

DIN L-ART HELWA

National Trust of Malta

VIGILO



APRIL 2007

NUMBER 31

Lm1.00

NEWSPAPER POST



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Din l-Art Helwa is a non-governmental organisation whose objective is to safeguard the cultural and natural environment of the nation.

Din l-Art Helwa functions as the National Trust of Malta, restoring cultural heritage sites on behalf of the State, the Church, and private owners and managing and maintaining those sites for the benefit of the general public.

Din l-Art Helwa strives to awaken awareness of heritage and environmental matters by a policy of public education and by highlighting development issues to ensure that the highest possible standards are maintained and that local legislation is strictly enforced.



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Din l-Art Helwa

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**VIGILO
is published in
April and October**

**VIGILO e-mail:
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Din l-Art Helwa**

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PHOTOGRAPHS
If not indicated otherwise
photographs are by
JOE AZZOPARDI

PRINTED BY
Best Print Co. Ltd.
Żurrieq Road
Qrendi QRD 1814

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The Barbados National Trust
The National Trust of Australia
The Gelderland Trust for Historic
Houses
The Gelderland 'Nature Trust'***

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Europa Nostra
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VIGILO

ISSN - 1026-132X

NUMBER 31

APRIL 2007

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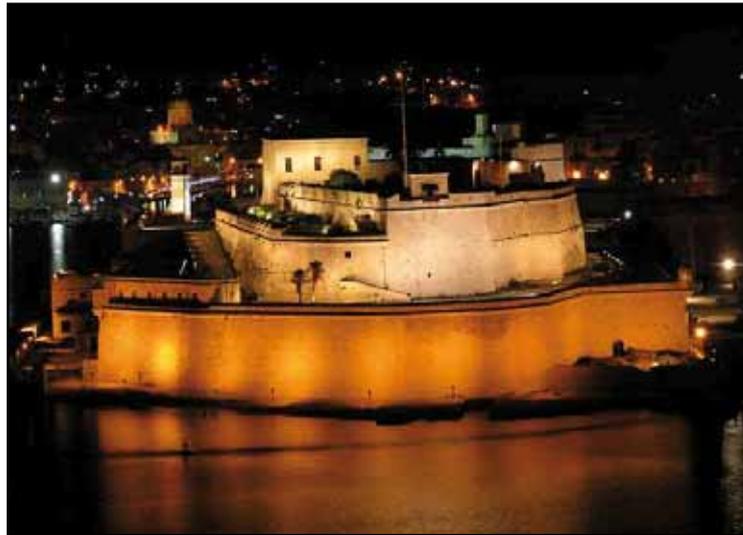
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Old Parish Church,
Siggiewi



BACK COVER

Main Gate,
Birgu



Between A Rock and A Hard Place

Martin Galea

Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa

When I was young I used to go and visit my old aunt and uncle, who lived in a rambling two-storey terraced house in Tarxien. One of the dark rooms upstairs (for the rooms were always shuttered and closed) held a wondrous sight for a 10-year-old boy. There, in a glass showcase, were any number of stuffed birds: egrets, herons, hoopoes, ducks – with their beautiful plumage of purples, greens and reds – staring back at me with their glass eyes. This was nature in all its splendour. I resolved then that I too would be a hunter and have my own glass showcase, which would of course be bigger and even more wondrous.

Later, when I was 17, I was out in the desert with a Libyan friend of mine. We were crashing around in an old Datsun when his father saw a group of birds (for some reason these birds were walking). He lowered the window and blasted them with his shotgun. In a palm-filled oasis, Fawzi and I sought to imitate him by shooting pigeons with an air gun. These have been my two earliest connections with hunting and I can well understand the excitement it holds: being close to nature, sitting at dawn in the countryside waiting for prey.

However, the thrill, so to speak, has been replaced with sadness. In Malta we do not see the birds of my childhood in the wild anymore. All too occasionally you may see a heron, and I once saw a hoopoe, but generally all one sees is the ever-faithful sparrow. Little birdsong is heard in the Maltese skies today.

I do have issues with killing animals or birds for pleasure, and environmentally the issues are now very serious for Malta. Apart from the decimation of what we would term our wildlife (apart from Paceville, that is) there are the issues of hunters blocking access to the countryside and the impromptu creation of “roads” for access to their hides and the destruction of the garrigue for trappers’ nets and hides, as well as the wider problem of hunting protected species and those under threat of extinction.

More recently, in Lipari, the whole family was thrilled to see a number of birds of prey (I wouldn’t hazard a guess as to what they were), soaring above the steep hillsides – a sight we could have, but sadly do not, in Malta.

The hunting issue has become very emotional in Malta. *Din l-Art Helwa* has always supported Bird Life in its efforts to control illegal hunting and to protect habitats and birds in general. It will continue to do so. We are proud to work alongside them in the Foresta 2000 project at Mellieha with the PARK Department of the Ministry of Rural Affairs and the Environment. And we salute those brave individuals who stand up in the face of gross intimidation from the more radical and unscrupulous hunters and trappers.

*"All too occasionally
you may see a heron,
and I once saw a
hoopoe, but generally all
one sees is the
ever-faithful sparrow.
Little birdsong is
heard in the Maltese
skies today."*

Opposite:

Far right from the top

Spanish Sparrow
Scops Owl
Purple Heron

Photos Richard Cachia Zammit

bottom left
An inquisitive *gremxula*



Ghadira Nature Reserve

The hunting issue also has an economic impact, as it affects the tourism industry. Tourism, which arguably contributes 20 per cent of GDP, has found itself in the firing line of potential visitors and lobbyists who are boycotting Malta because of hunting. Although unquantifiable, this is a potentially serious problem and is yet another argument as to why this so-called sport should be regulated further.

The Government has now found itself in a quandary. It is basically between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand it has the full weight of the EU, which is calling for an end to trapping and a restricted open season. This is in tune with the wishes of the vast majority of people on these islands.

On the other hand, there is a small, but vociferous, minority of hunters and trappers who are threatening to change their votes if the open season is restricted. In a country where the Government is on a knife-edge majority, these threats are taken seriously. It has tried to hedge its bets by giving in on the issue of spring hunting of two species within specific dates, forbidding the trapping of finches and increasing the penalties for illegal hunting. This has not been the most successful of tactics and has, to some extent, antagonised everyone.

I do have sympathy with their approach. However, hunting needs to be phased out by education, enforcement and the channelling of hunters' interests into conservation. Overnight legislation will result in confrontation, widespread illegal activity and, as usual, a lack of enforcement. But in the end, the Government will have to take a stand, and I hope it is in favour of the environment. The Government must act for the environment, as it has done when dealing with the fiscal deficit: firmly and for the common good. People will recognise this and take the medicine. It is kowtowing to particular interest groups, be they hunters or speculators, which gives rise to a sense of iniquity, and which will ultimately damage those who play this game.

Let the birds of prey, the barn owls and the migratory birds, return.



2007: The First Three Months

Edward Xuereb

Hon. Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa

The year began with a visit to Gozo on 3 January, at the invitation of the British Residents Association (Gozo Branch), by Secretary-General Edward Xuereb, Victor Rizzo and Joseph Chetcuti, who were joined by representatives of the DLH Gozo sub-committee.

Victor Rizzo gave a presentation on *Din l-Art Helwa*, which was followed by a short address by Edward Xuereb on the current work being carried out by the association, with special reference to Gozo. This presentation was well received and thanks go to the president and members of the BRA Gozo Branch for their warm welcome and for an excellent buffet lunch. It is also interesting to note that a number of the 70 people present who were not members of *Din l-Art Helwa* have since joined.

The monthly public lectures and cultural courses have proved extremely popular and have attracted several members and their guests. *Din l-Art Helwa* sincerely thanks the speakers for agreeing to help promote Malta's cultural heritage.

The restoration of the Lunzjata Fountain, a joint project with Kercem local council, should be completed by the end of March, while restoration work on San Antnin Battery in Qala, another joint venture with Qala local council and Mepa, has begun. It is good to note that progress has been made regarding



St Paul's Island

the restoration of the Tal-Hniena church in Qrendi and that the Curia have submitted a draft proposal of the way forward that is being studied and seems to be acceptable. Hopefully, the final agreement will be signed shortly.

The Housing Authority has recommended that Mtarfa Clock Tower be returned by it to the Lands Department and handed over under Deed of Guardianship to *Din l-Art Helwa* to carry out the necessary restoration work, that is expected to cost approximately Lm6,000. An application has been submitted to Mepa for the restoration of the statue of St Paul on St Paul's Island, which is being sponsored by Vassallo Brothers, whom we sincerely thank. Provided the necessary permits are issued, work is expected to start in May.

Opposite:

The Statue of St Paul on St Paul's Island during the first restoration.
Photos DLH

Lunzjata Fountain before and during restoration



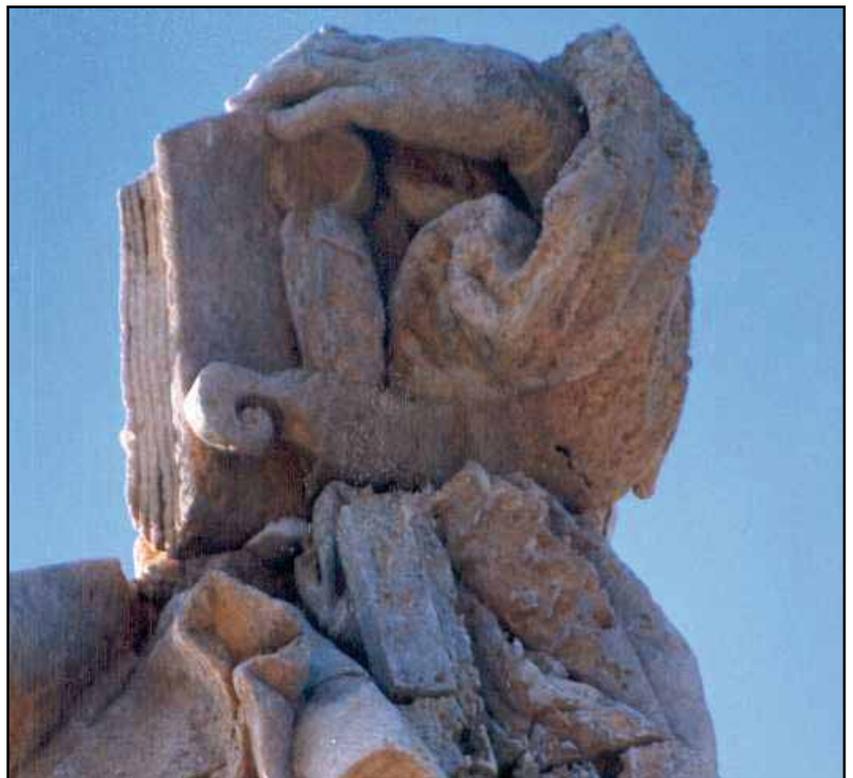
The necessary permits are still awaited from Mepa to begin restoration work on our premises in Old Bakery Street. Replies are also still awaited from the relevant authorities to our applications for the handing over of further properties under Deed of Guardianship and to our proposal to the Ministries concerned for the restoration of Fort Campbell and its future use, as well as to the creation of a national park in the northwest of the island.

The Executive President, together with the Secretary-General, the Director and Council members, has attended various meetings with government representatives, Mepa and other organisations and entities, to discuss various important topics such as the Urban Conservation Areas; Ta' Ċenċ; amendments to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), the raising of sponsorships for the restoration of future projects, national parks and the present uncontrolled over-development that is causing havoc to our cultural heritage and the environment.

It is of interest to note that Mr Stavros Dimas EU Commissioner for the Environment has replied to our petition on Ta' Ċenċ, giving *Din l-Art Helwa* his full support and confirming that "the site of Ta' Ċenċ contains natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest". Copies of his letter were submitted to the Prime Minister, the Environment and Rural Affairs Minister and the chairman of Mepa.

It is intended to start a campaign in the near future to increase our membership and also invite past members, as well as past associate and corporate members, to renew their membership, and to enroll more volunteers to help in the various projects and work contemplated or projected.

***Din l-Art Helwa* can only move forward and achieve its aims through the support of its members and volunteers, for which we are most grateful.**



PROPERTIES

*St Agatha's Tower (Red Tower)
Mellieħa*

**Monday to Sunday
10.00 am to 16.00 pm**

Monique Gatt – Warden
John and Elaine Allat
Pat Bowdler
Mary Chapman
Jim Deans
Tessa McQueen
Joseph Zammit
Joe Camilleri
Erminiette Zammit Camilleri
Anne & Victor Downing
James & Jane Evans
Kenna Pisani
Michael Portelli

*Torri Mamo
Marsascala*

**Tuesday to Sunday
9.30 am to 12.00 noon**

Vincent Raimondo – Warden
Beryl Boston
John Cassar
John and Emma Pendlebury
Carmen Sant
John Wilkinson
Mary Ballinger

*Dwejra Tower
(Gozo)*

**First Sunday of the month
9.30 am to 12.00 noon**

Carolyn Clements – Warden
Andy and Chrissie Scott
Nigel Britain
Jaynn Clarke
Sonia Haynes

*

*Chapel of the Annunciation,
Hal Millieri*

**First Sunday of the month
9.30 am to 12.00 noon**

Anthony Mangion – Warden
Jonathan McLeish

*

*Chapel of St Roque
Żebbuġ*

**First Sunday of the month
9.30 am to 12.00 pm**

Michael Bonnici – Warden

*

*Għallis Tower
Qalet Marku Tower*
**First Sunday of the month
9.30 am to 12.00 noon**

*

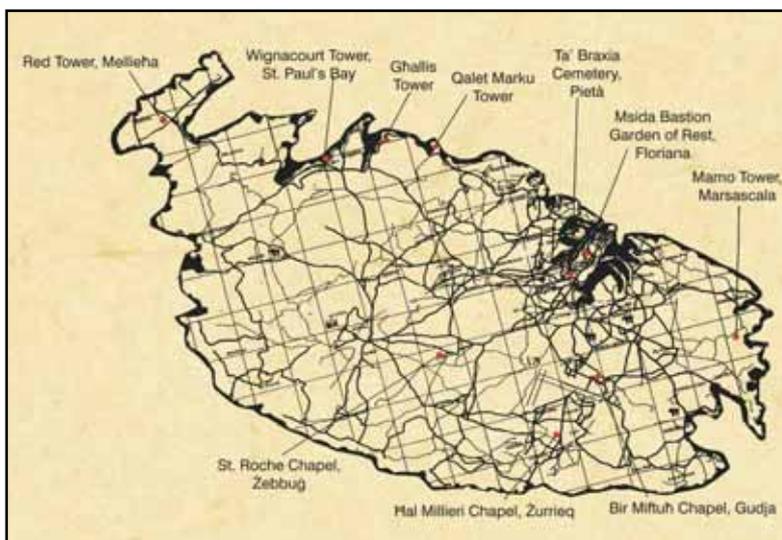
*Chapel of Santa Marija ta'
Bir Miftuħ, Gudja*
**Every Sunday
9.30 am to 12.00 noon**

Charles Gatt – Warden
Joe Chetcuti

*

*St Mary's Tower Comino
St Mary's Battery Comino*

Opened by appointment



PROPERTIES



Msida Bastion Garden of Rest



*Wignacourt Tower
St Paul's Bay*

**Monday to Saturday
9.30 am to 12.30 pm**

- Stanley Farrugia Randon – Warden
- Bill Andrews
- William Burrige
- Joseph Busuttill
- Richard Davies
- John Sare
- Ken Wroe
- Yvonne & Mike Heaton

*Msida Bastion Garden of Rest,
Museum of Maltese
Burial Heritage
Floriana*

**Tuesday to Thursday, Saturday
& First Sunday of the month
9.30 am to 12.00 noon**

- Mary Aldred – Warden
- Derek Aldred
- Terry Davies
- Geoffrey Dixon
- Bill Hensher
- Irene Jofeh
- Wendy Mudge
- Terry O'Neill
- Elaine O'Reilly
- Peter and Pia Sellers
- Juergen Sixt
- Caroline Waddington
- Margaret Walford
- Marjorie Bonnici

*Entry for members
is free.
Non-Members pay 50c.*

**HELPLINE
2121 - 5222**

**Please note that these
times may vary.
Up-to-date information is
available on the helpline.**

News from *Din l-Art Helwa*

Heritage & Environment Protection Committee

Din l-Art Helwa's Heritage & Environment Protection Committee (HEP) focuses on the disheartening mass of building construction taking place everywhere on these islands. It persistently sifts through the planning applications submitted to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (Mepa) and puts forward comments or objections.

Large projects are required to carry out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) before a decision on an application can be taken. Recently, *Din l-Art Helwa* objected to proposed changes to the regulations governing EIAs. These changes are aimed at easing the EIA requirements, as well as taking the final decision on EIAs out of the hands of Mepa and into the offices of the Rural Affairs and the Environment Ministry. *Din l-Art Helwa* strongly believes that politics must be kept firmly out of the planning process.

The committee keeps a watchful eye on proposed developments in the protected cores of historic villages and towns – known as Urban Conservation Areas (UCAs). One of the resolutions passed at the last AGM records *Din l-Art Helwa's* concerns over recent events in connection with UCAs.

Din l-Art Helwa is resolutely against the construction of new buildings in areas that lie outside the development zones, as well as the sanctioning of illegal buildings in these areas. Malta and Gozo have already been stripped of far too much precious countryside, which has been traded in for a mindless urban sprawl. Everything possible must be done to prevent further development in the few remaining green areas that are left.



Presentation of paintings to *Din l-Art Helwa*

The painter, Barbara McAdam Seth, has recently donated a collection of 184 watercolours to *Din l-Art Helwa*. The pictures depict a wide selection of wild flowers gathered by the artist in the Maltese countryside when she lived in Malta during the 1970s with her husband Ronald Seth, who was a writer.

Mr and Mrs Seth converted an old farmhouse in Landrijiet, outside Rabat, and lived there for eight years, dedicating their time to painting and writing. Their studios were on the roof, enjoying wonderful views of the countryside that they loved.

They first travelled to Malta in the 70s, and were immediately attracted to the island. Barbara McAdam Seth described her first encounter with Malta in this way: "I first set eyes on Malta at dawn; our plane came in to land at Luqa airport and as I stepped onto the tarmac the colours took my breath away. The rising sun was surrounded by an apricot sky, lighting up the flat roofed buildings that cast shadows of deep violet."

The paintings were presented to *Din l-Art Helwa* executive president Martin Galea, who thanked Mrs Seth for her generous donation to the organisation. Mr Galea noted that, apart from their artistic merits, the paintings are also a significant document of Maltese flora. Also attending the presentation were the artist's good friends, painters Alfred and Margaret Chircop, as well as Edward Xuereb, Victor Rizzo, Joseph Chetcuti, Petra Bianchi and Carmelina Galea.

Barbara McAdam Seth studied at the Medway School of Art in Rochester, Kent, and has exhibited in Paris, Brussels, Rome and Malta. She is mainly known for her flower paintings, fabric collages and portraits.

Photos:
Joe Chetcuti



Spring Fête at the Garden of Rest

On Sunday, 22 April, *Din l-Art Helwa* will be holding its annual Spring Fête at the Garden of Rest (opposite Floriana Public Library, below Belt is-Sebh), from 10am to 4pm. The public, as well as *Din l-Art Helwa* members and their friends, are invited to come and enjoy this tranquil garden in full bloom, with its breathtaking views over Msida creek and Manoel Island.

Books, plants, cakes, paintings and gift items will be for sale, and refreshments will be available on the terraces. Guided tours of the garden will be held at noon and 2pm.



Volunteers at Foresta 2000

Din l-Art Helwa is very pleased to have received a good response to its call for volunteers to roll up their sleeves and help at the Foresta 2000 afforestation site near the Red Tower in Mellieha. Over the last two months, various groups of volunteers have been at the site, clearing spaces, cutting grass, digging trenches and erecting fences with ranger Ray Vella, who kept everyone busy and interested – motivating the helpers with his own enthusiasm for the project and his wide knowledge of Malta's native flora and fauna.

Thanks go to, among others, Ralph Farrugia, Adrian Strickland, Silvio Scicluna, Leonard Tonna, Melita James, Brigitte Ragusa, Alessandro and Massimo Ragusa, Lisa Paris, Daniel Borg, Claudio Toscana and his three friends from St Aloysius College, Arne Johansen, Ryan Bonett, Ray Bonnici and his son Reuben, Henri Miceli, Victor Fiott and Wim van Wuuren and his colleagues from KPMG.

We have had many more offers from volunteers who will be helping out over the coming season. We look forward to seeing you all – this worthwhile project to rehabilitate a scenic area of our countryside needs as much help as it can get. Anyone who is interested in joining in, should please call *Din l-Art Helwa* on 2122-5952 or send an email to info@dinlarthelwa.org.

Foresta 2000 is a joint project managed by *Din l-Art Helwa*, Birdlife Malta and the Parks Department.

Bir Miftuħ Concerts 2007

19 May

Jean-Marc Apap, alto (viola) and Frederic Guerouet, accordionist, sponsored by the Embassy of France and the *Alliance Française*.

26 May

Francesco d'Orazio, violinist, sponsored by the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura*

1 June

(Details to be announced)

Din l-Art Helwa AGM



From the left;

Hon. Secretary General
Major Edward Xuereb
Executive President
Martin Galea
Founder President
Judge Maurice Caruana Curran
Hon. Treasurer
Charles Gatt

An important event this year was the Annual General Meeting, which was held on 24 February. Unfortunately, attendance at the meeting was poor, with only 43 members present.

This low attendance meant that while normal business could be conducted, the passing of amendments to the statute could not be put before the membership for their approval due to a lack of a quorum, which requires the presence of 60 members.

Founder President Maurice Caruana Curran welcomed members and thanked them for their support. He also urged them to continue to persevere and give the council their backing in achieving *Din l-Art Helwa's* objectives of protecting our cultural heritage and the environment.

At its first Council meeting, members approved the following nominations: President: Martin Galea, Hon. Secretary-General: Edward Xuereb, Hon. Treasurer: Victor Rizzo, Vice-Presidents: Martin Scicluna and Philip Zammit Briffa and Communications and PR Officer: Simone Mizzi. Five new members, who in the past six months have served on sub-committees, were co-opted on to the council, namely: George Camilleri, Maria Grazia Cassar, Carolyn Clements, Cathy Farrugia and Dane Munro. David Mallia, Richard McGonigle and John Sare, who served on the outgoing council, were also co-opted. A list of members elected to Council appears elsewhere in this issue.

During the AGM the resolutions shown opposite were passed and approved.



Founder President
Judge Maurice Caruana Curran

RESOLUTION: URBAN CONSERVATION AREAS



It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, on 24 February 2007, that *Din l-Art Helwa* deplores the major changes to the boundaries of the traditional town and village cores of Malta (Urban Conservation Areas) which were introduced into the Local Plans after the consultation period allowed for consideration of the original drafts had expired. These substantial changes were then approved by the Rural Affairs and the Environment Minister in 2006 without any further public consultation.

Under Section 27 of the Development Planning Act, Mepa is obliged to “make known to the public the matters it intends to take into consideration” and must “provide adequate opportunities for individuals and organisations to make representations to the Authority.” In the case of these changes to the Urban Conservation Area (UCA) boundaries, the public was given no opportunity to make representations as required by law.

Din l-Art Helwa therefore calls on Mepa to issue a call for a public consultation on these major changes in the UCA boundaries. In the interim, to avoid permits being issued or refused unjustly, Mepa should refrain from considering any permits relating to the areas where changes took place in the UCA boundaries before the necessary consultation had been completed.

Moreover, *Din l-Art Helwa* notes that in 1995, Mepa outlined and sought to address a series of major problems existing within UCAs. These include problems relating to the construction of additional floors, the deterioration of design standards and the lack of a contextual approach, the deterioration in the quality of the streetscape, the development of back gardens and yards, the loss of open space and traffic generation within the inner core. *Din l-Art Helwa* calls on Mepa to address these problems, all of which add to the gross over-development which is now endemic, with greater urgency as they still persist – and many have become more, rather than less, serious over the last 12 years.

Rumour has it that the Minister and MEPA have given up on conserving UCAs. Perplexity is now wide spread among the stone population



RESOLUTION: ILLEGAL FISHING PRACTICES

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, on 24 February 2007 that *Din l-Art Helwa* expresses its concern over uncontrolled fishing practices that are regularly being carried out in Maltese waters.

Nets are being hauled in within bays and creeks, killing immature fish. Young swordfish are regularly caught and sold in public places, notwithstanding the fact that this practice is illegal, and closed seasons for swordfish are ignored.

These practices, coupled with gross over-fishing, are severely depleting fish stocks and impacting on sustainability, with serious consequences for this and future generations of both the inhabitants of the Maltese Islands as well as the fishing industry itself.

Din l-Art Helwa therefore calls on the Rural Affairs and the Environment Ministry to take steps to ensure that these practices are brought under control, and to ensure that the relevant existing laws are enforced.

Restoration Notes

Cynthia de Giorgio

Delimara Lighthouse

The restoration of Delimara Lighthouse, which started this winter, is well under way. The aim of this project is to restore the lighthouse in order to preserve it and make it accessible to the public, and possibly holiday visitors. The restoration is being sponsored by the Malta Maritime Authority, which has made a donation of Lm13,000.

Delimara Lighthouse was built in 1854, a few years after the building of the Ta' Giordan Lighthouse in Gozo. The architectural fabric is in a relatively good state of preservation, but needs general maintenance. Every effort will be made to preserve the historic fabric of the lighthouse, which includes the stone blocks, timber apertures and floor finishes. In particular, the lantern and its machinery will be treated with the greatest caution, owing to their delicate state.

All the debris and rubbish has been removed from the building and its surrounds, and phase I of the restoration of the exterior fabric of the lighthouse has now been completed. This included the restoration of the damage to the walls, the roof and the tower/lantern. The cement accretions added in previous years were removed and mortar joints were carefully plastered with a hydraulic lime-based mix. All the exterior doors and windows are being restored and missing timber apertures are being replaced. Phase II, involving the restoration of the interior, has begun. This will include electricity and plumbing work, as well as finishes and interior apertures. Phase III will concentrate on the installation of kitchen and bathroom facilities, as well as the furnishing of the premises. The restoration of the lantern machinery will be carried out in Phase IV, after an extensive study of its condition and history to assess what work is required.



Chapel of St Roque, Żebbuġ

The chapel in Żebbuġ, dedicated to St Roque, was built in the 17th century during the plague epidemic. It was restored in 1989, and this winter extensive restoration work, including the removal of several layers of paint from the interior walls, has been carried out. The mortar joints were replaced with a hydraulic lime-based mortar and several layers of brown oil paint were stripped from the original stone benches. A new museum lighting system has been installed recently, and new display cases have been fitted for the exhibits.

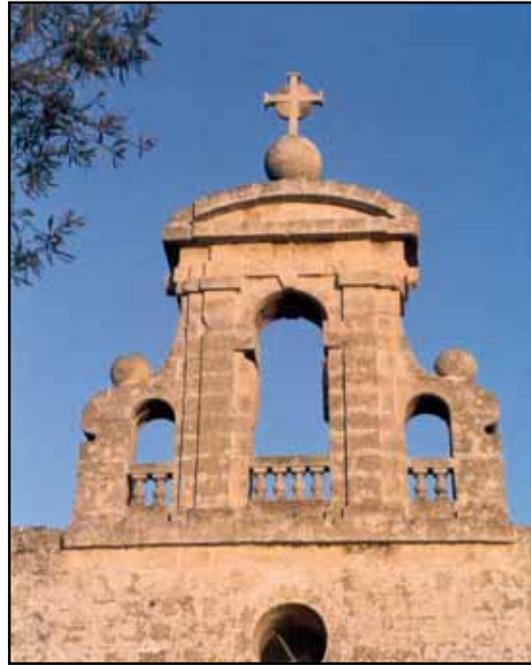
St Agatha's Tower

St Agatha's Tower, an important monument and landmark in our countryside, is presently undergoing an intensive restoration programme. Over the years, the external walls have suffered from water infiltration that has caused a significant loss of the rendering. The first phase of the restoration work, which was carried out last summer, consisted of removing all the loose plaster. The next phase, consisting of filling in the mortar joints and replacing the missing plaster on the exterior walls with a hydraulic lime-based mix, has also been completed. A new bridge was installed in the autumn.



Bir Miftuh

Last winter, the frescoes at Bir Miftuh suffered some deterioration as a result of water infiltration and measures have been taken in order to prevent the problem recurring. Some adjustments have been made to the water run-off incline and water spout on the roof and part of the waterproof membrane has been replaced. Ms Roberta De Angelis, a well-known restorer, was engaged to carry out a study of the restoration work needed to keep the frescoes in good condition. Funds will have to be raised in order for this restoration to be carried out.



Isopu Tower in Nadur

After three years of hard and difficult work by *Din l-Art Helwa* and Nadur local council, the 17th century Isopu watch tower has been restored.

Din l-Art Helwa has again excelled in saving the forlorn and often forgotten parts of our heritage because they tend to be off the beaten track. The project was taken over by *Din l-Art Helwa* just in time to save this very dilapidated tower, which was in danger of collapse. It has now been meticulously restored by local master mason Leli Saliba and his son, who used as much of the original stone and building methods as possible.

The watch tower, which is located at Dahlet Qorrot, is also referred to as San Blas Tower or Isopu Tower and also as Torre Nuova. It sits on the edge of a garigue ridge between the inlets of Dahlet Qorrot and San Blas. When seen from Dahlet Qorrot Bay, it beautifully dominates the ridge. The tower was constructed between 1667 and 1670, during the reign of Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner (1663-1680). However, it was the Gozo Università, who advised the Order of St John on matters concerning Gozo, that paid for its construction. The tower belongs to a series of coastal towers built during the 17th century by the Knights in an attempt to safeguard the island from attack by the Ottoman Turks and corsairs. In 1792 it is recorded as having three gunners and six gun crew. It is worth mentioning that Dahlet Qorrot watch tower is said to have been the only tower in Gozo, along with the Ramla battery, to have opened fire against the French during their attack on the island in June 1798.

The main entrance of the tower, which is built on a strong square podium, is on the upper storey and is reached by a flight of steps with a small timber drawbridge to connect the steps to the entrance. The steps were completely missing and have been rebuilt. Above the doorway the four escutcheons, which had suffered extensive erosion, have now been restored. The first of the two interior floors was completely missing and the supporting stone arches that sprang directly from the walls had also collapsed. The traditional stone *garigor* leading to the roof had been vandalised and the *tromba* on the roof was on the verge of collapse. In addition, all the wooden apertures were missing. As a result of the three years of laborious and careful work, the tower is now back to its former state, with the arches and first floor reconstructed using the original stone building methods of the 17th century. The *garigor* and *tromba* have also been reconstructed and the windows and doors have new wooden fittings.

The tower was recently re-opened by Deputy Prime Minister Tonio Borg, Nadur mayor Chris Said and *Din l-Art Helwa* president Martin Galea. The restoration of Isopu tower is part of a larger conservation project that stretches from Dahlet Qorrot to San Blas Bay.



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BANK ĊENTRALI TA' MALTA
CENTRAL BANK OF MALTA

Since its establishment in 1968, the Central Bank of Malta has demonstrated its commitment towards the preservation of Malta's cultural heritage in various ways. In particular, through corporate membership or other forms of sponsorship, the bank has consistently supported non-governmental organisations such as *Din l-Art Helwa*, *Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti* and *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna*, which are fundamental to safeguarding the national heritage. Being located in one of the most architecturally significant areas of the island, with its main building on St James Bastion and its annex within St James Counterguard, the bank has, moreover, always endeavoured to preserve its historic environs.

The main building of the bank – the ex-Vernon Club and former Garrison gymnasium, itself of historical importance, having been built in the 19th century – was the focus of one of the very first preservation efforts undertaken by the Bank. The interior of the building was entirely restructured, while the external framework was kept intact. A complete restoration of the exterior walls was undertaken between 2000 and 2002. This building also houses a currency museum, which includes an exhibition of antique coins used in Malta between 350 BC and AD 1855.

The bank also contributed extensively to the restoration of the *gardjola* (vedette) located on St James Bastion opposite the main building. This project was undertaken in conjunction with *Din l-Art Helwa* and necessitated the dismantling of the entire *gardjola*, the repair of the underlying bastion and its rebuilding to the original design.

At present, the bank is engaged in the restoration of the bastions and the *polverista* (ammunitions store), which lie adjacent to the bank's annex at St James Counterguard. This project, which is being undertaken with technical assistance from *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna*, aims at transforming the *polverista* into a conference facility without jeopardising any of its architectural features.

Recently, the bank has also contributed to the restoration of Palazzo Falson in Mdina and its collections, which is being undertaken by *Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti*.

Over the years the bank has also contributed to various initiatives related to the preservation of the national heritage. These have included interpretation schemes, television programmes and the organisation of the Europa Nostra Conference held in Malta in 2006.

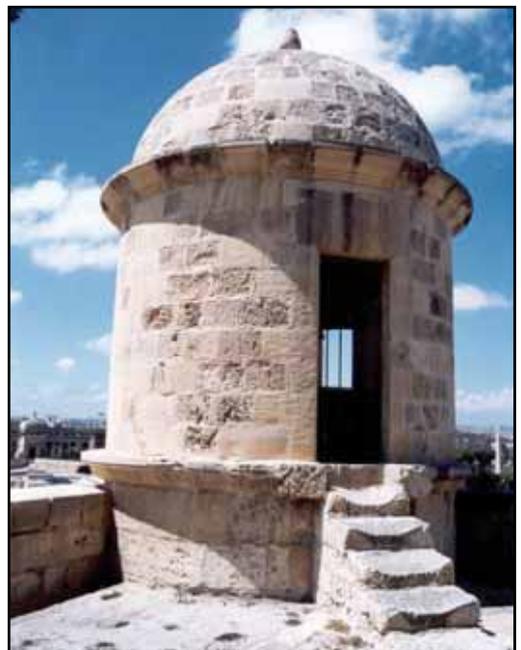
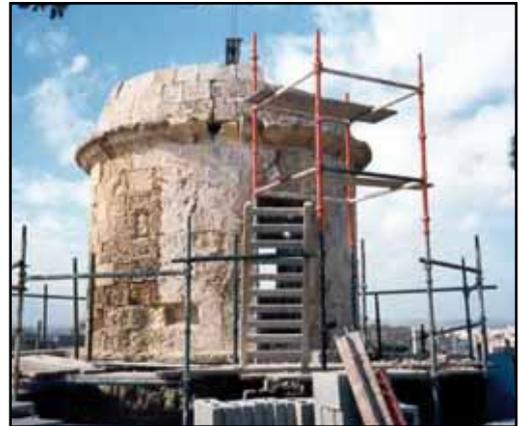
A significant contribution to the national artistic patrimony was made in 2003, when the bank presented to Heritage Malta, on loan, a painting depicting the Cleansing of the Temple by the Maltese artist Giuseppe Grech, painted in around 1783, for display in the National Museum of Fine Arts.

Opposite:
Torri Mamo
undergoing
restoration

photo:
DLH

The foyer.
Central Bank
of Malta

photo:
DLH



The Gardiola (Vedette) on St James' Bastion restored by *Din l-Art Helwa* in 1995



DLH Council Visits Fort St Angelo

Victor J Rizzo

Din l-Art Helwa Council members paid a visit to Fort St Angelo on Saturday, 27 January through the courtesy of Fra John Critien, Knight Resident, who kindly conducted the tour. Mr Anton Attard, author of the booklet *BIRGU (Città Vittoriosa) – Four Walks in a Historical City*, was also present and has graciously consented to the reproduction of what he has written about the Fort.

Fort St Angelo

Fort St Angelo, previously referred to as *Castrum Maris*, is perched on the hill at the tip of the Birgu promontory. Most probably, it was built during the Arab occupation, around 870AD, to protect the harbour area and the vessels berthed therein.

From the time of Count Roger the Norman (1091), the castle was the residence of the feudal lords who governed these Islands. The Castellans, as these lords were known, enjoyed complete autonomy from the *Università* of Malta situated in the capital city, Mdina. Most prominent among the Castellans who lived in the castle were the de Guevara and the de Nava families, and one cannot forget Gonsalvo Monroi, whose wife was imprisoned in the castle during the uprising of the Maltese in 1427.

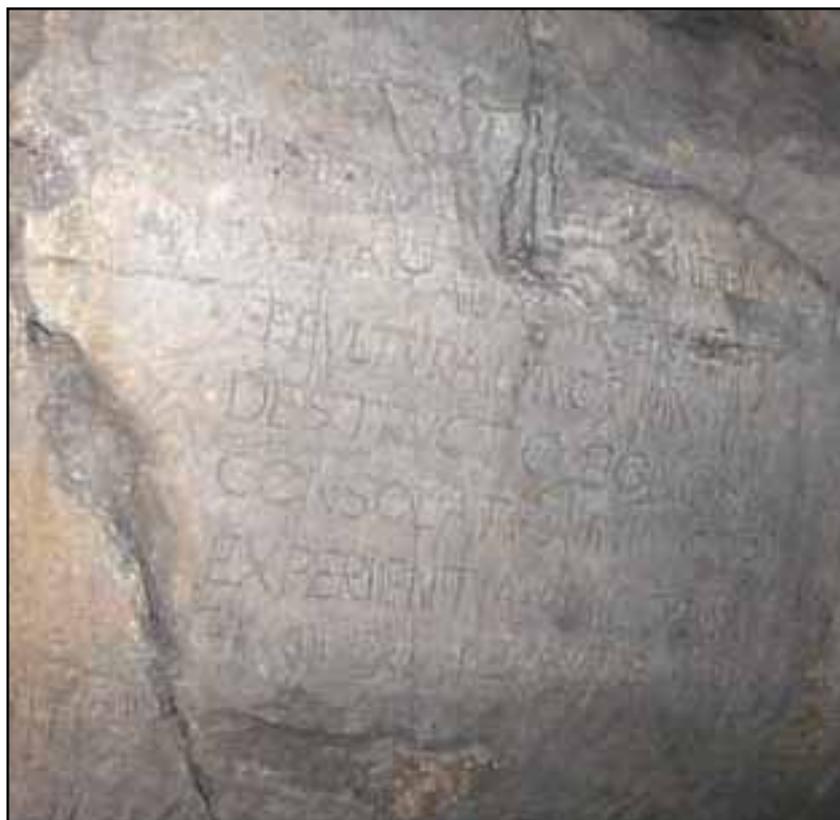
In 1530, when the Maltese Islands passed to the Order of St John, the Birgu promontory was established as their convent and Grand Master L'Isle Adam took up residence in the castle, which also became the headquarters of the Order.



A church, dedicated to St Anne, was enlarged to meet the needs of a larger congregation. The palace was built prior to the arrival of the Order, in Siculo-Norman style and was the residence of the Castellans. After the arrival of the Order, it was upgraded or modified to become the residence of the Grand Master. Later, it became the residence of the governor of the castle, whose emblems adorn the frieze in the main hall. Consecutive Grand Masters continued to live in the Castle until Jean de La Valette moved to a palace in Birgu.

From time to time, the Order strived to strengthen the castle and make it as impregnable as possible. It was during the Order's tenure that the castle was almost rebuilt. By 1536, on the recommendations of the military engineer Antonio Ferramolino, a cavalier, or tower, was erected to control the entrance to Grand Harbour and, to a certain extent, even Marsamxetto Harbour. At the same time, the ditch between the castle and Birgu, its suburb, was replaced by a moat. This renovation process continued on a regular basis for many years. The renovations carried out between 1676 and 1690 by another well-known military engineer, Carlos de Grunenburgh, were the most important. These included the formation of four parallel batteries at different levels facing the harbour, which rendered the castle an impregnable stronghold and, at the same time, contributed to the graceful appearance so admired today.

During the British occupation, in the period between 1800 and 1906, it was manned by the army. During the following years, it was taken over by the navy and renamed, first as HMS *Egmont* and later, up to the withdrawal of the British Forces from Malta, as HMS *St Angelo*.



Among the many interesting spots one also finds the old church, hewn in the rocks, dedicated to Santa Maria, which goes back to the 11th-12th centuries. It was then the parish church for the southern part of Malta. Its vestments and icons were listed in an old document in 1272 and classified as very old. This same document reveals, for the first time, the cult of Our Lady in these Islands. It is administered by the parish priest of Birgu, as it has always been since time immemorial.

Just opposite, there is the *Oubliette* or *La Guva*, which was one of the prisons in the castle. Graffiti made by some of the knights imprisoned there are still visible. A few metres away is the castle's cemetery, where some of the knights killed during the Great Siege were buried, together with others who died of the plague in 1676.

Some years ago, the upper part of the castle was granted to the Order of St John, which funded extensive restorations. Apart from the Church of St Anne and the Magisterial Palace, the top part is also adorned by the recently restored *Nympheum*, which is a kind of garden landscape ornament in the garden of the Grand Master offering some shade from the summer sun. Its architecture is attributed to Bartolomeo Genga, formerly the Duke of Urbino's famous engineer. A fountain, supplied by rainwater collected from the palace's roofs, unfortunately no longer exists.

A signal tower, erected by the British Navy to advise harbour traffic by flag signals, also provides an excellent view of Grand Harbour from an unusual angle.

The upper part of the castle is now occupied by the resident Knight of the Order, Fra John Critien, who kindly hosted the tour and to whom we have to attribute the present excellent state of this part of the fort. A visit to the castle (which might require a fee when open to the public) is highly recommended.

Opposite:

top
The Magisterial Palace

bottom
Historic graffiti in the *oubliette*

Photos:
Victor Rizzo

Church of St Anne – interior



The Shrinking Heart of Our Towns and Villages

Petra Bianchi

Director – Din l-Art Helwa

John Ruskin claimed that we know more about the lives of the ancient Greeks from the ruins of their buildings than from anything else they left behind. Anyone who has visited Pompei near Naples, a town frozen in time by the scorching heat of an eruption of the volcano Vesuvius, has experienced the fascination of being transported back into the past through the tangible remains of the original streets and houses of the ancient Romans – seeing not only the relics of their grand monuments but also visible traces of their ordinary, everyday domestic lives, and of a whole cross-section of the town's inhabitants.

Writers and painters have always been inspired by the streets through which they walked, responding with thought and emotion to urban vistas of towns and villages. Canaletto's Venice, Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria, Orhan Pamuk's Istanbul or the Cairo of Naguib Mahfouz – the imagination of countless artists has been attached to a favoured place.

People organise the spaces within their urban surroundings to reflect the way that they live and think, in line with their customs, values and beliefs. These spaces are a fusion of buildings, yards, streets and alleyways, gardens and public spaces. The architecture of our old towns and villages embodies the history of Maltese urban life. It bonds us to the generations that came before us and, if we are careful to conserve it, may do the same for the generations that will come after us. The physical aspect of our houses and streets acts as a focal point of our collective memory and identity as a nation.

Each individual relates to the urban heritage in a personal way, yet the community as a whole also has a shared response to this heritage. Private ownership of buildings broadens into public ownership of the town or village as a whole. The perception of ownership grows even wider, as in the case of Valletta and Mdina, when monuments or entire towns are designated as part of the international heritage as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It is thus not only the grand monuments of a place that might be recognised as important, but complete towns that could include ordinary streetscapes with humble alleys and simple vernacular architecture.

In the 1960s, a heavy mass of buildings, streets and entire new areas began to rise up into the skyline of Malta. By the 1980s, many people were looking at old houses and streetscapes with changed eyes. Increasingly, they appreciated the history being bulldozed away in a heap of dust before them. Today, nostalgic "past and present" photos in books and newspapers are ever more popular, often comparing familiar streets and landscapes with the way they looked only a few decades ago.

In the early 1990s, Maltese planning legislation decreed that the historic cores of the villages and towns of Malta would be protected. Their boundaries were traced into the draft Local Plans and termed "Urban Conservation Areas" (UCAs). In 1995, the document *Development Control with Urban Conservation Areas* was published by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (Mepa). This useful document outlines design and

"...the Planning Authority is obliged to "make known to the public the matters it intends to take into consideration" and must "provide adequate opportunities for individuals and organisations to make representations to the Authority"

"...much of the desire to build is not driven by the need for more and better housing, but by the craving to make money through real estate"

Opposite:

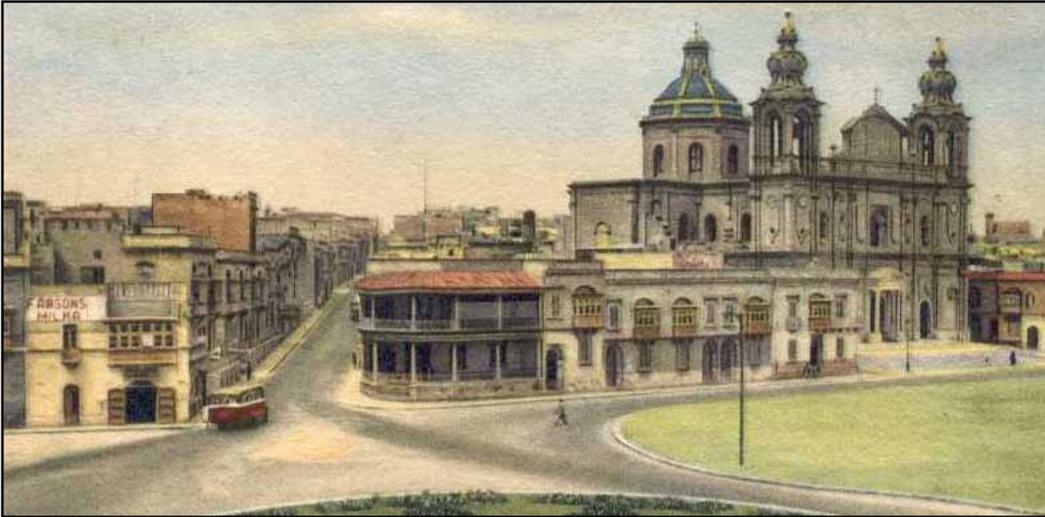
top
Vanishing Msida
in an old postcard

Bottom
A living urban core.
Birkirkara in the early 70s



Lost bits of Sliema. Tower Road corner
with lower Victoria Terrace

Photo:
Louis F Tortell



building regulations for these historic areas and has made great strides forward – but in reality, these rules are constantly challenged by the pressures of ongoing development.

Conservation must take social needs into account. To maintain a vibrant community life in a historic area, houses must be comfortable and desirable to live in, with a suitable internal layout. One recurring question is whether to rehabilitate or redevelop, that is, whether to improve the existing building, or to knock it down and build another in its place in a similar style. In terms of sustainability, the energy and resources used in construction are better invested if the building is encouraged to be long lasting.

When rehabilitating an old house, people usually aim to adapt the house to their lifestyle and taste, often knocking down walls to create contemporary flexible spaces, enlarging windows to let in more light and changing the function of rooms. At the same time, they value what Ruskin called the “golden stain of time”, and emphasise old and quaint features of the building.

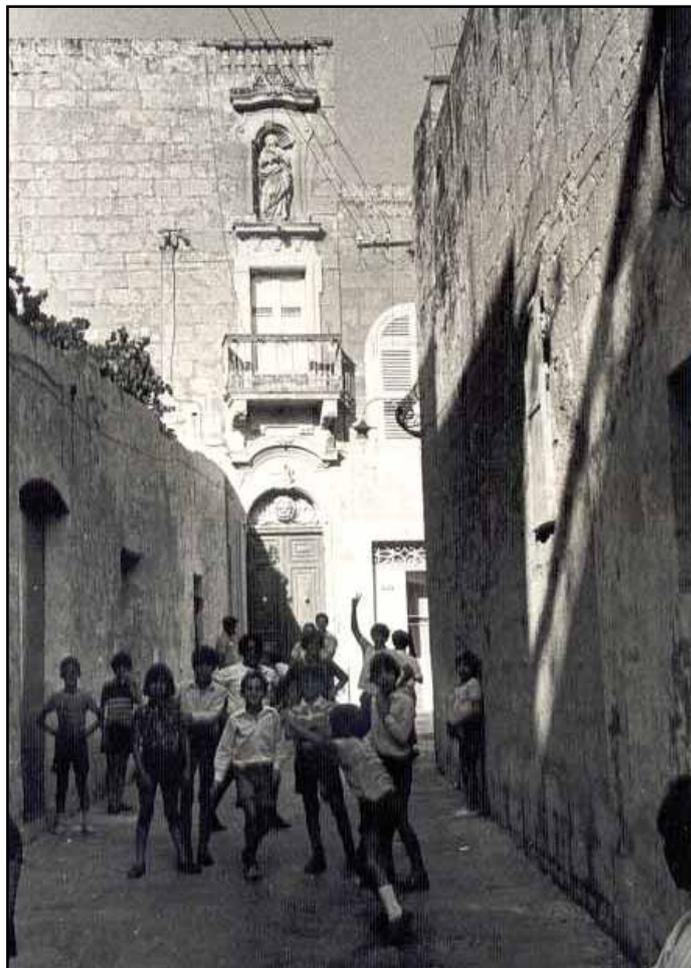
An extreme of this is the growing trend to only preserve the façade of an old house to “keep up appearances” and completely knock down the interior, creating an empty shell of history like a scooped-out oyster. Additional floors are added on to the top of old buildings, sometimes in a different style and with an unsatisfactory relationship to the building below, resembling

a mismatched torso and legs in the children’s game “Misfits” and wearing a penthouse as a silly hat.

In the early 1990s, the Structure Plan – the law governing development planning in Malta – was passed in Parliament. This plan sensibly stated that the draft boundaries of UCAs would continue to be amended in the subsidiary plans and additional areas included, indicating a presumption that they would grow bigger. Over time, one

would gradually expect more streets and buildings to be viewed as historic.

On the contrary, when the Planning Authority finally announced the amendments it had introduced in the new Plans of 2006, the UCAs had been reduced considerably. Huge areas of the UCAs of Hamrun and Pieta had vanished. A central area of Sliema had been left out. Streets were graded down from Category A to B or C, thus significantly changing the level of protection given to them.



Our heritage belongs to all of us. It follows that the public should therefore be entitled to have a say in its regulation. This fundamental right is formally recognised in the Aarhus Convention that came into force in the EU in 2001. Among other things, this document establishes the rights of the public to participate in environmental decision-making.

This is reflected in our own Planning Development Act, of which Section 27 (a) states that the Planning Authority is obliged to “make known to the public the matters it intends to take into consideration” and must “provide adequate opportunities for individuals and organisations to make representations to the Authority”.

In the case of these changes to the Urban Conservation Area boundaries, the public was not given “adequate opportunities” to make representations. In February 2007, *Din l-Art Helwa* therefore requested the Planning Authority to launch a public consultation to enable the public to review these changes. The Planning Authority is insisting that the revisions they introduced were merited. However, the difficulty does not lie solely in whether the changes were good or bad, but in the fact that the public was not sufficiently consulted.

It is certain that in the recent Plans, many of the changes made to the UCAs aimed to ease the building regulations in these areas and thus lessen the barriers to new development. Yet much of the desire to build is not driven by the need for more and better housing, but by the craving to make money through real estate, fuelled by hefty bank loans. The pressure is there to flatten everything to the ground and rebuild, and then repeat the process as soon as possible, harvesting our towns and villages like a type of profitable perpetual crop. This must be resisted absolutely.

Heritage is finite – once it is gone it cannot be replaced.

Action This Day

Martin Galea

Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa

At the height of the blitz, Winston Churchill used to head his most urgent memos with the words "ACTION THIS DAY". Stamped in bold red, he left no room for interpretation as to how urgent the matter was.

It seems to me that we need to convey to government and the powers-that-be just how serious the situation is at present with regard to both our urban heritage and our natural heritage.

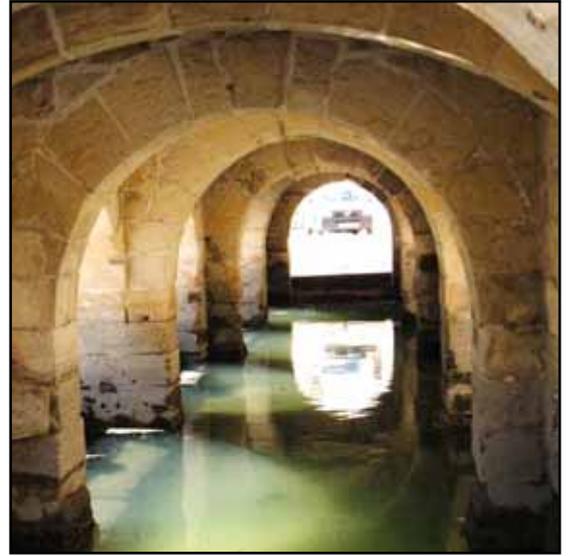
The state of our urban environment is extremely bad. I do not need to elaborate on this – it is self-evident. The state of the planning process that is meant to regulate and protect the urban environment is, in fact, moving backwards, and I say this advisedly. The way the development zones were bulldozed through in six weeks was nothing short of scandalous. We remember the Xaghra l-Hamra episode – not over yet – where sites studied and chosen by Mepa were swept aside, and some of Malta's most beautiful countryside put in their place.

Even more deviously, the draft Local Plans, which had remained as drafts for over five years, were suddenly approved with massive changes – of course drastically reducing the footprint for urban conservation areas and opening vast swathes of our towns and villages to even further development. This, we feel, is set to continue with the draft regulations being floated for Environment Impact Assessments. We now hear that if a developer feels that an EIA is not required, or that the conclusions are wrong, he may appeal to the Environment Ministry for the final say. To say that we have no confidence in politics meddling in development applications is an understatement. We have been there, and the results are there for all to see.

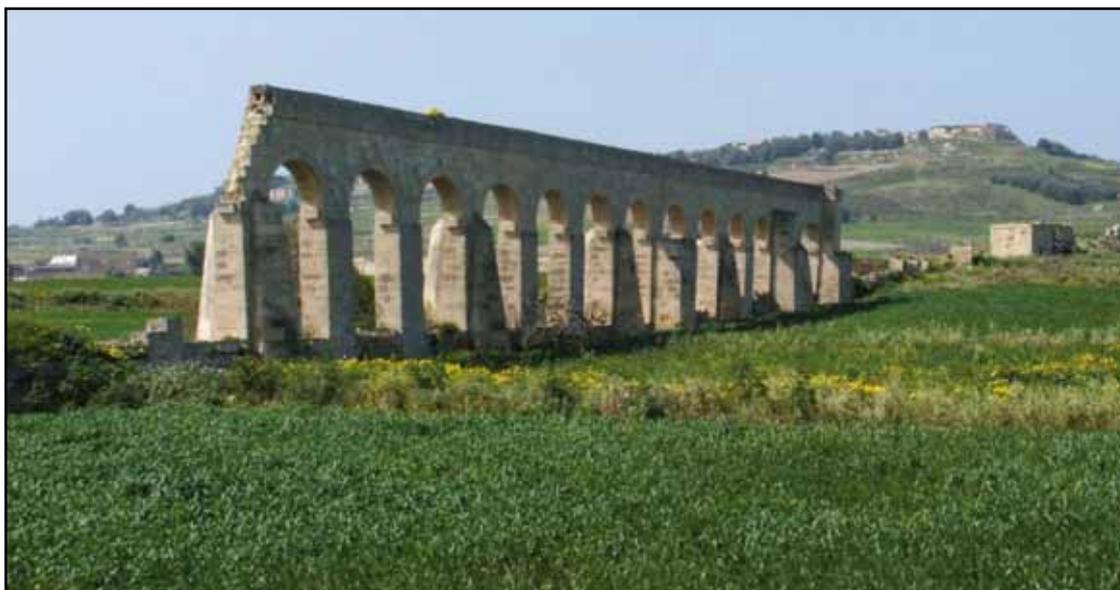
On the other side of the picture, there has been almost no progress in protecting our countryside – even those areas designated as Natura 2000 sites that we are obligated to protect. Very few urban sites have been protected, and the scheduling of important buildings and monuments has almost ground to a halt. We did not expect this, when the Prime Minister promised to put environment at the top of his priorities.

The little progress that has been made has been at the insistence of the European Union, which has forced the Government into action. It is no coincidence that Maghtab is now finally being rehabilitated. Neither is it a coincidence that air quality, water quality and so on are being monitored, and steps are being taken to clean them up.

This is unacceptable. Our Government should now be taking the lead in environmental reform. We can all see the damage caused by uncontrolled development: the economic impact on our tourism industry is now coming home to roost, dust emissions have reached alarming proportions and our health and quality of life is being seriously affected. This is shameful and can no longer be tolerated.



Government must do all that is within its power to save our sinking heritage



Monument to a time when men built in harmony with nature



Urban attack on the Gozo countryside

Does this mean that *Din l-Art Helwa* is against all development, that we oppose everything, that we cannot understand some of the pressures brought to bear on Government? Not at all. But there must be a balance – and what we see is a total imbalance between what should be allowed and what should be protected.

What are We Asking For

Politics must move out of the planning process. This insidious political pressure on Mepa must stop. We have had a number of reports from the auditor of Mepa indicating that the planning process is being abused. Certain developers are being allowed to get away with serious abuses and the planning process is becoming more opaque, with public consultation on draft plans or development zones being little more than a sham. Mepa must be strengthened. There are good, professional people at Mepa and much has been achieved in the past years in town planning. Applications can be seen on the website, and many reports can be downloaded. Let Mepa do its job. Strengthen this institution and its independence, and ensure its integrity. Buildings and monuments, many of which are at risk, must be scheduled and protected. The urban conservation areas must also be protected and not swept aside, as has been the case recently.

The Government must carry out its duty to protect the Natura 2000 sites. Almost no work has started in this respect and these sites are to be protected through partnerships with NGOs. We have put ourselves forward and are ready to assist. However, apart from promises, there has been no serious development in this respect.

Arbitrary changes in building areas must be stopped. If San Pawl tat-Tarġa was zoned for bungalows, and Swieqi for houses, then how has this suddenly changed, turning neighbourhoods into building sites for years, to the detriment of residents and the environment in general.

Action this day. “No more jaw jaw – more war war”, to quote the great man again. Get on with it and protect our heritage now. We have lost too much already.

We are aware that the building industry makes an important contribution to the Maltese economy, with a contribution of four per cent to the GDP, and that building must be allowed to continue in a proper and controlled way. Why talk about sustainability and set up boards and committees, if their advice is set aside? This is just lip service, eyewash, and we are no longer being fooled. The views of both the Government and the Opposition with regard to Mepa remain a great concern. Both parties must commit themselves to stop interfering in planning.

To achieve an authority that can fulfill its obligations to all of us, *Din l-Art Helwa* is proposing that a Commission of Inquiry be set up by Government. This will consist of eminent people, who are above politics, and who would be given the brief of looking into the workings of Mepa. This would not focus on its structure or legal basis, although the Commission may make recommendations to this effect. Rather, it would concentrate on how it has been working in practice, and how it could improve the service to all of us.

It is worth repeating Mepa’s own mission statement:

“Our Mission is to pass onto our children a better country than we inherited. It is for this very reason that we compare our environment to a treasure, something we place our energies in, to protect, care for and improve. The environment encompasses all – nature, cultural and architectural heritage, towns and villages, the countryside, the seas and air. We believe that together we should carefully plan so that our heritage, this gem which we treasure, will not fade away.”

The Malta Environment & Planning Authority is committed to ensure that land use and the protection of the environment meet the needs of today’s society and future communities. We are working to ensure a quality of life that will be in harmony with our natural, cultural and built environment. In so doing we are seeking to implement sustainable development that safeguards the environment.”





Quarries are still eating their way into the countryside

The Commission will seek to ascertain how the Authority can implement this mission statement and what, in certain instances, has prevented it from doing so in the past – what reasons the Board had for rejecting the executive’s advice, and why the appeals board overturned certain decisions. I reiterate that there is much good in the organisation, and this must be strengthened and capitalised on and strengthened. The Commission could strengthen the organisation and help it deliver what the country so desperately needs.

The Country’s Cultural Assets

On a related issue – *Din l-Art Helwa* has been very concerned with the state of the country’s cultural assets. We recognise the excellent work being done by Heritage Malta in restoring many of our finest monuments. We must also recognise the good work of the under-resourced Superintendence of Cultural Heritage in protecting many of those cultural assets that need it most. However, much work remains to be done. We remain dismayed at the state of Valletta – a world heritage city. The improvements that have been carried out do not change the impression of a jaded, crumbling bazaar.

So what are we to do to improve the situation? We have talked endlessly about what to do with the Opera House site and City Gate. We have brought over great architects like Renzo Piano, who have put forward ideas, and perhaps controversial solutions. We have had plans drafted and we have bickered in the press since 1945.

Yet, it seems to me, we have not talked enough, because we have not yet arrived at a conclusion. We must reopen the debate, and look at our city and where we hope to see

it in, say, five years time. We need to include Fort St Elmo and ensure that this most historic of forts is restored and opened to the public.

Regarding Fort St Angelo across the water, we remain concerned that the area in front of the gate will be built upon, although we understand that this is under review. We cannot stress the importance of having this view unfettered by incongruent structures, totally out of keeping with this monument.

We have asked for a meeting with the Prime Minister to put our concerns to him personally. We appeal to him to put environment at the top of his agenda – yes, along with job creation and economic stability. Everyone knows that we have lost too much, so why are we not taking sufficient steps to protect and conserve what is left.

Out with the old;
in with the new!
Future urban heritage
being created
in Msida



Compare
and
despair !

photo:
Joe Chetcuti



Harry (Wings) Day

Brian N Tarpey

The gravesite of Harry (Wings) Day is not what one would expect to see for a man who served his country in two world wars and was decorated in both of them. The grave, in Ta' Braxia Cemetery, is covered with a small flat horizontal tablet bearing a brief inscription showing name, rank, decorations, date of birth and date of death. The date of birth, however, is not correct. It shows 1879 instead of 1898 – a difference of 19 years. The tablet also shows that he had only served with the RAF, with no mention of the other services in which he had enlisted or in which service he was decorated for bravery.

Harry Melville Arbuthnot Day was born on 3 August 1898 at Kuching in Sarawak, Eastern Malaysia, where his father, Henry Robert Arbuthnot Day, was a Resident under the white Rajah Brooke.

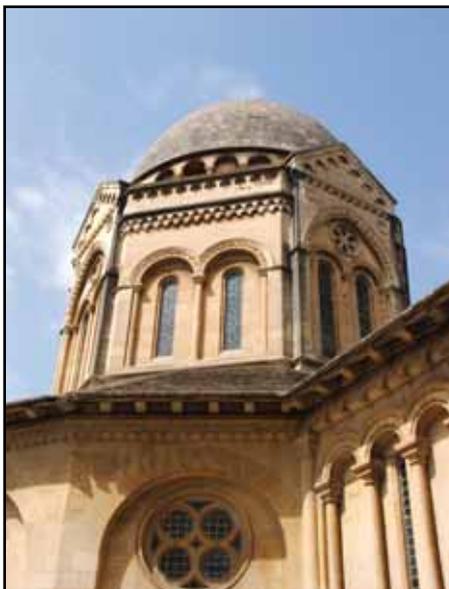
Royal Marines

At the age of 14, Harry Day was sent to England, where he was educated at Haileybury School in Hertfordshire, about 20 miles north of London. On reaching the age of 18, he joined the Royal Marines on 1 September 1916 and embarked on the battleship HMS *Britannia* as an acting lieutenant on 9 October 1917.

Torpedoed off Cape Trafalgar on 9 November 1918, just two days before the Armistice was signed, the ship was in darkness, with a list, and with a fire close to the 12-inch shell magazine. Acting Lieutenant Day went below to search for the wounded. The door to the wardroom was jammed but he could hear men groaning inside, so he burst in through the pantry hatch to find two injured men. With the aid of two stokers, the men were passed through the hatch and taken to the forecabin.

For this action he was awarded the Albert Medal, presented personally by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 13th February 1919. Part of the citation reads: "the cordite fumes were very strong and his life was in danger throughout. His courage and resources were beyond praise". (In 1971, his Albert Medal was converted to the George Cross).

As an acting lieutenant, he went on to serve in other ships including HMS *Isis*, in which he commanded the 40 man Royal Marine detachment. He toured the Far East on HMS *Malaya* in 1921, and in 1922 he was in HMS *Caladom*, when it helped to evacuate Europeans to Malta from Smyrna, where the city was being plundered by the Turks.



Ta' Braxia Cemetery.
Chapel dome

In 1924 he transferred into the Fleet Air Arm and after training at RAF Netheravon in Wiltshire and Leuchars in Scotland, he qualified as a pilot in 1925. He then served with 403 Flight aboard HMS *Hermes*, 401 Flight in HMS *Vindictive* and HMS *Tamar* on the China Station.

In 1926 he opened the Kai Tak airfield with a guard of one Royal Marine corporal, four Marines, and one RAF fitter and rigger. It was while on his tour of duty in Hong Kong that he met and married Doreen Holgate, and shortly after, on 1 September 1927, he was promoted to Captain RM.

On his return to England from his second tour in the Far East, Captain Day formed 408 Flight, which embarked in HMS *Glorious* in February 1929 for exercises with the Atlantic Fleet. When *Glorious* returned to Devonport, he went to Chatham Barracks where, in 1930, he applied to join, and was accepted into, the RAF with the rank of Flight Lieutenant.



Harry (Wings) Day

Joins the Royal Air Force

His first command in 1930 was "C" Flight, 23 Squadron, at Netheravon where, in 1931, one of the pilots under him was Pilot Officer Douglas Bader. It was because Bader ignored Day's instructions not to do low-level aerobatics in the Bristol Bulldog – the cumbersome aircraft with which they were equipped at the time – that led to Bader crashing while doing a low-level roll to impress friends, an accident that cost him both his legs.

Day spent the next five years in the Middle East and on the outbreak of World War Two he took command, as a Wing Commander, of 57 Squadron, flying Blenhiems. Sent to France in the September, on 13 October 1939, Day announced he would undertake a reconnaissance flight over Germany. Inevitably he was spotted and shot down by one of three ME109s. All ejected, but his crew were killed and Day was taken prisoner and spent the rest of the war as a POW.

During his captivity he escaped nine times, including the escape from Stalag Luft 111 in March 1944, when 80 got away via a tunnel. Only three made it to safety and 50 of those recaptured were shot by the Gestapo. The event was subsequently the subject of the film *The Great Escape*.

Harry Day finally gained his freedom in the last days of the war when he was moved to Northern Italy. He simply walked out of the hotel where he was quartered and headed for the American lines. He arrived back in England in May 1945 and was the only man to be awarded the DSO for services while a prisoner of war. He was subsequently promoted to Group Captain and in 1950 he retired from the RAF.

In his retirement he visited former POWs and members of the various escape associations and in later years he lived in Malta, where his favourite place was the RAF Officers' Mess, at RAF Luqa.

Harry Day died on 2 December 1977 at St. Julian's aged 79 and was buried the next day in Ta' Braxia Cemetery.

Twenty-one Years Later

Twenty-one years after the death of "Wings" Day, on 23 October 1998, Lt Col. Sam Pope, OBE, RM, General Secretary of the British Commonwealth Ex Services League, was asked by the Royal Marines Historical Society to look at the grave site of "Wings" Day, while he was on a visit to Malta, to see what condition it was in.

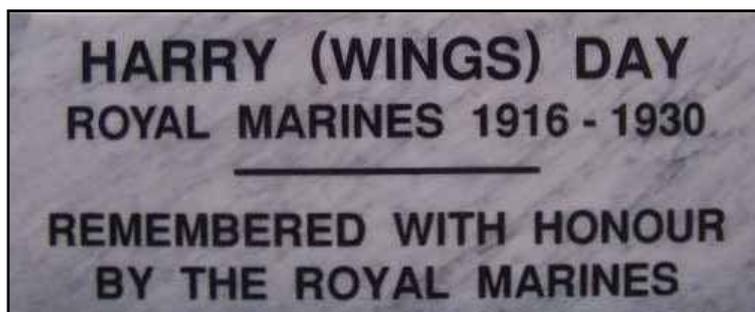
Knowing that the writer was recording the gravesites of Royal Marines buried in Malta from 1800, he contacted Brian and they arranged to meet to look at "Wings" Day's grave. Although the site and tablet were in good condition, there was no reference to Day's service in the Royal Marines.

When the Royal Marines Historic Society was informed, they agreed to meet the cost of a small marble plaque so that "Wings" Day's service in the Royal Marines would be remembered. The inscription on the plaque was suggested by Lt Col. Sam Pope, OBE, RM, who had known Day personally, and been present at Day's funeral, while commanding 41 (Salerno) Commando Company, Royal Marines, at RAF Luqa, in 1977. It reads:

**HARRY (WINGS) DAY
ROYAL MARINES 1916-1930**

**REMEMBERED WITH HONOUR
BY THE ROYAL MARINES**

Extracts from an article first published in *Royal Marines in Foreign Fields* by Brian N. Tarpey, and to be used by The Royal Marines Historical Society in a new publication covering the Albert Medals won by the Royal Marines.



The Royal Marines plaque



The tablet of Harry (Wings) Day

Could you please broadly outline the events that brought the VRC into being?

Valletta was in serious decline. Its historic monuments needed urgent attention and there was a widespread lack of maintenance. But we were also trying to look at a brighter vision for Valletta. In 1987 we were full of enthusiasm and ideas.

What is the current set-up of VRP?

One of the innovative ideas in 1987 was that the project itself (that is VRP) should be administered by a consultative committee drawn from some of the most important personages but also reflecting Valletta's own society. There was also originally a secondary advisory committee that was eventually merged into the main committee. The committee (now known as the Valletta & Floriana Rehabilitation Committee) still exists but as it has seen its voice being given less and less importance recently it is not really functioning well. The project itself, that is VRP, still functions as a unit within the Works Division. VRC was a managing tool and that is the way we saw it then. It is a pity that while other countries have copied our example, locally it has never managed to achieve a strong coordination status, which was the idea at its birth.



You were involved with the VRC from the very beginning. What was at the root of your interest in Valletta?

I am a "Belti", pure and simple. I have always been interested in Valletta and its problems and published a leaflet way back in 1982 on how I saw its future. It was called *ir-Rikostruzzjoni tal-Belt Valletta!* I would not use that term nowadays, but it set out my interest in the city. Besides, since my youth I have always been particularly interested in heritage. My first degree is in History, but I always dreamed of being a conservator, something I achieved with my studies many years later.

Has your perception of Valletta changed after these 20 years of work in, and for, the city? If yes, how?

Certainly. In the first place, I must state that VRP has been very highly successful not only in undertaking very ambitious projects but also in raising awareness about heritage. Today, everyone talks about heritage, but that was not the case then. In the first few years we dealt with the most pressing problems:

Interview with Valletta Rehabil



St Johns Co-Cathedral, the Palace and an endless list of projects. Then we turned to the environment with the first projects in the gardens and the paving of public spaces, and also the works of art within our buildings. We tackled seriously the housing problem. All that has changed now. In the first place, there are more players in the field, particularly Heritage Malta, St Johns Co Cathedral Foundation and the Restoration Unit. And yet I still believe strongly in the need for a coordinating, managing body like VRC, if only it is allowed to operate properly.

In your opinion, how have the Maltese people's perceptions of, and expectations for, Valletta changed over these 20 years?



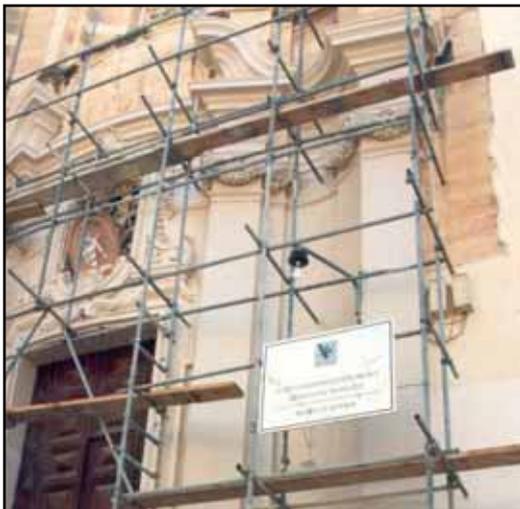
Ray Bondin Valletta Conservation Committee



Valletta was considered as a dying city in 1987. Today, developers are doing their best to get as much of Valletta as possible to resell. Yes certainly Valletta's image has changed dramatically over the last 20 years and this thanks to various persons and factors. Definitely VRC and VRP had a strong role in all this even though their importance is played down nowadays.

Have there been changes in the expectations of people who live or work in Valletta over these years?

The residents of Valletta, and here I speak as one of them, are not too pleased with the current situation. They see more and more offices surrounding them – if not actually in the same block. They see



new floors going up everywhere. My own house has suffered the indignation of an extra floor being built onto my inner courtyard and a two-storey addition in front. The residents are feeling being pushed out by the developers. The result is that more and more decent people of Valletta are moving out.

Are you satisfied with the work done by Mepa with respect to applications within Valletta?

An enormous amount of difference has been achieved as regards shop-fronts, but at the same time we have seen scheduled shop-fronts disappear. In spite of our constant warnings, new styles, which seem acceptable but are contrary to our traditions, are being pushed in. Valletta's skyline has changed dramatically and this is wrong. We are moving quickly towards trying to lose our World Heritage status.

How would you describe the relationship between Valletta and motor vehicles, in view of recent developments?

Park & Ride is one of the most positive things we have had recently, even though this has stopped us moving the carnival people out of Fort St Elmo. Up to now, the residents have not felt any change at all, but this will come when the system comes into full force. I am not entirely certain about the whole new system. I have always felt that if Government tackled the problem of the bussing in of its own workers, the parking problem could be drastically reduced. However, we have to wait and see what happens. I hope that it does not mean fewer people in Valletta. Our city needs people.

What were the most pressing problems of Valletta 20 years ago?

I would say Valletta's image as an area of social housing. This has certainly changed, thanks to the housing projects we had in the late 1980s. St John's was literally falling down: its façade was four inches off. Today, many of the main problems have been tackled but there is still so much to be done.

What are the most pressing problems of Valletta today?

Infrastructurally, we need to do more. Everyone talks about paving and they are right. Most of the pavements are a disaster. As we



move to pedestrianise more of Valletta in the next few months, we hope this problem is reduced. However, what is really worrying me is that the investment we are putting in to restoration projects is getting less and less (if you exclude the bastions project) and we have a number of unfinished projects waiting for funding.

What, in your opinion, has been the greatest achievement of the VRP in these 20 years?

Increasing awareness about heritage and its problems and giving dignity back to Valletta.

Which of the many VRP projects undertaken in Valletta presented the most difficulties?

All projects are difficult. In terms of management, Republic Street, but it was a first for us all. In terms of restoration projects, certainly the Paladini fresco projects at the Palace.

Of which of these projects are you most proud, and why?

I would have to say the Paladini project again, as this gained world-wide interest (but not much locally). The mortar we used is now used world-wide and is known as the "Malta fill-in mortar". Certainly, the recent two projects undertaken at St Johns, namely the restoration of the Chapel of Italy and the (much ignored) organ project were great achievements.

What project would you like to see undertaken in Valletta?

The Opera House site and Fort St Elmo. I have no doubt that we need to build a Parliament in the Opera House area and thus liberate the Palace. Fort St Elmo could easily be turned into a cultural centre, not a large theatre for winter but certainly one for spring and summer, and there is so much more that could be done.



Cannon In Malta

Joe Azzopardi

One of the earliest documentary references to cannon, in an otherwise considerably flimsy repertoire, is recorded by Giovan Fragisk Abela. Abela relates that, according to a letter he had located, in 1516 the Aragonese rulers of Malta had seized a large quantity of counterfeit coins on the Island. Such was the quantity of these counterfeit coins that the Maltese requested the permission of Viceroy of Sicily Count Monte De Leone to melt them down and use the resulting material to cast cannon. The viceroy not only acceded to this request but also offered to cover the cost of casting the cannon.

True as this anecdote may be, there can be no doubt that, with so many other things, cannon were introduced in Malta in significant quantities only following the handing over of the islands by Emperor Charles V to the homeless Knights of St John in 1530. At the time of the Knights' arrival, the strongest fortified position in Malta was the *Castrum Maris*, the fort later re-named by the Knights as Fort Saint Angelo. This was the seat of the representatives of the Spanish overlords and was chosen as the residence of the Grand Master Fra Philippe Villiers de L'Isle Adam (1521-1534). Records show that in 1429, the *Castrum Maris* was armed, along with other war paraphernalia, with eight *bombards*. By the time the Knights arrived, it had only a *mezzo cannone petriero*, two *falconetti* and a few *bombards*.

The other fortified centre of Malta, the then capital Mdina, was architecturally ill-suited to the use of cannon. Only some *bombards* are recorded as being deployed there, which would have been installed on top of the towers placed at regular intervals along the mediaeval walls.

On their side, the Knights had left a considerable number of cannon in Rhodes when they were expelled in 1522, some of which were recorded as still being there in the 19th century. A further loss of armaments, including a number of cannon, occurred with the loss of the *Santa Croce*, a vessel used by the Knights when they transferred from Rhodes to Crete, on their way to Viterbo. Unfortunately, the *Santa Croce*, reputed to have been loaded with 10,000 worth of arms and artillery, foundered at the entrance to the harbour of Candia, and sank with all its cargo.

The number of cannon brought to Malta by the Knights is not securely recorded. Most of the equipment salvaged from Rhodes, and retained by the order during its eight year search for a new home, reached Malta on board the *Gran Carracca Sant Anna*, a huge vessel, equivalent to a floating fortress. The *Sant Anna* itself had a compliment of 50 artillery pieces. This can be compared with the 45 pieces of artillery at the fortress of Tripoli, which were listed in a detailed inventory compiled by the Spanish when the fort was handed over to the Knights as part and parcel of the Malta deal. Tripoli, which represented the southernmost outpost of the Spanish dominion, was in Muslim territory with acute defensive issues. This necessitated the employment of what was considered a substantial defensive artillery force.

Whatever the number of artillery pieces brought over by the Knights, their number was soon augmented by the gift of 19 bronze cannon and 1,023 cannon balls presented in 1530 by the then still fervently catholic Henry VIII (1491-1547) of England. L'Isle Adam had visited England in 1528 to gain support and funds for the re-conquest of Rhodes and the king had committed himself to aid the enterprise by a gift of 20,000 crowns. The gift of cannon represented the fulfilment of that commitment in kind.

Some of these cannon were deployed at Tripoli, which was lost in 1551. The Turks then used them during the siege of Famagusta, on the eastern side of Cyprus, in 1571. In 1906, a cannon with the arms of L'Isle Adam and Henry VIII was found in the course of

Fort St Angelo

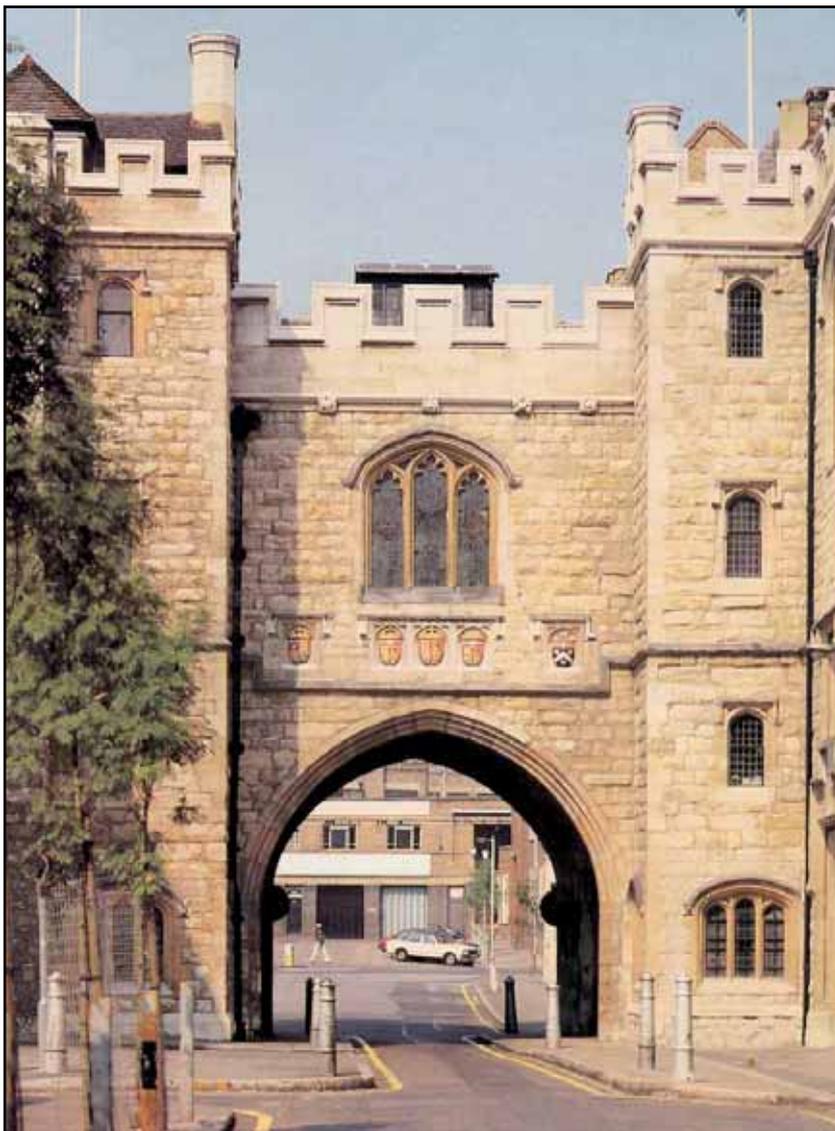


dredging operations in the harbour at Famagusta, which was under British rule between 1878 and 1960. This cannon is now on display at The Museum of the Order of St John, at St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, London.

The period between 1530 and 1565 witnessed a hectic armament drive in anticipation of a violent Turkish attack. This presented itself in the form of what history would record as The Great Siege of Malta. The siege represented the first and only large-scale, artillery-based, battle to be fought in Malta. The frescos of Matteo Perez D'Aleccio in the throne room of the Palace of the Grand Masters show the salient phases of the siege and illustrate the way in which considerable numbers of cannon were deployed during its course.

Although the exact figures are not securely recorded, there are indications that the Turks brought with them some 10 60-pounders, two 80-pounders and an enormous 160-pounder, referred to as a "basilisk". This was brought over from Rhodes, where it had also been used against the Knights in 1522. The Turks had considerable difficulty erecting their batteries, having to haul their guns across four-and-a-half miles of difficult terrain. The bombardment on St Elmo, where 27 artillery pieces were deployed, begun on 24 May and lasted a whole month, leading to such delays that the siege had to be lifted following the timely arrival of re-enforcements.

St John's Gate
Clerkenwell, London



The Turks beat a hasty retreat, leaving behind the less easily transportable armaments – included amongst which would certainly be the immense basilisk. In some plans of Valletta, the basilisk is shown above the city entrance over *Porta San Giorgio*. It was eventually scrapped at some later date. The only thing that survives is a cannon ball, preserved in the palace armoury, which gives an idea of the size and destructive potential of the basilisk. Other captured bronze artillery was probably melted and re-cast in cannon of the calibre normally used by the Order. By the 17th century, such operations could be, and were, carried out in the foundry of the Order. But in the aftermath of the great siege such facilities did not exist locally and many guns were sent to Messina to be repaired or re-cast. The number of guns shipped can be deduced by the fact that, at a certain point, a vessel flying the Venetian flag called *La Giorina* was chartered for this purpose.

Following the jubilant celebrations of this great victory came plans to re-build, adequately fortify and re-arm Malta, in view of an expected Turkish return. The Order further stretched its considerably strained resources, while diplomatically seeking assistance. The King of Spain was asked to assist with the carriage of 40 new guns from Naples. Equipment, including some artillery pieces and troops dispatched by Don Garcia de Toledo, arrived in June 1566 followed in 1567 by more arms and munitions sent by Cosimo I de Medici, Duke of Florence. Soon after, a large bronze cannon donated by Emanuele Filiberto, Duke of Savoy, also arrived in Malta.

Similar hectic re-arming occurred whenever the threat of a Turkish attack was particularly felt during the reign of the Knights. This provided the spur for the building of extensive fortified defences and the purchase of arms, including artillery pieces. A case in point was the fall of Candia, in Crete, in 1669. The Turks had been trying to capture this Venetian city for over 23 years and this had diverted their attention from Malta. Once the city had fallen, the threat to Malta re-presented itself with new vigour. Another alarm was felt in 1714. This time, the Order appealed to Louis XIV for assistance, who responded with 12,000 muskets, an unspecified number of artillery pieces and a corps of military experts. Another general alarm was sounded in 1722.

Malta and the Knights were once again on the brink of war in 1760, following the capture of the Sultan's main ship, the *Corona Ottomana*. The crisis was averted through French diplomacy when Louis XV bought the vessel from the Order and presented it to the Turks.

In the meantime, the Order, both as an institution and through single individuals, also dedicated considerable resources to the defence of the island. The Lascaris Foundation was established by Grand Master Jean-Paul Lascaris Castellar (1636-1657) in 1645 with the aim of providing the island with arms and munitions of war. It had considerable immovable property, among which the area known as "ta' Budak" in Naxxar. Its role was altered in 1652 to serve for the building and maintenance of galleys, but in the meantime some substantial acquisitions of arms were made through its funds. Other such foundations,

though with much more modest budgets, were set up by the Knights Fra Francesco Lomellina in 1603 and Scipio Pappafava in 1640.

Artillery pieces were obviously deployed along the immense perimeter of defensive structures built by the Order during its 267-year rule. These were the responsibility of the Commander of Artillery – a title that appears for the first time in the hierarchy of the Order following their move to Malta. This office, previously occupied by a low-ranking Knight, was given new prestige as a direct result of the development of cannon and other forms of firearms. A senior Knight always occupied the post, nominated by the Grand Commander, subject to the approval of the Grand Master and his Council. They generally served for a term of two years.

Great attention was given to the security issues that the accessibility and proper maintenance of all armaments on the Island presented. The various armouries were subject to periodical inspections, although with uneven results. It is reasonable to assume that such practices were also adopted for artillery pieces. On the security front, the presence of slaves in great numbers represented the most imminent threat. Although slaves were made to work in the armoury, strict regulations prohibited them from carrying weapons or even approaching ramparts, particularly when these were armed with artillery. The breaking of this regulation carried a penalty of 100 lashes.

Some information may be gleaned from the various reports and inventories commissioned by the various Commanders of Artillery, although these refer mainly to arms present in the palace armoury. In 1782, the Commissioners' report lamented the fact the most of the Order's weapons did not have any special markings indicating that they were its property. The artillery inventory dated 3 September 1785, drawn by Chevalier S Felix de Laine for the commandant of artillery Chevalier Fossiers, states that 362 bronze guns, 105 bronze mortars and 486 cast-iron guns were present in Malta. A section of the armoury at the palace assumed an initial partial role as a depository for collections of old arms following a first reorganisation called for by Grand Master Aloff de Wignacourt (1601-1622) – an idea that was later developed by other Grand Masters. Some small artillery pieces were also present in the armoury of the palace, as listed below according to the 1785 inventory:

Dietro il Sole sul ritratto Wignacourt
2 Canonetti di Bronzo

Dietro il Sole sul ritratto di fondo
2 Mortaletti di Ferro per Granate

Trofeo nell'angolo tra le 2 finestre nella facciata del ritratto Wignacourt
1 Mortaletti di Ferro per Granate

Intorno al quadro in fondo, e sull guardaroba
1 Mortaletti di Ferro per Granate
2 Canonetti di ferro



Detail from one of the *cannonetti* preserved at the Palace Armoury

In Seguito

4 Mortaletti di Ferro per Granate
4 Mortaletti di Ferro per Granate

Trofeo In Seguito

4 Mortaletti di Ferro per Granate

Trofeo Sotto il Ritratto Wignacourt
3 Canonetti di Bronzo

3za Piazza

1 Canonetti di Bronzo scolpito

5a Piazza

1 Cannone in quairo
5 Canonetti di Bronzo
1 Canonetti in ferro
2 Canonetti di piombo con anima di ferro
2 mortaretti di =bronzo

("Piazza" refers to grouped items set in the central part of the hall). Another *cannonetto di bronzo* and a *mortaretto do ferro per granate* are recorded as being *Nell'Ingresso ed ove puliscono le armi* (at the entrance and in the armourers' workshop).

One of the bronze *moraretti* preserved at the Palace Armoury



This gives a total of one leather cannon, five bronze mortars, 16 iron mortars, 14 small bronze cannon, four small iron cannon and two small lead cannon. This varies from another 18th century list that describes the artillery pieces present in the palace armoury as follows:

- 1 Canone di Quoiro**
12 Canonetti di Bronzo
3 Canonetti di Ferro
2 Canonetti di Piombo
3 Mortaletti di Bronzo
21 Mortaletti di Ferro per Granate

It would also be interesting to know where the *mortaretti*, which are not listed in the inventories for the palace armoury, were stored. Reference is made to *cannonetti* in bronze, iron and lead. These small pieces were probably used for the training of new gunners.

Today there remain 10 bronze and five iron small cannon in the palace armoury. In the case of the bronze cannon, two are about two metres long and the remaining eight are about, or under, one metre in length. They are considerably ornate, with coats of arms and other forms of decoration. All the small cannon are placed on wooden carriages.

The collection also includes 14 cast iron mortars and three made of bronze. The bronze ones are of particularly refined craftsmanship. One of them, set on a wooden base, carries the coat of arms of Grand Master Gregorio Carafa (1680 – 1690). It is inscribed MIRI. MIVILLA.F 1686 and on its base is an old oval metal plaque with the number 458 and a marking in white paint “PA 566”. This is probably a catalogue reference, with “PA” being the abbreviation of Palace Armoury.

The second bronze mortar has a scroll underneath the muzzle with the inscription “*Il Vigoroso*” – it being customary during the period to give names to artillery pieces. It carries the coat of arms of Grand Master Pinto (1741-1773). On the bulbous breech at the base of the mortar is inscribed the name Franciscus Trigance. This mortar also carries an old oval metal plaque with the number 224 and has a marking in white paint “PA 560”.

The third bronze mortar on display at the palace armoury is larger than the first two and has a decorated mount. The central section is decorated with a plain shield framed by what look like palm fronds and topped with an open crown. The old oval metal plaque shows the number 229 and the marking in white paint “PA 547”.

Reference is also made to the leather cannon *Canone di Quoiro*. This was long thought to have been imported from some northern country, produced at the end of the 18th century or, at the other end of the historical spectrum, to have been brought over from Rhodes. Stephen Spiteri has produced documentary evidence that shows how this uncommon item was produced in Malta. Spiteri refers to a petition presented to the Grand Master by a Margarita Ellul reminding him that it was one of her ancestors who had built the leather cannon:

Margarita, vedova di Francesco Ellul di questa Citta' Valletta espone che per riguardo dáver un suo antenato fatto il cannone di pelle che ritrovasi conservato nella sua armeria fu alli suoi antecessori, e successori concesso l'uso della mina che ritrovasi in questa citta' sotto il Forte Cavaliere.

These leather cannons are indeed very rare. They were often composed of a copper core reinforced with iron strips. This was then bound with rope, in some occasions mixed with tar. The whole was covered in stucco and then given a leather finish. The Malta specimen has lost part of its leather cover and the rope has been exposed. This cannon rests on what is probably its original carriage.

Strangely enough, no reference is made to one of the most interesting artillery pieces still displayed in the armoury collection. This is the breech-piece of a 16th

Opposite:

Detail from an another of the *cannonetti* preserved at the Palace Armoury

The leather cannon





century built-up wrought iron cannon known as a “port-piece”. These were artillery shafts composed of various inter-connectible sections and were mainly used on ships and were designed to fire stone-shot. The breech-piece had two brackets to which iron rings were attached. The one at the palace armoury has a damaged hinge and has lost the ring formerly attached to this. It has long been considered to be a mediaeval piece and thought to have been one of the mediaeval *bombards* found by the Knights in the *Castrum Maris*. It is mounted on a reproduction wooden carriage to which is attached an old metallic tag that reads:

ANCIENT PIECE OF ORDINANCE
FOUND IN MALTA.

The carriage is designed after a drawing Marked Pezza Cavalca in an old work entitled *Pratica Manuale dell' Artiglieria*, published at Milan in the year 1606.

(Signed) R James, April 1877.

Like many other items in the collection, the carriage also has a marking in white paint that reads “PA 423”.

During the French siege, Captain Raulat submitted an inventory of cannon under their control on 23 September 1799. A total of 310 bronze cannon, 73 bronze mortars, 227 cast-iron guns and 10 howitzers were listed. This inventory, and its comparison to the one compiled by Felix de Laine in 1875, might help dispel the long-standing belief that the French dispersed the armoury collection and artillery pieces they found in Malta. If this list is to be considered accurate, 52 bronze guns, 32 bronze mortars and 259 cast-iron guns had been removed. The balance is, however, still a far cry from what is presently preserved in the national collections.

Contrary to normal belief it was not during the French occupation but in the first 50 years of British rule, as shown again by Stephen Spiteri, that much of the arms and artillery collection was dispersed. In 1800, the British found a huge number of cannon in various states of serviceability. The majority of guns cast in iron were eventually used as bollards, while the 310 bronze cannon listed by Captain Raulat were disposed of, many being shipped to England to be added to various British collections.

Eighteen bronze cannon are recorded as being removed in 1838 during the governorship of Lt General Sir Henry Bouverie (1836-1843). Among these was a huge culverin, probably of early 17th century Flemish make (17ft 2ins long with a 5in calibre). On the first reinforce it bears two shields with the arms of the Order and of Alof de Wignacourt. On the second reinforce is the figure of St John the Baptist. It also has a number of decorative bands including a particular design with tongues of fire. The dolphins are naturalistic while the battered button was once probably a lion's head. This gun is most probably a companion of the one that stood in front of the Vilhena monument in Floriana, with which it shares many distinctive characteristics. It is now in the Tower of London.

A second Maltese cannon in the Tower of London is also a culverin (19ft long/calibre 6ins/weight 5 tons, 15cwt and 56lbs). The muzzle mouldings feature cherubim in relief. On the second reinforce is the figure of the Archangel Gabriel spearing Satan. On the first reinforce are three shields; the first one showing a cross, the second a cross and Fleur-de-Lys and the third three crescents. Also on the first reinforce is an inscription that translates as:

Made in the year 1607, in the time of Grand Conservator Brother Michael de Lentom, out of the perpetual income derived from the estate of Modica, established by Brother Raymond de Veri of Majorca, bailiff in the year 1590, and registered by Brother Raymond de Berga Grand Conservator.

The cannon is mounted on an elaborate carriage designed at the Royal Carriage Department, Woolwich, and made by John Hall of Dartford in 1829. This implies that the cannon must have reached England before this date.

But the most famous, and elaborate, Maltese cannon, preserved in the Tower of London is the so-called Ximenes Gun (5ft 1in/calibre 2.5ins). This was presented to the Order by Commander Lec de Boyer d'Argens, at the time Commander of Artillery during the period of Grand Master Francisco

Ximenes de Texada (1773-1775). It is an elaborately chiselled field gun, with an equally impressively orated carriage, designed by Philip Latterell and cast by Orazio Antonio Albergetti of Venice. The cannon is inscribed with the motto *Pomopa at Usu* – reflecting its double role as an artillery piece and a ceremonial item.

Following the capture of Malta on 12 June 1798, The Ximenes gun, together with other items, was embarked on board a French frigate ironically named *La Sensible*. On 27 June, *La Sensible* was intercepted and captured off Pantelleria by the English frigate HMS *Sea Horse*. The booty was transferred to England and was placed in the Tower of London. In the 1990s it was transferred to Fort Nelson, Portsmouth.

Another three Maltese cannon are listed in the catalogue of the Museum of Artillery in the Rotunda at Woolwich compiled by Major J P Kaestlin in 1970.

The first (9ft 1 inch/calibre 3ins) bears the cipher of Henry II of France and Diane de Poitiers and a shield with Fleur-de-Lys surmounted by a crown. It has an octagonal external surface and on the base ring the date 1551. The letter H and a crescent run alternately round the muzzle.

The second (6ft 7ins / calibre 2.5ins) has, on the first reinforce, three classic figures, half human, with horns in relief and is inscribed 1551 MLC.RSM.IERSE. On the second reinforce, is a figure in strong relief representing The Virgin and child.

The third (9ft 1 lins/calibre 2.92ins) is dated 1571. On the case are the arms of Venice underneath the letter X and on the reinforce the letters CDX and the letters AG with a coat of arms between them. Underneath this is inscribed PSA followed by MDLXXI.SA.

The information for this article has been collected from the following sources:

The Palace Armoury by
Stephen C Spiteri

Cannon of Bronze – article by Eric Parnis
in *Treasures of Malta Vol.1 No.1*

The Bronze Cannon of the Knights of Malta
(1773-1963) – by Captain J.M. Wismayer

The author would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Emanuel Magro Conti, senior curator maritime and military historic section and Michael Straut – curator, Palace Armoury.

Part three of this article, will appear in the next issue of Vigilo.

Birgu - Città Vittoriosa - Booklet

Victor J Rizzo



To create awareness of the need to preserve local culture and heritage, *Din l-Art Helwa*, in collaboration with Birgu local council, has published a 56-page booklet entitled *Birgu – Citta Vittoriosa - Four Walks in a Historical City*. The booklet is extensively illustrated, in full colour, and gives a detailed description of all the historical sites along the routes.

Printed by BestPrint and sponsored by Global Capital Group and Del Borgo Wine Bar, the booklet was officially launched on Friday, 5 January at the Gallarija Couvre Porte, in the offices of Birgu local council.

The author, Birgu native Anton Attard, proudly introduces the city of Birgu as “*Citta` Vittoriosa: the Victorious City*”, a title that the citizens of Birgu still have very much at heart after the Great Siege victory in 1565.

In fact, through the centuries, and under the influence of various rulers, Birgu became the centre of religious cults, technology and commerce. In prehistoric times, the first settlers built temples in honour of their gods. A temple in honour of the goddess Hammuna was erected at the base of the hill of the promontory, close to the site where a castle was subsequently built. It was later re-dedicated to Astarte and Gunone. According to Attard, most probably the temple was destroyed during the Arab occupation – its remains could still be seen when the Order of St John came to Malta in 1530. The castle was first referred to as *Castrum Maris*. After considerable modifications over the years it became known as Fort St Angelo. The poor inhabitants of the neighbourhood felt more sheltered and secure by building hovels close to the walls of the castle. Slowly, the scattered village beneath the castle took shape, and it was referred to as *Il Borgo del Castello* and hence its derivative – *Il-Birgu*.

Following the arrival of the Order of St John, Birgu was chosen to be their city and the Knights immediately occupied the castle as their headquarters. Gradually, Birgu was greatly improved and strengthened to meet the requirements of the Knights.

The Marina in the early
20th Century

Opposite:

top
Auberge of England

bottom
Advanced Gate

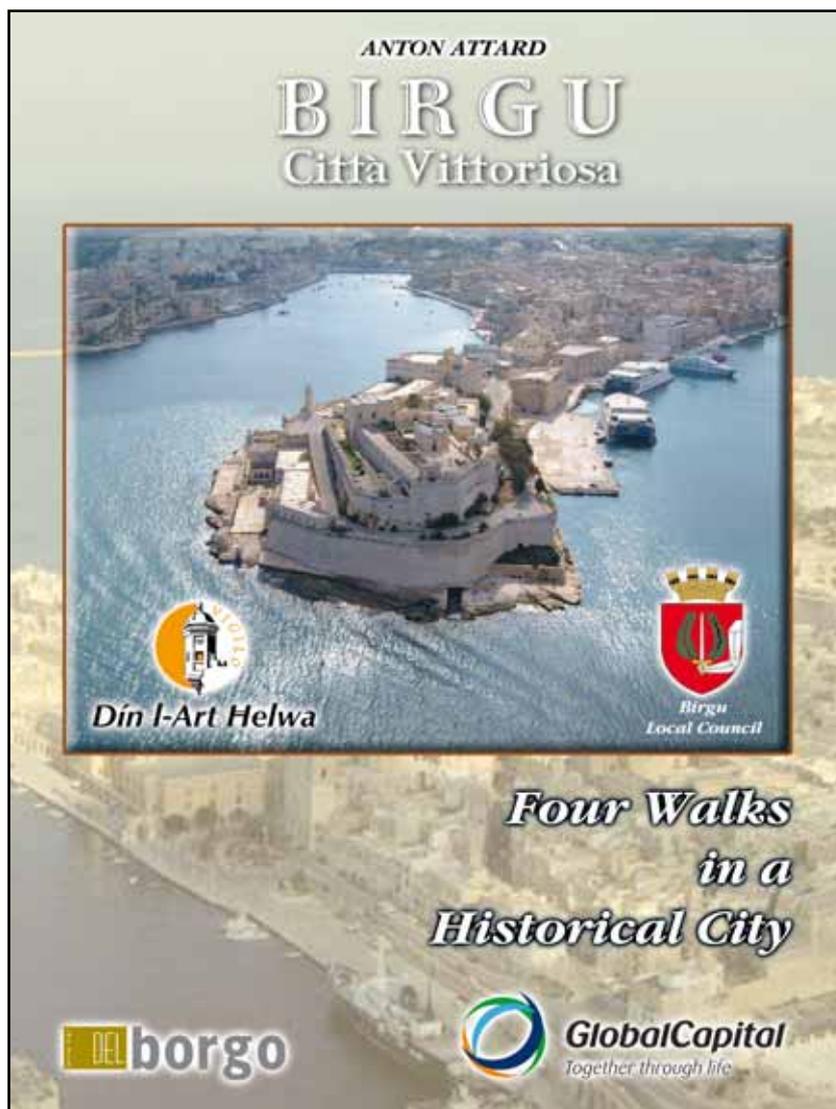
Photos:
Rev Martin Micallef
and Anton Attard

Front Cover

These walks take you past the auberges, the hospital, the new law courts and other palaces that sprang up within the fortifications. All four walks start from the bus terminus outside the main road leading to the city. Visits to the museums and churches, etc., are recommended.

The first walk takes you to the Collacchio area along the fortifications. The tour starts through a baroque sculptured gate known as Advance Gate or the Gate of Aragon. Walking through the courtyard, you cross the ditch to the gate of Couvre Porte and through the gate of Provence or Main Gate. Proceed along the fortifications from St John's Cavalier to St James' Cavalier, past the Order's Armoury and the Bishop's Palace.

A particular spot in the fortifications defended by the Langue of Castille is the breach known as *Il-Breccia*. It was here that Grand Master La Valette was wounded after he joined the Spanish Knights to force out the Turkish invaders who had earlier succeeded in breaching the bastion with their artillery. Further on is the Collacchio area where the Knights had their most



important buildings: the Auberges of Castille and Portugal, Aragon, France, Auvergne and Provence and England, and the *Sacra Infermeria* and the Church of Sta Scholastica, dedicated to St Anne. The titular painting in this church is considered to be among the best works of the famous Italian Knight, Mattia Preti.

The second walk is a maritime stroll along the Birgu Marina, now also referred to as the Birgu Waterfront. From a marina of galleons, warships and a dockyard it has developed into a yacht marina, mainly for larger yachts. You will walk past the Maritime Museum, the Order's Treasury – now occupied by commercial outlets – and other fine architectural palaces. Near Fort St Angelo, you cross over to the other creek through the old *manderaggio*, where the Order's captains berthed their vessels. The eastern shores of Birgu stretch below a long line of fortifications, past the Jews Sally Port and the Infirmary Sally Port, more commonly known as *it-Toqba*. Up a few narrow steps, a low door with an iron gate leads you to a ditch now named Coronation Garden. Walking past the olive groves and wartime shelters, now a war museum, you arrive at Couvre Porte.

Another walk to the Centre of the City leads you past the Dominican Priory and the Church of the Annunciation, the Inquisitor's Palace and the nearby Università, or the Council of Jurors, to Victory Square. Here, the author also takes you back to the last world war when the old campanile of this church was bombed, and the clock tower in the square completely destroyed. From this square, you can walk down through history towards the Renaissance church of St Lawrence, one of the oldest parishes in Malta. Among many interesting features of this church are the titular painting by Mattia Preti, another painting by Filippo Paladini, the statue of St Lawrence clad in a real, richly decorated, dalmatic on a silver pedestal, the pulpit and the organ loft.

The last walk stretches to the city's outskirts along the Cottonera fortifications, specifically built by Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner to try to make the Three Cities impregnable. You will walk past Fort San Salvatore, where you can admire the massive walls of the long line of fortifications. This leads you past St Lawrence Cemetery towards an imposing Notre Dame Gate, popularly known as *Bieb is-Sultan* in view of the bronze bust of Grand Master Cottoner placed high up on its façade. Two prominent colleges are also featured along this route.

With this booklet, the historical impact of Birgu has been put in its proper perspective, thanks to the joint efforts of *Din l-Art Helwa* and Birgu local council.



Climate Change and its Impact on Malta

Martin Scicluna

Vise-President of Din l-Art Helwa

The most formidable challenge confronting Malta in the next 20 years is global warming and climate change. Between now and 2030, we are not only going to have to cope with adjusting to the needs of accession to the European Union and the ruthlessly competitive demands of globalisation. We are also going to have to adjust our whole way of life to the threats of climate change and global warming. It is rather like asking a man suffering from appendicitis to carry his own operating table into the operating theatre. The only consoling thought is that these are challenges that face the whole of mankind in one way or another.

It is not too dramatic to say that if global warming becomes a reality – and if climate change is not halted – our country as we know it today will be largely unrecognisable. If global warming is successfully reduced – mitigated, overcome – that victory can only be achieved at substantial economic, social and other costs for everybody, including ourselves. We have perhaps a few years in which to draw up a survival plan. If anybody thinks that 20 years is a long time, let me disabuse them of that thought. You have only to look back 20 years to 1987 to realise that it feels like yesterday. Those who are aged 50 or younger – two-thirds of people alive in Malta today – will live through the consequences of climate change and the world's battle to overcome it. Through their children and grandchildren, they will see at first hand how, or whether, Malta rises to the challenges ahead.

Today, mankind is poised for probably its greatest trial. Whether we like it or not, we are a part of it. The acceleration of climate change now underway will sweep aside the comfortable, near perfect, climate to which we have adapted and become accustomed. The scientific evidence is now overwhelming. Climate change and global warming pose very serious risks. Put starkly, unless nations act now to mitigate the worst effects of global warming, it will lead to a new geological era that will cause the decline of western, industrialised life-styles as we know them today. Climate change threatens the basic elements of life for people around the world – access to water, food production, health, use of land, the economy and the environment itself.

What is unusual about the coming crisis is that humanity is the cause of it and nothing so severe has happened in millions of

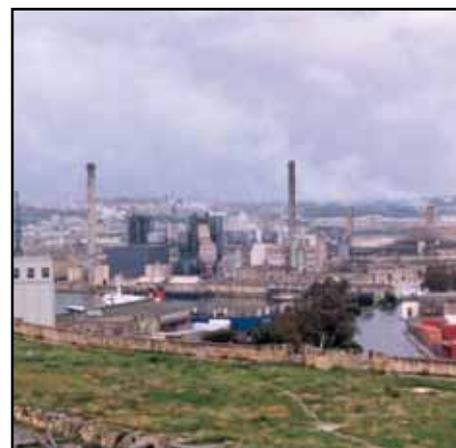
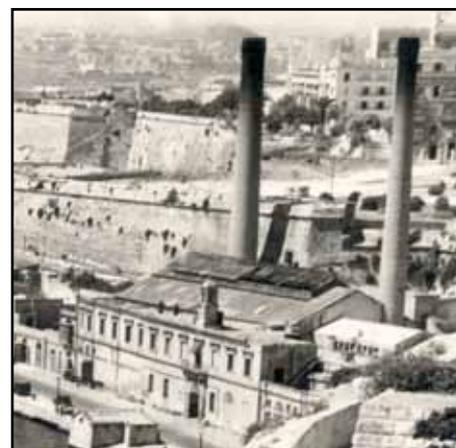
years. It is almost as if we had lit a fire to keep warm and failed to notice as we piled on fuel that the fire was burning out of control and the furniture had ignited. When that happens, there is little time left to put out the fire before it consumes the house itself.

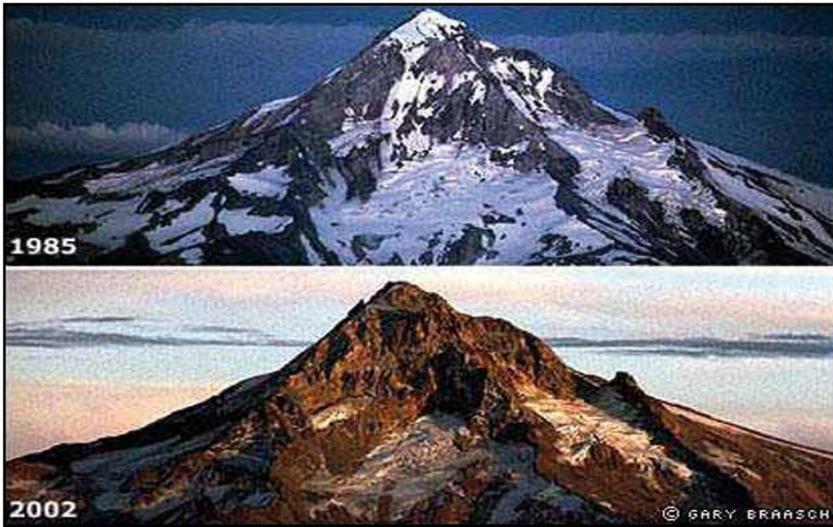
Global warming is not conjecture, supposition, scaremongering or partisan overstatement. It is, rather, a clear and very present danger. No one can predict its outcome or its effects with complete certainty. But scientists now know enough to understand the risks. Whatever doubts there may be about future climates, there is no doubt that both greenhouse gases and temperatures are rising. The evidence shows that ignoring climate change will eventually damage economic growth and our very civilisation and way of living.

Our actions over the next few years could create risks and major dislocation to economic and social development later in the century on a scale not seen since the first Great War almost a hundred years ago and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century. Some still deny the science of climate change. There are, indeed, legitimate debates over many particular details and effects of the world climate system. But it is no longer credible to doubt the underlying physical and geological mechanisms associated with increases in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We need to take steps now to mitigate the effects. These steps must be viewed as an investment – the costs incurred now and in the coming few decades to avoid the risk of very severe consequences in the future.

What will be the effects on Malta and what should we be doing? Global warming will affect Malta in many ways, but most particularly in two absolutely crucial and fundamental respects. These are our supply of fresh water and our energy security. The impact of climate change on Malta will lead to more extreme and haphazard weather patterns, with prolonged heat-waves, shorter, more intense, rainy periods and longer, dryer spells. Malta's attraction as a tourist destination will be undermined – with all the economic consequences that follow. Moreover, the escalating rise in temperature will be accompanied by severe water shortages, as rainfall over the central Mediterranean is drastically reduced. The biggest impact of this will be to exacerbate our problems with our water table, which

Doubtful past and present sources of our energy





is already not being replenished quickly enough. Soil erosion will be exacerbated. Lack of water in the soil will lead to increased salinity. Crop yields will diminish. The process of “desertification” will be accelerated. Sea levels will rise and many low-lying areas (for example, our beaches in the east and northeast) will be submerged. Malta as we know it today will be unrecognisable.

That is probably the worst case scenario. We would not be Maltese if we did not recognise intellectually these likely effects of global warming while, at the same time, being unwilling to acknowledge that our own lives will alter and that if climate change goes unchecked, life here will be profoundly altered. Underlying this denial is the dissonance with which we face all possible catastrophes. We might be deeply afraid of the impending disaster, but we are also confident that through the grace of God, or other sources of good fortune that have preserved us so far, we can somehow be spared from the consequences of catastrophic global warming and climate change.

But we are in a classic Catch 22 situation. Even if the worst case scenario is averted, we are still faced with the key challenges of what we do about our water supply and our energy security. The prospects are grim, and even if the world acts successfully to reduce the effects of climate change, there will still be hard times that will stretch us to the limit.

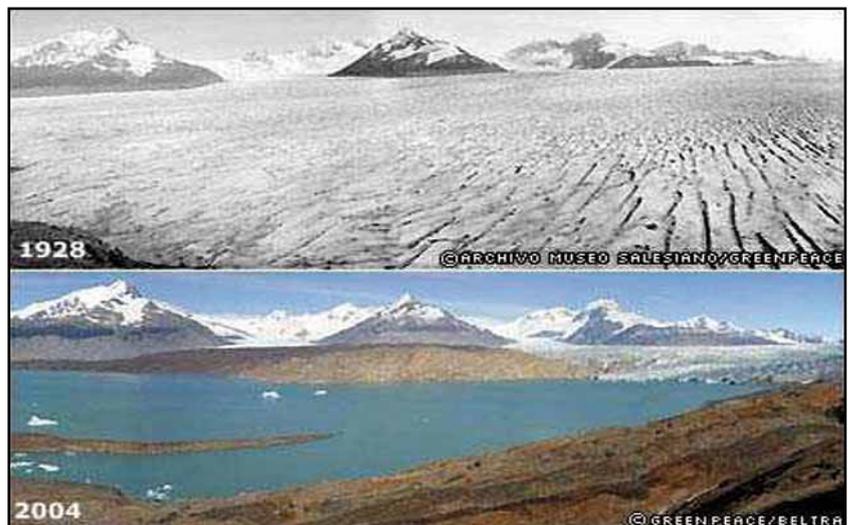
Energy to drive our power, to drive our industry, to drive our transport, to run our desalination plants – which provide 50 per cent of our water and energy for every aspect and comfort of modern life – will not only become extremely expensive as big price increases are effected to hold energy demand and carbon emissions in check. We will also be under increasing pressure to replace the carbon fossil, CO2 – producing energy supply sources in place today completely. We are already under intense pressure to make cuts in our carbon emissions. This will increase. We have to shift to a low carbon economy, but we have to do this by achieving energy security through much greater energy efficiency, conservation and the diversification of energy sources and supplies. Offshore wind energy, solar energy (thermal and photovoltaic technology) possibly also nuclear (why not?), hydrogen or bio-energy are all options. We have to examine all alternatives with an open mind.

This page:
Images source
bbc.co.uk

As with oxygen, we notice the lack of electricity and power only when it fails. The possible connection to Sicily for our new source of power by cable or, more likely, by gas pipeline, will involve huge financial costs and not inconsiderable strategic consequences. The need for action is urgent and the investments we make in the next five or ten years could move us onto a more sustainable path. The lead-time for any project of this nature is a long one, and the ramifications – affecting as they do new technologies, major investment costs, long term security and continuity of supply – are enormous. But increasingly higher energy costs will drive the agenda for us, whether we like it or not.

The importance of water as an essential resource of all life and a vital requirement for good health, sanitation and as a critical contributor to almost all industrial production is self-evident. It is a resource of vital strategic, social and economic importance. Why do we tolerate the depletion of the water table by illegal extraction, a water table that global warming will deplete even further? We have almost the lowest per capita water availability in the world (in 172nd place out of 180 nations). Why do we not make better use of storm water by diverting it to replenish the water table? Why do we not make use of recycled water (treated sewage) as even now Australia is doing, to combat its drought conditions. When will the National Water Policy be revealed and implemented? Should we not be paying a proper economic price for our water use to drive home the need to conserve it?

I shall not labour the point. Suffice it to say that future energy security, and the provision of adequate water, pose major challenges. This is why I place climate change and the consequent need to secure our water and energy supplies as the number one challenges facing us in the next few years. The bottom line is that, whether or not climate change is averted, the challenges to our continuing water and energy supply – the very bases of civilised life and sustainability – are enormous. They are urgent in view of the long lead times and the major investment costs required. They require the most careful planning for they impact on society, our way of life and our economy in the most fundamental ways. The economic risks of inaction are significant. We have to take action now to avoid catastrophic consequences in the future.



Watermills and Their History

Edward Caruana Galizia

Climate change, the realisation that the days of fossil fuel are numbered, and the increasing installation of wind machines to generate power, are now very topical issues. For obvious reasons, Malta has never been able to harness waterpower, but wind and animal mills were common, and windmills are now being restored (Xaghra) as tourist attractions. People are travelling widely, and for those inquisitive explorers of foreign countryside who happen to come across a watermill, the background of water power is interesting and has a much longer history than wind power. Sites of both restored and derelict mills can be easily found on the internet.

Man has always tried to invent methods of harnessing natural power to relieve the burden of slow repetitive labour. The Arabs first thought of using water power to turn wheels, and set wheels on riverbanks to raise water in buckets or pots in order to irrigate land. These are called *norias* or “Persian Wheels”.

An enormous Syrian wheel is still in existence. It was one of two wheels that raised water from the Orontes river to supply the old city of Hama by means of stone aqueducts. These Persian wheels have been dated on Egyptian papyrus to the 2nd century BC. They were introduced into Europe by the Arabs, and I have come across examples in Portugal and Majorca.

The existence of corn resulted in the invention of the waterwheel. Corn, like most foodstuffs, originated in the Middle East and we have learned a fair amount about the background of corn because burned grain resists deterioration, as does grain stored under perpetually dry conditions. It has been possible to carbon-date wheat found in Egyptian tombs and other places in Iraq and Egypt to 7000BC. Wheat was unknown in the New World until the explorers of the late 15th century took it there, and maize, being an indigenous American crop, came across the Atlantic the other way at this time. Hard winter wheat was only taken to the USA by the Russian Mennonites as late as the 1870s.

Modern chemistry has shown us that the wheat grain consists of three main parts – 14 per cent is the hard outer bran, two per cent the embryo (or germ) and 84 per cent the endosperm (or kernel), which is rich in carbohydrate and protein. It did not take man long to work out that he had to gain access to the kernel in order to survive. Early man ground his grain with his milling teeth or molars (“mola” is the Latin word for mill). Initially, the grain was put in shallow stone hollows and broken up with a hand-held stone, but later a mortar

and pestle were used. These were surpassed by the “saddle stone”, examples of which have been recovered from many prehistoric sites in Europe and the Middle East, although they are still in common use in third-world countries. Statuettes depicting women kneeling at these stones, as well as paintings in Egyptian tombs, date them to 2000BC. The work was usually done by female slaves, and one person working all day would grind enough meal to feed eight people for one day.

With the “rotary quern”, invented in about 200BC, grain was ground between a rotating upper runner stone and a stationary lower stone. The quern had an eye through which grain ran onto the grinding surfaces, and a spindle fixed in the middle of the lower stone carried and balanced the runner bearing (or rynd) let into the eye of the stone. The stones had grooves cut into the grinding surfaces to add a shearing action to supplement the natural abrasive quality of the stone. Large examples of the quern (hand mills), that were operated by slaves or mules, have been found at Pompeii and other Roman sites.

The Greeks invented a simple device for grinding corn. This had a vertical shaft on which a horizontal wheel was mounted. A four-foot head of water was directed along a trough onto the blades, which were mortised into the hub. The shaft passed through the lower stone and was then wedged into a hole in the upper stone, causing it to revolve with the wheel.

Scooped floats were more efficient than flat floats and resembled the 19th century water turbine, which was invented in 1824 by a young engineer, Benoit Fourneyron. This mill became known as the “Greek mill”, but because it became so widely used in Scandinavia, it also became known as the “Norse mill”. The owner would bring a supply of grain, fill the hopper, get the mill going (by opening the sluice), and return a few hours later, by which time the 2ft diameter stones revolving at 50rpm would have produced a sack of flour.

The Vikings in the 8th century were almost certainly responsible for bringing these mills to Britain. There were about 500 in Orkney and Shetland in 1814, but only one preserved mill now remains in existence. A 1,000-year-old horizontal wheel found in an Irish peat bog, and now in a Belfast museum, is one of the few relics existing of horizontal wheels, but I have come across derelict horizontal mills in northern Portugal,



The *norias* or “Persian Wheel”



Example of a horizontal mill

Illustrations provided by the author

and similar wheels have also been found in Greece, Spain, Rumania, Lebanon, and as far afield as South Africa and China.

In 15 BC, a Roman called Marcus Vitruvius combined the last two ideas – the wheel of pots and the Greek horizontal mill – and his inventive design lasted nearly two thousand years. Three centuries were to elapse, however, before this kind of mill was used, and there were probably two reasons for this. Firstly, there was an abundance of slaves in the city mills who operated the large hand querns and, secondly, it has to be remembered that all rivers were gods in pagan Rome, and there was probably a reluctance to harness the gods to perform menial chores. However, when Christianity was adopted as the official religion of Rome, and slave labour was abolished, all that changed, and watermills were built 22 miles outside Rome. In AD 536, Rome came under siege by the Goths, who intercepted the water supply and as a result of the subsequent starvation, the Romans soon designed the first “Floating mills” on the River Tiber. These remained in existence on the main rivers of Europe (apart from the Thames) until about 1800. They were usually moored under bridges – firstly, because of the obvious road access, and secondly, because the current was swifter near the piers.

The earliest information we have about British milling is derived from the Domesday Survey in the 1080s. Then there was one mill for approximately every 50 households, but 750 years later, there were four times this number, with a mill found every mile or two down every stream and river in the country.

A “Doomsday mill” does not mean that the mill that exists today in Britain is exactly the same mill that existed in 1080. Very few 400-year-old examples remain,

many mills having been rebuilt on the same site every couple of hundred years. Most mills were manorial mills (some monastic ones) and any corn grown on the lord’s land had to be ground at his mill, hand querns being forbidden. The farmers had to forfeit 1/16th of their grain in payment – called the “milling soke”.

Flour became the staple diet, and life revolved around the wheel. This is illustrated by a painting in Valletta’s Casa Rocca Piccola – perhaps a wealthy miller once owned this fine house.

The similarity of the word for “mill” in numerous languages suggests that news of the innovation spread rapidly.

How were Watermills Built?

Choosing the right site with respect to water levels was critical. The stream supplying the water to a mill is known as the leat, headrace or millrace, and the water leaving the mill, the tailrace.

The simplest method of obtaining power was to use the natural fall of the river or stream. An artificial channel (leat) was dug out, and if the flow of water was not great a weir with sluice gates was constructed to form a millpond, which not only provided a head of water, but also a reservoir. This would probably still supply enough water in times of drought to run the mill for several hours each day. Sometimes wheels were built inside buildings, probably to protect them from winter ice.

“Tidal mills” probably came into existence in the 12th century and they were therefore not mentioned in the Domesday Book. They were usually built up creeks on low-lying coastland and the tidal power was harnessed by building a huge pond to hold the water of the incoming tide, which was then released when the tide was out. The trouble with these mills was the odd hours that the millers had to work – two periods each day lasting five hours, about three hours after high tide. In 1936, there were three dozen working tidal mills, the last working one being at Woodbridge in Suffolk, England.

Types of Waterwheels

The type of wheel obviously depended of its location. The “Undershot wheel” is turned by the kinetic energy of the water as it strikes the paddles at between 7 and 8 o’clock. Efficiency is only about 22 per cent and is reduced still further if there is too much water in the tailrace.

With the “Breastshot wheel”, water strikes the paddles at between 8 and 10 o’clock. The lower the striking point, the greater the volume of water required.



Example of a floating mill

The “Overshot wheel” is by far the most efficient, requiring only a quarter of the water required by an undershot wheel. This wheel rotates in the opposite direction to breast and undershot wheels.

Wheel Construction

The early wheels were constructed in timber in the same way that a wheelwright produced cartwheels. Cast-iron was used in the early 18th century, but most millers settled for a hybrid wheel that had wooden spokes and cast iron axles and rims. The wheel was completed with either wooden or metal paddles.

John Smeaton (who, among other things, built a lighthouse some miles off Plymouth) experimented with waterwheel models in 1750 when trying to design wheels of maximum efficiency.

‘Work in’ = Wt. of water used per min (=no. of pump strokes lifting 6.6lbs water each) x ht. of water in tank.

‘Work out’ (‘effect’) = Power output was ht. through which scale pan + wt. was lifted in 1 minute.

Work out divided by Work in = efficiency. Overshot wheel efficiency was 63 per cent

vis-à-vis the 22 per cent for the undershot wheel.

Other British engineers who designed waterwheels at this time were John Rennie (who built canals and water pumps) and Isambard Brunel 1806-1859 (designer of bridges, tunnels, the transatlantic steamship *SS Great Britain*, etc.)

How it Works

The cast-iron “pit wheel” is parallel to the water wheel, and to move the rotation from a vertical to a horizontal plane, the pit wheel engages with a bevelled pinion called a “wallower” (from “follower”). The upright shaft is usually made of wood, and above the wallower is the “Great Spur Wheel”, which engages with very much smaller pinions called “Stone Nuts” or “Nut Wheels” – one for each pair of millstones – and two pairs were usual. The pit wheel would usually have three times as many teeth as the Wallower, which would therefore rotate three times as fast, and the spur wheel-stone nut ratio would be 5:1. The millstones could therefore be made to rotate at up to 150 rpm. The gearing changed very little from Roman times. Cast-iron was used from about 1770, although wooden cogs (apple trees) remained popular because they were smoother, quieter and could be more easily replaced if damaged.

The stone spindle passes through the floor above, through the bedstone, and into the runner stone. Mounted near the top of the shaft is the “Crown wheel”, which engages with a much smaller bevel gear that operates the sack hoist.

The millstones are encased in a wooden casing called a “tun”, and grain that is stored in bins on the floor above is delivered into the hopper and then into the eye of the runner stone. The steady flow of grain is ensured by something called a “damsel” (because it chatters like one!) which rotates with the stone. The ground grain (meal) then emerges at the circumference and ends up in sacks below. The bottom of the stone spindle is supported on the bridge tree, also known as the “lightening tree” because it made flour lighter when adjusted.

Windmills had similar machinery to watermills, did similar work, and came into existence in the 12th century. The two main millstones used in milling in the UK were:

1. French Burr stones. These came from the Paris area and the quartz stone was quarried in small pieces and held together with plaster of Paris and banded with an iron ring. These stones were best

for the finer grades of flour. Settlers in Virginia were importing them in 1620 and the cost of a pair in England in 1861 was £70. They did, however, last about 50 years.

2. Derbyshire stone (sandstone with grit) which was much cheaper.

Dressing

“Dressing” was the cutting of grooves into the grinding surface and was an essential part of the milling process. In years gone by, itinerant stone dressers would call at the mill to do the work. French stones would need dressing about every 300 hours and the Derbyshire stones, being softer, required dressing more often, but they would be quicker to dress. 100 years ago it might take a man three days to dress a pair of French stones, for which he would charge 30 shillings.

The different forms of stone dressing changed over the centuries, and between 1830 and 1870, 61 patents were taken out in the USA alone for different forms of dress patterns. The principle was always the same: the sharp edges of the many fine cracks and grooves met each other like a pair of scissors.

For dressing, the runner stone was lifted up with callipers, as it weighed about a ton.

The advent of the “Roller mills” spelt the beginning of the end for the small country mill. Roller mills were developed in Switzerland in 1820 and were first used in the UK in 1860. The rollers rotated at different speeds, were capable of very precise adjustments and were capable of splitting the grain without crushing the outer layers of bran, which contained the brown colouring. This started a craving for white flour, but it was not until 1912 that the discovery that vitamins were in the bran was made. Had the discovery been made 100 years earlier, one wonders whether the history of milling might have taken a different course. As it turned out, roller mills started to take over the production of flour from the end of the 19th century, and the majority of country mills ended up grinding barley for cattle feed. In countries where maize was the staple diet, for example in parts of South Africa, waterwheels were used to grind up this cereal until fairly recently.

Although corn grinding was the main use to which water wheels were put, they were also used for numerous other tasks from the 12th century onwards, and the word “mill” is fairly non-specific and refers to any grinding, crushing or manufacturing process.

Fulling Mills

If you know anyone called Fuller or Tucker, they may be descended from someone who did this for a living. Fulling is the stage immediately after weaving, and is the process by which cloth is shrunk and thickened (felted) by beating in water and fullers earth. The word “fulling” comes from the Latin word “*fullo*”, which in Roman times was the trade of scouring and felting cloth. The trade is almost certainly as old as corn milling because evidence of fulling has been found near Kyrenia in Cyprus, where a vessel containing fullers earth has been carbon dated to 5000BC. The fuller’s earth acts as a detergent, removing the natural grease in wool and permanently altering its texture. Fulling mills were also called tucking mills, and pandys in Wales and were also occasionally called walk mills, as people had to “walk” the cloth, if there was insufficient running water.

After the extermination of the wolf, wool brought much wealth to some European countries from the 14th century onwards, and fulling mills appeared wherever water was available. The device consisted of a couple of cams on the waterwheel axle giving a horizontal backward motion to the stocks that pummelled the wool.

The history of fulling is not dissimilar to that of the corn mills, and in 1883 John Dyer (from Wiltshire) invented a rotary



Old illustration of working watermill

milling machine in which the cloth was passed through rollers, a method that eventually replaced the traditional process in the major manufacturing centres.

Drainage

I mentioned earlier how water wheels were used in dry climates for irrigation. In wet northern Europe, they were used for land and mine drainage, and in the 16th century the wheel axle was used as a winding drum. Leather buckets and a reversible wheel were used, so the man in the gallery could control the way the wheel turned simply by operating different sluices.

Another pump devised was the “rag and chain pump” – pallets of leather stuffed with rags that had a continuous action through a hollowed tree.

A water wheel at London Bridge in the 1700s supplied the city with Thames water. When waterwheels were used for pumping they were called engines – otherwise they were called mills.

The Isabella Wheel on the Isle of Man was the largest pumping wheel ever built. Built in 1854, it is 70ft in diameter (Syrian wheel 73ft), weighs 100tons and did two-and-a-half rpm. It worked until the mines closed in the Depression of 1929 and has now been restored as a tourist attraction.

The Claverton Pump near Bath, in England, was built in 1813 by John Rennie. This enormous wheel is 25ft wide and can raise 100,000 gallons of water an hour from the River Avon into the Kennet and Avon canal, 47 feet above it. It worked until 1953, and has now been restored.

Other uses

In foundries wheels were used to drive fans to the forge, rotate grindstones and operate heavy hammers.

The discovery of Printing (Caxton 1486) produced a huge demand for paper. Waterwheels were used to operate projecting cams that lifted wooden stampers pulping linen and cotton rags, but steam was used from about 1850.

Mills were also used in mine ventilation and for wire drawing since the 1300s. Stamp mills were used for crushing ore in Saxony. Rollers crushed rock in the County Durham lead mines to extract lead. Rollers also crushed sugar cane in the West Indies.

Tanning mills of which there is an attractive example at Bayeux, Normandy, crushed oak bark to extract tannic acid for the tanning of leather. Other type of mills were brass mills, bobbin mills (Lancashire cotton), saw mills, silk mills – you name it. There is practically no end to the uses made of waterpower; in other words, man learnt to use the waterwheel to perform practically any laborious task.

What has happened to watermills today?

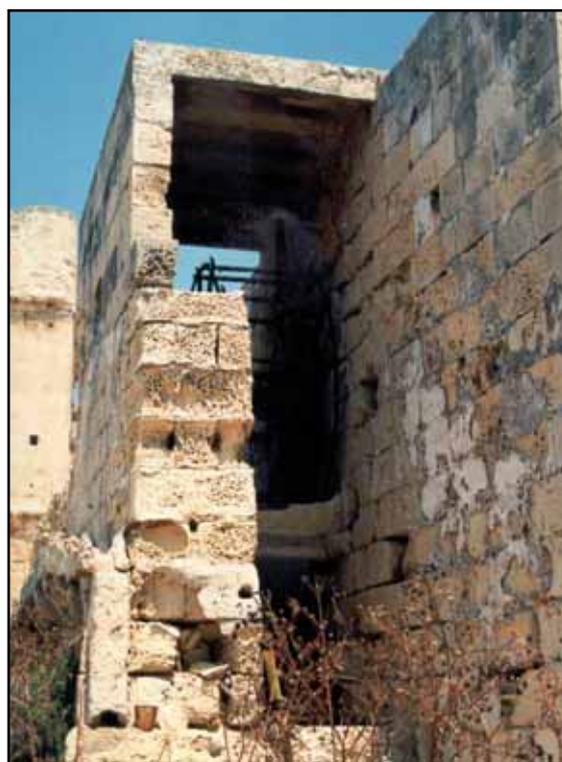
After serving us so well for nearly 2,000 years, the waterwheel has been made almost redundant by the development of steam power, roller mills, electricity and water turbines. Cheap labour is no longer available to restore waterwheels. In the early 1900s, if a wheel fell into a state of disrepair it was often replaced by a water turbine, but some were kept going up to the 1950s, when they were either removed or left to rot, and other sources of power (diesel engines or electricity) were used to operate the millstones. As roller mills became more popular in flour production, the old country corn mills continued to mill barley for cattle feed until the 1960s. These days, most farmers have an electric roller machine in their barns to mill barley.

Most old mills have been converted into residences and some have been fully restored and are open to the public, who can purchase freshly ground flour on site. Some people generate their own electricity, usually with turbines, but it is also possible to use fibreglass wheels with a generator that is geared up to the required 1500 rpm – an ideal source of power for night storage heaters in cold climates.

I have covered the past in some detail, because watermills are an interesting part of our heritage, and I have touched upon the present. I would like to end by considering the distant future for a moment. Is it not remotely possible that when fossil fuels have been exhausted, and we have perhaps suffered some nuclear catastrophe, we might not go full circle and be forced to revert once more to wind and waterpower for survival?

Abandoned mill at Marsaskala

Photo
Joe Azzopardi





Uncomfortable neighbours



**Historic crane at Blata l-Bajda,
just outside Mepa's door;
light years away from rehabilitation**

**A suspicious shadow is creeping upon
the shamefully derelict
Vendome Redoubt in Marsaxlokk**

Photo:
Joe Chetcuti



**The salt of our
tourism industry.
Qbajjar Salt pans
Gozo**



**Restored!
But certainly not
rehabilitated.
Monumental gate at
Police HQ
in Floriana**



Letters to Vigilo

These pages are meant to be your voice for your heritage.

Please mark your letters for the attention of The Editor, Vigilo, and send them to:

Din l-Art Helwa
133 Melita Street
Valletta

Or email us on:
arthelwa@kemmnet.net.mt

Dear Joe,

I am writing to make public my absolute disdain for the vandalism incident that occurred at Ghadira Nature Reserve in March. It is absolutely unacceptable that while a group of able and dedicated people are giving of their time and energy to provide this country with at least one truly protected area for birds, other members of our society sabotage their work in such ways. Birdlife has achieved at Ghadira something that not even the government, with all its talk of national parks and protected areas, has ever done. I will say it again: what happened at Ghadira is an absolute shame.

Regards

John Spiteri
Valletta

Editorial Note:

I concur completely with what my friend John has written. It is hoped – as I am sure is the case – that this incident will not demoralise Birdlife in their indispensable work but that, on the contrary, it will stimulate them to carry on with even more energy.

Dear Editor,

I have been fortunate enough to have spent two years work experience on your lovely island. Being an anthropologist, by passion if not by profession, I used a good part of this time to get to know the various aspects of Malta's social make-up. I have met and befriended lots of people who will always be in my memories now that I have to be back in my native town of Piacenza.

One of the things that impressed me most about the Maltese of all ages is their availability to do voluntary work. These I have found in parishes, football clubs, social support, cultural and heritage associations. And wherever volunteers were involved, things were done with enthusiasm, commitment and a lot of healthy smiles. This has been a wonderful aspect of my stay in Malta. In Italy, finding volunteers for any kind of association is becoming increasingly difficult, especially so with people over the age of 25.

I was also very impressed with the quality of your own magazine, even more so when I learned that it was produced by a non-governmental organisation and probably on a voluntary basis. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the government to assist such organisations as much as possible and also to foster, as much as possible, the voluntary involvement culture that is so much alive in Malta. One reason than for this is the economic burden it takes off government itself, but most of all for the type of citizens such a culture tends to produce.

In our time and age, the giving of one's time is the greatest gift of all. Volunteers should be valorised and supported in whatever field they decide to operate. As said above, the memory of such people will be the greatest gift I will be taking back home with me.

I wish your organisation every success in its work.

Regards

Simone Tornatorre

Volunteers at work at
Ta' Braxja



Dead Editor,

I am writing in the hope that someone will clarify for me an issue that has been puzzling me for quite a time. Could someone explain to me why the Tritons fountain at the Valletta bus terminus only seems to be functional at irregular intervals and with irregular intensity? At different times, different parts of the fountain are made to function, so it is clear that the mechanism in its entirety is in working order.

So how come that this magnificent fountain, the only thing worth looking at in the area before entering Valletta, is never fully functional? If it were, it would at least distract visitors from the surrounding ugliness that no government and no committee up to now has been able to rectify. Why is this fountain so often silenced? The same goes for a number of other public fountains, such as the Lion fountain in St Anne Street and the ones in the Argotti gardens, all in Floriana.

I was in Valletta the other day and, to my astonished surprise, the two fountains in Palace Square were spouting water – a sight I have not beheld in years. It was so pleasing to hear at least these water features coming to life through their spouts. I am sure it would not take such a great effort to ensure that all the fountains in Valletta and Floriana are fully functional for the enjoyment of the many who daily work and visit these places.

Alfred Saliba
Msida



Tritons fountain - detail



Lion fountain - detail

Sir,

I enjoy reading Vigilo, your excellent magazine so well-produced to highlight the work and activities to which Din l-Art Helwa is so completely dedicated, and I very much appreciate the thoughtful and responsible way in which every article and every comment appearing in the magazine is presented.

In addition to the usual information and interesting features describing the work and initiatives of the society, the last issue contained a couple of short poems by Marie-Claire Kaminski; inspired by Malta and the Maltese heritage. The poem entitled Promenade describes so well the scene on a popular seaside road on a summer evening, with people strolling and taking the air, cars impatiently following a leisurely moving karozzin, and, of course, the dark and silent sea in the background. The other poem, Temples, is a tribute to our neolithic temples, and even here a few deft and well-chosen words and phrases serve to breathe life into the picture so well described.

I couldn't help wondering if the author, Marie Claire Kaminski, is the same lady who used to give the occasional piano recital at the Manoel Theatre and elsewhere. I remember hearing this lady play on more than one occasion, which I thoroughly enjoyed and which left me very much impressed by her performance.

If, in fact, and as I imagine, the writer of these poems and the pianist are one and the same person, I cannot but express my admiration for this lady's artistic talents.

Yours faithfully

C. Bezzina
Sliema

Heritage Publications Review

Publications for consideration
within this section
are to be forwarded to
the Editor :

Din l-Art Helwa
133 Melita Street
Valletta

During the second half of the 17th century, the artist Mattia Preti lived in Malta as the resident painter of the Knights and young Maltese painters were fortunate to be able to nurture their own talent by observing his creative skills at close hand. The Knights also brought over a succession of architects, but they did not have a resident sculptor. So while paintings and buildings were commissioned locally during this period, sculptural works tended to be imported from Rome.

Two exceptionally talented and artistic brothers were born in Malta in the late 1630s, Melchiorre and Lorenzo Cafà. Both began their careers as stone carvers or *scalpellini*, and showed great promise in spite of the lack of a great sculptor on the Maltese scene who could act as their mentor.

When he was 24 years old, Melchiorre went to Rome and joined the workshop or *bottega* of the famous Roman sculptor Ercole Ferrata, an opportunity that enabled him to learn how to carve marble on a monumental scale, and from this point on he signed his name as "Cafà". Lorenzo stayed in Malta and matured into the most accomplished Maltese architect of his generation. The relationship between these two gifted brothers appears to have been close, and still invites further study.

Melchiorre died suddenly in a tragic accident in Rome at the age of 34, but by then he had already succeeded in leaving his mark on baroque sculptural art in Rome. He was influenced by Gianlorenzo Bernini, Alessandro Algardi and Ercole Ferrata, and yet managed to develop a distinctly independent imagination and skill of his own.

This is the first full-scale study dedicated to this artist. It is well illustrated and finely produced, edited by Keith Sciberras of the University of Malta, with contributions by an eminent group of international scholars working in the field of baroque art. These include the art critic Jennifer Montagu, who was instrumental in forming this team of researchers together with Keith Sciberras, Maria Giulia Barberini and Elena Bianca di Gioia. The other contributors are Angela Cipriani, Gerhard Bissell, Alessandra Anselmi, John Azzopardi, Tomaso Montanari, Louise Rice, Tuccio Sante Guido and Tony Sigel.

Apart from the articles themselves, the comprehensive bibliography and list of known works by Cafà that are included at the end of the volume will surely prove to be an indispensable tool for future research.

Three of the large works that Cafà produced during his 10 years in Rome are especially outstanding. First, his exquisite marble figure *The Charity of St Thomas of Villanova*, made for the church of S. Agostino in Rome, the *bozzetto* of which is held by the Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta. Second, his exquisite statue of the dying *S. Rosa di Lima*, carved in white Carrara marble. And, most impressively, his magnificent sculptured altarpiece *The Glory of St Catherine of Siena* at the church of S. Caterina di Magnapoli in Rome, where Cafà uses a mixture of white and coloured marbles to depict St Catherine rising to heaven through the clouds assisted by angels and cherubs. As suggested by Gerhard Bissell, this grand and brilliant work alone is enough to secure Cafà's place in the history of Roman baroque sculpture.

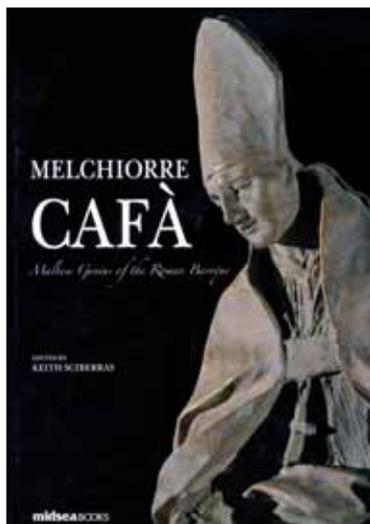
After leaving Malta in the late 1850s, Cafà is known to have returned only once – in 1666, for a visit of almost four months. The reason for this trip was that Grand Master Nicolas Cottoner wished to commission him to create a sculptural group of the Baptism of Christ for the Conventual Church of St John in Valletta, which Cafà accepted but never completed, due to his untimely death a year later.

At the time of this visit to Malta, his brother Lorenzo Cafà was involved in work to enlarge and improve the grotto of St Paul in Rabat, and had also been engaged to erect a new parish church in Rabat dedicated to St Paul. Melchiorre was quickly commissioned to design a silver sanctuary lamp for this church, which was later produced in Rome and sent back to the church in Rabat, where it still hangs. He also designed a new statue of St Paul for the grotto.

On this visit, Melchiorre was accompanied by the painter Michelangelo Merullo, who shared his lodgings in Rome and may have had a Maltese family connection. Merullo was also entrusted with a commission for the Rabat church, for which he painted the altarpiece *Virgin and Child with Saints*. Sciberras notes that Merullo's painting is like a "painted Cafà", so close is it in spirit to the work of Melchiorre. The close artistic collaboration between Cafà and Merullo merits further study.

To date, only one sculptural portrait by Cafà is known, a bust of Pope Alexander VII, rendered with psychological insight and masterly technical skill. Sciberras is convinced that more of Cafà's portraits have yet to be identified and we can only look forward to these discoveries.

Melchiorre Cafà must be counted as one of the most talented Maltese artists of the 17th century, honoured to have been recognised as a great sculptor by the brilliant Gianlorenzo Bernini himself, who worked in Rome as his contemporary. This volume is a worthy tribute to an artist of exceptional talent.



Melchiorre Cafà: Maltese Genius of the Roman Baroque

Edited by - Keith Sciberras
Published by - Midsea Books
ISBN - 978-99932-7-092-X
Reviewed by Petra Bianchi

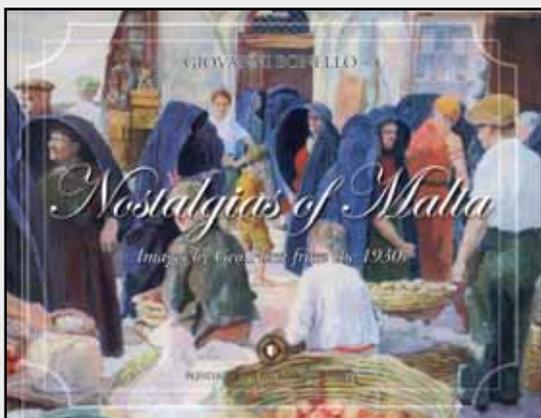
If not a labour of love, this publication is certainly a labour of affection. Bonello's affection and respect for Geo. Furst, and a genuine admiration for his work, emanate from every word of the few pages of text. In these few pages, Bonello outlines the seemingly improbable relationship of this German photographer with British dominated Malta, to which he came as a diplomatic secretary. In Malta, Furst found the love of a woman but also that of a land that was genetically pre-set to open itself to the foreigners who set foot on its shores. Furst responded to this openness by making the island the subject of a photographic career that would bind them forever. Not even confinement in Verdala Barracks during WWI managed to weaken Furst's love for Malta and one can almost feel the pain in Geo.'s heart when international circumstances obliged him to leave Malta and made his return difficult.

Furst's love for this island is rendered most tangibly in his photographic legacy. Looking at these images, one soon feels a kind of affinity with the man who made them, because both photographer and viewer are sentimentally moved by them. Today, they stimulate in us feelings of nostalgia for a Malta that we will never be able to see and experience. For Furst, apart from being a means of income, they probably also exorcised the fear that he would one day be made to leave.

The photographs testify to a deeply intimate involvement between subject and photographer. They show clearly his sensibility to the evanescent moods that are intrinsically bound to the place. He has an ability to capture, through the photographic medium, the prevailing atmosphere of every situation represented. Furst portrayed with equal flair the monumentality of ships in the harbours, the vivacity of a Valletta street, the vitality of traditional entertainment and the grandeur of military displays.

Personal favourites are the images in the section dealing with images of people. In these, Furst captures a multitude of fleeting moments that are simultaneously intimate and emblematic. His human subjects never degenerate into soulless representations of a type. The viewer immediately feels that they are shown in a particular moment that could only belong to them and that would be meaningless without their presence.

As said, old pictures of Malta tend to stimulate nostalgic feelings, yet Furst's photographs stimulate in the viewer a particular brand of nostalgia – an awareness of the loss of particular urban and rural settings and a yearning for a forgotten way of life. But there is yet another part that is somewhat indefinable and one must conclude that this indefinable part consists of the particular spirit that Geo. Furst was able to imbue into his images.



Photography is a selective art. It chooses what to capture on paper and this is then further manipulated through artistic artifice to look just as the artist intends it to. Thus, what at face value might appear as a series of effective snapshots collected in print are in reality the product of a wilful selective process.

Amelia Troubridge chose this process to distil the many elements that comprise the essence of what being Maltese is, and means. It uses the eyes of a person who, although having a strong bond with Malta, is often away from the Island, to allow us to see the fine tones that make up our society. We who live here are rendered immune to them by adulthood or are mostly too busy coping with, or reacting to, these elements to be able to allow ourselves time to look at them with detachment. And yet there is much to be achieved by such an exercise. We could identify points of convergence in areas that usually see us vehemently opposed to each other and, most of all, we could have an honest laugh at the pettiness of some of the issues about which we become so destructively passionate.

In some way, this is also an innovative form of tourist guide. It is a guidebook to Malta's most puzzling monuments – its people. And, like a good guidebook, it not only illustrates the most significant monuments (read "characters"), and enshrines them in a far off dimension populated by stereotypes, but also leads the attention of Amelia's viewer to the minor details and peculiarity of each of her subjects.

The author's lens focuses with equal interest on past political grandees and on the chubby boy who plunges purposefully into the sea at Ghar id-Dud. The book provides an unprejudiced look that distils through inclusion. The intricately tattooed shoulder blades of a man in Vittoriosa are given the same prominence as a knitting nun. Some images are almost oppressively conventional, while others are shockingly innovative.

In many instances, it is also a very personal matter. Many of the images represent family and friends. It is a society viewed through the composing elements of its primal unit - the family and its immediate extensions. The introductory phrase by Amelia "I always sleep well on hot summer nights ..." ushers in with fantastic economy of means the intrinsically Maltese flavour of the book – a flavour composed of village *festas* and political mass meetings, of knights and nuns but also of hunters and football fans. It is a delightfully attractive hotchpotch of personalities and characters, because although there are a few touching panoramas, it is the human landscape that take pride of place in defining the view of Malta in the eyes of Amelia.

Malta Diaries

Images - Amelia Troubridge

Text - Edward De Bono

Published by - Trolley

ISBN – 1-904563-54-6

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi

Nostalgias of Malta

Images by Geo Furst from the 1930s

Author - Giovanni Bonello

Published by - Fundazzjoni Partimonju Malti

ISBN – 978-99932-7-113-6

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi

I did not know Herbert Ganado personally. But my family, both on my mother's side (the Amato Gaucis and the Bernards) and on my father's knew him well. My parents were his contemporaries and his friends. My mother was a childhood neighbour of his in Floriana, where they played together. My maternal great-grandfather, Colonel Paolo Bernard, was Herbert's father's commanding officer in the Royal Malta Artillery. In his later years, Herbert and my paternal grandfather, Hannibal Scicluna, struck up a very close friendship and I count his two sons, Tonio and Vanni, as my friends.

Herbert Ganado manifestly loved his country. This shines through every page of every volume of the book for which he will be forever remembered: *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*, now in the course of being excellently translated by Dr Michael Refalo under the title *My Century*.

Everything Ganado writes is suffused with love of country. Luckily for us, Michael Refalo captures this well – and sometimes too his interpretation accurately catches the tone of voice and the spirit of the age, for in translating from Maltese into English one must allow for liberal interpretation. Ganado's home-spun descriptions of the rhythm of the day-to-day life in Malta, much of it now sadly lost as the price of progress, are written with great humanity and affection.

Ganado describes a country which, despite the obvious gaps between rich and poor, between a small, educated elite and a largely poor, uneducated populace, was probably more homogeneous than today. Yet, as is vividly demonstrated by Volume 3 of *My Century*, which covers the turbulent period from 1933 to 1942, it was also a country that was as riven by political polarisation as anything that has been experienced by Malta since.

Running through almost every chapter of this volume as a constant thread, whether written or unspoken, is the so-called "Language Question", which animated the whole of Maltese politics then – Italian versus English, pro-Italy or pro-Great Britain – played out against the darker forces of Fascism that then dominated the geo-politics of Europe, culminating in the Second World War.

To this extent, Volume 3 gives a good, if simplistic, potted history of the key events leading up to the outbreak of war and beyond, and how these interacted, for better or worse, with local politics. Herbert Ganado gives a wonderful bird's-eye-view of how the great historical incidents seemed in the eyes of our parents and grandparents – inhabitants of a minuscule colony occupying a vital position at the mercy of cataclysmic events played out in theatres elsewhere that were also, in the event, to engulf Malta.

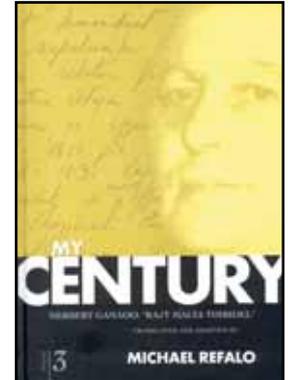
The overwhelming impression of Ganado, which this volume of *My Century* serves to underline, is what an intrinsically good man he was, a man of deep catholic faith and of self-effacing rectitude. He was a man with no hint of self-pity or rancour for the way the lottery of life had treated him. He wears his heart on his sleeve. Written some 30 years after the events that Ganado describes in this book, there is no vestige of bile or anger at the people or events that led to his internment and deportation to Uganda. Disappointment, yes. Sadness, undoubtedly. A thirst for revenge, never.

His lack of comprehension at what had happened reflects a certain naivete on his part, a lack of guile that makes him all the more attractive as a human being. I cannot imagine that he would have approved of the proposal made in some quarters today to erect a monument to him and the others who were interned in 1942. I suspect he would have gently chastised those who are advocating it for failing to see that while internment – a blunt instrument at the best of times – was a tragedy for those affected, and in many cases an injustice, it perhaps lay at the lower end of the scale of human suffering, death and destruction wrought by the Second World War on other Maltese citizens. This, he might have said, was a sad chapter best left to the longer term judgement of history, when time might add a fairer, more balanced, perspective to the no doubt fallible reasons for the actions taken then.

I would love to have known Ganado. Thanks to *My Century*, we can now know him vicariously. Those who wish to learn more about a Malta led by gentlemen – gentlemen-politicians and politicians who were gentlemen – whose sense of duty to their country induced them to fight passionately for Malta's political advancement, almost invariably to the extent of forgetting that local politics could not be divorced from events taking place in the wider world, and misguidedly backing the wrong side, albeit for genuinely held reasons – should read this book. These were people, on both sides of the Maltese argument, for whom the maxim "serve to lead" was part of their ethos and upbringing. They were the intellectual and active elite – a word not of disparagement but of honour – who set the agenda, who felt they had a part to play in advancing Maltese life, and played it with all the good intentions, as well as misjudgements and frailties, vanities and vendettas, to which human beings are prone. As in all politics, there were winners and losers. Fortunately for us, the winners have ensured that today Europe and Malta live in freedom.

My Century Volume 3

Author - Herbert Ganado
Translated and adapted by
Michael Refalo
Published by
Be Communications Ltd
ISBN – 535 6660 99985 3
Reviewed by *Martin Scicluna*



Histories of Malta - Closures and Disclosures

Volum VII

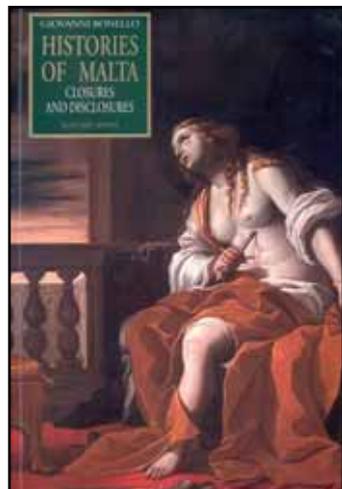
Author - Giovanni Bonello

Published by Fundazzjoni

Partimonju Malti

ISBN – 99932-7-177-6

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



I can think of a hundred positive adjectives that could easily be applied to Giovanni Bonello’s latest edition in the *Histories of Malta* series. But the one that keeps coming to mind is “beautifully illustrated”. This volume, in fact, contains a collection of amazingly varied graphic material that would, just by itself, provide scope for endless hours of relaxing investigation. The only thing that manages to overshadow even such rich material is the erudite text with which it is combined.

Still, the eyes may feast on the reproduction of paintings representing baroque ephemeral set-ups for public festivities (pp 80 – 93) or the dazzling grandeur of theatrical paraphernalia (pp 67 – 78). Amusing incongruities can also be encountered, such as in the illustration of Gozitan Costumes (p 107), where a supposedly prudish country girl takes care to cover her face from the hungry gaze of the men near by, while revealing the tanned roundness of her bosom in the process. Or the life-size statue of the Kaiser erected in British Malta for the POW exhibition while WWI was in full flow.

As does its six predecessors, this volume brings together articles about subjects that at some point or the other have managed to stimulate the interest of Bonello. The author has a markedly democratic approach to research: there is no subject that is too insignificant to attract his attention. This is the approach of a man who knows for a fact that the nature of his fellow man can only be understood fully through the study of his minor activities, those that are the unadorned products of his natural needs, where he is truly himself. “Official history” will always suffer from a degree of artificiality, while the true disposition of man will invariably come to the fore when he is most at ease, pursuing his daily affairs, or when he is in the grip of uncontrollable passions. When investigating characters, he looks for extreme situations. Being a judge of men, Bonello knows that it is only under such circumstances that the true face of a man will reveal itself. These are the situations that stimulate Bonello’s interest and it is this that sets his work apart from that of others active in this field of research.

Pointing out individual articles would be futile, however of great interest is Bonello’s work on the subject of postcard production. In this volume he presents an interesting list of artists who were involved in this trade and includes a number of postcards under various sub-headings. I found the Eucharistic Congress ones particularly interesting, and some satirical ones frankly disturbing. Collectively, they represent, in an unsophisticated manner, the memories of an age.

Much has been written about the author’s work – enough to fill yet another book – but I feel that this ever-increasing body of work can be simply interpreted as one man’s effort to present a focused version of the history of a country. Through his work, Bonello exposes the subtle shades that render the often hazy picture of history sharper and much more intelligible.

Two postcards of the Eucharistic Congress



Issue number 37 of *Treasures of Malta* is a real pleasure to read. A considerable portion of the material presented concerns the arts, with painting getting the lion's share of attention. The cover is graced by the reproduction of a Madonna and Child painted by Willie Apap in 1949. It is a magnificently executed picture, immensely expressive, notwithstanding the economy of detail presented. A short article in the publication presents and discusses the *bozzetto* for this picture. It is when confronted with this that the reader realises that this seemingly straightforward picture is the end result of a substantial evolutionary process.

The *bozzetto* shares with the end product the pathos conveyed by the loving gesture of the Madonna as she presses the right hand of her divine child against her chin. Her expression leaves the viewer in no doubt that she is aware of the terrible suffering that will be inflicted on him. The sombre pallet used for the abstract background of the *bozzetto* also conveys this awareness. In the final version, this aura of imminent suffering is mitigated by the adoption of an open landscape bathed in golden hues. This background, however, still holds an indication of the suffering to come in the bareness of the trees and in the emphases of the tree trunks, distant visual echoes of the cross upon which the gentle hands of the child will eventually be nailed.

The hands are the real protagonists of this work. Although the hands of the Virgin express her motherly love, and her need to protect her child, the hands and arms of the child Jesus form a virtual bridge that leads the viewer into the picture. The left hand, foreshortened by Apap with consummate virtuosity, expresses the universality of the message of love consumed through the saviour's sacrifice – a love that is open, as is his hand, to all humanity. The other hand, and its relation to the Virgin, represents the earthy sphere of divine love. It takes a great master to embody all of this in a "simple" picture. The painting is held in a private collection and many would have never known about it, had it not been published by *Treasures*.

There can hardly be a greater contrast between the anonymity of this picture and the huge exposure to which Matia Preti's *St George and The Dragon* at St John's co-Cathedral has been subjected in recent months. The catalyst of this mediatic interest was the recent restoration project, but at the heart of it is the intrinsic quality of Preti's picture and the affection with which it has long been regarded. Sandro Debono sheds some light on the narrative details seen in the background of the painting, offering an interpretation full of historical facts. It is heartening that in our age of constant visual stimulation there are some who can still take a fine detail and reinterpret it in its fullness. Such an ability must have come spontaneously to those for whom the painting was originally intended. The figure of the Saint, and the highlight represented by the white stallion, must have emerged very forcefully when viewed in a cavernously dark St John's and caught only by the flickering light of candles. It is a pity that, through today's set-ups, many are deprived of the possibility of viewing this, and many other pictures, in such a context. Special viewings under such conditions would certainly help responsive viewers to re-evaluate the works to which they have become accustomed through exposure.

Yet another painting is the protagonist of the pages dedicated by *Treasures* to works newly acquired for the national collections by Heritage Malta. Frank Portelli's *Crafts and Trades* mural is a kaleidoscopic reverberation of Mediterranean light that captures a multitude of locals intent on manual activities of a time gone by. The work fully represents a time when such humble subjects were made the object of attention by high art, stimulated by the perception of their imminent oblivion and intent on sublimating their creative element.

The subjects of paintings are discussed in a further three articles, while Paul Attard and John Magro present an interesting survey of wrought iron work produced in Naxxar during the 19th and 20th centuries. Patricia Camilleri and Ann Gingell Littlejohn discuss the Hal Resqun Catacomb, while Noel Caruana Dingli looks at Count Giovanni Francesco Preziosi and his French books. Of particular interest is Robert Attard's report about Malta's silk-work pictures.

Treasures of Malta

No. 37 Vol. XIII No.1 Christmas 2007

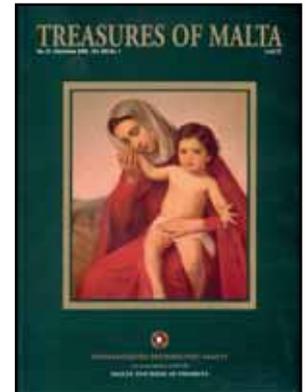
Editor - Paul Xuereb

Published by - Fondazzjoni

Patrimonju Malti

ISBN – 1028-3013

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



Bozzetto for
Madonna and Child
by Willie Apap

Maltese Crafts and Trades
by Frank Portelli



Gardens are special places. Their aspect and intended meaning have changed over the years, but their basic values have survived through the ages. It could hardly be different, as gardens may well be considered both the primordial abode of man and his final resting place. Man's existence begun in the Garden of Eden, or at least in a garden-like landscape, uncontaminated by his activities. And in a garden-like space, man is laid for his final sleep.

For a substantial part of human history, gardens represented a hankering to recreate a fragment of the original primordial paradise. It was so in ancient times, in the classical period and in the Middle Ages right up to the Renaissance. Things changed with the shift in cultural perception. The centrality of the natural and the divine forces gradually gave way to the establishment of the humane figure as the centre of existence. From being God's instruction book to men, nature became a force to be subdued and disciplined in order to reflect human supremacy.

This trend continued gaining momentum through the subsequent centuries during which first gardens, then parks and later entire landscapes were remodelled to emphasise human supremacy. In the baroque era, gardens lost their boundary walls – and with them all vestiges of intimacy – and proclaimed the political and financial power of their creator. During this period, gardens became fused with the surrounding landscape and were designed in a way that used features of the landscape as compositional elements. From this to the total subjection of the landscape and its complete redesign, the step was brief. This trend developed during the 18th century into what is defined as the English landscape garden that was first neo-classical and later romantic. The 19th century saw the emergence of the eclectic garden and in the following century, garden styles were dominated by abstract and post-abstract manifestations.

In his book, Tom Turner illustrates this historical evolution in considerable detail. The book is presented in a way that facilitates referencing, which makes it an ideal tool for students but means it loses its light-hearted readability. However, it is still full of intriguing details and illustrates well the story of man sowing the seed of imagination to carve out a small section of heaven on earth.

Gardens History

Author - Tom Turner

Published by - Spon Press

ISBN - 0-415-31749-5

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



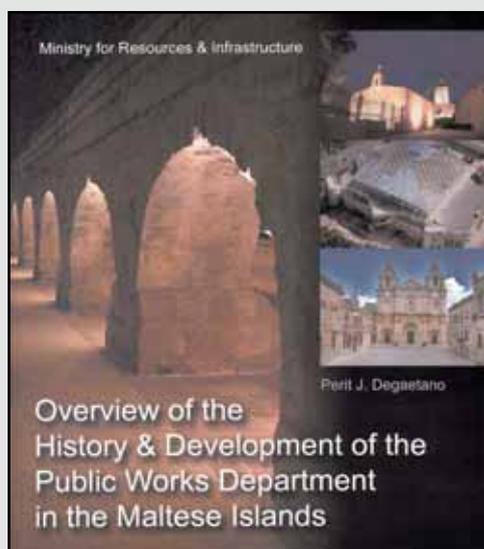
Overview of the History & Development of the Public Works Department in the Maltese Islands

Author - Joe Degaetano

Published by - Ministry for Resources & Infrastructure

ISBN - /

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



In this intriguing volume, architect Joe Degaetano traces the fascinating story of the development of the Works Department from its uncertain origin in the era of the Knights to the present. It is a story containing many characters and changing political and historical scenarios. Its most evident aspects are the numerous structures built over the years to facilitate the lives of those living on the Island and the author traces the invisible line that runs uninterruptedly to unite such structures.

These comprise a very peculiar section of our collective heritage – a unique type of monument born not exclusively out of artistic urge but in response to particular social needs. Administrative and service buildings, such as the Customs House and the Public Library, the Wignacourt Aqueduct and Manoel Theatre, Somerset Dock and Victoria Gate. These, and many others, were first and foremost the product of need. It is thanks to the talent and ingenuity of their creators that they subsequently obtained the status of national monuments.

A considerable amount of space is dedicated to more recent happenings and at this point, perceptions start to blur. For we who live in and use them every day, these structures will hardly ever attain the status of monument – objectively speaking, many of them lack the required characteristics. In the eyes of some, these are missed opportunities, to others they are the product of a maximisation of resources. Be this as it may, it will be future generations that will give the final verdict, that will choose what to keep and what to dispose of. A few might just make it!

Another aspect of the Department's work that is well represented is its involvement in restoration, urban re-qualification and the illumination of our architectural heritage. This is a sector in which some sterling work has been carried out and through which many time-honoured structures have been reclaimed for the national patrimony. We still live with the hope that some day a new, outstanding project will be developed by the Department – a project on which future generations will be compelled to turn on the lights in the same way as we illuminate those time-honoured structures left to us by our predecessors.



As published in
The Times of Malta

The Brief Encounter by Non Such Players

The Non Such Players will be presenting *The Brief Encounter*, a one-act play by Noel Coward, on the Birkirkara Railway Station platform on 15, 16 and 17 June at 7.30 pm. The venue is being made available by kind permission of Birkirkara mayor Mr Michael Fenech Adami.

Important Notice Your Membership 2007!

Please allow us to remind you that your membership for 2007 will be due on January 1st. As, we are sure, you are certainly aware, your membership means very much to us. Apart from giving us your financial support, your membership is an act of confidence in our work. As you also know our work is not always easy and knowing that there are people like you who support us is always of great encouragement. So please do take a moment and forward your membership fee to:

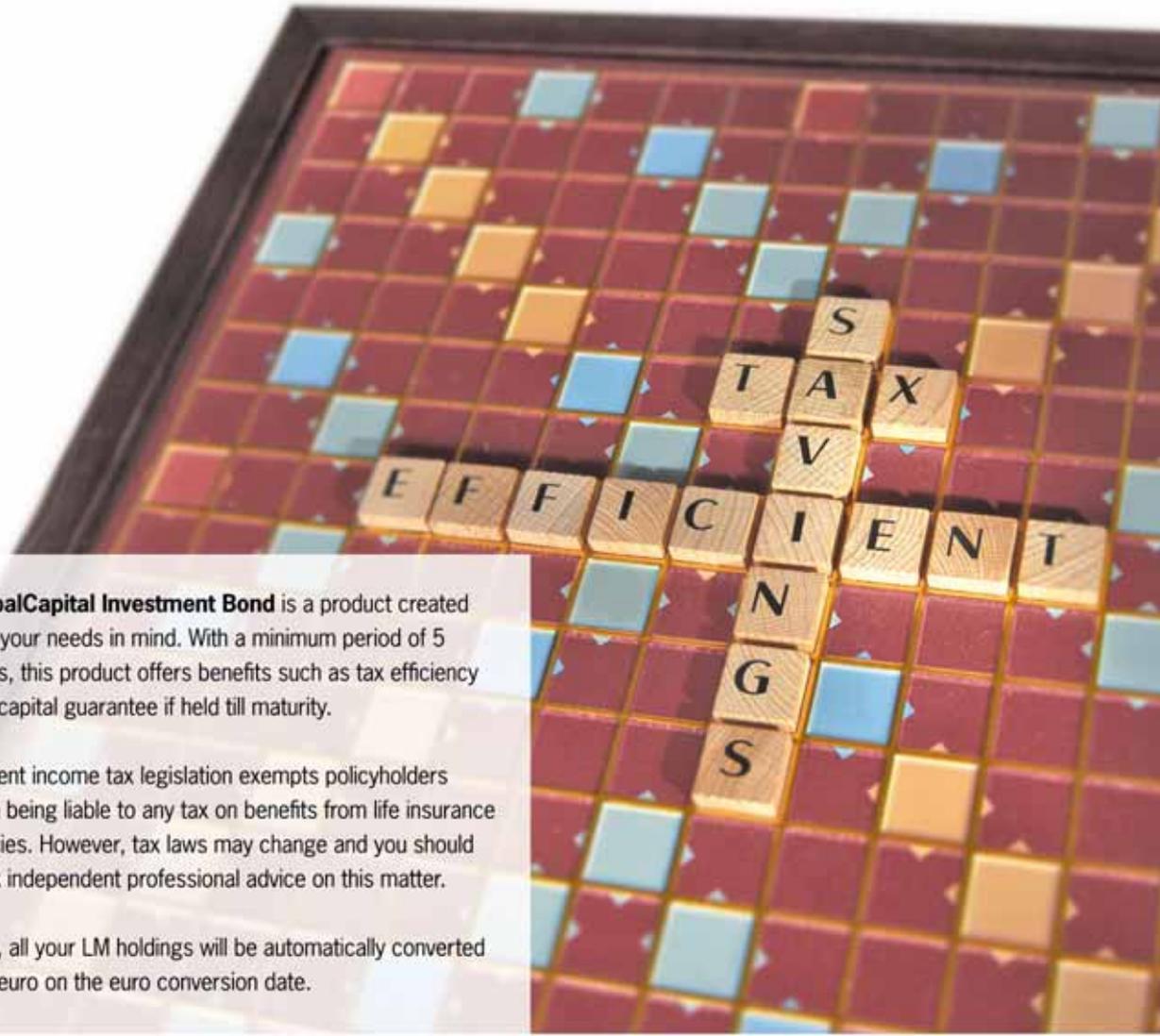


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