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**DIN L-ART HELWA**

*National Trust of Malta*



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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:

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**The National Trust for Scotland**

**The Barbados National Trust**

**The National Trust of Australia**

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**The National Federation of  
NGOs of Malta**

**The Heritage Parks  
Federation**

**Qantara**

**Future for Religious Heritage  
Association**

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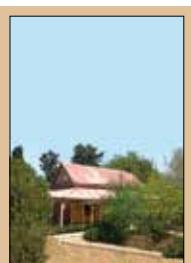
## FRONT COVER

*Majjistral in Spring the N.W. Nature and History Park, photo: Mario Mizzi (panoramio.com)*



## BACK COVER

*The 'Australian' Bungalow, circa 1920 perhaps the only surviving example of a training centre for people intending to migrate to Australia, a new restoration project for Din l-Art Helwa Photo: Martin Scicluna, Hon. Treasurer of Din l-Art Helwa*



# Notopia

## Alex Torpiano

*Popular misunderstandings of one sort and another - of the consequence of capitalism and vulgarizations, of the concept of democracy - have led the public to kick against the principle of land planning. Belief in trickle-down economics has likewise led us to tolerate every kind of abuse in the name of attracting financial investment... The deeper issue, aside from how these towers look, is the no-places created on the ground. One building next to another does not make a place, and many buildings do not make a city. ...The cure is to adopt a new approach to modern planning.*



Rural heritage overwhelmed at Manikata

*speed it up, not check it. The planning offensive was started in a mood of idealism that assumed two things: that rules would be used flexibly and intelligently, and that private developers would build according to the needs of local people. Now the tail is wagging the dog and developers are building for the needs of offshore account-holders and money launderers.*

I must confess that these are not really my words. They are taken from an editorial by Christine Murray in one of series of issues of *The Architectural Review* in June 2016. The author is not referring to Malta, is she? She is referring to a type of city, which the AR then called Notopia, (or, alternatively, “the selfish city”).

Do these words apply to Malta? Is Malta becoming Notopia?

As in Notopia, the planning system in Malta is not delivering urban spaces that guarantee us a quality of life into the future. We need to acknowledge that, effectively, we do not have a spatial planning system, understood as a process that directs the inevitable changes in national economic activity and demography – because change there must be – whilst ensuring that the Malta that we leave for our children is a place that is still worth living in. The process of planning has been so undermined that, in the public perception, and, worse, in the minds of politicians, planning is assumed to mean either the preparation of grand masterplans, or even merely the processing of development applications. There is no planning thought process in Malta that can balance development against the quality of our urban and natural environment.

The political resolve to set up proper planning processes, in the 1980s, was gradually weakened, over a number of successive legislatures, possibly as a result of a political reluctance to let go of a system of patronage that is engrained in our social fabric. Private interests continue to prevail over the common good, and

eventually over the national interest.

For example, in 2015, the petrol station relocation policy emphasized the benefit to residential areas, if petrol stations were relocated out of such areas to the periphery. Naively, or incompetently, the Planning Authority did not envisage that there would be a significant uptake of this policy. But, it did not require Nostradamus to predict that an entrepreneur would prefer the option of giving up a sole (barely functional) petrol pump in the middle of a village for permission to develop a 3000sq.m. site outside development limits, along major highways, with the potential of adding car-wash, eateries, and even offices. It had to be the collective outcry of NGOs that struck a chord with the general public that led politicians, reluctantly to ask the Planning Authority to review the policy. In the meantime, however, the approval of “relocated” petrol stations continued at a frenetic pace, before mounting public pressure would finally force the policy to be repealed. It is telling that the Minister responsible for the Planning Authority actually declared that it was not possible to simply dump the policy in order to “appease the public”; it seems that it was preferred to let the policy drag on in order to appease the entrepreneurs.

Din l-Art Helwa, the National Trust of Malta, was established in 1965 in reaction to a phase of transformation of Malta, from a military base economy into a modern nation, with its need for new factories, hotels and offices. As had happened in other countries, the rapid pace of development, with new building typologies, and with a mushrooming dependence on road transport, threatened the fabric of our towns and villages, and the loss of heritage buildings. Planning processes, or, more correctly, processes for awarding building permits were rather weak.

Din l-Art Helwa was set up to defend the island from over-development, the loss of built heritage and natural assets, and to ensure that the character of this “fair” land, of which our ancestors were justifiably proud – and which has also made our economic fortune – was not lost as a result of short-sighted greed.

The argument has often been – and is being repeated by our politicians today – that economic survival requires economic development, and hence change. Resistance to change is considered as reactionary, nostalgic, and ultimately inhibits prosperity. This is a fallacious approach, for a number of reasons. Firstly, and in order to counter hard-nosed economists, one could present an economic argument for preserving built and natural assets. Our country will never become a manufacturing powerhouse. Its primary resource, since Independence, has been the tourism industry. If Gozo shed its “sleepy” and “isolated” character, and became similar to Malta, the question would be why people would



Mercury Tower  
disproportionately straddling heritage



*Mercury Tower,  
disrespect for heritage*

wish to visit Gozo. Equally, if Malta were to become Dubai, why would visitors come here and not go to Dubai?

A second flourishing industry is the services one. This industry needs to attract foreign experts to live and work in Malta. The aesthetic quality of our urban and natural environment, and the overall quality of life, is a primary factor in such attractiveness.

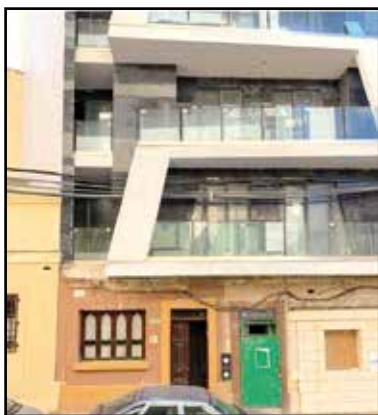
This is not to suggest that the protection of our cultural and natural heritage serves only to attract visitors. The most important need for a different approach to the protection of our built and natural environment is the well-being of Malta and Gozo's inhabitants. This well-being can be undermined by tangible issues such as air pollution, but also by the impact on mental health.

I do not subscribe to the mantra that is currently making the rounds, namely that now people are richer, and that they now wish to think about open spaces, or family parks, to relax in. This suggests that it is acceptable that we brutalise the places where we live and work, as long as, on the weekend, we can go (drive) to a "green" park to unwind. It misses the point that a proper quality of the environment, built as well as natural, is required wherever we work and live.

The role of Din l-Art Helwa, as National Trust of Malta, over the last half century, has been two-fold. Din l-Art Helwa has taken the lead in restoring, preserving, managing and show-casing iconic buildings that had hitherto been abandoned, such as our

rural medieval chapels, or fortification towers, or even green areas, such as the Majjistral Park. It rallied like-minded people to roll up their sleeves to do something about this abandonment. It pioneered the concept of NGO guardianship, to leverage private funds towards these objectives. This role has been an example for other NGOs who sprang up at a later stage, and even for the very setting up of Heritage Malta,

as the national agency to look after our iconic monuments. In addition, Din l-Art Helwa continues to campaign for the protection of assets that remain under threat, such as the buffer zones around urban conservation areas, the skyline, the green lungs within our built areas. This is almost a thankless, but vital role, since, in a situation where planning processes are weak, and heritage regulators under-resourced, it has practically become the responsibility of Din l-Art Helwa, and sister NGOs, to continuously, and at great cost, scan applications for development,



*Hybrid design smothers  
traditional building*

present objections in front of the planning commissions, mount appeals where policies are abused, and even take court action to get the Planning Authority to obey the law.

Din l-Art Helwa, and other NGOs, receive a regular stream of complaints and alerts from the general public; it is now *expected* that Din l-Art Helwa takes up the cudgels for all these situations, something it cannot do because of its limited resources. The authorities should acknowledge that the reason why Din l-Art Helwa, and other NGOs, are inundated by complaints is that people have lost trust in the institutions that are statutorily bound to protect our built and natural heritage, in the interest of the common good. Din l-Art Helwa continues to strive to raise awareness of the environmental problems the country faces.

Perhaps we ought to find solace that, in the run-up to the 2019 EP election, *all political leaders acknowledged that the environment of Malta is in poor shape; and promised to take action to do better* (they did not acknowledge that it was largely their fault!). Unless this was pre-electoral chit chat, can we now look forward to some deep strategic changes?

**TIMES OF MALTA**  
Thursday, May 16, 2016 | 41

## Environment a failing, Prime Minister admits

The PN has 'lost itself'

INIAN MARTIN

The government had not been an "environmentalists" as it should have been, with regard to the environment, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said yesterday.

He admitted, perhaps in the sincerest way to date, that the environment was not a priority when asked about concerns over overdevelopment during a TV debate with opposition leader Adrian Delia.

Asked from the environment, abortion and migration were among the issues raised during the debate, which took place before shadow cabinet yesterday's conclusion.

Can we dare hope, for example, that the role of NGOs in protecting the built and natural heritage be recognized as a legitimate juridical interest – and that the Planning Authority will be stopped from repeatedly pleading, in the court cases that NGOs have brought against it, that NGOs have no juridical interest in the outcomes of bad planning decisions. Can we dare hope that that the terrible damage caused to our towns and villages by the policy of allowing five-storey development where local plans previously allowed three stories, could be reversed? Can we dare hope that the petrol relocation policy would be repealed immediately? Can we dare hope that scheduling of important built and natural assets, proposed by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, or Environmental Resources Authority, would not be over-ruled by the development lobby via the Planning Authority? Can we dare hope that our country could adopt an Architectural Policy that would promote good quality development, and not development that simply ticked the boxes, in the rules prepared by Planning Authority? Can we dare hope that the planning process will develop from a legalistic procedure, into one that promoted the production of beauty and quality? As the Chairman of an important 1968 symposium said when he was introducing Judge Caruana Curran as a speaker, "what we need in town planning is judgement, not justice."

# Din l-Art Helwa's New Council 2019 - 2021

## PROFESSOR ALEX TORPIANO IS THE NEW HEAD OF DIN L-ART HELWA

Professor Alex Torpiano has been appointed the new Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa. Following the organisation's Annual General Meeting in February, members elected the new Council and the officials who are to lead the voluntary heritage and environment NGO into 2021. Simone Mizzi has been appointed Hon. Secretary General, and Martin Scicluna, former head of Wealth Management at HSBC, has been reappointed as Hon. Treasurer.

The new council members are Joseph Attard, Professor Anthony Bonanno, George Camilleri, Maria Grazia Cassar, Cettina Caruana Curran, Dr Petra Caruana Dingli, Elizabeth Cremona, Josie Ellul Mercer, Cathy Farrugia, Joseph Philip Farrugia, Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon, Martin Galea, Ann Gingell Littlejohn, Kenneth B Micallef, Professor Luciano Mulè Stagno, Perit Joanna Spiteri Staines. Professor Alex Torpiano, former president of the Kamra tal-Periti until last year and Dean of the Faculty for the Built Environment at the University of Malta, is the 8th Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa since it was founded by Judge Maurice Caruana Curran in 1965 to protect Malta's rich cultural heritage and the natural environment.



*Prof. Dr. Eur. Ing.*

**ALEX TORPIANO, B.E.&A.(Hons)**  
*(Melit.), MSc.(Lond), PhD(Bath),*  
*MIStructE, DIC, CEng, perit*



*Officials at the Annual General Meeting, Martin Scicluna Hon. Treasurer, outgoing officials Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President and Philip Mercieca, Hon. Secretary General at the end of their term of office*

Professor Alex Torpiano is an Architect and Structural Engineer by training. He is currently Dean of the Faculty for the Built Environment, and Head of the Department of Architecture and Urban Design. In 1994, he set up, and directed, the Institute for Masonry and Construction Research up to 2009, when it became the Department of Conservation and Built Heritage within the Faculty. He has had a long career in private practice, since 1988, when he set up what is now a leading architectural and structural engineering practice in Malta, TBA Periti, and between 2000 and 2012, when he led aoM partnership, a multi-disciplinary practice responsible for the Manoel Island and Tigne' Point Redevelopment Project. He has worked on many projects involving the restoration of heritage masonry structures, including Fort Manoel, Fort Tigne', Fort Cambridge, Fort Chambray, the Garden Battery in Tigne', Auberge de Provence, Bichi Palace, and the House of Catalunya, as well as on a number of local parish churches, and also on the Mnajdra, Hagar Qim and Ġgantija Prehistoric temples. At the University, he has also acted as Chairman of the International Institute of Baroque Studies, of the University of Malta. Between 1994 -1996, he was chairman of the Governing Board of the newly-set up Centre for Restoration Studies, and a member of the Board between 1999 and 2001. He was also Chairman of the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee between 1995-1996, and 2000-2001, and President of the Council of the Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers, between 1994 and 1996, Vice-President, between 2015 and 2017, and President, between 2017-2019.

# Heritage Protection in Action

## Maria Grazia Cassar

Unfortunately, it has become necessary to resort to litigation in court to defend heritage, and here is a brief update on recent actions taken by Din l-Art Helwa

### **St Ignatius Villa – St Julian’s**

Din l-Art Helwa has, on the 12th February 2019, been granted a favourable judgment from the Maltese Courts when seeking to obtain access to the architect’s report, upon which the Planning Authority based their decision to refuse to schedule St Ignatius Villa in St Julian’s. This came following our request, complete with extensive research compiled by Conservation Architect Edward Said, as to the historical, architectural and social significance of this villa, which is under threat of being demolished. The Environment and Planning Review Tribunal of the Planning Authority has also granted Din l-Art Helwa the right to appeal this refusal. The Planning Authority has since also lodged an appeal against these two judgements, and while the Court did not uphold the Planning Authority’s arguments, it did however raise ‘ex officio’ concerns regarding the fact that DLH does not constitute an ‘eligible person’ in terms of Article 2 of Chapter 496. Accordingly, it considered that, since only physical persons can be deemed to qualify under the relative definition and DLH is an NGO, the latter does not hold the right to request access to such information. It therefore ordered that the appeal be decided afresh by the Tribunal (this time to be presided by different members) such that the latter may now pronounce itself on both the preliminary plea in question as well as the merits of the appeal.

The Registrar of Court is also, at our behest, investigating the Planning Authority for contempt of court, following their inaction to stop the illegal demolition of one floor of part of St Ignatius Villa in December 2018.



Villa St Ignatius

### **DB Tower and City Centre on the former ITS Site, St George’s Bay**

Din l-Art Helwa, together with Swieqi, Pembroke and St Julian’s Local Councils, and other NGOs and residents also appealed the permission granted to build the City Centre and DB tower at St George’s Bay. The result of this appeal, which was determined last March, stipulated that the hotel was to be redesigned in parts, and receded from the bay, as well as reduced in height. The coalition of NGOs and Local Councils decided to pursue with further court action, namely a judicial review of the Planning Board’s decision, and an appeal from the decision of the Environmental and Planning Review Tribunal.

The recent discovery of a cold war underground bunker, in the area of the proposed project, has prompted a joint press release by several NGOs, including Din l-Art Helwa, calling on the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to issue an emergency conservation order on these heritage structures, and denouncing the “shoddy and negligent approach where all is fast-tracked and heritage is ignored so that it can more easily be destroyed”. In spite of this, demolition continued, and prompted a judicial protest against the Lands Authority, because it was in breach of the contract of emphytheusis entered into by the Government Property Department and DB San Gorg Limited, wherein it was stipulated that the Grade Two listed building which was the former ITS site was to be restored and not demolished. Works were stopped by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

On the 19th June 2019, the Court of Appeal found that Planning Board member Matthew Pace was in a position of a conflict of interest, with his real estate franchise selling parts of the development before the permit was granted. This led to the Planning Board’s decision of 20th September 2018 to be annulled, and the permit declared null and void.

## The Gozo-Malta Tunnel

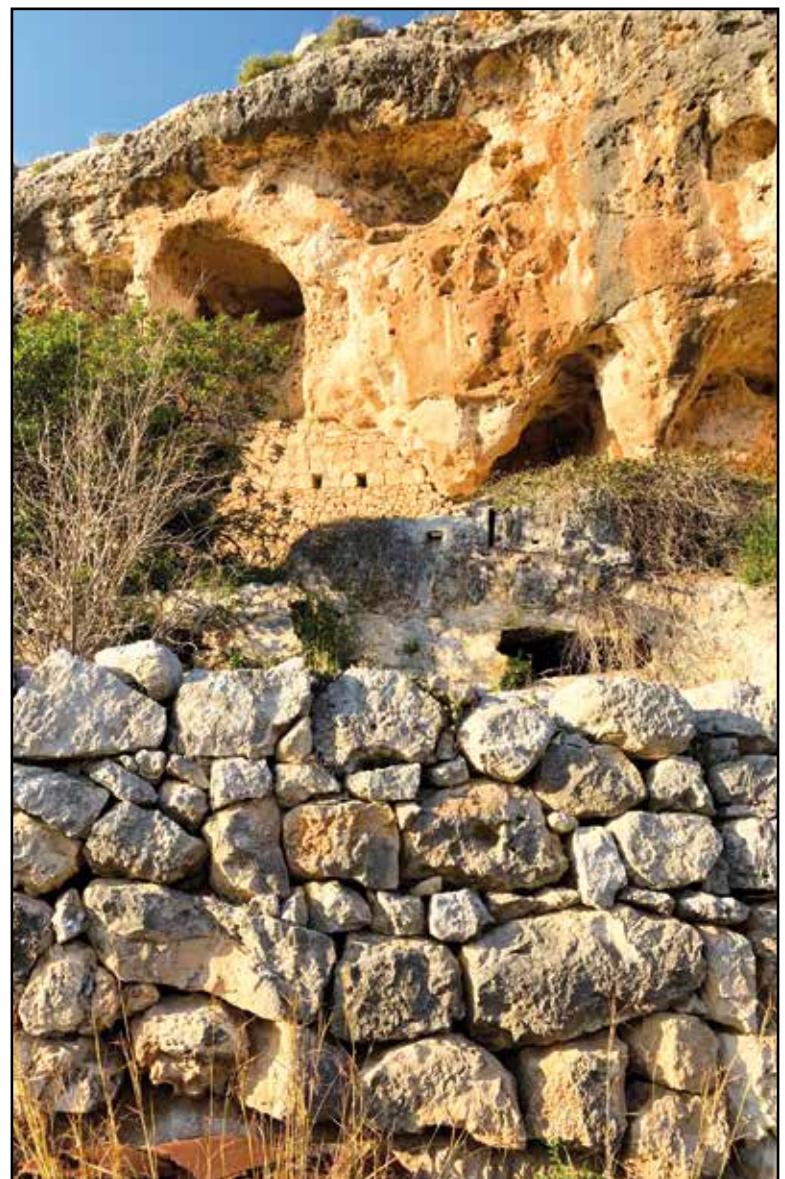
Joint action with other NGOs has also led to the filing of a judicial letter asking that all the studies be made public, as well as the mandatory Strategic Environmental Assessment, before decisions are taken with regards to the Gozo-Malta Tunnel. This followed a press conference held outside Parliament on March 9th, where representatives from a coalition of NGOs gathered and were spoken for by Ingram Bondin and Julia Camilleri, in no uncertain terms. Din l-Art Helwa also participated in the conference organised by Wirt Ghawdex on March 18th and was attended by Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon and Maria Grazia Cassar.

## Fuel Stations Policy

Moviment Graffitti staged a six day protest last March, symbolically besieging the Planning Authority by camping outside, and Din l-Art Helwa expressed their full support for their cause. They called on the Authorities to speed up the implementation of the new Fuel Stations Policy which has been more than a year in its final stages, and yet, permits were still being granted under the current one which allowed the take-up of 3,000 square metres of ODZ land. On Sunday 31st March, Council Member Stanley Farrugia Randon took part in a press conference outside the Planning Authority where he joined five other NGOs to speak about the senselessness of delaying the new fuel station policy, with a special emphasis on the effects of car emissions on health. Din l-Art Helwa also issued a press release condemning the approval of yet another new petrol station in Burmarrad in April.



*Cold War bunker entrance at the former its site*



*L-Imbordin: these troglodytic dwellings are at risk if the Gozo tunnel exits/enters here  
photo: Ann Gingell Littlejohn*

*Maria Grazia Cassar is immediate Past President of Din l-Art Helwa and a Council Member.*

# Resolutions taken by the General Assembly in February 2019

At Din l-Art Helwa's Annual General Meeting earlier this year, members voiced their concerns unanimously about the rampant development and unbridled construction which are taking their toll negatively on our natural environment, creating unpleasing visual amenities and having a negative effect on the quality of life. Resolutions were passed which we reproduce here for Vigilo. Din l-Art Helwa's environment and heritage protection team continue to campaign and lobby on the same issues and many articles were published in the media which are worthy of recording for our members in this edition.



*Din l-Art Helwa*

## ***RESOLUTIONS APPROVED DURING THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF DIN L-ART HELWA ON 23RD FEBRUARY, 2019, AT 133 MELITA STREET, VALLETTA AT 11 AM***

### ***RIŽOLUZZJONI JIET APPROVATI FIL-LAQGħA ĢENERALI TA' DIN L-ART HELWA, IT-23 TA' FRAR, 2019, F'133, TRIQ MELITA, VALLETTA, FIL-11 AM***

#### **RESOLUTION TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE AT LAW**

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa held at 133, Melita Street, Valletta on 23 February 2019, that, whereas a revision of the Constitution of Malta is currently being discussed, Civil Society be consulted on the concept of the inter-generational right of enjoyment of the nation's cultural and natural heritage assets, its artistic patrimony and its landscape, and that this concept be enshrined as an enforceable obligation within the new Constitution. In addition, Din l-Art Helwa would like to see supporting legislation that follows from this obligation, that defines strict parameters for holistic national plans to balance development and the protection of the environment and heritage assets. Din l-Art Helwa emphasises that this would only be a first step towards finding a sustainable balance between development and the protection of our built, artistic and natural heritage, without which balance the right of both current and future generations to an equitable enjoyment of these assets cannot be safeguarded.

#### **RESOLUTION URGING THE PLANNING AUTHORITY TO FULFILL THE ROLE FOR WHICH IT WAS CREATED**

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa held at 133, Melita Street, Valletta on 23 February 2019, that the Planning Authority urgently reviews its approach to planning to fulfil the purpose for which it was created, which is that it assesses requests for development against a well-thought out vision for Malta, rather than meekly reacting to developers' grand proposals. Din l-Art Helwa urges the Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects and the Planning Authority to update its planning tools, and to define strict land use policies with the revision of the Local Plans which protect our built and natural heritage. The Local Plan revisions have been on the

#### **RIŽOLUZZJONI BIEX TISSAHHAH IL- PROTEZZJONI TAL-WIRT KULTURALI U NATURALI FIL-LIĞI**

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2019, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li waqt li qegħdha tīgi diskussa reviżjoni fil-Kostituzzjoni ta' Malta, is-Socjetà Ċivili għandha tīgi kkonsultata fuq il-kunċett tad-dritt ta' tgawdija tal-wirt kulturali u naturali, il-patrimonju artistiku u l-pajżagg Malti, li għandhom jibqgħu jitgawdew minn ġenerazzjoni għall-ohra, u dawn il-kunċetti għandhom jiġu integrati u nfurzati fil-kostituzzjoni l-ġidida. Barra minn hekk Din l-Art Helwa tixtieq tara ligijiet li johorġu minn dan l-obbligu, u li jiddefenixxu b'mod preċiż il-parametri għal pjanijiet nazzjonali olisti biex ikun hemm aktar bilanċ bejn l-iżvilupp u l-protezzjoni tal-ambjent u tal-wirt kulturali. Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li dan huwa biss l-ewwel pass biex jinstab bilanċ bejn l-iżvilupp u l-protezzjoni tal-wirt mibni, kif ukoll tal-wirt artistiku u naturali għaliex mingħajr dan il-bilanċ il-ġenerazzjonijiet futuri ma jkunux jistgħu igawdu minn dawn il-beni.

#### **RIŽOLUZZJONI BIEX THEĞġEġ L-AWTORITÀ TAL-IPPJANAR BIEX TAQDI R-RWOL LI GHALIH ġIET IMWAQQFA**

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2019, Din l-Art Helwa theggieg lil Awtorita` tal-Ippjanar biex tirrevedi b'mod urgenti l-mod tif thares lejn l-ippjanar u biex twettaq dak li għalih għiet imwaqqfa, u li teżamina t-talbiet għal žvilupp fl-isfond ta' viżjoni studjata għal Malta, u mhux taġixxi biss fuq dak li jkunu qegħdin jipproponu l-iżviluppaturi. Din l-Art Helwa theggieg il-Ministeru tat-Trasport, Infrastruttura u Progetti Kapitali kif ukoll l-Awtorità tal-Ippjanar biex iġeddu l-ghoddha ta' ppjanar, u biex ifasslu politika čara u definita fuq l-užu tal-art biex

agenda for a very long time but have not yet been published. Din l-Art Helwa is not against development, but it demands sustainable development which valorises Malta's urban, natural and cultural heritage assets, and does not sweep them aside. If Malta is to create the urban heritage of the future and protect open space, it needs good and intelligent planning now, and not simply a vote for or against developers' proposals.

jiġu reveduti l-pjani lokali li jipproteġu l-wirt mibni u naturali. L-agenda biex dawn il-pjani lokali jiġu reveduti ilha hafna zmien fuq il-mejda u r-riżultati għadhom ma ġewx ippublikati. Din l-Art Helwa mhix kontra l-iżvilupp, iżda trid li jsir żvilupp sostenibbli li huwa sensittiv għall-valur tal-wirt urban, naturali u kulturali ta' Malta u ma tinjorhomx. Jekk Malta għandha tfassal il-wirt urban għall-futur u tipproteġi l-postijiet miftuha, għandha bżonn ippjanar tajjeb u għaqli issa, u mhux kemm tivvota favur jew kontra dak li jridu l-iżviluppaturi.

## **RESOLUTION REQUESTING BEST OPTIONS BE SOUGHT FOR A MALTA-GOZO PERMANENT LINK**

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa held at 133, Melita Street, Valletta on 23 February 2019 that, while it agrees that connectivity between Malta and Gozo should be increased, and that a permanent all-weather link is desirable, it urges the Government of Malta to explore all options before forging ahead with a subsea road tunnel which will produce vast amounts of waste and destroy large stretches of pristine land in Malta and Gozo. All solutions should be explored in a transparent and rational manner which will lead to the best choice that can be of benefit to all.

## **RIŻOLUZZJONI LI THEĞġEġ BIEK JINSTAB L-AHJAR MOD TA' TRASPORT BEJN MALTA U GHAWDEX**

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2019, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li waqt li taqbel li għandu jkun hemm titjib fit-trasport bejn Malta u Ghawdex, u li jkun aktar adattat għal kull tip ta' kundizzjonijiet ta' bahar, theggieg il-Gvern ta' Malta li għandu jistudja l-alternattivi kollha qabel ma jagħżel li ssir minn taħt il-bahar, li se tipprodu ħafna skart u tirrovina ħafna art mhux żviluppata f'Malta u f'Għawdex. Is-soluzzjonijiet kollha għandhom jiġu kkonsidrati b'mod trasparenti u razzjonali biex tinstab l-ahjar għażla għal kullhadd.

## **RESOLUTION TO PROTECT THE COAST AND FORESHORE FROM LAND RECLAMATION**

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa held at 133, Melita Street, Valletta on 23 February 2019, that whereas the Environment and Resources Authority is evaluating Land Reclamation Projects and their location, Din l-Art Helwa warns of the tremendous environmental impact on the seabed and irreversible negative consequence on the natural coastline that these will bring. Din l-Art Helwa urges the Environment Ministry and the Environment Resources Authority to ensure that land reclamation is not adopted as a de facto means of disposing of construction waste, and to take urgent measures and give direction by which reduction, re-use, and re-cycling of this waste becomes practice to avoid this vicious circle of destruction.

## **RIŻOLUZZJONI BIEK TIġI PROTETTA L-KOSTA MIR-REKLAMAZZJONI TAL-ART**

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2019, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li waqt li l-Awtorita` tal-Ambjent u Rizorsi qeqħdha tistudja progetti għar-reklamazzjoni tal-art u l-post adattat għal dan, Din l-Art Helwa twissi li dan iwassal għal īsara ambjentali kbira ħafna f'qiegħ il-bahar u fuq il-kosta naturali. Din l-Art Helwa theggieg il-Ministeru tal-Ambjent u l-Awtorită tal-Ambjent u Rizorsi biex ma jqisux ir-reklamazzjoni tal-art bhala mezz normali biex jiġi ddepożitat l-iskart tal-bini, u theggieg li jittieħdu miżuri b'mod urġenti biex dan l-iskart jonqos, jerġa' jintuża u jiġi rriċiklat u b'hekk ma nidħlux f'ċirku vizzjuż ta' qerda.

## **RESOLUTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND URBAN CONSERVATION AREAS THROUGH THE CREATION OF BUFFER ZONES**

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa held at 133, Melita Street, Valletta on 23 February 2019, that as per UNESCO guidelines on the protection of heritage, that the protection of the "surroundings" of the inscribed properties will be considered an essential component of the conservation strategy for cultural and heritage sites. Din l-Art Helwa calls on the Planning Authority, in line with the main thrusts of both the Structure Plan for Environment and Development and Policy DC15, to issue a generic adoption of concentric buffer zones around scheduled buildings and urban conservation areas. Din l-Art Helwa is increasingly concerned about the ruination of the context of our historic buildings by the lack of sensitive planning and by development in the immediate precincts of such buildings.

## **RIŻOLUZZJONI DWAR IL-PROTEZZJONI TA' BINI STORIKU U ŻONI URBANI PERMEZZ TA' HOLQIEN TA' ŻONI TA' PROTEZZJONI MADWARHOM**

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2019, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li skont il-linji gwida tal-UNESCO dwar il-protezzjoni tal-wirt, l-istess protezzjoni tal-madwar tal-postijiet ikkonċernati għandu jkun komponent essenzjali fl-istratgeġja tal-konservazzjoni ta' dawn il-postijiet ta' wirt kulturali. Din l-Art Helwa titlob lil Awtorită tal-Ippjanar biex, skont id-direzzjoni principali kemm tal-Pjan Strutturali għall-Ambjent u l-Iżvilupp u d-DC15, jaddottaw b'mod ġeneriku l-harsien ta' żoni ta' madwar bini skedat kif ukoll madwar żoni ta' konservazzjoni urbani. It-thassib ta' Din l-Art Helwa qiegħed dejjem jiżdied minħabba r-rovina talk-kuntest li fihom il-postijiet storiċi nbnew, u dan minħabba nuqqas ta' ppjanar li mhux sensittiv biżżejjed lejn dawn il-binjet.

## RESOLUTION TO PROTECT WELL-BEING AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa held at 133 Melita Street, Valletta on 23 February 2019 that, while our islands are experiencing economic growth, this is accompanied by a marked reduction in the quality of life and general health of citizens. Din l-Art Helwa asks Health and Planning Authorities to recognise that, with an island that is now over-populated, there is a surge in air pollution mostly due to increased car emissions and construction dust, and urges them to take remedial action. Health professionals and medicinal companies have noticed an unprecedented increase in allergies such as asthma, rhinitis, hay fever and even more serious illnesses caused by pollution. The well-being of the islands' inhabitants and their quality of life, based on a healthy environment, should be given priority over economic growth.

## RIŽOLUZZJONI FUQ IL-PROTEZZJONI TA' HAJJA B'SAHHITHA U L-KWALITÀ TAL-HAJJA

B'riżoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-23 ta' Frar 2019, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li waqt li l-gżejjjer tagħna qegħdin igawdu minn żvilupp ekonomiku qawwi, dan qiegħed ukoll iwassal għal tnaqqis fil-kwalità tal-hajja u s-sahħha taċ-ċittadini. Din l-Art Helwa titlob lill-awtoritajiet tas-sahħha u l-ippjanar biex jirrikonoxxi li minħabba li l-gżejjjer huma ppopolati aktar milli jifilhu, it-tniggiż tal-arja qiegħed jiżdied l-aktar minħabba d-dħahen tal-karozzi u t-trab li ġej mill-kostruzzjoni, u titlobhom biex jieħdu azzjoni biex jirrimedjaw din is-sitwazzjoni. It-tobba u l-kumpaniji tal-mediċini qegħdin jinnutaw zieda qawwija ħafna bla preċedent f'allergiji bħall-ażma, rinite, hay fever u mard iehor aktar serju kkawżat mit-tnejgiż tal-arja. Is-sahħha taċ-ċittadini ta' Malta u l-kwalita` tal-hajja tagħhom li tiddependi fuq ambjent nadif għandu jkun aktar importanti mill-iżvilupp ekonomiku.

## RAPPORTEURS NEEDED TO HELP PROTECT HERITAGE

Everywhere in all towns and villages in Malta and Gozo, demolitions and radical alterations are taking place. Beautiful 18th 19th and 20th century townhouses bite the dust daily together with their carefully made staircases, wrought iron details and wooden balconies. Din l-Art Helwa works daily to object to the Planning Authority to prevent these demolitions which, sadly, take place also in Urban Conservation Areas. Policies are full of loop holes, with the result that our traditional streetscapes are losing their character. Soon there will be not much to see that is original to our island. There is however still much to save.

By becoming a member of Din l-Art Helwa, or encouraging others to do so, you will help support the work that goes on.

Din l-Art Helwa needs ambassadors on the look out to take photos and to keep us informed. If you are interested, please email [info@dinarthelwa.com](mailto:info@dinarthelwa.com), stating your interest and your locality.



*Dark sky enjoyment is at risk from more development at Dwejra Gozo, photo: Joseph Caruana*

# The state of the environment

Martin Galea

Prior to the election of 2013 the Labour Party had a framework manifesto which it had committed to implement. In the section on environment, the document stated that by giving *priority* to the environment, the government would deliver quality of life by implementing a number of deliverables. These included strengthening the protection of outside development zones, empowering citizens to protect public domain zones, ensuring better and more effective management of Natura 2000 sites, and ensuring that the protection of the environment, the right to clean air and environmental health, as well as ensuring that the right of action in favour of the environment would be entrenched in the constitution.

These were fine words. Now two years into the second legislature, one cannot say the situation has improved environmentally, indeed it has become worse. Environmentalists are justifiably angry at the performance of the Government, which has systematically relaxed planning laws, and the protection of the countryside and outside development zones, as well as urban conservation areas. This has created a construction boom, but unfortunately the planning aspect – to think and act on how to best develop our most scarce resource, land – does not seem to feature as a priority.

Certainly the country is experiencing an economic boom. There is a building boom, record numbers of tourists, as well as a sharp increase in population. This has created stress on our roads, infrastructure, hospitals, schools, beaches, and has impacted heavily on our way of life. People are tired of traffic jams, noise, pollution, lack of space, dust and cranes. Now more than ever it is time to have real planning processes, and a strong regulator who seriously looks into planning issues, such as *planning* development, conserving the countryside, relieving congestion on roads (not by building roads in the countryside, however, or concreting country lanes), protecting our built heritage in towns and villages, and also ensuring that what is

built is worth preserving in the future. The Planning Authority is not doing this. It has patently failed in its mission, and the mistakes it has made will impact on the quality of life of the people who make Malta their home, for generations to come.

One must admit that planning is not an easy task and is fraught with controversy, but indicating where we can build, to what parameters and standard and giving environmental protection its proper weighting is fundamental in the most populated country in the world. This has not happened so far. Make no mistake. Malta has become very ugly, choked with traffic and fumes and unbridled, bad development everywhere – and at present there is no champion in Government to take up this challenge. The pictures we show to lure tourists to these Islands are the areas we should seek to protect, and which are the very ones under threat. This includes our built heritage, old palaces, churches, streetscapes, but also our natural heritage, the countryside, the *xaghri* and valleys. However, planning has been left to speculators and developers.

There seems to be no logic as to where permits for high rise buildings are given. Planning in this regard is mainly relegated to where speculators have land. Nor have we assessed how many petrol stations are required – each one committing 2000 square metres of supposedly green area to development – this at a time when all the major car manufacturers have committed to produce electric cars in the near future, and when the Government announces a commitment to phasing out carbon fuel cars over the next 20 years. We must therefore see this for what it is. Land without permits costs a fraction of the price of land within a development zone, hence the pressure to develop there.

The Planning Authority, as the regulator, must live up to its name and plan the development of the built environment, whilst conserving our patrimony. This is what we have the right to expect, but to date we have received far far less. Political will is required to set the tone, but so far it has not been forthcoming.

# A Tunnel of National Importance

## Maria Grazia Cassar

A Gozo-Malta tunnel is on everyone's lips at the moment, with much speculation on the environmental and social impact it will have. There have also been many suggestions of alternatives and variations on the subject by the public and people in the know, and it is understandable that there cannot be complete consensus about it. Din l-Art Ħelwa is certain about one thing, however – that the problems that the Gozitans face are considerable, and something must be done to address them.

The Government, however, has a duty to convince us that the route it is taking is the best solution, and will, in fact, solve the problems which it promises to address. There has not been any information regarding the new journey times through this proposed tunnel which has doubled in length since the 2015 cost/benefit analysis carried out for the Gozo Business Chamber and Transport Malta, which was based on an 8km stretch. How many vehicles are estimated to go through it every hour, and how much will the toll be? When the commuters exit at l-Imbordin, how long will it take them to arrive at their destination, be it to work, to Valletta, or to the airport? And most importantly, what are the alternatives available? These answers are vital in order to arrive at a transparent, reasoned decision which everyone will accept as the best option for our country. At the moment, all we have been told is that tender documents have been written and that the estimated cost of this project at €300 million (in the E-cubed analysis), is based on the 8km stretch only, and does not include the lengthy exit and entry portals.

The Transport Malta (2016) *National Transport Strategy 2050* and Transport Malta (2016) *National Master Plan 2025* mention the Gozo-Malta subsea road tunnel only by excluding it because still “*at the feasibility study stage*”. Surely it is imperative that the feasibility study, which has been carried out, is incorporated in the above mentioned Transport Malta study before the project goes any further? The tunnel cannot and must

not be seen in isolation from the transport strategy of Malta as a whole. This is extremely worrying, and all the more so, when it appears that the proposal of a Malta-Gozo road tunnel is in direct conflict with the principles of this Strategy and Master Plan, that is “*The creation of a modal shift away from the private car*” and “*The protection of the distinctiveness of Gozo’s settlements, cultural and natural environment to support the implementation of Eco-Gozo’s initiative*”. A tunnel to Gozo is not even mentioned in the relevant *Local Plans*. Is it too much to ask that these long awaited updates are concluded before more decisions are taken without any public consultation?

Din l-Art Ħelwa’s position is clear. Gozitans and Maltese have a right to know and be convinced whether this is the best solution in the light of all possible alternatives; whether the money spent on this tunnel will be money well spent, and not a white elephant; whether perhaps alternatives such as a light rail from Cirkewwa to the airport and other stops might be a better solution which will benefit commuters from Gozo and reduce traffic problems in Malta as well; whether a preferred option would be a smaller tunnel with a high speed train rather than a sub-sea road tunnel, thus avoiding the lengthy entrance and exit portals and the destruction of more of Malta and Gozo’s diminishing pristine natural land; whether the promised loss of “double insularity” status for Gozo will not be an economical suicide which is best avoided?

Whatever the answers, we call on government to step up to its responsibility and give them to us in a transparent and well-reasoned way. The odds at stake are too big to mess up, and our country is too small to absorb the enormity of the economic and environmental consequences unless they are sensitively thought out, and in the best interest of all. Something must be done, but let us do it well.



Malta-Gozo Tunnel Press Conference

# Where are the Buffer Zones?

**Joanna Spiteri Staines**

The *Irrestawra Darek Funds* scheme introduced by the Planning Authority is an excellent scheme to restore façades of traditional old buildings. The scheme was met with approval at Din l-Art Helwa since it helps home owners financially to restore their façades, it improves streetscapes and promotes the growing restoration industry. Moreover, there is one overarching, positive outcome, that of conserving our built heritage and our national identity for future generations.

I recently saw three beautiful scheduled buildings, all forming an intrinsic part of our cultural heritage which would benefit from the *Irrestawra Darek* funds. However, the owners were more concerned by what was happening in the vicinity since all are threatened by applications for the building of apartments which will replace the surrounding two storey houses and gardens. Another instance of development cashing in on our heritage!

One example is Villa Barbaro in Tarxien. This historic building pre-dates in part the Great Siege and its physiognomy is very similar to that of Girgenti Palace. It is one of the oldest buildings on the island, still in use as a family home. It is situated in a simple street bordering the urban conservation area and faces simple two storey buildings whose owners wish to demolish their homes and build four storeys and penthouses.

There are countless examples of people's homes now facing concrete blocks of flats. Triq Hal Mula in Żebbug comes to mind, where the people of an entire street in an urban conservation area woke up to find massive development upon their garden walls. The same is happening with the historic core and scheduled buildings of Guardamangia and the outrageous application for 114 apartments in Triq Santa Monica.

What is the point of a beautiful historic building if it is then dwarfed by massive development or of a beautiful historic citrus grove if it is overlooked by four storeys (or more) of concrete balconies? What is the point of beautiful historic streetscapes, reproduced on tourism brochures, soon to be ruined by insensitive development? What about the principles of 'buffer zones' and 'transition zones'?

In 2015, the Planning Authority employed experts to re-write the Policy and Design Guidelines. Both this document and the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development, talk about context, streetscape, and suitable distances from scheduled buildings and urban conservation areas. However, as we are seeing, such predominant principles are being ignored.

The first paragraph of the Design and Policy Guidelines Vision Document states the following:

*'The attainment of urban and architectural design quality is an integral objective of DC15. Our urban environment cannot afford to have a low-quality built fabric – a fabric that produced bland, repetitive blocks that are discordant with the older components of the street and, in the worst cases, kill the spirit of our streets due to the negative impact that is created in visual, social and environmental terms.'*



*Historic gardens at risk in Lija*

We desperately need a change in tack and re-centering of the Planning Authority to take stock of the threats that our heritage is facing. The introduction of new floor-to-ceiling heights in the Policy and Design Guidelines allows three storey areas to become five storey areas thus fuelling demolition. This "re-definition" of floor heights, deftly snuck in as an appendix to the Policy and Design Guidelines, is the main reason why our streetscapes are being demolished and rebuilt. The dwarfing of historic buildings, chapels and urban conservation areas is already happening.

The Planning Authority needs to actively protect our heritage. The 2008 case of Torri Gourgion, Lija where scheduling of the street was rendered after public outcry, is an excellent example of how the historic tower needed the context to protect its own historic architectural value. Buffer zones were an intrinsic part of the Structure Plan but there is no mention of them in SPED. UNESCO in 2008 specifically formulated policies that request buffer zones around sites of historical and natural importance.

If Malta is to consider itself a European country with heritage at the core of its identity then we need to protect this heritage, as do other European countries. We need to not only pay lip service but strengthen our planning and legislative framework respecting recommendations of UNESCO and others.

We need a Planning Authority which not only introduces *Irrestawra Darek* funds but also protects our heritage from destruction. Din l-Art Helwa urges the Planning Authority and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to introduce concentric buffer zones around historic buildings, their gardens and Urban Conservation Areas so that such areas are conserved in their entirety, including the context within which we appreciate them. We need this NOW, before we ruin our heritage sites any further.

We need to urgently revise the Policy and Design Guidelines and the SPED to indeed have '*change which is compatible with the historical continuum'*.

# Health versus Wealth

## Stanley Farrugia Randon

One of the resolutions approved unanimously by members during the Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa held last February stated that

*'while our islands are experiencing economic growth, this is accompanied by a marked reduction in the quality of life and general health of citizens. Din l-Art Helwa asks Health and Planning Authorities to acknowledge that, with an island that is moving towards over-population and which has an over-active construction industry, there is a surge in air pollution, mostly due to increased car emissions as well as construction dust, and urges them to take remedial action. Health professionals and medicinal companies have noticed an unprecedented increase in allergies such as asthma, rhinitis, hay fever and even more serious illnesses caused by pollution. The well-being of the islands' inhabitants, and their quality of life, based on a healthy environment, should be given priority over economic growth'.*

Din l-Art Helwa members were unanimous in this statement.

The increase in the number of floors of a building, which has become a knee-jerk reaction to changes in planning policies, has transformed large areas into construction sites. This results in an immediate increase in dust particles and pollutants from heavy vehicles. The eventual growth in the number of residents in the area consequently also results in an exponential increase in traffic and pollution. Particulate matter, in particular PM10 (the number referring to the size of the particle in the air, which, in this case, is derived from construction sites) is inhaled into our throat, nose and lungs and can cause sinusitis, chest problems and allergies such as asthma. Other health issues and diminishing quality of life arising from an increase in building heights is the competition for sunlight and lack of air ventilation.

Finer particles such as PM2.5 are derived from cars and the combustion of other fuels. These penetrate even further down into our respiratory system and can cause more severe illnesses such as cancer. Health effects of air pollution on pregnant women

and their infants, and children, are alarming. In polluted places, there is a higher risk of infant mortality, infants being born prematurely, of lower weight, and with a higher incidence of birth defects. Studies also suggest that the effects of air pollution are far-reaching, and that the effects of pollution on the unborn child can lead to increased risk of heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.

The rapid dwindling of our open spaces, which results from bad planning, is also detrimental to our mental wellbeing. Good quality landscaping in urban areas would reduce stress and makes us feel better. Apart from increasing the quality of our air and decreasing noise pollution, this would offer places where children can play and interact with nature.

Noise pollution caused by heavy vehicles, excavation, and construction in a site is also a nuisance to neighbours. It decreases the quality of rest and sleep and increases frustration.

Din l-Art Helwa is not against development. However, the association does demand sustainable development which valorises and enhances Malta's urban, natural and cultural heritage assets, and which is not carried out to the detriment of our wellbeing. A country which drives economic gain and values it more than the health of its inhabitants does not make sense!

A country which gives priority to petrol stations, which issues laws and regulations in favour of more construction, a country which encroaches on agricultural land and coastal areas to widen roads, thus promoting the use of yet more private vehicles without investing in an efficient public transport system, a country which encourages the immigration of more people into an already overpopulated island without assessing the capacity of its infrastructure, is a country which is not seeking the true wellbeing of its inhabitants and the environment. It is a country managed by short sighted and selfish governance that exploits today out of greed that will simply make no healthy tomorrow possible for its children. So now it is our health versus wealth –

***I think all citizens need to ask themselves 'Who gets to choose?'***

*Emissions from vehicles need to decrease*



**Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon is a long-standing Council member of Din l-Art Helwa, a Specialist in Family Medicine and author of a booklet titled 'It-Tniggis u s-Sahħha'**

This article was first published in the Times of Malta on 20 May 2019

# Notre Dame in our backyard

**Petra Caruana Dingli**

The burning down of the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris just before Easter provoked an outpouring of public emotion worldwide.

The images of the famous Gothic cathedral engulfed in flames are hugely powerful, and people all over the world have united in dismay. In her reaction, German Chancellor Angela Merkel described Notre Dame as “a symbol of French and European culture”. This incident reinforces the idea of ‘world heritage’, as promoted by UNESCO, or of European cultural heritage, as espoused by organisations like Europa Nostra.

Love for the past and its remains runs deep. This February I visited the Salinas museum of archaeology in the centre of Palermo in Sicily. On the ground floor, opening onto the former convent’s quiet courtyard, a small room is dedicated to the memory of Syrian archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad, who was head of antiquities in the ancient city of Palmyra, a world heritage site, for over 40 years.

In 2015, al-Asaad was brutally executed by ISIS militants. They had taken and damaged the old city but he adamantly refused to reveal to them where the important cultural artefacts had been stored for safety, and so they beheaded him. In the Palermo museum he is described as a ‘righteous man … defender of heritage’.

This tragic murder in Palmyra, four years ago, holds two extremes: theft and ruthless destruction of society and its historical artefacts, as opposed to ardent reverence and passion for cultural heritage.

Here in Malta, people have occasionally rallied around perceived threats to heritage. The vandalism on the Mnajdra temple in April 2001 is one example. And people were genuinely distraught by the collapse of the Azure window in Dwejra in March 2017.

The appreciation and study of cultural heritage has moved on. It is no longer restricted to outstanding buildings and monuments, as it was when awareness of cultural heritage grew 150 years ago in Europe, and later also in Malta. Built heritage lies elsewhere too – in rural or vernacular architecture, and in traditional streetscapes.

In Malta we are rapidly destroying practically everything, except anything built by the Knights of St John. To that, add Mdina, the Cittadella in Gozo, the prehistoric temples, churches and a selection of other buildings. The rest is on death row. Figuratively speaking, our built heritage is up in flames. Notre Dame is in our own backyard.

I am glad that I had the good fortune to visit the great old cathedral of Notre Dame several times in my lifetime before disaster struck this year. It is understandable that the world is saddened. So far it appears that the fire was an accident, linked to renovation works.

I don’t mean to put down their distress, yet I can’t help wondering how some people here in Malta, who should know better, can be so troubled and unsettled by accidental damage to this beautiful medieval cathedral in Paris, iconic as it may be, but not care about the deliberate, massive obliteration of their own heritage at home.

*A curtain of cement cages have destroyed a once picturesque corner of St Julians*



The ongoing devastation of the Maltese urban and rural landscape is no accident. It is a conscious decision by the government, that the construction industry is to be supported at all costs. Everything has been put in place, from policies and plans to committees and people, to ensure that new construction is not hindered by sentimental attachment to old spaces or vistas.

The entire landscape is being transformed. Big projects take priority. Residents are ignored. Traffic is increasing, but instead of reducing it roads and new petrol stations are built, not to mention the enormous tunnel on the drawing board.

The head of the Malta Developers Association, Sandro Chetcuti, has already voiced concern about Prime Minister Joseph Muscat's expected departure from politics next year. It could be difficult to find a replacement who will promote construction and development as much as Muscat and his government have done.

The beginnings of short-sighted development and inadequate planning in Malta can be traced back to the 1960s. Yet there were still semblances of attempts to put in place a legal framework, such as the Structure Plan of 1990, with a good direction and some vision.

In recent years the opposite has happened. Plans and policies have been dismantled to enable construction without vision. The result is all around to see, and it is only likely to get worse once all the permits which have been granted are implemented.

Today there is still hope that part of the Paris cathedral has been saved, and that it may even be rebuilt. It will never be the same, but everything possible will surely be done to respect and preserve the remains of this iconic, historic structure.

Our own Maltese heritage will not be rebuilt, respected or preserved. Rather than strive to save it, all efforts are focused on obliterating it. In the future we will remember the achievements of the Knights of St John on our islands through their buildings, but the rest of Malta will have little history left standing.



*The spire of Notre Dame, Monday 15 April 2019*



*A poignant Easter image of Notre Dame*

**Petra Caruana Dingli is Council Member and former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa.**

This article was first published on the online news site [www.theshiftnews.com](http://www.theshiftnews.com) on 17 April 2019, less than 48 hours after the fire broke out at the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris.

# Restoration and maintenance efforts

## Stanley Farrugia Randon

Din l-Art Helwa continues its efforts to protect iconic heritage buildings through restoration and maintenance in particular those entrusted to it in guardianship.

### WORK ON THE FORTIFICATIONS

#### Progress at the White Tower

Restoration on the White Tower continued and the cleaning and pointing of the external walls was completed. Scaffolding was removed by April although we had delays mainly because of bad weather. The blockhouse and the lower floor of the De Redin tower will be opened to the public as a Visitor Centre after summer and most of the work is practically completed. NEMO is an educational project part-funded by The Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation. It is aimed at children who want to enjoy a cultural experience by visiting the Tower and engaging in environmental awareness, especially that related to the sea. Obviously, adults will also be able to enjoy visiting the place and benefit from the educational experience which will cover marine biodiversity, the Mediterranean Sea and its foreshore, the history of Malta's coastal towers, and also the work of Din l-Art Helwa over the last 54 years. Touch screen technology will allow visitors to explore in more detail topics related to the programme content.

A multimedia room has been set up to show a documentary about Malta's marine biodiversity and foreshore with script provided by Stanley Farrugia Randon. The video footage for this documentary has been provided mostly by Mr Victor Micallef and to a lesser extent by Stanley Farrugia Randon. We are very grateful to Martin Vella, the Project Manager, our treasurer Martin Scicluna and Maria Grazia Cassar, then President of Din l-Art Helwa, for following the whole project throughout. We are also very grateful to Cyberspace, our service provider. In this room children and their teachers will be able to discuss issues related to the environment, especially marine.

The room located in the ditch close to the Tower has also been equipped to be able to serve as a lecture room as well as to serve as a hands-on activity area. This room was partly sponsored by Atlas Insurance.

Works will soon start on the roof and a toilet on the lower floor which will also be wheelchair accessible.

#### The Red Tower (St Agatha's Tower)

Thanks to EU funding, the Malta Tourism Authority is working on the restoration of the Red Tower. The old plastering of the internal walls, some still partly in cement, was cleaned. In the process a small room, which had at some time been opened in the thickness of the wall and subsequently blocked again, was discovered. Electricity works and the changing of the parquet flooring is presently underway and larger glass panels in the new floor will be left for visitors to have the opportunity to admire the rough original flooring.

Different materials and methodologies to plaster the interior and external facades of the tower are being considered.



*The White Tower, its scaffolding removed always looking cleaner and whiter!*



*Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon, Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar, Prof. Carmel Borg and from MCCFF and Mr Tony Cassar from Cyberspace in the interpretation centre*

*Discovery of a room in a wall when cleaning of the walls at the Red Tower*



*Cleaning of the internal walls at the Red Tower*

## Għallis Tower – in need of a sponsor

The restoration permit to restore the external façades of the Tower is in place but we are still looking for a sponsor. The walls are in a dire state and Din l-Art Ħelwa is again working hard to find a company which is willing to restore this iconic De Redin Tower to its former glory.



*Għallis Tower desperately seeking a sponsor*

## Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower

Following the restoration of the exterior and interior of the tower itself, Din l-Art Ħelwa is rehabilitating the surroundings of the tower. This is being done thanks to funds from the MIA Foundation. Concrete stairs and a concrete screed which had been laid around the tower were removed. The place will be made wheelchair accessible and lighting will render the place more attractive and safe. Our past president, Maria Grazia Cassar, and Josie Ellul Mercer are following this project to the end.

During the process of removal of the cement, an underground passageway was uncovered. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage was informed of its presence and it still needs to be explored. I think that this could be a water gallery as an old photo which is in my possession shows that there was once a water pump close to this find.



*Removal of cement flooring around Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower*

On the west façade of the Tower a squarish pit was discovered which seems to be a cesspit. A depression in the tower wall above this pit was probably the site where a urine bowl was inserted. This part of the wall was once enclosed by a small room. The same arrangement was also recently discovered during the restoration of the East wall of the L-Aħrax (White) Tower.



*Underground gallery discovered during excavations around Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower*

## Torri Mamo

The internal walls of the room on the roof of the tower were cleaned and repointed. Some of the windows needed repair or their frames changed.

## STORM DAMAGE IN FEBRUARY

Unfortunately a number of our sites were hit by the storm on Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 February. A rubble wall at the Garden of Rest (Msida Bastion Cemetery) partly collapsed. Some branches from the numerous tall trees around the garden gave way and damaged monuments below them. Other trees were uprooted by the strong winds but luckily did not cause any damage to the monuments close by.

At Hal Millieri a large tree which was located just beyond the gateway leading to the chapel was uprooted, elevating the flagstones around it in the process and damaging part of the perimeter rubble wall. This had to be fixed quickly before the March celebration of the annual feast of the Annunciation. Din l-Art Ħelwa made an appeal for urgent funds and is very grateful to a number of persons and companies who came forward to sponsor these emergency works. Part of the rubble walls surrounding the ditch at Torri Mamo also suffered damages and we thank the Artisan's Collective for their donation towards its restoration.

## WORK ON THE CHAPELS

The gateway to the Medieval chapel at Hal Millieri, formerly the doorway of St Michael's chapel which stood next to St John Evangelist chapel close by, suffered damages due to expanding metal insertions. Its archway stones need to be restored and repointed. The metal gate will be cleaned of its rust and galvanised.

St Roque chapel at Haż-Żebbug requires pointing of its external facades. Quotes are being sought and plans for its restoration are underway.

At Our Lady of Victory Church the restoration of the main façade and that of the annexe has been completed.

Heritage sites are constantly in need of upkeep and repair and Din l-Art Ħelwa ensures it looks after the sites in its care and we are grateful to the many sponsors who believe in our work and who make this possible.

# Our Lady of Victory Church façade gets a new lease of life

Early in February 2019 extensive scaffolding was erected to enable our contractors to clean and point the masonry of this first church of Valletta making it safe from water penetration. Several stones had to be changed as they had suffered much erosion. The roof surrounds were also treated and the wooden balcony and doors were also given another protective coat of paint. All was done with planning permits in place and monitoring from experts of the Heritage Protection Unit of the PA. Work was finished in record time despite the heavy winds and rain that plagued this winter so that Easter ceremonies and weddings could take place once more.

Din l-Art Helwa thanks the many sponsors who came forward and responded to the Victory Church Façade Appeal to enable us to carry out this vital work:

The P. Cutajar & Co Foundation, GasanMamo Insurance Ltd, Izola Bank Plc, The Thomas Smith Group, John Ripard & Sons, Tug Malta Ltd, Medserv Plc, RClin Pharma Ltd, Chevalier Joseph Micallef from the USA. We also thank Malta Industrial Parks Ltd for its support with the work on the belfry and the ADRC Trust and other donors who wish to remain anonymous for the restoration of the bells.



*Victory Church shrouded in scaffolding between February and April 2019*



*Victory Church, its new splendour revealed after restoration of its façade and annexe walls was completed.*

## WEDDINGS AT THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY

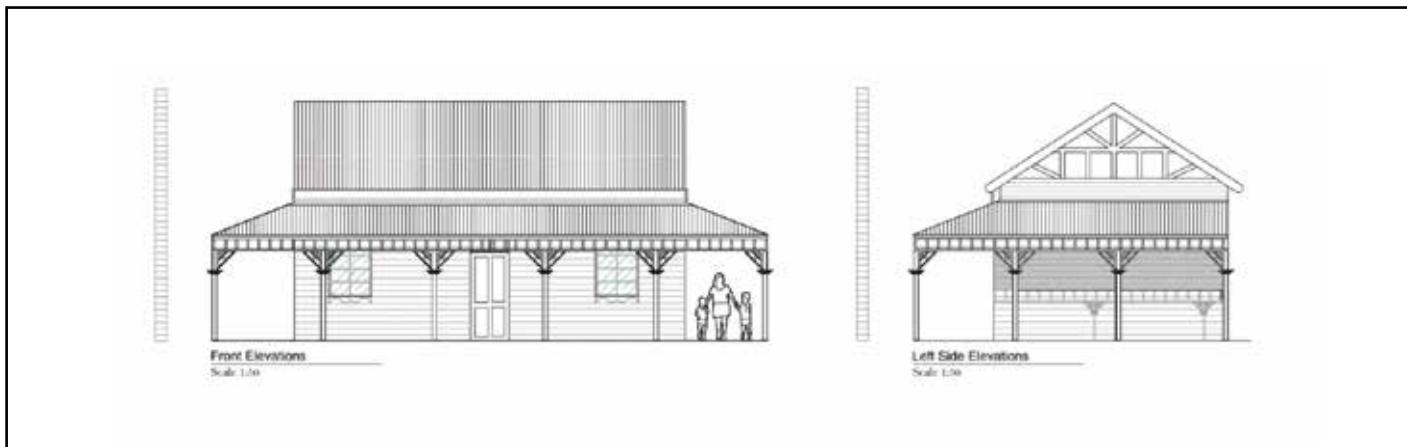
We are happy to report that, with the termination of the restoration of the interior perimeter walls, the organ balcony and the choir, the celebration of the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony has recommenced at the Church of Our Lady of Victories after several years. We have purchased a sumptuous red carpet to lead the bridal retinue up and down the aisle, restored two period kneelers, and provide service during the preparation of the ceremony, during the ceremony and after the ceremony. We also liaise with the Parish of St Dominic, under whose jurisdiction the Church of Our Lady of Victories lies, for much of the paperwork associated with the Holy Sacrament. We are delighted to have been of service to many happy couples this last year and bookings are already strong for 2019 to 2021. For more information do call the Church Custodian and Visitor Services Manager, Mario Sciberras on 00356 99637409 or email [marioscib@gmail.com](mailto:marioscib@gmail.com)

# Enter the Australian Bungalow!

**Joseph Philip Farrugia**

Din l-Art Helwa is embarking on saving a most unusual building, and one unique to its kind. This is ‘The Australian Bungalow’, a 1920s period timber structure that is perhaps the last surviving example in the world of its kind. Every Commonwealth country had been endowed with such a building.

At last, after lying unused and unloved for many decades at the Government Farm at Għammieri, Din l-Art Helwa got to know of the Australian Bungalow and of its potential importance to the historic memory of Maltese migration and to a style of architecture not used on the island. Din l-Art Helwa aims to restore and transport it to a new location at the centre of Ta’ Qali National Park, hopefully in the next few months. There it can be visited by the public and information will be dedicated to its historic use, focusing particularly on migration to Australia. It will be a most welcome and exciting addition to the Din l-Art Helwa portfolio of saved built heritage.



*Drawings: PARKS Architects*

This timber building was sent to Malta by the Australian Government in the late 1920s and set up at the Dar San Ġużepp Technical School in Hamrun to help teach Maltese prospective migrants the typical timber style of house they could expect in Australia and the methods and skills used in its construction.

Din l-Art Helwa agreed with the Government to take over the responsibility of restoring this historical gem and to relocate it to the National Park at Ta’ Qali. In March the necessary permits were received from the Planning Authority and the final preparations are being made to issue the tender for the works required.

Meantime great efforts are being made to raise the necessary funds though our generous sponsors.

On completion, the building will be equipped with interactive and other information panels and open for visitors with a focus on its architecture and use. From research which we have made, there is an abundance of stories and reports from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which amply demonstrates the great obstacles and many adventures the early migrants had to experience.

When the bungalow is ready for public access, we plan to open it during the weekends and possibly for more days especially when special events are being organised at Ta’ Qali. If anybody wishes to volunteer to join in the Australian Bungalow Team, please send an email to [admin@dinlarthelwa.org](mailto:admin@dinlarthelwa.org) so our office can register any contacts.



*photo: Martin Scicluna Hon.Treasurer Din l-Art Helwa*

# Storm damage repaired thanks to quick response from generous sponsors

**Simone Mizzi**

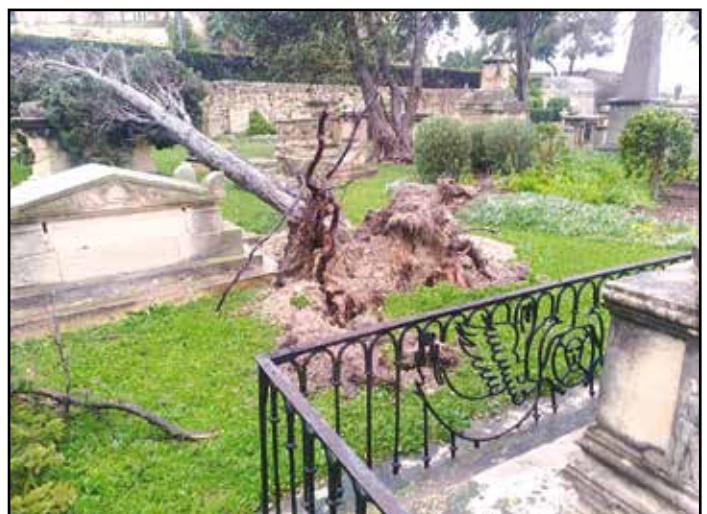
Some of the historic properties restored and managed by Din l-Art Helwa sustained considerable damage during the terrible storm that ravaged the country on 17 March 2019. When the damage became evident, we sent out an urgent public appeal for funds to help us meet the costs of urgent repair. The public was very quick to rise to the occasion. Several private donations were received, and GasanMamo Insurance also gave a most generous helping hand. A fine donation was also received from the Artisans' Collective - Malta, who were actually having a successful day trading in the Torri Mamo moat when the storm struck.



The historic chapel of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri, limits of Żurrieq had to be kept closed for a while as falling trees had damaged its paths and its ancient rubble walls. Its iconic conifer tree at the entrance was uprooted by the wind. Fortunately the historic chapel and its frescos sustained no damage and work quickly got underway to clear the passage and reinstate its walls for the annual Feast of the Annunciation which was held on the 24 March.



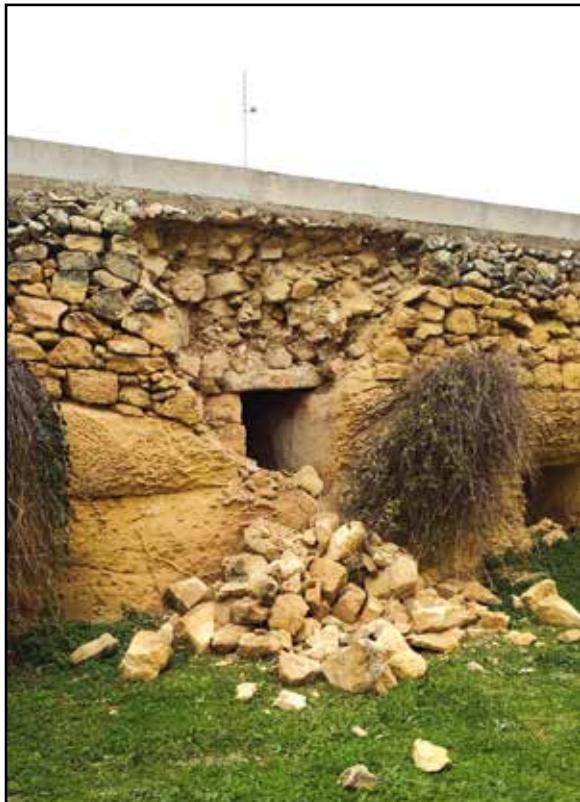
*A tree comes to rest at the Garden of Rest*



*Uprooted tree resting on tombstones at the Garden of Rest*



*Volunteers swing into action at the Garden of Rest*



*Rubble wall in the moat at Torri Mamo*



*In pristine condition once again*

Din l-Art Helwa would like to thank the many private donors, GasanMamo Insurance, the Artisans' Collective - Malta and the Gafà Brothers for their timely and generous help.

# Amazing Dwejra

## News for Vigilo from Dwejra Tower – from our Volunteer Simon Wallace

There is much going on at the northernmost tip of Gozo at Dwejra with its spectacular scenery and the iconic Dwejra Tower topping it all.

Earlier this year, the Ministry for Gozo installed a Panoramic Webcam on the roof of the tower - simply click on the link and enjoy live feed and those amazing Dwejra sunsets from wherever you are in the world! <https://www.visitgozo.com/panoramic-webcams/>

*Welcome to Dwejra Tower*

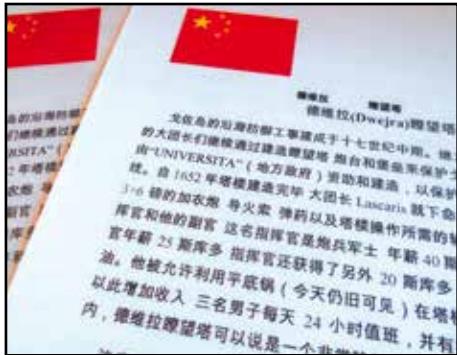


*Spring flowers at Dwejra*

Social Media - Dwejra Tower now has over 1200 likes on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Dwejra.tower/> and our “Tweets from the Tower” are proving popular with over 660 followers on Twitter <https://twitter.com/DwejraTower>

To infinity and beyond - Dwejra Tower recently featured in this Visit Gozo blog post about dark skies and stargazing on the Maltese Islands <https://www.visitgozo.com/blog/to-infinity-and-beyond-why-gozo-is-such-a-great-place-for-stargazing/>

The Tower’s “Plant of the Month” Facebook photo feature continues to prove very popular, thanks to our continued partnership work with Mario from Nature Trust Malta.



*Find your language - Chinese -  
the latest visitor information sheet at  
Dwejra Tower*



*Sailing into Dwejra Bay*



*Late Spring flowers at Dwejra*

## Find your language

Free multi-language information sheets are available to help our visitors learn more about the fascinating history of this Knights-era coastal watchtower. Currently these are available in Maltese, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Czech, Slovenian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, Portuguese, Hungarian and Chinese. Copies are also available free via e-mail (PDF file).

The Tower continues to open on Sundays throughout the year – this has resulted in very good visitor figures and Din l-Art Helwa participation in popular events held at Dwejra, including:

“Gozo Alive”

“Dwejra Festival” (Il-Fiera tad-Dwejra) and

“Dwejra: looking beyond (the Azure Window)” for which the Tower hosted a Ministry for Gozo photographic exhibition.

New events crop up regularly. Do keep up with our news on our Dwejra Tower Facebook page.

*Early morning at Dwejra*



# Activities in the Msida Bastion Historic Garden

## Paolo Ferrelli

2019 is as packed with activity or even more than last year. We continued to hold our popular monthly tours every first Saturday and tell the stories of the many personalities and heroes buried in the Garden. These tours have become so popular that at one event we were fully booked and had to hold an extra tour the next day much to our visitors delight. Attendance was very successful and in the next few months, during June, July and August, the tours will be held in the evening to avoid excessive heat and to give the Garden a different aspect since we light it up with candles. We also continue to be open to the public every first Sunday of the month when admission is free. We have a good attendance especially bargain hunters who come to our bric-a-brac section.

### One of our heroes - a hero in the Garden

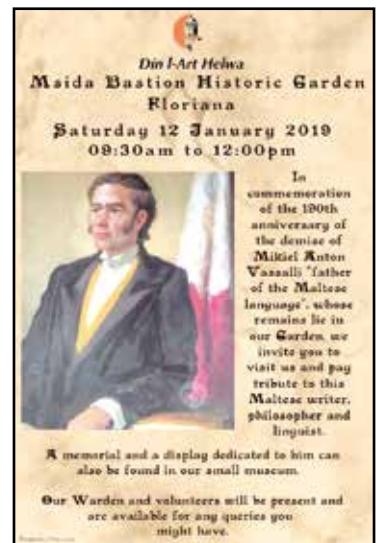
This is the memorial to Victoria Cross recipient Charles McCorrie whose remains lie in the Garden. Born in County Antrim, Ireland, he was approximately 25 years old and a private in the 57th Regiment of the British Army. He heroically defended his terrace during the Crimean War at Sebastopol when he caught a live shell that had been thrown from the enemy and threw it back. He was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. He died in Malta in April 1857.



*A hero in the garden*

### Anniversary of Mikiel Anton Vassalli's demise

This year marked the 190th year of the demise of Mikiel Anton Vassalli, said to be the Father of the Maltese Language. For this purpose, we organized a memorial day on the 12 January (which is the date he actually died in 1829) and honored his memory. This was the invitation we sent out.



### April is always a major month for the Garden and this is when we had most of our activities.



### Visit from the American Horticulture Society:

Two groups of members of this society paid a visit to our Garden – they were mainly interested in the flora of our site. We are proud to say the Garden was also awarded a Certificate of Excellence for the great work we are doing. These same groups were touring Malta and Sicily.

### It was a Dog Party!

On Sunday 14 April from 10:00am to 17:00pm, we organised a dog party where we hosted more than 30 dogs along with their owners who came for a day relaxing in a green area with enough place for the poochies to run and play. Part of the funds collected on the day were forwarded to AAA Sanctuary in Birzebbugia. This event was a massive success and we will certainly be organizing another one at the end of the Summer period.



## Children's Egg Hunt

On Saturday 20 April, we hosted an Egg hunt organized by the "Little Rock People" for around 100 persons. This turned out a very successful event with a lot of games, activities for the children (in particular the hunt for around 100 Easter eggs scattered around our Garden).



## Another Interview on RTK Radio

Our Joe Azzopardi was interviewed on the program "Tmiem il-Gimgha" by Emanuel Cassar wherein he announced our Annual Spring Fair and all the activities that were planned.

## Msida Bastion Garden Annual Spring Fair

Our annual appointment with this major event at our Garden this year was on Sunday 28 April. This year we were also hosting the Artisans Collective Malta with their colourful and bubbly stalls and organized loads of activities for children. Despite road works and other national local events which hindered a bit the presence of our visitors, we still managed to increase the number of attendees from last year and have a good income towards our fund raising. Thanks to all those who battled the roads and turned up for what ended up being a fantastic day!



## Visit from our benefactor Lucie Nottingham

Ms. Lucie Nottingham, a Trustee of the Tanner Trust and long time friend of Din l-Art Helwa, visited our Garden and chose it as a site for her interview with *The Times of Malta* – this interview was published on 28 April 2019. Thanks to the Tanner Trust which is Ms. Nottingham's family charitable trust, funds were donated for our green project which enabled us to make use of the reservoirs from the Knights and British period for watering the Garden in the Summer period. Thanks to the rain water collected in the reservoirs, we are able to save water from the main aqueduct. Our warden toured Ms. Nottingham around the Garden and she was very pleased with the hard work being done by all the volunteers.

*Ms Lucie  
Nottingham during  
her visit in April to  
the Garden*



## Visit by the British High Commissioner

Mr. Stuart William Gill who is the present British High Commissioner in Malta, paid a visit to our Garden on 24 April. Along with our warden Paolo who toured Mr. Gill around, there were Maria Grazia Cassar, Alex Torpiano. Mr. Gill had never been at our Garden and he was extremely pleased with the upkeep of our place and the commitment of its volunteers. It was with the collaboration of the British High Commission in the early days that the Garden was able to be restored by Din l-Art Helwa winning it the Europa Nostra Silver Medal in 2002 for the successful rehabilitation, restoration and regeneration of an early neo classic cemetery and its funerary monuments and its adaptation into a public garden. The restoration which started in 1991 took some ten years to complete and 20,000 stone and marble fragments had to be collected and pieced together.

## Visit by Eric Frere

Mr. Frere is a direct relative of Sir John Hookham Frere and lives in Boston USA. He paid us an expected visit in April, to honor the memory of his ancestor who is buried in the Garden. Mr. Frere was extremely impressed with what Din l-Art Helwa is doing to preserve Malta's heritage. He also became member of DLH and in June he will be back to lend a helping hand in the volunteering work with us at the Garden and Villa Frere 'Friends' garden. We look forward to having him back.

## Video shooting

Currently we are working on a project where our Garden will be featured in a video which will be in 8 languages and will be displayed at the entrance. It is also planned that we share it on the social media mainly U Tube and Facebook. Work is still in progress but here are some pics hereunder. Special thanks go to Anthony Ellul for helping us in the video and Martin Degiorgio who with his team of HRGM re-enactors helped out in re-creating the era in which the cemetery was in use.



*Paolo Ferrelli is the Warden at the Historic Msida Bastion Garden of Rest.  
Anybody wishing to volunteer at this historic site may contact Paolo on wardengor@gmail.com*

## Quick Action after February's storm

As reported elsewhere in this Vigilo, a massive storm took place in the end of February and hit our Garden big time leaving us facing an extensive amount of damages. Sadly two centenary Cypress trees went down and another one had to be chopped due to the dangerous state in which it ended up. Two rubble walls collapsed and also various tombs were slightly damaged. Our volunteers were at work immediately after the storm to secure the place, clean it up and ensure our visitors to enjoy the place in its original state.



## Activities at Majjistral Park

Din l-Art Helwa continues to form part of the Majjistral Park Federation with Nature Trust Malta and the Gaia Foundation who together look after this pristine territory with the objective of preserving its biodiversity and making it sustainable through appropriate public activity. Ghislaine Calleja sits on the Board of the Majjistral Park representing Din l-Art Helwa, taking over from Simone Mizzi. The Park celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year!



*Voluntary action - removal of alien invasive species at Majjistral Park*



*Guided nature walk at the Park*



*Mountain biking activity as part of Festa Natura celebrating ten years of Majjistral Park, December 2018*



*Greenhouse Malta and other NGOs presenting their work as part of Festa Natura celebrating ten years of Majjistral Park, December 2018*



*Maintenance of afforestation projects Festa Natura celebrating ten years of Majjistral Park, December 2018*



*Voluntary action - Restoration of rubble walls to outline designated boundaries at Majjistral Park*

## News from Santa Maria Tower on Comino



*Santa Maria Tower Comino*

*Students from Laura Vicuna School in Għasri, Gozo on an extra-curricular outing in April to Santa Marija Tower in Comino. Volunteers of Din l-Art Helwa illustrated the history of the Grandmasters and the importance of Comino as a Natura 2000 site.*



*Italian students from Monza, here on an exchange visit with the Victoria Primary School students, enjoying a day out on the beautiful Island of Comino during March.*

Santa Maria Tower on Comino is open by Din l-Art Helwa volunteers every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday during the summer months between 10.30 and 1500 hours.

# Mediterranean Peace Forum at Our Lady of Victory Church

## Patricia Salomone

Our Lady of Victory Church was Grand Master de Valette's thanksgiving offering to the Blessed Virgin for victory over the enemy of Christian Europe, the Ottoman Turk. Here, in this historic spot, was laid the first stone for the building of the city of the Order of St John.

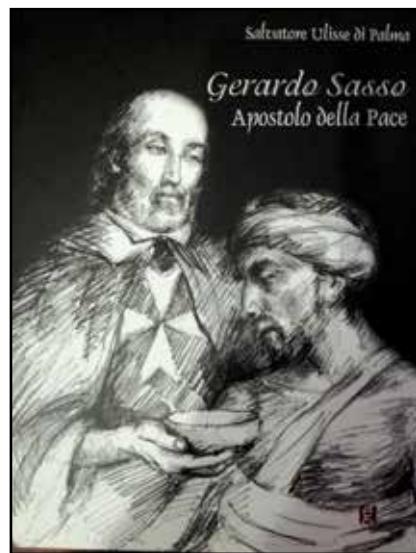
It is normal perception that this Order, made up of the cadet sons of the noble families of Europe, was an army of fighting men united in the defence of the Christian faith and the protection of the Holy Places. What is less known is the fact that some of the Knights were also first and foremost doctors and surgeons. The Order was, in fact, founded as the Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem. The founder, Gerardo Sasso, was a nobleman from Scala, on the Amalfi Coast, born around the year 1050. Gerardo joined the Benedictine Order and trained in the 'art' of medicine. Towards the end of the century, he sailed to the Holy Land where he was nominated Prior of the Benedictine Hospital in Jerusalem. He set himself the purpose of doing good and giving comfort to all, without distinction of creed or race.

It is common knowledge that, with time, the bellicose aspect of the Knighthood became prevalent. In fact, Victory Church was but the result of the battle fought on our shores, in 1565, and is replete with the symbols of the glory of the victor over the defeated.

That so many years later, Victory Church should be the venue for a Forum entitled *Pax Mediterranea* is, indeed, very significant. This forum was organised on 5 April 2019, in a collaboration between Italian Rotary District 2100, Campania, Basilicata e Calabria and Rotary Club La Valette Malta of District 2110 Sicily-Malta.



L to R: Under the painting at Victory Church showing the Blessed Gerardo Sasso, Past District Governor John de Giorgio Rotary District 2110, Daniel de Petri Testaferrata, President of the Maltese Association of the Sovereign Order of Malta, author Ulysse S. Di Palma, Simone Mizzi former Executive President Din l-Art Helwa, District Governor Salvatore Iovieno Rotary District 2100



The cover of the book on the Blessed Gerardo Sasso, by Rotarian Ulysse S. Di Palma

Service to all in need without distinction of creed or race is, as it is for the Knights of the Order, the main maxim of Rotary International. With this in mind, *Pax Mediterranea* is an initiative of Rotary District 2100 which saw Rotarians travel on a *Cammino della Pace*, a Peace Walk, from Scala, birth place of the Blessed Gerardo Sasso, to Assisi, site of the holy places of St Francis, apostle of Peace, to Malta, where the Knights found sanctuary after having lost the Holy Land and Rhodes.

The Peace Walk has Jerusalem as its final goal. There, in the holy city of the three monotheistic religions, a document symbolizing peace and solidarity between nations is being handed to the Franciscan Custodian of the Holy Sepulchre.

The idea stems from the publication of a book on the life of the Blessed Gerardo Sasso, founder of the Order of St. John, written by the Rotarian Ulysse Salvatore di Palma.

The event was hosted at Victory Church by Ms Simone Mizzi former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, District 2100 Governor Salvatore Iovieno, together with several Rotarians from RC Costa Amalfitana who attended the Forum, as well as several Knights of the Maltese Association of the Order and Maltese members of Rotary International.

Past District Governor, District 2110, John de Giorgio, opened the talks during which Governor Iovieno outlined the role that Rotary carries out for the promotion of Peace in the Mediterranean. The various activities of Order of Malta in today's world were very ably presented by Rotarian Daniel de Petri Testaferrata, President of the Maltese Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Rotarian Ulysse S. di Palma gave a presentation on his book entitled *Gerardo Sasso Apostolo della Pace*.

Ms Simone Mizzi, who has worked tirelessly for the restoration of Victory Church, pointed out all the symbols of Peace that can be identified within the walls of this historic monument. Her talk throws light on unknown aspects of this church. It is reproduced on the following page.

Before Holy Mass concluded the evening, a copy of the publication on Blessed Gerard was presented to Simone Mizzi, who received it graciously, saying it would make a proud addition to the growing library at Din l-Art Helwa.

**Patricia Salomone is a volunteer with Din l-Art Helwa and former Council Member**

# Our Lady of Victory Church

## Hidden aspects

Simone Mizzi

*A talk was delivered by Ms Simone Mizzi, former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, during the Pax Mediterranea Forum organised by Rotary Districts 2100 and 2110 at Our Lady of Victory Church on 5 April 2019. Hidden aspects of the history of this church are revealed in this talk so we thought we would share them with our readers and are translated from the original Italian by Patricia Salomone who coordinated the event.*

Good evening, I welcome you on behalf of Din l-Art Helwa, our voluntary organization, to the splendid Our Lady of Victory Church which we have recently lovingly restored and continue to look after.

Now the word ‘victory’ has connotations with a quarrel, an argument, a war but during this talk I will try to illustrate the role of this church as an instrument of peace and of collaboration between different strata of society and between nations. Both the Rotarians and the Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of St John have shown us tonight just what great work they do in this aspect, and I have learnt a lot from you just now.

This church, *tal-Vitorja* as we call it, was founded as a result of a great siege. It was the founder of our capital city, Valletta, Grandmaster Jean de Valette, victor in the Great Siege, who desired to build it and constructed it from his own personal funds. In fact, the foundation stone of the city is to be found beneath this edifice and so it is the first building, the first church, and the first burial place of this city. De Valette, who was deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin, dedicated his church to the Nativity of the Virgin as the Great Siege against the mighty fleet of Suleiman the Magnificent was lifted on 8 September 1565. 8<sup>th</sup> September is traditionally celebrated as the date of the birth of Mary. The small altar piece behind me, held to be the original titular painting of the smaller church, does not depict the birth of the Child Jesus, but the birth of the Virgin Mary. We see St Anne, her mother, St Joachim and the midwives who are administering to the newly delivered mother.

The church is replete with symbols of war and victory over the enemy, (there above you see the spoils of war lying at the feet of Victory, the winged messenger of the gods), yet, this evening, I, instead, wish to highlight the various signs that testify how a place born out of conflict can also promote peace, faith and prayer. Many have been the faithful through several centuries who have come, and still do come, to show devotion and give testimony to the spiritual inspiration that these walls bring.

The Grandmaster himself wished that the church be a place of devotion for all those working for the construction of his city – the poor, the nobles, the slaves. It is said that he regularly spent three hours daily praying here during his inspection of the fortifications and we are honoured every day to stand where he stood. Permission was given for converted slaves to be buried in the crypt here below us.

Several are the devotional symbols. First to deserve mention is St Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin, who appears in the altarpiece. Women who have problems with conception and delivery at birth recur to St Anne, the mother of Mary. We then have St Anthony the Abbott, protector of animals, and St Anthony of Padua, for those who need help with finding lost objects. There is St Philip Neri, the beloved apostle of Rome



*The titular painting of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary*



*Pope Innocent XII*

much loved by the poor for his life dedicated to helping the needy, and St Francis of Paola whose motto is *Charitas*. I would also illustrate a fairly recent donation made to this church of a precious statue of the Infant Child of Prague which was donated by the Knights of St John in Prague and which is known as the protector of expectant mothers. Thus faith and charity, the mission of the Knights of the Order of St John, still promote understanding and peace amongst nations in this small but historic church.

Among Grandmasters and Archbishops on this island there were frequently misunderstandings and arguments mostly relating to the rights of rank. On one such occasion, Pope Innocent XII, Antonio Pignatelli, who before being elected Pope was Inquisitor in Malta, made a gift of his effigy in bronze sculpted by none other than Giuseppe Mazzuoli (a follower and student of Bernini) to the Grandmaster as a symbol of reconciliation. He was the last Pope to sport a beard in the modern era. The bronze bust was placed on the façade of the church and peace reigned between the Church and the State.



*The monument to Angelo Emo  
by Antonio Canova in Venice*

Grand Admiral Angelo Emo, last of the Venetian admirals collaborating with the Order of St John in the Mediterranean, died on the island of Malta in 1792. He wished to honour both the island he adopted and his native place of birth. So he willed, as was the fashion of the time, that his heart was to remain here, and it was closed in the small sarcophagus that is found here at Victory Church, while his corpse was taken for burial in his hometown of Venice, where his funerary monument was made by none other than Canova. His funeral was a grand state affair accompanied by the Venetian fleet and that of the Order.

After the departure of the Knights, in 1836 this church became the parish for the British Catholics stationed in Malta and it was entrusted to the Royal Fencible Artillery. Several items from this 'British period' are awaiting to be exhibited in the little museum that is being set up alongside the church. These include the 14 *Via Crucis* paintings made by German prisoners of war when they were interned here in Malta at Pembroke on their way back to be repatriated. They were donated to the English Church chaplain of the time who was in charge of both the Pembroke church and this one. Very significantly, these are painted by a prisoner of war called A. Hagler, on scraps of tea boxes and wood from ammunition crates, and are dated 1946, and have been restored.

In 1848, Mons. Gavino Mamo started to teach doctrine and religion here, as part of the Order of the Good Shepherd (Ordine del Buon Pastore). One can see the letters OBP in several corners of this church. Here doctrine was taught to boys coming from needy homes, while girls and wealthier children were accommodated in three other churches in Valletta. Needy families were supported with donations of clothes, food and medication from within this church.

Today, the church of Our Lady of Victory is the first holy place visited by the thousands of foreign visitors alighting from cruise ships or just visiting Valletta who want to find a few moments of peace and reflection within these walls. Messages of goodwill are left in our visitors book at the entrance of the church from all nationalities and religions.

The name of *Din l-Art Helwa*, founded in 1965 to safeguard our natural and historic heritage, means 'This gracious, or beautiful land'. We shall persevere in our mission of saving such places as this which symbolize faith and peace and that is an important constituent of safeguarding our wellbeing. We work to save such historic places as they are part of our identity and of our European culture which go beyond the barriers of language, religion and colour. We share these sentiments with the Order of Malta here and worldwide and they also are very much aligned with Rotarian principles. It is therefore fitting that two Rotarian districts belonging to Rotary International have chosen to hold this forum promoting Peace in the Mediterranean here at Our Lady of Victory Church today and a most appropriate place to launch the wonderful book on the Blessed Gerardo Sasso.

We are fortunate to have a portrait of Blessed Gerardo tending to the sick in the sacristy. I invite you all to see it when you have concluded your programme.

On behalf of our organisation, I thank you all for coming here tonight.

Thank you.



*1945 Prisoners of War Stations of the Cross and their military crate*

# News from Ta' Braxia

## *Thank you to Chevalier Charles Gatt*

Din l-Art Helwa wishes to extend a great vote of thanks to Chevalier Charles Gatt for dedicating eighteen years to the Ta' Braxia cemetery and to the 'Friends of Ta' Braxia' of which he has served as Executive Director. Much work has been done during his role in office including driving the mission of 'Friends', which was set up in 2001 to assist in the management of the Neoclassical multi-denominational burial grounds at Ta' Braxia, including the restoration of the Jewish Cemetery, the improvement of lighting schemes and the drawing up of plans with government for the better management of the site.

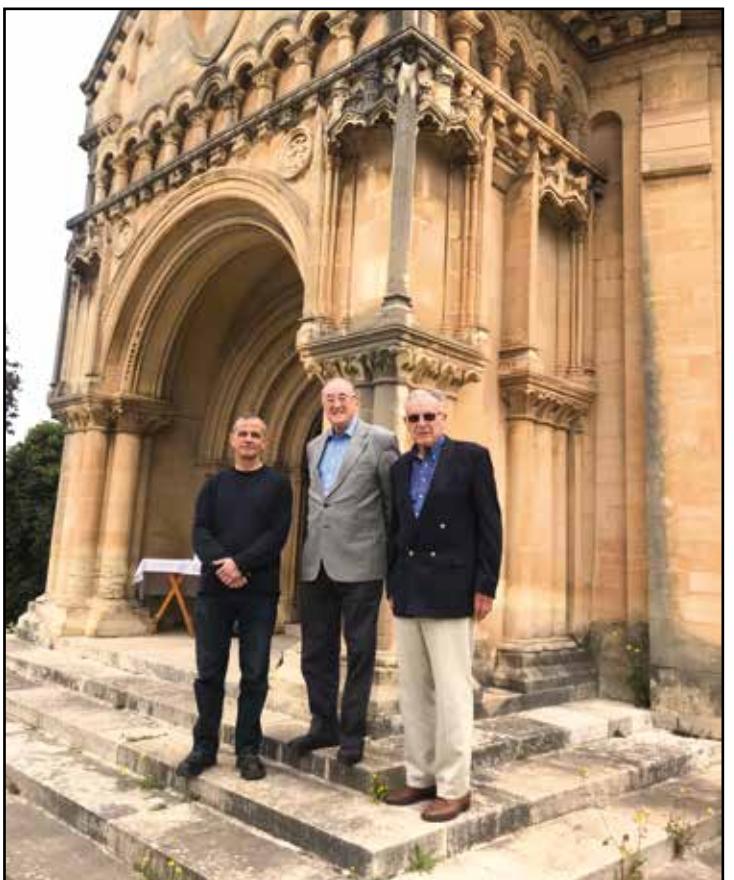
At the recent AGM of 'Friends' the President of 'Friends' Dr Alexander Welsh thanked Charles for his committed and outstanding contribution and example as a volunteer. He also thanked the many other volunteers who have helped in recent years including Major Tony Camilleri who has retired, Julian Gatt and Richard Jump who have returned to their home countries, and Brian Tarpey. Philip Galea, who has served as Secretary and Treasurer, will succeed Chevalier Gatt as Executive Director, while Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna of Russia, Head of the Russian Imperial House, continues as Patron of the 'Friends'. Ta' Braxia's 'Friends' is very much in need of volunteers and funds. Their foremost objective remains the restoration of the Galizia Fountain, its sculptures now submersed in its pond, and the beautiful Lady Hamilton Gordon Memorial Chapel, designed by John Loughborough Pearson, one of the most acclaimed Victorian architects, and built between 1893 and 1894, which needs urgent help.



*Ta' Braxia Galizia fountain and pond*



*Elevation of a fountain, E.L.Galizia*



*From l. to r. Philip Galea, Chevalier Charles Gatt and Dr Alexander Welsh outside the Ta' Braxia Memorial Chapel*

## THE 'FRIENDS OF TA' BRAXIA' NEED VOLUNTEERS AND FUNDS

Should you be interested in joining the 'Friends of Ta' Braxia' to lend a helping hand in any way please contact  
Philip Galea on [philipgalea@joinwell.com.mt](mailto:philipgalea@joinwell.com.mt)

# HSBC Malta hold Corporate Social Responsibility Day at The White Tower

A networking and information day for bank staff and retirees was held by HSBC Bank Malta p.l.c. on Tuesday 14 May, focusing on one of their major CSR projects of the last two years which is that of the rehabilitation and restoration of the White Tower (Aħrax Tower) in the limits of Mellieħa. This restoration has been principally made possible by the lead sponsorship of the HSBC Malta Foundation. The White Tower rehabilitation, Din l-Art Helwa's flagship project of the last two years, is a complex challenge which aims not only at saving the fabric of this extensive fortification, but also at bringing educational programmes to youth, focusing on the marine environment, biodiversity, and the importance of coastal areas and the sea. The interactive equipment was made possible through the NEMO projects mostly financed by the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation.

A group of HSBC employees and retirees were welcomed at the Tower by Martin Scicluna, Treasurer of Din l-Art Helwa and Martin Vella, a volunteer with the organisation who has been looking after the project. They were shown round the premises where the restoration is at advanced stage. They had an opportunity to experience at first hand the new interactive system which apart from the marine environment also focuses on the history of the tower, and learn about the chain of Din l-Art Helwa heritage sites saved by the organisation in its 54 years of existence. In the block house a video projection gives a twenty minute documentary teaching about the importance of the Maltese marine environment, the coast, the seabed, the importance of biodiversity and the risk from alien species.

The day was packed with activity and the participants worked to remove weeds from the artillery ditch and gun battery which surrounds the tower.

A highlight of the day was the lecture by Professor Timothy Gambin who presented his findings about the 8th century BC Phoenician wreck off Xlendi in Gozo. This exciting and important wreck is the oldest found in this region so far and is one of the most important in the Mediterranean. It lies in a depth of 110m which effectively requires more than two hours of decompression for a mere 12 minutes of bottom time. The wreck is only one of six Phoenician wrecks in the Mediterranean and the cargo was practically untouched bar some slight damage by fishing nets. Prof. Gambin gave an in depth presentation of both the technical diving details and also the archaeological findings. HSBC and Din l-Art Helwa who organised this event are very grateful to Prof. Gambin for his time, and the collaboration of the Department of Classics and Archaeology in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Malta is also acknowledged.



*Professor Timothy Gambin, photo: Martin Vella*



*Cleaning around the ditch*



*The ditch revealed*

## Heritage saved - 'St Joseph' and 'St Mark', two paintings by Gio Nicola Buhagiar...

**Amy Sciberras**



*St Joseph before restoration*



*St Mark before restoration*



*St Joseph during  
the final phases*



*St Mark during  
the final phases*



*Detail showing detachments  
and losses and an old  
inventory number*



*The cleaned  
and treated verso*

*The two oval paintings by Gio Nicola Buhagiar were found in the Sacristy of Our Lady of Victory Church. They were endowed with very ornate carved gilt frames which were also in very bad condition and on the point of collapse.*

***The restoration of the paintings by Conservator Restorer Ms Amy Sciberras has been made possible through the sponsorship of PwC Malta.***

There are two precious oval paintings located within the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Valletta which to date could not be well appreciated due to the poor state in which they were found prior to conservation treatments. They represent St Joseph holding the Infant Jesus and St Mark the Evangelist respectively. These paintings seem to be the works of Gio Nicola Buhagiar (1698-1752), one of the most notable and significant painters of the Maltese Baroque School.

The two oval paintings measuring c. 61cm in length and up to c. 47.5cm in width were executed on canvas and had been restored in the past. However past interventions had aged and were no longer serving their purpose of reinforcing the original. As a result, the paintings exhibited lack of adhesion between the paint / ground layers and the canvas support. Thus they were in an unstable condition whereby flaking and losses of the paint layer could be observed. Additionally, past retouching which had been applied where the original was lost, had altered in colour, thus hindering the overall legibility of the painting. This was further worsened by the oxidised and yellowed varnish coating which was greatly obscuring the vivid hues used by Buhagiar.

Following thorough preliminary analysis and documentation of the two paintings within the conservator's studio, local consolidation treatments to stabilise flaking areas and detachments were carried out. After consolidation treatments, the yellowed varnish coating obscuring the paint layer as well as past retouchings were removed using specific cleaning agents (solvents and gels), thus uncovering and leaving only the artist's work to be appreciated and studied.

Nonetheless the paintings needed further treatments aimed at reinstating the overall adhesion and stability of their various strata (i.e. the canvas, ground / gesso preparation layer and paint layer). Whereas in an old restoration intervention, the two paintings were lined through the attachment of a second canvas support to the original canvas, by time the old lining canvases had become partly detached from the original and were no longer serving their purpose. Hence the paintings were unmounted from their strainer frames and the old lining canvases were carefully removed. This allowed conservator-restorer Amy Sciberras to clean the verso of the paintings from foreign accumulations and old restoration glues. Following these treatments it was also possible to reinstate overall adhesion of the various strata through the application of a consolidant from the verso. The aged and oxidised canvases were then further reinforced through the implementation of a relining treatment.

Other old interventions such as old gesso infills were removed as necessary and re-applied using a compatible and conservation grade filler. Thus losses were infilled, levelled and textured according to the original texture and subsequently integrated using reversible conservation-grade colours. These two Baroque paintings can now, once again, be fully appreciated and relished.

... and their two elaborate gilt frames

**Josef Aquilina**

The elaborate gilt frames, used for the two Gio Nicola Buhagiar paintings of St Joseph and St Mark, were located high upon the wall in the Sacristy of Our Lady of Victory Church, where damp and time had very much damaged their beautiful gilding, and the wood itself was coming apart. Din l-Art Helwa invited Conservator Josef Aquilina to carry out their restoration.

The style and composition of the decorative frames recall Italian eighteenth-century examples. The whole ensemble is moulded over an oval framework to which are fixed directly with iron nails numerous carved mouldings of foliage and flowers, scrolls and shells, all decorated over with gold leaf through the water gilding technique. The carcass is hewn out of pine wood and a number of iron fixtures suggest that originally these were lit with a number of sconces.

The richly carved pair of Baroque giltwood picture frames were found to be in a very bad condition. Their wooden structure was in danger of disaggregation, with evident breakages along the various components. A number of recent iron fasteners along with spills of synthetic adhesive testify the presence of past structural repairs. Although this has contributed towards prolonging their permanence, such intervention led to a new kind of deterioration of the structure. In fact, the nails used have created new cracks and loss of the gilding fabric. In addition, the various components of the frames were not reassembled in their original position, thus creating new gaps, both in the structure and decoration, which should not have been present.

The gilt decoration, on the other hand, exhibited deterioration conducive to water damage. Much of the gilding had detached itself from the support beneath and in part had been lost. During a past treatment, a varnish, which had altered over time, had also been applied haphazardly, only partly covering the decoration. Voluminous deposits of dust and debris obscured the entire surfaces, particularly in their undercuts, where such deposits became ingrained within the fabric itself.

The treatment currently underway has included the consolidation of the detached gilding to be able to disassemble the structure without losing any original fabric, the removal of the numerous applied nails and the disassembly of the structure back to its original components. This has allowed the consolidation of the oval framework over which all the decorative components are applied. The framework has been securely reassembled respecting the original manufacture and using methods which allow for the best synergy between the various elements. Following this, the numerous missing carvings are being reinstated, and the intervention will then focus on the preservation of the decorative layer, which will finally see the re-integration of the various losses using traditional techniques and materials.



*The disassembled frame*



*An iron bracket for a sconce still in situ*



*A close-up of the damage*



*Meticulous work of consolidation*

*The project of the restoration of these two gilt frames is being carried out with the support of PwC Malta.*

***Josef Aquilina is a specialist in wood conservation with a degree conferred by the Institute for wood restoration in Piacenza (Italy).***

# Heritage Saved – Completion of the Conservation of the George Cross Grant Volume

**Simone Mizzi**



*Volume before restoration*

Theresa Zammit Lupi. The collaboration between Din l-Art Helwa, whose members raised funds for the preservation of the volume, and the Notarial Archives Foundation has contributed towards the endeavour of preserving Maltese national paper heritage and is hoped to lead to further collaborations.

The George Cross was awarded by His Majesty King George VI to the Maltese nation on 5 April 1942 for the valour and perseverance displayed during the Second World War. The deed was published in the Hall of St Michael and St George at the Governor's Palace, Valletta in the presence of His Grace Monsignor Michael Gonzi, Metropolitan Archbishop of Malta, on 7 February 1947. The Maltese population had undergone a complete disruption of everyday life, having faced food shortages and been the target of incessant bombings by the Axis forces.

The volume preserves the record of this significant part of Maltese history and that of its people.

The volume contains the enrolment of the act drawn by the Chief Notary to Government, Dr Carmelo Farrugia. The contract is between H. E. Frances Campbell

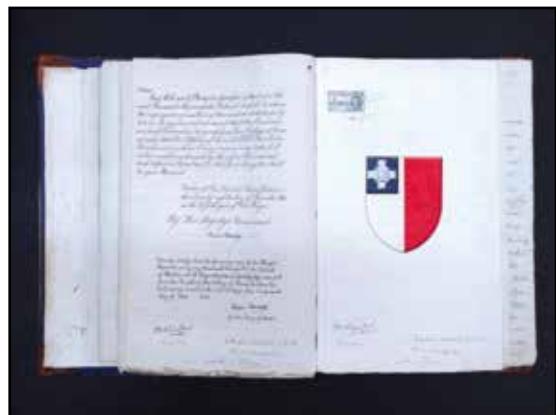


*Restored volume and cover*

Ross Douglas, Governor and Commander in Chief of the Island of Malta and its Dependencies, and His Honour Sir George Borg, Chief Justice and President of His Majesty's Court of Appeal, "wherein King George VI being desirous that for the greater honour and distinction of the Island of Malta" grants that a representation of the George Cross proper is placed on a canton azure to be borne for the Island of Malta and its dependencies upon seals, shields, banners or otherwise according to the law of arms. The volume also contains other notarial deeds, such as sales of land, reconstruction of damaged accommodation and the supply of provisions and fuel, which further preserve aspects of the past of Malta and the culture of its population.

The launch was attended by the Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, Dr Owen Bonnici, officials of Din l-Art Helwa and the President of the Malta George Cross Island Association, Judge Joseph Galea Debono.

The Notarial Archives volume holding the grant of the George Cross to Malta has undergone conservation treatment through a successful collaboration between Din l-Art Helwa and the Notarial Archives Foundation. The initiative was taken up following a guided visit last year to the Notarial Archives for Din l-Art Helwa members on the initiative of former council member Ian Camilleri. The restoration was carried out by paper conservator Alejandra Molano Contreras. The volume required various interventions, such as surface cleaning, removal of old repairs, spine repair, and cover repair. A protective enclosure was created to house the volume safely and securely. All treatments were carried out using the highest quality grade conservation materials and following current and international conservation practice and work ethic. The conservation treatment was carried out under the supervision of Head of Conservation Dr



*The enrolment of the act drawn by the Chief Notary to Government of the award of the George Cross*



*L. to r. Dr Joan Abela, the Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, Dr Owen Bonnici, Dr Theresa Zammit Lupi, Ms Maria Grazia Cassar*

# Maurice Caruana Curran

## *Nostalgic Memories of a Heritage Related Association with a Focus on Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa and the Hal Millieri Story*

Mario Buhagiar

*This is the first of a two-part series by Professor Mario Buhagiar.*

**Abstract:**

*This contribution seeks to honour the memory of Judge Maurice Caruana Curran as a key protagonist in the founding of a Heritage Protection sensibility which conditioned Malta's Post-Independence planning legislation. The story it unfolds takes a nostalgic stroll down memory lane to the short, but culturally fertile, period 1967-1970, when Din l-Art Helwa was in its golden first years. It tells of a fortuitous heritage-related initiative that provided a meaningful context to the setting up of an association culturally motivated teenagers and the rescue of an important late medieval church. Largely based on diary entries, miscellaneous notebooks and contemporary newspaper cuttings, its chief concern is to provide a factually correct account and to give an often bypassed merit to some of the major protagonists. This is especially the case in the Hal Millieri story.*

### **Maurice Caruana Curran and Din l-Art Helwa in Perspective**

The founding of a National Trust, in July 1965, by Maurice Caruana Curran (1918-2015), assisted by a cohort of scholars, intellectuals, and eminent personalities (including a small but significant element of foreign residents), is best considered in the perspective of the outburst of interest in the Maltese national identity that spontaneously responded to the granting of Independence in September 1964. Its aim was to ensure the preservation of Malta's built heritage and to conserve areas of natural beauty to be enhanced, understood and enjoyed by present and future generations. Judiciously cashing in on the national sentiment, Caruana Curran, inspirationally branded the Trust 'Din l-Art Helwa', grafting it in this way to the Maltese national anthem. This was an astutely calculated name which spelt out the Trust's commitment to become a key player in the conservation policy of the government of Independent Malta.



*The Chapel of Hal Millieri*

Maurice Caruana Curran was a highly erudite man, a legal luminary and a universally respected judge. It was his high repute and impeccable organisation skills that gave the Trust national and international credibility. It is to his credit that, in 1967, it was admitted full member of Europa Nostra, the federation of Europe's Heritage Societies and a consultative agency of the

Council of Europe. He was quick to realise that the achievement of Independence and the diversification of the economy from a military and naval bias to a tourism-oriented one brought with it an unprecedented threat to the built and natural heritage.

In July 1966 Din l-Art Helwa profited from the Government's decision to compile, with the assistance of the Council of Europe's Programme for Cultural Co-operation, a **Protective Inventory of Monuments and Sites** to form a basis for its planning policy. The Project was directed by Pietro Gazzola (1908-1979), an authority on the conservation and rehabilitation of heritage sites, assisted by Dott. Ottorino Tognetti, who had co-ordinated a similar project in Sabbioneta, Italy. The undertaking was remitted to the then National Museum Department and I was transferred on secondment by the Department of Education to assist in Tognetti's survey of the island and its division into protective zones (Urban, Natural, Historical, Archaeological and Scientific), card-indexed and delineated with a degree of protection on a detailed map.<sup>1</sup> This brought me into contact with Maurice Caruana Curran whose perceptive advice contributed to the project. The coastal belt received special attention and Maurice presented to the annual meeting of the General Assembly of Europa Nostra (Strasbourg, June 1967) an incisive paper "Problems of Coastal Preservation in Malta" on the need for an immediate conservation action. This was followed, a year later, by the publication of a study of the coast to which I contributed a report on the work in progress on the **Protective Inventory**.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Background to Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa**

The roots of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa lie in an Art and Archaeological Circle that I founded at the St Joseph Secondary Technical School, Paola, where I was Visiting Master for History, in 1966-67. The Circle organised extra-curricular classes on the Maltese heritage and visits to museums and archaeological sites, and published a cyclostyled newsletter. Its activities attracted attention. Fr Victor Camilleri (1933-2011), curator of the St Agatha Catacombs and Museum, offered it the opportunity to clear a still unexplored burial-chamber in the catacomb complex and to study and make accurate drawing of the enigmatic carved stone plaques in the museum collection. The portfolio of drawings is now in the collection of Malta University Library.

In May 1967 the Circle organised an interschool art competition on a heritage theme with a prestigious adjudicating board composed, among others, of Chev. Vincenzo Bonello (1891-1969) and artist Esprit Barthet (1919-1999). It was inaugurated by the Hon. Minister of Education, Culture and Tourism, Dr Paolo Borg Olivier (1901-1996) and blessed by Vicar General Bishop Mgr E. Galea (1891-1974) in the presence of the Director of Education Miss Margaret Mortimer (1911-1998).<sup>3</sup> Maurice Caruana Curran, who was among the distinguished guests, elaborated on the importance of motivating youths on the protection of heritage protection.

A crucial presence was that of Fr George Serracino-Inglott S.J., history master at St Aloysius College, where he had set up a similar archaeological society with the assistance of which he was surveying the Early Christian Necropolis at Salini Bay.<sup>4</sup> We were in regular contact and I recall a meeting, I believe some time in March, at his family home in St Paul Street, Valletta, when, in the company of his brother Fr Peter, we discussed the benefits of merging our two circles into a single youth heritage front and encouraging the participation of other schools. Miss Judith Wood (later Mrs Vella Bonavita), history teacher at the Sacred Heart Convent School, and Mr Victor Darmenia, headmaster of the Upper Secondary School, Naxxar, offered their cooperation. The idea of forming a youth branch of Din l-Art Helwa followed as a natural consequence. The initiative was taken by George Serracino-Inglott who contacted Maurice Caruana Curran.

### **Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa: Programming and Ideals**

Maurice Caruana Curran welcomed the idea with characteristic enthusiasm and asked George and me for an informal meeting at his Valletta residence. Dr Roger Vella Bonavita, who showed keen interest, was also present. With the backing of the Council of Din l-Art Helwa, an ad hoc committee, composed, in addition to ourselves, of Miss Judith Wood, Mr Victor Darmenia and Fr Norbert Ellul Vincent OFM, was set up to programme the

society and draft a statute. Miss Ann Amato-Gauci (now Mrs Gingell Littlejohn), Mr Vincent Cassar and Mr James (Jimmy) Evans (representing the teenagers) were later co-opted. Maurice Caruana Curran was always available with advice and, when he could afford the time, to chair a meeting. News of our activity spread quickly and we were conscious of a good response. A lengthy discussion was the branding of the society but we finally agreed on 'Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa' which we considered young people would find enticing. It however imposed an age limit which we often found necessary to overlook.

With hindsight we thought big and were overly ambitious. The statute had an 'A 'and' B' category. **Category A** was programmed to cater to a wide spectrum of youths who would be required 'to take a solemn pledge to commit themselves by word and example to the promotion of an awareness of Malta's historical and natural heritage and impress on the public at large the need to safeguard it'. The pledge was to be annually renewed at a solemn ceremony presided over by the Head of State or his representative. **Category B** was much more exclusive and demanding. It was to be composed 'of a maximum of forty teenagers, above the age of fourteen, selected by interview, who would commit themselves to (i) follow classes on the Maltese heritage (ii) undergo training in research work under competent supervision (iii) assist, when required, in fieldwork under professional guidance'.

In early May 1967 Maurice Caruana Curran, George Serracino-Inglott and I addressed a press conference at the Headquarters of Din l-Art Helwa. The creation of a youth branch of the Trust was welcomed by all sections of the press and the reports included application-forms for each of the two categories.<sup>5</sup> The response was beyond expectation. For **Category B** alone we had 250 applicants!<sup>6</sup> A meeting for prospective members was organised on Saturday May 27, in one of the large lecture rooms at the Valletta campus of the then Royal University of Malta. I opened the proceedings as acting chairman of the provisional Board of Directors, while George Serracino-Inglott elaborated



*27 May 1967. Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa is launched at the Royal University of Malta, Valletta, Lecture Room 8. Mr (later Professor) Mario Buhagiar, first Chairman of the Youth Section's Board of Directors, makes the founding address to a hall crowded with youths in the presence of the founder of the Youth Section, Fr George Serracino Inglott, S.J., and its other directors, Mr (later Dr) Roger Vella Bonavita, Miss Judith Woods, Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti, O.F.M., and Mr Victor Darmenia.*



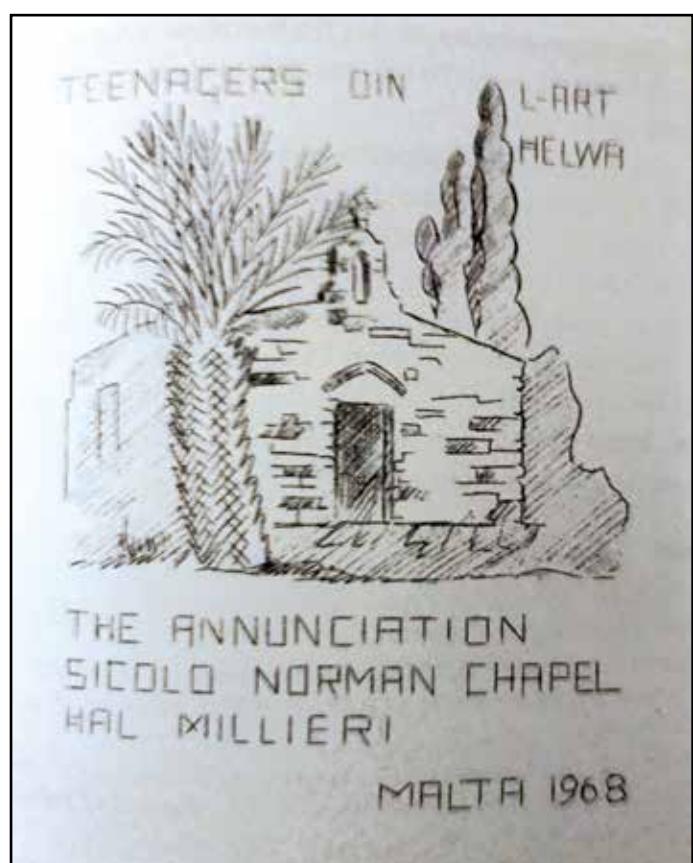
*The response to the call for the formation of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa, the Youth Section of the organisation, was overwhelming. 250 youths from all over Malta enrolled and are seen here during the launch meeting at the Royal University of Malta. Recognisable are front row: Fr George Serracino Inglott, second left; second row: l. to r. Tonio Casapinta, James Evans, Ann Amato-Gauci (later Gingell Littlejohn), Mary Borda (now Sister Maria Borda, M.M.M.); seventh row: extreme right Brian German. Photo courtesy of Brian German.*

on the way teenagers could meaningfully contribute to heritage conservation.<sup>7</sup>

The Board of Directors was formally constituted by the Council of Din l-Art Helwa in the first week of June 1967. It was assisted by a sub-committee of teenagers led by James (Jimmy) Evans to whose single-minded dedication the success of the society is greatly indebted. One of the first activities was a cycle of lectures on Maltese history and heritage by the then leading authorities. They were given to packed audiences at the Gonzi Hall, Catholic Institute, Floriana and, when available, the British Council Centre, Valletta. Lecturers included Joseph Cassar I Pullicino, Architect Michael Ellul and Godfrey Wettinger. I especially recall a thought-provoking talk, at the British Council, in March 1968, by architect and urban designer Ralph White on "The Immorality of Bad Taste: Some aspects of conservation in the Maltese Village". White had taken up residence in Malta and together with his friend and colleague, Thomas Foster was carrying out, under the joint auspices of the National Museum and Din l-Art Helwa, a survey of listed buildings in the historic cores of a select number of Maltese villages.<sup>8</sup> Both of them were subsequently generous with help and advice in the Hal Millieri Project.

Ralph White's lecture had the makings of a mission statement for Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa and when, in 1969, the association published the first and a regrettably only number of a projected quarterly journal.<sup>9</sup> It was the obvious choice for the leading article. The journal was dedicated to Fr George Serracino Inglott who had meanwhile left the island for missionary work in Chile. In the three short years of its existence, Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa had earned for itself an excellent reputation for its conservation initiatives. These reached a climax in the work carried out in the church of the Annunciation of the Virgin at Hal Millieri.

1968 and 1969 publications by Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa



### The Hal Millieri Achievement

The most important achievement of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa was the rescue from the neglect that had reduced it to a state of near dilapidation, the church of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri, Żurrieq. In so doing it raised a general public awareness of its importance as one of Malta's most significant medieval monuments and paved the way for its scientific restoration and scholarly study. The Teenagers' work consisted in tidying the church of accumulated rubbish and (more toilsome), its precincts and approaches of thirteen packed truckloads of prickly pears, loose stones and miscellaneous waste material. This took them several months of hard-working weekends. Their dedication transformed the derelict site into an oasis of old Maltese charm. Roamer's Column (*The Sunday Times of Malta*, March 17, 1968) paid them a richly deserved tribute:

*'I was at Hal Millieri on Sunday afternoon and the approaches to the small church were alive with young boys and girls clearing the rubble, stones and decaying prickly pear branches from around the structure. The work is being done ... under the energetic leadership of ... George Serracino Inglot S.J. and two of the Board members, Mr Roger Vella Bonavita a lecturer in History at the Royal University and Mr Mario Buhagiar of the Education Department who has been seconded to the Museum to work on the inventory of Malta's historical heritage being prepared for the Council of Europe. As the directors stressed their task is not restoration -- they are'*

*neither equipped nor have adequate knowledge for this – but the upkeep of the church ... The actual restoration, particularly of the medieval frescoes, would be the task of experts ...<sup>10</sup>*

An article by Christian Hansen put the Teenagers' achievement in a better perspective:

*'At a time of frantic development when ... Malta's endowment of natural beauty is in many cases being ruthlessly and tastelessly exhausted in the interest of avid speculation ... It is left to the enthusiasm of a group of school children, some now growing into young manhood and womanhood literally to salvage Malta's heritage. But enthusiasm is not enough: there must be self-discipline of learning patiently the art or science of archaeological research; there must be devotion and sacrifice of personal freedom; there must be experienced guidance. All these valuable assets these young people have. The Board of Directors of Teenagers "Din l-Art Helwa", their tireless leader Fr George Serracino Inglott S.J., Mr M. Buhagiar, Mr and Mrs R. Vella Bonavita, Mr V. Darmenia, Mr V. Cassar, and Fr N. Ellul Vincenti O.F.M are a constant inspiration and stimulus to these young people. Let me instance just one example of their enterprise which I have been privileged to see ... the beautifully simple little ... chapel of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri. It has stood there ... for years but from the time of decay and desertion of the village gradually disappearing amid a forest of weeds and giant prickly pear until it was impossible to recognise its existence, or unless one had the knowledge to realise that there was anything there but a decaying barn... When I was taken there we passed through a pleasant wrought iron gate into the quiet little church yard. Here a winding path, clean white and neatly gravelled led to the main door new and put there by the young people themselves. All around the building the neat path wound and beyond its edge the prickly pear were reduced to order or eradicated, the shrubs trimmed and the other trees pruned while the tall cypress brooded over all. Facing the lovely simple south door ... was the little burial ground neatly cleared and made tidy... The church had been cleared of rubbish and made clean so that the beautiful simple pointed arches stood out and the magnificent mural paintings were revealed. All this heavy and sustained labour had been done by these young people who call themselves "Teenagers Din l-Art Helwa." ...<sup>11</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> MUS 1969, 8; MUS 1970, 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Buhagiar 1968, 90-93.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times of Malta*, May 26, 1967, Staff Reporter, "Art Exhibition at Secondary Technical School"; *The Malta News*, May 26, 1967 "Archaeological Circle Exhibition."

<sup>4</sup> Serracino Inglott 1964.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, *Iz-Żmien*, May 8 1967, Staff Reporter "Żgħażaq biex iħarsu l-wirt ta' Malta".

<sup>6</sup> *Il-Berqa*, May 29, 1967, "L-Ewwel Laqgha Generali tat-Teenagers ta' Din l-Art Helwa". The report includes an impressive photograph of the packed lecture room.

<sup>7</sup> *Il-Berqa*, May 29, 1967.

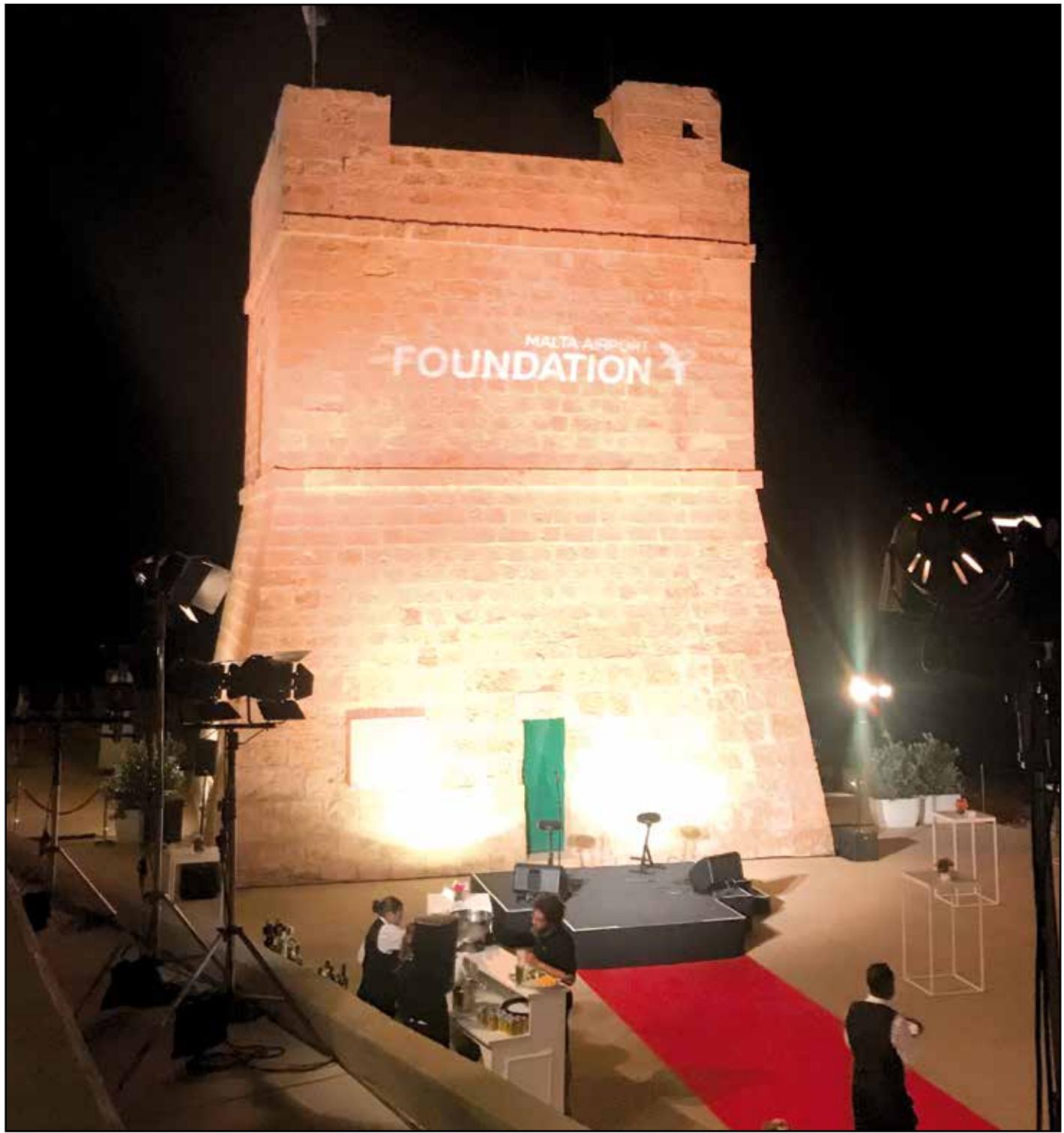
<sup>8</sup> White and Foster 1967; White and Foster 1969.

<sup>9</sup> *Teenagers Din l-Art Helwa Quarterly* vol. 1 no. 1 (ed. A. Buhagiar), National Press, Pieta (Malta, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> *The Sunday Times of Malta*, March 17, 1968, "Roamer's Column: The lesson of Hal-Millieri".

<sup>11</sup> *The Sunday Times of Malta*, October, 22, 1968, Christian Hansen "Youths Care of Maltese Heritage".

## Ta' Xutu Tower regains its glory



The restored 17C historic Ta' Xutu Tower at Wied iż-Żurrieq is illuminated for the night of its inauguration on 10 July 2019.

Xutu Tower is the 10th coastal watch tower saved for the nation by Din l-Art Helwa since its foundation and included an important landscaping project and regeneration of the surrounding cliff garigue. The project was made possible with the generous

sponsorship of the Malta Airport Foundation and with the collaboration of ERA and of the Qrendi Local Council.

The tower is opened by Din l-Art Helwa volunteers from Monday to Sunday between 10 a.m. and 12 noon, and on Friday between 12.30 and 15.30. More information about the tower and its restoration in the next Vigilo.

# The Xemxija and Dellija Batteries in St Paul's Bay

## Stanley Farrugia Randon



*Charles Amadeus de Berey, 1720,  
Carte des Isles de Malte du Goze  
et Du Cuming, 1720, Dellija is  
numbered as 26 and labelled as  
Battery at the end of the Calle,  
and Xemxija labelled number 28  
and labelled as A Great Battery.*

*No. 27 is a redoubt*

with walls fitted with musketry loopholes to defend an eventual landward approach to the battery. Some of the batteries were fitted with one large blockhouse which spanned the entire length of the gorge. The land front of most batteries was also fitted with a redan, a V-shaped wall, projecting outwards from the centre of the land front and also fitted with musketry loopholes. The coastal batteries had a semicircular or polygonal gun platform but not all of them had embrasures for the placement of cannons in their parapet wall.

The entrance to all batteries was from the landward side. A drawbridge was usually fitted to the gateway but it seems that not all batteries were actually fitted with one. Design-wise, hardly any two batteries are the same. They all differed in some detail from one another, either in size, shape of the artillery platform, number of embrasures on the parapet, or the layout of the barrack blocks and landward defences. This variety may reflect the personal preferences of the relatively large number of military engineers who were present on the island in the years 1714–16.



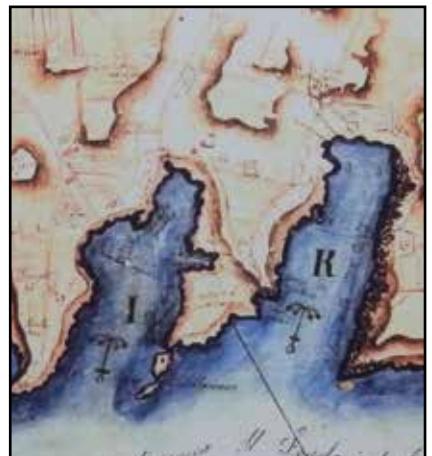
*Carte des Isles de Malte et du  
Goze, Brion de la Tour, 1784*

Coastal batteries were intended to open fire on troops entering a port. When possible batteries were erected on each side of a bay to make the most of their cross-fire. Their high and solid parapets, with embrasures, were intended to support heavy cannon firing. The Maltese coastal batteries built by the Knights of St John between 1715 and 1716 followed a pattern evolved by the French at the end of the 17th century. Blockhouses (or rooms) at the gorge (rear part) of the battery accommodated the garrison and the ammunition. The gorge was further protected

constructed on the Northern coast of Malta. Two of these were constructed on each side of St Paul's Bay.

### The Dellija Battery

The Dellija battery was so called because it was constructed on the Eastern side of the bay which is most of its time in the shade provided by the Wardija heights (Maltese: *delli*). It was constructed in 1715 and a Latin inscription was fixed recording that Grand Master Raimund Perellos y Roccafull built the redoubt to match the zeal of ‘the magnanimous prince’ Philippus Vendosme of the Priory of France to defend the maritime integrity of the bay against the enemy with



*1833 Fr Felic Cutajar Map1 The  
Dellija Battery is Number 52 labelled  
as Batteria alla parte Destra della  
Spiaggia and 53 is the Xemxija battery  
labelled as Batteria alla parte Sinistra  
della spiaggia. He notes they had 4  
cannon each*

the backing of the Council of the Order in 1715. Three coats of arms were also erected, one representing the Order, the other the Grand Master Perellos and the other France as the architect Vendosme was French.

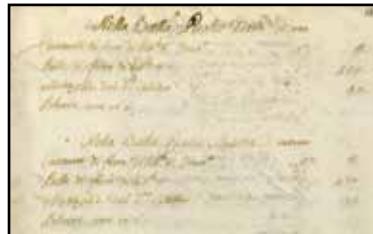
The ‘Batteria A Drita di S. Paolo’ was constructed at a cost of 1105 scudi, 1 tari, 11 grani and 4 piccoli. Work consisted of excavation, construction of a blockhouse with 13 arches, construction of the scarp, counterscarp and parapet, embrasures for the placing of cannon, construction of a bridge and a guard room. Costings also included pointing, plastering and painting works and the passing of canals and piping for water drainage.

It consisted of a large blockhouse built at the gorge of a rectangular platform with one of its corners rounded off and with a parapet 3 courses high above the level of the cordon. High walls flanked the battery to protect it from the high grounds around it.

In 1770 an inspection of the ‘Batteria Puales Destra’ revealed that there were six 6-pounder French iron cannons, 420 iron cannon balls, 90 grapeshots but there was no gun powder. These figures were exactly those reported for the Xemxija battery in the same year.

In 1829 the Chief Royal Engineer Officer George Whitmore recorded that the battery was abandoned and in considerable need of repair. Apertures were missing and the well did not have a cover. It required 130 square feet of masonry, 920 square feet of pavement, 225 square feet of roofing, 1490 square feet of pointing, one door 7.9 by 3.7 feet, one door 7.3 by 3.7 feet, one shutter 5.7 by 3.6 feet, one door 2.3 by 3.7 feet, a cover to the

Most batteries were surrounded with a rock-hewn ditch, and others had a ditch communicating directly with the sea, depending on the nature of the site. Others had only a shallow ditch protecting the redan or simply a pit in front of the main entrance. Some batteries which were constructed very close to the sea had their ditch filled with sea water. Several were



## *1770 report of the Dellija (Puales Destra) and Xemxija (Puales Sinistra) redoubts*

a summer residence together with their family. It was these residents that gave the name Dellija to this battery.

In March 1924 the battery was demolished as it was ‘blocking the way to modern traffic’. Professor Temi Zammit, then Director of the National Museum of Archaeology and Rector of the University of Malta was commissioned to prepare a sketch and plan where to erect the coats-of-arms and inscription which were removed from the battery before it was demolished. He also prepared the wording of a small plaque in Latin which was fixed to record the demolition of the Dellija redoubt.

The original coats-of-arms and inscription were removed to be safely preserved in the Museum of Archaeology. Copies of these coat of arms and inscription were affixed to a plinth. The parapet was retained but this was also removed when the roundabout and jetty were built after World War II. The plinth was rebuilt on the pavement to its present location.

## The Xemxija Battery

The Xemxija Battery was constructed in 1715 on the Western or sunny (Maltese: *xemxi*) side of the bay. It served to protect the bay from sea-borne enemy attacks until the first world war. It was later leased to private individuals who built an extension and used it as a summer residence together with their family. It was these residents that gave the name Xemxija to this battery.

An inscription in Latin on the side of the building in Latin states that the building is testimony of the gratitude of the Fra D. Emmanuel Arriás, Balí of the Order and Archbishop of Sevilla and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church.

### The Latin Inscription:

EMO.DNO. FR. D.EMMANUEL ARRIAS  
HIEROSOLIMITANI ORDINIS BAIULIVO  
MERITISSIMO  
NEC NON HISPALENSI ARCHIEPISCOPO  
AC S R ECCLESIA CARDINALI  
PLURIMIS EIUSDEM DEVINCTUS MUNERIBUS  
HUIUS PROPUGNACULI EXTRUCTIONEM  
AETERNUM GRATI ANIME TESTIMONIUM  
IDEM ORDO DICAVIT  
ANNO DNI M.D.CCXVI

It consists of a large blockhouse built at the gorge of a rectangular platform with one of its corners rounded off and with a parapet 3 courses high above the level of the cordon. High walls flanked the battery to protect it from the high grounds around it.

The 'Batteria A Sinistra Di S. Paolo' cost 1073 scudi. 9 tari, and 12 piccoli. Work included the construction of double walls, excavation works, trenching, levelling of the area, construction of the parapet wall, a bridge, construction of a blockhouse with 14

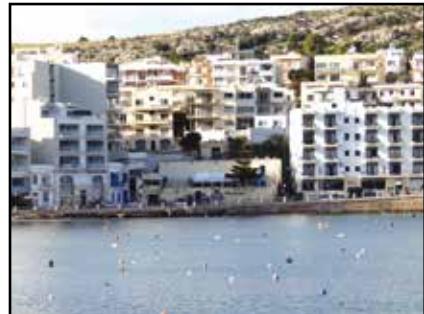
BATTERIA A DRITA DI S. PAOLO				29
Muro ad incassato	Lungo 8.00	Altezza 4.60	Larghezza 3.80	3.8.3.
Semicil.	L. 6.00	C. 3.00	A. 6.00	1.2.6. 1.2.5.
Semicil.	L. 3.00	C. 3.00	A. 4.00	1.2.2. 1.0.6. 2.
Semicil.	L. 4.00	C. 2.00	A. 4.00	1.4.7. 9.12.2.
Semicil.	L. 2.00	C. 2.00	A. 2.00	1.2.1. 1.2.1.
Contrafforte	L. 2.00	C. 2.00	A. 2.00	1.2.2. 2.8.
Scarpa	L. 9.00	C. 6.00	A. 5.00	2.8. 3.5.
Contrafforte della Porta	L. 4.00	C. 6.00	A. 2.00	3.7. 8.3.
Invauzione	L. 10.00	C. 7.00	A. 2.00	6.4. 9.18.1
Spianatura	L. 15.00	C. 3.00	A. 2.00	1.9. 3.12.3.
Terrazzo di accesso alla Porta	L. 15.00	C. 2.00	A. 2.00	1.6. 6.7.
Massiccio	L. 16.00	C. 3.00	A. 1.00	2.0. 1.13.2.
Arco n. 13. Semir. 2.4. C. 1.00				* 3.8. 6.
Due portali di Parapetto Semir. 2.00 C. 1.00 A. 1.00				1.8. *
Pontile di ferro				8.
Tabbia di ferro				5.0.
Ribocanturri di fianco leggermente				2.3.
quadriportico				3.
Canale di latore				3.
Camminando Muro ad incassato di 1.4 largo fino all' ingresso nella Piazzetta				7.
Porta di Piazzetta 40.200 C. 1.00 A. 1.00 L. 2.00 H. 2.00 Rete				2.6. 10. 15.
L. 1.00 C. 1.00 A. 1.00 H. 1.00 In Cima a 1.00 a 1.00				1.8.
Portone				4.6.
				7.11.05. 1.11.4.

*Manuscript showing the costings of the Dellija redoubt*

arches (as opposed to 13 arches in the case of the Dellija battery), a well, and a guard room with trapdoor. This also included pointing, plastering and painting works and the construction of canals and piping for water drainage.

During an inspection in 1770 the 'Batteria Puales Sinistra' was found to be armed with six 6-pounder French iron cannons, 420 iron cannon balls, 90 grapeshots but there was no gun powder. These figures are exactly those reported for the Dellija battery.

In 1829 the Chief Royal Engineer Officer George Whitmore reported that it was closed at the gorge and contained a building which was divided into three rooms. It was unoccupied and was in need of considerable repair. Apertures were missing and the well was uncovered. For its repair it required 549 square feet of masonry, 100 square feet of roofing, 2600 square feet of pointing, 1 door 7.9 by 3.7feet, 1 door 7.3 by 3.7feet, 1 shutter 5.7 by 3.6 feet, 1 door 2.3 by 3.7feet, a cover to the well 2.6 by 3feet, 1 pair of doors 7.10 by 5.3feet, 1 door 6.6 by 2.7feet and 1 shutter 5.10 by 3.6feet at a total cost of £59.3s.0½d.



*Xemxija redoubt today,  
engulfed by so called development!*

# Msida Bastion Garden of Rest Geothermal Project

## Luciano Mulè Stagno

### Horizon 2020 Research Project at Msida Bastion Garden

For many years now scientists have been sounding the alarm bells about climate change, and how humans are responsible for the alarming increase in carbon dioxide ( $\text{CO}_2$ ) in the atmosphere which is giving rise to the Earth slowly warming. This deceptively small change in average temperatures, 2-4°C over the next 50-100 years by most estimates, will result in catastrophic changes to our climate, our ecology and flora and fauna. Sea levels will rise, storms will become more violent and several places around the world could become almost uninhabitable. The obvious thing to do is to try to reduce the amount of  $\text{CO}_2$  we produce by burning less fuel, and one way to do that is to use renewable energy to produce electricity or heat.

When we think of renewable energy in Malta we immediately think about solar energy, since solar (photovoltaic) panels have become ubiquitous. Other forms of renewable energy in Malta include solar water heating and energy from waste. However a popular form of renewable energy in many parts of the world is geothermal energy. Geothermal energy can be harnessed in two ways. If the area is one which has a high thermal source as is the case of places like Iceland and some parts of Italy, one can find an aquifer with the suitable conditions to extract either very hot water or super-heated steam and use it directly to generate electricity. However another way to make use of geothermal energy is via heat pumps.

A heat pump is a device that transfers heat by evaporating a liquid and then releasing it by compressing that liquid. In reverse it can be used for cooling. Two places where we use heat pumps at home are in air conditioners (AC) and refrigerators. These are known as air-to-air heat pumps. In an AC the liquid collects heat from the outside, evaporates, and then releases the heat to the inside when it is compressed and converted back into a liquid. This is the reason ACs are much more efficient (and cost less) at heating than electric heaters – because they are not heating directly, but merely harvesting heat and transferring it from the outside to the inside. One way to make this process even more efficient is to put the heat transfer deep in the ground. Even a few metres underground, in the middle of winter the temperature could be close to 20°C thus making it easier to extract heat, and in the summer the ground temperature will be much cooler than the air thus making it much easier to take out the heat.

This method is well known and well developed but typically requires large disturbances to the grounds around the site and the use of large machinery. The premise of the project in which Din l-Art Helwa is participating is to develop geothermal systems for heating and cooling buildings in heritage and urban buildings where this type of intervention with large machinery is not possible or desirable. The project called GEO4CIVHIC - “Most

easy, efficient and low cost geothermal systems for retrofitting civil and historical buildings”, is being funded by the Horizon 2020 program of the European Union. It is led by CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy). There are 18 other partners besides DLH in a mix of industry, academia and NGOs. Other partners include the University of Padova, Friedrich Alexander University, Polytechnic University of Valencia and UNESCO.

The project kicked off last April 2018. It aims to develop the equipment needed, do simulations and testing at several sites around Europe. The Msida Bastion Garden will be one such site. As part of the project, a cooling and heating system will be installed in the building close to the street with heat exchangers in the ground. Very narrow boreholes will be drilled in non-sensitive areas to allow the heat exchange to occur. This part of the project will start happening in 2019. Once the system is installed its performance will be monitored for a couple of years and the results published. While this is a research project, its outcome can have tangible consequences helping countless historical and urban sites make use of renewable energy for heating and cooling.

The project is being led for DLH by Professor Luciano Mulè Stagno and supported by the Garden’s warden Paolo Ferrelli. The technical and administrative work is being performed by consultants hired by the project. Msida Bastion Garden was chosen as the site for this project as it has easy street access and a sizeable building close to the street. DLH has been making plans to better use that building and having it cooled in summer and heated in winter will certainly make it more attractive.



*Visit to the Garden of Rest by GE4CIVHIC participants*

# International National Trusts Organisation Conference - Bermuda

## Martin Galea

The International National Trusts Organization held its biannual conference in Bermuda last March. The Organization has over 70 member trusts from around the world. From the largest, the National Trust of England and Wales, to the smallest from St Helena in the middle of the Atlantic, stretching from America to Australia, Jordan to Curaçao. Din l-Art Helwa has been a member of this organization since inception with our former president Martin Scicluna forming part of the steering committee to set it up. Since then we have had a seat on the committee through Simone Mizzi, and now myself as a trustee, since the organization is now a registered trust in the UK.



*INTO Trustees in session*

The Conference discusses many things: how to make heritage more relevant, the issues of fundraising, of erosion and decay, making museums and exhibitions more relevant, and 'telling the story'. However it also discusses how the organization is to move forward. This year a milestone decision was taken to implement a *reciprocal visitor scheme*. It will initially be introduced as a pilot scheme in which Din l-Art Helwa will be participating. The reciprocal visitor scheme will allow members of each National Trust to visit properties of other National Trusts around the world on presentation of the membership card. This membership card will, in our case, be the Din l-Art Helwa membership card. To help members, we will over the course of the year be putting all the trusts and their properties on a website, so one can see what is potentially available when travelling. We are very excited by this and it really enhances the value of membership with Din l-Art Helwa.

I came away from the conference happy to have met like-minded people from across the globe, who discussed common problems, sought common solutions, and who injected a level of intellectual debate into the complex world of National Trusts.

INTO is a young organization in the world, just 10 years old and it is starting to find its voice. It will soon be loud. And not too soon.



*INTO Trustees outside the Bermudian National Trust headquarters which itself is a national monument*

# Planet Earth's Champions

**George Camilleri**



You have inherited hurricanes, floods, droughts, cyclones, freezing cold, heat waves, acid rain, sea level rise, ocean acidification, damage to eco systems, famines, depleting water resources, failing human health.

Your industries, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy, construction, insurance, financial services, tourism are being harmed by climate change caused by the global increase in temperature.

Your flora and fauna are dying and are being displaced by wildfires to search for better life conditions. Food production is endangered, causing disease, death, destruction, loss of economic livelihoods and migrations of climate refugees.

We have condemned you to life in a world thrown off balance by a global rise in temperature caused by our mismanagement of its resources. This is our legacy to you, what we are leaving to you in our will. Previous generations have irresponsibly mismanaged the earth's resources from day one. Hamster-like, we have been blindly turning the wheels of industry faster and faster over the years to increase production while squeezing the planet of its resources in pursuit of economic expansion. Needless unjustified wars also helped to boost the economy, producing war machines that pollute the atmosphere while being manufactured.

It all started way back in Neolithic times, when we started producing more than we needed for our personal consumption. It increased during the Industrial Revolution when workers' productivity shot up. Technological developments since then have further boosted productivity. When workers have the ability

to produce more than they need, the surplus will be taken up by the motivated few who made it their business to acquire the means of production. In pre-industrial times, this resulted in a massive land grab which spawned the landed aristocratic elite.

That wealth inequality continued and even grew with the Industrial Revolution. Owners of wealth invested in vast production complexes employing thousands of workers. Each year they added a substantial share of those workers' production to their wealth, while workers earned barely enough to survive and rarely had significant wealth. This pattern has continued up to the present day, when wealthy investors may hold substantial stakes in firms collectively employing millions. Global warming





there are more choices available for everybody. Capitalists seek to discover what people want and then produce it as efficiently as possible. Free-market capitalism is ruthless in its profit-and-loss discipline and it has led us to the edge of a precipice where our planet is running out of control. We have all been guilty of jumping on to the bandwagon and gorging on the earth's resources to satisfy our material cravings.

In the meantime, Oxfam reports that "The richest 1% of the world's population is worth more than the other 99%" while the recently released Carbon Majors Report highlights how only "100 companies are responsible for 71% of global emissions". And the World Resources Institute tells us that "The top three greenhouse gas emitters—China, the EU and the US—contribute more than half of total global emissions, while the bottom 100 countries only account for 3.5". The *Times of Malta* reports that a European Commission progress report found that Malta had failed to reach its emission reduction target "every year since 2013" and would again need to buy emission reduction credits from other countries that had exceeded theirs.

The reality is that since politicians are incapable of taking meaningful action to address the climate crisis, the corporate greed responsible for astronomical amounts of pollution goes unchecked. It isn't true that solving the climate crisis is nothing more than a matter of turning off the water when we brush our teeth or using a metal straw. To stop the climate crisis, governments must be held accountable in taking action to solve the climate crisis.

The incontrovertible fact is that our generation has not managed to stem the spiralling global temperature rise enough to avert the disastrous consequences of climate change, and worse is yet to come. Sadly, scientists have found that tropical countries, which tend to be poorer and to have contributed less to climate change, are set to disproportionately suffer the more severe environmental changes.

There is however a ray of hope in that youth globally have become the vanguard in the fight against climate injustice. They are tired of having to live in a world created by people who do not have their best interests at heart. Climate Change is not an isolated phenomenon. It is the real, imminent threat of a planet that cannot support life. It isn't a distant threat, it's happening right now. The impacts of this crisis will be devastating for future generations.

It is heartening to see that youths are now protesting and employing advocacy as ways to combat climate change inaction. In November 2016, a group of 21 young people between the ages of 9 and 20 sued the US government for failing to take adequate and appropriate action towards climate change and protecting public resources, resulting in a violation of the younger generations' constitutional rights to life, liberty and property.

The Youth Climate March also known as the "Zero Hour" March, held in Washington, DC on 21 July 2018, along with sister marches that took place around the world, are testament to the fact that the world's youth do not depend on adults to help improve their lives on this planet. This teenager-led movement used the power of social media and advocacy to raise awareness and call for immediate action towards climate change.

Closer to home, students are following in the footsteps of Greta Thunberg, the founder of the Youth Strike for Climate movement who has been nominated for the Nobel peace prize. Thunberg began a solo protest in Sweden in August 2018 but has since inspired students around the globe. On March 15 this year, students and environmental activists met at the University of Malta campus, walked to Valletta and gathered in front of Parliament to make noise and to cry out for change.

Keep it up, you are Planet Earth's champions. Youth has always had the power to change things. We, the failed generations, can only admire your energy and applaud you in your efforts to right what is wrong.

is the consequence of the uncontrolled expansion of polluting industrial production requiring the burning of fossil fuels to produce the energy required to generate profit.

Humans are mostly selfish and competitive, and economic activity is motivated by individual self-interest to the detriment of everybody else. The phrase 'tragedy of the commons' is an economic term that describes the situation when individuals act according to their self interest to the detriment of everybody else. Examples of this are the cod fisheries breakdown in the 1960s, the present Blue Fin tuna crisis, plastic garbage patches in the ocean, the Earth's blighted atmosphere, traffic congestion, land exploitation, the list goes on.

Capitalism takes the position that "*greed is good*," which its supporters say is a positive thing — greed drives profits and profits drive innovation and product development, which means

&lt;/div

# President George Vella receives Din l-Art Helwa

HE President George Vella recently received officials and Council members of the heritage organisation Din l-Art Helwa, led by its newly elected Executive President Professor Alex Torpiano, at The Palace, Valletta. President Vella reaffirmed his willingness to confer his Distinguished Patronage to the organisation. He was keen to hear about the organisation's recent achievements in the field of cultural heritage, about its key restoration projects such as that of the Our Lady of Victory Church in Valletta and the crucial involvement and education of youth such as that initiated through Project Nemo currently in development at The White Tower in Aħrax, Mellieħa, partly made possible with the financial support of the Malta Community Chest Fund, Fund for Voluntary Organisations.

President Abela and Professor Torpiano exchanged views and concerns about the need for the country to be more aware of the importance of the natural environment and the countryside and agreed that their value for the general well-being of society had to be better promoted if they were to be preserved for future generations.

Professor Torpiano thanked the President on behalf of Din l-Art Helwa for extending his patronage to the organisation and invited the President to view the work being undertaken by volunteers at the heritage sites it manages. He also presented the President with the publication *Heritage Saved – Din l-Art Helwa 1965-2015*, published by the organisation on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary, which gives an illustrated account of the heritage sites saved for the nation by Din l-Art Helwa since its foundation. The President thanked DLH and its volunteers for the sterling contribution they have made to the country over the decades.



*Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, presents a copy of Heritage Saved – Din l-Art Helwa 1965-2015 to the President of Malta, Dr George Vella*



*Din l-Art Helwa officials and Council members of Din l-Art Helwa visit the President. From l. to r. Professor Lucio Mulè Stagno, Martin Scicluna, Hon. Treasurer, Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President, HE President George Vella, Cettina Caruana Curran, Josie Ellul Mercer, Maria Grazia Cassar, Martin Galea*

# More honours for Din l-Art Helwa Founder President Maurice Caruana Curran

## Swieqi Award

On 30 March 2019, Din l-Art Helwa's late Founder President, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, was honoured by the Swieqi Local Council when he was posthumously awarded the *Gieħ is-Swieqi* for his lifetime contribution to Malta in the field of cultural heritage with his foundation of Din l-Art Helwa, and for his pursuit of justice and his many landmark judgments while serving as a judge on the bench in the Malta courts.

## Presentation to Europa Nostra

Simone Mizzi, Board Member of Europa Nostra, recently presented a copy of the *Liber Amicorum, Maurice Caruana Curran: Guardian of Heritage and Justice* to the President and Board of Europa Nostra on behalf of Din l-Art Helwa. The publication carries an article from Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary General of Europa Nostra, about our Founder Present, describing him as an early and committed European.

Din l-Art Helwa became a member of Europa Nostra in 1967, making Malta the seventh country to join the pan European network of heritage organisations.



*Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran receives the 'Gieħ is-Swieqi' award from the Mayor of Swieqi, Mr Noel Muscat, on behalf of her late husband*



*Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary General of Europa Nostra and Simone Mizzi*



*From l. to r.  
Guy Clausse, Executive Vice President,  
Professor Dr Herman Partzinger, Executive President of  
Europa Nostra, Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary  
General of Europa Nostra, Simone Mizzi and Dr Huub Dook,  
Treasurer of Europa Nostra*

# Trailblazing on Heritage and Justice

## Petra Caruana Dingli

### BOOK REVIEW: *Maurice Caruana Curran: Guardian of Heritage and Justice*

**Edited by Ann Gingell Littlejohn, Anthony Bonanno and Joseph Galea Debono (Malta: BDL, 2018), pp. 352**

Judge Maurice Caruana Curran (1918-2015) lived until his late nineties, enjoying a long and eventful life. A number of his friends and former colleagues have gathered in this book to pay their respects to his memory and to commemorate his life in writing. Their collection of warm and personal tributes to him are now published and available to read in this nicely-presented *Liber Amicorum*. Anyone who knew the distinguished judge will surely enjoy going down memory lane with them.

Besides his eminent legal career, he was active in sports, enjoyed acting on the theatre stage and writing poetry. I met him as founding president of the non-governmental organisation Din l-Art Helwa. He had established the organisation years before in 1965, with a group of other interested friends, to campaign for the protection of Malta's built and natural heritage. This was a sign of the times, as following Malta's attainment of independence in 1964 there was a surge of interest in Maltese identity – in its traditions and language as well as its architecture and landscapes. Today Din l-Art Helwa is still going strong, as one of the oldest environmental NGOs active in Malta.

Caruana Curran led Din l-Art Helwa for 33 years, then handing the reins to the renowned archaeologist Professor Anthony Bonanno, who is one of the three editors of this volume of essays, with Ann Gingell Littlejohn and Judge Joseph Galea Debono.

Bonanno was followed as the organisation's president by Martin Scicluna and Martin Galea. Another sign of the times is that three women then stepped into the leadership role, beginning with my own election as Din l-Art Helwa president in 2010 and followed by Caruana Curran's daughter, Simone Mizzi, and then Maria Grazia Cassar.

For as long as his health permitted, Caruana Curran continued to attend events at the Din l-Art Helwa headquarters in Melita Street, Valletta, next door to his former family residence. He was 50 years older than me so our paths at Din l-Art Helwa only crossed briefly, but I clearly remember his final years when he would still appear at the top of the steep staircase, determined to attend a lecture or social event, or to address an audience of members.

The strength and continuity of the organisation which he founded is attested by the fact that all its former presidents remained engaged in its activities and development well after their terms ended. Caruana Curran's wife Cettina also continues to be actively involved.

His legacy in the heritage field is central to Caruana Curran's achievements, but many of the contributors to this volume remember him best in his principal role, as a lawyer and judge working in the law courts of Valletta. He retired in 1983, after a distinguished legal career. He is well-remembered for his involvement in some very high-profile cases.

His many interests and activities provide the framework of the book, its arms and legs, but its beating heart is the man himself. The volume begins with a foreword and introduction by

Prosper Cardinal Grech and a prologue with biographical details and personal memories of her father by Simone Mizzi. The first section, entitled 'Up Close and Personal', contains further memories of Caruana Curran by Victor Aquilina, Nicholas de Piro, Norbert Ellul-Vincenti, Albert Ganado, Austin Gatt, John Mamo, Peter Vassallo and Paul Xuereb.

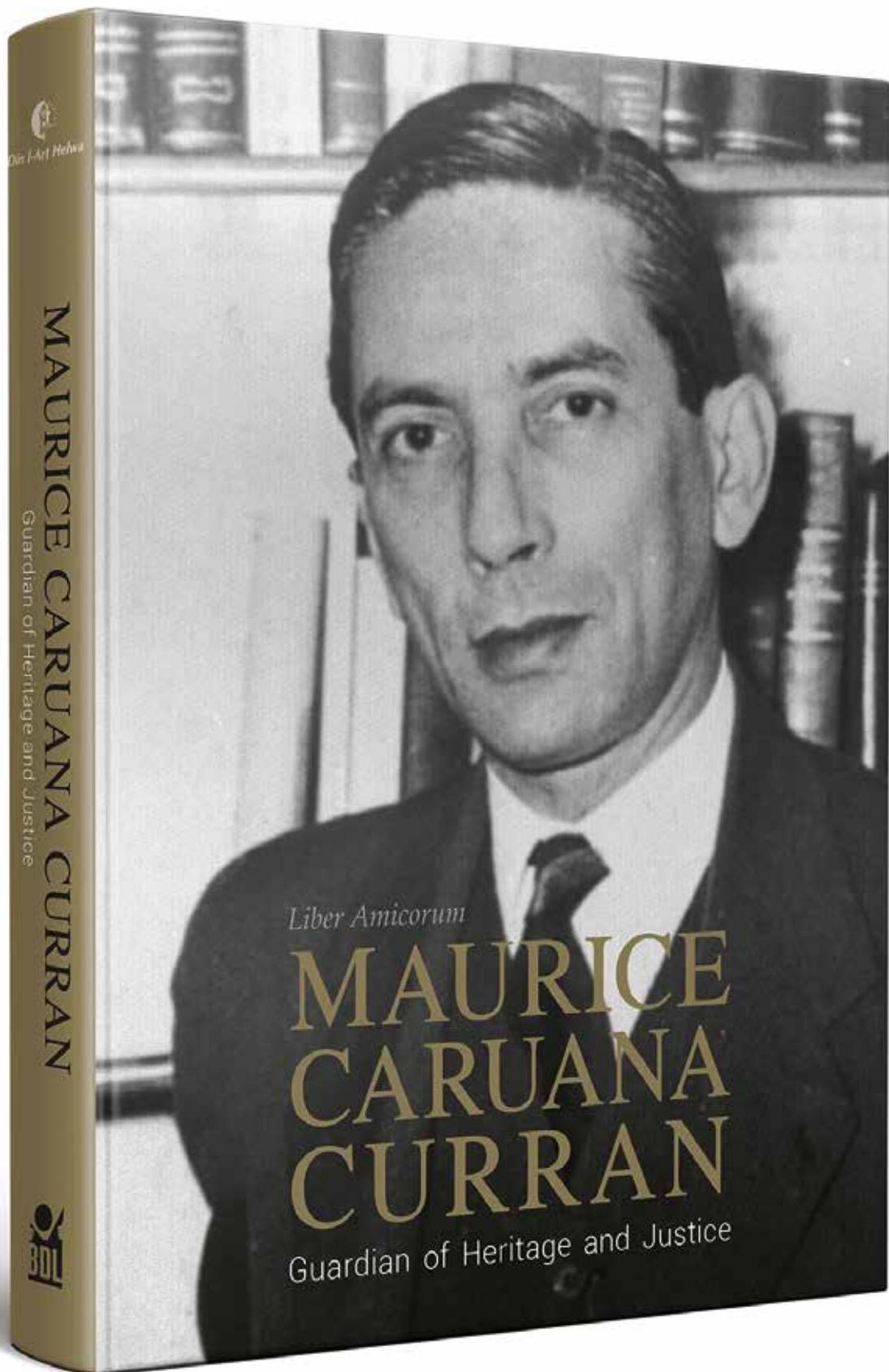
A genial picture emerges of a sociable, intelligent, amiable man who enjoyed notably long conversations, both face-to-face and over the telephone. His never-ending calls are fondly remembered, perhaps describing his latest favourite book to a friend, or interrupting the busy editor at the *Times of Malta* to dissect an article or discuss the latest cricket results. This personal side of the book is enriched with numerous photos documenting moments of his life.

The descriptions and appreciation of Caruana Curran's work in the legal field, mostly written by former students and colleagues, are of particular interest. This second section, entitled 'Of Justice and Heritage', contains contributions by Carmel A. Agius, Kevin Aquilina, David J. Attard, Austin Bencini, Giovanni Bonello, Tonio Borg, Joseph A. Filletti, Henry Frendo, Michael Frendo, Joseph Galea Debono, Joseph Micallef Stafrace, Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, David Scicluna and Francis Zammit Dimech. Collectively they describe his detailed and significant court judgements, his legal insights and sense of fairness, his distinctive and elaborate use of language, and his strong presence and sense of drama in the courtroom. He was clearly an extrovert who liked telling a story – and people enjoyed listening.

Five years after his retirement, in 1988 Caruana Curran was appointed chancellor of the University of Malta. But at this period of his life, the focus of the book shifts to his involvement in the heritage sector. This third and final section of essays, entitled 'Of Heritage and the Environment', contains contributions by Evarist Bartolo, Anthony Bonanno, Mario Buhagiar, Richard England, James Evans, Stanley Farrugia Randon, Louis Galea, Martin Galea, Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Martin Scicluna, Ray Vassallo, Roger Vella Bonavita, Alexander Norton Welsh and Maria Grazia Cassar, with a final touch by Philip Farrugia Randon.

Caruana Curran may have been a great talker, but he is also remembered as a good and sensitive listener. He lived through some turbulent times, badly affected by political events and personal trauma. His deep grief at the tragic, accidental death of his younger daughter Louise in 1968, aged thirteen, surfaces repeatedly in the essays. He then lost his first wife Katie, and experienced a tough period in the law courts.

Anyone interested in these stories and events, or in his achievements in the legal field, can refer to these insightful essays by fellow-travellers. Along the way, they touch upon a tense and difficult period in the 1970s which shaped Caruana Curran's life and career.



The *Liber Amicorum, Maurice Caruana Curran: Guardian of Heritage and Justice* can be purchased from leading bookshops and from the offices at Din l-Art Helwa at the price of €45.

# “Engage - encouraging active participation”

## George Camilleri

“Engage - encouraging active participation” is the name of a project aimed at expanding the participation of volunteers in the activities of Din l-Art Helwa. The project is managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) and funded through the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector on behalf of Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Voluntary Organisations within the Ministry for Education and Employment.

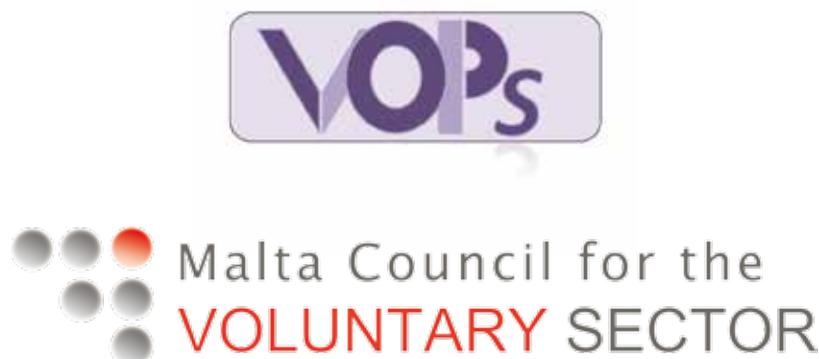
Volunteer participation and membership support in any NGO are the main driving forces that help the NGO to grow. For the last 50 years Din l-Art Helwa has been actively engaged in preserving Malta’s cultural heritage be it in monuments, artefacts or the environment. As one of the oldest established NGOs in the above areas, the membership base is also aging with the NGO.

“Engage” is aimed at expanding the membership base of Din l-Art Helwa in order to attract younger members to join as well as to engage more volunteers to help Din l-Art Helwa in the various projects we have around Malta and Gozo.

“Engage” has 3 components.

1. The design and implementation of a membership software system to organise the membership section of Din l-Art Helwa.
2. The development of a searchable volunteers database which allows volunteers to sign up and offer specific services / times to Din l-Art Helwa. The volunteers database makes it easier to contact potential volunteers when these are needed.
3. The redesign of the Din l-Art Helwa Website to bring it in line with current web standards. The upgrade also includes the development of a donation / online ticketing system to be used by Din l-Art Helwa.

“Engage” was carried out over an 18 month period between January 2018 and June 2019 after an intensive period of checking and testing by our staff and volunteers to ensure that all the data migrated from the old system to the new one is accurate and up to date.



# 54<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019

## Secretary General's Report

**Philip Mercieca, outgoing Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa presented the following report at the Annual General Meeting held earlier this year. Din l-Art Helwa thanks Philip for his sterling service during the term of his role in office.**

Good Morning Members, Friends and Volunteers - Welcome to the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa.

2018 was a most important year for cultural heritage and DLH was proud to play its part. Valletta was European Capital of Culture, it was the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of our Founder President, the late Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, and the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Comino Tower. This iconic building and the numerous heritage sites DLH has saved remain a great symbol of our commitment to heritage. I am pleased therefore to present our Annual Report for 2018 and ask you to kindly bear with me while I provide an overview of the numerous activities and challenges undertaken this last year.

### People

During 2018 we marked the retirement from Council of three very valuable long-serving Council Members, namely Judge Joe Galea Debono, Carolyn Clements and Ian Camilleri and we thank them wholeheartedly for their outstanding contribution over these last years. We have been very fortunate, however, to attract more first-rate people to our organisation who will undoubtedly bring new skills and renewed energy.

We therefore welcome four new members who joined Council this past year. First of all Architect Professor Alex Torpiano, Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of Malta and until recently President of the Kamra tal-Periti whose professional experience and strong credentials will prove invaluable to the organisation; Mr Kenneth Micallef, a professional banker and current President of the Institute of Financial Services who also sits on the BOV Arts Committee, will provide us with governance and organisational skills; Joe Attard, a long serving volunteer and warden of Comino Tower for some 10 years, brings first-hand experience of the needs of our sites and environmental knowledge and Elisabeth Cremona, a B.Sc. (Hons) graduate in Earth Systems from the University of Malta, and a M.Sc. in Environment and Development from the University of Edinburgh. Lizzie currently works in the Strategy Team at the Energy and Water Agency on policy so her knowledge will be invaluable.

I also thank our outgoing Council as this AGM will see the election of the new Council 2019 – 2021. Significantly, however, Maria Grazia Cassar will be stepping down from her role as Executive President, having completed her statutory four-year term, though continuing to be on Council. Maria Grazia has truly excelled in her term as President. Her untiring dedication and commitment to DLH and all it represents has been truly inspirational and we are very much indebted to her and thank her for her immense contribution these last four years.

Our Council Members and members also contribute by representing DLH on various cultural heritage Boards and Committees. Simone Mizzi, our former EP, continues to sit on the Committee of Guarantee now that this has been reactivated over the last year. The remit of this Board is to advise Government on the state of cultural heritage. She also sits on the Board of Europa Nostra while Dr John Vassallo sits as Council Member. Ghislaine Calleja,

who earlier worked within DLH, has taken Simone's place on the Board and Federation of Majjistral Park which has just celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our Hon. Treasurer, Martin Scicluna, serves on the HSBC Foundation Board while Martin Galea has replaced Simone Mizzi as a Board Member and Trustee of the International National Trusts Organisation.

We must also give thanks to outgoing wardens and volunteers today and welcome new ones. We thank most whole heartedly Lt. Col. George Attard Manch who has looked after the Church of Santa Marija of Bir Miftuh for so many years. George will now be taking a well-deserved rest. Welcome must be extended to Joe Attard who is now responsible for coordinating Comino and Gozo following the retirement of Carolyn Clements, George Iles who has taken over Bir Miftuh and Viv Thompson, taking over from Joe Azzopardi at Torri Mamo.

### Restoration

Our primary restoration efforts this last year were focused on the **White Tower** which should be completed within the next few months. Restoration and pointing of the internal and external walls nears completion together with new electricity systems. The Tower's ground floor is designed for use as a Visitors' Centre. Regular progress meetings have been conducted with Cyberspace, who are assisting us to prepare interactive screens and panels on Marine Biodiversity, the importance of the coast, the history of the Tower and DLH, with fundamental research by our Council Member Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon. The restoration of the British-period room in the ditch has been carried out and its electricity installed and removal of invasive trees in the ditch was completed. In compensation, DLH planted thirty-three trees at the nearby Dahlet ix-Xmajjar in collaboration with the Environment Resources Authority. Metal and wooden apertures are being installed as are security cameras and alarms.

We are very grateful to Martin Vella, also warden of the Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay, for his tireless and impeccable work as Project Manager, as well as to Stanley Farrugia Randon and Josie Ellul Mercer who are the Council Members responsible for the project. We must also mention and thank our Treasurer, Martin Scicluna, who was responsible for structuring the project and raising the funds that made this challenging restoration possible. In this respect DLH acknowledges for their support, the lead sponsor namely the HSBC Foundation and Corporate sponsor Atlas Insurance PCC Ltd, the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation as well as various Government Ministries and entities.

At **Our Lady of Victories Church** the restoration of the south façade wall was completed last year in time for the launch of Valletta 2018 and the annual commemorative Mass of the laying of the first stone of the capital city in March. Work has now recommenced on the front and eastern façade. The façades and belfry were in a poor state of repair and we are grateful to the many sponsors who made the restoration possible, namely the P. Cutajar and Co. Foundation, Gasan Mamo Insurance Ltd, Izola Bank plc, the Thomas Smith Group, John Ripard & Son Ltd, Tug Malta Ltd, Medserv plc, RCLIN Pharma Ltd, and Chevalier Joseph Micallef from the USA. Malta

Industrial Parks Ltd underwrote the costly repair of the intricately carved belfry. We also thank Ganado Advocates for underwriting the repairs of the stairwell in the sacristan's house. Here rotting wooden beams were changed and ceiling slabs and waterproofing cover using the original *xorok* and *deffun* were reinstated.

Another restoration completed last April was that of the four historic bells. Cast in the foundry of the Knights located then at Palazzo Ferreira, their iron crossbars and clapper equipment were in dire need of repair and causing much damage to the belfry itself. This challenging work was made possible with the generous support of the ADRC Trust, notably the Chalmers family and other private individuals. We thank Simone Mizzi for leading this huge project and undertaking the Façade Funding appeal, and Council Member Josie Ellul Mercer and custodian Mario Sciberras for their constant support.

Maintenance restoration work at **Torri Mamo** was conducted in July in a joint project with French volunteers as well as at **Hal Millieri**, including the surrounding rubble walls.

A major regeneration project undertaken is that of the natural landscape around the **Ta' Xutu Tower**, Wied iz-Żurrieq, coordinated by our Executive President, Maria Grazia Cassar. This is the final phase of the Tower's successful restoration, made possible by the Malta Airport Foundation.

Thanks to European Regional Development Funds made available with the assistance of the Malta Tourism Authority, an important restoration of the **Red Tower** has recently begun. Work on Dwejra Tower and Comino Battery forms part of the same project.

Another EU funded project will see DLH partner with 17 countries to study the effects of geothermal heating and cooling in a historic site. This will take place at the Msida Bastion Historic Cemetery and has been undertaken on the initiative of Council Member and Vice President Professor Lucio Mulè Stagno who is also coordinating the project.

Finally, another project upon which much research has been done and which we will start this year is the restoration of the unique wooden **Australian Bungalow** which is being relocated to a prominent place at Ta' Qali. This project is being coordinated by Council Member Joseph Philip Farrugia.

## Heritage and Environment Protection

DLH continues to oppose threats to the destruction of our built and natural heritage with all legal means possible. We filed a total of 594 objections with the Planning Authority during 2018 and yet only 27 were successful. Sadly 170 were nevertheless approved while another 365 are still being processed.

We continue to lobby with the Authorities and seek support in our efforts to curtail and control the rampant development and lack of planning taking place in Malta and Gozo. Last April DLH was a signatory to a declaration together with another twenty-one organisations, including the Kamra tal-Periti and several heritage NGOs, calling on the Government to recognise the detrimental effect that unrestrained development is having on our country whilst providing solutions for its mitigation. We again lobbied with representatives from this newly formed group "Wirtna – Our Legacy" in a meeting with Hon. Dr Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, voicing our concerns with regards to the demolition of vernacular and historic properties and the urgency to give more power to the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. On 16 November a contingent from Wirtna – Our Legacy, comprising DLH, Kamra tal-Periti, FAA, Wirt Ghawdex and the University of Malta had a high level meeting with the Hon. Prime Minister, Dr Joseph Muscat, Ministers Dr Ian Borg and Dr Owen Bonnici as well as Johann Buttigieg, CEO of the Planning Authority and Michelle Piccinino, CEO of ERA. The group again made strong representations about its concerns, as well as giving suggestions for the improvement of the situation.

Thanks to the widespread public support given to DLH, our appeal last year to revoke the permit for the high-rise Town Square project in Sliema was successful. This was to tower visibly over the Valletta skyline. The developers were asked by the Planning Authority to review plans which will now reduce its height considerably. Unfortunately, our appeal against the Mrieħel Quad Towers was rejected.

DLH is still in Court over the lack of protection by the PA given to St Ignatius Villa and the Sea Malta Building. We have recently objected to the ITS/DB development project together with three other NGOs and three Local Councils, Swieqi, Pembroke and St. Julian's, and have now recently attended, together with other NGOs, resident groups and three Local Councils, a meeting with Parliament's Environment and Planning Committee to discuss the imminent concession of title, land and environmental rights to the Corinthia Group.

We must give thanks to our hard-working Heritage and Environment Protection team on Council composed of Martin Galea, Joanna Spiteri Staines and Petra Caruana Dingli, aided by our Executive President, Maria Grazia Cassar. Maria Grazia Cassar has represented DLH at all the court sittings and planning appeal hearings. Thanks are also due to our lawyers Dr Franco Vassallo, as well as Dr Malcolm Mifsud and Dr Catherine Mifsud who are helping us in the various cases.

## Events

Due to the hard work of our wardens and volunteers, activities in the heritage sites managed by DLH have increased considerably this year, assisting the organisation to raise much needed funds for their upkeep besides creating an awareness of heritage.

The Red Tower remains the most popular and its beautiful sunset evenings were again a hit during the summer. It had a record year as far as number of visitors goes and we look forward to opening it again to the public as soon as we complete its restoration. We must thank James Evans and his hard-working team for their commitment to this marvellous site.

Torri Mamo is regularly chosen for events, nine this year, and is popular with the Scouts for their camping events. With our link with the French NGO Union Rempart, we organised a working experience with volunteers at the Torri, and local maintenance skills such as pointing, plastering and the upkeep of wood and iron work were taught. This 10-day live-in experience was organised by our President Maria Grazia Cassar, while Ghislaine Calleja, Victoria Camilleri and Jessica Ramaye looked after the group during their stay in Malta. They were housed at our Delimara Lighthouse.

The Msida Bastion Historic Garden of Rest team led by Paolo Ferrelli are also tireless in their efforts to attract people to this award-winning Garden. Paolo organises popular monthly talking tours and also holds tours for various individual organisations and associations. Weddings and now children's parties have been held there. On 29 April the annual Spring Fair was held while the garden has now become a popular site for painting sessions, an innovative idea from volunteer Sophie Woltz. On 12 January 2019 Paolo organised a special tour to commemorate the 190<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Mikiel Anton Vassalli, father of the Maltese language, whose remains lie in the Garden. We thank Paolo and his team for their dedication which greatly assists the sustainability of this historic place.

We are pleased to report that the Church of Our Lady of Victories has become a most popular venue for weddings. Nine were held between May and November assisting us to raise funds for its upkeep. For the first time the church took part in the Valletta Baroque Festival with a flute recital by flautist Neil McLaren on 23 January and a classic guitar concert by Simon Schembri on 26 January. We are grateful to the Teatru Manoel for its ongoing support of our sites. On 2 February, Silke Aichhorn, the much-loved international

harpist, returned to give a most successful concert organised in collaboration with Rotary Club Malta. DLH is grateful to Rotary Club Malta and to our sponsor, Mr Heribert Grünert for making this possible. On 10 April the Lincoln College Choir performed 'From Darkness to Light', a rich choral recital of Easter music, organised in collaboration with the former Maestro di Cappella of St John's Co-Cathedral, Hamish Dustagheer and its Pro-Rector Mgr Victor Zammit McKeon.

On 17 May, marking the restoration of the four historic bells of Victory Church, Kenneth Cauchi, campanologist responsible for their restoration, gave a lecture about the history of bell founding in Malta, following which the public were given the opportunity to sound and ring the bells. Sicilian organist Diego Canizzaro, expert in early organs such as the 18C *positivo* organ at Victory Church gave an organ recital on 20 November as part of the 2018 Malta International Organ Festival.

Numerous activities continued elsewhere: 18 March, the medieval chapel of Hal Millieri celebrated the annual Feast of the Annunciation this year in a twinning collaboration with Heritage Malta who opened the Ta' Mintna catacombs in Mqabba to the public on the same day. We are grateful to long serving custodian of Hal Millieri, Dr Anthony Mangion for the loving care he gives this chapel and its grounds.

The Santa Marija Tower on Comino hosted well over 19 school visits during which the history of the tower and the importance of the island as a Natura 2000 site was explained. We celebrated its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 29 and 30 September and the Historic Re-Enactment Group of Malta held activities while Warden Joe Attard and his team of dedicated volunteers showed visitors round the tower. Maria Grazia Cassar, our Executive President, attended this well-organized event and welcomed the Minister for Gozo, Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana and the CEO of Ambjent Malta, Dr Conrad Borg Manchè.

During May and June, the XXII Edition of the International Spring Music Festival was held at the beautiful medieval Church of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuh with three concerts: a guitar and mandolin recital on 25 May sponsored by the Italian Embassy and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, a violoncello and piano concert on 1 June made possible by the German-Maltese Circle and the Goethe-Institut. Lastly, the French Embassy and the Alliance Française de Malte – Méditerranée organised an operatic recital on 16 June to commemorate the bi-centenary of the birth of Maltese-born opera composer Nicolò Isouard. DLH thanks the Embassies, their Ambassadors, and their Cultural Institutes for their continuing support to bring high calibre musicians whose performances help generate funds and bring new life to this church. We are grateful to Cettina Caruana Curran for the vital role she plays in organising this festival every year.

## Other Key Events

The XIII Edition of Din l-Art Helwa's Architectural Heritage Awards, organised in conjunction with the Kamra tal-Periti, was held on 16 February at our headquarters. Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President and Chair of the Judging Panel, announced the winners, highlighting the successful projects, namely Binja Laparelli, the Macina, and the Coach House. Professor Alex Torpiano, Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of Malta and then President of the Kamra tal-Periti presented the awards to the winners, congratulating them for their outstanding examples in conservation and innovation. Professor Torpiano gave a most inspiring address expressing his concerns about the state of Malta's built heritage.

Another important initiative was the restoration of the George Cross Grant Volume. This was led by former Council Member Ian Camilleri who, through his collaboration with the Notarial Archives of Malta, learnt of the existence of the important George Cross

Grant Volume which needed restoration. In April DLH decided to offer support to help the Notarial Archives save this unique piece of Malta's paper heritage through a sponsorship. This restoration has now been completed. DLH is grateful to Ian Camilleri for his initiative and to Judge Giovanni Bonello, Dr Joan Abela and Dr Theresa Zammit Lupi for making the collaboration with the Notarial Archives possible.

Between June and August, DLH participated in weekly appearances on the TV show "Terrazza" on NET TV, to showcase the organisation's work and sites. Maria Grazia Cassar, as well as Simone Mizzi, Martin Vella, Lt. Col George Attard Manchè, Michael Bonnici, Paolo Ferrelli, Joe Attard, James Evans, Vivian Thompson, Ray Vella and Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon contributed with an episode each.

Last October DLH hosted the *Association Marcel Hicter* at our headquarters for a day during their six-day cultural democracy course. Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar gave a presentation about the work of DLH and led the group on a tour of Mdina which was greatly appreciated by the international students.

## Youth Events

As part of our collaboration with Erasmus Heritage Volunteers and Leader Projects, DLH arranged for a group of seven youths from Malta to travel to Espalion in the Aveyrou region in Southern France to join other youths from Romania and France on a two-week long work experience at the historic Château de Calmont d'Olt. The youth group, led by Ghislaine Calleja, had a most successful and enjoyable experience and were keen to follow this up with similar cultural and research work on DLH sites. On 2 November they gave a very interesting presentation at DLH headquarters of their experience in France. This initiative was co-ordinated by Maria Grazia Cassar.

## Upgrading our Communication Systems

This year DLH was awarded two funds: the Small Initiatives Scheme 2018 for our 'Connect' project through which we are now able to live-stream public lectures and events. We thank Council Member George Camilleri for his extensive efforts to see this project through. We were also successful in obtaining a Voluntary Organisation Projects Fund to develop a new membership system, which includes a volunteer data-base, an updated website, and various online facilities. We must thank our Treasurer, Martin Scicluna for his award-winning applications, Council member George Camilleri, our office and our IT Consultant, and Cyberspace for their considerable input. Finally, we thank the Alfred Mizzi Foundation who gave us the opportunity to boost campaigns on social media thanks to another generous sponsorship.

## Fund Raising Events

There were again two main fund-raising events during the year. The elegant Annual Reunion Dinner in the beautiful San Anton Gardens was held on 27 July under the distinguished patronage of HE the President of Malta, who together with other important officials, and members of the Diplomatic Corps honoured us by attending. This was again a lovely event, well supported and as always impeccably organised by Cettina Caruana Curran and her team of helpers to whom we extend our thanks.

After last year's great success, Council Member Joseph Philip Farrugia was again entrusted with organising a formal black-tie dinner which was held on 24 November in the grand Hotel Phoenicia Ballroom. Capacity turnout was achieved and the evening was once again a great success from every aspect. Many thanks must be extended to Joseph Philip Farrugia for his meticulous organisation as well as his team of helpers, in particular to Christine Farrugia, Maria Grazia Cassar and to Dr John Vassallo who contributed significantly to the event.

## Lectures

As part of our cultural programmes, a series of very informative high-profile lectures was once again held throughout the year at the Judge Caruana Curran Hall at our headquarters.

We are grateful to Perit Edward Said, Dr Stephen C. Spiteri, Judge Joe Galea Debono and Prof. Anthony Bonanno, Perit Joanna Spiteri Staines, Campanologist Kenneth Cauchi, Dr Joseph Buhagiar for supporting DLH and giving their time to share their knowledge to raise the high profile of Malta's cultural heritage.

In collaboration again with Perit Edward Said we organised a Protest Lecture on 8 November about St Ignatius Villa, to highlight its historic and architectural value and lobby against its proposed demolition. This was held to a packed St Ignatius Church in Old College Street, Sliema after which volunteers laid a wreath of poppies on the old Villa, appropriately marking the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War in November 1918.

## DLH Publications

2018 being the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of our Founder President Judge Maurice Caruana Curran (1918 – 2015), DLH published a *Liber Amicorum, Maurice Caruana Curran – Guardian of Heritage and Justice*. This highly illustrated publication consists of some 38 essays written by leading literary, academic and legal experts and those close to the late judge in the conservation and environmental fields, covering various aspects of his long and versatile career. We are grateful to the Editors, Professor Anthony Bonanno, Judge Joe Galea Debono, and Ann Gingell Littlejohn as Co-ordinating Editor, and the Organising Committee, Cettina Caruana Curran and Simone Mizzi, for bringing this publication to light. Its launch was held on 15 November at the Aula Magna of the Valletta Campus of the Malta University in the presence of HE the Acting President Dolores Cristina. A learned review panel chaired by Dr Mario Tabone, was made up of Professor Joe Friggieri, Mrs Bernadette Mizzi, and Mr Laurence Grech. His Eminence Prosper Cardinal Grech who wrote the foreword honoured the event with his presence. On 30 November, the book was presented to HE the President of Malta, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, also Patron of our organisation, by a delegation from Din l-Art Helwa consisting of Maria Grazia Cassar, DLH Executive President, Ms Simone Mizzi, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran, Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon, Professor

Anthony Bonanno and Professor Lucio Mulè Stagno. The President said she was proud both as President of Malta and as Patron of the organisation to conserve such an important piece of Melitensia in the growing Palace library. The publication is available at the price of €45 from leading bookshops as well as from Din l-Art Helwa. All proceeds raised will be dedicated to our many restoration and lobbying activities.

We are grateful to Council Member Stanley Farrugia Randon who had another busy year writing an update to the *Heritage Saved* handbook which he dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Judge Maurice Caruana Curran. This makes a practical guide for visitors and students. Stanley also produced a booklet on Torri l-Abjad and presented it to the Mellieħa Local Council. Both books were published by DLH for 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage and are on sale at €7 at our heritage sites and through DLH.

## Conclusion

On behalf of Din l-Art Helwa and its members, and on a personal basis, I would like to thank the outgoing Council, our volunteers in the office, on the sites, our hard-working office staff and in particular our Executive President, Maria Grazia Cassar as this will be her last AGM, for leading the organisation through such challenging times. We express our gratitude to Ann Gingell Littlejohn and Simone Mizzi for taking up the compilation of *Vigilo* so densely packed with events this year, and Simone for continuing to keep the media and our members supplied with our communications. We must also mention Joanna Spiteri Staines and Cathy Farrugia who have put together so many beautiful features promoting heritage sites in leading magazines. We would, of course, be nowhere without the untiring efforts of Rosanne Zerafa, our Office Manager, and Office Coordinator Annmarie Navarro, John Gafà our handyman, and Annie Tabone our cleaner. We must also thank Joe Busietta for recording our statistics so meticulously, Joe Chetcuti, Rina Mamo, Jaime Borg Cardona, Alfred Cassar and Karen Galea for their help in the office, George Camilleri for maintaining our website and issuing our circulars, Professor Lucio Mulè Stagno for following our Facebook and Twitter activity and Professor George Camilleri for the maintenance of our archives.

Finally, our thanks must also go to all our members everywhere for supporting yet another great year of achievements.



## RENT A LIGHTHOUSE

The historic Delimara Lighthouse restored by Din l-Art Helwa is now available for heritage holiday bookings for spring and summer. Situated in an exciting location with views over the Delimara cliffs, within walking distance from the swimming areas of Peter's Pool and Kalanka, it is also close to the picturesque fishing village of Marsaxlokk with its buzzing market and restaurant activity. The Lighthouse is divided into two tastefully converted separate apartments each sleeping five persons. Rentals per night per apartment are of €90 for Apartment A and €100 for Apartment B. Commissioned in 1850 by Governor Sir Richard More O'Farrell to provide safe passage to naval vessels to Valletta, this landmark building provides a wonderful adventure holiday off the beaten track. For further information, please email [admin@dinlarthelwa.org](mailto:admin@dinlarthelwa.org). All funds raised are dedicated to the upkeep and maintenance of the lighthouse.

# Grazzi Michael

## *Appreciation* Michael Bonnici – a true gentleman and son of Żebbuġ

Martin Galea

Michael Bonnici was that kind of politician who took up the mantle for the noblest of reasons. Born in Żebbuġ, a town and people he loved, he devoted much of his time and energy to ensuring that its heritage and culture were preserved. He was instrumental, with our Founder President, Maurice Caruana Curran, in obtaining the beautiful vernacular chapel of St Roque in trust for Din l-Art Helwa, one of the first heritage sites the organization obtained and restored, and turned it into a museum of notable historical personalities from Żebbuġ. These include the sculptor Antonio Sciortino and the patriot Dun Mikiel Xerri, who was executed by the Napoleonic forces in 1799, as well as Dun Karm, the national poet. He was also a prime mover in setting up the Santo Spirito Historical Pharmacy and was very involved in helping preserve the National Archives at the old hospital of Santo Spirito.



As a politician he was often described as a unifying personality in this politically divided country of ours and always acted correctly and honestly, serving part of his time as an MP as Deputy Speaker.

Respected and loved by all, his kindly and affable demeanour ensured that he could reach across the political divide, a comment made by the Prime Minister on hearing of his demise.

The last time I saw him was when he was seeking funds for an exhibition of the works of Sciortino's lesser known brother, Francesco Saverio, a sculptor, who had moved to Canada. How could I refuse him? Always selfless and working for the common good. A man to be emulated in many ways.

Din l-Art Helwa has lost a true friend and supporter. We pay tribute to him and give our sincere condolences to his family.



*The village of Żebbuġ gives Michael his final salute.*

*photo: Maria Grazia Cassar*

### The Chapel of St Roque

The quaint chapel of St Roque in Main Street, Żebbuġ was built in 1592 as a result of a vow to this saint by Tumas and Katerina Vassallo. During that period, Malta was afflicted by the plague and this couple from Żebbuġ promised to build a chapel to the saint if the village would be spared. After their death they bequeathed a field in the vicinity of Wied is-Sewda, and its produce was to be sold to pay for the saying of masses on the feast of St Roque which is celebrated on the 16 August. St Roque was a pilgrim saint who survived the plague.

On the 27 April 1980, through the efforts of the Founder President of Din l-Art Helwa, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, the Ecclesiastical Authorities granted the Chapel in guardianship to this organisation. Din l-Art Helwa has restored the chapel and maintains it till today. In 1989 the Chapel was inaugurated as a small Museum dedicated to the numerous personalities connected with or born in Żebbuġ and houses various memorabilia and artefacts. Michael Bonnici was dedicated to this chapel and was its curator till his death, lovingly putting together its collection and opening it regularly to the public. He shall be sorely missed. His grandson, Matthew Axixa, now looks after the Chapel following in his grandfather's footsteps. For visits to the Chapel please email: matthew.axixa@gmail.com



*Martin Galea is a Council Member of Din l-Art Helwa*

*This article was published in the Sunday Times of Malta on 2 June 2019*

# Lieutenant Colonel Eric Parnis 1930 – 2019



## Appreciation by Martin Scicluna

Lieutenant Colonel Eric Parnis died peacefully in his sleep aged 89 years. He had just returned from a fulfilling and marvellous trip to the annual Arena of Verona Opera Festival to listen to three outstanding Italian operas, one of the passions of his life.

Eric was also a life-long supporter and activist in Din l-Art Helwa, the National Trust of Malta. He played a leading role in overseeing the restoration and conservation of many of Din l-Art Helwa's properties over several years, following a sterling career in the Royal Malta Artillery. His schooling at St Edward's College with its emphasis on leadership, self-discipline and responsibility, was a natural stepping-stone to a career in the Army. Eric was one of Malta's first post-war Maltese officer cadets to go to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst in 1947.

Throughout his career in the Royal Malta Artillery, which he served almost entirely in 1st Regiment in the coast artillery role, later in air defence, and subsequently, in Germany in the transport role, he proved to be an outstanding officer – upright, dedicated and highly professional, if occasionally brusque in manner. He was a strict disciplinarian, but his men loved and respected him, appreciating fully that he was, above all things, a fair man whose overriding interest was the welfare of those under his command.

He subsequently rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in command of one of the Armed Forces of Malta regiments which was formed following the disbandment of the Royal Malta Artillery. He left the AFM voluntarily in 1980 when he found the political intrusion into the AFM during the 1970s neither acceptable nor conducive to the culture of public service in which he had been raised.

In his retirement, he turned his excellent organisational and man-management skills to good effect in the service of Din l-Art Helwa when he took over responsibility for the restoration and conservation of the Association's growing property portfolio in 2001, and subsequently when he was Vice President. In all, he was personally responsible for overseeing the restoration of about ten properties and historic monuments, while at the same time ensuring the maintenance and conservation of seven others. The state in which these properties were handed over to his successors remain his legacy to Din l-Art Helwa and indirectly to Malta.

His service and unwavering commitment to Din l-Art Helwa over many years was incalculable – managing all the regular care, maintenance and conservation of seventeen properties, dealing with vandalism whenever it occurred, overseeing the contractors and sub-contractors whose respect he earned through firmness and great patience, as well as involving himself in every other aspect of Din l-Art Helwa's business on the Council.

The last property whose restoration he oversaw when he was already well into his eighties was the geographically isolated 18th century St Anthony's Battery at Qala Point in Gozo, which necessitated weekly visits from Malta to ensure it was completed to the high standards he demanded, on time and within budget.

He will always be remembered by his friends and colleagues in Din l-Art Helwa as a man who gave the association his unwavering loyalty, commitment and enthusiasm.

Eric leaves a son, John, who lives in Switzerland and a brother, Alfred, in Canada. He was a devoted brother to his two sisters, Elizabeth Parnis and Sylvia Manduca, for whom he spared no trouble. No journey was too much for him to undertake and no commitment too daunting to fulfill. He was a much-loved and admired uncle and great-uncle to all their extended families, and by his many friends.

***Martin Scicluna was Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa 2001 - 2005 and is Honorary Life Council Member***  
***This appreciation appeared in the Times of Malta on 3 July 2019***

## Old soldiers never die

### Appreciation by Martin Galea

Eric Parnis was the epitome of an old soldier – ramrod straight, old world courtesy and charm, dry humour and acerbic wit, master of the bon mot, and partial to a snifter to wind down after the day's work was done. Always a gentleman, ever gallant to the fairer sex.

He had a distinguished career in the army, passing out from Sandhurst in 1947, joining the Royal Malta Artillery, which was then part of the British Army, before transitioning to the regular Armed Forces of Malta. He left the forces after troubling run-ins with the Government and the Premier at the time.

He joined Din l-Art Helwa and for a time he was Vice President, but this did not suit him – too much jaw jaw and not enough action, so quickly he settled in to the role he really enjoyed – restoring old forts and batteries around the islands. He threw himself into the role with characteristic enthusiasm and zeal – planning each assignment with military precision. Of course this did not always go down so well with the workmen who had no military training and were unused to this style of project management. Orders barked, no assignment too dangerous, and utmost haste. Chop chop. He almost had them saluting by the end of it. However they quickly settled down to his style, and I would hazard, enjoyed working with him and his weekly site inspections.

His first major project was the Red Tower in Mellieħa, one of the earlier major projects taken on by Din l-Art Helwa. Others followed in rapid succession – Dwejra tower, Nadur Tower, St Anthony's battery in Qala, Lunzjata Fountain amongst others.

At one point we needed the cannon returned to St Mary's Battery on Comino. The Royal Marines had used them in an exercise and dumped them in an inaccessible part of the garrigue in the seventies. Ever resourceful, Eric simply called up the Royal Navy who sent in a chopper, and promptly delivered the cannon back to their rightful place. Simple it wasn't, but he made it seem so.

Accompanying him on his restoration expeditions to Gozo there was always some old soldier who recognized his old colonel. 'Do you remember me sir?', to which the reply would shoot back 'U mela, one seven six four four two Baldacchino'. A soldier's soldier.

Eric was a character, raconteur par excellence, with a steady unwavering opinion especially when it came to opera which he loved. A history buff, passionate England supporter (in all things) and consummate all rounder. Few may recall, but he was army motorcycle champion in the fifties.

We will miss him at Din l-Art Helwa, but his work in saving some of Malta's important and iconic monuments will outlive him. For this and for his friendship and companionship we are very grateful.

Our condolences to his son, his brother and sisters for their great loss.

***Martin Galea was Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa 2005 - 2010 and is a Council Member of Din l-Art Helwa***  
***This appreciation appeared in the Times of Malta on 9 July 2019***

## Flashback February 2010

In memory of two outstanding Vice Presidents,  
Lieutenant Colonel Eric Parnis and Dame Blanche Martin



Current and past Din l-Art Helwa Executive Presidents and Vice Presidents gathered at the Annual General Meeting in February 2010. (from left to right) Seated: Dame Blanche Martin, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, Dr Petra Caruana Dingli (Bianchi); Professor Anthony Bonanno. Standing: Simone Mizzi, Lt. Col. Eric Parnis, Paul Asciak, Cettina Caruana Curran, Martin L.A. Scicluna, Martin Galea. Photo: Joe Chetcuti

### **DAME BLANCHE MARTIN MOM, MBE, KM 1920 - 2019**

Blanche Martin trained to be a teacher by profession, however in March 1943 accepted a posting as a cipher assistance at the British Naval Head Quarters at Lascaris Wharf during the War. She continued her work career with the British Services whilst stationed in Malta, up to 1979 when she retired.

Her clear blue eyes were the window of a spirit that shone to the very end. She was passionate about life, and worked tirelessly as a volunteer in the numerous philanthropic projects and associations she was so involved with, even up to recent years. She earned the National Order of Merit of the Knights of Malta and was made a member of the Order of the British Empire in recognition of her many years of hard work and dedication.

She was a founding member of the National Council of Women and of Din l-Art Helwa and was also the Founder of the Friends of the Little Sisters of the Poor. She was involved in the Malta Community Chest Fund, the British Culture Association, the George Cross Association and was also awarded the Elderly of the Year award.

Much loved and dearly missed by her family and all who knew and worked with her.



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