

# Secretary General's Report

## For the Year 2015

Good morning members, friends, volunteers and members of the press, I welcome you to the 2016 Annual general meeting of Din I-Art Helwa.

This last year has been a truly memorable and very special year for Din I-Art Helwa being the year of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 'our Golden Jubilee'. This was in fact appropriately celebrated by a series of important and prestigious events throughout the year so capably organized by our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary committee chaired by council member Albert Mamo who we thank for their hard work.

I must however start my address by paying tribute to the late Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, our founder president, who established and led Din I-Art Helwa for 33 years during which time he passionately fought to create awareness of the importance of conserving our extraordinary heritage and preserving the environment, establishing Din I-Art Helwa as the conscience of the nation in this regard. Judge Caruana Curran sadly passed away on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015, a few days after our last Annual General Meeting and a few days also after the opening event of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations which was the concert at the Manoel Theatre on the 21<sup>st</sup> February. We are proud to continue the work he started through Din I-Art Helwa and preserve his legacy.

### PEOPLE

The last Annual general meeting saw the election of the 15 Din I-Art Helwa council members for 2015 to 2017 to which were added an additional 7 co-opted members, for a total of 22, providing a group of dedicated first rate people bringing with them a wide range of skills and a wealth of experience in heritage, environmental protection as well as organizational and management skills necessary to enable our organization to continue to move ahead and achieve its goals. Albert Calleja will however, unfortunately be retiring from Council. Din I-Art Helwa wishes him all the very best, and thanks him for the excellent contribution he has given over the years. We are delighted meanwhile that Martin Galea has decided to return to Council. His experience and expertise will be invaluable to us.

A significant change in 2015 saw the statutory transition in July in the role of Executive President, with Simone Mizzi, an inspirational and exceptional leader for the previous 4½ years stepping down to be replaced by the equally accomplished Maria Grazia Cassar who was duly elected to replace her. Simone will nevertheless remain active within Din I-Art Helwa in the role of joint Vice President. We should also mention that she has meanwhile been elected to replace our other Vice President Luciano Mule Stagno, on the Executive committee of the International National Trust Organization whilst continuing to represent Din I-Art Helwa at Europa Nostra. She also continues to sit on the Board of the MIA Foundation and HSBC Foundation and on The Committee of Guarantee.

Council member Prof. Alan Deidun has been voted to represent all eNGO's on the new Environment Resources Authority Board. This is an honour for Din I-Art Helwa and we would like to thank Prof. Deidun, and wish him all the very best in his new post.

We are also fortunate that Dr John Vassallo accepted the invitation by council to be appointed as Din I-Art Helwa representative on the E.U. Funds Monitoring Committee within the Planning and Priorities Division, at the Parliamentary Secretariat. John's knowledge, expertise and wealth of experience in this area will be of great benefit to Din I-Art Helwa.

In view of the extensive work involved in our efforts to monitor and scrutinize development applications being submitted to MEPA, and where necessary or pertinent, to prepare a case objection, it was considered necessary to engage an architect on a part-time basis to assist us in this area. Arch Sarah Zammit Calleja was in fact engaged on this basis, starting in June 2015, and has since been extremely busy and active with 140 objections having been submitted by Din I-Art Helwa to MEPA by the end of 2015.

Meanwhile our long standing warden at Dwejra Tower, Gozo, Nigel Brittain, decided to step down after 11 years on the job. We thank him for his hard work and dedication over the years. He will be sorely missed. We were fortunate to find a replacement in Colin Hamer, who

has already done some voluntary work for Din I-Art Helwa at Majjistral Park. We welcome Colin and thank him for offering his services.

Finally we must also give a very big thank you to John Gafa for his loyal and dedicated service as handyman to Din I-Art Helwa for the last 15 years but who has now gone into retirement. John will be sadly missed and finding someone to replace him, on secondment from the government as John was, is so far not proving to be an easy task despite our endeavours.

### PROMOTION

Din I-Art Helwa has continued to avail itself of every opportunity to promote and publicize its declared mission to protect our heritage and environment and lobby for support with courtesy visits to government officials, potential sponsors as well the public in general. Recognition of Din I-Art Helwa's efforts has been forthcoming as evidenced by the ever increasing level of membership as well as the impressive level of public support given to our campaigns on social media.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> March, Din I-Art Helwa was presented with an award on the occasion of "Jum il-Fondazzjoni tal-Belt Valletta" and later in the year recognition for Din I-Art Helwa was also forthcoming when we were nominated for the first time for the prestigious Peter Serracino Ingott Award, which is awarded to groups or individuals for their civic engagement or who have brought positive change to society. The winner was MOAS, however we are proud to have been nominated.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April the restoration of the Wignacourt Tower St Paul's Bay, was officially launched by Minister for Tourism Hon. Dr. Edward Zammit Lewis providing good media coverage for Din I-Art Helwa.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> July Council members were invited by H.E. The President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca to an informal meeting at San Anton Palace where the President was presented with a copy of the Heritage Saved book written by council member Stanley Farrugia Randon.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> July the official opening of the Delimara Lighthouse by Minister of Transport Hon. Joe Mizzi was also well reported and covered in the media.

A courtesy visit to our offices by the Hon. Minister of The Economy, Investment and Small Business, Dr Chris Cardona and Malta Industrial Parks Limited Chairman, Mr Tony Zahra was made on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February, to present Din I-Art Helwa with the MIP sponsorship for the restoration of our Valletta premises.

Our officials also visited the Gozo ministry on the 28<sup>th</sup> August for a meeting with the Gozo Minister Hon. Anton Refalo to discuss various pending matters and initiatives by Din I-Art Helwa relating to Gozo and Comino.

Finally on 15<sup>th</sup> December we were also honoured to receive a courtesy visit by Ms Androuilla Vassillou, the former EU Culture Commissioner, who was attending a conference in Malta and who expressed her staunch support for Din I-Art Helwa and the work it is doing.

### SPONSORSHIPS AND RESTORATION

The continued generous support of our sponsors, who will later be mentioned in more specific detail by our Treasurer in his report, has enabled us to continue with our ongoing restoration work on new projects as well as the maintenance on a regular basis of all properties under the care of Din I-Art Helwa.

I would like to start by remembering the late Maj. Nestor Jacono, a past member of Din I-Art Helwa, for creating a trust, known as the Agapi Trust through which Din I-Art Helwa was awarded an important legacy of €25,000 which has been utilized to help fund work carried out at the Our Lady of Victory Church.

This year saw the start of the restoration of the Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Malta International Airport Foundation. The work here is still ongoing however the internal walls were cleaned and the external walls are being restored. The roof including the original cannon has been restored and a new carriage for the cannon and missing apertures were constructed.

The restoration of the Wignacourt Tower was completed with funds acquired by the Malta Tourism Authority from EU funding and we have to thank Martin Vella, warden of Wignacourt, and his team as well as our Stanley Farrugia Randon for the sterling work carried out at the Tower as well as the Eden Leisure group who carried out the clean-up exercise at the Tower. St Paul's statue was restored for the third time also with the support of the Malta Tourism Authority.

This year the restoration and refurbishing of the Delimara Lighthouse as a heritage holiday rental property was completed and launched in July. Special thanks is to be given in this regard to our sponsor Gasan Mamo, as well as The Malta Maritime Authority, and in particular Council members Josie Ellul Mercer and Stanley Farrugia Randon for the supervision of the work carried out as well as Maria Grazia Cassar, Simone Mizzi, Rosanne Zerafa, Rina Mamo and Josette Cini who were instrumental in completing the furnishings to enable us to open up. Initial response and bookings were very strong and here we also have to thank Sarah Mizzi for the initial promotion and subsequently Quicklets Letting who agreed to manage the bookings on our behalf gratis.

The programme for Victory Church meanwhile is going to plan. In May 2015, Giuseppe Mantella's team finished treatment of two thirds of the ground floor perimeter walls and the altars and reredoses of the St John of God and St Philip Neri was finished. Meanwhile the restoration of the magnificent Erardi painted ceiling by the Courtauld Institute has been nearly completed. The wooden floor that has concealed the paintings was removed after almost twenty years and on 19<sup>th</sup> August in the presence of the sponsor HSBC Foundation, and the media, the Erardi paintings were revealed to the public. The new illumination scheme of the Church was also inaugurated by His Grace the Archbishop Charles Scicluna at the Din I-Art Helwa Te Deum Mass on 9<sup>th</sup> December.

DLH has this year continued with the work on the restoration of the Mattia Preti paintings at Sarria church Floriana which is being undertaken by Giuseppe Mantella Restauri. After completing the centre altarpiece of the Immaculate Conception and painting of St Sebastian with the financial assistance of Shireburn Software and M.I.A. respectively, this year we undertook the restoration of the painting of St Roque with the assistance of Mr David Curmi of MSV Life which was completed and of St Rosalia sponsored by the Malta Rotary Clubs and District Clubs of Palermo which is still ongoing.

You may also have noticed that work has this year started on our prestigious Valletta office premises which is being made possible with the support and sponsorship of the Malta Industrial Parks Limited.

On 25<sup>th</sup> September an agreement was signed between Din I-Art Helwa and Malta Tourism Authority who kindly undertook to apply for EU funding for restoration works to be carried out at St Agatha's Tower, the Dwejra Tower in Gozo and the Sta Maria Battery located in Comino. We are eagerly waiting for the outcome of these applications.

A new waterproofing membrane was installed at the medieval church of Bir Miftuh, as the previous one which had been there for about 15 years, was failing.

Emergency works were carried out at St Agatha's and have been completed on one of the facades where this was necessary. We are grateful to council members Stanley Farrugia Randon and Josie Ellul Mercer for coordinating all the restoration works as well as supervising them.

Din I-Art Helwa would also like to thank the Friends of Ta'Braxia who carry on with their arduous task of looking after the cemetery against all odds. Charles Gatt, Andy Welsh and Tony Camilleri are to be thanked for carrying on this work.

Council Member Stanley Farrugia Randon is currently collaborating with Mater Dei Hospital to install a series of displays outlining Malta's medical history. This very interesting project should be completed by the end of the year.

Another project is planned for the enhancement of the Garden of Rest, which is being prepared by Arch. Joanna Spiteri Staines from our team with the assistance of Arch. Alberto Miceli Farrugia.

Finally I would like to mention that following an application for support, on the initiative of Simone Mizzi, the Community Chest Fund have confirmed their agreement to award Din I-Art Helwa a sum still to be established, which hopefully will be utilized for the purchase of a sorely needed pick-up car.

## **HERITAGE and ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

In 2015, Din I-Art Helwa took forward its mission to lobby in favour of the natural and built heritage of the Maltese Islands. It participated

in public consultation exercises, conducted a public survey, published numerous statements in the press, attended a protest rally, contributed to meetings of the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Development Planning, organised a public debate, and continued with its 'Save the Countryside' awareness campaign on Facebook which had reached over 15,000 followers by the end of the year.

Din I-Art Helwa began 2015 by calling on the Prime Minister to ensure increased dialogue prior to the approval of planning policies that will further erode the countryside and destroy Malta's rich architectural heritage due to the demolition of traditional street and townscapes.

Between January and April, Din I-Art Helwa formed part of the Coalition against Spring Hunting (CASH) campaigning against Spring Hunting. Ultimately, the vote against Spring hunting achieved 49.6% of the vote, falling short of a majority by only 2,220 votes. The Coalition stated that this close result sent a clear message that the environmental movement had matured and had proved to be a challenge to both the hunting lobby and the political parties represented in Parliament. In April, the Coalition welcomed the early closure of the hunting season following an incident in which a protected bird was shot, falling into the playground of a school.

In February, Din I-Art Helwa wrote to the Prime Minister objecting to the relocation of the Monti market stalls to Ordnance Street near the Old Theatre ruins and the Parliament building.

In March, Din I-Art Helwa condemned MEPA's decision to allow the pouring of concrete for new kiosk platforms directly onto the sand at Għadira, which is a Blue Flag beach, and urged the Authority to reverse this decision.

Also in March, Din I-Art Helwa's 'Save the Countryside' campaign conducted a public survey of the Maltese population's views on the countryside in collaboration with MISCO International. The survey showed that 97% of the Maltese population believe that the countryside should be protected more. 88% believe that Malta should have more protected nature sites.

Then in April, Din I-Art Helwa gave its support to the Public Domain Bill which has a huge significance in the protection of natural and heritage sites against speculation, inappropriate use or neglect.

In May, Din I-Art Helwa objected strongly to the government's proposal to grant land to contractors to build an educational establishment in an area outside the development zone at Żonqor Point instead of considering disused or brownfield sites. It is our view that whether modern or historic buildings are identified, projects of this type should be accommodated close to population centres and not in the countryside.

In June, Din I-Art Helwa voiced its view that if the proposed Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED), set to replace the Structure Plan, was approved in Parliament, the protection of the countryside would decrease. The proposed Strategic Plan would, in fact, increase the regulatory loopholes in favour of more development/speculation in the countryside.

In June also, Din I-Art Helwa participated in the 'Save Żonqor' public rally against the government's intentions to encourage the building of a new university at Żonqor Point. The protest was attended by around 3,000, the largest public protest that has ever taken place in the history of environmental campaigning in Malta.

Din I-Art Helwa deplored the new building at the AFM base in Marsamxett which obstructs the view of the Floriana bastions. This is yet another example of insufficient sensitivity to the negative impact on historic views by the government.

Then in July, the government published three draft Bills to regulate the forthcoming demerger of MEPA. Din I-Art Helwa participated in a meeting of the Standing Committee for Planning and the Environment at Parliament, and noted that the government's insistence of having the plenary debate before the public consultation had taken place was, in our view, nonsensical, and that the proposals are set to strengthen the hands of developers and weaken the environmental voice in planning decisions.

Din I-Art Helwa reiterated its position that the new Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED) was not an acceptable replacement for the Structure Plan. One would have expected the standards for a document of strategic national importance to be set at a much higher level.

In August, Din I-Art Helwa presented its comments on the proposed MEPA demerger, and noted that the new Planning Authority seemed to

be divesting itself of all environmental responsibility. The involvement of environmental expertise during the processing of planning applications is set to decrease with the new structures.

In August also, Din I-Art Helwa noted that it was strongly disappointed by the Prime Minister's statement that a new University was still to be built at Żonqor. The public consultation exercise to identify alternative sites seems to have been just a sham, as the site was already chosen. Din I-Art Helwa welcomed the re-use of buildings at Dock No.1 in Cottonera, but deplored the use of an ODZ area at Żonqor in Marsascala.

In October, Din I-Art Helwa's 'Save the Countryside' campaign organised a public debate entitled '*Il-Futur tal-ODZ: Għall-Maltin kollha jew għall-ispekulaturi biss?*' at the Old University in Valletta. The debate was chaired by journalist Caroline Muscat, and the participants were the Hon Michael Falzon, then Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, the Hon Marthese Portelli, Shadow Minister for the Environment, and the Hon Marlene Farrugia, then chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment and Development Planning; as well as the president of the Malta Developers Association Mr Sandro Chetcuti and Din I-Art Helwa Council member Prof Alan Deidun.

In December, Din I-Art Helwa noted that the transfer of ODZ land at Żonqor to a private developer was forging ahead without due consideration being given to the alternative sites proposed in the public consultation.

Also in December, Council member Joanna Spiteri Staines represented Din I-Art Helwa on the panel of a conference about the environment, organised by the Church Commission for the Environment. The Prime Minister and the Shadow Prime Minister were also on the panel.

Thanks must be extended to all the HE P team in particular Council members Petra Caruana Dingli, Joanna Spiteri Staines and Alan Deidun supported by Maria Grazia Cassar and Simone Mizzi, for the complicated and sometimes delicate work carried out in this area.

## EVENTS

This has undoubtedly been an exceptional year for the number of events organised in view of the additional 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

The popular annual Spring Fête at the Bastion Gardens was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April, organised by Albert Calleja and his helpers. Another Christmas Fair was also held at the Garden on the 5<sup>th</sup> December. Thanks goes to Mary Aldred, Albert Calleja and all the volunteers at the Garden of Rest.

This year we were treated to four wonderful concerts at Bir Miftuħ, on the 15<sup>th</sup> May sponsored by the Chalmers family, 23<sup>rd</sup> May by the French Embassy, 30<sup>th</sup> May the Italian Embassy and finally 13<sup>th</sup> June by the Israeli Embassy. As usual these concerts were well supported and appreciated and we must thank especially Cettina Caruana Curran, Charles Gatt, Pat Salomone, Amelia Calleja and Anne Marie Navarro in particular, for their organisation.

An innovative idea this year was to hold a day's seminar with all volunteers meeting together as a working group to brainstorm and discuss any issues they may be facing and propose ideas and strategies to improve Din I-Art Helwa. This event, which was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> June at the Paradise Bay Hotel, and was very well attended and a great success. All agreed it is to be repeated. Thanks must be extended to Martin Scicluna and Carolyn Clements for taking on the organization of this seminar.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> June a very enjoyable party to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was organized by Carolyn Clements and her Gozo volunteers and was attended by Council members.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> July, the actual date of our anniversary, Din I-Art Helwa launched a commemorative stamp celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary which was sold as a first edition.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> also, as mentioned earlier, we were invited for a courtesy visit to San Anton palace by HE the President. Then, the occasion of Din I-Art Helwa's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated the following day on the 10<sup>th</sup> July, with a fund raising dinner at San Anton which was also attended by HE The President of Malta, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca as well as the Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Dr Edward Zammit Lewis. This was a wonderful event, and was once again impeccably organized by Cettina Caruana Curran assisted by Charles Gatt, Pat Salomone and Cathy Farrugia amongst others. On this occasion our Executive President Simone Mizzi formally handed over the reins of Executive President of Din I-Art Helwa to Maria Grazia Cassar.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> August an activity was organized on Comino, in conjunction with the Ghajnsielem Local Council. The Gozo Bishop Mario Grech said Holy Mass which was followed by a Maltese feast and re-enactment wearing 18<sup>th</sup> Century Costumes. Carolyn Clements and her Gozo volunteers team are to be thanked for working on this event which attracted 340 people.

Our Youth Committee organized an open air film show on the 19<sup>th</sup> August as part of the Sliema Art Festival.

During September, our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary sub-committee organized a series of prestigious events surrounding a 5 day visit by Prof. Simon Molesworth, world renowned environmentalist and long standing President of The International National Trust Organisation. Prof. Molesworth gave a public talk on the 16<sup>th</sup> September at the Auditorium of the Valletta University Campus as well as at the Din I-Art Helwa premises the following day and besides participated in a business round table debate at the Chamber of Commerce. HE the Australian High Commissioner Ms Jane Lambert also attended this event, as well as a tour of Argotti Botanical Gardens. Courtesy visits were also arranged for him with the President of Malta as well as the Minister for Environment Leo Brincat. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary team of Albert Mamo Simone Mizzi, Maria Grazia Cassar, Ann Gingell Littlejohn, Cettina Caruana Curran and Pat Salomone are to be thanked and congratulated for the impeccable organisation of this prestigious visit.

In October also two art exhibitions by Stephen Spiteri and Ian Camilleri were held at St. Agatha's Tower and Wignacourt Tower respectively.

The presentation of the prestigious Din I-Art Helwa Awards for Architectural Heritage was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> November. There were a good number of very valid quality entries from a variety of projects and again the judges did not have an easy task. The winners were announced by Maria Grazia Cassar, Chairperson of the Award Scheme panel of judges, and were then presented with their awards by Arch. Richard England. Thanks goes to Dr. Conrad Thake, Arch Antonio Mollicone and Arch Joanna Spiteri Staines for participating on the judging panel.

On the 27 November the International President of Rotary and the Senior Officials of Rotary Club Malta visited Sarria Church for a presentation given by Dott. Santo Guido, on the restoration carried out to date on the Mattia Preti paintings. This was also the official launch of the restoration of Santa Rosalia by the Malta Rotary and Palermo District Clubs.

December saw two further important events as part of our anniversary celebrations. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> we were treated to a vocal recital by Mezzo Soprano Hadar Halevy accompanied by pianist Charlene Farrugia in the Tapestry Chamber at the Grandmasters Palace Valletta, kindly made available by Her Excellency The President who also attended the event. This was followed by a reception at the Palace and our thanks go to Cettina Caruana Curran, Pat Salomone and their helpers for organizing this event. This was followed on the 9<sup>th</sup> December by a Te Deum Mass celebrated by H.E. The Archbishop Charles Scicluna at Our Lady of Victory Church who also inaugurated the beautiful illumination of the ceiling. Finally on the 19<sup>th</sup> December Pat Salomone organized the popular annual Christmas concert by the Enkor choir at Our Lady of Victory Church which as usual was well attended.

## LECTURES

Several very interesting and informative high profile lectures were held throughout the year at the Judge Caruana Curran Hall. We are grateful to all the lecturers supporting Din I-Art Helwa, giving their time to share their experiences and knowledge to raise the profile of Malta's cultural heritage.

## CONCLUSION

I must conclude by, first of all, thanking most sincerely, all our loyal, hardworking and dedicated volunteers who selflessly give up so much of their time to maintain and keep open our properties. A very big thank you also to Joe Busietta, Prof George Camilleri, Albert Calleja and Joe Chetcuti for their work in maintaining DLH records and files up to date as well as Joe Azzopardi who produces our Vigilo magazine with the help of Judith Falzon and council member Ann Gingell Littlejohn. Finally, special thanks in particular to our hardworking office staff Rosanne Zerafa and Anne Marie Navarro as well as their volunteer helpers Karen Galea and Rina Mamo for their patience and commitment.

# Din I-Art Helwa

## Audited Accounts Summary

### Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2015

	2015 €	2014 €
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Property, Plant and Equipment	<u>42,091</u>	<u>45,182</u>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Inventories	32,047	29,035
Trade and Other Receivables	61,619	36,621
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>182,959</u>	<u>126,073</u>
	276,625	191,729
<b>Total Assets</b>	<u><u>318,716</u></u>	<u><u>236,911</u></u>
<b>Accumulated Funds and Liabilities</b>		
Income and Expenditure Account	<u>172,351</u>	<u>122,053</u>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Trade and Other Payables	146,066	88,459
Bank overdrafts	<u>299</u>	<u>26,399</u>
	146,365	114,858
<b>Total Accumulated Fund and Liabilities</b>	<u><u>318,716</u></u>	<u><u>236,911</u></u>

### Income Statement for Year Ended 31st December 2015

	2015 €	2014 €
<b>Income</b>	568,594	483,955
<b>Direct Expenditure</b>	<u>-438,145</u>	<u>-357,068</u>
<b>Funds available for recurrent expenditure</b>	130,449	126,887
Administration expenses	-80,262	-74,941
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) on recurrent expenditure before interest</b>	<u>50,187</u>	<u>51,946</u>
Finance Income	111	120
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for Financial Year</b>	<u>50,298</u>	<u>52,066</u>
Accumulated fund brought forward	122,053	69,987
<b>Accumulated fund carried forward</b>	<u><u>172,351</u></u>	<u><u>122,053</u></u>

When stating their opinion, our auditors, Vincent Curmi and Associates confirm that the financial statements give a true and fair view of *Din I-Art Helwa's* financial position as of 31st December 2015, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with General Accounting Principles for Smaller Entities.

Vincent Curmi and Associates have intimated their willingness to continue in office, which appointment is being recommended to the AGM.