

Stanley Farrugia Randon



Wignacourt Walks

St Paul's Bay



Wignacourt Tower A Brief History

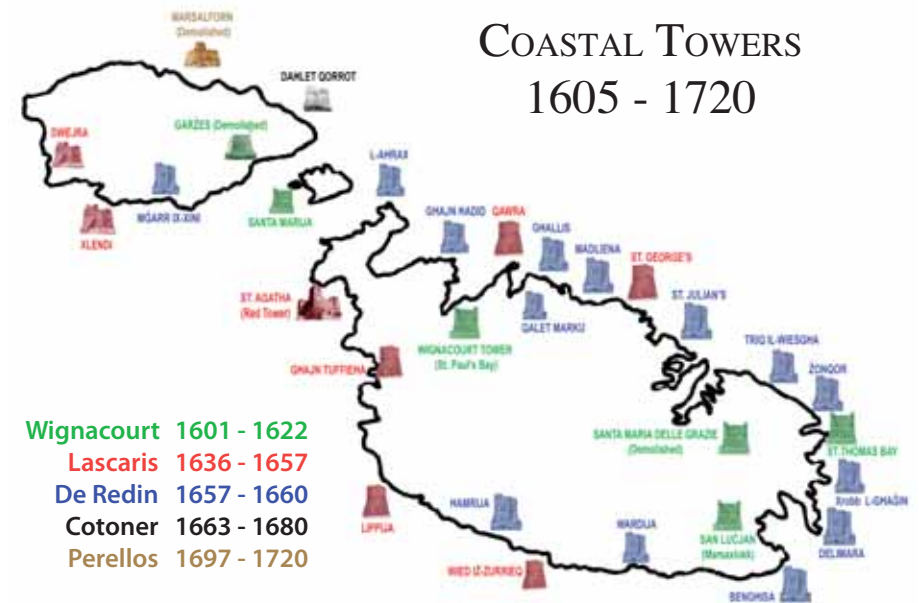


Old drawing of St Paul's Bay by Schellinkx

You are in the oldest standing watchtower of the period of the Knights of St John in Malta. Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622) offered to build towers, at his own expenses, to improve the coastal defence of our islands. The first to be built was in St Paul's Bay in 1610 and was named after St Paul.

On 6 November 1609 Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt called a meeting of the Council of the Order to discuss building this tower and presented a design and model for the tower. One of its aims was to defend vessels entering the bay (*'per sicurezza delle Galere, et altri vasselli amici quando gli conviene fermare in detta cala'*).

The Council approved the plans and the Grand Master offered to erect it at his own expense (*'a offerto di farla fabbricare a spese sue proprie'*), a cost of 6,748 scudi.



Map showing Coastal Towers between 1605 and 1720

The plan of the tower was presumably trusted to the Maltese architect Vittorio Cassar who was of the opinion that it had to be erected where the church of St Paul previously stood.

On 30 November 1609, Wignacourt wrote to the Knight Vincenzo La Marra, the receiver of the Order in Rome, describing the project. He explained to him that he wanted to erect a big tower in the bay of St Paul (*'Cala di San Paulo'*) to overlook friendly and enemy ships. He was of the opinion that in order to control the passage of ships, the best place would be close to the church of St Paul. He wrote that a design with all the measurements of the bay was ready and included the exact position where the tower was to be erected.

The design also included Mistra Bay (*'La Mista'*) which is to be found within St Paul's Bay (*'non ne e dal una all' altra piu distanza che di circa 250 canne'*).

In such a position, he continued, the artillery placed on the roof of the tower would be able to defend Mistra Bay also. The tower had to be square in shape with a base of seven *canne* and be 40 courses high

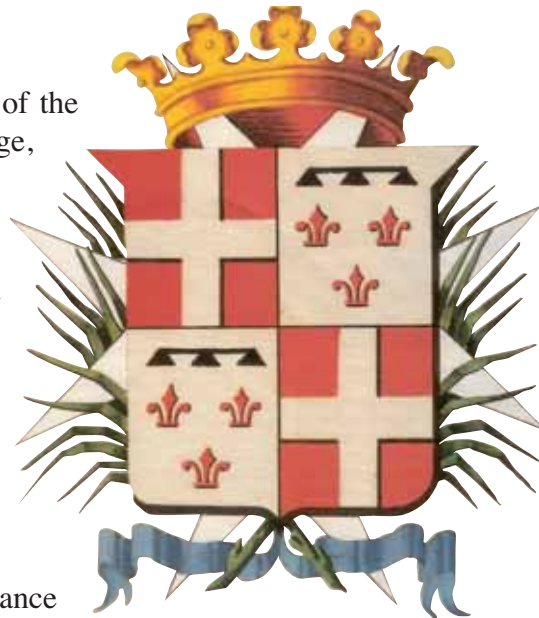


*Grandmaster Wignacourt
by Leonello Spada*

The original main entrance of the tower was through a drawbridge, reached by a staircase of stone, which was eventually removed in the 1960s to make way for the road in front of the tower. The present main entrance at ground floor is therefore not original. The original staircase led to the upper floor from which the individuals in the tower used to descend to the floor below through an opening by use of a rope or ladder. The original entrance and door are still present.

which amount to about five and a half *canne*. With such dimensions the artillery on the roof of the tower would have more than four *canne* of space on each side. These measurements correspond to the dimensions of the tower which was eventually built.

The ceremony for the laying of the first stone was attended by the Grandmaster himself, together with the clergy of Mdina, and was held on 10 February 1610. The ammunition was inserted in the tower in the presence of the Grandmaster.



Coat of Arms of GM Wignacourt



Original main entrance with staircase

Other changes to the original structure include the addition of small rooms as shown by old drawings and photos. A room was attached to the West side of the tower and the façade had at least two other doors opened, one on each side of the staircase. The person in charge of the defence of the tower lived on the upper floor. He had his bed, a place for a fire with its ventilation shaft, a toilet, and the curb of a well from where he obtained fresh water. He also had a small table for his belongings and to write. Timber holes on the walls suggest the existence of a secondary wooden floor supported on beams which was intended to provide sleeping accommodation. The lower floor was accessible from a trap door, now occupied by the spiral staircase, which was used for storage.



Engraving of tower dated 1863

In 1614, only four years after it was built, a strong attack by Turkish fleets was launched. St Paul's Bay was one of the places where the fleets planned to land. However, it seems that at the sight of the tower the fleet decided to enter Mellieha which was not defended at the time. For the first thirty years of its existence, Wignacourt Tower was the only northern defensive outpost, until Fort St Agatha (known as the Red Tower) was built at Mellieha in 1649.

The garrison of Wignacourt Tower, which was commanded by a master bombardier, kept watch for signs of approaching enemy ships. In 1715 a coastal battery was added to the tower to increase its fire power. The tower's armament throughout most of the eighteenth century consisted of two 6-pounder iron cannon, similar to the one deployed on its roof, and three 18-pounder iron cannon placed on the battery at the foot of the tower on its seaward side. In 1770 the tower's garrison was

provided with twelve muskets with bayonets together with five hundred cartridges, two pistols, twelve spontoons, and a sword.

Between 1913 and 1931 the tower was used as a Police Station while between 1937 and 1963 it was occupied by the Post and Telephone Department. In 1967 the government issued a call for tenders for the lease of the Wignacourt Tower. *Din l-Art Helwa* immediately reacted to this by appointing a commission who prepared a report and concluded that the tower should be used for purposes other than commercial and proposed that it be used as a Pauline Museum. The commission also stated that 'if the government was already committed to lease the tower for commercial purposes then certain conditions for its preservation should be laid down'.

Din l-Art Helwa rented the tower in 1970, after the Land Department had issued a notice in the Government Gazette for anyone willing to rent it on condition that it was restored and maintained.

Work started in 1972 under Architect Ray Vassallo, who was also a member of the Association. Other persons working on the project were employees from the firm Peter Cox.



Old Drawing of Tower



Early 19th Century painting attributed to the Schranz family

Vegetation and iron inserts were removed from the outer walls. The parapet of the roof was restored. The turrets were partly demolished and had to be rebuilt, their floors and apertures were replaced. Concrete insertions, including a concrete balcony, were carefully removed and the inside walls were pointed and painted.

When, in 1973, the Council of Europe announced that it would celebrate the Year of Architectural Heritage in 1975, the Council of *Din l-Art Helwa* decided to use its full ability and dedicate most of its funds to complete the restoration of the tower to commemorate this event. The restoration was inaugurated on 10 February 1976 by Dr P. Holland, Minister of Housing and Lands, and had cost the association Lm3000.

The original idea was to use the tower as a Pauline Museum, having as its main theme the coming of St Paul to our islands, but also items revealing the history of the village of St Paul.

In 1982 an agreement was signed between *Din l-Art Helwa* (National Trust of Malta) and the Socio-Cultural Institute of St Paul's Bay and for many years the tower hosted an exhibition of traditional agricultural and fishing implements.



The Promenade along the tower

Under the Development Planning Act of 1992 and the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands, the National Protective Inventory was established. All defensive towers are included as Grade 1 buildings, that is 'Buildings of outstanding architectural or historical interest that shall be preserved in their entirety Any interventions allowed must be directed to their scientific restoration and rehabilitation'. In 1994 a number of restoration works were carried out on the external walls of the tower. Organic growth and highly deteriorated masonry were removed. The pointing of cracks and open joints was carried out with lime mortar. Roof works were also carried out and a waterproofing membrane applied.

In 1997 the National Tourism Organization of Malta (now the Malta Tourism Authority) sponsored *Din l-Art Helwa's* further restoration of the tower. The outer walls of the tower were pointed and blocks of stones which were severely decayed were replaced.

An exhibition of models of the fortifications around Malta was prepared by Dr Stephen C. Spiteri, currently Superintendent of Fortifications at the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, and opened

in 1998. Reproductions of amenities, which the occupants of the tower would have used, were placed on the second floor.

Soon after, the local council paved the surroundings of the tower and also flood-lit its outer walls. Benches were put up and this made the surrounding area a popular place for recreation especially during the warm summer nights.

In 2003 Bank of Valletta donated a sum of money to carry out further refurbishments and modernisation of the exhibits. The lighting system was changed and security measures installed.

To get to Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay take bus 45, 48 or 58 from Valletta and stop near the office of the Local Council which is also quite close to the Parish Church. The road downhill on your right will lead to the tower. Other buses operate from Sliema.

Acknowledgements

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Message from Mayor, San Pawl il-Bahar

Perit Graziella Galea

B.E.&A. (Hons), M.Sc. (Road Eng.), A.&C.E.

San Pawl il-Bahar, like many other localities around Malta and Gozo, is full of interesting heritage. One of the important aspects which the San Pawl il-Bahar Local Council caters for is precisely that of ensuring that our residents and visitors, Maltese and foreigners alike, become aware of the importance of the historical aspect of this locality and preserve and protect it for our descendants.

There is no doubt that one of the most effective ways of getting to know a place is by walking through it coming in direct contact with the different features that constitute the archaeology and architecture of that place. When we rush through a locality, often using the modern means of transport, there is this tendency of missing out on what is of great local, and sometimes international, importance.

As the Mayor of the locality, together with the other council members, I full heartedly support initiatives that can be used to create a better awareness of the historical importance of this locality, such as this publication which highlights two walks that one could follow in order to better understand some of the important historical features of San Pawl il-Bahar.

The Wignacourt Tower is one such feature which stands out for its architectural, and historical importance, in San Pawl il-Bahar. Many pass by the tower without even realising its uniqueness. Others pass by, without ever thinking of having a look at what is found inside this tower.

The publication definitely brings about an appetite of wanting to know and discovering more about the locality. I would like to thank Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon, and *Din l-Art Helwa*, for this publication, and hope that there will be further such collaboration and publications.

Finally, I hope that, tourists and locals, permanent or seasonal, will make good use of this publication and hold at heart the great heritage found in this locality. We can and should further realise the potential of San Pawl il-Bahar and treasure it together with all its important features.



Approx. duration 1 hr

A Tour of Wignacourt Tower

Ground Floor

The exhibition on the ground floor helps the visitor discover the major fortifications around our islands. When the Order of St John came to Malta in 1530, they found three sets of old fortifications: a Castle in Birgu (later developed into Fort St Angelo) popularly credited to the Arabs who occupied our islands in 870AD, Mdina which was called so by the Arabs who fortified the city, and a medieval inland castle now known as the Gozo Citadel.

In 1552 during the magistracy of Grand Master D'Homedes two forts were built to defend the harbours. The first was Fort St Elmo sited at the tip of the Sceberras Peninsula (later named Valletta), and Fort St Michael on the Isola peninsula (later known as Senglea).



Wignacourt Tower

After the unsuccessful Turkish siege of 1565 the knights set about rebuilding the razed fortifications and Grand Master La Valette founded the fortified city of Valletta on the top of the Sceberras peninsula. The first stone was laid on 28 March 1566. In the 17th century it was decided to defend Valletta from the land front and Floriana Lines, designed by the Italian engineer Floriani, were initiated in 1635 during the magistracy of Grand Master Antoine de Paule. A major addition to Floriani's original plan was the construction of the Crowned Hornworks, designed in 1671 and completed in 1721 to occupy the high grounds to the left of the Floriana front.

In 1638 a military engineer Vincenzo Maculano da Firenzuola designed a line of fortifications to protect Birgu and Senglea from their surrounding heights, the Margherita Lines. Their construction started that same year but they were not completed until 1736. Fortifications linking Birgu to Senglea started in 1670 during the reign of Grand Master Nicholas Cotoner and are called the Cottonera Lines. The Cottonera lines enclose within them the Margherita Lines.

In 1670 the knight Giovanni Francesco Ricasoli financed the construction of Fort Ricasoli to fortify the Rinella peninsula to protect the eastern flanks of Valletta. In order to safeguard the western sides of the city, in 1723 Grand Master Antoine de Vilhena financed the construction of Fort Manoel on the small island inside the Marsamxett harbour (later known as Manoel Island).

Ground Floor of Tower



In the first half of the 18th century the Order of St John turned its attention to the island of Gozo where the Castello remained its only refuge for inhabitants. In 1749 the French Knight Jacques Francois de Chambray offered to finance a fort at Mgarr, Gozo's only secure harbour facing Malta. Fort Chambray was designed as a fortified city to protect the Gozitans.

Although of strategic value, a strip of land projecting from the north-west and almost closing the entrance to Marsamxett harbour remained unfortified. It was not until 1792 that Fort Tigné was constructed on this point and was named after the Baliff Tigné who contributed towards its cost, although it was Grand Master De Rohan who contributed to the major expenses.

The Order of St John was forced to leave the islands in 1798 when the French, under Napoleon Bonaparte, took over. Their stay in Malta lasted only two years as, in 1800, Britain assumed the role of defending Malta. In 1815 they began to construct fortifications running diagonally across the



Upper Floor of the Tower

island between Bingemma Heights and the heights above St George's Bay, later called the Victoria Lines. In the second half of the 19th century four forts were constructed along the lines; Fort Bingemma on the west, Mosta Fort in the centre, and Fort Madalena and Fort Pembroke on the east.

In 1844 works started to convert the centre of the Margherita Lines into Fort Verdala and the fort was linked to the rear of two of the bastions of the Cottonera Lines by the St Clements Retrenchment. In 1871 the Corradino Lines were constructed on the Heights of Corradino which lie between the end of Margherita and Cottonera Lines and the Crowned Hornwork of Floriana Lines.

Until World War II batteries and forts were constructed but modern warfare rendered such fortifications obsolete.

First Floor

This floor illustrates the various attempts to defend the coast of our islands by relatively smaller structures such as forts, towers, batteries, redoubts and entrenchments. A number of towers were erected by the Order of St John and many examples still exist. In 1870 the British began an ambitious task of protecting the coasts with modern defence forts. Already existing coastal defences were strengthened with new guns and casemates. Despite all these efforts, by the end of the 19th century, all the coastal defences erected by the Order of St John and the British became obsolete due to advances in war technology.



The kitchen



The bed

This barrel-vaulted floor also illustrates the environment in which people manning the defences of the islands lived and still retains many of the original features. A *focolare*, or small fire place was built into the wall with its ventilation shaft opening in the parapet on the roof. This served as a cooking place as well as a source of heat to warm up the place during the winter months. A stone *kenur* was used for cooking. There is also the place for the *gabinetto* or latrine.

Original wooden door



The latrine

The stout wooden door is still the original and was the main entrance to the tower before the outside stairway was demolished. A wooden bridge linked the door to the stairway and was raised by the guards in the tower by employing the *viravaux* mechanism. This mechanism was one of the four various types of drawbridge employed by the knights in Maltese fortifications. Situated inside the entrance passage way, it consisted of two crank handles of wood reinforced with metal. Parts of this can still be seen to the right of



The well



Table used by soldiers

the door. These were attached to ropes which were passed over bronze wheels set in the wall above the doorway. The ropes passed through holes above the door and were then attached to the wooden platform outside. The holes can still be observed, one on each side above the door. The counterweight mechanism passed through the floor in the passageway down to the ground floor. In fact before leaving the tower from the door in the ground floor, the visitor can observe the holes through which the chains of the counterweight mechanism passed.

Water was drawn up through a shaft from a well or *pozzo* situated beneath the tower. The well was filled by rainwater collected from the roof. The well shaft reached up to the roof to serve also the sentinels there. A trap door, now occupied by the spiral staircase, gave access to the ground floor which was used only for storage purposes. The bed allowed the garrison to rest when the levels of alert were low and the table served as a desk for paperwork.

The tower's small garrison consisted of a *capomastro* (or master bombardier) and two or three assistants. In times of invasion the tower was assisted by gunners to man the two 6-pdr and the three 18-pdr iron

cannon, the latter mounted on the battery outside the tower on its seaward side. This battery was added in 1715. Apart from cannon the tower was equipped with 12 flint-lock muskets fitted with bayonets, 500 *scartocci* (paper musket ball-cartridges), 2 flint-lock pistols, 12 spontoons and halberds, and a sword. Cannon ammunition stored in the tower in 1785 consisted of 112 (8-pdr) and 281 (18-pdr) round shot, and 30 (8-pdr) and 64 (18-pdr) *sacchetti di mitraglia* (grapeshot cartridges), together with a quantity of *polvere* (gunpowder).

Roof



View from the Roof

One turret on the roof is used to exhibit old photos of the tower while the other turret is used to inform visitors about the life of Grandmaster Wignacourt. While today's visitor may enjoy the spectacular views, in times past it was from here that soldiers manning the tower secured the island against the threat of sea-borne attack. Throughout most of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, Malta and Gozo were plagued by corsair raids as the Mediterranean sea was infested by pirates. Many an inhabitant was carried off into slavery by the Turks during the course of a rapid unannounced attack even though every effort was made by the local militias to watch and guard the islands' shores. Then, unlike today, the

northern part of Malta was relatively uninhabited and St Paul's Bay was particularly prone to corsair attacks. The main duty of the garrison in the tower was to keep watch of signs of enemy attack. A pre-arranged system of alarm signals, making use of flags and smoke by day, and fire and petards by night, was employed to relay messages from one watch-post to the next – all the way to Mdina and Valletta.

On the left-hand side of the bay is the prominent building of Selmun Palace which was built in the mid-18th century mostly as a retreat house. It also served as a fortified refuge in case of an enemy attack. To the left of the islet of St Paul, is the Mistra Battery, built in the beginning of the 18th century. This served to prevent an enemy fleet from disembarking in Mistra Bay. In front is the islet of St Paul on which a statue of the Saint was erected in 1845. The statue was restored recently by *Din l-Art Helwa*. The Qawra Tower can be seen on the right-hand side of the view.

We can now leave the tower and choose the direction we want to take.



Cannon on roof

Walk No. 1 (About 4 kilometers)

To the Salina Catacombs via Bugibba / Qawra Promenade

On leaving the tower, turn left down the road. As you approach the sea notice the presence of a number of rock-cut pools (called *banjijiet ta' l-ghazzenin*, literally meaning 'pools for lazy persons'). These must have formed part of a Roman Bath Complex with the larger baths closest to the tower being used by men and the smaller ones being used by women. If you continue walking along the sea you will come to a small inlet called fisherman's harbour (referred to as *il-Menqa* by the locals) where you could still admire some of the traditional multicoloured fishing boats. The Roman baths extended to this site.



Some of the Rock-cut Pools

The Fisherman's Harbour





As you leave the old fisherman's harbour to your left you can see the Gillieru Restaurant which is very popular for its fine seafood. This area is known as '*tal-Gillieru*' as the origins of this restaurant and hotel date back to the turn of the last century (early 1900's).

Walk up the hill towards the chapel located in the middle of the square. This chapel is dedicated to the Shipwreck of St Paul at St Paul's Bay. It is a national shrine and is situated at the site where many believe that the saint and his companions were welcomed by the Maltese and a large fire was lit. In fact the church is also known as *Tal-Huġġieġa* meaning 'huge fire'. It is not known when the first church was built on this site or even in this area, but according to local tradition, it was built not too long after the shipwreck. It may well be that the bay became known as St Paul's Bay because of this chapel.

The order of St John wanted to increase the Pauline Heritage on the islands in order to increase their popularity among the inhabitants, although Grandmaster Wignacourt had a genuine love towards the saint. At the time the only chapel existing in the area was close to the site where today stands the Wignacourt Tower. On 6 November 1609 Grand Master



Old photo of Gillieru building and chapel



The Chapel of St Paul's Shipwreck

Alof de Wignacourt called a meeting of the Council of the Order to erect a number of watch towers, one of which was to be in St Paul's Bay. The plan was presumably trusted to the Maltese architect Vittorio Cassar who was of the opinion that it had to be erected where the church of St Paul used to stand. When the tower was built it was decided to erect a replacement church, dedicated to the saint, in another place nearby. A ceremony was therefore held, attended by the Grandmaster and Bishop Tommaso Gargallo, during which a stone was removed from the old church. The Bishop celebrated holy mass for the last time on the altar and, after the singing of the *Te Deum*, he removed one of the slabs from the altar and, carrying it in procession, directed the cortege. A procession was then held during which this stone was transported to the site of the new church where it stands today. After it was blessed and prayers were said, it was used as the first stone of the new church. Under it coins and medals were buried by the Bishop and Grandmaster.



If you happen to be passing by while the chapel is open, walk in and admire the paintings. A large painting of the *Miracle of the Viper* (fig.1) depicts St Paul shedding off the viper to the awe of bystanders. Note that one of the inhabitants is on his knees looking at the base of the fire in which the figure of a face can be clearly seen (fig. 2). Grandmaster Wignacourt commissioned the painting himself and is depicted in it. The caricature-like portrait of an attendant may well represent the artist himself. The church has another pair of paintings depicting *St Paul curing Publius' Father* (fig. 3) and the *Meeting of St Paul with the Native Inhabitants* (fig. 4) again, at the base of the fire, a face has been depicted by the artist. All three paintings are Caravaggesque in style.





Up to 1970 they had been attributed to Lionello Spada (1576-1662) whose hypothetical relationship with Caravaggio has been seriously questioned. Other art critics attributed the paintings to Cassarino on purely stylistic criteria.

On the right side of the chapel note the six marble inscriptions from the Acts of the Apostles describing the work of St Paul in our islands. These were presented in Maltese, English, Italian, French, Spanish and German. Eight medallions in bronze also embellish the portico and show the work of the Apostle in our islands. Two roundels in bronze were fixed to the facade of the chapel. They depict the Shipwreck, the Miracle of the Viper, the Curing of the father of Publius, the Episcopal



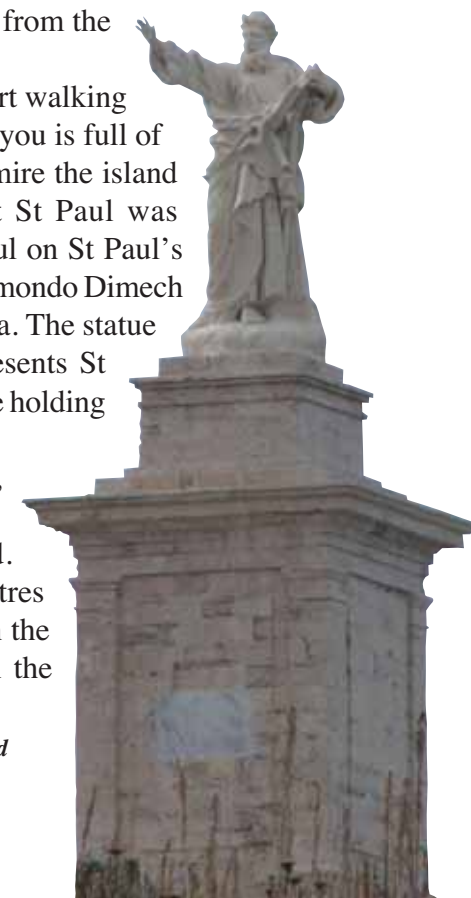
St Paul's Island – Photo courtesy of Aron Tanti

Consecration of Publius, the Apostolic work of St Paul in the Grotto and the Departure of St Paul from the Island.

Keep to the left of the chapel and start walking on the promenade. Bugibba Bay below you is full of boats in summer. Opposite you can admire the island of St Paul where tradition holds that St Paul was shipwrecked. The large statue of St Paul on St Paul's Island is the work of two sculptors, Sigismondo Dimech of Valletta and Salvatore Dimech of Lija. The statue alone is about 4 metres high and represents St Paul holding a book in his left hand while holding high the right one.

At his feet lies the viper which, according to the Acts of the Apostles, came out of the fire and bit his hand. The statue stands on a platform 8.3 metres high, the work of Francesco Spiteri. On the platform a marble slab was fitted with the following words:

Statue of St Paul on St Paul's Island



‘To the Apostle St Paul, Master and Doctor of the Church of all People, Father and Patron of the Maltese. This statue is the same place where he was shipwrecked - together with 275 others - on this island where he had to come and teach the faith of Christ, as his friend St Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles Cap.XXVII. Salvatore Borg, in memory of this event - in the year 1845 - worked hard for its erection’.

Now continue walking along the promenade until you come close to the jetty. On your left hand side, you may observe a small area of shallow squared salt pans cut in the rock. On close examination they consist of an ingenious system of canals, cubicles and reservoirs. If you happen to be passing by during sunset stop and admire the marvels of nature. The sky transforms itself into a rainbow of colours which no artist will manage to replicate.

For the next 600 metres or so enjoy the walk along the sea front. At one point you will meet a number of shops and lidos which are busy during the summer months but quiet or closed during winter.

After you pass in front of the New Dolmen Hotel you will discover another area of historical importance. You may want to visit the remains of a Stone Age temple within the precincts of the hotel but you will need to pass through the lobby. The spiral design on one of the stones has



The Qawra Entrenchment

been interpreted as referring to continuity of life after death as a spiral form denotes infinity.

During the second half of the 18th century, the Knights decided to add a long defensive line in this area as the shoreline was relatively exposed and easily approachable from the sea, particularly during the calm summer months. Little remains nowadays of the Qawra entrenchment, though most of it lies buried beneath the promenade. One particular section is still visible above road level and reveals a solid wall built of regular courses of drafted masonry with huge blocks of about 40cm in height. The wall was served by a firing banquette and the bastions had cuttings in the flanks.

Before arriving to the small tower which is now visible in front of you, a beach-post which was constructed during WWII to resist any attempt by the enemy to land on the coasts of Malta may be seen close to the shore. The post is built of concrete and has a square plan. The entrance was through a



Bugibba Salt Pans



Temple remains in the New Dolmen Hotel



World War II Beach-post

small hatch secured with an armoured door. It is approximately 4.5m high and divided internally into two floors. The upper floor has horizontal slit windows which originally had wooden sliding shutters.

A detachment of about seven men, armed with small arms such as machine guns and rifles, served within such posts. The lower floor mainly served as a rest room for the crew, but also had small embrasures in the walls for defense firing. On the roof of the post is a square observation turret, originally with a metal hatch on top. Its walls are riddled with aerial machine gun fire and shrapnel holes.

The next historical place of interest is the tower which is known by the natives as Fra Ben Tower. It was built in 1637 during the reign of Grandmaster Lascaris and consists of two floors. A coastal battery was built in front of it in 1715. It is presently used as a restaurant and in order to see it you have to pass from the pool area. This tower is much smaller in size than the Wignacourt Tower as its purpose was not to defend any attack coming from the sea but only as a watchtower to relay warnings of any seaward attacks to the nearest garrison.

Leave the tower and continue walking along the promenade. To your left, across the sea, you will easily sight another small tower called Ghallis Tower. This tower was built by Grand Master De Redin and was

one of thirteen towers built by this Grandmaster. This tower was also restored and is being maintained by *Din l-Art Helwa*.

Once again you will now walk past hotels, restaurants and other places of entertainment present on each side of the road. At one point the road bifurcates. Keep to your left until you encounter a steep but short downhill called *Triq Tal-Boxxla*. Then turn right into *Triq tax-Xtut* as from here you will be able to see Salina Bay from above.

The salt pans in this bay were constructed in the 1560s by Grand Master La Valette, obviously for the production of salt. It was a success and salt was also exported. The salt was originally collected by galleys which sailed into a canal running alongside the salt pans.



The Fra Ben Tower



Salina Salt Pans as seen from Triq Tax-Xtut

Continue roaming along *Triq tax-Xtut* and go uphill along *Triq il-Melħ* (appropriately named because *melħ* means ‘salt’) so you will again find yourself walking along the original path. At one point the road bifurcates again. Keep to your left as this downhill will lead you to Kennedy Grove. This is a popular site for camping and picnics. As the name implies the grove was named in the memory of President Kennedy of the United States of America who was assassinated in 1963. The monument houses a globe in the form of a round circle resting on plinths looking towards America.

The two fountains present in the park are powered by small engine rooms constructed with irregular stones used also for building rubble walls. These are called *girna* in Maltese and are a replica of rooms erected to meet the needs of farmers and herdsmen. The stones are left unplastered. Internally the ceiling is shaped like a dome while the external wall is usually circular. Its dome-shaped ceiling is constructed by corbelling, that is stepping one stone upon another so that each stone extends slightly beyond the one beneath it.



The Kennedy Memorial

Continue walking along the original pathway and you will end up walking along the sea front of Salina Bay. On your right hand side, on the other side of the road, you will see an uphill. Carefully cross the road to enter it. After a few metres you will see on your left a



The Girna

road called *Triq Katacombi* with a chapel dedicated to the Annunciation. It is not known exactly when it was built but it is mentioned in documents dated during the early 17th century. During the end of the 18th century the chapel was in danger of collapse and its walls were buttressed. The present titular painting was done by Envin Cremona. It is cared for by the Franciscan Conventual fathers.

At this point you may want to venture across ploughed fields situated



to the right of the chapel to discover the Salina catacombs which are an evolution from the underground rock hewn Punic examples seen in Xemxija in Walk Two. These burial sites were probably cut into a disused hard-stone quarry around the turn of the 1st century AD.

Although the Salina catacombs are small they possess all the characteristics associated with these types of burials. The architectural types of burials which may be observed in this site include floor burials, loculi, the arcosolium, the

The Annunciation Chapel, Salina



The Salina Catacombs



Table and Tricladium at Salina Catacombs

canopied type, and the circular table with tricladium. It is not the aim of this booklet to explain in detail the different forms of burial types but a special mention should be given to the latter one. The table and tricladium (dining hall) is hewn out of live rock and is a typical feature of Maltese catacombs. The idea originates from the agape table and conveys the message that the catacomb is the house of the dead.

After admiring the catacombs, go back to the Annunciation Chapel and turn right, back to the main road close to the sea. If you turn right and walk along the sea until you reach the junction of the first and second salt pan, you will see on your right hand side the Ximenes Redoubt. This was built in 1715 by Grand Master Ximenes. There was another redoubt (now demolished) on the opposite side of the bay.

Your first walk stops here. Although you have walked along a small part of Malta's coast, you had the opportunity of discovering sites which offer snapshots of different eras of Malta's rich history.



Ximenes Redoubt

Walk No. 2
(About 3 kilometers, excluding the Xemxija Heritage Trail)

To Mistra Bay via Xemxija

When leaving the Wignacourt Tower, enter the street opposite the tower (*Triq it-Torri*). At the end of it turn right into St Paul's Street (*Triq San Pawl*). After walking a few metres you will find yourself in front of the parish church of St Paul's Bay dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. The three statues on the outside are dedicated to St Francis, St Paul and Pope Leo XII. Its first stone was laid in 1902 thanks to Marquise Anna Bugeja who offered the land and expressed her wish to dedicate the church to Our Lady of Sorrows. The architect was E. Galizia but the church was eventually enlarged to satisfy the needs of the growing community. The titular painting dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, the Presentation of Our Lord, the Burial of Our Lord, St Paul and St Anthony are all works of Giuseppe Calì who was also commissioned by Anna Bugeja. The titular statue is believed to be the work of Karmnu Mallia.

In 1999 a set of 15 stained glass windows added to the beauty and spirituality of its interior. Behind the church, and in fact overlooking the Wignacourt Tower, is a friary of the Franciscan Fathers.



The Parish Church

San Pawl il-Bahar



Din l-Art Helwa

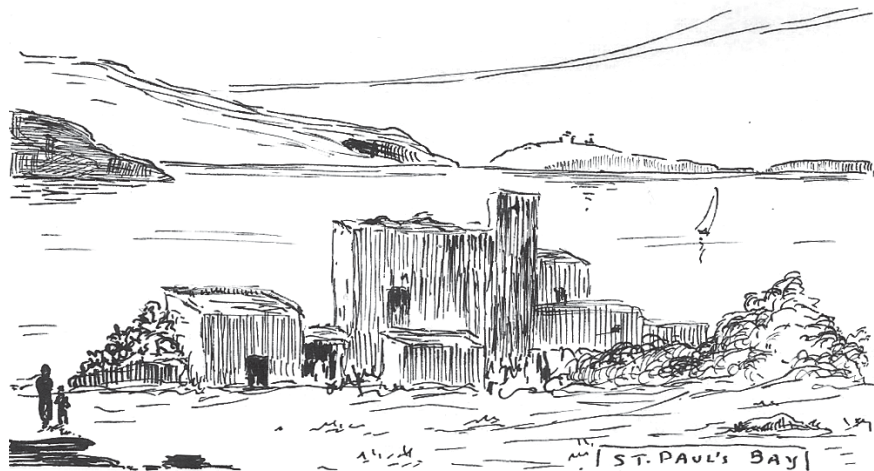


When leaving the parish church, turn to your right and continue the same direction as before. After some 100 metres, on your left hand side, you will see a Chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Built between 1854 and 1855, it served the needs of a small community of noble families during the summer months. It was enlarged during the early years of the 20th century and is now run by the Franciscan fathers.



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Chapel

On leaving the chapel, turn into the first road on your right hand side. This downhill curved road (*Triq it-Tonn*) will take you to a 14th -15th century tower known as *Ta' Tabibuha* which was used by the local militia to guard the bay before Wignacourt Tower was built., The tower was later converted to a farmhouse and was probably one of the first inhabited buildings in the North following



*A sketch in ink of Tabibuha Tower dated early 20th century
(by Dr George Zammit, signed 'Lucas')*

the construction of Wignacourt Tower. The construction of the latter tower encouraged people to venture here and try to make a living in the northern part of the island. The Tabibuha tower is composed of a single room on each floor, linked internally by removable ladders. A turret also existed. The rest of the structure is composed of a set of rooms that were built in the 17th century. Further modifications were made in the early 20th century. Unfortunately these latest additions hide the tower completely when coming down the road.

Continuing in the original direction, the road starts downhill and you will end up in an area called *Tal-Veċċa*. At the start of the promenade look left and you notice a fountain adorned with a small statue of St Paul. This is known as the *Għajn Rażul* fountain. The word *Għajn* means spring while the word *Rażul* is an Arabic common personal name. This area in St Pauls Bay is in fact also referred to as *Rażun* which means belonging to Razul. Today we find a Latin inscription saying:

Omnes Gentes
Venient, et
Glorificabunt Nomen Tuum Psl 85
Anno DNI MDCCXXV



Għajn Rażul Fountain



Old photo of Redoubt at id-Dellija



Three Coat of Arms

In translation the inscription says: ‘All the people will come and praise your name Psalm 85, AD 1725’.

To commemorate the Pauline year in 2009, *Din l-Art Helwa* decided to restore this important monument. The St Paul’s Bay local council agreed to contribute to half of the costs.

Now keep to the right and keep walking along the promenade. After going downhill, the promenade levels out. You can see three coat-of-arms with an inscription underneath. These are copies of what was present on a redoubt built in 1715. The building was inhabited in the 1900s but was removed when the road was widened. It is referred to as ‘*Id-Dellija*’ (meaning shady) and another redoubt called *Xemxija* (meaning sunny) redoubt existed on the opposite side of the bay presently a commercial outlet.

From left to right, the coat-of-arms are of Grandmaster Perellos, during whose reign the battery was erected, the Order of St John and the Langue of France representing Verdome who was the architect.

At this point you may want to sit down on one of the benches before continuing your walk uphill. When the road along the promenade starts uphill, you may choose to visit the *Xemxija* Heritage Trail. This will



The Apiary



Cave Dwelling

prolong your walk considerably and most of the road is rough. However there are many interesting things to see and it may take you 2 hours to complete this Heritage Trail alone. If you decide to start it, turn into the first street on the left after going uphill. This street (*Triq ir-Ridott*) is steep and is in the form of a C. When you arrive at its steepest point there is a Punic-Roman pathway with a sign 'Heritage Trail'. This pathway will lead you among rubble walls to enjoy the countryside and take some fresh air away from the traffic. You will find large vertical prehistoric stones called megaliths, apiaries where bees are kept for



Punic Tomb



Church of St Joseph the Worker

honey production, caves used for dwelling but possibly used before as burial places, remains of a Neolithic temple and tombs, Punic tombs, a prehistoric granary, a World War II pillbox, Roman Baths which were converted into dwelling places, a traditional farmhouse and examples of the enigmatic cart ruts. At the end of this interesting Heritage Trail you will end up close to the Mistra Gate which is located just before you descend towards Mistra Valley. You will meet this gate even though you choose not to explore the Xemxija Heritage Trail and so the history of this gate is described below.

If you choose not to visit the heritage trail, continue uphill along the sea side. At the top of this hill you will see on your right hand side a church dedicated to St Joseph the Worker. A chapel was built on this site in 1935 but a larger one was built in 1959 to serve the expanding population. The foundations were however deemed to be unsound and a new church with stronger foundations was built and consecrated in 2000. A friary exists behind the church. It is run by the Franciscan Fathers.

Mistra Gate



After leaving the Xemxija Church, turn right and continue your walk downhill. At the end of the hill, on your left, you will see Mistra Gate.

This historical gateway is closely connected with the history of the *Monte di Redenzione degli Schiavi* since it was the main gateway to the estates which belonged to the foundation set up by Grand Master Wignacourt in 1607. The aim of the foundation was to earn money for the redemption of slaves. The foundation's coat of arms is three loafs of bread surmounted by the letter 'R' for *Redenzione*. Grand Master Pinto who ruled from 1741 to 1773 must have had some connection with the gateway since his coat-of-arms appears above that of the *Redenzione*. The two small coat-of-arms at the side of the gate belong to two Bali namely Balì Claudius de Montagnae de Lafeuliere and Balì Carlo Maria Olgiati. *Din l-Art Helwa* restored the gateway in 1998.

You may now proceed down to the valley by passing under the bridge and along a road flanked by fields on your left and reeds on your right. At the end of this road you will find yourself in the picturesque Mistra Bay. Continue walking to the left of the bay and up the hill towards Mistra Battery.

When on 30 November 1609, Wignacourt wrote to the Knight Vincenzo La Marra, the receiver of the Order in Rome, describing the project to erect the Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay, he explained to

him that he wanted to erect a big tower in the bay of St Paul ('*Cala di San Paulo*') to overlook friendly and enemy ships he was of the opinion that in order to control the passage of ships, the best place would be close to the church of St Paul. He wrote that a design with all the measurements of the bay was ready and included the exact position where the tower was to be erected. The design included St Paul's Bay as well as Mistra Bay ('*La Mista*') which is to be found in the former bay and was not far away ('*non ne e dal una all' altra piu distanza che di circa 250 canne*'). In such a position, he continued, the artillery placed on the roof of the tower would be able to defend also Mistra Bay.

It was however clear that after the repeated attacks of the Turkish fleets from the sea, Mistra Bay was not protected sufficiently by the



Pen & Ink detail of Mistra Gate by Cedric Galea Pirotta



Detail of Coat of Arms of Grandmaster Pinto on Mistra Battery

Wignacourt tower. Besides, the bay provided an excellent shelter to enemy ships and so it was felt necessary to build another defensive structure overlooking the bay. Although the building of a battery was mentioned in the report prepared by the commissioners of fortifications Fontet and D'Arginy, it seems that this battery was not built in 1714. In fact Maigret's report written in 1716 does not mention this battery. Probably some years later a semi-circular gun battery was constructed but it was not before the Grandmastership of Pinto that the block-houses were constructed. Probably the battery was built in 1761 on the insistence of the military engineer Bourlamaque. During this time there was a small revival in the building of new coastal fortifications. These were

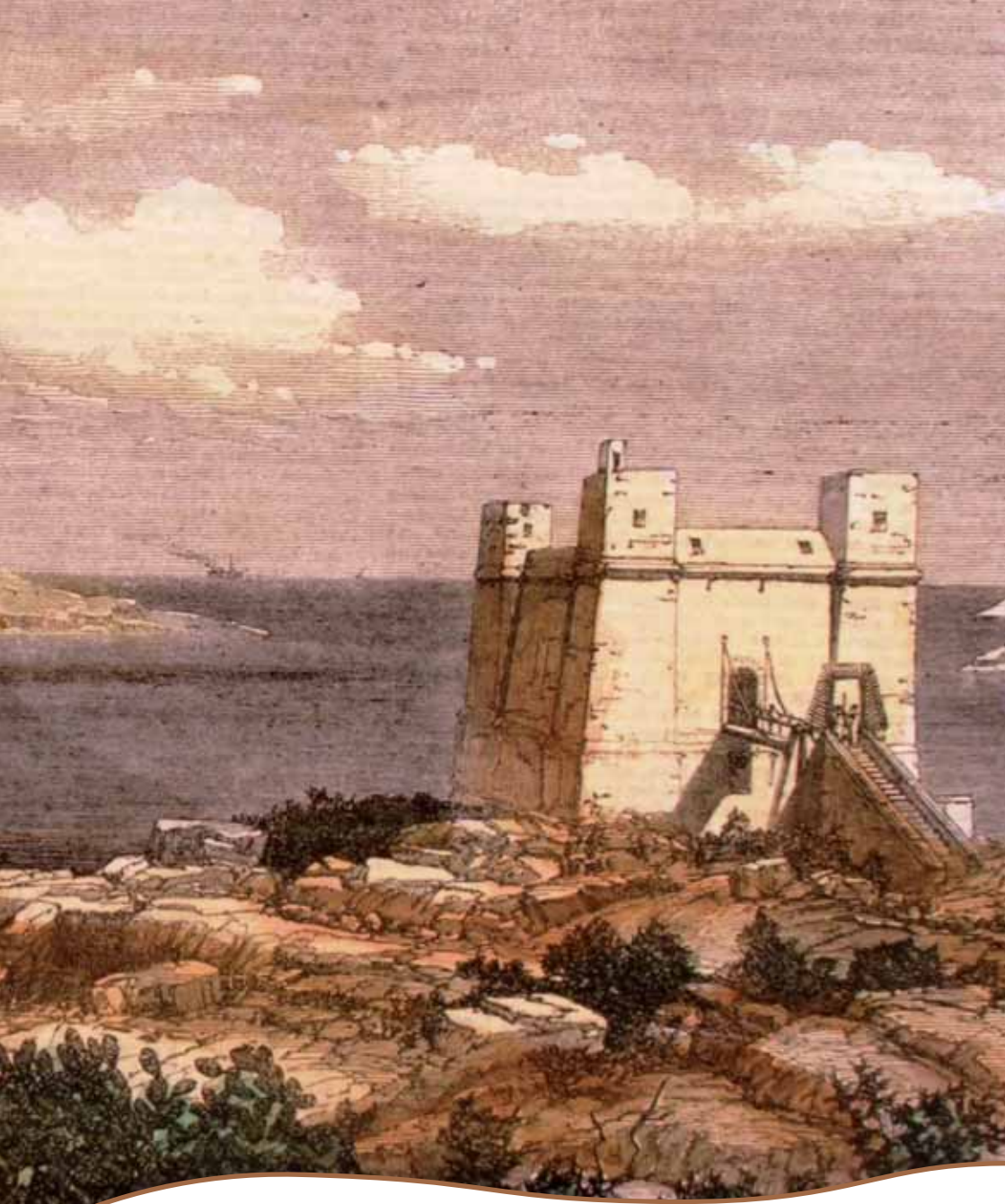
the coastal entrenchments. Bourlamaque also emphasized the building of new coastal batteries and Mistra Battery seems to be one of them. It complements the battery built in circa 1715 in front of the Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay. Till this date the battery still has the Coat of Arms of Grandmaster Pinto. In 1770 it was armed with just one 8pdr gun however in 1785 there were no guns whatsoever.

You have now completed the walk. Although you have only seen a fraction of our islands' history and culture, this walk gave you a taste of our prehistory, our religious culture and methods of defence used against Turkish invasions during the period of the Knights.

If you return to the main road you can take the bus to St Paul's Bay or to Valletta, on the left hand side of the road.



Mistra Battery



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