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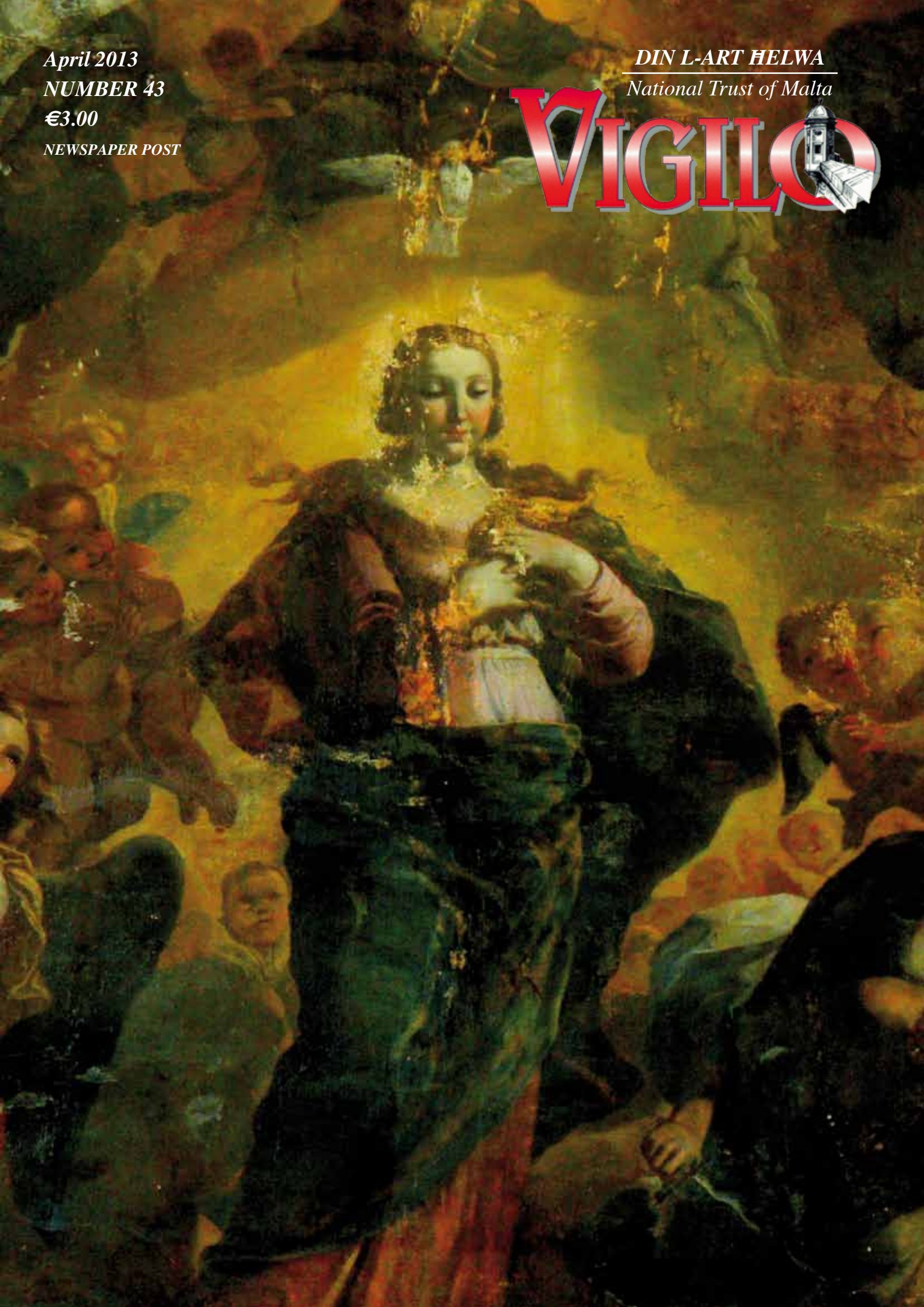
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NEWSPAPER POST

DIN L-ART HELWA

National Trust of Malta

VIGILO



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

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

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



Din l-Art Helwa

**The views expressed in
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those of
*Din l-Art Helwa***

Din l-Art Helwa
has reciprocal membership with:

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

The National Trust for Scotland

The Barbados National Trust

The National Trust of Australia

*The Gelderland Trust for
Historic Houses*

The Gelderland 'Nature Trust'

Din l-Art Helwa
is a member of:

ICOMOS - Malta

Europa Nostra

*The International National Trusts
Organisation (INTO)*

*The National Federation of
NGOs of Malta*

*The Heritage Parks
Federation*

Qantara

*Future of Religious Heritage
Association*

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Detail from one of the side altars at Our Lady of Victory Church



FRONT COVER

Mattia Preti's
Immacolata
at Sarrja Church

funds are needed for its
restoration



BACK COVER

Mattia Preti's
St Sebastian
at Sarrja Church

restoration sponsored by
MIA Plc



Time for Heritage to Come Into Its Own

Simone Mizzi

Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa



DLH Foundation Day, 16 July 1965

We are living in the interesting times that come after every general election, hopeful that culture and the environment will remain foremost in the minds of our new administration as it settles in to begin enacting its programmes and establish its priorities. The sweeping mandate given to the new government is doubly significant as it brings with it not just the onerous responsibility for the fulfilment of a wide and all-embracing manifesto, but also a great opportunity to put an end to many long-outstanding issues that impact on our environment and our cultural heritage.

Now we extend our good wishes to those who have been elected to govern and, in particular, to those who will be responsible for our sphere of activity and we are satisfied with the identification of the cultural sector as being worthy of its own Parliamentary Secretariat within the Tourism and Culture Ministry. With its ever-increasing contribution to our economy through tourism and potential job creation, and above all to our unique identity as a nation, we are confident the sector will continue to be given the recognition it very much deserves.

Within the culture portfolio of ministerial responsibilities we are particularly excited to see that restoration and the National Archives have been identified as sectors for activity, as both were selected through the DLH opinion poll for Cultural Heritage and the Environment as needing much by way of resources. With a national budget about to be voted in, *Din l-Art Helwa* will work to take its ideas through to its new advocates, and certainly looks forward to remaining, as it always has done, a main contributor to the search for solutions.

While reflecting on the role of an NGO such as DLH at this moment, I cannot help but return to our roots and look back

*opposite top:
St Anthony's Battery
before and after restoration*

*opposite bottom:
Restored bastions in Valletta
overlooking massive over-development
at Tigne Point*

*The DLH and HSBC
National Heritage Map
Painted by Kenneth Zammit Tabona and
distributed to 15,000 schoolchildren*

on what we have achieved for heritage and nature protection, both as a nation and as an organisation that has held to its course since 1965. In a way, this article – written for inclusion in *Vigilo* and built on my AGM address of 23 February – may serve as a memory frame to many newcomers to the scene, to new DLH members, new volunteers and, yes, to new parliamentarians who will each receive a copy of this edition of our beautiful magazine.

Founded to safeguard the environment and Malta's rich built cultural heritage, our mission statement binds us to cooperate in the observance of the directive Principle enshrined in Section 9 of our Constitution that provides that the "state shall safeguard the historic and artistic patrimony of the nation and its landscape". We have followed this guiding principle through successive administrations, working with each to contribute significantly to the growth of the heritage sector.

Yet heritage has not been without its growing pains in its search for maturity. We have seen the country commit acts of folly: the breaching of the bastions twice for the building of the Excelsior Hotel; acts of greed: the piecemeal demolition of the gracious Sliema front; acts of ignorance: vandalism at Mnajdra and quarry blasting below the temple sites and an absence of action, where *laissez faire* policies allowed public land to be stolen by lawless citizens at Armier and elsewhere.





Heritage has suffered British forts being turned into cattle farms, the building of a swimming pool within St Angelo and, even more recent, insensitive insertions such as apartments on its adjacent foreshore. Valleys continue to be raped and, up to this very day, planning aberrations such as the Tigné metropolis are permitted on the grounds of economic expediency, built beautifully for those who live inside, of course, but not for those outside. It sounds as if we have failed miserably as a nation – proving that if “education is expensive, try ignorance!” But no: slowly but surely, public appreciation of the environment and of cultural heritage has grown, even if we could not prevent such acts.

As a phoenix rising from the ashes, a cultural conscience did result from such mistakes. We do have a Structure Plan, and we do have a Planning Authority. After the terrorism on Mnajdra on that fateful Friday 13th – Good Friday – in April 2001, when we took to the streets and went into schools with our National Heritage map, sponsored by HSBC, and we lobbied for and saw a good Cultural Heritage Act come into force. This legislation gave operational powers to new state entities to bring dignity to our national sites, museums and collections. It empowered NGOs such as DLH to be entrusted with heritage sites under guardianship deeds.

After having saved 37 national monuments, and with 17 under our management, DLH leads by example. The designation of conservation areas and the scheduling of buildings came about. DLH was present during the formulation of the Sustainable Development Act and of the National Environmental Policy. Next came the formation of the Guardian for Future Generations, and its Sustainability Networking arm. We saw NGOs growing into a respected lobby whose thoughts impact upon decision-makers and who speak with a united voice on many issues. On the eve of the 2008 election, a powerful NGO lobby led by DLH, Nature Trust and the Gaia Foundation saw legislation enshrine the first ever national park land – the Majjistral – protected by Act of Parliament, yes, but not yet as protected as we would like it to be.

We have lobbied for incentives for conservation. In the last two successive budgets these did come about, and we hope they are now supported by parliament. The *Investi F'Darek* Scheme got off to a good start. Tax incentives to those investing in the regeneration of buildings in urban conservation areas were recently launched and there is great hope for the *Palazzini* Scheme to bring new life to our grand old buildings. Conservation has become another pillar of the economy. €35 million of EU funding has seen the restoration of public monuments become the order of the day, provided jobs and brought more demand for professional conservators. Work has started on Forts St Elmo and St Angelo. Our seas are now spectacularly clean but there is not, as yet, an equivalent of a Guardianship Deed for NGOs who manage natural spaces and we hope the future management of Natura 2000 sites will bring this about.

I venture to say that the nation's awareness has matured. Governance of cultural heritage and the environment has matured and there are sufficient laws to protect everything; but I also say that awareness has not yet matured enough. And it will not do so until there is a political front unafraid to act with clout on major

issues that remain unsolved. We need a strong hand inspired with a vision to find a just and fair solution to the illegal shanty town built at Armier, to stop illegal building that continues elsewhere, to bring all hunting issues to an end, to allow the public to walk along the national footpaths and enjoy the open countryside freely.

Then, too, we need skillful financial planning and finely tuned land-use policies to find alternatives to investment, wealth and job creation that are solely dependent on the commercial exploitation of our natural and historic assets. Ta' Ċenċ, Hondoq ir-Rummi, Manoel Island and other beauty spots are waiting like lambs going to the slaughter. The regeneration of decaying urban areas, and even of modern yet shabby recent development, goes a long way towards providing these same alternatives, but much is left that needs protection and our antennae are up.

We hope and trust that both the new administration and its Opposition will champion the environment and cultural heritage and pronounce themselves always with transparency but, above all, WITH UNITY. It will be then, and only then, that Malta will emerge as the only winner in the recent race for power.

There remains much to do, much to improve for 'our Malta', both for ourselves and for our visitors. DLH will continue to work so that all those who govern uphold Section 9 of our Constitution, requiring them to “safeguard the historic and artistic patrimony of the nation and its landscape”, a principle that is fundamental to the good governance of the country and to our quality of life. This being DLH's own mission statement, we should all be pulling together. Those who hold the reins of power can do so much to bring positive change for the protection and enhancement of our natural and historic resources.

Din l-Art Helwa, with its love for the beauty of Malta, is an example of steadfast commitment to this land. We are ambitiously persistent. We are continually moving our goalposts. We manage projects that seem impossible. We mount cannon during hurricanes, rebuild fortifications from scratch, bring order to historic gardens and stop decay in ancient places of worship. We work so that our leaders do what is right for the natural beauty and history of this fair land. *Din l-Art Helwa* offers continuity to everyone. And it is here to stay.



Secretary General's AGM 2013 Report

George Camilleri

Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa

This has been a year of unprecedented growth and challenge for DLH. In addition to the management of the 15 heritage sites in our care, our workload has increased as a consequence of managing the restoration of Our Lady of Victory church. In addition, we – along with other NGOs – are increasingly asked to be represented at government and EU consultation meetings.

People

Executive President Simone Mizzi opened the AGM by inviting all those present to remember Edward Xuereb, a dear friend and mentor who did so much for DLH. His commitment will remain an example to us all.

DLH continues to attract first rate people who bring to our organisation new skills and renewed energy. We welcome Martin Scicluna, former head of wealth management at HSBC and consider ourselves fortunate that he has offered to contribute his many years' experience towards streamlining our financial affairs and investigating new funding streams, including EU possibilities.

Albert Calleja, who occupied a top managerial post at Farsons, has brought us additional managerial expertise and, in addition to his normal volunteering duties at the Msida Bastion Historic Garden, is updating the numerous submissions for each of the nine properties we hold in guardianship – a laborious task but essential if we are to renew the deeds with Government. Philip Mercieca, also an HSBC retiree and former Forestals CEO, has offered to help with events, fund raising and volunteers; I am sure that his enthusiasm will give our fund raising and events team a great boost.

Judge Joe Galea Debono has also been co-opted on to the DLH council and gives invaluable advice when it comes to the many legal matters we are increasingly encountering, without this hindering his volunteer work at the Red Tower and on the Xlendi Tower Management Committee. John Sare has resigned

*Maltese and French
volunteers
collaborating in the
restoration of
Tal-Hniena Church*



from the Council for personal reasons and will no longer be in a position to organise the monthly lectures that have been held regularly over the years. We thank him for all his work over the years. Joanna Spiteri Staines has been appointed as DLH representative on the Rehabilitation Projects Board, and Maria Grazia Cassar and Cathy Farrugia have been invited to represent DLH on the V18 Events Committee.

George Camilleri has been nominated by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs as DLH's representative on the Climate Change Consultative Council and also represents DLH on *Fish4Tomorrow*, a group of five NGOs that promotes sustainable fishing and the responsible consumption of fish. Victor Rizzo, our Treasurer, sits on the Agricultural Sub-committee on Rural Affairs, and the Monitoring Committee for Operational Programme I.

Martin Galea continues as DLH's representative on the Heritage Parks Board that manages the Majistral National Park, where great difficulties are still being encountered in the prevention of vehicular access and illegal hunting. Simone Mizzi represents DLH on the Cultural Heritage's Committee of Guarantee, and has now been appointed by the government to the board of Guardians for Future Generations, on which Council member Michael Bonello also sits. This is a board on which DLH's influence will be of great value, as its mission is totally in line with our own. As can be seen, DLH is well placed to influence decision and policy-makers and will strive to ensure this continues during the next administration.

Qualified conservator Amy Sciberras has been employed as Project Manager/Custodian at Our Lady of Victory Church since 4 June and as a result, the church is open to the public on a regular basis.

DLH is making increasing use of foreign interns to support its work in its office, at its properties and at the Majistral Park. Our thanks must go to Vice-President Luciano Mule Stagno for his work in this respect: his contacts with the University and Mcast are invaluable.

Volunteers from the social responsibility programmes of HSBC and PwC have also helped us manage Our Lady of Victory Church at weekends, organise guided tours, carry out maintenance work at the Msida Bastion Historic Garden and assist at special events.

In June 2012, Simone Mizzi replaced Martin Scicluna as Council Member of Europa Nostra, which will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee in Athens this June. Luciano Mule Stagno represents DLH on the Committee of the International National Trusts Organisation, which holds monthly conference calls. *Din l-Art Helwa* has also become a member of a European organisation *The Future for Religious Heritage Network*, the purpose of which is to protect religious heritage. With the five churches and chapels we look after, this is a network worth supporting.

Sponsors

Our sponsors remain invaluable. At last year's AGM, we announced that we had embarked on the ambitious task of raising €1 million for the restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church. Our team, led by Simone, worked assiduously to establish the main sponsors who between them have now pledged almost that amount. We are grateful to our Principal Valued Partners, PwC Malta and the HSBC Malta Foundation, for their extraordinary generosity to this project.

We also thank our Valued Sponsors and supporters, the Alfred Mizzi Foundation, the Strickland Foundation, the Vodafone Malta Foundation, the Parsons Foundation, P Cutajar & Co. Ltd, The Malta Environment and Planning Authority, The Corinthia Group, Atlas Insurance Ltd, Computime Ltd and the Tanner Trust, who together make up our Victory Team.

It was definitely the project of the year as far as sponsorship in Malta is concerned, and progress is now being made at a steady pace. The Courtauld Institute conservators have spent many months up in the vault, where the visitor can admire new portions of Erardi painting emerging from the grime.

Gasamamo Insurance Ltd continues to sponsor the painstaking restoration of the Delimara Lighthouse mechanism and its housing.

The restoration of the nine monuments in the Maglio Gardens, funded by Fimbank plc, was successfully concluded last October.

MIA funded the spectacular restoration of the Mattia Preti's St Sebastian in the Departure Lounge of the airport. We are grateful to Stanley Farrugia Randon and Maria Grazia Cassar for looking after the restoration projects.

We were fortunate to be awarded a €25,000 grant for Wignacourt Tower as well as €30,000 towards the restoration of our Lady of Victory Church from the Good Causes Fund, while the Malta Tourism Authority supported the cost of floodlighting Comino Tower. The MTA will also be funding the restoration of Wignacourt Tower's exterior in a €100,000 project supported through the European Regional Development Fund. We are also very grateful for a legacy of €10,000 from the estate of the late Anne Crosthwaite, member of DLH for many years.

Events

We had numerous high-profile events in 2012. The year began with several private presentations at the Church of Our Lady of Victory to our main sponsors. These proved very successful, and culminated in a visit to the church to meet the sponsors by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and the Culture Minister Mario de Marco, which was followed by a reception and concert in honour of the sponsors, hosted by the Prime Minister at the Auberge de Castille.

In April, Malta was honoured by a visit from HRH the Duke of Gloucester to mark the Diamond Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Duke visited the Msida Bastion Historic Garden where he unveiled the memorial to the Victoria Cross Recipient Private Charles McCorrie.

DLH also received visits from Dr Owen Bonnici, Labour Party Spokesman for Culture and Higher Education, from the Board of Mepa, from the UK Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and from the new British High Commissioner, HE Mr Robert Luke. We must thank Patricia Salomone, our hard working Communications Officer, for the support she provided during these very demanding events.

Three successful Bir Miftuh concerts were again organised to perfection by Cettina Caruana Curran and we are grateful to the French, German and Italian Embassies for their support and to their cultural institutes for making the concerts possible. Our Annual Dinner in July was most successful and helped us raise valuable funds, as did the Autumn Dinner and Concert last November at St John's Cavalier, which was made possible through the support of the Embassy of Ireland and the Irish Ambassador to Malta, HE Jim Hennessy.

This sparkling event was a hit in all the social pages, and our thanks must go again to Cettina and to Maureen Gatt and to our office team, Rosemary Stagno Navarra and Anne Marie Navarra for these social fund-raising events, to Pat Salomone for the great PR and to Joe Chetcuti for providing us with photographs.

A most unusual event for DLH was the visit on 4 September by a delegation from the Hangzhou Province of the People's Republic of China who came to learn about our culture, to introduce their tourist city of Hangzhou and to seek future exchanges. Martin Scicluna made a presentation about DLH, following which light refreshments were served and gifts were exchanged.

Our 6th Photography Competition for the Marine Environment was again held at DLH's offices, organised by Council member Stanley Farrugia Randon to coincide with *Notte Bianca* on 29 September. On the same night, *Fish4Tomorrow* held their *Sunnara* Exhibition, also at our offices.

Another fund-raising event was the exhibition *Pulchrior in Luce (More beautiful in the Light)* by Maria Rossella Dalmas held in October at the Auberge d'Italie under the patronage of Culture Minister Mario de Marco.

The exhibition was opened by Judge Giovanni Bonello who showered his brilliant wit on those of us who were there. We thank Ms Dalmas, a most talented artist, for donating her work, that focused on the people and events at Our Lady of Victory Church, and would advise that some of her paintings are still for sale through the DLH Heritage Corner.

Also in October, DLH was invited to participate in the *Wirt iż-Żejtun* Roman Villa Symposium. *Heritage Saved by DLH in the south of Malta* was presented by Luco Mule Stagno, as was a series of five essays compiled by Simone Mizzi on texts by Maria Grazia Cassar, Stanley Farrugia Randon and Dr Alexander Welsh, which focused on Torri Mamo, Delimara Lighthouse, the Chapels of *Bir Miftuh*, *Hal Millieri* and *Tal-Hniena* Church. These papers have been published in the symposium's publication which is on sale at our offices.

We also managed to get out and about. Romina and Stanley Farrugia Randon organised a successful heritage and nature walk on Comino in September and was enhanced by our enthusiastic octogenarians, who walked and walked, while in November Pat Salomone coordinated a walk for Council members to St Anthony's Battery in Gozo.

Maria Grazia Cassar was successful in obtaining funding worth €8,514 under the EU Youth in Action programme for the project that involves the collaboration – for the third consecutive year – of young Maltese volunteers and French youngsters from the Rempart Group, in the restoration of *Tal-Hniena* Church. This took place between 7 and 16 September. Well done to Maria Grazia Cassar and Cathy Farrugia for putting this year's programme together, with the help of Sylvia Mule Stagno. Following the Rempart Group, Italian students from the *Istituto Geometra "DI PALO"* from Salerno also helped with restoration work at *Tal-Hniena*.

On 4 October, 30 delegates from Eco-Schools International, in Malta for a conference in which 50 countries participated, visited the Red Tower.

Floriana Local Council held an event on 21 October during which restorers worked on Mattia Preti's titular painting of the Madonna at Sarria Church, which DLH are promoting, while the Msida Bastion Garden remained open for the *Ġenna ta' Ġonna* day.

On 7 December, the winners of the DLH VIII Architectural Heritage Awards were presented with their awards at our offices in Valletta, by Culture Minister Mario de Marco. This year no fewer than 10 high-profile applications were received. Maria Grazia Cassar

took over from Martin Scicluna as chairman of the judging panel and Joanna Spiteri Staines was elected in her place. To them, as well as to Dr Conrad Thake and the Chamber of Architects, we express our thanks for their support each year.

An eventful year was brought to a close with the joyous and uplifting singing of the Enkor Choir at our last fund-raising event of the year, the Hallelujah Concert at Our Lady of Victory Church on 28 December. Enkor's swinging gospel music took us through time and our thanks go to the numerous volunteers and to Pat Salomone who made the concert possible.

Media Coverage

With all these great activities taking place, DLH was increasingly reported in the national media, with articles regarding our work, and with appearances on television. There are simply too many to list them all here. We made the headlines several times with the media, which is following the sponsorship programme for Our Lady of Victory Church very closely and reporting on the VIPs who visited it. Simone obtained one cover page as well as a major feature in *The Circle* for her *Life in Heritage*, and there was major coverage given to last year's AGM address with its *Protect Manoel Island* appeal. This was followed by a full page article by Simone on *How Heritage is Built*, three glossy pages on restoration in *Flair* magazine about the restoration of the Icon painting, and of Pope Innocent, at OLV Church, and one about the restoration of the painting of St Sebastian by Mattia Preti at Sarria Church. The Chamber of Architects magazine *The Architect* gave great coverage to the 2012 Architectural Heritage Awards while our social activities were also featured regularly in the social pages.

Our environmental campaigning was also reported, with major articles written by George Camilleri entitled *Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing*, the *Festa tat-Tonn* and *Trees cannot talk, but we can*, which challenged the authorities regarding the unbridled and unnecessary felling of trees.

Many features on TV focused on our national appeal for Our Lady of Victory Church. Comino and Dwejra Towers featured with the launch of the video *A Tale of Two Towers* on the programme entitled *Malta u lil hinn minnha*, for which we must thank Carolyn Clements who continues to lead the Gozo and Comino team with such dedication. It was due to her work that we were able to benefit early last year from the Eco Gozo Fund for interpretation panels and the production of this video. The Rossella Dalmas Exhibition was also featured on *Meander*. We also had coverage on television for many launches: the one with the Culture Minister regarding the restoration of Wignacourt Tower; with HRH the Duke of Gloucester for the unveiling of the McCorrie memorial; the one by Minister Jason Azzopardi of the White Paper on the Law on Public Domain; and of the Eco Gozo fund with the Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono. Coverage was also given to the conclusion of the restoration of Mattia Preti's painting of St Sebastian in the airport's Departure Lounge, together with our sponsors Malta International Airport plc, and to the visit by the DLH Council to the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Joseph Muscat, at Labour Party Headquarters.

A campaign to focus attention on Environment and Cultural Heritage was launched on 14 January through an online survey that asked the public to express their priority concerns for our natural and cultural resources. This brought DLH much acclaim and the result of this poll will be delivered by DLH to politicians and is available for all to see on the DLH website/Survey Results.

Publications

A booklet about *Hal Millieri* chapel, written by Stanley Farrugia Randon, has now been published and is available from major bookshops and our offices. Our thanks go to Stanley for this

initiative. Our annual calendar was not printed this year as it was decided to schedule its publication for spring 2013. This would bring it in line with the peak period for its sale as a desirable souvenir in major bookshops and our properties, and it will feature our major heritage sites. Thanks go to Victor Rizzo for this initiative. Victor is also working on a new publication focusing on the Pill Boxes of Mellieħa and Joe Azzopardi is putting together a guide book to Our Lady of Victory Church. We thank Joe for his hard work in making *Vigilo*, now in its 43rd edition, which goes from strength to strength, and Judy Falzon for her proof reading.

Heritage and Environment Protection

Objections were filed with Mepa regarding the projected Spinola shopping complex and as a response to the Environmental Impact Statement on the widening of the Coast Road. Prompted by the planned destruction of thousands of trees, a campaign for the protection of trees was launched on Facebook called *Trees Cannot Talk*.

Applications for work at *Ta' Baldu*, on the outskirts of Dingli, and at Portomaso, in respect of which DLH had filed objections, were both rejected by Mepa. DLH issued a press release in support of Mepa's decision regarding Portomaso, but also cautioned that the very close vote does not bode well for the future of our open spaces, especially in the light of the recent draft Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development. This leaves an unhealthy open-ended framework for future building policies. *Din l-Art Helwa* had previously appealed to the Tumas Fenech Group to leave the remaining space at Portomaso undeveloped and asked that the land be restored and allowed to regenerate naturally.

DLH has submitted to Mepa its feedback on the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED) document that presents the government's strategic objectives for the plan. The sentiment expressed in our feedback was that, no matter how comprehensive and well intentioned such plans may be, economic and political pressures have always had the power to circumvent rules and regulations. A serious effort must be made to address this endemic defect in our society otherwise the SPED runs the risk of being manipulated as was its predecessor, the much abused 1990 Structure Plan. We continue to monitor planning applications and file objections when they are called for.

The *Federazzjoni Kaċċaturi Nassaba Konservazzjonisti* (FKNK) has issued several statements inciting hunters and trappers against our Ranger at the Majjistral Park on the FKNK website. NGOs Gaia Foundation, DLH and Birdlife sent a letter to the Prime Minister protesting against these actions and urging the government to enforce the existing hunting laws.

DLH council members have attended several governmental consultative meetings: *Laqgħa ta' Konsultazzjoni - Il-Prevenzjoni, it-Tnaqqis u l-Kontroll tal-Hsejjes, Konsultazzjoni dwar il-pakkett ta' riforma tal-Politika Agrikola Komuni*, (Noise Pollution and the Common Agricultural Policy Reform). *Din l-Art Helwa* jointly with Fish4Tomorrow issued comments on the draft Aquaculture Strategy and presented them to the MRRRA. Fish4tomorrow (f4t) has appointed a campaign coordinator to lead the campaign on sustainable fishing financed by Global Ocean. The group is very active and has met with Mepa officials to discuss the Authority's Grouper Action Plan intended to protect this species from extinction. Written comments were then submitted. Further meetings were held between F4t members and local fishermen to gauge the attitude of these stakeholders towards sustainable fishing. F4t volunteers carried out a survey on two consecutive weekends to assess consumer attitudes towards the consumption of fish. It has been invited by the Ministry of Resources and Rural Affairs to join a new board set up to promote consumption of local fish with

other stakeholders, including the tuna pens operators. We are at present examining the implications of this involvement.

F4t teamed up with Greenhouse to produce a *Youth In Action* funded report and 20 minute documentary with the theme of sustainable fishing. The scientific report and the documentary, both entitled *25 Nautical Miles* were presented to NGO members, participants, sponsors, friends and family on 28 November at the Red Tower. F4t participated in Lampuki Fest, where the sustainable consumption of fish theme was expanded.

DLH, together with other environmental NGOs, submitted their comments on the *Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD)* consultation on pre-budget documents for next year's government mandate, while Simone Mizzi, on behalf of DLH, wrote to the Finance Ministry recommending financial benefits and tax exemptions on the regeneration of our historic town centres and the restoration of old buildings. We are pleased to note that these measures were indeed adopted by the 2013 budget. On 12 September, DLH, represented by George Camilleri, and representatives of other environmental NGOs attended a meeting with Dr Mario de Marco at which various environmental issues were discussed. On 9 November, DLH, represented by Simone Mizzi, along with representatives of other environmental NGOs met with Mepa during which the Authority gave an unconvincing overview of the vague draft policy for the height limitation adjustment policy for hotels in tourism areas.

On 29 November, Nature Trust (Malta) and *Din L-Art Helwa* met Mepa regarding the possibility of carrying out short-term conservation measures at St Paul's Islands – also known as the Selmunett Islands. DLH has been invited to form part of the Fisheries and Agricultural sub-committees (*Sotto-Kumitat Settorjali dwar l-Agricoltura u s-Sajd*), an inter-ministerial committee formed as part of the work regarding the strategic allocation of EU funds for the period 2014-2020. DLH participated with a group of NGOs in a joint press release bringing to public attention the light pollution caused by a restaurant in the dark sky zone of Dwejra. Mepa enforcement officers acted on the PR and the infringement was corrected. In addition, DLH filed objections to planning applications for more tuna penning and fish-farming activities around the *Xrobb l-Għagin* peninsula.

Care of Properties Entrusted to DLH

DLH is currently upgrading all the properties in its care with regard to health and safety laws and third party liability protection requirements, such as providing safety barriers around the perimeter of the roofs of all our properties, safety signage and fire safety measures. As required by law, we have appointed a consultant to prepare a Health and Safety assessment report on all our properties.

Work has now been completed on the renewal of the guardianship deeds for the nine properties that fell due for renewal on 21 February and we thank Albert Calleja for assiduously setting himself this task.

We continue to maintain and enhance our sites and, in fact, just last January two cannon from the Knights period were mounted on the roof of the Red Tower. Led by Judge Joe Galea Debono and Lt Col Eric Parnis, volunteers braved hail, sleet and gale-force winds and the event made the back page of *The Times* and *in-Nazzjon*. Our thanks go to these two gentlemen, whose tenacity saw the cannon sourced, given on loan by Heritage Malta, restored and equipped with new-made carriages in just six months.

The completion of work on Delimara Lighthouse is still being held up by the location of a cesspit, with Mepa not accepting the locations we have suggested for it.

The long-awaited removal of the concrete buffer at Torri Mamo has been accomplished and it is hoped to prepare this tower as a heritage holiday venue for the discerning tourist very soon.

Many works of art have been restored at Our Lady of Victory Church; work on *Tal-Hniena*'s interior walls is two-thirds complete and alarms and lightning protection have been installed at *Hal Millieri* Chapel. Work on St Anthony's Battery at Qala is almost completed and its wooden apertures are now installed. We must thank Lt Col Eric Parnis for this outstanding piece of work.

We also thank Josie Ellul Mercer who, as property division manager, looks after the upkeep of all our sites.

It is not only our Council members and the volunteers in our heritage sites who must be thanked for this amazing year. Quietly in the office, Prof. George Camilleri continues to organise the archives, Joe Busietta looks after our VSO reports, and Prof. Margit Wass organises our Heritage Corner. And we must also thank Rosemary Stagno Navarra and Anne Marie Navarro for their endless support of all of us. Our thanks must also go to John Gafa for maintaining our properties in good shape and to Annie Tabone our cleaner.

The restored entrance to St Anthony's Battery



The *Din l-Art Helwa* Opinion Poll on Heritage and the Environment

Simone Mizzi

Executive President of *Din l-Art Helwa*

On 14 January, DLH launched an on-line survey to gauge public opinion on the most pressing issues for the environment and cultural heritage with the intention of conveying the results to our political leaders. With some 800 pollsters *Stop the building* led the poll from the start, in line with the Resolutions adopted by those at the AGM.

There is a common thread running through the issues in the top four places, while it is interesting to note that the issue topping the poll is intrinsically linked to the one which was placed last. It seems that we need to focus our energies on the subject of regeneration, the meaning of which is obviously not understood – at least, not well enough.

It is, however, of great satisfaction that restoration has been identified within the portfolio of the new Ministry of Tourism and the Arts. Regeneration and restoration must go hand-in-hand if our built and artistic legacies are to remain vibrant contributors to our economy.

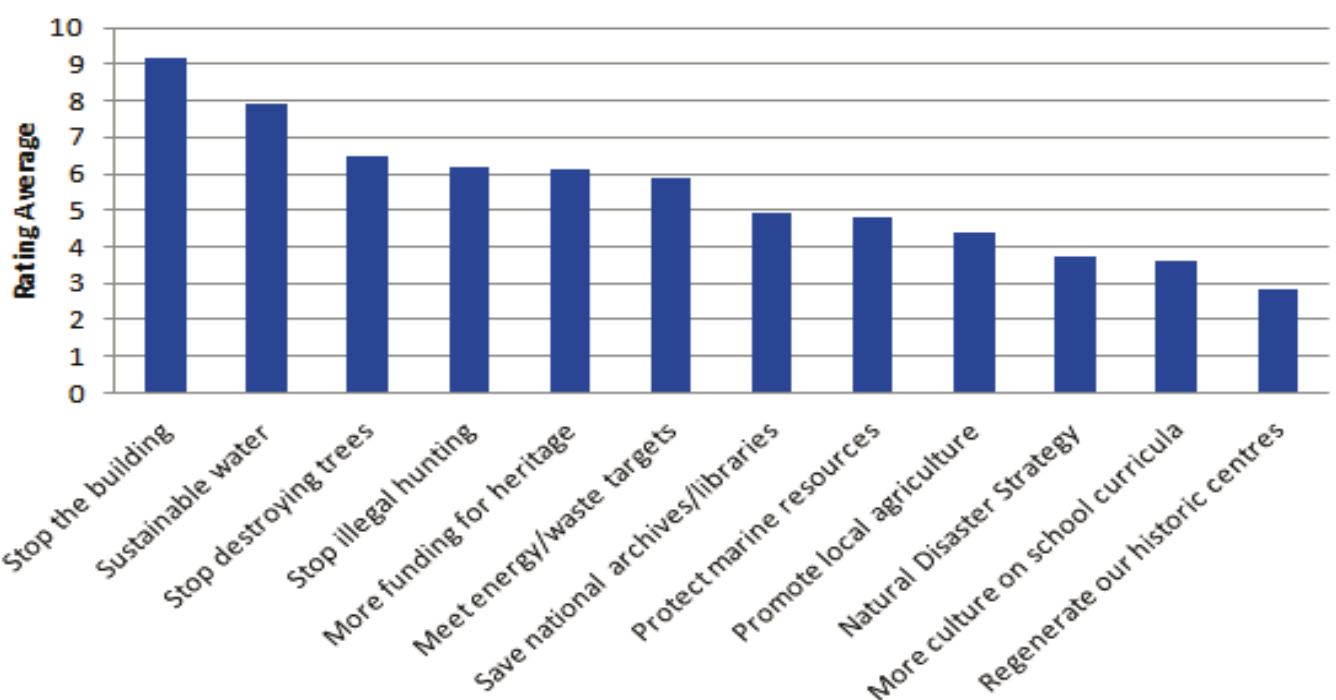
Conservation is a sector that can indeed provide many jobs, as can be seen by the extraordinary work being carried out on Malta's mighty bastions. Conservators in all disciplines are very much in demand for the conservation of our public monuments and their artistic treasures. We hope that funds are made available for the teaching of the skills required for the conservation of the huge variety of Malta's cultural inventory, whether it be of stone, art on stone or on canvas, metals, paper, textiles – the list is long.

Conservation
and
Regeneration
are deserving
of more thought

Our sample poll has shown:

- We are fed up with living in the middle of a construction site. We do not want more of our green spaces given over to building and we want the restitution to the public of land taken illegally.
- We want a strategy for that most valuable of resources, our ground water, without which no life is possible. We want it to come without the use of fossil fuels, an expensive exercise both for the planet and for our pockets. We want an end to illegal borehole extraction, which threatens our aquifers and the livelihood of those working in the agricultural industry.
- We are greatly disturbed by the sight of trees being felled indiscriminately, by ancient gardens being dug up and destroyed, sometimes illegally, sometimes by misguided local councils hell-bent on dubious “embellishment” schemes.
- We want an end to illegal hunting, so that we can enjoy our natural spaces, and be free to roam the countryside and feel safe, especially in national parkland such as the Majjistral, where little or no protection is afforded because of cowardly political interference.

Results of the DLH poll for Cultural Heritage and the Environment as at 23 February





I return to the main concern arising from our poll because it is intrinsically linked to the 12th subject, which attracted the least attention.

In 2005, NSO statistics showed Malta's built up areas as being 27 per cent of total available land (315sq km).

Between 1990 and 2005, building in ODZ increased by 100 per cent, from 15 sq km to 30 sq km, while in the development zone it only increased by five per cent.

Were we to update the national statistics to hand, we would find the situation has deteriorated even more. The small amount of land that remains undeveloped is either agricultural or else taken up by road networks, quarries and landfills.

If we are to protect our green spaces and our traditional built heritage, but accept that building is woven into our DNA, we have to understand and promote the value of "regeneration". This concept has not yet taken off, but it could be such a viable part of the construction industry and a sustainable contribution to our economy. Perhaps it is not yet understood because investment in regeneration brings slower returns and we have been spoilt by being able to make money super fast, unsustainably.

Regeneration within conservation areas is not as easy, nor as attractive to investors, as new builds. It is restricted by what already exists that deserves to be saved. Demolition for redevelopment has been easier and permissible, even though UCAs and the scheduling of buildings were introduced. If, as I hope, the awaited structure plans will restrict new building in ODZs, this will result in increasing pressure on our existing built heritage, new or old, bad or good. And this is where regeneration comes in, and it is a real glimmer of hope.

Regeneration is about breathing new life into buildings or areas that have been, or are in the process of being, abandoned and deteriorating physically. Regeneration is not just about restoration. It includes finding new uses for a depressed area, catalysing

High rise development in Sliema looming over the Valletta skyline as seen from Kalkara

investment, encouraging communities not to move away – or to move back in and creating business opportunities for potential commercial investment.

Regeneration is not a simple task. It does not come about unless it is given due consideration from all angles. It must not happen only through public spending, as in the case of the new Barrakka Lift, or the Biagio Steps fortifications museum, both good examples of how to bring vibrancy to the surrounding areas, even across harbours. Regeneration requires vision, good planning, technical advice, collaboration between stakeholders, the pooling of properties amongst neighbours, the creation of property trusts or banks, an interested creative audience, and a great deal of funding, both private and public.

Whole areas of Valletta, the Three Cities, Mdina's palaces and even areas, developed at a later date but still in our traditional style, such as Birkirkara, Mosta and Msida, will not be abandoned. People do not want to leave their homes, and they stay as long as they can, but unless a use is found for them that affords modern standards of living, they will eventually move out.

No. 225 Tower Road, sensibly readapted and successfully restored by Lombard Bank Plc



English Heritage, reporting on the direct and indirect benefits of investing in built heritage, has analysed the long-term economic benefits of restoration and regeneration and there are some encouraging figures in an analysis carried out in 2011*:

“Every £1 invested in the historic environment directly contributes on average an additional £1.60 to the local economy over a 10-year period”. Perhaps that return on investment is too slow or to little for us?

“Repair and maintenance accounted for approximately one-third (£34.8 billion) of construction output in Britain in 2010.” We need to have these statistics expressed as part of Malta’s National Statistics.

“Maintaining what we have creates more jobs than building something new: Every £1 million put into repair and maintenance creates 55 per cent more direct construction labour input than £1 million of output for new build (both private and public).”

I would go even further: it is not just our traditional conservation areas that require regeneration. The rampant, unplanned developments of the 1970s and 80s were built so badly that they too require regeneration, offering huge opportunities for redevelopment if tackled with imagination. Newer areas of Malta already require urgent attention, as do the shabby suburbs that appeared with the extension of local plans. We now have towns and villages that have, no beginning and no end, and no identity either. We must *never* allow ourselves to become immune to shabbiness because we deserve to have better urban areas that provide our own unique Maltese identity. Regeneration is known to add value to the tourism sector. The discerning cultural tourist, said to account for 60 per cent of people who travel, deserves to find that identity here and nowhere else, and yet what are we giving them?

From the social aspect, both regeneration and redevelopment would benefit local populations, by improving our environment and with it our quality of life, providing employment and yes, let’s please include some landscaping and trees while we are at it.

We ask that this administration will:

- Retain existing building boundaries.
- Further develop the incentives for regeneration and conservation that were launched and lost as the nation swung into election mode.
- Give further financial benefits to those investing in restoration and regeneration.
- Encourage legacies to cultural heritage.
- Offer assistance to young first time buyers choosing to purchase homes in urban conservation areas.
- Lift narrow-minded restrictions governing the media coverage given to sponsors in the private sector who fund cultural or environmental projects.

We are thrilled at the opportunity of conveying the ideas that arose from the DLH Opinion Poll to the new government, whose own declared intentions are to harness the energy and vision of all who work for a better Malta.

I would very much like to thank DLH Council Member, Architect Joanna Spiteri Staines for her inspiration and for her advocacy of regeneration.

* ‘Heritage and Growth’, published by English Heritage 9/12/2011

This Is How You Voted

Stop the Building. Prevent the despoliation of Malta’s remaining countryside, protect the landscape and public views from development and take action against the illegal use of land.	1
Promote sustainable water. Let’s face it: the lack of water and the heavy cost of creating it is a most critical national issue. Give us a strategy and halt illegal ground water extraction.	2
Reverse the culture on trees. Trees are not an expendable commodity, nor are they a public nuisance. Please protect these green lungs in urban areas.	3
Stop illegal hunting. Especially in parkland areas such as the Majjistral National Park.	4
Culture pays. Dedicate a further one per cent of the national budget to the enhancement of our built heritage and national monuments, which guarantee employment through tourism, maintenance, use and restoration.	5
Meet targets for alternative energy and waste reduction. Invest creatively in more communication programmes to help us understand what we can do to help at domestic, commercial and industrial levels.	6
Save our national memory. Our national library and archives are in a grave state of decay. Dedicate more resources to saving the collections of our written memory. Prioritise digitalisation and invest in new technology to guarantee their survival.	7
Protect our local agriculture. Offer incentives to farming communities and restrict the importation of foreign produce so we can guarantee livelihoods and protect the natural environment.	8
Protect the marine environment and our fish stocks. Promote traditional fishing methods and a culture for the sustainable consumption of fish to preserve Malta’s artisan fisherman and our marine resources.	9
Environmental catastrophes. Give us a national strategy to help us cope in the event of earthquakes, tsunamis and oil spills, as well as disasters brought about by climate change.	10
More heritage and art at school. Dedicate a few more hours a week to the teaching of heritage, history and the arts both at primary and at secondary school level.	11
Regenerate our historic centres. Offer financial benefits to regeneration initiatives so new life can be brought to the centres of our old town and village and residents will be prevented from fleeing these areas and our island’s unique architectural character will be maintained.	12

8th *Din l-Art Helwa* Awards for Architectural Heritage

Din l-Art Helwa created the Architectural Heritage Award Scheme primarily to encourage better architecture and to reward any building project which made an outstanding contribution to architectural excellence in a Maltese context. The Chamber of Architects are always most positive in their advice and support, propounding the message that good architecture is not simply a technical discipline but also reflects good design in keeping with our cultural heritage.

There was a record number of 10 submissions this year, all of an exceptionally high standard. Whilst this was immensely satisfying, it made the judging panel's job particularly difficult. It is also an indication of the positive mindset of architects and their clients, in deciding to invest in rehabilitating and re-using, or restoring and conserving existing buildings.

"In this day and age, when we talk of sustainability and the value of architectural heritage, such projects have additional significance, and we sincerely applaud them", said Maria Grazia Cassar, the member of *Din l-Art Helwa*'s Council in charge of rehabilitation projects, who presided over the judging panel.

The projects spanned a wide spectrum of building style – from large stately houses to the vernacular and from disused (or misused) fortifications to a mediaeval chapel – all of them worthy of great praise, and all winners in their own right. However, for the purpose of this competition, the judges had to make the difficult choice.



Back row, left to right:

*Arch. Matthew James Mercieca, Arch. Andrea Vassallo Cesareo,
Arch. Neil Felice, Executive President Simone Mizzi,
Arch. Tabitha Dreyfuss, Arch. Paul Camilleri.*

Front row, left to right:

*Mr Franco Masini, Hon Dr Mario de Marco, Arch. Gilbert Buttigieg,
Mr Mark Pace and Arch. Reuben Lautier.*

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and the Environment, Dr Mario de Marco, who once more agreed to preside over the presentation of the awards ceremony, said: "These awards encourage architects to aim for excellence in their projects, whilst encouraging investment in our local cultural heritage". Presenting the prizes to the respective winners, Dr de Marco reiterated: "As a nation, we can pride ourselves on our invaluable heritage which has an intrinsic cultural – as well as an economic – value. Therefore our biggest challenge lies in finding a balance between ensuring the appreciation of heritage and its sustainable use."

This year's winner in **Category A: A Major Regeneration Project**, went to architect Norbert Gatt on behalf of The Restoration Directorate within the MRRA for The Fortifications Interpretation Centre, called *The Fortress Builders*, at Biagio Steps, Valletta.

The Prize in **Category B: The Rehabilitation and Re-use of Buildings**, was awarded to architect Gilbert Buttigieg for his sensitive and imaginative rehabilitation and re-use of Palazzo Vittoriosa, without compromising any of its integrity as a historic house.

Two diplomas were awarded in this category, one to architect Matthew James Mercieca for the rehabilitation and re-use of a vernacular building into a comfortable modern home and the second to architect Reuben Lautier and Mark Pace for the refitting of the former IHC premises to be used as the new offices for Malta Enterprise in Gwardamangia.

The winner in **Category C: Restoration and Conservation Projects**, was awarded to Wirt Ghawdex for the excellent restoration and conservation of the late mediaeval chapel of Santa Cecilia at Ghajnsielem.

Two diplomas were also awarded in this category, with the first going to V.C.F.S. Architects for the restoration and conservation of Villa Siggiewi, the offices of Siggiewi Local Council, and the second to architect Paul Camilleri for the restoration and conservation of the Malta at War Museum and underground war shelters at Couvre Porte, Birgu by *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna*.

The judging panel was unanimous in its opinion that the Fortifications Interpretation Centre, *The Fortress Builders*, was deserving of the highest award, the *Din l-Art Helwa* Silver Medal for 2012, signifying the best in all the categories.



The Fortifications Interpretation Centre

Din l-Art Helwa **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013 RESOLUTIONS**

RESOLUTION 1:

Despoliation of Countryside and Protection of Green Areas

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on 23 February 2013 at the *Din l-Art Helwa* office at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, that the government is urged to prevent further despoliation of Malta's remaining countryside and green areas by taking the strictest measures and actions possible to control any further construction development which encroaches beyond the currently agreed development zones; and to protect the precious green spaces within our urban areas such as gardens and public spaces containing trees.

Irvinar tal-Kampanja u l-Protezzjoni Taghha

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita, Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2013, Din l-Art Helwa thegġeg il-gvern biex ma jikkompromettix dak li fadal mill-kampanja billi jieħu miżuri iebes biex jikkontrolla l-iżvilupp li jmur barra ż-żoni stabbiliti ta' żvilupp, u biex jiprotegi dak li għad fadal mill-gonna u postijiet pubbliċi bis-siġar fil-postijiet urbani.

RESOLUTION 2:

Aesthetics and Design in Architecture and Sustainability in Building

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on 23 February 2013 at the *Din l-Art Helwa* office at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, that appropriate steps should be taken by the Ministry of the Environment and the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, who should work in conjunction with the Chamber of Architects to introduce binding aesthetics and design guidelines for buildings construction in order to improve the visual architectural environment; to impose a tax on buildings left unfinished, or left empty beyond a period of 12 months after their completion; and to provide financial and other incentives to encourage the regeneration of dilapidated areas.

L-Estetika fl-Arkitettura u l-Bini Sostenibbli

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2013, Din l-Art Helwa thegġeg lill-Ministeru tal-Ambjent u l-Awtorita' Maltija tal-Ambjent u l-Ippjanar biex jahdmu flimkien mal-Kamra tal-Periti u jfasslu linji ta' gwida dwar l-estetika ta' bini u b'hekk titjeb id-dehra tal-ambjent mibni arkitettoniku ta' pajjiżna. Għandha ssir taxa fuq bini mhux komplut jew li jithalla vojt għal perjodu ta' aktar minn tmax-il xagħar wara li jitlestha, u jitfasslu inċentivi għal min isebs postijiet mitluqa

RESOLUTION 3:

Illegal Occupation of Public Land

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on 23 February 2013 at the *Din l-Art Helwa* office at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, that while the government is proposing an Act of paramount importance though a White Paper on National Property and the Public Domain that will afford the highest possible protection to the national inventory of lands and assets belonging to the state by enshrining them in the Public Domain by Act of Parliament, immediate steps should be taken to remove those persons who are already illegally occupying public land and buildings, and to return such land and buildings to the community in order to enable all members of society rightfully to enjoy their own common patrimony.

Okkupazzjoni Illegali ta' Artijiet u Postijiet Pubbliċi

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2013, Din l-Art Helwa, waqt li tirrikonoxxi li l-gvern qiegħed jipproponi 'White Paper' ta' mportanza kbira fuq Propjeta' Nazzjonali u Dominju Pubbliku biex jiprotegi artijiet u assi tal-istat billi jinkludihom f'inventarju ta' Dominju Pubbliku b'Att tal-Parlament, tixtieq tara lill-gvern jieħu azzjoni biex inehhi dawk il-persuni li qegħdin jokkupaw illegalment artijiet u postijiet pubbliċi u jagħti lura dawn l-artijiet u bini lill-komunita' biex tkun tista' tgawdi dak li hu tagħha bid-dritt.

RESOLUTION 4:

Proper Management of the National Park

Just prior to the last general election, the government had committed itself by Act of Parliament to setting up a National Park at Majjistral in the north west of Malta. This was a landmark project aimed at managing and protecting some of Malta's most beautiful and ecologically important landscapes. The park is managed by *Din L-Art Helwa*, the Gaia Foundation and Nature Trust under the Heritage Parks Foundation. The park was set up in 2008 but after four years, however, the project remains largely stalled with the prime issues of hunting and uncontrolled vehicular access unresolved.

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on 23 February 2013 at the *Din l-Art Helwa* office at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, that the government should recognise the importance of having a proper National Parks Network and work towards providing appropriate management structures and to resolve the particular issues of hunting and uncontrolled vehicular access in the Majjistral National Park. It is also hereby resolved that the area of the park be increased and that this new area be also enshrined by Act of Parliament in order to ensure that one of Malta's largest remaining unbuilt areas of countryside is properly managed and protected.

Tmexxija tal-Park Nazzjonali

B'Att tal-Parlament, qabel l-aħħar elezzjoni l-gvern kien ikkommetta ruħu li jwajqqaf Park Nazzjonali fil-Majjistral ta' Malta. Dan il-proġett huwa ta' mportanza kbira li permezz tiegħu nistgħu niproteġu ftit mill-postijiet sbieħ u ta' mportanza ambjentali u ekoloġika f'pajjiżna. Il-Park huwa mmexxi minn Din l-Art Helwa, Gaia Foundation u Nature Trust taħt il-'Heritage Parks Foundation'. Dan il-proġett beda fl-2008 iżda qiegħed isir ftit li xejn u fil-Park għad hemm il-kaċċa u aċċess bla kontroll tal-karozzi.

Għalhekk, b'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2013, Din l-Art Helwa thegġeg il-gvern biex jirrikonoxxi l-importanza tal-Park u jsolvi l-problemi li hemm dwar il-kaċċa u l-aċċess għall-karozzi fil-post. Dan il-Park għandu jikber u postijiet miżjuda miegħu għandhom jitharsu b'Att fil-Parlament biex b'hekk dan il-post fil-kampanja ikun jista' jiġi protett u jitmexxa kif imiss.

RESOLUTION 5:

Sustaining our Fish Stocks

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on 23 February 2013 at the *Din l-Art Helwa* office at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, that, in view of the grave decline in fish stocks and the possible extinction of certain species of fish – a situation partly caused by over consumption – all efforts are to be made to promote and nurture a culture of sustainable eating with regard to fish stocks and to generate awareness within the local consumer market by giving the local population the knowledge and awareness with which to choose responsibly whilst simultaneously protecting the local artisan fisherman.

Kampanja għall-Konsum Responsabbli tal-Hut

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2013, Din l-Art Helwa temmen li għandha ssir kampanja mill-gvern, għaqdiet Governattivi u l-Kooperattivi tas-Sajjieda biex il-poplu jkun jista' jixtri l-hut b'risponsabbilta' u ma jibqax jixtri speċi ta' hut li qegħdin jonqsu, kif ukoll biex jibqaj jgħin s-sajjied tradizzjonali. Il-gvern għandu jwettaq incentivi biex jizdied il-qbid u l-bejgħ ta' hut anqas popolari.



A section of the spectacular coastline forming part of The Majjistral National Park

An Update on the Progress at Our Lady of Victory Church

Simone Mizzi

Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa

Historic Icon Returns to Our Lady of Victory Church

The historic Icon of Our Lady of Victory, said to have been donated by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, is now back in the church, following careful restoration by Prevariti Ltd. Before being returned to its normal place – high above the altar – the icon was put on display for several weeks in the cabinet close to the entrance of the church where it could be more easily viewed by visitors. The icon, with its delicately painted copper face and finely chiselled silver *riza*, was badly tarnished through exposure to harsh light, and its protective wooden cabinet had suffered deterioration and woodworm infestation. This part of the conservation programme of the art treasures in Our Lady of Victory Church undertaken by *Din l-Art Helwa* has been made possible through the support of PwC, while the richly embossed blue fabric that now relines the cabinet was donated by CamilleriParismode.

Work on the Vaulted Ceiling

Up in the vault, the conservators from the Courtauld Institute resumed work last November and continued working on the challenging part of the depiction of the Presentation of the Virgin. Previous treatment had caused havoc to the original paintwork by the great Maltese artist, Alessio Erardi, and it is very satisfying to see the face of St Joachim, the father of Our Lady, that has emerged from under centuries of grime and salt efflorescence, looking on at the presentation of his daughter, the Virgin, at the Temple. The colours are absolutely stunning.

Other parts of the vault, in particular the ribbed arches, are being cleaned and treated. This long and painstaking work is revealing the background design and gilding, and bringing out the original paint.

The Courtauld group will remain with us until April. In the meantime The University of Malta Department of Conservation has commenced its field work on the vault. This will give students enrolled in the MSc course for the Conservation of Decorated Architectural Surfaces the opportunity to work under the supervision of Conservator Roberta de Angelis and Professor JoAnn Cassar, who will be working with the Courtauld's team. The scaffolding will have to be extended to enable this work to be carried out and we are grateful to the HSBC Malta Foundation for its huge support that is making this work possible.

Work on the High Altar and other Monuments

Conservators James Licari and Frank Chetcuti, aided by Joe Debono, concluded their work on the high altar in time for the Christmas services. We are grateful to the Alfred Mizzi Foundation for their sponsorship of the renovation work on the monuments and altars in the church.

Next in line for restoration will be the monument to the Venetian Admiral Angelo Emo, whose heart is contained in the neoclassical sarcophagus, with a wonderful sculpted bust by Maltese sculptor Sigismondo Dimech. A lecture on this subject by Professor Mario Buhagiar is being organised for later this year.

The Organ Cabinets

The organ pipe cabinet and the finto organ cabinet have been taken to the laboratory of restorer Erika Falzon for cleaning and treatment. Extensive studies by Erika, in conjunction with wood conservator Michael Formosa, have been carried out on these two wooden pieces which, according to documentation, date back to the late 18th century.

Graffiti Discovered

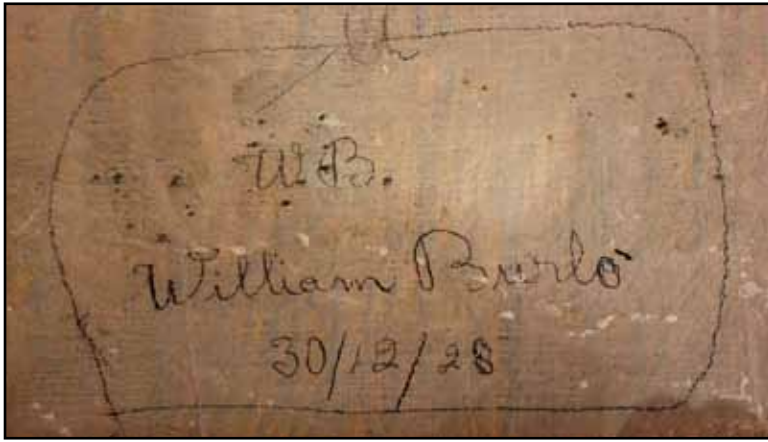
Removal of the finto organ pipe cabinet exposed some wonderful hidden graffiti – not only on the wall behind the organ but actually inside the organ case itself, presumably the work of many of the musicians who must have played the organ when it was still being used. Amy Sciberras, resident conservator and custodian of Our Lady of Victory church, has photographed and documented all these graffiti as a permanent record.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Painting Restored

A precious 18th century oil painting of the *Sacred Heart of Jesus*, hanging neglected in a corridor behind the sacristy, has been restored by Amy Sciberras herself, together with its beautiful oval frame. This will now be placed on display in the church, and again we must thank PwC for underwriting the cost of the restoration of works of art such as this. There are many more still to do!



Steve Rickerby, Senior Conservator at the Courtauld Institute, at work on the Presentation of the Virgin



Two of the graffiti discovered at OLV – Photographs Amy Sciberras

Enkor Concert on 28 December

This was a great note on which to end the year - we thank Johanna Van Lent and her most energetic and talented choir and Pat Salomone, Communications officer for DLH, who coordinated the event and all the volunteers who helped make this fund raising event a success.

Volunteering by HSBC Retiree Group

A group of retirees from HSBC have offered to help us keep Our Lady of Victory Church open during weekends, when Valletta is very busy. We thank HSBC’s directors for having come forward with this wonderful idea. We need volunteers on a daily basis in the management of the historic sites entrusted to us. Without volunteers, keeping these places open would simply not be feasible.

And Flowers as well

New silk flowers have been purchased for the altars and the church is slowly regaining its dignity. We do hope you are enjoying being part of the process that is returning Our Lady of Victory Church to its former glory as much as we are. I can say that for all of us working on the project for *Din l-Art Helwa*, this has been a great privilege, a great deal of knowledge is being acquired and we can look forward to the coming year with security, knowing that with your support the work will continue.

Thank You

Members of The Victory Team, who have made the work at Our Lady of Victory Church possible, are to be thanked and a mega-sized banner has been hung outside the church in recognition of their support.

Designed by Network Publications and engineered carefully, so that it does not touch the stone surface, by Cyberspace Ltd this streamer also portrays the image of ‘Victory’, as painted on the vaulted ceiling of the church by Alessio Erardi. It is with the support of all our partners, sponsors and associates that Malta is steadily reclaiming one of its most important religious, historic and artistic treasures.

HOMAGE TO HERITAGE



Din l-Art Helwa
Restoration Project

Church of Our Lady of Victory
1566



Allegory of 'Victory' by Alessio Erardi - 1716

PRINCIPAL VALUED PARTNERS

PWC	HSBC MALTA FOUNDATION
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VALUED PARTNERS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Alfred Mizzi Foundation The Strickland Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malta Environment & Planning Authority Vodafone Malta Foundation
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<h4 style="margin: 0;">VALUED SUPPORTERS</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Atlas Insurance PCC Ltd Computime Ltd Carathis Group of Companies The Farnes Foundation Maltese Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta P. Caruana & Co Ltd The Tamara Trust 	<h4 style="margin: 0;">VALUED ASSOCIATES</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bulgaria Auction Galleries CVC Media Group Cyberspace Solutions Ltd Malta Association of Professional Conservation Restorers Malta Rehabilitation Projects Office Network Publications Ltd Superintendence of Cultural Heritage The Courtauld Institute of Art, London University of Malta Valletta Local Council
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www.dinlarthelwa.org

The mega-sized banner

Letter of Appeal for Our Lady of Victory Church

Dear friends and members,

A year ago, Din l-Art Helwa launched its national appeal for support for the restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church in Valletta, and the "Victory Team" was established following the overwhelming response of many private individuals like you, of businesses and corporations. On behalf of Din l-Art Helwa, I write to thank you for having supported this initiative through your generous donation and to give you an update on the progress DLH has made with the challenging task of saving Valletta's first church from the neglect of centuries.

Our first six months of work was dedicated to raising the funds necessary for the large-scale interventions necessary for the project. Many local businesses, foundations and corporations came to our assistance and funding was found for important and delicate work such as the conservation of the 18th century Alessio Erardi paintings on the vaulted ceiling, the restoration of numerous works of art and repairs to the main monuments and altars, and for studies to be carried out on the physical structure and condition of the building.

Repair work has begun on the organ cabinets, neglected wooden apertures have been replaced, waterproofing systems are being continually maintained and security and fire alarms have been installed. Studies are being carried out as to optimal lighting. Restorers have saved the portrait of Pope Innocent XII and given new life to the icon and riza of the Virgin, which is being returned to its place above the main altar. Initial marketing and interpretation has commenced and an audio guide and website are in the making.

In June, we also employed Amy Sciberras as full-time conservator/project manager, enabling the church to be kept secure and open to the public from 8.30am to 4pm daily. At weekends, the help of HSBC volunteers ensures that the church is kept open. Many fundraising and public relations events have taken place and I hope you were able to be at the end-of-year jubilant Hallelujah concert by the Enkor Choir, which ensured that 2012 ended on a gloriously high note!"

The main thrust this year was to urgently resume the conservation work on the Erardi ceiling by procuring the expert services of the Courtauld Institute of Art, world leaders in the conservation of decorated stone surfaces. The result can now really be appreciated, with the section depicting The Presentation of the Virgin almost completed. To this end, we will be organising a private visit to the church for sponsors and private donors, so you can truly enjoy seeing the work unfold.

Nevertheless, despite the funds that have been set aside for the specific activities mentioned above, we continue to require support for the general upkeep and embellishment of this most important national monument. We do not have sufficient funds to repair the 18th century organ – the cost for this alone being €35,000. We would also like to create a small museum, to repair the old traditional wooden balcony that overlooks Victory Square and restore the church's bells and belfry.

All these involve major expenditure. Now that we are about to enter the second year of Din l-Art Helwa's guardianship of Our Lady of Victory Church, the first Church in Valletta, I would invite you to renew your support for this very worthy cause and also to spread the word amongst friends, families and colleagues, both here in Malta and overseas. Only in this way will we be able to maintain the great momentum you helped us achieve last year.

We would also appreciate receiving your email address if you wish to join the network of communication being established for the many members of the public and private donors who have requested more information and news about this project. If you wish to be included in this communication network, please send an email to Anne Marie Navarra on info@dinlarthelwa.org. You will only receive emails about Din l-Art Helwa's activities concerning Our Lady of Victory Church.

We look forward to your generous response and I thank you on behalf of Din l-Art Helwa for having donated the seed money to make our mission possible during this first year. It is by helping to finance projects such as this that we can truly say we are helping Malta. Thank you for making the work at Our Lady of Victory Church possible.

With kindest regards,

Simone Mizzi
Executive President



The Presentation of the Virgin by Alessio Erardi after conservation. The square section at bottom right shows the state of the mural before restoration.

Din l-Art Helwa News

Patricia Salomone

Crowds admire Our Lady of Victory Church

With the help of HSBC Corporate Social Responsibility Programme Volunteers and PwC Volunteers, *Din l-Art Helwa* opened Our Lady of Victory Church to the public during Notte Banca last September. Around 2000 people toured the church guided by the volunteers who explained the value and history of the monuments and religious artefacts which span a period of close to five hundred years since the church was built by Grand Master De Valette. 800 visitors climbed the spiral staircase escorted in groups of four to get a close view of the precious 18th century ceiling paintings depicting the life of the Virgin, painted by Maltese baroque artist Alessio Erardi.



HSBC volunteers George Brancaleone and Adrian Mallia



PwC volunteers Michela Jaccarini, Cheryl Cachia, Bertha Toledo and Charlene d'Amato

Pulchrrior in Luce – An Exhibition of Acrylic Paintings by Maria Rossella Dalmas

An exhibition of acrylic paintings by Rossella Dalmas to celebrate the restoration of the Church of Our Lady of Victory was held between 19 October and 9 November.

The 20 paintings exhibited depicted the conservation work and activities carried out since the church was handed in trust to *Din l-Art Helwa*. The artist, with her unique eye for detail and the contrast between light and shadow, has immortalised historic moments such as the much appreciated visit by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, accompanied by Tourism, Culture and the Environment Minister Mario de Marco; the visit paid by Shadow Spokesman for Culture, Research and Higher Education Owen Bonnici and the visit of HRH, The Duke of Gloucester, who is by profession an architect and a great admirer of art.

The conservators, from both the Courtauld Institute and the University of Malta, are caught during moments of their painstaking work while other activities intrinsic to the church's religious context are also captured by the artist's sensitivity. Most popular is the series of Altar Boys, showing the boys during preparation for service at The Vatican. Very true to life is the portrait of Church's Rector, Mons. Anton Galea, at prayer and poignant in its significance is the picture showing members of the Maltese Association of the Order of Malta carrying the exquisite statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague in procession.

Simone Mizzi thanked Dr de Marco for his patronage and for allowing *Din l-Art Helwa* the use of exhibition space in the Auberge d'Italie. She also expressed gratitude to Dr Sandro Debono, Curator of the Fine Arts Museum, and Katya Micallef, Curator of Contemporary Arts, both at Heritage Malta, for including the Dalmas exhibition in their calendar of events. Thanks also went to Jackie St John, the MTA coordinator for the Auberge d'Italie and the very helpful staff.

Pulchrrior in Luce was opened by Judge Giovanni Bonello, historian extraordinaire and Judge of the European Court of Human Rights, who likened the artist's use of light to that of Van Vermeer. Ms Mizzi said that *Din l-Art Helwa* was very grateful to Maria Rossella Dalmas for her generosity in donating part of the proceeds of the exhibition to the conservation of Our Lady of Victory Church and for the energy and motivation with which she produced this exciting project. "For Maria Rossella Dalmas", she said, "*Pulchrrior in Luce – More Beautiful in the Light* – is art that comes to assist art in a most altruistic initiative and I commend the artist once more not only for her expertise in art but also for her spirit of community and generosity".

The Hon. Dr Owen Bonnici, the artist Maria Rossella Dalmas, Mr Anthony Cardona representing Minister Mario de Marco, Simone Mizzi and Judge Giovanni Bonello at the opening of the Pulchrrior in Luce Exhibition.



Historic Icon Returns to Our Lady of Victory Church

The historic icon of the 'Blessed Virgin of the Victory', said to have been donated by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt to Our Lady of Victory Church, has been restored and returned to the church, where it can once more be admired.

The icon, with its delicately painted copper face and finely chiselled silver *riza* was badly tarnished through exposure to harsh light, and its protective wooden casing had suffered deterioration and woodworm infestation.

The restoration of the art treasures in OLV is part of a conservation programme undertaken by *Din l-Art Helwa*, made possible through the support of PricewaterhouseCoopers, while the richly embossed blue fabric that now relines the casing was donated by CamilleriParismode. The restoration was carried out by PrevArti Ltd. See full report on pages 28 & 29.



*From left to right:
DLH Executive President Simone Mizzi and Rector of Our Lady of Victory Church
Mon. Anton Galea thank PwC partner David Valenzia during a visit by the
firm's directors to the Church*



HE UK High Commissioner Robert Luke and Mrs Luke Visit Our Lady of Victory Church

On 10 December, UK High Commissioner Robert Luke and Mrs Luke visited the church of Our Lady of Victory where they were welcomed by DLH President Simone Mizzi and council members. Also present were directors of the HSBC Malta Foundation. Mr and Mrs Luke were able to meet senior conservators from the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Lisa Shekede and Stephen Rickerby, who are working on the conservation of the Erardi paintings. The conservation of these 18th century paintings is being undertaken through the support of the HSBC Malta Foundation.

*Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede illustrating the
conservation works to HE Mr Robert Luke and Mrs Luke
together with Ms Watkinson of the HSBC Foundation*

Christmas Weekend Fair at Msida Bastion Historic Garden in December

Year in, year out, this fund-raising family event helps provide *Din l-Art Helwa* with much needed income for the maintenance of this spectacular garden that overlooks Marsamxetto Creek, the Lazaretto and Fort Manoel from within the 17th century bastion. The fine weather and coincidence with the President's Fun Run brought many people to the Christmas fair which was spread over two days.



The volunteers in festive mood

Hallelujah Christmas Concert by EnKor at Our Lady of Victory Church

Thursday, 27 December was rehearsal night for the choral concert planned for the following evening. The side door to the church had been left open and passers-by began trickling in on tiptoe. Wide-eyed, they said: "It sounds like angels singing. What's happening?"

The next day, they came back to listen to the concert proper, joining those who had booked their seats well ahead. Council member Patricia Salomone, on behalf of Executive President Simone Mizzi, welcomed the large audience, headed by Mons. Dun Anton Galea. She explained that the title of the evening's concert – *Hallelujah* – was a reference to the work that had been carried out throughout the year. She pointed out that the large blue banner affixed to the side of the church acknowledged the valued partners who had pledged large amounts of money for the restoration of the church's treasures. "But every cent counts", she said, "and your contribution this evening is as valuable to us as every other sponsorship. More valuable, however, is the awareness that is being created among people who hitherto were unaware of the historic and religious value of this – Valletta's first building, first church and first burial place." After indicating some of the work that had been carried out, with a special mention of the magnificent icon that was on show at the entrance to the church, Mrs Salomone invited choir leader Johanna Van Lent Singles to begin the concert.

A crescendo of heavenly voices filled the air, calling the faithful to adoration. *Adeste Fideles* was followed by a selection of hymns and carols, both ancient and modern, that kept the audience enthralled and prompted Dun Anton to say that it was the first time Christmas had really been celebrated "this year in Valletta". He said that never before had he seen the church come alive as beautifully as during this *Hallelujah* concert.

Thanks were expressed to all the volunteers and *Din l-Art Helwa* staff whose efforts had contributed to the evening's success. But it was to EnKor that gratitude was mostly due for their generous performance, the last of the festive season. The conductor, singers and musicians joined *Din l-Art Helwa* Council members and the audience to exchange Season's greetings over a glass of wine and biscuits.



Splendid Autumn Concert supported by the Embassy of Ireland and HE the Ambassador of Ireland Mr Jim Hennessy

This year's autumn concert and fund-raising dinner was held in the Grand Hall of St John's Cavalier. This historic venue was kindly made available for the occasion by the Ambassador of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, HE Ing de Capua. Patrons had a splendid evening of entertainment and excellent food in the presence of Culture Minister Mario de Marco and Mrs de Marco.

HE, the Irish Ambassador, Mr Jim Hennessy addressed the gathering saying it was a singular pleasure for the Embassy of Ireland to be able to support the DLH autumn dinner and concert, saying that with Ireland's Presidency of the European Union starting on 1 January 2013, the country's top priority was to improve economic growth and job creation. 'I am delighted that Ireland and Malta are in full agreement on these priorities' he said. Mr Hennessy supported the dinner by bringing two extremely talented young musicians to Malta: Róisín Walters, whose performance showed why she is considered such a fine violinist, and Evin Kelly, who expertly played the classical accordion. The duo excelled in their execution of pieces by Bach, Sarasarte, Bartok and Astor Piazzolla and also played traditional Irish tunes such as the ever popular *Danny Boy*. Young Maltese soprano Gabrielle Sargent, with poise and a crystalline voice, sang arias and Irish melodies, ably accompanied by the two Irish musicians. The audience was thrilled by the virtuosity, technical range and expertise of these emerging talents.



Ms Michelle O'Reilly, Mrs Monica Hennessy, HE Mr Jim Hennessy Irish Ambassador to Malta, Simone Mizzi and Cettina Caruana Curran. photograph - Joe Chetcuti

Mr Hennessy said he was delighted that bilateral relations between Ireland and Malta are excellent and would certainly be strengthened by the visit to Malta of Ireland's Minister for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton, on 3 and 4 December.

Simone Mizzi thanked all those present stressing the importance of supporting the heritage organisation. "It is not enough to save our historic places – and DLH has saved 37 national sites since its foundation – the challenge is to use them to be able to pass them on in good shape," she said. She spoke of the importance of staging events in historic places, with which Malta is abundantly blessed, to bring to them new life. She also joined patrons in saying farewell to Australian High Commissioner Anne Quinane, whose posting to Malta would be concluding shortly.

A fund raising raffle included splendid prizes: an exquisite scene of Valletta, donated by artist Peter Vella de Fremaux, a sparkling Waterford crystal ship's decanter generously donated by The House Shop, a bottle of 12-year-old Jameson Irish Whiskey donated by the Farsons Group in a presentation box and a coffee table book on Ireland.

***Din l-Art Helwa* awards €250 Prize to Winners of Photographic Competition on the Marine Environment**

For the sixth consecutive year, *Din l-Art Helwa* organised a Marine Environment photographic competition to raise awareness of the importance of protecting our precious marine and coastal environment.

Continuous dredging of the seabed, and the uncontrolled use of small-mesh nets, have a negative effect on the fish population, while illegal fishing of small and immature tuna and swordfish reduces the availability of these important sources of healthy food.

Din l-Art Helwa called for photographs depicting the beauty of marine life and the horrors of pollution and announced the winner of the competition during the *Notte Bianca* in Valletta last September. A total of 16 entries were received, under two categories: Category A was to depict sea pollution or any other negative effects of human activity on the sea or coastal environment and Category B was for photographs showing the beauty of underwater life. All the entries were exhibited at DLH's offices during *Notte Bianca* Saturday, 29 September, 2012. Marine biologist Prof. Patrick Schembri from the University of Malta Biology Department kindly agreed to present the prizes to the winners. These were Didier Lauterborn, whose dramatic photograph of *Flotsam on the surface of the sea* was the winner of Category A and Sonia Silvio, who took first prize in Category B with her photograph entitled *Shades of Yellow at Submarine Cave at Menqa*.



Flotsam on the surface of the sea



Shades of Yellow at Submarine Cave at Menqa

The Future of Historic Places of Worship

Din l-Art Helwa recently became a member of the European Network for Historic Places of Worship, an organisation that encompasses some 68 national and voluntary associations and educational institutions in 26 countries working to save historic places of worship. In November, DLH president Simone Mizzi attended a conference aptly organised in Venice, a city very challenged to save its numerous churches and religious monuments due to its dwindling population and the threat resulting from climatic elements and tourism. The conference identified that many European religious heritage buildings are at risk. Many are in a state of disrepair and as a result are being closed, sold, demolished or changed beyond recognition. Congregations are shrinking and some sites, such as the more important national monuments, are challenged with managing the onslaught of mass tourism. These are threats to the high quality architectural and artistic heritage of these buildings and the cultural heritage they represent.

Small groups of local people, many of them voluntary associations with no state funding, are often faced with responsibility for the care and management of some of the most important heritage which lies at the heart of our European identity. Having defined the European landscape and cityscape for centuries, these buildings contribute to our way of thinking and our beliefs, as well as to our understanding of aesthetics, art and architecture.

In Malta, *Din l-Art Helwa* is responsible for the care of four historic places of worship: the 15th century churches of Bir Miftuh and Hal Millieri with their mediaeval frescoes, the chapel of St Roque in Żebbuġ, built as a devotion to keep the plague away from the village, and the baroque masterpiece, Our Lady of Victory Church, the first church in Valletta with its magnificent vaulted ceiling paintings by Maltese artist Alessio Erardi. In addition, DLH voluntarily is undertaking the restoration of the beautiful 1645 church of Our Lady of Succour, *Tal-Fniena*, in Qrendi.

Simone Mizzi pointed out that the main challenge is not only ensuring that the historic and artistic heritage of religious places of worship is preserved but also to keep the buildings alive long after the communities they served have shrunk and moved elsewhere, leaving the churches closed and unused. Finding extended and appropriate uses for them, while ensuring they remain vital pastoral centres, was the subject of the Venice conference. It was most enlightening to hear about the difficulties other countries are facing and important links were made with organisations with the same challenges as those we have in Malta.

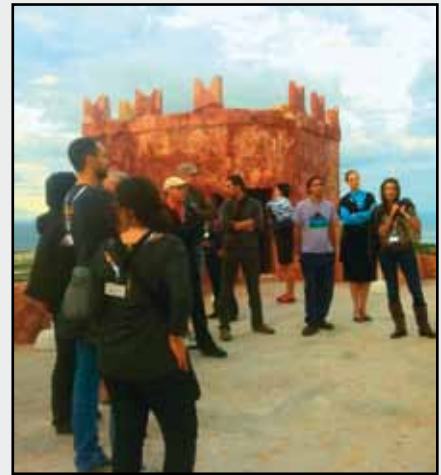


Simone Mizzi with Olivier de Rohan, President of the European Network for the Future of Historic Places of Worship and of the Sauvegarde de l'Art Français at the Don Orione Conference Centre in Venice with a Din l-Art Helwa religious heritage poster.

Eco-Schools International

Nature Trust Malta, as the local coordinators of Eco-Schools International hosted the National Operators Meeting from 7 to 11 November in Mellieħa. Some 70 delegates from 50 countries attended the meeting and on their first day a group of 30 delegates visited the Red Tower, which was opened especially for them. They were accompanied by Vince Attard and Jeffrey Sciberras of Nature Trust.

As it was quite late when the party arrived, the visitors were taken straight up to the roof to enjoy the beautiful views and take photographs. They were rewarded by a magnificent sunset. The history of the Tower was of great interest to the delegates, and those from landlocked countries such as Mongolia found the fact of being an island, and able to see the invaders so far away and so prepare for an attack, particularly fascinating. As they explained, many emerging countries have little by way of heritage to show and Malta occupies a very special position in this field. They were extremely grateful for the visit and were all thrilled to receive a copy of the DLH publication *Walks around the Red Tower*.



Delegates visiting the Red Tower



Lisa Tonna and Michael Vella chose Wignacourt Tower as the setting for their engagement photo-shoot

Volunteers' Christmas Party 2012



*Mary Galea Debono
Josette Ellul Mercer
Patricia Salomone*



*Stanley Farrugia Randon
Romina Farrugia Randon
Tony Alty*

Din l-Art Helwa Council Members Visit St Anthony's Battery

On a balmy autumn afternoon in early November, a group of *Din l-Art Helwa* council members visited St Anthony's Battery on the shore near Qala. The walk across the garigue was a refreshing experience in itself: a rare opportunity to enjoy what is left of our archipelago's natural beauty – its views, smells and unpolluted air. Far across the horizon to the north lies Sicily, which can easily be seen from this point on a clear day, and the lights of which are a beacon on moonless nights! To the right was the breathtaking view of the small islands of Comino and Cominotto, with Malta in the background.

As we approached the Ridotto San Antonio – later known as St Anthony's Battery – the difficulties faced by the original builders of this outpost became evident. We were able to better appreciate the hard work put in by those working on it today - master mason Leli Saliba (*il-Bufajra*), and Lt Col Eric Parnis supervising the restoration on behalf of *Din l-Art Helwa* in collaboration with the Qala Local Council and Mepa.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation work is nearly completed. Grand Master de Vilhena's coat of arms, together with the Cross of the Order of St John, stand proudly over the entrance, together with an inscription by the Governor of Gozo which reads: "*Nel Governo del Cav Fra Paulo Antonio de Viguier, 1732*". A small wooden bridge crosses a narrow moat leading into the powder room, now fully reconstructed with its roof-supporting arches of honey-coloured Maltese stone.

The visit continued along the open space of the parapet and across this to the battery's pentagon-shaped walls. Here, Council member Stanley Farrugia Randon gave a brief talk on the history and value of this fortification – its use, abandonment and revival.



The President of Malta Hosts DLH Council Members

H.E. President George Abela graciously invited *Din l-Art Helwa* Executive President Simone Mizzi, together with members of the DLH Council to San Anton Palace to express his appreciation of the work being done by this dedicated group of volunteers for Malta's heritage and environment.

It was the President's express wish that the group be received at San Anton Palace so that he could personally show them the splendid restoration work that has recently been carried out on the collection of Giuseppe Cali paintings, as well as the many improvements to the Palace's interior decorations, ceilings and the Russian chapel.

Simone Mizzi said: "We found the President's encouragement, as patron of our organisation, most motivating and energising. For people who, out of pure dedication, volunteer their time and abilities for the service of the nation, such appreciation from the head of state is a memorable event. There is no better reward for our continuous efforts."



Din l-Art Helwa Council members with H.E. President George Abela

Appeal for Funds to Save Mattia Preti's *Immacolata* at Sarrìa Church

For the past two years, *Din l-Art Helwa* has been actively involved in the project that will see the restoration of the titular painting, four lateral paintings, and two lunettes – all the work of Mattia Preti – at Sarrìa Church in Floriana.

Sarrìa Church was built as a votive offering in thanksgiving for the end of the outbreak of the plague in 1676 by Grand Master Cottoner (1663-80). So far, we have completed the restoration of the painting representing St Sebastian, sponsored last year by Malta International Airport plc. Emergency work was also carried out last year by Giuseppe Mantella Restauri on the titular painting representing the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. However, funds are needed to continue the work on this wonderful piece of art and begin working on the others.

Din l-Art Helwa would like to take the opportunity presented by the 400th anniversary of the birth of Mattia Preti to appeal to your generosity. Such an undertaking requires means that are beyond those of DLH. However, we believe that the aim of restoring all the paintings in Sarrìa is achievable, taken one at a time. The church was built to the designs of Mattia Preti himself, and is his only known architectural work. With its seven paintings by the artist, it is a unique Preti legacy that must be conserved for future generations. Cheques should be made payable to "Din l-Art Helwa Mattia Preti Project" and all donations should be sent to 133 Melita Street, Valletta. Your generosity will be very much appreciated.

Simone Mizzi



Lunch time concerts at Our Lady of Victory Church

Friday 3 May / Tuesday 25 June
12:15pm

Price €8 / children free / pensioners and groups over 15 pay €5

Calendar of Events

May

Thursday 9 - 6.00pm

Public lecture by Martin Scicluna

"Fifty Years of Planning Abuse: Look Around You and Weep"

Friday 17 - 8.00pm

Bir Miftuh International Music Festival

Violin and Harpsichord concert.

Sponsored by the French Embassy and the Institut Francais.

Sunday 19 & Monday 20 - 10.00am to 4:00pm

European Maritime Days

As part of the official programme DLH will be opening Delimara Lighthouse to the general public.

Friday 24 - 8.00pm

Bir Miftuh International Music Festival

Concert by the Lucentum Horn Quartet comprised of Jose Garcia Gutierrez, Gabriel Garcia Gutierrez, Jose Chanza Soria, and Alberto Garcia Izquierdo.

Event sponsored by the German Embassy.

Friday 31 - 8.00pm

Bir Miftuh International Music Festival

Piano, Violin and Cello concert.

Sponsored by the Embassy of Ireland's EU Presidency Cultural Programme.

June

Thursday 13 - 6.00pm

Public Lecture by Architect Edward Said

"Villa Frere, Pietà - One of the Mediterranean's most celebrated historic gardens".

Saturday 15 - 8.00pm

Bir Miftuh International Music Festival

A Violin Solo by Paolo Tagliamento

A Child Prodigy recital sponsored by the Italian Embassy, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Societa' Umanitaria di Milano.

July

Friday 19 - 8.00pm

48th Anniversary Dinner at San Anton

Major Edward Xuereb - An Appreciation

Martin L. A. Scicluna

Edward Xuereb, who died after a long, brave and uncomplaining battle with cancer on 22 December aged 73, was the epitome of the public-spirited individual who lives his life quietly helping others, but without drawing attention to himself.

He was educated at St Edward's College, where his father – the school's much-loved bursar – died tragically young playing football with the students on St Edward's Day, 13 October 1947. Edward, like so many from Malta's leading school, was commissioned into the Royal Malta Artillery in 1959 after attending the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

He made his career in the Army, serving in Germany and Malta, where he held various regimental posts and participated actively in every aspect of social and sporting life. He was an excellent all-round sportsman and represented his regiment at rowing, water-polo and football. His career in the Army culminated with his tour of duty as a major in the newly-formed Maritime Squadron of the Armed Forces of Malta. He left the Army in the mid-1970s when the local political situation became intolerable and he concluded that a new career move to the private sector beckoned.

Those were difficult economic times for Malta, but Edward eventually found his niche as Secretary to the Malta Union Club, a post he filled until his retirement. He brought to that post the excellent organisational, administrative and man-management skills that were to be expected from somebody who had served in the Royal Malta Artillery.

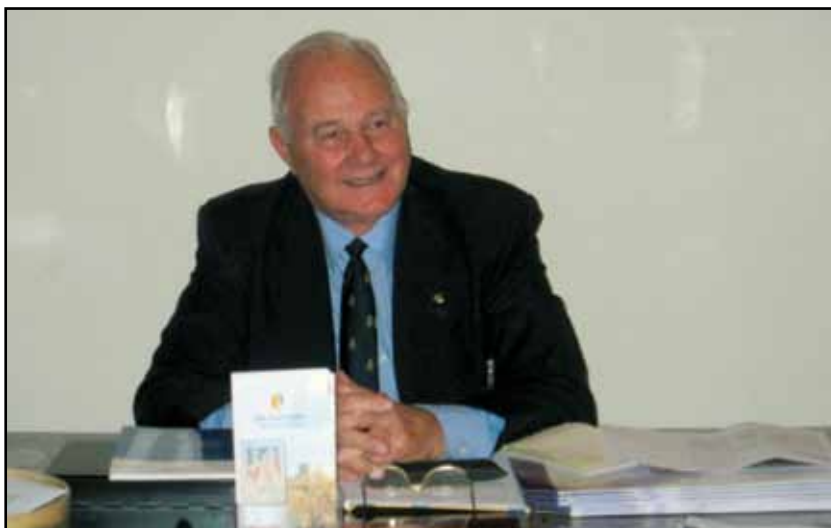
But, more than this, he brought to the job (as he was to do immediately after his retirement from the Union Club when he became secretary-general of *Din l-Art Helwa*) qualities of tact, commitment, hard work, reliability and sheer common sense, which enabled both these organisations – one a civilian club with notoriously demanding members, and the other a wholly voluntary organisation with inevitably stretched funding and manpower resources – to thrive under his leadership and dedicated support.

He went on to become a successful chairman of the Malta Union Club in an unpaid capacity when his experience, friendliness, calmness under pressure and qualities of compromise and mediation were vitally needed.

Those of us in *Din l-Art Helwa* who served with him on the Council when he became secretary-general, where he replaced his good friend, the redoubtable Philip Zammit Briffa, will always remember with great affection and admiration his amazing conscientiousness, tenacity, industry and dedication over the four years of his tenure.

It was typical of Edward that he would bring to any job he filled those unsung qualities of modesty, reliability, unwavering loyalty to those around him and sheer honesty, commitment and industry that marked him out from the rest.

He will be very sadly missed by all of us who knew and worked with him, and all his many friends. He will also be greatly missed by his beloved and most loyal wife, Astrid, and his family, to all of whom we extend our very warmest sympathy. May he rest in peace.



Simone Mizzi, Mro Paul Ascik and Cettina Caruana Curran

Maestro Paul Ascik's 90th Birthday

To celebrate Mro Paul Ascik's 90th birthday, and in appreciation of his many years of valuable service as Vice-President of *Din l-Art Helwa*, Executive President Simone Mizzi, on behalf of the Council, presented him with a book entitled *The Power of Example*. This is a compendium of the best examples of restoration projects in Europe in the first 40 years of Europa Nostra and this particular edition features the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest on the cover, as it was published the year that DLH was awarded the Europa Nostra Silver Medal for the extraordinary restoration of this historic garden and its monuments.

St Agatha's Tower Gets its Cannon

Patricia Salomone

It takes a very determined group of people, the volunteers of *Din l-Art Helwa*, to endure gale-force winds, hail and freezing temperatures to carry out the sort of feat that was achieved on 18 January: the returning of two cannon dating back to the days of the Order to the roof of St Agatha's Tower, known as the Red Tower.

The delicate, if not dangerous, operation was carried out by hoisting up the cannon and their new carriages by crane and placing them in the embrasures on the tower's roof in the presence of only the hardest of dedicated members. The two cannon have been loaned by Heritage Malta to *Din l-Art Helwa*, which has had them restored, under the supervision of Heritage Malta Curator Emanuel Magro Conti. *Din l-Art Helwa* also had the carriages made specifically to fit the cannon, based on historic original designs.

Lt Col. Eric Parnis and Judge Joseph Galea Debono supervised the difficult operation with the support of Property Division Manager Josie Ellul Mercer, who looks after the upkeep and maintenance of DLH sites. The enthusiasts who were present, notwithstanding the inclement weather, included James Farrugia who took these impressive photos as well as Edith Farrugia, James Evans, Barry and Mary Doughty, Bill Clarke and Frank Shenanan.



St Agatha's Tower was completed in 1649, during the reign of Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris Castellar, with the intent of guarding the Comino Channel and Ghadira Bay from incursions by the Ottoman Turks and the Barbary Corsairs. After serving as Company Headquarters for the E Company of the 1st Battalion, Kings Own Malta Regiment, during WWII, the tower was in private hands for a number of years. In the 1970s it was taken over by the Armed Forces of Malta as an observation post and radar station. It was then given to *Din l-Art Helwa* some 14 years ago under a guardianship agreement and has been extensively restored, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Demajo Group of Companies, Toly Products Co. Ltd and Playmobil Malta.

Spectacularly situated at l-Ahrax tal-Mellieha, on the crest of Marfa Ridge, the Red Tower dominates Ghadira Bay. Today, the cannon are not expected to serve as a deterrent to foreign incursions but rather to enrich the experience of the numerous tourists and history aficionados who walk up the newly improved road to visit one of Malta's most fascinating heritage sites.



All smiles from the stoic volunteers; Edith Farrugia, Josie Ellul Mercer, Joe Galea Debono, Eric Parnis and James Evans

left: One of the gun carriages hoisted against the background of a deceptively blue sky during a brief pause in the rainstorm



Nearly there at last

Comino Tower Visitors Statistics

Peter Llewellyn

Dominating the Gozo channel and watching over every trip by the Gozo ferry, Comino Tower is the largest of Malta’s coastal defence watchtowers, designed to defend itself without rapid backup. It is also one of the oldest of the towers built by the Knights. While designed to repel foreigners, these towers represent part of Malta’s unique cultural heritage and they are an asset in Malta’s aim to attract more non-sun, sea and sand tourists.

Despite its relative isolation, restricted opening hours and limited accessibility compared to other properties managed by *Din l-Art Helwa*, Comino Tower has recorded over 22,000 visitors from almost 60 countries in the four seasons from 2008 to 2011.

The tower is open to the public on average 130 days a year from April to October inclusive. The actual opening dates are largely determined by the seasonal opening of the Comino Hotel which, as well as being a source of visitors, kindly provides transport on its guest and service boat for the DLH volunteers who are mainly Gozo-based. This is in addition to the free daily passage provided by the local Gozo boat owner on *Anselma*. Since two volunteers are normally on duty, these contributions “in kind” are significant and *Din l-Art Helwa* is extremely grateful.

Comino Tower welcomes an average of over 5,600 visitors a year during the season – an average of over 40 a day. Of course, average figures hide large seasonal variations, with the cooler spring and autumn months bringing larger numbers of visitors, sometimes up to 150 a day, especially if there are walking groups. Access is only on foot and the rough surrounding garigue and many stone steps means the tower is, unfortunately, not very accessible to those with physical disabilities. In the heat of midsummer, there might be fewer than 20 visitors making the long hot climb from the shore.

Whilst the largest nationality group of visitors (19 per cent) is Maltese, the majority of these come in groups such as schools (May and Oct) or local cultural heritage and nature special interest groups during the week. Weekends tend to attract local families, often with visiting Maltese from the Diaspora countries such as Australia, who are usually very pleasantly surprised at the scale of the restoration and visitor facilities.

Of the foreign visitors, 90 per cent are from the EU (all 27 states) and comprise nationality proportions that pretty much mirror airline routes to Malta. Some 80 per cent of EU visitors are from just five countries: Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Spain, and visitor profiles vary greatly. Spring and autumn tend to be more popular with older northern European visitors, some of whom are on specialist walking or photography holidays – sometimes with their own guide. Italian visitors tend to dominate the hotter months, especially August, while those from Spain are often young and in Malta to learn English.

Russians are a growing visitor group, many also studying English in Malta and, together with Swiss nationals, represent 85 per cent of the non-EU European visitors.

Most visitors are Malta-based and are on Comino for just a day. Guests staying at the Comino Hotel are second and, surprisingly, fewer visitors report that they are on a Gozo-based holiday.

Feedback from the visitor experience to Comino Tower is almost always very positive. The ‘wow factor’ is definitely there, once the sheer size of the structure is absorbed, as are the awesome views, especially from the 360° roof-top panorama. The information and display boards and videos are well used and the information sheets – now translated into 17 languages including Japanese, Chinese and Hebrew as well as western and several eastern European

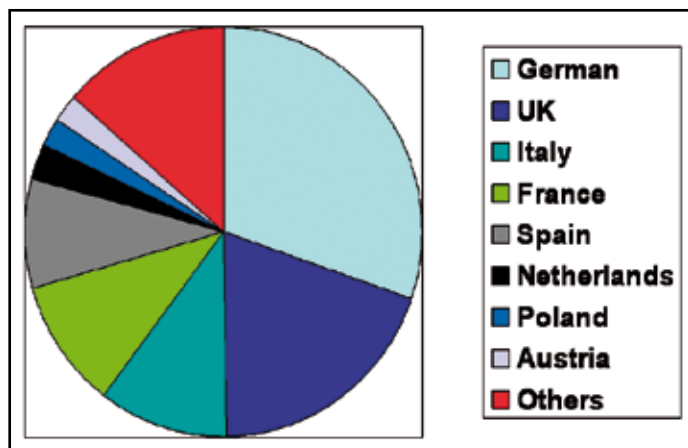
languages – are particularly appreciated. Is this a record for any DLH or other heritage site in Malta and Gozo? Perhaps one of our readers can let us know!

Most visitors to the tower comment on how they appreciate the peace and tranquillity of Comino, apart from the Blue Lagoon in summer, and express the hope that it can stay that way.

Visitor donations are encouraged and average about €1 a head. Least revenue is collected in mid-summer, with fewer visitors – including those taking a break from the beach in just swimwear, despite volunteers jokingly offering to accept designer sunglasses or watches in lieu of cash! Also, unless prearranged, groups are difficult to ‘control’ in terms of attracting donations. A little revenue comes from the sale of bottled water, postcards and publications, etc., however the potential for selling more gift items, such as local agricultural produce, is limited by visitors being on foot and therefore not in a ‘buying’ frame of mind as they might be, for example, arriving at the Red Tower by car or coach.

Comino Tower is occasionally hired out for special events but the logistics are always going to be a challenge. However, its isolation is part of its magic.

An indicative visitor number for 2012 is 6,420. This shows a marked increase over 2011, although not as high as our record year of 2010 and, interestingly, it is accompanied by an increase in income per person to €1.28 compared with €1.08 in 2010. Our visitors are now appreciating the enhanced visitor experience with the new audio visual materials, display panels and multi-language information leaflets – as well as the engaging welcome by our volunteers.



Summary of visitor nationality groups to Comino Tower

Opening Season (Days Open)	2008 (113)	2009 (124)	2010 (145)	2011 (130)
Maltese visitors	865	824	1529	975
EU Visitors	3364	3555	5358	4155
Other Europe	195	194	324	274
Rest of world	173	174	312	325
Total	4597	4747	7523	5729



*Icon silver attachments
during the cleaning process
photograph - PrevArti Ltd*

The Restoration of the Icon of Our Lady of Victory was sponsored by PwC

*The face of the Virgin during restoration
photograph - PrevArti Ltd*



Icon of Our Lady of

Joe Az

Set high within the apse of Our Lady of Victory Church, above the titular painting representing *The Nativity of the Virgin*, is the icon known as *Our Lady of Victory* which was donated to the church by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622).

Although it is not the titular painting of the church, this icon can be considered its heart – responsible for its popular name. The work is of unknown antiquity and authorship and presents a delicate representation of the Virgin Mary surrounded by a finely crafted silver *riza*. The face of the Virgin is painted on a sheet of copper and is thought to be inspired by a fresco of the Virgin at Matera, Italy. The *riza* is crafted to resemble an intricately brocaded dress and includes a crown surmounted by a globe with a star, over which stands the eight-pointed cross. The face is surrounded by 12 silver stars set over a silk damask fabric background. These 12 stars are a common attribute of the Virgin Mary and recall the description made of her in the Book of Revelation: “And there was seen a great sign in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars”. The icon carries a necklace, probably a devotional offering given in fulfilment of some long-forgotten vow.

The icon is composed of 18 elements in four different materials: the stars, a crown (including some imitation stones), a necklace and the *riza*, all of which are in silver; the portrait of The Virgin Mary on a copper sheet; the brocaded fabric background and the wooden case. All these elements required specific work, which was carried out using a wide range of techniques.

When the icon was removed from its usual location it was discovered that originally it probably consisted of the portrait of the Virgin and the silver *riza*, which was shorter than the one we see today. A clearly visible section was later added to the bottom of the *riza*, possibly to change its proportions so that it harmonised more with the additional elements, consisting of the 12 stars, which were added to it. The silver elements were crafted using the embossing technique in which flat sheets of silver are cut in a predetermined outline and then shaped and decorated, using a hammer and shaping tools, to produce a slight relief effect. These are then polished to different finishes to add depth to the relief and distinguish between the various parts.

The first inspection revealed that the icon was in a relatively good state of preservation, although some cracks could be observed, mainly in the depiction of the hands. Accumulated surface dirt – consisting of dust, grime and soot was, however, partially impairing its detail. In particular dust, which attracts humidity, had contributed to the formation of tarnish on the surface which had considerably darkened the silver elements.

The copper sheet on which the face is painted appeared to be corroded in certain places due to oxidisation. Some micro losses of pigment and a number of stains were also observed. The woven brocade fabric – originally light blue in colour – that provides a background to the silver elements was also badly discoloured. It appears to have been woven by machine in the mid-20th century.

The icon was transferred to a workshop in late 2012 for further study and the implementation of a restoration programme by Prevarti Co. Ltd. It was first cleaned superficially with soft brushes and subsequently dismantled so that specific restoration could be carried out on the various parts.

of Victory Restored

zopardi

Varnish, stains and over-painting were removed from the painted surface of the copper sheet, while the back of it was cleaned and the corrosion stains were removed. A conservation-standard adhesive was applied to consolidate the paint layer. Lacunae found on the paint surface were in-filled with *stucco* and levelled. A layer of varnish was applied as an intermediate layer before retouching aimed at re-establishing the visual unity of the painting. A final layer of varnish was applied to seal the retouching, saturate the original colours and protect the original painted surface.

The silver elements were all treated using a uniform procedure. The stars were numbered to ensure they would be reattached in the correct order. The existing attachments of the silver elements, which secured them to the background, had deteriorated extensively and required replacing. The surface tarnish was cleaned using a conservation-grade abrasive paste applied with cotton swabs. Finally, all the silver elements were re-attached in their original position and were given a final polishing before being sealed inside the new display case.

The old wooden case was found to be in poor condition as a result of extensive insect infestation in the past so it was replaced by a new one made of tulip wood. A handmade frame of antique design was also fitted. This was given 12 layers of gesso and five of bole, over which 24 carat gold was laid. The case was fitted with non-reflective glass affording 99 per cent UV protection and offering the best possible view of the icon. The brocade fabric which served as a background and also lined the wooden case was replaced and a system of LED light tracking was installed. The brightness and tint of the illumination were carefully calibrated to show the icon in the best possible lighting.

The restoration of the icon was completed early this year and this was returned to Our Lady of Victory Church where it was put on display in a special showcase close to the main entrance. This allowed visitors the rare privilege of seeing the icon at close quarters before it was once again replaced in its original position, high within the apse wall.

The restoration was entrusted to Prevariti Co. Ltd (www.prevariti.com) under the direction of Pierre Bugeja who also supplied the technical information for this article. The brocade fabric was donated by Messers Camilleriparismode.



The icon of Our Lady of Victory after restoration

*below left:
The icon of
Our Lady of Victory
back in its original location*

*below right:
Detail of the face
of the Virgin
after restoration*



Our Lady of Victory Church More Art Treasures Saved

Conservation and Restoration of the Painting Representing the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Amy Sciberras - Conservator and Restorer

Our Lady of Victory Church holds many artistic treasures, some of which are very visible whilst others are more hidden. One that was hidden from sight is a small oil painting on canvas that was hung in a corridor behind the sacristy.

The painting represents the Sacred Heart of Jesus and is a modest copy of the work of Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) in the Church of the Gesu' in Rome. The flaming heart of Jesus is depicted surmounted by a cross, pierced by a lance and surrounded by a crown of thorns which is the typical iconography associated with the theme. However, it is interesting to note that whereas during the 19th and 20th centuries the heart is almost always depicted on the chest of Jesus, who is pointing to it, in this case Jesus is holding the heart out towards the viewer.

*The restored painting of
The Sacred Heart of Jesus*

The painting is neither signed nor dated, but a thorough examination of the painting technique – carried out both before and during conservation treatments – revealed that the

painting probably dates from the late 18th century. The canvas itself is stretched on an oval strainer and fixed to this by means of wooden tacks. Wooden tacks were typically used during the late 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, while strainers were in use until the second half of the 18th century. It was also evident, from areas of the paint layer that were flaking, that the preparatory layer (which is the intermediate layer between the canvas support and the paint layer) has a reddish colour. Such coloured preparations are also typical of the 17th and 18th centuries. The painting was found to be in a poor state of conservation. Insect holes in the strainer support and decorative frame indicated that it had suffered from insect infestation. The back of the canvas support and paint layer was covered with superficial dirt and dust. The latter is in fact particularly harmful, being an attraction to pests and also being hygroscopic¹, thus increasing the humidity levels around the objects.² The canvas support also exhibited a slight dent that was affecting the paint layer.

The paint layer had signs of minor flaking on the blue mantle of the figure of Christ, as well as the background, revealing the reddish preparation underneath. Furthermore, it was not possible to fully appreciate the artist's palette and therefore the true colours of the painting, due to the thick layer of dust and grime deposited on its surface. Minute stains and fly specks, along with a whitish stain on the right-hand side, contributed to altering the appearance of the underlying painted surface. An examination using ultraviolet fluorescence gave no indication of previous interventions.





The decorative frame was also in a very poor condition. In some places the preparation layer and gilding were completely lost, exposing the wood underneath. Nevertheless, the frame was found to be structurally sound since the damage caused by biodeteriogens was not extensive.

Conservation and restoration treatments

The painting was thoroughly examined and photographically recorded, using non-invasive techniques, not only prior to the conservation/restoration work but also during it and subsequently.

Raking light was used to reveal the dent in the canvas support and detachment problems in the paint/preparatory layers. Ultraviolet fluorescence was used as a surface identification technique to identify the presence of varnishes and retouching.

Areas in the strainer and decorative frame which showed signs of past insect infestation were treated as a preventive measure. A made-to-measure isolating film was inserted between the strainer and the canvas painting and insecticide was injected in specific places by syringe. This method had the advantage of not requiring the removal of the painting from its strainer, so that the problem could be addressed without compromising the physical integrity of the painting.

Flaking and unstable areas of the preparatory and paint layers were consolidated using a synthetic adhesive – which, unlike organic adhesives, does not attract biodeteriogens, thus reducing the risk of future infestation. Moderate heat and pressure, applied to the area being treated by means of a heating spatula, ensured the re-adhesion of the paint and preparation layers to the canvas support.

The dent in the canvas support, which was also evident in the paint and preparatory layers, was reduced using localised moisture and pressure. The canvas support was first tested to ensure that it is not sensitive to water. Preliminary cleaning tests and analysis under ultraviolet light were also carried out to determine the safest and most effective way of cleaning the thick layer of superficial deposits and grime covering the original paint layer.

Detail of the painting during restoration

All photographs are provided by the author

The painting before restoration



The superficial grime was initially solubilised using a mild chelating agent and rinsed using de-ionised water. In addition, artificial saliva was thickened and used to further clean any remaining deposits. During cleaning, the paint layer was continuously examined under ultraviolet fluorescence to monitor the effectiveness and level of cleaning. Once the layer of grime had been removed, persistent fly specks and other surface stains were cleaned mechanically by means of a scalpel.

Lacunae in the paint and preparatory layers, as well as in the strainer, were infilled using calcium sulphate (*gesso di Bologna*) mixed with an organic binder. This type of preparation was chosen for its compatibility with the original preparation. Once dry, the infills were levelled and textured to imitate the original surface texture of the painting. A completely reversible protective coating was subsequently given to the surface and the infills were reintegrated. Finally, a protective coating was applied to the paint layer.

The decorative frame was disinfested and treated, while rusted metal elements and nails were removed. Detachments of the preparation and gilded layers were stabilised by the use of synthetic adhesive. The sensitivity of the gilded surface was tested to determine the safest and most effective cleaning method. Fly specks and wax deposits were removed mechanically by means of a scalpel, while persistent grime was cleaned using a cotton swab and small quantities of organic solvents.

Lacunae or losses in the gilded surface were infilled and carved to imitate the moulded contours of the frame. Losses on the back of the decorative frame were also infilled and levelled. The infilled areas were reintegrated through the oil-gilding technique using 23.5 carat real gold leaf. Unlike silver, imitation gold or copper, gold leaf has the advantage of not tarnishing. Prior to gilding, a reddish-orange colour, as similar as possible to the original coloured bole,³ was applied to the infilled areas. A reddish preparation is used in gilding to create a warm effect underneath the gilding.

For the long-term conservation of the painting and artefacts in general, it is considered crucial that they should be exhibited in a clean, pest-free environment, safe from possible water infiltration and accessible to the public. The provision of adequate exhibition or storage space must be coupled with regular maintenance and routine inspections to maintain the best possible environmental conditions. Display areas and storage spaces should be included in a regular cleaning regime, and within the environmental monitoring programme and any integrated pest management schemes. Such preventative maintenance is a powerful tool in the prevention of decay and the avoidance of large-scale conservation/restoration.

Acknowledgements

I would like to record my appreciation to *Din l-Art Helwa* for offering me the opportunity to manage the conservation project of the Our Lady of Victory Church and its contents. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Senior Conservator Anthony Spagnol for his advice as well as to Judge Giovanni Bonello and Professor Mario Buhagiar.

The Restoration of the Painting of The Sacred Heart was sponsored by PwC



Amy Sciberras at work on the painting

Footnotes

¹ Hygroscopic: attracting, absorbing and retaining moisture from the atmosphere.

² Notes taken during the presentation of the UCL students (MSc Sustainable Cultural Heritage) held on December 5, 2008 at Heritage Malta's Head Office at Valletta.

³ The bole or *bolo*, consists of a refined clay, typically Armenian clay. Armenian bole is an earthy clay originating in Armenia and is usually red.

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Restoration of the Main Altar of Our Lady of Victory Church

Joe Azzopardi

The main altar of Our Lady of Victory Church has been restored. Although at first it seemed that the altar required little more than a superficial cleaning, a detailed inspection revealed that more deeply-rooted problems were present. Much of the deterioration identified originated from the altar's continuous use over the years and the environmental conditions in the church. High levels of humidity, in particular, trigger the migration of soluble salts which in turn crystallise on drying and, on a macroscopic scale, cause cracking of the stone's internal pores, leading to its deterioration. This deterioration appears as powdering of the stone surface, the exfoliation of surface coatings, salt efflorescence and moisture stains.

The technique used in the construction of the altar also contributed to its deterioration, as it involved the close interaction of materials with different characteristics. The carrying structure of the altar is made out of globigerina limestone blocks, which were then clad, using adhesives – normally natural resins – in different coloured marbles.

Further deterioration, this time caused by human activity, is manifest as lacunae caused by missing sections of marble within the decorative elements and cladding, staining arising from the accidental spilling of wax, and the erosion of the marble surfaces. Particularly damaging was the attachment of metal hooks to hold various ornamental accessories used to embellish the altar on certain occasions, and copper and iron attachments on the front of the steps to secure the carpeting. This metal has corroded and expanded, causing staining, cracking and pitting to the marble. Some past maintenance work was also observed. This involved the use of epoxy adhesives to re-attach loose pieces of marble, various coatings of polish and the filling of mortar joints or lacunae, often with unsuitable materials.

Following the identification of the various problems, the altar was washed with a conservation-grade detergent. Further cleaning was undertaken, to attempt to remove any stains or thick deposits. Various missing pieces of marble were replaced with similar ones cut to shape so as to obtain a uniform surface. Hidden gaps in the structure of the altar, discovered through light tapping on the marble, were filled by injecting a conservation-grade liquid adhesive. The same material was used to seal cracks and loosened pieces. Open mortar joints were filled with a conservation-grade mortar and, finally, protective coatings were applied.

The restorers also discovered an interesting case of relocation. It was noted that, on the sides of the uppermost section of the altar, were inserts in a marble that was different from the one originally used. This led to the conclusion that, originally, the altar had protruding sculptured corbels – a common feature of baroque altars. Yet another indication of a past intervention of considerable extent on this part of the altar was the amount of cement in-fill at the back. This was painstakingly removed, as it was deemed detrimental to the marble as well as to the underlying globigerina limestone. Cement is known to affect globigerina limestone by accelerating decaying cycles and because it is impermeable to water and rising damp, it was probably diverting humidity and salts into the marble cladding.

It was later discovered that at some point the corbels were removed and relocated on the wall close to the sacristy entrance for use as a shelf. The corbels were removed from the wall, and put back in their original position, after cleaning and reconditioning by marble restorer Joseph Debono.

The main altar has been restored by Heritage RestCo, which has already carried out various restorations commissioned by *Din l-Art Helwa*. The technical information for this article was also supplied by Heritage RestCo.

*The Main Altar of Our Lady of Victory
Church after restoration*

**The restoration of the main altar of Our Lady of Victory
Church was sponsored by the Alfred Mizzi Foundation**



Conservation and Restoration of St Roque's Statue, Żebbuġ

Joe Azzopardi

The large statue of St Roque, which is situated opposite the chapel dedicated to the saint in Żebbuġ, has been restored on the initiative of *Din l-Art Helwa* volunteer Michael Bonnici who, for the last 20 years, has been the warden of this chapel on behalf of DLH. The restoration was made possible through the joint sponsorship of Bank of Valletta, HSBC Malta, JMV Quality in Steel Ltd and the Debono Group and was entrusted to the capable hands of Heritage RestCo's conservators James Licari and Ingrid Ross.

St Roque is reputed to have been born in around 1295, in the city of Montpellier of which his father was governor. After his parents died when he was 20-years-old, Roque distributed his fortune among the poor and left for Rome as a mendicant pilgrim. On his way he stopped in various plague-stricken cities, curing victims with the sign of the cross. At Piacenza, he himself was stricken with the plague. He withdrew to a hut in a neighbouring forest and would have perished had not a dog belonging to a nobleman named Gothard Palastrelli supplied him with bread and licked his wounds, healing them. After his recovery he returned to Montpellier where he was taken for a spy and cast into prison where he stayed until his death in 1327.

Following the Black Death in Europe (1347–50) a rich iconography of the plague and the Fourteen Holy Helpers, a group of saints venerated together in Roman Catholicism because their intercession was believed to be particularly effective against various diseases, was developed. It is in this ambit that the iconography of St Roque finds its historical origin. The cult of St Roque gained momentum during the bubonic plague that passed through northern Italy in 1477-79 and his iconographic attributes became better defined.

*The statue of St Roque
left - before restoration
right - after restoration*





*The sculptural base
of the wooden crucifix
before and after restoration*



*bottom:
Conservators James Licari and
Ingrid Ross at work on
the statue of St Roque*

Unfortunately, the Maltese Islands were not immune to outbreaks of plague, instances of which are recorded in 1592, 1676, 1736, 1813 and even as recently as the 1930s and this is the reason why St Roque features prominently in local sacred art. The Żebbug statue is possibly the largest baroque representation of the saint in Malta, and conforms to the iconographic canon referred to above.

Saint Roque is shown with a beard and long hair, his right hand is outstretched – pointing to the plague bubo on his thigh that is exposed by the raised clothing. He is wearing the attire of a pilgrim comprising a coat, mantle, thick socks and closed shoes. A hat hangs on his shoulders and a shell on the left side of his chest. Under the saint's left arm is a gourd, the large, hollowed-out fruit of a plant that was commonly used by pilgrims as a water receptacle. In his left hand, St Roque holds a staff, yet another sign that identifies him as a pilgrim. The ubiquitous dog is shown sitting to the saint's right, holding a bun of bread in his mouth.

The statue faces Main Street, the village's original principal street, which extended from De Rohan Gate to the Parish church. Up to the 18th century, it was free-standing but eventually houses were built abutting it. Thus the statue is now backed by an architectural framework that was created behind it and that incorporates the original pedestal. This architectural framework is surmounted by a sculptural feature that serves as the base for a wooden crucifix.

The sculptor is unknown but in his *Storia del Żebbug e sua Parrocchia* (1882, p53), Ciappara recounts that the image resembles an extraordinarily well-built priest who lived in the area. The same account refers to an indulgence granted in the year 1736, though no evidence to confirm this could be found. The statue and the pedestal are made from globigerina limestone. The figure of St Roque appears to be carved out of various blocks of stone, while the dog is carved from a single block with a low pedestal beneath.

The Restoration

The statue and architectural framework were found to be in a fairly advanced state of deterioration, caused mainly by exposure to the elements, and conservation was urgently required. Following preliminary investigations, it was obvious that small parts of the statue had been replaced over the years, most notably the hands which had apparently been damaged in the past and repaired. The index finger of the right hand had been replaced with a roughly-carved wooden one and the fingers of the left hand also seem rough and short. At some point the left arm had apparently broken off and had been re-attached with cement, slightly skewed from the original angle and inclination, as a result of which the staff was no longer held straight as it passed through the left hand.

The statue was covered with several layers of oil-based paint, the uppermost layer of which was deteriorating badly. Apart from being unsightly, the problem with this type of paint is that because it is impervious, it does not allow the stone to "breathe", thus trapping inside the salts that have been absorbed. Oil-based paint also traps humidity and dirt causing deterioration underneath the coating. It was also apparent that the colours chosen did not match the originals, which might have held significance in relation to the iconography of the saint. The pedestal had been plastered and coated with several layers of what appeared to be Portland cement and impervious paint.



Cement seems to have been used extensively all over the statue to repair previous losses. This was visible as lumps or plates with smooth surfaces on their exterior, and in most areas were becoming detached. A rough stone protruding from a damaged area of the drapery on the right was another indication of a previous repair that had been carried out in an amateurish fashion. Algae and mosses were found on the pedestal, in the wall behind the statue, and in some areas underneath the paint layers, indicating high humidity levels and possible water infiltration. The metallic halo attached behind the head was rusting, and the wooden staff had also deteriorated badly and required replacing.

It was decided that the best option was to carry out the work on the statue in situ, to avoid any potential damage as a result of it being transported to a restoration laboratory. Scaffolding was erected, with the assistance of the Restoration Directorate under the direct responsibility of the Resources and Rural Affairs Ministry. The statue and architectural framework were extensively photographed before, during and after restoration, and a record was kept of the observations and all the work carried out.

The main aim of the restoration was to consolidate the stone and return the statue to its original colours. Surface cleaning tests were carried out to identify the original pigments, and iconographical studies were made to compare this particular statue with others of the saint in order to ascertain the relevant colours. Although much of the original pigment had been lost, appropriate colours were identified.

All the harmful oil-based paint layers were individually removed in a time-consuming procedure entailing the use of a surgical blade. The moss and algae was eliminated using appropriate solvents and the black crust was cleaned mechanically, again using a surgical blade.

All the cement patches that were beginning to detach were removed. The left arm, which had been re-attached in the past, was left as was, although it is at the wrong angle, because removing it might have caused much more harm to the statue due to the need for an aggressive removal of the cement, coupled with the possibility that an internal pin may have been inserted through the cement and into the original stone.

The wooden finger was also left, but was slightly carved to give a better interpretation of a finger. Plastic repair (a method of filling and reconstructing missing parts of the stone fabric with a mortar) using a lime-based mortar was then used to repair the large gaps found behind the statue in the architectural framework. Some globigerina limestone fragments, that had been soaked overnight, were mixed with the mortar and used on the larger gaps. Finer plastic repair was undertaken in respect of the losses of the stone parts of the statue, as well as in the mortar joints.

Once all the gaps had been repaired, the conservators/restorers applied the colours using lime-based paints with earth colours, which give a natural finish and also allow the stone to 'breathe'. As a result of this work, the effigy of the popular pilgrim saint has been returned to something approaching its original colours. The halo was cleaned, treated with a corrosion converter, and covered in several protective layers.

DLH is grateful to Michael Bonnici for spearheading this project and for the dedication he constantly shows in the care of the chapel of St Roque which holds an exhibition dedicated to numerous famous personalities born in Żebbuġ. It is hoped that the restoration of the statue of St Roque will continue to draw interest to this quaint corner of this ancient village.

The information for the article was supplied by James Licari, Ingrid Ross, and Michael Bonnici.



The chapel of St Roque

Vanity, Profanity & Worship: Jewellery from the Maltese Islands

On Easter Day this year, the long-awaited *Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti* exhibition entitled *Vanity, Profanity & Worship: Jewellery from the Maltese Islands*, opened to the public. Following on from the Edward Caruana Dingli exhibition held in 2010, this exhibition focuses on the long history of jewellery in Malta from pre-historic up to contemporary times.

Tackled in its entirety, the art of jewellery has never had such a public showing in Malta and this comes at a time when the importance of jewellery as an art form needs to be recognised and emphasised. In these times of international economic uncertainty, the price of gold on international markets has risen astronomically and many people are taking advantage of the fact and trading in some of their gold items for cash. This is happening in Malta too, and the lack of knowledge about what constitutes unique, historic jewellery may see significant pieces unwittingly ending up in the melting pot. A high profile exhibition of jewellery will therefore not only please culture-loving visitors but should also serve to educate the public in general about the historic value of jewellery and make a compelling argument for its preservation.

From the richest jewels worn by the members of the Maltese nobility to the ones worn by church prelates, this collection spans the centuries. The story of jewellery in Malta is a reflection of the story of the country itself, not only a melting pot of various peoples and cultures but also of various styles and influences. This point is clearly reflected in the exhibition, which includes pieces made abroad and brought into Malta becoming very much part of our jewellery history and influencing pieces that were made in Malta.

The exhibition is laid out thematically, setting the scene for a broader understanding of jewellery in its social and historical context. Themes tackled include superstition and beliefs, ranging from amulets to religious objects, 19th century jewellery, filigree, and the crafting of modern and contemporary jewellery, including Malta's connections with the celebrated international jewellery designer Andrew Grima.

Well over 500 items of jewellery are on display, including a number of spectacular artefacts borrowed from churches which rarely, if ever, can be seen at such close quarters by the general public. Moreover, the setting of the Casino Maltese provides the ideal backdrop to the rich jewels laid out for the public to admire, and reminds us that, decades ago, these same jewels might have been worn to balls in this very building.

Designed in-house by Michael Lowell, who is also CEO of *Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti*, and curated by Francesca Balzan, this exhibition has brought together years of research in this little known aspect of our heritage. Combined with *Patrimonju*'s forte, which is the ability to draw out objects from private collections that are not normally available for public viewing, it is an event not to be missed by anyone interested in Maltese art and culture.

The exhibition is complemented by a fully illustrated catalogue that includes annotated essays detailing original research by noted local and international experts in areas relating to the history of jewellery in Malta. A full programme of activities, including lectures and workshops, is being held for the duration of the exhibition.

***Vanity, Profanity and Worship: Jewellery from the Maltese Islands*, at the Casino Maltese in Valletta from 31 March to 26 May every day from 10am to 6pm and until late on Fridays. For further information contact: info@patrimonju.org or www.patrimonju.org**



*Pectoral cross of Bishop Alpheran de Bussan,
late 17th early 18th century*



Maltese 19th century filigree bracelet

An Archaeology Walk in Gozo

Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon

My wife Romina and I like to visit the sister island of Gozo every month with the aim of relaxing and walking as much as possible. We usually visit the Lunzjata Valley where we always drink some natural water from the Lunzjata Fountain, and then continue to the bays of Ramla l-Hamra, Hondoq ir-Rummien and Qbajjar. We have recently discovered the long walk from Marsalforn Bay to Wied il-Mielah in the northwest of Gozo and down to Wied il-Ghasri. Mgarr ix-Xini, Dwejra and San Blas are other bays we often visit. Sometimes we also scuba dive around the coast of Gozo, which reveals a totally different world that is unknown to many.

But on a recent visit we decided to devote our time to the prehistoric remains in Gozo. This not only helped us to be more appreciative of our origins, but also meant we visited places we had never been to before, some of them offering breathtaking views. We had visited the Ġgantija Temples a few years earlier, so decided to give this a miss. In order to get some advice as to which places to visit, we decided to start with the Archaeology Museum, in the Cittadella. It is not a large museum but the items on display are very well presented.

From there, we decided to start walking towards Marżiena Temple as we wanted to visit some people at the Manresa Retreat House in Munxar. After joining some friends there for a cup of coffee, we turned left into Windmill Street. When we arrived in front of a windmill, unfortunately without sails, we asked a resident for the way to the Marżiena Temples. He responded with a guffaw and, to our surprise, said: "*Dawk il-ftit ġebliet li sab mignun Germaniż?*" ("Those few stones that were discovered by a German lunatic?").

Anyway, after telling him that we were still interested in having a look, he somewhat lethargically led us to a narrow footpath just opposite the windmill. This site has obviously never been properly explored extensively, and the considerable number of megalithic blocks are partly hidden by carob trees and prickly pear plants, but the alignments of the megaliths suggest the shape of apses of a temple. Several Ġgantija and Tarxien-phase shards of pottery have been found on the ground in the past.



*Remains of
Santa Verna Temple
in Xaghra*

We returned to our car, which we had parked in Rabat, chuckling several times as we recalled what the local man had told us.

We decided to visit the Santa Verna Temple next. We drove to the main square of Xaghra, then turned into the road to the left, opposite the church, to arrive at the corner of Triq Santa Verna and Triq Sant' Anton. We had to ask directions to some local residents before we found the right road to the site. There are only a few megaliths still standing, but horizontal blocks may represent an altar and a hole with a depression in it was interpreted by the farmer tilling the adjacent field as a container for holy water. He told us that when he was a boy he had found many skulls and pieces of pottery in the fields nearby.

After leaving the Santa Verna site, we headed for the road opposite the Ġgantija temples, where we studied an informative notice that indicated other interesting sites. Just behind this board are tombs cut into the rocks, as well as a prehistoric cave called 'Ta' Ghejzu' which yielded pottery shards from the Ġgantija period (circa 3500BC). The nearby megaliths may have formed part of a temple.

*An intriguing circle
of standing stones*



A few metres down the main road is Triq Tal-Qacča, in which there is a path leading to the Xaghra Circle, where a notice at the gate in a fence surrounding the entire site tells the prospective visitor that admission is by prior appointment with the Ġgantija office. The Xaghra Circle is also known as the 'Brockdorff's Circle' after the surname of the person who painted them. Unfortunately, on this day we only saw scant remains of a large stone circle. The items found in these tombs are now in the Archaeology Museum.

After a good meal, we decided to visit Ta' Ċenċ, as we had read that this was a place where we would find many interesting prehistoric remains. On leaving Xaghra we noticed, from a distance, Nuffara Hill where pottery from the Borg in-Nadur phase (1500-700BC) had been found. Several items were found here, including pottery, querns, anchors and spindle whorls, all of which give a glimpse into daily life in a typical Bronze Age settlement. Rock-cut, bell-shaped pits have also been found on this flat-topped hill, which could have been used for the storage of grain.

From Rabat we followed the signs leading to Sannat and then to Ta' Ċenċ. On the way past the Ta' Ċenċ Hotel, we noticed a sign to the Mramma Temple. Such signs indicating minor prehistoric sites are the exception rather than the rule in Gozo, but our enthusiasm was soon replaced by frustration because, although we spent two hours roaming about this plateau, we could not identify any remains resembling the form of a temple. The place is peppered with large stones – partly covered with vegetation, rubble walls, modern stones dumped at random and hunters' huts. Luckily, we identified a dolmen called 'Id-Dura' in Maltese. This is a horizontal stone lying on vertical ones. The Ta' Ċenċ plateau also has some of the enigmatic cart ruts – but we were unable to find them. However, the weather was pleasant and we enjoyed the fresh air and the variety of plants and flowers – not to mention the beautiful sheer cliffs.

Due to the lack of signage at the sites we visited, we had lost much more time than expected. However, on our way back to the ferry we decided to go to Qala and try to find the Haġra l-Wieqfa (the "standing stone"). In order not to lose any more time, we agreed to ask for directions from anyone we assumed to be a Qala resident. Unfortunately, most of the people we asked did not know it even existed and one person thought that, because its name implied that it must be a precious stone, it could not be found outdoors! It is the most ancient attraction in the village and is probably the only surviving element of a megalithic structure from the Temple Period (4100-2500BC) and is to be found in a small field in-between two houses in the aptly-named Triq it-Tempju (Temple Street).

Our day visit to prehistoric Gozo had been a pleasant one. The spring weather was ideal and we had visited places we had never been to before. We left the island chatting about various points which could hopefully serve as constructive criticism to the authorities concerned. We had loved the small but informative Archeology Museum in the Cittadella, which had stimulated our appetite to visit various sites. However, there are no road signs to direct the visitor



Dolmen at Ta' Ċenċ

*All photographs
are by the author*

*Ta' Marżiena
prehistoric temple
remains*

to these archeological sites, apart from the Ġgantija Temples of course, but the Xaghra notice board, with a detailed map of interesting places to visit, was very informative. If you are lucky enough to actually arrive at the site, but are not an archeologist, it is very difficult to interpret what you are actually looking at. The fact that the site is overgrown, and the existence of modern additions, makes this interpretation even more difficult and the provision of a small description, with a sketch of the site, would definitely be helpful.

The majority of people do not know what cultural heritage their particular area holds and I think the respective local councils should take every opportunity, and use every means, to inform them. On approaching most of the sites, we felt as if we were trespassing on private land. These sites should be made more accessible and provided with clearly defined footpaths.

On another visit to Gozo, as we were walking past San Dimitri Chapel looking for Wied il-Ghasri, my wife and I observed an intriguing circle of standing stones. It is obvious that there are so many other sites that have not yet been investigated and Gozo has so much more to offer – so good luck to all our budding archeologists!



Żejtun Roman Villa Symposium and Exhibition

Ruben Abela

Last October, local heritage NGO Wirt iż-Żejtun held a symposium and exhibition at the Domus Sagra Familgia at Żejtun on the subject of the Roman Villa located within the grounds of the Girls Secondary School at Żejtun. Through funds it obtained from the HSBC Malta Foundation, *Din l-Art Helwa* was instrumental in assisting the archaeological investigation and conservation of this site by the Department of Classical Studies and Archaeology and the Department of Built Heritage of the University of Malta.

At the symposium, chaired by President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici and entitled *The Żejtun Roman Villa: Research, Conservation, Management*, 11 papers on these different themes were presented to an audience of local heritage enthusiasts and scholars. The first paper, presented by Prof. Anthony Bonanno and Dr Nicholas Vella, covered the archaeological investigations and the main findings. Maxine Anastasi presented her paper regarding the pottery found on the site and this was followed by a paper by Prof. JoAnn Cassar and Roberta de Angelis that focused on the conservation issues of the site.

David Cardona presented a management proposal for this site and then a team from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage made a detailed presentation about other archaeological sites that have recently been discovered in the Żejtun area and architect Ruben Abela explained the historical context of Żejtun.

Dr Timmy Gambin's presentation focused on the movement of oil during the Roman period and information regarding the cultivation and processing of olives in the Malta of antiquity was the subject of the talk by Dr Joseph Buhagiar. The management and marketing issues regarding the Roman heritage in the south-east of Malta were tackled by Dr Nadia Theuma.



left to right: Prof Anthony Bonanno (former President of DLH), HE President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, and Ruben Abela

Dr Nicholas Vella leading the guided tour



Findings on display during the exhibition

Dr Malcolm Borg and Samantha Fabry discussed the management issues that need to be considered for this archaeological site and the last paper was a compendium of the work undertaken by *Din l-Art Helwa* in the management of heritage sites in the south of Malta. The symposium ended with a closing speech by the Mayor of Żejtun.

A guided tour of the site was given by Dr Nicholas Vella the day after the symposium.

All the papers presented at the symposium have been gathered into a publication edited by Ruben Abela and published by Wirt iż-Żejtun, which is available from *Din l-Art Helwa*'s bookshop.

An exhibition on the Roman Villa was also organised by Wirt iż-Żejtun the week before the symposium, hosted by Żejtun Local Council in collaboration with Żejtun Parish Church, Heritage Malta and the Department of Classics and Archaeology of the University of Malta. The main sponsors were Actavis.

IUU: Illegal, Unregulated and Undeclared

George Camilleri

Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa

The tuna farming industry must be clapping its collective hands for joy following the news released by the Scientific Committee of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) of the improvement of the blue fin tuna stock after having monitored this industry for six years. The report estimates that the tuna spawning stock is now back to the 300,000 tonnes level that had been reached in the 1960s after having been cynically reduced to about 150,000 tonnes (which is an optimistic estimate – some say it was much less) by the self-same industry in the first decade of the 21st century.

This would indeed also be good news for environmentalists, were they to accept it all at face value, but – face value being what it is – it means that a closer look at the ICCAT report is called for. The truth of the matter is that the scientific community acknowledges it does not have reliable catch statistics, mainly due to “illegal, unregulated and undeclared” fishing activities, or IUU. It should be clarified that these predictions are based on just one year’s observations. Furthermore, the statistical parameters used by ICCAT ensure that predictions are as close to rosy as possible, suggesting that the ICCAT estimate could be slanted towards the optimistic.

The European Union continues to consume more fish than European seas can produce. The EU would run out of fish halfway through the year if it only consumed fish from its own waters. The solution is simple: just go fishing somewhere else, preferably where it’s the cheapest, so that you make as much profit as possible. Europeans start eating someone else’s fish from 7 July onwards and after that the EU becomes dependent on seafood from waters beyond the jurisdiction of its members. In effect, one out of every two fish a European consumes comes from outside the EU.

The situation is aggravated because the EU is not the only culprit. Unscrupulous Chinese, Russian and Latin American – apart from, of course, European companies that use flags of convenience – are using illegal gear, fishing in sea areas in which they are not allowed, and are not reporting their catches. In addition, ships are laundering illegally-caught fish by transferring them at sea to legal boats, making it impossible to identify catches. The situation is particularly serious in African waters, where pirate fishing may now be taking nearly 30 per cent of the catch from local fishermen from some of the poorest countries in the world like Somalia and Angola, which do not have the resources to police their territorial waters.

Poor countries are helpless in the face of the force used against them. There are reports of Angolan fisheries authorities who have had their boats rammed and sunk by illegal trawlers, whilst other pirates have hurled buckets of boiling water over boarding parties. At least two inspectors have disappeared, believed murdered, while on observer duty aboard industrial trawlers. The high seas today are like the American Wild West of the 19th century, only now the bandits are huge factory fishing vessels and there is no sheriff in town.

“Black lists” have been created by some regional fisheries management organisations to identify vessels that engage in IUU fishing but these lists are not shared, so the vessels simply move to another area of the ocean where there are no rules, change their names and flags and continue fishing. Apart from the human misery that the pirate fishers are causing, the practice undermines conservation measures, resulting in the depletion of fish stocks. Up to 75 per cent of the world’s fish stocks are fully exploited, over-exploited or depleted according to the UN’s Food and Agriculture organisation.

Much of the seafood we find on our fish stalls is a product of IUU fishing. Fresh tuna caught before May and after mid-June is IUU, baby swordfish is IUU, nobody knows the origin of meagre (gurbell), snapper (pagell or similar), dentex (dentici), grouper (cerna) which may well be IUU since there is no credible labelling system in place at fishmongers or in restaurants.

The local fishing authorities have a system in place whereby the entire seafood product landed in a very few legal ports is inspected for IUU, with penalties for transgressors. This may sound positive, until it is realised that the people who are suffering the most are the small local fishermen who land an infinitesimal proportion of the IUU product consumed locally. They should not be subjected to the same weights and measures as the industrial fisherman, but that is another story.

Most fish on sale at fishmonger stalls is unlabelled and hence of unknown origin, and so is the fish served in restaurants. A step in the right direction would be for the competent authorities to introduce product labelling on fishmonger stalls showing country of origin and date of production, and to enforce these regulations by frequent inspections. Another proactive step could be taken in restaurants by introducing a system whereby a mark of quality can be affixed next to menu items denoting the origin and freshness of the seafood being served.

George Camilleri writes for Fish4Tomorrow, a group formed to campaign for sustainable seafood consumption and composed of Nature Trust, *Din l-Art Helwa*, Sharklab, Greenhouse and Get Up Stand Up. It campaigns with the authorities for the enforcement of correct labelling at fishmongers, and advises the public to insist on this information when purchasing fish and/or consuming it in restaurants.

The Restoration of an Old Stove

Michael Bonnici

After the opening of the Pharmacy Museum at the old Santo Spirito Hospital in Rabat – now housing the National Archives (see *Vigilo* No. 37 – April 2010), it was my pleasure to be approached by National Archivist Charles Farrugia and his dedicated staff with a request to undertake some more voluntary work in the premises.

On the ground floor is a room known as “the kitchen”, in which all sorts of discarded items had been stored for disposal or recycling at some future date. Up to 1961, when the hospital was closed, it had been used as the hospital kitchen. Originally it seems to have been a very large room with an archway in the centre supporting the first floor containing the wards of the hospital. It is most likely that, at some point, the metre-wide archway was built up and the room divided into two sections: the kitchen and a separate room for storage.

The Santo Spirito stove before restoration



When renovations to the building were first begun prior to it becoming the home of the National Archives in 1985, the wall separating the room was removed, thus restoring it to its original dimensions.

Entering this room from a roofed area between the internal yard and the main yard (leading to George Borg Olivier Street), to the left is a very old fixed structure which is the old stove that formed part of the kitchen fittings.

Covered with several wooden planks, large sheets of plywood and various other discarded items, it was barely possible to imagine that there was a hidden treasure underneath. The decision having been taken that the National Archives needed a laboratory for cleaning and treating documents, the room was cleared and all the unwanted material was removed.

This massive clearance revealed the old stove, which was undoubtedly used for cooking food for patients as well as hospital staff and unfortunately, when the renovation work began, no one thought to preserve it. All the lime plaster that was removed from inside the building was thrown into the stove instead of being taken away. This meant considerably more damage to the stove from the discarded lime, which is extremely incompatible with the wrought iron from which the stove is made.

The whole structure was documented thoroughly and methods to restore the stove to its original state were established. The section of wall above the surface of the stove was once covered with locally manufactured decorative cement tiles – two different types of tiles being found while cleaning the stove pits. Broken pieces were matched, fixed together and preserved. Evidence shows that the tiles were replaced by sheets of tin up to 60cm high affixed on a flat bar iron frame. In all probability, this alternative was short-lived, because the heat coming from the stove soon caused the soft metal to deteriorate and eventually melt. Unfortunately, it was replaced with asbestos sheets – as described later.

According to the records, in 1936 approval was given for the acquisition of a new type of cast iron framed stove. This consisted of a cast iron top with different sizes of pits used as built-in ovens. As well as the five small openings, the surface has another three 40cm-wide surface pits where metal containers were lowered down to rest on cast iron grids surrounded by newly built fire bricks, while heat came from coal-fired slots at floor level. Three other intermediate



coal-fired slots were used for heating smaller containers on the smaller pits. Another section consisted of two drawers at the front with inside grids used for meals prepared in dishes having a coal-fired slot immediately underneath the grid. In between the iron openings on the front, the different sections were separated by fire bricks. Due to ignorance in those days of the harmful effects of asbestos, the fire bricks on the front and sides of the top surface were covered with asbestos fixed with a mixture of black lime and cement. As a result, the thickness of the wrought iron was reduced to nearly half of its original thickness due to extensive deterioration caused by the direct contact with the lime.

With great determination, patience, perseverance and courage, the asbestos was totally – and carefully – removed and disposed of in secured containers at official sites established for such hazardous material. Thorough cleaning was then carried out to remove the material – particularly the lime – that had been dumped all over the interior pits.

The several sections of the surface made up of wrought iron in various sizes and shapes were carefully removed while chipping the loosened built up flakes and several coats of special chemicals used in conservation to stabilise active corrosion were applied.

The underlying material on which these top surface sections had been laid (black lime mixed with cement) was totally removed and a layer of plastic sheets laid over the soft material. On top of this a 3cm thickness of expanded polyethylene was laid to prevent further rising damp. The metal sections were then replaced in their original layout as per details recorded prior to dismantling and the canal receiving the coal ashes was cleaned of coal residue.

Having treated all the doors and other iron fittings, oiled the hinges and eased the locks – in all taking over three whole months of dirty work to complete – I am more than satisfied that another piece of our heritage has been restored and preserved for the enjoyment of the public.

**All photographs are
provided by the author**



*The Santo Spirito stove
after restoration*

San Girgor - The Old Parish Church of Żejtun

Dr Andy N Welsh



*Coat of arms of Bartholomew Ghasciak
Photograph provided by
the author*

The earliest post-Muslim Christian churches are unrecorded but we assume they were somewhat basic semi-troglodytic structures, like, for example, Tal-Baqqari near Żurrieq. These would have been replaced by the familiar small box-like buildings – an early example being Hal Millieri. The first parish churches would have been similar, but as the population increased and the Church became organised, they were enlarged, leading to the great 15th and 16th century cruciform buildings such as Bir Miftuh. San Girgor church in Żejtun is one of these, and remarkable for the fact that it is still in daily use. Most of the parish churches we see today were rebuilt in baroque style in the 17th and 18th centuries. This article attempts to trace the story of San Girgor church.

At one time, some people believed that St Paul landed in Malta at Xrobb l-Għagin, and a small church was erected on a headland there, near Żejtun, to honour the event. There is no evidence for this, unlike at St Paul's Bay, off which were discovered the remains of anchors from the shipwreck of a large Roman vessel. Canon Joe Abela, the historian of Żejtun and to whose researches I am much indebted, is of the same opinion. It was quite common for churches to be built on previous religious sites, but some facts are known. San Girgor, as the church is popularly called, is actually dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria. 'San Girgor' is, in fact, Pope Gregory the Great, of whom more later, and in this article I will refer to the church by this name, which is how it is usually called today.

St Catherine was a Roman lady of noble descent who proclaimed the Gospel at a religious event called by Emperor Maximinus in AD 307. For this she was tortured on a spiked wheel, a "Catherine Wheel", and then beheaded. Her remains were spirited to Mount Sinai, and at its foot a monastery was built and dedicated to her. It is a remarkable place, and as it is well fortified, it has never been penetrated despite many attacks. One of the oldest (6th century) Christian places in continuous devotion, it has a remarkable collection of ancient manuscripts, said to be second only to the Vatican. Pope John XXII (1316-1334) encouraged the veneration of St Catherine in Western Christendom and proclaimed her feast day.

As far as is known, the first actual mention of the church in Żejtun was in 1372, when Bartholomew Ghasciak was appointed to it from the Cathedral in Mdina, and there is a reference to the church dated 1375 in the state archives of Palermo, recorded by Stanley Fiorini.

Side elevation of San Girgor Church



Żejtun was one of the original 12 *kapelli* or parish churches listed in the famous *Rollo* of Bishop de Mello of 1436, although it is believed that the original division of Malta into parishes was the work of Bishop Hilarius (1356-70). The parish of Żejtun included most of southwest Malta, including Żabbar, Ġhaxaq, St George of Birżebbuġa, Marsaxlokk, Delimara, St Thomas Bay, Marsascula and Żonqor. This was a large but sparsely populated area, and from the name we know that olives were cultivated there: the word *żejt* translates as ‘oil’ in Maltese and as ‘olive’ in Arabic. There are still some olive trees, but most were grubbed up in the Middle Ages in favour of cotton for ships’ sails, which was more profitable.

Żejtun, as its inhabitants will proudly tell you, received its city charter – ‘Citta Beland’ – from Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch. The name derives from the maiden name of the mother of Grand Master Hompesch, and was the third of three cities to receive charters during his time as Grand Master. Żejtun was originally a

conglomeration of villages and hamlets: Hal Ġwann, Hal Tmien, Bisqallin, Hal Bisbut and Hal Dmik. These eventually resolved themselves into the upper and lower towns, which explains why San Ġirgor and the new parish church are some distance from each other: the bulk of the population had moved further inland to be safer from the depredations of seaborne Saracens and pirates. Raids took place every few years until the decline of Ottoman power in the latter part of the 18th century. A particularly devastating incursion took place in 1429 when a force of 18,000 soldiers under Kaid Ridavan ravaged Malta and took an estimated 3,000 prisoners, out of a population of possibly 10,000. One result of this raid was that many coastal villages were abandoned for good¹. The external walls of San Ġirgor church have many graffiti etched on them – several depicting galleys.

The Church of San Ġirgor is famous for the votive procession that is held every year on 12 March, the feast of St Gregory. This procession was ordered by Bishop Cubelles in 1543, but possibly was a re-ordering of an edict of 1400. Cubelles had asked for it as a supplication for peace in Europe, but some feel there could have been other causes for the veneration, for example that St Gregory’s intervention caused the wrecking of a Turkish fleet off the south coast. However, the procession, which at its height would number about 30,000 people, was a yearly event that started in Mdina and ended at the church in Żejtun. It still takes place, but in a much reduced form. The church became associated with St Gregory, although still dedicated to St Catherine, and is popularly known as “San Ġirgor”. A fine statue of the latter can be seen outside the Church. It was carved by Salvu Dimech (1805-87) to a design by the artist Joseph Hyzler².

According to Bishop de Mello, the incumbent of St Gregory’s in 1436 was one Paul Branichel, with a stipend of 14 *uncie* plus a further *animagium*, or endowment of one *uncia*. At a more senior level were the cantors or precentors from the Cathedral in Mdina who were appointed to supervise the various parishes. Details of these, together with their coats of arms, were painted in the Sacristy from 1720. They commence with the aforementioned Bartholomew Ghasciak spelt who was cantor from 1372 to 1391. His coat of arms is probably the earliest individual known in Malta.

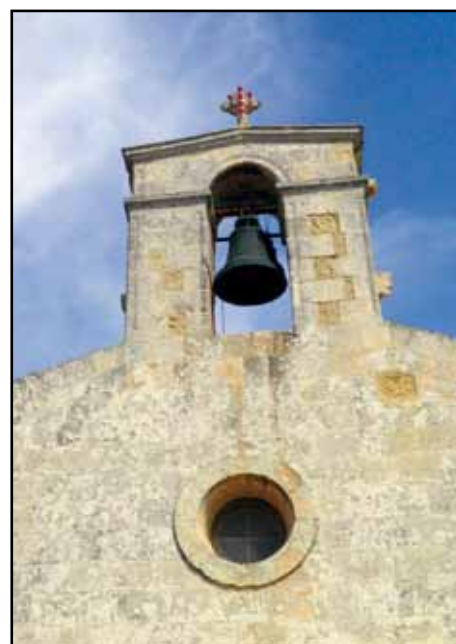
The church at that time is assumed to have consisted of only a segment of the present nave, identified by doorways now blocked on each side, and cross ribbing in the roof, which replaced the earlier arches at a later date. The floor level was found to be 18 inches below the present one. On the left wall of the nave is a blocked doorway, arched with an inscribed hood mould, and there is some early stonework. On the other side of the nave is another blocked doorway, with a rounded top.

The Bonici family, one of the wealthiest and influential of Maltese families at the time and related by marriage to the Testaferratas, had property in Żejtun and were benefactors of San Ġirgor and, in particular its successor, the present parish church dedicated to St Catherine, which is built on Bonici land. In around 1450 the family built a private chapel dedicated to St Mark and St James in the cemetery adjoining the church. This was later



Blocked doorway formerly leading to the Bonici family chapel

The bell cote



rebuilt, possibly in 1560, close to the nave near the pointed door referred to above which led into it. The chapel was demolished in 1837.

The cemetery dates from the early days and is still used today in a much enlarged area. The church has no crypt, but in 1575 Mgr Dusina ordered that two sepulchres be excavated under the church floor³. It was common practice for people to be buried under the church floor the custom was generally abandoned in the 19th century – although the last such burial in San Girgor was in 1940. Apart from some numbering, the slabs are no longer decipherable.

Canon Abela records an inscription in the church that shows it was extended in 1492, both towards the east and the west, to form the present nave⁴. The inscription reads: *Hoc opus fieri fecerunt venerabilis Czullus dictum Baldu et honorabilis Paulus Dalli et Jacobus Bonici procurators S. Catherinae Żejtun. MCCCLXXXII ultimo Februarii X indicationes*. This inscription is no longer there, but there is no reason to doubt its existence at some time. Canon Abela may have recorded it from the cathedral, or other, records rather than actually seeing it, for he states that "poicche nella cupola". The cupola or dome dates from about 1600, so the inscription might not have been there by 1647. The 1492 extension was noteworthy in that the builder laid the roofing slabs transversely on the arches, creating an elegance similar to the barrel vaulting found elsewhere in Europe, instead of laying the roof across the points of the arches. The bell cote and a fine doorway, with a circular headed door flanked by Doric columns and panelled pilasters surmounted by a carved entablature, were added later.

Bishop Dusina saw the church in 1575 on his famous Visitation and says that it was large and commodious and fully lime-washed. Traces of previous frescoes were found during 20th century renovations but these no longer survive⁵. He records the Bonici chapel and the main altar only, so we can assume that, at this point, San Girgor was one long nave with the side chapel of St Mark and St James, and doubtless a vestry. The incumbent was John Mamo, a man of over 70 and somewhat ignorant. He had not taken his Minor Orders, but Dusina saw to it that he was properly ordained. Dusina does not mention Żejtun as such, but refers to the "Casale of St Catherine". He also noted that the centre of population had moved inland from the church and forecast the eventual relocation of the parish church by ordering that the Sacrament should be administered in the Church of St Mary at Bisqallin for the convenience of parishioners.



After the Great Siege of 1565 there was a period of peace and prosperity and a corresponding rise in the population. The *Status Animarum* for 1590 records 2,027 residents, a considerable number for a parish at the time. This dropped in the next century, owing to the creation of new parishes, but had returned to this level towards the end of the 18th century. These figures fuelled a further extension of San Girgor, starting in about 1590, and a hundred years later the building of the new parish church in the centre of Żejtun. Much damage had been done to San Girgor during the Great Siege by the Turks, and the new work would have erased this. The building work took place over a period of time, as one would expect, and seems to have been subject to some changes of plan. It will be noted that there is a transverse roof over the front of the nave (with small windows in the gables), which suggests that smaller transepts had previously been built or started and subsequently discarded.

The completion is recorded in an inscription which reads as follows: *Rmo D.N. Paulo v. Antist N. 2b R'Rm Tho. Gargallo Matth Purlo Recttre Procur Leona. Et Mario Tabuni Tho Bonicio Paula Abela et Franco Xuereb Officiosus huius Parrochae populous Aelemosynis temm.zh. mini sanctus tuinam pliore ve nustriormq formam redigit anno D.M.DCVI*. Loosely translated, this means that through the alms of the people of the parish, the church was rebuilt in a more spacious and decorated form in AD 1606. This would be the transepts and dome and the extension of the nave, built over a number of years from at least 1593. The dome was one of the first in Malta; it has a short drum and was surmounted by a lantern, which blew down in a great storm in February 1759 and was never replaced⁶.

The transepts were commodious, with quadripartite vaults, and the old nave was reduced to allow the construction of a dome and then a continuation of the nave beyond to form the cross-shaped form that can be seen in many Maltese churches. The building of major churches in the form of a cross, first seen in the old cathedral at Mdina, serves as a remembrance of the Crucifixion, but also makes provision for two side altars to ancillary saints. Bir Miftuħ was one of the first parish churches to have transepts, and they can also be traced in the ruins of the old parish church of Siġġiewi. The old church of St Saviour in Lija is largely modelled on San Girgor. The 1615 Visitation report could be read to infer that some remodelling had been carried out in the nave itself and the capital and base mouldings of the arches suggest this was the case.

One can imagine that the remodelled church would have been then one of the finest in Malta. In the left transept are the coat of arms of Grand Master Perellos de Rocaful (1697-1720), who had a house – Casa Perellos – in St Catherine Street. A painting of our Lady of the Rosary, now in the parish church, was donated by him and hung in the north (left) transept over an altar dedicated to the Rosary – now dedicated to Our Lady of Carmel. Perellos' coat of arms on the east wall of the transept is covered at present by another painting. The other transept altar is dedicated to St Roque. The painting of Our Lady of Carmel also has the arms of Grand Master Perellos while above the left-hand altar is a painting of St Gregory, with the coat of arms of Mendonca, probably the donor, a Knight of the Order of St John, together with the arms of the island of Malta and the city of Estella in Navarre, Spain.

It should be mentioned that in 1614 there was a terrible incursion by the Turks, causing much devastation and also the desecration of the church, and this is commemorated in a panel in old Italian above the door to the left of the main altar.

The dimensions of San Girgor church are: width of nave and transepts 11.9m, length of nave 20.5m, nave to transept end 8.7m, transept end to vestry, 9.6m, east end to front of vestry 3.9m. In 1615 the vestry would have been the end of the chancel and would have extended considerably further.

However, the population continued to grow in the upper town. San Girgor was inconveniently placed for most of Żejtun's residents and the move foreseen by Dusina began with the construction of a new church, the present parish church, in 1692. Girgor Bonici, who had become the 'Governor' – ie Mayor – of Mdina, and Head of the Popular Council, the highest offices to which a Maltese could aspire under the Knights, devoted 30 years' income plus a large site in the village to build a new baroque church to rival those being built all over the island. The new church, lighter, larger, loftier and more fashionable, took some years to construct and, in fact, was not fully open until 1730, although it became the official parish church in 1708.

The old church retained its dedication, but became known popularly as 'San Girgor'. St Gregory the Great is much venerated in Malta – he was Pope from 590-604 AD and among many pious and valuable actions, systematised and fully developed the whole dogmatic system of the modern Church. It was Gregory who sent St Augustine and 40 monks as missionaries to England. Like St Catherine, Gregory had been a Roman patrician who had responded to the call of Christ.

In the meantime, the church of San Girgor was deteriorating. In a testimony of 1730, the Rev. G K Scicluna stated that it was "almost crumbling down" and that it was being used by fishermen as a store. Bishop Cocco Palmieri was minded to total demolish it, but there were strong objections from the faithful and he conceded that, because of its age, the Christian burials and the devotion of its congregation, it should be repaired. However, he declared that it should be reduced back to just the nave, and that the stones recovered be used to construct the side aisles of the new parish church. He ordered that "a wall be built just under the arch dividing the nave from the rest and a screen decorated with columns, etc., recovered from the demolished part be erected, an altar constructed and the old painting of St Catherine be fitted above it... and all other parts of the church – dome, transepts, vestry, etc. – be demolished".

This started with the removal of ancillary structures and the shortening of the chancel, but was fiercely resisted (as in Dusina's time) by the congregation and, fortunately, it was agreed to keep the old church after all. However, only a small part of the old coffered chancel remains behind the new screen. The rest was removed to encourage the congregation to move to the newly built parish church in the *raħal ta' fuq* or upper village, dedicated to St Catherine. A crudely built extension at the eastern end of the church of San Girgor has served as the sacristy up to the present day.

In 1969, a passage above the south transept was revealed, containing some 50 skeletons, including children and elderly people. These had, in fact, been seen earlier, in 1909, but the passage had been quietly closed up again. The skeletons bore no signs of soil or of violence and there were no shoes, buttons or personal possessions that might have remained had those discovered been alive or cadaverous when they entered the narrow passage. Legends have grown up about these skeletons, but it seems most likely that they were uncovered during rebuilding work and discreetly walled up above the transepts. A similar passage probably exists above the other transept, but this has never been opened.

Much has disappeared over the years, including doubtless ex-votos from the seafaring and fishing people in the neighbourhood. Graffiti from the 17th and 18th centuries of ships and other representations can be seen on the outside of the church. During the French Occupation 1798-1800, the church was used as a hospital and during WWII as a military store. However, there are still several fine paintings to be seen, and three altars. The central (main) altar is the magnificent one that stood at the end of the previous chancel, although the screen is of a later date and the titular painting of St Catherine is an 18th century canvas that was originally the main altarpiece of the new parish church, the previous one now being in the parish museum. The painting of St Gregory in the right transept was given by the Knight Prior of Hibernia, Don Pietro Gonzales, in 1615. The altars in the transepts are dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary and St Roque.

Further work was carried out in the 19th century, including the provision of a *garigor*; or spiral staircase to the roof, passages and a priest's chamber above the vestry and, more recently, a door to the road at the back. Large buttresses designed by Joseph Hyzler (the painter who also designed the statue of St Gregory that stands outside the church) were added, three on each side of the nave, and the south transept was structurally strengthened. However, the church is more or less the same as it was in 1606 and remarkable for the fact that it is still in use, with Mass for a sizeable congregation being celebrated daily in this beautiful and historic place.

Acknowledgment must be given to not only Canon Joe Abela, but to the late Walter R Zahra and to help from Lieut. Col. George Attard Manche. Adrian Strickland has substantially edited this whole article and warm thanks are due to him for this and for his continual encouragement.



The statue of St Gregory close to the church

*opposite:
The buttresses designed
by Joseph Hyzler*

Footnotes

¹ Abela Canon Joe *The Parish of Żejtun during the Middle Ages*, Midsea Books 2005.

² Zahra Walter *The Old Church of St. Gregory of Żejtun 2nd ed.* Harrild Press Co-op p17.

³ Abela Canon Joe op cit p35.

⁴ Abela Commendatore. *Della Descrizione di Malta, 1647* rep Midsea Books 1984 p.364.

⁵ Abela Canon Joe op cit p35.

⁶ Mahoney Leonard. *A History of Maltese Architecture* Veritas Press 1988 p.175.

The Messina Sepulchral Chapel

Giuseppe Gauci

Solemnly consecrated on 9 May 1869, the Addolorata Cemetery is amongst the finest cemeteries in Europe. It is an outstanding work by the prolific architect Emanuele Luigi Galizia (1830-1906), executed in the Neo-Gothic style on Tal-Horr Hill on the outskirts of Tarxien¹. The hilly terrain is dominated by St Mary's Chapel, but within the boundaries of the cemetery there are ordinary tombs, monuments and a significant number of private sepulchral chapels.²

The entrance to the cemetery, from the bottom of the hill, is dominated by two lateral buildings, one housing the records office for burials and the other the guardian's house. From there, one can admire the space just behind the gates, defined by a concave arched structure, and the imposing layout of the cemetery in the background leading up to the chapel built on the crest of the hill.³ All these were constructed in intricate geometric patterns which unfortunately, due to the elements and a lack of maintenance, have lost much of their original detail.⁴

The Messina sepulchral chapel



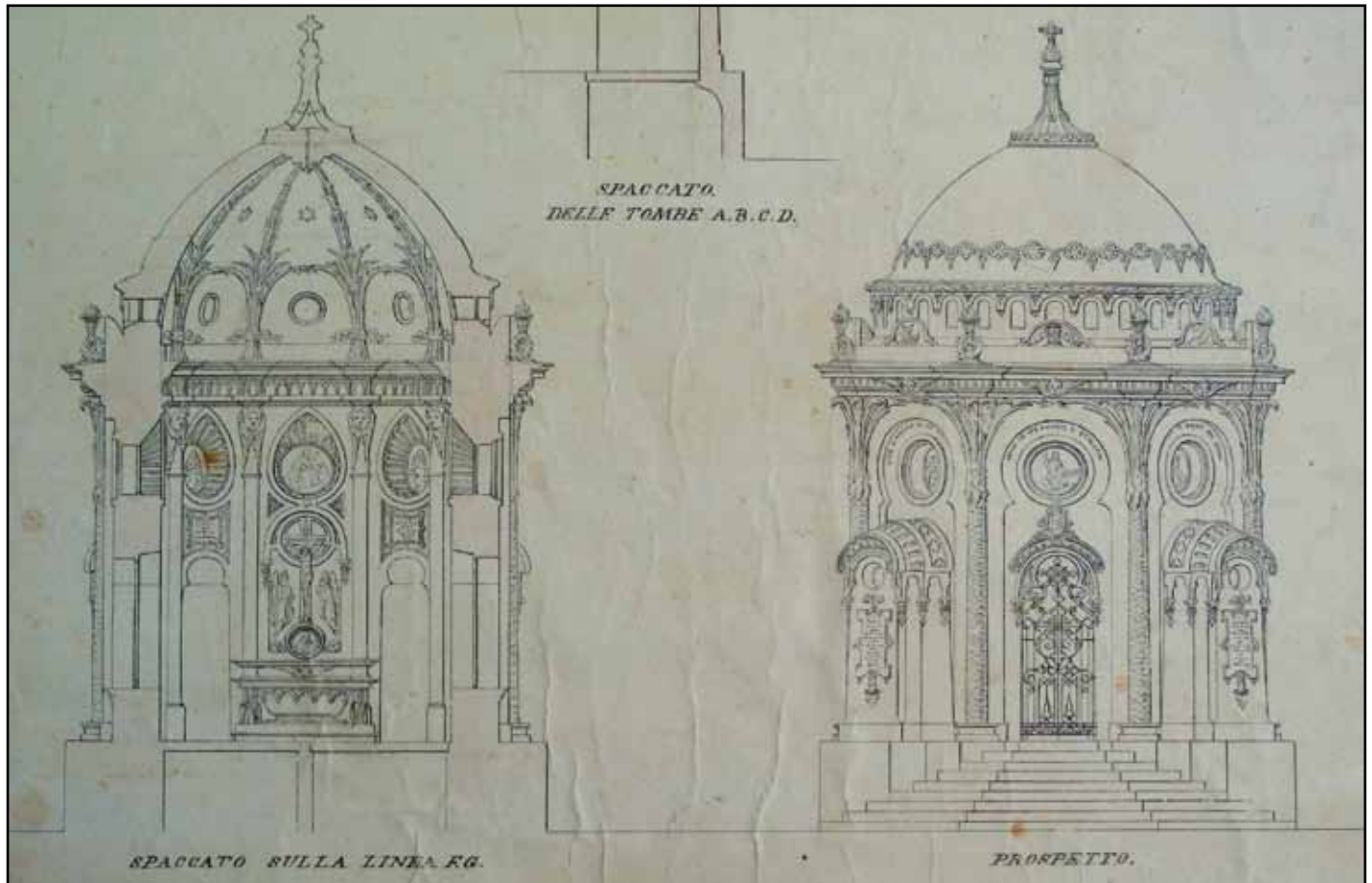
The Addolorata Cemetery was conceived as a consequence of the prohibition to bury the dead inside churches, which was the prevailing type of burial. As a consequence, the private funerary structures in the confines of the cemetery assumed the form of miniature church-like structures.⁵ These can be described as 'homes for the dead', but their splendour helps to soften the harshness of death. The appropriate word for these chapels is *sacello*, an Italian word that is also used in Malta to describe a sacred bounded property. The sepulchral chapels in the Addolorata Cemetery are monuments commissioned by businessmen, bankers, architects as well as prelates, politicians, and army officers amongst others.⁵ They are a manifestation of status intended to have an impact on the public.⁶ Sepulchral chapels reflect the skills of the architects who designed them and the wealth of the people who commissioned them.

The construction of a sepulchral chapel required the purchase of a number of vaults (burial plots) so that an adequate ground surface area was available for the erection of the structure.⁶ The owner of the site would then commission an architect to draw up a suitable design, which had to meet a certain standard in order to obtain permission from the cemetery authority, composed of the representatives of the Church and the government. Once this had been granted, a mason was contracted to construct the *sacello*. The *scalpellini* were the craftsmen responsible for the stone sculpting. The purchase of the land and the construction of a sepulchral chapel would have cost the substantial sum of approximately £80 in the 1870s.⁶

Nicola Zammit

A doctor, philosopher, designer and self-taught architect, who left a unique work of art at this cemetery, Nicola Zammit (1815-1899) was born in Siggiewi. He travelled extensively and was impressed by the architecture in European cities, which instilled in him a great interest in design and architecture. He left a heritage of unique works of art, including liturgical paraphernalia, silver antependia, altar canopies, catafalques, pulpits, pillars, bell towers and, of course, sepulchral chapels. His work was characterised by Eclecticism and Revivalism.⁷ He made excess use of symbolism and decorative carvings which create an ideal fusion with the surrounding environment, be it a church, a house or a cemetery.

Zammit's work fulfilled the dual purpose of functionality and decoration and the Messina sepulchral chapel in Addolorata Cemetery, in which use and architecture are ingeniously fused together, is his masterpiece. It is located in the west-division, on section Y, compartment B, of the cemetery and was commissioned in 1875 by Giovanni Messina for the wealthy merchant Count Rosario Messina (1796-1875) and his family.⁸



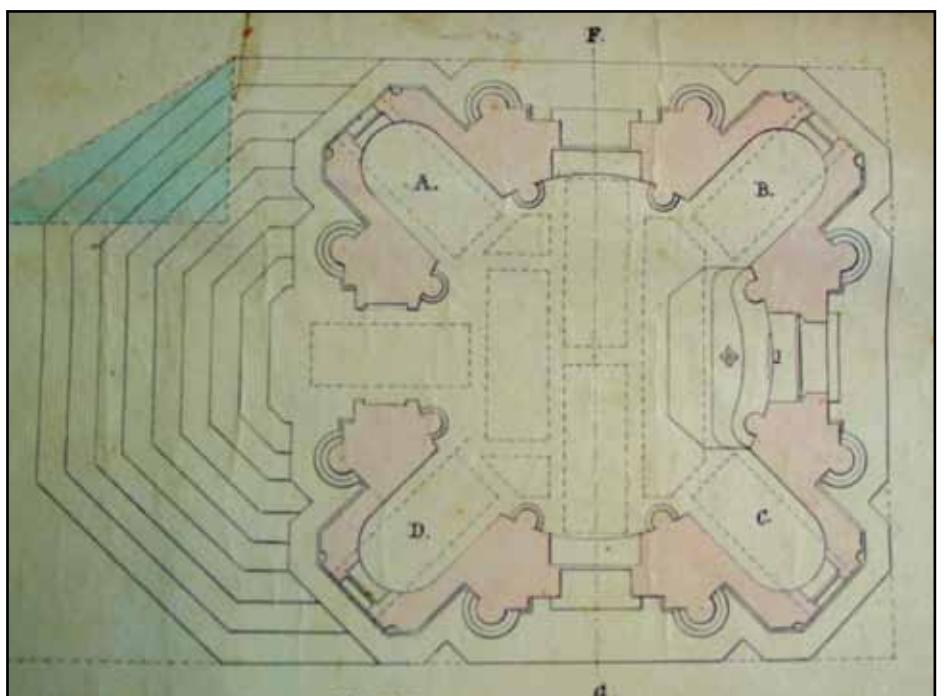
Compared to the other sepulchral chapels, it is a large edifice, being approximately nine metres high, including its dome, and having a footprint of approximately 58 square metres, excluding the stairs. Nicola Zammit had asked the cemetery authorities to grant consent for the acquisition of an extra parcel of land in order to accommodate the whole stairs according to the original design.⁸ The permit for Zammit's design was issued on 23 December 1875, signed by Galizia as the architect responsible for the cemetery.⁸ The chapel is built on a limestone podium approximately one-and-a-half metres high. However, the lowest course of the podium is made of Maltese hardstone to act as an impermeable membrane, as a preventive measure against erosion due to water absorption from the foundations. The form is octagonal terminated by a shallow drum structure serving as the base for the dome. The octagonal section has four projections, like apses, also resting on the podium, which served to increase the number of vault spaces inside the chapel to eight.

The exterior of the Messina Chapel is highly decorated and somehow flamboyant. Zammit's design is based on extensive stone carvings and symbolism. At first glance, the chapel appears celebratory, but its features were chosen to also symbolise death and the afterlife.⁹ Each carved piece is not only executed with great skill and artistry but has an important role in its architectural function. The decoration of the chapel bears a strong "naturalistic" effect which was typical of the late 19th century.⁹ It is dominated by eight delicately carved stone palm trees, which not only serve as support for the structure and the dome but also identify the chapel as an oasis for the dead. The palm leaves are the capitals of the columns, while the shafts are sculpted in the form of palm tree trunks. Other decorative features found in the body of the chapel include *putti* and very finely carved upright torches surrounded by garlands, which act

Zammit's elevation and section drawing of the Messina sepulchral chapel

Drawings provided by the author

Zammit's plan drawing of the Messina sepulchral chapel



as finials for the entablature. Unfortunately most of these finials have been lost over the years due to a lack of maintenance and repair. In between the finials are sculptured symbols in a semicircular frame, referring to death and Christianity. These symbols are the hour-glass with wings, indicating the passage of time; the anchor, which is an early Christian symbol of Christ;⁹ the lion, symbolising nobility; the cross, representing the Redeemer; a dove with an olive branch, that symbolises peace; an upright torch with flame, symbolising enlightenment; a star, representing creation; and a fish, symbolising a tomb.

The protruding apses on the corners of the chapel are also highly decorated with torches, circular windows (*oculii*), inverted torches symbolising death and stone placards hung by ribbons. In the original drawings by Zammit, the placards included inscriptions, but the stone was not inscribed as originally designed.

The dome rests on a shallow drum that has a repetitive decoration consisting of hollows, eight of which are windows, with repeated arches terminated with inverted flames. This decorative motif is also found on the canopy of the main altar at the Collegiate Church in Cospicua, which was also designed by Zammit.¹⁰ The *sacello* structure terminates in a dome with a cross as a finial.

Another important characteristic is the amount of *oculii* surrounding the chapel, a total of eight, apart from the other four on the apses. In the original design by Zammit, these window openings were to contain stained-glass figures and were to be surmounted by scripts, but this was not done. The apertures of the chapel are also decorated with particular features. The main door is surmounted by the Messina family coat of arms and the door and the lateral windows are protected by wrought-iron grills.¹¹

The interior of the chapel is also intricately decorated with the same features as those used on the exterior of the building. The central piece depicts a crucifix with two lateral angels in adoration. Typical of Zammit's design, underneath the crucifix there is a circular medallion depicting the Virgin Mary, probably Our Lady of Sorrows.¹¹ The Messina Chapel is the only sepulchral chapel designed by Nicola Zammit in the Addolorata Cemetery. Another chapel designed by him in response to a commission from the Chapter and Clergy of the Collegiate Church at Cospicua, was never constructed.¹²

This essay highlights the architectural, artistic and historic merits of a hidden treasure, one from a cluster of jewels in the Addolorata Cemetery. A lack of attention and maintenance to a large number of these sepulchral chapels has resulted in the loss of their pristine beauty. The Messina Chapel – together with the rest of the cemetery – is a showcase of the great inheritance left by our forefathers and it merits protection, serving as it does as a link between our ancestors and future generations.



Detail of the carved ornamentation of the Messina sepulchral chapel

The Messina family coat of arms



Footnotes

¹ SACES, Konrad Buhagiar: *Neo-Gothic Architecture in 19th Century Malta*, 1986, p. 9.

² Conrad Thake, Quentin Hughes: *Malta war & peace an architectural chronicle 1800-2000*, 2005, p. 74.

³ Leonard Mahoney; *5000 years of architecture in Malta*, 1996, p. 235.

⁴ Malcolm Borg: *British colonial architecture in Malta 1800-1900*, p. 90.

⁵ Mario Borg: *The Addolorata Cemetery: A study of a select number of funerary chapels of the late 19th and early 20th century*, 1998, BA (Hons), p. 20.

⁶ Mario Borg: *The Addolorata Cemetery: A study of a select number of funerary chapels of the late 19th and early 20th century*, 1998, BA (Hons), p. 21.

⁷ Stephanie Vella: *Nicola Zammit (1815-1899): An artist and art critic in the context of 19th century Malta*, 2001, M.A. p. 26.

⁸ Chief Draughtsman's Office, Floriana. C.D.O. Folder 2, Permit no. 97 dated 23 December 1875.

⁹ Stephanie Vella: *Nicola Zammit (1815-1899): An artist and art critic in the context of 19th century Malta*, 2001, M.A. p. 43.

¹⁰ Tony Terribile: *Treasures in Maltese Churches, Bormla (Cospicua) Kalkara*, 2002, p. 95.

¹¹ Stephanie Vella: *Nicola Zammit (1815-1899): An artist and art critic in the context of 19th century Malta*, 2001, M.A. p. 44.

¹² Chief Draughtsman's Office, Floriana. Permit no. 44 dated 20 October 1873.

Heritage Publications Review

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

Din l-Art Helwa
133 Melita Street
Valletta

Subterranean Valletta

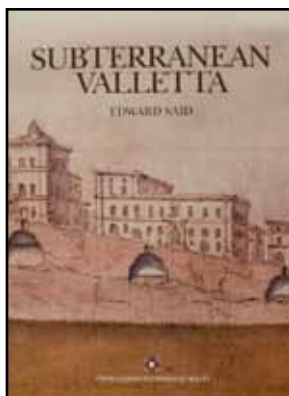
Author – Edward Said

Published by – Fondazzjoni

Patrimonju Malti

ISBN – 978-99909-3-167-9

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



Books are a product of the author's mind addressed to the mind of the reader. However, if the writing of certain books can be an exclusively intellectual undertaking, others require that the author goes out and literally digs up his material. *Subterranean Valletta* falls squarely in the second category. One can only begin to imagine the amount of time, effort, calculated risk and physical discomfort put in by Edward Said in the writing of his thesis, from which this publication has been extracted. However, the result is certainly worth the effort.

This book is a fascinating exploration of the architectural capillaries which lie beneath the skin of Valletta with its streets, squares, courtyards and gardens. Just as with a living organism, these capillaries form a vital part of the whole system and without them the city could neither have been born nor continued to survive.

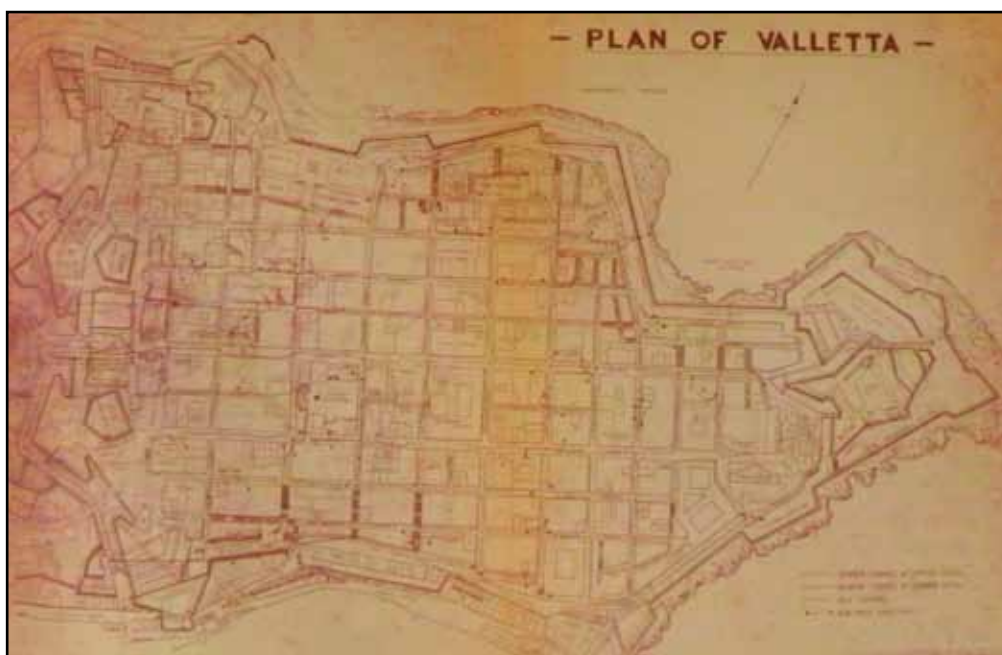
This vast conglomeration of cavities, caves, tunnels and chambers which extend beyond the limits of the city itself originated, or were adapted, to function as amenities for one or other of Valletta's two main roles: that of city and that of a fortress. These two aspects were originally strictly segregated, with distinctive architectural, sociological and functional aspects and the city being a sort of cumbersome guest within the fortress that housed it. Both, however, possessed a common denominator in their subterranean amenities. These often ran in parallel, one occasionally intersecting the other, and bridged the gap between the two co-existing souls of the city.

Many forces were involved while this intricate labyrinth was gradually taking shape. These included the original configuration of the terrain, the function of the different overlying buildings, warfare strategies and developments, population numbers and hygiene standards in different periods, and the ever decreasing amount of space available. All these contributed to give subterranean Valletta the shape it has today.

The author touches on all these aspects – starting with a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) and evoking the image of a bucolic Scerberras peninsula, still unmarked by large-scale human activity, although tell-tale references to cisterns in very early 16th century documents infer some sort of occupation of the peninsula before the Knights took it over. The peninsula comprised five valleys and various coastal caves which would be transformed and eventually buried under the city we see today.

Said then proceeds to dig in and present, in concise and well-illustrated chapters, the development of subterranean Valletta. As the book progresses, the text evokes images, sounds and smells varying between slowly percolating water, musky earth and resonating echoes. Water, especially, is often evoked for if it is true that there is no life without water, in Valletta there would hardly have been any water without digging. This precious commodity did not give itself easily and it was only through a complex network of mostly subterranean structures that it could be made available in the required quantities.

But as well as providing the source for life to thrive, subterranean Valletta was also fundamental in assuring life's perpetuity by housing storage facilities for grain, the main ingredient in the making of bread – the basic element of the human food chain. It also protected the life that it had helped nurture through WWII air-raid shelters. Like the roots of a tree, the various elements of subterranean Valletta provided the premise for life to flourish above ground.



Because it is concealed beneath the surface, subterranean Valletta and its significance have long been neglected. However, an attentive read of Said's book ought to bring about in each reader a considerable change in mentality. Our first thoughts about "underground" are likely to be of death, dirt and sewers. And yet, hewn in the living bedrock of the Scerberras peninsula, or built within its cavities, is the original and enduring reason why Valletta still stands as a living – and thriving – city. Edward Said's book should encourage its readers to venture out and explore for themselves the part of subterranean Valletta that is within easy reach and wonder, now with a better informed mind, what lies beyond.

Comprehensive plan of underground Valletta from the Public Work Department Archives

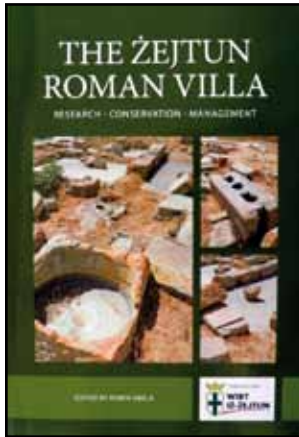
The Żejtun Roman Villa

Editor – Ruben Abela

Published by – Wirt iż-Żejtun

ISBN – 978-99957-0-379-0

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



The Żejtun Roman Villa



This is the first publication by Wirt iż-Żejtun, an NGO which, as declared in its mission statement “aims to foster interest and respect towards the natural, cultural, environmental, historical, ethnographical and archaeological heritage of Żejtun”. It is a collection of the papers presented by various speakers during a symposium held in October on the research, conservation, and management aspects pertaining to the remains of the Roman villa found in the grounds of Żejtun secondary school.

The symposium, and hence this publication, brought together various academics, researchers and other experts on the Żejtun Roman Villa who, between them, contributed 11 papers. The first two detail the history of the site, starting with its discovery in 1961. This was followed by an initial excavation commencing in 1964 and proceeding with an annual excavation campaign, led by the Museums Department, from 1972 to 1976.

The excavations brought to light the remains of a villa and various fragments of stone apparatus used in the production of olive oil clustered around one room. It was concluded, therefore, that this area had been the industrial part of the complex. The residential area consisted of three adjoining rooms which were originally plastered, decorated with paint, and paved in lozenge-shaped terracotta tiles. Other noticeable discoveries included a large quantity of pottery vessels and 44 Roman coins dating between AD222 and 361.

The University of Malta recommenced excavations at the site in 2006 with the intention of assessing, recording and publishing the findings regarding the architectural remains and cultural material resulting from past excavations and any data arising from new work. This excavation, which is ongoing, is co-directed by Dr Nicholas Vella, Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Malta, and Prof. Anthony Bonanno, lecturer and former head of the same department and former President of *Din l-Art Helwa*.

The third paper, by Prof. JoAnn Cassar, Head of the Department of the Built Heritage at the University of Malta, deals with conservation issues relating to the decorated floors and the remains of plaster and paint on the walls of the residential area of the villa complex. These include a number of multi-disciplinary studies comprising documentation and mapping, assessment of deterioration causes and environmental monitoring. Research is also being carried out to tackle the problem of vegetation growth on site and to identify the appropriate grouting material and mortars to consolidate the loose plaster. Following the completion of these studies, a maintenance plan will be put in place to ensure the continued conservation of the site.

Having provided an exhaustive illustration of the site, and details for its planned preservation, the book goes on to analyse the options for the proper management and use of the site. What to do with the Żejtun Villa? A management proposal by David Cardona seeks to ascertain the viability of the site being studied, conserved and eventually opened to the public and discusses the thorny issue of whether it would fare better by being reburied until new solutions, technologies and resources are available.

The next four papers use the remains of the villa as a pivot around which its past and present context is illustrated. This is achieved by discussing other sites discovered over the years, the cultivation and processing of olives in Maltese Roman antiquity, and the movement

of olive oil in the Roman period. These papers help to put in context the true value of the site as both a unique part of our heritage and the product of a defined cultural milieu. The following two papers expand on the subject of site management and interpretation.

The final chapter of the book is a contribution by DLH Executive President Simone Mizzi, who has put together a compendium of essays written by the organisation’s historians, researchers and conservators for the purpose of this publication that describe the five heritage sites in the southern part of Malta saved by DLH through restoration, namely: the 15th century churches of Hal Millieri and Bir Miftuh, Torri Mamo, the 17th century church of Our Lady of Succour (tal-Hniena) at Qrendi and the Delimara Lighthouse.

The aim of Wirt iż-Żejtun is to make this book the first in a series to be published in the future. The beginning is certainly promising of good things to come.

Histories of Malta Confusions and Conclusions

Volume XII

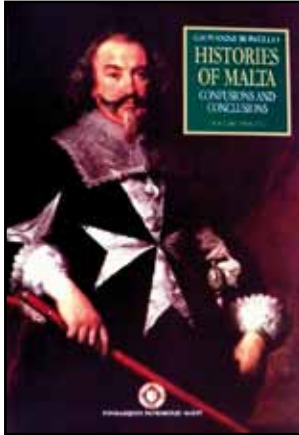
Author – Giovanni Bonello

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Patrimonju Malti

ISBN – 978-99909-3-168-6

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



*The Ximenes Cannon taken from the
Palace by the British.*

*Photograph courtesy of the
National Museum of Archaeology*

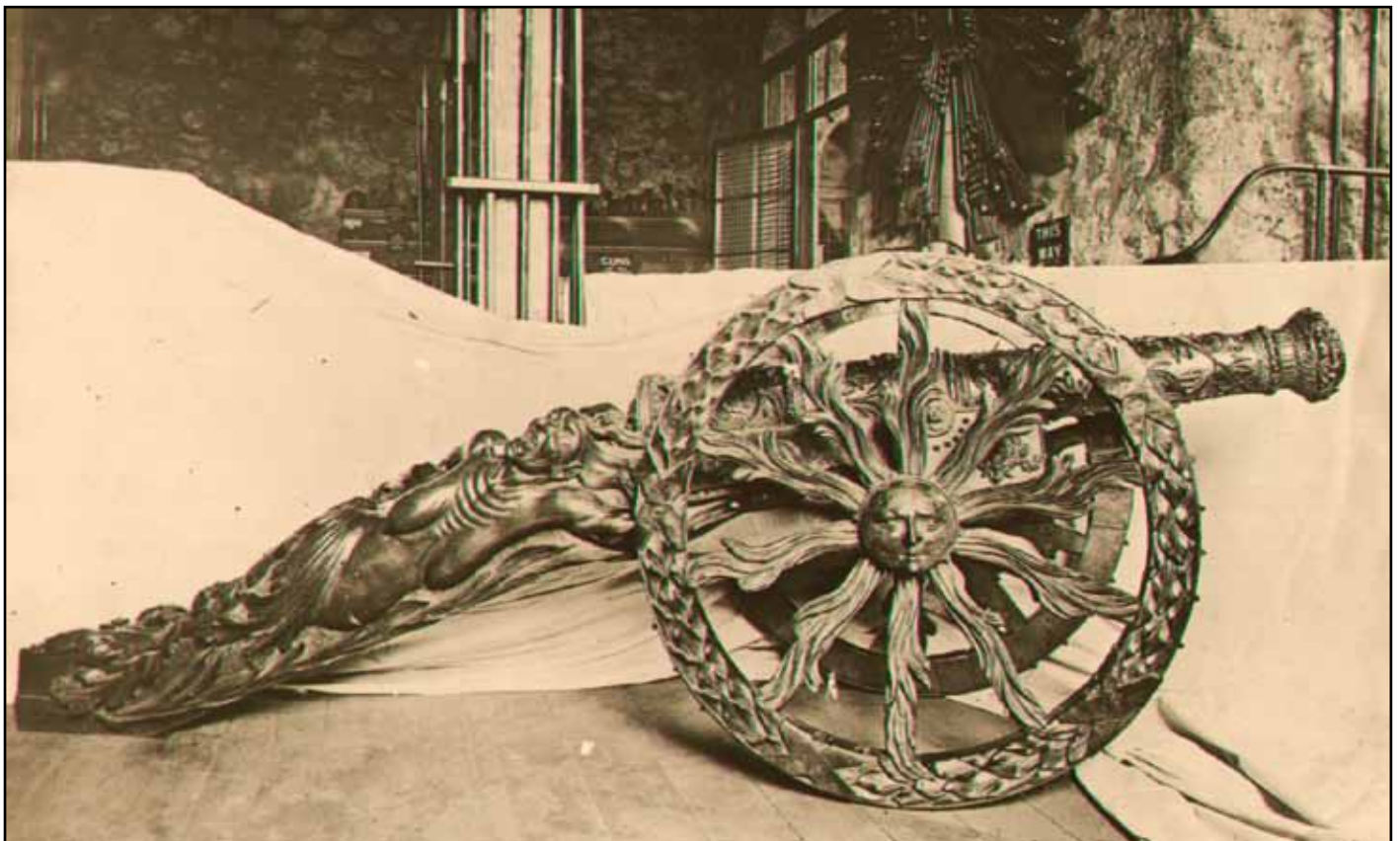
The elegant green spine of Giovanni Bonello's 12th volume in the *Histories of Malta* series can be seen gracing the shelves of Malta's sadly few remaining bookshops. Bonello has once again consigned to press an impressive collection of articles comprising the eclectic mix of subject matter, complex personages, interesting illustrations and historical detail to which his readers have become accustomed. This rich variety is, however, rendered homogeneous by a common thread detectable throughout the book – and, indeed, the whole series – consisting of the author's whimsical commentary on the historic narrative he is presenting.

Certainly the chapter which demands most attention in this edition is the one entitled *The Hidden History of the Looting of the Palace*. This is so due to the current relevance of the subject, which brings to the reader's mind the question of what will be the future of the Palace, with the highest institution in the country moving out in the near future. As is often the case, a look at the past might reveal interesting insights and, if soberly interpreted, such insights might in turn help to avoid repeating old mistakes.

The fact that Bonello is viscerally passionate about the subject brings an involved immediacy to the text that is not present in other parts of the book. At the onset, he advises the reader that this is no literature for the faint-hearted and he confesses that he found no pleasure in researching and writing it. The sad story of the systematic dilapidation of this unique manifestation of Maltese history reads like a bulletin of war and, as in all wars, everyone is the loser. However, in this case in particular, so is the national heritage.

Across 40 pages, the longest article in the book, and with an obviously heavy heart, Bonello traces the vicissitudes of the Palace's rich collections. He starts from the climatic moment, reached when Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch was made to leave the Palace by the French. Up to that point, a succession of Grand Masters had enriched it both with personal belongings and with the best pieces from the estates of deceased Knights that had been bequeathed to the Order. The French interlude made the first dent in the collections but it was the rule of subsequent British Governors that reduced them almost to nothing. As pointed out by Bonello, to the Grand Masters the Palace represented their destiny, the culmination of a lifelong career, while for the Governors it was simply an often-used opportunity to smash and grab.

The lack of a proper inventory fuels speculation however, the fact that today the rooms are such a far cry from the opulent interiors depicted by Charles Frederick de Brocktorff in the 1820s gives the measure of how much was lost, looted, or often simply – and unceremoniously – sold off. Particularly hair-raising are the tales of the daughter of one governor pouring boiling water over paintings, and of soldiers using 16th century majolica ornaments as skittles in games of bowls. Better recorded is the pillage of the





Magdalena Ventura by Juan Ribera

Ara x'Int Tghid

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Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



armoury, of which detailed inventories do exist. The numbers pertaining to the artillery collection are, quite simply, tragic. So are the accounts of ill-conceived use of unique historical military items for mock tournaments in the 1820s. Even worse was the action taken to remedy the consequences of decay – which saw many pieces first being painted black and then sandpapered to a nonsensical shine.

In this volume, Bonello also chooses to explore a rarely treated historical idiosyncrasy, that of the bearded female crucifix. This peculiar element of the Christian faith is investigated by the author who also traces a link to the mysterious figure of Santa Liberata and, in turn, to the holy body of the saint with a similar name worshipped in the Capuchin Church of St Barbara in Kalkara. The bearded female crucifix is identified with St Wilgefortis, whose interesting story is also recounted. Bonello also indulges in an extended sideline through which he touches on the stories of other famous bearded women in history. Particularly poignant are his comments regarding the famous painting of the bearded Magdalena Ventura by Juan Ribera in which he sees a manifestation of femininity rather than a negation of it.

Each of the 12 chapters will be of particular interest to different readers. Together, however, they form yet another substantial block in the edifice of historical knowledge constructed by the author through this series. Individually they are a considerable achievement; together they have a synergetic quality that adds value to the whole series now spanning 13 years of publication.

Following in quick succession to Martin Morana's similar publication entitled *Bejn Kliem u Storja* (see review in the previous issue of *Vigilo*), *Ara x'Int Tghid* (*Watch What You're Saying*) presents yet another collection of Maltese words from the historic and sociological ambit by the same author. These books express clearly the correlation between words and culture. Words are probably the most sublime embodiment of culture intended as a manifestation of human intellectual achievement. Both words and culture are the fruit of the mind, for what are words if not projections of the human intellect, a way to codify the world around and inside us, our way of categorising objects, actions, and sensations?

Words and culture co-exist in an infinite cycle of creation, with culture presenting the premise for new words to be moulded to more accurately reflect the culture that has prompted them. Words also provide the medium for transmitting culture across time and space and creating links and understanding between different cultures. This is a precious capability in a world that is becoming ever smaller, and in which different cultures meet and often collide.

Our language is a treasure of such immense magnitude that we all find it difficult to quantify its value. We may always be able to communicate with a foreigner in his language but it is only through our own language that full and exclusive understanding with a fellow Maltese becomes possible. When we are among foreigners, what is that makes us stand out and brings us together? What make us immediately recognisable to our fellow countrymen? Not our appearance, our gestures, or our bearing. It is the words we speak in our own language. It is the cultural circle to which we belong, an inescapable mutual affinity.

Martin Morana's books are an immense achievement: the obviously great idea that no one else has previously come up with. And they come at a time when they are most needed. Unfortunately, words are as vulnerable as any other element of our cultural heritage. Change in our lives comes about with such speed that some words – and the cultural milieu in which they originated – can become obsolete and eventually lost before we actually realise that it is happening. Words are often the only relic of an aspect of our culture that has been lost.

We have reached the point where words need to be saved and, come to think about it, books are the most natural way in which words can be kept alive because words are the flesh and blood from which books are made. Words will not be saved by being collated in dictionaries that are only used occasionally and by the few. It is in books such as *Ara x'Int Tghid* that words come into their own, when they are investigated for what they are, what they say, and from where they come. That they are presented in an interesting, easy to follow, and well-illustrated manner is an added bonus. But the greatest achievement of these books is that it makes words that have virtually fallen into disuse known and understood by many who otherwise would not have been exposed to them.

The catalogue of words collected by the author in these two volumes is by no means exhaustive. There are many others, pertaining to specialised areas, which are waiting to be recovered and saved. In the process it will not just be words but the whole cultural context that will be recovered. And through an increasing network of recovered words, created over hundreds of years, our cultural roots will connect us to our past, make the present relevant and project us as more complete beings towards the future.

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