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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.



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*Detail of the restored Gutenberg Madonna at Our Lady of Victory Church*



## FRONT COVER

Chasuble with Pinto coat of arms from Our Lady of Victory Church  
Photo: *The Art Boutique*



## BACK COVER

Wied Żurrieq Tower  
A friendless Tower



# Privileges that Threaten Our Environment

*Simone Mizzi*

*Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa*

We are extremely concerned about the onslaught of development which appears to be coming our way and threatening our countryside, our traditional skylines and our landscape and even our picturesque fishing villages such as Marsaxlokk are to be caught in the storm. The revision of many planning policies, launched with fast-fisted fury by the government in the first few months since the last election, will open the floodgates of construction at a time when we have not even recovered from the excessive building that followed the last rationalisation of schemes and relaxation of height limitations. An even more serious consideration is that the stakeholders who stand to gain from such revisions are being placed in positions where they have direct influence over planning, becoming the planners themselves and sometimes outnumbering Mepa members on planning sub-committees. They have become judge and jury in their own causes having been tasked to promote their own projects. While this move can be taken to be a sign of great maturity and could be positive, I am worried for Malta.

We have developers being called upon to propose areas for land reclamation projects, hoteliers deciding on future hotel heights – the list is long. The havoc this can bring to areas that are still free from development and to our skyline is alarming when there is no over-riding strategic plan in place. The incorrectness of procedures, the lack of information and the lack of time permitted for public consultation is considered by *Din l-Art Helwa* to be unacceptable. We have personally lobbied the Prime Minister and various related Ministries within the new government, spoken to the Leader of the Opposition and we have made our points only too clear to everyone. An economy that relies on the construction industry is a weak one.

NGOs like *Din l-Art Helwa* have, over the years, earned the right to make their voices heard and they have right to information. We will stand firm on this position. Letters and press releases have been published regularly to bring our sentiments to the attention of the authorities, and the public at large, and we hope that some of these bear fruit. On page 8 of this magazine is a great report on recent stands taken by our organisation.

*Din l-Art Helwa* has never been against appropriate – or necessary – development. It is against speculation and the use of our land and beauty spots for greed. The development lobby is strong and stands much to gain from these new policies. Indeed, we genuinely believe that activities such as agri-tourism, if led by farmers to improve agriculture and if carried out correctly with the re-use of old farm buildings in traditional style and the use of suitable materials, could be of benefit. However, Malta is too small to take the risk that it is developers pushing the cause of agriculture, and not the other way round, in particular when there are so many unfinished and ugly buildings lying empty and when whole areas of Malta are highly compromised. Now even those built in the 1980s require regeneration, and attention should be focused on them. Instead, we predict that further urbanisation of rural areas will take place. Farms will be glorified and become glamorous rural villas. The much-needed and urgent upgrading of the countryside, the reinstatement of our rubble walls – all of which are in a dire state – saving our thin layer of topsoil and water catchments, will play second fiddle. Agriculture may not benefit at all.

I recently had the opportunity of being the guest speaker at the quarterly meeting of the Malta Hotel and Restaurant Association (MHRA). The moment was propitious. The industry had just been given the privilege of deciding for itself just how high hotels can go, which is indeed a preposterous proposition. It seems “the sky is the limit” – to quote a headline from *The Times of Malta*. I would like to share the address I made, and my concerns, with you.

**The news about the proposed development brief of Marsaxlokk came the day after this address, but if I had to address the MHRA again today, I would end my speech with these words: “AS FOR MARSAXLOKK – if you want to save it for tourism, leave it as it is. Learn from Marsascala and Marsalforn. We don’t want Marsaxlokk going the same way.”**



*How much longer will the urban scale of Marsaxlokk be maintained?*



## TOURISM AND HERITAGE – THE FUTURE

### Simone Mizzi addresses the MHRA

It is a given fact now that good preservation of cultural heritage and our natural environment is fundamental to Malta's tourism. They are the daily backdrops to our lives and to the visitor experience. In this respect, *Din l-Art Helwa* is thrilled that tourism and culture live within the same Ministry, as it is recognition that both strands bring synergies to each other.

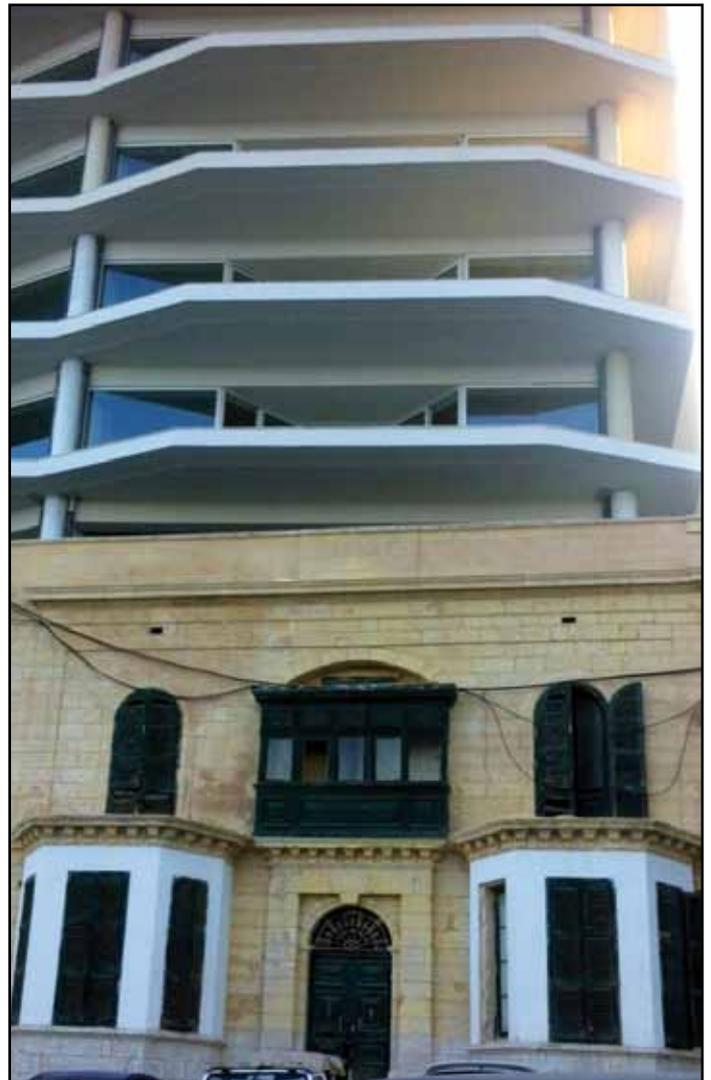
The moment is also timely. As President of *Din l-Art Helwa*, I am aware that at this particular moment you have been tasked with influencing planning for new building heights and to introduce innovation. As stakeholders in your industry, this is indeed an unprecedented privilege, and one that brings you great responsibility for which you will be accountable. I come from a business background, and I readily acknowledge that in all business, renovation is necessary. So while I welcome the energy this will bring, I will use these few moments to consider with you what direction the tourism industry will take as this will inevitably have its effect on heritage and the environment.

We know 60 per cent of all travellers on the move in Europe are motivated by other cultures. Cultural tourism in Europe in 2010 left €335 billion in European pockets and gave nine million jobs. I know we can increase Malta's share of this, but is it by building taller, wider, newer – pulling down all our old buildings – or is it by enhancing what we have, by redesigning and by conversions. Or both? Regeneration of areas leaves money circulating in the till far longer than new-build. You are rightfully striving to upgrade old hotels, and we hope that this will have a knock-on effect on upgrading whole areas of Malta, thus improving the quality of life of those of us who live here. However, if you build up the Gzira and Strand sea-front, what happens to the Fort Manoel skyline and the view over Lazaretto from Valletta? Will the extra nights you fill in August add that much more to your bottom line to justify losing such a national asset? This is just one of many landscapes we stand to lose. It is tricky, balancing an increase in beds, maintaining average room rates and driving the offer upwards by bringing new life to magnificent old buildings and to our rural areas, but it surely cannot and should not be done by destroying our natural and historic assets – the qualities that most tourists come to find in the first place.

This has been Malta's angst since the 1970s, reacting as it did then to the swinging fortunes of the British market going from 170,000 visitors in the late 1960s, to the 1.3 million now. This year I think the boiling point reached in our August numbers did certainly blow our domestic lid. Hospitality has framed our lives through centuries of welcoming, living, trading and interacting with foreigners. This has given us a unique culture of our own, but our way of life has to sharpen its act if we are to provide the right backdrop for our visitors.

*Can development at Manoel Island exemplify quality design?*

I have remained deeply involved with tourism and marketing as the heritage sites that *Din l-Art Helwa* manages depend much upon the curious visitor finding them. I began my professional life manning the Guest Liaison desk at the first Malta Hilton in 1968, going up the Hilton ladder – a great training school – and then had the rare privilege of managing Ta' Ċenċ when tourism in Gozo was in its infancy. Guest numbers were few, as were flights in and out of Malta. However, they brought very top quality people, a sophisticated international clique that preceded the onslaught of mass tourism and the Ibiza-disco-hugging age. These people loved Malta because it was yet unspoiled. Malta and Gozo were going the upmarket way.



*Strident clash of styles*

Then in the 1970s, tied as we were to the British market, we had to quickly adapt to visitors with new budgets, and fast utilitarian tourist accommodation became necessary. A well-functioning aesthetics board had been disbanded and structure plans were not really around. Suddenly, we became very spoiled by making money super fast through construction for both our visitors and ourselves, with the result that we lost much of our ancient cultural landscape and unique architecture, both propositions that truly made Malta different. When we threw these out, we lost direction. However, we are blessed to have a lot left which we simply cannot afford to lose. You here in this room, champions of the tourism industry, have a chance to put us back on track to find the balance between numbers and quality – no easy task.

Today, with world travel and communications continuing to explode, our sunshine and our sea – fabulously clean as it now is – are no longer our unique selling proposition. I would ask you whether we really have to continue pouring more concrete onto our skyline to increase visitor numbers to fit more in? In some places we cannot even see the sun any longer. Consider what we have made of 'Chains' in the most picturesque part of old Spinola. So I ask you, as you are now planners, what brakes can you put into the system to ensure we upgrade our visitor experience without ruining what is left. Look around you daily to see what the visitor sees. From Pieta to St Julian's, driving along the sea-front, there is nothing now that is truly Maltese nor anything of which we can be proud. Prime bays such as St Paul's and St George's feature vertical canyons of cement facing each other, and more seem to be on the way. Only our sea redeems this vision.

This is where heritage and environment come in but, even then, they do not offer solutions to the absence of any aesthetics and adequate planning. We are privileged to have many fabulous monuments, traditional streetscapes and natural spaces that are poised in style somewhere between Europe and North Africa. They are sights that fascinate our visitors. We find them posted on all social media. National advertising and PR in many sectors market such treasures most successfully to show the 'real Malta' and its people. It is necessary to protect these great landscapes not just to spread visitor traffic into outlying



*Qrendi's disappearing countryside*

areas, and into the still unexploited shoulder months, but for ourselves to save our vision from choking on building. Our baroque church domes, so symbolic of Malta, dominate the skyline when you land at Luqa, yet many of them are being obliterated by high-rise. Here lies the problem: if all this goes on taking our coastline and few beaches along with it, what are we going to have to offer the visitor that is different, and what will be left for us here to enjoy? We have to save Malta's context before it all goes. And you can influence planning, you are now planners!

Since its foundation in 1965, *Din l-Art Helwa* has saved as many as 38 heritage sites through its voluntary work and restoration. We manage 16 properties in guardianship for the state and the Church. We do this entirely on our own. We are a very small group, but our message is very strong. Every cent we raise goes into heritage. In 2012, €412,000 was ploughed into the economy, and some €75,000 of that was non-recoverable VAT. The historic sites we open daily to the public received 35,000 visitors, providing a good experience, we hope, for them to take home, and our volunteers gave close on 25,000 hours freely to the country to do this. Our sites vary from mediaeval and baroque churches, to Knights' fortifications, British cemeteries and historic gardens, green areas and wild open spaces – a great cross spectrum of the cultural breath that Malta has to offer.

We work entirely with volunteers and have the fortune of enjoying great support from the business community and private individuals who share our vision – many of whom are in this room. Yet keeping old buildings standing is not sufficient. Giving them new and appropriate use after the purpose for which they were built has ended is our challenge now and yours, as you too want to revive your old buildings.

Who amongst us is not filled with pride at the sight of the Comino and Red Towers lit up at night – and we thank the MTA for setting the example as it was the NTOM who funded the first restoration of Wignacourt Tower back in 1975, and now ERDF Tourism funds will do so again. The Red Tower – fitted out for a sponsors' dinner – is an example of the way historic sites can be used in a dignified manner, and sponsors such as Infinitely Xara have helped make this year's music festival at Bir Miftuh financially rewarding.

*Bugibba, Ready for Regeneration*





There is much work to be done where heritage and tourism can work hand in hand. Delimara Lighthouse will soon be ready and can provide heritage holidays to two families. Historic Gardens such as the Garden of Rest, with its marvellous view over Marsamxetto, still need discovery when its museum and tea rooms are upgraded. The area around Ghallis Tower is still a dumping ground, but can be redeemed if the tower is flood-lit. Wied iz-Żurrieq Tower is awaiting the sign-off from government so that we can return it for public enjoyment after restoration.

*Din l-Art Helwa* has raised awareness amongst successive governments and will do so unabated and undaunted even now. Heritage is winning on the monuments side, but much less on our natural and visual environment. Old houses still go down like dominos to be replaced by ordinary buildings, Valletta is becoming one flashy jewellery shop, the Blue Lagoon is unbearable in August, and Gozo is already unrecognizable. Here we must stop and reflect. Thanks to growing awareness and some timely EU funding, we are saving our important monuments, but will we save them as beautiful jewels set in a shabby tin mounting? This will happen if we do not put an end immediately to the loss of traditional architecture and our vanishing landscapes.

The Maltese always created beautiful buildings up until the explosion of the 1970s. Let us go back to doing this. There is a saying in some oriental cultures: “The toad does not poison his own hole”. But man does. If we do not tread carefully now, we will have to rely on cheap room nights. I appeal to you to look carefully at the effect your actions will have before you pour yet more cement onto our skyline or into our countryside. All of us have travelled. We understand the value of keeping what is only ours because nobody else has it. Yet it is hard to accept that sustainability means earning a steady buck, not necessarily a fast one.

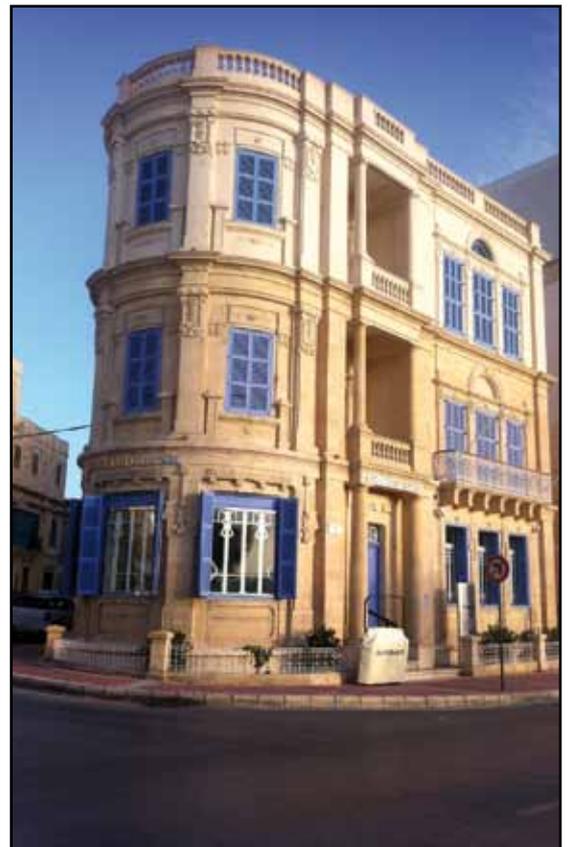
In the meantime, there is much your association can do to make Malta a five-star destination not just for our visitors but also for ourselves. I congratulate you all for the half million persons entering and leaving Malta last month, but I must confess it put those of us living here under great duress. This was no fault of the MTA or of any of its partners. Please use your powerful lobby to insist

*St Paul's Islands, what's left?*

there is the political will to have an integrated spatial plan, combined with education and enforcement, to improve coastal, marine and rural management. This mumbo jumbo very simply would bring all stake holders and activity together in a strategic plan, but would translate at basic level as the good governance of simple activities: anti-littering action and enforcement, expulsion of all illegal occupiers of our beauty spots, dignified and camouflaged bring-in sites, organised parking and designated barbeque areas, waste separation by hotels and restaurants and advertised rotas for waste collection in holiday apartments, disciplined boat anchorages, the correct use of holding tanks, and let's not forget noise: noise from bars, discos, from blaring pleasure cruisers, and much more of which you are aware. What will happen over the next three years if we add demolitions and more building to this? We must get our internal act up to scratch if we want to appeal to a higher spending visitor. *Din l-Art Helwa* will continue to save some pretty awesome stage sets for the country yet, you who are such a powerful lobby, please use your influence to get its backdrop right.

19 September 2013

I ended this address by inviting everyone to be accountable to the country when deciding on taking hotels to new heights and to use this privilege wisely. I also thanked many of those present for their support with sponsorship and collaboration, in particular the MTA and the MIA plc, Island Caterers Group Plc, Infinitely Xara, AX Holdings, Comino Hotel for helping our volunteers on Comino, the Hilton Malta, Westin and Kempinski Hotels for assistance with our raffles, Robert Arrigo Tours and Osborne Catering.



*Lombard's iconic extension is sensitive to style*

# Heritage and Environment Protection Report

Between May and mid-August, *Din l-Art Helwa*'s Heritage and Environment Protection team actively followed a number of issues, as summarised here.

## 'Semma Lehnek' consultation

In May, DLH participated in the *Semma Lehnek* consultation launched by Parliamentary Secretary Michael Farrugia, which invited suggestions from the public on how the planning system and other procedures within the Malta Environment and Planning Authority could be simplified.

DLH voiced its concern that, while Dr Farrugia was highlighting the objective to reduce bureaucracy in development planning, it was still not clear what measures would be put in place to ensure that principles of sustainable development would be safeguarded.

It insisted that these measures should be clearly spelt out, and recalled that an online opinion poll it conducted last January showed that the most pressing issue as far as the public was concerned was "Stop the building". DLH noted that the combination of a reduction in planning application fees and so-called "simplification" of development planning procedures gives the undesirable message that more building development may be encouraged by the government, to the detriment of the environment.

With the glut of empty dwellings on the market, DLH would encourage the upgrading of buildings of insufficient quality and the regeneration of run-down areas, even those of recent construction, rather than the building of new ones. Furthermore, it insisted that public participation in all environmental issues, particularly the use of land, must be an underlying principle in all proposed changes. The fast-tracking of certain applications without the scrutiny of a public committee meeting might reduce bureaucracy but would also reduce transparency.

While DLH agrees with the updating and streamlining of policies, all policy changes must seek to ensure that the environment is safeguarded: the countryside, the coast and our marine spatial areas. Amendments to the local plans should not be contemplated before a comprehensive strategic vision is in place following all necessary environmental assessments and consultation.

DLH also called on the government to finally remove all illegal hunting hides and boathouses and to follow up enforcement notices with timely action, especially within urban conservation areas or outside development zones.

## Relocation of the *monti* to the entrance of Valletta

In May, DLH issued comments to the press about the potential relocation of Valletta Market (the *monti*) to Ordnance Street near City Gate, and its potential spill-over alongside the new Parliament building up to Victory Square. It noted that this idea lacks vision for the area as well as sufficient reflection on the devaluation it may bring to the investment made to upgrade the entrance to Valletta.

DLH pointed out the irony in the government planning to relocate and tidy up the unsightly kiosks and stalls just outside the entrance to Valletta, while at the same time possibly proposing to place market stalls just within the city walls.

It disagrees with the proposal to relocate Valletta Market to the newly regenerated City Gate area. While acknowledging that the current market site in Merchant's Street may have its drawbacks, and that other solutions may be considered, the entrance to Valletta is wholly unsuitable for an open-air market.

*New Smart City buildings emerge over the horizon and ruining one of Malta's most beautiful landscapes*



### Building heights

In May, Parliamentary Secretary Michael Farrugia and Minister Karmenu Vella launched the “Height Limitation Adjustment Policy for Hotels in Tourism Areas”. DLH publicly noted its disappointment that, following consultation meetings with Mepa in 2012, this policy had now been revised and approved without the government having carried out the impact assessment that was recommended at the time.

DLH stated that, while it appreciated the importance of tourism to the economy and to the provision of employment, the policy does not attempt to strike the right balance between the quality of our environment and the generation of revenue, and it has been rushed through without serious analysis to justify it.

Another concern registered by DLH is that this policy introduces a situation of two weights and two measures. Hoteliers, on the one hand, will have the privilege of building two additional storeys while, on the other, local businesses or home owners will not be granted the same privilege. DLH is concerned that this will create a precedent for the further granting of permits to the two latter groups in the future.

DLH noted that overall building heights must be addressed holistically, taking into consideration the loss of light, over-development and the inevitable loss of quality of life and visual amenity for home-owners as well as visitors.

In June, Mepa then went ahead and renewed planning approval for a large high-rise development in Ġzira, in the absence of an adequate and up-to-date policy on high-rise development in Malta. DLH said that such major planning decisions, with a long-term impact, should be underpinned by a clear vision and strategy and should not be approved piecemeal.

This new high-rise complex in Ġzira, which will include Malta’s tallest building of 33 floors, was promoted as being a way of regenerating the surrounding area. DLH pointed out that it was not clear what improvements in the existing urban fabric are to be expected, beyond the boundaries of this development. On the other hand, the construction of a large-scale project may aggravate traffic problems on the heavily congested road network in this area.

### Gozo bridge

In June, DLH expressed its concern that the government is exploring the idea of constructing a bridge across the Gozo Channel, through the commissioning of a 15-month feasibility study costing €4 million. DLH believes that this project is totally unacceptable. A bridge between Malta and Gozo would have enormous visual impact and would destroy one of the most scenic, traditional and beautiful views of the Maltese Islands.

### Delimara power station

In June, DLH submitted comments to Mepa as part of the ongoing EIA on the conversion to gas of the Delimara Power Station. DLH is in favour of operating the Delimara Power Station using gas instead of heavy fuel oil, due to the better environmental performance of gas.

It notes that the importation of gas to Delimara is possible by two alternative options: either through a natural gas pipeline or by constructing onshore/floating facilities for the importation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by ship. DLH is insisting that both these alternatives should be assessed as part of the EIA, to ensure that all options have been considered thoroughly and that the best long-term choices are made, with all the relevant environmental information made available to the public. DLH has requested confirmation that it will still be possible to obtain EU funding for a gas pipeline if onshore/floating LNG facilities are constructed.

Malta’s National Energy Policy of 2012 was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). DLH notes that if significant modifications are made to this Policy, it should first be updated and screened for an SEA before the EIA is completed.

The gas pipeline infrastructure may have less intense environmental impacts in Marsaxlokk than the onshore/floating LNG facilities. The land and marine impacts of both alternatives must be assessed in detail, including visual impact, the construction of a new jetty, dredging work, land reclamation, and the relocation of the Has-Saptan refuelling dolphin. DLH has also requested that a Social Impact Assessment and a Cost Benefit Analysis are carried out in the overall environmental assessment of this application, as was the case for the new Delimara extension.

**Note: Since August, the draft EIS for the the Delimara Power Station was circulated, and DLH submitted its comments. DLH noted that the draft EIS fails to consider any technological alternatives. The level of detail in the report leaves many questions unanswered, for example it does not clearly present which of the proposed layouts has the least environmental impact and which is the preferred option. It also does not present a clear picture of the utilisation rates of the new plant, the existing plant and the interconnector.**

### Relaxation of regulations

In June, DLH stated that it considered the government’s decision to allow people who build illegal structures to obtain a temporary compliance certificate despite the illegality, to be a retrograde step for the environment. Rather than solve the problem of illegalities, DLH is concerned that a relaxation of the rules may well serve to increase the problem.

DLH noted that this move follows several other recent contentious decisions, such as the increase in hotel building heights, the reduction of development application fees, the extension of expired building permits and the decision to pursue major land reclamation projects without submitting any strategy to the public for comment. When viewed together, these decisions send the unfortunate message that the government intends to promote development without paying sufficient attention to the environmental consequences.

### Caravans at Armier and St Thomas Bay

In June, DLH welcomed a court ruling regarding the caravans at Armier beach, which confirmed that the caravans are illegal. It noted that these caravans are an eyesore that are denying the public their right to enjoy the foreshore, and are also causing environmental damage to the beach at Armier. DLH has been saying for many years that the illegal caravans and boathouses at Armier should be removed. It is a shame that it has taken the authorities so long to act on these blatant illegalities.

In August, DLH submitted an objection to Mepa regarding the construction of a caravan site, with pool, snack bar and play area, on undeveloped land that lies outside the development zone (ODZ) at St Thomas Bay. The project description submitted to Mepa points out that the site is flanked by agricultural fields and is situated only a few metres away from the shoreline.

The construction of new caravan sites on undeveloped ODZ land along the coast is not acceptable in principle. Were this application to be considered, it may set a precedent for new ODZ caravan sites in other bays in Malta and Gozo.

### Land reclamation

The government has formally announced its intention to accept expressions of interest from the private sector for land reclamation projects in order to boost the economy, and has stated that it will entertain innovative ideas for the extension and use of any area of the coastline.

In July, DLH said that inviting developers to provide government with their own environmental and economic feasibility studies on such projects is extremely dangerous. Such proposals, if

not properly and impartially assessed, will result in the loss of natural assets that will be sacrificed for private and short-term speculation.

DLH noted that this is a very worrying proposal from the government, which should find solutions to enhance the economy without selling off the country's coastline and marine environment. Land reclamation should only be entertained if projects of major and national importance warrant it, and only after a strategic assessment has been carried out.

The government should shift the attention of development, through serious incentives, to the regeneration of the many built-up areas that lie dilapidated and derelict. Such an improvement could lead to many years of sustainable employment and result in increasing competitiveness and a better quality of life.

### Revision of Local Plans

The existing local plans were drawn up under the overall strategy provided by the Structure Plan of 1990. An exercise to revise the Structure Plan through the new Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED) was started in 2012 but has not been completed.

In July, DLH said it seriously questions the government's decision to launch a revision of the local plans without an updated strategy in place, and recommended that the government should steer clear of hasty and piecemeal decision-making with long-term effects on our environment. It called on the government to complete a full strategic plan, with all the required consultation, before revising the local plans. This should also be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) before being adopted.

While appreciating the government's desire to act in a timely manner and encourage widespread public involvement, DLH expects the authorities to respect all established environmental safeguards and procedures. Changes to the local plans will have a far-reaching impact on land use and the government must not opt for short cuts when our environment is at stake.

Shortly after this statement was made, DLH was disappointed to note that the revision of the local plans was indeed going ahead in what appears to be a strategic vacuum. It noted that a similar approach had been taken to land reclamation, where a call for expressions of interest has been made without any strategy having been presented.

DLH also objected to the fact that this important exercise was being carried out in the summer months, when it is to be expected that public participation will be at a lower level than at other times of the year. It called on the government to postpone this ill-advised and premature initiative to revise the local plans until it has clearly formulated the strategic objectives that will guide the process.

In August, DLH submitted an initial set of comments to Mepa on the revision of the local plans. It stated that the effect of development on the environment and quality of life is of major concern, and again repeated that an overall strategic plan that addresses this concern should be finalised by the government before revising the details of the individual local plans.

The strengths and weaknesses of the existing local plans should then be identified in relation to the strategy and presented to the public, including the capacity of urban areas, traffic flows, vacant housing stock and visual amenity.

In its comments, DLH noted that the existing development zones and building heights should not be increased, and that more green and pedestrian spaces should be created within urban areas. Major land reclamation projects should only be considered for reasons of national strategic importance.

DLH noted that the local plans should promote rainwater harvesting, the regeneration of historic areas and buildings, pleasant

and harmonious streetscapes, quality in the design of buildings and landscaping. They should prevent the loss and fragmentation of agricultural land and no further residential development should be permitted outside the development zones, including for agri-tourism. Buffer zones for buildings trapped in urban development should be included in the local plans, as well as between historic areas and the rest of the urban development.

DLH also emphasised that all measures and policies included in the National Environment Policy (NEP) of 2012 should be taken into consideration in the revision of the local plans, as it provides direction for all sectors that affect the environment. The NEP states that spatial planning should ensure that land is used efficiently without the need to extend the development boundaries.

Among many other valid measures, the NEP promotes the use of spatial planning to protect public open spaces, coastal areas, agricultural land, and gardens. It encourages town centre management and the integrated improvement of degraded areas, as well as safe and healthy rural areas for informal recreation that respect landscape character. The NEP promotes alternative modes of travel, and notes that traffic in areas prone to the "street canyon" effect should be reduced. The road network should be designed to take traffic away from town centres.

DLH also requested that, in line with previous practice, all organisations and persons making submissions for revisions to the local plans should be identified to ensure transparency.

### Petrol station near Maghtab

In early August, DLH submitted comments to Mepa regarding the proposed construction of a petrol station with carwash and other facilities, near Maghtab in Naxxar. DLH noted that the area near this proposed petrol station is predominantly agricultural and rural, with livestock farming and various residences in the vicinity.

The site itself consists of agricultural land outside the development zone. DLH said that the fact that this agricultural land is abandoned should not lead to it being made available for irreversible excavation and development. The loss and fragmentation of agricultural land is to be avoided.

There are already several petrol stations within a close distance of the proposed site, and the facility is not essential for the amenity of the area as any vehicles requiring fuel can easily reach the nearby petrol stations in minutes.



*Details of the current Delimara Power Station*

### New blogs on *Din l-Art Helwa* website

*Din l-Art Helwa* has launched three regular blogs on its website in order to stimulate general discussion and awareness on issues related to the environment and our cultural heritage. Members are encouraged to participate and send in reactions.

The blogs are written by Alan Deidun, Conrad Thake and Petra Caruana Dingli.

**Alan Deidun** is a marine biologist and committed environmentalist. His blog is sure to be an outspoken take on the environmental sector in the Maltese Islands, both above and below the waves.

**Conrad Thake** is an architect, urban planner and architectural historian. His blog will discuss issues related to Maltese architecture and the state of our built environment.

**Petra Caruana Dingli** has a long-standing interest in cultural heritage and the environment, and has experience in these fields in both the non-governmental and public sectors. Her blog will follow events and news on our rural and urban environment.

Follow the blogs on [www.dinlarthelwa.org](http://www.dinlarthelwa.org)

### Marine Issues - *Stanley Farrugia Randon*

I would like to raise awareness on three issues relating to marine activity around our islands.

Firstly, the principle that access to the coast should not be denied to the public seems to have been confirmed on various occasions by the Maltese courts. So it should follow that if the land leading to a part of the coast is privately owned, the owner should allow access to the coast through his property. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. This summer, I was asked to refrain from entering the pretty bay of Ta' Kantra in Mġarr ix-Xini as it meant passing through the private property of the Ta' Ċenċ hotel next to the coast.

Secondly, reclamation of the coast is eating away what should be the best asset of our country, which lacks much by way of natural resources. An example in point is what is going on in Marsalforn, where parts of the coast are being covered with concrete. This not only uglifies the outline of the natural coastline but also destroys the natural habitat of the rich marine biodiversity of which our islands should be proud.

Thirdly, creating swimming zones in our bays is a practice that ensures the safety of bathers. In order to secure the buoys in a fixed place, they are moored by placing bricks on the sea bed. Unfortunately, these bricks are often not reused the following year, with the result that the sea bed is being littered by these unsightly objects.



*Mġarr ix-Xini - road leading to Ta' Kantra*



*Unused bricks on seabed at Mġarr ix-Xini*



*Marsalforn.  
Reclamation of coastline*

# ABOLISH SPRING HUNTING Campaign

**Simone Mizzi**

*Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa*

## SIGN UP TO ABOLISH SPRING HUNTING A PRACTICE NO POLITICIAN IN GOVERNMENT HAS HAD THE GUTS TO STOP

*Din l-Art Helwa* is one of 13 organisations that have formed a coalition to work towards the abolition of hunting in the spring, the time when birds of passage, namely the quail and the turtledove, are returning to Europe to reproduce. These two species are on the European Conservation List and are therefore listed as threatened, a fact that was misrepresented by the Maltese Government to the European Court of Justice. The legal notices that allow spring hunting require abrogation through a referendum and through campaigning in other ways and at all levels, in both Malta and in the rest of the EU.

Hunting in general is a practice that does this island no honour and especially during the spring, when birds are at their most vulnerable. It is outdated, anti-social, prevents the enjoyment of our countryside when it is at its best and works against our economy as it is a deterrent to the quality and nature-loving tourist. Furthermore, other protected species are killed in the process. The coalition aims to obtain the 35,000 signatures required for a referendum to be held.

### Who is in the Coalition for the Abolition of Spring Hunting?

The coalition is made up of 13 organisations that have agreed to work together to bring an end to spring hunting on the Maltese islands. These are: Ramblers Association of Malta, Nature Trust, *Moviment Graffiti*, International Animal Rescue Malta, Greenhouse Malta, the Gaia Foundation, Friends of the Earth Malta, *Flimkien għal Ambjent Ahjar*, *Din l-Art Helwa*, the Coalition for Animal Rights, BirdLife Malta, *Alternattiva Demokratika* and the Malta Organic Agricultural Movement. The coalition is an equal partnership of organisations bringing their skills and expertise to achieve an end to spring hunting on Malta.

### Why has it been formed now?

With various Maltese administrations over the years making spring hunting possible, and a European Commission that is slow take action, the coalition has been formed to work both in Malta and across the European Union to bring pressure on both the Maltese government and the European Commission to end spring hunting in Malta.

Both major political parties are committed to protecting spring hunting. During spring this year, the government removed the requirement for a €50 special licence fee and identification armband for registered hunters. As a result, there were 50 per cent more registered hunters during the spring hunting season this year than there were last year.

Spring hunting is made possible in Malta through a derogation of the EU Birds Directive. Although this directive is aimed at protecting birds, exceptions for the taking or killing of birds can be made where air safety, public health, research or nature protection are concerned, as well as the capture, retention or other judicious use of birds in small numbers, on a selective basis and under strictly supervised conditions. Killing for sport is not a "judicious use". While the European Commission carefully monitors the situation in Malta, it is slow to act.

### What is wrong with allowing spring hunting on Malta?

Malta is situated on one of the spring migration routes from Africa to northern Europe used by birds to reach their breeding grounds. It is a stopover point for a great many types of protected birds, but

these are often illegally targeted by hunters. Rare and threatened birds such as the Pallid Harrier, the Osprey, the Red-footed Falcon, and even majestic species such as the Greater Flamingo and the White Stork, have been targeted by hunters in the spring.

Two types of bird are especially prized by hunters. Both the turtle dove (*gamiema*) and the quail (*summiema*) have been hunted in Malta for many years, but both have now become of conservation concern because their numbers are declining so rapidly in Europe.

From both a conservation and a hunting perspective it makes no sense to hunt birds that are returning to their breeding grounds. These are the birds that have survived the winter and will replenish their populations if they reach their breeding grounds. Killing them in the spring is therefore unsustainable.

### How is spring hunting allowed?

The killing of birds in spring, when on migration to breed, is forbidden under the EU Birds' Directive. However, member states can apply an exception (also known as a derogation) where it is deemed that there is no other satisfactory solution other than to allow the killing of birds for very specific purposes permitted by the directive.

The Maltese government has been applying the dubious logic that an autumn hunting season is not a satisfactory alternative to a spring hunting season, traditionally opened in April and May before Malta's accession to the EU. This assumption is based on figures declared (and misreported) by hunters themselves in respect of turtle doves and quail killed. The figures were then presented by the Maltese government to the European Commission, showing that the number of turtle doves and quail killed in autumn was not sufficient to maintain the traditional kill. Based on this argument, Malta applies a derogation to allow a spring hunting season for these two species because an autumn hunting season (open for five months for a total of 41 species) is not deemed to be a satisfactory alternative to hunting in the spring.

Malta accordingly uses the derogation "to permit, under strictly supervised conditions and on a selective basis, the capture, keeping or other judicious use of certain birds in small numbers." (Article 9 (1) c of Directive 2009/147/EC)

It does so by incorrectly declaring/describing the killing in spring of turtle dove and quail as "judicious use" of the birds, and so attempts to be excluded from the obligations imposed by the Birds' Directive. It has also proposed incentives such as the use of arm bands, SMS reports and increased police presence to comply with the "strictly supervised conditions" as determined by the directive. The Malta government also sets limits on the numbers of turtle dove and quail that can be killed in spring as a "selective basis" in line with the directive's requirements.

### Is it not the role of the European Union to deal with this?

The European Commission is responsible for ensuring that Malta abides by the conditions of the Birds' Directive and that any derogation to allow spring hunting represents "judicious use" and fulfils all criteria. For spring hunting, this means that Malta must demonstrate that spring hunting is undertaken judiciously and under very strictly controlled conditions and that there is sufficient enforcement to ensure compliance with these conditions.

Each year, Malta is obliged to send a report to the EC within a month of the end of the spring hunting season, explaining how it considers it has correctly fulfilled the derogation. Other stakeholders – such as BirdLife Malta and hunters' associations – also send in reports with their analysis of the situation.

While the European Commission is concerned that Malta is not properly fulfilling its obligations, it does not have the resources to check what is actually happening on the ground each and every spring hunting season. Accordingly, it relies on reports filed by governmental and non-governmental organisations, and raises queries where it deems appropriate, to obtain an understanding of whether a derogation has been correctly applied or otherwise. The filing of reports and queries is, however, a slow and long bureaucratic process that may result in infringement procedures against Malta in the future. This invariably allows for the possibility of future spring hunting seasons to be incorrectly permitted in the meantime.

### What about the European Court of Justice?

The European Commission took Malta to court in 2009, accusing it of contravening the Birds' Directive because of the spring hunting seasons that took place in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Contrary to some claims and misconceptions, the Court unequivocally deemed these hunting seasons illegal, by declaring that:

*“By authorising the opening of a hunting season for quails (*coturnix coturnix*) and turtle doves (*streptopelia turtur*) during the spring migration period in the years 2004 to 2007, without complying with the conditions laid down in Article 9(1) of Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds, as amended, in respect of 2004 to 2006, by Council Regulation (EC) No 807/2003 of 14 April 2003 and, in respect of 2007, by Council Directive 2006/105/EC of 20 November 2006, the Republic of Malta has failed to fulfil its obligations under that directive”*

It did not authorise the issue of fresh regulations on Spring Hunting; it merely declared the existing ones to be illegal. Following the 2009 judgement, the government published a new legal notice with a shorter hunting period than in previous years, and introduced the concept of limited numbers of turtle dove and quail as one of a number of measures in the hope that this would not be challenged again by the Commission as once again being not complaint with the Birds' Directive.

Malta was, however, challenged in 2010, when it was obliged to again review a legal notice allowing spring hunting after the European Commission re-opened a new infringement procedure via a formal warning (a Letter of Formal Notice). The result of this is a 2011 framework legislation which has set the limits by which a spring hunting season can be permitted in Malta. In the meantime, the European Commission has not closed its case on Malta. It continues to assess the situation with each spring hunting season year after year, and in particular remains concerned over the level of strict supervision.

Thus Malta runs the huge risk that if it is once again considered as not being compliant, it will face another court case that could involve it in huge administrative costs as well as fines that will cost the tax payer very dearly.

### Why a referendum?

There are about 15,000 registered hunters and trappers in Malta. Some general elections have been won on just 5,000 votes. Hunters have used this to demand concessions from the major political parties in return for votes. Both of Malta's main political parties have made deals with hunters to gain votes. However, recent surveys have shown that 60 per cent of Maltese voters would like to see spring hunting abolished. With the pre-election actions of both main political parties always resulting in concessions being given to hunters, a referendum is the only way that the majority of people can make their desire for the abolition of spring hunting a reality.

A referendum held at the right time is an inexpensive option compared with the fines the EU may eventually apply to Malta for not applying the Birds Directive correctly. In addition, spring hunting has an adverse effect on the Maltese economy because it discourages high value tourists from visiting the country at a very desirable time of year for them.

### What is the referendum seeking to achieve?

The referendum will seek the abolition of legislation that allows spring hunting in Malta. The petition we are asking people to sign to enable this to happen states: “We the undersigned persons, being registered as voters for the election of members of the House of Representatives, demand that the question of whether the following provision of law, that is to say Framework for Allowing a Derogation Opening a Spring Hunting Season for Turtledove and Quail



Coalition members at Buskett

Regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 504.94 – Legal Notice 221 of 2010), should not continue in force, shall be put to those entitled to vote in a referendum under Part V of the Referendum Act.”

The abrogative referendum that the petition should trigger will ask for people to vote in favour of the abolition of Framework for Allowing a Derogation Opening a Spring Hunting Season for Turtle dove and Quail Regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 504.94 – Legal Notice 221 of 2010) as amended to date.

#### **But what about minority rights?**

Hunters often claim that their right to kill birds should be protected because it is a long-standing tradition among a minority of people and banning spring hunting would adversely affect their rights. The rights associated with minorities are usually linked to *human* rights and have never been used to justify anti-social behaviour by a minority of people. The argument that killing birds can constitute some sort of inalienable right of a minority of the population is simply absurd and an insult to those minorities in society who are struggling for their rights and equality.

Hunters in Malta already enjoy a five-month hunting season in the autumn for which the Birds Directive permits the killing of 41 game species. More than half of these species regularly migrate over Malta including the turtle dove and quail, which can therefore be hunted in the autumn. Therefore, the abolition of any spring hunting season will still leave the hunters with a season in autumn during which they can hunt for both turtle dove and quail during a season when birds are less vulnerable.

#### **Is this a politically motivated coalition?**

The coalition is comprised of 12 non-governmental organisations and *Alternattiva Demokratika*, which together represent the entire environmental movement in Malta. It is motivated by a desire to bring an end to one of the most serious and long-standing problems that affects nature in this country. Many of the organisations, including BirdLife Malta and *Alternattiva Demokratika*, have campaigned on this issue for decades, regardless of which political party has been in government.

#### **Why should voters become involved?**

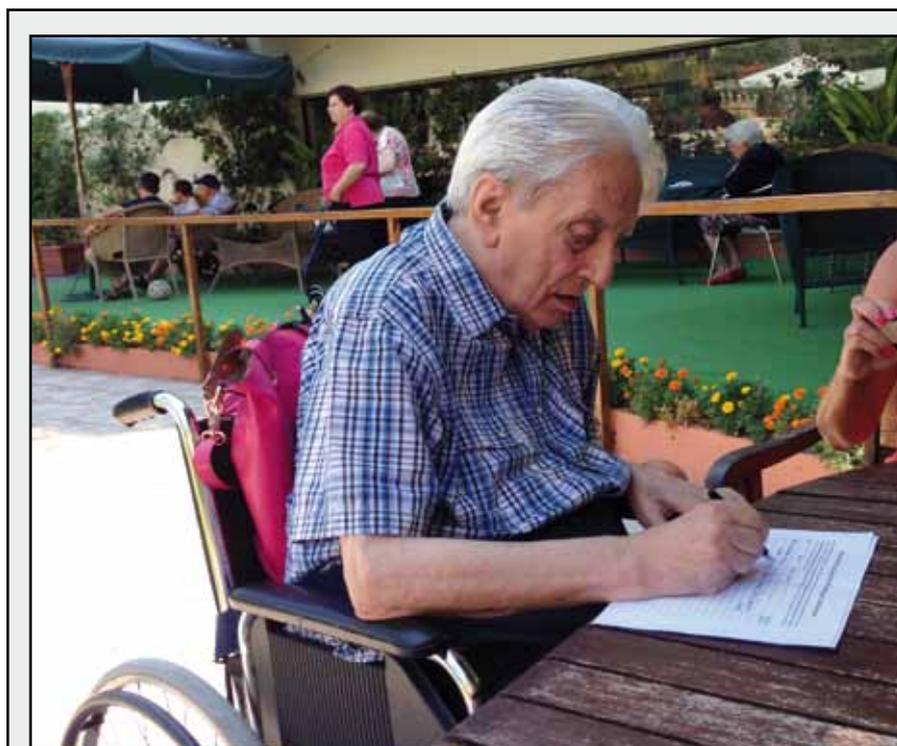
Successive governments have failed to act on spring hunting because of the power that the hunters’ lobby wields over them. It is unacceptable in a modern democracy for a small minority to seek to influence the outcome of general elections by offering votes for concessions and it is time this practice is ended, once and for all.

The referendum represents an opportunity for the majority of voters to make their wishes known to government. Many people feel powerless over some of the issues about which they care. Becoming involved in this referendum will give back to the people the power to take decisions.

#### **What should people do now?**

At least 35,000 Maltese who are eligible to vote in a general election need to sign the petition in order to call for a referendum. The petition cannot be signed online. Copies of the petition can be found with this issue of Vigilo. Further information and instructions regarding the return of the signed sheets can be obtained by emailing *Din l-Art Helwa* on [info@dinlarthelwa.org](mailto:info@dinlarthelwa.org) or the coalition’s central email address: [cashmalta2013@gmail.com](mailto:cashmalta2013@gmail.com).

The Coalition is asking people to sign the petition and to gather more signatures from their friends and family. Thank you for helping us abolish this unsavoury practice.



#### **Founder President, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran signs the petition**

Founder President, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran at 95 still leads us by example and signs the petition to abolish Spring Hunting.

He said: "No animal species should be killed just before it reproduces let alone birds that cannot protect themselves when they land on the island tired and thirsty and looking for a place to rest before they return home".

# A Bridge to Gozo

*Petra Caruana Dingli*

As a scenic landscape, the Gozo-Comino channel is one of Malta's most beautiful and outstanding assets. This must be a prime consideration in any discussions or studies about the proposed construction of a bridge spanning the five km channel that is currently being promoted by the government.

The idea is for Gozo to have better connectivity with Malta, but at what price? The double insularity of Gozo – an island depending on another island – also has its special advantages. The relatively peaceful lifestyle of Gozo is intrinsic to its charm and is a principal attraction of the Maltese Islands as a tourist destination.

The marketing strategy of the Malta Tourism Authority, as presented on its website, is to promote Gozo “for relaxation holidays” and for its rural, slower-pace, “off-the-beaten-track” atmosphere, including cycling and walking holidays. A key selling point is that Gozo is “unspoilt and not as built up as Malta”, with “wild terrain”.

The *visitmalta.com* website describes Gozo as “a peaceful, mystical backwater”, and an “ideal secluded haven” that is “more rural and tranquil” than Malta with “a relaxed pace of life”. Some people have purchased properties in Gozo specifically because they were attracted by the tranquillity of the island, whether for holidays or as a principal residence.

If a bridge is constructed, people visiting the waters around Comino will find themselves swimming or boating close to what will, in effect, be a main arterial road suspended across the channel. The popular Blue Lagoon, the capacity of which is already severely strained by large numbers of visitors every summer, would be situated near a motorway.

With this project, the government would have to completely rethink the overall tourism product currently offered by the Maltese Islands. The diversity of the product would certainly be affected, as it is likely that Gozo would gradually lose its distinct and treasured identity and be transformed into simply an extension of Malta.

It is understandable that some people who live in Gozo and who travel to Malta regularly, or even daily, for study or work, would like to have a bridge to reduce their travel time. But have all the other options



*A charming stretch of coast at Mġarr, Gozo*

for improving connectivity without causing a major environmental impact been properly explored, for example, a more frequent ferry service or a catamaran? Is a bridge costing mega-millions more feasible than extending the ferry service to reduce waiting times?

Leaving financial costs aside, which may cause the project to be dropped in any case, no study can be complete without highlighting the major

environmental cost of a bridge. It would have a huge impact on the scenic views of the channel and the island of Comino. A bridge would also have a significant environmental impact on Comino through light and noise pollution. Apart from its Natura 2000 status, Comino is a bird sanctuary and considered an important stop for migratory birds passing over the Maltese Islands.

The effect of a bridge on traffic in Gozo is another concern. Gozo's roads can already become very congested at peak times and are not designed to handle a major traffic influx. The traffic impact in Mellieħa, with a predicted increase in vehicles travelling to and from Gozo, should equally not be underestimated.

The idea of a referendum has been put forward. I hope the project will be abandoned well before this stage, but if a vote were to be taken then all Maltese citizens should be eligible to participate, as such a huge project would have a long-term effect on everyone, in terms of environmental and economic impact and the island identity of both Malta and Gozo.

Some people have commented that bridges can be attractive. Well, of course they can, especially in urban areas, but this is not a question of whether or not a specific design is beautiful, but whether a massive concrete bridge should be constructed in the gorgeous natural setting of the Gozo-Comino Channel. I think not.

*The Gozo-Comino Channel*



# Żejtun Roman Villa Conservation Project

*Jo Ann Cassar and Roberta De Angelis*

The Żejtun Roman Villa conservation project, which is being directed by the University of Malta's Department of the Built Heritage, has gathered momentum during the past two years, thanks to funds raised by *Din l-Art Helwa* from the HSBC Malta Foundation and a research grant from the University of Malta.

Specialists from various fields have contributed in different but closely related ways towards the safeguarding of this important site. Work has included a continuation of the documentation of the site and related conservation work, an essential step whenever any treatment is planned and/or carried out. Research on the materials and technology used to make the mortar and plaster is continuing and studies on suitable mixes to use on site have also been carried out.

The current phase of the documentation process has included the transfer to electronic format (ACAD) of the graphic documentation – the mapping of deterioration forms and their extent – sponsored by HSBC Malta Foundation. In parallel with this work, research carried out at the Department of the Built Heritage and sponsored by the University of Malta has included a study of a number of plaster and mortar samples stored at the University's Department of Classics and Archaeology. This study will provide useful information for archaeologists to trace the development of the site.

Studies are being carried out on a selection of samples in a specialised laboratory in Rome, while more numerous fragments are being analysed by an MA student in the Classics and Archaeology Department, working with the Department of the Built Heritage. A series of laboratory tests have been undertaken at the Department of the Built Heritage on a number of mortar mixes in order to ascertain the most suitable mix for use on-site to stabilise the fragile plaster remains. This work was supported by the University of Malta.

All this has led to a concentrated campaign this summer to carry out emergency treatment to stabilise the fragile plaster remains and floor tiles. The work included the localised application of biocide, the careful removal of weeds and soil from the plaster remains, the stone joints and the tiled floors, and the application of mortar – work that was also sponsored by the HSBC Malta Foundation. In preparation for this hands-on campaign, conservators and a biologist were engaged to provide expert advice on specific issues – again sponsored by the HSBC Malta Foundation.

All the resulting reports will be used to draw up a conservation plan of the site. This will indicate the “road map” for the long-term preservation of the site, which involves complex and multi-disciplinary issues and for this reason, the plan has to carefully evaluate the different options and their consequences.



*A sequence of photographs taken during the emergency conservation treatment carried out at the Żejtun Roman Villa in August and sponsored by the HSBC Malta Foundation.*

*Mortar has been applied to reinforce and stabilise the fragile tiled floors (a and b) and the walls (c and d).*

*photographs: Jane Marie Vella*

**HSBC**   
**Malta Foundation**

# Din l-Art Helwa News

Patricia Salomone

## Din l-Art Helwa organises tour of main properties

On Sunday, 7 April, *Din l-Art Helwa* organised a tour of some of the most fascinating properties in its care. A group of 30 was accompanied by Stanley and Romina Farrugia Randon, both active members of the association. They visited the Red Tower in Mellieħa, Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay and the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest in Floriana, where tea and coffee were served. The group then proceeded to Bir Miftuh chapel in Gudja and Mamo Tower in Marsascala. Starting at 1 pm, the tour lasted a good six hours and, notwithstanding the unfavourable weather, the participants enjoyed sheltering from the rain inside the properties, looking around and asking questions. It was a pleasure to see that a good number of them were foreigners living in Malta who took the opportunity of visiting these sites and learning more about our rich historical identity.



Participants in the tour at Torri Mamo

Photo by Anthony Lance

## Wedding at Wignacourt Tower

Peter Preece and Melissa Gray, a Scottish/English couple living in St Paul's Bay, chose Wignacourt Tower as the venue for their small family wedding ceremony. The civil ceremony was held on 18 June under a magnificent blue sky and was enlivened by the participation of members from the Jackson's Pipe Band. Peter wore full Scottish dress for the occasion featuring the Scottish National tartan, while his bride wore a tailor-made Chinese silk dress, a link to her time spent in China and Hong Kong. Friends and family members in attendance came from 10 different countries and between them represented 14 different nationalities. The bride and groom expressed their thanks to Carmen Pelligrina, who very kindly volunteered to open up the Tower and whose help was invaluable both before and after the event.



Peter Preece and Melissa Gray



A lone piper from the Jackson's Pipe Band

## Volunteers enjoy an evening at the Red Tower

On 28 June, the eve of Mnarja, council members of *Din l-Art Helwa* held a gathering for Red Tower volunteers at the tower. The group of volunteers who help at Our Lady of Victory Church were also invited. As a long, sunlit evening gave way to a splendid sunset, volunteers mingled together to enjoy and share experiences. Judge Joe Galea Debono, himself a volunteer at the Red Tower, gave a presentation on the history of the tower and its context as part of the network of fortifications built by the Knights of the Order of St John to defend the coastline, while Executive President Simone Mizzi gave further insight into the story of the invincible St Agatha, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century martyr and saint from Catania to whom the tower is dedicated as a symbol of strength. DLH Treasurer Martin Scicluna coordinates the HSBC volunteer group and their presence at Victory Church has proved invaluable to visitors.



Simone Mizzi tells volunteers the story of St Agatha



Red Tower and Victory Church volunteers together with DLH Council Members on the roof of the tower

***Din l-Art Helwa* 48th annual reunion dinner**

The *Din l-Art Helwa* held its 48th annual reunion dinner at San Anton Gardens on 19 July, under the auspices of President George Abela, and in the presence of HE the Ambassador for Ireland Mr Jim Hennessy and Mrs Monica Hennessy, HE the Ambassador of Spain, Don Felipe de La Morena and Dona Patricia Bertrand de la Morena, HE the Ambassador of France, M. Michel Van de Poorter and Mme Van de Poorter, HE the Ambassador of the United States, Mrs Gina Abercrombie Winstanley and Mr Winstanly, the Ambassador for Italy Signor Giovanni Umberto de Vito and Signora de Vito and the Ambassador for Germany, Herr Klaus Peter Brandes and Frau Brandes. That this important event on Malta's social calendar was so well attended by the distinguished guests and in great numbers by supporters of *Din l-Art Helwa* is proof of the high regard that is enjoyed by this NGO which has been active in the protection of our national heritage and environment for nearly five decades.



*From left to right:*

*The Ambassador of Spain H E Señor Felipe de la Morena, Dame Blanche Martin, Prof Luciano Mule' Stagno, Señora Patrizia de la Morena, Executive President Mrs Simone Mizzi, Ambassador of Italy H E Dott Giovanni Umberto de Vito and Signora de Vito, Mr Kenneth Mizzi, Mrs Monica Hennessy, Ambassador of Ireland H E Mr Jim Hennessy, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran*

In a welcome speech to all those present, DLH President Simone Mizzi said that the organisation would never have achieved so much without the solid commitment of its members and corporate sponsors, in particular the banking, financial services and business communities who continually support our national heritage, turning out in great numbers for the event, "in particular the Boards of APS Bank Ltd, Bank of Valletta plc, HSBC Bank Malta plc, MSV Life and PwC". She also thanked all those whose generosity had contributed to the success of the evening such as the the sponsors of the raffle prizes, two beautiful paintings by the artist Major John Borg Manduca and several weekend breaks in Malta's leading hotels, and the Quacks for providing delightful music throughout the course of the evening.

Mrs Mizzi paid homage to the volunteers who made the evening possible and all those volunteers who worked for the protection of Malta's heritage throughout 2012. She quantified the 25,000 volunteer hours spent by the *Din l-Art Helwa* volunteers as equivalent to some €250,000 being donated to the nation through sheer hard work. €412,000 was spent in 2012 on the restoration and management of the sites entrusted to the organisation by the state or the Church. Most of this went on the challenging project of restoring Our Lady of Victory Church, again with the stalwart assistance of the business community and with a contribution to the state of almost €80,000 in VAT alone.

While lobbying on the environmental front, Mrs Mizzi said *Din l-Art Helwa* is deeply concerned about the many proposals being made that need studying in-depth before they become reality.



*Mr Martin Scicluna, DLH Treasurer, Executive President Mrs Simone Mizzi, Mark Watkinson, CEO HSBC Bank Malta Plc, Mr Kenneth Mizzi, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran*

"There is much talk of land and its use, hasty revision of local plans, new modalities for the permitting of building and sanctioning of illegalities even in Out of Development Zones", she said. "We are living in interesting times, both in the world and in Malta. Sadly, it is in such times that the environment becomes a pawn to be sacrificed on the altar of economic expediency. I would give you one maxim in which I fiercely believe. It is easy to generate wealth sacrificing our beauty spots and our natural assets, such as our precious coastline, to development. The true skill lies in boosting the economy without this territorial exploitation, and *Din l-Art Helwa* will continue to work to this end."



*HE Mrs Gina Abercrombie Winstanley Ambassador of the USA and Mr Winstanly, with H E Herr Klaus Peter Brandes Ambassador for Germany and Mrs Brandes and DLH's Mrs Simone Mizzi, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran and Prof Lucio Mule Stagno*

*Guests from Bank of Valletta Plc, 2nd from Left is Mr Charles Borg, Bank of Valletta CEO while, 6th from left is Mr Kenneth B Micallef, Head of CEO's Office*



### 17<sup>th</sup> Bir Miftuh International Music Festival

*Din l-Art Helwa* was amongst the first organisations to launch classical music concerts given in historical surroundings that form part of our rich heritage. The idea was the brainchild of Dott. Giuseppe Xausa, then director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Malta. When Judge Maurice Caruana Curran enthusiastically informed him of the work being carried out on the abandoned mediaeval chapel on the outskirts of Gudja, Dott Xausa came up with the idea of holding quality concerts sponsored by the foreign embassies in Malta.

Ever since – for the last 16 years – during the cool late Spring evenings, music *aficionados* have been gathering in the lovely mediaeval chapel of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuh to enjoy quality performances of classic music. These are made possible by the patronage of various embassies and cultural organisations which, while promoting their musical culture, help raise funds for the local heritage that has been entrusted to our prestigious organisation.



*Patrick Bismuth, Baroque violin and  
Bruno Procopio, harpsichord*



*The Lucentum Horn Quartet*

Every year, Cettina Caruana Curran, wife of *Din l-Art Helwa* Founder President Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, works untiringly along with DLH staff and volunteers to make the event a success. This year, *Din l-Art Helwa* was honoured by the assistance of no fewer than four embassies which, through the efforts of their ambassadors and cultural directors, brought to Malta talented artists who enthralled audiences at each of the four concerts.

The first concert of the 17<sup>th</sup> Bir Miftuh International Music Festival was given on Friday, 17 May and featured an unusual combination of Patrick Bismuth on baroque violin and Bruno Procopio on harpsichord. The programme included some fascinating works by Jean-Féry Rebel, François Couperin, Louis-Gabriel Guillemain, Jean-Marie Leclair and Jean-Philippe Rameau. This concert was made possible by the support of the Embassy of France, the French Ambassador HE Michel Vandepoorter and the *Alliance Française de Malte – Méditerranée*, and set the standard for what was to be a highly successful festival offering a sequence of superb performers throughout.

The concert held a week later, on 24 May, was sponsored by the German Embassy and Ambassador HE Hubert Ziegler, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of composer Richard Wagner. This offered the unusual opportunity to listen to a first-class quartet of French horn players, the Lucentum Horn Quartet, comprised of Jose Garcia Gutierrez, Gabriel Garcia Gutierrez, Jose Chanza Soria and Alberto Garcia Izquierdo. Their eclectic programme included stimulating works by Richard Wagner, Carl-Maria Von Weber, Anton Bruckner, Bernhard Edouard Muller, Heinz Reichert, Friedrich Constatin Homilius, Nicolai Tscherepnine and Lowell E. Shaw.

The third concert, on 31 May, saw a special edition concert brought to us by HE Jim Hennessey, Ambassador of Ireland, as part of Culture Ireland's programme to mark the country's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which spanned the first six months of this year. This was a recital by Hugh Tinney, piano, Fionnuala Hunt, violin and Christopher Marwood, cello. The trio is amongst the finest in Ireland and the three musicians form part of the exciting Academy Chamber Ensemble, which has toured extensively through China, America and Europe. They performed some sparkling works by Irish composers John Field and Ian Wilson, a marvellous composition by Antonin Dvorak and a fiery tango by Astor Piazzolla.

This year's festival came to a glorious end on 15 June with Italy's contribution of a virtuoso solo violin recital by Paolo Tagliamento, who is only 15 years old. His performance of hauntingly beautiful works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Eugène Ysaÿe and Niccolò Paganini saw the audience explode into enthusiastic applause – so unbelievably nimble were the young violinist's fingers and so deeply felt the music that flowed from his instrument. *Din l-Art Helwa* is indebted to HE Ambassador Umberto de Vito and Dott Salvatore Schirmo, Director of the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura*, the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry and *Società Umanitaria di Milano*.

All the concerts were followed by a reception in the chapel grounds at which refreshments were served, courtesy of Infinitely Xara, with wines from Marsovin and drinks from General Soft Drinks. These receptions provided the audiences – which included music lovers from various countries – with not only the opportunity to meet the musicians but also to enjoy talking to each other about the joy of music, especially when it is performed in places such as the Chapel of Bir Miftuh, in its original rural surroundings.

*Violinist Paolo Tagliamento*



### Re-enactment at the Red Tower

On Sunday, 23 June members of the Historical Re-enactment Group Malta (HRGM), enacted a typical military camp of the late 18th century, at the Red Tower in Mellieħa. Soldiers of the Militia and Maltese Light Infantry, enacted the rolling of cartridges, cleaning of their muskets, and took part in drills and skirmishes in the surrounding countryside. They were wearing different late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Order of St John Maltese Militia attire and uniform, all of which have been carefully researched by HRGM.

All the equipment, arms and weapons used were authentic to the period and the audience had the chance to ask questions and handle the items. The re-enactors are very knowledgeable and enjoy discussing the characters being represented and the times and roles played by them in Maltese history.

At intervals the soldiers carried out a military drill, including the firing of the replica weapons used, as presented in the original 18<sup>th</sup>-century manuals.

The Red Tower was erected by Grand Master Lascaris in 1647 to guard and protect the channel between Malta and Gozo from incursions by the Ottoman Turks. The tower watchmen would have spotted oncoming enemy vessels a good 12 hours ahead of their arrival to shore: there is a magnificent 360° view of the surrounding area from the roof of the tower.

### Din l-Art Helwa's Youth in Action programme wins 2013 award and is nominated for Best Practice in Brussels

A group of young volunteers contributing to *Din L-Art Helwa's* restoration project at the Church of Tal-Hniena in Qrendi have been awarded a grant for 2013 through the EU-funded *Youth in Action* programme. This follows last year's successful grant-winning activity that gave rise to a very effective *Youth in Action* exchange during which 18 young people from both Malta and elsewhere in Europe took part in cultural interaction and training activities centred on the conservation of the 1645 Tal-Hniena Church, a historic place of worship and a national shrine.

This was organised by *Din l-Art Helwa*, along with professional conservators, and focused on visits to historic sites, lectures about best practice in conservation, spending time with the local community of Qrendi and studying traditional stone conservation practices such as the art of 'deffun' laying and the preparation and application of lime mortar mix. The 2013 youth exchange will take place in France – again with the collaboration of *Din l-Art Helwa's* French partner, *Union Rempart*, an NGO active in the restoration of fortifications and historic buildings. This year, the Maltese group will be joining their French counterparts in the north of France to work on the restoration of a mediaeval castle in Coucy.

The 2012 *Din l-Art Helwa* Youth in Action event was nominated as one of the top 10 nominees for the European *Youth in Action Best Practice* awards. Newly graduated architect Tara Cassar, leading the Maltese group, was invited to collect this award at the ceremony that took place in Brussels during European Youth Week, which saw various NGOs working across Europe meeting and sharing their stories and experiences in voluntary work.

Tara Cassar said: "The event was in itself a learning opportunity as it allowed all of us there to not only share our own stories but, in turn, to listen to one another's and opened our eyes to the vast achievements that can be attained through the *Youth in Action* funding programme. It is very motivating to recognise the positive change that is taking place across Europe and to learn how we can continue to develop our contribution to the community on a national and international level through the *Youth in Action* programme. In our case, the Church of Tal-Hniena is a wonderful shrine of great historic and religious importance for Malta that needs urgent conservation. Its restoration is critical and although much is left to be done, we are proud to have done our bit to save a small part of it. We are greatly honoured to have been chosen again to continue with this activity in 2013, this time to work on a historic property in France." The *Youth in Action* programme is organised with the assistance of the European Union Programmes Agency.



*Architect Tara Cassar and Fabrice Duffaud, head of the International Relations Office of Union Rempart during the Advance Planning YIA week in Paris.*

*Conservator James Licari with youth exchange students at Tal-Hniena, Qrendi*



### Cooperation on EU-funded projects

*Din l-Art Helwa* was recently awarded an EU grant from the Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme, which makes it possible for NGOs to attend conferences and organise exchanges with similar organisations from EU member countries. DLH Executive President Simone Mizzi attended Europa Nostra's 50th Anniversary Forum in Athens in June at which the Pan European Cultural Heritage Organisation celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The award was made possible with the assistance of the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), and an event was held at the committee's offices in Republic Street, Valletta at which Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties Minister Helena Dalli met with award-winning NGOs, local councils, and MEUSAC staff.

Signing the Visibility Agreement with MEUSAC for EU-funded projects, Simone Mizzi said: "The assistance of MEUSAC to NGOs is invaluable: it makes it possible for organisations such as *Din l-Art Helwa* to be aware that funding can be available to help us in various aspects of our work, and then to ensure that our grant applications conform to the high standards required. We are grateful to Alison Camilleri and Annabelle Khalil for their enthusiasm and untiring support. In our voluntary work, every penny counts. It was a privilege to participate in Europa Nostra's Golden Jubilee celebration forum in Athens with funding made possible by EU programmes.



*Simone Mizzi signs the Grant Scheme Agreement for Visibility of EU-funded programmes in the presence of the Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, the Hon Helena Dalli and Dr Vanni Xuereb, Head of Meusac*

### Din l-Art Helwa Lectures 2013/2014

*Din l-Art Helwa's* next season of monthly cultural talks will begin in October and run through until June. The full programme is shown below. Please note that the lectures will start at 6.30 pm and not 6 pm as in previous years. All lectures will take place at the Judge Caruana Curran Hall, *Din l-Art Helwa*, 133 Melita Street, Valletta.

#### Thursday, 10 October

*Selmun: Delights and Dilapidations*

By Professor Anthony Bonanno, BA(Hons) (Melit), D Lett (Palermo), PhD (London), FSA and Judge Joe Galea Debono, BA (Hons), LLD

#### Tuesday, 15 October

*Underwater Forests*

By Dr Joseph A. Borg  
(organised by Majjistral Park)

#### Thursday, 14 November

*The Magistral Art Collection*

(A study on the art collections of the Grand Masters)  
by Dr Therese Vella (International Institute of Baroque Studies, University of Malta)

#### Thursday, 12 December

*Bejn Kliem u Storja*

(A talk explaining the link of Maltese words with the island's history).

by Martin Morana

The talk will be given in Maltese with notes in English.

#### Thursday, 9 January

*Industrial Heritage in Malta*

By Professor Dr Robert Ghirlando, BSc(Eng), MEng, PhD, FIMech.E, Eur.Ing

#### Tuesday, 4 February

*Underwater Landscapes*

By Dr Aaron Micallef  
(organised by Majjistral Park)

#### Thursday, 13 February

*Relics and reliquaries in the Diocese of Malta during the Baroque period*

By Fr Edgar Vella

#### Thursday, 13 March

*Archaeological research carried out in Roman sites in Malta*

By archaeologist David Cardona

#### Thursday, 10 April

*The Grand Master presides over Strait Street*

By Professor Peter Vassallo, BA (Hons), BA(Oxon), MA(Oxon), PhD(Oxon)

#### Thursday, 8 May

*Maltese wall paintings and mural decorations: techniques and deterioration – team work and documentation*

By Daniela Murphy Corella, ACR

(With an introduction by Dr Cynthia de Giorgio, CEO St Johns Co-Cathedral)

#### Thursday, 12 June

*Environmental Management in Malta*

By Professor Louis Cassar, CBiol, MIBiol, PGDip(Env.Mgt), MSc(Env.Plan&Mgt), PhD(Reading)

### In memory of Tim and Anne Crosthwait – generous benefactors of *Din l-Art Helwa*

*Din l-Art Helwa* has received a generous legacy from Anne Crosthwait, who passed away last year, and would like to dedicate this part of *Vigilo* to her memory and to that of her husband, Tim. Anne was a most loyal member of *Din l-Art Helwa* and had a great love of Malta and knowledge of its history, art



and architecture. Tim Crosthwait, who died in 2006, was British Deputy High Commissioner to Malta in 1965 and was instrumental in the formation of *Din l-Art Helwa*.

The love Tim and Anne had for Malta came from many years spent in their house in Lija, and from the many good friends they acquired on the island. We thank their heirs and will ensure that the legacy is dedicated to the continuance of the mission of the organisation that they supported for so many years.

*Tim Crosthwait*     *Anne Crosthwait*



### Malta Mediterranean Literature Festival at Msida Bastion Historic Garden

The Malta Mediterranean Literature Festival, now in its eighth year, was held between 29 and 31 August. As in the previous two years, the venue for the festival was the Msida Bastion Historic Garden.

The writers participating this year were Angela Bonanno (Sicily), Tsead Bruinja (Netherlands), Maria Grech Ganado (Malta), Khaled Khalifa (Syria), Mazen Maarouf (Palestine), Nikola Madzirov (Macedonia, FYROM), Immanuel Mifsud (Malta), Denisa Mirena Pescu (Romania), Monique Roffey (UK), Karl Schembri (Malta/Gaza) and Fahredin Shehu (Kosova). Short films from Reel Festivals were shown every night, while live unconventional music was played by Jes Psaila, Justin Galea, Michael Galea, Joe Debono and Manuel Pulis.

The festival was organised by *Inizjamed*, with the support of various partners, namely *Din l-Art Helwa*, the British Council, Middlesea Insurance, the European Commission Representation in Malta, Reel Festivals and the Culture Programme Success Scheme run by the Cultural Contact Point of Malta.



### International Marine Bird Area launched at Red Tower

The stretch from Ta' Ċenċ Cliffs to Irdum il-Madonna at Mellieħa has been designated an Important Bird Area (IBA). This was announced by Birdlife Malta from the roof of the Red Tower, which affords the best views of the area involved.

The designation of the Gozo Channel as an IBA is scientific recognition of the area's global significance for three threatened bird species: the Yelkouan Shearwater, the Scopoli's Shearwater and the Ferruginous Duck. One of the species, the Yelkouan Shearwater, is listed as "vulnerable" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of endangered species and Malta has 10 per cent of the species' breeding population.

*The launching of the International Marine Bird Area*  
Photo: Susan Mompalao de Piro





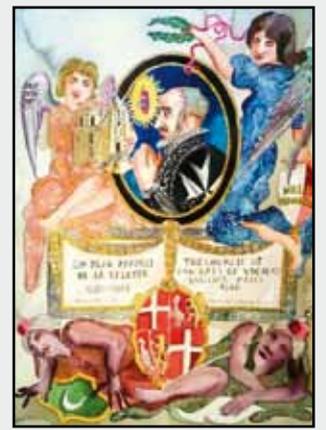
*Bir Miftuħ Church and  
Elisabetta Moscati Scerberras  
Marchesa di Xrob l-Għagin*

### Special Xmas offer on the 'HERITAGE SAVED' limited edition prints

The Heritage Saved limited edition watercolour prints by Kenneth Zammit Tabona, launched to raise funds for the Our Lady of Victory Restoration Project are now more relevant than ever, at the start of the second phase of this challenging project to save Valletta's first church and its Alessio Erardi ceiling paintings.

The prints, signed by Kenneth Zammit Tabona, come in two sets of six and are normally available at €120 per set, and at a reduced price of €100 to members of *Din l-Art Helwa*. Until 31 December, the prints will be available at half price, ie €60 per set and €50 to members.

This limited edition makes a great Christmas present and will help raise the much-needed funds for the restoration of the church. Please do spread the word.



*Our Lady of Victory Church  
and Grand Master La Valette*

### Villa Frere lecture

The last of the 2012-2013 series of monthly *Din l-Art Helwa* lectures, which was in July, was not, as is customary, given at our headquarters but at the conference hall of Malta Enterprise in one of the buildings of the former St Luke's Hospital complex. The choice of venue was determined by the subject being discussed: the Garden of Villa Frere. Part of the hospital, in fact, rises over a portion of this once famous site.

In 1836, in the best British tradition, the Rt Hon. John Hookham Frere began creating a beautiful estate on a hill facing Msida Creek. The garden was attached to the villa that replaced the original seaside residence he had rented for himself and his wife Lady Errol who, by the time work on the garden had started, had sadly passed away. The design of Hookham Frere's garden was one of the earliest cultural manifestations of the newly established British rule on a monumental level, he being one of the first British citizens of note to make Malta his home, following the island's annexation to the territories controlled by the British Crown.

The garden was conceived as an English romantic landscape garden with some Mediterranean overtones. Like most artistic creations, the design is a reflection of the person who conceived it and many details betray Hookham Frere's passion for classical scholarship. Most prominent among these is the *exedra* which eventually became known as "the temple". The highest point of the garden was occupied by the belvedere, reached by the so-called "lovers walk", from where John Hookham Frere could look out across the creek towards the Msida Bastion Cemetery where his beloved wife had found eternal rest.

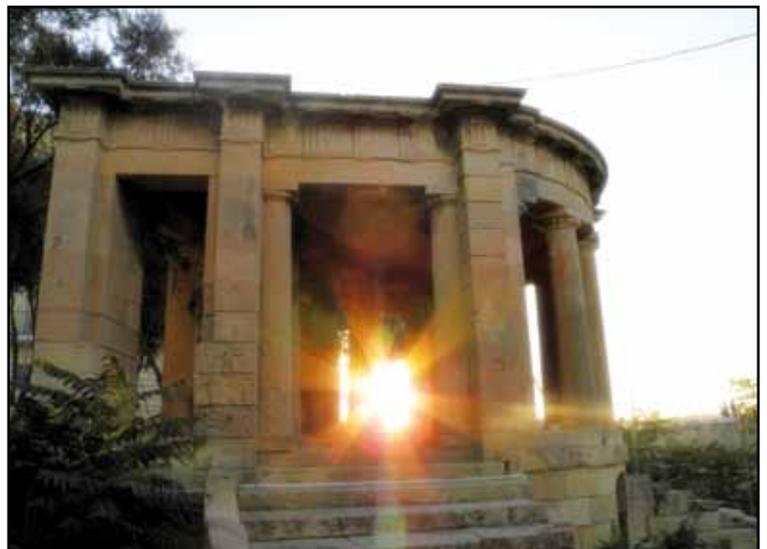
Following the demise of Hookham Frere in 1846, the villa and gardens were abandoned for a period and then, in 1860, they were rented by Count Rosario Messina who, as the name suggests, was of Sicilian origin but whose wife was Maltese. The lease was then passed on to their daughter, who married Captain Edward Price, a retired naval officer and keen gardener, who took in hand the first restoration of the grounds which by then had been established for 60 years and had become an attraction for British visitors to the Island. Just as in its first layout the garden reflected the classical inclinations of Hookham Frere, so touches added by Price reflected his world-wide travels. This was most evident in the Japanese Garden, which included a bamboo fence, lanterns and an alcove housing a Buddha. The garden also had its moment of international fame when, on 5 July 1930, it was featured in *Country Life*, one of the most prominent publications of its genre in the UK.

The *Din l-Art Helwa* lecture was delivered by Josephine Tyndale-Biscoe, the great-granddaughter of Captain Price and author of *A Lost Maltese Garden – John Hookham Frere's masterpiece*, and architect Edward Said who, in 2012 was awarded a Master's degree in historic landscapes preservation from the University of Bath, made possible through the STEPS scholarship awarded by the Maltese Ministry of Education. His thesis focused on the design and development of the Villa Frere estate.

To an attentive audience, the speakers delivered a comprehensive historic and descriptive analysis of this remarkable site, as originally laid out by Hookham Frere, and its development through time. The garden's architectural design and landscaping was also considered in the light of what remains today.

In conclusion, an outline vision stating why and how the conservation of what remains of this villa and its garden should be carried out was presented. Mr Said identified the surviving sections of the property and also other elements that are now located off site, such as the well head in the forecourt of Casa Leone and various stone benches. He emphasised that one of the most pressing issues is the restoration of part of the garden's original perimeter by reintegrating the *exedra* and belvedere with the surviving historic landscape. These were severed with the construction of St Luke's Hospital and the Hookham Frere Primary School.

The lecture also provided an appropriate occasion to present to the public a newly established association – the Friends of Villa Frere – the aim of which is raising awareness of the villa and its important garden and giving shape to a plan for the restoration of its surviving elements. The Friends of Villa Frere may be contacted on 21 32 0520 or [villafreere@gmail.com](mailto:villafreere@gmail.com)



*The sun setting behind the exedra of the Villa Frere gardens*

## Lessons from Athens - Simone Mizzi attends Europa Nostra's 50th Anniversary

Europa Nostra, the pan-European organisation that encompasses some 282 associations working to save cultural heritage across Europe, celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The organisation represents a growing citizens' movement for the safeguarding of Europe's cultural and natural heritage and its network of members form an influential lobby for cultural heritage. Its President is Maestro Placido Domingo.

This year's Golden Jubilee and the annual forum were held in June at the New Acropolis Museum in Athens, built to house the splendid remains of the Parthenon and its vast statuary at the foot of the Acropolis itself. To be able to visit this with Europa Nostra was indeed a privilege. *Din l-Art Helwa* is one of the early members of Europa Nostra and as a member of its Council, I was able to put forward views and make recommendations for the protection of heritage.

The main issue of common concern to all those attending the forum is the increasing threat to natural and built heritage from construction and development. The European recession and the dire straits of some economies are being used as excuses by governments to justify the need for new development. This is very much in line with what has been said in Malta by our new administration, only our economy is not in such a bad shape. To quote the mantra of the day: "Construction is necessary to boost productive activity". In some member states, whole areas encompassing important European heritage are being sold to offset the national debt and this is a great worry. Vigilance and lobbying by NGOs is now of the utmost necessity and all members found they are strongly bound by the intention to increase such activity. To this end, Europa Nostra launched its *Most Endangered Monuments Scheme*, backed by the European Investment Bank with their knowledge of the regeneration of economies. I have already suggested the establishment in Malta of a similar scheme to the Tourism Minister Karmenu Vella, the Culture Secretariat and Parliamentary Secretary Jose Herrera and also to Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, all of whom were most interested in the benefits of such a scheme to Malta. So watch this space.

The event in Athens was jointly organised by Europa Nostra and Europa Nostra's country representation in Greece, *Elliniki Etairia* (the Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage), managed bravely and passionately by Costa Carras, Vice President of Europa Nostra and co-founder of *Elliniki Etairia*. Costa is fearless in his defence of heritage. In his opening address welcoming everyone to the Forum, he traced the history of Europa Nostra since its foundation, when after the formation of *Venice in Peril* by Sir Duncan Sandys, it was felt that a European organisation was needed to address the advancing threats to heritage. During his address, I had the honour of hearing him mention Judge Maurice Caruana Curran and praising him as one of the forward thinkers whose driving force had left a profound mark on the formation of Europa Nostra in its early days. *Din l-Art Helwa* joined Europa Nostra in 1967 and was represented by Judge Caruana Curran for many years, ably followed by Martin Scicluna who served then on its board, helping to take the organisation forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is an honour for me to follow in their footsteps.

The culmination of each year's forum, but especially that of this year's Golden Jubilee, is Europa Nostra's Heritage Award Ceremony, which took place in the magnificent *Odeion of Herodes Atticus*, an imposing structure of the second century AD. This theatre lies just below the Acropolis and its monuments, which are floodlit at night, provide a magical setting indeed. Seeing them reaching up to the sky as they do, they cannot fail to remind us of the contribution to thinking and to the democratic process that those early Athenians made to mankind in the space of just a few hundred years.

Malta should learn from Athens, as our beautiful island is fast following in its footsteps. I refer to the disastrous effects that development has had on its appearance. The city of Athens today is a rather unpleasant sprawling urban centre of unsightly cement apartment blocks, its gracious neo classic buildings lost to speculation with no adequate planning for any public open spaces nor the use of traditional building methods or materials. It is saved by the air one breathes while



*The Acropolis Museum in Athens*



*The Parthenon Room of the Acropolis Museum*



*Europa Nostra President  
Placido Domingo presenting  
The Europa Nostra  
Architectural Heritage Awards*

*Opposite:  
New development  
pushing against the  
built heritage in Sliema*

on the Acropolis, by the distant lure of the sea and beautiful islands, and by the presence of ancient Byzantine chapels on every street corner.

Through the efforts of the NGO *Elliniki Etairia*, the advance of construction was halted in the ancient Plaka area, where the traditional quarters were saved and are being cleared of inappropriate new buildings to enhance public spaces, and the gardens leading to the Acropolis and within the Agora. Here the restoration of old houses, and the creation of pedestrian areas does send a message of optimism, very much as *Din l-Art Helwa's* efforts have done in Malta, where as many as 37 national monuments have been saved through restoration and reuse since our foundation in 1965.

The Europa Nostra Architectural Awards Scheme celebrates excellence in partnership with the European Commission. It campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes and seeks to influence European and national policies related to heritage in much in the same way as *Din l-Art Helwa's* annual Award Scheme for Architectural Heritage in Malta. Europa Nostra's awards ceremony was attended by the Greek Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth Androulla Vassiliou who, together with Maestro Placido Domingo, presented the winners with their awards. This year's European Prize for Cultural Heritage in the Conservation category was won by a most unusual restoration scheme, that of Tallinn Seaplane Harbour in Tallinn, Estonia. The scheme provided for the study and restoration of the first reinforced concrete seaplane hangers of 1912 and the formation of a popular maritime museum that is now playing a great part in the regeneration of the rundown port area of the Estonian capital.

The award for a Lifetime of Dedicated Service to Cultural Heritage was deservedly awarded to the Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments, a team that has been working for several decades to reverse the negative effects of time, neglect, pillage, pollution and inappropriate interventions. This prize was won by Judge Maurice Caruana Curran back in 2004. I was privileged to attend a workshop discussing the challenging restoration of the temples, monuments and their statuary and no doubt the scheme to save the Acropolis, with its many treasures still lying hidden below the ground, will continue for many decades to come. Such is the work involved in saving heritage. It requires not just funding, but conscience, constancy and commitment.

To learn more about Europa Nostra and this year's Award Scheme, visit [www/europanostra.org](http://www/europanostra.org). It is well worth browsing among the network of conservation schemes that were found worthy of an award this year. You will appreciate the huge amount of work that is going on in Europe to save heritage across so many countries. I can honestly say *Din l-Art Helwa* is doing its bit.



*New development vanquishing the build heritage.  
Photo: Cultura Inquieta*

**Simone Mizzi is grateful to the Grundtwig EU funding scheme which made her participation in the 2013 Europa Nostra Forum possible, and to the untiring support shown by the MEUSAC team.**



# "Friends of Ta' Braxia" - An Update

*Chev. Charles Gatt - President of the "Friends of Ta' Braxia Cemetery"*

It has been the Friends' practice for a number of years to invite the British High Commissioner to undertake the role of Vice-President of the Association on taking up duty in Malta. I am therefore pleased to announce that HE Mr Rob Luke has accepted the invitation.

The Friends of Ta' Braxia Association has existed for 12 years, having been founded by *Din l-Art Helwa* Founder President Judge Maurice Caruana Curran. The number of Friends at present is 65, the majority of whom are foreign nationals from many different countries but mainly from Britain. For a cemetery where almost 5,000 people are buried, it could be expected that the number of Friends would be much higher. However, establishing contact with the owners of graves, especially those abroad, is often impossible as in many cases the lineage of the original owners has long ceased to exist. Some owners are not interested in becoming Friends as they expect the

government to ensure that the cemetery is kept in a respectable condition, as is the case with graves in the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The cemetery would sink into a state of total disrepair were it not for the few volunteers who spend some of their valuable time working there. The work involves the management and administration of the Association, representing *Din l-Art Helwa* on important visits by foreign dignitaries or representatives, dealing with enquiries from visitors, cleaning and maintaining the chapel, co-ordinating gardening work, carrying out minor structural repairs and restoration, cleaning gravestones – especially of Friends' graves, painting, planting new trees and carrying out historical research.

This year, 10 new cypress trees have been planted and all the palm trees have been regularly sprayed to eradicate the palm weevil, which had attacked a number of them. We managed to save all of the palms except one. At present, our main volunteers and co-ordinators are Andy Welsh, Tony Camilleri, Brian Tarpey and myself, but we do invite volunteers to join us. This year we have had help from HSBC employees working on the bank's corporate volunteer scheme. As a result of this support, 13 large perimeter railings were sanded down and painted by the HSBC team under the direction of Gordon Xerxen. HSBC also funded the cost of the materials, for which we thank them.

Meetings were held during the year with the Minister of Health and the Elderly and the Directorate of Public Health to discuss the difficulties and shortcomings of running the cemetery. These meetings covered aspects that had been already been raised at previous meetings, including the need to restore the memorial chapel, the dangerous state of the caretaker's house – which has for years been occupied by a squatter, the ineffective caretakers assigned to the site and the repair of the collapsed section of the perimeter wall. As before, no progress has been made on the concerns raised in spite of plans drawn and estimates obtained by the Association and presented to the government. We hope the new administration will respond to our pleas.

Also discussed with the Minister was a plan projected by the Association to take over the management of the site. This would be made possible by the construction of about 130 new graves, the structural plan for which has already been submitted and approved by Mepa. It was proposed that the proceeds from selling the new graves would be fed



*HSBC volunteers at Ta' Braxia*

**If you wish to become a Friend of Ta' Braxia, or just want to volunteer to assist Chev. Charles Gatt and his team, please email [cagatt@global.net.mt](mailto:cagatt@global.net.mt).**

*The Galizia fountain*



directly into the costly restoration of the important neo-gothic chapel and the Emmanuele Luigi Galizia fountain – both of which are in a precarious state – and improving the condition of the garden itself. This project, based on a sound business plan prepared by the Association, appeared to have been favourably considered by the Ministry. However, it was stated that other not dissimilar projects were being considered for the Addolorata and other cemeteries and our proposal would be further considered taking account of the experience gained from those projects.

The cemetery attracts a number of visitors during the year, mainly casual but also in groups. We have had visits by dignitaries, representatives or groups from Russia, France, Israel, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and others. We have not, however, seen the coach-loads of visitors that used to visit in previous years. Although we received some publicity through articles in DLH publications such as *Vigilo* and the Ta' Braxia Cemetery Guide booklet, as well as a very well-presented TVM programme, we feel that the site is not sufficiently organised and tidy to turn it into a "must-see" destination for tourists and locals without correcting the many shortcomings previously mentioned, as this would result in negative publicity not only for the cemetery but also for Malta.

In the meantime, the Friends continue their struggle to keep the cemetery as respectable as is reasonably possible. Activities such as the regular visits by Russian nationals led by their Ambassador to pay their respects to the many Russians buried there, the visits and AGM by the Ramblers Association and the services held in the chapel by the Friends on All Souls Day and other services by Christian denominations, prevent the cemetery from becoming virtually abandoned.

I must certainly finish by thanking all members and friends of the Association who support our cause and, of course, the volunteers who give their precious time and often provide financial help. The combined aim of all these people is to try and keep Ta Braxia Cemetery in a respectable state.

### The significance of Ta' Braxia Cemetery

As we pursue the work of the Friends of Ta' Braxia Cemetery we are very aware of the significance of this place. Ta' Braxia was consecrated by the Right Reverend George Tomlinson, first Bishop of Gibraltar, on 17 June 1857. (Malta was part of the Diocese of Gibraltar – the See was run from Malta but for diplomatic reasons the seat of the diocese was given to Gibraltar.) The first interment in the cemetery was that of Lieutenant Thomas Coakley, a survivor of the Crimean War, who died at the early age of 20 on 30 October 1857. Most of the other fatalities of the War had already died and the existing facilities were packed with them. As most of these were not Roman Catholic, they were buried in the great burial ground that starts at the Valletta Bastions where the Excelsior Hotel now stands and runs on to the Ospicio, including the old British Cemetery, the Quarantine and Cholera graveyards, the Greek Orthodox Cemetery and the Msida Bastion Cemetery, also consecrated by Bishop Tomlinson, when St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral was consecrated in 1843. On the other side of the water was the Rock Gate Cemetery. All these cemeteries were abandoned and most of the graves cleared with the exception of the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest, restored by *Din l-Art Helwa* over an 11-year period.

Ta' Braxia was the first properly designed and laid out cemetery, in the open fields called Ta' Braxia, adjacent to the small Jewish cemetery, granted to the Jewish community in 1831. It was the work of Emmanuele Luigi Galizia, the young architect of the Works Department as was the design of its beautiful fountain. The cemetery was his first commission and made his name. In 1857, only the first section existed: the rest came later as the need arose. The cemetery was intended to be ecumenical, and persons of many

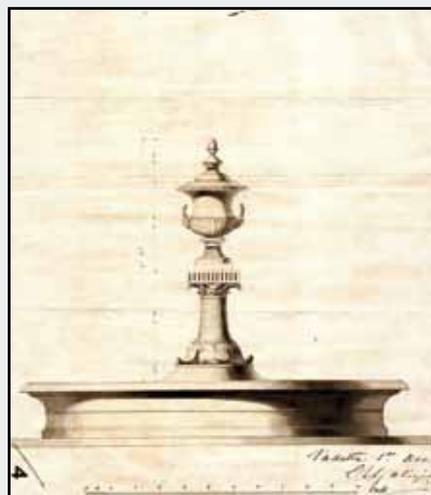
different religious persuasions are laid to rest in it. The cemetery was handed over to the Maltese government between the wars and subsequently many Roman Catholics have chosen it as their last resting place. It is now effectively full, but it is hoped that in due course a number of additional vaults can be constructed to meet the needs of a substantial waiting list. Worthy of note is the memorial to Captain Andrew Moynihan of the 90th Regiment Cameronians Scottish Rifles who was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry during the Crimean War in 1855 at the age of 25.

Nearly 5,000 people are buried in Ta' Braxia, which may sound a great many but approximately that number die in Malta every year, and this would have been the case in 1857, when the population was much smaller but life expectancy was about a third of what it is now. However, Malta cannot cope indefinitely with the increasing number of burials. A few bodies are donated to the Pathology Department, some are buried at sea, and some are repatriated abroad, but most are laid in the ground in the traditional way. Addolorata and many village cemeteries have been and are being expanded, but there is a limit to the amount of land that can be used in this way. Eventually cremation will have to be introduced, despite the fact that it is still not acceptable to many.

The bulk of the burials in Ta' Braxia go back many years, to a time when belief in the afterlife was vivid and was seriously taken "in sure and certain knowledge of the resurrection of the body" and of meeting again in heaven. At one of our All Souls Day services we had a homily from Peter Wolfenden in which he likened our work to that of actors on a stage, watched by a huge silent audience of those who had gone before. This has always resonated with me and I feel we are expected to do our best for this beautiful place and see that the graves continue to be given the respect they originally received. The Friends of Ta' Braxia will continue to strive towards this end.

### An appeal to save The Galizia Fountain

Both *Din l-Art Helwa* and The Friends of Ta' Braxia continue to seek funds for the restoration of the cemetery's Galizia Fountain, which was designed by Emmanuele Luigi Galizia, the architect of the cemetery and later of the Addolorata Cemetery. This is now in a very poor state of repair and requires urgent remedial work. Two-thirds of the decorative stonework has now sunk into the water in the basin of the fountain and is badly eroded. The entire structure is on the point of collapse and is being held together with wire.



*Galizia's design for the fountain at Ta' Braxia*

The church is now undergoing some major changes to the ground floor and in the sacristy area, and we would not like you to be alarmed when you enter and find it full of scaffolding. In spite of this, it continues to attract many visitors, some of the highest order...

**Visit from the President**

In April we were honoured by a visit from President George Abela, who is the patron of our organisation, which left us re-energised and motivated. He spoke of his great love for restoration, and enjoyed a part tutorial with the university students who are participating in the MSc course in Conservation of decorated architectural surfaces. A team of young architects and art historians are, of course, working on Victory Church as part of their study work. The President was full of praise for the work *Din l-Art Helwa* is doing and left us a beautiful message in the Victory Book, which we will cherish as one of the new treasures of the church.

**Visit from the Prime Minister**

On 6 September we were honoured by a visit from Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and Mrs Muscat. They were welcomed and escorted around the church by Executive President Simone Mizzi, the *Din l-Art Helwa* Victory Team of volunteers and Council members, together with the Rector Mgr Anton Galea. The Prime Minister and Mrs Muscat signed the Victory Book and were presented with two copies of the DLH and HSBC Heritage Map of Malta by Kenneth Zammit Tabona for their twin daughters.

**Giving OLV the works**

As referred to at the beginning of this article, there is now scaffolding behind the main altar and down one side of the church, and the scaffolding over the front door has been extended. This is because we are working on parts of the church that have never been treated before, namely the apse, the organ loft, the perimeter walls on the ground floor and the funerary monument to Angelo Emo, the last Grand Admiral of Venice. The work on the Emo monument, by Maltese sculptor Sigismondo Dimech, has been commissioned to Giuseppe Mantella Restauri. The MSc students, working under the supervision of Prof. JoAnn Cassar and Conservator Roberta de Angelis, are studying the parts of the vault over the altar and the entrance, while on the ground floor work is continuing on uncovering the original decoration and gilding that still lies beneath centuries of inappropriate painting. Justine Balzan Demajo, a conservator in her final year of studies in Florence, worked with us during the summer to patiently strip away the flaking walls resulting from years of over-painting. The lower ground courses of one side of the church are now complete.

We continue to assess the viability of uncovering the original paint work on the perimeter walls, the altar niches and their sculptures. This is proving perhaps the most difficult and challenging part of the project so far. We are grateful to PwC and the Alfred Mizzi Foundation for funding this part of the work that will identify the correct method to use on the perimeter murals and the altars.

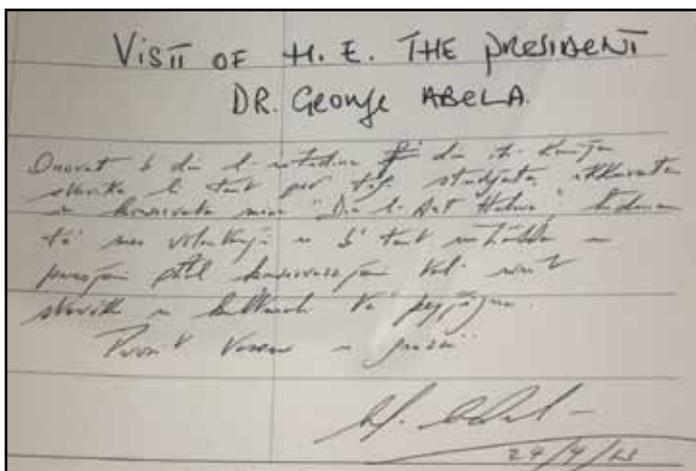
**The vaulted ceiling**

The spring campaign by the Courtauld Institute on the Erardi ceiling stopped in May for the summer and resumed on 14 October. The spring restoration period saw work on the segment depicting *The Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple* almost complete. Lisa Shekede and Steven Rickerby of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London will remain with an enlarged team for an extended period of work up to next spring. Special tuition with the university is being organised for the MSc students so we can ensure that we can pass on much of the knowledge and skill acquired. The conservation of the Erardi vaulted ceiling is generously sponsored by the HSBC Malta Foundation.

An Update on the Progress  
 Simon  
 Executive President

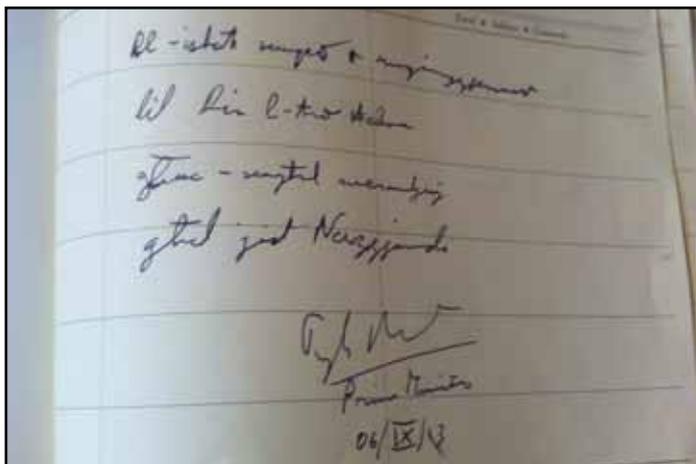


President Abela studying the photogrammetry portfolio of Our lady of Victory Church



President Abela's dedication in the Victory Book

Opposite:  
 Simone Mizzi accompanies Prime Minister  
 Dr Joseph Muscat and Mrs Muscat during their visit



The Prime Minister's signature in the Victory Book

# at Our Lady of Victory Church

e Mizzi

t of Din l-Art Helwa

## Scientific studies

Conservators Amy Sciberras and Francesca Muscat have concluded an in-depth study into the deterioration of the walls to determine the reason – often rising or penetrating damp. The study will be extended when minerals and salts extraction tests are carried out on the walls this autumn to determine how active the rising damp problem is and what measures can be taken to minimise its impact.

## New lighting system

The installation of a new “art-friendly” lighting system is continuing. The old cabling system has been carefully removed and the new wiring system will be passed behind a wooden skirting or low dado that is being made specifically so that no structural changes will be required. A series of stylish light poles will direct lighting to the altar niches which will each bear a discreet description. The wooden skirting will be painted to match the walls. This work will be funded by Mepa’s Urban Improvements Planning Fund and by a grant from the National Lottery’s Good Causes Fund.

## The organ cases

Excitement continued to mount as conservators Erika Falzon and Michael Formosa, having studied the organ cases, proceeded to remove the existing layers of inappropriate paint. Beautiful original gilding on a green background has been revealed on the organ cabinet itself, confirming our belief that this cabinet was either of Sicilian origin or else made in Malta under Sicilian influence, and dates from around 1790. The Tanner Trust has contributed to the cost of this work.



*The well shaft found at Victory Church*

## Events and concerts

A successful season of lunch-time concerts, with the tremendous support of the Kalypso Ensemble, was held in spring and early summer. We thank this wonderfully talented team of musicians for their wide and varied performances and hope to continue them in the autumn – as soon as the heavy work in the church is concluded.

## Guide books, audio guides and other forms of communication

Work has almost been concluded on these guides, which will greatly enhance the visitor’s experience. Recordings have been made in six languages for the audio guides, which will feature religious music, including Maltese pieces, in the background. This project has been coordinated by DLH Communications Officer Pat Salomone, herself a talented linguist. *Vigilo* editor Joe Azzopardi has written the Guide Book to Victory Church, which was edited by Pat, and we hope this will soon be published. A brief guide for visitors to the church is now also available. The provision of all communication material is being made possible through funding from Vodafone Malta Foundation and we also hope to receive a regional grant for sustainable tourism in this regard.

## The crypt of Grand Master de Valette

A beautiful cover for the crypt, fashioned in wrought iron and bearing a bronze eight-pointed Cross, has been created by a skilled Naxxar blacksmith, Patrick ‘il-Muzzan’, working with traditional techniques. An ingenious system designed by architect Edward Said will allow a view into the crypt from above through a mirror.

## Guttenberg’s Madonna

Amy Sciberras, resident conservator of Victory Church, has almost completed the delicate restoration of the *Guttenberg Madonna and Child*, which had suffered a considerable amount of damage. This painting bears the coat of arms of Fra Wolfgang Philip von Guttenberg, a most pious and wealthy knight of the Order of St John. He was devoted to the Virgin Mary and, as Bailiff of Guttenberg, he personally endowed many churches in Malta with beautiful works of art. Other works of art in Victory Church are also being treated, including the many silver devotions that hang on the altar to St Philip Neri and the two gilded wooden coats of arms of Grant Master de Valette and Grand Master Lascaris, which were found in the sacristy. We continue to be very grateful to PwC for their support with the work on the many art treasures contained in the church.

### Disinfestation

The least glamorous part of our work has been the disinfestation process. This has meant literally emptying the church of its contents so that they can be sorted for treatment. We have been fortunate in being able to treat the items on site in the church annexe, an invaluable space since its use has meant that it has not been necessary for these valuables to leave the premises. In order that this work can proceed behind closed doors, the church will not be open to the public between 16 September and 14 October.

### Finding the well

After two years of searching for a well (every building in Valletta has a well) the well shaft has been found and speleologists (caves and karst features researchers) have been sought to check it out with video cameras. The discovery was a very exciting moment as this was probably the first well in Valletta. Knowing where it lies will help us trace and prevent rising damp. The results of the investigations will be announced shortly.

### The whole of Malta is indeed indebted to the sponsors and volunteers of Victory Church

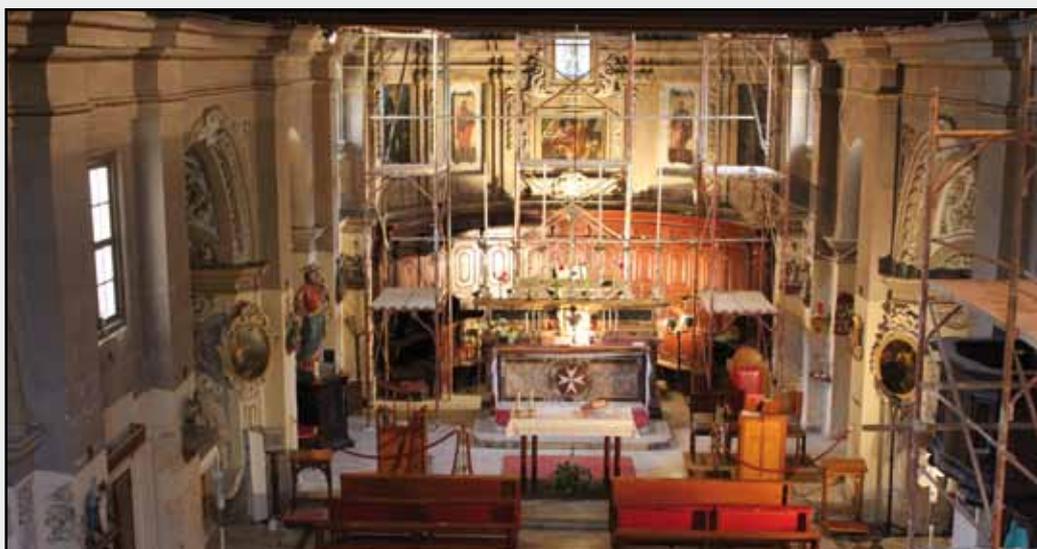
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many sponsors who continue to support this incredible project through their generosity. HSBC Malta Foundation will continue to fund the work on the Alessio Erardi ceiling paintings, while PricewaterhouseCooper (PwC), The Alfred Mizzi Foundation, The Strickland Foundation, The Vodafone Malta Foundation, The Farsons Foundation, P Cutajar & Co. Ltd, Corinthia Group and many others shown on the Victory Team table have renewed their sponsorships for 2013 and well into 2014/2015.

We also remain indebted to the dedicated team of volunteers at DLH who focus on Victory Church, in particular the untiring commitment of Ms Amy Sciberras, resident conservator at OLV, Josie Ellul Mercer, Albert Mamo, George Camilleri, Pat Salamone, Albert Calleja, our handyman John Gafa, and to the HSBC early retiree volunteers and PwC students who provide invaluable hours. It is through the efforts of all those mentioned that this building, so unique for its historic, religious and artistic legacy, is being slowly but surely saved for the nation.

### FUNDING NEEDED FOR PHASE 2 OF THE VICTORY CHURCH PROJECT

*so that work can carry on uninterrupted*

While funding has been secured to allow us to continue well into 2014, we are now looking for funds to carry on with Phase 2 of the Victory Church project in Autumn 2014 and then into 2015. This comprises the restoration of the sacristy and its annexe, the conversion of rooms for the better display of the sacristy works of art, the replacement of the electricity supply to this part of the church and the costly replacement of the ancient storage cupboards – which have been completely eroded by termites – to house the church's altar facings, vestments, books and documents. We have calculated some €132,000 is needed for this part of the project and we would be grateful for any financial help that can be donated.



### A magnificent chasuble restored

A magnificent chasuble in embroidered polychrome silk belonging to Our Lady of Victory Church and featuring the coat-of-arms of Grand Master Pinto has undergone conservation treatment by *The Art Boutique*. The decoration, which covers the entire surface of the fabric, comprises decorative scrolls and gold thread. The surface is divided into three areas by gold braid, composed of sprays of flowers, bunches of grapes and ears of wheat that branch out upwards.

*Detail of the chasuble showing the coat of arms of Grand Master Pinto*



## THE VICTORY TEAM

*Din l-Art Helwa* is grateful to the following sponsors, benefactors, supporters and associates whose generosity has made the restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church possible.

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# Our Lady of Victory Church More Art Treasures Saved

## The two organ cases in the Church of Our Lady of Victory Conservation treatment to date

*Erika Falzon - The Art Boutique, Conservation and Fine Arts  
Michael Formosa, Paintings, wood and furniture Conservator*

The organ is one of the oldest instruments still used in European classical music and the origins of the pipe organ can be traced back to the *hydraulis* (water organ) in Ancient Greece in the 3rd century BC.

Above the main door to the Church of Our Lady of Victory lies the organ loft and inserted in two niches are two wooden organ cases. The one to the left (looking upwards from the church floor facing the entrance) is a *finto organo* that was painted in such a way to look like an organ from a distance. The one to the right was equipped with the organ pipes. The pipes, action and wind system are typically fitted into a case, which blends the organ's sound and helps project it into the church. This case is often ornamentally carved and otherwise decorated. The visible portion of the case, called the *façade*, will most often contain the pipes.

The organ case containing the pipes was coated in several thick layers of greyish-blue paint so the first thing we did was carry out a number of scientific paint analyses and also some sample cleaning and, to our surprise, we began exposing a different decor.

Samples taken of the two cases were observed under a microscope and subjected to histochemical and microchemical tests. The paint analyses carried out on the two cases were indispensable because it provided much information about all the various layers of paint. The sample from the organ case confirmed that what was actually visible was an addition – i.e. over-painting. It was grey in colour and consisted of two layers, underneath which the original was exposed – comprising a light greyish paint layer together with a gilded decoration.

Many painstaking hours were spent removing the various layers of paint using a mixture of solvents in a gel to ensure that we removed all the paint that had accumulated in the crevices and the irregularities of the wooden surface. Finally, a delicate and finer covering of a light grey paint decorated with gilt was exposed. The gilt is actually silver leaf coated in a *mecca* (a varnish) in order to imitate gold. This was common practise in order to reduce costs, as gold was always very expensive.

Many people would wonder why such a decor would have been covered. This practice is, in fact, rather common and is due to the fact that, as taste and fashion changes, so artefacts are given a more contemporary appearance. In earlier times, there were no laws or codes of ethics regarding the protection and preservation of the historical nature of an artefact. Another consideration was that it was an inexpensive way of making a somewhat shabby artefact look better. Obviously, it would have cost considerably more to restore and treat the decoration – applying silver to the losses, covering this silver with *mecca* and integrating the loss of paint with new paint. Nevertheless, at times we are thankful that some decorations or paintings were covered over, because that is why we still have them today. It is quite likely that the original decoration would otherwise have been subject to considerably more deterioration.

Following the cleaning, work to integrate the damaged paint and gilt decor was carried out. The final process was to apply a protective coating.



*Organ case  
before and after  
the removal of the  
over-paint*



The *finto organo*, which is similarly decorated with paint and gilt, is also being cleaned of the layers of grime and dirt accumulated over the years. During the cleaning, we have come across some dates and what could be a signature.

Following the cleaning, losses to the paint and gilt losses will be integrated. Some pieces of the casing had become detached from the case and these are being re-incorporated into the case and parts where woodworm has eaten through the wood are also being consolidated and treated. Finally, the surface of this case, like the other one, will be given a protective coating.

It is most interesting that, although they are similar in decor, the two cases are not imitative of each other. The actual structure is somewhat different, in that the façade of the *finto* is divided into three, while that of the other is divided into two. This gives rise to a number of questions: if they have a different structure and decoration, then were they actually made at different times and, if so, why? Perhaps there were originally two identical cases and then, over time, as a result of natural aging and use, one deteriorated to the extent that it had to be adapted or changed?

In parallel with the treatment, research into the historical context of the cases is also being carried out to discover when and where these organ cases were manufactured, not only by comparing them with other organs – mainly in Sicily, and also in Malta – but also by scientific analysis.

Such analysis to date has included wood identification<sup>1</sup>, which was carried out on a number of samples. From the observations made, it appears that both organ cases are made from *picea sp.* (spruce).

However, although the wood type is the same, the samples identified under the binocular microscope clearly showed that the spruce used for the two organs did not come from the same source. This might be an indication that they were not made at the same time.

Following the identification of the wood, dendrochronological tests were carried out. Dendrochronology is a very accurate science that determines when a tree was felled by studying the growth rings of timber or wooden items. The data collected will be processed and eventually cross-dated to find similarities in parts of the same item. Following this an average can be derived. All the data is then correlated with existent master chronologies and the result will give the date of the last growth ring in a particular item.

Tests on the *finto organo* gave the most intriguing results. A sample taken from the sides of the case show that the last growth ring dated from 1531. The boards were wide, which indicates that the tree was felled very close to this date. This is only one year after the Knights of St John settled in Malta and since the foundation stone of the church was laid in 1566, there would seem to be two explanations: either the wood was recycled or else the organ case was originally part of another piece of ecclesiastical furniture. The latter, however, is unlikely as the cross-section of the organ case has a parallelogram outline (ie, it is not perfectly rectangular). This shape corresponds with the incline in the masonry of the niche where the organ is located in the church, thus indicating that it was specifically made for this church. Another possible date – 1781 – resulted from the study of the two frontal pieces. Unless further measurements are taken, this date is still only a probability and is not scientifically confirmed. However, if this date is true, then the suggestion that the sides of the organ (1531) were made from recycled wood is more plausible. Unfortunately, the dating of parts from the other case proved unsuccessful.

As can be seen, there are still a number of questions to be answered and hopefully all the information we are gathering from research, visual observations and scientific analysis, in parallel with the actual conservation treatment, will place us in a better position to contextualise and date the organ cases.

*Din l-Art Helwa* is grateful to the Tanner Trust for its contribution to the restoration and conservation work.



Photo of OLV interior showing the two organs in place  
(Image taken from the Archives of the National Museum of Archaeology)



The organ in 1980

#### Reference:

<sup>1</sup> Identifying the types of wood present will, apart from being an aid in the selection of any wooden reconstructions, may be used to predict the physical behaviour of the wooden parts when fluctuations of both relative humidity and temperature occur. The identification of this is also important for documentation purposes.

## Restoration and conservation of the painting of the Holy Virgin and Child, bearing the Guttenberg coat of arms

*Amy Sciberras - Conservator and Restorer*

Amongst the interesting collection of paintings housed in the Church of Our Lady of Victory is the canvas painting representing the Holy Virgin with Child, found at the foot of the titular painting of St Philip Neri, on the first altar on the right-hand side.

This painting is a copy of the work of Carlo Maratta (1625-1713). The original painting is in the Vatican art gallery. The figures of the Holy Virgin and Child are depicted closely entwined and the composition draws the eye towards a meditative encounter with the infant Jesus. The infant Jesus is depicted looking towards the viewer, while the Virgin has a serene gaze, as if in contemplation, focused slightly away from the viewer. The theme of the Virgin and Child has been prevalent throughout the centuries, and although still popular today, was most significant in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

An interesting feature of this painting is the coat of arms of Fra Wolfgang Philippus von Guttenberg (1647-1733), depicted beneath the Holy Virgin and Child. Fra Philip is thus, in most probability, the donor of the painting. It is therefore likely that the painting was executed between the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Fra Wolfgang Philippus von Guttenberg was Bailiff of Brandenburg and a notable dignitary of the Order of St John. He lived in Malta for 63 years and contributed to several landmarks in Malta.<sup>1</sup> In fact, a small half-length portrait of this great benefactor of the Order still hangs in the sacristy of Our Lady of Victory Church, over its dedicatory plaque.

### State of conservation and past interventions

The painting was in very poor condition and close examination revealed that in the past it had been subjected to amateurish restoration. The strainer was structurally unstable and was being further weakened by open joints, fractures and rusted metal nails. There were insect holes, indicating an infestation, and the accumulation of dust that filled the gap between the strainer support and the stretched canvas was causing some distortion along the lower part of the painting.

Dust and grime also covered the reverse of the canvas, especially the lower half, whilst the tacking margins of the canvas support were narrow and in poor condition. In fact, the deterioration of the tacking margins was contributing to the slacking of the canvas, resulting in warping. Further warping of the canvas corresponded to the side members of the strainer and to the lower open joint of the strainer at the right-hand corner.



*Fixing inlays in area of canvas losses*



*The Guttenberg coat of arms*

It is interesting to note that a relatively small area of the canvas's tacking margins was attached to the strainer by commercial metal nails instead of the original wooden tacks. This indicated an earlier attempt at restoration.<sup>2</sup> This was not the only evidence of past restoration. A patch was found attached to the central part of the upper half of the reverse of the canvas. This was made from duct tape, whilst two more textile patches were found under the strainer. The fact that duct tape (and not a textile) was used to repair the damage at the central area of the painting indicated that this was probably carried out in a separate intervention.

The duct tape patch corresponded to a relatively large lacuna in the canvas support concealed by a very rough infill (measuring 4.5cm by 3.6cm). This roughly executed old infill was very evident, even from the front, particularly because of its prominent central position. The lower textile patch underneath the strainer corresponded to a stuccoed tear in the canvas support, while the other textile patch



*The painting before restoration*

at the side corresponded to stuccoed losses of the canvas support. Minor losses of the support were also observed on the lower half of the painting. The reverse of the canvas support was also severely stained, probably due to the impregnation of varnish applied to the paint layer.

With regard to the ground and paint layers, these exhibited various signs of deterioration including lacunae, *craquelure* (dense cracking), cupping, lifted paint, retouched infills and flaking paint. Gaps and flaking were concentrated around the perimeter of the painting, especially towards the lower edge, where the coat of arms of Bailiff Guttenberg is depicted. Other losses corresponded to gaps in the canvas support. Retouched and uneven gesso infills applied in past restorations also indicated losses of the original ground and paint layers.

Cupping and lifting of the paint layer also indicated a lack of adhesion between the various strata constituting the painting (paint layer, ground layer/s and canvas support). Although the entire painted surface exhibited lifted paint, this was even more pronounced on the blue mantle of the Virgin and on the flesh tones. Lifted paint could be the result of shrinkage of the canvas support caused by exposure to high relative humidity levels.

When investigated under UV light,<sup>3</sup> an inconsistent opaque green/yellow fluorescence was observed. This indicated the use of an organic varnish such as dammar. Various incidents of retouching that were barely visible to the naked eye were also very evident (seen as dark patches) under ultraviolet fluorescence.

#### Conservation-restoration procedures

Following the preliminary analysis using non-invasive techniques such as raking light, ultraviolet fluorescence and infra-red reflectography,<sup>4</sup> which helped to gain a better understanding of the method employed and state of conservation, the paint layer was faced through the attachment of Japanese paper<sup>5</sup>, to ensure that any unstable areas of the paint and preparatory layers were not lost during handling and treatment.



*The painting after restoration*

### The restoration of art treasures at Our Lady of Victory Church is being carried out with the support of PwC Malta



All photographs are provided by the author

#### *Fixing the inlays*



#### *Removal of old varnish*



The canvas was then removed from its strainer and the reverse cleaned using dry-cleaning methods such as soft brushes, scalpels and a low-wattage vacuum cleaner. The tacking margins of the canvas support were gradually flattened using localised pressure, heat and moisture. The duct tape patch attached to the verso of the painting was removed as this was not compatible with the original materials. The textile patches, which had already started to detach, were also removed. This exposed old infills that were also mechanically removed. During this treatment, old stucco was found covering some areas of the original paint layer. This was also removed, subsequently uncovering more of the original background. Following this treatment, the lifting and cupping of the paint layer were addressed by the application of moisture, heat and pressure. This helped not only to improve the surface of the paint layer, by reducing distortions, but also in reinstating adhesion to the lifted paint.

Losses of the canvas support, including those which had been filled in with gesso, were inlaid using a linen canvas of the same thickness as the original. The shapes of the gaps in the original canvas were traced onto the newly prepared canvas and then carefully cut and positioned into position on the original canvas. Care was taken to ensure that the threads of the prepared canvas were perfectly aligned with those of the original. Once in place, the inlays were fixed using a synthetic adhesive.

Even though gaps were filled in and the surface was improved, the original canvas was still deemed to be weak, so relining was considered to be the best option. This involved the attachment of a new canvas support on the reverse of the original canvas, using a suitable adhesive in order to reinforce the original support as well as improve adhesion between the preparatory/paint layers and the original canvas. A close-weave linen canvas, similar in texture to the original, was chosen for the re-lining process and a synthetic adhesive was used. The relined painting was re-stretched on a stretcher frame. The advantage of a stretcher frame over a strainer is that it is possible to maintain the painting under tension without the need to dismantle it. The new stretcher frame was made from tulip wood.

Once re-stretched, the facing (protective paper) covering the paint layer was removed. At this point, the paint and preparatory layers were well adhered to each other and to the canvas support, making it safe to clean the oxidised varnish layer that was obscuring the original paint layer. Preliminary cleaning trials were carried out along the periphery of the painting using cotton-swabs and examined under ultraviolet fluorescence in order to determine the most effective cleaning agent. Old retouching and over painting were removed during this treatment, thus uncovering the original nuances of the painting.

Gaps in the paint layer were filled in with gesso, levelled and textured to imitate the painting's surface. An intermediate layer of varnish was then applied and major infills were integrated using reversible varnish colours applied in the *tratteggio spezzato*

technique. This kind of retouching makes the image easier to understand and at the same time recognisable to the observer in close-up.

Finally, a thin layer of synthetic and reversible protective varnish was applied by means of a spray-gun to protect the paint layer from physical damage, dust, and pollutants.

### Acknowledgments

Special thanks are due to senior conservator Anthony Spagnol for his advice and constant support, and to wood conservator Michael Formosa for making the stretcher frame.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Guttenberg is particularly remembered for his patronage to the Church of St Francis in Rabat, Malta and for being one of the main benefactors of the Chapel of *Our Lady of Mercy (tal-Madonna tal-Hniena)* in Qrendi.

<sup>2</sup> In fact beneath the part of the canvas attached to the strainer by commercial nails, a textile patch was found attached to the reverse of the canvas, thus indicating an earlier restoration.

<sup>3</sup> Ultraviolet fluorescence is a non-invasive way of investigating paintings. The original paint and/or varnish layers fluoresce UV radiation relatively more than materials applied later, for example in earlier restorations. With UV light, the fluorescence of old varnishes, as well as the presence of over painting, can be identified.

<sup>4</sup> Infrared reflectography is a non-invasive technique that provides the possibility of revealing information, including underdrawings and alterations in paintings.

<sup>5</sup> Japanese paper is a thin, strong paper made from vegetable fibres.

*Cleaning of the pictorial surface*



*Pictorial integration*



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# Rediscovering Bateria D'Orbeau

Edward Said

To most of us, Qalet Marku is synonymous with the tower erected by Grand Master Martino De Redin, standing alone on the flat Ras il-Qrejtjen peninsula as one of the sites held longest in trust by *Din l-Art Helwa*. It therefore might come as a surprise that, not too far behind it, stands another gem – or rather the remains of another gem – of Hospitaller origins.

Lying approximately at the humped centre of the spit of land are the crumbling ruins of what was once a coastal defence battery. This was one of a series built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century during a vigorous upgrading exercise by the Order of St John to further protect the vulnerable low-lying coastal areas hitherto watched solely by the aging, sparsely positioned towers. What one sees today are the remnants of low-lying straight walls built with boulder-sized masonry elements. Evidence of a ditch beyond sections of these walls is clearly visible. The surroundings are littered with the dressed stones and fill material that once formed part of the structure the outline of which is barely discernible on present-day satellite images.

Further research at the Public Works Department archives revealed that not so long ago this defence, known as *Bateria D'Orbeau*, had a polygonal plan with a raised platform and embrasured parapet wall and most likely also included a blockhouse to house a garrison, not unlike other examples such as Qala Battery in Gozo, designed



*Plans of the Bateria D'Orbeau from the Public Works Department archive*

All photographs provided by the author

*Remains of the Bateria D'Orbeau*



to French standards of the time. It is essential to distinguish between batteries and redoubts, the former being strategically positioned to command the mouths of bays and armed with cannon, while the latter – usually located further inland along the shoreline – were intended to accommodate infantry in order to engage in combat with enemy troops ambushing the beaches. In fact, such a redoubt once stood not far from *Bateria D'Orbeau* at the Ghallis edge of Ras il-Qrejtjen; this is now lost but remnants possibly still exist beneath the Coast Road.

The nearest redoubt now is the one at Baħar iċ-Ċaġħaq that is presently being used as a catering establishment. Survey plans dating to the first half of the last century show the battery still in good condition and on lease to third parties, most likely for leisure purposes (as happened with many defunct coastal defences at this time). It is also the only one of its kind along this part of the coast for miles. During or around the Second World War the battery appears to have been severely mutilated and readapted to serve some military purpose.

Other wartime structures on Ras il-Qrejtjen still exist and on the ruins of *Bateria D'Orbeau* today are two reinforced concrete structures still in use by third parties which look suspiciously like military devices, although this still remains to be confirmed.

Having said this, I believe that this battery deserves further study along with an urgently-needed conservation management plan. *Bateria D'Orbeau* forms an integral part of the remaining coastal heritage in this region, and while we are fortunate to have a generous number of such Hospitaller structures still standing, to quote Dr Stephen Spiteri “...hardly any two batteries are the same” and therefore the need to preserve what remains of them is unquestionable.



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# Friends of a Friendless Tower

**Simone Mizzi**

*Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa*

*Din l-Art Helwa's* involvement with Wied iż-Żurrieq coastal watchtower dates from 2011, which is when we brought its fast deteriorating state to the attention of the authorities. A photographic survey was carried out by Stanley Farrugia Randon, who also wrote the historical notes below. A condition survey was carried out by architect Ruben Sciortino and a business case study to put to government in order for a Deed of Guardianship to be acquired was drawn up by Council member Ian Camilleri.

Securing guardianship of this southern watch tower would be a natural progression for *Din l-Art Helwa* in its work on the conservation and restoration of heritage sites, in particular considering those located in the south of Malta that are already looked after by our organisation. We would consolidate our activity in this area which would benefit from potential job creation through an increase in tourism amenities, also in the off-shoulder months. The beauty of the southern coast and its countryside is still almost intact and a more culturally-inclined visitor can be attracted to it, especially given its proximity to the Neolithic temples of Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra which are World Heritage sites. In the middle of an important tourist area, it is a shame that this historic site has not yet been recognised for its importance. *Din l-Art Helwa* is now aspiring to restore the tower – which is situated in a landscape blessed by great natural and geological features – and open it to the public. It will serve as a visitors' centre and information point with illustrative displays on the history of the Tower and other fortifications, and on the natural beauty of Wied iż-Żurrieq and its rich marine and coastal biodiversity.

*Din l-Art Helwa* is grateful to the Malta Financial Services Authority which will be the main sponsors of this restoration project and the Mayor of Qrendi David Schembri for his constant support.

## The history of Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower

Stanley Farrugia Randon

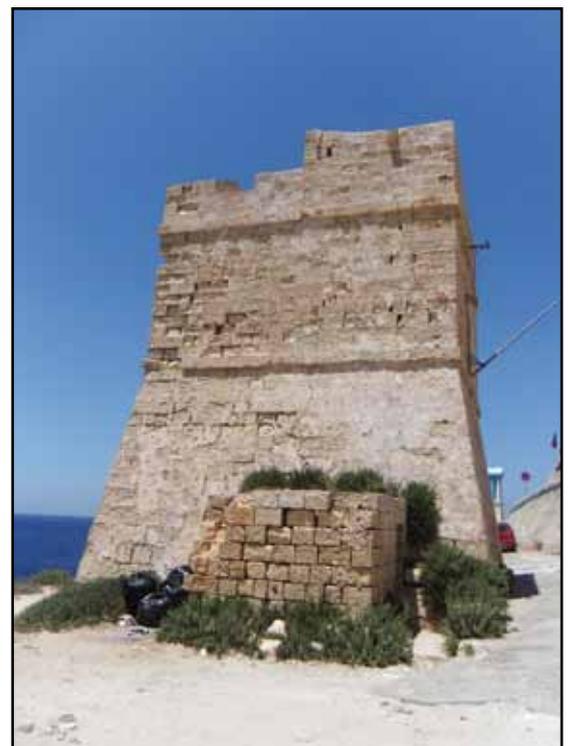
The history of this coastal watch tower has to be seen in the context of the building of fortifications around the island by the Knights of the Order of St John. When the Knights made the Maltese Islands their home, they fortified Birgu in the great port that is now called Grand Harbour and after the Great Siege of 1565, they built Valletta. These two cities overlooked both the ports of Marsamxetto and Grand Harbour and thus were able to defend the island from sea-borne invasion.

The islands had been continuously attacked by Ottoman fleets that would plunder Gozo, the sister island, and take its inhabitants into slavery. The 1551 Siege of Gozo was the most dramatic, when about 6,000 Gozitans were taken as slaves and the castello was destroyed. This served as a lesson: the invader had to be attacked before disembarking. So a series of coastal fortifications protecting the northern harbours were planned. It was, however, not before 1605 that Garzes Tower (demolished in 1848) was built in Mġarr, overlooking Mġarr Harbour in Gozo. Grand Master Martino Garzes offered 12,000 scudi for the building of this tower but he died in 1601 and it was his successor, Alof de Wignacourt, who ordered its construction in 1605, using the funds of his predecessor. Grand Master Wignacourt built many other coastal towers, most at his own expense. These were St Paul's Tower (1610) in St Paul's Bay, known as Wignacourt Tower, San Lucjan Tower (1610) in Marsaxlokk, St Thomas Tower (1614) in Marsascalea, Sta Maria delle Grazie (1620) close to Xgħajra, one at Marsalforn (1616) in Gozo and Santa Marija Tower (1618) on Comino. These were large, square-shaped towers compared to the watchtowers that followed and were armed with cannon. The watchtowers were constructed with turrets resembling bastions and were referred to as *fortini* or small forts. The duties of the soldiers in these watchtowers included fighting any disembarking enemy as well as keeping watch. So the towers had sufficient reserves of water, food and ammunition to withstand a short siege.

The defensive strategy changed during the reign of Grand Master Lascaris (1635-1657), during which the small towers at Ghajn Tuffieħa, Lippija, Nadur Tower on the Bingemma Ridge on the Victoria Lines, St George's Bay and Wied iż-Żurrieq tower were constructed. These were primarily watchtowers with the additional function of providing shelter to the militia soldiers.

Towers constructed on the island of Gozo during the reign of Lascaris include Xlendi Tower and Dwejra Tower. The Red Tower (1648) was an exception being much larger in size. This, however, was constructed in Mellieħa with the aim of defending an important landing spot which had been left undefended up to then.

The Università of Mdina used to organise eligible people to take part in the defence of the island well before the Order of St John assumed responsibility in 1530. This system of defence was known as the "militia" – later referred to as *id-Dejma*. Wied iż-Żurrieq being a sheltered bay which might offer an attacking enemy a good landing spot was one of the places where *Dejma* men were to be stationed. We do not know if there was a previous tower on the site. The existing tower was constructed during the reign of Grand Master Lascaris, but there was probably some earlier form of shelter from the weather for a guard or watchman. The promontory at Wied iż-Żurrieq was referred to as *Guardia Xutu* and in fact the tower is often referred to as *Xutu Tower*. This lookout post was linked on the southeast side with the lookout posts of Nadur Kelbe (at Bengħajsa), and Qabar il-Għarib (between Għar Hasan and the present Wardija Tower). On the northwest side, it was linked with the lookout post of Petra Negra near Lapsi. From documents





of the Militia dated 1417 we know that the site was manned by people from the villages of Siggiewi, Leu and Qrendi. The Knights continued to use this lookout post when they made Malta their home in 1530, and it was from here that, on 18 May 1565, the Aragonese Knight Fra Ramon Fortuny, together with a detachment of cavalry, followed the movements of the Turkish armada as it looked for an anchorage in the vicinity.

Although it is not known precisely when Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower was built, Grand Master Lascaris ordered the construction of the watchtowers on 13 January 1647, so we can presume that it was built in 1648. Ten years later, Grand Master de Redin constructed a watchtower at Ras il-Wardija (Torre della Guardia del Giorno) to the east of Wied iż-Żurrieq and Ras il-Hamrija to the west, thus including Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower in the chain of coastal watchtowers built by de Redin. He commissioned no fewer than 13 watchtowers which, in sequence from the northeast to the southwest, are: the White Tower at Armier, Għajn Hadid Tower in Selmun, Għallis Tower on the Coast Road at Salina, Qalet Marku Tower at Qrejten Point further along the Coast Road, Madliena Tower, St Julian's Tower, Triq Il-Wisgħa Tower, Żonqor Tower, Xrob l-Għaġin Tower, Delimara Tower, Benghisa Tower, Hamrija Tower and Wardija Tower.

Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower is more or less square in shape and consists of two floors, each with a vaulted ceiling. The roof is flat and has a parapet with two gun embrasures. The lower part of the tower walls are scarped up to the line of the cordon, but above this they rise vertically to the corniced moulding and parapet of the roof. Originally, the guards entered through the doorway on the second floor of the north elevation of

*Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower  
from the sea*

the tower with the use of a ladder or rope. The lower floor was accessed through a hole in the floor of the upper floor. The doorway used today to access the lower floor was opened on the west wall during the British period.

The importance of this tower is that it was probably the last one to be built during the reign of Grand Master Lascaris and was the prototype for those built by his successor. Structurally, the de Redin towers were stronger than the somewhat flimsy Lascaris towers (excluding the Red Tower), the main difference being that they (including the one at Wied iż-Żurrieq) were built around a barrel vault and were thus capable of mounting cannon, while the Lascaris type had roofs resting on wooden beams that were incapable of supporting any heavy piece of ordinance.

As with other coastal towers, under British rule Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower was probably manned by the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment which in 1861 became the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery. In 1873, the Artillery relinquished its coastal guard commitments and so the tower was probably abandoned. During World War II, it was probably used as a Coast Observation Post and was manned by the Coastal Defence Force.

With the advent of the aeroplane and modern warfare, the fortifications around our islands became redundant. Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower also lost its military role but was used as a police station until 2002. Since then it has been neglected and abandoned and it is now in a precarious and sorry state. It will continue to deteriorate until Din l-Art Helwa is formally allowed to take over responsibility for it and begin the lengthy process of applying for restoration development permits.

*Opposite:  
Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower  
in urgent need of  
restoration*

# Restoration and Maintenance Report

Stanley Farrugia Randon

Since the last issue of *Vigilo* in April, the Restoration and Maintenance Sub-committee has been very active. Our considerable achievements are due to two main factors, a committed team of individuals on the restoration side, and the generous support of our sponsors and members who continue to believe in our work and therefore make the protection of our heritage a reality. The efforts of the Restoration and Maintenance Sub-committee exclude Our Lady of Victory Church, which is being managed by a sub-committee of its own, and is covered elsewhere in *Vigilo*.

All this work would not have been possible were it not also for the team composed of Josie Ellul Mercer, Maria Grazia Cassar, Carolyn Clements (Gozo Branch).

For the first time we included the word 'maintenance' in the title as much of our work is not strictly speaking 'restoration' but maintaining our properties in order to prevent further damage from the elements. Restoration requires the expertise of specialists with experience in restoration and conservation whereas maintenance is mostly, but not exclusively, carried out by our handyman John Gafa, who has been involved with the association for 20 years or so.

## Mamo Tower

At the beginning of April, restoration work started on Mamo Tower in Marsascalea. A Mepa permit had been received in 2011 but under new conditions for which we were not prepared. One of these stipulated that work was subject to a bank guarantee of over €9,000 and that the work would be monitored on a regular basis by members of the Heritage Protection Unit (HPU) within Mepa and each of these visits would be subject to "monitoring charges".

In a sense, this appears contradictory, because if the work is being strictly monitored by the HPU, then there should be no need for a bank guarantee to safeguard against any improper work. Such financial conditions being imposed upon an NGO such as *Din l-Art Helwa* that receives no funding from the state for its work to keep national monuments in a good state of conservation created an increasing strain on our budget. Furthermore, our Guardianship Deed in itself constitutes a guarantee for a state-owned property whereby the deed is rescinded if we do not keep the sites in a good state. The Deed also requires our work to be monitored by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, whose constant help and advice has always been appreciated and adhered to.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the restoration of this unique tower was successfully completed. Gale-force winds at times rendered working on scaffolding dangerous and this delayed the completion of the project. Work was also on hold for some weeks pending installation of gaiters on main supply cables by Enemalta. Work on the tower was entrusted to Stephen Scicluna.

## Sopu Tower, Nadur

At the beginning of May some maintenance work was carried out on the Sopu Tower by Alfred Stubbings. Water was seeping down from the roof into the tower which we nicknamed "The Green Tower" due to algal growths on the inside walls. Pointing of the joints of the parapet wall and the roof was carried out and the original conduit that channelled rainwater down to the well was re-opened.

Another intervention included the repair of a low-lying sloping plinth around the sides and back of the tower with *deffun* after it was noted that this material was originally used. Pointing

of any open joints in these same sloping parts further reduced the possibility of water entering into the tower. A red deal *paraqua* (weather bar) was fitted to the main door and new limestone flagstones were laid on the threshold. These measures were carried out as some water was seeping into the tower from the main door.

Martin Portelli, a DLH volunteer who helps us open the Sopu Tower, visited the site regularly and was of great help to us. His good judgment and opinion were very much appreciated by the Restoration and Management Sub-committee.

## Hal Millieri

During the first two weekends of May, maintenance work, including some re-pointing on the façade of Hal Millieri Chapel was carried out by conservators Heritage Resco made up of James Licari, Ingrid Ross and Frank Chetcuti.

## Qala Battery, Gozo

The Restoration and Maintenance team are extremely grateful to Eric Parnis for his constant drive to finish the work on this battery in the name of *Din l-Art Helwa*. Wooden apertures were installed in the battery and so was the new cover of the well. We are now waiting for Qala Local Council to clear the rubble and to re-point the battery from both the inside and outside. This is the last outstanding work and will bring this project to completion. It was funded by Mepa's UIPP fund, by *Din l-Art Helwa* and the Qala Local Council.

## Delimara Lighthouse

The fuel tank which was the only source of energy in the past for the lighthouse was cleaned and this accentuated some interesting decorative features. The copper gutters of the housing protecting the mechanism were fixed. Some of them had to be replaced as they were extensively deteriorated. We have also applied for a cesspit as there is no drainage system present in the area. In the past the sewage was being disposed of down the cliffs in the sea. The permit has been granted. We are grateful to GasanMamo for their generous sponsorship which has enabled us to move forward with this challenging project.

## Bir Miftuh

During the month of September maintenance work, including some re-pointing of the façade of Bir Miftuh Chapel was carried out by conservators from Heritage Resco.



*Mamo Tower undergoing restoration*

**Wish List**

Our wish list is extensive; there is no shortage of restoration work in Malta and Gozo. We do need, however, to be able to match demands for large restoration projects with specific funding, to enable us to adopt a disciplined approach to our work. We are therefore always on the look-out for companies and individuals who could contribute financially to specific projects involving our very rich heritage. Provision of new funding is addressed via a finance sub-committee.

**The Sanctuary of Tal-Hniena – an important National Shrine.**

In 2006 the Cultural Commission and the Parish of Qrendi signed an agreement with *Din l-Art Helwa*, valid for 20 years, to proceed with the restoration of The Sanctuary of Tal-Hniena. This while leaving access for pilgrims and other visitors as Tal-Hniena remains a consecrated church. *Din l-Art Helwa* is allowed to organise activities to raise funds, while the administration of the church remains in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities.

*Din l-Art Helwa* remains committed to this important restoration and we are hoping to find a sponsor to share our vision. We are grateful to Bank of Valletta plc who had assisted with phase one of the work. We wish to continue to restore the reredos, the perimeter walls, to find damp proofing solutions and to replace the floor. Window glass panes which were broken by festa fireworks will have to be repaired. When this is done we can start on the ambitious project of the restoration of the numerous ex votos that belong to this national shrine.

**Comino Battery**

Funding is also required to continue work on Santa Marija Battery on Comino where treatment on the corrugated concrete ceiling of the room built during the British period is necessary. The flooring of the rooms also need attention and apertures need to be maintained.

**Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower**

We are still waiting for an official confirmation of the guardianship deed which has been promised for this important coastal fortification. When this is in hand we can apply with MEPA for the restoration work to be carried out. We have already commissioned architect Reuben Sciortino who has prepared a Condition Survey, Method Statement and Bill of Quantities of the tower so we are well prepared to start gathering estimates for the work when the deed is signed.

**Clockwork mechanism of the Delimara Lighthouse**

We would like to have the clockwork mechanism of the Delimara Lighthouse restored but this involves some engineering work to replace the missing parts. We gathered some estimates and such work will cost us about €9,000, a project which needs funding.

Volunteer Martin Vella has gone into details on how this mechanism works and we hope we will be able to eventually make the clockwork mechanism work again.

**Red Tower**

Re-pointing of the Red Tower will soon be due but this will be a major expense as it involves a large area and scaffolding will be needed.

**Msida Bastion Cemetery**

Many monuments in the Msida Bastion Cemetery are in need of restoration but this delicate work would require the engagement of a restorer/conservator.

**Dwejra Tower**

The external walls of Dwejra Tower are in urgent need of restoration. About six years have passed since it was last restored. We would like to start work by next year but we require an estimated €30,000.

**133, Melita Street**

Many times we tend to forget that we are looking after another property in Valletta, our own headquarters. Maintenance work had to be done on the roof membrane and some internal painting was required. However the façade remains to be redone.



*Details of Delimara Lighthouse fuel container*



*Stonework requiring restoration at Msida Bastion Cemetery*

**Qalet Marku Tower vandalised**

Few people are aware that, last year, Qalet Marku Tower fell prey to vandalism when aerosol paint and other substances were sprayed onto sections of its walls. Fortunately, *Din l-Art Helwa* was able to take immediate action, before the substances had penetrated the stonework too deeply, and building conservation contractor Alfred Stubbings very kindly saw to their removal, free of charge.



*Qalet Marku Tower before and after*

# Nature and More at Majjistral Nature and History Park

*Annalise Falzon*

*Communications Officer and Nature Walks Guide*

At least 8,000 people have attended activities in the park since it was opened in 2007. These have ranged from public lectures to guided and thematic walks with specialists on entomology, botany, ornithology, malacology, astronomy, mammalogy, geology, ichthyology, wildlife photography and rescue.

Children have also been catered for through their own Junior Ranger Club activities, which have included practical sessions of nature photography. Blue Flag activities with the MTA, guided snorkelling with Sharklab Malta and summer clubs visits are organised every summer, while the winter months see regular school visits, fieldwork and talks for schools and foreign universities, as well as the University of Malta. Health-related activities such as Tai Chi, Yoga, kayaking and mental and physical health awareness schemes are also examples of activities with the added aim of promoting outdoor activities.

This year we also organised some special activities that involved joining with other protected areas in the north by visiting Ghadira Nature Reserve with BirdLife Malta, celebrating European Maritime Day in May with coastal activities and visiting the adjacent protected area of Ghajn Tuffieħa with the Gaia Foundation. There was also our special meteor showers event in August in conjunction with Majjistral Eco Farm. In addition, we launched the first of our two practical courses on dry-stone walling in conjunction with MCAST and are now planning to go ahead with an advanced course on the subject.

If you have not yet attended a park activity, we hope to see you soon. If you have been one of the participants in past events, we would be grateful if you could take a minute to rate Il-Majjistral Nature and History Park on *Tripadvisor* (listed under National Parks).

## Volunteering

Several interns and students have helped on a voluntary basis at the park as well as representatives from various organisations and NGOs. A big turnout of 90 Vodafone employees supported a volunteering day at the barracks during the summer.

HSBC Cares has been sending regular help for the past year, with staff volunteering by helping with work on improving both outdoor and indoor sites as well as taking part, along with families and friends, in various park activities. We also thank various nature photographers who continue to help us through their talent.

## Updates

The Majjistral Management Board currently consists of the following members: chairperson: Dr Carmen Sammut; members:



*Children learn about animal rescue at the park with Nature Trust's Wildlife Rescue Team*

*The weasel is one of the park's residents  
photo:Raymond Galea*



Ms Nadia Suda Lanzon, Mr Darren Saliba, Mr Joe Christina, Mr John Buttigieg, Mr Peter Mamo, Mr Martin Galea, Dr Rudolf Ragonesi and Mr Vince Attard.

### New regulations for the park

After a long wait, the site-specific regulations for Majjistral Park were published in July by virtue of Legal Notice 217 of 2013. The Legal Notice regulates various activities including the following:

- Hunting and/or taking is restricted to the period from two hours before sunrise to 10 am.
- No parking or driving outside designated areas
- No camping outside designated areas
- No lighting of fires or setting-off of fireworks
- No removal of stones or sand from Golden Bay (Ramla tal-Mixquqa)



The full legal notice and relevant application forms (for access or for organised activities involving more than 20 people) can be found on the park's website in the Downloads section (Site Regulations and Applications).

*Summer Solstice 2013 fund-raising walk  
in aid of ALIVE Charity Foundation  
photo: Christian Falzon*

### Restoration work in progress

The Torri Ta' Ciantar, also known as Ghajn Żnuber Tower, has been completely restored. The site is still surrounded by a fence, but we hope to be able to remove this soon and complete work on the interior. The tower has already been put to the test for its potential as a shelter during our Move for Health Treasure Hunt with the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate in Force 7+ northwesterly winds!

We have received approval for the restoration of the WWII gun post near Il-Minzel and work is underway after various samples of the existing concrete were taken for testing.

### Forthcoming events

Events are listed below but more details will be announced in due course on our Facebook page or email. If you would like to be put on our mailing list and be updated regularly by email, please send your address to [walks@majjistral.org](mailto:walks@majjistral.org). Private tours can be requested provided there are at least eight confirmed participants.

**Sunday, 20 October at 3 pm:** guided walks resume with an afternoon walk starting from Golden Bay.

**Saturday, 26 October:** Clean-up at the park in conjunction with Mellieħa Local Council.

**Sunday, 2 November at 10 am:** – Children's activity for the Park's Junior Rangers Club (for those aged between 11 to 13) in conjunction with the Turu APPREZZA Campaign.

**Sunday 23 November at 10 am:** Treasure Hunt; fresh air, exercise and testing how much you know about the park!



*Restored double girna*

# British Army Regimental Badges in Stone - Floriana

*Denis A Darmanin*

From the earliest days of British rule (1814-1964), Floriana, surrounded as it is by strong fortifications, was identified as a key element in the defence of Malta. The British military authorities soon converted Floriana into the first garrison town on the Island. Even the ditches between the rows of bastions and curtains were used, with stores, workshops and stables being built there.

Many of us have seen photographs, or even lithograph prints, of the large military parades held on the Island, and these were more than likely taking place on the famous, hard-packed gravel of the Floriana parade ground. This was the scene of military reviews of entire regiments, executions, the presentation of Colours and many other events, including those pertaining to the Independence of Malta in 1964.

This heavy militarisation of Floriana meant that large numbers of military personnel were concentrated in the area and it was inevitable that they would leave physical mementos of their presence, which often took the form of regimental badges – of which there is a profusion in Floriana.

## Sa Maison Garden

The various British regimental badges – mainly carved in the soft rock of the bastion at Sa Maison Garden, directly below the San Salvatore Counterguard – are known to many and have been written about on numerous occasions. Various accounts also relate the history of the garden, of Chevalier Fra Caille Maison after whom it is named, and of Lady Julia Lockwood who lived there in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Many of these badges – testimonials left by the regiments billeted at the barracks in Floriana between the period 1856 to 1903 – have unfortunately suffered through erosion, vandalism, theft and possibly even at the hands of the regiments themselves. Only a few remain clear, with others having eroded so much as to be barely recognisable or having disappeared completely, leaving just the empty rectangular niches and the studs that once held them in place. Certain members of particular regiments were sufficiently hot-headed to hold grudges against other regiments and this could have been behind the intentional defacement of some badges. It could also be the reason for the inscriptions that were later carved on some of the badges.

The badges that still remain, even if they are only just visible, recall such regiments as Prince Albert's (Somersetshire Light Infantry) Regiment of Foot (the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn was stationed in Malta in 1872 and 1874 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn between 1877 and 1878); the 60<sup>th</sup> Rifles; H Company The King's Royal Rifle Corps (in 1895), the 33<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Wellington's Regt (West Riding), complete with crossed axes and pick and shovel and the Battle Honour 'Dettigen', (in Malta in 1885 and 1888) and signed by Private W. Harrison; the 20<sup>th</sup> Foot, Lancashire Fusiliers (1<sup>st</sup> Bn in 1881, 1899, 1901 and 1905 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn in 1881 & 98); the 2<sup>nd</sup> Foot, the Queen's Regt (*Pristinae virtutis memor*). (1877-78); the Northamptonshire Regt; The 57<sup>th</sup> (West Middlesex) Regt of Foot; The West Riding Regiment and the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn The Border Regt (1897 and 1899). Further in, towards the ditch, beyond the skewed arch by Gianni Barbara (1738) is another stone badge, that of the Royal Army Medical Corps, with the uncompleted date '19' but topped by a Victorian crown. A small crude commemoration bears the legend \*PALI\* 'D' COMPANY MARCH 22 1872, referring to the 1<sup>st</sup> (Somersetshire) (Prince Albert's Light Infantry) Regiment of Foot.

During the early years of my visits to the garden, I had noticed that one of the badges – that of the Army Ordnance Department – was actually of cast metal, consisting of the Board of Ordnance shield with the three cannon and three shot above, as well as a scroll with "*Sua Tela Tonanti*" below. This badge had originally stood on the main portal of the Ospizio Magazine not far from the garden, which was used by the Army Ordnance Department until destroyed by



*The metal badge formerly in Sa Maison Garden in September 2003*

**All photographs are provided by the author**

*Opposite:  
Badges in the  
Police CID yard*

*Metal badge on the door keystone of the 'Ospizio'*



enemy bombs during the Second World War. At some time after 2003, an attempt was made to steal the badge which was aborted due to its weight. It was assumingly placed in safe keeping but has never been seen since. It is to be hoped that the badge is returned and placed in the National War Museum, with a copy made for the garden.

**Malta Police Force Headquarters**

In 1896, the War Department set out to build a number of large barracks on the Island, with Floriana featuring very prominently. During the same period, barrack blocks and magazines were built behind what is now the General Headquarters of the Malta Police Force, and named Casemate Barracks. Originally built in 1735 as a reformatory to educate poor children, the building served as the Central Hospital from 1850 to 1956. Adjacent to the casemated barracks along San Salvatore Curtain, the British Army had built a transport shed in 1911, which is now the yard of the Malta Police Force headquarters. I was fortunate enough to obtain permission to take photographs of the badges of British Army Regiments and Corps that had served in these barracks, carved in the stone, and of some unusual graffiti. A few other frames were left blank.

The first frame contains the badge of the Royal Army Service Corps, having a GvR cipher at its centre with '32 MT COY' incised above, referring to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Motor Transport Company, RASC. As this is a corner pilaster, the other face bears a badge commemorating the start of the building of the shed, consisting of a framed 'GR' topped by an excellently carved Tudor Crown and 'A.1911 D' below. Next is the badge of the Northamptonshire Regiment with 1911, divided at the bottom. This badge is most likely that of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, which was posted to Malta on 16 January 1911, and it shows signs of damage. The next badge is of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn (Prince of Wales's Own) West Yorkshire Regiment and is dated '1913'. The top of the middle plume has already been repaired, but it has broken off again. The badge of the Worcestershire Regiment has strong indications of having been tampered with, as the stone around the it shows signs of having been clumsily chiselled.

Together with the badges are numerous graffiti etched in the soft stone, of which two in particular caught my attention:

The first reads:  
 D. COLLINS INVERNESS  
 42<sup>ND</sup> ROYAL HIGHLANDERS  
 SEPT 1922  
 X OF ? 79<sup>TH</sup> QUEEN'S OWN CAMERON HDRS

Mr Collins must either have been attached to some other regiment or was in Malta for some particular reason, as the only Highland Regiment in Malta at the time were the 1st Gordon Highlanders, who served in the island twice: 1921-1922 and 1923-1924.

The second reads:  
 V  
 MAN TREE NAMES  
 → OZEER PETER REVE  
 MAURITIUS SOUVENIR

Mr Reve must have belonged to the Mauritius Pioneer Corps, but who can really say, when so many soldiers of the Empire had set foot on Malta?

**Lintorn Barracks**

In 1856, a few barrack blocks and a cookhouse were erected adjoining the parade ground and quarters to the rear of San Salvatore Curtain which, along with the existing casemated billets, were referred to as 'Floriana Barracks'. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the few military buildings on the edge of the parade ground were demolished and the building of new barracks with proper facilities was begun in 1903 and named Lintorn Barracks, after Sir John Lintorn Simmons, Governor of Malta from 1884 to 1888. A further floor was added in 1911. The barracks were divided into three sections, with the main blocks occupied by the Royal Engineers and two other sections by the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Royal Army Service Corps and a later detachment from the Royal Signals. Above the central arch on the veranda of the Guard Room is a large badge of the Royal Engineers in relief that was carved into the stone by a Maltese Sapper, Gabriel Vella.



32MT COY RASC (GRV)



GR – AD 1911



2<sup>nd</sup> Bn The Northamptonshire Regt.



2<sup>nd</sup> Bn West Yorkshire Regt.



*2<sup>nd</sup> Bn The Middlesex Regt.*



*2<sup>nd</sup> Bn West Yorkshire Regt.*



*2/4<sup>th</sup> Bn The Royal Fusiliers*

*Badges at Montgomery House*

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**Transport Malta Licensing Office**

The British services found the ditches of Floriana quite suitable and offering good protection, and they used them for the building of workshops, billets, stores and every type of hut. The Transport Malta Licensing Office in St Francis Ditch, which still operates from one of these buildings, was originally occupied by the Royal Engineers. Above the main building is a framed rectangular plinth that has a grenade above the 'UBIQUE' scroll cantered between 'RE'.

**Montgomery House**

Along the far side of the granaries is a large building that was originally built as a country house for Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena in 1732. It later became known as 'Market House' and served for the administration and control of the granaries. In 1826 it was sold for the sum of £1,301 4s 6d to the British Military Authorities and was converted into an Officers' Barracks by the Master General and Board of Ordnance and soon became known as 'The Pavilion'. The work was supervised by Colonel Whitmore of the Royal Engineers. In 1941, the building was renamed 'Montgomery House' when Field Marshal Lord Montgomery took up residence in it and it was from here that he finalised the plans for the invasion of Sicily in 1943. Meetings numbered from 182 to 188 of the US and British Combined Chiefs of Staff were held at Montgomery House from 30 January to 3 February 1945 and again on 31 July 1945.

When actor David Niven was in Malta during his service with the British Army, he was stationed in Lintorn Barracks and worked at Montgomery House. He refers to the barracks and Montgomery House in his famous book *The Moon's a Balloon* (1<sup>st</sup> book).

After the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the British Army officers who used The Pavilion as a mess left a legacy of stone badges denoting the regiments to which they belonged. Most of the doorways and windows around the rectangular yard are adorned with these badges. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn (Prince of Wales's Own) West Yorkshire Regiment has an exact copy of the badge at the transport shed, inclusive of the date '1913' above. The badge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own) has three small plaques above it, with the middle one bearing the date '1914'. Next is the badge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn The Northamptonshire Regiment with the date 1911, while that of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Bn The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) TF has 'FLORIANA MARCH 1915' incised below on its frame.

It is interesting to add that on the badge there is also 'RAISED SEP 1914 - MALTA JAN 1915'. Showing slight damage is the badge of The Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's), which has the dates '1685' and '1910' at its base. These probably denote the dates when the Regiment was raised and when it was stationed in Malta. Another interesting badge belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> Garrison Battalion, The Northumberland Fusiliers, which has the dates 1915-1920 in large figures likewise at the base.

Commemorating the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) TF, is what was then their most recent badge bearing the Battle Honour 'SOUTH AFRICA 1900/02'. The last badge is that of The Suffolk Regiment and the date 1907-1908. Their castle badge is also encountered in Sa Maison Gardens as a free-standing monument commemorating 'The Pompadors'.

From the 1950s until just before its closure, Montgomery House served as the Malta Garrison's pay office. The building was transferred to the Maltese government on the departure of British forces in 1979. In 1982 it was renamed Middle Sea House after being leased to the Middle Sea Insurance Co. Ltd and its main entrance was moved to the arched gateway leading into the courtyard.

**St Francis Ravelin**

Just inside the Baroque Portes des Bombes, is a lone stone badge of the Cheshire Regiment affixed to the wall of St Francis Ravelin. It is the 1922 pattern badge and measures just under a metre. The Regiment served in Malta on two occasions: the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn from 1931 to 1933 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn from 1940 to 1943. It could be that either of these battalions was stationed at St Francis Barracks or that the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn was assigned the defence of this last line of defences during the Second World War.

I hope to feature other badges within former British military establishments in different locations throughout the island at a future date.

# The Gourgion Tower - Gone but not Forgotten (Part 1)

Joe Azzopardi

Notwithstanding the controversy which it generated, it is undeniable that the rehabilitation of the remains of the Opera House forms part of the post-WWII healing process of our heritage which, seven decades on, is still underway. While the Opera House fell victim to the bombs dropped by enemy aircraft on 7 April 1942, there were other buildings that were also victims of the war in more indirect ways. One example was the centuries-old Lighthouse of Fort St Elmo, which was demolished in the summer of 1940, just after the outbreak of World War II, because it was claimed that it could serve as a landmark for attacking enemy aircraft.

Other buildings were eventually lost because they happened to be in the way of chosen strategies. Such a scenario arose when plans were being made for a first invasion of mainland Europe. The operation envisaged a massive attack on Italy via Sicily which, logically, would have in Malta its most effective launching platform. Most prominent among the buildings that had to make way to allow for the creation of airfields to be used in this operation was the Gourgion Tower, on the outskirts of Xewkija.

The Gourgion Tower was not the first building of architectural value that had to make way for the creation of an airfield. The eclectic Casa Bertrand was demolished to make way for the airfield at Ta' Qali<sup>1</sup>.

## Giovanni Gourgion

The Gourgion Tower was built for Giovanni Gourgion, a prominent member of the Island's community and one of the first to extend what can be considered as patronage of the arts among the Gozitan gentry in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1687 he commissioned the altarpiece representing The Virgin of Mercy with Souls in Purgatory which was installed in the church of St George in Rabat the following year<sup>2</sup>. This is a painting of considerable quality produced by the workshop of Mattia Preti and includes what are believed to be full-length portraits of Giovanni and his wife Elena Moscati. Elena was the great-granddaughter of Pinu Gauci, from whom is derived the name of the famous pilgrimage sanctuary at Ta' Għammar, in Għarb.

Giovanni Gourgion and his family seem to have had a very close bond with the Order of St John from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Little heard-of before this period, by 1687 there were five Gourgions in Valletta and one in Mdina, with a Palazzo Gourgion in both cities<sup>3</sup>. The family also possessed estates in Rabat and a famous villa in Lija, which still exists and which once included as a garden folly the tower now standing on the road leading to the parish church. By 1693, the family was so well established as to marry into the aristocratic de Piro family and numerous of its members would eventually hold important ecclesiastical positions. The Gourgions also acquired one of the six apse chapels in the newly reconstructed cathedral at Mdina when this was completed in 1702<sup>4</sup>. It was certainly an impressive social climb.

Giovanni Gourgion who – in the records of Mdina parish – is recorded as being 50 years old in 1695<sup>5</sup>, is said to have made his money from trade and privateering (piracy against Turkish ships). In Gozo, he had a town house close to St George's Church in Rabat and a vast estate in Xewkija.

He was appointed *secretario*, a sort of personal secretary, by Grand Master Gregorio Caraffa (2/5/1680-21/07/1690) towards the end of his reign. The appointment was confirmed by Caraffa's successor, Adrien de Wignacourt (24/7/1690-4/2/1697) whom he served for seven years. As *secretario*, he was in charge of quarrying, water supplies, salt-pans leases, the transportation of soil, the planting and felling of trees, property renovations and alterations, public land and open spaces. He was allowed to hunt on the Knight's preserve of Comino, had a *kaless* (small carriage) at his disposal and was given a salute of three salvos when boarding or disembarking one of the Order's ships. He was also given the income of a tax imposed on leaseholders<sup>6</sup>.

In 1692, Gourgion was also appointed *Capitano della Verga* (head of the local government, the *Universita*, of Mdina) a title that was purely honorific by the time and which he retained for some time under Wignacourt's successor, Ramon Perellos y Rocafull (7/2/1697-10/1/1720)<sup>7</sup>. In this function, Gourgion



The Gourgion Tower

Photo courtesy of The National Archives, Gozo Section



*Full-length portraits of Giovanni and Elena Gourgion from the altarpiece of The Virgin of Mercy*

successfully petitioned Adrien de Wignacourt in 1695 to be allowed to construct the loggia at Saqqajja Hill which was used to present the *pallio* to the winner of the Mnarja horse races and which is known as *Mnarja Barracca*<sup>8</sup>. Under Perellos, he was also made Procurator of Wheat, a post even more remunerative than that of *segreto* and through which he received a commission on all grain he brought to Malta<sup>9</sup>.

In the same year in which the Gourgion Tower was finished, Giovanni commissioned yet another painting from the workshop of Mattia Preti, this time for the priory church of St Augustine, depicting St Augustine with St John the Baptist and The Blessed William of Aquitaine<sup>10</sup>. The commissioning of such paintings, and the building of the country house known as *Torre Gourgion*, is a reflection of his status and the refinement of his personal taste, and may be interpreted as a deliberate act of self-propaganda on the part of Giovanni Gourgion in an effort to appear as an equal among the Maltese nobility and the high ranking officials of the Order. After all, at the time it was people such as the Governor of Gozo Fra Don Francisco de Cordoba who were commissioning paintings from Mattia Preti<sup>11</sup>.

Another hint of this propagandistic intention might also survive in the long-held belief that none other than Grand Master Adrien de Wignacourt travelled all the way to Gozo for the opening of the Gourgion Tower. No solid documentary evidence has been found to corroborate this, and considering the fact that the visit of a Grand Master to Gozo would have indeed been a rare occurrence, it seems unlikely that no reference to it has survived in the archives.

### The Gourgion Tower

The Gourgion Tower was located southeast of Xewkija in an area now known as Ta' Gorgun. In the area where Giovanni Gourgion was about to build his tower there were already two towers – one known as *Torre Tinghi*, which carried an inscription dating it to 1540, and the other as St Cecilia Tower, built by the Master of Artillery Bernardo Macedonia in 1613 close to the chapel dedicated to the same saint<sup>12</sup>.

Although commonly defined as a tower, and certainly possessing military-inspired architectural features, the building was in reality a multi-functional fortified farmhouse that served as the focal point of the owner's vast agricultural estate, a country retreat for leisurely pursuits and a fortified position providing temporary sanctuary. All these aspects were combined together and contributed to give the Gourgion Tower its final appearance.

Although built at the height of the baroque period, in around 1690, the building has many features in its design that are very different to those preferred by the mainstream architectural style of the

period. Rather than looking light, dynamic, engaging and ornamental (all elements expected to be incorporated in a baroque building) the Gourgion Tower was solid, forbidding and utilitarian.

This design was the result of the historic and geographic context in which the building was conceived and its multifaceted nature. Right in the middle of the century before it was built, Gozo was the object of a cataclysmic event that would shape the island's future for generations to come. In July 1551, most of Gozo's population – numbering around 6,000 – was taken into slavery by a Turkish force under the command of Sinan Pasha<sup>13</sup>. This traumatic event had long-lasting repercussions on population figures, which started to recover significantly only following the implementation of a holistic defence strategy. The main feature of this strategy was a series of towers built along the coast during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, starting with Garzes Tower at Mġarr in 1605. Other towers were built at Marsalforn in around 1614, Xlendi in 1650, Dwejra in 1652, Mġarr ix-Xini in 1661 and San Blass in 1667<sup>14</sup>. These efforts had the desired effect and by 1680 the population of Gozo had once again reach approximately 5,700 and by 1705 it was up to around 6,100<sup>15</sup>. One of the most populated villages was Xewkija which, in 1680, had 500 residents and 640 in 1705<sup>16</sup>.

It is these facts that are behind the choice of design for the Gourgion Tower. Rather than looking at what was being built at the time, Giovanni Gourgion followed the long-standing tradition of constructing fortified country retreats that had started with the construction of Verdala Palace in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. An even more direct influence seems to have been exerted on the design of the Gourgion Tower by the Bubaqra Tower, built on a small hill near Żurrieq in 1580 for Don Matteolo Pisani, a Conventual Chaplain of the Order<sup>17</sup>.

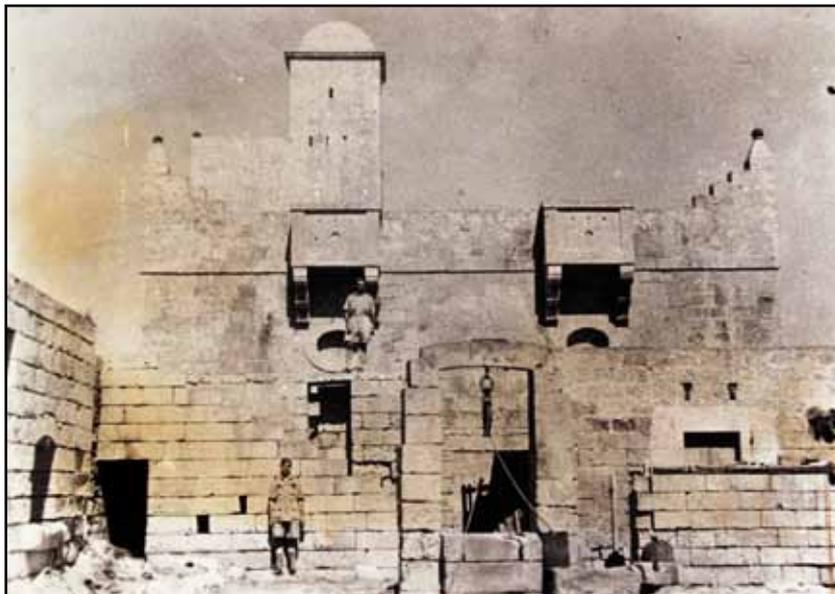
Like the Gourgion Tower, Bubaqra Tower is set in a vast agricultural estate surrounded by gardens and citrus groves. Both structures have simple solid lines: rectangular in the case of the Gourgion Tower and square in the case of the Bubaqra Tower. In both, a large hall cuts through the building and is flanked by smaller rooms. However, the most evocative similarity between the two are the spurs that rise at the corners of the main floor of the Gourgion Tower and on top of the indented turrets of Bubaqra Tower, and which in both cases added such a memorable profile to the respective buildings and also did much to endow them with a military aura. Such spurs, albeit in simpler renditions, are a common feature on traditional Maltese farmhouses. The origin of them is unknown but, according to scholars,

*Plan showing the original location of the Gourgion Tower. Image courtesy of Heritage Malta*



they may be the vestiges of an old ancestral custom and may have functioned as talismans<sup>18</sup>.

The culminating element of the profile of the Gourgion Tower, being set at its apex, was the domed stair-hood. This uncommon architectural feature lent an oriental feel to the building. However, a precedent for it existed in *Palazzo Stagno* in Qormi that was built in around 1589. It is thought that this feature of *Palazzo Stagno* was inspired by the domed circular *gardjoli* (lookout posts) set at the salient points of the fortification lines then being built by the Order. In fact the similarity can hardly be ignored. The same feature would later re-appear on the *Torre dello Standardo*, built close to the entrance to Mdina in 1725.



*The forecourt and east elevation of the Gourgion Tower.  
Photo courtesy of The National Archives, Gozo Section*



*Detail showing the  
domed stair-hood.  
Photo courtesy of  
The National Archives,  
Gozo Section*

**Part two of this article  
will appear in the next  
issue of Vigilo**

**The author would like to  
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#### Footnotes

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## The Malta Association of Professional Conservator-Restorers - MAPCo-Re

*James Licari*

The term “conservation-restoration” is often used to cover a number of concepts which include preservation, conservation and restoration. In Malta, the profession of the conservator-restorer is regulated by the Cultural Heritage Act (2002, amended 2007) – Chapter 445 of the Laws of Malta, which stipulates that only conservator-restorers who are warrant holders can practice the profession. Such legislation, together with the Code of Ethics and the Guidelines of Practice, were drawn up and published by the Warrants Board in 2006 and exist to guide all those working in this cultural heritage field.

The Malta Association of Professional Conservator-Restorers (MAPCo-Re) was established in 2007 with the aim of being the leading voice for the profession in Malta, bringing together academically qualified and experienced professional conservator-restorers who abide by the Code of Ethics. It is committed to improving the understanding of and access to the safeguarding of cultural heritage.

MAPCo-Re currently has about 30 registered members, the majority of whom are holders of a Bachelor’s degree in Conservation-Restoration read for at the Institute of Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (CINCH: 1999-2010) – Heritage Malta’s teaching arm. In 2010, the responsibility for these courses was assumed by the Department of Built Heritage at the University of Malta. The degree mentioned above provided academic training in the humanities (archaeology, history of art and architecture) and the sciences (material science and diagnostic science), as well as a solid foundation in documentation and hands-on practical conservation-restoration experience on objects/sites related to the area of specialisation chosen.

There are four areas of specialisation that are divided as follows: paintings and polychrome wooden sculpture; stones, metals, ceramics, glass and composite items; textiles and carpets; paper and book materials. To date, no academic degree has been issued specifically covering a specialisation in wood and furniture, but wood conservation is covered by the area of polychrome wooden sculpture.

The first degrees were conferred by the University of Malta in 2003. Other vocational training courses have been provided locally by MCAST, but graduates in these courses should be appropriately certified and, legally, should only work under the supervision of a professional conservator-restorer (who has obtained his or her warrant), according to the Cultural Heritage Act.

In 2008, MAPCo-Re felt the need to be connected with all other local professions and consequently joined the Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA) as an associate member. After achieving this local recognition, the association went a step further and in September 2010 applied to be an associate member of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorer Organisations (ECCO). In May 2011 it was not only officially accepted as an associate member, but was also requested to contribute more extensively to the European framework and other activities within the profession. In 2013, MAPCo-Re was also officially accepted as a fully federated member of the MFPA and as a full member of ECCO. It is currently applying to become a registered voluntary organisation.

MAPCo-Re wishes to stress the importance of it being consulted in respect of any work related to the conservation and/or restoration of our cultural heritage. There are many people who speak publicly as conservator-restorers who are not members of MAPCo-Re and hence are not bound to respect the international and local professional Code of Practice. The association would like to appeal to all those concerned about our common heritage to help increase awareness of this voluntary association of “cultural heritage medics” who can help preserve our historical past for the future.

### MAPCo-Re Committee:

President- Mr James Licari / Secretary- Ms Lindsay Galea / Treasurer- Mr Michael Formosa

Public Relations Officer- Ms Valentina Lupo / Voluntary Organisations Officer- Mr Simon Dimech / Events Organiser- Ms Amy Sciberras

MAPCo-Re can be contacted and followed on Facebook as:

‘MAPCo-Re: The Malta Association of Professional Conservator-Restorers’;

Mailing address:

MAPCo-Re, 1, 27, The Professional Centre, Sliema Road, Ġzira, GZR 1633.



*MAPCo-Re is affiliated with:*



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## Heritage Publications Review

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### Why We Build

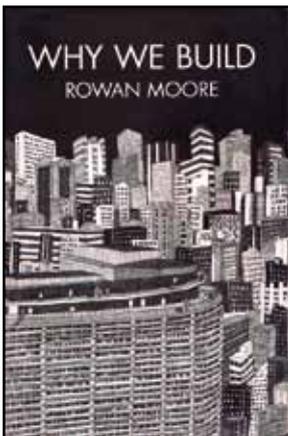
Author – Rowan Moore

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Reviewed by

*Petra Caruana Dingli*



Cars transport people from one place to another, but they do a lot more than that. A choice of car can reflect the social status or financial position of the owner. It can tell us whether the owner is fashionable or stylish, has a large family or is an environmentally conscious type. Certain cars are typically owned by younger or older people.

When a car is manufactured, a balance must be struck between design, price, safety, efficiency, technology and comfort and all this must fit in to the brand and image of the car.

A successful building also requires a combination of elements similar to those of a car – including design, technology, comfort, efficiency and safety. All these must achieve the right image to fit in with the desires and aspirations of the owner or the architect.

Just as the primary reason for needing a car is to move from A to B, the first reason to construct a building is to provide shelter. But a complex set of emotions are thrown into the mix, which Rowan Moore sets out to explore in this book.

Moore looks at the motives of prominent architects and their influential clients to design and construct major buildings across the globe. Starting with the ambitious and extravagant building projects of modern Dubai, such as the Palm Jumeirah artificial island in the form of a palm tree and the Burj Al Arab hotel imitating sails, this book focuses on the human desires and emotions that give buildings their shape and size.

According to Moore, Dubai's recent building rush was "a fable, a source of identity, an end in itself". The buildings reflected the ambitions of the rulers of Dubai "for power, for glory, for pre-eminence – and drew in the desires of others – for money, glamour or excitement. As the forms emerged, they inspired further emotional effects, such as awe, shock, emulation and fantasy, which heightened the urge to build more".

Yet while the shape of the Palm Jumeirah is impressive as seen from above through Google Earth, it is "more ordinary at ground level, where what you see are high walls and close-packed developments that block views of the water. Owners of homes on the fronds found that they faced not so much the sea, as a suburban cul-de-sac penetrated by a tongue of brine."

In Dubai, "the feverish excitement of its grand projects was not matched by everyday experience. The basic elements of Dubai are those of the modern American city – mall, tower, highway, theme park, suburb... They carry little of the drama or daring of Dubai's making. Much of Dubai's fabric is made of bland, highly managed spaces connected by a tissue of semi-chaotic infrastructure."

Moore says that construction in Dubai "lost touch with what might be called sense" and muses over the power of illusion in architecture.

The structure of this book loosely follows a set of themes, illustrated through recollections, anecdotes and a series of examples of the way in which buildings may be desired as a means of establishing power, of reaching for eternity, of concealing or projecting eroticism or even of solving marital problems.

Larry and Lynda Dean built their extravagant new home in Georgia, Atlanta, a mansion which cost \$25m to build and \$18 more for maintenance. The marriage failed shortly after they moved in. Moore wonders whether the building of homes is sometimes conceived as a remedy to strains in a marriage: "It is easy to imagine that by fixing the bricks and mortar, one is fixing the flesh and blood, the more so as buildings seem easier to sort out than people... Because they are expensive and effortful, construction projects offer the appearance of serious attempts to fix something, even if they are irrelevant to the matter in hand."

Sometimes architects take over and create spaces that are so tightly designed that the owners cannot add their personal touch and make them their own. Moore quotes an essay by the famous Adolf Loos, which satirises the architects of the Viennese secession and art nouveau who strove to design every inch of space and furniture in a building, leaving no space for the inhabitants to transform it into their personal space. This creates a tension between the architect's vision and the life of the user: "Historians talk of 'Palladio's Villa Rotonda' or 'Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye' as if they and not their clients owned them."

Moore presents the idea of home as a cosmos, driven by a wish to "dream up a world of which the maker is master, where everything is as he or she wishes it... it is a powerful reason why, functional questions apart, clients commission and architects design buildings."

Corbusier, for example, saw the re-designing of the home into a practical, efficient and beautiful unit "as the key to re-forming society". He thought that "a well mapped-out scheme, constructed on a mass-production basis, can give a feeling of calm, order and neatness, and inevitably imposes neatness on its inhabitants." Moore describes how Corbusier's imagined link between rational design and disciplined living was not to be taken for granted, as "the public housing projects that loosely followed his theories were soon reviled as inhumane and soulless and as havens of vandalism and crime."

This book is packed with stories about architects and their clients, and the buildings that they create together. The chapters meander along, gradually unpacking and revealing the desires, dreams, failures and ambitions of people involved in creating and using buildings, and the multitude of problems, disappointments, joys and successes that they encounter along the way.

**Melita Historica**

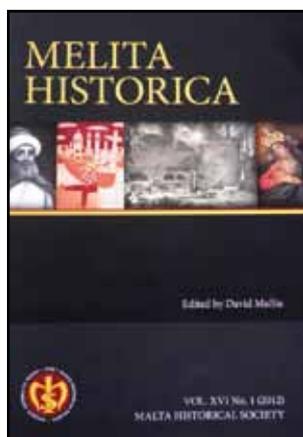
VOL. XVI No. 1

*The Proceedings of History Week 2009*

Editor – David Mallia

Published by – Book Distributors Ltd

ISBN – 1021-6952

*Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi*

Being the specialised publication that it is, *Melita Historica*, the journal of the Malta Historical Society, has an allure all of its own. Its content is certainly not everybody's cup of proverbial tea and admittedly the text can at times be daunting. Yet it is probably the best history-related material published in the past months. This is history for historians and history lovers with a definite interest in the subject.

Over the past few years, and probably thanks to a new editor and publisher, the journal's appearance has been brought up to date and made more appealing. The format and colour scheme are an open invitation to browse through the pages. In the journal's previous, somewhat formal, guise such a gesture would have already required a commitment to summon up a degree of demanding intellectual effort which can often kill the fun factor that reading can – and should – have.

Having said that, this smart fashionable jacket is still worn over a series of well-researched and academically very valid papers that offer infinite insights into a number of quite diverse subjects. For the lover of art there are the papers dealing with a newly reattributed painting by baroque artist Francesco Vanni and the very interesting one illustrating the output of British artists Julian Trevelyan and Mary Fedden during their stay in Malta. This has the added bonus of being profusely illustrated with seldom seen examples of both artists' work. Those interested in social, mercantile and agrarian history will delight in Albert Ganado's paper about Giuseppe Pulis Montebello, and legal and linguistic historians will find Mark A. Sammut's paper dealing with the term '*midheb*' in Vassalli's Lexicon very illuminating.

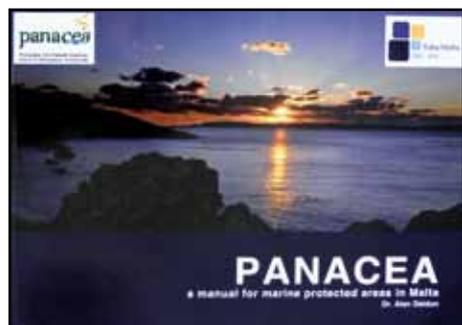
I personally was much taken by Guzi Gatt's translation, from the original Arabic text by Ahmed bin Muhammed al-Khalidi, of the passages dealing with the visit to Malta by Emir Fakhr al-Din al-Ma'ni II, a Lebanese noble who fled the Ottoman Turks in 1613 and was provided with refuge by the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. During his five years in Italy, the Emir visited Sicily and spent some time in Malta which was referred to in a few passages of the account of the Emir's travels written after his return to Lebanon.

More than just another academic publication, *Melita Historica* has developed into a platform through which both well-established and budding historians can bring their work to a wider audience. It offers infinite starting points for further research, both in the subject treated by the papers themselves or in subjects that develop at a tangent for a reference or a footnote. Most importantly, it demonstrates that – even if little publicised – interest in history is still very much alive and will continue to be so for many years to come.

**PANACEA***A manual for marine protected areas in Malta*

Author – Alan Deidun

Published by – University of Malta

*Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi*

This interesting publication sums up the intentions behind the setting up of the PANACEA – *Promozione Aree Naturali Attraverso Centri di Educazione Ambientale* (Promotion of marine protected areas through environmental education centres) project. The main objective of the project is to promote the sound scientific management of biodiversity assets in Sicilian and Maltese Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by drawing on codes of best practice developed within selected MPAs and through the provision of environmental educational centres.

The project starts from the very sound premise that in order for MPAs to achieve the purpose for which they have been designated, a widespread knowledge of their intrinsic scientific, environmental and also economical value must be achieved. It is only through this that a wide consensus for the setting up and protection of MPAs can be achieved. Such wide consensus will, in turn, demand the attention and efforts of politicians because it is they who will be charged with writing and enacting the laws that will protect and hopefully extend the MPAs.

For centuries we have looked at the sea as a resource to be exploited, which it undoubtedly is. However, the limits imposed by human technical capabilities acted as a safeguard against over exploitation and depletion of this resource. In recent years, however, the balance has been tipped and modern technologies have been applied to maximise the profits of those investing in the exploitation. Signs of this imbalance did not take long to become evident and whole ecosystems were put at risk. It is this imbalance that MPAs are intended to address by offering sanctuaries in which marine biology can regenerate.

The entities participating in the project consider environmental education centres as portals of education and entertainment, in which visitors (students, divers, tourists, locals) are regaled with a didactic experience through a kaleidoscopic overview of the MPAs' living resources using a number of ad hoc tools including documentaries, interactive tools, permanent exhibitions and models, ecological laboratories, etc. While looking at all options offered by the modern age for the dissemination of knowledge, those involved with PANACEA also opted to use the most classic of knowledge repositories, the printed book.

Playing what is perhaps the easiest and most obvious card, this manual capitalises on the stunning aesthetic magnificence of various marine habitats, as captured in the photographs accompanying the text and is a window on what lies beneath the blue cloak of our sea.

In Greek mythology, Panacea was the goddess of universal remedy. She was the daughter of Asclepius, the god of medicine and healing, whose iconographic symbol, a snake-entwined staff, survives as a universal symbol of medicine. Panacea was said to have a potion with which she healed the sick. Unfortunately, such quick fixes for the maladies that afflict our sea are hard to come by these days. It will have to be the efforts and commitment of people such as those involved in PANACEA that will have to re-establish the balance and maybe tip it just slightly over in favour of the marine environment.

## Treasures of Malta

No. 57 Vol. XIX No. 3

Editor – Giovanni Bonello

Published by – Fondazzjoni

Patrimonju Malti

ISBN – 1028-3013

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



The golden tones of Edward Lear's watercolour *Fomm ir-Rih* grace the cover of this issue of *Treasures of Malta*, tantalising the readers and whetting the appetite in expectation of the exhibition of the artist's works to be held at Palazzo Falzon in the autumn next year. In fact art, and in particular painting, is the main topic of this issue. Four out of the eight main articles are concerned with painting – whether it be the tale of how restorers brought back to life Mattia Preti's *The Allegory of The Triumph of the Order* in St John's or the efforts to partially dissipate the fascinating enigma surrounding the portrait of Leonora Cybo housed in Palazzo Falzon.

Simon Mercieca sheds light on a little known painting belonging to Bormla parish church depicting the *Madonna del Buon Viaggio* (The Madonna of the Safe Journey) with the Fort St Elmo Lighthouse in the background: a subject that would have certainly appealed to the parishioners of this city of mariners. Mercieca gives details of the restoration of the painting and the discoveries to which it led, the greatest one being a secure attribution to Francesco Zahra. A second discovery was the maritime scene, including St Elmo lighthouse in the background, that had long been obscured by layers of black paint.

Much closer to the present and yet still possessing a mysterious attraction exerted by great graphic art of all ages is the screen print Point of contact no. 17 by Victor Pasmore. This was recently donated by the Pasmore family to the National Museum of Fine Arts which is slowly building a considerable collection of works by the artist whose works grace the walls of art galleries such as The Tate in London. The artwork was in a considerably fragile condition and the story of its conservation and restoration makes very interesting reading.

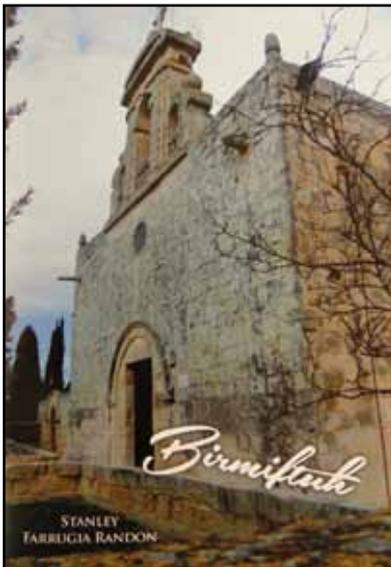
Yet another article dedicated to modern art explores the life and work of Toni Pace with a particular focus on his metal sculptures. One of the lesser known modern Maltese artists, Pace comes as a surprising discovery. His basic, almost crude, sculptures are viscerally Maltese and offer alternative renditions of very common objects such as watermelons and prickly-pear bushes. Particularly appealing is his *Women with Faldetta* (ghonella), the most common image from bygone times which he brings up to date by transforming her into a modern goddess using primordial shapes. Reading of the reaction in Malta to modern art in the first half of the last century almost gives the impression that barely a day has passed, judging from reaction to the Piano project in Valletta. The constantly reoccurring issue of the need for a proper modern Art museum also springs to mind.

Also demanding of attention is Edward Said's article featuring the picturesque grounds of Villa Frere in Pietà. One would hardly believe that behind the decaying façade lining the Pietà waterfront survive the remains of one of Malta's most famous gardens. Said narrates the history of this garden and the man who created it – John Hookham Frere – bringing to life the almost mystical history surrounding it and the geological fault within, imagined by Grognet as an outlet of the infernal river Styx. The garden is presented as a casket of ambiances from different ages, each having their own different moods. The wealth of information Edward Said gathered might well be the catalyst for a regeneration of this most ill-treated stretch of urban survivors – buildings and gardens which, in spite of everything, are still there to tantalise the mind about what the area might once have looked like. In the end only hope remains that we might see what is left, rather than what has been ruined, and strive to save and valorise it.

Detail from Preti's

*The Allegory of The Triumph of the Order*





### ***Birmiftuh***

Author – Stanley Farrugia Randon

Published by – *Din l-Art Helwa*

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi

The church of Bir Miftuh has a very special place in the hearts of those who have been involved with *Din l-Art Helwa* for any length of time. The restoration of this church was one of the first such projects undertaken by the organisation, which continues to care for it with the same passion as that displayed shortly after it was founded.

Bir Miftuh was the perfect site for a budding heritage organisation to tackle. Over the years, the project provided the satisfaction of having saved a unique example of our architectural heritage, the excitement of discovering long lost fragments of frescos and burials and the potential to capture the vision of future sponsors. In fact, the church has the right degree of visibility – being one of the first buildings that visitors see as they leave Malta International Airport. This simple fact has been providential, in that it has prompted MIA to contribute generously to its restoration over the years.

In this engaging booklet, Stanley Farrugia Randon – himself a long-standing volunteer with DLH – guides the visitor through the history, architecture and art treasures of Bir Miftuh. The current building is the core survivor of a much larger complex that once might have included up to five side chapels, apart from the one that has survived. Citing various documents, Stanley Farrugia Randon speculates on the probable appearance of the complex at its peak and, gradually, the image of an ever-changing building, subject to different plans in different ages, starts to emerge. The building grew and contracted, as if a living organism, until it reached its present cubic form.

Apart from the architecture itself, the most outstanding element of Bir Miftuh is what remains of the fresco representing the Last Judgment that survive on the west wall. Using a pallet limited to white, red, yellow, black and mixtures thereof, the artist managed to paint an impressive array of figures that still demand attention, even in their fragmented condition. It is also interesting to note that in all the surviving areas depicting the damned being tormented in hell, these are always represented as members of the fairer sex!

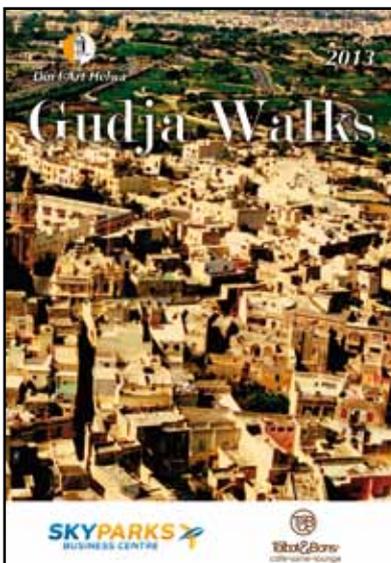
The final part of the book is dedicated to illustrating the constant efforts made by *Din l-Art Helwa* in its work to save first, and then maintain the fragile patrimony that is Bir Miftuh. This book is also a heartfelt acknowledgement to all those who, over the years, have participated in this effort and without whom this important part of our heritage could have so easily been lost.

### ***Gudja Walks***

Author – George Attard Manche

Published by – *Din l-Art Helwa*

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



This is the latest in the series of publications produced by *Din l-Art Helwa* which are intended to be used as guides to the most important monuments and buildings in the village or town to which the different booklets refer. They also place emphasis on the urban core of the particular village or town, providing a context for specific monuments and buildings. In fact, the very layout of the streets themselves, is also a part of our heritage. The booklets aim to draw attention to every element of these streets, with the understanding that they all contribute to the overall urban setting and, all together, represent an irreplaceable heritage.

The aim is also to help the public understand the value of certain elements which might not be so apparent and which, for that very reason, are much more at risk of being tampered with, irremediably altered, and in the end completely lost. They are often also an invitation to the local residents to take a fresh look at their neighbourhood, renew their interest and revive their role as its primary guardians.

In this booklet George Attard Manche takes a look at the village of Gudja. As in all villages, pride of place is reserved for the parish church, its artistic patrimony, and the buildings associated with it, such as the band clubs. These are the centre of village life and the social adhesive that binds all the residents together. Beyond this are the smaller churches and chapels, the niches, and the old houses that are so typical of any Maltese village.

But Gudja also has a few more rare treasures, principal among which is the imposing Palazz Ta' Bettina, also known as Palazzo Dorell. This beautiful country estate consists of a lovely villa with extensive grounds in which stands what is probably Malta's ultimate romantic garden folly, Xlejli Tower. Also outstanding is Gudja's *Gnien Tal-Kmand* or Lieutenant's Garden which, unlike many others of its kind, has more or less retained its original conformation and setting and as such is one of the best preserved Lieutenant's Gardens – complete with an outstanding main portal crowned with the royal insignia.

This booklet will be extremely helpful to all those, both local and foreign, who would like to know more about this charming village. In the case of foreign visitors it is almost like having a personal guide which should go a long way towards enticing them to visit this village which is off the main tourist track and for that very reason can provide them with an authentic feel of what village life in Malta is all about.

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