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DIN L-ART HELWA

National Trust of Malta

VIGILO



**Din l-Art Helwa
Celebrates**



2018



**Valletta
European
Capital of
Culture**



**European Year
of Cultural
Heritage**



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

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

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



Din l-Art Helwa

Din l-Art Helwa
has reciprocal membership with:

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

The National Trust for Scotland

The Barbados National Trust

The National Trust of Australia

*The Gelderland Trust for
Historic Houses*

The Gelderland 'Nature Trust'

Din l-Art Helwa
is a member of:

Wirtna - Our Legacy

ICOMOS - Malta

Europa Nostra

*The International National Trusts
Organisation (INTO)*

*The National Federation of
NGOs of Malta*

*The Heritage Parks
Federation*

Qantara

*Future for Religious Heritage
Association*

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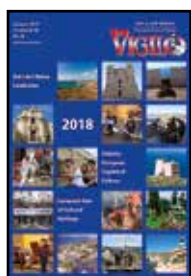
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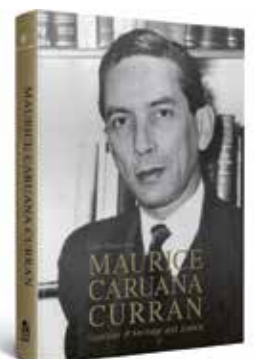
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2018 celebration poster
by George Camilleri
adapted for Vigilo



BACK COVER

Liber Amicorum
Maurice Caruana Curran –
Guardian of Heritage and Justice
A publication by Din l-Art Helwa to honour its Founder President, the late Judge Maurice Caruana Curran (1918 - 2015) published in 2018, the 100th Anniversary of his birth.



2018 – What a year it's been!

Maria Grazia Cassar

Din l-Art Helwa Executive President

We started it off with no less than 22 heritage NGOs drafting a declaration which was presented outside Parliament on the 18 April calling on the Government to protect Malta from the unbridled negative effects of bad development. Since then, a delegation from some of the NGOs met with the leaders of the Nationalist Party, the Partit Demokratiku, and last November with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Culture, the CEO of the Planning Authority, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and the CEO of the Environment and Resource Authority.

At this time, the new petrol station policy was discussed at the parliamentary committee meetings, with substantial improvements to the current one. This has unfortunately not yet been approved in Parliament, and since then, four permits for new fuel stations in outside development zones have been granted, in line with the old 2015 policy, which allows substantial ancillary facilities and therefore results in more take-up of land. There are 12 more applications waiting to be processed, which makes the ratification of the new policy a matter of extreme urgency.

Then in May, after more than 30 sittings, we were rewarded with a victory in our appeal against the 28-storey high *Townsquare* development. This was sent back to the drawing board, and plans have now been re-submitted for a scaled-down project. Unfortunately this was not the case for the *Mriehel Towers* development, which was upheld by the Environmental Planning Review Tribunal.

June saw Din l-Art Helwa join the protest and campaign against the cutting down of trees as part of the widening of many main roads. The people's pleas were not heard as the works carried on



Signing the Wirtna Declaration



*Townsquare's development will now not be seen from St Angelo
(photo Daniel Cilia)*



“This is the powerful playing God: the arrogant entitled hand that sees nothing of shaping and remoulding the natural shoreline to accommodate its immediate needs.”

*Save Our
Trees protest*

notwithstanding, and since then, hundreds of trees in Santa Lucia, Marsa, and now Buqana, Rabat, have been given the chop. What touched many was the site of two ancient trees in Balzan being uprooted from Triq il-Wied, as they were a cherished characteristic of the area, and it certainly looks the worse without them.

In September, the massive development on the site of the former ITS building and a 38-storey tower in St George's Bay were approved in spite of the 4,000 objections to it. Din l-Art Helwa joined other NGOs in a campaign to raise funds to appeal this permit, together with the Swieqi, Pembroke and St Julian's Local Councils. Another case of the people not being heard. The Environmental and Planning Review hearings have started and since suspension of works has been requested, the decision is expected in the first quarter of this year.

All throughout the year, Din l-Art Helwa has been battling to save the historic St Ignatius Villa from further demolition. This occurred a few days after a request was submitted, together with a historical and architectural report for the scheduling of the villa. The scheduling was refused, based on other "heritage reports", which found this building unworthy of protection. In a landmark judgement last April, the Registrar of Courts was instructed to initiate contempt of court proceedings against the architect, developer and the Planning Authority's chief of enforcement. A public lecture was held in February to raise awareness about the great historical and architectural significance of this site, and again last November this was repeated as a Protest Lecture held in St Ignatius Church which abuts the villa. This was very well attended and the public were appalled when they learned just how important this site is. The date of this lecture coincided with the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. A very poignant gesture was the laying of a wreath of poppies on its gates, as St Ignatius Villa had served as a war hospital during the 1917/1918 years. Din l-Art Helwa will continue to do everything in its power to save this architectural and historical gem from destruction.



Cartoon by Patrick Galea of the DB tower and ITS Development used in the campaign



The demolition of two Żebbuġ houses which DLH is appealing (photo Daniel Cilia)

Other significant victories have been obtained in the protection of Villa Barbaro, Attard, when its scheduling was approved at our behest by the Planning Authority last September, and the application for the development of a large historic garden in the Urban Conservation Area of Balzan was recently turned down, amid hundreds of objections by neighbours and NGOs, including ours. The protection of the air quality, natural habitats, and the visual and physical wellbeing which these gardens in UCAs afford cannot be stressed enough and we commend the Planning Board for its judicious decision. Let's hope that this view will be a defining trend in similar applications in the future. We are also awaiting the verdict of our appeal against the demolition of two vernacular houses on the Main Square of Żebbuġ, Gozo. The applicant has since revised the plans to retain the façades and two front rooms, but we believe that these ancient homes should be

protected in their entirety, and their attractiveness exploited rather than destroyed in the name of tourism.

Unfortunately, other large issues are looming on the horizon, and Din l-Art Helwa will take a stand to influence decisions or oppose them. There is the prospect of a tunnel to Gozo, land reclamation, and more speculative high rise buildings. It is unfathomable how these proposals, which will irreversibly alter our coastline and way of life are being proposed without sound and well thought out studies and evaluations. There is no holistic vision involving stakeholders, no long-term plan, and most of all the views of the general public seem to have very little influence on outcomes. This is the powerful playing God: the arrogant entitled hand that sees nothing of shaping and remoulding the natural shoreline to accommodate its immediate needs. This is very scary stuff indeed, and leads me to think of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* where he says:

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.

In the case of Malta, our smallness makes us even more vulnerable to each and every intervention which affects all of us. Let's keep these words in mind and hope that a bit of humility and respect for others will illuminate decision-makers and developers.

As this is my last address as president of Din l-Art Helwa, I wish to end with a note of thanks to all Council, especially the Secretary General and Treasurer, for the support they have shown me during my term. The hard work of all has contributed to Din l-Art Helwa's successes and to the carrying out of its mission against all odds. I thank all the volunteers at the sites, who unfailingly open and look after them so well, and our wonderful office staff who go far beyond the call of duty to ensure the smooth running of the organisation. The Din l-Art Helwa Council is soon to elect a new Executive President and I am confident that whoever takes up the role, with its challenges but huge satisfactions, will keep our organisation firmly on track for the years to come.

Wirtna – Our Legacy

Alex Torpiano

On 18 April 2018, Din l-Art Helwa, together with 21 other entities, launched a Declaration under the slogan “WIRTNA – Our Legacy”, in order to highlight their common serious concerns about the impact that an unbridled construction industry is having on the built heritage of Malta and Gozo. The signatories of the Declaration were the Kamra tal-Periti, Din l-Art Helwa, Flimkien għal Ambjent Ahjar, the Sliema Heritage Society, the Archaeological Society Malta, the Departments of Architecture and Urban Design, of Conservation and Built Heritage, and of History of Art of the University of Malta, the Malta Association of Professional Conservators-Restorers, the Cinema Heritage Group, Wirt iż-Żejtun, Wirt Għawdex, Wirt San Ġwann, Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, Malta Underground, Friends of Villa Frere, and ICOMOS Malta.

These, and other entities that immediately expressed their support in the following days, accused the state of having failed to safeguard the patrimony of the Nation, as guaranteed by the Constitution. The fundamental message of the Declaration was that the way we treated our heritage today was the legacy we left for future generations.

The Planning Authority was indicted for having abdicated its role of planning in favour of the common good of society, and for having, contrary to sound spatial planning principles, adopted policies that favoured speculation, destruction of built heritage assets, the mutilation of historic urban centres, and a general impoverishment of the urban environment. The Declaration was published in the context of a Planning Authority that had been found guilty, by the Environment Ombudsman, of having violated its own legal provisions to authorise the demolition of the ex-NAAFI building in Marsa, and in the context of a Planning Authority that had blocked a request, by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, to schedule Villa St Ignatius, and which had also been reprimanded by the Court for having acted in contempt of court in relation to the same case.

The Declaration “proposed and demanded”:

- That a single integrated public inventory of cultural assets that are scheduled or identified for scheduling be urgently compiled, and maintained, under the Cultural Heritage Act, and not under the Planning Development Act, and that such inventory be binding on planning decisions;
- That conservation experts and heritage NGOs are invited to be actively and genuinely involved in policy making in the legislative processes relating to development planning;
- That the protection status of Urban Conservation Areas, and the areas immediately surrounding Urban Conservation Areas, as well as the significance of Grade 2 scheduling, be urgently redefined, so as to give effective protection to the cultural assets therein, rather than promote façadism or token, and effectively meaningless, preservation of fragments, such as niches, plaques, and sculptural features;
- That the current ineffectual presumption against the demolition of buildings within Urban Conservation Areas be strengthened by a blanket presumption against the building of additional floors above the existing, unless it could incontrovertibly be demonstrated that no additional damage to the character of the Urban Conservation Area would result;
- That the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) be ratified by Malta, without further delay;
- That the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro 2005), be signed and ratified by Malta, without further delay;
- That Government provides its agents, primarily the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, with the necessary tools and resources to safeguard our cultural heritage in an effective and lasting way, within a strong legislative framework;
- That Government provides adequate funding for experts to publicly report on archaeological discoveries made as a result of construction activity, as required by the Valletta Convention, to which Malta is a party;
- That, in addition to schemes such as Irrestawra Darek, public funds be made available to allow investment in public infrastructure, including pavement and street quality, especially in Urban Conservation Areas, so that these are truly given life again, to the social benefit of existing residents;
- That a public Heritage Property Fund be created, which could be used in exceptional circumstances by the state, to intervene and acquire key properties which have strategic cultural significance, so that these properties could be restored and redeveloped in an appropriate way, before being put back on the market to recover some, if not all, of the funds expended, or otherwise to be put to communal or societal use;

The Declaration made an impact with the public and the media, but government attitudes are difficult to change. Following the launch, we worked to create a cross-party platform so that heritage protection would not be caught in the sterile confrontations of partisan politics. Support was expressed by the opposition political parties, but it took until November 2018 before we were able to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister, and Ministers Borg and Bonnici, responsible for the Planning Authority and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage respectively, so as to discuss the main issues.

During this meeting, the Prime Minister expressed his opinion that there was a breakdown in communication between government and the people represented by the various NGOs, and other entities working in the area of protection of the built heritage, and that this had led to a situation of mistrust in the relative agencies. He expressed interest in the proposals to create a Heritage Property Fund, and to promote schemes that would offer funds for the restoration and preservation of streets in urban conservation areas. He



Professor Alex Torpiano addresses the media at the Press Conference held outside Parliament on 18 April, 2018 together with Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, (left) and Tara Cassar, Spokesperson for Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar

instructed his ministers to study the proposals and make recommendations outlining how such proposals could be implemented. In response to our comments about the effectiveness of the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage, the Prime Minister invited us to submit proposals how the SCH could be strengthened particularly as far as concerned its institutional structure, its legislative powers, and of course its resources.

It is noted that barely a week after this meeting, a Bill amending the Cultural Heritage Act was tabled in Parliament, and is currently being discussed.

Professor Alex Torpiano is Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of Malta, Past President of the Kamra tal-Periti and Council Member of Din l-Art Helwa



Originally built to the design of Mortimer and Degiorgio Architects, in 1948, to serve as a NAAFI warehouse for the British Forces based in Malta, and later used by Sea Malta, parts of this modernist building have been illegally demolished

“We got that beauty from the past, but what are we going to leave to our children?”

A stirring address given by Professor Alex Torpiano, Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of Malta and then President of the Kamra tal-Periti at the XIII Edition of the Din l-Art Helwa Architectural Heritage Awards – February 2018

I am grateful to Simone Vella Lenicker who reminded me this week of the words of Renzo Piano.

I would like to thank Din l-Art Helwa for inviting me to preside over this event today. But I cannot help using this occasion to express a serious personal, but also collective, (on behalf of a number of periti, and non-periti), **concern** about what is happening to our built heritage.

Din l-Art Helwa was founded in the 60s in response to a development boom that saw many villages sundered apart by great avenues, symbols of modernity and development. Over the years, there were other difficult periods, such as the Building Development Act of the 70s. The realisation that the situation was out of control led, in the late 80s, to the first proper planning process in Malta. However, I think that although we thought that the planning structures set up in the late eighties could, more or less, avoid a return to the mistakes of the 60s and 70s, we have to acknowledge that this is not the case.

The unbridled pace of the construction industry is currently accompanied by practically daily reports of buildings demolished with or without permission. Why, might one ask, are we, collectively, as construction industry, as professionals, and as the planning infrastructure, allowing the beauty that “we got from the past” to be lost, destroyed, mutilated or buried. Is it a lack of understanding? Is it a lack of awareness of the significance of what we have/had? Is it short-sighted greed? Is it stupidity? Do we not realize that this heritage has been our economic salvation, and that we abuse it at our peril?

Buildings, that have stood for ages, that have defined the character of whole neighbourhoods, are being approved for demolition at an alarming rate. Alternatively, they are approved for “preservation”, by the addition, not of one overlying floor, but of six or seven or eight! Planners seem not to realise that this form of “preservation” of Grade 2 scheduled buildings, is a fate worse than demolition – even if DC15 says otherwise. Not only are these “planning” rules costing our heritage dear, but they are insidious, because they are conditioning society, and politicians, to think that this is an appropriate way of protecting, or preserving, a scheduled property. It is not!

Current laws theoretically provide ways by which cultural properties could be protected. But how do we decide which properties are “cultural” enough to be protected? Is the **scheduling** process working? Allow me to express some cynicism. When the saga of the demolition of the ex-NAAFI/Sea Malta building culminated into a decision by the Ombudsman that the Planning Authority had not acted in accordance with the Law, the Planning Authority announced that it was scheduling a group of 20 something buildings in Sliema. When this saga was followed by the Villa St Ignatius illegal demolition, another twenty something scheduled buildings were announced – but not Villa St Ignatius. Why? Is this just a sop to Cerberus?

Are we **arguing against development**? Absolutely not. We are arguing against the current model of development which, with few exceptions, is intrinsically destructive, without providing the mitigation that, at least, the replacement is of superior quality. I cannot blame the owner of a property which has heritage significance, or is located in a conservation area, to seek ways by which that property could be re-developed. These properties are old, difficult to maintain, they need expensive repairs, and they are expensive to run. So, given the sorts of property prices and rentals being bandied around, given that Planning Authority rules allow this to be done rather easily, and given that all your neighbours are doing it, why not do the same thing? We need to find solutions to the financial implications for these people.

The second part of Renzo Piano’s question is about **what we are leaving for our children**. Destroying our heritage, in the name of development, is one thing, but the other serious point is about the “heritage” we are creating in its place.

I believe that this Award, today, celebrates this “new heritage”. It is right that it should. The projects awarded today represent the best architectural heritage works, over the past year. It is, however, important that the profession, the authorities, all of us, act in a consistent manner. We cannot celebrate good design, heritage or otherwise, whilst at the same time doing nothing, when we have the power, to change those planning policies that are promoting destruction. We cannot be proud of our showpiece works, if we do not also refrain from exploiting policies, (sometimes by deception or half-truths), simply in order to maximise the return to our client. We owe our professional allegiance to more than just whoever pays our professional fees, our work does not affect only the owner, but the whole community. Our work has a social dimension, which we cannot ignore.

Awardees, therefore, you carry a greater responsibility, now that your work of excellence has been highlighted. All your work has to show the same respect to our architectural heritage as these projects which have rightly received accolades. You have the opportunity to be models of good practice to the industry and to the profession. You have the moral authority to convince your client not to ask for those things which you know are not of the same standard.

Preserving our built heritage is not anti-development but it requires cleverer development, for the intrinsic heritage value to be better exploited, and hence protected. Preserving architectural heritage does not mean that there is no place for modern design, even in the middle of our conservation areas but it requires more subtle design skills, and much better planning rules, for the result to be successful. And the projects awarded today are proof of this.

I would therefore like to conclude by offering my sincere congratulations to the Awardees – and to Din l-Art Helwa for carrying forward this message over the last half decade.’

XIII Edition Din l-Art Helwa Architectural Heritage Awards

The presentation of the XIII Edition of the Din l-Art Helwa Awards for Architectural Heritage, was held at the Judge Maurice Caruana Curran Hall at the organisation's premises in Valletta on Friday 16 February 2018. Professor Alex Torpiano, Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University and President of the Kamra Tal-Periti, presented the Awards which were announced by Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, who also chaired this year's judging panel.

As in past years, this competition was conducted with the support of the Kamra Tal-Periti, who nominated Professor Conrad Thake as their representative on the jury. The other judges were Dr Antonio Mollicone, from the University of Malta, and Din l-Art Helwa Council Member Perit Joanna Spiteri Staines, together with Perit David Pace.

The *raison d'être* of this annual competition, now in its XIIIth edition, is to highlight and reward projects which make an outstanding and significant contribution to architectural excellence in a Maltese context, with a focus on regeneration, re-use and conservation. The Chair of the Award Scheme, Maria Grazia Cassar, expressed satisfaction at having witnessed great strides in the achievement of such objectives in the varied projects that have won the award over the years, and that this competition has contributed to the positive appreciation of the value of Malta's built heritage.



*Binja Laparelli - Award Winner for
Best Major Regeneration*



Il-Maċina - Award Winner for Best Readaptation to new use

The jury was unanimous in its decision to award the Prix d'Honneur for Category A – a Major Regeneration Project, to “Binja Laparelli” by Bezzina & Cole Architects & Civil Engineers. The judges felt that this new building has successfully achieved its aim within the brief, while at the same time respecting the context of the fortifications. Of particular note was the discreet rational approach, yet imaginative design, in the stone screen created on the Bank's façade, and the integration of the design elements to complement the exterior walkway, and the historical structures.

The prize for Category B – The Rehabilitation and Re-Use of Buildings, was awarded to Edwin Mintoff Architects for the Maċina project, which



the judges felt was setting an example in the rehabilitation and re-use of military buildings. This project achieved the necessary luxury for its new use as a high-end guest house, while the overall design concept retained the military functional feel of the building's previous use, especially in the staircase and the courtyard.

In Category C – A Restoration and Conservation Project, the prize was awarded to The Coach House by Perit David Drago of Architecture Project. The intervention and extension upon the existing building consisted of a stone volume above the existing fabric. The limestone façade, detailed to mimic a weaved pattern, created a surface of changing shadows echoing the irregular surfaces of the historical walls below.

The Silver Medal prize was also awarded to The Coach House, signifying the best overall in all categories, because of the success of this project in creating a harmonious intervention with the simple historical fabric of the existing farmhouse. The message the Jury wanted to stress was that it is indeed possible to introduce an architectural vocabulary that unites the fragments of historic buildings thus creating a pleasing ensemble, rather than resorting to the demolition of these simple, vernacular structures.

The Coach House - Silver Medal Award Winner for Best Restoration and Conversion

Kamra tal-Periti President expresses concern for quality of future heritage

In his keynote address which is reproduced in this edition of Vigilo, Professor Alex Torpiano praised the winning projects and congratulated the winners. He stated that they were outstanding examples of developments, which through sensitive and clever interventions succeeded in adapting historic or traditional buildings to new use without sacrificing their architectural fabric or traditional context. Professor Torpiano expressed serious concern about the alarming rate at which Malta's unique built heritage was being lost to new development which was not respectful of the past and stressed the need to encourage the appreciation of the historical fabric of Malta's built urban environment. He questioned planning policies and charged architects to use higher skills so as to leave future generations 'new built heritage' which is sympathetic to that which already exists.

Maria Grazia Cassar brought the Awards to a close, conveyed her thanks to the panel of judges for their meticulous work and also to Professor Torpiano for his important message for the preservation of Malta's built heritage and for accepting to present the Awards.



Professor Alex Torpiano at the DLH Architectural Heritage Awards



*Winners of the XIII Din l-Art Helwa Awards for Architectural Heritage
From left to right: Perit Rory Apap Brown, Perit David Drago,
Din l-Art Helwa Executive President Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar,
Perit Edwin Mintoff, Perit Keith Cole and Professor Alex Torpiano*

Resolutions

adopted at the Annual General Meeting of DLĦ on February 24 2018

A REVISION OF POLICY FOR TALL BUILDINGS

It is hereby resolved, at the Annual General Meeting, held at Din l-Art Helwa offices at 133, Melita Street, Valletta, on 24th February 2018, that whereas the Floor Area Ratio Policy has been in force, this needs to be revised and discussed in more depth, and in the light of a Masterplan for the whole country. The areas established in this policy must be re-evaluated together and assessed by means of serious visual studies and planning aids, and not case by case as is happening when individual projects are under review. In the absence of specific building regulations for tall buildings, and the infrastructure to support them, Din l-Art Helwa calls for a re-opening of the discourse on this topic, which will involve the Planning Authorities, and all other Stakeholders in order that this big step which is to change the country's built environment for good, will be a step in the right direction, and not a step in the dark that will affect the quality of peoples' lives permanently.

REVIŻJONI TAL-POLITIKA FUQ BINI GHOLI

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta, is-Sibt 24 ta' Frar 2018, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li, għalkemm il-politika tal-proporzjon bejn l-art żviluppata u l-arja kollha (maghrufa bhala Floor Area Ratio) ilha fis-seħh, huwa meħtieġ li tiġi riveduta u diskussa aktar fl-isfond tal-Pjan Nazzjonali. Iz-żoni msemmija għandhom jiġu riveduti bhala haġa waħda, bl-għajjuna ta' studji viżivi u għodda oħra użati fl-ippjanar, u mhux każ b'każ kif qiegħed jiġri meta jiġu studjati proġetti individwali. Fin-nuqqas ta' regolamenti fuq bini għoli u fuq infrastrutturi biex isostnuhom, Din l-Art Helwa tixtieq li dan is-sugġett jerga' jiġi diskuss mal-awtoritajiet tal-ippjanar u ma entitajiet oħra kkonċernati biex il-pass li jittiehed u li jista' jaffettwa l-ambjent mibni tal-pajjiż darba għal dejjem, ikun pass fid-direzzjoni t-tajba u ma jkunx pass fid-dlam u li jaffettwa hażin u għal dejjem il-kwalità tal-hajja tan-nies.

PUBLICATION OF LOCAL PLANS

It is hereby resolved, at the Annual General Meeting held at Din l-Art Helwa offices at 133, Melita Street, Valletta, on 24th February 2018, that whereas the Local Plans have been under review since the approval of the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development

document, these have not yet come to light. Din l-Art Helwa urges the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Planning, the Hon. Chris Agius MP, to make this a priority, as the fast rate of development currently experienced, should be regulated only through these Local Plans.

PUBLIKAZZJONI TAL-PJANIJIET LOKALI

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta, is-Sibt 24 ta' Frar 2018, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li għalkemm il-Pjanijiet Lokali ilhom jiġu studjati wara l-approvazzjoni tad-dokument tal-Pjan ta' Strategija għall-Ambjent u l-Iżvilupp, dawn għadhom qatt ma ntwerew. Din l-Art Helwa tteġġeg lis-Segretarju Parlamentari responsabbli għall-Ippjanar, l-Onorevoli Chris Agius MP, biex jagħtiha prijorità għaliex ir-rata mgħaġġa tal-iżvilupp tista' tiġi biss imrażżna mill-Pjanijiet Lokali.

SCHEDULING OF BUILDINGS

It is hereby resolved, at the Annual General Meeting, held at Din l-Art Helwa offices at 133, Melita Street, Valletta, on 24th February 2018, that whereas there has been a drive, in recent weeks, by the Planning Authority to schedule a number of buildings, it is urged to step up this process, and allow for the protection of Malta's fast disappearing traditional and historic architecture, which is being swallowed up by development. Din l-Art Helwa demands that demolition is halted immediately, especially in Urban Conservation Areas, where utmost protection should be given, and often, not even façades are being retained. This is taking place also in Gozo, where not only villages are under attack, but also the medieval cluster houses in Victoria, unique to the island.

SKEDAR TA' BINI

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta, is-Sibt 24 ta' Frar 2018, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li, għalkemm kien hemm xi żviluppi fl-aħħar ġimgħat mill-Awtorità tal-Ippjanar biex tiskeda numru ta' binjiet, huwa neċessarju li dan il-proċess jithaffef biex tiġi mħarsa l-arkitektura tradizzjonali u storika li qiegħda tinbela' mill-iżvilupp. Din l-Art Helwa trid li d-demolizzjoni ta' bini, l-aktar f'Zoni Urbani ta' Konservazzjoni, tieqaf immedjatament biex tingħata protezzjoni immedjata minhabba li l-anqas il-faċċati tal-bini ma huma qegħdin jinżammu sħaħ. Dan

qiegħed iseħħ ukoll f'Għawdex fejn mhux biss il-villaġġi qegħdin jiġu affettwati iżda wkoll id-djar uniċi medjevali fir-Rabat Victoria.

REVISION OF RURAL POLICY 2014

It is hereby resolved at the Annual General Meeting held at Din l-Art Helwa offices at 133, Melita Street, Valletta, on 24th February 2018 that the 2014 Rural Policy be revised urgently by Government so that its policies are stringently limited to guidelines for the genuine regeneration of the countryside as it is being used as an excuse to promote new building, replace existing structures, increase existing footprints and to sanction past illegalities. Furthermore, Din l-Art Helwa urges Government to protect the quaint, traditionally built rural structures of a certain age that lend the countryside in Malta and Gozo its unique character. These should be adapted to modern use and preserved, and not demolished on the pretext of dilapidation.

Furthermore, the Government must organise the National Water Management Plan, as per its electoral commitment, so as to protect our water table, our most precious resource, which is presently being ravaged by over-extraction and nitrate pollution.

REVIŻJONI TAL-POLITIKA RURALI 2014

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' Din l-Art Helwa, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta, is-Sibt 24 ta' Frar 2018, Din l-Art Helwa ssostni li l-Politika Rurali tal-2014 għandha tiġi riveduta mill-aktar fis possibbli mill-Gvern biex il-politika li jfassal kun limitata strettament bil-linji gwida biex il-kampanja tiġi ġenwinament rigenerata għaliex bħalissa qiegħda tintuża bhala skuza biex tinkoragġixxi bini ġdid, jinbidlu strutturi eżistenti, tiżdied l-arja li tinbena u jiġu maħfura illegalitajiet li saru. Barra minn hekk Din l-Art Helwa tteġġeg il-Gvern biex l-istrutturi rurali antiki u tradizzjonali li jagħtu l-kampanja Maltija u Għawdxija dehra unika, għandhom jiġu adattati għall-hajja moderna u mhux jitneħħew bl-iskuza li gġarrfu.

Barra minn hekk il-Gvern għandu jorganizza l-Pjan Nazzjonali għall-harsien tal-ilma kif ġie mwieġhed fl-elezzjoni biex jiġi mħares l-ilma taħt l-art, rizorsa mill-aktar prezzjuża, u li bħalissa qiegħed jittella' wisq aktar ilma milli din ir-rizorsa tiflaħ u qiegħda tiġi mniġġsa bin-nitrat.

Concluding Reflections

Mario Tabone

Liber Amicorum

Maurice Caruana Curran – Guardian of Heritage and Justice



Dr Mario Tabone



His Eminence Prosper Cardinal Grech and HE the Acting President of Malta Dolores Cristina



HE the Acting President Dolores Cristina addresses the public during the launch of the publication

Din l-Art Helwa was honoured that Dr Mario Tabone, known for his wide knowledge of literature and history, chaired the Review Panel for the publication honouring our Founder President Judge Maurice Caruana Curran launched on 15 November 2018 at the Aula Magna, Valletta Campus of the University of Malta. The launch was held in the presence of HE the Acting President, Mrs Dolores Cristina and of His Eminence Prosper Cardinal Grech who wrote the foreword to the book. Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, welcomed guests together with the Judge's family, Cettina Caruana Curran and Simone Mizzi, and introduced the evening, assisted by Chevalier Charles Gatt. On behalf of the organisation, she thanked the Editors, Professor Anthony Bonanno, Judge Joe Galea Debono and Coordinating Editor, Ann Gingell Littlejohn, and all Council Members of Din l-Art Helwa for their commitment and work. Cardinal Grech, describing the publication to be a deserving monument to the late Judge, gave the event his blessing. The Review Panel was made up of Mr Laurence Grech, Mrs Bernie Mizzi and Professor Joe Friggieri.

We are thrilled to reproduce in this edition of *Vigilo* Dr Tabone's erudite address which brought the review to a close.

When Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran did me the honour of asking me to chair this book launch, I did what I always do when tackling a subject: I awaited an echo in my memory of a catch-phrase or saying which then puts me on the trail of further reflections. This time, it flashed almost instantaneously, and it was: "Let us now praise famous men..." It is the title of a runaway best-seller by James Agee, published in the early forties, which documented the impoverishment of tenant farmers during the Depression. Actually, the title is lifted from Sirach (44:1) and continues: "and our fathers that begat us". I found this quite appropriate and stirring as we meet today to pay tribute to a just and worthy man. After all, as Cicero once remarked: "The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living". Also, a communal act of memory is vital to countervail that iniquitous societal vice which is the "forgetfulness of history".

To begin with, it is right and proper to name, compliment and thank the Editors and Organising Committee: Mrs Ann Gingell Littlejohn, Professor Anthony Bonanno, Judge Joseph Galea Debono, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran and Mrs Simone Mizzi, for the arduous task of producing this praiseworthy volume. I would also like to congratulate them for the judicious choice of the sub-title Guardian of Heritage and Justice. I would also like to applaud the contributors for their learned, varied and significant articles. Many thanks also go to the distinguished members of the panel: Professor Joe Friggieri, Mr Laurence Grech and Mrs Bernie Mizzi.

Judge Caruana Curran was a man of many parts, a brilliant multi-faceted personality, with major achievements in various fields and wide literary and cultural interests: in youth, a star athlete, enamoured of the theatre, poet, endowed with a subtle and discerning legal mind, an outstanding public prosecutor, a legendary judge and a peerless champion of the environment and cultural heritage. So, naturally, this book ranges over a broad spectrum, from warm reminiscences, appraisals by legal scholars, historical chronicles, confessions of intellectual debt and sagas of environmental activism. But, of course, the reigning passions of Maurice were justice and heritage, and here, he was not only prophetic and a pioneer – his agonising concern with these fields is still as relevant as ever. Injustice and disdain for heritage spell a dysfunctional, if not an outrightly dystopian, society, and the twilight of civilised living. We can appreciate, then, that Maurice did not occupy his mind with trifling matters but with those of epochal import. One of the maxims of La



The Review Panel from left to right: Mr Laurence Grech, Mrs Bernie Mizzi, Dr Mario Tabone and Professor Joe Friggieri

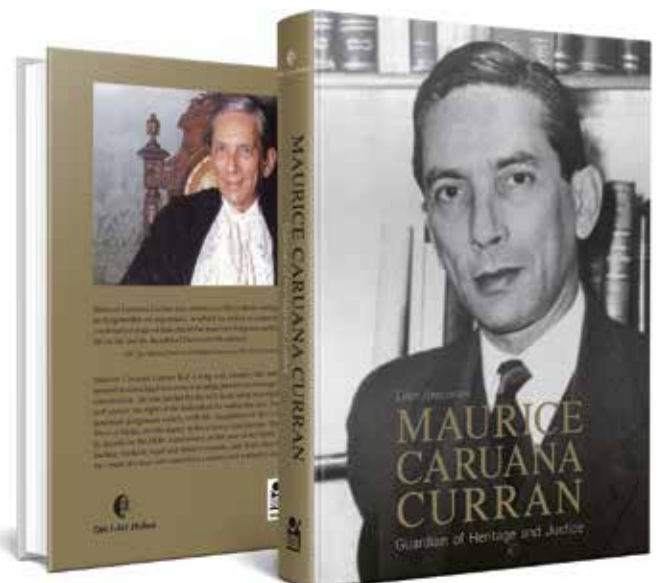
Rochefoucauld inevitably comes to mind: “Those who occupy their minds with small matters generally become incapable of greatness”. And Maurice certainly was capable of greatness. Indeed, this book, Liber Amicorum, is not only a memorial by friends but a clarion call to all of us, as citizens, to be vigilant and accountable. Montesquieu, an incisive political philosopher made that famous remark which, perhaps, ought to be on the desk of all of us: “The tyranny of a prince in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy”.

As a judge Caruana Curran showed integrity, clarity, knowledge, courage, without fear or favour (in spite of slurs and threats), compassion and, by peer consensus, made landmark judgements. I do not presume to make forays into the legal field but the comments and assessments of the eminent scholars in this book testify to his exalted status as a judge. Just a few stellar examples would do: “symbol of the independence of the judiciary” (Bencini); at a time when there was “almost general collapse of the judiciary, Caruana Curran stood out and stood firm” (Bonello); “a single man had single-handedly changed the course of legal history” (Aquilina); referred to as the Lord Denning of Malta; “Like Lord Denning, he strove to ensure that the individual rights and freedoms were

protected from the arrogance of power”(Attard); “the supreme embodiment and role model in Maltese history for separation of powers and independence of the judiciary” (H. Frendo); His judgements were sheer works of art and showed his deep knowledge of the law” (Galea Debono); “In times when people were losing hope in the Courts as bastions for the rule of law, Caruana Curran’s courage and example was a great service to the nation” (Mifsud Bonnici). Yes, Judge Caruana Curran was a redoubtable defender of the law. He knew and felt deeply what John Locke states succinctly: “Wherever law ends, tyranny begins”. He was a stickler for the rule of law not to be doctrinaire or pedantic but because he knew that the rule of law was the foundation of our basic rights. Plato somewhere states that “Not to help justice in her need would be an impiety” – Maurice could certainly not be faulted in that respect.

Of course, Maurice Caruana Curran bequeathed a great legacy to the nation in Din l-Art Helwa, which he founded in 1965 and led and inspired for many years. It is an organisation which has valiantly fought for conservation of the built and natural heritage as well as promoting respect for the cultural heritage in general. Maurice knew and felt viscerally that a people without a past is disoriented in the present and without a compass for the future. Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote so eloquently on democracy in America and was what would today be considered a political scientist, wrote: “When the past no longer illuminates the future, the spirit walks in darkness”. Maurice was saddened by the spectacle of how we savaged our habitat, degraded urban areas and have eaten up open spaces. Alas, this barbaric insouciance to our collective memory, heritage and environment continues. Under his leadership, several historical sites have been salvaged from utter destitution. Among so many others, the interventions at Hal Millieri and Bir Miftuħ and the restoration of the mediaeval frescoes constitute a veritable milestone. We have no mountains, lakes, rivers or mineral richness. Apart from the human element, our greatest resource as a nation is the cultural heritage which, per square kilometre, is probably one of the densest in the world. This should be obvious to all but, regrettably, there has been, along the years, an indifference and apathy both among the general public and the political class. In this sense, I always remember what Helen Keller (born deaf, mute and blind) wisely said: “Eyes are useless if the mind is blind”. Maurice, one is proud to recall, not only had his eyes open but also an ample mind. I like to think that he knew and recited Theodore Roosevelt exhortation: “There is your country; cherish these natural wonders; cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children’s children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches and its romance”. No wonder, in 2005, he was awarded the Europa Nostra Cultural Heritage Award for “his unswerving commitment to the ideals of conservation, for his ability to speak fearlessly for heritage and for his unflinching spirit of volunteership”. It is indeed poetic justice that we are paying homage to Judge Caruana Curran this year, the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

I would like, once again, to thank and congratulate both the contributors to the book and the panel for creating a collective portrait of Maurice – a mosaic portrait where every tessera reveals an aspect or angle of his exuberant personality and wide interests. Well has it been said that the things we love tell us what we are. Today, we heard of Maurice’s love of justice and heritage – and so we know what man he was: a man of honour, integrity, vision, an idealist and humanist, in short, a truly civilised man. In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle declares pungently: “All virtue is summed up in dealing justly” and, no doubt, Judge Caruana Curran was truly a just man.



The publication Liber Amicorum Maurice Caruana Curran – Guardian of Heritage and Justice

Presentation of the publication *Liber Amicorum Maurice Caruana Curran – Guardian of Heritage and Justice* to HE the President of Malta



Officials of Din l-Art Helwa recently presented a copy of the newly launched publication *Maurice Caruana Curran Guardian of Heritage and Justice* to HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, who is also the Patron of the heritage organisation founded by Judge Maurice Caruana Curran in 1965. This *Liber Amicorum* was published by Din l-Art Helwa on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the birth in 1918 of its Founder President and recounts his accomplishments in the many fields in which he excelled during his long, productive and versatile career. With some 37 written contributions from many of Malta's leading thinkers, legal and literary experts and many close to him in the field of heritage conservation, and with a foreword by His Eminence Prosper Cardinal Grech, this book captures the vision of the late judge who, with his many landmark judgments and his

timely foundation of Din l-Art Helwa, served his country and wished to leave it a better place. The publication is illustrated lavishly with many photographs capturing key moments in the judge's life making it an important piece of Melitensia, and will be preserved in the library at the Presidential Palace.

The editors for the publication *Liber Amicorum Maurice Caruana Curran – Guardian of Heritage and Justice* were Professor Anthony Bonanno and Judge Joseph Galea Debono, with Ann Gingell Littlejohn as co-ordinating editor, while Cettina Caruana Curran and Simone Mizzi formed the organising committee. The launch of the publication was held recently at the Valletta Campus Aula Magna during which Dr Mario Tabone chaired a most erudite review panel made up of Mr Laurence Grech, Mrs Bernie Mizzi and Professor Joe Friggieri. The publication is now available in major bookshops, and through the bookshop at Din l-Art Helwa at a price of €45. Any proceeds derived by Din l-Art Helwa from the sale of this book will be entirely dedicated to the activities of the organisation in its mission to protect and promote the cultural heritage of the Maltese islands.

*From left to right:
Professor Anthony Bonanno,
Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran,
Ms Maria Grazia Cassar,
Executive President of
Din l-Art Helwa,
HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca,
President of Malta,
Mrs Simone Mizzi,
Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon,
and Professor Lucio
Mulé Stagno*



Valletta - European Capital of Culture 2018

Simone Mizzi



19 January 2018 – Showers of brilliant fireworks illuminate Valletta's mighty bastions

On the evening of 19 January, Valletta put its best foot forward as it stepped into its new role as the European Capital of Culture 2018 (together with Leeuwarden in the Netherlands). Its dramatic fortifications and Baroque palaces resplendent under Malta's golden sun, Europe's World Heritage City became Capital of Culture and burst into a brilliant celebration of music, dance and light. Attended by no less than some 130,000 people – almost a third of the island's population - the Baroque capital city and its narrow streets came alive as 1,000 artists and 450 production team members gathered together under the spotlights of some 18 kilometres of fibre optics to celebrate Malta's cultural traditions and its proud significant European history.

The Grand Hospital of the Knights of Malta, the gracious building that boasts the longest unsupported hall in Europe, hosted the official opening ceremony of Valletta 2018 on the evening of 20 January. The festive event kicked off with addresses from the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Tibor Navracscics, the President of Malta HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, the Prime Minister of Malta Dr Joseph Muscat, the Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government Dr Owen Bonnici and the Parliamentary Secretary for Consumer Protection and Valletta 2018 Dr Deo Debbattista. The welcome remarks were made by the Mayor of Valletta, Professor Alexiei Dingli, and the Chairman of the Valletta 2018 Foundation, Mr Jason Micallef.

Simone Mizzi was present at the official opening ceremony both as Board Member of Europa Nostra and former President of Din l-Art Helwa. Set to the theme of the traditional Maltese 'festa', celebrating history, religion, traditional crafts and food, its language and spectacular pyrotechnic art (fireworks) and coloured by the warmth of its hospitable and friendly people, the launch of Valletta's Capital of Culture was deemed to be perhaps the most extensive artistic spectacle that Malta has ever seen, drawing praise from locals and foreigners alike. The year of culture was set to multiply beyond Valletta to the most remote corners of the island archipelago, and to amaze all for the next 365 days of events, didactic information, networking and celebration.

Reporting back for Europa Nostra's newsletter and for *Vigilo*, Simone Mizzi, who was born and raised in Valletta, stated:

Valletta is Europe's smallest capital city and now the first World Heritage City to become European Capital of Culture. It is a city of extraordinary history and extraordinary beauty. I hope the pride and appreciation felt by all for Valletta, and its power to amaze, will live on, so that recognition of the great universal value it has for the world, and of the cultural heritage that it represents is shared and enjoyed for generations to come, especially after this year, the European Year of Cultural Heritage when we are all sharing our heritage and our values. Above all, I fervently hope that Valletta's power to inspire, with the example of its historic legacy, protects the built and natural heritage that is being lost outside Valletta and elsewhere in Malta".



The Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, Dr Owen Bonnici, launches Valletta as European Capital of Culture, standing before the backdrop of Renzo Piano's new Parliament Building

Simone Mizzi is former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa and currently serves on Council as Vice President

Din l-Art Helwa Supports Europa Nostra's *Berlin Call For Action*



Signing the Berlin Call for Action at DLH headquarters DLH officials from left to right: Seated are from left to right, Martin Scicluna Hon. Treasurer, Philip Mercieca, Secretary General, Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President DLH, Simone Mizzi, Vice President Europa Nostra and Council Member of DLH, and Ann Gingell Littlejohn, right, standing are Council Members, Martin Galea, Lizzie Cremona, and Professor Anthony Bonanno

The Berlin Call for Action was presented by Europa Nostra, which is the Voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe encompassing some 400 heritage organisations and associations, together with the German Cultural Heritage Committee (DNK) and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK), during the European Heritage Summit held in Berlin in June 2018 to mark the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The Berlin Call for Action was disseminated throughout Europe and Din l-Art Helwa also organised it to be available in Maltese. Its symbolic signatures were presented to the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracscics, on the 20 November at the European Parliament by Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary General of Europa Nostra, and Uwe Koch from the German Cultural Heritage Committee. The Berlin Call to Action can still be signed on #BerlinCallToAction in its 18 language versions including Maltese.

It is satisfying to note that on 27 November 2018 at the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council in Brussels, as a result of the activities and lobbying organized by cultural heritage stakeholders during 2018, EU Ministers of Culture and the Council of the European Union adopted among others, a Work Plan for Culture 2019 – 2022, stressing the importance of sustaining the legacy of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. Ministers acknowledged that

‘the Year has considerably raised public and political awareness about culture and heritage in Europe, and the importance of taking this momentum forward to tap the full potential of the social and economic value of culture for Europe’.

The Work Plan prioritises Sustainability in Cultural Heritage including Climate Change, Social cohesion and Well being, Gender equality, Supporting networks for artists, cultural and creative professionals, and Strengthening international cultural relations through cultural heritage.

11 July 2018. Officials of Din l-Art Helwa, a member of Europa Nostra since 1967, met to sign the Berlin Call for Action at its Valletta Headquarters. Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa (seated third from left) said

‘Especially now, during 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage and after the Cultural Heritage Summit in Berlin, it is important that all NGOs and individual citizens who have the cause of cultural heritage to heart sign the Berlin Call for Action which appeals to politicians, communicators and opinion makers to support the Seven Points of Action listed in the Appeal #BerlinCallToAction’.

Simone Mizzi, Vice President of Europa Nostra from Malta, (seated second from right) said:

‘The Seven Points of Action drawn up by Europa Nostra and its partners in Berlin, focus on making cultural heritage a fundamental pillar of the European project that puts culture at the heart of all European activities, and will, if implemented, have great positive impact on programmes for youth and education so that awareness of our European values and history is transmitted to the next generation’.



20 November, 2018, a Twitter photograph received from Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović taken at the presentation of the Berlin Call for Action signatures to Commissioner Tibor Navracscics (left) together with Uwe Koch, representative of the German Cultural Heritage Committee

Joseph Calleja sings Europe's *Ode to Joy* ...in Maltese

The renowned tenor Joseph Calleja shared his own inspiring contribution of Europe's *Ode to Joy* during the European Cultural Heritage Summit which took place in Berlin on 18-24 June. This unusual version sung in German and then in Maltese, the *Innu l-Ferħ*, was recorded in the historic Church of Our Lady of Victories in Valletta. The video was premiered during the European Policy Debate "Sharing Heritage – Sharing Values" to the delight of the high level audience discussing the future role of cultural heritage in Europe.

Dr John Vassallo, Council Member of Europa Nostra and Simone Mizzi, Board Member of Europa Nostra tell us:

'This is the first time Schiller's verses are sung in the Maltese language, one of the 24 official languages of the European Union and the only one with Semitic roots. Mr Calleja was inspired to sing the *Innu l-Ferħ* in Maltese as a response to the #Ode2Joy Challenge, which was launched by Europa Nostra and its President Maestro Plácido Domingo. This initiative celebrates Europe and our shared heritage on the occasion of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018'.

Joseph Calleja stated: "*Music, alongside mathematics, is a universal language and a language that brings us all together. Initiatives such as the #Ode2joy Challenge challenge us all European cousins in the right way and brings us together as only music can.*"

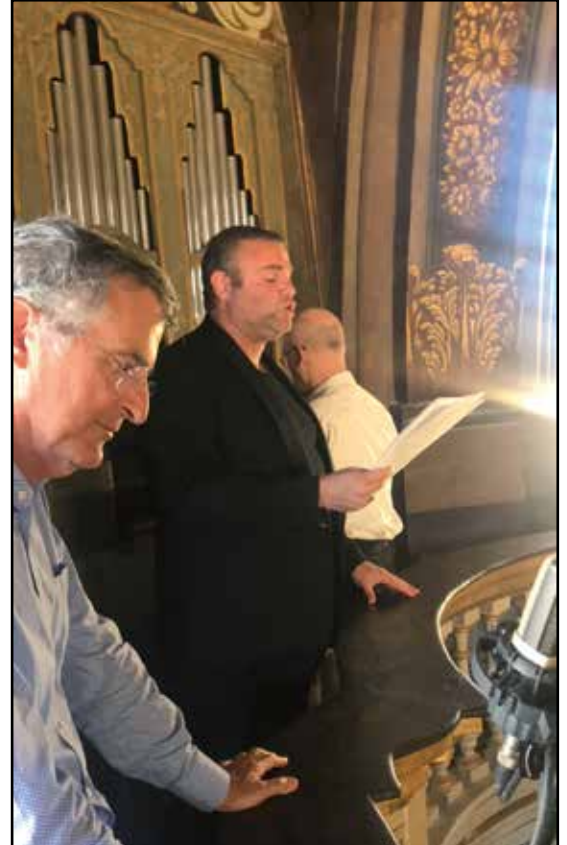
Maestro Plácido Domingo reacted to Calleja's performance: "*I am thrilled that Joseph Calleja, whose impressive career I have been so pleased to follow, has chosen to bring Europe his own version of the inspiring Ode to Joy from his country of birth. As President of Europa Nostra, I wish to convey all our thanks for this very special gift which he brought us from Valletta, European Capital of Culture for 2018.*"

The *Ode to Joy* was translated into Maltese by **Dr John Vassallo**, former Ambassador for Malta to the European Union while Simone Mizzi, former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa coordinated the event at Our Lady of Victories Church, the oldest church in Valletta. The flagship restoration of the historic church is on its way to completion and has been one of the most challenging projects for Din l-Art Helwa, an early founding member of Europa Nostra. Maestro Joseph Calleja was accompanied by organist Hugo Agius Muscat on the recently restored 18C *Positivo* Organ of Our Lady of Victories Church.

NOTE:

#Ode2Joy Challenge

On the occasion of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, Europa Nostra and its President Maestro Plácido Domingo have invited the citizens of Europe to contribute to the #Ode2Joy Challenge. This social media participatory initiative kicked-off on 9 May 2018 – Europe Day. Since then, over 100 reinterpretations from over 25 countries across Europe and beyond of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* have been filmed at heritage sites and uploaded online. The challenge will continue until 9 May 2019! For more information on how to contribute and see the videos, please visit: www.ode2joy.eu



Tenor Joseph Calleja on the Organ Gallery at Victory Church in preparation for his recording of the 'Ode To Joy'



The Ode To Joy Malta Team at Victory Church from left to right Dr John Vassallo, Dr Hugo Agius Muscat, Tenor Joseph Calleja and Simone Mizzi

IN MEMORIAM

*HRH Prince Henrik of Denmark, Comte de Montpezat (1934-2018)
President of Europa Nostra (1990-2007)*



1992 - A relaxed moment on the Bosphorus for Maurice Caruana Curran, Founder President of DLH with HRH Prince Henrik of Denmark, President of Europa Nostra during the annual congress held in Istanbul

As a member of Europa Nostra, Din l-Art Helwa pays tribute to His Royal Highness the Prince Consort of Denmark who passed away on 13 February 2018. Prince Henrik was the President of Europa Nostra for a period of 17 years, from 1990 to June 2007. His Presidency marked a phase of unprecedented growth and development for Europa Nostra which is today recognised as the true “voice” of cultural heritage in Europe.

Greatly committed and dedicated to the promotion of cultural heritage, Prince Henrik never missed a General Assembly or a Council meeting of Europa Nostra, a European Heritage Awards Ceremony or any other event for which his presence was important. He visited Malta for the Annual General Meeting of Europa Nostra in 2006.

Prince Henrik’s wise and prudent advice was highly valued for any action aimed at the promotion of Europe’s cultural heritage, or in any situation of threat to this heritage. He became President of Europa Nostra in 1990, only a few months after the fall of the Berlin Wall which marked the beginning of a new era for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Our continent was finally becoming a vast space of democracy and security based on shared values. Our cultural heritage proved to be a key factor in this new European momentum, opening up new horizons for the objectives and activities of Europa Nostra. At that time, accepting the Presidency of Europa Nostra was an act of courage and evidence of Prince Henrik’s dedication to European ideals. By doing so, Prince Henrik took up the task of continuing the work of his two predecessors who were both strongly committed to a united Europe: Lord Duncan-Sandys, former British Minister, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Cultural Heritage of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Hans de Koster, former Minister of the Netherlands, who chaired the Committee of Ministers and subsequently the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The contribution of Prince Henrik to Europa Nostra was decisive: consolidating Europa Nostra by establishing its headquarters in The Hague (The Netherlands) with a permanent and efficient Secretariat, as well as developing its collaboration with the European Union and enlarging our citizens’ movement for cultural and natural heritage throughout Greater Europe. This latter task was especially dear to Prince Henrik’s heart: he was always keen to learn about the needs and concerns of associations and communities committed to cultural heritage in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Prince Henrik’s diplomatic skills and finesse were a great asset to help ensure the right balance for Europa Nostra’s relationship with the Council of Europe, the Strasbourg-based institution linked to the origins of Europa Nostra, and with the European Union, of which it has become a valued partner representing civil society. It was under his mandate that the Europa Nostra heritage awards became, in 2002, the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards.

All of these significant achievements reflect the great dedication to the mission and activities of Europa Nostra by HRH the Prince Consort of Denmark, and those of us in Malta who knew him will always remember him with gratitude.

How can you help Din l-Art Helwa and make a difference?

Martin Scicluna

Hon. Treasurer Din l-Art Helwa



Martin Scicluna

“We have been blessed with good fortune beyond our wildest expectations, and we are profoundly grateful. But just as these gifts are great, so we feel a great responsibility to use them well. That is why we are so pleased to join in making an explicit commitment to the Giving Pledge.”

Bill and Melinda Gates

Notwithstanding the contentious conversations one may have concerning the distribution of wealth in the world, it has to be recognised that there are still some very decent people out there and that the concept of giving back to society is still making a huge difference. There are a large number of billionaires, including Bill and Melinda Gates, the founders of MICROSOFT and WINDOWS, who have **pledged that they will donate at least half their wealth to philanthropic causes during their lifetime.** They are probably best known for their relentless fight against the eradication of polio, and the indications are that the fight is being won.

Mindful that most of us are not billionaires, I suggest that we look at another quote from Sue Desmond-Hellmann, Chief Executive Officer of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation who states that:

The world will not get better by itself. We must set big goals and hold ourselves accountable every step of the way.

Replacing “The world” with “Malta”, we can apply this statement to our country and also to our times.

If we consider the scary proliferation of waste and plastics, the continuous “attack” on our open spaces/countryside, the many historical and cultural places which require restoration and rehabilitation, there is clearly a lot to be done.

At this point you may be wondering ... if I am not a billionaire:

Can I still make a difference?

Do I still need to keep myself accountable?

Is it still important to set big plans?

Well, if you are a billionaire, we would love to meet you and to share our vision and mission with you ... but if you are a conscientious Maltese citizen, you do not need to be a billionaire to make a difference and the answer to all the questions above is certainly a resounding YES!



Volunteers make a difference in this clean up operation

Din l-Art Helwa is a non-governmental organisation that is registered as a legal person (association), is enrolled with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, has its books of account audited by a Certified Public Accountant and Auditor every year, and is subject to a Statute including provisions for a Council and a volunteer Executive President to be elected every two years.

Which of the following potential avenues applies and appeals to you?

	HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE?	HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE?	HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE?
WHAT CAN YOU DO?	Little Time	Few Hours Per annum	Several hours Per month
I can only support Din l-Art Helwa “in spirit” and if and when I can	Make a Donation now! ... your contribution big or small will certainly help us continue our work.	Become a member. Selectively attend and take part in our diary of cultural events including tours, lectures, concerts and other fund-raising activities.	
I have a passion to meet people, would like to provide support on an uncommitted basis	Become a Member, and/or make a donation.	Volunteer for occasional attendance and contribution in Clean-ups, to assist us in hosting cultural events, or in our administrative office in Valletta.	
I wish to actively share my skills and experiences, to meet new people and to actively contribute to the mission of Din l-Art Helwa		Consider joining one of our site volunteer teams. As a volunteer you will be responsible for taking care of a historical property (in a team), meeting and greeting visitors and acting as an ambassador of Din l-Art Helwa.	Consider a leadership role (on the basis of skills and experiences) at one of our sites open to the public. Consider joining our Council or our Executive Management Committee (requires a minimum of 120 hours per annum) in areas of Restoration, Youth Leadership, Events Management, Public Relations and Marketing, Property Management Environmental Activism, Financial Management and Fund-Raising and other organisational roles.

Our registered office and our administration centre is in 133 Melita Street Valletta. This is open every working day. We have sites in Dwejra Gozo, Comino, Mellieħa, St Paul’s Bay, Żurrieq, Delimara, Marsascalea, Valletta, Floriana and in other areas in Malta and Gozo where we open sites less often than our main sites.

Din l-Art Helwa delivers a significant amount of outputs with 3 employees and circa 100 volunteers.

If 50,000 Maltese citizens donated just 1 hour per week of voluntary work, it would amount to the equivalent of 1,250 full time volunteers!

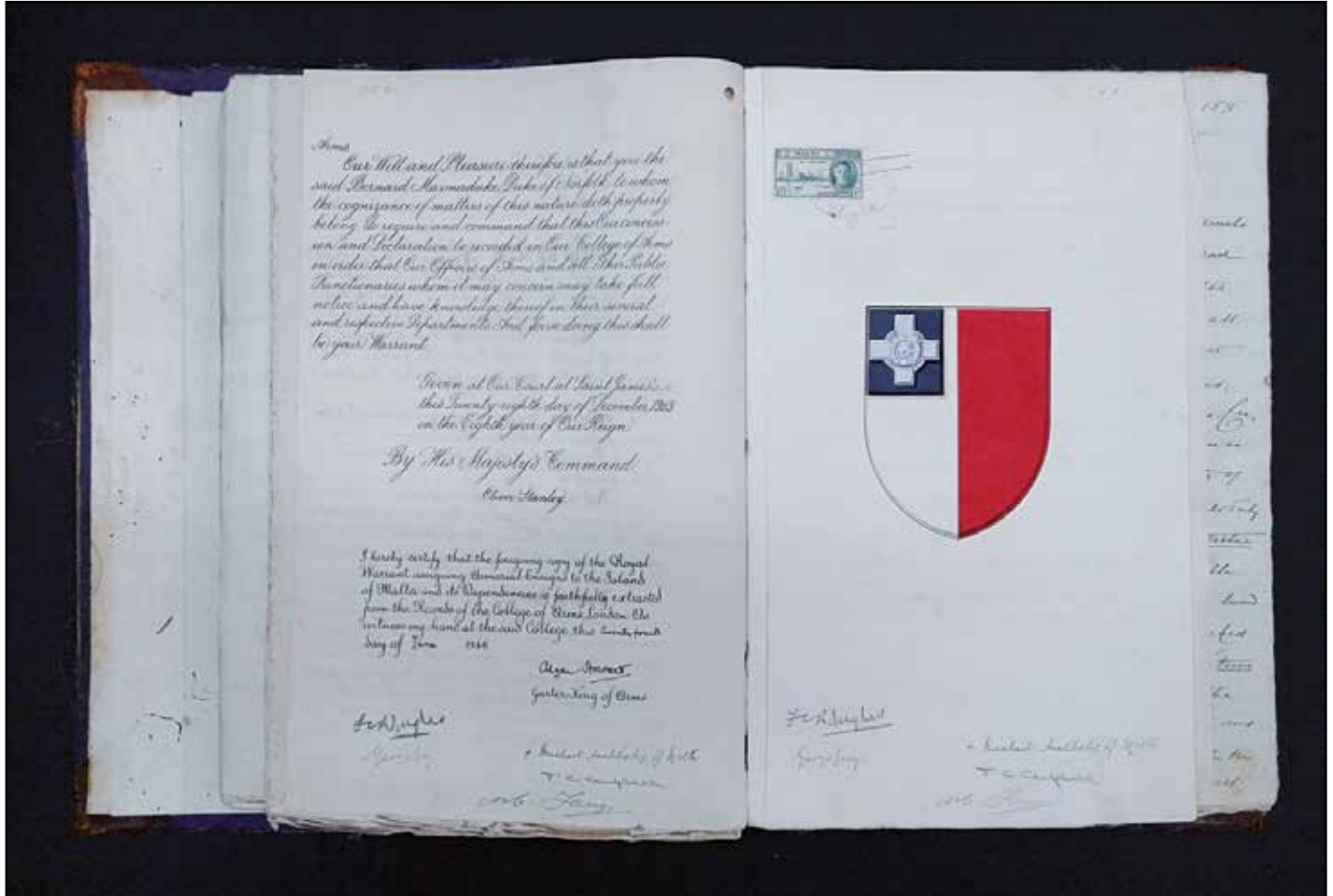
Imagine what we could achieve with your help ... your contribution is invaluable, even if it is a few hours per annum.

Become a member, volunteer with Din l-Art Helwa.

<https://dinlarthelwa.org>

The George Cross Enrolment Deed Its Importance and Restoration

Joseph Galea Debono



The George Cross Grant in Volume 407 of Notary to Government Carmelo Farrugia, Notarial Archives, Valletta. (Photo courtesy of the Notarial Archives)



Dr. Joan Abela takes viewers through the volume

Friday 13 April 2018 saw the press launch at the premises of Din l-Art Helwa of the national trust's sponsorship of the restoration and conservation process of the Notarial volume containing the enrolment in the records of Notary to Government Carmelo Farrugia of a very important historical document that had since enrolment been forgotten, lying forlorn till the historians and conservators working in the Notarial Archives found it in St Christopher Street, Valletta.

It was on the initiative of Council Member and former Honorary Secretary of Din l-Art Helwa, Ian Camilleri, that the importance of this volume was brought to the attention of the organisation that promptly decided to raise funds for its restoration. It was identified by the experts at the Notarial Archives as the volume containing the enrolment of a copy of the Royal Warrant authorising the College of Arms in London to assign the Armorial Bearings of the George Cross to the Island of Malta and its Dependencies, as well as a copy of the King's letter awarding the George Cross dated 15 April 1942.

The press launch communicating its forthcoming restoration, was organised together with the Notarial Archives Foundation and its President, Judge Giovanni Bonello, and its lead consultant, historians Dr Joan Abela and paper conservator Dr Theresa Zammit Lupi. The launch was planned to coincide with the events commemorating the 76th anniversary of the award and was addressed by the Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, Maria Grazia Cassar. She welcomed those present who included the President of the George Cross Island Association, Judge Joseph Galea Debono and representatives of the United Kingdom and Malta branches of the Association.

Judge Galea Debono then outlined the circumstances which had prompted King George VI to make such a unique award to this Island Nation in the dark Spring days of 1942, when Malta was being subjected to relentless bombing by the German Luftwaffe and the Italian Regia Aeronautica, and at a time when supplies of food, fuel, ammunition, medicines and other necessities of life had fallen to their lowest levels. The King's award came as a morale boost to a suffering population and garrison who still had more long months to undergo suffering, privation and death.

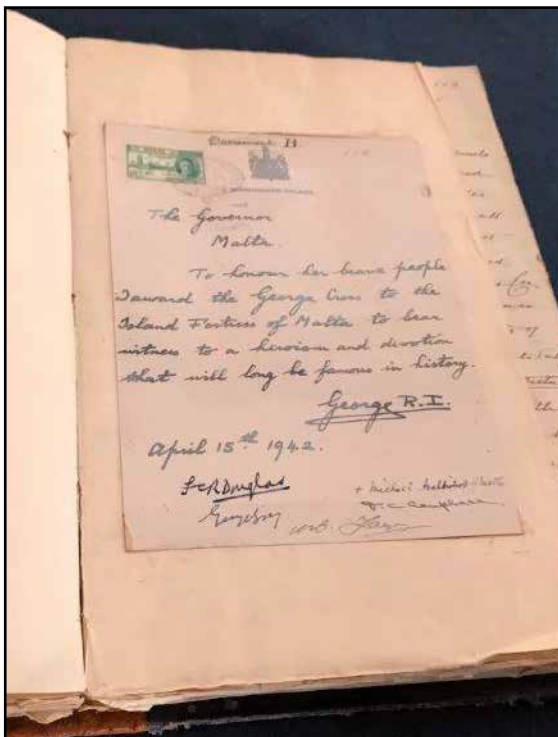
Judge Giovanni Bonello, Chairman of the Notarial Archives Foundation, explained the role of the Foundation. He said this sponsorship is of great significance to the Notarial Archives Foundation since support from another non-governmental organisation, such as Din l-Art Helwa, itself dependent on the private sector for funding, is greatly appreciated and it is hoped that this initiative will continue to set an example for other organisations, companies, and the private sector to become active contributors in the Notarial Archives Foundation's mission to preserve our nation's paper heritage for future generations. Dr Joan Abela and Dr Theresa Zammit Lupi spoke about the work necessary to preserve the volume, and expressed their great satisfaction at this opportunity of collaboration with Din l-Art Helwa to promote and preserve Malta's paper heritage.



Judge Giovanni Bonello, President of the Notarial Archives Foundation, receives the sponsorship letter from the Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, Maria Grazia Cassar



Damage caused to the volume: Lower edge of binding and text block showing abrasions and several folds. (Photo courtesy of the Notarial Archives)



Copy of the King's Letter awarding the George Cross to the Island of Malta

The conservation treatment of this volume will require various interventions, such as surface cleaning, removal of old repairs, spine repair, and cover repair. Furthermore, a protective enclosure will be created to house the volume safely and securely. All treatments would be carried out using the highest quality grade conservation materials and following current and international conservation practice and work ethic.

The volume was on display during the launch, thanks to the help and co-operation of the Chief Notary to Government and Archivist, Dr Keith German.

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE DEED

Although the George Cross was immediately adopted by the Times of Malta on its masthead and on some logos of some commercial firms, so much so that an Ordinance had to be promulgated prohibiting its unauthorised use, it was only on 28 December 1943, that the College of Arms in London authorised its inclusion on the Armorial Bearings of Malta, to be shown "on seals, shields, banners or otherwise according to the Laws of Arms."

The enrolment deed was executed on 17 February 1947 at the request of Governor Douglas and the Chief Justice Sir George Borg and was witnessed by the Metropolitan Archbishop, Monsignor Sir Michael Gonzi and the Lieutenant Governor David C. Campbell. It included as Document A the copy of the Royal Warrant and of the new Armorial Bearings showing the George Cross on a dark blue canton on the top white segment of the Maltese arms and a photograph of the King's letter awarding the George Cross as Document B.

A transcript of the text of the deed follows:-

No.19

*This Seventeenth day of February
One thousand nine hundred and
forty-seven.*

Enrolment

BEFORE me, DOCTOR CARMELO FARRUGIA, Notary to Government and in the presence of the hereinafter mentioned witnesses, who have all the qualifications required by law, personally came and appeared.

HIS EXCELLENCY FRANCIS CAMPBELL ROSS DOUGLAS, Governor and Commander in Chief of the Island of Malta and its Dependencies, son of the late Thomas James Boswall born in Canada, residing at Saint Anton Palace, Attard, Malta.

HIS HONOUR SIR GEORGE BORG, Kt., M.B.E., LL.D, Chief Justice and President of His Majesty's Court of Appeal, son of the late Mariano, born in Valletta, residing at Sliema.

Known to me the said Notary.

WHEREAS on the fifteenth Day of April one thousand nine hundred and forty-two, His Majesty the King, to honour her brave people awarded the George Cross to the Island Fortress of Malta to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history.

AND WHEREAS the George Cross and His Majesty's Letter awarding the same were duly presented by His Excellency Field Marshal Lord Gort, then Governor and Commander in Chief of Malta and its Dependencies to Sir George Borg who on behalf of the People of Malta received them at a public ceremony held on the Palace Square, Valletta, on the thirteenth Day of September One thousand nine hundred and forty-two.

AND WHEREAS His Majesty the King being desirous that for the greater honour and recognition of the Island of Malta and its Dependencies the Armorial Bearings thereof should contain fit and proper allusion to the aforesaid especial mark of His Royal Favour was graciously pleased by Royal Warrant given at the Court of Saint James's on the Twenty-eighth day of December, One thousand nine hundred and forty-three in the Eighth Year of his Reign addressed to the Earl Marshal and duly entered in the Records of the College of Arms, London, to ratify, confirm and assign unto the Island of Malta and its Dependencies the following Armorial Bearings, that is to say: for Arms Per pale Argent and Gules on a Canton Azure a representation of the George Cross proper as depicted in the painting thereto annexed, to be borne for the Island of Malta and its Dependencies upon Seals, Shields, Banners or otherwise according to the Laws of Arms.

AND WHEREAS in order the better to preserve for posterity these unique documents which while providing a lasting reminder to the People of Malta and its Dependencies, to the British Empire and to the world of the trials bravely borne and of the great contribution which Malta and its Dependencies with God's help were able to render to the British Empire in the hour of its greatest need will constitute an ever recurring encouragement to future generations to continue to show themselves worthy of the unique honour and with God's help to persevere in serving His Majesty the King and the Empire with the same devotion as in the past, it has been decided to preserve the original of His Majesty the King's Letter awarding the George Cross and a certified copy of the Royal Warrant assigning the Armorial Bearings to the Island of Malta and its Dependencies in the Royal Malta Library and to enroll in my records a copy of His Majesty's Letter and a certified copy of the Royal Warrant.

AND WHEREAS in pursuance of the latter part of the decision so come to His Excellency the Governor and Sir George Borg have now delivered to me a certified copy of the Royal Warrant (and of the annexure thereto) assigning the Armorial Bearings to Malta and its Dependencies given at the Court of Saint James's on the twenty-eighth day of December, One thousand nine hundred and forty-three and a copy of His Majesty the King's Letter awarding the George Cross to the Island Fortress of Malta dated the fifteenth day of April, One thousand nine hundred and forty-two, marked respectively Document A and Document B and have requested me to enroll same in my records to all ends and purposes of law.

NOW, THEREFORE, after having read out the said two Documents to the Apparers herein in the presence of the witnesses hereunder named, I have attached same to this deed for enrolment.

THIS DEED, the import whereof has been duly explained by me to the parties hereto, has been done, read and published in the Hall of Saint Michael and Saint George at the Governor's Palace, Valletta, Malta, in the presence of His Grace Monsignor Michael Gonzi, K.B.E., D.D., D. Litt., J.C.D., Metropolitan Archbishop son of the late Joseph residing at the Archbishop's Palace, Valletta and His Honour Sir David Callendar Campbell, C.M.G. Lieutenant Governor son of the late William Howard residing at Dar il-Ljuni, Hamrun, witnesses hereunder signed with me Notary and the apparers.

Sgd. F.C.R. DOUGLAS

GEORGE BORG

+ MICHAEL ARCHBISHOP OF MALTA

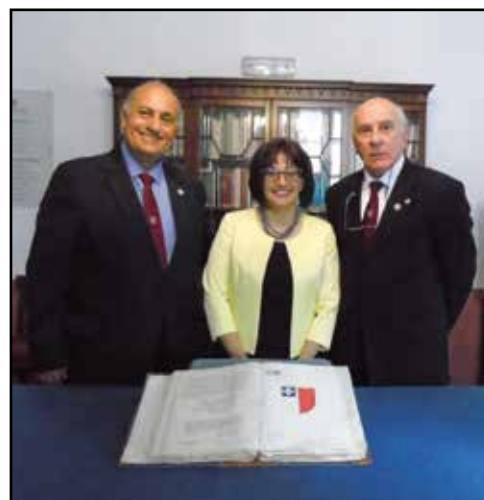
D.C. CAMPBELL

CARMELO FARRUGIA

NOTARY TO GOVERNMENT.

The restoration was successfully concluded and the now restored volume was launched to the public on 15 February 2019 at the Notarial Archives in Valletta in the presence of the Hon. Dr Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture, and Local Government, and officials from Din l-Art Helwa and the Notarial Archives.

*Giovanni Navarro, PRO of the Malta G.C. Branch of the GCIA,
Dr Joan Abela and Judge Joseph Galea Debono, President of the
George Cross Island Association (UK and Malta)
(Photo courtesy of Giovanni Navarro)*



Restoration, Conservation and Maintenance Efforts during 2018

Stanley Farrugia Randon



Every year the restoration, conservation and maintenance committee has a more difficult task to handle. Restoration and conservation are becoming an increasingly specialised science and Din l-Art Helwa employs specialists to carry out the work. This means more costs as well as more difficulty in finding the right people to do the job. This Din l-Art Helwa sub-committee is made up mainly of Josie Ellul Mercer and myself and we are lucky to find huge cooperation from the wardens of the properties as well as from other volunteers who choose to help us during the restoration of a site. Health and Safety and Insurance issues also must be addressed. Dealing with a number of workmen and coordinating the works between them is no joke. Nowadays contractors are more willing to conduct construction works rather than restoration and it is difficult to find someone to do the job. Applications for Planning Permits take months to be processed and we conduct regular monitoring visits with members of the Planning Authority and Environment and Resources Authority. Waiting for permits to be issued while we have sponsors waiting for our feedback on the progress of works on a site is to say the least frustrating.

Last but not least funding is also a problem for a non-governmental organisation like ours and in this regard we appreciate the great support from our present Treasurer Martin Scicluna. 18% VAT on any services is also a big financial burden.

Our main efforts this year were focused on the White Tower. We are very grateful to Mr Martin Vella, warden of the Wignacourt Tower (St Paul Tower) in St Paul's Bay who helps us to manage

Four different stages in the development of the tower. (All photos courtesy of Stanley Farrugia Randon)

Restoration of the east side wall of Torri l-Abjad

most of the aspects related to this restoration. During the last year, restoration of the British room in the ditch was completed and electricity installed. It will be used as a lecture room. This year work continued on the removal of the trees in the ditch which were causing damage to the ditch walls. To compensate Din l-Art Helwa planted 33 trees at the Dahlet ix-Xmajjar area close-by, in cooperation with ERA. The trees had to be watered regularly and are now growing well. Restoration and pointing of the internal and external walls of the tower is now nearing completion. External electricity cables were installed below ground level as was instructed by the relevant authorities. Electricity is being installed at ground level of the tower and this will be used as a visitor centre.

Regular meetings are being conducted with Cyberspace to prepare interactive screens and panels with information on marine biodiversity, the foreshore and information on the tower and on Din l-Art Helwa. In the meantime I conducted research on the history of the tower and published a booklet about it. Metal and wooden apertures were slowly but surely installed in all the different rooms of the tower. These were urgently needed because of security issues and we are planning to install security cameras and alarms. Two wells close to the tower have been cleaned and repaired and are being used for water storage. We have also consulted experts on water storage and its use for drinking and washing purposes and for the toilets in the tower. Regular visits on site with the contractor Stephen Scicluna and the architect Joseph Attard were conducted.



Din l-Art Helwa acknowledges the principal lead sponsor, namely HSBC Malta Foundation and corporate sponsor Atlas Insurance PCC Ltd, as well as the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation (Social Fund 2016), the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, the Ministry for Finance and National Lotteries Good Causes Fund (2016) and the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Environmental Funding Support Scheme for Voluntary Organisations 2016 whose support is making this challenging restoration possible.

Torri Mamo also required maintenance works this year. This was conducted by French volunteers in July. In September the woodwork of the bridge and gate was replaced. Our handyman John Gafà conducted cleaning and pointing of the walls and ceiling of the room on the tower roof. A window needed a new frame.

Hal Millieri chapel also required maintenance, as well as the repair of one of the rubble walls surrounding it.

We had applied for a Planning Permit for the restoration of the external walls of Ghallis Tower and have finally received approval from the Planning Authority but we still lack the funds to start this project.

The most important part of a site is its roof. Percolation of water is one of the main sources of damage to the old structures. Maintenance of all roofs of the historic properties managed by Din l-Art Helwa is carried out by our handyman on an annual basis before the start of winter.

Work has also been carried out in the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest. Volunteers, led by their warden Paolo Ferrelli, did some paintwork on the three cannon, replaced two rotten hatches (pump and reservoir hatches) with new ones (by volunteers), replaced broken slabs in two graves, discovered more tombs which required cleaning and basic repair work. Restoration of three monuments and other repairs were done by professional restorers. Many of these works were made possible by sponsorships from Mons. Philip Calleja and Col. RAMC (ret.) David Vassallo.

The restoration of the Red Tower started thanks to EU funds obtained through the Malta Tourism Authority. The Dwejra Tower and Comino Battery will follow under the same scheme. We apologise to readers that the Red Tower will not be open to the public till critical stages of the restoration are finalised.

Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon is a Council Member of Din l-Art Helwa



The interior of the lower floor of the tower after cleaning



View from Torri l-Abjad



Presentation of the Torri l-Abjad booklet written by Stanley Farrugia Randon to the Mellieha Local Council

Restoration continues at the church of Our Lady of Victories

Simone Mizzi



Completing the restoration of the bottom layers on the South Wall

SOUTH FACING FAÇADE RESTORED

Following the Victory Church Façade Appeal in late 2016 a great number of persons and companies generously came forward to assist Din l-Art Helwa to carry out another successful restoration of the south facing façade and the belfry of Our Lady of Victories Church, Valletta. The wall and its intricately carved belfry had suffered great deterioration, both most exposed to all elements. Rain and harsh winds, in particular, beat on the masonry causing it to slowly erode, while the fierce sun in summer causes cracks and drying out of its mortar joints. The iron supports of the bells had caused much damage to the surrounding belfry. The south wall and belfry have now been restored, their eroded masonry repointed or changed where necessary, and surfaces consolidated. We also ensured that water was draining correctly from the roof by re-routing the drainpipe exits and all was done after detailed conservation methods were approved by the Planning Authority. Consulting conservation architects for the project have been Periti Edward Said and Glorianne Cassar of AXV Ltd., while the contractors were Agius Stone Works. Both these companies have been long time supporters of Din l-Art Helwa and the heritage properties we manage, and we are grateful to them for the sensitive attention they give Malta's built heritage.

Following the wonderful response we received for this project from many companies and individuals, many with links to Valletta, the work could start and Phase 1 completed by early 2018, in time for the launch of Valletta as European Capital of Culture. Din l-Art Helwa thanks those many benefactors who have made donations to the scheme: 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., and Chevalier Joseph Micallef from the USA. We also thank the Malta Industrial Parks Ltd for its support of the challenging work on the belfry.

The restoration of the front wall and that of the church annexe wall will be taken up again in early 2019 as work can now resume after Valletta's term as European Capital of Culture in 2018 came to an end.

RESTORATION OF THE SACRISTAN'S HOUSE STAIR WELL AND CEILING

Work continued throughout the year on the interior stairwell and roof of the adjoining house. Its beams were rotting because of water penetration, and the wood had been totally eaten by termites. The top part of the stairwell was dismantled and wooden beams replaced, and we retained all unbroken ceiling stone slabs (*xoroq*). The old waterproofing layer (*deffun*) protecting the ceiling was replaced using the same method and materials. We are grateful to Ganado Advocates who generously came forward to cover the cost of this complex work.



Prior to restoration - the carved belfry showing deteriorated masonry

RESTORATION OF THE FOUR HISTORIC BELLS

At the same time as the restoration of the belfry, work was undertaken to ensure that the four historic bells of the Church of Our Lady of Victories could be restored, and their supports changed where necessary and rendered secure. These four bronze bells date to the Order of St John whose foundry was located just facing the site of the Opera House at Palazzo Ferreria (still bearing the name of its original function). This was no mean task as the bell supports had completely rusted, causing the belfry to crack, and were in danger of collapsing. The bell clappers also had to be secured, their pinning systems were causing corrosion. The heavy bronze bells had to be lowered into the belfry in such a way that their weight would not damage the roof and the ceiling. Below these lie the early 18C precious ceiling paintings by Alessio Erardi who was commissioned by Grand Master Perellos to depict the life of the Virgin.



Damaged stone slabs precariously support one of the bells

The task was entrusted to campanologist Kenneth Cauchi who has known the bells since he was a young boy. A detailed report by Kenneth showed that this intervention was most timely and his conclusions were presented by him to a full church in a memorable lecture on the History of Bells and Bell Founding in Malta on 17 May 2018. It was a joy to hear the bells peal again when, as Kenneth concluded his presentation, the public were given an opportunity to sound and ring the bells.

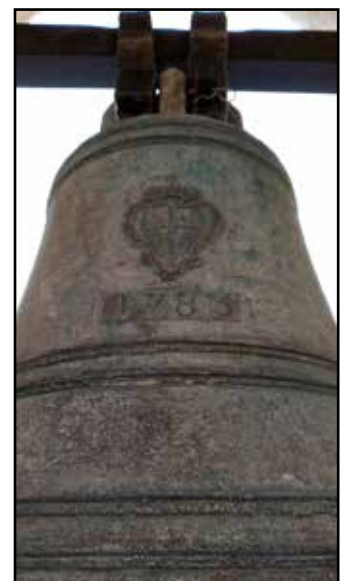
We reproduce an extract from his findings on the fascinating history of the bells:

THE 1744 BOUCHUT bell – the largest

This was cast in 1744 in the Foundry of the Order of St John by the prominent Master Founder of the Order's Ferreria, Aloisio Bouchut, who is known to have cast the monument to Grand Master Vilhena in Floriana. This bell is a typical Bouchut



Showing corrosion to the cross bar and damage to stone work



After changing of the cross bow and cleaning of the bell



The three armorials after cleaning



The four clapper supports after cleaning



The large bell after restoration

casting of the period, exhibiting a very austere surface devoid of any decorative elements except for two baroque armorial shields, namely those of the Grand Master Pinto and Bishop Rull. An unidentified female martyr saint is also cast on the bell. No Latin inscription commemorates its commissioning except the year of casting in Roman numerals: MDCCXLIII

THE 1785 TRIGANCE BELLS

Two of the four bells were cast by the Trigance brothers who took over the role of Master Founders of the Order's Ferreria after the demise of Aloisio Bouchut. One bell is a typical early Trigance casting of the period, exhibiting a very austere surface devoid of any decorative elements except for the armorial shield of the Order of St John and the casting year 1785.

The other bell cast by the Trigance brothers exhibits the same characteristics, however this bell is badly cracked in its sound bow and if its tone is intended to be restored, conservation treatments would have to be carried out in the UK. Alternatively, the other option recommended temporarily, [this was the option chosen by Din l-Art Helwa] is that the bell can have its fittings restored to bear the load of the bell safely and retained for posterity while still hanging in the belfry.

THE SMALL MENVILLE BELL

This was cast in the late 17th, early 18th century, by brothers Luca and Mederico Menville, also Master Founders of the Order's Ferreria (and uncles of Aloisio Bouchut). The bell carries an armorial shield of the Order of St John however no date is present as is typical with smaller Menville castings.

All wrought iron clappers were found to be original.

The work on the four historic bells was made possible by the ADRC Trust, set up by the Chalmers family in memory of their son Alistair, a keen volunteer with Din l-Art Helwa. Together with a donation from another benefactor their generosity ensured that the four historic bells of the Order of St John, a unique legacy of the church, have also been saved by Din l-Art Helwa and can be maintained only a stone's throw away from the Foundry of the Order of St John, where they had originally been created.

WEDDINGS AT THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF VICTORIES

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

The Wonder of Sarria Church

Patricia Salomone

Having obtained the go ahead from the Art Superintendence for the overseeing of the restoration of Mattia Preti works at Sarria, Din l-Art Helwa entrusted Giuseppe Mantella Restauri with the restoration of the St Sebastian in 2013 to mark the 400th anniversary of the birth of the artist in February 1613. Malta International Airport provided the funds and, in an unusual publicity stunt, the painting was moved to the departure lounge of MIA where the restorers worked to the admiration of travellers who left their contributions in a donations box. According to Mantella this is the most beautiful and significant St. Sebastian painted by Mattia Preti. The Roman soldier, young and handsome, is being tortured to death because of his conversion to Christianity. In the wounds inflicted by the multiple arrows, the faithful saw the wounds, or pustules inflicted by the plague. Sebastian is therefore one of the saint protectors against the dreaded Black Death.

Mattia Preti was born in the mountain village of Taverna in Southern Calabria, Italy. His older brother Gregorio, also an artist, had moved to Rome where the younger brother joined him. The two worked together, but it was soon evident that the younger brother's work was innovative, of finer quality and displayed more movement.

The artist's name started to be known among the people in high places. He was commissioned to paint St Francis Xavier for the Chapel of Aragon in St. John's Church and the St. Catherine for the Chapel of the Italian Knights. When the Order decided to further embellish the Conventual Church of St

John, Grand Master Raphael Cotoner sent for the artist to come to Malta to decorate the Conventual Church with scenes from the life of the Saint and of the deeds of the Order. Preti moved to Malta where the rich commissions he received from the Order took up his whole life. He worked fast and tirelessly until his death in 1699.

On his arrival to Malta in the summer of 1661 Preti offered to decorate the vault and walls of the Conventual Church at his own expense, the Order sustaining the cost of gold leaf, colours and all the requirements for the Master's work.

Preti's success at the transformation of St John's earned him the nomination to Knight of Grace and brought him to the attention of successive Grand Masters, knights, parish priests as well as the continued protection of the high and mighty.

Back in Naples he had been engaged to paint seven paintings at the seven doors of the city, each representing a Saint protector against the plague. The same idea inspires the work at Sarria - the same plague saints as in Naples. The reason was that in 1675 an epidemic of the Black Death decimated the Maltese population.

Il 24 del passato mese, [i.e. in December 1675] siamo stati chiamati da Matteo Bonici habitante in questa città Valletta a visitar una sua figliola d'anni undici ammalata di febbre acutissima al primo die, al terzo li comparvero poche macchie di petecca di color rosso, e nella coscia destra una picciola pustoletta più lata dell'ordinario e delle petecche dell'istesso colore di carne; sintomi frequenti che succedono nelle febbri maligne in quest'isola, al quinto s'aprì e mandò fuori un poco di marcia bianca, al settimo morì.

This was the written report made on 25 January 1676 by two medical doctors entrusted with the task by the Council of the Order. It must be noted that it took a month for some action to be taken. That the plague should spread from a town on the sea, Valletta in this case, made sense as the plague was carried by rats on vessels. It seems that Bonici was a rich tradesman who was of course in contact with the captains and crews of ships in harbour.

The slow reaction by the public health authorities saw the contagion spread quickly to Attard, Bormla and Kirkop. Weeks later, drastic measures were taken – churches were forbidden to keep holy water in the respective fonts, soon there were restrictions on attendance at church, the banning of the Lenten sermons, the closing of schools, banning of public meetings. Eventually people were not allowed to leave their homes *Non possa alcuno uscire da ciascuna casa se non uno schiavo*. By the end of

St. Sebastian
(detail)





The Immacolata

March the situation was desperate and in early April, the Grand Council decided to resort to the intercession of the Immaculate Conception *per placare l'ira Divina* (to placate divine wrath). It was decreed that *in perpetuo* on 8 December (feast of the Immaculate Conception) all Knights and all religious, should receive the sacraments and walk in procession to the Church of Sarria dedicated to the Immaculate Conception where images of St Sebastian and St Roque were to be placed.

There stood an old chapel outside the walls of Valletta which had been built by the Knight Martin Sarria around 1575. The Cav. Sarria had received special permission to build this church outside the walls, on condition that he would demolish it in the case of an attack by the enemy. By 1675, the church was in a dilapidated state and therefore Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner, who had succeeded his brother Raphael, decided that should the contagion be overcome, a new church be built.

For fear of contagion, demolition work was postponed. The procession was held on 8 December 1676 and after that date the demolition of the old building and the new construction were carried out. Grand Master Cottoner entrusted Mattia Preti with the design of the plans for the church and ordered no less than seven paintings for its decoration. This is the only ascertained building built according to the architectural design of the Master. It must be said that reference is made in the Order's documents to another church, which may have been designed by Preti, in the grounds of Verdala Castle.

Sarria Church is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception and the *Cavaliere calabrese*, as Preti became known, produced an altar piece showing a splendid *Immacolata* surrounded by a decorated stone frame, a flamboyant Baroque setting, almost like a theatre curtain. As in every painting of the time symbolism enriches the painting. For example,

we see the Virgin benignly looking at the angel who is replacing his sword into its sheath symbolising that the battle against evil has been won, the disease has been curbed.

When Simone Mizzi, then the Executive President of DLH, paid a visit to see the work Mantella had done on the St. Sebastian, he pointed out that the altar piece was collapsing, actually folding on itself, the stretched backing being completely worn out. Simone walked to the church door, feeling rather despondent and wondering who to appeal to when her phone rang. It was John de Giorgio, CEO, Shireburn Software Ltd., saying they were celebrating 30 years since their foundation and wished to do something for the Nation's heritage. The Madonna had intervened! Shireburn Software Ltd. undertook to support the restoration of the altar piece. As the restorers cleaned the surface of the painting, they discovered that the Virgin's mantle was decorated with little putti and that the figure is placed in a Maltese context with the Grand Harbour and bastions in the background.

To the left of the *Immacolata*, is the painting depicting another Saint much revered for his power over the plague – St. Roque. San Rocco is shown with his pilgrim's staff. He looks ecstatically towards the Heavens through a ray of light cutting across the dark sky representing the dark days of the plague. A dog licks the wounds caused by the disease as the Saint has been administering to the sick regardless of the danger to himself. Here Din l-Art Helwa acquired the sponsorship of MSV Life, whose offices are right opposite Sarria Church.

Another Saint closely linked to the plague is Saint Rosalia, patron saint of Palermo. This painting is presently being exhibited at the Palazzo dei Normanni in Palermo to which it has been loaned through the auspices of Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of the Republic. This painting was brought back to its original beauty with funds collected by the Rotary

St Roque before and after restoration





St Rosalia and the personalities from Rotary International

Clubs of Malta together with the Palermo Rotary Clubs because this female Saint is the Patron Saint of Sicily's capital. She is seen here as a young Virgin, wearing hermit's clothing, humbly inhabiting a cave in Monte Pellegrino close to Palermo. Maltese and Sicilian Rotarians attended the presentation of the completed restoration work and were honoured with the presence of Rotary International President, Ravi Ravindran and his wife on this occasion.

The image of St Nicholas, the saint we know as Father Christmas, completes the set of four paintings alongside the Altarpiece. Of course this is the exaltation of Grand Master Nicholas Cotoner's patron, the Bishop Saint Nicholas of Bari, protector of children in need. We see the little putto holding a branch of the cotton plant representing the Cotoner coat-of-arms. Again a ray of light cuts through the dark sky to light up the saint's figure and if one looks closely behind his mantle one sees a group of children in a cauldron. Tradition has it that St Nicholas saved

the lives of a group of children that were being martyred by being boiled in a cauldron. It is thanks to past Rotary governor Tony Coleiro who was there on that occasion that DLH found a sponsor in Paul Mifsud, CEO of Sparkasse Bank Malta.

Finally the church is decorated with two large lunettes. Again Sparkasse Bank Malta is covering costs for restoring one of these which depicts St Michael and the Devil, representing the theme of the Victory of Good over Evil. The Angel of God wears the robes of a Knight of the Order. He is overpowering the forces of Evil, the plague, represented here as the Devil. This painting is in a very poor state of repair having been painted over several times and having suffered the effects of humidity.

An anonymous sponsor is supporting the other lunette which shows a theme frequently repeated by the artist – the Apotheosis of the Order of St John. This lunette is in a better state of conservation. To thank sponsors and in an effort to collect funds for state-of-the-art lighting for the church, Din l-Art Helwa will hold a celebratory concert this year, at the completion of the restoration of all the Preti works at Sarria.

The fascination with Mattia Preti's works grows when one visits Taverna, as I did in summer 2018. Taverna is a little village high in the mountains in Southern Calabria. The artist painted several works for his home town, some of them in conjunction with his brother Gregorio. Some works were painted in Malta and sent to Taverna. They can be seen, of course, in the Museo Civico di Taverna as also in the Chiesa di San Domenico where in the second lateral chapel one can see the painting depicting St John the Baptist while at his feet is a self portrait of the artist Mattia Preti himself wearing the white Cross of Christendom over the red cloak of Passion and Blood, the robe worn by the Knights of the order of St John. In his right hand, the artist holds the instrument of his trade, the paintbrush. He wears his Knight's robe and looks straight out of the picture directly at the onlooker. Not exactly an example of humility!

As one grows older, there is always something to learn. While in Taverna, I learnt an interesting and seemingly insignificant detail about Preti's works. My knowledgeable guide, Giuseppe Mantella, explained how art experts recognise Preti's works that were made in Malta. When the artist arrived here he found that he needed some basic material to spread over the canvas before applying the colour. Not having this at his disposal, he crushed Maltese stone and made do. As a result, if one looks at Preti's Maltese paintings against the light, one can see little bumps. These are the fossilised shells so difficult to crush in our limestone.

Fr Lino Spiteri S.J., guardian of Sarria Church, will be happy to open up this historic monument to visitors who wish to see the paintings and make a donation towards the purchase and installation of a state-of-the-art lighting system that would allow the paintings to receive adequate and non-damaging lighting. He can be contacted on 00356 99444349.



St John with Mattia Preti self portrait (Taverna)

Patricia Salomone is a former Council Member and Communications Officer for Din l-Art Helwa

Villa Barbaro 'Bellosguardo'

An Eighteenth-Century Country House in Attard

Petra Caruana Dingli

Villa Barbaro, also named 'Bellosguardo', was built by the noble Barbaro family as a country house in the early eighteenth century. It lies in the historic centre of the village of Attard, close to the parish church. The villa was built with extensive gardens at the back of the property, a large section of which is still extant.



Façade of Villa Barbaro

originally decorated with frescoes. The windows were fitted with painted Bohemian glass, only one of which survives today. The entrance hall is wide and imposing with groin-vaulted ceilings; this is embellished with coupled pilasters and elegantly carved cornicing. The doorways are surrounded by finely carved mouldings, particularly the large arched door, opposite the entrance which leads to the courtyard and which is surmounted by a carving of the Medusa head flanked by two elaborately carved cornucopias.¹

The villa has an unusual and sophisticated façade, with the fenestration and an open balcony positioned on one side of the main doorway. Internally, this layout creates a long 'enfilade' of reception rooms, with the villa's superb and unique 'Zodiac Room' as its finale.

A marble slab over the portal bears the inscription 'Bellosguardo', the old name given to the house as a result of the country views which it once enjoyed. As described by Cecilia Xuereb in *Treasures of Malta*, three reception rooms form the *appartamento nobile*:

By altering the thickness of the walls the architect ingeniously reduced a sharp curve so that the three rooms present one long prospect or enfilade of rooms leading from the hall. Above their fine cornices these rooms have coved ceilings in the Italian Renaissance style which were



The entrance hall of Villa Barbaro

This elegant villa is built on one storey, with its rooms opening up to the garden at the back. The garden has an important '*prospettiva*' alcove, which is 16 courses high and perfectly aligned to the front entrance hall and main garden doorway of the house. In the garden, opposite the Zodiac Room there is an imposing alcove bearing an early carving of the family's coat-of-arms, surmounted by a patrician's helm and clearly pre-dating the grant of the marquise in 1778.

The French artist Jean Houël visited Villa Barbaro in 1776, where he saw a treasure of Roman coins which had been discovered in Gudja. Houël sketched a Roman statue which he saw in the villa's garden.² In his important travel diary *Voyage Pittoresque*, Houël recorded:



Interior of Villa Barbaro

When I undertook a tour to the old town I passed through the village of Attard. In this village, in the garden of the Marchese D. Carlo Barbaro, I had the occasion to make a drawing of the beautiful remains of a marble statue. It shows a draped woman which I believe to be of Roman workmanship. I depicted this figure in plate 258, marked with M.³

Carlo Antonio Barbaro was one of Malta's early archaeologists and wrote a book on his excavations at Corradino called *Degli avanzi d'alcuni antichi edifice scoperti a Malta*. He built the Zodiac Room as a gallery or cabinet in which to display his well-known collection of antiquities and curiosities. This collection was visited and recorded by numerous eighteenth-century travellers to Malta.

The Zodiac Room is the only known purpose-built eighteenth-century *galleria* in Malta. It contains rich carvings on its walls and ceiling, featuring mythological symbols and figures. A sculpted roundel in the centre of the cross-banded ceiling represents various Greek gods. The owl represents Athena, the helmet and the sword indicate the god of war, the bow and sheet of arrows represent Diana, the winged wand represents Mercury.



Prospettiva in the garden of Villa Barbaro

Nicholas de Piro writes:

This purpose-built galleria is a collector's cabinet quite unique in Malta. It is decorated with richly sculpted signs of the zodiac and mythological motifs. Its special interest lies in its architectural sophistication and also in the fact that, like others in differing parts of 18th-century Europe, it was specifically designed for the display of a choice collection of antiquities and objets d'arts belonging to Marchese Barbaro.



The Zodiac Room. Sculpted roundel in the centre of the cross-banded ceiling



Detail of sculpted roundel on the ceiling

The galleria

follows the usual pattern of being suitably long, well lit by several windows and richly decorated to show the collection to the best possible advantage. In keeping with the period's desire to impress, it was conceived as a spectacular finale to an enfilade of reception rooms all built along one axis and skillfully designed to give the illusion of greater depth. The ingeniousness of the Zodiac Room's architectural design is in the creation of concave pilastering at the room's corners and central section (also carried over in concave banded arches of the cross-vaulted central ceiling and in the barrel vaulting at each end) giving the illusion of elliptical form in a room which is in fact rectangular.⁴

Carlo Antonio Barbaro was well-known for his 'cabinets of curiosities of nature and antiquities'.⁵ In 1778, the erudite French traveller Dominique Vivant Denon recommended learned visitors to call upon

Monsieur Barbaro ... who has arranged with great taste, a fine collection of specimens of all the natural productions of the island, and a considerable number of Roman coins, highly valuable for their excellent preservation, which he shews to strangers with the utmost affability and politeness.⁶

According to Onorato Bres, the museum at Casa Barbaro held a carved ancient bronze figure representing a crayfish, found in 1796 near Tarxien.⁷



The Zodiac Room



The Zodiac Room. One of four carvings representing Zodiac signs and seasons.

In 1792 the scholarly Dutchman Johan Meerman, founder of the Meerman museum at the Hague, also visited the cabinet of the Marquis Barbaro; there one can see a few natural curiosities, among which some rather rare pieces (some of them products from Malta and Gozo); some antiquities, some genuine antique heads, and a bust said to be of Antonius; some nice coins Greek, Roman, Sicilian, Maltese, only some of them gold, but among these a large, think Saracen piece, about as big as a double or triple ducat; furthermore, apart from some bas-reliefs and paintings, there is a cabinet of precious cut stones, all of them *intaglio*, but arranged according to the kind of stone.⁸

Furthermore,

The special items were kept apart in a drawer in a room with the twelve signs of the Zodiac; and in another room a collection of birds, insects, and four-footed animals. One of the very finest items is a large Oriental pearl with an outgrowth; the artist who mounted the pearl, added a gold head by using the excrescence as a shoulder, and so modelled a Hercules out of this pearl.⁹

This piece of jewellery in the form of Hercules may be attributed to Benvenuto Cellini and Francesca Balzan has suggested that it might be one of the present exhibits in the Getty Museum.¹⁰

Halfway up the magnificent staircase, a marble tablet was put up by Carlo Antonio Barbaro's children Romualdo and Anna. It bears an inscription in Latin, and is dated 1794, and has been translated as follows:



Marble inscription

Carlo Antonio Barbaro, Marquis of St George, on the occasion of his second visit to Italy, in which he went to greet people of outstanding culture and his friends. He visited museums and galleries and outstanding libraries; he was warmly welcomed by Pope Pius VI and by Archduke Peter Leopold of Tuscany and by other persons of the highest rank and lineage; and on returning home he increased and built up a museum and library of learned books as a solace to his old age, assembling them in this villa in which, laughing at the vainglorious and trifling ambitions of men, and keeping himself busy, he continually indulged his literary pursuits. He enlarged the villa and its gardens and enclosed it with a fine wall, convinced that everything that helps, renders safe and adorns, would be welcome.¹¹

Today Villa Barbaro is prized and appreciated by the village of Attard as one of its most important historic properties. It features in a booklet by Joseph Borg, *The H'Attard Village Core: A Walking Tour of Discovery*, published by the Attard Local Council, and on an information panel put up by the Ministry of Tourism in the Attard village centre.

As noted in the booklet:

A historic event which took place in front of the Villa is recorded in an 18th century Florentine journal [still preserved in the family archives]. It describes the erection by Marquis Barbaro, directly opposite the Villa's balcony, of a 51-foot [15.5 metres] Triumphal Arch under which Grand Master de Rohan [1775-97] and all his entourage passed, on their way to his ceremonial installation in Mdina. A family tradition recounts that the Grandmaster and his retinue were invited inside to take refreshments and that de Rohan then saluted the villagers from the balcony of the house. Traditionally it is held that, it was in this Villa's gardens that the Maltese insurgents drew up the first military offensive plans against the French in 1798.

¹ Cecilia Xuereb, 'Villa Barbaro Bellosguardo', in *Treasures of Malta* 1:2 (1995), p. 74

² Thomas Freller, *The Grand Tour* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2009), p. 656.

³ Thomas Freller, *The Observing Eye: The French Artist Jean Hoüel in Malta* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2013), p. 126.

⁴ Nicholas De Piro, *The Quality of Malta: Fashion and Taste in Private Collections* (Malta: AudioVisual Centre, 2003), p. 22.

⁵ Freller (2009), p. 232.

⁶ Cited in Freller (2009), p. 303.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 656-57.

⁹ De Piro, p. 24.

¹⁰ Francesca Balzan, 'A 'Cellini' Pendant in 18th Century Malta?', in *Sunday Times of Malta*, 1 August 2004, pp. 44-45

¹¹ Translation of Latin tablet by Mons. Professor Edward Coleiro.

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All photos courtesy of Marquis Cremona-Barbaro

Din l-Art Helwa requested the scheduling of this gorgeous country villa in June 2018, granted in September, and it is now protected as a Grade One property.

Dr Petra Caruana Dingli is a Council member and former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa

The Chapel of San Mikiel is-Sincier, limits of Rabat

Stanley Farrugia Randon



The re-Christianisation of Malta

Malta was conquered by Muslim Arabs in 870 AD and it is thought by some scholars that Christianity brought to us by St Paul in 60 AD was lost or suppressed among the circa 5,000 inhabitants of the time. The Arabs occupied the islands and the bishop was sent in chains to Palermo. Churches and shrines were probably destroyed and this is evidenced by the archaeological studies carried out at Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi. In 1091 the Normans under Count Roger conquered Malta but the Arabs were left to live on the islands. However, the population remained essentially Muslim until the thirteenth century. Recent evidence shows that, at least in Gozo, Christianity was not totally interrupted during the Arab period.

The islanders continued to speak an Arabic language and seem to have lost the art of building for a long time, worshipping in catacombs and caves. Latin Christianity was consolidated by the Angevins (1266-1283) and the Aragonese (1283-1530). Not many churches dated from the thirteenth century are recorded on the Islands, apart from the Mdina Cathedral and the Gozo Matrice, a chapel on Comino, and two churches in the *castrum maris* dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin and St Angelo. There were probably also rock-cut chapels or box-like apsed chapels which were very small in size.

Between 1370 and 1495 our islands saw the establishment of religious orders among which were the Franciscans, the Carmelites, the Benedictines, the Augustinians and the Dominicans. It was probably during this re-Christianisation of the islands that a large number of chapels started to appear.

The abandoned Chapel of San Mikiel is-Sincier

The interior of the Chapel



We find examples of troglodytic places which were used as sacred places which include the Nativity of Our Lady in Mellieħa which enshrines the oldest painting of Our Lady executed in Malta directly on the rock, three cave chapels found close to each other in Rabat namely St Paul's Grotto, St Mary Magdalen and in the crypt of St Agatha, San Brinkat in Ghargħur, San Niklaw in a natural cave in Mellieħa, a chapel re-cut from one of the tomb caves in Bingemma, St Peter Church in Naxxar, Għar tas-Slaleb, at the junction of Wied il-Kbir and Wied Hanzira in Hal Qormi, the Nativity of Our Lady before entering Abbatija tad-Dejr Catacombs in Rabat, St Leonard cave church in Liemu valley near Dingli, and Ta' Santa Katerina on the way to l-Għadira ta' San Raflu in Gozo. Many others mentioned in pastoral visits were destroyed including a cave chapel on Filfla.

Besides these troglodytic places, other places of worship like the chapel of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri, the Santa Cecilia Chapel in Gozo and the San Ċir Chapel in the outskirts of Rabat, were of the simple box-shaped type.

The Chapel of San Ċir is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, chapels still standing. San Ċir, or Ċirjaku, was venerated mostly during the Byzantine period and it is possible that when constructed the chapel was dedicated to this saint. The name San Mikiel is-Sincier is possibly a corruption of San Mikiel and San Ċir!

Unfortunately it has been abandoned for too many years and used as a store for agricultural purposes. Mons. Dusina and other bishops who visited the chapel in the sixteenth and seventeenth



The interior of the Chapel

centuries all reported that it was in a bad state and so we are lucky it is still standing. The oldest document on the chapel is the Dusina visit report in 1575. Paraphernalia belonging to the chapel were hidden beneath the pavement or adjacent fields, and burials were conducted in the adjacent field which was a cemetery.

Location

The easiest way to reach the chapel is by driving to the Domus Romana in Rabat, then down to the Nigret junction and then driving in a narrow road to the left when going in the direction to L-Imtarfa. It is found roughly 300 metres away from this narrow road and it is best accessed on foot.

The chapel is located in the Ġnien is-Sultan which is in the Ġhajj Qajjed area. This is an archaeological site with Punic and Roman tombs, Roman wells and stone troughs for the production of olive oil. Its isolation is what probably saved it from destruction or from expansion as was the fate with so many other medieval chapels. The fields around it are still worked and farmers claimed that for many years it was used to keep oxen and cows but never pigs as a sign of respect to the building.

Other medieval chapels existed in the vicinity such as the San Dimitri Chapel in Ġnien Fieres which is adjacent to Ġnien is-Sultan, Tas-Salvatur Chapel in Ġhajj Qajjed and another one dedicated to St John in Tat-Tabja area. Unfortunately these chapels no longer exist.

The Chapel through the years

The structure of the chapel did not suffer any major changes throughout the ages. Its architecture is typical of fifteenth century Maltese medieval chapels which consisted of a simple box-structured room. In 1575 Mons. Pietro Dusina conducted an Apostolic Visit and reported that the chapel did not have doors or windows but had an altar and a floor. He ordered the Grand Master to restore it. This is because the chapel was in an area under the jurisdiction of the government. Indeed the area is called Ġnien is-Sultan as it was the property of the Aragonese Sultans before it was handed over to the Knights of St John in 1530 by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

Subsequent Apostolic Delegates mention the presence of the titular painting dedicated to St Michael. The feast was celebrated on 29 September and the *Primi Vespri* used to be held the day before the feast by the vine growers in the vicinity. In 1678 Bishop Molina reported that the chapel was in a bad state and ordered that some of its stone beams be removed as a sign of its deconsecration. The



Part of the ceiling which has collapsed

painting dedicated to St Michael had to be taken to the Church of St Paul in Rabat. This led to the foundation of the altar of St Michael in St Paul's church but the painting of St Michael from San Ċir was replaced after a few years by another altar painting by Mattia Preti.

Since 1678 the chapel was used for agricultural purposes and to keep animals. A large stone trough where the animals used to eat and drink is still present on site. Numerous holes in the walls to tie the animals are also present. In the beginning of the twentieth century a wall was erected in the middle of the chapel to divide it into two after the property was divided between two brothers.

Architecture

The chapel was constructed to serve the religious needs of the farmers who used to take care of the lands of the ruler. It therefore did not need to have an elaborate structure. It consists of five pointed arches which divide the chapel into six bays. There is no apse but the altar was typically located on the East side where the sun rises. Today there is a reconstructed altar but behind it there is still the recess in the wall thickness where the items needed to celebrate mass were safely kept. Stone slabs (Maltese: *xorok*) spanning from one arch to the other were used to roof the chapel. The roof is quite inclined and this is probably an influence from Arabic architecture which was still used at the times of the construction of this chapel. The floor is cobbled and between the bases of the arches there are some stone benches called *dikkiena*. Interesting to note is that one of the arches has a Roman column integrated into part of its base. Indeed if one walks along rural Rabat roads these columns are not rare and sometimes they have been incorporated into farmhouses as well.

Possible fragment of wall painting



The thickness of the walls is made of two layers with an infill of chunks of stone and soil. The inner part of the wall was made of rough stonework but the arches were constructed out of neatly cut stone.

The main door which is on the west wall is arched and above it is a slit window. Another semi-circular entrance is part of the buttressed South wall but this was a side doorway which led to the *zuntier* beneath which burials were conducted. The chapel is better accessed through the cemetery and South side entrance as the West wall is presently covered with vegetation. The North wall has a window.

Present state of the chapel

After 300 years of abandonment the chapel was rediscovered and between 1980 and 1983 the chapel was cleaned and part of it was excavated to reveal pottery as early as the Punic era. In 1981 the wall that divided the chapel was removed. Most of the work was done following a sponsorship of about Lm3000 from the NSTF (National Students Travel Foundation) and help from a Sanċir Trust. Minor trenching was conducted on part of the South-East corner and archaeological finds included some pottery from different eras of Maltese history. It is not known however if further study on these finds was conducted. On 2 October 1988 the cleaning of the chapel was inaugurated and mass was celebrated. However the chapel has been abandoned ever since and is in desperate need of conservation. Some of the stone slabs have fallen and rain water flows through the roof and its apertures. Humidity rises uncontrollably. Under the whitewashed walls, there were probably fresco paintings and these are still visible in some places. Roots of vegetation growing in cracks in the outer walls only serve to widen these cracks and allow more water to infiltrate the chapel. Its main door on the West side is blocked by cane plants.

Din l-Art Helwa would like to save this chapel which has now been abandoned for so many years and left without a proper guardian.

22nd Edition of the Bir Miftuħ International Music Festival

The Bir Miftuħ International Music Festival, organised every spring by Din l-Art Helwa, at the church of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuħ, is one of the highlights of the music calendar of the Maltese Islands and is supported by various Embassies and their Cultural Institutions. These ensure every year the participation of high calibre international and local performers who delight the audience with unusual and delightful repertoires. Three concerts were held this year:

The first, a mandolin and guitar recital by the amazing CORDAminazioni Duo, Tiziano Palladino and Davide Di Ienno, brought us music by Corelli, Gervasio, Rossini, Mascagni, Bellafrente and Piazzolla and was sponsored by the Embassy of Italy and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura.

The second concert, by the Karlsruhe Konzert Duo, comprising Reinhard Armleder - cello and Dagmar Hartmann - piano, presented the audience with works by Schumann, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Brahms, Fauré, Debussy, Granados and De Falla – a fascinating performance made possible through the kind support of the German-Maltese Circle and the Goethe Institut.

The final concert celebrated the bi-centenary of the death of the Maltese-born, internationally acclaimed composer Nicolò Isouard. Sponsored by the Embassy of France and the Alliance Française de Malte-Méditerranée, it was performed by the Isouard Ensemble made up of Matteo Colombo - violin, Ian Ellul - violin, Matthew Fenech - viola, Gjorgji Cincievski - double bass and Claire Ghigo - mezzo soprano. They paid tribute to this remarkable composer by performing captivating excerpts from his delightful operas.

Din l-Art Helwa greatly appreciates the unfailing support of its sponsors as it is thanks to them that the Bir Miftuħ International Music Festival has flourished and garnered such a high reputation which assists the organisation to bring new life to the beautiful medieval Church of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuħ.



During Karlsruhe Konzert Duo recital sponsored by the German Maltese Circle and the Goethe-Institut.

From left to right: Ms Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President Din l-Art Helwa, H.E. Frau Gudrun Maria Sräga, former Ambassador for the Republic of Germany to Malta, Ing. Arthur Ciantar, President German-Maltese Circle, Mrs A. Ciantar, Mrs Doreen Sammut, Mr Victor Sammut Secretary German-Maltese Circle, Mr Emanuel Farrugia, Council Member German-Maltese Circle



Tiziano Palladino and Davide Di Ienno, on mandolin and guitar during the concert sponsored by the Embassy of Italy and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura



Dott. Giuseppa Schatzer, H.E. Mr Peter Schatzer, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran, organiser of the Bir Miftuħ Festivals, Ms Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President, Signora M. Sammartino and S.E. Sig. Mario Sammartino



Mezzo Soprano Claire Ghigo & Isouard String Quartet performing during concert sponsored by the Alliance Française de Malte – Méditerranée and the Embassy of France

Music at Our Lady of Victory Church

Celebrating Valletta as European Capital of Culture 2018

Music continued to revive the historic church of Our Lady of Victory Church, Valletta's first church, with its marvellous acoustics, and we hope readers were able to enjoy the many recitals and concerts that took place. Here are some leading moments.

The musical calendar opened in January with a collaboration with the Artistic Director of the Teatru Manoel, Kenneth Zammit Tabona, who made the church the venue for two of its popular noon concerts for the 2018 Valletta International Baroque Festival.



The much acclaimed flautist Neil McLaren played the Telemann Fantasias on January 23 2018, a brilliant and most refined rendition.



Simon Schembri, the internationally esteemed classic guitarist played the Scarlatti Sonatas to a full house on 26th January.



The much loved international harpist, Silke Aichhorn, returned to Malta yet again to give another delightful performance on the harp at Victory Church on 2nd February for DLH in collaboration with the Rotary Club Malta who made it their annual charity concert with proceeds going towards restoration of the church. DLH is grateful to our sponsor, Mr Heribert Grünert, for making this possible and to Rotary Club Malta. From left to right: Silke Aichhorn, Mr Heribert Grünert, Professor Robert Ghirlando, President of the Rotary Club Malta, Mr John de Giorgio, Governor, Rotary District 2110, and Ms Patricia Salomone.

Din l-Art Helwa was proud to host the Choir of Lincoln College, Oxford, who gave a choral recital entitled 'Darkness to Light' at the Church of Our Lady of Victories, Valletta on 10th April 2018. This was organized by Din l-Art Helwa in collaboration with the Maestro di Cappella Hamish Dustagheer and Monsignor Victor Zammit McKeon, Pro Rector of St John's Co-Cathedral. The programme, specially chosen to express the transition between Lent and the glory of the Resurrection, featured the newly restored 18C Positivo Organ of the church and included excerpts from Bruckner, Birstow, Monteverdi, Tye, Taverner, Paulus and Macmillan.



To close the year of activity at the church, on November 20th, Sicilian organist Diego Cannizzaro, expert on early organs such as the 18C positivo organ at Victory Church, visited Malta and gave an organ recital within the framework of the 7th Malta International Organ Festival. Pat Salomone, former Communications Officer with DLH presented Maestro Cannizzaro together with Dr Joseph Lia, Director of the Malta International Organ Festival.

Comino's Santa Maria Tower is 400 years old



Comino tower with its new floodlights

Din l-Art Helwa stepped up activities this year to mark the 400th Anniversary of the Santa Maria Tower on Comino, the restoration of which perhaps was one of the most challenging projects ever undertaken by the organisation. A convoy of 17 trucks loaded with building materials sourced from an old quarry in Gozo had to be landed on the island in 2002 and the project was completed in two years. The 400 year old tower had been suffering great neglect and abandon and was hugely dilapidated when DLH was granted it in guardianship from the government of Malta. Its restoration had been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Malta Maritime Authority, the Vodafone Foundation and the Comino Hotel.

In time for the anniversary, the Tower has again been embellished when it received a new environmentally friendly floodlighting system. The new LED lights are of the highest quality, very efficient and can be programmed in different modes. The Ministry for Gozo very generously covered their cost in collaboration with the

Gozo Channel Company. Built by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt in 1618, reputedly to a design by Vittorino Cassar, the tower is 12 metres high. It stands 80 metres above sea level on a thick plinth which is also eight metres high. The Tower makes an iconic spectacle dominating the straits between Malta and Gozo especially at night. A 360 degree view can be enjoyed over the Blue Lagoon from its roof.

Joe Attard, warden of Comino Tower, reports that the tower receives some 80 visitors a day, but that it is also very popular with schools. He tells us that 'as part of DLH's unrelenting commitment to promote better appreciation of the environment, we have, in 2018, hosted 19 school groups at Comino Tower, where students are given explanation as to why the island of Comino has been designated as a Natura 2000 site'.

The 400th Anniversary was celebrated with a special open weekend on 29 and 30 September 2018 culminating with displays by the Historic Re-enactment Group of Malta showing life at the tower through the centuries, a visit by the Minister for Gozo, the Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana and representatives from ERA.



A group of San Anton School Grade 4 students enjoying their visit on a glorious day in October.



Minister for Gozo, Dr Justyne Caruana, with the Historic Re-enactment Group of Malta



Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of DLH, Warden Joe Attard and tower volunteers welcome the Minister for Gozo, Justyne Caruana. From left to right: Volunteers Stephen Cox, Joe Attard, Sue Nightingale, Chris Hemmings, Minister Dr Justyne Caruana, Maria Grazia Cassar

An 'Open Day' from the past at St Mark's Tower



The coastal watch tower at Qalet Marku, known as St Mark's Tower, served as an unusual stage set when it was open to the public on Sunday 25th March 2018 with an unusual display of historic re-enactments.

Members of the historical interpretation group, the Compagnia San Michele – Malta, in collaboration with volunteers of Din l-Art Helwa, opened the tower to the public, showed visitors around the tower, explained its history and also displayed a number of reproductions of the period.

The tower was built during the reign of Grand Master Martin de Redin who had extended the defences of the Order of St John by building thirteen coastal watchtowers between 1658 and 1659, eight of which still stand today. Though in poor shape, the tower was still in use when the British arrived. It was then modified by the addition of an entrance at ground level. Many interesting features are to be found in its surroundings at Qrejtjen Point, amongst which a British redoubt and the remains of a Roman road. Qrejtjen Point is also home to many natural habitats, making it an important area for heritage and nature alike. Din l-Art Helwa restored St Mark's Tower in 1998.

Compagnia San Michele outside St Mark's Tower at Qalet Marku

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. All funds raised are dedicated to the upkeep and maintenance of the lighthouse.

No rest for some at the Garden of Rest!

Paolo Ferrelli



2018 was an extremely busy year for the Historic Garden of Rest thanks to the indefatigable efforts of the Garden Team.

Monthly Talking Tours: these have become a regular and most popular feature on our calendar with a maximum attendance of 20 persons to ensure the best of attention in this experience.

During the hot summer days we held two tours at night when the Garden is lit up with candles and this makes the ambience very impressive.

the Planning Authority Guided Tours for their staff, guided by volunteer Joe Azzopardi. We also held guided tours for individual associations such as the Soroptomists who held their AGM there, the InterNations Association, the Malta Book Club, Guests of the Radisson Blu and Golden Sands Hotel after I was invited to give a lecture there about the Garden, and to students of the Dark Tourism Course of the Malta University Liberal Arts and Sciences Dept amongst others.

We are also happy that the Garden is becoming popular for birthday parties for children. We hosted two this last year under the shade of the trees where children could run freely and safely.

A most spectacular event took place for a civil wedding when the Garden was decked out with gazebos and seating and refreshment areas. Even though it was March the weather was excellent. 350 people attended and the couple were very happy at the end of the day.



An innovative activity was organised by volunteer Sophie Woltz. These were two painting sessions for artists who wanted to take advantage of the peace and beauty of the Garden to create their masterpieces.



Each year the request for individual tours increase and we are so happy to organize these. For example the Garden has become the regular last stop for the Ghost Tours organized by the Association Publiju ta' Malta and is a regular venue for



Our Annual appointment with the Kinemastik Short film festival

Again this 3 day festival of short film screening by international film directors was held. Big screens and seating are set up to host the thousands of people who attend this event.





The Malta Book Festival Commission chose the Garden to be the venue for the interview with Mr Victor Fenech after being awarded Lifetime Achievement Award.

We are proud to have hosted this here as Mr Fenech has been a long time promoter of cultural heritage in Malta. The interview was aired in October 2018 as part of the Malta Book Film Festival.

Spring Fair 29 April 2018

More than 450 visitors turned up for our traditional annual event. Lots of activities went on, such as bouncing castles and face painting for the children, used books stalls, cake stall, BBQ stall, re-enactment actors from HRGM animating the place and more. Despite the weather starting off looking grim, the event was a huge success with the best turnout ever.



CSR activity

The Garden remains a popular place for CSR activity. Day events were organised by retired personnel of HSBC Malta bank who undertook cleaning and maintenance and they were joined by Andrew Beane, the Bank CEO, for a personal tour.



CSR activity for PwC Internships

14 University students following the Business & Finance course of PwC had the opportunity to volunteer with us for 20 hours each. This was a very much appreciated help since in the Summer period, most of our volunteers are away! An appreciation letter was presented to each and every student.



Maintenance and Restoration remains paramount activity in our work to manage the Garden and its historic monuments.

Last Spring conservator Frank Fenech carried out special maintenance on three tombs in sector C which were deteriorating. Photos show before and after treatment.



Blessing Ceremonies continue to be held and we are delighted this gives us the opportunity for further research and revelations each time.

Capt. John Bathurst Thomson

October 2018, a group of retired Doctors and Nurses (British Army and Royal Navy) paid a visit on the grave of Capt. John Bathurst Thomson, 69th Regiment of Foot. Within the Regiment he was well respected both by his brother officers and the rank and file. They appreciated his medical skills and personal attention. When the period of the cholera epidemic was at its height, his zeal and continuous attention to his patients was remarked upon by all. His care often led him to work almost continuously without sleep. When he first showed signs of cholera, he could not be persuaded to give up his duties. It was necessary for him to be removed some distance from the hospital, and Colonel Paxton, who was in command of the regiment, arranged for Dr Thomson to be taken to his own comfortable



quarters. For his funeral Dr Thomson's body was placed on a gun carriage, and preceded by a firing party and the bands of the 69th Regiment and Royal Malta Fencibles. It was followed by the medical staff, officers of his corps, men from the 69th Regiment, some wives and personal friends. When the coffin reached the ditch between Valletta and Floriana, the men insisted on removing it from the bier, and carried it on their shoulders the rest of the way to Msida Bastion cemetery. To commemorate his death, a monument voluntarily paid for by the men of his regiment, who each contributed two days wages, was erected in the Upper Barakka Gardens in Valletta. The monument is still there. The rediscovery, cleaning and relaying of the engraved slabs at the Garden were made possible by the commitment and generosity of Colonel RAMC (ret.) David Vassallo.



Lietenant John Evans

Last Spring, during some works in the garden, in ground over an empty grave, a skeleton was found. It was missing its skull. Research was immediately carried out and we were able to find the name of this man, the original marble tablet in another sector of the garden: Lieutenant John Evans, Commander of H.M.S. POLYPHEMUS. He died on 20 February 1843, struck by apoplexy at his residence in Strada San Giovanni and was taken to the Bighi Naval Hospital but died the next day. Contacts were made with the Town Council of Wimborne Minster and an article was published on the *Bournemouth Echo*, looking for some descendants. Following the article we received a lot of emails with information regarding this officer. Last November, after a short blessing ceremony held by Father Simon Godfrey, the grave was sealed and consolidated and, as soon as restored, the original broken tablet will be fixed on it.

Emily Leeves

During the summer 2018, Monsignor Philip Calleja paid a visit to the Garden. He was looking for the grave of Emily Leeves, the only relative buried in Malta of Mother Mary Veronica of the Passion. Veronica was declared Venerable by the Holy See in 2014. Accordingly to the research carried out by Mons. Calleja, Emily became a Catholic on her deathbed. She died aged 21 on 8 December 1847, and was buried in our cemetery. She was dumb and deaf, and had a heart defect that did not permit her to grow properly. The quest for the grave took all summer, while the original marble tablet, found in the garden, was under restoration by Mr James Licari and Mrs Ingrid Ross. By November the marble tablet was restored, all thanks to the sponsorship of Mons. Calleja. A blessing ceremony held by the Vicar General of Malta, Mons. Joseph Galea-Curmi, was organised, in the presence of Mons. Calleja and a strong group of Catholics.



The total number of visitors to the Msida Bastion Historic Garden during 2018 amounted to 1971 from 37 different countries around the globe. 2018 has been a very busy and successful year for us and we thank all our many volunteers who loyally support this magical place and keep it going.

Paolo Ferrelli is the Warden at the Msida Bastion Historic Garden of Rest, Floriana, which was restored and is managed by Din l-Art Helwa. He can be contacted on wardengor@gmail.com

Château de Calmont d'Olt, France

A Union Rempart project

Ghislaine Calleja

Din l-Art Helwa partnered with its long-standing French counterpart Union Rempart and participated in an Erasmus Heritage Volunteers and Leaders exchange under the European mobility programme Erasmus+ to mark the Year of European Cultural Heritage 2018. Over a fortnight at the end September 2018, seven Maltese youths: Mark Cauchi, Raffaella Corrieri, Matthew Borg, Michelle Padovani, Tracey Sammut, Jelena Stambolic, and myself, Ghislaine Calleja, teamed up to embark on collaborative experience at the historic Château de Calmont d'Olt. We were joined by other youths from Romania and France, journeying from Toulouse, across Rodez to Espalion in the Aveyron region of Occitan located in southern France.

Château de Calmont d'Olt, a medieval fortress in the Rouergue part of the Aveyron region, is mentioned in the cartulary of the Abbaye of Conques as early as the year 883 AD. The Calmont d'Olt family, who built the castle around the year 1000, perched on an igneous, basaltic peak at an altitude of 553 metres dominating the Lot Valley, disappeared in 1298 with the death of Bishop Raymond who was in charge of the building of the Notre Dame cathedral of Rodez. The Castelnau-Bretenoux family then inherited the Baron's estate and set up a garrison there. The outer curtain wall was built during the Hundred Years' War. After this the castle was somewhat modified to conserve the medieval fortress look that is apparent today. It fell to ruin in the 17th century. In 1986, Thierry Plume, who runs a private entity devoted to and passionate about historical heritage, purchased the castle and began to develop and rebuild the site. The fortress was classified as an Official Historic Monument in 1992. It is managed, animated and sustained by the Association of Calmont D'Olt, whose members were present throughout our stay to guide us through the activities.

In 1997 an agreement was made between the Association de Sauvegarde du Château de Calmont d'Olt and Union Rempart, an international heritage organisation which federates 170 associations in a network that covers the whole France, as well as having forged links with associations outside France to increase awareness of European Heritage. They have since been receiving volunteers each year from all over Europe to help with the progressive preservation and stabilisation of the castle which

has dominated the town of Espalion and the Lot valley for over 1000 years. From its 11th century keep to its lower outer curtain wall remnant of the Hundred Years' War, this fortress is the perfect example of perpetual defensive adaptations.

The international volunteer site at Château Calmont d'Olt located on 4 Rue de Bouquiès in Espalion, has been open to heritage volunteers for more than 15 years. These living quarters in such close proximity allow this exchange of volunteers and the progressive repair of the ruin. No knowledge of building and restoration is required, only genuine motivation, openness and willingness to learn, and delicious French food set to fuel the demanding, physical work planned for us.

The morning session on our first day was an introductory historic site visit led by the owner of the castle, Thierry Plume, and the French heritage team. The rest of our time was devoted to safeguarding the heritage of the fortress and learning traditional skills from the experts. The construction sites are dedicated to alternating workshops on traditional stone masonry, stone cutting and archaeology.

Our two-week restoration camp was structured around rising to the smell of freshly baked baguettes (delivered to our doorstep) and brewed coffee for breakfast, boosting us to get ready for our 15-minute steep uphill trek up to castle by 8:30 am. At this time the scheduled intensive, manual labour would begin and tail off at about 12:30 pm, at which point we would gather and head back down to the living quarters for lunch. After our wholesome lunch we would have half an hour to digest our food and make our way back up to the castle by 1:45 pm to continue working up to about 5:30 to 6 pm. We had a rotating schedule whereby one or two volunteers would stay back at the headquarters on some of the days to help out with daily chores in the dormitories and kitchen, mainly cleaning and food preparation. By the end of the day, we were physically exhausted, in dire need of a shower and free time to unwind and socialise with everyone present. We would normally play *pétanque* (the French equivalent of Maltese *boççi*) just before sunset, until we were served dinner. We were served both exquisite vegetarian and meat options, accommodating everyone's dietary requirements.



Aerial shot of Château Calmont d'Olt after rebuilding part of the outer curtain wall (bottom centre to right)



Traditional stone masonry of the XVth century outer curtain wall and the view of the Aubrac

We were instructed to foster ownership of the site, to be safety conscious, wearing safety shoes, hard hats, construction gloves and safety glasses when required. We were briefed on the overall legibility and sustainability which translated to making use of materials that were present on site and ideally not having to reintroduce and transport foreign materials e.g. aggregate for outer mortar of the wall were tiny stones from the River Lot.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Hundred Years' War changed the design of the castle quite drastically, adapting to a military style fortification. During this time soldiers were deployed as nobody actually lived on the grounds of the castle, making the defence and the outer-curtain wall the most important aspect of the fortification. The outer curtain wall with its eight distinct towers and 32 arrow loops was in fact added at a later and hasty stage and was the result of all the conflict and a desperate need to safeguard the castle. The walls were never built to a great height, ca. 5 metres, for the soldiers to walk easily and to be able to protect the ramparts. Archers needed to be well positioned above their enemies to be as close to them as possible.

The first step was getting acquainted with the different types of stone used on site including basalt, red sandstone and limestone, their different strength and texture. Basalt, an igneous rock, is extremely robust, unable to be shaped or cut but breakable. The second and most important consideration for every intervention was choosing and moving the different types of stone needed to build the wall which are mainly fill and face stones by sorting through them to thoroughly identify their shape. A face stone is usually large and sturdy, having a smooth and relatively flat face on either parallel side and jagged surrounding ends that allow for more grip due to a larger surface area when applying mortar to the wall. Despite using mortar, the usual process of building a dry stone wall was applied which entails setting the length of the stone into the wall, hearting the wall tightly, crossing the joints, keeping stones and courses level and finally building with the plane of the wall.

The cement was constantly being made and mixed using a cement mixer throughout the process of setting stones using three buckets of sand (two different types used for internal structure and external façade), one bucket of aggregate (gravel or small river stones for the façade), one bucket of hydraulic lime and one a half of water. We added another 1.5m to the wall, which finally measured 6m high by 1.3m wide.

Stone cutting was a bit trickier and required more finesse and attention to detail. It entailed the acquisition of the traditional technique and rhythm to cut when using the chisel and different hammers available e.g. the Portuguese round hammer in order to flatten the surfaces of the red sandstone that would be used to reconstruct the arrow loops, to retain the style that was used.

Archaeological excavation and surveying was carried out to expose, process and record archaeological remains. The Inner courtyard was excavated to reveal the three rooms, barrel vaulted ceiling and their dividing wall. The dividing wall was determined to be a later addition due to the stones used and style of arches. The walls were all cleaned thoroughly and drawn by hand to scale.

Since interventions are very subjective, there is no true standard to adhere to but replicating the style and correcting the errors was important. The architect assigned to be in charge of national heritage monuments and sites in the Aveyron Region of France visited us on our third day there to ensure that all the work done was up to standard and complied with regional guidelines.

During the peak season (July and August), there are daily live shows and interactive animations around the themes of war and everyday life of the Middle Ages, including live shooting of the trebuchet (a type of siege engine), the cannon and archery. On one of the afternoons we got a taste of this grand spectacle,

were faced with a few fun challenges and puzzles to solve and were asked to give our constructive feedback on what could be added or improved. On the last couple of days some of the Maltese volunteers were also involved in designing and making wooden games from scratch for the Easter season and entertaining families and children on their visits to the castle.

We actively participated in debates and discussions on built and cultural heritage experience with another dozen volunteers from France and Romania, we shared our culinary heritage, the Maltese team made a traditional pumpkin pie, *pastizzi* and *imqaret* from scratch and also gifted the rest a variety of typical Maltese goodies such as traditional honey rings, *Twistees*, *Bajtra* (prickly pear) liquor, *qubbajt* and other typical Maltese products.

During our free time, a few excursions were organised that allowed for the discovery of the built and natural heritage of the Aveyron region and its quaint medieval villages. These included a visit to the Bouzouls canyon on National Stone day; to Rodez, the ancient city and capital of the Aveyron, where we visited Notre Dame cathedral and the Soulagues museum; Château de Belcastel; a visit to Saint-Côme-d'Olt and its historic monuments; farmers' markets, and we even managed to fit in a swim in the river Lot. On our last day we hiked up in the Aburac highlands looking out for indigenous flora and fauna such as gentian root (the main ingredient in the popular *Suze liqueur*) and *Té de Aubrac*, to the ski area during the elk rut season. We were overwhelmed by the abundance of awe-inspiring views and ended that day with a gorgeous sunset picnic overlooking intact forest landscapes and even got to see the Milky Way, stark and bright, with our naked eye.

The knowledge, passion and skills gained from this heritage experience are greatly transferrable and add value to all disciplines of life. Volunteering gives you the chance to flex your creative muscles, experimenting with roles on a short-term basis. It is easy and fun, a great opportunity to network and be substantive. We had a running collective term throughout our stay, *Famille en France*, because we became part of a collective and had become so close by the end of our stay that we felt like we were a family who had forged many sincere friendships. It was extremely difficult to bid adieu to the castle, the delicious food (and wine), the stunning Aveyron region and to our volunteer counterparts.



French, Maltese and Romanian Heritage volunteers visit Château Belcastel

Top row: Cristian Badescu, Mina Barbu, Nicholas Marc, Matthew Borg, Maxou Pottier, Carina Davidoiu, Mihai Vlăduț, Camille Degross, Mark Cauchi.

Bottom row: Stefan Sălăvăstru, Michelle Padovani, Rafaella Corrieri, Kevin Durand, Jelena Stambolic, Tracey Sammut, Ghislaine Calleja and Matei Danes.

Ghislaine Calleja is a volunteer with Din l-Art Helwa

A Special Sunset Evening at the Red Tower

James Evans

From mid-May to early September, Din l-Art Helwa volunteers welcome visitors to the Red Tower (St Agatha's Tower) at Marfa Ridge, Mellieħa, for the increasingly popular Sunset Evenings. This event takes place every Tuesday and Thursday from 7.30 pm to sunset. Entrance fee is €5 per person and includes a tour of the historic tower, a complimentary glass of wine but above all, visitors can enjoy a fantastic 360 degrees view from the roof of the Red Tower over the Majjistral Park, Ghadira bay, the Mellieħa l-Aħrax area and the Straits of Comino right across to Gozo. The cherry on the cake is the opportunity for a photo-shoot of the spectacular sunset to the west of the tower with Ta' Ċenċ cliffs in the distance.

The initiative to organise these sunset evenings was taken by Brian Sly, a member of the Red Tower team of volunteers. He is ably aided on a regular weekly basis by two other dedicated red tower volunteers, Doreen Considine and Jo Woodall.



Ex-Teenagers relax at Mellieħa from left facing camera: Victoria Perici, Michael Mallia, Torio Gingell Littlejohn, James Evans, Roger Vella Bonavita, Ann Gingell Littlejohn (partly hidden), Marie Buhagiar, Tony Buhagiar (slightly visible), Ivo Caruana (at head of table), Miriam Vella Gregory, Joe Vella Gregory, George O. Attard, Alex Xuereb, Maurice O' Scanaill, John Cachia



Group photo from left to right: Roger Vella Bonavita, Torio Gingell Littlejohn, Ann Gingell Littlejohn, Maurice O' Scanaill, Anne Cachia, James Evans, Miriam Vella Gregory, George O. Attard, Michael Mallia, Alex Xuereb, Marie Buhagiar, Tony Buhagiar, Ivo Caruana, Victoria Perici, John Cachia

This August, one of the evenings had a very special visitor, the well known historian Dr Roger Vella Bonavita, who was the guest of honour to a memorable reunion. Dr Vella Bonavita is an ex-member of the Board of Directors of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa, the youth section of Din l-Art Helwa that was set up in 1967. This year happens to be the 50th anniversary of the cleaning and rehabilitation of the chapel of Ħal Millieri and its precincts, an event that was commemorated later that year. Knowing that he would be unable to attend the Ħal Millieri reunion, Roger expressed his wish to meet a few ex-teenagers who had worked on this project.

Ann Gingell Littlejohn, also an ex-member of the TDLH Board of Directors, came up with the great idea of meeting Roger at the majestic setting of the Red Tower sunset evening.

Although invited at short notice, the affection and respect that ex-TDLH members still hold for Roger, and his late wife Judith, was evident from the enthusiastic response from twelve ex-teenagers who formed part of the core group that worked with Roger at Ħal Millieri and later at Rinella Battery. Viewing of sunset from the roof of the tower was followed by an intimate dinner at a nearby location on Mellieħa beach. The evening was full of anecdotes about eventful moments and tales of funny incidents whilst working on TDLH projects. The reunion ended with a short speech by Roger, where he expressed his thanks for bringing back such wonderful memories. Some of us had not seen Roger since he emigrated to Australia, so this was a very moving occasion.



James Evans was the first President of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa, (the Youth Section) when it was set up in 1967 and is volunteer coordinator at the Red Tower.

“Teenagers” at Ħal Millieri – 50 Years On

James Evans

The threat of rain showers coupled with the embarrassing thought of not being able to recognise faces that have matured for half a century did not deter an enthusiastic group of ex-teenagers from attending a reunion to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the cleaning and rehabilitation of the Siculo-Norman chapel of the Annunciation at Ħal Millieri and its precincts. This initial cleaning and upkeep of the chapel, carried out by Teenagers’ Din l-Art Ħelwa, led to the setting up of a committee of experts that advised on the scientific study and eventual restoration of the chapel and the priceless frescoes that it houses.

The reunion took place on the initiative of John Cachia, one of the ex-teenage members, who happened to be passing through Ħal Millieri when he saw the plaque that had been unveiled on the



Chapel of Ħal Millieri and the fresco of St Augustine

boundary wall of the precincts to commemorate the completion of works by Teenagers’ Din l-Art Ħelwa in 1968. John roped in Marie Buhagiar née Calleja (Secretary and ex-member of the Teenagers’ Committee) and James Evans (first President of the Teenagers’ Committee) who both readily joined in the organisation of the reunion. Following a number of meetings to plan the programme, an invite was circulated to ex-members of TDLĦ who had participated in the clean-up of Ħal Millieri. The response was overwhelming; nearly all ex-teenage members that were contacted were excited about the proposed reunion and confirmed their attendance months in advance. A number of ex-teenagers who now reside abroad even made travel plans so that they could be in Malta at the time of the reunion.

On the actual October day, the weather was fine and the event was a huge success. In all, over twenty ex-teenage members and three ex-members of the TDLĦ Board of Directors were present, most accompanied by partners. One has to keep in mind that although some ex-members had remained friends and kept in contact or bumped into each other over the years, for some members who specifically worked at Ħal Millieri this was the first meeting in 50 years. The big day commenced with Holy Mass that was celebrated in the chapel of St John the Evangelist just fifty metres away from the Ħal Millieri chapel. Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, Judith Vella Bonavita née Wood and two ex-members of TDLĦ (Anton Ciarlò, Anjelica Cauchi née de Giorgio) who have regrettably passed away, were remembered during Mass. In a moving homily, Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti OFM, compared the way early Christians went forth to spread the good news and led by example to the way teenagers under proper guidance took on the upkeep of historic monuments which had hitherto been forgotten and in so doing set an example to others. Fr Norbert also stressed the upholding of Christian values including conserving the built-up and artistic patrimony left to us by our forefathers, and also protecting our natural environment for those to come.



Professor Mario Buhagiar, founding chairman of the Board of Directors of Teenagers’ Din l-Art Ħelwa and Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti, member of the first Board.

At the end of Mass everyone remained seated to listen to Fr Norbert recount how, as a young priest, he got involved as a member of Din l-Art Helwa and was immediately asked by Judge Maurice Caruana Curran to work with the teenagers of the youth section. He reminded those present of the very first activities and fledgling ventures that were organised by TDLH before embarking on the major projects. Fr Norbert pointed out that, laudable as the professional restoration work that ensued turned out to be, it was the principal intention of the initial Board of Directors, as well as of Judge Caruana Curran, that the younger generation be inspired to love our patrimony including the environment in a hands-on manner. The response was most encouraging, with Hal Millieri, Bir Miftuh and Rinella Battery proving to be a great harvest of willing hands and hearts.

Messages were then read out from members who now reside abroad and could not make it to the reunion, and from members who happened to be away from Malta on the day. These messages are reproduced with this article. Ms Simone Mizzi then recounted how, following the sad demise of her father, the late Maurice Caruana Curran, whilst rummaging through a drawer containing his most cherished papers, she found a file with all the important developments pertaining to the upkeep and restoration of Hal Millieri. Ms Mizzi said that this showed that amongst all the works carried out by Din l-Art Helwa, her father held the project of Hal Millieri as one closest to his heart.

The group then gathered in the grounds of Hal Millieri chapel where members spoke about individual recollections. Newspaper cuttings from the late 1960s and photos of teenagers cleaning and clearing debris served to revive memories of the months on end that were spent on the rehabilitation of the chapel and its precincts. The opening paragraph of one newspaper article by Christian Hansen is eerily valid fifty years on.

At this time of frantic development in Malta, when building is booming, and on all sides new flats, villas, hotels are rising, some reasonable in taste, some excellent, and some by any standards, execrable; when Malta's endowment of natural beauty is in many cases being ruthlessly and tastelessly exhausted in the interests of avid speculation, how many people know of the quiet voluntary work being done to rescue and protect the ancient places on our island?

Today, the quiet voluntary work still goes on and Din l-Art Helwa is still outspoken in its defence of the built heritage and the collective environment.

The reunion then shifted to Ghar Lapsi for light lunch during which there were more and more recollections, such that

the reunion lasted till late in the afternoon. Before departing, a donation of €100 was presented to Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa. The mood of those present can be summed up in the words of Maria Grazia Cassar, in a note of thanks that she sent following the reunion:

It was an honour, and a great pleasure to join you last week in commemorating 50 years since your group first got together. It was wonderful to see the bond that linked you then, still very much alive, and the joy was really palpable. I was moved by the messages from the friends who could not be there, and the many memories that were evoked, especially of those who have passed to a better life. Your hard work in restoring the various historical sites and most of all in consolidating a core group of Din l-Art Helwa Volunteers lives on today, and the fruits of your labour, dedication and enthusiasm will continue to inspire us for a long time to come.

The organisers would like to express their gratitude to Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti for readily accepting to celebrate Mass (Fr Norbert is also an ex-member of the TDLH Board of Directors), to Prof. Mario Buhagiar (co-founder of TDLH, ex-Secretary of the Board of Directors and trustee of the Hal Millieri – Bir Miftuh Trust) and Ann Gingell Littlejohn née Amato-Gauci (also an ex-member of the TDLH Board of Directors) for the encouragement they gave us to organise this event and for joining us on the day. Thanks also go to Mr Ben Schembri for opening the chapel of St John the Evangelist and to Dr Anthony Mangion (warden of Hal Millieri chapel) for providing assistance by preparing for Mass and opening up Hal Millieri chapel and precincts on the day. It is evident that Dr Mangion takes good care of the chapel which is normally open to the public on the first Sunday of the month from 9.00 am to 12 noon. It was an honour to have Ms Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, joining us for the day. It was also wonderful to have Ms Simone Mizzi present, as an ex-member of TDLH, as Vice-President of DLH and in representing her late father, Maurice Caruana Curran, who was so supportive of the projects undertaken by TDLH.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the ex-teenagers who attended the reunion. All planning and preparation would have been futile without their response, so ultimately it was their presence that made the reunion such a memorable day. In fact, such was the success of the event that we are already thinking of organising another reunion to recall the 50th anniversary of another major project undertaken by TDLH that took place in 1969 – that of cleaning Rinella Battery in Kalkara and restoring the 100-ton gun that it houses.



*Group photo on the parvis of the Chapel of St John Evangelist
Back row left to right: Paul Chetcuti, Odette Chetcuti, Frances Casapinta, Anne Cachia, Maryse German, Brian K. German, Christina Nicodeme, Andrew Flinn, Torio Gingell Littlejohn, Fr Norbert Ellul Vincenti, Simone Mizzi, Maria Grazia Cassar.
Middle row left to right: Alex Xuereb, Simone Brincat, Lino Casapinta, John Cachia, Joseph Debono, Josephine Caruana, Ivo Caruana, Philip Borg, Elda Borg, Liliana Buhagiar.
Front row left to right: Suzanne Carabott, Jane Evans, James Evans, Mario Buhagiar, Marie Buhagiar, Theresa Valentino, Joe Carabott, Michael Mallia, Ethel Cachia Pickard, Ann Gingell Littlejohn, Mary Grace Flinn.*

Messages on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the rehabilitation of the Siculo-Norman chapel of the Annunciation and its precincts at Ħal Millieri

From George Serracino Inglott (co-founder of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa)

Message to ex-members of TDLĦ on the occasion of the reunion on 17th October 2018 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the 1968 completion of cleaning work at Ħal Millieri.

To love our heritage is an element that runs through our blood and consequently through our nervous system. The proof of this affirmation is incarnated in our reunion today.

Fifty years have passed since our nervous and problematic action to take over Ħal Millieri Chapel to create consciousness amongst all to respect and safeguard our past. Today we witness that the snowball which was very small at the time is now a gigantic ball taken up by numerous other organizations who have emulated our principles and actions to enhance the knowledge of many forgotten cultural aspects of our most beautiful country. One close friend of mine spent a month in Malta and on his return to Chile told me that though Malta is small in size, when one appreciates the infinite number of monuments and the many cultural activities going on, one completely forgets the smallness of the island.

Another important reflection which this historical reunion brings to mind, is on Time and being (Heidegger), memory and emotions, space, landscape, rationality and actions, discourse, morality, Teenage and education, the past and the present-future. The systematic analysis of emotions is the basis of ontological analysis of time and historical landscape which enhances the beauty of history, time and pleasure – an eternal satisfaction and memory enacted by two important aspects of life, rituals and memories. Celebrating Mass in a desecrated chapel in ruins “non illumine etc” with no light, the teenagers turn it into a big focus of light on our way of looking at the past not as an event but as a deed that lives in the present and the future. From death we brought life. All of us became creators of sensitivity to the beauty in a simple chapel turned by time into a pig sty. At that time none of us fully rationalised what we were doing and it is now, after fifty years of our actions, that I realise the moral lessons we were giving to many of our elders. However, this concept was quite clear in 1968 to Judge Maurice Caruana Curran who was the back bone of all our actions.

I take this opportunity to show my appreciation and give thanks to Professor Mario Buhagiar, Dr Roger Vella Bonavita and his late wife Judith for the important roles that they played in all TDLĦ projects. Finally, but not least, without the teenagers Ħal Millieri would have only been an idea of Mario.

My love and best wishes to all – to Jimmy, first president of the Teenagers' Committee of TDLĦ, to Simone, to the ex-directors Mario, Ann, Pippa and to Father Nobert and all twenty 'teenagers' at this reunion.

George Serracino Inglott, El Paico (in the town of El Monte), Metropolitan Region (Santiago) – Chile

From Dr Roger Vella Bonavita (Vice-chairman of TDLĦ Board of Directors and trustee of the Ħal Millieri – Bir Miftuh Trust)

I much regret not being here to meet you all. It really was a great pleasure to see many of you (with assorted spouses) at *Torri l-Aħmar* on 18th August, courtesy of the 'Castellan' James Evans *olim* President of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa. The only thing that saddened me was the absence of Judith. It was she who decided we must support Judge Maurice Caruana Curran's initiative in setting up TDLĦ. That brought us into the youth group.

The sunset was magnificent that evening as we sipped our wine on the battlements and admired the view of the countryside across the hills to the outcrops and cliffs on the coast and then to a serene evening sea beyond, as a blood red sun sank inexorably below the horizon. There was a time when we all took that the kind of scene and moment for granted. Now such spots are very rare.

Dinner afterwards was great fun! Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

It is difficult to talk about our (i.e., TDLĦ's) record in conservation projects and their influence nationally without sounding pompous and superior. The fact is that we were the first to show that practical conservation is not rocket science. We were the pioneers: half a century ago. All members of TDLĦ (including the directors of course) who were involved in our projects can look back with pride on what we as a group achieved half a century or so ago — mostly with our bare hands. DLĦ followed suit spectacularly, by its continued devotion to conservation, and going on to restore and manage a varied portfolio of sites — besides being responsible for the restoration of a very important national monument: the church of Our Lady of Victories in Valletta.

Over the years several heritage NGOs and special interest groups followed suit, each seeking a niche area in which to operate, often tapping impressive levels of funding and support for their projects. Eventually government too came to understand the economic, social and political merits of conservation and restoration programmes. It spent vast amounts of money on massive projects with laudable results. The new lease of life given to the magnificent fortifications of Valletta, Senglea, Vittoriosa, Mdina, the Cittadella of Gozo, St Elmo and St Angelo bear eloquent witness to this, as does the excellent work on the Hypogeum, Ħaġar Qim, Ħal Tarxien and Ġgantija, the upgrading of our museums and the world class work on St John's Co-Cathedral, the Presidential Palace and other heritage sites. We should also acknowledge the way in which the Three Cities and Valletta have been revitalised and given a new dignity and quality of life, as also the contribution of the church.

Sadly, there is a dreadful flip side to this coin. We all know that the losses and ongoing threats to our natural and built environments are many, heavy and mainly irreversible. Unforgivable things, absolutely unforgivable things, have been permitted and even encouraged in the name of 'development'. Sadly, as I understand it, many more are in the pipeline. But there is hope: public awareness of the need for practical measures to save what we love for ourselves and future generations has grown and will keep growing – Facebook is full of special interest groups with heritage leanings. So, I urge you all to keep up the good fight. As in the past there will be setbacks, but there will also be victories.

But, I must not end on a sour note for this is a happy occasion. For Judith and me, our years with TDLH were some of our happiest in our lives – indeed with hindsight I think TDLH helped cement our marriage. Were she alive, she would join me in thanking you all for giving us the pleasure of working with a wonderful bunch of teenagers!

Thank you all,

Roger, Perth, Western Australia

Messages from ex-teenage members

From George O. Attard

Dear friends

The Archaeological Circle was launched just over 50 years ago at St. Aloysius College with Fr George at the helm.

The Circle increased drastically when like-minded students from other schools and groups joined together to form the Teenagers Section of Din l-Art Helwa. We made new friends and most of you are gathered here, but regretfully I could not be with these friends today.

It was impossible for me to attend today's special event. I had already accepted and booked, together with my partner Jowita, to travel to Poland for the marriage of her best friend.

Thanks to John, Jimmy and Marie, this will hopefully be the start of many more reunions during the course of which so many naughty pranks and activities are remembered and shared.

I sincerely hope to meet you all again soon.

George Olof Attard

From Daniel Borg

"What an amazingly long way DLH has come from those first endeavours by all involved, back in 1968, when its Youth Section started raising awareness among us... then teenagers... on the value of preserving our rich heritage.

In my mind, both Hal Millieri & Bir Miftuh... still today... stand as "a" if not "the" vivid testament and pillar to all DLH stands for. Today sadly, more than ever before, with so many challenges constantly being added to an already long list.

My sincere wish for the future of our beloved islands is that today's youth be educated on the importance of never letting go when it comes to fighting the many battles in the name of our identity, culture and heritage – how can we possibly continue to manifest this were it not for the contribution made by our forefathers and the unique architectural gems we have inherited from them?"

Fondest regards,

Daniel Borg, Halifax (Nova Scotia) - Canada.

From Louise Rimoldi (née DeMaria)

I have many happy memories of our time at Hal Millieri, I remember one particular day when I found a coin whilst sifting through the debris.

I am attaching a photograph I found which is dated 18th February 1968.

Enjoy the reunion and I am sorry I cannot join you.

Louise Rimoldi (DeMaria), Banstead (Surrey), England



From Joe Vella Gregory (ex-Secretary of TDLH and trustee of the Hal Millieri – Bir Miftuh Trust)

Hi everybody !

I was looking forward so much to this reunion but alas duty calls, to coin a phrase so to speak!!

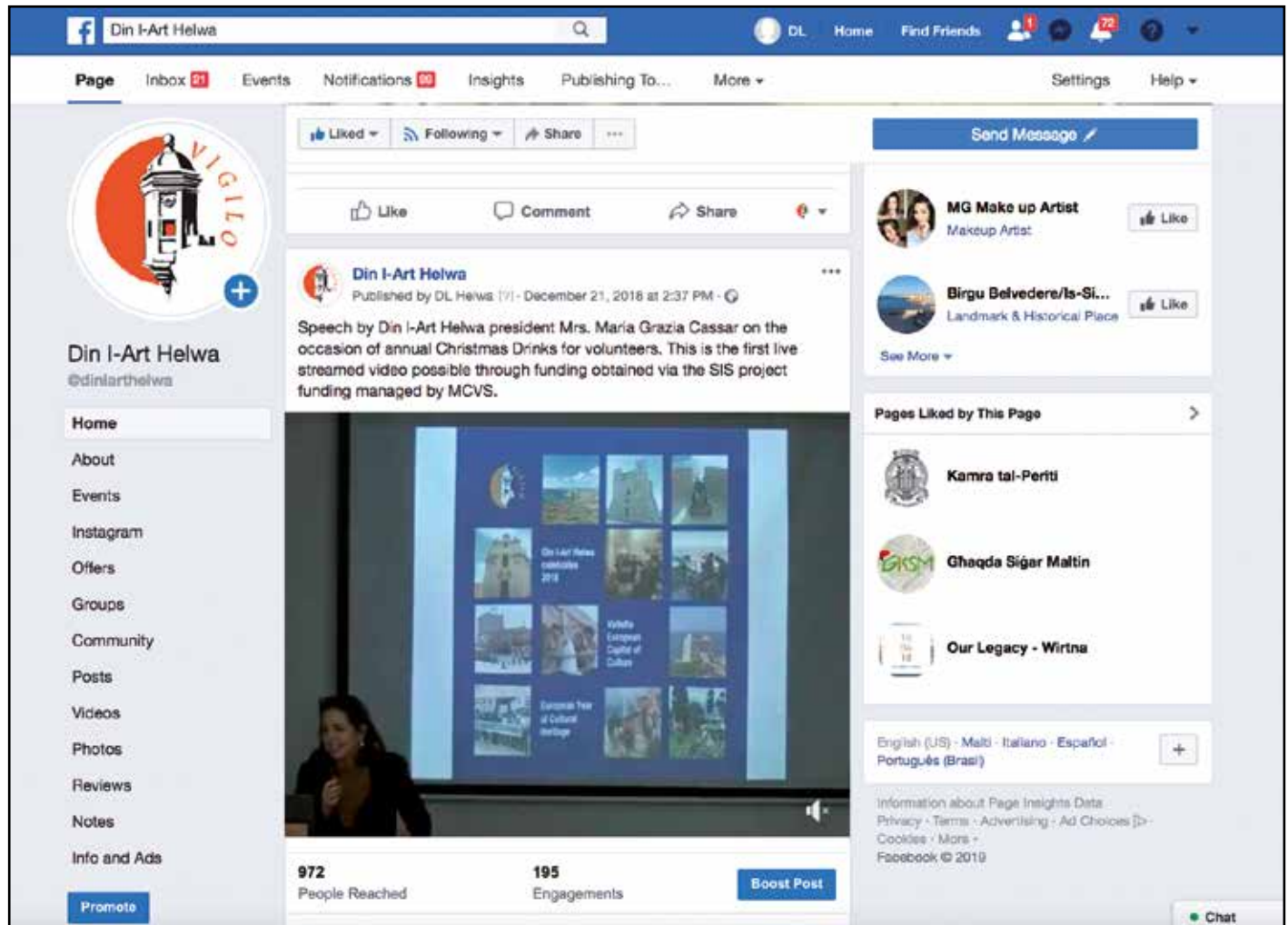
I am sure you will all have great fun, not only in reminiscing the good old days but especially meeting with each other. Our get together in honour of Roger Vella Bonavita was so good that this reunion should be the same, if not better, with more people joining in.

Big huggs to everybody.

Joe

The “Connect” Project

George Camilleri



“Connect” is a project aimed at improving the communication between Din l-Art Helwa (DLH) and the general public. It will specifically target the streaming of events, lectures and talks organized by DLH and presented by notable personalities, learned speakers and experts and make these available live via streaming to the general public. All streamed events will then be placed in a digital archive accessible online.

DLH strongly believes that educating and informing the public is one of its core responsibilities as guardians and custodians of Maltese cultural heritage. In today’s connected world where everyone is using the internet, live streaming of events is probably the best way of reaching out to the public.

One of the main drivers behind this project has been the persistent requests from Gozitan members who often find it difficult to travel over to Malta to attend the lectures regularly held by DLH. Arrangements have already been made with the Ministry of Gozo to host meetings where events can be streamed from Malta.

Using the latest live streaming technology DLH will be able to ensure that whoever wants to follow events organised by DLH can do so from the comfort of his/her home or outdoors using a PC, Laptop, Tablet or Smartphone or other similar device.

An archive of streamed events will be built over time, creating a library of talks and lectures on a variety of subjects.

George Camilleri is former Hon. Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa and a Council Member of the organisation

St Ignatius Villa

Cathy Farrugia

This article first appeared in *Places*, Issue 20, April 2018, and is reproduced by kind permission of the editor, Fiona Galea Debono

Learn from the past and build for the future

Many of us have been brought up to follow this maxim in our lives.

We were taught to respect the elderly and to learn from their experiences.

We were taught to embrace our own experiences and to learn from our past mistakes and adventures.

And finally, we were taught to treasure our local cultural heritage and traditions.

We live on a small island, with an incredibly rich and diverse built cultural heritage. At Din l-Art Helwa, we are very conscious of the fact that this is simply not appreciated enough and that often, there is very little initiative to protect what we have for future generations.

Today, we should reword this maxim to *ignore and trample on all that is old and build on it for future profit*. But why is this? Yes, we all know that the promise of future profits acts as very powerful blinkers. And yes, we do support progress and development but certain things are certainly worth protecting from the bulldozers.

Let us refer to St. Ignatius Villa in Scicluna Street in St Julian's as just one example of this. Over a year ago, this NGO did all it could to present a case for its scheduling by the Planning Authority. Instead, its representatives had to helplessly witness the horrific and illegal destruction of certain sections of this iconic building without much support from the authorities.

Is it possible that all those concerned are so unaware of the architectural beauty of this building? Maybe it is because today it is completely overshadowed by nondescript blocks of flats or maybe the blinkers are on again.

Is it possible that those concerned are so unaware of the building's links to so many chapters in the history of our country? It is here where Din l-Art Helwa may possibly come into its own, being in a position to inform anyone who cares to listen.

In fact, we actively promote the preservation and protection of historic buildings and monuments, the character of our towns and villages, as well as places of natural beauty and importance and the flora and fauna of such places, especially in relation to the problems arising from modern urban development. It has to be said that during these past years, in trying to carry out its mission, this NGO's representatives have often felt that they were facing a near impossible task of David and Goliath proportions.

But let's get back to St. Ignatius Villa. It must have all started with a prolonged meeting between a prominent businessman John Watson and his architect, both keen to create something new and original. Together, they built a stunning country villa on the hill with unobstructed views of the sea, hence its first name *Bel-Vedere*. The house, with its extensive gardens stretching right down to the bay, must have provided an ideal location for this entrepreneur and his family.

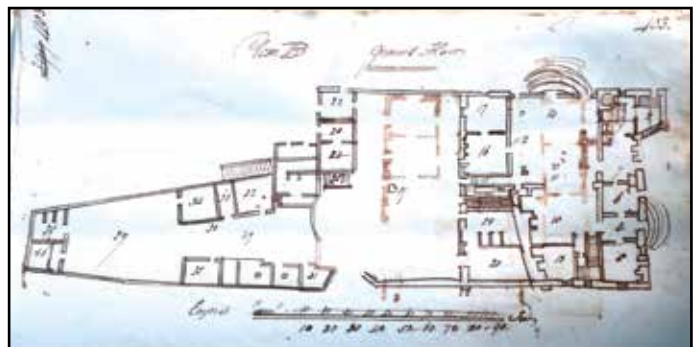
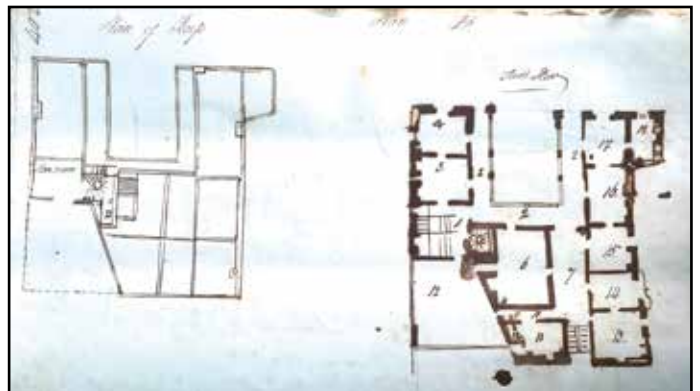


A painting of Balluta Bay dating to the early 19th century dominated by *Bel-Vedere*. Note the crenellations and pseudo-Gothic arches. (Private collection Malta)

We all know that for centuries the production of cotton was one of Malta's most important industries and its cotton was prized throughout the Mediterranean. It seems that Mr Watson played an important role in ensuring that this industry kept up with the times, as explained in this excerpt (adjusted slightly to be more politically correct) from MacGill, Thomas, *A Hand Book or Guide for Strangers Visiting Malta*, Malta 1839.

We shall take leave to mention the fine house and gardens of Bel-Vedere, the residence of John Watson Esq, who is rendering himself a benefactor to the [locals], by his assiduity and exertions in the introduction of the Brazil cotton plant; an uphill task with a people so [attached] to their ancient cotton and customs.

Soon after Mrs Watson's death in 1843, the villa was sold and it became a Protestant College until 1865. These architect's plans date back to the time when it was sold.



Various plans of St Ignatius Villa found at the Notarial Archives.

We are all well aware of the influential role the Jesuits have had upon Maltese society over the years. St Ignatius of Loyola was the founder of the Society of Jesus in 1540 and the building was renamed accordingly when it became a Jesuit College (from the 1870s until 1907). Within a few years of operation, so high was the demand by those wanting to be educated there that it soon became a boarding school with a refectory, dormitory, gymnasium, study halls and laboratories. A number of sports facilities were also housed in the former grounds of the old Bel-Vedere.

The Jesuits, or the ‘schoolmasters of Europe’ as they are often known, contributed to improving Malta’s educational standards from this very building. This is yet another important link to our local history.

It was during this time that both the adjacent Church and the extension were built. Both these buildings are scheduled, yet St Ignatius Villa is so far, not protected. Din l-Art Helwa is doing its best to change this situation and commissioned Perit Edward Said, conservation architect, to draw up a Heritage Assessment Report. In his words

Close inspection of Bel-Vedere, both in the contemporary depictions and evidence on the building fabric today, show various architectural elements which are of the pointed 19th Century Style, albeit restrained, yet unmistakably original to the early century design. Most of the external facades still survive intact though some extents have been incorporated into the later Jesuit additions on Old College Street, including the church. In conclusion, this begs the question: Is St Ignatius Villa one of the earliest, if not the first building in Malta with Neo-Gothic motifs?



St. Ignatius College in the 1950s, in Azzopardi, Anton. Jesuit Schools in Malta: 1592-1907. Malta 2002

The Government Gazette of 10 November 1995 describes when the property was scheduled by law. This included St Ignatius Church and the adjacent buildings but for some reason, not St Ignatius Villa.

After the Jesuit Fathers vacated the property, the premises remained vacant for eight years until 1915, when the building was converted into a military hospital. Starting with 155 beds St Ignatius Hospital also included an operating theatre with an X-ray room. In fact, the hospital was also used as a surgical facility with its first 84 patients arriving in 2 July 1915. Injured soldiers who had served in the Great War were treated and were able to convalesce here. This is yet another link to Malta’s history, contributing to its gaining the nickname of *The Nurse of the Mediterranean*.

St Ignatius College also functioned as a hospital during the Second World War.

Nicholas Krasnoff was a Russian national who, together with other compatriots, took up residence at St Ignatius College in 1919 after fleeing his country in exile. Again, another Maltese



Nurse on balcony (<http://cdm15887.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15887coll16/id/872/rec/4>)

tradition is represented in this building, that of offering ‘safe haven’ for those who require it.

Krasnoff came to Malta as a refugee in 1919. He was a watercolour artist of great accomplishment. Princess Nathalie Poutiatine, who introduced classical ballet to Malta and opened the first classical ballet school here, was herself a refugee who died in Malta in 1984. She wrote:



Nicholas Krasnoff, St Ignatius College (Courtesy of R&J Gingell Littlejohn Auctioneers)

Nicholas Krasnoff was a well-known and talented artist; he had designed the beautiful new palace for the Imperial Family in Yalta (Crimean Peninsula). He was asked to give me lessons so as not to interrupt the tuition I was receiving in that art in Russia ... I did greatly enjoy his lessons, sitting under a shady arch of military buildings in open air, overlooking the blue sea. He explained to me the importance of light and shade and its techniques in watercolour. He found the light on the Malta stone most effective against the deep cobalt blue of the sea and sky. (Poutiatine, Nathalie. Princess Olga: My Mother. Malta, 1982)

Today, the premises are unfortunately in a bad state of repair and its much shrunken grounds totally neglected. Yet, in the eyes of many of us too, it still retains its elegant beauty of yesteryear. It is Din l-Art Helwa’s opinion that a particular property should be considered an integral part of a nation’s cultural heritage for two main reasons namely; if it has specific, important architectural features and for historical reasons, because of the role it has played in the history or memory of the nation or of the community.

In this case, St. Ignatius Villa has both distinctive architectural features, as well as significant links to various chapters in Malta’s history.



The current state of the Villa (Din l-Art Helwa archives)

A detailed Heritage Assessment Report has been submitted by Din l-Art Helwa in its attempt to have the building scheduled. Unfortunately, the Planning Authority has, so far, refused this. This decision has been questioned and the case is still pending.

It is beyond belief that the Planning Authority has refused to schedule St Ignatius Villa, despite the evidence provided of its significant architectural and historical importance. The current planning application to create a road right through it with blocks of flats all around is the epitome of the destructive greed which spares no one and nothing in its path, no matter how valuable or beautiful. This heritage belongs to all of us, and to future generations. It should be protected, not wiped out. Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President, Din L-Art Helwa.

We all hope that the proverbial David will be successful in this particular battle against Goliath. Unfortunately, there were so many other similar buildings just as beautiful and important as St. Ignatius Villa but they are no longer with us to tell their tale and to remind us of their eventful past.

Cathy Farrugia is a Council Member of Din l-Art Helwa

The Alfred Mizzi Foundation supports Din l-Art Helwa Heritage Awareness Programmes

Last July, The Alfred Mizzi Foundation once again came to the support of Din l-Art Helwa with another generous sponsorship. The agreement between The Alfred Mizzi Foundation and Din l-Art Helwa will grant a three year sponsorship enabling DLH to disseminate its ideals and work towards the safeguarding of Malta's heritage and environment.

Whilst Din l-Art Helwa's mission to save the nation's patrimony through its restoration projects is ongoing, it also strives to raise awareness and lobby for the protection of the environment, both built and natural. This requires considerable resources, and sponsorships such as this ensure that the voluntary organisation can work to achieve its goals. At a presentation held in the offices of DLH, Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar, thanked The Alfred Mizzi Foundation for their generosity, and reiterated how important this support was for Din l-Art Helwa so it could widen its outreach and communicate its goals.

Mr Julian Sammut, Trustee for The Alfred Mizzi Foundation, expressed his satisfaction at being able to contribute towards the work of Din l-Art Helwa, and that the mission of The Alfred Mizzi Foundation is to support cultural heritage and the environment, education and the well-being of society.



Trustees of The Alfred Mizzi Foundation, Albert Petroccholino and Julian Sammut, third and fifth from left, with officials of Din l-Art Helwa, from left to right: Philip Mercieca, Secretary General, Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President, and Simone Mizzi, former Executive President

Two more publications from Din l-Art Helwa



Heritage Saved by Stanley Farrugia Randon is the updated pocket size book describing the work of Din l-Art Helwa since its foundation, and the heritage sites it has saved through the decades and which it manages for the nation. The book is in A5 size and has 216 pages in full colour and is dedicated by the author to Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, Din l-Art Helwa's late Founder President (1918 – 2015), on the 100th anniversary of the year of his birth

The **L-Ahrax Tower** (*The White Tower*) guide book, also by Stanley Farrugia Randon, is in A4 size and has 24 pages in full colour. It describes the history, the several transformations, and degradation over the centuries of this important landmark at Armier, and its road to salvation after being taken over for restoration by Din l-Art Helwa.



Both books are published by Din l-Art Helwa and printed by Best Print in Qrendi. They are available from the Din l-Art Helwa bookshop at 133 Melita Street, Valletta and from all Din l-Art Helwa heritage sites at the price of €7. All proceeds raised go towards Din l-Art Helwa's activities in the protection and promotion of the rich cultural heritage of the Maltese Islands.

For more information email info@dinlarthelwa.org

Enchanted Evening at San Anton Palace

At the annual fund raising dinner held on 27 July 2018 by Din l-Art Helwa, National Trust of Malta, in the beautiful grounds of the Palace of San Anton, the moon too helped enhance the magic of the evening as the red glimmer of an eclipse could be made out through the ancient trees of San Anton Gardens.

Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, welcomed a glittering international gathering for the heritage NGO's 53rd Reunion which was attended by Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, Mr Edgar Preca, as well as members of the diplomatic corps and officials of several cultural and academic entities. Amongst these were HE Mr Pdraig Mac Coscair, Ambassador for the Republic of Ireland, HE Mr Peter Schatzer, Ambassador to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and Dr Giuseppina Schatzer, HE Ms Natascia Meli Daudey, Ambassador of Poland, Mme Elizabeth du Breil de Pontbriand, Cultural Counsellor of the Embassy of France, Dott. Massimo Sarti, the newly arrived Director of the Italian Cultural Institute and Signora Sarti, Ing. Arthur Ciantar, President of the German Maltese Circle, Professor Peter Xuereb, Judge at the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg, and his wife Professor Angela Xuereb, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Malta, and Professor Alex Torpiano, Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment and President of the Kamra tal-Periti and his wife Dr Gabrielle Torpiano. The event was supported by the strong presence of a number of corporate supporters of the heritage NGO, in particular - APS Bank Limited, Bank of Valletta plc, BNF Bank plc, Mapfre MSV Life plc, and HSBC Bank Malta plc while the InterNations Association were present with no less than 21 different nationalities.

A most successful raffle was held with paintings generously donated by artists Godwin Cassar and Dr Carol Jaccarini, as well as other exciting prizes which helped make up much needed funds for the organisation's activities in the protection of the national heritage.

Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, gave an address outlining the numerous activities undertaken throughout the year, in particular the project to save the White Tower at Armier, the rare Australian Bungalow, and the bells of Victory Church. She also highlighted many lobbying and campaigning actions taken to prevent the loss of built and natural heritage due to building development. Ms Cassar also recalled that 2018 was the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Din l-Art Helwa's Founder President, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, and announced that a *Liber Amicorum*, written as a tribute by his friends, was to be published by Din l-Art Helwa later in the autumn to honour his life and achievements in the fields of justice and heritage. She thanked all the volunteers led by Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran for their unwavering dedication to this annual event. HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of the Republic and Patron of Din l-Art Helwa, commending the work of the organisation, also addressed guests, referring to the many restorations undertaken in 2018 at San Anton Palace.



The national anthem opens the evening at the arrival of the Patron of the organisation, HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta and Mr Edgar Preca. From left to right: Martin Scicluna, Hon. Treasurer, Prof. Lucio Mulé Stagno, Vice President, Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President, HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, Mr Edgar Preca, Cettina Caruana Curran, Simone Mizzi, former Executive President



A glittering evening for the annual reunion of Din l-Art Helwa in the grounds of San Anton Palace



*Eclipse of the moon
(Photo Stanley Farrugia Randon)*

Glamorous Gala Dinner at the Phoenicia Ballroom

The newly refurbished Phoenicia Ballroom was the venue for Din l-Art Helwa's Autumn Gala Dinner, a glittering event aimed at raising much needed funds to assist the heritage organisation meet its many challenges to safeguard and protect Malta's cultural heritage.

Guests were welcomed by the voluntary organisation's officials and Council members. Throughout the evening, works of art donated by a number of Malta's leading artists were auctioned and a rich list of opportunity trips, weekend escapes and unusual prizes were taken by those who bid the highest in the Silent Auction. The raffle offered other exciting prizes. Entertainment was by the popular Vinny and his band, with Andreanna the singer for the night, while Malcolm Galea, talented actor and stage director, compered the evening and kept guests entertained and amused during the night's programme.

Some of Din l-Art Helwa's lead corporate members enriched the event with officials present from the Bank of Valletta, BNF Bank, AX Group, Deloitte, Plaza Centre and Curmi and Partners. The success of the evening was also made possible through the generosity of Sparkasse Bank (Malta) Ltd, Philippe Martinet Fine Wines and Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Noll.

Maria Grazia Cassar, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa thanked all those attending as well as the generous art donors. She said that the event was a fitting closure for 2018, to celebrate the European Year of Cultural Heritage, also Valletta's year as European Capital of Culture and the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Din l-Art Helwa's Founder President, the late Judge Maurice Caruana Curran. Finally she thanked all sponsors and benefactors, and especially the organization's hard working volunteers led for this event by Council Member Joe Farrugia and his wife, Christine, for making the evening possible.



Din l-Art Helwa officials, Council members and guests during the Autumn Gala Dinner. From left to right: Mrs Simone Mizzi, Mr Joe Farrugia, Dr Marianne Noll, Mr Kenneth Mizzi, Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar, Dr Pierre Cassar, Mrs Christine Farrugia, Mr and Mrs Pierre and Zoe Chaumarat (partly hidden) and Dr John Vassallo



The Phoenicia Ballroom at the DLH Gala Night

53rd Annual General Meeting - 24th February 2018

Secretary General's Report

Good morning members, friends and volunteers. I welcome you to the 53rd Annual General Meeting of Din l-Art Helwa and I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2017, by all counts an eventful year. This has once again been a very active and busy year for DLH continuing to present us with new goals and challenges in our endeavour to protect and enhance our natural heritage and environment and preserve our unique identity.

PEOPLE

The last AGM saw the election of the 15 Council Members from March 2017 to February 2019 to which were added 7 co-opted members, for a total of 22, providing a group of dedicated first rate people bringing with them a wide range of skills and a wealth of experience. This year will not therefore necessitate a further election, however, two of our long standing Council members, Pat Salomone and Joe Chetcuti, have decided to step down after several years of dedicated loyal service to DLH. We are indeed most grateful and indebted to both Pat and Joe whom we thank wholeheartedly for their invaluable contribution and hard work and wish them both all the very best though we are sure they will remain available to assist us when called for. We are therefore in a position to co-opt an additional 3 members to further strengthen our team on Council and we are currently working on seeking appropriate and dedicated individuals who may be interested.

Our Council Members meanwhile continue to also contribute and represent DLH by advising on various other cultural and heritage related Boards and Committees. Former Executive President Simone Mizzi continues to serve as a Board Member of Europa Nostra whilst DLH member and sponsor Dr John Vassallo serves as an individual Council Member. Both represented DLH at the AGM of Europa Nostra and Simone attended the Europa Nostra Silver Medal Award Ceremony at the Piramide Bianca di Sesto Caio in Rome last November. She also attended the formal launch of Valletta 2018 European Capital of Culture on the 20th January 2018 on behalf of both Europa Nostra and DLH. Simone has this last year continued to represent DLH on the Federation of NGOs of Majjistral Park whilst DLH Council Member Martin Galea has been elected Trustee of the International Trusts Organisation after Simone concluded her term of office. Another Council Member, Alan Deidun, continues to represent all eNGOs on the Environment Resources Authority Board whilst Treasurer Martin Scicluna serves on the HSBC Foundation Board. Pat Salomone also represented DLH on the Floriana Regeneration Forum.

COURTESY VISITS AND CORPORATE MATTERS

Conscious of our need to continue to promote our mission for heritage and environmental protection we have sought regular meetings and discussions with relevant authorities, as well as potential sponsors, to promote and seek support for our work. Shortly after last year's AGM the Board of Europa Nostra held its Spring Board Meeting in Malta between 15th and 18th March 2017 and DLH had the honour of hosting one of their meetings and a networking lunch at our headquarters. The Board was also hosted by the Minister of Justice and Culture Dr Owen Bonnici to a reception at Fort St. Angelo.

Meanwhile, shortly after the General Election, DLH was accorded a meeting on 21st June with the Prime Minister who was accompanied by the Minister of Justice and Culture and the Minister for the Environment. Six Council Members attended representing DLH and our Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar was given the opportunity to raise the concerns of DLH, in particular relating to high rise and FAR policy, protection of ODZ and the setting up of more nature parks, as well as the protection of vernacular architecture and defending urban conservation areas.

Other meetings with Government officials included a meeting held in August with the Hon. Chris Agius, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and the Property Market with regard to the proposed guardianship to be assigned to DLH of the Vendôme Redoubt in Marsaxlokk whilst another meeting was held with Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Dr José A. Herrera with regard to the Australian Bungalow, another proposed new DLH project which will hopefully get underway and be completed during 2018.

On the 27th July, Din l-Art Helwa was awarded the "Apprezzament il-Mellieħa" by the Mellieħa Local Council. Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar received the award at a ceremony held in the Sanctuary Square, Mellieħa.

Early this year, in January 2018, further meetings were attended with Leader of the Opposition Dr Adrian Delia, who invited DLH together with other NGOs to discuss the PN motion with regard to Żonqor as well as other issues relating to the environment. Very recently we also met with the Minister for Gozo Justyne Caruana, to seek her support and assistance on matters relating to Gozo and Comino.

A very interesting and successful initiative was a Corporate lunch held at our premises when DLH invited satisfied existing sponsors, and also potential new ones, to outline DLH work and plans and seek their support. We have to thank our Treasurer Martin Scicluna for organising this very successful event.

During November the MIA Foundation Board, headed by CEO Alan Borg, paid a courtesy visit to the completed Wied iż-Zurrieq Tower. It was agreed that the official opening would be postponed to 2018 when the landscaping around the Tower, also financed by MIA, will be completed.

RESTORATION

This was concentrated in 2017 on commencing work on the restoration of the White Tower in Armier. This involved regular meetings with the architect and contractors as well as with PA and ERA officials. After illegal structures were removed work started on the cleaning of the ditch and ditch room (which needed reconstruction of the roof), ordering of apertures and provision of facilities. Work also involved the compilation of a number of photos, videos and information on marine bio diversity as DLH plans to use the place for various diverse activities which include educational and academic initiatives, youth training facilities, exhibitions, a diving and marine study centre, guided tours and lectures, corporate and philanthropic functions and heritage accommodation. To this end a booklet written by Council Member Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon has also been prepared, providing information on the historical background of the Tower and other defence points close by. We need to thank in particular our sponsors, HSBC Malta Foundation and Atlas Insurance PPC Ltd, for supporting this important project. The launch and signing of the Agreement and Funding Arrangement with HSBC, our main sponsor, was signed on the 2nd August 2017 at the Tower in the presence of the media. Subsequently HSBC volunteers have participated and assisted in a tree planting session undertaken in the ditch. We must also thank our volunteers in particular Martin Vella who is leading this project and coordinating and supervising the works as well as Stanley Farrugia Randon and Josie Ellul Mercer for their contribution in this regard, and Martin Scicluna who is coordinating the financial aspects.

Much work continued at the Our Lady of Victory Church on all fronts with much completed in time for V18. The appeal made by Simone Mizzi of November 2016 was eagerly met by several sponsors who rallied to assist in the restoration of the exterior façades. After permits were obtained, the work started on the South West wall which was concluded in January. DLH would like to thank the P. Cutajar & Co. Foundation, Medserv plc., Izola Bank plc., RCLIN Pharma Ltd., Tug Malta, Sullivan Shipping, J. Ripard & Son, GasanMamo Insurance Ltd., the Thomas Smith Group, Chevalier Joseph Micallef for making this work possible. Restoration will continue on the other facades as soon V18 comes to an end. Malta Industrial Parks Ltd sponsored the work on the belfry, Ganado Advocates the repair of the dangerous stairwell of the annex, while the ADRC Trust is making the restoration of the four historic bells possible. Also The Alfred Mizzi Foundation continues with its sponsorship of the altars and niches of the church.

Two important restorations made possible with the kind support of Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Noll were that of the organ balcony and its forty balustrades carried out by Giuseppe Mantella Restauri. Completed in April, this revealed small delicate wall paintings depicting sheaves of wheat and palm fronds on the supporting wall. The restoration of the historic 18C posivito organ of Victory Church by organ conservator Robert Buhagiar was concluded in December after two years of work generously sponsored by the Eden Leisure Group. The organ and its elements were reinstated and in an inaugural concert played to a packed house on the 5th December. The Tanner Trust is to be thanked for the restoration of the organ 18C cabinet and its “finto double”.

The St John of God elaborate gilt frame and the St John of God Nazarene style painting were returned to their 1746 altar in March, having been restored by Josef Aquilina and Amy Sciberras, with the kind support of PwC Malta. Also started was the complex restoration of the wooden choir stalls by ReCoop Limited, carried out with the kind support of Simonds Farsons Cisk and Farrugia Investments Limited. Each piece of wood had to be individually mapped and disinfested and treatment for termites put into the foundations. This work will soon be completed.

As mentioned previously, in 2017 we managed to complete work on the Wied iż-Zurrieq Tower which was opened to the public. Volunteers were found to attend in the Tower who were trained by Martin Vella, and a new warden Mark Shrimpton was appointed. Visits by the public to date have been encouraging.

In 2018 we hope to make good progress on the project of the Australian Bungalow. This bungalow which is currently lying abandoned in Marsa, was initially built by the British Government in the early 20th Century to teach potential emigrants to Australia how to work on these types of structures. The plan is to restore the bungalow and transport it to Ta' Qali where it can be utilised and will be accessible to the public. Discussions with the authorities are now well under way and in an advanced stage and the bungalow was recently visited by the Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Dr José A. Herrera, who has agreed to assist in the arrangements to transfer the bungalow to DLH under guardianship deed, as well as the Australian High Commissioner. The project is being headed by Council Member Joseph Farrugia, assisted in particular by Lucio Mulé Stagno and Maria Grazia Cassar.

Another project in the pipeline is the restoration of the Vendôme Redoubt Tower in Marsaxlokk. The intention is to convert the tower into a museum for fishing. This has in fact been offered to us by the Government however we are still in the course of discussions, also with Parliamentary Secretary Mr Chris Agius, as mentioned earlier, with a view to the guardianship being assigned to DLH. Meanwhile, other ongoing maintenance work has also been carried out. This includes the outer walls of the Hal Millieri Chapel, the restoration of two monuments in the Msida Bastion Historic Gardens, and a permit has recently been received for the restoration of the external facades of the Ghallis Tower. Very recently, at the end of January the new floodlighting system at Comino Tower, financed by the Ministry for Gozo, was installed and we thank Carolyn Clements and the Gozo/Comino team of volunteers for seeing this through.

Completion of the restoration of the Mattia Preti St. Nicholas painting in Sarria Church was also achieved thanks to the sponsorship by Sparkasse Bank Malta plc, and the co-ordination of this project by Patricia Salomone. A part sponsorship of the scaffold required to decorate the dome of Sarria Church was also kindly obtained from Vassallo Builders.

We have also, at the request of our insurers, carried out electricity safety and health and safety assessment reports of the properties under our care.

We are pleased to report, meanwhile, that bookings at the Delimara Lighthouse have been very encouraging and we are fully booked all through the Summer.

We must thank, in particular, Stanley Farrugia Randon and Josie Ellul Mercer for their commitment to the onerous task of maintaining continued upkeep of all the DLH sites as well as monitoring the work in progress on the new projects underway.

HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

DLH has persisted in its efforts to lobby and fight for the protection of our natural and built heritage in the face of ever increasing threats and evidence of continued abuse. This unfortunate situation is at times disheartening, however, we have persevered in our efforts having filed a total of 607 objections during 2017, unfortunately frequently unsuccessfully. We have also regularly lobbied in the media as well as continued to put forward representations with environmental authorities and Government officials.

Last May in the run-up to the general election, in common with other eNGOs we organised an important initiative where the eNGOs together presented a common front listing 10 important environmental issues that it was felt required urgent attention. This was presented to all the political parties at a media event at our headquarters which was very well attended, also by the leaders of all the main political parties. The issues raised were discussed and debated, with the political parties responding by putting forward their respective intended policies.

DLH has during the year raised regular objections against the abuse of ODZ and the demolition of vernacular buildings and town houses, not only in Sliema but all over the island which were destroying the historical character of our towns and villages. A typical case is in Żebbuġ Gozo where two town houses in the main square are scheduled for demolition. We have also recently campaigned for the scheduling of the historic St Ignatius Villa in St. Julian's which unfortunately has to date been refused, and objected, together with the Kamra tal-Periti, against the demolition of the Sea Malta building in Marsa. We have also issued frequent press releases re proposed developments such as Smart City, Manoel Island and the Villa Rosa project and the need to have a National Strategy Plan for the future of Malta. Din l-Art Helwa has also published joint statements with The Archaeological Society Malta on applications which threatened to destroy sites of archaeological importance.

Meanwhile the appeals filed last September by DLH at the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal on permits given for two high rise projects – Townsquare Sliema and Mriehel Towers are still in course, however, a decision is now expected imminently (although excavation work on both projects has started and is now well underway). Both these appeals were also supported by Nature Trust Malta and The Archaeological Society Malta.

As stated earlier the protection of our heritage and environment has become, we feel, increasingly fundamental to our organisation and in recognising the importance of this, our Council has decided to try to further strengthen and bolster our efforts in this regard. We are now proposing to employ two professional dedicated individuals, a Planning officer and a Communications officer whose responsibilities will primarily be dedicated to reviewing all planning applications made to the Planning Authority and to prepare and submit objections or comments on applications which are of national importance, or in ODZ or UCA areas, and which, in DLH's opinion, go against planning regulations or best practice. They will attend PA meetings and prepare cases for appeals and publicise all major planning objections using print and electronic media as well as plan campaigns and lobby for the environment. It is intended also that they will endeavour to develop and execute a funding strategy which, ultimately, will as far as possible cover our expenses in undertaking this initiative. The response to our call for these two positions has been very encouraging and we are currently in the course of undertaking our selection process. We are confident therefore that, very shortly, we will have appointed two dynamic and motivated individuals to assist us in taking up the challenges of protecting Malta's heritage and environment.

We must thank Maria Grazia Cassar, Martin Galea, Petra Caruana Dingli and Joanna Spiteri Staines for their effort, commitment and perseverance in this difficult area.

EVENTS

Our Lady of Victory Church continues to attract a high level of visitors and this year has been the venue for many beautiful events, concerts and informative presentations. It is worth registering visits from Europa Nostra in March, from HSBC, from the façade sponsors, and concerts given by the International Spring Festival Orchestra, the Prague Philharmonic, classical guitarist Liat Cohen, organist Hugo Agius Muscat, the final event on December 17th being the Gaudate Concert by the Cappella Sanctae Catharinae Choir. A prestigious twinning exhibition starting on December 1st of Melchiorre Gafa's "Nativity" and "The Annunciation" wax reliefs honoured this Maltese Baroque sculptor on the 350th anniversary of his death, together with the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, which was attended by His Grace Monsignor Charles Scicluna, Archbishop of Malta. This initiative was organised together with historian Sante Guido and conservator Giuseppe Mantella who gave an illustrative talk about the sculptor and his life, and with Monsignor Edgar Vella and the Metropolitan Chapter Museum of Mdina who kindly loaned the works of art. Finally a Christmas terracotta collection of cribs by architect Antonietta Filangeri was also displayed.

DLH continues to be grateful to Simone Mizzi and Pat Salomone for their work in organising this dense programme of works at OLV and to Josie Ellul Mercer for helping with the challenging logistics as well as custodian Mario Sciberras, Cettina Caruana Curran, Cathy Farrugia and the office staff, Anne Marie Navarro and Rosanne Zerafa.

Once again three wonderful concerts were held in the Bir Miftuħ Chapel at the end of May/early June. As usual these concerts were well attended and much appreciated and we must thank the Embassies of France and Germany for their sponsorships and of course Cettina Caruana Curran for the excellent organization, together with her team of helpers who included Charles Gatt, Cathy Farrugia, Pat Salomone, Anne Marie Navarro, Amelia Calleja, Ian and Joan Camilleri.

Other interesting events during the year include the Spring Fete at the Garden of Rest on the 7th May, well managed by our excellent warden Paolo Ferrelli and his team; the sunset evenings at the Red Tower held twice weekly; and the exhibition named "Azure Window" launched by Spazju Kreattiv at the Dwejra Tower, Gozo and Notte Bianca at OLV, which was very well attended and organised by warden Mario Sciberras.

There were two main fund raising events during the year. The annual and most popular dinner at San Anton Palace under the distinguished patronage of H.E. The President of Malta, and this year attended by Acting President Mrs Dolores Cristina, was held on the 28th July and once again was a lovely event, well supported and as always impeccably organised by Cettina Caruana Curran and her team of helpers.

With a view to enhance our fund raising efforts, it was decided this year to attempt a novel event with a grand black tie dinner which was held at the newly refurbished Hotel Phoenicia on the 4th November. The organisation was entrusted to Council Member Joseph Farrugia who had previous experience in organising similar events. The guests were treated to an evening of superb food, excellent music and an auction of works of art kindly and ably conducted by Nicholas De Piro who also joined Marielou Coppini and Christine Farrugia in a brief amusing recital. The evening was a great success from every aspect and many thanks must be extended to Joseph Farrugia and his team of helpers in particular Pat Salomone, Christine Farrugia and Maria Grazia Cassar.

Other activities included very interesting and popular tours and walks for our members organised by Council Member Ian Camilleri. These included beautiful sites such as the Majjistral Park in Spring, the Cittadella in Gozo, the Santa Marija Tower and Battery in Comino and the Heritage Trail of Ħaż-Żebbuġ, including Saint Roque Chapel.

As part of our cultural programme for the year we have also continued, regularly throughout the year, to present lectures at our Judge Caruana Curran Hall and are grateful to all the lecturers who have supported this programme. These included high profile names, experts in their field such as Dr Keith Buhagiar (Maltese Rural Landscape Developments from AD 900 to AD 1900); Mrs Sandra Mifsud Bonnici (Wonder Woman of the Baroque Age); Professor Anthony Bonanno and Judge Joe Galea Debono (The Central Segment of Victoria Lines); Dr Mark Agius (The Development of the devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel); Professor Joseph M. Brincat (Migration and Language in Malta); Professor Louis F. Cassar and Dr Elisabeth Conrad (Applying Concepts of Afforestation and Restoration Ecology); Professor Keith Sciberras (Caravaggio's Malta); Professor Alan Deidun (Pressures facing our Marine Protected Areas); and Architect Conrad Thake and Ms Janica Buhagiar (presenting their book *Ta' Braxia Cemetery*). This year's lectures were kickstarted by a lecture on Villa St Ignatius by Architect Edward Said, and a lecture on "Guarding against Contagion" by Dr Stephen Spiteri, in collaboration with the International Institute for Baroque Studies of the University of Malta.

Finally, the prize-giving ceremony of the XIII Annual Din l-Art Helwa Awards for Architectural Heritage was held last week at our premises, and the awards presented by Professor Alex Torpiano, the Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment and the President of the Kamra tal-Periti. Din l-Art Helwa thanks the members of the jury who this year were Dr Conrad Thake, from the Kamra tal-Periti, Dr Antonio Mollicone, from the University of Malta, Din l-Art Helwa Council Member Perit Joanna Spiteri Staines, and Perit David Pace. The chair of this competition, as in previous years, was Executive President Maria Grazia Cassar.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, on behalf of Council Members, I would like to thank all our DLH volunteers everywhere for the sterling work they have put in, giving up many hours of their personal time to maintain and keep our properties open for the public to enjoy. I feel it would not be untoward, however, to give a special mention to the volunteers of the St Agatha/Red Tower who have continued to achieve very impressive results, consistently reporting increased income which has become a very important contribution to our budget as our Treasurer will no doubt explain later.

A huge thank you also must be extended to our hard working dedicated office staff Rosanne Zerafa and Anne Marie Navarro assisted by Joe Chetcuti, Karen Galea, Rina Mamo and helpers Annie and Joe Tabone and John Gafà. Thanks also to George Camilleri who looks after our website and sends emails to all members; Lucio Mulé Stagno for looking after our ever growing FaceBook activity; Joe Azzopardi, our editor of *Vigilo* and Judith Falzon who assists with its proof reading; Jaime Borg Cardona for updating our members' database and finally Joe Busietta and Professor George Camilleri for keeping and maintaining all statistics and records.

Corporate Responsibility in Action during 2018

Martin Scicluna

Hon. Treasurer Din l-Art Helwa

Din l-Art Helwa is a volunteer-powered engine ably strengthened by a very small group of dedicated employees. The circa 100 volunteers manage our sites passionately and look after the thousands of visitors who support us by their presence at our sites and our activities. The people resource is a fundamental requirement for any NGO to be successful.

The financial side of things, however, is clearly also critical to success particularly where large projects are involved.

During 2018, we were supported by a number of corporates either via project sponsorship, or through annual membership or by attending and supporting our periodic fund-raising activities. These companies are therefore actively contributing in the defence, enhancement and restoration of Malta's natural and built heritage. Without the support of these corporate citizens, Din l-Art Helwa's work and mission would have been more challenging than it is.

The Executive President and the Council of Din l-Art Helwa wish to publicly recognise, especially in this last year celebrating the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the particular contribution and support of the HSBC Malta Foundation, the Malta Airport Foundation, PwC Malta and the Alfred Mizzi Foundation, in the challenging restoration projects of the White Tower (Armier), the Wied iz-Żurrieq Tower and the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Valletta.

In addition to these companies and Foundations, Din l-Art Helwa is fortunate to have the support, both moral and financial, of the many other corporate citizens who are listed on the following page.

Each donation is important no matter how large or how small.

We are also grateful to the numerous supporters listed hereunder who over the decades have made Din l-Art Helwa what it is today. It is Malta who has benefitted from your belief in our organisation.

THANK YOU

Air Malta plc, Allied Newspapers Ltd, Arriva Malta Ltd, Auto Sales Ltd, Aviaserve Ltd, Body Shop Malta, Central Bank of Malta, Central Cigarette Company Ltd, Computime Ltd, De la Rue Currency & Print Ltd, Deutsche Bank (Malta) Ltd, Enemalta Corporation, Environmental Landscapes Consortium, Evoke Gaming Ltd, Exalta Projects, Finance Malta, Forestals Ltd, General Workers Union, Generary Ltd, GlobeGround Malta, Gozo Channel Company Ltd, Grech & Co Ltd, GVC Support Services Ltd, Ignazio Anastasi Ltd, Infinitely Xara, Island Hotels Group Holdings plc., Joinwell Ltd, Kemmuna Ltd, M. Demajo Group, Malta Financial Services Authority, Malta Maritime Authority, Malta Planning Authority, Malta Union of Teachers, Marsovin Ltd, Megabyte Ltd, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Rural Affairs & Environment, Mizzi Holdings, Multi Packaging Ltd, Nexia BT, P. Toledo Ltd, Pisciculture Marine de Malte Ltd, Playmobil Malta Ltd, Round Table Malta, RS2 Software plc, Salvo Grima Group Ltd, The Francis Miller Foundation, Toly Products Ltd, Transport Malta, Union Haddiema Magħqudin, Vassallo Builders Group Ltd, Vodafone Malta Foundation.

AN APPEAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

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

- 1) We always need to bolster our Gozo and Comino team with new recruits. For logistical reasons, this would be particularly practical for those living in Gozo or in the north of Malta. Both Maltese and English speakers are needed and anybody interested in helping is requested to talk to Joe Attard on 7930 3558.
- 2) Because of an increase in the workload, our offices in Valletta need volunteers to help Rosanne Zerafa and Anne Marie Navarro with clerical work, answering the telephone, various odd jobs and errands.
- 3) Other volunteers are needed everywhere, so do please get in touch if you are willing to help.

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



Din I-Art Helwa Corporate Members & Sponsors 2016 – 2019

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Karmen Micallef Buhagiar
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Mr Heribert Grünert
Mr Peter Mamo and Family
Chevalier Joseph Micallef
Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Noll

Din I-Art Helwa

MAURICE CARUANA CURRAN

Guardian of Heritage and Justice



Liber Amicorum

MAURICE CARUANA CURRAN

Guardian of Heritage and Justice