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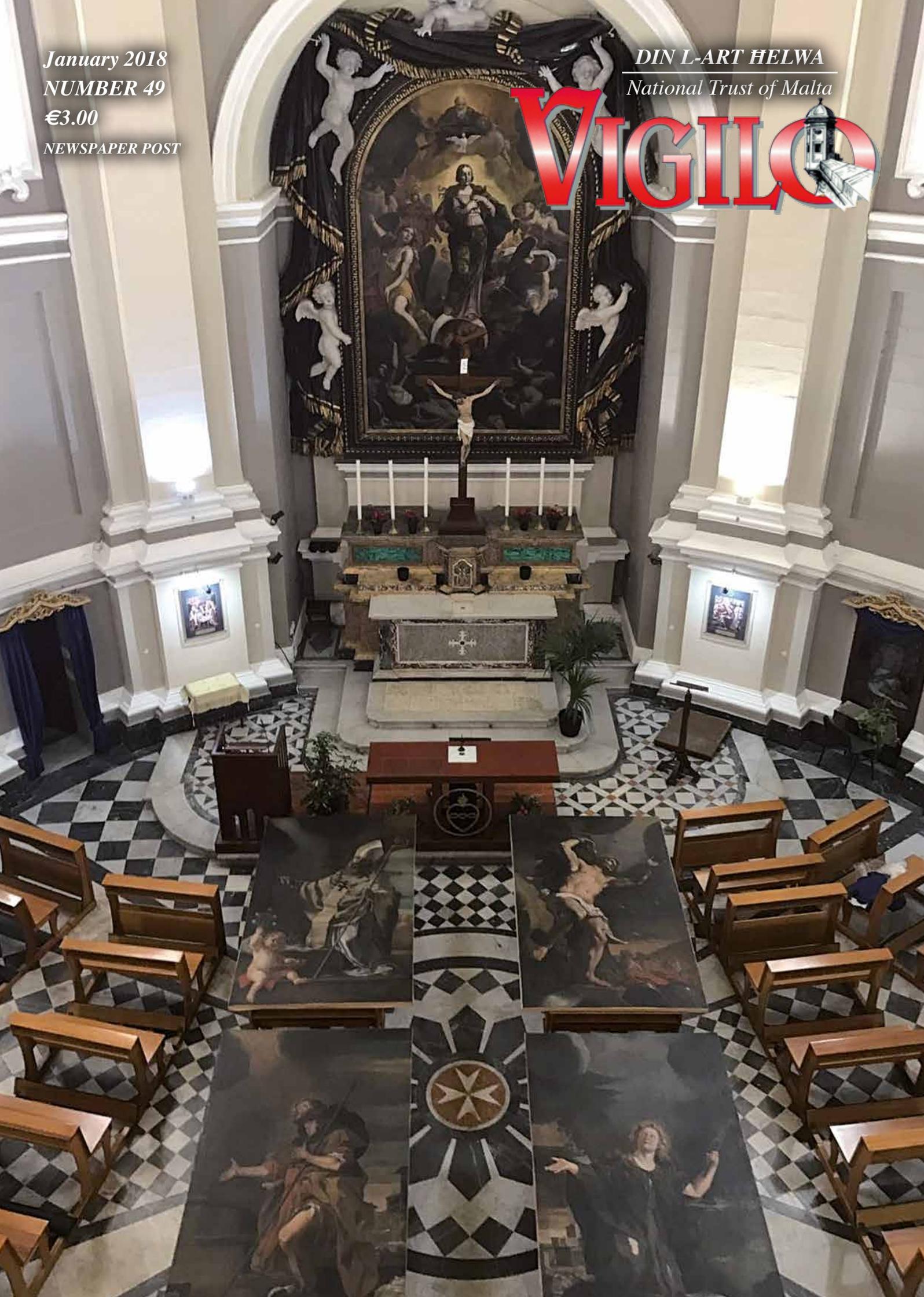
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NEWSPAPER POST

DIN L-ART HELWA

National Trust of Malta

VIGILO



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

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

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



Din l-Art Helwa

Din l-Art Helwa has reciprocal membership with:

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

The National Trust for Scotland

The Barbados National Trust

The National Trust of Australia

***The Gelderland Trust for
Historic Houses***

The Gelderland 'Nature Trust'

Din l-Art Helwa is a member of:

ICOMOS - Malta

Europa Nostra

***The International National Trusts
Organisation (INTO)***

***The National Federation of
NGOs of Malta***

***The Heritage Parks
Federation***

Qantara

***Future of Religious Heritage
Association***

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Din l-Art Helwa**

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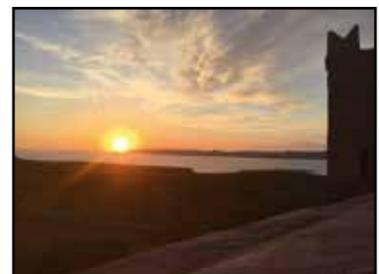
FRONT COVER

Bird's eye view of interior of Sarria Church, Floriana.
Photo:
Giuseppe Mantella



BACK COVER

Sunset evening at the Red Tower.
Photo:
Claudia Maticena



Asking Politicians to Listen

Maria Grazia Cassar

Din l-Art Helwa Executive President

The protection and preservation of Malta's built and natural environment has always been very high on *Din l-Art Helwa's* agenda. It is a slippery affair, as it involves influencing decision-makers, where very often huge financial commitments and votes are at stake. Politicians are always more ready to lend a listening ear and to agree to promises before elections, and to this end, together with a coalition of Maltese eNGOs, the leaders of the main political parties were invited to pledge their approval of Ten Electoral Recommendations which were put together by the 23 eNGOs. This event was purposely organised on the 22nd May, World Biodiversity Day, and took place at *Din l-Art Helwa's* headquarters.

We called it "The Environmental Challenge", and presented a document with ten major issues affecting Malta's built and natural environment. This was explained to the audience by myself, Alan Deidun, Claire Bonello and Mark Sultana on behalf of the coalition. After the presentation, the politicians were invited to take the stage and a discussion ensued, led by Chris Peregin, the founder and CEO of online news platform "Lovin Malta". The participants included Prof. Arnold Cassola from Alternattiva Demokratika, Dr Simon Busuttill from Partit Nazzjonalista, Dr Marlene Farrugia from the Partit Demokratiku, Dr Jose' Herrera and Prime Minister Dr Joseph Muscat from the Partit Laburista.

Some interesting points emerged from the discussion, although, as was to be expected, these were somewhat drowned by the usual blame-game used by politicians. Dr Farrugia insisted on the need to give as strong a protection to Urban Conservation Areas as to Outside Development Zones, while Dr Cassola emphasised that the courts should be given the legal tools to take action against abuse. Dr Herrera made a very important point when he said that the environment should transcend political allegiance, and that is why he had worked with the shadow minister Jason Azzopardi to draft the Public Domain Law. He also stated that his party would set up a dedicated environmental court in order to strengthen and further protect it. Dr Busuttill pointed to his party's electoral manifesto "A better Quality of Life for You", which included many of the points which the eNGOs had raised. Finally, something which Dr Muscat said, and which would be worth reminding him of, was that he did not intend extending the building zones, but on the contrary, he would consider removing some areas of natural beauty which fell within them, making them ODZ, whilst compensating the owners adequately. He also mentioned the important topic of waste management, which was to be, in his opinion, the country's biggest challenge.

On the whole it was a very civil affair, and indeed pointed to the fact that politicians can be in agreement over environmental issues. These issues are too important to squabble about, and have a fundamental effect on people's lives.

Following the re-election of Prime Minister Joseph Muscat to Government, we thought it opportune to pay him a courtesy visit, and put forward the three main issues of concern to us regarding the built and natural environment. We were received soon after, and went to Castille on the 21st of June. The delegation consisted of Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar, The Hon. Secretary General Philip Mercieca, The Hon. Treasurer Martin Scicluna, Vice-Presidents Simone Mizzi and Lucio Mulé Stagno, and Council Members Stanley Farrugia Randon and Martin Galea.

After the introductions and congratulations, The Prime Minister was presented with a copy of "Heritage Saved" by Dr Farrugia Randon. A discussion ensued, with emphasis on the vital importance of reviewing the Policy for High Rise buildings, and drawing up a masterplan for the whole country which incorporated infrastructure, social considerations, as well as the high visual impact of such buildings on our environment. The Prime Minister was visibly taken aback when we showed him the photomontages of the two applications which *Din l-Art Helwa* is appealing, and their effect on the surroundings.

The second point we put forward was the unpardonable loss of our traditional and vernacular buildings to give way to re-development in our towns and villages. Hundreds of permits were approved by the Planning Authority to demolish such old buildings, and the unique character of Malta's architectural landscape was being destroyed as a consequence. Furthermore, the DC15 was allowing for the rise in heights in new developments at the edge of village cores. This is resulting in the steady blocking out of the traditional skyline of the Maltese landscape, where views of church domes are being obliterated by horrendous blank party walls of new developments. The Prime Minister said that NGOs such as ours always complained when policies were already in place, but should speak up before. I replied that *Din l-Art Helwa* does speak up, but unfortunately not many of its recommendations are taken on board. I also suggested that the Planning Authority should publish the results of such public consultations before the law is enacted.

Finally, *Din l-Art Helwa* made a request of the Prime Minister that ODZ areas are protected, and that areas of natural beauty be given further protection by the creation of more Nature Parks. We also suggested that more resources are given for the management of Natura 2000 and Marine Protected Areas.



Political Leaders at Din l-Art Helwa

The Coalition Of Local Environmental NGOs

Recommendations for Electoral Programmes 2017

Presented to: AD, PD, PL, PN, Patrixjotti Maltin and Alleanza Bidla

The following document provides 10 environmental recommendation areas for policy and decision-makers within Malta's five political parties in view of the upcoming General Elections 2017.

The following proposals should be implemented within the first five-year electoral term, i.e. June 2017 – June 2022.

1. CONSTITUTIONAL ENSHRINEMENT OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

Constitutional entrenchment of ODZ areas, with the listing of ODZ areas and the prohibition of development and commercialisation of said areas. The citizen has to be given a universal right of action to sue the State for breach of this and other Constitutionally-entrenched environmental provisions, including the duty to protect biodiversity.

2. LAND USE AND PLANNING

The PA and ERA must be placed on an equal footing with an equal say. One cannot dominate the other. Every rejection of an ERA recommendation should be fully justified in writing by the respective planning board. **The Planning Authority boards and ERA should include members of civil society and NGOs** in far greater number than at present. The three-membered **Planning and Environment Commissions and the Environmental Review Tribunal** should include planners and more professionals besides architects. No architect still active in their profession should be allowed to act as a consultant to government on land reform. The fees NGOs and ERA are charged in connection with any **planning appeal** need to be significantly reduced so as not to render this tool out of reach due to prohibitive costs.

A complete overhaul of the **2014 ODZ policies** (Rural Policy and Design policies) should be effected within the first year, following extensive consultation with NGOs, so as to close off the current loopholes. Any new petrol station approved for an ODZ area should not have ancillary facilities such as a car wash, showroom etc. No net uptake of ODZ land through the publication of any **revised local plans** should be contemplated. Such a revision should not take place before 20 years since the last such revision. All large-scale (to be defined a priori) ODZ development should be subjected to approval through a 2/3 Parliamentary majority and to the condition that an equivalent developable parcel of land becomes ODZ. The need for small-scale ODZ development (e.g. reservoirs, tool rooms, etc) should be fully justified by applicants with ERA and with eNGOs, with permits being withdrawn within the first year in case of abuse of permit conditions.

Masterplans for high-rise buildings and for land reclamation should be in place prior to further approvals of such projects. Current development proposals for Ta' Ċenċ and Hondoq ir-Rummien should be definitely shelved.

Legislation on Noise Pollution should be put in place. Objective measurements should be applied and enforced, in line with WHO and EU recommendations.¹

3. AFFORESTATION, NATURA 2000 MANAGEMENT AND BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

Renewed afforestation efforts should be initiated on public government land, with community involvement to encourage ownership. At least one site should be afforested with significant numbers of indigenous trees every year. A legally-recognised **Natura 2000 site management agency** should be set up, with the aim of relieving ERA of the day-to-day management of such sites and with the mandate to apply for external funds to further implement management measures within these sites. **Approved management plans for Natura 2000 sites** should be urgently implemented. The list of protected floral and faunal species should be increased, coupled with fines for handling and poaching such species.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE

A vision for a fossil fuel-free Malta must be drawn up and researched, and plans for a fossil-fuel free Malta put in place. **Climate Change adaptation strategy** should be put in place, given inevitable climate change effects in the coming decades even if all emissions were to stop tomorrow.

5. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Traffic should be tackled head on, both as an economic AND public health challenge. **Initiatives for electric cars** must be put in place, with increased subsidies, possibly funded for by increased taxation on traditionally fuelled cars, or by tax credit for those who scrap old cars. **Enactment of a network of pedestrian and bicycle-only roads** (not bike lanes – existing roads **entirely exclusive** for biking). Heavy subsidisation of electric bikes is highly recommended. The use of polluting fuels used in shipping should be addressed and technology allowing the **on-the-road assessment of fume generation by vehicles** should be purchased by Transport Malta and related fines be spiked.

6. WASTE, WATER USE AND AGRICULTURE

The **introduction of compulsory separation of all waste at home is to be implemented.** Given our climate, the government may choose to support the introduction of garbage disposal units fitted inside kitchen sinks to handle bio-waste. Urgent measures should be

introduced to curb the entry of plastic litter into our seas, with coastal catering and accommodation facilities (HORECAs) being encouraged to cut down on the use of plastic and single-use utensils.

Malta should pull its head out of the sand and realise that it is one of the top 10 water-scarce countries in the world.² **This country does not have a National Water Management Plan.** There is a need to enact legislation to establish that **groundwater** in Malta is a public resource, and must be administered as such. Ensure rainwater re-use at source in buildings, and introduce a flood tax for all buildings not having rainwater re-use infrastructure.

GMO products in food must be properly labelled and regular checks must be done, including testing for pesticide residues in both local and imported consumables. Such testing facilities should be available in Malta and results should be released promptly to prevent the sale of the contaminated food in question. Enforcement of current pesticide use constraints should be strengthened up.

7. ARCHITECTURAL/BUILT HERITAGE

Prevent the demolition of heritage properties, including those outside of **Urban Conservation Areas (UCAs)**. Establish a system of maintenance grants to owners of heritage properties, and tax exemptions/grants for NGOs preserving heritage properties. Empower the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage with more resources to adequately assess planning applications, and implement Superintendence and CHAC recommendation that the Planning Authority draw up appropriate policies for the treatment of surviving historic buildings in modern streetscapes.

The **Valletta and Cittadella skylines** should be safeguarded against incongruous development proposals, as should heritage sites of archaeological importance and their buffer zones and dark-sky heritage areas (from light pollution).

8. SUSTAINABLE FISHING AND THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Strict enforcement of already existing laws must be implemented. Any form of fishing by explosives, poisons, curtain nets and dragging is to be abolished. Concrete action must be taken to stop the sale or distribution of immature or protected species. A marine enforcement section within the ALE and within ERA should be instituted and supported financially by government as a rapid response unit once infringements (e.g. spearfishing with SCUBA gear) are reported by the public. The confines of no-take areas within designated **MPAs** should be clearly demarcated through buoys for seafarers and a small enforcement team should be seconded on land to each MPA as reference points for the public. Large-scale **land reclamation projects** outside harbours should not be considered. NGOs and ERA should be consulted on the drafting of the national **Marine Spatial Plan**, which should be completed by 2021.

9. HUNTING AND TRAPPING

Current **hunting fines** should not be relaxed while enforcement of environmental laws should fall under a new Wildlife Crime Unit of specialised trained police officers with the involvement of environment NGOs. **Malta should cease to unilaterally apply the trapping derogation**, for which there is no justification, in view of the extensive environmental damage that trapping exerts, besides the lack of a comprehensive and publicly-available register of trapping sites within Natura 2000 sites. Hunting derogations should be reconsidered and justified by scientific facts.



10. EIA STUDIES, ENFORCEMENT AND DONATIONS TO ENGOs

Major construction works should only be approved by Parliament after environmental studies have been carried out. The definition of 'major construction works' should be clearly stated and adhered to. The **EIA process** should be strengthened and not undermined or prejudiced by political statements anticipating the approval of such projects prior to conducting EIA studies. ERA should conduct the **alternative site selection exercise** included within EIAs and should be consulted on matters pertaining to site selection (e.g. motorsports track) from the very start when new projects are announced. Enforcement facilities should be strengthened up and **Direct Action**, rather than sanctioning, should be resorted to more frequently, especially for illegal developments in ODZ areas, in protected sites or public land. The **Public Domain Act** should be broadened to allow the public to invoke it while implementation by the Authorities needs to be speeded up. The eNGOs additionally **request removal of VAT from donations** to environmental organisations, and the necessary systems put into place to make this possible.

The following NGOs and Organisations have approved the above recommendations:

Din l-Art Helwa	Slow Food Malta
Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar	Ramblers Association
BirdLife Malta	Għaqda Bajja San Tumas
Friends of the Earth	Noise Abatement Society of Malta
Gaia Foundation	TerraFirma Collective
Nature Trust Malta	Malta Water Association

¹ http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/43316/E92845.pdf

² (<http://www.investinginwater.org/Water+Scarcity/>)

52nd Annual General Meeting - 25th February 2017

Secretary General's Report

Good morning members, friends, volunteers and members of the press. I welcome you to the 52nd Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa and am pleased to present our Annual Report providing a general overview of the activities of the Council for the past year, which once again, has proved to be a most active and challenging year for DLH in its work to protect our precious heritage and environment.

PEOPLE

We are fortunate to be able to count on a team of extremely dedicated, talented and hard working Council members and other volunteers who selflessly give up many hours of their personal time to manage the ever increasing workload and demands as *DLH* continues to expand its activities and seeks to achieve its goals.

Our Council for 2016 welcomed back the invaluable services of Martin Galea and Ian Camilleri and later in the year we were fortunate to additionally co-opt Joseph Philip Farrugia, who we welcome, and whose professional experience and expertise in architecture and restoration as well as in the organisation of fund raising events will undoubtedly be of great benefit to *DLH*. Unfortunately, this year, Albert Mamo will be retiring from Council though assuring us that he will continue to assist where needed and remain active within *DLH*. We are indeed most grateful to Albert for his contribution not least for his leadership and commitment in heading the 50th Anniversary Celebration committee and skilfully organising a series of exceptional prestigious events over 2 years.

Our Council members also contribute and represent *DLH* by advising on various cultural and heritage related Boards and Committees.

Ms Simone Mizzi, our former President was elected last May to the Board of Europa Nostra and continues to represent *DLH* on this pan European federation of heritage organisations, while *DLH* member and advisor, Dr John Vassallo has also been elected as an individual member of the Europa Nostra Council (*DLH* has been a member of Europa Nostra since 1967 and is assisting in the organisation of a special meeting in Malta in March 2017 in conjunction with the Malta Presidency of the European Union).

Simone also represents *DLH* on the Board of International National Trusts Organisation and on the Committee of Guarantees in Malta and the Majjistral Park Federation while continuing to serve the interests of cultural heritage on the HSBC and MIA Foundations.

Our Hon. Treasurer Martin Scicluna, also serves on the HSBC Malta Foundation board, for which we thank him.

Council member Prof. Alan Deidun was elected to represent all NGOs on the Environment Resources Authority Board and has been doing a sterling job.

Also Dr John Vassallo continues to represent *DLH* on the E.U. Funds Monitoring Committee within the Planning and Priorities Division, at the Parliamentary Secretariat.

We have also been very fortunate to welcome several new volunteers who will be looking after and keeping open our properties. We welcome Carol Lee and Paola Valota at OLV; Luke Galea at the Red Tower; Catherine Pace and Margaret Cachia at Wignacourt Tower; Alan and Bridget Kenny, Viv and Pauline Thompson at Torri Mamo; Neil Hitchcock, Neil Pursey, Steve Jessel, Phil Warner, Sue and Richard Hasthorpe, Jill Dowsett, Lawrence Bellizzi, Sue Nightingale, Chris Hemmings and Marion Miskimmin for Gozo and Comino and finally Charles Paul Cilia and Paolo Ferelli at the Garden of Rest. Colin Hamer is resigning from his role as warden of Dwejra tower, and we would like to thank him for the excellent work he has carried out.

Apart from those on Council and our helpers in the office, we have a total of about 120 volunteers now helping in our properties to whom we are most thankful. Nevertheless, as we take on and open new properties our dependence on finding volunteers remains, and at present we still need to find others to be able to regularly open up to the public the soon to be completed Ta' Xutu Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower.

Our long search and several attempts with the authorities to try to acquire the services, on secondment from Government, of a handyman to replace the retired John Gafa remained unsuccessful and this obliged us, last October, to proceed to employ John's son, Roderick Gafa, as our new handyman, on probation for 12 months. Roderick has in fact settled in very well and is promising to be of great assistance and a valuable addition to the restoration team.

COURTESY VISITS/CORPORATE MATTERS

In June the newly appointed Minister for the Environment and Climate Change and Sustainable Development, the Hon. Dr. José Herrera paid a courtesy visit to the Garden of Rest which was covered by the media. During the visit the Minister met with *DLH* officials – Maria Grazia Cassar, Simone Mizzi, Petra Caruana Dingli and Alan Deidun. A follow-up meeting was agreed to discuss relevant issues with the Minister and this was held on 1st July. This was attended by Petra Caruana Dingli and Martin Galea and, in particular, the future of nature parks was discussed.

Also in June, *DLH* collaborated with the French Embassy who had invited M. Didier Happe, from the French authority of Restoration, to visit Malta between the 1st and 4th June. *DLH* assisted in introducing M. Happe to various local organisations in the field.

During the year, given changes in the Voluntary Organisations' legislative framework and given new activities such as the rental of Delimara Lighthouse, the need was felt to review our fiscal reporting responsibilities. KPMG Malta reviewed our activities within a fiscal context. The end result was that, as from 2016, *Din l-Art Helwa* started collecting and paying VAT on selected activities. Thanks are due to KPMG for their assistance and advice on these issues which they offered to *DLH* pro-bono.

Dr Petra Caruana Dingli participated in a conference held at the Excelsior Hotel, on the 28th October, showcasing the success of the EEA Grant Scheme Beneficiaries, which featured *DLH* in a stand, purposely set up by Council Member Cathy Farrugia and Rosanne Zerafa.

In October, Architetto Mario Pisani kindly accepted *DLH*'s invitation to be on the judging panel of the *Din l-Art Helwa* Awards for Architectural Heritage, and joined Chairperson Maria Grazia Cassar, Arch. Joanna Spiteri Staines, Dr Conrad Thake and Dr Antonio Mollicone to adjudicate the prize-winners.

Prof Luciano Mulé Stagno attended a meeting with European Commissioner Mr Miguel Cañete responsible for Climate Action & Energy, at Europa House, on January 12th.

On the Corporate side also, early in the year, the Secretary General attended, on behalf of *DLH*, the annual ceremony at San Anton Palace for the distribution of MCCF funds by H.E. The President when a cheque was presented to *DLH*, awarded towards the purchase of a van. Later in the year a secondhand diesel vehicle/van was in fact purchased and is now being regularly used. Thanks go to Council Member Josie Ellul Mercer for following this purchase through.

SPONSORSHIP AND RESTORATION

This year we carried out the long awaited restoration of the facade of our beautiful headquarters in Melita Street corner with Old Bakery Street, including the wooden balcony, thanks to the part-sponsorship given to *DLH* by Malta Industrial Parks.

Our major ongoing project was the challenging restoration of Ta' Xutu Tower at Wied iż-Żurriq which is now in the final stages of completion and we look forward to opening this to the public soon. As mentioned earlier, we still however need to find volunteers to tend to the Tower before we can open regularly. We thank Malta International Airport Foundation for their generous support in sponsoring this project.

Also, a much needed restoration to the east façade of the Red Tower, Mellieħa was concluded with the work being sponsored by MFSA.

At Our Lady of Victory Church in Valletta the challenging multi disciplinary task is now nearing completion. This year through the generous sponsorship by the Alfred Mizzi Foundation the two altars and elaborate carved niches of St. John Evangelist and St. Liberius have been restored by Giuseppe Mantella Restauri and their delicate colours revealed. A kind donation by Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Noll has assisted us to begin work on the organ/balcony and a generous gifting scheme by Mr and Mrs Sandro Raniolo have boosted general funds to continue work on the other parts of the church.

The 18th Century pipe organ, original to this church, is being restored through the generosity of The Eden Leisure Group. We hope to launch this in early 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage when Valletta takes up its role of Capital of Culture. Extensive studies on the severely damaged wooden choir stalls have been carried out and their restoration is now underway with donations from Farrugia Investments Ltd., and Simonds Farsons Cisk plc, thanks to the initiative of Council Member Ian Camilleri. The delicate work to reveal the original perimeter murals on the left and entrance walls of the church continues through the generous sponsorship of PWC Malta and through whose support the restoration of the St. John of God altar painting and the Guardian Angel, a rare 19th Century oleograph have also been completed.

Simone Mizzi continues to drive this important project with the invaluable help of Josie Ellul Mercer, custodian Mario Sciberras and the support of Albert Mamo, Pat Salomone and Maria Grazia Cassar, our Executive President, who bring fund raising opportunities and events to aid the project. Simone has in fact just launched another appeal for funds to secure the facade, deteriorating belfry and historic bells for which some €95K are required.

Also, at Sarria Church in Floriana we have this year facilitated the restoration of yet another two Mattia Preti paintings. The charming painting dedicated to Sta Rosalia, the Patron Saint of Palermo, sponsored by the Rotary District 2110, Sicily and Malta Clubs was completed, while work on that of Saint Nicholas of Bari, with a sponsorship from Paul Mifsud of Sparkasse Bank, has also commenced. We thank Council Member Pat Salomone for her initiative to complete the ambitious task of restoring the remaining Mattia Preti paintings in the church of which five have been completed to date.

Meanwhile maintenance on the various properties under our control continues on a regular basis. Damage resulting from acts of vandalism at the Red Tower and Ghallis Tower was repaired. At the Red Tower an amount in cash was stolen, which thankfully was recovered from our insurers. We have however now installed CCTV cameras at the Tower and taken other precautions.

An application to restore Ghallis Tower has been submitted to the Planning Authority while we are awaiting news on EU funds, applied for on our behalf by the M.T.A., to enable us to carry out more restoration at Dwejra Tower, St. Mary's Battery on Comino and the Red Tower.

A full development application has also been filed to enhance the accessibility of the Garden of Rest, by introducing a lift and ramps which bridge the various levels of the garden. Thanks go to Simone Mizzi who has co-ordinated this, together with Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar.

We must thank in particular Stanley Farrugia Randon and Josie Ellul Mercer for their commitment to the onerous task in maintaining continued upkeep of all *DLH* sites which now number 18 with Victory Church and the Ta' Xutu Tower nearing completion. In this respect we shall in fact continue to enlarge our portfolio of properties under our control and during 2017 will hopefully embark on the restoration of three new properties. On the 22nd November 2016 we formalised an agreement with the Mellieħa Local Council to undertake the restoration of the Torri l-Abjad in Armier limits of Mellieħa. The agreement is valid for a period of 10 years during which *DLH* will be responsible for the conservation of the property and will be authorised to utilise the property when completed for heritage and environmental educational activities. A formal handover was made by the Mellieħa Local Council, in the presence of Minister Deborah Schembri on 14th January this year. We must thank Maria Grazia Cassar, Lucio Mulé Stagno and Ian Camilleri for their initial discussions and negotiations with the Mellieħa Local Council to lay the foundations for this most important and prestigious project for *DLH* as well as Martin Vella who has undertaken the arduous role of Project Manager. This is undoubtedly a large project which will require substantial funding on which our Treasurer Martin Scicluna has worked very hard with already very positive results of which he will no doubt inform you in greater detail in his presentation. Martin however deserves our special thanks for his persistence and efforts to achieve these results.

The other new projects in the pipeline are the restoration of the Vendôme Redoubt Tower in Marsaxlokk. This was in fact offered to us by Government and we are currently in the course of concluding an official guardianship deal with Government. Here again,

substantial funding will be necessary and approaches to potential corporate sponsors have already been initiated. It is intended to convert this Tower into a museum for fishing.

Finally, another project being undertaken on the initiative of Prof. Lucio Mulé Stagno is the restoration of the so called Australian Bungalow currently lying in an abandoned state in Marsa. The bungalow was initially built by the English Government in the early twentieth century, to teach potential emigrants to Australia how to live in these types of bungalows. The plan is to restore the bungalow to its original state and transport it to Ta' Qali where it can be utilised and will be accessible to the public. This project is being studied and undertaken by Council Member Joseph Farrugia, aided by volunteer Martine Leben.

HERITAGE & ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

In 2016 *Din l-Art Helwa* continued to lobby for the protection and appreciation of the natural and built heritage of the Maltese Islands. It participated in public consultation exercises, published numerous statements in the press, contributed to meetings of the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Development Planning, and continued with its 'Save the Countryside' awareness campaign on Facebook which had attracted almost 18,000 followers by the end of the year. It also launched an awareness and fund-raising campaign against high-rise development in Sliema and at Mrieħel.

Din l-Art Helwa submitted three formal appeals at the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal in 2016. The first one has been successful, with the planning authority revoking the demolition of the façade of three art deco houses in Tigné. The appeal against the proposed Townsquare and Mrieħel towers is still underway. Arch. Sarah Zammit Calleja was engaged to handle the increased workload monitoring permit applications to the Planning Authority.

Many individuals and organizations provide support in this area of our work, however special thanks are due to *DLH* council members Dr Petra Caruana Dingli, Arch. Joanna Spiteri Staines, Martin Galea and Prof. Alan Deidun, as well as to Dr Anika Psaila Savona, Richard Cachia Caruana and Arch. Edward Said. We are also grateful to Daniel Cilia, Dr Ray Bondin, Arch. Simone Vella Lenicker, Paul Radmilli, James Vella Clark and Dr Reuben Grima for their advice and assistance. Legal counsel on appeals was provided by Dr Malcolm Mifsud, Dr Cedric Mifsud and Dr Catherine Mifsud.

In January *DLH* joined other e-NGOs in refusing a seat on the Climate Action Board, as a response to the lack of commitment of the government to the environment.

DLH commented on revisions to the Mrieħel Industrial Area policy. The building height limitations at Mrieħel were not subjected to public consultation which went against EU directives. *DLH* noted its strong disagreement with high-rise at Mrieħel due to its central and high position in the historic sight-line between Valletta and Mdina.

In February *DLH* expressed concern at the renewed proposal to build 15 villas at Ta' Ċenċ in Gozo. This unacceptable proposal will continue the relentless destruction of the countryside and goes directly against all current planning policies for this area.

Din l-Art Helwa raised concerns on relaxed height limitations for retirement homes. While appreciating the need for living facilities for elderly persons, additional height should only be considered for appropriate sites and not within UCAs or ODZ.

DLH joined other e-NGOs in raising concerns about the appointment of MP Dr Franco Mercieca as Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Development Planning due to his involvement in property development.

DLH welcomed proposals for a management structure at Inwadar Park at Żonqor, designated in the Local Plan of 2006, and the incorporation of additional areas within its boundaries. A press launch was held in February on a report by *DLH* council members Petra Caruana Dingli and Martin Galea on the management of protected areas entitled *The Future of Nature Parks in Malta: Innovation and Management*. This was published in 2015 by the Today Public Policy Institute, in conjunction with *Din l-Art Helwa*'s Save the Countryside campaign.

In March *DLH* supported the Public Domain Bill, presented to Parliament by MPs Dr Jason Azzopardi, Ryan Callus and Dr Marthese Portelli, which provides additional protection against speculation to designated areas. *DLH* noted that NGOs could recommend sites for classification as public domain. In May *DLH* welcomed the approval of this law.

In May *DLH* also voiced concerns on the proposed relocation of the Birżebbuġa Enemed fuel depot to a sensitive area at Has-Saptan in the limits of Ghaxaq. *DLH* repeated its previously declared concerns to the Planning Authority in November and in May *DLH* also voiced concerns on new draft regulations for the sanctioning of building irregularities.

Whilst in June, *DLH* supported in principle the Nationalist Party proposal for a two-thirds majority in Parliament for development in ODZ areas. *DLH* noted that the new policy for Rural Areas in 2014 had not slowed down development in the countryside.

In June also, *DLH* commended the Planning Authority for refusing the development of a retirement home at Wied Ġhomor. *DLH* was however dismayed by a permit for a 5-storey block of apartments in Lija, which it considered to be a gross misinterpretation of policy and out of character in a 2-storey villa area. This permit may create an unfortunate precedent.

DLH joined e-NGOs in calling for all high-rise to be put on hold until a holistic master plan is finalized assessing their cumulative impact on traffic, shading, infrastructure, air pollution, wind effect, skyline, as well as the economic value of property and quality of life. The organizations also called on the Planning Authority to postpone hearings on high-rise at Mrieħel until a full public consultation on this zone is carried out. In July *DLH* with other NGOs wrote to the Prime Minister requesting a full explanation of the steps which led to Mrieħel being included in the Floor Area Ratio policy, and why this decision was taken behind closed doors.

In July *DLH* raised concerns about a planning application for a new fuel station and car-wash facility beside the Turkish Muslim cemetery at Marsa, a scheduled Grade I building. *DLH* also filed an appeal jointly with the Sliema Local Council on the proposed demolition of three period houses in Hughes Hallett Street in Sliema, in view of the relentless destruction of Sliema's architectural heritage.

In August the Planning Authority granted controversial permits for high-rise towers at Mrieħel and at Qui-si-Sana in Sliema. This was strongly condemned by *DLH*, also strongly disappointed by the ERA chairman's absence at the hearing. *DLH* subsequently launched a 'Stop the Greed – Skyscraper Campaign' appeal for funds from the public to enable continued action through legal and other means.

That month *DLH* expressed concerns on proposed internal and external changes to the Sacra Infermeria in Valletta, another Grade I listed monument. In another case, *DLH* noted that the Jerma Hotel in Marsascala was finally set to be demolished and supported calls by members of the Marsascala Local Council to reinstate the Jerma site as a public open space.

In September *DLH* filed appeals at the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal on permits for two high-rise projects – TownSquare in Sliema and Mriehel Towers. Both appeals were supported by Nature Trust Malta and the Archaeological Society Malta. *DLH* invited Dr Michael Short from Bartlett's School of Architecture, London, to advise on matters related to high-rise and good planning practice. Dr Short visited Malta in October and subsequently submitted a report to *DLH*.

In October *DLH* representatives actively participated in the consultation process for the IPPC permit of the new gas-fired Delimara Power Station and submitted comments to ERA.

In November *DLH* wrote to the European Commission, concerned that no Strategic Environmental Assessment was carried out on the Floor Area Ratio policy before approval by the Minister. *DLH* wrote to UNESCO noting the detrimental impact that skyscrapers would have on the historic skylines of Valletta and Mdina.

DLH commented on the Paceville Master Plan, and participated on this subject at the Parliamentary Committee for the Environment and Planning between September and December. While *DLH* favours the development of master plans, it felt this draft plan was unacceptable as it did not address the needs of the entire community of the area, nor provide a vision for the country as whole. *DLH* also objected to the process followed, which lacked transparency and seemed to further direct financial interests rather than serve the public interest. The proposal for land reclamation at Portomaso was also entirely unjustified. Besides these actions, *DLH* monitored almost 700 planning applications and environmental impact assessments and submitted a steady stream of comments and objections throughout the year, encompassing a wide variety of development and environmental issues.

On January 26th 2017, *Din l-Art Helwa* joined the Valletta Local Council, the Valletta Alive Foundation and Friends of the Earth (Malta), in an open letter to the Prime Minister to safeguard Valletta's Outstanding Universal Value, and protect it from the dangers of unsuitable development.

EVENTS

A full programme of both cultural as well as fund raising events was again held in 2016. Early in the year on the 21st February an official presentation of the original key to the Wignacourt Tower was made to *DLH* by Mr Max Farrugia, whilst on the 28th February a very interesting and well attended historical re-enactment was organised by the Compagnia San Michele at Bir Miftuħ chapel.

On the 1st April a harp and piano recital was held at Our Lady of Victory Church to mark the 450th Anniversary of the founding of Valletta. Internationally acclaimed harpist, Silke Aichhom, and the renowned pianist Sofia Narmania performed a musical programme which was chosen specially to reflect the spiritual and artistic treasures of the Church built by Grand Master La Vallette after victory in 1565. This event was made possible with the kind sponsorship of Heribert Grünert.

From the 3rd to the 12th May a retrospective exhibition of the *DLH* Awards for Architectural Heritage from 2005 to 2015 was held in the foyer of the Parliament Building. The Hon. Dr. Anglu Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives inaugurated the Exhibition which presented no less than 49 projects that had received awards. This was in fact the last and closing event of the 50th Anniversary celebrations and special thanks must be given to the 50th Anniversary Committee, so ably led and chaired by Albert Mamo, and including Maria Grazia Cassar, Simone Mizzi, Pat Salomone, Cettina Caruana Curran, Ann Gingell Littlejohn, and Philip Mercieca, for organising over the last 2 years a series of important and prestigious events.

Three wonderful concerts were again organised in the Bir Miftuħ Chapel at the end of May/early June with the kind support and sponsorship by the Embassies of Italy, France and Israel. As usual these concerts were well supported and appreciated and we must thank in particular Cettina Caruana Curran, Charles Gatt, Amelia Calleja, Pat Salomone, Cathy Farrugia and Anne Marie Navarro for their excellent organisation.

Council member Ian Camilleri offered to organise regular tours for our members to the various *DLH* properties which have proved to be very popular. The first tour was in March to the Delimara Lighthouse and Torri Mamo which was followed up in June with tours to the Red Tower and Foresta 2000 and later in the year of Sarria Church and Our Lady of Victory Church. In October a number of enthusiastic participants joined the excursion entitled 'Clapham Junction Cart Rut Experience' conducted by author Gordon E. Weston. It is intended that these popular tours will become a regular feature of our Events calendar.

Also in June *DLH*, in collaboration with the Celebrate Islands Movement, held 2 guided tours to the Wignacourt Tower, the oldest standing coastal watchtower in Malta, which were conducted by the Tower's curator Martin Vella.

On the 23rd and 24th July an elaborate re-enactment by the Group "Show of Arms" was held at the Wignacourt Tower, which proved to be very popular and served to attract the public to the Tower and create awareness of its historical background.

The annual and most popular fund raising dinner at San Anton Palace under the distinguished patronage of Her Excellency the President of Malta and also attended by the Minister of the Environment, Minister Herrera, was this year held on the 29th July. This was again a wonderful event, well supported and as usual impeccably organised by Cettina Caruana Curran and her team of helpers.

In August the Gozo and Comino volunteers assisted to organise the Comino Festa at the Santa Marija Tower which this year included a re-enactment by the Compagnia San Michele and attracted several visitors both local and foreign, whilst all through Summer, sunset evenings at the Red Tower were regularly organised for visitors on Tuesdays and Thursdays by volunteer Brian Sly, aided by other Red Tower volunteers, whom we thank most wholeheartedly.

A small ceremony was held on the 5th October at our premises to launch a further publication by Council member, Stanley Farrugia Randon, called 'Il-Biedja f' Malta', a history of agriculture in Malta and the effects it has had on the Maltese landscape and environment.

On the 13th October, in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute, a talk was given by Dottoressa Paola Bassani together with Simone Mizzi, to commemorate the celebration of 100 years since the birth of Giorgio Bassani, a leading intellectual and writer who founded Italia Nostra and who shared much in common with our founder Judge Maurice Caruana Curran.

The Annual Autumn Concert and Dinner at the Grand Hall, St John's Cavalier, Valletta was held on the 11th November. The highlight of the evening was a string performance by the Rotterdam Ensemble which was made possible through the generous sponsorship of

Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Noll. Guests of Honour for this successful and enjoyable event were the Minister of Education, Mr Evarist Bartolo as well as H.E. The Ambassador of the Netherlands Mr Joop Nijssen.

In December a presentation of Mattia Preti's Santa Rosalia, restored by Giuseppe Mantella Restauri, with the support of Rotary District Clubs, was held at Sarria Church, Floriana. Rotary District Governor Nuncio Scibilia accompanied by Ian De Cesare and incoming Governor John de Giorgio visited the Church of Sarria to view the restored painting.

On the 18th December a well attended Christmas Concert featuring the Cappella Sanctae Catharinae was held at Our Lady of Victory Church.

The prestigious annual architectural awards for 2016 was this year postponed to the 20th January 2017 when we were honoured by the distinguished presence of Her Excellency The President of Malta who gave out the awards to the prize-winners.

One of the last events held was a special three-day book fair, which was organised by volunteer Joe Busietta, whom we thank very much, together with Prof. George Camilleri, Pat Salomone and Cathy Farrugia.

LECTURES

A regular series of very interesting lectures was held at the Judge Caruana Curran Hall to support our cultural programme for the year. Our high profile lecturers to whom we are most grateful included Simone Mizzi whose talk "50 Years of Achievements and Looking to the Future" outlined the achievements of *DLH*; in February, Dr Stephen Spiteri gave a lecture about the Great Siege as seen in D'Aleccio's paintings, which was held in collaboration with the International Institute of Baroque Studies of the University of Malta. The other talks were "The Artistic Significance of the Via Crucis" by Georgina Pavia; "Malta's Heritage Trees" by Dr. Joseph Buhagiar; "Aliens in Seas – Is there a Cause for Concern?" by Prof. Alan Deidun; a talk on the Victoria Lines by Prof. Anthony Bonanno and Judge Joe Galea Debono and a talk on the natural heritage of the Inland Sea at Dwejra, Gozo by Major Peter Ripard.

IN CONCLUSION

We must once again thank all our loyal hardworking volunteers, as well as our members and sponsors without whose generous support our work would not be possible.

A special mention and big thank you must be given to Andy Welsh, Charles Gatt and Tony Camilleri of the 'Friends of Ta' Braxia', which functions under the umbrella of *DLH*; Joe Azzopardi our editor of *Vigilo*, Judy Falzon and Ann Gingell Littlejohn who helps him with the proof reading; Joe Busietta, Prof. George Camilleri and Albert Calleja for keeping all statistics and records; Joe Chetcuti, Rina Mamo and Karen Galea for their invaluable background work in the office and last but most certainly not least our hardworking office staff Rosanne Zerafa and Anne Marie Navarro for their patience, dedication and commitment to *DLH*.

Resolutions AGM 2017

The Protection of Valletta and its Skyline

The extraordinary universal value of the city of Valletta and its World Heritage status as a fortified Baroque City are under severe threat, in particular from skyscrapers planned too close to its walls, from new additions that mar its historic skyline, and from inappropriate commercial developments that are rapidly destroying the integrity of its architecture and its overall dignity.

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held at 133 Melita Street, Valletta on Saturday 25th February 2017, that the Prime Minister, as the highest official in Malta responsible for planning, together with the Parliamentary Secretary in charge of Planning and Lands, as well as the Planning Authority are all urged to ensure that developers are urgently provided with stringent criteria that will preserve Valletta and its unique characteristics and skyline, also with regard to its buffer zone. Furthermore, that the same authorities will step up enforcement to guarantee that such criteria are observed and that they will rigidly disallow sanctioning to developers who breach regulations.

The Demolition of Traditional and Historical Buildings

It is hereby resolved at the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held at 133, Melita Street, Valletta on Saturday 25th February 2017, that the Prime Minister, as the highest official in Malta responsible for planning and the preservation of cultural heritage, together with the Parliamentary Secretary in charge of Planning and Lands, as well as the Planning Authority, are all urged to prevent the unwarranted demolition of so many traditional and historic buildings that is taking place relentlessly, especially in urban conservation areas, but also in rural areas. This is causing an irreplaceable loss of the traditional architectural fabric and the cultural identity of Malta, and must be halted immediately. The restoration and conservation of traditional and historic buildings should instead be further encouraged.

A Masterplan for High-Rise Buildings

It is hereby resolved at the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held at 133, Melita Street, Valletta on Saturday 25th February 2017, that the Prime Minister, as the highest official in Malta responsible for planning, together with the Parliamentary Secretary in charge of Planning and Lands, as well as the Planning Authority, should put permits for high rise developments on hold until a National Masterplan is approved and proper evaluations are carried out of the environmental, social and infrastructural impacts of such buildings. In the absence of a Masterplan, *Din l-Art Helwa* is especially concerned that no public consultation was carried out on the area of Mriehel when it was designated as a high-rise area and included in the Floor Area Ratio Policy of 2014.

Destruction of our Heritage

Joanna Spiteri Staines

At every event in relation to 'The Environment', there is much talk about protection of the environment, protection of heritage, rehabilitation, sustainability, green programmes, etc. All good sound bites, but that is what they are, simply sound bites.

What is happening on the ground, in these tiny islands, is a far cry from sustainability. What in fact is happening is the destruction of heritage in the name of so called 'development', which we are told by our politicians cannot be stopped.

Din l-Art Helwa has been flagging applications to the Planning Authority which are of concern. Our strategy is to object to the destruction of the rural environment and the destruction of the historic environment. We are therefore in a good position to judge what is indeed happening on the ground. Sadly, in the name of development, there are a great number of applications, some of which are approved and some of which are recommended to be approved, which in fact consist of the destruction of the very simple historic urban fabric which constitutes our heritage. The can of worms has been opened, and the sheer numbers of demolition throughout Malta and Gozo is now spiralling exponentially. When one demolition is allowed in a UCA, others follow.

Between January 2017 and December 2017 *Din l-Art Helwa* sent in a total of 609 objections, 109 of which were to the destruction of historic buildings.

Of these many are situated in Sliema and St. Julians with few façades being proposed to be retained. Other applications for demolition include historic traditional villages such as Siġġiewi, Tarxien, Gudja, Żebbuġ, Żejtun, Mellieħa and Rabat (Malta & Gozo) amongst other locations. A great number of old houses which do not lie within the UCA are earmarked for destruction simply because they do not lie within the Urban Conservation Area.

Most of these buildings consist of simple vernacular terraced houses. Nearly all the proposals called for total demolition to erect instead blocks of flats. Of all our objections sent in, a very small number were refused (9 in number). Of the rest, a total of **86 were approved for demolition with a further 95 awaiting a decision.**

The destruction, as you can see, is relentless and leaves no corner of Malta or Gozo spared.

The planners will argue that there are policies to protect. Indeed there are. The Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development, (SPED) clearly states:

URBAN OBJECTION 2: To improve the townscape and environment in historic cores and their setting with a presumption against demolition of property worth of conservation by..."

In January 2015, in response to the Draft Policy and Design Guidelines, *DLH* wrote to the team engaged to review the Design and Policy Guidelines, alarmed that the phrase "presumption against demolition" in the context of heritage sites and Urban Conservation Areas had been removed from the draft. In fact we had written the following:

It is of utmost concern to DLH that such a policy will lead to several cases of demolition of the vernacular simple buildings which constitute the urban fabric of our towns, as referred to in 1.2.1 that states that there is pressure for demolition and extensive alterations to properties within the urban fabric of local traditional settlements. The lack of clear unequivocal protection of



Traditional and period buildings earmarked for demolition



House in Ħaż-Żebbuġ, Malta

*Two houses in Żebbuġ Square, Gozo
Photo Daniel Cilia*



historic buildings can only lead to wholesale destruction of our heritage. Din l-Art Helwa therefore strongly recommends that this policy is changed to ensure the following:

1. No demolition should be allowed of buildings with historical and/or aesthetic importance whether these occur outside UCAs or within UCAs.
2. In particular architectural features need strict definition; in the past 25 years there has been blanket protection over historical construction systems such as rooms with *kileb* and *xorok tal-qasba*, the so called birthing rooms, mill rooms, etc. This type of protection should be retained. Not only is it discriminatory to those people who spent a considerable amount of money in retaining.
3. It should be mandatory that the case officer and/or the heritage bodies visit such buildings where applications are being determined.
4. No façadeism should be allowed since this leads again to destruction of our urban fabric. This is particularly relevant to new applications for the development of buildings in the World Heritage City of Valletta. Exceptions to this should only be allowed for certain parts of Sliema and St Julians where the destruction and redevelopment is so widespread that it will become discriminatory to those property owners if this is not allowed for the few remaining properties.
5. Resorting to the state of disrepair and degradation of stone should not be a reason for demolition since utilising contemporary restoration techniques such deteriorated stones can be changed.
6. Resorting to sanitary conditions or the fact that a site may be vacant should not be a reason for demolition. This will only fuel property owners to allow such buildings to deteriorate further due to being able to eventually obtain permission for demolition.
7. If old buildings in UCAs are to be increased in height, such additions are to be done with extreme sensitivity to the existing building.

8. A cut and paste facsimile of façades, whilst not a creative solution, does lead to uniformity at an urban level, and is a tried and tested solution in many a European City. This should be seen as an option, especially for additions that fail to meet the aesthetic unity which is required for a streetscape.

We were pleased at the time to note, that the team engaged to write the new Policy and Design Guidelines had indeed taken on board our recommendation and the policy reads as follows:

P5: PROPOSALS FOR THE REHABILITATION OR DEMOLITION OF SCHEDULED PROPERTIES AND PROPERTIES WITHIN URBAN CONSERVATION AREAS

Applications involving demolition of scheduled properties and properties within Urban Conservation Areas will not normally be considered.

However, sadly the writing was on the wall. It is evident that there is political will to spear head destruction of the heritage in the name of 'development'. Clearly the deciding bodies are failing to do their duty to protect our heritage. Previous organisations such as the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) and the Integrated Heritage Management (IHM) have had their power to stop such destruction curtailed. They now form part of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, which is clearly far too understaffed to halt such destruction when these applications are being recommended for approval by the Planning Directorate and supported by the EPC Board.

Amongst these applications are very old structures such as the 18th century structures in Cospicua, buildings which were built by the Knights of St John which should be restored and rehabilitated. Also worrying is the destruction of the historic streets of St Julians mainly the mid 20th century houses of Birkirkara Road and Birkirkara Hill, St Julians. Others follow, such as the illegal demolition of St Ignatius Villa, in St Julians.

Instead of harmony in our streets we are obliterating the traces of our heritage, and creating sporadic so called contemporary architecture in streets which consisted of simple terraced houses.

See for example, the main access road into Żebbuġ; instead of approving a simple façade which creates harmony amongst a row of traditional houses, we now have a totally different development type which heralds the end of this traditional streetscape, both in terms of its aesthetic and in terms of the heights of these buildings.



The unauthorised demolition of one wing of St Ignatius Villa St Julians



The villa as seen in the nineteenth century with Balluta Bay in the foreground



Din l-Art Helwa calls on the current Planning Authority and the Parliamentary Secretary for Planning to halt this destruction. If the policies are unclear, then they need further clarification. If the boards are misled then they require further direction. If persons in the street believe that a house cannot be restored since it is 'derelict' then they require further understanding of what restoration is all about. We commend the Planning Authority for the Irrestawra Darek programme which allocated funds for restoration purposes. However, this will not halt the trend for demolition. Concrete action is required. These demolitions do not constitute development, but regressive short sighted, destruction and greed. Once gone, these buildings will never come back.

The streetscape of the main access road into Ħaż-Żebbuġ destroyed

High Level delegation from *Europa Nostra* visits Malta and launches ‘Heritage4Europe’

Europa Nostra held its board meeting in Valletta from 16 to 19 March to mark the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU – one year before Valletta becomes a European Capital of Culture 2018 and the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

Head of European Commission representation welcomed *Europa Nostra* to Malta

European policy issues were the key topics discussed by Board members, Vice-Presidents of *Europa Nostra* and the chairs of the four juries of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/ *Europa Nostra* Awards on the first day of the meeting which, appropriately, took place at Europa House.

Ambassador Dr Elena Grech, Head of the European Commission Representation in Malta, welcomed the *Europa Nostra* delegation and presented Executive President Denis de Kergorlay with a book about heritage sites in Malta which, through EU funding, have been successfully restored by the Malta Restoration Unit. The Board debate focused on the European Year and the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty on 25 March, as well as the ongoing discussion on the future of Europe.



The Board of Europa Nostra met in Valletta at the DLH headquarters on the 18th March for their Spring board meeting also on the occasion of the Malta EU Presidency during which the European Year of Cultural heritage was to be launched. They were hosted by DLH and are here seen here at work in the Council Room, while the DLH Founder President, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran watches on.

Launch of civil society campaign for European Year of Cultural Heritage: Heritage4Europe

A highlight of the meetings was the evening reception at the recently restored Fort St Angelo in Birgu in the presence and under the patronage of Justice, Culture and Local Government Minister Dr Owen Bonnici and many representatives of organisations involved in preserving Malta’s heritage. At the reception, *Europa Nostra*’s Secretary General Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović launched the slogan for its social media campaign for the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018: ‘Heritage4Europe’.

“During the European Year of Cultural Heritage we will make sure that heritage is used as a vehicle for conveying a positive message to Europe and a cohesive message for us Europeans,” said Ms Quaedvlieg-Mihailović.

Dr Bonnici stressed the key role played by NGOs in safeguarding cultural heritage. The reception also provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of European cooperation, as Fort St Angelo – an iconic monument built by early Europeans as a bastion of European values – is one of the sites



Malta’s Heritage remains in grave danger, Simone Mizzi, board member of Europa Nostra gives a presentation to their board while they were in Malta. Simone described the efforts of DLH to slow and halt the assault of the environment and built heritage.



Secretary General of Europa Nostra, Sneska Quaedvlieg Mihailovic, Denis de Kergorlay, Executive President of EN, stand below the portrait of DLH Founder President Maurice Caruana Curran with Council Member Simone Mizzi and Vice President Costa Carras. It was the third visit of Europa Nostra to Malta following their two General Assemblies in July 1971 and in 2006.

restored, thanks to European and national funding.

Executive President Denis de Kergorlay, who was back in Malta for the first time since the *Europa Nostra* Congress in 2006, congratulated the Minister and the Maltese for their impressive, and very high quality, restoration efforts. He did, however, mention *Europa Nostra's* concerns about the future of heritage groups and urban and cultural landscapes in Malta due to the risk of over-development. He therefore appealed to people of Malta, and the authorities involved, to make the right choices for the future of the priceless, yet fragile, heritage of the entire island of Malta. To underpin his call for adopting responsible and respectful attitudes for the future of Malta's heritage, he handed to Dr Bonnici a copy of the report entitled *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe*, thus stressing the huge value and positive impact of cultural heritage on Europe's society, economy, culture and environment.

***Europa Nostra* concerned about increasing threats to Malta's unique cultural heritage**

The second part of the board meeting was hosted by one of *Europa Nostra's* longest standing member organisations, *Din l-Art Helwa*, whose Vice-President and *Europa Nostra* Board member Simone Mizzi outlined the alarming threat to Malta's unique urban and rural landscape from disproportionate developments (including the proposed high-rise building developments located too close to the World Heritage City of Valletta) in a session dedicated to the subject of 'heritage in danger'. Simone also presented some success stories: thanks to the tremendous efforts and dedication of its many volunteers, the work of *Din l-Art Helwa* has raised vital awareness of Malta's unique cultural heritage and – Board members were delighted to learn – has saved several important historic monuments through restoration.

Towards the end of the meeting, Executive President Denis de Kergorlay was presented with a copy of the book published to mark the 50th anniversary of the organisation entitled *Heritage Saved. Din l-Art Helwa 1965-2015* written by Stanley Farrugia Randon.

One stunning example of a heritage treasure that has been saved is the Church of Our Lady of Victory, built in the 16th century and the first church built in Valletta after the Great Siege, which the *Europa Nostra* delegation visited after the meeting.

The *Europa Nostra* Board meetings were preceded by a high-level conference on cultural diplomacy on 9 March with *Europa Nostra's* Secretary-General Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović as one of the speakers on the key role of cultural heritage in fostering the EU's international cultural relations.

Simone Mizzi and Dr John Vassallo as EN Board and Council members respectively were instrumental in setting up and organising this highly successful visit by *Europa Nostra*.

The Rome Declaration

The European Union is 60 years old. Simone Mizzi attended the celebrations held in Rome on 26 March, together with Europa Nostra members, on the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. It is worth reading the Declaration of the leaders of the 27 member states and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission. All those who have worked to raise awareness about culture and cultural heritage, and to ensure that their significance is recognised by our leaders, are happy to read that the value of culture and cultural heritage to European unity, identity and peace was stressed twice in this declaration.

The Rome Declaration

“We, the Leaders of 27 Member States and of EU institutions, take pride in the achievements of the European Union: the construction of European unity is a bold, far-sighted endeavour. Sixty years ago, recovering from the tragedy of two world wars, we decided to bond together and rebuild our continent from its ashes. We have built a unique Union with common institutions and strong values, a community of peace, freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, a major economic power with unparalleled levels of social protection and welfare.

European unity started as the dream of a few: it became the hope of the many. Then Europe became one again. Today, we are united and stronger: hundreds of millions of people across Europe benefit from living in an enlarged Union that has overcome the old divides.

The European Union is facing unprecedented challenges, both global and domestic: regional conflicts, terrorism, growing migratory pressures, protectionism and social and economic inequalities. Together, we are determined to address the challenges of a rapidly changing world and to offer to our citizens both security and new opportunities.

We will make the European Union stronger and more resilient, through even greater unity and solidarity amongst us and the respect of common rules. Unity is both a necessity and our free choice. Taken individually, we would be side-lined by global dynamics. Standing together is our best chance to influence them, and to defend our common interests and values. We will act together, at different paces and intensity where necessary, while moving in the same direction, as we have done in the past, in line with the Treaties and keeping the door open to those who want to join later. Our Union is undivided and indivisible.

In the years to come we want a Union that is safe and secure, prosperous, competitive, sustainable and socially responsible, and with the will and capacity of playing a key role in the world and of shaping globalisation. We want a Union where citizens have new opportunities for cultural and social development and economic growth. We want a Union which remains open to those European countries that respect our values and are committed to promoting them.

In these times of change, and aware of the concerns of our citizens, we commit to the Rome Agenda and pledge to work towards:

1. A safe and secure Europe: a Union where all citizens feel safe and can move freely, where our external borders are secured, with an efficient, responsible and sustainable migration policy, respecting international norms; a Europe determined to fight terrorism and organised crime.
2. A prosperous and sustainable Europe: a Union which creates growth and jobs; a Union where a strong, connected and developing Single Market, embracing technological transformation, and a stable and further strengthened single currency open avenues for growth, cohesion, competitiveness, innovation and exchange, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises; a Union promoting sustained and sustainable growth, through investment, structural reforms and working towards completing the Economic and Monetary Union; a Union where economies converge; a Union where energy is secure and affordable and the environment clean and safe.
3. A social Europe: a Union which, based on sustainable growth, promotes economic and social progress as well as cohesion and convergence, while upholding the integrity of the internal market; a Union taking into account the diversity of national systems and the key role of social partners; a Union which promotes equality between women and men as well as rights and equal opportunities for all; a Union which fights unemployment, discrimination, social exclusion and poverty; a Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent; a Union which preserves our cultural heritage and promotes cultural diversity.
4. A stronger Europe on the global scene: a Union further developing existing partnerships, building new ones and promoting stability and prosperity in its immediate neighbourhood to the east and south, but also in the Middle East and across Africa and globally; a Union ready to take more responsibilities and to assist in creating a more competitive and integrated defence industry; a Union committed to strengthening its common security and defence, also in cooperation and complementarity with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, taking into account national circumstances and legal commitments; a Union engaged in the United Nations and standing for a rules-based multilateral system, proud of its values and protective of its people, promoting free and fair trade and a positive global climate policy.

We will pursue these objectives, firm in the belief that Europe’s future lies in our own hands and that the European Union is the best instrument to achieve our objectives. We pledge to listen and respond to the concerns expressed by our citizens and will engage with our national parliaments. We will work together at the level that makes a real difference, be it the European Union, national, regional, or local, and in a spirit of trust and loyal cooperation, both among Member States and between them and the EU institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. We will allow the necessary room for manoeuvre at the various levels to strengthen Europe’s innovation and growth potential. We want the Union to be big on big issues and small on small ones. We will promote a democratic, effective and transparent decision-making process and better delivery.

We as leaders, working together within the European Council and among our institutions, will ensure that today’s agenda is implemented, so as to become tomorrow’s reality. We have united for the better. Europe is our common future.”

Europa Nostra Conference in Turku

At the recent Europa Nostra conference in Turku, Finland, former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa and Europa Nostra Board member Simone Mizzi was invited to illustrate Malta's preparations for Valletta 2018 and for the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Simone's address is reproduced below for Vigilo

As one of Malta's oldest heritage NGOs and of Europa Nostra's earliest founding members, Din l-Art Helwa welcomed the news that Valletta had been designated Capital of Culture in 2018 with alacrity. Our beautiful World Heritage City with its unique buildings, poised between two harbours, had much to gain if it was to recapture its pre-war vitality and rebuild its dwindling population. Europe's Director-General for Culture, Michel Magnier (who is with us today) knows perhaps even better than I do that the state of preparation for this great celebration is very advanced.

Several years of benefitting from EU funding, followed by the run-up to Valletta 18 as we call it, the EU's 60th anniversary falling during Malta's Presidency of the EU and now 2018, European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYOCH), have seen all sectors galvanised into action. So when this was announced, it could not but help prompt Valletta 18 to reach further heights.



Simone Mizzi at the Europa Nostra Heritage Congress in Turku Finland

Malta had a double whammy and not a day passes without some event being announced, or some renovation work being completed.

Before I get deep into my message, I would ask Monsieur Magnier to please convey to his colleagues the gratitude of civil society activists such as ourselves for the recognition given to cultural heritage by the 27 leaders who mentioned the value of culture not once but twice in their joint Rome Declaration. The EYOCH must simply build on these words and we must ensure that they are put into action. Thanks go to our German colleagues who conceived this brilliant idea, and to Europa Nostra that pursued it unflinchingly until it became a reality.

So, what has Malta been doing since it joined the EU? Well, it has spent its EU funding well to promote and enhance the cultural sector – also considering that tourism is such a vital part of our GDP. Some six kilometres of Valletta's mighty fortifications have been restored and now gleam as they must have done when they were built by the Order of the Knights of St John. The massive fortresses of St Elmo and St Angelo, after many years of campaigning by NGOs such as DLH, have found a new life and offer a wonderful visitor experience and, indeed, can still grow to become centres of hospitality and learning. Plaques such as those recognising the impact of EU funding are to be seen in nearly every corner of Malta. These information plaques are so important to Europeans because seeing them they can feel they have brought change to the places they visit. To non-Europeans they help convey the significance of what Europe really is.

In Valletta, many splendid palaces are being put to new use, such as the Auberge of the Italian Knights which will soon house Malta's Museum of Fine Arts. Dilapidated areas of lower Valletta are being converted to house a creative hub where artists and designers can find expression. In Gozo, the regeneration of the Cittadella has been completed splendidly and its maze of tunnels and mediaeval streets are buzzing with new life.

Educational projects initially created for V18 but now serving a wider extended function are aimed at making culture relevant to people and to mobilise our young people. Creative arts protagonists had long felt that Malta did not have enough theatres or display centres. To this end, an audit of theatres and/or community spaces was carried out and as many as 80 forgotten venues in towns and villages have been rediscovered, many of them hidden gems of *art nouveau* and *art deco*, rare in the Southern Mediterranean.

Spreading creativity through art in our towns and villages is the aim: sprucing up our old brass bands, giving space to new creative media such as script-writing, film and photography, and involving young people, and now it is up to each and every one of us to take part.

The members of Europa Nostra have been particularly busy and are doing us proud. The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation will display its treasured collection of 18-century tapestries, its famous choral books and silver collections in a true state-of-the-art museum and recovered spaces will be adapted to provide Europe with its first Caravaggio Centre – a place for teaching and coming together.

The Manoel Theatre, built in 1732 and one of the five oldest theatres in Europe that is still functioning, has been totally restored and is now being fitted with energy-saving systems to

prolong its use into the summer months, when Valletta becomes a cauldron.

The voluntary NGO *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna*, a new member of *Europa Nostra*, has completed its work on the Saluting Battery with the provision of its last great cannon, fascinating people of all ages with the daily firing of the noonday gun. Below it, the rehabilitation of Valletta's underground War Centre – a vast maze of tunnels dug during the British period – will demonstrate its central role in Malta's military importance.

Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, another member of *Europa Nostra* that was established to bring attention to privately-owned Maltese treasures, is organising the first ever exhibition of musical instruments of the Maltese Islands.

Voluntary NGOs such as *DLH*, with our limited funding capacity, do our bit in no small way. We do this without any funding from the state apart from those EU schemes we are astute enough to win! We bring life back to old buildings after restoration, but this is not enough. We have to make them relevant to people today, through music, lectures and workshops. *DLH* has saved 40 such sites in 50 years and music always plays a great part in this work.

Early next year, the five-year restoration of Valletta's first church, Our Lady of Victories, will come to completion when its 1790 pipe organ, dismembered, lost and now recovered, will be played for the first time in over a hundred years. Further EU funding will help us restore and provide new interpretation facilities at three coastal watch-towers, and will see us begin an important restoration of the White Tower on Malta's northern coast. As *Europa Nostra's* study entitled *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe* demonstrates, who can say now that culture does not pay?

The tourism industry has accelerated to this new beat and has provided the incentive for the renewal of aging hotels. Boutique hotels are springing up – making use of formerly abandoned buildings – and restaurants and new yacht marinas are being created as I speak. Our airport is being given a €78 million extension in readiness to greet increasing numbers of visitors. With



The Mdina moat and fortifications are now restored.



A greater part of Fort St Elmo has been restored



The 1732 Teatru Manuel, one of the five oldest European theatres still functioning as a theatre, will be totally acclimatized to prolong activity into the summer months.



A European Union programmes plaque indicates sites which have been restored with European funding.



The Auberge d'Italie, in Merchant Street, Valletta, soon to house the MUŽA, the Museum of Fine Arts transferred from Admiralty House in South Street.

Renzo Piano’s magnificent new entrance to our capital city of Valletta – the jewel in the crown of the evolution of our built heritage – Malta is well-placed to astonish everybody during 2018.

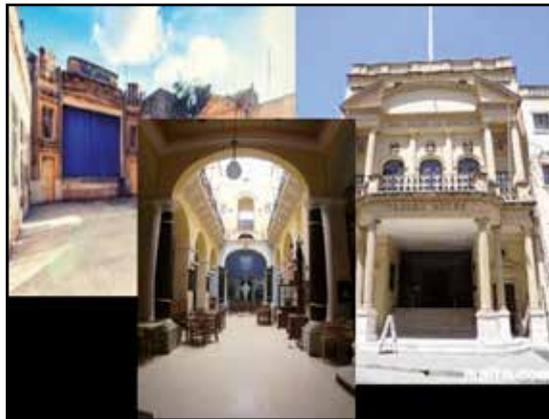
However, success and sustainability carry a high price tag. We need to ensure that this sudden ‘too much of everything’, and the great investment in cultural heritage, do not tip the scales and kill the proverbial golden goose, leaving us at risk of losing our national identity. There is one enemy with which I believe heritage has not been accustomed to battling, and that is affluence. If heritage comes up against financial interests, it generally loses and it cannot simply be left to a handful of NGOs to champion it. Civil society will be stretched to the limit if it is to work to mobilise our young people on one end and assist, cajole and convince politicians on the other.

While we all are determined that the European Year of Cultural Heritage makes culture accessible, relevant and enjoyable to the people of today, misplaced investment and a lack of good planning can, if we are not careful, ruin such enjoyment for the generations to come. I would ask our European leaders, UNESCO and ICOMOS, to be vigilant and demand tighter scrutiny in their heritage impact assessments of development projects. This applies especially in and around World Heritage Sites such as Valletta and Venice, where too much activity can cause a city to lose its soul and change its cultural landscape and context forever – and not always for the better. We do not want cities like Venice and Valletta to become giant pizzerias.

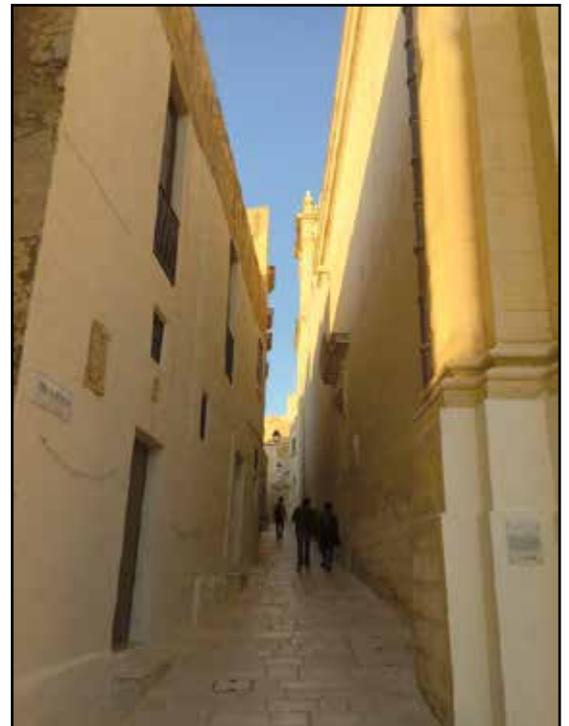
With our iconic *gardjola* symbolising vigilance of these risks, we eagerly await this singular European year, this unique opportunity to reach the hearts and minds of new audiences. However, each and every one of us must play our part in promoting and celebrating all our favourite things, in every corner of Europe. Only in this way will we ensure that 2018 leaves a legacy long after it has come and gone.

I thank *Europa Nostra* and Creative Europe for giving me this opportunity to talk about Malta and promote many of my favourite places and I thank you all for listening.

An audit of community spaces and theatres by the Valletta 2018 Foundation has shown Malta and Gozo to have no less than 77 theatres, a most impressive number for an island this size.



Dilapidated areas of Lower Valletta, formally known as the Abattoir, are being restored and will be home to a Creative Design Cluster.



Gozo’s magnificent Ċittadella has been restored, its maze of medieval streets a hive of activity. (photo Simone Mizzi)



Boutique Hotels spring up daily in Valletta and give life to old buildings. Photo by courtesy of La Falconeria, Melita St., Valletta.



St John's Co Cathedral is soon to have a state-of-the-art museum where it can display its unique collection of 18C tapestries, its choral books and silver, while a space has been recovered to house a Centre for Caravaggio studies.



At Our Lady of Victory Church and other Din l-Art Helwa managed sites, we will participate in the European Year of Cultural Heritage with music, lectures and workshops. Above are the Russian String Virtuoso Ensemble at a concert organised by the International Spring Orchestra Festival and its Director, Karl Fiorini.

YET THERE IS A FLIP SIDE TO SUCCESS



Cruise liners mar the enjoyment of Grand Harbour's magnificent fortifications and the dense traffic visitors create need better management if cities like Valletta are to be enjoyed in a dignified manner. (photo Sneska Quaedlvieg Mihailovic)



Just outside St Elmo's newly restored fortifications, the towering modern apartment blocks at Tigne Point are an ugly oppressive invader of this historic space. (photo Simone Mizzi)



The cleaning of oil rigs is inappropriate activity in French Creek. It is visually obtrusive and pollutes the waters of Valletta's harbour.

HSBC Malta Foundation breathes new life into the historical Torri l-Abjad



HSBC CEO Andrew Beane announcing the sponsorship in front of the White Tower

Malta's history enthusiasts will have another gem to explore as the restoration and rehabilitation works on Torri l-Abjad (White Tower) in Mellieħa are now underway.

HSBC Malta Foundation and *Din l-Art Helwa* held a groundbreaking ceremony on the site to mark the start of a three-year project, to restore the watchtower to its former glory. It was originally built in 1658 and saw redevelopment during the Knights' period circa 1716.

The iconic Torri l-Abjad is being rehabilitated as part of a multi-phased project by *Din l-Art Helwa* to restore the entire complex, which includes a protective fortification consisting of an artillery battery and ditch. The project also encompasses the completion of dormitories and other facilities, as well as a visitor centre and didactic facilities.

HSBC Malta Foundation is financing the restoration, conservation and rehabilitation of the Tower as well as its outer fortification. Upon completion, the restored Tower is expected to provide educational facilities for the maximisation of the historical, cultural and environmental value of the site and its environs to students of all levels.

HSBC Malta CEO Andrew Beane said: "Torri l-Abjad represents another magnificent historical, architectural, and cultural gem in Malta's treasured offerings. HSBC Malta Foundation's support to this project aligns with our goals of working for the environment, education, and heritage."

"*Din l-Art Helwa* is very grateful to HSBC Malta Foundation for believing in this project and sharing our vision to create a centre where visitors may discover the historical site, but also learn about nature in the area, which is so pristine. We are fitting it out to accommodate groups overnight, thereby filling the gap in providing this much-needed type of facility," said *Din l-Art Helwa* Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar.

Torri l-Abjad is located in l-Aħrax tal-Mellieħa. The entire restoration project is expected to be completed in three years' time.



HSBC CEO Andrew Beane and Din l-Art Helwa Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar signing the agreement



HSBC (Malta) Foundation members and Din l-Art Helwa Council, together with Mellieħa Mayor John Buttigieg on a tour of the tower with Martin Vella, the project co-ordinator

Atlas supports *Din L-Art Helwa's* White Tower restoration project

As part of its corporate social responsibility programme, Atlas Insurance will be supporting the restoration of the White Tower in I-Aħrax tal-Mellieħa. The restoration of this coastal tower, built by Grand Master de Redin in the mid-17th century, has been entrusted to *Din l-Art Helwa* by the Mellieħa Local Council.

“We will be sponsoring the restoration of the guardroom of this tower, which will be called ‘The Atlas Room’” said Catherine Calleja, Atlas Director and Group Company Secretary. “The guardroom will serve as a visitors’ centre and multipurpose room located at the edge of the ditch which surrounds the tower.”

“The demolition and restoration work on the guardroom commenced a few weeks ago. Work is being done with extreme care so as not to further damage the stonework,” added Ms Calleja.

The White Tower was built during the reign of Grand Master Martin de Redin, who built 13 towers in the first two years of his brief three-year reign. The Tower in L-Aħrax was constructed in 1658 and was the sixth tower to be built by de Redin.

Commenting on the collaboration, *DLH* President Maria Grazia Cassar said that “*Din l-Art Helwa* is very grateful to Atlas Insurance, not only for the financial support of the White Tower Restoration Project but also for the recognition of *Din l-Art Helwa's* work in the protection and preservation of Malta’s built and natural heritage.” She added “We hope that through this project a strong relationship with Atlas and its staff will be nurtured and we look forward to their involvement as works get underway.”

Din l-Art Helwa plans to use the place for educational and cultural initiatives. It is planned to create facilities to host students, youths and other groups, for overnight stays, including access and facilities for disabled persons. The site will be open regularly to visitors who will learn about the history of the tower and other fortifications, as well as enjoy a permanent interactive exhibition focusing on marine life and flora and fauna of the surrounding environment.



From left: Martin Scicluna, DLH Honorary Treasurer, Maria Grazia Cassar DLH President, Catherine Calleja, Atlas Director and Group Company Secretary and Margherita Cachia, HR Executive.

Din l-Art Helwa Awarded *Apprezzament il-Mellieħa*



Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar receiving the award from the Mellieħa Mayor John Buttigieg, while Martin Vella, the White Tower project manager, and Council Members Martin Scicluna and Ian Camilleri look on.

On the 27th July 2017, *Din l-Art Helwa* was awarded the “*Apprezzament il-Mellieħa*”, by the Mellieħa Local Council. The citation mentioned the valuable work that *Din l-Art Helwa* was carrying out in the locality, in the preservation of Mellieħa’s cultural heritage. Mayor John Buttigieg said that *Din l-Art Helwa* was to be praised for the long-standing success of the custodianship of the Red Tower, which was one of the main attractions in the area, as well as the recent commitment to carry out the restoration of the White Tower which was in the limits of Armier. This agreement was reached with the Mellieħa Local Council in December 2016, and the project was expected to reach its final stages within three years. The commemorative plaque was presented to Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar, who was joined on the stage to receive it by the Hon Treasurer Martin Scicluna, Council Member Ian Camilleri and Martin Vella who was co-ordinating the restoration project of the White Tower.

AN APPEAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Dear Members and Friends of *Din l-Art Helwa*. We now look after 19 historic sites in guardianship or trust and we very much need more hands to work. We are looking for volunteers to help us in several areas:

- 1) We always need to bolster our Gozo and Comino team with new recruits. For logistical reasons, this would be particularly practical for those living in Gozo or in the north of Malta. Both Maltese and English speakers are needed and anybody interested in helping is requested to talk to Carolyn Clements on 9905 1866.
- 2) Because of an increase in the workload, our offices in Valletta need volunteers to help Rosanne Zerafa and Anne Marie Navarro with clerical work, answering the telephone, various odd jobs and errands.
- 3) Other volunteers are needed everywhere, so do please get in touch if you are willing to help.

Please email info@dinlarthelwa.org or telephone 2122 0358 or 2122 5952 and speak to Rosanne.



Din l-Art Helwa News

Din l-Art Helwa Tours

In 2017, *Din l-Art Helwa (DLH)* organized five tours to a number of built heritage and environmental sites, mostly properties under its management. The tours included visits to Għallis and Wignacourt towers, Majjistral Park, Dwejra tower, Wied il-Mielgħ window and Cittadella in Gozo, Santa Maria tower and battery in Comino and a Heritage trail of Żebbuġ.

This is the second year that Ian Camilleri, a Council member, has organized these tours for the dual purpose of offering sponsors, members, friends and supporters of *DLH* a unique opportunity to experience our heritage and at the same time raise funds for our restoration and conservation programme. All this has been made possible with the help of various volunteers namely Martin Vella, Richard Cachia Zammit, Simon Wallace, Joe Attard and Michael Bonnici who kindly shared their knowledge of the sites and made the visits truly interesting. Thanks also to Patricia Salomone, George Camilleri and Lucio Mulé Stagno for the publicity and media releases, and to the office staff for taking the bookings.

The tours will continue in 2018 with the first tour starting in February, so please keep on the lookout on our website, facebook and the media.



Heritage Trail of Żebbuġ led by Michael Bonnici



Wignacourt Tower Wins TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence

We're pleased to announce that St. Paul's Bay Wignacourt Tower has been recognized with a 2017 Certificate of Excellence, based on the consistently great reviews earned on TripAdvisor. Only select businesses receive a Certificate of Excellence. In this case, thanks to the volunteers at Wignacourt Tower, led by Martin Vella, this historical site which was restored and is managed by *Din l-Art Helwa* has earned this prestigious award. Well done to Wignacourt Tower!

News about the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest



Tanner Trust Green Project

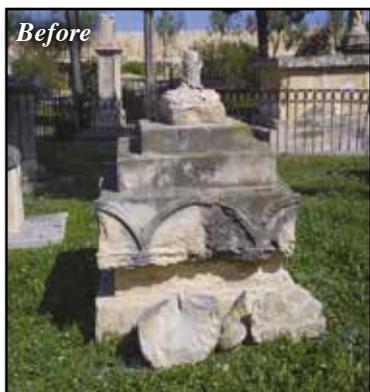
The major expense incurred by *Din l-Art Helwa* at the Garden of Rest is obviously the water required for irrigation. Thanks to the funding provided by the Tanner Trust Green Project, and the collaboration of the Garden's 'neighbours', the Restoration Unit, we have been given the opportunity to use two cisterns that lie beneath the Restoration Unit's yard.

These two cisterns, one of which dates back to the time of the Knights and the other to the British era, have been cleaned and restored and are now connected to the cistern beneath the Garden itself so that the rain water collected can be used for watering purposes. The capacity of these cisterns is more than sufficient to cover the water required for the Garden, thus saving money and also contributing towards environmental sustainability. At the moment, we have just concluded the first phase of the project and we hope the work will resume before the beginning of winter. Our thanks go to Restoration Unit Director Dr Norbert Gatt, who gave us the go-ahead for initiating this work, and to architect Mario Ellul of the Restoration Unit for his valuable input.

Working on the cistern outside the Ospizio

Restoration work

During April and May, restoration work on two tombs in the lower part of the Garden was carried out by restorers James Licari and Ingrid Ross. The work consisted of general cleaning, the re-installation of a cross, and repair to a vase that had been badly damaged by wind during a storm.



MIPP visit to the Garden

On 23 April, a group of photographers from the Malta Institute of Professional Photography visited the Garden of Rest for a photography workshop as part of the course they are currently following. The photographers spread out around this magnificent old Garden, capturing images ranging from solid sculpted stone to fleeting light and vanishing shadows. The group was welcomed by volunteer Joe Azzopardi, who gave them a brief historical talk about the site. We thank the visitors for generously contributing to the fund for the upkeep of the Garden.

*MIPP group during the visit to
Msida Garden of Rest for a workshop
Sunday 23 April*





Paolo Ferrelli and Patricia Salomone with the EU diplomats

EU Diplomats Visit

On 4 May, Warden Paolo Ferrelli and Patricia Salomone led a guided tour of the Garden for 24 EU diplomats who were in Malta during the Maltese Presidency of the European Union.

Ghost tours

The *Assoċjazzjoni Publiġu ta' Malta*, which is based in Floriana, organised a series of six Ghost tours, all of which ended at 10 pm at the Garden of Rest. The tours were held from October 2016 to March 2017, and the average number of participants was 20.

Global Payments lend The Garden of Rest a hand

Global Payments employees in 30 countries united to participate in the third annual Worldwide Day of Service. This initiative demonstrates their continued commitment to 'Service Driven Commerce' by giving back to the communities in which they live and work.

Locally, Global Payments chose to help *Din l-Art Helwa* at the Garden of Rest. On 22 May, a team of eight employees, led by their Senior Operations Manager Celia Abela, volunteered to carry out gardening work. We were extremely happy with how they carried out their work and it was a real pleasure getting to know them and sharing this day with them.



Annual Garden Fete

This year's Garden Fete took place on Sunday 7th May, and was very well attended

Theodore-Eddie Kalogeropoulos

On 30 May, we had the pleasure of hosting Greek musician and writer Theodore-Eddie Kalogeropoulos, the author of *The Lodge of St. John and St. Paul No. 349*. Mr Kalogeropoulos is currently writing other books focusing on freemasonry in Malta. He made a donation to the funds for the Garden and, at his request, we arranged for the making of a bench bearing freemasonry symbols to commemorate the 200 years since the Foundation of the English Lodge in Malta.

Stalls at the Garden Fete



Paolo Ferrilli and Patricia Salomone with the Maltese Militia of 200 years ago

Warden Paolo Ferrelli interviewed

On 3 June, the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest warden Paolo Ferrelli was interviewed by local television host Anthony Ellul, a well-known actor and the presenter of the local programme *Tul il-Kosta Maltija* which is shown on ONE TV. The filming included both ground and aerial views (taken by a drone) of the Garden.



Warden Paolo Ferrelli interviewed for “Tul il-Kosta Maltija” programme

Italiani a Malta clean up at Comino Tower



Volunteers from the “Italiani a Malta” Group do a hard day’s work to clean up the Santa Marija Tower ditch and Battery, aided by Comino volunteers

A group of enthusiastic Italian residents in Malta spent a day at Comino Santa Marija Tower cleaning up and having the time of their lives! This event was organised in collaboration with the Italo-Maltese Chamber of Commerce. ‘It was an occasion for meeting new friends, admiring nature, being useful to society and having a good meal and a laugh together’, they said. The Comino volunteers organised and supervised the work, injecting a strong team spirit among the participants



The cleaned-up Santa Marija Battery

who did a great job. *Din l-Art Helwa* Executive President thanked all the group at the end of the day, for all their efforts and praised them for the wonderful spirit of camaraderie, offering them coffee which she had brought with her, while the Comino volunteers distributed a souvenir key chain as a memento of the occasion.

www.italianiamalta.com

Visit to Ta' Braxia Cemetery by HHH Grand Duchess Maria of Russia



Chev. Charles Gatt receiving the Imperial Medal and Certificate 'In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Great War 1914-1918'

During her official visit to Malta in June 2017 the Head of the Russian Imperial House Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Maria of Russia visited Ta' Braxia Cemetery to pay her respects to Russian personages interred in the cemetery, among them the Poutatine Princesses, General De Breze and architect and sculptor Boris Edwards.

Her visit marked the 140th anniversary of the birth in San Anton Palace in Malta of her grandmother, Grand Duchess Victoria of Russia, Princess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland, daughter of Prince Albert, the son of Queen Victoria, and Maria Alexandrovina of Russia, daughter of Emperor Alexander II.

A Russian Orthodox service conducted in the Memorial Chapel by Fr. Nikon Belavenets was

A group photo from left: Dame Irina Malikova, Dr. Andy Welsh, the Duchess Maria of Russia, Fr. Nikon Belavenets, Major Tony Camilleri, Chev. Charles Gatt and Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar



followed by an award ceremony when the Duchess presented Medals and Certificates 'In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Great War 1914-1918' to the Friends' President Dr. A.N. Welsh, CEO Chevalier Charles Gatt, retired Hon. Treasurer Major Anthony Camilleri MBE and the archivist and historian Brian Tarpey.

Gifts were presented to HHH by Executive President Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar on behalf of *Din l-Art Helwa* and by Dr. Andy Welsh on behalf of the Friends of Ta' Braxia.

On this occasion the Duchess graciously agreed to become a Patron of the Friends of Ta' Braxia Association.



Din l-Art Helwa put on display an exquisite collection of terracotta and lava stone nativities, hand made by Sicilian Architect Antonietta Filangeri. The exhibition was held during the month of December at Our Lady of Victory Church.

One of the clay sculptures on exhibit

The Bir Miftuħ International Music Festival 2017



Soprano Claire Ghigo and Harpist Britt Arend

The Bir Miftuħ International Music Festival opened this year on Friday 19th May with a Vocal and Harp Recital by Claire Ghigo, mezzo-soprano and Britt Arend on the harp.

This concert was entitled 'Beau Soir' and was kindly sponsored by the Embassy of France and the Alliance Française de Malte – Méditerranée.

The duo delighted the audience with beautiful works by Reynaldo Hahn, Camille Saint-Saens, Gabriel Fauré, Eva Dell'Acqua, Claude Debussy, Ernest Chausson, Pauline Viardot, Maria Malibran, Jules Massenet and Charles Gounod.

On Sunday 28th May the medieval Santa Marija Chapel at Bir Miftuħ was filled with heavenly music as the Oriana choir of London gave a mesmerizing Choral Recital comprising works by Thomas Louis de Victoria, Claudio Monteverdi, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Eric Whitacre, Bob Chilcott, James MacMillan, Elizabeth Alexander, William Hawley, Mia Makaroff and Moses Hogan.

Director David Peckham conducted the chorists with gusto and introduced the various pieces giving interesting background information on the composers and their works. Peckham also explained that little is known and appreciated about female composers which is why the choir presented music written by Elizabeth Alexander and Mia Makaroff and supports lady composers and directors. This concert formed part of the London Oriana Choir's annual trip overseas.

The third concert was held on Friday 9th June and consisted of a Vocal, Flute and Piano Performance by the Trio Sweet Birds, comprised of husband and wife team, Katharina Ruckgaber, soprano, and pianist Christian Schmitt, together with Tatjana Ruhland on the flute.

The Trio regaled the audience with a delightful concert of works by Handel, CPE Bach and JS Bach, Caccini, Schubert, Mozart and Bishop. The name of the trio perfectly reflected the charming bird-themed rendition of the soprano and flute combination complemented by the piano. This concert was sponsored by the German-Maltese Circle and the Goethe-Institut.



The London Oriana Choir



Trio Sweet Birds

Update on restoration works at Our Lady of Victory Church, Valletta

Simone Mizzi



Satisfied conservators Amy Sciberras, Silvia Orsi and Josef Aquilina with St John of God

Simone Mizzi, who has led the Victory Church Project since its inception, provides this update on the latest restoration work carried out at Victory Church.

Those who attended the Liat Cohen guitar solo in March saw for themselves the wonder that had been revealed with the restoration of the four side altars. We have the Alfred Mizzi Foundation to thank for their perseverance with us to complete this painstaking work.

During the month of April, five years after *Din l-Art Helwa* was entrusted with the care and restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church, the project took another major stride forward, being finally freed of scaffolding. Months of painstaking work by the Giuseppe Mantella Restauri restoration team has revealed the decorative scheme of paintings on the entrance wall of the church.

A very pretty frieze of 18th century motifs has been discovered below the organ balcony, with sheaves of wheat and garlands, while the balcony – with its 40 columns and balusters – has been cleaned to reveal the original delicate gilding and decoration. We are delighted with the result, all of which is in keeping with the ceiling paintings above the front extension of the church, built on the orders of Grand Master Emanuel Pinto y Fonseca in 1751. The work on the wall paintings has been made possible by the generosity of PwC Malta, and the restoration of the organ balcony was carried out with the support of Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Noll. It is incredible to think that, after five years, the restoration work on the interior walls has now been completed.

Work on the 1790 pipe organ continued and was completed by the beginning of December, with a concert on December 5th that heralded Valletta becoming a European Capital of Culture and was a most appropriate re-launching of the

original organ of this church. We have to thank the Eden Leisure Group for their generous assistance and for the interest they have taken in the organ's complex restoration. As soon as the work was completed, the organ was fitted into its 18th century pipe cabinet which, with its *finto* double, and returned to its place in the organ loft. I thank the Tanner Trust for assisting with the restoration of these two beautiful gilt and wood cabinets which are still in storage and for waiting so long to see the fruits of their support.

Work continues apace on the choir stalls, and their beautiful warm-coloured wood is being treated and enhanced by Recoop, thanks to the support of Simonds Farsons Cisk plc and Farrugia Investments Ltd. This work will be completed in a few weeks' time.

The painting of St John of God, in its carved gilt frame, was returned to its original place – over the first altar on the right – in March, after restoration work coordinated between three conservators. Amy Sciberras worked on the Nazarene-style painting of St John of God, patron saint of the *Donati*. (The *Donati*, who were benefactors of the Order of St John, erected their altar in the church in 1736 and were given the right to be buried there.) The simple painting has a very elaborate gilt frame restored by wood and gilt expert Josef Aquilina. The frame is a work of art in itself, composed of a complicated knitted and stuccoed fretwork. These two conservators worked with Silvia Orsi, who has led the Giuseppe Mantella team in its work on the elaborate stone altar and its surrounding niche. We again thank PwC Malta for its support on this enterprise and our thanks also go to *Din l-Art Helwa* Council member Josie Ellul Mercer and Church custodian Mario Sciberras for coordinating the logistics of this long and multi-disciplined conservation.

April saw the conclusion of the report by senior conservators of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London – our friends Lisa Shekede and Stephen Rickerby. We have worked with them to collate what we have learnt during the many long years of conservation of the Alessio Erardi vaulted ceiling and this important document will be published shortly so that students of art history and conservation will be able to consult it in future. We must remember and thank the HSBC Malta Foundation for its important contribution to this essential part of Victory Church – its ceiling being the crowning glory that had to be saved above all else.

Simone concludes by thanking those amongst our readers, both first time sponsors and old friends of DLH, who have come forward to support our last initiative for the restoration of the outer walls of the church, the belfry and the bells. This work will start as soon planning approval is obtained from the Planning Authority – which should soon be to hand.

It is only right to mention and thank the many who have supported Din l-Art Helwa over the years: Chevalier Joseph Micallef who has encouraged us with his interest from the United States, the Malta Industrial Parks Ltd, the P. Cutajar Foundation, GasanMamo Insurance Ltd, Medserv plc, Tug Malta, John Ripard & Son Ltd and Sandro and Christine Raniolo, while at the same time welcoming Izola Bank and Thomas Smith and Sons Ltd, who join the Victory Church group of sponsors.

It is thanks to the great generosity of all the above that we will be able to start this final phase to complete the restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church and ensure that its unique historic, artistic and spiritual legacy is preserved. It is something of which we can all be truly proud.

Thomas Smith Group contributes to Our Lady of Victory Church restoration



As part of Thomas Smith Group's continuous efforts to support the community, the company is contributing to the final phase of restoration work at Our Lady of Victory Church, which focuses on the belfry and its bells and the exterior of the church's walls.

"Every donation helps us save a part of this national treasure and it is extremely encouraging to see that Thomas Smith Group believes in our cause. On behalf of *Din L-Art Helwa*, I thank Thomas Smith wholeheartedly", said *DLH* vice president Simone Mizzi.

"We are proud to be part of the restoration project. We recognise the importance of the significant work carried out by *Din l-Art Helwa* and in appreciation of their work for Malta's heritage, we hope to build awareness of the church's restoration," said Managing Director Joe Gerada.

Thomas Smith is a group of companies offering a diversified portfolio of services in international shipping and logistics, and insurance.

Mr and Mrs Joe Gerada and Liana Cachia representing the Thomas Smith Group visit the Our Lady of Victory Church with Simone Mizzi, Vice President Din l-Art Helwa

Guitar recital by Liat Cohen



On 23 March the audience at Our Lady of Victory Church was regaled with a dazzling classical guitar recital by Franco-Israeli classical guitarist Liat Cohen, a rare treat by a musician rightly hailed as 'the princess of the classical guitar'.

The concert, presented by *Din l-Art Helwa* to support the church's 'Façade Fund', lasted some 75 minutes and consisted of a musical journey by a remarkable musician performing an array of Spanish and South American (Argentinian, Brazilian and Venezuelan) composers, with the inclusion of Johann Sebastian Bach and the Russian Nikita Arnol'dovich Koshkin. Some of these works are indispensable in the repertoire of every guitarist.

During the short interval, former *Din l-Art Helwa* President Simone Mizzi spoke about the restoration of Our Lady of Victory church that had been started in 2012 and was in the final stages. She thanked all the sponsors who had been instrumental in bringing the project to near completion and expressed the hope that the work would be finished by 2018.

All the proceeds from this concert would go towards the restoration of the façade of the Church, its belfry and its historic bells.

Russian Virtuosi concert at Our Lady of Victory Church

All the scaffolding at Our Lady of Victory Church was removed just in time for it to become a uniquely splendid place for an unforgettable musical performance by The Russian Virtuosi of Europe orchestra on Saturday, 29 April.

Brought to Malta by Karl Fiorini, the Artistic Director of the International Spring Orchestra Festival, this 12-piece string orchestra is in a class of its own, offering as it does a unique combination of the Russian School of instrumental playing and brilliant ensemble skills, and the audience was charmed by the ensemble's performance of music by Elgar, Schoenberg and Tchaikovsky.

This was the first collaboration between the ISO Festival and *Din l-Art Helwa*, and Maestro Fiorini declared himself very satisfied by the excellent acoustics of Victory Church. This augurs well for future performances of quality music performed in Valletta's oldest church and first building - commissioned by Grand Master Jean Parisot de Valette in thanksgiving for victory after the Great Siege and dedicated to the birth of the Blessed Virgin.

The 18th Century Positivo Organ Restored



A VOICE LOST AND FOUND

The 18c Positivo Organ of Our Lady of Victory Church, an instrument salvaged from wreckage by Din l-Art Helwa with the support of The Eden Leisure Group



1920 Photo by Richard Ellis courtesy of Heritage Malta showing the organ on right and it's 'finto' simile on left in the Church of Our Lady of Victory.



1980 photo of the organ, still in place. Its cabinet over painted in layers of grey.



2 February 2012 - The Organ as Din l-Art Helwa found it.



3 June 2013 - At the Studios of Erika Falzon, the Cabinet undergoes restoration.



5 June - 2012 - Conservator Robert Buhagiar, sorting out the organ pipes up in the vault.



16 November, 2017 - The Organ reinstated within its Cabinet both restored.



2 September 2013 - The Organ 'Finto' Simile, found cut in half to accommodate the 1940s harmonicum, still holds its 'rear view' mirror and evidence of candle burns.



15 November 2017 - The 'Finto' Simile now restored.

On Tuesday 5th December 2017, The Eden Leisure Group, together with *Din l-Art Helwa* proudly hosted a recital to launch the newly restored 18C Positivo organ of Our Lady of Victory Church, with Dr Hugo Agius Muscat, organ, and Joseph Lia, baritone, organized by Din l-Art Helwa and the Malta International Organ Festival. The *Din l-Art Helwa* restoration of the 18th century organ has been made possible by the Eden Leisure Group. Seen here left to right are Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President *Din l-Art Helwa*, Simone Mizzi, Ian DeCesare President of the Eden Leisure Group, Pat Salomone, Organ restorer Robert Buhagiar and Hugo Agius Muscat, organist.



Din l-Art Helwa thanks The Tanner Trust for their support with the restoration of the Organ cabinet and its Finto Simile. The assembly and restoration of the two cabinets and the organ would not have been possible without the precious collaboration, patience and skills of Organ Conservator Robert Buhagiar, Wood Conservator Michael Formosa and Art Conservator Erika Falzon and the Din l-Art Helwa team for Victory Church, especially Pat Salomone, Josie Ellul Mercer and Mario Sciberras.

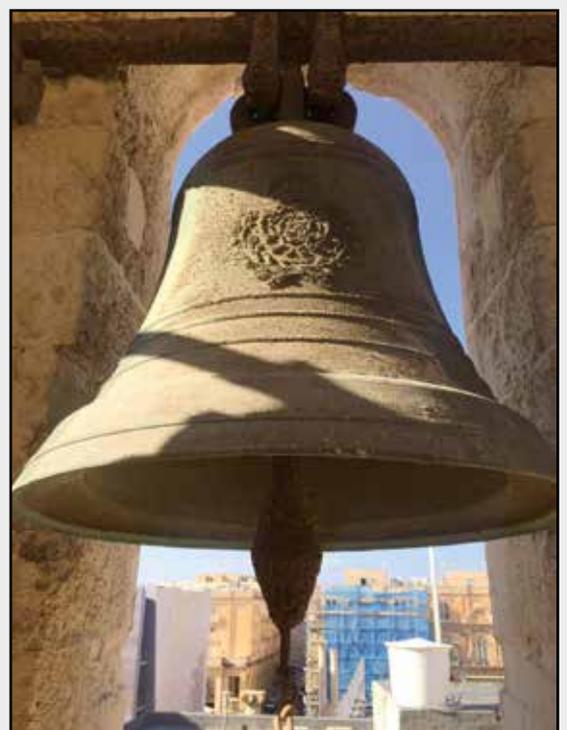


An appeal for the restoration of the exterior walls, the belfry and the bells of Our Lady of Victory church

An appeal for funds for the restoration of the exterior walls of Our Lady of Victory Church, together with its four bells and belfry, was launched in December 2016. The photographs show the corrosion of the historic bells, two of which date from the time of the Order of St John, and the various parts of the masonry in the belfry which is in much need of attention. This project will see the last phase in the restoration of the oldest church in Valletta and *Din l-Art Helwa* hopes that, funds permitting, this will be completed by June 2018 in time to celebrate Valletta as a European Capital of Culture and the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Din l-Art Helwa thanks the following sponsors who have come forward to offer support and made a great part of the work possible.

Chevalier Joseph Micallef
 GasanMamo Insurance Ltd
 Izola Bank plc
 John Ripard & Son Ltd
 Malta Industrial Parks Ltd
 Medserv plc
 P. Cutajar Foundation
 Thomas Smith Group
 Tug Malta



Maltese Baroque Sculptor, Melchiorre Gafà, Celebrated at Rome Papal Basilica and at Victory Church, Valletta



On the occasion of the 350th Anniversary of the death of the baroque sculptor Melchiorre Gafà, known as Cafà in Rome, a wax bas-relief bozzetto by this artist, The Adoration of the Shepherds, was exhibited in the Museum of the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica, also known as Santa Maria ad Presepium. This Papal Basilica is the first church ever to have been dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. Within this Basilica is venerated the reliquary which holds the only known fragments of the sacred Cradle.

In a twinning event ‘**Natalis Jesus Christi 2017, Melchiorre Gafà, A Maltese Sculptor in Baroque Rome**’ organized by *Din l-Art Helwa* together with the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum Chapter of Mdina, who kindly loaned the works of art, the anniversary was also celebrated in Malta in the Church of Our Lady of Victory, the first church of Valletta which was dedicated by the Order of St John to the nativity of the Blessed Virgin. At the Church of Our Lady of Victory, the twinning was inaugurated on December 1st with a talk on the life and works of Melchiorre Gafà, by Art Historian Sante Guido. Here, two other wax bozzetti by the sculptor were on display until the end of January,

Art historian Sante Guido, Maltese Ambassador to Italy HE Vanessa Frazier, Restorer Giuseppe Mantella and Simone Mizzi, with the bozzetto The Adoration of the Shepherds by Melchiorre Gafà at the Museum of the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

‘The Annunciation’ and ‘The Nativity’. The initiative was also made possible with the kind collaboration of the Maltese Embassy in Rome and with the support of GasanMamo Insurance.

In Rome, the twinning exhibition, was inaugurated on the 13 December by His Eminence Stanislaw Cardinal Rylko, who as Archpriest of the Basilica hosted the event in the presence of His Grace, Archbishop of Malta Charles Jude Scicluna, and the Ambassador of Malta in Italy, Ms Vanessa Frazier. Art historian Sante Guido with Giuseppe Mantella together with Mons Edgar Vella curated the event in Rome which was also attended by Simone Mizzi representing *Din l-Art Helwa*. In Malta they were assisted by Pat Salomone, Communications Officer of *Din l-Art Helwa*.

The display of these works of art by Melchiorre Gafà, who was born in Birgu in 1635, and who died in Rome after a tragic accident at the age of 32, is intended to bring further recognition to the genius of this young artist who already by the age of 26 had attained a highly refined technical ability and had been appointed academician at the Accademia di San Luca, the most important artistic institution of Papal Rome. The wax reliefs, presumably created as studies or bozzetti, possibly for eventual full-size works, found their way back to Malta with the artist’s belongings after his untimely death. They were discovered beneath layers of gesso and silver gilt within the sacristy of the Mdina Cathedral and on examination by Giuseppe Mantella and Sante Guido, were recognized as works of the sculptor whose many works are exhibited in the National Fine Arts Museum in Malta and in important museums around the world. His largest sculptures, the Glory of St Catherine of Siena, in the church of S. Caterina a Magnanopoli in Rome, his fine statue of the Charity of San Tommaso in the church of St



His Eminence Stanislaw Cardinal Rylko, centre, with His Grace the Archbishop of Malta Charles Scicluna, right, the Maltese Ambassador to Italy, Vanessa Frazier, left, and Art Historian Sante Guido, standing, at the inauguration of the Exhibition Melchiorre Gafà, Maltese Sculptor in Baroque Rome.

Augustine and the Martyrdom of Sant Eustachio in the Church of Sant Agnese in Rome, while his most complete extant work is that of the Santa Rosa of Lima, created for the Church of St Domenico in Lima, Peru.

Perhaps Melchiorre Gafà is best known in Malta for his wooden sculpture of St Paul, for the Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta, as well as the marble Statue of St. Paul for St. Paul's Grotto in Rabat. Because of the young sculptor's premature death, both works were completed by Ercole Ferrata, Gafà's teacher.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who at the time was the best known sculptor in Rome, is known to have exclaimed that 'Il Maltese' would surpass him in sculpture, having shown great discernment and vigour in several of his works.



Art historian Sante Guido, delivering the lecture about Melchiorre Gafà at Our Lady of Victory Church, Valletta.

Christmas Concert at the Church of Our Lady of Victory, Valletta

Our Christmas concert this year featured Malta's only male chamber choir Cappella Sanctae Catharinae joined by soprano Danielle Ciantar.

The repertoire, which included 17th century Christmas pastorales as well as the revival of ancient Maltese carols, attracted a large, attentive audience.

A retiring collection was made in aid of Victory Church Conservation Works.

Din l-Art Helwa is grateful to Alexander Vella Gregory and his choristers who generously collaborate with us to raise funds for this important cause.



Din l-Art Helwa Anniversary Dinner

27th July 2017



The Annual *Din l-Art Helwa* Anniversary Dinner was held in the beautiful setting of San Anton Gardens on the 27th of July 2017. The Acting President, Her Excellency Dolores Christina honoured the guests with her presence, and gave a very inspiring speech about the valuable work that *Din l-Art Helwa* does. She went round every table, socialising and making everyone present greatly at ease.

Din l-Art Helwa Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar welcomed Her Excellency and

Left to right: Maria Grazia Cassar, Mr Victor Christina, Her Excellency the Acting President Dolores Christina, Cettina Caruana Curran and Martin Scicluna

all the guests, who included Her Excellency the Ambassador of the United States of America, Ms Kathleen Hill, Dr Francis Zammit Dimech, Member of the European Parliament, the Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Spain, Don Pedro and Mrs Sosa, as well as M. Antoine le Marc, the deputy Cultural Councillor of the Embassy of France. The evening was idyllic, with excellent food and lovely music by “Il-Pusé”, and everyone enjoyed it tremendously. This was thanks to the hard work by Council Member Cettina Caruana Curran and her team, who organised everything to perfection.



The beautiful setting in San Anton Gardens



The Top Table at the Dinner

Gala dinner at the Phoenicia Ballroom 4th November 2017



Marilou Coppini, Christine Farrugia and Nicholas de Piro entertaining the guests



A table made up of several Council Members and their guests



The elegant setting of one of the tables with Treasurer Martin Scicluna and guests

With the historical sites and monuments in *Din l-Art Helwa's* care on the increase, expenses are forever on the rise. We therefore need to reach out, not only to our members and friends, but also to their friends and to this end, in 2017, we introduced a new event into the *Din l-Art Helwa* calendar. Inspired by the tasteful redecoration of the Hotel Phoenicia and thanks to their keen co-operation we hosted an exclusive gala at the Phoenicia Ballroom on the 4th of November.

The evening was hosted by our Executive President Ms Maria Grazia Cassar, whilst the entertainment was professionally compered by Chris Dingli. Music for dancing was provided by Vinny's five piece Band, accompanied by Andreana's dulcet tones.

This special fund raising event included a traditional auction of a few select paintings and sculptures. Guests also had the opportunity of a silent auction bidding privately for exceptional stays at superb 5 star hotels in Rome, Budapest, London, Malta and Recanati in Italy, all kindly donated by friends of *Din l-Art Helwa*. They could also bid for a day's charter on a 52/54 foot sailing boat or a brass band to play for up to 45 minutes at private parties or celebrations.

This event was an elegant occasion, with excellent food and wine served in a relaxed and newly refurbished setting. It was ably organized by Council Member Joseph P. Farrugia who headed a hard working team including his wife Christine, comedienne Marilou Coppini and Marquis Nicholas de Piro who served as auctioneer as well as entertaining the guests with one of his well-known tongue-in-cheek verbal caricatures.

The history of Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower

Stanley Farrugia Randon



Cannon after restoration and new carriage

The small towers dotted around our coast are historical treasures. Most of them were built during the time of the Order of the Knights of St John, either to fortify the Islands or to act simply as watchtowers.

Until the 17th century, no serious attempt had been made to fortify Malta's coastline and it was in 1605 that Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt ordered the building of Garzes Tower in Gozo, which was financed by his predecessor, Martin Garzes. Grand Master Wignacourt built another six towers at his own expense and his successor, Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris, was responsible for building a further eight which were, however, paid for from the people's taxes. Grand Master Martin de Redin, who followed Lascaris, built thirteen more towers, at his own expense, in the first two years of his three-year rule.

Although the exact date of its construction is not known, Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower was built during the reign of Grand Master Lascaris. On 13 January 1647, the Grand Master ordered the construction of the tower and we can therefore presume that it was built in 1648. It was located in the same area as a coastal observation post, or *maħras*, which was probably similar in appearance to the one that still exists in St Paul's Bay, known as the Ta' Tabibu Tower.

Studies carried out on the main door of the tower's upper floor showed that the wood used was larch and spruce and the weather board was made of pine. Scientific dating revealed that some of the wood was around 800 years old, suggesting that it had been used to make a door in the *maħras* that was subsequently recycled and used for the main door of the tower.

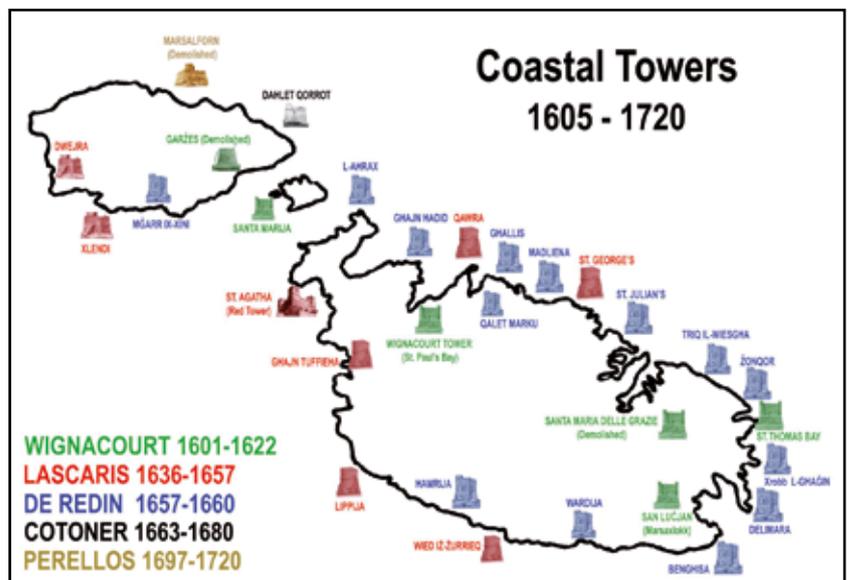
Those manning the *maħras* at Wied iż-Żurrieq were probably the first to see the huge Ottoman fleet, under General Dragut, approaching Malta in 1565 – the start of the Great Siege. The Knights, with approximately 2,000 foot soldiers, and some 400 Maltese men, women and children, withstood the siege and repelled the invaders. Nearly 50 years later, in 1614 – well before the tower at Wied iż-Żurrieq was built – the Turks made a final attempt to take Malta when they landed at Marsascula and Marsaxlokk and devastated Żurrieq and Żejtun.

In fact, by the time the tower was built, in around 1648, Ottoman attacks had been reduced to sporadic piracy, and during the following century there were no major organised assaults on Malta. It became increasingly more expensive and difficult to find enough men to man the defences. In November 1792 it was calculated that 1,500 men were required to efficiently defend the towers. In order to man the other coastal defences, which by then included redoubts, batteries and entrenchments, it was estimated that a further 2,000 people were needed to defend the western side of the island, 2,000 to defend the east, another 2,000 for Valletta and Floriana and some 900 for Fort St Angelo, 200 for Fort Ricasoli and 200 for Fort Manoel.

Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower was manned by Maltese guards and their commander, the *Torriero*. The *torriero* were supervised by the *turcopiliere*, the superintendent of the guard posts and coastal towers. The *Gran Balio*, who was a member of the Order, had the right to inspect the towers

The tower, also referred to as *Torri Xutu* (called *Sciuto* or *Sciuto Tower* by the British), is basically square-shaped and consists of two floors. The

Map showing coastal towers built during the reign of different Grand Masters of the Order of St John





Restored vault in the tower

ceiling of the lower level is supported by three arches between which are flagstones or *xorok*. The upper floor has a barrel-vaulted ceiling to support the extra weight of cannon on the roof. The roof is flat and has a parapet with two embrasures for two cannon. The lower part of the tower walls are scarped up to the line of the cordon but above this they rise vertically to the cornice moulding and parapet of the roof.

Originally, the guards accessed the tower through a doorway in the north elevation, accessing the upper floor by the use of a rope ladder. The lower floor was accessed through a hole in the floor of the upper floor. It was the last to be built by Grand Master Lascaris and served as a prototype for the ones to be built by his successor. Structurally, the de Redin towers were stronger than the flimsy Lascaris towers (with the exception of the Red Tower), the main difference being that the de Redin towers (including the one at Wied iż-Żurriq) were built around a barrel vault and thus were able to bear the weight of cannon, whereas the Lascaris type had roofs resting on wooden beams that were incapable of supporting any heavy piece of ordnance.

Access to a well is through a hole opposite the stairs leading to the roof. The well could also be accessed from the outside when – probably during the British period – the doorway leading to the lower floor was opened and part of the northern wall breached to lead to the well.

A small room was built to serve as a kitchen. Judging from the type and size of stone used, this room was probably built during the British period. A *fuklar* or cooking stove, with its ventilation shaft, was discovered during the cleaning and restoration of the room, together with its ventilation shaft and roof.

Following the news that the plague had hit nearby Messina, in June 1743 Grand Master Fra Don Emmanuel Pinto sent inspectors composed of *jurats* (magistrates) – one from the *Università* of Notabile and one from each *Università* of the cities of Valletta, Vittoriosa and Senglea – to report on the

conditions of the coastal towers. By this time, the towers had lost their military role but had assumed other, equally important, roles against smuggling and stopping anyone from landing without permission – for security and sanitary reasons. The *jurats* were accompanied by the *Adjuvant-General* of the Militia and the Master of the Gun Carriages to check and list the artillery stores in each tower visited.

When the *jurats* visited Wied iż-Żurriq Tower, the three soldiers supposed to be on guard were absent. Only their commander, the *Torriero* Salvatore Caruana from Qrendi, was present. He was paid two scudi, six tari a month by the *Università* of Notabile and the three absentee soldiers were still receiving their two scudi monthly wage. The *Torriero* told the *jurats* that he did not even know their names! According to the subsequent report, the tower had a rope ladder but no bell or stone sentry box and no Standard. The roof of the powder magazine, situated on the roof of the tower, needed rebuilding and the door needed new hinges. A block of stone in the ceiling of the accommodation room was cracked, causing water to leak through. The *Torriero* apparently requested a supply of oil and a loud-hailer.

In the tower at the time of the inspection were two swivel guns with their stands (falconets), four muskets, five rotoli of gun powder, two rotoli of fuses, one vice, one rammer with extractor and two rotoli of lead bullets. No mention is made of the cannon which was on the tower when *Din l-Art Helwa* first visited it in 2013. It is interesting to note that there is no mention of the well that can be accessed from the upper floor of the tower but only of a cistern situated about 80 metres away, and this may lead one to think that the present well was



Undated photo of aeroplanes flying over the tower



The Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower after restoration

modern warfare, the fortifications around our islands became surplus to requirements. Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower also lost its military role but post-war, it was used as a police station until 2002.

In 2013 Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower was included in the list of places handed over to the non-governmental association *Din l-Art Helwa*. A generous sponsorship from Malta International Airport plc made its restoration possible but this was no easy job. The tower had been unused for more than 10 years and most of its doors and windows were either missing altogether or in very bad condition.

The lower half of the tower had been plastered with cement and a number of stones had deteriorated beyond repair. After the appointment of an architect and the acquisition of the necessary permits, work began on the external structure at the end of 2014. The cement was manually removed from the walls and the deteriorated stones were replaced under the close supervision of the architect and the authorities. Missing apertures were replaced but it was possible to restore the main door of the upper floor as well the door of the small building adjacent to the tower.

Access to the upper floor had always been by a wooden ladder through a hole in the ceiling but this was not suitable for visitors, so a metal staircase and safety rails were installed to enable visitors to access the upper level.

Electrical wiring was carefully passed through the joints in the walls, lamps were strategically placed to enhance the beauty of the walls and arches and CCTV cameras and lightning conductors were installed. Information panels in the tower and on the roof were installed to offer information to the visitor on the history of the tower, on the island of Filfla, on marine biodiversity and on *Din l-Art Helwa*. A touch screen also enhances the experience of the visitors.

Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower is open to the public every morning, except Mondays, between 9.30 and 12.30.

dug in the northern wall during the British period and not by the Knights.

As with other coastal towers, under British rule Wied iż-Żurrieq (*Sciutu*) Tower was manned by detachments of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment which changed its name in 1861 to the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery. In 1873, this was relieved of its coast guard commitments, but the tower continued to be manned and in 1874 the doorway used today to access the lower floor was opened through the west wall to provide easier access to the outside for the three coastguards on duty at the time.

There is very little by way of records relating to the tower as it did not undergo any structural changes. Such records as exist include pointing and plastering with lime, requests to supply water to the cistern, repair of the ladder and maintenance of woodwork.

From 1900, Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower was used as a police station but in December 1915 it was reclaimed by the military. A King's Own Malta Regiment badge carved in stone and located above the ground-floor entrance (the work of Mr Frank – later Colonel – Cassar Torregiani in 1932) is proof that the tower continued to be used by the military. During the Second World War it was used as a Coast Observation Post and was manned by the Coast Police. With the advent of the aeroplane and

The White Tower aka Torre L-Abjad, Ta' Hoslien, Ta' Eslien, Torre Biancha

Stanley Farrugia Randon



The White Tower in the mid 20th Century



*Another view of the White Tower
in the mid 20th Century*



*The White Tower in the mid 20th century,
a different angle*

The White Tower was the sixth of the thirteen towers that Grand Master Martin de Redin had built, at his expense, during the first two years of his brief three-year reign. These are, in sequence from north-east to south-west, the White Tower at l-Ahrax, Armier; Ghajn Ħadid Tower in Selmun (in ruins since its upper floors were destroyed by an earthquake in 1856); Ghallis Tower on the Salina Coast Road (under the care of *Din l-Art Helwa*), Qalet Marku Tower, also on the Salina Coast Road (under the care of *Din l-Art Helwa*), Madliena Tower (now in good condition), St Julian's Tower (converted into a bar), Triq Il-Wiesgħa Tower in Xgħajra (in good condition), Żonqor Tower (collapsed), Xrobb l-Għagin Tower (collapsed), Delimara and Bengħisa Towers (both demolished by the British forces to clear the line of fire from nearby forts), Ħamrija Tower (in good condition) and Wardija Tower in Żurrieq (in fairly good condition). The total cost to the Grand Master of all the towers, including the woodwork, amounted to slightly more than 6,428 scudi.

The White Tower was constructed in 1658 at a cost of 589 scudi, excluding the expense of the wooden apertures. It is strategically located on a hill between Dahlet ix-Xmajjar and Dahlet ta' Eslien (or Hoslien) which is now referred to as Dahlet it-Torri and looks over the Comino channel. Until the turn of the 20th century, the ruins of the Hoslien Redoubt still stood in Hoslien Bay and the original plaque commemorating this event still exists. The *Università di Notabile* paid the salary of the bombardier and the three *dejma* soldiers. It was armed with two bronze cannons, four muskets, 16 cannon balls, musket balls and 10 rotolo (about 8kg) of powder.

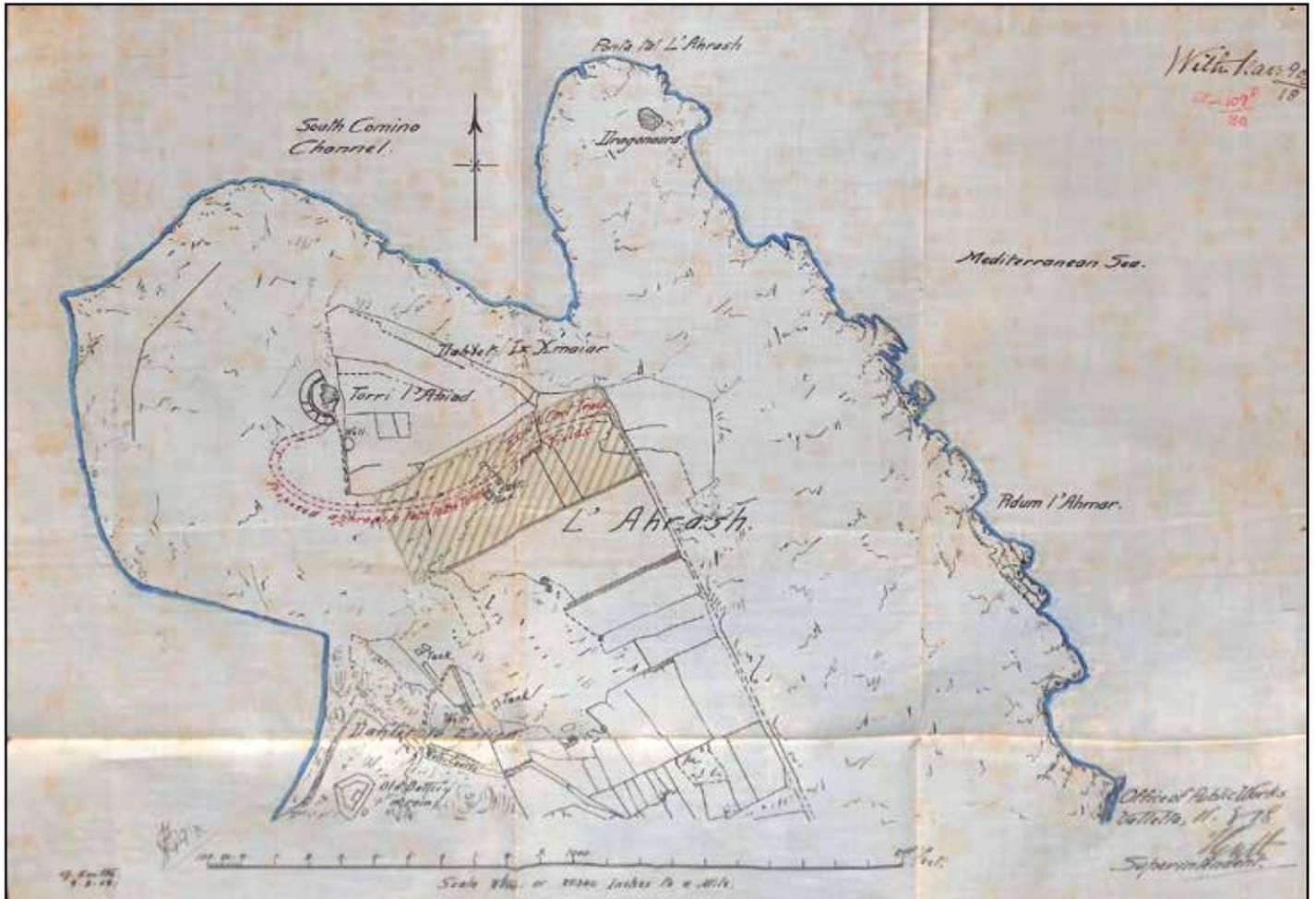
Inscription of the Plaque

FRA DON MARTINO DE REDIN MAGNO S.R.H. MAGISTRO
SEXTAM SPECVLAM PRO CARINARVM AC IN COLARVM TVRIORI
STAT ILERIGENTI, MELITEN POPVLVS PRINCIPI SVO
CLEMENTI PROVTV IN CORDE, SIC IN L RIDE GRATES
DEBITAS REDDEBAT. AN. 1658

Above the inscription there was the coat-of-arms of the Grand Master but its place is now occupied by a disproportionately large depression that suggests a larger coat-of-arms was fitted at a later date, possibly during the British period. The tower is said to have served as a summer residence of the British Governor.

The tower built by Grand Master de Redin consisted of two floors: the ground floor being used for storing cannon balls and gunpowder and the upper floor as living quarters for the *torriero* or commander of the tower, three soldiers and a bombardier acting as reinforcement. The roof of the lower floor is supported by three arches, while the upper floor has a vaulted ceiling that allowed heavy artillery – consisting of two cannon – to be mounted on the roof. The roof has a turret in one corner and a parapet all around. The guards reached the upper floor by means of a rope ladder and climbed up to the roof by means of a spiral staircase. They accessed the ground floor by means of a rope or ladder. The external wall of the ground floor is scarped up to the cordon. A machicolation on the east side of the tower is a remnant of mediaeval fortifications through which stones or burning objects/liquids were dropped on attackers. Some earlier towers, such as St Paul's Tower built during the reign of Grand Master Wignacourt in 1610, had machicolations but this is the only one of the 13 de Redin towers which was built with one.

Other minor defensive posts built during the period of the Order of St John include batteries, redoubts and entrenchments. In 1714 and 1715, reports were forwarded by Knights D'Arginy and Fontet accompanied by Second Engineer



Detail of the 1918 plan of the Naval Authority showing that the redan in front of the tower was still present at the time. Note the proposed path leading to the tower in red dotted lines and the path for the layout of the cable leading to the sea in black dotted lines (Acknowledgements: National Archives Rabat)



Corridor built c. 1918 to link the upper floor of the tower with the British additions above the blockhouse

Bachelieu. The work proposed had to be planned and supervised by expert military engineers. In February 1715, French military engineers, headed by Brigadier Louis Francois d'Aubigné de Tigné and Charles François Mondion as Second-in-Command, visited the islands to enhance the defences of the bays. In April, the Grand Prior of France, Philippe de Vendôme, joined the engineers. Tigné was in favour of strengthening the harbour fortifications in Cotonera, Sta Margherita, Ricasoli and Floriana. Vendôme was more inclined towards the strengthening of the coastal defences and offered to donate money for their construction as well as a loan without interest. The latter strategy was preferred and adopted.

A 1720 map by Charles Amadeus de Bery gives us a clear idea of where these batteries and redoubts were located. This was during the reign of Grand Master Perellos. The tower was strengthened with the addition of a blockhouse, which still stands at the side of it. It was further protected by the construction of walls with musket holes of which only part of one survives. A 1918 plan prepared by the Naval Authority shows the shape and position of this wall. One of these projected from the south-east corner of



*Interior of the
blockhouse*

the tower while the one that still exists projects from the north-east corner of the tower. A ditch, which was armed with 8 cannon but with no embrasures, further protected the whole site.

The blockhouse and battery cost 544 scudi, 11 tarì, 10 grani, and 3 piccoli. This was spent on the walls of the counterscarp, smoothing the rocks, excavation work, the transportation of material and four arches of the blockhouse and *feritori* which, in military terms, means embrasures or musket holes. Close examination of the low parapet wall of the ditch does not reveal the presence of any embrasures but it is possible that these *feritori* were embrasures or musket holes in the redan walls which no longer exist.

The inside and the surrounding walls of the ditch were full of overgrowth, planted trees and some fruit trees. It is presumed that the trees were planted to offer more privacy to the tenants of the tower and not for military and defensive reasons. *Din l-Art Helwa* applied to the relevant authorities to clean the overgrown ditch. This is partly excavated in rock and partly built, and the roots of the trees are causing severe damage to the surrounding walls of the ditch.

The upper floor of the tower can be independently reached via a staircase from an entrance on the south-facing wall of the blockhouse. The blockhouse in turn is accessible from an entrance on the west wall and from here one can access the ground floor of the tower from an arched passage cut through the thickness of the Western wall of the tower. This arrangement allowed the building to be divided into two separate parts.

Following the news that the plague had hit nearby Messina, in June 1743 Grand Master Fra Don Emmanuel Pinto sent inspectors composed of *jurats* (notaries) – one from the *Università* of *Notabile* and one from each of the *Università* of Valletta, Vittoriosa and Senglea) to report on the conditions of the coastal towers which, by this time, had lost their military role but had assumed other equally important roles against smuggling and

stopping anyone from landing against permission – especially for security and sanitary reasons.

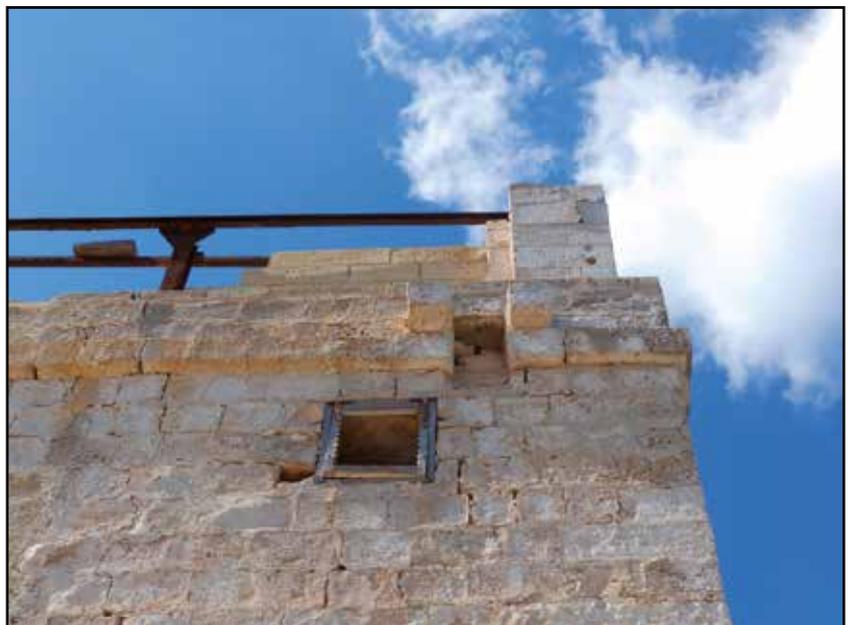
From this inspection, we learn that the tower was manned by a commander (*torriero*) who received a salary of 2 scudi 6 tarì a month, three soldiers with a salary of 2 scudi a month and a bombardier acting as reinforcement. They were paid by the *Università* of *Notabile* and were under the command of the *Senescalco* in Valletta. It was noted that the tower was not provided with a bell and that the well was about 30 paces away. It was in a good condition and had been pointed and whitewashed some time before the inspection.

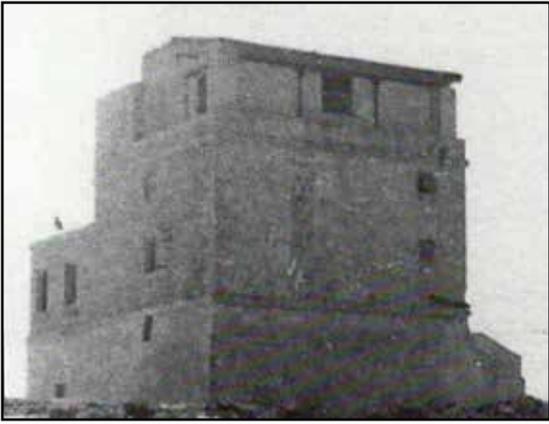
The tower was armed with two five-pounder (French) bronze cannon, length of bore six feet, two inches; six lines (French), diameter at the touch hole 11 inches six lines, diameter at the trunnions 10 inches (French), bore seven inches four lines (French), two gun carriages which were unserviceable, four unserviceable trucks with two iron axles, two swivel gunsmith stands (*falconets*), four muskets, eight staffs with rammers and wooden sponges, one brass ladle for gunpowder, one worm to extract wadding and gunpowder, 1 hand-spike to traverse and elevate guns, 1 vice, four beds, a flag pole, 16 iron cannon balls, one *rotolo* fuse, *rotolo* lead bullets, 10 *rotoli* of gunpowder and two arm stands.

In 1770, the battery was armed with ten 12-pounder iron cannon and it was suggested that three of them be replaced with the same number of 24-pounder cannon together with the equipment required to fire them, two of the biggest bronze mortars together with their 30 bombs, 700 iron cannon balls and 150 grapeshot. An amount of gunpowder was kept at the Red Tower in case of need.

In 1800, the Maltese Islands came under British rule. After the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, when the French army under Napoleon was defeated, the Maltese Provincial Battalions, the Malta Coast Artillery and the Battalion of Maltese Veterans were disbanded and an infantry regiment called

*Machicolation
on east wall*





Mid 20th century photo of the tower

The Royal Malta Fencible Regiment was formed. Lieutenant Colonel Count Francis Rivarola was entrusted with raising the regiment. In March 1828 he reported that the White Tower required attention, particularly after the bad weather that afflicted the islands in the winter. It is interesting to note that in this report he refers to the tower as 'Tower Biancha'. Being an Italian name, this could well mean that the tower was called so even during the period of the Knights and was later on referred to as the White Tower. It required pointing, plastering, carpentry work as well as supply of chairs, tables and oil lamps.

A detailed map drawn by Don Felice Cutajar, a Maltese priest, and dated 1833 gives us the names of the coastal towers, batteries, entrenchments, redoubts and curtains and the quantity of guns to be found in them. In this map, Don Felice noted that the tower was still armed with two cannon and the surrounding battery with eight. We still hope to find some of the cannon buried in the land surrounding the tower. Until 1918, when the tower was handed over to the Naval Authority, it was manned by the Military Authority with the primary aim of preventing smuggling as well as stopping illegal landing of unauthorised people on defence and health grounds.

The White Tower and the hydrophone station

The request for the White Tower to be handed over on long lease to the Naval Authority was made on 15 February 1918, following tenders called for by the Director of Contracts. They also requested that a cable be laid to the sea and for the construction of a road leading to the tower (marked in dotted lines on the plan). The transfer from the Military to the Naval Authority was made on encroachment terms, as the tower was to be converted into a Naval Instrument Station. It was stated that 'the building will require to be thoroughly repaired and considerably extended, an approach road constructed...' The approach road passed through a plot of land held on long lease from the Government by Gio Maria Borg nicknamed *Ta' Ghokos*.

It is interesting to note that the plan of the tower indicated how the *redan* walls might have been built to enclose the tower and battery. Today, only part of

the northern wall of the *redan* remains. It could well be that the stones of the rest of the northern wall, as well as the southern wall, were used to build the room in the ditch as well as a small room behind the tower, as these additions are built from big stones from the time of the Knights.

The tower was transferred to the Naval Authority in March 1918 on encroachment terms and was converted into a Naval Hydrophone Station. A floor was constructed on the blockhouse and some rooms added to the roof.

Originally an instrument to locate icebergs following the sinking of the *Titanic*, the first hydrophone was invented in 1914 by Canadian Reginald Fessenden. It was improved by a Frenchman, Paul Langevin, and a Russian, Constantin Chilowsky, who invented an ultrasound transducer. A thin layer of quartz between two metal plates detected sound waves and could determine the distance and direction of an underwater object. During the war they were used to detect U-boats getting close to the coast or even submarines. Eventually, the Americans improved on this apparatus so that it was able to detect U-boats at a distance of 25 miles.

Hydrophones were still in use in WW2. There is a reference to a hydrophone listening station in Malta in the book entitled *The German Submarine War 1914-1918* by R. H. Gibson and Maurice Prendergast (2003) referring to 'an experimental station with a hydrophone training school (which) was begun at Malta during the autumn of 1917'. This could refer to either St Thomas Tower or the White Tower, or to both.

In July 1922, a request by a Maltese citizen to take the tower and adjoining land on lease was refused as it was still being used by the Naval Authorities. At that time, the tower was 'in perfect maintenance'. At a time when many of the coastal towers were transferred to the civil government, leased to private individuals, turned into kiosks

Another extension to the White Tower





Part of the still surviving redan

or police stations, the White Tower continued to serve its military role – its location being considered too important for it to be abandoned.

At the beginning of the Second World War, the Maritime Authority again took control of the tower but after the war it was leased to various individuals until around 2004, when it was abandoned. In the 1980s one of its tenants built a garage behind the tower which partly destroyed the redan.

In June 2009, the tower was handed over to Mellieħa Local Council which, in November 2016, signed an agreement with *Din l-Art Helwa* granting it the property and adjoining land on loan for 10 years for restoration, conservation and use.

The first thing DLH did was to secure the area and close it off. The tower has been left abandoned for years and parts of it were collapsing, rendering the building very dangerous. The tower was scheduled as Grade 1 by the Planning Authority in 1995, so the original tower will be restored without any modifications, but other work will include masonry and concrete work on additions made during the time of the British, waterproofing of the whole structure, plumbing, electricity and drainage work. Landscaping and repairs to the concrete area surrounding the tower will conclude the project, which is expected to take at least three years. Two unauthorised structures that had been used as a garage and a store room will be demolished.

Martin Vella, warden of Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay, will be leading the project but the restoration committee – comprising Josie Ellul Mercer and the author – will be helping out. President Maria Grazia Cassar and Treasurer Martin Scicluna are working hard to find further sponsors for this project. Architect Joseph Attard, who was appointed by Mellieħa Local Council to provide a method statement for the restoration of the tower before it was handed over to *Din l-Art Helwa*, is in charge of the work.

Din l-Art Helwa intends to use the tower for educational and academic purposes: school or youth-training facilities, exhibitions, a diving and marine-study centre, artistic performances, guided tours and lectures, corporate and philanthropic functions and heritage accommodation.

Principal lead sponsor: HSBC Malta Foundation

Corporate Sponsor: Atlas Insurance PCC Ltd

Office of the President Grant : Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation: Social Fund 2016

Central Government Grant: Ministry for Finance, National Lotteries Good Causes Fund 2016

*Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change:
Environmental Funding Support Scheme for Voluntary Organisations 2016*

St Paul's Tower: a guard post, a beacon, a police station and a telephone exchange

Stanley Farrugia Randon



During the French occupation of Malta, a Maltese Volunteers Corps (*Cacciatori Maltesi*) organised themselves to force the French in Malta to take shelter in Valletta, Fort St Angelo, Fort Manoel, Fort Ricasoli and other smaller forts around the islands. However, they were soon compelled to surrender and leave the Islands altogether, especially after the Maltese sought the help of British Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson, who was in the Mediterranean at the time. As a result, a British Expeditionary Corps consisting of the 30th and the 89th Regiments was sent from Messina. The defence of the island and the naval sector was under the command of Sir Alexander Ball (later to become the first Civil Commissioner of the Maltese Islands) while the troops were under the command of General Graham (later Lord Lynedoch).

Graham recognised the valour of The Maltese Voluntary Corps and in 1800 he obtained permission to establish a paid Maltese Light Infantry. In 1801, an infantry regiment, named The Maltese Militia, was established to defend the Islands. This consisted of three divisions, each having three companies of 100 men, and preference was given to men who had taken part in the French blockade. The Maltese Militia was supplied with muskets, bayonets and pouches. The General and his officers of this infantry regiment were all Maltese. In 1801, The Maltese Militia Coast Artillery was formed, consisting of companies which were stationed at St Paul's Bay and Marsaxlokk. In 1802, the Treaty of

Very small door on the left side of the main entrance, leading to lavatory

Drawbridge changed into a concrete platform



Amiens stated that at least half of the garrison in Malta had to consist of Maltese troops commanded by Maltese. In the same year, The Maltese Light Infantry, The Maltese Militia and The Maltese Militia Coast Artillery were reorganised into The Maltese Provincial Battalions, The Malta Coast Artillery and The Battalion of Maltese Veterans.

In 1805, the Royal Malta Regiment was founded and most of the men of the Maltese Provincial Battalions enrolled in this new Regiment. Officers were British, German and Maltese and the Regiment was often involved in overseas expeditions. This Regiment was disbanded by 1811 mostly following a heavy defeat against the French on the island of Capri.

After the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, when the French forces under the command of Napoleon were defeated, the Maltese Provincial Battalions, the Malta Coast Artillery and Battalion of Maltese Veterans were disbanded and an infantry regiment, named The Royal Malta Fencible Regiment (RMFR) was formed. The uniform was red with blue facings and gold lace. The regiment consisted of 10 companies, including three companies of artillery. St Paul's Tower, more popularly known as Wignacourt Tower, served as quarters for the Commanding Officers of the RMFR, and on 24 October 1828 a request was made to repair the conduit leading to the cistern and a window.

Various old documents from the Department of Public Works reveal that regular maintenance was done on the tower, needing regular whitewashing and supply of chairs, tables, oil lamps and filling up of the well in summer.

Between 1854 and 1861, pensioners of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment were organised in a company – the Royal Malta Fencibles Pensioners



Photo of the tower in the 1960s showing the presence of the beacon on the roof

Company – and wore blue frock coats with red facings, blue trousers, forage caps, boots and black accoutrements. Between 1852 and 1857, a scheme existed for the enrolment of men aged between 17 and 60 into the Maltese Militia. The only exemptions were members of the clergy, doctors, magistrates, judges, members of the Council of Government, the Superintendent of Police and members of The Royal Malta Fencibles. Initially it was compulsory but was later on a voluntary basis. The uniform was blue with red facings.

In 1861, as a mark of royal favour, Queen Victoria decreed that the RMFR become an artillery corps and its name was changed to 'The Royal Malta Fencible Artillery' (RMFA). The Royal Malta Fencibles Pensioners Company was disbanded in that year but the RMFA itself continued to exist till 1889.

In 1889, The Royal Malta Regiment of Militia and The Royal Malta Artillery were formed. The Royal Malta Regiment of Militia consisted of various companies. Seven companies were stationed in Valletta, while others were stationed in Vittoriosa, Notabile, Naxxar and Żebbuġ. This name continued in use until 1907, when King Edward VII changed it to 'The King's Own Malta Regiment of Militia' (KOMR).

The KOMR were required to defend the Maltese Islands during the First World War (1914-1918), while the British Infantry Battalions were fighting abroad, but St Paul's Tower was not occupied by this regiment because in 1913 it was transferred to the Police Authority, which occupied it until 1931. During its use by the police, the drawbridge was replaced by a concrete passage between the external flight of steps and the main door on the upper floor.

St Paul's Tower has a recess in the wall close to the kitchen with a hole that served as a lavatory. This is an original feature of the tower and the hole used to lead to an opening in the sea. When the tower was used as a police station, part of the south wall was excavated to create a small room in the thickness of the wall which served as a lavatory. When the drawbridge was replaced by a concrete passage, this toilet was also made accessible from the original external staircase. Before the external staircase was removed, the external entrance to the lavatory was blocked but another lavatory was constructed on the West side of the tower with this wall of the tower serving as one of its walls.

The tower was used partly as an office and partly as a prison cell, which was built in the lower floor and consisted of a room with walls about 2.1 metres high, with the upper part surrounded by iron netting. The tower was abandoned in 1931, and remained unused for six years because it was said that part of the cliffs below were collapsing and the tower was at risk of falling.

On 1 August 1937, it began being used by the Post and Telephone Department and was used as a telephone exchange up to 1 April 1963, when an automatic telephone was inaugurated in Ġhajn Tuffieħa Road. However, a trench dug in the wall on the façade of the tower for the installation of telephone cables remained an eyesore.

In 1953 a request for the installation of the present internal spiral staircase that leads to the upper floor was made by the clergy of St Paul's Bay parish church which indicates that the tower may also have been used by them.

In 1960 some of the ancillary rooms adjacent to the tower that feature in paintings and photographs from the 19th and 20th century were removed and a concrete platform with benches was created on its west and east sides. The staircase was removed and the concrete passage that had replaced the drawbridge served as a balcony, although part of it was removed to allow access for cables.

The tower served as a light source to direct fishing vessels and other ships entering the bay for shelter during the Second World War and also to signal impending air attacks. This beacon, which was fixed close to the seaward parapet wall, was the property of the Defence Land agents and the Government but by the 1960s it was already non-functional.

The tower was again abandoned in 1963 and became the responsibility of the Lands Department. In 1967, *Din l-Art Helwa* began requesting it be given guardianship of the building but had to persist for three years before this was eventually granted, in 1970.

*Vigilo speaks to Fr Edgar Vella, secretary of the *Kummissjoni Patrimonju Kulturali Kattoliku* (KPKK)*

What is the role of the KPKK?

The KPKK is a consultative body that gives advice to the Episcopal Conference on conservation and restoration projects of all types carried out in the Diocese of Malta with regard to its artistic, historical and cultural heritage pertaining to the diocese.

What is your role within the KPKK?

As secretary of the Commission I have to see what requests have been submitted by all ecclesiastic entities in order to prepare an agenda, and to take the minutes of all the meetings – which are then submitted to the Chancellery of the Curia to be archived. The Chancellor is responsible for delivering the decisions/advice of the Commission to the Bishop.

When was the KPKK formed?

The KPKK was formed in 2002 by decree of the Episcopal Conference.

What led the Maltese Diocese to form the KPKK?

The Diocese of Malta decided to form the Commission after suggestions from the Vatican to control all restoration work on church properties to avoid, as much as possible, any mistreatment of its artistic heritage.

What falls under its responsibility?

It is responsible for discussing conservation and restoration projects after studying the reports that have been submitted. Requests vary – from structural conservation and restoration projects of immovable property in conjunction with the Planning Authority to the conservation of paintings, sculpture, metals, textiles and other minor works of art that are under the curatorship of churches.

What expertise do the members of the Commission have?

Its members are well-versed and, having graduated in various fields connected with cultural heritage, have expertise in subjects such as art history, liturgy, architecture, music, restoration techniques and librarianship.

What means and resources does the KPKK have to achieve its objectives?

At its meetings, it discusses full detailed documentation submitted for its review, including condition reports, restoration method statements and estimates pertaining to the various requests by church entities.

How does the Commission operate?

It meets every month after its members have received the minutes of the previous meeting and the agenda with the reports of the next meeting for preliminary individual review.

Does the KPKK co-operate with other bodies to achieve its objectives?

The KPKK co-operates mainly with the Planning Authority in relation to structural projects.

An update on restoration at Sarria Church, Floriana

Patricia Salomone



The beautiful photo on the cover of this issue shows all five paintings by Mattia Preti which have so far been restored by the expert team of Giuseppe Mantella Restauri. They are:

The **Altar piece which represents The Immaculate Conception**. This splendid monumental painting, so richly enclosed in its Baroque frame, received the support of Shireburn Ltd. who paid for the restoration in celebration of the 30th anniversary since their foundation.

The **Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian** is, according to restorer Giuseppe Mantella, the most astounding of all the versions painted by Preti of the martyr saint. This painting was restored with funds collected by the Malta International Airport and was, in fact, restored at the airport departure lounge where travellers could deposit a donation in the donations box.

The **Saint Roque**, restored with kind support of MSV Life Insurance, is yet another painting of the saint on whose intercession the faithful depended for liberation from the plague. The painting hangs to the right when facing the altar.

The painting of **St. Rosalia** with her delicate crown of white roses was saved by funds collected by the Malta Rotary Clubs together with the Rotary Clubs of Palermo. Rosalia, *la Santuzza*, is Palermo's patron saint.

The most recent restoration was generously funded by Sparkasse Bank Malta. It represents **St Nicholas of Bari**, patron saint of Grandmaster

Nicholas Cotner, who commissioned the artist Mattia Preti to build the small circular church and decorate it with paintings dedicated to the saints known for their intercession against the plague.

The church is run by the Jesuit community which has taken on the recent painting of the lower walls of the church, removal of unnecessary wires and cleaning up. Scaffolding Solutions of Vassallo Builders Ltd have helped in the setting up of an elaborate scaffolding which has made painting the inside of the cupola possible.

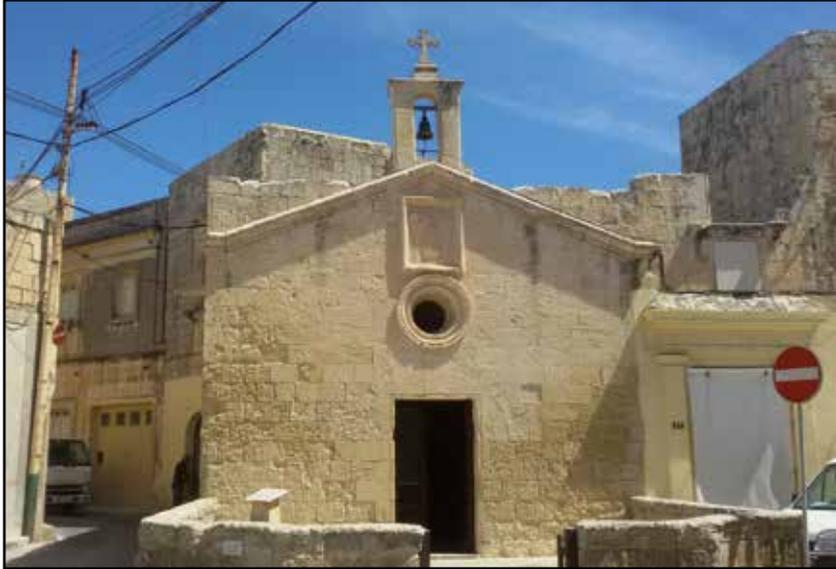
Din l-Art Helwa has taken on the responsibility for finding donors to help restore all seven paintings by Mattia Preti at Sarria. We would like to have the seven paintings done by the end of 2018, in celebration of Valletta 18, European City of Culture.

The church stands on the site of an earlier chapel, built in 1585 at the expense of Knight Fra' Martin Sarria Navarra. In thanksgiving for the end of the devastating plague in 1675, Grand Master Nicolas Cotner replaced the chapel with the current church, which is actually dedicated to the Immaculate Conception but is still usually known by the name given to the original building. The church is a jewel in Malta's heritage as it is the only building for which the artist Mattia Preti ever prepared the architectural plans. It holds no less than seven of his paintings.

Kindly contact us on: info@dilarthelwa.org or 2122 5952 or 2122 0358

The mediaeval chapel of St Roque in Żebbuġ

Patricia Salomone



The mediaeval chapel of St Roque in Żebbuġ was built in the early 17th century at a time when the island was being ravaged by the plague. The dedication to St Roque clearly indicates this, as he was known as a protector against the dreaded disease – from which he eventually died. A statue of St Roque was erected opposite the chapel during the last of the plague epidemics in the early 19th century. It was restored by *Din l-Art Helwa* in 2012, on the initiative of *DLH* volunteer Michael Bonnici, who is the warden of the chapel.

The mediaeval chapel of St Roque, Main Street, Żebbuġ

In 1980, the Archdiocese of Malta ceded the chapel to *Din l-Art Helwa* and a few years later the decision was taken to use this historical building as a small museum dedicated to some of Malta's most eminent sons – several of whom were born in Żebbuġ. Among the famous people born in the village we find the patriot, Dun Mikiel Xerri: 1737-1799; Mikiel Anton Vassalli, linguist and philosopher: 1765-1829; Dun Karm Psaila, writer and poet: 1871-1961; the painter Lazzaro Pisani: 1854-1932; Antonio Sciortino, sculptor: 1879-1947 and his brother – also a sculptor – Francesco Saverio Sciortino: 1875-1958. All these – and many others – are remembered and celebrated in the chapel, as are the victims of WWII who were born or lived in Żebbuġ.

Also housed in the chapel is material relating to Catholic Action in the 1950s and memorabilia of people who have left their mark on village life, as well as on the development of our country.

Michael Bonnici researches and collates material that he considers will be of interest to both students and fellow researchers. Anyone who would like to visit the chapel are requested to call Mr Bonnici on

9942 4176 or contact him on michbonn@malta.net

In December, *DLH* Council member Ian Camilleri, with the assistance of Michael Bonnici, led a tour of Żebbuġ with the final stop being the chapel of St Roque. This was a great opportunity to discover the architectural and social history of this beautiful town, as seen through the eyes of one who knows his birthplace like the back of his hand.



Original hand-drawn designs by Lazzaro Pisani for his work on the parish church of Nadur in Gozo.



The statue of St Roque on the corner of Mamo Street and Main Street, Żebbuġ

Malta's first inhabitants revisited

Dr A.N. Welsh

They say that the best things in life are free, and at least one of them is. To sit on the south side of Wied iż-Żurrieq in the evening, and watch the sun go down behind the garigue, the sea lapping and frothing at the base of the cliffs and Filfla rising enigmatically in the distance is very therapeutic – but cast your mind back to how it would have looked 5,000 years ago.

There would be no WWII pillbox opposite, the little boats would have no motors, Filfla would be a bit larger and there would be no tomatoes or potatoes to have with your fish but, basically, you would be looking at the same view. Now try going back another 5,000 years, to 8,017 BC, just after the end of the last Ice Age.

You would be high up on a green hillside looking down on a steep ravine with a trickle of fresh water going out to a sea that is 100 metres lower down than now. The valley would extend out as land towards some low hills, a complex which was Filfla. The evening sun would still go down behind the land opposite, but this would have been greener and cooler – and a rather dangerous and precipitous place in which to sit. You would probably have been harvesting or browsing the land below for things to eat and going farther out for crustaceans and seafood.

In my imagination, you would be living in a mud-brick house or complex, possibly connected over the land with cart rut transport. (Archaeologist Dr David Trump discovered the bases of two such mud brick buildings at Skorba and traces of others have been found since; however, mud brick houses break down over time and leave little in the way of footprint.) Malta was not then an island, but was part of a landmass running down from a much larger Italy and a larger Sicily. Over the next two-and-a-half millennia, the ice melted and the sea slowly rose to its present levels, cutting off Malta and Sicily as we know them now.

In a previous *Vigilo*, No. 48, I suggested that Malta's first inhabitants arrived by land, when Sicily and Malta were joined. In this article, I would like to explore this hypothesis further and consider what their background may have been and what they would have found when they arrived here.

To recapitulate, the last Ice Age – thought to have been caused by a shift in the axis of rotation of the Earth – began in 25,000BC and took effect quickly (in about five years). One effect was to draw sea water into the poles as ice, and so sea levels dropped about 100 metres in the Mediterranean. This created a large landmass running down from Italy, with Malta as its tip. Malta itself would have been joined to Gozo and the other islands and is estimated to have been 20 per cent larger, with surrounding lower land.

The ice cover itself extended down through Northern Europe to – and including – the top of Italy. The climate here would have averaged five degrees Celsius lower than now – cold and windy, but by no means impossible for animal and human life. We know that deer, wild boar and mouflon (a kind of horned sheep) coped with the climate, providing excellent food for Stone Age hunter-gatherers.

The Ice Age came to an end in 11,500BC, again fairly quickly, and the ice began to melt in warm and balmy conditions, but there was a blip – during which the ice returned – called the 'Younger Dryas' and the warm weather did not stabilise until 8,500 BC. The ice took time to melt, and it was not until some 3,000 years later

that the present dimensions and climate of Malta (and of Italy and Sicily) were finally established.

I mentioned hunter-gatherers, assumed to be small roving bands, hunting and living off the land and pursuing a fairly primitive and precarious existence 'nasty, brutish, and short' in Hobbes's famous phrase. However, recent archaeology has challenged this, or challenged it in part. The discovery of a group of stone circles with animals carved in relief and other refinements at Göbekli Tepe in Turkey dating to about 10,000 BC shows that there must have been an organised and technically advanced culture running back into the Ice Age.

The houses of the Göbekli Tepe builders have yet to be found and, in fact, there is much more to be excavated at the site. Not too far away, at Çatalhöyük, a complex of buildings has been discovered, all connected and entered from the roof. Economic of building materials and building labour, but low on ventilation, sanitation, and lighting, these are estimated to date back to 7,000BC. Stonework and spectacular buildings discovered in South America have been dated to 15,000 BC, so it seems that a whole new page in mankind's development is coming to light.

Our forefathers thought that our Maltese temples were built by the Phoenicians, but we've long attributed them to the 'Temple People', a culture which was at its height from about 4000BC to 2500BC. Now we have to question whether there were even earlier cultures. This also applies to the cart ruts – examples of which have been found in the Azores. Speculation will be confirmed as archaeological techniques are further developed, but when it comes to the flora and fauna of that distant age, we are on firmer ground.

It seems that, at some stage, either farmers arrived or the hunter-gatherers learned how to farm. Animal husbandry and the growing of crops developed in the Middle East at about the time of the ending of the Ice Age – 'the Neolithic Revolution', possibly earlier, as the average temperatures here during the Ice Age were only five degrees Celsius below what they are at present. Farming was necessitated by an increasing population and a reduction in available game.

Hunting is an attractive, manly way of life, much easier than breaking one's back in the fields, but if the alternative is to see starvation it becomes impracticable. It has been estimated that, in temperate conditions, a Stone Age family needs about five square miles for subsistence. Obviously, this figure depends very much on the land, but a good half acre will grow all the crops needed for the same family. Livestock, of course, need much more. A number of things flow from farming – stability, property, the nuclear family and, above all, surpluses, which enable the support of a full-time priesthood, specialised occupations and the conditions for a more civilised society.

What did those early settlers find? Malta was covered with trees and shrubs. David Trump found traces of olives (*olea europa*), Judas trees (*cercis siliquastrum*), hawthorn (*crataegus*) and ash (*fraxinus*), so we can take these as a fact. Figs were believed to have brought over by the first settlers, but it can reasonably be assumed that there were evergreen oaks, Aleppo pines, carobs, the sandarac gum tree (*gharghar*), plums and almonds. The Romans boosted the plantation of olives and grapes and the Arabs

brought cumin, citrus fruits, and promoted cotton, Malta's most profitable crop in the Middle Ages, not forgetting that Malta was noted for its fine woven cloths in Roman times.

The period following the Younger Dryas enjoyed more favourable conditions than now, warm and balmy, with sufficient rain. The valleys would be running with water – particularly *Wied l-Ghasel*, *Wied il-Kbir*, *Wied id-Dalam* and, in Gozo, *Wied il-Ghasri* – for most if not all of the year, and the water table was much higher. Much of the lower lying land was probably swamp. We must also remember that Malta lies well south in the Mediterranean, being at the same latitude as Oran in Algeria, so there would be some species of tropical plant. Even today I have seen bananas and papaya growing in out-of-the-way locations. On old maps we see Malta classified as part of the African continent – and Tunis was lumped together as the initial patrimony of the Knights.

Malta would have been a kind of green paradise for a few hunter-gatherers, although it would seem that stocks of wild game were soon depleted. It was noted for its many scented roses and plentiful honey bees, but it would have posed a challenge to farmers. These people had to start clearing the land without any metal implements: not even the Temple Culture had them. Malta would have been covered with small trees, shrubs and knee-deep vegetation. The limestone cover of the Islands degrades to very fertile soil. Stones can be removed by hand to make rubble walls which hold back the soil, as well as providing some shelter and a boundary.

The first Neolithic fields were enclosures for animals. They entered at a corner, which served as a kind of crush so that animals for slaughter, breeding, care or movement could be caught and picked out. One wonders how the fields were cleared. Stone Age man did not have metal tools and although a few deer may have survived, antler picks would be in short supply. With stout sticks, stubborn stones could be levered out and taken to what would become the edge of a field (often the edge of the next field) and used for building a rubble wall (we know they could build reasonable walls – although perhaps not for housing).

Rubble walls served several purposes – they provided a place to put the stones which had to be cleared from the surface of the land – they provided shelter from wind, and some shade, and though it may not have troubled the original settlers, protection from soil erosion and from stealing. They also were a barrier to animals and they formed a little kingdom formed by the sweat of the family's brow which would feed them from then on.

However, even with today's equipment, clearing wild land is somewhat of a challenge, and what soil you are left with is jam-packed with the seeds of weeds and is not really free of them for some years. I have had some personal experience and the best answer I found was to run pigs on the land for a couple of years: they are excellent for leaving the field as a clean area of soil ready for tilling. Stone Age man would use fire to burn off the vegetation – the ash makes the field very fertile – but the land is soon exhausted and has to lie fallow for two or three years, maybe even longer. The pressure would always be on getting a crop sown and so the fields would be small and, once in production, would not be changed. Field boundaries are the most permanent of archaeological markers.

Farmers farm: they only make fields to get the process started. As one local farmer put it 'walls do not make money'. You might remove a wall between two fields, but getting an adjoining farmer to agree to alter his walls is unlikely. In Phoenician and Roman times large areas were put together under a presiding house, the 'villa' In Arab times these *ci-devant* estates were broken up into small holdings, but then in Norman times all land was

deemed the property of the Crown and was tenanted in return for military service, produce, labour, and of course rent. Large areas, *latifundia*, were retained by the crown and favoured nobility. All the individual farmers energy went on getting as much out of the land as he could so that he could pay his rent and have enough left to feed his family.

The concept of ownership might have come in with the Neolithic revolution. Roaming bands of hunter-gatherers might fight to protect a particularly favourable area, but they were not tied to a particular place and had to keep moving as they exhausted the game, etc., where they were. However, once proper farming and husbandry began, people were tied to their farms. How the original land was allocated is unknown, although a study of the field boundaries might offer some clues. Was it a case of the first to arrive claiming the best bits, or did some petty king reward his followers and friends with land grants? Land was the stuff of life: you lived on what you could produce from your fields. This was far from the case in later centuries; even in Phoenician times, wheat was being imported and it has been variously estimated that the farms of Malta and Gozo could, at the most, support between 10,000 and 20,000 people.

Quintinus, writing in 1536, records a population in excess of 20,000, frugal and healthy, long since relying on wheat imports from Sicily and exporting cotton, cumin and honey – living close to the soil, eating bread of course, but also 'thistles'. Probably this was the limit of Quintinus's botany, although some thistles have a fleshy root, but there are many edible plants growing wild, such as wild leeks, carrots, garlic, fennel, young nettles, plums, carob tree pods, samphire and, by then, the ubiquitous though not endemic 'fat hen', wild spinach and, in those wetter times, land crabs, mushrooms, fungi and snails. There were always olives and, over the centuries, came figs, citrus fruits, peaches, loquats, almonds, etc., which provided healthy if not particularly sustaining additions to the staple diet. Small game, birds, seafood and fish were eaten whenever available, but meat figured rarely on the menu of the locals.

Today, we have 460,000 residents and getting on for two million annual visitors but we eat better than our ancestors, thanks to the global economy. Unfortunately this growth has resulted in the devouring of much of our countryside. A Stone Age man coming back today would be bewildered by the changes but he would still recognise the odd charmed spot – the few places of peace where the air blows clean and Nature reigns. Let us cherish them.

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Restoring attitudes to preserve paper heritage at the Notarial Archives, Valletta

Dr Christina Meli, PRO NARC

Saving and preserving paper heritage is a relatively new concept in terms of public awareness in Malta. It is not difficult to observe a nation-wide general lack of knowledge of the importance of paper heritage in all its forms, ranging from its historical content – essential for researchers coming from all disciplines – to the aesthetic beauty of the structure of a volume, an art which is frequently unappreciated.

Every effort of the Notarial Archives Resource Council (NARC) is fuelled by the need to raise awareness amongst the Maltese public for a change in this mentality and to make people aware of the gaps in the Maltese identity that can be filled through the understanding of paper heritage. This is the way forward towards the creation of a new conscience which prompts in us a new-found respect for paper heritage. These issues are at the core of every project that the NARC undertakes.

To understand the importance of the collection of the Notarial Archives, I must relate some of their history. They were originally established in 1640 under Grand Master Lascaris (1636-57) who, for the first time, defined the importance of the proper keeping of notarial documents in the Deed of Foundation of the *Archivio Notarile*. Today, the Notarial Archives are governed by separate legislation and fall under the responsibility of the Chief Notary to Government. Original copies of these notarial acts are currently deposited in 2-3 Mikiel Anton Vassalli Street in Valletta, which is also the office of the Chief Notary to Government. Register copies of these acts, which are true copies of the original documents, are housed in an 18th century palazzo situated at 24 St Christopher Street, Valletta.

During the Second World War, the original documents of the notarial acts were stored in the basement of the *Auberge d'Italie* and that of a house

*16th century register
before and after
restoration*



*Dr Joan Abela and Dr
Theresa Zammit Lupi
with visitors
at the archives*



in St Andrew Street, Valletta, along with some of the register copies. The documents stored in St Andrew Street had to be transferred to the *Auberge d'Italie* after the government building in which they were stored was hit in 1941. In April 1942, the *Auberge d'Italie* was bombed twice, resulting in the destruction or damage of some 2,000 volumes. In December 1945, both the original documents and the copies were transferred to a palazzo in St Christopher Street but were re-housed in the 1960s when the palazzo underwent structural reinforcement. In 1968, the original documents were moved to Mikiel Anton Vassalli Street, while the Register copies were re-housed in St Christopher Street, where they have remained ever since. The shameful state in which they were abandoned is precisely what the NARC is striving to prevent from ever being repeated, by providing expert advice to the Office of the Notary to Government.

Due to the efforts of the NARC, the Notarial Archives have come a long way in the past few years, although it is important to stress that work on such a great scale never ceases to produce new challenges.



The archives before and after

Work in this regard has been helped by the award of €5,000,000 as a result of the successful application for funding from the European Regional Development Fund, which was submitted by the Justice, Culture and Local Government Ministry through the Office of the Notary to the Government. This funding is being used for the rehabilitation of the fabric of the building housing the Notarial Archives, the reorganisation of housing and shelving of the manuscripts, as well as purchasing of new equipment. This is an essential part of the process of rehabilitating the Archives, since a safe and suitable building is the first step in ensuring a secure environment for them.

In this regard, last year the government allocated a building in St Paul Street, adjoining the palazzo of the Notarial Archives, to serve as part of the newly refurbished premises. It is planned to link the two buildings into one interconnected centre for historical and scientific investigation that will be fully accessible to both local and international researchers.

In the same way that the structure of a building is the protector of its contents, so is the structure of a volume the protector of its historical content. It is therefore essential to consolidate and conserve the physical aspect of paper heritage, even if only for preserving the historical information contained therein. The successful ‘Adopt a Notary’ scheme, launched by the NARC in 2015, is aimed at raising funds to preserve the collection of the Notarial Archives.

The scheme encourages companies, institutions, organisations and individuals to ‘adopt’ either a notary’s collection of deeds consisting of several volumes, or a single volume that is of particular historical significance or a single historic document. Donations start from a minimum of €250 and sponsorships of €6,000 and over may be spread over a number of years. Efforts are made to select the most suitable adoption in line with the sponsor’s interests and budget. Estimates for conservation treatment are prepared and a proposal is then tailor-made for the particular sponsor.

At this point, conservation on the selected documents starts. All treatments are carried out by qualified book and paper conservators using the highest quality materials and following current international conservation practice and work ethic. Contact with our sponsors is never lost – in fact, the NARC strives to include them. Visits to the Notarial Archives by sponsors and other interested individuals contribute towards the raising of awareness, a crucial factor for this project to be a success. Care

is also taken to ensure that when the document has undergone conservation it is housed in a specifically made container, an essential step to ensure that the efforts made to preserve it are not reversed. Every step of the process is documented and also recorded with photographs, which later compose the final conservation report. In accordance with international conservation ethics, this detailed process is followed in respect of every document that undergoes conservation.

The ‘Adopt a Notary’ scheme follows a priority plan: it puts documents of particular importance for their content or their aesthetic quality at the top of the list of documents to undergo conservation treatment. Such a priority plan is only possible through the sorting and preliminary cleaning of documents. A project currently being implemented at the Notarial Archives, which was for the past three years sponsored by HSBC Foundation Malta, involves the sorting and cleaning of some 5,000 *bastardelli* volumes.¹ A number of dedicated and trained volunteers and students are involved in this project, which is managed by the head conservator of the NARC.

The slow, delicate work involves systematically going through the manuscripts one by one and carrying out surface cleaning of the pages with a soft brush. Each volume, many of which have never been opened or dusted since the Second World War, is identified and catalogued in a database as initial entries which will eventually be taken up by a professional archivist. Notes on particular features that the volume might possess, such as recycled covers or endearing doodles, are also made on the entries in the catalogue. Care is also taken in the way in which these volumes are stored. Manuscripts that have sound covers are labelled with a loose, acid-free board across the spine which is held with cotton tape. Manuscripts that are damaged are wrapped entirely in acid-free paper and labelled before being shelved and loose quires and fragments are stored with the fragment collection in acid-free folders.

Volunteers working on the manuscripts



¹ The *bastardello* is a bound volume containing the first rough drafts of a particular notary’s contracts, deeds, wills and other documents.



Unsung treasures at the archives

Another cataloguing exercise is being carried out on another project that the NARC is overseeing. The British Notaries project involves the task of cataloguing each act of British notaries for the first half of the 19th century. This was initiated in 2013 and involves a number of volunteers who are directed by a History MA candidate. The volunteers put the data acquired from the original contracts into a database. This is also preliminary work that will be undertaken by professional archivists in the near future.

The NARC insists on the importance of conservation work being undertaken by qualified book and paper conservators. Conservation is a practice requiring proper training and any mistakes – whether intentional as part of the treatment or accidental – can result in irreversible damage to the document concerned. To rectify situations such as these, the introduction of a conservation warrant awarded to professionals who satisfy the requirements of a professional book and paper conservator must be introduced. An integral part of such requirements is an academic course focused on teaching the right skills and knowledge to students aspiring to work in this field. At the moment, there is no academic course leading to this qualification in Malta and students have to be trained abroad.

This is one of the challenges that the NARC had to face. Nurturing a love for research, books and learning, and fostering in young students a respect for our nation's paper heritage, are among the founding aims of this voluntary organisation. Currently, three MA students are being sponsored by the Maltese government to follow one of the most highly-acclaimed courses in the field at West Dean College in the UK. Through the advice provided by the NARC, the government is allocating funds every year to sponsor students to continue their studies in areas directly related to the Notarial Archives. Targeting young minds will eventually lead to the change in perspective and mentality that is so needed in our society.

The project of rehabilitating the Notarial Archives is not solely concerned with preserving the Archives' invaluable paper heritage but is also focused on making the documents accessible to the public, while ensuring that no physical or environmental hazards are created which could damage the sensitive material. This is partly the reason why a multi-disciplinary team is being brought together. Along with fully qualified book and paper conservators, the team must include historians, art historians, curators, archivists and professionals specialised in a range of other disciplines. This methodology also fosters an environment that encourages collaboration with photographers, fashion designers, illustrators, graphic designers and other artists who gain inspiration from the various aspects of the collection of the Notarial Archives. This is why every contribution to the Notarial Archives, whether financial, artistic, logistical or organisational, is required to save Malta's paper heritage. For these reasons, the NARC encourages students, artists and professionals to undertake research and other projects connected to the Notarial Archives.

Collaborations are also focused on strengthening the element of research. In fact, the NARC has collaborated with teaching institutions and continues to nurture its relationships with them. Collaboration with the University of Malta includes partnerships with the Department of Maltese (Faculty of Arts), the Department of History of Art (Faculty of Arts), and the Department of Conservation and Built Heritage (Faculty for the Built Environment), all of which encourage students to take an interest in the Notarial Archives. International contacts are also essential for the Notarial Archives to adopt a worldwide perspective, to learn from previous examples and to inspire others to follow in its footsteps.

International collaboration includes strong contacts with West Dean College, the National Archives of Amsterdam, the University of Amsterdam, the University of York, and the Malta Study Centre, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library in the USA, which facilitate scholarships and internships as well as instigate further research in respect of the collection of the Notarial Archives.

Several activities are organised by the NARC to raise awareness about the state of Malta's paper heritage and its various efforts to safeguard it. Visits to the Notarial Archives are organised on a regular basis during which the history of the Archives and the conservation work being undertaken are explained. This intimate look at the work of conservators and the treasures the collection contains makes the visitors more aware of its importance, which is not only of Maltese significance but also indispensable for the understanding of Mediterranean history.

Similar awareness is raised in presentations given to companies that 'adopt' a notary or document from the collection, as well as in lectures given at the University of Malta. A staple event organised by the NARC is the *Cena* which, on two separate occasions, delighted patrons with documented traditional food of the 15th and 16th centuries. The NARC has also organised a book launch, workshops and a summer concert in collaboration with the choir *Cappella Sanctae Catharinae* and historical interpretation group *Compagnia San Michele*.

All the efforts and conservation work undertaken by the NARC are aimed at informing the public about the treasures contained in the Notarial Archives. More importantly, its ultimate aim is to change people's way of thinking to a more conscientious mentality regarding the preservation of our nation's paper heritage. Imagine deleting every piece of information on a country's hard drive disk, picture a student mistakenly deleting all his or her dissertation files on a laptop, or a teenager losing all the photos on a Smartphone. That feeling of panic is what the NARC faces each and every day when faced with the challenges of saving our country's paper heritage. Abandoning this immense hub of knowledge and aesthetic beauty is akin to wiping out the documented memory of Malta's history. We owe it to future generations to preserve our paper heritage to the best of our abilities – so support your country's heritage by volunteering, donating or helping in any other way you can.

To make a donation to the NARC or to participate in its adoption scheme, please email Dr Christina Meli on cantilena.mjcl@gov.mt

Like the NARC on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/notarialarchives/>

Become a member of the Notarial Archives Community Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NotArcl>.

Some thoughts on an escutcheon opposite Luqa cemetery

Pierre A. Sansone MD



The waysides and country lanes of Malta and Gozo are dotted with the remains of ancient buildings crying out for repair. They generate much curiosity and stimulate research by both scholar and amateur.

Taking a stroll along Triq Gudja, the narrow street opposite Luqa Cemetery on the way to Gudja, one can observe, on the façade of a very old building, a much-eroded stone escutcheon on which is carved a coat-of-arms. Below it is a date, possibly 1699.

A friend pointed out to me that the figures on this double coat-of-arms closely resemble the Sansone coat-of-arms (Figure 1), which prompted me to look into this coincidence. Which families are represented by the lions rampant? Which families are conjoined into this particular coat-of-arms? And then, of course, is there a link between these families and the family Sansone, whose coat-of-arms is, in fact, a lion resting on a transversely leaning column, surmounted by a baronial crown?

It is interesting that, further along the same street, stands a dilapidated building (Plate 1), opposite what looks like an ancient well-head (Plate 2) at the side of a modern Water Services station. Both these ancient buildings, together with the well-head, might possibly be part of a hamlet dating back to medieval times. They may, indeed, be connected to the nearby chapel of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuh which was, until the late 1590s 'one of the most important places of worship in Malta', to quote Farrugia Randon (2013).

A close look at the righthand side of this escutcheon led me to observe that it was very similar to that of the *Maltese* family.

According to Mugnos (1655), the appellation *Maltese* was acquired as nickname by the Timera family from Castrogiovanni, one of whom, Leodorigi Timera, was sent by the Norman kings to administer Malta at a date which has not been established. It would be idle conjecture to equate Timera with Paolino de Malta, proctor in Malta for Frederick II 1239-1240, especially as scholars like Luttrell (1975) and Dalli (2006) do not make this equivalence.

In an interview with Fiona Vella in 2009 Emanuel Maltese Trigona, one of the owners of Villa Trigona near Enna, refers to the fact that his father's surname, Maltese, is said to have been derived from that of an ancestor by name Timera who, after serving as governor of Malta, returned to Sicily and was given the nickname Maltese which eventually became his surname.

While the *Maltese* coat-of-arms (Figure 2) seems identical with the righthand carving on the Gudja escutcheon, the Timera coat-of-arms (Figure 3) is somewhat different from the lion leaning against what seems to be a palm tree that appears on the left side of the escutcheon.

Should any of our readers be in a position to shed more light on this subject, please contact the author on psansone@maltanet.net



Figure 1. Sansone coat-of-arms



Plate 1. Dilapidated building on Triq Gudja (photo: the author)



Plate 2. Possible ancient well head (photo: the author)



Figure 2. Coat-of-arms of the Maltese family



Figure 3. Timera coat-of-arms

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Social Services in the times of the Knights of St John

Joe Azzopardi



Under the rule of the Order of the Knights of St John, Malta became a cosmopolitan centre of political, religious, military and commercial standing. This not only brought to our shores huge numbers of individuals who sought to make a living out of all this activity but also had an impact on the social set-up of the local population, affecting patterns of settlement, living conditions and outlook on life.

Most of the activity was concentrated in the towns surrounding Grand Harbour. This meant that the poor and the wealthy, the noble and the commoners, the sick and the healthy, were never physically too far removed from one another. During this period, the population of Malta increased from about 25,000 to 114,000.¹ Of this 114,000, 75,000 lived in the countryside and the remaining 39,000 lived in the overcrowded towns surrounding Grand Harbour.²

Such a multifaceted social set-up produced wealth, but also misery. However, the era was also characterised by a changing attitude regarding the dignity of man which, in turn, created the impetus towards an upgrading of the standard of living of all sectors of society. This, combined with the charitable precepts ingrained within the all-pervading Catholic culture and the Statute of the Order, fostered initiatives aimed at assisting the weakest members of society.

Hospitals as social welfare centres

Being a hospitaller order, the Knights were obliged to provide hospitals and their considerable economic resources ensured that these were of the highest standard. Upon its arrival in Malta

The Great Hall of the Sacra Infermeria

Allegory of the hospitaller role of the Order of St. John.

St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta

in 1530, the Order founded a hospital in Birgu.³ This, however, was by no means a novelty for the Islands. St Francis' Hospital, later known as *Santo Spirito*, was already established in 1372.⁴ The 16th century also witnessed the establishment of St Julian's Hospital which provided services in Gozo,⁵ although the records of the visit by the Apostolic Delegate Mgr Duzina in 1575 state that St Julian's Hospital had been turned into a prison.⁶

Far from being places solely for the treatment of the sick, hospitals were also centres for the provision of welfare assistance. The *Sacra Infermeria* (Holy Infirmary) in Valletta, established in 1575, dispensed the staple food of all ages – bread – and also soup to the poor and infirm of the city. Largesse from its accounts was also disbursed as monthly allowances to the blind, lame and leprous. Help to elderly men was given either as financial handouts or in the form of access to the one of the *letti perpetui* (perpetual beds) in the *Sacra Infermeria*.⁷ The records show that in 1776 there were 50 such beds used for this purpose.⁸

The *Ospidaletto* or *Casetta Delle Donne* (Women's Hospital), also in Valletta, was established in 1659 by Grand Master Martin de Redin. This was the successor of a small house known as 'Santa Maria della Scala', endowed in 1625 by Caterina Scappi — for the care of poor, infirm women but which closed after the death of its founder in 1655.⁹ Apart from offering medical assistance, the administrators of the Casetta also sought to help indigent women and issued 160 loaves of bread daily. Additional loaves were distributed to the homes of poor and infirm women in the Grand Harbour area towns. By 1771, over





*Monumental gate at
Mistra carrying the
coat-of-arms of the
Monte De Redenzione
degli Schiavi*

880 loaves of bread were being distributed daily by four women called *pitanziere* (alms-givers). These were employed by the *Ospidaletto* and delivered not only bread but also medicine and items of bedding distributed by this institution, together with money granted to the same unfortunate women by the Treasury of the Order.¹⁰

Between the 16th and 18th centuries, such institutions multiplied. A list of hospitals, together with their capacity, was prepared by a Dr Vincenzo Caruana 1798. This comprised:

The *Sacra Infermeria* in Valletta – 400 beds for males

*Santo Spirito Hospital
main courtyard*

The *Ospidaletto* or *Casetta Delle Donne* in Valletta – 160 beds for females

Santo Spirito Hospital in Rabat – 40 beds

Ta' Saura Hospital in Rabat (established 1667) – 80 beds for both males and females

St Joseph's Hospital in Żebbuġ (established 1778) – 15 beds for females

The Ospizio in Floriana (established 1732) – 280 beds for the elderly, both male and female

St John's Hospital Rabat (Gozo) (established 1719) – 20 beds for males

St Julian's Hospital in Rabat (Gozo) (established 1782) – 50 beds for females.¹¹

Caring for infants and children

Children, particularly unwanted ones, were possibly the most vulnerable members of society. Malnutrition led to very high mortality rates amongst children who were weak or poorly developed. Smallpox and other diseases, as well as particularly cold winters, caused the death of many children.¹² Care for children in need goes hand in hand with the institution of medical services and the establishment of hospitals, from which it was usually dispensed. There were rare instances across Europe of separate institutions functioning exclusively as orphanages.

In Malta the situation was no different. *Santo Spirito* hospital received unwanted babies and took care of their upbringing. These could be left anonymously through a revolving contraption called a *ruota* (wheel).¹³ A similar arrangement was





Santo Spirito

in operation at the *Sacra Infermeria*. Specific areas were reserved for the rearing of such unwanted children.¹⁴ In many instances, the children were born out of wedlock. In a society dominated by such a rich, supposedly celibate, elite order of Knights, such occurrences were not rare. Illegitimacy was certainly common in the harbour area: the baptismal records of the parish church of Porto Salvo in Valletta include children left at the *Sacra Infermeria*. Between 1600 and 1613 these accounted for over 35 per cent of all children baptised in this parish.¹⁵

The Convent of St Ursola, as well as offering rudimentary relief services to the poor of the city, also functioned as an orphanage.¹⁶ The Valletta female hospital also included the *Casa delle Alunne* for illegitimate females.¹⁷ Babies taken in at the *Sacra Infermeria* were entrusted to the care of two women known as *ospetaliere*,¹⁸ while breast-feeding was done by *mammane* (wet-nurses). These were among the few women to be employed in this institution. By the end of the 18th century, over 200 such babies were received annually. Unfortunately, only around 50 per cent survived their first year.¹⁹

Those who took it upon themselves to care for these children also sought to ensure that they were provided with a means of supporting themselves, once they reached adulthood. Boys were transferred to the care of the priest at Fort Ricasoli and often placed in workshops as apprentices by the age of eight.²⁰ This not only granted them the opportunity of future employment in a trade but, and possibly more importantly, access to a confraternity that could also provide assistance in old age.

On rare occasions, boys could also be adopted. Those responsible for children at the *Sacra Infermeria* considered requests from families deemed to be suitable to be entrusted with such children. The family would raise the child and eventually adopt him or her. These families were bound to care for

the child in all its needs while enjoying the right to profit from the personal service of the child until it reached adulthood.²¹

Girls had to wait until their 20th birthday before being offered employment, often as servants with rich families or as attendants in the Women's Hospital.²² In 1569, the *Monte di Carità* was set up to enable the endowment of poor orphan girls and provide them with a dowry of 25 *scudi*, thus enabling them to be married. The dowry was also meant to provide a good start to the new family.

In 1734, a sort of trade school for girls was established in Floriana, close to the *ospizio*, in the building that is now the police headquarters. This was funded by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena and was known as the *Conservatorio del Gran Maestro*. It housed 131 girls cared for by eight women.²³ There were another two similar institutions: the *Conservatorio del Prior* and the *Conservatorio del Padre Agius*, located in Cospicua, which welcomed orphan girls. The earliest records regarding the one in Cospicua date back to 1710, while the *Conservatorio del Prior* was founded in 1606. This was specifically intended for young women from morally questionable backgrounds, such as the daughters of prostitutes or girls at risk of entering that profession. At the end of the 18th century these three *conservatori* housed 60 girls between them.²⁴

Women

Another vulnerable group were women, particularly widows. Assistance to sick women, women deemed unfit for work, women abandoned by their husbands, widows and those who were old and infirm, was also provided by the *Università* (Municipality) of Mdina in the form of financial assistance. This municipal assistance was extended to those living within the area from Dingli to Naxxar.²⁵

The greatest risk to women, however, was always that of having to resort to prostitution to make a living. Certainly, the living conditions in the harbour area were more conducive to such a course in the life of women. One of the most common reasons was that the husband, often a foreigner, left and never returned. The women could not re-marry and employment was scarce, so many turned to prostitution in order to survive. According to the *Status Animarum* of the parish of Porto Salvo compiled in 1667, there were 165 females in the parish who lived as *donne pubbliche*. This amounted to eight per cent of the entire female population of the parish.²⁶

To address this issue the *Asilo delle Repentite* was established in 1595. The repentant women, actually repentant prostitutes, were prepared by the nuns for either marriage or a religious life. In 1609, the Asylum was placed under the charge of the Franciscan nuns of St Mary Magdalene and became known as The Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena. It was partly funded through tax on wine imports and a tax, amounting to one-fifth, on the inheritance of deceased prostitutes.²⁷

The elderly

Old age, for those who reached it, was not a happy prospect. Once a person became unfit for work, he or she had probably to resort to begging to survive in a world without pensions. To address this problem, the *Ospizio* or *Casa di Carità* was opened in 1729 in Floriana. It soon became evident that it was insufficient and a new building was funded in 1732 by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena. This housed 380 individuals annually.²⁸

Ta' Saura Hospital, founded in 1667 by Dr Nicholas Saura, also aimed to provide care for the elderly. The regulations for the running of the hospice were laid down by Bishop Molina in 1680. Further funds were donated by Rev. M. Azzopardi in 1762 and admission was opened to elderly priests from Żebbuġ and those giving service in Mdina Cathedral and St Paul's Church in Rabat.²⁹

Coping with crises

Population increases and natural phenomena such as droughts or crop failures could give rise to sudden crises and put huge pressure on local supplies, thus fuelling inflation which, in turn, increased poverty. The municipal authorities sought to keep the price of basic foods such as bread, wine, oil and cheese stable and affordable.³⁰ Try as they may, however, malnutrition was among the main causes of death.

Other causes were poor living conditions and inadequate sanitary arrangements caused by sudden increases in population density in particular areas. The situation was not helped by the limited, and often compromised, water supply. Abuse of the water supply was widespread, with people using drinkable water to wash clothing and water animals, thus contaminating the supply. Regular *bandi* were issued to try and curb such abuse.

In 1656 a marked increase in the presence of beggars on the streets was recorded. Moved both by charitable pity and also by the implied risk to the security of the island, the government established the *Congregazione dei Poveri Mendicanti* under the direction of Nicholas Cotoner (then Bailiff of Majorca).³¹ Funds to assist these beggars were raised by the imposition of a special tax on tobacco. A recommendation to allow beggars access to the help provided by the *Congregazione dei Poveri Mendicanti* had to be issued by a physician and the parish priest.³²

Furthermore, begging became subject to the issue of a licence and beggars had to present a medical certificate attesting to their inability to work due to disabilities such as blindness, missing limbs or old age. A declaration from the parish priest stating the beggar's age, the extent of poverty and honesty were also required.³³ In an attempt to remove beggars from the streets, Nicolas Cotoner, upon his election to the position of Grand Master, provided a place in which they could be accommodated.

Conclusion

A point that emerges strongly from the above is that any 'social services' that existed in the era of the Knights resulted not from any systematic state programme but from the charity of rich benefactors, initiatives undertaken by the Catholic Church or, occasionally, the foresight of individual members of the government. In such a context, funding was often sporadic and thus charitable institutions were often vulnerable. However, the Hospitaller element in the Order's make-up, and the integration of the Order and the State in the local context, made a considerable difference to the standard of such 'services' in Malta which were at a par with – and in some instances – better than in the rest of Europe. This ensured that the greater part of the population could at least aspire to the basic necessities of life – be it food, shelter or medical care.

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A Token of Appreciation for Patricia Salomone



Patricia Salomone has been Council Member and Communications Officer of *Din l-Art Helwa* for the past seven years, giving her time and energy enthusiastically to *Din l-Art Helwa*. Her vivacious character was infectious, and she instilled passion and dedication into every project she embarked on, never shying back from any task. Whether it was decorating our HQ, organising art exhibitions, writing, appearing on tv and radio or co-ordinating a restoration project, Pat did it all with elegance and efficiency, and it is also thanks to her drive that the Sarria paintings restoration is nearing the end. She was also a team player, and many will fondly count her as a dear friend, even after her resignation in December 2017. She said that she was doing this with a heavy heart, but her family duties were making many demands of her. We all thank Patricia for what she has done, and for being part of *Din l-Art Helwa*, knowing that she will be there if we needed her.

A Token of Appreciation for Joseph Chetcuti



Everyone will know Joe as the photographer at every *Din l-Art Helwa* event, recording the many activities and wonderful occasions held year in year out. In fact, he is one of the longest standing Council Members, having joined the Council in 2002 and actively giving his service even at the office on a weekly basis, where he is much needed. Joe will be very much missed, but after fifteen years of dedicated contribution to the *Din l-Art Helwa* Council, it is with regret that he has decided to step down. He is an example of true volunteership, with commitment to a cause, and the spirit to see it through. We are very appreciative of all that Joe has done over these years, and thank him for it. I would also like to thank Joe for deciding to continue volunteering at the office for as long as he can.

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