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NEWSPAPER POST

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National Trust of Malta

VIGILO



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Din l-Art Helwa is a 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

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Qantara

***Future of Religious Heritage
Association***

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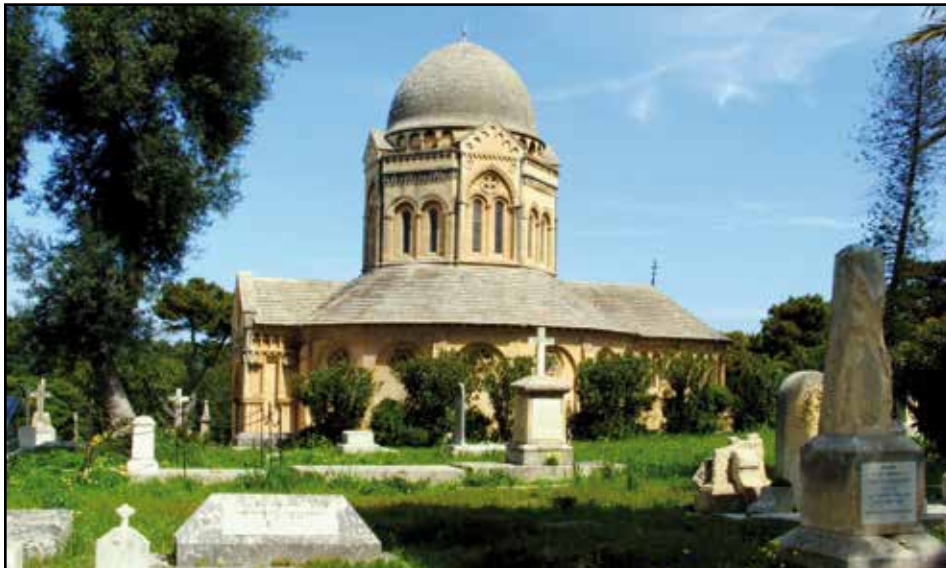
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Corporate Sponsors

C O N T E N T S



The Hamilton-Gordon memorial chapel at Ta' Braxia Cemetery



FRONT COVER

The restored
Fresnel lens of
Delimara Lighthouse
Photo:
Stanley Farrugia Randon



BACK COVER

The restored
canopy top and
weather vane of
Delimara Lighthouse
Photo:
Stanley Farrugia Randon



Restoration sponsored by GasanMamo Insurance Ltd

Speaking Truth To Power

Simone Mizzi

Executive President of Din l-Art Ħelwa

Speaking truth to power about heritage and the environment has been the role of *Din l-Art Ħelwa* for nearly 50 years now. As we approach the organisation's 50th anniversary in 2015, only one thing has changed: the environment is frailer than ever. Fifty years ago, Town and Country Planning Acts had not yet been envisaged. In the early 1970s, attempts were made to establish them. In the late 1970s, any thought that had been put into creating them, was fast taken out. Overnight, all of Malta was made one whole Development Zone under the infamous Buildings Development Areas Act. Permits for development were granted according to who was the flavour of the month. Successive administrations established umbrella laws but used and abused them also according to political flavour. Today, as dictated by established legislation, any new development planning should arise from well-studied vision, yet our planners are introducing new regulations in haste and unprepared. Today, the granting of flavour of the month permits and the sanctioning of illegalities is being rendered legal by new regulations, so there will be no such thing any more that we can call ODZ. "We won't extend ODZ boundaries", say the planners, "but you can build within them!" What goes around, comes around.

It is hard to watch Malta's environment suffer, land dwindle, coastline cemented and awful quality buildings built in haste that mostly remain empty – and all this to pander to an electorate. From where I stand today, planning is in the hands of the people, in an 'ask and you shall receive' street-by-street revision of Local Plans. A voter's paradise.

Coping with the swinging pendulum from the agony to ecstasy of conservation is the privilege of DLH presidents, its Executive Council and of all who love Malta and want to preserve its beauty. The work we do to save heritage, restore order and bring new life to heritage gives us the strength of conviction that we are doing what is right for Malta. It is only this that can re-energise and empower us to brave a truly



Bahrija

ugly and grim present for which I have prepared an environmental housekeeping to-do list for government. We will keep reminding it of its duties, its role, its legal requirements and its own binding promise made in its 2013 election manifesto to work to protect the environment.

Next year – 2015 – will bring much work to us as volunteers, but also much joy and celebration. DLH remains a national ideal, a national conscience. Armed with just a wing and a prayer, we turn ugliness into beauty, decay into freshness, old into new. Armed with the strength of example, DLH speaks this side of truth to power. Whether our audience loves or hates what we say, they all admire us for what we do. Our aspiration to preserve the beauty of Malta, the love we have for this small patch of ours spurs us on despite the walls of ignorance we face. This is the ideal, an *idée fixe*, through which we achieve all we do and more.

"Nothing and nobody will ever, ever take this ideal away from us".

Mġarr Metropolis



It is with a great sense of pride that I thank our team for the tremendous strides we have made this year in all aspects of our work: in restoration, in the renewals of our Guardianship Deeds with the government, for the privilege of another friendless tower to restore, for our fund-raising achievements, for the many generous sponsors who share our vision, the extraordinary milestone of giving the Delimara Lighthouse back its hood, the funds raised for Victory Church – which will soon top a million euros. Who would ever have thought it possible for a group of volunteers to achieve so much? If you ever tried to plan it, you could not. It just defies all logic and all sense of attainable possibility. Some 21,500 volunteer hours were worked in 2014. It doesn't sound much but we just have to read our Secretary-General's report to know just how much those 21,500 volunteer hours have managed to achieve during this last year, coupled with those of our slim office staff, a small indication of what



lies in store for us next year for the Golden Jubilee. I remain mindful that 2014 has only been one more normal DLH year. One of almost 50, and so, remembering past presidents and councils, I wish to salute those who came before me who have blazed their own trail of good for Malta.

Now for those of us working in the field of conservation, it is a most anxious time. Whilst the awareness of built heritage on a national level has definitely grown, and DLH definitely can claim to have had great impact on that, the need to preserve our environment and our countryside has not sunk in. On the contrary, it seems that every square inch of land and sea is now at risk.

DLH has worked with all administrations for the last 50 years. The organisation has grown in its knowledge of conservation and environment management. It has rubbed elbows and shared this with those whose responsibility it is to actually manage Malta's heritage assets. They grew along with us and we grew with them, in particular with good direction from Europe. Today, we are starting from scratch with a new set of minds, yet these are ever fixed in the same mind-set, laced now by modern day values where everything is calculated by its fast monetary equation. The environment is a mere resource that has no champion except for a handful of brave NGOs like DLH. An economy based on the construction industry remains a weak one and shows very little sensitivity on the part of past and present masters. DLH has spoken this truth for 50 years. I look forward to the challenge of working with the new 'boys on the block', hoping some sense of conscience will creep into their hearts and minds.

DLH has never been against development as long as it is necessary, as long as it brings quality, and as long as it does not destroy our unique identity. Whilst hiding behind the right given to it by a great electoral majority, this government's obsession that it wants to see innovation in building to boost the economy is like listening to a record stuck in a groove.

The urban conglomeration that is Mosta keeps eating away at the green surrounding the town. View from the Mosta Dome towards Magħtab

Magnificent colours of our sea



We have asked to learn more about the vision that is guiding this, taking the issue as far as the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning Development, where we have been greeted most fairly. We have asked for the studies that precede a new Structure Plan. As a public we have a right to this information. At the time of writing this, this has not yet been forthcoming. We wait for it with eager minds but with caution because in the last year we have NOT heard a single word in favour of the environment. On the contrary, we hear daily about new planning regulations.

Regulations, regulations, regulations. Today's planners really believe that by passing these regulations they are protecting the environment. Policies regulating the impact of man's activity on the use of space, especially those standards of health, safety, size, shape, design and location, are necessary.

Yet I see another truth emerge. As far as the planners are concerned, regulating in this instance means permitting, so first you regulate, update or change policies and then you open the flood-gates for construction. Petrol stations, fireworks factories, cemeteries, solar farms and shooting ranges, farm shops, boutique wineries, country hotels, higher hotels everywhere, buildings in the countryside, buildings in the sea, islands in the sea, a redevelopment brief for Marsaxlokk whilst, ironically, a tanker 350 metres long in Marsaxlokk and 10 storeys high – and sometimes two of them – will feature prominently in the mouth of the Bay, something that has not been thought through properly yet. As if that were not enough, 21 land reclamation schemes are being considered.

Where are the studies that tell us that all this is necessary? *Repetita Juvant*. Who is protecting the environment? Who will protect it when Mepa is dismembered? For the last year – since the elections – our Minister for the Environment has been left without a job. Will he get it back when this happens? One vote on the Mepa Board is all he will get and that does not give him very much unless it gives him the right to veto.

So there is not much time left for our environment. At DLH, we do not wish to wait this time out. We want to be proactive, so here is the task list for government to work towards and a Job Description for the Ministry of the Environment who should be handling these issues with the planners together and not in isolated silos.

I would ask the government to:

1. Finish the new Structure Plan, launch it, explain it to the public, allow comment and truly listen by taking comments and acting on them.
2. Start the process to extend Malta's protected National Park from Majjistral right down to Wied iż-Żurrieq.
3. Finalise a Marine Spatial Plan especially in view of intended land reclamation schemes. This request by Malta's Environment and Planning Commissioner in the Ombudsman's office was disappointingly brushed aside by the Prime Minister.
4. Add four more Marine Protected Areas to the four we already have. These could be from Xlendi – Past Ta Ċenċ to Mgarr ix-Xini, Ċirkewwa, Delimara peninsula from Xifer l-Infern to Ras il-Fenek. Activate and regulate the four already established marine parks so that they are not just on paper.
5. Step up scheduling for unique national assets, including their buffer zones, because the buffer zones of areas of high landscape areas, archaeological sites and those around Urban Conservation areas protect the sight-lines of our church domes, such a unique feature of our baroque heritage. Once we build around these, this part of Malta's identity is lost forever.
6. Step up the scheduling of old buildings in our towns and villages so that the need for horizontal living does NOT destroy the character of their interiors or their gardens, especially old cities like Valletta, its beautiful courtyards, its wrought iron and its wooden balconies. Only Malta has these.
7. Schedule more of the humble vernacular, our rural hamlets, and our rubble walls. Protect them from the modern invasion that is about to come. Learn from the destructive extensions to local plans: Bahrija, Żebbieh, Manikata, now all merging into one.
8. Assist NGOs with right of redress on Planning Appeals, with accessible fees and the rights to object to the Planning Authority.
9. Impose the all-important Guardianship Deed on all contracts granting the use of historic sites to commercial ends which is now permitted within the recent ODZ regulation. This valuable tool should not be discarded to facilitate commercial activity with lesser binding contracts.
10. Step up incentive schemes to regenerate urban conservation and also create incentives for the sponsors of restoration projects by increasing tax benefits.
11. Order the National Statistics Office to collect and publish data on land use both in and out of development zones. The last time it did this was in 2006. I wonder why it stopped.
12. Establish the Style Guidance Committee, otherwise who is going to judge which design is innovative or not? Who will save our national identity?
13. Give a five year moratorium and grants to REMOVE all aluminium apertures forthwith and BAN the wretched material, regulate our partiality for kitch colour schemes and inappropriate visual amenities.
14. Sign the European Landscape Convention. It is a gross shame that Malta is one of only two European countries that have not signed it. Iceland is the other. Malta ratified it in 2000; who knows why we have not signed it? Maybe there are conditions we have failed to meet or maybe we simply do not care.

This makes a constructive action list for our culture, planning and environmental ministries and sets a road map for sustainable development. More will need to be added as we go along.

DLH welcomes improvement and regeneration. This could not be more evident than in our support for the controversial project for Valletta’s entrance. The retrofitting of the social housing façades was one of this organisation’s recommendations and must be the improvement of the decade. I am so happy to have seen this take place. Whatever happens, Malta always had good quality building until the 1960s but since then there have been precious few new examples. We must make sure we have quality buildings again, and ones that give us our own special identity, that say Brand Malta, Product Malta and not Product Anywhere!

I am actually looking forward to defending a brave beautiful new Malta, providing that our natural and built heritage, especially our countryside and our coast, is safeguarded and not impoverished to enrich the few. We must remain positive and will certainly give it our very best. Let us take strength not just from the heritage saved in the last 49 years but certainly because of the prospect of doing the same and more for Malta during the next 50. Finally, let us take strength from the support we give each other as volunteers and for the personal support you all give me, for which I thank you.

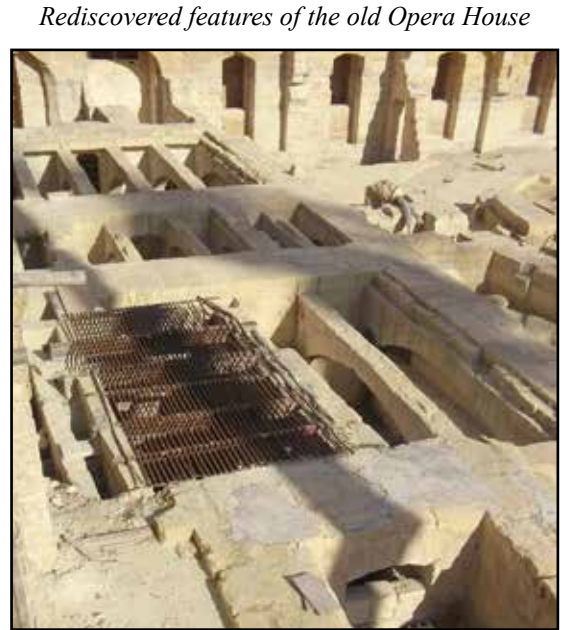


Retrofitting of the social housing façades

Reinstated features of the old Opera House



Valletta’s entrance regeneration project



Rediscovered features of the old Opera House



The old and the new

Din l-Art Helwa lists the environmental tasks for the government which the organisation considers are urgently required for the protection of Malta’s land and marine spaces in view of the many development policies and regulations impacting upon territory which the government intends updating or launching. The tasks have been listed following recommendations made during DLH’s AGM on 22 February and were sent in a letter from Simone Mizzi to Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Minister Leo Brincat, Parliamentary Secretary for Lands, Planning and the Simplification of Administrative Process Michael Farrugia, Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Local Government José Herrera and Malta Environment and Planning Authority chairman Vince Cassar, with a copy to Prime Minister Joseph Muscat who is responsible for both Sustainable Development and Lands.

Din l-Art Helwa’s president Simone Mizzi says: “It is easier to tell the Government what it can be doing rather than what it should not be doing. I believe this to be a more positive way of working with those who have the power and responsibility to look after our heritage and environment. Most of these recommendations impact on spatial use of land and sea – perhaps the main aspect of environmental protection that is needed with our island being so small – and unused space is at grave risk of being compromised by new building regulations.”

To date only one acknowledgement – from Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Minister Leo Brincat – has been received.

Secretary General's AGM 2014 Report

George Camilleri

Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa

This was a most active year for *Din l-Art Helwa* in its work to protect heritage and the environment.

Renewal of Guardianship Deeds

The most significant achievement of the last year was the renewal on 14 October of nine Guardianship Deeds that had lapsed since first being signed in 2003. These were for the Red Tower, Santa Marija Tower and Battery, Wignacourt, Dwejra, Ghallis, Qaliet Marku and Mamo Towers and the Msida Bastion Historic Garden, as well as obtaining a new deed for Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower. A symbolic ceremony was held at the Msida Bastion Garden with Superintendent of Cultural Heritage Anthony Pace and Parliamentary Secretary for Culture José Herrera and Parliamentary Secretary for Lands Michael Farrugia.

People

During the year Albert Mamo, Alan Deidun and former DLH President Petra Caruana Dingli were co-opted as DLH Council members. They bring with them invaluable experience in business and environmental management. Albert now chairs the 50th Anniversary Committee, while Petra and Alan contribute regularly to our crucial environment protection activities.

Our Council has formalised the rank of 'Honorary Council Member for Life' for long-standing council members/officials so they remain on the council in an advisory capacity but vacate seats to allow for new members. Former President Martin Scicluna has offered to stay on in this capacity. I am sure everyone will join me in thanking Martin for his sterling contribution to DLH over the years – in particular his successful lobbying for DLH to acquire the first ever Guardianship Deeds in 2003.

George Camilleri and Luciano Mule Stagno will represent DLH on the new National Rural Network Malta Committee which aims at adding value to rural development in Malta.

Sponsorships and corporate fund raising

We wish to remember the late Mrs Anne Crosthwait, a loyal member of DLH, who left the organisation an important legacy of £10,000.

Mr and Mrs Roderick Chalmers have informed DLH of the foundation of the ADRC Trust, the objectives of which are the promotion of Hispanic culture especially amongst young people, and activities enjoyed by their late son, Alistair, a dedicated DLH volunteer. We are grateful to the ADRC Trust for sponsoring a Bir Miftuh concert this year in collaboration with the Spanish Embassy.

DLH is indebted to the Malta Tourism Authority for covering the cost of the flood-lighting of Comino Tower, Dr David E. Griscti for again donating a full-page advertisement to DLH on the programme of the Manoel Theatre International Spring Orchestra Festival, Mr Justin Zammit Tabona and Infinitely Xara for sponsoring the catering for the Bir Miftuh concerts and Forestals for our new office computer.

We thank Shireburn Software Ltd for sponsoring the restoration of Mattia Preti's painting the *Immaculate Conception* at Sarria Church on the occasion of the company's 30th anniversary. The restoration, by Giuseppe Mantella Restauri, was celebrated as DLH's contribution to the 400th anniversary of Mattia Preti's birth at a concert at Sarria Church.

DLH also acknowledges the generosity of the 'Victory Team' who make the ongoing restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church possible. They are honoured in the new Victory Church guidebook.

One important piece of news is that DLH has been awarded a grant of €50,000 through the Sustainable Development Tourism Fund for the Victory Church project, having achieved top marks in the scheme, which will allow 42 individual projects to be completed. The successful application was written by Simone Mizzi and a dedicated team composed of Albert Calleja, George Camilleri, Albert Mamo, Josie Ellul Mercer, Pat Salomone and Conservator Amy Sciberras. We are extremely grateful to Albert Calleja for managing the massive job involved with documentation.

The fund-raising team led by DLH treasurer Martin Scicluna, with Professor Lucio Mule Stagno and Professor Philip Mercieca, brought many new corporate sponsors this year. We are grateful to Bank of Valletta plc, MSV Life plc, APS Bank Ltd, Island Hotels Group Holdings plc, Shireburn Software Ltd and Finance Malta for supporting our work.

National elections and courtesy visits

The general election on 9 March, and subsequent change in government, entailed a great deal of activity on our part to establish contacts with the new authorities.

Immediately after the elections, Simone Mizzi and DLH officials visited new Sustainable Development Minister Leo Brincat, Tourism Minister Karmenu Vella, Parliamentary Secretary for Culture José Herrera and Minister for Social Dialogue Helena Dalli.

On 9 August, Simone Mizzi, Luciano Mule Stagno, George Camilleri and Martin Galea paid a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Joseph Muscat at Castille, not only to present to the new government the good wishes of DLH but also to voice concern over policy decisions that will impact on the environment. Representing the government were PM Joseph Muscat, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning Michael Farrugia and Parliamentary Secretary for Culture José Herrera. Simone Mizzi gave a presentation of DLH's achievements in its protection of heritage and this facilitated the renewal of the nine guardianship deeds.

On 10 September, president Simone Mizzi paid a courtesy visit to Opposition Leader Simon Busuttil and on 12 September to new UNESCO Ambassador Mgr Joe Vella Gauci.



Comino Tower by floodlight

Heritage and Environment Protection

In April DLH, together with Nature Trust Malta and the Gaia Foundation, was successful in curtailing hunting hours in the Majjistral Nature and History Park when the Environment Ministry issued a legal notice with new regulations for this protected area. Former DLH president Martin Galea represents DLH on the management board that oversees our activities in this important area.

In July, DLH and other eNGOs attended a meeting with the developers of Ta' Ċenċ, who proposed that eNGOs take over the large ecological area that is already entrenched as a Natura 2000 site as a national park. The eNGOs did not compromise their position – which is that they object to villas being built at Mgarr ix-Xini.

In August, the Coalition Against Spring Hunting, composed of 12 eNGOs including DLH, was launched. Its objectives are to bring about a referendum to abolish spring hunting. To date, over 40,000 signatures have been collected and the vetting of these is underway. DLH contributed over 4,000 signatures and is grateful to everyone who supported this campaign.

In October, DLH campaigned strongly against the final approval by Mepa of the large development on Mistra Ridge. DLH had already opposed this project at the outline stage in 2008. Its objection was again overturned by the Mepa Board on 31 October with no reason given. DLH appealed to the Environment and Planning Commissioner, requesting an investigation of the case. The Commissioner found that Mepa would have been justified in rejecting the outline development application.

Following the public outcry that arose after Mepa's approval of the Mistra development, and due to mounting concern over major policy changes being introduced by the government without adequate studies – in particular in the absence of a new SPED – the eNGOs organised a pro-environment rally in the streets of Valletta on 7 December. The rally demanded that politicians live up to their political promises to protect the environment. DLH featured prominently, with five former and current executive presidents, the Secretary-General, Treasurer and Vice-President leading council members and volunteers holding placards and a streamer demanding *Politicians: Protect our Environment*.

On the issue of public access to Ta' Kantra at Mgarr ix-Xini in Gozo, DLH stood full square behind council member Stanley Farrugia Randon and issued public statements following an exchange with the developer's representatives during a Mepa board hearing on 22 November, which resulted in the permit being refused. An appeal on this decision has since been lodged by the developer.



Secretary General George Camilleri addressing the AGM
Photo Joe Chetcuti

We attended several private and public consultations on the proposed gas-fired power station at Delimara and have objected to this proposal being carried out without any studies having been presented on possible alternative locations. *Din l-Art Helwa* is insisting that the risk analysis for this project must be completed before the permit determining location is granted, and that the environmental (IPPC) and development permits should be considered together by the board.

Risk analysis expert Prof. Hans Pasman acted as consultant to DLH and attended the public consultation on 27 January with George Camilleri on the application for the construction of the new LNG gas terminal at Delimara. Prof Pasman expressed the view – shared by DLH – that there is insufficient data on the risk of mooring the LNG storage vessel inside the port of Marsaxlokk and studies of alternative locations with higher safety implications should be carried out.

A delegation from the Director-General for the Environment of the European Commission held its annual meeting with the Maltese authorities on 7/8 November to discuss infringements and issues relating to the implementation of EU environmental law. Simone Mizzi and George Camilleri attended and brought to the DG's attention certain omissions in the procedures adopted by the government to expedite the deploying of the new gas-fired power station in Delimara.

DLH has written to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for the Environment and Planning, requesting that it reviews the procedures being followed by government in the launch of numerous new and revised development regulations. DLH presented its position at a meeting with the committee on 28 January, stating that these policies are being rushed through in haste by government and Mepa without a new national Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED) having first been concluded. DLH objects to new or revised development policies being absorbed by the SPED retroactively, without an analysis and study of their cumulative environmental impact having been conducted and the findings thereof having been made public.

DLH has made numerous submissions on new and revised planning policies to Mepa this year, including a revision of the Local Plans and policies for areas outside development zones, the floor area ratio policy determining tall buildings, fireworks factories, fuel stations, hotel heights and solar farms.

At the conclusion of this eventful year, DLH remains more concerned than ever by the pro-development stance of our new government. A focused group of vigilant council members, guided by Petra Caruana Dingli, are on constant alert and we continue to campaign tirelessly on this front. We receive constant support from the public and our numerous submissions on environmental issues are to be found on the DLH website.



Mgarr ix-Xini

Restoration and Property Management

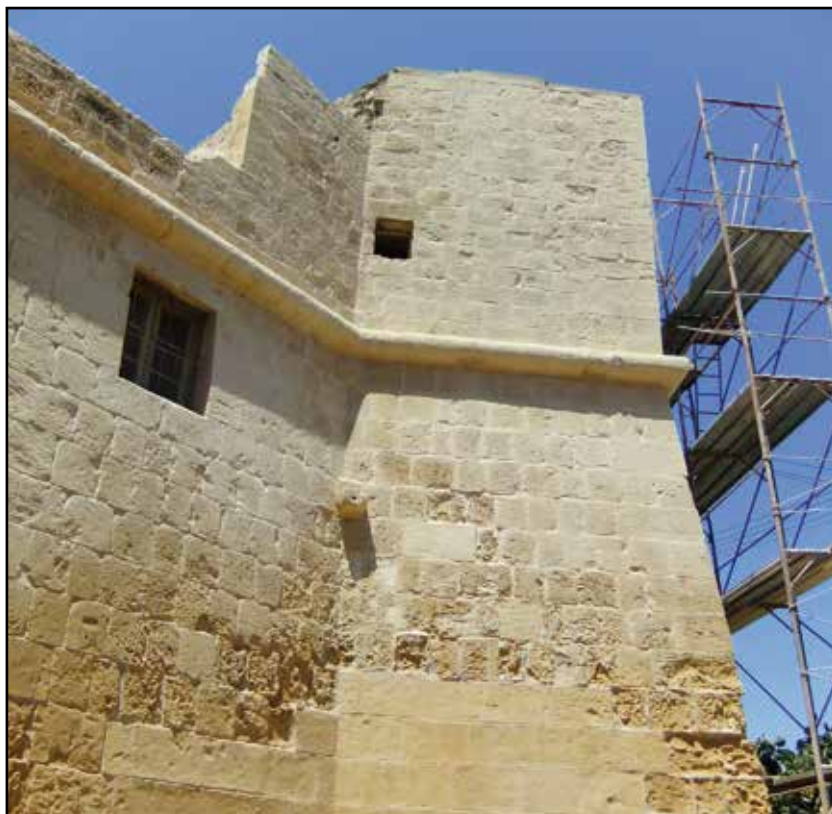
We have concluded several restorations: the exterior walls of Torri Mamo, two façades of Bir Miftuh church, the façade of San Roque chapel and the statue of St Roque in Żebbuġ and the roofs of Zopu Tower and Dwejra Tower. The beautiful Sarria Titular painting by Preti has been saved and the complex restoration of the canopy and cesspit at Delimara Lighthouse has been concluded. Although the challenge of the restoration of the Our Lady of Victory Church continues unabated, we have completed work on many works of art: another segment of the Erardi vault and *The Presentation at the Temple* by the Courtauld Institute conservators. Treatment to the ground floor walls is under way, and a new lighting system and interactive unit has been installed. A hand-made, wrought-iron grill cover now adds dignity to the first burial place of Grand Master de Valette. The provision of audio guides is soon to be launched, with translations in six languages ably coordinated ably by PRO Pat Salomone. In the summer, a costly but necessary disinfestation of the entire church and contents was carried out.

Mepa permits to upgrade the Msida Bastion Museum/tearoom have been obtained, and the permit for restoring Wied Iż-Żurrieq Tower is being drawn up. We thank council members Stanley Farrugia Randon, Josie Ellul Mercer and Carolyn Clements in Gozo for overseeing the upkeep of the properties so diligently, and Eric Parnis for chasing Qala Local Council to finish their part of the work on St Anthony's Battery.

Publications

The guide book to Our Lady of Victory Church was published, thanks to the support of the Vodafone Malta Foundation, as was the ERDF fund for Sustainable Tourism, written by Joe Azzopardi and edited by Pat Salomone.

The Gudja Walks booklet by Lt Col. George Attard Manche, warden at Bir Miftuh, has also been printed. The 2014 DLH Calendar, produced by Victor Rizzo, was launched earlier so that it could be available to summer tourists. A fully illustrated booklet on Bir Miftuh has been published by Stanley Farrugia Randon for DLH.



*Torri Mamo
undergoing restoration*

Events

On 4 March, President George Abela hosted a reception for Council members at San Anton Palace. He expressed his appreciation of the dedicated work being done by DLH for Malta's national heritage and showed us the splendid restorations carried out on the Russian Chapel, the Giuseppe Cali paintings and the Palace interiors.

On 17 March, the Feast of the Annunciation was commemorated at the mediaeval chapel of Hal Millieri. Guided tours were given by Stanley Farrugia Randon and Salvator Mousu'.

On 24 April we were honoured by the President's visit to Victory Church, where he viewed the restorations, met the Courtauld Institute conservators and MSc university students. Dr Abela praised DLH's voluntary efforts in his message in the *Victory Book*, which we will always treasure.

To celebrate his many years' service as DLH Vice President, Simone Mizzi, together with Council members, presented Maestro Paul Axiak with a copy of the Europa Nostra publication *The Power of Example*.

In April, Stanley Farrugia Randon organised a fund-raising tour to the Red Tower, Wignacourt Tower, the Msida Bastion Garden, Bir Miftuh chapel and Mamo Tower.

The Spring plant sale at Msida Historic Garden took place, followed by a splendid fête on 29 April. Our thanks go to Mary Aldred and Albert Calleja for their work. On the invitation of Jasper de Trafford, Council members enjoyed seeing the restoration currently in progress at Villa Bologna's gardens. Mr de Trafford kindly offered their use for DLH events.

DLH embarked on a series of fund-raising lunchtime concerts by the Kalypso Ensemble at Our Lady of Victory church. We thank Pat Salomone and Philip Mercieca for this initiative.

Hal Millieri Chapel



The 17th Bir Miftuh International Music festival, featuring artists from France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Malta, was held during May and June and was – again – a resounding success, due to the high quality of the musicians and the organisation of Cettina Caruana Curran, very ably assisted by Anne Marie Navarro, Charles Gatt and the DLH team.

Infinitely Xara generously sponsored the catering for the festival. We thank the French Embassy and the Alliance Française, the German Embassy, the Italian Embassy and the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura*, for their support and the Irish Embassy for the special edition concert celebrating Ireland's EU presidency, brought about through the Culture Ireland and EU Cultural Programme.

On 19 May, European Maritime Day at Delimara Lighthouse was very well-attended. Hundreds of people visited, and the doors were finally closed at 7pm, three hours later than planned.

On 21 June, HSBC Cares volunteer staff held a family event at Msida Bastion Garden with a barbeque, face-painting and martial art demonstrations – resulting in a donation of €700 to DLH. We are indebted to Albert Calleja, who coordinated the event.

On 22 and 23 June, DLH and the Historical Re-Enactment Group of Malta organised a re-enactment at the Red Tower, while on 28 June, Council members held a gathering at the Tower for volunteers and the HSBC volunteers who help at Our Lady of Victory Church.

Judge Joe Galea Debono, himself a dedicated volunteer at the Red Tower, gave a presentation on the history of the tower.

On 19 July, the Annual Fund Raising Dinner at San Anton was held under the patronage of President George Abela and beautifully organised by Cettina Caruana Curran and Charles Gatt.

Through the efforts of treasurer Martin Scicluna, many corporate sponsors took tables in support. An exciting raffle, organised by Dame Maureen Gatt, was held with a beautiful pair of paintings by John Borg Manduca as the main prize. We are most grateful to Mr Borg Manduca for his generous support.

Between 29 and 31 August the *Inizjamed* Malta Mediterranean Literature Festival, now a successful annual event, took place at the Msida Bastion Garden coordinated by *Vigilo* editor Joe Azzopardi.

On 6 September we were honoured by a visit to Victory Church of Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and Mrs Muscat, who both left us encouraging messages in the 'Victory Book'.

On 28 October, DLH again celebrated European Heritage Weekend – organised by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage – during which the main properties held in guardianship by DLH were open to visitors free of charge.

On 16 November the 48th Anniversary Autumn Dinner was held at St John's Cavalier, Valletta by courtesy of the Ambassador of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John Umberto Di Capua. Featuring a recital by renowned Maltese soprano Lydia Caruana, this concert was made possible through the support of the HSBC Malta Foundation. DLH is extremely grateful to HSBC Malta CEO Mark Watkinson and Josef Camilleri, Head of Public Affairs, for their support.

*Military re-enactment
at the Red Tower*

On 12 December the interactive unit at Victory Church was unveiled by Ms Gemma Mifsud Bonnici, Chairwoman of the Vodafone Malta Foundation, in the presence of UK High Commissioner Rob Luke and Council members.

On 18 December the 9th DLH Architectural Heritage Awards Scheme, organised with the support of the Chamber of Architects, was marked with Parliamentary Secretary for Culture José Herrera presenting the awards. We thank the judging panel, composed of Dr Conrad Thake, Joanna Spiteri Staines, Prof. Lucio Mule Stagno and chairwoman Maria Grazia Cassar, for overseeing this prestigious award scheme.

On 21 December, the *Gloria* fund-raising concert at Victory Church, organised by Pat Salomone, brought our year to a close with triumphant Christmas songs by the Enkor choir.

Over the year, 11 high-profile talks were given in the Judge Caruana Curran lecture hall. We are grateful to all the lecturers for giving their time and knowledge to raise the profile of Malta's cultural and natural heritage.

Simone Mizzi gave a presentation on DLH to the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association on 10 September and on 30 January addressed the Sixth-formers of St Edward's College. She also represented DLH at the European Cultural Networks' Seminar.





*Executive President Simone Mizzi addressing the AGM
Photo Joe Chetcuti*

Media coverage

We obtained extremely high-profile media coverage, including several interviews and being featured on television programmes, during the course of the year. Numerous environmental issues brought about by proposed development projects gave rise to much activism and ensuing media coverage. These included Mepa's approval of the Mistra development, the Anti Spring-Hunting Referendum, the proposed Gozo bridge, the demolition of town-houses in Urban Conservation Areas, the launch of 12 new planning regulations by Mepa without a national Strategic Plan for the Environment, the Delimara Power Station issue and land reclamation schemes.

Lead opinions by Simone Mizzi and George Camilleri were carried by the *Times of Malta* and *The Malta Independent: A Ministry for Development?, Our Development Zone, Where is Fred Flintstone?, Looming catastrophe, Building, building everywhere, Government slow down your haste and What if something does go wrong??.* Pre-budget submissions by Simone Mizzi to the Finance Minister re a *Budget in the Making* were published and an article on regeneration by Joanna Spiteri Staines appeared in the *Times Property and Construction Supplement*.

Simone spoke on *TimesTalk TV* re the government's pro-construction stance and George Camilleri spoke about Mistra on *Dissett*. Maria Grazia Cassar participated in the airing of *Int Min Int* on 17 July – a TV debate with MCAST students on the introduction of 'modern' architecture in our historic towns. The Sarria restoration and the new grill cover at Victory Church featured on PBS news. Stanley Farrugia Randon contributed to five features on the TV programme *Ma Bundy*, focusing on marine issues and gave five interviews on *Meander* about the bubonic plague, which also featured the two statues of St Roque in Żebbuġ and Birkirkara, both restored by DLH.

At the end of September, DLH introduced regular website blogs by Alan Deidun, Conrad Thake and Petra Caruana Dingli to stimulate debate on environmental and heritage issues. Some 40 blogs have been written to date. Visits to our website have increased substantially since their inception and we thank Petra for spearheading this initiative.

DLH teamed up with Fimbank plc to create a series of television spots promoting heritage and spreading awareness of the historic sites managed by DLH. Our restorations and events generate great interest and our PRO Pat Salomone continues to liaise with the media.

Youth Section

Ian Camilleri has re-established the DLH Youth Section, which had its first meeting on 24 September. Simone Mizzi took those present through the history of the organisation, showing them historic material pertaining to the former Teenagers DLH. The section participated in the NGO fair held at Naxxar High School, set up a stand during Freshers' Week at the university and has its own Facebook page.

DLH Youth members concluded another exchange with *Union Rempart* for the fourth consecutive year. The project in 2013, entitled *Maltese and French Youth for the Restoration of European Heritage*, involved French and Maltese volunteers working for two weeks on fortifications in Courcy, France. We thank youth member Tara Cassar who successfully led the initiative and won finance through the EU-funded *Youth in Action* Programme and a subsequent Award for Excellence.

Administration

DLH relies on subscriptions as one of its main funding sources. In order to streamline this process, we have reformed our annual subscription system so that all memberships are due for renewal at the beginning of the year. With an increased workload, it was also necessary to upgrade the Sage 50 accounting software package to better plan and report on DLH's finances.

We thank our volunteers

We are proud to have recorded an increase in volunteer hours over last year to a total of 20,533 in 2013 – which represents a contribution to the economy valued at €250,000. These figures are reported regularly to the Culture Ministry and the National Statistics Office.

We must include our thanks to HSBC volunteers and PWC interns who have helped at Our Lady of Victory Church and the Red Tower and with maintenance work at Ta' Braxia and Msida Bastion. Above all, we must thank our wardens and volunteers everywhere for their support at our properties, Joe Busietta who compiles our statistics and inventories, Professor George Camilleri for his work on DLH's archives, Joe Azzopardi, for editing *Vigilo* and Judith Falzon for its proof-reading and Romina Farrugia Randon, Sophie Woltz, Carmen Naudi, Karen Galea, Jenny Welsh and Joseph Chetcuti for their assistance in the office. We also thank Rosemarie Stagno Navarra and Anne Marie Navarro for their endless support, John Gafà, our loyal handyman, and our cleaner, Annie Tabone.

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

*Treasurer Martin Scicluna addressing the AGM
Photo Joe Chetcuti*



Din l-Art Helwa ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2014 RESOLUTIONS

Finalisation of the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on Saturday, 22nd February 2014 at the *Din l-Art Helwa* offices at 133 Melita Street, Valletta, that the government should carry out comprehensive studies and finalise the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development before proceeding with the revision of the Local Plans and planning policies or the introduction of new policies that impact on land and marine spaces, in order to ensure that a shared, holistic and sustainable vision and strategy is in place to guide all decision-making with long-term and major impacts on our environment.

Finalizzar tal-Pjan Strategiku għall-Ambjent u l-Iżvilupp

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' *Din l-Art Helwa*, f' 133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-22ta' Frar 2014, *Din l-Art Helwa* ssostnili qabel ma jkompli jirrive di l-pjan lokali u l-politika tal-ippjanar jew jintroduci politika ġdida li għandha effett fuq l-ambjent fuq l-art u l-baħar tagħna, il-gvern għandu jwettaq studji biex jiġi finalizzat il-Pjan Strategiku għall-Ambjent u l-Iżvilupp. Dan għandu jsir biex ikun hemm viżjoni wiesa u sostenibbli li tmexxi d-decizjonijiet li jaffettwaw għal tul ta' żmien l-ambjent tagħna.



Urban development closing in on open spaces in Mosta

Marine Strategic Plan for Land Reclamation

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on Saturday, 22nd February 2014, that the government should finalise a Marine Strategic Plan, as requested by the Commissioner for the Environment and Planning, before moving ahead with any land reclamation projects. The approach taken should be holistic rather than project-driven. Land reclamation has major environmental impacts, and the social, economic and strategic needs that are driving these projects have not been presented to the public by the government, or adequately discussed.

Pjan Strategiku għall-Ambjent Marittimu għar-Reklamazzjoni tal-Art

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' *Din l-Art Helwa*, f' 133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-22 ta' Frar 2014, *Din l-Art Helwa* thegġeg il-gvern biex, qabel ma jsiru proġetti ta' reklamazzjoni tal-art, jagħmel Pjan Strategiku għall-Ambjent Marittimu kif hu mitlub mill-Kummissarju tal-Ambjent u l-Ippjanar. Għandu jkun hemm politika waħda u mhux decizjonijiet skond il-każ. Ir-reklamazzjoni tal-art għandu mpatt qawwi fuq l-ambjent, u l-bżonnijiet soċjali u ekonomiċi għall-dawn il-proġetti għadhom mistura jew ma ġewx diskussi sew.

Conservation of Rural Areas and the Landscape

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held on Saturday, 22nd February, 2014 that the government should discourage further despoliation of Malta's dwindling countryside, its rural landscape, green areas and open spaces. Future planning policies must protect all areas of high landscape value and not allow construction in any areas of ecological value, as well as their buffer zones, thus irreversibly destroying Malta's rural environment and vernacular built heritage. Further risk to the replenishment of the water table through construction must be prevented and the restoration of traditional rural buildings should be actively encouraged.

Konservazzjoni tal-postijiet rurali u l-pajżagġ

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqgħa Ġenerali Annwali ta' *Din l-Art Helwa*, f' 133 Triq Melita Valletta fit-22 ta' Frar 2014, *Din l-Art Helwa* thegġeg il-gvern biex jara li l-kampanja, il-pajżagġ Malti u postijiet miftuha ma jkomplux jithassru. Il-pajżagġ għandu jiġi protett permezz ta' politika tal-ippjanar li ma tippermettix bini f' postijiet ta' valur ekoloġiku kif ukoll f' postijiet li jmissu magħhom, u b'hekk ma jintilifx l-ambjent rurali u l-bini vernakolu ta' pajjiżna. M'għandux isir bini li jhassar aktar l-ilma tal-pjan u jiġi nkoragġut ir-restawr tal-bini rurali tradizzjonali.

Mistra - The Monstrosity Yet to Come

“Only Malta loses on Xemxija Ridge, irrespective of the short-term gain for the economy”, wrote DLH Executive President Simone Mizzi in a reaction given to the media shortly after Mepa’s approval for the area previously known as Mistra Village Holiday Complex to be developed as a vast urban metropolis. Nine Mepa board members voted in favour of the massive 744-apartment project and five voted for it to be modified yet again to a more appropriate scheme. *Din l-Art Helwa* maintained that the outline permit granted in 2008 was the result of misleading and incomplete information provided to the former Mepa Board and demanded the revocation of this permit, citing Article 77 of the Environment and Planning Act. This request was thrown out by the chairman, Vincent Cassar, at the start of the meeting. Mr Cassar stated that the Board had considered the request and found it to be legally unjustified, adding that he was not obliged to reveal the considerations that led to this decision.

“It is very concerning”, wrote our executive president, “that the efforts to protect Malta’s environment, in this case a sizeable chunk of important scenic landscape, should be left to NGOs when the real responsibility for championing the environment should be that of Mepa itself. I am comforted by the fact that there were five members of the Mepa Board who wished to see the project modified so its effect on the landscape would be mitigated or who insisted that local regulations governing the permit would be observed. However, the Board based its decision on an as yet unapproved high-rise policy, the Floor Area Ratio, that calls for a maximum of eight floors to be allowed, when this permit was in fact granted for 12, hardly a ‘small departure’ from the Local plan which, in essence, allows only four, said Ms Mizzi.

“This policy also obliges the Mepa board to ensure that the resulting building is ‘of a high calibre’, but what we saw projected”, she said, “were multiple repetitions of boxes accented in red, blue and green that were still massed in a most unnatural adjacency to the surrounding landscape.” Ms Mizzi reiterated that the Mepa Board, in the absence of any aesthetics board or style committee, would have to shoulder this responsibility and by approving this scheme of massive blocks accept that it did actually fulfil this requirement.

Another unanswered question was in relation to the complete reversal of the Traffic Impact Statement made by Transport Malta’s CEO, described in his letter to the Board of August 2013 as being of ‘no objection’. This was a complete departure from the comments made previously in 2008 by Transport Malta’s experts, who had then stated that any additional traffic would impact most seriously on the single lane traffic between St Paul’s Bay and Mellieha, itself the main thoroughfare to Gozo. The justification given in the report to the Board was that as the number of flats had been reduced from 994 to 744 the impact on traffic was no longer objectionable. *Din l-Art Helwa* contended that this conclusion was absurd and totally unacceptable.

In her press statement, Ms Mizzi said: “The major concern now is that with the acceptance of this project the precedent for tall buildings to be built on hills and ridges has been set. Malta does not have much left by way of unspoilt landscapes and open countryside. This design for the former Mistra Village Complex, itself a *Din l-Art Helwa* award winner several years ago for its use of local materials and traditional style, still could be more sensitive to the landscape. Its massive volume will be a permanent unpleasant blot for miles around.” She added that, after the Mepa hearing, she was happy to hear the Kuwaiti developers say that they would consider improving this design yet again. Ms Mizzi said she hoped they would make it kinder to the eye and more in keeping with the natural contours of the land. “We trust they will be true to their word” she said in conclusion.



*The Mistra Development
as approved in the Outline
Application*



*The Mistra Ridge
as it is today*



*The Mistra Development
as approved in the
Full Development
Application*



*The Mistra Ridge
as it is today*

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT FOR PLANNING DISMISSES OUTRIGHT THE FINDINGS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER

“This indicates that the government has no intention of protecting the environment”, said Simone Mizzi

Din l-Art Helwa immediately expressed its disappointment at the outright rejection by Parliamentary Secretary for Planning Michael Farrugia of the report of the Commissioner for the Environment and Planning following his investigation into the procedures that led to the granting of permits for the redevelopment of Mistra Village. The Commissioner found that *Din l-Art Helwa* was justified when it filed its request to revoke the planning decisions by Mepa that will give rise to the monstrous development that is to be built on the ridge at Xemxija.

In a statement after architect David Pace had declared his findings, Simone Mizzi said: “It is clear that the Secretariat in charge of Planning is not sensitive at all to the results such a development will have on the important national landscape at Mistra Ridge. Even if he does not agree with the Commissioner’s findings, the least we would expect somebody in his position to say is that developments of such magnitude will be planned so as to be consonant with the landscape in the future. Instead, we hear it stated that the rape of our countryside is justified because the developers have made a great investment in our economy.

“Each time this justification is given, a piece of Malta disappears. Worse still, there has been forever silence from the very Ministry whose sensitivity the country needs to count upon, and that is the Ministry for the Environment. If Mepa has no sensitivity to sites of landscape value while its Environment Directorate is still constituted, I dread to think what is to happen when it no longer is there.”

Din l-Art Helwa is satisfied that the findings of the Commissioner were totally in line with those of the organisation and reiterates its stand. Although government Ministries can use their power to bulldoze their way through everything, said Ms Mizzi, “The facts remain clear: the planning parameters for the area were not followed; a policy for tall buildings applied only in selective parts when it strictly called for no tall buildings on Xemxija Ridge. Extremely serious adverse impacts, such as that of the design on the surrounding landscape and that of traffic, have been left unresolved. These issues were the duty of the Major Projects Team to point out to the Board and for the Board to question, but they were conveniently glossed over. So how Dr Farrugia could claim that the Environmental Impact Assessment and all procedures were scrupulously carried out is beyond comprehension and gives rise to many questions about his direction of the Planning Authority in the future.

The organization will continue to act to protect the interests of the environment, unlike planning boards that now exist to rubber-stamp development. It was this series of events that led to NGOs organising a protest march in defence of the environment in Valletta on 7 December.

Public Protest in Favour of the Environment

Speech by Simone Mizzi, Executive President of *Din l-Art Helwa* on the occasion of the Public Protest in Favour of the Environment held in Valletta on 7 December 2013

I speak on behalf of all those who love this fair land, all those who value the environment, all who enjoy nature and the life it contains, who value open space and clean unpolluted air. I also speak for all who value our unique historic heritage and the beautiful buildings left to us by our forefathers. Ladies and gentlemen, we are not here today in carnival mode. We are here to deliver a message to all in government, to those in charge of planning for construction and development. We are here to tell them to carry out their duty and deliver the promises made in recent election manifestos – the promise to protect the environment and preserve it for our children because this is the right of future generations.

Gentlemen and ladies in government, the situation is very grave indeed. Existing laws are broken while new laws that abuse the environmental rights of citizens are being created. We are witnessing your own abuse of existing planning laws, as in the recent case for Mistra where you went against Mepa's own planning regulations. The development you have permitted in Mistra is a monster conceived by one government and given birth to by the next. Mistra is the shame of a nation that has sold its soul to the speculator! If you permit this abuse, I tell you that you do not respect nature nor do you know how to enjoy it. Your only appreciation of it is the exploitation of its commercial potential. You are unable to see the beauty of our island, and, if you do not listen to the appeal of all of us present, I am afraid it is going to be too late!

Gentlemen in government, I hope you can negate these statements. Give us proof that you intend protecting the environment, as so far no such indication has been forthcoming. With the new laws you are about to pass you continue to rape this beautiful land which has little left that is authentic and original owing to the uncontrolled development of the last 30 years. Our children are set to inherit little more than multiple cages of cement.

We object to the new legislation allowing building in the countryside, on our garigue and in our valleys. This is nothing else except a pretext to take construction into green areas. We will lose more trees, more agricultural land, precious soil reserves and the catchment of fresh water.

We demand transparent laws that explain clearly to the uninitiated which commercial and industrial activities are again to creep into residential areas. We cannot know what changes the 'Use Changes Policy' will place on our doorstep. Kindly clarify, gentlemen!

We refuse high-rise buildings in our towns and villages. Ten floors are just too many for our narrow streets. We do not want to lose our traditional architecture because developers convince you that these old buildings are not up to today's style of living. Use your imagination, gentlemen! We are against tower blocks that will change the skyline of our nation and darken our living spaces. Gentlemen, the towers you intend building can exist in places like Dubai or Shanghai. They do not fit in here.

We do not want more buildings on our coast that block off the daily sight of our sea which gives us our island identity. Enough cementification of our shores! The sea is our place of relaxation and important for our tourism. We appeal to developers to cast their sights elsewhere.

Finally, we refuse laws being rushed through without previous proper study. Planning without an overall strategy, without social and environmental impact analysis is against the law – both ours and at European level. Why all this hurry?



We at *Din l-Art Helwa* join all who want to protect the natural assets and the historic heritage of our nation. We truly hope that our appeal will be listened to and that it will not fall on hearts of cement. We pledge we will continue our fight tirelessly for this fair land on behalf of our children and our children's children.

Above
Executive President Simone Mizzi
addressing the crowd

DLH leading the protest with the current
and four former Executive Presidents.

From left to right:
Martin Galea, Professor Anthony Bonanno, Dr Petra Caruana Dingli, Exec President Simone Mizzi, Martin L.A. Scicluna, and Martin Scicluna (Hon. Treasurer)

Diskors tas-Sinjura Simone Mizzi, President Ezekuttiv ta' *Din l-Art Helwa* waqt il-Marc' Pubbliku ta' Protesta Favur l-Ambjent is-Sibt 7 ta' Diċembru, il-Belt Valletta

Qeghda nitkellem f'isem kull min ihobb lil din l-art helwa, f'isem kull min ihobb l-ambjent, in-natura, il-hajja li taghtina l-ispazju fejn niehdu nifs f'arja bla tniġġis. Qeghda nitkellem f'isem kull min ihobb il-wirt storiku u l-bini sabieh li hallewlna missirijietna.

Sinjuri, qeghdin hawn illum, mhux biex naghmlu Karnival iżda għax irridu nwasslu messaġġ lil kull min hu fil-Gvern u lil dawk li għandhom l-awtorita' li jmessu l-ambjent u l-ippjanar tal-bini u ta' l-iżvilupp. Qeghdin hawn biex nghidulhom jerrfegħu d-dmirijiet tagħhom biex iwettqu dak li wegħdulna f'it ilu qabel l-elezzjoni – meta' qalu li ser iharsu l-ambjent u jzommuh għal uliedna għax hekk jisthoqquhom dawk li għad jigu warajna.

Sinjuri fil-Gvern, is-sitwazzjoni hija mill-aktar serja. Liġijiet li jinkisru u liġijiet godda li jabbużaw mid-dritt ambjentali ta' cittadin. Mela qeghdin naraw li fejn għandna liġijiet eżistenti għall-ippjanar intom tabbużaw minnhom, bħal ma għadkom kif għamiltu fil-każ tal-Mistra, fejn ksirtu r-regolamenti tal-MEPA stess. Din l-Art Helwa tgħidilkom li l-iżvilupp tal-Mistra huwa l-mostro konċepit minn Gvern wiehed u mwelled mill-iehor, il-misthija ta' pajjiż li bieghh ruhu lil is-spekulatur.

Sinjuri fil-Gvern, jekk intom tippermettu dawn l-abbużi, nghidilkom li intom lin-natura ma thobbuhiex, ma tifmuhiex, u lanqas ma tafu tgawduha hlief biex issarfuha bħala materjal ta' kummerċ. Intom l-isbuħija ta' pajjiżkom ma tarawhiex, ma tagħrfuhiex u issa jekk ma tisimghuhx l-appell ta' dawk kollha hawnhekk illum, sinjuri ser ikun TARD WISQ! Sinjuri fil-Gvern, aġtuna provi għall-kuntrarju, għax s'issa minn għadkom dawn il-provi ma rajnihomx.

Sinjuri fil-Gvern, qeghdin nghidulkom li bil-liġijiet li ser tagħddu ser tkomplu tagħruq u tagħfqu dan il-pajjiż tant sabieh iżda li f'it baqagħlu li hu awtentiku minhabba l-iżvilupp bla rażan ta' l-aħħar tletin sena. Il-wirt tat-tfal tagħna se jkun xejn hlief gaġeġ tas-siment.

Aħna ma rridux il-liġi għda għal bini kampanja, fuq ix-xagħri u fil-widien. Din hi biss skuża għall-iżvilupp tal-*green areas*. Ser nerġghu nitilfu s-siġar, inċekknu l-ghelieqi, nitilfu l-hamrija u l-ilma ġieri.

Aħna rridu regolamenti trasparenti li jfehmu lill-mara tad-dar x'attivitajiet kummerċjali u industriali ser jerggħu jidhlu fiż-zoni residenzjali. Bil-*Use Changes Policy*, aħna ma nafux x'ser insibu wara l-bieb tagħna. Għamluha ċara, sinjuri, jekk jogħgobkom!

Aħna ma rridux bini għoli fl-ibliet u fl-irhula tagħna. Għaxar sulari huma wisq għat-toroq dojq tagħna. Aħna ma rridux nitilfu l-bini tradizzjonali tagħna billi thallu l-iżviluppatur jgħidilkom li dan mhux sura għal hajja ta' llum. Użaw l-immaginazzjoni!

Aħna kontra l-bini għoli li ser ibiddel l-identita' u l-karattru tal-wirt mibni ta' pajjiżna, li ser jagħlaqna go morsa fid-dlam. Sinjuri, il-famuzi "towers" li tridu, halluhom għal postijiet bħal Dubai jew Shanghai.

Aħna ma rridux iżjed bini fuq il-kosta, il-kosta halluha halli nistgħu naraw il-baħar, titfghux siment fuq il-ftit blat u xtut li baqagħlna. Il-baħar hu l-uniku żvog li għandna u li jgħibna t-turismu. Sinjuri żviluppaturi nappellaw lilkom ukoll - dawwru għajnejkom band' oħra.

Fl-aħħar, ma rridux liġijiet mghagħlin, u magħmulin bla studju. Ma rridux ippjanar bla strateġija, u mingħajr analiżi fuq l-impatt soċjali u ambjentali. Għalfejn din l-għaġla kollha? L-ippjanar bla strateġija hu kontra l-liġi ta' pajjiżna u ta' l-Ewropa. Aħna ta' Din l-Art Helwa ninaghqdu ma' dawk kollha li jridu jsalvaw is-sbuħija naturali tal-gżejjer tagħna u tal-wirt storiku kollu li jinsab fihom. Nixtiequ li dan l-appell tisimghuh u li dan il-kliem ma jaqagħx fuq qlub tas-siment. Aħna ta' Din l-Art Helwa ser inkomplu niġġieldu għaliha, għal uliedna u għal uliedhom ukoll.

Letter sent to the Prime Minister and in copy to Mr Leo Brincat, Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Dr Michael Farrugia, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Simplification of Administrative Processes, and Mr Vincent Cassar, Chairman of Mepa.

Dear Prime Minister

As you are aware, on Saturday, 7 December a public rally was organised in Valletta by 12 environmental NGOs including *Din l-Art Helwa*, a number of resident associations and youth organisations.

During the rally, among other concerns, the government was requested to put on hold the new policies and changes to the local plans that are currently being put forward until adequate studies have been carried out which will enable better informed decisions to be made on these issues.

As *Din l-Art Helwa* has already outlined in various submissions to the government, in particular to Mepa, we request that the full new strategic plan to replace the Structure Plan, including all required public consultation, is completed before revising the local plans, or introducing new policies regulating ODZ land use and building heights, or embarking on land reclamation projects.

It is only once a strategic plan is completed, together with all necessary supporting studies, that the government should propose changes to the local plans and to other planning policies, including the recently proposed policies regulating the use of land in the countryside and building heights, and building up the coastline through reclamation projects. All new policies and plans must be presented with supporting studies detailing why they are necessary and giving adequate information on the sustainability of the proposals.

On behalf of *Din l-Art Helwa* I would now like to make this recommendation to you formally and also trust that you will consider the genuine concerns of the public which were highlighted in the rally of 7 December 2013. We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely
Simone Mizzi
Executive President

Fred Flintstone Revisited

George Camilleri

Secretary General of Din l-Art Helwa

Fred Flintstone dons his animal-skin coat, pecks Wilma on the cheek and, picking up his spear, trots off to kill supper. In the evening, he drags supper back to the cave for Wilma to cook. Back then, this was the only way he could feed his family, since agriculture had not yet been invented, so there was no plentiful supply of fruit and vegetables to supplement meat.

Fast forward 15,000 years to the 21st century and agriculture has been around for thousands of years. We have evolved a system whereby we can go to a shop and trade. Fred now barter his goods. He has changed his animal skin for a suit or t-shirt and he takes home the meat somebody else has killed.

Fred doesn't need to go out and hunt for food any more; he buys it at the supermarket. So why does he hunt? Maybe because he enjoys it?

Life is a funny thing. It seems that it evolved on Earth some 3.5 billion years ago and we still don't know how this happened. We have been to the moon and thousands of people have climbed Everest. We have gone down 11,000 metres to the deepest part of the Pacific Ocean. But we still cannot create life.

Life is not cheap: it is irreplaceable, priceless. We cannot make it, we cannot stop it when it wants to leave and, once it is gone, we cannot get it back. It's all the same life – from the smallest single cell or the largest in a giant sequoia – but try as we can, we cannot create it.

Hunting, on the contrary, *kills* life. Life is rare and precious and must be cherished and protected. Hunting kills life. Hunting therefore kills something

*A cartoon dating back
to 2002
by Steve Bonello*



that is rare and precious and that cannot be right. Just because it's been done for thousands of years doesn't justify the killing of something rare and precious just for some traditional pleasure.

The argument that since hunting in Malta is traditional it becomes a socio-cultural right is an over worked mantra. A tradition is just a group of related ideas that have lasted for a long time and just because traditions may contain valuable knowledge doesn't mean they are always right. Duelling, *castrati*, wigs in court, dog fighting, bull fighting, fox hunting

*A splendid turtle dove
resting on a
country wall*





*Collecting signatures for the petition asking for the holding of a referendum regarding the abolition of spring hunting.
Photo – Times of Malta*

and slavery are all archaic traditions, some cruel, some absurd, all obsolete. Why should entrenched cultural traditions, however humanely significant, so easily lead to extreme moral blindness? Hunting for pleasure is morally wrong and should be consigned to history's scrapheap.

If, like Fred, you need to hunt to survive then you would have some excuse for killing. But nowadays if you are a carnivore you don't even need to kill. You can leave the killing to others and buy your dead animals neatly packed and refrigerated. So why hunt if you don't need to? It's a disturbing thought, but people who hunt do it because they actually enjoy it.

Maybe they hunt because the act of asserting one's power over another creature's life is some subconscious urge to bolster one's insecurities. Perhaps these wannabe Rambos in their camouflaged fatigues and FWDs are just stating they are rough tough alpha males wielding dangerous weapons.

Hunting in springtime is even more cruel and barbaric. Every year, thousands of infant birds are not born because their parents have been slaughtered for pleasure while the bird population decreases because dead birds don't reproduce.

DLH Founder President Judge Maurice Caruana Curran signs the petition



REPORT

illegal hunting

CALL THE POLICE

How to file a police report:

- Call 21 22 40 01- general police switchboard

You will probably be diverted to the ALE or district police (local police station).

Call the ALE direct 22 94 21 61 / 2 / 3

- Ask for the police badge number of person taking your call

The police officer replying to the call is obliged to take your report. You do not have to go to the police station.

- Take note of the police unit (ALE or district police) taking your report.

If it is the district police taking your report, also take note of the police station where the person taking your report is based.

- If possible, please make a follow up call to learn whether the police has taken action on your report.

• [Inform BirdLife Malta of the outcome](#)

Birdlife's instructions about reporting illegal hunting



It is not only cruel and barbaric; it is also illegal in the EU. The law is clear: turtle dove and quail cannot be hunted in spring because in Europe the two species are in 'unfavourable conservation status'. This conservation status prohibits derogations. In 2009 the European Commission found Malta guilty of contravening the Birds' Directive and in 2010 re-opened a new infringement procedure. Malta runs the huge risk that if again found to be non-compliant, it will face another court case that could land it with huge administrative expense and fines that will cost the tax-payer dearly.

Successive administrations have cynically sidestepped EU legislation to pander to the powerful hunting lobby. Shockingly, hunting hours have recently actually been increased to satisfy the urges of these bloodthirsty voters and these measures are tragically beginning to bear fruit with the slaughter of protected birds in increasing numbers.

So from now on, every time you hear a gun shot at sunrise think "Somebody is getting a buzz out of killing a bird". Fred Flintstone did it for food. Today he does it for fun. Anyway, the spring hunting season is on again, permitted by government. Hopefully it will be for the last time.

Where is the Master Plan

Simone Mizzi

Executive President of Din l-Art Helwa

Well, we are all saying it. NGOs are pleading for it. A public rally demanded it. The Guardian for Future Generations, the Church Commission for the Environment and environmentalists have spoken out to the same end. *Din l-Art Helwa* has taken the issue to the Parliamentary Committee for the Environment and Development Planning. And now, even the President of the Malta Developers Association is admitting that terrible planning policies have ruined the topography of Malta over the last decade, to quote the media on this sector. Only better planning by the government can make for better results. On this score we are all in agreement.

So where does good planning start and why indeed have we *all* had to shout the same message? Before launching *ad hoc* development policies, as is currently happening, we need a planning master plan to be drawn up methodically, as required by law. Such was the now lapsed 1992-2012 Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands. With this government's hurried pro-development stance, the need for the new Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED), from which all land use policies originate, becomes even more urgent.

Whether the 1992 Plan was good, bad, outdated, ignored or abused, it needs to be replaced. Such a plan gave definition to development policies and afforded a measure of protection to the environment such as with the Out of Development Zones. This protection has just been annihilated with Mepa's recent approval of guidelines that justify all sorts of buildings in rural areas. While most regulations attempt to contain urban sprawl, this latest one actually facilitates it.



Getting ready to take our pro-environment convictions to the streets of Valletta

While Din l-Art Helwa strives to save Wignacourt Tower for posterity, this is being surrounded by hideous modern buildings lacking any form of architectural interest





The SPED that is due is entrenched in Malta's Environment and Development Planning Act of 2010. This aims at 'protecting the environment and to make provision for the planning of development' through the management of land and sea resources, vital for a small island with a high population density and ever-increasing lifestyle expectations. It delineates the function of all those entities, including Mepa, whose responsibility is to protect our built and natural heritage, our resources and everything that constitutes the environment.

The same Act requires the government itself to safeguard "the environment and to take preventative and remedial measures to protect it in a sustainable manner for the benefit of today's and future generations". The comparison to this government's 2013 election manifesto is almost uncanny. I quote, because sometimes repetition helps: "*Malta should be in the vanguard on environmental standards, not because there is an obligation placed upon us by European directives but because this is what best suits our children and generations to come*".

So what has happened to this promise? This government, through its soon-to-be-dismembered Mepa, is drawing up piecemeal policy changes without measuring their full cumulative impact and with no guiding master plan that is underpinned by the required studies, research and analysis. One year into this administration and we have heard few words on its environmental vision. On the contrary, there is a mantra about narrow-minded conservationists who hold back the economy and do not wish our island's identity to evolve.

Now identity, (and I am not referring to passports), is constantly evolving, and perhaps is never made. Hence a SPED would determine the direction for the protection of our island's heritage in which such identity is rooted. While identity evolves, people remain mostly self-serving. This means that regulatory authorities working to a national plan are needed and should be the ones responsible in the struggle for environmental preservation. DLH looks to the authorities to legislate again – and fast – and to give us a master plan that is not, and will not be, bent by political dictat. What is happening may well be the opposite as the document called SPED as launched does not fulfil its legal requirements.

New systematic planning by the people for the people in a street-by-street 'Ask and you shall receive' fashion is said to provide the model upon which new Local Plans are being revised. It is a true voters' paradise. Other proposed policies will permit the construction of more petrol stations, higher hotels, fireworks factories, tall buildings, buildings in rural areas and buildings in the sea, to name just a few.

With no proper SPED in place, there is no economic, demographic and social study that looks far beyond the needs of today to explain the need to build more, rather than to improve what we have. SPED rationale should be presented by our planners to the public for comments before going to Parliament for debate and legislation. Only then can we say we have a strategy that guarantees good, transparent governance of the island's heritage and environment, and, hopefully, one that is applied with cross-party determination. Anything else driving planning arises from sheer caprice, the promise of quick gain, or an insensitivity to Malta's historic and natural beauty. Without a complete and thorough SPED as required by law, Malta may be facing all three.

A lovely art nouveau building being steadily suffocated by ill-proportioned and ill-conceived new development in St Paul's Bay

Heritage and Environment Protection Report

In the past months, *Din l-Art Helwa's* Heritage and Environment Protection team actively followed a number of issues, as summarised here.

The gas storage tanker at Delimara

One of the main issues on which *Din l-Art Helwa* has concentrated over the last six months is the new gas-fired power station that the government intends to build at Delimara. DLH remains concerned that options for the possible location of the gas storage tanker for this plant were not all assessed in detail before the permit was granted by the Mepa board. In a long-term project of major national importance, it is expected that all options would be seriously assessed, but this was not the case.

In the race to meet deadlines, the planning authority agreed that the gas storage tanker should be located inside the bay before all the risk assessments had been presented. The development permit was approved before either the nautical risk assessment or the harbour risk assessment had been completed. *Din l-Art Helwa* maintains that other users of the bay had the right to know how their own activities would be affected by the presence of the storage tanker, and to express their opinions and ask questions *before* a decision on the location of the tanker was taken and not afterwards.

In a letter to Mepa chairman Vincent Cassar, following the granting of the permit, DLH Secretary-General George Camilleri expressed the organisation's considerable concern regarding the safety of the new facility at Delimara. Mr Camilleri reiterated the position that the location for the gas storage tanker

Example of storage tanker in Grand Harbour



Opposite top: Clouds gathering over the beautiful Maltese countryside

Opposite bottom: Urban sprawl slowly but surely eating away at the countryside

Delimara Power Station seen from Marsaxlokk



should not have been approved, once the potential for a serious accident had been established.

Although the probability of such an accident has been arguably estimated as being extremely remote, the fact that the possibility does exist should have ruled out locating the storage tankers within the bay. The safer solution would have been to locate the tanker outside the bay and the Mepa board should not have approved the project before complete studies had been carried out.

The government shows no intention of protecting the environment

After the new government had been in place for only eight months, *Din l-Art Helwa* again expressed its grave concern that so far the attitude towards the environment seemed to be to merely exploit and use it to the maximum. This is the emerging scenario from which it is apparent that it is now only the NGOs that are left to champion the environment.

Din l-Art Helwa noted that Environment and Sustainable Development Minister Leo Brincat has been completely silent about the major new plans and policies that are being put forward by the government and are likely to have a negative impact on the environment, such as the relaxation of building height restrictions and the loss of rural land through the revised ODZ policy. The minister has also not ensured that an acceptable strategic plan is put in place before the local plans are revised or land reclamation proposals are considered.

Malta is a very small country, and the sustainable use of land is one of our biggest environmental problems, said *Din l-Art Helwa*, adding that it had been flooded with reactions from an indignant public in the aftermath of the controversial Mistra Village permit that was granted by the Mepa board. It demanded to know how the Minister intends to ensure that development is sustainable if no studies or overall strategy is in place before moving ahead with the massive plans and projects which are in the pipeline and which will have a huge impact on the environment.

So far, the government has taken no visible and positive steps to ensure that the environment is protected and that development is sustainable. *Din l-Art Helwa* has therefore called on it to outline its intentions for the environment to the public.



Citizens march in defence of the environment

Environment groups and citizens are concerned that the government is not fulfilling its obligations to defend their right to a healthy environment and have raised their voices in protest against the introduction of new planning regulations that relax building restrictions and will bring further over-development of the country.

A protest march held in Valletta in December demanded that the government refrains from launching a series of policies currently being drawn up by Mepa as these will bring about widespread destruction of the countryside and further reduce open spaces. High-rise buildings and new hotel heights will increase traffic, restricting residents' access to light and air, reclamation schemes will obliterate more coastline, and commercial activity will be introduced in residential areas, thus endangering the quality of life and health of the citizen.

Twelve organisations: Birdlife Malta, *Din l-Art Helwa*, *Flimkien għall-Ambjent Ahjar*, Friends of the Earth Malta, the Gaia Foundation, Greenhouse Malta, the Malta Organic Agricultural Movement, *Moviment Graffiti*, Nature Trust Malta, the Ramblers Association of Malta, Y4TE and Why Not?, together with several local residents' associations and supported by Tribali, insisted that the government fulfils its obligations to "protect Malta's landscape and its natural and cultural heritage" as laid down by the principles of the Maltese Constitution.

The NGOs believe that Malta has not yet recovered from the 2006 rationalisation of development zones and that building has continued unabated under previous administrations over several decades, resulting in some 70,000 empty or under-utilised properties while no adequate strategic study has been carried out to justify the need to further increase capacity.

Labour's 2013 electoral manifesto makes strong promises that: "*Malta should be in the vanguard on environmental standards, not because there is an obligation placed upon us by European directives but because this is what best suits our children and generations to come.*"

Despite this strong undertaking, pledged by the new government, the NGOs maintained that within the first eight months of the new government the only commitment shown by the authorities

was to further the interests of the development lobby. Property speculation is currently rampant in expectation of relaxed rules and large parcels of land in some of Malta's most beautiful and ecological areas are changing hands rapidly.

Furthermore, NGOs are also highly concerned that where building regulations do exist, they continue to be flouted, as happened recently in Mepa's controversial approval of the 15-floor high-rise scheme at Mistra Ridge, a project that has aroused public indignation and anger as it will scar an area of national landscape value permanently. The NGOs maintained that Mepa's approval was based entirely on irregularities and misleading information and that it should have been delayed until further improvements to the scheme could be effected.



Despite having a Ministry dedicated entirely to the Environment and Sustainable Development, the rights of citizens to enjoy open spaces, clean air and a healthy lifestyle continue to be threatened by an outdated fixation that construction will solve all Malta's problems. With messages flooding in to the environment groups daily, it is clear that citizens feel the need to express their indignation openly to the government which, instead of protecting the environmental rights of the citizen, is exploiting them irresponsibly as a mere trading commodity.

A Ministry for overdevelopment?

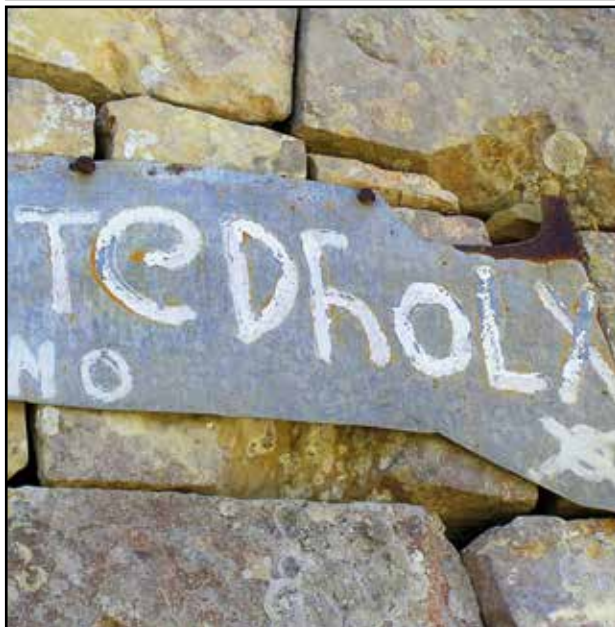
Following its policy for building outside the development zones (ODZ), the government issued its draft regulations on high-rise buildings, known as the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) policy. With its drive for land reclamation and the promotion of so-called 'landmark' high-rise buildings, the government's vision for Malta appears to be based on the urban landscape of Dubai, said *Din l-Art Helwa*.

In the last few months, the government has incessantly promoted initiatives to increase and facilitate development everywhere, but not a single initiative to protect our environment from over-development has been put forward. So far, the government's environmental credentials are non-existent.

The draft policy guidelines for buildings in ODZ areas are an attempt to justify construction in rural areas. Instead of safeguarding the countryside, the government is actively seeking all possible ways to exploit it. Following close in its heels, the draft policy for tall buildings has the potential to completely transform Malta's urban landscape.

Din l-Art Helwa stated that it would have been more appropriate for the government to set up a 'Ministry for Over-Development' rather than a 'Ministry for Sustainable Development' as the new regulations will encourage more building rather than balance it, exacerbate congestion in built-up areas and take further urbanisation into rural areas. The FAR policy and the ODZ policy are just two of numerous regulations being launched that ride roughshod over the current structure plan and with no social and environmental impact assessments. *Din l-Art Helwa* finds the government's haste in promoting such policies unacceptable.

Do we really want to see more of this in the countryside?



The draft ODZ policy has been put forward in an information vacuum, without any supporting studies or assessments. This is an example of piecemeal planning without any strategic or long-term vision whatsoever. The main emphasis of this document is clearly on establishing ways to permit construction in ODZ areas, and not the protection of the countryside.

The ODZ policy should be shelved until further information and studies on the current situation and requirements in the countryside are put forward for evaluation and discussion. Without this assessment, the entire document is premature and superficial. The draft policy makes no attempt to ensure that development is sustainable, and the idea of sustainability is hardly even mentioned, let alone assessed, throughout the entire document.

Din l-Art Helwa contends that the ODZ policy must safeguard and protect the rural environment as a precious resource and counteract urban sprawl into the countryside. More emphasis must be placed on the protection of rural landscapes, ecosystems and biodiversity. Malta's ODZ policy should highlight the conservation and restoration of all natural habitats in the countryside and safeguard them against pressures from development.



While certainly having no place in residential areas, small industrial enterprises are just as detrimental to our quality of life when allowed to operate in the countryside

Letter to Parliamentary Committee on the Environment and Development Planning

In January, *Din l-Art Helwa* wrote to Standing Committee on Environment and Development Planning chairman Marlene Farrugia, objecting most strongly to the government's ongoing initiative to hastily revise and introduce a series of important plans and policies without carrying out the necessary background studies, before the conclusion of the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED).

The revision and formulation of these plans and policies will have major and long-term environmental, social and economic implications, and *Din l-Art Helwa* requested that the following initiatives are put on hold until the SPED is finalised: the Revision of the Local Plans; the Outside Development Zone policy; the Hotel Heights Adjustment policy; the Fuel Service Stations policy; the Fireworks Factories policy; the Solar Farms policy; the Cemeteries policy and the Inner Harbour Areas (Marsaxlokk) development brief.

Furthermore, land reclamation projects are being considered in the absence of a Marine Subject Plan. In 2013, the Environment and Development Commissioner called for such a plan but this call has so far gone unheeded and plans for land reclamation are still moving ahead. As a result of this approach, no strategic environmental assessment on land reclamation is being carried out.

Din l-Art Helwa requested the Standing Committee on the Environment and Development Planning to review the procedure that is currently being followed by the government in the preparation of the SPED and the revision and formulation of the plans and policies mentioned above. Following this request, the Committee did begin to discuss these issues and DLH and other NGOs were invited to attend the meetings.

The government and Mepa are devising policies which will encourage new building outside development zones, yet neither are doing anything to save the country's rural heritage which is allowed to crumble.



9th *Din I-Art Helwa* Awards for Architectural Heritage



Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Dr Jose Herrera with all the recipients of the awards as well as Executive President Simone Mizzi and Maria Grazia Cassar, Chairperson of the panel of judges

This annual awards scheme, organised by *Din L-Art Helwa* with the support of the Chamber of Architects, is now in its ninth year. Its aim is to publicly recognise the work being carried out in the sphere of cultural heritage and reward projects that are particularly significant in the Maltese context.

Category A: Major Regeneration Project

This year, the *Prix d'Honneur* in Category A was awarded to Design and Technical Resources Ltd (DTR) for 'The enhancement of the visitor experience at Ġgantija Heritage Park, Xagħra, Gozo'. This project also won the Silver Medal Award for the best project overall. The judging panel liked the innovative design and use of materials in this project, but were particularly impressed with the 'portals' that were created along the new pathway, allowing a new vision and appreciation of the magnificent Ġgantija Temples.

In this category, a Diploma was awarded to Architecture Project for the Barrakka Lift, and to the Restoration Directorate for Il-Foss tal-Mdina.



Enhancement of the visitor experience at Ġgantija Heritage Park, Xagħra, Gozo by Design and Technical Resources (DTR)



Il-Foss tal-Mdina



*The
Wignacourt
Museum*

Category B: The Rehabilitation and Re-use of Buildings

The *Prix d'Honneur* in this category was won by The Wignacourt Museum for their project involving the re-organisation of the entire museum – including the restoration of its architectural fabric and the contents.

Architect Patrick Calleja was awarded a Diploma for the new Lombard Bank, Sliema Branch – a milestone in the protection of the architectural patrimony that was Art Nouveau Sliema.

Architect David Xuereb, on behalf of QP Management, was also awarded a Diploma for the PBS Creativity Hub.



PBS Creativity Hub

Category C: A Restoration and Conservation Project

The *Prix d'Honneur* was awarded to Architecture Project for their work on The Nymphaeum & Gate at Villa Bologna, Attard. It is to be hoped that all gardens, especially private ones, that were once an integral part of the Maltese townscape, will be given the care and importance that has been shown at Villa Bologna.

Architect Jean Frendo, on behalf of the Restoration Directorate, was awarded a Diploma in this category for the restoration of The Three Farmhouses at Buskett, a very difficult project that demonstrates there is no such thing as irretrievable heritage.

The interesting project of *Il-Gallarija Miftuha* by architect Chris Briffa was given a special mention. In this project, the traditional closed wooden balcony was given a new twist, morphing into an opening and closing version that allows for today's desire for unobstructed vistas.

The awards were presented by Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Jose Herrera, following an address of welcome by *Din L-Art Helwa* Executive President Simone Mizzi.

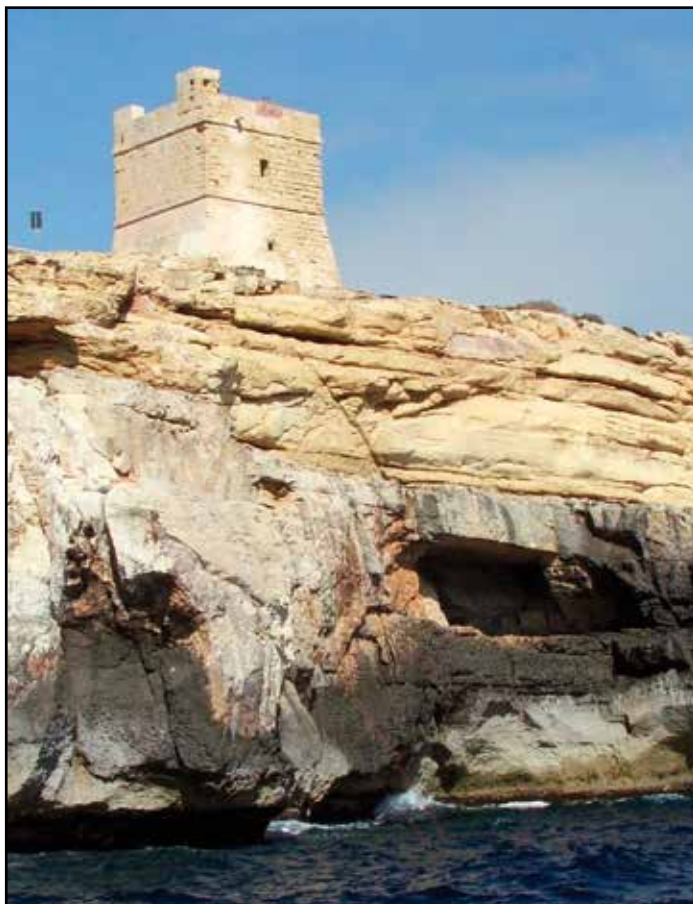
The chairwoman of the panel of judges, Maria Grazia Cassar, announced the winners in her speech. The other judges were Dr Conrad Thake, on behalf of the Chamber of Architects, architect Joanna Spiteri Staines and DLH vice-president and Council member Professor Lucio Mule-Stagno.

In presenting the awards, Dr Herrera praised the work undertaken by *Din L-Art Helwa* and for organising such an important event. "This is a prestigious recognition from a prestigious organisation which has pioneered restoration projects in Malta for more than 50 years. Malta is so rich in cultural heritage that it is impossible for the central government to be able to carry out all the restoration projects needed for the upkeep of important historical monuments. It is not possible for the government to disregard an organisation such as *Din l-Art Helwa*, who has built a reputation for the pristine work carried out in this field. It is for this reason that the guardianship deeds of historic monuments under the care of this organisation have been renewed for another 10 years and a new site has been added."

Dr Herrera added that it was good to see government entities such as Heritage Malta and the Restoration Directorate participating in such awards. "I am honoured to see entities that fall under my remit being involved in such events. I am even more privileged to be leading these entities who are being acknowledged for the important work that they have carried out."

The Nymphaeum at Villa Bologna





Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower

*The signing of the renewal of Guardianship Deeds by Parliamentary Secretary for Lands Dr Michael Farrugia with to his right Secretary-General George Camilleri and to his left Executive President Simone Mizzi, Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Dr Jose Herrera and Superintendent of Cultural Heritage Dr Anthony Pace.
Photo Martin Attard, DOI*

Din l-Art Helwa is entrusted with Renewals for 10 years

Din l-Art Helwa has again been entrusted with the guardianship of 10 historic sites, including the coastal watch tower at Wied iż-Żurrieq. This was announced by Parliamentary Secretary for Lands Michael Farrugia and Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Jose Herrera in a symbolic signing ceremony held at the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest – a site restored and managed by *Din l-Art Helwa*. Present for the ceremony was Superintendent of Cultural Heritage Anthony Pace who signed the deeds along with DLH Executive President Simone Mizzi and Secretary-General George Camilleri.

It was in February 2003, following legislation for the 2002 Cultural Heritage Act, that the first ever Guardianship Deeds were signed with *Din l-Art Helwa*. This was the first time in the history of heritage protection that historic sites were entrusted to an NGO by a government in a stringent legal document of 10-year duration. The nine heritage sites involved – St Agatha's Tower (the Red Tower), Santa Marija Tower and Santa Marija Battery on Comino, Wignacourt Tower, Torri Mamo, Dwejra Tower and Ghallis and Qaliet Marku Towers, as well as the Msida Bastion Protestant Cemetery and Garden of Rest – had already been restored by *Din l-Art Helwa*. Now, after 10 years, *Din l-Art Helwa*, has again been entrusted with their care. Simone Mizzi confirmed that the government had chosen to entrust the organisation with the care of another historic site, Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower, which is in urgent need of restoration. These 10 sites had been abandoned and many were literally crumbling, but thanks to the generosity of *Din l-Art Helwa*'s sponsors, the generosity of private individuals and the hard work of the organisation's volunteers, and many others have been saved for the nation.

Din l-Art Helwa was founded in 1965 with the mission of protecting and enhancing Malta's rich built and natural heritage. It has saved 37 landmarks and monuments over the years and maintains several open spaces such as Foresta 2000 below the Red Tower, the Majjistral Park and historic gardens. At the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest, *Din l-Art Helwa* volunteers worked on their hands and knees for 11 years to piece together 20,000 shattered stone fragments in



Trusted with Guardianship 10 Historic Sites

order to put its neo-classical monuments back into place. The project was awarded with the 2002 Silver Medal for Restoration by Europa Nostra.

Simone Mizzi pointed out that, in the last 10 years, *Din l-Art Helwa* has dedicated some €2.5 million to the care of the sites it manages or restores. In 2012, DLH volunteers gave some 20,000 hours to this work and over €400,000 was ploughed into the economy through restoration – proving that heritage brings sustainable activity, provides many jobs and improves our environment, adding value to the quality of life on the island and to tourism. At this particular time, added Mrs Mizzi, DLH is working on several projects: completing the restoration of Delimara Lighthouse, the complex restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church in Valletta, the upgrading of the small museum in the Garden of Rest to improve its amenities and access, and at Sarria Church, where conservators have just resumed work on the magnificent *Immacolata*, the titular painting by Mattia Preti. It is intended that this work will be finished by 8 December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Together with DLH Council members, Mrs Mizzi thanked the government for having faith in the organisation and praised all the volunteers, in particular the five former executive presidents who, for nearly 50 years, have worked with such commitment – giving freely of their time to Malta. In this sense, by signing the first ever renewals of Guardianship Deeds, *Din l-Art Helwa* has again made history for heritage.

Finally, Mrs Mizzi made an appeal to the government to protect the traditional character of our old town and village centres from development and speculation. The regeneration of dilapidated areas should be encouraged, not demolition. Once the charm of these urban centres is gone, it is gone forever and with it the quality that makes them solely Maltese. Mrs Mizzi also appealed to the government not to allow new building to take place in the countryside, as Malta's open rural spaces are getting rarer and need protection from construction.



Painting on the vaulted ceiling of Our Lady of Victory Church before and after restoration



*Following the signing of the renewal of Guardianship Deeds. From left to right: Secretary-General George Camilleri, Parliamentary Secretary for Lands Dr Michael Farrugia, Executive President Simone Mizzi and Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Dr Jose Herrera
Photo Martin Attard, DOI*

Our Lady of Victory Church More Art Treasures Saved

American MA graduates from the Courtauld Institute of Art, Department of Wall Painting Conservation, Katey Corda, Jennifer Porter (pictured) and Kiernan Graves, are currently working on the vault paintings under the supervision of Lisa Shekede and Stephen Rickerby, also from the Courtauld Institute. Katey and Kiernan, team members since January 2013, were joined by Jennifer in January 2014. Conservation of the largest bay, which depicts the Presentation of the Virgin, and the Presentation of Christ at the Temple, is nearing completion, and work on the entrance bay is now also well underway. The work has involved stabilisation of the stone support and paint layers, reduction of salts and non-original varnish layers, de-restoration in some areas, and reintegration of losses, with the spectacular results that can be observed in these photographs.

The conservation of the Alessio Erardi wall paintings has been made possible through the support of the HSBC Malta Foundation.



Paintings from Our Lady of Victory Church currently undergoing conservation-restoration

Amy Sciberras - Conservator and Restorer

The painting of the Good Shepherd

The painting of the Good Shepherd, signed 'A.F. 1864', is the work of Maltese artist Antonio Falzon (1805-1865). Unfortunately, it was hung beneath a faulty window in the church's sacristy and was consequently damaged by rainwater seepage. Because water causes considerable shrinkage in canvas supports, the painting had suffered from extensive lifting of the paint layer and the considerable detachment of the paint/preparatory layers from the canvas support.

Due to the extent of this lifting, it was necessary to 'face' the painting through the attachment of Japanese paper¹ to the paint layer, using a special adhesive, to ensure that any unstable areas of the paint and preparatory layers were not lost during the restoration work. The painting is now undergoing consolidation treatment to reinstate adhesion between its various layers which has made it necessary to temporarily dismantle it from its stretcher frame in order that this treatment can be applied to both the front and the reverse. In addition, the extensive lifting and deformation of the paint layer are also being improved by the application of localised moisture, heat and pressure. The painting has a very oxidised and yellowed layer of varnish which will be cleaned to expose the original colours of the painting.



*The painting of the Good Shepherd
before restoration*



*Amy Sciberras at work on
the painting of
Our Lady of Good Counsel*

**The restoration of art treasures
in Our Lady of Victory Church
is made possible with the
support of PwC Malta.**

*Detail of the painting
before restoration
under raking light*

The painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel

This painting, the work of renowned artist Antoine de Favray (1706-1792) has an interesting history.

It was also found to be in poor condition, exhibiting lifting of the paint layer and cupping, which indicate a lack of adhesion between the painting's layers and could be the result of fluctuating and/or unfavourable environmental conditions such as high humidity.²

Unlevelled infill (*stuccature*) and gesso residue on the paint layer indicated that the painting had been the subject of unprofessional restoration work in the past, probably intended to stabilise the paint layer. However, this was unsuccessful as unstable areas should be treated and consolidated before the infilling of any losses is attempted.

Preliminary, non-invasive investigations carried out to obtain useful information about the artist's technique, the materials used and the painting's current condition included visual analysis using diffused light, raking light,³ ultraviolet fluorescence (UV)⁴ and infra-red reflectography.⁵ Microscopy, using various magnifications, was also used in order to better understand the technique employed and the stratigraphy, ie the various layers (*strata*) constituting a painting. These initial but crucial studies are also essential for planning any remedial treatment.



Subsequently, the paint layer was stabilised using a compatible and stable adhesive. This was applied by means of a brush and areas where the paint layer had lifted were also improved. The old *stucco* found covering some of the original paint was removed, thus revealing more of the original. Once the paint layer was stabilised, a lacuna in the canvas support was closed using threads similar to the original. Cleaning trials were also carried out and the old varnish was cleaned.

Following this, losses in the canvas support were filled in using a gesso mixture compatible with the original one and an intermediate layer of varnish was applied to the painting's surface. At present, such infills are being integrated using reversible varnish colours.

**All photographs
are provided
by the author**

References

Degiorgio, S. / 2011 *The Hospitaller Church of Our Lady of Victory*, Unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Malta.

Farrugia, J.J. / 2012 *The Art and Architecture of Twentieth Century Gozo*, in the Gozo Observer No. 26, June 2012.

Footnotes

¹ Japanese paper is a thin, strong paper made from vegetable fibre.

² High humidity levels cause the canvas to shrink which, in turn, results in the lifting of the paint layer due to a reduction of the surface area of the canvas support.

³ The use of raking light reveals any deformations in the canvas support and detachment problems in paint/preparatory layers which would need to be treated to restore the structural stability of the painting.

⁴ Ultraviolet fluorescence is a non-invasive method for investigating paintings. The original paint and/or varnish layers fluoresce UV radiation relatively more than materials applied subsequently, as in previous restoration work. This means that the fluorescence of old varnishes as well as the presence of over-painting can be identified.

⁵ Infra-red reflectography is another non-invasive technique that provides the possibility of revealing various information including under-drawings and *pentimenti* in paintings.

*The paint layer
being consolidated*



The Crypt

A wrought-iron grill has been installed over the entrance to the church's historic crypt. The church was the first burial ground in Valletta where Grand Master de Valette (1494-1568) was first laid to rest on 22 August 1568 as well as his successor, Grand Master Pietro del Monte (1499-1572). The iron grill was forged in the traditional manner by Muzzan Blacksmiths Patrick, Michael and David Xerri.



At work on the wrought-iron grill



Simone Mizzi with 'Muzzan' father and son, Michael and Patrick Scerri, during the installation of the wrought iron grill over the historic crypt

Review of the booklet *Our Lady of Victory Church* authored by Joe Azzopardi and published by *Din l-Art Helwa* in 2013

Petra Caruana Dingli

In March 1566, soon after their victory against the invasion of Malta by the Ottoman Turks, the Knights of St John laid the foundation stone for the fortified city of Valletta. The first known building that the Knights immediately constructed in the new city was the church of Our Lady of Victory, erected on the highest ground of the peninsula. Two years later, Grand Master Valette died and was buried in the crypt of this church.

Before the construction of the magnificent Conventual church dedicated to St John the Baptist, Our Lady of Victory church acted as the main church of the Order of St John in Valletta. It continued to be extended and embellished until the mid-18th century, evolving into a splendid Baroque church in line with the stylistic development of the time.

By the mid-20th century, the church was badly in need of restoration, and conservation work was eventually initiated by the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee. As one of the churches that belonged to the Knights of St John, today the church is the property of the Maltese government. In 2011, after several years of discussion with the authorities, the government granted a Deed of Guardianship over the church to the non-governmental heritage organisation *Din l-Art Helwa*.

Important projects begun by the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee, such as the ongoing restoration by the Courtauld Institute of the beautiful paintings by Alessio Erardi on the vaulted ceiling, were continued by DLH and many other projects were initiated.

Din l-Art Helwa has recently published a booklet on Our Lady of Victory church, written by Joe Azzopardi. This booklet provides a wealth of information on the many artefacts of the church, illustrated with some very attractive photographs.

Apart from providing an overall history of the church from its beginnings to the present day, the text also covers its architectural development and provides an illustrated tour of the interior with a special focus on the High Altar and the treasures of the apse.

The important paintings by the Italian artist Alessio Erardi are examined in depth, providing a valuable record of the details of this ongoing major restoration project which is truly saving these gorgeous frescoes from complete ruin – they had deteriorated so badly that at one time there was talk of painting over them!

Joe Azzopardi observes that, while Erardi's fresco cycle represents the life of the Virgin, these ceiling paintings also contain references to the successes and victories of the Order of St John.

The booklet describes various other works of art within the church, including its marble tombstones and the exquisite 18th century organ cases. With its wealth of interesting details about this lovely church and its meticulous and extensive restoration, this booklet is likely to be useful to scholars and art historians as well as of interest to the casual visitor or anyone interested in the history of the Order of St John.



An appeal is being made for funds for the restoration of the 18C church organ. This was left abandoned for many decades and many parts were lost. Any donations can be sent to DLH, 133 Melita St., Valletta.

Valetta's oldest church gets latest communication technology

With the support of the Vodafone Malta Foundation, Our Lady of Victory Church, the oldest church in Valletta and its first building, can now boast an interactive information kiosk that offers bespoke touch-screen technology. As part of the complex renovation programme being undertaken by *Din l-Art Helwa*, this interactive table now allows visitors easy access to colourful information on the unique history of the church and its art treasures. Focus on current restoration and information about religious services is available, as is the list of sponsors who have made possible *Din l-Art Helwa*'s challenging project to restore the church.

This is one of a series of communication vehicles made possible by the Vodafone Malta Foundation which include a pocket guide book to the church, audio guides in six languages, pamphlets giving a quick guided tour of the church and display equipment that will enhance the numerous works of art and religious ephemera found in the church.

The interactive kiosk, programmed by Cyberspace Ltd, was launched on 12 December. With the blessing of the Rector, Mons. Anton Galea, it was unveiled by Vodafone Malta Foundation chairperson Gemma Mifsud Bonnici in the presence of UK High Commissioner HE Rob Luke. Also present was DLH Executive President Simone Mizzi as well as members of the Council.

Ms Mizzi said that the organisation was grateful for Vodafone Malta Foundation's support in making it possible for the oldest church in the capital city to offer modern information technology to visitors. It is a special way of making religious heritage and the pastoral services of the church relevant to the generation of today and giving the visitor a deeper understanding of the artistic and spiritual importance of Victory Church in a quiet and comfortable environment that does not disturb people visiting the church for devotional purposes.



Ms Gemma Mifsud Bonnici, Chairperson of the Vodafone Malta Foundation, British High Commissioner HE Rob Luke, Dun Anton Galea former Rector of Victory Church and Cettina Caruana Curran try out the new interactive display with Simone Mizzi

HSBC Malta increases commitment to €275,000 for the Erardi vault at Victory Church

With its donation of a further €75,000, the HSBC Malta Foundation has again demonstrated its support for *Din l-Art Helwa*'s restoration of the vaulted ceiling of Our Lady of Victory Church. This was announced by HSBC Malta CEO Mark Watkinson during a visit to the church with Professor David Park, Director of the Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

With HSBC's support for Alessio Erardi's masterpiece, *Din l-Art Helwa* is restoring, conserving and enhancing the spiritual and historical significance of Our Lady of Victory Church which, as Valletta's oldest building, is intricately linked to the city's foundation and history.

"As the first church of the capital city, adorned, amongst others, with paintings by Maltese artist Alessio Erardi, Our Lady of Victory Church is an invaluable cornerstone of Malta's history which deserves the very best professional care and attention," said Mr Watkinson.

Din l-Art Helwa's executive president Simone Mizzi replied that HSBC's substantial increase in funding will ensure that conservation work on Erardi's *Life of the Virgin* will be successfully and professionally concluded by 2015. "We are also thrilled because this will coincide with *Din l-Art Helwa*'s Golden Jubilee," she said.

While stressing that the vaulted ceiling is a very important part of the conservation work, Ms Mizzi reiterated that there is still much more to be done. She expressed sincere gratitude to the HSBC Malta Foundation, the Courtauld Institute conservators and to Prof.



From the left, Prof. David Park, Simone Mizzi, Mark Watkinson, Steve Rickerby and Lisa Shekede

Park, who had come to Malta specifically to view progress on the work on the ceiling.

"I am", Prof. Park said, "absolutely delighted by the progress which has been going faster than expected, while still observing the high standards set. This is the fourth consecutive professional task undertaken by the Courtauld Institute of Art on wall paintings in Malta, which includes work at the Magisterial Palace and the co-Cathedral. The task here has presented many exceptional difficulties, but work on the splendid Erardi ceiling is coming to a very successful conclusion."

"He expressed his good wishes to DLH for the completion of all the other work required to finally restore the church to its original glory."

Din l-Art Helwa News

Patricia Salomone

Din l-Art Helwa's Autumn Concert and Dinner at St John's Cavalier

On Saturday, 16 November, *Din l-Art Helwa* held its traditional Autumn Concert and Dinner in the Grand Hall of St John's Cavalier, Valletta, in the presence of the then Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Jose Herrera and Mrs Herrera. Once more, the historic hall was made available by courtesy of HE Umberto Di Capua, Ambassador of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta.

After a welcome drink, guests were invited to take their seats for a recital by internationally renowned Maltese soprano Lydia Caruana. Lydia enchanted the audience with her beautiful voice and stage presence as she gave a performance that included works by Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Gounod, Bizet and Verdi. She was skilfully accompanied on the piano by Yvette-Maria Galea. This concert was made possible thanks to the generous support of Mr Mark Watkinson, CEO, HSBC Malta and, the piano was made available by kind concession of Dr Michael Grech and the Manoel Theatre.

After the concert, President Simone Mizzi thanked all those present for their support and expressed the hope for continued collaboration between DLH and the Secretariat for Culture in the safeguarding of our heritage and environment. Ms Mizzi acknowledged the help generously given by Casapinta Design Group and DLH volunteers and office staff.

Guests then enjoyed an excellent gourmet dinner served by Osborne Caterers. A raffle was then held for four splendid prizes, donated by generous sponsors. The first prize was a painting, entitled *Texting the Lord*, by Rossella Dalmas; the second was a weekend for two at the Malta Hilton; the third prize was a pair of scatter cushions by InsideOut Design Finishes and the fourth prize was a coffee-table book entitled *Sails Round Malta* by Joseph Muscat. The evening came to an end with a rendition of 'Happy Birthday to You' to Dr Herrera.



From left to right: Patricia Salomone, Lisa Shekede, Sarah Watkinson, Mark Watkinson, Simone Mizzi, Steve Rickerby, Dr Michael Grech and Francesca Grech.

bottom left:
Chev. Charles Gatt, Mrs Cettina Caruana Curran, Mrs Marie Benoit and Mr David Elyan

Soprano Lydia Caruana



Majjistral Nature and History Park Interpretation Centre opens its doors for the first time

The Majjistral Nature and History Park in Mellieħa has recently opened its new Information Centre in the old military barracks at Golden Bay. Formerly known as *il-Kamp ta' Ghajn Tuffieħa*, the new Centre will be able to host educational activities related to environmental management, while also providing information related to the various features of the Majjistral Park.

The official opening was held on 13 April, just two years after the signing of the management agreement between the government and the Majjistral Park Management Board. According to project coordinator Darren Saliba, this is only the first step of many more, in which structures will be restored and made available to schools and other educational facilities as a means of broadening environmental knowledge and understanding. The Majjistral Management Board has under its management 15 more structures that will be converted into educational facilities for the benefit of everyone.

Management Board chairwoman Carmen Sammut praised the work done on site and thanked all those involved, including the companies and organisations that helped through activities, the donation of trees and office equipment. Dr Sammut also announced that a competition with an investment of around €14,000 was being sponsored by the Malta Information Technology Agency. This initiative, which will see two competing groups preparing a mobile application for Majjistral Park, will help promote creativity and entrepreneurship in young people with environmental awareness.

The opening ceremony was carried out by Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change Leo Brincat, who said that the opening of the Interpretation Centre was proof that anything is possible when everyone involved contributes towards a single goal.

The Majjistral Nature and History Park, Malta's only national natural park, stretches from Golden Bay to Anchor Bay and includes the areas known as Ix-Xaghra l-Hamra, Ghajn Żnuber and il-Qasam Barrani. It forms part of the extensive Natura 2000 network, areas that are protected through both European and national legislation and is managed by the Heritage Parks Federation – a non-governmental organisation consisting of *Din l-Art Helwa*, the Gaia Foundation and Nature Trust Malta.



Majjistral Nature and History Park Information Centre

Gloria – Christmas Concert by Enkor

Once again it was a case of “full house”, with people standing outside a totally full Our Lady of Victory Church to listen to the heavenly sound of Enkor’s Christmas concert. This year, the concert was held on 21 December, in the full spirit of Christmas. Amongst the audience were Irish Ambassador HE Jim Hennessy and his family.

Gloria was the title chosen in thanksgiving for the conservation work on the church that had been completed in 2013. Although there is still much to be done, it was a year of considerable achievement.

The concert presented an opportunity to display the newly-laid wrought-iron grating that now graces the opening to the underground vault, which was the first burial place of Grand Master de Valette. This work by Mikiel and Patrick (*il-Muzzan*) of Naxxar was given good coverage on PBS News and attracted several curious visitors. The Enkor concert also provided an occasion to launch the new lighting system, designed and installed by Markus Micallef at Proinvest Ltd.



HE Jim Hennessy, Ambassador of Ireland, Simone Mizzi, Enkor Choir director Johanna van Lent Singels and Pat Salomone



The Enkor Choir



Soloists performing during the concert

Din l-Art Helwa Celebrates Mattia Preti with Vivaldi at Sarria Church in Floriana

On 22 February 2014, a string concert by the Kalypso Ensemble celebrated the presentation of the newly restored *Vergine Immacolata* by Mattia Preti at Sarria Church, Floriana.

In the presence of the then Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Dr Jose Herrera and Mrs Herrera, Italian Ambassador to Malta Dr Giovanni de Vito, Floriana mayor Nigel Holland, Rector Fr Joseph Borg and John de Giorgio and Franco Galea, directors of sponsors Shireburn Software, DLH executive president Simone Mizzi recounted the fascinating story of this restoration project.

“In 2012 we had acquired permission to restore the St Sebastian painting. Dot. Giuseppe Mantella was commissioned by *Din l-Art Helwa* to do this work. While we were working on the St Sebastian, the *Immacolata* sent us her own particular message saying she was urgently requiring attention. She was literally crumbling under her own weight, her stretchers and lining eaten by woodworm. Here, with Dr Mantella’s help, we asked the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage, Dr Anthony Pace, for urgent permission to take it down and save it from collapsing and early in 2013, in a pure act of faith, Dr Mantella changed its stretchers and relined it in an emergency salvage operation. *Din l-Art Helwa* then made a commitment to restore it and to raise funds for the costly and expert restoration with which to celebrate Preti’s 400th anniversary year.

The historic value of this canvas is worth mentioning. It is one of seven canvasses that the Cavaliere Calabrese painted to decorate the chapel which he was commissioned to build by Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner, in 1676 when our islands were ravaged by the plague. Layer upon layer of artistic thinking by the artist form the composition of this picture, with the beautiful Madonna at its centre. Looking down on her are God the Father and the Holy Ghost in an apotheosis of Good over Evil. The stone frame, also designed by Preti, was restored by Giuseppe Mantella Restauri just in time for the 8 December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, last year. What was still missing was the cash to pay for the work!

Just before 8 December, we sent out an appeal for funds to allow us to return the painting to its place. PBS kindly offered to document this restoration by DLH with pre and post restoration images in time for the Feast. I was due to go on air and make an appeal on behalf of DLH for sponsorship as the organisation still had no funds specifically for this project and I was standing on Sarria’s doorstep with the TV cameras being set up, when my mobile rang and, as if by divine intervention, Mr John de Giorgio CEO of Shireburn SoftwareLtd was on the other end of the line wishing to commemorate his company’s 30th anniversary with a worthy project. The lady in blue has her own way of creating synergies between those who work to save our cultural heritage – and so here we are. How can I thank Mr de Giorgio for his wave of telepathic intuition and for the generosity of Shireburn Software? I congratulate them on their company’s 30th anniversary and would add that Shireburn is a Maltese company that does the island proud with its high professional standards and great sense of corporate responsibility.”

Ms Mizzi also thanked Dr Anthony Pace and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, for their high degree of collaboration and constant advice, Fr Joe Borg for his availability, the Valletta and Floriana Rehabilitation Committees and Floriana local council and mayor for their collaboration, the Restoration Directorate and, of course, Dott. Giuseppe Mantella for believing in *Din l-Art Helwa* and working far beyond his professional commission in researching this painting so thoroughly while carrying out its restoration. Ms Mizzi also thanked DLH Council members Maria Grazia Cassar for coordinating the initial stages of the project, and also with the St Sebastian, and Pat Salomone, Cettina Caruana Curran and the office staff for taking on the organisation of the event. Lastly Ms Mizzi thanked Dr Herrera and the Italian Ambassador and other guests for their attendance.

Mr John Degiorgio said it had been a pleasure for his company to have sponsored such a worthy cause in celebration of the 30th anniversary of Shireburn Software Ltd and Dr Hererra praised *Din l-Art Helwa* for its dependability and promised that on his desk were the papers relating to some form of fiscal agreement for those business entities who commit part of their earnings to elements of Malta’s heritage that need saving. This was the cherry on the cake, at the end of such an enjoyable evening and one hopes that promises will be kept.



*from the left:
John De Giorgio CEO of
Shireburn Software Ltd,
Monique Chambers,
Simone Mizzi, and
Mrs and Mr Franco Galea*

*Kalypso Ensemble
play Vivaldi under
Mattia Preti’s
Vergine Immacolata*



'Pictures at an Exhibition' at Auberge d'Italie

An exhibition of abstract paintings by David G. Curmi, entitled *Pictures at an Exhibition*, was held at the Ministry for Tourism, Auberge d'Italie in Valletta between 21 March and 4 April.

This new collection of abstracts in acrylic, ink and resin was produced between 2012 and 2014 and follows the artist's successful solo exhibition held at San Anton Palace in March 2012. "Each one of these 40 abstract paintings is inspired by my music playlist," said the artist. "I use colour to interpret the inter-connection of the sounds and feelings that I find in music".

In fact, the pieces of this astonishing collection are strikingly different from one another and *prima facie* the exhibition appeared to be more a collective than the work of a single artist. It could be said that Mr Curmi deliberately departed from the homogeneity that normally dominates solo exhibitions to create a collection of different abstracts. A closer evaluation of the works, however, reveals that the works come together in the diversity of the music by which they are inspired and in the common media in which they are executed.

The exhibition was introduced and opened by Lawrence Pavia on 21 March. During the opening ceremony, *Din l-Art Helwa* executive president Simone Mizzi said the organisation was extremely grateful to Mr Curmi for pledging part of the proceeds from the sale of the paintings towards the restoration of Mattia Preti's painting of St Roque, one of the seven Preti paintings adorning the Sarria Church in Floriana. Ms Mizzi said: "I am confident that other generous sponsors will come forward to offer to support the restoration of the remaining four paintings by Mattia Preti, at Sarria, which are crying out for restoration".

The exhibition was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and the Malta Tourism Authority and was supported by Bank of Valletta plc, Middlesea Insurance plc, MSV Life plc, KPMG, the Corinthia Group and ROCS.



from the left:
Mariella Curmi, David G Curmi, Simone Mizzi and Lawrence Pavia.

Farewell Visit by *Din l-Art Helwa* Council Members to President George Abela

On 26 February, *Din l-Art Helwa* council members accompanied Executive President Simone Mizzi on a farewell visit to President George Abela at San Anton Palace. Ms Mizzi thanked Dr Abela for his patronage of *Din l-Art Helwa* and for his enthusiastic support of everything concerned with Malta's rich cultural heritage. Dr Abela expressed his appreciation for all the work that the NGO has carried out tirelessly for almost 50 years. He graciously accepted a copy of *The Power of Example, 40 years of Europa Nostra*, presented to him by Ms Mizzi.



from the left:

Albert P Mamo, Ian Camilleri, Josie Ellul Mercer, Philip Mercieca, Patricia Salomone, Blanche Martin, Cettina Caruana Curran, President Abela, Simone Mizzi, George Camilleri, Martin Scicluna, Prof. Luciano Mule Stagno, Caroline Clements. (not shown: Joseph Chetcuti).

photo: Joseph Chetcuti

The 13th-century girl known as 'CP 10' is reburied

The remains of the young woman known as 'CP 10', removed from her tomb many years ago for forensic study, was returned to her rightful place of burial in the Chapel of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri on 26 March. The assistant parish priest of Żurrieq, Rev. Fr Raymond Cassar, the Żurrieq Mayor Ignatius Farrugia, DLH Executive President Simone Mizzi and Council member Josie Ellul Mercer were present for a commemorative blessing, together with chapel custodian Tony Mangion, while Council member Stanley Farrugia Randon and DLH handyman John Gafa prepared the ground.

Heritage Malta and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage collaborated on this project, bringing to light much more information about the young girl who was approximately 16 years old when she died and was given the right to be buried in the chapel. It has been established that she had known a life of toil and hardship and had also experienced periods of hunger. A full report will be published in a later edition of *Vigilo*.



The remains just before reburial

***Din l-Art Helwa* at the KSU Freshers' Week 2013**

The *Kunsill Studenti Universitarji* (Students Union Council), asked *Din l-Art Helwa* to set up a stand during Freshers' Week 2013. We knew from the start that this would not only prove to be a new and fruitful experience but also a great challenge for the simple reason that it was the first time something of this nature had been set up! Trying to get the stand was no mere feat but we persevered, we worked and we managed.

Having gone through this experience, we can now honestly say that the turnout was much better than we expected, with 11 new members for *Din l-Art Helwa*, not to mention 202 signatures to the petition for the referendum to stop spring hunting – something which gave us immense satisfaction. All in all, it was certainly a memorable experience which gave DLH the opportunity to meet new people, exchange ideas and, most importantly, give something back to the community of which we all form a part.



Din l-Art Helwa's stand during Freshers' Week 2013

Ads Promoting Heritage

Din l-Art Helwa has teamed up with Fimbank plc to create a series of video advertisements promoting heritage and spreading awareness of some of the historic sites DLH manages with their unusual anecdotes that capture public interest. Do watch out for these. We hope you enjoy them and they bring us in loads of new members. The video spots will be aired five times a day on TVM and TVM2 between October 2013 and May 2014. The prime time spot is aired at around 7.45pm every day on TVM just before the 8.00pm News.

Executive President Simone Mizzi Visits St Edward's College



Executive President Simone Mizzi visited St Edward's College and gave a passionate address to the sixth formers on the importance of Heritage. Albert P Mamo, DLH Council Member, was also present.

EU Best Practice Award for “Youth Exchange Qrendi 2012”

The Youth Exchange, which goes under the name *Maltese and French Youth for the Restoration of Maltese Heritage*, organised by *Din l-Art Helwa* together with French partners Rempart under the *Youth in Action* programme, has been recognised with the *Best Practice Award* by the European Union Programmes Agency. The ceremony, held last December, was to recognise and give exposure to the most innovative, engaging and generally successful initiatives organised through the *Youth in Action* (YiA) programme between 2007 and 2013. The project was recognised as a leading example of best practice.

The Youth Exchange, held in September 2012, brought together a group of Maltese and French young volunteers to work on the restoration of the Tal-Hniena chapel in Qrendi and, through this, contribute to the preservation of Maltese cultural and historic heritage.

This was the third successful exchange to have taken place, after having first been conceived in 2010 through the efforts of Maria Grazia Cassar, Cathy Farrugia and other members of *Din l-Art Helwa*. The project in 2012 was the first to be funded through the YiA Programme but not the last, as the following year, in September 2013, a fourth exchange was held. This time around, the project saw a group of Maltese and French volunteers travel to the North of France to the town of Coucy-le-Château-Auffrique. There they worked together on the restoration of a 13th-century gate that once formed part of the town's fortifications. Through this initiative the young people expanded this type of effort across national borders, thus contributing to the restoration of not just local heritage but to our shared European heritage.



Robert Debono, National Coordinator at European Union Programmes Agency, the then Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth & Sport Stefan Buontempo and Tara Cassar Youth Leader for the project. photo by Pierre Sammut DOI

Letter from a Visitor to the Red Tower

A marvellous attraction, where you can be squired by a marvellous host, Lance, one of Lancashire's finest!

Last September, after visiting the Mellieha WWII shelters, we hopped on a bus for the short journey to the Red Tower. It can be seen from the bus, but you'll have to be sharp if you wish to alight at the correct stop.

The bus driver cheerily called out: "Enjoy your long walk" as we left the bus and we feared it would indeed be a challenging jaunt. However, despite the heat, my wife and I merrily climbed northwards. Yes, it was indeed a challenge, but not by any means insurmountable. And when you reach your journey's end, I can assure you the reward will be a fine one.

A measly entrance fee was swiftly repaid within moments of our arrival. Our obviously sweaty appearance was sympathetically noted by our host who motioned us to a bench, where we greedily cooled ourselves in front of the electric fan thoughtfully brought over by Lance, as we viewed an entertaining film about the origins of the Tower.

With our cool countenances now restored, we sauntered around the building. Yes it was compact, but it nevertheless held a wealth of history.

Just as at the Mellieha WWII shelters, our host was more than willing to share his passion for his subject, giving us as much information as we desired about the tower, and then moving on to give his personal tips for enjoying the rest of the island. He felt like an old pal by the conclusion of our visit and I had to be dragged away by my wife at the point where she sensed I may have begun to question Lance to see if he shared one of my Lancashire passions: the wonderful game of rugby league!

Arise, Sir Lancelot...

Another first for *Din L-Art Helwa*

For the first time, a private group has been granted permission to tour some of the underground tunnels and chambers beneath Valletta. In October, by kind permission of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Gozo and Comino Volunteers group, accompanied by architect Edward Said, explored the labyrinth of chambers and passages in the subterranean area of the Auberge de Castille and the Auberge d'Italie, parts of Malta's underground heritage that are not normally open to the public.



Exploring subterranean Valletta

Members of Sliema Venture Scouts recall their Summer Camp in Comino

By Jonathan Mercieca

On 5 September, we met at our HQ for our annual summer camp. This year's was going to be very different from usual, as we would be based on Comino, thanks to the generosity of *Din L-Art Helwa*.

Unfortunately, our stay in Comino had to be shortened before we even got there, as bad weather forced us to spend the first two days of camp in Sliema. We made the most of our stay there, practicing some scouting skills such as pioneering and mapping. We also took the opportunity to do some climbing on our indoor climbing wall, and once the weather calmed down we did a bit of kayaking around St Julian's Bay.

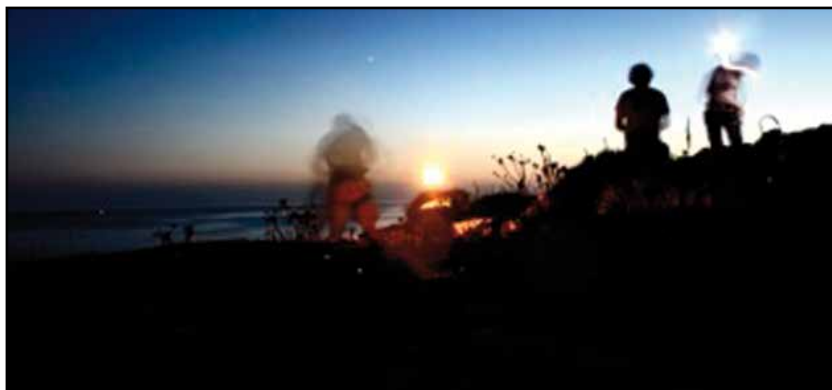
On the 7th we woke up bright and early, as the weather forecasts all predicted sunny weather, and we would finally be heading for Comino. We put our kit into a van, hooked up a trailer and loaded up our kayaks, and headed off for Ċirkewwa. From there we kayaked over to Comino, which took less time than expected as the currents and weather were in our favour. After a quick packed lunch we returned to the kayaks to explore the caves along the coast, which I can assure you is a much greater experience than being taken around on a tour boat. We even found a sandy beach hidden away in one of the caves, and enjoyed a nice swim to cool off.

We spent the rest of the afternoon hiding from the sun in the tower, where we had time to shower, apply sun cream and consume large amounts of tea. At around 6 pm we headed back out with some ropes and harnesses in search of a good spot for an abseil. We found the perfect place next to the gun battery and spent a few hours abseiling through the sunset until it was too dark to continue.

That evening, which was unfortunately our only one on Comino, was spent on the roof of the tower, where we had a BBQ with amazing views in all directions. There were even fireworks going off, in Malta as well as in Gozo. We celebrated the birthday of one of our group with a cake, and slept up on the roof under the stars. The next morning we woke up early yet again. Half of us kayaked to Gozo on the perfectly still morning water. We waited at Hondoq ir-Rummien for some triathlon competitors, who were to swim back to Malta. We helped in escorting them back, providing support and much-needed rest spots along the channel. Once back in Malta, we met up with the others, who had spent the morning packing up and carrying out some maintenance work at the tower and visiting the Santa Marija Battery before returning to Marfa. We had a quick bite to eat before loading up the kayaks and heading for home, for some well-deserved sleep after such an amazing camp on the unsung island of Comino.



Sliema Venture Scouts on Comino



Din l-Art Helwa's Youth Committee and the Youth Section of Naxxar Local Council collaborate to clean-up Qalet Marku

The flag has been hoisted at the tower. On Saturday, 22 March, *Din l-Art Helwa's* Youth Committee and the Youth Section of Naxxar Local Council collaborated on a thorough clean-up of the area around Qalet Marku Tower in Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq.

The main aim of the exercise was to restore the natural pleasant surroundings of the tower, which was constructed in 1658-9 and is one of the 13 watch towers built by Grand Master Martin de Redin around the coastline. It is hoped that, whilst safeguarding and preserving this historically important building, the work of the young people from both organisations to enhance the environment will encourage people to visit Qalet Marku Tower and enjoy both it and the area around it.

On the day, the 12 volunteers, led by DLH Youth Committee coordinator Ian Camilleri, managed to clear a substantial portion of the peninsula and it is hoped that, by the beginning of summer, it will be completely clean.



The flag hoisted at Qalet Marku Tower

The volunteers who participated in the clean-up



Din l-Art Helwa would like to express its gratitude to the Naxxar mayor for sponsoring the skip hire, and for encouraging the young people in the community to support and participate in the activity. Special thanks also go to the members of the *Din l-Art Helwa* Youth Committee, including those who delivered the tools to the site.

The Youth Committee is planning several clean-ups this year, at Wied iż-Żurrieq Tower, St Paul's Islands, and the Qala Battery in Gozo.



The volunteers hard at work



Delimara Lighthouse Restoration Update

Stanley Farrugia Randon

After over eight years of work, the restoration of Delimara lighthouse was finally completed earlier this year when the lantern, mechanism and housing were hoisted into place after more than two years of work by JMS Art Metal. This was a laborious job that involved the dismantling of the lantern and housing to restore the individual parts.

Some parts, such as most of the glass panes, a large number of bronze bolts and bearings and most of the copper guttering have been replaced. The remainder were cleaned and restored, the iron parts were galvanised and the bronze lantern was given a lacquer protection.

The base of the lantern has also been repaired, which involved the sculpting and fitting of the missing parts in steel plates. The welding work involved the use of special electrodes to join the cast-iron parts to steel. The stone to which the base of the outer lantern housing was fixed has also been replaced with hard stone.

The lantern being taken down



Details of the fuel container formerly used to light the Delimara Lighthouse



The dented fuel tank was restored and cleaned, revealing its beautiful copper colour and Victorian decorations. The Fresnel system of lenses and prisms has been cleaned and its metal parts restored and protected.

Din l-Art Helwa has received permission for a cesspit, as the lighthouse is not connected to any drainage system. In the past, sewage was disposed of down the cliffs and into the sea!

We are grateful to GasanMamo Insurance Ltd for their generous sponsorship which has enabled us to accomplish this challenging project.



The mechanism and housing being hoisted into place



The Fresnel lenses

Towns, Villages and Hamlets

Stanley Farrugia Randon

The very small size of our islands may lead one to think that towns and villages merge into one block of buildings where it is difficult to notice where one begins and the other ends. Indeed, in some instances a road is divided into two, with one half belonging to one particular locality and the other belonging to another. Local councils and parishes do not always match and sometimes a property is designated as the responsibility of one local council but forms part of the parish of another.

A town (Maltese *belt*) is where a relatively large number of people live as a community, and a village (Maltese *raħal*) is usually a smaller community of people living in a rural area. In Malta, such definitions are hard to understand. Valletta has a continually dwindling population, while Birkirkara is ever growing in size and population, and yet we still refer to Valletta as *Il-Belt Valletta*. A very important consideration to keep in mind is the location of the governing bodies of the time. The *Università* in Mdina had been the governing body for well over a hundred years by the time the Knights of the Order of St John took over the running of our islands in 1530.

Although Malta is very small, we can still encounter a number of hamlets (Maltese: *rhajjel*) in the countryside. The word 'hamlet' is borrowed from the Old French *hamel*, which means 'village' and is simply a diminutive of *hamel*, indicating that its size is even smaller than that of a village. Although a typical hamlet consists of only a few houses which lack basic services, they are proud of living in seclusion but nevertheless still form part of the area for which a local council is responsible.

When the Arabs invaded the Maltese islands in 870 AD, there is reason to believe that the islands were abandoned. They were subsequently colonised by Muslims from Sicily in the mid-eleventh century. The Norman conquest of Malta took place in 1091 after Sicily was conquered. The Muslims were allowed to continue living on the islands provided they recognised the Normans as their lords and paid a yearly tribute. The Christian slaves were freed and taken by the Normans, and Malta was left even more Muslim than before. The Muslim cemetery on the ruins of the *Domus Romana* in Rabat suggests that the Islamic community thrived within the walls of Mdina and Rabat. The Norman re-conquest of Malta in 1127 brought a Latin garrison to Mdina and this time the Muslims were most probably forced out into the countryside. It is here that they must have established hamlets to continue practising Islam and it is in these hamlets that they developed husbandry. A Maltese rural settlement is still known as *raħal* – a word of Arabic origin. The people are known as *raħħala* which literally means 'sheepfold'. Agricultural methods with ingenious methods of gathering water to practise dry farming were developed in Malta – as they were in other parts of the Mediterranean where Muslims had a strong influence.



A one-roomed building in Imtahleb devoid of its roof showing the use of kileb

All photographs are provided by the author

*Below left:
A cave with an additional room at Imtahleb below the chapel*

Wied Hażrun and the Simblija Hamlet



When the Order of St John visited the islands before making them their home, they described Malta as a relatively barren, rocky island with few trees. Our shallow soil does not easily support trees and so timber was not used much for construction. On the other hand, the soft globigerina limestone allows for the construction of an entire building, except the doors and windows and our stone is part and parcel of vernacular Maltese architecture.

The hamlets took the form of a few houses and caves, the latter being either natural or dug into rock. The leaders of these hamlets probably lived in buildings erected using methods that may have well been introduced by the Muslims themselves. The nomenclature still in use, such as '*xorok tal-qasba*' and '*kileb*', has a Semitic origin. The *xorok* were stone slabs not exceeding seven feet in length and these were laid on *kileb*, which are brackets of stone protruding from the upper part of the side walls. If the room was wide enough, the *xorok* had to be supported in the middle by a timber beam or *travu* which was referred to as *pastaz*.

The poorer or less important people might have lived in the caves, although it could be that these were reserved for livestock or for storing crops. Hamlets could have a combination of natural or man-made caves together with houses built of stone and timber. A feature in common was that they all employed an efficient system for the collection of water that could easily be reminiscent of the methods used by the Muslims in mediaeval times.

Most old hamlets – such as Tartani, Hal-Mann, Hal-Tmiem, Bisqallin, Bisbut, Hal-Kbir, Hal-Xluq, Hal-Muxi, Hal-Dragu, Hal-Saffieni, Hal-Hobla and Hal-Bajjada – have disappeared. This is a loss to our historic, artistic and cultural patrimony. A few have disappeared only recently, such as the mediaeval hamlet at Ghar Ilma on the outskirts of Sta Luċija in Gozo. Up to 30 years ago there were a small number of mediaeval houses in this area which have subsequently been 'transformed' into modern villas. Only a couple of stone walls built in the vernacular style have survived.

The mediaeval hamlet of Simblija still survives and is probably the best known. It is composed of rock-cut dwellings as well as built ones, but is, however, closed to the public. Mepa scheduled the Simblija complex as a Grade 2 and Class B national monument in June 2006.



A wall at Ghar Ilma showing the use of kileb

Room with arches in Birkirkara





Għajn Tuffieħa hamlet overlooking valley



Għajn Tuffieħa Hamlet



Imtarfa

At Imtahleb there is also a complex of caves and constructed dwellings. Some of them are located just behind the present chapel, others are located underneath it and some of them are modern. The place is mostly abandoned but some of the single-room buildings and caves are used for storing crops or by hunters. The present chapel was constructed on the site of an earlier one that was recorded by Dusina in his survey of 1575. A structure just behind the chapel is entirely built of stone and is similar in architecture to mediaeval chapels such as those of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri and San Cir on the outskirts of Rabat. Other single-room buildings were constructed using the old method of *xorok* supported on *kileb*, but these structures are, unfortunately, crumbling.

Another collection of old buildings can be found close to the Għajn Tuffieħa Roman Baths. The upper floor of a two-storey building bears the coat of arms of Grand Master Perellos (1697-1720) but the lower stone wall is obviously a much earlier construction. Again, this hamlet overlooks a valley which is farmed and has an efficient irrigation system.

Two single-room buildings adjacent to each other in Birkirkara, which once would have overlooked the now developed valley, probably date from mediaeval times. The larger of the two is built of three-pointed diaphragm limestone masonry arches at a spacing of approximately 1.4m that support flat stone slabs (*xorok*) set at an inclination to the horizontal. The internal space is approximately square, measuring about 7.8m by 7.4m. The roof of the other, much smaller, building is constructed in the vernacular method of *xorok* supported on *kileb*.

Unfortunately, we are rapidly losing buildings constructed in the vernacular architecture. The establishment of the Planning Authority in 1992 and Urban Conservation Area policies (UCAs) helped to protect them – or at least slow down the loss, as did other policy documents including ‘Design Guidance for Development within UCAs (PA 1995) and ‘Policy and Design Guidelines (MEPA, 2007). These are in line with various international UNESCO charters which state that historic buildings should be re-used to ensure their conservation. Many of these places could easily be used for modern purposes. In parts of Umbria such as Gubbio, Assisi and Orvieto are typical examples of how mediaeval buildings can be used in today’s modern world. These places have been converted into modern houses and shops while still conserving their mediaeval charm.

The Gourgion Tower - Gone but not Forgotten (Part 2)

Joe Azzopardi

A highly original architectural element of the Gourgion Tower, compared to other country retreats, and certainly one of its most outstanding features, was a series of eight small balcony-like structures hanging on all four sides at the upper edge of the first floor level. These resembled very closely the *box-machicoulis* (drop boxes), which were a characteristic of fortifications in the Middle Ages. These appeared on a number of private towers in Malta that were built by land owners to protect their estates from the occasional corsair raid and which become popularly known as *Torrijiet tal-Mishun*¹. One such structure is *Torre Gauci* in Naxxar that overlooks St Paul's Bay and was built in 1548 for Francesco Gauci².

Such features, also referred to as *piombatoi*, were also to be seen on *Torri Tinghi*. Although out of fashion in the late 17th century, when the Gourgion Tower was built, this feature provided the perfect answer to the need for providing a secure offensive position along the outer perimeter wall whilst functioning also as lookout posts. They also probably represented a nostalgic evocation on the part of Giovanni Gourgion and possibly the intention of this relatively new family to establish a link with the historic Maltese landowners.

As these balconies included a permanent masonry base, which is usually not present in other *piombatoi*, they were not meant to be used for bombarding attacking forces. Each balcony, however, had a series of perforations distributed on its three sides which functioned as spy holes and musketry loopholes, qualifying them as fully functional *muxrabijiet*³.



2 of the 8 small balcony-like structures hanging on the upper edge of the first floor level of the west elevation.

Photos on this page courtesy of The National Archives, Gozo Section

The ornate public well



An additional feature, with a similar function, was also inserted over the main entrance to the building located at the centre of the south elevation. This consisted of a stone slab perforated by an alternation of seven round and five square spy/musketry holes, which ensured that anybody approaching the property would be received in a way befitting their intentions. Above the slab, the date "1689" is inscribed in the stone and in the middle of it was inserted a skull with cross bones, possibly an ironic reference to the owner's privateering years. Below the slab was the inscription SUB AUSPICIS ANIMARUM PURGATORI (Under the protection of the souls of Purgatory).

Also on the same façade were three coats of arms. In the centre, set between the corbels of one of the small balconies over the main door, was the Gourgion coat of arms. When reproduced in colour, this consisted of a white dove flying towards a golden star over an azure ground. Abutting the parapet wall was the coat of arms of Adrien de Wignacourt, to the left of main door, and that of Gregorio Caraffa to the right. These coats of arms were defaced during the French occupation⁴ of Malta and Gozo (1788-1800).

The inscription referred to above was only one of the nine which have been recorded all over the building and its surrounding walls. On a secondary door to the right of the main entrance was another inscription advising the reader not to put his trust in any but in the Lord. Many of the inscriptions quoted biblical texts and had religious undertones, while particularly emphasising the role of water as an allegorical representation of God's grace and of charity as a virtue. This was a theme directly linked to the painting in Rabat, where the Gourgions are seen pouring relieving water over the souls in the flames of Purgatory.

One very interesting inscription was located over the outer boundary wall of the complex, fronting the east elevation. An opening into this boundary wall led into a forecourt, with a well at its centre, through which the east elevation could be reached.

Overlooking this forecourt were the stables and accommodation for the estate workers. To the left of this opening was an ornate public well, the wellhead of which was set within a niche comprising three concentric arches. Above was a small podium over which was set a skull sculpted in stone which was flanked on both sides by fleur-de-lys. Between the well and the opening was a Latin inscription which, in translation, states: "The man who has compassion for the poor lends to the Lord. Receive the water of life and call on the name of the Lord. Giovanni Gourgion, *secreto* and servant of Adrien de Wignacourt, most illustrious Master of these islands of Malta and Gozo, finished this building according to the Deed of Notary Alossio del Lore on 2 November 1690"⁵.

The inscription was set in a decorated stone frame and was surmounted by a shield which probably once contained the Gourgion coat of arms. The deed referred to in the inscription was not for the building of the tower but for the construction of a large water cistern which was to supply the two wells referred to above⁶.

Yet another inscription once located in the area, although not in the tower itself, perpetrated the long-held tradition that identifies the area where the Gourgion estate was located as that where the people of Gozo miraculously heard St Paul preaching from Rabat (in Malta) and were converted to Catholicism. The inscription stated AUDIERUNT CREDIDERUNT CUSTODIERUNT which translates as "They heard, they believed, they kept the faith"⁷.

It seems that while it retained its original components, over the years various additions were made to the Gourgion Tower⁸. The most significant of these were on the southeast corner and consisted of a room built at first-floor level over a section of the boundary wall where this was pierced by an arch. The room was accessed through a small door and had a series of narrow slits within its wall. These were probably intended to provide ventilation for the drying of cheeselets.

Operation Husky

For 253 years, the Gourgion Tower stood as a symbol of the taste and status of Giovanni Gourgion. With the passing of time, it also become a symbol of Xewkija and, flanked by the majestic palm tree that grew in the east-facing forecourt, was an essential part of the silhouette of the village. All this until 16 June 1943, when its demolition began in order to make way for runway No. 1 of the Xewkija Airfield, making it the only important Gozo heritage casualty of WWII⁹.

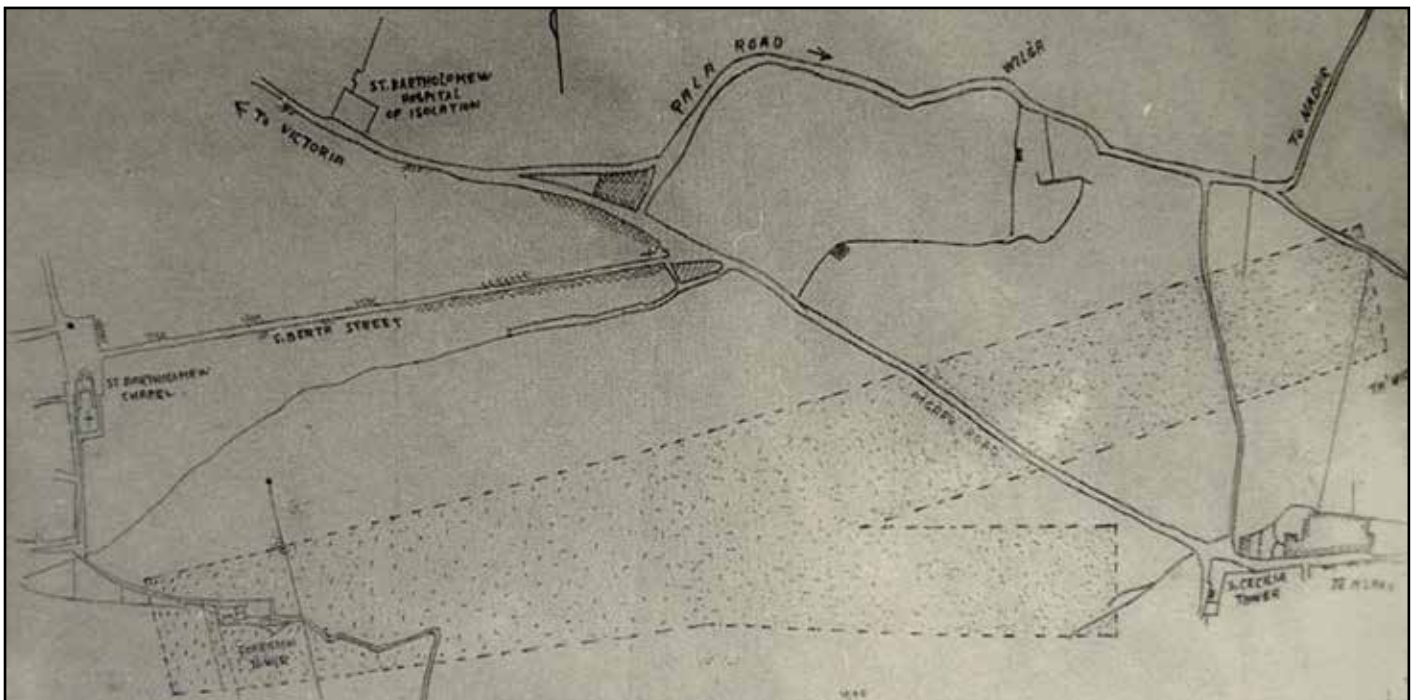


The inscription once located over the outer boundary wall fronting the east elevation.

*Photo courtesy of
The National Archives,
Gozo Section*

**Part one of this article
appeared in the last
issue of Vigilo**

*Projected plan of the Xewkija Airfield dated June 1943
Photo C Bezzina as published in The Gozo Airfield - 2004*





The Xewkija Airstrip formed part of the plan, codenamed Operation Husky, which was to lead to the invasion of Sicily by the Allied Forces of the US, Britain and the Commonwealth countries. This was the first invasion of Axis-held mainland Europe and was also the precursor of Operation Overlord, the invasion of France (Normandy) on 6 June 1944.

Although Malta did have a number of airfields, these had been heavily bombed and seriously damaged during April and May 1942. On July 15 1942, Air Vice-Marshal Keith Park was appointed Air Officer Commanding and by November plans to redress this situation were being made as it was envisaged that Operation Husky would employ over 600 aircrafts¹⁰.

Huge numbers of people were employed to construct three new airfields in Qrendi, Safi and Xewkija. The airfields were to cater for 33 full squadrons and one half squadron. Park also requested the deployment of an airfield construction team. In response to this, Airfield Construction Squadron No. 5051, comprising over 900 officers and personnel, was relocated to Malta from the Middle East with the third and final party of 153 men arriving on 31 March 1943. In addition to these, A Royal Engineers Tunnelling Company, four Pioneer Companies, 300 Shelter Construction labourers, 950 labourers and 24 skilled tradesmen from the Public Works Department, Air Raid Precautions personnel and additional unskilled local labourers were employed¹¹. It was the biggest construction project undertaken in the Maltese Islands during WWII.

In May 1943, AOC Park and the Governor John Vereker (6th Viscount Gort) agreed that the Gozo airstrip that was to accommodate 76 aircrafts would be built in Xewkija. Unavoidably the construction of the airfield meant the destruction of a number of buildings and considerable tracts of agricultural land.

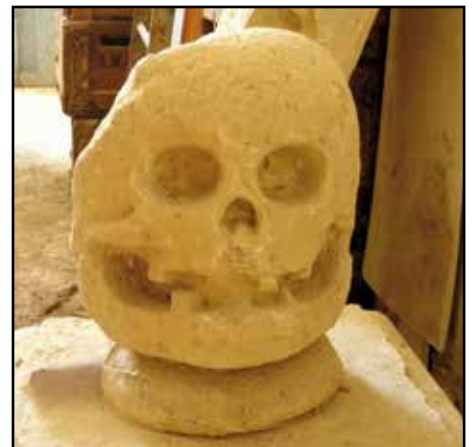
The construction was carried out by the Americans of Company E, a detachment of the 21st Engineer Aviation Regiment. Company E brought with it to Gozo several items of heavy machinery, including four D8.12 cubic yard scrapers, 24 one-and-a-half-yard dump trucks, three 12-inch power blade graders, three D4 bulldozers, two compressor trucks, one 3/8 cubic yard shovel, one D4 loader truck, two rollers, one rubber-wheeled roller, one eight-ton low loader, one 12-ton rooter and one 1000-gallon water sprinkler¹². The full company reached Gozo on 6 June and, following the two days required to set up camp, work started on the clearing of some 400 fields, numerous stretches of rubble wall and various structures – including the Gourgion Tower. Some 300 Gozitan labourers were added to the work contingent¹³.

As expected, the farmers whose land was to be affected by this enterprise protested to the authorities but – helped by the intervention of Mgr Michael Gonzi, then Bishop of Gozo – they were persuaded to cooperate.

Following a visit by AOC Park on 10 June, it was decided to build an additional 1,200-yard long airstrip in Xewkija. Work on the second airstrip started on 15 June and on 20 June work on both strips was concluded. On 23 June, the airfield was inaugurated by the landing of two Spitfires.

When completed, the Xewkija airfield resembled a Y – extending for some 4,000 feet and with each section some 200 feet wide. Runway No. 1, which was one of the arms of this Y shape, started behind Xewkija church, a little further from where the Gourgion Tower

The author would like to express his gratitude to George Azzopardi of Heritage Malta's Gozo office for his knowledgeable help and availability



This page and opposite: Remains of the Gourgion Tower in storage at Heritage Malta

had stood, extending in front of St Cecilia's Tower in the direction of Nadur. Before reaching an area known as *Borg Gharbi*, it merged with the other arm. The second arm, runway No. 2, ran from the open countryside under Xaghra where the niche known as *tal-Madonna tar-Rummienna* (Our Lady of the pomegranate) is located. The foot of the Y extended from *Borg Gharbi* towards Qala¹⁴.

On 30 June, three USAF Spitfire squadrons from the 31st Group – the 307th, 308th and 309th Fighter Squadrons – landed at Xewkija. Operation Husky kicked off on the night of 9 July, with massive air support from Malta and Gozo¹⁵. The Xewkija airfield was rendered redundant when, on 14 July, the American aircraft were transferred to *Ponte Olivo* airfield in Sicily. By 19 July, the last plane had left but it was retained as an emergency airfield. Later Gozitan



contractor Mikiel Spiteri cleared the site and the requisitioned land was returned to the farmers, who also received compensation for lost crops¹⁶.

In the course of the demolition of the Gourgion Tower, an American mechanical shovel accidentally fell into the cistern that fed the wells¹⁷. According to some sources, the tower was not actually demolished but dismantled. The Americans were supposed to have reached an agreement with the owners and marked all the stones. Once the airfield was dismantled, they asked the owners if they wanted the Tower rebuilt or financial compensation. The owners chose the second option¹⁸. However, no documented evidence of this has been traced.

It is also very interesting to note that, in a detailed report compiled by Captain Robert R. Lewis that listed day-to-day occurrences during the work, no mention is made of the demolition/dismantling of the Gourgion Tower, indicating that the issue may well have caused some sort of controversy. The report is entitled *History of Company E, 21st Engineer Aviation Regiment for Period from 1 June 1943 to 21 July 21 1943, inclusive* and is dated 24 July 1943. There is also no mention of the Tower in the *Completion Report Gozo Airfield* compiled by Captain R.M. Sexton¹⁹.

The loss of the Gourgion Tower did not however pass, unnoticed. Hugh Braun, the celebrated architectural historian, lamented its loss in *Works of Art in Malta: Losses and Survivals in the War*²⁰. Another who voiced his protest against the demolition was Lawrence Zammit Haber who, when realising that this could not be averted, undertook the task of ensuring that as many of the decorated stones as possible were preserved. These included most of the small stone balconies, the decorative elements of the public well and many of the inscriptions. All these were later donated to the Gozo Archaeological Museum and some were eventually put on display for a number of years. They have now all been removed to storage, awaiting the availability of an adequate area in which they can be displayed. The Gozo Archaeological Museum also holds a set of elevation drawings and plans of the Gourgion Tower drawn by Dr Francis S Mallia.

Alas, thus is the folly of war. The Gourgion Tower, which had stood for 253 years, was demolished in just four days (between 16 and 20 June 1943) to make way for an airstrip that functioned for 15 days (from 30 June to 14 July) and actually saw action for only five days (9/10 to 14 July) and was used only for a further five days (from 14 to 19 July 1943).

Footnotes

- 1 Spiteri Stephen, 1994, *Fortress of the Cross*, Malta, Heritage Interpretation Services.
- 2 *ibid*.
- 3 Azzopardi Joe, 2012, A Survey of the Maltese Muxrabijiet in Vigilo, Din l-Art Helwa
- 4 Calleja Joseph and Zammit Haber Frans, 1997, *The Gourgion Tower*, Midsea Publications
- 5 *Ibid*
- 6 Monsarrat Ann, 1996, Giovanni Gourgion and Preti's 'Virgin of Mercy' in *Treasures of Malta*, Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti
- 7 Calleja Joseph and Zammit Haber Frans, 1997, *The Gourgion Tower*, Midsea Publications
- 8 Mifsud A Mons., 1920, *La Milizia e le Torri Antiche in Malta*, Archivum Melitense
- 9 Bezzina Charles, 2004, *The Gozo Airfield*, Published by the author
- 10 *Ibid*
- 11 Camilleri Robert, *Building of airfields in Malta for Operation Husky 70 years ago*, Sunday Times of Malta (7/07/2013)
- 12 *Ibid*
- 13 Bezzina Charles, 2004, *The Gozo Airfield*, Published by the author
- 14 Bezzina Frank, 2000, *Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex 1940 – 1943*, published by the author
- 15 Bezzina Charles (Translated by Alfred Palma), 2012, *When the Siren Wailed*, published by the author
- 16 *Ibid*
- 17 Bezzina Charles, 2004, *The Gozo Airfield*, Published by the author
- 18 Tabone Saviour, 2008, *Gourgion Tower*, Letter sent to the Sunday Times published on 17 February
- 19 Bezzina Charles, 2004, *The Gozo Airfield*, Published by the author
- 20 Braun Hugh, 1946, *Works of Art in Malta: Losses and Survivals in the War*, H.M. Stationery Office.

Cultural Heritage for Europe, Europe for Cultural Heritage

Maestro Plácido Domingo - President of Europa Nostra

It is a great joy for me to be with you all today in Brussels for the closing events marking the Golden Jubilee of Europa Nostra.

Europa Nostra was born 50 years ago, upon the initiative of a small group of dedicated Europeans. The vision of our “founding fathers” lives on, just as the vision and ambition of the “founding fathers” of the European Union. They form part of the same dream: the dream of bringing Europeans together, in peace and prosperity, with respect not just for human rights and fundamental values of democracy and the rule of law, but also with respect for Europe’s tremendous legacy of cultural achievements, in all their diversity and inspiration for new accomplishments.

Fifty years later, what has been done to make this dream come true? Both the EU institutions and civil society organisations such as Europa Nostra have invested huge efforts in “building an ever closer union” among Europe’s states, regions, cities, civil society organisations and individual citizens.

Europe has become a continent of peace, yet a peace which continues to be threatened. Europe has continued to be a continent of prosperity, yet a prosperity which is today facing difficult times. But in both good and bad times, Europe has remained a continent with a formidable vitality and creativity of its culture. It is therefore time for the EU institutions to fully recognise that our culture and cultural heritage are the prime resource for Europe.

Our culture is indeed much more than “a sector”. Culture is what makes us who we are and what gives meaning and beauty to our lives. And culture is what makes Europe – Europe! It is the dynamic, ever-changing product of centuries of interaction among various communities in Europe, beyond physical and mental frontiers and across time and generations. Our culture is therefore a true beating heart of our Europe. For all these reasons, culture and cultural heritage indeed count for Europe and for US, the citizens of Europe.

Twenty years ago, the Maastricht Treaty finally introduced a much-needed competence for the Union in the field of culture.

This competence, of course, did not replace the main competence which remains with member states and their regions and cities. But the EU competence in the field of culture is nevertheless an important one, since its *raison d’être* is to give an additional quality to the action undertaken at national, regional or local level.

This European cooperation with regard to culture has been beneficial in many ways: whether measured by the numbers of historic buildings restored or the thousands no, millions, of individuals whose lives have been enriched by a performance, a landscape or a landmark; by the exposure to another culture than their own or especially by the discovery of the European dimension of our shared culture.

More recently, the Lisbon Treaty went even further. This treaty now states that “the protection of the cultural and linguistic diversity and the safeguard of our cultural heritage” are not only a mere competence; they are above all, a basic aim of the European Union.

In line with this new ambition, and in response to the many challenges which our economy and society are facing today, Europe ought to make a true “quantum leap” by giving a new quality to its commitment to culture.

Culture ought to become the main protagonist of the “New Narrative for Europe”. As pointed out by the initiative launched earlier this year by the European Parliament and led by President Barroso, the narrative for Europe cannot be reduced to economy only.

We fully support the necessity of a “New Narrative for Europe” which would speak to the new generations and revive their “desire” for Europe while remaining faithful to the original spirit and idea that have inspired the building of Europe. And in this process, EU institutions should indeed listen more carefully to the voices and messages coming from the cultural world.

“*On ne tombe pas amoureux du marché unique*” said Jacques Delors, who was the President of the European Commission at the time when the Maastricht Treaty came into force. I could not agree with him more! But I hope you will agree with *me* that we can all fall in love with the richness, diversity and beauty of Europe’s cultural heritage: tangible heritage, such as our monuments and landscapes and also intangible heritage, such as music and literature.

Investing in our culture and our cultural heritage therefore means investing in our human capital and in our future.

I am delighted that we are all gathered today in the *Bibliothèque Solvay*. This is an important *lieu de mémoire* for Brussels, for Belgium and for Europe as a whole.

**Introductory speech by
Europa Nostra President
Plácido Domingo
at the conference entitled
*Cultural heritage for Europe,
Europe for cultural heritage*
Brussels, Solvay Library,
5 December 2013**

below:

*2014 European Union Europa
Nostra Cultural Heritage
Prize Winner*

The Restoration project of the
16c Dragomirna Monastery
frescos in Suceava, Rumania.

**For more information on the
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Europa Nostra Cultural
Heritage Awards 2014 visit
www.Europanostra.org.**



Only 15 years ago, this building faced the risk of becoming a ruin. Today, it stands proudly – in all its original splendour – in the very heart of the European quarter of Brussels where it continues to radiate the power of “*L’Europe de l’Esprit*”. How did this happen? It happened thanks to the skills, perseverance and generosity of people who had a dream and who worked hard to make this dream come true. We could not have had a more symbolic place for our conference today.

I know that all of you who are gathered here in the Bibliothèque Solvay will continue working to keep Europe’s cultural heritage alive, either as professionals or as volunteers. Indeed, our cultural heritage is not only about stones; it is about people and their passion, their skills, their power of example.

And I know that our European heritage movement is extremely wide. It concerns all generations. And it is deeply interconnected with the world of art, Europe’s festivals, opera and concert halls, theatres, Europe’s museums, with the work of Europe’s architects and urban planners and also with the work of Europe’s writers, historians and thinkers. All together we stand for “*L’Europe de la Culture*”, “*L’Europe de l’Esprit*” and all together we can become a formidable force for advancing a sustainable development of our economies and our societies; for engaging our communities; for promoting a more harmonious interaction between men and nature and for enriching our lives.

Europa Nostra – in partnership with all members of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3 – seeks to be the voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe. The voice of thousands and thousands of historic buildings and heritage sites in Europe and the voice of millions and millions of people from Europe and beyond who care for this heritage. People who are committed to protect it and pass it on to future generations.

It is this voice which urges all EU institutions to give a new boost to the EU’s action to benefit cultural heritage. The EU needs an ambitious strategy for cultural heritage. Even with the existing competence and existing policies and funding tools, the EU can do much more for cultural heritage – provided that all its institutions agree to integrate cultural heritage in all relevant EU policies. Why? Because, cultural heritage, indeed counts for Europe!

I shall gladly convey this message also to President Barroso and Commissioner Vassiliou when I meet them later this afternoon.

Let us grasp this historic opportunity! Let us join forces, let us work together to give to the entire process of European integration a “positive shock” through the creative energy and inspirational power of our culture and heritage.

We have a shared responsibility to make this happen: you, the leaders of the various EU institutions and we, the protagonists from the cultural scene.

Let us revive and reclaim the European dream, and let us continue to make this dream come true – in our time and for those that will follow us!



Ta' Braxia - The Modern Cemetery

Janica Buhagjar

The funerary art, development of style and planning of Ta' Braxia Cemetery, dating back to 1857, represents a change in artistic sensibilities that led to a new attitude towards death in Malta. This is depicted not only in the design of the cemetery, its architecture and landscaping, but also in its funerary monuments.

Ta' Braxia brought many innovations to the island that represented a break with its past. These innovations pertained to social sanitation, urban reforms as well as new artistic sensibilities. Ta' Braxia was a physical manifestation of 19th century laws, society, sanitation, customs and architecture in Malta. It also embodied the contemporary attitude towards death and burial that would eventually led the island to modernism and to cemeteries such as St Maria Addolorata. Ta' Braxia gives a clear understanding of funerary art and architecture in the late 19th century making it one of the most important cemeteries in Malta.

Yet despite these potential improvements and attention to Malta's aesthetic developments, the local ecclesiastical authorities remained unimpressed by the new standards the British authorities were trying to implement and raised objections to the new cemetery. These objections were directed more at the religious changes Ta' Braxia would introduce rather than at the cemetery's architecture and style. The result was that even before it was opened, the new cemetery created tensions between the British government and the local Roman Catholic church. The strongest objection was that Ta' Braxia was an 'extra-mural' cemetery, "open to all religions for the purpose of interment".¹ This is somewhat misleading because in reality, Ta' Braxia was only to be used by Christian denominations, with Muslims and Jews having their own separate cemeteries.² At the time, it was common practice for the Anglican Church to allow the burial of members of other protestant denominations in its churchyards. However, the local Roman Catholic Church was against its members being buried with members of other Christian denominations.

Through the catholic newspaper *L'Ordine* the local ecclesiastical authorities argued that they were concerned because they had no representatives on the committee that would be in charge of running the cemetery. The British government in turn accused *L'Ordine* of instigating religious antagonism and quickly explained the reasons for the extra-mural cemetery, the intention to allow mixed interment and the choice of committee members. When *L'Ordine* finally accepted and endorsed extra-mural burial, it still insisted that the cemetery's style should follow that of a cemetery in a Roman Catholic country. These requirements included that the cemetery should include a chapel for services, that the chaplain should have his residence and be employed full time to pray for the dead buried in the cemetery. From this argument it is clear that what 19th century Malta opposed was not the new style but rather what it represented, and to them Ta' Braxia was going to represent something non-Catholic and non-traditional.

However, the criticisms levelled by *L'Ordine* were not exclusively concerned with religious matters. It also³ criticised the fact that a young and ordinary Public Works employee was to be responsible for such a task as designing a cemetery. Emanuele Luigi Galizia (1830-1906)⁴ was 25 years old at the time. He had received his certificate of qualification as a Land Surveyor (*Perito Agrimensore*) on 14 December 1852. One of the reasons why he was given the project was his strong pro-British inclinations. The other was because he personally came into contact with his superior "Montanaro who was a collector of Land Revenue and also chairman of the *ex-ufficio* of the committee in charge of directing the works."⁵

Although this was Galizia's first major architectural project, the cemetery helped to introduce and slowly infiltrate the new consciousness on the island regarding death, funerary art and architecture. At the time, Galizia was not a major figure on Malta's architectural scene, but after Ta' Braxia he continued to expand and refine his profession in funerary architecture as seen in the St Maria Addolorata (1862-69) cemetery and the Turkish cemetery (1874). It was Galizia who changed and planned the arrangement of graves, the profile of the boundary wall and the designs of fountains. The cemetery was extended in 1880, by which time Galizia was its superintendent. But by the next extension – in 1889 – Galizia had been succeeded by Professor G. Schinas.

Despite the local ecclesiastical authorities' vociferous objections seen in *L'Ordine*⁶ Ta' Braxia was finished and blessed in October 1857.⁷ The first burial was carried out on 31 October by the Bishop of Gibraltar.⁸ There was no mention of this in the local press to avoid any further arguments on the issue. Considering Malta's Mediterranean heritage and strong Catholic beliefs, it is not hard to understand why the local ecclesiastical authorities resisted the British Government's ideas and the provision of Ta' Braxia. The new cemetery represented a change from Malta's past – a change that would affect the Catholic Church's power. Ta' Braxia represented an example of ecclesiastical architecture led by a secular authority rather than by a religious one. Furthermore, it was designed by the young Galizia who represented the younger generation of 19th-century Malta and how it was slowly evolving, along with the rest of the continent.

Ta' Braxia cemetery also clearly demonstrated this British heritage in 19th-century Malta due to its architectural plan, design and landscape, slowly helping the island to move forward towards modernity. For instance, the formation and design of Ta' Braxia Cemetery reflects the culture of the British government regarding landscape and its approach to the notion of



Altar of the Hamilton-Gordon memorial chapel

death and commemoration. Ta' Braxia altered the urban landscape by introducing new ideas in funerary symbolism and mourning. It was also a time when artists could create individualised monuments, resulting in a great diversity and combination of styles. The cemetery is influenced by both the neo-classical and Romantic style: its grid-like structure harks back to Classical doctrine while reflecting contemporary urban settlements. This formality is an ancient notion, with the serene plans reflecting the dead lying still for eternity.

As Roman Catholicism was Malta's official religion, the island had never had the need for a Protestant cemetery, therefore such a cemetery had to be built. The British authorities first used the Floriana Bastion for mixed interment, which later became known as The Msida Bastion cemetery^{9,10}. Although the Msida Bastion cemetery emulated some of the British contemporary ideas and cemetery typologies, it was not truly a vision of what the British garden cemetery ought to be. It was a bastion *modified* to become a cemetery. A true garden cemetery had to be built to communicate specific ideas and functions.

Even though the Msida Bastion cemetery was sufficient for the British government for some time, eventually they needed to build a garden cemetery for burial and to reflect their contemporary Zeitgeist philosophy and values. As early as 1806, as a result of the Msida Bastion cemetery, Malta had already been introduced to a mixture of the symbolism of different religions and different cultures. At Ta' Braxia, this artistic funerary tradition was highlighted and continued in the design and craftsmanship of some of the monuments. But as a genuine example of a garden cemetery, it was Ta' Braxia that first embodied the Romantic values, architecture and funerary symbolism as the newly-established design for 19th century burial.

Galizia emphasised the central axis by placing the main gate and two internal gateways along this axis. Paths act as divisions to the various sections of vaults.¹¹ From the original main entrance, a long, straight path stretches to the end of the cemetery. It was originally conceived to be in three parts: from Division A to F, from G to Q and from R to Z. Each area is entered through a gate and all three are aligned with each other. In the middle of the two latter areas lie two fountains, also aligned in front of each other to achieve a straight uniformity. The artificial ponds form the centre of an entirely self-contained world, the circumference of which leads to other pathways.

Although Ta' Braxia has a symmetrical design and follows Classical doctrine, it also has the Romantic concepts of the late 19th-century garden cemeteries. Nature is incorporated into the landscape like most cemeteries that were erected on the outskirts of English towns due to the introduction of new sanitation practices. Ta' Braxia followed these ideas, transforming the cemetery into a healthy place that is ideal for contemplation. It demonstrated a break with the traditional values of Maltese society and a move towards the new standards and consciousness of urbanity. Ta' Braxia Cemetery seems to highlight the aspect of tamed nature. Although the Romantic elements in Ta' Braxia are mostly non-formal and subject to interpretation, they are equally important for the holistic understanding of this cemetery and the British community's idiosyncrasies.

It also marked a social change and not just an architectural one, as these cemeteries were particularly popular with the newly-emerging middle class, who were eager to detach themselves from the working classes and publicly demonstrate their social status. Some of the most outstanding monuments in Ta' Braxia commemorate men of high social standing. With the cemetery being available for use by various Christian denominations, it provided the space to reflect the multiculturalism that was developing in Malta, with its funerary monuments similarly representing a variety of different cultures, organisations and individuals. They are, however, mostly in the Eclectic, Gothic Revival or Neo-Classical style, with symbolism from Egyptian, Classical or Liberty styles.

Ta' Braxia's plan already made use of distinguishable Neo-Classical features such as clean and elegant lines, logical rhythm and restricted ornamentation. The cemetery's classical funerary symbolism includes the urn, the down-turned torch and broken columns. Egyptian Revival in Ta' Braxia is manifested in the frequent use of obelisks, pyramid-shaped monuments and the monumental columns at the cemetery's main entrance. Gothic Revival is also another style that shows up significantly at Ta' Braxia and was a direct response to the pagan inspirations of Neo-Classicism and Egyptian Revival. Gothic Revival is easily recognised through such elements carved in monuments as Gothic lacing, tracery and varying forms of pointed arches. However, not all the funerary architecture in Ta' Braxia can be clearly categorised, because artists often blended various styles together, resulting in hybrid and unique funerary art. By the end of the 19th century, Eclecticism was seen as a declaration of open-mindedness that leads to intellectual pursuits.

Flora symbolism shows an underlying Romantic preoccupation with the relationship and struggle between man and nature. The most notable floral symbols at the Msida Bastion cemetery are roses, acanthus leaves, olive branches, laurel wreaths and palm fronds, symbols which reappear at Ta' Braxia cemetery. Thus, specific flowers conveyed a specific meaning – the final message that was assigned



Detail showing the widow on the Gollcher monument

to either a tombstone or a monument. For instance, the poppy symbolised eternal sleep, the pansy is a symbol of remembrance while the rose symbolises purity and the beauty that lay in paradise. The wreaths on one of Ta' Braxia's most well-known funerary monuments, the one to Olaf Gollcher, is made of a variety of flowers, including daisies, roses, acanthus leaves, forget-me-nots and dogwood, the latter having a Christian connotation to resurrection and the triumph of eternal life.

The Gollcher monument, 1889, is based on a Neo-Classical model where the widow's head and body are leaning against the column, paying homage to her husband's bust. Created by Milanese artist Cavaliere E. Pozzi, the monument represents a more progressive social trend emerging in 19th century society, while at the same time representing the gender roles of the century. It is a clear statement of the widow's role in 19th century funerary art. She now has greater financial independence and this new status is depicted

in the life-sized depiction of her in the monument. The diverse range of funerary symbols and designs seen in Ta' Braxia show how they reflected 19th century attitudes towards death and the values they wanted to commemorate. The largest monument in the cemetery is the Hamilton-Gordon memorial chapel, which captured the spirit of its age through its architecture and symbolism.

The funerary chapel was designed by the architect John Loughborough Pearson (1817-1897). The foundation stone was laid on 29 May 1893 and the building was completed by 1896. The chapel was commissioned by the First Baron Stanmore, then Sir Arthur Hamilton-Gordon (1829-1912)¹² who was the Governor of Ceylon, in honour of his wife Lady Rachel Emily Hamilton-Gordon. In January 1889, on their way back to Britain after his governorship of Ceylon, Sir Arthur and his wife stopped in Malta, where Lady Hamilton-Gordon was taken ill and died shortly afterwards. She was buried in Ta' Braxia on 28 January 1889 and four years later her husband decided to commission a memorial chapel when he returned to England.

The chapel is one of Pearson's late works and shows the architect's own individual style, which differed from his earlier architecture that had stronger Neo-Gothic characteristics. Pearson's first phase followed the Gothic Revival's strict principles of architecturally correct designs. Eclecticism – as seen in some of Pearson's works and in the Hamilton-Gordon chapel – was not merely the amalgamation of past styles but a sign of open-mindedness and inventiveness. Lord Stanmore's chapel was designed in around 1893, when British architecture was conservative due to social insecurities, making it a rather bold architectural feat.

The chapel is based on an octagonal central space with an arcade of eight piers carrying a drum and dome, surrounded with double aisles with an arcade between the western entrance projecting with a gabled doorway and an eastern chancel with a semi-circular apse. The interior is vaulted, with 16 sides around a central dome on an octagonal drum with double aisles and eight cylindrical piers separating the inner one from the octagonal centre. Its plan echoes Italian Romanesque and Byzantine influences and its exterior decoration follows the same influences. Pearson also used Byzantine decoration, showing again an interesting eclectic combination. The windows of the Hamilton-Gordon chapel all have different patterns and are mostly of the Geometrical variety rather than of the Flowing or Curvilinear type. The Hamilton-Gordon chapel is further proof of how well Pearson was able to adopt the contemporary styles in such a small building while retaining his particular design characteristics. Forming part of the chapel's exterior is the tomb of Lady Hamilton-Gordon. It is set within a gracious Gothic-style, stone tabernacle attached to the external walls of the circular chancel with its distinctive shallow conical roof.

Interpretations drawn from the various funerary monuments found at Ta' Braxia reflect the socio-political, religious and artistic attitudes of the 19th century. Romanticism interpreted the non-terrestrial world that gave the 19th century its ethereal transience. In addition, Ta' Braxia's funerary art emulates the same artistic consciousness and style of other European 19th-century cemeteries such as Kensal Green in London and the Protestant cemeteries in Rome and Madrid, making it a genuine artistic expression of its time.

Footnotes

1 - NAM: CSG 04/28: P. 183-6 Regulations For The 'Ta Braxia' Cemetery. Under The Article No. 78 of the Police Code.

2 - Nowadays it is still known as the 'Protestant Cemetery' despite the fact that other Christian denominations, including Catholics, are also buried in it.

3 - 23 Nov 1855. In 1830 Anti-British press also criticised the architect Richard Lankersheer due to the Anglican Church (1839) in Valletta's faulty foundations as seen in Denis De Lucca, *British Influence on Maltese Architecture*. Mallia Milanese (1988) 320.

4 - Further information about Emmanuel Luigi Galizia can be found in Conrad Thake's *Emanuele Luigi Galizia (1830-1907)*, *Treasures of Malta* Vol. 6, No. 3 and *Emanuele Luigi Galizia (1830-1907)*, *Architect of the Romantic Movement*, *Treasures of Malta*, Summer 2000, vol. VI, no. III, 37-42.

5 - *The Malta Times* of 13 November 1855 as seen in Buhagiar (1982), 42.

6 - 16 October 1857.

7 - The first person to be buried in Ta' Braxia cemetery was Thomas Coakley, aged 20 years 6 months, Lieutenant and Adjutant of the 21st Fusiliers, who died on 30 October 1857. He served in the siege and capture of Sevastopol and in the expedition to Kinburn.

8 - Manuscript diary of Captain Fredric Gatt. Private collection of Dr A. Ganado.

9 - However, the Floriana Lines were designed by Pietro Paolo Floriani well before the 19th century, when Malta was still under the reign of Grand Master Antoine de Paule in the 17th century. Some Knights protested that the Valletta land front could have been better protected and counterguards could have been provided for the Msida Bastions. French engineers De Tigné and Mondion built retrenchments above the Msida Quarantine Bastions. For further information about Malta's fortifications refer to Stephen C. Spiteri's *Fortresses of the Cross: Hospitaller Military Architecture, 1136-1798* (Heritage Interpretation Services) 1994 and Stephen C. Spiteri's, *Fortresses of the Knights* (Pub: BDL) 2001.

10 - From as early as 1806 there is evidence of burials in the Msida Bastion for members of the Protestant communities in Malta. Cemeteries included the Quarantine Bastion Cemetery and the smaller Greek Orthodox cemetery, the site of which is now occupied by the new Excelsior Hotel. The Msida Bastion cemetery is the only one that survived from the early 19th century. It was unfortunately heavily vandalised and later restored to its former glory by *Din L-Art Helwa* and re-opened as a public 'Garden of Repose'. Since there were two cemeteries operating at the same time, it is unclear when exactly the Msida Bastion cemetery officially opened. Furthermore, a senior citizen of Floriana believed that the cemetery was but an extension of the Quarantine Bastion, since the authorities of the time had in mind the idea of taking over the two cemeteries to form one large memorial park. However there is no concrete evidence to support this statement. James Cannon, *The Msida Bastion Cemetery, Malta*. (Cannon) 1990, 8.

11 - Conrad Thake, *Ta' Braxia Cemetery: An Architectural Appraisal*. *Treasures of Malta*, Volume 17 Issue 3.

12 - He served as Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, Canada from 1861 to 1866; as Governor of Trinidad from 1866 to 1870; as 11th Governor of Mauritius, Mascarene Islands, from 1871 to 18 August 1874; as Governor of Fiji from 1875 to 1880; Governor of New Zealand from November 1880 to June 1882 and as Governor of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) from 1883 to 1890. For further information about Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon refer to C. W. Newbury, *Patronage and Politics in the Victorian Empire: The Personal Governance of Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon (Lord Stanmore)* (Cambria Press) 2010.

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