

## THE JOURNAL OF THE MALTESE DIASPORA

# MALTESE NEWSLETTER

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BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN MALTESE ALL OVER THE WORLD



## ST. JOHN AMBULANCE – AUSTRALIA - HISTORY

### Order of St John

When Jerusalem fell to the first Crusaders in 1099, they found in the Holy City a hospice where the monks of St Mary's abbey cared for weary pilgrims, the sick and the injured. The hospice, established by Christian merchants from Amalfi, chose St John the Baptist as its Patron Saint and adopted the eight-pointed White Cross of Amalfi as its emblem. It became known as the Hospitalliers of St John of Jerusalem.

Today the Maltese Cross, as it became known, is seen worldwide on ambulances. The four arms of this emblem represent the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude and its eight points represent the Eight Beatitudes: the blessedness of the merciful, the pure, the peacemakers, the persecuted, the humble, the comforters, the meek and the righteous. The cross is coloured white to represent purity.

For centuries St John was headquartered in Rhodes and later in Malta where it continued its role operating major hospitals and protecting the sick and the poor. The religious Order continued to be based in Rome, where it remains to this day. The Order of St. John flourished across Europe. In about 1140, its Knights in Britain built their headquarters in Clerkenwell, London. The Order continued to prosper in Britain until Henry VIII's time when he confiscated all the lands and property that had been donated to St John over the years, and dissolved the Order. However, devoted St John knights vowed to continue their work.



St John Ambulance Australia is a Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. The Order of St John has more than 2,500 members in Australia. It is headed by the Queen's representatives in Australia - the Governor General, and the Governors of each State.

In the Nineteenth Century a group of citizens revived the Order of St John in England, drawing their inspiration from the example of the Knights of St John who in medieval times, offered care and shelter for pilgrims and crusaders. St John Ambulance was subsequently formed to put its humanitarian ideals into practice in the new industrial society, promoting the cause of first aid for the sick and wounded through volunteer effort—a novel concept at the time and a much-needed one. The movement spread to Australia in 1883 and has since developed into the organisation that we know today. The work of the Order of St John is carried out in many countries around the world. St John is a Royal Order of Chivalry with the Queen as its Sovereign Head.

#### **SHORT SURVEY – Please answer these 3 question and forward them to me. I thank you kindly.**

1. Do you like receiving THE MALTESE NEWSLETTER – The Journal of the Maltese Diaspora? Yes/No
2. Is it likely you recommend the newsletter to your relatives and friends? Yes/No
3. Would you like to keep on receiving the newsletter regularly? Yes/No

**I will appreciate a reply especially from those who never contacted me before. Thank you. Frank Scicluna**



## President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca recalls her second year of her Presidential term

The 3 April 2016 marks the second year of President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca's term of office.

She paid tribute to former Presidents and Malta by laying flowers in a number of monuments of former Presidents around the island.

She spoke of her work over the past two years.

Through the creation of the Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, she is bringing hundreds of people together by creating a space where people can speak freely, with the aim of helping develop Civil Society and strengthen democracy, a statement read.

She also created the President's Trust, an entity that engages with organisations to develop empowerment programmes aimed at vulnerable youths.

She spoke of the transformation of the Malta Community Chest Fund, turning it into a Foundation.

As for her international work, she said that she was given the opportunity to contribute in a number of important fora, including within the UN, the World Leaders Forum, and Children of Prisoners Europe.

She was also appointed as a member of the Council of World Women Leaders. The President explained that she was invited to join with the group *Arraiolos*, an informal network of EU Heads of State.

Malta has also welcomed a number of Heads of State over the past two years, and President Coleiro Preca has met a number of others while on her State visits. These include Italian President Sergio Mattarella; Grand Master of the Order of Malta Matthew Festing and German President Joachim Gauck.

She spoke of the initiative 'Noffri.com', where people can offer to undertake voluntary work, instead of giving money to charity. She dubbed the initiative a success, where over 80,000 hours were pledged in the first three hours, from 3,500 people. The President also spoke of initiatives to help groups working in the same sector, come together and collaborate.

As an example, she mentioned the establishment of the National Cancer Platform, "that today brings together 13 NGOs within the cancer sector, so that these can, while keeping their individual identities, work together in order to offer holistic help to cancer patients. She also took the initiative to bring 32 trade unions together through the National Trade Unions Forum.

Children have always been at the heart of her Presidency, she said. She mentioned a number of initiatives, including school visits where she held informal meetings with classes to discuss their aspirations etc. She also mentioned the President's Secret Garden initiative.

Malta still benefited from the contribution of the Maltese diaspora, President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca maintained at the opening of the Convention for Maltese Living Abroad last year.

In her address, the President said that the delegates' presence was a clear evidence of how the Maltese managed to succeed wherever they may be. She said that while Maltese people have ended up living in every corner of the globe, they remained united by culture and by common values.

She insisted that Malta and the Maltese diaspora could contribute to each other's benefit, and pledged that the Presidency would remain close to Maltese people living overseas. "You are a part of us, and we want to help you foster your Maltese identity. Malta still needs you," she said.

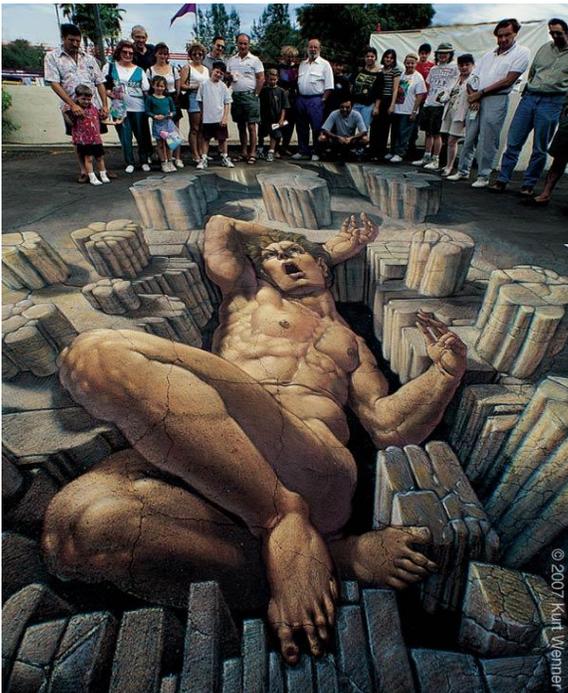
## THE AMAZING CHALKMEN



This time we compiled a list of the world's top most talented 3D sidewalk artists showcasing some of their best works. Those guys are: Edgar Mueller, Julian Beever, Kurt Wenner, Manfred Stader, and Eduardo Rolero.

These talented street artists have crafted an amazing ability to trick the eyes of passersby into seeing 3 dimensional sceneries and objects on a completely flat asphalt. Their works are created using a projection called *anamorphosis*, and create the illusion of three dimensions when viewed from the correct angle.

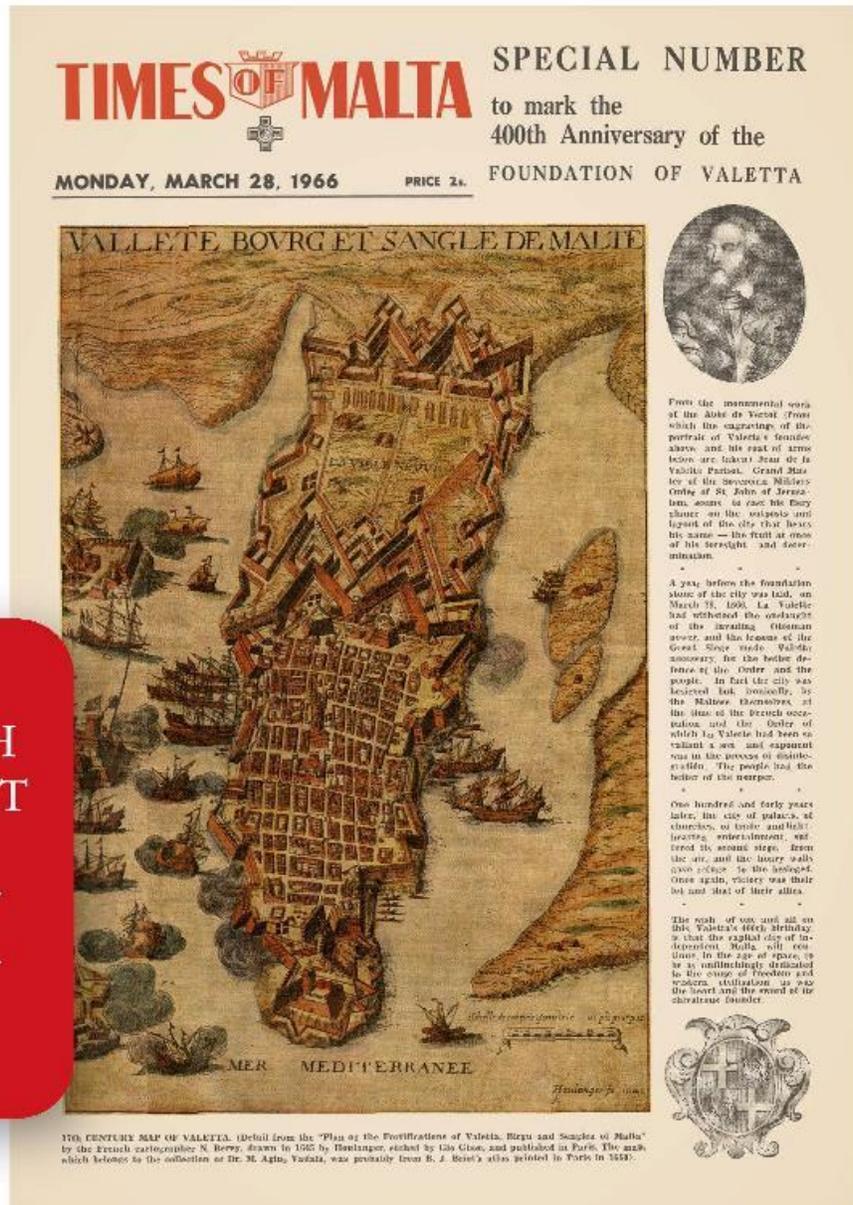
Art of this style can be produced by taking a photograph of an object or setting at a sharp angle, then putting a grid over the photo, another, elongated grid on the footpath based on a specific perspective, and reproducing exactly the contents of one into the other, one square at a time.



# TAKE A TRIP BACK IN TIME WITH TIMES OF MALTA!

On the 450th anniversary of the founding of Valletta, discover the history of our capital city as well as a look at what life was like in Malta 50 years ago. Get your replica copy of a special supplement on our capital city as issued back in 1966.

BOOK YOUR  
NEWSPAPER WITH  
YOUR NEWSAGENT  
FOR MONDAY  
**MARCH  
28th**



17th CENTURY MAP OF VALETTA. (Detail from the "Plan of the Fortifications of Valletta, Birgu and Senglea of Malta" by the French cartographer N. Berry, drawn in 1682 by Houssier, etched by Jan Goussier, and published in Paris. The map, which belongs to the collection of Dr. M. Agius, Valletta, was previously from R. J. Bonn's atlas printed in Paris in 1658).

For more information, please write to [marion.muscat@timesofmalta.com](mailto:marion.muscat@timesofmalta.com) or call on 25594208 during office hours.



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## **THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Australian Red Cross is a member of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (the International Movement) with millions of members and volunteers operating in over 190 countries. The three components of the International Movement are the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 190 Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, and the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Our Movement's mission is to prevent or reduce human suffering, wherever it is found. Our [Fundamental Principles](#) guide us in this mission.

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**NATIONAL RED CROSS RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES** National Societies embody the work and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 190 countries. National Societies act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief, health and social programs. During wartime, National Societies assist affected civilian populations and support army medical services where appropriate.

**INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS** The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC promotes the importance of international humanitarian law and draws attention to universal humanitarian principles. As the custodian of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC has a permanent mandate under international law to visit prisons, organise relief operations, reunite separated families and undertake other humanitarian activities during armed conflicts.

**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES** The Federation is a global humanitarian organisation, which coordinates and directs international assistance following natural and man-made disasters in non-conflict situations. The Federation provides support and policy guidance to the 190 Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies that are members of the International Movement. Its relief operations are combined with development work, including disaster preparedness programs, health and care activities, and the promotion of humanitarian values. In particular, it supports programs on risk reduction and fighting the spread of diseases, such as HIV, tuberculosis, avian influenza and malaria. The organisation also works to combat discrimination and violence, and assistance for migrants.

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## Celebrating Valletta's 450th Anniversary with a Calendar of Cultural Events

The anniversary will be marked on the 28th March and the calendar of cultural events has been planned following a series of meetings with the Valletta community and its representatives earlier this year.

2016 is a special year for Valletta during which the 450th anniversary will be marked. In a rare occasion, the two Valletta band clubs will be joining forces, a special edition of Carnival will be held and the first Valletta Pageant of the Seas will start a new tradition on the 7th June.

The Valletta 2018 Foundation, together with the Valletta Local Council, is commemorating the 450th year anniversary since the city's foundation stone was laid, with a special programme of events. The anniversary will be marked on the 28th March and the calendar of cultural events has been planned following a series of meetings with the Valletta community and its representatives earlier this year.

Addressing a press conference at Palazzo De La Salle, Valletta 2018 Foundation Chairman Jason Micallef said "This anniversary is not only significant for Valletta, but for Malta as a whole. We want to mark the building of what is today the only city classified as a UNESCO world heritage site with a series of activities spread over the year 2016."

Valletta Mayor Alexiei Dingli added "Together with the Valletta 2018 Foundation and other entities, events are planned to take place almost every week in 2016 to celebrate such an important year. Valletta and its people have a unique character and this will be celebrated in these events which are planned to include all members of the community".

For the year 2016, annual art festivals and cultural events organised in Valletta will be including special activities. The 450 programme also includes the Valletta Pageant of the Seas, a large-scale event in the Grand Harbour featuring several marine vessels, a swim between Fort St. Angelo and Fort St. Elmo commemorating Toni Bajada, as well as several races and acrobatic shows. This is planned to give a taste of the year-long Cultural Programme in 2018. While describing the event, Valletta 2018 Artistic Director Mario Philip Azzopardi said "We're creating a new tradition which will gain prominence in Malta's artistic and cultural calendar."

Valletta 2018 Executive Director Karsten Xuereb said "In 2016 the Valletta 2018 Foundation will be stepping up preparations for the hosting of the title of European Capital of Culture by strengthening its cultural programme, extending it to different communities and giving it greater visibility. The collaboration with various government and private organisations to mark Valletta 450 is an example of this long-term strategy in action."

Other activities include a celebration organised by Valletta's parishes as well as a concert featuring music by Valletta's resident band clubs, King's Own Band Club and Societa' Filarmonika Nazionale La Valette. The Valletta 2018 Foundation has appointed a coordinator to ensure that these activities are widespread and inclusive. For this special occasion, a logo, consisting of the Valletta Local Council logo and the 450 year anniversary logo, was designed and released earlier today.



## Lingwa Tas-Sinjali Maltija (LSM) - Deaf People Association

### ASSOCIATION AIMS

The aims of the Association are as follows:

- to ensure that Deaf persons have equal opportunities to live an independent life of the highest possible quality;
- to exert reasonable pressure on Maltese authorities to ensure that Deaf people have equal opportunities to enable them live an independent life of the highest possible quality;
- to investigate ways Deaf people can have equal opportunities;
- to raise public awareness on how Maltese Society can change to offer equal opportunities to Deaf people to enable them live an independent life of the highest possible quality.
- To disseminate information on existing facilities available to Deaf people;



Dizzjunarju  
Il-Lingwa tas-Sinjali  
Maltija

- to enter into partnership with Government, Authorities and Organizations that are consonant with the Association's aims;
- To encourage international contacts with similar organizations abroad and takes part in international meetings

*Lingwa Tas-Sinjali Maltija* or Maltese Sign Language (LSM) is the language of the Maltese Deaf Community.

There are currently three routes to Maltese Sign Language courses:

The Directorate for Lifelong Learning offer Maltese Sign Language

levels 1 and 2 as **evening courses** at a number of locations across Malta.

- The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) offer Maltese Sign Language level 1 and 2 as short courses.
- The University of Malta's Institute of Linguistics also offers some Maltese Sign Language and Sign Linguistics courses to university students through the department's Maltese Sign Language Project.



## IL-BIRGU – CITTA' VITTORIOSA

Birgu's oldest recorded building was a Phoenician temple dedicated to the goddess Astarte, located at the peninsula's tip. This was succeeded by a Greek shrine to Hera and later by a Roman temple to Juno. Over this temple, in 828, the Arabs built a fortress. Nearly 400 years later it became known as Castrum Maris, the castle by the sea. Eventually becoming known simply as il Castello. In 1530 Grand Master Philippe de l'Isle Adam took

up residence in the Castello, renamed Fort St Angelo. The town that grew beyond its walls became known as il Borgo del Castello or, in Maltese, Birgu (meaning town). Birgu has been a populated centre for millennia and remains one of the most densely inhabited areas on the islands.

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In mediaeval times it welcomed Venetians, Pisans, Genoese, Aragonese and Castilians who introduced the cult of St Lawrence. The church dedicated to him was Malta's first parish and dates from 1090, when Count Roger of Normandy invaded Malta and overthrew the Arabs.

St Lawrence originally served as the Conventual Church of the Order of St John before St John's Co-Cathedral was built in Valletta. The present church is a fine example of baroque design. The area in front of St Lawrence was used as a graveyard during the siege and later St Joseph's chapel and the Crucifix chapel were built on the burial site.

A small museum, entrance through Triq San Lorenzo, is located next to the parish church where de Valette's hat and sword are showcased.



## Belgium bans wearing of Islamic burqa in public

Amnesty says the ban is in breach of Belgium's obligations under international human rights law / AFP

- Belgium bans the burqa in public

- "Hope to be followed by other countries"
- No votes against in parliament

**BELGIUM became Europe's first country to vote for a ban on the full Islamic veil or burqa, sparking dismay today among Muslims and warnings of a dangerous precedent with France set to follow suit.**

The bill, which also drew fire from human rights group Amnesty International, will not enter force for weeks and may have to be re-examined if early elections are called as Belgium battles a political crisis.

"We're the first country to spring the locks that have made a good number of women slaves, and we hope to be followed by France, Switzerland, Italy, and the Netherlands; countries that think," said Liberal Deputy Denis Ducarme.

In the lower house of the federal parliament yesterday, 136 deputies supported a nationwide ban on clothes or veils that do not allow the wearer to be fully identified, including the full-face niqab and burqa.

There were two abstentions. No one voted against.

The ban will be imposed in streets, public gardens and sports grounds or buildings "meant for public use or to provide services" to the public, according to the text of the bill.

Exceptions could be allowed for certain festivities like carnivals if municipal authorities decide to grant them.

People who ignore it could face fines, or a jail sentence of up to seven days.

All governing parties and the opposition agreed on the move - most for security reasons linked to the fact that people cannot be recognised while wearing the clothing.

The upper house of parliament has two weeks to raise any objections, but with early elections likely to be called, legal experts are debating whether the whole package would have to pass through a new assembly.

"Belgium now joins Iran and Saudi Arabia in that exclusive but unenviable rare club of countries to impose a dress code in the public domain," Michael Privot, an Islamic scholar, said in the *Le Soir* newspaper.

He said the three cite: "the protection of dignity, or even the freedom, of women to justify the unjustifiable: the restriction of individual freedoms of some of our citizens."

The vice-president of the Muslim Executive of Belgium, Isabelle Praile, warned the vote could set a dangerous precedent and feared it could pave the way for a later crackdown against other symbols of religious expression such as Sikh turbans.

"Given the acute crisis which our government is facing, this move to kill our liberties, which will deprive dozens of women of their fundamental rights, is totally over the top and driven by ideology," she said.

<http://www.news.com.au/travel/world-travel/belgium-bans-wearing-of-islamic-burqa-in-public/story>



## DAR IL-GVERNATUR GOVERNOR'S HOUSE IN GOZO GETS A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

*Re-enactment at the Governor's palace in Mgarr, Gozo.*

A historic building known as Dar il-Gvernatur will now serve as the premises of Gozo's heritage watchdog after having been demolished and rebuilt using the same stones.

The structure needed to be moved by a few metres when the main road between Victoria and Mgarr was rebuilt and widened.

It was painstakingly demolished and each stone was indexed, numbered, and then positioned in the same place when the building was constructed again a few metres away from where it originally stood. The newly-restored building was inaugurated by Gozo Minister Anton Refalo on Saturday as he officially handed it over to Gozo Heritage.

Dr Refalo said the project was just one of many undertaken by his ministry in a bid to restore and protect the island's heritage. He mentioned, as an example, the restoration of several statues and niches in various localities in Gozo as well as the restoration of the Gozo Ministry's façade in Fontana. He also said how 17 students, many of whom were members of Gozo Heritage, were following a part-time university course to facilitate the creation of a restoration unit within Gozo Heritage.



Photo: Mark Avellino.com.au

### AFL International - Harmony Cup - Lebanon v Malta

2016 was the first time Malta fielded a team in the Harmony Cup. Games were played against Ireland, Lebanon and Israel. This is the first gallery from the day, Great effort from the Maltese Crusaders who were unlucky not to make the final after two very good games

against Lebanon & Israel. [#aflinternational](#) [Harmony Cup](#) [City of Melbourne](#) [#harmonycup](#) [#teammalta](#)

We receive several Newsletters every month. The list is too long to publish. We appreciate and treasure these newsletter because, voluntarily, they are providing excellent service to the Maltese community living in Malta and overseas. Well done and keep up the good work. Our motto: *working together like a big happy family*. Maltese Newsletter Editor



## MALTA 1565 THE GREAT SIEGE

### The 16th Century

#### *Grand Master Jean de Valette*

After nine Crusades spanning nearly 200 years, the successful Muslim Siege of Acre finally expelled the Christian armies from the Middle Eastern coast in 1291. Over time, Turkish armies spread westward, intent on spreading their religion throughout Europe. In 1453, Turks captured the mighty Byzantine city of Constantinople, opening a gateway to the west. In 1523, the Ottoman Empire under 28-year-old Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent besieged the island of Rhodes, at the time defended by order of the Knights Hospitaller, off the southwest coast of Asia Minor. Despite a valiant stand, the Knights eventually ran out of supplies and were forced to withdraw, first to Crete, and then to island of Malta, just south of Sicily. In the years that followed, the Christian Mediterranean kingdoms were under near-constant assault by the Ottoman forces, most notably by ships commanded by the infamous corsair Turgut Reis. In 1551, Reis invaded Malta, but after only a few days, he abandoned the attempt and seized and ravaged the neighboring island of Gozo instead.

Jean de Valette, the commander of the Knights Hospitaller on the island of Malta, had witnessed the effectiveness of the Ottoman military first-hand; 42 years earlier, he was a young soldier who escaped the conquest of Rhodes, and in more recent years he had spent a year as a prisoner of Reis before being released as the result of a prisoner exchange. The descendent of a family of Crusade knights and a reputation as a severe but pious commander, the Knights Hospitaller chose him to be the leader of their order specifically to prepare for what was seen as the inevitable Ottoman assault on the island.



As the Grand Master of the Order of Saint John in charge of the Knights Hospitaller, de Valette ordered the defenses of the city of Birgu, a walled city on a rock promontory on the southern side of Malta's Grand Harbor, to be strengthened. De Valette's orders supported the established Fort St. Angelo with the construction of Fort St. Michael on an adjacent outcropping, and Fort St. Elmo across the harbor. To his 600 knights, he added about 1,200 hired soldiers, received about 1,000 in assistance from Italy, and mobilized a little over 6,000 militia men and galley slaves.

On May 18, 1565, over 180 ships ferried about 30,000 Ottoman troops to the shores of Malta, 20% of which were the justifiably-feared Janissaries, elite Ottoman arquebusiers (that is, medieval gunmen) representing the personal investiture of the Sultan himself. The Ottomans were known for the effectiveness of their artillery; they set up 13 cannons a short distance from Fort St. Elmo, including two culverins hurling 60-pound balls, 10 cannons hurling 80-pound balls, and one Basilisk, a multiton monstrosity that hurled 160 pound cannonballs. Mustafa Pasha, the overall commander of the Ottomans, expected that Fort St. Elmo would be overrun and siezed within days, but due to an error in deployment where a sub-commander placed some of their arillery within range of the Christian batteries from Fort St.

Angelo, and the stalwart defense of the 200 Knights assigned to defend St. Elmo, the siege of even this first fort lasted for more than a month. Fort St. Elmo eventually fell, but at substantial cost to the Ottoman forces; more than 2,000 of the invaders perished, including the pirate Reis.

Mustafa now turned his army's attention to Forts St. Angelo and St. Michael, and the town of Birgu. The Ottoman cannons were of less use, especially as Mustafa feared Maltese reinforcements and therefore attempted to siege the island with more haste than usual. Meanwhile, De Valette and his defenders posed a staunch resistance; Ottoman ships sent to attack from the sea were targeted and sunk by Maltese cannons, and Ottoman siege towers, forty feet high and filled with assault soldiers, toppled when de Valette ordered some ground-level wall blocks removed in order to allow cannons to blow the legs off of the structures at point blank range. The Ottomans appeared to gain an advantage when one of Mustafa's lieutenants found a way to ignite a barrel of black powder within a crevice in the otherwise smooth rock face supporting the fortress walls; but de Valette himself, 70 years old at the time, grabbed a spear and personally led his men to defend the breach, driving the Turks back and securing the hole.

De Valette and the Maltese knights developed incendiary weapons to terrify the Ottoman invaders. Maltese inventors developed an early form of hand grenades, clay pots filled with napalm-like Greek Fire and hurled at their opponents; the shards of clay exploded as shrapnel, and the Maltese threw them in waves, causing havoc among their tormentors. They also built fire hoops, wooden rings about the size of a modern hula hoop, wrapped in layers of burnable material such as brandy, gunpowder, turpentine, and heavy cloth, then ignited and rolled down the hills towards attackers by the hundreds. For closer range, they developed the Trump, a hollow metal tube filled with flammable sulfur resin and linseed oil; when lit, a gout of flame several yards long would issue forth from the snout for as long as a half hour. The defenders stationed these primitive hand-held flamethrowers at doorways, portcullises, breaches, and other choke points to deter any approach; as the attacking Turks typically wore long, flowing robes, the effects of being set on fire were particularly devastating to them. One account of the battle records a lone Maltese knight in Fort St. Elmo, visible from across the harbor as he held off many Ottoman assaulters while armed with only a single trump.

The attack, which Mustafa had originally estimated would take only days, lasted for three months. The Ottoman soldiers, seeing soldier after soldier meet grisly, sudden, or incendiary deaths, lost heart, and morale among the attackers plummeted. Finally, in September, word reached Mustafa that Sicilian reinforcements were heading for the island, and he made the decision to withdraw. By that time, only about 600 defenders remained, and about 1/3 of the entire population of the island of Malta had been killed in the fighting. The Turkish commitment, including periodic reinforcements, totaled about 40,000 men, and the battle had cost them about 25,000 lives.

Immediately following the Ottoman retreat, the Knights decided to build a city where Fort St. Elmo had once stood. De Valette himself laid the first cornerstone in the city which bore his name. Today, Valetta is the capital city of the sovereign state of Malta.

#### Links and Sources:

The Siege of Malta, 1565 by Francesco Balbi, Boydell Press, 1965.

The Great Siege: Malta 1565 by Ernie Bradford, E-Reads/E-Rights, 2010.

Campaign 50: Malta 1565, Last Battle of the Crusades by Tim Pickles, Osprey Publishing, 1998. The image of the cannon crippling the tower is by Christa Hook, and appeared in this book.

Drawing "The Great Siege of Malta" is by Andrew Howat from [Illustration Art Gallery](#).

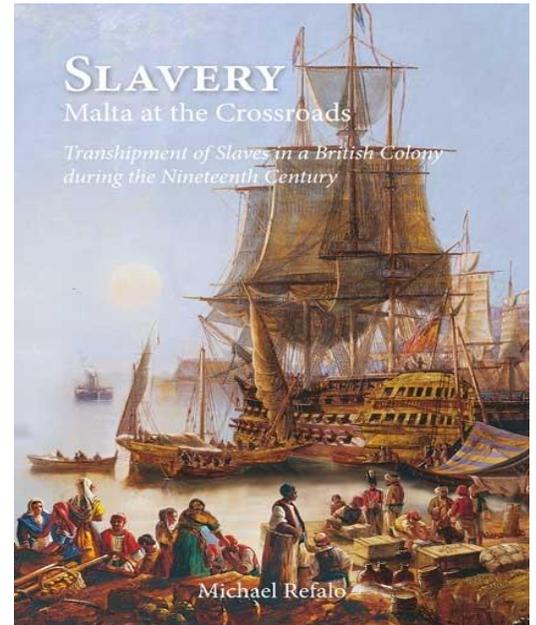
"The Last Crusaders", episode of Warriors, The History Channel, 2009.

"Malta 1565" © 2015 by James Husband.

## SLAVERY IN MALTA

On 28 September 1871 an anonymous letter in a local newspaper complained that slaves from North Africa were being landed in Malta for later transfer to the Levant. That letter led to a parliamentary question in the House of Commons and open a can of worms for the British administration in Malta. Both the Foreign and Colonial Offices in London and the Malta governors had to seek a solution to the thorny problem.

All efforts to stamp the practice, however, proved frustrating for the local administration; the only consequence being accusations of negligence or connivance from British consuls in the Levant. Furthermore, such incidents provided the French-born American consul in Tripoli with ammunition to attack the British authorities in the attempt to push the interests of his adoptive nation. Additionally, the book deals extensively with the plight of the slaves landed in Malta, and the interests and ambitions of their owners.



### The People of Malta

<https://www.facebook.com/thepeopleofmalta/>



"Ilna minn mindu konna tfal bin-nghaġ. Kieku ma tħobbhomx, ma trabbihomx." – Zabbar Malta – Żaren "Għamilt 24 sena ngħix l-Awstralja imma mbagħad erġajt ġejt Malta għax m'hawnx isbaħ minnha. Issa qed ngħix Għawdex. L-Awstralja xorta bqajt inħobbha u nixtieq li nerga' mmur għall-holiday. Kont naħdem fuq l-iskycrapers f'dejn is-Sydney Opera House." – Victoria Gozo - Philip.

"Qabel niftakar ħafna joħorgu bin-nghaġ f'dawn in-naħat. Illum kollha mietu jew inqatgħu. Kullimkien qed jinbena u l-ħdura qed tonqos. X'ħin jispiċċa kolloz inżarmaw, m'hemmx x'taġħmel."



**THIS NEWSLETTER SHOULD BE READ BY ALL THE MALTESE LIVING IN MALTA AND ABROAD. IT HAS SO MUCH EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL RICHNESS AS FAR AS THE MALTESE HERITAGE IS CONCERNED THAT MAKES EVERYONE PROUD TO HAVE A MALTESE BACKGROUND. MALTA IS NOT BIG IN SIZE BUT ITS LANGUAGE, HISTORY AND CULTURE ARE UNIQUE. THE MALTESE PEOPLE MADE A GREAT NAME IN THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE.**



## MALTESE GHONNELLA (FALDETTA) Ghonnella or Faldetta (Traditional women's head dress)

Now seen only in paintings, old postcards or re-enactments, a distinguishing Maltese costume is the Ghonnella or Faldetta. This characteristic, black cotton or silk head dress was an essential women's costume certainly up to the 1930's and also up to the 1950's especially amongst members of the lay doctrine society known as 'M.U.S.E.U.M',

The origins of this stiffened head dress are not known. Many say it derives from the eastern veil, or from the Spanish Mantilla. Others maintain that it was first introduced in 1222 as a sign of mourning by the women of Celano (Italy) who were expelled to Malta following the massacre of their menfolk. Yet another theory is that its origin evolved from the necessity for women to veil their head when entering a church.

Covering the head and wrapped around the body from waist downward the 'Ghonnella' left the face completely visible.

The 'Ghonnella' endowed the Maltese women with a proud and pretty appearance. It became her, showed her sprightly and honored her in people's eyes.

It is hardly possible to come across Maltese women wearing the 'Ghonnella' these days, except within re-enactment of traditional Maltese life, perhaps accompanied by the male figure also in typically village attire of the Maltese 'Zepp' – a traditional, farming character.





## THE TIME WHEN THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF MALTA SPENT IN ADELAIDE 2007

### The Maltese-Aboriginal community Charles of Valletta set up in Adelaide

*Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi being presented with an Aboriginal boomerang by Mr Agius. Photos: Austin Tufigno.*

That the Maltese get everywhere is a well-worn adage. That one of them manages to single-handedly create a community of about 700 Maltese-Aborigines, however, is the kind of novelty that only rears its head when a Prime Minister is in town.

The second stop of Lawrence Gonzi's two-week tour of Australia, was in Adelaide where he met Aboriginal siblings Josie and Bob Agius. They made a point of welcoming the Prime Minister in their three native tongues and presenting him with an Aboriginal boomerang.

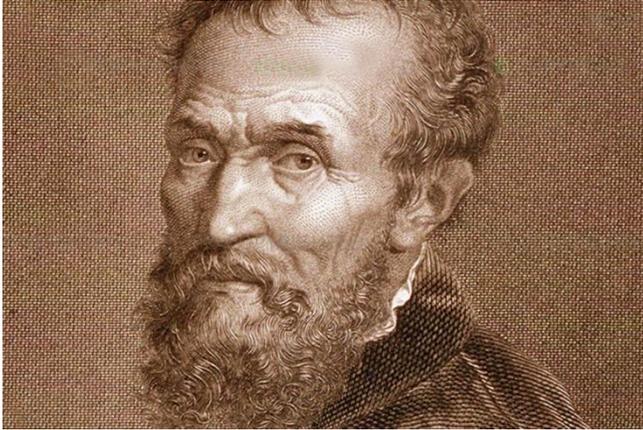
The man behind all this, Charles, a Maltese migrant thought to be from Valletta, has long passed away. And so has his Aboriginal wife, Laura. But his Maltese spirit is very much alive and kicking in their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, as well as all the rest. Bob and Josie's dearest wish now is to visit Malta for the first time, so they can find out where their father lived and where he is buried.

Seventy-two-year-old Bob told The Times: "I would love to walk on the ground where he was born and go to where he was buried. I am half Aborigine and half Maltese. Oh my word, no one could make me say otherwise. No one can change that." The problem is that neither Bob nor any member of the Aborigine Agius family know where to look, since Charles parted with their mother and returned to Malta. "I think he was well into his 80s when he died, but we don't know the details and would love to find out."

Charles had originally married a Maltese woman in Malta, but emigrated to Australia in around 1930 before marrying Laura in March 1939. They had four sons, followed by three daughters, and he worked in the workshops on the Islington railway before leaving the family. "I never met many Maltese because I spent much more time with my mother's people. And it was hard for us because of the way the law was back then which separated black Aborigines from whites; the Australians looked down on us and didn't even allow us to speak our language."

However, he was in the company of a few hundred Maltese in the town hall yesterday, and they were all captivated by the development and proliferation of the Agius family. The boomerang he handed to Dr Gonzi was made by a group of Aborigines Bob is affiliated with. "That is a gift from the Aboriginal people of Australia, not from the Australians. My father was a strong man so that Maltese must be strong people," he said.

Whether he realises his dream and makes it to Malta remains to be seen, but he got a bit closer yesterday. And his eyes welled-up with joy when his nephew brought him a picture of him presenting the boomerang already signed by the Prime Minister. Dr Gonzi managed to put a smile on a few more faces, as he visited an old people's home run by Maltese Franciscan sisters, where he joined the nuns for coffee, and a trip to the neighbouring church where a Gozitan Franciscan, Fr Gabriel Micallef, is the parish priest and Chaplain of the Maltese Community of Adelaide.



## Michelangelo Buonarroti

Painter, Architect, Poet, Sculptor (1475–1564)

versatility in the disciplines he took up was of such a high order that he is often considered a contender for the title of the archetypal Renaissance man, along with contemporary rival and fellow Florentine Medici client, Leonardo da Vinci.

**Lived:** 6 Mar 1475 - 18 Feb 1564 (age 88)

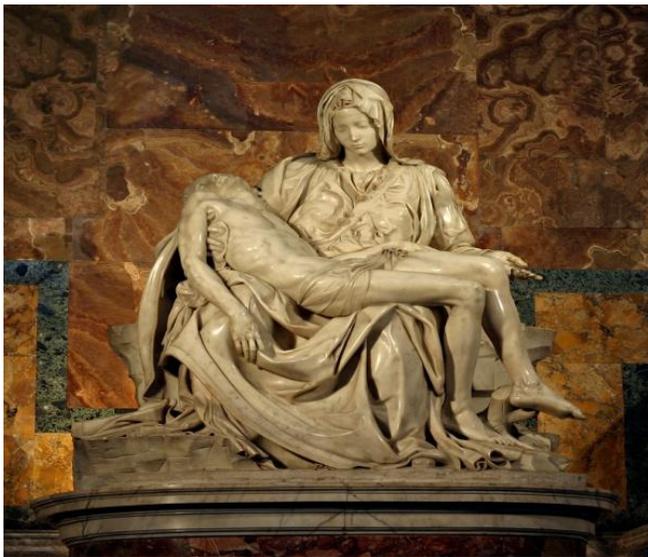
**Periods:** Renaissance · High Renaissance · Italian Renaissance

**Buried:** Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence

**Founded:** Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze

**Parents:** Ludovico di Leonardo di Buonarrotto Simoni · Francesca di Neri del Miniato di Siena

Michelangelo is widely regarded as the most famous artist of the Italian Renaissance. Among his works are the "David" and "Pieta" statues and the Sistine Chapel frescoes.



## PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE TEMPLES OF MALTA

The oldest buildings in Europe are found in Malta - older than the Pyramids of Egypt. The occupation and settlement of Malta by modern humans began approximately 7,000 years ago, when the first Neolithic Farmers crossed the 50 mile-wide straits that separate the islands from Sicily. Prior to that, the islands were uninhabited. The undomesticated animals, at the beginning of the Holocene [12-10,000 years ago] would have been red deer, bear, fox and wolf. Much earlier than that, there is archaeological evidence of Pleistocene species [c. 250,000 years ago] such as dwarf elephants and hippopotami.



### THE NEOLITHIC FARMERS

The impetus to cross over to Malta from the southern tip of Sicily, from where it was visible, was probably land pressure created by the expanding farming communities [Bonanno 1997].

Red Skorba pottery with a bright red coating

The three waves of farming settlers are characterised by their pottery; first, the Ghar Dalam [pottery with geometric patterning], secondly the Grey Skorba [a dull, undecorated ware of greyish colour] and then the Red Skorba [pottery with a bright red coating].

Commercial and cultural contacts with the mother island – Sicily - occurred throughout this period, as evinced by examples of flint, obsidian and female figurines.

The early settlers worshipped a 'mother goddess' whose type is known from early statuettes found scattered around the Mediterranean. Similar statues are found on Malta, several being of uniquely large size. We know from physical evidence that worship in the Malta temples included animal sacrifice. Beyond this, little is known about the rites and rituals that took place there. Although the temples are large in overall extent, the interior chambers do not have enough room to hold more than a few people at one time. Therefore public worship in large groups would not have been possible. It is likely that the priests and priestesses carried out rites inside the temples, and the public was not invited, [Daniel Cilia, 2004], perhaps similar to the 'restricted' experience of the Palaeolithic caves of Europe, such as [Chauvet](#).



### THE TEMPLE BUILDERS

The temples of Malta have been described as a suitable candidate for the 'ancient wonders of world' [along with the [Pyramids of Egypt](#), the Colossus of Rhodes, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, Pharos Lighthouse of Alexandria, the Statue of Zeus at Olympia and the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus].

The Maltese temples are constructed of stone - coralline limestone - in a cloverleaf (trefoil) floor plan. Their typical architectural elements include the incomplete dome and the horizontal arch, or post-and-lintel trilithon. The curvatures of the temples perhaps reflect the circular plan of ordinary dwellings of the time, but are also reminiscent of underground burial chambers.

The basic temple plan consists of a variable number of hemispheric chambers, or apses, branching off from a narrow entrance path. The apses are incomplete domes, built of ingeniously corbelled stone, broad at the base and curving in towards the top. However, a full dome could not be constructed using this technique; after the walls had been built up, the apse was roofed in animal hides which were suspended from timber poles. Pole-and-hide construction was also used for the doors. It has been suggested that the temples might have represented the head, arms and legs of a deity, since one of the commonest kinds of statue found in these temples is a 'fat' woman (*Venus of Malta* from [Hagar Qim](#)), a symbol of fertility.

**This period can be categorized into phases:**

Zebbug – c. 4100-3800 BC

A new wave of farming settlers from Sicily, with a new ceramic kit of pear-shaped jars.

Mgarr – c. 3800-3600 BC

A short transitional stage, pottery with curved lines.

Ggantija – c. 3600-3000 BC

The Temples begin to be constructed, simply at first, but then increasingly more sophisticated. For example, the internal plan of the temple became heavily stylized in structure, evolving from the trefoil to the symmetrical five-apsed plan.

Saflieni – c. 3300-3000 BC

Hypogeum, a structure hewn out of rock, three storeys high. It was used for worship and burial.

Tarxien – c. 3000-2500 BC

Tarxien – c. 3000-2500 BC – the height of the temple-building phase. Several temples were constructed – Hagar Qim, Mnajdra, Borg in-Nadur, Tas-Silg and Tarxien. Construction had become very sophisticated, such as the immense stone blocks and the intricate facades of Hagar Qim.

**THE MALTA TEMPLE BUILDERS – CONCLUSION** The first inhabitants of Malta left no writing behind them, only elaborate, sophisticated and unprecedented stone structures in the form of temples. These temples, requiring extensive resources, were clearly an integral and religious element of their culture. The archaeological record shows unequivocally that the Temple builders disappeared from around 2500 B.C. Whether this was due to over-exploitation and eventual exhaustion of the natural resources - parallels appear here with [Easter Island](#) - compounded by successive years of drought or a climate change, remains speculative. Was the population completely wiped out, or assimilated? A warlike Bronze Age people, similar to those of Greece, southern Italy, and Sicily, succeeded the Temple builders, bringing with them an entirely new culture which included disposing of their dead by cremation..

## Fresh Innovative Debut for The Travellers

Written by [Antoine Farrugia](#)



**The Travellers**, a new, young and energetic band, will be releasing their debut single, "**Semplicità**" on the 12th of this month, followed by another single and the launch of their first 5 track Extended Play (EP) later on in 2016.

The band got together in 2013, with one aim in mind, that of trying to create something different in the already wide diversified local music scene.

Clayton (Bassist), Joseph (Trumpet), Chris (Main Vocals) and Andrew (Guitarist), have been in the music scene from a very young age and their love for Music grew fonder as they grew older. On the

other hand, Sylvano (saxophone) and Michael (drummer) joined the rest of the band later on in 2013. This marked the inception of The Travellers.

All the members of The Travellers hail from Gozo and are very frequent commuters, crossing the channel to and from Malta regularly, hence the name of the band seemed the most appropriate and was an obvious choice.

In the past year, the band has been working on a mix of contemporary music incorporating brass and

Maltese lyrics. This had originally started more of a curiosity and the band started experimenting with how their melodious tunes would sound when combined with the Maltese language on contemporary rhythms. The aim behind this was to change the concept of Maltese diction in music on the islands.

This does not mean that the band is restricting their music to Maltese, but are leaving all their options open and are excited to see what the future holds. We urge you to stay tuned to [esflashmalta.com](http://www.esflashmalta.com) even through <http://facebook.com/esflashmalta> **Twitter** for all the latest about the local music scene.

## The Forgotten Children of Malta – Western Australia



Posted by [lewis blayse](#)

*Image: Malta's Child Migrant Memorial (Source: Times of Malta <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100509/letters/abused-maltese-child-migrants.306450>)*

### CHILDS MIGRANTS' MEMORIAL IN MALTA

*Inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Malta 2 March 2008*

Malta was a source of "child migrants" to Australia. Most attention has been placed on the child migrants from the U.K., largely because there were 7,000 from the U.K. and about 300 from Malta.

In both cases, children were promised a good life in Catholic Church Children's Homes in Australia. The reality, of course, was very different, with many suffering all of the known forms of abuse at the hands of their supposed "carers".

Maltese boys were placed in Castledare Junior Orphanage, Clontarf Boys' Town, St Joseph's Trade and Farm School, Bindoon, and in St Mary's Agricultural School, Tardun. Previous postings have covered some of the abuses at these Christian Brotherhood institutions.

About 50 girls were sent out to Western Australia and were placed in the St. Joseph Girls' Orphanage, Subiaco and Nazareth House, Geraldton.

Nazareth House was run by the Sisters of Nazareth (see previous posting) who were responsible for abuses at other institutions they ran in Australia. It closed in 1977 and is now a residential aged-care facility. St. Joseph's was founded by the Spanish Benedictine Monks and closed in 1974. It catered for girls from six to sixteen years of age.

While significant information exists about abuses suffered by the boys from Malta, not much is available concerning the girls. It is to be hoped that the Royal Commission will provide more.

The first group of 27 boys, on assisted passage, left Valetta Grand Harbour on March 26, 1950, for Freemantle in Western Australia, aboard the "Ocean Triumph". A memorial plaque and sculpture (see photo below) have been placed on the site (activists had wanted a list of names included, but this did not happen).

Monsignor Philip Calleja, who ran the Maltese Church's Emigrants' Commission for many years, wrote a paper about Maltese child migrants in 2008. It was read out during the unveiling of the child migrants' monument at the Valletta Waterfront. Following on Prime Minister Gonzi's 2008 apology, Archbishop Paul Cremona apologized, in 2010, for the Maltese Church's involvement in the child migration scheme. The Australian Government has also apologised.

In 2011, three former Maltese child migrants began legal action against the Christian Brotherhood for sexual and physical abuses. In Malta, the issue appears to remain contentious, particularly with regard to the role of former Emigration Minister, Dr Cachia Zammit.

One former child migrant, Raphael Ellul, returned to Malta to reconnect with his past, but also to close a traumatic chapter in his life when, as a 10 year old child, he endured physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the Christian Brothers in Australia, in their Tardun and Castledare facilities. "Ray", as he became known, was born in 1960 in Cospicua.

Dr Patrick Howard, who worked with stress-disordered Vietnam veterans and with children in institutions run by the Christian Brothers, states that the six years at Tardun's Agriculture Farm left Ray with "chronic depressed mood, low self esteem and a feeling of hopelessness."

In Tardun, he was forbidden to speak the Maltese language with other Maltese residents and was subjected to beatings whenever he was heard speaking it. During this period he received no specific English language instructions, which inhibited his chances to apply for non-manual jobs later on in his life. Lack of English was a further protection for the Brothers from having victims alert community members to the abuses.

A few of the Maltese child migrants fared better in their new country, particularly those who were later re-united with family who migrated to Australia as part of the large migration scheme from war-torn Europe.

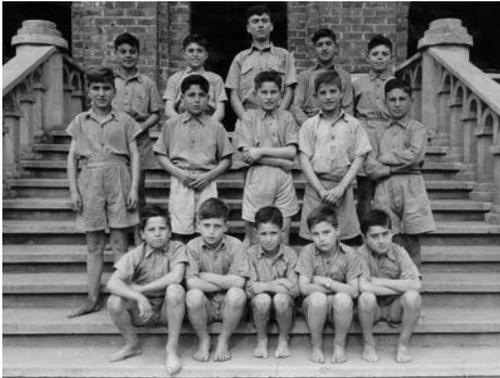
One of these was Professor David Plowman who came out at the age of ten, followed three months later by a brother. Eight years after their arrival, Plowman and his brother sponsored their mother and younger brother, who joined the two brothers in Australia as normal migrants. To the Western Australian government's frustration, half of the Maltese child migrants were reunited with their families within two years, with most choosing to move interstate.

In 1993, the late Professor Plowman became Director of the Graduate School of Management at The University of Western Australia. "I have been lucky," he has said. "Of those who were at Tardun at my time, I'm the only one that I know of with a university education."

In the 1990s, the Maltese Professional and Business Association set up the Child Migrants of Malta organisation to help the former child migrants, with Professor Plowman as chairman. He has written an extensive account of the Malta child migrant scheme for a Maltese history journal (see reference below). For these activities he was awarded the Queen's Birthday honour of Medal of the Order of Australia.

### **Maltese children at Bindoon, Western Australia**

*(Photo below) Maltese children at Bindoon Boys' Town 1952. Reproduced courtesy State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library 005086D.*



In 1928 Perth-based Maltese priest Father Raphael Pace urged the Christian Brothers to include Maltese children in its emerging migration scheme. Negotiations between the Maltese and Western Australian Governments continued through the 1930s but the first Maltese child migrants did not arrive in Australia until after World War II.

Between 1950 and 1965, 259 boys and 51 girls were sent to Catholic institutions in Western Australia and South Australia.

Most parents believed their children would receive a better education in Australia. Instead many were put to work on the

Christian Brothers' building projects and left to endure the same punishments and abuses as their British counterparts. Some were forced to stop using their Maltese language and never learned to read or write English.



*Child migrant memorial, Fremantle 2006.*

*Reproduced courtesy Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.*



## LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER THE INTERNET

Communication is firstly one of the key factors- for example, people can find members of their family that would have not been possible to trace before. We can now trace our family tree.

Where as people would have to write or use phones, they can now send e-mails to communicate. Social Networking sites change the way we interact with one

another, and we can meet people from all over the world in a flash that we once would not be able to do. And it's free!!

Internet has opened up a complete new door for businesses- meetings can take place with people at different locations in the world with the aid of the internet and web cams etc.

think of e-commerce. This has changed the way in which we shop. E-bay is a huge example of this. We can buy things for a bargain that we simply could not do before. It has also made things such as buying tickets online to fly abroad. The function of E-tickets can now make checking in quicker and avoiding queues.

Also, businesses can use the internet as a great advertising tool- you see adverts and pop ups everywhere! The internet is a great knowledge resource. Type any word or phrase into a search engine and you have your answer in seconds!

Since we can do things at the click of a button, we probably shop and talk more on our computers than we do physically, and this will continue. There are other downsides to the internet- there are sites and forums that are potentially dangerous and brainwashing. For example, pro-anorexia sites, pornographic sites etc. It is also easier to access people's information, whether it be their credit card details, or where they went or go to school etc. This can make the world a potentially more dangerous place. It is 27 years since Sir Tim Berners-Lee first formally introduced the World Wide Web. To commemorate such a momentous moment in modern life we look at 11 ways it changed our lives.

**1. MAPS Before:** 'Has anyone seen the Street Directory? I need it to get to Camden right now! Where is Camden in this stupid thing?' **After:** Just use Google Maps to find out where you need to go, how long it will take you and what's the quickest way. Simple. Insert your address and whoop the photo of your house appears before your eyes.

**2. BOOKING A HOLIDAY Before:** 'Hello, I would like to book a family holiday. What are my options?' Hour long conversation follows about what you like and don't like. **After:** Go online, pick a city, buy a ticket and boom you're done.

**3. WATCHING TV Before:** 'Where is the TV guide? I need to know when the new Simpsons episode is on and I can't find out if someone has taken the TV Guide. Without the TV Guide I know nothing!

**After:** Just Google the name of the show for all the info or go on a TV guide website. So easy. Which leads to...

**4. MISSING TV Before:** 'Great, now I missed the show because I couldn't find the TV Guide. And since I can't find it I have no idea when the repeat will air. I give up, I'll just have to read a book.' **After:** It'll be on iPad in about 5 minutes.

**5. NEWS Before:** (5 hours after an event) 'No I had no idea it happened! I missed the 6 O'Clock News. Guess I'll have to read about it in tomorrow's papers.' **After:** (Immediately after an event) 'Yeah it's all over Google, Yahoo or Twitter.'

**6. GOING TO THE CINEMA Before:** (At The Box Office) 'Hello, two tickets please. Oh, sold out? Night ruined.'

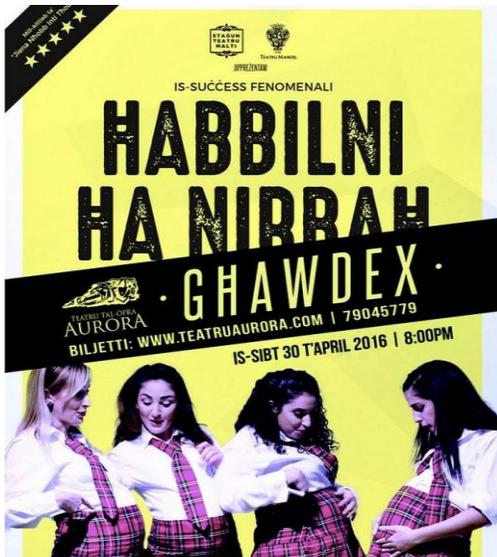
**After:** 'Great, I'll book online now!'

**7. STAYING IN CONTACT Before:** 'Here is my address and home number. I look forward to hearing from you in 2-3 working days.' **After:** 'Who uses house phones? I'm not telling you where I live! Just Tweet or Facebook message me.'

**8. VOICING YOUR OPINIONS Before:** 'Agh so angry! Going to write a letter to the editor and phone into a radio station!'

**After:** 'Agh so angry! Going to tweet about it and start a blog. People will hear my voice!'

**9. MUSIC Before:** 'Oh yes! The new Madonna album is out! I hope it doesn't sell out in Tower Records on cassette.' **After:** You may download it in minutes. 'What's a cassette? Sell out?'



## HABBILNI HA NIRBAH – A comedy/satire at Aurora Opera House

by gozonews.com

After the exceptional success of *Jiena nhobb, inti thobb* (I love, you love), Simon Bartolo wrote another record-breaking and jaw-dropping social comedy/satire for Stagun Teatru Malti. 'Habbilni ha nirbah' (Impregnate me so I'll win), is a drama that blends political, sexual and religious controversies, inspired by prominent and real-life news reports in Maltese newspapers.

It is largely based on a true story of 4 teenage girls who compete and bet on who ends up pregnant first with the end result being that all four of them end up pregnant. This is Simon Bartolo's take on this true story.

Following its resounding success in Malta's Manoel Theatre, *Habbilni ha nirbah* is up for another run in Gozo's Aurora Opera House.

Monica Attard, Nancy Calamatta, Josette Ciappara, Carlos Farrugia, Vince Micallef Pulè, Antonella Axisa, Marceline Galea, Lorriane D'Ugo and Jean Pierre Cassar will take part. The four teenage girls will be Kim Dalli, Daniela Carabott Pawley, Mariele Zammit and Shelby Aquilina.

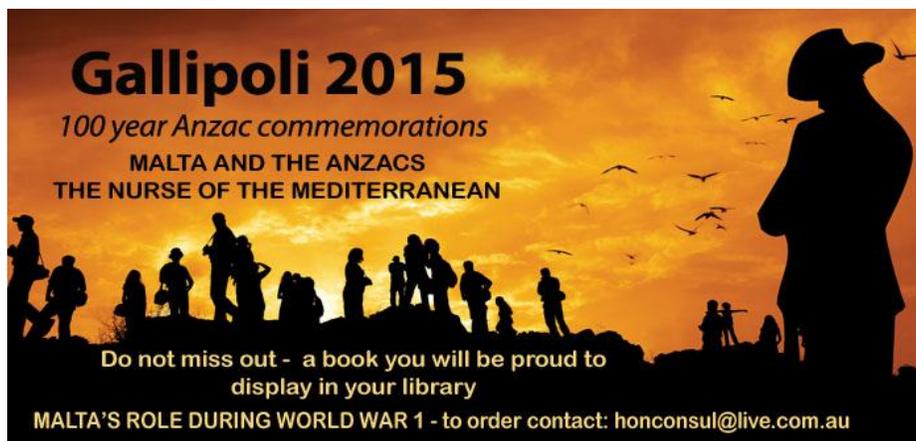
Performed in Maltese to a strictly 16+ audience, *Habbilni ha nirbah* is on at the Aurora Opera House, Victoria, Gozo, on Saturday, the 30th of April at 8pm.

## LANDING OF ANZACS AT GALLIPOLI

At the start of the Gallipoli campaign, in April 1915, the wounded were evacuated to Egypt, but it was immediately evident that facilities there could not cope. A week after the landings at ANZAC Cove, at the beginning of May, the first convoy of casualties arrived in Malta; by the end of the month more than 4,000 sick and wounded were being treated on the island.

In 1915 57,950 servicemen from the Gallipoli expeditionary force were evacuated to Malta, and during the last three months of the year the sick and wounded continued to arrive from the Dardanelles at the rate of about 2,000 weekly, and in one week in December 6,341 were landed in Malta.

Despite the best efforts of the medical staff, some casualties did not recover and were buried in Malta. Among these are 202 members of the Australian Imperial Force and 72 servicemen from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. When war was declared in August 1914 there were just four military hospitals on the islands. Within a year there were 21 plus seven convalescent depots and homes – earning Malta the soubriquet of Nurse of the Mediterranean.





**History at end of the tunnel - detailed map of Valletta tunnels being compiled**

*Some 150 history buffs attended a private lecture on Valletta's subterranean spaces in the tunnels beneath the Auberge de Castille. Photos: Chris Sant Fournier*

A detailed map of the subterranean tunnels, crypts and foundation waterways which run beneath Valletta's hustling and bustling streets is being compiled by a team of architect-cum-historians, in the hope of opening parts of the "unknown city" to the public.

Architectural historian Edward Said's new organisation, Underground Valletta, has for the past year explored some 130 underground spaces in the capital city, ranging from air-raid shelters and five-storey wells, to complex tunnel networks connecting the various palaces and arterial roads.



"This is our mission and we are committed to discovering more, as there is so much left which we do not yet know," Mr Said told the Times of Malta.

He was speaking from the sidelines of the NGO's inaugural activity held earlier this week in the tunnels beneath the Auberge de Castille. After a brief lecture on the history of Valletta's first underground spaces, such as the caverns at the cliffs of Mount Sciberras all the way to the military spaces used during the Cold War, Mr Said gave some 150 curious visitors a tour of the tunnels connecting the Auberge de Castille to the Auberge d'Italie which today houses the Tourism Ministry.

*This is our mission and we are committed to discovering more, as there is so much left which we do not yet know*

Perhaps the most compelling of the passageways, Mr Said believes, is the 16th-century sewage system, which runs beneath the entire

Valletta grid.

The complex system was dug out of the foundation of the city and much of it is still in use today. Beneath some of the larger squares in Valletta is a collection of 12 reservoirs, some several storeys deep. Mr Said said these were designed by the knights for a city under siege and could support a population of 40,000 for some four months.

