

Josephine Morley (formerly Smith née Abela)

In October 2024 Josephine gave us some family history for her mother, Nora Abela, whose memories of coming to Stonehouse in 1956 from Egypt after the Suez crisis, we wrote about in Journal Issue 5 (Bridgend Hostel).

Josephine's relations have researched the Pussich family history back to 1081 (see Coat of Arms and information next page)

Maria Pussich married Vittorio Delle Fave of Trieste, Italy and they had 13 children, 8 of whom survived. Eleonora (Nora) was the youngest, born in 1919.

Maria left her husband and escaped to Egypt with her children including Nora.

Nora later married John Abela and had two children. In 1956 when the children were only aged 2½ and 3 months, they were forced to flee Egypt after the Suez crisis. The Abela family came to Bridgend Hostel in Stonehouse.



This photo, probably taken in Trieste, Italy, shows Nora's mother (Josephine's grandmother) Maria Pussich standing at the back, with her mother and father and brothers.

Standing at the back: Remigio, Taddeo, Maria
Centre row: Guiseppe, Antonio (father), Maria (mother), Augusto,
Sitting at the front: Pierino



COAT OF ARMS

Austrian Family

PUSSICH

The Noble / Aristocratic Family Pussich were transferred to Padova in 1081.

Due to lack of work there, they gave no work to Foreigners, so they had to change their Surname to Pussi, to be able to get some work.

The Judge of "Ponte Altinate" who was also a Marquis, set this matter, later than 1275.

Spirabelli and Bernardo Pussi, were very well respected from the year 1134 to 1167. Their names appeared in the Review Book of Nobility called: "Blasonico."

This was represented by Pietro di Antonio, a descendent of the Antonio's family.

A passage from a letter sent to Nino Pussich (His nephew.)

I was so surprised, when I found out about our descendants. Our ancestors, living in Veneto, establish themselves in Dalmaria, where they acquired some land.

In regards of the grandmother's origin, it was well known. During the French Revolution, one of our ancestors, escaped Paris, with his wife (who was a French Countess.) He disguised himself as a house-keeper to be able to escape, and settle down in Vienna.

Nora Abela

My husband John and our two young daughters, Josephine aged 2½ and Mary aged 3 months, were woken at 1 o'clock in the morning by loud knocking on our apartment door. I went to the door and found two Egyptian Policemen there. They insisted that all the family, still in our night clothes, went with them. I asked them if I could get some milk for the baby, but they refused. They took us in a van to an English School where there were other people. We were locked in and left there with nothing but what we were wearing, no food or drinks.

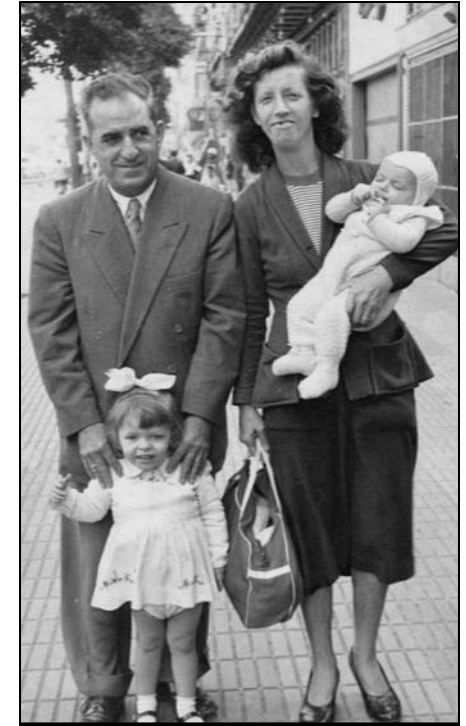
At about 7 o'clock in the morning the police separated out all the men and then took all the women and children to another building. We were there for several days with no food or water, although we asked the guards for some. Eventually one guard gave me some tea which I gave to my daughters to share. We had no money to pay the guards for food and water, however one guard brought us a tin of corned beef to share between 14 persons.

Because I was Italian the police eventually allowed a relative to come and collect us together with my husband and take us to their house in Cairo, where we got some clothes and had to stay until told what was going to happen to us. Within a month we were told we must leave Egypt and we would be taken to England because my husband, being Maltese, had a British Passport that included me and the children.

We were taken by the Red Cross train to Alexandria to get on a boat bound for Marseille in France. We were put in the very bottom of the ship where we had to lie on the floor, no beds or clothing. Some people were being seasick all over the floor so I had to hold my two daughters on top of me to keep them out of the smelly and messy floor. It got so bad that I decided to take them on to the outside deck for some air before being made to go back down until we arrived in Marseille.

When we got to England we were taken to a camp near Leeds. It was winter time and very cold which we were not used to. When the camp was closing down the manager asked me and my family if there was any other place we would like to go and I said somewhere warmer, so he suggested Bridgend in Stonehouse in the South of England.

We were in Bridgend Hostel for about 18 months before being found a house in Brimscombe where we stayed for about six months. Then the council offered us a house in Midland Road in Stonehouse. Our third daughter Teresa was born there, and we lived there for many years before moving to the flats just off Park Road, where I still live, on my own since my husband died in 1982.



*The Abela family before
being sent out of Egypt.
Johnny with Josephine and
Nora with Mary.*

Life at Bridgend Hostel c1957



Left: Josephine Abela at Bridgend Hostel. Left with unknown boy. Her father Johnny and sister Mary are looking out of the window.

Centre: A group of children with Josephine in the big hat and her sister Mary behind in the sunhat.

Right: Josephine with unknown lady. She looks like she may be a Red Cross worker or similar.



*A party for the children at Bridgend Hostel in the 1950s.
The man in the centre is the mayor of Cheltenham, Charles Irving, with **Josephine Abela** (left) and Joe Spiteri.
The girl with the big bow in her hair right of centre is Vilma Cini. John Gasan is 3rd from left bottom row.
Jo can remember dances at the Hostel where her father would get her to stand on his feet and then do the waltz with her.*

Eleanora Rosa Abela
by her granddaughter, Louise Fox, February 2023

How do you sum up 102 years in a few words?

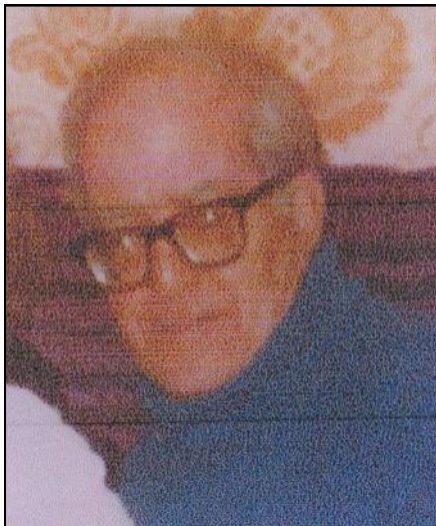
Born in 1919 in Trieste, Italy, Nora moved with her mother, brothers and sister to Egypt, where she grew up. In about 1938 she went back to Italy to a girls' college for a year. War broke out and that year turned into six. During that time she went from student to teacher and protector of the younger girls. She then became a nurse.

She then went back to Egypt and her beloved mum, who she took care of while working as a chambermaid at the Shepherds Hotel in Cairo. Each week she would hand over her wages and hold back enough to take her mum to an occasional movie and to sit in a café with a bottle of beer and eat olives as they watched the world go by.

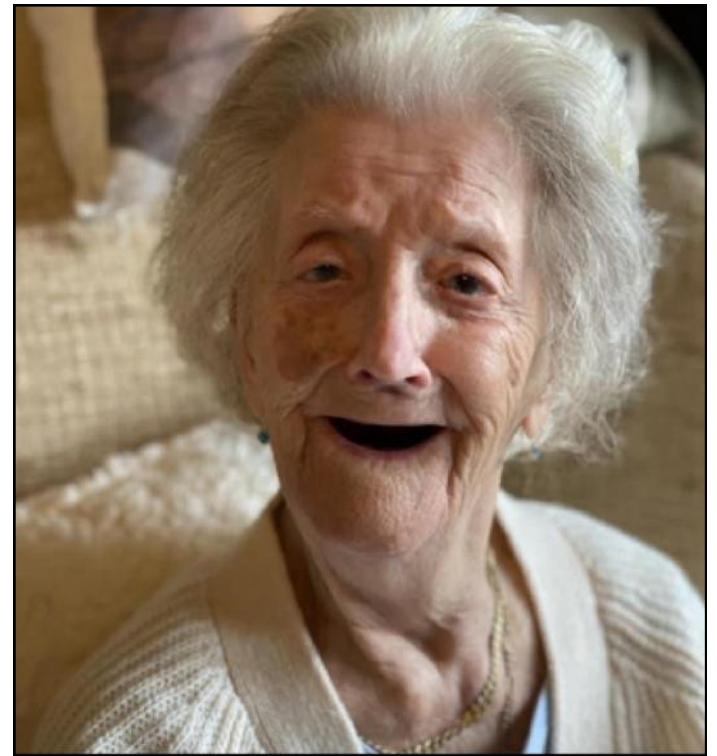
She met and married her husband, Johnny Abela, and had Jo in 1954 and Mary in 1956. When Mary was three months old, war broke out during the Suez crisis. They were woken from their sleep and taken away to be put into a concentration camp. Because Johnny was Maltese, they had British passports, so they were expelled from Egypt and shipped to England. She smuggled some family jewellery in Mary's nappy and brought a rocking chair which they passed off as Mary's cot.

They arrived in a country they had never been to and didn't speak the language. They were passed from camp to camp until they eventually settled in Stonehouse and a third daughter, Teresa, was born. English was added to her repertoire and Nonna was now fluent in an impressive seven languages. She always said English was the hardest to learn.

Johnny died on April 1st 1982.
Nora died in 2021 aged 102.



Johnny Abela



Nora Abela aged 102