

Tuna Fishing

...an age old tradition,
a way of life...



...Mellieħa was known
for the best catch of
tuna in Malta...



This was one of the main sources of living in Mellieħa. It was an old local industry known as TUNNARA, which lasted until 1961. Mellieħa was not the only place for tuna fishing, but it was well known for the best tuna quality. In fact, the sale of the local tuna was guaranteed as it was easily sold by its proper call name 'Tal Mellieħa t-Tonn' [the tuna of Mellieħa]. The original base was at Anchor Bay from where the fishermen, under the sole command of the "padrun" [patron], used to sail in the open seas in that region. Afterwards the calmer sea of Mellieħa Bay was preferred and the labyrinthine nets were secured by huge anchors to the seabed at the right hand side of the bay entrance. From their new base, the Westreme Battery, an old structure built as a fortress by the knights and fishermen, about 40 using a long and large boat

called 'xieru', used to row for a long stretch to reach the nets, and then return with the catch. Tuna Fishing is still an important fishing industry. Old methods are now a history. Fishermen have invested in modern fishing vessels and techniques to sail for distant areas for a good catch of Tuna. Tuna catches in the area are exported all round the world to as far as Japan. Tuna fish is also bred in fish farms.



*Above left: A plan showing the method of tuna fishing
Above right: An old photo showing the fishermen pulling the nets with
the catch (With the courtesy of Anthony Fenech)*