

DIN L-ART HELWA

National Trust of Malta

VIGILIO



OCTOBER 2008

NUMBER 34

€3.00 (Lm1.29)

NEWSPAPER POST



The Council

Founder President
Judge Maurice Caruana Curran

THE COUNCIL 2007-9

Executive President

Martin Galea

Vice-Presidents

Martin Scicluna

Major Philip Zammit Briffa

Hon. Secretary General

Edward Xuereb

Hon. Treasurer

Victor Rizzo

Communications Officer

Simone Mizzi

Members

Professor Anthony Bonanno

Carolyn Clements

George Camilleri

Judge Maurice Caruana Curran

Cettina Caruana Curran

Maria Grazia Cassar

Joseph Chetcuti

Charles Gatt

Cynthia de Giorgio

Cathy Farrugia

Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon

Dr David Mallia

Dame Blanche Martin

Richard McGonigle

Dane Munro

Helga Pizzuto

Mr John Sarè

Dr Andy Welsh

Director

Dr Petra Bianchi

Din l-Art Helwa

National Trust of Malta

133 Melita Street

Valletta VLT 1123

Tel - 21 225952

Fax - 21 220358

open

Monday - Friday

9:00 am - 12:00 noon

e-mail

info@dinlartelwa.org

web

www.dinlartelwa.org

Din l-Art Helwa is a non-governmental organisation whose objective is to safeguard the cultural heritage 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 cultural 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.



Din l-Art Helwa



The views expressed in
VIGILO

are not necessarily
those of
Din l-Art Helwa

Din l-Art Helwa
has reciprocal membership with:

*The National Trust of England,
Wales & Northern Ireland*

The National Trust for Scotland

The Barbados National Trust

The National Trust of Australia

*The Gelderland Trust for
Historic Houses*

The Gelderland 'Nature Trust'

Din l-Art Helwa
is a member of

ICOMOS - Malta

Europa Nostra

*The International National Trusts
Organisation (INTO)*

*The National Federation of
NGOs of Malta and
The Heritage Parks
Federation*

VIGILO
is published in
April and October

VIGILO e-mail:
arthelwa@kemmnet.net.mt

COPYRIGHT by the PUBLISHER
Din l-Art Helwa

EDITOR
DESIGN & LAYOUT
JOE AZZOPARDI

PROOF READER
JUDITH FALZON

PHOTOGRAPHS
If not indicated otherwise
photographs are by
JOE AZZOPARDI

PRINTED BY
Best Print Co. Ltd.
Zurriq Road
Qrendi ZRQ 09

VIGILO

ISSN - 1026-132X

NUMBER 34

OCTOBER 2008

VIGILO

C O N T E N T S

SPECIAL ARTICLES

- 12**
Sustainable Tourism
by *Petra Bianchi*
- 19**
Naxxar - Four Walks to Discover a Village
by *Victor J Rizzo*
- 20**
Water - A Crisis?
by *Gordon Knox*
- 26**
Heritage and Planning Concerns
- 28**
The Marbles on the Ledger Stones of St John's Co-Cathedral
by *Carmel Spiteri*
- 32**
National Picture Archive Established at Rabat
by *Kevin Casha*
- 34**
The National Archives of Malta
by *Charles J Farrugia*
- 36**
The Baroque Transformation of Mdina's Magisterial Palace
by *John Zammit*
- 42**
Light Pollution - Problems and Solutions
by *Alexei Pace*
- 46**
Sheer Cliffs and Shearwaters at I-Irdum tal-Madonna
by *Helen Raine*
- 02** Executive President
- 04** Vice-President
- 08** Restoration Notes
- 14** *Din I-Art Helwa* Membership
- 15** *Din I-Art Helwa* News
- 40** Photoshots
- 50** Publications Reviews
- 52** Letters to *VIGILO*



Baroque carvings, St John's Co-Cathedral



FRONT COVER

Remembering the Pauline Year



BACK COVER

The Old Police Station Naxxar



MEPA Reform

Martin Galea

Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa



The Mistra Village site

" Unless the board members of Mepa and those on the DCC begin to take decisions that stand up to scrutiny and protect the environment while not stifling development, then all the reform in the world will not change the current state of affairs. "

We have been promised by the Prime Minister that he will be taking the reform of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (Mepa) under his wing and, indeed, Mepa has been included in his onerous portfolio of duties. So far we have not seen much: a press conference, some meetings with NGOs, including *Din l-Art Helwa*, and promises that the proposals would be out before the year's end.

In the meantime some scandals have emerged, the most serious of which is the development at the old Mistra Village for an 11-storey complex which will have a massive adverse impact on the skyline and huge traffic implications in an already congested area. How the board passed this permit, which goes against the Floor Area Ratio policy on a number of counts as well as other provisions in the Local Plan, is beyond us at *Din l-Art Helwa* and brings this whole reform into doubt. The key issue here is that no matter how much you regulate, or establish structures and procedures, unless there is a serious reform in mentality on the part of Government and those who lead Mepa, then all we are going to get is more eyewash.

We have said to the Prime Minister that major changes at Mepa may not change the current state of affairs where scandalous decisions are taken on major projects that diminish Mepa's respect and standing in our community. Unless the board members of Mepa and those on the DCC begin to take decisions that stand up to scrutiny and protect the environment while not stifling

development, then all the reform in the world will not change the current state of affairs.

Mepa's mission statement refers to it being the guardian of our environment (in its widest sense) and really, if I was a teacher, I would probably mark its performance as an 'F' – with the comment "could do much better". It is equipped to do so, has the talent in its staff to do so and yet refuses to. It is out of step with society.

I would say that, some years ago, the environment lobby was on opposite side of the fence to the tourism industry – the Malta Tourism Authority and the Malta Hotels and

"MEPA and Beyond".

In the foreground the Floriana greenery, at the centre the MEPA office, and beyond part of Malta's wild conurbation





The already over-developed Xemxija Bay

"In many areas, as we are being warned by those in the tourism industry, development is destroying jobs and perhaps what is a thriving tourism industry – apart from the impact on our lives and the loss of much of what is beautiful and unique in Malta."

The road is certainly long
and hopefully it will not lead to
even further conurbation



Restaurants Association. Yet if you look at their recent pronouncements in the press, you will find that environment is at the top of their concerns. Indeed, I attended an Ernst and Young conference on an attractiveness survey of doing business in Malta, and environmental issues were consistently the areas in which we scored badly. Surveys in newspapers put Mepa and the environment at the top of the public's high anxiety list.

Stricter and more stringent environmental and business regulation does not discourage business. However, it must be applied equitably and fairly. Someone who owns land outside the development area can live with the fact, but as soon as he sees someone else who owns a similar piece of land obtaining a permit, then the boat is well and truly rocked.

And this is what has been happening. When people can acquire land at lower prices and then lobby and obtain a permit to build apartments in areas reserved for villas or structures in areas outside the development zones, the whole system is thrown into disarray. One can try to justify the decision but quite frankly it doesn't wash, and the popular saying is that Mepa is not even-handed. Even the Auditor has come up with issues that reinforce this view.

The members of the boards of Mepa are responsible for this. Instead of jealously guarding the organisation's reputation they have participated in tarnishing it. This, of course, does not apply to all the board members many of whom are serious and conscientious. But of course it does not take many bad decisions to ruin a reputation.

So while some reform is required at Mepa, and proper guidelines – such as those for tall buildings – need to be clarified and applied, it is more a question of managing the applications, and giving clear decisions that limit the scope for misinterpretation and criticism. We cannot expect that a perfect system will be created but it is clear to me that many decisions at Mepa, especially on larger projects, reflect the old mentality of the past – development is good, it creates jobs, it is good for the economy. In many areas, as we are being warned by those in the tourism industry, development is destroying jobs and perhaps what is a thriving tourism industry – apart from the impact on our lives and the loss of much of what is beautiful and unique in Malta.

I still have faith that Mepa can deliver. There have been some small but significant advances in management and the new chairman has, I think, redressed some of the imbalances. But the road is long and each bad decision on a major project destroys the beneficial effect of hundreds of good ones.

The Need For A Central Environmental Enforcement Agency

Martin Scicluna

Vice-President of Din l-Art Helwa

In the environmental field, flouting the law is endemic. It is the Achilles' heel of Malta's environment. Illegal boat-house owners abound. Illegal structures continue to be constructed. Structures built illegally outside the development zone continue to be "sanctioned" by Mepa – that is, they are made legal. Illegal hunters' and trappers' hides continue. Illegal hunting and trapping continue. Vehicles – chief among them public and government transport – continue to emit poisonous gases. Illegal water extraction continues to deplete our precious and irreplaceable mean sea-level water aquifer.

The state of building construction sites continues to defy government site management regulations. Illegal littering continues unabated. Illegal dumping in the middle of our remaining cultural landscape continues. Our coast-line continues to be defaced by extraneous and illegal structures. Illegal quarries continue in operation. Construction development is permitted to intrude on our cultural and heritage sites. The ecology and cultural habitats continue to be threatened by illegal construction. Public footpaths in the countryside continue to be illegally closed. Illegal noise pollution is endemic, especially during the festa season.

Improvements in the way the regulatory authorities operate and are organised are a vital pre-requisite to a better environment. But enforcement of the law, and public education about the need to protect the environment – backed up by the encouragement of more environmentally-friendly behaviour, are also key to a better environment. Unless respect for regulation and the rule of law is backed up by enforcement, we will always lag behind the standards set in other EU countries. Unless people are made aware of the necessity to protect the environment through public education campaigns they will never learn to respect and protect it. Enforcement, education and the encouragement of good habits go together. For enforcement to work effectively, three key ingredients must be present.

First, there must be the political will to implement it. Too often, in discussion with officials and reading the Mepa Audit Officer's annual reports, the clear impression is given either that officials are held back by political involvement from taking the necessary enforcement action, or that the need to fill vacant posts in the enforcement sections of regulatory authorities or the police force are not supported or given sufficient priority by Ministers.

Secondly, there must be a sufficient number of enforcement officers deployed and available to cope with the task.

Thirdly, once enforcement has been implemented, the law courts must ensure that the administration of justice reflects the seriousness of the offence and recognises the need to introduce a culture change of respect for the environment. Too often there have been instances of environmental law-breaking – one recalls immediately hunting transgressions or the flouting of building regulations – apparently being treated less severely than the public might expect or wish them to be. This undermines the regulatory authority, as well as conveying the misplaced message that the environment is of minor or lesser importance.



Ever expanding species!
Construction cranes are
becoming the most common
view in Malta

A number of enforcement agencies are involved in “policing” the environment; they consist of the following:

The Administrative Law Enforcement (ALE) branch of the Malta Police Force

There are 21 field officers in the Malta Police Force who are allocated to the specific role under ALE of dealing with a range of environment-related offences – for example, illegal hunting and trapping, including anti-hunting at sea; traffic offences, including vehicle emissions; the removal of derelict vehicles; noise pollution, littering and dumping; support for Mepa on the removal of illegal structures and the inspection, together with Customs and Excise, of the importation of protected species of birds and animals. But ALE is also used for a variety of other duties, such as dealing with band marches and festas, patrols at sea, policing tourist areas, etc. ALE is clearly seriously under-resourced and tends to have its roles defined by seasonal priorities. As a consequence, and through no fault of its own, it is a Jack of all trades and master of none.

District Officers of the Malta Police Force deployed throughout Malta and Gozo

The remainder of the Malta Police Force, which is deployed in its majority in district headquarters, is nominally also responsible for dealing with the same offences as ALE. In practice, their priorities are different and only cursory attention appears to be paid to environment-related offences, since they are viewed as either the responsibility of ALE or of others (such as local councils, Mepa, etc.). The impression given is that offences against the environment are not regarded by District Police officers as their business – an attitude which, if true, the Commissioner should be urged

to rectify. District Police do appear, however, to get involved with noise pollution (excessive music, etc.) when complaints are made.

Mepa Enforcement Officers

There are currently between three and eight Enforcement Officers in Mepa. There should be 24. The Mepa Audit Officer has consistently drawn attention to the lack of enforcement resources within the Authority and the haphazard nature of its application. This gives the impression of Mepa being weak with major contractors and strong with the ordinary applicant. In any case, the Authority is also short of Environment Protection Officers (not to be confused with Enforcement Officers) who are the expert inspectors in various technical areas. There are currently about four or five, when there should be about 10.

ADT Enforcement Officers

There are about 20 ADT Enforcement Officers. They are involved in the enforcement of all forms of public transport infringements (such as conformity with service contracts, bus schedules and driver behaviour) for route buses, mini-buses, horse-driven cabs, taxis and chauffeur-driven vehicles. They also carry out emission checks and other road-side checks such as vehicle weights, general maintenance of vehicles and tacograph checks. The paucity of road-side checks on vehicle emissions appears to bear out the inadequacy of the resources available to perform all these tasks.

MRA Enforcement Officers

There are none. It would appear, therefore, that no resources currently exist for enforcing the illegal extraction of water or illegal quarrying. However, the



The construction industry must be administrated by illuminated regulatory bodies



Mineral Directorate of Mepa issues development permits for quarries and presumably, therefore, is responsible for enforcing transgressions, while the MRA issues quarry licences to extract the stone. Monitoring and control is however the responsibility of Mepa. Any enforcement in this area therefore falls on the over-stretched handful of Mepa Enforcement Officers identified above.

Local Councils

Local councils employ private wardens on contract. Their focus is almost entirely on traffic offences (mostly illegal parking), simply because it has been found almost impossible to collect the fines imposed by the courts on those who commit offences such as littering or dumping. This issue is discussed more fully below.

Ministry of Social Policy

A number of Public Health Inspectors are, *inter alia*, allocated to the control of excessive noise, but enforcement rests either with ALE or Mepa.

Abusive littering with construction material is still rampant

" Enforcement of the law is crucially important to the protection of the environment, but for this to be effective requires a conscious re-direction of resources to this area of government business, as well as the organisation and political backbone to make it happen. "

Two clear deductions may be drawn. First, the range of enforcement roles is extremely wide and technically diverse. Second, all the agencies are severely under-strength and are deployed in penny-packets in various roles with a consequent dilution in their ability to enforce the law effectively. There is a patent need for more resources to be allocated to the recruitment and training of Enforcement Officers.

Enforcement of the law is crucially important to the protection of the environment, but for this to be effective requires a conscious re-direction of resources to this area of government business, as well as the organisation and political backbone to make it happen. Unless enforcement and the application of the rule of law are made central to the safeguarding of the environment, the environmental deficit will continue to grow.

The current organisation and arrangements for enforcement in the environmental field are inefficient as well as ineffective. There is a need for a single “Environmental Enforcement Agency” to be set up, which will be answerable to the “Minister for the Environment”. This is now the Prime Minister, though there may be an organisational case for linking such an agency with the cleansing responsibilities of the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. This will entail the concentration of all the enforcement officers in Mepa, ADT and MRA (when these are allocated to them), as well as the “Green” Wardens, into one agency. They will be answerable to one agency head, who will deploy the resources available to him as he thinks fit within priorities laid down by government.

While the Mepa, ADT and MRA enforcement officers are currently public officers, there would be merit in contracting out this role to the private sector in exactly the same way as the local wardens dealing with traffic and parking offences have largely taken over this area of enforcement from the Police. Annual budgetary provision will have to be made, based on the number of man-hours which it is estimated will be needed by local councils, Mepa, MRA and ADT to deal with the range of duties to be covered. The budgetary allocation will be calculated broadly on the needs anticipated for the regulatory authorities of Mepa, ADT and MRA, as well as the local councils.

ALE and District Police Officers would, as now, remain responsible for the enforcement of a range of environmental offences and ALE would have to form a core part of the Enforcement Agency. However, the size of ALE needs to be considerably increased from 21 to, say, 36 if it is to be even marginally more effective. It will also be important to ensure that the line of responsibility to the Head of the Environmental Enforcement Agency of the Assistant Chief Commissioner responsible for ALE is clearly laid down without, of course, weakening in any way his employment line management responsibility and accountability to the Commissioner of Police.

One of the shortcomings of the current arrangements is that the collection of fines for environmental offences – especially those for littering and dumping – has proved difficult to apply. While traffic offences and parking fines are under-pinned by the fail-safe arrangement of the annual vehicle registration license to ensure compliance (ADT will not issue the car licence until all outstanding fines have been cleared), no such arrangement currently exists for littering or dumping offences. This is a lacuna in the law that must be corrected. This can be done by adopting one of two options: either that the provisions of any government service – whether the issuing of a passport, medical or hospital treatment or a car licence – will be conditional upon the payment of all outstanding fines, including those for littering, or tied in to the annual tax return, which would include a section for outstanding fines of any kind to be subject to the same regime as any tax outstanding (including interest on the amount outstanding or undeclared).

The establishment of an Environmental Enforcement Agency along the lines outlined will be more cost-effective (in exactly the same way as has happened with the payment for traffic wardens, the income from fines should more than compensate for the costs of sub-contracting the role of Green Wardens to the private sector) as well as being better targeted, organised and controlled. The current blurred responsibilities and lines of accountability will be removed and all enforcement – for whichever authority – will be carried out by the one Enforcement Agency.



The little countryside that remains must be made accessible to the public

Din l-Art Helwa Restorations

Din l-Art Helwa will soon embark on a restoration project that will target four important sculptures that form part of the urban fabric of the capital. In this article, architect David Mallia traces the history of the four statues.

The controversial opinions expressed by Adolf Loos in his essay *Ornament and Crime* written in 1908 would appear to have had little or no influence on the Maltese Islands, where *Kunstwollen*, or the *will for art* (and decoration), has clearly been strongly manifested since prehistoric times. The concept of *Kunstwollen* was defined by Riegl in 1893 and, translated literally, means “artistic urge” or “a will to form”. Riegl argues that this “will for art” regulates man’s physical perception of objects by suggesting ways for him to imagine them. *Kunstwollen* is the desire of man to interpret the world as easily as possible in accordance with his inner drive. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that Valletta and the many buildings built since its foundation exemplify the manifestation of this continued “will for art”.

The city of Valletta was founded in 1566 following the victory of the Great Siege in the previous year, during which a relatively small number of Knights and Maltese managed to defeat a seemingly overwhelmingly superior Ottoman armada. The prestige gained by the Order of St John as a result of this victory gave rise to numerous monetary offers that financed this expensive undertaking. The defensive walls were the first structures to be built along the northern half of the Sceberras Peninsula that separates Grand Harbour from Marsamxett Harbour. Even the seemingly austere fortifications were not totally devoid of ornament, since they were punctuated at intervals by highly elaborate gateways. The next step was to enact regulations that would govern the construction of all the buildings in order to enable private individuals who had acquired building sites to proceed with the construction of their houses. A special Commission was appointed early in 1568 and this soon issued new regulations. Careful study of the series of building regulations issued by the Commission reveals that a number of them form the basis of contemporary planning legislation in Malta. Among the 12 regulations issued on 12 May 1569, the seventh reads:

“Chi piglierà sito dove le strade fanno cantoniera sia obbligato fare in detta cantoniera alcun bello ornamento sotto pena di essergli a spese sue buttato in terra.” (Owners of houses sited on corner plots shall undertake to set up some form of permanent decorative feature on such corners, failure to comply with which shall entail the demolition of the house at the expense of the owner).



The statue of St James adorning the corner of Merchants Street and St Christopher's Street

Photo: David Mallia

Opposite:

The statue of St Roque situated at the corner of St Christopher Street and St Ursula Street

It can be seen that aesthetic considerations formed an integral part of this legislation and that the legislators were not totally unacquainted with the precepts of Vitruvius, who in his *Ten Books on Architecture* stressed that all buildings must be built with due reference to durability, convenience and beauty. Vitruvius states that beauty will be assured when the appearance of the work is pleasing and in good taste, and when its members are in due proportion according to correct principles of symmetry.

The visitor strolling through the streets of Valletta will certainly notice that many buildings are characterised by strong corner pilasters, often raising the full height of the façades up to the entablature which they support. This frequent use of the giant order – a major feature in Mannerist architecture, in which the pilasters span two or more storeys – further accentuates the corners. Some are rusticated, while others are plain; however, they add greatly to the overall architectural effect. A number of these corner pilasters were further embellished by the addition of statues in niches, further enhancing them. It is not certain whether these niches formed part of the original design of the buildings, but certainly a good number of them would seem to have been added some time after the completion of the building. It is also possible that in some cases the original statue and pedestal may have been replaced, this hypothesis being proposed on stylistic grounds. Less prevalent but even more distinguishing are the examples of sculptured monuments that adorn some of Valletta's open spaces and which were generally erected to commemorate a specific person or event. Although the greater part of these sculptures is to be found in the two Barrakka gardens, other notable works are to be found in some of the city's piazzas.

Statue of St Roque

The statue of St Roque is situated at the corner of St Christopher Street and St Ursula Street. The house at the corner was at one time the residence of the Justice of the Peace for the West – Valletta and Floriana, as described by the French Demanial Commission in 1799. The statue stands on an elaborate pedestal which springs from between the two corner pilasters of the building. The observer's eyes are drawn upwards from the pedestal, which becomes more ornate at the top, towards the elaborate inscription panel immediately below the statue itself.

The statue bears all the traditional iconography associated with the saint, who was especially invoked during outbreaks of the plague: the figure of a man bearing a pilgrim's shell on his cloak, holding a staff and having a raised tunic to show the plague sore on the thigh and being offered bread by a dog – according to the life of the saint as detailed in the *Golden Legend* (*Legenda Aurea*) by Jacopo da Varagine.

Statue of St James

The statue of St James is found at the junction between Merchants Street and St Christopher's Street and decorates one of the corners of the former Jesuit College. On 12 November 1592, Pope Clement having informed Grand Master Verdala of his intention to open a college in Malta for Jesuit priests under the auspices of the Sicilian province, the relevant deed for its establishment was duly signed and the site allocated to them for this purpose.

The Jesuits also had to agree, on the insistence of the Grand Master, to open a school for the teaching of Grammar and the Humanities. On 22 November 1769 the College, thus established, became a Public University of General Studies.

The original plans for the Maltese Jesuit church and college by Valeriano are lost but early on (before 1622) some alterations appear to have been made to the ground plan of the college. It seems that, originally, the Jesuit building was an unimpressive structure. However, the entire block, including the



façade, was apparently remodelled from 1647. The door and window mouldings of the façade are identical to those of the church façade and it has been suggested that the façade was designed by Buonamici. Like Gerolamo Cassar's Grand Master's palace and other buildings, the façade is astylar – without columns or pilasters and is modulated by the clever use of panelling. In 1753 the quoins of the building were embellished by the addition of statues which were paid for by Fra Philippe de Nesselrode. They depicted Jesuit saints. This description seems to hold true for three of the statues but not for the one being discussed. This in fact is supposed to represent St Francis Xavier but actually has all the attributes of St James. It may be that the original statue was replaced and that St James was chosen as a substitute since the former name of Merchants Street was *Strada San Giacomo* – however this is mere conjecture.

The statue stands on a simple pedestal that is inserted between the two corner pilasters of the building. Like many images of St James the Greater, the statue shows the saint as a well-equipped mediaeval pilgrim with an ample cape, a broad-brimmed hat, a bag for provisions and a drinking gourd. The hat is adorned with a scallop shell, which pilgrims to Campostela have used as a heraldic device for over a thousand years. The traditional walking stick with a hook is absent, but the stance of the right arm and hand suggests that there may have been one originally.



Statue of Queen Victoria

In 1887, the golden jubilee of the accession of Queen Victoria was celebrated with extraordinary pomp. A committee led by Sir Henry Hutchinson, Principal Secretary to Government, and Sir Adrian Dingli as vice-president collected subscriptions and organised festivities during which people had the opportunity to show their profound attachment to the sovereign. To celebrate the memory of this happy event, the idea of erecting a statue of the Queen in Valletta was proposed.

The work was entrusted to the eminent sculptor Professor Giuseppe Valenti of Palermo, whose patrons included some of the most important families of Palermo and whose works include sculptures for tombs. Sir Adrian Dingli himself corresponded with the sculptor following the departure of the Principal Secretary from Malta and, during a visit to Rome in 1890, he visited the sculptor personally and furnished him with all the necessary details for the sculpture, including the text of the two Latin epigraphs composed by Professor Don Vincenzo Tarozzi dell'Apollinare, which were cut into the sides of the pedestal.

The white marble statue was solemnly unveiled by Governor Smythe in August 1891 and received general approval. It was placed in the centre of *Piazza Tesoreria* (now *Misraħ ir-Repubblika*) and replaced the statue of Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena, which was moved to the entrance of the Mall Gardens at Floriana (and is now in *Pjazza Papa Giovanni XXIII*).

The statue portrays the Queen seated and wearing ceremonial attire, which includes a coronet and a voluminous dress, the drapery of which falls onto the square pedestal supporting the sculpture which, in turn, stands on a three-stepped podium. The Queen is looking to the left and her left arm is pointing in the same direction. She is shown wearing the black Gozitan lace shawl that was presented to her as a gift by the Maltese. A cast bronze British royal coat of arms, flanked by the lion and unicorn, adorns the front of the pedestal, while the Maltese coat of arms, also in cast bronze, adorns the back.

Older photographs of the piazza clearly show that the paving of the square included a shallow raised border around the podium that was shaped like the Victoria Cross. Sadly, this no longer exists.



Opposite:

The heraldic lion of
Grand Master
Antonio Manoel de Vilhena

The Statue of
Queen Victoria



The Heraldic Lion of Manoel de Vilhena

The lion statue bearing the coat of arms of Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena is found on the corner of East Street and St Christopher Street. There was a house erected by the *Fondazione Manoel* at No. 70 which stood on the site of an older house belonging to the bequest of Domenico Bologna. The site had been acquired by the *Fondazione* in exchange for a number of fields. The lion, sporting an elaborate mane, is portrayed as roaring while protecting the escutcheon. This links this remarkable “corner” statue with other buildings of the *Fondazione Manoel* in Valletta, all of which are indicated as belonging to the *Fondazione* but none of which have such a stunning display. It could be that the angle at which East Street meets St Christopher Street allowed for the addition of this unique monument.

Conclusion

The statues considered here are but a few of the many works that adorn Valletta and are a testimony to the continued need felt by its inhabitants to embellish and beautify their city. After 1571, Valletta replaced Mdina as the capital city and despite the havoc wrought during the Second World War, when many buildings were destroyed, it still realises the aesthetic intentions of its founders and still deserves the epithet coined by Sir Walter Scott as “a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen”.

References

- A.O.M. 92 Liber Conciliorum Status – *Ordinatione per dar luoghi a Fabricar Case alla Città Valletta*, f.177.
- Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, vol. iii, England, 1894.
- Roger De Giorgio, *A City by an Order*, Malta, 1985.
- Victor F. Denaro, *Still more Houses in Valletta in Melita Historica*, vol. 3 no. 3, Malta, 1962.
- Arturo Mercieca, *Sir Adriano Dingli: sommo statista, legislatore, magistrato in Melita Historica*, vol. 1 no. 4, Malta 1955.
- Alfredo A. Mifsud, *Knights of the Ven. Tongue of England in The Malta Herald*, 1916.
- Morris H. Morgan (trans.) *The Ten Books on Architecture* by Vitruvius, Massachusetts, 1914.
- Alfonso Panzetta, *Nuovo dizionario degli scultori italiani dell’ottocento e del primo novecento*, Turin, 2003.
- Alois Riegel, *Leading Characteristics of the Late Roman Kunstwollen*. in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Donald Preziosi, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Carmel Testa, *The life and times of Grand Master Pinto*, Malta, 1989.



Sustainable Tourism

Petra Bianchi

Director of Din l-Art Helwa

Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism Mario de Marco has recently emphasised the fact that, for the tourism industry to be sustainable, we must “maintain, conserve and upgrade our environment”. He warned that tourism development must not take place at the expense of the environment, and all reports drawn up by the Malta Tourism Authority are now to take environmental considerations into account.

We can only agree with this – although in truth it is amazing that it was not already happening before Dr de Marco stepped in. The results are all around us for everyone to see.

Tourism development must consider both the natural environment and the built heritage. This logically applies to other kinds of development that also have an impact on tourism and must be sustainable – the same principles must apply to all development.

Old houses and streetscapes are part of our heritage and attractive to tourists, yet demolition continues apace. It is obvious that



Out with the old, in with the new

our urban environment is being damaged by over-development, yet little is being done to put a lid on this damage. We are experiencing a demolition stampede, targeting traditional houses and gardens all over the country. How will this affect tourism to Malta in the long term?

Now we also have a sudden surge of tall buildings, blissfully unimpeded by any national strategy on where they should be located in spite of their massive impact on both the urban and natural environment. *Din l-Art Helwa* has called for a moratorium on new permits for tall buildings until such a strategy has been drawn up, but this has not been addressed.

Vast numbers of old houses have been replaced with three-storey blocks of cramped, characterless flats, many of which appear to have remained unsurprisingly vacant. This architectural clutter is also a pitiful waste of energy and limestone. Limestone is a non-renewable resource and it is estimated that new stone will no longer be available within 30 years, at this rate of usage.

Why not just conserve and re-use more of the buildings that we already have? And if we are to demolish, at least let the old stones be re-used elsewhere, instead of being crushed and dumped.

Of course, the government cannot be expected to do everything. Property owners, architects and developers all need to play their part in respecting and appreciating the value of our heritage.

"Let us be clear that shifting the balance in favour of heritage does not automatically mean harming progress."

Opposite:

top - Enhanced display at the Roman Domus, Rabat

bottom left - The alluring charm of Mdina

bottom right - Restored splendour at St John's



Valletta's disintegrating urban fabric

New ideas for change are being presented all the time, and so they should be – making plans, inventing, imagining and trying to look ahead into the future are the essence of human intelligence and creativity. Balancing development and change on the one hand and the conservation of our historic buildings on the other is difficult. However, let us be clear that shifting the balance in favour of heritage does not automatically mean harming progress.

Investing in heritage has economic value as it enhances the cultural product. For example, the success of both the Valletta and Vittoriosa Waterfront projects depends on their historic ambiances, and the planned Dock No.1 project seems set to turn out the same way.

Many of our main heritage sites have now been taken well in hand – the Roman villa in Rabat and the Hypogeum are well-known examples, but there are many more. NGOs and some local councils also play a valid role, including *Din l-Art Helwa*, which has restored many historic buildings and monuments over the years.

Visitor numbers to the main sites can pose a threat if not managed properly. Malta is promoted as a cultural destination and it is not possible to cope with tens of thousands of visitors each year trampling over the prime sites without the management of visitor flow, adequate displays, interpretation and other facilities.

As we have recently seen in the cases of St John’s Co-cathedral and Haġar Qim, the creation of improved visitor facilities can be controversial. Heritage does not just consist of material objects, but plays a role in our perception of national identity and culture, and everyone understandably feels a sense of ownership.

Major proposals about our shared cultural heritage must be put forward with transparency and public consultation in mind. It should go without saying that adequate information should be readily available to the public from the outset – and not following a public outcry, as in the case of the St John’s museum extension. All proposals must be studied carefully to identify the best solutions in the interests of our heritage.

Whichever conclusions are eventually reached regarding all our various sites, good solutions must be found, and without delay. Our heritage must be neither neglected and destroyed, nor fossilised – we must adapt to change successfully, with sensitivity and respect towards the intrinsic value of our heritage, and to enhance its lasting value for all to enjoy.



Din I-Art Helwa Membership

Alberta Security
 Alfred Mizzi Foundation
 Allied Newspapers Ltd
 APS Bank Ltd
 Atlas Insurance Agency Ltd
 Auto Sales Ltd
 Avantech
 AX Holdings Ltd
 Bank of Valletta plc
 British High Commission
 Central Bank of Malta
 Charles Darmanin & Company Ltd
 Computime Ltd
 Corinthia Group of Companies
 Curmi & Partners Ltd
 De La Rue Currency & Security Print Ltd
 Dingli and Dingli
 Eden Leisure Group Ltd
 Enemalta Corporation
 GasanMamo Insurance Ltd
 General Workers' Union
 GO plc
 Ignazio Anastasi Ltd
 Island Hotels Group Ltd
 Lombard Bank Malta plc

Corporate Membership:
€ 2,329.37 for 5 years
€ 582.34 per year for 5 years



Din I-Art Helwa

Malta Financial Services Centre
 Malta International Airport
 Malta Maritime Authority
 Malta Stock Exchange
 Malta Tax Free Marketing Group
 Malta Tourism Authority
 Marsovin Ltd
 Megabyte Ltd
 M Demajo Group
 Middlesea Insurance Company Ltd
 Miller Distributors Ltd
 Mizzi Holdings Ltd
 P Cutajar & Company Ltd
 Philip Toledo Ltd
 Playmobil (Malta) Ltd
 PricewaterhouseCoopers
 Rotary Club (Malta)
 Round Table Malta (One)
 Salvo Grima Group Ltd
 Shireburn Software Ltd
 Simonds Farsons Cisk Ltd
 Toly Products Ltd
 Tug Malta Ltd.
 Union Haddiema Maghqudin
 Vassallo Builders Ltd
 Vodafone Malta Ltd

Membership Rates 2009

Individual Annual Membership
€ 20.00

Individual Life Membership
€ 200.00

Married Couple
 (or long-standing Partners)
 Annual Membership
 (for Two) **€ 30.00**

Married Couple Life Membership
 (for Two) **€ 300.00**

Students Din I-Art Helwa
 Annual membership **€ 5.00**
 (also covers University Student
 membership for members
 up to 25 years old)



Din I-Art Helwa

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Be a Guardian of Malta's Heritage. Join Today

Surname: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

I wish to apply for:

Individual, annual	€ 18	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual, life	€ 180	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joint, annual *	€ 24	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joint, life *	€ 250	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student, annual	€ 5	<input type="checkbox"/>

(* husband and wife or partners at the same address)

Cheques to be made payable to Hon. Treasurer Din I-Art Helwa,
 133, Melita Street, Valletta

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Din I-Art Helwa

TWO OF OUR PROPERTIES



19th century Chapel of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuh, Gudja
 - Restored in 1973.



St Agatha's Tower commonly known as the Red Tower, Meliha,
 built in 1647/48 by Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris Castellet
 - Restored in 2001.

Bestprint Co. Ltd., Qrend

Din l-Art Helwa News



Security System Installed at Hal Millieri

Din l-Art Helwa has recently installed a security system at the mediaeval chapel of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri in Żurrieq, as a protective measure against vandalism. This 15th century chapel contains unique frescoes and has been in the care of *Din l-Art Helwa* since 1968. It is opened on the morning of the first Sunday of every month by our warden, Anthony Mangion. *Din l-Art Helwa* is very grateful to Alberta Fire and Security for helping us with the installation of this security system.

Marsovin range of La Torre wines to support *Din l-Art Helwa*

Marsovin have reached an agreement with *Din l-Art Helwa* to help fund the restoration of certain properties.

Earlier this year, Marsovin released a range of six wines, branded as La Torre, each of which carries a picture of a different tower on the front label. Marsovin is intending to classify its La Torre range of wines as IGT Maltese Islands and as from the 2008 vintage, will be donating a sum of money to *Din l-Art Helwa* from every bottle of La Torre sold, which will be used by *Din l-Art Helwa* to fund various restoration projects.

Marsovin is proud to be associated with *Din l-Art Helwa*. Director of Marketing Jeremy Cassar said: "It is only through initiatives like these that non-profit organisations such as *Din l-Art Helwa* can afford maintain their constant efforts and hard work. Marsovin has a long-standing reputation for supporting such initiatives and looks forward very positively to the results of this agreement."



Din l-Art Helwa News

Monument to Russian Naval Hero Restored



A ceremony was held on 19 May at the Garden of Rest in Floriana to celebrate the restoration and unveiling of a fine memorial to Captain Baron Egor Antonovich Schlippenbach, a Russian naval hero of the early 19th century. The restoration of this prestigious monument was commissioned by the Russian government and the work was carried out by Agius Stoneworks and coordinated by *Din l-Art Helwa*.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by HE Andrei Granovsky, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Malta, Eleonora Mitrofanova, head of the Russian Centre for International Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, Vladimir Kozhin, head of the board of the Konstantinovsky International Charity Fund, Sergei Medvedev, Director of the Russian Cultural Centre, Martin Galea, Executive President of *Din l-Art Helwa* and other distinguished guests.

Captain Baron Schlippenbach died on 20 March 1830, aged 48, on board His Imperial Majesty's Frigate *Alexandra*, which he commanded.

Born in Livonia, and a Captain First Class in the Russian Navy, he was the son-in-law of Vice Admiral (later Grand High Admiral) Count Heiden. By 1821, Schlippenbach had been decorated with the Russian Order of St George, following the successful completion of 18 naval campaigns. He was buried on 22 March 1830 with full military honours, including a major procession from Valletta to the Msida Bastion cemetery. The funeral party was provided by the 85th Light Infantry Regiment and included a large number of Russian and British Naval Officers. Present was Vice Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm and army officers from every regiment in the Maltese garrison. British and Russian ships of war in the harbour lowered their ensigns to half mast and the Frigate *Alexandra* fired minute guns.

Schlippenbach was buried in the Msida Bastion (so-called because it overlooks Msida) cemetery which formed part of the Floriana bastions, where non-Catholics were interred at the time. The eastern end of the ground where Schlippenbach was buried became a consecrated cemetery in 1843 (it was never deconsecrated) and continued to be used until 1856, when it was full, and burials then continued in the new cemetery of Ta' Braxia in Pieta.

Schlippenbach's grave was recorded by Captain Charles Zammit in 1929 during a survey for the Museums Department. His survey drawing shows a cruciform monument to the rear of Susannah Frere's tomb. Two damaged panels from the tomb, one in Latin and one in English, were recovered and have been repaired and remounted on the new monument, together with a memorial panel in Russian.

Din l-Art Helwa public lectures

Din l-Art Helwa has once again organised a series of monthly public lectures to run from October to June. The lectures, which will be held in the lecture hall at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, will start at 6pm and those wishing to attend are requested to be seated by 5.45pm. The first lecture, by Claude Borg on *The Conservation and Restoration of Villa Francia in Lija* was held on 9 October. Subsequent lectures are as follows:

Thursday, 13 November

'The Impact of Climate Change on our Marine Living Resources' *Dr Alan Deidun*

Thursday, 11 December

'Unearthing Mdina's Medieval Ramparts' *Dr Stephen C. Spiteri*

Thursday, 8 January

'The Advent of Modern Architecture in Malta' *Dr Conrad Thake*

Thursday, 12 February

'Educating for the Preservation of our Cultural Heritage' *Dr Martina Caruana*

Thursday, 12 March

'Subterranean Valletta' *Edward Said*

Thursday, 16 April

'The Main Guard in Valletta' *Adrian Strickland*

Thursday, 14 May

'Aspects of Maltese Antique Jewellery' *Francesca Balzan*

Thursday, 11 June

(to be announced)



Can You See by Philipp Seifert



Car Disgracing Paradise Bay by Andrew Cachia

Din l-Art Helwa's Blue Campaign Marine Photography Competition

For the second year running, *Din l-Art Helwa* has held its annual photographic competition that forms part of the *Blue Campaign* on which it is presently working to raise awareness of our marine environment.

The negative effects of certain fishing practices on the fish population have been known for years. Continuous dredging of the seabed, and the uncontrolled use of nets with small mesh sizes, is contributing to the depletion of fish in the Mediterranean and the illegal fishing of small and immature tuna and swordfish is also contributing to the decline in these important sources of healthy food.

The prize-giving took place at *Din l-Art Helwa's* offices on 26 September. There were two categories of photographs: Category A depicted sea pollution or any other negative effects of human activity on the sea or coastal environment, and Category B focused on the beauty of underwater life.

A prize of €250 was awarded by Executive President Martin Galea to the winning entries in both categories. From the 15 entries, Andrew Cachia was the winner of Category A, with his photo entitled *Car Disgracing Paradise Bay*, and Mario Micallef won Category B with his photograph entitled *Nudibranch*.

Din l-Art Helwa hopes that this competition helps to raise awareness of the importance of our beautiful marine and coastal environment and the need to protect it for future generations. Thanking Stanley Farrugia Randon and Joseph Chetcuti for organising the competition, Mr Galea said that pollution and over-fishing were jeopardising the livelihood of the inhabitants of the sea. Stanley Farrugia Randon praised the high standard of the entries and said that judging the winners had not been easy.



Nudibranch by Mario Micallef



Nudibranch by Joseph Azzopardi



Prize-giving at *Din l-Art Helwa*



Chapel of St Paul,
San Pawl tat-Targa

Naxxar - Four Walks to Discover a Village

Victor J Rizzo

Hon. Treasure of Din l-Art Helwa

Cooperation between *Din l-Art Helwa* and Naxxar Local Council has resulted in a 48-page booklet entitled *Naxxar – Four Walks to discover a Village*. The booklet is extensively illustrated, in full colour, and gives a detailed account of all the historical sites that are passed by the walker.

Printed by BestPrint of Qrendi, the booklet was generously sponsored by AX Holdings and Palazzo Parisio and Gardens and was officially launched on 24 July at the offices of Naxxar Local Council.

Author Paul Catania – who is from Naxxar – proudly relates the origins of the village, the earliest signs of habitation in which go back to prehistoric times. This is amply verified by the presence of a vast system of cart-ruts leading up from the valley to the San Pawl tat-Tarġa ridge.

Throughout the Middle Ages and during the period of the Knights, the village served as the gateway to the north of the island. The strategic importance given by the Knights to this area is evidenced by the existence of the Captain's Tower and the entrenchment walls near the cart-ruts.

The establishment of the parish as early as the 14th century was also a first in the Maltese countryside. Although the parish church is dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady, the strongest tradition in the village is that concerning the shipwreck of St Paul. In fact the motto of the village is *Prior Credidi* (First to Believe), as the inhabitants were presumably among the first to accept the new religion.

The first walk takes the reader through the heart of the village, from Pjazza Vittorja to Triq Santa Luċija, the most important street in the village. Over the years, this street has become the centre of all commercial activity in the village, as well as the centre of the social life of the villagers. Triq Santa Luċija is also unique in another respect: it has the largest number of alleys of any street in Malta, 14 in all. It also has the same number of small statues adorning various houses. These picturesque alleys are the pride of the residents and their upkeep is immaculate.

The second walk begins with a detailed visit to the parish church and then through Triq il-Kbira and Triq id-Dejqa. Previously, Triq il-Kbira was known as Strada Reale, as it was the main street leading to Valletta. In fact here is found the former Armoury building, the old Parish House, with its sculptured balcony, and the house of the



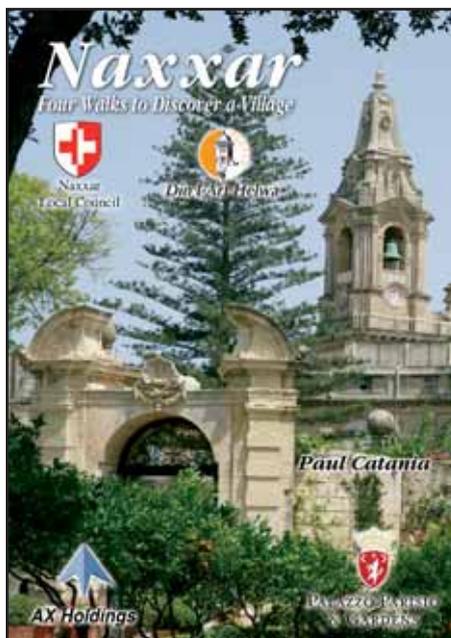
The old police station in Triq il-Kbira

Tax Collector. Walkers will then go down the narrowest street in the village, with 16th and 17th century houses on both sides.

The third route also starts from the main square and passes through two more old streets in the village, Triq Castro and Triq il-Markiz Scicluna, and on to the small hamlet of *San Pawl tat-Tarġa*. Further along, the walk leads to the Naxxar entrenchments, constructed in 1720 by the Knights, and to a most elaborate system of cart ruts.

The fourth walk actually takes the reader out into the countryside, starting from Burmarrad church. A secondary road leads to the *Tal-Qadi* ruins, which are the remains of a Neolithic temple that was first excavated by Sir Temi Zammit in 1927. Further down, towards the Salina Coast Road to Baħar iċ-Ċaġhaq, the walker comes across a number of historical sites: the Catacombs, the Ximenes Redoubt, the Fougasse, Ghallis and Qalet Marku Towers and the dolmens at Maghtab.

Copies of the booklet, which costs €2.50, are available from the offices of *Din l-Art Helwa* and Naxxar Local Council. *Din l-Art Helwa* is working closely with other Local Councils to produce similar booklets which aim to create awareness of local heritage and the environment.



Water - A Crisis?

Gordon Knox



Malta is heading for a crisis unless attitudes to water management and conservation change drastically. Natural water resources are over exploited and insufficient for the population of the islands, meaning that the shortfall is provided by expensive reverse osmosis (RO) desalination plants and virtual water.

Water is such a common substance that it is totally taken for granted – a public right at public expense, with seemingly inexhaustible quantities available at the turn of a tap. It is an essential component of life as we know it. It has many unusual properties and manifestations, which not only form the basis of myriads of natural processes but have continued to be fundamental to human society from prehistory to the present day. However, these properties, particularly water's use as a natural solvent, also mean that resources can be easily damaged or destroyed if they are not properly managed. Once water resources are lost by displacement or pollution, they are very expensive to replace.

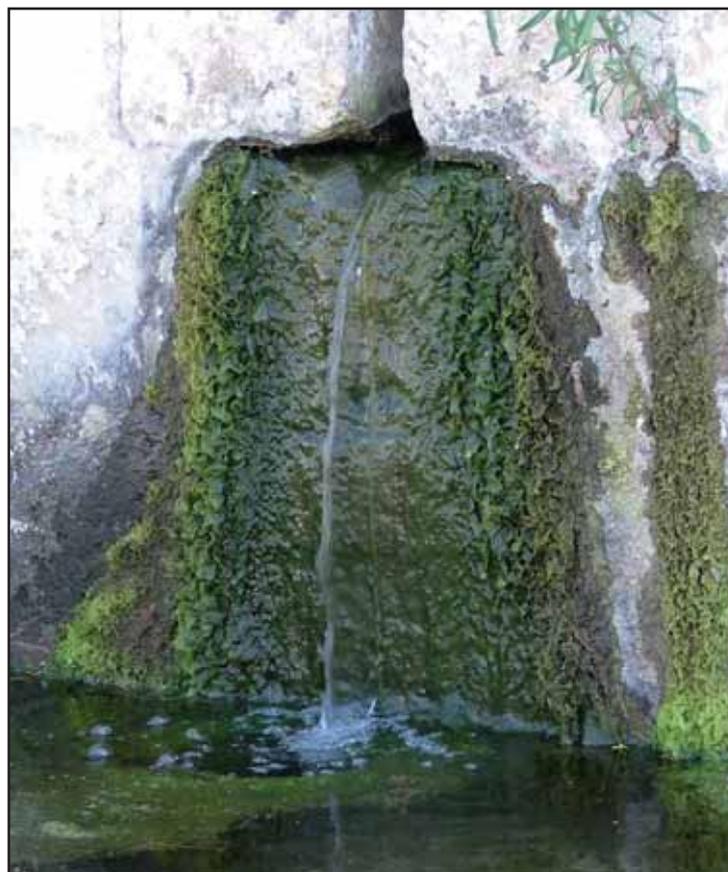
Interplanetary probes have established that water is a common component of the Solar System and it is likely that Earth's original volume of water was inherited from condensation from the Solar Nebula around 4.5 billion years ago. Geological studies show that the Earth has had liquid oceans and a hydrological cycle for the greater part of its history. Today,

Traditional well exposed in quarry wall of The Limestone Heritage, Siggiewi.

Photo Gordon Knox

most water – around 97.5 per cent – occurs on the surface of the earth as salt water and only a small proportion – 2.5 per cent – is in the form of fresh water, of which 68.9 per cent is locked up in ice, 30.8 per cent is in groundwater and 0.3 per cent is in lakes and rivers, with a further amount as vapour in the atmosphere. It is involved in an immense geodynamic cycle, largely powered by solar energy by which surface waters are evaporated and purified before condensing as precipitation. Exchange also takes place with ground waters and deep geology partially energised by the Earth's own thermal energy from the decay of radioactive elements. The biosphere constitutes an intimate part of the geodynamic cycle and consumes and excretes water on a vast scale.

Precipitation is not equitably distributed, and nor is usable ground water. Some countries have an abundance of water, but in others water is scarce. In many parts of the world water resources are under severe pressure. Precipitation often does not meet a population's needs and fossil ground water is extracted in an unsustainable manner. This is true on the Maltese Islands, where ground water is being extracted at a greater rate than the rate at which it is replenished.



Natural spring, Rabat.

Photo
Gordon Knox

The main natural water resources in Malta and Gozo consist of the mean sea level water bodies or aquifers (MSLAs), which are essentially Ghyben-Herzberg fresh water lenses floating on denser seawater. The actual water is situated in fissures and pores mainly within the Lower Coralline Limestone Formation. Minor resources are situated in perched aquifers lying above the impermeable Blue Clay Formation. Perched water flows outwards above the Blue Clay Formation surface and springs are found where the Blue Clay and succeeding Upper Coralline Limestone Formation outcrop in the Maltese countryside. A very minor, transient, but potentially significant volume is trapped in runoff tanks, cisterns and wells. Run off capture has been important throughout Malta's history. Notable examples of this are the prehistoric Misqa Tanks, close to the Mnajdra Temple, and the cellar cistern of the Roman Villa site near Ghar Dalam. There are thousands of traditional flask-shaped domestic and agricultural wells, a good example of which can be seen on the quarry wall at The Limestone Heritage, Siġġiewi. Many are still in use today, and many houses have rectangular cisterns, covered with an arch-supported superstructure beneath ground level, to catch roof and street run-off. Along the main valleys there are small dams that assist the collection of storm run off and subsequent infiltration into the subsurface. Historically, Maltese society exploited the springs above the blue clay formation at a local level, and in the early 17th century the Wignacourt Aqueduct was built to carry water from the Mdina/Rabat area to Valletta. The MSLAs were largely unseen and unknown, apart from springs and brackish pools adjacent to the coast and only became exploited heavily during the 20th century. Today, around 60 per cent of Malta's water is supplied from the MSLAs via boreholes and pumping from a system of underground galleries.

The actual volume of water resources in place, and producible on a sustainable basis, cannot be measured directly. Geological modelling is required, plus a knowledge of the variation of rock porosity, such as geometrical properties and connectivity and permeability and related flow rates. Modelling is difficult because the host rock is limestone, which may not only have primary porosity between rock grains, formed when the limestone was deposited, but also secondary porosity caused by physical processes such as faulting and fissuring and/or by dissolution and reprecipitation of the limestone fabric to form voids that range in size from microscopic scales to caves. In the subsurface, water flows easily along fissures, but with less ease through microscopic pore spaces. While this phenomenon aids productivity from a borehole, it can also mean that salt water is sucked into the periphery of the borehole, thus damaging the aquifer.

A good understanding is needed of charge rates and depletion rates (natural + artificial). Estimates should never consist of a single figure, as there are many uncertainties inherent in the estimates – including the heterogeneity of the host limestones – and ideally should be modelled in a probabilistic manner. The volume of the fresh water lenses beneath the islands was estimated at two billion cubic metres



Fissure and water dissolved voids exposed in quarry wall of The Limestone Heritage, Siġġiewi.

Photo Gordon Knox

several decades ago. However, it is not the water volume in place in the rock that is important, but the sustainable producible volume.

Charge comes mainly from precipitation but also includes leakages from the domestic water grid and also leakages from sewage pipes. Depletion depends not only on extraction but also on the natural dynamic flow of the water to the edges of the lenses along the coasts of Malta and Gozo, where brackish pools and springs can form.

Precipitation rates are related to rainfall, but infiltration to the ground water bodies is discounted by surface evaporation, plant transpiration and surface run-off to the sea. Precipitation can vary significantly from year to year, but collection of data over many decades gives a mean figure for the annual precipitation on the Maltese Islands. For example, annual rainfall is around 0.5 metres per year, meaning that about 160 million cubic metres of rain falls on the 316 square kilometres area of the Maltese islands, of which a range of about 22 to 40 million cubic metres infiltrates to the MSLAs on average (In a wet year 80 million cubic metres and in a dry year 16 million cubic metres may be added respectively). To this may be added about 5.5 million cubic metres from leakages in the water utility network and possibly an equivalent amount from sewage pipe leakages. Of the remainder, around



Run off flood water in Wied Hal Balzan, September 2003.

Photo Gordon Knox

6 per cent reaches the sea as direct runoff, although in built up areas this may reach and exceed 80 per cent. Some 70 to 80 per cent returns to the atmosphere by evaporation and transpiration and an unknown quantity is harvested by run off wells, cisterns and tanks.

In the MSLAs, natural depletion is a continuous process by flow to the periphery of the lenses at the coastlines. This may be in of the order of 23 million cubic metres per annum. Artificial depletion takes place through boreholes and pumping stations by the public utility with a relatively minor amount from springs and by both regulated and unregulated private boreholes. The map of the Malta Resources Authority (MRA) illustrates the historical density of the latter and includes old private hand-dug boreholes (blue dots), new boreholes (red dots), registered for the first time in 1997, and springs (green dots).

Public water production sources in the Maltese Islands.

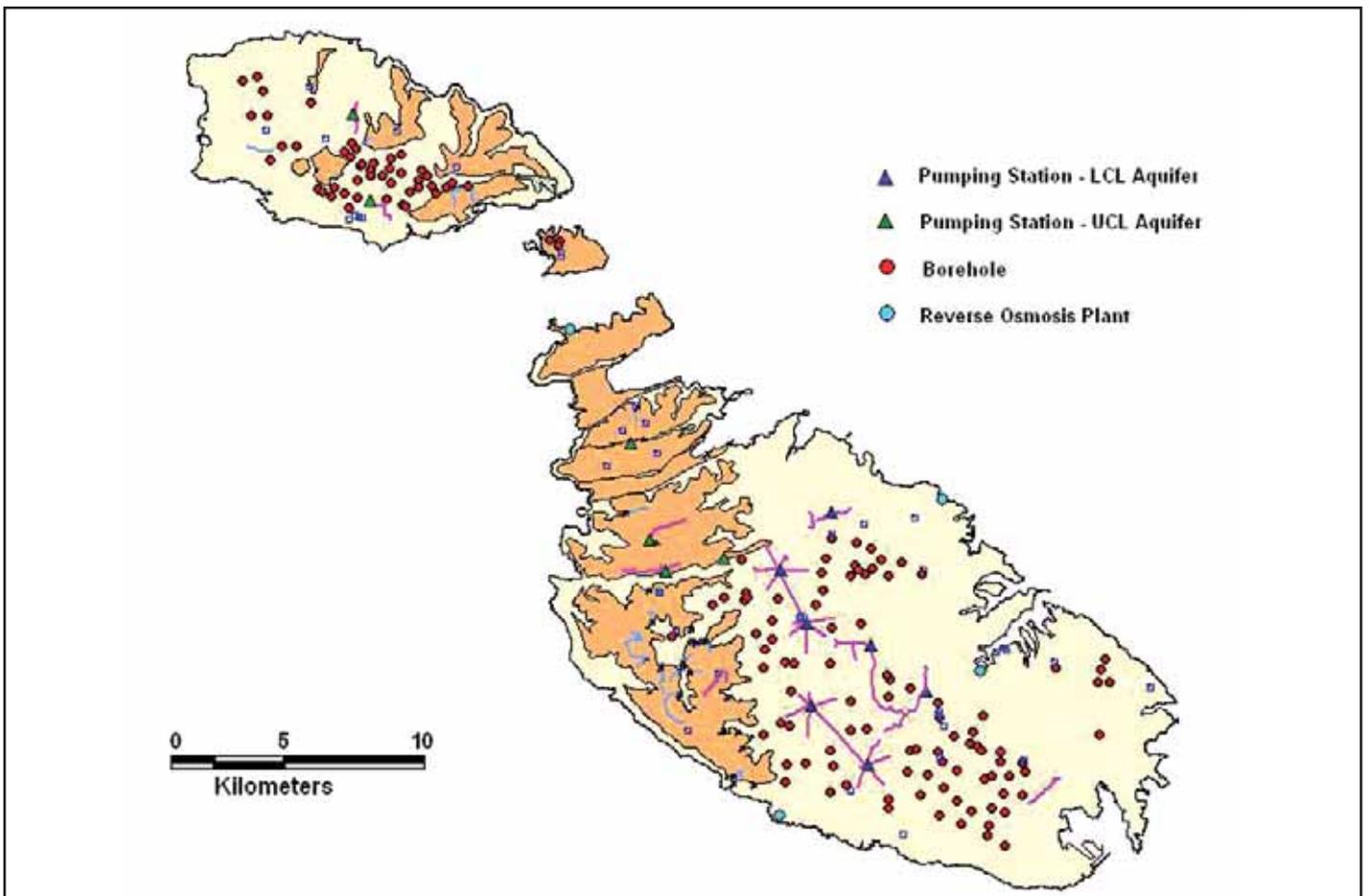
Reproduced by permission of MRA.

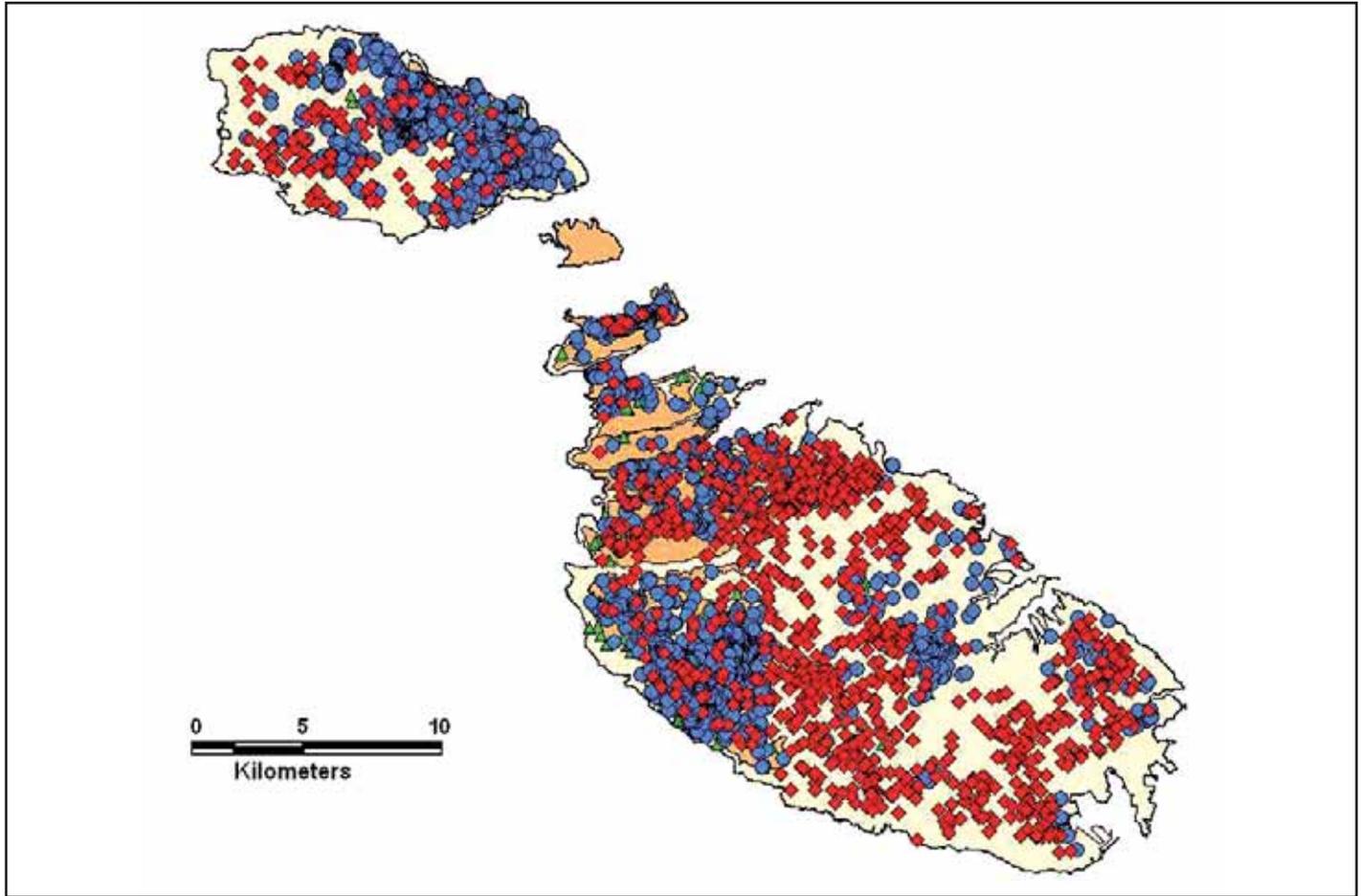
In 2007, the metered ground water extraction was of the order of 13.4 million cubic metres per annum, while to this should be added an unreported volume estimated at 16 million cubic metres, giving a total of around 29.4 million cubic metres per annum. Perched aquifers discharge naturally by springs and further extraction takes place from boreholes and wells. However, perched aquifers only supply a minor component of the Maltese Islands' water supply.

An aquifer has a maximum sustainable yield that includes natural as well as artificial depletion, beyond which it will suffer irreversible damage. In the case of the MSLAs, salinisation and invasion by seawater is the major threat. All Maltese aquifers are affected by pollutants such as fertilisers and infiltrating surface spills of miscellaneous liquids.

This means that they deteriorate for domestic consumption, so that remedial treatment is required to meet prevailing standards. An example of this are nitrates in the MSLAs, which are diluted by mixing with RO water before delivery to the consumer. In the case of the perched aquifers, fertiliser pollution has reached such levels that the water is no longer fit for human consumption.

The MSLAs have been estimated at different times to have different sustainable yields according to particular hydrological models. These have varied between 12 and 23 million cubic metres per annum. Whatever the correct value, it is clear that extraction beyond sustainable levels has, over decades in the case of the MSLAs of Malta, resulted in a contraction in the size of the fresh water lens while the salinity of extracted water has increased.





This contraction will continue with unsustainable extraction at present rates. In 2005, Mepa warned in a consultative document that water extraction without regard for the sustainability of the resource carries a severe risk of wiping out, for practical purposes, the underground fresh water storage capacity provided by the sea-level aquifers. Another document suggested that by 2015, seven years away, the MSLA under Malta would become unusable.

Total aquifer extraction in no way meets the shortfall for demand, as the RO plants provided about 17 million cubic metres per annum production in 2007. The sea water is mined to extract non-saline water. Desalination plants around the islands desalinate sea water and mix it with borehole water before feeding the national grid of water pipes and distribution to consumers. In 2007, around 56 per cent of the water utility's supply was generated from sea water, or about 37 per cent of Malta's total demand. The desalination process is expensive, which means that the public water utility is a major consumer of electrical power and thus contributes significantly to the amount of oil that Malta imports for power generation.

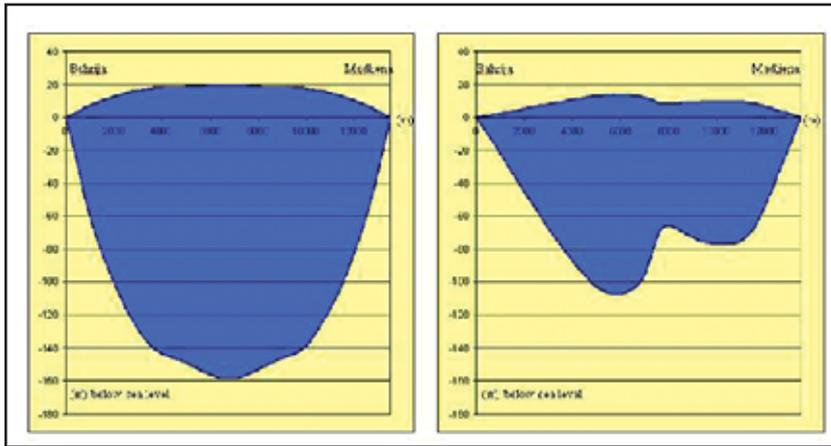
Malta consumes water in another way. It is basically an island city state surrounded by a large moat: the Mediterranean Sea. The "city" has a high population density and a very limited rural hinterland, which is far too small to support the population of around 400,000 people. Malta is, therefore, heavily dependent on others for food and industrial products, apart from energy from overseas. So the country imports large volumes of virtual water. This concept was introduced in 1993 by John Anthony Allan, who

Location of Registered Private Groundwater Sources in the Maltese Islands.

Reproduced by permission of MRA.

was awarded the 2008 Stockholm Water Prize. Virtual water is water that is embedded in commodities and is the volume of water used to produce agricultural and industrial goods. For example, the amount of water used to produce 1kg of wheat is 1,300 litres and for 1kg of beef is 15,000 litres. All products and goods have a virtual water content, so a country's exports and imports can be aggregated to obtain a virtual water balance. In addition, the export/import statistics of a country can be examined to estimate the water footprint, which is defined as the sum of total domestic consumption and virtual water imports, minus virtual water exports. According to a 2004 UNESCO-IHE publication, Malta imported about 644 million cubic metres per annum of virtual water in the period 1997 to 2001. This means that elsewhere in the world, around 30 times as much water as the sustainable yield of the Maltese aquifers was consumed to produce food and goods for import to the Maltese population. From this perspective, Malta is not in a sustainable situation.

On Malta, there are several issues related to water consumption: a dense population; a Western paradigm – water/sanitation is a public right provided at public expense; total demand of around 57 million cubic metres a year; overproduction from the aquifers; at least 5,000 private registered boreholes, the production of which is unknown; an unknown number of unregistered boreholes, with an unknown production; water use is energy/cost sensitive – water production requires six per cent of total power generation and RO water costs five times that of borehole water and has an impact on the balance of payments; meeting EU quality requirements; the limited recycling of water; the management and



capturing of storm water; pricing is a social and economic balancing act. While the above issues are well documented, and data and information is available on the websites of government and state organisations, public awareness is poor. The natural water bodies are out of sight, out of mind, and do not impact upon the public in the same way as, for example, air pollution, waste recycling and urban sprawl – which are public and media issues.

What are the consequences of not addressing these issues? Two extreme scenarios can be postulated, one of which I have called “Drift Scenario” and the other “Ruthless Conservation Scenario”. The real future is likely to lie somewhere in between.

The Drift Scenario is a projection where little changes from the present and would describe a world with some or all of the following features: population density remains high or increases; the water wasteful paradigm is rooted in the population; unregulated private water production continues; there is minimum husbandry of rainfall and capture of storm water; limited recycling; depletion, salinisation and exhaustion of aquifers followed by the potential collapse of Maltese agriculture; near total dependence on desalination and energy/price fluctuations and the water supply being hostage to international crises.

On the other hand, the Ruthless Conservation Scenario would feature a world with much or all of the following characters: lower population density; a population that is highly sensitive to water conservation; highly regulated and sustainable production from aquifers; maximum husbandry/domestic use of rainfall; large to micro scale recycling – state, industry and domestic; redirection of horticulture and agriculture to incorporate virtual water concepts, desalination still prominent; reduced exposure to energy/price fluctuations and a more manageable future, with strategically preserved fresh water resources.

What might the Ruthless Conservation Scenario entail? According to the latest Eurostat Survey, in the short term the Maltese population is anticipated to rise to 429,000 by 2035. Assuming this projection is correct, it puts further demand on water, which makes a ruthless conservation world even more urgent.

A massive public relations campaign would be needed, to educate the population as to the scarcity and stress on water resources on the island, and the consequences of not changing the present wasteful

Vertical section of the Ghyben-Herzberg Freshwater Lens in the Lower Coralline Limestone Aquifer;

(A) at the levels it would stand if there were no abstraction of groundwater and

(B) at the level it is today.

Reproduced by permission of MRA

Opposite:

The tranquil waters of the fountain in the courtyard of Palazzo Falzon, Mdina

attitude to water. The goal would be nothing less than to change the cultural attitude towards water of everybody on the islands, in preparation for the hard and difficult decisions to follow.

There would be the introduction of government policies and regulations to persuade and coerce the population, agriculture and industry – and government and state bodies – to water saving, conservation and water harvesting practices. Rainwater harvesting would be at a premium in wells/cisterns/tanks as a supplement/replacement for metered utility water or as water capture to be fed directly to the groundwater aquifers. The terraced nature of the Maltese countryside already minimises run off and aids water capture for infiltration. However, an increase in the number of well maintained dams in the valleys and storm water capture in the urban areas would all be in place.

Malta processes around 13 million cubic metres of sewage each year. Conservation in the home associated with the introduction of dual flush mechanisms would cut this volume significantly. Recycling would be the norm, from large scale reclamation of water from sewage to grey water-saving practices in hotels, homes, industry, agriculture and the public sector.

Meter pricing would maintain a socially sensitive element for basic personal volume needs, but the real cost of water would be charged, without subsidy. A full registry of private boreholes, including consumption and charging, would be in place, plus measures and resources for the prosecution and penalisation of water theft. Measures and technology would be put in place to detect and close down private and public boreholes where extraction is damaging the aquifers.

Production from the ground water aquifers would never exceed the natural recharge. In fact, planned measures would be in place to produce less than natural replenishment in order to rebuild the subsurface volumes as a long term strategic measure.

Virtual water practices would be in place, whereby industry and agriculture migrate to efficient water conservation methods and processes and also migrate to plant and animal products, which consume less water per kilogramme of product. This applies not only to commercial horticulture, agriculture and animal husbandry, but also to private and public gardens and parks.

A reversion to flora that is tolerant to summer drought and a Mediterranean climate would replace water-thirsty plants in constant need of water. The everyday scenes of bowsers and sprinklers watering public areas would disappear as climate-sensitive planting takes place, as, for example, on the airport roundabout. The last century has seen the movement to mainly water-thirsty ornamental plants and shrubs in gardens and the pendulum needs to swing back to the cultivation of plants that are at home in a Mediterranean climate.

Even if the Ruthless Conservation scenario becomes a reality, Malta would remain exposed. With major conservation measures in place, and more water-efficient local food production, the demand for virtual

water imports would remain. Elsewhere, rising global population will add to competition for the virtual water consumed for export products to Malta, adding to global pressure on prices. Measures to stabilise and increase Malta's strategic ground water reserves imply some increased production from the RO plants and dependence on foreign oil imports and/or electricity imports by cable. The debate on alternative energy sources has been largely related to the global warming issue and the cutting of carbon dioxide emissions. However, in the Maltese context the debate should be redirected towards security issues and reducing dependence on foreign energy sources and, indirectly, their role in Malta's water dependency. Oil imports for energy and water production make Malta far more vulnerable to international price fluctuations and to unforeseen events in other parts of the world, over which Malta has no control. While Malta's high population density means that dependence on foreign oil and future cable imported electricity will remain for the foreseeable future, strategically planned moves towards the use of alternative energy sources using proven technology by utilities, the private sector and domestically by the private citizen, will help to mitigate Malta's water crisis, which is imminent long before the effects of global warming begin to impact upon the ground water bodies.



Acknowledgements and Further Reading

The writer acknowledges and is grateful to the MRA for permission for the reproduction and use of illustrations in their open files and to The Limestone Heritage in Siggiewi for permitting the use of illustrations taken on their premises.

This article is based on a series of lectures I have been giving to non-government organisations in Malta since April 2005. Any reader who would like to delve further into the subject of water resources on the Maltese islands will find that a lot of material is available on websites of government and state organisations, and these organisations are to be complemented on the open file nature of this information. Many analyses and studies have been carried out and documented, and government is certainly aware of the issues, even if the general public is poorly informed.

The reader is directed to the websites of Mepa (<http://www.mepa.org.mt/>), MRA (<http://www.mra.org.mt/>), NSO (<http://www.nso.gov.mt/>) and the WSC (<http://www.wsc.com.mt/>). For an introduction to water footprints, the reader is directed to <http://www.waterfootprint.org/>.

In addition, I have listed below publications of both general and specific nature from which I have drawn some of the information in this article.

Ball, P. 1999. *H₂O A Biography of Water*. Weidenfield & Nicolson. Republished in paperback by Phoenix in 2000.

Cardona, C. 2006. *An Integrated Approach towards Assessing the Feasibility of Domestic Rainwater Harvesting in Malta*. MSc thesis, University of Oxford.

Chapagain, A. K; and Hoekstra, A. Y. 2004. *Water Footprints of Nations*. UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education. Vol.1: Main Report & Vol. 2: Appendices.

Eurostat, 2008. *Population Projections 2008-2060*. Eurostat Newsrelease 119/2008-26 August 2008.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 2006. *Malta water resources review*. Rome.

Guerrero, M. 2003. *El Agua*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 4th edition.

Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA), 2002. *Utilities Topic Paper – Draft for Public Consultation* June 2002.

Malta Resources Authority (MRA), 2004. *A Water Policy for the Future – A Consultation Document*, March 5 2004.

Malta Resources Authority (MRA), 2005. *Initial Characterisation of the Groundwater Bodies within the Maltese Water Catchment District under the Water Policy Framework Regulations, 2004*. Final Draft 13th January 2005.

National Statistics Office, Malta (NSO), 2008. *World Day for Water 2008*, News Release 45/2008, 20 March 2008.

Pedley, M; Hughes Clarke, M; and Galea, P. 2002. *Limestone Isles in a Crystal Sea – The Geology of the Maltese Islands*. Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd.

Water Services Corporation, 2007. *Water Services Report 2006-2007*. Malta.

Proposed extension to the St John's Co-cathedral Museum

Din l-Art Helwa recognises that the existing exhibition space at St John's Co-Cathedral Museum is in need of refurbishment. Furthermore, the space is not large enough to exhibit the unique historic tapestries that are undergoing restoration, as well as many other artefacts that cannot currently be displayed.

In principle, *Din l-Art Helwa* is therefore in favour of the search for solutions to increase the exhibition space in the Museum. The Maltese public, as well as visitors, stand to benefit from the display of a larger number of artefacts, especially considering the exceptional quality and historic importance of these objects.

It is important that this unique collection of original artefacts of St John's is kept together in its entirety and not dispersed in other museums or locations, and this supports the Foundation's attempts to find ways of enlarging the existing exhibition space at St John's.

After viewing the two alternative outline proposals being presented by the Foundation, *Din l-Art Helwa* is of the opinion that, with appropriate safeguards and careful attention to any structural or archaeological issues, the proposal to extend the museum by excavating part of St John's Square has merit and deserves further study.

Any tunnelling or digging into the bedrock to create new excavated space must be carried out in the most sensitive manner to prevent the vibrations causing any damage. Excavations should also avoid the destruction of any original features that may exist below the street or square, such as the foundations of the original palaces that stood opposite the cathedral façade and were bombed in the war. If excavated, the possibility of incorporating such remains into the new project should be carefully considered.



Heritage and Pla



The restoration of Bartolott's Crypt for use as a silver vault is a good idea. The highest level of caution and safeguards must be investigated and applied to counteract underground humidity, as well as the potential flooding of underground spaces, which could cause irreversible damage to priceless, degradable artefacts such as the St John's Tapestries, should these items be stored or displayed underground.

The demolition of the interior of the 1960s extension on the corner of St Lucy Street and Merchant's Street to create a state-of-the-art exhibition space is acceptable, but the exterior façades should be retained as they are harmonious with their surroundings and over time have successfully blended with the exterior of St John's and the streetscape.

If more space is required in the area of the 1960s extension, excavation below this structure may be preferable to the construction of more floors above. Additional floors above are not advisable as they would abut the side of the cathedral and could partially cover one of the lunettes.

Din l-Art Helwa is therefore not in agreement with the second alternative proposal presented by the Foundation, which envisages a new three-storey structure in this area. Any proposed cafeteria should only be located in new museum annexes and not in any historic or religiously sensitive area of the complex.

The covering of the external courtyard with transparent material may be acceptable, if a good and detailed design is presented, especially in view of the fact that it will also help protect the stone mouldings and detailing of the existing doors and windows from further deterioration.

The proposed widening of the walkway above the arched gateways on Merchant's Street is acceptable as this is also a post-war extension, and the space provided could be put to good use as a gallery.

The podium that delineates the boundaries of the cemetery should be retained and fenced off in order to prevent people from stepping or sitting on this monument.

Planning Concerns



Opposite:
Detail from one of the
Flemish tapestries

The 1960's extension of the Museum of St John's on the corner of St Lucy Street and Merchant's Street.

Ta' Ċenċ overlooking Mġarr ix-Xini



Din l-Art Helwa presents suggestions to the Prime Minister on Mepa reform

On 31 July, *Din l-Art Helwa* presented a series of suggestions to Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi as part of ongoing discussions on the reform of Mepa.

While accepting that Mepa is in need of structural reform, *Din l-Art Helwa* believes that the critical issue at this time is a lack of good governance. There have been far too many applications approved that go against Mepa's own policies and good practice, such as the Mistra Village redevelopment, the Mistra bay discotheque, and the Safi supermarket. Structural reform of Mepa is not necessary to address these contentious decisions, as they could have been avoided through good governance within the existing structure.

Din l-Art Helwa believes that there is a lack of strategic vision on planning issues, especially with respect to major projects such as tall buildings, where the impact is at a national level. Until a clear national strategy for tall buildings is formulated, *Din l-Art Helwa* strongly recommends a moratorium on applications for such structures.

The ill-advised policy that allowed building heights to be increased to three floors in many areas must also be urgently reviewed, as this has created havoc throughout our urban areas with the haphazard and widespread demolition and redevelopment of properties.

The quantity and quality of current development does not promote sustainability; instead, it jeopardises the value of both our natural and built heritage. If planning is to be taken seriously, then the whole culture within the planning process needs to change. We must decide what we want to save and protect and then ensure that this is done.

New proposals at Ta' Ċenċ in Gozo

After viewing the latest proposals for the extension of the existing hotel at Ta' Ċenċ, *Din l-Art Helwa* and Nature Trust (Malta) issued a joint statement on 26 September stating that the present proposal is a significant improvement on the original plans.

The two NGOs are conscious that the developer has made a significant effort to conform to the provisions of the Structure Plan. However, there are still some concerns. One of these is the area near Mġarr ix-Xini that has been earmarked for villas by the developer, and which has now been omitted from the plans to be considered at a later stage, as this part of the proposal is under appeal. DLH and NTM believe that this area cannot be excluded, as plans for the Ta' Ċenċ site should be viewed holistically. Another issue of concern is the bio fuels being proposed on site.

Another outstanding issue is the proposed extension to the south of the existing hotel building, which encroaches on the bird sanctuary. DLH and NTM are concerned that this could set a dangerous precedent for development proposals in other protected areas.

The management of the heritage park should be in line with EU Directives for protected areas, with free access to the public. Once any permit is issued, it must be final, with no possibility for further applications for extensions.

Din l-Art Helwa and Nature Trust also call on the Malta Environment and Planning Authority to schedule the area at Ta' Ċenċ that has been recommended for scheduling by the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage. This area lies behind the grounds of the existing hotel and around the Tal-Gruwa ridge that overlooks Xewkija and contains archaeological remains of national importance, such as dolmens and their associated features. The authorities should also declare the area a Natura 2000 site, since it has all the necessary credentials.

The Marbles on the Ledger Stones of St John's Co-Cathedral

Carmel Spiteri

This article is an abstract of a long essay submitted in partial fulfilment of the Diploma in Baroque Architecture.

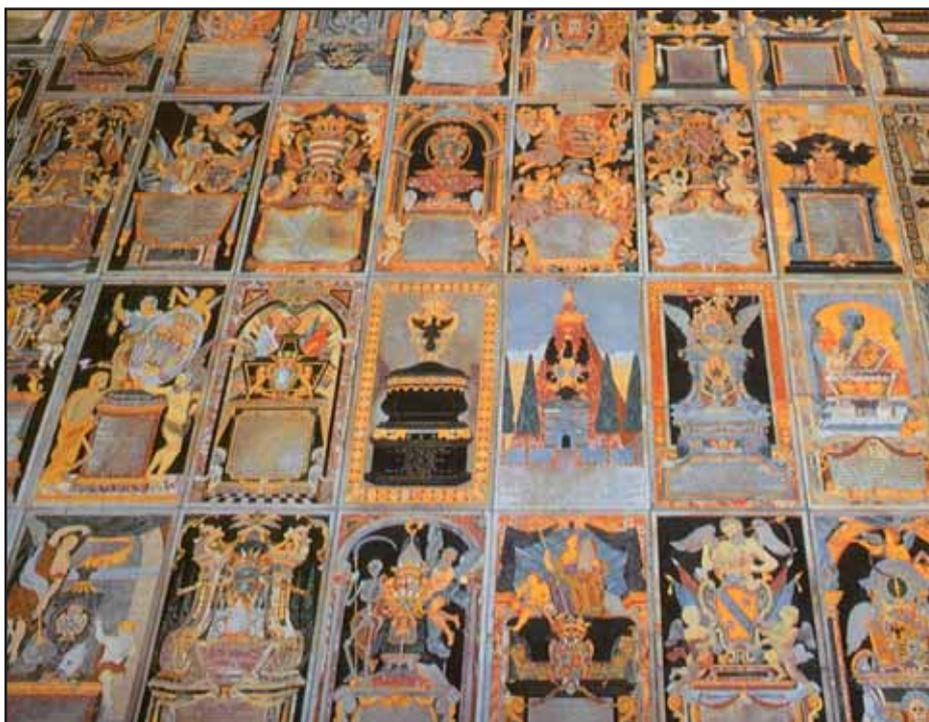
The course is organised by the International Institute for Baroque Studies University of Malta and funded by the Works Division, Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

Opposite:

top left - Ledger stone of
Fra Anselm De Cays

top right - Ledger stone of
Baron Fra Wolfgang Philip von Guttenberg,
Bailiff of Brandenburg
Photo courtesy of M.J. Publications

A section of the magnificent paving
of St John's Co-Cathedral



Inside St John's Co-cathedral in Valletta, built by the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights from every nation and other important dignitaries, such as admirals and generals who were somehow connected to the Order, are buried. These men represent the flower of European aristocracy from the 16th to the 18th century.¹

Their multi-coloured tombstones cover the entire floor of the church. The immense nave, the side chapels and the vestibules that lead to the side entrances, as well as the oratory, are paved with slabs commemorating brave deeds on land and at sea, as well as diplomatic missions. This church is a manifestation of the Order's triumph, a statement so great that it overshadows the presence of death within the building. It is filled with monuments made of the finest marble and a variety of other valuable stones.

Gathered here are the coats-of-arms of most of the great aristocratic families of Europe², as well as coded visual images³ using symbols and icons that reflect the rank and importance of the deceased. Each of the 375 tablets is like a page of history, describing the hopes and fears of the consecrated sons of chivalry.⁴

Labelled as "one of the strangest and yet one of the most impressive churches in Christendom", this edifice was built during the reign of Grand Master Jean L'Eveque de la Cassière⁵ by the Maltese architect

Gerolamo Cassar. Originally the paving must have consisted of local *franka* slabs. During the time of British Governor Sir Frederick Cavendish Ponsonby, part of the floor was still paved with *franka* and some slabs were transported from the crypt under the oratory so that marble would cover the whole floor.

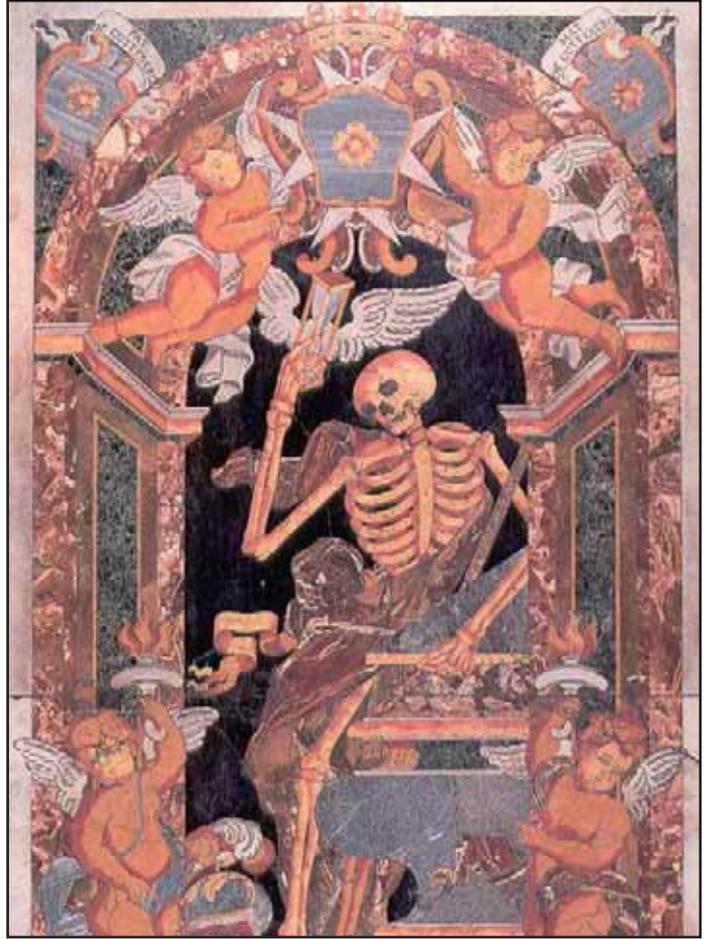
In the 1660s, the Council decided to proceed with an outstanding refurbishment of the interior, with the help of the painter Mattia Preti from Calabria – also known as "*il Cavaliere Calabrese*".⁶ Apart from Preti's paintings and sculptured pedestals, the church contains bronzes, marble statues and silver artefacts. Preti was the catalyst for the remarkable change of taste that brought the church of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem firmly within the realm of great baroque art.⁷

Sir Hannibal Scicluna refers to a document dated 15 December 1667, which states that the marble slabs had to be laid in a manner that would not interfere with burials because the tombs underneath had to be easily accessible. The ledger stones were designed to provide another dimension to this magnificent interior.

There are four burial areas in all. The area is the Crypt of the Grand Masters, built underneath the main altar. The second is the floor of the church itself and in monuments on the church walls. The third is Bartolot's Crypt, a sizeable crypt underneath the Oratory and sometimes also referred to as "Our Lady of Graces" like the chapel within it. The fourth burial place is the yard⁸ adjacent to Merchants Street which is screened from the road by a wrought iron fence.

Marble is strong yet delicate, heavy yet able to convey a feeling of lightness, with a wide array of colours and textures. Geologically, it is classified as metamorphic rock, that is, rock that has undergone change from its original form. It originates in the mineralogical and structural transformation of pre-existing rocks due to magmatic intrusion or rising temperature and pressure caused by the displacement of the earth's crust.⁹ True marble is a re-crystallised form of limestone. Commercially, when a limestone is hard enough to take a polish it is also classified as marble.¹⁰

Marble has traditionally been used in buildings of a certain status, both as a structural material and as an embellishment chosen for its colour, which is usually the material's most striking quality. This range can be further extended with the use of porphyries, alabasters



and onyx. Impurities such as iron oxides can result in highly attractive coloured veining in marble.

Different marbles vary in their hardness, which is due to the physical conditions in which they are formed. Some are brittle while others break easily when handled. Marble formation occurs in stages, which results in various textures and veining. During the formation process, heat and pressure repeatedly break up the rock and new material fills in the cracks and crevices. Polished marbles retain their lustre for a long time, especially if they are well maintained.

Various causes contribute to the deterioration of this natural material. The most common is rising damp, especially when marbles are used to clad walls with no damp-proofing protection. The dissolved nitrates travel from the ground to the surface of the marble and then crystallise, breaking up the micropores in the process.

The use of ledger stones can be traced back to the late 11th century, when simply carved coffin-lids made of stone were sunk into the floor.¹¹ Ledger stones identify the place of burial and close the grave while leaving it accessible. Importantly, they also record an inscription.

To create a ledger stone, an established artist would often be contacted, given a brief and commissioned to design it. Some of the stones in St John's were designed

by Romano Carapicchia, Francesco Zahra and perhaps Favray. These masters would produce the relevant sketches and give their advice on design and materials. A written agreement was drafted and signed recording the names of the parties, the time-frame for the undertaking and the sum to be paid.¹² The preliminary sketches would be discussed and could be altered according to the client's requirements.

Repair work on the ledger stones of St. John's



The approved final drawing would then be enlarged to the full size of the slab by the master, an apprentice or the *marmista* himself. These were either Maltese or Sicilian craftsmen. Some stones might have been prepared abroad and then transported to Malta. Most of them have a *Bianco Carrara* base slab around 70mm thick.¹³

To enlarge the original to full-size scale, a convenient grid was drawn on the original and the lines in each of these squares were drawn to a corresponding grid on the larger paper. The original design was transferred from a large sheet of paper or several small ones to the supporting slab using the *spolvero* technique. This was an efficient way of transferring drawings or copying in the period.

Holes were pierced by a sharp needle along the lines of the design. The frequency of the holes depended on the detail – the finer the detail, the closer the piercing on the paper. Fine black powder was placed in a small piece of coarse cloth and tied into a knob called a *tuptapu*. The powder passed through the cloth and the holes in the paper when the *tuptapu* was lightly tapped and rubbed on the design. The design was scratched with a fine pointed instrument to make the tracing more permanent as the dust could be easily blown away or smudged.

The marbles to be used would already have been chosen at this stage, and the closed areas marked accordingly. Each area would have a particular marble assigned to it, chosen for its colour. The sizes of these pieces, called *folietta*, varied as did their thickness – from three to six mm thick, depending on the size. The areas to be filled with the coloured marble were chiselled out to the required depth and the coloured *folietta* fitted in with great care and precision. Before the cutting took place, the pieces of coloured marble chosen were turned around so that the natural veining would give a more dramatic effect to the whole composition.

Some yellow marbles react to an open flame by turning orange or red-orange. This technique gives a three-dimensional rounded effect. The last phase of the process is the polishing, and this was done using abrasive powders of various granular sizes.

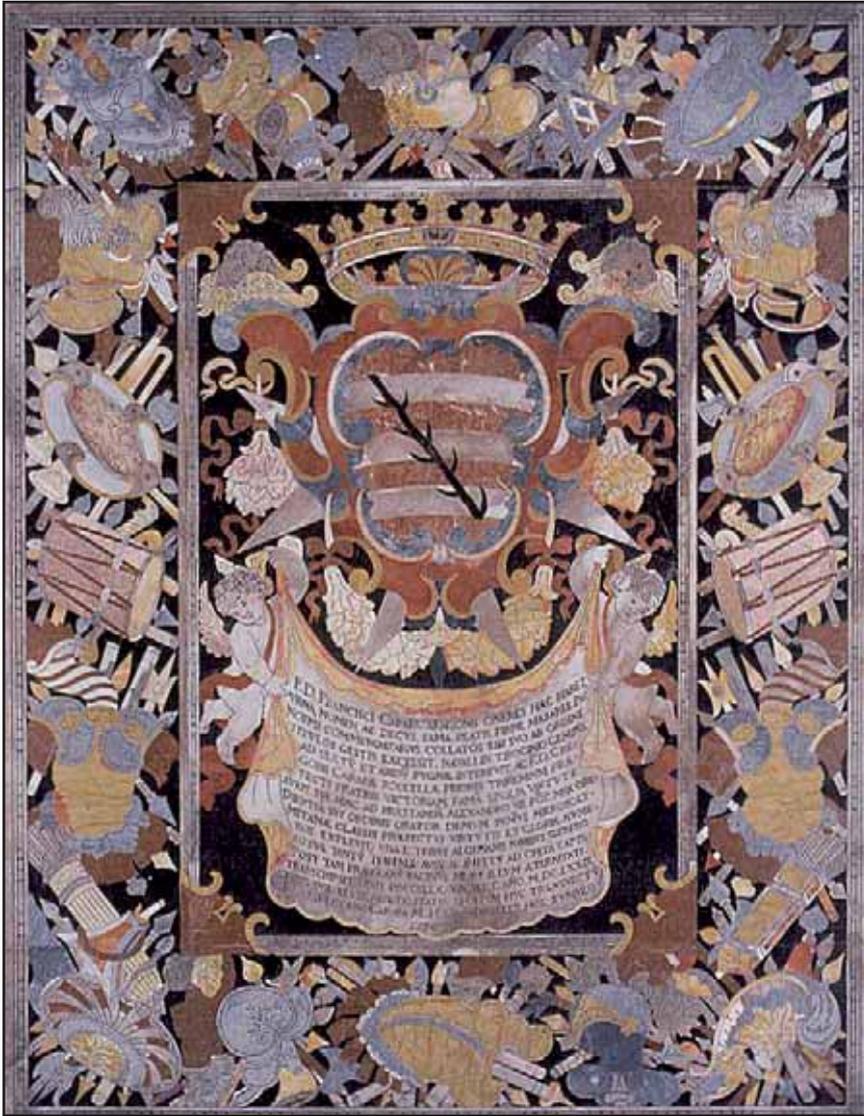
Another technique commonly used in the ledger stones was the tracing out of deep incisions, one to two mm or more wide, using a straight edge and small, thin and sharp chisels, filling in usually with black but also with grey or yellow resin. This technique was preferred for the detailing of feathers on wings, facial or body features and heraldry.

The proper way to cut out the characters of the inscription is the *tipa verticale*. The only font used throughout the whole church is the Roman uppercase with the classic serif, and the chisel using only two line thicknesses. This face is cut into the slab in a V-groove. The filling in with lead was a dangerous exercise. A flat stone slab had a conical hole drilled from the upper face forming a funnel-shaped hole so that the bottom face would only have a small hole drilled through it. This slab was placed with the hole on the chiselled-out letter to be filled. Lead was poured into the inverted cone, flowing through and filling up the whole character.

The glue, known as *kola tar-raza*, was a mixture of virgin wax and resin found on the bark of trees. The ingredients were warmed up gently and mixed into a paste in a *bain marie*. In some cases the *folietta* was fixed to the main slab using plaster of Paris. The cut *folietta* was tapped gently in place so the air and excess glue would ooze out from underneath it. Larger loose pieces of marble would be placed on top of it to exert uniform pressure in a way that its face would be in the same plane with the boarder of the bearing Carrara slab. This would be repeated for each piece. The painstaking and laborious polishing process would finish the job and the finished slab would be ready for laying.

An artisan at work on one of the ledger stones





The exuberantly baroque ledger stone dedicated to the memory of Fra Francesco Carafa

The longer version of this essay contains a catalogue of the marbles used in the production of the ledger stones of the Co-cathedral of St John, and sheds light on the various types of marbles imported into Malta during this period.

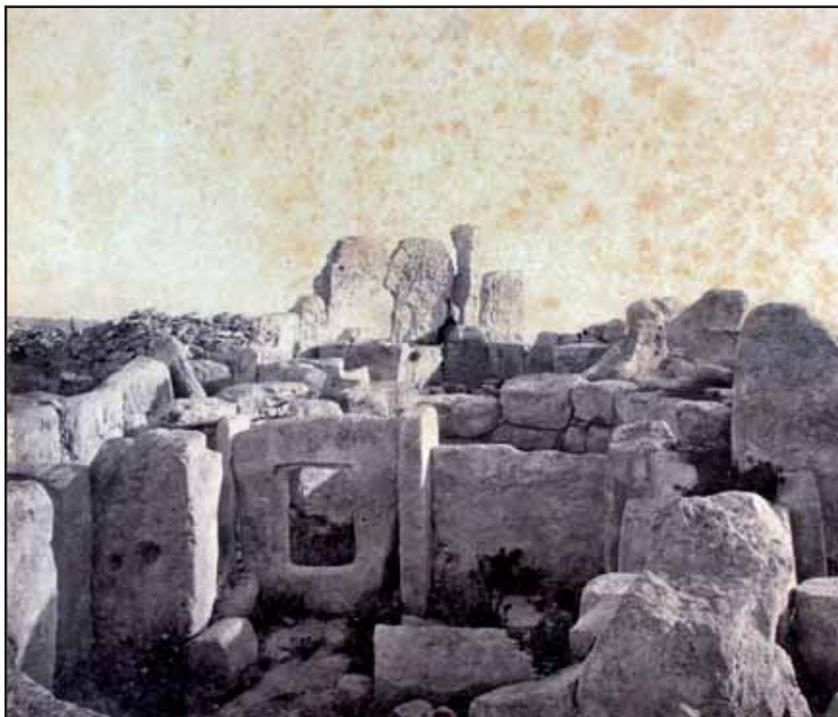
References

- 1 E.Sammut. *The Co-Cathedral of St. John* (Malta: 1950), p.22
- 2 N. de Piro. *The Temple of the Knights of Malta*. Miranda Publications(Italy: 1999), p.24
- 3 G. Bonello. *Art in Malta: Discoveries and Rediscoveries* (Malta: 1999), p.160
- 4 H. Scicluna. *The Order of St John of Jerusalem and Places of Interest in Malta and Gozo* (Malta: 1969), p.177
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 133
- 6 D. Cutajar. *History and Works of the Art of St. John's Church Valletta-Malta*. M.J. Publications Ltd(Italy: 1999), p.10
- 7 K. Sciberras *Roman Baroque Sculpture for the Knights of Malta*. Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti (Malta 2004), p.26
- 8 P. Buttigieg. *Taghrif dwar il-Konkatedral ta' San Gwann*. (Malta: 2000), p. 163
- 9 M. Campagna. *Stone Sampler*. Norton & Company(New York: 2003), p. 12
- 10 E.C. Adams. *Science in Building Vol. 3* Hutchinson(Essex: 1983), p. 178
- 11 J. Fawcett. *Historic Floors: Their Care and Conservation*. Butterworth-Heinemann. (Oxford 2001), p. 24
- 12 J. Debono. *Notes on St John's Co-Cathedral Marble Tombstones, the Artisans, Foreign and Maltese* Melita Storica. (Malta 1999), p. 387
- 13 *Times of Malta* (28 Jan. 2003).

During the course of my research I conducted an interview with Joe Pace of Żurrieq, who spent 34 years working on the ledger stones in St John's as a *marmista*, at first in a makeshift workshop in a large courtyard at *l-Arcipierku* in Valletta. I acquired some of the information in this chapter from Mr Pace.

National Picture Archive Established at Rabat

Kevin Casha



Students, researchers and the public at large will soon be able to find historical pictures of Malta at the click of a mouse, thanks to a project initiated by the author, for whom it is a dream come true.

Campaigning for the setting up of this archive had been going on for nearly four years. The author's insistence finally paid off and, with the assistance of National Archivist Charles Farrugia, the National Picture Archive, or NPA, is now a reality. The Friends of the National Archives also contributed towards this project and the digitalising and recording of the archive's own photographic collection is at an advanced stage.

The main aims of the NPA are threefold, and although it will be some years before the project is fully operational, work has finally started. The first aim is to digitise and catalogue photographs taken in Malta that are at least 50 years old. The second is to publicise the fact that a great number of historical pictures are being lost to posterity. In fact, members of the public are being invited to loan their pictures to the NPA so that they can be digitised and catalogued. The original will, of course, be returned to its owner, and the donation will be recorded and acknowledged. It is a pity that so many valuable pictures have already been lost, but at least now a start has been made towards saving these images for future generations.

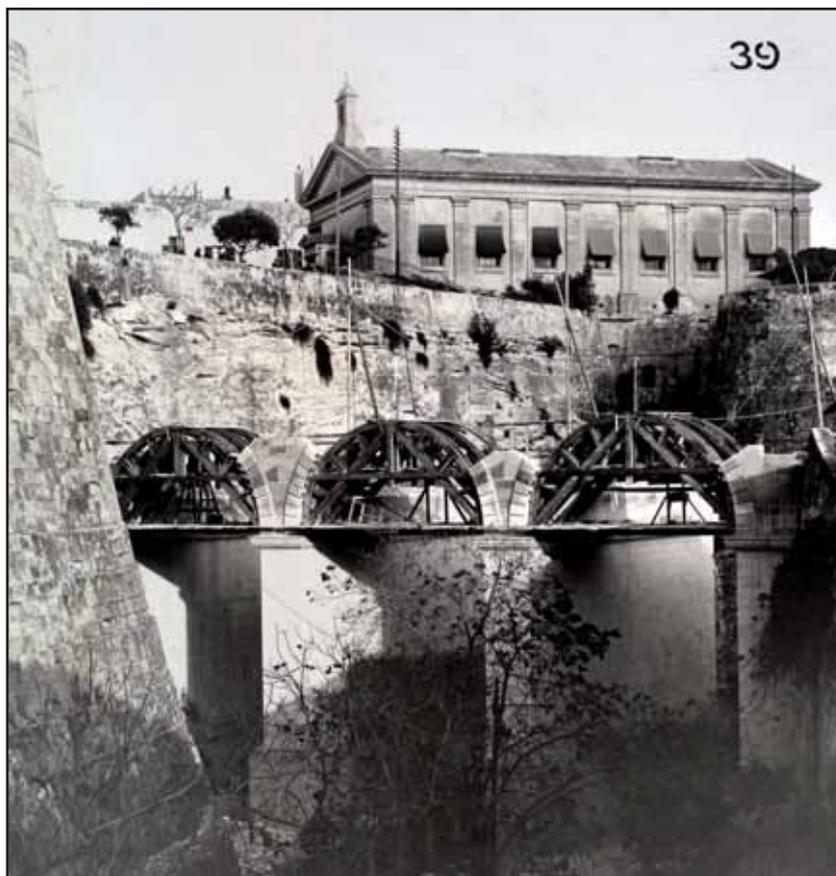
Subsequently, a third phase of the project will focus on accessibility – making various collections available to as wide a public as possible. A website will be set up on which the archive's images will be accessible for viewing and studying. These will eventually be made available for publication for a nominal fee that will go towards financing and consolidating the NPA.

**Kevin Casha is
Technical Coordinator
for the National
Picture Archive Project**

Photography in Malta made its initial appearance just a few years after its invention in Europe. Thus looking through the history of Maltese photography one not only finds a detailed insight into the Maltese Islands but also uncovers a wealth of information on the evolvement of photography and its ancillary processes. The fact that photography was introduced to the island at a very early stage after its birth on the continent has ensured that our recent history has been very well depicted over the years, so there is surely a vast wealth of material that is crying out to be saved, nurtured and enjoyed.

This is an exciting project that was badly needed. The photographs are being digitised, and a database is being compiled so that the fullest information about the images in the Picture Archive will be available for researchers. This will, of course, be an ongoing process. No hard copies will be made, because of the cost involved, but electronic copies will be available through the website.

The need for private collectors and the general public to start loaning their collections and photographs for digital archiving, thus helping to safeguard this important national heritage, cannot be over emphasised. Well-known collector Tony Terribile has already promised to loan his collection of pictures, and Ian Ellis is also cooperating with the National Archives and we hope that people will come forward and co-operate in this project.



Some pictures from the eclectic collection.

Opposite:

top - Haġar Qim 1836

bottom - Building works on Girolamo Cassar Road

This page (clockwise from top):

Interior of the Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House after bombardment

Steam Roller, 1764

Cabaret Dancer, Paris - postcard

Further information about the NPA is available from The Coordinator of the National Picture Archive, c/o the National Archives of Malta, Hospital Street, Rabat RBT 1043, tel. 2145 0077, fax 2145 0078 or email: customercare.archives@gov.mt



The National Archives of Malta

Charles J Farrugia

This page and opposite:

Views of the National Archives building

Photos:
Kevin Casha

The National Archives of Malta is the country's leading institution entrusted with the protection of public records. The National Archives Act, which was approved by the Maltese Parliament in 2005, stipulates that the National Archives has the mission to safeguard the collective memory of the Maltese nation. This is done through the preservation of records in the various repositories managed by the National Archives.

The holdings of the National Archives in Malta are deposited in Mdina and Rabat. The Mdina repository was opened on 28 October 1988 in the magnificent palace known as the Banca Giuratale. It houses the records of various courts and





tribunals and comprises some 30,000 volumes. These extensive records were created by bringing together under one roof the legal records of the Knights and the French from the Palace in Valletta, and the 19th century court records from the Law Courts. Another century of records is still waiting to be transferred to the National Archives.

The section comprising the documents belonging to the period of the Order of St John contains the records of 18 tribunals, including the *Magistrato degli Armamenti*, *Consolato di Mare* and *Curia Capitanalis Notabilis*. Extensive research has been carried out on these records, in particular related to Malta's commerce, legal system and maritime history. Among the researchers who have worked extensively on these records should be mentioned renowned historians such as Dr Carmelo Testa and Dr Carmelo Vassallo, with publications such as *The French in Malta* and *Corsairing for Commerce*.

The documents preserved at Santo Spirito, formerly a hospital, date back to the early days of British rule. Santo Spirito is considered to be one of the oldest hospitals in Europe, with early records of its use as a hospital dating back to the 14th century traced in Palermo. The records are arranged in *fonds* according to international archival standards. Amongst the holdings are over a thousand volumes of The Chief Secretary's files and correspondence; dispatches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies; more than 3,600 Customs Department volumes, listing all arrivals and departures of passengers and cargo to and from Malta; *proceaux verbale* for more than a century; police and prison records; files from various Ministries and Departments; over 100,000 ex-servicemen's personal files and a collection of more than 7,000 drawings originating from the Ordinance Department. To these have been added a number of private collections, including the papers of *Biagio Tagliaferro & Figli*, and the poet Guzé Aquilina.

A collection of photographs, glass plates and postcards is also preserved in the National Archives, including several albums containing the official records of Royal events. Most of the photographs were taken by local photographers such as Richard Ellis. Others depict various Councils of Government, presidential photographs, and an extensive collection (more than 100,000) of photographs attached to passport applications from 1915 up to the present day.

Extensive photographic and audio visual material is scattered in the other repositories, including the DOI, PBS, in every government department and in private collections. The photographic holdings are often consulted by local media companies such as PBS and BPC for their audio-visual productions. The newly-established national picture archive is already working on digitising and data-basing government and privately owned photographic collections following the first phase of an extensive project entitled "The National Memory Project" that was launched by the then President of Malta, Professor Guido de Marco, on 22 March 2004.

Records related to Gozo are preserved at the National Archives section in Triq il-Vajringa, Rabat, Gozo, which was opened on 24 November 1989. The oldest Gozitan records held are those of the *Universitas Gaudisii*, or mediaeval government of Gozo, which date back to 1560.



The Baroque Transformation of Mdina's Magisterial Palace

John Zammit

Along with the baroque cathedral, one of the most imposing buildings in Mdina is the Magisterial Palace, which is located near the main entrance into the city just behind the city gate. This monumental building, erected by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena as part of his programme to revive Mdina in the early 18th century and now housing the National Museum of National History, is one of the most beautiful, elegant and refined examples of baroque palatial architecture found on the Maltese Islands.

The origins of this building as a magisterial residence date back to the first Grand Master, Jacques Villiers de L'Isle Adam, who took up residence there to establish his sovereignty over the island's capital. Undeniably, the focus of Vilhena's project was to rebuild the old Magisterial Palace as a sumptuous new palace.

The project commenced in 1724¹ to the design of the Order's French resident military engineer, Charles Francois de Mondion, and was conceived as part of a wider re-planning scheme that involved transforming the main entrance area in Baroque architectural style. At the time, the city was still largely mediaeval. Mondion also introduced other elements, primarily a new imposing baroque gateway and the *Torre dello Standardo*.

The new Magisterial Palace was originally the residence of Grand Master de Vilhena. Eventually it became the Council House of the Mdina Community and, in the early 20th century, was converted into a hospital through the generous funding of HRH the Duke of Connaught, later King Edward VII. The National Museum of Natural History was set up in the palace in 1973 and includes a reference library on the natural sciences.

Inevitably, Vilhena Palace and its history are interwoven with that of the city of Mdina, Malta's old capital city, situated in the centre of the island. In Punic

An appreciation of the architecture of Vilhena Palace

Coat-of-arms on the interior of the entrance portal



and Roman times, the city was surrounded by a wall and occupied a much larger area than the present city, incorporating much of present-day Rabat. By the late middle ages, mediaeval documents speak of a castle occupying one corner of the old city walls.

Gabrio Serbelloni's drawing dated 1565 indicates that the castle, with its round tower, was probably part of a larger castle known as the *Castellu di la Chitati*. The old castle, possibly dating back to Byzantine times, was partly demolished by royal licence some time after 1453.² The extant plans indicate that the remaining castle formed part of the land front, and only about half of the courtyard survived. This layout was probably retained up to first floor level. The courtyard was larger but only half enclosed. A wall, which may have been the remains of one of the walls of the castle, separated the triple entrance from the remains of this mediaeval castle, which Mondion in all probability later used as part of a foundation wall for his palace. This was situated on the right-hand side of the second entrance. This wall cuts right through the palace, commencing from the dungeons and continuing up to the entrance in St Paul's Square (*Misrah il-Kunsill*).

It appears that the old palace had two floors, with the second floor accessible through a stairway probably situated near the entrance in St Paul's Square. The roof structure of the second floor level of the new Magisterial Palace cuts through the original windows. These are now blocked up, indicating that the wall is older than the intervention and is possibly part of the original structure of the castle. The moulding at the top of this wall is a continuation of the original and the walls on the two adjacent sides are at a lower level with the same moulding.

Beyond the old main gate in the first courtyard of the town there was a statue in a niche in the wall of the gate.³ Within this courtyard, there was also a stone bench, about 2.5 palms high, placed against the wall leading to the second entrance. The small church of

Tondo with the bust of Grand Marted De Vilhena over the main portal





A section of the forecourt
with elliptical arches

*Santa Maria della Porta*⁴ was situated on the left-hand side, inside the gate by the first courtyard entrance. This church had a square plan with one altar, and its reasonably large vaulted entrance was accessible only by means of a flight of steps.⁵

Significant work was carried out between the completion of Serbelloni's plan and Mondion's revamping of the city entrance. Serbelloni's plan shows only a long wall separating the castle from the triple entrance, but Mondion clearly found rooms requiring alterations to suit his needs. At a certain point, the room underlying the magnificent stairway leading from the main courtyard to the first floor had an intermediate floor. This is indicated by an entrance door to the adjoining room, which can still be seen at a higher level than the existing floor level. The spaces for wooden beams are also still visible, indicating a ceiling that was later removed.

The walls underneath this stairway also seem to date from different periods because they differ from one another in that part of the wall, which changes alignment with the innermost part appearing the oldest. The level of the adjoining corridor around the back courtyard corresponds to the armoury floor level. Thus, Mondion probably had to raise the forecourt to a sufficient level to accommodate the proposed stairs linking this forecourt to the first floor in the back yard. It is likely that he was restricted by the level of the first floor (*piano nobile*) and had the forecourt not been raised, there would not have been enough space for the stairs and the steps would have had to be bent to accommodate the different axes.

The palace is reached through an ornamentally theatrical gate, set in a fine screen wall that segregates it from the public road. On the main portal leading to the first floor is an effigy of Grand Master Vilhena and his emblem, flanked by two lions – which form part of the Grand Masters' emblem – is displayed on the gateway leading to the forecourt.

One of the most interesting features in the design of the new Magisterial Palace is the development of the two main axes. The one at the back mainly follows the old footprint and seems to be a continuation of the old castle, with its deep foundations dating back to mediaeval times or even earlier. By adjusting the gate to the city, Mondion created enough space to be able to use the existing foundations to form a square forecourt. Thus, on the left-hand side Mondion erected a screen wall with its elliptical arches to compliment the opposite side.

In this same forecourt, part of the jamb of the second entrance was found during work carried out to

This article is an abstract of a long essay submitted in partial fulfilment of the Diploma in Baroque Architecture.

The course is organised by the International Institute for Baroque Studies University of Malta and funded by the Works Division, Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

Intersection of a lateral elevation of the forecourt
and the main façade



replace the old paving of the forecourt in 2002. The level at the foot of the jamb corresponds approximately to the level in the back yard, thus indicating that originally the level of the entrance was more or less similar to the old palace courtyard. During excavations it was noted that the lower part of the wall is of an earlier date or was perhaps used as a foundation for the wall. A block of stone formed part of both the lower wall and the threshold, suggesting that the wall opening and the threshold were constructed at the same time.

Just before the entrance through the gate leading to the forecourt, part of a mediaeval wall is still visible on the left-hand side. This wall was part of the third entrance leading to the city. Premises Nos. 6, 11 and 12, which belonged to the Suara Hospital, were exchanged for No. 116 *Strada Cristoforo* in Valletta, at an estimated value of €2,073 Lm890). These premises were pulled down and a relatively new extension was built in the 1930s. The screen wall with its elliptical arches can still be seen today.

The arrangement of elliptical arches on three floors overlooking the forecourt is reflected on both sides. The first vault at ground level on the right-hand side, which is deeper than the other three, constitutes part of the old entrance. Interesting features are the casemate vaults that shape part of the old mediaeval bastion and are at a considerably higher level than those built on the inner side of this bastion. The inner skin, together with its walls and low vaults, served as foundations. The foundations of the right façade overlooking the courtyard served also as a retaining wall because the courtyard level was elevated by approximately 1.5m from the original height. The jambs of doorways in these foundations are mainly constructed of recycled stone.

Beyond the main forecourt leading to the principal entrance, with its banded columns and crowned by a bronze effigy of Grand Master Vilhena, a majestic bent staircase leads to the first floor and on to the arcaded walkway surrounding and overlooking the rear courtyard. The stairway providing access from the side entrance at *Misrah il-Kunsill* to the first floor is built in the form of a square. It centres around a much older small room lying in the space underneath it.

Commencing from the courtyard, a door leads to a small room underneath this same staircase. The side walls of this lower room indicate that up to about 1.7m from the floor the construction may date back to the original castle. The floor level of this room stands at approximately 1.8m below the finished floor level of the courtyard. Compared to other rooms at this level of the courtyard, it appears that



Baroque decoration over one of the internal portals



The internal courtyard

this may have been the approximate original level of the castle. The vaulted roof of this room supporting the stairway is clearly of a later date than that of the walls.

It is interesting to note that one of the walls of the 1930s extension overlooking the small courtyard is built on an old wall, pierced by a semi-circular arch forming part of the old building. A stairway in this courtyard leads to a room above the cells situated in this same courtyard. In the room above this spiral staircase there is now a door with five steps that accommodates the difference in level between the palace and the new extension, previously known as the Maltacom building.

As mentioned above, this spiral staircase leads to a single room that lies next to the side entrance corridor, but the floor level is higher because of the underlying cells. The room leading from the corridor of the back courtyard to the small courtyard at the back of the 1930s' extension seems to pre-date Mondion's addition. Another room situated on the left-hand side of the side entrance has windows, the position of which in the room is dictated by the symmetry of the façade. There is also graffiti in this room.

Another door leads to two further rooms, and three rooms situated on the right-hand side of the entrance from *Misrah il-Kunsill* have intermediate floors. The first room immediately by this side entrance has low headroom of about 2.25m, with a segmental vault. The second room on this side has headroom of about 2.8m with a spiral staircase at the far end leading to the three rooms at intermediate level, which also have limited headroom. It is possible that all six rooms at both levels were used as cells.

This side corridor also leads to the back courtyard. While the architecture is devoid of fine mouldings in cornices and door jambs, the first floor is adorned with fine examples of pleasant baroque cornices supporting the ceiling beams. The door leading into the main hall of the law courts and the door situated in this hall are finely sculptured. Wooden decorative balustrades further decorate the first floor landing, which in turn separates the small passageway leading to openings of rooms overlooking the bastion.

The triple entrance may have formed part of the old castle until the need was felt to dismantle part of the outer walls in 1453, principally those situated on the northern and western sides. Part of an original wall separating the castle from the triple entrance was not dismantled, as is indicated in Serbelloni's plan.

In 1530, Grand Master L'Isle Adam transformed the remnants of the eastern part of the castle into a palace. A number of small alterations were carried out when the building was transformed into a convalescent hospital in 1909. Other old buildings, which did not feature in Mondion's scheme, were demolished and a new wing for the hospital was built instead.

Statue of St Paul on the first landing of the staircase situated close to the entrance of the former Law Courts, now *Misrah il-Kunsill*, entrance



References

- 1 D. De Lucca. *Mdina and the Earthquake of 1693* (Malta: ND), p. 49
- 2 M. Buhagiar & S. Fiorini. *Mdina: the Cathedral City of Malta* (Malta: 1996), pp. 443-45
- 3 Archives of the Cathedral of Mdina. *Manuscript 60, fol. 22*
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.



*Touches of colour within
Malta's
historical
urban fabric*



Light Pollution - Problems and Solutions

Alexei Pace

"It is indeed a feeble light that reaches us from the starry sky. But what would human thought have achieved if we could not see the stars?"

Jean Perrin (1870–1942) French physicist, Nobel Laureate for Physics, 1926.

Perit Alexei Pace BE&A(Hons), MFFSoc, A&CE, coordinates the Light Pollution Awareness Group, which is an official section of the *International Dark-Sky Association*.

Email: lpag@maltastro.org

All photographs have been kindly provided by the author

The Malta Freeport



Artificial lighting is an essential part of our lives – we use it to extend our daily lives into the night-time hours. However, the increased use of external lighting in the Maltese islands has resulted in problems. Light in the wrong place at the wrong time can be intrusive and there have been more complaints about light pollution in recent years.

In England and Wales, this change in perception led to it being classed as a “statutory nuisance” with effect from April 2006. Statutory nuisance is a criminal offence and local authorities are now able to initiate proceedings under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as with noise and smell).

While the importance of artificial lighting for security, pedestrian and traffic safety, in promoting access to sport and recreation and for enhancing historic and architecturally important buildings is recognised, lighting can have a marked impact on the night-time scene, significantly changing the character of the area and altering wildlife and ecological patterns. On the widest scale, dark skies and views of the stars are now becoming a thing of the past, except in the remotest of areas.

After the industrial revolution, the accelerated growth of the population, the expansion of towns and the appearance of the big cities with more efficient lighting technology – based first of all on gas and

later on the incandescent bulb – changed the situation. The humble and salutary light that had, up to this point, helped to prolong the duration of human activities to a reasonable extent and to protect us from the dangers of the environment, started to become a danger for other inhabitants of this environment, the ones that, unlike us, need darkness to survive. Light pollution had just been born, and it has not ceased to grow and spread ever since.

What is light pollution?

Light pollution, which can be described as artificial light allowed to illuminate, or pollute, areas not intended to be lit, consists of three main elements:

- **Light trespass** is light spilling beyond the boundary of the property on which a light is located, such as light shining through a bedroom window.
- **Glare** is the uncomfortable brightness of a light source when viewed against a darker background, such as a floodlight shining directly in your eyes at night.
- **Sky glow** is the orange glow we see for kilometres around towns and cities caused by a scattering of artificial light by airborne dust and water droplets. This is a serious problem for Maltese astronomers, as light pollution washes out our view of the night sky. It is becoming more and more difficult to find areas anywhere on the Maltese islands where our view of the night sky is unaffected by illumination, as our grandfathers used to experience. The light from the stars can take hundreds, even hundreds of thousands, of years to reach our eyes – what a pity to lose it on the last moments of its journey! We have to remember that the orange glow in the night sky not only obscures the stars but also wastes energy and money.

Sources of light pollution

Pollution can emanate from a wide range of artificial light sources, including:

- Security lights that illuminate buildings and their surroundings.
- Floodlights used to illuminate sports grounds, places of entertainment, buildings and monuments.

- Street lighting.
- Advertising and display lighting.
- Night-time lighting of offices, shops and other premises.
- Illuminated signs, advertisements, promotional lighting, etc.
- Decorative lighting (eg external festive decorations).
- Car park lighting (including the Park-and-Ride site – a major eyesore at night!).
- Transport operations (ports, airports, bus terminals, etc.).

The impact of light pollution

Light pollution can:

- Harm people's quality of life. For example, it can disturb sleep when stray light trespasses into homes.
- Interfere with our view of the night sky.
- Waste energy, thus wasting the Earth's finite resources and (taxpayer's) money.
 - Impact upon the ecology and wildlife of an area, affecting the behavioural patterns of mammals, birds, insects and fish.

Our historic buildings and fortifications – many of them going back hundreds of years – are amazing feats of architecture and engineering. Long stretches have been lit using high wattage floodlighting, but in some cases this has produced negative results by highlighting flaws and views of the structure never meant to be seen. Just because a building or structure happens to be scheduled is not a good enough reason to proceed with external lighting.

It is rarely necessary to light all the elevations of a building: some parts are often unsuitable or inaccessible for viewing. It is usually better to concentrate on the prime nearby and distant night-time viewpoints. As part of the design process, distance, angle and the position of the viewer should always be taken into account.

Some people may even argue that in these days of concern about energy wastage and climate change, there is no justification for floodlighting a building in the first place and it should not even be considered. The installation of electrical floodlighting is totally inappropriate for many historic buildings, when one considers the period in which they



were built. Most of our historic buildings were never intended to be lit and therefore to keep them historically valid they should never be encumbered with what is just a modern trend.

The benefits of light pollution reduction

How can people living in towns and cities expect to benefit from improved lighting practices aimed at eliminating light pollution?

Light pollution policies will result in:

- The more efficient, and hence lower cost, lighting of public areas and private premises. This will save money and energy, and enhance public safety and security.

This page:

The amazing glow of the Maltese night sky





- The avoidance of any unnatural biological, environmental or behavioural effects on plants and animals in brightly lit areas.
- Favourable publicity for the location in question and a positive image of Malta on the world stage. The government's involvement will highlight its role in energy conservation and the reduction of waste and put the region firmly on the map so far as the environment is concerned.

Though the end result may look similar there are radical differences in the way architectural illumination was conceived in Mdina (top) and in Valletta (bottom)

- Increased visitor numbers and tourism. Citizens of many countries, particularly those in continental Europe, think very highly of such schemes and would like to make a "Dark-Sky City" part of their itinerary.

- Improved views of the starry sky, including the slow march of the bright planets against the "fixed" stars, the regular daily cycle and seasonal advance of the constellations and the monthly phases of the Moon and its changing aspect through the year.

Tackling light pollution

The extent of light pollution can be dramatically reduced by a number of simple and inexpensive measures, and everyone can play their part in reducing complaints of light pollution.

When installing exterior lighting, the following questions should be asked:

- Is the lighting necessary?
- Could safety be achieved by other measures, such as a fence or screen around an area?
- Do the lights have to be on all night? (Can unnecessary lighting be switched off or a timer switch – or, better still, a PIR-activated sensor light – be installed?)
- Is the lighting causing a nuisance to others?



It is possible to reduce many of the negative effects of lighting through proper design and planning, by using lighting only where and when necessary, by using an appropriate strength of light and by adjusting light fittings to direct the light to where it is required. Illuminance should be appropriate to the surroundings and the character of the area as a whole. "Over lighting" should be avoided and shields, reflectors and baffles should be used to help reduce light spill to a minimum. Specifically designed equipment, such as full cut-off lighting which, once installed, minimises the spread of light above the horizontal should be used.

Lights should be properly installed and positioned to avoid light spill upwards into the sky or horizontally to adjacent properties or the countryside. "Globe lighting" should be particularly avoided as much as possible, as it creates maximum light pollution, emitting more light upwards than on to the area being lit! For sports facilities, days and hours of use can be forecast at the planning application stage by the applicant and if these are acceptable they can become conditions of planning approval.

Churches are a challenge to light properly. The easiest way, of course, is to install a few floodlights all around the dome, with the consequence of generating a high amount of skyglow due to the spill light over the church dome lantern. Church buildings are sometimes more attractive when lit from within, allowing them to be seen against the night sky.

Light should be directed downwards wherever possible to illuminate its target, not upwards. Many floodlit buildings are lit from the ground with the beams pointing into the sky, which often leads to columns of stray light pointing up into the sky, creating vast amounts of light pollution and wasting energy. Lighting should not glare on approach and should direct light onto the ground and not into the sky, where it is wasted. In other cases, simply lowering the angle of the beam will stop light from overshooting the building into the sky.

To keep glare to a minimum, the main beam of all lights directed towards any potential observer should be kept below 70°. It should be noted that the higher the mounting height, the lower the main beam angle can be. Glare can be very obtrusive in places with low ambient light, and extra care should be taken in positioning and aiming. Floodlights with asymmetric beams that permit the front glazing to be kept at or near parallel to the surface being lit should always be used.

For domestic and small-scale security lighting there are two options: the use of passive infra-red sensors (PIR) or all-night lighting at low brightness. If correctly aligned and installed, a PIR sensor that switches on lighting when an intruder is detected often acts as a greater deterrent than permanently floodlit areas, which also allow a potential intruder to look for weaknesses in security, ie open windows, etc.

New developments

The best method of dealing with light pollution is at the planning stage of new developments. This is an ideal time to ameliorate the design or installation of lighting schemes.

1. Local authorities must request lighting schemes from those seeking planning permission for new developments, or changes to existing schemes.
2. Lighting schemes must only include lights that do not shine above the horizontal (full cut-off lighting fixtures).
3. Before planning permission is granted, a local authority should require the following details (together with any other lighting conditions that are appropriate):

- a. The height, type, shape and luminance output expected of the luminaires.
- b. The minimum level of light required to perform the lighting task.
- c. An impact assessment of the lighting.
- d. Whether the light fitting minimises the amount of light spill above the horizontal, and whether it lights areas outside the boundaries of the property it is meant to illuminate. (For example, applications to install globe or sphere lighting should be rejected, unless the light is shielded and directed downwards).
- e. Whether the lighting scheme is in an area near to a nature conservation area that needs protecting. If so, local environmental groups should be consulted before planning permission is granted.
- f. Whether the lighting will be on all night or will be timed to go off at, say, 11pm or midnight. It is relevant to impose conditions relating to the type of lights, their position and the timing required in order not to contribute to energy wastage – while at the same time ensuring security.
- g. In areas of doubt, the planning permission should be subject to tests on the lighting levels with the requirement that the lighting installations be changed if they are not satisfactory.
- h. Every local planning authority should create a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on light pollution. These should be subject to public consultation. An SPD should give planning officers the necessary powers to request information on lighting schemes and LPAs the power to reject noncompliant schemes.

The way forward

In future, great care should be taken to protect the few tracts of land making up our remaining countryside, the night skies and our finite resources. Light pollution should be minimised by good design and the use of the correct equipment for the task.

Careful consideration must be given to all floodlighting proposals, especially in areas outside development zone and within or on the periphery of towns. All exterior lighting schemes should demonstrate that the scale of the proposal and the level of lighting will not have a significant adverse environmental impact.

Individuals can make an immediate difference by checking existing lighting, repositioning domestic security lighting and perhaps reducing the wattage of the bulb. Remember to switch off lights when they are not required. By acting on this simple advice, everyone can help reduce the nuisance and unnecessary effects of light pollution and aim to minimise wasted energy.

In summary, good lighting practice benefits everybody as it conserves energy, reduces costs and increases public safety and security. The elimination of light pollution will enhance the environment and preserve our view of the wonders of the night sky – fully half our field of vision – both for ourselves and for future generations.

Sheer Cliffs and Shearwaters at I-Irdum tal-Madonna

Helen Raine

As summer turns to autumn at I-Irdum tal-Madonna (L-Ahrax tal-Mellieha), some special visitors return to this spectacular rocky site. They steal back under cover of darkness, intent on avoiding people and predators. They are swift and silent, disappearing under rocks and into burrows before their presence has even been registered. They are not easy to see but, with a bit of luck, they might be heard calling on a moonless night – they are the Yelkouan Shearwater (*Garnija*) and they come back to Malta from October onwards to claim their nesting burrows for the coming breeding season.

The birds return to land initially to spring-clean their nesting burrows, removing any droppings or feathers before they lay their single white egg in February. Good burrows are at a premium for the birds and scuffles may well break out between rival males guarding a prime site. Researcher John Borg from the EU LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater Project has been monitoring the birds for over 20 years now and finds the same bird with the same partner in the same burrow year after year, showing just how site-faithful these birds are – and how, when a pair finds the perfect burrow, they really hang on to it!

The secret of I-Irdum tal-Madonna's popularity with these enigmatic seabirds is in its geology. The sheer, crumbling cliffs are a shearwater's paradise – deep crevices, tunnels and narrow cracks honeycomb the cliffs and provide protection from predators. So the population there has survived for countless generations.

Now, however, the shearwaters are under threat and – you've guessed it – man is the culprit. I-Irdum tal-Madonna, the site for the Yelkouan Shearwater Project, is very popular as a camping site and just as the birds start to return after the summer, so too the number of campers gradually begins to rise. Unfortunately, some irresponsible campers are causing major problems for the birds.

The main problem is with rubbish. No doubt visitors to the site will have seen that some campers pack up their tents and go home without a thought to the rubbish that they leave behind. Others make an effort to collect the rubbish, but then leave the bin bag there, which gets torn by dogs and cats, scattering the contents everywhere. And while this is unhygienic and unsightly for visitors, for the shearwaters it has more sinister implications, because rubbish attracts rats. When the rats have finished with the left-over sandwiches, and as their numbers increase, they set off in search of new food supplies – and that means shearwater chicks.

Shearwaters are most diligent parents. They take turns to incubate the egg and they also share parenting duties, with one bird sitting on the nest while the other fishes, often for days at a time. Once the chick is a few days old, the parents leave it alone from time to time while they fish. When they are small, the chicks are little more than pom-pom like bundles of fluff with beaks. The birds evolved before rats were present on Malta, and these fluffball chicks are totally defenceless against them. So when a rat finds a chick cowering at the end of its burrow, it's a pretty unequal contest and there's no prizes for guessing who comes off worse.

The rocky shores of I-Irdum tal-Madonna





Yelkouan Shearwater on the wing

The EU LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater project is working hard to change all this. This partnership initiative aims to protect the Yelkouan Shearwater on land and at sea and, as part of its work, has carried out a large-scale rat eradication programme at I-Irdum tal-Madonna. The initial results have been spectacular. Where before, researcher John Borg of Heritage Malta and his BirdLife Malta colleagues had been finding broken egg shells and the remains of chicks but few fledging birds, after the rat eradication almost all the chicks survived to leave the nest and head out to sea to start fishing. For the team, it was one of the great pleasures of fieldwork to watch the rotund little balls of down gradually growing feathers until finally only a little tuft of fluff on their head indicated that they were any different from the adults.

Rat eradication has worked well in the short term, but the continued success of this action, and thus the survival of the shearwater chicks, relies on keeping I-Irdum tal-Madonna free of rubbish. Every visitor to the site can make a huge contribution to protecting these birds by taking their rubbish home with them when they leave and, ideally, collecting up what less responsible camping neighbours have left behind.

But improving I-Irdum tal-Madonna and the shearwater colony that lives there is not just a question of picking up litter. I-Irdum tal-Madonna is one of the Malta's finest natural areas and, in recognition of this, it is a Natura 2000 site – designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for animals and plants. This means that it is internationally important and protected under both EU and Maltese law. The LIFE project is preparing a management plan with all those involved so that this incredibly important natural heritage site is managed properly. Over the course of the next two years, the project will be working

with visitors and campers on site to ensure that not only do visitors leave no rubbish behind, but also that those visitors get the most out of the area without impacting upon the very thing they have come to enjoy – the natural environment and the birds that depend on it.

To start this process off, the project has developed a commonsense Code of Conduct that will protect the site and improve the fate of the wildlife there. Visitors are being asked to leave their cars in the car park and not drive off the tarmac roads. The vegetation on this site is very fragile and driving on the garrigue or through the woods destroys it completely. Parking in the car park, rather than driving off road, might mean a short walk but it will ensure that the rare plants and insects on the site get a chance to recover. It will also prevent car radios and headlights disturbing the birds.

All photographs have been kindly provided by the author

Bottom left:
John J Borg monitoring a shearwater chick

Bottom right:
Researcher with Yelkouan shearwater





To make sure that the birds (not to mention the other campers) get a quiet, dark night, the Code asks people to leave their sound systems, generators and lights at home and enjoy being in such a special place in peace. Light pollution in particular is a serious problem for shearwaters. They need complete darkness at their breeding sites and even a single street light has been enough to cause a colony to desert its nests. Also, when the young birds are leaving the nest for the first time, bright lights on the horizon can draw them inland rather than out to sea for fishing. These birds often collide with buildings and once they hit the ground, they cannot get airborne again. The project is working with the Light Pollution Awareness Group to try to address the problem of light pollution nationwide, but campers can do their bit by relying on torch-light rather than generators at I-Irdum tal-Madonna and keeping the noise down at the same time.

As with all camping in Malta, you also need a permit and this can be obtained from the Government Property Division (GPD) who can also advise where to camp without affecting the shearwaters. This will mean that areas that the shearwaters have deserted due to disturbance might be re-colonised in the future. GPD has a project leaflet to send out with the permit that explains more about how to protect the site and copies are also available from:

www.lifeshhearwaterproject.org.mt/publications

The team hope that these simple measures will make a big difference, not only to the birds but also to the experience of all campers and visitors to the site. Camping is about enjoying the outdoors, and hearing radios at full blast among a pile of rubbish is somewhat counterproductive for the majority of people!

Sorting out the issues on land for the birds is only half the battle. One of the greatest threats to shearwaters is our lack of knowledge of the areas at sea that are important to them for fishing, resting and moulting (changing their feathers after the breeding season). In this arena, the project has been carrying out

Yelkouan Shearwater at the breeding site

Bellow :

Chicks start out as a bundles of fluff

Bottom:

Eventually chicks and adults are almost indistinguishable

some truly cutting-edge research with telemetry devices (small electronic devices that are fitted to the back of the bird and track their movements). For the first time anywhere in the world, Yelkouan Shearwater chicks have been fitted with solar powered satellite tags to track their migration patterns. Two chicks were tagged and the tag beamed a signal to a satellite once or twice a day. Every day, the team logged onto a website to find out where the birds were. Gradually, the very first indications emerged of where the young birds go when they leave the nest, with one bird flying to Greece before the tag fell off (the tags are only intended to be attached temporarily) and the other bird heading into the eastern Mediterranean and then to the coast of North Africa before contact with it too was lost.

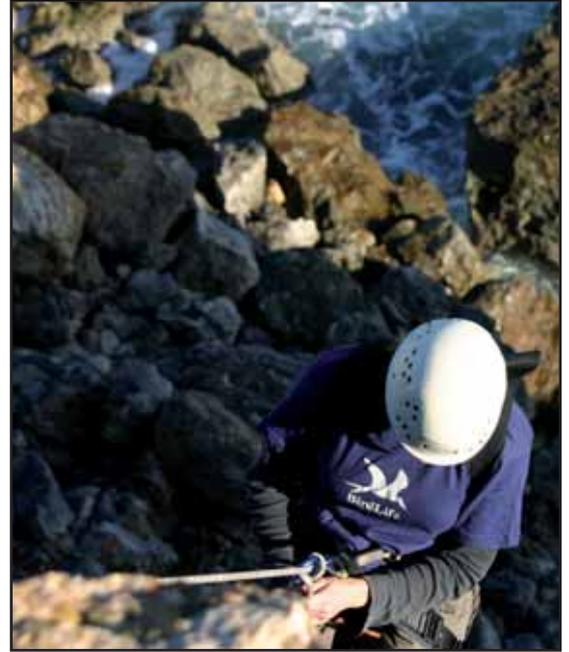
We also fitted the adult birds with GPS data loggers. These tags were much more difficult to work with, as the adult birds had to be re-caught when they returned to feed the chicks, because the data from the tag is stored in the device rather than being transmitted to a satellite. Since the birds are nocturnal, this meant long nights on the cliff and some seriously challenging fieldwork.

An average night started with setting up the abseiling ropes in the dark. The team then abseiled down a sheer cliff to a narrow ledge, which was the main study site. And there it waited. The birds' movements are determined by a complicated combination of the moon and the weather. A full moon rising early might mean that





Top left:
Cleaning up
I-Irdum tal-Madonna



Top right:
Abseiling to nests

the birds stay away completely, because even moonlight can be enough to discourage them from returning to their burrows. A new moon rising in the early hours means that the birds can come back at any time of the night. For the fieldwork team, that meant sitting on a damp ledge all night in a state of permanent alertness. The birds call around the cliffs, an eerie sound that people used to believe was an evil spirit, but just before they come back to the burrows, however, they go silent. So the waiting fieldworkers had to be 100 per cent ready to catch an incoming bird. If the bird streaks past into its burrow with the data logger attached, there's nothing to do but wait for it to leave again before the data can be obtained – and that could be five days later!

All that hard work was worth it, however, when – after 59 nights in total – the team had managed to track five individual birds to their feeding grounds. Most of them were foraging to the east of Malta, on the continental shelf. This meant trips of over 200kms to the feeding area and often much longer distances were covered, as the shearwaters searched for food for their chicks.

Ultimately, all of this data will be used to identify Marine Special Protection Areas so that the locations at sea that are important for the birds can be adequately managed. The telemetry work has revealed that the birds use areas of sea opposite their breeding colonies during the night hours – something that

L-Ahrax tal-Mellieha



conventional surveys could never have revealed as the birds cannot be seen in the dark. The project partners will be working together to link maps of the birds' feeding areas to the location of rafts noted during boat-based observation. Fishing grounds and oceanographic data will also be used to create a model that will help the government to identify which areas at sea require protection and management.

The work of the project and BirdLife Malta is really helping to put Malta on the map in terms of international seabird research – already worldwide interest is increasing, not just about Yelkouan Shearwaters, but also about the Corys Shearwaters and European Storm-petrels that breed on our rugged cliffs. Everybody has a chance to contribute to this work, either by simple actions such as following the Code of Conduct at I-Irdum tal-Madonna or getting involved in a clean up operation there.

Anyone who would like to find out more about the LIFE project, or would like to help in the clean up campaign, can email:

info@lifeshearwaterproject.org.mt

The site warden also gives regular free guided walks at I-Irdum tal-Madonna. At the right time of the year (mainly from February to June), he can help visitors catch a glimpse of these elusive birds skimming the horizon, just inches above the waves. During the rest of the year, they can find out more about the special flora and fauna of the site, as the warden reveals some of I-Irdum tal-Madonna's secret sights. To book, call the BirdLife office on 2134 7644.

The EU LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater Project is a partner initiative with BirdLife Malta, The Armed Forces of Malta, The Malta Maritime Authority, Heritage Malta, The Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences, the SPEA and the RSPB. It is partly funded by the EU, with contributions from HSBC and MEPA.

Heritage Publications Review

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

Din l-Art Helwa
133 Melita Street
Valletta

Nostalgias of Malta

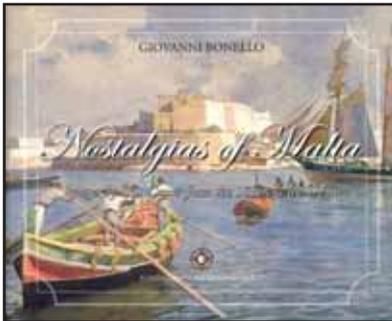
Images by S.L. Cassar from 1890 to the 1930s

Author - Giovanni Bonello

Published by - Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti

ISBN – 978-99932-7-188-8

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



There is something about old photographs that makes them intrinsically appealing and that immediately polarises one's attention. Most probably it is a hankering for times that have gone and that, we can be quite sure, will never be seen again: a past made of lost places, smells and sounds – sensorial stimulations which, having been filtered by the passage of time, leave a sweet aroma that we long to re-experience over and over again.

Who among us has not longed to escape to the times and places depicted in these photographs? It is a sad reflection on our generation that old photographs manage to give so much solace with such little effort. This is an implicit manifestation of the fact that with all the supposed “progress” we have achieved, we have also lost things that were essential for the quality of our lives.

With this book, Giovanni Bonello takes us again on a joyride of the senses, putting in our hands an impressive collection of vintage photographic material and in our hearts a sense of almost unbearable sadness. He presents us with images of life as it was and, in most respects, should still be; a life that had time to consider the consequences of its actions, that found time to consider and appreciate the creation of beauty, a life not yet suffocated by the omnipresence of motor vehicles. Roads have certainly taken us far, but how much have they destroyed in their progress towards today?

Bonello achieves this through the study, collection and presentation of the photographic work of Salvatore Lorenzo Cassar who was active in Malta at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. In committing to print yet another important record of the multi-faceted and little studied photographic history of Malta, Bonello presents us with a catalogue of very interesting images.

Naturally, the first thing we notice when confronted with this book is how places looked then, and how we know then now – places that we will never see again, like the Chapel of Bones on page 22, and scenes that were, and could still be, such as the nave of St John's hung with the Flemish tapestries on page 17. Some places are devastatingly different, others are virtually unchanged but have nevertheless lost that fascination captured in these images. Lost buildings, lost sights but, most of all, a lost way of life. A considerable part of the section entitled “Places” is dedicated to Valletta and its environs and features buildings and sights that are now derelict but were then in pristine condition. How we have we failed ourselves and future generations.

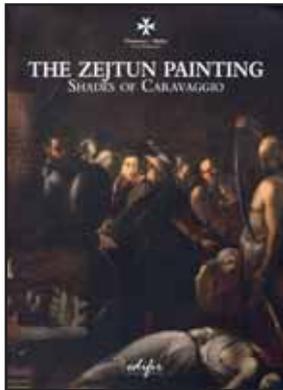
Few and far between are the scenes that are virtually unchanged from how they were – scenes that should be regarded as the last chance to save the few remaining bits of authentic Malta, such as Kalkara Bay, which is so similar today to the image presented on page 65.

I am quite sure that similar thoughts crossed the mind of the author many times as he was labouring to bring this book together. This is manifest in the title itself and in the restricted amount of text. Although this may sound idiosyncratic, I am convinced that this book is not mainly intended to be read; it is a book intended to be looked at and mused over.



The Żejtun Painting Shades of Caravaggio

Editor - Roberta Lapucci
Published by - Edifir Edizione
Firenze
ISBN – 978-88-7970-348-2
Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



What's in a name? Well, quite a lot actually, if that name belongs to one of the acknowledged masters of western art. A considerable portion of the contents of this very interesting publication endeavours to give a physical manifestation to the aura of Caravaggio exuded by the pictorial representation of the Martyrdom of St Catherine of Alexandria colloquially referred to as "the Żejtun Painting". This definition – the Żejtun Painting – is also much more than a name. It single-handedly elevates this particular piece of art to the role of the most meaningful example of pictorial art in the village of Żejtun, and possibly one of the most outstanding examples of sacred art in the Maltese Islands.

The painting discussed in this book is a collection of different elements varying both in quality and, very possibly, in the period of execution. This is most noticeable in the facial types and the rendering of certain drapes that can vary, within the space of a few square metres, from the sublime to the frankly mediocre. However, as is expected from a Caravaggio inspired painting it is light that is the real protagonist of the painting and this light, together with the somewhat peculiar composition, is the most recognisable source of the Caravaggio aura referred to above.

The book is a collection of short but very informative articles that present the painting and its historical vicissitudes in a readable, informative and authoritative manner. What is most apparent is the fact that physical knowledge and a definitive attribution seem to counteract each other in an inversely proportional manner. In other words, the more we know about the make-up of the painting – an argument in which the book is exhaustive – the more questions about the attribution seem to arise. As perhaps it perhaps, the book possibly creates more questions than it attempts to answer.

The articles about the restoration work are very interesting, although in some instances these risk becoming overbearing. Although it might amount to a cliché, I was much taken by the double page spread that presents the painting before and after restoration. At face value it might seem virtually unchanged, but looking closer one discovers that the restoration has managed to give it back its original depth and expressed sensibility through the exposure of finite hues, delicate shades and an overall rebalancing of the chromatic components.

Apart from bringing attention to this interesting – and extremely deserving of such attention – work of art, the book also emphasises the quality that must be expected in restoration work and sets a benchmark against which other restoration work should be measured.

Being presented with a new book gives me sensations that are not dissimilar to those conjured up during my childhood years, when I would let my mind roam freely in search of fantastic adventures. Opening a book for the first time, I feel as if I am at the beginning of a journey of discovery, during the course of which I hope to meet many fascinating people, visit far-off places and reach the longed-for treasure of new knowledge. And when I have finished reading it, the degree to which my wishes have been fulfilled is at the top of the list of criteria by which the book is judged before it is consigned to join the ranks of memories and experiences of my life.

I therefore consider good those authors who are able to fulfil these hopes. Some manage this with a single work, others with one book in a series of many, others still have the gift of capturing the imagination of the reader with every page they write; I have to say that, in my opinion, Giovanni Bonello has earned a place in this last category with his *Histories of Malta* series.

There is a fantastic collection of material in each volume that is able to stand on its own and also to integrate with the rest of the series. Volume eight already holds the promise of the reader's reward in its subtitle: *Mysteries and Myths*. How could any self-respecting literary traveller deny himself the opportunity to delve into a book with such an alluring prospect?

Bonello's work certainly fulfils the promise contained in its subtitle which, with a list of seven volumes preceding this newest one, is no mean feat. But that is Bonello's gift. The reader needs only to read a few sentences and he is irresistibly drawn into the journey that he will abandon only with considerable effort and self discipline, and to which he will long to return at every occasion until it is brought to its natural conclusion.

For me, it was the article about Gian Battista Tiepolo's *Consilium in Arena* that constituted the first irresistible pull into this particular volume. I had long admired this painting, with its watery atmosphere and the characteristic hazy rendition of this great Venetian master. I had also often wondered what particular set of circumstances had come together to present one of the greatest masters of the rococo with the opportunity to depict such an unusual subject. As expected, Bonello exhaustively answered all my questions, even adding answers to many others that I had not thought of asking.

This is what makes Bonello deserve all the praise that has been lavished on him since this series first saw the light of day. The Tiepolo article contains the process of intuition, stimulated curiosity, research and presentation that is the strong point of all the series and that has earned Giovanni Bonello his position among the great Maltese historians of our time.

Histories of Malta - Mysteries and Myths

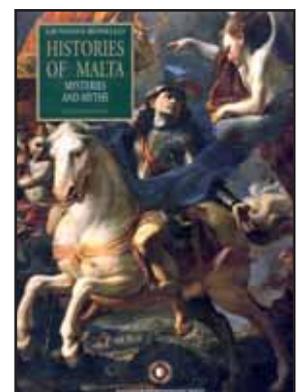
Volume VIII

Author - Giovanni Bonello

Published by Fundazzjoni Partimonju Malti

ISBN – 978-99932-7-165-9

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



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 Sir,

I feel I should add my voice to those of the many who have expressed their absolute disbelief at the way the issue of the pink façade at Saqqaja was handled. I think this needs to be looked at from different perspectives, all of which are pertinent and worthy of consideration.

The main issue is that pertaining to the right of an owner to do what he pleases with his property. Taste is, of course, a matter of personal preference but the issue here is to what extent should that taste be imposed upon others.

It would be hard to argue that a façade is not part of a property but it would also be frankly stupid not to consider that a façade forms part of the urban landscape, which is the property of collectivity. It is this fact that gives collectivity the right to interfere with choices regarding the exterior of buildings.

Unfortunately, we seem to live in a country that has failed to educate its population in any form of taste, or at least respect for collective taste. This being the case, it is reasonable to argue that any choice that will have a strong impact on the collectivity – and there is no doubt that a pink façade in an historic urban context does have an impact on the collectivity – should be guided by professional help.

What I absolutely fail to understand is how such professional insight, here represented by the Mepa permit process, could fail to persuade the applicant to change his mind. I use the word “persuade” rather than “impose”, because I think that should be the role of the organisation. Mepa should start by trying to persuade applicants that their original intentions might not be best suited to a given situation. If such a persuasion process fails, then it is time to make use of any legal means to safeguard the collectivity.

Unfortunately, Mepa is mostly viewed as a regulating body, there to curtail the liberty of all citizens in the name of some unknown and unperceivable common good. That this is the general view that people have of Mepa is certainly due to a failure by the organisation to project a different image and to some very bad decisions in the past. This is certainly at the root of the general aversion most people have towards it and also the basis for the need for seemingly unending reorganisation processes.

Andre Saliba
Mosta

Dear Sir,

The idea of making Gozo an Eco Island is terrific. Unfortunately, this initiative did not kick off with much of a good, or even eco-friendly, start. Lots of paper was wasted in a supposedly public consultation exercise that looked much more like an advertising campaign and resulted in wasted funds and yet more accumulated rubbish.

As is often the case at the beginning of such projects, a “drive to do” is strongly manifested. Yet much could be attained by actually not doing things. I am referring in particular to the eco benefit Gozo would gain if a recent craze for covering discreet country lanes with layers of asphalt is stopped.

In some instances this has been taken much further, as is the case with the opening of a road that leads from Marsalforn into Wied l-Infern. The first part of this once discreet country lane has been transformed into a fully-flagged thoroughfare that would be the envy of many a main road. One wonders to accommodate whom? Furthermore, this seemingly innocent operation has entailed the creation of a large asphalted junction that claimed a portion of workable farmland and the obliteration of some rubble walls. To add insult to injury, these rubble walls were not, as one would have expected, rebuilt at the edge of the new road but have been replaced by stretches of hideous walls. Eco Island indeed!

Simon Saliba
Floriana



*Modernist Malta – The Architectural legacy
A photographic exhibition*

The *Kamra tal-Periti* (Chamber of Architects) and *Din l-Art Helwa* will be mounting a photographic exhibition on 20th century modernist buildings in Malta from 24 January to 27 February 2009 at St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity. The exhibition will focus on post-war buildings constructed prior to 1970, including schools, industrial and commercial buildings, tourism developments, churches and private residences.

Five of Malta's leading photographers – Patrick Fenech, Matthew Mirabelli, Sergio Muscat, Alexandra Pace and Darrin Zammit Lupi – have been commissioned to photograph around 40 buildings that have been selected for the exhibition by the *Kamra tal-Periti* as being worthy of recognition as part of Malta's recent architectural heritage.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication that will include the black-and-white photographs as well as two essays presenting historical and personal accounts of modernist architecture in Malta. This event will appeal to people who are interested in architecture as well as those who are interested in art, photography and Malta's cultural history.

Prior to the event, Dr Conrad Thake will be giving a public talk on the subject in the lecture hall at *Din l-Art Helwa*'s headquarters in Valletta entitled *The Advent of Modern Architecture in Malta*, on 8 January at 6pm.

Numerous buildings that formed part of Malta's modern architectural achievement have already been either demolished or changed beyond recognition. However, a few excellent examples of modernist architecture still exist and this exhibition is intended to raise awareness of this aspect of Malta's recent architectural heritage and to promote their historical and architectural value. This event is sponsored by HalMannVella and supported by the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts.



University of Malta, Old Humanities Building, by Patrick Fenech



Clunaird House, by Darrin Zammit Lupi

**Important Notice
Your Membership 2009!**

Please allow us to remind you that your membership for 2009 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: Why not do this now before the Christmas rush overtakes you!



*The Hon Treasurer
Din l-Art Helwa
133, Melita Street
Valletta*

Thank you for your support!



