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DIN L-ART HELWA

National Trust of Malta



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

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

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



Din l-Art Helwa

Din l-Art Helwa has reciprocal membership with:

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

The National Trust for Scotland

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The National Trust of Australia

*The Gelderland Trust for
Historic Houses*

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*Future for Religious Heritage
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FRONT COVER

*The Allegory of the Order of St John, Mattia Preti, Sarria Church, recently restored by Din l-Art Helwa.
Photo: Giuseppe Mantella*



BACK COVER

*Detail of ornamental stonework of prayer lodge, Ottoman Muslim Cemetery, Marsa, by Architect Emmanuele Luigi Galizia.
Photo: Conrad Thake*



An environment worth living in

Alex Torpiano

“Our country is going through very particular circumstances that deserve our full attention”. These are the words of the President of the Republic, during the Republic Day Honours Awards in December 2019. Our country, *din l-art helwa*, has been shaken to the core by the unravelling of the web of intrigue, fuelled by greed for money and power, which had reached the highest levels of authority. The silver lining to the whole sordid affair was the way civil society, more than any politicians, reacted – the way that normal people, of all ages and backgrounds, raised their voices to bring the situation to a head, and demand a different Malta. We trust that these voices will remain strong when Malta finally gets down to rewriting its Constitution in order to ensure that such things do not recur.

Does this have anything to do with our Din l-Art Helwa? Good governance, politics, power and money are inevitably linked to spatial development, and the quality of our natural and built environment. There is an obvious direct link between the socio-economic ambitions of an elected government and the mechanisms set up to achieve those objectives. In Malta, these mechanisms are, primarily, the Planning Authority, the Environment and Resources Authority, and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. One of the first acts of the 2013 administration was to amend the legislation regulating development, splitting planning from the environment – with the argument that, in this way, environmental protection would be stronger. This was accompanied by an explicit desire to facilitate the process of development proposal approvals – as if the success of an authority was to be measured by how quickly it came to a decision, rather than by the *quality* of its decisions. An authority was created that effectively changed the planning process, from the 1990s objective of balancing different demands on land use against the protection of the inevitably limited spatial resources of the island, into one which is *all about the rights of the land owner*. The process of planning approval, nowadays, is no longer about whether a particular development proposal is of benefit to the community, but whether there is any reason to limit the “intrinsic rights” of the land or property owner. Building development is an economic goal in itself rather than a means to achieve a better quality of life for all of us.

In October 2019, I was invited to a Workshop on “Baukultur” in Malta. *Baukultur* is often translated roughly into the *culture of building*. But it is actually much more – it is about considering *construction as culture*, and the shaping of our environment, built and unbuilt, as a **cultural act**. The term *Baukultur* is not an alternative word for *Architektur*, architecture, or even good architecture. It is not about beautiful buildings. It is about “every human activity that changes the built environment”. In the Davos Declaration, EU Ministers acknowledged that there was a “trend towards a loss of quality in both the built environment and open



landscapes” – a “trivialisation of construction”; “a lack of design values”; “a growth of faceless urban sprawl”.

Baukultur is not just about architects, but includes the roles of many parties, workers, public authorities, politicians, contractors, general public, etc. It is not limited to urban conservation areas, but extends to all our living environment, including suburban and rural areas, towns and villages, industrial zones, road infrastructure. It is about an *environment which is worth living in*. It is an approach which includes planning processes for building projects and infrastructures and open landscapes. It includes the process and detail of construction. It is about, the Declaration emphasises, “*prioritizing cultural values over short-term economic gain*.” In order to fulfill *Baukultur* objectives, it is necessary that, to the social, ecological and economic dimensions that we are, more or less, familiar with, we should add, and prioritise, an emotional and aesthetic dimension.

Baukultur affects EVERY activity which is proposed within the built and unbuilt environment, whether it is putting up electricity poles and billboards, or building roads, or bus stops. It means that whether the proposal fulfills development control or height limitations, or building regulation requirements or not, the *primary criterion* against which the proposal is assessed will be cultural, or aesthetic. One particularly important statement in the Davos Declaration is that *Baukultur* is about *an investment in the living space of the future*.

Of course, in Malta we are far from *Baukultur*. This does not mean that we do not have any beautiful buildings. But we certainly do not understand the construction process as a cultural act – although we do acknowledge that the buildings and urban spaces created by our forefathers now form the mainstay of our cultural tourism. Our planning and development control processes use the wrong model, because they are conceived as a series of regulations, against bullet point requirements.



Mrieħel bypass

This does not mean that Design Guidelines are not a useful tool. However, the text, or perhaps the interpretation of these “guidelines”, misses the main objective, which should be that every intervention to the built environment has to contribute to its visual order and delight which is fundamental to our well-being, but also to the legacy that we are *obliged* to bequeath our future generations. Let us have the courage to use the word “beautiful”, a word which is unfortunately missing in our planning rules. Last October, the United Kingdom published updated Design Guidelines – and the drive for these new guidelines was literally to put *beauty* in the heart of design.

These are some proposals I pushed forward:

- (a) The public sector has to lead by example. No public money should be spent on any project which impinges on the built environment, without its being deemed to satisfy much higher levels of cultural and aesthetic criteria. This approach includes the promotion of architecture design competitions for all projects funded by public money. It includes having the courage to take decisions which do not put “economy” at the top of the approval criteria. It also includes time for a proper interaction with the public, specifically to raise the awareness on the cultural and aesthetic value of the proposal.
- (b) The private sector has to commit to the design of, and investment in, the public realm within the wider context of their private projects – which are, after all, effectively allowed by the community, for the benefit of the community. An owner has no intrinsic rights to develop his property. This right is given to him by the community. The whole doctrine of “vested rights” embedded in our planning processes has to be qualified – the rights of the individual owner should always be subservient to the rights of the community, which is giving him development permission.
- (c) More radically, a change is required in our attitude towards the areas that lie outside established urban settlements, the areas which we, euphemistically, call ODZ. In truth, ODZ is full of development, from agriculture buildings, to roads, to electricity power cables, to fuel stations. These areas need to be “designed”. We do not need policies on what can be built in ODZ (such as, the Rural Policy); we need detailed landscape plans for our countryside. In the recent DLH submissions on the revision of the Rural Policy 2014, (*Times of Malta*, 22 November 2019), we insisted that a

successful rural policy should have the primary objective of protecting our countryside and its biodiversity, our agriculture, and especially our landscape. It is obvious and natural that some activities, beyond purely agricultural, may need to be accommodated outside the boundaries of the areas already designated for development. However, ANY proposals for development should demonstrate:

- (i) The absolute necessity of the proposed activity, and the impossibility of accommodating such an activity within the zones already defined for development;
- (ii) that the impact on landscape is minimised and mitigated.

For a successful rural policy to embrace sustainability principles, the primary concern has to be the *legacy for future generations*. The primary consideration must be the impact of any proposed development on landscape. Landscape planning is a primary tool for developing a rural policy on sustainable principles.

Effectively, what we are proposing is not simply about planning permits, but about a more radical transformation of our construction and building industry, a radical change in our spatial planning philosophy, so that it really works “in the public interest for the common good”. Our planning and regulatory model has to be redesigned from scratch.

In 2014, a prominent developer declared “once the government puts someone’s profits before the national interest, that is the beginning of the end”. In 2019, after an unprecedented five-year boom of ugliness, the same MDA President glibly declared that Malta was now paying the price for having allowed “personal greed to overcome prudence”. These statements explain why the country is, morally as well as physically, in the shape it is. They acknowledge that Malta’s spatial planning model has failed, since it has allowed “personal greed” to prevail – I would prefer to use the words “over the common good” – and has to change.

Civil society should take the opportunity offered, by the change in leadership in Castille, and at the head of the Planning Authority, as well as by the apparently emerging realisation that “greed” has driven development to the detriment of Malta’s citizens and visitors, to ensure this change. Din l-Art Helwa has made important proposals about how the protection of the natural and built environment for future generations could be entrenched in the Constitution. It will depend on us all to insist on the proper mechanisms.

The need to persevere has never been more critical

Tara Cassar

This year alone a team of Din l-Art Helwa Council members together with a group of dedicated students, young planners and associates, submitted over 300 objections to individual development applications being considered by the Planning Authority. The developments objected to are varied, ranging from applications for the demolition of stately heritage properties, proposals for mega-developments over archaeological remains, requests for concrete monstrosities over historic villas, the construction of seemingly innocuous storerooms in the remote countryside or the felling of mature trees to make way for more cars.

In many cases Din l-Art Helwa has taken on some of the biggest players in the construction industry, as in the obscene case of the db Towers in Pembroke. Din l-Art Helwa joined several NGOs in the ongoing campaign against the monster project, led by the residents of Pembroke together with Moviment Graffiti.

Following the failure of the majority of the members of the Planning Board to even acknowledge the serious concerns put forward by thousands of objectors, and the disappointing position taken by the Environment and Planning Tribunal that chose to only reduce the proposal imperceptibly, Din l-Art Helwa together with the appellants, determined to do all that was necessary, took the case to the Court of Appeal. In May of 2019, a decision was reached. Against all odds and disbelief, the appeal was upheld, and the planning application for the db Towers was revoked.

This case is far from over as developers behind the project have already resumed the process for re-applying. In the meantime, government agencies have also applied for a bombastic network of tunnels in Pembroke that, if realised, will lead to further heritage and environmental destruction in the environs. There is indeed a lot more work to be done.

This is not the only case where Din l-Art Helwa has found itself having to go to court to fight for the protection and preservation of our natural and built heritage. Other prominent cases include the Planning Authority's alarming treatment of the historic Villa St Ignatius in St Julian's as well as the Authority's flawed decision to permit the demolition of parts of the Sea Malta Building in Marsa, through a procedure legally reserved for (minor or temporary) urgent remedial works.

Another recent case that also ended up in court, concerns the outdoor extension of a catering establishment in Dwejra, Gozo. The application could seem rather trivial at first glance, however for those who understand the value of Dwejra, not only as a site of immense ecological and cultural heritage value but moreover, as a site forming part of our Dark Sky Heritage, the detrimental implications of the case become far more alarming. The case had first been refused by the Planning Commission in December 2017, only to be overturned by the Environment and Planning Tribunal in June 2019. The appellants had no other choice but to appeal



Photos by kind permission of Dr Joseph Caruana

to court. The Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the appealing NGOs and revoked the permit.

This is another case where Din l-Art Helwa collaborated with several other NGOs, including The Institute of Space Sciences and Astronomy, to reach our shared goal of safeguarding our heritage, not only by demanding it through campaigning, but attaining it through direct legal action.

Open spaces, green enclaves and mature gardens in village cores continue to be threatened through excessive development proposals. Over the past couple of months alone Din l-Art Helwa has worked to put a stop to several such developments that if realised would have obliterated heritage gardens and open spaces in a number of localities including Mosta, Lija, Naxxar, Żurriq and Żejtun.

There is also grave concern for the future state of the green enclaves, and effectively the integrity of the entire village core, of St Julian's. At present, there are at least four large-scale developments planned in a concentrated area which, if realised, would completely wipe out the quaintness of these historical and still largely authentic streetscapes. Amongst the pending applications is a megadevelopment for 62 residential units, office space and retail, intended to replace a green open space with frontage on Triq Sant'Elija and Telgħet Birkirkara. At such a mammoth scale, this application alone would devastate this urban conservation area.

Another application is that on Triq il-Karmnu where developers are seeking a permit for the complete demolition of the stately townhouse that was once the residence of Dr Censu

Tabone, the former president of Malta. The developer is also requesting the demolition of the only known open-air theatre in St Julian's, which is found in the garden of the property, that is itself proposed to be excavated – all this to make way for more apartments.

In addition to campaigning against this specific planning application that stands as a direct threat to our architectural and social heritage, Din l-Art Helwa has also filed a request for the immediate scheduling of the property itself, to ensure it is given the highest level of protection legally available, and therefore truly safeguarded for future generations.

Another ongoing struggle is that against the harrowing proposal of an 11-storey hotel planned in the historical grounds of Villa Ciantar in Pietà. Din l-Art Helwa vehemently opposed the application and supported the efforts of the Friends of Villa Frere who led a vociferous campaign against the development. If realised, the majestic gardens of Villa Frere, restored through endless hours of labour and love, would be cast in a dark shadow by this 11-storey structure which will be in part replacing the mature (and itself majestic) sister garden of Villa Ciantar. At the time of writing of this article, a decision on this frightful case had not yet been taken. Din l-Art Helwa will continue working, and will support all efforts, to stop this monstrosity from eradicating our shared cultural heritage.

For many years Sliema seemed to be the prime target of much of the construction industry's worst exponents. Decades of abusive decisions coupled with a disregard for the protection of our built heritage, in favour of what was heralded as economic prosperity (and still is), led to large portions of this once elegant town being marred by ugliness. Today, the extent of the destruction seems to have no bounds as the failed format once reserved for the North Harbour region of the island is being applied to all of Malta and has even made its way to Gozo.

Dozens upon dozens of vernacular properties with traditional stone slab (*xorok*) ceilings, *kileb* and other characteristic features are being demolished at an unprecedented rate. These properties that together are the crux of Gozo's built heritage, are being replaced with dull disparate blocks, often five storeys high, breaking the once idyllic low-lying skyline. Din l-Art Helwa continues to fight these applications, and campaign for better policies that would ensure Gozo is enabled to grow sustainably without its most meritable attributes being lost in the process.

There is a real need to persevere through this dark chapter in the history of Malta's built and natural environment. Din l-Art Helwa continues to be at the forefront of these efforts working closely with other NGOs, together exemplifying that through constructive collaboration and the pooling of our expertise, not only can we fight this, but we can win.



Open air theatre

POSTSCRIPT

The application for the development of the historic gardens of Villa Ciantar at Pietà was turned down at the end of January. Further encouraging news was the conferment in early February of Grade 1 status on the St Julian's site.

Perit Tara Cassar is an architect focusing on planning policies and environmental issues, working with residents groups and eNGOs, and also forms part of Din l-Art Helwa's Heritage and Environmental Protection team.

A Twisted Tale of Two Houses

Alex Torpiano

This is the story of two late 19th/early 20th century, Grade 2 scheduled, houses located within the St Julian's Urban Conservation Area, and abutting a "safeguarded area of natural coastline", (North Harbours Local Plan policy, NHCV03). As Preface, in 2014, the redevelopment of the interior of the smaller house is proposed behind the retained ca. 5.2m façade. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage observes that the site possibly overlapped the 18th century St Julian's Entrenchment, and urges careful archaeological monitoring during the work. In the first instance, the proposal is recommended for refusal, because the back elevation was not considered acceptable in the context of the "short and long distance views of the UCA". The EPC does not agree, and approves the application – no mention of the possible overlap with the St Julian's Entrenchment appears in six pages of conditions listed in the permit.

lower storeys are tucked in behind an existing seaward wall (part of the enceinte?), which is proposed to be retained. The three upper levels in the wings of the broadly U-shaped plan of the original building were stepped backward on every floor; the main building volume at the top was at ca. 17m from the forward edge of the same seaward wall. The proposal pushes the building line seawards by ca. 16m, so that, instead of a terraced volume, a "solid" block, ca. 27m deep, is proposed, with, additionally, ca. 3.5m deep terraces, at each level, projecting beyond the official building alignment.

After some timid observations from the Design Advisory Committee on the architectural treatment of the seaward façade, and from the SCH on the penthouse level, that extends beyond the height of the original building, the proposal is recommended for approval. The case report glibly highlights SPED objectives –

for example, the presumption against demolition of buildings within UCAs, or the obligation to improve the townscape and enhance the "character and amenity" of the area – but avoids *any* evaluation against these objectives. Instead of a Grade 2 building restructured within its original envelope, the net result is a crude cuboid of apartments, "hidden" behind the original façade. The permit conditions emphasise the preservation of the original patina and lichen growth, and the pointing on the façade; however, apparently, no one points out that the whole, scheduled, built volume, located at the water's edge, is being radically transformed.

In Act 2, in 2017, another application is submitted, now covering both sites. The proposal again comprises one car-park level and two office levels below the street – with some adjustments to the slab levels, and a complete removal of the original seaward wall – and five floors above the

street, (the lowest for offices, under four residential floors). The original SCH objections, on the "negative impact on views across the bay" are easily "resolved" by reducing the internal height of each floor, so that the overall building lies within the height of the facade; whilst the original objection of the DAC, that the proposal jarred "with the setting of the scheduled buildings",



Full view of a monstrous development totally ruining Balluta Bay

In Act 1 of the story, in 2016, it is proposed to demolish the interior of the bigger three-storey house, whilst retaining the 17.5m façade, and to replace the interior with four storeys of apartments above street level (that is, within the same height as the façade). Three storeys below street level are proposed, the upper two as offices, and the lower one as a car-park. These



Side view

somehow disappears. Din l-Art Helwa's objection, that the building volume extended beyond the adjacent properties, is dealt simply by the observation that the DAC and the SCH had no objection to the proposal – as if the Directorate has no remit to *itself* evaluate any proposal against the same policies quoted in its report; for example, that, according to the Structure Plan, alterations to the interiors of Grade 2 buildings would be allowed only “if proposed to be carried out sensitively and with least detriment to character and *architectural homogeneity of the building*”.

Act 3 is work in progress, even whilst the building is being constructed. A fresh application, in 2018, refers, originally, to the conversion of the whole block into a hotel. At a certain stage, the application changes into a proposal to convert all levels into offices, now eight storeys overlying a basement carpark. The extra bit at the top, which had been removed to get the original permit, reappears, with no objection from the SCH. The current recommendation is for a refusal, not least because the proposal for 4500sq.m. of offices exceeds the Local Plan limit, (of 75sq.m.!) The lower level projecting balconies are also, belatedly, deemed to impact the visual integrity of the area. The determination of the application would conclude Act 3. Further developments of the story are not excluded.

If the story sounds convoluted, it is because it really is. The moral, however, is very clear. If, dear readers, you wish to consume a big salami, you need to slice it into bite-sized portions. You might still get visual indigestion, but you would profit nonetheless. This is how to obtain a permit for a nine-storey block, right at the water's edge, effectively replacing two, Grade 2 scheduled, houses, within a UCA, and abutting a safeguarded area of natural coastline!

POSTSCRIPT

An attempt to increase office space in an eight-storey block which has deleteriously jutted out onto Balluta Bay was turned down by the Planning Authority's planning commission on 3 October 2019.

Professor Alex Torpiano is the Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa and the Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of Malta

This article was first published as A Convoluted Story in the Times of Malta on 21 August 2019

Aesthetics

Stanley Farrugia Randon



Aesthetics is defined as 'a set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty'. It could be the appreciation of a work of art or music, but also of a building, landscape or streetscape. The word *helwa* in the first few words of Malta's national anthem is referring to the beauty of the Maltese Islands and was the inspiration for the late Judge Maurice Caruana Curran who in 1965 founded the non-governmental organisation Din l-Art Helwa together with my great-uncle Dr Godfrey Randon.

The perception of beauty is subjective and a question of taste. Aesthetics is considered to be a branch of philosophy and is a study of subjective and sensori-emotional judgements. Although subjective, the perception of beauty is generally very similar among people with similar social, cultural and educational background. In such cases the stimulation of the senses is similar and leads to similar reactions. Although aesthetics may be subjective we can mention a number of local examples about which most people are in agreement.

Many would think that a countryside chapel or a Maltese dry hut (*girna*) are aesthetically pleasing and that they integrate well with their surrounding. Most would also think that a garage-like structure built of cement would not be aesthetically pleasing in the same context. A row of vernacular buildings, as simple as they

may look, are more aesthetically pleasing to the eye than a series of lifeless concrete apartments of different styles and height. Similarly, a road with houses adorned with Maltese balconies and painted wooden doors looks more attractive than one with houses which have balconies in different materials, shapes and colours. Likewise sensori-emotional stimuli are more positive if one had to walk along a promenade and enjoy unobstructed sea views rather than having to walk along a series of permanent lidos obstructing the views and access to the foreshore. A valley which has been transformed into a road with adjacent showrooms is not as aesthetically pleasing as one which is still in its natural state. Likewise a ridge is spoilt if buildings are erected on it.

Since independence in 1964 Malta has undergone a rapid transformation which was essential for the growth of industries and to render the islands as economically independent as possible. Recently our islands experienced another wave of transformation with planning applications on the rise. Unfortunately this transformation occurred with little planning and with very little attention to aesthetics. Most people would agree on what is aesthetically pleasing and what is not. Proof of this is when one looks at photos or videos where Malta is promoted as a tourist destination and where only aesthetically pleasing views of landscapes and streetscapes are shown.



Although it should be the responsibility of the architect and developer to see that a new building integrates well within its surrounding, it is the planner who has to conserve the characteristics of the surroundings to render the place aesthetically acceptable. If new policies are causing the destruction of houses and rebuilding of apartments, the least the planner could do is to set a list of requirements which would render the roadscape more pleasing to the eyes.

Unfortunately the physical, cultural and social environment plays little part in planning and not much attention is given to the finishings and materials used. Consequently the end result is a hotchpotch of haphazardly built constructions which give no uniformity to the street. Homes are destroyed to be replaced with lifeless apartments. Our villages are being transformed into concrete matchboxes. An obvious example is Sliema where development has meant that the aesthetically pleasing views from Valletta have been partly ruined. This has occurred due to a lack of sensitivity towards our natural and built environment. Policies issued under different governments allowing more floors to be built in conjunction with an uncontrolled growth in population led to a knee-jerk reaction by many to destroy their home and replace it by concrete structures. Lack of proper policies is also

leading to the building of high-rise complexes. These factors are also leading to an increased pressure to build in Outside Development Zones and around Urban Conservation Areas. All these factors have changed the aesthetics of our rural and urban environment. So why are we destroying all that is part of our environmental identity? It is all a question of greed. Economic interests are put before aesthetics and common sense.

An aesthetics board used to exist in the 1970s but it was removed. Din l-Art Helwa had objected to this and thinks that it should form an integral part in the evaluation of every application. MEPA has a checklist of policies and if these are ticked then the building of the site is approved. But there is much more to this. Every building should be evaluated in its context and developer and architect should see that these requirements form an integral part of the application. A Design Advisory Committee does exist but I believe with limited power to change planning from its roots. It is of little use to comment on façade treatment without changing the planning rules beforehand.

It is about time that aesthetics is considered by developer, architect and planner. When is this going to happen? Is it too late? Is everything already lost?

Outrage

Conrad Thake

Proposed Service Garage Complex next to the Ottoman Muslim Cemetery, Marsa

During the past few years the Turkish government had embarked on an ambitious project to restore the Ottoman Muslim Cemetery at Marsa. The façade was recently restored to its original splendour and works started on the prayer lodge within. The cemetery is undoubtedly a rare nineteenth-century architectural gem of so-called Orientalist architecture or to be more precise Neo-Ottoman architecture. Its patron was the Sultan Abdülaziz I, an enlightened and humanist Ottoman leader who had actively sought rapprochement with the Western powers. The Maltese architect Emmanuele Luigi Galizia was commissioned to design the cemetery following his previous endeavours at Ta' Braxia and the Addolorata cemetery.

The Ottoman Muslim cemetery was constructed and completed in 1873-74. Galizia was rewarded for his efforts by the Sultan bestowing upon him the prestigious Order of the Medjidie (fourth class). The Ottoman patronage of an overtly exotic and Orientalist building complex, "exported" to a British colonial outpost in the Mediterranean, gave rise to a series of political and ideological issues. These themes together with a comprehensive historical overview and photographic documentation of the cemetery are explored in my book *The Ottoman Muslim Cemetery in Malta*, published in 2016.

Some three years ago whilst restoration works were still at the initial stages, a planning application was submitted by a third-party proposing the construction of a petrol station/car wash facility and ancillary facilities on a currently vacant and derelict land immediately adjoining the cemetery. There was a public outcry and the planning application was consigned to limbo as it was not pursued further, or so it seemed. However, recently a new outline planning application (reference PA 6033/19) was submitted to the Planning Authority by the same applicant proposing this time the 'construction of an industrial garage complex (Class 5A and Class 6A)' on the same site. The preliminary plans submitted indicate some 29 service garages distributed over a three-storey high building complex which if approved would physically overshadow the cemetery. Once again various local NGOs and individuals have made their voices heard and submitted their objections and representations to the



Muslim cemetery, Marsa, Malta, c. 1880s
(Photo: Richard Ellis, courtesy of the RIBApix Collection)



Girolamo Gianni, "Martyrs' Cemetery in Malta," 1874
Oil painting. Istanbul, Harbiye Military Museum
(Photo: courtesy of the Harbiye Military Museum)



Carte de visite of Sultan Abdülaziz I (r. 1830–76), albumen print by J. Cook, (London, 1867) (Photo: private collection of Conrad Thake)



The architect Emmanuele Luigi Galizia (1830–1906) in ceremonial uniform during his tenure as Superintendent of Public Works, between 1880 and 1888 (Photo: courtesy of the Richard Ellis Archive – Malta)



Prayer lodge at the back of the cemetery, c. 1880 (Photo credit: Mr Francis Galea Naudi)

Planning Authority against the proposed development. These objections were not only reported in the local press but even abroad such as in the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet Daily News*, the Istanbul newspaper *Sabah* and the online BBC News website. What is currently being proposed in the Outline Planning application is nothing short of barbaric, as if approved the proposed development would totally obliterate the vistas of the cemetery from afar. The project would not only have a very negative visual effect on the cemetery complex as it would compromise the monumental scale of the complex, but also the intended industrial uses are totally incompatible with (and also disrespectful), to the adjoining Muslim and Jewish cemetery next to it.

The local Turkish authorities through their local architect-in-charge of the restoration project have also registered their objection to the proposed development and in their written submission stated that ‘previous incidents have demonstrated the incompatibility of industrial activity in the proximity of this historical site.’ The cemetery is a rare and sublime example of Neo-Ottoman architecture in the island. It is imperative that its setting and surrounding context be safeguarded. Various local organizations and authorities including *Din l-Art Helwa*, *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* and the Marsa Local Council have registered their strong objections to the development to the project.

The Muslim cemetery is a scheduled Grade 1 historical monument of major importance not only in terms of architecture but as an integral part of our cultural heritage. One hopes that the countless appeals do not fall on deaf ears and that reason and the respect of our heritage will prevail.



*The main entrance doorway to the Muslim cemetery
(Photo: Conrad Thake)*

POSTSCRIPT

Due to the relentless and sustained public pressure objecting to this inappropriate and insensitive development from various NGOs, including Din l-Art Helwa, Local Councils, the Turkish Embassy and various individuals, the planning application was withdrawn. We shall remain vigilant. – The Editors



*The main jali screen window that forms part of the front façade
(Photo: Conrad Thake)*



*Detail of minaret-like corner towers
(Photo: Conrad Thake)*

Professor Conrad Thake is an architect and professor in the Art and History of Art department, University of Malta.

Any inquiries regarding the book *The Ottoman Muslim Cemetery in Malta* should be addressed to the author via email: cthake@gmail.com

Restoration Report June - December 2019

Stanley Farrugia Randon



The new gate will be painted after the galvanised coating becomes matt

The gateway to the Annunciation Chapel at Ħal Millieri

It is very easy for the visitor to miss the entrance to the Annunciation Chapel as it is separated from the road by a gateway which leads to a pathway. The gateway to the chapel was formerly the doorway of St Michael's chapel which stood next to the Chapel of St John Evangelist close by. Before being utilised as the portal of St Michael's chapel, that gateway had originally been built to serve as one of the portals of the new transept arms which had been added to the old parish church of Żurrieq in the 1580s. It is in the Renaissance style. The archway consists of a semi-circular moulded arch resting on side pilasters with rare Melitan mouldings. The arch is adorned by a carved leaf keystone. The arched doorway is accentuated by plain rectangular bas relief side pilasters with Doric capitals which support a cornice towering above the arched doorway with a restrained imposition. An eastern cross is located at the centre, on the topmost level of the archway. It is raised on a circular, flat-topped coned base that stands on a rectangular pedestal. When the old parish church of Żurrieq and its newly added transept arms were demolished in the 1640s to make way for the new parish church, the two portals were preserved and transported to Ħal Millieri where the small country churches of St John Evangelist and St Michael were being rebuilt.

The metal gate was fitted around 50 years ago but was not galvanised and throughout the years it received a number of coats of paint. However it was rusting rapidly and started damaging the stonework to which it was attached. The original idea was to sandblast it and galvanise it but it was beyond repair and its increasing weight was further damaging the stones. It was therefore decided to replace it with a galvanised gate which is lighter and has stainless steel fittings. This has now been installed and is more appropriate.



St Roque Chapel facades being restored

St Roque Chapel

On 27 April 1980 the Ecclesiastical Authorities transferred this chapel to Din l-Art Ħelwa by signing a deed on the parvis of the chapel. Our non-governmental organisation had proved itself effective and professional when it was entrusted with the safeguarding of the Ħal Millieri and Bir Miftuħ chapels ten years earlier and it was handed over the St Roque chapel, in Trust, for 150 years.

The chapel was restored and in 1989 was opened as a museum that shows the works of prominent Żebbuġ residents. Dr Michael Bonnici, a volunteer with Din l-Art Ħelwa and a resident of Żebbuġ, had looked after the chapel till his demise in 2019 and curated its collection of Żebbuġ memorabilia. His grandson, Matthew Axisa, is now looking after the chapel and joined the restoration team to point the external façades of the chapel. Indeed this was the last wish of his grandfather who had contacted us just a couple of months before his demise to have a look at its exterior. Works included the removal of loose surface applications given in the past, re-pointing of the mortar joints using a hydraulic mortar and filling of alveolar crevices where needed. The open mortar joints around the church parvis were also pointed. Work was entrusted to Heritage ResCo. This restoration was long due and at the same time it was the best tribute Din l-Art Ħelwa could give to its former curator.

The White Tower

Following the completion of the interior and exterior stonework of the tower in 2019, we started concentrating on the external apertures. These were nearly all missing due to years of neglect by the authorities. A number of metal and wooden doors and windows had to be ordered. We opted for secure sturdy metal doors for the apertures on the ground floor to render the place more secure, and CCTV cameras and a burglar alarm system were installed.

After the necessary permits were obtained, a toilet was constructed in the yard of the tower and the necessary measures taken to make it accessible to people in wheelchairs. Toilets were installed by the British in the upper floors but there were no sanitary facilities on the ground floor. Great care was invested to make the multimedia room in the blockhouse accessible to people with special needs and so it was necessary to provide sanitary facilities in the lower floor. The toilet drains will now have to be connected to the cesspit of the British period situation in the now restored ditch.

Lighting as well as plumbing had to be planned before the laying of the concrete flooring of the yard and roof. The flooring of the yard which was done in concrete probably during the British period was damaged mainly by stones falling on it when the tower was abandoned. The well in the yard was also cleaned, the wellhead restored and a metal trapdoor fixed. This well, which is pear shaped, will be filled with potable water and chlorinated to assure that it is safe at least to be used for showering purposes. A very small triangular room close by, which was used as a shower room in the past, will be used as a pump room. Unfortunately there is no access to any legal source of Government water in the vicinity.



The White Tower

The roofs of the room which was used as a kitchen as well as the pump room were damaged and their wooden beams had to be changed. Some stone slabs were also damaged and had to be changed. The roofing in the yard between the blockhouse and the kitchen (which was constructed after the Knights' period) also had to be restored as it had partly collapsed. This part offers shade and protection from the rain for people who walk from the kitchen to the blockhouse or vice versa.

Din l-Art Helwa acknowledges the support of the principal lead sponsor namely HSBC Malta Foundation and corporate sponsor Atlas Insurance PCCLtd, as well as the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations, the Ministry for Finance and National Lotteries Good Causes Fund and the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change whose generosity is making this challenging restoration possible.

Delimara Lighthouse

The Delimara Lighthouse was commissioned by Governor More O'Ferrall in 1850 but its construction started around 1854. In fact a plan of the site that had to be acquired for the construction of this lighthouse is dated 1854. It was functional by 1855 and is the only lighthouse in Malta to be equipped with Fresnel Lenses.

By summer 2005, the lighthouse had not been in use for several years and was facing a state of abandonment. Din l-Art Helwa approached the then Malta Maritime Authority, now Transport Malta, and offered to manage and restore it. This request was met with approval and the lighthouse was officially devolved to the organisation soon after and restoration commenced. Ten years have passed since this lighthouse tower was restored. Since then the pointing, plastering and paint layer underwent deterioration. Reasons for this include the strong winds prevailing in the area, the close proximity to the sea and exposure to sea spray, and the constant changes in temperature leading to expansion and contraction of the fabric as well as wet-dry cycles of water contaminated with salt.

GAL XLOKK Foundation Funds

Din l-Art Helwa applied for GAL XLOKK Foundation Funds Measure 1 which are funds accessible to NGOs operating in the Southern Region of Malta for the restoration of cultural assets. The GAL XLOKK Foundation is one of the Local Action Groups which has been chosen to implement the LEADER programme for Malta (2014-2020) in the south-east territory of the Maltese Islands. The aim of the Foundation is to help improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in the south-east rural areas in Malta. The Foundation found the restoration of the maritime painting scheme of the Delimara Lighthouse Tower to be worthy of an award. The restoration will commence when contractors are commissioned.

Bir Miftuħ Church – provision of chairs, projector and amplification equipment.

Another useful Fund was won through the GAL XLOKK Foundation Measure 2 for the upgrading of cultural facilities in the South. This is allowing us to provide 120 theatre chairs for the Church of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuħ which will prove to be very useful during events in the church. An outdoor projector and amplification will also permit us to hold outside events in the chapel grounds during the summer months and encourage the local community and Parish of Gudja to hold further activities.

The Red Tower/Comino Battery/Dwejra Tower

Din l-Art Helwa has been awarded a grant under the European Regional Development Fund within Operational Programme I for the 2014-2020 programming period for the restoration of three historical military structures. The Product Development Directorate within the Malta Tourism Authority is providing the necessary co-financing required for this project as well as valuable assistance to Din l-Art Helwa in the implementation process. The project, referred to as the Northern Coastal Watch, consists of the restoration of three historical coastal forts situated along the Northern coast of the Maltese Islands – the Red Tower of Mellieħa, Santa Marija Battery on Comino, and Dwejra Tower in Gozo. The works on St Agatha’s, or the Red Tower, are nearing completion, with the interior completed and re-opened to visitors.

After studying different methodologies and materials, work on the external walls started at a steady pace, using an interesting “fresco” technique, which is time consuming and very dependent on the proper weather conditions.

The restoration of the Comino Battery has been completed, and included the interiors of the blockhouse, as well as the battery walls which had suffered a lot of deterioration due to its proximity to the sea. Dwejra Tower will follow in 2020 and the project will also see the much-needed restoration of both the interior and exterior fabric of the tower.



Red Tower interior



Red Tower façade under restoration

The Msida Bastion Cemetery Garden of Rest

Towards the end of November 2019, Din l-Art Helwa proceeded with the refurbishment of the entrance of the Msida Bastion Historic Garden. Two rows of tiles and several layers of paint which were encouraging rising humidity on the wall were removed. The roof was left painted in white but the walls were re-pointed in hydraulic lime. This renovation now offers a better place for our volunteers at the cemetery to welcome their visitors.



Entrance of the Msida Bastion Cemetery Garden of Rest after intervention

The Din l-Art Helwa Restoration and Maintenance Committee is composed of Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar, Mr Josie Ellul Mercer and myself while Mrs Simone Mizzi worked to win the GAL XLOKK Funds. We welcome all the help, advice and encouragement of the rest of the Council.

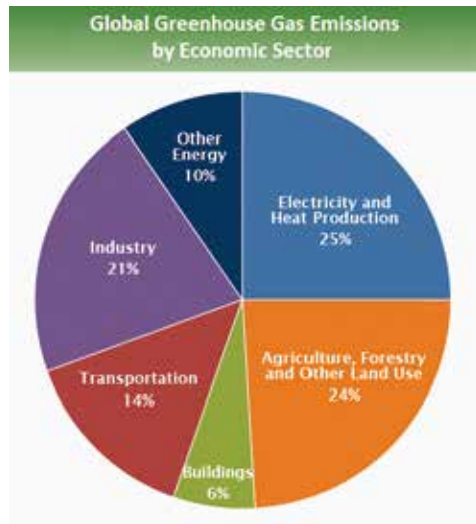
Dr Stanley Farrugia Randon is a Council member of Din l-Art Helwa

What you can do for Climate Change

George Camilleri

“... there is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that climate is changing and that these changes are in large part caused by human activities”

—United States National Research Council



1. **Use less electricity.** The single highest contributor to climate change is the burning of fossil fuels to produce electricity. Reduce your domestic consumption of electricity by switching to energy saving lightbulbs, turn off appliances when they are not being used, do not over cool or overheat your home, install alternative energy technologies.
2. **Travel responsibly.** SUVs were the second largest contributor to the increase in global carbon emissions from 2010 to 2018. Get rid of your SUV, you really don't need all that power and space. Buy a smaller, more energy efficient car or go electric. If you're stopped for more than 10 seconds (unless you're in traffic), don't idle. Idling is bad for your car, uses fuel, and contributes to air pollution. Use public transport when possible.
3. **Eat less red meat.** Cattle are the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Raising cattle and sheep creates vast amounts of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Cutting out meat, or even reducing consumption and favouring fish and chicken, can seriously save carbon. Studies suggest merely swapping red meat and dairy for a more balanced diet with fish, eggs, and fowl makes a big difference.
4. **Insulate your home.** Well insulated houses use less energy to keep them warm in winter and cool in summer. This means that less carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere from burning of fossil fuels in power stations.
5. **Have fewer children.** Having fewer children is considered the optimum way of reducing our carbon footprint because of the impact of a growing population on a world already using natural resources faster than they can be replaced. Having one fewer child is possibly the most effective step a person in a developed country can take to reduce their carbon footprint.
6. **Renovate an old home.** Don't buy a new home; renovate an old one. Inefficient existing buildings are one of the world's biggest energy problems; the best place to start making a difference is at home. Think double glazed draft proof apertures, insulated floors, walls and ceilings, trees for shade to reduce summer glare, insulated hot water pipes, LED smart lighting, solar water heating and photovoltaic electricity generation.
7. **Reduce food waste.** Whether it's left on your plate or rotting in your fridge, wasted food is a big problem but small changes to your routine can make a big difference. When possible don't throw out your food. It contributes to climate change because it goes to landfill and produces methane, another greenhouse gas. At the same time, you are wasting the water used to grow it. Buy less so that nothing rots and goes to waste. Store Food Correctly. Potatoes, tomatoes, garlic, cucumbers and onions should never be refrigerated.
8. **Wash clothes in cold water.** Many people still wash their laundry in warm water, which costs more money and takes a toll on the environment. Approximately 75 percent of the total energy use and greenhouse-gas emissions produced by a single load of laundry come from warming the water itself. Studies have shown that washing in cold water is just as effective as using warm.
9. **Use less plastic.** Nearly all plastic – 99% – is made from fossil fuels which release CO₂ during production. Plastic bags, packaging and single use plastics constitute the bulk of the problem. Avoid disposable single use plastic articles. Plastic bags are incredibly destructive to the environment: they take hundreds of years to break down, contaminate soil and waterways, and cause widespread marine animal deaths. Switch to reusable bags and use them consistently. Use and re-use your own shopping bags.
10. **Plant a tree.** Shade, serenity, sustainability – trees add so much to the urban landscape and ask so little. They absorb and store the carbon dioxide emissions that are driving global heating.

The Landscaping Project and Regeneration of the garigue around Ta' Xutu Tower

Maria Grazia Cassar

One only has to look at photos of the surroundings of Ta' Xutu and compare them to what it looks like now, to appreciate the extent of this landscaping and regeneration project. Whilst in the final phases of the restoration of the tower itself, the Malta Airport Foundation, sponsors of the project, insisted that it did not make sense to do one without the other. Then Executive President, Simone Mizzi, mobilised the Environment and Resources Authority, under the watch of Perit Ruben Abela, to share their opinions as to what should be achieved by such a project. A meeting was called on site and Professor Ruben Paul Borg was asked to assist in the design and implementation of this project. The objective was clear – the area behind the tower, which had evolved into an impromptu car park, was to be brought back to the rock-face and the garigue helped to regenerate. A large spectator stand which had been built in the 1990s to complement a now defunct clay pigeon shooting range was also to go.

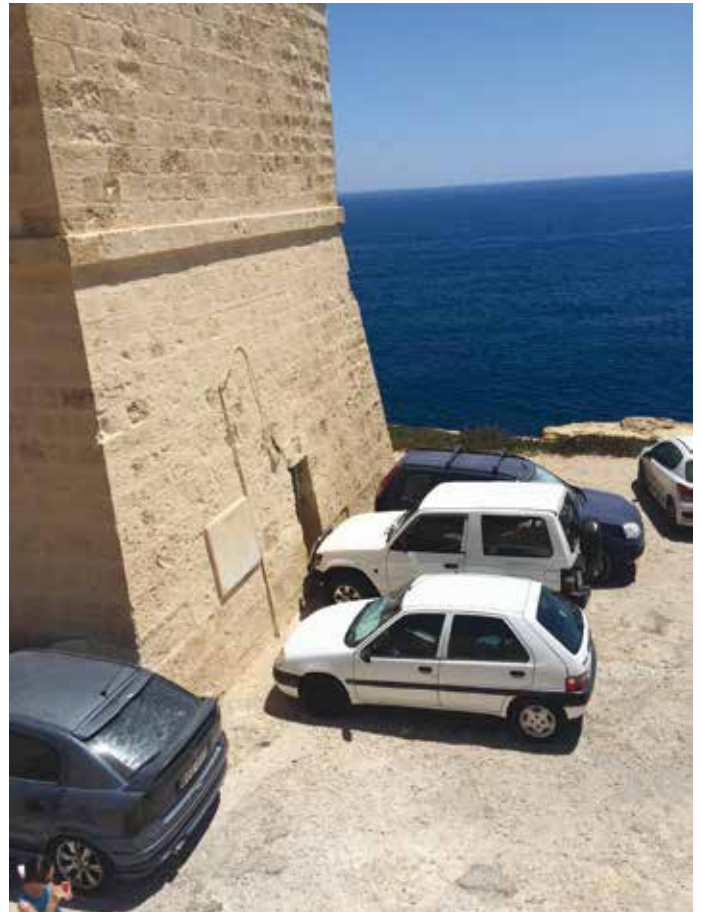
The architect's vision was to preserve as much as possible the natural aspect of the whole site, whilst providing a welcoming space for visitors to the tower and the area. The staircase which

joined the road to the tower was replaced by a ramp which is in conformity with all accessibility requirements, and while entry to vehicles was restricted by bollards, a gentle slope now leads visitors to the esplanade in front of the tower. This was paved with an exposed aggregate concrete which harmonises with the rocks around the tower. Informally placed cubes out of the same material provide seating, while echoing the rocky outcrops in design. Fissures of soil for the planting of indigenous plants were created along the ramps. The Torri Ta' Xutu volunteers lent a hand in planting the many varieties, some of which were kindly donated by Il-Majjistral Nature Park. These were *fringed rue (flejġel)*, *caper plant*, *lentisk*, *widnet il-baħar*, *golden samphire* and *sempreviva t'Għawdex*. They also patiently watered the plants throughout the Summer months, ensuring their survival.

The pockets of soil which were exposed in the rockface were left to regenerate naturally, which will take a few years. The beauty of the rock face, however, needs no embellishment, and it is with great satisfaction that Din l-Art Helwa can say that it has given back to nature a sizeable area which had been subjected to man-made disturbance. A really exciting moment



The dismal state of the surroundings before restoration



Cars parked against the tower walls



Date which was discovered under the rubble



The hand-cleaned rocky surface, with soil pockets behind the tower.

was the discovery of the date 1856 • 12, carved deep into the rockface at the back of the tower. Prof. Borg pointed out that this was the date that a severe earthquake in December 1856 had destroyed what was left of the chapel on Filfla. This date had been buried under tons of material for many years. Another exciting discovery was an underground chamber, which is still to be explored, under the surveillance of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. That, however, is another project in its own right.

The tower restoration and the landscaping was inaugurated by the Malta Airport Foundation on 10 July 2019.

XIV Din l-Art Helwa Awards for Architectural Heritage

Din l-Art Helwa announced the winners of its 2019 Architectural Heritage Awards, now in its 14th Edition since its inception in 2005. Maria Grazia Cassar, immediate past president of Din l-Art Helwa and chairperson of the Awards Jury Panel, opened the ceremony, together with Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, stating that the *raison d'être* of this annual competition was to highlight and reward projects which, in the opinion of the judges, made an outstanding and significant contribution to architectural excellence in a Maltese context, with a focus on regeneration, re-use and conservation. Since 2005, Din l-Art Helwa has been pleased to acknowledge no less than 80 projects as winners through the Awards, and this competition, held with the collaboration of the Kamra tal-Periti, has indeed contributed to the positive appreciation of the value of Malta's built heritage. The Jury Panel was made up of Professor Conrad Thake, representing the Kamra tal-Periti, Professor Anthony Mollicone from the University of Malta and Din l-Art Helwa Council Member, Perit Joanna Spiteri Staines.

Within the Category for the Rehabilitation and Re-Use of Buildings, the judges were unanimous in their decision to award the *Prix d'Honneur* to Domus Zamittello. This challenging project saw the conversion of a palatial Valletta house into a luxury boutique hotel over the course of no less than 15 years, when parts of the original property were re-acquired and re-integrated into the building, thus reversing the fragmentation that had occurred in the past. This allowed for the rehabilitation of the palazzo as a whole, including all the façades, which have contributed towards the urban renewal of its surroundings. What struck the jury most of all was the fact that despite catering for a new use of the building, the conservation of the original throughout was a top priority. This brought to light the beauty of the palazzo's architecture, with its 18th century details, which can today be enjoyed and appreciated once more by all. The meticulous restoration of the painted walls and wooden ceiling of the *gran salone* was truly commendable, and it is hoped that other projects of regeneration and re-use, especially in Valletta, will follow the example set by Domus Zamittello. Perit Dr Edwin Mintoff, representing Edwin Mintoff Architects entrusted with the project, received the *Prix d'Honneur* for the Rehabilitation and Re-Use of Buildings.



*Domus Zamittello, Valletta, Winner of the
Prix d'Honneur for Rehabilitation and Re-Use*



*Tigné Garden Battery winner of a DLH Diploma for
conservation and restoration*

In the Category for a Restoration and Conservation Project, two Diplomas were awarded: the first was for the commendable and timely restoration of The Garden Battery, Tigné by MIDI Plc. This was nothing short of a life-saving operation, which literally brought a long-forgotten and partly buried fortification to see the light of day once more. Intense development had totally engulfed this military heritage, but the jury felt that a diploma was due for the efforts to preserve what was left of the military complex, carried out with sensitivity and clarity of direction. It was hoped that all the military structures in the area would get the treatment they deserved and would serve not only as a reminder of the not-so-distant past, but would enhance the architecture that would surround them in the future. Perit Ivan Piccinino received the Diploma on behalf of MIDI Plc.

The second Diploma in the same Category was awarded for the conservation and restoration of No 34, Main Street, Lija, a private residence. The exquisitely sculptured balcony and details which adorn the building necessitated a very skilful intervention to save the remaining original fabric and restore the legibility of what was unfortunately lost due to extreme deterioration and decay. Speaking on behalf of the jury, Ms Cassar said that the lengths that private homeowners go through to preserve the heritage of which they are custodians is indeed worthy of recognition. Perit Edward Said, on behalf of Architecture XV Ltd, received the Diploma for the conservation of 34 Main Street, Lija.



No 34 Main Street, Lija, winner of a DLH Diploma for Restoration and Conservation



The Grand Masters' Crypt at St John's Co-Cathedral Winner of the Din l-Art Helwa Prix d'Honneur in the category Restoration and Conservation

The Prix d'Honneur in this Category for Restoration and Conservation was awarded by the jury to the "Installation of an Environmental Control System for the Conservation of The Grand Masters' Crypt at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta". This complex and delicate project was necessary to provide the required micro-climatic environment in the

newly restored Grand Masters' Crypt, as determined by the studies carried out by the Courtauld Institute of London, in order to slow down the deterioration of the fresco paintings in the Crypt. The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, led by Curator Dr Cynthia de Giorgio, embarked on a two-year study-phase, together with the architects and with the involvement of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, to determine the best design options for this critical installation, and to plan the least intrusive route for the ducts to reach the underground chamber via the oculi which were already present, but which had been blocked off in subsequent modifications of the Cathedral. The complex project was carried out after much research involved surveys, 3D scans and investigative archaeological work. During the project important discoveries were made including the previous finished floor level of the Cathedral and the Main Altar steps. This project, which was multi-disciplinary, shows how determination to cause the least intrusion on a historical building of national importance can prove to be a success story and one which will help protect the building for the future. Perit Gaston Camilleri received the Award on behalf of TBA Periti entrusted with this phase for the environmental control and conservation of the Grand Masters' Crypt at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta.



The Awards were presented by Professor Anthony Bonanno, former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa and Professor in the Faculty of Archaeology at the University of Malta, who, congratulating the winners on their well-deserved awards and commending the jury for its work, also added that he would encourage more of these excellent projects, especially in the area of major regeneration, to protect and enhance Malta's unique built heritage.

From l. to r. Professor Anthony Bonanno, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Malta, who presented the awards to the winners – Perit Gaston Camilleri, Perit Ivan Piccinino, Perit Edward Said, Perit Dr Edwin Mintoff, with Ms Maria Grazia Cassar, Chairperson of the Din l-Art Helwa Architectural Heritage Awards Jury Panel

The Rehabilitation of Qasam Barrani (Il-Prajjet) at Il-Majjistral Nature and History Park in October 2019

Tasmin Caruana

The Area

The 'Qasam Barrani' or 'Il-Prajjet' area forms part of the Il-Majjistral Nature and History Park in the North West of Malta. It is designated as Natura 2000 and is found along the northern boundary of the park. It is a coastal dry rocky landscape harbouring a number of coastal flora species, including a number of endemics, and low cliffs that constitute an ideal habitat for breeding Shearwaters. Din l-Art Helwa, together with Nature Trust Malta and the Gaia Foundation form the Majjistral Park Federation that manages this area of Malta.



Much of the area is currently in a degraded state due to construction waste that has been dumped over the last few years and which mainly came from the creation of a slipway. Some rubble has become covered with native vegetation and looks like a natural landscape. Other dumping material has remained an eye sore, especially the mounds of soil and large concrete material deposited near the coast. There is also a problem of domestic litter including plastic bottles, tin cans, paper and glass.

In the area we also find a few disused and dilapidated trapping and shooting hides, and alien acacia trees were planted. Other alien flora include prickly pear and agave plants. However, the area close to the coast remains in good condition and contains typical coastal flora species.

In terms of health and safety the slipway has no fence on its sides, and might present a danger to the general public when walking in the area.

Geology

Geologically the main outcrop is Upper Coralline Limestone with low cliffs overlooking the sea. Much of the Upper Coralline Limestone is the *Ġebel Imbark* member, while there is also a small area of the *Tal-Pitkal* member. There is also a mound of Blue Clay that was excavated during the slipway construction.

Habitats

The main habitats are vegetated sea cliffs colonised by the endemic *Limonium zeraphae* (Zerapha's Sea-lavender) and calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation (plants that grow in rock crevices).

Plant Species

The area hosts a number of coastal flora species, including the following endemic species which form healthy populations in the area:

- Darniella melitensis* – Maltese Salt-tree
- Limonium zeraphae* – Zerapha's Sea-lavender
- Anthemis urvilleana* – Maltese Sea Chamomile

Indigenous species found in the area, some of which are coastal species, include:

- Senecio bicolor* – Silvery Ragwort
- Limbarda crithmoides* – Golden Samphire
- Daucus carota/gingidium* – Wild Carrot/Sea Carrot
- Hedysarum coronarium* – Sulla
- Suaeda maritima* – Common Seablite
- Mesembryanthemum crystallinum* – Lesser Crystal Plant
- Capparis orientalis* – Caper
- Tamarix africana* – African Tamarisk
- Lotus cytisoides* – Grey Birdsfoot Trefoil
- Silene sedoides* – Hairy Catchfly
- Foeniculum vulgare* – Fennel
- Cynara cardunculus* – Wild Artichoke

Natural growth of wild plants covers much of the rubble deposited in the area and has formed a natural landscape. *Limbarda crithmoides*, an evergreen succulent plant that is typical of coastal habitats is particularly common. *Senecio bicolor* and *Daucus carota* are also common and play an important role in covering old mounds of rubble. *Hedysarum coronarium* grows in patches on areas of Blue Clay. The western part of the area that was free from dumping is in a more or less natural state, with frequent growth of *Limonium zeraphae*, *Suaeda maritima* and *Silene sedoides*.

Due to the disturbance that occurred here especially in the past, a number of plants that colonise disturbed habitats have been observed. The area was also afforested in the past with alien species (*Acacia spp.*; *Agave sisalana*; *Opuntia ficus-indica*). *Acacia* trees and *Opuntia* are common and occupy significant parts of the area, while agave is only present in small quantities. Vegetation surrounding the area consists of species typical of garigue/coastal garigue/dry rocky habitats including *Coridothymus capitatus*, other shrubs such as *Hypericum*

aegypticum, *Anthyllis hermanniae*, *Ruta chalepensis*; and species of orchids, herbaceous perennials, annuals, and geophytes.

Bird Species

The area is a good place to spot migratory birds in spring and autumn, as it is a coastal location. The most important bird in the area is the secretive Yelkouan Shearwater (*Garnija-Puffinus yelkouan*) that breeds in the coastal cliffs. The estimated breeding colony is about 10-50 pairs.

Blue Rock Thrush (*Merill-Monticola solitarius*) also breeds in the cliffs.

Other breeders include Sardinian Warbler (*Bufula Sewda-Sylvia melanocephala*) and Spanish Sparrow (*Ghasfur tal-Bejt-Passer hispaniolensis*). The Spectacled Warbler (*Bufula Hamra-Sylvia conspicillata*) breeds nearby.

Reptile Species

Reptile species include the Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*), Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*) and Western Whip Snake (*Coluber viridiflavus*).

Ecological Rehabilitation of Area

In order to ecologically rehabilitate the area a number of interventions need to be carried out.

The schedule of work needs to follow the below sequence of interventions:

Removal of dumped material

Much of the dumping is of site origin and was produced by the excavation of rock to construct a slipway to the sea. Other dumping consists of construction waste (concrete and limestone blocks) and domestic waste like broken tiles, glass, tin cans and plastic bottles which also occur on site.

Some of the dumped material consists of large concrete blocks which need to be removed by heavy duty machinery.

Other rubble that is devoid of vegetation and consists mainly of stones can be removed, if possible by hand, so as to minimise impact on the area. Since much of this rubble is from naturally occurring limestone, it can be re-used.

Mounds of soil and soft material can be levelled, or collected and re-used for rehabilitation in the same area. Mounds of other material can be removed or mixed with soil.





Other rubble is covered by native vegetation, mainly *Limbarda crithmoides*, *Senecio bicolor* and *Daucus carota/gingidium*, plus other flora. This creates an almost natural landscape, so it can be left there for further natural rehabilitation.

Removal of aliens

Alien species of acacia, prickly pear and agave need to be removed. There is a substantial amount of both acacia and prickly pear. Acacia trees preferably need to be uprooted, since they can grow back if removed by cutting.

However continuous removal of new shoots will eventually kill the parent tree. Acacia trees also grow suckers, and seedlings sprout rapidly when a parent tree is cut down (sunlight reaches the ground, and if soil is moist seeds germinate rapidly and abundantly). So after the trees are cut, monitoring needs to take place.

The removal of these alien flora can be done with the help of volunteers through organised activities.

Wherever possible, interventions will be by hand, and heavy duty machinery used only where necessary, so as to minimise the impact of damage on the environment.

The removal of these invasive flora species should preferably happen outside of the birds' breeding season. It will also be better to remove the acacia and other alien species over a period of time, say in one year, so as to allow any disturbed wildlife to resettle.

A few dilapidated trapping/shooting hides can be dismantled by hand.

Removal of litter

The area also suffers from domestic litter dumping, including plastic bottles, cans and glass. This can be removed manually.

Planting

Planting of indigenous flora can take place to rehabilitate and embellish the area. Species are to be coastal and preferably shrubs. Planting should be done in specified areas, and not in areas that are already rehabilitated naturally by native plants. Tamarisk trees can be planted along the tracks in some areas.

Species of vegetation will be a selection of tree shrubs and same grasses.

Car access control

In order to minimise environmental degradation and reduce the possibility of dumping, boulders should be well placed to stop car access. Access on foot will be facilitated.

Irrigation System

An irrigation system will need to be set up to water the planted trees and shrubs for the first 2-3 years. This can be carried out by Park staff. This will involve rain water storage (reservoir/water tank), irrigation pipes, and a water pump.

It's all happening at the White Tower

Susan Vassallo

Project NEMO at the White Tower

NEMO is an educational project which is part of a much larger Din l-Art Helwa project involving the restoration and reuse of the Torri l-Abjad/White Tower in Armier at l-Ahrax tal-Mellieħa. The educational project is part funded by the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation, MCCFF. The Principal lead sponsor for this project is the HSBC Malta Foundation. The project was also partly funded and supported by Atlas Insurance PCC Ltd, the Ministry for Finance, National Lotteries Good Causes Fund 2016 and the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change together with the Environmental Funding Support Scheme for Voluntary Organisations 2016.

In October and November 2019 Torri l-Abjad was opened to 120 students from the Cospicua, St. Paul's Bay, Marsascala, Żejtun and Senglea Primary Schools to learn about the history of the tower, as well as enjoy a permanent interactive exhibition focusing on marine life and flora and fauna of the surrounding environment. Most of the content of this exhibition was provided by Council Member Stanley Farrugia Randon, and the attractive display designed by Cyberspace Solutions Ltd. Maria Grazia Cassar and Susan Vassallo met the students and their teachers at the tower and guided them through the exhibition.

The students showed enthusiasm and curiosity throughout the two hour visit to the tower and we are sure that they will also carry with them positive memories of their visit, which will help them in the future to be more open to visiting museums and interpretation centres and taking an interest in the country's cultural heritage.

Ms Susan Vassallo is a volunteer with Din l-Art Helwa for the White Tower project

Photo credits: Chiara Cassar



Atlas Insurance employees at the White Tower in Mellieħa

Council views progress at the White Tower



Council Members and spouses visit to The White Tower on 5 October.

From l. to r.

Mrs Mary Rose Bonanno, Professor Anthony Bonanno, Mr Kenneth Mizzi, Mrs Pat Salomone, Professor Alex Torpiano, Mr Martin Vella, Mrs Martin Vella and Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar

During a recent visit to see the progress at the White Tower, Alex Torpiano, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, presented Project Leader Martin Vella, also the Warden at Wignacourt Tower, with the publication *Maurice Caruana Curran, Guardian of Heritage and Justice* as a token of thanks from Din l-Art Helwa for the challenging work of coordinating the restoration of this heritage site. From its roof can be seen the thirty tamarisk trees that have been successfully planted by Din l-Art Helwa in the nearby coastal area to replace the trees removed from the tower ditch during restoration. Maria Grazia Cassar, immediate Past President, and Council member Stanley Farrugia Randon have been overseeing the restoration which is now at an advanced stage.



From l. to r.

Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar, Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, Mrs Pat Salomone, former Din l-Art Helwa volunteer, and Mr Martin Vella

Atlas Insurance staff see the restoration of the White Tower

A group of Atlas Insurance employees, together with their family and friends recently enjoyed a tour of the White Tower, known in Maltese as it-Torri l-Abjad, a small coastal watchtower overlooking Armier Bay in the limits of Mellicha. It was built in 1658 as the sixth of the de Redin towers.

The White Tower is in advanced stages of restoration, which are being carried out by Din l-Art Helwa. Atlas is sponsoring the restoration of the British period guardroom which will be used as a multi-purpose room for meetings and events. During the visit, Atlas employees could witness firsthand the works currently underway.

The visit took place on a Sunday morning and was led by Martin Vella from Din l-Art Helwa who gave everyone a tour

of the tower itself, the guardroom, and the NEMO Marine Interpretation Centre for children. After the tour, the group enjoyed a picnic lunch and refreshments in the shade of the tower.

“As a company, we believe in supporting the community, and in this case, the restoration of our precious heritage,” said Marketing and HR Manager, Jackie Attard Montalto.

“Whenever we decide to support a project in the community, we endeavour to involve our colleagues in terms of the appreciation and work being carried out. Since agreeing to support Din l-Art Helwa, we have already held two clean-ups of the grounds around the tower, and this tour has been our third staff activity,” she said.

The 23rd edition of the International Music Festival at Bir Miftuħ

The 23rd Edition of the Bir Miftuħ International Music Festival, organised annually by Din l-Art Ħelwa at the medieval Church of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuħ gave exceptional resonance this year to the church with its magnificent spanned arches and medieval architecture. With its perfect acoustics and always with a rich and varied programme, the Festival at Bir Miftuħ has become one of the highlights of the music calendar of the Maltese islands. This year's edition, with four top quality concerts, proved to be a special treat for everyone.



Silke Aichhorn - Harp, Christín Enke-Mollnar - Soprano

The festival opened on the 3rd May with a unique Harp and Soprano Recital by Silke Aichhorn - Harp, Christín Enke-Mollnar - Soprano thanks to the sponsorship of an unfailing benefactor of Din l-Art Ħelwa.

The Duo delighted the audience with a fascinating repertoire including the Ave Maria by Caccini, The Moldau by Smetana/Trneček and various exquisite Lieder by Mozart, Schubert, Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann, Brahms and Grieg. Silke Aichhorn, the renowned German harpist, was back again with us in Malta once more, by popular acclaim after several visits to the island.

The second concert, held on the 24th May was titled 'Concert for Europe', held on the eve of the elections for the European Parliament, and featured the European Anthem written by Schiller, the 'Ode to Joy'. Generously sponsored by Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Schaefer Noll, both constant benefactors of Din l-Art Ħelwa, the choice of music was intended to kindle interest in European values and the European way of life. Drs Vassallo and Noll have supported the String Quartet from The RE: Orchestra, since their formation as a group. Formerly known as the Rotterdam Ensemble they have performed in Malta several times and they enthralled the audience with amazing renditions of excerpts from Beethoven, Mozart, Fauré, Puccini, Mahler, Rossini, Strauss, Bellini, Offenbach and Viardot.

Bringing exceptional talent to the evening was the performance by two established international artists: Gillian Zammit, soprano, and Claire Ghigo, mezzo soprano. The European Anthem, the Ode to Joy, translated into Maltese by Dr John Vassallo, was sung by both the performers and the audience and brought the concert to a grand finale.



The RE: Orchestra and soprano Gillian Zammit and mezzo soprano Claire Ghigo



From l. to r.

Mr Kenneth Mizzi, Honorary Secretary General Mrs Simone Mizzi, Events Co-ordinator Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran, H.E. Mr Patrick Duffy, Ambassador of the Republic of Ireland, Mrs Gillian Bartolo & the Minister for Education Mr Evarist Bartolo



From l. to r. Mrs Maria Grazia Cassar, Events Co-ordinator Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran, Mrs A. Ciantar & Ing. Arthur Ciantar, President of the German-Maltese Circle, Mrs Gemma Mifsud Bonnici & President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Executive President Prof. Alex Torpiano & Dr Gabrielle Torpiano, H.E. Mr Walter Haßmann, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

The third concert brought the festival a Violoncello and Piano Recital by ‘The Modern Cello - Piano Duo’ made up of Daniel Sorour – Violoncello and Clemens Kröger – Piano. It was kindly sponsored by the German-Maltese Circle and the Goethe Institut. They played delightful works by Granados, Cassado, de Falla, Brahms, Schubert, Arvo Pärt, Ginastera, Saint-Saens and Paganini.

The last concert ‘Promenade à Trois Voix’ featuring Simona Marini – Flute and Percussion, Frédéric Martin – Violin and Lira da braccio, Florian Villain – Guitar and Percussion, brought this year’s festival to a magnificent close with an original programme of vocal and instrumental music including ancient pieces by French and Italian composers such as Attaignant, Monteverdi, Frescobaldi and Stefano Landi, as well as traditional folk music of the 16th and 17th centuries and some sacred chants.

This concert was made possible through the generous support of the Embassy of France and the Alliance Française de Malte – Méditerranée, jointly with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in collaboration with the Embassy of Italy.

Din l-Art Helwa is truly grateful to the sponsors who supported this event and to all who attended. It is only with such support that it is possible for the organisation to maintain the Church of Santa Marija ta’ Bir Miftuħ, a unique surviving example of rare medieval architecture in Malta.



The Modern Cello – Piano Duo



From l. to r. Director of the Italian Cultural Centre Dott. Massimo Sarti & Signora Sarti, Signorina Ilaria Sammartino, Signora M. Sammartino, Ambassador of Italy S.E. Dott. Massimo Sammartino, Mrs Gemma Mifsud Bonnici, President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Prof. Alex Torpiano, Dr Gabrielle Torpiano, H.E. Mme Bridgette Curmi, Ambassador of France, Former Attaché of Culture Mme Elisabeth du Breil de Pontbriand, Events Co-ordinator Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran.



The ‘Promenade à Trois Voix’ Trio

Restoration of the Mattia Preti works at Sarria Church – An Update

Patricia Salomone

Mattia Preti lived and worked in Malta for four decades in the 17th century. He arrived in 1661 and worked fast and tirelessly, producing a great number of paintings, both directly on stone as well as on canvas. His most prolific patron was the Order of the Knights of St John. He died in Malta in 1699 and is rightly buried at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta.

As the plague ravaged the Maltese islands in 1676, Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner called upon the artist to erect a church in the suburb of Floriana as an ex-voto to be dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. The church was to replace a pre-existing chapel and was to be embellished with seven paintings by the *Cavaliere calabrese*.



The Allegory of the Order of St John before restoration



Detail

Din l-Art Helwa has taken up the task of saving these seven paintings, so poignant in spiritual meaning and artistic value, from the ravages of time. Giuseppe Mantella Restauri have been entrusted with the execution of the necessary studies and work.

Giuseppe Mantella points out

We have now nearly reached the final stages of the work, having only one of the seven works still to complete. The concave lunettes were the last to be tackled. In early October, we returned the one entitled Apotheosis of the Order back to its original place to the right of the main altar at Sarria church. The lunette representing The Victory of Good over Evil is presently being reinforced and studied. I must say that it presents a formidable challenge as humidity and previous patching up have played havoc with the original painting by Preti. But we enthusiastically take up the challenge.

So, for the time being, I can update *Vigilo* readers with what the restorers have brought back to life in the lunette entitled *Allegoria dell'Ordine di San Giovanni* and which can now be admired in all its glory, also thanks to state of the art lighting which has recently been set up in the church.

This lunette is particularly rich in allegorical details. As Maria Chiara Cozzi writes

The main figure represents St John the Baptist, patron of the Knights of St John, who is seated at the centre of the composition. A young woman wearing armour symbolically personifies the Order and is kneeling at his feet. She is wearing the Order's scarlet banner bearing the white cross of Christendom and is about to take hold of the sword in defence of Uprightness. With his right hand the Baptist indicates a fleet of galleons in the distance exhorting the woman to face the sea journey in order to fight and defeat the infidel. This figure is strikingly reminiscent of the allegorical female figure painted in bright colours twelve years earlier by Preti



on the counter façade of the Conventual Church of the Order in Valletta. She wears the same plumed helmet and armour and similarly brandishes the sword and banner with which to defeat Turks and corsairs. Both this lunette and the composition at St John's Co-Cathedral depict the Order's mission which was both Military and Hospitaller. Hence, the battle galleons on the one side while on the other end of the painting is shown a hospital hall where sick and wounded are to be attended to. To the right, the scene shows a majestic angel robed in gold as it holds up the Order's banner while on the opposite side are a putto and two angels. One is holding Grandmaster Cotoner's coat-of-arms up high while the other angel is on horseback and blows into a horn sounding a hymn of glory.*

benefactors who have made this impressive monumental artistic and religious recovery possible:

- The Immaculate Conception – Shireburn Software Ltd
- The Martyrdom of St Sebastian – Malta International Airport
- St Roque – MSV Life
- St Rosalia – The Rotary Clubs of Palermo and Malta
- St Nicholas – Sparkasse bank Malta
- The Apotheosis of the Order – An anonymous donor as ex-voto
- St Michael overcomes the Devil (Victory of Good over Evil) – Sparkasse Bank Malta

When the final and seventh painting is completed, Din l-Art Helwa will hold a celebratory concert in conjunction with all the

All photos by Giuseppe Mantella

* Extract translated by the author from a description by Maria Chiara Cozzi in the publication *Mattia Preti dipinge San Sebastiano* by Giuseppe Mantella and Nella Mari.

Ms Patricia Salomone is a volunteer with Din l-Art Helwa and former Council member

Maurice Caruana Curran

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

Mario Buhagiar

This is the second of a two-part series. The first part was published in Vigilo Number 51



Hal Millieri – before and after

Hal Millieri before Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa

There is a widespread misconception that the Hal Millieri Church was discovered by Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa. It is important to put the record straight. The church, although neglected and in a state of near dereliction, was not unknown. Themistocles Zammit was aware of it and was (presumably) responsible for a 1927 photograph in the Żurrieq file of the National Museum of Archaeology. It is the first known photograph of the church and records that the palm tree, which is now an attractive feature of the site, was then still a sapling. That its planting was not an act of embellishment is suggested by the fact that the church was already neglected. Bishop Pietro Pace did not bother to include it in his 1908 pastoral visitation report. It was, however, visited on October 23, 1927 by Bishop Mauro Caruana who, in spite of finding it unsuitable as a place of cult, might not have been insensitive to its interest. Six days later, on 29 October, he sent, through his secretary, Fr Carmelo Farrugia, an official note to the Żurrieq archpriest, Fr Gio Batta Chigo, instructing him to clear the church of the rubbish (*Rimuovere gli imbarazzi dalla chiesa.*) The roughly scribbled visitation notes kept by Fr Farrugia contain the first known mention of the frescoes: [*ci*] *sono degli affreschi sulle pareti, rovinati* ("there are ruined frescoes on the walls").¹

None of the ecclesiastical visitation reports to the church, starting with the Apostolic visit of Mgr Pietro Dusina in 1575, considered the frescoes worthy of a mention.² In 1859 Bishop Gaetano Pace Forno ordered the entire whitewashing of the church,³ which would have covered the paintings under a film of lime. It is, however, possible that his instructions were ignored. An awareness of their importance is first noted in 1946 by Hugh Braun who reported that they were "a remarkable series of medieval wall paintings which need careful restoration and preservation."⁴ An interest in them was shown in 1962 by Michelangelo Cagiano de Azevedo, head of an Italian

Archaeological Mission to Malta, coordinated by the Istituto del Vicino Oriente of the University of Rome.⁵

In 1956, Luret Cutajar (1897-1979) published two articles on the church in *Il-Berqa*.⁶ Cutajar was a self-taught man with a passionate interest in Maltese history and heritage. He was told of the church by Mgr Professor Pietro Paolo Saydon (1895-1971) in April 1956 but had difficulty in locating it and in being allowed to see it. His first visit convinced him of its importance. He shared his enthusiasm with Dr Vincent Depasquale (1920-2012), the newly appointed Librarian of the Royal Malta Library, and the veteran historian Eduardo Romeo Leopardi (1903-1967) and took them to see it. On the murals he sought the advice of Mgr Professor Serafino Zarb (1899-1976) and the painter/restorer Raphael Bonnici Cali (1907-2002). His two articles contain an accurate plan of the church and are a noteworthy pioneering study. It is a pity that the photographs taken by the *Il-Berqa* photographers are today unaccounted for.

Cutajar did all in his power to save the church and even offered to pay for urgent repair works. He appealed to the archpriest of Żurrieq, Fr Salvatore Gauci, but was dismissed because the parish lacked restoration funds. He was instead directed to the man who kept the keys of the church which he used as a barn. This was a certain Profirju Zammit nicknamed 'Ic-Ċirkes' who deserves to be remembered as Malta's last known cotton-beater ("*daqqaq tat-tajjar*").⁷ Cutajar was disheartened but did not give up because he tried to solicit the support of the Żurrieq priest and amateur historian, Fr Loreto Zammit, who published newspaper articles on historical buildings and their need of protection,⁸ but he showed no interest in Hal Millieri. Cutajar next addressed petitions to the Minister for Works and Deputy Prime Minister Ġużé Ellul Mercer (July 31, 1956) and the Vicar General Professor Mgr Arturo Bonnici who both regretted that they were unable to help. Mgr Bonnici did, however, discuss the church with the Archbishop Sir Michael Gonzi who, on a visit to Żurrieq,

instructed the archpriest to carry out urgent repairs. In 1959 the roof was cleared of a thick growth of pernicious vegetation and consolidated with a waterproof course. This helped save the roofing-slabs from caving in, but the church remained neglected and out of bounds.⁹ In 1967, Cutajar republished his *Il-Berqa* articles, edited and enlarged, in *L-Orizzont*.¹⁰

It was around this time that a teacher-colleague told me of the church, warning me that it was difficult to locate and hard to access. Dr (later Professor) Joseph M. Falzon, with whom I shared a common interest in exploring the Maltese countryside, accompanied me on my first visit. I vividly remember the experience. The approach to the church precinct was closed by a securely bolted wrought-iron gate and we had to scramble up a high rubble wall and jump into the grounds landing into a thick clump of prickly pears. We did not require a key to enter the church because the door was in a dilapidated state and unlocked. What we first noticed were stacks of hay, miscellaneous farm rubbish and the remains of the fuselage of a Second World War fighter plane. Our attention was however, immediately captured by the wall-paintings of monumentally portrayed saints. I shared my experience with George Serracino Inglott and took him to the church. We excitedly agreed to discuss with Maurice Caruana Curran the idea of asking the Teenagers to tidy the church and its grounds which included a 1582 plague cemetery. He immediately warmed up to the project. The Board of Directors and the Teenagers' Committee were enthusiastic.



Anjelica De Giorgio (later Cauchi) and George Attard cleaning the Hal Millieri gate in the 1960s

What we did not know was that Maurice and the Din l-Art Helwa Council had already been alerted to the church by Mr Joseph Dalli, hardworking secretary of the Żurrieq Civic Committee, who had sent a letter petition for assistance to safeguard it, on February 2, 1966. Dr Paul Xuereb, Din l-Art Helwa's first Secretary had written back that the Council had delegated Maurice Caruana Curran and Chev. Vincenzo Bonello to discuss the church with the Archbishop. Mr Dalli had subsequently taken Dr Xuereb and Chev. Bonello to see the church. On 10 March 1966, the Żurrieq Civic Council issued a press release on its Hal Millieri cooperation with Din l-Art Helwa.¹¹ At the same time a group of Żurrieq youths, led by Anthony Mangion (later Dr Anthony Mangion, Librarian, Malta University Library) were seeking permission to start taking care of the church.

Difficulties and Benefactors

The archpriest of Żurrieq, Fr Paul Pace, showed interest in the Teenagers' project, but warned that Profirju ic-Ċirkes, would

oppose and could be hostile. Archbishop Gonzi, however, gave his backing and Profirju grudgingly conceded to make the church accessible. Work started in February 1968 and immediately attracted public attention. We had tens of well-wishing visitors, usually on Sunday afternoons, and they often lent a helping hand and made a donation. A major problem was lack of funds which George and I tried to solve by raising a greater awareness of the historic importance of the church and its need for restoration. To mark the start of the work we produced a cyclostyled twenty-nine page monograph with two appendices, one by Erin Serracino Inglott and the other by James Evans and Mary Borda respective president and secretary of the Teenagers' committee.¹² It sold out immediately. The monograph is now a collector's item. It was supplemented by articles in *The Sunday Times of Malta*¹³ and the editor, Mr George Sammut (1919-1984), went out of his way to keep the church in the news.

We received very considerable assistance and valuable advice from Architect Michael Ellul (1925-2018), Head of the Antiquities Section of the Public Works Department, who provided wheel barrows, picks, spades and other essential tools and who also went out of his way to coordinate the removal of debris and rubbish from the site. In addition, he was generous with the supply of lime and cement. He had the backing of the Minister of Works, Dr Carmelo Caruana (1916-1992) who visited the church in January 1969.¹⁴

Assistance also came from other sources. One cannot not mention architect Thomas Foster who was generous to a fault and donated to the church a much needed new set of doors made, under his specifications, by Abram Woodworks, Balzan. Equally worthy of special acknowledgment was Mrs Vera (Vee) Greer who deserves to be better remembered as a benefactress of Din l-Art Helwa and of worthy initiatives of cultural and natural conservation. Her house 'San Clemente', at the foot of Saqqaja Hill, Rabat, was a place of encounter of Anglo-Maltese scholarship and connoisseurship. It was through her that, in 1968, I first met Dr Anthony (Tony) Luttrell to whom the study and restoration of the church is so greatly indebted. Luttrell was at the time collating material for his benchmarking book *Medieval Malta – Studies on Malta before the Knights*, published by the British School at Rome.

Mrs Greer also took the initiative of asking Ann Ballantyne,



Bir Miftuh

who was establishing herself as a wall-paintings conservator in medieval churches in England, to examine the murals and report on their conservation and restoration. Miss Ballantyne visited the church on 25 July 1970 and submitted her report on August 11.¹⁵ Her evaluation was of paintings of "high quality ... executed in a *secco* and not a *fresco* technique although damp over the past years has caused a virtual frescoing of the pigment, and caused the first of the covering layers of lime wash

to calcify".¹⁶ She found the pigment "in a very sound condition" but noted that much of the plaster needed "mending and general reconsolidation". A worrying factor was the damage caused by rising damp and by water seepage. She concludes that "if cleaned and treated by skilled hands the results should be spectacular and well worth having done". Ann Ballantyne's pioneering report, although not entirely correct, deserves credit for its pioneering evaluation of the paintings and their conservation and restoration and requirements.

The Ħal Millieri-Bir Miftuħ Trust

There had meanwhile been a benchmark development in the legal status of Ħal Millieri church. The rescue of a key art historical site invested Din l-Art Ħelwa with the responsibility of its sustained good maintenance and accessibility to scholarly study and archaeological investigation. This could only be done if the association was legally entrusted with its care. The council delegated its president Maurice Caruana Curran to negotiate with the archdiocese a deed of entrustment. The old parish church of Bir Miftuħ, which the Teenagers had earmarked as their next major project, was included in the talks that followed. Legal skill and diplomacy prevailed. The two churches were transferred in trust to Din l-Art Ħelwa.

The deed of constitution of the Ħal Millieri and Bir Miftuħ Trust, in the acts of veteran, and much respected, Notary Rosario Frendo-Randon (affectionately known as 'Iż-Żis') took place in the afternoon of Sunday 1 February 1970 in a prestigiously

solemn ceremony in the presence of the Governor General and the Archbishop, and high ecclesiastical and civil authorities, in the church of Bir Miftuħ which had the advantage over Ħal Millieri of a larger audience capacity. I was privileged to be among the signatories together with Roger Vella Bonavita, as representative of the Board of Directors of Teenagers' Din l-Art Ħelwa. James Evans represented the Teenagers' Committee.¹⁷ For Din l-Art Ħelwa it was a vital development. For Teenagers' Din l-Art Ħelwa it was a moment of triumph.

Scientific Restoration and Scholarly and Archaeological Investigation

Dr Anthony Luttrell, who had in the meanwhile moved to the University of Malta, was, with the full backing of Maurice Caruana Curran and the Council of Din l-Art Ħelwa, actively researching, in collaboration with Maltese and international scholars, the history of the church and its artistic significance. He was also seeking expert advice for a diagnostic study of the paintings and their conservation and restoration intervention. The book, *Ħal Millieri a Maltese Casale*, which he edited in 1976, remains the standard reference work on the church.¹⁸ It was complemented a year later by an archaeological investigation by Dr T.F.C. Blagg and Dr (later Professor) Anthony Bonanno, which Luttrell engineered, under the joint auspices of the University of Malta and the National Museums Department.¹⁹ The church is now recognised as one of Malta's most important art historical monuments.

¹ AAF, *Visitatio Maurus Caruana 1927*. Scribbled notes.

² For a list of the Visitation Reports: Mangion 1979, 137-8.

³ AAF, *Visitatio Pace Forno 1859*, f. 240.

⁴ Braun 1946, 46.

⁵ Missione 1963, 23.

⁶ Cutajar 1956.

⁷ Information kindly given by Captain C.G. Zammit, Director of the National Museum Department.

⁸ See for example Zammit 1966; Zammit 1968; Zammit 1970.

⁹ Details in Cutajar 1968.

¹⁰ Cutajar 1967.

¹¹ Cutajar 1968.

¹² Buhagiar and Serracino-Inglott 1968.

¹³ Serracino Inglott 1968; Buhagiar 1968B ; Buhagiar 1968C.

¹⁴ Ir-Review 1969.

¹⁵ Ballantyne 1970.

¹⁶ The subsequent intervention by Paola Zanolini established instead an *a fresco* technique: Luttrell 1976, 104-108.

¹⁷ Deed of Trust 1970.

¹⁸ Luttrell 1979.

¹⁹ Blagg *et al.* 1990.

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Professor Mario Buhagiar is Resident Professor at the University of Malta and former head of the Department of History of Art which he founded

Malta – Nurse of the Mediterranean

Gian Carlo Azzopardi

When discussing the Mediterranean during the First World War many will refer to the campaigns fought at Gallipoli and in the Salonika. A lot of effort is put in to recount every detail of what took place during battles and amongst troops in the trenches. However, a crucial element is often omitted by military historians, one which concerns the actions which took place away from the frontline action, inside hospitals. Besides the struggles of the battlefield, medical staff fought their own battles and dealt with the rushes of sick and wounded brought in from the front lines. Having avoided any frontline action, Malta was deployed to provide hospital accommodation and urgent medical treatment for thousands of sick and wounded. Through the analysis of the personal accounts, from Malta, of practitioners, published in the *British Medical Journal*, and the *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, it is possible to uncover vital medical research which confirms Malta's reputation as an important medical hub.

In the case of both the Gallipoli and Salonika Campaigns, the most notable statistic was the high percentage of casualties suffering from disease. Taking the case of the Salonika campaign, both sides evacuated the Struma Valley in the hot summer months of 1916 as a precaution following several outbreaks of diseases such as malaria, which alone inflicted an estimated 160,000 British casualties. Over on Gallipoli, the conditions in the quickly constructed trenches provided the ideal factors for disease to fester. In many cases, latrines were simply a hole in the ground and running water was not adequately provided, thus leading to a general lack of hygiene. In the blistering summer of 1915, the failed August offensive of the Battle of Sari Bair left thousands of corpses lying in the battlefield, attracting swarms of disease-carrying flies to the trenches.

For this reason, Malta's facilities largely faced intakes of diseased patients, rather than wounded. However, medical facilities on Malta never retained the same level of activity as patient numbers were either subject to an expected increase during an offensive, or an unexpected rush of patients suffering from pestilence. After the evacuation from Gallipoli in January 1916, the medical situation in Malta was largely inactive. Sick and wounded still arrived from the Salonika, however Malta's usage as a hospital base was largely minimised. In February 1916, only 600 sick and wounded were received and 1,500 the following month. By the end of the month, there were only a total of 4000 men in Malta's hospitals, even though accommodation amounted to 20,000 beds, eventually being reduced to 12,000.



Casualty evacuation from Anzac Cove, Gallipoli

Regular medical activity resumed in July 1916 in conjunction with an outbreak of malaria during the Salonika Campaign. A scheme was therefore started to increase the total accommodation to 27,000. Such an expansion was made possible by erecting tented facilities around already existing hospital buildings. In 1917, the risk of submarine raids on hospital ships in the Mediterranean necessitated the reduction of patients leaving the Salonika for treatment. Instead, efforts were made by increasing the hospital facilities already present in the area. Five general hospital units were subsequently ordered to be mobilised in Malta for service in the Salonika, taking with them equipment, beds, and staff. As a result of the reduction of staff leaving for the Salonika, the total accommodation on the island was reduced to 12,932. The Spanish flu epidemic in 1918 had facilitated a temporary increase in accommodation to 9,218 beds in November, however these were soon removed after the vast majority of the remaining sick and wounded were sent to England. The number was later drastically reduced to a peace time figure of 476 equipped hospital beds in February 1919.

Understandably, the number of surgeries which were carried out in Malta between 1914 and 1918 amounted to hundreds. Each case presented its own difficulty as a result of the context where the patients were brought from. However, through the assistance of radiograms, better known as X-ray images, it became possible to carry out a diagnosis more efficiently and with less trial and error. Consultant Surgeon Col. Charles Ballance highlighted the importance of X-rays throughout his tenure in Malta, particularly in his case to locate a bullet fragment lodged inside the right ventricle of the heart of Private Robert H. Martin of the 1st Battalion, 1st Derbyshire Yeomanry. In strides for surgical development, Col. Ballance was responsible for performing the first operation on the heart itself. In doing so, cardiac surgery was inaugurated in



Christmas at Fort Ricasoli Hospital ward, 1915



Illustration of the radiogram depicting a bullet fragment inside the heart of Private Robert H. Martin

Malta on 16 February 1918. Assisted by a female doctor, Dr Sarah Marguerite White, Col. Ballance made an incision to expose the heart and cut into the right ventricle, the chamber of the heart which pumps blood through the artery leading to the lungs, and retrieved the bullet lodged in the interventricular septum, a wall separating the lower chambers. The patient survived the operation, thus making it the third such attempt ever made worldwide. Unfortunately, because the patient died of sepsis a month after the operation was conducted, the procedure was never given great recognition. Nevertheless, Col. Ballance opted to publicise his successful attempt in an article published in the *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*. Moreover, Col. Ballance also held a discussion centred around his experience at a Bradshaw Lecture, a prestigious conference hosted at the invitation of the Royal College of Surgeons, and the Royal College of Physicians of England.

In addition to surgical development, doctors working in Malta developed a great sense of confidence for treatment through the use of injections. Results in the several hospitals showed that when injected with the relevant medicine, patients healed quicker and posed a lesser risk of relapse. The treatment for malaria took a similar route through the use of quinine injections. The only effective method against the disease was through the injection of quinine, a drug which flushes out the Plasmodium parasite which causes the illness. In Malta, this practice was used and

patients were placed under a programme of quinine injection with the aim of curing and preventing relapse. In an article entitled “Quinine and Antimony in the Treatment of Malaria”, published through the *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, Captain Adam Patrick RAMC makes reference to two patients, numbered 9 and 11 respectively, who were treated in Malta with the aforementioned treatment programme. Capt. Patrick described how both patients experienced constant relapse with malaria before being transferred to Malta to undergo quinine treatment. After having commenced the programme of daily quinine injections, both patients were found to be free of the Plasmodium parasite within two months, further adding to the positive reputation of Malta as a hub for medical practice and research.

Apart from the new research being made into the treatment for disease and physical injuries, one of the most important developments which took place during the Great War was the emerging recognition



Group photo taken inside Australia Hall

of mental health. The process of recovery in Malta allowed for a pleasant recovery which benefitted the mental health of each patient, in turn even uplifting the morale within the wards. Efforts were made by several voluntary organisations such as the Young Men’s Christian Organisation or the Red Cross to arrange gatherings for convalescents or raise money for new social hubs like the Australia Hall, opened in 1916. The activities and atmosphere which were present for such a positive recovery are best described in the personal memoirs of Rev. Albert G. Mackinnon, a chaplain who visited Malta during the war to offer his spiritual service to the patients. His memoirs are perhaps also the ideal

primary source to catch a glimpse of the social activities which were taking place in Malta during the war.

An instance of positive morale was experienced when Rev. Mackinnon made the acquaintance of an unnamed sergeant from the King’s Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) who had been wounded to such an extent that he found great difficulty in walking. Rev. Mackinnon had asked if it was still possible for him to attend a mass service the following day and if possible bring any others with him. To his surprise the next day, a large congregation turned up for the service, followed by the unnamed sergeant walking on crutches. Those present ranged from those with slight wounds and illnesses to the grievously injured. Mackinnon stated that even those with amputated limbs saw little reason to pass on the service. In saying this, the morale in Malta’s hospitals wards could be considered to have been rather high, unaffected by the sight of death, with the daily average number of funerals numbering between 15 and 20 in the summer of 1915.

In conclusion, medical practice conducted in Malta varied a great deal when taking into consideration the different categories of surgeries and treatments given to recovering patients. Additionally, the rapid development of medical equipment and stable supply of medication also made it possible to maintain programmes of medication for ailing patients, and also to carry out surgery on the sick and wounded, whether complex and high risk, or basic routine work.



Relief

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Giancarlo Azzopardi is a recent B.A. (Hons) graduate who based his dissertation on Malta as the nurse of the Mediterranean

Tales from Four Towers

Santa Marija, Comino



Outgoing Bishop of Gozo, Monsignor Mario Grech, recently paid a visit to Comino and to the Santa Marija Tower. He very much enjoyed being shown around the island and the fort which was restored in 2002 by Din l-Art Helwa. Comino forms part of the Ghajnsielem Parish. His Excellency (10th from left) was greeted at the Tower by its warden Joe Attard (9th from left) and Comino Chaplain Fr Joe Attard (5th from right), together with priests and archpriests from the Gozitan Diocese. Din l-Art Helwa extends its best wishes to Bishop Mario Grech for his new post at the Vatican.

Ta' Xutu, Żurrieq

Ta' Xutu Tower at Wied iż-Żurrieq, recently restored by Din l-Art Helwa with the support of Malta Airport Foundation, has become a popular venue for events such as roof top wedding ceremonies and re-enactments of period historical displays. The developing ecological restoration with its open space and marvellous view from the cliff lends itself to such events, as the public can have a bird's eye view over the landscape and horizon. The displays by the re-enactment group 'Show in Arms' on the 5th October 2019 was particularly well attended. Din l-Art Helwa volunteers are always at hand to show visitors around and explain the history of the tower and its architectural significance. The tower is open most days from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and Thursdays and Fridays up to 3 p.m.

Photos by Michael Vella



Wignacourt, St Paul's Bay

On the roof at Wignacourt Tower a spectacular show of sword duels, pistol and musket firing from 'Show in Arms' kept the public attentive on 3rd November



A Castellar Flag is donated to the Red Tower

The Deputy Mayor of Castellar, M. Pascal Brun, and Mme Brun, an eminent prehistory scholar, were in Malta recently to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Malta Map Society Foundation. On this occasion they visited St Agatha's Tower (the Red Tower) and donated a Castellar Flag, (its emblem is a red tower!) to Malta and in particular to Din l-Art Ħelwa. Castellar, a historic village in Provence of 1200 people, is the birthplace of Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris de Castellar and has long had connections with Malta and the Knights of Malta since the area was a fiefdom of the powerful Lascaris-Ventimiglia family who produced no less than 30 knights of Malta, including the Grand Master himself. Lascaris, who built the Red Tower in 1647, was born in Castellar in 1560 and died in Malta 1657. The ancestral home of the Lascaris family can still be seen and visited.

Together with Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President of Din l-Art Ħelwa, volunteers of the Red Tower showed the French group around the tower and a new theory as to why it was painted red was discussed. Could it be that the Grand Master wished it to be red because of the red tower emblem on the flag of his family town?

Mr Joseph Schirò, Hon. Secretary of the Malta Map Society, was also present for this presentation.



From l. to r. Mr Joseph Schirò, Hon. Secretary, Malta Map Society, Mr James Evans, Warden at the Red Tower, Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President of Din l-Art Ħelwa, Judge Joseph Galea Debono, former Council Member and a volunteer at the Red Tower, M. Pascal Brun, Deputy Mayor of Castellar, and Mrs Simone Mizzi, Secretary General of Din l-Art Ħelwa



Din l-Art Ħelwa volunteers with the French group from Castellar enjoy the amazing view from the roof of the Red Tower

Summer Solstice Scopoli's Shearwater Sensation!

Simon Wallace

On the 21st June, Dwejra Tower volunteers teamed up with BirdLife Malta for A Night with the Scopoli's event.

Co-hosted with Din l-Art Helwa, the evening was a great success as over twenty guests were treated to the cacophonous clamour made by hundreds of Scopoli's Shearwaters returning to their colonies close to the coastal watchtower.

From within the astounding venue of Dwejra Tower located in one of Gozo's Dark Sky Heritage Areas, the evening started with a talk about the fascinating lives of Maltese Shearwaters by James Crymble, Project Warden and Light Pollution Officer with the EU-LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija. <http://birdlifemalta.org/arcipelagugarnija/>

After watching the sun set from the tower's roof, the intrepid guests set off on a walk led by James towards the cliff tops facing Fungus Rock. As darkness fell, distant calls of Scopoli's Shearwater could be heard far out at sea. In the space of just half an hour, these calls rose to a crescendo as hundreds of Scopoli's returned from their long foraging trips out at sea – a frenzy of life along the remote, yet far from barren, coastal cliffs of Dwejra.

BirdLife Malta would like to thank Din l-Art Helwa for this



Simon Wallace (left) Dwejra Tower Volunteer, with James Crymble, Project Warden and Light Pollution Officer with the EU-LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija (right)



BirdLife Malta Team surveying Shearwaters on Fungus Rock, 21 June 2019



partnership opportunity and are looking forward to taking part in future events surrounded by such staggering natural beauty!

It was a magical evening and an unforgettable experience for both our guests and volunteers.

Then a few days later...



*Fungus Rock with a Scopoli's Shearwater incubating an egg
Photo credit: Benjamin Metzger*



*Yelkouan Shearwater, adult with chick
Photo credit: Birdlife Malta*

Crowdfunding initiative to appeal against further development in Dwejra

Dwejra is a Natura 2000 site, a Dark Sky Heritage Area, and a designated Special Protection Area under the Wild Birds Directive.

The 15 NGOs which united in one effort to save Dwejra from further development were overwhelmed by the massive support by the general public in the past days. Following the scandalous decision by the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal to overturn the Planning Authority's refusal for further development in Dwejra, this front of NGOs urged people to donate and raise funds so that a court appeal could be filed. In less than two days over €3,000 were donated.

Dwejra in Gozo is iconic and needs protection. It is one of the best diving spots, and is surrounded by sedimentary rocks with an array of fossils. Its beauty lies in the fact that it remains more or less pristine. At night this place can give spectacular views of the dark sky and stars while the iconic Scopoli's Shearwater use the cliffs as their breeding habitat. Light pollution and increased development will damage this area. Both BirdLife Malta and the Institute of Space Sciences and Astronomy had officially objected to the development proposed and hence have the right to appeal it at court.

Not only does this successful fundraising campaign pave the way for the court appeal, but it also sends a clear message that civil society is strong and a force to be reckoned with. The NGOs would like to thank the people for their support which motivates them further to fight for this cause, while promising to remain fighting to safeguard the natural and cultural heritage of our islands for the benefit of all.

There is a happy ending to this story – as a result of pressure on the part of the appealing NGOs the Court of Appeal ruled in their favour and revoked the permit.

The 15 NGOs united in this front are:

- Bicycle Advocacy Group
- BirdLife Malta
- Din l-Art Helwa
- Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar
- Friends of the Earth Malta
- Isles of the Left
- Light Pollution Awareness Group
- Moviment Graffiti
- Nature Trust Malta
- Ramblers Association
- The Archaeological Society Malta
- The Astronomical Society of Malta
- The Institute of Space Sciences and Astronomy
- Wirt Għawdex
- Żminijietna – Lehen ix-Xellug

(Source: BirdLife Malta website)

Other positive news

Facebook likes for the Dwejra Tower page continue to grow and we now have over 1400 followers on this social media site. Our "Plant of the Month" feature on Facebook also attracts a lot of interest, and the information is now available in both English and Maltese language versions.

The "Tweets from the Tower" have also seen good interest and Dwejra Tower now has 721 followers on Twitter. In 2020 we will be exploring other ways to further promote Dwejra via social media – watch this space!



@DwejraTower



www.facebook.com/Dwejra.tower/

Leaving no stone unturned – at the Msida Bastion Garden!

Paolo Ferrelli

As visitors at the Historic Bastion Garden increase in number annually, our hard working Warden, Paolo Ferrelli tells Vigilo of the untiring work of his team of volunteers not just to keep the garden and its monuments in tip top condition, host regular events, but also to carry out ongoing research to piece together memorial fragments and identify the personages and burials which so far have been left unnamed. Here is what Paolo tells Vigilo:

Monthly Tours – First Sunday of the Month – Painting in the Garden

The monthly tours at the Garden have become a popular event amongst our visitors and always very well attended. During June, July and August, the tours are usually held at night, rendering the atmosphere of it all different and “spooky”. Visitors love it, while our First Sundays attract a great number of visitors interested in good bargains amongst our used books and bric-a-brac. We have also continued to entice artists with two yearly appointments, in Spring and in Autumn with our ‘Painting at the Garden’ days for a strong group of attendees who have come to love the peace in our garden.



Dogs Party

Another appointment in spring and autumn is the Dogs Party. The latest one was held on Sunday 20 October and a good number of dogs and owners were present. Donations collected have been forwarded to help the CSAF (Carers for Stray and Abandoned Felines) in Bormla.



Visit from Royal Army Medical Corps

On Saturday 12 October 36 Officers from the Royal Army Medical Corps visited the Garden led by Col. (ret) David Vassallo RAMC. The focal point of the visit was to pay respects to Captain John Bathurst Thomson, who died of cholera on 18 September 1850, and whose tomb was recently repaired. Thomson’s monument can also be found at the Upper Barrakka Gardens in Valletta.

Russian Navy Day

27 July is Russian Navy day, a national holiday in Russia. A ceremony was held at the Garden in front of the grave of Captain Baron Egor Antonovich Schlippenbach, a Russian Naval Officer who died in 1830. Baron Schlippenbach was the Commander of the H.I.M.S. frigate “Alexandra”. A good number of members of the Russian Embassy and from the Russian Centre for Science and Culture attended the brief and simple ceremony. Red carnations were laid at the base of the monument.



Ġenna ta’ Ġonna 2019

On Sunday 13 October the Garden was again open this year to support the Floriana Local Council during the event Ġenna ta’ Ġonna. 288 visitors visited the Garden on the day and volunteers were really busy managing the huge number of people. A sunny day helped to attract visitors. A media press conference to launch the event Ġenna ta’ Ġonna was held on 8 October, also at our Garden, with the presence of Parliamentary Secretaries Mr Deo Debattista and Mr Silvio Parnis. Also present were MP Robert Cutajar and Floriana Mayor Ms Davina Sammut Hili. We take this opportunity of thanking the Mayor for choosing our site as the location for this conference.



Students

2019 has seen a good participation of students at the Garden. 63 students from different countries, mainly Maltese, but also Italian and a French student, helped out in the Garden during the summer period. As always the energy and willingness to deliver brought by the students gave a strong boost to our activity. They were mainly involved in gardening, maintenance of monuments and research in the Garden, welcoming visitors and cleaning of the monuments.



Introduction video

After a long and trying period, we are happy to announce the completion of the introduction video of the garden. It is being shown at the entrance of the Garden. Visitors will be able to watch a ten-minute video in eight languages – Maltese, English, Swedish, French, Spanish, German, Russian and Italian. A very big thank you is due to Mr Anthony Ellul, the film director, who spent hours of his free time coming to the Garden with his equipment, including a drone, and going on to edit all eight videos. I would like also to thank the Historical Re-Enactment Group of Malta, who provided an animated group of re-enactors, led by Mr Martin Degiorgio, for the video. Thanks are also due to Mrs Ester Parra Fuente (Script and voice in Spanish), Mrs Ute Burghardt (Script and voice in German) and Mrs Svetlana Vella (Script and voice in Russian). The video can also be seen on our FB page and on YouTube. This project is a high quality product that was provided to us free of charge.

Kinemastic Short Film Festival

The last week of July is always dedicated to hosting the Kinemastic Short Film Festival. The festival was a big success again and lasted three evenings, ending with a half day Sunday for the children.

Special visit

We had the pleasant chance to meet Mr and Mrs James Cannon who visited the Garden from Australia. Mrs Susan Cannon is the daughter of Reginald Kirkpatrick, who started research at the garden in the 80s, which led to its subsequent restoration. After the sudden death of Mr Kirkpatrick, Mr Cannon published his research, a milestone in the works of the Garden. They were very pleased to see how the Garden is maintained and complimented us on the excellent work being done by all volunteers.

Probation Office

The Garden is proud to contribute in supporting the Department of Probation and Parole by hosting some offenders who with their help are contributing to the maintenance of our historical site. "To help ensure social stability by contributing to minimize the frequency of crime and by ensuring the re-integration of offenders to functional societal frameworks". We fully adhere to this statement.

Talk at the Radisson Blue Resort & Spa, Golden Sands

At the end of June, I had the privilege of being invited by Mr Henry Diacono, Guest Experience Manager, to give a talk to guests of the Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Golden Sands in Ghajn Tuffieħa.

Eric Frere

A very special volunteer who joined our team for two months was Eric Frere, from Boston USA. Mr Frere is a sixth generation descendant of the Honourable John Hookham Frere, through his brother George, and Susannah. He spent two months at the Garden, taking care of the grave of his ancestors. In particular he took care of stripping, repairing (thanks to Chris the blacksmith!!), undercoating

and repainting in black the metal fence that surrounds the monument of Susannah Frere that was in a really bad state. Eric, well done for your help and support to the garden. He also shared his time between our Garden and the Garden of Villa Frere.





Finds at the Garden

The Garden is still revealing its hidden secrets. We discovered, amongst others, a huge broken urn, almost complete in all its parts, and at least three names that were completely unknown so far. We are also carrying out research in the archives, both in Malta and in the UK, that are contributing to increase the knowledge and story of the Garden.

Cleaning of the Bastion

This summer a team from the Restoration Directorate, led by Antoine, cleaned our bastion of weed and bushes from top to bottom. Thanks to the Restoration Directorate for supplying us with their workmen.

Visitors

The number of visitors has increased and in 2019 we had visitors from 54 different countries. We are very happy that around 44% of our visitors are Maltese and together with the British account for 69% of our visitors. We also had visitors from such far-flung countries as the Faroe Islands, China, Bolivia, Japan, South Korea, Argentina, Bangladesh and Hong Kong.

A great well done to the Msida Bastion Cemetery for having been adjudicated worthy of becoming a member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe.

Mr Paolo Ferrelli is the Din l-Art Helwa volunteer Warden at the Msida Bastion Historic Garden



Vassalli bench

A special donation to the garden was made by the *Logġa Mikiel Anton Vassalli No. 1*, founded in 1851, a subordinate lodge of the Sovereign Grand Lodge of Malta. A bench resting on slabs with Masonic symbols was donated in esteem and out of respect for the figure of Mikiel Anton Vassalli on the occasion of the 190th anniversary of his death on 12 January 1829. There are quite a number of Masonic symbols in the garden, which is not surprising considering that it was not uncommon to be a Freemason in Britain in the 19th century.



Blood Donation

In between one event and the other, the Garden also supports the National Blood Transfusion Service. We invite everybody able to donate to join our effort in helping this important programme. Not only sweat but also blood for Malta!!

Din l-Art Helwa in Chichester



In summer 2019 Chevalier Charles Gatt, former Treasurer and long-serving Council Member of Din l-Art Helwa, was invited to give a presentation about the organisation to the *Friends of Valletta* Association in Chichester. Charles presented the Din l-Art Helwa story with a highly illustrated talk tracing the history of the organisation its foundation in 1965 and highlighting flagship restorations such as those of the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Valletta. The *Friends of Valletta* is a strong association with many members who have strong ties with Malta and many with Maltese surnames.

At the end of the talk Chevalier Gatt presented Mr Graham Pound, Chairman of the *Friends of Valletta*, with a glossy book of Maltese views.

From l. to r. Mr Graham Pound, Chairman of the Friends of Valletta in Chichester, Chevalier Charles Gatt, and Ms Rachael Osborne, Secretary of the Association



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

An enchanted evening at San Anton Palace



A glittering evening for the 2019 annual reunion of Din l-Art Helwa in the grounds of San Anton Palace



The national anthem marks the arrival of the Patron of Din l-Art Helwa, National Trust of Malta, H.E. Dr George Vella, President of Malta and Mrs Vella who are welcomed by officials of the organisation. From l. to r.

Martin Scicluna, Hon. Treasurer, Dr Gabrielle Torpiano, Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President, H.E. Dr George Vella, President of Malta, Mrs George Vella, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran, Event Co-ordinator, Mrs Simone Mizzi, Secretary General

The 54th celebrational summer fund raising dinner organised by Din l-Art Helwa, National Trust of Malta, was this year graced by the presence of H.E. the President of Malta, Dr George Vella, the new Patron of the organisation, together with Mrs Vella. The evening was held in the historic grounds of the Palace of San Anton, Attard, and guests were welcomed by Professor Alex Torpiano, the new Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, together with officials and Council members.

The event was attended by members of the diplomatic corps and officials of several cultural and academic entities. It was strongly supported by the presence of many corporate supporters of Din l-Art Helwa, in particular APS Bank plc, AX Group, Bank of Valletta plc, Vassallo Group Ltd, and several members of the InterNations Association. A lavish menu was provided by Osborne Caterers while musicians George Curmi *il-Puse'* and Godwin Lucas entertained guests throughout the night with their delightful repertoire.

A most successful raffle was held with several works of art generously donated by artists Maria Rossella Dalmas, Anna Galea, Paul Fenech, and from photographers Daniel Cilia and the late Suzie Jenkins, which, with other exciting prizes helped make up much needy funds for the organisations activities in the protection of the national heritage.

Professor Torpiano thanked H.E. Dr George Vella for accepting to become Din l-Art Helwa's patron, as well as the Environment Landscapes Consortium and its Ministry for the use of the San Anton Palace grounds. He gave an address illustrating the numerous activities undertaken by Din l-Art Helwa throughout the year which had been marked by the recent launch of the historic Ta' Xutu Tower at Wied iż-Żurrieq, a restoration project completed with the financial support of the Malta Airport Foundation. This was the 10th Coastal Watch Tower restored by Din l-Art Helwa and one of 41 national heritage sites saved through restoration since its foundation in 1965. Professor Torpiano described the continued lobbying and campaigning actions undertaken by Din l-Art Helwa to prevent the loss of built and natural heritage and underlined his concerns about the loss of open spaces. He paid tribute to the work of all volunteers at Din l-Art Helwa who had kept the organisation vibrant throughout the decades since its foundation, as well as the organisers of the dinner. In particular he wished to remember the late Lt Colonel Eric Parnis, a former Vice President of the organisation, for his commitment to heritage during his time on Council.

MESSAGE FROM OUR TREASURER

Din l-Art Helwa recognises the strong and consistent support that it receives from corporate citizens. Various companies from a mix of industries and varying in size provide financial and moral support via restoration projects, other financial support through annual membership, co-operation with the involvement of their employees and by attending our landmark fund raising activities.

On behalf of the Executive President, the Council and members of Din l-Art Helwa, I gratefully acknowledge our corporate supporters' assistance. Malta and its wonderful cultural heritage is all the much richer for it. Thank you.

Martin Scicluna
Hon. Treasurer
Din l-Art Helwa



Fun-packed elegance at the Phoenicia Ballroom

Din l-Art Helwa's autumn fund-raising Gala Dinner, now an established night in our social calendar, was held at a tightly packed Phoenicia Ballroom on Saturday 23rd November, always an elegant and classic backdrop to any soirée. An event-packed fun and glamorous evening was graced by many friends and members of Din l-Art Helwa most of whom dressed for the occasion in black tie, and with young fashion designer Luke Azzopardi embellishing the evening with many of his fabulously romantic ball gowns adorning several of his friends. A fundraising auction, a silent auction and a raffle were preceded by a pre-dinner champagne reception held on the adjacent Maryanski Terrace where many beautiful *objets d'art* generously donated by leading artists were on display. The works which went under the hammer during the course of the evening included paintings and sculptures by Pawl Carbonaro, John Martin Borg, Zoe Chomarat, Andrew Micallef, Arnold Sultana, Alexia Coppini, Joseph Xuereb, Gianni Pace and Amelia Saint George.

Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa and Dr Gabrielle Torpiano, officials and Council members of Din l-Art Helwa greeted guests, together with the main event organisers of the evening, Joe Farrugia and his wife Christine.

The event and auctions were professionally compered by Thomas Camilleri, a comedian and one of Malta's top actors, and the duo of Michael Manduca on the keyboard and singer Romina Mamo set the tempo with their entertaining music.

Professor Alex Torpiano thanked those present for their participation and generosity, saying that continuous funds were

needed to keep up activity in the protection of the environment and in the organisation's many restoration projects. He thanked in particular the corporate sponsors who attended for helping to boost the evening with their participation: namely APS Bank plc, AX Group, Bank of Valletta plc, Deloitte Malta, Plaza Centres plc, PwC Malta, while BNF Bank plc and Sparkasse Bank Malta plc sent a handsome donation in support of the event. Special thanks were bestowed on Council member Joe Farrugia and the events team of volunteers and office staff at Din l-Art Helwa for having put together such an entertaining evening.

Always raising much interest were the weekend breaks and experiences on offer for the silent auction. These were generously donated by the Hotel Quirinale – Rome, the Grand Hotel Corinthia – Prague, The Landmark – London, La Scibina Resort – Sicily, and the Hotel Football – Manchester, The Manoel Theatre, Sanya Eco Spa and Gym, Malta Sailing Charter, while generous gifts and vouchers from Azzopardi Jewellers, Barracuda Restaurant, Giuseppe's Restaurant, Melita Health & Beauty, St Julian's, Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, Charles de Giorgio made for a most exciting raffle.

Din l-Art Helwa would like to acknowledge also the generous support of Dr John Vassallo and Dr Marianne Noll, Atelier Michael Tabone, Philippe Martinet Fine Wines and Flowers and Company at Green Suppliers for their donations towards the many fine wines and floral decorations that contributed to making the evening a resounding success.



The Organisers' Table: Dr John Vassallo, Ms Monique Chambers, Mr Bernd Kohncke, Mrs Christine Farrugia, Mr Joseph Farrugia, Dr Marianne Noll, Mr John Degiorgio and Mrs Daniela Kohncke



The Officials' Table: Clockwise Mr Anthony Pace, Mrs Josephine Pace, Mr Martin Scicluna, Treasurer Din l-Art Helwa, Ing. Charles Cuschieri, Mrs Josette Scicluna, Mrs Marstel Cuschieri, Professor Alex Torpiano, Executive President Din l-Art Helwa, Dr Gabrielle Torpiano, Mr Christian Gauci, Ms Louise Grima



Din l-Art Helwa volunteers Chiara Cassar and Joanna Portelli wear evening gowns by Luke Azzopardi



Hosts Joe and Christine Farrugia welcome popular model and fashion icon Tamara Webb and Perit Andrew Borg Wirth



Fashion Designer Luke Azzopardi and his party: Andrew Borg Wirth, Luke Azzopardi, Tamara Webb, Becky Micallef, Michael Zerafa, Maria Azzopardi, Nicole Gera



Tightly packed Phoenicia Ballroom



Compère Thomas Camilleri conducts a lively auction sale.



AX Group



PwC Malta



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APS Bank plc



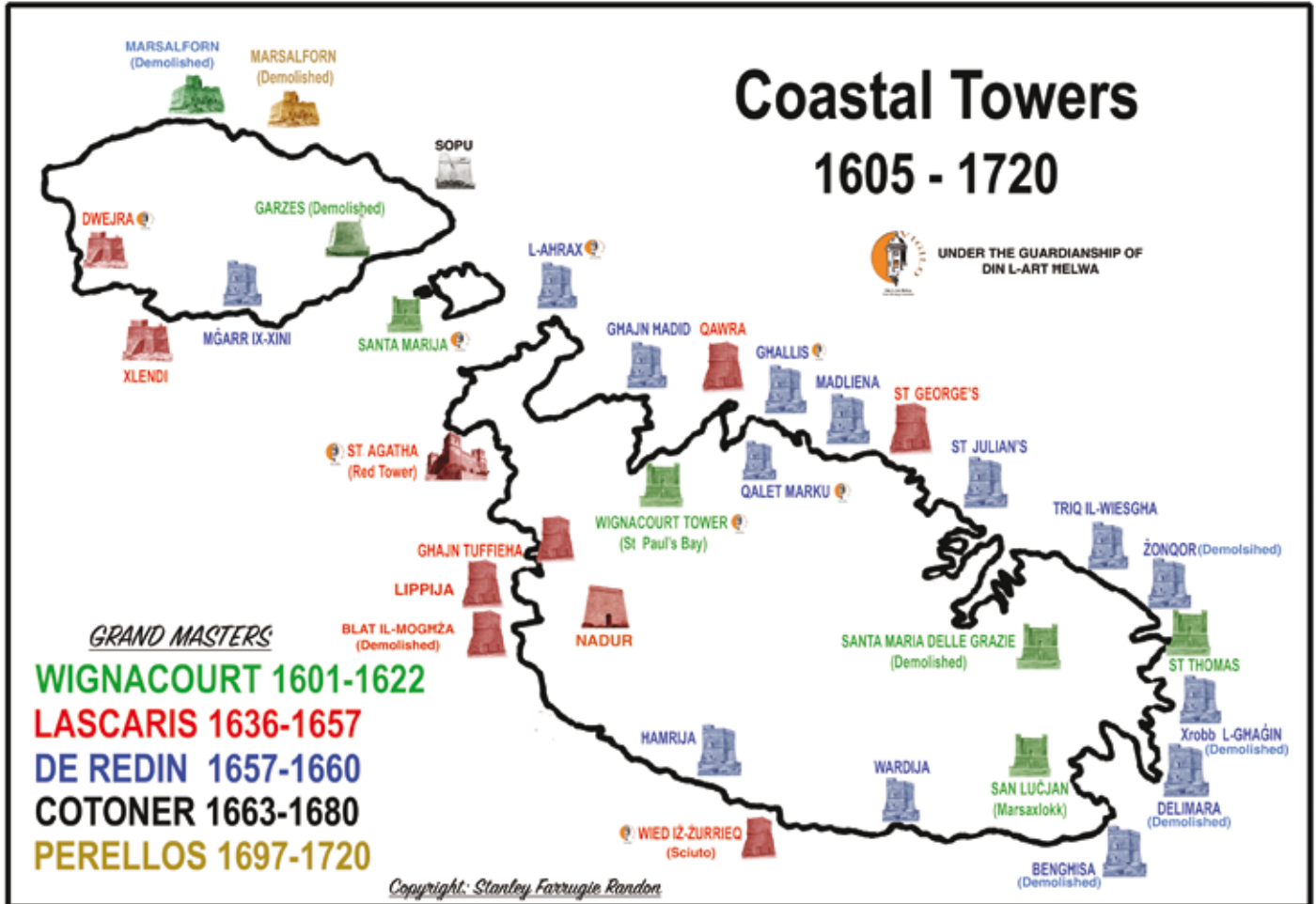
Deloitte Malta



Plaza Centres plc

Coast Guards before the construction of coastal towers

Stanley Farrugia Randon



Din l-Art Helwa manages a number of coastal fortifications which include towers and batteries. At one time or another I have been involved in the restoration and management of these places and had served as warden of Wignacourt (St Paul's) Tower for 16 years. These fortifications influenced the demographics of their surroundings as people began to feel more secure. Indeed the Northern part of the island was largely uninhabited before the building of the coastal towers but they still worked the fields. I like to imagine how these people and their families felt insecure living or working far away from inhabited areas and basic amenities.

Past empires had their own troops trained to fight to defend their lands and conquer others. The rest of the population worked the lands, reared animals or performed all sorts of manual work. In a small island like Malta, in the middle of the Mediterranean and surrounded by ports which were easily accessible to pirates, the situation was very different. The small rural population also had to play their part in the coastal watch whilst the government mostly guarded the urban areas where the governing bodies lived. In Birżebbuġa and Marsaxlokk there are Bronze Age remains which show evidence of fortified places. Indeed, even St Elmo on Monte Sciberras and St Angelo in Birgu have a history much older than that of the Knights of Malta.

The coastal guards were involved in fighting back pirates but must have also been a determining factor in the change of governance of the island. The Normans who took over the islands in a very short time after 220 years of Arab rule, and the French who expelled the Knights of St John after 268 years, had the support of the coastal watch guards.

The coastal guards on duty formed an imaginary wall around the islands, looking over the sea and lighting a fire if an enemy was sighted. The light of the fire by night and the smoke emitted by day would relay the message to the other guard posts and the bells of the churches would ring to inform the people to come out of their homes armed. As reported by the Maltese *Capitoli Universitari* in 11 February 1416, these were *li guardi di li marini su' nostri mura et defensionni* (Mons. A. Mifsud, *La Militia e le Torri nella Antica Difesa di Malta*). The inhabitants always lived in fear of an attack and prepared to fight. They defended their country and family by offering their time and risking their lives manning these coastal posts while still having to work hard in the fields to earn a living.

Even the dry stone walls (*ħitan tas-sejjeħ*) served as defence and sometimes a labyrinth for pirates. They also served as hides and it was probably these walls which prevented the Turks from locating the armada of the *Piccolo Soccorso* who were guided by

the locals from Mdina to Birgu during the Great Siege of 1565. The Maltese knew the fields well and they were renowned to be agile enough to hide behind these dry walls and jump over them when needed.

During the Middle Ages, when attacks from the sea were even more frequent, and centuries before the Knights built the coastal towers, there were various coastal guard posts.

These watch posts, called *guardia* or *mahrās*, were located in strategic positions to spot any approaching enemy fleet and relay the message by lighting a bonfire around the islands. They probably consisted of one or two rooms where the guard on duty could shelter. They were guarded by the coastal militia which was set up at the end of the 14th century to defend the islands from the frequent attacks of pirates who attacked villages and remote places which were otherwise unprotected. From the militia list of 1419 the population is estimated to have been around 10,000 with many scattered around the island and so a look out of most of the coast needed some form of organisation. By 1530 the population was around 20,000.

The word *dejma* probably derives from the Maltese word *dejjem* which means 'always' as the guards provided for 24 hour duties. The first *dejma* was for the defence of Mdina but later on it was extended to villages. The Captains or *Banderarii* of the *dejma* were chosen in September and were allotted their area to defend. The head of the horsemen was known as the *Kavabuzz*.

Up to the 17th century no serious attempt had been made by the Order of St John to fortify Malta's coastline. Bosio, the historian of the Order of St John) described how the natives greeted Grand Master L'Isle Adam when he took possession of the islands of Malta in 1530. He was greeted by long-bearded members of the *dejma* and from his description we know how they were dressed – in tartans which went down to their knees, and covered with the local cotton weave. They wore caps and some wore an earring. They were on horseback and most were armed with swords and daggers and *zagaglia* and dressed

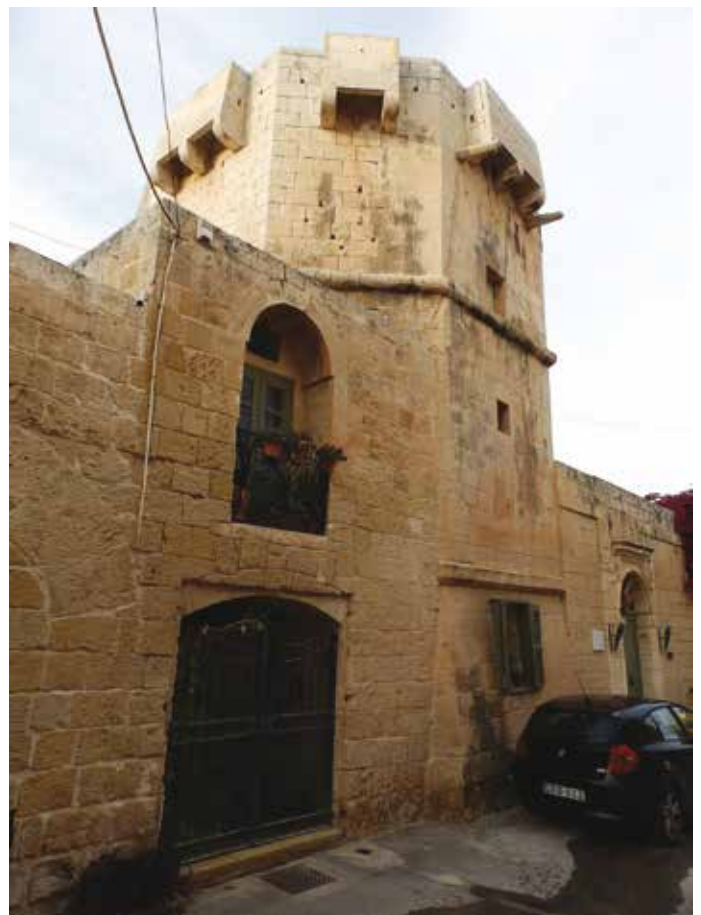
di carte vesti e giubbe, che infin a mezza gamba li soprano, di cotone o sia bombagie, in maniera trapontate e ripiene che no solamente alle frecce et alle saette degli archi et a bolzoni delle balestre resistono, ma talora all'archibusate ancora: portando in capo certi berrettoni che quivi nel proprio paese si fanno, i quali berrettoni non sono men utili e men forti delle vesti sopradette.

The *dejma* system was adopted by the Knights but they reserved the right to elect the captains themselves. The Knight who commanded these military regiments was called the seneschal. Men from 16 to 65 years had to enroll and were divided into units according to the villages. In fact many villages had their meeting place which was most often a cross on a pedestal in front of one of the many churches and chapels scattered around the Maltese islands. The call for meeting in this place was a cannon shot or church bells. These crosses are still referred to as the *salib tad-dejma*. Noblemen and the rich had to supply ships, galleons, felukas, horses and mares. A family was armed with slings, arrows, swords, alabards, daggers and later firearms. The signal for gathering of people to fight was called *nafra*. Besides defending the villages, the *dejma* was also in charge of the coastal defence. The guards were paid between one and a half and three scudi per month by the Mdina Università and that of Valletta, and therefore from Maltese taxes.

The soldiers of the *dejma* were organised into various regiments according to the city or village from where they came.

The only watch post or *mahrās* which survives is the Ta' Tabibu post in St Paul's Bay. Most of the coastal towers built during the Knights' period were probably built on the same spot occupied by these posts. For example in all probability the *mahrās* in Wied iż-Żurriq was located in the same place where the Xutu tower is now located and in fact dendrochronological studies on the wooden door revealed that the wood used was from *Larix* species (Larch), *Picea* species (Spruce) and the weather board of *Pinus* species (Pine). Dendrochronological dating gave an indication that part of the wood was around 800 years old and so part of the wood used as a door of the *mahrās* may well have been recycled and used for the main door of the tower. However this was not the case in St Paul's Bay where St Paul's Tower, built in 1610, was erected on the site of a chapel dedicated to the saint. In the latter case the reason could have been that the watch post now known as the Ta' Tabibu was still in use and so the tower was built in another strategic position to offer an extra watch post. Mellieħa and St Paul's Bay are not mentioned in the militia list of 1419 but this does not mean that they were totally uninhabited or not used for agricultural purposes. Indeed the list reveals that the population was mostly located in rural areas and therefore still thriving on agriculture and husbandry. This justified the need for adequate coastal watch to put the people on guard when a suspicious pirate ship was spotted. They were mostly manned between the beginning of March and the end of September as pirates did not venture out to sea during the winter months because of bad weather.

Other guard posts or fortified houses were either private property or part of an attempt to secure the surrounding area. Some of these, although inland, had a view of the sea in the distance. The Grand Master offered some privileges to people who erected their own defensive towers, giving them the right



Captain's Tower in Qrendi



Ta' Tabibu Tower with flats in the background



Torri Mamo

to name the tower, erect their own coat-of-arms, and exempted their son from serving in the militia or from keeping a horse in time of peace but still obliging him to defend his country when the enemy invaded. Mamo Tower in Marsascala (which is also managed by Din l-Art Helwa) is one such tower. Contrary to popular belief, this tower was not built by the Order of St John but, as its name suggests, by the Mamo family to use as a fortified family stronghold. Gregorio and Giorgio Mamo were father and son, both master builders of the Knights. A few metres away is a chapel dedicated to St Gaetan which was built by the same family.

There was also the *torri tal-mishun* from which boiling liquid was thrown onto the assailant. Every village had one built close to the church. These places were manned by the common people, apart from privately owned towers which were defended by their owners.

Din l-Art Helwa was always to the forefront in the restoration of coastal defences. I would like to conclude by begging for the restoration of the Ta' Tabibu Tower in Triq it-Tonn, St Paul's Bay. This is probably the only *mahr*s still standing today and it is in need of restoration. Din l-Art Helwa has often brought this to the attention to the authorities.

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

Thank you to Ray Vella – first ranger and manager of Foresta 2000

Simone Mizzi



The scenery before

With this edition of *Vigilo*, Din l-Art Helwa wishes to thank Ray Vella after his recent retirement, for the many years of work he gave to establish and protect *Foresta 2000*. Former Executive President, Martin Galea, had worked with BirdLife Malta and with the Parks Division to carry out a ‘Millennium’ project for the year 2000. This was to be long lasting and save green spaces so they could be enjoyed by future generations of people. The photos of the regenerated woodland speak for themselves.

Ray was the first ranger and manager of *Foresta 2000*. He worked with Martin Galea and other Din l-Art Helwa volunteers to replant the hitherto fragile clay hill slope and barren area just below the Red Tower in Mellieħa. He also fixed stepped pathways and created signage. It is now glorious woodland, having re-established a traditional Maltese *maquis* that will ensure clay and soil erosion are minimised as much as possible. Ray started to work there in August of 2004.

Foresta 2000 is an area that covers roughly around the same



After a few years...



The scenery today

area as Buskett Gardens (55 hectares). Ray recorded planting over 21,000 trees and shrubs, all of which are native trees, either still in existence or which used to grow, and which were brought back from near extinction, such as the Western Strawberry Tree, Narrow-leaved Ash, Kermes Oak and Holm Oak. His years at *Foresta 2000* and the care with which he nurtured all those trees planted (and replanted several times over) have now really borne fruit on those fragile clay cliffs below the Red Tower. Thanks to the trees taking root, the slopes there are now secure and afforestation certainly a great success in this area of Malta which is so important for the migration and habitats of birds and for our biodiversity in general. These Ray protected even sometimes at the risk to his own personal safety.

‘I really appreciate the fact that DLĦ was so instrumental in the creation of the new forest,’ says Ray, ‘and how it has altered the area around the Red Tower. Martin Galea knows only too well how difficult the first years were. I remember the monthly



Planting trees in 2004

meetings after hours we spent in Sliema and Attard going over the fine details! Without the help of DLH it would have never happened. I am proud that this project has greatly embellished the area around the Red Tower and that I have also helped in creating greater access to the zone with the steps leading to the site. I know I will be visiting just the same and hope to be able to give a hand when needed in the future’.

Former Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa, Martin Galea joins all at DLH in thanking Ray for what he did over the years for this great project and puts in a special word:

‘Ray, I know what sacrifices you went through when you were personally targeted, shot at and had your place destroyed and your animals killed. It took guts and determination to continue in the face of such intimidation and threats, for which you have my greatest respect. The trees are now growing, the area cleared, and whilst the work is never finished nor the challenges over, you were there at the beginning which is always the hardest.

Thanks Ray and well done.’

For more information you can also visit the FB page at FB/Foresta 2000.

Photos by courtesy of Ray Vella and BirdLife Malta

Mrs Simone Mizzi is the Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa

Thank you to Joe Azzopardi

Martin Galea

It was a time when Din l-Art Helwa was not rich (not that it is today but it was a considerably smaller organisation). Our communication with members was through an old Gestetner machine, foolscap size, complete with pink correction fluid, hand cranked and individually stamped (I can still taste the gum, ugh) and posted. An Englishman, Peter Kent Baguley, turned up at the office and offered to help as a volunteer. We discussed where he could be most useful and decided that resuscitating *Vigilo*, an intermittent hand-stapled pamphlet started in 1967 by Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, our founder, would be a great initiative. Peter was a lot more ambitious than I and when he turned up with a 16 page colour draft edition, I balked at the cost – at the time our total income was about €50,000. However, it was our thirtieth edition and I was persuaded. The first revived *Vigilo* came out in Summer 1995. In his forward, the judge said he was delighted and honoured to write the first contribution and wished it a long life. And so we started to produce a regular edition. Peter very soon found Joe, a young eager volunteer with absolutely no background in publishing, but my word, he learnt fast and when Peter left for the UK our baby was in safe hands.

For many years Joe published *Vigilo* single handedly. He found the contributors, ran some of his own articles, mainly with a historical context, looked to the layout, and dealt with the printers. He did this efficiently, with no fuss and alone. Anyone who knows publishing magazines knows what a massive undertaking this is. Finding the right contributors, recording all the events of the association, contributions come in late, and over or under their allotted space, proof reading needs to be done, late entries and so on. Joe never fussed or lost his cool, just got on with it and got the job done.

In the end after having done this for many years Joe has decided to retire as (volunteer) editor and move on. Simone Mizzi, Ann Gingell Littlejohn and Maria Grazia Cassar have all lent a helping hand getting *Vigilo* to our readers while Joe was studying for several degrees these last years, but again he left the publication in safe hands. I should mention here that Petra Caruana Dingli has accepted to take on an editorship role later this year, in addition to her other roles within the organization.

We owe Joe a great debt of gratitude. *Vigilo* provides the reader with a record of Din l-Art Helwa, its activities, restorations, its many campaigns and generous sponsors, as well as articles of interest to those who have Malta’s heritage at heart. It also is a record of many of the personalities and volunteers who make up Din l-Art Helwa and therefore as a publication it serves as a record of the Association. It keeps our flag flying and is sent to persons of influence such as MPs, as well as members with whom we need to keep in touch. You could say it is one of the pillars of our marketing strategy to build up our profile over the years.

Thank you Joe for your great contribution to our cause, and best wishes from all of us here at Din l-Art Helwa.

Mr Martin Galea is a Council member and past Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa

A Christmas Gift for Din l-Art Helwa



*From l. to r.
Professor Alex Torpiano,
Executive President of Din
l-Art Helwa, Mrs Anne
Cachia and
Mr John Cachia*



A 1790 carved stone sundial was donated to the organisation by members John and Anne Cachia, who have been involved with Din l-Art Helwa since the 1960s when they were active members of Teenagers' Din l-Art Helwa, and who had worked on the Hal Millieri project as youths. The sundial's provenance is not known but it was purchased by the Cachias from antique dealer Pawlu Tanti years ago. It is a handsome addition to the collection of stone carvings at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, home to the organisation since 1967. Din l-Art Helwa thanks Mr and Mrs Cachia for this thoughtful and generous gesture.

1790 stone sundial

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