

Lm3.00

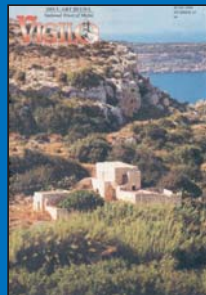
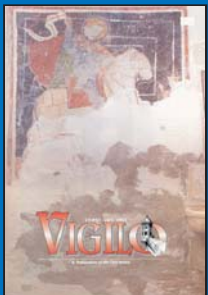
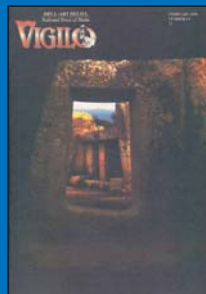
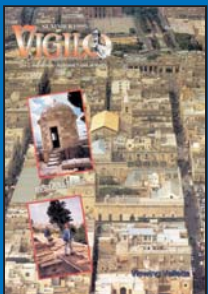
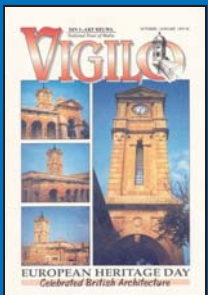
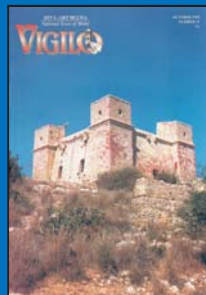
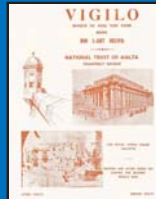
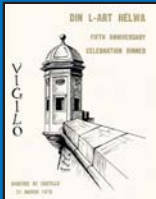
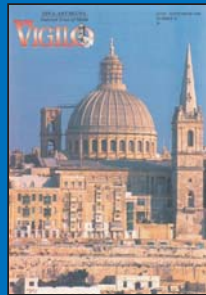
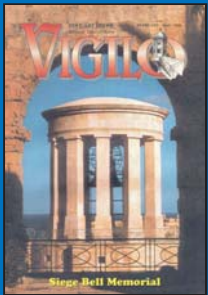
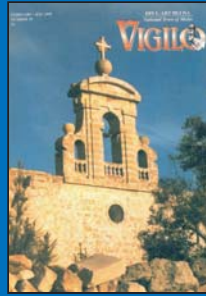
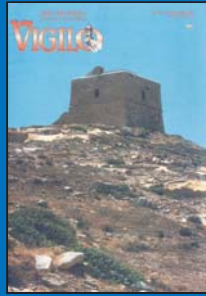
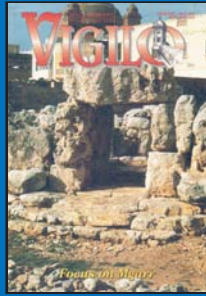
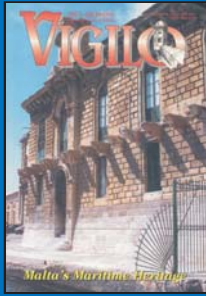
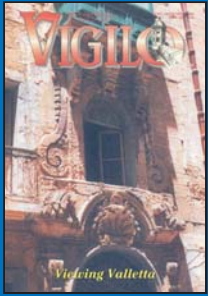
DIN L-ART HELWA  
National Trust of Malta

40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

JULY 2005

NEWSPAPER POST

# VIGILLO



# VIGILO

ISSN - 1026-132X

40th ANNIVERSARY  
ISSUE

JULY 2005

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



COPYRIGHT by the PUBLISHER

**Din I-Art Helwa**  
133 Melita Street  
Valletta  
Malta GC

telephone/fax: 21 220358  
e-mail:  
info@dinarthelwa.org  
web:  
www.dinarthelwa.org

EDITOR  
DESIGN & LAYOUT  
**JOSEPH AZZOPARDI**

PHOTOGRAPHERS  
**JOSEPH AZZOPARDI**  
&  
**JOSEPH CHETCUTI**

PROOF READER  
**JUDITH FALZON**


**FRONT & BACK  
COVERS**

Past Editions of  
Vigilo

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

The views expressed  
in **VIGILO**  
are not  
necessarily  
those of  
**Din I-Art Helwa**

# C O N T E N T S

FOREWORD	01
EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT	02
FOUNDER PRESIDENT	03
HERITAGE PROPERTIES TRANSFERRED TO <i>DIN L-ART HELWA</i>	05
PATRONS	06
1965 - MESSAGES	08
2005 - MESSAGES	10
1965 - INAUGURAL MEETING RESOLUTION	12
1965 - GOVERNOR GENERAL'S INAUGURAL MESSAGE	13
1966 - EXTRACTS FROM ANNUAL REPORT	16
1966 - "THE BULLETIN" REPORT	18
1966 - MESSAGE BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AT FIRST AGM	20
1967 - THE FUTURE OF THE PAST	21
THE EARLY DAYS	26
2005 - CITATION FOR MAURICE CARUANA CURRAN	29
LIST OF RESTORED PROPERTIES	30
SUMMING UP	32
SPEAKING TRUTH UNTO POWER	34
	
<i>Portrait of Judge Maurice Caruana Curran</i>	
36 EARLY HISTORY OF TEENAGERS	36
38 WHO OWNS THE PAST?	38
39 A COVER FOR MALTA'S TEMPLES	39
40 RECONSTRUCTION OF MNAJDRA	40
43 MARJORIE DE WOLFF	43
44 CARTOONS	44
46 CUTTING CORNERS IN VALLETTA	46
48 VALLETTA IN 1945	48
50 VALLETTA A CITY BETRAYED	50
54 EUROPA NOSTRA MEDAL FOR MSIDA BASTION CEMETERY	54
56 GONE TOO SOON	56
58 HALTING THE UGLIFICATION OF MALTA	58
60 THE PERILS OF NON-PLANNING	60

# FOREWORD

In 1965, when it all began for *Din l-Art Helwa*, Malta was a different place. It was newly independent. There was a palpable air of hope and excitement in the air about the huge challenges that lay ahead.

The Times (then The Times of Malta), reporting the inaugural meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* at the Manoel Theatre on 9 July 1965, wrote that the enthusiasm shown by all those who attended was a clear indication of the growing interest in, and the ever-increasing concern for, our national heritage. However, a humorous columnist writing in one of the other local papers commented that “*Din l-Art Helwa* was one of those organisations frequently formed in this country only to die a natural death within a few months”.

This commemorative edition of *Vigilo* shows how wrong he was. This anthology of articles reflects the many faces of *Din l-Art Helwa* over the last 40 years – its ups and downs, its concerns, interests and hopes. In making our selections, we have had to cope with a prairie of flowers, like a Dutch tulip farm. We hope you will like our choice.

The role of *Din l-Art Helwa* was clearly laid down from the start. It remains the same today as it was 40 years ago: ***to safeguard Malta’s cultural heritage and the natural environment.***

In the spirit of the times, and reflecting the concerns and motivation that led to its creation, *Din l-Art Helwa* was then primarily a lobbying organisation. The hands-on conservation and restoration roles followed later.

The art and craft of successful lobbying is both to provide informed and constructive criticism and to cajole and – if necessary – to hassle and harry those who have the power to make decisions. As one article reproduced here puts it, to do this effectively, *Din l-Art Helwa* has had to be prepared to speak Truth unto Power – however unpalatable that Truth may sometimes be to those in power. We have always spoken and written our mind without fear or favour. This commemorative edition provides us with many insights into the brave art of lobbying.

Our parallel, but secondary role has been the hands-on conservation and restoration of our cultural heritage and natural environment. Quite simply, the outstanding mediaeval, 17<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century Maltese monuments listed among the historic sites which *Din l-Art Helwa* has saved for the Nation over the years would have been lost if *Din l-Art Helwa* had not physically intervened to save them. We are proud to show an up-to-date list of these in this commemorative edition.

For an organisation with absolutely no government funding, with no funding of its own other than what it can raise by sponsorship and donations, and made up entirely of volunteers, it is a remarkable achievement. Thirteen of these properties, including our headquarters building, are now in our hands. We open them to the public. We continue to conserve them. We have devised interpretation schemes at most of them. We use them regularly and keep them alive. We conduct guided tours of the properties and our wardens – all volunteers – can show people round the properties when they are open.

None of this would have been possible without the early leadership and inspiration of one man – our Founder President, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran. We owe *Din l-Art Helwa*’s existence largely to him. Judge Maurice Caruana Curran has dedicated the last 40 years of his life to

upholding the cause of cultural heritage in Malta. He was the chairman of the Steering Committee that prepared the ground for the foundation of *Din l-Art Helwa* on 9 July 1965. He was subsequently the President of the Trust for a further 33 years and has remained active on its Council as Founder President to this very day. We publish in this edition a number of his early contributions, as well as some of the documents recording the beginnings of this association, together with some by his worthy successors as Executive President.

Maurice Caruana Curran was the inspiration for *Din l-Art Helwa* and its leader, mentor and advocate. His creation of *Din l-Art Helwa* in 1965 was a timely and far-seeing act. He gave *Din l-Art Helwa* enormous energy, skill and wisdom. His commitment to Malta’s heritage and to European cultural heritage as well, was total and over-riding. He placed his wide experience, love and knowledge of Maltese art and history, as well as his determined vision for Maltese conservation, at the service of *Din l-Art Helwa*.

We are, therefore, delighted to mark in this commemorative issue his award by Europa Nostra – the foremost pan-European cultural heritage organisation – of the top prize for a life-time’s dedication to European and Maltese cultural heritage. It is a crowning achievement for him personally and for *Din l-Art Helwa* in its 40th year, and reflects ever-lasting credit on Malta.



## Introduction to the 40th Anniversary Issue

### *Martin Galea*

*Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa*

It is a great privilege for me to introduce this commemorative edition of Vigilo magazine. 2005 marks the fortieth anniversary of *Din l-Art Helwa*'s foundation.

A "Ruby Anniversary" is always an occasion for celebration, and this is particularly so in the case of an organisation like ours which has paralleled so closely the vicissitudes and successes of Malta's development since attaining independence.

Vigilo itself came early upon the *Din l-Art Helwa* scene, starting in a much simpler and humbler format than the glossy, wide-ranging magazine we have today. This commemorative edition seeks to capture both the flavour of what it was like to be in *Din l-Art Helwa* in its early days, as well as some of the preoccupations that have faced the association over the years.

Thus, you will find a broad range of subjects – from the early messages of support which welcomed the setting up of *Din l-Art Helwa* and the action taken in the first few years, to the thinking which has shaped our approach. Recurring themes, such as *Din l-Art Helwa*'s concerns about Valletta, the pre-historic temples, the coastline and the impact of over-development in Malta, are marked by a selection of articles from the many on these subjects which have appeared in Vigilo since its inception.

Above all, this commemorative issue is a celebration of *Din l-Art Helwa*'s achievements over the years in highlighting the need to safeguard Malta's rich cultural heritage and natural environment, in acting as the conscience of successive governments and in showing what a voluntary organisation, with only limited resources – but sufficient determination – can do.



Wignacourt Tower  
one of the earliest  
restoration projects  
undertaken by  
*Din l-Art Helwa*

## 40 YEARS ON

### *Judge Maurice Caruana Curran*

*Founder President of Din l-Art Helwa*

#### *A retrospective look at 40 years of Din l-Art Helwa*



Ta' Ċenċ before  
it was developed

Promotional card of the first  
Grand Hotel Excelsior

It was the early sixties. The “sixpenny settlers”, those sons of the British colonels who had striven to keep the line of fire free on the coastline and cliffs of Malta, as well as Maltese speculators, started building everywhere. Ironically, they destroyed what many of their fathers had given up their lives to save. I felt a sense of outrage, and a sense of helplessness. Out of love for my country, so beautiful and so pristine, I felt the great need to do something about it. There were many others who, like me, shared this vision.

The steering committee was composed of Chevalier Vincenzo Bonello, Architect Roger de Giorgio, Moses Gatt, Edward R. Leopardi, John Manduca, Dr Edward Mercieca, Dr Godfrey Randon and myself, as chairman, with Dr Randon as secretary. We used to meet weekly in the boardroom of architects Mortimer & de Giorgio, then in Kingsway, who also lent us a secretary, Maria Azzopardi, to assist us. As chairman, I prepared a draft of our statute and took inspiration from the models of the National Trust in the United Kingdom and Italia Nostra.

So many people have asked me what led me to found *Din l-Art Helwa*. The reply consists of a variety of answers. First of all, there was the love of my island, and the need to do something about its preservation. I was encouraged by the Independence Constitution of 1964, and one of its directive principles, which determines that “the State shall safeguard the landscape and the historic and artistic patrimony of the Nation”. This is not an actionable clause at law, but Article 9 lays down that the observance of this principle is essential to the good governance of the islands.

But the situation on the ground was very different. There was an utter contrast. In conversations with Dr Godfrey Randon, at St Paul’s Bay, after Mass on many a Sunday morning, we used to talk of the wild spread of building that had begun even then. I realised that the Government needed help from below.

Secondly, there was the encouragement given to me by many people. One was Sir Maurice Dorman, Governor General of Malta for many years. Another, Massimo Iglioni – an Italian and a great lover of Malta and Gozo, who built the Hotel Ta’ Ċenċ and the pretty houses at Mġarr Ix-Xini, gave me confidence to do what I felt had to be done for our beautiful island.

When the committee had finished its task approving my work on the statute by March 1965, we were stalled for a name and we struggled. It was not to be too Italian, such as “Malta Nostra”, neither was it to be too English, “Malta Heritage Trust” – although in retrospect, Europa Nostra has encouraged its members to adopt Latin titles. One afternoon, while at work in my study, I heard the Maltese national anthem on the radio and one phrase of its opening lines rang like a bell: “*Din l-Art Helwa*” (“This Fair Land”). With excitement I called up Godfrey Randon, who said: “You have hit it right on the head”. And so “*Din l-Art Helwa*” was adopted by the steering committee as the name of the association.



We called the foundation meeting at the Manoel Theatre, kindly lent to us free of charge by the late Michael Kissaun, who was then its manager. On 9 July 1965, with the theatre packed to its rafters, our organisation was founded. Telegrams of congratulations flooded in from personalities abroad: from Earl Mountbatten of Burma, Sir Hugh Casson, Quentin Hughes, Sir Harry Luke, Lord Duncan Sandys, Ernle Bradford, Julian Trevelyan, and so many others, and also from organisations such as Italia Nostra and UNESCO. These precious documents are safely conserved within the archives of *Din l-Art Helwa*.

That July evening at the Manoel, the flower of the Maltese intelligentsia was present. All the Ministers of the Cabinet attended in the front row and promised us full support.

This was not to be, however. The first 'present' given to us by the Government came like a rude shock: it was to be the granting of permission for the building of the Hotel Excelsior right within the heart of the Floriana Bastions, of which it consequently took out a great chunk.

The Excelsior was also built over two cemeteries, losing us considerable historic memory. We protested strongly about this, in what must have been then the start of our lobbying role, and Prime Minister Dr George Borg Olivier helped a little by ordering that the hotel should not exceed the limits of the Floriana lines in height.

This was, however, only the first edition of this hotel. The second and present one – still unfinished after so many years and with no sense of proportion or aesthetics – is defiant of all respect to our history. Today, together with the abomination of the new apartment blocks recently built on Cottonera's waterfront just below the hallowed ground of Fort St Angelo, it must still constitute the biggest "crime" against Malta's historic, architectural legacy.

Of the steering committee, only three are still alive today: Roger de Giorgio, John Manduca and myself. I want, therefore, to take this opportunity to pay tribute to them all and commend them for starting a voluntary heritage society for Malta and Gozo that has now become the National Trust of our islands.

The Governor General was the first patron of the society and later, when Malta became a Republic in 1974, each subsequent President has always kindly accepted to grant us patronage.

The first step I wished to take was to find the society a headquarters from which to operate in Valletta. There was a house next door to my residence in Britannia Street, on the corner with Bakery Street, which was occasionally opened by the Secretary of the Malta Relief Fund. I waited for the Prime Minister to come back from the United Kingdom to ask for his help. When I mentioned this to Sir Maurice Dorman, he said: "The Malta Relief Fund is captained by me" and he immediately asked the secretary to give us half the premises.

When Mr Mintoff appropriated the money of the Malta Relief Fund to assist with social services, the Commissioner of Land, Dr John Pullicino, gave us the whole of the house. Over the years, we have worked



133, Melita Street  
Valletta

"The first step I wished to take was to find the society a headquarters from which to operate in Valletta."

hard to restore this gracious building to its former dignity. It is now, I am proud to say, a hive of industry and has become almost too small for the numerous volunteers who attend regularly each day!

The Council of *Din l-Art Helwa* soon formulated its mission statement as follows:

1. *To educate the public in general, especially young people, to the importance of their cultural heritage.*
2. *To lead by example and take on projects of restoration and repair of buildings of historical value which have been neglected or vandalised.*
3. *To hold properties in trust.*
4. *To maintain a watchdog role and lobby the authorities for the protection of the landscape and of the rich architectural legacy of the Maltese islands.*

Space does not permit me to recount in any detail the history of *Din l-Art Helwa* during its first 40 years of life and, in any case, this commemorative edition seeks to give a flavour of old times. We have survived so many obstacles: the lack of funding, ignorant attacks on our properties by vandals, an attack on my person by a Minister who called me "Public Enemy No. 1" in Parliament and a lack of public following when we started.

However, I can now look back happily at these 40 years with great pride and satisfaction. My thanks go to all the members of the Council who have served during the last 40 years, even if I cannot name them all here. I also want to thank all those unnamed numerous volunteers for their contribution and also, especially, each and every one of our members and our corporate sponsors, without whose invaluable assistance we could not hope to continue to carry out our work.

May providence always bless *Din l-Art Helwa*. I am confident that it will continue to grow from strength to strength and that its numerous volunteers will remain committed to its mission, that of looking after This Fair Land.



Stone carving at  
133, Melita Street  
Valletta

# Transfer of Heritage Properties to *Din l-Art Helwa* 2003

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2003 the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage, Mr Anthony Pace, transferred nine properties restored by *Din l-Art Helwa* to the Association through the first Deeds of Guardianship signed under the Cultural Heritage Act 2002.

These historic buildings have been painstakingly restored over many years by *Din l-Art Helwa*. They represent that part of Malta's heritage which the Association has saved for the Nation. The Deeds of Guardianship will formally permit *Din l-Art Helwa* to use the properties to generate funds for their upkeep and to implement new projects to save more of our heritage.

The properties transferred are: St Agatha's Tower (The Red Tower), Wignacourt Tower, Ghallies Tower, Qalet Marku Tower, Torri Mamo, Msida Bastion Garden of Rest, Dwejra Tower (Gozo), Santa Maria Tower and Santa Maria Battery (both on Comino). Together with the church of Santa Maria ta' Bir Miftuh, the chapel of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri and St Roque's Chapel in Żebbuġ they form part of the patrimony now held in trust by *Din l-Art Helwa*.

Welcoming the transfer, Executive President Martin Scicluna said "We have waited a long time for this formality to be completed. We welcome the opportunity presented by the Cultural Heritage Act 2002 for us to participate actively in preserving Malta's heritage and presenting it for the enjoyment of the general public. We shall take great pride in being the guardians of these properties".



Executive President  
Martin Scicluna and  
Mr Anthony Pace

# Messages from three Patrons of *Din l-Art Helwa*

*Din l-Art Helwa*  
wishes to express its  
gratitude to these three  
Patrons for their  
unfailing support.

*The name chosen for your Organisation's magazine, Vigilo, aptly fits in the mission statement of your organisation, because ever since Din l-Art Helwa started functioning way back in 1965, it has always been in the forefront to safeguard Malta's historical and cultural heritage and the surrounding natural environment.*

*Din l-Art Helwa has been one of the pioneering voices that has lobbied and helped to create public awareness towards anything that is Maltese. All this could be attributed to the untiring work of its founding Executive President, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, in particular, and all other members who, with their dedication, have actively contributed towards the conservation of our heritage.*

*It is indeed an honour for me to act as a Patron of such an important organisation, whose mission over these last 40 years, has been to support cultural projects as well as to raise awareness of our cultural heritage. Cultural Heritage gives us our identity, be it linguistic, artistic or traditional. Our cultural heritage defines who we actually are. The cultural treasures, which we have inherited, are now in our hands and we have to ensure that they are valued and safeguarded for posterity so that future generations too could be proud of what Malta possesses. This is precisely what Din l-Art Helwa has been doing, acting as a watchdog over our country's treasures, lending its voice and providing the necessary means to see to the restoration, conservation and embellishment of the numerous treasures found all over these Islands and in particular those which have been entrusted to it.*

*In recent years, we Maltese have become more aware of our national heritage and the environment. This is the result of early educational campaigning and lobbying both by the relevant authorities and by a number of non-governmental organisations, the catalyst being Din l-Art Helwa. Such organisations should provide unbiased criticism on governmental measures in conserving cultural heritage and protecting the environment.*

*I cannot but express my gratitude towards the work that has been done by your organisation which is supported by a number of volunteers who dedicate most of their spare time towards the upkeep and the protection of a number of our country's treasures. Through such voluntary work, your organisation has, throughout the years, helped reduce the financial expenditure which otherwise would have had to be borne by government, but most of all it has managed to save a number of monuments which otherwise would have been lost for ever.*

*For all the sterling work your organisation has done, I would like to thank you and wish you ad multos annos.*

**HE Dr Edward Fenech Adami, President of the Republic of Malta,  
Patron since 2004**

Flight into Egypt Chapel at Pinto Stores







*I remember a series entitled I Was There, wherein people recounted personal experiences lived during the war.*

*The event we are commemorating is less dramatic, but it certainly was innovative in its time and long lasting in its effect. I was there at the Manoel Theatre when, on 9 July 1965, Maurice Caruana Curran, launched Din l-Art Helwa. The name stuck. Hundreds were present at the Manoel. Malta was living a new renaissance. Independence had been achieved less than a year before. The economy of the island was on the move. The building industry was heading towards one of its great expansions in history and to remember that only a very few years before, mass emigration to Australia was considered as the island's only safety valve and that the future of Malta was considered to be very bleak.*

*Din l-Art Helwa's role as the watchdog of the country's heritage, was sometimes misunderstood. We moved from an economic doom to an economic boom and remembering the affliction caused by the services rundown, the admonishments of Din l-Art Helwa on certain building sprees, were considered by some to be uncalled for. Life is made up of balancing acts. I believe that the role of Din l-Art Helwa, as the conscience of a people, was very relevant and very much needed throughout these 40 years which have seen major changes in Malta's contemporary history. How apt is the word Vigilo – it does carry the message of vigilance and perhaps more than guarding – safeguarding.*

*Today, Din l-Art Helwa is accepted as part of the Malta scene. We all heed its voice because it is the voice of reason, built on sound aesthetic principles, bound to our nation's history, living the cultural environment of our society.*

*Forty years after, one can look back with pride. One is encouraged to look forward with insistence, persistence and consistence.*

**President Emeritus, Professor Guido de Marco, Patron  
1999 - 2003**

*I am proud to say that I was present at the foundation meeting of Din l-Art Helwa at the Manoel Theatre 40 years ago, and have jealously kept my receipt for the first subscription, written in the late Dr Goffredo Randon's handwriting. I have followed the society very closely all these years.*

*There are many reasons for its success. First of all, it was ably led and steered through some troubled waters by Judge Caruana Curran. Secondly, the society never fell into the trap of viewing environmental concerns separately from the safeguarding of our historical, cultural and artistic heritage. Din l-Art Helwa was deemed worthy of care and protection in all its aspects, whether man-made or natural landscape, seascape, fauna and flora. The society resisted pressures from within and from outside it to become more stridently committed to narrow environmental issues, but maintained a balanced dedication to the best appreciation and preservation of the heritage taken as a whole.*

*During the years I was responsible as a Minister for both cultural heritage and the environment, the rapport between Din l-Art Helwa and Government was very direct. I received advice as well as critical comment, indeed I asked the society to act as consultant on certain issues. Nevertheless, there were occasions when the discussions at my office in Floriana became extremely lively. These exchanges proved to be useful and the conclusions arrived at were considerably enriched by the contributions made by the society.*

*Din l-Art Helwa was also very helpful when my then Ministry, through its various departments and sections (including the Girolamo Cassar School of Masonry), embarked on a number of restoration projects, including the rebuilding of the Flight into Egypt Chapel at Pinto Stores in the Valletta Marina, which will now figure prominently in the Viset Centre. The project attracted the Europa Nostra award, not without some help from Din l-Art Helwa. The society also gave advice and support when the ramparts at St Angelo and various other building on the Vittoriosa waterfront were repaired, and when the Maritime Museum was being set up. I would also like to mention the collaboration during the restoration of the Msida Bastion Cemetery. So that when the society offered to take care of Torri Mamo at Marsascala, I personally intervened to make it possible. When he was entrusted with environment protection, my colleague Dr Stanley Zammit also found the entente with the society very useful.*

*During my tenure of the Presidency I had frequent contacts and exchanges of views with the society and this has continued with Mr Martin Scicluna, Ms Simone Mizzi, Dr Ragonesi Jr, and a good number of active members, including the recent President, Martin Scicluna, after I left office – especially within the Committee of Guarantee.*

*Din l-Art Helwa has taken the lead in showing the way in which civil society (NGOs and other semi-public if not, strictly governmental, associations and institutions) can and should sustain the whole community's efforts in the safeguarding and appreciation of our common natural and human heritage in This Fair Land.*

**President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici,  
Patron 1994 - 1999**

**Archbishop Michael Gonzi**

*It gives me much pleasure to send this message on this inaugural day of your society, and I declare that I feel myself honoured by your request to do so.*

*As a son of these Islands Maltese born and bred, I share with you your love for the country which God has endowed with beauty all its own. To discern the characteristic trait of this beauty is one of your tasks, because you cannot improve on nature, unless you strive to respect its original and fundamental pattern. Malta must remain Malta, if it is to be loved by its citizens and admired by foreigners. These do not come here to find another asphalt jungle, because they have enough of them in their own lands. Malta cannot be turned into just another metropolis, because there are enough of them elsewhere, and because we must avoid a repetition of the classical fable of the frog trying to blow itself up into a cow and bursting asunder in the process.*

*We have enough history behind us and monuments to illustrate it, and beautiful nature spots to embellish it. Our monuments are more than the mere neolithic ruins which we must preserve, but without allowing other standing things to fall into ruin, either through the inclement action of elements, or through the destruction of vandals, the number of which must not be encouraged to increase by an inviting neglect. The exigencies of modern life and of economic needs must be blended with the skyline and the shoreline, the scenery and the size of the Island, so that no disproportion or disharmony come to mar them. Our villages must not be disembowelled, the semi-oriental touch of many spots must be respected, and our shores must be improved without destroying their public utility.*

*I wish you well, and I wish you plenty of imagination, so that it might assist you, like a sixth sense born of conscious and subconscious touch dictated by love. I welcome especially the private character of your Society, which reasserts the principal that mature people do not need the Government to prod them into initiative. Step by step, improvement by improvement, may you contribute in harmony towards the enhancement of Malta's beauty, and Gozo's charm out of love for your fellow citizens, out of civic pride before foreigners, and especially out of respect for God's own gifts of colour, contours and beautiful scenery with which He has endowed our country, framing it between the deep blue sea, and the clear blue heavens.*

**National Trust for Scotland**

*I am sending this message to you at the express wish of Lord Wemyss, the Chairman of Council and Executive Committee of this Trust. It is to wish you most sincerely all possible success at your inaugural meeting on 9 July, and all members of this Trust hope that you will be successful in forming a national non-Governmental body to care for the historical and natural heritage of Malta.*

*In addition to conveying this message of good will from the Chairman and all members of this Trust, I would like to reassure you that if there is any way in which it is thought that this Trust could assist you, we shall be only too pleased to help.*

*I can only add that you are to be congratulated on starting this movement because there must surely be an urgent need for the formation of a National Trust with the widest powers. We every day are gaining experience here on the ways in which an independent nationally respected body can do so much for the public enjoyment in the national interest. I would like to renew our message of good will and our offer of help in any way that you may consider possible.*

# Messages received by *Din l-Art Helwa* in 1965

**The National Trust**

*It is with the greatest pleasure that The National Trust welcomes the formation of The National Association for the safeguarding of the Historic, Artistic and Natural Heritage of Malta. The unique and stirring history of Malta, the famous buildings connected with its great past and the well-known natural beauty of your Island make the need for an organisation to preserve them an urgent one; the Association's claim for widespread support must surely have the strongest appeal.*

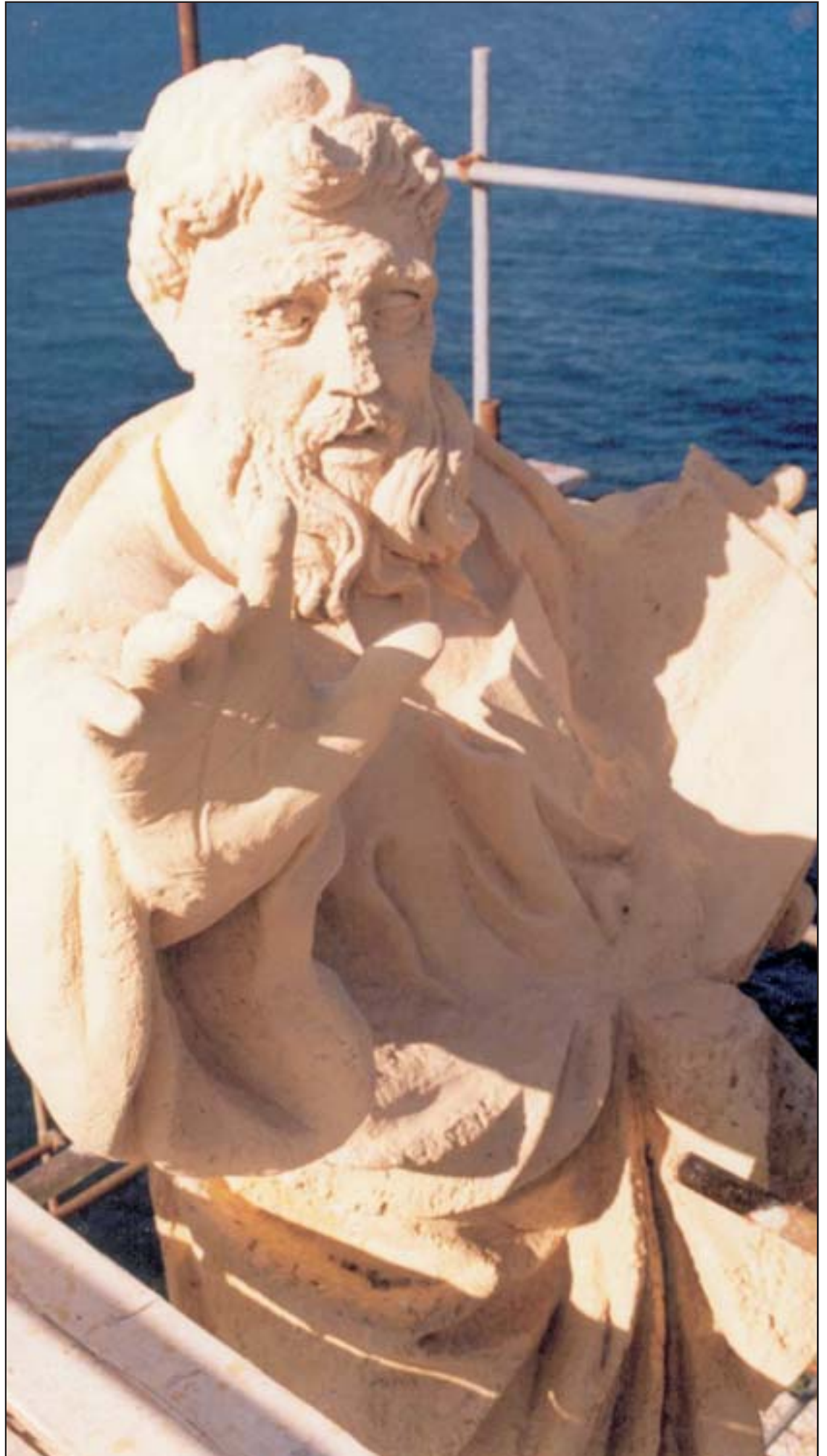
*The National Trust keeps in close and friendly touch with similar bodies in many Commonwealth countries and in other parts of the world. The traditions of friendship, respect and common interest between our two countries are so close that The National Trust is certain that the ties that bind us together will always grow stronger and to our mutual advantage.*

**Lord Duncan Sandys  
The Civic Trust In England**

*I am delighted to hear that an organisation is to be founded to preserve the unique beauties of Malta. Your famous Island is rich in noble monuments and picturesque streets, while its rugged coastline and smiling countryside possess a special charm. As President of the Civic Trust, which is undertaking a similar task in Britain, I send you my warm congratulations and best wishes for the success of your efforts. If our experience, gained by trial and error, is of any value to you, we shall be happy to place it at your disposal.*

*As a friend of Malta, I hope that your timely decision to take active steps to protect your heritage will bring pleasure to the people of Malta now and in generations to come, and will help to attract an ever-increasing flow of foreign visitors to your lovely Island.*

St Paul's Statue,  
St Paul's Islands,  
Restored 1996



*Looking back through the history of both our organisations, we can say with a sense of satisfaction that these 40 years have been a Maltese renaissance, in terms of environmental and heritage appreciation.*

*We have come a long way, a long, hard way, often fraught with difficulties. We can be proud, because we and our predecessors made it happen, all that we have achieved with enthusiasm and dedication, even though there remains a lot – often too much – to be done to achieve our ultimate goals.*

*Together we share the same love, appreciation and concern for what has been bestowed upon us by nature or previous generations. In this time of change it is the past that gives us the courage to look forward and meet the challenges and opportunities to continue working to achieve what we believe in.*

*BirdLife Malta is especially delighted that, in recent years, we have succeeded in crossing roads and teaming up together with the PARK (Parks, Afforestazzjoni u Restawr tal-Kampanja) section of the Rural Affairs and Environment Ministry, to realise our millennium project idea of recreating a Mediterranean woodland in Mellieħa – FORESTA 2000.*

*The President and Council, on behalf of our members and supporters, wish Din l-Art Helwa plenty more years of success in defending our heritage and restoring it to its fitting glory.*

*Ad multos annos, Din l-Art Helwa!*

*Sincerely,*

**Joseph M. Mangion**  
President - BirdLife Malta



# Messages received by *Din l-Art Helwa* in 2005

*On the occasion of Din l-Art Helwa's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I wish to take the opportunity, on behalf of Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, to extend my warmest congratulations and very best wishes to Din l-Art Helwa for having been, through the far-sighted vision of Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, the pioneers in creating public awareness of Malta's rich heritage of historical buildings and the environment in general.*

*Over the years, through sheer determination and hard work, Din l-Art Helwa has managed to build up an impressive inventory of restored historical buildings. The fact that this was all done by dedicated members on a voluntary basis and limited private funding makes it even more admirable.*

*What was undoubtedly of even greater weight in the long term, is that Din l-Art Helwa, through Martin Scicluna's unequivocal and courageous repeated interventions, both directly as well as via the media, managed to convince Government to finally take notice and recognise the sterling work that Din l-Art Helwa has been carrying out all these years, as had already been officially acknowledged by Europa Nostra.*

*While the road is never ending, I do not doubt that, as a result of past success, coupled to the maturity garnered over its appreciable and respectable existence, Din l-Art Helwa is equipped to take on more challenges and continue safeguarding our cultural heritage.*

**Maurice de Giorgio**  
Executive Chairman  
Fondazzjoni  
Patrimonju Malti



*An organisation that has put forward the Maltese heritage to levels that makes us all proud.*

*We look forward to seeing this dedication continue in the future, so as to inspire the new generations to be as dedicated towards conserving Maltese heritage.*

*BICREF has enjoyed having the full collaboration of Din l-Art Helwa in the past on issues linked to our natural heritage and it will be happy to do so in the future, too.*

*Best wishes to Din l-Art Helwa.*

**Dr Adriana Vella**  
BICREF  
The Biological  
Conservation  
Research  
Foundation



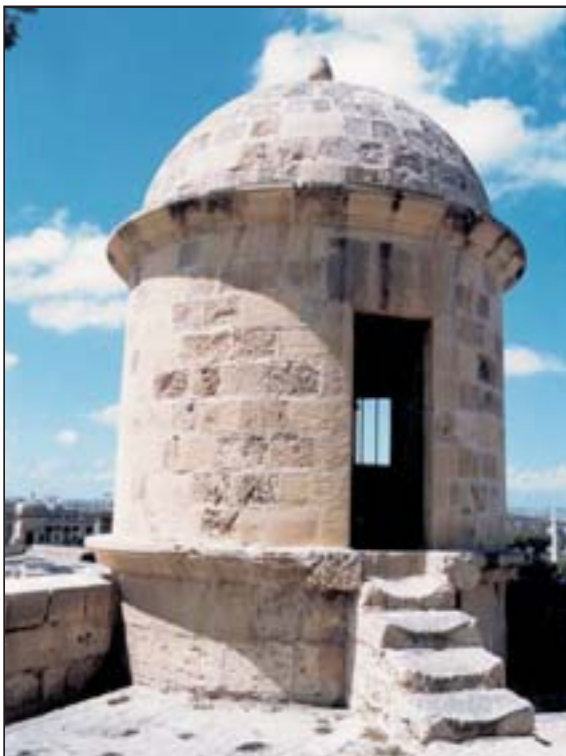
*It is with enormous pleasure that I write to congratulate Din l-Art Helwa on its many successes achieved over 40 years of hard work for Malta's heritage and its people. When I visited last year I saw at first hand your great cultural treasures, not just special to the Maltese people but of world significance, and the threats they face through inappropriate development and the pressures of change, both man-made and natural.*

*Din l-Art Helwa is a vital voice for the heritage and environment in Malta, and your lobbying role is as important as your ownership of properties. We are both island trusts, united in our beliefs and in our membership of an international heritage community. Much has happened since my predecessor Jack Rathbone welcomed your formation, not least Malta's accession to the European Union.*

*It is inspiring to see the National Trust model translated into so many different countries. Din l-Art Helwa's challenge, like ours, is to show our Governments how vital it is to look after our heritage and, by looking after special places ourselves, what an enormous contribution our heritage makes to the quality of life of our nations, creating a better future forever, for everyone.*

**Fiona Reynolds, CBE**  
**Director-General of the National Trust**

The Gardiola (Vedette) on St James' Bastion, restored in 1995



The Gardiola (Vedette) on St James' Bastion during restoration

Kull min ihobb tassew lil artna, l-omm li tatna isimha, ma jistax ma japprezzax dak kollu li s-soċjetà *Din l-Art Helwa* ghamlet fl-40 sena li ilha fostna, u li qed tkompli tagħmel, biex niehdu hsieb kif imiss il-wirt naturali u nazzjonali tagħna.

Wirt artna huwa għani. Sfortunatament, però, mhux dejjem apprezzajna biżżejjed, ilkoll kemm ahna, is-sbuhija u l-importanza ta' dan il-wirt jew ċerti oqsma tiegħu. Kienu diversi ċ-ċirkustanzi li minhabba fihom kien hemm żmien li aljenajna xi ftit irwiehna. Madanakollu, is-soċjetà *Din l-Art Helwa* spiss għenet biex, bil-kelma u bl-eżempju, tiftah il-għajnejn u turi t-triq it-tajba f'dan il-qasam.

Id-dmir li niehdu hsieb kif imiss il-wirt naturali u nazzjonali hu dmir ta' kull wiehed u wahda minna. Nafu lkoll x'jistax jgħri meta, ukoll jekk ftit, fostna jkun hemm min ma jifhimx jew ma jgħozzx biżżejjed dak li hu sabih u hu tagħna lkoll.

Is-soċjetà Maltija, għalhekk, ma tistax ma tkunx u tibqa' grata lejn dawk kollha li, b'sens kbir ta' mhabba u generozità, jiddedikaw tant hin, enerġiji u esperjenzi mhux biex jiksbu xi haġa għalihom infushom, imma biex jgħinu halli l-poplu tagħna japprezza u jhars dejjem aħjar, bil-kliem u bl-għemil, dak kollu li jagħmel parti mill-ġrajja u l-hajja nazzjonali Maltija.

**Ġużeppi Mercieca**  
**Arċisqof ta' Malta**



# Historic 1965 Resolution Concerning the Establishment of the National Association Called *Din l-Art Helwa* (“This Fair Land”)

## The Founder Members of *Din l-Art Helwa* (“This Fair Land”) meeting at the Manoel Theatre, Valletta, this 9<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1965:

Considering that Malta and Gozo have inherited from their past a historic and artistic heritage of monuments, buildings and sites, as well as other objects, of well-known and indeed, in certain respects, unique significance;

Considering also that nature has endowed these Islands with rural and coastal landscapes which enhance their beauty;

Considering that this historic, artistic and natural heritage, as known examples bear witness, is in peril of being lost or greatly damaged due to the ravages of time and to the mistakes which are sometimes made by persons unheedful of its importance;

Considering that such loss or damage would be severely detrimental to the spiritual, physical and material well-being of the people of Malta and Gozo, as well as to the aesthetic pleasure and happy relaxation of their visitors from other lands and of those who make these Islands their home;

Considering that while progress and modern development are essential they make it of the utmost urgency to formulate balanced policies and to adopt positive measures for the safeguarding of such vital heritage before irretrievable loss or damage results;

Considering that the present generation of the people of Malta and Gozo have very special responsibilities in this regard, and that to promote a greater public awareness and to stimulate voluntary initiatives a national, non-governmental body should be established, devoted to the task of conserving in co-operation with the competent State organs, the national heritage of these Islands.

### RESOLVE:

**TO FOUND**, as they do hereby found, a national association for the safeguarding of the historic, artistic and natural heritage of the nation, which association shall be known by the second, third and fourth words of the National Anthem *Din l-Art Helwa* (“This Fair Land”) and shall be constituted in accordance with the Rules prepared by the promoters of this Association and distributed at this meeting, three copies whereof, together with three copies of this Resolution, are for future record being signed by the Chairman of this meeting the Hon. Mr Justice Maurice Caruana Curran and by two other Founder Members here present, namely: Mr Salvino Mizzi and Dr Joseph H Reynaud, it being understood that the foregoing approval of the Rules is provisional in the sense that an Extraordinary General Meeting will be called by the Council within six months for the purpose of giving consideration to any amendments thereof that may be moved, at which Extraordinary Meeting such amendments may be decided upon by a simple majority of those present whatever their number.

**APPROVED** in our presence at the Inaugural Meeting held at the Manoel Theatre on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1965, in witness whereof we have hereunto placed our signatures on the same date.

### FOUNDER MEMBERS:

*Salvino Mizzi*  
*Joseph H Reynaud*

### CHAIRMAN OF MEETING:

*Maurice Caruana Curran*

# Extracts from the Governor General's Speech at the Inauguration of *Din l-Art Helwa* on 9th July 1965 at the Manoel Theatre

**Sir Maurice Dorman**  
was Governor of Malta from  
1962 to 1964  
and Governor General from  
1964 to 1971.

Let me sum up briefly the task to which the promoters of *Din l-Art Helwa* call you and through you all in Malta this day. It is:

**To promote beauty,  
To fight ugliness,  
To preserve our heritage,  
in city and village, in the country and by the sea.**

This is a task in which you will have everyone's support – for we all love This Fair Land. But you will not have everyone's understanding – for we are not all blessed with eyes to see what improves, what mars or what is crumbling, and you will not have everyone's help – for we are not blessed with determination, courage and energy to fight for what is worth saving. You are putting your hands to a task which is as arduous as it is essential in Malta today. Welcome to a challenge which will engage all your interest, your insight and your initiative!

If you approve the resolution and proposals put before you today you will be assuming a real responsibility to the people of these islands and a moral obligation involving a heavy schedule of individual effort. There is no one else covering the whole of this field and many will look to you for guidance and for action. You will find, I believe, that your endeavours will group themselves into four main headings: Preservation, Restoration, Education and Prevention.

## **Firstly, Preservation:**

By this I mean activities akin to those of Italia Nostra or of the National Trust in Britain. There are three things you can do here. First, while you cannot immediately develop an organisation which would become a repository for the Stately Homes of Malta you can start working to this end. You will first have to prove your ability and obtain a measure of public confidence. But "mighty things from small beginnings grow", and we have to start somewhere.

I can foresee the possibility of government, landowners and people being prepared to consign to your care strips of coastland so that they could not be developed and would forever be preserved as they are now. I can imagine your accepting the care of an old house, furnishing it by loans of good things from your members, and maintaining it in conjunction with the Public works Department from fees taken when it is opened to visitors. But this will take time.

**Secondly**, you can develop and promote and preserve areas of outstanding natural beauty. You can seek agreement with landowners as to what those areas might be and so prepare the way.

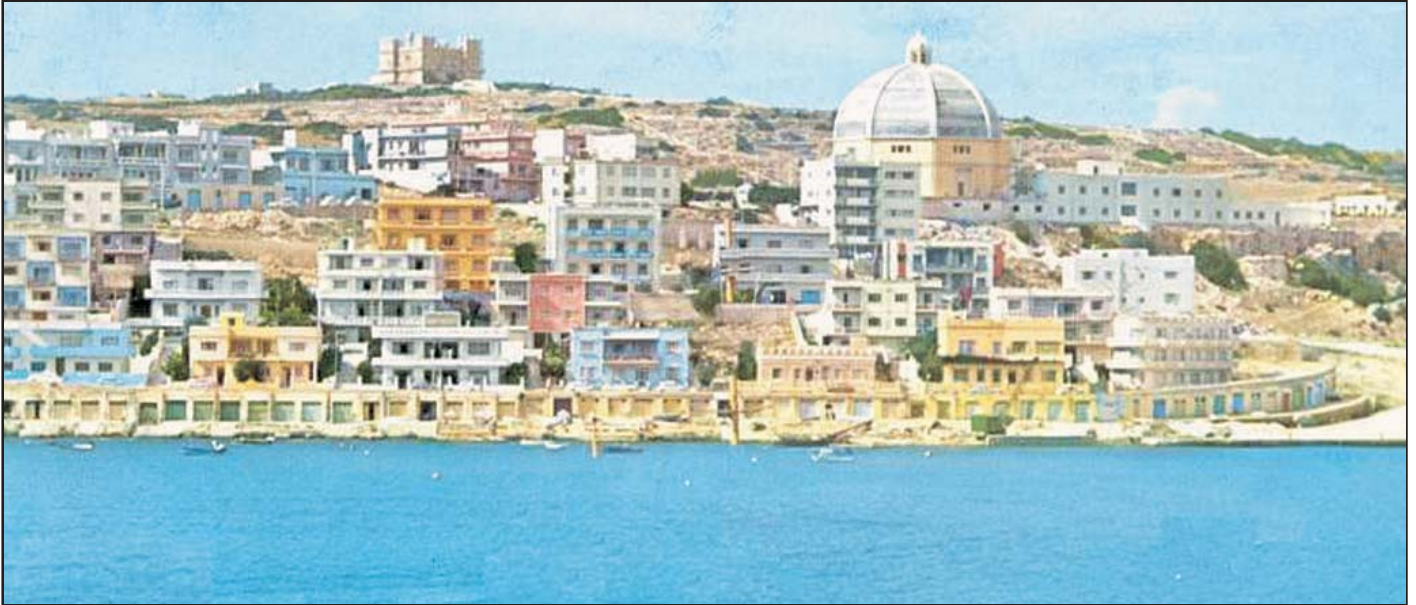
**Thirdly**, you can in conjunction with the Museum authorities seek to establish which buildings are really worth preservation and to publish a list of them. Some work has already been done on this, but it is my impression that much remains to be done – all buildings of equal antiquity are not of equal value. There may also be buildings of comparatively modern character, of the last century, which are worth preserving – what about the hospital at Bighi or the Victoria Lines for instance?

## **Secondly, Restoration:**

By this I mean activities akin to those undertaken by the Civic Trust in Britain. The removal of eyesores in town or countryside. Let me quote a few practical examples of what might be done:

Bighi Naval Hospital





The "coat of many colours" of Xemxija  
from an old postcard

Between Floriana and Valletta could not the filling station and advertisers be dissuaded from spoiling an area of great dignity by petty posters which are a bad rather than good advertisement?

In many places barbed wire is offensive. Could not a working party seek to get the Services, farmers and the Agricultural Department, all of whom offend in this way, to remove such eyesores?

In country areas, rusty oil drums are hideous on dry stonewalls.  
What can be done to persuade farmers to replace them?

Could youth groups be organised to get rid of other eyesores in the countryside, rusted target frames on the seashore at Ta' Qawra and other Servicon relics or to rebuild parts of the Victoria Lines.

But everyone can make their own list of eyesore. We can all see that there is scope for endless work of removal, renovation and restoration.

### Thirdly, Education:

This might be said to be part of both preservation and prevention. It is not only education of the public to care for their countryside and beaches, but persuasion of advertisers, builders and public authorities to do what is good rather than what is easy, cheap, messy, or garish – to awaken public interest in good street furnishings, in good architecture and in good planning.

I think of good and bad shop fronts and shop signs, of danger from soft drink signs, of overhead cables criss-crossing the streets, of posters misplaced by Government departments, but most of all of the misuse of colour. The fishermen painting their craft never go wrong. The doors and surrounds, the shutters and window frames of a building in Malta stone is seldom done badly.

There is an instinctive understanding among the people here. But one has only think of the "coat of many colours" of Xemxija, the silver B.P. tanks, the blue smoke stack of the Phoenicia laundry, the juxta position of red and green benches in the gardens of San Anton, to realise how much needs to be done. The sun of course will be the greatest help in peeling off men's worst efforts. But could not some architect members produce a brochure on the painting of modern buildings in Malta.

### Fourthly, Prevention:

Here the Association's role is, when all else fails, to persuade the Government and its ministries to take power to prevent and prohibit the few from marring the enjoyment and appreciation of the many. If necessary, to outlaw hoarding to make illegal billposting – there are many other methods of advertisement open to promoters today. But more important than this is the prevention of haphazard development, the prevention of ugly, urban sprawl, the prevention

The silver B.P. tanks,  
removed in 1974





of overcrowding by reserving open spaces and prevention of the unsightly by the control of industry and of workshops – all this regimes the adoption of effective town and country planning legislation. It is part of your business to ensure and to show that the public do care about these things and it is on that basis that a Government can then act.

I have adopted briefly to outline something of the practical scope of activities which I see as lying before you. It seems a formidable list and you may doubt your ability to tackle it. I do not suggest that you should tackle it all at once. But let me offer you three maxims in the conduct of your affairs:

**Be practical** – it is no use to say, however true it may be, that the biggest eyesore in Malta is television aerials, because they are here to stay.

There is bound to be a clash of interest in those problems.

Tackle the things you can do and do them well.

**Be persistent** – because you cannot make much impact on a big problem, do not be put off doing all you can in smaller ways.

Never forget the power of persistent publicity.

**Be co-operative** – you will get better results by offering constructive help than offensive criticism. Remember that there are others who have been working many years at some of these matters and often with good success; the Museum Authorities, the Aesthetics Board and the Public Works Department – you can help each other greatly.

Your tools of action are persuasion and publicity. Your means of action are men and women of every walk in life prepared to give time and effort to these tasks. You will then be surprised how much help and support you attract from the public, from the authorities and from others interested in Malta.

**I wish you every success in the promotion of beauty, the fighting of ugliness and the preservation of our heritage in This Fair Land.**

Hideous rusty oil drums  
in the country area around Mosta  
in the '70s



# Extracts from the First Annual General Meeting Report

Judge Maurice Caruana Curran

President of *Din l-Art Helwa*

31st May 1966

As President of your Council it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Association's First Annual General Meeting. The fact that we have safely reached such a stage, as well as the contents of this report, will, I hope, prove that in spite of the usual teething troubles this Association has come to stay as a desirable, if not essential, addition to Malta's civic movements.

It is now my duty to give you an account of our activities during our first year of existence.

His Excellency the Governor General, Sir Maurice Dorman, has been graciously pleased to become the Patron of this Association. In recognition of the outstanding services rendered by his enlightened support, the Council has unanimously elected Sir Maurice Dorman a Benefactor of this Association.

I am sure you will be pleased to hear that since the Inaugural Meeting the membership of the Association has risen to 600. My Council believes that with a little effort the four-figure mark should be reached by next year.

In pursuing its objectives, the Council has maintained contacts throughout all necessary Government levels. I am very proud to say that in the Hon. Prime Minister, by whom delegations were received personally on a number of occasions, we have found a true friend on whose innate good taste and love of beauty much depends for the future of Malta's heritage. We have also had meetings with the former Minister of Works, the Hon. Dr J. Spiteri, and still have regular meetings with the Director of Public Works.

We have recently had a most rewarding meeting with the new Minister of Education, Culture and Tourism, the Hon. Dr P. Borg Olivier, and are awaiting

an interview with the new Minister of Public Buildings and Works, the Hon. Dr C. Caruana, whom we must thank for the tribute he paid us in a recent newspaper interview. We are also grateful for the interest shown by Members of Parliament, who have raised questions in the House on matters related to our objectives.

The result of these official contacts and the favourable publicity attending our formation and inception of activities – I must here thank all sections of the Press for their unfailing support – has been that in our first year we have nearly completed the first phase of our mission, namely that of bringing about a greater public awareness of the problems of historical and aesthetic preservation.

This has led to a fairly wide measure of recognition culminating in recent events about which we cannot but feel happy, namely:

The statement in the Speech from the Throne of April 25, 1966, that "in the process of physical development it will be the constant care of all Ministers to safeguard the landscape and our unique historical and artistic heritage".

The second event is that of the creation of a new Ministry of Education, Culture and Tourism. The concept involves the protection of all "cultural property" under the new Minister's charge, and we feel that here we have another friend to whom we can turn with confidence and who can rely on us for all the co-operation he needs in his arduous task.

The third event, and one which I announce with really great pleasure, is the decision of the Minister I have just mentioned to invite this Association to nominate a representative on the Tourist Board. We have accepted this invitation and have submitted to the Minister the name of Dr Edward Mercieca, one of the original Promoters and now a member both of the Council and of the Executive Committee.

We have also obtained the recognition of the Church Authorities by the appointment of Chev. V. Bonello, the distinguished art expert and one of our most assiduous Council members to serve as Ecclesiastical Liaison Officer for the preservation of religious monuments.

With industry and business too we feel that we are beginning to achieve a wide measure of understanding. The important thing here is for people to understand that we are not against progress. Far from it. All we say is that there are ways in which things should be done and ways in which they should not be done and that the story of the last few years in Malta unfortunately shows that the latter course has been followed too often.

This page:  
The deteriorating  
Bir Miftuh Chapel  
before restoration by  
*Din l-Art Helwa*

Opposite:  
Fresco from  
Hal Millieri



We want to stop and reverse the trend. We hope that beneficial results will eventually emerge from a meeting which we have had, thanks to the initiative of one of our Life Member, with the Presidents of the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Malta Industries and the Confederation of Employers.

There is, of course, so much else to be done, particularly in the field of legislation to provide better protection to our national monuments and to our landscape. We hope that green areas and long stretches of coast will still be saved from the often mistaken hurry of the speculator. We feel that the first essential step in this direction is an official declaration by Government that it endorses and intends to implement the provisions of the UNESCO Recommendation for the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites of December 11, 1962, which, with its happy compromise between the needs of preservation and development is our guide and manual in everything we try to do. We trust that the Government will embrace more and more the principles of advanced planning and of consultation with public opinion as enshrined in the UNESCO document.

A second most urgent and vital step is the completion and publication of the Master Plan for the physical development of these Islands. As long as this remains incomplete and not exposed to public discussion, we shall continue to be faced by a series of *faits accomplis* by those who can manoeuvre better in the tactical struggle. This should be so obvious that it need hardly be said, yet every day we see the sorry spectacle of buildings going up in the wrong places, or in the wrong style, or on the wrong scale, or in the wrong colour until the whole of Malta, and perhaps Gozo too, will eventually be spoilt.

We do not maintain that everything that is being done is ugly. There are encouraging signs also, among which we are very glad to mention the Kennedy Memorial and the mercifully low building, graced with stone arches and wrought iron that is going to be the home of the Malta Hilton. We are also very pleased with the restoration works that are being carried out at the Inquisitor's Summer Palace.

We hope and pray that good taste and a greater sensitivity to the character of Malta will prevail, but we are frankly alarmed by the dimensions and beehive style of the Excelsior Hotel at Floriana, which should never have been built on this site.

We have requested the Government either to publish the plans, so as to enable public opinion to express itself, or to use its power under the contract to demand a wholesale revision of the existing plans, so as to bring them into external harmony with the selected site. The beauty of this landscape and our own prestige as a nation are at stake. We must show that we are fully conscious of our responsibilities as its custodians for the nation and the world. Later on in this meeting, on behalf of the Council, I will propose a resolution on this subject and on the adoption of the other measures referred to above in connection with the UNESCO Recommendation and the Master Plan for physical development. Everything that this Association stands for depends on them.



# The Vital Role of *Din l-Art Helwa* by 'John Citizen' of 'The Bulletin' - June 1966

*"That is precisely why the association has come into existence. Its chairman and its council decided it was time to save the face of Malta before it was hopelessly disfigured by land speculators"*

This page:  
St Julian's peninsula in its  
very early stages of development

Opposite:  
The first  
Ramla Bay Hotel, Marfa

Mr Justice Caruana Curran, The President of *Din l-Art Helwa*, in his annual report at the general meeting of the Association, having announced that since the inaugural meeting the membership of the association has risen to 600, expressed his hope and that of the Governor General, the Patron of the Society, that *Din l-Art Helwa* will shortly count its members not only in hundreds, but also in thousands.

From a careful perusal of the report which contains an account of its achievements, I could not but wish *Din l-Art Helwa* good luck and all the success it deserves. Malta is at the moment going through a period of transformation and adaptation in order to meet the challenge of the new times. Faced with the sudden reality of the general run down in the Services, the Government of Malta had to study ways and means of replenishing the old sources which went suddenly dry.

The change over from colonial economy to the pattern of a precious economy conditioned by the agencies of a new social pattern imposed a number of urgent alternative sources for such replenishment. One is tourism which one can describe as Malta's salvation under one aspect and as Malta's damnation under another aspect.

The other day, an educated English tourist with relatives in Malta told me while we tipped our soft drinks "What a pity and a great loss it will be if Malta's beautiful

landscape will be defaced by more ugly and garish painted houses completely out of tune with the colour tone of beautiful stone in Malta."

I couldn't agree more. All the 600 members of *Din l-Art Helwa* could not agree more. That is precisely why the association has come into existence. Its chairman and its council decided it was time to save the face of Malta before it was hopelessly disfigured by land speculators, some of whom have an eye for beauty though they are primarily after money, while others have an eye for easy big money, happen what may to the Maltese landscape.

Luckily something happened to prevent the disfigurement of part of Sliema Strand by the erection of large hotel obstructing a large part of Sliema sea view; but it seems that business bug travelled from there very stealthily to the bastion area behind the Phoenicia Hotel.

In the speech from the throne we were assured that 'in the process of physical development it will be the constant care of all ministers to safeguard Malta's landscape and our unique historical and artistic heritage'. But, frankly, though the Government has a willing ally in *Din l-Art Helwa*, there is not much that this association can do to aid the Malta Government to save and spare Malta's landscape if the Government itself will not stop the foolish policy of treating its building plans as confidential. It seems that



*“I cannot understand why the Government is not being more far-sighted and scrupulously strict in all matters affecting Malta’s landscape which once permanently disfigured will constitute a permanent eyesore.”*

*“In the speech from the throne we were assured that in the process of physical development it will be the constant care of all ministers to safeguard Malta’s landscape and our unique historical and artistic heritage”*

the plans of the hotel in question were privately shown to the council members of *Din l-Art Helwa* but they were not enabled to submit the plans for the comments of the members of the Association.

Because Malta’s landscape is our inalienable heritage the Government should make it a policy to publish all designs of large scale buildings both if these are the Government’s own plans or are the plans of capitalists building on Government property. In this way, the general public can express its reactions.

I know there will be many foolish letters in the press, but there will be a few comments written by sensible people who know what they are talking about, and can give the Government good advice. The creation of a new Ministry of Education and Tourism involves the protections of all cultural property under the Minister’s charge. In other words, the association of *Din l-Art Helwa* is going to rely on Dr P Borg Olivier for co-operation (a free exchange of) on matters of common interest, namely the preservation of Malta’s cultural heritage.

So far, *Din l-Art Helwa* has taken action about the following places of natural or historical interest.

**The Upper Barracca  
saluting Battery**

**Church of Most Holy  
Annunciation at Hal Millieri**

**Għajn Tal-Hasselin  
(Public Fountain) Msida**

**Windmill, Naxxar  
St. John’s Cavalier, Valletta**

**Ghadira Water Pond and  
Bird Sanctuary, Mellicha**

I cannot understand why the Government is not being more far-sighted and scrupulously strict in all matters affecting Malta’s landscape which once permanently disfigured will constitute a permanent eyesore.

I conclude repeating the following paragraph from the inaugural report by Mr Justice Caruana Curran:

*“We hope and pray”, said Mr Justice Caruana Curran, “that good taste and a greater sensitivity to the character of Malta will prevail, but we are frankly alarmed by the dimensions and beehive style of the Excelsior Hotel at Floriana, which should really never have been built on this site”.*

*“We have requested the Government either to publish the plans, so as to enable public opinion to express itself, or to use its powers under the contract to demand a wholesale revision of the existing plans, so as to bring them into external harmony with the selected site. The beauty of this landscape and our own prestige as a nation are fully at stake. We must show that we are fully conscious of our responsibilities as its custodians for the nation and the world”.*

Well-spoken, well-said, but will the wise words be heard and heeded by the Government before Malta’s landscape is permanently injured and disfigured?



# Message to *Din l-Art Helwa* from Sir Maurice Dorman, GCMG, GCVO At the First Annual General Meeting on 31st May, 1966

*I am truly sorry that other responsibilities prevent me being present with you this evening and I apologise for this – I had hoped to be here.*

*I send to you all my best wishes and congratulations on the excellent start which has been made by the organisation. You have shown that there is a need for this organisation and that you will be heard when you have something to say. Now we must begin to develop on a wider basis.*

*First, I learn that you have now enrolled some 600 members and this is splendid. But we must endeavour to spread our membership even more widely so that we are numbered by thousands and not by hundreds. The support of businessmen, trade unionists, teachers and farmers is very necessary.*

*Larger numbers will increase our influence and give added weight to what you say. It will lead to more people appreciating the aims of the society. It will spread the burden of work which now falls on the shoulders of only a few.*

*I appeal to all who love This Fair Land, who treasure its heritage and who hope to foster its future, all who are glad that Din l-Art Helwa exists, to help and support by joining it and getting others to join it.*

*Second, I suggest that you should develop on a broader front and that you should spread the burden by setting up sub-committees charged with the examination and framing of proposals on specific issues. To such sub-committees you could co-opt those who can make a special contribution through their knowledge, profession or interest.*

*Your influence will depend not only on numbers but on expertise – on the thorough and practical analysis of every problem or matter you take up. For this you will need to seek the co-operation of those who are experts – do not be afraid of them, they love This Fair Land as much as we do.*

*Third, we should begin addressing ourselves to a wider audience – to the builders or proprietors of hotels, to the developers, to the advertisers, to the Services, to the public. After all, it is not always the Government which is at fault, they may have the means to right a wrong, but the wrong, the fault, the mistake has been committed often by others. We must address ourselves to the prime causes.*

*To sum up in a few words – we must now start developing in width and in depth.*

*My best wishes to you all.*

# The Future of The Past :

## Problems of Conservation in a Developing Area

### Sir Hugh Casson, MA, ARA, RDI, FRBI, FSIA

First may I say how honoured and pleased I am to be your guest speaker here today – honoured for obvious reasons I think, pleased for more specific ones. First it is flattering.

Secondly it gives me a chance to see once again your historic and (so far!) still beautiful island, and thirdly because it gives me the chance of congratulating you, my hosts, members of *Din l-Art Helwa* – if you are not members I hope you will be after tonight – which in two years has already achieved a membership of over 600, and in particular the Hon. Mr Justice Caruana Curran, President of this Association, upon your enterprises and hard work fighting on this desperately important battlefield – for battlefield it most certainly is – chaotic, bewildering, fragmented, in which it is sometimes genuinely difficult to know who's side one is on and for how long.

Nevertheless, I am genuinely surprised to have been asked:

(a) because I am an architect; and those who love beauty (as you, as members of your Society must certainly do) seldom love architects; and

(b) because I am, as it were, a stranger here happily ignorant of your particular problems and difficulties. This ignorance has its advantages, for I genuinely do not know whose toes I am going to tread on tonight, and those who limp as they leave this beautiful theatre, even if they deserve their bruises, will, I hope, accept them bravely as having been dealt out in innocence.

Now having indulged in this traditional protest of my inadequacy for tonight's talk, I shall continue, equally traditionally, to prove it. We have got a lot to do and not much time to do it. So may I clear the ground to begin with?

#### BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CONSERVATION

**First**, throughout this talk I am going to use the word "conserve" rather than "preserve". "Conserve" means "wise use" and implies development. "Preserve" has undertones, however unjust, of "embalment". Somehow people today think of "preserve" as static and of "conserve" as dynamic.

**Secondly**, since we are among friends, let us disarm our enemies by admitting the dangers of conservation. They are nostalgia, permanence, timidity, lack of realism and obstructionism, which are all negative forces. We all know about these faults. Let us guard against them in the coming campaign.

Extracts from a lecture  
given by  
Sir Hugh Casson  
at the  
Manoel Theatre  
Valletta

10 January 1967

**Thirdly**, since we are involved in battle, let us have a slogan and principles to fight for. May I suggest as our slogan Sansovino's prescription:

*"A city should be built for the convenience and satisfaction of those who live there – and to the great surprise of strangers."*

As principles? May I propose three for your acceptance:

1. We live in an age of technology – motorcars, aerodromes, power stations, factories, jukeboxes, water skiing, and we must come to terms with it, and not pretend it does not exist.

2. You (and I in England) live in a small and overcrowded island. This means there is no room to mess about. It is like living in a boat. Safety, comfort and pleasure depend upon "a place for everything and everything in its place".

3. Although ultimately an environment is everybody's responsibility, the chief responsibility lies – as with a factory, a farm, or a household – with management, i.e. the Government and their specialist advisers. I cannot say that in England, or from what I have seen here, we have any of us much to be proud of – and I speak here for my colleagues in the profession of planning and architecture and administration, as a guilty man myself. Having said this, let us waste no time blaming other people for the mess we are in. We made it ourselves, directly as individuals or indirectly through our chosen representatives.

Now we all know that every piece of land here – since there is so little of it – (as in Britain) must be wisely used. There are the development demands of industry – factories, dockyards, housing, agriculture, hotels and power stations. There are mass recreational needs to be catered for. There are minority but essential enthusiasms to be watched over – archaeology, bird watching, rock-climbing, skin-diving, cycle-racing, and even, perhaps simple contemplation.

#### NEED FOR IMMEDIATE SURVEY

How are all these conflicting needs to be met? Only, I suggest, by a thorough and immediate survey and value assessment of what is already there, followed by a strong imaginative and creative policy for action. Obviously no battle can be won without good intelligence. That intelligence must be made available

now – i.e. within six months – if not already there. Concentrate on the most vulnerable areas and treat them as “crash problems”. Our Government gave our coastal authorities six months maximum to assemble the necessary information. Better even incomplete information now, than full information that is out of date and useless because it has taken five years to collect.

Now, collecting this information honestly is not difficult or onerous. Some of it can be done by voluntary societies like you, some of it needs people no more expert than senior students. Everybody can help, and the more widely based the help, the more involved people are, the better. But facts are no substitutes for judgements – and these will be difficult. Lots of money and hundreds of people are personally involved and the atmosphere will be highly charged.

### **There are three questions to get clear:**

**Whether to conserve**

**What to conserve**

**How to conserve**

### **WHETHER TO CONSERVE**

I hope by our presence here tonight we all signify our belief that despite all the dangers previously referred to, a policy of positive conservation of a national heritage, natural or man-made, is not only desirable, but wholly admirable. It is irrational maybe but deeply set, and rightly so, in the human mind. It is also most properly enshrined in your Constitution: “The State shall safeguard the landscape and the historical and artistic patrimony of the nation.” You yourselves have said it. Let us therefore, waste no more time on this question.

### **WHAT TO CONSERVE**

I suggest five categories can be named:

1. The masterpiece – a cathedral, a temple, a castle, this theatre.
2. The group masterpiece – a finely grouped hilltop village, a handsome street, a line of fortifications. None of them individually masterpieces, but together undoubtedly one.
3. The place or building or object associated with a great man or an historic event. (This is a literary, not an aesthetic matter and is assessed, therefore, on different values).
4. The fragment or oddity – a ruined windmill, a memorial stone, an archaeological relic, a statue, a paved courtyard, a particularly well-shaped tree.
5. A piece of natural scenery, large or small, tame or wild.

### **SAFEGUARDING THE COASTLINE**

Now I would like to concentrate for a few moments on the field of conservation of the coastline, as it is of such vital importance both to you and to us in the United Kingdom. For both of us it is perhaps our greatest glory. We neither of us have much of it, and it is a fast disappearing asset. It is not impossible – unless you do something about it – that Malta, instead of being surrounded with rocks and sand and sea-spray will be a concentration camp of fences, car-parks, hotels, villas, litter bins and tarmac – and who will want to come here then?

You are, in fact, as we were, on the verge of suffering a major defeat upon your beaches – made all the more tragic because it is self-inflicted – and it is a defeat for which you will receive from future generations absolutely no sympathy at all. These problems, which are the products of mass holidays and mobility, and with which you, I am sure, are familiar, include the following:

1. Coast roads, even panoramic roads are too often barriers separating land



Mile Stone, limits of Mgarr

Crucifix Tree, Saqqajja





from sea, thus mutilating that magic line where land and water meet. Watch out for this.

2. There is a conflict between car-parking near the sea where it is convenient but also hideous, and inland where it can more easily be hidden but motorists will not use it. This can only be solved by forbidding parking along the road, but the ban must be strictly enforced.

3. The seaside, because it attracts crowds, attracts squalor, shacks, litter, notice, fencing and the other excrescences of what has unfortunately acquired the description “seaside slum”. There is no fitter description. The secret here is to concentrate – do not dissipate.

4. New demands – water skiing, marinas, bring new problems to the ears as well as the eyes. Keep noise and silence apart.

5. Together these problems and demands tend to produce similar answers (or attempted answers) and tend to iron out all differences of personality between one seaside area and another and make them all uniformly faceless. This is fatal.

The solution here again is the familiar one – the simple doctor’s rule – examine, diagnose, prescribe. I assume your examination survey has been done – it is inexcusable if it has not been done – I assume you are, like us, now trying to sort out how to meet the conflicting demands. This brings me to my last question: How to conserve?

**HOW TO CONSERVE**

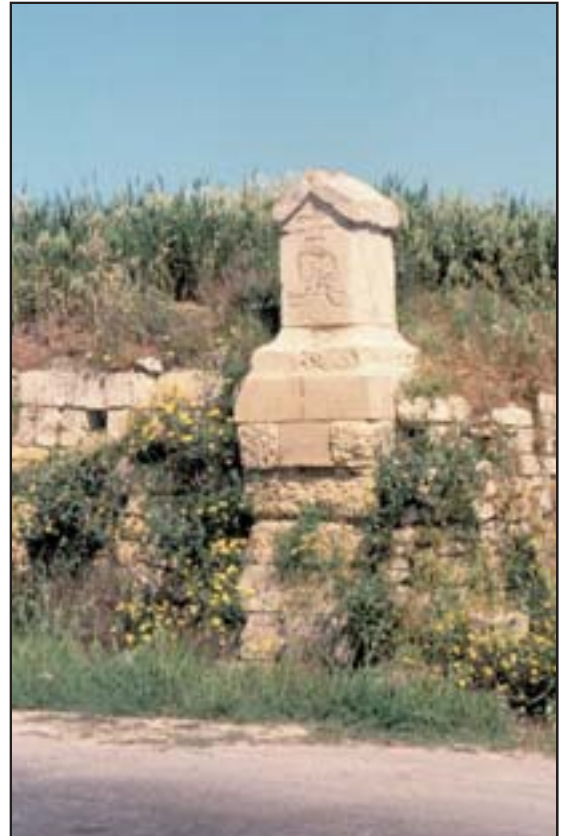
Here I am on uncertain ground. I know what we in Britain do (with varying success) but do not know how you manage. One thing is true about both of us. We are not doing enough, (a) because we lack the will and (b) because our planning (since in the end it usually means trying to prevent, in the interests of the community, somebody from doing what they want to do) is to most people either a nuisance or a joke and is beset by the human frailties of expediency, delays, fake tolerance, timidity and greed. Our conservation machine in Britain is a good one.

We have firm legislation, a system of officially recording in various grades buildings and landscapes of outstanding interest or beauty, a Royal Fine Art Commission that vets the design of all buildings to be placed on positions of more than local importance, and a Historic Buildings Council that makes grants of up to half a million a year to maintain monuments and buildings of a national importance. We also have a network of Amenity Societies of all sizes and interests, the principal one of which is the National Trust, and (thank goodness) a huge army of cranks of all kinds who keep an eye open for vandalism even if they cannot always prevent it happening. But none of this is any good if – as so often happens – the real will is lacking. I hope it is present at least here tonight.

**BETTER LEGISLATION NEEDED**

Believe me, I know your difficulties, principally shortage of staff and money – plus, I venture to suggest, shortage of clear aims. Your legislation has had a confused history, has proved inadequate and is being revised, but cannot, even with the promised help of experts, be re-drafted and working in under tow years. Your listing procedure is out-of-date and starved of funds. Your Aesthetics Board seems not to be treated seriously enough – perhaps through lack of vigour within itself. Your laws seem better framed for protection of monuments than for the conservation of natural beauty, and not attentive enough to monuments in their setting. The building of the wall round the neolithic temple at Haġar Qim is a case in point, even if carried out with a good intention.

Your fines for aesthetic misbehaviour are ludicrously small. There seems to be no co-ordination of policy in such small, but important, items as the purchasing of street lamps, street signs and other street amenities. Your hardworking planning staff have no time for creative thought and must spend their time in trying to keep their heads above the rising tide of routine paperwork. You are, in fact in exactly



Crown property marker, Saqqajja

The old Haġar Qim wall





Newly cleared road in front of Qrendi parish church



Site of the old Floriana car park before the creation of the present multi-storey car park

the same situation as most countries in the world, but with an easier (because more compact) area to handle and with one tremendous advantage – a glorious natural building material in ample supply right under your feet. So all is not lost.

### CRISIS FOR MALTA'S BEAUTY

History provides endless examples of Malta, when faced with a real crisis, coping with it courageously and briskly. But crisis – I must repeat this again – is your situation today. Obviously a crash situation demands crash attitudes and crash techniques. Bearing in mind our slogan and our principles may I suggest – once we have completed our survey on the front line – a few rules to follow? They are not in any order of importance:

1. Beware of over-enthusiastic antiquarianism, period-snobbery or indiscriminate preservation. This, however well meant, can lead to embalmmnt, paralysis and victory by default to the vandals.
2. Beware of aesthetic rigidity – the formal axial approach to a village church is very dull and uninteresting.
3. Do not confuse judgement with justice; the first is essential, the second impossible.
4. Beware of the cute, the artificially primitive, the curio souvenir, the dressing-up box device.

### TEN CARDINAL RULES FOR GOOD CONSERVATION

1. Take a look at the management – Central and Local Government. Is what it does and what it owns visually good enough? All Government and municipal property – buildings, lamp-posts, museums, street-furniture, note-paper, staff uniforms, should be top quality in design within the budgeting limit. No nation should be satisfied with the second-rate. After all we pay enough for it. Why should it not be good? It is too important to be left to non-visually trained or insensitive and overworked civil servants.
2. Insist – for it is surely your right – on the pre-publication – in adequate time to do something about it if you want to – of all development schemes on the coast or in areas of special beauty and interest. Once more I am assuming these areas have already been defined – if they have not, ask why not?
3. Insist that all developers and their architects show the new development – by model – photo-collage or extended drawing – in its setting. Accept for examination no drawing of a building in a street that does not show its immediate neighbours.
4. Judge each case on its merits, and in difficult cases, always on the spot – never from plans and photographs. In Bath the Planning Committee make regular inspection tours to discuss difficult cases on site.
5. Guard relentlessly your specialities – a hilltop village, a small harbour front, a skyline silhouette. In cases of very great importance or difficulty, full-size mock-ups in scaffold and building board may be justified. If somebody wants to build near a national monument he must be ready to take, and pay for, a bit of extra trouble. After all, we have got to look at it.
6. Do not let the best be the enemy of the good. Modest improvements now should not be postponed for long-term utopias.
7. Do not be over-fussy over small things. You will only get known as fuss-pots and lose respect. People have to live and work. They are not exhibits in a museum.
8. Do not be thrown into panic by the motor car, nor spend millions of pounds and great technical ingenuity on temporary palliative. Obviously you must segregate through, local and pedestrian traffic; avoid widening narrow picturesque roads or streets (make the motorist go slower or go round or even walk); keep car-parks as far as possible out of sight or screened from direct view.

9. Enlist the aid of local newspapers to spot vandalism and encourage thoughtful improvement. They are usually on the right side – and anyway they love a good argument.

10. Never relax, for the battle is never over. Do not forget that the quickest way to kill a good idea is to swamp it with praise and do nothing active about it. Therefore, keep on attacking, but helpfully. Praise Government when it does something well. They do sometimes, and they like praise – they get so little of it. Be positive. Involve everybody in projects. Get the old fountains going. Have an anti-sign, anti-wirescape campaign. Agitate for the Church, the Armed Services and the Government to be subject to the same aesthetic controls as everybody else (why not?).

### YOUR VILLAGES

Keep an eye on your villages and do not let them get exploded. They are Malta's greatest asset. Keep an eye on pollution, dumping, agricultural slums. Shame the Services into removing old eyesores. Help with listing of conservanda. Strengthen the hands of the Aesthetic and Antiquities Boards. You will be busy – do not forget you are not alone. Every country has this problem; so, exchange views whenever you can.

### ARCHITECTS' CONFERENCE

I understand that in September of this year an important conference on the history of the Architecture of Malta will be staged here. Architects and historians of

international reputation will be present. Would it not be a good idea to extend the conference, as part of your crash programmes, to the study of the best methods, including financial ways and means, of conserving Malta's architectural heritage and ensuring that this tradition of excellence in local architecture is dovetailed into the most modern constructions?

But however creative you are, inevitably you will become restrictive. Self-discipline, rules, controls, restrictions. These are not, I know, sympathetic words – and when used in relation to holidays – for it is the tourist and visitor who make Malta's biggest and most profitable headache – they seem ludicrously inappropriate.

But there is no room to do both these things on a small island unless they are kept physically separate and ruthlessly protected from each other. To do this will not be popular – particularly among those who see such action as affecting – as, of course, it will – their short-term interests.

But no Government expects to be loved and any Government who does only popular things does not deserve to be in power. But I do suggest that if we here – representatives of top management, professional experts and private enthusiasts – refuse to fight for unpopular policies, then we shall earn the lasting disrespect of future generations for having connived through our idleness and philistinism at the degradation of our Islands.

We, both of us, inherited something worth having – let us have the sense and sensibility to hang on to it and to pass it on unbroken and enriched to our descendants.



Hill-top village in Gozo

## The Early Days

*Philip Zammit Briffa*

*Honorary Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa*

2001 - 2005



Left:  
Early restoration work in progress at  
Wignacourt Tower

For 40 years, the association's volunteers have striven – against the odds, I would add – to preserve our traditional and historical heritage, exemplified in our buildings and monuments, and to safeguard the flora and fauna so typical of our Islands.

During this long period, commencing less than a year after the Maltese Islands achieved independence, the association's efforts have been greatly influenced by intense political upheaval, building booms and the development of tourism.

Throughout, *Din l-Art Helwa* has never wavered in pursuing its *raison d'être* – to promote beauty: to banish ugliness. It has, in the main, been an uphill struggle. We have had our successes and have saved various historic sites for enjoyment by future generations. We have advised and argued against the continuous advance of so-called progress that seeks to destroy our heritage for short-term monetary gain.

Some battles we have won, others proved unwinnable and the result is there for all to see. We will, however, persist in the belief that there is still much that can be saved. It will be, however – as the Duke of Wellington exclaimed after Waterloo – “A close run thing”.

While browsing through our old records, I came across various papers and correspondence relating to the setting-up and the first few years of *Din l-Art Helwa* and I would like to share this information with you.

A group of public-spirited gentlemen had, for some months, been discussing the need for an organisation “to do the kind of work which is the special interest of the Civic Trust in England”. The idea was greatly supported by the Governor-General, Sir Maurice Dorman, who was always prepared to give his advice and encouragement, and a Promoters Committee comprising the following was set up:

**Chev. V. Bonello**  
**The Hon. Justice M. Caruana Curran,**  
**LLD, BA**  
**Mr R. de Giorgio, BE&A, FRIBA**  
**Mr M. Gatt, MBE**  
**Mr E. R. Leopardi**  
**Mr J. Manduca**  
**Dr E. Mercieca, MD, DMR(D) (Lond)**  
**Dr G. Randon, LLD**

After much preparatory work and much heart-searching to find a suitable name – *Din l-Art Helwa*, the first words of the Maltese national anthem, an inspired choice – an article appeared in the press entitled “Protecting The Island's Heritage” by Judge Maurice Caruana Curran on 12 April 1965, proposing to set up some form of National Trust and outlining the aims of the association. This elicited many letters of interest and support from the general public.

The inaugural meeting was planned to take place at The Manoel Theatre, Valletta, on 9 July 1965. A letter from the theatre stated that the request for the “loan” of the theatre could not be acceded to as “a fee must be charged every time the public is admitted to the theatre”.

However, the letter goes on to say “However – both in their individual and private capacity, and realising fully the laudable aims of your organisation – the members of the Management Committee offer to meet the rent liability of the Theatre, so that the general meeting of your organisation can take place at the Manoel” – a most generous gesture.

On the occasion of the inauguration, many letters of support and congratulation were received. Extracts from a few are reproduced elsewhere in this commemorative publication.

The inaugural meeting commenced at 5.15 pm and an address was delivered by the Governor General, Sir Maurice Dorman. Among those invited were the Acting Prime Minister, the British High Commissioner, Sir John Martin, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker and Ministers and Members of Parliament.

Sir Maurice touched on the aims of *Din l-Art Helwa*, which would be grouped under four main headings: Preservation, Restoration, Education and Prevention. Extracts are reproduced elsewhere.

Opposite:  
The Wignacourt Fountain  
before and after restoration

Inauguration ceremony at the  
Chapel of St Roche in Żebbuġ





*prominent Maltese philanthropist, a project for the complete restoration of an old windmill at Naxxar which would animate a large tract of countryside.*

*A commission consisting of Judge Montanaro Gauci and Mr Richard England to collaborate with the Qormi Civic Committee on a matter of some concern to one of the Qormi parish churches.*

*Advice given to the Government against the proposal to build a cafe/restaurant on the Upper Barrakka Saluting Battery. The council expressed its concern at the call for tenders for the 50-year grant on emphyteusis and its development involving the raising of permanent structures within the area.*

Victor Aquilina, in his report in The Times of Malta, wrote that the enthusiasm shown by all those who attended the inaugural meeting was a clear indication of the growing interest in and the ever-increasing concern for our national heritage.

The founder members of the association were unanimously elected to sit on the council, together with 13 other members. The latter included members appointed by The Royal University of Malta, The Gozo Civic Council, The Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers, The Sovereign Military Order of Malta, The Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, The Malta Historical Society, The Malta Geographical Society, The Agrarian Society and The Natural History Society of Malta.

The first council meeting was held on 6 August 1965 at The Palace, Valletta, graciously put at the association's disposal by Sir Maurice Dorman. The officials elected at this meeting were: Judge M. Caruana Curran as president, Dr P. Xuereb as hon. secretary and Dr G. Randon as hon. treasurer.

Three months later, Judge Caruana Curran wrote in The Times of Malta an account of activities in the first few months of the association's life. These included:

*The setting up of an ad hoc committee composed of Colonel G. Tabona as chairman, Chev. V. Bonello, Chev. E.R. Leopardi, Mr Lorenzo Zahra and Commander D.J. Calnan. The committee was to work in close cooperation with the Vittoriosa Historical Society to repair and tidy up the historic "postes" of the Great Siege and for the restoration of some of the Borgo's monuments.*

*A special committee composed of Judge Caruana Curran, Professor J. Galea and Dr G. Randon to discuss, with a*

In April 1966, the Governor-General Sir Maurice Dorman agreed with great pleasure to extend his patronage to the association and was also nominated as a benefactor.

The first general meeting was held at the University Theatre in Valletta on 4 June 1966. Judge Caruana Curran expressed his gratitude to the British High Commissioner Sir John Martin who, together with Lady Martin, was the first Life Member of *Din l-Art Helwa* and was donating furniture, carpets and office machinery for the association's offices at 133 Britannia (now Melita) Street, Valletta – at the time being shared with the Malta Relief Fund. He also reported that the association had been invited by the Minister of Education, Culture and Tourism to nominate a representative on the Tourist Board. The name of Dr Edward Mercieca was submitted. In addition Chev. V. Bonello was appointed to serve as Ecclesiastical Liaison Officer for the preservation of religious monuments.

Other interesting points that came out of the meeting were:

*The concern expressed by most members over the building of the Excelsior Hotel in a prominent historic area. In June, Judge Caruana Curran, on behalf of the council, wrote to the Prime Minister Dr G. Borg Olivier commenting on the project – "after doing our level best to look at them (the plans and perspective drawing from the other side of Marsamxett) with a kind eye we could not avoid the conclusion that the whole concept of the architect responsible is too bulky, too monotonous, too much like a bee-hive in outline and generally falls short of the respect which ought to have been shown to such a priceless site as the*



*Government, in its efforts to give the highest priority to tourism, made available to the Company".*

*The need to restore the chapel at Hal Millieri and the public fountain (Għajn tal-Hasselin) at Msida.*

*Strong opposition to the building of a multi-storey car park against St John's Cavalier.*

*A proposal to drive a new road through the gardens of Villa Bologna (1745).*

*Backing given to the Natural History Society regarding a new Mellieħa Bay Road to ensure that this new road would be kept a sufficient distance away from the Għadira pond and bird sanctuary to guarantee a minimum of interference with this last remaining ecological unit in Malta.*

The 1966 Annual Report also listed the first corporate members of *Din l-Art Helwa*. These were:

The Corona Club  
 Friends of Malta GC  
 Floriana School Old Boys Association  
 Marsovin Ltd  
 The Melita Band Club  
 St Catherine Band Club  
 St Gabriel Band Club  
 The St John Ambulance Brigade  
 St Michael's College  
 Xaghra Cultural Centre  
 The Boys Scouts Association  
 The Royal University of Malta

In January 1967, the Governor General Sir Maurice Dorman declared open the headquarters of *Din l-Art Helwa*, housed in a 17<sup>th</sup> century building at 133 Melita Street, Valletta.

Since 1965, this building had been shared with the Malta Relief Fund and when this organisation was wound up, the whole building was transferred to *Din l-Art Helwa* mainly due to initiatives taken by Judge Maurice Caruana Curran. After the official opening the UK High Commissioner Sir John Martin presented *Din l-Art Helwa* with items of furniture. The premises were blessed by council member Mgr E. Coleiro.

1967 was described as a year of consolidation, during which there were moments of great satisfaction deriving from the results obtained in some cases and the increasing measure of official and public recognition. Needless to say, there were also times of great despondency.

In his address to the general meeting, the president said that it was the considered view of the association that the last year had seen a further fall in the standard of appearance of our country and, in particular, he referred to:

*The erection of too many high buildings such as in Paceville and Qawra.*

*The rapid urbanisation and absorption of most of the littoral of the north west region, of bays and ridges by tourist and villa development.*

*The terrible mixture of styles and architecture, without any apparent attempt by the responsible authorities to control them.*

*The gimmickry of the Perspex advertisements jutting out of every possible shop and business establishment, which is unworthy of, and in contrast with, the setting of our towns and villages, especially the older ones.*

In 1967, the Youth Section was set up and did marvellous work cleaning up the Hal Millieri Chapel. During the same year, *Din l-Art Helwa* became a member of Europa Nostra, which had been set up in 1963.

The president addressed the general assembly in Strasbourg on the subject of coastline preservation. Judge Maurice Caruana Curran served on the council of Europa Nostra until he retired in 2003 and his place was taken by the present executive president Martin Scicluna.

Newsletter No. 1 was published this year, the cost being borne by the Hon. Mabel Strickland and the Progress Press. It contained the text of a lecture given by the eminent architect Sir Hugh Casson at the Manoel Theatre on 10 January 1967. A full version of this speech is reproduced elsewhere in this publication.

At the end of the year, on 31 December, the Torċa published a poem by Anton Buttigieg, known as the Poet of Nature, then a Labour MP and later President of Malta, dedicated to the president and members of *Din l-Art Helwa*. This read as follows:

#### FIL-MILIED

*F'Diċembru*

*Iwarrad in-narċis fil-blat u l-mogħxa,  
Fl-gholjiet u fil-widien ta' Malta tagħna.*

*Alla*

*Jinsab fil-hlejjaq kollha;*

*Iżda nistħajjel*

*Li fil-Milied*

*Jitwieled bambin ċkejken*

*Fin-nieqa safra u bajda*

*Ta' kull narċis!*

*U biex il-Bambin jorqod*

*Ferħan f'din-nieqa sbejħa,*

*Omm Alla ġiet mis-sema*

*U mlietha kollha fwejħa!*

#### Translation

#### CHRISTMAS TIME

*December*

*The narcissus grows and flowers*

*Amidst the rocks and wasteland*

*On the hills and in the valleys*

*Of our dear land, Malta.*

*God*

*Is in all creation*

*But I think that every Christmas*

*A tiny baby Jesus is born*

*In the yellow and white cradle  
Of every narcissus flower.  
And so that Jesus sleeps  
Serenely in this beautiful cradle,  
The Mother of God comes down from  
Heaven  
To fill it with a sweet fragrance!*

In these first few years, as may well be expected, *Din l-Art Helwa* acted as a pressure group, making suggestions, giving advice and sometimes even launching protests against what were considered ill-advised projects or badly-sited developments. It was only when the boom subsided that the association decided to extend its scope to "Trust" duties. Its first expense was the taking over of Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay on encroachment terms in 1970. Since then, the association has restored a good number of buildings and monuments and finally, after many years of frustrating discussions, *Din l-Art Helwa* formally took over nine Government properties to look after on behalf of the nation, having previously been given on trust by the Church the three chapels of St Mary at Bir Miftuh, the Annunciation at Hal-Millieri and St Roque at Żebbuġ.

Our job is far from over. We face even greater challenges in the future. We will continue to advise and criticise when uncontrolled development threatens our heritage and the environment. We accept the need for a balanced approach to the problems that face us but we insist that our patrimony must remain intact for the enjoyment of generations to come.



The hall at 133, Melita Street, Valletta

# Judge Maurice Caruana Curran Receives Top European Union / Europa Nostra Cultural Heritage Award

## Citation

**For his unwavering commitment to the ideals of conservation, for his ability to speak fearlessly for heritage and for his unflinching spirit of volunteership.**

**Judge Caruana Curran has dedicated over 40 years to upholding the cause of cultural heritage in Malta, and is considered by all in Malta to be the pioneer and pillar of the national conservation movement. In 1965 he founded *Din l-Art Helwa*, a voluntary non-governmental organisation, to assist the State in the conservation of environmental and cultural heritage. He succeeded in arousing the awareness of the public and of the government to the importance of Malta's extraordinary heritage, lobbying against the misuse of land the destruction of traditional architecture, the effects of the increase in tourism and development, for an improved legislation and for the listing of buildings. He toiled tirelessly to find volunteers, rally membership, raise funds and campaign on issues. Judge Caruana Curran organised conferences, lectures, and educational initiatives, furthered international contacts, studied international legislation and wrote endless letters to the press.**



Judge Maurice Caruana Curran receiving the Europa Nostra Award for a lifetime contribution to cultural heritage from HRH the Prince Consort of Denmark.

On 3 June 2005, the European Union and Europa Nostra awarded Judge Maurice Caruana Curran with a top European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage.

Judge Maurice Caruana Curran received his award together with th monetary prize of €10,000 from Europa Nostra's President, HRH the Prince Consort of Denmark, and Mr Harald Hartung, Head of the Culture Unit at the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, at the European Heritage Awards Ceremony at the Håkonshallen in Bergen, Norway.

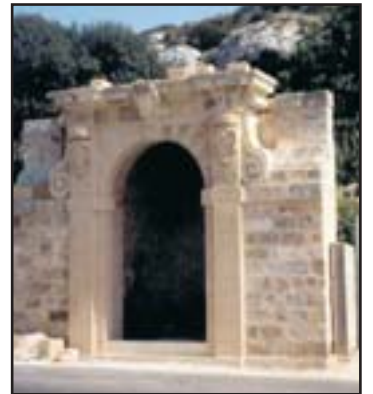
In total, 38 laureates from 21 countries across Europe were recognised for a series of exemplary achievements throughout Europe with Judge Maurice Caruana Curran winning top Prize in the category of "Dedicated Service to Heritage Conservation". The citation pertaining to this award is reproduced alongside.

In 1967, *Din l-Art Helwa* became the seventh non-governmental organisation to become a member of Europa Nostra. Today, this is now the representative platform for more than 200 heritage associations active in the field of heritage conservation throughout Europe.

Judge Maurice Caruana Curran will be dedicating this financial award to *Din l-Art Helwa*'s restoration programmes.

The European Heritage Awards Scheme was launched in 2002 by the European Commission, as part of the implementation of the EU Culture 2000 Programme. Europa Nostra, the pan-European federation for heritage, was selected to run this awards scheme, on the basis of its long experience in publicly recognising, on a European level, individual or joint excellence in the heritage field. In 2006, Europa Nostra will hold its annual congress in Valletta from 16-21 May. This prestigious event will be organised by *Din l-Art Helwa*.









## Historic Sites and Monuments Restored by *Din l-Art Helwa* 1968 - 2005

Property	Restored	Sponsored by
01) Annunciation Chapel at Hal Millieri - C 1450	1968	Farsons Foundation
02) 133, Melita Street, Valletta - C 1750	1970s ongoing	<i>Din l-Art Helwa</i>
03) Chapel of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuh - C 1450	1970	Malta International Airport
04) Wignacourt Tower, St Paul's Bay - 1605	1975/76 1997 2003 (Interior)	National Tourism Organisation – Malta (now Malta Tourism Authority) Bank of Valletta
05) St Roque Chapel, Żebbuġ - 1592	1980 2005 (Interior)	<i>Din l-Art Helwa</i> Round Table Malta One
06) Wignacourt Fountain, Valletta - C 1610	1986	<i>Din l-Art Helwa</i>
07) Msida Bastion Garden of Rest, Floriana - 1806	1990s	British High Commission Malta Government
08) Mamo Tower, Marsascula - 1642	1994/5	Round Table Malta One
09) Ghallis Tower, Salina Bay - 1658	1995	Mizzi Group of Companies (now Mizzi Holdings)
10) Vedette at St James Bastion, Valletta - C 1580	1995	Central Bank of Malta
11) St Paul's Statue, St Paul's Island - 1845	1996	Vassallo Builders
12) Sundial at Ghaxaq - C 1900	1996	Dr Cachia Zammit
13) Dwejra Tower, Gozo - 1652	1997	Galdes & Mamo
14) Santa Marija Battery, Comino - 1715	1996/7 2003/04	Comino Hotel P. Cutajar & Co Ltd
15) Qalet Marku Tower, Bahar iċ-Ċaghaq - 1658	1997/8	Round Table Malta One
16) Mistra Gate - 1607	1998	Corinthia Group of Companies
17) Red Tower, Mellieha - 1649	1999 / 2001	Toly Products Demajo Group of Companies Playmobil Ltd
18) Ta' Braxia Cemetery, Pietà - 1857	2000 ongoing	<i>Din l-Art Helwa</i> <b>Malta Government</b>
19) Santa Marija Tower, Comino - 1618	2002 (exterior) 2005 (interior)	Malta Maritime Authority Vodafone Foundation
20) St John the Evangelist, Hal Millieri - C 1481	2004	Maltapost p.l.c.
21) Isopu Tower, Nadur Gozo - 1667	2004	Marjorie de Wolff Legacy <b>Nadur local council</b>
22) Our Lady of Victory, Valletta - C 1570	2002 2004	Computime Ltd PricewaterhouseCoopers
23) Manoel Theatre, Valletta	2004 (ongoing)	Computime Ltd

# SUMMING UP

## MAURICE CARUANA CURRAN

*President of Din l-Art Helwa*

*First Published – February 1999*

As I was the president of the Steering Committee that took the necessary steps for the foundation of *Din l-Art Helwa* in 1965 and have been the president of this national Association for the 33 years that have passed since then, the time may have come for me to take up a different role, while still retaining my close connections with the Association. One cannot part with an institution that one has loved so much without a considerable degree of pain. Arrangements, however, cannot last for ever and changes are necessary at some time.

Before these changes take place, I consider it my duty to give a retrospective view of my experiences at the head of this Association and an impression of my hope for the future of Malta's splendid, indeed unique, historical and natural heritage.

Malta in the past had no laws as we know them today and there can be no proper conservation without adequate legislation. My first contact with the need of such legislation came as far back as 1961. Until then Malta's heritage had survived through the Old Antiquities Protection Ordinance of 1925 which in theory is still in force, and the Aesthetic Building Ordinance which was strictly enforced at the time and had as its main purpose "the safeguarding of the

symmetry of surrounding buildings". This law was replaced by the Planning Development Act of 1992 and the function of the maintenance of aesthetics in the visual environment was transferred to the Planning Authority, which is a highly professional and effective body but not always successful in the field of architectural aesthetics.

During the interval, Malta's beauty was maintained also by a tradition of good taste in the architectural profession and the general public but the economic explosion since the 1960's and the consequent mega

"A great hope lies in the announcement recently made by Dr Austin Gatt, Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, that a Trust will be set up, comprising *Din l-Art Helwa* and the Local Councils Association for the restoration of historic buildings..."

projects have gone a long way to cause irreparable damage to the visual environment. Somehow, however, Malta's beauty and attractiveness have continued to exist.

The first glimmer of planning came in 1961 when I had the good fortune of

meeting Mr Jeffery Switzer, a lecturer in Land Use at Cambridge University, who had been seconded by the British Government to the Maltese colonial government which ruled Malta at the time, after the loss of the Constitution in 1958. He had been forgotten in an upper room at the Palace for a whole year and his term of office was about to end. He asked me what planning legislation there was in Malta and I invited him to come and see me at the Attorney General's Office, and I showed him the relevant provisions about building in the primitive code of police law.

He took the opportunity of my explanations to amend that code by a provision declaring the whole of Malta a Planning Area and the Planning Area Permits Board was then set up to grant permits all over Malta, with sometimes disappointing results. That law and the PAPB as it was known continued to hold sway until the Planning Development Act of 1992 which established the Planning Authority, with the results that are visible everywhere.

*Din l-Art Helwa* was officially founded at an historic meeting at the Manoel Theatre on July 9th 1965. The meeting was honoured by the presence of all the ministers then in office and we were promised every support as everyone realised that the aim of the Association was to co-operate with the State in its duty under the Independence Constitution to safeguard the national heritage in all its aspects. We were gravely disappointed when only a few months later the PAPB, with the approval of the Antiquities Committee and the backing of the government, issued the permit for the building of a hotel on the very bastions of Valletta on the Marsamxett Harbour side.

The Italian architect at that time had done his best to design the hotel in a way which fitted into the skyline of Valletta and Floriana. Later, however, the PAPB granted another permit for the original hotel to be demolished and the present box-like structure to be built breaking up the skyline against the ruling given by the Prime Minister, Dr George



View of Tigne Point, 1999

Borg Olivier in 1965. Such bad examples have, of course, the tendency to be repeated elsewhere and this has happened to the detriment of the environment as a whole.

One of the worst features of building in Malta since then has been the rapid ribbon development which has tended to make Malta one conurbation, with many villages indistinguishable from each other. Such ill-disciplined development is also happening in Gozo, though to a smaller extent.

The demands of tourism, which I do not deny, have also had their effect on the building of several hotels round the coastline. It is well known that tourism has the tendency to ruin the beauty spots which tourists are supposed to enjoy. I hope a correct balance will soon be struck by the Planning Authority in this respect.

The PA has acquitted itself well in the scheduling of buildings of historic or architectural importance. At the same time we have had unfortunate cases of scheduled buildings pulled down on the pretext that the PAPB had granted a permit before they were scheduled by the PA.

Recently we have had the unfortunate episode of the falling of one of the megaliths at Haġar Qim and mystery still surrounds the closing, for several years, of the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum. We trust that solutions will be found. In his book on Malta, Andre' Maurois describes these two relics of the Bronze Age as "*les vrais merveilles du monde*" - the true wonders of the world.

It is not possible for me in this article to give more than a thumbnail account of my misgivings that all is not well with conservation in Malta. At the same time, I also want to strike a positive note of hope for the future. The environment movement in Malta has grown by leaps and bounds through



Full development at Tigne Point as originally proposed

*Din l-Art Helwa* and other societies formed in recent years. *Din l-Art Helwa* has done its best to raise money for the restoration of historic towers and chapels and these works have been carried out and will continue in other places.

A great hope lies in the announcement recently made by Dr Austin Gatt, Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, that a Trust will be set up, comprising *Din l-Art Helwa* and the Local Councils Association for the restoration of historic buildings and we hope that this will soon become an accomplished fact.

Another good sign is the merging of the three societies, SSCN, *Arbor* and *Verde* into the Nature Trust (Malta). *Din l-Art Helwa* has recognised the importance of this Trust by donating to it the sum of Lm1,500 from the legacy left to it by the gracious Marjorie de Wolff for the planting of trees.

Through the Planning Development Act and the Planning Authority, we now have the instruments required for proper conservation, but legislation and committees are not enough without a sufficiently strong political will. The government can demonstrate this will by using its undeniable influence on the Manoel Island and Tigne Point project as well as on the design of the new entrance to Valletta.

In this respect we hope that the government will not exhume the Piano Project, so strongly condemned nine years ago even by modern-minded people like the late and much loved Francis Ebejer.

With regard to Manoel Island, we hope that the terms of the deed will be announced beforehand in time for public opinion to be expressed. *Din l-Art Helwa* lays great stress on the need for inserting a clause that the restoration of Fort Manoel and other historic buildings on Manoel Island will be carried out within a definite time limit and not left to the Greek Kalends. If these two problems are adequately solved, if the restoration of Haġar Qim is accomplished, together with the re-opening of the Hypogeum and if a stop is put to further ribbon development and the enclosure of the coastline by more hotels, of which we seem to have enough, these good examples should have a beneficial effect on the future in the same way as the bad examples of the past have influenced contemporary life in Malta.

I take this opportunity to wish *Din l-Art Helwa* and all other environment associations all success in the years to come. I also appeal to all politicians and especially to all developers to use their utmost endeavours to show the restraint which is necessary if anything is to be left of the beauty of our islands.



View of Tigne Point, 2005

# Speaking Truth Unto Power

## *Din l-Art Helwa's Lobbying Role*

*Martin Scicluna*

*Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa*  
2001 - 2005

*Din l-Art Helwa* was conceived and set up 40 years ago primarily as a lobbying organisation. The art and craft of successful lobbying is both to provide informed and constructive criticism and to cajole and, if necessary, hassle and harry those who have the power to make decisions affecting our daily lives. In Malta's highly centralised system this is almost invariably the government of the day. The objective of any lobbying system is so to influence people's views and opinions – including those of politicians of all persuasions – as to achieve the ends we seek in the cultural heritage and environmental fields.

Over the last 40 years, *Din l-Art Helwa* has conducted its lobbying campaigns courageously, responsibly and constructively – never criticising without also offering solutions – almost always in the face of government lethargy or opprobrium, or both.

Some friends have rebuked me for making pronouncements that, by implication – as they saw them – were critical of the government and therefore undermined it. Yet, what they overlook is that *Din l-Art Helwa* has never made any political distinction between Red or Blue or Green. Indeed, the mark, value and strength of our comments have been precisely that we had no political axe to grind. And those having the breadth of vision and the national interest at heart have recognised this – including, I am glad to say, some politicians I know.

We have been neither Red, nor Blue, nor Green. *Din l-Art Helwa* has always been neutral as between governments – of whatever complexion. But to be neutral and impartial is not to be indifferent. It is never to look the other way. It is to make distinctions between good and bad policies, between dysfunctional or comatose governments and those whose policies are beneficial to our country.

We have been equally severe in our criticism of both Red and Blue. My distinguished predecessor, our Founder President, was labelled “Public Enemy Number One” by one government. And I myself was named in Parliament for expressing a different view from the one held by Ministers.

The role of *Din l-Art Helwa* is to safeguard Malta's rich cultural heritage and natural environment. To do this effectively it must be prepared to speak Truth unto Power – however unpalatable that truth may sometimes be to those in power. To fail to do this in the face of any government neglect of our cultural heritage or our environment would be to traduce the very purposes for which we were set up 40 years ago by those men of vision who sensed instinctively, and only too accurately, the way our political masters would treat our cultural heritage and our environment.

Part of any government's lot is to shoulder criticism. We may vent our criticism on the government in power, of whatever complexion, because we expect the people we elect to power and responsibility to deliver efficient administration and governance. Glow-worm politicians, with their self-importance and specious slogans, come and go. But they are ultimately accountable to the people they are meant to serve.

For our part, it is our responsibility to highlight – as fairly and objectively as possible – environmental and cultural heritage issues. With time, these have become ever more pressing. Our politicians must be made to understand, through our lobbying, that the environment and cultural heritage matter, that they ignore them at their electoral peril and that they must therefore – in their own self-interest – exercise the political will to make the necessary improvements.

It is essential for us to speak Truth unto Power. This means offering clear, frank, unbiased, balanced, unvarnished but constructive criticism. We care more for accuracy than for the feelings of the subject of our criticism, or their partisan supporters. Nor should we defer to them. We have always spoken and written our minds without fear or favour.

If to look at Malta's cultural heritage and the state of its environment with sombre realism and an unwillingness to trim our sails or to tell reassuring stories is to be accused of criticising government, then so be it. I prefer to insist on truthfulness and accuracy in the cause of truth – in the cause of improving the state of our Island and our quality of life.

We shall not be silent. Our role is to lobby in a forthright manner with all the intellectual arguments we can muster those who have it in their gift to enhance our cultural heritage and natural environment through the strategic decisions they take, and to produce constructive solutions for the way ahead.

This may sometimes mean dissent, debate and criticism, as well as dialogue and agreement with the government of the day. But the over-riding objective will remain the achievement of a better Malta in cultural heritage and environmental terms, not supine and complacent support for any government – of whatever complexion – which is not doing its job as we would earnestly hope to see it done.

This said, let me also add that we are indeed appreciative that steps are being taken to alleviate some of the heritage and environmental issues. There is a greater awareness, both on the government and opposition benches, of the stiff environmental and heritage challenges that face us, and a sense of wanting to do something about them. I would like to feel that the robust tone of our lobbying has had something to do with this.

In conclusion, it is *Din l-Art Helwa's* role to try to change for the better the way government approaches our cultural heritage and environment. We try to help the cause of good government in these areas. Good government means bringing to bear all the knowledge and all the arguments you can from inside and outside, debating and arguing them as frankly as possible and trying to reach the best solution. This is what we have tried to do and will continue to do. Impartially – with boringly inconvenient arguments to government if need be.

For, ultimately, we have to ensure that when it comes to doing something about our cultural heritage or the environment we, as individuals, are not treated as insignificant by those who have the power to change things. When I was young, there was the Soviet Union, Hitler's Germany and Mussolini, white supremacy in South Africa, Franco in Spain, Salazar in Portugal. Closer to home, there was colonial Malta and the nihilism of the 1980s.

Now they are all gone. It is individuals who, in fact, changed things. This is why it is important for us all, as individuals, to be prepared to give voice to our concerns and not to connive or acquiesce at the degradation of our Islands through our idleness, or simply a wish for an easy life. This is why *Din l-Art Helwa* speaks up. And shall continue to speak Truth unto Power as it has done over the last 40 years.

Malta's monument to  
political lethargy.  
photo: Gino Galea



## The Early History of Teenagers' *Din l-Art Helwa*

Joseph M Meli

At a Press Conference convened by the Council of *Din l-Art Helwa* on 6 May 1967, the President, Mr Justice Maurice Caruana Curran, announced the formation of the Youth Section under the title of *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa*. Membership was divided into two categories, namely Category A and Category B.

Category A Membership was targeted at a wide spectrum of membership in order to attract as many teenagers as possible. The only requirement for membership was "a promise not to damage anything that is connected with our heritage" a promise that was to be taken every year at a public ceremony.

Category B Membership was composed of competent scholars of Maltese history who formed a group of 40 teenagers, all over the age of 14. These were to undertake a course on Malta's heritage through a series of lectures. In addition, they were to be instructed on how to carry out surveys of areas of historical or natural importance and were asked to submit some research work every year. Admission to this group depended on an interview.

Category A membership was gratis, whilst Category B membership was fixed at one shilling per month, that is five cents per month or 60 cents per annum in today's money. The reason for the formation of *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* was given by the founder himself, Fr George Serracino Inglott SJ in an article in *The Times of Malta* in May 1967: "The principal factor which encouraged me to introduce the Youth Section was that I felt no serious effort had ever been made by any organisation to educate Malta's teenagers in their country's heritage and therefore this gap should be filled".

The activities of *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* were coordinated by the Board of Directors composed of Mario Buhagiar as Chairman, Victor Darmania, Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti OFM, Fr George Serracino Inglott SJ, Roger Vella Bonavita and Judith Wood. The first general meeting of *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* was held on 3 June at the Royal University of Malta in Valletta.

In his introductory talk as Acting Chairman of the Board of Directors, Mario Buhagiar urged the members of the new association to look after Malta's heritage, first of all by learning all they could, and eventually by carrying out research work.

Fr George Serracino Inglott, the founder of the association, then spoke to members about the applications and the interest which the new venture had aroused, while Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti discussed the lectures prepared for members. Roger Vella Bonavita spoke about the administration of *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* and introduced the members of the Committee, who were:

President : James Evans  
 Secretary : Roderick Mallia  
 Treasurer : Anne Amato Gauci

Members : Mary Borda  
 : Albert Marshall  
 : Lino Casapinta

**Joseph Meli was a member of the Youth Section during the 1970s and early 1980s. He occupied various posts in the organisation, such as Public Relations Officer, Secretary and finally as its President.**

***An outstanding reunion of ex-Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa took place at the Red Tower on 30th April, 2005***

*This page and opposite*

Saint Agatha's  
 Catacombs

In his address as President of *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa*, James Evans urged members to take an active interest in their national heritage while they are still young. "We have not joined this Association for fun. We mean hard work. Our studies and surveys have to be carried out as scientifically and seriously as possible. Of course we will have social activities but the stress will be on scientific work. I am not going to mince my words. We must work hard. We must be prepared to sacrifice as much of our time as possible. We must show Malta what we teenagers are capable of doing".

Other points which were covered by Mr Evans in his speech were a membership card, which would provide free admission to government and ecclesiastical museums and sites of interest; a call upon artists to help in the design of a proper badge for *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* and finally, an announcement that a magazine would be published for members. Miss Ann Amato Gauci then discussed the matter of finances in general and of subscriptions in particular. A UNESCO documentary entitled *Timeless Treasures* was shown next, which showed the potential contribution of young people towards the preservation of monuments. The first general meeting ended with a talk by Victor Darmania.

The appeal to join *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* was taken up by no less than 250 youngsters, 162 in Category A and 98 in Category B. Category B members were divided into groups for research work in the following fields: Maltese Language, Ornithology, Wild Flowers, Folk-music, Archaeology, Heraldry, Architecture, Numismatics and Social History. Each group worked under a supervisor and at the end of the social year a report was to be presented on each topic.



The first series of lectures for members of *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* was launched in July 1967.

The lectures were held at the Mgr Gonzi Hall at the Catholic Institute in Floriana and their aim was to “fill in the gap in our educational system”[sic]. All young people were urged to attend these lectures, as it was a challenge to all Maltese youths who “were often at that time accused of acts of vandalism” [sic tris].

Generally speaking, no organisation in Malta attempted to organise any activities for its members during the summer months, but for *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa*, the summer of 1967 was different.

In the August of that year, *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* launched an anti-litter campaign with the aim of impressing on the public the need to keep Malta tidy. At first, the campaign was restricted to the Island's more important beaches such as Ghajn Tuffieha and Golden Bay, where members set an example by clearing the litter which uncivic-minded holidaymakers and local beach enthusiasts left behind during the summer months. In the course of this campaign, bins were placed on all seashores and beaches. The main intention of this exercise was to give an example of keeping Malta tidy, and as a result of this, the government set up a committee under the title Keep Malta Tidy Committee.

Another group of members was involved in surveying Saint Agatha's Catacombs in Rabat, at the invitation of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul, and of the Bingemma Necropolis on the outskirts of Rabat, under the supervision of Mario Buhagiar and Fr George Serracino Inglott respectively. Plans of the most interesting chambers were made, and drawings of some of the pottery from both sites, together with some carved stones that formed part of an old medieval frieze in the Church of Saint Agatha, were made.

The group working at Saint Agatha's was composed of the following members: Marianna Bartolo, Anthony Buhagiar, Elda Buhagiar, Joseph Carabott, Daphne Cefai, Paul Chetcuti, James Evans, Emmanuel Grima, Mary Grace Muscat, Johanne Nicholas, Ethel Pickard, Alfred Quintano, David Schembri, Emmanuel Schembri, Myriam Spiteri, Vivianne Spiteri, Joseph Vella, Joseph Vincenti and Claire Williams.

The boys were mostly responsible for the survey of the catacombs and the drawing of plans while the girls were responsible for sketching.

During the month of September a joint activity between *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* and the archaeological groups of Saint



Aloysius College and Sacred Heart Convent, under the direction of Fr George Serracino Inglott SJ, resulted in the discovery of Malta's 31<sup>st</sup> known megalithic temple at Il-Ġnien ta' Fonzu, between the area known as Tal-Balal and L-Iklin. This temple was described in the October issue of the magazine produced by the archaeological group of Saint Aloysius College *Il-Qedem Illum No. 3*.

The site was described as having two apses with megaliths 10 feet wide and standing about five feet above ground level. The entrance to the temple, facing east, was also traced. The Museum Authorities were informed and immediate action was reported to have been taken in order to protect the site until excavation work could be undertaken.

In October, as a continuation of the anti-litter campaign, *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa* extended its example to suburban areas when it cleaned-up the area in front of the Europa Centre, then known as the NATO buildings, in Floriana. In a message to the nation to mark the first Keep Malta Tidy Week, the Prime Minister said he was pleased to learn that the Keep Malta Tidy Committee was organising this event and wished to make an appeal for cooperation for the “attainment of our ideal of cleanliness and clean habits”. Dr Borg Olivier added in his message “Everyone, adults and children, can participate in one way or another, in this national effort to make a more beautiful place of our country by keeping it tidy. I am aware that the task will, at times, be somewhat difficult and that it will take time to accomplish...”. We are now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we are not half way there yet!

The second series of lectures on Maltese heritage was inaugurated by Dr Godfrey Wettinger's presentation on *Life in Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century Malta*. Other speakers in this series included the late Francis Mallia, the late Dr Victor Denaro and Ġużè Cassar Pullicino. As for the previous series of lectures, the venue was The Catholic Institute in Floriana.

At the Second Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa*, in May 1967, again at the Royal University of Malta, in the presence of the late Sir Maurice Dorman, the

then Governor-General of Malta, Mr Justice Maurice Caruana Curran said:

“Now we come to a most gratifying event which marks a real milestone in the so far short life of *Din l-Art Helwa*. I refer to the formation of our Youth Section, under the title *Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa*, led and organised by a dynamic group of teachers, among whom are Fr George Serracino Inglott SJ of Saint Aloysius Collage, Mario Buhagiar of St Joseph Secondary Technical School, Victor Darmania of Naxxar Secondary Technical School, Roger Vella Bonavita of the Royal University of Malta, Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti of the Lyceum and Judith Wood of the Sacred Heart Convent School. I have never seen anyone move so fast as these inspired teachers, except perhaps the teenagers under them. You should see, as I have had the good fortune to see, the enthusiasm of these young people for the national heritage. They want to work and they can work. The organisers have been literally flooded by membership applications.

Very soon another general meeting will be called to approve the amendments which will incorporate the section under the rules of the Association with a charter that the Council of *Din l-Art Helwa* will at all times have the duty of encouraging, fostering and promoting. It is most gratifying to all of us grown-ups to see that for once we have done something which our children do not consider terribly old-fashioned and so on. But I know they will not just imitate. They will express their personality in their own way. There is no stopping them now. They are on the march. Well done, teenagers”.

In August 1967, Messrs Mallia and Marshall resigned as committee members and Mary Anne Bartolo and Carmen Camilleri Fava were appointed in their stead. Ms Borda was appointed Secretary in lieu of Mr Mallia.

I take this opportunity to make an appeal for material on the *Din l-Art Helwa Youth Section* photographs, circulars, publications and any other material which can be used which might be in the possession of past and present members. This material will be passed on to the *Din l-Art Helwa* secretariat in order to be used for the eventual History of the *Din l-Art Helwa* Youth Section.

# The Maltese Archaeological Heritage

## Who Owns the Past?

Professor Anthony Bonanno  
Executive President of *Din l-Art Helwa*  
1999 - 2001

*First Published – June 2000*

*Who Owns the Past?* is the title of one of a series of books published in the wake of a highly controversial international conference on prehistoric archaeology held in Southampton several years ago.

The title and contents of this collection of papers focus on a central issue concerning the cultural heritage: *who decides what constitutes the past, and on behalf of whom?*

Several of our prehistoric temples, together with the Hypogeum and the whole city of Valletta, have been included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

Normally such an inclusion is made at the request of the government of the country in which the monuments or sites are situated. That, in itself, implies that the leaders of this country, acting on behalf of the Maltese people, recognised the fact that this archaeological heritage does not belong solely to us Maltese, but to the world as a whole. This is very much in line with Malta's well known stand on, and promotion of, the concept of the "*Common Heritage of Mankind*".

The latter involves an extension of that concept to cover future generations: the common heritage belongs not only to us but also to our children and grandchildren, and to their children and grandchildren. Our heritage possessions, therefore, are for us all to enjoy, in usufruct; but we have, equally, a duty to hand them over to future generations in the best possible condition.

It is a well known fact that the cultural heritage, including the archaeological one, is a source of national pride and a contributing factor towards the formation of a sense of national identity.

That potential has on various occasions in the past been manipulated and abused to support aberrant political and racial ideologies, such as in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. We should be constantly on our guard to avert similar manipulations in the future.

Ownership obviously implies enjoyment, however limited. But who has the right to enjoy the heritage, and to what extent? *Prima facie*, everyone has that right without distinction of race, colour, sex, age or level

of education. But, as always, things are not that simple. In most cases the archaeological monument, or archaeological object, is fragile and delicate by its very nature, and is susceptible to damage by the natural elements as well as by human presence or handling.

Thus, the only distinction to be made is in the degree of access to the archaeological object. So that, if the man-in-the-street cannot, for serious reasons, enjoy a monument directly, he has a right to enjoy it by some other means, through properly documented and illustrated publications and through multimedia experiences, including virtual reality. Conversely, it is the duty of the scientist who has a more direct access to the monument or object, to bring that monument or object within reach of the general public through the same media.

Perhaps the most telling examples of such monuments are the Lascaux, Chauvet and Cosquer caves in France, with their magnificent palaeolithic paintings, all of which are inaccessible to visitors, the first one being substituted by a replica for the enjoyment of all.

But a more familiar example is the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum. This unique underground structure has been closed for almost ten years, the main reason being that the paintings inside it were suffering irreparable damage from conditions created partially by visitors.

Irrespective of the question of whether it was just or not to deprive tens of thousands of people who longed to visit it of such a right for such a long time, the closure was inevitable, for the purpose of protecting the same resource for future enjoyment. Now, finally, it is about to be opened again for regular, but considerably restricted, visits. Sections of it will remain inaccessible to the public. The latter have a right to enjoy those parts through the means mentioned above.

The Hypogeum experience has also taught us an important lesson. It has confirmed what is widely known through common sense, namely, that the value of the heritage is better appreciated when it is unattainable. While familiarity with it breeds contempt, deprivation generates greater

respect and craving for it. So much so that in this case some operators in the tourist industry itself have gone so far as to suggest charging as much as Lm4 entry fee. It is true that the higher the fee, the greater the appreciation of the heritage value, but I find one serious flaw in the measure. It discriminates on financial grounds and that is not acceptable in any democratic society. I am sure that ways will be sought to pre-empt this issue and to bring this important item of our cultural heritage within the reach of all those who deserve to experience it.



Sunset over Haggar Qim



# A Cover for the Maltese Temples

Professor Anthony Bonanno  
Executive President of *Din l-Art Helwa*  
1999 - 2001

*First Published – October 2000*

Once more I find it necessary to clarify that whatever I am writing in this address is an expression of my personal opinion, the opinion of one who has been for 30 years intimately involved with the study of our archaeological heritage and, consequently, with the problems connected with its preservation. It does not necessarily reflect the official position of *Din l-Art Helwa*, although I have a feeling that most members concur with these views.

Nor does it necessarily always reflect the positions already taken, or those that will

be taken, by the scientific committee set up by government to study and make recommendations on the preservation of Malta's megalithic temples.

Recently the Minister for Education, who is the minister responsible for culture and for the cultural heritage, made two very important statements in very quick succession. The first one revealed the government's acceptance of the need to erect a temporary protective cover over the four largest and most impressive prehistoric temples of these islands, and its willingness in principle to provide the funds for such covers.

The second one expressed government's propensity to accept the principle of "privatising" the management of individual units of the archaeological heritage, of transferring the direct management of archaeological sites to non-government institutions. On this occasion I shall limit myself to discussing the first of these two statements.

The main issue of the protective cover, its justification, is quite clear and does not seem to have provoked any controversy or dissenting voices. This is because without it, given the present state of scientific and technical knowledge, or better, given the present lack of better remedial measures, the temples concerned are doomed to perish at an exponentially accelerated pace.

The recommendation in favour of a temporary, light-weight, fully ventilated, protective cover came from the scientific committee set up by government in May this year. After that the same committee made a careful study of the causes and agents of the processes of decay of the fabric and structure of the temples.

The most serious and impending of these turned out to be the effects of direct rainfall on the temples, as well as the resulting concentration of groundwater underneath them, alternating with strong direct solar radiation in the drier months.

Two other issues are likely to be more controversial: the cost and the design of the proposed cover. The estimated cost (Lm500,000 for each cover) has already been



Tarxien Temples Colossal Statue

revealed. It has already raised a few eyebrows among some, especially in the context of the present financial situation of the country. Others give such an inestimably high value to these gems of past human endeavour, say that the quoted sum leaves them unimpressed.

The high cost is suggested by the hi-tech product that is required to provide shelter for the temples without any supports resting on any part of the temples themselves, and capable of resisting the eolic forces that characterise the Maltese climate.

This is what seems to justify the estimated high cost. Whether that amount needs to be spent or not is linked to the second issue, the design.

The cover needs to be designed in such a way as to provoke the least impact on the aesthetics both of the temples themselves and of their environmental context. It should rather, hopefully, contribute to the enhancement of both. But, I admit, that might prove to be an impossibility.

At the same time, the cover has to be effective in providing the desired shelter, strong enough to resist the elements and built of reasonably lasting materials.

On this matter the government has already made its intentions quite clear. There will be an open, national, possibly international, competition for the most acceptable design. I anticipate that this will be the most debated issue. On whichever the choice will fall, no design will be liked by everyone.

## Conclusion

What is important is that there be a national debate on the issue, that the subject be discussed in every corner of Maltese society: in the family; at the band club; within highbrowed committees; among professionals, archaeologists and conservators on the one hand and architects and artists on the other; in short, everywhere.

The wider the debate, the greater the manifestation of the maturity of the Maltese people on an issue that concerns them all directly, because it is at the very root of their identity.



photo: Gino Galea

# The Reconstruction of the Mnajdra Temples

Dr Alex Torpiano

*First Published – October 2001*



Shattered megalith  
Photo: *The Times*

The damage suffered by the Mnajdra Temple complex on 13 April 2001 rightly generated an indignant and angry reaction, locally as well as abroad. The attack was clearly organised and planned. My involvement with the reconstruction started on the 14 April, when a distraught Tony Pace, the Director of the Museum of Archaeology, telephoned to ask me to go to Mnajdra to evaluate what had happened. His request was accompanied by a recommendation to brace myself for a very distressing sight.

## The Damage to the Temples

The Mnajdra Temple complex consists of three temples, referred to as the Lower, the Middle and the Upper temples. The oldest temple is the Lower one, situated to the south-west of the others. The damage in this temple was limited to the first chamber. On the left hand side of this chamber, a megalith, located right at the top of the corbelling courses had been pushed over, and on its way down it had hit another upright megalith, decorated with characteristic surface pitting, and had damaged part of this pitting. No more megaliths had been displaced from this location, confirming the hypothesis that the attack had been interrupted by some unexpected event.

On the right hand side of the same chamber, another two megaliths, this time located in the third corbelling course, had also been pushed over. One of these megaliths had fallen directly on, and caused extensive fracturing to, a small flight of steps, leading to the chamber immediately to the right of the entrance. Inside this chamber, which in 1994 had been the site of another significant collapse caused by a violent rain-storm (*see Vigilo 12*), a free-standing tall upright megalith, that had escaped damage in 1994, was also toppled over, and had broken into a number of pieces as a result.

The damage in the Middle Temple was much more extensive. Practically all the apses were involved. Two uprights at the entrance were pushed over, and some effort had clearly been expended in an attempt to push over another big upright megalith marking the portal between the first and the second chambers.

The right hand apse of the first chamber was probably one of the first to be attacked. The dismantling of the two extant corbelling courses was complete. During the attack on this apse, one of the underlying uprights was hit by a falling megalith and was displaced. This was potentially of great concern because both the displaced megalith and the one adjacent to it were in a very serious state of deterioration, and would therefore be difficult to handle without risking further damage. The apse appeared to have been attacked from the east end, with a systematic movement, around to the western extremity.

The apse on the other side of this chamber had been involved in the 1994 collapse; however, a significant number of the two corbelling courses had not been damaged in that collapse, but were now toppled over. The apse appears to have been attacked simultaneously from both extremities, with the attack moving towards the middle of the apse, where, for some reason, the dismantling process was suddenly interrupted.

Some coralline limestone megaliths, that originally formed part of the outer wall of this chamber of the Middle Temple, were also pushed over during this process, this time to the outside of the temple.

The inner chamber was also particularly affected by the attack. On the left hand side, the attackers successfully dislodged an upright that formed the side to the porthole opening into the side-chamber. The megalith with porthole opening was also damaged during the attack, with a fine crack being visible at the junctions between the upper and bottom members and the right-hand side of the portal. The attack in this apse appeared to have started from the upright marking the central niche, with a movement towards the middle. A number of megaliths were damaged as a result of the impact with the ground or other megaliths.

The right hand side of the inner chamber was spared a complete dismantling of the two corbelling courses, probably because of the same providential interruption. A total of about 76 megaliths, and some 25 stones from the rubble walling to the west of the Middle Temple were affected by the attack.

## The Reconstruction Process

The reaction to the attack was particularly prompt. Within days of the completion of the magisterial enquiry, a detailed archaeological record of the collapsed megaliths was launched, together with a rectified photographic survey and reports commissioned on the superficial damage caused to the megaliths and on the

implications of the attack on the structural stability of the monument. The available photographic documentation was also obtained from the Museums Department. The best tools for the reconstruction were the set of rectified photographs of the Temples that had been taken immediately after the 1994 collapse, and the systematic photographic record that was started by the Museums Department last year.

As has often been pointed out in the past, the Temples are currently a ruin; this means that the structural integrity that would have resulted from the form of the completed structure has long been lost. The corbelling courses originally formed part of hemispherical rings that would have been stable, in spite of their corbelled projection beyond the face of the rings below, by virtue of the transmission of horizontal circumferential compressive forces across tight vertical masonry joints. The "tightness" of these rings has long been lost, and therefore the stability of the corbelled courses has been reduced to a dependence on the stability of each individual corbel. This is what facilitated the vandal attack; each megalith corbel could be attacked individually.

Nevertheless, it was established that the stability of the surviving structure was not at risk, and there was no need to put in extensive false-work or sandbagging, as had originally been feared. The only risks were in connection with the upright between the first and inner chambers of the Middle Temple, which had not been pushed over, but which was left at a precarious angle; and in connection with the drying out of the exposed soil infill, which could lead to crumbling.

The report prepared by the author proposed a number of interventions including the installation of a crane to facilitate the handling of the stones, the removal of some of the top layers of infill between inner and outer walls in the Middle temple, so as to facilitate the re-location process, the lifting of each megalith from its collapsed position, using nylon fabric slings, the structural gluing of those fragments of the collapsed megaliths that were considered as necessary for the recovery of the structural integrity of the whole, the re-assembly of the collapsed megaliths back in their original positions, and the re-placing of infill material at the top of the space between inner and outer skins of the temple walls. The detailed method statements for these interventions were discussed by the Scientific Experts Committee, and the archaeological and aesthetic implications assessed in the context of international restoration charters.

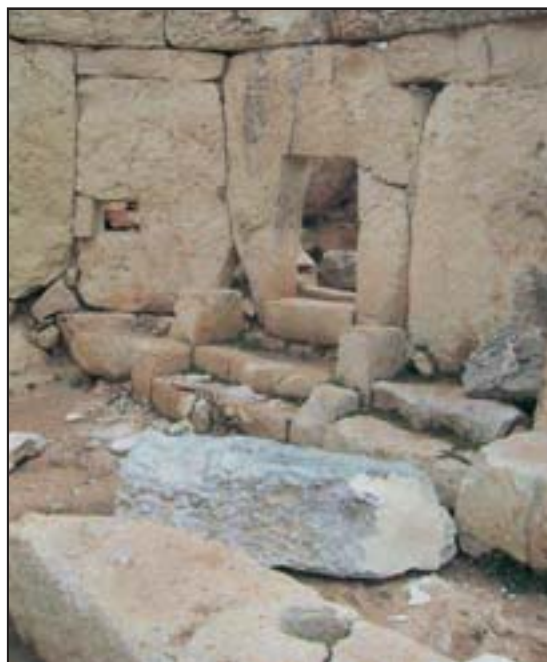
The other consolation emerging from the attack on Mnajdra Temples was that it allowed us to better study the hitherto hidden components of the construction system. The Museums Department took the opportunity to carry out archaeological investigations, particularly into the wall construction at the rear of the Middle Temple.

The reconstruction process was started by the lifting of those collapsed megaliths in the Lower Temple that had cracked upon impact and needed to be glued together before re-assembly. In some instances, the plane of cracking was not recent, but was, as evidenced by the

cement rendering, located at a previous repair. In other instances still, it was clear that two adjacent megaliths, involved in the collapse, were originally one single megalith. It was proposed that, for structural as well as for architectural reasons, the major sections of such megaliths should be solidly re-attached to each other. This was proposed for those cases where the cracks were the result of the attack, or where previously repaired cracks had re-opened, as well as for older cracks that had not been repaired. In my opinion, the visual integrity of the monument required it to be read with due attention being given to the original size of the megaliths. The fragmentation of the megaliths into smaller pieces, particularly since the fracture surfaces tend to weather over time, and eventually be read as vertical joints, in my opinion detracts from the proper reading of the structure of the monument.

Three types of adhesives were proposed. For those cracked megaliths where the separate pieces could be independently stable adjacent to each other, that is, where the strength across the repaired crack was not vital for the stability of the monument, it was considered sufficient for the adhesive to consist of hydraulic lime mixed with sand. Although the hydrated hydraulic lime is relatively strong, the repaired joint would not be as strong as the original stone and the repair could therefore be considered as having an ideal degree of reversibility.

Where the strength of the repaired crack was considered to be vital for the integrity of the structure, the re-attachment had to be based on irreversible techniques, involving modern epoxy adhesives. This was particularly recommended for the tall megalith in the Lower Temple. The use of cement was clearly not acceptable. The use of two-component epoxy-based adhesives has never been used to repair heritage stone monuments in Malta, although we had already used the technique in laboratory test conditions at the University. The use of lime-based mortars, or indeed any "paste-like" material, is not acceptable on visual grounds since a thick repair joint will tend to read as an intended joint. No dowels were proposed across the cracked joints.



Damage in the Lower Temple  
Photo: The Author



In the case of the porthole slab in the Middle Temple, it was proposed that the fine cracks be repaired by using very low viscosity adhesive. The adhesive is chemically similar to what is popularly referred to as super-glue, and has the ability to penetrate very fine cracks. This type of intervention has in fact not yet been carried out, since it was desired to first monitor the cracks to establish whether they were still alive before deciding to carry out the injection repair.

The main part of the reconstruction operation consisted in the identification of the collapsed megaliths against photographs from before the attack, the careful lifting of the megaliths using slings made of nylon fabric, and the re-assembly of the megaliths in their original position. The main objective of this exercise was to reconstruct the temple stones in the reverse sequence as that in which they were displaced. In other words, as each megalith was lifted from the top of the collapsed pile, it would immediately be placed on its presumed original location. The success of the operation depended solely on the skilful handling of the megaliths by the two masons, Wenzu and Górg. Wenzu had previously worked on the 1996 reconstruction of the Mnajdra temple, and therefore had the sensitivity of how to handle these massive but, at the same time, delicate stones.

It has never been clear whether the original megaliths were laid in a bedding mortar or whether the stones were worked smooth so that no bedding layer was necessary. In any case, any bedding mortar would have disappeared long ago. In recent years, therefore, the monument has been read as one without any bedding mortar between megaliths. This is, however, the cause of severe distress in the stones, since the uneven contact points in the interfaces give rise to high local stresses and, hence, to micro-cracking and accelerated deterioration. It was therefore proposed that the reconstruction of the displaced megaliths be made with the use of a bedding mortar, using a hydraulic lime-sand. The insertion of such a mortar bed is considered to be completely reversible, since the lime-sand mortar is not expected to adhere to the stone surface in a permanent fashion, or to develop any significant strength. The use of such bedding mortar was considered to be superior to the wedging of the megaliths using smaller stones, since the latter gives rise to high localised stresses.

The process of re-assembly was comparable to a giant three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. The photographs available do not easily give a hint as to the correct orientation of the position of the various megaliths. This is because the appearance of the surface of the megalith depends on the shadows cast by the projections on and depressions in the surface, and hence on the time of day.

Other clues were used to determine the exact positions and orientation, such as slight surface discolorations where stones were originally in contact, or where they projected beyond the lower levels. In some instances, we used water poured into a surface depression in order to check that the levelling of the megalith was the same as the original – if this was the case, the pool of water would cover exactly the depressed area that was discoloured as a result of years of ponding of water. The correctness of a complete semi-circular ring of stones was also verified by the ability to fit the stones within the given circumference, or otherwise. In some instances, it was necessary to dismantle and re-assemble with slight changes in angle so as to manage to complete a semi-circle.

The other difficult issue related to the fragility of two upright megaliths that were already severely deteriorated, and had been displaced as a result of the attack. We were not confident that these megaliths could be handled without their crumbling in our hands. In the end, during the re-assembly process it was found that the only way to carry out the



Protest march for Mnajdra

work properly was to pull out the displaced megalith, as if it were a decayed tooth, clean out the whole area and put it back again. It was not an easy decision, also because we were not sure what would happen to the infill when we removed the retaining megalith completely.

As it happened, the “tooth” was pulled out cleanly, and without any collateral damage, and the infill turned out to be well-packed fragments of stone (*xulliel*) which did not move when the retaining megalith was removed. The operation allowed a first ever glimpse of the way the infill of the walls was carried out. After the soil that had fallen in was cleaned out, the megalith was replaced in its original position, at the correct angle, and the remainder of the re-assembly could continue.

When the reconstruction process was completed, the restoration staff of the Museums Department continued with the integration of the repaired cracks so as to reduce the visual impact. We also took the opportunity to repair and re-assemble another four megaliths that had collapsed and been damaged in the 1994 collapse. Finally, we also dismantled the area in the Haġar Qim temple that had collapsed in another storm in 1998, and reconstructed it, so that the steel falsework that had been erected in 1998 could be removed.

### Conclusion

The reconstruction process has been a necessary consequence of the attack on the Mnajdra Temples. It has also been an opportunity to study its unique construction system from a closer perspective. It was an intense period of hard physical work, which, although assisted with a modern crane, led us to appreciate even more the original efforts that must have been made to construct the temples.

The reconstruction process was a completely successful one but the serious problems of deterioration of the megaliths remain. The attention that was given to the temple sites during this reconstruction period by the media, by the general public and by officialdom, must not be allowed to lapse.

The long term risk that environmental agents such as rain and sun pose to the survival of the temples have not diminished as a result of the emergence of higher risk for anthropogenic damage than had previously been assumed. We owe it to future generations to protect these unique sites to the best of our abilities and with the maximum resources that we can afford. We also owe it to all visitors of the current generation to better present the sites, and to make their visit a memorable experience.

## Marjorie de Wolff ( 1895 - 1997 )

**Benefactress of  
*Din l-Art Helwa***

**Charlotte de Trafford**

**The Legacy left by Marjorie de Wolff has been mainly spent on the restoration of Torri ta' Isopu (Gozo) and in supplying an injection of funds to Nature Trust on its formation in 1999.**

Portrait of Marjorie de Wolff  
by Terence Vickress  
kept in the boardroom at  
*Din l-Art Helwa*



Ada Marjorie de Wolff who, died aged 102 last October, is the first person in the 35 year history of *Din l-Art Helwa* to have made a bequest to the society.

She married Major Charles Esmond de Wolff CBE on the 14th August 1920, and it was his appointment to Malta in 1933 which brought her to the island. The de Wolffs first took up residence in St Julians and soon Marjorie was involved in the social whirl of those hectic pre-war years as well as taking part in the many cultural activities.

Possibly animals and animal welfare were her greatest passion. In England she had been an ardent animal welfare campaigner and she continued this work in Malta where she founded the RSPCA.

Marjorie's interest in amateur dramatics led her to be an early member of the MADC. and she was a frequent visitor to the Manoel Theatre. She loved music but in particular Opera and never missed an opportunity of seeing a new production.

Arts and crafts had always played an important part in her life so that by the time she settled in Malta she was already an accomplished craftswoman with always something new and interesting for the visitor to admire in her workshop. Precious metals and stones held a special fascination for her and she created some exquisite and unique jewellery. Through her apprenticeship to one of the Mdina workshops she became a very capable guildler and decorated many of her own pieces of furniture.

When war was declared in 1939, Esmond was once again called into active service. His career in World War 1 had been very distinguished but the injuries he sustained left him almost totally deaf. Yet despite that handicap, he served with great distinction once again. Meanwhile, Marjorie was contributing to the war effort by working in the victory kitchens as well as organising help and refuge for the many families evacuated from Valletta and the Three Cities to the outlying villages during the bombing of the Grand Harbour areas.

By now they had moved to Balzan and once the war was over, 151 Main Street became the venue for many memorable parties. Marjorie was a marvellous hostess and an inspired flower arranger. The house was always filled with the colours and scents of her lovely garden.

Besides the formal parties when Janie, her loyal maid, reigned supreme, there were also more intimate gatherings when Marjorie would regale us with stories from her life in six reigns; she was born a Victorian and lived through the reigns of two Edwards, two Georges and Queen Elizabeth II.

She was a great character with a tremendous *joie de vivre* which was wholly infectious. I remember when aged 98 she asked me to buy her a dozen rose bushes and how secretly I wondered whether she would live to see them bloom. The following year, while we were enjoying a cup of tea in her sitting room, my eyes lit upon a vase of magnificent scented roses. She noticed me admiring them and enthused how thrilled she was with the rose plants I had bought her.

When Marjorie first arrived in Malta she had been a keen horsewoman and loved to ride or drive her pony trap through the unspoilt Maltese countryside. In later years she was saddened and alarmed by the rampant and haphazard development everywhere, and I believe that her bequest to *Din l-Art Helwa* was a last effort to preserve the unique character of the Maltese landscape and architecture for future generations.



All images except for the 40th Anniversary Cartoon have previously been published in The Times.

All cartoons are reproduced with the kind permission of the artist, Maurice Tanti Burlò.





The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



# Cutting Corners in Valletta

## *Highlights of a report by Sir Bernard Fieldon*

*First Published – 1995*



Sir Bernard Fieldon, a world expert in architectural and environmental conservation and long time adviser to UNESCO, said how honoured he felt to have been invited to Malta by Valletta local council. Bath, Florence, Rome and Valletta are the only four cities in the world to have been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

During his seven-day stay in March to unofficially monitor the management of Valletta as a World Heritage Site, he had meetings with the President, Prime Minister, the Arts and Youth Minister, the Environment Minister, the Planning Authority, the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee and Valletta City councillors.

Sir Bernard's keen eye, clear analysis, wealth of knowledge and experience and his utterly gentle and good-mannered approach endow his evaluations with a special currency. It would not only be discourteous but sheer folly not to consider very carefully what he has to say.

With De Jokilehto, Sir Bernard jointly authored the UNESCO Publication Guidelines for Management of World Heritage Sites and he recently completed a detailed study of Bath.

Of fundamental importance, Sir Bernard emphasises is that: "everyone concerned with a historic city should understand its significance". He applauds the City of Bath for having produced and widely distributed The Bath Manifesto, which sets out the reasons for, and responsibilities associated with, the city's designation as a World Heritage Site.

In contrast, Sir Bernard noted that nobody in Malta seemed able to locate the UNESCO document that designated and defined Valletta as a World Heritage Site. According to Sir Bernard's records, the designation was made in 1980 and is number 183. Professor Salvino Busuttil, chairman of the Valletta Rehabilitation Project's Committee, has kindly agreed to locate a copy for *Din l-Art Helwa*.

World Heritage status confers benefits but it also imposes responsibilities for management, which "should ensure that the needs of the inhabitants are top priority". Sir Bernard outlined what he believed to be the various roles of Valletta, in order of priority:

Residential  
Governmental  
Cultural  
Commercial  
Tourism

The residential population of Valletta is approximately 10,000 and declining by some 300 per month. In contrast, there is a massive work-day influx of some 43,000 people by bus and car, creating major parking problems as well as considerable danger, damage and discordance by such a huge number of vehicles swamping the narrow streets and flooding the City Gate area.

Sir Bernard was in no doubt that "pedestrians should be given priority" and noted that, in fact, pedestrian circulation was often much quicker anyway.

In mentioning that he had read three major post-war planning reports concerning Valletta, Sir Bernard noted that none had so far led to any action, but crucially each faced "a fundamental difficulty in that you cannot separate Valletta and Floriana". It was possible, he thought, that this problem might not have been recognised when



the citation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site was drafted. Sir Bernard continued: "In fact, the whole defensive system should be given World Heritage status in my opinion".

Having welcomed the Government's establishment of the Bastion's Restoration Unit, Sir Bernard concentrated on what he perceived to be six key threats to Valletta, namely:

- Population Decline
- Neglect and Obsolescence
- Alterations and Improvements
- Traffic and Parking
- Visual Threats
- Tourists

He regarded the continuing population decline as a fundamental problem. Linked to the neglect and obsolescence of buildings, however, he could see no reason why affordable and high standard housing could not be created through a planned refurbishment of empty and under-occupied buildings.

Sir Bernard deplored insensitive alterations and improvements to buildings particularly, but not exclusively, in the retail sector, through incongruous design, for example, by removing or altering balconies, through the use of inappropriate materials such as aluminum instead of wood and inappropriate techniques, such as water jet cleaning.

The apparent anarchy and overcrowding of the City Gate bus terminus has, in Sir Bernard's emphatic view, rendered the "open space" between Valletta and Floriana a "NO-MAN'S LAND". Traffic and parking require immediate and urgent action so that pedestrians are given priority; pavements and streets should be cleared of cars and park-and-ride schemes implemented, with mini-buses circulating along the city's perimeter roads.

Visual threats are posed by intrinsically poorly designed buildings and the juxtaposition of incompatible designs not only within the city but within its environs. For example, were a tall building to emerge in the Tigne development at Sliema, it would, in Judge Maurice Caruana Curran's words: "humble and humiliate Valletta." People without training in visualisation cannot see until it is too late when a multi-storey building has been built in the wrong place.

Finally, Sir Bernard saw unbridled tourism as a possible threat to Valletta's culture and quite bluntly said: "You shouldn't sell yourself to tourism". Underlying these major threats, in Sir Bernard's view, is the crucial issue of management. The management problems are wider than just planning control. The aim should be "to enhance the vitality of the World Heritage City through the actions of its citizens."

Sir Bernard believes that with the present management situation there is a total lack of effective coordination, and concluded by saying: "In view of the complexity of the problem, I would recommend a coordinating committee be appointed by the President with:

- A representative of Government
- A representative of the local council
- Persons with knowledge of urban economies, architecture and culture

The members of this committee could well come from existing bodies whose activities it would absorb. The committee would be accountable to the President and people of Valletta and produce an annual report.

**The chairman should be a citizen of Valletta.**



Proposed Master Plan for the new Valletta approach

Opposite:  
Gardiola over St James ditch

Derelict building at the corner of Merchants Street and St Lucija Street



## Valletta in 1945 - Comments and Proposals

Philip Zammit Briffa

Honorary Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa

2001 - 2005

For many years now we have been hearing and reading about the revitalisation, rehabilitation and restoration of our capital city, Valletta. Major projects and various initiatives have been proposed by our Government over a period of years, and have been discussed and dissected, criticised, revised, postponed and aborted. Countless seminars, symposia, fora and conferences have been held on the various problems affecting our capital and the assorted initiatives needed to restore the areas still to be tackled. For many years in fact since the end of the Second World War in 1945 we have been considering such diverse subjects as the City Gate and Opera House areas, traffic restrictions and various aesthetic issues.

This issue of *Vigilo* includes a summary of our Executive President's address to the Annual General Meeting on the 28 February. *Valletta; a City Betrayed* addresses the current problems and suggests solutions. In 1945, the Government of Malta published a report prepared by Austen St B Harrison and R Pearce S Hubbard outlining a plan for the reconstruction of Valletta and the three cities. A year of unremitting toil was spent in producing this plan in the face of many difficulties. The report makes intriguing reading and includes various comments and opinions which carry as much weight now as they did 60 years ago. The report is explicit and pulls no punches. I am reproducing parts of it which readers should find of interest and which may, perhaps, influence views that have, so far, proved to be intractable.

In his foreword, the then Governor, Lt-General Sir Edmond Schreiber, wrote that the planners had submitted a plan which incorporated the requirements of modern traffic and amenities with a minimum of fresh demolition and the preservation of the characteristic features of the cities and towns in Malta's harbour area. It is useful to bear in mind that the population of Valletta then was about 24,000. It is now about 7,000. There were about 6,000 vehicles in Malta whereas now there are over 250,000.

### Main Proposals

The Report referred to two radical proposals and commented:

*Valletta, with its massive encient, pierced occasionally by tortuous tunnels of access, its narrow streets, many so steep as to necessitate long flights of steps, and its*

*frequent right-angled road-junctions, is manifestly ill-adapted to motor traffic. Yet these obstacles to the free movement of vehicles are among the characteristics which make the Capital of Malta unique among cities and a place of pilgrimage. Were Valletta only a relic of the past we should not hesitate to recommend the exclusion of motor traffic from its streets with all the consequential inconvenience of its inhabitants; and we have reason to know that there are some so intoxicated by the glory of its past, and so filled with veneration for the monuments which record it, that they are prepared, or believe they are, to practise any austerity which the proper maintenance of them entail.*

*Valletta is, however, no such relic but, on the contrary, a city palpitating with life and, as we have also reason to know, there are among its citizens some so conscious of this vital urge that they would raze its ramparts to the rock and replace its canyon-like streets with spacious avenues. It appears to us, as we believe it must to most Maltese, that neither of these suggestions is acceptable, because neither frankly faces all the facts.*

Whatever might once have been said in favour of the banning of cars from Valletta, the proposal is now undesirable and impracticable. On the other hand, the suggestion that the work of destruction, begun by the enemy, should be continued by the Government, to prepare the way for a contemporary city untrammelled by relics of the past, is one calculated to appeal only to

fanatics. By a generation which has witnessed the wanton ruination of so much of its heritage it is unlikely to find general acceptance.

The proposals for Valletta were shaped by two principal considerations. Firstly, the damage caused by the war did not necessarily warrant radical re-planning. Secondly, every care should be taken to conserve the unique character of what remains of the City of the Order.

### Entrance to Valletta

The City Gate area was dealt with in some detail. The planners noted the proposal, made on more than one occasion, to remove not only Kingsgate but also the Curtain linking the Bastion of St James with that of St John. They stated that they were unequivocally opposed to this suggestion, not because they regarded the Gate itself as sacrosanct, but because they were convinced that so important a breach in the enceinte of Valletta would, in the long run, lead inevitably to the destruction of the character of the City as a whole. They recommended, on the contrary, that the entrance should be closed to all wheeled traffic.

The planners also commented on the fact that anyone passing for the first time through the tunnel of Kingsgate must have felt that the principal approach to Valletta was as inconvenient, as in character it was unworthy, of the City of the Knights. Early maps indicated that up to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the area in question was free of buildings. Those that were there in 1945 had



A much newer  
City Gate in 1971



The Opera House  
from an old Postcard

*“The truth, of course,  
is that good  
architecture is but the  
outward and visible  
sign of an inward and  
spiritual grace”*

Opposite: Clearing the way  
for the new  
Valletta approach road  
in 1979

been badly damaged by enemy action or were condemned as slum property. The planners' recommendations included the creation of an open space and two buildings on either side which might reasonably rise to the height of the Cavaliers and which should be set behind arcades, the terraced roofs of which might be on the level of Queensway, now Pope Pius V Street.

The latest proposal, which has not been proceeded with, envisaged an underground car park and multi-storey building on Freedom Square, with an open area at the back below St James Cavalier.

### The Opera House

The planners then went on to tackle the Opera House. They contended that the Opera House was not a historic building, probably as a result of a schedule drawn up by a committee chaired by Chevalier Hannibal Scicluna and including Chevalier Olaf Gollcher, Major Hugh Braun, Professor Antonio Sciortino and Mr Charles Zammit. This committee chose to regard as historic monuments all ecclesiastical buildings of whatever date, all antiquities of a date prior to 1680 and all structures of a notable historic or aesthetic interest of a date earlier than 1798. The Opera House was completed in 1866 and hence did not qualify.

The planners were not very kind when they described the building's attributes as follows:

*It is very generally agreed that the acoustics were execrable; that the line of sight of a high proportion of the seats was unsatisfactory; that the number of seats was, from the point of view of an impresario, insufficient; that the stage, with its wings and loft, were too small; that the actors' dressing-room accommodation was insufficient and that the approach to the building by carriage was impracticable. We had supposed therefore, that the opportunity presented by its destruction would be eagerly seized by a people obviously not lacking in musical and histrionic ability, to erect on the same site or elsewhere, a building better adapted to the contemporary needs of music and the drama.*

*Upon making enquiries, however, we learned that it was the wish of all those we consulted that the destroyed building should be resuscitated. Such striking and, in our experience, rare unanimity of opinion must be respected; we therefore refrain from making any recommendation.*

*We would, however, point out in passing that only a person unskilled in the practice of architecture could suppose it possible, without changing its form, satisfactorily to remedy so many serious defects in a building.*

### Aesthetics

Before bringing the report to a close, Harrison and Hubbard chose to devote a short chapter to a number of matters *which have only this in common: that they relate to what in Malta is commonly referred to as “aesthetics”*. An Aesthetics Board existed in Malta for many years but now seems to have disappeared from view. The planners stated at the time that the existence of this Board was proof that the people of Malta were concerned about the appearance of their cities and were convinced that it had served a useful purpose and that the cities, at least, were more seemly for its labours. They also stated that:

*Its very success, however, appears to us to have contributed to the propagation of the popular heresy that good architecture is something which may, at will, be applied to, or withheld from, a structure otherwise utilitarian. The truth, of course, is that good architecture – to quote words familiar in another context – is but the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; and no committee, however constituted, and with whatever powers endowed, can ensure good architecture. Good architecture is the work of good architects.*

The 60 or so years that have elapsed since this report was published have seen many new buildings take the place of the destroyed and damaged auberges and other buildings of the Order. The uniqueness of Valletta has created great difficulties in the minds of planners and architects. The new Law courts and the General Workers Union building are not gems of architecture.

We must not repeat these mistakes in the area of City Gate, Freedom Square and the Opera House. How much weight should be given to public opinion? In this particular field, is the public sufficiently discerning and cultured to make a correct judgement? Should the plan be one that is acceptable to the majority, a politician's solution, or should it be a brave attempt to produce exciting structures that will enhance our capital city while at the same time respecting its uniqueness as a fortified city of World Heritage status?

## Valletta: A City Betrayed

*Martin Scicluna*

*Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa  
2001 - 2005*

*First Published – April 2004*



Valletta is a city betrayed. Over the last 50 years, successive governments have largely neglected this once beautiful mannerist and baroque city. We Maltese have indeed been fortunate to inherit a city conceived and designed by men of vision, fashioned by architects of skill, imagination, flair and style and able to marry

the overwhelming and powerful military origins of the city with the needs of civilised and noble inhabitants. Valletta is a historic and architectural gem. It is a legacy in stone.

What kind of a people are we, therefore, who spurn such a legacy – as we have done in the last half-century – and allow it to decay? What kind of governments do we have, that are prepared to spend almost Lm12 million in the last five years on the Sliema Promenade, on St James Cavalier and on Bugibba Promenade, yet have spent only just over Lm500,000 on Valletta in the same period? What does this say about our sense of priorities and Valletta's place in our politicians' hearts? Valletta has been betrayed.

There is one key ingredient missing before the commitment and flow of resources in the direction of Valletta – or of any other of our World Heritage sites – may reflect the priority they deserve. That key ingredient is political will. Our politicians have for

**Summary of a  
presentation by  
Martin Scicluna,  
Executive President  
at the  
Annual General  
Meeting  
2004**

too long paid lip service only to the needs of Valletta. This must change.

But hard on the heels of political will comes organisation. There must be a master plan for Valletta. There must be better organisation of the machinery of government as it affects Valletta, with a view to creating a more focussed structure – a clearer chain of command and accountability.

Our recommendation for the way ahead in Valletta is clear. We wish to see one ministerial supremo – a Parliamentary Secretary given direct responsibility for Valletta to the exclusion of all other responsibilities. This is a national problem – a national challenge. Its importance requires national solutions.

The ministerial supremo would be a Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Culture. His terms of reference – his portfolio – would need specifically to give him the necessary overarching control over other departments and government entities.

What should the master plan consist of? Again, our vision is very clear. We start with a number of basic premises. First, it must be a pragmatic and realistic plan. The rehabilitation of Valletta is inevitably ambitious and challenging. It is no less than the conservation and regeneration of Valletta after half a century of neglect.

Second, the master plan must lay down clear priorities. It must attack first the bread and butter issues – improvements to the appearance and day to day quality of life of Valletta that so offend us, before tackling the grand projects so beloved of ministers.

While not excluding the possibility of tackling major projects – as and when financial investment

Derelict  
Lower Fort St Elmo





The Lion  
Valletta's proudest  
symbol

allows – we would strongly recommend starting with the bread and butter issues. These can – and should – be tackled straight away.

What are the bread and butter issues? The state of most of the pavements in Valletta are a national disgrace. The cats' cradle of telephone wires and other wiring in most streets are an eyesore. The overall lack of cleanliness and shabbiness of Valletta's streets are a crying shame for any capital city, let alone a World Heritage site.

The litter and dog excrement, the broken pavements and pot-holed streets are offensive to the eye. Rubbish pick-up points need to be more liberally located around the city and cleared with greater frequency and thoroughness. There is no reason why minimal investment and organisational nous should not transform the look of our streets overnight.

Street lighting needs to be improved. Major historic buildings should be floodlit. The upkeep of the magnificent floodlit bastions must be greatly enhanced and regularly maintained. Rules on advertising signs need to be devised and then implemented. Shop fronts need to be made to adhere to uniform standards of appearance and materials as befits an outstanding heritage city. Air-conditioners are a modern addition whose use cannot be banned. They are here to stay. However, their design and installation should be such as to minimise their objectionable appearance. The upkeep of balconies, so redolent of the typical Valletta streetscape, must be actively encouraged.

There is no reason why in such a self-contained city – only nine hundred metres long and five hundred metres wide – the signage marking the way to all our historic sites and, indeed, marking the sites themselves, should not be uniformly done and uniformly attractive.

We believe that tackling these issues would begin the process of transforming the whole appearance of Valletta in the immediate term. The financial outlay would be minimal – perhaps a one off expenditure of Lm2 or 3 million – as much as is being spent now in

one year on roadside flowers. But the impact would be out of all proportion to the money spent.

As to the major longer-term capital projects, these are numerous. The overall costs are not insignificant. Today, they are unaffordable. But rather than throw up our hands and say we cannot afford them so we are not going to do anything, let us at least draw up a plan for their implementation as and when funds do become available.

Let us start with Fort St Elmo, probably one of Malta's prime historic sites and now in a tragic state of dilapidation. The whole of St Elmo (Lower St Elmo especially) needs to be cleaned up and made secure.

As to what to do once Fort St Elmo is clean and secure, we believe that it is important for the Fort to be re-inhabited by organisations which can use it productively and in a manner which is dignified and fitting for a fort of this historic importance. The need to re-inhabit St Elmo is fundamental to its future use. Most importantly, it must be made accessible to the general public and to visitors so that its historic significance and architectural beauty can be fully explored and enjoyed.

Next, the vexed issues of the City Gate, Freedom Square and the old Opera House. These are currently a major stain on Valletta. What has happened here epitomises the story of Valletta on a gruesome scale – a potent cocktail of government and bureaucratic incompetence and indecision, over-ambitious plans and inadequate funding.

The whole area from City Gate to the Opera House site is seedy and unsavoury. Inaction is not the answer. There is much that can be done immediately without major financial expenditure. The area can – and must – be thoroughly cleaned out and properly organised. The taxis and food stalls can – and must – be moved away. The architecture of the City Gate can be improved by simply embellishing its façade so that it more nearly resembles the gate of old.

Freedom Square itself is unbalanced and characterless. Its use as a car park exacerbates the ugliness of the setting. The square itself should be restored with buildings on one side and a public recreational space with a fountain and outdoor seating at its core.

As to the Opera House site, we would prefer to re-build the Opera House with an outer fabric which is compatible with the traditional style and character of Valletta (my own preference would be to see it composed of the Barrie architecture) while using the internal space created for a multi-purpose theatre or other similar cultural purpose.

We have flirted with the idea that the country's Parliament would provide an appropriate use for the new building. But we have concluded that a more fitting place for the Parliament – in terms both of space available and the facilities already largely in place there – would be the Mediterranean Conference Centre.

Another blemish on the Valletta landscape is the Monti in Merchants Street and part of Old Theatre Street. It is down-market, shabby and incompatible with the needs and setting of a historic city. If it must be retained, it should be moved to the ditch near the

War Memorial – an area which is already used by the Monti every Sunday. The centuries old St George's Square is currently the car park for Members of Parliament. It is extremely inappropriate for what is



probably the most attractive and elegant square in Valletta to be used in this way. The square should be restored for public use and enjoyment with seating, and perhaps the return of the original fountain.

A continuing major maintenance expenditure is needed for the up-keep of the bastions and fortifications around Valletta. Responsibility for the fortifications of Malta should be vested in Heritage Malta. The bastions and fortifications are outstanding features of Valletta, but they are under constant attack from erosion and the wear and tear of time. Many parts are in danger of collapse.

### Regeneration

I want now to touch briefly on the city's regeneration – bringing it back to life. I start with the vital need to optimise tourism. We need not only to improve the facilities in Valletta and the way it looks but enhance its status as a cultural capital on a Mediterranean, European and global scale.

There is a huge, as yet untapped, source for the cultural tourist to enjoy. We must be more imaginative in the scope and organisation of heritage trails and access to historic sites – from the ecclesiastical riches to the baroque architecture, the subterranean passages, the Knights' auberges, the military fortifications, the gardens and artistic treasures. But they need properly focused organisation and attention – a job which the Malta Tourism Authority should be driving forward more energetically.

A key ingredient in bringing the city back to life is how we deal with traffic. We start from the basis that the car is a necessary evil, which must however be controlled. The objective should be to make the central core of Valletta pedestrianised.

But to make this a workable proposition we accept that there are two prerequisites for success. I stress that unless these aspects are first put in place, plans to pedestrianise parts of the city are doomed to failure.

Firstly, an efficient and comprehensive "park and ride" scheme needs to be introduced, coupled with a modern and effective public transport system linking Valletta with the rest of the Island.

Secondly, we need a fast and efficient maritime transport system linking our coastal towns by sea to Valletta, coupled with mini-bus transport into the city centre and a lift and cable car facility from Grand Harbour to the centre (as indeed is, we believe, already being planned – though, as always, painfully slow to be executed). We must also try to

Left:  
The fountain  
now in St Philip's Garden  
Floriana



A historic British period cast-iron litter bin  
in a Valletta side street

Proposed site for  
park and ride system





The Opera House saga

halt and reverse the population and residential flight from the city by appropriate fiscal and other measures. The population of Valletta now stands at around 6,000 from 21,000 just a few years ago.

Such fiscal measures must go hand in hand with a wholesale revision and updating of the rent laws – as indeed has been earnestly promised by the government – since these currently act as a severe disincentive to landlords to restore their old properties in Valletta and to rent them at a fair market price so that there is a proper return on investment. When is the government finally going to pull its finger out on this issue and deliver on its promises?

The shopping centre and commercial role of Valletta is already established. It can be made much better. In our view, however, there are enough shopping malls to meet present and future demands. There is no need for more. More importantly, the malls that already exist now need to be up-graded if they are to meet the standards to which Valletta should be aspiring.

As to enhancing Valletta in the evening, both culturally and socially, we believe that this is already happening. We do not wish to see Valletta turned into another Paceville. What we want to see is an elegant city whose daytime hustle and bustle gives way in the evening to the leisurely pace of theatre-goers and diners in good, small, atmospheric restaurants, or drinkers enjoying a drink in outdoor cafes.

**Summing Up**

To sum up: the state of Valletta today presents a national challenge, which must be tackled on a national scale. We must have one minister in Government solely responsible for coordination and action in Valletta – a ministerial supremo who would be a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture.

We must draw up a proper master plan for Valletta. The master plan must focus immediately on the bread and butter issues that so offend any visitor to our capital. In parallel, it must tackle – as and when funds become available – the major projects which we have identified today in a phased and incremental manner.

The Excelsior saga



# EUROPA NOSTRA MEDAL FOR MSIDA BASTION CEMETERY

Maurice Caruana Curran  
Founder President

***Din l-Art Helwa* is proud to announce that the International Jury Panel of the Europa Nostra Heritage Award Scheme, chaired by J. Wynford Evans, CBE, has awarded its Msida Bastion Cemetery Restoration Project a highly prestigious award consisting of a Medal of Honour for 2001.**



Msida Bastion Cemetery.  
Detail of a monument  
before restoration

The citation inscribed on the medal awarded to the Maltese project by Europa Nostra fully describes the merit of the project:

***For the admirable, painstaking recovery, re-assembly and careful restoration of the monuments, headstones and tombs of the Msida Bastion Cemetery and for the conversion of its derelict historic site into a public garden.***

Andy Welsh and his wife Jenny, Founder President Judge Maurice Caruana, holding the Medal of Honour, and his wife Cettina with H E Eric Gerada Azzopardi, Maltese Ambassador to Sweden and Denmark



The presentation ceremony, presided over by HRH Prince Henrik, Prince Consort of Denmark, was held on Saturday 23 March in the Gobelín Hall at Christiansborg Castle in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, Founder President of *Din l-Art Helwa*, was presented with the medal on behalf of the project submitted by the Association under the Heritage Award Scheme and received the award together with Dr. Alexander Welsh, who led the team of DLH volunteers who worked so hard for ten years to restore the dilapidated historic Msida Bastion Cemetery and to ensure its conversion to a public garden called Il-Ġnien għall-Mistrieħ, Garden of Rest.

The ceremony was also attended by Mrs Viviane Reding, Commissioner in charge of Education and Culture of the European Union and by the Executive President of Europa Nostra, Baron Daniel Cardon de Lichtbuer. Malta was represented by her Ambassador to Denmark and Sweden, H E Eric Gerada Azzopardi.

A festive dinner in honour of the award winners was held on the same evening at Christian VII's Royal Palace at Amalienborg. Many other representatives of European NGOs working in the same field as *Din l-Art Helwa*, were present for the occasion. A commemorative plaque, also granted by Europa Nostra, will be presented to *Din l-Art Helwa*, for affixing on the site.

Four types of projects are considered annually for this prestigious award. These are:

- The restoration of a historic building or site.
- The re-adaptation of a historic building or site to a modern use.
- The construction of a modern building in sympathy with historic surroundings.
- The creation of areas of natural beauty.

The project submitted by *Din l-Art Helwa*, falls under the first two areas.

This award is of special importance for Malta. Although Malta has won some five diplomas in previous years under the scheme, this year's entry is the first to have been recognised as being worthy of the prestigious Medal of Honour. Europa Nostra awards six such medals each year.

The other European winners of the 2001 Medals of Honour for restoration projects are :

**Villa Tammekann in Estonia, Lions Home in Cyprus, Kynzvarť Castle in the Czech Republic, Turebyholm Manor in Denmark, and Gallico Castle in Montecalvoli in Italy.**





View of Msida Bastion Cemetery as it looks today  
Photo: Simone Mizzi

Europa Nostra is the Pan-European Federation of 230 National Trusts and heritage and environmental NGOs. It enjoys consultative status with the Council of Europe and is also in close contact with the Commission of the European Union on all heritage and environmental matters.

The restoration work on the Msida Bastion Cemetery met the approval of the judging panel on various bases. These include the commitment and dedication of the team of volunteers who had to carry out difficult and dangerous work, most of the time manually, to repair, reassemble and restore the neo-classic headstones and monuments in varying states of preservation. This was done under all sorts of weather conditions over a number of years. It has been necessary to sort out as many as 20,000 fragments.

The historic site had to be cleared from invasive overgrowth as it had been neglected and left derelict after it suffered bomb damage in World War II. Subsequently it had been frequently vandalised with each grave being broken into and looted.

Judge Caruana Curran, at the time President of the DLH, had brought the sorry state of the site to the attention of Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, then Minister of Education. Together with the Ministry of Agriculture, which was responsible for the garden as a public area, Dr. Mifsud Bonnici made it possible for the Heritage NGO to begin its long and painstaking project of rehabilitation.

The Msida Bastion Cemetery was the first British Cemetery to be set up in Malta and was in use from 1806 till 1857 when it became full and the later Ta' Braxia Cemetery, now also under restoration by DLH, was established. The Msida Bastion Cemetery, hidden within the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Bastion Walls of Floriana, houses many important and artistic specimens of neo-classic funerary art. These are a rare occurrence in the Mediterranean region being more associated to northern cultural spheres.

Most of the monuments were designed and executed by Maltese architects, sculptors and stone masons. Through the project DLH succeeded in establishing the final resting place of Mikiel Anton Vassalli, known as the 'Father of the Maltese Language' and John Hookham Frere, a great benefactor of the Maltese, both notable amongst the leading personalities buried there.

Today the Msida Bastion Cemetery is open regularly as a public garden and *Din l-Art Helwa*, are currently working to obtain its guardianship under the new Heritage Act. It is also in the process of establishing a small museum which will house funerary memorabilia and research documents that might be of interest to the public.

The restoration project started in 1989 by Reginald Kirkpatrick, a Council Member of DLH and after his death the leadership was taken over by Dr Welsh and his team, including his wife Jenny and Mary and Derek Aldred who were amongst the most active volunteers, together with Bill Morgan and Des Fay. The findings of the meticulous research work have been published in two guide books by DLH compiled by Dr Welsh together with the historian Alan Keighley.

*Din l-Art Helwa* was one of the first eight members to have joined Europa Nostra in its early years in 1967.

**Judge Caruana Curran told Vigilo**

***“I consider this prestigious award to be the culmination of my work both for Din l-Art Helwa in general in all these long years, as its representative on the Council of Europa Nostra since 1986, and above all for Malta in the field of heritage conservation”.***

Restored monuments



## Gone Too Soon: Protecting Malta's Coastline

Richard Offen

First Published – October 2001

Whether one likes pop music or not, living in a house with three teenage daughters means that it is difficult to avoid! Two or three years ago the favourite song of the moment, which blared out from my daughters' rooms at what seemed like upward of several thousand decibels, was one by Michael Jackson called *Gone too Soon*. I must confess that I quite liked this song. It described, quite poetically I thought, the fleeting and transient nature of natural phenomena such as sunsets and rainbows. It occurred to me at the time that many other beautiful and wondrous things could have been added to Jackson's list, including our coastline.

### Guest of *Din l-Art Helwa*

These thoughts returned to me, recently, when I was the guest of *Din l-Art Helwa* to help them focus on the coastline of Malta. The task was to see what could be done to protect some of the spectacular natural beauty of your shores and ensure that they do not become a mere memory to be sung of to future generations.

First, let me place on record my sincere thanks to *Din l-Art Helwa* for an absolutely superb and incredibly interesting few days. I had not visited Malta before, but will certainly be back for more! My time with you will remain long in my memory.

During my all too brief visit, it became apparent that the areas of the Maltese coastline that have not been drastically altered by the hand of man are of outstanding quality and every bit as good as anything we have in Britain. This quality is exemplified not only by spectacular landscape features, such as the cliffs of Gozo, or the fascinating wildlife the coast supports, but also by the historical and archaeological monuments which represent Malta's long and incredible history. These are all facets of your island heritage that I feel the Maltese people should jealously guard.

### A Parallel in Britain

The British, too, are an island race and, over many millennia, the sea and our shores have played an important role in shaping the fabric of our society. The coastline bears traces of man's endeavours over thousands of years. It has acted as the interface for our trade, commerce and warfare with the rest of the world and has also been a source of inspiration to poets, musicians, and artists alike. Its natural resources have also provided people's livelihood for many centuries. In recent history, like Malta, this has resulted in considerable areas being exploited for all kinds of development, with consequent damage to the natural environment.

The coast having played such an important part in British history, it is not surprising that the first property to come to the newly formed National Trust was on the coast. It was Dinas Oleu, a rocky hillside behind the Welsh seaside town of Barmouth, given, on the strict understanding that it would always be kept

wild, by Mrs Fanny Talbot in March 1895. This gift cast the die for the National Trust to play a major part in protecting the coastline of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. (Scotland has its own National Trust, which also cares for many miles of the Scottish coast).

### Neptune Coastline Campaign

By 1965 the Trust had acquired 300 km of unspoilt coastline, including areas such as Blakeney Point in Norfolk, the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland, parts of the magnificent Gower Peninsula in South Wales and the Farne Islands, one of the most important breeding grounds for coastal birds in Europe. However, in our densely populated islands, it was becoming clear that huge tracts of fine coastline were being lost to badly-sited industry and expanding towns, or simply being "loved to death" by the spread of tourism.

Enterprise Neptune (recently renamed the Neptune Coastline Campaign) was launched in 1965 as a national appeal to enable the National Trust to respond to the threats by purchasing coastal areas and preventing the destruction of our most beautiful and environmentally sensitive coastal areas.

So far, thanks to the Neptune Coastline Campaign, the National Trust has taken into its protection, for the benefit of the nation, more than 900 km of coastline. This ownership includes fine landscapes, important wildlife sites and areas of considerable cultural, historical and geological significance, as well as a variety of beaches visited by millions every year.

**Richard Offen**  
Campaign Manager  
of the Neptune  
Coastline Campaign  
visited  
*Din l-Art Helwa*  
in 2001  
on behalf of the  
National Trust

Ramla Bay  
Gozo



Through Neptune, the National Trust aims to conserve the character and quality of the coastline by drawing attention to the pressures facing it and raising money for its acquisition.

**A Call to Action**

With this as your example, it would seem to me that there is not a minute to lose in starting to protect what remains of the magnificent, unspoilt Maltese coastline. It is clearly time to stand up and be counted and begin to persuade people that unabated development is not the be all and end all of the Island’s economy, or its culture.

Many will argue that development, especially for tourism, is the key to the Island’s future prosperity, but I would suggest that if this philosophy is adhered to rigidly, it may be that Malta will shoot the goose that is laying some of the golden eggs.

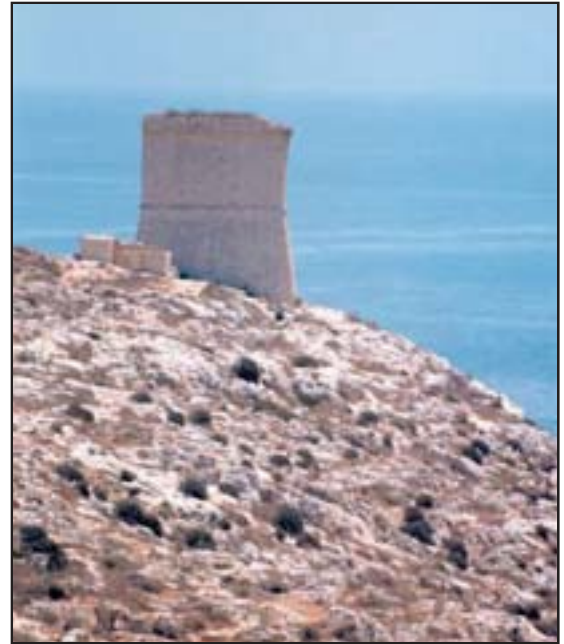
Many countries are now finding that “heritage-tourism” is occupying an ever-increasing share of their tourism market. It is clear that Malta has a great deal to offer such tourists and, for this reason, I would strongly urge *Din l-Art Helwa* to campaign hard for the protection of the remaining unspoilt coastline and ensure that it is accessible for everyone to enjoy.

**Coastal Towers**

*Din l-Art Helwa* is ideally placed to spearhead such a campaign. During the last few years the organisation has undertaken painstaking restoration work on some of the wonderful, historic towers sited along the coastline.

These towers form a key foothold and a good starting point for gaining further coastline to prevent it being developed and keep it accessible.

Provided that management agreements can be reached that include some of the land surrounding the



Right: Coastal cliffs at tal-Hamrija

towers, these areas will provide an excellent starting point for a campaign to protect more of the Maltese coast.

“So what is in it for me? Why should we worry about our coastline?” Islanders will ask. In a speech to the National Health Society in the 1890s, Octavia Hill, one of the three founders of the National Trust said:

“Keep those fair, far, still places for your children and your children’s children, if you can: the more cities increase, the more precious they will be; for the more man’s soul will long for the beauty, for the quiet, which the city does not, cannot, give”.

It is said that we do not inherit the coastline from our forebears, merely borrow it from our children. It is therefore everyone’s responsibility to ensure that something worthy is handed on for future generations to enjoy.

**Working in Partnerships**

The ability of the coastal zone to sustain all human and physical pressures depends on how it is protected and managed. In Britain, the National Trust feels it still has a crucial role to play in acquiring coastline as a means of ensuring its long-term protection.

Ownership and management of individual sites, however, must have regard to the wider context and the Trust is committed to the well being of the coastal zone as a whole and the maintenance of naturally sustainable coastal systems. To achieve this requires a willingness to work in partnership with others, a capacity for listening and innovative flair.

I feel sure that *Din l-Art Helwa* has the same willingness and I sincerely hope that it will gain the necessary support to protect the precious jewel that is Malta’s coastline.

Dingli Cliffs



## Halting the Uglification of Malta

*Martin Scicluna*

*Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa  
2001 - 2005*

*First Published – October 2004*

To uglify is to make ugly. Uglification – itself an ugly word – describes what happens when things are made ugly – physically unappealing.

Minister George Pullicino's recent brave and impassioned plea about the current state of Maltese architecture, and the part played in it by members of his own profession, struck a chord with *Din l-Art Helwa*. Ever since our inception almost 40 years ago, we have striven hard – often in vain – to turn back the tide of ugliness that has threatened Malta's beauty.

With few exceptions, the uglification of the last 40 years has been relentless. The overwhelming surge of construction development compounded by – in the main – poor, tasteless architecture has taken its toll.

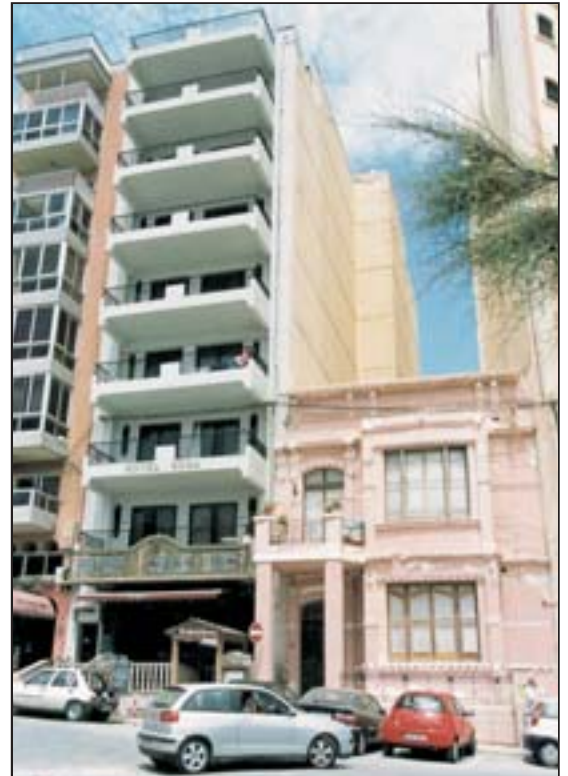
It started with several large tracts of land at Ghajn Żejtuna (the Santa Maria Estate) and Kortin in Mellieħa. This was followed by the onslaught on Sliema, the valleys and much of the coast-line. The abomination that is City Gate and the building of the Excelsior Hotel directly on the Valletta bastions were early indications of a barbaric disregard for our historic fortifications. Fort Chambrai was a later victim.

The uglification of Sliema stands as a stark example of all that has gone wrong with Malta's urban development over the last 40 years. Sliema, once a most elegant and dignified place in which to live, has been largely turned into a town teeming with the grossest apartment blocks, devoid of architectural merit, soulless monuments to greed and speculation. (In parenthesis, I should add that internally the apartments I have seen are mostly luxurious, in stark contrast to their exterior).

Qawra, Buġibba, St Paul's Bay, St Julian's, Marsascula, Marsaxlokk, not forgetting the once charming fishing villages of Gozo, have all succumbed to the bulldozer and the jack-hammer of rampant construction development.

*“Must  
Malta's  
beauty  
perish?”*

May the images on this page  
and opposite speak  
for themselves!



Nor have the traditional Maltese villages been spared. Many formerly beautiful, classic village cores have been transformed. Once integral and distinct villages have spread outwards to present a virtually unbroken amorphous mass ranging from Mosta to Żurrieq.

Despite the welcome and over-due creation of the Planning Authority (now MEPA) in 1992, this tide of uglification, personified by over-development combined with second-rate architecture, has persisted. The legacy of the last four decades is that there are now parts of Malta which are irredeemably ugly. Compare and contrast with “old Malta”, as exemplified by Vittoriosa and Senglea. Then, weep.

Must all of Malta's beauty perish? The answer must surely be No – not unless we let current policies continue. What should be done?

The cardinal first step is for the government to exercise the political will to make changes to the way we use and share this tiny land. It surprised me to hear Minister George Pullicino complain about what his profession had done to our country when he, and his ministerial predecessors, have always been in a position to do something about it. While I appreciate that he can have only limited influence over the calibre of architect produced by the Faculty of Architecture, those who graduate to that profession work in a climate and to development rules set by our legislators through the Development Planning Act.



Have he and his Ministerial colleagues the political will to take the following ten steps?

*Ensure that the new Structure Plan for Malta imposes a halt on further construction development outside specified, tightly defined areas. The new Structure Plan must in effect say “so far and no further”. This structure plan must be under-pinned by the force of law.*

*Reject any further building “Outside the Development Zone” (ODZ). The current laissez-faire approach to the ODZ must cease and tough sanctions must be applied to those who transgress them. The MEPA Planning Board and Control Commissions must be bound by the force of law to apply the rules rigidly and to restrict their flexibility to decide issues subjectively.*

*Reduce the rate of approval of development applications by setting and adhering to annual threshold figures for the different types of construction development: hotel beds, housing, restaurants, shops, industrial complexes, etc.*

*Allocate the remaining unbuilt plots of land in development areas in a phased manner to slow down and stabilise development.*

*Actively protect urban conservation areas and impose and apply tight criteria on rural conservation areas.*

*Ensure that the aesthetic merits of a planning application are an integral element of the planning process and that planning permission will not be granted unless aesthetic criteria are met. Re-introduce a recognisably Maltese “grammar” into our vernacular architecture.*

*Up-date and reform the rent laws. This government promised to do so almost two years ago, but has still not taken the first steps to honour this commitment.*

*Introduce a hoarding tax on any properties which still lie empty 12 months after completion. Buildings left uncompleted should attract a daily fine if they are left in shell form for longer than a year after the start of construction.*

*Control the extraction of limestone from our quarries by setting annual limits. Increase the price of stone to reflect more accurately its economic worth as an irreplaceable resource.*

*Introduce minimum thresholds for the re-use of old stone in new developments.*

Must Malta’s beauty perish? Must it become, in the words of Professor Quentin Hughes 35 years ago, “just another blighted area of exploitation”? The solution lies in the hands of our legislators, our planners and our architects.

But the paramount action lies with our government. Sooner or later there must be a government with the courage to acknowledge that further large-scale development is not sustainable if Malta is to remain a tolerable place in which to live and for the canker of uglification to be halted.

**That Time Is Now**



*“The new Structure Plan must in effect say so far and no further”*

*“Ensure that the aesthetic merits of a planning application are an integral element of the planning process and that planning permission will not be granted unless aesthetic criteria are met”*

# The Perils of Non-Planning

## Maurice Caruana Curran

### 1985

It was back in July 1969 that the influential Architectural Review devoted its whole issue to "MALTA, Past, Present, and Future".

Among its contributors were well-known architects and town-planners, like Quentin Hughes, Richard England, James Morris, Peter Richardson, Joe Tonna, J.C. Huntingford and Jan Masser.

In this article I would like to make reference to remarks by Mr Masser in his contribution under the title "THE PERILS OF NON-PLANNING".

Mr Masser, a lecturer of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool – School of Architecture started by saying: "Planning – should be a very high priority in Malta... because the combination of circumstances have given rise to a building boom which has greatly intensified the pressure on land in recent years..."

He pointed out that at the time the number of households increased by 3% but the building of dwellings rose by 18%. Admittedly at the time household sharing (more than one family in the same house) was 14%, but this was reduced to 6%.

This was 16 years ago, and one has to agree that by now this figure has been substantially reduced, and possibly most household sharing today is due to such exigencies as young married couples live with old parents in order to look after them, rather than to any serious shortage of houses.

It is true that there will always be a need for modern homes by people, but unfortunately there seems to be a lack of any serious planning, and thus the perils envisaged by Mr Masser must now be more pressing and real than in 1969.

No survey seems to have been made as to the requirement of houses for the next ten years, nor for the future use of old homes which may be vacated by householders seeking more modern accommodation. Will they be totally pulled down or transformed into pens for goats and sheep? Has any study been so far made as to the possibility of rehabilitating such houses and modernising them?

This exercise has taken place in other countries with much success, and there were not only financial savings, but also the character of the

town, village or street, where these structures existed, was safeguarded.

Mr Masser also referred to new developments. He criticised the haphazard build-up of Bugibba promontory, the creation of ribbon developments, and the mix-up of modern designs along-side buildings of Maltese vernacular architecture. One will wonder at his remarks were he to re-visit the islands today.

The development of buildings in valleys, such as Santa Maria Estate, also came under his criticism, yet despite the warnings and protests from this Association, during the last few years we have seen more valleys destroyed by development. The powers that be, not only did not heed our suggestions, but also ignored the sincere and objective advice of professionals, like Mr Masser, who came to Malta and fell in love with its environment.

More than 15 years have passed without any serious planning, while the very intelligent plans prepared for a number of areas by the Town Planner lent to Malta by the United Nations in the 60s were scrapped by those who think that they know better.

An example is the "scheme" for the San Tumas Peninsula, Marsascala, which envisaged detached and semi-detached premises with two centralised shopping areas. This was discarded and the area has mostly become another series of garages and flats over them, thus only benefiting the owners of land in this sector, since they could squeeze more plots per acre.

The fault of all this lies not only at the door of the present administration. The previous administration took two years to pilot the Town and Country Planning Act through Parliament. It finally passed it a few weeks before the dissolution of the Legislature. It then only needed the signature of the responsible Minister to become law and come into force, but the Minister failed in this duty and did his greatest disservice possible to his country. Malta would have, most probably, been saved the serious damage caused through unplanned development.

**The Town and Country Planning Act has since been repealed!**



Building at San Tumas Point



Building the Hilton tower and the new flats in Birgu

*This publication is sponsored by*



*Central Cigarette Company Limited*

We have great pleasure in sponsoring this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative issue of *Vigilo* and we take this opportunity to congratulate *Din l-Art Helwa* on reaching this milestone in their admirable work in the defence of our nation's cultural heritage.

It is sad, but nonetheless true, to reflect that without the sterling work that *Din l-Art Helwa* has carried out over the last 40 years, much of the cultural heritage of our country would have been lost. It is our belief that organisations such as *Din l-Art Helwa* need the support of the business community as well as that of the Government and the general public.

Although we recognise that we operate in an industry that could be seen as controversial, we aim to be a responsible company in the way in which we operate and interact with society. Such responsibility naturally encompasses helping the local community. Given the depth of cultural heritage in Malta, due to the island's unique history, we felt that we should contribute towards efforts that safeguard this cultural heritage.

This is the reason why, over the years, Central Cigarette Company Ltd has given financial support to a number of organisations in this area and we are proud to have been, and to continue to be, of support to *Din l-Art Helwa*. Central Cigarette Company Ltd is the local subsidiary of British American Tobacco, the second largest international tobacco company in the world, operating in over 180 countries. Wherever British American Tobacco operates, local subsidiaries are at the forefront in helping the local community. In Malta, we have been extremely active in helping local sports organisations in the past and more lately we have been deepening our involvement in the cultural heritage area.

British American Tobacco prides itself on the fact that the company has been present on the island, under one name or another, since 1907. Our history and that of the country are therefore entwined for almost one hundred years. Central Cigarette Company Ltd employs around 130 staff, all of whom are Maltese, and has recently finished a programme of modernisation of its office and factory in Bulebel Industrial Estate in Żejtun. The company operates in the local market and is also involved in the export of British American Tobacco products on behalf of the parent company. We aim to be one of the better employers on the island, in the belief that our employees are one of the greatest assets that the company has.

We wish *Din l-Art Helwa* success in the future and we hope that other members of the business community will support it in its useful work. For our part, we will continue supporting *Din l-Art Helwa* to ensure that future generations of Maltese, and the millions of tourists that visit us, will be able to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of which this country is proud.

