd been able to visit before publishing the book in March 2022, places that would have had more space in a separate section of Itineraries, as they do in the other volumes in the series 'Of Islands and Women'.

In the Author's Note of the published book I wrote this link to that explanatory sentence in the Preface 'Once it becomes possible to travel safely again, I hope to return to Sardinia and, as far as possible, rectify the omission. If so, I shall put the itineraries on the publisher's website - [www.holobooks.co.uk](http://www.holobooks.co.uk).' I hope this update can be seen as one extended itinerary, going some way to fulfil that undertaking, that it is better than nothing. (There are also updates on the website of *Madeira* and *Crete*, but these may well be out of date by now; there are no plans to further update). The numbers in brackets throughout this text refer to the pages in the book where a particular place etc. has been mentioned.

The tour started in Cagliari, and during the two days there, took in the archaeological site of Nora. From Cagliari the 15-strong tour, with its most knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide, Paola, visited the grand nuragic site *Su Nuraxi at Barumini*. Then, having climbed into the mountainous Barbagia, we were based in Oliena, from there visiting Nuoro and Orgosolo. Then it was onto the *Basilica Santissima Trinità di Saccargia*, in the middle of nowhere, and further east to Alghero with a side visit to Sassari. With a short stop at Bosa, it was on to the archaeological site of Tharros. The tour ended with a night in nearby Oristano.

There is one glaring, and unforgivable omission from the book's index: the important town of Nuoro, not only the home place of Grazia Deledda, but also that of many others, including women anti-fascist activists. Here, with apologies, is the missing entry: 4, 11, 16, 22, 79, 106, 11, 138, 143-46, 149-52, 158, 160-61, 202, 209, 230, 247, 265, 274-75, 285, 287, 297, 302-10.

Having sketched the tour's itinerary, I'll now elaborate, emphasising the 'Places' part of the subtitle of the book. It helped enormously to have a well-fashioned tour itinerary and a guide who knew her subject, even if she did not always know about the women involved. She was usually patient with me, though, when I interjected! And now having read the book, has been good enough to make sure of the accuracy of this update and, indeed, has corrected any obvious mistakes in the book.

On our arrival at Cagliari airport, we were met by Paola. From there we were driven into town and to the Hotel Flora where Derek and I had stayed twice before. My plea to have the same room had gone astray. That first afternoon was unscripted so, it being lunchtime, I hastened to find the nearby restaurant *Niu* (Nest) which I suggested in the book (92) is the location of the S. Francisco church (sometimes spelt erroneously Francesco in the book). Outside this, Violante Carroz, Contessa di Quirra

- otherwise known as *La Sanguinaria* (91-2) - was interred in a sepulchre. I wrote that *Niu* could be approached through the back entrance on Via Mameli - not so: only from the front, at 56 Corso Vittorio Emanuele. I walked through to the back, though, and there, on the right, forming a small part of a carved arch, were remains of the convent. I had lunch outside - possibly where Violante's sepulchre was erected - and was pleased to see that *culurgiones* (280/81) were on the menu. I chose a multi-coloured version. They looked fun, and the sauce was good, but I have to confess that I like my pasta less *al dente* than the Italians do, and I also like food hot! Afterwards I started my hunt to see where my book was stocked; I started with *Libreria Miele Amaro* on Via Giuseppe Manno (82) and was pleased to see that it was there.

The rest of the afternoon was spent visiting the special tourist medical centre - worth knowing about - because I had forgotten to take an essential medication. Your hotel should know about the centre and can make an initial telephone contact. You need to have some sort of proof of being prescribed the medication: I had to ring my Oxford chemist who faxed over a copy of my prescription history. The Eur50 cost just for the Sardinian prescription was somewhat mitigated by the fact that the centre is in the Via Grazia Deledda, with a chemist just round the corner to fill it. In the early evening, I caught up over cocktails at the hotel with dear Anglo-Sardinian friends.

The following day our group was driven in the minibus that was also to take us round the island, to just below the entrance to the *Castello*. That is where I began to realise that Derek could never have managed the tour earlier arranged and cancelled. You really do need to be mobile and have stamina, or a strong supply of determination, to embark on this tour. Previously Derek and I had approached the *Castello* on the little Noddy train that departs from the *Piazza del Carmine*, a step from the Hotel Flora. That takes you into the centre of the *Castello*. Our tour guide, Paola, has an apartment there, so that what she told us as she took us round added a flavour inevitably omitted from my far-too-brief and disparate mentions of our earlier visit (66, 95, 103-05, 124, 132, 203, 205, 232-33, 235 ) (the *Castello* is in the book's index under Cagliari). The page numbers in brackets here might be more useful for a visit. But I will now add more information.

When Derek and I had previously visited the National Archaeological Museum, we approached it through the Porta Cristina, named after King Carlo Felice's well-regarded wife, just one way into the *Castello* (132). On the tour we did so seemingly from the back already in the *Castello* which came as a surprise to me. On our earlier visit, Derek was only fit enough to sit and wait for me to come back to him. As the Noddy train only gave us a short time before the return journey, I raced up and down the Via Marmora looking, rather unsuccessfully, for where various people, particularly the Piercy family (235), had lived. On this tour of the *Castello*, there wasn't a chance to re-explore the street. On our earlier trip, Derek and I ate twice - once for lunch, once for dinner (going up to the *Castello* by taxi) - at a café near the *Elefante* Tower (105), with its good food and marvellous vista; to be recommended. During the lunch trip, I left Derek and raced further into the *Castello* to find the *palazzo* where the royal family lived when they took refuge in Sardinia (124).

The tour took in the *palazzo*, but before we reached that, we were taken into the Pisan built SantaMaria Cathedral which I had previously omitted. The interior is elaborately decorated, and contains several chapels, including that devoted to Our Lady of San

Eusebio, also called Chapel of the Black Virgin because of a sculpture of Mary in that colour, carved in cedar wood from Lebanon. In the centre of the Chapel of Santa Barbara is the painting *Santa Barbara refusing to worship pagan idols*. She is the patron saint of miners and mining (222). Also of interest was our descent into the only one of the cathedral crypts open to the public. There, in what is called the Sanctuary of the Martyrs (discovered at the beginning of the seventeenth century), are stone carvings of the faces of a couple of long rows of 179 Sardinian martyrs, one of whom is a woman (name apparently) unknown. There is also a marble tomb, one of several in the crypts, of a member of the royal family - Marie Joséphine of Savoy (1753-1810), wife of the future Louis XVIII of France. She seems to be the only royal woman in the crypt open to the public.

Out once more into the sunlight, we crossed *Sa Ruga de sa Speranza* between the Cathedral and the chapel *Nostra Signora della Speranza* (Our Lady of Hope). A *ruga* is, literally, and delightfully, a 'wrinkle' which suggests the narrowness of the passage between the two. Our Lady, the Virgin Mary, was also known as the Waiting Madonna, that is, the original statue showed her pregnant, and even in the 1950s, the bronze bell would ring the call to celebrate her on 18 December. The chapel was built as the private place of worship of the Aymerich family, the Marquises of Laconi (102-6). It probably dates from some time after 1535, when the family's coat of arms was awarded; there is a stone carving of the double-headed eagle above the portal. The family's nearby *palazzo* was bombed in 1943; since 2011, use of the chapel has been granted to the Russian Orthodox worshippers (including Ukrainians, of course) of Cagliari, and managed by the Orthodox Moscow Patriarchate. You may find the door open late on a Saturday, or on a Sunday morning, allowing you to look inside this small and deceptively simple chapel - the door was closed and we could only stand in front of it. It is not clear if the statue is still there: I've seen a photograph of the interior with a framed photograph of it above the altar table, though there also seems to be a statue perhaps resembling it in a niche to the right.

Further along from the chapel, is the Santa Lucia Convent (*Via Martini*) founded by Maria Cardona, wife of the Viceroy, in 1539 (95), and where the Angioy daughters were sent to school in the 1790s (120). Beyond that the street still shows signs of war bombing. There is a bombed *palazzo* there which at one time belonged to a French woman who committed suicide following the end of an affair.

Finally of our *Castello* tour is the *palazzo* in which the royal family took refuge in the spring of 1799, and where they remained for some years (122-134). The walk from there down into the town centre took us past the Bastion of Saint Remy and St Catherine's School, formerly the convent where a ceremony described by Mary Davey took place (230-233) and, to the left, the mouth of the *Via des Canelles*. From no.32 the shots were fired that killed the Viceroy, the 4th Marqis Camarassa, an assassination in which Francesca Zatrillas was implicated (102-6). A plaque with the names of the assassins, including hers, was later put up there (104). (I haven't seen it and the tour didn't include those details). At the bottom of the *Castello* hill, our bus waited to take us to the archaeological site of Nora with, first, a stop for an excellent lunch at nearby Pula.

I have already described this site in some detail in the book (44-7), after a visit not enhanced by pouring rain. This time it was bathed in warm sunshine and Paola was,

as usual, a knowledgeable guide. I will make just two additions. At the top of the incline that leads down into most of the site, are the remains of the temple of the Phoenician or Punic goddess Tanit. Although I mention this temple's existence in the book (29), I did not know then where the remains of it were excavated. From there, the rest of the site stretches out below you. The other relevant find was a Roman villa (*Casa dell'Atrio Tetrastilo*), not only with four of its columns remaining - a good landmark - but also with a fine mosaic, probably in a bedroom, of a woman, a nereid (sea nymph), riding a dolphin or an ancient marine animal.

The following day we left Cagliari. For a few miles we travelled in an old-fashioned train to get a taste of DH Lawrence's 1921 trip described in *Sea and Sardinia* (after which the Tour is named). We got off at Mandas where he and his wife, Frieda von Richtheofen (1879-1956), made a stop. The station is festooned with plaques containing Lawrence quotations. I was more interested in her and do wonder how much she, also a writer, contributed to the manuscript. In any case, it is her trip as much as his. Their stop for the night in Nuoro is said to have been in homage to Grazia Deledda, and she is certainly briefly mentioned, though nothing connected with her. You may prefer to read this bit when we visit Nuoro. At 6pm, the couple take refuge in bed in order to get warm, waiting with some impatience for dinner at 7.30. What Lawrence writes then gives a flavour of the book and, in particular, of the wife he calls Queen Bee. I've learned from experience to let readers draw their own conclusions from a quoted text:

When the q-b can stand it no more she flounces up, though the clock from the campanile has struck seven only a few minutes before. Dashing downstairs to reconnoitre, she is back in a breath to say that people are eating their heads off in the long dining-room. In the next breath we are downstairs too.

Their fellow diners are all men, and the couple's meal is meagre.

Our bus awaited us following our brief Mandas stop. Ahead of us lay an archaeological site that I had described, and objects unearthed there, but only drawing upon written material (14, 19, 25-6). It was the place, for example where the stamp for decorating bread that so please me was found. I knew it was essential to visit *Su Nuraxi-Barumini* (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), but when we arrived and saw the impressiveness of it, I realised that my imagination had deceived me. The village that grew up around the *nuraghe* required attention, prompted by what I'd read: for me, with my particular interest in dispute resolution, I was particularly glad to see the remains of what I call in the book *Recinta di Giudizio* (26) (literally, 'Judgement Enclosure') and which Paola calls *Capanna delle Reunioni* ('Meeting Hut').

But everything is dwarfed, in all senses, by the *nuraghe* that looms over the site, and that is even with its top missing. What was a more extraordinary experience was climbing up metal steps to the top, then down via uneven, often slippery, stone steps into its core, with its various dark rooms leading off a main atrium. The view from the top was wonderful and, far away on a hill top, were the jagged remains of one of Eleonora d'Arborea's castles - Castle of Marmilla). There was a café where one could have a sort of lunch; it didn't do justice to the magnificence of the archaeological site, but from its windows you could still see Eleonora's castle in the distance.

In the nearby village of Barumini, where we didn't stop, is the *palazzo* of the distinguished Zapata family which arrived in Sardinia in the train of the *Infante* Alfonso in 1323, after which Sardinia became subject to the rule of Aragon. In 1541, the Zapata family bought the barony of Las Plassas, Barumini and Villanovafranca which they held until the abolition of feudalism (which took place from 1836). The long-lived Eleanora Zapata Castelvly (1593-1679) inherited the barony, which was her dowry when she married. It was she who started work on the *palazzo* often called the Casa Zapata (perhaps best translated as manor house). It was lived in by the family for centuries, ending with Donna Concetta Ingarao Zapata in the early 1980s. At the end of the '80s, it was purchased by the municipality of Barumini in order to turn it into a museum, opened in 2006. In 1990 during work on the structure of the main building, and after the removal of the original floors, some walls were found that belonged to the *nuraghe*, now called *Su Nuraxi 'e Cresia* (13-10th century BC). They had been used as the foundations for the supporting walls of the *palazzo*. The Museum, run by the *Fondazione Barumini Sistema Cultura*, contains not only archaeological finds, but also objects and manuscripts belonging to the Zapata family and agricultural implements. The archaeological section has been mounted into the oldest part of the museum. It is viewed from above through a system of footbridges and some glass floors.

Soon after we left the area, the bus started to wind and climb, and wind and climb into the Barbagia region until I must confess that I soon felt a bit queasy and was glad that we had a pit stop and refreshment - I had a soothing ice-cream and felt better. Eventually the mountains, valleys and gorges gave way to an extraordinary, long mountain range - The *Supramonte* - which in the evening sun was a ghostly silver; we were never again to see it looking so wonderful, almost eerie. I don't know if the fact that it covers 35,000 hectares gives any idea of its extent. It was among this range that many bandits took refuge (149-52), and it was these mountains with which the young Grazia Deledda, brought up in Nuoro, was familiar. She wrote in her novel *Ash*:

The whole mountain appeared covered by a violet mantle of serpil; and beyond the vision of the very deep valleys and high peaks towards which the travellers approached, seemed between the torn veil of the luminous fog, between games of sun and shadow, under the blue sky painted with strange clouds that ... slowly thinned out, a mad artist's dream, a picture of unlikely beauty.

Our stop for the next two nights was *Su Gologone* Hotel, Oliena, and it was from there that we were to drive the following day to Nuoro and Orgosolo. The hotel was rather more lavish than one might expect among these mountains and with the history of the Barbagia region. It was well and tastefully appointed, with even a swimming pool, and the restaurant obviously serves the surrounding area. We were treated to a 'banquet' there our first night. Dinner the second night wasn't so impressive.

The following day we were driven first to Nuoro, with a concentration on Grazia Deledda, who put Sardinian literature on the map with her winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature. I give her and her writing space in more than one chapter of the book (143-4, 150, 157-58, 160, 210, 253, 264-6, 271, 275, 305-5). Once again my imagination of the street in the *Santu Pedru* district, in which she was brought up,

proved false. And I hadn't really imagined the interior of the three-storey house. It is now a museum (*Museo Deleddiano*), made to look as if Grazia had just stepped out for a walk, but perhaps a bit contrived in order to show all the possible contents over time, particularly the kitchen and store room abundantly full of varied produce, most of it grown locally, and her working rooms. The area in which the house now stands, used to be inhabited by shepherds.

That was all we saw of Nuoro; Paola always kept to a strict time table to allow us to see only as much as was practical, with little scope for straying. So I didn't see the church down the road where Grazia's sarcophagus in black granite now stands - the small church of the *Madonna della Solitudine (sa Solidae)* in the *Via Ciusa*, not far from the Deledda house. The church's original 1622 bronze bell is now kept in the sanctuary of the new incarnation of the church (1947-58), not the one that Grazia grew up with. The importance of the bell to my story is that it was commissioned by Perdita Basingheddu (b1584), a Nuorese woman. It bears the inscription in Sardinian that I think can be understood by a non-speaker after a moment's reflection:

SANCTA MARIA DE LA SOLEDAT  
LA FETA LOST BASINQUEDDU DE CARITA

Before commissioning the bell, Perdita, a healer, was imprisoned by the Inquisition as a sorceress (her case connected with that of Julia Carta (96-7)). Perdita's sentence was finally discounted as a notarial deed of 1611. By then she was married and lived in Cagliari, obviously in wealthier circumstances. She either returned to Nuoro or remembered her birthplace when commissioning the bell.

In 2011, two years before her death, the Barbagia-born (Ulassai) artist Maria Lai (279-86), wanting to pay tribute to Grazia Deledda, created a monument 100 metres from the church which she conceived as a place of rest and meditation. The white with light, concrete work, contained in a rocky apse, opens, according to Maria, to heaven and earth. Again, I haven't seen it but a description I've found details how you enter through a quadrangular portal into the area occupied by white columns on which stylized images of characters and animals from Nuoro life - women, men, shepherds and goats - are mixed with frames containing writings shown in black. Once through the portal you are invited to leave your anxieties behind and wander into another dimension!

From the church, the *Via Ciusa* winds up Mount Ortobene which was so special to Grazia: she wrote about it, for example in *Reeds in the Wind*, and quoted a passage from that at the Nobel Prize ceremony in 1927. She wrote,

No, it's not true that the Ortobene can be compared to other mountains; there is only one Ortobene in the whole world; it's our heart; it's our soul, our character, everything big and small, kind and tough and rough and sorrowful to us.

Her body was first taken up there, to the church of *Nostra Signora del Monte*, on its return from Rome where she had lived since 1900, and where she died. At the top, since 2020, stands a life-size, bronze statue of her holding a pen, several books and

her Nobel Prize medal; she is bending her head to write and wears the elaborate costume worn by Nuorese women in the late nineteenth century. There is another statue in the centre of town, in the upper part of the *Corso Garibaldi*, and at the end of the *Via Majore*, which we didn't see either. This one, erected in 2016, of Grazia as a girl, has proved rather controversial; indeed, it has been described as producing an 'earthquake', particularly on social media. As it is not for me, not being from Nuoro, and not even having seen it, to go that far, I must say, from photographs of it, I can see why it might have raised questions: Grazia's stance is a bit strange. It may be that the sculptor pictured *her* asking a question, which is a nice idea, but only in theory. In front of the town hall there is, apparently, a 1981 large head and shoulders sculpture by Lucia Caggiari Guiso, born in nearby Bortigali in 1909. She was not only a sculptor but also a painter and ceramist. Again, with only a photograph to go by, it does look rather monumental, rising as if straight from the ground.

In the centre of town you could imagine the *banditessa* Maria Antonia Serra Sanna parading in her finery (149), and where she was finally arrested in the attic of her family home. The *Su Connottu* uprising of 1880 against enclosures, led by Paskedda Selis Zau, took place in Nuoro (160-1). It was also the home of anti-fascist activists (302-311) such as Mariangela Maccioni and Grazia Sechi Giacobbe. These women are typical of those from Barbagia which bred rebellion since at least Roman times. The region is impossible to imagine physically; you have to go (climb up!) there.

From Nuoro we were driven into the woods for a shepherds' lunch. I had expected us 15, Paola and our splendid driver Simplicio, to be the sole guests for something rather special. Far from it. There were a dozen or so other groups, all sitting on benches and expertly served by the 'shepherds' with the sort of food they might have eaten, including without cutlery, and as much perfectly nice wine as we desired. This was followed by a performance of the speciality polyphonic folk singing of the region by a quartet of men arranged in a square - *Cantu a tenòre*. The pressure of the many different nationality guests trying to take photographs was a little off-putting. And I have to admit that I had a similar reaction to listening to it as I had when first introduced to Peking Opera. No doubt one gets attuned to these much-admired cultural emissions!

By then, the lovely weather we had experienced since our arrival in Cagliari, against the forecasts, had disappeared. The dull afternoon was a disappointing way to see the famous murals of Orgosolo, about which my informant, now friend, Pietrina had written a book (154-7). Unfortunately she was elsewhere on the island that day so we could not meet.

Early the following morning, it was back in the bus for quite a long journey across from the east of the island to the west, to end at Alghero. Once descended from the heights of Barbagia, a long wide central plain stretched before us. We knew we had an important proper stop in due course, but the view from the window was satisfying in spite of the lack of buildings to draw the eye; I was particularly taken by stubby trees with canopies like broccoli heads. More striking was of a lone complex of buildings that caught the eye as we whizzed past too fleetingly to take a photograph. But I did note its name, Santa Sabina, and felt that it deserved further research. That was because it was more than a rather small, domed and obviously old church: so close that it seemed to be part of it, was a sixteenth century BC *nuraghe*. The church,

said to be unique, sometimes known as Santa Sarbana, started off as a sanctuary, or perhaps a Christian baptistery, then, in the eleventh century, it was rebuilt.

Not long ago, the foundations were inspected and it was discovered that the floor of the original building was made from basalt ashlar (large square-cut stone) taken from the top of the *nuraghe*. Further exploration revealed a nuraghic village, as well as numerous Roman finds. Fragments of ashlar in basalt and limestone from a nearby giants' tomb were used in the church's rotunda. Three or four hundred metres north of the *nuraghe* is *Su Cherchizzu* sacred well, discovered in 1881, but then abandoned and forgotten about until 1982. Lined with basalt, it retains water even in a hot summer. In earliest times, local inhabitants visited the sacred well to practise the cult of water. Sacred wells (*pozzi*), their possible use and finds in them are discussed in the book (indexed under 'Wells', 16, 19, 21, 23-4, 144).

A small stone building (*cumbessias*) near the church was a resting place for early pilgrims, and is still in use as such during the novena in honour of Saint Sabine. A particular rite, *sos izzadorsos*, is celebrated in the church. The complex is two kilometres away from the unspoilt village of Silanus (40kms, 25 miles west of Nuoro; population approximately 2,000). On 29 August each year a procession sets out from the village to celebrate the saint, though she was martyred in Rome, not Sardinia, around the year AD126. It is possible not only to visit the site, but also to climb the *nuraghe*, from where there is a fine view. A car park and other facilities are provided; there is a small fee. It is also worth visiting Silanus, with its crafts and produce, particularly for the fairs in May and June. In the first part of May *su ischidu sagra*, a festival in honour of cheese, is held at Santa Sabina. The longevity of the people of Salinus is deemed noteworthy. Is that too much information about a site viewed in a flash from a bus window? But it does seem worth a visit, doesn't it?

Further along our route, a few kilometres south of Sassari, which we were not due to visit until the following day, we stopped at the Basilica of *Santissima Trinità di Saccargia* - rising black and white striped (basalt and limestone) in the middle of nowhere. I describe in the book (68-9), how it was founded by Marcusa de Gonale (b. 1051) and her husband *Giudice* Costantino I of Torres, desperate to have a living child. On a journey where they stopped for the night, Marcusa had a dream, said to be a vision, in which a child appeared to her, after which the couple promised that if one were to be born they would build a basilica there. Nine months after the stop, the future *Giudice* Gonario I was born (68-9). Beside the basilica, are the remains of a monastery that was perhaps built earlier; accounts are a bit ambiguous. There is more to say about the basilica, in addition to my now constant refrain of how different things are in reality from one's imagination drawn from reading.

The name *Saccargia* is interesting in itself. It refers to the sacredness of the place already testified in antiquity, hence the name *Sacraria*, which latter became *Saccargia*. But there is more to it than that: a legend traces the name back to *s'acca argia*, or 'the spotted cow', which appeared in front of the monastery to offer milk to the friars, kneeling as if in prayer. It is said that is why, at the top of one of the square columns supporting the portico through which one enters the basilica, are two stone carvings of a kneeling cow. Inside the basilica, in front of the altar, is a tall painted wooden statue of the Madonna; she is finely dressed and wears a crown. Further along



is a retable containing six paintings of saints; central is one of Mary with baby Jesus on her lap.

Eventually we reached the still-Catalan-influenced port of Alghero. The main area of interest is the old walled city, a few steps away from our hotel, and entered through the wall by a couple of portals. Though the rabbit warren old city is, perhaps not surprisingly, a bit touristy, that is not enough to be a deterrent. I had one particular area of interest to track down. Again not surprisingly, that is not well known about. It is the area about which I write in some detail in the book - the Jewish Quarter (88-90). As so often, in my line of work, the key to finding somewhere not on the tourist map is determination. By dint of asking several people, first in the hotel, then in shops or the street, I established that, oddly, it is connected with the Architectural University. I had to keep my head and follow the instructions I'd been given: first it was to find the Santa Maria Cathedral (1593) - along the main *Corso* to the *Piazza Duomo*; then it was to enter a dingy alley two turnings on the right past the Cathedral. At the end of that, you enter the *Santa Croce Piazza*; at the other side of the sad-looking *piazza* is what looks like a university building. I ventured through the portal to where a group of students were chatting and asked the whereabouts of the Jewish Quarter (*Piazza Juharia*): we are all actually standing in it was the reply! There were no houses, nor signs that they had existed, no synagogue, no other buildings left of the old Jewish Quarter. It was just a large empty *piazza* with a clear sign - *Piazza della Juharia*. My photograph of that sign came out clearly, but not that of a more elaborate nearby plaque (erected 2013); it was too high up and at a difficult angle. I can only discern the dates 1354 and 1492, those between which the Jewish population flourished there. Up a flight of steps across the *piazza* was the old sea wall and in the sea down below there were millions of pounds sterling worth of yachts at anchor. As there is no sign of the Jewish Quarter I describe in the book, apart from the signs, for once my imagination, drawing on written sources, mostly contemporary, trumps the present day reality. After the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Sardinia - and elsewhere in Europe - some families converted to Christianity in order to stay; the best known of them were the Carcassona, members of which rose to great social and political heights (89-90, 113-16, 128-9).

The following day it was off to Sassari, not far to the north east of Alghero. There, what I wanted to find was in various areas of the city. Our first stop was the *Museo Nazionale GA Sanna* in the *Via Roma*. And it was here that I perhaps irritated Paola most and where I felt most strongly. As far as I was concerned, the museum was commissioned and, indeed, paid for by Zely Sanna-Castoldi (213-219) in order to house her father's extensive collection of archaeological and ethnographical artefacts (219). She had donated his collection to Sassari in 1878, and the building of the Museum took place between 1926 and 1927. Paola, in her pre-tour introduction, described it as founded by her father, after whom it is named. This in spite of the Museum's historical note on the atrium wall that it was Zely. I felt I had to interrupt - I usually mention women to Paola in private - and it was easy to read her reaction to this done in public. The Museum is certainly worth visiting - spaciouly designed and everything well-displayed.

Paola always gives us 15 minutes or so at the end of a tour of museums, during which she has displayed much knowledge and energy, supposedly to go back and look at things that had particularly interested us, but I suspect that it is also for her well

deserved few minutes of rest and re-gathering of strength. I felt I had not blotted my copy-book for ever when she was pleasant when I told her that I was going to nip out in order to find the house, also in *Via Roma*, where Ellen Giles lived and was murdered in 1914 (246-48). I had asked a staff member if no. 87 might be left or right of the Museum, and so set off to the left. But when I got to where no. 87 should be, I found that a hotel stretched from no. 79-91. Paola told me when I hurried back disappointed that it is called the Leonardo da Vinci.

We were then taken on a quick, hot, thirsty-making, and rather exhausting tour of Sassari - most historically interesting and, indeed, attractive. By then all that most of us could do was to look for a good place to have lunch - bad choice. Two of our party, mother and son had, instead, set their hearts on going to the National Art Gallery (*Pinacoteca Nazionale di Sassari*) which they not only found at 4 *Piazza Santa Caterina* (between the church and the *Palazzo Ducale*), but also reported back that there was a room dedicated to the paintings of Edina Altara who, with her sisters, also artists, was born in Sassari (277-9; indexed under 'Artists').

Leaving Sassari we drove back towards Alghero but had another stop, to a long-established and first-in-the-area vineyard. Forgive me, I cannot remember its name. I know it was Daniela who showed us round more than one large and freezing cold cellar - full of thousands, if not millions, of bottles - which I'm afraid did me in. I was carrying too much and couldn't drag my heavy bag along the ground because it was wet (I have since bought a knapsack!). I love to drink wine, red, and champagne, but I'm afraid I sat out the next section of the visit, a wine tasting. Instead I sat in the sun recovering and caught up on my diary - so ungrateful and unappreciative of me; it was supposed to be a big treat. I was glad to be back in our hotel. I didn't go out for dinner that evening. I went to the supermarket just up the road; couldn't find anything to eat, so stayed in my room eating nuts brought from home.

After an early (8.45am) start we reached Bosa, a small town on the river Temo, in the pouring rain, after a drive during which the bus was buffeted, and sea and rocks below merged. Although I had a rain proof jacket, I had no rain-hat nor umbrella. Under those circumstances you just make do and no fuss. I seem to remember that at some stage a member of our tour who always had a kindly eye out for me as an older, lone woman, lent me a spare head covering of sorts. But it was worth the stop at Bosa which was, and still is, the home of filet-making made commercial by Olimpia Melis Peralta (275-76; indexed under Artists). What is more, we made our way over puddles to 135 *Via del Carmine* to the home and workshop of a filet maker. Because of the rain, we stayed outside the open door, while the artisan showed us how filet is done, with examples in various stages of completion, so that we could better appreciate it. There were also small pieces to buy. I bought a key ring with a filet insert which is proving very useful to keep my house door key safe. I tried to make portable purchases wherever I could because Sardinia, like places all over the world that depend on tourists, has had such a bad two years.

But there is more to Bosa than filet-making. The town is said to date back to antiquity, the territory conserving traces of ancient civilisation. As a town it was believed to have been founded by the Phoenicians, but an inscription suggesting that from the ninth century BC has been lost. According to legend it was founded by Calmedia, a wife or daughter of *Sardus Pater* (Sardinian Father), a mythical hero of the nuragic

Sardinians, believed to be the son of Heracles. Calmedia, enchanted by the beauty of the region, decided to found a city there. As far as reality is concerned, the noble family of Malaspina from Tuscany in 1123, one of those families from the mainland that built up a power on the island (72), erected the castle of Bosa on the Serravalle hill. There what remains of it still lowers over the town - a bit eerie on a rainy day. It was both the family home and performed a defensive function. Adelaide Malaspina was the wife of *Giudice* Guglielmo I of Cagliari, an overpowering figure in the *giudice* period. Her daughter, Agnese of Massa, married Marianus, in due course *giudice* of Loguduro-Torres. Later in that period, Eleonora d'Arborea enters the story or, as it is described in a summer 2019 re-enactment, 'The arrival in Bosa of little Eleonora d'Arborea in 1342'.

Eleonora's parents had spent their early married life in Catalonia, her mother's home place, and there had four children, including Eleonora (80). They did not return to Oristano, the seat of the *giudicato* of Arborea, until 1342, the year of the apparent Bosa visit. There, they and their children, including just-about three-years-old Eleonora, stayed at the Malaspina Castle with one of Eleonora's paternal uncles and his wife. The pageant re-enacted in the lee of the castle contains all possible details of the family's festive welcome. In 1347, Eleonora's father, on the death of his older brother, was to become *Giudice* Marianus IV. Re-enactment of historic events and lives are a common feature of modern Sardinian culture. And every place with any connection to the future *Giudicessa* Eleonora, being the historic figure that she is in Sardinia, is noted.

After our soaked visit to Bosa, our bus bowled further south and then west to the Sinis Peninsula at the end of which is the Phoenician archaeological site of Tharros (6-7, 27, 29, 31-3, 38-9, 78) overlooking the Gulf of Oristano. By this time, the rain had disappeared; the welcome sun had come out. My main interest in the peninsula, apart from Tharros, was the property of the Roman woman Fundania Galla (36-9) for whom her husband wrote *De Re Rustica* as a farming guide. As we drove along towards Tharros, I gazed eagerly out of the window picturing Fundania Galla's farm there, and even the possibility of seeing the evidence of it left by an inscription. When I raised it with Paola, however, she quickly deflated me: even if such a person and farm had existed it was nowhere where we were going: it was likely on the road from Oristano to Othoca (now Santa Giusta).

We had a tour of Tharros booked at a time which allowed us to have lunch before it. The eating place didn't look that impressive, but we had an excellent meal of freshly caught sardines. After that, we got into a toytown train which took us to the archaeological site, passing alongside a sea sparkling with diamonds. Paola made the following tour lively in her usual informed way. At its end, in the tourist shop, I bought a black apron decorated with the four heads that embellish Sardinia's flag, as another effort to help Sardinia's economy. I always mean to wear an apron when cooking, but seldom get round to it. From there it was to Oristano where we were to spend the last night of the tour.

Arriving at our hotel in late afternoon, we had been given a map with marked on it possible restaurants for dinner, and while some people flaked out after a demanding day, others set out, as if on a treasure hunt to find a suitable place to eat. I did too but first I had a more urgent task. Derek and I had taken the train to Oristano in 2018. The

train journey went well and fortunately we listened to the only taxi driver at the station when he told us that we needed to book him for our return before 4.30, because there would be no other taxis available. Leaving Derek in the funny place where we had lunch, I scampered round looking at the various places on my list (78) but when I got to the Archaeological Museum, I found it closed, leaving me no time to go back. On my return to Derek, having photographed the impressive statue of Eleonora in the main *piazza* (85), we sat in a too-hot-sun, at first, because we thought it might be pleasant, but later, when we hadn't seen a single taxi pass by, out of concern. But our driver did turn up, as promised. Derek left his best panama hat on the train on the journey back to Cagliari. It was put on a later train back and put on the left luggage shelf in the station to where I hot-footed. Not surprisingly, given the quality of the hat, someone had fancied it!

In 2022, the Archaeological Museum had to be my first visit. As it turned out, it was a good job that I hadn't managed it earlier: I wouldn't have been alert to my most miraculous find there. The first pleasing and useful display I came across was a life-size model of a nuragic woman dressed in one of the styles of the day; further on, there was another. Then I came to a display case where the caption describing all the contents, told me that in it was the Fundania Galla inscription (37); my heart skipped a beat, as it always does when I find a longed-for contribution to my research. But it wasn't clear which of the artefacts was **the** inscription. I asked the only member of staff around for help; she left her place behind the till and came to show me. As I photographed it, I pictured the Roman woman farmer of two centuries ago. Did she visit Sardinia? In the book I suggest that she did, and that she may have stood on her land holding her husband's book of guidance, and I quote the relevant extracts from it. Leaving the Museum, I made my obeisance to the statue of Eleonora.

That statue of Eleonora probably bears no resemblance to what she may have looked like, but a carved stone head and shoulders of her can be seen in a family apse in the Church of San Gavino Martyr in San Gavino Monreale. Unlike the imposing Oristano statue, it is contemporary (14th century). The Arborese court stayed in the San Gavino castle quite frequently for rest and recreation, taking advantage of the nearby thermal baths. I have been to the railway station there, but I have not visited the castle nor the thermal baths. There is a hotel where you can take advantage of the thermal waters.

That evening, our hotel treated us to cocktails and, following a vote among us, we agreed to dine together on our last evening of the tour; Paola, who usually ate and drew breath separately with our driver, Simplicio, agreed to join us. The duty manager at the Hotel *di Duomo*, Andrea, went to a lot of trouble to secure us a booking for 16 at the *Craf Da Banana Ristorante*, which several of us recommended from our reconnaissance. When we arrived, we found that in our own nook of the restaurant they had prepared a table for 16 and somehow what could have been difficult to order for all of us, and then pay, turned out to be so easy, and we had a most appropriate good bye to our trip. The only fly in the ointment was that out of a clear early evening, we came out to pouring rain, and not everyone had gone prepared. We were downstairs with our luggage at 8.30 the following morning and, appropriately, it was a dull and dreary drive straight to Cagliari airport.

I hope this update to my book, the first draft of which is completed on Tuesday, 20 December 2022, fills in at least some of the lacunae.

